

of doctrine but to enforce obedience. The createdness question “was merely a convenient pretext” to bring the ulema to heel and to remove them from their position as “spokesmen on religious affairs” who could veto the caliph (pp. 78–79).

Nawas makes a compelling and eloquent argument that requires our attention. To begin understanding the *miḥna*, one must start here. The editors of the series are to be commended for their efforts to gain the larger audience that is its due.

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The Tomb of Jesus and His Family? Exploring Ancient Jewish Tombs near Jerusalem's Walls. Edited by JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH. Grand Rapids, Mich.: WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO., 2013. Pp. xx + 585, illus. \$48 (paper).

The book under review, edited by James Charlesworth of Princeton Theological Seminary, is the latest collection of studies to result from an international conference that he has convened. This collection focuses on a tomb in East Talpiot, south Jerusalem, accidentally uncovered and hastily excavated in 1980 and then brought to new prominence in 2007 by a television documentary and popular book in which it is argued that the tomb was the final resting place of Jesus, his mother Mary, his wife Mary Magdalene, their son Judah, and a number of other family members. Almost all historians and archaeologists reject these identifications. Nevertheless, Charlesworth in 2008 convened a conference in Jerusalem to explore and debate the matter further.

Although the rationale for the conference and the book is dubious, the actual results are for the most part helpful. The essays review the history of the find, a number of relevant sciences (such as petrology, DNA, prosopography, palaeography), and Jewish burial practices of late antiquity. One of the best essays in the volume is by Amos Kloner and Shimon Gibson, two of the three archaeologists who excavated the tomb. (The third and lead archaeologist was the late Joseph Gath.) They recount their work and carefully explain what was recovered. As have many, Kloner and Gibson conclude that “there is nothing to commend the Talpiot tomb as the family tomb of Jesus” (p. 51).

I have space to mention only a few other other contributions. Mordechai Aviam rightly underscores the importance of understanding the differences in Galilean burial practices. Given what we know of Galilean burials, he finds it difficult to believe that “the entire family [of Jesus], whose members probably died over the next thirty or forty years after Jesus, would also adopt the Judean practice of *ossilegium* and be brought to Jerusalem to be buried with Jesus” (p. 111).

Stephen Pfann correctly interprets the “Mary Magdalene” ossuary inscription to read, “Mariame and Mara” (pp. 190–99), not “Mary the Master.” He also concludes that the name “Jesus” was not the original name inscribed on the “Jesus, son of Joseph” ossuary. It appears that another name, perhaps Yudan (short for Yehudah, or Judah), was partially effaced and then incorporated with the later inscribed Yeshua (Jesus). The evidence is quite curious on any reckoning. It seems that the person named Yeshua was placed in an ossuary already occupied by someone else (a brother?). Why this person’s name was then effaced is impossible to say. In any case it seems doubtful that the remains of the most important figure in the family, a figure adored by a growing following, thought by this following to be Israel’s Messiah, would be placed in a very plain ossuary, already occupied by the remains of someone else.

Christopher Rollston reviews several aspects of the relevant science, including statistics, and concludes that “it is certainly not tenable to suggest that the data are sufficient that this is the family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth” (p. 221). He rightly notes that we are hardly in a position to ascertain the true family relationships of the persons whose remains were found in the Talpiot tomb.

Amnon Rosenfeld, Howard Feldman, and Wolfgang Krumbein provide scientific evidence that strongly supports the authenticity of the inscription on the James Ossuary (i.e., “James son of Joseph brother of Jesus”). These scientists further argue that the geochemical footprints of the ossuary are consistent with what is known of the Talpiot tomb. From this they conclude that James Ossuary may have originally derived from the Talpiot tomb, which, if true, significantly increases the odds that the tomb was indeed the tomb of the family of Jesus. No doubt further research will be undertaken.

There is one glaring omission in the book under review: No study explains the prominent pointed gable and circle excised over the tomb’s entrance. This artistic design is found on coins—as far back as the Hasmonean period—ossuaries, monumental tombs, and other forms of Jewish funerary art. It symbolizes the temple and has nothing to do with Jesus and his movement. Given the temple establishment’s opposition to Jesus and his followers, such a symbol would have been a most unlikely choice as adornment for a tomb linked to Jesus or his family.

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A City from the Dawn of History: Erbil in the Cuneiform Sources. By JOHN MACGINNIS. Philadelphia: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014. Pp. 128, illus. \$45 (paper). [Distributed by Casemate Academic, Havertown, Pa.]

This small attractive book was commissioned by the Kurdistan Regional Government to celebrate the

history of their capital Hawler, one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities, known in Sumerian as Urbilum, in Akkadian as Arbail, and in Arabic as Erbil. The author, an Assyriologist, begins with an introduction to the cuneiform writing system, followed by a sketch of the development of the town from the Gutian Period (late third millennium B.C.E.) through the time of the Achaemenids. Special sections are dedicated to the Assyrian goddess Ishtar of Arbail and to the suburb of Milkia, which played a role in the local *Akitu*-festival under the Neo-Assyrian empire.

The heart of the work is a collection of all published cuneiform sources mentioning the settlement, beginning with three tablets from Ebla (of uncertain relevance). Unsurprisingly, the bulk of the material comes from Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian archives, although there are also about a dozen Ur III records. MacGinnis translates a few of the more important texts, such as the Hymn to Erbil (LKA 32), but most are simply characterized in brief, for example: "SAA 5 151.6; CT 53, 637; reign of Sargon. Letter to the king mentioning Arbail and a palace" (p. 91), leaving the interested reader to seek out the primary publication for further information.

A few of the tablets are accompanied by photos, all of outstanding clarity, but some on such a small scale as to be illegible. A handful of the monuments, including the Dadusha Stele (p. 54), a stele of Ashurbanipal (p. 68), and three relief panels from Nineveh's South West Palace (pp. 78–80) are also pictured.

Other than as a statement of justified civic pride for the current inhabitants of the venerable city, it is difficult to see the utility of this monograph. The casual reader will find the catalogue of texts that takes up most of its pages arid, while the cuneiformist will need to go elsewhere to utilize the gathered references. Perhaps someone writing the history of Erbil would find the checklist useful. The reviewer suggests that the author himself undertake the task of compiling a fuller narrative of the story of this important site.

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Studi Graeco-Parthica: Political and Cultural Relations between Greeks and Parthians. By EDWARD DABROWA. *Philippika*, vol. 49. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2011. Pp. 196. €48 (paper).

Professor Dr. Edward Dabrowa is a distinguished Polish ancient historian dealing with pre-Islamic Iranian history and its connections to the classical Mediterranean world at the Historical Institute of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow. He is himself a student of Professor Jozef Wladyslaw Wolski (1910–2008) and his school of ancient Iranian history.

In this collection of fifteen articles, previously published in academic journals, on the relations between Greeks and Parthians within the realm of the Parthian Empire, we have a rich selection of articles, which would otherwise remain scattered throughout a wide variety of journals. Special thanks are due Harrassowitz Verlag for publishing them in a single volume.

While it is pleasant to find Dabrowa's articles in English, French, Italian, and German, one misses short abstracts in English for each essay, since not all international colleagues will be able to follow all these languages easily.

The variety of topics discussed by Dabrowa center on the difficulties and differences between the Parthians, originally of nomadic stock, and the Greeks who settled in the regions of the Parthian realm following the campaigns of Alexander the Great and even earlier. Of special interest is the article which deals with the connections of Parthians and Greeks in the Hellenized cities of the first century (pp. 27–37). This is an important problem, since it focuses on the cultural relations between an already settled Greek population and the ruling Parthian aristocracy. This aristocracy was of Iranian stock and stood by its nomadic roots until the end of its power, as has been demonstrated by Dabrowa's student Jan Marek Olbrycht of Krakow (*Parthia et ulteriores gentes: Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen dem arsakidischen Iran und den Nomaden der eurasischen Steppen. (3. Jh. v. Chr. bis 3. Jh. n. Chr.)* [Munich 1998]). Whenever the political situation in the Near East and especially in Syria and Iraq (Iran and Afghanistan could be added here) makes regular excavations possible once more, Dabrowa's deep look into these problems on the basis of the historical sources should be held in mind when analyzing their results.

That the connections between Parthians and Greeks weren't always peaceful once again becomes obvious when we read about the politics and wars in three articles (pp. 49–57, 59–73, 75–81).

A very prominent topic for Dabrowa is the old question of "Parthian Philhellenism," expressed mainly via their coins, which consistently follow Greek, i.e., Seleucid prototypes. The Parthian Empire was settled by many different ethnic groups and tribes who spoke many very different languages of most varied origin, although many of them will have been of Iranian stock. How far the Hellenization of the Orient had progressed in political affairs is astonishing, in that the Parthians focused very much on Greek traditions and tried to win the Greeks for their empire.

The multiethnicity of the Parthian realm had significant influence on religious affairs, and it is not surprising that Dabrowa puts special emphasis on the question of the role that the ruler-cult played for the Parthians, with or without Greek (Seleucid) influence. Dabrowa's researches will be of greatest importance when the most recent Italo-Turkmenian excavations (2011 and 2012)