



LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY and Persian Studies.

HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY Leiden University, in Leiden, The Netherlands, was officially founded on 8 February 1575. At that time, the northern Netherlands were a rebellious, predominantly Protestant, cluster of provinces, nominally under the sovereignty of the Roman-Catholic king of Spain. When the city of Leiden, with considerable sacrifice, withstood a double siege by the Spanish army, its inhabitants were rewarded by William Prince of Orange, the leader of the revolt, with the foundation of a university. This was the first Protestant institution of higher education in what would become the Dutch Republic and, from 1813 onwards, the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



PLATE I. Leiden University Library in its new building at Witte Singel, just outside Leiden's



inner city. A modern building (1983), designed by architect Bart van Kasteel, it is the first building of the Library designed expressly as a library. Photograph (1 March 2009) courtesy of the author.

In 1587, the administrators of the young academy realized that they should organize a library so that the books that they already had and those that were expected to come into the university's possession would be professionally preserved and made available to students and scholars. The legacy of the theologian Johannes Holman (d. 1586) gave immediate impetus to the foundation of a genuine library and, following a large donation of books and manuscripts in 1587 by the professor of Greek, Bonaventura Vulcanius (d. 1614), a library facility was built inside the main building of the university, a confiscated Catholic church. The official founding date of the library is 31 October 1587 (Hulshoff Pol, p. 402).



PLATE II. The old Oriental reading room of Leiden University Library in its new building at Witte Singel. Situation as of 17 July 2004 (has since changed). Photograph courtesy of the author.

A catalogue of the entire holdings, the *Nomenclator auctorum omnium*, was published in 1595 by Petrus Bertius. It is the first ever printed catalogue of a public collection of books. The publication of this catalogue had a dual purpose: firstly, to make the treasures of the library available and secondly to



attract students and scholars to the newly founded university. The *Nomenclator* is the first of a long series of printed library catalogues; the last one, containing a description of the entire collection, was published in 1716. After that year, only partial catalogues were published.

A new building for the library was completed in 1983 and marked a turning point in terms of rapid automation (PLATES I and II). Today (2020), the printed books and manuscripts of the library can be accessed through an online public catalogue and the large manuscript holdings of the library are currently being digitized. Apart from the traditional, book-related materials, Leiden University Library presently also houses art-historical, geographical and electronic collections of all sorts. It is the largest scholarly library in The Netherlands.

THE ORIENTAL COLLECTIONS

One of the features for which Leiden University Library has become known is its Oriental collection. From the outset, books in non-European languages were collected. In fact, the first two books in the university's holdings were editions of the *Biblia Polyglotta* (the bible in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin) and the *Talmud* (in Hebrew).

The study of Oriental languages, primarily of Hebrew, but also of other Semitic languages such as Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, Arabic, and Ethiopian and, to a lesser extent, of other languages such as Persian and Turkish, received fresh impetus in Renaissance Europe where the search for authentic sources was high on the list of humanist scholars. This interest is exemplified by the scholarly output of the most outstanding scholar of Europe at the time, Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), who was a professor of Leiden University. His main work, *De emendatione temporum*, was reprinted on several occasions, in different countries between 1583 and 1629. In it, Scaliger uses sources in an impressive number of languages, including Arabic, Persian and Ethiopian, to establish a comparative study of the chronological systems of the world. The sixty or so Oriental manuscripts of his private collection, which Scaliger bequeathed to the university, are the first Oriental manuscripts in its library's holdings.

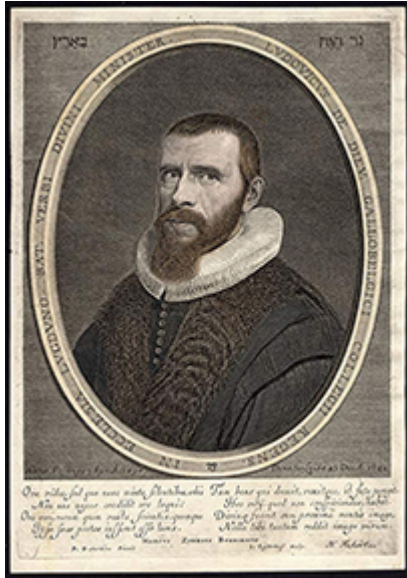


PLATE III. Portrait of Ludovicus de Dieu (1590-1642), the author of *Rudimenta linguae Persicae* (1639). Portrait by P. Dubordieu, copper engraving by I. Suyderhoef, published by H. Focken, ca 1650. Private collection (The Print Collector), The Netherlands.

Unfortunately, the collections of Scaliger's successor, Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624), did not go to Leiden University, but they are not lost. They are now in Cambridge University Library, whereas Erpenius' additional claim to fame is the Oriental printing press that he founded and that had several works in Arabic among its publications. This was not novel, however, since the professor of Hebrew, Franciscus Rapelengius (1539-97), had already been printing books in Arabic in Leiden as early as 1588. His posthumously published Arabic-Latin dictionary (Leiden, 1613) is an example of early Orientalist printing in the Netherlands. Early Persian studies are represented in Leiden by Louis de Dieu (q.v.; 1590-1642; PLATE III), a regent of the French College in Leiden and a Protestant minister of the Divine word. He was conversant with a number of Oriental languages, including Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian. De Dieu edited and translated two Persian texts written in India by Father Jerome Xavier, the *Mer'āt-al qods* or *Dāstān-e Masiḥ* (as



Historia Christi persice conscripta) and the *Dāstān-e aḥwāl-e Ḥawāriān* or *Dāstān-e San Pēdrō* (as *Historia S. Petri persica conscripta*). Both were published in Leiden in 1639 (Storey, I, pp. 163-66), as was de Dieu's Persian grammar, *Rudimenta linguae Persicae*. The latter work included the first two books of Genesis, taken from the Persian translation by Jacob Tawus (Rabbi Ya'qub b. Yusof Ṭā'us), which was printed as early as in 1546 in Istanbul in Hebrew script. De Dieu transliterated it into Arabo-Persian script and fashioned it into recognizable Persian.

Collecting manuscript sources and producing scholarship on the basis thereof are aspects of basically the same activity and humanist ideal: the opening up of new worlds of knowledge. Not only did this lead to a reappraisal of the Greek and Hebrew heritage as sources of European culture, it also encouraged scholars to seek relevant sources in other languages, notably in Arabic. It was the Leiden professor in Oriental languages and in mathematics, Jacobus Golius (q.v.; 1596-1667; PLATE IV), who, between 1622-24, conducted a field trip to Morocco, and between 1625-29 an acquisition trip for Middle Eastern manuscripts on behalf of Leiden University.



PLATE IV. Posthumous portrait of Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), the author of a Persian-Latin dictionary (1669). Oil



painting on canvas by Hieronymus van der Mij (1687-1761) after a contemporary engraving. Collection Leiden University (Icones 81).

In addition to works on Arabic language and Islamic literature, he was searching for Islamic scientific texts and, more particularly, Greek sources in Arabic, especially those parts of the “Conic Sections” by Appollonius of Perga, which had been lost in the Greek version. The slightly more than two hundred Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts that he brought back from Aleppo and Constantinople form the beginning of the Leiden Oriental collections on a grand scale. In 1653, Golius published his famous Arabic-Latin dictionary, which has remained in use for almost two centuries. His Persian-Latin dictionary was posthumously published in 1669, as part of the *Lexicon Heptaglotton* of Edmund Castell.

More was to come. Golius’ pupil Levinus Warner (1619-65) became the Dutch ambassador to the Sublime Porte. He was a bibliophile and profited from the immense antiquarian market in Constantinople by bringing together a superb collection of more than a thousand manuscript volumes in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish. After his death, these manuscripts came to Leiden and consequently made the Leiden library one of the major repositories of such materials. The 17th century is considered the Golden Age of Dutch culture; it was certainly the golden age of Oriental studies in the Dutch Republic.

Although the highlights of that golden age were not to be repeated in the 18th century, the acquisition of Islamic manuscripts by the Leiden library steadily continued. Single items and entire libraries were purchased, and by 1820 the library’s Islamic manuscript holdings exceeded 2,000 items. Interest in Europe shifted, and Oriental sources were no longer acquired solely with the purpose of adding to Western knowledge. The 18th century, Europe’s Age of Enlightenment, saw a growing interest in Oriental literary works, both in prose and poetry.

The colonial era brought many more Islamic manuscript materials to Leiden from what is now Indonesia. Indeed, this occurred in such numbers that one can speak of exponential growth. Shortly before 1900, some 7,000 Oriental manuscripts had entered the library (though not all of these were of Islamic content), many of which had come from Indonesia. The purchase in 1883 of a



private library from Medina is evidence that acquisitions from the Middle East continued as well. But colonialism was not the only way that collections entered the library; moreover, the acquisitions were untainted by the ugly aspects of colonization as the Netherlands never colonized parts of the Middle East. The post-colonial era is, in fact, more conspicuous for its increase in manuscript holdings. By 1974, the number had grown to around 14,000 and by the end of 2018, the number of Oriental manuscripts had reached well over 27,000.

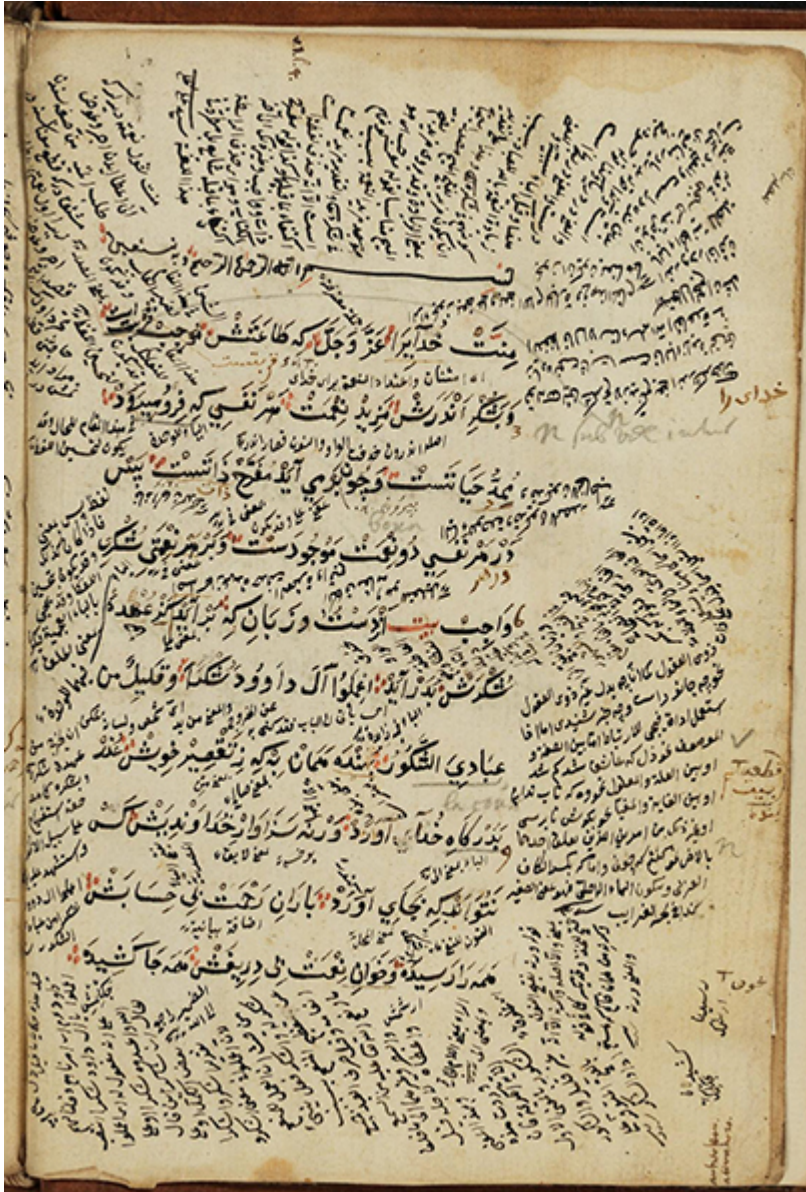


PLATE V. Opening page of the *Golestān* by Sa'di Širāzi, Persian text with glosses in Arabic and Turkish, and notes



by Jacobus Golius. Collection Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609). MS Leiden Or. 242, f. 1b. Photograph courtesy of Leiden University Library,

But just owning a manuscript collection is not sufficient; it requires an infrastructure to facilitate its use. A reader's primary needs are a good catalogue, a well-equipped reading room and an extensive reference library. Archival needs should be catered for by digitization and a well-equipped restoration workshop guarantees the physical survival of the collections. All of this was established in Leiden.



PLATE VI. Iraj is slain by Tur. An episode from the Šāh-nāma by Ferdowsi, in a manuscript dated 840/1437, possibly from Shiraz. MS Leiden Or. 494, f. 24b.

A large number of in-depth descriptions of parts of the Leiden manuscript holdings were published in *Codices Manuscripti*, a series of manuscript catalogues published on behalf of the Leiden library. It is unfortunate that the catalogue of Persian manuscripts, initiated by J. T. P. de Bruijn and his



students in the 1970's, was never completed. He did, however, complete the English version of Jan Rypka's *History of Iranian Literature* in 1968.

The current (2020) library holds about 6,000 manuscript volumes originating from the Middle East, containing multiple texts, mostly in Arabic, but there are also considerable numbers of manuscripts in Persian and Turkish. There are approximately 1,000 Persian manuscripts preserved in the Leiden library. Four of these, with low class-marks, represent the 17th-century acquisitions, the others were acquired in the last fifty years. Among the notable Persian manuscripts is a Persian text of the *Golestān* by Sa'di Širāzi (d. 691/1292), with glosses in Arabic and Turkish and notes by Jacobus Golius (PLATE V). The manuscript was the source of Sa'di's popularity in Europe in the 17th century (Brancaforte). Another important holding is an illustrated manuscript of the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsi (q.v.; see Sims; PLATE VI).

There is also a manuscript of the *Tadkerat al-awliā'* by Farid-al-Din Moḥammad b. Ebrāhim 'Aṭṭār (q.v.; d. after 586/1190; PLATE VII), which was one of the manuscripts used by R. A. Nicholson for his edition of the text (London and Leiden, 1905). Other notable manuscripts include a Persian translation of the Gospel of Matthew (PLATE VIII); a Judaeo-Persian version of the *Divān* of Hafez (q.v.; PLATE IX); the *Daḳira-ye K̄vārazmšāhi* (q.v.) by Zayn-al-Din Gorgāni (PLATE X); the *Alfāz-e adwiya* by Nur-al-Din Moḥammad 'Abd-Allāh b. Ḥakim 'Ayn-al-Molk Širāzi (q.v.; PLATE XI); and an untitled work on dream interpretation by Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Ali b. Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Ġaznawi (PLATE XII).



PLATE IX. Opening page of the Judeo-Persian version of the Diwān of Kāvāz Ḥāfez Širāzi (see HAFEZ). Undated, but possibly late 18th/early-19th century. MS Leiden Or. 14.396, f. 1a. Photograph courtesy of the author.

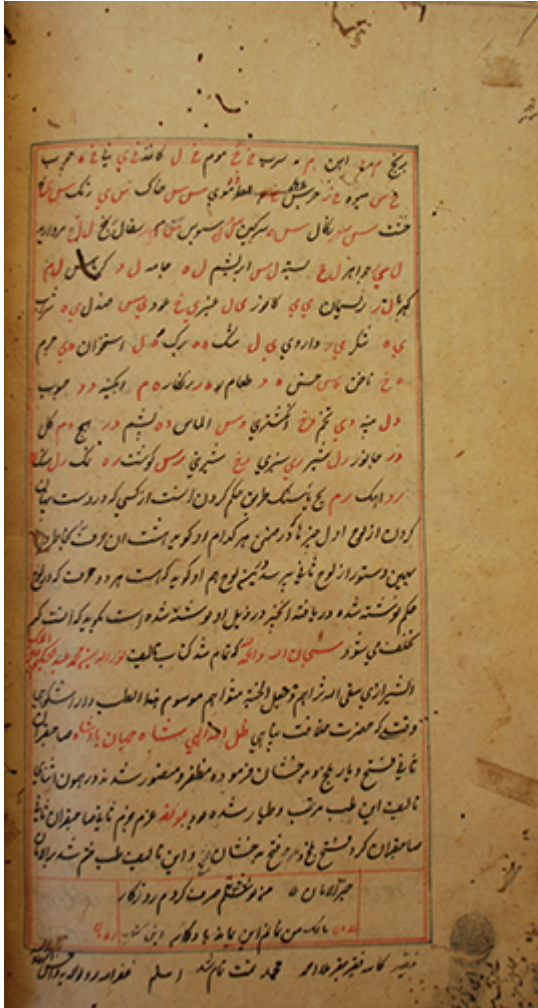


PLATE XII. Last page of *Alfāz-e adwiya*, the pharmacopeia by Nur al-Din Moḥammad ‘Abd-Allāh b. Ḥakim ‘Ayn-al-Molk Širāzi, composed in 1038/1628-29 and dedicated to the Mughal emperor Šāh Jahān (r. 1037-1068/1628-57). The manuscript comes from India and is undated, but it may have been copied in the 12th/18th century. MS Leiden Or. 22.686, f. 521b. Photograph courtesy of the author.



PLATE VII. Taḍkerat al-awliā' by Farid al-Din Moḥammad b. Ebrāhim 'Aṭṭār. Manuscript undated, but possibly 8/14th century. The right half is a later addition. End of the Fehrest, table of contents with names of biographees and beginning of the main text. MS Leiden, Or. 281, ff. 7b-8a. Photograph courtesy of the author.



PLATE VIII. Opening pages of the Persian translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, dated Pera, Rajab 869 (February/March 1465), only a few years after the Ottoman conquest. Acquired in Constantinople by Levinus Warner (1619-1665). MS Leiden Or. 675, ff. 1b-2a. Photograph courtesy of the author.



PLATE X. Opening pages of the Second Book of the *Ḍakira-ye K̄vārazmšāhi*, the medical encyclopedia by Zayn-al-Din Gorgāni who dedicated it to the Khwarazmshah (q.v.) Qoṭb-al-Din Abu'l-Faṭḥ Arslāntigin (r. 490-521/1097-1127). Manuscript possibly of the 8/14th century. MS Leiden, Or. 18.161, ff. 104b-105a. Photograph courtesy of the author.



PLATE XI. Opening pages of an untitled work on dream interpretation by Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Ḡaznawī. Undated, but possibly from the 9/15th century or even earlier. MS Leiden, Or. 23.361, ff. 7b-8a. Photograph courtesy of the author.

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