

Archipelago Network ————— Press Release

Press release #05

January 17, 2024

Introducing Maritime Trades of the Cyclades

How does the sea shape Cycladic identity and culture? What do maritime crafts signify for the future of the Cyclades? Can boatbuilding, small-scale fishing, and seafaring contribute to the sustainable development of the Aegean islands?

Archipelago Network introduces *Maritime Trades of the Cyclades*, inviting you to explore the Cyclades from a different perspective and imagine an alternative future. Navigate between Amorgos, Koufonisia, Paros, Santorini and Syros through an interactive digital map, exploring images, sounds, and narratives as you meet the boatbuilders, fishers, and sailors of these islands.

At the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the Aegean archipelago has long served as a meeting point for seafarers, travelers, and migrants, shaping diverse communities and cultural practices. Boatbuilding, small-scale fishing, and seafaring are closely tied to Cycladic identity and culture.

Throughout history, wooden boats have served as connecting links between the islands and the surrounding region. Over time, they evolved into a form of traditional Aegean architecture, connected to a distinct system of technical craftsmanship. Small-scale fishing, a timeless source of sustenance and economic activity, encompasses a plethora of techniques and symbolic knowledge about the marine environment. Finally, seafaring has been the main conduit in the region for the movement of people and the exchange of goods and ideas.

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Currently, Greece is experiencing a rapid reduction of wooden boatbuilding and use of traditional wooden boats; one of the biggest threats faced is the destruction of wooden fishing boats with subsidies provided by the Greek government, an EU regulation aimed at reducing the fishing fleet and its environmental impact. Through documentation and advocacy, this project aims to raise awareness for the living tradition of boatbuilding, and to participate in a campaign to end these subsidies while pursuing alternative, sustainable fishing methods.

Via the on-site digitizing of archival collections, as well as production of extensive audiovisual documentation, *Maritime Trades of the Cyclades* provides a digital record attesting to the technical and experiential knowledge of these communities, as well as related cultural practices and beliefs. Over twelve months, this project has produced thousands of documentary photographs arranged into 43 discrete collections; dozens of hours of field recordings and digitized sound recordings; 3D models of selected woodworking tools; over 500 digitized photographs and rare archival documents, presented in 19 archival collections; and a 12 part docu-series.

This interdisciplinary research output encapsulates the interconnected maritime traditions of wooden boatbuilding, small-scale fishing, and seafaring in Amorgos, Koufonisia, Paros, Santorini, and Syros, tracing their enduring relationship with the economic and cultural fabric of the region. It also highlights the role they stand to play in climate adaptation, social cohesion, and shaping a resilient future for the coastal areas of the Cyclades and the Aegean as a whole.

Researchers and a broader audience may navigate the resulting archival and contemporary audiovisual material through a digital map created by Archipelago Network specifically for the project. The collections will be enriched with additional material over the course of 2024. Additionally, a series of public events, including exhibitions, screenings, and talks, are planned on these islands to honor these practices and advocate for their continued existence and evolution.

All collections are available under a Creative Commons license, encouraging free distribution and use for research, creative, or other purposes.

Browse the digital map [here](#).

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"Maritime Trades of the Cyclades" is realized under the auspices and with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, with lead support from the Costas M. Lemos Foundation, and with the support of Goethe-Institut Athen.

The project is implemented in collaboration with Arxeion Taxis, the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), Friends of the Museum of Aegean Boatbuilding and Maritime Crafts, and Motherland as well as local partners, including the Municipality of Syros-Hermoupolis, the Municipal Community of Koufonisia, the University of the Aegean in Syros, the Syros Historical Archive, the Santorini Archive Project, the Industrial Museum of Hermoupolis, the Santorini Maritime Museum, the Historical Folklore Museum of Naousa, the Professional Fishing Association of Amorgos, the Paros Park, and the Atlantis Oia Dive Centre.

To stay updated with the latest news from the field and upcoming events, follow the social networks of the Archipelago Network or visit archipelagonetwork.org.

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