Book Review

Apocalypse: Earthquakes, Archaeology, and the Wrath of God by Amos Nur, with
Dawn Burgess, Princeton University Press, 2008; ISBN-13: 978-0-691-01602-3

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The book by Amos Nur is an example of a very well constructed aid in transferring a scientific knowledge to the modern society. Based on a rich collection of textual references to past earthquakes, *Apocalypse* poses intriguing questions and formulates fascinating hypotheses about possible links between a fall of ancient civilizations and a destructive force of nature. Amos Nur utilizes the latest scientific results to envisage well-grounded myths and legends in a new light, giving preference to natural forces rather than to battles and conquests in explanation of historical and pre-historical cities and communities. Apart from geophysical considerations, the book includes a wealth of archeological information and reports from past and recent expeditions. No doubt, seldom could any book be so provoking in discussions on geophysical contributions to societal collapse in ancient times as *Apocalypse* is.

The book includes ten chapters, Glossary, References and Index. Chapter 1 explores both the archeological evidence for earthquakes in Mycenae, and the attitudes and preconceptions that shape our interpretations of such evidence. Chapter 2 is devoted to the basics of seismology, and origin of earthquakes. Chapter 3 examines the reliability of the written record reporting on ancient earthquakes and their bearings on archeological scientific interpretations. Chapter 4 presents different clues, which may testify destruction by an earthquake that took place contemporaneously with the lifetime of the ancient community. Chapter 5 catalogues various skeletal finds in well-known archeological sites to evidence

casual relations between the earthquake and the destruction. Chapter 6 discusses earthquake-induced rock collapse in the caves of Qumran as a possible cause that protected the Dead Sea Scrolls, dated back to 31 BC, for our generations. Chapter 7 reviews the earthquake record in the Holy Land, and examines how advances in various disciplines are leading to better methods for verifying archeological and archeoseismological evidence. Chapter 8 compares the modern record of very large earthquakes and earthquake sequences to the areas affected by destruction at the end of the Bronze Age. Chapter 9 examines effects that earthquakes can include on the life of ancient and modern societies. The final Chapter 10 summarizes the philosophy of the book, underlying the greatest potential of the seismic calamities for being of a major forcing that influenced the history of ancient civilizations.

In my opinion, the book is addressed rather to archeologists, that to geophysicists, although the latter can benefit from the book by preparing their presentations addressed to students or to less introduced listeners at more popular lectures. This is so because archeological hypotheses and concepts are the main targets in discussions presented by Amos Nur. The battle between both sides looks to at a very high emotional level, which should make the reader considerably more involved in both Earth and historical sciences. Should this be a main goal of the book, it certainly has been reached by the author.

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