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REVIEWS

Barbara LEVICK, *Vespasian*. Routledge: New York, 1999. ISBN 0415166187 (hb). Pp. xxiii + 310, cloth. US \$42.95.

Levick's biography of the first Flavian emperor adds perspective to an era not examined in depth for over 25 years. The work is a political, rather than a military, study of the man. It will interest scholars in many aspects of classical history, while providing areas of interest for the casual reader.

Levick divides the work into 13 chapters, with copious notes and a useful bibliography. There are nine maps at the front of the book: these might be better placed throughout the work (the map of Britain, for instance, could be put in either Chapter Two, where Vespasian's role in the Claudian invasion is discussed at length, or in the short section on the British campaigns when Vespasian became emperor, on pages 157-60), but the reader does know the maps are and can make easy reference when needed.

The first three chapters examine Vespasian's life prior to the death of Nero. Special attention is drawn to his relationship with the Julio-Claudian emperors of this period. Particularly interesting is Chapter Two, dealing with Vespasian's involvement in Claudius' conquest of Britain. As noted earlier, this concerns the political aspects of the campaign and Vespasian's role in that, rather than the actual fighting on the island, for which a reader might consult Frere, Todd or Branigan.. One example is Vespasian's rise to command *legio II Augusta* and the possible connections that won him favour with the *princeps*. Levick makes it clear that later Flavian writers went too far with some of their claims concerning his British activity, a point worth note when studying this event..

Another example concerns Vespasian's role when he returns from Britain, at the time of Messalina's death and Claudius' subsequent marriage to Agrippina. Although Levick has examined this situation before in some detail

(Chapter Six of her biography of Claudius), she places Vespasian in the picture with a possible connection to L. Vitellius, father of the future emperor. The relationship between the two families clearly would change within 20 years, but the friendships of Claudius' final years would both help and hinder Vespasian for the rest of his life.

Chapter Three concerns Nero's reign and Vespasian's move to the command in the east. Particularly useful here is Levick's description of the military movement and the men connected to this, such as M. Ulpius Traianus. Men such as Traianus would later play critical roles in the Vespasianic administration. At the end of the chapter is a very helpful appendix for those interested in the work of Josephus: his references and dates are stated in western terms. While such a table might be unnecessary for a scholar of this period, it provides an easily understood chronology for the casual reader.

Chapters Four through Twelve study the final ten years of Vespasian's life, moving from the civil war to his consolidation of power and concluding with the establishment of the dynasty. The divisions are natural, lending themselves to further study specific aspects of his reign. One wishing to study economic policy, for example, will find a wealth of information and sources in Chapter Seven, while those interested in the dynastic succession and the relationship between Vespasian and his sons will find Chapter Eleven relevant.

The year 69 is explored in some detail in Chapter Four. It is effectively divided in two, first studying the course of events and Vespasian's role. Levick immediately examines and discards Josephus' claim that he had predicted Vespasian's elevation to *imperator* as early as 67. The second half scrutinises the reasons for the success of the new *princeps*, with special attention given to the individuals involved on the Flavian side. Many men are included here, providing ample room for continued study. An excellent example is Antonius Primus, whom Levick sums up briefly here (although he is mentioned in several other parts of the book). One might combine Levick's comments with those made by Ash in her *Ordering Anarchy* (1999, Chapter Seven) to get a very full portrait of Primus.

The political situation remains the dominant focus in Chapters Five and Six, illustrating both the enemies and friends of the new regime. The association between Vespasian and the senate clearly illustrates the problems faced by the new dynasty, while also shedding light on many important individuals in this period of history. Examples include Helvidius Priscus and Sextus Julius Frontinus, but readers will discover many others. Levick's notes and bibliography make further study quite easy. With such a large number of

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*.