ARABIC STUDIES IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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Within fifty years, between 1640 and 1660, the Dutch revolutionized the study of Arabic. They produced some of the best editions of Arabic texts, the best readers, the best dictionaries and the best grammars, and they assembled one of the very best libraries of Arabic works in Western Europe. They overtook with apparent ease other nations, the Germans, the French, the Italians, the English and the Spaniards, who had contributed to the subject in the past and who, in the case of the Italians and the Spaniards, possessed, at the beginning of our period, collections of Arabic texts in the Vatican and the Escorial superior to anything to be found in the Low Countries. This development was primarily the work of two men, Thomas Exterius and Jacob Golius, both of whom studied and taught at the university of Leiden, and the key to their success is to be sought in the gradual deployment of Oriental studies at the oldest university in the Northern Netherlands.

Behind the later flourishing of Arabic studies at Leiden stands the figure of the French scholar of Italian origin, Joseph Justus Scaliger (1). In the first place a classicist with a lifelong interest in chronology, Scaliger was only incidentally an Orientalist and only very incidentally an Arabist, yet he had a vision of the study of Arabic which far surpassed his time, and as long as that vision was pursued by his pupil Exterius, and by Exterius' pupil Golius, the Dutch remained masters of this field. Scaliger came to the university of Leiden in 1593, eighteen years after the foundation of the university in 1575. He had embarked on the study of Arabic many years earlier, while he was living in Paris in the 1560s, and he had then struggled with the difficulties entailed by the nascent state of Arabic teaching. There were hardly any printed texts on which to practice. Not a single dictionary was in print except for Pedro de Alcalá's Spanish-Arabic glossary printed in Granada in 1505 (4). The grammars were pitifully few and inadequate. The earliest printed one was also by Pedro de Alcalá, Arte para ligereamente saber la lengua arábiga, published, like the glossary, in Granada in 1505, and nothing further seems to have appeared on the subject until the French Orientalist Guillaume Postel (5) published his Grammaire arabe in 1538. Postel had studied Arabic in Constantinople and had assembled what, at the time, was considered a respectable collection of Arabic manuscripts. Scaliger consequently chose him as his teacher. It was, however, largely on resistance against Postel's approach to the language that Scaliger developed his own ideas. Postel, who was particularly susceptible to dreams, cherished the supremely unrealistic belief in the possibility of converting the Muslims to Christianity by presenting them with a few well-chosen and incontrovertible Christian texts translated into Arabic. Like so many other of his contemporaries, moreover, like Sebastian Münster, Theodor Bibliander and Angelo Camini, Postel regarded Arabic as a descendant of Hebrew which, with Syriac and Amharic, would be of use to theologians for the better understanding of Hebrew and the elucidation of some of the more obscure terms in the Old Testament and the Rabbinic writings.

Scaliger appears to have been thoroughly dissatisfied with Postel as a teacher of Arabic, and this was due not only to ideas on the subject, which he could not share, but also to the method of teaching established by Postel and followed by the two later German authors of Arabic textbooks, Jacob Christmann, whose Alphabetum arabicum appeared in 1582, and Rüdiger Spey, whose Compendium Grammaticum Arabice appeared in 1583. The method these, and so many later Arabists, followed was to use Arabic versions of parts of the New Testament for simple linguistic exercises. Thanks to Postel the library of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg had acquired an important collection of versions of the New Testament in Syriac and Arabic which the Frenchman had brought back from the Levant (6). Fransciscus Junius, the Elector’s librarian, who was appointed professor of theology in Leiden in 1592, decided to use these versions in order to elucidate and reestablish the text of the New Testament, and in 1578 he published a Latin translation of the Arabic version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Corinthians, and seems to have made, but not published, translations of the Acts and John, Galatians and Hebrews (7). He stressed the possibility that the Arabic text might be less corrupt than the other received versions. It would thus be a more faithful rendering of the ideas of the Apostles. Christmann was a pupil of Junius, and, by appending a passage in Arabic from Postel’s manuscript of the Epistle to the Philippians to his Alphabetum arabicum, he was combining the aim of his master with the didactic purpose of providing reading matter in Arabic.

Christmann’s example was followed by Arabists throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth century - Spey, Bedwell, Theunisz, Exterius, Hissigius, Petreius, all at one point published Arabic versions of Scriptural Books, and, even if Postel, Junius and Christmann inaugurated the fashion of publishing Arabic Scriptural recensions, the primary inspiration behind their work was the aim of reestablishing the text of the Scriptures evident in the series of great Polyglot Bibles which had been appearing ever since the early sixteenth century - the Complutensian Polyglot started in 1502 and first circulated in 1522, the Antwerp Polyglot issued between 1569 and 1573 by Christophe Plantin, to be followed in the seventeenth century by the Paris Polyglot (1629-1648) and the London Polyglot (1667). The advantages and the perils of such an attitude to Arabic became particularly evident in the early eighteenth century when Albert Schultens was teaching at Leiden. On the one hand theologians were attracted to the study of the subject and patrons were susceptible to arguments based on the theological importance of the language. On the other hand the tendency to treat Arabic as ancillary to Christian theology prevented any true appreciation of Arabic culture, just as its alleged use for the better understanding of Hebrew prevented Arabic from being treated as a language in its own right with a development entirely independent of Hebrew. Ultimately, therefore, the visions of Postel were to hold up the development of Arabic studies and this was something which Scaliger, well in advance of his time, had the imagination to realize.
Having himself started to study Arabic on the basis of translations of the Scriptures, Scaliger soon saw how limiting such a procedure was. The restricted vocabulary was of no assistance in acquiring a broader acquaintance with Arab culture, and he referred with contempt to those who, after three hours spent reading one Pauline Epistle, set themselves up as Arabists and went to teach others (8). The student of Arabic, Scaliger maintained, must start with the Qur'an. In the late sixteenth century this usually meant obtaining an Arabic manuscript of the text and reading it alongside the Latin translation originally done by the Englishman Robert of Keton at the expense of Peter of Chaundy in 1543 and edited by Theodore Bilhander in 1549. "You can no more master Arabic without the Qur'an than Hebrew without the Bible", Scaliger wrote to the French scholar Isaac Casaubon in 1603, and elsewhere he rightly insisted on the necessity of reading as many different Arabic texts in as vast a variety of fields as possible (9). Scaliger also realized how misleading it was to study Arabic in association with Hebrew, for a very brief sketch, he admitted, such an approach might serve some purpose for the beginner, but in the long run the student would be seduced by the apparent similarity and fail to grasp the real difference between the words (10). Rather than Hebrew the language that really could lead to a better knowledge of Arabic was Turkish (11). This was not on account of any similarity between the languages but because the Turks were the most accomplished students of Arabic. Centuries of veneration for the language of the Qur'an meant that they had produced the best guides to that language. For the European, therefore, the true key to Arabic was the knowledge of these guides - and it was with such an idea in mind that Dignus and Galus were to study first Turkish and then Persian and make such good use of Persian and Turkish Arabic dictionaries in their own lexicographical publications.

The proximity between Arabic and Hebrew was one of various traditional arguments for the study of Arabic that Scaliger rejected. He rejected too the idea, once sincerely held but now usually advanced to attract gullible patrons, that Arabic should be studied for missionary purposes, to enable Western theologians to confuse the Qur'an and convert the Muslims to Christianity (12). Scaliger assigned to the study of Arabic, rather, certain practical ends. The Arabs had produced great doctors, mathematicians, astronomers, geographers, historians and chroniclers. He himself made use of the historians and chroniclers in his own work on chronology, on geographies, languages, and Scaliger's influence accounts for the important editions of writings of Arab scholars prepared by his pupils and which were to contribute to such a large extent of the Oriental knowledge of the Western world.

From a practical point of view, Scaliger's influence went still further. His advanced ideas on the study of Arabic were contained in his Ephemerides aevi edited by Daniel Hebraeus and published in 1627, but his great practical contribution was to lay the foundations of the Leiden collection of Arabic manuscripts (13). The texts which Scaliger had laboriously assembled, texts transmitted to him from Cairo, Alexandria, Marsilles and elsewhere, formed a collection limited both in size and scope when compared to the holdings of the Vatican and the Escorial, yet at the time it was one of the largest in Northern Europe and in 1626 the sedentary English Arabist William Backell travelled to Leiden partly for the purpose of consulting it. From Backell's point of view its greatest treasures were the Arabic versions of the New Testament and an Arabic-Latin glossary, the Thesaurus linguae arabicae, which Scaliger himself had compiled (14).

By the time Scaliger came to Leiden in 1593 Arabic studies had unquestionably made some progress since his days in Paris. Apart from the appearance in the early 1580s of the books of Christiaen and Spay the most important contributions came from Italy. The Italians had a venerable tradition of Arabic studies, especially where the art of typography was concerned (15). Even if the first book to contain Arabic characters was Breidenbach's Peregrinum in Terram Sanctam published in Mainz in 1486, the Italians soon caught up. A Qur'an is said to have been published in Venice in 1599 (16), and in 1514 there appeared in the little town of Fano on the Adriatic the Kitaq Qu'ran al-Sa'idi or Botom horee childhoods issued for the benefit of the Egyptian Copts. This was followed in 1516 by Ag owing Rheder's Jacob the Polyglot Psalterium with Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic and Arabic versions of the Psalms in parallel columns published in Genoa, and in 1524 there appeared a Marotic prologuebook in Arabic but printed in Syriac characters at the expense of Pope Gregory XIII. Also in 1584, with the encouragement of Cardinal Ferdinand de' Medici, the Future Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Typographia Medicea was founded in Rome (17). The first European press to publish systematically in Arabic, it was run by an Orientalist of genius, Giovanni Battista Palmieri, and between 1590 and 1595 it produced a series of Arabic books - two editions (one bilingual, in Latin and Arabic, and one in Arabic) of the Gospels, and, solely in Arabic, two works on syntax by Arab grammarians, Ibn al-Majid's Kitab al-Farq and the so-called Aderabijan, an abridgment of a part of the work of the geographer al-Mardi entitled Niharik al-aslaq, Awidma's al-Qurun, and Najir al-Din-al-kull's Arabic translation of al-Bid'is Elements. These works, produced in an elegant typeface, were to become obligatory reading matter for Arabists, but, nearly all entirely in Arabic, they were of no use to beginners. They were produced, rather, with an eye to sales in the Ottoman Empire. Only a relatively small number of copies seem to have been available in Northern Europe and the English Arabist William Backell did not manage to obtain the Backell Elements until over ten years after its original publication in 1594 (18).

With the other major advance in Arabic studies Scaliger was more immediately involved. This was the decision of Plantin's son-in-law, the elder Francis Baphetelius, to have Arabic types cast for the Officina Plantiniana in Leiden (19). Baphetelius had arrived in Leiden in order to run the Officin in 1596 and was appointed professor of Hebrew at the university in the following year (20). He had a wide knowledge of Oriental languages and had been of assistance to his father-in-law during the production of the Polyglot Bible.

For his mastery of Arabic he seems to have been indebted to Pellezius (who also worked on the Antwerp Polyglot), and, as professor of Hebrew, he was additionally pre-
perceived to give instruction in Arabic. He can thus be said to have inaugurated the study of the subject in Leiden, but it was only in the last years of his life, and especially with the arrival of Scaliger, that he had the time and the incentive to cultivate the language as systematically as he would have liked. One of the reasons for his having Arabic types cut was to print the Arabic quotations in the revised edition of Scaliger's De emendatione temporum. A further purpose was to print his own Arabic dictionary which he had been compiling together with an Arabic grammar (that has since been lost), and he knew from the Introduction to his dictionary, which was at last published in 1611, that it was partly intended for those many men who had commercial dealings with the Arabic-speaking world. Raphelengius made little use of his Arabic type before his death in 1597, but in 1595, besides his type specimen, the Specimen Characterum Arabicorum, he printed, solely in Arabic, an accompanying letter signed by the Prince of Orange for the navigator Cornelis Houtman and his fellow passangers sailing to the Far East (21).

This brings us to an urgent motive for studying Arabic in Holland: the increasing diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire and Morocco, the growing need for interpreters, and the requirements of the merchant, the navigator, and the traveller. Throughout the period we are dealing with those Leiden professors who knew Arabic - Scaliger, Raphelengius, Theunisz, Espenius, Colius - were all called upon to translate official dispatches for the government. Scaliger complained strongly of the difficulty involved in tackling these elaborate and prolix documents which required the knowledge of an entirely new vocabulary (22), and these same documents were among the material which Raphelengius used to compile his dictionary. At the same time interest in the East was sustained and stimulated by a series of works by geographers and travellers - Leo Africanus' description of Africa, the books on Turkey by Babesci, Pierre Gilles, Pierre Belon, Douai and others, Thouret's cartography and the atlases of Ortelius, Mercator and Blaeu, the voyages of Claudius, Nicolas de Nicolay and Linschoten, and the descriptions of journeys to the Levant and the Holy Land by Breedenbach and Basilius.

The importance of the language for trade with the Levant induced the curators of Leiden University to provide for the teaching of Arabic. Two years after Raphelengius' death in 1599 a Jewish convert to Christianity of Polish descent, Philippus Ferdinandi (23), was appointed to lecture in Arabic, but his career was tragically short: he died in 1601, and for the last eight years of Scaliger's life which ended in 1609 the post remained vacant. The situation did not change until 1612, one of the most eventful years in the history of Arabic studies at Leiden.

In February 1612 the curators of the university at last gave way to the insistence of Jan Theunisz and appointed him to teach Arabic. Theunisz (Joannes Antonides) had worked as a printer and bookseller and he had acted as an innkeeper in Amsterdam (24). He was a man of considerable versatility and later designed a system of waterworks in his house in Amsterdam which impressed more than one English traveller. By religion he was a Maronite. He appears to have started studying Arabic under Raphelengius, and he improved his knowledge by letting rooms to the secretary of the Moroccan envoy to the Dutch Republic. However, delayed as he was later to be by better Arabists than himself there can be little doubt that Theunisz's continued experience of Arabic and of typography contributed to the sudden revival of the Officina Plantiniana as printers of Arabic.

Although Pruss Raphelengius' youngest son, Joost and Pruss the Younger, were already planning to rid themselves of their typographical material they seem to have been determined first to publish their father's Arabic dictionary, and on this they started work, with Theunisz's help, in 1611. Since their father's death in 1597 the Officina's Arabic types had been used comparatively seldom - for words and passages in Scaliger's De emendatione temporum of 1598, in Douai's De temporibus Constantii regum (1599), in Scaliger's edition of Humilis' Apocrypha and Grotius' Synagogenlsten, both of 1600, and in Claudius' Reise in Libyen of 1603.

In 1612, on the other hand, the firm was working on the older Raphelengius' dictionary. Theunisz himself had the Raphelengius brothers produce his edition of the Arabic version of the Epistle to Titus, and William Bedwell, who arrived from England in August, hoping to consult Scaliger's library and to purchase their Arabic types in order to print the Arabic dictionary which he himself had been compiling since the 1580s, asked them to publish his edition of the Arabic version of the Johannine Epistles (25).

However significant Theunisz's contribution to the activity of the Officina Plantiniana it was dwarfed by the contribution of one of Scaliger's most brilliant pupils who returned to Holland in that same year of 1612 - Thomas Espenius (26). Espenius (Thome van Eype) was born in Goriachem in 1581, his parents being Protestant emigrants from 's-Hertogenbosch. He only became interested in his studies at a relatively late stage and started to learn Oriental languages after matriculating at Leiden University in 1602. He was instructed and supported by Scaliger, and although he concentrated on the study of Hebrew, the vocalisation of which language was to interest him all his life, he certainly discussed the possibility of studying Arabic with the great French scholar. Scaliger consequently provided him with a letter of introduction which he presented to the leading European Arabists after graduating at Leiden in the summer of 1608. First Espenius went to England where he called on William Bedwell from whom he seems to have received his very first Arabic lessons. Within less than six months he left England for Paris. Here he met Scaliger's friend James Cassonob, received further Arabic lessons from the itinerant Capit Josephus Adamesca or Baratius, completed the collection of Arabic proverbs originally dispatched to Cassobon and partly translated by Scaliger, and working with the publications of the Medici press and the notes of the deceased Dutch Arabist Adriaan Willemsen, he started on his Arabic grammar.

After a period at the academy of Skour, where he was encouraged by Philippe Du Plessis Mornay, Espenius returned again to Paris, now encountering the French Arabist Etienne Hubert and taking lessons from the learned Moroccan merchant Ahmed ibn Qasim. In 1611 Espenius left France and travelled to visit some of the major
collections of Arabic manuscripts in Europe. He called on the libraries of Milan and Venice, went to Genoa, Basel, and Heidelberg where he borrowed the chronicle of al-Ma‘alik in the Palatine Library and the manuscript of Abu ‘l-Faraj. At the same time he learned other Eastern languages - Persian, Turkish and Ethiopic.

By the time Erpenius had come back to Holland in July 1612 he was ideally equipped to promote the study of Arabic along the lines recommended by Scaliger who had died three years earlier. Having mobilised some of the most influential members of the Republic of Letters, like Isaac Casaubon and Daniel Heinsius, having discredited most other European Arabists, Erpenius undoubtedly contributed to the disgrace of Jan Thunus who was despised on account of his religion and ridiculed on account of his faulty Latin. Consequently Erpenius was appointed professor of Arabic in his stead early in 1613 and acted as such until his death of the plague in 1624. In this period he created the greatest school of Arabic in Europe. Students from all over the Protestant world made their way to his lectures, and it took a man when he had trained, Jacob Gellius, to succeed him and build on his achievement.

Erpenius owed much to the art of printing and much to his first printers at the Officinæ Plantinianæ. The debt was reciprocal. If Raphelengius’ sons started to compose their father’s dictionary with the help of Thunus they concluded it thanks to the collaboration of Erpenius. When the Lexicon Arabicum at last appeared in 1613 it was unique. With the auspicious exception of Schindler’s polyglot lexicon (Hebrew, ancient and Talmudic, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic) published in Haren in 1612, Raphelengius was virtually the only Arabic dictionary in the West and its publication put paid to Bedwell’s hopes of producing what he had hoped would be the first Arabic-Latin dictionary. Yet Erpenius’ preface to his Observations in Lexicon Arabicum appended to the dictionary showed that European Arabic lexicography still had far to go.

Raphelengius’ sources were necessarily limited. He exploited most of the printed material available - Pedro de Alcalá’s lexicon of 1505, Quatremoir’s polyglot Pentateuch, the publications of the Medici press, and the polyglot Pentateuch with Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian and Arabic versions (the last by Basilia Gein) all printed in Hebrew characters and published in Constantinople in 1546. He also used a great deal of manuscript material, the Qur’an, official dispatches, contracts and safe-conducts, collections of Muslim prayers and a Muslim legal code, and the Theophanes Arabice Lingo compiled by Scaliger. Raphelengius’ heavy reliance on Middle Arabic writings, however, led Erpenius to doubt the purity of a number of the Arabic words he listed and, in his list of corrections, Erpenius showed that he shared Scaliger’s vision of the study of Arabic by using no less than three Arabic-Turkish dictionaries which he had acquired in the course of his travels.

By modern standards Raphelengius’ lexicon is inadequate. It is clearly geared to a readership with a knowledge of Hebrew, and all the Arabic roots are accompanied by transcriptions in Hebrew. Yet the true advantages of Raphelengius’ dictionary became apparent if we compare it to the vast lexicon which Bedwell was compiling and which has remained in manuscript in Cambridge University Library (27). While Bedwell followed the Hebrew alphabetical order - a puzzling feature for modern Arabists but one which we also find in Scaliger’s wordlist - Raphelengius, like all later lexicographers, followed the standard Arabic order. Thanks to spellists in Hebrew and Arabic, in Greek, and above all in Latin, at the end of the work, Raphelengius’ dictionary could be used in more than one direction. Not only was it more accurate than Bedwell’s, and with vastly superior vocalisation, but, published in a single quarto volume. it was far handier than the many long and erudite tomes compiled by Bedwell and it served the functional purpose of providing the traveller to the East with the most reliable guide to the Arabic language to date.

Erpenius’ most important contribution to Arabic studies was the Arabic grammar on which he had started to work in Paris and which the Officinæ Plantinianæ also produced in 1613. This, as we have seen, was not the first of its kind. Besides the grammars of Pedro de Alcalá, Pestel and Spycy, and the two Arabic works on syntax published by the Medici press in 1592, the German Arabist Peter Kistow had published a grammar in Bruslau in 1608, and in 1610 the Medici press had issued the Liber Taślimit, a bilingual edition which could thus be used by Europeans and which dealt mainly with the modifications of the verb. Erpenius’ Grammatica Arabicæ, however, was infinitely superior to any of its predecessors. It was the first clear and complete exposition of Arabic grammar and was to remain the standard annual for the study of the language for two centuries. Even when it was superseded in the nineteenth century by Silvestre de Sacy Erpenius’ grammar was still the model on which later works, including the present standard Arabic grammar by William Wright, were based.

The Grammatica Arabicæ was one of many publications which Erpenius produced in the field of Arabic studies. Also in 1613 the Officinæ Plantinianæ brought out his Arabic version (with Latin translation) of the Passion from the Gospel of St Matthew. This was followed in 1614 by the bilingual edition of Arabic proverbs, the Proverbia Arabicae centumquaque suis, the Latin translation of which was started by Scaliger and Casaubon and completed by Erpenius. In 1614, however, the Officinæ Plantinianæ gave up printing Arabic for good. This seems to have been due to the death of their Arabic compositor (28). A set of used types was sent to Bedwell in England, but what became of the newly cast types used for the Proverbia, and what happened to the punches and matrices, remains a mystery. Although the Raphelengius brothers reached an agreement to sell their Arabic typographical material to their cousin Baltasar Moreus in Antwerp in 1621 all traces of it have since disappeared.

The immediate result of the death of the Officinæ’s Arabic compositor was that Erpenius found himself without a publisher. After vain enquiries - he even suggested that Bedwell allow him to use the types he had purchased - he decided to found a press of his own (29) and consequently had types cut which were inspired by one of the smaller typefaces of the Medici
press. By the time his types were put to use they were by no means unique in Northern Europe. Besides the types Peter Kirsten had had cut in Breslau there was also the typographical material which Swazy de Breves (30), the great French Orientalist, brought to Paris, probably from Rome, and with which, in 1616, another Arabic work on syntax was printed, the Kitab fi 'milad al-qur'ayna by the Maronites Gabriel Sionita and John Hesamita. The first book which Erpenius printed on his new press was a bilingual edition of the Fables of Lindam. This appeared in 1615, and was followed by various Scriptural texts in Arabic, by the history of Joseph the Patriarch and the Sura Yisa from the Qur'an, and by the grammatical works - a new bilingual edition of the Alqarniya (first printed by the Medici press) together with 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani's "Hundred Rules" and his own Kitab al-lamina aswara, a revised version of his original Grammatica. In 1625, the year after Erpenius' death, there appeared his edition of al-Mas'ud's Historia sassanica with a preface by Jacob Golius.

After this survey of Erpenius' publications we should pause to ask what his purposes were in studying Arabic. It would be wrong to take too seriously all his statements in the inaugural lecture which he delivered in Leiden on 18 May 1613, his "Oratio de lingua Arabica." Such creations were intended to attract patronage and the arguments provided were usually repetitions of traditional commonplaces rather than the true convictions of the speaker. The arguments offered by Erpenius fall mainly into the former category. He dwells on the richness and beauty of the Arabic language, on the vastness of the area in which it is spoken, and on the contribution of Arabic writers in every domain, but he also introduces the old ideas that a knowledge of Arabic can contribute to the understanding of Hebrew and Arabic, and that it can be used for converting the Muslims to Christianity.

lif we ask at what Erpenius actually published we receive a different impression of his objectives. A high proportion of his publications - his grammatical works and bilingual editions of proverbs and fables - had a purely didactic purpose: that of facilitating the study of the language and providing simple texts with which to practice. The true originality of his approach is perhaps most evident in his Historia Joseph Patrisiaciae ad Alvernum Arabum (31). Here he produced what in fact was the first scholarly edition of a long chapter of the Qur'an, accompanied by an interlinear Latin translation, a Peer translation in the margin, the medieval Latin translation edited by Rambler in 1543, and philological notes of his own. Erpenius shared Scaliger's belief that the Qur'an was by far the most important text on which to practise one's Arabic, and he consequently took the first step towards producing a reliable edition of it which would avoid the errors which had crept into the medieval translation. Although not a work intended to be sympathetic towards Islam the Historia Josephi certainly contributed to a more objective assessment and understanding of Muslim culture.

We can also detect the influence of Scaliger behind the Historia sassanica of al-Mas'ud which Erpenius had copied from a manuscript in the Palestine library in Heidelberg. The author was a Copt who lived in Egypt in the thirteenth century and the Historia was the first work of an Arab historian to appear in its Arabic version in Europe. One of the main reasons for Scaliger's interest in Arabic was, as we saw, the contribution of the Arab historians to establishing a reliable chronology. Al-Mas'ud can be regarded above all as a chronologist, and the example set by Erpenius in editing his text was to be widely imitated by later Orientalists.

Finally we come to the various Scriptural works published by Erpenius, the Arabic versions of the Passion of Christ from the Gospel of St Matthew, the Epistle to the Romans, the New Testament, and the Pentateuch. Here Erpenius' object was no longer primarily didactic. He shared, rather, the aspiration so widespread amongst European Orientalists of the time of producing a polyglot Bible in which, above all, the Greek text of the New Testament with all its variants could be compared to other Oriental versions, and the Vulgate, St Jerome's Latin translation accepted so uncritically by the Church of Rome, could be scientifically criticised (32). Erpenius was not only an Arabist. In 1620 he was also appointed professor of Hebrew at Leiden University and his many publications include works on Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Greek. Yet Erpenius was primarily an Arabist and, whatever the arguments for too seriously all his statements in the inaugural lecture which he delivered in Leiden on 18 May 1613, his "Oratio de lingua Arabica." Such creations were intended to attract patronage and the arguments provided were usually repetitions of traditional commonplaces rather than the true convictions of the speaker. The arguments offered by Erpenius fall mainly into the former category. He dwells on the richness and beauty of the Arabic language, on the vastness of the area in which it is spoken, and on the contribution of Arabic writers in every domain, but he also introduces the old ideas that a knowledge of Arabic can contribute to the understanding of Hebrew and Arabic, and that it can be used for converting the Muslims to Christianity.

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and in September 1622 he set out for Morocco as an engineer attached to the embassy of the Dutch Republic to the sultan Moulay Zaydân. Golius thus became the first great Dutch Arabist actually to visit an Arab country. In Sarî, where he awaited the outcome of the embassy, he continued to improve his knowledge of Arabic, made a thorough study of the traditions and customs of the Moors, and started to collect Arabic manuscripts. For this last activity he benefited greatly from the assistance of Erasmus’ former tutor in Paris, the erudite Moroccan merchant Ahmed ibn Qasim.

Within a few months of Golius’ return to Holland, Erasmus contracted the plague. Golius nursed his master until the end, and, on 12 May 1625, he was appointed his successor. He delivered his inaugural oration, Oratio de causis linguae Arabicae, on 3 July. Before embarking on his lectures, however, Golius insisted on the necessity of a further visit to the Arab world and obtained permission of the curators of the university to act as chancellor to Cornelis Nisius, the recently appointed Dutch consul to Aleppo. He left Holland in December 1625. His stay in the East lasted far longer than the period originally stipulated with the curators of the university, but these same curators displayed both wisdom and foresight in prolonging his lease. For, while he was in the East, Golius traveled from the Mediterranean to the Persian border and from Aleppo to Constantinople. Not only did he add to his range of Eastern languages Turkish, Persian and Armenian, but he assembled a collection of Persian, Turkish and Arabic manuscripts considered at the time to be one of the marvels of the west. This was to form the basis of the Oriental collection of the Leiden university library (3).

Golius at last started teaching Arabic in Leiden in 1629 and in November of the same year he was also appointed professor of mathematics. His most enduring contribution to the study of Arabic besides his collection of manuscripts was his great Lexicon arabico-latinum which appeared in 1613.

Just as Bedell had given up his immediate hopes of having his own Arabic dictionary printed when he heard that Raphelengius’ work was about to appear, so Erasmus’ pupil, the French Biblical scholar Samuel Bochart, is alleged to have destroyed the Arabic lexicon he himself had been compiling when Golius’ work was published. The standard of Arabic lexicography in Europe depended primarily on the amount of texts, lexicographical and otherwise, which the compiler had been able to consult (36). In Raphelengius’ case, as we saw, the number was limited. Before he died in 1632 Bedell had consulted further texts, and above all the great Arabic dictionaries, the Qādirī and the Sāghān, but the result of his labours, which had run continually out of hand, remained in manuscript. In 1632 the Italian Antonio Giggi had published a lexicon for which he too had used the Qādirī, the Sāghān, and certain Qur’anic wordlists, but no European used so wide a range of material as Golius. Not only did Golius use the Qādirī and the Sāghān, the Nāqšī and al-Zamakhshāri’s Aṣaṣ al-halīghīn, but, in accordance with the vision Scaliger had had of Arabic studies, he exploited to the utmost the very best Arabic-Turkish and Arabic-Persian dictionaries. His vast collection of Arabic manuscripts, moreover, afforded him a vision of Arab culture of a scope to which few other Europeans could lay claim. Without the Hebrew transcriptions of the Arabic roots which we find in Raphelengius’ lexicon, with nothing but a Latin wordlist at the end and making no attempt to be a comparative dictionary of Semitic languages, Golius’ lexicon, like Erasmus’ grammar, was to remain unsurpassed until the nineteenth century.

Silverstre de Sacy’s pupil, the German lexicographer Wilhelm Freytag, compiled a four-volume dictionary in 1837 which owed an immense debt to Golius and replaced the earlier lexicon as the standard Arabic dictionary, but in fact the first Orientalist really to improve on Golius was the Englishman Edward Lane with a dictionary which started to appear in 1839 and which was only partially complete on his death in 1846. And even later followed Golius’ method of using native dictionaries to establish the meaning of the words.

Like Erasmus Golius also published a number of Arabic texts which were to serve the didactic purpose of providing students with excercises : the Proverbia musulmanalis, published in 1629 by the Kuyvers who had bought up Erasmus’ typographical material; extracts from the Regnum of al-Ḥaḍramī, a quaestio by al-Ḥaṣan b. ‘Abd ar-rāy, further proverbs, chapters from the Qur’ān, and selections of verse which he added to the new edition of Erasmus’ grammar which appeared in 1656; and an eye-witness account of the life of Tāriq ibn Zaydân, Amīdār Arabiae Sive orientalium gestarum Ṭimūrī, only in Arabic and published in 1636, which had the additional advantage of adding to the Western knowledge of Arab historiography. In a more scientific domain Golius prepared a bilingual edition of the Astronomical Elements of al-Farghānī which had first been published in 1590 by Jacob Christensen in a Latin translation based on a corrupt Hebrew version. Golius’ edition appeared in 1669, two years after his death.

By the time Golius died in 1667 Leiden university had every reason to be proud of its Oriental department. The face of Arabic studies was admirably changing all over Northern Europe. Libraries which, at the beginning of the century, had contained a small number of Arabic texts mainly of Christian origin, now possessed a large amount of Muslim works and provided students with a far broader view of Arabic literature - we have only to think of the collections accumulating at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. But even in comparison with other centres of Arabic studies Leiden continued to occupy a place of special importance, and pupils fled to Golius’ classes from Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia as well as from the Low Countries.

If we except the Biblical scholar Louis de Dieu who studied under both Erasmus and Golius and used his knowledge of Oriental languages exclusively for the purpose of Scriptural study (37), and the Roman Catholic doctor Vojtěch Fortunatus Pleron, who studied in Amsterdam, lectured in medicine in Louvain where he translated part of Alcuin’s al-Qur’ān into Latin, and who was simply in correspondence with Golius (38), the most illustrious Orientalists driven by Erasmus’ successor were not Netherlanders but Foreigners.

Johannes Heinrich Hottinger, for example, was born in Zurich in 1620 and, after
studying in Groningen (39), settled in Leiden in 1640 where he learnt Arabic from Golius and acted as the tutor of his children. He later returned to Switzerland but died in 1667 on his way back to Leiden where he had been offered the professorship of theology, and his ties with Leiden remained strong throughout his life. His importance as an Arabist resides in his studies on Arabic literature and bibliography, and works like his Prolegomena long remained invaluable guides to the location and contents of the main Arabic manuscripts in European libraries. Still more gifted than Hottinger was Levius Warner (40) from Lippe in Germany, who started studying Arabic with Golius in 1638. After producing a number of brief publications on Oriental studies he assembled the means to travel to Constantinople, probably thanks to Golius. He arrived in Turkey in 1645 and remained there until his death twenty years later, having long acted as Dutch resident. Although he never took up the professorship of Hebrew which he was offered at Leiden in 1648, he continued to benefit from the financial support of the curators of the university, and in return he collected manuscripts. These manuscripts, some furnished with Warner’s marginalia, far surpassed in number and scope those collected by Golius and added a further unique attraction to the Leiden library.

Golius’ other foreign pupils were less distinguished than Hottinger and Warner. Johannes Georgius Nisselius (41) from the Palatinate and Theodorus Petreus (42) from Friesland in Schleswig-Holstein are mainly of interest on account of their typographical accomplishments. Nisselius purchased some of the material made by Erpenius from Elsevier and, together with Petreus, produced a polyglot edition of the Epistles of St Jude in Latin, Arabic and Ethiopic in 1654. Petreus, who continued to issue polyglot editions of the Scriptures after Nisselius’ death in 1662, received Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Coptic, and later added Aramaic to his stock, and his Clausis Linguum Arabis, Persicae et Tartaric, which he printed in Leiden in 1663, was intended for merchants and travellers who wanted to teach themselves Oriental languages without the encumbrance of a tutor. Johannes Fabricius (43), from Danzig returned to Germany after studying at Leiden and taught Arabic in Rostock where he published his Specimen Arabicum in 1658. Fabricius had profited from Golius’ collection of manuscripts, several of which he had copied, and his Specimen, intended to encourage the study of Arabic in Germany and Northern Europe, included the first sama of al-Januri and the qudsi of al-Mufarrij which Golius was later to append to his new edition of Erpenius’ grammar. Finally we should mention the Rhenish doctor Johannes Eichmann (44), who came to Leiden at the age of thirty in 1631, and died in Holland eight years later. A friend of Gerard Vossius and Claudius Sulzerius and regarded as one of Golius’ most promising pupils, his single publication appeared in 1690, a year after his death. This was the Tabulae Octabata, an edition of an Arabic version of the famous Greek text which he had found in one of the Golius manuscripts.

The predominant number of Germans amongst Golius’ pupils points to the development of Arabic studies after Golius’ death. Although Leiden was to retain a high reputation as a centre for the study of Oriental languages this was because of its li-

brary and not because of Golius’ successors. And indeed, Golius’ successors partook in a general decline. The curators of the university were at first loathly in their choice: the Salus Hieronymus Harder, appointed to teach Arabic in 1669, refused himself of the chance to travel to Turkey four years later and never returned from Constantinople (45). A long interval ensued, during which the teaching of Arabic in Leiden seems to have been entirely smeared by that of Hebrew and Syrian. By the early eighteenth century the only Dutch Arabist of stature, Adrian Reining (46), lectured not in Leiden but in Utrecht. Leiden thus remained without a teacher of Arabic until 1730, when the former chaplain in Smyrna, Johannes Regen, returned to Holland and took up the professorship. And in 1729 Regen was joined by the founder of a dynasty of Orientalists who were to teach at Leiden throughout the eighteenth century, Albert Schultens.

Albert Schultens (47), who was born in 1686 and lived until 1758, had studied in Groningen and had then been appointed professor of Hebrew in Franeker in 1713. He came to Leiden in 1729 as the "Interpres Legati Revensi" or keeper of Oriental manuscripts and started to lecture in Arabic at the university. Three years later, in 1732, he was appointed professor, in his day Schultens was an influential Arabist, and indeed, he had the merit of reissuing Erpenius’ grammar and of editing some important Arabic texts by the major Islamic poets and historians. If we examine his views on the Arabic language, however, we see that he in fact held these very theories which Scalliger had been the first to oppose. These theories were boldly proclaimed in his inaugural Oratio de Lingua Arabicae antiquitatis origine: Hebrew and Arabic were presented as twin sisters which should be studied together and which should be studied for the same purpose. The purpose was theology. Little was new about Schultens’ theory, but it led to a violent polemic. Although the controversy which ensued lies outside the scope of this exhibition it marked a new departure in Arabic studies and can serve as an appropriate end to my survey (48). The main protagonist was a German, Christian Jakob Reiske, who had come to Leiden in 1728 to consult the Arabic manuscripts collected by Warner. In the course of his studies on early Arabic poetry Reiske demolished any theory about pronominal links between Arabic and Hebrew. Sometimes advancing arguments remarkably similar to those presented by Scalliger over a century earlier Reiske freed the study of Arabic from that of theology and from that of Hebrew. He was pitiless in his contempt for Schultens and Schultens was to grow less bold in his efforts towards Reiske. In the face of frustration and persecution, refused the professorship he deserved better than any of his contemporaries, Reiske became by far the greatest Arabist of his day: he became the first truly modern Arabist. As Reiske’s theories gradually obtained recognition the study of Arabic changed; it was no longer studied in association with Hebrew but came to be treated as an Islamic language the understanding of which must be based on the Quran and the works of the first Arab poets of the sixteenth century. The monopoly in the field of Arabic studies so clearly occupied by the Dutch in the seventeenth century went to other nations, to the Germans, to the English, and to the French. Yet, however
great the changes caused by Reiske in the approach to Arab culture, those linguistic manuals composed in Leiden in the seventeenth century, Espericus' grammar and Gollus' dictionary, continued to retain their value; the manuscripts in the Leiden library collected first by Scaliger and later by Gollus and Warner continued to form one of the greatest Arabo collections in Western Europe, and the progress achieved by Reiske was in part the result of his research in the Leiden library. This progress was not, of course, limited to the Arabic language: it also entailed a better knowledge of Islam. We have only to compare the title of William Bodwell's work of 1675, Mohammedische Bemerkungen: That Is, A Discovery of the Manifold Forgeries, Falsities, and horrible Impletions of the blasphemous scoundrel Mohammed: With a demonstration of the Inefficacies of his Law, contained in the cursed Alcoran, so typical of contemporary attitudes to Mohammedianism, with the sympathetic presentation of the Mohammedian conquests in Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire based on the studies of Reiske "and all who have treated Mohammed with favour, or even justice" (49), to see the alteration that took place in less than two hundred years (50).

NOTES


5) On Postel's knowledge of Arabic see Rock, Die arabischen Studien, pp. 36-44 and François Secret, 'Guillaume Postel et les études arabes à la Renaissance' in: Ambix, 9 (1962), pp. 21-36. Postel's ideas on the subject are to be found in the preface to his Exposition arabe (see also William J. Bouwsma, Conversion Ruled. The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel 1510-1581, Cambridge, Mass., 1997, pp. 239-241).

6) These manuscripts are discussed in G. Levi della Vida, Ricerche, pp. 324-337.

7) Fr. W. Otto, Pragmatische Jurisprudenz der Antike, Professor der Theologie und Pastoral 1759-1832, Amsterdam 1891, pp. 56-61.


9) Ibid., p. 231. Cf. also pp. 208, 220.

10) Ibid., p. 197, 209.


12) Ibid., p. 697.


(18) A. Hamilton, William Bedwell, p. 87.


(20) CF. Jagnabi, Zeventiende-eeuwse Boevoeraars, pp. 36-46.


(22) J.J. Kucic, Epistolae orientales, pp. 692-696.

(23) Jagnabi, Zeventiende-eeuwse Boevoeraars, p. 32.


(31) See the comments on this and Esperius' other publications in [Robert Jones], Arabic Books [Bernard Quftich Catalogue, 1986], London 1986.


(35) CF. J.J. Wilsun, Jacobus Golius (1566-1647) en zijn handgeschreven, Leiden 1880.


(38) Jagnabi, Zeventiende-eeuwse Boevoeraars, p. 106.

(39) Max, Die arabischen Studien, pp. 91-92.


(41) Jagnabi, Zeventiende-eeuwse Boevoeraars, pp. 211-212.

In een tijdspane van vijftig jaar, tussen 1610 en 1660, brachten de Nederlanders een revolutie te weeg in de studie van de Arabische taal. Zij producerden enkele van de beste uitgaven van Arabische teksten, de beste leerboeken, de beste woordenboeken en de beste grammatica's. Bovendien creëerden zij een van de meest voorrechttelijke bibliotheken van Arabische werken in West-Europa. Zij omsloten zonder enige moeite andere landen, zoals Duitsland, Frankrijk, Italië, Groot-Brittannië en Spanje, die zich in het verleden op dit vlak reeds verdienstelijk hadden gemaakt en in het geval van Italië en Spanje in het begin van de hier beschouwde periode grote versamelingen Arabische teksten bezaten, respectievelijk in het Vaticaan en het Escorial (1), die kwalitatief deze in de Lage Landen ver in de schaduw stelden.

Deze ontwikkeling was vooraf te danken aan het werk van Thomas Erpenius en Jacob Golius, beiden student en later professor aan de universiteit van Leiden, van wie het succes moet gezocht worden bij de geleidelijke ontwikkeling van de Oosterse studies aan deze oudste universiteit van de Noordelijke Nederlanden (2).

De stuwende kracht achter de latere ontwikkeling van de Arabische studies te Leiden was Joseph Justus Scaliger, een Frans classicus van Italiaanse afkomst die zijn leven lang belangstelling had voor de chronologie (3). Scaliger was slechts toevallig oriëntalist en zelfs geheel uitzonderlijk arabisch. Desondanks liep zijn visie op de Arabische studies ver vooruit op zijn tijd en zolang deze visie werd voorgehouden door zijn leerling Erpenius en diens leerling Golius bleven de Nederlanders de meesters op dit terrein.

Scaliger werd in 1593 aan de universiteit van Leiden verbonden, achttien jaar na haar stichting in 1575. Hij had de Arabische studies reeds vele jaren voordien aangezet, nog tijdens zijn Verblijf te Parijs in de jaren zestig van de zestiende eeuw. Hij werd toen geconfronteerd met de moeilijkheden ingevolge de gebrekkige gesteldheid van het onderwijs van het Arabisch. Er bestonden nauwelijks gedrukte teksten voor oefening. Geen gedrukt woordenboek was voorhanden, afgezien van de Spaans-Arabische woordenlijst van Pedro de Alcala die te Granada werd gedrukt in 1505 (4). Daarnaast waren er bedroevend weinig spraakmethodes ter beschikking en wat voorhanden was, was zeer gebrekkig. De vroegere gedrukte grammatica was eveneens bezorgd door Pedro de Alcala. Zijn Arte para ligermente nober in lengua araviga verscheen evenals zijn woordenlijst te Granada in 1505. Buiten deze publicaties zijn blijkvallend geen