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## Buchbesprechung

VAN DE MIEROOP, MARC: *The Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of Ramesses II*. Malden, MA/Oxford/Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell, 2007. xiii, 297 pp. 23,1 × 15,5 × 2,5 cm. ISBN-10: 1405160691; ISBN-13: 978-1405160698. Preis: € 86,99.

Marc Van de Mieroop, Professor of History at Columbia University, has dedicated most of his writing efforts in recent years to the publication of general treatments for a broader audience, and the present volume is no exception. It is thus quite readable, even enjoyable at times, covers a very wide range of themes, and succeeds in creating a lively picture of the Ancient Near Eastern societies in question. It constitutes an accessible and informative overview of the international system of the Late Bronze Age that is the key focus of the book, concerning 'itself with the connected histories of these ancient peoples and countries. It studies how they shared ideologies, cultures, economies, social structures, and much more, even if they all gave those areas of life a local flavour' (p. x). It includes quite a few quotes from original documents as well as illustrative photographs, maps and drawings. It offers a 'bibliographic essay' at the end of each of its ten chapters, and concludes with king lists, a bibliography and an index. The footnotes, however, also found together toward the end of the book, inadequately document the claims and the narrative of the text. For example, the claims concerning Kurunta's status in Tarhuntašša (p. 41) and Ugarit's initiating diplomatic relations with Assyria and Egypt (p. 42) can hardly be traced unless one ploughs through the secondary literature mentioned at the end of the chapter or is already familiar with what the author is assumedly referring to.

The work refrains from monolithic explanations (e.g. p. 253) and is generally appropriately circumspect. The author is by and large properly sceptical of various ancient royal claims, but there are notable lapses, such as when he states (pp. 91–92), without a hint of incredulity, that Tukulti-apil-Ešarra I's donations of plundered loot 'were mere tokens' compared to the 13,841 kg. (sic) of gold that Thutmose III donated to Amun after his Syrian campaign. That Madduwatta 'conquered southwest Anatolia and Cyprus' (p. 29), events known to us only from a highly tendentious document aptly dubbed the 'Indictment of Madduwatta' by modern researchers, may be seen in a similar light.

The writing is also at times somewhat cumbersome, and often enough rather inexact.<sup>1</sup> The claim that the king of Ugarit 'seems to have initiated diplomatic relations with Assyria' (p. 42) presumably comes under this rubric, since, as far as is known, it was Assyria which initiated contact with Ugarit (e.g. Singer, HdO 1/39 [1999] 686–690). A similar slip is the statement that 'scholars disagree on the exact spelling' of the term Ḫabiru (p. 48),

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<sup>1</sup> One might suspect that Van De Mieroop's decision (p. xiii) 'to make the ancient texts as accessible as possible, often omitting to indicate where a passage is broken or its translation uncertain' could be a portentous omen in this regard.

though naturally it is the pronunciation, the phonetic realisation, which is uncertain, not the spelling.

Some statements strike one as simply odd or misplaced, such as the claim that (p. 163) 'some tapestries were so special that even the jaded Mesopotamian scribe could see the need to write down what they depicted.' Jaded Mesopotamian scribe? One wonders what evidence could possibly have led the author to view Mesopotamian scribes as jaded. Similarly mystifying is his statement that (p. 241) 'The ancients may have doctored the archaeological record less than the texts, but its interpretation is equally subject to modern trends.' One can hardly claim that the ancients 'doctored' the archaeological evidence, nor did they 'doctor' the texts to a greater degree. In the context, he presumably means that the ancients left remains, both archaeological and textual, that are ambiguous and/or less than transparent. And his interesting discussion of *The Tale of the Doomed Prince* (pp. 198–199) hardly warrants the conclusion that, 'Egypt and the foreign countries had ceased to be separate in literature' (p. 198).

Not only can the occasional imprecision be found, however. The volume also includes some startling omissions, oversights and inaccuracies.<sup>2</sup> The author states, for example, that, 'By 1100 virtually the entire Eastern Mediterranean world, except for Egypt, had abandoned writing, or if people did continue to write, the traces of it are unknown to us' (p. 8). This ignores, of course, much of the corpus of Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions, most of which were written from ca. 1100–700 BCE (e.g. Hawkins, *HdO* 1/68 [2003] 146–151); and while the cuneiform tradition certainly does drop off dramatically by 1100, archives such as that of Dunnu-ša-Uzibi/Giricano (Radner, *Subartu* 14 [2004]) date to the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> so that Van De Mieroop's statement is at least overly emphatic.

Later he claims that Ḫattusili III accorded his nephew, Kuruntiya of Tarḫuntassa, 'a status second only to himself and the crown prince' (p. 41), which is both incorrect and misleading. It is incorrect because, though Ḫattusili III installed Kuruntiya on the throne of Tarḫuntassa, it was Ḫattusili's son and successor, Tudḫaliya IV, who raised Kuruntiya to a position second only to himself and the crown prince. It is misleading because it omits the fact that Kuruntiya was explicitly placed on equal terms with the other major viceroy of the Hittite empire, with the king of Karkamiš (*Bronzetafel* § 18).

On pp. 71–74 one finds a highly interesting discussion of newly founded imperial capitals, but this section oddly omits a further parallel, that of Muwattalli II's move to Tarḫuntassa (e.g. Singer, *BMSAES* 6 [2006] 37–58; id., 3<sup>rd</sup> *ICH* [1998] 535–541). This is all the more surprising, since the event is in fact known to the author (cf. p. 93), and since it illustrates nicely some of the points emphasised in this section.

On p. 89 it is claimed that 'freestanding temples did not exist' in Mycenae, which is a hopelessly outdated view.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this would be such a surprising fact that one would

<sup>2</sup> My comments stem largely from my own area of focus, Syria and Anatolia in the second half of the second millennium.

<sup>3</sup> Radner, *Subartu* 14 (2004) 52, dates the texts to the second quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but according to the ultra low chronology of Gasche et al. (*ibid.*, n. 43). Dating them according to the low chronology, e.g. would place them back into the first quarter of the century.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. G. Albers, *Re-evaluating Mycenaean Sanctuaries*, in: *Celebrations: Sanctuaries and the Vestiges of Cult Activity* [Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 6] (Athens 2004) 111–149; E. Konsolaki, *A Mycenaean Sanctuary on Methana*, in R. Hägg (ed.), *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults* (Stockholm 2002) 25–36.

hope to at least see some reference to literature on sacral architecture and/or places in the bibliographic essay, but this is not the case.

On p. 94 Ḫattusili III's usurpation of the Hittite throne is discussed, where one finds the assertion that Ḫattusili in his Apology had 'argued that Urhi-Teshub's use of sorcery had forced him to act.' This is simply not the case, however. It is his personal rival, Arma-Tarḫunta, that Ḫattusili accuses of sorcery. His reasons for acting against Urḫi-Teššub were, so he claims, Urḫi-Teššub's attempt to strip him of power by taking away his lands, in the end even his powerbases Ḫakmis and Nerik.

The author states on p. 129 that, 'When the Hittites and Assyrians had carved the state (of Mittanni) up, they did not continue to confront each other', ignoring, among other things, the fact that these two powers fought a major battle near Niḫriya (e.g. Singer, *ZA* 75 [1985] 100–123), from which Tudḫaliya IV fled in defeat and disgrace.<sup>5</sup>

At other times the author presents vigorously debated issues as seemingly common knowledge and/or greatly oversimplifies complex processes. He claims, e.g. that 'Kurunta staged a coup and temporarily seized power in Hattusa, necessitating Tudḫaliya's military action to retake the capital' (p. 41). This glosses over the fact that Kurunta's purported coup is anything but certain (e.g. Klengel, *HdO* I/34 [1999] 289–291) and is treated rather tepidly even by the most enthusiastic researchers (Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [2005] 319–321). Moreover, there is no evidence whatsoever for any military action by Tudḫaliya to retake Ḫattusa.

On p. 37 he states that, 'Internal difficulties with royal succession in Egypt led to a request by Tut'ankhamun's widow for a Hittite prince in marriage', with no caveats whatsoever. Only on p. 122, where the same claim is made, does one find at least a footnote (n. 20) in which he mentions that 'others have suggested that this happened after Akhenaten's death' (p. 263).<sup>6</sup>

On p. 93 he writes that 'the Hittites pushed the Egyptians gradually out of Asia' (cf. also p. 129), but this is at best misleading and at worst simply incorrect. The claim gives the impression that Egypt was pushed completely out of Asia at this time, which is not at all the case, as they remained in possession of the entire southern Levant. Moreover, it was for the most part Mittanni that pushed Egypt out of northern Syria (and/or filled in where no empire was present), while Ḫatti gained the greater part of its Syrian possessions by virtue of its subsequent destruction of Mittanni during the reign of Suppiluliuma I. Also the famous battle between Muwattalli II and Ramesses II did little to push Egypt out of Asia, as it effectively ended in a stalemate which cemented the territorial status quo.

On p. 120 he claims that, along with Babylonia, Mittanni, Alašiya, Ḫatti and a rising Assyria, also Arzawa was the equal of Egypt as reflected in the international correspondence from Amarna. This is anything but clear from the two letters from Arzawa, however. To the contrary, in EA 31–32 the pharaoh and Tarḫundaradu do not address each other as brothers, as members of the 'Great Kings Club' do, but simply as one king to another, negotiating the purchase of a Arzawean daughter.

<sup>5</sup> He does, in his bibliographic essay on the chapter (p. 133), refer to Mora and Giorgieri's interpretation of 'the Hittite-Assyrian competition over northern Syria as a set of minor skirmishes.'

<sup>6</sup> For the most recent discussions, see Miller, *AoF* 34 (2007) 252–293; Groddek, *GM* 215 (2007) 95–107; Stipich, *Gs. Tóth* (2008).

On p. 225 he assumes that Urḫi-Teššub 'had gone to Egypt after Hattusili III had removed him from the throne', but this ignores the fact that Urḫi-Teššub is never attested in Egypt. The only hint available that Urḫi-Teššub might have gone to Egypt is the repeated accusations in Hittite letters to the pharaoh to this effect, but this was always vigorously denied by the Egyptians (e.g. Singer, *Fs. de Roos* [2006] 27–38), and it is far from certain that the Hittite accusations are to be preferred.

While Van De Mieroop's volume presents a lively picture of the societies of a fascinating period and the interactions among them, it is unfortunately fraught with sometimes significant errors and oversights, thereby limiting its appeal. It is thus certainly a useful supplement to discussion of the period, but one should be aware of its deficiencies as well as its merits.

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