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Review of "1177 B.C. The Year Civilization Collapsed"

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Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C. The Year Civilization Collapsed*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Eric H. Cline is the first author in the Turning Points in History series that aims to analyze specific moments in the ancient world that resulted in civilizations taking new directions. Cline takes the year 1177 B.C. when the Late Bronze Age took a drastic turn for the worst and a whole new age came from it, the Iron Age. The Mediterranean world, as Cline argues, was a complex network that relied on trade and communication to prosper during one of the golden ages in history but when a series of harmful incidents occurred, the world could not recover. Cline stresses throughout that it was a globalized world that led to the downfall and not the individual events that took place. Through the globalized Mediterranean world, the complex network unraveled after a series of wars, internal rebellions, natural disasters such as earthquakes, and most importantly that these connections with the other cultures could not reconnect themselves, which left the Mediterranean world unable to recover. Cline makes it clear that the evidence he presents could go in several different ways and there is no clear piece of evidence that points to either internal rebellion or natural disaster, but through context analysis from archival remains, Cline cites a mix of natural disaster and network failure to cleverly argue his point.

Cline uses a mix of evidence types to further his unique argument such as letters, marriage agreements, goods found in cities, and archeological evidence. The three main locations for archives he used were the ancient cities of Amarna, Ugarit, and Hattusa. Cline fully elaborates on each of these places and all the other locations he discusses, such as the Valley of Kings or the Knossos Palace. While these analyses are engaging, they get long winded and disrupt the flow of his argument about ancient worlds because of the attention the modern era receives. The benefit however is to educate about the process ancient evidence has endured and also gives light on present studies on the same evidence which he footnotes and tells of the potential of those studies on the field and his specific argument. These future studies would eliminate the massive use of 'mays' 'possibly' and 'ifs' that appear throughout the book and give the sense that the book is a middle placeholder between the older studies that believe the downfall was a singular event and the modern studies that hope to show more evidence that points to a more complicated set of events.

Cline argues that complexity theory is the only way to explain the sudden collapse of a once thriving system. This theory allows for multiple reasons for an event rather than having to argue that one specific cause put the entire event in motion. Using complexity theory, Cline gives a full argument that the world was a connected area that had cause and effects that rippled across the Mediterranean Sea. His argument also complicates the idea that the ancient cultures were completely secluded; Cline even goes so far as to say that this was the first instance of internationalism. In an attempt to avoid a kings only approach to history, Cline also suggests that merchants were undertaking negotiations between kingdoms in these small bars and early hotels where ideas could travel across cultures.

The idea of network analysis rests on the idea of taking a moment, a snapshot, in history and analyzing the connections in that moment and connecting it to other networks that can help explore those moments. Cline compellingly explores a number of these historical moments, but he does not connect all of them together and therefore does not fully explain how the ancient world was a integrated network. It is not until the final two chapters that Cline attempts to connect all the cities other than a letter that was written in Egypt and sent to Anatolia. A closer analysis of how the drought in the East stimulated the invasions of the Sea Peoples in the West. Nevertheless, Cline's arguments are thought-provoking.

Overall Cline's book offers a useful foray into the new kind of history, that of networks and ancient globalization. This new wave of scholarship is taking these moments, such as the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age, and coming to new conclusions that I find more compelling in their complexity than a singular reason for a such a drastic change. Cline explores the ancient world by looking at the entire spectrum of evidence types available to come to the conclusion that the world today is not as different as the world was in 1177 B.C. This book manages to take an event that happened thousands of years ago and makes it relevant for today's readers. No nation is completely independent and cannot thrive as such. This itself is a useful lesson for today.

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