

of gender relations in the past. She concludes that we cannot assume that women's status diminished as depictions of women in rock art decreased, nor can we assume that males increasingly excluded women from ritual places and activities. Indeed, Angelo Fossati has suggested that Bronze Age female deities represented by *oranti* were still worshipped in the Iron Age. Most important, continued use of localities with earlier feminine imagery, and incorporation of earlier into later images (rather than obliteration) suggest that earlier imagery had significance to later ritual practitioners.

Bevan completed her PhD dissertation, the basis for this volume, in late 2004. *Ambiguous Images: Gender and Rock Art* (Hays-Gilpin 2004), my overview and critique of several earlier rock art research projects that involved gender in one way or another, appeared at the same time. Bevan and I were unaware of each other's interest in this topic and proceeded to explore it independently at different scales. I am happy to report that Bevan's study is exactly the sort of detailed, in-depth examination of a single rock-art district that I envisioned as necessary to redirect rock-art research from programs that largely have been flawed by gender biases, Primitivism, and naïve deployments of inappropriate ethnographic evidence. In my survey of the literature prior to about 2002, I was able to find many notable strong cases, most of which Bevan cites here. But for the most part, gendered perspectives on rock art were scattered and inconsistent. Bevan's study provides a solid platform for moving forward, not only for understanding European rock art and what rock art can tell us about ancient Europeans, but as a model for research in other areas where ethnography provides no strong continuity between past and present.

The transformation of a dissertation to a book is no simple task. In this case, extensive citations, documentation of visual detail in this rich body of evidence, and consideration of many angles for possible interpretation sometimes obscure the important conclusions of the study and may overwhelm all but the most ardent reader. On the other hand, for the diligent reader, this monograph has characteristics that make a published dissertation useful: a thorough literature search, consideration of multiple working hypotheses at every turn, consideration of theoretical perspectives from

many angles, and thorough presentation of heretofore unpublished data. The reader interested in the roles of ethnography or cross-media comparison in rock-art research will be rewarded with a wealth of possible connections and analogies, duly wrapped in yellow 'caution' tape to prevent slips and falls into unwarranted conclusions. Rock-art enthusiasts will enjoy the 128 detailed drawings. Anyone interested in European prehistory should find new data and new ways of thinking about gender arrangements here.

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Oliver Dickinson, *The Aegean from Bronze Age to Iron Age. Continuity and Change between the Twelfth and Eighth Centuries B.C.* (London: Routledge, 2006, xvi + 298 pp., hbk, ISBN 0 415 13589 3)

The centuries between the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces and the rise of the Greek *polis*, c.1200–700 BC, have been among the main topics of research in the last 20 years. The discovery of new material and the appeal that a period of transformation and interaction exercises upon our contemporary society have produced an exponential growth of symposia, exhibitions, and publications. A book aiming at giving an overview of what has been learnt is certainly welcome. This work by Dickinson fills a gap in the field. Ambitiously, it faces the question of continuity between the Mycenaean and the Greek world and debates the 'tendency to treat the "Dark Age" as a completely new beginning' and therefore ignore the Bronze Age background (p. 8). The volume appears as the natural continuation of a previous book by the same author (Dickinson 1994), sharing with it both goals and structure.

In the introduction, Dickinson gives a short overview of the different interpretations of the period under study, focusing mainly upon post-Second World War scholars. One of the effects is that the more recent bibliography

sometimes obscures older titles. The author then examines the use and conceptual implications of the term 'Dark Age(s)' and proposes to dismiss it and to adopt a different terminology, distinguishing between the Postpalatial period (PPP: c.1200–1050 BC) and early Iron Age (EIA: c.1050–700 BC).

Chapter 1 deals with 'Terminology and chronology', both relative and absolute. Dickinson gives a very useful survey of the main stratigraphical sequences summarizing the results in a chronological chart (p. 23, fig. 1.1) where the Nichoria and Cretan sequences are compared. It largely coincides with accepted chronologies (e.g. PPP ends roughly 1050 BC). Sub-Mycenaean, more than a period in itself, is considered simply as the 'last, not in itself especially significant, stage of the Mycenaean pottery in some central regions of the mainland' (p. 15).

Chapter 2, 'The collapse of the Bronze Age civilisation', goes further than the title might suggest. It is not only a discussion of the causes of the fall of the palaces but also a summary of the interpretations of the Mycenaean palaces, the extension of their authority, and the Mycenaean trade. Dickinson succeeds in giving a clear and updated picture of the main questions and his conclusions are without doubt correct. The fall of the palaces was due to many concurrent events, among which 'personal ambitions' are included, but not massive invasions, a theory which 'owes more to romance than reality' (p. 50). Dickinson does not, however, discuss a recent hypothesis concerning the existence of a great Mycenaean kingdom (e.g. Mariotta 2003; see also Postgate 2001:160), and Eder's analysis of the movement of foreign people in the Peloponnese, even if quoted (p. 51), does not receive the attention it deserves.

The true topic of the book begins to be discussed in Chapter 3, 'The Postpalatial period', where data relating to the twelfth and eleventh centuries BC are illustrated. The analysis of Postpalatial society is set between the two centuries. Dickinson refuses the idea of extensive migrations both towards Cyprus and Palestine, although he accepts significant movements of populations within the Aegean. The displacing of previous sites is due to internal instability, with the rise of banditry and piracy and, as a consequence, to the 'attraction towards perceived centres of security' (p. 66).

After a first period of recovery, however, achievements in material culture are limited, and decline reaches its climax in the eleventh century, when cultural traits ceased to be recognizable as Mycenaean.

In Chapter 4, 'The structure and economy of communities', the idea of a real drop in the number of settlements and in population during the Dark Ages is accepted. Changes in the economy, however, cannot be ascribed to climate change but to a loss of knowledge; there is, for example, no evidence for exploitation of metal sources in the Aegean during the EIA. Dickinson confutes Whitley's theory of big men. Still more pages are devoted to contrast the thesis of a pastoralist oriented economy in the EIA Aegean. Dickinson mainly bases his critique on *Warriors into Traders* by David Tandy (1997). The conclusion that a style of mixed farming was prevalent in this period and that short-life settlements could be explained as a consequence of movement away from settlements perceived to be failing is convincing, but Dickinson does not quote Palmer 2001, where many of the conclusions and even criticisms of Tandy's redistributive economy were already present.

In Chapter 5, 'Crafts' (architecture is dealt with in the preceding chapter), the reader is provided with an excellent and complete discussion of all the relevant aspects of material culture: pottery, metalwork, figurines, weapons, dress and jewellery. However, Room AA in Festòs is not Late Minoan, nor Sub-Minoan, but belongs to the eighth century BC.

Differently from Morris and Whitley, the author thinks that EIA burial customs do represent the practices of the larger part of the population. Continuity more than a break characterizes their development from the Postpalatial period until the seventh century BC, when display assumed new forms in the cult sphere, such as dedications. Uniformity is not the rule, however, and the *necropoleis* of Lefkandi, Athens, and Knossos are the exception within a general poverty.

Chapter 7, 'Trade, exchange and foreign contacts', based almost exclusively on pottery, clearly distinguishes three phases in the development of external relations with Greece: the twelfth, the eleventh–tenth, and the tenth–eighth centuries BC, each characterized by different trends in the quantity, origin, and distribution of local wares and of foreign

imports in Greece. However, in the period of major decline of interregional relations (the eleventh and tenth centuries) trade never disappeared, but was simply limited to an intra-Aegean network of pottery circulation, mainly from Euboea and Attica, with a selective pattern of distribution. The mechanism of trade would have been based upon personal relationships, which create special links between single areas.

The problem of continuity is discussed in the section devoted to 'Religion' (Chapter 8). With the exception of Crete, the process can be described as a progressive removal from standardized Mycenaean practices culminating in the eleventh century, when a change can be detected. New practices, centred upon shared sacrifice, acts of offering and meals, spread from certain centres, hence contributing to the creation of a common ritual. Dickinson stresses the communal character of the evidence and questions (rightly in my opinion) Morgan's hypothesis of a central role of rulers in the development of cult sites and Mazarakis Ainian's suggestion that shrines were previously dwellings of the rulers. The process indicates the majority of the features of Greek religion were a development of the EIA and not of the late Bronze Age (LBA). However, Dickinson tends to underestimate the importance of animal sacrifice in the Mycenaean period.

In the final chapter, Dickinson, free now to illustrate his own personal perspective, brilliantly gives a general outline of the development from the Mycenaean to the classical period and tries to answer the fundamental questions: Did a Dark Age, understood as a period of poor material culture, really exist? What were its relations with the preceding and the following periods? To the first question the answer is yes. Social and political instability, which followed the collapse of the palaces and gave birth to ephemeral settlements, made power fluid, raised uncertainty (not only among lower classes but also among the potential partners in trade), and determined a true decline in material culture. Only the recovery of stability in the tenth century BC made growth in population and size possible and allowed first the Euboeans, then the Athenians, to recover trade relations with the Near East and later with the West. As far as continuity is concerned, notwithstanding the survival of some complex artefacts (such as

chariots and the oared galley), it is clear that the reorganization of society in the tenth and ninth centuries made the LBA world definitely distant.

Dickinson is successful in putting together a synthesis of the data and their interpretation and in giving a balanced view of different hypotheses. The main point is the balance demonstrated in the discussion of different theories and the consciousness of the limits of archaeological data, which keeps him distant from general models. If sometimes a positivist approach appears (e.g. interpretation of pit and cist burials, p. 183), his main approach is in some ways postprocessual (explicitly stated on pp. 177 and 256) and pays much attention to individuals and their psychology. On the other hand, an anthropological approach, now considered fundamental in every attempt of interpreting past societies, is largely missing.

Three more general points must be made. Dickinson deliberately avoids the use of literary sources (see pp. 197–198, 238–240). But in some ways this undermines our possibilities of interpretation. In discussing trade, for example, the few hints present in the Bible could have been useful (see 1 Kings, 10 and King Solomon's fleet). Moreover, western contacts are only poorly discussed, and sometimes completely absent. Cremation was spreading widely all over Europe and Italy and not confined to Syria. No mention is made of the relations between Greece and Italy between the twelfth and tenth centuries, demonstrated by studies of the painted pottery of southern Italy (Yntema 1990). Finally, there are some strange absences in the bibliography (Coulson 1990; Deger-Jalkotzy 1977; Schachermeyr 1979, 1980) and in the material record – no reference is made, even on the map, to the important site of Prinias in Crete (see bibliography in Gigli 2005:15–16) and to the eleventh-century *obelos* from Skales (Palaepaphos) with the first Greek inscription in Cypriot syllabic script and Cypriot dialect (Masson and Masson 1983).

Despite these criticisms, the goal of the volume is completely achieved and it constitutes not only a fundamental handbook, perhaps even more so than Dickinson 1994, but also a useful up-to-date reference book for anyone wishing to deal with the centuries between the collapse of the Mycenaean states and the rise of the Greek polis.

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Ludmila Koryakova and Andrej Epimakhov, *The Urals and Western Siberia in the Bronze and Iron Ages*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Cambridge World Archaeology], 2007, 408pp., illustrated, hbk, 978 0 521 82928 1)

The archaeological cultures of the Bronze and early Iron Ages spread over the vast territory of the Urals and western Siberia are rather poorly reflected in the academic literature of

Europe and North America. One should, therefore, welcome the appearance of this quite representative monograph, which summarizes the recent accomplishments of Russian archaeology on the subject.

Being relatively distant from the main scientific centres of Russia/USSR, this region of Eurasia has not, for a long time, been in the forefront of archaeological research. The discovery of the Arkaim and Sintashta monuments in the last century has made this area recognizable archaeologically, but it did not become well known in the West, mainly because of political concerns (p. xxi). Only after the great political changes at the beginning of the 1990s has the publication of such an informative and inclusive multidisciplinary work become possible, filling a previous blank on the map of human knowledge. As P. Kohl remarks in his foreword, 'the Cold War barrier that isolated this region from Western consideration has now completely melted away'.

The main idea of the monograph is to portray in general terms the prehistory of the Urals and western Siberia and the achievements of archaeology in this region. The authors aimed at presenting an overview of important archaeological sites, assemblages of material cultures, and common concepts, and they have accomplished this task perfectly well.

The chronological frame of the monograph is rather extensive, stretching over more than three millennia of human history and discussing numerous archaeological cultures. The territory in question includes many different zones ranging from steppe and forest-steppe to several types of forest. This diversity provided an opportunity for comparative climate and palaeosoil studies, the results of which are also presented in this monograph. Naturally it was not possible to assemble all the available information about the region in one volume. The abundance of material presented gives the book on the one hand an encyclopaedic significance and, on the other hand, it has meant that the amount of information given varies from one section of the book to another. However, the book is well organized – one can find at least some information on most topics – and the extensive bibliography at the end of the volume allows the reader to follow up any specific questions.