distinguishable from Ioannes. (And presumably "Ionannes" (74) is a typo, but if not, it too seems unwarranted.) How we achieve Pirmeni from Pṛm is even less clear. Ochała is generally correct that Ghazali's onomastics are in line with general Nubian and Egyptian trends. But Table 7.2 hides the ball: it shows *only* the similarities, while the onomastic differences between Ghazali and other sites would be equally revealing.

A brief note on chronology (Chapter 8) and a summary conclusion (Chapter 9) follow. A number of main themes and arguments persist through the entire work. First, and contrary to previous generations of scholars studying Ghazali, the comfortable place of Coptic in Ghazali's monastic community indicates a "strong cultural Egyptian influence on Nubian monasticism" (15) and not the presence of ethnic Egyptians. Second, the high-quality Greek used in these epitaphs proves the "high level of literacy at the monastery" (16). Finally, these texts, both Coptic and Greek, give us an intimate look at Nubian eschatology and the Nubian belief "that human fate, including death, is determined by God" (16).

The funerary inscriptions themselves – along with plates, indices, and concordances – make up the final two-thirds of the volume. Following the leaders in Nubian epigraphy, Jacques van der Vliet and Adam Łajtar, Ochała organizes the texts by type and formulary, rather than by language. Thus, we have epitaphs with the prayer "God of the Spirits" in both Greek and Coptic, followed by epitaphs invoking God's providence, command, and will, also in both Greek and Coptic.

Ochała presents every text in a consistent format: excavation number, findspot, present location, language, material, dimensions, description, palaeography, bibliography, and transcription with translation. But of the 223 discrete entries, many are fragmentary, small fragments, or, in several cases, mere letters. Thus the bulk of Ochała's analysis relies on a relatively small group of texts, and the rest result in diminishing returns. This is frustrating, and doubly so when we consider how much information from earlier excavations is lost or was never recorded.

Still, Ochała's work is impressive, and necessary. My own initial forays into Nubian prosopography, onomastics, and demography were completely foiled by the baffling editions of funerary epigraphic material from Ginari and Sakinya. One can only hope for more volumes like Ochała's for the sites first studied before the modern scientific period of Nubian studies, and more from him for years to come.

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The Emperor and the Elephant: Christians and Muslims in the Age of Charlemagne. By **Sam Ottewill-Soulsby**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. 363 pp. $39.95.

For too long, the history of Carolingian diplomatic relations with the Islamic world has been written largely based on the Latin sources, and the Christian–Muslim encounter has too often been filtered through the distorting lenses of the crusades and the mythic Carolingian world of the *chansons de geste*. Enduring yet contradictory narratives have

either held that Charlemagne had fully dedicated himself to driving the Muslims out of Europe or that he was a tolerant promoter of a multicultural empire. With *The Emperor and the Elephant: Christians and Muslims in the Age of Charlemagne* Sam Ottewill-Soulsby set out to dispel both of these myths, and the result is a learned and engagingly written book. By using both Latin and Arabic sources and integrating, to the extent possible, the perspectives of those on both sides of a century of diplomatic exchanges, Ottewill-Soulsby succeeds in producing a much fuller and more nuanced picture of Muslim–Christian relations in the Carolingian era than any we have seen before.

Ottewill-Soulsby's integration of the sources for the Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties into the history of Carolingian diplomatic relations with their Muslim counterparts, both to the east and in Al-Andalus, allows him to develop a convincing argument for the existence of two distinct styles of diplomacy. The first is exemplified by the relationship between Charlemagne and the Abbasid Caliph Harun-al-Rachid, famous for his gift of the elephant Abu al Abbas that arrived at Aachen in 802, a style that he calls "prestige diplomacy." This brand of diplomatic activity was carried out largely to impress local elites, offering tangible evidence of a ruler's healthy reputation abroad. These exchanges were not necessarily practical, as the transport of an elephant over thousands of miles suggests, but they played an important role both in the self-presentation of the ruler and in his depiction by historians of the realm. We are still talking about Harun's majestic gift this many centuries later. Prestige diplomacy was also episodic and tended to occur between stable regimes. The Islamic sources reflect similar symbolic importance attributed to the Frankish gifts received at the Abbasid court. Elephants were meaningful for both, and Harun's gift represented a point of common meaning understood by both participants.

The second style of diplomacy applies to the complex diplomatic relations between the Latin West and the Umayyad caliphate in Al-Andalus, which Ottewill-Soulsby calls "frontier diplomacy." The fraught and often hostile relationships between the Franks and the leadership at Córdoba were part of a complex geographical picture that included the two buffer zones known as the Upper March, part of Al-Andalus up to the Ebro River, and the Spanish March, which extended from the Ebro to the Pyrenees. The marches housed various political entities, both Christian and Muslim, that together constituted a large intermediate zone that separated the Caliphate and the West Frankish kingdom. Both marches were multiethnic, with Goths and Basques prominent in both, as well as Frankish, Arab, and Berber settlers. The Spanish March included, among other places, Pamplona, the county of Aragon, and the cities of Girona and Barcelona, which were controlled by a powerful count. The Umayyad leadership generally left the management of the Upper March to urban governors, often the descendants of elite Arab settlers, some powerful enough to raise their own armies.

Whereas prestige diplomacy was largely voluntary between the distant Abbasid and Carolingian seats of power, diplomacy between the Franks and the powerful caliphate to the south occurred out of necessity, since only the unpredictable marches separated the two powers. Ottewill-Soulsby effectively refutes the too-common assumption that the histories of the two realms rarely impinged upon one another, with Roncesvalles in 778 as the famous exception. Carolingian Europe was not isolated from Muslim Spain after 711, as has often been assumed. The opposite was true, as *The Emperor and the Elephant* demonstrates again and again through the author's inclusion of the Umayyads in the history of Carolingian Catalonia.

Ottewill-Soulsby succeeds in his stated goal of rescuing the Muslims from functioning as merely part of the landscape of the Carolingian past. One of the book's major

strengths is its readability thanks to the author's confident command of the material and talent for narrating complex events from multiple perspectives. Moments such as the ambush in the Pyrenees in 778 or the multiple crises in the reign of Louis the Pious take on new dimensions when the Latin sources are reread against the Arabic sources and then productively reframed. The reign of Louis the Pious saw intense conflict with Al-Andalus in the late 820s, the failed management of which, as Ottewill-Soulsby argues, contributed more than has previously been acknowledged to the crisis of his reign in 833 with the rebellion of his sons. Louis had engaged in far less diplomatic activity with the Muslim world than had his father, while the reign of Louis's son, Charles the Bald marked the end of Carolingian–Umayyad relations in 831. Those with the rest of the Islamic world also appear to have ended for the Carolingians in 831.

Ottewill-Soulsby brings this impressive study to an end with the image of Charlemagne's body wrapped in a silk shroud decorated with images of elephants, the emperor like his memory forever intertwined with the symbol of his friendly diplomatic relations with the Abbasid caliph. This groundbreaking and much-needed new study will be a required reference for all future scholarly considerations of the early medieval world.

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The Syriac Orthodox Church in the Time of the Syriac Renaissance. In Concept and Reality. By **Peter Kawerau**. Translated by **Patrick Conlin**. Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 64. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2022. 246 pp. $65 hardcover.

Peter Kawerau's work is a foundational contribution to the study of Syriac Orthodox Christianity between the eleventh and the early fourteenth centuries. The work remains surprisingly relevant despite its publication almost 70 years ago and the increasing scholarly strides in the field for the past couple of decades. Scholars and interested students of the medieval Middle East, eastern Christian traditions, and the medieval period more broadly would therefore benefit from the publication of Kawerau's work in English translation offered in this volume.

Available now in a sturdy, hardback edition from Gorgias Press, the volume presents a concise and highly legible study of a richly documented confessional community whose marginalization in both medieval and Middle Eastern scholarship has been increasingly amended in recent years. Patrick Conlin's precise translation, which is based on the second edition of Kawerau's work (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), reduces the possibility of imposing interpretations of Kawerau's words by offering a literal, yet highly intelligible rendering of the original German. The most notable translation decision undertaken by Conlin was to update some terms that carry a rather heavy historical baggage with potentially polemical and, at times, normative implications. In line with more recent scholarship in the field, terms such as the "Syriac Orthodox