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**Eric H. Cline (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xxxiii, 930. ISBN 9780195365504. \$175.00.**

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

This volume has made me wonder what exactly the definition of a handbook is. According to the Oxford Advanced Dictionary, it is a small book, giving useful facts. The book under review here certainly does not fit the first part of this definition. It is big, comprising more than 900 pages, with 66 chapters by 61 contributors. I traveled abroad with the book several times and it definitely is not a comfortable companion in economy class airplane seats or on Greek KTEL buses. Fortunately, the book does provide many useful facts, and much more. All of the contributors are renowned scholars and together they treat an impressive range of topics.

The Aegean Bronze Age covers roughly the period from 3100-1050 BC. Research in this field began in 1870, when Heinrich Schliemann went to Hisarlik, now in Turkey, to excavate the site of Troy. In the 140 years which have passed since his pioneering excavations, the Bronze Age has been one of the most active fields within Greek archaeology, itself a discipline of intensive academic research. Bronze Age research has covered all parts of Greece and western Turkey and even beyond the Aegean in the eastern and Central Mediterranean. It is clear that such a rich field of study cannot easily be summarized in one book, not even if it has more than 900 pages. In order to structure the information, the book is subdivided in four parts: Background and Definitions, Chronology and Geography, Thematic Topics and Specific Sites and Regions. These parts are subdivided in sections, each containing a number of individual chapters of roughly equal length (8-13 pages). This structure has resulted in a very versatile book, since the contributors approach the subjects in their own ways and many of them rely heavily on personal experience and conviction. Because of its structure, this book is entirely different from a book with a similar title, the ***Cambridge Companion to the Aegean Bronze Age***, which is more thematically organized (C. W. Shelmerdine, 2008). The editor of the volume under review here wisely chose not to end with a grand conclusion, but an introductory chapter on the goals of the volume, intended readers and the specific circumstances of research into the Bronze Age Aegean, could have provided more unity. The two contributions in part I that serve to provide background and definition are too particular. J. D. Muhly's chapter on the history of research is an adequate account of discoveries and people involved, but it lacks any reference to broader trends in intellectual and academic history. S. W. Manning's contribution on "Chronology and Terminology" hardly discusses any terminology, but provides a good overview of the state of affairs with regard to relative and absolute dating. A thorough introduction to the Aegean landscape and geography, unfortunately, is lacking.

The versatility of the book, which is one of its strengths, is also one of its weaknesses. The individual contributions vary enormously. Some are very detailed and specific, while others are very general, which made me wonder at various points about the intended target group.

On the one hand, we have difficult discussions in detail, such as the one on Early-Middle Minoan sealing, writing and administration (Tomkins and Schoep, pp. 71-72) or that on seriation among Cycladic cemeteries (Renfrew, p. 87). On the other hand, little attention is devoted to Cycladic marble figurines (Renfrew, p. 88; Tzonou-Herbst, p. 214), which for many people are icons of Early Bronze Age Aegean art. To some extent, this misbalance among the articles is caused by the structure of the book itself. In part II, a traditional geographical and chronological approach is adopted, which often does not reflect the current state of research. For example, S. Voutsaki describes the Middle Bronze Age as one period, while showing convincingly that there is a clear distinction between the earlier part (MH I-MH II) and the later part, which clearly leads up to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (MH III-LH I). The lengths of the individual chapters do not reflect the current state of research within the discipline. The chapter on Late Bronze Age mainland Greece (Shelton, 139-146), has 8 pages of text, while the LBA Cyclades, arguably a period of lesser archaeological prominence for this region, is discussed in 9 pages (Barber pp. 160-169). Likewise, the site of Thorikos is described in more detail (Laffineur pp. 712-720) than prominent sites such as Akroteri on Santorini (Doumas, pp. 752-759) or Pylos (Davis, pp. 680-687). Fortunately, this inequality among the various chapters is compensated for by the quantity of the contributions: several issues are treated in more than one chapter and omissions in one paper are often treated in another.

In a book aiming to cover a field of research as wide as the Bronze Age Aegean, tough choices need to be made and omissions are unavoidable. Some of these choices are unfortunate, for example the absence of a chapter on Thessaly, or on western Greece, including Achaia, Epirus and the Ionian Islands. Why are there two chapters on seals and sealings (chapters 24 and 25), when most, if not all, seals found in Mycenaean Greece were made on Crete (J. G. Younger, pp. 329)? The presence of a whole chapter on the Cypro-Minoan writing system (chapter 28) is also a bit odd, considering that Cyprus is mostly lacking in the book, except for one chapter in the section on the "wider Mediterranean" (chapter 60). The order of the various contributions is not always logical. For example, the chapter on the Trojan war (chapter 35 in the section "events"), treats many of the same issues as the one on Troy (chapter 63 in the section "wider Mediterranean"). In fact, these two chapters would have made a good separate section together with the chapter on Western Anatolia (chapter 65). As it is, there is quite some redundancy in information. However, one may wonder how many people will read this book cover to cover and, as stated above, the repetitions in the book, often from a somewhat different perspective, ensure completeness.

The most serious shortcoming of the book is its paucity of figures and maps. Aegean art has produced many impressive objects worthy of reproduction in color. The text by A. P. Chapin (chapter 17) on Aegean frescoes, for which color is crucial for appreciation and understanding, has only two small black-and-white figures of low quality. The chapters on Minoan and Mycenaean pottery (chapters 30, 31), which describe typological sequences of pot shapes and decorations have no pictures at all! Had I not had some knowledge of Aegean pottery, I doubt whether the text would have made much sense to me. The people of the Aegean Bronze Age have produced monumental architecture in addition to a range of more modest structures. They are described in the sections on architecture (chapters 14, 15), but, unfortunately, there are no pictures and plans. Even several descriptions of individual sites, such as Kato Zakro on Crete (chapter 38) and Pylos in Messenia (chapter 51), do not have site plans. A map of the Aegean indicating the location of sites is lacking altogether. The decision by the editor (or the publisher?) to include so few figures, and only in black and white, severely limits the accessibility of the information and diminishes the quality of the book.

Judging from the critical remarks above, one could have the impression that I have a negative opinion on the book. However, the opposite is the case. The majority of the contributions is of excellent quality and I have learned many things. An example is the chapter on "Materials and Industries" by D. Evely (chapter 29) who gives a good overview

of the development of metalworking and ceramic production. Also of note is Chapter 18 on "State and Society" by D. Nakassis, M. L. Galaty and W. A. Parkinson. They show very clearly the difference between Minoan and Mycenaean palaces in terms of statehood and organization and are able to point to the limitations and possibilities of these palaces as political centers. The real treasure troves of the book are the bibliographies. With a few exceptions, the individual chapters provide ample literature, in some cases covering 5 or 6 pages (in small font). Most of the bibliographies are up to date and will provide the readers with the tools to explore in detail many of the issues raised in this volume.

In short, this handbook is big, but very useful. There are some serious omissions and shortcomings, notably the paucity of good pictures and maps. However, the quality of the contributions and the accompanying bibliographies is such that it will be of great help to anyone interested in the Aegean Bronze Age.

Table of contents:

Part I: Background and Definitions

1. History of Research, James D. Muhly
2. Chronology and Terminology, Sturt W. Manning

Part II: Chronology and Geography

3. Neolithic Antecedents, Peter Tomkins
- Early Bronze Age
4. Mainland Greece, Jeannette Forsen
5. Crete, Peter Tomkins and Ilse Schoep
6. Cyclades, Colin Renfrew

Middle Bronze Age

7. Mainland Greece, Sofia Voutsaki
8. Crete, Ilse Schoep
9. Cyclades, Robin L. N. Barber

Late Bronze Age

10. Mainland Greece, Kim Shelton
11. Crete, Erik Hallager
12. Cyclades, Robin L. N. Barber
13. End of the Bronze Age, Reinhard Jung

Part III: Thematic Topics - Art and Architecture

14. Minoan Architecture, Louise Hitchcock
15. Mycenaean Architecture, Louise Hitchcock
16. Figurines, Ioulia Tzonou-Herbst
17. Frescoes, Anne P. Chapin

Society and Culture

18. State and Society, Dimitri Nakassis, Michael L. Galaty, and William A. Parkinson
19. Minoan Religion, Susan Lupack
20. Mycenaean Religion, Susan Lupack
21. Death and Burial, Christopher Mee
22. Trade, Bryan E. Burns

23. Weapons and Warfare, Ioannis Georganas

Seals and Writing/Administrative Systems

24. Minoan Seals and Sealings, Judith Weingarten
25. Mycenaean Seals and Sealings, John G. Younger
26. Cretan Hieroglyphic and Linear A, Helena Tomas
27. Linear B, Thomas G. Palaima
28. Cypro-Minoan, Nicolle Hirschfeld

Material Crafts

29. Materials and Industries, Doniert G. Evely
30. Minoan Pottery, Birgitta Hallager
31. Mycenaean Pottery, Jeremy B. Rutter
32. Textiles, Brendan Burke

33. Jewellery, Robert Laffineur  
Events
34. Eruption of Thera/Santorini, Sturt W. Manning
35. Trojan War, Trevor Bryce
36. The Collapse at the End of the Bronze Age, Oliver Dickinson
- Part IV: Specific Sites and Regions - Crete
37. Ayia Triada Vincenzo La Rosa
38. Kato Zakros Lefteris Platon
39. Khania (Kydonia), Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki
40. Knossos, Colin Macdonald
41. Kommos, Joseph and Maria Shaw
42. Malia, Jan Driessen
43. Palaikastro, J. Alexander MacGillivray and L. Hugh Sackett
44. Phaistos, Vincenzo La Rosa
- Mainland Greece
45. Argolid, Sofia Voutsaki
46. Boeotia, Anastasia Dakouri-Hild
47. Central and Southern Peloponnese, William G. Cavanagh
48. Northern Aegean, Stelios Andreou
49. Lerna, Martha Wiencke
50. Mycenae, Elizabeth French
51. Pylos, Jack L. Davis
52. Thebes, Anastasia Dakouri-Hild
53. Thorikos, Robert Laffineur
54. Tiryns, Joseph Maran
- Cyclades, Dodecanese, and Saronic Islands
55. Aegina Kolonna, Walter Gauss
56. Akrotiri, Christos Doumas
57. Dodecanese, Toula Marketou
58. Rhodes, Toula Marketou
- Wider Mediterranean
59. Cape Gelidonya shipwreck, George F. Bass
60. Cyprus, Louise Steel
61. Egypt, Jacke Phillips
62. Levant, Assaf Yasur-Landau
63. Troy, Peter Jablonka
64. Uluburun shipwreck, Cemal Pulak
65. Western Anatolia, Alan M. Greaves
66. Western Mediterranean, Lucia Vagnetti

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[Index for 2011](#)

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