

Interpreting maritime objects and representations

Reconstructing prehistoric watercraft in Northeastern Europe by means of Stone Age rock art: one more attempt

Ekaterina Kashina, Ville Mantere and Evgeniy Kolpakov

Abstract: In this article, we discuss Stone Age rock art as a source for reconstructing early means of water transport used in the forest zone of northeastern Europe. Concentrations of Stone Age petroglyphs are known in northwestern Russia, Sweden and Norway, all of which contain boat images. However, identifying specific boat types used in reality on the basis of a morphological analysis of rock art figures remains problematic. Sporadic images provide clues for interpretation, and these suggest the use of frame boats. Stone and Bronze Age archaeological finds from the forest zone of northeastern Europe also point to the use of frame boats. These include a series of wooden paddles and a unique ceramic model of an alleged birch-bark canoe. The widespread tradition of representing boat figures in rock art with elk-headed stem posts also has parallels in the archaeological record of northeastern Europe. Presumably, sculpted elk-head boat stem posts were used for festive activities. Although finds of logboats are very scarce and remains of frame boats are completely absent, we conclude that highly diversified means of water transport were used in northeastern Europe from the Mesolithic period onwards.

Introduction

Prehistoric hunter-gatherer-fishers had relations with watercraft which depended on local environment, lifestyle and economic factors. During more than one hundred years of focussed archaeological investigations, scholars paid quite scarce attention to the means of water transport, in comparison with stone and bone working, early ceramics and settlement structure. The main reason for this was the rareness of archaeological finds such as paddles and boat fragments. Recent research has postulated the existence of highly developed networks between the regions of the forest zone of the Circum-Baltic zone, encompassing the exchange of goods, ceramics, prestige items, marriages, visiting relatives, performing festive events, *etc.* (Herva *et al.* 2014). Together with an increase in studying diets and ceramic vessel functions (Courel *et al.* 2020), new perspectives have thus arisen for reconsidering prehistoric water transport, both maritime and inland. The frequent movements of people in frames of social networking, together with extensive fishing, allow recognising boats as fast and highly efficient means of transport. They were inevitable during the warm/open water season not only in coastal areas, but all over the vast inland territories within the taiga zone. There are two main groups of sources for reconstructing early watercraft in northeastern Europe: archaeological finds of boats and rock art images. An auxiliary source is the ethnographical data on Northern populations.

The numerous boat images found at large rock art concentrations dated to the Stone Age have confirmed the wide presence of watercraft. The Scandinavian rock art images of boats were studied extensively during the last decades (for an overview, see: Helskog 1985: 199;

Wickler 2019: 184–185; Gjerde 2021: 138–139). Views still diverge as to which boat type emerged first, as the data on climate conditions and vegetation of woodlands in the territory of Scandinavia could be interpreted quite differently (see Glørstad 2013 and comments). Scholars also disagree regarding the specific means of watercraft used in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods based on rock art images in Scandinavia, Finland and Northern Russia (Helskog 1985; Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012b; Mantere 2023). The main questions are the following: how precisely can we interpret these rock art images as particular boat types (skin boat, logboat, bark canoe), and which additional sources (archaeological and/or ethnographical) could help us? As Russian sources are not always easily available to a wide audience, we attempt to revise all available sets of data in order to clarify the problems mentioned earlier.

Aims of the chapter

In this chapter, we aim to discuss Stone Age rock art as a source for reconstructing early northeastern European hunter-gatherers' water transport practices, focussing mainly on the territory of modern Northern Russia. We compare rock art images with available archaeological finds dated to the Stone and Bronze Ages, and we discuss the value of certain ethnographic sources concerning native watercraft. We start by addressing the archaeological finds.

Archaeological evidence of the most ancient watercraft

Today, not many archaeological sources are available to reconstruct the most ancient watercraft of the forest belt in the northern latitudes of Europe. In western Europe,

the large corpus of artefacts is represented by logboats and sometimes paddles/oars, belonging both to hunter-gatherer-fishers (Mesolithic) and farmers (Neolithic) at a time range of approximately 7500–3000 BC (Andersen 1986; Arnold 1995). However, there are still no data on the presence of other possible boat types, like skin boats, canoes and rafts. In central Europe, no Stone Age logboats have been found, apart from a single find in Slovenia, dated to around 6000 cal BC (Rogers 2010; Gaspari and Erič 2012). The existence of bark boats is questionable in this region, though the unique find of a bark mat at Dąbki 9, Poland, could probably be interpreted as remains of such a boat type (Kotula *et al.* 2018).

In eastern Europe, the oldest logboat was found in Lithuania and dated by radiocarbon at around 2800–2600 cal BC; it likely belonged to the Corded Ware culture (Piličiauskas *et al.* 2020). This Šventoji 58 logboat was made of oak and found at a paleo-river bottom. It represents a rather elaborate and fine woodworking technique; it has a narrow hull with thin sides. It was probably supplied with an outrigger in a form of a thick oak plank, as one was found near the drowned and damaged vessel.

The oldest logboat in Russia comes from the *chernozem* (black soil) belt, Voronezh region, besides the Don River. It is made of oak and represents a slightly unfinished large vessel evidently intended to be used for transportation, perhaps even as a ferry. It was dated by radiocarbon at around 1800–1700 cal BC (the Bronze Age), and it belonged to forest-steppe mobile pastoralists. Based on its large size, it could have been used to transport cattle and cargo in addition to people. It was obviously carved with bronze tools (Gak *et al.* 2021).

As for the presence of skin or bark boats in eastern Europe, a unique find of a fragmented ceramic canoe model dated approximately to 2200–2000 BC comes from Central Russia, Ryazan region, Shagara burial ground (Bronze Age). It strongly suggests that such a boat type might have been used in the region (Kashina and Shutikhin in prep.) (Figure 5.1). Its silhouette reminds the viewer of the native North American Eastern Cree birch bark canoe (Adney and Chapelle 1964: Figure 95).

The existence of frame/bark boats still cannot be proved by archaeological finds. According to Aleksandr Shutikhin, an independent researcher of traditional watercraft and a professional craftsman in Kotlas, Arkhangelsk region, Russia, some elongated pieces of worked wood, now kept in museum collections, might have been canoe framing details such as stringers, ribs and beams. It should be noted, however, that unlike the Inuit boats *kayak* and *umiak*, the birch-bark canoes probably did not have such well-identifiable and recognisable details. Conversely, they could have contained many details taken literally ‘right from the forest’, worked with minimal treatment (Kashina and Shutikhin in prep.). Thus, we may simply fail to recognise such wooden details.

The connection between archaeologically known light and small paddles and frame or bark boats and canoes is still being investigated. One-metre fragments of paddles with narrow blades discovered in Norway are dated by radiocarbon to around 2700–1700 cal BC, and they are presumed to have been used with light boats (Wickler 2019: 190–192). Light paddles (around or less than 150 cm in length and around 300–450 grams in weight), together with double paddles, were detected at Bronze

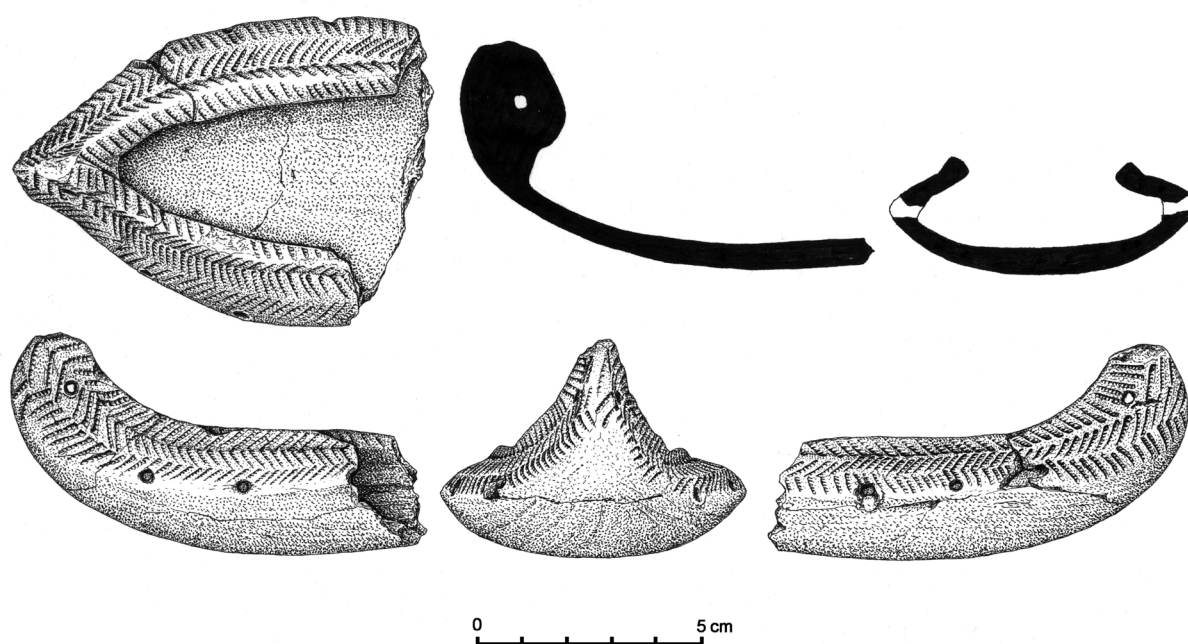


Figure 5.1. Fragment of a ceramic canoe model from the Shagara burial ground, Ryazan region, Central Russia, dated to around 2200 BC. Image courtesy of Ekaterina Kashina, State Historical Museum.

Age hunter-gatherer-fishers' peat-bog settlements in the Middle Trans-Urals as a wide series of perfectly preserved finds (Kashina and Chairkina 2017). It is quite likely that some of these light paddles fitted logboats as well. Conversely, there is no doubt that double paddles, the remains of which were found in Northern Russia and in Middle Trans-Urals, were fitted exclusively for skin or bark boats. In the territory of northern and central Russia, as well as in the territory of modern Latvia and Lithuania, finds of wooden paddles are known at peat-bog sites, dated to the Late Mesolithic (7500–6000 cal BC) and Neolithic-Early Bronze Age (fourth–mid-third millennium BC). These have dimensions close to the finds from the Middle Trans-Urals. They sometimes feature narrow and/or pointed blades, which correspond well with the reconstructed landscapes: inland lakes (sometimes shallow and overgrown with weeds) and sea lagoons (Vankina 1970; Zhilin 2004; Rimantienė 2005). The paddle-blade attributes, very similar to the eastern Baltic finds, can be observed in the rock art of Lakes Onega and Lake Kanozero in the Republic of Karelia and Murmansk region, Russia (Figure 5.2, 1–3).

Before presenting an overview of boat figures in Stone Age rock art, the point must be made, that—at least in

the Bronze Age of northeastern Europe—the presence of different watercraft types is substantiated by archaeological finds of vessels, namely, logboats and birch bark canoes. Moreover, there is a high probability of boat production using bark other than birch (*e.g.* spruce or fir bark) and frame (the skin of sea mammals or elk).

Depictions of boats in the rock art of northeastern Europe

In Sweden, elk-head boat figures are more or less evident at the rock carving sites of Nämforsen (Hallström 1960) and Norrfors (Ramqvist *et al.* 1985) and at the Tumlehed rock painting site (Schultz Paulsson *et al.* 2019). The rock painting sites in the southeastern part of Finland together comprise around 100 figures interpreted as boats (Luukkonen 2021). Only a dozen of these can be regarded as depictions of elk-head boats. In Norway, there are several Stone Age rock carving sites with boat depictions. Elk-head boats are found at the sites of Slettnes and Alta in northernmost Norway, but other types of boat figures are known at many other sites along the Norwegian coast (Gjerde 2017). Recently, two large (*umiak*-style) boat figures were discovered at Valle in the Ofoten region, and these probably represent the oldest boat figures in the world (Gjerde 2021). Another recent

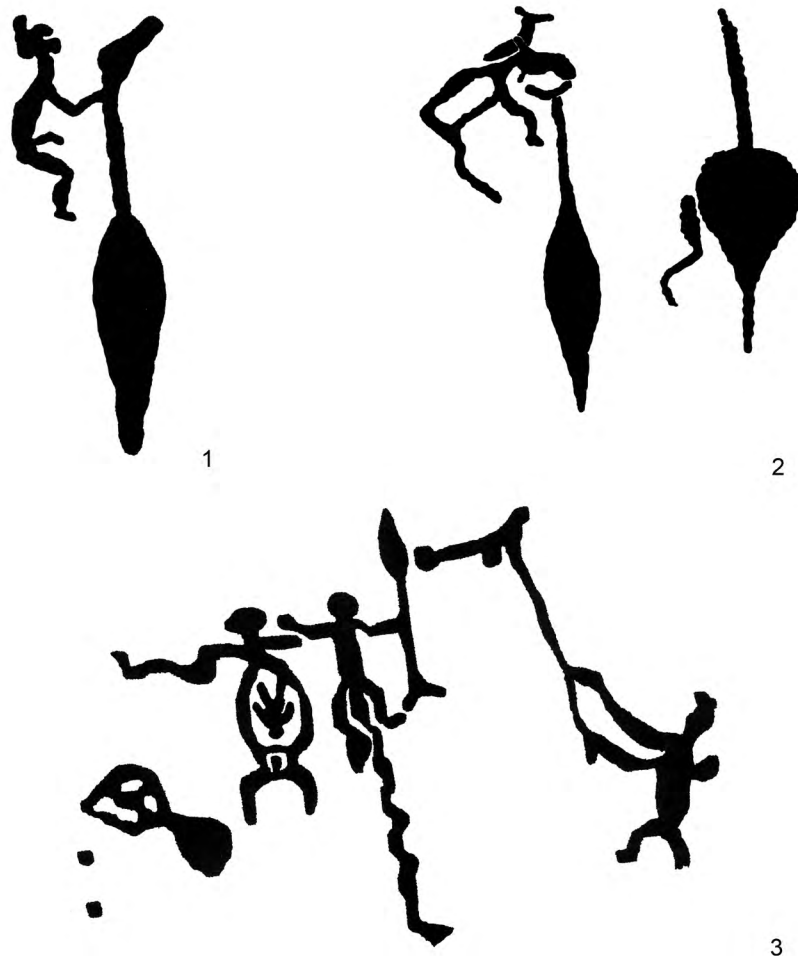


Figure 5.2. Images of paddles at Lake Onega and Lake Kanozero. 1, 2 – Lake Onega, 3 – Lake Kanozero. Image adapted from Zhulnikov 2006; Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012a. Not drawn to scale.

find worth mentioning is the first rock painting found in the Republic of Karelia, Tulguba, which depicts a single boat figure (Zhulnikov 2022).

Three main groups of Stone Age petroglyphs are known in northern Russia, all of which contain elk-headed boat images. The first concentration is situated on the eastern shore of Lake Onega, Republic of Karelia (Figure 5.3); the beginning phase of these petroglyphs is believed to be the oldest (fifth to third millennium BC). The second concentration is located at the estuary of the Vyg River, close to the town of Belomorsk and the White Sea shore, Republic of Karelia; it has been widely dated to the late fifth to third millennium BC (Ravdonikas 1936, 1938; Savvateyev 1970). The third concentration is situated in the southern part of the Kola Peninsula, Murmansk region, on the shores and the small islands of Lake Kanozero; it has been dated to around fourth to second millennium BC. Formally, some of the Kanozero images probably belong to the Bronze Age, but the economy of this region's population was fully based on hunter-gatherer-fisher activities, including sea mammal hunting (mainly, beluga whale) (Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012a). Shore displacement and neighbouring archaeological finds together serve as the main chronological indicators of these petroglyphs (Zhulnikov 2006; Poikalainen and Ernits 1998, 2019).

The number of boat images in each concentration is different: at Lake Onega, there are around 60 images; at the Vyg River, more than 500, and at Lake Kanozero, around 200. We will take a closer look at their appearance in each concentration. The Lake Onega boats always have the hull shown by a line; they depict a varying number of passengers (from zero to more than 10), and the boats often have an elk-head stem post. This concentration contains almost no hunting scenes (Figure 5.4). The Vyg River boats have usually a rectangular hull, a false prow or a protruding keel; they have zero to more than 20 passengers and elk-head stem posts. A lot of hunting scenes are shown (mostly beluga whale hunting, but also the hunting of birds and elks) (Figure 5.5). The Lake Kanozero boats have many parallels with the Vyg River images. Their hull is usually rectangular, with a false prow or protruding keel and a sternpost; their number of passengers ranges from zero to more than 20, they have elk-head stem posts, and many belong to sea hunting scenes (mostly associated with beluga whales) (Figure 5.6).

Based on the general boat characteristics, we unfortunately are unable to decipher the boat construction types—that is, whether they depict carcass boats, bark canoes or logboats. Only while interpreting some rare compositions, where two persons hold the boat from each side, we can presume that lightweight boats are depicted



Figure 5.3. Distribution of rock art agglomerations with elk-head boat images. Map by Ville Mantere.

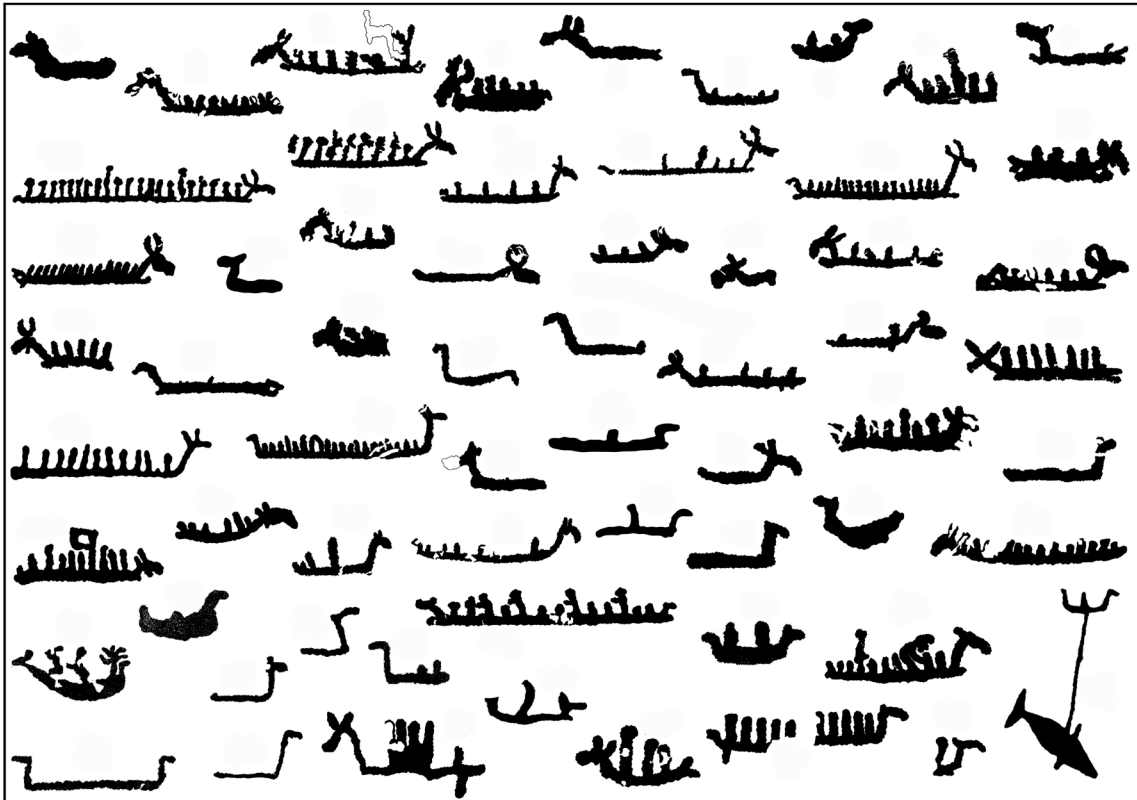


Figure 5.4. Elk-headed boat figures depicted at Lake Onega. From Mantere 2023. Not drawn to scale.

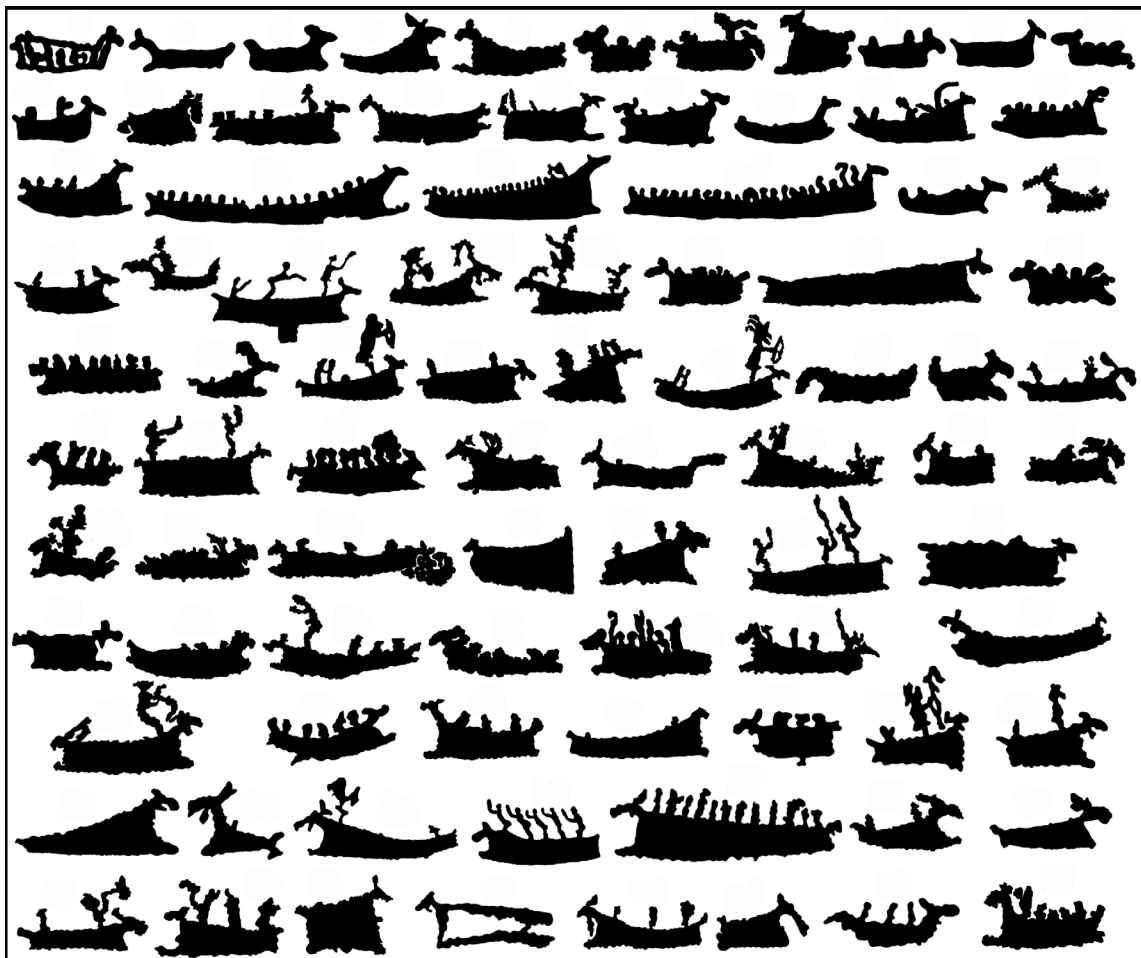


Figure 5.5. Elk-headed boat figures depicted at Vyg River. From Mantere 2023. Not drawn to scale.

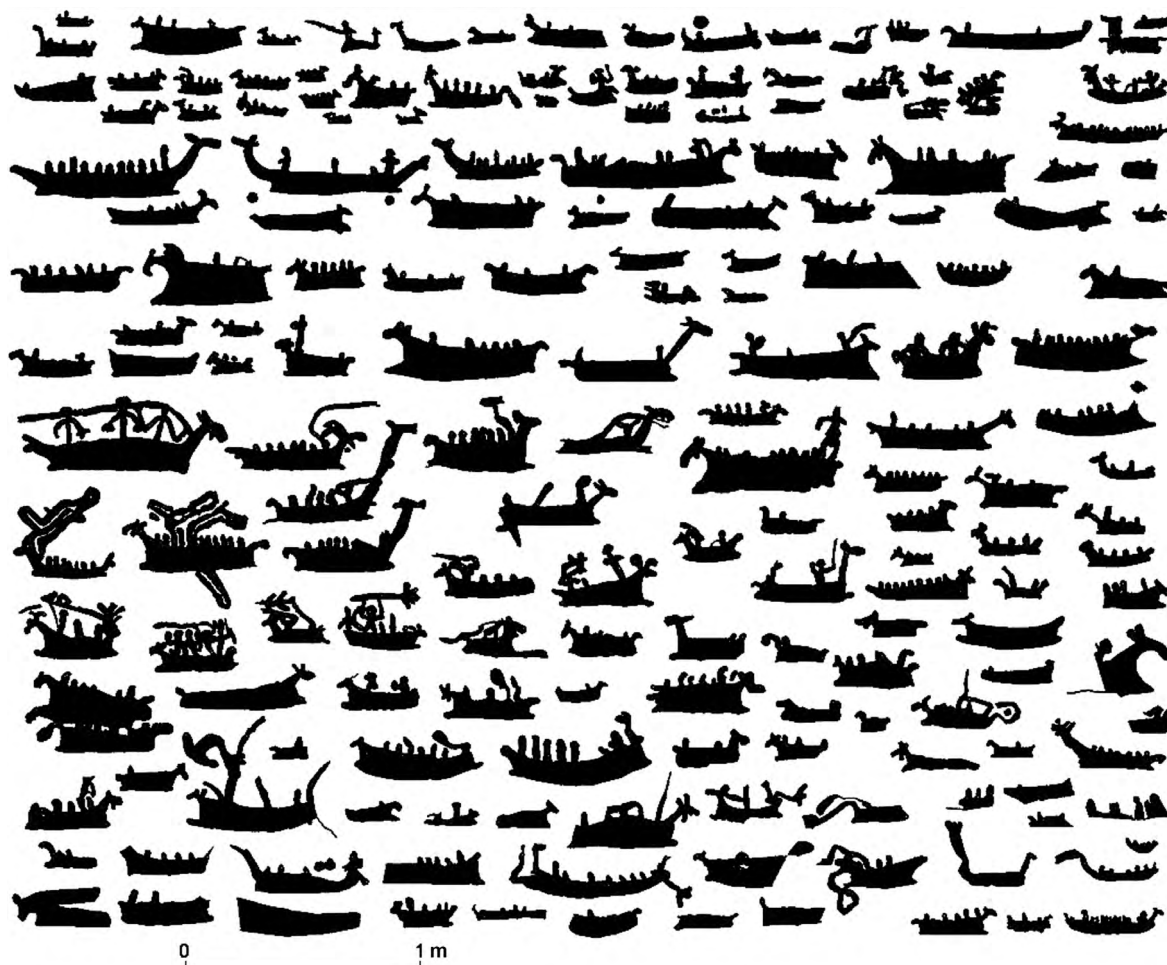


Figure 5.6. Images of boats at Lake Kanozero. Selected boat images from Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012b.

(Figure 5.7, 1–2). There exists one such composition in the Vyg River concentration, and two more in Alta, Norway (Zhulnikov 2006: 143; Helskog 2014: 89–93). In these cases, the boats seem not to be logboats. Several boat images are also made in ‘x-ray style’, with the boat ribs visible, which could correspond to skin-boat or bark boats. These rare boat images are known in concentrations of the Vyg River and Alta (Zhulnikov 2006: 143; Helskog 2014: 136–141) (Figure 5.7, 3–4).

Scholars argue that the large rock art concentrations resulted from meetings between different groups of people in the course of seasonal rites or festivals, managing the exchange of goods and marital connections (e.g. Meinander 1979; Gjerde 2010; Mantere 2023). The aims of rock art images, their subjects and scenes, are generally believed to have been deeply connected with myths and rituals, though petroglyphs usually include images of real-life objects and activities along with imaginative ones (Helskog 1985, 2012; Zhulnikov 2006: 5–11; Kolpakov 2020). It goes without saying, however, that for the prehistoric hunter-gatherer-fishers themselves, a modern-style distinction between ‘mythical’ and ‘common’ reality was unlikely to exist (see e.g. discussion in Mantere 2023).

Estimating boat size and carrying capacity

The interpretation of the number of passengers in boat figures in rock art often faces problems. There are visible human figures with arms and legs, or upright ‘rods’, and sometimes ‘elk head staffs’ or ‘cargo’ are depicted inside the boat figures. Moreover, in some cases, the boats are empty, and sometimes they are ‘overwhelmed’ with crew (Hallström 1960; Helskog 2014). According to A. Zhulnikov (2006), depictions might show the ancestors’ spirits being transported by boat to the afterlife, or their arrival by boat at a celebration to accompany the living community members. This is a plausible explanation, especially for boat figures carrying exceptionally high numbers of passengers (e.g. up to 25 ‘rods’ in one boat at the Vyg River, while there are not more than 12 at Lake Kanozero) (Zhulnikov 2006: 108). According to the ethnographical data on the Chukchi/Inuit, four to eight or five to 10 people could take part in the sea mammal hunt in the average *umiak* frame boat, and for travelling, up to 20 people might take a single boat (Anichtchenko 2016; Gjerde 2021). The social aspects of the crew images in Scandinavian rock art have been addressed several times: the difference in person’s size and attributes has been recognised as a potential source of data to investigate

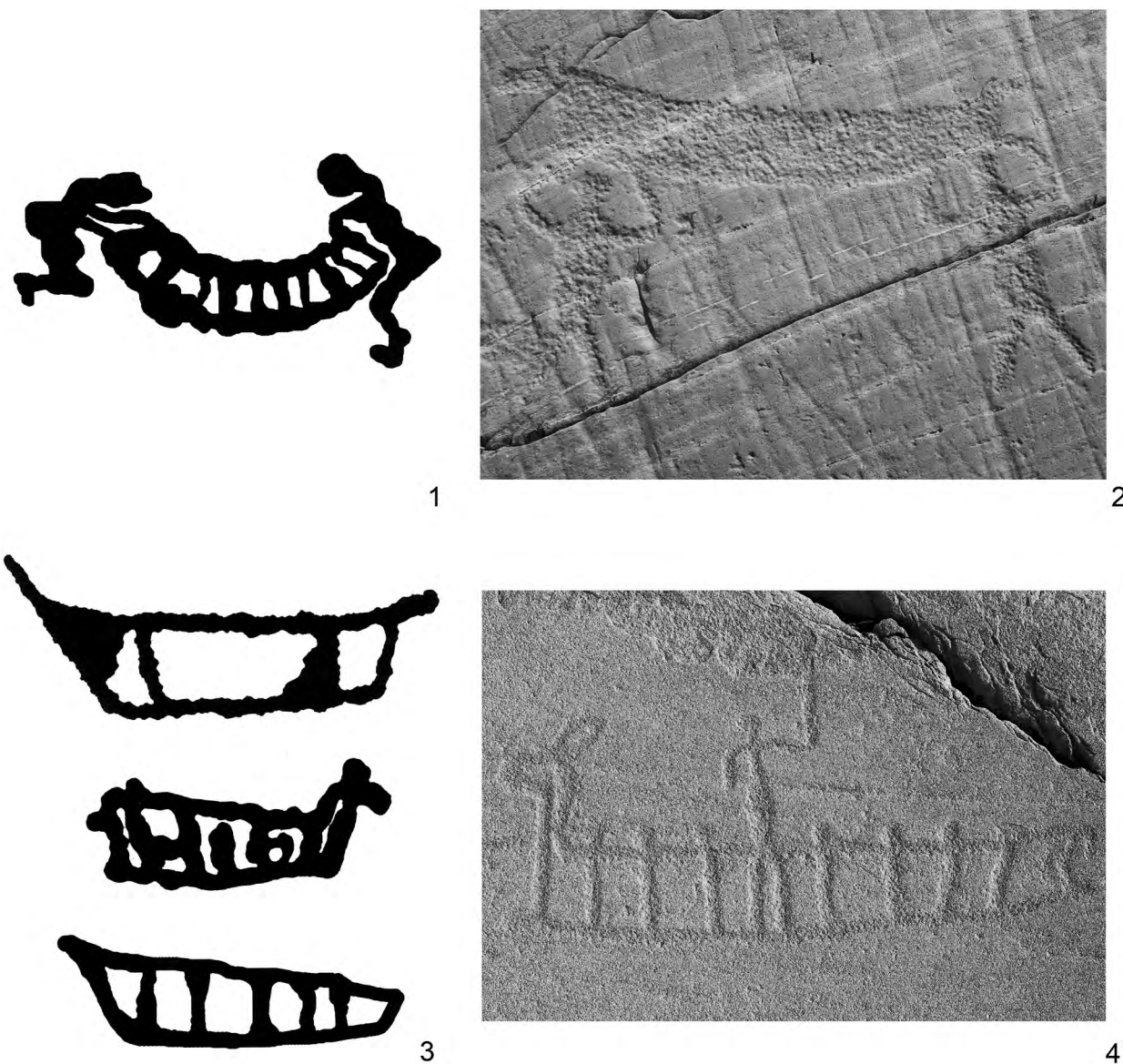


Figure 5.7. Images of probable frame boats: 1, 3 – River Vyg, Republic of Karelia; 2, 4 – Alta, Norway. 1, 3 from Zhulnikov 2006; 2, 4 – photo by Ville Mantere. Not drawn to scale.

leadership, family and gender issues (Helskog 1985; Ling 2012). However, the main part of rock art images are highly schematic, and therefore, they do not suggest such differences in status.

According to osteological data from the Kola Peninsula settlements, probably more or less contemporary to the Kanozero images, the hunted sea mammals included harp seal, white whale and porpoise (Kolpakov 2020). In the Lake Kanozero rock art, sea mammal images depicting porpoise and white whale can be observed. These species are moderate in size, in comparison to the large whale species hunted by the Inuit. Thus, it is likely that fewer boat passengers would have been involved in sea hunting during the north Russian Stone Age.

In the Oleneostrovskiy burial ground at the Kola Peninsula, dated to the end of the second millennium BC, several finds of

plank sledge, treated with tar, have been investigated (Figure 5.8) (Murashkin *et al.* 2016; Kolpakov *et al.* 2019). They are very similar to Sami sledges, well known ethnographically and named *keryozhka* (a Russian term with a Sami origin). Though they have the silhouette of a boat, they obviously did not belong to a ‘normal’ type of watercraft, since their length was 2 metres or less. Their use was most probably restricted to the transport of dead bodies from the mainland to the island cemetery, where they were then used as coffins. On the basis of these finds, it can be argued that the technology of plank-boat building was already formed by this time period (*i.e.* the second millennium BC) and that many of the ancient boats (for example, those depicted at Kanozero) could in fact have been plank boats (Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012b). Plank boats appear in the British Isles at the boundary between the fourth and third millennia BC (Kastholm 2015), but their presence in mainland Europe during that period is questionable.

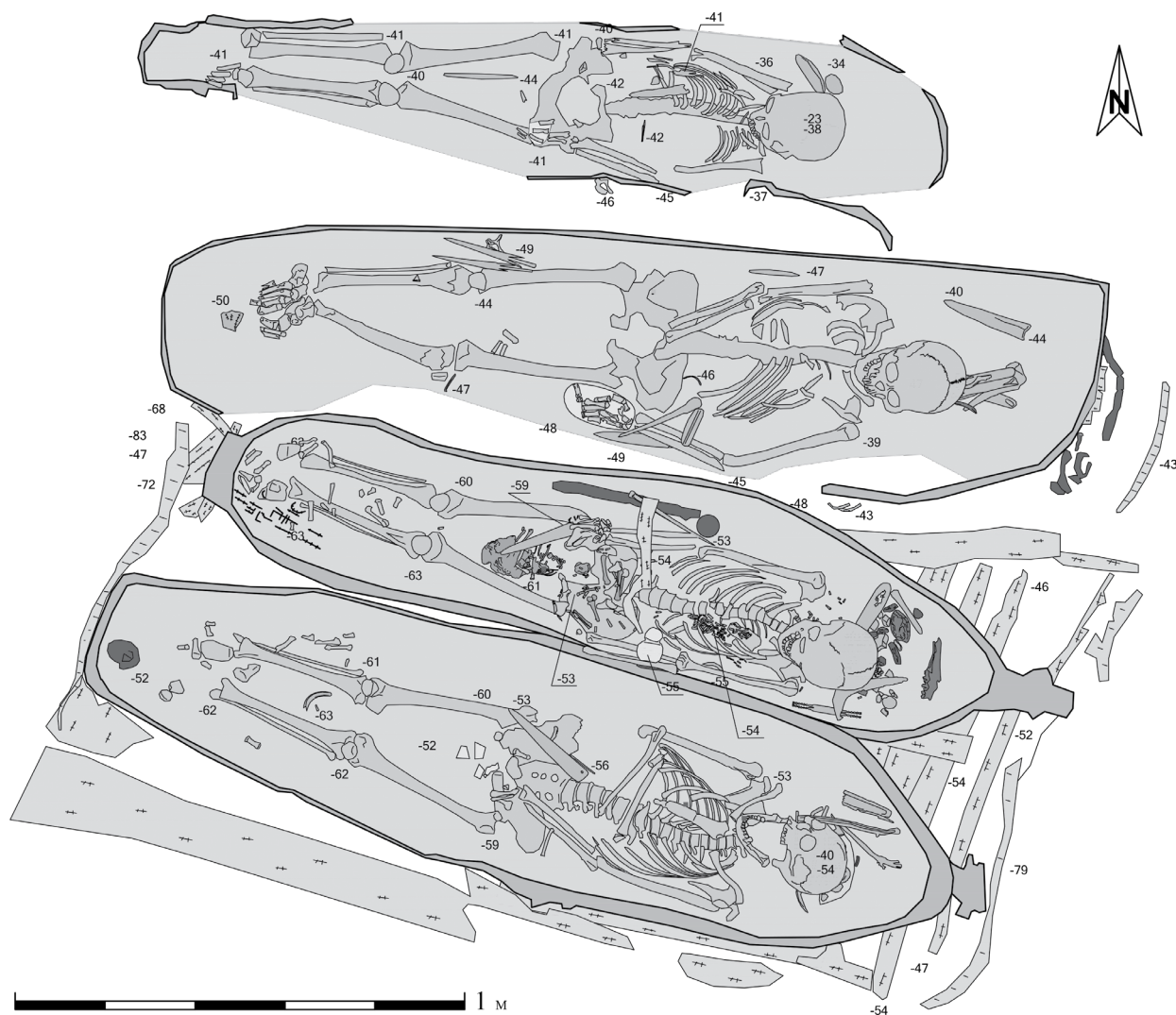


Figure 5.8. Burials in wooden sledges, Oleneostrovskiy burial ground, Kola Peninsula, dated to the second millennium BC. Image from Murashkin *et al.* 2016.

A recurring detail of the Kanozero boats is the keel protruding forwards and backwards beyond the hull (see Figure 5.6). This has been interpreted by E. Kolpakov and V. Shumkin as the actual wooden keel, to which planks were fastened by binding (2012b). This evokes Early Iron Age plank-built vessels, well investigated by archaeologists, such as the famous Hjørtspring ship, Denmark, or the boat frame from Grunnfarnes, Norway, dated to around the mid-first millennium BC (Ling 2012; Wickler 2019).

There is an alternative interpretation of this detail based on the existence of special type of birch bark canoes known from northern areas. Such canoes were used in the Amur River by *Gol'dy* or, in modern ethnographical terminology, *Nivkhi* tribes (Khabarovsk region, Russian Far East), and by the Lake Kootenay West Canadian natives: namely the canoe with the so-called sturgeon nose (Figure 5.9) (Luukkanen *et al.* 2020: 191; Arnold 2021: 56). From our point of view, their silhouette corresponds well with majority of boat images depicted at the Vyg River and at Lake Kanozero (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6).

The boat stem post decoration

As mentioned, a considerable number of boat images in northern rock art contains mysterious elk-head stem posts. The elk head usually has long protruded ears but no antlers. Questions abound as to the meaning of the elk head in boat construction. Was it an elk skull, or a killed animal's head, or something else, and should it be interpreted as a male or female elk head? It has been almost 70 years since the famous Lehtojärvi wooden elk-head sculpture was discovered in a peat-bog in northern Finland. This unique find measures around 40 cm, and it has been interpreted as the stem-post decoration of a prehistoric boat (Erä-Esko 1958) (Figure 5.10). The sculpture has been radiocarbon dated to the Late Mesolithic, around 5700 cal BC (Hel-130), but as the date was obtained a long time ago (Jungner 1979), we believe it would be worthwhile to redate the item using the AMS method.

The Lehtojärvi artefact has a slot on its top. This was made for the express purpose of inserting wooden ears, not antlers, because next to the slot, a stub representing

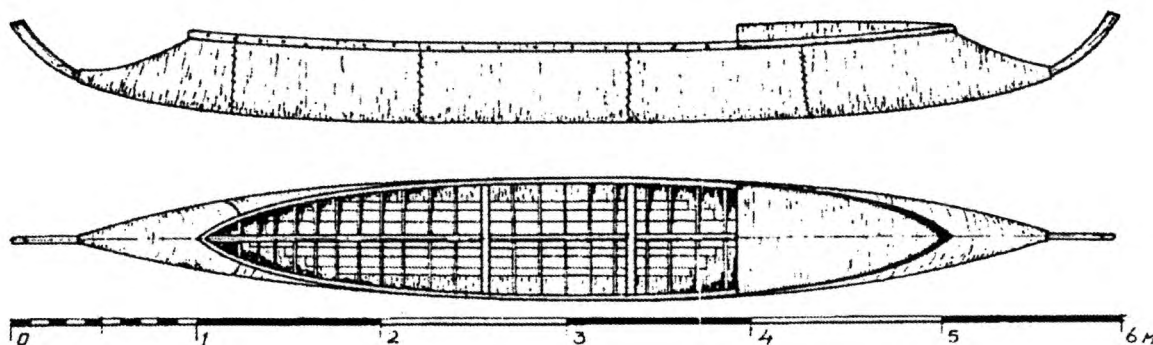


Figure 5.9. Birch-bark canoe of Nivkhi natives, Russian Far East, with a ‘sturgeon nose’. Image from Chepelev 2004.



Figure 5.10. Wooden elk-head sculpture from Lehtojärvi, Finland, possibly a boat prow. Photo by Ville Mantere. Not to scale.

shed antlers is visible on the left side of the elk head. Thus, the depiction is obviously of a male elk in winter. We have paid attention to the fastening structure (the bottom slot and a transverse rounded hole) and propose that it could have been suited for assembling and disassembling the sculpture. Perhaps it was a special boat decor, used only during festive occasions. Other interpretations are certainly possible, including the periodic renovation of such elk heads (see the broken lower part of the fastening

device from the right side at the Lehtojärvi artefact, Figure 5.10) or their attachment as a separate act at the very end of a boat building process.

The ship images on Scandinavian Bronze Age petroglyphs with long decorated prows, for example, contain persons with musical instruments (*lures*), horned figures and acrobats, which have been interpreted by Ling (2012: 18) in light of ethnographical data on Pacific peoples, where

large canoes demonstrate power and prestige. We realise these Bronze Age materials are quite distant by chronology and cultural background from the discussed rock art, and that the meaning of hunter-gatherer-fishers' watercraft was different. Likewise, the North American Algonquin put a vertical 'headboard' wooden detail in the form of a human figure to any canoe prow to strengthen it physically and symbolically (Arnold 2021: 80–81), and the Siberian Nganasan attached a forked wooden or antler detail to the prow (Zhulnikov 2006: 109).

According to A. Shutikhin, a wooden sculpture of the size of Lehtojärvi could have fitted not only a logboat stem, but also the prow of a small-sized skin or bark boat. There is, however, a possibility that real elk heads could have been attached to boat stems (see Hallström 1960). Judging from the Kanozero boat images, we could further propose that the elk's tail (or its replication) could have been fastened to the protruding sternpost (see Figure 5.6).

Another find that, with a hint of imagination, looks like an elk-head boat stem post is the antler sculpture found at the Mayak 2 multi-period settlement at the Kola Peninsula, Murmansk region, Russia; it measures only 12 cm in length (Gurina 1997). By its silhouette, it corresponds to boat depictions with elk heads, especially because of its large ears, and it is also more-or-less contemporaneous with these, as the sculpture has been roughly dated to the period 2500–1500 cal BC (Figure 5.11). Looking at it, we can imagine how the intact wooden elk-head stem might have looked.

But why was the elk so commonly associated with the boat? Most probably, there were a number of reasons, but one

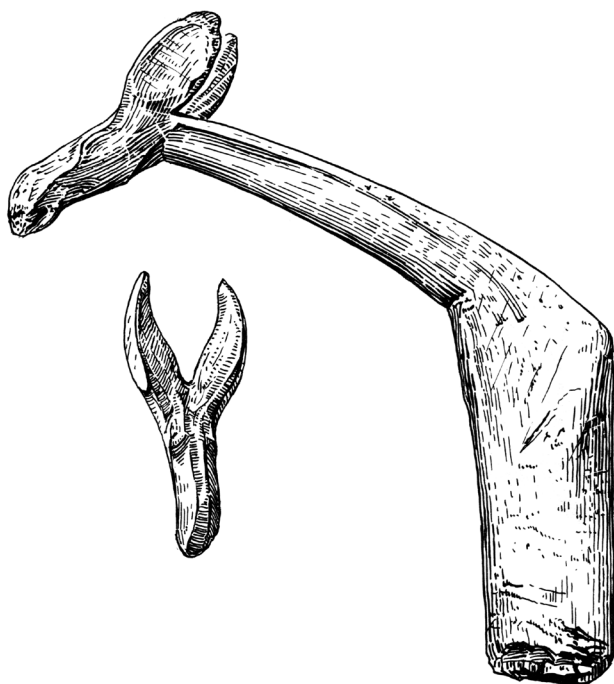


Figure 5.11. Antler sculpture of an elk head from the settlement of Mayak 2, Kola Peninsula. Image from Gurina 1997. Not drawn to scale.

was undoubtedly that the elk was the single most important game animal in the boreal forest zone. Therefore, northern hunter-gatherers had a special relationship to this animal, and it is possible the elk was seen as a guardian or patron of hunters. Another key factor was probably that elk prefer aquatic environments, especially in the summertime, and they are also very good swimmers. Thus, we can assume that boats and elk were conceptually somewhat similar in the minds of Stone Age hunter-gatherers (e.g. Westerdahl 2005). Just as the elk could easily move between land and water, so, too, could humans travel between land and water by boat. Boats were also used for hunting elk, so a further explanation is perhaps that the elk at the boat stem indicated the purpose of the boat. In addition, elk skins were perhaps used for making boats, at least in some areas (e.g. Stölting 1997).

Discussion

The deepest prehistory of watercraft remains the most understudied topic in the field of maritime and underwater archaeology. The hunter-gatherer-fisher watercrafts in the northeastern European Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages differed a lot. This is partly a speculative conclusion, although it is supported by some rare unequivocal archaeological finds, which unfortunately cover neither all regions of this vast zone nor the multitude of chronological periods. Thus, we usually need to extrapolate the data obtained to a neighbouring region and/or time period. In the territories of modern Russia, Baltic States, Finland, Sweden and Norway, no vessels dated to the Stone Age have been found. Bronze and Early Iron Age archaeological finds therefore provide us the closest frame of reference. We believe that some younger data could be extrapolated to the Stone Age, since we discuss the boreal/forest zone/taiga, where the hunter-gatherer-fisher way of life continued up to historical times. We have mentioned light/narrow paddles, double paddles and a Bronze Age canoe model as indirect archaeological evidence of early watercraft. Another important source of Stone Age watercraft is rock art, but, as we have demonstrated in this chapter, in most cases, the boat images cannot be unambiguously deciphered as particular boat types. Luckily, some rare images (e.g. at the Vyg River and Alta) clearly demonstrate the ribs, but the whole exterior still, as a rule, does not allow us to distinguish frame (skin) boats from bark boats. According to A. Shutikhin, based on his experience of a sea journey between the town of Kem and the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea in 2007, as well as inland routes, a birch-bark canoe is well suited for both salty and fresh water. However, ethnographic data on Arctic peoples mention that frame boats covered with skin, namely, the *kayak* and *umiak* of the Chukchi and Inuit, were exclusively used for the sea hunt. The absence of bark boats in these contexts is obviously connected to the lack of raw material, namely, appropriate wood and bark.

The existence of Stone and Bronze Age plank boats before the mid-second millennium BC (the Kola

Peninsula burials' radiocarbon dating) remains unclear. The presence of 'keels' on most boat images depicted at the Vyg River and Lake Kanozero is sufficient for some authors (see, for example, Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012b), but archaeological finds of plank boats with keels are still not known for the fourth and third millennia BC. For this reason, these images can be equally interpreted as bark canoes with a 'sturgeon nose' bow and stern, with parallels in the ethnographical data of the Russian Far East and western Canada. It is beyond doubt that boats in sea mammal hunt compositions in northern rock art are in any case not depictions of logboats (Kolpakov and Shumkin 2012b: 320). The emergence of skin boats in northern Europe has been debated (*e.g.* Glørstad 2013; Gjerde 2021), but a wooden kayak detail in western Greenland radiocarbon dated to around 2200 cal BC (Grønnow 1994; Anichtchenko 2016: 46) provides a reason to believe that skin boats already existed during the Stone Age. Similarly, a ceramic canoe model dated to around the same time helped us to re-evaluate the role and antiquity of bark boats in the forest zone.

The general form of northeast European Stone Age rock art boats frequently features the elk-head stem. A credible, though unique archaeological parallel to it, found in Northern Finland where no rock art is thus far known, raises new questions about how common such a construction was among these petroglyph-making communities. Was it an everyday boat feature, or a festive detachable décor? It remains impossible to answer this question with certainty. We mentioned earlier the general purpose of rock art as mythical and ritual. Simultaneously, these rock art images and compositions include a row of well-recognisable real-life items such as weaponry, snowshoes, ski poles, *etc.*, and the elk-head boats are shown in the 'realistic' scenes of hunting, fishing and travelling. As previously mentioned, the form and the size of an elk-head stem seemingly would not interfere with the boat's economic facilities. Conversely, in comparison with the row of indigenous watercraft examples, as well as archaeological finds, such sophisticated decor as a protruding animal head has no analogues among boats for everyday use. The 'supernatural' version, when the crew is interpreted as a group of dead ancestors, also makes us suppose the use of common boats for rituals and festivities, with the elk-heads added temporarily to the prows.

Thus, the impact of our study in the prehistoric maritime archaeology of Northeastern Europe is the following: we postulate the presence of different boat types during the period of rock art production (at least during the wide chronological frame between fifth and second millennium BC, but perhaps as early as in the tenth millennium BC). The novelty in deduction is that we have made more visible the presence of frame (skin) and bark boats during this epoch. The characteristics of these vessels could have been very different: large or small, carrying from one or two to a dozen passengers, and having different functions such as transportation, fishing and hunting. The last point could also be connected with different boat types: beaver,

otter, waterfowl and elk were perhaps hunted with the use of individual boats, while sea mammals, mainly porpoise and white whale, were hunted from large boats with multiple crew members involved. We proposed, though quite speculatively, an additional function for boats—a ceremonial/festive one, judging from the use of a sculpted stem post in the form of an elk's head, which was probably a temporary and detachable detail. This could suggest that prehistoric hunter-fishers perceived the boat as a living creature, one with which a particular set of spiritual beliefs was connected. The extensive distribution of elk-head boats in space and time probably indicates the wide and universal presence of such beliefs within the Northern hemisphere.

Prehistoric watercraft comprised a number of established boat types, adapted to different hunter-gatherer-fisher needs. This reflects the long and diverse history of watercraft building techniques in the forest zone. Great future potential lies in the archaeological study of peat bogs and waterlogged settlements (coastal, as well as inland locations), where wood and other organic material has survived under favourable conditions. In these contexts, additional elk-head stem posts and sewn bark mat debris could be unearthed. Hopefully, some distinct wooden frame details, especially ribs, and plank boat remains will also be discovered in future. The discovery of a Stone Age logboat in northern latitudes would be a true sensation.

Conclusions

After an analysis of multiple boat images in the rock art of northeastern Europe, we came to the conclusion that, in most cases, it is impossible to ascertain which construction types were implemented. Nevertheless, some observations of ethnographical materials and archaeological finds belonging to the hunter-gatherer hemisphere allowed us to propose the following conclusions. Logboats probably emerged during the Mesolithic period, but were not used for sea mammal hunting; frame (skin) boats or bark boats were used for this purpose. Seemingly, both were represented in rock art, and were most probably already in use across the forest zone in the Mesolithic period. The knowledge of plank-boat building existed in northernmost Russia in the second millennium BC, but the presence of this building technology in earlier times remains unsettled. Boats decorated with elk-head sculptures were seemingly widespread in northern latitudes, and we suggest that they probably reflected temporary transformations of 'everyday' boats into 'festive' means of transportation.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Aleksandr Shutikhin for providing the data on the experiments with birch-bark canoe building and exploitation, Dr Aleksandr Zhulnikov for valuable advice and Prof Svend Hansen for providing access to the library of the Eurasian Department (German Archaeological Institute, Berlin).

References

- Adney, E. T. and Chapelle, H. I. 1964. *The bark canoes and skin boats of North America*. Museum Bulletin 230. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.
- Andersen, S. H. 1986. Mesolithic dug-outs and paddles from Tybrind Vig, Denmark. *Acta Archaeologica* 57: 87–106.
- Anichtchenko, E. 2016. *Open passage: Ethno-archaeology of skin boats and indigenous maritime mobility of North American Arctic*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Southampton.
- Arnold, B. 1995. *Pirogues monoxyloxyes d'Europe centrale: Construction, typologie, evolution [Central European dugout canoes: Construction, typology, evolution]*. *Archéologie Neuchâteloise* 20. Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Editions Alphil.
- Arnold, B. 2021. *Canoës en écorce de bouleau: De la Sibérie à l'Amérique du Nord et les contraintes induites par la matière première. Le tour du monde en 80 pirogues [Birchbark canoes: From Siberia to North America and the constraints induced by the raw material. Around the world in 80 canoes]*. Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Editions Alphil.
- Chepelev, V. R. 2004. Traditsionnye vodnye sredstva peredvizheniya u korennykh narodov Nizhnego Amura i Sakhalina [Traditional water transportation among the indigenous peoples of the Lower Amur and Sakhalin]. In: P. Sorokin (ed.), *Izucheniyе pamyatnikov morskoy arkheologii 5 [Studying the monuments of maritime archaeology 5]*, 141–161. Saint Petersburg: IIMK RAN.
- Courel, B., Robson, H. K., Lucquin, A., Dolbunova, E., Oras, E., Adamczak, K., Andersen, S. H., Astrup, P. M., Charniauski, M., Czekaj-Zastawny, A., Ezepenko, I., Hartz, S., Kabaciński, J., Kotula, A., Kukawka, S., Loze, I., Mazurkevich, A., Piezonka, H., Piličiauskas, G., Sørensen, S. A., Talbot, H. M., Tkachou, A., Tkachova, M., Wawrusiewicz, A., Meadows, J., Heron, C. P. and Craig, O. E. 2020. Organic residue analysis shows sub-regional patterns in the use of pottery by Northern European hunter-gatherers. *Royal Society Open Science* 7(4): 1–16.
- Erä-Esko, A. 1958. Die Elchkopfskulptur vom Lehtojärvi in Rovaniemi [The elk head sculpture from Lehtojärvi in Rovaniemi]. *Suomen Museo* LXV: 8–18.
- Gak, E. I., Kashina, E. A., Davydov, D. Y., Skorobogatov, A. M. and Yeltsov, M. V. 2021. Datirovka i istoricheskiy kontekst dolblyonoy lodki GIM po dannym kompleksnykh issledovaniy [Dating and historical context of the State Historical Museum's dugout boat based on comprehensive research data]. *Stratum Plus* 2: 235–252.
- Gaspari, A. and Erič, M. 2012. Poznomezolitiski deblak iz Hotize [Late Mesolithic deblak from Hotiza]. In: A. Gaspari and M. Erič (eds.), *Potopljena Preteklost. Arheologija vodnih okolij in raziskovanje podvodne kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji [Submerged past. Archaeology of aquatic environments and research of underwater cultural heritage in Slovenia]*, 405–408. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Didakta.
- Gjerde, J. M. 2010. *Rock art and landscapes: studies of Stone Age rock art from northern Fennoscandia*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Tromsø.
- Gjerde, J. M. 2017. A boat journey in rock art from the Bronze Age to the Stone Age—From the Stone Age to the Bronze Age in northernmost Europe. In: P. Skoglund, J. Ling and U. Bertilsson (eds.), *North meets south: Theoretical aspects on the northern and southern rock art traditions in Scandinavia*, 113–143. Swedish Rock Art Series 6. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Gjerde, J. M. 2021. The earliest boat depictions in Northern Europe: Newly discovered Early Mesolithic rock art at Valle, northern Norway. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 40(2): 136–152.
- Glørstad, H. 2013. Where are the missing boats? The pioneer settlement of Norway as long-term history. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 46(1): 57–120.
- Grønnow, B. 1994. Qeqertasussak—The archaeology of a frozen Saqqaq site in Disko Bugt, West Greenland. In: D. Morrison (ed.), *Threads of Arctic prehistory: Papers in honor of William E. Taylor, Jr.*, 197–238. Mercury Series 149. Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization.
- Gurina, N. N. 1997. *Istoriya kultury drevnego naseleniya Kolskogo poluostrova [History of culture of the ancient population of the Kola Peninsula]*. Saint Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedeniye.
- Hallström, G. 1960. *Monumental art of northern Sweden from the Stone Age: Nämforsen and other localities*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Helskog, K. 1985. Boats and meaning: A study of change and continuity in the Alta Fjord, Arctic Norway, from 4200 to 500 years BC. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 4: 177–205.
- Helskog, K. 2012. Bears and meanings among hunter-fisher-gatherers in Northern Fennoscandia 9000–2500 BC. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 22(2): 209–236.
- Helskog, K. 2014. *Communicating with the world of beings—The world heritage rock art sites in Alta, Arctic Norway*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Herva V.-P., Nordqvist K., Lahelma A. and Ikäheimo J. 2014. Cultivation of perception and the emergence of Neolithic world. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 47(2): 141–160.
- Jungner, H. 1979. *Radiocarbon dates I*. Helsinki: Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, University of Helsinki.
- Kashina, E. and Chairkina, N. 2017. Wooden paddles from Trans-Urals and from Eastern and Western European

- peat-bog sites. *Archaeology, Ethnology & Anthropology of Eurasia* 45(2): 97–106.
- Kashina, E. and Shutikhin, A. (in prep.). Visible and invisible water transport components of the East European Plain and Trans-Urals in prehistory. In: *Proceedings of the international symposium of boat and ship archaeology*. Zadar, Croatia: University of Zadar.
- Kastholm, O. T. 2015. Plankboat skeuomorphs in Bronze Age logboats: A Scandinavian perspective. *Antiquity* 89(348): 1353–1372.
- Kolpakov, E. M. 2020. Economic activities in the petroglyphs of Fennoscandia. *Quaternary International* 541: 63–73.
- Kolpakov, E. M., Murashkin, A. I., Khartanovich, V. I. and Shumkin, V. Y. 2019. *Kola Oleneostrovsky Cemetery. 1925–2013*. Saint Petersburg-Vologda: Drevnosti severa.
- Kolpakov, E. M. and Shumkin, V. Y. 2012a. *Rock carvings of Kanozero*. Saint Petersburg: Iskusstvo Rossii.
- Kolpakov, E. M. and Shumkin, V. Y. 2012b. Boats in the rock art of Kanozero and Northern Europe. *Archaeology, Ethnology & Anthropology of Eurasia* 40(1): 76–81.
- Kotula, A., Czekaj-Zastawny, A., Kabaciński, J. and Terberger, T. 2018. Fishing and disposing? The use of a Lake Shore zone at the Stone Age site Dąbki, Poland. *Scyllis. Zeitschrift für maritime und limnische Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte* 18(2): 203–211.
- Ling, J. 2012. War canoes or social units? Human representation in rock art ships. *European Journal of Archaeology* 15(3): 465–485.
- Lobanova, N. 2015. *Petroglify Onezhskogo ozera [Petroglyphs of Lake Onega]*. Russkiy Fond Sodejstvija Obrazovaniju i Nauke. Petrozavodsk—Moskva: Universitet Dmitriya Pozharskogo.
- Luukkanen, H., Fitzhugh, W. and Anichtchenko, E. 2020. *The bark canoes and skin boats of Northern Eurasia*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books.
- Luukkonen, I. 2021. *Suomen esihistorialliset kalliomaalaukset [Finnish prehistoric rock paintings]*. Keuruu, Finland: Sigillum.
- Mantere, V. 2023. *The relationship between humans and elks (Alces alces) in northern Europe c. 12 000–1200 cal BC*. *Karunhammas* 21. Turku: University of Turku.
- Meinander, C. F. 1979. Innovation centers in the Arctic. *Fenno-ugrica suecana (Tidskrift för finsk-ugrisk forskning i Sverige. Journal of Finno-Ugric Research in Sweden)* 2: 85–94.
- Murashkin, A., Kolpakov, E., Shumkin, V., Khartanovich, V. and Moiseyev, V. 2016. Kola Oleneostrovskiy grave field: A unique burial site in the European arctic In: P. Uino and K. Nordqvist (eds.), *New sites, new methods: Proceedings of the Finnish-Russian archaeological symposium, Helsinki, 19–21 November 2014*, 185–199. ISKOS 21. Helsinki: Finnish Antiquarian Society.
- Piličiauskas, G., Pranckėnaitė, E., Peseckas, K., Mažeika, J. and Matuzevičiūtė, S. 2020. Ancient logboats in Lithuania: New finds, wood taxa and chronology. *Radiocarbon* 62(5): 1299–1315.
- Poikalainen, V. and Ernits, E. 1998. *Rock carvings of Lake Onega—The Vodla region*. Tartu, Estonia: Estonian Society of Prehistoric Art.
- Poikalainen, V. and Ernits, E. 2019. *Rock carvings of Lake Onega II. The Besov Nos Region. Karetski and Peri Localities*. Tartu, Estonia: Estonian Society of Prehistoric Art.
- Ramqvist, P., Forsberg, L. and Backe, M. 1985. And here was an elk too... A preliminary report of new petroglyphs at Stornorrfors, Ume River. In: M. Backe (ed.), *Archaeology and environment 4 (in honorem Evert Badou)*, 313–337. Umeå, Sweden: Umeå University.
- Ravdonikas, V. I. 1936. *Naskalnyie izobrazheniya Onezhskogo ozera [Rock carvings of Lake Onega]*. Moskva–Leningrad: Akademiya Nauk SSSR.
- Ravdonikas, V. I. 1938. *Naskalnyie izobrazheniya Belogo morya [Rock carvings of the White Sea]*. Moskva–Leningrad: Akademiya Nauk SSSR.
- Rimantienė, R. 2005. *Die Steinzeitfischer an der Ostseelagune in Litauen. Forschungen in Šventoji und Būtingė [The Stone Age fishermen at the Baltic Sea Lagoon in Lithuania. Research in Šventoji and Būtingė]*. Vilnius: Litauisches Nationalmuseum.
- Rogers J., 2010. Logboats from Bohemia and Moravia, Czech Republic. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 39(2): 310–326.
- Savvateyev, Y. A. 1970. *Zalavruga. Arkheologicheskiye pamyatniki reki Vyg. Chast' pervaya. Petroglify [Zalavruga. Archaeological sites of the River Vyg. Part one. Petroglyphs]*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- Schultz Paulsson, B., Isendahl, C. and Markurth, F. 2019. Elk heads at sea: Maritime hunters and long-distance boat journeys in Late Stone Age Fennoscandia. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 38(4): 398–418.
- Stöltzing, S. 1997. The boats of Slettnes: Sources of Stone Age shipbuilding in northern Scandinavia. *Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 26(1): 17–25.
- Vankina L. 1970. *Torfyanikovaya stoyanka Sarnate. Sārnotes purva apmetne [Peat site Sarnate. Sārnote bog settlement]*. Rīgā, Latvia: Zinātne.
- Westerdahl, C. 2005. Seal on land, elk at sea: Notes on and applications of the ritual landscape at the seabord. *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 34(1): 2–23.
- Wickler, S. 2019. Early boats in Scandinavia: New evidence from Early Iron Age bog finds in Arctic Norway. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 14: 183–204.

Zhilin, M., 2004. *Prirodnaya sreda i khozyaystvo mezoliticheskogo naseleniya tsentra i severo-zapada lesnoy zony Vostochnoy Yevropy [Natural environment and economy of the Mesolithic population of the centre and northwest of the forest zone of Eastern Europe]*. Moskva: Academia. Available online: <<https://www.academia.edu/44964491>> (accessed 24/8/2023).

Zhulnikov, A. M. 2006. *Petroglify Karelii: Obraz mira i miry obrazov [Petroglyphs of Karelia: The image of the world and the worlds of images]*. Petrozavodsk: Skandinaviya.

Zhulnikov, A. M. 2022. Pisanitsa Tulguba [Tulguba rock art]. *Uchonye Zapiski Petrozavodskogo Universiteta* 44(2): 8–13.

From Portus to Fucino (Italy): naval archaeology and symbolism on Torlonia reliefs

Marina Maria Serena Nuovo and Stefania Tuccinardi

Abstract: In the years 1852–1878, during the draining of the Fucino Lake, fragments of a large monumental relief bearing a waterfront landscape with views of a city, a countryside and two floating boats was recovered. Around the same time, during the archaeological excavations at the harbours of Claudius and Trajan in Portus (Rome, Italy), a small relief depicting a boat approaching a harbour was brought to light. The scene combines symbols with many realistic details to represent the boat and harbour. Subject of studies for nearly two centuries, the relief has been approached almost exclusively from an art historical perspective. The original context for both reliefs remains subject of speculation. The analysis of the two depictions—possibly contemporaneous (from the end of the second to the beginning of the third century AD) but different in dimensions, artistic treating of the scenes and probably also patronage—affords an opportunity to clarify the symbolic meaning of the depicted elements and propose new interpretations.

This chapter explores the symbols represented in the two scenes from a naval-archaeological approach. The naval details, together with the symbolic elements and a brief review of the original excavation documentation, assist the authors in presenting a new interpretation of the two reliefs, one which may link them to their original historical, social, and political meaning and significance, while at the same time, reinterpreting their iconography in the most correct and plausible way possible.

Introduction (MMSN, ST)

During the second half of the 1800s, Alessandro Torlonia, an influential banker from Rome, was involved in land reclamations in central Italy, particularly at the mouth of the Tiber River and in the area occupied by Fucino Lake, in the Abruzzi (Figure 6.1). The Torlonias hailed from a village near Lyon and did not have any aristocratic origin, but in exchange, they had a strong flair for business. Alessandro Torlonia continued the social rise of his family through the flourishing economic activities he undertook, and thanks to the draining of Fucino Lake in 1875, he received the title of Prince of Fucino from the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II (Felisini 2019).

The exploitation of the land ownership afforded Alessandro Torlonia the opportunity to carry out archaeological excavations, thanks to which outstanding artefacts were discovered and became part of his private collection of ancient art.¹

These artefacts include the two reliefs which are the subject of this chapter. These reliefs, one from Fucino

Lake and the other from Portus, are exemplary in the field of Roman artistic production in terms of waterfront representations and symbolism connected to ports, ships and maritime activities. Before this analysis, the two reliefs had never been studied together, and this chapter presents them in parallel for the first time. They share a few characteristics: the circumstances of their discovery, that is Alessandro Torlonia's undertakings; the presence of boats; the symbolic and/or realistic representation of a waterfront landscape; and, possibly, their dating. Moreover, they are in some way comparable also because they both comprise a sort of real 'portrait', representing images of where they were found and where they belonged. The areas where they were found, even if not close to one another, are both locations of the remarkable hydraulic undertakings started by the emperor Claudius. These are, namely, the outlet of Fucino Lake and the impressive harbour at the mouth of the Tiber River, and they were later sites of interventions by the emperor Trajan and the economic interests of Alessandro Torlonia. The reliefs differ in their dimensions, artistic treating of the scenes and, probably, also patronage.

Through a naval-archaeological approach, this chapter analyses the symbols depicted in the two reliefs with the ambitious goal of clarifying the symbolic and topographic meaning of the depicted elements in order to link them to their original historical, social and political context and significance. The chapter is organised in three parts. The first describes the topographic context and the iconographic characteristics of the relief from Fucino Lake,

¹ Only the finds from Fucino Lake were acquired by the Italian Government in the 1990s, and they are now exhibited at Castello Piccolomini, in Celano (Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo). The finds from Rome and its hinterland are still part of the Torlonia's collection, which is considered the largest private collection of ancient art in the world. Parts of these masterpieces were displayed to the public during a temporary exhibition in Rome (2020) and Milan (2022) (Settis and Gasparri 2020).



Figure 6.1. Abruzzi, central Italy: Fucino Lake. Image from Google Earth.

the second concerns the Portus relief and the third includes a discussion and conclusions about the two artefacts.

The authors worked as a team; however, in this analysis, M. M. S. Nuovo focussed mainly on the relief from Fucino Lake and naval archaeological topics, while S. Tuccinardi worked principally on the relief from Portus and the symbolism in ancient Roman art. The combined research was an occasion for a general review and updating of the scientific literature published to date, but it can still be considered as a preliminary stage because many questions have not been answered yet, and they will be the object of further detailed investigations.

Fucino Relief: a brief history of the finding context (MMSN)

Before it was drained in 1878, Fucino Lake was the third largest lake in Italy; it was located in Abruzzi, a central Italian region. The absence of an efficient outlet was the reason for changes in the lake level and frequent disastrous overflowing. This problem was already known during Roman times and had been considered by Julius Caesar (see, for example, Letta 1994: 203).² However,

work did not begin until the emperor Claudius promoted the construction of an artificial outlet of the lake, an ingenious and impressive hydraulic work (Suet., Divus Claudius, 20, 1). The outlet consisted of a canal bringing the water to the Incile, a complex of basins closed by shutters, from which point water flowed into a 5 km tunnel through Salviano mountain, finally to reach the Liri River (for the technical aspects, see Giuliani 2008: 33–48). Its completion required 11 years of the continuous and constant work of 30,000 workmen (Suet., Divus Claudius, 20, 2), and it had substantial costs (Plin., HN, 36, 124). A complete draining was not in the project (Letta 1994: 203), in order to retain a local economy based on agriculture, fishing and related activities (Migliorati 2015: 137). Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio (Suet., Divus Claudius, 21, 4; Tac., Hist., 12, 56; Cass. Dio, 60, 33, 3–4) note that during the inauguration ceremony for the outlet opening in 52 CE, Claudius organised a *naumachia*, a naval battle performance involving 24 triremes divided in two fleets.³ Despite the great effort spent on this remarkable project, the ancient writer Pliny (Plin., HN, 36, 124) states that the emperor Nero did not continue the project because of hatred towards his predecessor Claudius.

² On the coincidence between the projects and works of Julius Caesar and Claudius, see Migliorati 2007: 108–109.

³ There were 50 triremes for each fleet, according to Cassius Dio, 60, 33, 3; Claudius equipped triremes, quadriremes, and nineteen thousand combatants according to Tacitus (Tac., Hist., 12).



Figure 6.2. The relief now consists of five elements, all exhibited at Castello Piccolomini—Collezione Torlonia e Museo d’Arte Sacra della Marsica, in Celano (Abruzzi). Courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

There is not much information about the functioning of the outlet after the reign of Nero. Probably, from Nero to emperor Hadrian, the outlet was kept functioning (Letta 1994: 208) thanks to the presence of a station of *classarii* (a garrison of marines, CIL IX, 3993) from the imperial fleet of Ravenna. However, an inscription, which had unknown provenance and was destroyed by a tremendous earthquake in 1915, commemorated the intervention of the emperor Trajan in 117 AD, who gave back to the owners the lands flooded by Fucino Lake (CIL IX, 3915; Sommella and Tascio 1991: 459–460; Letta 1994: 208, note 64). Finally, according to the laconic sentence of the *Historia Augusta*, the emperor Hadrian ‘Fucinus lacus emisit’ (‘made the Fucino lake flow’). Perhaps Hadrian completed the repairs of the outlet and made it fully operational again or, more likely, he had work done to lower the canal, improving the water flow and realizing a greater extent of land for cultivation (Letta 1994: 208, with previous references).

Probably due to earthquakes dated to the fourth century AD, the outlet stopped working. During the following centuries, it was alternatively cleared and kept functioning or abandoned. After a considerable water rise between 1804 and 1817 (Clemente 1976: 242), efficient restorations were carried out between the 1820s–1830s under the direction of the engineer Carlo Afan de Rivera (Segenni 2003: 56). During these works, many artefacts were discovered. On 29 August 1833, the archaeologist Giuseppe Melchiorri wrote a report to the secretary of Istituto Archeologico in Roma (Archaeological Institute in Rome) communicating the discovery, among other finds, of a limestone relief depicting two boats found near the Incile (Afan de Rivera 1836: 50), reused in a wall separating the first basin from the second one (Clemente 1976: 241). It is unclear whether the relief was removed at

the time of the discovery or was left on site and removed from its location during the time of Alessandro Torlonia.

In 1853, the Court of Auditors and the Società Anonima Regia Napoletana (Neapolitan Limited Royal Company) signed an agreement to restore the Roman outlet. In 1855, Alessandro Torlonia bought all the shares and decided to revamp the original project as a complete sap of the lake.

The works were completed in 1878, and the historian Auguste Geoffroy reported that, in addition to the fragment already known in 1833, three more fragments with reliefs were discovered (Geoffroy 1878: 3) to have been reused in the lower part of a pit (Segenni 2003: 60). A fifth fragment was illustrated for the first time by E. Agostinoni in 1908 (Agostinoni 1908: 13; 16). The same kind of limestone—sourced from local quarries in the area of Fucino Lake (Agostini 2003: 87)—and certain stylistic similarities helped to identify the new fragments as part of the same monument as the previous find. Consequently, the relief currently consists of five elements: two large, nearly complete blocks, two joining fragments and an additional small piece, all exhibited in Celano (the Abruzzi), at Castello Piccolomini—Collezione Torlonia e Museo d’Arte Sacra della Marsica (Figure 6.2).⁴

Fucino’s relief (MMSN)

The first block (inv. no. 67501, height 58.4 cm; width 104.5 cm; thickness 20.6 cm) represents a stretch of water cut through by two vessels sailing left (Figure 6.3). Based

⁴ Schäfer (2022: 280) erroneously states the relief is stored at Palazzo Torlonia in Rome.



Figure 6.3. The first block discovered bearing the relief of a stretch of water cut through by two vessels going from right to left. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

on their characteristics, Beltrame (2003: 83) suggests they can be interpreted as military vessels, of a type generally called long ships or *naves longae* because of their elongated shape. The one to the right is an oar-driven vessel with no sail (Figure 6.4); it has an unusual concave prow, ending with a rhomboidal decoration.⁵ Six human heads, schematically represented, come out from the side of the vessel; they can be interpreted as rowers who look at the *gubernator* (helmsman), who in turn looks back at them while clearly holding a side helm out of the aft cabin. The aft cabin is flanked by two *styloi* and flags. The *styloi* were pointed poles, which were set on units of the Imperial navy alongside the ornamental stern—or *aplustre/apluster*—and carried the standards and the image of the boat’s guardian deity, called *tutela* (for an example, see Casson 1995: 346–347). The *aplustre* curves inwards and ends with a *cheniscus*, a boat decoration in the shape of a goose/swan head used ‘for finishing off the sternpost’ (Casson 1995: 347). There are 13 oars; these do not cross the side of the boat but are represented all at the same level, below what looks like a jutting out bulwark (Beltrame 2003: 83), or a simple balustraded deck, or a side screen to protect the rowers. The latter is very similar to the ones sculptured on the warships on the Trajan’s column (see Pitassi 2011: 138). The oars are more than double in number, relative to the heads of the rowers. It is possible the artist may not

have given the exact number of oars actually used on the boat, but just depicted the idea of a multitude; it is also possible this higher number of oars indicates the presence of two banks of rowers, possibly even superimposed. The raised squares on the oars might be interpreted as tholes. No deck was represented over the rowers.

The relief with the vessel at left (Figure 6.5) is badly damaged in its lower part; however, it is still possible to distinguish the stem ending in an inward volute on top and a pointed cutwater at the bottom. An oblique foremast, the *artemon*, is distinguishable. The *aplustre* ends upwards and, as in the previous boat, it is flanked by *styloi* with flags. Below it, the aft cabin stands, out of which there is the *gubernator*, looking at left. At least eight rowers are preserved, looking at the helmsman; not only their heads, but also their chests and right arms are visible. It is not possible to determine the whole number of oars and rowers because of the poor preservation in this part. Even if incomplete, as in the previous ship, it can be interpreted as a monoreme, or at most as a bireme.⁶ Again, no deck was represented over the rowers. It is also possible the rowers would not in fact have been visible, and the sculptor used an expedient artistic convention to show them onboard (see Pitassi 2011: 136).

⁵ For a parallel, see Maiuri (1958: 24, fig. 3–4).

⁶ Since the end of the first century BC to the beginning of the first century AD, the larger multirow warships were disposed of in favor of smaller types: the quadriremes and the triremes became the larger types, and a variety of smaller ships developed (Pitassi 2011: 115–117).



Figure 6.4. A zoom-in of the right boat. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.



Figure 6.5. A zoom-in of the left boat. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

Even if well outlined, the function of these boats remains doubtful because of the absence of clear offensive elements. They are surely military vessels because of their shape and because of the *stilo*i, but at least the one at right has been interpreted as a light non-combatant auxiliary galley (Beltrame 2003: 83). They are less likely merchant

galleys, even if these last could also have a prow ‘ending in a cutwater that jugged forward into a ram-like point’ (Casson 1995: 158).

The central part and a portion of the top left of the block is occupied by water, stylistically rendered through



Figure 6.6. The block representing an urban landscape. Inv. no. 67504; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

a series of parallel waves. A couple of aquatic plants (*thypha latifolia*?) come out of the water. On the bank, there are stylised trees. The presence of many small cavities indicate that this part had been worked by a drill to render the thick foliage of the trees. Chisel marks seem to have erased some of the waves in the centre of the relief because, probably by mistake, the waves were initially carved too close to the trees. The upper part of the relief is occupied by a detailed scene which is helpful for understanding the whole context. At the right corner, there are workmen working at a double drum winch, connected to a tripod with a pulley. The detail of the turning of the ropes, well visible in the uppermost part, and the perfect straightness give the idea of the functioning of this lifting machine: one rope goes down, while the other goes up, in a continuous movement (Giuliani 2003a: 81–82). The ropes depicted on the relief descend vertically, giving the idea of a lifting work and not of a work by traction, necessary, for example, to haul a boat, even if the functioning of a hauling winch is the same as a lifting winch (Giuliani, personal communication).

The second block⁷ (inv. no. 67504, height 61 cm; width 123 cm; thickness 28.8 cm) represents the urban landscape of a walled city, organised in regular blocks of houses and streets with a theatre (Figure 6.6). Outside the city walls, at right, there is a stream and a bridge, and below the bridge, there is a street flanked by buildings, perhaps funerary monuments.

⁷ R. Belli Pasqua (2016: 58) erroneously reports the material is marble and not limestone.

The third (inv. no. 67502, height 30.7 cm; width 35.3 cm; thickness 33.2 cm, Figure 6.7) and fourth (inv. no. 67503, height 23.5 cm; width 32cm; thickness 30 cm, Figure 6.4) fragments join. To the left, there is a colonnaded building, very likely a temple, below which, on a terrace, there are four figures which can be interpreted as statues of deities. Next to them, at right, a staircase descends to a lower level, where other elements (Geoffroy 1878: tav. XV.C) were chiselled out between 1878–1883 (Brisse and de Rotou 1883: tav. XXI). The scene may represent the terraced sanctuary of goddess Angitia at Luco dei Marsi, partially built into Salviano Mountain rock, about 3 km south of the Claudian outlet.

The right face of the right fragment bears traces of reworking (Figure 6.8). On this face, there are the remains of soldiers' rows, almost completely erased by levelling with a claw chisel. Fortunately, a few details allow us to distinguish the chest of a soldier wearing a *lorica segmentata*, a segmented armour used by the Roman army since the first decades of the first century AD (Bishop 2002: 23). D. Faccenna dates the scene from the Flavian times onwards because this type of cuirass is known on monuments only from this date (Faccenna 2003: 74). Probably the relief continued further left because the figures are too close to the edge of the block, and the body of the leftmost soldier appears incomplete; consequently, the block was then broken at left and reused on another side. Currently, it is not possible to determine how many times the block was reused, perhaps at least two. However, a detailed study of this block exceeds the scope of this chapter and will be the subject of further investigations.



Figure 6.7. The two joining fragments with the representation of the sanctuary of the goddess Angitia. Inv. nos. 67502 and 67503; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

Finally, the fourth fragment (inv. no. 67500, height 22 cm; width 19.8 cm; thickness 13 cm) bears the remains of four buildings, of which three have a gable roof (Figure 6.9).

Discussion on interpretation and dating (MMSN)

The relief is fragmentary, and many elements have been lost, so it is not possible to reconstruct the mutual position of the preserved blocks with absolute certainty. C.F. Giuliani (2003b: 79–81) has proposed a very plausible reconstruction, based on the preserved original faces of the blocks and on the topographic references represented. The monument might have been about 2 m high and 3.5 m width, with an average thickness of the blocks of about 0.25 m (Figure 6.2).

The men at work with the winches provide enough clues to identify them as workmen working at the Claudian outlet and, consequently, the body of water can be interpreted with a certain confidence as Fucino Lake, viewed from south (up) to north. The block with the urban landscape has a large band at the bottom, the base from where the whole scene takes place, and it is the bottom of the relief. If we assume that the two joining fragments represent the sanctuary of Angitia, then this would stand on the top right part of the scene, and it would be the right end of the relief.

The sanctuary was at the southwestern boundary of Fucino Lake.

The urban landscape might be a representation of the ancient city of Marruvium, now San Benedetto dei Marsi, but other hypotheses are also possible.⁸

The whole scene can be interpreted as an astonishingly detailed description of Fucino Lake and its environs, photographed as an instant picture during the works carried out at the outlet during Roman times.

The two boats might be a representation of the *naumachia* organised by Claudius for the inauguration of the outlet of Fucino Lake, as described by Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassio Dio. The hypothesis is extremely fascinating, even if clues are not enough to fully support it, at least at the present state of the research. Compared to the vessels

⁸ Because of the bird's-eye view, the perspective is very compressed, and the real distance between objects has been altered. Consequently, the city represented might have been not directly built on the lake's banks. If so, the view might be from south-southwest, and the city represented might be Alba Fucens, which is indeed surrounded by massive walls and has a theatre in the southern part of the city, as in the representation. The topographic relation with the Incile and the sanctuary of Angitia also matches. This hypothesis will be object of a further study.



Figure 6.8. The right face of inv. no. 67502, bearing traces of reworking with remains of soldiers' ranges, almost completely cancelled by a levelling with a claw chisel. It is possible to distinguish the bust of a soldier wearing a *lorica segmentata*, a segmented armour used by the Roman army since the first decades of the first century AD; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.



Figure 6.9. The fragment with the representation of buildings. The largest building seems organised on three stories and bears a series of holes with unclear function. Inv. no. 67500; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

represented in the *naumachiae* in Pompeii, the ones in the Fucino relief do not have proper or undeniable offensive elements, even if, as stated above, they are military boats. This is supported by C. Beltrame's suggestion (2003: 83) that the ship on the left very closely resembles the vessel represented on coins from the time of Hadrian with the type of *Felicitati Augusti* (see, for example, Amandry *et al.* 2019: 86, no. 963A). Even on the coin, it is possible to distinguish a schematic representation of a military vessel: a few rowers with a multitude of oars, the volute stem, the oblique foremast, the pointed cutwater and not a proper ram, the aplustre flanked by *styloi* and the cabin with the *gubernator*. Moreover, it is important to note that the fast military vessel *liburna* was not necessarily provided with a ram, and it was used as a battleship in the second line for fast raids (Avilia 2002: 132). The ship to the right, which is in actuality in the second line, might have been a *liburna* used in the *naumachia* on the Fucino Lake. The *liburna* could have been rowed as a bireme (see, for example, Pitassi 2011: 141). The *naumachia* organised by Claudius must have been such an extraordinary event, its memory possibly survived for decades. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the temple of Apollo at Alba Fucens (now the church of St Peter in Albe), there is a graffito dated to the first–second century AD (Nuovo and Tedeschi forthcoming) or the end of the Republican times–beginning of the early Imperial times according to Guarducci (1953: 120) representing a vessel with a ram and the inscription 'navis tetretris longa' (Guarducci 1953: 119–130, Fig. 5; Mertens 1969: 21; 22, Fig. 11). Certainly, it is not possible to determine if the author of the graffito actually saw a *navis longa* in the Fucino Lake, as for example, during the memorable Claudian *naumachia*, or if he was a sailor coming back home or asking for protection from the god.

The hypothesis that the two ships might be auxiliary military vessels used by the *classiarii* for patrols⁹ appears unlikely, as this corps was probably involved in technical aspects of the constant control of the Claudian outlet, more than in proper military operations.

However, even if the representation of Fucino Lake is beyond doubt, it is not sure if the urban landscape is real, imaginary or, most likely, a fusion between reality and imagination. In fact, it is possible the artist was inspired by the real landscape around Fucino Lake, and the care for the details in the urban landscape, as well as in the representation of men at work, attest to this. Nevertheless, at the same time, the artist could have combined the real landscape with iconographic models, widespread during the imperial times, representing landscape as impressions rather than as a topographic map. The composition of a scene with a body of water, vessels and a walled city is very common in wall paintings in Pompeii, for example (Avilia

and Iacobelli 1989). It is generally used in mythological representations or in images with *naumachiae*.

Portus Relief: a brief history of the finding context (ST)

In 42 AD, Emperor Claudius began the construction of a new extensive harbour in a lagoonal area at the mouth of Tiber River, about 2 km north of Ostia. Its construction was a long process which included the excavation of a large extent of the ancient coastline, the construction of enclosing walls and the erection of two artificial piers jutting into the sea (for ancient sources describing the enterprise, see Keay and Millet 2005: 11–14, 315–327; Bergen 2022: 198–203; Bukowiecki and Mimmo 2023). According to Suetonius (Divus Claudius: 20,3), the lighthouse was in deep waters facing the entrance of the harbour. The harbour was inaugurated under the rule of Nero, as demonstrated by the coins minted for the event (Felici 2022: 10–17). Emperor Trajan enhanced the structure by building the outstanding inland hexagonal basin behind the Claudian Complex (Plin., Panegircus, 23.2) and by excavating a channel called Fossa Traiana (CIL XIV, 88), which was critical to the regulation of the Tiber River (Figure 6.10).

The external basin, called *Portus Claudii*, was probably in use even after the sack of Portus by Alaric the Goth (410 AD), while in the fifth century AD, the basin made by Trajan and the central area of the port were surrounded by a defensive wall (Keay 2021: 54); the Fossa Traiana was navigable until the twelfth century (Paroli 2005: 43). The site of Portus was easily identifiable, even after centuries, thanks to the presence of the hexagonal basin. From the Renaissance onwards, the harbour was the object of cartographic and archaeological interest (Bignamini 2003; Felici 2022). In 1856, Alessandro Torlonia purchased land in Portus in which he started the drainage project which in 1878 implemented a real archaeological rediscovery of the place.

The excavation reports, the proceedings of the Pontifical Commission and a series of letters published in the *Bullettino dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* and *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* allow us to reconstruct a sequence of important archaeological campaigns, carried out between 1857 and 1870 (for the documents mentioned above, see Tuccinardi 2022: 86–100).

These excavations were carried out in the area occupied by the imposing structure called the Imperial Palace and by the so-called Grandi Magazzini di Settimio Severo (Lanciani 1868: 171), near the Xenodochium of Pammachius, now identified as the Basilica Portuense (Maiorano and Paroli 2013), as well as in the area adjacent to Villa Torlonia. The first archaeological plan of the site is due to Rodolfo Lanciani who, during occasional short visits, was able to document the archaeological excavations undertaken by Alessandro Torlonia; Lanciani's study was fundamental

⁹ It is known the *classiarius* Onesimus erected a small temple between the Incile and the underground tunnel, dedicated to the cult of the Caesar family, of the Lares and of the Fucino (CIL IX, 3887; Sommella and Tascio 1991: 459–460).



Figure 6.10. Lazio, central Italy. Image from Portus Project (<https://www.portusproject.org>).

in defining the topography of the Torlonia excavations at Porto (Lanciani 1868).¹⁰

From 2006 to the present day, the Portus Project, directed by Simon Keay in 2006–2021, has started a new season of systematic investigations in Portus, including extensive geophysical surveys, excavations and geoarchaeological studies. These have produced, as a result, an up-to-date knowledge of the topography and the monumental complexes of the most important port of the Empire (Keay and Millet 2005; Keay 2012, 2021; Keay and Woytek 2022, with previous references; on the geomorphological studies see Bellotti *et al.* 2009: 51–58; Salomon *et al.* 2017: 53–60) (Figure 6.11).

The Portus relief (ST)

Among the numerous marble highlights found during the Torlonia's excavations and included in the Torlonia's collection, the Portus relief (Figure 6.12) is surely one of the best known (Rome, Laboratori Torlonia, Pentelic marble, height 75 cm; width 122 cm).¹¹

¹⁰ Before the surveys of the last decade, fundamental studies about Portus were Lugli and Filibeck 1938 (with cartography by I. Gismondi) and Testaguzza 1970.

¹¹ In the latest edition of the Torlonia Museum catalogue (Visconti 1884, 1885), 52 sculptures are published as originating from Portus. In many

In recent years, thanks to a renewed interest in the Torlonia Collection, the relief has been the topic of several scientific contributions aimed, above all, at interpreting the complex symbology of the representation (Cecamore 2019; Felici 2019a, 2019b; Tuccinardi 2020; Felici 2022; Ugolini 2022: 68–78, *passim*). Beyond a general analysis of the represented symbols, the symbolism connected to the boats' representation, the communicative expedients and the topographical references will be considered in this chapter.

Since the time of its discovery, the port view was interpreted as a representation of the monumental structures in *Portus Claudii* and *Portus Traiani* and, in a time when shipwrecks were not yet investigated, the relief immediately became a source of precious information about shipbuilding and ancient naval engineering, fundamental to reconstructions of the large merchant ships during the Imperial age (see Guglielmotti 1874).

On the left side of the relief, within a frame with a Lesbian kyma, a *navis oneraria* (cargo ship) is approaching the waterfront of the port of Claudius, indicated by the lighthouse. The ship has only sail propulsion: an artemon

cases, however, the stated origins are not reliable (see Tuccinardi 2022: 86–100).

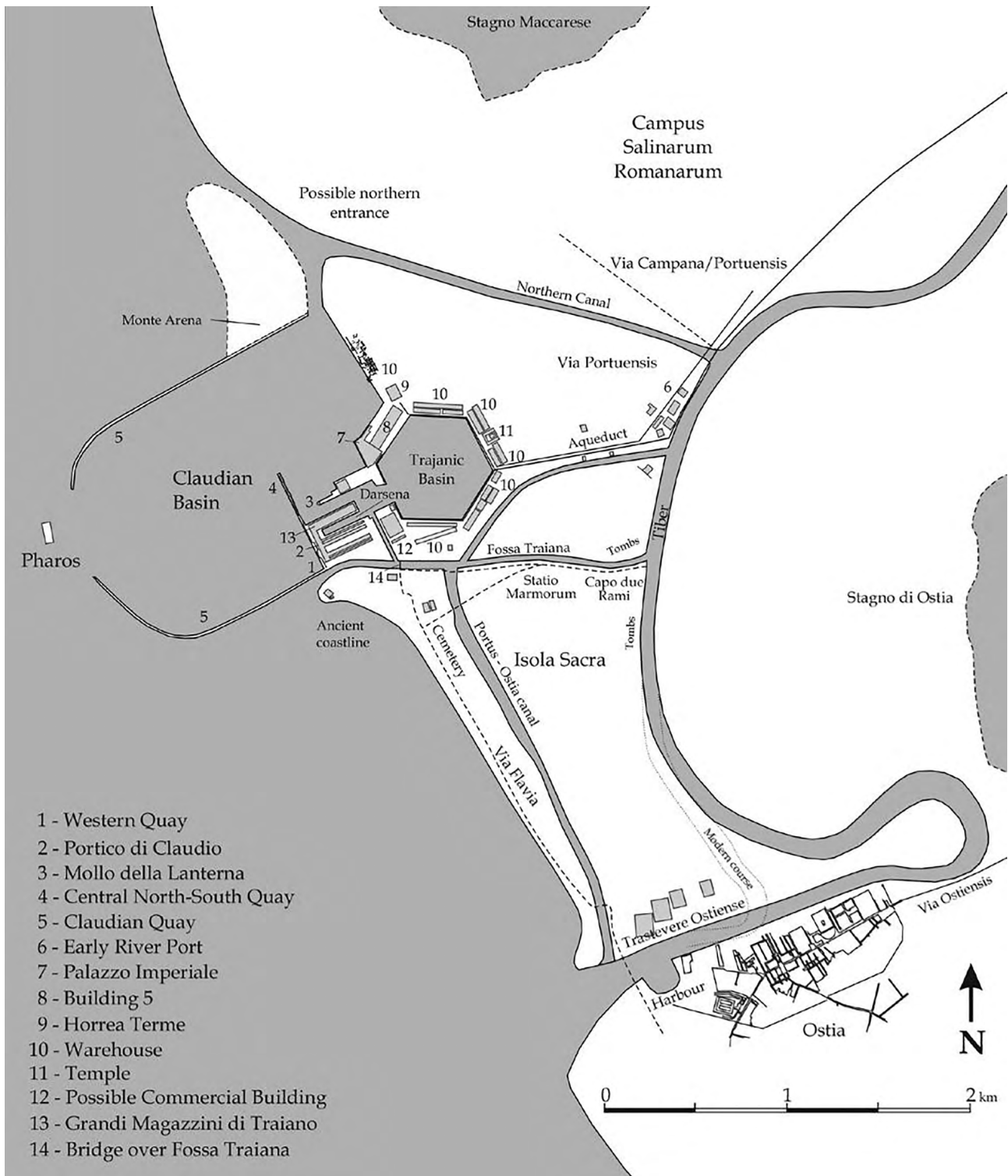


Figure 6.11. Map of Portus, the Isola Sacra and Ostia, showing the location of buildings discovered by the recent research. Image from Portus Project (<https://www.portusproject.org>).

and a main mast equipped with a square sail and a triangular topsail. A small boat flanks the cargo ship, on which a muscular sailor is steering the right helm with a rope passing through two holes in the helm, in order to direct the vessel safely to the entrance of the port. This type of sailor can be compared to modern harbour pilots on pilot boats commanding, for example, large ferries, or

to modern sailors on tugboats.¹² In fact, because of its large dimensions, the vessel had reduced manoeuvrability and needed external support. In the meantime, the mainsail was slackened to make the vessel slow down, while a sailor

¹² On small boats probably operating as tugboats in the Trajan's harbour, see Casson 1965: 33–34.



Figure 6.12. Torlonia Relief n. 430. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by L. De Masi.

with a double-block halyard had probably already furled the sail of the artemon, which is folded next to the prow.¹³ The rest of the crew, composed of four additional sailors onboard, is intensely engaged in various tasks, including the shaping/repair of a piece of wood by a carpenter. On top of the gallery cabin at the stern,¹⁴ a man, probably the owner of the ship, officiates an *apobaterion* ritual, a sacrifice to the gods for the success of the journey (Feuser 2015: 38–39). The owner is accompanied by a woman, perhaps his wife or an attendant, and by another male figure. An additional merchant ship is already docked at a pierced docking stone of the pier. Four muscular sailors are finishing furling the mainsail and topsail, while the gangway is already on the pier, where there are ongoing unloading activities, summarised by a man carrying an amphora. Possibly, this might be the same ship represented as docked inside the Trajan's basin.

The stern of the ship at left is decorated with a Victory holding a wreath, very likely the *tutela navigii*, a patron

¹³ It is also possible this sailor is positioning the gangway (Avilia 2002: 150–151). However, M. M. S. Nuovo (personal communication) emphasises that the gangway is usually represented as a flat plank put on one of the sides of the ship (see, for example, Casson 1965: plate II, Figs. 2 and 3, respectively, a painting and a mosaic, both from Ostia) and not as a curved element in the prow as in the Portus relief. In the docked vessel, the gangway is clearly visible on the right side of the ship; it is crossed by a man carrying an amphora, and behind it is the artemon with the 'curved element' connected to it.

¹⁴ On the religious value of the stern, see Fenet 2016: 264.

deity to help safety throughout a voyage from which the ship often took its name (see Brody 2008: 2–5; Fenet 2016: 318–323). The stern has a small aplustre which ends with a *cheniscus*; another decorative element with unclear function is also present.¹⁵ A refined allegorical representation embellishes the hull, maybe Aurora among the Winds, or a Venus *velificans* between two Erotes (Felici 2022: 33). The mainsail, on which the rings for the sheets are well visible, shows the specular group of a she-wolf with twins on each side of the mast. The top of the mast is surmounted by a winged Victory bearing a wreath. A decoration representing Bacchus with a panther (Di Franco and Merlati 2022: 528–536) is on the prow; it is identical to the representation visible at the top right of the block and similar to the decoration of the prow of the docked ship.

In the background, a view of the most representative monuments of Portus can be identified: the lighthouse of *Portus Claudii* with the bronze statue of an emperor raised on top (Ojeda 2017) and a triumphal arch, recognisable by its attic—seen from the side—and surmounted by a quadriga drawn by elephants, whose attribution and real

¹⁵ This element is interpreted as a lighthouse by E. Felici (2022: 21–26). However, it seems to belong to the ship, rather than being a part of the landscape. An interpretation as a small stern cabin or as a similar structure appears more plausible (Avilia, personal communication and discussion with M. M. S. Nuovo); see also the ship represented in a mosaic from via Nazionale in Rome (Pensa 1999; Salvetti 2002).

location are still debated (De Maria 1988: 247; Fähndrich 2005: 230–232; 236; Tuck 2008: 331–332).

In this symbolic and topographic representation, several well-defined images of deities are present: at the centre, Neptune with a pistrice (marine monster) and the trident (Simon 1994, p. 487, no. 34; Di Franco and Mancini forthcoming: 122–123), Bacchus with a panther to the top right and three Nymphs at the fountain to the bottom right.

On both sides of the lighthouse, on moulded bases, perhaps supported by monumental columns, stand two statues of the deity protecting the place. To the left, there is the Genius Loci of Portus, a youthful togate figure crowned by a lighthouse, with a cornucopia in the left hand and a wreath in the right one (Romeo 1997: 606, n. 35); to the right, there is a bare-chested figure wearing a robe wrapped around the hips, bearing the cornucopia and the wreath, probably identifiable as the Genius Populi Romani (Canciani 1994).

Discussion on interpretation and dating (ST)

Shortly after the discovery of the relief, the archaeologist Alberto Guglielmotti gave sparse information on the exact place of the finding; he says only that it was found in the ruins of the porches around the market of the Roman port, built on the right bank of the Tiber River (Guglielmotti 1874). Archaeological discoveries in the area of the northeast jetty of the hexagonal port confirm the presence of a sacred place dedicated to the cult of the god Liber Pater (Van Haepere 2019: 294–295). For example, in 1864, an inscription was brought to light, dedicated to Liber Pater Commodianus (CIL XIV, 30; EDR n. 149981, R. Marchesini). Furthermore, according to antiquarian sources, a statue of Liber Pater had been found in the area in the fifteenth century, but it was thrown into the sea at the order of Cardinal Bessarione (Volpi 1734: 156).¹⁶ The presence of this temple with rectangular shape was confirmed during the archaeological surveys carried out by Simon Keay (Keay and Millet 2005: 109).

From the analysis of the Portus relief, it is clear the whole view is built on the constant juxtaposition of allegorical images and realistic elements, of allusive figures and explicit representations of the monuments that characterised and made immediately recognisable *Portus Claudii* and *Portus Traiani*. The precise correspondence of the main monuments represented on the Torlonia relief and the ones depicted on the sarcophagus slab at the Vatican Museums (De Maria 1988: 247; Fähndrich 2005: 125–127, pl. 81–82) supports the idea much care was given

to the realistic details. For example, the representation of Neptune could have been either symbolic, as he was the god of the sea, or a precise topographic reference to a real worship place. In fact, the same iconography of the god occurs also in a well-known mosaic found in Ostia with the representation of the lighthouse of Portus (Simon 1994, p. 487, no. 34). Moreover, the effigy of Bacchus should be associated with a cult of Liber Pater, of which, as stated above, a worship place has indeed been identified. Finally, the bathing Nymphs at the bottom right (Figure 6.13), below the Dionysian group, are probably an allusion to a nymphaeum located in Portus, possibly near the temple of Liber. However, even if precise topographic references can be identified, the realism is always combined with the symbolic and allegorical meaning of the relief.

In the case of the man performing the ritual, the face is sufficiently characterised to be considered a real portrait and, perhaps, the owner is the client who ordered the relief. Because of the portraits' modes of execution and the type of hairstyles, a dating in the Severan period can be suggested, a chronology which would also fit well with the marking of the pupil of the large apotropaic eye in the form of a pelta shield (Figure 6.13). Furthermore, although the use of the drill is attested in this period to give greater depth of field and emphasise the contrast between shadows and light (see Belli Pasqua 2022: 43), it is interesting to note the drill is not used everywhere, but only for certain details, like in the relief from Fucino Lake.

A different interpretation of the whole scene was proposed by some scholars (Chevallier 2001: 25; Cecamore 2019: 169), based on the chronology and the presence of symbolic elements like the she-wolf which also have political meanings. The whole scene could represent the imperial ship of Septimius Severus returning to Portus from his trip to Africa in 204 AD. Therefore, according to this interpretation, the relief of Portus would be part of a larger public monument dedicated to Septimius Severus.

However, the parallels found in the portrait (Figure 6.14) might not necessarily be a real representation of the ruler (Balthy 2013), but simply either a *zeitgesicht* (period-face: Zanker 1982) or a *Bildnisangleichnung* (image assimilation: Massner 1982), which implies the imitation of the emperor's portrait by wealthy men or their identification with the image of the emperor.

Moreover, the presence of the she-wolf on the mainsail is not necessarily connected to the imperial ship, and it does not automatically mean it is a realistic element (on the Lupercal in the public and private spheres, see Dardenay 2012: 106–124). The representation of the she-wolf, exclusively symbolic, might be placed in the same semantic context as the large eye, unrelated to the rest of the composition. Both the eye and the she-wolf (Duliere 1979: n. 123) can be interpreted as apotropaic elements. A large eye was commonly used as an apotropaic element on ships because it represents the wider and deeper view which guides the ship through a secure journey and

¹⁶ G.R. Volpi cites the inscription on the statue dedicated by the *Lenuncularii* to Liber Pater, reported by the famous sixteenth-century antiquarian Pirro Ligoro. The *Lenuncularii* was a guild of boatmen that oversaw the driving of the ships across the Tiber River (on *Lenuncularii*, see Casson 1965: 31–36). However, the news about Bessarione seems unfounded, and the inscription, which is not registered in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, may have been invented by Ligorio (see also Lanciani 1868: 181).



Figure 6.13. Torlonia Relief: the apotropaic eye and the three Nymphs at the fountain. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by L. De Masi.

avoids accidents (Meda 2010; Felici 2019a: 7). The she-wolf might also have been a generic symbol of *romanitas* (Zanker 2002: 86, with previous references).

From the times of its discovery, the relief was interpreted as a dedication to Liber Pater offered by a wealthy shipowner to thank the gods for a safe and successful journey.

The frequency of Dionysian images, which deliberately repeat the same statuary type, seems to corroborate the traditional identification of the relief as a votive offering to Liber Pater-Bacchus (and perhaps also to Neptune?) made by a merchant or shipowner; this hypothesis might be confirmed by the interpretation of the letters inscribed on the mainsail. According to some scholars (for example, Feuser 2015: 39) they could be unravelled as V(otum) L(ibero) or as a shortened formula for V(otum) L(ibens animo solvit) (see Meiggs 1973: 165; Dardenay 2012: 122). Recently, Enrico Felici (2022: 43) proposed a different interpretation. These initials represent the name of the ship painted on the sails, which was sometimes the same as the *tutela*, as stated above. Consequently, VL may be the abbreviation for Victoria Libera.

The connection between the symbols of victory, repeated multiple times (Victories and wreaths), and the positive outcome of the navigation is evident (Felici 2022: 43); even Vergilius points out how ships which would successfully return to port were celebrated as victorious (Verg. G. 1, 303–305). The inscription on the sail might call to mind the ritual of embroidering on the sails the best wishes for a good navigation (Tuccinardi 2020: 178), mentioned in Apuleius (Metam., XI, 16), for example.

Reflecting on the symbolic meaning of the ship and rejecting the votive purpose, Felici (2019a, 2022: 23) advances the hypothesis the relief might have been part of a funerary monument. In fact, in antiquity, ships and lighthouses were often connected to funerary contexts as a metaphor of the journey from life to afterlife.¹⁷

However, even if the interpretation of the relief as part of a funerary monument might be plausible, it contrasts

¹⁷ See the mainstream reference in Cumont 1949: 283–286, an overview of the prosaic and spiritual value of boats in funerary representations in Guidetti 2007: 86–87 and the political meaning of the lighthouse as a triumphal monument in Ugolini 2022: 76–77.



Figure 6.14. Torlonia Relief: the cargo ship. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by S. Tuccinardi.

with the high probability the slab comes from the so-called second side of the hexagon, where Alessandro Torlonia's archaeological excavations certainly took place and several pieces of evidence suggest the presence of a temple dedicated to Liber Pater (Van Haepere 2019: 294–295). The three Nymphs depicted near the left edge of the slab, in close connection with the image of Bacchus-Liber Pater, may suggest the presence of a scenographic fountain (nymphaeum); this type of architectonic complex may be connected—given the topography of the locations—to the layout of the aqueduct that lies on the second side of the hexagon where the Liber Pater temple is located, offering a new link between the relief and this specific area (Fig. 6.11).

Moreover, representations of the deities in funerary reliefs with work scenes, celebrating the achievement of the deceased from a professional point of view, are rare or completely lacking. Take, for instance, the reliefs from the tomb of Eurysaces at Porta Maggiore (Ciancio Rossetto 1973; Jones 2018) or the monument of Naevoleia Tyche in Pompeii (Kockel 1983, 100–109 no. Sud 22) and the numerous slabs of similar subject from the necropolis of Ostia (on this subject, see Zimmer 1982): in the concreteness of these images, the divine is an offstage spectator.

Final considerations and conclusions (MMSN, ST)

On the basis of the analysis presented here, both iconographic and topographic, it is possible to state

the relief from Fucino Lake is a celebration of the extraordinary feat of engineering represented by the construction of the artificial outlet of the lake. The works to regulate the waters of the lake remained vivid in collective memory for generations because of the great effort in terms of its planning, the implementation of the project and the involvement of thousands of workmen for more than 10 years. The enterprise carried out by Emperor Claudius is clearly evoked in the relief by the presence of the workmen with the winch, which gives information not only on the depicted historical event, but also on the exact topographic location represented, namely, the channel and the tunnel of the artificial outlet. The purpose of a precise topographic representation appears fairly clear, even though the entire scene is only partially preserved: in fact, it is possible to identify a sanctuary; a Romanised city with orthogonal streets and a theatre, surrounded by walls; a road flanked by a necropolis and cultivated fields which survive only thanks to the intervention of the emperor. In this way the landscape itself becomes a symbol of the triumph of order out of chaos, of the capacity for Roman engineering to dominate a messy and uncontrolled nature and an allegory of the good government of a great ruler. If the interpretation of the two boats as an evocation of a *naumachia* is correct, the two vessels contribute to the reconstruction of a precise landscape in a specific moment and with an explicit political message: the memorable and impressive inauguration of the outlet organised by emperor Claudius with the involvement of at least 24

triremes. The view of a multitude of warships at 700 m at sea level—in a mountainous area on the Apennines—must have been such an event, possibly remembered also with a graffito in the temple of Apollo in Alba Fucens. The presence of vessels from the imperial fleet in the context of the Fucino Lake is otherwise unexplainable, and their reading as auxiliary boats appears to be a hypothesis not sufficiently supported by historical and/or archaeological evidence. The *classarii* were involved in the maintenance of the outlet as engineers of the military genius, more than as sailors patrolling the lake.

The unknown artist of the relief had a celebrative intent in his mind: every single element represented contributes to the celebration of Rome and of the greatness of the emperors. The use of a type of limestone available in the area of the outlet (Agostini 2003: 87) indicates a municipal production which exploits both local materials and workshops with their own style and technical abilities. However, even if the artistic language is local, it is possible to argue the client was public or somehow connected with the public, like a wealthy imperial official (a freedman?) or a *procurator*. The relief can be considered as the expression of official art, conveying a message of political propaganda. Its original location remains unknown, but as two large and heavy fragments were reused in the walls of the pit where they were found, it is possible the original location was not far from their replacement location. Perhaps it was a large celebrative monument located near the Incile, maybe in proximity of the tunnel under the Salviano Mountain. Because of the large dimensions and because of its iconography, it is less likely it was a private funerary monument. The stylistic characteristics suggest a date in the second century AD. Consequently, the monument was not built for the inauguration of the outlet, but nearly a century thereafter. The ancient sources mention the involvement of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian for the refunctioning of the outlet, and their interventions in the Fucino Lake area might have been a good occasion to celebrate the works carried out by their predecessor, Claudius. However, the use of chisels and the drill for specific purposes might indicate the late second century AD or early in the beginning of the third century AD,¹⁸ under the rules of the Severii, even if works carried out by this imperial family in the Fucino Lake area are not known.

The relief from the Fucino Lake and the one from Portus can be associated together, not only for the circumstances of their discovery, the presence of detailed ships rich in meticulous particulars and the perfect fusion of realistic and symbolic elements, but also because both the reliefs celebrate great feats of engineering and the magnificent infrastructures built by the Roman emperors (Claudius and Trajan). In the relief from Portus, the symbolic elements seem to refer to actually existing topographic locations and, at the same time, the detailed elements on the large merchant boat are obvious allegories.

Portus was the largest and the most important harbour of the Empire; its monumental layout, known from iconographic sources, was striking in many respects: the lighthouse, the statues on columns, the arch surmounted by a quadriga.¹⁹ As rightly noted, in the Portus relief, the celebration of the empire and beneficent emperors merges with that of the security of the empire's food supply, closely linked to the great harbour of Portus (Felici 2022: 28–33).

The merchant boat itself is a symbol of wealth and prosperity, guaranteed by the Roman empire through the complex food supply system. For the Portus relief, it is possible to suppose a private client, a wealthy merchant offering a vow to the god Liber Pater through a monument with a specific and well-constructed semantic structure and a clear message: only thanks to the strength and the solidity of the empire was it possible to achieve individual goals and carry out fortunate private undertakings. A wise and prudent management of the empire is the basis for the happiness and prosperity of the entire community, just as the success of a sea journey depends on the skill, wisdom, prudence and judgment of the commander.

The owner of the monument, probably an imperial freedman, might have decided to be represented during his flourishing activities on the sea, according to a rather widespread custom. Consequently, there is a coexistence of symbolic and real elements, and the sea journey has the double value of biographical memory and metaphor. On the grounds of the specific topographic references of the finding context and the dense presence of divine elements rarely attested in the funerary repertoire—ruling out the mythological scenes and the cases where the defunct is compared to the divine—the hypothesis of a funerary purpose appears less probable than a votive offering. The propitiatory and apotropaic meaning of numerous symbols, the ritual represented and the large protective eye seem to indicate a ritual function of the relief, that shows the representation of devotional practices related to daily life in Portus and, more generally, to the seafaring world.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Cairolì Fulvio Giuliani for discussing further considerations of the winches in a personal communication; to Luisa Migliorati for general comments and suggestions on the chapter; to Carlo Gasparri and Lorenzo Campagna for the comments about technical and stylistic aspect of the Portus relief; to Filippo Avilia for the productive conversation on *naumachiae*, naval iconography and naval archaeology; to Stefano Medas and Carlo Beltrame for sharing knowledge on naval archaeology; to Daniela Villa for talking on the sanctuary of the goddess Angitia; to Pascal Arnaud for a prolific discussion of the symbolism of the Torlonia relief from

¹⁸ According to T. Schäfer (2022: 280), the relief is dated to the time of the emperor Claudius.

¹⁹ For the imperial monuments at Portus, see Tuck 2008: 325–335; Ugolini 2022: 57–84.

Portus; and to Carlo Gasparri and Lorenzo Campagna for the comments about technical and stylistic aspects of the relief from Portus.

References

- Afan de Rivera, C. 1836. *Progetto della restaurazione dello emissario di Claudio e dello scolo del Fucino [Project for the restoration of the Claudius effluent and the Fucino drainage]*. Napoli: Stamperia e cartiera del Fibreno.
- Agostini, S., 2003. I lapidei [The stonemen]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.) *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 87–89. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Agostinoni, E. 1908. *Il fucino [The forge]*. Bergamo, Italy: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche.
- Amandry, M., Burnett, A., Hostein, A., Mairat, J., Pau Ripollès, P. and Spoerri Butcher, M. 2019. *Roman provincial coinage*, Supplement 5 (vols. I, II, III, VII.1 and IX). Available online: <<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/supp/rpc-supp-5.pdf>> (accessed 9/3/2023).
- Avilia, F. 2002. *Atlante delle navi greche e romane [Atlas of Greek and Roman ships]*. Formello, Italy: Ireco.
- Avilia, F. and Jacobelli, L. 1989. Le naumachie nelle pitture pompeiane [The naumachie in Pompeian paintings]. *Studi Pompeiani* 3: 131–154.
- Balty, J. C. 2013. Interactions entre la sphère publique et la sphère privée: Types iconographiques et types statuariés (Umbildungen, Zeitgesicht et Privatapotheose) [Interactions between the public sphere and the private sphere: Iconographic types and statuary types (Umbildungen, Zeitgesicht and Privatapotheose)]. In: A. Dardenay and E. Rosso (eds.), *Dialogues entre sphère publique et sphère privée dans l'espace de la cité romaine: Vecteurs, acteurs, significations [Dialogues between the public sphere and the private sphere in the space of the Roman city: Vectors, actors, meanings]*, 275–295. Paris: Ausonius.
- Belli Pasqua, R. 2016. La città rappresentata. Contributo all'analisi dell'immagine della città nella cultura figurativa greca e romana [The city represented. Contribution to the analysis of the image of the city in Greek and Roman figurative culture]. *Thiasos* 5(2): 49–62.
- Belli Pasqua, R. 2022. Dalla tecnica alla forma: Strumenti e trasformazioni della cultura figurativa nella scultura antica [From technique to form: Tools and transformations of figurative culture in ancient sculpture]. *Quaderni di Architettura e Design* 5: 33–52.
- Bellotti, P., Mattei, M., Tortora, P. and Valeri, P. 2009. Geoarchaeological investigations in the area of the imperial harbours of Rome. *Mediterranée* 112: 51–58.
- Beltrame, C. 2003. Le rappresentazioni delle navi [The representations of ships]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 83. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Bergen, C. 2022. *Wegen der Schönheit eurer Häfen: Hafenanlagen der frühen Kaiserzeit—Spiegel städtischer Selbstdarstellung? [Because of the beauty of your ports: Port facilities of the early Imperial period—mirrors of urban self-expression]*. Rahden, Germany: Marie Leidorf GmbH.
- Bignamini, I. 2003. Ostia porto e Isola Sacra. Scoperte e scavi dal medioevo al 1801 [Ostia port and Isola Sacra. Discoveries and excavations from the Middle Ages to 1801]. *Rivista dell'Istituto nazionale d'archeologia e storia dell'arte* 26: 37–78.
- Bukowiecki, E. and Mimmo, M. 2023. Infrastrutture portuali a Portus. Le recenti indagini dell'École française de Rome [Port infrastructure in Portus. Recent investigations by the École française de Rome]. In: M. L. Caldelli, N. Laubry and F. Zevi, (eds.), *Ostia e Portus dalla Repubblica alla Tarda Antichità: Studi di archeologia e di storia urbana sui porti di Roma. Atti del sesto Seminario Ostiense (Ostia Antica-Roma, 10–11 aprile 2019) [Ostia and Portus from the Republic to Late Antiquity: Studies of archaeology and urban history on the ports of Rome. Proceedings of the sixth Ostiense Seminar (Ostia Antica-Rome, 10–11 April 2019)]*, 321–336. Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome.
- Bishop, M. M. C. J. 2002. *Lorica segmentata. A handbook of articulated Roman plate armour*, vol. I. Braemar, Scotland: Armatura Press.
- Brisse, A. and de Rotrou, L. 1883. *Prosciugamento del lago Fucino fatto eseguire da Sua Eccellenza il Principe Alessandro Torlonia. Descrizione storica e tecnica, in due volumi ed un atlante [Drainage of Lake Fucino commissioned by His Excellency Prince Alessandro Torlonia. Historical and technical description, in two volumes and an atlas]*. Roma. (Ristampa in occasione del centenario della prima edizione a cura di D. D'Amato, U. M. Palanza, Avezzano 1983.)
- Brody, A. J. 2008. The specialized religions of ancient Mediterranean seafarers. *Religion Compass* 2: 1–11.
- Canciani, F. 1994. Populus/Populus Romanus. In: H. C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 438–443. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Casson, L. 1965. Harbour and river boats of ancient Rome. *Journal of Roman Studies* 55(1–2): 31–39.
- Casson, L. 1995. *Ships and seamanship in the ancient world*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Originally published in a hardcover edition by Princeton University Press, 1971.)
- Cecamore, C. 2019. Rilievo Torlonia [Torlonia relief]. In: G. Pasquale (ed.), *L'arte di costruire un capolavoro:*

- La colonna Traiana [The art of building a masterpiece: The Trajan column]*, 169. Firenze, Italy: Giunti.
- Chevalier R. 2001. Le ports d'Ostie: Pur une relecture des source [The ports of Ostia: A rereading of the sources]. In: J. P. Descoeurde (ed.), *Ostia: Port et porte de la Rome antique [Ostia: Port and gate of ancient Rome]*, 20–29. Genève, Switzerland: Musées d'art et d'histoire.
- Ciancio Rossetto, P. 1973. *Il sepolcro del fornaio Marco Virgilio Eurisace a Porta Maggiore [The tomb of the baker Marco Virgilio Eurisace at Porta Maggiore]*. Roma: Istituto di studi romani.
- Clemente, V. 1976. Istituto Archeologico Germanico di Roma e i corrispondenti abruzzesi (1829–1838): Spunti per la riscoperta romantica degli Abruzzi [German Archaeological Institute of Rome and its correspondents from Abruzzo (1829–1838): Ideas for the romantic rediscovery of the Abruzzi]. In: *Atti del III Convegno Viaggiatori europei negli Abruzzi e Molise nel XVIII e XIX sec. Teramo-Giulianova, 19–20 settembre 1974 [Proceedings of the III Conference on European travellers in Abruzzo and Molise in the 18th and 19th centuries. Teramo-Giulianova, 19–20 September 1974]*, 183–259. Teramo, Italy: Centro di Ricerche Storiche Abruzzo Teramano.
- Cumont, F. 1949. *Lux perpetua [Perpetual light]*. Paris: P. Geuthner.
- Dardenay, A. 2012. *Images des fondateurs d'Énée à Romulus [Images of the founders from Aeneas to Romulus]*. Bordeaux, France: Ausonius Éditions.
- De Maria, S. 1988. *Gli archi onorari di Roma e dell'Italia romana [The honorary arches of Rome and Roman Italy]*. Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Di Franco, L. and Mancini, L. forthcoming. Una testa di Nettuno al Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto. Dalla lettura iconografica alle testimonianze del culto di Poseidon/Neptunus nella colonia greca e romana [A head of Neptune at the National Archaeological Museum of Taranto. From the iconographic reading to the testimonies of the cult of Poseidon/Neptunus in the Greek and Roman colony]. *Mediterranea* 19: 113–140.
- Di Franco, L. and Mermati, F. 2022. Il Bacco da Piacenza: Matteo Camera, Tito Angelini e il contesto di uno scavo borbonico [The Bacchus of Piacenza: Matteo Camera, Tito Angelini and the context of a Bourbon excavation]. *Archeologia Classica* 73: 519–549.
- Dulière, C. 1979. *Lupa Romana: Recherches d'iconographie et essai d'interprétation [Lupa Romana: Iconographic research and interpretation essay]*. Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome.
- Faccenna, D. 2003. I rilievi Torlonia dal Fucino [The Torlonia reliefs from Fucino]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 69–81. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Fähndrich, S. 2005. *Bogenmonumente in der römischen Kunst: Ausstattung, Funktion und Bedeutung antiker Bogen- und Torbauten [Arch monuments in Roman art: Equipment, function and significance of ancient arch and gate structures]*. Rahden, Germany: Leidorf.
- Felici, E. 2019a. Il rilievo Torlonia. Manifesto libertino del commercio marittimo [The Torlonia relief. Libertine manifesto of maritime trade]. *L'archeologo subacqueo* 70(2): 2–32.
- Felici, E. 2019b. Il rilievo Torlonia: Appunti di iconografia portuale [The Torlonia relief: Notes on port iconography]. *Rivista di archeologia* 43: 179–193.
- Felici, E. 2022. Iconografia portuale romana: Note di topografia antica litoranea [Roman port iconography: Notes of ancient coastal topography]. *Rivista di Topografia antica* 22: 7–66.
- Felisini, D. 2019. Giovanni Torlonia. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 96: 273–276.
- Fenet, A. 2016. *Les dieux olympiens et la mer [The Olympian gods and the sea]*. Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome.
- Feuser, S. 2015. Kult und Kultbautenn in Hafendarstellungen, Hafendarstellungen in Kult und Kultbauten Kult und Kultbauten [Cult and cult buildings in port representations, port representations in cult and cult buildings cult and cult buildings]. In: T. Schmidts and M.M. Vučetić (eds.), *Häfen im 1. Millennium AD: Bauliche Konzepte, herrschaftliche und religiöse Einflüsse [Ports in the 1st millennium AD: Architectural concepts, manorial and religious influences]*, 35–52. Regensburg, Germany: Schnell & Steiner.
- Geoffroy, A. 1878. *L'archéologie du lac Fucin [The archaeology of Lake Fucin]*. Paris: Didier.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2003a. Note sulla composizione dei rilievi Torlonia [Notes on the composition of the Torlonia reliefs]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 81–82. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2003b. La rappresentazione degli argani [The representation of the winches]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 79–81. Pescara: Carsa Edizioni.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2008. Sfidando gli Inferi: Problemi di cantiere per l'emissario del Fucino [Challenging the Underworld: Building site problems for the Fucino emissary]. *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* L: 33–48.
- Guarducci, M. 1953. Alba Fucens: Graffiti nell'antico tempio sul colle di S. Pietro [Alba Fucens: Graffiti in the ancient temple on the hill of S. Pietro]. *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 8: 117–125.

- Guglielmotti, A. 1874. *Delle due navi romane: Scolpite sul bassorilievo portuense del principe Torlonia dissertazione del P. M. Alberto Guglielmotti [Of the two Roman ships: Sculpted on the port bas-relief of Prince Torlonia dissertation by the P. M. Alberto Guglielmotti]*. Roma: Cotta e Comp. Tipografi del Senato.
- Guidetti, F. 2007. La tomba di Trimalchione. Saggio di commento archeologico al Satyricon [The tomb of Trimalchio. Archaeological commentary essay on the Satyricon]. In: F. de Angelis (ed.), *I normalisti per Paul Zanker [Normalists for Paul Zanker]*, 77–95. Pisa, Italy: Edizioni della Normale Superiore di Pisa.
- Jones, N. B. 2018. Exemplarity and encyclopedism at the Tomb of Eurysaces. *Classical Antiquity* 37(1): 63–107.
- Keay, S. J. 2012. *Rome, Portus and the Mediterranean*. London: The British School at Rome.
- Keay, S. J. 2021. Reflections upon the challenges in documenting Portus Romae, the maritime port of Imperial Rome. In: L. Chioffi, M. Kajava and S. Örmä (eds.), *Il Mediterraneo e la storia [The Mediterranean and history]*, 51–70. Roma: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae.
- Keay, S. J. and Millet, M. 2005. *Portus. An archaeological survey of the port of Imperial Rome*. London: The British School at Rome.
- Keay, S. J. and Woytek, B. 2022. Portum Traiani: An interdisciplinary approach to the imagery of Trajan's harbour at Portus. *Chapters of the British School at Rome* 90: 63–107.
- Kockel, V. (1983). *Die Grabbauten vor dem Herkulaner Tor in Pompeji [The tombs in front of the Herculaneum Gate in Pompeii]*. Mainz, Germany: P. von Zabern.
- Lanciani, R. 1868. *Ricerche sulla topografia della città di Porto [Research on the topography of the city of Porto]*. Roma: Tipografia Tiberina.
- Letta, C. 1994. Rileggendo le fonti antiche sul Fucino [Re-reading the ancient sources on Fucino]. In: E. Burri (ed.), *Sulle rive della memoria. il Lago Fucino e il suo Emissario [On the shores of memory. Lake Fucino and its outlet]*, 202–212. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Lugli, G. and Filibeck, G. 1935. *Il porto di Roma imperiale e l'agro portuense [The port of imperial Rome and the agro portuense]*. Roma: Istituto Italiano Arti Grafiche.
- Maiorano, M., Paroli, L. and Agnoli, N. 2013. *La Basilica Portuense: Scavi 1991–2007 [The Portuense Basilica: Excavations 1991–2007]*. Borgo San Lorenzo, Italy: All'Insegna del Giglio.
- Maiuri, A. 1958. Navalìa Pompeiana. *Rend. dell'Accademia di archeologia, lettere e belle arti*, 33: 7–34.
- Massner, A. 1982. *Bildnisangleichung: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungs- und Wirkungsgeschichte der Augustusporträts (43 v.Chr.–68 n.Chr.) [Adaptation of portraits: Studies on the history of the origin and impact of Augustus portraits (43 BC–68 AD)]*. Berlin: Mann.
- Meda, S. 2010. Gli occhi e l'anima propria delle barche: Religiosità e credenze popolari tra antichità e tradizione [The eyes and soul of boats: Religiosity and popular beliefs between antiquity and tradition]. In: E. Acquaro, A. Filippi and S. Medas (eds.), *La devozione dei naviganti. Il culto di Afrodite Ericina nel Mediterraneo [The devotion of sailors. The cult of Aphrodite Ericina in the Mediterranean]*, 11–23. Lugano, Italy: Athenaion, Lumières internationales.
- Meiggs, R. 1973. *Roman Ostia* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mertens, J. 1969. *Alba Fucens. II. raports et études [Alba Fucens. II. reports and studies]*. Bruxelles: Centre Belge de recherches archéologiques en Italie Centrale et Méridionale.
- Migliorati, L. 2007. Peltuinum: Un aggiornamento [Peltuinum: An update]. *Journal of Ancient Topography* XVII: 107–126.
- Migliorati, L. 2015. Lo spazio diacronico: Elementi di riflessione sull'uso del suolo attraverso i secoli [The diachronic space: Elements of reflection on land use through the centuries]. *Roma* 27(2): 129–142.
- Nuovo, M.M.S. and Tedeschi, C. forthcoming. Graffiti di San Pietro in Albe tra Antichità e Alto Medioevo [Graffiti from St. Peter in Albe between Antiquity and Early Middle Age]. In G. Curzi C. D'Alberto, M. Gianandrea and E. Tosti (eds.) *Lungo la via Tiburtina Valeria nel Medioevo [Along the via Tiburtina during Middle Age]*. Proceedings of the conference held in Chieti and Rome, 14–17 November 2023. Rome: Società Romana di Storia Patria.
- Ojeda, D. 2017. Rilievo Torlonia inv. n. 430: L'immagine sul faro [Torlonia relief inv. no. 430: The image on the lighthouse]. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 118: 85–92.
- Paroli, L. 2005. History of past research at Portus. In S. J. Keay and M. Millet (eds.), *Portus. An archaeological survey of the port of Imperial Rome*, 43–59. London: The British School at Rome.
- Pensa, M. 1999. Moli, fari e pescatori: La tradizione iconografica della città portuale in età romana [Piers, lighthouses and fishermen: The iconographic tradition of the port city in Roman times]. *Rivista di Archeologia* 23: 94–130.
- Pitassi, M. 2011. *Roman warships*. Martlesham, England: Boydell and Brewer.
- Romeo, I. 1997. Genius. In: H.C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 599–607. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Salomon, F., Goiran J.-P., Bellotti, P. and Keay, S. 2017. *Géoarchéologie des canaux de Portus - Estimation des*

- gabarits [Geoarchaeology of the canals of Portus—Estimation of dimensions]. In G. Caneva, C. M. Travaglini and C. Virlouvet (eds.), *Roma, Tevere, Litorale. Ricerca tra passato e presente [Rome, Tiber, Coast. Research between past and present]*, 53–60. Roma: École française de Rome, CROMA - Università Roma Tre.
- Salveti, C. 2002. Claudius Claudianus clarissimus vir? Gli scavi per l'apertura di via Nazionale e il ritrovamento del mosaico con scena di porto [Claudius Claudianus, the most famous man? The excavations for the opening of Via Nazionale and the discovery of the mosaic with a port scene]. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 103: 68–88.
- Schäfer, T. 2022. *Der Reliefzyklus Medinaceli: Von Actium bis Nero: Zeitgeschichte und Selbstverständnis im Principat des Kaisers Claudius [The relief cycle Medinaceli: From Actium to Nero: Contemporary history and self-understanding in the principate of Emperor Claudius]*. Rahden, Germany: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH.
- Segenni, S. 2003. Il prosciugamento del lago Fucino e le scoperte archeologiche [The drying up of Lake Fucino and the archaeological discoveries]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 56–62. Pescara: Carsa Edizioni.
- Settis S. and Gasparri C. (eds.). 2020. *I marmi Torlonia. collezionare capolavori [The Torlonia marbles. Collecting masterpieces]*. Milano, Italy: Electa.
- Simon, E. 1994. Neptunus. In: H.C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 483–497. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Sommella, P. and Tascio, M. 1991. Ricerca sull'urbanistica romana nella zona fucense: Marruvium [Research on Roman town planning in the Fucens area: Marruvium]. In: *Il Fucino e le aree limitrofe nell'antichità, atti del Convegno di Archeologia (Avezzano, 10–11 novembre 1989) [Fucino and neighbouring areas in antiquity, proceedings of the archaeology conference (Avezzano, 10–11 November 1989)]*, 456–477. Avezzano: Archeoclub d'Italia—Sezione della Marsica.
- Testaguzza, O. and Peliti R. 1970. *Portus: Illustrazione dei porti di Claudio e Traiano e della città di porto a Fiumicino [Portus: Illustration of the ports of Claudius and Trajan and the port city at Fiumicino]*. Roma: Julia Editrice.
- Tuccinardi, S. 2020. Bassorilievo con veduta del Portus Augusti [Bas-relief with view of the Portus Augusti]. In: S. Settis and C. Gasparri (eds.), *I marmi Torlonia. Collezionare capolavori [The Torlonia marbles. Collected masterpieces]*, 175–178. Milano, Italy: Electa.
- Tuccinardi, S. 2022. *Un tesoro di erudizione e arte. Il Museo Torlonia di scultura antica [A treasure trove of scholarship and art. The Torlonia Museum of ancient sculpture]*. Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.
- Tuck, S. L. 2008. The expansion of triumphal imagery beyond Rome: Imperial monuments at the harbors of Ostia and Leptis Magna. In: R. L. Hohlfelder (ed.), *The maritime world of ancient Rome: Proceedings of 'the maritime world of ancient Rome': Conference held at the American Academy in Rome, 27–29 March 2003*, 325–341. Ann Arbor, MI.: Published for the American Academy in Rome by the University of Michigan Press.
- Ugolini, F. 2020. *Visualizing harbours in the classical world: Iconography and representation around the Mediterranean*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Van Haepelen, F. 2019. *Regio I: Ostie, Porto (fana, templa, delubra. Corpus dei luoghi di culto dell'Italia antica—FTD, 6) [Regio I: Ostie, Porto (fana, templa, delubra. Corpus of places of worship in ancient Italy—FTD, 6)]*. Paris: Collège de France.
- Visconti, P. E. 1884. *I monumenti del Museo Torlonia riprodotti con la fototipia. Vol. II, tavole [The monuments of the Torlonia Museum reproduced with the phototype. Vol. II, plates]*. Roma: Stabilimento Fotografico Danesi.
- Visconti, P. E. 1885. *I monumenti del Museo Torlonia riprodotti con la fototipia. Vol. I, testo [The monuments of the Torlonia Museum reproduced with the phototype. Vol. I, text]*. Roma: Tipografia Tiberina di F. Setti.
- Volpi, G. R. 1734. *Vetus Latium profanum [Old Latin profanity]*. Patavii: [Giovanni Antonio e Gaetano Volpi] excudebat Josephus Cominus.
- Zanker, P. 1982. Herrscherbild und Zeitgesicht [Image of ruler and face of time]. In *Römisches Porträt Wege zur Erforschung eines gesellschaftlichen Phänomens. Wissenschaftliche Konferenz 12–15 Mai 1981 (Römisches Porträt) [Roman portrait ways of researching a social phenomenon. Scientific conference 12–15 May 1981 (Roman portrait)]*, 307–312. Berlin: Humboldt Universität.
- Zanker, P. 2002. *Un'arte per l'impero. funzione e intenzione delle immagini nel mondo romano [An art for the empire. Function and intention of images in the Roman world]*. Roma: Electa.
- Zimmer, G. 1982. *Römische Berufsdarstellungen [Roman job descriptions]*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.

Maritime material culture and its connection to Eastern Orthodox Christian saints: a preliminary study

Rafail Papadopoulos

Abstract: Christianity has long been associated with water: it acts as a natural barrier in Moses' story, it is a means of spiritual cleansing used by John the Baptist and it is connected to parables and miracles attributed to Jesus and various saints. Water and water-related activities such as fishing and seafaring have been purposefully adopted into faith, spiritual practices and remembrance. Moreover, marine vessels, which have been an important means of transport for Mediterranean civilisations since prehistory, were included in Christian practices in a variety of ways, not just as symbols of saints but also as part of rituals.

This chapter presents a preliminary study of the connection between Christian saints and maritime material culture. The focus is examples from early Christianity, especially Greek Orthodox Christianity, as developed in the eastern Mediterranean during the Mediaeval period and thereafter. The first part of the study assesses written sources associated with saints of the sea such as Nicholas of Myra and Phocas the Gardener. The second section discusses how art and material culture—mainly icons and frescoes, religious works of art—relate to narratives of the saints' lives, associated miracles, local beliefs and spiritual practices. Icons are devotional paintings of Christ or other holy figures typically executed on wood and used ceremonially in the Byzantine and other Eastern Churches, while frescoes are religious murals painted on walls.

Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to present matters of faith and materiality in maritime context, as expressed through textual evidence and material artefacts from Eastern and Greek Orthodox Christianity. It is hoped this preliminary study will reveal new insights into and connections between maritime material culture, the sea itself and the artefacts, symbols, monumental art, votives and rituals which have been used by Christian maritime communities for over two millennia.

Introduction

Water has been associated with faith and the divine since prehistoric times (Rappenglück 2014). In Europe as early as the Neolithic, it was conceived as the personification and extension of deities (Tvedt and Oestigaard 2006; Oestigaard 2011). This conceptualization inspired cults, beliefs, rituals and practices in many communities. Some of the earliest material evidence for processes linking divinity with water comes from the Mediterranean region and dates to the first millennium BC. Poseidon, the ancient Greek god of the sea, was its embodiment, personification and sole ruler. Temples to Poseidon were built near ports and maritime routes to influence maritime activities and movements and gain the god's patronage and protection (Mylonopoulos 2013). Deities such as Poseidon and mythological events taking place in water were the frequent subjects of sculptures, paintings and other types of artefacts from the period, while rituals and festivals celebrated water-related events such as the 'Navigium Isidis' ['The Voyage of Isis'] of Roman-era Alexandria, the annual reopening of the sailing season (Hanrahan 1962) which memorialised

the links between divinities, aquatic environments and the communities using them.

This deep entanglement between water, religion, material culture and rituals continued into the first millennium AD. In its first five centuries, Christianity, which was then just emerging from and still firmly connected to the Judaic tradition, was closely associated with water and maritime material culture (Goodenough 1943: 408–410; Siegal and Yovel 2023). Water—including sea water—was viewed as means of purification, as well as a symbol for spreading the message of the new religion (see Réau 1955–1959 and Jensen 2000 for a discussion of baptism and iconography in early Christian art). Some of the apostles were fishermen (Matthew 4:18–22), or they spread their message through maritime journeys across the Mediterranean, or they were baptised with water (Acts 2:38). Christian maritime communities built churches and chapels to host and honour icons and relics of saints and gain the saints' patronage and protection (Morgan 2010: 23–24; for a general introduction to early saints and their connections to pre-Christian traditions, see Réau 1955–

1959 and Mathews 1993). Connections between churches dedicated to patron saints of seafaring and cities with harbours and seafaring activities are readily apparent in the archaeological and textual records of the Mediaeval and post-Mediaeval periods.

The connection between water and Christian societies has long been a subject of study and analysis (e.g., Flatman 2011: 313–315). Perhaps the most prominent of these efforts is the nine-volume series *A history of water* (edited by Tvedt and Oestigaard), which includes contributions from more than 230 scholars and took a decade to publish (2006–2016). Another major study of maritime material culture, maritime archaeology, theology and Christian saints is Gambin's 2014 book *Ships, saints and sealore: Cultural heritage and ethnography of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea*, which provides important interdisciplinary research results.

Despite these extensive studies, a new research question emerged during an assessment of the contemporary literature, one which concerned maritime material culture in the context of Christianity during the Mediaeval and post-Mediaeval periods. In archaeology, the analytical approach to the production of material culture includes artistic expression. Nonetheless, few analyses have focussed on the interconnections between maritime communities, their material culture and the maritime landscape. In other words, artefacts are typically analysed as individual pieces of material culture, but few scholarly studies have connected them to other aspects of the local communities which produced them (Hatch 2011: 217–218, 231). This chapter aims to fill the gap by providing a holistic overview of the entanglements between maritime environments, social aspects of Christian communities and the representation of those aspects in the associated material culture, particularly forms of religious art.

Research aims and methodology

By combining theological, textual, archaeological and art historical research data, derived mainly from the Eastern Orthodox tradition, this preliminary study provides insight into the maritime interconnections between religion, the environment and local communities. Saints such as Nicholas of Myra and Phocas the Gardener, their honouring and veneration by local communities, the symbols used to depict them and the related artefacts produced in southeastern Europe during the Mediaeval and post-Mediaeval periods are discussed, with a particular focus on Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. The data and details discussed here were collected through a desktop study and analysis of published scholarship, along with Christian texts (e.g. the Bible, missals and liturgical books).

Analysis of the collected data, as presented here, seeks to bridge the gap identified in the literature by providing critical interpretations of Christian beliefs, material culture and rituals within the context of the maritime cultural

landscape of the eastern Mediterranean region (Westerdahl 1992). Specifically, within the research framework formulated by Hatch (2011), this study focuses on the ways religious artefacts, symbols and rituals are created and used by fishermen and maritime communities. These elements connect maritime material culture to specific maritime communities, showing how artefacts become core parts of cultural identities. Through specific case studies, this chapter also examines how these elements become part of broader networks of beliefs, rituals and traditions.

For the purposes of this analysis, specific case studies of saints and relevant artefacts were selected. Admittedly, the case studies presented here are a subset of the available data intended to represent the larger range. They are also part of a broader field of study with significant potential to reveal the interrelations between the identities of maritime communities and their Eastern Orthodox beliefs, practices and artefacts.

The Christian faith and water

The roots of Christianity are deeply embedded in the spiritual and philosophical life of the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures, which had various connections to water through cultural beliefs and practices and pre-Christian religions. Christianity often adopted these earlier associations of water with divinity (Flatman 2011: 313–315, fig.17.2). Water is often mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament, God is referred to as 'the spring of living water' (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13). In the New Testament, Jesus is mentioned as 'the water of life' (John 4:10–26, 6:22–59). In the Gospels of the New Testament, John the Baptist baptised people in water in the name of God. In Orthodox Christian liturgies, water is used in baptisms, and holy water is used to cleanse and bless believers. Blessings over waters underline the power of water to cleanse, a belief belonging to ancient traditions in the Mediterranean region (Armstrong and Armstrong 2006: 367–375; N. Papadopoulos 2012: 390–391, 432–433, 456, 510; Papastavrou 2012). There are many blessings for cleansing seafarers, their activities and the tools and products of their craft. In Eastern Orthodox maritime communities, there are also blessings for the construction of sea vessels, the fishermen who sail them and their fishing nets (N. Papadopoulos 2012: 390–391).

In the *vitas* (biographies) of saints, water—and especially the sea—often take the role of an adversary. In the stories of Moses and Elijah, it is a natural barrier, and in accounts of Saint Brendan and Saint Nicholas of Myra, it is a liquid desert full of arduous trials. Water is ultimately conquered by the prayers of the prophets and saints through divine intervention (Töyräänvuori 2022), a topic discussed in greater detail in later sections. Water is also a means of travelling and an environment for work, shared experience which connected saints to local maritime communities. For example, Saints Peter and Andrew were particularly venerated by maritime communities because they were

fishermen both before and while they conducted their apostolic work (Pontifical Council 2023).

Patron saints and sacred material culture

In early Christianity, saints were regular people who were baptised and enlightened by the teachings of Jesus which had spread through his apostles and followers. Many saints from the first several centuries of the new millennium were fishermen and seafaring merchants (Luke 5: 1–11). They spread the new religion by leveraging the advantages of their maritime mobility (Acts 27: 1–2). Many died due to, within or through instruments used on or in water. Some also possessed honorary titles because they either worked at sea or conducted or experienced miracles related to the sea. Saints such as Nicholas of Myra and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are often adopted as patrons and protectors of maritime communities. These religious beliefs and associated stories have also been expressed in Christian material culture, through forms such as the icons used to decorate the walls of churches. The tradition of icons emerged in the early days of Christianity, and it continued throughout the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine eras (Kenna 1985: 364–368).

Cultural forms like icons often possess additional meaning, especially when they are incorporated into rituals and spiritual practices. Such uses make this type of artefact an important part of religious, cultural and social identity, thus aligning Orthodox Christianity with the anthropological concept of ‘lived religion’. Religions are understood as ‘ways of fabricating networks of relations among human beings, on the one hand, and relations with gods, angels, saints, the afterlife, spirits or ancestors, nationhood, destiny, or providence, on the other’; in ‘lived religion’, images and artefacts ‘work as ways of engaging the human body in the configuration of the sacred’ (Morgan 2010: 16; also see Kenna 1985: 367–368). An icon becomes more than a depiction of a saint, as it becomes associated with cultural beliefs, social interactions, ritual behaviours and places for practicing those behaviours.

Saints’ icons and symbols in Holy Scripture, art and material culture

Material culture¹ and artistic products² related to the lives of saints almost invariably depict the various events and divine interventions which brought them into the Christian faith. Icons typically depict events described in scripture and other Christian texts. Often regulated by theologians and Church leaders, these artworks are known to impact the communities using them quite deeply. For example,

¹ These artefacts can be directly connected to the life of a saint, including his or her physical remains, personal belongings, housing, means of travel, tools of work, etc. They can also be objects related to miracles and/or teachings of a saint while he or she was alive. Other objects include instruments related to the death of the saint, the location of his or her death or martyrdom, and relics and materials connected to miracles after his or her death.

² The most common artistic products are representations of saints and their symbols in portable icons, wall paintings (frescos) or mosaics.

an icon of Saint Nicholas showed him miraculously saving a ship’s crew from certain destruction; sailors and fishermen felt directly connected to the subject of the icon and prayed to receive his protection when at sea (Morgan 2010: 20–21).

Some of the most important symbols of Christianity are also connected to the sea. The anchor, a symbol of hope (Hebrews 6:19), is often placed on tombstones. Similarly, the fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ in Greek, an abbreviation of Ιησούς Χριστός Θεού Υιός Σωτήρ, which translates as ‘Jesus Christ, son of God and saviour’) was used by Christians in the era of Roman persecution to mark them as having been ‘fished out’ of the sea of humanity and saved by the apostles (Luke 5:11; Mark 1:17; Lamberton 1911; Delvoy 1988: 23). In early Christian art, fish represent the souls of the deceased that the Divine Fisherman catches in his net. This assimilation became commonplace in relation to the vocation of the apostles, as the first four were recruited from among fishermen from the lake Genesaret and were later transformed as fishermen of souls (Reau 2000: 102). The fish also takes the form of the dolphin, thought to be the saviour of castaways who swims by the vessel/ship of the church, sometime even carrying the church on its back as a symbol of Christ holding his church (Reau 2000: 102).

Fish and their connection to water are also found in the *Physiologus*, a collection of moralized beast tales with several references to fish and their connection to Christian faith (Sbordone 1936). The compendium is thought to have been written around the third or fourth century AD, although it was initially believed to have been written as early as the second century AD. The *Physiologus* also contains a reference to the *aspidochelone*, a sea monster which tricks sailors into thinking they have found land before sinking their ships; this beast is considered a representation of Satan (Konstantakos 2020: 281).

In the Old Testament, Noah’s ark and his God-given mission to save humanity from the flood are symbolically paralleled in the New Testament, where the Church is the ark and assumes its mission to save the human species. Finally, the ship on stormy waters symbolises the Church as it sails towards heaven while facing worldly dangers; Jesus is the captain of the metaphorical vessel, and his lieutenants are the Church leaders and the saints (Lekkos 2015: 8–22). John Chrysostom, an early Church leader who also served as the archbishop of Constantinople and was later canonised as a saint, described the Church as a ship in stormy seas saved from destruction through divine intervention:

... δέχεται τραύματα, καὶ οὐ καταπίπτει ὑπὸ τῶν ἑλκῶν κλυδωνίζεται, ἀλλ’ οὐ καταποντίζεται· χειμάζεται, ἀλλὰ ναύαγιον οὐχ ὑπομένει...

... she is wounded yet sinks not under her wounds; tossed by waves yet not submerged; vexed by storms yet suffers no shipwreck ... (Papadimitrakopoulou 2009: 153).

Even today, a building built as a church is compared to a ship: the main architectural component is referred to as the *nave*, a term related to the Latin *navis*, meaning ‘ship’ (Rabiega and Kobylinski 2018: 207). These examples show water and ships as deeply connected to the Christian faith and its symbolic tradition.

Churches and relics of saints were often destinations of choice for pilgrimages made by local and distant believers alike. These faith-inspired journeys created networks and means of communication that spanned and connected communities, societies and regions (Morgan 2010: 27–28). Pilgrimages were important contributors to and influences on the socio-economic growth of cities, especially those containing sites with religious significance such as Rome and Jerusalem (Bell and Dale 2011: 601–603). In many locations, icons, frescos and other types of artefacts were dedicated to specific saints due to the miracles associated with them. These depictions often contained inscriptions which briefly narrated the story depicted. Such artefacts are found throughout the Mediterranean region (Drewer 1996: 7–9; Gambin 2014: 10–11).

Patron saints of the sea: icons and the maritime element

The following sections review five maritime saints whose patronage is directly associated with scripture and/or can be verified with archaeological data. Particular focus is given to two saints: Nicholas of Myra and Phocas the Gardener.

The Virgin Mary

While Mary’s life is not described in any detail in the New Testament or the Apocrypha, a large cult formed around her after the First Council of Constantinople in the fourth century AD. This circumstance motivated the theologians of the era to examine her biblical importance and refer to her as the Virgin Mary in the Nicene Creed. In Greece, starting in early Christianity and continuing in the Eastern Orthodox faith, the Virgin Mary (Παναγία or Panagia in Greek, meaning ‘all holy’ or ‘most holy’) was given over 2,500 epithets and 70,000 honorary adjectives which varied by location and time period (Maas 1914; MKPK 2007). Some of her titles, given to her by local communities as a form of endearment and veneration, are directly associated with water. Contemporary examples include Παναγία Γοργόνα (Panagia the Gorgon/Mermaid) and ‘Παναγία Θαλασσινή’ (Panagia of the Sea).

An early title, Ζωοδόχος Πηγή (‘the spring of life’), relates to Mary’s role as the mother of Jesus. This title is attested by the sacred spring and the Church of St Mary of the Spring in Istanbul, Türkiye, which dates to the fifth or sixth century AD (Saint-1475 2023). The veneration of Mary as a patron of maritime communities is reflected in *votive icons* (these are paintings given to a church in honour of prayers answered), which usually depict her accordingly to

the content of one of her titles or by referencing a miracle attributed to her intercession. An example is shown in Figure 7.1 (BXM-02267 2023); it is a wooden votive icon dedicated to Mary held in the collection of the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Mary is depicted on the top half of the icon holding Jesus in the stance of the Οδηγήτρια (‘guide’). The bottom half depicts a shipwreck, with men swimming towards the shore and safety. The inscription names Κούρτζουλα (Kureczula) as the site of the wreck, and Ioannis Ardavanis, a sailor from the island of Kefalonia in the Ionian Sea, as the person dedicating the icon to Mary in gratitude for his surviving the shipwreck due to her intercession.

Saint Nicholas

Saint Nicholas (Άγιος Νικόλαος, in Greek) of Myra is one of the most venerated saints in the Christian world (Delehayé *et al.* 1940: 568; Zias 1969: 275–277). He was born in the third century AD in the Patara of Lycia on the Mediterranean coast of Türkiye. He lived during a particularly troubled period for the new religion: the Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian had launched the Great Persecution in 303 AD, severely punishing Nicholas and thousands of other Christians for their faith. Nicholas was imprisoned during the persecutions, and he was known as an educated man and a paragon of justice, philanthropy and kindness (Mpakopoulos 2002: 215–216).

While no contemporary documents mention Nicholas, he is referenced in texts dated to about two centuries after his death. One was written by Theodorus Lector between 515 and 520 AD. In the text, Nicholas is described as one of the individuals attending the Council of Nicaea of 325 AD. By the time the *Life of Saint Nicholas of Sion* was written sometime during the second half of the sixth century, there was a martyrium (a church built over the tomb of a martyr) for Saint Nicholas of Myra (Sweetman 2017: 31–32). Given this, it seems likely his cult had already been established by the time the texts were written (Blacker *et al.* 2013: 250).

A later vita of Saint Nicholas is the *Vita Compilata*, an anonymous manuscript from the ninth or tenth century AD. This account is interesting because it combines two vitas: one concerns Nicholas of Myra, the other Nicholas of Sion (Strati 2015: 586). Other early compositions of Nicholas’ vita are based on a tenth-century series of books, the *menologion* (a collection of saints’ lives) of Saint Symeon the Translator. Symeon’s work was translated and included in later vitas such as the scripts of Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (Mpakopoulos 2002: 207, 210).

Saint Nicholas would ultimately absorb many of the characteristics and traditions associated with Neptune, the pre-Christian god of the sea (Réau 1955–1959: 361–365). Although it had emerged from the aniconic Judaic tradition, early Christianity embraced the use of icons and imagery as a way of transmitting its most important



Figure 7.1. Portable icon (BXM-02267) depicting Mary holding Jesus (top) and a shipwreck (bottom); it measures 45.0 × 33.0 cm and has been dated to the second half of the seventeenth century. The icon reflects the refined post-Byzantine techniques of the Ionian islands, combining realistic elements from Italian Renaissance art with the late Byzantine techniques used in workshops in Crete and western Greece. The icon is composed of vibrant colours—mainly gold, black, dark green and blue—and is of excellent craftsmanship. Copyright Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum, and used with permission.

dogmas to recent converts. Paraphrasing earlier Christian scholars in the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great defended the use of religious images as fulfilling ‘a useful and important function: the pictures are made for the instruction of the illiterate’ (Barasch 2013: 64). Many artists engaged to make the images were trained in the classical Greco-Roman tradition, and thus they applied well-known, pre-existing models to biblical stories. In this way, the Christian God acquired the attributes of Apollo or Sol Invictus as the new religion spread in Europe. After the Roman Empire made Christianity its official religion, God acquired the image of Jupiter, the main deity. As biblical stories and associated artistic images became codified, artists retained some discretion in how they represented stories associated with saints. As Réau notes, many of the early saints took over the cults of heroes (warriors, protectors, or healers) and minor gods, assimilating not only their physical characteristics and powers but also their attributes. Thus, Saint Nicholas took over Neptune’s role.

Saint Nicholas’ position as a patron of the sea and sailors is connected to miraculous events from his life and after his death, especially ones described after the tenth-century vita compilations. According to these narratives, when Nicholas decided to sail to Jerusalem, he had a vision of the devil cutting the ropes of his ship; this foretold an upcoming storm, which the saint calmed with a prayer. During the storm, a sailor accidentally fell from the sails to his death. The saint prayed over the body, and the sailor was brought back to life. When the crew of the ship decided to head for their homeland instead of Patara, their original destination, the rudder of the ship broke. The saint prayed once more so they could safely reach Patara (Mpakopoulos 2002: 213–214). In another miracle, the saint appeared on the helm (steering wheel) of a ship and safely guided its crew to his city of Myra (Mpakopoulos 2002: 224–225). Miracles attributed to Saint Nicholas after his death include his delivering the crew of a ship from malicious demons. He also saved a man drowning in a storm; he miraculously brought the man back to his house, wet from the stormy waters but otherwise unscathed (Mpakopoulos 2002: 226–228).

Based on his life, miracles and popularity among maritime communities throughout the Mediterranean, Saint Nicholas has been considered the patron saint of the sea and its workers since the Mediaeval era. His veneration flourished well before the Great Schism broke the communion between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches in 1054, and it continued afterwards in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Churches were built in his honour near the sea, and small wooden icons depicting him are used to this day on boats and ships to honour him and gain his protection (Blacker *et al.* 2013: 249–251).

In Greece, Saint Nicholas is considered the guardian of the Hellenic navy, and as such, he is honoured with celebrations on his feast day (December 6th) and by

the use of his name and image on sailing vessels. After the construction of every vessel is completed, blessings are read, and they invoke his name specifically (N. Papadopoulos 2012: 390–391; *Άγιοι Προστάτες των επαγγελματιών* 2016: 48–49).

In Eastern Orthodox iconography (the use of visual images and conventions to convey cultural ideas), Saint Nicholas is typically depicted as a bishop, and he is usually near ships. These visual choices refer to episodes from his life and associated miracles, and they signify his status as the protector of sailors. Interestingly, in his physical depiction, his physiognomy usually combines the features of two saints: Nicholas of Myra and Nicholas of Sion. This phenomenon becomes evident starting in the tenth century, and it originates in the aforementioned unification of the *vitas* for the two saints (Strati 2015: 586–589).

Beginning in the tenth century AD, the life episodes in the depictions of Saint Nicholas start to follow the details of his *vita* as found in the narrations of Saint Symeon the Translator. These episodes show themes not present in portable or monumental depictions before Symeon’s time (Skavara 2005: 81). The scenes in this depiction are complex, greatly varied, and derive from Nicholas’ life and miracles, a fact which endures even during the post-Byzantine era throughout the entirety of the Balkan region (Skavara 2005: 80–81). Despite the use of different artistic styles and the wide geographic range of manufacture and use, these depictions exhibit a thematic and chronological continuity which goes hand in hand with the post-ninth century scriptural references to the saint (Zias 1969b: 276–277).

In southern Albania (*e.g.* Gjirokastrë) and northwestern Greece, icons and frescoes combine simple linear designs with expressive eyes and lighted faces, characteristics also found in the fourteenth-century visual depictions of Saint Nicholas at the Church of St Nicholas of the Roof near Kakopetria, Cyprus (Skavara 2005: 91–93). Particularly in northwestern workshops, these characteristics reflect the combination of older and newer techniques and style, while also incorporating methods from the schools of artists in northwestern Greece and Crete. These phenomena show the endurance of artistic themes and techniques in Orthodox Christian hagiography, despite political and societal change, implying the formation and endurance of networks for communication and interaction between communities (Skavara 2005: 92–93).

Starting in the fifteenth century, the Greek northwestern region of Kastoria was home to Christian art workshops which became renowned throughout the region. An example of these workshops comes from the fourteenth-century icon of the life of Saint Nicholas at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Dragota, Kastoria in Greece. The icon includes the miracle of Saint Nicholas on a ship travelling towards Jerusalem, in which he calmed a storm (Strati 2015).

The miracles connected to Saint Nicholas continued to be depicted in post-Byzantine art, often ‘vita icons’, based on details from the combined vita. A ‘vita icon’ is the image of the life of a saint which typically consists of a large central portrait surrounded by episodes from the saint’s biography. For example, in the early seventeenth-century church of Saint Nikolaos at Sarakinishte of Lunxheri in southern Albania, we find scenes of Saint Nicholas’ life, including some of his miracles near the sea and on ships (Skavara 2005: 85, 86, 89, 92). In this church, the Artemis miracle, in which Saint Nicholas demolished through prayer a temple of Artemis, the chaste Greek goddess of the hunt, also appears in the early eighteenth-century church of Saint Nicholas in Petra on the island of Lesbos in Greece. This is directly related to the fourteenth-century Holy Church of Saint Nicholas Orphanos in Thessaloniki, Greece. Interestingly, this once again highlights the enduring artistic traditions regarding depictions of Saint Nicholas, as well as the networks of communication between distant Christian communities within which these traditions were transferred (Sakellariadi 2018: 266).

In the collection of the Athens Byzantine and Christian Museum, there is a portable wooden icon of Saint Nicholas (Figure 7.2; see BXM-13185 2023). Chronologically, it is placed at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. This vita icon was chosen for this study because its depiction follows the saint’s life as described in vitas written after the ninth century. The correspondence between visual depictions and textual descriptions confirms the continuity of the tradition across a span of many centuries.

The icon contains three rows of images. Each consists of three small scenes, for a total of nine images. Starting from the top left, the beginning of the saint’s pastoral work is depicted with his ordination. Next to it is an example of his charity: he gives a pouch filled with coins to the father of three poor sisters who lie in bed. The third image shows the saint’s religious zeal, which inspires him to destroy false idols.

The second, central, row contains the main image of Saint Nicholas in its middle position; he is depicted seated on his bishop’s throne, and he blesses the viewer. In this row are two miracles performed by the saint on the sea. To the left, he saves a sailor from drowning; to the right, he saves the crew of a ship from a storm caused by malevolent spirits. It is not a coincidence these miracles have been placed in the central row, as they refer directly to the saint’s association with the sea and his patronage of sailors.

The third (bottom) row is dedicated to the saint’s righteousness and his disdain of injustice. In the centre image, the saint intervenes in the wrongful accusation and attempted execution of three innocent men, generals of Emperor Constantine the Great. When the generals returned to the Emperor after successfully quelling a revolt, they were wrongfully accused of treason by an imperial

adviser. Remembering the saint’s righteousness, the three generals prayed to him for help. The saint answered their prayers by appearing in the dreams of the emperor and his adviser, threatening them with divine retribution if they wrongfully executed the generals. To the left, the saint warns to the emperor as he sleeps. To the right is the result: the emperor, after heeding the saint’s warning and admiring his righteousness, frees his generals and also orders the creation of a golden crosier and decorated gospel as gifts for Saint Nicholas. The freed generals depart for Myra to become monks in order to venerate their benefactor.

Saint Phocas the Gardener

Saint Phocas (Άγιος Φωκάς, in Greek) the Gardener lived in the fourth century AD in Sinop, a city located in what is today northern Türkiye. His name possibly derives from the ancient Greek word φώκη, the aquatic mammal ‘seal’.

His identification is debated, since there was also a Saint Phocas who was the bishop in Sinop in the first or second century AD, and the written references to their lives overlap. The earliest account of the saint’s life is a homily (sermon) written by Saint Asterios of Amasea in the fourth-to-fifth centuries AD. In the homily, the saint’s life is described in detail. He is presented as a humble and charitable man known for helping lost sailors. During Trajan’s persecutions of Christians in the first-to-second centuries AD, the saint was marked for execution, so imperial soldiers sought him in Sinop. On finding Phocas, they asked him for directions and explained their mission, at which point he offered to host them in his house for the night and promised to assist them. The next morning, Phocas dug his own grave in his garden, and he surrendered himself to the shocked and now-reluctant soldiers. The saint, however, insisted they carry out their duty and requested they bury his body in his garden. The soldiers respected these wishes (Foskolou 2018: 319–320).

According to Saint Asterios, sailors venerated Saint Phocas and created songs based on the homily about his life. He was honoured by sailors in a region which spanned from the Black, Adriatic and Aegean Seas to the ocean to the west and the bays of the eastern lands (Foskolou 2018: 319–320). However, the cult around the saint declined around the ninth century, while the cult of Saint Nicholas of Myra gained in popularity. This circumstance perhaps occurred because Saint Nicholas’ feast day (December 6th) was connected to the turbulent weather of the winter season, something that made his protection quite valuable and directly connected to the needs of sailors (Olgun 2022: 75–76).

The designation of Phocas the Gardener as a patron saint of sailors is attested by a documented tradition in the eastern Mediterranean which emerged after the saint’s miraculous interventions in saving seafarers. Sailors, considering the saint to be a member of their crew, would split a share for him, bought every day by a different sailor. Once the ship reached port, they would donate the sum of money



Figure 7.2. Portable icon (BXM-13185) depicting Saint Nicholas and scenes of his life. It measures 74.2 × 50.0 cm and has been dated to the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. The icon shows the very fine post-Byzantine technique of the Cretan school of artists, incorporating older linear techniques and vibrant colours such as gold, white and red, with the long figure technique of the Italian Renaissance. It was produced by the Cretan artist Μόσκος Ιωάννης (Moskos Ioannis). Copyright Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum, and used with permission.

collected for the saint's share to charity and ask for his patronage and protection (Saint-2483 2023).

The saint's patronage is attested by various forms of material culture associated with pilgrims in the eastern Mediterranean. For example, he is mentioned in graffiti dated to between the fifth and seventh centuries on the natural southern port of the island of Syros, in Cyclades, Greece. These inscriptions are devoted to Saint Phocas, and they include invocations to the saint's assistance, including a prayer to save a ship named *Maria*. The saint's patronage is also attested by a sixth-to-seventh century AD clay medallion which depicts Saint Phocas wearing a sailor's clothes, while standing on the deck of a boat in a praying stance. The clothes and the boat symbolise and highlight his patronage (Foskolou 2018: 319).

Within the context of pilgrimages made during the Mediaeval era, a type of artefact known as *ampullae* was widely circulated. These were flasks, often containing holy water or oil from different pilgrimage sites. A collection of these artefacts is currently held in the Art Museum of Princeton University. One such flask, dated to the sixth century AD, is dedicated to Saint Phocas, as it contains imagery of boats in hagiography connected to the saint; it is made of terracotta and originates from Asia Minor (Abramowitz 2022: 3, 6).

Saints Spyridon and Theodora in Corfu

Saint Spyridon (Άγιος Σπυρίδων, in Greek) was a bishop from Cyprus in the third or fourth centuries AD. Accounts of his life describe him as an ethical person of deep faith who performed miracles. After his death, his body was transferred to Constantinople to save it from a raid on the island of Cyprus. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, his relics were moved to the island of Corfu in Greece, where they are still kept to this day. He is named as a protector of the island in liturgical texts dating to 1674. Miracles attributed to his intervention occurred on multiple occasions of disaster, especially in the Ionian Sea during the eighteenth century, and this established him as a patron saint of the island of Corfu (Mpitha 1995: 163–167; Saint-3247 2023).

His designation as the protector of the maritime community of the island of Corfu is attested in locally produced artefacts. Examples include two portable icons devoted to Saint Spyridon in the collection of the Christian and Byzantine Museum of Athens. The first icon (Figure 7.3; see BXM-02073 2023) is from the late seventeenth century. Its centre depicts a galley in stormy water; however, to the right at the top of the scene, Saint Spyridon is seen blessing the ship. According to the icon's inscription, it is a votive of a man named Avgoustinos (Αυγουστίνος, in



Figure 7.3. Portable icon (BXM-02073) depicting a miracle by Saint Spyridon. It measures 21.5 × 32.0 cm in size and is dominated by the colours red and light and dark blue. The icon's production in the Ionian islands (Greece) is attested by the use of western Greek techniques. Copyright Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum, and used with permission.

Greek) from the island of Corfu, Greece, who was saved from a shipwreck and devoted the icon to Saint Spyridon for his miraculous intervention. This votive icon connects the saint to the sea and his patronage to the Ionian islands, especially Corfu.

The second icon (Figure 7.4; see BXM-10817 2023) further solidifies the saint's connection to the sea. The icon in its current, restored, form shows Saint Nicholas enthroned and dates to the seventeenth century. However, in the eighteenth century, a newer layer depicting Saint Spyridon was painted over this image; it has since been removed.

Why an image of Saint Spyridon was painted to cover one of Saint Nicholas has not been explained. However, we might speculate, based on the aforementioned information, that the islander community of Corfu considered Saint Spyridon their patron because he was believed to have performed miracles for Corfu and the Ionian Islands region. Based on this observation, this icon suggests the Christians of Corfu reprioritised the two saints in their patronage of maritime Christian communities in the Ionian Islands region.

Along with Saint Spyridon and Saint Nicholas, Saint Theodora is another patron of the maritime community of Corfu. She was Regent and Empress of the Eastern Roman Empire, and an important figure in the history of Christianity.

During the eighth and ninth centuries, politicians and religious leaders fought one another over the religious significance of iconography and the potential classification of icons as idols, whose use and veneration was specifically prohibited in the Christian faith. These arguments came close to civil war in the Eastern Roman Empire. Countless portable icons were shipped to remote locations for safekeeping; others were destroyed, and some were painted over. Many frescos did not survive. However, Theodora managed to restore the honouring of icons after summoning a council on 11 March 843. To this day, during Lent, the Sunday of Orthodoxy honours the re-establishment of icons in the liturgical life of the Church. For this reason, Saint Theodora is honoured in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Her relics are currently kept in Corfu (Saint-3639 2023).

In the icon shown in Figure 7.5 (BXM-01566 2023), Saint Theodora is depicted on a throne, in imperial attire, holding an icon of Mary and Jesus. This imagery references her role in re-establishing the honouring of icons. The icon has an interesting detail: under the saint's feet, there is a small crest depicting a ship, the emblem of Corfu (Mpitha 1995: 164). This symbolises her patronage of the island.

Conclusions

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in Christian spirituality, faith is associated with material realities.

From water itself, blessings and rituals, to depictions of saints and their lives, the materiality entangled with the Eastern Orthodox Christianity is ever present and impactful. The material culture used for spiritual practices and veneration holds agency and deeply affects believers and their respective communities. These artefacts provide a narrative of their own, acting as agents of historical, religious and cultural continuity regardless of their origin or time of creation (Shanks 1998; Rountree *et al.* 2012: 8–12).

The longstanding traditions of venerating saints through their icons, rituals and activities as illustrated with the cases of Saints Nicholas and Phocas are indicative of the vastness and the persistence of the social, cultural and trading networks between different maritime communities across the eastern Mediterranean and beyond (Sweetman 2017: 6–8). The cult of Saint Nicholas was so popular, it eventually reached northeastern Europe. He became established there as the patron of the Hanseatic League, and cathedrals and churches in Lübeck, Stralsund and Wismar (Germany) were dedicated to him starting in the twelfth century (Mehler *et al.* 2016; Friedel 2017; Rösch 2021).

The topographical spread and continuity of religious material culture such as the *vitas* and blessings asking for the intercession of different maritime saints, the complex yet enduring iconography of Saint Nicholas, the votives to Virgin Mary, Saint Nicholas and Saint Spyridon and, finally, the traditions surrounding Saint Phocas show not only the agency of religious material culture, but also the connectivity and chronological continuity of the associated beliefs and traditions between different maritime communities. The connectivity between harbours and ports in combination with network theories, as used in Sweetman's research in the eastern Mediterranean, could be used in future studies to assess the extent of the cults of the saints of the sea in southern and northern European societies (Noble and Smith 2008: 581–605; Leidwanger and Knappett 2018: 1–21).

Tracing the cults of maritime saints in scriptural, textual, archaeological and artistic data shows promise for future interdisciplinary research. This introductory study is a small but hopefully positive contribution in our understanding of how past maritime communities perceived the divine, how it affected their material culture and how it can define and shape their maritime cultural identity to a significant extent. Future research should include a robust methodology for the study of iconography (*e.g.* Walker Vadillo and Walker Vadillo 2022) and apply it to a robust sample of iconographic material from Greek and Eastern Orthodox practices. This could also be expanded to Catholic practices, either through comparative analysis or independent study, for example, highlighting the use of votive offerings in the churches of fisherfolk communities (see the study by Armendariz 2009 for an example).



Figure 7.4. Portable icon depicting an enthroned Saint Nicholas (BXM-10817). It had been painted over with a depiction of Saint Spyridon; the newer image has since been removed. The icon measures 123.0 × 78.0 cm in size. It is predominantly gold, white and red in colour, and western Greek workshop techniques are well incorporated with the Italian style. Its place of origin is Messina, Sicily. Copyright Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum, and used with permission.



Figure 7.5. Portable icon (BXM-01566) depicting Saint Theodora. The detail under her feet shows a crest with a ship. The icon measures 40.5 × 29.0 cm, and its colours are mainly shades of red and gold, the colours of royalty. Its construction displays the notable skill and technique of the Cretan artist Εμμανουήλ Τζάνε (Emmanuel Jane). It is dated to 1671. Copyright Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development, Byzantine and Christian Museum, and used with permission.

Acknowledgements

For this research, I used a number of excerpts and data from my unpublished master's thesis (R. Papadopoulos 2018). I would like to thank the Christian and Byzantine Museum of Athens for agreeing to provide me the images and data relevant to this study. In terms of research material and support, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues Malachy Labrie-Cleary, Konstantina Gkaraliakou, Jeroen Louwe Kooijmans, Heidi Vink and Dr Christos Kekes. Regarding the theological aspects of this project, this research chapter would not have been possible without the guidance of my brother and specialist in theological matters, Archimandrite Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, and the Professor of Byzantine Literature Alexandros Alexakis of the Department of Philology, University of Ioannina in Greece. I would like to thank Dr Veronica Walker Vadillo and Monica Ann Walker Vadillo for their valuable suggestions on iconographic analysis, and Dr Karenleigh Overmann for her copyediting assistance. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends in Greece and Denmark for their constant support. In memory of my beloved mother Alexandra Papadopoulou and of my professor in the Maritime Archaeology master's programme of the University of Southern Denmark, Thijs J. Maarleveld. May they rest in peace.

References

- Abramowitz, R. 2022. Perceiving ampullae: Approaches to the production and distribution of Asia Minor flasks housed at the Princeton University Museum of Art. *Journal of Student Scholarship* XXIV: 1–14. Available online: <<https://joss.tcnj.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/176/2022/04/2022-Abramowitz-Art-History.pdf>> (accessed 2/9/2023).
- Armendariz, X. 2009. Exvotos y ofrendas maríneas en el País Vasco: Estado del estudio e inventariado de materiales votivos marítimos [Votive offerings and maritime offerings in the Basque Country: Status of the study and inventory of maritime votive materials.]. Available online: <https://www.academia.edu/60423281/Exvotos_Y_Ofrendas_Maríneas_En_El_Pa%C3%ADs_Vasco_Estado_Del_Estudio_E_Inventariado_De_Materiales_Votivos_Mar%C3%ADtimos> (accessed 10/10/2023).
- Armstrong, A. and Armstrong, M. 2006. A Christian perspective on water and water rights. In: T. Tvedt and T. Oestigaard (eds.), *A history of water. Series 1, vol. 3: The world of water*, 367–384. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Barasch, M. 2013. *Theories of art: From Plato to Winckelmann*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Bell, A. R. and Dale, R. S. 2011. The Medieval pilgrimage business. *Enterprise & Society* 12(3): 601–627.
- Blacker, J., Burgess G. S. and Ogden, A. 2013. *Wace, the hagiographical works: The Conception Nostre Dame and the lives of St Margaret and St Nicholas*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill.
- BXM-01566. 2023. *Η αγία Θεοδόρα [Saint Theodora]*. Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Collection of portable icons and wood carvings. Available online: <<https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.exhibit&id=52>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- BXM-02073. 2023. *Θάμα του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα [A miracle by Saint Spyridon]*. Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Collection of portable icons and wood carvings. Available online: <<https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.exhibit&id=49>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- BXM-02267. 2023. *Θάμα της Παναγίας (αφιερωματική) [The miracle of the Virgin]*. Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Collection of portable icons and wood carvings. Available online: <<https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.exhibit&id=9>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- BXM-10817. 2023. *Άγιος Νικόλαος [Saint Nicholas]*. Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Collection of portable icons and wood carvings. Available online: <<https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.exhibit&id=67>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- BXM-13185. 2023. *Άγιος Νικόλαος και σκηνές του βίου του [Saint Nicholas and scenes from his life]*. Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens. Collection of portable icons and wood carvings. Available online: <<https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.exhibit&id=130>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- Delvoy, C. 1988. *L'art byzantine [Byzantine art]*. Grenoble, France: Editions Arthaud.
- Drewer, L. 1996. Recent approaches to early Christian and Byzantine iconography. *Studies in Iconography* 17: 1–65.
- Flatman, J. 2011. Places of Special Meaning: Westerdahl's Comet, "Agency," and the Concept of the "Maritime Cultural Landscape". In: B. Ford (ed.) *The Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes. When the Land Meets the Sea*, 311–329. New York: Springer.
- Foskolou, V. 2018. 'Reading' the images on pilgrim mementoes (eulogies): Their iconography as a source for the cult of saints in the Early Byzantine period. In: D. Ariantzi and I. Eichner (eds.), *Für Seelenheil und Lebensglück. Das byzantinische Pilgerwesen und seine Wurzeln [For salvation and happiness in life. The Byzantine pilgrimage and its roots]*, 315–325. Mainz, Germany: Propylaeum.
- Friedel, M. 2017. *Von St. Nikolaus zum Lübecker Dom [From St. Nicholas to Lübeck Cathedral]*. Virtuelles und Reales Lern- und Kompetenz-Netzwerk. Available online: <<https://archiv.zawiw.de/sites/www.vile-netzwerk.de/www.vile-netzwerk.de/stadtgeschichten/articles/von-st-nikolaus-zum-l%C3%BCbecker-dom.html>> (accessed 27/3/2023).
- Gambin, T. 2014. Maritime activity and the divine: An overview of religious expression by Mediterranean

- seafarers, fishermen and travellers. In: D. Agius, T. Gambin and A. Trakadas (eds.), *Ships, saints and sealore: Cultural heritage and ethnography of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea*, 3–12. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Goodenough, E. R. 1943. Early Christian and Jewish art. *Jewish Quarterly Review* 33(4): 403–418.
- Hanrahan, M. 1962. *Paganism and Christianity at Alexandria*. *University Review* 2(9): 38–66.
- Hatch, H. E. 2011. Material culture and maritime identity: Identifying maritime subcultures through artifacts. In: B. Ford (ed.), *The archaeology of maritime landscapes*, 217–232. New York: Springer.
- Jensen, R. M. 2000. *Understanding early Christian art*. London: Routledge.
- Kenna, M. E. 1985. Icons in theory and practice: An Orthodox Christian example. *History of Religions* 24(4): 345–368.
- Konstantakos, I. M. 2020. The island that was a fish: An ancient folktale in the Alexander Romance. In C. Ruiz Montero (ed.), *Aspects of orality and Greek literature in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Lamberton, C. D. 1911. The development of Christian symbolism as illustrated in Roman catacomb painting. *American Journal of Archaeology* 15(4): 507–522.
- Leidwanger, J. and Knappett, C. 2018. Maritime networks, connectivity, and mobility in the ancient Mediterranean. In: J. Leidwanger and C. Knappett (eds.), *Maritime networks in the ancient Mediterranean world*, 1–21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lekkos E. P. (ed.). 2015. *Σύμβολα, ιερά σκεύη και άμφια [Symbols, sacred vessels and vestments]*. Athens: IXTYC.
- Maas, A. 1914. The name of Mary. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton. Available online: <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464a.htm>> (accessed 10/9/2018).
- Mathews, T. F. 1993. *The clash of gods: A reinterpretation of early Christian art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Paperbacks.
- Mehler, N., Belasus, M., Holterman, B. and Küchelmann, H. 2016. *Die Expansion der Hanse in den Nordatlantik im Fokus von Archäologie und Geschichte [The expansion of the Hanseatic League into the North Atlantic in the focus of archaeology and history]*. Available online: <https://www.academia.edu/28605065/Die_Expansion_der_Hanse_in_den_Nordatlantik_im_Fokus_von_Arch%C3%A4ologie_und_Geschichte> (accessed 9/23/2023).
- Mitropolitis Korinthoy Panteleimon Katanikolas [MKPK]. 2007. *Θεομητορικά Προσώνυμια [Mother of God names]*. Athens: Apostolic Ministry.
- Morgan, D. 2010. Material culture of lived religion: Visuality and embodiment. In: V. Johanna (eds.), *Mind and matter: Selected chapters of the Nordik 2009 conference for art historians*, 15–31. Studies in Art History 41. Helsinki: Helsingfors.
- Μπακοπουλος, Ι. Μ. 2002. *Ο Μέγας Συναξαριστής της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας [The great synaxarist of the Orthodox Church]*. Athens: Synaxaristis.
- Μπιθα, Ι. 1995. Απεικονίσεις των πολιορκιών της Κέρκυρας. Μικρή συμβολή στην εικονογραφία του αγίου Σπυρίδωνα [Depictions of the sieges of Corfu. Small contribution to the iconography of Saint Spyridon]. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 18, 151–168.
- Mylonopoulos, I. 2013. Poseidon. In: A. Erskine, R. S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C. B. Champion and S. R. Huebner (eds.), *The encyclopedia of ancient history*, 5454–5455. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Noble, T. F. X. and Smith, J. M. H.(eds.). 2008. *The Cambridge history of Christianity. Vol. 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Oestigaard, T. 2011. Water. In: T. Insoll (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the archaeology of ritual and religion*, 38–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olgun, Z. 2022. *A sailor's life for me: The Middle Byzantine sailor on board and at port*. Unpublished master's thesis, Central European University.
- Papadimitrakopoulou, K. G. 2009. Εκκλησία. Ανυπέρβλητο το μεγαλείο της! [The Church. Her greatness is insurmountable!] In: *Ροδόσταγμα Χρυσοστομικής Σοφίας. Tome Β' [Rosary of Chrysostom's wisdom. Book B']*, 153. Kantza, Greece: Fotodotes.
- Papadopoulos, N. (ed.). 2012. *Ευχολόγιον το Μέγα [Euchologion the Great]*. Athens: Saliveros.
- Papadopoulos, R. 2018. *Boathooks and fire-hooks. An archaeological analysis and their connection to art, symbols and Christian saints*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Southern Denmark.
- Papastavrou, E. 2012. *Ο συμβολισμός του Νερού στη Χριστιανική Εικονογραφία. Πεμπτονσία [The symbolism of water in Christian iconography. Quintessence]*. Available online: <<https://www.pemptousia.gr/2012/07/o-simvolismos-tou-nerou-sti-christiani/>> (accessed 28/3/2023).
- Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. 2023. *Patron saints of the sea*. The Vatican. Available online: <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20000601_mare_santi_en.html#top> (accessed 1/8/2018).
- Rabiega, K. and Kobylinski, Z. 2018. The symbolic role of boats and ships in pagan and Christian Medieval Northern Europe. In: L. D. Nebelsick, J. Wawrzeniuk

- and K. Zeman-Wisniewsk (eds.), *Sacred space: Contributions to the archaeology of belief*, 197–218. Warsaw: Instytut Archeologii UKSW.
- Rappenglück, M.A. 2014. The cosmic deep blue: The significance of the celestial water world sphere across cultures. *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 14(3): 293–305.
- Réau, L. 1955–1959. *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Réau, L. 2000. *Iconografía del arte cristiano. Vol. 1, introducción general*. J. S. Jimenez (trans.). Barcelona, Spain: Serbal.
- Rösch, F. 2021. The technology of Medieval maritime trade. An archaeological perspective on northern Germany and beyond. In: L. Rahmstorf, G. Barjamovic and N. Ialongo (eds.), *Merchants, measures and money: Understanding technologies of early trade in a comparative perspective. Vol. 2: Weight and value*, 69–98. Kiel, Germany: Wachholtz Verlag.
- Rountree, K., Morris, C. and Peatfield, A. D. A. (eds.). 2012. *Archaeology of spiritualities*. New York: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Saint-1475. 2023. *Ζωοδόχος Πηγή [Zoodochos Pigi]*. Orthodoxos Synaxaristis. Available online: <<https://www.saint.gr/1475/saint.aspx>> (accessed 9/6/2023).
- Saint-2483. 2023. *Άγιος Φωκάς ο κηπουρός [St Phocas the Gardener]*. Orthodoxos Synaxaristis. Available online: <<https://www.saint.gr/2483/saint.aspx#References>> (accessed 3/6/2022).
- Saint-3247. 2023. *Άγιος Σπυρίδων ο Θαυματουργός, επίσκοπος Τριμυθούνας Κύπρου [St Spyridon the wonderworker, bishop of Trimythoundos Cyprus]*. Orthodoxos Synaxaristis. Available online: <<https://www.saint.gr/3247/saint.aspx>> (accessed 31/3/2023)
- Saint-3639. 2023. *Άγία Θεοδώρα η Βασίλισσα [St Theodora the Queen]*. Orthodoxos Synaxaristis. Available online: <<https://www.saint.gr/3639/saint.aspx>> (accessed 31/3/2023).
- Sakellariadi, A. 2018. ‘Νικολάου χείρ...τό επίκλην Ρίτζης... εκ Πελοπόννησον’: Ο εικονογραφικός διάκοσμος του ναού του Αγίου Νικολάου στην Πέτρα Λέσβου (1721) [‘By the hand of Nikolaos...called Ritzes...from the Peloponnese’: The iconographic decoration of the church of St Nicholas in Petra, Lesbos (1721)]. In: A. Semoglou, I. P. Arvanitidou and E. G. Gounari (eds.), *Lepetymnos. Studies in archaeology and art in memory of Georgios Gounaris. Late Roman, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period*, 255–276. Thessaloniki, Greece: Stamoulis.
- Sbordone, Fr. (ed.). 1936. *Physiologus*. Rome: Dante Albrighi.
- Shanks, M. 1998. The life of an artifact in interpretive archaeology. *Fennoscandia Archaeologica* XV: 15–42.
- Siegal, M.B. A. and Yovel, Y. 2023. Network analysis reveals insights about the interconnections of Judaism and Christianity in the first centuries CE. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10: 1–9.
- Skavara M. P. 2005. Ο εικονογραφικός κύκλος του βίου του Αγίου Νικολάου στη Σαρακίνιστα Λιούντζης Αργυροκάστρου [The pictorial cycle of the life of Agios Nikolaos in Sarakinista Liuntzis Argyrokaastro]. *Δωδώνη Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα Τμήματος Ιστορίας και Αρχαιολογίας Πανεπιστήμιο Ιωαννίνων* 34: 77–106.
- Strati, A. 2015. Εικόνα του αγίου Νικολάου με σκηνές του βίου του από την Καστοριά. Σχόλια και παρατηρήσεις [Icon of St Nicholas with scenes from his life from Kastoria. Comments and remarks]. In: A. Tourta and V. Katsaros (eds.), *Αφιέρωμα στον ακαδημαϊκό Παναγιώτη Λ. Βοκοτόπουλο [Tribute to academician Panagiotis L. Vokotopoulos]*, 585–592. Athens: Ekdoseis Kapon.
- Sweetman, R. J. 2017. Networks and church building in the Aegean: Crete, Cyprus, Lycia and the Peloponnese. *Annual of the British School at Athens* 112: 207–266.
- The Bible. 2011. New International Version. Available online: <<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/>> (accessed 30/10/2018).
- Töyräänvuori, J. 2022. Knights, kings and dragons: The symbolic conquest of the Mediterranean Sea in Late Antiquity and its historical background. In: A. Lampinen and E. Mataix Ferrándiz (eds.), *Seafaring and mobility in the Late Antique Mediterranean. Vol. 1: Ancient environments*, 13–25. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Tvedt, T. and Oestigaard, T. 2006. Introduction. In: T. Tvedt and T. Oestigaard (eds.), *A history of water. Series 1, vol. 3: The world of water*, ix–xxii. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Walker Vadillo, V. and Walker Vadillo, M. A. 2022. Frozen in time—Iconography, visual analysis, and the study of nautical activities in maritime archaeology. In: V. Walker Vadillo, E. M. Ferrándiz and E. Holmqvist (eds.), *Down by the water: Interdisciplinary studies in human-environment interactions in watery spaces*, 45–65. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.
- Westerdahl, C. 1992. The maritime cultural landscape. *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 21(1): 5–14.
- Zias, N. 1969. Εικόνες του Βίου και της Κοιμήσεως του Αγ. Νικολάου (πίν. 104–113) [Images of the life and dormition of St Nikolaou (pl. 104–113)]. *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 5: 275–298.
- Άγιοι Προστάτες των επαγγεμάτων [Patron saints of professions]*. 2016. Athens: Democratic Press.

Ancient sculptures lost at sea: stories of loss and discovery

Katerina Velentza

Abstract: This chapter explores stories of loss and discovery of ancient sculptures in the Mediterranean Sea from the period of Classical Antiquity until today. Through the study of archaeological evidence, literary sources, historical records, contemporary art and popular culture, this research demonstrates the continuity in the reception of sculptures from the waters of the Mediterranean Sea over the centuries. From the period of Classical Antiquity to Mediaeval times and from the shipwrecks of the ‘Grand Tour’ period to the most recent archaeological discoveries, incidents of underwater deposition, discovery or recovery of sculptures have instigated strong feelings of catastrophe, mystery and wonder in both pre-modern and modern narratives. These emotional and conceptual associations have shaped long-term attitudes towards sculptures from under water in the stories and traditions of multiple eras. Through the study of sculptures from under water, this chapter addresses issues of public perception and portrayal of underwater archaeology. The overarching aims of this research are to comprehend more fully human interconnections with the underwater environment and to advocate for greater care in conducting and presenting underwater archaeological research to the public today and in the future.

Introduction

Humanity has always had a special bond and dependence on the sea (Horden and Purcell 2000; Omstedt 2020). Since prehistoric times, the sea has been a space of communication and connection, as well as a divider. It has been a source of both livelihood and disaster. It has had a deep emotional and societal meaning for people, while its mysterious waters have inspired, over the centuries, wondrous adventures and innovations, as well as stories and feelings of catastrophe and chaos (Strang 2004: 50–51; Phelan 2007; Lampinen and Mataix Ferrándiz 2022: 1–8).

Similarly, most cultures have conceived the underwater world as a place of wonder, adventure and risk. This perception of the underwater environment as something extraordinary created thrilling tales of domination during Classical Antiquity. An example is the fascinating story of Alexander the Great going under water in the Mediterranean in a glass bathyscaph to prove his supremacy (see [Pseudo-]Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni* 2.38); this tale parallels underwater exploration and treasure-seeking narratives of the modern era, especially from the middle of the twentieth century (Bass 1966: 22; Muckelroy 1978: vii; Earle 1986: 68–72; Green 1990: 2–3; Burrows 2010).¹ Despite the efforts of many scholars to define clearly the academic and theoretical

background of the discipline of maritime and underwater archaeology in ways which disassociate it from the earlier adventure-seeking and treasure-hunting connections, the thrill which the underwater world incites continues to foster misrepresentations of underwater archaeological discoveries as treasure salvage even today (Du Plat Taylor 1965; Bass 1966; Muckelroy 1978; Adams and Rönnby 2013; Maarleveld *et al.* 2013; Gately and Benjamin 2018).

As George Bass, the pioneer of maritime archaeology, once stated, ‘everything made by man was carried at one time or another in a ship or was simply lost at sea somehow, fell accidentally or were placed purposefully in the water’ (Bass 1966: 17). Ancient Greek and Roman sculptures have been such objects, lost at sea and recovered from its depths throughout the centuries. From the sixteenth century until today, hundreds of ancient sculptures of various dates, types, sizes and materials have been retrieved from the Mediterranean seabed by early underwater explorers and archaeologists or simply by fishermen, sponge divers and recreational scuba divers (Velentza 2022). Given the special artistic value of these artefacts, sculptures from under water have been seen by scholars and the general public alike as exceptional objects evoking mystery, adventure and lost treasure. The fascinating idea of discovering and recovering ancient sculptural works of art from the water has also stimulated local enthusiasm and pride (*e.g.* Rackl 1978; Stenuit 2002; Petriaggi 2005; Queyrel 2012; Bellingham 2014; Koutsouflakis and Simosi 2015). More recently, the romanticism accompanying underwater

¹ The wider exploration of the underwater world started with the invention of the diving equipment known by its acronym, SCUBA (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus), and more specifically, with the type known as ‘aqualung’ invented by Emile Gagnan and Jacques-Yves Cousteau in 1942. This safer and lighter apparatus made it possible

for divers to spend more time under water and avoid the life-threatening dangers of helmet diving.

sculptural finds has inspired contemporary artists, who display their sculptures under water or use the idea of discovering ancient sculptures under water as part of their artistic narratives (e.g. Hirst 2017a).

Recent analysis of 110 Mediterranean underwater deposits with ancient sculptures of various types and materials showed these artefacts were lost or deposited under water for various reasons across a wide period of time, ranging from the time of Classical Antiquity to the nineteenth century AD (Velentza 2022: 61–63). The same study showed that most of the ancient Greek and Roman sculptures from the waters of the Mediterranean were found accidentally, by chance rather than in archaeologically organised operations (Velentza 2022: 12–35). These circumstances of discovery, along with the lack of archaeological means for scientifically investigating underwater archaeological contexts until the second half of the twentieth century, have been the main reasons for the different perceptions of sculptures found under water, as compared to artefacts found on land. However, there is evidence that long-term attitudes towards objects found under water, especially sculptures, likely shaped and defined the perception of underwater sculptural finds in modern thought.

This chapter explores narratives of loss and discovery of ancient sculptures in the Mediterranean Sea from the period of Classical Antiquity until today. The analysis starts with a discussion of ancient literary sources and pre-modern historical records which refer to underwater depositions or discoveries of sculptural pieces in the Mediterranean region. Stories from preserved ancient and Mediaeval texts, combined with preserved iconographic and material evidence, unveil how people of the Mediterranean past perceived and dealt with the underwater loss and discovery of sculptures. Next, the focus turns to modern accounts of underwater sculptural depositions and discoveries from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. This analysis includes the ‘Grand Tour’ shipwreck of Lord Arundel’s sculptures, Lord Elgin’s sunken sculptural collection, early underwater exploration missions in the ancient Antikythera shipwreck and the site of Artemision and chance sculptural finds such as the Riace bronzes and the ‘Dancing Satyr’ of Mazara del Vallo. As this chapter will demonstrate, the interpretations and stories of catastrophe and wonder attending the discovery of ancient sculptures under water draw immediate connections to pre-modern narratives. The chapter concludes by exploring how the rendering of the sea as both a wondrous and catastrophic sphere has impacted the work of various contemporary artists. Examples such as Damien Hirst’s 2017 exhibition and film ‘Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable’ and Luca Guadagnino’s 2017 film ‘Call Me by Your Name’ present astonishing links to ancient and post-Classical narratives. These works thus illustrate the various influences that the extraordinary underwater archaeological record has had, not just on modern archaeological scholarship but also contemporary art, popular media and culture.

This analysis highlights the continuity in the reception of sculptures from under water throughout time, from the ancient Mediterranean to the modern world. Hence, it shows that the current association of ancient sculptures from the sea with strong feelings of mystery, romance, wonder and pride are not solely based on the modern circumstances of sculptural discoveries. On the contrary, this association has been influenced by pre-modern narratives and earlier considerations of sculptures from under water which have been cultivated by different societies for centuries.

In its conclusion, this chapter addresses more widely the issues of public perception and portrayal of underwater archaeology in the modern era. Through narratives related to sculptures from under water, the study traces more extensive patterns of cultural and conceptual understandings of loss and discovery in the sea. These patterns can help maritime archaeologists understand the deeper human interconnections with the underwater environment across different periods of time, insight which will enable them to portray and safeguard underwater archaeological finds more effectively according to the scientific principles of the discipline.

The loss and discovery of sculptures in classical and pre-modern narratives

Classical Antiquity

Starting with the period of Classical Antiquity, the loss of sculptural artefacts under water due to natural disasters, shipwrecks and human actions are reported in ancient textual sources and iconographical representations.

Strabo, in his work *Geography*, describes how a bronze statue of Poseidon was lost at sea in the strait near the Greek city of Helice in the Peloponnese in 373 BC due to an earthquake and subsequent tsunami. During the incident, the entire city was submerged. Strabo recorded the following:

For the sea was raised by an earthquake and it submerged Helice, and also the temple of the Heliconian Poseidon Helice was submerged by the sea two years before the battle at Leuctra. And Eratosthenes says that he himself saw the place, and that the sailors say there was a bronze Poseidon in the strait, standing erect, holding a hippocampus [seahorse] in his hand, which was perilous for those who fished with nets (Strabo, *Geography* 8.7.2).²

One of the most interesting aspects of the story is its description of sailors talking about the statue of Poseidon as a danger for those who fished with nets because of the way it was deposited in the sea. The account is particularly

² This passage from Strabo and the other ancient textual sources cited in this section were translated by the author.

valuable because it reveals how the loss of a sculpture under water survived in seamen's tales. Because statues were considered images and personifications of actual gods in ancient thought, the underwater existence of Poseidon's statue was associated with catastrophe (the earthquake and tsunami), as well as generic danger and fear of how the god might react to the boats sailing over him.

Lucian, in his second-century AD work *Zeuxis*, describes how a 'picture' (εἰκόν in Greek, usually meaning a sculpture) was wrecked on a ship transporting it as plunder from Athens to Italy after the sack of that city by Sulla in 86 BC:

There is a copy of the picture now at Athens, taken exactly from the original. The latter is said to have been put on a ship sailing for Italy with the rest of Sulla's art treasures, and to have been lost with them by the sinking of the ship, off Malea, I think it was. (Lucian, *Zeuxis* 3)

The catastrophic shipwreck took place off Cape Maleas in the southern Peloponnese, Greece, a site notorious for its bad weather. Significantly, it is located close to the area where the first-century BC Antikythera shipwreck was discovered in the 1900s. Due to this geographical proximity, Lucian's story has been an important basis for scholarly interpretations of the transport of sculptures found in the Antikythera ship (Velentza 2022: 13–15).

In his *Description of Greece*, written in the second century AD, Pausanias described how the people of Thasos threw the statue of the athlete and Olympian winner Theagenes into the sea after his death because of a 'dispute' between the sculpture and some of Theagenes' enemies:

When he [Theagenes] departed this life, one of those who were his enemies while he was alive came every night to the statue of Theagenes and whipped the bronze as though he were hurting Theagenes himself. The statue put an end to the outrage by falling on him, but the sons of the dead man prosecuted the statue for murder. So, the Thasians dropped the statue to the bottom of the sea (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 6.11.6–8).

As the story continues, the Oracle of Delphi instructed the Thasians to retrieve the statue from the sea to save the island from famine. It was apparently difficult for the Thasians to conceive of a method of retrieving the statue from under water. When they could not think of a plan and had given up, some fishermen unexpectedly caught the statue in their nets and brought it back to land. Hence, the story by Pausanias presents both the catastrophic but also redemptive nature of depositing a sculpture under water, while at the same time highlighting the challenges and supernatural aspects of a sculpture's recovery from the seabed.

A similar scenario of a discovery or recovery of a statue from under water is represented by a first-century BC stone sculptural relief found near the temple of Hercules in Ostia, Italy (Museo Ostiense, Inv. No. 157; Boin 2010: 258–264, Fig. 7; Santangelo 2013: 78–79, Fig. 3.1; Kloppenborg 2018: 581, Fig. 4). The relief, which must have been a sculptural dedication, contains a depiction of a group of fishermen who drag a male sculpture from the sea. The sea is represented by sculpted fish and boats. The retrieved statue is depicted in a posture similar to that of other Classical sculptures, including the bronze statue of a god retrieved from the sea off Artemission in Greece (Bass 1966: 72; Rackl 1978: 57; Parker 1992: 60; Hemingway 2004: 35–40; Arata 2005: 146–147; Tzalas 2007: 350–353), the 'Poseidon of Livadostra' (Mattusch 1988: 4–5, 79–80; Kaltsas 2002: 86; Arata 2005: 172; Tzalas 2007: 343–344) and other statuettes of Hercules and Zeus.³ It is not clear why this depiction was sculpted in the relief or who the sculpture actually represents. Based on its style and features, Hercules or various deities have been suggested (Becatti 1938–1939: 40; Boin 2010: 260–261). It is also not clear from the representation or the inscription why the sculpture was under water. Was this incident a myth or a true event? Was the statue found by accident, was it lost or deposited and then retrieved? And was the sculpture dedicated in Ostia? And if so, was that before or after its recovery from the seabed? Despite all these unanswered questions, the plain existence of this representation on this Ostia relief highlights the importance and wondrous aspects of a sculpture's discovery and/or recovery from under water, as well as the supernormal effort required by the fishermen to bring the statue on land.⁴ Additionally, this representation of a retrieval of a statue from the sea by fishermen with their nets confirms the existence of distinct provisions and techniques for the salvage of sculptural material from the Mediterranean seabed in case of an underwater loss.

Mediaeval times

Stories of loss and discovery of ancient sculptures under water are also preserved from the Mediaeval times. For example, Chapter 43 of the eighth- to ninth-century AD text *Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai* (Παραστάσεις σύντομοι χρονικαί, meaning 'brief historical notes') mentions the theft and subsequent loss at sea of a late antique porphyry statue with three heads depicting the Emperor Constantine and his sons Constans and Constantius (Nicetas Choniates, *Historia* xxiv.181, 648.1751–655.1772; Mango 1963: 55–

³ For examples, see the bronze statuettes of Hercules in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, accession numbers 96.9.273 and 28.77; the 'Zeus of Ugento' in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto; and 'Zeus, Thunderbearer', Ident. Nr. Ol. 12701, in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

⁴ Becatti (1938–1939) suggested the discovery of a statue from under water would have been a *monstrum*, namely, a sign which indicated that the harmony between gods and men was out of balance; such a circumstance would have required the intervention of a priest to interpret the sign and propose a remedial course of action.

75; Queller and Madden 1997: 138; Cameron and Herrin 1984: 31–34, 48–50, 167–277; Bassett 1991: 87–88). More specifically, the narrative says:

And the porphyry statue (*zodion*) there of three stones with three heads, which some said was of Constantine the Great in the middle, Constantius on the left and Constans on the right, with two feet, but six hands—a strange spectacle (*theama*) for those who saw it, each one looking in a different direction—and one head. But once there was a fire in this place, and while everyone was busy (so to speak) that extraordinary thing was stolen, in the reign of Theodosius II (408–50) Those who dared to do this were not able to remove it to their own country but were overtaken by the emperor's boat and did away with themselves; they cast both the spectacle (*theama*) and themselves into the sea and drowned (*Parastaseis* B 174.43).⁵

Despite the best efforts of sailors 'with rope-baskets' and divers commissioned by the emperor Theodosius, the statue was never retrieved. Its permanent loss at sea was said to have made the emperor extremely angry.

Another story of a Mediaeval underwater deposition and recovery of a late antique statue comes from the Italian town of Barletta on the coast of the Adriatic Sea (Johnson 1925: 20–25; Koch 1926: 20–27, plates 20–21; Kiilerich 2016: Figs. 1 and 3). According to local tradition, a larger-than-life-sized bronze statue of a man known as the 'Colossus of Barletta' was found in a Mediaeval shipwreck, probably a Crusader ship bringing material to Italy after the 1204 sack of Constantinople (Mango 1963: 55, 68; Magoulias 1984; Queller and Madden 1997: 160, 195; Harris 2003: 14, 169, 186; Phillips 2005; Kiilerich 2018: 55–56, 68–70). The statue was supposedly found in the Adriatic Sea in 1309 and brought to the harbour of Barletta shortly afterwards (Kiilerich 2018: 55). Due to the early date of the discovery, the exact origins and circumstances of the underwater deposition were never investigated and thus cannot now be reconstructed with any certainty. However, the mystery and romanticism surrounding the discovery of the Colossus of Barletta have deeply influenced the local culture and traditions (Kiilerich 2018: 69, Figs. 11 and 12). This can be seen through the position given to the now-restored statue, which has stood outside the Basilica del Santo Sepolcro at the centre of the town since the fifteenth century.⁶ Moreover, the impact of this underwater sculptural discovery is highlighted by a surviving local folktale about the mysterious giant of Barletta, a beloved character who watches over and protects the city and its inhabitants. An illustrated version of this fascinating local story was published by DePaola (1984).

⁵ Translation by Cameron and Herrin 1984: 117–119.

⁶ According to Kiilerich (2018: 55, Fig. 2), the statue was initially placed in front of the Sedile del Popolo in 1491, but when the Sedile was demolished in 1923, the statue was moved to its present location in front of the Basilica del Santo Sepolcro.

The loss and discovery of sculptures in the modern era

The stories associated with the submersion and underwater discovery of ancient sculptures do not stop at the Mediaeval era. Since the start of European Antiquarianism and the period of the 'Grand Tour', there are surviving reports of archaeological discoveries of ancient sculptures which were found on land but ended up under water during their transport to northwestern Europe. Additionally, from the sixteenth century onwards, hundreds of ancient sculptures have been discovered, primarily on the Mediterranean seabed in the context of ancient shipwrecks or other sites (Velentza 2022: 12–35). These discoveries have deeply impressed the public imagination in the nearby regions, making the statues objects of local pride. At the same time, as it will be explained, the highly emotional and impactful nature of underwater sculptural discoveries has influenced twenty-first-century artists, who have displayed their works of art under water or included the loss and discovery of sculptures from under water in their artistic storytelling.

'Grand Tour' losses and recoveries

The development of European Antiquarianism and the 'Grand Tour' initiated a large-scale shipping of ancient sculptures to northwestern Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Black 1985: 226–229; Trunk 2003: 257; Coltman 2009: 117–158). The 'Grand Tour' was a touristic movement in which wealthy European elites visited the Mediterranean region to see the monuments of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations. One of its main elements was the acquisition of ancient art from the places visited (Sweet 2012: 2–3; Spivey 2013: 314). Architectural remains and sculptures were the most popular pieces transported for the collections of touring European elites (Spivey 1996: 225; Sweet 2013: 59–61). The collection and long-distance movement of ancient works of art and sculpture was performed mainly by ships; these sometimes wrecked, taking with them the ancient artefacts which they carried (Coltman 2009: 119).

One of the earliest recorded submersions of this type was the seventeenth-century shipwreck of the Arundel collection. This underwater loss involved ancient stone sculptures from terrestrial sites in Asia Minor lost under water during their transport to London for the collection of Lord Arundel (Velentza 2022: 10–11). William Petty, who was in charge of the collection and oversaw its transportation, shipwrecked somewhere in the Aegean Sea along with the collected sculptures; upon his rescue, he was arrested as a spy (Angelicoussis 2004: 143–159; Vickers 2006: 8). After his release from prison, Petty conducted salvage operations to recover the sunken marbles, which arrived in London in 1627 (Vickers 2007: 29–32). The sculptures of the Arundel collection are currently in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK, and the degradation of their surfaces due to their submersion is still visible.

Lord Elgin's ship, the *Mentor*, carried 17 crates of antiquities from Greece, including sculptures from the Acropolis of Athens. In the nineteenth century, the *Mentor* suffered a fate similar to that of Lord Arundel's ship. The *Mentor* wrecked off the Greek island of Kythera in 1802, along with her cargo (Throckmorton 1970: 163–168; Lianos 1983: 25; Kourkoumelis and Tourtas 2014: 6–7; Velentza 2022: 11). Although no passengers or crew died in the wreck, the loss of the antiquities she carried was a catastrophic loss and huge financial blow for Lord Elgin, who organised a two-year salvage operation to recover as much of the ship's cargo as possible and transport the sculptures to their final destination in Britain (Throckmorton 1970: 166–168; Lianos 1983: 26). Some marble sculptural pieces from the Parthenon, currently held in the Acropolis Museum in Athens with signs of marine degradation could have been subjects of this underwater deposition during the nineteenth century (Figure 8.1).

These stories of the underwater deposition and later recovery of ancient sculptures are not well known. However, surviving records indicate that the collectors and salvagers involved in these incidents saw the sea as a repository of treasure so valuable it could not be allowed to remain lost. In conjunction with the surviving pre-modern narratives examined previously, these encounters significantly influenced how ancient sculptures from under water were handled and interpreted by scholars and the general public in the context of the archaeological discoveries which surged after the twentieth century.

Underwater archaeological discoveries

Sculptures have been found in the Mediterranean Sea since Classical Antiquity and Mediaeval times. However, the first discovery of an ancient sculpture from under water with antiquarian interest did not occur until the sixteenth century. The incident involved the retrieval of the Livorno sculpture from the sea off Tuscany; the piece was quickly absorbed into the antiquities collection of the Medici family in Florence (Mattusch 1978: 101–104; Arata 2005: 7, 170). It marked the start of several underwater archaeological finds involving ancient sculptures.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, discoveries were scarce and accidental. All the recorded examples were isolated finds retrieved with no information regarding their archaeological context (Velentza 2022: 12–13). In the first half of the twentieth century, a period still well before the invention and broad use of SCUBA, discoveries of sculptures in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea became more frequent but still mostly accidental (Velentza 2022: 13–20). During this time, single sculptures and larger assemblages of sculptural material were found, some coming from shipwreck contexts. The sculptural discoveries of this era astonished contemporary scholars and collectors. In most cases, the sculptural objects were considered valuable treasure of national importance, requiring salvage rather than careful archaeological extraction and investigation. The salvage operations of the time were typically organised by the governments of countries claiming territorial rights to the waters where the sculptures were discovered. Retrieval was extremely



Figure 8.1. Fragments of a marble metope from the Parthenon with signs of marine degradation, from the collection of the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Photograph by the author.

dangerous, and several people perished in the efforts to bring ancient sculptures to the surface.

One such story comes from the Antikythera shipwreck, the first ancient wreck found in the Mediterranean Sea and the first big concentration of ancient sculptures (Muckelroy 1978: 12). In 1900, the wreck was found accidentally by Greek sponge divers who were fleeing a storm during their return from operations in Northern Africa (Bass 1966: 74–75; Throckmorton 1970: 113–168; Rackl 1978: 15–36; Tzalas 2007: 344–346). After the sculptural discoveries were reported to local authorities, the Greek government conducted salvage operations between 1900 and 1901. Over the course of many months, archaeologists worked from the surface on ships of the Greek navy, while sponge divers went under water to retrieve as many sculptures as they could (Tsiropoulou *et al.* 2012: 18–28). This massive undertaking was arduous and disastrous. Bad weather, the significant depth of the site and the lack of safe diving equipment combined to make conditions hazardous. Some heavy sculptures were lost in greater depths, one sponge diver died and two others were permanently paralysed (Bass 1966: 29; ‘Return to Antikythera’ 2021).⁷

Similar incidents occurred during salvage operations of the underwater site at Cape Artemision in the Aegean Sea. From this site, two bronze sculptures—the ‘God (Zeus or Poseidon) of Artemision’ (Hemingway 2004: Fig. 22, Fig. 26) and the ‘Horse and Jockey’ (Hemingway 2004: Fig. 23–24, Fig. 30–33)—were retrieved in fragments in 1926–1929 and in 1936 (Bass 1966: 169; Rackl 1978: 57; Parker 1992: 60; Hemingway 2004: 35–40; Arata 2005: 146–147; Tzalas 2007: 350–353; Koutsouflakis 2017). Similar to the circumstances of the Antikythera wreck, fragments of the Artemision sculptures appeared accidentally, as chance finds in fishermen’s nets (Hemingway 2004: 35–43). The local archaeological authorities immediately interpreted the sculptural fragments as precious works of art created by great masters of ancient Greek sculpture. This reaction, along with the potential for illicit salvage, inspired Greek authorities to organise rescue operations. However, during this process and amid bad weather, several of the helmeted divers died from embolism as the result of rising to the surface too rapidly (Bass 1966: 72). Following these deaths, the salvage work at Artemision was halted, and the exact location of the underwater site became forgotten over time.

Overall, early archaeological and scholarly conceptions of ancient sculptures found under water were based largely on the experience of these salvage operations, instigating feelings of thrill and wonder, awe and fear. These elements fit with pre-modern conceptions of the underwater

environment as a dangerous realm which cannot be accessed without risk (Frost 1968), and they evoke even earlier stories of sculptural loss and discovery. These factors decidedly shaped how early modern discoverers, archaeologists and scholars understood and interpreted ancient Greek and Roman sculptures from under water. The artefacts were seen as valuable treasure whose salvage from the underwater world involved arduous labour and personal danger.

The methods, techniques, equipment and knowledge of underwater archaeology have vastly improved since the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, even today, ancient sculptures from under water are mostly found by accident and without archaeological context.⁸ For example, the Riace statues, two large-scale bronze sculptures of male warriors, were found in 1972 off the coast of Riace Marina, near Porto Faticchio in southern Italy, by a recreational diver who reported his discovery to the local archaeological superintendency (Lattanzi 1986: 13–14; Gianfrotta 1986: 25; Arata 2005: 186–188). The Lošinj sculpture, also known as the ‘Croatian Apoxyomenos’ or ‘Apoxyomenos of Vela Orjule’, was found in 1996 in the Lošinj archipelago in Croatia, close to Vela Orjule, by a tourist (Stenuit 2002: 41–44; Arata 2005: 172–173). The Mazara del Vallo ‘Dancing Satyr’ (Figure 8.2) was discovered in fragments during 1997 and 1998 in the nets of local fishermen operating a motor trawler at the sea off Sicily, between the island Pantelleria and the African coast (Arata 2005: 154; Petriaggi 2005: 74–76). In 1999, another bronze sculptural fragment, a life-size bronze elephant foot, was brought to the surface, with no contextual information, by the same fishermen from Mazara del Vallo (Arata 2005: 154; Lapatin 2018: 159–168). The fishermen who discovered these sculptures—the crew of the *Captain Ciccio* fishing boat and especially their captain—have been praised as local heroes by the Museo del Satiro in Mazara del Vallo (Velentza 2022: 639–644). The museum exhibit presents the efforts to bring these works of art onto land with awe, despite the use of outdated investigative methods and the obvious lack of proper contextual analysis and systematic archaeological investigation. In similar fashion, at least seven fragments of ancient bronze sculptures were found between 1994 and 2009 around the island of Kalymnos, Greece, by local fishermen who reported and surrendered their striking discoveries to the Greek archaeological services (Koutsouflakis 2007: 48–49; Koutsouflakis and Simosi 2015: 74–75; Koutsouflakis 2017).

There are dozens of similar accounts of non-archaeological retrievals of ancient sculptural artefacts from under water, even as late as the 2010s (Velentza 2022: 20–35). All

⁷ Since then, the site of the Antikythera shipwreck has been revisited, first by Jacques-Yves Cousteau with short surveys and excavations in 1953 and 1976, and since 2014, by the team of the ‘Return to Antikythera’ project organised by the Hellenic Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities (see Parker 1992: 55–56; Arata 2005: 144–146; Kaltsas *et al.* 2012: 14–15, 36).

⁸ Of 110 underwater deposits examined in a recent study by Velentza (2022: 63, Fig. 26), approximately 64 (more than 58% of the recorded data) lack a known underwater archaeological context or a potential date for their underwater deposition. This circumstance is related to the discovery of the sculptures as isolated finds and their recovery from sites which are undated and not surveyed.



Figure 8.2. The bronze statue of the ‘Dancing Satyr’ of Mazara del Vallo, displayed in the Museo del Satiro Danzante in Sicily. Photograph by the author.

have been accompanied by elements of mystery, surprise, excitement and pride. Frequently, these incidents appear in local news and other popular media accompanied by interviews and descriptions of how the discoverers realised they had found an ancient sculpture under water, thus intensifying the thrill of these extraordinary recoveries. These circumstances of discovery, combined with the catastrophic loss and wondrous, supernatural discovery associated with sculptures from under water since Classical Antiquity, keep alive the concept of salvaging ancient treasure.

This outdated antiquarian approach has obstructed the analysis of these sculptural artefacts within well-defined archaeological contexts, frequently leading to misinterpretations (Velentza 2022: 41–45). One such example is the case of the Riace sculptures mentioned earlier. These two sculptures were found by a recreational scuba diver in 1972. The Diving Unit of the Carabinieri salvaged the reported sculptural fragments without putting a specialized framework for underwater archaeological research into place (Gianfrotta 1986: 25; Lattanzi 1986: 15; Arata 2005: 186–188), despite the many academic underwater archaeological projects which were taking

place in Italy at the time (e.g. Owen 1971; Eiseman and Ridgway 1987). Only a year after the salvage of the Riace statues, an archaeological investigation was organised for the discovery site. During this survey, more bronze fragments fitting the already retrieved sculptures were found, though according to the archaeological reports, no ship wreckage was detected. However, more recent examination of the recovered archaeological material, survey reports and seabed photographs have given scholars a different perspective. As Lattanzi (1986: 16) and Gianfrotta (1986: 28–29) have observed, during the salvage and surveys of the site, a large quantity of amphorae fragments was found, especially under the armpit of Statue A, as was a fairly thick piece of amphora wedged between the arm and the torso of one of the statues. Additionally, small pieces of wood and several lead rings were found during salvage operations. These contextual artefacts and data, though included in the archaeological publications of the underwater operations, have not yet been used in a methodological study of the underwater site, nor have they been taken into account in interpreting the statues and their maritime transport. Simply, the opportunity to understand the exact archaeological context of these artefacts has been lost through the thrill and excitement of underwater

salvage. As a result, most scholars can examine the Riace bronzes only from an art historical perspective (Busignani 1981; Boardman 1985: 53; Mattusch 1997; Neer 2010: 148–155).

The same idea is promoted by the display of these statues in the gallery of the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia in Reggio Calabria. The Riace sculptures are exhibited next to sculptures from the Porticello shipwreck as works of art, with no information about the site or the conditions of their underwater discovery (Figure 8.3). Because of this presentation and the lack of information, most scholarly interpretations of these sculptural artefacts regarding their original land context, primary function, transportation and underwater deposition have been based on purely hypothetical theories which draw conclusions from art-historical analyses and mentions in ancient sources. This practice has promoted significant misunderstandings of the provenance and use of the Riace sculptures. The most prevalent theory sees the sculptures as booty stolen in the Roman era from a Greek sanctuary, probably Delphi, with the intention of transporting them to Italy (Mattusch 1996: ix-x, 47, 64–65 and 193–194; Mattusch 2002: 111–114; Jenkins and Turner 2009: 29–30; Neer 2010: 148–155; Bellingham 2014: 209–219). In reality, there is no

documented archaeological evidence to support any of the dates, places or activities mentioned in these hypotheses.

From the examples cited above, it is clear that the various concepts and emotions associated with discovering sculptures under water, from Classical Antiquity until today, have prevailed over the need for careful archaeological investigation and interpretation. This has masked any contextual data, which are frequently considered unimportant. This, in turn, has perpetuated the misrepresentation of underwater archaeological finds as treasure goods, worthy only of salvage rather than archaeological investigation. As Gately and Benjamin (2018) analyse in depth, this portrayal of underwater archaeological research as a treasure hunting endeavour is a problem with which maritime archaeologists still struggle. Moreover, the lack of methodological research and contextual analysis of the sculptures from under water is a reason why these artefacts are frequently subjects of illicit trafficking. Examples include the sculptural head from the Porticello shipwreck, which appears in the gallery adjacent to the Riace sculptures in Figure 8.3; the Fano sculpture, also known as ‘Statue of a Victorious Youth’ or ‘Getty Bronze’ (Figure 8.4), currently held in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum; and most recently,



Figure 8.3. The Riace bronze statues (left) and one of the Porticello shipwreck bronze sculptures (right), displayed in the Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia in Reggio Calabria. Photograph by the author.

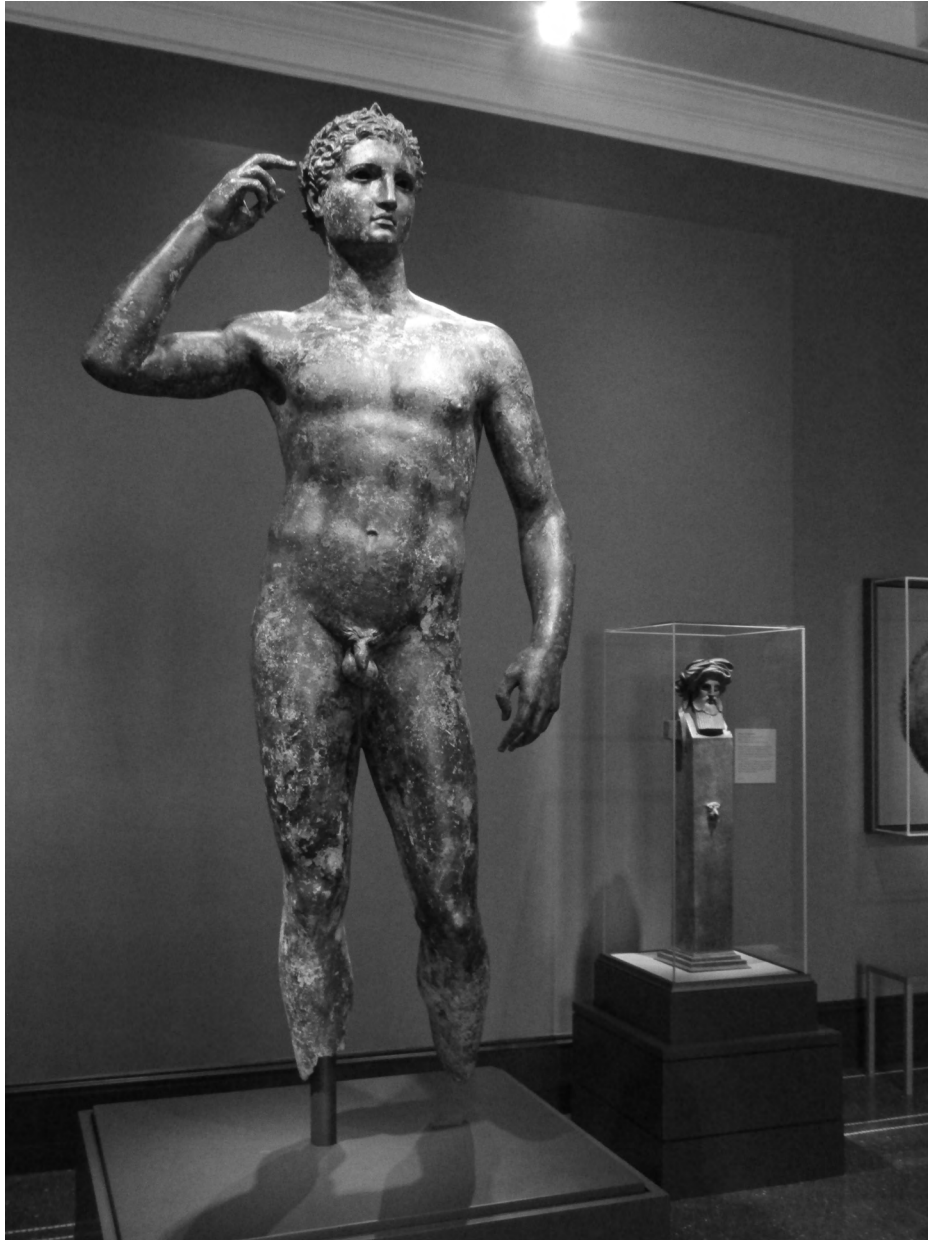


Figure 8.4. The smaller-than-life-size bronze male sculpture found off Fano, Italy, displayed in the Getty Villa in Los Angeles. Photograph by the author.

a large-scale bronze statue found off the coast of Gaza, which was sold through eBay after its out-of-context discovery (Velentza 2022: 44–45).

Modern reception and inspiration

The romanticism and mystery surrounding ancient sculptures from under water have had an interesting impact on the work of contemporary artists. In recent years, several artists have exhibited their sculptural creations under water, thus developing underwater sculpture museums visited by diving tourists. For example, the Museo Subacuático de Arte in Cancún, Mexico, is an underwater museum which exhibits a wide range of underwater sculptures to visitors who can dive, snorkel or see the underwater galleries from glass-bottomed boats. The museum promotes its

concept and visiting experience as a unique adventure and opportunity to view the ocean in a way unlike anything visitors have ever seen before (MUSA 2023). One of the artists exhibiting his sculptures there, Jason deCaires Taylor, describes being under water as a ‘deeply personal, liberating and otherworldly experience’ (deCaires Taylor *et al.* 2014: 6–9). He explains that by choosing to display his sculptural works under water, he both expresses his adventurous personality and encourages insights into human relationships and experiences with watery environments.

To date, the most fascinating contemporary art adaptation of underwater sculptural discoveries is Damien Hirst’s exhibition and mockumentary film, ‘Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable’, which presented the tale

of a fictional Roman shipwreck full of sculptures from an imaginary ancient collector. The exhibition was first presented in 2017 at the Palazzo Grassi and the Punta della Dogana in the Venice Biennale, and then in a 2017 film produced by Netflix. For the exhibition and film, Hirst submerged several of his own sculptures in the Indian Ocean and then filmed their retrieval as if they were newly found archaeological discoveries. Impersonating a scientific patron, Hirst then restored, catalogued, interpreted and curated the retrieved sculptures to be presented to the public in Venice (Greene and Leidwanger 2017: 2–11; Hirst 2017a, 2017b). Moreover, as Greene and Leidwanger (2017: 4–6) note, some of Hirst's sculptures resemble well-known ancient sculptures retrieved from under water, including a colossal statue, called 'Demon with a Bowl', which mimicked the form and posture of the Riace statues. This imaginary narrative and counterfeit story of loss and adventurous discovery was the basis of an unprecedented, highly exciting and engaging artistic project which juxtaposed truth and fiction, mystery and wonder and the ancient and the modern.

The artistic curiosity inspired by ancient sculptures from under water was also featured in the 2017 film 'Call Me by Your Name', directed by Luca Guadagnino and based on André Aciman's 2007 novel of the same name. This film, rich with classical references, presents pictures of ancient Greek and Roman bronze sculptures in its opening titles, including several pieces found under water (Stevens 2018). The most notable sculptures are the Marathon sculpture (Bass 1966: 74 and 169; Parker 1992: 259; Mattusch 1997: 15–16; Arata 2005: 178) and the 'Dancing Satyr' of Mazara del Vallo (shown in Figure 8.2). Importantly, the film features an underwater sculptural discovery in detail. The two main characters, Elio and Oliver, join Elio's father, Professor Perlman, to retrieve an ancient bronze sculpture from Lake Garda. In this scene, after the statue is removed from the water by divers, the characters examine its fragments. The professor suggests the statue was a Hellenistic copy of one of Praxiteles' originals from the fourth century BC, noting that it must also have been a gift from a Count Lechi to his lover, the contralto Adelaide Malanotte (Melnikova 2020: 387). The bronze statue presented in the film resembles the sculptural type and posture of the Fano sculpture (Figure 8.4), which was found under water somewhere in the Adriatic Sea and has been part of the J. Paul Getty collection since 1977 (Mattusch 1997: 1–3). Overall, the sculptures from under water featured in the film are Guadagnino's inventions; they do not appear in Aciman's original novel, which frequently mentions figures from ancient literature, history and myth. However, as Stevens (2018) notes, the novel seldom refers to ancient art history or archaeology. Hence, the film director likely used ancient bronze sculptures—especially those from under water—to represent visually the novel's references to ancient literary texts (Melnikova 2020). Anachronistically, the 'Dancing Satyr', which appears in the opening titles, was discovered in 1997–1998, several years after the novel's fictional setting. Undoubtedly, the specific choice of the scene of the

underwater sculptural retrieval and the thrilling emotions of excitement, wonder, mystery and romance that overtake the two main characters were chosen deliberately by the director to assist in the peak of their romantic idyl of Elio and Oliver and contribute to the film's visualisation of desire, nostalgia and adventure.

Conclusion

This study highlights an interesting continuity in the reception of sculptural loss and discovery in the Mediterranean Sea. From the period of Classical Antiquity to Mediaeval times and from the shipwreck losses of the 'Grand Tour' to the most recent archaeological discoveries, incidents of underwater deposition, discovery or recovery of sculptures have been associated with intense emotions and cultural concepts of mystery and adventure in both pre-modern and modern narratives. These concepts have created long-held reactions to sculptures from under water in the stories and traditions of multiple eras, deeply influencing modern scholarship and art as well. This realization reveals that there are certain attitudes towards sculptures from the sea which have been shaped over centuries. In modern times, these attitudes—combined with the abrupt and sometimes difficult circumstances of discovery and salvage of underwater sculptures—have influenced the level of analysis and understanding feasible for these archaeological artefacts. As the present analysis has demonstrated, diachronic concepts associated with sculptures from under water have decidedly interfered with the way sculptural discoveries have been perceived, not just by scholars, archaeologists and art historians but also by the general public, the media and contemporary artists.

This realisation highlights the dynamic role of the sea as a space of lived experiences where polar opposites—catastrophe and utopia, chaos and wonder—co-exist. More widely, the narratives and incidents of sculptures lost and found under water also provide insight into long-term conceptual processes which have influenced academic and public perceptions of maritime archaeology and underwater archaeological finds in the modern era. With this deeper understanding of why things have been viewed and presented in certain ways, practitioners of maritime archaeology can work towards advancing the public understanding of the sea and underwater environment. Greater care in portraying maritime and underwater archaeological discoveries is necessary, as suggested by Gately and Benjamin (2018), along with building the capacity for better approaches, processes and methodologies. Targeted education on the subjects of maritime archaeology and maritime heritage in schools and academic settings, but also for divers and heritage authorities would also help to improve the understanding of maritime archaeological finds in the public sphere (Staniforth 2008).

For the case of sculptures from under water, efforts for capacity building and expanding education will enhance

public awareness of the underwater archaeological contexts where sculptures are found (e.g. shipwrecks, deposits of jettisoned objects and ritual depositions; some of these are currently invisible in the archaeological record due to the lack of data). Additionally, better and more strict methodologies should be followed in researching and recovering sculptures from underwater deposits, following the guidelines and frameworks developed by prominent scholars and organisations of the discipline (e.g. Muckelroy 1978; Adams and Rönby 2013; Maarleveld *et al.* 2013). These initiatives will help the field move away from the outdated antiquarian practice of treasure salvage, while also safeguarding archaeological objects from potential antiquities trafficking.

References

- Adams, J. and Rönby, J. 2013. *Interpreting shipwrecks: Maritime archaeological approaches*. Southampton, UK: Highfield Press.
- Angelicoussis, E. 2004. The collection of classical sculptures of the Earl of Arundel, 'Father of Virtue in England'. *Journal of the History of Collections* 16: 143–159.
- Arata, F. P. 2005. *Opere d'arte dal mare: Testimonianze archeologiche subacquee del trasporto e del commercio marittimo di prodotti artistici [Works of art from the sea: Underwater archaeological evidence of the transport and maritime trade of artistic products]*. Roma: Libreria dello Stato.
- Bass, G. 1966. *Archaeology under water*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Bassett, S. G. 1991. The antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 45: 87–96.
- Becatti, G. 1938–1939. Il culto di Ercole ad Ostia [The cult of Hercules in Ostia]. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 67: 7–60.
- Bellingham, D. 2014. The underwater heritage of the Riace bronzes: Ethics, provenance and the art market in ancient Rome and today. In: V. Vadi and H. E. G. S. Schneider (eds.), *Art, cultural heritage and the market: Ethical and legal issues*, 209–220. Berlin: Springer.
- Black, J. 1985. *The British and the Grand Tour*. Kent, UK: Croom Helm.
- Boardman, J. 1985. *Greek sculpture: The Classical period*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Boin, D. 2010. A hall for Hercules at Ostia and a farewell to the late antique 'Pagan Revival'. *American Journal of Archaeology* 114(2): 253–266.
- Burrows, W. 2010. *This new ocean: The story of the first space age*. New York: Random House.
- Busignani, A. 1981. *Gli eroi di Riace: Daimon e Techne [The heroes of Riace: Daimon and Techne]*. Firenze: Sansoni Ed.
- Cameron, A. and Herrin, J. 1984. *Constantinople in the early eighth century: The Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Coltman, V. 2009. *Classical sculpture and the culture of collecting in Britain since 1760*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DeCaires Taylor, J., McCormick, C. and Scales, H. 2014. *The underwater museum: The submerged sculptures of Jason deCaires Taylor*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- DePaola, T. 1984. *The mysterious giant of Barletta*. Boston: HMH Books for Young Readers.
- Du Plat Taylor, J. 1965. *Marine archaeology: Developments during sixty years in the Mediterranean*. London: Hutchinson.
- Earle, S. 1986. Sea and space: Frontiers for exploration—An introduction. *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 76(1): 68–72.
- Eiseman, C. J. and Ridgway, B. S. 1987. *The Porticello shipwreck: A Mediterranean merchant vessel of 415–385 BC*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.
- Frost, F. 1968. Scyllias: Diving in antiquity. *Greece & Rome* 15(2): 180–185.
- Gately, I. and Benjamin, J. 2018. Archaeology hijacked: Addressing the historical misappropriations of maritime and underwater archaeology. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 13: 15–35.
- Gianfrotta, P. A. 1986. Il naufragio [The shipwreck]. In: L. M. Lombardi Satriani and M. Paoletti (eds.), *Gli eroi venuti dal mare [Heroes from the sea]*, 25–37. Rome: Gangemi editore.
- Green, J. 1990. *Maritime archaeology: A technical handbook*. London: Academic Press.
- Greene, E. and Leidwanger, J. 2017. Damien Hirst's tale of shipwreck and salvaged treasure. *American Journal of Archaeology* 122(1): 2–11.
- Harris, J. 2003. *Byzantium and the Crusades*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Hemingway, S. 2004. *The horse and jockey from Artemision*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hirst, D. 2017a. *Treasures from the wreck of the Unbelievable*. London: Other Criteria.
- Hirst, D. 2017b. *The undersea salvage operation: Treasures from the wreck of the Unbelievable*. London: Other Criteria.
- Horden, P. and Purcell, N. 2000. *The corrupting sea: A study of Mediterranean history*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jenkins, I. and Turner, B. 2009. *The Greek body*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum.

- Johnson, F. P. 1925. The Colossus of Barletta. *American Journal of Archaeology* 29(1): 20–25.
- Kaltsas, N. 2002. *Sculpture in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens*. Athens: Kapon Editions.
- Kaltsas, N., Vlachogianni, E. and Bouyia, P. 2012. *The Antikythera shipwreck: The ship, the treasures, the mechanism*. Athens: National Archaeological Museum.
- Kiilerich, B. 2016. The Barletta Colossus revisited: The methodological challenges of an enigmatic statue. *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 38: 55–72.
- Kiilerich, B. 2018. Abstraction in late antique art. In: A.C. Olovdotter (ed.), *Envisioning worlds in late antique art: New perspectives on abstraction and symbolism in late-Roman and early-Byzantine visual culture (c. 300–600)*, 77–94. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Kloppenborg, J. 2018. Jesus, fishermen and tax collectors: papyrology and the construction of the ancient economy of Roman Palestine. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 94(4): 571–599.
- Koch, H. 1926. Bronzestatue in Barletta. *Antike Denkmäler* 3: 20–27.
- Kourkoumelis, D. and Tourtas, A. 2014. Excavations on the *Mentor* shipwreck. *Nautical Archaeology*, Summer: 6–7.
- Koutsouflakis, G. 2007. Bronze torso of equestrian statue from the Sea of Kalymnos. *Enalia* 10: 42–57.
- Koutsouflakis, G. and Simosi, A. 2015. Hellenistic bronze sculptures from the Aegean Sea: Recent discoveries 1994–2009. In: J. M. Daehner (ed.), *Power and pathos: Bronze sculpture of the Hellenistic world*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust.
- Koutsouflakis, G. 2017. Bronzes from the Aegean Sea: A reassessment of old and new finds. In: J.M. Daehner, K. Lapatin and A. Spinelli (eds.), *Artistry in bronze: The Greeks and their legacy. XIXth International Congress on ancient bronzes*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust.
- Lampinen, A. and Mataix Ferrándiz, E. 2022. *Seafaring and mobility in the late antique Mediterranean*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Lapatin, K. 2018. A puzzling pachyderm. In: C. Draycott, R. Raja, K. Welch and W. Wootton (eds.), *Visual histories of the classical world: Essays in honour of R. R. Smith*, 159–168. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers.
- Lattanzi, E. 1986. I bronzi nel Museo di Reggio C. [The bronzes in the Museum at Reggio C]. In: L. M. Lombardi Satriani and M. Paoletti (eds.), *Gli eroi venuti dal mare [Heroes from the sea]*, 13–24. Rome: Gangemi editore.
- Lianos, N. 1983. Έρευνα στο ναυάγιο ΜΕΝΤΩΡ [Research on the *Mentor* shipwreck]. *Αρχαιολογία* 8: 24–28.
- Maarleveld, T., Guérin, U. and Egger, B. 2013. *Manual for activities directed at underwater cultural heritage: Guidelines to the annex of the UNESCO 2001 convention*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Magoulias, H. J. 1984. *O city of Byzantium, annals of Niketas Chroniates*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Mango, C. 1963. Antique statuary and the Byzantine beholder. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17: 55–75.
- Mattusch, C. 1978. The bronze torso in Florence: An exact copy of a fifth-century B. C. Greek original. *American Journal of Archaeology* 82: 101–104.
- Mattusch, C. 1988. *Greek bronze statuary: From the beginnings through the fifth century BC*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mattusch, C. 1996. *Classical bronzes; the art and craft of Greek and Roman statuary*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mattusch, C. 1997. *The victorious youth*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on Art.
- Mattusch, C. 2002. In search of the Greek bronze original. In: E. Gazda (ed.), *The ancient art of emulation*, 99–106. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Melnikova, I. 2020. Nostalgia, adaptation, and (textual) identity: Luca Guadagnino’s ‘desire trilogy’. *Adaptation* 13(3): 378–396.
- Muckelroy, K. 1978. *Maritime archaeology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Neer, R. 2010. *The emergence of the classical style in Greek sculpture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Omstedt, A. 2020. *A philosophical view of the ocean and humanity*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- Owen, D. 1971. Excavating a classical shipwreck. *Archaeology* 24(3): 118–129.
- Parker, A. J. 1992. *Ancient shipwrecks of the Mediterranean and the Roman provinces*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.
- Petriaggi, R. 2005. *Il satire danzante di Mazara del Vallo: Il restauro e l'immagine*. Roma: ICR Istituto Centrale per il Restauro.
- Phelan, J. 2007. Seascapes: tides of thought and being in Western perception of the sea. *Goldsmiths Anthropology Research Papers* 14. London: University of London.
- Phillips, J. 2005. *The fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople*. London: Pimlico.
- Queller, D. E. and Madden, T. F. 1997. *The fourth Crusade: The conquest of Constantinople*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Queyrel, F. 2012. L’Alexandre d’Agde: Un porte-plateau ou un porte-flambeau [The Alexander of Agde: A tray

- holder or a torchbearer]. In: *De l'Éphèbe à l'Alexandre d'Agde, ouvrage publié à l'occasion de la nouvelle restauration [From the Ephebe to the Alexander of Agde, work published on the occasion of the new restoration]*, 61–69. Agde, France: Musée de l'Éphèbe et d'Archéologie sous-marine.
- Rackl, H. 1978. *Βουτιά στα Περασμένα: Υποβρύχια Αρχαιολογία [Dive into the past: Underwater archaeology]*. Athens: Gutenberg.
- 'Return to Antikythera' project. 2021. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. Available online: <<http://antikythera.whoi.edu>> (accessed 23/4/2021).
- Santangelo, F. 2013. *Divination, prediction and the end of the Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spivey, N. 1996. *Understanding Greek sculpture: Ancient meanings, modern readings*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Spivey, N. 2013. *Greek sculpture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Staniforth, M. 2008. Strategies for teaching maritime archaeology in the twenty first century. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 3: 93–102.
- Strang, V. 2004. *The meaning of water*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Stenuit, M. E. 2002. The Apoxyomenos of Vele Orjule, a Greek bronze statue discovered off Croatia. *Minerva* 13: 41–44.
- Stevens, B. E. 2018. Classical desires in *Call Me by Your Name* (dir. Luca Guadagnino 2017). In: F. Bièvre-Perrin (ed.), *Antiquipop*. Available online: <<https://antiquipop.hypotheses.org/eng/3264eng>> (accessed 28/4/2021).
- Sweet, R. 2012. *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Throckmorton, P. 1970. *Shipwrecks and archaeology: The unharvested sea*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Trunk, M. 2003. Early restorations of ancient sculptures in the Casa de Pilatos, Seville. In: J. Burnett Grossman, J. Podany and M. True (eds.), *History of restoration of ancient stone sculptures*, 255–264. Los Angeles: Getty Publications.
- Tsiropoulou, M., Antoniou, M. and Massouridi, S. 2012. The 1900–1901 investigations. In: N. Kaltsas, E. Vlachogianni and P. Bouyia (eds.), *The Antikythera shipwreck: The ship, the treasures, the mechanism*, 132–145. Athens: National Archaeological Museum.
- Tzalas, H. 2007. Χάλκινα αγάλματα από τα βάθη της θάλασσας [Bronze statues from the depths of the sea]. In: P. Valavanis (ed.), *Μεγάλες στιγμές της ελληνικής αρχαιολογίας [Great moments of Greek archaeology]*, 342–363. Athens: Kapon Editions.
- Velentza, K. 2022. *The maritime transport of sculptures in the ancient Mediterranean*. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Vickers, M. 2006. *The Arundel and Pomfret marbles in Oxford*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.
- Vickers, M. 2007. The Arundel and Pomfret marbles in Oxford. *Minerva* 18: 29–32.

The archaeology of ships and boats