

plausible picture of the emotional and political life of this ubiquitous yet still enigmatic figure.

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The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe. Jan Loop, Alastair Hamilton, and Charles Burnett, eds.

The History of Oriental Studies 3. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xii + 354 pp. \$115.

This volume is intellectually intriguing, to say the very least. It engages a subject that is not only relevant to our times in terms of shared humanity, and humanities, but also thought provoking in terms of understanding the future of language pedagogy. It brings to light the long history of connectivity between East and West in one of its less studied dimensions. The studies and investigations have a geographic and thematic range that is studiously selected by the editors. Editing a volume can be a thankless job, but the editors of this volume have diligently held to their proverbial guns and produced a volume that I consider seminal in its overall effect; germinal in the potential it offers for future studies, including the comparative branches of the study; and temporally germane. It was a tremendous amount of fun (a harrowing adjective for a philologist) to read, as the essays followed one another with careful consideration for the reader—and were obviously meticulously thought through by the editors as to what order they should appear in.

The first chapter, “Arabic Studies in the Netherlands and the Prerequisite of Social Impact,” by Arnoud Vrolijk, a top-notch and prolific scholar of Arabic philology, was a prudent choice to be first in the colophon, as it defines the boundaries of not only the book, but also our objective grasp of Oriental studies in the West. It also highlights the Netherlands’ tremendously strong history in Oriental studies and demonstrates the herculean efforts given by Dutch scholars in keeping alive Oriental studies and, thereafter, disseminating its importance far and wide—much like the effort Vrolijk has given in his productive career. Although every single chapter in this book satisfied my urge to know and opened up a whole new world to me in terms of the extent of what is missing in the study of this particular niche, I particularly liked the chapter “Teaching and Learning Arabic in Early Modern Rome: Shaping a Missionary Language.” In it, I particularly liked the story of a Giovanni Battista Eliano (1530–89), who, even prior to establishment of the Congregation of the Propaganda, by Pope Gregory XV, was, at the Collegio, a teacher of Arabic and Hebrew. This chapter emphasizes the importance given language due to ecclesiastical (political) motivations. This scholar and translator of Arabic was eventually dispatched to Egypt to “promote the union of the Coptic patriarchate with the Roman church” (195).

The other philologically astute chapters in this volume range from studies on “Learning Arabic in Early Modern England,” by Asaph Ben-Tov, to ones on Arabic pedagogy in Spain (“Sacred History, Sacred Languages: The Question of Arabic in Early Modern Spain,” by Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano), Sweden (“Arabia in the Light of the Midnight Sun: Arabic Studies in Sweden between Gustaf Peringer Lillieblad and Jonas Hallenberg,” by Bernd Røling), and the Ottoman Empire (“Learning Oriental Languages in the Ottoman Empire: Johannes Heyman (1667–1737) between Izmir and Damascus,” by Maurits H. van den Boogert). The other articles are of a different sort but are equally fascinating: those by Nuria Martínez de Castilla Muñoz (“The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Salamanca in the Early Modern Period”), Alastair Hamilton (“The Qur’an as Chrestomathy in Early Modern Europe”), Jan Loop (“Arabic Poetry as Teaching Material in Early Modern Grammars and Textbooks”), Sonja Brentjes (“Learning to Write, Read and Speak Arabic Outside of Early Modern Universities”), Simon Mills (“Learning Arabic in the Overseas Factories: The Case of the English”), and John-Paul A. Ghobrial (“The Life and Hard Times of Solomon Negri: An Arabic Teacher in Early Modern Europe”). As a philologist with a lately bloomed want for accessibility and clarity, I think this volume does justice to both—and then some.

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Figure del regno nascosto: Le leggende del Prete Gianni e delle dieci tribù perdute d'Israele fra Medioevo e prima età moderna. Marco Giardini.

Biblioteca della “Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa” Studi 32. Florence: Olschki, 2016. xx + 350 pp. €38.

In fifteenth-century Rome, Ethiopian pilgrims responded to the locals’ persistent questions with increasing bewilderment: “Our king is Zara Yaqob; why do you call him Prester John?” (Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* [2008], 198). The legend of Prester John—a Christian priest-king in the Far East who ruled a terrestrial paradise overflowing with gold, spices, and other treasures—dominated medieval European ideas of the world beyond the shores of the Mediterranean. Much of the curiosity resulted from a spurious letter from Prester John to the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos, which began circulating in Europe around 1165, describing the marvels and riches of his kingdom. While this was originally believed to be located in India (and connected to the evangelization of Saint Thomas), later authors placed it first in western Asia and then in eastern Africa; hence the curiosity about Ethiopia.