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Rome on the Euphrates

Freya Stark

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Freya Stark : Rome on the Euphrates before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rome on the Euphrates:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Rome's Eastern FrontierBy OctaviusIn this book, Freya Stark recites her travels in the Middle East as she stops near the important cities and battlefields that marked the fluctuating borders between Rome and Parthia. A good scholarly presentation that is backed by strong historical evidence and research.The book reviews Rome's first contact with Parthia under Sulla in the early 1st century B.C. to the time of the Byzantines and the Sassanians. Stark argues that the Euphrates river marked the geo-political limits of each empire and that incessant warfare between them was only a waste of resources as neither had the ability of expanding any further. Stark also covers how the military tactics of each state were a disadvantage against their enemies. Rome's strongest military asset was its infantry and its ability to conduct extended sieges but the legions were slow, with limited range, and vulnerable to cavalry. Parthia's main asset was its heavy cavalry and archers that could cover vast distances rapidly. The Parthian empire was a disadvantage to Roman legions as the territory was vast and primarily suited for cavalry engagements: legions such as Crassus' at Carrhae could easily be outmaneuvered, enveloped, and crushed. Parthia's cavalry on the other hand was of little use in confined territories and even less useful in laying sieges: Parthian invasions into Roman territories therefore tended to be short and more akin to raids and skirmishes than full invasions.This is a good book on studying the frontier between Rome and Parthia and how it affected both empires. Stark's arguments are well supported by historical texts and other evidence: her research is sound. The book is not a scholarly lecture or dissertation and so can be read by someone who has little to no knowledge of Roman

history.

ROME ON THE EUPHRATES is the history of the long frontier of the Euphrates through eight centuries of Roman warfare. When Roman legions marched into Asia Minor 200 years before Christ, their plan was to secure a buffer zone between the Mediterranean, which they virtually owned, and the area beyond, which they sought to isolate rather than control. But their calculations went awry. Their expanding involvement lasted eight centuries, drained their energies, and--unguessable catastrophe--destroyed the bridge that, since Alexander the Great, with mutual benefit had linked China to commerce of the Mediterranean. The author's main theme is the uselessness of war across a frontier whose trade is beneficial to both sides. Her own travels to these historic battlegrounds give depth to this remarkable story--a story from which lessons still can be learned today.

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