

Cyprian Broodbank. *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013, 672pp., 387 illustr., 49 in colour, hbk, ISBN 978-0-500-05176-4)

This book offers a super-synthesis of Mediterranean prehistory and early history, extending from 1.8 million years ago to 500 BC, across 11 chapters. It contains an outstanding array of well-chosen and up-to-date examples that are well integrated within, and bring to life, a wide range of interesting larger themes explored over a vast timespan and geographical area. The inclusion of North Africa in the prehistory of the Mediterranean — long wished-for, but never before undertaken on anywhere near this scale — is a particularly important achievement. So too is the incorporation of major landscape, climate and vegetation changes in and around the Mediterranean, and in a manner that is not excessively deterministic. As Broodbank notes, ‘climate change has too long been the missing element in our understanding of what happened in the Mediterranean’ (p. 265). Nor does he shy away from incorporating literary evidence: critically and where appropriate.

Broodbank acknowledges inspiration from Horden and Purcell, Renfrew, Andrew Sherratt, and Childe, all of whom also wrote large-scale histories covering all or part of the Mediterranean (e.g. Renfrew, 1972; Horden & Purcell, 2000). But his work is by no means overshadowed by theirs. At the same time, Broodbank’s book renders obsolete the general accounts by Trump (1980) and Braudel (2001).

At the core of the book lies a concern with ‘the shifting webs of people’ (p. 16) across the sea and land. In practice, this means identifying a host of connections and comparisons over space and time. While not exactly agenda-setting for archaeological theorists, this ties in very well with current interests in Mediterranean archaeology, exemplified by keywords such as connectivity, networks, mobility, entanglement, interaction, and encounter. Broodbank’s thinking is also critical. For example, his emphasis on the ‘sheer diversity of trajectories’ (p. 80) ensures that his telling of the human story of the Mediterranean is never simply evolutionary.

The book is extensively researched, based on a stunning breadth and depth of reading, thinking and understanding. One strategic choice by the author has been to refer mainly to literature published in the English language. This inevitably underrepresents the contribution of indigenous and German-speaking Mediterranean archaeologists, who might consequently regard the book as excessively Anglophone; it can partly be explained by the likely Anglo-American market for the book, and also by a desire to make use of the freshest (post-2000) high-resolution research — which is increasingly being presented internationally in English.

There is no hint of regional or chronological bias in the book. The eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age, and the Aegean islands in particular, may be Broodbank's personal favourites, but he successfully advocates and practices 'an emphatically polyglot history' (p. 25). Indeed, if anything, the significance of Aegean prehistory is downplayed.

Chapter 1 provides a valuable critical historiography of Mediterranean (pre)historic archaeology, including the Northern European appropriation of Mediterranean antiquities, the romanticization of Mediterranean landscapes and peoples, the overlooking of North Africa west of Egypt, the over-specialization of archaeologists by period, region or technique, and a traditional ever-emphasis on artefacts. Added to this is a useful introduction to the practice and politics of archaeology and related climate history in the Mediterranean, including acknowledgement of current threats to the archaeological heritage.

Chapter 2 introduces the geography of the Mediterranean. While PhD theses often provide such information in a worthy but dull manner, Broodbank's treatment is fascinating, since it is written in human terms — referring, for example, to travelled time, lived-in places, choices of route, and human-induced extinctions of island fauna. It is also helpfully contextualised by global-scale comparisons.

Chapter 3 covers the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic. Rejecting claims of early Mediterranean sea-crossings (with the possible exception of limited Neanderthal crossings to off-shore islands), Broodbank portrays the Mediterranean Sea as a barrier

that was circumvented during the course of hominid and early human expansion across Africa and Europe.

Chapter 4 continues the story of the expansion of modern humans around the Mediterranean, leading to the creation of the first Mediterranean societies and communication networks, but also to challenges in maintaining these. Thankfully, Broodbank avoids getting bogged down in the details of lithic tool typology, which dominate many French and Italian accounts of the Upper Palaeolithic in the Mediterranean. But the authenticity of the Balzi Rossi figurines is accepted by Broodbank uncritically (p. 119 and Plate VIII): doubts over their status have endured since the time of their ‘discovery’ (e.g. Mortillet, 1898).

Chapter 5 explores the origins and spread of agriculture and associated Neolithic lifestyles. This was surely one of the most difficult chapters in the book to write, since the relevant scientific data are so contested. For example, how sure are we about sea levels and the related loss and gain of land in different periods? Despite this, Broodbank makes a very good effort to impose order, while remaining critically aware of the limitations of the available evidence, and of the complexity of associated social developments. The last hunter-gatherers of the northern Mediterranean, although acknowledged for their resilience, receive relatively short shrift, ultimately being written off at around 6200 BC by an event of climatic deterioration. But Broodbank’s discussion of the origins of the nuclear family and of privacy in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B — reminiscent of Engels’ (1972 [1884]) classic work — is particularly daring.

Chapter 6 covers the rest of the Neolithic and the Copper Age. The appropriate message here is of a period characterised by ‘local ways of doing things’ (p. 202), including early farmers in the Nile valley, various combinations of herders, gatherers and hunters in northeast Africa, mobile pastoralists in Saharan North Africa, small island farmers and more idiosyncratic larger island societies, Italian villagers, big complex communities in the Levant, and so on.

Chapter 7 deals with the ‘long third millennium’: a period hailed by Broodbank as ‘one of the most decisive ages in Mediterranean history’ (p. 234). This

is an outstanding chapter, which introduces some compelling archaeological themes, complimented by the judicious use of written records. A drier climate, the need to store food, growing socio-economic inequalities, settlement expansion and contraction, monument building, innovative transport technologies, long-range sea travel, ‘the first superpowers’ (p. 269) of the Mediterranean as well as novel smaller-scale societies, the development of writing, elite culture, proto-currencies, the sensuous properties of special objects, and male warriors are key ingredients. In particular, Broodbank draws an excellent contrast between the consumption of wealth in the Aegean and central and western Mediterranean, as opposed to its accumulation to the East (p. 338).

Chapter 8, on the second millennium BC, continues the book’s core theme of interactions. Here, in particular, Broodbank writes confidently about Bronze Age regional economies in the eastern Mediterranean, and provides some interesting extended case-studies of trade and its political dimensions, including Ugarit’s archaeology and archives, the diplomatic letters of Amarna, the Uluburun shipwreck, and the obscure Bates’ Island off the north-west coast of Egypt. There are also some excellent discussions of power relations and inequalities.

Chapter 9 is about the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, and — due to the nature of the evidence — falters slightly compared to the rest of the book. The first part, spanning 1300–1000 BC, continues the story of contacts, mobility and powerful rulers, but also introduces the onset of a ‘dark age’, whose ‘Sea Peoples’ Broodbank rightly deconstructs. Men tend to dominate the narrative (and, arguably, also the historical evidence), although women occasionally appear as wives, powerful ladies and goddesses. The second part of the chapter, covering 1000–800 BC, nicely offsets the consequences of ‘Phoenician’ trade in connecting the east, west and south Mediterranean with the expansion of central Mediterranean maritime connections westwards and north.

Chapter 10 is also divided into two parts: the eighth and early seventh centuries BC, and the seventh and sixth centuries. This is another excellent chapter, in which the key message is of the Mediterranean Sea as a ‘superconductor’ (p. 505).

The web of themes spun together is far too extensive to describe here, suffice to say that Broodbank's account of economic developments is truly sophisticated.

Chapter 11 then summarizes the long story covered in the previous chapters and concludes by revisiting Horden & Purcell's (2000) three common denominators underpinning Mediterranean life (fragmented micro-ecologies, connectivity, and uncertainty plus risk and opportunity), and by posing some questions for scholars interested in later periods (post 500 BC). This is not an essential chapter, but is useful for readers not intending to read the whole book.

Broodbank's grand narrative provides a very refreshing and thoughtful take on old and new stories about Mediterranean pre- and early history. He is particularly effective at sharpening the focus on previously blurred cultural patterns, and setting them within their wider contexts — one bold and persuasive example being his delineation of the expansion and impact of the Croatian Cetina culture throughout the Adriatic and beyond. Furthermore, Broodbank's style of writing is superb: clear, eloquent, captivating, and even witty. But, in adopting a single, authoritative voice, together with an approach that gathers and ties down information for our educational benefit, his text allows relatively little room for current debate (one amongst a few exceptions being the conflict over Aegean chronology). As a consequence, Broodbank rarely poses questions or leaves threads untied for the readers to pick up and rework for themselves. Nor does he set a clear agenda for future research by Mediterranean prehistorians, beyond implicitly advocating a broad comparative approach. Instead, a key target audience for the book (at least in the introduction and conclusion) seems to be those classical and medieval Mediterranean archaeologists who previously doubted the interest and importance of the region's pre- and early history.

The printed book has been produced to an excellent standard. The high quality paper ensures that the text and images are sharp, while the use of endnotes (as opposed to in-text bibliographic references) and only minimal end-of-line hyphenation makes the text easy to read. The whole text has been very well proof-read; an exceptionally rare typographic error being 'dangrs' instead of 'dangers' (p. 513). The choice and placing of illustrations is excellent. Photographs, line drawings, maps, and tables are all used to very good effect. And the high quality of the

reproduced images ensures that the grey-scale photographs are generally as effective as those in colour — the latter justifiably dislocated between pages of text, given the surprisingly low cost of the book (£34.95). The chronological tables (pp. 10–14), with their traditional, evolutionary ‘Early’, ‘Middle’ and ‘Late’ phases, seem somewhat out of place in a book that so effectively liberates us from such labels, but do usefully map on climatic phases as well as marine isotope stages for the Pleistocene. I only suffered from the heavy weight of the printed book (2.2 kg), particularly when travelling, and in retrospect might have opted for the eBook version.

The 672 pages will take most readers months to complete (and I suspect they took a decade to write), but the benefits of broadening one's knowledge and understanding in this way are immeasurable. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn about the Mediterranean's rich human past. Certainly, I would expect all PhD students working on any period or region of Mediterranean prehistory to have read this book, cover-to-cover. And for those of us with established research in particular Mediterranean periods and regions, Broodbank's book should help us see our own areas in a new light, and inspire us to raise our game.

Overall, this book represents a great scholarly achievement and a generous service to everyone interested in the archaeology of the Mediterranean.

REFERENCES

Braudel, F. (eds. Roselyne de Ayala & Paule Braudel) 2001. *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, trans. by S. Reynolds. London and New York: Allen Lane.

Engels, F. 1972 [1884]. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Horden, P. & Purcell, N. 2000. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell.

Mortillet, G. de, 1898. Statuette Fausse des Baoussé-Roussé. *Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Series 4(9):146–53.

Renfrew, C. 1972. *The Emergence of Civilisation: The Cyclades and the Aegean in the Third Millennium BC*. London: Methuen.

Trump, D.H. 1980. *Prehistory of the Mediterranean*. London: Allen Lane.

ROBIN SKEATES
Durham University, UK