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## Mediterranean Mountain Environments

Edited by Ioannis N. Vogiatzakis. Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. xv + 216 pp. € 45.20, £ 37.50. ISBN 978-0-470-68625-6.

The Mediterranean Basin is defined by the mountains that surround it, and, as noted in the preface (p xiii), "there is still a lack of integrated reading material on Mediterranean mountains that encapsulates both natural and cultural elements of the mountain environments in the region." This book goes some way toward remedying this gap and, in comparison to the seminal work of environmental history by McNeill (1992), is described as "more of a textbook with chapters on physical and human geography." As discussed below, this is true only to a certain extent. The preface also states that, since McNeill's book, "there has not been a book dedicated to the mountains of the region." Within the academic literature, this may be true: but beyond it, such books do exist (eg Ardito et al 2001), as well as the series of publications entitled *Montagnes méditerranéennes*, published by the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Montagnes Sèches et Méditerranéennes (CERMOSEM) in French throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The key point here is that the Mediterranean is a region of many languages and cultures and that, while the appearance of a book in English on the mountains of the Mediterranean is to be welcomed, it could have been greatly enriched by greater reference to literature in the many languages of the region.

The book is in 10 chapters, beginning with an introduction that notes the mountainous nature of many of the region's countries and briefly outlines the content of the book. The chapter also includes a small-scale map that refers to some of the mountain ranges: unfortunately, it does not mention many of the ranges referred to throughout the book, and the opportunity to present it in color (in a useful section of color plates) was not taken. Consequently, many of the geographical references require readers to resort to an atlas or Wikipedia. Chapters 2 and 3 present the Quaternary environmental history and glacial history of the region. These are comprehensive reviews of the literature and note the millennia of human impacts on the region and its mountains. A theme that emerges in these, and subsequent, chapters is the variable availability of scientific knowledge from country to country, though whether this is an artifact due to the reliance on English-language literature cannot be assessed. Chapter 4 presents, in a largely descriptive manner, the geological setting (very briefly), the soils (by underlying geology), and the landscapes (by region). Chapter 5 is entitled "Climate and Hydrology," but includes only a short section on climate. The chapter is based on a funding proposal, apparently on water resources (particularly related to snowmelt regimes) and decision support systems, as well as the vulnerability of water resources to climate change and possible adaptation strategies. These are the themes of the chapter, which is therefore somewhat eclectic and presents an overview of neither the climate nor the hydrology of the region's mountains. Chapter 6 presents the biogeography of the region, particularly in relation to vegetation and flora, with short sections on fauna (largely vertebrate) and protected areas.

With Chapter 7, on cultural geographies, there is an abrupt change in emphasis. Here the mountain environments are the setting, rather than the focus, of the chapter, which is mainly historical, with sections on mythical, theophanic, "traditional," and commodified mountains. The last two sections contrast economies based mainly on primary activities versus those based particularly on tourism and other commodities. The European Union policies that attempt to address these different issues (at least around the northern rim) are briefly mentioned. Chapter 8 is on land use changes, starting with a short description of drivers: "Of the sociopolitical factors the most important is population" (p 160). However, the very great changes in population over time and space are only briefly described, reappearing in a model on p 173 that contrasts the southern and northern parts of the region. Recent land use changes are presented by country—but not for all of the region's countries. Again, the policy context is barely mentioned. There is a short section on the environmental consequences of land use changes, but this is not cross-referenced to Chapter 6 (an opportunity missed throughout the book except for the first and last chapters). Notably, while the chapter does include a very short section on wildfires—in a historical but not current context—this is one of the very few mentions of fire in the whole book, remarkable for a region where its biophysical and cultural role has been so important for so long, and is likely to remain so (p 195). Likewise, other natural hazards, such as floods, are not mentioned in this chapter and barely in the book, including in Chapter 9, on "Climate Change and Its Impact." This is a comprehensive literature review, deriving particularly from European-funded projects. The chapter concludes that "Mediterranean mountain environments seem to be accelerating towards uncertain ecological states" (p 197).

The final chapter restates many points made in previous chapters and concludes that "a concerted and coordinated effort to account for all of the services provided by Mediterranean mountains" (p 208) is needed, and that this should be interdisciplinary and international. It is undoubtedly true that the Mediterranean mountains provide a wealth of diverse ecosystem services for the

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inhabitants of the region as well as the millions who visit it each year. This framework could be a useful starting point for a future edition of this book, which could truly be a textbook with chapters on both physical and human geography, drawing together all of the knowledge deriving from research in the mountains of all of the countries of the region, including Algeria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Turkey, and the countries of the West Balkans, which rarely feature in this book. This would be a significant challenge, as found recently in the process of developing a report on the mountains of the Middle East and North Africa (Victor 2012), but it would be a worthwhile goal.

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