

were of this sort, with time markers for the full moon at the beginning of the year (month of Nisan), the summer solstice, the heliacal rising of Sirius, and the winter solstice. For the benefit of any reader for whom a year beginning with a month of Nisan rings a bell, let me assure you that the Nabataeans also had months of Iyar, Tammuz, Elul, Tishri, Kislev, Thebet (Teves), and Adar, and their language was a form of Aramaic, which can be read, and even written.

But let us end on an astronomical note, by quoting a chapter by Magli, who says that the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbek faced the heliacal rising of the Pleiades, around May 5 at the time of its construction. — VIRGINIA TRIMBLE.

Simon Marius and His Research, edited by Hans Gaab & Pierre Leich (Springer), 2018. Pp. 479, 24 × 16 cm. Price £109.99/\$149.99 (hardbound; ISBN 978 3 319 92620 9).

It is no fun being accused of plagiarism, and even less fun when the accusation is unjustified and the accuser is the pompous Italian loud-mouth and know-it-all Galileo Galilei. This slur left the German margravian court observational astronomer, mathematician, and astrologer Simon Marius (1573–1625) under somewhat of a cloud until very recently. Four hundred years after Marius published his major work *The World of Jupiter (Mundus Iovialis)* a conference was held in Nuremberg and the twenty papers presented there make up this book.

Marius spent most of his life in southern Germany and worked under the patronage of the Ansbach margraves. He was a careful and accurate observer of celestial phenomena and was lent a Belgian telescope at about the same time as Galileo was making his own instruments. Marius wrote annual calendars/almanacs, a tract on the comet of 1596, discussed the nova of 1604, worried about the differences between the Copernican and Tychoonian cosmos, recorded details of sunspot activity at a time just before the Maunder Grand Minimum (he was the first to observe sunspots telescopically), and naturally looked through his telescope at Jupiter. Not only did he discover the Jovian satellites independently of Galileo, he also gave them their names. Unfortunately, he published his results in 1614, four years after Galileo. Marius is also credited with ‘discovering’ the Andromeda Nebula, which he again observed telescopically. Unfortunately he overlooked the fact that it had been seen before, having been described in the *Book of Fixed Stars* by Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi in 964 AD.

The book under review will establish Marius as an illustrious pioneer of German astronomy. And it should erase Robert Grant’s *History of Physical Astronomy* (1852) slur that described him as ‘an impudent pretender’. The book abounds with references and foot-notes. Marius’ major works are reproduced in full. It is rewarding, thorough, academic, comprehensive, and well-illustrated. It is just the sort of major work that will grace the shelves of an astronomy library for many decades to come. — DAVID W. HUGHES.

Magnificent Principia: Exploring Isaac Newton’s Masterpiece, by Colin Pask (Prometheus), 2019. Pp. 526, 23 × 15.5 cm. Price \$18 (about £14) (paperback; ISBN 978 1 63388 568 4).

The average scientist (than whom, of course, our readers are much more knowledgeable) can be expected to know (i) that *Principia Mathematica* is the *magnum opus* of a great, perhaps the greatest, physicist of all time, Isaac Newton, (ii) that it was written in Latin, and (iii) that even in translation, it