A Baroque Jesuit's Encounter with the Qur'an

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Paul Shore

A Baroque Jesuit's Encounter with the Qur'an

An Examination of Ignazio Lomellini's, S. J., *Animadversiones, Notae ac Disputationes in Pestilentem Alcoranum*

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And I cannot fail to mention that Kitty the household cat was a calm and constant companion during the months of writing and revising.

Brandon, Manitoba, November 2022

Editor's Note

The author of this book, Reverend Paul Shore, suddenly died February 27, 2023, apparently from undiagnosed pancreatic cancer. In the very last days before his unexpected death, he told me some final changes and corrections, then granting his imprimatur. Therefore, the present book is what Paul has approved in its final form.

The study on Lomellini's translation of the Qur'an was a matter close to Paul's heart. Having worked on the subject for many years, he asked me to publish his study in the CISC series, when we met in Berlin at a conference on Christian translations of the Qur'an. This was in 2018, and since that time we stayed closely in touch writing countless emails on Lomellini. I assisted Paul in deciphering the Genoa manuscript, which is often hardly legible, and checked all Latin quotations including a complete transcription of Sura 18. A no less difficult task, however, was it to bring Paul's scattered sheets into shape. Without the help of Antonia Geisler, this would not have been possible. I am also grateful to Vicky Ziegler, who checked the Arabic.

Bochum, Germany, March 2, 2023

Table of Contents

I Introduction 9

II Characteristics of the Translation 35

III Problematic Arabic Passages and Words 73

IV Lomellini, the Bible, and Other Holy Matters 107

V Sources from Other Traditions 115

VI Sura 18 and Translation 129

VII Conclusion 155

Appendix I: *Āyāt* Counts in the Lomellini Manuscript 169

Appendix II: A Non-Qur'anic Arabic Passage 175

Appendix III: Silvestre de Sacy's Note and Lomellini's Dedication 177

Bibliography 181

To the Reader

In correlating Lomellini's numbering of *āyāt* with that of the 1924 Cairo edition of the Qur'an, "recte" is used throughout to indicate the latter.

Chapter One

Introduction

Animadversiones, Notae ac Disputationes in Pestilentem Alcoranum is the title of a manuscript of 323 two-sided folios housed in the library of the University of Genoa (Ms A-IV-4) and bearing the date 1622. The manuscript is entirely intact except for the following flaws:

a large, illegible patch on ff 30^{r-v} (probably water damage)

a small vertical hole at ff 70^{r-v}

a small hole with staining, possibly from a burn, that obscures the Arabic text, at ff 93^{r-v}

a hole accompanied with staining at ff 137^{r-v}

a smaller hole with no staining at ff 136^{r-v}

a large vertical stain on ff 238^{r-v}.

The document consists of the complete Arabic text of the Qur'an, a Latin translation thereof, and extensive commentaries. There are also numerous marginalia. Its composer identifies himself as Ignazio Lomellini of the Society of Jesus. The document was completed in 1622, and was begun, the translator tells us, several years earlier.

This manuscript is unique and cannot be readily connected to any other document of the period, yet it can be placed within a context of Jesuit literary culture which sought to be worldwide in its scope. The engagement of a Catholic scholar such as Lomellini with the Qur'an took place at a time when it had been already on the Index of Forbidden Books of the Portuguese Inquisition for 175 years.[1] Yet this period also saw the appearance of translations of the Qur'an into vernacular languages via the paraphrase of Ket-

[1] Carvalho, Pedro Moura, *Mir'āt al-quds (Mirror of Holiness): A Life of Christ for Emperor Akbar* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37. In the early seventeenth century the Holy Congregation of Roman Censors decreed against the publication of the Qur'an in any form. Bevilacqua, Alexander, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 55.

tonensis/Bibliander, as well as the flourishing of Arabic studies in the Low Countries.[2] Lomellini thus worked surrounded by serious engagement with the Qur'an as a literary document, but simultaneously he was both a product of and a contributor to an era of religious polemic and hostile confrontation in which his own order, the Society of Jesus was a major player.[3]

Ignazio Lomellini died on 20 May 1645 at the Casa di S. Andrea al Quirinale, in Rome, where there were no other known Arabic scholars.[4] If Lomellini had a collaborator who was a native speaker of Arabic, among the prime candidates were the Maronite Christians residing in the Collegio dei Neofiti in Rome. The institution had been founded in 1577 and was directed by the Society; the Jewish-born Jesuit Giovanni Battista Eliano was soon bringing boys from Lebanon there.[5] A further connection between Lomellini and this Collegio was Abraham Ecchellensis (1605-64), who taught there for years and whose Syriac grammar was censored by Lomellini.[6]

The Maronite College in Rome was another point of connection between Jesuits resident in Rome and Arabic speakers. Jesuits, among them Pietro Metoscita, undertook the theology course there.[7] Lomellini himself played a role in an evaluation of a *Missale Chaldaicum* intended for Maronite clergy, that was published in Rome in 1594.[8] Another possible link to the Arabic

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2 See Hamilton, Alastair, "'Nam tirones sumus': Franciscus Raphelengius' *Lexicon Arabicum-Latinum* (Leiden 1613)", in *Ex Officina Plantiniana: Studia in memoriam Christophori Plantini (ca. 1520-1589)*, ed. by Marcus de Schepper and Francine de Nave (Antwerpen: Vereenigung der Antwerpschen Bibilophielen, 1989) (= *De gulden passer 66-67*), 557-89.

3 Heath, Michael J., "Islamic Themes in Religious Polemic", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 50, 2 (1988), 289-315.

4 Fejér, Josephus, *Defuncti Secundi Saeculi Societatis Jesu 1641-1740*, (Romae: Curia Generalitia S. J. / Institutum Historicum S. J., 1988), 175.

5 Wilkinson, Robert J., "Syriac Studies in Rome in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century", *The Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture*, 6 (2012), 55-74, at 58-9.

6 Levi della Vida, Giorgio, *Aneddoti e Svaghi Arabi e Non Arabi* (Milano-Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1959), 205n35.

7 Cassar, Carmel, "Pietro Al-Matushi a Maronite Jesuit missionary and Arabic scholar", *Accademia Angelico-Costantiniana di lettere arti e scienze, Studi sull'Oriente*, 22, 2 (2018), 281-284. Metoscita published an Arabic grammar two years after Lomellini completed his translation.

8 Khater, Antoine S., "Abraham Ecchellensis controversiste: Sa *Responsio* à Jean-Baptiste Hesronite à propos du missel maronite", in *Orientalisme, science et contro-*

language was through the Lomellini family business of coral fisheries on the island of Tabarca (Tabarka) off the coast of what is now Tunisia.[9] Before he entered the Society Lomellini may have come in contact with Muslim slaves whom his family owned, and from whom he could have learned the rudiments of Arabic. Growing up on the Mediterranean littoral, Lomellini may have had contact with Christians who had been captured by corsairs where they would have been exposed to Arabic, and then ransomed by Trinitarians or others.[10] The Lomellini Albergo, whose presence in Genoa is documented in the twelfth century, during the late Renaissance was the epitome of the socially well-connected clan. Two members of the Lomellini Albergo, Giacomo and Alessandro, were Jesuits in the seventeenth century.[11] The Albergo's connections reached beyond Genoa: Benedetto Lomellini (1517-1579) was a cardinal and bishop of Agnani, and several other Lomellinis wore a bishop's mitre.[12] Goffredo Lomellini was the Genovese ambassador to Rome for forty years. Fra Francesco Lomellini, who served as the ambassador of the Order of St John to the Holy See, sponsored Caravaggio during his stay in Malta 1607-8.[13]

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verse: Abraham Ecchellensis (1605-1664), ed. by Bernard Heyberger (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 135-150, at 143. Thanks to Fr. Pierre Jabbour for making me aware of this reference.

9 Rights to this fishery were granted by Suleiman I but the Lomellini family also held an *asiento* from Charles I. D'Albertis, Enrico, "Crociera del Violante: Parte Narrativa", *Annali Del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Genova,* 11 (1877-1878), 9-324, at 294; Engels, Marie-Christine, *Merchants, Interlopers, Seamen and Corsairs: The "Flemish" Community in Livorno and Genoa* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1997), 112. See also Boccadamo, Giulianna, *Napoli e l'Islam: storie di musulmani, schiavi e rinnegati in età moderna* (Napoli: M. D'Auria Editore, 2010), 123-124n10.

10 Epstein, Steven, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca, NY-London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 193.

11 Battilana, Natale, *Genealogie delle famiglie nobili di Genova* (Genova: Dalla Tipografia dei Fratelli Pagano, 1825), 30.

12 Canepa, Vincenzo, *Cenni storici sulla Liguria e su Genova* (Genova: Presso Il Librajo Canepa, 1858), 197-198.

13 Farrugia Randon, Philip, "From "persona virtuosissima" to "membrum putridum et foetidum": A short account of Caravaggio's stay in Malta", (2005), 1-22, at 7. https://www.academia.edu/35032686/Caravaggio_from_persona_virtuosissima_doc (accessed September 29, 2022). Thanks to Carmel Cassar for this information.

The Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh holds a portrait by Anthony Van Dyck of members of the family of Giacomo Lomellini, doge of Genoa from 1625 to 1627. No portrait of Ignazio Lomellini is known to exist.

The relatively few facts unearthed so far regarding Lomellini's career as a Jesuit shed little light on his motivations and opportunities for translating the Qur'an.[14] Nor do the projects undertaken by the Society of Jesus at the start of the seventeenth century aimed at the conversion of Muslims seem to have pointed towards the development of a Latin translation of the entire Qur'an, let alone the transcription of the entire Arabic text.[15] Instead Lomellini's engagement with the Qur'an lies at the intersection of several factors characteristic of the seventeenth-century Society. First, in a religious order committed to missions that proclaimed "one world is not enough,"[16] the mastery of languages was understood as both a demonstration of skill needed to win that world for the True Faith, and as a means of mastering (often in tandem with colonial enterprises) the *cultures* using those languages. Language mastery was a collective Jesuit project, and Arabic is mentioned specifically in the *Constitutions* of the Society as a language to be studied.[17] The network of Jesuit scholars was extensive, and Jesuits engaging with a target language were often supported by other Jesuits with no knowledge of the language. Cornelius à Lapide (1567-1637) for example, served on the committee overseeing the translation of the Bible into Arabic, although there is no evidence that he had any command of the language.[18] Jesuit interest in the Arabic lan-

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[14] See Shore, Paul, "An Early Jesuit Encounter with the Qur'ān: Ignazio Lomellini's Animadversiones, Notae ac Disputationes in Pestilentem Alcoranum", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 34, 1 (2017), 1-22.

[15] For example, Jesuit efforts to use the Maltese language as a steppingstone for engagement with Arabic-speaking populations elsewhere did not include the translation of the Qur'an into any European language. Cassar, Carmel, "Malta and the Study of Arabic in the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries", *Turkish Historical Review*, 2, 2 (2011), 125-54.

[16] *Unus non sufficit orbis*, a semi-official motto of the Society, modified from Juvenal's *Satires* and ultimately referencing the world-conquering ambitions of Alexander the Great (whom we shall meet again in Lomellini's manuscript). The motto appears in the Society's centennial folio volume. *Imago Primi Saeculi Societatis Iesv* (Antverpiæ: Ex officina Plantiniani Balthasaris Moreti, 1640).

[17] Cohen, Leonardo, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia (1555-1632)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 97n1.

[18] Colombo, Emanuele, "Jesuits and Islam in Early Modern Europe", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. by Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

guage dates to the first decades of the Society. In 1554 Ignatius directed that the houses of the Society purchase Islamic books and that the Jesuits study the Qur'an, in order to be prepared to enter into religious discussions with Muslims.[19] By 1566 the Jesuit Tipografia del Collegio Romano had produced a *Confessio* in Latin and Arabic.[20] In the sixteenth century, an Arabic-speaking Jesuit house was set up in Messina, Sicily, and an Arabic studies program was introduced into the college there. A specifically "Arabic college" was begun at Monreale, also in Sicily, in 1555, although it lasted only a few months.[21] Other Jesuit contemporaries of Lomellini had engaged with the Qur'an. We are told that Pero Pais (Páez) (1563-1622) a Spanish Jesuit in Ethiopia, mastered Arabic.[22] About Rudolph Acquaviva, who was murdered with his companions in Cuncolim in the district of Goa in 1583, Philipp Allegambe writes, "Quo in studio ita profecit, vt totum egregiè Alcoranum calleret."[23] However, whether this refers to either the Robert of Ketton translation in the Bibliander edition or perhaps even one of the extant translations into Persian, is not clear. Jesuit mastery of a text such as the Qur'an may also have been limited to "talking points" to be deployed in debates with Muslims. Antonio Possevino (1533-1611) argued for the importance of learning Arabic in his essay "Linguae arabicae necessitas ad turcas iuvandos."[24] (Note the conflation of Turk and Arabic.) This study of Arabic would presumably have included syntactical and lexical issues specific to the Qur'an.

2019), 349-78, at 368. Athanasius Kircher (1602-80), whose knowledge of Arabic was probably quite minimal, was a member of the same committee.

19 Michel, Thomas, S. J., *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. by Ifran A. Omar (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

20 Vervliet, Hendrik D. L., *The Palaeotypography of the French Renaissance: Selected Papers on Sixteenth-Century Typefaces* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 449-450; *Fidei orthodoxae brevis, et explicata confessio, quam Sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia docet, et iis maxime proponendam, edit, quicunque ab orientalium errore, ad Catholicæ veritatis communionem accedere...* (Romæ: In Collegio Societatis Iesu, 1556).

21 *Vita Ignatii Loiolae et Rerum Societatis Jesu. Tomus Quintus* (Matriti: Excudebat Augustinus Avrial, 1897), 196.

22 Zwartjes, Otto, *Portuguese Missionary Grammars in Asia, Africa and Brazil, 1550-1800* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2011), 209-210.

23 Alegambe, Philipp, S. J., *Mortes illustres et gesta eorum de Societate Jesu ... adiecit Joannes Nadasi* (Romae: Ex Typographia Varesij, 1657), 140.

24 Possevino, Antonio, S. J., *Bibliotheca Selecta de Ratione Studioroum* ... (Venetiis: Apud Altobellum Salicatium, 1603), 442-443.

Jesuits could approach Arabic from other directions: Ignacio de las Casas, SJ (1550-1608) came from a Morisco family; he preached and heard confessions in Arabic and had almost certainly grown up with a knowledge of the language.[25] Another Jesuit of Morisco background who preached in Arabic was Juan de Albotodo (1529-78). Arabic studies (if not specifically Qur'anic studies) continued to have its defenders among seventeenth-century Jesuits. The Irish-born Jesuit specialist in Oriental languages, Tomás de León (1613–1690) was a staunch supporter of Arabic studies, citing the work of his fellow Jesuit Athanasius Kircher as evidence of the value of Arabic learning.[26]

Secondly, the hierarchical and obedience-driven organization of the Society notwithstanding, Jesuit culture could permit a fair degree of *de facto* if discreet autonomy. As we shall see, Lomellini had a powerful patron, Cardinal Orsini whose library was a source of materials used by the translator. Yet this supported autonomy might be disrupted by the patron's death or fall from favour. In Lomellini's case the death of his patron four years after the dedication of *Animadversiones* probably hindered the appearance of the work in print, and even of the advancement of the project to a fair copy. And there is no evidence that the translator ever acquired another patron—or that Lomellini continued his Arabic studies after 1622. His draft of a Latin translation thus stands alone among instances of contemporaneous Western engagement with the Qur'an.

Thirdly, the rigorous investigation of a document, even if it derived from a heretical and dangerous belief system, was seen by many Jesuits as a duty. Hannibal de Coudret (1524-1599) for example sought permission to study the works of Calvin in order to refute the latter's claims.[27] Lomellini's apparent lack of knowledge of any other literature in Arabic makes his engagement with the Qur'an fundamentally different from de Coudret's study of Calvin, who wrote and cited works in Latin. Lomellini, despite his encounter with the text in isolation, made a serious study of it, and endeavoured to make as accurate a translation as possible. However, as the example of Kircher's attempted translation of the Nestorian stele reminds us, a sincere effort by a Jesuit to translate a text does not exclude the presence of

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[25] Colombo, "Jesuits and Islam", in Županov (ed.), *Handbook of the Jesuits*, 350-51.

[26] Stolzenberg, Daniel, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 277.

[27] Martin, A. Lynn, *The Jesuit Mind: The Mentality of an Elite in Early Modern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 9.

doctrinal polemic.[28] Lomellini confined much of this polemic to his commentaries, but as we shall see, at times the scent of polemic is detectable in the translation as well. This polemical approach harmonized with Medieval anti-Islamic authors such as Hugh de Flavigny (fl. c. 1100) whose works were found in Jesuit libraries.[29]

Lastly, Lomellini can be located within a Mediterranean cultural region which, although it does not correspond to any administrative unit of the baroque Society of Jesus, yet because of the political and economic arrangements of the day may be considered a frequently coherent field of action for early seventeenth century Jesuits. Fernand Braudel's classic work on the Mediterranean world of the late sixteenth century can be a very useful point of departure here, as are more geographically specialized studies such as those of Carmel Cassar.[30]

Comparisons of Qur'an translation made by Robert of Ketton (Kettonensis) (fl. 1141–1157), revised by Theodor Bibliander (1509-1564), that of Lodovico Marracci (1612-1700), as well as that of Egidio of Viterbo (1472-1532) are included with discussions of Lomellini's translations because the first two are, respectively, the most widely available Latin translation in Lomellini's time, and the most scholarly Latin translation ever undertaken, while Egidio's lexical choices sometimes shed light on Lomellini's. These translations also suggest the wide range of possibilities within the Neo-Latin idiom for dealing with the unique lexical and syntactic features of Qur'anic Arabic. The translation of Dominicus Germanus de Silesia (1588-1670) is included

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[28] Billings, Timothy, "Jesuit Fish in Chinese Nets: Athanasius Kircher and the Translation of the Nestorian Tablet", *Representations*, 87, 1 (2004), 1-42. In 1625 a stele was discovered in Xi'an in the province of Shaanxi in northwestern China which described a Nestorian community in the region. While Nestorianism has been called a heresy and the stele was even denounced (wrongly) as a Jesuit forgery, Jesuit scholars such as Athanasius Kircher made use of the stele to develop the idea of an early Christian presence in the Far East. Keevak, Michael, *The Story of a Stele: China's Nestorian Monument and Its Reception in the West, 1625–1916* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).

[29] Shore, Paul, "Two Hungarian Jesuits and the Qur'an: Understanding, Misunderstanding, and Polemic", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 20, 3 (2018), 81-93.

[30] Braudel, Fernand, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II. Volume II*, transl. by Siân Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Cassar, Carmel "The Collegium Melitense: A Frontier Mission in the Interface between the Christian and Muslim Worlds", *Al-Qanṭara*, 36, 2 (2015), 443-62.

for comparison with a roughly contemporaneous work undertaken, like Lomellini's, in relative solitude under the protection of a powerful patron.[31] As we shall see, unlike the above-mentioned translators, Lomellini provides multiple possible numbers of *āyāt* for a majority of the Suras. He also seems unaware of the division of Suras into "Meccan" and "Medinan," something Marracci incorporates into his translation, but which is not part of the translations of Kettonensis/Bibliander or Germanus.[32]

One commentator on Qur'anic translation observes that studies of these translations have often focused on "finding mistakes and demonstrating that perfect translation is impossible..."[33] While this study will pay considerable attention to Lomellini's lexical choices that stray from more commonly accepted meanings of words, it will not hold up the Qur'an in the original Arabic as a "perfect" object which can be only imperfectly rendered in another language. Nor does this writer claim to possess a "perfect" knowledge of the original that informs his analysis of Lomellini's work. Rather each engagement between the original and target languages will be understood as of value *per se* recognizing that while Lomellini's command of Latin was very strong, it was not his native tongue, nor did any of his potential audience claim it as their first language. Lomellini is thus negotiating a dynamic in which his intended Christian audience(s) will probably know Latin fairly well and will be steeped in another (probably cognate) tongue, but who use Latin for communication on theological and philosophical topics. Lomellini's commentaries, themselves drawing on Hebrew and Aramaic sources, which would be little known by his audiences, placing an added responsibility on the translator to make this information accessible to anyone encountering his work. Among the tools that might have been available to Lomellini was *Thomae Erpenii* [i. e., Thomas van Erpe] *Rudimenta linguae Arabicae: Accedunt ejusdem Praxis grammatica…* (Leidae: Ex Typographia Auctoris,

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[31] Burman, Thomas E., *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 63.

[32] One may also compare the translation of Johann Zechendorff (1632): See Glei, Reinhold. F., "Sleeping in the Cave: Zechendorff's Translation of the Qur'an", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 20, 3 (2018), 121-36, and Glei, Reinhold F., "A Presumed Lost Latin Translation of the Qur'ān (Johann Zechendorff, 1632)", *Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature*, 18 (2016), 361–72.

[33] Wilson, M. Brett, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

1620). Van Erpe's book, which contains short interlinear translations of the Qur'an, went through many printings.

Lomellini's undertaking was less an attempt at mastery of a language than it was an engagement with a specific text in that language. This distinction deserves emphasis. Unlike Kettonensis and Germanus, who lived for years in regions where Arabic was spoken, or Marracci, who while he did not sojourn in those regions, was widely read in Arabic-language commentaries, Lomellini appears to have focused his attention exclusively on the Qur'an. Fortunately, there were Qur'an manuscripts close at hand. By the early seventeenth century the Vatican Library possessed a number of Qur'ans,[34] and individual collectors such as Cardinal Orsini also possessed copies.[35] Access to these manuscripts was complicated by the inclusion of the Qur'an on the *Index*, but well-connected persons consult them with the proper permissions. In fact, at least one Jesuit contemporary of Lomellini felt that the Qur'an could be read without danger by the properly trained: "…non omnibus permittendum Alcoranum sed cum delectu & praecipue posse legi a doctis, qui illius libri errores facile potuerunt aduertere."[36]

Lomellini may also have had formal instruction in Arabic. One candidate for the role of Lomellini's Arabic teacher is the Maronite Gabriel Sionita or Siniote (Jibrāʾīl aṣ-Ṣahyūnī) (1574-1648), who later became professor of Arabic at the Sorbonne. Sionita came to Rome at the age of seven, and did not leave permanently for Paris until 1614, so there was a period of up to 26 years during which both men were in Rome. Sionita's principal connection to the Jesuits was that he studied at the Roman Collegio dei Maroniti, which was run by the Society.[37] Lomellini's translation was thus undertaken in an environment which, while not always entirely supportive of Qur'anic studies, provided ways forward for the dedicated scholar.

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[34] Malcolm, Noel, "The Study of Islam in Early Modern Europe: Obstacles and Missed Opportunities", in *Antiquarianism and intellectual life in Europe and China, 1500-1800*, ed. by Peter N. Miller and François Louis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 264-84, at 270.

[35] Lomellini acknowledges using three Qur'ans owned by Orsini: "Primum enim totum textum Alcoranicum descripsi e manuscripto meo collato cum tribus tuis." Folio 7^{r}.

[36] Sanctarelli, Antonio, S. J., *Tractatus de haeresi, schismate, apostasia …* (Romae: apud Hæredem Bartholomæum Zanetti, 1625), 173. Sanctarelli (1569-1649) was a moral theologian who gained notoriety for his claim that the pope could depose heretical monarchs.

[37] Wilkinson, "Syriac Studies", 73.