

The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World

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By Cyprian Broodbank. Pp. 672, figs. 338, color pls. 49. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013. \$49.95. ISBN 978-0-16-999978-1 (cloth).

Broodbank's book offers a synoptic view of the Mediterranean past from the arrival of the first hominin until the advent of the classical world, thereby forming an ambitious synthesis that covers the period ranging from 1.8 million years BP to 500 B.C.E. Such a large scope is prompted by Broodbank's interest in exploring the weaving of cultural, social, and ecological threads into meaningful practices on and around a "Middle Sea." The first chapter exposes the book's aims and surveys the archaeological record and methodological framework. The second chapter focuses on the physical aspects of the Mediterranean: the geological formation of the basin and its climatic features. Its meaning as a geographical but also cultural entity are examined before the "Making of the Middle Sea" is explored chronologically in chapters 3–10. The hominin expansion around the Mediterranean Sea, until climatic conditions during the Younger Dryas (10,700–9,600 B.C.E.) force modern humans to reversion into a maritime lifestyle, is thoroughly examined in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 investigates the expansion of the Neolithic package through both terrestrial and maritime pathways (10,000–5,500 B.C.E.), while chapter 6 surveys the ongoing diversity of lifestyles when local ways of doing things continue to prevail (5,500–3,500 B.C.E.). Chapters 7 and 8 evaluate the emergence of Egyptian and Mesopotamian superpowers and their impact on the Mediterranean basin as well as the forging of empires based on large-scale production systems and exchange networks until the turmoil of the end of the 13th century in the eastern area of the basin allows the flourishing of its central and western parts (ch. 9). Chapter 10 examines the urban expansion and emergence of key Mediterranean historic cities and the formation within their walls of civic powers (800–500 B.C.E.). Chapter 11 discusses conclusions.

The unique combination of rare climatic, topographic, and environmental conditions dictate the borders of the area under study, although the fuzziness of its limits leads to the inclusion of certain external components key to the shaping of the Mediterranean world. This exploration is embedded in chronological and climatic settings, as the author intricately deals with the pace of changing environmental conditions that created windows of opportunities, or constraints, for the living populations. The physical settings also make up a significant part of the discussion, and the author constantly asserts their impact on the ongoing formation of the Mediterranean basin.

Despite possible hints of Neanderthals having "frog-hopped" to some islands, the Paleolithic is a period of almost obstinate circumventing of the sea. The independent development of human species on either side of its shores shows its power as a barrier that remained virtually unchallenged until climatic conditions forced populations to consider this huge expanse of water as a potential conveyor. Broodbank explores the increasingly seaward orientation of Mediterranean populations by following a path of ongoing engagement with the sea highlighted by assisted drifting, seagoing, and true seafaring, all processes marking a gradual rise in the role of the sea as a connecting agent (chs. 4, 5). Environmental pressure on people played a key role in these initial times of maritime exploration, regularly triggering higher mobility and eventually leading to a conversion to marine lifestyle at the turn of the Holocene, which sees the real making of the Middle Sea. In marked contrast to the pedestrian expansion of modern humans around the basin, the westward spread of farming followed a trans-Mediterranean axis, where islands and peninsulas functioned as many bridges in a Neolithic world of accelerating innovation. The degree of engagement with the sea increased exponentially when the need for exotic materials arose, mostly in relation with the emergence of Egyptian and Mesopotamian superpowers, the material, technological, and economic developments of which were rapidly adopted in the eastern Mediterranean. Access to the most remote places of the basin and the creation of sea-woven interaction networks of an unprecedented nature were accelerated by the adoption of the sail in the third millennium B.C.E. Highly conducive trading circuits brought grain, metal, oil, wine, textiles, and crafts to the eastern part of the basin where core nodal points interacted with the coastal and inland periphery. At the end of the second millennium, however, these circuits also conveyed trouble. After the destructions that brought the Bronze Age to an end, the central and western parts of the basin became more integrated in pan-Mediterranean exchange networks. Eastern shipping technology and Phoenician trade of almost hegemonic character allowed the expansion of cultures and markets to the farthest western limits of the basin, a "mediterraneanizing" phenomenon, according to the author (518).

This monumental synthesis efficiently copes with what the author describes as an ongoing "ghettoization of knowledge" (23). The organization of the book breaks away from traditional labels so as to address major transitions often related to specific climatic conditions. Chronological determination is favored over cultural distinctions to demonstrate the impact of contemporaneous developments and practices around the Mediterranean basin. Such an approach is fed by continuous references to chronological frameworks, expressed when possible in ¹⁴C dates, as well

as by recurring mentions of population estimates and by provision of concrete data ranging from the evolution of the coastlines (which may have led to the existence of maritime nurseries) to detailed quantities of manufactured and transported goods. This ample information, based on up-to-date research from all around the Mediterranean, provides the reader with an unprecedented chance to assess the impact of the various events and processes selected by the author for the shaping of the Middle Sea. The maritime component of the Mediterranean is considered within the general framework of events that took place inland and shaped specific occupation patterns and lifestyles that had strong repercussions regarding the engagement with the sea. For example, the movement of growing Neolithic populations, and with them the transmission of the agricultural package, is considered in the context of the social encounters between land-oriented farmers and hunter-gatherers more readily connected to the sea (195), and it is one of the many examples of cooperation between populations with different interests and orientations the author explores throughout the book. The interconnection between inland developments and the engagement with the sea is also exhibited by the river-oriented societies of Mesopotamia and Egypt. During the fourth millennium B.C.E., both areas experienced an unprecedented wealth and population growth, the management of which was sustained by material and ideological means that boosted the seaward orientation of Levantine cities at the crossroads between these superpowers. Their involvement in trade promoted the creation of an integrated network in the eastern Mediterranean. Specific occupation and production patterns are also seen as playing an important role in the delayed involvement of the central and western Mediterranean in eastern trading networks as lower population densities, and the absence of the consolidating agricultural patchwork of olive and vine cultivation and terraced agriculture, contrasted markedly with eastern Mediterranean settings and lifestyles and affected engagement with the sea. During the Iron Age, the convergence of interests between Assyrian authoritarian economies and Levantine mercantile cities promoted the expansion and increased efficiency of Mediterranean networks while fostering the multiplication of harbor towns around the basin. Such examples demonstrate how the author takes into account a wide array of parameters that compose an enmeshed vision of the processes at play in the forging of societies on and around the basin, from shipping technology, monarchs' aspirations, merchants' avidity, and agricultural trajectories to craft production and management. As such, the approach is truly a holistic one, encompassing such diverse parameters as the environmental or cognitive aspects of the Neolithic expansion or assessing the economic allure of the sea in regard to the increasing threat of predatory populations sailing the Mediterranean at the end of the Bronze Age.

The selection and processing of available data is also striking, since Broodbank's research relies on extremely varied artifacts, from rodent bones to the most elaborate objects, indicating interactions in and around the basin. This consideration of a wide array of sources and parameters is expressed in a stunning style that efficiently correlates prudent statements regarding recent discoveries (Paleolithic and Mesolithic finds on the Greek islands) or long-lasting debates (the Bronze Age palaces, the Sea Peoples) with new perspectives on long-accepted data and interpretations, thereby providing a relevant historical synthesis.

The myriad details that have an impact on individual events or situations are thoroughly considered. This is especially striking and valuable as far as North Africa is concerned (196–201). Despite recent archaeological investigations, the data available for this large portion of the basin remain scant in comparison with other Mediterranean regions. Such a scarcity of archaeological evidence could be related to the physical settings of the coast and hinterland, but the author emphasizes the role of the Sahara as a super-attractor for populations from the end of the Pleistocene onward. Placid lakes and rich resources spread over huge expanses of territories generated rich and varied lifestyles and values, but since movement of African populations was typically from the north southward, they triggered marginal North African trajectories in regard to the history of the Mediterranean. The recurring attention given to this huge though archaeologically discrete part of the basin is another illustration of the author's care for the large perspective and for patterns emerging out of discrete record.

Also worth stressing is the author's care in referring to populations in geographical rather than ethnic terms, unless the available data point to a conscious sense of belonging to a specific group. Such an approach allows an understanding of the formation and interaction of populations that remains independent from labels that often postdate key events and processes in the Mediterranean setting. Nevertheless, the author points to specific ways of doing things, whether alimentary prescriptions, specialization of gender roles, or traditions that enable the reader to ascertain the roots of later, significant developments in the shaping of Mediterranean diversity. The book testifies to the author's interest in producing a narrative that is embedded in modern interrogations and in a need for stressing the ever-shifting practices, moving peoples, and reworked identities across the basin. It provides a history of the Mediterranean that stresses the multiplicity of patterns and exchanges in continuous processes of becoming against simplistic models that, in difficult modern times, tend to be promoted by narrow-minded views and misconceptions regarding the forging of identities.

The book is sustained by abundant illustrations. The maps efficiently support and synthesize the information provided in the text and alone form a highly valuable part of the research. Reconstruction of sites, building plans, and photographs, many in color, enliven the book while supporting the author's argumentation and allowing the comparison of the material production of societies all around the basin. The book thus also proves to be a unique visual synthesis of the archaeology of the Mediterranean. The audience addressed ranges from specialists wishing to insert their own research in an extended Mediterranean context to an informed public of nonspecialists. The quality of the processing of abundant and up-to-date documentation, the new perspectives on long-debated data and processes, and the staggeringly wide geographical and chronological scope of the book make this an excellent introduction for archaeology students as well as a valuable tool for advanced researchers.

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Book Review of *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World*, by Cyprian Broodbank
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