

Preface

Thutmose III—"Strong Bull Arising in Thebes" as one of his five names reads—was without question one of Egypt's greatest pharaohs. His reign was packed with momentous events and was of unusual length—a total of fifty-four years in a time when the average for his dynasty—the Eighteenth—was about sixteen and one-half years. Thutmose came to the throne at an unusually young age. His stepmother (and aunt) Hatshepsut immediately became his regent, a position that she soon transformed into a co-rulership, with herself as the senior pharaoh—the most effective and powerful of the few women ever recognized as pharaoh in Egypt.

This situation lasted some twenty years, with Thutmose being permitted considerable, if limited, independence. In particular, he may have led, on Hatshepsut's behalf, Egyptian campaigns against various foreign lands. Nevertheless, there was either an enduring resentment on his part or a dawning realization that Hatshepsut's reign had not been "politically correct." Late in Thutmose's reign, long after Hatshepsut's death, he ordered or permitted an attack on her memory at the beautifully decorated and enormously scaled funerary temple built for her at Deir el-Bahari, in western Thebes—her images were defaced, although the rest of the many figures represented in the temple were left intact.

Once he was sole ruler, Thutmose initiated the most sustained policy of conquest and expansion known for ancient Egypt. In his twenty-second year, he led his armies into Canaan, defeating a vast coalition of enemies (coming from as far away as Syria) at Megiddo—the Armageddon of the Bible. As a result, the great rulers of the Near East (including Assyria, Babylonia, and the Hittites) who were not directly involved in the conflict sent Thutmose placatory gifts, recognizing his new status. Throughout the next twenty-two years, Thutmose and his forces developed Egypt's first empire, a relatively stable system of Egyptian overseers and foreign vassals that extended through

Canaan and Lebanon into southern Syria and up the Nile through northern and central Nubia. This empire, delivering annual tribute and services, greatly increased the wealth of Egypt's kings and was the basis for an imperial system that persisted, to varying degrees, well into the Twentieth Dynasty. Thutmose's contacts beyond the empire included not only other parts of the Near East but Anatolia and the Aegean as well.

Under Thutmose III, Egypt's already well-developed culture achieved new heights. He himself was a prodigious builder of monuments, including a vast new "festival hall" east of the Karnak Temple proper, the Sixth and Seventh Pylons of Amun-Re's temple at Karnak, and the large sacred lake at Amun-Re's temple as well. In addition, he had a funerary temple and a richly decorated tomb at western Thebes and built temples at many other towns in Egypt. More generally, some of the most superbly decorated of the Theban elite tombs were produced for his officials, such as the great vizier or prime minister Rekhmire and others.

Art and architecture, however, were only part of the story. In religion, important developments took place during Thutmose's corule with Hatshepsut. Later, during his sole rule, religious developments on the one hand reinforced and displayed the divine aspects of kingship even more ostentatiously than before, yet on the other hand they articulated the nature of Amun-Re, the imperial god, who came to be seen as a deity intervening directly in history and even in the lives of individual Egyptians. Thus, some scholars believe a tension began to set in between royal pretensions and Amun-Re's evolving personality and cult that was to lead to the innovative but destructive changes initiated by pharaoh Akhenaten, the monotheist ruler who was the great-great-grandson of Thutmose III.

Literature and historical writing also flourished under Thutmose III. His *Annals*, set up within the sanctuary of Amun-Re at Karnak itself, are among the most extended of historical narratives to survive from ancient Egypt. They include a particularly elaborate description of the campaign that culminated in the Battle of Megiddo, a text that has fascinated both scholars and military men in recent times. Thutmose's reign was also characterized by complex religious hymns.

This long, richly documented reign and the pharaoh who was central to it have never been the subject of an extensive monographic treatment in English. Moreover, recent studies of Thutmose III in German and French lack the depth and scope that is intended for the work presented here. Initiated by Dr. Benedict Davies, and then seen through development by coeditors Professors Eric Cline and David O'Connor, the book consists of essays on virtually every aspect of the reign of Thutmose III written by experts on each

topic. This extensive treatment of a pivotal figure in the ancient Mediterranean world during the Late Bronze Age will provide a uniquely comprehensive view of one of Egypt's greatest pharaohs and will be of interest to a wide audience—specialists in Egypt and the Near East, graduate and undergraduate students, and the wider public as a whole.

We gratefully acknowledge the preparation of the index to this book by Dr. J. J. Shirley and Laurel Bestock.