

ICOM ICMAH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

**“EXPLORING THE DEPTHS”
THE INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY OF
MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY**

October 28-30, 2026 at Zadar, Croatia

ABSTRACT BOOKLET

**#History & Archaeology Museums #Underwater Cultural Heritage
#Preservation #Conservation #Collection Management #Climate Change**

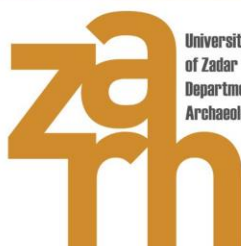


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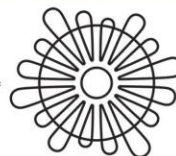
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ICOM ICMAH Annual Conference 2026

"Exploring the Depths - The Inspirational Journey of Maritime Archaeology": Preserving The Underwater Cultural Heritage Collection Within History And Archaeological Museums

Date: October 28-30, 2026 **Venue:** Zadar, Croatia

Conference Program at a Glance

Day 1 – Wednesday, October 28, 2026 - University of Zadar, Obala Kralja Petra Krešimira IV, 2 nd floor, Ceremonial Hall	
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Registration (Ground floor)
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Opening Ceremony - Welcome Addresses • Josip Faričić, Rector of the University of Zadar, Croatia • Nouran Khaled, Chair of ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (ICMAH) • Jelena Dunato, ICOM Croatia, Director of the Cres Museum • Magdalena Landry, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, <i>Pre-recorded video message</i> • Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture and Media, Croatia
9:35 – 10:00 AM	Keynote Speech • Lamia Fersi, <i>"From the Seabed To The Living Museum"</i>, Tunisia
10:00 – 10:15 AM	Coffee Break (Ground floor)
10:20 AM – 12:20 PM	Theme 1: Museums and Public Engagement Moderator: Anamarija Eterović Borzić, Museum of Ancient Glass in Zadar, Croatia.
12:20 – 12:30 PM	Q & A
12:30 – 1:30 PM	Lunch Break (At participant's own expense)
1:35 – 2:35 PM	Theme 1: Museums and Public Engagement (continued) Moderator: Anamarija Eterović Borzić, Museum of Ancient Glass in Zadar, Croatia
2:35 – 2:45 PM	Q & A
2:50 – 3:30 PM	Theme 2: Conservation and Management Moderator: Mladen Pešić, International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar, Croatia
3:30 – 4:00 PM	Coffee Break (Ground floor)
4:05 – 5:45 PM	Theme 2: Conservation and Management Moderator: Mladen Pešić, International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar, Croatia.
5:45 – 6:00 PM	Q & A

End of Day 1



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Day 2 – Thursday, October 29, 2026 - University of Zadar, Obala Kralja Petra Krešimira IV, 2nd floor, Ceremonial Hall

8:00 – 9:00 AM	Registration (Ground floor)
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Keynote Speech • Roko Surić & Doris Kurtov , <i>"The protection and management of Croatia's underwater cultural heritage"</i> , Croatia
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Coffee Break (Ground floor)
10:00 – 11:40 AM	Theme 2: Conservation and Management (continued) Moderator: Nouran Khaled, Chair of ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (ICMAH)
11:40 AM – 12:00 PM	Q & A
12:00 – 1:30 PM	Lunch Break Hosted by ICUA Zadar, Božidara Petranovića 3, Exhibition Pavilion
1:30 – 2:45 PM	Visit to the St. Nicholas Centre and Exhibition "Deep Peaks - Underwater Heritage of the Split-Dalmatia County"
3:00 – 4:00 PM	Theme 3: Underwater Cultural Heritage and Climate Change Venue: University of Zadar, Obala Kralja Petra Krešimira IV, 2nd floor, Ceremonial Hall Moderator: Mate Parica, University of Zadar, Croatia
4:00 – 4:10 PM	Q & A
4:10 – 4:30 PM	Coffee Break (Ground floor)
4:30 – 5:30 PM	Theme 4: Approaches for Mitigating Looting of Underwater Cultural Heritage Sites Moderator: Dino Taras, Archaeological Museum Zadar, Croatia Theme 5: Technology and Innovation Moderator: Dino Taras, Archaeological Museum Zadar, Croatia
5:30 – 6:00 PM	Q & A

End of Day 2



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**Day 3 - Friday, October 30, 2026 - University of Zadar, Obala Kralja Petra Krešimira IV
& Offsite Activities**

9:00 – 11:00 AM	Sports in Museums Workshop, Room 101, Ground Floor
11:00 AM – 6:00 PM	Proposed activities:
	Option 1: Visit to underwater archaeological sites in the Zadar region ○ <i>Pag Island, near the village of Šimuni</i> - Coastal underwater archaeological remains ○ <i>Letavica diving site</i> - Collection of ancient Roman amphorae; available for certified Advanced Open Water Divers (AOWD) ○ <i>Pag Island Coast</i> - Roman shipwreck with piles of broken amphorae, suitable for snorkeling and certified Open Water Divers (OWD)
	OR
	Option 2: Guided visits to cultural institutions in Zadar ○ 4:00 - 5:00 PM - <i>Museum of Ancient Glass in Zadar</i> (Address: Poljana Zemaljskog odbora 1) ○ 5:15 - 6:15 PM - <i>Archaeological Museum Zadar</i> (Address: Trg opatice Čike 1)

Posters (University of Zadar, Ceremonial Hall, 2nd floor)



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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



From the seabed to the living museum

Lamia Fersi
Tunisia

Institut National du Patrimoine/ Musée National du Bardo

How can history and archaeology museums ensure the preservation of underwater cultural heritage while making it living, accessible, and socially relevant through public engagement? History and archaeology museums play a fundamental role in preserving underwater cultural heritage—fragile, long invisible, and distant from the general public. Beyond their conservation mission, these institutions are now called upon to rethink their practices in order to foster public engagement and transform underwater collections into vehicles for knowledge, awareness, and civic participation. This paper contributes to a broader reflection on the role of Mediterranean museums in contemporary dynamics of public engagement around underwater cultural heritage. It takes as a case study the exhibition and interpretation strategies applied to the Mahdia shipwreck, discovered off the Tunisian coast and presented at the Bardo National Museum. Discovered off the Tunisian coastline, this shipwreck is a major archaeological testimony to the artistic, economic, and cultural exchange networks linking the eastern and western shores of the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period. The assemblages recovered from the site—now preserved and displayed in the museum—offer a particularly relevant basis for analyzing the scientific, museographic, and mediation challenges involved in the heritage-making of underwater remains, which are by nature fragmented, decontextualized, and difficult for the public to access. From this perspective, the study examines the interpretive tools, scenographic choices, and communication strategies used to transform a submerged vestige into an object of knowledge, transmission, and collective appropriation. It highlights the potential of these collections to renew cultural mediation practices and strengthen dialogue between archaeological research, museum institutions, and society. In conclusion, this contribution demonstrates that the preservation of underwater cultural heritage collections cannot be separated from an active policy of public engagement. History and archaeology museums thus emerge as key spaces where conservation, research, and citizen participation converge to transform a submerged and fragile heritage into a living and shared memory.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



*The protection and
management of Croatia's
underwater cultural heritage*

Doris Kurtov & Roko Surić

Croatia

International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar
(ICUA Zadar)

UNESCO designated the Croatian System of protection and management of underwater cultural heritage on sites Velika shallows near Cavtat, Letavica and Baron Gautsch as a Best Practice relating to underwater cultural heritage at the Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the 2001 Convention in Paris in June 2023. The designation recognizes Croatia's national framework for protecting and managing underwater archaeological sites, through the procedures and criteria established for issuing activity permits in areas containing underwater cultural artifacts. It specifically covers the management of archaeological finds off the coast of Cavtat and two other shipwrecks: the Letavica site, a Roman ship that sank near Pag Island in the 1st century BC, and the Baron Gautsch, an Austro-Hungarian passenger ship that sank in the Adriatic in 1914 after striking a mine. UNESCO Best Practice examples are initiatives implemented in accordance with the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Archaeological Heritage that promote public access to underwater cultural heritage. To date, fourteen such examples have been recognized, each awarded for a four-year period.



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THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Coastal and lagoon-based communities of Lagos Island: rethinking maritime heritage interpretation through community-driven visual documentation and museum-based digital storytelling.

Grace Aderele

Nigeria

Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, Pan-Atlantic University

Lagos is a city historically shaped by water. Long before its emergence as a colonial port and contemporary megacity, lagoon-based settlements along Lagos Island and surrounding communities developed complex maritime cultures centered on fishing, boat-building, trade, and coastal mobility. Yet, despite this rich aquatic history, Lagos's maritime cultural heritage remains under-documented in formal archaeological and museum narratives and is increasingly threatened by rapid urban development and land reclamation. This paper proposes Lagos Island's lagoon communities as a case study for rethinking how maritime cultural heritage in West Africa can be identified, documented, and interpreted in the absence of large-scale underwater archaeological excavation. Methodologically, the study adopts a visual anthropology framework combined with community-based heritage documentation, drawing on oral histories, participatory photographic surveys, historical cartography, and digital mapping of waterfront environments. This approach positions community knowledge and lived maritime practices as primary heritage sources, rather than supplementary data. Attention is given to museum-based visual storytelling as an interpretive strategy. The research examines how photographic documentation, short-form video narratives, and interactive digital mapping can translate intangible and landscape-based maritime heritage into accessible museum and online exhibitions. The proposed hybrid interpretive model is distinctive in its integration of three elements: participatory community documentation, digital visual media production, and museum interpretive design. This combination moves beyond conventional maritime archaeology's focus on submerged material remains by foregrounding living waterfront cultures and endangered coastal landscapes. By addressing current gaps in the representation of Nigerian maritime heritage in museum collections and global maritime archaeology discourse, the Lagos case study contributes a perspective from a region largely absent in international forums. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how museums can act as mediators between living lagoon communities and the preservation of maritime memory, expanding maritime heritage practice to include both submerged and lived aquatic cultural landscapes.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



*Representing Underwater Cultural Heritage
in Lithuania: Inland Water Sites and the
Baltic Sea Shipwrecks — Practices,
Narratives, and Community Engagement*

Edvinas Ubis & Elena Pranckėnaite
Lithuania

Lithuanian Sea Museum, Klaipėda University

Maritime and water-related cultural heritage is slightly determinant of Lithuania's cultural, geographic, or political identity compared with other Northern European countries. Nevertheless, numerous underwater cultural heritage (UCH) sites have been identified and investigated within approximately 90 km of the Baltic Sea coast and its territorial waters, and across inland lakes and rivers. This presentation examines how UCH is represented, interpreted, and communicated to the public in Lithuania, focusing on two case studies: inland water objects such as lake settlements, water transport and fishing structures, and Baltic Sea shipwrecks. Together, these examples reveal how museums and heritage institutions mediate between scientific research, public engagement, and national cultural identity. Inland-water heritage is dispersed across a heterogeneous institutional landscape – national regional parks, local museums, and private initiatives – resulting in varied and often uncoordinated approaches, as well as incomplete interpretive strategies. By contrast, the Lithuanian Sea Museum operates as a national maritime heritage institution, combining underwater archaeology, naval history, and broader maritime culture. Its exhibitions integrate artefacts from shipwrecks, interactive displays, scenographic environments to create immersive experiences, complemented by public programming. Particular attention will be given to how the museum contextualises underwater heritage within themes of memory, identity, and the Baltic Sea as a shared cultural space. The role of digital tools, participatory activities, and educational outreach in fostering community awareness and stewardship will also be analysed. The presentation evaluates the narratives conveyed by UCH, comparing principal presentation strategies with a focus on memory, identity, and the Baltic Sea as a shared cultural space. Finally, the presentation discusses the implications for integrated management and coordinated interpretive frameworks aimed at enhancing conservation outcomes and public engagement with Lithuania's UCH.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Establishment of a maritime museum in Pahang

Nurul Hamizah Binti Afandi

Malaysia

Pahang State Museum Corporation

The establishment of a maritime museum in Pahang is imperative, as a state with a rich culture and history as well as identity that is deeply influenced by riverine and maritime life. This paper will be looking into the ongoing effort of preserving Pahang's riverine and maritime past through the establishment of a forthcoming maritime museum in Pulau Beram, Pahang. The museum will be delineating the story and narrative of a port town, which includes the historical, geographical, cultural, archaeological, and the local genius aspect of a port civilisation. From emphasising the role of Pekan in Pahang as a port city to introducing the wider maritime history of the Malay World and the Indian Ocean World, the museum will also be presenting the history of the locality of Pulau Beram and the maritime history of Pahang as recorded in Malay historiography. Through looking at the importance of Sungai Pahang in history and prehistory as well as its underwater cultural heritage, this paper will also highlight the evidence of trade history in Pahang based on archaeological findings like ceramics and shipwrecks. Through the presentation of the historical narrative and the exhibition of artefacts including traditional boats, old maps, currency and goods traded along the Spice Route, it is hoped that the museum will encourage or instill a sense of appreciation towards the port civilisation history of Pahang and the Malay World as well as the principal role it once played in the global maritime history.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



*The Yenikapı Excavations: Istanbul's
Maritime Archaeology and its
engagement with the public*

Emir Son & Ögül Emre Öncü
Türkiye
Istanbul Archaeological Museums

Since its establishment in 1869, the Istanbul Archaeological Museums have continuously pursued their principal mission of safeguarding, interpreting, and sharing the cultural heritage within the borders of the country with humanity. Within this framework, alongside museum practice, the institution has made significant contributions to the scholarly world by both conducting major archaeological excavations itself and establishing substantial collaborations with researchers working throughout the country, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, when archaeology began to take firm steps as a scientific discipline. In doing so, it has succeeded in forming a pioneering identity through its activities in archaeological knowledge production, heritage conservation, and museology. When evaluated in this context, it is possible to demonstrate through various examples that the Istanbul Archaeological Museums have carried this core mission into the present day. The excavations conducted in Istanbul since the 2000s are especially noteworthy in this regard. Among these, the Yenikapı Excavations undoubtedly represent a prominent example. Carried out between 2004 and 2014, the Yenikapı Excavations received widespread attention in the international public sphere. As a result of these works, significant scientific data and a large number of artifacts were uncovered, revealing an uninterrupted stratigraphic sequence of Istanbul from the Neolithic Period through the Iron Age, Greek and Roman periods, the Byzantine era, and the Ottoman period. A substantial portion of the excavated layers belonged to the Port of Theodosius, which was in use between the 4th and 12th centuries AD. In this area, thirty-seven Byzantine shipwrecks were discovered. In addition, hundreds of thousands of finds related to port life, seafaring, and maritime trade were identified. It would be an honor for us to present, at this symposium, the Istanbul Archaeological Museums' core mission of preserving and interpreting cultural heritage within the country's borders and sharing it as part of humanity's collective memory, through the example of the Yenikapı Excavations. Within this scope, evaluations will also be shared regarding two temporary exhibitions previously organized at the Museum on the Yenikapı Excavations, as well as a new exhibition section planned to open in the near future, which will comprehensively address the Port of Theodosius. Thus, we are planning a presentation under the subheading Museum and Public Engagement within the main theme of the symposium, Maritime Archaeology.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Roman Ships at Trstenik and their public display

Irena Radic Rossi & Ivan Šuta

Croatia

University of Zadar

Research at the shallow-water site of Trstenik in Kaštel Sućurac began in 2002 with the recovery of a complete perforated dolium. Investigations continued with the discovery of the submerged remains of the coastal section of a Roman estate, distinguished by a wooden fence extending approximately 100 meters along the shoreline. Between 2006 and 2020, the remains of three ships were discovered on the southwestern side of the fence. The vessels had been filled with stones and deliberately scuttled in order to protect the structure from the destructive southern winds. Each ship differs in construction and size, ranging in length from 5 to 14 meters. The density of their framing elements indicates differing functions. The discovery of the Roman ships at Trstenik represents a significant contribution to our understanding of ancient maritime trade and shipbuilding. These well-preserved remains provide valuable insight into cargo transport and daily life in the Roman Adriatic, in close proximity to ancient Salona. In response to the archaeological collection capacity of the Museum of the City of Kaštela, and within the framework of the ARCHAEO DIGIT project (ARCHAEOlogical DIGITal Paths for Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism), funded under the INTERREG Italy–Croatia programme, an interactive display was created. It consists of a relief model of this section of the site, with touchpoints presenting photographic and video material for each find. The model is exhibited as part of the museum's permanent display in Vitturi Castle in Kaštel Lukšić. The public presentation enables visitors to experience this underwater heritage firsthand, transforming archaeological research into a shared cultural experience. By presenting the ships in an accessible and educational context, the exhibition underscores the importance of preserving maritime heritage for future generations.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



From Seabed to Showcase: Museum Mediation of a Sixteenth-Century Shipwreck in the Bay of Kotor

Jelena Čelebić
Montenegro
Koç University

The Cape Kabala shipwreck, at the entrance of the Bay of Kotor (Montenegro), is one of the most significant early modern underwater sites in the southern Adriatic. Excavated in 1996, it yielded a substantial assemblage of high-quality Iznik pottery, allowing a dating to the mid- to late-sixteenth century (a matter of scholarly debate), and indicating Venetian trade networks linking the Ottoman eastern Mediterranean to western markets. The most significant result of one season of excavations, although not conducted according to current methodological standards, was the identification of pine types used in the vessel's hull elements, which suggests regional timber use, local shipbuilding practices, or both. A selection of artefacts from the Cape Kabala wreck is now displayed in the local museum of Herceg Novi. This paper examines how the shipwreck has been translated from its underwater context into museum space and questions the extent to which the current exhibition conveys its maritime significance. Traditional object-centered display does not offer a wider picture of a particular place in time and neglects the relational character of (underwater) cultural heritage. Detached from its seascape, trade routes, and hinterland connections, the collection risks being perceived as isolated objects rather than evidence of a dynamic maritime cultural landscape. Drawing on Westerdahl's maritime cultural landscape framework and museum studies perspectives, the paper analyses the disjunction between seabed context and curatorial representation. The paper concludes by proposing strategies for recontextualizing the Cape Kabala assemblage through integrative interpretation, spatial narration, and public engagement, therefore reconnecting museum presentation with landscape-based archaeological understanding.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



The conservation and museum exhibition of maritime cultural property in the early 1960s: the little-known collaboration between Fernand Benoit and Jacques-Yves Cousteau for a maritime museum in Marseille

Diane Alliaume

France

Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes

In the early 1960s, the little-known collaboration between Commander Cousteau and Fernand Benoit, then Director of the 12th Archaeological District of Provence, on a museum project unprecedented in Europe: a ‘museum of the sea’ in Marseille, reveals a series of insights that are essential to understanding the establishment of underwater archaeology in France. Anticipating the potential offered by Fort Saint-Jean and its environs, they designed a complex that would serve both as a museum and a tourist attraction, integrated into its topographical context, to display the results of their excavations of the Grand Congloué shipwrecks. This project also aimed to present the history of navigation since ancient times, including its commercial players, a map of maritime routes, and a physical, chemical and oceanographic study of the marine environment based on the work of the Endoume Marine Station and the Calypso expeditions. The project also included an aquarium, an area showing the working conditions of underwater archaeologists, and the installation of a laboratory for treating wood from underwater environments and a school for underwater excavations. In line with a decentralised vision of culture, this project was supported by the Minister of Cultural Affairs in 1962, at a time when Italy was also considering integrating maritime museums into the national archaeological museums of Italy's various provinces. At the same time, the first restoration work carried out on the Ephèbe d’Agde in 1964 at the CNRS laboratory of the Borély Museum in Marseille revealed the technical and institutional constraints inherent in the treatment of archaeological artefacts derived from underwater excavations. These issues are analogous to those encountered during the conservation of artefacts and naval architecture elements from the Grand Congloué shipwrecks, whose conservation highlighted the lack of suitable facilities, funding and specialised laboratories. In the context of the reorganisation of archaeological services in France initiated by André Malraux, these studies emphasised the pressing necessity to establish a national organisation dedicated to underwater archaeology, equipped with laboratories. Despite the non-realisation of the Sea Museum project, with decentralisation laws not yet in place, Fernand Benoit and Jacques-Yves Cousteau's contribution, both aboard the Calypso, where they provided their scientific expertise, and in the museum field, were decisive in the recognition, institutionalisation and professionalisation of French and, more broadly,

Mediterranean underwater archaeology. The concept of establishing a special underwater archaeology department at Fort Saint-Jean prevailed, culminating in the formation of the DRASM, which was established by the decision of André Malraux, Minister for Cultural Affairs, in 1966. The ambition of Fernand Benoit and Commander Cousteau to promote underwater archaeology and the riches of the Mediterranean was also realised in 2013 with the inauguration of a substantial national museum dedicated to the Mediterranean in this part of the city. This museum, the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (Mucem), will be complemented in 2022 by the opening of an interpretation centre dedicated to the Cosquer underwater cave.



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THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Treasures Found on the Maritime Silk Road

Jiyeon Kim

Korea

Seoul Baekje Museum

This presentation introduces the special exhibition “**Treasures Found on the Maritime Silk Road**” at the Seoul Baekje Museum as a case study in effectively communicating maritime archaeological research to the public. Co-organized with the Taean Maritime Museum of the National Research Institute of Maritime Cultural Heritage, the exhibition presented underwater cultural heritage from the Baekje, Goryeo, and Joseon periods recovered from the Taean sea area to a broad public audience in Seoul for the first time. By contextualizing these finds within the history of maritime exchange, the exhibition highlighted the historical significance of the Korean Peninsula—particularly the Taean sea area—within East Asian maritime exchange networks.

THEME 1 – MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



The aquarium: a tool for exhibiting underwater heritage

Carly Degbello
Benin

Cellule Diocésaine du Patrimoine Religieux de Porto-Novo

The excavation of the Nanhai No. 1 from the South China Sea in 2007 will go down in the history of underwater archaeology as a remarkable feat and a textbook case for posterity (UNESCO Courier, 2017). Its preservation in a giant aquarium at the Guangdong Maritime Silk Road Museum says everything about the protagonists' desire to make the museum a guardian of underwater heritage and make it accessible to different audiences. Such resources and skills are not within the reach of all nations, and even if they were, the fragility of some wrecks forces explorers to preserve them in the water. In fact, access to them is reserved for only a minority of audiences. And if we are to "bring the underwater past to life" for present and future generations, it is important to imagine other methods of promoting underwater heritage. With this in mind, we are investigating a project for an aquarium-museum that is different from the aquarium museum. The aquarium-museum would obviously be a miniature aquarium in The "aquarium-musée" would obviously be a miniature aquarium in which immovable wrecks from certain waters (Turk's Lagoon, Sardinia, Bermuda) would be reproduced in 3D and displayed in exhibition rooms. The aim is to create a small-scale representation of the underwater heritage of certain regions. For those who cannot dive, and those who cannot afford the luxury of virtual reality headsets, this would be both an informative and educational opportunity. We will first try to analyse the usefulness of these wrecks in deep waters. Next, we will look at the risks of raising them, and finally, we will examine the 3D reconstruction of underwater heritage.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



Ports, People, and Exchange: Maritime Archaeology of South India and its Links with Southeast Asia

Khushi Keshari
India

Advanced Study Institute of Asia, SGT University

South India occupied a central position within the Indian Ocean world, functioning as a major maritime interface between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia. While literary traditions and inscriptions attest to long-standing commercial and cultural connections, maritime and coastal archaeology provides critical material evidence for understanding how these interactions were structured and sustained. This paper examines archaeological remains from key South Indian port sites to reconstruct patterns of trade, mobility, and cross-cultural exchange across the eastern Indian Ocean. Drawing on evidence from sites such as Poompuhar (Kaveripattinam), Arikamedu, Alagankulam, and related coastal settlements, the study analyzes harbour remains, anchors, ceramics, beads, amphorae, and other trade-related artefacts. Their distribution, typology, and contextual associations are examined alongside parallels from Southeast Asian contexts to trace networks of commodity circulation, technological exchange, and shared material practices. By foregrounding artefacts as traces of movement and interaction, the study reconstructs the lived realities of maritime connectivity rather than abstract trade networks. Rather than treating ports as mere commercial nodes, the paper reads them as cultural contact zones where trade, ritual practices, and everyday interactions intersected. Moving beyond diffusionist models of “Indianization,” the study approaches maritime exchange as a process of negotiation, adaptation, and mutual cultural production among connected coastal communities. Particular attention is given to maritime ecologies, including monsoon navigation and port landscapes, which shaped patterns of mobility and long-distance interaction. The paper further argues that the maritime remains of South India represent a shared transregional heritage, underscoring the importance of preserving and interpreting coastal and underwater cultural resources within museum and public history frameworks.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



Hidden in the Depths: Exploring the Submerged Archaeology of Ireland's Inland Waterways

Jordan Hanson & Karl Brady
Ireland

National Monuments Service

The National Monuments Service is the state body responsible for the management, protection and promotion of cultural heritage in Ireland. As an island nation, Ireland's history and existence is inextricably linked with the maritime world. With some 880,000 km² of seabed, 7,000 kilometres of coastline, thousands of kilometres of rivers and more than 12,000 lakes, underwater cultural heritage is a core focus for NMS. This paper will hone in on the archaeological potential of Ireland's inland waterways, using the River Shannon and Lough Corrib as case studies. Representing Ireland's longest river and largest lake respectively, recent archaeological investigations carried out by NMS have demonstrated that these waterbodies were indispensable to the island's inhabitants for millennia. A multitude of sites, ranging from prehistory to the modern day have been uncovered across both settings, offering new insights into how the island's peoples interacted with these networks over time. When considering the protection of underwater cultural heritage, each waterway presents its own set of unique challenges and obstacles. This paper will explore the challenges faced by NMS when conducting archaeological investigations, as well as the methodologies employed to overcome these challenges.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



The Practice and Advancement of Underwater Archaeology in Taiwan: The National Museum of History and the Excavation of the “General No. 1” Ancient Shipwreck in Penghu

Chen Hsiao Chai
Taiwan

National Museum of History

Taiwan is located at the center of the East Asian maritime network, and the Taiwan Strait has long been a major shipping corridor. In 1987, ceramic fragments were discovered near Jiangjun Islet in the Penghu Archipelago, prompting the government to recognize the significance of underwater cultural heritage and initiate protective measures. In 1995, the National Museum of History was commissioned to undertake the “Penghu Ancient Shipwreck Excavation Project,” marking a milestone in Taiwan’s underwater archaeology. Between 1995 and 1998, the Museum carried out a three-stage underwater archaeological program, ultimately identifying the “General No. 1” shipwreck site. A total of 284 artifacts were recovered, including ceramics, porcelain, wooden and metal objects, coins, rope, charcoal, and bamboo fragments. Based on the recovered materials and ship construction features, the vessel was identified as a mid-Qing dynasty flat-bottomed merchant ship built with Fuzhou fir. The excavation of “General No. 1” represents Taiwan’s first systematic underwater archaeological project and laid the foundation for the development of underwater archaeology in the country. In 2007, a dedicated underwater archaeology center was established in Penghu, and in 2017, the site was officially designated as an underwater cultural heritage site under the Underwater Cultural Heritage Preservation Act. Looking ahead, plans are underway to establish an underwater museum in Penghu to further safeguard and interpret Taiwan’s maritime heritage.



MEDJUNARODNI
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University of Zadar
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Centre Camille Jullian
Histoire et archéologie de la Méditerranée et de l'Afrique du Nord
de la Protohistoire à la fin de l'Antiquité



MUZEJ
ANTIČKOG
STAKLA



ARHEOLOŠKI MUZEJ ZADAR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM ZADAR

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



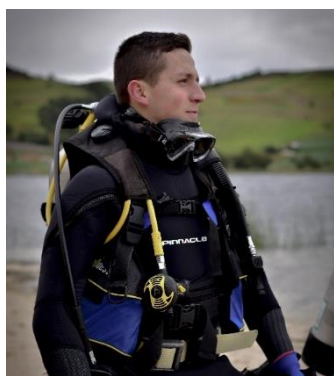
Managing Wooden Vessels from a Terrestrial Site: Archaeological and Conservation Perspectives

**Kristina Ponjavic Višnjic (P), Ilija Dankovic & Dragana
Gavrilovic**
Serbia

Institute of Archaeology

In recent years, archaeological research in Serbia, conducted in the area of a former branch of the Danube known as Dunavac, in the immediate vicinity of the ancient city of Viminacium, has opened a new chapter in the study of fluvial cultural landscapes within the Drmno open-cast coal mining zone. The Dunavac today represents a former river channel whose meanders remain clearly visible on satellite imagery. Although the site is now situated within a terrestrial landscape, geomorphological and sedimentological evidence indicates that this area once functioned as an active river course or an oxbow channel, characterized by sediments favorable for the long-term preservation of organic material. Between 2020 and 2023, systematic archaeological excavations recorded several wooden vessels and elements of ship construction, pointing to the long-term use of this riverine space across different historical periods. The prolonged deposition of these finds in permanently wet, anoxic conditions created an environment that enabled the preservation of archaeological wood. However, as the mining complex remains active, contemporary mining operations pose a serious threat, leading to sudden exposure of finds to air and accelerated deterioration. For this reason, conservation represents a crucial component of the protection process, ensuring the transition of finds from an unstable field context into controlled conditions. This paper discusses an integrated archaeological and conservation-oriented approach to managing this heritage, encompassing systematic documentation, assessment of preservation state, stabilisation immediately after discovery, and the planning of further protective measures under controlled conditions. Particular attention is given to the development of a strategy for long-term safeguarding and future presentation of the finds. Although permanent museum infrastructure has not yet been established, activities are currently underway to create an appropriate space for storage and display, with the aim of gradually integrating these finds into public and scholarly use and situating them within a broader interpretation of fluvial and underwater cultural heritage.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



Documentation, recovery and dissemination of the Galeón San José, underwater cultural heritage in deep waters in Colombia

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Colombia

Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia

The sinking of the galleon *San José* in 1708, off the coast of Cartagena de Indias, represents one of the most significant methodological challenges for Colombian archaeology. Located at more than 600 meters deep, its study has required the progressive development of technical, methodological, and technological capacities by the Colombian State for the documentation, research, protection, and dissemination of Underwater Cultural Heritage in deep waters. Since 2019, the Culture and Defense sectors—working together through the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Knowledge, the Colombian Navy, the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, and the General Maritime Directorate—have strengthened an interdisciplinary team composed of archaeologists, oceanographers, historians, hydrographers, and experts in underwater robotics, among others. This collaboration has made it possible to refine verification, recording, and recovery operations at depth through the use of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). These operations integrate photogrammetry, high-resolution 3D recording, and detailed object documentation, producing digital elevation models, orthophotomosaics, point clouds, and cataloguing records that enable precise analysis of the context and its associated materialities. The contrast between documentary sources from 1706 and the archaeological evidence from 1708 offers an exceptional case for examining processes of mobility, circulation, hybridization, and technical adaptation in the early modern world. Beyond the naval sphere, the study of the shipwreck provides information on agricultural, construction, and food practices, revealing dynamics of interconnection and identity formation in the Caribbean. The documentation of material culture and advances in 3D modeling have gone beyond scientific analysis to become tools for public outreach through virtual reality, interactive applications, video games, and simulators. These resources broaden public access to one of the most relevant archaeological contexts in global maritime history.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



TIDES Project: Establishing Methodological Foundations for Reconstructing Nin's Ancient Maritime Landscape



**Lucijana Šešelj, Irena Radić Rossi, Feđa Milivojević
& Dušanka Romanović**

Croatia

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The TIDES project (Tides of the Past: Research in Historical, Cultural, and Natural Transformations of the Maritime Landscape of Nin) is a four-year research initiative based at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka. The project employs an interdisciplinary approach to study landscape evolution at one of the most significant archaeological sites on the Croatian coast, focusing on reconstructing environmental and socio-historical transformations from prehistory to the early modern period, with particular emphasis on the Roman city of Aenona (Nin) and the identification of its as-yet-unlocated ancient harbor. This paper presents the methodological framework established during the project's inaugural year. The research team—comprising specialists in archaeology, history, geology, and geophysics from multiple institutions—initiated several foundational activities during 2025–2026. Archival research, including systematic analysis of historical maps, photographs, and published sources, has established a baseline for retrograde spatial analysis. Advanced remote sensing techniques, such as LiDAR data acquisition and aerial drone photogrammetry, are being deployed to document the current landscape. Preliminary geophysical surveys have been conducted in targeted areas to test methodological approaches. Additionally, consultations with the Museum of Nin Antiquities and the Archaeological Museum in Zadar have begun regarding access to collections and frameworks for future public dissemination. These first-year activities lay the groundwork for an integrated, open-access GIS database and establish methodological protocols for subsequent phases of underwater archaeological investigation, sediment coring, and laboratory analysis. Future project phases will include the development of Virtual Reality content designed to make Nin's maritime landscape transformations accessible to broader audiences. This presentation offers an opportunity to discuss interdisciplinary approaches to maritime landscape reconstruction and to explore strategies for translating archaeological research into museum-based public engagement.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



Planning, Education and Management of the Conservation of Underwater Cultural Heritage: Current Statistics and Institutional Capacity in Türkiye

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Türkiye

Ankara Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi-Faculty of Fine Arts

Türkiye has long been a significant center for underwater archaeological research due to its extensive underwater cultural heritage (UCH) potential and its long-standing tradition of scientific excavations. While archaeological investigations have expanded substantially in recent decades, the conservation, documentation, and long-term management of artifacts recovered from submerged contexts remain complex and resource-intensive processes that directly affect museum collections and their sustainability. This study examines the institutional planning and management of underwater excavation and conservation practices in Türkiye following the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Particular attention is given to governance structures, the distribution and qualifications of conservation professionals within the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the organizational capacity of regional conservation laboratories responsible for museum collections. The research also evaluates higher education programs that provide training in underwater archaeology and conservation, assessing current professional training capacities and their alignment with institutional needs. The study is based on quantitative data, including the number of authorized underwater excavations and surveys, staffing profiles, and the institutional distribution of conservation facilities. By mapping the existing framework, the research identifies structural strengths and limitations affecting the sustainable preservation and museum management of underwater cultural heritage collections. The findings aim to contribute to broader international discussions on policy development, capacity building, and the integration of conservation planning within museum-oriented heritage management strategies.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



From the Depths of the Sea of Alexandria to the Museum Display at the Grand Egyptian Museum: The Safe Journey of Underwater Archaeological Artifacts

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Egypt

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

The sunken cities of Heraklion and Canopus, along with parts of ancient Alexandria that now lie underwater, are some of the most important underwater heritage sites in the Mediterranean. Since their discovery in Abukir Bay, many artifacts have been found—from giant statues of kings and queens to religious objects and everyday goods used in trade. These items have been carefully discovered, preserved, and prepared for public display. This paper tells the story of how these artifacts were transferred from Alexandria to the exhibition halls of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). The paper focuses on important discoveries like the red granite statues of Ptolemaic rulers such as Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, religious objects that show a blend of Greek and Egyptian traditions, and items that reveal details about ancient sea trade. It also explores the technical and ethical challenges that archaeologists and conservators face along the way. The paper also looks at how modern technology—such as photogrammetry, 3D modelling, and specialized conservation methods—helps move these artifacts from salty underwater environments to museum settings. It then shows how the Grand Egyptian Museum acts as a guardian of this underwater history, creating new ways to display these treasures and connect visitors with the rich, multicultural stories of Heraklion and Alexandria during Ptolemaic times. By sharing this Egyptian example, the paper adds to the wider conversation about preserving underwater heritage and making it available to people around the world. It suggests that moving these artifacts from the seabed to the museum is not just a matter of logistics. It is a meaningful act of passing on culture—ensuring that history from deep underwater continues to inspire people today and in the future. This work brought together archaeologists, conservators, and engineers. The team began with detailed 3D scans, careful cleaning, and stone restoration. One of the biggest challenges was creating a support system strong enough to hold the statues safely and protect them during earthquakes. Today, the project stands as a powerful example of how teamwork can preserve cultural heritage. It not only saved ancient monuments but also created a powerful experience for visitors—setting a new standard for how archaeological treasures can be displayed.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



From Seabed to Showcase: Preservation and Interpretation of Underwater Archaeological Finds at the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan

Sevinj Nasirova
Azerbaijan

National Museum of History of Azerbaijan

The National Museum of History of Azerbaijan has played a pioneering role in the study, preservation, and exhibition of the country's cultural heritage, establishing itself as the first center for systematic archaeological research in Azerbaijan. From 1925 through the 1960s, under the leadership of prominent archaeologists including Davud Sharifov, Evgeni Pakhomov, Ishag Jafarzade, Movsum Salamov, Saleh Gaziyevev, and Mammadali Huseynov, the Museum conducted groundbreaking excavations in sites such as Khachmaz, Nakhchivan, Gabala, Ganja, Kharaba Gilan, Orangala, and Mingachevir. These terrestrial expeditions, together with ethnographic fieldwork organized by the Museum, provided the foundation for scientific research into Azerbaijan's material culture and enriched the Museum's collections, forming primary sources for numerous scholarly publications and dissertations. From the 1960s onward, the Museum became the country's first institution dedicated to underwater archaeological research. Between 1968 and 1972, a diving team led by historian-archaeologist Viktor Kvachidze carried out pioneering investigations in the Caspian Sea and its coastal areas, including Bendovan I, Bendovan II, and Bilgah. These efforts resulted in the discovery and documentation of submerged medieval settlements, such as Mugan and Gushtashfi, providing invaluable material for both research and exhibition. The artifacts recovered from these sites now occupy a prominent place in the Museum's permanent exhibition, demonstrating the transformation of submerged finds from excavation to public display. This presentation highlights the Museum's practices in preserving, documenting, and interpreting underwater archaeological finds, illustrating how submerged sites are transformed from seabed discoveries into publicly accessible exhibits. It emphasizes the Museum's role in mitigating risks to underwater heritage, employing innovative documentation technologies, and engaging the public through exhibitions, publications, and educational programs. By showcasing the integration of research, conservation, and museum interpretation, this study demonstrates the National Museum of History of Azerbaijan's enduring contribution to the protection of underwater cultural heritage and its impact on national and regional historical narratives.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



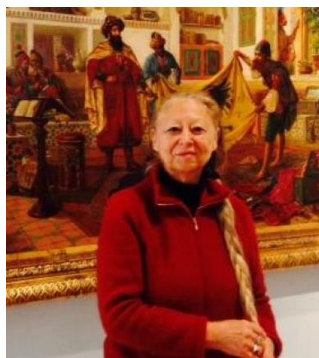
*The Sacred Islands of Pachacamac:
Archaeology, Coastal Communities, and
the Management of the Maritime Cultural
Landscape of the Great Andean Oracle*

Rocío Villar Astigueta (P) & Denise Pozzi Escot
Perú

Museo Pachacamac

The Archaeological Research Project *Islas de Pachacamac* is carried out in the marine coastal subzone and the islands associated with the Archaeological Sanctuary of Pachacamac, the main ceremonial center of Peru's central coast and one of the most important oracles of the Andean world. The research seeks to understand the maritime cultural landscape linked to the sanctuary from an Andean worldview, in which territory is conceived as an animated environment where mountains, coast, sea, and islands possess agency and participate in shaping the social, economic, and ritual life of the people. From this perspective, the sea and the islands form part of a symbolic and circulatory landscape integrated into the economic, ideological, political, and territorial system of Pachacamac. In Andean tradition, the sea is associated with feminine principles of fertility, origin, and regeneration within a logic of duality and complementarity that structures relationships between the natural and social worlds. Within this framework, the coastal subzone and the islands are not merely spaces for resource exploitation, but culturally conceived, observed, and traversed territories where meanings tied to the sanctuary's sacred landscape were materialized. The project is developed under an integrated approach to research, conservation, and management of underwater cultural heritage, guided by the principles of the 2001 UNESCO Convention. The investigations combine archaeological survey, geomorphological analysis of the coastal environment, and underwater recording technologies such as geospatial mapping, photogrammetry, and three-dimensional modeling. The 2013 and 2014 field seasons made it possible to recover a small collection of cultural objects from the underwater environment, now preserved in the collections management area of the Pachacamac Museum. The project also incorporates a participatory management component with fishing communities, whose knowledge enriches archaeological interpretation. Its results have contributed to the inclusion of the Pachacamac Islands in the National Archaeological Inventory and to supporting the proposal to designate the sanctuary's maritime area as Cultural Heritage of the Nation under the category of cultural landscape.

THEME 2 – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT



Preserving and Managing Marine Collections: Toward an Ecological Approach for Museums

Myriame Morel - Deledalle
France

Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée

During the COVID-19 epidemics, artists, philosophers, cultural practitioners, and even the general public began asking new questions about the purpose of museums, their history, their ability to adapt to society and the environment, and even went so far as to suggest that museums might need to disappear altogether. Without going that far, it seemed necessary to reflect on these issues within the specific field of wet collections originating from the sea, lakes, and rivers. These collections, which provide unique scientific, human, and environmental knowledge, are most often extremely fragile. They may have been damaged by the surrounding aquatic environment, or, on the contrary, preserved by it—only to risk being destroyed as soon as they are brought to light. This is a defining characteristic of waterlogged wood, whether it concerns large vessels or small objects made of organic materials whose removal from their discovery context can jeopardize their long-term preservation. Should we then extract these objects from their wet environment, treat them, exhibit them to the public, or lend them—at the risk of destroying them? These are some of the questions that are emerging today as we confront the reality of climate disruption. Here, ecological considerations intersect with technical, scientific, and ethical questions, ultimately becoming a broader societal issue. Drawing on long-standing experience in the treatment of waterlogged wood, on the hindsight now available to assess the effectiveness of these treatments, on current choices (excavating in situ, exhibiting in museums, or excavating and leaving in situ), and on the evolving definition of museums, we will examine how this shift is taking place. It is nevertheless clear that contemporary society is generating new social and political questions that we must confront directly and take into account when considering the future of our collections and our museums.

THEME 3 – UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Geoarchaeological Assessment and Management Strategies for Maritime and Submerged Archaeological Sites in Marsa Alam, Red Sea, Egypt: Challenges of Environmental Change and Blue Tourism

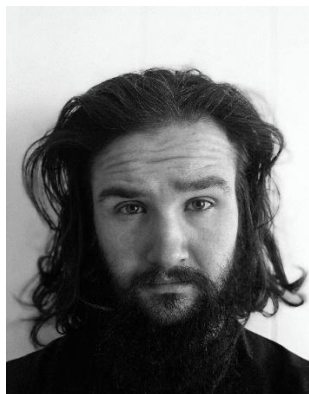
Samah Moustafa AboZeid

Egypt

Higher Technological Institute for Media and GIS

Marsa Nakari (Nechesia) is a Ptolemaic and Roman harbour located southwest of Marsa Alam, currently represented by an abandoned harbour area above sea level and an associated submerged archaeological zone offshore. This area formed part of ancient maritime trade routes along the Red Sea. Archaeological surveys conducted in August 2001 by a joint mission from the (DUA) and the In Situ Institute investigated seven bays between Safaga and Marsa Nakari. These bays were shaped by successive coastal erosion and episodic torrential rains from the Eastern Desert and were historically used as maritime trade corridors. Underwater investigations revealed ceramic amphorae encrusted with coral growths at depths ranging from 3 to 16 meters near the reef in the Marsa Alam Gulf, demonstrating the site's dual archaeological and ecological significance. This study emphasizes the need for continued investigation using advanced technological methods to protect and conserve both underwater cultural heritage and coral reef ecosystems. The research integrates geo-archaeological and geomorphological assessments with underwater photogrammetry, 3D modeling, micro-geoarchaeological analysis, and GIS-based mapping to evaluate site formation processes, environmental change, and preservation conditions. It also examines climate-related factors and blue tourism impacts while proposing a sustainable management framework that supports in situ preservation and the adaptive reuse of the abandoned harbour as an open-air maritime museum. The study contributes to international discussions on underwater cultural heritage, museum-led interpretation, and sustainable coastal tourism in environmentally sensitive regions.

THEME 3 – UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Challenges in archaeological fieldwork and museum conservation caused by climate change in the Arctic

Trygve Sikveland Røysland

Norway

Svalbard Museum

In the Arctic, climate change happens faster than anywhere else. For the archaeology and cultural heritage of Spitsbergen in Arctic Norway, these changes are having profound and severe consequences. More rainfall, less sea ice, increased coastal erosion and changing ocean currents are all having detrimental effects on archaeological sites and artefacts currently in situ around the archipelago. The questions of when and how to intervene to safeguard this cultural heritage as it comes under increasing threat is an urgent debate, with a particular focus on how to accommodate its long-term curation. In the autumn of 2025, this debate was brought into sharp focus when Svalbard Museum undertook a rescue excavation of a beached wooden artefact in Grønfjorden; a 6m by 2.5m shipside presumed to be part of a 17th century wreck, potentially stemming from the first discovery of the Arctic Archipelago by Dutch explorers. The wreck had been washed ashore and was at risk of either being crushed by winter sea ice, carried back to sea or decay in warmer summer conditions. Every form of fieldwork is challenging in the Arctic and with the increasing loss of daylight and decreasing temperatures decisive action was needed if the artefact was to be rescued. With little time to prepare, the project went ahead and the wreck was documented and taken apart as the tide rose around it. It was packed and airlifted onto a ship and taken to Svalbard Museum. It now lies outside a garage, under a tarp, frozen in ice, slowly rotting away, with no permanent place to store it or no funds to conserve. This raises the key questions: What do we do when climate change forces our hands? Do we leave artefacts to be crushed by sea ice, or do we leave them to rot outside our repository?

THEME 3 – UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Environmental change, urban expansion and the vulnerability of submerged archaeological sites in the Republic of Benin

Angelo Ayedoun
Benin

University of California Santa Clara

Stretching from Grand-Popo in the west to Porto-Novo in the east, the Beninese coastline hosts a rich but largely understudied coastal and underwater cultural heritage. This heritage has been shaped by centuries of maritime trade, navigation, the transatlantic slave trade, and socio-cultural interactions. However, Benin's underwater cultural heritage is increasingly threatened by environmental pressures, particularly coastal erosion, as well as by poorly controlled coastal development, including tourism infrastructure and erosion-control projects. These activities can disrupt marine environments and endanger submerged archaeological sites if preventive measures are not implemented. This paper aims to present key elements of Benin's underwater cultural heritage and advocate for their protection in the context of climate change impacts.

THEME 4 – APPROACHES FOR MITIGATING LOOTING OF UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES



Mitigating the looting of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) Sites in Malta

Anton Motivans
Malta

Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

When it comes to mitigating the looting of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) Sites, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) in Malta has adopted a multi-pronged approach centred around 1. collaboration with other government entities, 2. education and public engagement, 3. a robust legal framework, and 4. a monitoring strategy that consists of both desk-based and in-the-field diving components. At the core of this approach is the belief that no single measure is wholly effective. In combining these methods, SCH's mitigation strategy includes elements which are pre-emptive, active, and reactive. Education and public engagement are pre-emptive in that they work towards increasing awareness of UCH and associated best practices. This approach also fosters local stewardship and encourages public reporting. Collaborations with other research and heritage entities can also be pre-emptive, especially when it comes to archaeological survey and site detection. The reliable location data that is generated from these surveys facilitates planning and results in the more effective management of UCH resources. Other aspects of these collaborations are more active in terms of mitigation and involve patrols and a system whereby only registered and ticketed divers can visit certain historic sites. Similarly, real-time remote monitoring of marine traffic, coordination with maritime law enforcement, and regular in-water site inspections serve as active measures aimed at mitigating looting. If looting has taken place, SCH works closely with customs to monitor imports/exports and prosecute offences relating to the provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act. This multi-pronged approach adopted by SCH to mitigate the looting of UCH sites is tailored to the Maltese context and addresses the issue from a variety of angles which target the reduction, active prevention, and prosecution of looting and attempts at looting.

THEME 5 – TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



Meet ENALIA – A Digital Interactive Exhibit on the Maritime Archaeology of Cyprus

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Cyprus

Independent and Maritime Archaeologist &
HFF Liaison Cyprus

This paper presents a recently completed museological project supported by the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF), developed to mark the 20th anniversary (2005–2025) of the THALASSA Agia Napa Municipal Museum in Cyprus. The project addressed an interpretive gap in the museum's permanent displays by complementing the existing narrative through contemporary museological approaches, values, and curatorial practices. The initiative aimed to enhance public awareness and understanding of Cypriot Maritime Cultural Heritage (MCH), emphasising both its cultural significance and the importance of its protection. To achieve this, a permanent digital interactive exhibit was designed and implemented, accompanied by an educational museum station and a mobile museum kit extending the experience to schools and community events. Together, these components create a multi-layered interpretive environment intended to “bring the maritime heritage of Cyprus to life.” The digital exhibit comprises three interconnected elements: (1) ENALIA, an animated portrait of a maritime archaeologist who welcomes visitors and introduces the discipline, humanising scientific practice; (2) an interactive tools station featuring 3D-printed replicas of maritime archaeological equipment embedded with RFID tags, enabling visitors to access interpretive texts and visual material through object handling and scanning; (3) an interactive touchscreen map presenting Cyprus' maritime archaeological sites, enriched with contextual information, imagery, and digital applications produced by excavators and collaborators. The educational station and kit simulate an underwater excavation, allowing participants, particularly children, to operate tools such as an airlift and a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) while uncovering replica artefacts. The paper argues that contemporary museological design, creative technologies, embodied interaction, and narrative-driven interpretation can transform museums into active custodians of underwater heritage, fostering awareness, accessibility, and community engagement.

THEME 5 – TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION



Archim3edes Relevant National Project: Apulian shipwrecks' mapping and surveying for research and wider accessibility

Rita Auriemma (P), Cristiano Alfonso, Mikhail Bardashov, Angelo Colucci, Luigi Coluccia, Sergey Khokhlov, Edward Borgogno, Filiberto Chiabrando, Andrea Lingua, Alessio Martino, Paolo Maschio & Beatrice Tanduo

Italy

University of Salento & Politecnico University of Torino

The PRIN 2022 project ARCHIM3DES (ARchaeological and Cultural Heritage documentation In Marine environment using advanced 3D mEtric Survey techniques) is dedicated to the mapping, documentation, and enhanced accessibility of Apulian shipwrecks along the Ionian and Adriatic coasts. The project investigates a range of archaeological contexts, including the beached wrecks of Cesine and Bacino Grande and the submerged sites of Leuca and Novaglie, which differ in chronology, depth, depositional dynamics, and state of preservation. These case studies provide a comprehensive overview of the maritime cultural landscape of southern Italy, contributing to the study of ancient shipbuilding techniques, cargo composition and broader Mediterranean trade networks. The research also addresses site formation processes and the impact of coastal and marine environmental changes on the preservation of fragile wooden structures and dispersed materials. Within this archaeological framework, ARCHIM3DES integrates advanced non-invasive surveying methodologies. Geophysical prospections (side-scan sonar and magnetometry) have supported site detection and spatial analysis, while high-resolution underwater photogrammetry has enabled detailed documentation. In this context, the project developed a dedicated stereoscopic photogrammetric system, CRAB (Calibrated Rig for Aquatic photogrammetric Bicamera system), designed to ensure metric reliability in challenging underwater conditions through a calibrated stereo camera configuration. The integration of acoustic positioning systems, optical data, and georeferenced 3D modelling has produced multi-resolution digital replicas of the wrecks, supporting both scientific analysis and long-term monitoring. At the same time, immersive visualization tools and virtual access strategies promote wider public engagement. ARCHIM3DES thus demonstrates how technological innovation can strengthen archaeological interpretation while fostering sustainable management and broader accessibility of underwater cultural heritage.

POSTERS



Wadang (roof-end tiles) as "shoreline proxies": architectural elements reveal maritime connectivity along the Chinese Maritime Silk Road from the Six Dynasties to the Song period (6th–10th centuries CE).

Meihui Li

China

Vrije University Brussels

Maritime archaeology and museum studies are increasingly turning to collections-based evidence to reconstruct patterns of mobility, craft transmission, and cultural exchange along historic sea routes. This paper focuses on wadang (roof-end tiles) and proposes them as "shoreline proxies": architectural elements found on land that can nonetheless reveal maritime connectivity along the Chinese Maritime Silk Road from the Six Dynasties to the Song period (6th–10th centuries CE). The research grows out of my involvement in the Jiangsu Maritime Silk Road Heritage Protection Planning Project in 2020, where wadang were treated as comparative material reflecting the prosperity of seaborne trade and transregional contact, as suggested by their distribution across China, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan. Building on that planning framework, the paper first sketches the longue durée development of Chinese wadang, tracing their trajectory from early formalization to the stylistic maturity achieved during the Six Dynasties, especially in the Nanjing region. The empirical core of the study is a collections-based analysis of Tang–Song lotus-pattern wadang at Sichuan Museum. Four representative examples are used to construct a diachronic sequence in which lotus motifs—central to Buddhist architectural symbolism—merge southern and northern formal traditions. This integration is traced through diagnostic features such as petal modelling, T/Y-shaped interstices, rim proportions, and bead–nipple borders. A focused transregional comparison then examines a Tang-period "T-ji tradition" lotus wadang in the museum's collection alongside excavated Japanese counterparts that share a standardized set of traits. When read together with textual sources such as the Nihon Shoki, these correspondences support a model of eastward transmission carried by Buddhist networks and craft specialists moving via the Korean Peninsula. By bringing together heritage planning, museum collections, and cross-sea comparative analysis, the paper proposes a replicable diagnostic protocol that makes Chinese wadang more legible within international museum practice and maritime heritage discourse.

POSTERS



Interpreting Underwater Cultural Heritage through Interactive Programs: The Case of the Museum of Kronstadt History

German Shershnev

Russia

Museum of Kronstadt History

The Baltic Sea is a significant area for underwater archaeological research owing to the high concentration of shipwreck-related objects from various historical periods on its seabed. However, only a limited number of Russian museums systematically work with this type of heritage. The Museum of Kronstadt History is one of the examples that offers a comprehensive display of underwater archaeological materials. The museum collaborates closely with the Underwater Research Center of the Russian Geographical Society, which carries out archaeological investigations in the Gulf of Finland, conserves recovered artefacts, and transfers, a portion of them to the museum's collection. Lacking its own conservation department, the museum places special emphasis on the interpretation of underwater cultural heritage. Working with underwater heritage poses several interpretative challenges: how to convey the specific nature of underwater archeology, which methods best engage audiences, and how to balance scientific accuracy with accessibility. For many years the museum relied mainly on traditional communication formats, but recently it has shifted toward experimental interactive approaches. The first step was the program «Pirates of the Baltic» - a costumed performance targeting a broad audience. Recognizing its primarily recreational nature, the museum developed a more sophisticated follow-up: «Underwater Odyssey». Its concept divides the visitor group into two parallel modules - scientific one led by a «scientist» and a playful one led by a «ship's cook». This structure successfully integrates educational content with interactive elements and allows effective handling of large groups. The case illustrates an effort to reconcile scientific credibility with engaging interpretive formats. While these programs do not claim to be a universal model, they demonstrate the potential of interactive practices as a powerful tool of museum communication.

POSTERS



Museo Atlántico, the first European underwater museum

Marlen Lutter
Germany

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This study examines the Museo Atlántico, the first European underwater museum, off the coast of Lanzarote as a museum practice that challenges established concepts of museums, exhibitions and education. Initiated in 2016 by artist Jason de Caires Taylor, the museum relocates art, memory and knowledge production to a subaquatic space and combines artistic intervention with ecological objectives. It thus exemplifies Sharon Macdonald's understanding of museums as sites of meaning-making rather than fixed institutions. From the perspective of empirical cultural studies, the museum is approached not primarily as an institution but as a cultural practice emerging through the interplay of environment, materiality and sensory experience. Drawing on Beatrix von Bismarck, the Museo Atlántico is understood as a constellation whose meaning unfolds through the relations between humans, artworks, technologies, nature(s) and culture(s). Following Tony Bennett's concept of museums as "technologies of culture", the thesis asks how these technologies are transformed when the conventional exhibition space is replaced by the underwater environment, letting a special underwater cultural heritage arise. Methodologically, the study is based on ethnographic fieldwork on Lanzarote, including narrative interviews with museum staff, visitors and the artist, participant observation at the diving center and during museum visits. The research follows a reflexive and sensory ethnographic approach, incorporating the researcher's own embodied position in the field. The analysis highlights the sea as a central actor in meaning production. Drawing on Tim Ingold's relational concept of environment, perception, movement and interpretation are shown to be inseparably linked. Everchanging visibility, currents, sound and physical exertion structure the museum experience and transform visitors into physically involved participants. At the same time, tensions emerge between ecological education and tourism, sustainability rhetoric and infrastructural effort, as well as artistic intention and individual interpretation. These ambivalences resonate with Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's notion of "destination culture" and position the Museo Atlántico as a paradigmatic example of NaturenKulturen, in which nature and culture are fundamentally intertwined.

POSTERS

Safeguarding and Valorizing Underwater Cultural Heritage in Apulia: A Monitoring-Oriented Framework for the Porto Cesareo Coastal & Underwater Park

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In recent years, a productive synergy between the Apulia Region and the University of Salento has supported a shared vision of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) as a driver of sustainable local development. Within this framework, the Porto Cesareo Coastal and Underwater Park is being developed as a pilot initiative in Apulia, where tourism and culture coexist within a Marine Protected Area (MPA), and heritage becomes a key resource for blue tourism. At the same time, UCH sites in accessible coastal waters remain vulnerable to multiple pressures, including uncontrolled visitation, opportunistic looting, and gradual environmental change. This contribution presents the rationale and governance logic for introducing a dedicated video-based monitoring strategy as a supporting layer within the park model—strengthening protection, documentation, and long-term site management, while also increasing public awareness and promoting responsible use. Monitoring is framed not as a purely “security” measure, but as part of an integrated approach that links research activities, management planning in cooperation with the MPA authority, and visitor interpretation. The same logic of visual observation can help museums and cultural venues bring the “underwater landscape” closer to non-divers by complementing printed and digital interpretive tools and expanding inclusive access to submerged settlements, shipwrecks, and isolated finds spanning from the Bronze Age to the modern era. A key condition is a broad local partnership—diving centres, cultural and creative enterprises, tourism operators, associations, and guides—so that conservation, education, and valorisation practices can evolve together. Porto Cesareo is presented as a replicable case for coastal regions seeking balanced solutions that improve protection outcomes while supporting responsible blue tourism.



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POSTERS

The value and potential of underwater cultural heritage as 'a resource for sustainable development and quality of life: Apulia's experiences and good practices

**Rita Auriemma, Luigi de Luca, Danilo Leone, Maria Turchiano
& Giuliano Volpe**

Italy

University of Salento, University of Foggia, University of Bari, Regione Puglia

Over the last decade, the Puglia Region, together with the Universities of Foggia, Bari and Salento, has launched several significant community projects, aimed at making the regional rich submerged and coastal heritage accessible to all and at promoting its use as a resource for cultural, social and economic development, in line with the Faro Convention. Thanks to the half a century of research activity by the three universities and the implementation of a Geographic Information System devoted to the underwater cultural heritage, the intense process of knowledge and enhancement of the submerged assets has implied the increase of the community engagement and awareness. This process has included exhibition's projects such as 'Into the sea of intimacy. Underwater archaeology tells of the Salento' exhibition (at the Brindisi Airport), with the involvement of the Salento museum network, and the more recent 'Between two seas' exhibition at the Hai Nan Museum in China; transborder cooperation projects like 'Fish&C.h.i.p.s.', 'UnderwaterMuse', 'BlueMed Plus', 'Wreck4All 2.0'; community projects like 'Underwater and coastal Park of Porto Cesareo', in the Marine Protected Area; National Recovery and Resilience Plan project entirely dedicated to the sea as powerful agent of transformation, development and connection, the 'M.Ar.E.A.' project; wider accessibility projects like 'Puglia Seascapes' and the last one, 'Sailing the sea. Puglia coastal and underwater itineraries', which is ongoing and is creating a network of accessible archaeological coastal and submerged sites, related cultural places and stakeholders, so that the sea walks become paths of experience and resources of hospitality.



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POSTERS



Preserving Roman Maritime Heritage: Museum Collections and the Reconstruction of Lusitania's Settlement

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Underwater archaeology in Portugal has revealed a significant body of evidence related to Roman maritime trade, currently preserved in History and Archaeology museums. As part of a doctoral investigation on the Roman settlement in Central Portugal, this paper examines the contribution of these collections to understanding the maritime dynamics of the former Roman province of Lusitania between the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD. The Portuguese Atlantic coastline presents technical challenges to archaeological investigation, which partly explains the uneven distribution of research along the coast. Nevertheless, excavations, accidental discoveries, and systematic recoveries have identified ship structures, amphorae, cargo elements, and other materials directly associated with navigation and long-distance trade, enabling the identification of trade networks and the main imported and exported products, as well as the production support structures. Much of this material is now integrated into museum collections, where it undergoes conservation, study, and public interpretation. Beyond material preservation, these objects play a fundamental role in constructing historical narratives about Lusitania's maritime connectivity and its integration into the economic networks of the Roman Empire. Permanent exhibitions and thematic displays have contributed to increasing public interest in maritime archaeology and to highlighting underwater cultural heritage as a structural component of historical memory. Through the analysis of these museum collections, it becomes possible to reconstruct the main nautical routes along the Portuguese coastline and to understand their articulation with river corridors and the Roman road network. The study thus demonstrates that the preservation and interpretation of submerged heritage not only safeguard material remains but also constitutes an essential tool for reconstructing the maritime dynamics and territorial organization of Roman Lusitania.