

CHRYSTOMIDES (J.), DENDRINOS (C.) and HARRIS (J.) *Eds. The Greek Islands and the Sea. Proceedings of the First International Colloquium held at the Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London, 21-22 September 2001.* Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 2004. Pp. xv + 289. £24.99. 1871328144.

LÄTSCH (F.) *Insularität und Gesellschaft in der Antike.* (Geographica Historica 19). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005. Pp. 298. €48. 3515084312.

Islands and the sea that surrounds them have long held a certain fascination for travellers and scholars alike. Ancient and modern writers have engaged with them as realities or as metaphors, invariably associating them – both in a negative and positive sense – with isolation, boundedness and distance. In academic circles, the last decade has seen a revival of studies concerned with islandscapes and seascapes; the disciplines of history and archaeology, in particular, have understood the great potential of these new viewpoints and have made great strides in problematizing and theorizing past interaction between land, sea and islands. It is within this tradition that these two books fall.

*The Greek Islands and the Sea* is a collection of articles originally presented at the 2001 colloquium of the same name. The colloquium's aim was to present a diachronic and holistic view of the activities and changing fortunes of all those who have, directly or indirectly, engaged with islands in the Aegean. Covering a time span from *ca* 500 BC through to the modern day, movement, mobility and interaction are the key themes that link all the contributions, be it small-scale movement from an island to a neighbouring 'goat island' for pasture land (Constantakopoulou) or larger-scale movement of 12th- to 16th-century travellers between and across different parts of the Mediterranean (Malamut). Mobility and movement (whether of the islanders themselves or of occupying powers) invariably raise issues about one's identity; the questions of 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' are present in the subtext of several of the contributions, but are most poignantly expressed in the powerful poems of modern Kephallonian sailors (Vryonis). Complementing the overarching themes are two contributions that offer a distinctly practical perspective on living and working on the sea (Ayodeji; Pryor). In her imaginary account of a day in the life of Cyrton, a fisherman in classical times, Ayodeji combines archaeology, classical literature, iconography, marine biology and ethnography fruitfully to illuminate the combination of skills and experience any ancient fisherman would have had to possess in order to return alive with the catch. Unfortunately her account shies away from exploring questions of identity or the spiritual dimensions of a profession known for its hardship and danger. Pryor, in exploring the AD 949 expedition to recover Crete from the Muslims for the Byzantine Empire, manages to impress upon the reader

the great level of organization that needed to go into its preparation and execution, with regard to the transportation of large numbers of soldiers and horses, provisioning, water supplies and anchoring facilities. In particular his description of the spatial requirements for mooring a fleet is an apt reminder that mediaeval galleys and sailing ships could not simply be parked 'like cars in a multi-storey carpark' (87). Perhaps more importantly, his estimates of anchoring formations (97 boats would require between 1.04 and 8.9 km of beach) evoke the impressive visual effect any large-scale expedition would have had on observers.

Although the book's contributions raise important issues, the lack of firm thematic guidance by the editors and the omission of an introductory chapter that draws together all contributions within a framework of islands, identity and mobility prevents this collection of separate, individual papers from becoming something greater than the mere sum of its parts. As a consequence, contributions by Letsios on Jewish communities, Jacoby on the demographic evolution of Euboea, and Chrysochoou on Cretan maps sell themselves short by shying away from a more in-depth analysis of the observed facts and phenomena.

Lätsch's *Insularity and Society in Antiquity* is a welcome attempt to understand the ways in which island life shaped and impacted upon ancient societies. Thus, the book asks the important question of whether there was a fundamental difference between societies that lived on the mainland and those that inhabited an island.

While concentrating on (pre)historic societies in the Mediterranean, the question is of general significance for all those interested in understanding island societies in any period and region.

The book can broadly be divided into two sections: drawing upon a wide range of ancient literary sources and modern approaches to islands, the first two chapters provide an overview of the history of island studies and seafaring, and illuminate the ever-changing meaning of key terms, such as 'island' and 'insularity'. The second section consists of the remaining six chapters, each dealing with a specific topic in relation to islands (i.e. colonization, settlement, economy and trade, warfare, identity, and isolation). In the main body of the text, L. views the variables of space and seafaring as determining life and development of any island. With regard to initial colonization, islands were colonized later than the mainland as they required a seaworthy transport vehicle. Instead of proximity to land, it was their size, agricultural potential and raw materials that made the difference for colonists, resulting for example in Crete being colonized before (smaller) islands close to the mainland. Small islands (regardless of their distance from land) were reliant on exchange for survival and were deserted when trade decreased. Population size was therefore closely linked to the size of an island and the frequency of trade. By contrast with the mainland, population growth could not be accommodated through land expansion, but resulted either in the departure of part of