

The Mediterranean and History

Language

English

...the Mediterranean is a very old crossroads. For millennia everything converges upon it, mixing and enriching its history: man, pack animals, and vehicles. Goods, ships, ideas, religions, arts of life”– Fernand Braudel, “The Mediterranean, the space and the history”

The Mediterranean the Roman’s “*mare nostrum*” is the largest inland sea of the planet bridging three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia, a liquid surface of 3 million km² with 2000 islands, involved by a 47 000 km coastal perimeter.

But the Mediterranean is not only a geography, a climate or a sea, it is a cultural space, a confluence of very ancient civilizations which have bequeathed us specific ways of community life and diverse cultural heritages.

It is a specific way of perceiving, thinking and acting which impacted the whole planet.

Over millennia geographic, climate and others factors attracted human groups fleeing draughts, conflicts and cyclical famines and settled in more temperate and fertile areas of the Mediterranean region. The rivers were the roads for the “great lake” where the three monotheist great religions were also born: Judaism, Christianity and Islamism.

In this space extraordinary civilizations have emerged and developed productions, the sciences and the arts. Farmers, craftsmen and merchants’ societies emerged and hundreds of cities were founded. The good navigability of the Mediterranean enabled an intense trade and the settling of “trading posts”, in regions even beyond the Gibraltar Strait namely along the coast of the Iberian Peninsula.

The Mediterranean cities have an urban structure highlighting the importance of the ports, the presence of great markets, squares and temples, amphitheatres and entertainment, an immense web of narrow alleyways revealing an intense community life, full of belonging and neighbourhood relationships.

Portugal has in all of its territory evidence of the presence of people originating from the Mediterranean and many Portuguese cities were founded in the Ancient times.

The expression of these experiences created a life style the Greeks called “*díaita*”, socializing and eating habits which constitute the “Mediterranean diet”.

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