



DIEU, LOUIS (LUDOVICUS) DE

DIEU, LOUIS (LUDOVICUS) DE, Dutch Orientalist (b. Vlissingen, Flushing, April 7, 1590; d. Leiden, Dec. 23, 1642). His father Daniel de Dieu (1540-1607) was a Calvinist minister at Brussels, who in 1585 fled from the Spanish army to Flushing in the Protestant province of Zeeland. Louis studied theology and Oriental languages (Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Arabic) in Leiden with Thomas Erpenius and Jacob Golius. As a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, he served first in his native province and then from 1619 onwards in Leiden. In 1636 he was appointed governor of Walloon College, a hostel for theology students from the southern Netherlands (present-day Belgium) associated with the University of Leiden.

As a scholar De Dieu was renowned for his interpretations of biblical texts, which were based on a wide and profound linguistic learning. His studies were mainly concerned with the early and more recent translations of the Bible. He also wrote a comparative grammar of a number of Semitic languages (*Grammatica linguarum Orientalium. Hebraeorum, Chaldaeorum et Syrorum inter se collatarum*, Leiden, 1628).

His first acquaintance with Persian was through the Jewish-Persian translation of the Pentateuch by Rabbi Ya'qūb b. Ṭā'ūs, which was printed in a polyglot Bible at Constantinople (1546). In 1635 two Persian texts fell into his hands, which further stimulated his interest in the language. They contained lives of Christ and St. Peter, originally written in Portuguese by the Jesuit priest Jerome Xavier (1549-1617) and then translated into Persian at the command of the Mughal emperor Akbar (q.v.; Storey, I, pp. 163-66). De Dieu published both



texts together with a Latin translation and annotations, intending to correct what he viewed as “misrepresentations” of Christian beliefs on the part of the Catholic missionary (*Historia Christi*, and *Historia S. Petri*, Leiden, 1639). At the request of the printers of these books he also wrote an elementary grammar (*Rudimenta linguae Persicae*, Leiden, 1639), with the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis from the Persian Pentateuch of Rabbi Ṭā’ūs attached as reading material. It is a small book of eighty-two pages which describes the basic morphological rules of Persian in four chapters (the elements of the Persian language, the verb, nouns and pronouns, particles) according to the categories of classical grammar. However, occasionally he also turned his attention to the analytical structure of Persian, in particular in those cases where parallels could be drawn with the Dutch language. His work was the first Persian grammar published in Europe.

Some confusion has arisen as to the actual authorship of *Rudimenta*. Only a few years after its appearance, a German scholar visiting the Netherlands, Christian Rau, made the suggestion that the grammar was not written by De Dieu himself, but by Johannes Elichman (fl. 1600-39), a physician from Silesia living in Leiden, who was renowned for his extensive knowledge of Oriental languages. This remark by Rau was accepted by Joseph von Hammer and misled Gernot Windfuhr (p. 13) to say: “De Dieu is probably the pseudonym for Johann Elichman.” In the preface to his edition of the *Historia Christi*, De Dieu fully acknowledged the help he received from the lexicographical collections of his Leiden colleagues Elichman and Golius, but there are no grounds for supposing that the grammar was not his own work.

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