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*Rameses III King of Egypt: his life and afterlife.* By AIDAN DODSON. 295mm. Pp 189, 131 col and b/w figs. The American University Press, Cairo, 2019. ISBN 9789774169403. £29.95 (hbk).

Rameses III (1173–1142 BC) is generally acknowledged to be the last great pharaoh, although too often overlooked in the light of his bombastic and egocentric nineteenth-dynasty predecessor Rameses II (1265–1200 BC) almost a century before him.

This book is the second in a proposed series – the first was on Sethy I (Dodson 2019) – to provide the lives of key figures of ancient Egyptian history; presenting not only their lives, monuments and achievements, but also their rediscovery and reception in modern times. This is literally so with Rameses III, his mummy being discovered in the Great Cache of royal mummies in 1881 (Theban Tomb 320). Dodson's stated aim is to provide 'a fully documented and extensively illustrated summary of what we know about Rameses III, his time and monuments ... [he has] emerged from obscurity to be the subject of research over the past four centuries'. Whilst his key monument, his large memorial temple at Medinet Habu, Thebes, has been exhaustively published, his life and times have only been superficially addressed.

The reign of Rameses III in the twentieth dynasty was pivotal in the history of the Fertile Crescent and Eastern Mediterranean at a time when masses of peoples were on the move, pushing for a place in the face of aggression, and in their turn becoming aggressors. This is notably depicted in the detailed reliefs of the battles of the Sea Peoples attacking Egypt being repulsed on the outer north walls of Rameses's memorial temple.

Dodson presents a succinct yet detailed picture of Rameses III from his birth to Sethnakht, founder of the twentieth dynasty, through his reign, monuments and family and notably to his murder. The latter had long been known from papyri of court proceedings preserved in Turin. It had always been thought that he had been poisoned as there was no evidence of trauma on his mummy; it is only recently that non-intrusive technical innovations were able to penetrate the ancient wrappings around his neck and reveal that his throat had been cut.

The Great Harris Papyrus (found in a Theban tomb in 1855 and named for its first collector owner, subsequently acquired by The British Museum in 1872) was commissioned by

Rameses IV; it rates as a virtual Domesday Book of Rameses III's reign, giving a brief history of his reign and then listing the temples and endowments he made. With 117 pages over a 41m scroll, it is the longest known papyrus.

A major feature of Dodson's American University Press books is the large number of tightly focused and highly relevant illustrations (largely from his own archives) that provide invaluable backing to his text. Rameses's tomb, often called 'Bruce's Tomb' after James Bruce who investigated it in 1769, is among the largest and best decorated in the Valley of the Kings after Sethy I's. It is described in fascinating detail, focusing on its brightly coloured walls that are a remarkable guide to the ancient Egyptian's view of the Afterworld. Rameses's stone sarcophagus, now in The Louvre (from Henry Salt's collection), is decorated with texts from the *Book of Amduat* (exterior) and *Book of Gates* (interior). Its lid with the recumbent Osirid king in relief on it was recovered by Giovanni Belzoni, who donated it to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in 1823.

The revelation of the means of Rameses III's murder made headlines and, not least, his modern identity lives on, as the face of his well-preserved mummy has been the origin for many recent mummy horror films.

The detailed notes and supporting bibliography make this the 'go to' book for immediate access to the reign that has, until now, not been fully appreciated in the literature. Dodson is one of the most prolific Egyptological authors of recent years, publishing accounts that are extremely reliable, well illustrated, readable and soundly referenced to be of use to scholars and interested laymen alike. Further publications in the projected series will be, as this volume, invaluable additions to Egyptological literature.

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*The Oxford Handbook of Prehistoric Oceania.* Edited by ETHAN E COCHRANE AND TERRY L HUNT. viii + 513 pp. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 2018. ISBN 97800199925070. £110 (hbk).