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Cover: see Fischer in this volume, p. 323, *Fig. 22b*.

representation, which accordingly influences the meaning, including the symbolic significance, in the mythological narratives.

This is effectively illustrated through the representations of the rape of Europe by Zeus (pp. 121–127) existing in different versions and particularly popular in Baetica. These are markedly interesting, since the emotional and chronological narrative, with its many different phases, is displayed through the expressions in face and posture, seemingly according to a text from the Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (II: 836–875), which underlines the emotional development in the young woman from curiosity, over fright to the final state of delight and consummate love. These hints, together with some further details in the iconography, enable the viewer to follow in an exact way the narrative of this particular version and interpretation of the myth from the beginning to the end.

Another excellent example of this extended reading is the convincing guiding through and detailed analysis of the mosaic of Polyphemus and Galate (pp. 110–111), in the scene with the young nymph whose face reveals alarm and dismay when looking at the cyclop who is courting her. The original episode, first appearing in a text "The Cyclops," by the poet Philoxenus of Cythera (435–380 BC), Syracuse, and later reinterpreted by some of the poets of Alexandria and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIII: 759), is here figuring in a scene presented as unique by the authors, with its complex message, referring to a particular passage in the texts which demands particular knowledge both of the producer to represent and the viewer to be able to decipher it.

These two examples of an inventive reading suggest that these variations of the images, with their subsequent slightly diverse emotional meanings, are due to precise literary sources that represent different phases or even episodes of one and the same myth, rather than pure pictorial variations of a cartoon or basic model *per se*.

A supplementary benefit from this combination of traditional classical scholarship in the field with new openings of interpretations between specific text and iconographic variations, I suggest, is that it opens the many times unnecessarily locked discussion about the role of the craftsmen and their potential independence, both toward possible readymade cartoons and toward the presumed buyers. This concerns the craftsmen's literary knowledge, manual capacity and artistic talent, through hand and eye, to shape a version of a myth, through the use of facial expressions and body language, and to express its deeper meaning and thus communicate it to the public.

To conclude, this well-written study of mosaics with its broad and scientifically updated content recreates, in an appealing way, with its often new and frequently exceptional illustrative material, the lost Baetica, *Hispania Antiqua*. It has

succeeded well in its intention to appeal to various groups of readers using a fruitful and inventive new approach regarding antique visual culture. The lavish illustrations allow the possibility to study the subject thoroughly, both the mosaics *in situ*, in museums and in private collections in Andalusia, and their place in the general history of mosaics. It would be an excellent course book as it presents a remarkably didactic way to learn the myths of antiquity—and to teach others—as well as it is of great interest for the general public, as certainly also for the keen scholar in the field.

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*Mesohelladika. La Grèce continentale au Bronze Moyen. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École française d'Athènes, en collaboration avec l'American School of Classical Studies at Athens et le Netherlands Institute in Athens, Athènes, 8–12 mars 2006* (BCH Suppl., 52), eds. A. Philippa-Touchais, G. Touchais, S. Voutsaki & J. Wright, Athens 2010. 1046 pp. ISBN 978-2-86958-210-1.

This impressive volume, the acta from the conference in Athens in March 2006 on the Greek Mainland during the Middle Helladic period, organized by the French School at Athens, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and the Netherlands Institute in Athens, is in many respects impossible to review, at least with any ambition to give a fair treatment to or even mention all, 63 papers and 28 posters, of the well written and interesting contributions in Greek, English and French. The ambition of the conference was to cover the Middle Helladic culture in all of mainland Greece, to give it an identity as a cultural epoch in its own right, not only as a materially rather boring predecessor to the Mycenaean, or in the words of Oliver Dickinson, in his stimulating introduction that gives a background to the current state of discussions within Middle Helladic studies: one cannot judge a culture simply by its material manifestations (p. 13).

A preface by the directors of the organizing Schools and an introduction by the editors are followed by a list and chronological subdivisions and of abbreviations of publications. Other bibliographical references are found in the footnotes of each paper. On 1000-plus pages around 100 scholars then present their views and ideas of various aspects of the Middle Helladic period, ranging from presentation of new material, topographical issues to symbolism, organization and economy to production, technology and methodology. The presentations are organized in seven sections of various length and

themes that in many cases could easily have been published as separate books.

In Section I, 'Topography and habitat' (pp. 29–329), the contributions naturally have different foci, some presenting newly excavated material, often from rescue excavations, other being useful syntheses from restudied sites. The papers are ordered by geography, starting with the Argolid and Pylos in Messenia, but also treat recent finds at sites such as Galatas in Troizen and sites in Laconia, and regional overviews are given of recent research in the western, north-western and northern part of the Peloponnese. Further articles treat sites in Attica, on Euboea, in Achaea Phthiotis, Thessaly and on Skyros. Especially welcome are the papers on so far less well-known areas and sites. So, on the island of Aegina it is interesting to note the preliminary finds from "another prehistoric site" than Kolonna, namely Lazarides on in the eastern part of the island. Together the authors of the papers offer much new information that will be important for further studies concerning settlement patterns as well as regional chronological and social developments. Overviews of recent discoveries always have "best before" date, but together the articles give a good idea of the state of Middle Helladic excavation results in the beginning of the 21st century that will be useful for many years to come.

Funerary issues are discussed in the 15 papers of Section II ('Funerary practices and physical anthropology', pp. 331–494). Also in this case presentations of recent finds dominate, but here are also found critical discussions of various topics such as gender, regional differences and discussions of changes in funerary practices from the Middle Helladic to the early Mycenaean period. The second part of the section demonstrates the emerging importance of bio-archaeology, physical anthropology and osteology. The authors deal with results of studies concerning the physical remains of the dead with discussions of health, nutrition and disease, but also social issues, such as kinship, facial reconstruction of the dead and DNA analyses of human remains.

The section treating symbolism and ritual (Section III, pp. 495–548) is, together with the section on social organization and evolution (VI, pp. 753–822), the shortest, but certainly not the least interesting, of the volume. Symbolism and ritual in the Middle Helladic period have long been subjects that were never or rarely discussed. In this volume it is the shortest part with slightly over 50 pages, but the five authors ably demonstrate how various aspects what may be called ideology or mental structures, such as symbolism, iconography and traditionalism over longer periods, may be inferred from the material evidence through stringent methodology.

Aspects of social organization and evolution have also interested the five authors of Section VI. Their studies range from large scale socio-political overviews based on survey

records and regional studies, to questions concerning demographic issues, group identities, settlement planning at Argos and domestic economy at Asine. The aim is towards a better understanding of the dynamics in the Middle Helladic communities themselves, not only as places for formation processes of the emerging Mycenaean period.

Ceramic studies and chronology would some years ago probably have been the largest part of any book on the Middle Helladic. Here this section (IV, pp. 549–647) takes up roughly a tenth of the volume, with ten papers and posters. It is also noticeable that the authors deal less with pure classification problems and more with presentations of stratigraphy at individual sites and discussions of ceramics as evidence of inter-communication. A few pottery classes merit separate discussions and re-evaluations, especially the Minyan group and the polychrome wares. The database for the classification of the pottery from Aegina Kolonna is presented as an important tool by W. Gauss. No doubt these contributions on the archaeological "hardware" will form the basis for further research.

The production of pottery and regional specialization is taken into the next section (Section V, 'Production, technology and economy', pp. 649–751) together with metallurgy, discussions of husbandry and subsistence and other economic issues. Here two papers deal with subsistence patterns and diet, while three other contributions treat archaeozoological, archaeobotanical as well as marine data. That may be compared with the four papers that treat production and consumption of pottery and metallurgy and that aim at integrating questions concerning material production with social issues, especially during the transition from Middle to Late Helladic. It is clear that further studies of material production, together with modes of production and consumption will be important when understanding the period in question.

A number of studies have been undertaken on various aspects concerning trade and communication and that is reflected in the discussions of external relations and interactions in the last section, VII (pp. 823–1036). The section contains 20 papers and posters that together attempt to see the Middle Helladic culture and social groups in wider perspectives, and as an integral part of the synchronic interactions in the Aegean, with papers not only treating the mainland but also the Cyclades, Crete, Corfu and the north-east Aegean. Also areas that not often have been considered in the discussions of interaction in the Middle Helladic culture zone, such as Macedonia, and the material culture from Sovjan in Albania and Vivara in Italy, are shown to have a place in the interactions concerning the Aegeans of the time. These papers and posters present new material and explore issues such as cultural transfer, social and economic interactions.

The editors get the last word in the concluding remarks and emphasize that the multifaceted character of the colloquium and thus the publication of it reflect the state of research.

On a more formal issue it may be noted that thanks to the vigilance of the editors, there are very few typographical errors. The illustrations are generally adequate, even if more photos of the ceramic material (also in colour) would have been welcome, as well as a map with discussed sites marked.

Naturally it is possible to discuss the organization of such a large and rich volume, and it is sometimes more a question of taste whether a certain article should have been classified as treating external relations, funerary practices or something else. It is also noticeable that there are some issues that do not get their own section, as e.g. site planning and architecture—which does appear under several headings—and so the reader is strongly recommended not to limit her or his reading only to one of the sections. It is understandable, and does not take away anything from the usefulness of the volume. As it stands it is an important work, giving a comprehensive (and sometimes exhaustive) view of where the studies in Middle Helladic culture stood in the early 21st century. It will therefore be a valuable tool and reference work for Middle Helladic scholars for many years.

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E. McGowan, *Ambiguity and Minoan Neopalatial seal imagery* (SIMA-PB, 176), Uppsala: Astrom Editions 2011. xii + 96 pp., 47 figs. ISBN 978-91-7081-244-6.

The monograph under review is an original and engaging study of the problem of purposeful ambiguity (or, rather, multivalence) in figural imagery on Minoan Neopalatial glyptics (seals and signet rings produced in c. 17th–15th centuries BC). It originates in a 2010 dissertation at the University of Melbourne entitled *Cryptic glyptic: A rhizomatic exploration of ambiguity in selected Minoan Neopalatial glyptic images*, completed under the supervision of L. Hitchcock. McGowan has set to explore an intriguing possibility: that modern/etic scholarly difficulty to identify certain images in Aegean Bronze Age glyptics may not reflect a problem to be resolved through progress in our knowledge and our familiarity with Aegean imagery; the author proposes to consider the possibility that certain cases of ambiguous identification may in fact be intentionally so and she proposes a theoretical framework in which such a possibility can be further explored.

This work is neatly divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–8) presents the main theme of the volume, which is to

argue that “the imposition of a positivist scaffolding has obscured alternate connections and reduced the perceived multiplicity of imagery” (p. 2). The agenda to be further explored in following chapters is explicitly—albeit briefly—stated (pp. 1–3). For the rest of this chapter (p. 5–8), the author helpfully attempts to provide the non-specialist reader with basic knowledge about the context of production and use of Aegean glyptics, focusing on the Neopalatial period (an era when this craft witnessed unprecedented prosperity and which forms the focus of this book). Perhaps the section on “seal imagery and other media” (p. 7–8) could have been more expanded, since it is most closely associated to the main question of this monograph. The lack of chromatic contrast, the potential of reproduction through the impression of seals and signets and the small scale are features that definitely set glyptics apart from other image-bearing artefacts in the Aegean Bronze Age. As the author herself remarks, multivalence is another “way in which glyptic imagery may have been condensed to conform to the small parameters of the medium” (p. 8).

Chapter 2 (pp. 9–32) is essentially a critical historiographic essay on how problems of ambiguity had been addressed by previous scholarship. McGowan begins, very appropriately, with Evans. His approach to the interpretation of glyptic imagery is brilliantly described and it is recognized that the great pioneer acknowledged that images conveyed multiple messages, although he ultimately viewed these as reflecting the bursting creativity of the Minoan artist. Moreover, the author critically assesses the contribution of the *CMS* (*Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*) project, whose meticulous recording of all Aegean seals and sealings called for terminological uniformity, refinement and consistency in image description and identification. McGowan identifies the 1980s and the 1990s as the period when “positivism” prevailed in studies of glyptic imagery and when the “correct” identification of such images or motifs came to be considered as a pivotal prerequisite for any progress in their proper understanding. Within this epistemological context, she studies the fluctuations of scholarly reactions against ambiguity in image identification: studies by Morgan, Yule, Marinatos and Loughlin, are carefully and fairly considered. A most important part of this chapter is the section where works by Pini, Onassoglou, Krzyskowska, the van Effenterres and Wedde are considered as to their, by and large, “positivist” attempts to resolve what was seen by them as a “problem”, either in our understanding of the images or in the quality of our available documentation of them. It is, from this perspective, most refreshing that the author chooses to enter, at this point, a brief review of case-studies from other media, in order to demonstrate that, elsewhere, “ambiguity and connections between categories have been seen as bases for enquiry rather than problems to be minimised” (p. 28). Interesting, in this regard, is her discus-