



IGNATIUS OF JESUS

IGNATIUS OF JESUS (Ignazio di Gesù). An Italian missionary in Persia and a scholar of the Persian language. Carlo Leonelli was born near Pesaro in Italy in 1596 and died in Rome in 1667. He entered the Discalced Carmelite Order (see [CARMELITES](#)) taking the name Ignatius of Jesus, and was sent as a missionary to the East. He lived in Persia (Isfahan, 1629-34; Shiraz, 1634-41), and in Mesopotamia and Syria from 1629 to 1663 (Ambrosius à Sancta Teresia, 1944, pp. 182-83; Chick, *A Chronicle* II, pp. 898-900; Orsatti, 1981). In Isfahan he resided in the country's oldest Carmelite mission (founded in 1608), where Pietro Della Valle (q.v.) had sojourned before him (1617-21) and learnt the rudiments of Persian under the guidance of the Carmelites. Ignatius also began to study Persian, Arabic, and probably Turkish there (Orsatti, 1981, pp. 57-58).

Ignatius is renowned mainly for his studies on religion and on the customs of the Mandaeans or Christians of St. John, a Gnostic sect speaking an Aramaic language and settled at that time near Basra (Orsatti, 1981, p. 61). His work is also very important in the history of the study of Oriental languages and cultures in Europe. He mastered Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Mandaean to perfection. He wrote a series of works in Latin devoted to the study of these languages for Europeans (not only for missionaries), some of which either remained in manuscript form or were lost (Ambrosius à S. Teresia, 1940). He was among the first to promote the tradition of Persian studies in Europe. He wrote a *Grammatica Linguae Persicae* (Rome, 1661) printed by the Propaganda Fide, the third Persian grammar to be published in Europe, following that of



the Dutch scholar Ludwijk de Dieu (Leiden, 1639), and that of the Oxford grammarian John Greaves (London, 1649). He was also the author of a Latin-Persian dictionary, which remained in manuscript form (Vatican Library, ms. Borg. pers. 15; cf. Rossi, pp. 170-71; Orsatti, 1981, pp. 74-83). Ignatius's grammar was conceived as part of a more extensive work to be used in the teaching of Persian and Arabic: *Scrinium Duarum Linguarum Orientalium*, which remained in manuscript form (Rome, National Library, ms. Fondi Minori 69 [S. Maria della Scala 42]; cf. Piemontese, no. 268). He also made a Persian translation, and both a literal and a free retroversion into Latin, of the *Dottrina Cristiana* by Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542-1621; Rome, National Library, ms. Fondi Minori 67 [S. Maria della Scala 27]; cf. Piemontese, no. 270), which is different from that made by the Jesuits of Lahore a few years earlier (Camps, p. 175). It is said that during the last years of his stay in the East, Ignatius devoted his time to composing a *Scrinium Quatuor Linguarum Orientalium*, i.e., Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and Mandaean, now lost (Orsatti, 1981, p. 63).

Ignatius's linguistic works are characterized by their strong practical purpose: to teach people to speak languages well and in a short time. Although his Persian grammar was influenced by the Latin grammatical tradition, it is more concise and effective than that by L. de Dieu, which was mainly intended for erudite European scholars, and was strongly influenced by the Hebrew linguistic tradition (Jeremiás). In his *Dictionarium* the Persian equivalents in the original Arabic script are always preceded by a transcription of their pronunciation in Latin characters (for a historical-linguistic study of the transcription of Persian words, cf. Orsatti, 1984); and much space is devoted to phraseology and examples of usage. The layout of his *Scrinium Duarum Linguarum* is also worthy of note. It includes, not only Persian and Arabic grammar, but also a Latin-Persian and Latin-Arabic dictionary arranged by subject and, for each language, lists of words by grammatical category (pronouns, adverbs, verbs), ways of greeting people, and examples of dialogue, indicating when and to whom they should be addressed. With his linguistic and religious works, Ignatius is one of the most typical representatives of the Oriental missionary tradition.



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