

While her book was not envisioned as a definitive masterpiece, Shoemaker provokes discussion, leading other scholars to further investigate the sources employed and the relationship between the New World and the Old World.

—David Payne

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Timothy Tackett. *When the King Took Flight*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003. Pp. 288. Cloth \$24.95.

For anyone who has ever wondered about how the French Revolution, which started out with the high ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, descended into the Reign of Terror, University of California, Irvine Professor Timothy Tackett offers a new perspective. According to Tackett, the Revolution's downward trajectory was set in motion by Louis XVI's attempt to flee from France in June of 1791. By this time the country had achieved relative stability and was well on the road to becoming a constitutional monarchy. However, the king's attempted flight called into question whether the new government could have a monarch who was opposed to these ideals.

In eight largely chronological chapters the author closely examines the circumstances surrounding these events. He includes an extensive discussion about the nature of the monarchy, the role of public opinion in shaping the image of the king, as well as Louis XVI's personal traits such as his well-known inability to stick to a decision. Tackett also analyzes the major factions that made up the National Assembly and how the king's flight first caused fissures and then chasms between them. He details how the mistrust created by the king's perfidy led to a fear of external foes and eventually to alarm about internal enemies. In the end radicals ousted the moderate faction and unleashed widespread paranoia where anyone could become a suspect. These radicals went on to create the legal apparatus to deal with real and imagined enemies.

Historians of the French Revolution frequently slight the influence of the citizens of the provinces. Tackett, however, highlights their importance in two places. First, he shows how the revolutionary government created a new sense of national identity

## 6 Perspectives

among the provincials. A heightened awareness of events outside their local concerns led to the capture of the king in Varennes. Second, the king's flight created increased mistrust of "suspicious" persons within the provinces and aided the rise of the Terror in the countryside.

Tackett, who has written other books about eighteenth-century France, draws on memoirs, letters, and journals of some of the most famous participants such as Marie Antoinette, Lafayette, and Madame Roland, as well as contemporary revolutionary newspapers. In contrast to an approach pioneered by Francois Furet, the author returns to doing archival work, consulting the National Archives as well as those of a number of departments, a new administrative unit created by the revolutionary government. Highly engaging and readable, *When the King Took Flight* illustrates how the seemingly minor event of stopping a coach on the way to the French border had major repercussions for the future trajectory of French history.

—John C. Chen

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Susan Whitfield. *Life Along the Silk Road*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Pp. 253. Paper \$18.95.

Susan Whitfield's *Life Along the Silk Road* is based on a collection of primary sources found in a cave near Dunhuang, China. The cave stored manuscripts for almost three hundred years from the Chinese, Tibetan, Mongol, and Turkish governments who controlled the city at different times in the first millennium. Loan records, prayers, legal documents, medical prescriptions, and letters from soldiers far from their homes help Whitfield to understand the political, social, religious and economic history of the people and governments involved in the Silk Road trade. Whitfield is the director of the International Dunhuang Project at the British Library at London. She used illustrations found in the cave to compose the life stories of the ten fictional characters in her book.

The Silk Road trade was an exchange between Central Asian wares such as wool, horses, and sheep for Chinese goods like the desirable silk which only the Chinese could manufacture. The land route extended over thousands of miles from Chang'an, China,