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# “I am whom I know”: Some Notes on the Life and Work of Johannes Elichmann<sup>1</sup>

Toon VAN HAL

0. Johannes Elichmann was a renowned seventeenth-century physician and Orientalist who is credited with paving the way for the Scythian theory, a precursor to the concept of an Indo-European language family. Despite his high standing among his peers, Elichmann remains somewhat enigmatic and elusive today due not only to his untimely death, but also to his tendency to avoid the spotlight. There have been several brief biographical accounts written about Elichmann, starting with Pierre Bayle’s (1647-1706) second edition of *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in 1702.<sup>2</sup> As more relevant primary sources have come to light, and recent studies of the early modern republic of letters increasingly mention or discuss Elichmann (albeit always in passing), it has become possible to paint a more nuanced picture of this versatile and accomplished scholar. Despite this progress, the following picture of Elichmann remains ‘pointillist’ in nature, and this brief biographical sketch is but a step on the path to a fuller understanding of his life and work.<sup>3</sup>

1. Many twentieth-century historians assumed that Elichmann was born in 1600,<sup>4</sup> but thanks to records of his three enrollments as a student

<sup>1</sup> Jeanine de Landtsheer and Johannes Elichmann shared much in common, from their wide-ranging intellectual curiosity to their willingness to aid their peers. Both were at ease in the intellectually stimulating atmosphere of Leiden and both, unfortunately, passed away at a too young age.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Dibon, *Regards sur la Hollande du Siècle d’or* (Napoli, 1990), 440.

<sup>3</sup> For references to older biographical work on Elichmann, see the outline of his life in T. Van Hal, “*Moedertalen en taalmoeders*”. *Het vroegmoderne taalvergelijkende onderzoek in de Lage Landen* (Brussel, 2010), 335-342. This contribution is a follow-up step announced in that work.

<sup>4</sup> As spelling variations for the element ‘Elich-’, one finds Elech-, Elicht-, Elig- (this is how L. De Dieu spells the name), Heylich- (in one letter by Descartes) and Ehlich-. ‘Elis-’ is only found in the Leiden *Album studiosorum* and is possibly a spelling error, even though it occurs as such twice. In Elichmann’s *Album amicorum* (see below) his name is spelled in different ways. Elichmann’s name was sometimes mistakenly confused

at Leiden University, we know that he was probably born in 1601.<sup>5</sup> Like many of his fellow students, he came from the region of Silesia, despite some later sources mistakenly assuming he was Danish, for reasons that will become clear below. We have no information about his social background, family, or childhood, though the motto in his *album amicorum* (“I am oppressed by poverty, but lifted up by my intellect”, “paupertate premor, sublevor ingenio”) may indicate a humble upbringing. An extensive search of the matriculation records at old universities within the Holy Roman Empire has not yet yielded any results.<sup>6</sup>

Contrary to common belief, Elichmann did not immediately settle in Leiden upon completing his studies in, most likely, Germany, nor did he reside in Amsterdam for an extended period before enrolling at Leiden University.<sup>7</sup> His *album amicorum*, which has 97 entries, indicates that he traveled extensively throughout the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>8</sup> In 1622, he took up residence in Regensburg, with a visit to Prague in August of the following year. He returned to Bavaria, specifically Landshut, in 1624, before spending some time in Leipzig and Regensburg, and then from September until the end of March 1626, in Liège. From July 1627, it seems he stayed for an extended period in Liège. The last entry in the album from Liège is dated December 6, 1630. During this time, Elichmann harbored dreams of journeying to the East or Africa to improve his skills in chemistry and to learn Arabic. A key figure in Liège was Johannes Woestenraedt (died 1637?), an accomplished scholar who, while well-connected in his time, remains an elusive figure today.<sup>9</sup>

with that of Johann Eleman (ca. 1590-1669), who also worked as a physician in Leiden (cf. for example G. Monchamp, *Histoire du cartésianisme en Belgique* (Bruxelles, 1886), 255).

<sup>5</sup> The information found in the entries is not entirely compatible: his first enrollment was on 18 March 1631 as “Johannes Elismannus, Silesius” at the age 30, his second on 23 December 1633 without an indication of age (again as Johannes Elismannus, Silesius, M. Dr.) and his third on 24 August 1635 (now as Elichmannus) at the age of 33. Assuming that one of the given ages is correct, this yields a possible time span from 1600 to 1602.

<sup>6</sup> See also H. Schöffler, *Deutscher Osten im deutschen Geist. Von Martin Opitz zu Christian Wolf* (Frankfurt am Main, 1940), 141.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. F. Klein-Franke, *Die klassische Antike in der Tradition des Islam* (Darmstadt, 1980), 56.

<sup>8</sup> The manuscript in question is currently housed under sigel ms. 257 in the Wellcome Library located in London. Cf. the description in S.A.J. Moorat, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts on Medicine and Science in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library* (London, 1962), 157-160.

<sup>9</sup> Woestenraedt was in contact with Mersenne, Meursius, Rivet, Saumaise, and other humanists. For some leads, see C. de Waard, *Correspondance du P. Marin Mersenne*,

Woestenraedt likely directed Elichmann towards the northern Netherlands by recommending the Arabic classes given by Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) at Leiden or noting that it was a good region to purchase books.<sup>10</sup>

2. On February 14, 1631, Henricus Dormalius reported that Elichmann had journeyed to Leiden,<sup>11</sup> where he enrolled as a student of Arabic at Leiden University in March (*Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae*). Elichmann's *album amicorum* records the first Leiden entry in April 1631 (f. 94 recto). That same year, he sent a letter to Johannes Zechendorff (1580-1662), the headmaster of a school in Zwickau dedicated to the study of Oriental literature. In this letter, which was published in 1636 and which would remain his only published work throughout his lifetime, Elichmann extolled the virtues of learning Arabic for the practice of medicine.<sup>12</sup> Scholars have long assumed that Elichmann and Zechendorff had some prior connection,<sup>13</sup> but a recent reading by Asaph Ben-Tov suggests that there is no indication that Elichmann was a former pupil of Zechendorff's.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it appears that Zechendorff was the driving force behind the publication of the letter, which was printed in Jena and prominently featured Elichmann on the cover with numerous accolades ("clarissimus, excellentissimus literatissimusque"). Elichmann's revelation that he had only been studying Arabic for a year is noteworthy

*religieux minime. VI: 1636-1637* (Paris, 1960), 336-337; J. Mogenet, "Un ami liégeois d'Holstenius: Henri Dormal", *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 35 (1963), 225-271, at 233; R. Halleux, A.-C. Bernès, L. Etienne, "L'évolution des sciences et des techniques en Wallonie", in F. Joris, N. Archambeau (ed.), *Wallonie: atouts et références d'une région* (Jambes, 1995), 199-227, at 204; C.M. Ridderikhoff, H. De Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *Quatrième livre des procureurs de la nation germanique de l'ancienne Université d'Orléans 1587-1602: Texte des rapports des procureurs* (Leiden – Boston, 2015), 528; I. Meursius, *Opera omnia in plures tomos distributa*, ed. I. Lamius, XI (Florentiae, 1762), *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> See an undated letter by Woestenraedt to Huygens in J.A. Worp (ed.), *De briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608-1687). 6. 1663-1687* (Den Haag, 1917), 471; Mogenet 1963 (as in n. 9), 235, 240, 243.

<sup>11</sup> Mogenet 1963 (as in n. 9), 235.

<sup>12</sup> J. Elichmannus, *Litæe exoticæ, scriptæ Arabicæ. Ab eodem in literas Hebræas conversæ punctatæ et (...) ferre ad verbum in Latinum versæ (...) a Joanne Elichmanno ad Joannem Zechendorff* (Jenæ, 1636).

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., A. Katzer, *Araber in deutschen Augen. Das Araberbild der Deutschen vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, 2008), 91.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ben-Tov, "Johann Zechendorff (1580-1662) and Arabic Studies at Zwickau's Latin School", in J. Loop, A. Hamilton, C. Burnett (ed.), *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston, 2017), 57-92, at 84-85.

for two reasons. Firstly, it invites us to reassess Zechendorff's educational program, whose success is sometimes highlighted by referring to Elichmann's fluency in the language.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, it prompts the question of what other Eastern languages Elichmann may have had some familiarity with before his arrival in Leiden. It seems likely that he only began studying Persian in the Netherlands, as Leiden was one of the very few places in Europe where the language was then studied, primarily due to the efforts of Franciscus Raphelengius (1539-1597) and Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540-1609).<sup>16</sup> This emphasizes the conundrum of how Elichmann managed to become such a preeminent authority on Persian in so short a time, especially as he was simultaneously engaged in the study of other languages and working as a physician. In his *album amicorum*, Elichmann's acquaintances in Liège had portrayed him primarily as a philosopher.<sup>17</sup>

Klaus Conermann has made a brief, but incisive observation about the name that appeared after Elichmann's second entry in the Leiden matriculation book. It reads: "Mohammeth, filius Haly, Mauritanus e Regione Sus".<sup>18</sup> This unmistakably refers to a certain Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Bilqāsīm, with whom Elichmann maintained a close relationship and exchanged letters written in Arabic. In these letters, Elichmann was addressed as Yaḥyā b. al-Marḥūm, meaning "John, son of the deceased".<sup>19</sup> This statement implies that Elichmann's father is no longer alive. Moreover, it might hint at Elichmann's unfamiliarity with his father, a conjecture arising from the non-specification of the father's name. Alternatively, this absence of detail could simply mean that Elichmann shared his father's first name. Either way, it appears that Elichmann's impressive fluency

<sup>15</sup> E.g. in Kater 2008 (as in n. 13), 91.

<sup>16</sup> J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Iranian Studies in the Netherlands", *Iranian Studies* 20.2/4 (1987), 161-177. His interest in Persian was typified as an "inissus amor", see Mogenet 1963 (as in n. 9), 240.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout the album, Elichmann is primarily celebrated for his medical achievements. An allusion to his command of languages is found in only one entry ("orientali literatura insigni"), which is also the most recent entry (by Joachim Hirthenius, on March 21, 1638, f. 79r.).

<sup>18</sup> K. Conermann (ed.), *Briefe der Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft und Beilagen: Die Zeit Fürst Ludwigs von Anhalt-Köthen 1617-1650* (Berlin – New York, 2010), 200.

<sup>19</sup> J. Schmidt, "An Ostrich Egg for Golius. The Heyman Papers Preserved in the Leiden and Manchester University Libraries and Early-Modern Contacts Between the Netherlands and the Middle East", in J. Schmidt (ed.), *The Joys of Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism. Vol. 2: Orientalists, Travellers and Merchants in the Ottoman Empire, Political Relations Between Europe and the Porte* (Istanbul, 2002), 9-74, at 25.

in Arabic may have been partially the result of private lessons with Muḥammad.<sup>20</sup>

3. In the latter half of 1634, Elichmann journeyed to Denmark, according to one source in the wake of a Danish trader who had just returned from India and had an excellent knowledge of Persian.<sup>21</sup> There he was the guest of the physician and professor Ole Worm (1588-1654). Elichmann availed himself of the opportunity to study ‘Gothic’ – that is, Old Norse sources, including runic monuments.<sup>22</sup> Worm believed that Elichmann’s primary interest in Old Icelandic texts was to uncover connections with Persian, and it is likely that he also studied Basque and Irish for similar reasons. But Elichmann’s pursuits were not solely confined to his comparative study: a letter from Worm to Stephanus Stephanus (1599-1650) reveals that during his stay, Elichmann transcribed almost the entire *Literatura Runica* – a work that Worm would publish the following year and of which Elichmann received a copy on higher-quality paper.<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, it was likely the lure of the East that drew Elichmann to the North. Probably from Copenhagen, Elichmann penned a letter to Christen Friis (1581-1639), Chancellor of Denmark as of 1616 and a respected member of the republic of letters. In this letter, he suggested that a new Danish voyage to the colony of Tranquebar on the southeastern coast of India, where Denmark had begun to build a castle in 1620, should also focus on collecting oriental manuscripts. Elichmann likely offered to partake in such an endeavor.<sup>24</sup> Worm, a close friend of Friis,<sup>25</sup> may have

<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to one of the reviewers for the scenario of name inheritance. Of the four African students enrolled in Leiden, the identities of two remained unknown: cf. M. Zoeteman, *De studentenpopulatie van de Leidse universiteit, 1575-1812*. ‘Een volk op zyn Siams gekleet eenige mylen van Den Haag woonende’ (Leiden, 2011), 285. However, it now appears that a third student has been identified.

<sup>21</sup> Mogenet 1963 (as in n. 9), 240.

<sup>22</sup> O. Worm, T. Bartholin, *Olai Wormii et ad eum doctorum virorum epistolae* (Hafniae, 1751), 163. See also T. Bartholin, *De libris legendis dissertationes*, ed. J.G. aut Meuschen (Hagae-Comitum, 1711), 83.

<sup>23</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 163. For more information on this work, see T. Wills, “The *Third Grammatical Treatise* and Ole Worm’s *Literatura Runica*”, *Scandinavian Studies* 76.4 (2004), 439-558. See also O.P. Grell, *The world of Worm: physician, professor, antiquarian, and collector, 1588-1654* (London, 2022), 159, 160.

<sup>24</sup> O. Degn, *Christian 4.s kansler. Christen Friis til Kragerup (1581-1639) som menneske og politiker* (Viborg, 1988), 135. I have not seen the letter, which is in the Danish state archives, myself.

<sup>25</sup> Grell 2022 (as in n. 23), 8. On the significance of Friis for initiating Danish historical projects, see K. Skovgaard-Petersen, “... By the direction of the most noble and

been the originator of this idea, expecting that Friis' interest in Oriental languages would make the proposal particularly attractive to him – Friis, too, had also delved into the perceived similarities between Persian and Danish.<sup>26</sup>

In the closing days of September 1634, his good friend Claude de Saumaise (1588-1653) promised Elichmann his assistance in securing a letter of recommendation for the Danish chancellery.<sup>27</sup> His efforts bore fruit and by February, Elichmann had received permission to embark on a journey to India, sailing on the *St. Anna* in November 1636.<sup>28</sup> His mission was to negotiate trade terms with Indian and Persian authorities. On his return to Europe, he was to use any leftover funds to acquire antiquities, traveling by the most cost-effective land route available.<sup>29</sup> Saumaise had also attempted to connect Elichmann with François Auguste de Thou (1604-1642), who was destined to become ambassador in Constantinople. In a later letter, Saumaise informed Jacques Dupuy (1591-1656) that Elichmann had been in Leiden again since the end of May 1635, where he was faced with choosing between two attractive options: along with the offer from the Danish king, the possibility remained open to accompany De Thou.<sup>30</sup>

4. Ironically, neither of the opportunities presented to Elichmann came to fruition. Despite some modern accounts claiming he practiced as a physician at the Persian court,<sup>31</sup> Elichmann remained in Leiden until his

distinguished Christen Friis': The Influence of Chancellor Christen Friis (1581-1639) on the Histories of Denmark by Johannes Pontanus (1571-1639) and Johannes Meursius (1579-1639)", *Daphnis* 32.1/2 (2003), 199-229.

<sup>26</sup> K. Skovgaard-Petersen, *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV (1588-1648). Studies in the Latin Histories of Denmark by Johannes Pontanus and Johannes Meursius* (Copenhagen, 2002), 160.

<sup>27</sup> *Francisci et Joannis Hotomanorum, patris ac filii et clarorum virorum ad eos epistolae* (Amstelaedami, 1700), 477.

<sup>28</sup> A. Bredsdorff, *The Trials and Travels of Willem Leyel: An Account of the Danish East India Company in Tranquebar, 1639-1648* (Copenhagen, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Degn 1988 (as in n. 24), 135. See also E.C. Werlauff, *Historiske efterretninger om det Store kongelige bibliotek i Kiøbenhavn* (Kiøbenhavn, 1844), 15.

<sup>30</sup> L. Delisle, "Les correspondants de Peiresc. V: Claude Saumaise", *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres de Dijon. Partie des lettres*. 1881-1882 (1882), 203-384, at 328.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., J.-C. Muller, "Early Stages of Language Comparison from Sasseti to Sir William Jones (1786)", *Kratylos* 31 (1986), 1-31, at 13; R. Schulze, "Islamwissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft", in F.W. Graf, F. Voigt (ed.), *Religion(en) deuten. Transformationen der Religionsforschung* (Berlin, 2010), 81-202, at 93-94.

untimely death, where he engaged in an array of philological pursuits, encompassing languages both familiar and new to him.<sup>32</sup> This period coincided with the devastating outbreak in 1636 of the plague that claimed at least a quarter of the city's inhabitants.<sup>33</sup> Accounts suggest that Elichmann played a major role in combating the outbreak<sup>34</sup> – his medical practice, as described in a 1636 letter from Danish physician Henricus Fuiren (1618-1659), then staying in Leiden, to Ole Worm, prevented him from fully dedicating himself to his studies in philology.<sup>35</sup> Letters attest to his willingness to put his own life on the line to save the lives of others.<sup>36</sup>

It would be a misperception to view Elichmann as a solely altruistic physician, as it is clear that his astute business acumen also contributed to his substantial wealth. In 1635, Elichmann had enrolled as a medical student at Leiden University, the third instance of his name appearing in the university's *album studiosorum*. Robin Buning suggests that his primary motivation for enrolling was not to study, but rather to establish or expand a medical practice. It was a common practice for doctors to enroll in university for this purpose.<sup>37</sup> As a physician, Elichmann was reportedly highly successful, with many humanists seeking him out as their medical doctor, despite our limited knowledge of specific names.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See for Elichmann's undertakings regarding an unknown alphabet, P.N. Miller, "Peiresc and Ethiopia: How? and Why?", *Lias* 37.1 (2010), 55-88, at 82-83. De Thou never traveled to Constantinople either. Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) had him executed in Lyon on charges of conspiracy, along with Henri Coiffier de Ruzé, Marquis of Cinq-Mars (1620-1642).

<sup>33</sup> L. Noordegraaf, G. Valk, *De gave Gods. De pest in Holland vanaf de late middeleeuwen* (Amsterdam, 1996), 59.

<sup>34</sup> "Johannes Eligmannus Silesius, chymicus incomparabilis [sic], medicus eximius, et de nostra urbe durante hac lue optime meritus", in a letter dated 4 May 1636, from De Dieu to Ussher. See C.R. Elrington (ed.), *The whole works of the most rev. James Ussher, D. D., Lord Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of All Ireland*, 17 vols, 16 (Dublin, 1847), 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 548. Some scholars assume that Elichmann would have devoted himself exclusively to Oriental studies; cf. A. Bresson (ed.), *Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc. Lettres à Claude Saumaise et à son entourage (1620-1637)* (Florence, 1992), 135; Klein-Franke 1980 (as in n. 7), 56.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. a letter by Saumaise to Golius in A. Clementius, *Claudii Salmasii [...] Epistolarum liber primus. Accedunt, De laudibus et vita eiusdem, prolegomena* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1656), 136.

<sup>37</sup> R. Buning, 'Henricus Reneri (1593-1639): Descartes' quartermaster in Aristotelian territory' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University, 2013), 170.

<sup>38</sup> Apart from Heinsius, Saumaise and Vossius, there was Caspar Sibelius (1590-1658) and maybe Johannes Meursius (1579-1639). See H.W. Tydeman, "Caspar Sibelius, in leven Predikant te Deventer; volgens zijne onuitgegeven eigen-levensbeschrijving", *Godgeleerde bijdragen* 23 (1849), 481-537, at 500; P. Colomesius (ed.), *Gerardi Joan. Vossii et clarorum virorum ad eum epistolae*, 2 (Augustae Vindelicorum, 1691), 151.



Elichmann's special gum pills, crafted with distilled mineral waters from Spa – the eponymous spa town near Liège – were highly prized.<sup>39</sup> In a letter of recommendation, Saumaise extolled Elichmann's "admirable secrets in medicine and in that part of philosophy which concerns natural things" and credited him with creating the pills that had saved his life, the recipe for which Elichmann kept secret. Saumaise also revealed that his own rival, Daniel Heinsius (1580-1655), held a grudge against Elichmann for this very reason – that without Elichmann's intervention, Saumaise would not have survived.<sup>40</sup> Saumaise trumpeted the virtues of Elichmann's pills far and wide.<sup>41</sup> Henricus Reneri (1593-1639) saw in them a cure for blockages that clogged the internal organs, particularly the spleen. The pills were a godsend for those who placed the mind above the body. Bartholin told Worm that he was impressed by this invention, although Worm was more circumspect<sup>42</sup> – the absence of answers to Worm's letters and inquiries since Elichmann's departure from Denmark appears to have impacted Worm's attitude.<sup>43</sup> Elichmann kept the recipe close to his chest, sharing it only with a privileged few, such as Reneri, on the condition of strict confidentiality. He experienced great success in a short time-span, contemporaries noted.<sup>44</sup> Until Elichmann's death, colleagues were attempting to uncover the formula for these effective pills,<sup>45</sup> and even in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, his remedies were still being used and referred to.<sup>46</sup> One author notes that pills made of spa-water were very common, but their effectiveness varied greatly depending on how they were prepared: "Some make the intestines rumble moderately, some very violently, and then some do nothing at all. So the proof of the pudding is in the eating."<sup>47</sup> However, there are

<sup>39</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 654; Buning 2013 (as in n. 37), 59. See also J.-J. Manget, *Bibliotheca medico-practica*, 3.1 (Genevae, 1739), 306.

<sup>40</sup> See T. Van Hal, "A Precursor and Successor to William Jones: Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn's Contribution to the Scythian Theory and Comparative Linguistics", *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 7.3 (2022), 302-353, at 318.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g., a letter to Peiresc in Bresson 1992 (as in n. 35), 386, 137.

<sup>42</sup> See the letters of 3 October 1638 and 7 January 1639 respectively in Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 653, 654.

<sup>43</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 335, 646.

<sup>44</sup> Buning 2013 (as in n. 37), 40.

<sup>45</sup> Buning 2013 (as in n. 37), 171.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. T. Birch, *The history of the Royal Society of London for improving of natural knowledge* (London, 1757), 127. The (alleged?) composition of the pills is disclosed in Anon., *Praxis chymiatrica rationalis* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1687), 33, 99, 129, 133.

<sup>47</sup> T. Bonetus, *Polyalthes sive thesaurus medico-practicus*, 2 (Genevae, 1690), 690: "quaedam alvum mediocriter movent, quaedam vehementissime, quaedam nullomodo, adeo ut fides sit penes experientiam."

also suggestions that Elichmann's marketing of the pills was disingenuous, and that they may not have contained any true regional ingredients from Spa.<sup>48</sup>

Elichmann's interests apparently extended to the realm of biological experimentation. Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), the renowned seventeenth-century polymath, informed him about a fish, which was boiled for six hours, whose head afterward continued to move. This note is recorded in the journal of Isaac Beeckman (1588-1637), a prominent natural philosopher and contributor to modern atomism who himself had borrowed books from Elichmann's library.<sup>49</sup> The partnership with René Descartes (1596-1650) is a puzzle, because the details of their collaboration in medical fields are unclear, and the roles of teacher and student are indeterminate.<sup>50</sup> Descartes, who valued his privacy,<sup>51</sup> found in Elichmann a trusted confidant who even acted as a gatekeeper for his correspondence. All sorts of oral and written messages to Descartes appear to have passed through Elichmann.<sup>52</sup> When considering the potential of a connection with Descartes and his associates, David de Wilhelm (1587-1658) received a powerful counsel from Reneri: the synergy of Descartes' mathematical and philosophical acumen with Elichmann's knowledge of medicine, chemistry, and languages, enriched with Woesteraedt's encyclopedic knowledge, would make for a triumvirate without equal in Europe.<sup>53</sup>

5. In the last years of his life, Elichmann's name appears frequently in the Leiden civic archives, primarily in relation to his untimely death, but also due to his marriage two years prior. In the summer of 1637, Elichmann, possibly realizing that an ambitious journey to the East would

<sup>48</sup> G.H. Velschius, *Exotericarum curationum et observationum medicinalium chiliades duae* (Ulmae, 1676), 274. Cf. also A.R. Hall, M.B. Hall (ed.), *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg. Vol X: June 1673-April 1674* (London, 1975), 449.

<sup>49</sup> C. de Waard, *Journal tenu par Isaac Beeckman de 1604 à 1634*, 3 (La Haye, 1945), 320.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. F. Baldassarri, "Elements of Descartes' medical *Scientia*: books, medical schools, and collaborations", in F. Baldassarri, F. Zapiere (ed.), *Scientiae in the history of medicine* (Roma – Bristol, 2021), 247-270, at 254-255; A. Strazzoni, "Some unpublished fragments on Descartes's life and works", *The Seventeenth Century* 37.5 (2022), 1-39, at 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> That Descartes lived a lifestyle of seclusion is questioned by Baldassarri 2021 (as in n. 50).

<sup>52</sup> T. Verbeek, "Huygens, Descartes and Golius", in L. Gosseye, F. Blom, A. Leerintveld (ed.), *Return to Sender: Constantijn Huygens as a Man of Letters* (Ghent, 2013), 275-297, at 281.

<sup>53</sup> Buning 2013 (as in n. 37), 252-253.

be unlikely to materialize, chose to wed Machtelt van Nieuwenhoven, daughter of the distinguished Leiden official, Christoffel Dirksz,<sup>54</sup> or alternatively, was propelled by affection, thus setting aside his previous ambitions.<sup>55</sup> Jacob Golius served as a witness. Around that time, he may have moved from Papengracht (where J.F. Gronovius had a letter for Isaac Vossius delivered on October 5, 1636)<sup>56</sup> to the “Vleeshuis” in Breestraat. Bartholin’s comment that Elichmann’s Dutch wife provided him with her wealth and religion suggests that she came from a family of means.<sup>57</sup> While Elichmann’s upbringing is uncertain,<sup>58</sup> it is likely that he converted to Calvinism. Charles Adam’s characterization of Elichmann as a scholar unencumbered by religious beliefs is supported by Saumaise’s contention that among physicians a lack of religious passion was not uncommon.<sup>59</sup> On April 15, 1638, Elichmann acted as a godparent for the daughter of Henri Clignet.<sup>60</sup>

Elichmann was known for his generosity in mentoring aspiring Arabists, hosting both Christian Ravius (Rau, 1613-1677)<sup>61</sup> and Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) in his home and providing them with classes alongside those of Jacobus Golius. The young Vossius is even said to have fallen ill from the exhaustive task of copying manuscripts.<sup>62</sup> Elichmann’s commitment to Arabic studies extended to offering free food and lodging to speakers of the language, as long as they assisted in the task of preserving valuable

<sup>54</sup> J.J. Orlers, *Beschryvinge der stad Leyden, inhoudende 't begin, den voortgang, ende den wasdom der selver [...]* (Tot Leyden, 1641), *passim*. Elichmann is not mentioned in this book.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. <https://www.openarch.nl/elo:b6fdc49a-7128-ad76-bfec-60a904bd4cec>.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. <http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/profile/work/a950a8f4-64c0-4a1c-9a1e-b250498286ef>.

<sup>57</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 644.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. S.G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation era (1500-1660): authors, books, and the transmission of Jewish learning* (Leiden – Boston, 2012), 285.

<sup>59</sup> C. Adam, *Vie et œuvres de Descartes: étude historique* (Paris, 1910), 107-108.

<sup>60</sup> P.T. van Rooden, J.W. Wesselius, “J. S. Rittangel in Amsterdam”, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 65 (1985), 131-152, at 137.

<sup>61</sup> P. Babinski, “The Formation of German Islamic Manuscript Collections in the Seventeenth Century”, in S. Mangold-Will, C. Rauch, S. Schmitt (ed.), *Sammler – Bibliothekare – Forscher. Zur Geschichte der orientalischen Sammlungen an der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* (Frankfurt am Main, 2022), 19-44, at 31. Joannes Roue, whom Vossius mentioned in his letter exchange, is probably a wrong name for the same Ravius.

<sup>62</sup> See F.F. Blok, *Isaac Vossius en zijn kring. Zijn leven tot zijn afscheid van koningin Christina van Zweden, 1618-1655* (Groningen, 1999), 63-64; A.C. Balsem, *Een biografie van de Bibliotheca Vossiana* (Leiden, 2020), 16. Also Theodore Haak (1605-1690) might have stayed with Elichmann; see J.A. Stedall (ed.), *John Pell (1611-1685) and his correspondence with Sir Charles Cavendish: the mental world of an early modern mathematician* (Oxford, 2005), 47.

manuscripts through transcription.<sup>63</sup> As revealed in some other early modern letters, Elichmann was persistent in his efforts to produce copies of manuscripts, either by personally transcribing them or by enlisting the help of copyists, and apparently without any significant financial constraints.<sup>64</sup>

6. Unfortunately, Elichmann was unable to cure himself after falling ill sometime before July 1639. Gronovius expressed his desire for the doctor's swift recovery through letters to Saumaise.<sup>65</sup> Through Bartholin, we know he was suffering from intermittent fever ("tertiana"), which did not stop him from receiving visitors and musing about Bartholin's homeland and its antiquities. But on August 18, late in the day, new symptoms arose, resulting in his sudden death without leaving a will.<sup>66</sup> On September 18, 1646, Elichmann's widow would remarry Daniel van Hamel, a merchant from Diest (in present-day Flanders) who was also a widower.<sup>67</sup>

His death was a profound loss to the scholarly community, felt deeply by his colleagues and friends. Saumaise, in particular, was inconsolable, writing to Dupuy of the overwhelming grief he felt at the mere mention of Elichmann's name. He depicted Elichmann as his only friend in the city, whose highly regarded library he could use as if it were his own.<sup>68</sup> Johannes de Laet (1581-1649) confirms Saumaise's great despair in a letter to Boswell.<sup>69</sup> An anonymous Arabic letter writer, addressing Golius, mentioned the deep impact Elichmann's passing had on him and how he had not been able to find a moment of peace since he had received the news. The writer explains that he had never intended to come to Holland, but only did so in order to visit Elichmann's grave.<sup>70</sup> Bartholin composed a mournful poem comprised of three elegiac couplets.<sup>71</sup> In a letter to

<sup>63</sup> Schmidt 2002 (as in n. 19), 26.

<sup>64</sup> See e.g., Delisle 1882 (as in n. 30), 378.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. P. Dibon, F. Waquet, *Johannes Fredericus Gronovius, pèlerin de la République des Lettres. Recherches sur le voyage savant au XVIIe siècle* (Genève, 1984), *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> Some sources mistakenly regard August 10 as the day of Elichmann's death, on which the letter exchange between Bartholin and Worm provides further particulars: Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 661-662.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. <https://www.openarch.nl/elo:20ab78fc-9aba-f496-b350-cf91f52fcfb6/nl>.

<sup>68</sup> P.E.R. Leroy, *Le dernier voyage à Paris et en Bourgogne (1640-1643) du réformé Claude Saumaise. Libre érudition et contrainte politique sous Richelieu* (Amsterdam, 1983), 59.

<sup>69</sup> British Library ms. 6395, 42 & 43.

<sup>70</sup> Schmidt 2002 (as in n. 19), 26.

<sup>71</sup> T. Bartholin, *Carmina varii argumenti* (Hafniae, 1669), 66. Bartholin reports that the poem was printed in 1639.

Saumaise, Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678) wrote that Elichmann's passing had caused her almost unbearable grief. Van Schurman lauded Elichmann as an unparalleled scholar in the realm of Eastern wisdom, crediting her ability to advance in her studies to his personality.<sup>72</sup> All the same, it appears that relations between Elichmann and Descartes had grown strained by the late 1630s, as Descartes reportedly expressed very negative views of Elichmann after his death – this may have been due to Elichmann revealing to Descartes that it was no longer a secret that Descartes had fathered a child.<sup>73</sup>

7. Some contemporaries who saw Elichmann reported that his illness did not slow him down, and his sudden death exposed the multitude of projects he was involved in, many of which were left unfinished.<sup>74</sup> With Martin Opitz (1597-1639) he had exchanged views on Old German sources.<sup>75</sup> Johan van Beverwijck (1594-1647), a physician with whom Elichmann entertained a good relationship, started multi-perspective work on the inevitability of the end of life in the 1630s and published a first volume of his *Epistolica quaestio de vitae termino, fatali an mobili* in Dordrecht in 1634.<sup>76</sup> Van Schurman encouraged Elichmann to contribute an eastern perspective on the topic, a task whose cruel irony became apparent when Elichmann's own untimely death prevented him from completing it, as noted by some early modern scholars.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See P. van Beek, *The first female university student: Anna Maria van Schurman (1636)*, First edition (Utrecht, 2010), 79; A.R. Larsen, S. Maiullo, *Anna Maria van Schurman and André Rivet: Letters and poems to and from her mentor and other members of her circle* (New York, 2021), 323-324.

<sup>73</sup> C. Adam, *Descartes: ses amitiés féminines* (Paris, 1937), 93. Descartes, in a letter to Mersenne, notes the deaths of Elichmann and Holstenius, in addition to that of his friend Reneri, who is the only one whose relationship with Descartes is explicitly stated as good. "One apparently does not need war to find death," was the laconic comment with which Descartes jumped to another subject.

<sup>74</sup> In a letter to Theodore Haak (1605-1690), Mersenne expressed his disappointment that the numerous projects promised by Elichmann were destined to remain unrealized; cf. C. de Waard, *Correspondance du P. Marin Mersenne, religieux minime. VIII: Août 1638 - Décembre 1639* (Paris, 1963), 636.

<sup>75</sup> Conermann 2010 (as in n. 18), 199-201.

<sup>76</sup> See S. Rauschenbach, *Judentum für Christen: Vermittlung und Selbstbehauptung Menasseh ben Israels in den gelehrten Debatten des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin – Boston, 2012), 126-156. In 1639, Van Beverwijck also suggested that Johannes Scheffer (1621-1679) should establish communication with Elichmann; see A. Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi. A History of Johannes Schefferus' Lapponia (1673) and its Adaptations* (Tromsø, 2020), 113.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. M. Wasmuth, *Grammatica Arabica [...] Praemissa est Paraenesis de Linguae Arabicae utilitate* (Amstelodami, 1654), \*\*\* 3.

In the year of Elichmann's passing, Ludovicus de Dieu (1590-1642) published three distinct yet interrelated works that were often bound together, comprising two translations from Persian, *Historia Christi* and *Historia S. Petri*, as well as a concise Persian grammar, the first of its kind to be printed. Shortly after the publication of De Dieu's trilogy, Christian Ravius claimed that the works had actually been written by Elichmann and that De Dieu had taken credit for them after Elichmann's untimely death.<sup>78</sup> This was likely an exaggeration, as De Dieu credited Elichmann with assisting in the creation of these works.<sup>79</sup> Ravius' claim was thoroughly debunked by Anton Deusing (1612-1666) in a preface dedicated to Golius. Deusing emphasized the dynamic collaboration between the two scholars and Elichmann's reluctance to take credit for his own work.<sup>80</sup> However, Deusing's account either remained unknown or failed to gain traction due to its overly detailed nature. As a result, Ravius' version persisted and was repeated by influential scholars such as August Pfeiffer (1640-1698).<sup>81</sup> It even led to "Ludovicus de Dieu" being listed as a pseudonym for Elichmann in specialized dictionaries.<sup>82</sup>

In 1640, Elichmann's most well-known work was published: *Tabula Ceбетis Graece, Arabice, Latine. Item aurea carmina Pythagorae, cum paraphrasi arabica*. It was believed that none other than Pythagoras himself was the original author of the 'golden verses' in Arabic. Peiresc was one of the scholars who had encouraged him to undertake this task and to introduce this purported Pythagorean work to a European audience.<sup>83</sup> With this work, Elichmann aimed to demonstrate the significance of an Arabic translation for the publication of an original Greek text. Specialists in the field have long agreed that Elichmann's edition is of very good quality.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>78</sup> C. Ravius, *Panegyricae orientalibus linguis dictae* (Ultraieci, 1643), 12.

<sup>79</sup> L. de Dieu, *Historia Christi Persice conscripta, simulque multis modis contaminata, a P. Hieronymo Xavier, Soc. Iesu* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1639), \*\*2v, \*\*\*3r. In a letter to Ussher, De Dieu also indicated that Elichmann was of great assistance to his work. See note 34.

<sup>80</sup> N.Ö. Palabıyık, "An Unsung Hero of Oriental Studies in Leiden: Anton Deusing (1612-1666) and his Persian and Turkish dictionaries", *Lias* 46.2 (2019), 157-200.

<sup>81</sup> A. Pfeiffer, *Introductio in Orientem* (Jenae, 1715), 56.

<sup>82</sup> E. Weller, *Index Pseudonymorum. Wörterbuch der Pseudonymen oder Verzeichniss aller Autoren, die sich falscher Namen bedienten* (Leipzig, 1856), 41.

<sup>83</sup> P. Gassendi, *Viri illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc, senatoris Acquisiensis vita*, editio tertia; auctior, correctior, distinctior (Hagae-Comitum, 1655), 195. See e.g. T. Wotschke, "Der polnischen Brüder Briefwechsel mit den märkischen Enthusiasten", *Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Polen* 22 (1931), 1-66, at 44.

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. F. Rosenthal, "Some Pythagorean Documents transmitted in Arabic", *Orientalia* 10 (1941), 104-115, at 105-107.

Saumaise, who did not agree with Elichmann's belief in the relevance of Arabic for Greek publications, wrote the preface – which would prove the main source of biographical information regarding Elichmann for later scholars. From this preface, we learn, for example, that Elichmann had also prepared an Arabic dictionary and is said to have mastered sixteen languages. In his contribution to the Beverwijck project, Elichmann himself alluded to an *Archeologia Harmonica* in which he would reduce the words from different languages to one origin. It is unclear to what extent this work had already been conducted.<sup>85</sup>

8. Elichmann's impressive library became a magnet for both intellectual and potentially commercial interest. Bartholin and Worm exchanged letters over the ultimate fate of the books in Elichmann's library.<sup>86</sup> Bartholin was deeply disappointed to discover that there was no will, particularly so since Elichmann had previously professed that he intended to bequeath his Scandinavian manuscripts to Bartholin and Worm. Elichmann's manuscript collection was certainly substantial, but gaining insight into it is not an easy feat. Ravius tells us that he had a library of over 70 manuscripts, though it is unclear if that number only pertains to Oriental texts. By contrast, according to Ravius' figures, Golius had amassed a collection of 200 manuscripts.<sup>87</sup> Bartholin, on the other hand, reported that Elichmann had collected over 300 manuscripts following his marriage.<sup>88</sup> By the close of March in the year 1640, Bartholin learned that no original manuscripts would be put up for sale at the impending auction, which was set to take place around Pentecost. Elichmann's books went under the hammer on May 24th, 1640, at the establishment of bookseller Franciscus Hackius.<sup>89</sup> The sales catalog, with the strategic inclusion of the word "rare" in its title,<sup>90</sup> gives us a window into Elichmann's intellectual preoccupations. Of note is his deep engagement with theories of language, among many other topics. But, notably, his large collection of manuscripts

<sup>85</sup> See T. Van Hal, "On 'the Scythian Theory'. Reconstructing the outlines of Johannes Elichmann's (1601/1602-1639) planned *Archaeologia harmonica*", *Language & History* 53.2 (2010), 70-80.

<sup>86</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 662-670.

<sup>87</sup> Ravius 1643 (as in n. 78), 34.

<sup>88</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 644.

<sup>89</sup> J. Elichmannus, *Catalogus variorum ac rarissimorum in qualibet scientia, ac lingua librorum [...] Johannis Elichmanni [...]* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1640).

<sup>90</sup> D. McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books: Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600-1840* (Cambridge, 2018), 135-137.

and autographs – which had attracted attention from many humanists and were protected by his friends as far as the autographs were concerned – were not part of the auction.<sup>91</sup> Bartholin negotiated with Elichmann’s widow to acquire the Icelandic manuscripts, which were reputed to be of great import. He also expressed interest in the Arabic and Persian manuscripts, which were rumored to have been promised to a certain ‘Magnas’. He harbored the hope of receiving financial aid from the king of Denmark for this endeavor. Worm responded more cautiously – with the passing of Friis in 1639, the king’s interest in Oriental manuscripts was certain to wane.<sup>92</sup>

Only a small portion of Elichmann’s correspondence has come down to us – it is known that he exchanged letters, for example, with Gisbertus Voëtius (1589-1676)<sup>93</sup> and Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680),<sup>94</sup> among many others. The only known example of Elichmann’s unpublished scientific writing can be found in the French National Library. These notes on the history of Indian cane, like his letters, are replete with quotations and etymologies from Hebrew, Persian, and Arabic.<sup>95</sup> A Persian list of the Parthian kings, transcribed by Elichmann himself, came into the possession of Isaac Vossius, who intended to give the document to the Irish churchman and scholar James Ussher (1581-1656); the latter had already expressed a desire to see it in a letter to Ludovicus de Dieu.

<sup>91</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 665. Jan de Laet informs the English antiquarian Boswell of the auction through numerous letters (cf. British Library, add ms. 6395: 56, 57, 58). Cryptic references to Elichmann’s handwritten legacy can be found in letters from Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645) to Dr. Sampson Johnson. See K. Fincham (ed.), *The Further Correspondence of William Laud* (Rochester, 2018), 238; G.J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning. The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), 110.

<sup>92</sup> Bartholin to Worm on August 31, 1639. Despite having already replied to Bartholin on November 26, 1639, Worm received a new letter from Bartholin on April 10, 1640, using nearly identical language. See Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 662, 664, 668-669.

<sup>93</sup> A.C. Duker, “Eenige onuitgegeven brieven van en aan Gisbertus Voetius, verzameld en meedegeedeeld”, *Archief voor Nederlandsche kerkgeschiedenis* 4.3 (1893), 276-325, at 278.

<sup>94</sup> J.E. Fletcher, *A study of the life and works of Athanasius Kircher, “Germanus incredibilis” with a selection of his unpublished correspondence and an annotated translation of his autobiography*, ed. E. Fletcher (Leiden – Boston, 2011), 259.

<sup>95</sup> J. Elichmannus, “Sacchari Indici historia, e Christophori Acostae et Garciae ab Horto scriptis concinnata. Accedunt Joannis Elichmanni notulae ad eam historiam”. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Latin 6840. The manuscript was preserved in Paris at least from the middle of the eighteenth century; see A. von Haller, *Bibliotheca botanica qua scripta ad rem herbariam facientia a rerum initiis recensentur* (Figuri, 1771), 333.



As a safeguard, Gerardus Johannes (1577-1649), Isaac Vossius' father, had another copy made.<sup>96</sup> In 1645, Cromwell's troops stripped Ussher of his books, and Ussher reportedly mourned the loss of Elichmann's Persian list in particular.<sup>97</sup> The whereabouts of both lists are now unknown, yet fragments of the list seem to have resurfaced in later books.<sup>98</sup> Thanks to a remark by Johann Heinrich Hottinger, we know that the 'Magnas' referred to by Bartholin is most likely Ussher, known in Latin as Jacobus Usserius Armachanus in his capacity as Archbishop of Armagh.<sup>99</sup>

Early modern sources often reference the anecdote that Elichmann wrote German verses that were easily understood by Persians, in order to highlight the close relationship between Persian and Germanic languages.<sup>100</sup> One such poem, which was written in the Persian alphabet in honor of Van Schurman, has survived to this day.<sup>101</sup> Elichmann might have promised Worm a comparable poem as a commentary on his work on Old Norse.<sup>102</sup> Persian also pops up occasionally in Elichmann's shorter contributions. For example, in the year of his death, he wrote three expressions concerning human self-awareness in Johannes Fredericus Gronovius' (1611-1671) *album amicorum*: “Γνωῶθι σεαυτόν” (“Know oneself”), “Selbst ist der Mann”, and “من آنم که من دانم” (“I am that person whom I know myself”).<sup>103</sup>

For two decades following his passing, certain humanists clung to the possibility that remnants of Elichmann's oeuvre would yet surface. Nicolas Heinsius (1620-1681), in 1658, had to break the disappointing news to a curious correspondent, probably Carlo Roberto Dati (1619-1676), that any chance of Elichmann's notes surviving was unlikely, as

<sup>96</sup> See Elrington 1847 (as in n. 34), 16, 24-25; Balsem 2020 (as in n. 62), 20-21.

<sup>97</sup> Anon., “Queries and notices”, *The Oriental Collections* 1 (1797), 88-92, at 89.

<sup>98</sup> B. Hederich, *Reales Schul-Lexicon [...]* (Leipzig, 1748), 414 (s.v. *Arsaces*).

<sup>99</sup> J.H. Hottinger, *Dissertationum miscellanearum pentas* (Tiguri, 1654), 68. On the presence of at least one *codex Eligmanni* in the Bodleian library, see K.C.A. Matthes, *Die edessenische Abgarsage auf ihre Fortbildung untersucht* (Leipzig, 1882), 27.

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., L. de Linda, *Descriptio orbis et omnium ejus rerum publicarum* (Jenae, 1670), 148.

<sup>101</sup> See T. Van Hal, “The alleged Persian-Germanic connection: A Remarkable Chapter in the Study of Persian from the Sixteenth through the Nineteenth Century”, in A. Korangy, C. Miller (ed.), *Trends in Persian and Iranian Linguistics* (Berlin, 2018), 1-20; for an edition and translation, see Larsen, Maiullo 2020 (as in n. 72), 276-277.

<sup>102</sup> Worm, Bartholin 1713 (as in n. 22), 612.

<sup>103</sup> The Persian as translated by Paul Babinski, who succeeded in tracing Elichmann's source (viz. Sa'di's *Gulistān*). Cf. [https://x.com/Paul\\_Babinski/status/1590723447461924867](https://x.com/Paul_Babinski/status/1590723447461924867). The album is preserved in the Royal Library of The Netherlands, Den Haag, 130 E 32: 72r.

they had been scattered and lost. Nevertheless, Heinsius persisted in his search, questioning Golius about any Pythagorean writings by Elichmann and inquiring at the Elzevier publishing house, to no avail. There was still hope in a visit to Jan le Maire, a publisher who had been on good terms with Elichmann, but a year later, Heinsius learned from Maire that Elichmann had not published anything more than what was already commonly known.<sup>104</sup>

When it comes to manuscripts obtained, copied, or commissioned by Elichmann, we are able to form some notion of their nature and significance through the various allusions to them in other early modern texts, which, for the most part, offer only succinct clues. The important accounts of two witnesses, Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620-1667) and Joannes Antonides van der Linden (1609-1664), who esteemed Elichmann highly, grant us a glimpse into his library, as both men conducted an on-site survey. Hottinger recalls that he saw an Arabic manuscript by Ibn Sora, a member of a Jacobite church, in addition to *Tractatus Mar Isaaci, Monachi Syri*,<sup>105</sup> an Arabic translation of a homily by John Chrysostom, and an Arabic commentary on the apocalypse in Syriac letters.<sup>106</sup> Van der Linden's *De scriptis medicis* appeared two years prior to Elichmann's passing, providing information on a range of Greek manuscripts, many with an alchemical focus: Christianus' *De auri optima confectione*, Cleopatra's treatise on weights and measures, Democritus' *Physicorum et Mysticorum liber*,<sup>107</sup> Stephanus Alexandrinus' *De divina & sacra arte Chrysopoeae* in nine books, a ἔρμηνεία τῶν σημείων τῆς ἱερᾶς τέχνης and a Greek commentary by Synesius on Democritus.<sup>108</sup> The collection was further

<sup>104</sup> Based on the table of contents, it appears that the intended recipient of the letter was Cassianus Puteus, but he had already passed away. Io. Targionius (ed.), *Clarorum Belgarum ad Ant. Magliabechium nonnullosque alios epistolae*, 1 (Florentiae, 1745), 229, 233.

<sup>105</sup> J.H. Hottinger, *Historia Orientalis* (Tiguri, 1660), 146.

<sup>106</sup> J.H. Hottinger, *Promtuarium, sive, bibliotheca orientalis* (Heidelbergae, 1658), 85, 70, 63, 285. See also Hottinger 1660 (as in n. 105), 346-347.

<sup>107</sup> This manuscript attracted the attention of Isaac Newton (1642-1727); cf. K. Figala, J. Harrison, U. Petzold, “*De Scriptoribus Chemicis: sources for the establishment of Isaac Newton's (al)chemical library*”, in P.M. Harman, A.E. Shapiro (ed.), *The Investigation of Difficult Things: Essays on Newton and the History of the Exact Sciences in Honour of D. T. Whiteside* (Cambridge, 1992), 135-179, at 169.

<sup>108</sup> J.A. van der Linden, *De scriptis medicis libri duo* (Amstelredami, 1637), *passim*. Cf. S. Matton, “L'influence de l'humanisme sur la tradition alchimique”, *Micrologus* 3 (1995), 279-345, at 317-318. It appears that other early modern books which offer information on Elichmann's alchemic library rely on Van der Linden as their source. See e.g. P. Borellius, *Bibliotheca chimica seu catalogus librorum philosophicorum hermeticorum*

distinguished by the presence of Icelandic treasures, among them possibly an important early modern copy of the so-called Snorra or Prose Edda, which Christian Ravius donated to the University Library of Utrecht in 1643.<sup>109</sup>

9. From the brief outline presented here emerges the portrait of a versatile, widely esteemed, and restless scholar who substantially contributed to the height of intellectual pursuits in seventeenth-century Leiden. It would be intriguing to explore if his varied areas of interest can be attributed to a common thread, such as natural philosophy. Ole Grell's recent intellectual biography of Ole Worm, who as a physician, collector, and linguistic antiquarian shares many similarities with Elichmann, suggests that this may indeed apply to Elichmann too.<sup>110</sup> A more comprehensive examination of Elichmann's writings and correspondence, along with the gradual disclosure of early modern sources and notarial documents, could provide further insight into life and work of this remarkable individual.<sup>111</sup>

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*etc.* (Heidelbergae, 1656); J.J. Baier, *Biographiae professorum medicinae qui in Academia Altorfina unquam vixerunt* (Norimbergae et Altorfii, 1728).

<sup>109</sup> Anon., *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter i det Store kongelige bibliotek* (København, 1900), LVIII-LIX.

<sup>110</sup> Grell 2022 (as in n. 23).

<sup>111</sup> I would like to extend my gratitude to the reviewers and editors for their insightful comments and constructive critiques. This research was facilitated through the generous support of the FWO (the Research Foundation – Flanders), under grant number G083120N.