ISAAC CASAUBON THE ARABIST:
‘VIDEO LONGUM ESSE ITER’

Alastair Hamilton

The Huguenot scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) owed his reputation to many achievements—his unparalleled knowledge of Greek, his editions of classical texts with their erudite philological annotations, his attack on Baronius which included an accurate dating of the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus and entailed the destruction of the myth of their antiquity. Arabic plays a small part in his publications, but its presence is all the more striking. The large, and somewhat ungainly, Arabic types of Guillaume Le Bè in Paris which, on small pages such as those in Casaubon’s edition of Gregory of Nyssa’s third epistle, occupy anything up to three lines, give the Arabic words a far greater prominence than the passages in Hebrew and Greek. The relevance of these words to Casaubon’s profound textual analyses is sometimes a little mystifying and leaves the impression of a man reveling in his own discovery of a language which was still little known in Europe. Yet Casaubon also displayed a remarkable insight into the culture of the Arabs; the language occupies an important place in his correspondence and his unpublished notebooks, and it was to the promotion of Arabic studies in the West that he made a significant contribution.

Casaubon was a close witness of the greatest revolution ever to have affected the study of Arabic in Europe. When he started to learn the language there existed no truly satisfactory Arabic grammar or dictionary in print. By the time of his death in 1614 a grammar had been published which would remain unsurpassed for over two hundred years and a dictionary had been printed with an appendix which would influence Arabic lexicography in Europe for just as long. Both the grammar and the appendix were the work of one of his closest friends, the young Dutchman Thomas Erpenius, and, in his letters to Cusaubon, for whose help and encouragement he was to remain deeply grateful, Erpenius recorded every stage of his progress. Casaubon can hardly be said to have taken a direct part in this revolution, but the mere fact that Erpenius should have owed him so much and informed him of his advance in such detail shows that he had an unusual understanding of the problems involved, while his immense reputation as a scholar made him a focal point among European Arabists who consulted him and sent him their works. So what do we know about Casaubon’s own efforts to learn Arabic and his accomplishments as an Arabist in his own right?

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In a letter to Philippe de la Cанaye de Fresnes of August 1592, Casaubon, who was still living in Geneva, said he was preparing to study Arabic, the language used by so many great philosophers, by reading Hebrew. Because of his voracious appetite for information, however, his reasons most probably corresponded to those listed by Guillaume Postel some time earlier, or, as Roger Bacon had put it earlier still, 'for the absolute acquisition of knowledge' ('propter studium sapientiae absolutum').

To the benefits of Arabic given by Bacon and other apologists, its use for philosophers, physicians, astronomers, geographers, theologians, missionaries and historians, Postel had added another one. Arabic, he maintained, was spoken throughout Asia and Africa, from the Fortunate Isles to the Moluccas, from the Atlantic to the eastern shores of the Indian Ocean. It was consequently invaluable for travellers, and Casaubon, whose study of antiquity embraced the eastern Mediterranean, suggested in his letter to De Fresnes that he too would like to travel in the Middle East where he would practise his Rabbinic Hebrew and devote himself seriously to learning Arabic.

In 1596 Casaubon moved to Montpellier and, when he left Montpellier for Paris three years later, he owned at least some of the books he used subsequently for his Arabic studies. These included an *Alphabetaum arabicum* and an unspecified Arabic grammar. But it was only after he had settled in Paris in 1600 that Casaubon, aged just forty, really began to get to grips with the language.

Delighted by the quantity and variety of Arabic material he discovered in the French capital— he immediately had the run of the rich collection of his intellectual patron Jacques-Auguste de Thou besides limited access to the royal library (of which he would become custodian in 1602)—Casaubon proudly reported his swift progress in Arabic to Jacques Lect in December 1600. And in Paris, besides the books and the manuscripts, he found other scholars, some of them lecturers in oriental languages at the Collège Royal and most of them members of the medical profession, who would encourage and help him. One was Etienne Hubert, who had served for a year as physician to the ruler of Morocco, Ahmad al-Mansur, and had subsequently been appointed physician to the French king and nominated professor of Arabic in 1600. It seems to have been Hubert who gave Casaubon his first lessons. Another French Arabist was Hubert's predecessor at the Collège Royal, Arnoul de l'Isle, once the physician of Henri III and later of Ahmad al-Mansur. Returning to Paris in 1599, de l'Isle left again for Morocco, this time as French ambassador, in 1606. And a third was Jean Martin, yet another doctor who probably lectured in Arabic at the Collège Royal. Then, outside the academic world, there was Étienne Fleury, the distinguished councillor who was also interested in Arabic. Casaubon's scholarly reputation was high enough to draw these men to him, and the protection of De Thou stood him in good stead.

Casaubon's main source of inspiration, however, was Joseph Justus Scaliger, who had left Paris for Leiden in 1593 and with whom Casaubon first corresponded in 1595. Scaliger never returned to France. His correspondence with Casaubon intensified over the years and continued until his death in 1609. Scaliger, who was taught Arabic by Guillaume Postel in 1562, owed his fame as an orientalist above all to his work on chronology, *De omnatione temporum*, first published in 1583. By the time he was corresponding with Casaubon, he was engaged in the compilation of an Arabic dictionary, the *Thesaurus linguae arabicae*, which he completed in
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April 1597.14 An accomplished Arabist—he produced a remarkably good Arabic translation of a letter of safe-conduct from Maurice of Nassau—he imparted to Casaubon his perceptive ideas about how the language should be studied.15

Late in September 1601 Casaubon was taking Arabist lessons,16 and in November he told Scaliger that he was drawing up a word list.17 From then on, for some five years, Arabic became one of the subjects he and Scaliger discussed most frequently. From then on, too, Casaubon began to scour his books for Arabic words,18 and Marcus Welser, the classical scholar from Augsburg, expressed the fear that his commitment to Arabic might distract him from his other studies.19 But, Casaubon informed Scaliger, he, like Scaliger himself, had no illusions about the difficulties involved in acquiring even a limited knowledge of the language. It would be ‘a long journey’.20

What characterizes Casaubon’s study of the Arabic language is its dependency on his teachers. First it was Etienne Hubert, and when Hubert absented himself from Paris Casaubon, who was trying to complete his edition of the Historiae Augustae spectaculae, temporarily abandoned Arabic.21 He did not do so for long. In March 1602 Adriæn Willemsz arrived in France with a letter from Scaliger.22 Born in Flushing, Willemsz had matriculated at the Faculty of Arts at Leiden University in April 1695 at the age of eighteen,23 and had subsequently turned to

18. See, for example, his notes on the flyleaf of his copy of Johann Stößler’s Schriftliche fabulose und philosophische schriften (Paris 1585), London, British Library (hereafter BL), shelf-mark 35.5.14.
21. ‘Vide longum esse litter, non dicam, ad cognitionem suas linguas perfectum, sed vel mediocris nostrum. Nam
23. For Casaubon as an Arabist see Pükel (as in n. 15). pp. 57–97.
25. See below, n. 169.
26. BL, MS Burdett 364, fol. 322v: ‘Anno min. CDXCVI promotore, cum ad adhaerendum Jurem doctum, linguarum studia sui adsumus, etc. ad haec incipit interpr: ne dicam, abscipere.’
28. BL, MS Burdett 364, fol. 322v: ‘Anno min. CDXCVI promotore, cum ad adhaerendum Jurem doctum, linguarum studia sui adsumus, etc. ad haec incipit interpr: ne dicam, abscipere.’
32. Boll., MS Casaubon 23, fol. 189r. For Casaubon see Epistolae, I, p. 473. (1 March) ‘Ex inftulo pergebusus, et partem hortum aliusdem ornat Matthias in interpretatione Arabica, medicine. He may well have benefited from the appointment to the chair of Arabic in August 1599 of the converted Polish Jew Philippus Ferdinandus, who was greatly admired by Scaliger but died some four months after his nomination.24 He certainly had lessons from Peter Kirsten at Breslau, a physician who had been touring Europe in an endeavour to learn enough Arabic to read the medical works of Avicenna.25 In the course of his travels Kirsten met an Arabic-speaking Christian who gave him some tuition, and his tour included a visit to the Low Countries and a meeting with Scaliger who assured him that ‘the true doctor of medicine’ could better dispense with Latin than with Greek or Arabic: ‘verus medicus, potius linguas latinæ carere posset, quam veh Arabica, vel Graeca’.26 Erpenius thought Kirsten worthless as an Arabist,27 but in a letter to Casaubon Kirsten would claim some credit for the extraordinary progress made by Adriæn Willemsz and propose that he should edit Adriaen’s postsynuous paper himself.28 Adriæn, therefore, arrived in France with what would seem to have been a solid grounding in the language.

Not only did Casaubon become devoted to Adriaen—he and his wife would consider him an adopted son—but Casaubon used him as his Arabic teacher and relied on him for reading the Arabic texts in his possession.29 Adriæn, for his part, availed himself of the manuscripts owned by Casaubon and his friends. We still have his marginal notes to al-Hanani’s al-Durrat ‘l-nahwiyya, a grammatical text in a manuscript belonging to Etienne Hubert,30 and Casaubon kept the autograph list of words Adriaen drew up when he was reading the codex of the Arabic Discours in the royal library in October 1603.31

In March 1603 Casaubon noted in his journal that he was beginning to study Matthew’s Gospel in Arabic ‘with the utmost delight’ (‘cum summam voluptatem’)—the same phrase he used when he was reading the Hebrew version—and accordingly compiled a wordlist.32 Some time earlier, late in 1601, he had acquired the
Rome, of the work on geography by the twelfth-century topographer al-Idrisi. But al-Idrisi, Hispano-Arab by origin, Moroccan by birth, and Sicilian by adoption, had not been identified and was still generally known in Europe as ‘geographus Arabus’ or ‘Nubiensis’. Caesalponio and Adriaen also read the Koran together. Adriaen made marginal annotations in Caesalponio’s manuscript and added an index of the suras at the end. It was no doubt with Adriaen, moreover, that Caesalponio returned to his copy of the Medici manuscripts, and they started on Avicenna’s Qānūn, also printed by the Typographia Medicea.43 The two men planned a joint publication. In 1602 David Riviart de Fleurance, the future tutor of Louis XIII who was traveling in Italy, sent Caesalponio, who had always had an interest in proverbs as we see from his editions of Theophrastus, an Arabic manuscript containing two hundred proverbs. They were attributed mainly to Abū ‘Ubayd, the philologist born in Herat in the eighth century, but were in fact of various origin, partly Muslim and partly Christian. Riviart had had the text translated into Latin by a Maronite in Rome, but Caesalponio, drawn by the idea of editing the proverbs, found the translation unsatisfactory. He copied out the entire text, as well as the Maronite’s translation, and added a few notes of his own. He also had Adriaen transcribe the first 176 proverbs, which he sent to Scaliager in Leiden at the end of 1602, suggesting that he elucidate some passages. Scaliager did so, and dispatched his translation to Caesalponio in May 1603.44 Adriaen subsequently copied the rest of the manuscript, but Scaliager never completed his work on it.

Having begun under such good auspices, Caesalponio’s Arabic studies met with a major setback in the summer of 1604. Adriaen Willemzelm died, unexpectedly after a brief illness, in July. Caesalponio was heartbroken. In an emotional letter to Scaliager, in which he described his fraticide to Adriaen’s lodgings and the scene at his deathbed, he expressed to the full the affection he had for him, his admiration for his learning, and the depth of his grief.45 As a result of Adriaen’s death

42. For contemporary speculation over his identity see below p. 165.
43. Epistola p. 214. The Koran, which Caesalponio subsequently gave to Riviart, is Bod., MS Marsh 358 (see below n. 116). For an example of Adriaen’s marginalia see p. 69.
44. Epistolas p. 398. See also the copy of the Paris edition of 1592 with his own marginalia, BL, shelf-mark 535 A 10, and the later edition of 1672. His Hebrew and Greek proverbs are collected in Bod., MS Caesalponio 17.
45. Abraham Eichendorff, Die orientalischen sappho, nach den orientalischen Urtexten geschaffen im pea (in n. 107, pp. 105-7)
47. Bod., MS Caesalponio 30. In the published edition Eichendorff included some poems by Caesalponio, to proverbs I.57, 172, 184 and II.55.
48. Adriaen Willemzelm’s transcription of the first 176 proverbs with Scaliager’s marginalia in Leiden, Leiden University Library, shelf-mark 527 D 7. The recent discovery was made by Aronov Ydoviel, see ‘Al ha—Bod—Ad as Fribu—Jepen’ (in n. 14, pp. 48-50 (n. 42).
49. Epistolas p. 163. Cf. the account in Caesalponio’s pericope to Joseph Justus Scaliger, Oecolampadis autou in aetatis suo edita, Paris 1550, siga 3-3.'
Casaubon's commitment to Arabic underwent a long interruption. Even if he told Scaliger in March 1605 that he was still translating the Arabic Geographicus into Latin, and in November that he was reading more of Avicenna's Quaestiones, he had in fact turned his attention almost entirely to his edition of Polybius and, as he informed Sebastian Tengnagel, the Dutch imperial librarian in Vienne, in March 1660, he had all but abandoned Arabic.

By this time, however, Casaubon seems to have assumed above all the role of an adviser, an assistant and a spectator. As Erpenius made his gigantic strides forward, it was to Casaubon that he confided the details of his advance, what he read, whom he met, and his opinion of other Arabists. Thanks to Erpenius Casaubon himself returned to the problems he had planned to publish with Adriaen Willemse but had put aside after his death. In October 1669 he entrusted the manuscript in Adriaen's transcription with Scaliger's translation, and the annotations by both Scaliger and himself, to Erpenius, asking him to retransliterate the text, edit and publish it.

Casaubon's renewed determination to proceed with Arabic was relatively brief. Just as he had depended on Etienne Hubert and on Adriaen Willemse, so he depended on Erpenius, and when Erpenius left Paris at the end of the year Casaubon's Arabic studies came to a standstill. He already referred to them in a letter to Johannes Buxtorf in February 1670 as a thing of the past. A little later

55. Erasmi, p. 255. His notes on Avicenna are in Bodl., MSS Casaubonis 23, fol. 196v-197r, 199v-192r.


59. Basle, Offentliche Bibliothek, MS GT 62, fol. 91v. ‘Inulbium arbitratus est cupitam Arabicae linguae cogitandem cuibe multa vocabula in libris Rabinicius passum legi exposita nonnam. Sed si alio curare ab illo inscripsum renovauerint…’ I owe this reference to Joanna Wilmshurst.

60. Erasmi, p. 535. ‘Curiosum esse a te per- lectum ad hoc satis, quod est aliquot ansiam quos scapillentes te effacerrar, multo non crediderum esse a te praestare. Liberunt eadem opera librarum, et decus tibi apud vere crustidum insomestra perepiem.’


63. Erasmi, p. 527.

64. BL, shelf-mark 622.b.3(4).

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Owing to his diary, his letters, his notebooks (the Adversaria now at the Bodleian Library) and his marginalia, we are comparatively well informed about how Casaubon proceeded with the study of Arabic. The knowledge of Hebrew he shared with nearly all the other early European Arabists was an advantage and
does much to account for his progress in the first stages. He was already acquainted with the morphology of a Semitic language and would have been familiar with certain Arabic words. Yet he also soon realized that the assistance provided by Hebrew was limited. Posset had attributed his own swift mastery of Arabic to his command of Hebrew. 67 Casaubon, who had initially read Hebrew in order to pass on to Arabic, discovered that the proximity between the two languages had been vastly exaggerated, and wondered how Posset could possibly imagine that the two years which he said it might take the Hebraist to learn Arabic was a short time. He also dismissed Posset's claim that Arabic was spoken across Asia. 68

Casaubon appears to have acquired most of the available material on Arabic, and his collection of Arabic printed books, one of the many fruits of his own form of bibliophiliaso memorably described by Mark Pattison, 69 would, when presented to the British Museum many years later, become the basis of the Arabic collection in what is now the British Library. 70 The books he is known to have owned include four works on the Arabic alphabet. 71 One is the Alphabitum arabicum by the professor at Heidelberg Jacob Christmann. 72 Christmann's brief book, published in Neustadt an der Oder, had come out in 1552, and its treatment of the different elements of the alphabet, such as the number, name, shape and phonetic value of the consonants in separate sections with separate headings, was indeed innovative, 73 while the exercises it provides are the Lord's Prayer in Arabic intended as an improvement on the version given by Guillaume Posset in his Arabic grammar of 1538, and a passage (2.6-11) from the Epistle to the Philippians which Christmann had copied from a manuscript deposited by Posset in the library in Heidelberg. The second work was the Specimen characterum araborum by Franciscus Raphelengius. 74 It was published in 1592 and was intended primarily as a specimen to exhibit the Arabic types Raphelengius had had cut for the Officina Plantiniana, the Leiden branch of the printing firm belonging to his father-in-law, Christophe Plantin, in Antwerp. It simply contains the Arabic alphabet (with no further elucidation) and an Arabic version of Psalm 50 (51). The third work, also dated 1592, is the Introductio in linguam arabicam by Bartholomeus Radmann, professor in Frankfurt an der Oder. Despite the title this again is solely concerned with the Arabic alphabet and gives the Arabic text of Psalm 145 (146) 1-7. 73 Casaubon's surviving copy in the British Library lacks

67. Posset, Lexicarium duodecim... introductionis (as in n. 4), sig. D’2'; klem, Grammatica arabica (as in n. 4), sig. D’4'.
68. Boll., MS Casaubon 60, fol. 283'v.
69. Pattison (as n. 4, p. 3); p. 88 'Pleased everyone else, he spent it as he could save on books. Book-buying was to him not the indulgence of a taste or a passion, it was the acquisition of tools'. Cf., e.g., p. 429.
70. T. A. Birrell, 'The Reformation of the Library of Isaac Casaubon', in Halinga Francisco: Fourteen Studies in Bibliography presented to Prof. Dr W J. H. Hallema on the Occasion of his Retirement from the Chair of Neophilology in the University of Amsterdam at the end of the Year 1964, ed. A. R. A. Crome van Uchelen, Amsterdam 1966, pp. 99-104, esp. 102: 'Until Posset's policy began to bear fruit in the late 16th century, Casaubon's little nucleus of orientalia was virtually all that was available to scholars working in the British Museum.'
71. A number of Casaubon's Arabic books are mentioned in Birrell (as in n. 70), pp. 59-63-64.
72. BL, shelf-mark 622.h.2(1).
73. Jones, 'Learning Arabic' (as in n. 20), pp. 181-182.
74. See also Flick (as in n. 17), pp. 42-44.
75. Jones, 'Learning Arabic' (as in n. 20), pp. 265-266.
76. See below, n. 89.
77. BL, shelf-mark 622.h.2(2).
78. See an extensive discussion of Raimondi's work by Jones, 'Learning Arabic' (as in n. 30), pp. 169-170, 266.
As for vocabulary, Casaubon followed the same path as his contemporaries—Scaliger in Leiden, Raphaelengius in Antwerp, Bedwell in London and many others. He drew up wordlists of his own based on all the Arabic sources he could procure. He did so, as we saw, with the Medici press edition of Matthew’s Gospel, diligently noting the words and, in the case of the verbs, giving the correct root and form. He also started to do so with the 1593 edition of Avicenna’s Qūnān. And he tried to extract the Arabic words from Maimonides’s More Nevūḥim.

One result of his efforts was the wordlist, which can probably be dated around 1603, in his interleave copy of the Dictionarium novo hebraico, the Hebrew-Italian-Latin dictionary by the Italian Jewish scholar David De’ Pomi which came out in 1587. On the flyleaf of the dictionary Casaubon lists his sources. Most of them are the publications of the Typographia Medicea—the Gospels, the Ajjurrimiyas, the Kīdāb nasarat al-mushāhā, Ṣāṣir al-Dīn al-Tūsi’s Arabic version of Euclid’s Elements of 1594 and Avicenna’s Qūnān. With the exception of the Gospels, all these works were entirely in Arabic. To these Casaubon added the polyglot Pсалter (in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic) published by Agostino Giustini in Genoa in 1516; two manuscripts, the one of the Koran and the one of the proverbs attributed to Abū ‘Ubayd; and, finally, the Arabic passages in the 1598 edition of Scaliger’s De emendatione temporum.

To bring an Arabic vocabulary into line with a Hebrew dictionary entails one great difficulty, the alphabetical order. A number of Arabic letters are missing in Hebrew. When Casaubon was at work a few European Arabists, such as Bedwell and Scaliger, preferred the so-called abjad order, or variants of it, closer to the Hebrew than that of the hijāʿi alphabet customary today in which the characters are ordered by shape. The abjad was the earliest Arabic alphabetical order and is sometimes known as the Aramaic or numerical order since the letters are arranged according to their numerical value. Two versions of it exist, an eastern one and a western one—which change in the two occur after the fourteenth character (the nān). The European Arabists tended to choose the eastern version, in which the characters with no Hebrew equivalent are placed, in numerical order, at the end of the alphabet, ending with the ghaṣ (غ), with the numerical value of 1000.

This was the order used by Avicenna in his list of medicaments in the Qūnān. While all the works on the Arabic alphabet owned by Casaubon give the hijāʿi order, Radmann alone also discussed the abjad at some length.

The abjad was in fact well known in Europe. Postel had given it in his Arabic grammar, and Theodore Bibliander in his De ratione commentarii enuntiato in gnomum et literarum commentarii of 1548, simply in order to illustrate its numerical function. Yet neither Casaubon nor any of the other European Arabists followed the abjad arrangement, whether western or eastern, in full. Postel was the most faithful, following the eastern system for twenty-three characters, but ending with the ghaṣ (غ), ghain (غ), dāl (د) Bibliander and Radmann followed the same order as far as the thāʾ (ث) and omitted the last six characters; Scaliger, in his Arabic glossary, the unpublished "Thesaurus linguæ arabicæ", promised with the hijāʿi order and arranged some of the letters according to their shape, placing the dāl (د) after the dāl (ذ), the khāʾ (خ) after the dāl (ذ), the ghaṣ (غ) after the yain (ي), and the dād (د) after the sadd (س), and ending with the thāʾ (ث). Bedwell, in his Arabic-Latin dictionary in Cambridge University Library, did something similar, but treated the dāl and the dād as if they were the same letter, as he did the thāʾ and the khāʾ, the thāʾ and the yain, the ghaṣ and the thāʾ, and the sadd and the dād (with which he ended). Even Franciscus Raphaelengius, who followed Postel and the majority of western Arabists in using the traditional hijāʿi order in his Lexicon Arabico-Latinum, published posthumously in 1613, treated those characters only differentiated by diacritical points—the jīm (ج), the hāʾ (ح), and the kāf (ك), the yain (ي), the dāl (ذ), the dāl (ذ), the shād (ش), and the sād (س), the dād (د), and the sād (س), and the sūdān (سودان), and the sadd (س)—at least in the narrative text, as they were the same character.

In his own interleaved dictionary Casaubon seems to have been influenced by Scaliger, following the Hebrew order wherever possible but grouping, according to their shape, the characters with no Hebrew equivalent together with the ones that corresponded to the Hebrew. In Casaubon’s case, as, indeed, in the case of both Bedwell and Raphaelengius, this meant implicitly denying their value as independent letters. We thus find the dāl joined to the dāl under the Hebrew dālāth (ذ), the khāʾ and the hāʾ under the heṭ (خ), the thāʾ and the sadd under the sādāh (س), the thāʾ and the sūdān under the sīn (س), and the sūdān under the sīn (س), and the thāʾ and the sūdān under the sīn (س).

The centre of a circle

Word soon spread that Casaubon was interested in Arabic and he gradually established relations with other scholars in the same field. The first was Scaliger, and it was to Casaubon that Scaliger imparted some of his most important insights. He warned him against positing too close a relationship between Arabic and

seems to have relied on his Turkish informant for much of his information. 'Ordo duplex est. Alio maiore ordine alphabet Arabico-Euarensi, quando primum poenas docet inuentum. Alio quando iitn poenas inuentem.'


93. Leiden, University Library, MS Or. 212.
94. Cambridge, University Library, MSS Lib. 1.7.
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Hebrew and, as we saw, against studying Arabic on the basis of excerpts from the New Testament. He discussed with him numerous aspects of the languages, including the peculiarities of Moroccan Arabic and its influence on Spanish. In February 1602 Casaubon was asking Scaliger about the Arabic version of Maimonides's *Mesech Bethanim*, Arabic paraphrases of the Old Testament, and the Arabic name of Alexander the Great. He informed Scaliger about manuscripts which might interest him. He told him about a French-Arabic-Turkish lexic on he had discovered, and he sent him some notes on the Koran by a 'Dominican' and a specimen of the Arabic types owned by Guillaume Le Bè de Paris (which he had used in his own publications and would use again in his edition of Scaliger's posthumous *Opuscula*).

In July 1603 Casaubon entered into correspondence with William Bedwell, known as the founder of Arabic studies in England. Casaubon had heard about Bedwell from Laue Christensen, a well-connected Dane from Riße who, after studying in Copenhagen and Franeker, had proceeded to Oxford. A friend of Daniel Rogers and William Camden, with an interest in Semitic languages, Christensen had met Bedwell in 1597. From England he had gone to Germany and the Netherlands, and then to France. He had contributed to the spread of Bedwell's reputation as an Arabist on the European continent, and in Paris he sought out Casaubon. Casaubon made the first approaches to Bedwell, addressing him with the modesty of a student calling on a master.

When Casaubon first wrote to him Bedwell, who had studied at Cambridge, was rector of the church of St. Ethelburga in Bishopsgate and lived in London. Diffident and retiring, he nevertheless had powerful friends, such as Lancelot Andrewes, once master of Pembroke Hall at Cambridge, where he and Bedwell probably first met, and subsequently dean of Westminster (1601), bishop of Chichester (1605), bishop of Ely (1609), and finally bishop of Winchester (1619). Andrewes presented Bedwell with the vicarage of Tottenham High Cross in 1607 and would subsidise his trip to Leiden in 1612. Bedwell seems to have introduced him to Casaubon. Like Scaliger and Erpenius, Bedwell informed Casaubon about his various discoveries. He told him about his efforts to find an Arab printer, listed the Arabic texts in his possession and commented on the Arabic versions of the New Testament.

Casaubon corresponded with all the main European Arabists. In September 1608 Jacob Christmann, in Heidelberg, made a copy for his benefit of the first two chapters of the Arabic version of the Epistle to the Romans which had been acquired by Postel; and in 1611 he was referring to mathematical terms in Arabic and asking Casaubon about the Mozarabic Latin-Arabic glossary in Leiden. Étienne Hubert also discussed Arabic terminology with Casaubon. Christophe Dupuy, Cardinal Du Perron's secretary and subsequently royal chaplain, informed him, early in 1604, of the Arabic books and manuscripts he had brought back from Rome, and communicated further bibliographical discoveries in Rome to him two years later. Other scholars sent him their works. Kirsten, besides telling him about his studies and enquiring about manuscripts in the royal library, sent him his Arabic grammar, his edition of Avicenna and his notes on the Matthew Gospel, while Georg Michael Lingelheim, councillor of the Elector Palatine, lent Casaubon the manuscript of an Arabic medical lexicon from the Heidelberg library.

In 1608 Casaubon was approached by Yístif IsbAb Dhajn, known in Europe as Josephus Barbatius or Abudacun, a Copt who had recently arrived in Paris and, impelled by a thirst for knowledge and curiosity about the West, was in search of celebrities. Abudacun, from Cairo, is now known as the author of the *Historia Yacchirum, seu Coptorum*, one of the first histories of the Church of Alexandria, published posthumously in Oxford in 1675. He had come to Rome in 1595 with a letter to the pope, Clement VIII, from the patriarch of Alexandria, Gabriel VII. He had converted to Catholicism and joined the Discalced Carmelites, but he seems never to have been fully ordained and, in circumstances which remain obscure, left Rome for Paris. Once he was in France he managed to enter the circle of professors of Arabic at the College Royal, thanks to whom he was appointed interpreter royal and occasionally employed as a teacher of Arabic. On 9 July 1608 he wrote Casaubon a letter introducing himself and listing the many languages he claimed to know. His eagerness to get in touch with Casaubon, and the fact that his letter was entirely in Arabic, is evidence of the reputation Casaubon had acquired. A few months later, in September, Abudacun wrote a similar letter to Scaliger in Leiden, but he wrote it in Italian and added an Arabic version.
Casaubon's last mainstay in Arabic studies was, as we saw, Thomas Erpenius who arrived in Paris in January 1609. Erpenius had studied in Leiden. He had there mastered Hebrew, and his decision to proceed to Arabic seems to have been due to the influence of Scaliger. Scaliger had given him a letter of introduction to English scholars, and Erpenius had travelled from Leiden to England in order to attend the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Once in England, in September 1608, he made the acquaintance of William Bedwell. In December Bedwell began to teach him the rudiments of Arabic. 

Erpenius stayed in Paris from January to November 1609. It was there that he started to make the rapid progress in Arabic which enabled him to compile his grammar, and this progress, an Erpenius always admitted with passionate gratitude, was due in part to Casaubon. To begin with, Casaubon encouraged him with his expressions of admiration; he lent him his Arabic material and introduced him to Abudacus who gave him further tuition. Neither Bedwell nor Abudacus, however, proved particularly good teachers. In November 1609 Erpenius left Paris for Saumur, where he spent much of 1610 before returning again to Paris. He continued to work on his Arabic grammar and was attracted by Casaubon's proposal that he should have it published, together with the proverb, by Le Bé in Paris. In March 1611, however, Casaubon had to inform him that Le Bé now refused to publish works by 'heretics'. Casaubon gave him his manuscript Koran with Adriaen Willemsz's marginalia by way of consolation.

On his second visit to Paris Erpenius made a further advance in Arabic thanks to the lessons he received from the Moroccan envoy, Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari, whom he met in Constantinopole. This event which he recounted to Casaubon in detail. At this point, too, apparently again thanks to Casaubon who approached them through William Bedwell, the surviving sons of Franciscus Raphelengius.

in charge of the Officina Plantiniana in Leiden asked Erpenius to correct their father's Arabic-Latin lexicon which they had at last decided to publish and wished to issue together with Erpenius's own Arabic grammar. Hoping to improve his Arabic, Erpenius left France for the South in an attempt to sail from Venice to Istanbul. No ships were sailing, and he had to content himself with the Venetian bookshops and the European libraries—Milan, Basle, Geneva and, above all, Heidelberg—before he made his way back to Leiden. He arrived in July 1612 and took up the professorship of Arabic at the university in the following year. Here again Casaubon had done his utmost to help him, enlisting the support of Hugo Grotius and Daniel Heinsius in Holland. Throughout this period Erpenius kept in touch with him. From his letters we can follow his improvement, his expeditions to the various European collections of Arabic manuscripts, and his revolutionary discovery of the Arabic-Turkish glossaries and of the monolingual Arabic dictionaries which enabled him to correct countless errors in Raphelengius's lexicon. 

Casaubon left France at the end of 1612 and settled in London. Here he found himself again in the company of Arabs. His arrival coincided with Abudacus's stay in England, and they met in London, where Abudacus's collection of celebrities grew by the day. Casaubon could also at last meet his English friends with whom he had corresponded for so long. One was Lancelot Andrewes, who had been elevated to the see of Ely, and the other was Bedwell. Bedwell introduced him to the publisher and bookseller John Bill, who would furnish him with books throughout his stay in London and publish his critique of Baronius. When he visited Leiden in 1612 Bedwell carried with him letters from Casaubon to his Dutch friends. He sent Casaubon an account of his experiences and his meetings, and when the two men were both in London Bedwell showed him his Arabic lexicon. However little time he had for his Arabic studies in England, Casaubon continued to encourage other Arabs, urging Etienne Huber, for example, to publish something on Arabic with the collaboration of Le Bé. Casaubon was still believed to be one of the foremost scholars studying Arabic, and Bedwell transcribed a letter written to Casaubon in July 1613 by the Arabic-speaking Christian Marquis al-Durābīl al-Kurdi or Marco Dobelco, who had lectured in Arabic in Rome, moved to Spain, and was searching for employment in England.

Quite apart from the services which Bedwell and Andrews rendered to Casaubon, they were very loyal and affectionate friends who did much to mitigate the xenophobia he detected in the streets of London and the resentment of his achievements he believed he found at the court and universities. In a querulous
Arabia, although clearly a Muslim, referred to Christ, and he made particular use of his description of the Holy Land. In his edition of Gregory of Nyssa of 1660 he quotes the geographer’s passage on Bethlehem and his descriptions of the gates of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre;35 while in his attack on Baronius, De rebus sacrati et ecclesiasticis exercitationes of 1614, he quotes him on the distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem.36

The terminology of Avicenna attracted special attention in medical circles, and the quest for reliable manuscripts of Avicenna’s writings on medicine induced many doctors to study Arabic. On a couple of occasions Casaubon corrected the Arabic in the Medici press edition of Avicenna’s Quinain. In the notes to the Historiae Augustanae scriptores of 1604 he pointed out an error in Avicenna’s use of the term conditum, a pharmacological preparation.37 Two years later, in De satyriva Graecorum poesi, he quotes Avicenna in Arabic on priapism and again corrects an error in the Medici press version;38 and in his edition of Persius of the same year, when discussing the herb ophanum (basil), he recommends the use of the Arabic medical lexicon in the Heidelberg library lent him by Lingelheim for elucidating a vocabulary which had so often been misinterpreted.39

Only once does Casaubon refer to his collection of Arabic proverbs—in his notes to the Historiae Augustanae scriptores where he compares one of them to a Latin equivalent.40 He made, on the other hand, a somewhat catholic use of his acquaintance with Arabic vocabulary. In his analysis of the word castra, defined in the same text as the “Moorish” for elephant, he points out that the Arabic, like the Hebrew, is fit (of which he gives only the Hebrew transcription, in a smaller typeface better suited to the rest of his book).41 Like a number of his contemporaries, such as

139. “...et apud Avicennam, qui omnium nobilium poetae est, hunc ortum, sed in Arabica eius editione ut scripturam hanc nomen quasi legatur apud Graecos, gulosae pro subtilius duplici errore. Quem ad sectam est Avicenna, qui solum utinam in peccato adoptet.”
140. Casaubon, In Alcæum Spartanum (as in n. 133), p. 470.
141. Ibid, p. 97.
William Bedwell, he speculates on etymology. He had corresponded with Scaliger about the etymology of the name 'Helogabatus' and advances the words for 'God', Allah and for 'mountain', jebel, which he prints in Arabic.143

One of the sources Casaubon quotes in this connection is of particular interest: the Mozarabic Latin-Arabic manuscript glossary in Leiden, dating from the twelfth century, about which Christmann enquired in 1611.144 Originally owned by Postel, who had given Franciscus Raphelengius his first Arabic lessons, it had been lent, by way of Andreas Miasios, to Christophe Plantin's firm in Antwerp for use by Miasios's pupil Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie when he was preparing the Syriac text for the Antwerp Polyglot Bible. Postel subsequently allowed Raphelengius to keep it. It would form the basis of the Arabic-Latin lexicon on which Raphelengius was still working in Leiden when he died in 1597, and it was also used by Scaliger as one of the main sources for his own Arabic-Latin 'Thesaurus'. As long as he lived, Scaliger appears to have had it on permanent loan from its true owner, Raphelengius's sons and heirs, to whom it returned after Scaliger's death.145 The manuscript, therefore, always remained in Leiden, but Casaubon nevertheless cites it as though he had seen it himself. How can this be explained?

Scaliger had copied out extracts from the glossary, and the Latin words from the extracts, but not the Arabic ones, had been published by Bonaventura Vulcanius in his Thesaurus urtisique linguae in 1600.146 On the first of the two occasions on which Casaubon cites the Mozarabic glossary, when referring to a jewelled clasp, he is clearly quoting from Vulcanius.147 The second reference concerns the gender of the word 'moon'.148 Casaubon points out that *gane* (gane) is masculine, but adds that *gane* (hâla), which he claims to have seen in the Mozarabic dictionary, is feminine. Hâla, however, does not exist. It is not to be found either in the Mozarabic glossary or in Scaliger's 'Thesaurus'. Both the glossary149 and the 'Thesaurus'150 give the correct form, *hâla* (hâla), which is masculine. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that Scaliger was Casaubon's source. In the last, separately paginated, section of the 1598 edition of his De emendatione temporum, the 'Veterum Graecorum fragmenta selecta', Scaliger gives hâla and says he found it in the Mozarabic glossary.151 The mistake, therefore, is Scaliger's, who may have confused the singular with the plural (gane, ahala), which is indeed in the glossary.152

144. Leiden, University Library MS Or 231. The glossary was published by C. F. Seybold, Glosario latino-arabicum ex extantibus codicibus hispanicis coeperant, Leiden 1806, col. 703.
147. This is by far the best study of the glossary.
149. Leiden, University Library, MS Or 231, fol. 84v.
150. Leiden, University Library, MS Or 231, fol. 4v.
151. Scaliger, De emendatione temporum (as in n. 88), p. 206: 'Nec ipsum hostium 120 dixit a se mpurgip, id est, Loomant proprediit et nescit centum, cum secundo die a suis vicinis sumus planetam faciit, ut
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had told Casaubon that Abudacrus was unsatisfactory as a teacher, 158 and he lamented Bedwell’s shyness and his reliance on a limited number of sources. 159 He was dissuasive of the Mennonite Jan Thounissi, who taught Arabic in Leiden before he himself was given the chair. 160 And in the marginalia which he, too, added to Hubert’s al-Hasani manuscript once used by Adriaen Willemsz, he made it clear that a number of the corrections which Adriaen had proposed to the original were completely wrong. 161 He even had reservations about his early master Ahmad ibn Qasim al-Hajari, and al-Hajari, who called on Erpenius in Leiden, was amused at his former pupil’s Arabic, so classical and inflected. He pointed out that he did not observe the zamr, the vocallessness of certain consonants, 162 and, he might have added, spoke a language quite unlike anything spoken by the Arabs themselves.

Erpenius wrote a cordial letter to Casaubon about the proverbs. Nevertheless he observed that Scaliger’s notes and translation required much improvement. Indeed, he felt that Scaliger’s version was far inferior to the much criticized Matron-Neitzel translation which Casaubon had been sent from Rome. The Arabic itself, he said, was so full of mistakes in the vocalisation as to be virtually incomprehensible. He admitted that this must have been due to the intervention of colloquial forms and the copyist’s ignorance of the classical language, but the implication of his criticism was that none of the scholars involved—Casaubon, Scaliger and Adriaen Willemsz—had fully appreciated the defects of the text. 163

Erpenius was right in observing that the rules of classical Arabic were violated repeatedly in the manuscript he received, but was he right in calling these violations mistakes? If we look closely at the transcriptions of the original, by Casaubon and Adriaen Willemsz, the matter appears in a different light. The text is one of many


166. Erpenius, Epistolae, p. 665.

167. BIB, MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

168. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

159. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

160. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

161. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

162. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

163. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

164. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

165. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

166. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

167. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

168. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’

169. Ibid., MS Arabic 4127, p. 28 (see n. 30).

170. Adelard of Melrose (as in n. 8), p. 285: ‘...et habuit multos libris arsque et legavit la grammatica eruditorum et de studiis et de scientiis et de sapientiis et de doctis...’
examples of what is now known as Middle Arabic, a state of the Arabic language heavily influenced by colloquial usage which is of increasing interest to linguists at the moment. 170 Like many editors to this day, Erpenius believed that, in order to be published, an Arabic text should necessarily be in the classical language, and he used his publications for teaching it to his Leiden students. So he improved and purified the Arabic of the proverbs. He corrected the plurals, turning, for example, the oblique al-sayyadīn ('huntmen') of the original into the correct nominative, al-sayyadīn (I.12), and changing the nominative al-hāfīn ('robbers') into the oblique al-hāfīn (I.18). He supplied the vowel and other orthographic signs he had learnt from the Arab grammarians. He added an alif with the tanūt or 'unination' to undefined substantives in the accusative case. In I.3.7 he preferred the construct state fī (ṣ) to fām (ḍ), 'mouth'. By classifying the text and turning it into Koranic Arabic he had transformed it.

However Erpenius may have judged his transcription, Casaubon's plan to publish the proverbs is another example of his originality as a scholar. When he received the manuscript no text of Arabic literature existed in print. Works in Arabic had indeed appeared—on history, topography, medicine, mathematics and grammar. There were devotional writings and, above all, parts of the New Testament, so frequently used as linguistic exercises. The proverbs, on the other hand, belonged to an entirely different genre. After their publication Erpenius himself edited further collections of Arabic sayings while later European Arabists also advanced to different works of literature—to the poets, to the authors of the Maqāmāt in rhyming prose, and to the tales which would at last give the culture of the Arabs a more popular appeal.

Casaubon was equally original in his approach to other aspects of Arab culture. In his edition of the satires of Persius, which came out in 1605, he announced his intention of discussing Arabic poetry, 171 his interest in which is further confirmed by the passages he underlined and commented on in his copy of the 1566 Antwerp edition of De totius Africæ descriptione by Leo Africansus. 172 That he never carried out his plan could be attributed in part to shortage of time, but also to the lack of texts available in the West at that moment. The project itself, however, is yet another indication that he was in the vanguard of students of Arabic. Bedwell had no such insight and, in his various apologies of Arabic, never refers to its poetry. Erpenius, on the other hand, would present a stirring defence of Arabic poetry in his orations of 1613 and 1620. 173

Casaubon had started to read the Koran in 1603, and although he often dismissed it in the traditional terminology of anti-Islamic rhetoric, referring to its 'many absurdities and abominations' 174 and 'insane figurative speech' (which he also applied to the writings of the Rabbis), 175 he had a genuine interest in it. He transmitted to Scaliger some notes on it by 'a Dominican', of which he was himself critical. 176 Erpenius discussed with him the meaning of certain Koranic terms. 177 The various lists of his books show that he owned at least three copies of the Koran in Arabic, a Latin translation which must have been the Bibliander edition of 1543, and the so-called Epigraphic Alcoranite, 178 an anonymous Latin abridgment of the text edited in 1543, together with medieval material and other pieces of his own, by Johann Albrecht von Widanansuter. 179

Casaubon's immense interest in all aspects of the Arab world, in its topography, its history and its religions, as much as in its language, is attested not only by his translation of al-Idrīsī but also by the marginalia in his copy of Leo Africansus. When Leo wrote his Descrittione dell'Africa in Italian in 1526 he had converted to Christianity. That was the price of his release from Castel S. Angelo, where he had been held ever since the pirates who had captured him off the island of Djerba had presented him as a gift to the pope, Leo X. But he was born a Muslim and had served the ruler of Morocco, and he would seem to have reverted to Islam after his departure from Italy. 180 His religious sympathies thus remain something of a mystery, and Casaubon speculates on them on the fly-leaf of his copy. But Leo's work contains a wealth of details about the institutions of Islamic Africa, and particularly of Morocco, and his accounts of Arab learning and Arabic literature would be exploited by European apologists of Arabic such as Erpenius. 181 These items of information too were underlined by Casaubon, who seems to have been especially interested by what Leo had to say about Egypt.

Another work to which Casaubon provided abundant marginalia was the Maronite confession of faith published entirely in Arabic by the Typographia Medicea in 1593, 182 probably a relatively late acquisition, which he might have read on his own. He marked those points which a Protestant would have regarded as contentious, such as the Catholic claim that the Maronites believed both in the seven sacraments and in purgatory, and he underlined the passages concerning the Church councils in which the Eastern Churches played an important part—Nicaea, Chalcedon, Constantinople and Florence. He could have intended to use

171. See his edition of Persius (as in n. 140), pp. 113–34; De Arabum rhetorica, qua fere converted est Muhammadus Alcoranum, si aliam inscripsit Drucus vocum, alias discriminat.
172. RL, shelf no. 793.d.2, fol. 19v-20, 43v, 133v.
the information in his *De libertate ecclesiastica* of 1607, or, more probably, in the continuation of his critique of Baronius, in answer to Baronius’s statements about the Eastern Churches and his belief in their imminent unity with Rome.

Interest in the Christians of the East was widespread in the circle of scholars surrounding Casaubon. Their Churches, generally regarded as a more faithful reflection of the early Church than the Catholic one, were admired by Protestants for their resistance to the overtures of the papacy. This same concern with the Eastern Christians also led Casaubon to expand his knowledge of their languages. His curiosity was by no means limited to Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic. He owned material in Ethiopic\(^{183}\) and in Armenian,\(^{184}\) although he never actually studied them. When he was in Paris he came across a bilingual version of the New Testament in Arabic and Coptic, as well, it would seem, as a trilingual manuscript, in Coptic, Arabic and Greek, of the Epistle to Philemon, belonging to Cardinal Du Perron. He consequently tackled Coptic.\(^{185}\) Even if he does not appear to have gone much farther than the alphabet, his efforts, made some twenty years before Athanasius Kircher truly introduced Coptic into the West,\(^{186}\) do credit to Casaubon’s intuition of its importance.

**Conclusion**

As a practitioner of the Arabic language Casaubon may have had his shortcomings, but as a student of Arab culture he often displayed extraordinary foresight. His criticism of the Arabic New Testament and his interest in Arabic literature are some of the first signs of developments that would come into their own later in the century. The enthusiasm with which he tackled the language infected others. The better contemporary Arabists—Kirsten, Christmann, Tengnagel, Hubert, Scaliger, Bedwell, and the best of all, Erpenius—regarded him as an equal who could understand their problems and appreciate their discoveries. Befriended by the foremost scholars in Europe, Casaubon was also one of the great letter writers of his day. Even if he owed his reputation to his activity in fields other than Arabic, it was as an Arabist, too, that he assumed a pivotal position in the Republic of Letters. His writing desk, like those of Erasmus, Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc, Jean Le Clerc, Mathurin Reyssiere de La Croze and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, became one of its ephemeral capitals. We are indebted to his letters for much of what we know of the development of Arabic studies in Europe in the early seventeenth century, and he played a central part in the reception and transmission of ideas about the subject.

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\(^{183}\) Bodl., MS Casaubon 22, fol. 34r, 120v. See also the list of Ethiopic words, transcribed and taken from Francisco Alvarez’s account of the quest for Presbyter John, in MS Casaubon 30, fol. 77v–79r, and his comments on the Ethiopic liturgy in MS Casaubon 65, fol. 62v–63r.

\(^{184}\) Bodl., MS Casaubon 22, fol. 44v.

\(^{185}\) Bodl., MS Casaubon 22, fol. 47v–49r.

\(^{186}\) Bodl., MS Casaubon 22, fol. 47v–49r.

\(^{186}\) On the early history of Coptic studies see Hamilton, *The Copts* (as in n. 110), pp. 97–99.