



Journal of Marine and Island Cultures

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EDITORIAL

Marine and Island Cultures: A unique journey of discovery

Historically, islands, seas and oceans encompassed a particular dualistic nature characterised by communication and isolation. Oceans specifically were regarded as a subject of adventure and challenge. They were perceived at once as a path toward the unknown world, and as a feared space from which unwanted changes emanated. Some islands were perceived as spaces for communication connected together by oceans or seas, but also as spaces isolated from one another by these same waters. This dualistic nature of islands and open waters contributed to the development of unique and varied island and marine cultures, and to the distinctive role that the islanders played in cultural development, as well as in cultural preservation.

The importance of islands, seas and oceans, moreover, has continuously expanded with the growing awareness that these serve as alternative spaces where solutions to some crucial problems currently faced by mankind such as climate change and depletion of resources may potentially be garnered. Some answers have been found, for instance, in islands, seas and oceans with coexistence in terms of biodiversity and cultural diversity. Yet, in order to maintain such coexistence in those sometimes fragile environments, international cooperation is required where oceans, seas and islands are concerned.

While open waters account for two-thirds of the earth's surface, the planet's landmasses can be likened to a couple of massive 'islands' that are essentially surrounded by these waters. In this regard, islands and open waters are integral not only to our planet earth, but also to its inhabitants and especially to humans. While islands, seas and oceans have served as places of conflicts, they are also inherently endowed with the potential to foster coexistence and joint prosperity. To this end, the combination of islands, seas and oceans into one overarching category facilitates interdisciplinary and multifunctional comparative studies, the scope of which goes beyond that of local studies. To accomplish this, basic research

is needed, to forge the foundations required for future policies too.

The Institution for Marine and Island Cultures (MIC) at Mokpo National University has focused on research related to oceans and islands, with particular reference to Korea. However, as part of its efforts to expand the scope of study at a global level, the Institution has increased the scale of research to include multidisciplinary studies, and sought to establish networks with related research institutes. The time has come to put forward a new field that can be referred to as 'island oceanography'. Focused on island and ocean-related issues that affect mankind, this new field can be developed by establishing a multidisciplinary research system and global network system.

A partner of this network is CCLP, the Cambridge Centre for Landscape and People at the University of Cambridge, UK, whose academics have carried out in the last two decades outstanding research on European and Mediterranean island landscapes and seascapes. Their cooperation with academia, governments, NGOs and organisations for natural and cultural heritage conservation in all continents has supported a wider network of experts in islands and seas. It is part of the joint effort between MIC and CCLP to widen the scope globally, that prestigious island-, sea- and ocean-related research institutes and researchers in the world have come together to launch the *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* (IMIC).

The international *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* is the official journal of the Institution for Marine and Island Cultures (MIC), Republic of Korea. The journal aims to publish peer-reviewed and original research papers and reports, as well as reviews and comments covering all aspects of the humanities and cultural issues on marine and island environment. In addition, the journal supports the publication of articles that present integrative and multifunctional research carried out across interdisciplinary boundaries, including studies examining the sustainability of the living environment, nature and ecological resources, and the socio-economic systems of islands and islanders. The journal particularly encourages the submission of papers relating to marine and island cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region as well as in the American, European and Mediterranean Regions, not excluding the other parts of the world. With this interdisciplinary and biocultural

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perspective in mind, we look forward to welcoming outstanding innovative research from a wider spectrum of scholars, from the youngest to the emeritus, and stimulate discussion on this particular topic of marine and island cultures.

Sun-Kee Hong *

Mokpo National University, Republic of Korea

E-mail address: landskhong@gmail.com

Gloria Pungetti

University of Cambridge, UK