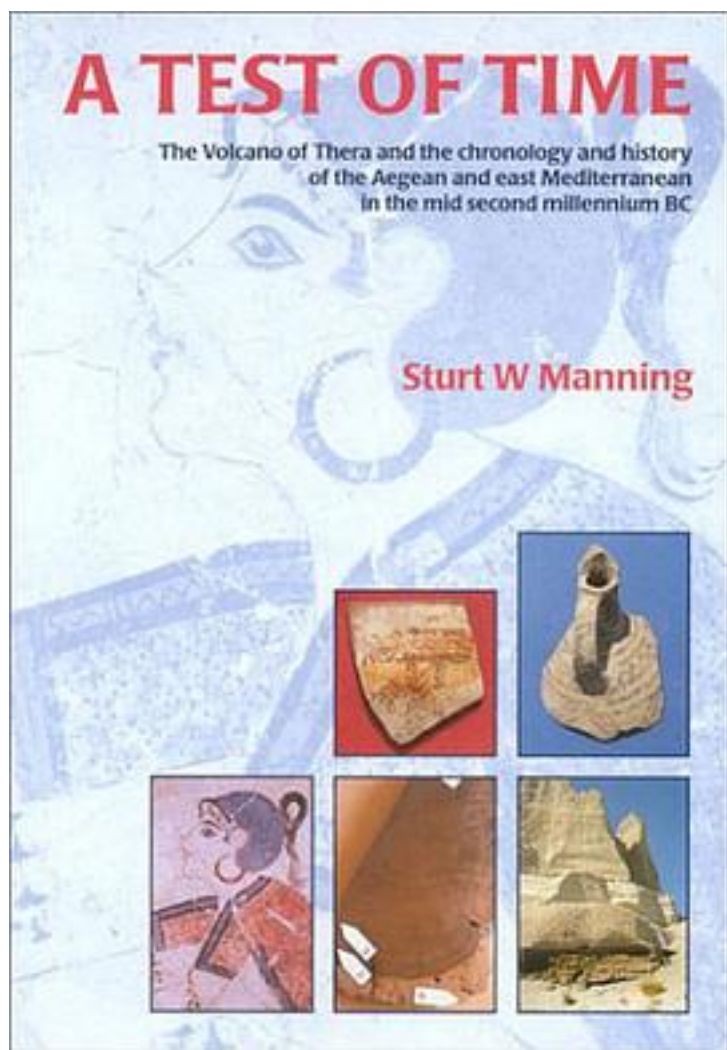


A Test of Time



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著者:Manning, Stuart W.

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The great mid second millennium BC eruption of Thera has been the subject of intense popular and scholarly interest for many years. The effects of the eruption have been linked with the destruction of the Minoan palace civilisation of Crete, the legend of Atlantis and even the events described in the biblical accounts of Exodus. Scientists have studied the remains of the volcano, traced eruption products across the east Mediterranean, and sought evidence for a climatic impact in ice-cores and tree rings. At Akrotiri, archaeologists have unearthed a major prehistoric town which was buried by the eruption, finding multi-storey houses decorated with wonderful frescoes, full of ceramics and other finds linking this site with the contemporary civilisations of Crete, Greece, Anatolia, Cyprus, the Levant and Egypt. The eruption of Thera represents a special, clearly defined, moment in Aegean history. If the eruption could be precisely dated, it would offer a unique linchpin for the study and synchronisation of the history of cultures of the region in the mid-second millennium BC. Furthermore, it would provide a key test for the historical chronology of ancient Egypt (as determined by two centuries of scholarship) and the derived archaeological chronologies currently employed in the Aegean and East Mediterranean. But the date of the Thera eruption is the one question which has remained stubbornly unresolved: the subject of intense controversy for a generation in both archaeological and scientific publications. Dates differ in current scholarship by over 100 years. The book seeks a resolution of the Thera date, Sturt Manning presents a review of current data, and interpretations and understandings of the evidence for the eruption date, from tree-ring data, ice cores, pottery typologies, radiocarbon and relative dating techniques, and proposes a new 'early' chronology for the eruption. A wide-ranging and extremely detailed book.

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