

Citation style

Ray, Corey: review of: Elissa Castel, *Egipto: Signos y Simboles de lo Sagrado*, Madrid: Alderbán Ediciones, 1999, in: *Journal of Ancient Civilizations*, 16 (2001), p. 131-133, DOI: 10.21245/rec.ant.154222251



copyright

This article may be downloaded and/or used within the private copying exemption. Any further use without permission of the rights owner shall be subject to legal licences (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

individuals and events, selection becomes a critical issue: Levick has done this well and has clearly researched the subjects thoroughly.

Provincial policy is discussed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, as Levick examines affairs in Gaul, Germany, Britain and the eastern provinces. She emphasises the individuals assigned to these provinces and their dealings with the new emperor, rather than the actual campaigns of the generals. These campaigns can easily be found in other modern works, so Levick provides a needed tool for scholars of provincial policy. Furthermore, men such as Q. Petillius Cerialis demonstrate the importance of imperial connections. He put an end to the revolt of Civilis, before moving to Britain and conducting wars against Venutius and the Brigantes. Levick properly gives credit to the men who supported the new emperor and made the transition so smooth for him.

In the chapter (11) titled "Elites," Levick further examines connections to the Flavians with a study of the changes made to the senate. As she points out, changes were needed after the ravages of civil war, changes made fairly quickly by the new emperor. This was clearly an opportunity to reward friends and supporters, especially those from the east. These *novi homines* became the basis for the new senate, a group with which Tacitus dealt while writing the *Histories*. As with previous chapters, the material is presented in an orderly fashion and many notes are provided for those who wish to pursue individuals or families in more detail.

The final chapter sums up Vespasian's life by studying his portrayal throughout history. Historians of all eras will be interested in these observations, as they open up many possibilities for classicists and others. The book as a whole is a much-needed study of one of the most important emperors in Roman history.

Dr. James Stewart, IHAC

Elissa CASTEL (RONDA), *Egipto: Signos y Símbolos de lo Sagrado*. Alderbán Ediciones: Madrid, 1999. ISBN 84-88676-76-X. Pp. 440. Euros 22.25

Bookshelf references are always handy to have around. Reference books are always a must have for any student of ancient Egypt. Nicholson and Shaw's *Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (Harry N. Abrams, 1995), Baines and Malek's *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (OUP, 1984), and Bunson's *Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (OUP, 1991) are just a few of the books that should find their way on to everyone's reference shelf. The latest to fall into this category is Elisa Castel's new *Egipto: Signos y Símbolos de lo Sagrado*.

Though Castel's reputation outside of the Spanish reading world may be limited, her new book on Egyptian symbols might prove a reason to bring her research into other parts of the world. Reference works can prove a very difficult task to compile. Castel, however, accomplishes the task and does it well.

The book is structured in a dictionary reference manner. The groupings include terms or ancient Egyptian words (i.e. orthopods and amulets) and concepts (i.e. colors and numbers). Each entry begins with both the hieroglyphic text and its transliteration. From there, she provides a description that includes associations and characteristics (as in the case of animals). Also included are texts related to the particular entry. These text examples, some primary sources, range from comments and observations in works by ancient authors such as Plutarch to text excerpts from the Egyptian writings like the "Book of the Dead." The mixture of information provided for each entry not only makes the book unique, but also that much more useful.

The organization of the book is alphabetical per relation by term, concept etc. At the end of the book is a transliterated index of the entries that is cross-referenced with the Spanish equivalent or translation for easy reference. While this kind of index is unique, innovative and very useful, one must question the lack of a proper index. Although most items are self-contained under the particular entry and many transliterated entries are noted as being in multiple sections (i.e. cross referencing is somewhat available), there are instances in which a more proper index would be useful. This is especially true when considering text references to terms and concepts such as Pyramid Texts.

Also included among the hieroglyphic text for the entries are various line drawings and the like. The lack of color images and/or physical examples in this paperback book is a little disappointing in some respects when one considers the immense amount of work put into writing it.¹ This should not, however, be seen as a shortcoming, considering the high costs of using photographs or images and the fact that the book is more of a quick reference source than a standard work on a specific subject.

With the exception of a proper index, there is little if anything that can be said to be lacking in this well written and well researched book. While there are currently no plans for translation of this work into English, and its Spanish limits its market, I would rather recommend that one should learn Spanish rather than to pass this book

¹ This point is made only in order make it clear that those looking for physical images will not find them in this book (cf. Nicholson and Shaw *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*). The line drawings, however, are very clear and fill this gap fairly well.

up. This publication is one that not only encourages one to purchase it, but also to purchase others by the author.

Corey Ray, Rhodes College, Memphis, TN

MARC VAN DE MIEROOP, *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History*. Routledge, London and New York, 1999. ISBN 0-415-19533-0. Pp.196, fig 8.

This is a general book for both specialists and laymen, which tells us how to deal with the abundant cuneiform materials in the study of various aspects of history: political, social, economic, and gender. It also provides an introduction to the written sources from Mesopotamia for academics and students. The author, Professor Marc van de Mieroop, is an Assyriologist at Columbia University in New York.

In the introduction, the author says that his book aims at investigating the practices of historians of Mesopotamian civilization, the first recorded culture in human history. He wants to show us the various uses of the abundant cuneiform textual material in the research of history, and, as an Assyriologist, he will disregard what archaeology and art history, or other sciences, tell us about ancient Mesopotamia, and will focus almost wholly on written sources. He also presents a useful table (table 1) to give a chronological chart of Mesopotamian history.

Chapter one is named The First Half of History. The author classifies all the cuneiform sources into six categories: Administrative documents, private legal documents, letters, historiographic texts, literary texts and scholarly texts. He illustrates the characters of these texts and explains how to use them, which is very important for a beginner in Assyriology and in the history of ancient Near East. In the end, he tells us the history of the use and western spread of cuneiform writing, which was adopted in neighboring lands such as western Iran, Anatolia, Syria-Palestine and Egypt, where it was used as a diplomatic language. In this chapter, the author uses table 2 to show approximate numbers of various text types in the periods of Babylonian and Assyrian history and table 3 to show the chronology of Mesopotamian history with selected finds.

Chapter two is named History From Above. Now, we will see some interesting things about the study of Assyrian royal inscriptions and Sargon of Agade. Almost every student of Assyriology has to read Sennacherib's inscriptions during his study, but has he thought something more about it? Since royal inscriptions often give us propagandistic information, we have to take their accuracy with a grain of salt, and