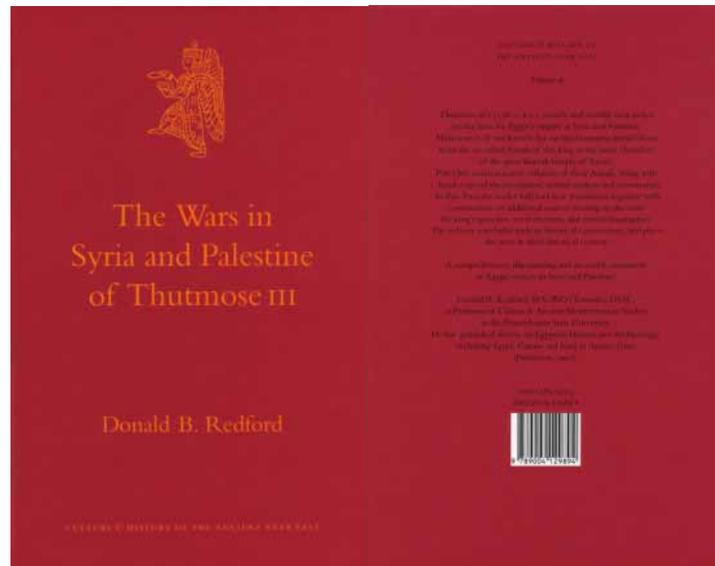


Redford, D.B. 2003. The wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III. – Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 16)

Book review by S.M. van Roode



During the reign of Thutmose III, the Egyptian empire reached its greatest extent. This pharaoh expanded the borders well into Asia, and recorded his accomplishments in the so-called Annals in the inner chambers of the Amun temple at Karnak. Donald Redford has dedicated a study to these campaigns, in which he attempts to provide an integrated view of these events. To this purpose, he presents a new edition of the Annals next to other texts related to the wars, followed by a historical analysis. Over twenty years of research have resulted in a fact-packed volume in which no detail is overlooked.

The first part consist of the Annals themselves. The collation is added on separate sheets in the book, so one can compare the hieroglyphic text to the translation without difficulty. Furthermore clear black-and-white photographs are included at the end of the book. The texts are translated and thoroughly annotated. The author has chosen to include major annotations regarding location names in the body of the text, whereas the rest of the many annotations, regarding other authors' views, discussions of correct readings etc, is placed entirely in the footnotes. This sometimes results in an odd page lay-out, consisting half of footnotes. Three excursus deal in more detail with the council of war, the sequence of events and the toponyms presented in the toponym lists. In the latter, the author elaborates once more on his view that the toponym lists are not lists of defeated cities, but rather an itinerary.

In the second part other texts related to the wars are presented. Redford discerns three categories: the sittings of the king, assembled from various monuments, encomia, and biographical texts. Each text is presented in translation and is followed by a commentary that places the text in relation to the Annals and other texts. The third part finally presents a historical analysis in which the wars are placed in a wider context. This starts with a description of the early 18th dynasty and the campaigns of that period. An equally fervent skirmish is fought out in the footnotes, resulting in more action in small print than described in the main text. Next, two chapters concerning the nature and size of the expeditionary force, the rates of speed on the march and the transit corridors into Asia, are included. Although their subject is definitely interesting, the chapters are largely theoretical and comparisons with classical sources or even mediaeval equipment are happily included. The rest of the historical analysis presents the reader with an interesting comparison between the wars of Thutmose's predecessors and his own, revealing the latter's different approach to campaigning and expanding the empire, and a few aspects of the wars.

The book offers an excellent compilation of texts concerning the wars of Thutmose III, thoroughly annotated. This is the strength of the book and turns it into an important text-sourcebook. A definite plus is that, while the emphasis of the book is on Egyptian texts, texts from the conquered areas are included as well in the discussion, thus providing a broader point of view. The book is eloquently written; Redford masters the art of presenting scientific argument and theory in well-versed writing. The book is a volume of the Brill series Culture and History of the Ancient Near East. Brill has a longstanding tradition in publishing scientific literature in Egyptology and the book is, despite some minor inaccuracies like flaws in the transliteration font and a few

incorrect page-references, beautifully published. In short, the book is a valuable acquisition for anyone who wishes to study the wars of Thutmose III in more detail.

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