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INTRODUCTION

Social Archaeological Approaches in Port and Harbour Studies

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Abstract This introductory article to the special issue of the *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* offers a comparative perspective on the theme of archaeological theory and social archaeological approaches to ports and harbours. As a specialist in Roman archaeology I was keen to explore the way in which specialists in other areas of archaeology approached the archaeology of ports and harbours and whether different approaches and perspectives may be able to add nuances to the way in which material is interpreted. The volume brings together a collection of exciting new studies which explore social themes in port and harbour studies with the intention to encourage debate and the use of new interpretative perspectives. This article examines a number of interpretative themes including those relating to architectural analyse, human behaviour, action and experience and artefact analysis. These themes help us to move towards a more theoretically informed ports and harbour archaeology which focuses on meaning as well as description. The emphasis on theory within archaeology allows us to be more ambitious in our interpretative frameworks including in Roman archaeology which has not tended to embrace the theoretical aspects of the archaeological discipline with as much enthusiasm as some other areas of archaeology.

Keywords Comparative archaeology · Social analysis · Archaeological theory · Water · Roman studies

Introduction

The purpose of this special issue of the *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* is to explore the role of archaeological theory and interpretation in port and harbour studies with a special

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focus on social themes. Archaeologists have a tendency to work within period or thematic specialisms which allows them to develop expert knowledge and experience of these areas. This can mean, however, that there is not always as much methodological and theoretical debate between specialisms as there could be which can help enrich perspectives and debates. It was the intention of this volume to bring contributors of various period specialisms and perspectives together in order to debate the potential of theory and social approaches within port and harbour archaeology. There is exciting new work taking place in this area, within wider cross-specialism developments in theory and social archaeology, and this volume explores some of this work and its potential. Through the emphasis on the social importance of ports and harbours, the volume will be useful for those interested not only in themes connected with maritime archaeology but the archaeological discipline as a whole.

Social approaches to port and harbour archaeology are important because ports and harbours have played roles in many major historical events but they were also integral parts of everyday life. They are integral to many of the key themes that have been important throughout history including travel and exploration, human interaction, trade and exchange, imperialism, exploitation and slavery, war and peace, environmental manipulation and technological development. These global themes, however, have not always had much impact on the range of questions asked from the archaeological remains of ports and harbours or the theoretical perspectives of interpretation (cf. Parker 1999, 2001); instead, though this is now changing, it could be argued that technological and economic themes have tended to dominate methodologies and interpretations. Archaeology, as a discipline, however, is well positioned to explore a range of interpretative perspectives and nuances through the study of the structural remains themselves, their use and how they were experienced and the material culture from the sites. There are also cultural and religious meanings that need to be contextualised including the values attached to water, its power, the control and manipulation of water and also the dangers and unknowns of travelling on water (e.g. Chapman Davies 2008; Teaiwa 2008; Mithen 2012; Rogers 2013). A social archaeology of ports and harbours allows us to development more critical perspectives of the archaeological material and place it within its wider social and historical context.

We have dictionary definitions of ports and harbours today which can help inform our understanding of the installations and help us to categorise the various structural elements that we find at these sites. At the same time, however, it is important to recognise that the distinction between a port and harbour is debateable and different traditions may have had varying ways of conceptualising and categorising structures (cf. McNiven 2003). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) describes a harbour as a place where vessels can be stored or seek shelter. They can be artificial, constructed with breakwaters, sea walls or jetties, or they can be natural, surrounded by land. Whilst the dictionary describes a port as an artificial construction on the sea, lake or river shore where vessels are loaded and unloaded it is uncertain whether there should be an either/or definition. This means that it is even more important to assess local contextual meanings. There are also other features associated with these installations including hards, causeways, wharfs and jetties and there are landing places which were the earliest features associated with water travel (McGrail 1997: 49–63). Waterfronts can be regarded as the point of interaction between land and water whether the water is the sea, river, lake or in another form. It is often a place of uncertainty where the properties of land and water intermingle. Waterfronts can be altered through human action and construction or they can be unaltered but equally encultured through human use, action and experience (cf. Insoll 2007). These definitions help us to categorise the archaeological remains and their uses but it is important that we not assume

that they were interpreted in the same way in the past and had the same meanings. Through contextual studies it is possible to emphasise localised meanings and emphasise the importance of human experience, ideology and action in creating meanings associated with these structures.

As editor of this volume, my specialism is the archaeology of the Roman world, especially settlement and landscape studies, and it is through my research experience that the need for a volume such as this became apparent. In examining the potential of social archaeological approaches to the relationship between Roman settlement and water (Rogers 2013), it became clear that there could be more engagement within Roman archaeology of the theories and methodologies of other archaeological specialisms including maritime archaeology. At the same time, however, it is also important that the study of meanings and experiences draw on the specific regional, temporal and cultural contexts of the case studies. This volume, then, is the result of my desire to experiment in a comparative approach of theories and methodologies by bringing together specialists from different periods that can also focus on the detail, and their expertise, of the social contexts of their specific areas of study. Globally, port and harbour archaeology is an important research area but there has been little opportunity for dialogue between scholars of different specialist areas or periods. This introductory chapter will discuss some of the issues relating to how we might develop a more theoretically aware and social archaeological agenda for the study of ports and harbours providing examples, especially drawing on my experience in Roman studies, from a range of research projects and my own research.

Port and Harbour Research in Archaeology

More recent studies in maritime archaeology usefully demonstrate that there is now a shift in focus away from purely descriptive approaches to material remains, such as shipwrecks and cargoes, and instead a greater emphasis on considering the social implications of the evidence (e.g. Gould 2000; Dellino-Musgrave 2006; McCarthy 2011; Robinson and Wilson 2011). It was perhaps Muckelroy's (1978) book *Maritime Archaeology* that was one of the first major proponents of the social approach to maritime remains and it is highly influential in the field. Muckelroy (1978: 4) states that the "primary object of study is man and not the ships, cargoes, fittings, or instruments with which the researcher is immediately confronted". The examination of port and harbour structures in the book, however, is largely descriptive providing a fairly standard review of the development of the technology of installations in the ancient Mediterranean (ibid.: 147). Babits and Van Tilburg (1998) *Maritime Archaeology: A Reader of Substantive and Theoretical Contributions* compiles a selection of writings and research on maritime archaeology from across the world, demonstrating the development of the discipline and the move towards more social themes and contextual study especially in the analysis of shipwreck archaeology. The fact that there is very little within the book on port and harbour archaeology, however, demonstrates that this area of study has not always been subject to the same theoretical and methodological developments as other areas of maritime archaeology.

One of the most recent general works on maritime archaeology is the *Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology* (Catsambis et al. 2011) which in over forty chapters again contains a huge wealth of information. It presents important new research and current thinking on many subjects including ship and shipwreck archaeology, the process of studying maritime archaeology, ethics, politics and museum archaeology, but the section entitled 'Maritime Culture and Life Ashore' is the shortest in the book with seven chapters.

Within this section there is only one chapter that really deals with port and harbour archaeology in any detail and this focuses on the ancient Mediterranean (Oleson and Hohlfelder 2011), which, though useful, predominantly consists of a conventional account of technological developments and structures not unlike the earlier account by Blackman (1982). Within the volume there is very little consideration of port and harbour archaeology beyond the Western viewpoint, although Ransley's (2011) *Maritime Communities and Traditions* provides some balance to this. Rainbird's (2007) study *The Archaeology of Islands* and Van de Noort's (2011) *North Sea Archaeologies* are useful examples of recent works that demonstrate the huge potential in drawing on perspectives from a wider range of cultures. Especially useful is Rainbird's non-Western focus in much of his book, with case studies from areas including Micronesia and Polynesia, although there is disappointingly little consideration of ports and harbours in the work. Van de Noort's book examines seafaring and boat technology in some detail but again does not deal much with the archaeology of ports and harbours perhaps due to the general assumption that we know what port and harbours are and what they were in the past.

One important development has been the concept of the maritime cultural landscape which has sought a holistic approach to understanding coastal archaeology, looking beyond the examination of installations in isolation, and instead how the cultural landscapes relate to human identities and behaviours as, for example, can be seen in Ford's (2011) *The Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes*. Parker (2001) also emphasises the need to recognise that port wharves and quays only formed one part of the structural and natural features that were used in maritime activities which could also include beaches, coves, sheds, river-bank moorings, settlements, roads and paths. Perhaps the most influential work is that of Christer Westerdahl, which emphasises the importance of considering the implications of the spatial context of maritime locations on human actions and experiences (e.g. 1992, 1994, 1997, 2011). Much of his work, however, takes a socio-economic stance and Western perspective. McNiven (2003) reminds us that there has been a tendency to study ships, cargoes, harbours, lighthouses and other features connected with the sea in terms of 'techno-scapes' instead of the social significance and meanings of each construction, context, function and the way in which they were experienced within that social context. He emphasises that non-Western perspectives, such as those of Australian aboriginals, would have been very different if drawn on their own concepts of the sea and sailing.

Architectural Analysis of Port and Harbour Installations

One important theme relating to the social archaeology of ports and harbours concerns the analysis of the installations themselves (cf. Rogers 2011). Our knowledge and understanding of 'structural remains', however, relates not only to the archaeological methods employed but also the perspectives of interpretation. The emphasis, for example, tends to be placed on what we interpret as human made structures rather than 'natural' features which could be equally significant cultural features in the landscape (cf. Ingold 2000; Insoll 2007). 'Natural' harbours, for instance, can be considered to have had social meaning and need not have been regarded as distinct from the built environment in the same way as we tend to take for granted today. In any structural analysis of ports and harbours, then, it is necessary to consider the way in which the remains have been studied and documented and what may have been neglected as much as what has been recorded.

There have been a number of useful accounts detailing the global development of ancient port and harbour technology and the processes involved in construction but

generally in these accounts there has been an emphasis on describing the practical and economic circumstances around the technological developments seen in port construction. Two recent summaries of current knowledge of the development of ancient port and harbour technology both emphasise economic perspectives (Blackman 2008; Oleson and Hohlfelder 2011): "the symbiotic feedback between the economy and technology is especially marked in the history of harbour construction" (Oleson and Hohlfelder 2011: 810). For these authors, "the evolution of harbour design was driven by the changing characteristics of the ships that used the facilities, the economic needs of the individuals and groups that constructed them, and changes in available tools and techniques" (ibid.). For Blackman, too, the development and spread of port and harbour technology was related to the increase in commerce and the size of boats which meant that it was necessary to berth them by the side of quays rather than land them on beaches or draw them up to riverfronts or coastlines. This process of change and development can be seen in early waterfront constructions in the Indus Valley, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt as the movement of goods and trade became more important (Blackman 1982: 92). Whilst important, this emphasis on economic perspectives does not take into account significant social implications relating to changes in attitudes to how the landscape can be altered and how structures can be imbued with the identity, motives and experiences of those that initiated, and were involved in, the construction work; these experiences will have differed through the range of people associated with such work. It is also important to recognise that the use of natural harbours and landing places (e.g. Blue 1997) will have remained important alongside artificial constructions and these features can also be analysed archaeologically. Human action and use will have impacted these waterfronts, giving them a history and social meaning much like the artificial constructions.

As structural forms, whether artificial or not, it is possible to undertake social analyses of ports and harbours, considering the identities, motives and experiences of those that initiated the work, were involved in the construction activities or involved in the use and development of the 'natural' ports. It is possible to approach port and harbour constructions beyond purely technological considerations and examine the social implications of the work. Structuration theory (Giddens 1984), for example, can be used to analyse built spaces and individual buildings in order to access the different identities involved in the construction activities. Buildings can be analysed according to both the social structures governing actions but also the ability of individuals to express their identities through the structure (cf. Gardner 2007; Revell 2009).

The harbour of Caesarea Maritima (Fig. 1), King Herod's port city in modern Israel, for example, has been the subject of considerable archaeological and historical study (e.g. Holum et al. 2008; Raban 2009; Vann 1992). The harbour was an artificial construction with foundations in the sea, initiated by Herod, ca. 25–13 BC. What made it possible was the technology of hydraulic concrete, developed around 200 BC in Italy (McCann 1987) that allowed free-standing structures to be built in the sea. The construction involved the importation of a huge amount of pozzolanic sand from Italy. Though it became an important stopping point in the movement of grain to Rome, its design and construction must also have been imbued with the identity of those involved ranging from Herod's expression of power and egoism, to the engineers and architects that came from Italy, to those actively involved in the complex procedure of the construction itself. As well as monumental breakwaters constructed from hydraulic concrete and quarried kurkar blocks it was also necessary to adapt to local environmental conditions and constructional traditions; some techniques and materials used here had been used in Iron Age and Hellenistic harbours (Oleson and Branton 1992: 54). The harbour construction, however, was much

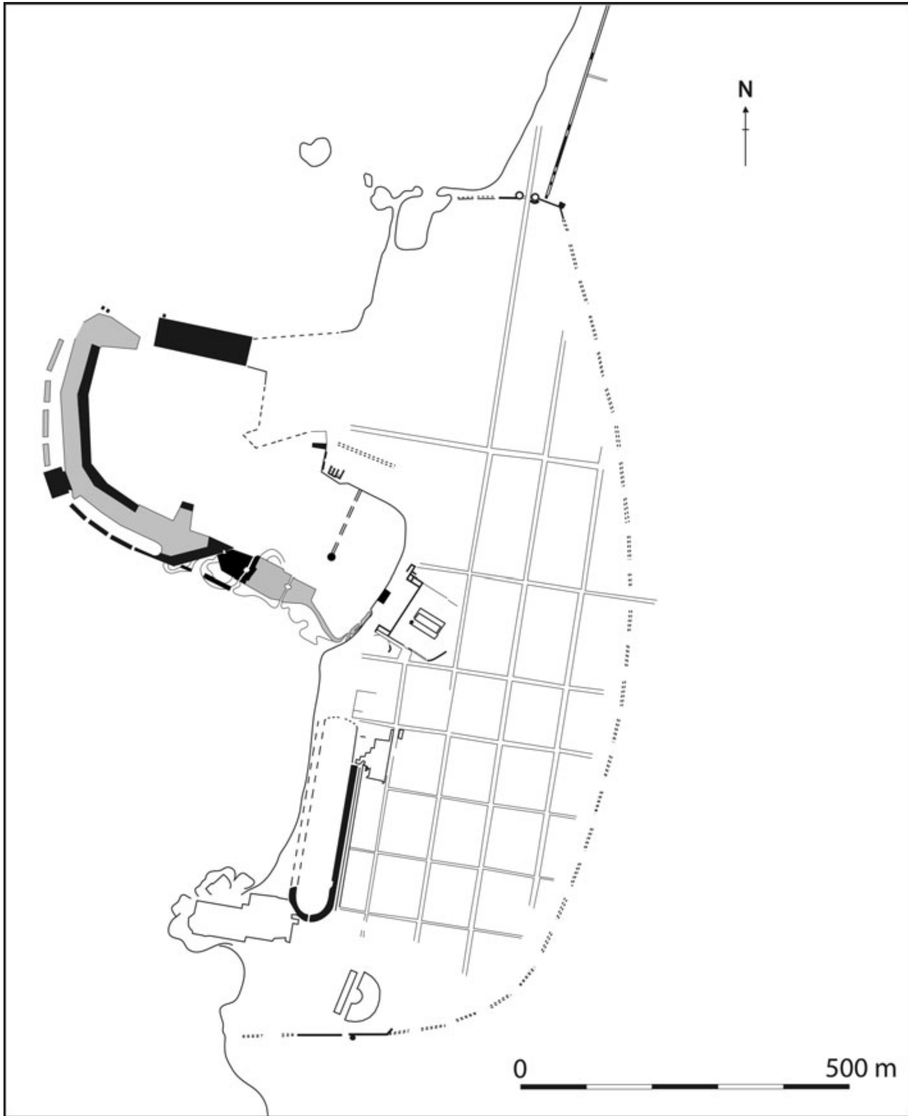

Fig. 1 Plan of the harbour structures at Sebastos (Caesarea Maritima), Israel (drawn by Debbie Miles-Williams; adapted from Raban 2009)

more than simply practical in detail. There were, for instance, concrete foundations of towers which are likely to have been clad in marble and displayed statuary and a monumental temple facing the waterfront (Tuck 2008). With these monumental and religious features, projecting into and dominating the sea, this structure combined statements of power, politics and religion. At the same time, the incorporation of traditional building techniques may have appeased any local unease about the dangers of altering the landscape and manipulating the water in such a monumental way. It drew on new technologies but

also traditional techniques which may well have made it more acceptable and less confrontational in its local landscape context.

Another useful case study in which to consider the social implications of construction methods and design choices is the much smaller scale waterfront installation excavated at the Roman period port of Myos Hormos on the Red Sea in Egypt. As well as a stone harbour wall, excavations uncovered a structure built around the first century AD from hundreds of amphorae and other pottery vessels which were laid down to consolidate the waterlogged ground and form a jetty extending the shore (Blue and Peacock 2006: 68–70). The space between the vessels was filled with silty material and the layer sealed by a surface of trampled earth (Blue 2011). Such waterfront structures of this date are not uncommon in parts of Spain, France and Italy (Bernal et al. 2005) but it is the only one known in this location and would seem to represent someone at Myos Hormos with knowledge of this type of construction method. Although not a stone or timber structure, it is monumental in its own right and would have involved considerable labour. The actions of those people involved will have formed part of the meanings and memories associated with this location. Indigenous local peoples may also have been involved in the construction and they may have had a very different viewpoint regarding the construction as the incomers.

In later periods there are more textual sources relating to construction activities making it easier to consider the relationship between identity and the design and construction of waterfronts. For the port of medieval London, for example, there is not only a considerable amount of detail from excavations but also documentary evidence. Both sources of evidence indicate that much of the expansion of the waterfront related to individuals wishing to enlarge and improve their own properties rather than the result of the civic authority. Responsibility for the maintenance of the wharves and flood defences, moreover, rested with the owners or occupiers of each individual waterfront property. There also does not appear to have been any specialist waterfront construction workers at this time and instead the building of waterfronts was treated in much the same way as domestic house construction (Harvey 1954: 130; Milne 1992, 2003). This resulted in a variety of different structural designs appearing, which can be seen in the archaeological remains, and it means that to some extent the designs can be connected to the identities of property owners, architects and builders. In this way, our understanding of these structures becomes much more meaningful and contextualised than can be gained from descriptive approaches to the structural evidence and a focus on technological aspects.

Ports, Taskscapes and Behaviour

An aspect of the social archaeology of ports and harbours can also be approached through the study of the various activities that took place in these waterfront contexts. Waterfront locations encouraged specific kinds of human behaviour and activities that could differ from other contexts. In some cases the development of new forms of port and harbour installations could lead to changes in the way in which waterfront activities were organised. A social approach to port and harbour archaeology can put more emphasis on understanding the contextual meanings of these structures through the people that lived and worked in these localities. Textual sources, for example, present a vivid image of the huge range of different peoples, jobs and guilds involved in the working of the harbours of ancient Rome (Mattingly and Aldrete 2001). Though the harbours at Rome may have been unusual in their size and dynamism at this time, each port can also be considered in these

terms of its composition of people. Waterfront locations also demanded specific activities that would not have been undertaken in other contexts due to their relationship with water and vessels and these activities will have had an impact on the way in which people shaped their identities (cf. Rainbird 2007; Van de Noort 2011). Waterfronts created contexts for specific types of tasks and activities forming 'taskscapes' (cf. Ingold 1993), which in turn contributed to the construction of human identity.

The organisation of activities connected with port and harbours also formed part of the broader social conditions and changes of the period. In the late medieval/post-medieval period in Britain, for example, one development in the infrastructure and organisation of activities associated with the functioning of ports and ships came with the appearance of victualing yards which supplied ships, such as that recently excavated in Tower Hill, London (Grainger and Phillpotts 2010). Prior to this time in the Royal Navy docked ships were supplied on a much more *ad hoc* basis where officials were appointed to supply the ships of particular fleets for individual campaigns. Excavations at Tower Hill uncovered the fairly well-preserved remains of a complex that included a bakery, a cooperage, a slaughter house, various storehouses and dwellings for the officers of the yard. The site for development was both close to the Thames and to the City with its existing markets and supply routes (ibid.: 87). This victualing yard represented changes in the organisation of activities and human behaviours as foods were prepared and stored centrally for the first time. Their development also represented the beginning of larger scale changes in the relationship between ports and settlements as docklands were built away from the main areas of settlement (Parker 1999: 336).

In many parts of the world it is colonial activity that has historically led to the creation of new port and harbour installations, often adapting existing natural harbours and landing places in areas that did not have infrastructures on such a large scale before. These new constructions will also have altered the organisation of waterfront activities and it should be a goal to consider, where possible, these constructions in terms of post-colonial perspectives such as examining their impact on local peoples and their behaviours (e.g. Connah 1993; Wilbanks and Hall 1996; Couper-Smartt 2003; Horning 2007).

People and Ports

People and their actions and experiences play a major role in the construction of place and the meanings associated with those places (Casey 1993, 1996; Cresswell 2004). The specific nature of ports as contexts of activity on the waterfront and, by their nature and function, their connection with places across water and overseas means that they could often attract a large range of different peoples with varying perspectives. One aspect of ports that does not generally receive as much study as it could is domestic architecture—where these people would have lived or stayed. The analysis of domestic structures has much potential for revealing aspects of the lifeways and cultural interactions of different peoples in these port contexts. There has been much debate in archaeology about how to study domestic architecture in order to elucidate aspects of the identities of the occupants including the composition of households, the various uses of different spaces and the expression of cultural identities in house structure and internal design (e.g. Allison 1999; Hingley 1989; Trümper 1998). Nevett's (1999, 2010) work on housing in the Greek and Roman world argues that individuals were capable of expressing their identities through the choices taken in architectural styles but especially in their internal furnishings, fittings and decorations. Since people predominantly behave according to their cultural traditions,

it may be possible to identify a range of peoples of different social backgrounds and geographical origins through the structural remains as they came together as a result of the function and role of ports. Tang (2005), for example, studies the excavated housing of three Mediterranean trading centres, Delos, Carthage and Ampurias, in the Hellenistic/Republic and early Imperial periods in order to try to identify different cultural influences on house design and decoration. This can then be related to the social experiences of these peoples as they interacted in these contexts.

Delos became one of the largest commercial ports in the Mediterranean and traders came from a large range of places including as far away as modern Syria and Lebanon (Rauh 2003). Analysis of the domestic structures identified a number of different influences on the architecture with some houses apparently being organised in the Greek tradition whilst others taking a more Roman form of organisation (Tang 2005; Nevett 2010: 87). It appears that many of the houses were able to reflect the wealth that was available through the commercial activities and the cultural influences that were strongest on the house owners. There were also a number of houses, however, that did not represent either form of organisation and these cases may reflect the identities of people from other parts of the Empire or beyond who had different ideas about domestic construction and organisation. It is important, however, to consider the point raised by Tang (2005: 177) that for many of the people working at Delos it may not have been regarded as a permanent residence and so they may not have had their own accommodation on the island.

Through the excavations at the port of Berenike on the Red Sea in Egypt, it has been possible to identify changes in the use of building materials within the settlement over time which may also represent changes in the composition of the population (Sidebotham 2011: 56). In the early-middle Ptolemaic period the buildings were made of gypsum/anhydrite stone with the bricks made of sand. In the late Ptolemaic and early Roman periods the structures were made of large limestone boulders and cut stone whilst in the later Roman period the majority of structures were built of fossilised coral heads. This may simply reflect changes in the accessibility of materials; it may also be possible to relate the constructions to the identities of the inhabitants or at least changes in what influenced their behaviour. At Myos Hormos, further north on the Egyptian Red Sea coast, the majority of structures were mud brick but there were differences in the quality of the constructions which may indicate different builders and the identities of individuals (Peacock and Blue 2006: 176).

The extent to which we can separate domestic from business contexts—what defines a domestic and work context—in many port settings is also problematic. Nevett (1999: 166), for example, makes the important point that the whole settlement of Delos was principally a trading centre and as such domestic structures were also places of work since business transactions and other activities would often have been conducted at home. Parker's (1999, 2001) study of medieval ports refers to the idea of the 'portuary landscape' where elite merchants actively sought to form a very visible and significant element of port settlements with their houses and through funding events and displays. They not only advertised their business but emphasised their wealth and power.

As well as the wealthy elite, there will have been a large range of other types of people in ports with different statuses but there has been far less investigation into the way in which they may have experienced ports or were organised within these contexts. With a range of people living and working, ports and harbours can be regarded in terms of contested landscapes. In some periods of the past they included the lives of slaves who will have had a different interpretations and experiences of ports than other people. In the Roman world, the ports of Delos and Ephesus have long been studied as major foci in the

slave trade. It might be possible to use the archaeological evidence to identify the way in which slaves might have experienced these ports as they were brought to them and then moved on. In order to do this it would be necessary to identify the process by which the slaves arrived, disembarked and were moved to accommodation areas. A reference by Strabo (14.5.2) describes the port settlement at Delos as receiving a huge amount of slaves on a daily basis and even pirates used the port to offload slaves. It is now generally accepted that Strabo (1917–1932) was exaggerating the number of slaves that passed through the island (cf. Scheidel 2011), but it does indicate the importance of such activities. Strabo provides no suggestion as to how the slaves may have experienced this process through their physical contact with the port infrastructure and settlement but it may be possible to identify aspects of this encounter archaeologically. The slave trade on Delos has conventionally been associated with one building in particular, known as the "Agora of the Italians", which is in close proximity to the port installations and was a large porticoed complex around 6,000 m^2 and comprised a two-storeyed colonnaded court with statue niches, a bath, two latrines and what appears to have been a row of shops. The interpretation of this building has been the subject of much debate with many disagreeing that it should be seen as a slave market building (cf. Cocco 1979; Coarelli 1982; Le Roy 1993; Fentress 2005; Trümper 2009; George 2011: 395).

What is important, however, is that it is structural and material remains such as this that could be analysed from a range of theoretical perspectives in order to achieve more nuanced readings relating to their significance and meaning in terms of human experiences. The slave experience will have formed an important part of these sites and it is necessary that attempts are made to access aspects of the realities of their physical presence (cf. Morris 2011; Thompson 2003; Webster 2005). Experiential approaches to ports and harbours can also be approached through archaeological survey work which allows for a far greater understanding of wider settlements and landscape contexts. Portus near Rome, for example, has recently been the subject of intensive geophysical and surface survey which has transformed our understanding of the Claudian and Trajanic period harbour complexes and also the buildings associated with them (Keay et al. 2005, 2008). Incorporated into such work could be the development of methodological and theoretical approaches to the way in which these settlements were experienced and negotiated and how this differed from earlier uses and experiences of these landscapes. The Roman port town of Leptiminus in Tunisia, as another example, provided an ideal setting to undertake a large-scale investigation of the context of coastal installations and analyse the nature of the port town (Stone et al. 2011). It is also important that ports or port networks are not isolated as distinct entities but are considered to form an integral part of the wider cultural landscape that interact with it and inform their character (cf. Abulafia 2011; Horden and Purcell 2000; Matvejević 1999).

In a completely different period and area of the world, archaeology in Australia and New Zealand has been attempting to examine more aspects of the experiences of Aboriginal and Maori people as they interacted with European emigrants in waterfront contexts. Veth (2006) shows how Aboriginal and Maori people were involved with Europeans in the early whaling industry unlike many industries that developed later. Documents show that some even held supervisory positions and they could receive equal pay and conditions (ibid.). Studies of archaeological material from these bases have also demonstrated that women and children were present and so they were not purely male (Lawrence and Staniforth 1998). In examining the cultural significance of these activities, and the way in which these locations were experienced, then, it is important to recognise that they will have varied amongst the different types of people situated here.

Archaeological Material from Port Sites

The study of artefact assemblages from excavation sites can form an important way of accessing aspects of the lives and identities of the people living and working in those contexts. Deetz's *In Small Things Forgotten* (1977), for example, demonstrates how it is possible to elucidate aspects of the lives of ordinary people through their expressions of identity in the style and decoration of personal objects. This is especially valuable in the study of people that tend to be neglected in historical accounts such as slaves in plantation settlements. More emphasis continues to be required in the need to contextualise each object within its spatial, temporal and social context so that finds assemblages can contribute towards the study of identity and experience. There has been much debate relating to the extent to which material culture can be used to study identity expression in archaeology (e.g. Allason-Jones 2001; Allison et al. 2005; Deetz 1977; Eckardt 2008; Swift 2009). In contexts such as port settlements, such an investigation into identity might be especially important because it can provide information on the range of people entering ports and living in these places, resulting in the unique nature and biography of each settlement.

Analysis of the pottery assemblage at the port settlement of Berenike, for example, where the range of origins of its inhabitants and visitors remains uncertain, demonstrates the presence of Indian decorative 'rouletted' ware and coarser wares which may point to the presence of people from India in this settlement for at least some parts of the year (Sidebotham 2011: 56). There was also Aksumite pottery which may either indicate trade with this sub-Saharan East African kingdom or indicate that some of these peoples lived within the settlement. Further north along the Red Sea coast at Myos Hormos, excavations of a row of fairly rudimentary mud brick structures also found Indian and Aksumite pottery and evidence of unidentified languages on *ostraca,* which may suggest people from these areas actually living here (Thomas and Masser 2006: 140). In the medieval port settlement that followed Myos Hormos, Quseir al-Qadim, it is suggested that the distribution of pottery may indicate that incomers worked and lived in separate areas (Tomber 2008: 75).

Botanical evidence should also form an important element of the finds analysis of sites since food stuffs form an important element of identity expression. Differences in diet can provide an important way in which people distinguish themselves and their traditions from each other, which may be especially important in port settlements where there will have been a concentration of people from different origins looking for ways to maintain and emphasise their own identities (cf. van der Veen 2008). A detailed study of plant remains from Myos Hormos/Quseir al-Qadim, resulting from food processed and consumed there and preserved due to the dry conditions of the site, for example, allowed a detailed study of the diet of the inhabitants and it was possible to demonstrate changing diets as a result of the trading networks connected with the port (van der Veen 2011). Attempts were also made to identify whether it was possible to establish different zones of occupation in relation to the wealth/status and ethnic identity of the various inhabitants but unfortunately the material mostly came from rubbish dump deposits rather than their original contexts so this was not possible.

Analysis of plant food consumption across a range of sites in Roman Britain has demonstrated that the port settlement of London had the widest range of new foods compared with other settlements in Britain at this time, some of which remained rare even in other major towns (van der Veen 2008). The interpretation of the results of this analysis was that the London's plant food assemblage was probably a result of its position as an important trading centre and the large immigrant population that most likely lived here

compared with other settlements. Van der Veen (2008: 105) argues that the metropolitan character of Roman London, its social mix of people and perhaps the temporary nature of many people's residence, may have encouraged the need for markers of identity and status through imported foodstuffs. Food can be considered in terms of embodied material culture integral to physical and social well-being, social interaction and identity expression that should form an important subject of investigation into the way in which ports constituted the biographies of people.

Papers in this Volume

The papers in this volume cover a range of different periods, themes and places. The paper by Ford concerns social issues connected with the construction of port and harbour installations looking for explanations relating to the use of boats in the structures. Also concerned with installations, Leidwanger's paper draws on his archaeological survey work of the coast of southwest Cyprus in the Roman period which documented small-scale ports and anchorages. With this evidence he examines the social context and use of these installations emphasising their importance which has often been neglected in studies of larger port-towns. Whilst his analysis of these structural remains ties into the wider socio-economic history of the Empire, he emphasises the importance of studying the small-scale and everyday realities of how these ports functioned.

Pullen's paper draws on the results of his fieldwork at the recently discovered Mycenaean port town of Korphos-Kalamianos in the Corinthia, Greece. Research has shown that this was short-lived site as a result of its likely dependency on another political or economic entity and that it was probably connected to one of the palatial centres of the Argolid such as Mycenae or Midea. This does not mean, however, that the port site cannot also be studied in its own right gaining a conceptual understanding of this settlement in the period of the palatial centres and the people, social conditions and experiences of people in the settlement. Fontana's paper also demonstrates the considerable potential there is in examining the relationship between port and settlement focusing on sixteenth century Portsmouth and a range of historical sources available relating to the port. Within the context of nationally significant historical events, there is also considerable potential in revealing much about the lives of the population within this port town. The relationship between settlement and port is also explored in Newman's paper on port development in northwest England between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The development of ports here at this time was also associated with the laying out of planned towns and this paper explores a range of issues connected with the establishment of such settlements. He also seeks to tie these developments into the wider social history and social changes of this period and importantly relates the port settlements to the individuals involved in their planning including their economic, social, spiritual and egotistical motives.

The final three papers focus more on using archaeological evidence to elucidate aspects of the lives of people that could be found in ports and port settlements. Breen examines a series of ports that developed along the coast of the western Red Sea between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries that expanded to accommodate the movement of peoples associated with the *Hajj* travelling to Mecca and Christian pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem. Breen uses archaeological evidence to examine the types of people of varying ethnicities and identities that lived in these ports as a result of their function. McCarthy's paper combines archaeology and social history to examine ports in colonial Western Australia focusing on the early nineteenth century Swan River Colony and the varying fortunes of its port of

Fremantle and its notorious reputation of becoming a focus of drunkard behaviour. Finally, Kelleher's paper combines archaeological and textual evidence to examine the lives of people in the ports of seventeenth century Ireland on the coast of Cork where piracy and prostitution formed a part of everyday life. Through the documentation of archaeological remains including rock cut steps, slipways, quays, lantern niches and rock platforms it is possible to reconstruct aspects of the movement and daily activities of people here. The paper vividly demonstrates the potential of examining waterfront infrastructures in terms of daily experiences and actions.

These papers demonstrate the huge potential there is in developing social studies of the archaeological remains and contextualising findings within the society that built and used them. This allows us to move beyond descriptive approaches that isolate the findings from their contextualised meaning and brings understanding to the way in which these structures were used and conceptualised at the time. These studies clearly emphasise the importance that ports and harbours played in the events of world history and so it is essential that the material is fully utilised to explore these themes and the full range of people that were affected by them. Many of the papers place an emphasis on the settlements associated with the installations rather than the installations themselves. By examining the port settlements it is possible to explore in much more detail the fortunes of the ports and the people, activities and experiences associated with them. The activities associated with ports and their context often created unique forms of communities and identities which are often underrepresented in the historical sources but can be explored through archaeological material.

It is hoped that this issue, providing a comprehensive comparative social archaeology of ports and harbours, will be of use to those not only interested in maritime archaeology but those researching all aspects of settlement archaeology and social conditions and histories of the past. The papers in this volume also demonstrate that archaeology can provide an additional voice to our understanding of the historical events with which ports were often associated. Ports and harbours have played such an important role in so many aspects of human history that it is essential that they should receive more study within their wider social, economic and political context. Such a comparative global approach also helps archaeologists to demonstrate the important implications of their work within wider social issues.

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