

and his sub-editors. Whether this approach to the essays works for individual readers is a matter of taste, but the scope inherent in each volume is such that most will only find a few of compelling interest. The general histories touched on above do not suffer from this difficulty as a single author provides the unity and theme as an essential element to their work.

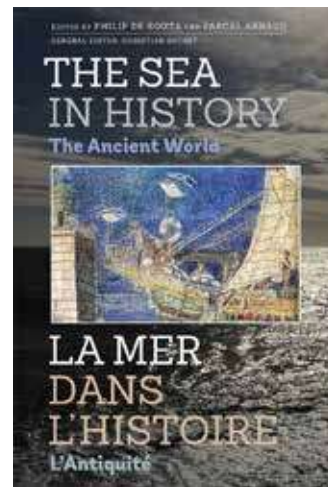
Buchet's summary is a relatively extensive paper—more than twice the average length of the papers included in the four volumes—that expounds on three key findings inherent in the entire project. The first is the claim that maritime factors are the most significant influence on political and economic development of individual states, a powerful force that leads to predominance and drives expansion and is consequently a primary driver of history. For practitioners of maritime history, broadly defined, this conclusion can certainly bring comfort to what might be perceived as a somewhat unfashionable corner of the profession. There is, thus, much to agree with in the sum of the papers that underscores this relationship between humankind and the seas. But it may be more correct to observe that all human endeavour is driven by a myriad of influences, working together in complex ways that makes causality inherently difficult to determine and nearly always contingent on further reflection, analysis and new evidence. Surely that is what makes the profession of history such a fascinating and compelling field of study.

From a Canadian perspective, this series is a powerful reminder of the role of the sea, of commerce, of naval power, and of our own reliance on maritime trade. Buchet may well have been considering the general 'sea blindness' of Canadians and their government as he set about to rectify matters with this set of volumes on 'The Sea in History'. Anything that can encourage young scholars' understandings of these broader matters and to open eyes to worlds far from home yet with significant influence on local prosperity is to be welcomed. Buchet's work accomplishes this aim without doubt to those willing to dip into these volumes and seek to learn, to reflect and increase their understanding of the globe which we all inhabit.

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Christian Buchet, Philip de Souza and Pascal Arnaud (eds.). *The Sea in History: The Ancient World – La mer dans l'histoire: L'Antiquité*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, [www.boydelandbrewer.com](http://www.boydelandbrewer.com), 2017. 730 pp., illustrations. ISBN 978-1-78327-157-3. (E-book available)

This is the first of four volumes that address the question posed by General Editor, Christian Buchet,



as to whether the sea is the *differentiating* factor in the overall development of states, of societies and of history. The sea itself is a broad term essentially involving any activities and relationships with bodies of water be they rivers, lakes, seas or oceans. In particular, are the histories of those societies that took to the water different from those who shunned it, or from those geographically isolated from the sea? This is as wide a field of enquiry as one could possibly imagine and the range of approach provided by the contributors to this volume is indeed extremely diverse.

To ensure a degree of intellectual diversity, Buchet has organized a large group of historians from, he claims, around the world, to address particular issues from a variety of vantage points and different disciplines. This particular volume boasts no less than 42 articles written by 43 authors (one article is a collaboration of two historians) as well as separate papers by the volume's editor to provide introductory and concluding bookends. It must be conceded, however, that the geographical dispersal of the historians represented in this volume is overwhelmingly European. No less than 15 are French, with six from the United States representing the second largest national contingent. Most of the rest are from the major European countries—Spain, Italy, Germany, UK, and Ireland—with one or two representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The two historians from Asia are European in background who happen to be faculty at a Japanese and Singaporean university respectively. The diversity in perspective is therefore a little less than ideal in terms of fully achieving the objectives established by Buchet and reflects more the Western tradition.

The papers themselves vary widely in terms of topic, with the book split into two basic sections addressing prehistory—essentially interpreting evidence from archeology—and historical periods. The latter is geographically divided into standard areas of study and includes the Ancient Near East and Pharaonic Egypt; the Mediterranean World (the bulk of the book with 23 articles); and, the Indian Ocean and the Far East. Most of the papers are less than 15 pages in length, with the exceptions being an introductory paper by Pascal Picq, that posits the notion that “La mer est la propre d’*Homo sapiens*” and a concluding paper by one of the volume's editors, Pascal Arnaud. As the title of Picq's paper implies, it and a substantial proportion of the papers are in French. These 17 papers represent nearly half of the volume, which in of itself is not a problem for many, but is something to be aware of. No other languages are represented notwithstanding the nationalities of the historians involved.

The individual papers address subjects as widely separated as the prehistory of seafaring in the Caribbean and Japanese islands to the importance of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Mesopotamia where humankind's first cities arose some six thousand years ago, to a number of papers on the maritime dimensions of the Greek and Roman states in the ancient world. One paper addresses the question of taxing maritime activities, which serves as a reminder that offshore tax havens are no new innovation. There are inevitably gaps in what is covered in the volume. There is, for example, no separate exploration of the role of Carthage in the Mediterranean

world, with some references provided through the Roman lens. Nor is there much on the scene in Africa south of the Mediterranean littoral, or of Latin America. If nothing else, such gaps demonstrate the difficulty in fitting in every topic that could be addressed in a single volume as well as impressing on the reader the broad orbit of the subject with what has been included.

Arnaud in his general introduction acknowledges this problem and admits that antiquity as an epoch is not well defined. In the Western tradition, the ancient world was that of the Mediterranean and the near East. The entities that strove for dominance as well as trade with each other form the bedrock of European civilization, and this reality is reflected in the fact that the three-quarters of the articles address issues in the Mediterranean basin. Civilizations further afield were legendary or only vaguely known to exist—knowledge essentially due to trade by very small enterprises—or were entirely unknown, such as the Americas and Australia. These significant limits do not render the effort at creating a global history nugatory and many of the papers will be of interest to both the specialist and general reader.

There are three caveats to note with this book. The first is the lack of an index to help locate material within the many papers that are linked. An index is an important aid to the reader of any academic text and this is no exception. Its lack is unfortunate. The second is that references, almost all secondary in nature, are often provided only as footnotes. It would have been helpful to have a bibliography at the end of each paper. Finally, the cost at US \$220 is undeniably steep. Few will be willing to lay out such a sum, particularly if only a few articles are of immediate interest, and hence it likely will be a matter for libraries.

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Christian Buchet and Michel Balard (eds.). *The Sea in History - The Medieval World/La mer dans l'histoire - Le Moyen Âge*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, [www.boydelandbrewer.com](http://www.boydelandbrewer.com), 2017. 1086 pp., ISBN 978-1-78327-159-7. (E-book available) [Review reprinted from *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, October 2017.]

This intimidating volume represents the second in a set of four, following on *The Sea in History - The Ancient World*, and preceding two more books on the early modern and modern eras. The book's editor, Michel Balard, wastes no time in invoking Braudel in his introduction, which serves as a

