

Memory and the Mediterranean

By Fernand Braudel

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A grand sweep of history by the late Fernand Braudel–one of the twentieth century's most influential historians–**Memory and the Mediterranean** chronicles the Mediterranean's immeasurably rich past during the foundational period from prehistory to classical antiquity, illuminating nothing less than the bedrock of our civilization and the very origins of Western culture.

Essential for historians, yet written explicitly for the general reader, this magnificent account of the ebb and flow of cultures shaped by the Mediterranean takes us from the great sea's geologic beginnings through the ancient civilizations that flourished along its shores. Moving with ease from Mesopotamia and Egypt to the flowering of Crete and the early Aegean peoples, and culminating in the prodigious achievements of ancient Greece and Rome, Braudel conveys in absorbing detail the geography and climate of the region over the course of millennia while brilliantly explaining the larger forces that gave rise to agriculture, writing, sea travel, trade, and, ultimately, the emergence of empires. Impressive in scope and gracefully written, **Memory and the Mediterranean** is an endlessly enriching work of history by a legend in the field.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Fernand Braudel's *Memory and the Mediterranean*is a panoramic and singular history, a comprehensive synthesis, of that region from pre-historic times to the beginning of the Byzantine Empire. Braudel's concerns are not the usual turning points such as battles and political upheaval. Instead, he focuses on regional and sub-regional vicissitudes (climate, topography, geologic cataclysms, the very currents of the sea itself) and their legacies, especially commerce, to trace the reasons behind the risings and falls of the greater Mediterranean's scores of ancient cultures. What, for example, were the ramifications of Egypt's lack of forests? How did the discovery of bitumen and the development of concrete affect, respectively, the Phoenicians and the Romans? *Memory and the Mediterranean*is complex and demanding but in the end, rewarding. Its point of view is at once Olympian, humble, and richly commonsensical. --*H. O'Billovitch*

From Library Journal
Not enough can be said about this most recently published work from Braudel (A History of Civilizations), a general history of the Mediterranean region from its geologic beginnings to Rome's takeover of the entire area. Braudel, who dominated France's Annales School following World War II and died in 1985, wrote this work in the late 1960s for a series that was never published. Subsequently, current scholars have used footnotes to correct the factual errors that resulted mostly from incomplete archaeological evidence regarding the earliest human history, leaving the author's text otherwise intact. The modern reader will appreciate this work's brevity compared with the author's previous works. Since the history of Phoenicia and its colonies is so closely tied to the geography of the Mediterranean, Braudel's emphasis on geography is particularly salient here. His approach to the Mediterranean will fascinate modern students of ancient history who have doubtless envied the 15th and 16th centuries for receiving so much attention from historians. Recommended for all academic and large public libraries. Clay Williams, Hunter Coll., New York
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From Booklist
Starred Review A neglected treasure, this masterful study of the ancient Mediterranean world lay unpublished for 30 years. Now felicitously translated, this panoramic chronicle reminds us why Braudel (who died in 1985) commanded global respect as a historian and a scholar. With the poise born of long research, Braudel strides gracefully through the millennia--peering over the shoulders of Paleolithic artists drawing primitive murals on the cave walls of Belbasi, marveling at the ingenuity of scribes experimenting with a proto-alphabet in the turquoise mines of Sinai, marching beside the Roman legions advancing against the Helvetti at Bibracte. True, the editors have had to append a few notes detailing recent archaeological discoveries that compel revision of some of Braudel's judgments. But Braudel's errors detract little from his luminous accomplishment in weaving together so many narrative strands in one seamless and compelling story. Whether explaining how the island of Thira disappeared in volcanic fury or why the Emperor Trajan failed in his foray beyond the Euphrates, Braudel engages the imagination of his readers, drawing us into a drama taut with human passions and conflict. Sure to delight Braudel's longtime admirers--and to win over new ones. *Bryce Christensen*
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