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A MARONITE MEDIATOR BETWEEN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MEDITERRANEAN CULTURES: IBRAHIM AL-JIÀ ILANI, OR ABRAHAM ECHELLENSE (1605-1664) BETWEEN CHRISTENDOM AND ISLAM*

Introduction. The problem of cross-cultural contacts in the Mediterranean

To most people, the battle of Lepanto (1571) marked the end of whatever cultural or other unity the Mediterranean still might have had since the Crusades first divided the sea in an Islamic and a Christian sphere of influence. The gradual closing of the ranks on both sides, evident since the tenth century, by the end of the sixteenth century had developed into a virtual military and political standstill, which seemed to preclude any possibility of cultural exchange, the continuity of commercial contacts notwithstanding. However, I would like to propose here that we would be wrong to think of the Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a region divided into two entirely self-contained cultures. Nevertheless, a general history of cultural life in the Mediterranean during this period remains to be written; moreover, such a project does not seem feasible as long as those who have studied one or more of the numerous minor episodes of Christian-Islamic or, otherwise, European-Near Eastern contacts show little awareness of the basic fact that these very moments are part of a structure and a process of cultural exchange and even interdependence that tied together the shores of this sea.

It seems desirable that historians who study the problem of cross-cultural contacts in the Mediterranean should cast their net rather wide. If historians want to fruitfully treat this topic, they will have to historically interpret the results of such other scholarly approaches to human reality as, e.g., cultural anthropology and oriental studies. Only by adopting an interdisciplinary and an integralistic stance can they hope to discover the manifold examples of the above-mentioned fundamental unity. Ideally, a search for the factors that brought about this unity would include a comparative study of popular customs and of religious and social usages but also of the structures of politics and of systems of patronage. Equally important is an analysis of commercial contacts and their impact. Another topic might be piracy and its influence, and, partly connected with it, the role of the so-called renegades. Essential is, of course, research into the function of the many intermediate groups like the Greeks and the Jews, etcetera.
The focus of the essay.

Against this general background, it is the specific purpose of this article to draw attention to a group of mediators of special interest to historians of the cultural, including the intellectual contacts between Christianity and Islam (1); I am referring to those members of the Lebanese Maronite community who, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, came to Europe and, generally speaking, significantly contributed to the growth of oriental studies and thus to an ongoing European-Near Eastern debate during the following two hundred years. Also, however, the Maronites exemplify the continuous tensions between the two dominant cultures of the Mediterranean, the Christian-European and the Islamic-Near Eastern. To illustrate the Maronites' role, I will concentrate on an important early representative of this group, a man called Ibrahim, from the Lebanese village of Isla, who styled himself Abraham Ecchellense when he lived in Europe.

The significance of Ecchellense has been noted before (2), and some elements for a reconstruction of his life and works have been available for some time, but no effort has been made to assemble these data, to enquire into the nature of Ecchellen's work and to integrate it all into a proper biographical essay and, in doing so, correct a great amount of minor and major mistakes. The lucky find of some manuscripts (3), including an extensive (auto-)biographical note, apparently supplied by Ecchellen himself to Carlo Cartari, a Roman patrician and the self-appointed chronicler of the Roman University, seemed the proper occasion to systematize and synthesize our knowledge of this learned Maronite and reflect on the larger problems of cross-cultural Mediterranean contacts.

The Maronites in History.

For most readers, some introductory remarks about the Maronites may be useful, the more so as the latter form a group that, out of a religious community, developed into a nation with a definite culture of its own (4). Reputedly, the rather legendary St. Maro(n) (350-433), a monophysite monk, founded the monastery around which the community originated, in the valley of the Orontes, near Antioch. In the sixth century, the greater part of the group was slaughtered in an attack by Jacobite-Syrian Christians, a fact not normally mentioned in Maronite historiography. With the Arab invasions of the seventh and eighth century, the patriarch of Antioch fled to Byzantium; the remainder of the Maronites, who had migrated to North Lebanon, then chose to elect their own pontifex. One of his successors was St. John Maron who ruled from 685 to 707 and gave his name to the group. Again, the Maronite historical tradition tries to re-write the past, telling that the saint led his followers into safety from the Arab conquerors. Actually, the Maronites were attacked by the
Byzantine emperor Justinian II. Even this tradition recently has been doubted; people now have it that the Maronites, really, were Christianised Arabs, fleeing the valley of the Orontes at the end of the ninth century before the onslaught of the Byzantine armies.

It is not easy to decide what is true and false in these various interpretations of early Lebanese history, precisely because they still play such a large part in the present-day politics of the country. According to many Muslims, the Christian Maronites, whose number probably amounts to 25 per cent of the population, have an inordinate hold over the cultural and political life of the Lebanese nation. To counter this criticism, which actually dates from the last century already, the Maronites continue to strive to create a non-Arab, Christian past for themselves that would make them the original masters of Lebanon, the founding-fathers of the present state. The Islamic Arabs, of course, try to play down this tradition.

However this may be, settling down in the mountain recesses of the Lebanon, the Maronites became, more than ever, a society of warrior-farmers, feudally organized, living in small villages centring around the patriarch's see in the Kadisha valley; they became known as the "Ahl al-arajab", the people from the mountains; isolated from contacts with the churches in Byzantium and Rome, the Maronites did not betray what they, in another attempt to create a millennia! tradition, considered their Phoenician background: they engaged in trade all over the Eastern Mediterranean, established small communities as far as Cyprus and Baghdad, and also entered the new rulers' bureaucracy, serving as administrators to the caliphs in Damascus and, again, Baghdad.

With the advance of the Crusades, however, it became clear that the Maronites had not assimilated at all; they quickly joined the European invaders and became valuable scouts and spies, knowing the lay of the land as well as they did. Intermarriage with the "Franks" produced the "Pullani"-society, in which Eastern and Western influences mingled. Contacts with the West meant contacts with Rome and the papacy. A Romanization of the Maronite church took place and in 1182, the community formally abjured monotheletism, a belief which they had held ever since the Council of Chalcedon (A.D.451). Rome was not tardy in using this chance to extend its authority, even though the end of the Crusader kingdoms heralded the end of direct influence from Europe; the papacy continued to send out missionaries: first Dominicans and Franciscans, then, in the sixteenth century, members of the newly-founded Order of Jesus, and finally, in the seventeenth century, Capucins; none of them could avoid the sometimes serious clashes with the local population which did not easily give up its spiritual and cultural independence. Though Maronite patriarchs attended the great church councils of the fifteenth
and sixteenth centuries (8), it is almost certain that Rome did not realize that Romanization was not only superficial, being restricted to the Maronite (ecclesiastical) elite, but also incomplete, as Western, Latin traditions were only partially accepted in Maronite liturgy and theology. The first great mission pope of the Catholic Reform period, Gregory XIII, wishing to bring the Maronites into closer contact with the Roman fold, not only increased the number of missionaries sent to the Lebanon (9), he also established the Maronite College in Rome, to train young men from this community in the Roman obedience (10). Great though the influence of this College and its alumni may have been, in the end it did not effectuate more than a constant, but theoretical reaffirmation of Rome’s supremacy by a group which still maintained its religious and socio-cultural individuality and independence. The actual reunion of the Maronite with the Roman church, promulgated at a synod in 1736, introduced the papal name in the Syrian liturgy and established the separation of men and women in monasteries; other minor accomodations and changes were accepted as well. Before and after this event, the Maronites, for the above-mentioned political reasons, have gone to great ends to establish their original, Latin orthodoxy and their adherence to Rome, an effort which has discoloured much of their otherwise valuable historical scholarship (11). Notwithstanding all this, such fundamental things as the election of priests by the local community, the non-enforcement of celibacy in the lower echelons of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the use of Arabic as the language of prayer and of the reading of the Scripture, and of Syriac-Aramaic for the liturgy, as well as the fact that the election of the Maronite patriarch is only formally ratified by Rome all remained unchanged, up till the present day.

Ecchellen's Youth, 1605-1619.

Abraham Ecchellense, as he is generally known, was born Ibrahim al-I:ia ilanl, in the village of 1:1 on the slopes of the Lebanon, on February 15, 1605 (12). His father was one "Giovanni Abraham", a local petty nobleman from an ancient family of warriors, as Abraham told his Roman biographer. His mother Mary was from the Schipani-family, formerly rulers of the town of Qjubayl, the old Byblos, between Beirut and Tripoli, on the Syrian coast. Abraham felt the need to add that the city was well-known for its expert seafarers and famous architects – from this region came the stones of Solomon's temple and, we might add, the cedar wood for its ceiling and furniture; it also was the home of St. Simeon, the Stylobite; in the enumeration of these details, we can see what historical and social background the Maronites liked to present, linking their community to the tradition of Phoenicia and, of course, ancient Israel, the Holy Land, where Christianity originated.
Mary's grandfather had been deposed by the Turks, somewhere in the 1520's; since then, the Schipani led a rather impoverished and perilous life. As Abraham's father died when the boy was nine years old, his mother soon sent him away to be educated by a relative, who was the abbot of the famous monastery of St. Anthony. Abraham stayed with him for some six years, being taught Syriac, the sacred language of the Maronites and other Near Eastern nations – later, he is quick to add that it can only be compared to Latin.

In 1619, when Abraham was about fifteen years old, the then Maronite patriarch decided to select some youngsters for further education in the Maronite College in Rome; young Ecchellen was his first choice; though Mary was rather loth to see her only son leave for Europe, she gave in to the combined pressure of the patriarch and the archpriest of Tripoli. Thus, on November 15, 1619, Abraham and five others sailed from the port of ayda', ancient Sidon, accompanied by archpriest Abraham Anturini, venerably aged 91, and Giovanni Battista Corti who later joined the Society of Jesus. The little group arrived in Rome on January 8, 1620.

The beginning of the first Italian period, 1620-1628.

For five years, Abraham was a student, learning Italian and Latin, philosophy and theology. Then, in 1625, father Pietro Metosuta, another Maronite member of the Society of Jesus, died, leaving vacant the chair of Syriac and literary Arabic at the College. Abraham, though young, was asked to fill his position and accepted – eagerly, we may assume. He immediately started working on a Syriac grammar – we know it was printed in 1628 by the newly-established Press of the equally new papal Ministry for the Propagation of the Faith; the booklet was almost universally used, even in his own country, Abraham proudly stated. It is, actually, very much a study tool for beginners, short, clearly structured, a soft-cover, small pocket book well suited to daily use (13). It was dedicated to Ottavio cardinal Bandini, protector of the Maronites; in the introduction, Ecchellen extols Syriac as one of the most venerable culture languages of the world. The idea to compose a short introduction to its fundamentals, to be used besides the Latin grammar of Georgius cAmTra – or cUmayra (? -1644), a Maronite scholar who lived in Rome from 1584 onwards, before becoming patriarch in 1633 – had been sponsored by Francesco Ingoli, the powerful first secretary of the Congregation of the Propaganda. Two of the three readers who perused the book before the imprimatur had been given, were oriental scholars: abbot Hilarion Roncati, of the monastery of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and Sergius Rizzi – Sarkls al-RuzzT (?-1638) – the Syrian archbishop of Damascus, brother to two and nephew to one Rizzi-patriarch of the Maronite church, who permanently resided in Rome. It is strange that Abraham omits to tell
that already he had served as corrector of the Maronite Breviarium, which was printed in Rome in 1624; more important, in 1628 he also published a *Khuia at al-lyg!l.a al-carabiyya*, or 'Short Introduction to the Arabic Language' (14). In the mean time, Abraham increased his proficiency in philosophy, crowning his efforts with a promotion at the *Collegia Romano*, the famous Jesuit college which already was attracting the attention of the Roman and Italian nobility, to the great chagrin of the authorities of Rome's *Sapienza-university*. On June 15, 1631, the newly created doctor left for Syria, arriving at Sayda' on July 25. There, according to his own information, he went to see the man who was by then master of Greater Syria, the *amTr* Fakhr al-Dîn (15).

**Medite"anean Interlude: Eccle\//en as diplomat and merchant, 1628-1633**

To understand what other roles young Abraham had played while pursuing his academic studies in Rome, we should stop for a moment and consider the position and politics of the grandson of Fakhr al-Dîn I, from the tribe of the Druzes and from the house that had ruled Lebanon since the twelfth century, priding itself on having been the champions of the Crusader kings (16). Born in 1572, Fakhr al-Dîn II was confirmed san@.ak of his familts fiefs of Beirut and Sayda' on the death of his father, I).:urlpaz Ma n, as well as acquiring Safad in 1602. He quickly became one of the small group of petty rulers operating almost entirely independent from their nominal Ottoman overlords in Istambul; increasing his power, he succeeded in defeating his main rival in two battles at Damascus and I:Iama in 1607. In his fervour to gain control over Greater Syria and throw off the Ottoman yoke, Fakh \r al-Dîn established diplomatic relations with grandduke Ferdinand I of Tuscany (17). This prince, of course, was quite eager to help the Druze *amTr*: the prospect of commercial gain which free harbours in the Levant would provide, as well as a vision of a new crusade, of Tasso's recently published *Gerusalemme Liberata* come true, must have held great attraction. Fakhr al-Dîn also approached Rome for support, very probably using the Maronite College as an intermediary. Actually, Fakhr had been educated in a Maronite family, members of which later held most of the high positions in his government (18). The favour which the *amTr* showed the Maronites is, of course, easily explained. Not only he could well use their military might – according to some early seventeenth-century sources, the Maronite community contributed some 25.000 men-at-arms to his forces (19) – he also knew that their contacts with the Church of Rome could be turned to political profit; the idea, however vague, of a new crusade remained dear to the popes up till the end of the century.

In 1613, Fakhr al-Dîn discovered that the Ottoman government had decided to bring his quasi-independent rule to an end. To avoid disaster,
he choose to take refuge in Tuscany, a highly published event in the Christian world. With the accession of a new Grand Visir, in 1614, Fakhr was allowed to return and his son Ali was named governor of Southern Lebanon. In 1615, the amTr did return, for seven months, but only to bolster up his forces and encourage his people. He then again sailed for Europe, trying to enlist the aid of Spain and of the Knights of St. John, thus preparing a large-scale bid for independence. He finally broke his self-imposed exile in 1618. From then on, his power constantly grew; as he conquered Tripoli and extended his influence into Palestine, trying towards Jerusalem, he also strove to interest the Southern European powers in a combined attack on the Turks, to liberate the Holy Land. We should not be surprised that actual European support of this great game never materialized; to most rulers, it must have seemed too dangerous, in view of the power the Turks could still wield, as well as their threatening vicinity to certain parts of Christian Europe.

It seems that young Ecchellen, though he does not acknowledge the fact in his autobiography, was mixed up in Fakhr al-Dln's affairs and schemes at least from 1628 onwards (20); we then find him buying arms in Tuscany (21). According to Ecchellen's autobiographical notes, he first met with the amTr on his return to Syria in 1631, when Fakhr gave him a grand welcome, eager for information on the state of Christendom (22). Being interested in European culture and its products, Fakhr asked for Ecchellen's opinion about the translation of one Mattia's work on medicinal herbs, which had been produced on his request by a Jewish trader called David, and a French merchant, one monsieur Blanc. Obviously, this is Pietro Andrea Mattioli's *Dei discorsi nelli sei libri di Pedacio Dioscuride*, published in Venice in 1585. Ecchellen advised a thorough collation with the original, and promptly got the job, as well as Fakhr's friendship (23); the discrepancy between the autobiographical notes and the other sources seems to indicate that at a later stage of his life, Abraham wished to hush up his early political activities. With financial assistance from the amTr, with a sum of 300 scudi annually paid by the Congregation of the Propaganda in Rome, and investing some of his own money as well (24), Ecchellen then proceeded to establish a Maronite school in the Lebanese mountains; the patriarch and a synod especially convened for the purpose gave the enterprise their blessing and support (25). In 1631, Fakhr al-Din sent Ecchellen to Florence as his special envoy (26). His mission was a complicated one. The grandduke had sent a gift of books and medicine, and the amTr planned to thank him with two bales of silk farmed in his own gardens. Ecchellen was to be the gift bearer (27). However, he also had to sell some 44 more bales of Syrian silk and invest the proceeds in Tuscan government bonds, as a security for Fakhr's younger sons; after a lot of trouble with some greedy Florentine merchants, the sale realized
some 22,766, – *scudi* (28). Ecchellen also was empowered to buy supplies of powder and arms, and of iron to be used in the founding of canon (29). However, I think that his mission had a cultural side as well, for from 1631 onwards we find a Tuscan physician, Mattia Naldi, as well as Tuscan artists – an architect, a sculptor and an engineer – working in the Lebanon; the latter constructed Fakhr's famous palace in Beirut as well as a bridge in Sayda' (30).

In the autumn of 1631, Ecchellen returned to Syria, only to be sent on another mission (31), this time to sell slaves and other commodities on the markets of Northern Africa (32). Perhaps this time he went by way of Cyprus, where he may have visited the Maronite merchant community, acquiring the knowledge which later enabled him to provide a memorial on the condition of the island that was part of a proposal for a Christian reconquest of this strategically important stronghold in the Eastern Mediterranean (33). He certainly went to Livorno, where he was to buy a ship that could be used for all his planned transactions, and then be sailed back to Syria (34). After a great deal of complications with the Tuscan authorities, who did not trust Ecchellen's credentials, he travelled to Algiers and Tunis in the Spring of 1633, to transact his business of freeing a number of slaves (35). While in Tunis, he also engaged in some literary-epigraphical discussions over supposedly Punic inscriptions, which he recognised as ancient Egyptian, with a rather fascinating Christian 'renegade' residing there, one Thomas d'Arcos; he remains a rather elusive orientalist, who according to his lively letters produced quite a number of interesting works of which, however, nothing seems to remain (36).

Sometime in the Fall of 1633, Ecchellen returned to Florence (37); there, according to his own story, he heard that Fakhr al-Dīn had been captured by the Turks, brought to Istanbul and had been beheaded with his entire family. Whether the amTir's reported conversion to Christianity, in 1633 (38), had had anything to do with sultan Murad's decision to destroy the power of this over-mighty pseudo-vassal, is not clear. Obviously, Istanbul was worried by Fakhr's plans, as well as by his actions; the fact that the Syrian prince gave the Knights of Malta free access to his ports and supported them liberally, as well as entertaining close contacts with the European powers with Mediterranean interests, hardly can have endeared him to the Porte.

*The end of the first Italian period, 1633–1640*

Thus came an end to Ecchellen's career at the side of a man who might have altered the course of Mediterranean history. Stranded in Tuscany, he probably found himself quite lucky with the grandducal offer of a chair of Arabic and Syriac at the university of Pisa. It is not clear whether at this time he started collaborating with the Tuscan mathe-
matician Alfonso Borelli; at the request of the grand duke, they produced a translation of books Five, Six and Seven of the *Konika* of Apollonius of Perge, based on the Arabic version of Abu al-Fatl), al-?arar; a manuscript of this version had been brought to Florence by the Syrian patriarch Ignatius Nicmatullah. If so, the work was of long gestation; only in 1661, the *Apollonii Pergaei Conicorum Libri V, VI et VII* were published; added to it was a compilation and translation of writings by Archimedes, from the Arabic edition of Thabit ibn ?urra (836-901)

In 1636, pope Urban VIII asked Ecchellen to come to Rome, offering him a chair of Arabic and Syriac at the papal university. Abraham also entered the service of the Congregation of the Propaganda, as he was nominated a member of the committee which had been formed to produce an Arabic version of the Bible; in this function, he succeeded his fellow countryman Yul)n?awshab?ali?na(? (39).

The first French period, 1640-1642.

After four years, a very gratifying request arrived from Paris. The French king, Louis XIII and his all-powerful first minister, the cardinal-duke of Richelieu, asked the Congregation of the Propaganda to 'lend' them Ecchellen's services for one year (41). The Maronite would be employed on the edition of the Polyglot Bible, a version of Holy Scripture in seven languages and one of the great feats of seventeenth-century European scholarship.

The story of Ecchellen's first year in France is a complicated one (42). The arrival of the young Maronite scholar soon proved too much for his already famous compatriot, Gabriel Sionita or, to give him his original name ?jabraal-Sahyiinl (1577-1648) (43). He, from the age of seven, had been a pupil at the Maronite College in Rome, too; proceeding to the chair of Arabic and Syriac at the Sapienza, he then had been asked to come to Paris to take the professorship of Semitic languages. Not only had he published one of the earliest Arabic grammars in the West – it appeared in Paris in 1619 – he also edited al-?dr\ls's Geography, that monument of Arab geographical literature, the *Nuzhat al-musht\a\f_dhikr al-am\ar wa al-a\<tar*. Sionita, now, with the Oratorian father Jean Morin, whom Ecchellen had got to know in Rome, in 1639 (44), was one of the intellectual fathers of the Polyglotta-enterprise which, however, was directed by a Parisian patrician, named Michel le Jay, who also paid for it. Originally, Ecchellen, probably unaware of the petty scheming amongst these Bible-entrepreneurs, was asked to act as reader of Sionita's translated versions, a proposal readily accepted by the elder Maronite as his work was not universally applauded by the scholarly world; actually, being accused of laziness and incompetence, Sionita was overjoyed to
have the quality of his products confirmed by his young colleague (45); Ecchellen’s authority in these matters was the stronger as he brought with him a rare manuscript, containing a Syriac version of the Old Testament given to him by the above-mentioned Sergius Rizzi (46); the Maronite prelate had compiled this version on the basis of a great number of Arabic and Syriac manuscripts which he had collated with the Vulgate; much care had been taken to present the vocalization signs according to the old usage, as they were of crucial importance to the understanding of the text; the proper sequence of verses, chapters and of the Books themselves, had been realized through a typographically intricate presentation (47); a copy of the work had been given to the Vatican Library, whose holdings had been used, and another one now came to Paris with Ecchellen, which seems to show that the young scholar was taken seriously by his elders; it was now used to collate Sionita's versions. However, a conflict between Le Jay and one Vitry on the one, and Sionita one the other hand, already nascent since 1638, escalated when Le Jay announced that he wanted to fire Sionita. The latter now began to publicly attack them, but included Ecchellen as well; among other things, Abraham was accused of having produced little or nothing during his stay in Paris (48). This, however, was manifestly untrue. Although the Propaganda Congregation only had given Ecchellen one year’s leave of absence, the Maronite, according to a later published public defence, prepared four chapters of Esther, four of Ruth and of the first Book of Kings, as well as Baruch, Judith, Maccabees and Tobias (49). From other sources we know that he did a lot more than that (50), though part of the two works he published in Paris in 1641 must have been prepared in Rome.

Both publications seem to reflect a particular concern of Ecchellen’s, setting the tone for future intellectual and scholarly endeavours. First a book appeared titled Sanctissimi patris nostri B. Antonii Magni monachorum omnium parentis Epistolae viginti. Dedicated to Francesco cardinal Barberini, the cardinal-nipote of the reigning pope Urban VIII and one of Rome’s great patrons of the arts and sciences, it contained the Latin translation of the twenty-one known letters written by the fourth-century saint and Church father to his disciples. Ecchellen had used an Arabic manuscript, written in Egypt around the year 800, which was now in the possession of the Maronite College in Rome. In his introduction, he stresses some points which were to remain important to him. In this particular case, a defence of the monastic tradition, so fundamental to Maronite culture, was quite to the point, indeed, as Rome still sought to combat the onslaughts on this very tradition by both Calvinists and Lutherans who, according to Ecchellen, even dared argue that no such tradition had existed in the first years of the Church. He quoted the Fathers as well as early Arab writers to establish the fact that a monas-
tic way of life could be found in Egypt even before Christ's birth; and had not Muhammad advised his followers to respect this tradition? In the privilege which Eccellen's printer obtained, the importance of the booklet in the war against heretics and latitudinarians now being waged by the Roman Church is specifically mentioned. In all this, we may assume some influence of one of Eccellen's Roman friends, Lucas Holste (1596-1661), learned librarian of cardinal Barberini and much interested in the original unity of the Western and the Oriental churches. On another level, Eccellen expounds his method; translation should be literal rather than literary, especially since so many Latinists have a tendency to use the limited vocabulary of the Classics to translate texts from another culture. As Eccellen had not made a copy of the original text, and the Maronite College refused to send him the original manuscript, he did not reproduce the Arabic version alongside his translation.

Eccellen's second publication of 1641 was the *Synopsis Propositorum Sapientiae Arabum Philosophorum inscripta Speculum Mundum representans*. This was the Latin translation of an Arabic version of an originally Persian collection of theses proposed by J:lusayn ibn Mu'1n al-DTn al-Maybudl, around 1485 (51). The 26 propositions which constitute the text deal with every field of science and learning, from God's knowledge of Man and Creation, via stellar movements and cosmography to alchemy. The edition was dedicated to the cardinal-duke of Richelieu, and rather flatteringly compared the French first minister to king Solomon, as both were the recipients of Arab wisdom – the queen of Sheba being presented as an early representative of Arab culture. Richelieu was hailed as a champion of the collaboration between Occident and Orient, and Eccellen reminds him of that courageous Christian group living in Syria, descending from the ancient Franks, of whom the late Fakhr al-Din had been the exemplary leader; as an aside, Eccellen recounted how the amir, while teaching him the Arab way of lance fighting, had deplored Europe's lack of interest in a common attack on Islam – presumably as embodied in the Ottomans -to regain the country where Christianity originated. This rather politically-laden dedication obviously appealed to some vague notions entertained by France's political leader; Eccellen cannot really have thought that the cardinal intended to organize a crusade, but fact was that France showed quite a serious interest in extending its influence in the Levant, both commercial and political; religion was one means to this end, and Richelieu had personally financed the production of an Arabic translation of the Catechism, which then had been freely distributed in Syria and Lebanon.

It will be clear that Eccellen had used his Parisian year as best he could and that, at least in that respect, Sionita's later accusations were entirely ungrounded. Perhaps Eccellen's own idea, that his colleague
P. RIETBERGEN suspected him of trying to gain all the credit for the Arabic and Syriac versions of the Polyglotta, explains their rift. Writing to his Roman friend Lucas Holste (52), Ecchellen tells that pamphlets presenting the various points of view have appeared already; but though the nuncio has intervened on Ecchellen's behalf and Richelieu supports him, too, the situation remains highly unpleasant. Of course, the work suffers from it as well; there is discussion about the question whether or not all manuscript versions in Arabic and Syrian existing in Rome should be consulted, after copies have been made with Barberini's consent; Ecchellen favours a limited approach, using the Arabic Bible manuscript of the convent of San Pietro in Montorio only. Meanwhile, the importance of the Paris Polyglotta is already being internationally acknowledged; much support is given by English scholars – we should remember that in 1657, bishop Brian Walton finally produced an English edition of the Polyglotta; amongst others, Ecchellen's friend Edward Pocock (1604-1691), professor of Arabic at Oxford, had offered his help to the Parisians, afterwards using their version of the Pentateuch as the basis for his part of the London Bible (53).

In November 1641, Ecchellen again writes to Holste (54), asking him to present his edition of the letters of Antonius Magnus to cardinal Barberini and announcing his return; the troubles with the Polyglotta have been solved by him to everybody's content; obviously, he referred to a contract that he had signed with Le Jay and Sionita as long ago as August, 15, which gave him the final responsibility for the Arabic, Latin and Syriac translations and edition of the books Baruch, Esther, Judith, Maccabees, Ruth and Tobias, to be produced on the basis of manuscripts from the Maronite Colleges in Rome and Ravenna, as well as the Old Testament manuscript formerly belonging to Rizzi (55).

The second Italian period, 1642-1644.

Early February 1642, Ecchellen left Paris for Rome, against Richelieu's express wishes – the cardinal offered him a professorship at the College Royal and a stipend of 600 scudi a year – but on Barberini's express orders. His friend Jean Morin, praising his work in a letter of recommendation to abbot Hilarion Roncati (56), indicates that everybody hopes for Ecchellen's speedy return to France, remarking, rather disparagingly "quae enim ad lettras spectant multo commodius Parisiis quam Romae instructur et conficiuntur", referring, implicitly, to a cultural rivalry between the two towns and their courts that manifested itself all through the first half of the seventeenth century and must have been the very reason why the cardinal-nipote wished to tie the rising young scholar once more to the Roman Curia. When Morin, trying his best, warmly recommends his friend with the cardinal (57), suggesting that he really should be
allowed to return to France, Barberini replies that he needs Ecchellen's expertise to help defend the ancient traditions of the Church against the attacks of all sort of free thinkers (58).

We know little to nothing about Ecchellen's activities during the next four years. He probably resumed his former tasks at the college of the Propaganda, but he also must have started working on some projects which matured in 1645 and 1646, viz. a follow-up on the edition of the letters of Antonius Magnus and an edition of the Arabic version of the constitutions of the Council of Nicea. Both undertakings seem to fit the idea about Ecchellen's usefulness expressed by Barberini.

In the dedication of the 1645 Concilii Niceaeni Praefatio una cum titulis et argumentis Canonum et Constitutionum eiusdem, qui hactenus apud Orientales nationes extant, nunc primum ex Arabica lingua Latine redditi ab Abrahamis Ecchellensi ... cum eiusdem notis, Ecchellen explicitly states that the present decrees and dogma's of the Church are in complete accordance with the early Christian ones, notwithstanding the arguments of free thinkers and heretics. In his introduction, he first introduces a theme which, I think, from then on became the basic reason behind all his future projects, when he argues that in almost every field of culture and scholarship, Arabic texts have retained much that has been lost in the West; just so in theological and canonical matters, for a comparison between the Greek and Latin versions of the Council's decrees on the one hand, and the Arabic manuscripts on the other has shown that the Oriental tradition is much stronger; in a series of extensive notes, Ecchellen elaborates this point, specifically drawing attention to the 44th canon which gave the patriarch of Alexandria the title of metropolite, thus establishing him as the virtual head of the Christian church, a role which was then assumed by the Roman pontiff.

In 1646, Paris was the place where Ecchellen published his Sapientissimi patris nostri Antonii Magni abbatis regulae, sermones, documenta, admonitiones, responsiones et vita duplex, which, obviously, was the fruit of his previous Roman research. According to the preface, the author had promised cardinal Barberini to continue his Antonine studies. For this purpose, he had collected manuscripts both from the Vatican Library and the Maronite College, but also a text provided by Giovanni Battista Mara, a scholarly monk of Sant'Angelo in Pescaria – a Maronite, it would seem – as well as some texts brought to the monastery of San Pietro in Montorio by a Franciscan monk, formerly papal commissioner of the Holy Land, bne Andreas Arcuensis; these very old manuscripts, collected under the title Clavis Ianuae Paradisi provided both a Vita of saint Anthony and the texts of some monastic hymns invoking the saint. Ecchellen's scholarly attitude is such that he could plainly state that there was no proof of the sermons etectera actually having been written by Saint Anthony; a very old tradi-
tion, however, which was explicit in the manuscript, connects these writings with the saint and should therefore be accepted.

These projects, then, must have claimed Ecchellen's attention during his years in Rome – but Paris still beckoned. In 1644, we find him writing to Jean Morin in answer to a series of detailed questions about Maronite liturgy, the disposition of Maronite churches and a number of other characteristics of the Oriental church (59); it is evident that Morin was already collecting some of the material which in 1655 was published in his great compilation of texts on Eastern liturgy and ritual, about which they continued to correspond. As an afterthought, Ecchellen complained that old friends like Le Jay have 'done nothing for him', and that he is now 'writing to Mazarin', viz. to Jules cardinal Mazarin then at the first height of his power. Apparently, his scheme was successful; assisted by cardinal Michele Mazarini, a brother of France's then first minister, he obtained a position as royal interpreter for Arabic and Syriac; the lordly stipend of 900 scudi annually, which, to his obvious content, he negociated, indicates that this cannot have been a mere sinecure (62).

*The second French pen'od, 1644-1651.*

The professorship of Arabic and Syriac at the College Royal which, according to Ecchellen's own saying, was then specifically created for him by Mazarin and the grand chancellor of France, Pierre Seguyer, brought him another 360 scudi a year. This largesse, of course, was bound to create professional jealousy, and so it did. Other professors at the College started vilifying their Maronite colleague, targeting their attack on his Polyglot past (63); one Valerian de Flavigny, who held the chair of Hebrew, maintained that the Hebrew version of the Bible, being the oldest, was the only trustworthy one, characterizing the Vulgate as a work that was a "n'vulus turbidissimus, cisterna dissipata (which) aquas continere non potest". Having based his own translations on, amongst other texts, the Vulgate, Ecchellen took his pen and wrote a flaming defense, arguing that as the Hebrew version had been authenticated after the Babylonian exile by Ezra and a council of elders, so the Pope and the Council of Trent had authorized the Vulgate – and, moreover, one could not very well maintain that the Synagogue had received the Holy Spirit's support to the same measure as Holy Church, could one? Besides, the Hebrew version was far from purely Mosaic, or even prophetic; the text had been corrupted both intentionally, by the rabbinical tradition, and unintentionally, by the many copists. Then, of course, there was the problem created by the invention and introduction of a system of dots by the post-Talmudic rabbins of Tiberias, which had greatly complicated the text. According to Ecchellen, Flavigny knew next to nothing of the manifold problems in-
valved in deciphering Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac texts with or without the vocalization and other signs involved.

In two long letters to the public, Ecchellen presented his arguments, which created a huge row with Flavigny. As a Frenchman and a nobleman, a canon of Reims cathedral, a doctor of the Sorbonne and a professor at the College Royal, this worthy felt insulted as never before in his life, and finally tried to drag Ecchellen to court, a move, however, which managed to square the entire Sorbonne behind the foreigner. Whether the account given by Pierre Bayle, writing some decades later, can be trusted, remains unclear; he maintains that it all went back to a mistake made by Flavigny's printer, and soon acknowledged by the learned professor, though Ecchellen went on attacking him.

In the mean time, the now ageing Sionita saw his chance to settle an old account and entered the arena with a pamphlet that accused Ecchellen of privateering – in the Mediterranean – and profiteering – in accepting a salary of some 3000 *livres* annually without producing anything worthwhile for the Polyglotta (64). This, of course, was a hit below the belt, and Ecchellen hardly can be blamed for retaliating in kind, with a letter that not only set things straight biographically speaking, but also managed to take Sionita to task about his defective knowledge of Arabic and Syriac, especially where the sticky problems of vocalization were concerned.

It seems clear that cardinal Mazarin, who at this time also was establishing his socio-cultural position as one of France's foremost patrons of the arts, in return for his protection expected Ecchellen to help him build the great library which was one of the most clamorous manifestations of cultural leadership and constituted a sort of long-term propagandistic investment; scholars who were enabled and encouraged to consult the treasures of one's library, often published the contents of the precious manuscripts they found in editions which, of course, then spread the collector's fame even more widely. This precisely was what Ecchellen did in publishing one of the results of his perusal of Mazarin's Arabic and Syriac manuscripts and mention in the cardinal's name in the title. He had discovered an Arabic text, the *Ta'ffim al-muta'a'lim*, by Burhiin al-DTN al-ZarnugjT, an essay on science and scholarship written, perhaps, in the year 1203 (65); this, I think, must have fitted in nicely with his earlier publication on the Arab philosophy of science, of 1641; the author, a Hanafite lawyer, intended his work to be a practical guide to Madrasa-students; he emphasizes man's obligation to use God's most precious gift, that of the intellect, which may attain knowledge. Ecchellen discourses on
the attributes and attitude which constitute the scholarly mind, and the methods by which knowledge can be gained, providing a running commentary on the prophet Muhammad's *dicta* in this field; he explains that,
notwithstanding the prophet's rather negative attitude to the world of learning, philosophy and logic are important elements of Arab culture, more specifically referring to the efforts of the caliph al-Ma'mun to further the cause of scholarship by, amongst other things, promoting the translation of Christian scientific texts. This particular treatise, short as it was, to Ecchellen's opinion provides a succinct guide, useful for Christians, too. The analogy seems obvious, the more so when Ecchellen points to some Arabic manuscripts which he deems of great importance to European culture, viz. the unedited decades of Livy, in the royal library of the Escorial, the konika of Apollonius of Perge, in the library of the grand duke of Tuscany, and some Aristotelian and Euclidian treatises in Mazarin's collection. As we will see, he already was outlining his own publication program for the years to come. In the dedication to Pierre Seguyer, Ecchellen also mentioned the friendship shown to him by men like Le Jay, Gaulmain, Mondin and Thevenot – whom we shall meet again – indicating, of course, the circle of Parisian orientalists which must have been his natural milieu. The importance of the text and of Ecchellen's translation was obvious, as appears from the fact that in 1709 it was again published, now in Utrecht, by the famous Dutch orientalist Hadrianus Reland, as: Enchiridion Studiosi, Arabice conscriptum a Borchaneddino Alzemouchi, cum duplice versione Latina, altera a Frederico Rostgaard, sub auspiciis Josephi Banesii, Maronitae Syri, Romae elaborata, altera Abrahami Ecchellensi.

Mazarin's maecenatic glory was again extolled in Ecchellen's next Parisian publication, De proprietatibus ac virtutibus medicis animalium, plantarum ac gemmarum tractatus triplex, auctore Habdahmano Asiutensi Aegyptio...ex ms. codice Bibliothecae Eminentissimi Cardinalis Mazarini. Two months before this book was published, Mazarin had acquired some one hundred Arabic manuscripts, and Ecchellen had started to work on an inventory; while cataloguing these texts, he discovered this particular treatise, which he collated with another one from the library of the Oratorians. To its edition, he added two further treatises, both from the manuscript collection of his friend Melchisedech Thevenot; whereas the first one dealt with the curative possibilities of animal products, the second discussed the medicinal properties of plants and the third those of gems; the three of them are now known to be the Diwan al-lāyawan of one and the same fifteenth-century author, ʾAbdarrāhman bin ʿAbī Bakr Qjallil al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1508) (66). In his notes Ecchellen, as well as using other manuscripts from the Mazarin collection, also draws upon his personal experience, as when he tells that part of his knowledge of gems comes from the Polish court jeweler, Giovanni Battista lana, who for long years had been a resident of Cairo. In the dedication to Francois Vautier, a famous lawyer as well as a medical doctor, formerly court physician to
Maria de Medicis, Ecchellen found an opportunity to draw attention to the Arab world view, when he wrote: "tota scientiae ratio bipartita distinguitur apud Arabes sapientes (...) in ilium scilicet, quae ad animas pertinent, sive legem, atque in illam, quae ad corpora spectat, sive medicinam", thus once again stressing the importance of learning from Arab culture, to strengthen the Christian position.

When we ask what occupied Ecchellen's attention between 1646 and 1651, the sources again remain silent; however, we may conclude that he, as busy studying quite a number of topics if we believe a list he gave to Carlo Cartari (67); most of the items on it have not resulted in a publication or, for that matter, in manuscripts which have come down to us. Certain questions which he may have been pondering did, in one way or another, return in works published after 1651, but it seems that several important projects which Ecchellen seems to have been working on in these very years did not come to full fruition. Thus, for example, his plan to edit various writings of St. John Maron, the real founding father of the Maronite Church; Ecchellen never realized the publication of the saint's treatises and tracts on such topics as the Jacobite liturgy, church hierarchy, Monophysitism, Monotheletism and Nestorianism – the last three, obviously, aimed at a proper definition of the Maronite stance especially as to the true nature of Christ (68). Another theme which had interested Ecchellen for a long time, seems to have occupied his thoughts in Paris as well. Among the projects he listed, one was described as Paral/eli seu collatio dogmatum orienta/i um nationum cum dogmatibus Ecclesiae Romanae et protestantium ubi ad oculum demonstratus orientales in nullo convenire articulo cum Protestantibus, ex iis qui ipsos inter et Ecclesia Romana controvertentur uti iactant. This, of course, ties up with his Niceanean publication, as well as with a letter which he wrote, and published, request of Barthold Nihusius, a learned priest working in the Netherlands and later suffragan bishop of Mainz, "de usu communionis sub unius specie apud Orientales" (69). Nihusius had enlisted Ecchellen's help against the many efforts made in the 1640's and '50's by Dutch, English and German Protestants especially, to come to terms in one way or another with other non-Roman, Christian churches; Hugo Grotius wrote his tract on the truth of Christendom to propagate the Protestant version of the Christian faith in the Arabic speaking world; his text had been translated into Arabic by Ecchellen's friend Edward Pocock who, himself, contributed an Arabic rendering of the Anglican catechism and liturgy to this cause, whereas Johann Heinrich Hottinger gave the Near East his Arabic translation of the Confessio Helvetica. This policy naturally grated on the mind of Ecchellen and his likes, the more so as
the Maronite must have interpreted these overtures as proof that his church still was considered different, not in communion with Rome,
whereas part of his own scholarly work had been directed towards establishing the historicity of this very union.

Some projects which may have been started in Paris, whether during his first or his second stay, never were finished, either. Amongst them, perhaps, Ecchellen's Latin translation of the Geography of Abu al-Fida' Isma'il bin Call (1273-1331), prince of Hamsa (70). The existence of this important text among the Vaticani Orientali was known to Lucas Holste who, already in 1628, asked Barberini to find him a man well-versed in Arabic to provide a Latin translation of the very long, descriptive title of Abu al-Fida's treatise, which Holste wanted to include in his 'History of Ancient Geography' (71). Apparently, Barberini asked a Maronite scholar who at that time was studying the Vatican Arabic manuscripts, Vittorio Scialac Accurra, or rather Na' rallah Shalaal-A ur1, the founder of the Maronite College in Ravenna (72); he, though coming up with a paraphrase of sorts, finally noted: "This book cannot be understood, either in its entirety or in parts." (73). In the same year, Ecchellen, still a pupil at the Maronite College, was consulted when Accurra sold a collection of Arabic manuscripts to the Vaticana (74). Whether he was tempted to try his hand where his learned compatriot had failed, we do not know. Fact is that a translation, in his hand, of the greater part of Abu al-Fida's Geography exists among the Barberini manuscripts (75). However, as we also know that Thevenot used parts of Ecchellen's version for his Relations de divers Voyages (Paris, 1666) – the parts about Hind and Sind, or "Les climats Alhend et Alsend de la Geographie d'Abulfeda" – it is equally possible that Ecchellen only started working on this project when he first met his friend during his first Parisian stay. It never came to a fullfledged publication, though; in 1650, part of the Geography was translated and published in London by the Englishman John Greaves as the Chorasmiae et Mawarabnahræ (...) descriptio, while Erpenius, Golius and Pocock used it, too; a full edition only was published in the nineteenth century.

Ecchellen stayed in Paris till 1651, at last even occupying quarters in the building of the newly established Bibliotheque Royale (76). But then a summons came from Rome; once again, the cardinals of the Congregation of the Propaganda, now headed by cardinal Capponi, had decided that Ecchellen's qualities were needed in the Papal States rather than in France; they may well have thought that a man of his experience might be better employed in Rome – serving the Propagation of the Faith as well as spreading the fame of the Eternal City as a centre of learning – than in Paris which, to many policy-makers at the Curia, did not exactly behave as the centre of a state which prided itself on being the Church's
obedient eldest son. Ecchellen was recalled to assist in the preparation of the Roman Arabic version of the Bible, as well as function as interpreter for Arabic and Syriac.
Before leaving France on March 21, 1651, Ecchellen witnessed the publication of yet another result of his diligent research, the *Chronicon Orientale* (...) *cui accessit eiusdem supplementum Historiae orientalis*, a volume in *folio* – beautifully illustrated by the Royal Printing Office, with engravings for the *incipit-letters* – apparently sponsored, once again, by chancellor Seguier. Ecchellen tells his readers that he is on the brink of returning to Italy, which has made the writing of a long introduction impossible; however, the extensive notes give a great deal of information; they have been assembled from various manuscript sources, such as texts in the Royal Library, thanks to the friendship of the Du Puy-brothers, and in the libraries of Guilbert Gaulmain, Mazarin and Seguier, but they are based on data collected by Thevenot as well. The text in question is a rather simple world chronicle, produced in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, which takes history up to the Roman emperors, continuing with lists of the caliphs, the local rulers of Egypt and Syria, and the patriarchs of Alexandria. Ecchellen did not know the name of the author – we now know it was written in or around the year 1259 by Petrus Abu Shakir ibn Ratub abu Karam ibn Muhladdib (77) – but the manuscript had disclosed that he was an Egyptian Copt, a monk and a patriarch of Alexandria himself; the manuscript, up till 1626, had been in the possession of a Maronite priest called Elias, from Ehden in Lebanon, who had discovered and copied the text in Cairo; Ecchellen had purchased his copy and now gave the text to the world, with a quite specific purpose that, once again, neatly dovetails with his earlier ventures. Europe, according to him, knows far too little about the Near East, a region that is of the utmost importance to it; the people of the Orient are seen as uncivilized, ignorant, even by such learned worthies as the late Joseph Justus Scaliger, who read a great number of Arabic texts but understood little ... (78). To redress this situation, Ecchellen accompanied his edition of the chronicle with a true work of his own, actually the first large-scale text he wrote, a *Historia Arabomm ab eorum origine usque ad Pseudoprophetam Mahometum* (...) *in duas divisa partes*. This, in fact, is a description of early Arab culture, especially in the fields of chronology and historiography, as well as a survey of pre-Muhammedan Arab religion and philosophy, obviously meant both to correct ideas and views created and spread by orientalists such as Scaliger, and to enlighten the European public about the value of Arab civilization.

*Back to Rome for the last time: 1651 and onwards.*

Ecchellen arrived in Rome on May, 12, 1651. The Congregation of the
Propaganda gave him 120 *scudi* a year for his job as interpreter and assistant, rather paltry as compared to his Parisian earnings, plus the promise of the chair of Arabic at the *Sapienza* on the retirement of father
Filippo Guadagnolo (79). Perhaps Ecchellen complained, or else the authorities may have felt that something more rewarding was, indeed, called for; however this may be, on March 5, 1652, the cardinals of the Propaganda decided to endow a chair of Syriac at the Sapienza, with Ecchellen as founding professor.

With this combination of tasks, the Maronite must have been quite fully occupied, but it did not keep him from research, as became clear in 1653, when the famous Press of the Propaganda published his *Ope Domini Nostri Iesu Christi incipimus scribere Tractatum (...) auctore Hebediesu, metropolita Sobiensi, Latinitate donatum et notis illustratum*. The work was dedicated to Antonio cardinal Barberini, chancellor of the Church, cardinal-prefect of the Propaganda, Grand Almoner of France and bishop of Poitiers. This choice, of course, had its political reasons, as always, but it was an appropriate one as well, because of Ecchellen's purpose with the publication of this particular text.

It all went back to a manuscript belonging to the Roman monastery of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, where the abbot was Don Hilarion Roncati, who ranked as a competent orientalist as well as a patron of letters; he had drawn Ecchellen's attention to this list of Chaldean writers compiled, as Ecchellen wrongly thought, by a late fifteenth-century convert from Nestorianism to Christendom, one Hebediesu (80); men like Leone Allacci, of the Vatican Library, and Giovanni Battista Maro, canon of Sant'Angelo in Pescaria had urged Ecchellen to edit and publish the text as it would serve an important goal, viz. to show the full extent of scholarly literature in Chaldean and Syriac that could support the appeal to tradition now necessary to Rome in its struggle against heretics and free thinkers (81). Consultation of this corpus also would contribute to purge the Greek and Latin texts of the many corrupted passages they contained; finally, a better understanding of the Oriental scholarly production would show that however many the differences between the Roman and the Oriental churches -differences that were constantly being magnified by the papacy's critics -there was, in the Near East, a region with its own culture, its own languages, in a fundamental union with Rome (82). Actually, Hebediesu's bibliography, to which Ecchellen added a number of titles of Arab writers whom he deemed important, only seems to have been the excuse for a longish apologetic introduction and a series of very extensive notes, loosely connected to the listed items; thus, there is a fifty-page discussion with such scholars as Arnold Boot and James Ussher on the origin of the vocalizing signs in Syriac, and the way this problem interferes with a proper reading and interpretation of the Syrian
Old Testament (83). Clearly this reaches back to the controversy between Ecchellen, Sionita and Flavigny, but also to the Maronite's efforts to strike at those heretics who try to combat Rome by accaparating the
Eastern tradition. Besides its other effects, this 1653 publication of Ecchellen's apparently did engender a debate among orientalists, for we find Ecchellen's old friend Jean Morin writing to him on such questions as whether in Hebrew and Samaritan vocalizing signs existed from the beginning, and whether the Arabs always used them as well; another question of his was how Jewish women and children, not being schooled in grammar, ever could have read the sacred texts if they did not know the vocalizing rules? Would it be possible to use some verses of the Syriac Pentateuch to indicate what the actual pronunciation of words might have been? (84). Ecchellen's answer, in which he entered into numerous grammatical details, took some nine months, not surprisingly, for from another source we know that his last publication had landed him in some quite unexpected troubles (85). Apparently, Pope Innocent X had taken umbrage at the way Ecchellen had mentioned Barberini's French connections, congratulating him on having been named Grand Almoner of France, and stressing his pastoral and fiercely anti-heretical activities in his see; the short of it was that Ecchellen was in disgrace and even considered returning to Paris. It is not clear what was the outcome of this episode, but the Maronite scholar did not leave Rome.

Ecchellen, the Vatican Library and European Oriental studies.

When, in 1655, Innocent died and was succeeded by Fabio cardinal Chigi, who assumed the papal name of Alexander VII, things in Rome began to change, at least in the field of culture (86). In contrast to the previous pontiff, the new pope was a patron of the arts and sciences on the grand scale. His vision of a Roma Restaurata not only extended to grandiose building programs but also encompassed the spiritual world. Actually, one of his main obsessions was the need to restore Rome to its erstwhile position as the leading intellectual centre of Europe, not only the capital of the Papal States and of the Christian world but also of the Republic of Letters (87). Combating the heretics and all those who, within the Church, wished to detract from Rome's authority, was his main policy aim, as it had been Ecchellen's ideal, too. This battle, of course, had to be waged on the field of learning, with the intellect and books as the chosen weapons. Hence the position of the papal university was considerably strengthened, the salaries of the professors were raised, publication facilities were created, etcetera. In this climate, Ecchellen started upon his last great work. His last, for the other project, the publication of a Biblioteca Orientalis, in qua non solum ingens recensetur Chaldeorum, Syrorum et Arabum librorum copia, vernm etiam eorum qui in hasce linguas
sunt translati, which he mentioned in his 1658 list for Carlo Cartari, never materialized. However, the very fact that we now know that this project existed may, once again, underline Ecchellen's importance within
the group of Maronite orientalists who, over two centuries, contributed so much to the establishment and growth of that field of scholarship in Western Europe. Surely it is not by chance that the enterprise which assured the immortality of that other great Maronite orientalist, Giuseppe Simonio Assemani, was a *Biblioteca Orientalis* as well (88), though it concentrated on the holdings of the Vatican Library instead of giving what, perhaps, even Ecchellen would not have been able to provide, a general survey of works published in Near Eastern languages. However, even as a catalogue of the books and manuscripts in the papal collections, Assemani's *Biblioteca* could not have been compiled without recourse to the older Maronite's bibliographic and inventoring labours at the *Vaticana* (89).

When Ecchellen returned to Rome, he apparently realized that his future scholarly work in his chosen field would, inevitably, have to be based mainly upon the rich oriental holdings of the papal library. A catalogue of these treasures did not, however, exist though books and manuscripts had been pouring in since the late fifteenth century, as the result of donations by successive popes, cardinal-librarians and other benefactors, but also as the outcome of the papal right of spoils, or via such exotic ways as the confiscation, by the papal inquisitor on Malta, of Turkish manuscripts captured by the Knights of St. John (90). From the early decades of the seventeenth century onward, the Maronite orientalists in Rome had realized the importance of this collection, using it for their research and trying to get the library's management to employ one of them to ensure its proper safeguarding and making it available to the scholarly world.

Thus, the above-mentioned abbot Vittorio Accurra, professor of Syriac at the *Sapienza* from 1610-1631 and, hence, Ecchellen's predecessor, author of a lengthy 'Defense of the Maronite Nation', had been working for the Vatican Library just like the Maronite archbishop Sergio Rizzi who had been sorting out the Syriac and Arabic manuscripts for his Syriac edition of the Bible, and coveted the as yet non-existent post of *scrittore* for Arabic and Syriac for his scholarly nephew Giuseppe Luna – Yusuf al-Hilali – as much as Accurra wanted it for himself (91). It seems that from 1653 onwards Ecchellen was continuing this tradition, working on a provisional list of the Vatican's Near Eastern manuscripts. In 1658, this resulted in a rigidly thematic catalogue which was to remain the basis of future inventories (92). The importance of Ecchellen's contribution to the proper functioning of the *Vaticana* as a great research library did not go unnoticed; whether it was pope Alexander himself who realized professor
Ecchellen's worth, or his nephew the cardinal-librarian Flavia Chigi, we do not know, but on May, 21, 1660, Abraham Ecchellense was nominated to the newly-instituted position of scittore for Arabic and Syriac at the
Biblioteca Vaticana; this was a function added to the six traditional ones connected with the library, viz. the two scrittorie for Hebrew, Greek and Latin, respectively; it meant a clear recognition not only of the new nominee's personal merits but, one may say, of the importance of the Near East for the cultural history of the European-Christian world.

In his new function, Ecchellen soon was assisted by the three Nairone-brothers, Fausto, Giovanni Mattia and Nicola, members of the Nimrun family, who were related to him through his wife (93). Returning to Rome in 1651, Ecchellen probably realized that he was going to stay. Perhaps it was then that he married, choosing one Constantia, the daughter of Michael ibn Nimrun, originally from the Lebanese village of al-BanT but since long settled in Rome. Constantia bore him four children, three sons and a daughter. It seems that Ecchellen became a prominent member of the Roman Maronite community, not the least through the patronage he obviously enjoyed from Alexander VII; we find the Maronite patriarch in the Lebanon writing to him on several occasions, not only thanking him for intervening with the pope in favour of the Maronite cause, but also for his charity towards needy fellow Maronites (94). The Nimruni-brothers had been educated at the Maronite College in Rome, and now, in various ways, stepped into the tradition of orientalist scholarship of their community. But while Fausto (1625-1712) was being groomed as Abraham's successor at the Sapienza (95), and young Nicola was employed as a copyist in the Vatican library, it was Giovanni Mattia who began to act as Abraham's amanuensis and collaborator. Together, they tried to solve the problems created by the influx of books and manuscripts which resulted from Ecchellen's succesful efforts to get the oriental holdings of the Neophyte College in Rome transferred to the Vaticana (96). The descriptions in the Ecchellen-Nairone catalogue of Vatican Near Eastern manuscripts of 1686, which was the first result of this collaboration (97), show that at least in the fields of Arabic and Syriac the two were certainly among the leading scholars of their day – so much so that Assemani repeated them almost verbatim in his Biblioteca Orientalis; however, Coptic was not their strong point, and the Turkish section is rather weak as well (98).

All this should not make us forget that Ecchellen's purpose was not a mere catalogue, but a research tool, to be used for his own and others' scholarly work, and more specifically for the last great book he was preparing, as well as for his projected Biblioteca.

In 1661, the Press of the Propaganda printed Ecchellen's last work which had been in the making for some six or seven years already (99).
Actually, it consisted of two separate studies, often found bound together as their purpose was, in fact, the same. They were *Eutychius patriarcha Alexandrinus vindicatus et suis restitutus orientalibus, sive responsio ad*
Johannis Seldeni Origines, in duas tributa partes, quarnm prima est De Alexandrina Ecclesia Originibus, altera De Origine Nominis Papae, quibus accedit Censura in Historiam Orientalem Johannis Henrici Hottingeri Tigurini, omnia ex orientalium excerpta Monumentis. This work was dedicated to Alexander VII, quite properly so, I think, because the subject matter was dear to the pope: the defense of the papal primacy against the onslaughts of heretics and free thinkers; these had become more frequent and violent in the late 'forties and the 'fifties; they formed a threat to Rome's supremacy, the more acutely felt by Alexander as Jansenism spread in the Low Countries and France, and Gallicanism was openly favoured by Louis XIV, with whom the pope was on far from amiable terms. The dedication is a complicated and cunning verbal mixture of the allegorical elements used in visual propaganda during Alexander's pontificate – the mountains, the star and the oak of the Chigi coat-of-arms as the link between Heaven and Earth, between Divine Wisdom and its representative, the Church – and of Ecchellen's own obsession, the contribution of the Near East to European-Christian culture; it shows when the author addresses the pope as follows: "cedat igitur veritati mendacium; tuos montes adoren Sinai, Sion, Carmelus, caeteraque praeclara montium iuga; thura offerat Libanus, eiusque sublimae, ac incorruptae cedri, incorruptae fidei symbolum, vis immortalibus sese submittant quercibus." The writers and wisdom of the Near East can help to defend the Roman tradition; the Maronites have honoured the primacy of the popes over the past eleven hundred years; in the end, the Chigi-star will prove to be a load-star towards the cradle of Christ; this certainly is a neat introduction to Ecchellen's most extensive polemic ever. In both studies, he attacks John Selden's interpretation of two texts by Sacid ibn al-BitT, also known as Eutychius, orthodox patriarch of Alexandria from 933 to 940 (100). In each, Ecchellen gives the Arabic text, followed by Selden's Latin translation and his own version, and then goes on to comment on specific points and problems, which range from Selden's inadequate command of Arabic and his incorrect translations to his lack of knowledge of other, circumstantial evidence like a number of pertinent inscriptions on monuments in Alexandria, etcetera. The reason behind the entire excercise was, of course, to disprove Selden's claims against the continuity between the patriarchate of Alexandria and the Roman papacy as the leading sees of the Christian world. To the discussion, Ecchellen brought an impressive array of manuscript sources which had provided him with his data, enumerating some 68 codices, of which a goodly fifteen were in his own possession.

With these rather lengthy apologetic studies, the list of Abraham Ecchellen's publications ends. Whether he continued working on the many projects which still were on his mind in 1658, we do not know. Still, the
oeuvre as it stands shows a definite consistency, that marks Ecchellen as a mediator between Mediterranean cultures. He was educated in the culture of the Christian-Syrian-Arab world, but deeply attached to a religion that, though originating in his own region, now had its centre in Western Europe and was steeped in a culture that for long had disregarded its origins, looking upon the inhabitants of the Near East as the arch-enemies of Christendom, as people who were both infidels and barbarians. Ecchellen realized that the Christian part of the Near Eastern cultural complex was an integral component of Christianity as such, and may have felt that Christian civilization, precisely because of its growing Eurocentricity, had to be counterbalanced by re-introducing it to its own roots; he also realized that the Arab-Islamic part of the Near Eastern cultural complex had preserved and developed a tradition of knowledge and scholarship that Christianity, and Christian-European culture could not let go unheeded; Ecchellen's life's work aimed to bring about this re-introduction through making available to Europe some of the products of a culture that not only was its nearest neighbour but also, albeit partly, had grown from the same roots. Cultural diversity – Ecchellen never denied that many elements in the praxis of the Oriental churches differed considerably from the Roman canon – within fundamental theological unity would enable the Roman Catholic church to stand strong against the waves of disdissence, heterodoxy and heresy. Perhaps one should see Ecchellen's singificance in yet another light. In his life and works he seems the personification of the Maronites, a group that, while trying to achieve a certain synthesis between the two dominant Mediterranean cultures, was at the same time torn between them. A synthesis as visualised by Ecchellen may be a dream only, as seems to be shown by Lebanon's history in the twentieth century.

Epilogue.

Abraham Ecchellen died on July, 15, 1664. Even if no monument to his memory was erected in Rome – though in Paris his name adorns the facade of the College Royal – his work was continued. His nephew, Fausto Nairone, immediately wrote to the then grandduke of Tuscany as the head of the family that had always taken care of the Maronites in general, and of Abraham in particular (101); he requested grandduke Leopold to recommend his brother Giovanni Mattia for the succession to Abraham's function as scrittore at the Vatican Library, while asking for himself the professorship at the Sapienza; whether or not through grandducal protection, both wishes were granted by pope Alexander (102), who, two years later, also selected Fausto Nairone as first custodian of the newly-established university library, the Biblioteca Alessandrina, especially charged with the care of its oriental holdings (103). But Ecchellen's own manu-
scripts entered the *Vaticana*, there to remain a separate collection till in the eighteenth century all Oriental *fondi* were united by the Assemani-brothers; in making the catalogue of the new *fondo*, they heavily relied on the previous, Ecchellen-Nairone inventories (104). Thus, Ecchellen helped organize one of the most important European repositories of Near-Eastern manuscripts at a time that Oriental studies became ever more important, though at the same time Europe entered a phase wherein growing Orientalism, as a taste for the exotic, went hand in hand with a growing disdain – born partly from political and economic superiority – for the very culture that Ecchellen, standing in the Maronite tradition, had sought to bring closer to the European mind.

**NOTES**


2) Most of the available information to date has been meticulously, though unsystematically gathered in a number of footnotes to: G. Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla Formazione del più antico fondo dei manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana*, Citta del Vaticano 1939, especially p. 6, note 2 (= *Ricerche*), and in Graf, o.c., III, pp. 354-359.

3) Archivio di Stato di Roma (= *ASR*), Fonda Cartari-Febei (= *FCF*), Vol. 64, ff. 23r-27r and 69r-81v.


8) *Anaissi*, o.c., pp. 113-114.


11) Atiya, o.c., p. 392; Salibi, o.c., passim.

12) Unless otherwise indicated, all bibliographical references are to Ecchellen's (auto-)bibliographical essay as cited in note 3, ut supra.

13) Abrahaeni Ecchellensi Collegii Maronitarum Alumni Linguae Syriacae sive Chaldaicae Perbrevis Institutio ad euisdem Nationis Studiosos Adolescentes, Rome 1628.

14) Graf, o.c., III, p. 356.


17) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., p. 61.

18) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., pp. 40-41.

19) Domenico Magri, *Viaggio at Monte Libano*, Rome 1624, p. 44.

20) The following is a reconstruction of Ecchellen's activities on the basis of a great number of documents connected with Fakhr al-Din published by Carali in his study on the amir; however, some of the letters Carali quotes have not been dated correctly.

21) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., docs. CLII, CXLI.

22) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, f.69v.

23) [Abraham Ecchellen] *Epistola apologetica (Prima, Altera), in qua diluuntur calumniae ac imposturiae quamplures adversus Syriacam Libelli Ruth editionem et eius Latinam versionem, a magistro Valeriano de Flavigny congestae*, [Paris 1647, 1648] (= Epistola). This apologetic work actually consists of three pamphlets, of which the first two (pp. 1-112; 115-165) are directed against De Flavigny, and the third (pp. 167 sqq.) against Sionita (ut infra note 43): *Epistola apologetica tertia in qua respondetur libello Gabrieliis Sionitae*. For the facts cited here: pp. 184-185.

24) Cfr. also Anaissi, o.c., p. 112.

25) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, f.70r.

26) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., docs. CXLII-CLV.

27) Idem, docs. CXXXIX, XXL.

28) Idem, docs. CXLI, CXLV, CXLII.

29) Idem, doc. CXLI.

30) Idem, pp. 125-127 and docs. CL, CLVII.

31) Idem, doc. CLVII.

32) Idem, docs. CLI, CLII, CLIX.

33) Cfr. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Fondo Mediceo (= ASF, FM), M 4, Inserta IX, f. 21 and M 4274, bis, Inserta VI, f.3.

34) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., doc. CLVII.

35) ASF, FM, M 6, ff. 330, 348, 351, 365.


37) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., doc. CLII; cfr. also ASF, FM, M 6, ff. 381, 548, 553, 573.

38) Carali, Fakhr, o.c., p. 410.


40) Raphaël, o.c., pp. 96-97. Al-lalla rii:inTilib had collaborated with Gabriel Sionita (ut infra note 43) on the publication of al-Idrisi’s Geography.

41) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, f.70v.


43) Raphaël, o.c., p. 73 sqq.; Graf, o.c., III, pp. 351-353.

45) Antiquitates, o.c., pp. 298-299, Morin to Ecchellen, August 3, 1641; cfr. Epistola, o.c., p. 126 sqq.

46) Epistola, o.c., p. 126 sqq.; Antiquitates, o.c., p. 70.

47) Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (= BAY), Vaticani Latini 7763, f. 41r, a letter from Rizzi to the Vatican Library.

48) Epistola, o.c., p. 143 sqq.

49) Idem, ibidem.

50) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, ff. 81r-83r contain a list of Ecchellen's publications.


53) Idem, ibidem.

54) Idem, f. 3r, Ecchellen to Holste, Paris, November 22, 1641.

55) Epistola, o.c., p. 146.

56) Antiquitates, o.c., pp. 300-301, Morin to Roncati, January 16, 1641.

57) Idem, pp. 302-303, Morin to Barberini, January 16, 1641.


59) Idem, pp. 326-334, Ecchellen to Morin, April 22, 1644.

60) On the printing of this text: Ecchellen to Holste, September 16, 1645, in: BAV, Barberini Latini 6499, f. 4r.


63) The story of this episode in: Epistola, o.c., pp. 3-165, as well as in Ecchellen's biographical notes: ut supra note 3.

Up till now unnoticed is the additional, rather gossipy material provided by: P. Bayle, Dictionnaire Historique et Critique, Basle 1741 (= sixth edition), Vol. II, pp. 335-336, as well as the summary of this article in: L. Moreri, LeGrand Dictionnaire Historique, IV, Paris 1759, in voce Ecchellensis; my attention to this source was kindly drawn by ny colleague Mrs. Drs. L. van Lieshout. I have not introduced Bayle's data in my text because his comments on Ecchellen's behaviour in the Flavigny-case seem inspired by religious-political reasons, mainly; Bayle obviously did not take kindly to the fact that in the famous debate between Arnauld and Claude, the former used some small piece of evidence produced by Ecchellen, concerning Melchite religion; Claude, in his turn, tried to discredit his opponent's source by accusing Ecchellen of having disrupted life in the Maronite College in Rome, having cheated on Fakhir ai-Din, having been imprisoned in Florence, etc.; all of these quite improbable opinions are uncritically reproduced by Bayle.

64) Epistola, o.c., pp. 183-185.


66) Brock, o.c., II, pp. 143, 158.

67) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, ff. 83r-v.

68) Idem, f. 84r, according to a later note from Ecchellen, dated November 12, 1657.

69) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, f. 83v.


72) Raphael, o.c., p. 61, note 2; Ricerche, o.c., p. 285. Accurra was a professor at the Sapienza from 1610-1631. He wrote a hitherto unknown Nationis Maronitarum Defensio: see BAV, Borgiani Latini 30, ff. 1-263v.

73) BAY, Vaticani Latini 7763, ff. 42r-v; he translated Abu ai-Fida's work as the "Liber Dispositiois Regionum".

74) BAY, Vaticani Latini 7763, f. 93r, Ecchellen's account, written together with Georgius Maronius, Maronite archbishop of Cyprus. The list of manuscripts is on ff. 89r-v.

75) Idem, Barberini Latini 317, ff. lr-64r. Ecchellen gives as his title: "Liber Directionis Regionum".

76) ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, f. 81r.


78) A. Ecchellen, Chronicon Orientale, o.c., p. 275 sqq.

79) On Guadagnolo: ASR, FCF, Vol. 64, ff. 64v-66r and 236r-239v.

80) A. Ecchellen, Ope Domini, o.c., pp. 16-17; for the correct attribution: Graf, o.c. III, p. 357.

81) Idem, p. 129 sqq.

82) Idem, pp. 20-23.

83) Idem, pp. 20-3-214-284.

84) Antiquitates, o.c., pp. 422-423, Ecchellen to Morin, October 8, 1653.


90) E.Rossi, Elenco dei Manoscritti Turchi della Biblioteca Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1953, p. X.

91) Ricerche, o.c., p. 362 sqq.

92) BAY, Vaticani Latini 13200, ff. 63 sqq.

93) The exact relationship between the Nairone-brothers and Constantia Ecchellen is unclear: if they may either have been her brothers, or her cousins, as the name of Michael an-Nirimuni al-BanT is given both for the father of Constantia and of the father of the three brothers.

94) On Fausto, or rather Murhijjb ibn Nimrlin ai-BanT, see: Nouvelle Biographie Generale, XXVII, pp. 141-142. His scholarly production is not overwhelming, but he did publish a Dissertatio de origine, nomine ac religione Maronitarum, Rome 1679.

95) Ricerche, o.c., pp. 411, 415.

96) BAV, Vaticani Latini 13201, ff. 63 sqq.


98) As is shown by letters from Ecchellen to Jean Morin: Antiquitates, o.c., pp. 449-470, 473-475, and 478-480, of July 13, 1654, January 11, 1655 and April 25, 1655, respectively.


100) Anaissi, o.c., pp. 127-128, a letter from the patriarch to Ecchellen, March 15, 1660.


102) Ricerche, o.c., p. 6, note 3.


104) Ricerche, o.c., p. 27.