

## Ancient

*Ancient Chinese Warfare*, by Ralph D. Sawyer. New York: Basic/Perseus, 2011. Pp. xiv, 554. Illus., notes, biblio., index. \$39.99. ISBN: 0-465-02145-1.

In this work Sawyer, translator and editor of a number of notable ancient Chinese military texts, takes a look at the nature of warfare at the dawn of Chinese history, from the mythic age of the “Three Sovereigns” (c. 3500-2000 BC), through the legendary Hsia/Xia Dynasty (c. 2000-1600 BC), to the semi-historical Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BC). Drawing on annals, poetry, religious texts, archaeology, myth, and other sources, Sawyer has pieced together a study of the organization, technology, equipment, and the conduct of war during the poorly documented era at the beginning of Chinese civilization. He touches upon such topics as the introduction of the horse and later the chariot, strategy and diplomacy, fortification, command, and more. A very readable look at a hitherto very obscure period in the history of China and of military institutions.

*Livia, Empress of Rome: A biography*, by Matthew Dennison. New York: St. Martin’s, 2010. Pp. x, 320. Illus., stemmata, gloss., notes, biblio., index. \$27.99. ISBN: 0-312-65864-8.

One of the most maligned women in history, Livia Drusilla (58 BC-AD 29), wife of the Emperor Augustus, is best known to moderns as the homicidal “Tiger Mom” of Robert Graves’ novel *I, Claudius* and the very popular TV mini-series of that name from the 1970s. Journalist and biographer Dennison does a terrific job of sifting through the available evidence, critiquing sources from ancient literature, carefully sorting the sequencing of events, and, where direct evidence is wanting, comparing Livia’s life and experiences with those of other notable women of the period. He concludes that like other strong women in history, Livia seems to have suffered from a very hostile “press,” and that, in fact, she seems to have been an influential help-mate to Augustus, but hardly an *eminence grise* manipulating events. As he does this, Dennison also helps clarify the highly complex political, military, legal, familial, and cultural tools that Augustus wielded to attain and keep supreme power longer than anyone else in Roman history. Worth reading for anyone interested in the Roman Empire.

*Zenobia of Palmyra: History, Myth, and the Neo-Classical Imagination*, by Rex Winsbury. London: Duckworth/Herndon, Va.: International Publishers Marketing, 2010. Pp. 198. Illus., maps, appends., notes, biblio., index. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 978-0-7156-3853-8.

For a time Zenobia (c. AD 240–274) ruled a vast swathe of the Middle East, holding her own between Rome and Persia, but the actual person and her life

have largely been lost to history, if not to the imagination. In this book, classicist Winsbury takes a look at what might be termed the “three Zenobias”. Separating what can be learned about the real person from the slender documentary and archaeological record, as well as the vaster body of legend about the warrior-queen, he gives us a solid account of the life and times of Zenobia, one of the few strong women in ancient history *not* reputed to have been a sex machine. He then goes on to show how the mythic image has influenced artists and writers throughout history, most notably in the nineteenth century. In the process, we are given a look at war, statecraft, and diplomacy in the ancient world, particularly the Middle East, during the great mid-third century crisis of the Roman Empire. A good book for students of ancient history, of women in history, and of the Romantic Movement.

*Soldiering for God: Christianity and the Roman Army*, by John F. Shean. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010. Pp. xviii, 452. Illus., notes, biblio., index. \$224.95. ISSN: 1385-7827.

Prof. Shean (LaGuardia), takes on the question of the relationship between Christianity and the Roman Army. Displaying a masterful command of the literary, archaeological, and numismatic evidence, Shean opens with a look at the social, moral, and religious status of the warrior in early societies, and goes on to examine the religious experience of the Roman Army. He then looks at the early Church and its relationship to the army. Shean demonstrates that, despite modern attempts to portray them as pacifists, early Christians had no moral objection to military service, noting, for example, that the many soldier-martyrs were persecuted for refusing to take part in pagan rituals, not for refusing to fight. He goes on to discuss the evolution of, and religious changes in, the Roman Army from the late-third century into the early fourth, a period in which several faiths supplanted the traditional Capitoline deities, which suggests that Constantine’s conversion was influenced by the fact that Christians had become sufficiently numerous in the ranks to make it a smart move. There’s more, of course, such as the Christianization of the state, the “barbarization” of the army, and so forth. *Soldiering for God* is an important work for anyone interested in the rise of Christianity, the later Roman Empire, and the Roman Army.

*Military Culture in Imperial China*, edited by Nicolo di Cosmo. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2009. Pp. x, 444. Illus., maps, append., notes, biblio., index. \$22.95 paper. ISBN: 978-0-674-06072-2.

Prof. di Cosmo (Institute for Advanced Study), opens this work by noting that China’s military history has been rather neglected, due in part to the misconception that it was essentially a “military”