

**Vidal, Jordi (Hg.): Studies on War in the Ancient Near East.** Collected Essays on Military History. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2010. 198 S. m. Abb. gr. 8° = Alter Orient und Altes Testament 372. Lw. 78,00 €. ISBN 978-3-86835-035-7.

Bespr. von Karen Radner, London.

This slim volume is a collection of nine contributions dealing with various aspects of warfare in the ancient Middle East. Of greatly differing length (7–37 pages) and depth (ranging from broad surveys to the edition and analysis of individual texts or text passages), they deal with Egypt, Anatolia, the Levant and Mesopotamia from the mid-third to the mid-first millennium BC.

In his short introduction (pp. 1–3), editor Jordi Vidal states that “the present volume aims to help consolidate the studies on Ancient Near Eastern warfare” but no attempt is made to compare, contrast or link the individual contributions (thankfully, there are indices of toponyms, gods, persons and subjects: pp. 193–198). The introduction gives a very brief overview of some key publications on war, warfare and the military in the Ancient Near East from the 1960s onwards. The comprehensive “Bibliographie sur les armées et les militaires au Proche-Orient ancien” of P. Abrahami, as published in *Revue des études militaires anciennes* 2 (2005) and 3 (2009), will offer more relevant materials to the interested reader.

The book opens with two chapters dealing with Egyptian methods and strategies of warfare. Juan Carlos Moreno García writes on “War in Old Kingdom Egypt (2686–2125 BCE)” (pp. 5–41) and offers a detailed discussion of the logistics of raising troops and a survey of the limited information available for actual armed conflict in the Old Kingdom sources. In his exploration of the military policies of the New Kingdom, Aaron A. Burke concentrates on the early stage of Egypt’s expansion into the southern Levant: “Canaan under siege: the history and archaeology of Egypt’s war in Canaan during the early Eighteenth

Dynasty” (pp. 43–66). He argues that there is little reason to assume that there was a deliberate Egyptian policy of destroying Canaanite fortifications and closes with stressing the Canaanite vassals’ importance in Egypt’s defensive strategy. This chapter opens a series of five contributions on Late Bronze Age warfare. Trevor R. Bryce continues with a study of the New Kingdom’s arch rival for control of the Levant, the Anatolian kingdom of Hatti. His chapter “The Hittites at war” (pp. 67–85) discusses the organisation of the Hittite army before briefly analysing to Hatti’s conflicts with Egypt and Assyria. The chapter closes with a short discussion of the transportation of booty and the role of military training and discipline. The next three chapters focus on some of the finer points of Late Bronze Age warfare. Juan-Pablo Vita highlights “The power of a pair of war chariots in the Late Bronze Age: on letters RS 20.33 (Ugarit), BE 17 33a (Nippur) and EA 197 (Damas-

cus region)” (pp. 87–93), arguing that a pair of chariots constituted an operational unit of war. Jordi Vidal’s chapter “Sutean warfare in the Amarna Letters” (pp. 95–103) explores the military role of the nomadic inhabitants of the Syrian steppe which he describes aptly as “internal periphery, beyond the control of the palatial authorities [of] the eastern Mediterranean kingdoms” (p. 95) that employ them at times as mercenaries. Jaume Llop moves further east to Assyria when he discusses “Barley from Ālu-ša-Sîn-rabi: chronological reflections on an expedition in the time of Tukultī-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BC)” (pp. 105–116). On the basis of a detailed discussion of administrative documents from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta he suggests that the Assyrian army attacked Suhu on the Middle Euphrates and Babylonia in the same year, namely the eponymate of Etel-pî-Aššur son of Kurbānu = year 13 of Tukultī-Ninurta’s reign.

The final three contributions deal with the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires of the early first millennium BC. Davide Nadali’s chapter “Assyrian open field battles: an attempt at reconstruction and analysis” (pp. 117–152) offers an illustrated survey of depictions of pitched battles in Neo-Assyrian art, linking them to accounts in the textual sources as far as this possible, and then seeks to extrapolate “the tactical plans of the Assyrian army” (p. 136) which he seems to see as fixed and unchanging over the course of two centuries covered by his sources. But fundamental changes in the use of cavalry make this highly unlikely, as Robin Archer’s recent study “Chariotry to cavalry: developments in the early first millennium” showed (in: G. G. Fagan & M. Trundle, eds., *New Perspectives on Ancient Warfare*, Leiden 2010, pp. 57–80). Nadali’s positivistic approach to interpreting the images would benefit from a more conscious consideration of the severe limitations of the evidence. G. G. Fagan uses the material less heavy-handedly (“‘I Fell upon Him like a Furious Arrow’: Toward a reconstruction of the Assyrian tactical system,” in: Fagan & Trundle, op. cit., pp. 81–100). John MacGinnis’ chapter on “Mobilisation and militarisation in the Neo-Babylonian Empire” (pp. 153–163) serves as a useful reminder of just how limited our understanding of the structure of the successor state to the Assyrian Empire and the extent and nature of its rule over Western Asia still is. Due to the nature of the available evidence his discussion on raising troops focuses mainly on the contributions of the Babylonian temples although he does his best to explore other sources of troops. Also the last chapter is dedicated to the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Rocío Da Riva’s study “A Lion in the Cedar Forest: international politics and pictorial self-representations of Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC)” (pp. 165–191) presents and analyses the rock monuments of this king, consisting of cuneiform inscriptions and/or reliefs, from four sites in modern Lebanon which she sees as “an expression of Babylonian political power and territorial control in the West” (p. 182). In the meantime, her edition of “The Ne-

buchadnezzar rock inscription at Nahr el-Kalb” has been published (in: Anne-Marie Maïla-Afeiche, ed., *Le site de Nahr el-Kalb = Bulletin d’Archéologie et d’Architecture Libanaises*, Hors-Série 5, Beirut: Ministère de la Culture: Direction Générale des Antiquités, 2009, pp. 255–301).

The genesis of this varied but stimulating collection is not explained in the volume. It is apparently not the result of a symposium, workshop or conference panel although Vidal, in the introduction, tantalisingly states that “the original project also included some studies on periods and topics which for various reasons have not made it to the final version” (p. 3). But given that many of the contributors are either Catalan or work in Catalonia, the book can certainly be seen as a showcase for the impressive surge in recent Catalan scholarship on the Ancient Near East.

