



New Book Chronicle

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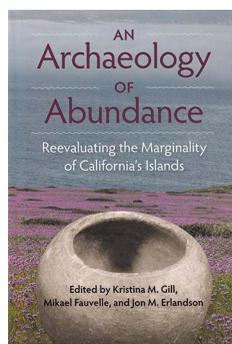
This NBC reviews several volumes that consider the archaeology of islands and maritime subsistence in prehistory. Islands have frequently been viewed as isolated, marginal places where survival is a challenge compared with the more accessible and well-resourced mainland. The volumes under review ask us to reconsider such concepts of marginality, and to reassess the nature of places, such as islands, that have been considered isolated and which can appear—the modern eye at least—challenging to inhabit. This approach continues a growing trend, seen, for example, in the publication since 2006 of the *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*, which attempts to resituate islands in their archaeological context and to centre them in their sphere of influence. Over a decade ago, Boomert & Bright (2007: 18) argued that rather than pursuing an ‘island archaeology’, which necessarily isolates the geographical subject, a better approach might be “an archaeology of maritime identity”. Similarly, Helen Dawson (2019: 451) has called for “a reconceptualization of marginality, focusing on an island’s in-betweenness rather than isolation”. In this NBC, we examine the extent to which recent volumes focusing on islands reflect this research agenda.

Transformation and resilience

Our first three volumes re-examine the islands and estuaries of the California coast and the Caribbean. The results challenge ideas of insularity and harsh environmental conditions, speaking instead of abundance, resilience and connectivity.

KRISTINA M. GILL, MIKAEL FAUELLE & JON M. ERLANDSON (ed.). 2019. *An archaeology of abundance: reevaluating the marginality of California’s islands*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida; 978-0-81305-616-6 paperback \$100.

TERRY L. JONES *et al.* 2019. *The prehistory of Morro Bay*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; 978-1-60781-706-2 paperback \$45.



The editors of *An archaeology of abundance* aim to reconsider the traditional perception of islands as “geographically more remote, less productive, and more marginal for human survival compared to the adjacent mainland” (p. xv). The 21 (largely US-based) contributors were invited to re-examine the natural resources in the California islands in order to establish their diversity, productivity and nutritional and technological potential.

The volume opens with a discussion by the editors that sets the agenda for the following chapters and identifies the key themes in island archaeology. The editors challenge the prevalent interpretation of these islands as having struggled to sustain rising

populations, and that changes in island resources drove intensified trade and craft specialisation. This chapter provides the groundwork for their reinterpretation of the term ‘marginality’, which has often been evaluated based on the ecological, economic, or political situation, and certainly in the case of the latter, is clouded by subjectivity of perceptions. The focus of this volume is largely, though not exclusively, ecological marginality and the availability of fresh water, animal and plant resources. Natural minerals and trade resources are factored into the measure of marginality.

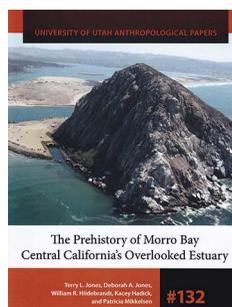
The following chapters are arranged thematically, with Chapters 2 and 3 continuing the exploration of perceived marginality (Braje *et al.*; Gusick & Erlandson). Braje and colleagues consider the problematic nature of ‘baseline syndrome’, which fails to recognise abundance in the past due to a reliance on benchmarks based on modern species levels. Braje and colleagues’ studies of the recovery of California island ecosystems after their historical occupation and the introduction of animal species led to diachronic degradation of island resources, suggest that “the perceived marginality of many islands and archipelagos for ancient human settlement and survival has often been exaggerated” (p. 52), and that studies of deeper ecological and human history on individual islands may, in fact, reveal a very different situation. Gusick and Erlandson (Chapter 3) ask quite legitimately, “if the California islands were marginal for human settlement compared to the adjacent mainland, why were they colonized so early and why are Paleocoastal sites so abundant?” (p. 61). The answer, of course, is that they were not marginal. Their review of the palaeocoastal archaeology of the California islands demonstrates that they may have been more resource-abundant even than the mainland coast.

Chapters 4–6 focus on the re-evaluation of particular resources for use as food, medicine, fuel and tools, and also the availability and use of minerals for tool making. Gill *et al.* investigate archaeobotanical evidence for terrestrial plant resources on the California islands (Chapter 4), concluding that “island floras were robust enough to support human populations for millennia” (p. 124). Ainis *et al.* (Chapter 5) suggest that, based on ethnohistorical accounts of seaweed use along the Pacific Coast and increasing archaeological evidence for use of indigenous terrestrial plants on the islands, early inhabitants were also exploiting sea vegetables not only to supplement their diet, but also perhaps for medicinal use. Despite limited preservation of seaweed in the archaeological record, sufficient examples exist to suggest the likelihood of it being an important resource for the first inhabitants of the California islands.

Comparisons between the islands and the mainland are the focus of the final section of the volume; Chapters 7–9 consider, in particular, interactions between the two. Following up Chapter 6, in which Erlandson *et al.* outline the mineral resources of the islands and the ingenuity of their exploitation by the early occupants, Fauvelle and Perry (Chapter 7) present a study of the conveyance of, and trade in, goods manufactured from these resources. The results reveal that ritual items were important drivers of exchange both between individual islands and between island and mainland; in fact, the islands seem to have been better resourced than the mainland coastal region. Glassow and Johnson (Chapter 8) compare population levels between islands and the coastal mainland, and the fluctuation of these numbers over time. Their study shows that marginality can be measured in multiple ways, with

population (size and stability) representing just one factor, and one that does not necessarily predict marginality of subsistence.

In the penultimate chapter, Torben *et al.* consider the movement of plant and animal species to islands by Indigenous peoples. The authors demonstrate that, compared with global data for prehistoric translocation of plants and animals, the California islands experienced fewer introductions than elsewhere, suggesting that the translocation of species was unnecessary and therefore marginality was probably not a driving factor. The book closes with a summary by Fitzpatrick and Erlandson that draws out the significance of the volume's various case studies for island archaeology elsewhere around the world. The examples cited include the potential for discovering a deeper history than previously thought of hominin occupation of some Mediterranean islands, and the possibility that Pacific atolls were no more marginal than high volcanic islands. The comprehensive approach taken in this volume provides an exemplary model of the ongoing efforts to reconsider the marginality of islands that should encourage other serious reconsiderations of the subject.



In the next volume under review, the focus shifts from islands to the mainland. *The prehistory of Morro Bay*, by Jones *et al.*, considers a not marginal, but rather marginalised estuary on the central California coast. Described as unimportant in records from diaries chronicling the Portolá expedition (1769–1770) because it was unsuitable for shipping access, Morro Bay has not garnered the same archaeological attention as its better-known neighbours, San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay. Indeed, Morro Bay only began to attract scientific interest in the late 1960s. In this volume, the authors aim to redress the balance and across 12 chapters they present the results of a

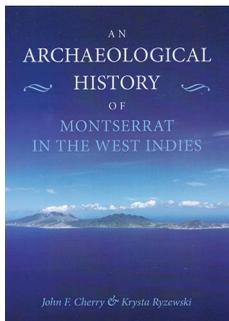
14-year archaeological project to investigate six prehistoric sites around the bay.

While the opening chapter sets out the scope of the project, Chapter 2 details the environmental conditions and ethnohistory of Morro Bay; these include accounts from early seafarers that detail abundant local resources. Chapter 3 situates the archaeological investigations within the regional context of the San Luis Obispo Coast and the Pecho Coast to the south of Morro Bay. Methodologies are presented in Chapter 4 and the following chapters (5–10) each detail one of the six sites under investigation (each known only by a site number). Each chapter is essentially an individual site report detailing field methods, site structure and chronology, dating evidence, faunal and archaeobotanical remains, small finds and, where present, human remains. A synthesis and discussion are provided for each site, but Chapter 11 considers the six sites together in the broader context of regional archaeological investigations to emphasise “the diachronic and spatial diversity of the bay’s resources and the manner in which resident foragers coped with that diversity” (p. 176).

The final chapter (12) provides a synthesis and discussion. The evidence shows that although resources at Morro Bay were abundant, they were also variable and not necessarily stable. Foraging in this area would have required knowledge of diverse food sources and the ability to act flexibly. The earliest occupation in the estuary can be dated to 8100 cal BP—probably representing the Millingstone Culture known elsewhere in the region. A hiatus in

occupation from 7000–5900 cal BP is insufficiently explained by the current evidence and may be due to any one of a range of factors, including limited sampling. In the Early Period (5700–2550 cal BP), however, the number of sites in the bay increased alongside evidence for different tool types. An increase in projectile points and bifaces coinciding with a decrease in milling stones perhaps reveals a shift from a reliance on plant foods to hunting. The Middle Period (2550–950 cal BP) is poorly represented, but there is abundant evidence for the Middle/Late Transition period (950–700 cal BP), with a heavy concentration on marine-focused subsistence. The Late Period (700–180 cal BP) is represented by complex changes, including an increase in plant foods and shellfish, along with an increase in the numbers of shell and stone beads. Overall the sites contribute to the wider portrait of a “prehistoric response to exceptional spatial and diachronic variability” (p. 251). The authors suggest that “Morro Bay can well be considered a microcosm of California in general, inasmuch as California’s indigenous past was defined by response to variability in the same way that the Northwest Coast was defined by resources abundance” (p. 240). The data presented in this volume are comprehensive and add much to the broader archaeological record of the California coast. Presenting the evidence from the mainland, the volume perfectly complements *An archaeology of abundance*, not only in revealing the variability of the coastal resources on the mainland but also by bridging a gap in the archaeological record of this coastal region.

JOHN F. CHERRY & KRISTA RYZEWSKI (ed.). 2020. *An archaeological history of Montserrat in the West Indies*. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-789-25390-0 paperback \$40.



One of the smaller Caribbean Islands, with an area of just over 100km², Montserrat sits on the ‘Ring of Fire’—the circum-Pacific rim prone to seismic and volcanic activity. The mapping and recording of the archaeology of Montserrat is particularly important in light of the ongoing volcanic activity which, having begun in the mid-1990s, has since rendered half of the island uninhabitable and led to a decline in the resident population to around one-third of its previous number. The volcanic activity that created a fertile island attractive for human settlement now threatens to destroy the archaeology that documents Montserrat’s long history.

The volume opens with an introductory chapter outlining the unusual geological and environmental conditions of this small island and the dynamic landscapes that these processes have shaped. Chapter 2 offers a history of archaeology and heritage management on Montserrat, revealing that, even in the relatively recent field of Caribbean archaeology, the island has seen a paucity of excavation. This is, in part, due to the difficulty of the conditions, for much of the island, even areas once occupied, is covered by tropical forest. This dense and difficult terrain complicates archaeological investigation. Of the excavations that have taken place, many are rapid rescue interventions to record sites threatened by volcanic activity.

In recent years, lidar survey undertaken by the *Survey and Landscape Archaeology on Montserrat* (SLAM) project has helped to overcome these mapping challenges; indeed, Montserrat is the first Caribbean island to be surveyed in this way. Having set the scene, the authors turn their attention to a chronological presentation of the archaeology of the island, from the first peoples on Montserrat *c.* 2800 BC through the Ceramic Age (which extends over the entire period from *c.* 500 BC until the beginning of the colonial period (seventeenth century AD)), the sugar era and slavery (AD 1712–1834), and life after emancipation.

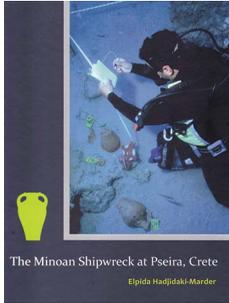
In contrast with the other islands of the Lesser Antilles, the earliest human occupation on Montserrat is located inland, away from the coast in the Centre Hills. The Upper Blakes site, for example, consists of a collection of over 700 chert lithics, probably imported from Long Island, Antigua; the lithics were scattered across several fields but were concentrated in one field (field 2) that appears to have been a knapping site. Charred organic material from Upper Blakes has returned a calibrated radiocarbon date of 2880–2625 BC; this places the site not only as the earliest on Montserrat, but also one of the earliest sites in the Lesser Antilles. Cherry & Ryzewski consider the implications of this discovery for the colonisation of Montserrat, pushing back, as it does, the earliest date for human visitors to the island by two millennia. Given the limited evidence, however, they conclude that it does not necessarily alter the previous estimate of larger-scale colonisation in the early first millennium BC.

The first permanent settlers and horticulturalists to occupy Montserrat are reported in Chapter 4. Located close to the shore on the western side of the island, the Trants site is a 6ha settlement that represents around 1000 years of occupation, spanning the Early Ceramic Age (*c.* 500 BC–AD 500). Trants, however, was not an isolated settlement; it is one of four Early Ceramic sites scattered around Montserrat, the others being Radio Antilles in the far south, Belham Valley on the west coast and the Glendon Hospital site in the north. The inhabitants of the Trants site were also connected to a network that offered access to more exotic ceramic styles (such as Huecoid style—named after the type-site in Puerto Rico), while carnelian beads manufactured at Trants have been discovered on more distant islands, such as Grenada.

The final chapter takes a long view of the disasters—natural and otherwise—that have beset Montserratians and situates these events within a long cycle of disaster management that involves preparing, coping and rebuilding. The chapter considers earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic destruction, which are a result of the natural geography and geology of the island, as well as economic and humanitarian crises caused by human conflict. What is clear from the volume is that contemporary Montserratians are part of a long history of resilient human settlement on this small island, which, despite its modest size, was firmly linked into global economic networks from its earliest occupation.

Prehistoric sailors

ELPIDA HADJIDAKI-MARDER. 2021. *The Minoan shipwreck at Pseira, Crete* (INSTAP Prehistory Monographs 65) Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-931534-29-1 hardback £55.



Linking island dwellers and those living on the mainland is the sea—and the ability to travel and trade across it. The next volume under review considers the nature of maritime trade and movement, focusing on the seafaring people of ancient Crete—the Minoans—through the lens of shipwreck evidence. Elpidi Hadjidaki-Marder's engaging volume charts the discovery and excavation of the Minoan shipwreck at Pseira, a small islet in Mirabello Bay on the north coast of eastern Crete. The introductory chapter sets the scene by outlining the broader contextual evidence for the Cretan maritime tradition that includes traded goods, representations of ships on seals,

harbour installations and the compelling evidence of ships themselves, preserved as wrecks.

The focus of this volume is a Minoan ship that sank off the islet of Pseira in the Middle Minoan or Protopalatial period (c. 1900–1700 BC). The wreck is the first, and remains the largest and oldest, Minoan seagoing vessel to have been discovered. The wreck dates to MM IIB and is estimated to have sunk around 1725/1700 BC. This is an important period in Minoan history that is often overlooked in favour of the more abundant archaeological remains of the Late Minoan era. The wreck was identified by divers in 2003 during a deep-water geophysical survey.

Excavation of the wreck site, described in Chapter 3, took place over several seasons from 2004–2009. The painstaking process of lifting over 140 artefacts is described and the finds locations for each season illustrated. This section also details the challenges of deep-sea survey and the advantages of on-site human interpretation over remote technologies. During the search for the most productive area to excavate the team also discovered the first clear evidence for artificial harbour works on Pseira; dating to the Middle Minoan period, this is claimed here as one of the earliest harbour installations in the world.

Specialist reports by contributors to the volume form the detailed Chapters 4–7. Philip Betancourt reports on the pottery, which made up the majority of the finds, and Eleni Nodarou provides petrographic analysis of the vessels. Joanne Cutler, Thomas Brogan and Todd Whitelaw discuss the ceramic and lead weights from the wreck and Heidi Dierckx offers an account of the ground-stone implements. The pottery assemblage is notable as the largest corpus of complete or near-complete clay vessels from a single Middle Minoan IIB deposit and one of the few examples of complete, large amphorae, which survive poorly in other contexts. The cargo is indicative of the nature of routine trade at this time. The absence of known Pseiran exports, such as stone vases, together with petrographic results confirming that ceramic vessels are broadly local in character (manufactured at the nearby coastal centres of Gournia, Priniatikos Pyrgos and Mochlos), suggests that the ship was most likely involved in regional trade along the north coast of eastern Crete.

Pseira Island has very little arable land and lacks raw material resources. Trade with the northern coastal towns of Crete would therefore have been essential to the Pseirans. Hadjidaki-Marder's volume paints a vivid picture of everyday trading and maritime movement in this Middle Minoan coastal region. Supported by beautiful colour plates of the wreck site and its excavation, the book demonstrates the wealth of information that can be extracted from a single shipwreck and lends still more weight to the argument for islands as connected and resilient places.

Dawson (2019: 451) argues that because of "their 'optimal marginality,' islands become productive and innovative spaces". This is certainly borne out by Pseira, which, despite its poor natural resources, exported stone vessels and shell objects, and maintained trade links with the broader Mediterranean region. Similarly, the resources of the California islands more than match those of the coastal mainland. The authors of the volumes reviewed here are correct to challenge the perception of islands as marginal; through their 'island-centred' approaches (cf. Armit's 1996: 5–6 "island centred geography"), these volumes challenge many preconceptions about island life and society.

References

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- BOOMERT, A. & A.J. BRIGHT. 2007. Island archaeology: in search of a new horizon. *Island Studies Journal* 2: 3–26.
- DAWSON, H. 2019. As good as it gets? "Optimal" marginality in the *longue durée* of the Mediterranean islands. *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 7: 451–65.
<https://doi.org/10.5325/jeasmedarcherstu.7.4.0451>

Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 September 2021 and 31 October 2021. Those featuring in the New Book Chronicle, however, have not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

Africa and Egypt

- GARRY J. SHAW. *Egyptian mythology: a traveller's guide from Aswan to Alexandria*. 2021. London: Thames & Hudson; 978-0-500-25228-4 hardback \$29.99.

Americas

- DAVID H. DYE. *Mississippian culture heroes, ritual regalia, and sacred bundles*. 2021. Lanham: Lexington Books; 978-1-7936-5059-7 hardback \$125.
- RAVEN GARVEY. *Patagonian prehistory: human ecology and cultural evolution in the land of giants*. 2021. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; 978-1-64769-026-7 hardback \$65.

Anatolia, Levant and the Middle East

MURRAY EILAND. *The archaeology of Nineveh: unveiling the nomadic Parthian Empire*. 2021. London: Gothick; 978-1-83803-163-3 paperback £29.99.

ACHIM LICHTENBERGER & RUBINA RAJA (ed.). *Glass, lamps, and Jerash bowls: final publications from the Danish-German Jerash Northwest Quarter Project III*. 2021. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-58937-4 paperback €85.

ROBERT WOOD & BENJAMIN ANDERSON (ed.). *The ruins of Palmyra and the ruins of Baalbek* (two volumes). 2021. London: Bloomsbury; 978-0-7556-1726-5 hardback £278.

Asia

YAN SUN. *Many worlds under one heaven: material culture, identity, and power in the northern frontiers of the Western Zhou, 1045–771 BCE*. 2021. New York: Columbia University Press; 978-0-231-55262-2 eBook £50.

Britain and Ireland

JONATHAN CLARK, JUSTIN GARNER-LAHIRES, CECILY SPALL & NICOLA TOOP. *Lincoln Castle revealed: the story of a Norman powerhouse and its Anglo-Saxon precursor*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-735-9 hardback £25.

JANE KENNEY. *A Welsh landscape through time: excavations at Parc Cybi, Holy Island, Anglesey*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-689-5 hardback £45.

Byzantine, early medieval and medieval

LESZEK GARDELA. *Women and weapons in the Viking world*. 2021. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78925-665-9 hardback £30.

The Classical world

LYVIA MORGAN. *Keos XI: wall paintings and social context: the north-east bastion at Ayia Irini*. 2021. Oxford: INSTAP; 978-1-931534-97-0 hardback £55.

European pre- and protohistory

JOËLLE ROLLAND. *Le verre de l'europe Celtique: approches archéométriques, technologiques et sociales d'un artisanat du prestige au second âge du Fer*. 2021. Leiden: Sidestone; 9789088909955 paperback £85.

The Roman world

ANTHONY A. BARRETT. *Rom brennt! Nero und das Ende einer Epoche*. 2021. Darmstadt: Theiss; 978-3-8062-4340-6 hardback €29.

CHRISTOPHER COURAULT & CARLOS MÁRQUEZ (ed.). *Quantitative studies and production cost of Roman public construction* (Ancian 4). 2020. Córdoba: Córdoba University Press; 978-84-9927-545-1 paperback €25.

Heritage, conservation and museums

Federal Monuments Office. *Fundberichte Band 58*. 2021. Horn: Berger; 978-3-85028-970-2 hardback €79.

General

MARY BEARD. *Twelve Caesars: images of power from the ancient world to the modern*. 2021. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; 978-0-691-22236-3 hardback £30.

ACHIM LICHTENBERGER & RUBINA RAJA (ed.). *The archaeology of seasonality*. 2021. Turnhout: Brepols; 978-2-503-59395-1 paperback €120.

ANDRZEJ ROZWADOWSKI & JAMIE HAMPSON (ed.). *Visual culture, heritage and identity: using rock art to reconnect past and present*. 2021. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78969-847-3 eBook £16.

Paperback, second and subsequent editions

IAN BROWN. *Beacons in the landscape: the hillforts of England, Wales and the Isle of Man (second edition)*. 2021. Oxford: Windgather; 978-1-911188-75-9 hardback £39.95.