Johann Zechendorff (1580–1662) and Arabic Studies at Zwickau's Latin School*

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Zwickau in Electoral Saxony was not a good place to be during the Thirty Years War. Throughout the hostilities the town's inhabitants were repeatedly subjected to the miseries of chronic warfare. Worse still were the accompanying inflictions: hunger and repeated outbreaks of the plague. Zwickau's Latin school was spared none of these miseries. As early as the summer of 1619 the town was forced to billet some three hundred Saxon soldiers, much to the burghers' disadvantage. To this inconvenience were added recurring acts of lawlessness by the soldiers, who were finally brought under control when three of the Saxon recruits were hanged in the market place.¹ Zwickau's wartime woes had just begun. The following year witnessed a severe crop failure,² with food shortage reaching a peak in 1623.³ In light of the growing menace of the Thirty Years War the Latin school decided in 1625 to suspend the Lent school-comedies, to be renewed only in 1671. The following year the town was afflicted by yet another in a series of bubonic outbreaks which claimed the lives of 375 victims. This occasioned an order from the Saxon Elector for weekly penitential sermons and Catechism exams for adults as well as school-children.⁴ One further wartime misery came in 1632 when the town was conquered and plundered by Wallenstein and its Latin school was temporarily used by the Imperial commissary of stores as his headquarters.⁵

* I would like to thank Gerald Toomer for his instructive comments on an earlier version of this paper. My findings on Zechendorff were first presented at the colloquium of the research group "Religious Individualization in Historical Perspective" at the Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt, where I had the good fortune of being a post-doctoral research fellow when researching this paper. My thanks to the discussants at this colloquium for their insightful comments. Finally, I would like to thank the staff at the Ratsschulbibliothek in Zwickau for their untiring helpfulness. Needless to say, I am alone responsible for any errors and misconceptions.

1 E. Herzog, *Chronik der Kreisstadt Zwickau. Bd. 2: Jahresgeschichte*, Zwickau, 1845, pp. 397–8.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 405–6.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 409.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 422.

During one bubonic outbreak Johann Zechendorff (1580–1662), headmaster of Zwickau's Latin school, decided to take action.⁶ God in his wrath was chastising the town with the scourge of war, hunger, and pestilence, he wrote in the introduction to a strange undated work extant only in manuscript. To assuage this divine displeasure he had decided temporarily to suspend the study of profane authors (Graeco-Roman literature) and instead to read and comment on the Seven Penitential Psalms.⁷ These he read with his pupils in the classroom as well as privately in no less than thirty translations and paraphrases.⁸ Since some of his pupils had begun learning Arabic, Zechendorff undertook the compilation of an Arabic paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms to acquaint them better with the Qur'an's vocabulary and phraseology. Muhammad, for Zechendorff the unquestionable author of the Qur'an, is dubbed the Arab Cicero (*Cicero arabicus*) – according to him a common epithet for the prophet among Muslims.⁹ This resulted in a curious work, which Zechendorff never got printed, with the equally curious title *An Arabic paraphrase of the seven penitential psalms, i.e. in the style of and taken from the system of the Qur'an, which contains CXIII chapters*,¹⁰ or rather *from the Arab Cicero and in the Ismaelitic and regal Solomonian language: in pure and unadulterated speech set down rhythmically, with an interlinear Latin translation for the benefit of German students of Arabic, to allow them an easier access to the Qur'an*.¹¹ In a lengthy German introduction to the work Zechendorff argued that there was more eloquence (*Reden v[nd] Wortt*) and substance (*Res oder Realia*) in the Psalter than in the 'monotonous droning' of the 'book of the deluded Muhammad', which

- 6 Possibly the bubonic outbreak of 1626 which occasioned the above-mentioned Electoral decree but one of the later outbreaks (e.g. 1633 or 1636) are also possible.
- 7 RSBZ, MS 18.4.29. fol. 224^{v-r}, J. Zechendorff, *Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica*. The codex was written by Zechendorff from right to left but paginated by a later librarian from left to right, hence the reverse pagination.
- 8 Ibid., fols 224^v–223^v.
- 9 Muhammad, needless to say, was not, to the best of my knowledge, ever referred to in Arab sources as an 'Arab Cicero', nor am I acquainted with any other of Zechendorff's European contemporaries using this (in itself charming) epithet.
- 10 This is a rare slip. As Zechendorff knew, the Qur'an has 114 chapters. In an undated letter to the Jena Orientalist Johann Ernst Gerhard the Elder (1621–1668) Zechendorff even offered an analysis of the short concluding sura. FBG, Chart. B. 451, fol. 132^r.
- 11 *Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica id est stylo, & ex Alcorani Systemate quod cxiii capita continet sive ex Cicerone Arabico & Ismaelitica atque Lingua Salomonis regia: puris, merisque Loquutionibus appronatis Rhythmicè [marg. add. Cum versione interlineari Latina] In Usum Arabicantium Germanorum: ut ad Alcorani Lectionem Aditus facilius pateat. Diligenti Lectione ac Meditatione a Iohanne Zechendorff* ^{LL^{arum}} *Orientalium Cultore Conscripta.*

stands in contrast to his following assurance that the paraphrase, using Qur'anic verses as mosaic stones '[...] is magnificently beautiful and ornate, set and recited in the regal Arabic tongue, as it [Arabic] is attributed to King Solomon, as its inventor, through the wisdom with which he was endowed by God. So, for the sake of this language, it is not to be contemned'.¹²

Each psalm verse appears at the bottom of the page in Luther's translation alongside several couplets of rhyming Arabic verses (or rather pseudo-Qur'anic verses) which approximate the content and tenor of each verse. To this is added an interlinear Latin translation. Thus, the opening verse of Psalm 6 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.'¹³ or in Luther's translation, which Zechendorff quotes at the bottom of the page, 'Ach Herr, straff mich nicht in deinem Zorn' is rendered by several Arabic 'Qur'anic' alternatives. The first of which reads:

اي الرحمن الرحيم
انت العزيز الحكيم

*O, the Compassionate and Merciful One
You are the Great and Wise One.*

The latter verse may have been taken from several Qur'anic verses, e.g. suras 2.129, 5.118, 40.8, or 60.5¹⁴ and is mistranslated by Zechendorff as 'Thou art a mighty judge' (*Tu es fortis iudex*). Although the margin of each page contains the sura numbers, to which the rhyming couplets do not correspond, and a page number in Zechendorff's copy of the Qur'an (*pagina mihi*)¹⁵ from which they were ostensibly quoted (or paraphrased), the Arabic quotations do not, to the best of my knowledge, relate to these. Nonetheless this strange work offers a creative pseudo-Qur'anic paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms, and, although its mosaic stones are not genuine Qur'an verses, they are a creative attempt at composing Qur'an-style snippets, forged but true to the spirit of the original, and to show their correspondence with the pious sentiments of the Psalms recited in Zwickau at the time.

12 Ibid., fol. 220v. 'Aber will es herlich schön, v. zierlich nach Arabischer königlicher Sprach / wie sie denn dem könig Salomoni, als dem Erfinder, nach seiner vom Gott verliehenen Weißheit, zugeschrieben wirdt / gesetzt, v. geredetdt, so ist es der Sprachen halben, an ihr selbstn nicht zuverwerffen.'

13 All English quotes from the Bible follow the King James Version.

14 Sura 60.5. may have struck Zechendorff as appropriately penitential: 'Lord, do not expose us to the designs of the unbelievers. Forgive us, Lord; You are Mighty, the Wise One.' English quotes from the Qur'an are taken from N.J. Dawood's translation for Penguin Classics (originally 1956). I have used the 2nd bilingual edition of 2006.

15 I have not been able to trace Zechendorff's copy of the Qur'an.

The ostensible point of Zechendorff's exercise was a mixture of Lutheran piety in the face of adversity and an attempt to help his pupils better understand the difficult language of the Qur'an.¹⁶ Although a detailed introduction and the careful layout of the manuscript suggest that it may have been meant for publication, the work was never printed, nor am I acquainted with any contemporary or later reference to it. As remarkable as the work itself is the fact that Arabic instruction was offered in Zwickau's Latin school in the 1630s and that its headmaster was eager to help Saxon schoolchildren better understand the Qur'an in Arabic. (Figure 3.1)

The most important source on Zechendorff's life is the sermon delivered on the occasion of its expiration.¹⁷ On Sunday the 23 February 1662 the eighty-two year-old headmaster of the Latin school of Zwickau was laid to rest in the town's central church.¹⁸ He had passed away a week earlier, survived by his second wife¹⁹ but by none of his children, after serving as headmaster for forty-five years. The funeral sermon was delivered by the Zwickau superintendent Gottfried Siegmund Peißker²⁰ and includes a fairly detailed and apparently reliable²¹ account of Zechendorff's life.²² Opening with a funeral oration, it may be objected, lends this short study of the Zwickau pedagogue and Orientalist an unwarranted tone of morbidity. Zechendorff indeed lived through a particularly vicious period of early modern history, nor was his personal life sheltered – few lives were just then. At the same time the extant

16 *Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica*, fol. 223^v.

17 G.S. Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule / Welche Dem Wohl-Ehrenvesten / hoch-Achtbaren und Hochgelahrten Herrn Johann Zechendorffen / Weitberühmten Philologo, und der Stadt-Schulen allhier zu Zwickau ins 45tzigste Jahr mit Ruhm und Ehren gewesenenen Rectori, Am Sonntage Reminiscere, war der 23. Febr. dieses lauffenden 1662. Jahres / Dessen geheiligter Leichnam / in der Obern Stadt-Kirche / mit Christlichen Ceremonien, ehrlich und rühmlich zur Ruhe bracht wurde / Aus Seinem täglichen Gebet Psalm CXLII. v. 6.7. Herr / zu dir schreye ich / und sage / du bist meine Zuversicht / etc. öffentlich auffgerichtet / Und nunmehr auff Begehren / zu des Sel. Mannes schuldigen Nachruhm / zum Druck befördert wurden / Durch Gottfried-Siegmund Peißkern / der Heiligen Schrift Licentiatum, Pfarrern und Superintenden zu Zwickau, Zwickau, 1662.*

18 Herzog, *Chronik der Kreisstadt Zwickau*, p. 106. Though referred to since 1935 as Zwickau's Cathedral, the imposing St Marien is not an episcopal seat.

19 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. A1^v. Marien-Salome née Götsen.

20 Peißker was appointed to the post two years earlier. See *Unschuldige Nachrichten von alten und neuen theologischen Sachen*, Leipzig, 1713, p. 453.

21 On several points the accuracy of Peißker's biographical account is corroborated by external evidence.

22 Paul Stötzner's article on Zechendorff in the *ADB*, 1898, openly follows Peißker's funeral sermon as its main source.

FIGURE 3.1 Zechendorff, Septem Psalmorum poenitentialium Para-Phrasis Arabica, RSBZ, MS 18.4.29 FOLS. 204V-205R.

sources suggest that this inquisitive and productive mind enlivened an otherwise arduous existence. Opening an account of his life and scholarship with a funeral sermon is appropriate in so far as Zechendorff shares with many of his fellow early modern ‘secondary thinkers’ the fate of having the outlines of his biography best documented by a learned eulogist. Apart from his printed works, of which there are relatively few, two further sources are important for the present study: the collection of Zechendorff’s manuscripts (both letters to him as well as works of his extant only in manuscript) kept in Zwickau’s Ratschulbibliothek, as well as some remnants of his correspondence with the Lutheran Orientalist Johann Ernst Gerhard the Elder (1621–1668), extant in the massive Gerhard *Nachlass* at the research library in Gotha,²³ and a series of

23 Most of Zechendorff’s letters preserved in this collection are to be found in FBG, Chart. A 138.

letters he wrote to the famous Zurich Orientalist Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667).²⁴

Zechendorff's life and career can be summarized as follows: He was born in the Saxon town of Lößnitz in the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountain region) on 8 August 1580. His father, Michael Zechendorff, was himself a school teacher, first in Lößnitz and later in Schneeberg, where he eventually became an arch-deacon. His mother Anna Zechendorff, née Bergmeister, was the daughter of the burgomaster of the nearby town of Schwarzenberg.²⁵ Of his other relations we know of a paternal uncle in Ballerstedt in the Harz region²⁶ by the name of Zacharias Zechendorff, who like Zechendorff's father, was a teacher.²⁷ A brother (probably half-brother), a baker in Schneeberg also called Zacharias, is attested in Zechendorff's correspondence.²⁸ Unlike numerous seventeenth-century scholars of modest or middling origins, whose academic, pedagogical, or ecclesiastical careers facilitated a social upward mobility, Zechendorff, who eventually became a school-master in Schneeberg and later in Zwickau, exhibits a social stability. Born and raised in the Erzgebirge in a socially 'upper middling' milieu of modest means, he was, after a *peregrinatio academica*, to return to his original social, regional, and vocational setting.

According to Peißker, Zechendorff was tutored by his father. In 1599, at the remarkably late age of nineteen, he started his studies with his uncle in Ballerstedt, moving from there to the Latin schools in Aschersleben, Braunschweig, Eisleben, and then to the Latin school in Zerbst, the tuition being paid for by his uncle.²⁹ The headmaster of the Latin school in Zerbst was Gregor Bersman, a neo-Latin poet and former professor of rhetoric, Greek, and Latin in Leipzig. Bersman was dismissed from the university in 1581 following his refusal to subscribe to the *Formula Concordiae* and his criticism of Lutheran orthodoxy.³⁰ Zechendorff's father recalled his son from Zerbst insist-

24 I am grateful to Jan Loop for bringing these letters to my attention and for kindly sending me a copy of them.

25 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fols. D2^{r-v}.

26 In modern-day Saxony-Anhalt.

27 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D2^v.

28 RSBZ, MS 172.6., two letters from Zacharias Zechendorff to his brother, 28 December 1629 and 1 January 1630, informing him of the fatal illness and death of his mother – Zacharias refers to her as 'my mother' rather than 'our mother'. The letter of January is signed 'Der L Bruder / williger / Zacharias Zechendorff / Bürger vndt Becker / Daselbst [Schneeberg].'

29 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D2^r.

30 See Friedrich August Eckstein's article on Bersman in *ADB*.

ing he return home, to avoid the ‘venom of Calvinist teaching’.³¹ It seems that it was in Schneeberg’s Latin school that Zechendorff made his first significant acquaintance with Oriental languages, studying Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, as well as Greek, logic, and astronomy. As we shall see, the driving force behind his Oriental studies in later years was a fascination with Arabic, with which he became acquainted considerably later. In 1604, at the late age of twenty four, Zechendorff matriculated at the university of Leipzig, paying for his upkeep by serving as a *famulus* before receiving an Electoral stipend and later earning some money as a private tutor, graduating from the philosophical faculty as *magister artium* in 1608.³² The fact that both his short-lived studies in Zerbst as well as those in Leipzig were paid for by others suggests that his father had modest means at his disposal. As was to become painfully clear to Zechendorff himself in later years, there was a discrepancy between the standing learned pedagogues enjoyed in their community (in Zechendorff’s case in a much broader learned milieu) and their economic precariousness. In 1610 he was appointed deputy headmaster of the Latin school in Schneeberg, becoming headmaster in 1614.³³ This was followed by an invitation to head Zwickau’s Latin school in the spring of 1617.³⁴ Zechendorff remained headmaster in Zwickau for the rest of his long life.

In 1612, while serving as deputy headmaster in Schneeberg, Zechendorff married his first wife, Catharine, daughter of a Lößnitz dignitary. After her death in 1637 he married Marien-Salome née Götsen. Neither marriage, Peißker informs us, produced any successors (*Leibes-Erben*).³⁵ This does not mean the two marriages were without issue, but rather that none of these offspring were still alive at the time of his funeral. An undated Latin address to Zechendorff consisting of elegiac couplets (a common school drill), composed by Johann Zechendorff Jr. is extant.³⁶ A slim collection of threnodic poems, published shortly after Zechendorff’s death, includes a Hebrew poem by a certain Georg Zechendorff, though the content suggests he was not his son but a revering young relative.³⁷

31 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D3^r. ‘Damit er aber von dem Veneno Calvinistischer Lehre nicht angesteckt werden möchte / ist er von seinem Herrn Vater bald wieder abgefordert worden.’

32 Ibid., fols D2^v–D3^v.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.; RSBZ, MS 18.5.13, letter from the town council of Schneeberg signed on Easter Tuesday 1617, releasing Zechendorff from his obligations there.

35 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. E1^r.

36 RSBZ, MS 18.5.13.

37 *Lacrumae super beata analysi M. Johannis Zechendorffi ...*, Zwickau, 1662, fols B3^r–B4^r.

In an age without pension schemes Zechendorff remained headmaster until his death, though in his final years he no longer attended the school.³⁸ This, to judge from Peißker's apologetic tone, gave rise to considerable dissatisfaction. Those who believe that his final years were marked by senile incapacity, the headmaster's eulogist protests, are sorely mistaken. Though no longer able to teach at the Latin school, he was by no means idle. On the contrary, Peißker assures his audience, Zechendorff was constantly praying, an arduous undertaking, far removed from idleness or senile inertness.³⁹ After some negotiations, Zechendorff was succeeded as headmaster by his former pupil Christian Daum (1612–1687), a prominent pedagogue in his own right, who had been serving as teacher (*tertius*) at the Latin school since 1642.⁴⁰

Zechendorff's exceptionally long tenure as headmaster in Zwickau (1617–1662) seems, all in all, to have been beneficial to the Latin school and his scholarly reputation must have stood it in good stead, as well as the fact that several of his pupils, among them Christian Daum, were to become respected scholars in their own right. His reputation was sufficient for a number of offers to be made to him during his long tenure in Zwickau and the fact that he turned them down in favour of the Latin school is not insignificant.⁴¹ At the same time, just as his remaining in office long after he was no longer capable of carrying out his pedagogical duties seems to have given rise to discontent, it is important to note that Zechendorff's own satisfaction with the Latin school and the municipal authorities had its ups and downs. Suffice it here to say that in a letter to the Jena Orientalist Johann Ernst Gerhard of June 1647 the almost seventy-year-old headmaster complained bitterly of conditions in Zwickau and regretted having to turn down an invitation by the celebrated Orientalist and diplomat Adam Olearius to move to Denmark⁴² due to misgivings about the Danish climate and travel by sea.⁴³

Zechendorff owes his relatively few appearances in modern scholarship not so much to his life-long pedagogical exertions but to his achievements

38 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D4^v.

39 Ibid., fol. Br^r.

40 On Daum see A.S. Ross, *Daum's Boys: Schools and the Republic of Letters in early modern Germany*, Manchester, 2015 and L. Mahnke, 'Christian Daum – ein Zwickauer "in ganz Europa berühmt"', in *Literarisches Leben in Zwickau im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds M. Hubrath and R. Krohn, Göttingen, 2001, pp. 195–213.

41 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D4^r.

42 Unlike Zechendorff Olearius undertook voyages to the East – most famously to Persia.

43 FBG, Chart. A. 138, fol. 213^r.

as an Orientalist, especially in connection with the Qur'an.⁴⁴ As has recently been pointed out, the Zwickau Latin school, like many others in its day, was primarily concerned with preparing pupils for university. Consequently, the stress was laid primarily on a thorough drilling in Latin and, from the fourth grade, in Greek as well. Though Zechendorff introduced new subjects – above all the study of Oriental languages – this in no way challenged the central role allotted to Latin in this pedagogical setting. But, with this notable exception, as Alan Ross notes, it was more the 'how' than the fairly constant 'what' that worried pedagogical reformers of the early seventeenth century.⁴⁵ When Zechendorff moved to Zwickau in 1617 he does not seem to have known Arabic. Two undated works of his, extant in manuscript, possibly written in his early years in Zwickau, deal with the teaching of Latin. Typical of his day is the concern in these works with method and typical of Zechendorff are the peculiar titles: *Methodi cabbalisticae causa*,⁴⁶ and *Sepimentum sive causae methodi cabalisticae*.⁴⁷ Despite appearances these dry manuals have nothing to do with Cabalah in the normal sense but with a stringent method which, in the spirit of Ramism,⁴⁸ clearly defines the bare essentials of the subject at hand (Latin grammar) and its systematic instruction, in the firm belief that this will enable its swift and easy acquisition (*schnell und leichtlich*, as Zechendorff puts it in his German writings) with as little rote learning as possible. To these is added his 1636 *Praecognita latinae linguae*, also extant in manuscript.⁴⁹ As we shall see, when Zechendorff eventually immersed himself in Arabic and began teaching it, a simplification of instruction would remain a central concern. The same concern with method and an easier approach to languages becomes evident in Zechendorff's undated and unpublished Persian Grammar, composed in his later years, now surviving in Zwickau in what was probably meant as a first draft.⁵⁰ That Zechendorff should have embarked on his career in

44 An instructive exception, touching on Zechendorff's pedagogical outlook in the context of civic concerns and the pedagogical trends of his day, is offered by A.S. Ross, "Da hingegen bei uns fast ein jedes Land und Ort sich ein besonderes Machet". Zentrum und Peripherie im bildungsgeschichtlichen Kontext am Beispiel der kursächsischen Stadt Zwickau im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 131, 2011, pp. 263–83.

45 Ross, 'Zentrum und Peripherie', p. 271.

46 RSBZ, MS ZZZ ii.

47 Ibid., bound separately from the *Methodus Cabbalistica*.

48 There is a direct reference to Ramus in *Methodi cabbalisticae causa*, fol. 9^v.

49 RSBZ, MS 9.10.17.

50 *In Linguae Medicam Particam, sive Persicam Manu-Ductio*, RSBZ, MS 18.5.18. fol. 2^v. 'Weil Ich, G. Leser! Mich / ohne Ruhm zu melden / so lang Ich in pulvere scholastico nach Gottes Willen über 40 Jahr versiret / stets befließen, u. bedacht gewesen bin, Wie die

Zwickau with a detailed consideration of method in teaching Latin is hardly surprising. Though Oriental languages were taught in several German Latin schools – mostly Hebrew, with occasional instruction in Aramaic and Syriac – Zechendorff's enthusiastic study and teaching of Arabic, which led him to offer his pupils a 'Qur'anic paraphrase' of the Penitential Psalms, are exceptional.

The obvious questions are when Zechendorff came to learn Arabic, how, and most interestingly, why. On these points Zechendorff is frustratingly reticent. What we do have in the absence of a 'smoking gun' are several pieces of circumstantial evidence, which offer at least partial answers to these questions. On 2 December 1623, some six years after Zechendorff took up his post, the superintendent of Zwickau, Veit Wolfrum (1564–1626) held a festive speech in the Latin school, published two years later under the title *Nox Cygnea*,⁵¹ an elaborate and in itself unoriginal exhortation to the study of Arabic.⁵² In it Wolfrum, by then in his late fifties, told his audience of his recent discovery of this language and his enthusiasm for it – stemming mostly from its theological utility, stressing, true to form, its necessity for the conversion of Muslims. The latter argument can usually be treated as a pious trope, though in Wolfrum's case it has recently been suggested his interest in Arabic may have gone back to his officiating at the baptism of a Turk in 1612.⁵³ The learned superintendent was aware that an interest in Arabic would not go unopposed, and accordingly equated such objections with the demand to burn Jewish books, opposed by Johannes Reuchlin over a century earlier. He assures his audience of his detestation for the impiety of the Jews and the Turks, yet openly condemns the obscurantist zeal of those who would have the writings of Jews and 'Turks' banned.⁵⁴ Wolfrum prides himself on winning over the Latin school's headmaster Zechendorff. Although a command of Arabic had some practical

studierende Jugend, umb vieler Ursach willen, könnte baldt, leichtlicher, u. kurtzlichen zum studijs, u. höhern Dingen, gebracht, nicht so lang in trivialibus verhalten werden, Darbey aber gesehen, das es durch kein besser Mittel, als durch die guten, u. allerhandt nützlichen Sprachen geschehen könne; Weil die freyen künste, u. andere disciplinen, neben der hl. Theologia inn andern Sprachen, u. nicht nur inn vnser Deutzschen oder Lateinischen, od(er) Greichischen beschrieben, u. daraus gelernet werden müssen.' (my underline).

51 Cygnea is the Latin for Zwickau whose coat of arms bears six swans.

52 *Nox Cygnea exhibens dissertationem in laudem linguae Arabicae a Vito Wolfrum, D. & Superintendente. Recitabatur 2. Decemb. Anni Christi 1623. in Schola Zwickauensi, praesentibus non tantum omnibus Scholae praeceptoribus et discipulis adultioribus, verum etiam multis ex ordine senatorio & fraternitate in oppido & agro Cygneo*, Leipzig, 1625.

53 Ross, *Daum's Boys*, p. 94.

54 Wolfrum, *Nox Cygnea*, fols. B1^r–v.

advantages (even if these would not have been considerable in Zwickau), Wolfrum stressed the role of Arabic studies in the framework of humanist scholarship, within which he places them.⁵⁵ While others learn French, Italian, Spanish, Bohemian, and Polish for worldly gain, let us (*Musarum alumni*), who dedicate our studies to the glory of God, study Chaldean, Syriac, and Arabic which are indispensable for theological debates.⁵⁶ More interesting than Wolfrum's arguments for the study of Arabic is the glimpse he affords of the demand for, and availability of, these studies in Zwickau's Latin school in December 1623. Vinzent Schmuck (1565–1628), dean of the theological faculty in Leipzig, wrote a short letter of approval with which Wolfrum prefaced his brief work.⁵⁷ A lengthy letter by himself to the Leipzig theologian (21 October 1624) was added as an appendix.⁵⁸ In his letter to Schmuck the Zwickau superintendent had the following to say about the immediate backdrop to his endorsement of Arabic studies at the Latin school:

When, following the peculiar request of a certain pastor in the diocese of Freiberg, who was paying me a visit and had purchased several copies of Elias Hutter's *Cubus alphabeticus*, I wrote an Arabic saying in his *album amicorum*, and, as chance had it, I had quoted something from the Arabic Psalter in a certain student's (*scholasticus*) album, it came to pass, with the blessing of Him, by whose counsel we are guided, that our headmaster, a man most dedicated to Oriental languages, should also begin [to take an interest in Arabic] and that at the same time the desire to learn this language should have been kindled among the pupils of our school. After I had sent you this dissertation and letter sent to me by twenty pupils, not only did you approve my suggestion, but you read the dissertation in such a way as to willingly take upon yourself the role of midwife for my new offspring, instructing me on some points and urging me to publish it. You see, illustrious Dr Schmuck, that it is, after God, thanks to you that we are now studying Arabic.⁵⁹

55 Thus he (convincingly) enlists Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon as pioneers of Arabic studies as well as less likely humanist scholars such as Martin Crusius. For Casaubon's Arabic studies see A. Hamilton, 'Isaac Casaubon the Arabist: *'Video longum esse iter'*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 72, 2009, pp. 143–68.

56 Wolfrum, *Nox Cygnea*, fols B4^v–C1^r. See also Ross, 'Zentrum und Peripherie'.

57 Ibid., fol. B3^r, 20 April 1624.

58 Ibid., fols H2^v–I4^r, 21 October 1624. Both letters, it should be noticed, came after the festive oration in Zwickau.

59 Ibid., fol. I2^v. 'Cumque ad peculiarem petitionem Pastoris cujusdam in Fribergensi dioecesi, qui me salutabat, & Cubi Eliani exempla aliquot emebat dictum Arabicum

When the festive oration appeared in print in Leipzig in 1625 it was accompanied by several congratulatory poems – among them a laudatory note in Arabic by Zechendorff, the Arabic produced in elegant copper engraving. In late humanist hyperbole Zechendorff promises to sing Wolfrum's praise as long as he lives: 'O my noble teacher, for your instruction (sayings) taught my heart the language of the Arabs.'⁶⁰ However genuine this gratitude to the superintendent who shared his enthusiasm may have been, Zechendorff's interest in Arabic seems to have started somewhat earlier. In a *laudatio funebris*, published shortly after Wolfrum's death in 1626, his eulogist, Valentin Hentschel, claimed he had discovered Arabic in his fifty-ninth year (1623), 'with one foot in the grave' and past his mental prime. The point, of course, is to praise Wolfrum's diligence and eagerness to master a new language even in the autumn of his life.⁶¹ By 1623, however, Zechendorff will have known a fair amount of Arabic – enough, in any case to allow him to teach the language (which at the time did not necessarily imply an impressive mastery of it). In his undated Latin gratulatory poem, Zechendorff claims to be working on a concordance of the Arabic Psalter he was studying with his students.⁶² In a preface to his *Specimen Alcorani*, published in 1638 (a decade after Wolfrum's death), there is no trace

albo amicorum ipsius insererem; & forte uni scholastico ex Psalterio-Savariano aliquid Arabici in suum album inscriberem; eo tandem eventum est benedictione ejus, qui secundum consilium suum nos ducit, ut Rector noster, Orientalium linguarum perquam studiosus, etiam inciperet, & simul in alumnis scholae nostrae desiderium illius Arabicae linguae accenderetur. Cumque Dissertationem & epistolam a 20. scholasticis hoc nomine ad me scriptam, ad te mitterem legendam, non tantum approbasti propositum meum, verum etiam Dissertationem ita legisti, ut obstetricantis munus non gravate in te susciperes in isto meo novo foetu, fideliter in quibusdam moneres, & ad evulgandam illam me instigares. Vides igitur Clariß. Smucci post DEUM tibi uni & solidi deberi, quod jam hic Arabicamur.'

60 Ibid., fol. H2^r.

مدحتي / اذا اخبر باسمك / في الناس وامجدك / حتى اكون حيا / يا كريم معلنا / لان القولك قد قلبي / علم لسان العرب

With the Latin version: 'Laudatio mea/ Age, annuciabo nomen tuum/ Inter homines et gloriabo Te./ Donec ero vivus ego./ O Domine venerande Doctor noster!/ Quia sermo tuus nunc cor meum/ Docuit linguam Arabum.'

61 V. Hetschel, *Splendor Doctorum Magnificus Das ist Heller Ehrenschein Getrewer Lehrer. In einer Christlichen Leich und Trostpredigt*, Leipzig, 1627, fol. H3^v.

62 Ibid., fol. H1^v. '[...] curta supellex/ Quandoquidem nobis librorum erat, atque Magistrum,/ Ut non destiterim, donec Psalteria Sacra/ Savariana, mihi dium, atque opus admirandum,/ Ære graviparta, atque in concordantia vocom,/ Cum nostri studij, studijque Phila-rabis olim/ Cuncta, labore meo, & cura collecta fideli,/ Multiplici fructu comportarem, atque locarem.'

of indebtedness to the late superintendent. Zechendorff maintains that he was self-taught and had been engaged in the study of the Qur'an – an arduous study due to lack of teachers and lexica – for the last twenty years, i.e. since 1618/19.⁶³ According to the same note it was in 1626 that he purchased his own codex of the Qur'an at great cost. There are otherwise very few indications of exactly when and why Zechendorff undertook his Arabic studies. Peißker, Zechendorff's eulogist (1662), tells us he had studied Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac in his twenties at the Latin school in Schneeberg.⁶⁴ Why and exactly when he began to learn Arabic must remain uncertain. A clue, however, is offered in a tantalizingly brief note in the introduction to his second Qur'anic sample *Unius atque alterius Suratae textus*, where Zechendorff notes that in 1626, having taught himself 'some Arabic' (*aliquot modo*) from books (*muti magistri*), he procured a copy of the Qur'an at great cost,⁶⁵ but this expensive acquisition⁶⁶ in 1626, as Wolfrum's short piece clearly demonstrates, must have been preceded by several years of some knowledge of the language. An obvious book for Zechendorff to have consulted would have been Thomas Erpenius' *Grammatica arabica* (1613) – a copy of this grammar with Zechendorff's annotations in fact survives in Zwickau.⁶⁷ Decades later, in a letter to Hottinger, Zechendorff claimed that he also used a manuscript volume of prayers in Arabic to teach himself the language.⁶⁸ His acquaintance with the Qur'an when he was nearing his fiftieth year, it was sometimes said by Zechendorff himself as well as by his eulogist, led him to translate the entire Qur'an into Latin and add his own refutation.⁶⁹ Roberto Tottoli has recently made the sensational discovery of Zechendorff's Qur'an in Kairo, consisting of the Arabic text, carefully copied out by Zechendorff with an interlinear Latin translation of the entire book.⁷⁰ Whatever the shortcomings of this translation, it presents

63 J. Zechendorff, *Specimen Suratarum, id est, Capitum aliquot ex Alcorani Systemate*, Zwickau, 1638, fols A2^r–A3^r.

64 Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. D3^r.

65 J. Zechendorff, *Unius atque alterius Suratae textus*, Zwickau, s.a., fol. A1^r.

66 Which regrettably I have not been able to trace.

67 RSBZ, MS shelf mark 23.10.1. The book has been annotated by two different hands. One is unmistakably Zechendorff's.

68 ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 575^r, 6 October 1651.

69 E.g. J. Zechendorff, *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, Zwickau, 1627, fol. A3^r. ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 575^r, letter from Zechendorff to Hottinger, 6 October 1651. Zechendorff claims he had added an interlinear Latin translation (throughout) his copy of the Qur'an. See also Peißker, *Dreyfache Ehren-Seule*, fol. A4^v.

70 R. Tottoli, 'The Latin Translation of the Qur'an by Johann Zechendorff (1580–1662) Discovered in Cairo Dār al-Kutub. A Preliminary Description', *Oriente Moderno* 95, 2015, pp. 5–31.

in itself a remarkable feat of scholarly enthusiasm and dedication. While this translation remained unpublished (and apparently unknown) until Tottoli's discovery, Zechendorff's intensive study of the Qur'an resulted in the publication in print of two short works – annotated editions and Latin translation of four short suras – which were to become his visiting card in the Republic of Letters. Before turning to these, an earlier work merits consideration.

In 1627, a year after acquiring his Qur'an manuscript, there appeared in print Zechendorff's first published work dealing with the Qur'an, and seemingly connected with Wolfrum's plea for Arabic studies in the service of Christian polemics – a work originally recited at a graduation ceremony at the Latin school on 13 August 1627 with the title *Fabulae Muhammedicae* (Mohammedan Fables). Seventeenth-century book titles are notoriously long, but in this case it is worth quoting in full: *Mohammedan fables or the Qur'an's trifles which are to be found and recalled in its entire system (which consists of 114 chapters) and are read, accepted, and believed to be the divine truth by the Turks, Moors, Persians, and Arabs as well as by other Oriental peoples, yet are decried, driven out, and rejected by pious Christians. Faithfully rendered from an Arabic manuscript, displayed to the public in verse, and recited by the headmaster of Zwickau's Latin school, Master Johann Zechendorff of Lößnitz, on the event of a graduation ceremony in the presence of the teachers, gentlemen of the cloth, the consuls, and the entire municipal senate as well as other distinguished gentlemen and most learned men on 13 August 1627.*⁷¹ The poetic rendering and commentary on Qur'anic 'fables' was not only, to the best of my knowledge, Zechendorff's first public utterance on the Qur'an, but it was delivered at a public event in the presence of his colleagues, pupils, and the local political and ecclesiastical dignitaries.⁷²

The ambivalence informing Zechendorff's attitude to the Qur'an is patent at the outset in his short introduction: it is likened to a work of Oriental tapestry,

71 *Fabulae Muhammedicae sive nugae Alcorani, quae in ejusdem systemate integro (quod 114. capitibus constat) reperiundae commemorantur, & tam a turcis, mauris, persis, arabibus, quam alijs orientalibus populis vt dia veritas leguntur, accipiuntur, creduntur, a christianis vero pijs pipulo differuntur, exploduntur, rejiciuntur ex manuscript arabico fideliter versae & carminice prostitutae, ac recitatae in promotionis scholasticae actu: dominis scholarichs, ecclesiae ministries, consulibus, totoque senatu, & alijs dd. Ac viris doctissimis praesentibus a M. Johan: Zechendorff Lesnicensi, scholae Cygnaeae rectore, 13. Augustim Anno 1627, Zwickau, 1627.*

72 A charming reminder of the immediate context, i.e. a graduation ceremony attended by local notables but also by dozens of talkative teenagers, is offered by Zechendorff's final remark before embarking on the first 'fable'. Ibid., fol. B2^v. 'Has ego dum refero strepera dictante Minerva/ Omnes nunc faveant, sint tranquillissima tecta:/ Garrula lingua suam non intermisceat odam.'

striking in its colourful splendour and the variegated material from which it is woven.⁷³ In less poetical terms, the book is to Zechendorff's mind an interwoven medley of truth and falsehoods, dazzling and yet lacking any intellectual acumen or forceful argument with which to jeopardize a Christian conscience.⁷⁴ A similar line of argument was used in 1543 to defend the revised publication of Robert of Ketton's twelfth-century Latin translation of the Qur'an.⁷⁵ The insult in claiming the Qur'an to be a collection of risible fables may have been intended, but it was at the same time a forceful riposte to those who argued that its publication would undermine the spiritual welfare of Christendom. In portraying the Qur'an as a collection of fables Zechendorff was following what had become a well-established line of argument,⁷⁶ although his admiration for the style of the Qur'an and his far-reaching concession of 'truths' in it far surpassed most of his sixteenth-century predecessors.

True to form, the work, written in Latin hexameters, is prefaced by an impassioned address to Muslims in Arabic and Latin:

O Turks and Arabs! If only you would separate that which is false from the book which you study [i.e. the Qur'an], if only you would separate the

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- 73 Ibid., fol. A2^v. 'Quod sunt perstromata Babylonica, sive ut vocant tapetes Turcici, varietate quipped colorum a Phrygionibus variegata & aucupicti: Illud etiam est ALCORANUS ARABICUS, sive Liber ille, ex quo Turcae verbum Dei, & suam Religionem se haurire sibi persuasum habent; per quem pie & honeste hic vivere gestiunt, & quo in tandem creduli se beari confidunt.'
- 74 Ibid., 'Sic modo vera & sana invenimus posita: modo falsa & mendacijs referta, nulloque sensus acumine aut argumentorum pondere, quod hominem Christianum vel leviter movere possit instructa: modo fabulosa atque absona veris sunt immista; modo de his, modo de illis confuse agens nomina tractat. [...] Illis omnibus hactenus in authentico, & autographo quodam Manuscripto Arabico cognitis a me eius gratia primum, ut linguam Arabicam aliquot modo (quum meo cortice natandum, viva Praeceptoris voce, destitute) familiarem mihi redderem.'
- 75 On Robert of Ketton's Qur'an translation see J. Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig, 1955, pp. 3–9 and T. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560*, Philadelphia, 2007, esp. pp. 110–21. On Bibliander's printing of Ketton's translation and the ensuing controversy see H. Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation. Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa*, Beirut, 1995, pp. 159–275.
- 76 E.g. Philipp Melanchthon's preface to Bibliander's Qur'an publication of 1453, *Praemonitio ad lectorem*, in *Philippi Melanthonis Opera quae supersunt omnia: Corpus Reformatorum*, eds K.G. Bretschneider (vols. 1–14) and H.E. Bindseil (vols. 15–28), Halle 1843–1860, vol. 5, pp. 11–13.

fables, which I have pointed out to you and have written it down for you in Latin, you shall live in righteousness and be united with us in faith.⁷⁷

There is no reason to doubt Zechendorff's piety. At the same time there is no evidence, of which I am aware, to suggest he had ever engaged in any missionary effort or had any real interest in doing so. Apart from the obvious fact that converting Muslims would have been an unlikely task in Zwickau in the 1620s and 30s, if this piece of metric rhetoric were composed with an eye to proselytising Muslims, even beyond war- and plague-ridden Saxony, Zechendorff would not have composed it in Latin hexameters. This is not to suggest that converting Muslims (mostly Ottoman captives) was of no interest in the seventeenth-century Holy Roman Empire, but that, to my mind, it did not play a role in Zechendorff's writing, clearly meant for a Christian audience.⁷⁸

The striking point in Zechendorff's argument, even if intended as an intellectual exercise rather than inter-religious communication, is that in order to be Christians Muslims had to excise the falsehoods in the Qur'an – i.e. that an 'emended' version would contain enough valid religious instruction to unite Muslims in faith with the orthodox (i.e. Lutheran) Christians of Zwickau.

The work itself combines Zechendorff's opinions on portions of the Qur'an with the school master's penchant for didactic Neo-Latin poetry.⁷⁹ Despite the harsh tone of the opening lines, they are not without a certain playfulness:

77 Ibid., fol. A4^v. 'Ad Turcas et Arabas de Alcorano. O Vos Turcae! & o Arabes./ Quem legitis librum/ Si ex eo sejungeretis falsum,/ Si ex eo separaretis fabulosum,/ Quod fabulosum posui id vobis/ Et latine conscripsi id vobis: Tunc crederetis in rectitudine/ Et eßetis nobiscum in fide.' The Arabic version follows on fol. B1^r.

الي اترك وعرب من القرآن / يا انتم اترك ويا عرب / الذي تدرسونه الكتاب / ان منه تفقدعون باطلا / ان منه تفقدون محالا / الذي محال جعلتهم / و بالرومية كتبهم / ثم تؤمينون باستقام / وتكون معنا في امانة

78 For genuine efforts to convert Ottoman captives in the Holy Roman Empire see M. Friedrich, "Türken" im Alten Reich. Anmerkungen zur Präsenz und zu den Lebensumständen von "Heiden" und "Ungläubigen" im Mitteleuropa', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 294, 2012, pp. 329–60 and A. Schunka, "Türken taufen in Thüringen. Muslime und lutherische Geistlichkeit im Erfurt des 17. Jahrhunderts", *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde von Erfurt*, 73, 2012, pp. 160–84.

79 To modern readers, for whom Neo-Latin poetry seems a pointless exercise in a dead language, this may appear a peculiar choice of medium. It should be noted that drills in Latin verse composition formed a staple of early modern schoolboys' routine. If Zechendorff's passion for Oriental languages was remarkable, his use of Latin verse was typical of its day.

Frivola fert animus deliramenta Prophetarum

*Dicere MVHAMMEDIS [...]*⁸⁰

(‘My mind is inclined to relate Muhammad’s frivolous absurdities’).

This may be a play on the opening lines of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, with which his pupils and readers would have been well acquainted.⁸¹ While the *Fabulae* opens with a run-of-the-mill anti-Muslim invective (*O nimium stultus populus*) castigating Muslims for departing (!) from Christian doctrine,⁸² thus conforming with traditional perceptions of Islam as an outgrowth of Christian heresy rather than a completely different religion,⁸³ and wondering at the credulity of Muslims who believe such ‘trifles’ (*nugamenta*).⁸⁴ The Qur’an itself is defined as a many-threaded work skilfully composed in lush poetry and its religious claims the product of a malign would-be prophet.⁸⁵ All this is a standard approach to the subject. The work’s actual content points in a more original direction. There follow ten Qur’anic *fabulae*, i.e. Qur’anic versions of biblical narratives, which Zechendorff first paraphrases with references to the Qur’anic verses printed in the margins, followed by his comments. The important point here is that, despite minor discrepancies, none of these Qur’anic accounts would have struck Zechendorff’s audience in the auditorium of the Latin school as particularly false or pernicious. If anything, in their verse paraphrase they do more to stress common ground than to excoriate Muhammad’s ‘trifles’. In his refutation Zechendorff points out some obvious differences between

80 *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, fol. B1^r.

81 Ov. *Met.* i, 1–2. ‘In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora.’

82 *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, fol. B1^r. ‘O nimium stultus populus! Qui semper adhaeret / Falsidico, gentes cui reduxisse voluptas: / Quique negat Christum crucifixum, quique recedit / A vera Christi doctrina, quando fatetur / Atque colit, blanda multum mendacia lingua.’ (my underline)

83 On the Medieval development of this view see J.V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in medieval European Imagination*, New York, 2002, pp. 105–69. A brief consideration of this is outlined in my ‘The Academic Study of Arabic in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Protestant Germany: a Preliminary Sketch’, *History of Universities*, xxviii, 2, 2015, pp. 93–135 (96–7).

84 *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, fol. B1^{r-v}. One of the rare occurrences of *nugamenta* in classical Latin, incidentally, is to be found in Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*, i.25: ‘Et a quo’ inquit ‘istorum nugamenta haec comparasti?’ – arguably enhancing the suggestion of playfulness in Zechendorff’s hexameter ‘address to Muslims’.

85 Ibid., fol. B1^v. ‘ALCORANUS: opus polymitum rite manuque / Et calamo scite descriptum carmine largo, / Religionis opus sacrum quod continet in se / Suppositi Vatis scelerata fraude maligni.’

biblical and Qur'anic narratives.⁸⁶ Without wishing to trivialise these differences, they are outshone by the similarities set out eloquently in Zechendorff's verse. Thus the third *fabula*⁸⁷ pivots on the Qur'anic verse 2.257: 'God is the Patron of the faithful. He leads them from darkness to the light. As for the unbelievers, their patrons are false gods, who lead them from light to darkness. They are the heirs of the Fire and shall abide in it for ever.' Few of those gathered in the auditorium of the Latin school in August 1627 would have found this offensive. This is followed by the Qur'anic account of the story of Cain and Abel. '[Cain's] soul prompted him to slay his brother; he slew him, and thus became one of the lost. Then God sent down a raven, which clawed the earth to show him how to bury the naked corpse of his brother.' "Alas!" he cried. "Have I not strength enough to do as this raven has done and to bury my brother's naked corpse?" And he repented.' (5.31). Zechendorff's protest at Muhammad's adding the raven, unattested in the Old Testament,⁸⁸ cannot alter the obvious fact that the Qur'anic rendering of this episode has much in common with the way seventeenth-century Lutherans would have understood this biblical story. The same applies to the other *fabulae* paraphrased and commented on in this work. This fascination with parallels and affinities between the Qur'an and the Bible informed a considerable part of Zechendorff's interest in the Qur'an. We have already encountered his unpublished 'Qur'anic paraphrase' of the Penitential Psalms, probably written more or less at the same time. Offering Qur'anic paraphrases of various psalms seems to have been something of a pious habit with Zechendorff, rather than a onetime whim. Thus we find him in October 1654 consoling the Marburg clergyman Georg Teucher, whose wife Maria (Zechendorff's relative) had recently died in childbirth.⁸⁹ Concluding his elegiac couplets of consolation, Zechendorff ends with a 'Qur'anic para-

86 E.g. The different accounts of Satan's fall – unlike the Qur'anic account in sura xviii, Christian doctrine does not hold that Satan's digression was his refusal to bow before man. *Fabulae*, fol. B3^v.

87 Ibid., fols B4^r–Cr^r.

88 *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, fol. C2^r: 'O Auditores! quid vult sibi fabula mendax/ Corvi? quam falsam veris immiscuit illis.'

89 Zechendorff's condolences in Latin verse were printed together with the (German) funeral sermon and several other Latin funerary addresses and poems in *Frommer Kinderzeugender Weiber Güldenens Klainod der Seligkeit ... Bey Christlicher Leichenbestattung der Weyland Erbaren und Tugendreichen Frauen Marien / Des Ehrwürdigen / Achtbaren und Wohlgelarten Herrn M. Georgii Teuchers / Wohlverordneten Pastoris und treufleissigen Seelsorgers zu Marbach ... Welche den 1. Octobr. 1654. nach vielen außgestandenen Geburtschmertzen selig verschieden / und den 12. ejusdem Christlich daselbst zur Erden bestattet worden ...*, Freiburg, 1654, fols H1^v–H2^r.

phrase' of Ps. 40. 17 'But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.' Quoting in Arabic (in Hebrew transliteration) and in Latin translation what are purported to be corresponding snippets from suras 59, 33, and 25, which, strung together, read 'My misery lies heavily upon me, but my Lord prepares a feast in my honour. In him I have a guide. He suffices me as helper'.⁹⁰ 'Anti-Mohammedan' polemics notwithstanding, his interest in the Qur'an was deeply rooted in his Lutheran piety.

Zechendorff's Qur'an paraphrases have an affinity with his *Fabulae Muhammedicae* and the *Specimen suratarum* (1638) to which we now turn. All three are concerned with parallels and the existence of (Christian) truths in the Qur'an – a line of thought which had several variations in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The difference between Zechendorff and several other scholars identifying Christian utterances in the Qur'an is that he evinces no interest in any historical explanation. While certain scholars identified Christian truths in the Qur'an as being the result of Muhammad's adoption of authentic (Christian) oral traditions, some of which had been left out of the New Testament,⁹¹ and others saw religious (but no longer Christian) truths in the Qur'an as testimonies of Muhammad's espousal of aspects of a philosophical religion disguised as revelation,⁹² Zechendorff's extensive demonstration of parallels is decidedly a-historical. A further example of such a reading (and excerpting) from the Qur'an is offered by his undated *Eclogae Mohammedicae*, a slim eight-page work printed in Zwickau, in which several Qur'anic quotations expressing general monotheistic sentiments, are paralleled with biblical, patristic, and pagan quotations.⁹³ It is this agenda that, to my understanding, also informs the *Specimen suratarum* of 1638.⁹⁴

90 'Miseria mea gravis mihi! Sed parat escam honorem Dominus meus, mihi in eo director, sufficit ipse mihi auxiliator. באסי שדידן לי אלא אעתר אלרוק אלכרים רבי לי בה האדיאן. כפי הן לי נציראן' Zechendorff ends his condolences with a similar exercise on Ps. 4:17 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' excerpting verses from suras 7, 18, and 12.

91 E.g. J.C. Schwartz, *Specimen Philosophiae Orientalis Antiquissimae Ex Corano*, Cobourg, 1719.

92 E.g. J.D. Michaelis, *Nova versio partis surae ii. Corani, cum illustrionibus subiectis*, Göttingen, 1754, fol. 2^r.

93 *Eclogae Mohammedicae sive scita alcoranico-mohammedica arabica*, Zwickau, s.a., C.F. von Schnurrer in his *Bibliotheca arabica*, Halle, 1811, p. 406, dates the work to 1646 without offering any reason for this dating.

94 As with other of his works, the title-page has no date. Since the translations are prefaced by a letter of late 1637 congratulating Zechendorff on the immanent publication of the *Specimen* 1638 is usually taken as its most likely year of publication.

Although the devotional aspects of his Oriental studies were considerable, Zechendorff clearly saw himself as a member of the Republic of Letters. Even works of a highly devotional nature were studded with references to Scaliger's correspondence and to the works of Arabists like Thomas Erpenius. His 'Qur'anic paraphrases' and the published *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, though indispensable for an understanding of his motivation as an Arabist, do not account for his respectable standing within the learned community of his day. He owed the fact that he was still quoted by scholars around 1700 to his Arabic edition and interlinear translation of several Qur'anic chapters which he published.⁹⁵ In 1638, in the midst of the Thirty Years War, Zechendorff published his *Specimen suratarum*, the Arabic text and interlinear translation of suras 61 and 78, using coarse Arabic types carved for him by one of his pupils.⁹⁶ The slim work is prefaced by a dedication to the professor of rhetoric at Danzig's academic gymnasium Johann Mochinger (1603–1652)⁹⁷ and ends with several letters by notable scholars. These include a letter by the Leiden Orientalist Louis de Dieu (1590–1642) to the poet and professor of moral philosophy at Wittenberg, Michael Schneider, in which he sang the praises of Zechendorff and his translation of several Qur'anic chapters which had been circulating. As is made clear from his letter, Zechendorff's reputation in Leiden owed much

95 See e.g. J.M. Lange, *Dissertatio Historico-Philologico-Theologica de Speciminibus, Conatibus variis atque novissimis Successibus Doctorum quorundam virorum in edendo Alcorano Arabico*, Altdorf, 1704, p. 11.

96 Zechendorff, *Specimen Suratarum, id est, Capitum aliquot ex Alcorani Systemate*, Zwickau, 1638. Zechendorff, who repeatedly apologized for the coarseness of these home-made Arabic types, makes several references to them in his correspondence, saying that they were cut for him by an (unnamed) young pupil. See e.g. ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 563^r, his letter to Hottinger (18 August, 1650), and MS 52, fol. 575^r, a letter to Hottinger, 6 October, 1651: 'Proinde specimina ista / rudi, & indigesto caractere / per scholarem quendam puerum ita fieri permisi, uti si qui e[sse] doctis viderent; illam censendo vel approba[re]nt, vel rejicerent.'

97 See Bertling's entry in *ADB*, s.v. Mochinger's Orientalist interests and achievements are attested by an undated letter he wrote to Zechendorff and which the latter forwarded to Johann Ernst Gerhard (FBG, Chart. B 451, fol. 133^r) as well as by the Syrian scholar Nicolaus Petri in his letter of August 1647 to Jacob Golius following a visit to Mochinger in Danzig on his way back to Aleppo. See J. Schmidt, 'An Ostrich Egg for Golius, the John Rylands Library MS Persian 913 and the History of Early Modern Contacts between the Dutch Republic and the Islamic World' in id., *The Joys of Philology. Studies in Ottoman Literature, History, and Orientalism (1500–1923)*, vol. 2, Istanbul, 2002, pp. 9–74 (47). Petri notes Mochinger's proficiency in Turkish as well as Arabic. I am grateful to Gerald Toomer for drawing my attention to this work.

to the Silesian physician and Orientalist Johann Elichmann, to whom we shall soon return.⁹⁸

In the dedication to Mochinger Zechendorff claims that this slim volume was the fruit of some twenty years of studying the Qur'an, aiming, ultimately, at an Arabic-Latin edition of the entire book accompanied by a refutation.⁹⁹ As with the *Fabulae Muhammedicae*, refutation stands ostensibly at the heart of this enterprise, and here too Zechendorff's actual work diverges from its avowed aim. Each page of the Arabic text of the two short suras reproduced here is faced by a page where the truth value of each verse is determined (*falsa/recta*). In contrast to the polemical introduction, a surprising number of verses in these suras are deemed true and those refuted 'get off' in most cases with a relatively slight correction. This has much to do with Zechendorff's choice of suras. Apart from their convenient brevity, both sura 61 (*The Battle Array*) and sura 78 (*The Tidings*) are fairly innocuous from a Christian point of view. Though in his introduction Zechendorff does not spare Muhammad traditional Christian invectives,¹⁰⁰ he points out the positive, albeit non-Christian, light in which Jesus is portrayed in the Qur'an.¹⁰¹

Thus, for example, the opening verse of sura 61 'All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise One' meets with Zechendorff's approval and he lists several Old Testaments equivalents – found, not surprisingly, mostly in the Psalms.¹⁰² The next verse 'Believers, why do you profess what you never do? It is most odious in God's sight that you should say one thing and do another' likewise elicits approval and biblical parallels, this time from the New Testament. If these two verses express a general monotheistic sentiment, verse 61.6 proves more interesting for a Christian commentator: 'And of Jesus son of Mary, who said to the Israelites 'I am sent forth to you from God to confirm the Torah already revealed, and to give news of an apostle that will come after me whose name is Aḥmed [i.e. Muhammad].' Yet when he brought them express signs they said 'This is plain sorcery.' Not surprisingly, Zechendorff rejects the Qur'anic claims that Muhammad's advent as prophet was foretold by Jesus of Nazareth, or that Muhammad was at all alluded to in Scripture. He rejects the notion that the founder of Islam had performed any miracles, though he notes with approval as historically correct the claim that Muhammad's 'fellow Saracens' initially took Muhammad to be

98 *Specimen Suratarum*, fols E2^v–E3^r. The letter is dated 16 March 1637.

99 *Ibid.*, fol. A2^r.

100 *Ibid.*, fol. B3^r.

101 *Ibid.*, fol. B2^r.

102 *Ibid.*, fol. A4^r: 'DEUM ab omnibus in mundo invocari. Ψ 150.5. Ψ 96.11. Ψ. 148. 1. Esa. 49.13.'

an impostor – taking ‘When he brought them conspicuous signs’ as a reference to Muhammad rather than Jesus.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, the reproach following this verse ‘And who is more wicked than the man who invents a falsehood about God when called upon to submit to Him? God does not guide the wrongdoers’ meets with Zechendorff’s approval. God is indeed not the author (*causa*) of evil in sinners – with corroborating references to the Psalms and Sirach.¹⁰⁴

On occasion Zechendorff’s critique can assume a more pedantic tone. Thus in commenting on sura 78.2 ‘Did we not spread the earth like a bed, and raise the mountains like supporting poles?’ he comments ‘It is not Muhammad who created with the Trinity the heavens etc. but only God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.’ It must have been clear to him that the first person plural in the Qur’an referred to God, but since he scornfully rejected Muslim claims for the Qur’an’s divine authorship, Zechendorff rather pedantically refers the first person plural to Muhammad, who, he must have realised, was not laying claim to Creation. However, despite such instances, and despite some mistranslations, what is important in the present context is the way Zechendorff went about commenting on the Qur’an in this short work, emphasising what he saw as the truth value of each verse, and that a surprising number of verses – the overwhelming majority – were deemed by him to be correct.

At first glance Zechendorff’s second specimen of Qur’anic texts, the *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*,¹⁰⁵ looks much like the *Specimen Suratarum*, using the same home-made Arabic types for the text of two short suras, 101 (The Disaster) and 103 (The Declining Day). It is, however, of a different nature altogether. As with most of Zechendorff’s works, it is undated. Since the *Specimen* can be convincingly dated to around 1638, this is taken by some library catalogues to be the likely date for the *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*. Other dates are 1646 and even the unlikely late 1660 have been suggested.¹⁰⁶ The work was printed by Melchior Göpner, the Zwickau printer with whom

103 Ibid., fol. B2^r. ‘Falsa: 1. Christum Mohamadem Prophetam aut Apostolum esee, praedixisse. 2. Ejus Nomen in Sacra scriptura expressisse. 3. Ipsum cum miraculis venisse. ibid. Homines & sui Sarraceni Muhamedem esse praestigiatores credidisse.’

104 Ibid., fol. B3^r. ‘DEUM non causam mali in peccatoribus Ψ. 5.4. [For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.] Syr. 15.21 [v. 20 in KJV: He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin.]’

105 *Suratae unius atque alterius textus ejusque explicationem ex commentario quodam arabe dogmata Alcorani, / verba maxima, minimaque explicante literatae genti ad felicius refutandum atque solidius dijudicandum, de versione tam Alcorani, quam commentatoris Muhammedanae religionis*, Zwickau, s.a.

106 J.A.G. Weigel, *Apparatus literarius sive index librorum lectissimorum*, vol. iv, Leipzig, 1817, p. 23. J.F. Hirt, however, in his *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek*, 8, 1776, pp. 290–1.

Zechendorff often collaborated.¹⁰⁷ Determining the date of this work is possible and, more importantly, significant, due to the nature of Zechendorff's undertaking. Unlike the *Specimen Suratarum*, it is not a theological evaluation but the fruit of the important realisation that the Qur'an could not be sufficiently understood without recourse to Muslim commentaries (*Tafsir*). In the introduction to the short work Zechendorff states that he had already circulated among fellow-scholars an earlier attempt at translating a small portion of the Qur'an and commenting on the truth and falsity of its assertions – clearly a reference to the *Specimen Suratarum*. After the latter's favourable reception the present work offers the text of two suras and excerpts from a Muslim commentary in Arabic and Latin translation.¹⁰⁸ He had become aware of the fact, Zechendorff tells his readers, that the Qur'an could not be properly understood without recourse to its Muslim commentators of which there was a plethora among Muslims, but which were practically unknown to European scholars.¹⁰⁹ Numerous unread copies of Muslim commentaries, he surmises, must be gathering dust in the libraries of European potentates.¹¹⁰ Animated by this newly acquired realisation he had attempted to obtain for himself a copy of a Muslim Qur'an commentary. 'And so six or seven weeks ago, by God's singular grace and by the favour and support of the best of friends, a certain *turjeman*, a commentator, reached me from distant shores, who treats the Qur'anic text as the Masoretes do the Torah among the Jews, a commentator with whom I was not yet acquainted, the *tafsir qadi pezavi* (The Qur'an-commentary of the Qadi Pezavi).¹¹¹ This is either a scribal error or Zechendorff's misreading. The commentary his friends had procured for him was in fact *The Lights of Revelation and Secrets of Interpretation* by the thirteenth-century Persian scholar (and

argued, unconvincingly to my mind, that the work must have been one of Zechendorff's earliest publications in Arabic.

107 Since Göpner arrived in Zwickau in 1630 and died in 1669 (See Herzog, *Chronik der Kreisstadt Zwickau*, pp. 416, 505) dating the *Suratae unius atque alterius textus* anywhere between 1630 and Zechendorff's death in 1662 is technically possible.

108 *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*, fols A1^{r-v}.

109 On this point see N. Malcolm, 'The Study of Islam in Early Modern Europe: Obstacles and Missed Opportunities' in *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China*, eds P. Miller and F. Louis, Ann Arbor, 2012, pp. 265–88.

110 *Ibid.*, fols A2^{r-v}.

111 *Ibid.*, 'Proinde ante sex-septem Hebdomadas, singulari DEI indultu a longinquis oris, ex Amicorum optimorum favore, & promotione perlatus quidam ترجمان (qui hactenus Alcorani undiquaque stabilit uti Masorethae apud Judaeos Legem, velut legentes experientur) Commentator ad me, quemque Ego inter supra dictos nondum offendo nempe تفسیر قاضی پضاوی.'

judge) Nāṣir al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar al-Bayḍāwī. In Latin transliteration Bayḍāwī and Pezavi look nothing alike, but in Arabic/Persian a confusion of the two is not inconceivable: بياوي (Bayḍāwī) بياوي (Pezavi).¹¹² This use of Bayḍāwī also offers us an indication of the date of the work’s composition: on 18 October 1646 Zechendorff wrote a letter to Gerhard accompanying a short work in Arabic which he had published using his coarse Arabic types (*rudes ac infomes typi domestici*), making a direct reference to al-Bayḍāwī’s commentary on a minor point.¹¹³ This is followed by a letter of 12 December 1646 in which Zechendorff informed Gerhard of an Arabic Qur’an commentary he had most recently (*nuperrime*) come upon, and of his wish to translate it into Latin in its entirety and his hope of sending Gerhard and other scholars a sample of this work as soon as possible. Six months later, on 23 June 1647 he sent Gerhard samples (*quaedam exemplaria*) of the commentary.¹¹⁴ In a letter to Hottinger of 6 October 1651 Zechendorff claimed (possibly getting his dates wrong) that he had not acquired his copy of al-Bayḍāwī until 1649¹¹⁵ – this is clearly inaccurate, but strengthens the argument for an acquaintance with al-Bayḍāwī in the late 1640s and subsequently for a late date of composition of the *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*. Admittedly this is no conclusive proof that the work was printed in 1647, but it seems most likely to be the case. If Zechendorff was referring in his last two letters to Gerhard to a different Muslim commentary, it has disappeared without leaving a trace. In the same letter of October 1646 Zechendorff, clearly excited by the opportunities presented by this new acquisition, also stresses the great difficulty involved in using an Arabic codex which lacked both vocalisation and in many cases even the diacritical points – something which may explain his mistaking al-Bayḍāwī for Pezavi.¹¹⁶ In fact, as early

112 al-Bayḍāwī’s extensive Qur’an commentary is in Arabic rather than Persian. It was published in modern times by H.L. Fleischer, *Beidhawī Commentarius in Coranum*, vol. 2, Leipzig, 1846/8. al-Bayḍāwī’s commentary to sura 101 discussed here is to be found in vol. 2, p. 414. On al-Bayḍāwī see P. Riddell, ‘Baydawi’, in *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*, ed. O. Leaman, New York, 2006, pp. 116–18 as well as J. Robson, ‘Al-Baydawi’, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, and J. Schacht, new edn, vol. 1, Leiden, 1986, p. 1129, and T. Nöldeke (who did not think much of al-Bayḍāwī) in his *Geschichte des Qorāns*, 2nd edn., Leipzig, 1909, ii. p. 176, iii. p. 242.

113 FBG, Chart. 138, fol. 206^{r-v}.

114 FBG, Chart A 138, fol. 213^r.

115 ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 575^r.

116 FBG, Chart. A 138, fol. 208^r. ‘Commentarius quidam in Alcoranum integrum, uti Ego posideo in Arabia scriptum nuperrime ad manus meas venit, liber egregius, sed sine punctis vocalibus, et[iam] saepe Diacriticis. Illum intepretari ad verbum, ut Alcorano ipsi feci, si Doctorum & tua imprimis ope, & censura uti-frui liceret. Proxima occasione, si DEO ita

as 1638 Zechendorff remarked in the preface to the *Specimen* that he had obtained a Persian and a Turkish Qur'an commentary, but was not versed enough in these languages to use them.¹¹⁷ Three years later, in August 1650, he embarked on a correspondence with the renowned Zurich Orientalist Johann Heinrich Hottinger, their detailed exchange having been triggered by Hottinger's use of al-Bayḍāwī (to Zechendorff's delight) in his *Thesaurus philologicus* (1649).¹¹⁸ The Zwickau schoolmaster, already in his seventy-first year, tells Hottinger that he had translated al-Bayḍāwī (to whom he now refers by his proper name) the previous year (1649) and sends him a copy, apologizing for the poor quality of the Arabic types (*rudis & informis*) made for him by one of his pupils.¹¹⁹ If this is the long promised translation (and Arabic edition) of the entire al-Bayḍāwī commentary, it has disappeared without trace. It is more likely that he sent Hottinger al-Bayḍāwī's commentary to the short suras 101 and 103 accompanied by his Latin translation. In any case, by the time Zechendorff corresponded with Hottinger he had despaired of further work with the commentary of al-Bayḍāwī, and, driven by disappointment at his failure to find a patron willing to invest in proper Arabic types, together with harsh economic necessity, he agreed to sell his copy of al-Bayḍāwī to the future mayor of Zurich, Johann Heinrich Escher, then in Leipzig.¹²⁰

In the introduction to the *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*, we are told that, having consulted Baydawi's commentary for several days, because of the difficulty of the work, aggravated by lack of vocalisation, Zechendorff prayed to the Holy Ghost to enable him to translate two suras into Latin. Though the Holy Ghost guided his quill he is far from confident and humbly submits his specimen to the judgment of those of greater expertise.¹²¹

visum fuerit, quid speciminis ex illo mittam, ut T.^a Praest. & alij docti iudicium suum de mea interpretatione tali, si arriserit, interponant: & an liber dignus tali labore, & luce.'

117 *Specimen*, A2^v. It will be noted that by 1646 he felt confident enough to write a Persian grammar extant now in RSBZ, MS Sign. 18.5.18, the introduction to which he sent to Gerhard on 11 June 1646 (hence my dating), FBG, Chart. A 138, fol. 204^r. The Persian Qur'an commentary Zechendorff is referring to is possibly identical with RSBZ, MS 18.4.52b presented to him by the Leipzig (and later Helmstedt) Hebraist Johann Baldovius, and which does not seem to have been used by Zechendorff.

118 On Hottinger's *Tesaurus philologicus* in its pedagogical and theological context see J. Loop, *Johann Heinrich Hottinger: Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 2013, pp. 68–74.

119 ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 563^{r-v}.

120 See Loop, *Hottinger*, p. 143.

121 *Suratae unius atque alterius textus*., fol. A3^r.

Both suras offered here (101, 103) are very short. That this slim volume is not a polished final product but an experimental output submitted to his colleagues' judgment makes it all the more interesting and offers us an instructive glimpse into this Orientalist's workshop. Both suras elaborate a common theme, the Day of Judgment. sura 101 runs thus in N.J. Dawood's translation:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! The Disaster [*al-qāri'a*]! (1) What is [*mā*] the Disaster? (2) Would that you knew what the Disaster is! (3) On that day men shall become like scattered moths (4) and mountains like tufts of carded wool. (5) Then he whose good deeds weigh heavy in the scales (6) shall dwell in bliss; (7) but he whose deeds are light, (8) the Abyss shall be his home. (9) Would that you knew what this is like! (10) It is a scorching fire. (11)

The first thing to catch one's attention is the fact that Zechendorff misunderstood the basic term at the heart of this sura: *al-qāri'a* (the disaster)¹²² he translates it as 'the opponents' (*contradicentes*). This translation also pivots on Zechendorff's understanding of the syntactically pivotal adverb *mā* which can mean both 'what' as would seem to be the case here, as well as a negation of verbs in the past tense. Zechendorff chooses here the latter resulting in: 'The opponents (*contradicentes*). Not opponents (or non-opposing) (*Non cotradicentes*). And since I have made it known to you, what the opponents are (*Et quando notum feci tibi quid contradicentes*).' That this is a nonsensical mistranslation is clear. The instructive point is how Zechendorff reached this misunderstanding. This verse is followed by a quote from al-Bayḍāwī's commentary: 'An explanation of this verse precedes it in al-Hāqqah.¹²³ *Al-Hāqqah*, as Zechendorff points out correctly, is the title of sura 69, which opens with an almost identical verse 'The Catastrophe (*al-hāqqah*):¹²⁴ and what is the Catastrophe? Would that you knew what the Catastrophe is! The Zwickau schoolmaster, who, as we have already seen, was fond of juxtaposing diverse Qur'anic verses (both genuine and fabricated) to express a pious sentiment, is here following al-Bayḍāwī's lead and attempting, albeit unsuccessfully, to

122 Literally 'that which pounds/strikes' is one of the Qur'anic designations for the Day of Judgement.

123 B4^v. سبق بيانه في الحاقه. Praecessit Explicatio ejus in Alchqveti.'

124 The alternating *hāqqah/ qāri'a* is the only difference between the two opening verses – hence the distinction in Dawood's translation between catastrophe and disaster.

understand sura 101 in the light of sura 69.¹²⁵ What trips him up is his mis-translation of *hāqqah*. Zechendorff often complained of the great difficulty of working on Arabic without a proper dictionary¹²⁶ – Jacob Golius' Arabic-Latin Lexicon appeared only in 1653, and whether Zechendorff could afford it is not at all clear. Zechendorff confused *hāqqah* (catastrophe) with the almost identical *hāqq* (truth)¹²⁷ and misses the point of al-Bayḍāwī's reference. Sura 69, like 101, deals with the Day of Judgment, and dwells on the divine retribution visited upon those who denied its existence (Thamūd and 'Ād) and others who disobeyed God (among them Pharaoh). It could be that al-Bayḍāwī's observation on the similarity between the two suras led Zechendorff to mistake disobedience/opposition to God as the subject of sura 101 and its pivotal term *al-qārī'a* (the disaster) as opponents. In other words, Zechendorff's approach and method, I would argue, are more significant in the present context than the error, which subverted his understanding of this passage. From assessing the Christian truth value of Qur'anic verses, he had moved, about a decade later, to attentively following a Muslim commentator's minute references on how to understand basic terms in the Qur'an – even if assuming that the two approaches to the Qur'an co-existed seems to me safer than to assume that the latter replaced the former. Zechendorff could still be fascinated by Qur'anic-Biblical parallels, while pursuing an interest in Muslim commentaries as aids in reading an extremely difficult book. Translating passages from the Qur'an without accessible dictionaries or a sufficiently broad acquaintance with the language was a Herculean undertaking, and it comes as no surprise that Zechendorff made several, at times egregious, mistakes. Pioneering enterprises are bound to be rough and their products are not meant for the faint-hearted.

While it is these two slim publication of 'Qur'anic snippets' which gained Zechendorff a certain standing in the Republic of Letters and, to a very modest extent, in modern scholarship, in the present context it is above all his long

125 A reading of Qur'anic verses in the light of others is also manifest in Zechendorff's own note on 101.6 with a reference to sura 7.7 'On that day all shall be weighed with justice. Those whose good deeds weigh in the scales shall triumph, but those whose deeds are light shall lose their souls, because they have denied our revelations.'

126 E.g. ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 575^r, letter to Hottinger, 6 October 1651: 'Beidavi n. ante biennium demum tandem videre contigit / nec Lexicon nullum, præter quod mihi conscripseram, e Raphelangio, & alijs editis scriptis πωτιχῶ modo, & facie. Quo adjutus pro virib[us] meis Alcoranum, multas itidem Arabicas precesiones, quarum M.S. libellorum aliquot nactus, discipulus Ego ita verti.' See also ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 574^r, letter to Hottinger, 24 April 1652.

127 Even if Zechendorff himself had doubts about this translation: Ibid., 'Titulus est Suratae 69. Ibi est horum verborum explication, qvam aduxissem si minorem literarum typi. Vox autem significat, ni fallor, Veritatem.' (my underline).

tenure as headmaster in Zwickau from 1617 to 1662 which is of particular interest, and of which, regrettably, the extant sources offer only occasional evidence. As we have seen, paraphrases of the Penitential Psalms and a playful address in Latin hexameters on 'Qur'anic fables' were an occasional part of the pedagogical and intellectual context in which instruction in Oriental languages and Arabic in particular were embedded in Zwickau. These do not, however, tell us much about the actual teaching practices. Zechendorff's scholarly output, short publications and letters addressed to fellow scholars make it clear that, as from the mid 1620s, Arabic had become his main scholarly concern. How was Arabic taught in Zwickau? What texts were used and how? And how successful were Zechendorff's Arabic lessons? Regrettably, the honest answer to these questions is an admission of almost complete ignorance. In none of his extant letters, of which I am aware, does he offer us a glimpse into his classroom activity; hardly a coincidence since his correspondence with fellow scholars was devoted to 'higher' concerns – new discoveries rather than the practice of teaching, nor have I been able to find any accounts by students describing their Arabic studies in Zwickau. To add to the gloom of uncertainty is a piece of bad news: with the possible exception of private instruction, Arabic studies seem to have disappeared from the Zwickau syllabus after Zechendorff's time. A schedule of lessons of 1676, 14 years after Zechendorff's death, compiled by Christian Friedrich Leitner, deputy headmaster under Zechendorff's successor Christian Daum, existing in an uncatalogued manuscript in Zwickau's Ratsschulbibliothek, has no sign of Arabic or any other Oriental language.¹²⁸ Some solace is to be found in circumstantial evidence. The Latin school library in Zwickau holds several copies of Erpenius' *Grammatica Arabica* (1613), one of them bearing several marginalia in Zechendorff's handwriting.¹²⁹ It is more than likely that he would have used this book in both learning and teaching Arabic. Another indirect testimony is offered by Zechendorff's obvious desire to find printed Arabic texts to read with his pupils. One such instance is offered by a florid letter in Arabic which he received from the above-mentioned Johann Elichmann. Studying medicine and Oriental languages in Leiden, where he evinced a particular interest in the uses of Arabic in the study of medicine,

128 RSBZ, (no shelf-mark) *SYLLABUS LECTIONUM a Clmo Dno ConRectore CHRIST. FRID. LEITNERO in Schola Cygnea Jussu & Auctoritate Dnn Inspectorum Rectorisque*, 14 February 1674. This and other more elaborate uncatalogued Zwickau syllabi (which I was not able to find) are reproduced in R. Beck, 'Ein Stundenplan für die Zwickauer Gelehrtenschule von 1676', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für deutsche Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte*, 1 (1), 1891, pp. 238–42.

129 RSBZ, MS 23.10.1.

Elichmann became a successful practising physician, with such scholars as Daniel Heinsius and Claude Saumaise among his patients. Apart for his interest in Persian and its affinities with German and Greek, he worked on the Arabic version of the *Tabula Cebetis*, which he believed to be of great value in reconstructing portions of the extant Greek text.¹³⁰ In the aforesaid letter by Louis de Dieu, accompanying Zechendorff's *Specimen Suratarum*, De Dieu refers to Elichmann as a distinguished doctor and experienced *chymicus*, as well as an outstanding expert on Arabic and Persian.¹³¹ This brilliant career came to an abrupt end with Elichmann's death in 1639 at the age of thirty-nine.¹³² In 1631 Elichmann wrote a florid letter in Arabic to Zechendorff celebrating the uses of Arabic in medicine. They do not seem to have been acquainted prior to this, but Zechendorff's reputation as a champion of Arabic studies seems to have motivated the letter, in which Elichmann, who had started learning Arabic in the previous year, could exhibit his linguistic prowess. In 1636 Zechendorff had it printed with a parallel Latin translation and the Arabic in a Hebrew transliteration¹³³ with the express intention of using it in Arabic classes. A more conventional choice of text was Zechendorff's re-issue of Erpenius' Arabic edition of the Lord's Prayer in his Arabic grammar (1613), *Analysis orationis dominicae in lingua Arabica*, dedicated to Johann Ernst Gerhard (undated, c. 1647–1650).¹³⁴

130 His edition of the *Tabula Cebetis* was published posthumously in 1639 with a preface by Claude Saumaise. On Elichmann in the context of the Scythian hypothesis see T. Van Hal, 'On "the Scythian Theory". Reconstructing the Outlines of Johannes Elichmann's (1601/1602–1639) planned *Archaeologia Harmonica*', *Language & History*, 53, no. 2, 2010, pp. 70–80.

131 *Specimen Suratarum*, fol. E3^r. 'ZECHENDORFII eruditio apud nos inclaruit, per Doctiss.^m Johannes Elichmannum, Medicum eximium, Chymicum peritissimum [!], literasque Orientales, praesertim Arabicas, & Persicas apperime doctum [...].'

132 See J. Fück's article in *NDB*.

133 *Litterae exoticae scriptae arabice a ... Johanne Elichmanno Silesio medicinae doctore. ad clarissimum virum M. Johannes Zechendorff ... In literas hebraeas conversae punctatae, & κατὰ πόδα ferme ad verbum in latinum versae, commodo, atque usui discentis juventuti; unde; quot quippe centeni omnigenum autorum, & artium libri sibi, & rei literariae bono adhuc cum Deo, & die, brevi doctorum undique subadjuvarum ope & opera, quia antea nondum visi, expectandi, legendi, cognoscendi: perspiciat, publici juris factae*, Jena, 1636. See esp. fol. A2^v: 'Et exinde incepti Ego paulo ante annum, qui jam praeterijt, operam dare huic Linguae.' and fol. A3^r: 'פמן אגלן הדה בדאת אנא קלילאן קבל אלסנת'

134 *Orationis Dominicae in lingua arabica analysis grammatica, iuxta Thomae Erpeni grammaticam Arabicae linguae* (sl.). On 8 February 1647 Gerhard wrote a letter to Zechendorff (Gerhard's draft is preserved in FBG, Chart. B 44 26^r) in which he thanked him profusely for a great kindness, possibly the dedication to him of this work.

Finding available printed Arabic texts for his students (or indeed, for himself) was extremely difficult, and Zechendorff's correspondence teams with complaints about the lack of Arabic types and of benefactors willing to invest in such types. We have encountered two alternative options already: the uncommon one of using home-made types, as in the case of the Qur'an samples, for whose lack of elegance Zechendorff was continually apologising, or the more common early modern recourse of producing Arabic in Hebrew transliteration, as in the case of Elichmann's letter. A third possibility, of which Zechendorff occasionally availed himself, was to have Arabic texts produced as copper plates. This costly option was used by Zechendorff in 1625 for a short address in Arabic to Veit Wolfrum in the above mentioned *Nox Cygnea* as well as for his Arabic 'address to Turks and Arabs' at the outset of his *Fabulae Mohammedicae* (1627). By far the most impressive use of copper-plates for his teaching of Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, and later Persian and Turkish, is to be found in his *Circuli coniugationum*, a collection of copperplate engravings in octavo printed and elaborated repeatedly between 1626 and 1648: the *Circuli coniugationum* offer a visible link between Zechendorff's early concern with à la mode pedagogical method and his discovery of Arabic in the 1620s. In a series of complex and beautifully executed tables – usually in the form of six circles surrounding an inner-circle, each containing a systematically arrayed series of verb endings – Zechendorff offered a visual guide to the conjugation of perfect and imperfect verbs in various Oriental languages. The plates, measuring ca. 130×80 mm,¹³⁵ were produced by Jeremias Hermann, a Zwickau engraver with whom Zechendorff collaborated on several occasions. The product was a slim pocket-book, consisting solely of small engravings which, in theory, anyone studying these languages could easily consult at any time to identify a verb's conjugation and tense. The 1626 title-page declares their purpose: this schematic and systematic visualisation of verb systems in various Oriental languages was meant to allow students to master effortlessly any one of these languages within less than a month¹³⁶ (Figure 3.2). Such promises of early modern teachers may seem dubious, and as with Zechendorff's earlier *Methodus Cabbalistica*, we may wonder how successful his *Circuli coniugationum* actually

¹³⁵ They vary slightly in size.

¹³⁶ *Circuli coniugationum ad linguas hebraeam chaldaeam syriacam et arabicam facillimo labore et brevissimo studio cognoscendas quamvis vel septimana nedum mensis spatio et tam ad cuiusvis linguae analysin quam Genesin admodum conducentes quibus mutatio punctorum et punctandi ratio subjecta cum introductione germanica et praemissa lectionis paucis horis cognoscendae instructione inventi et dispositi M. Ioan. Zechendorff philologiae et orientalium linguarum cultore, Jena, 1626.*

FIGURE 3.2
Zechendorff, *Circuli conjugationum*,
Zwickau 1645, RSBZ.

were in facilitating the study for beginners struggling with Semitic verb conjugations. Such promises, however, were common at the time, and often accompanied by a genuine concern for simplifying language instruction as far as possible, often in the belief that a highly systematic approach would reduce to a minimum the need of learning by rote. Among Zechendorff's prominent contemporaries championing this form of highly systematic and allegedly simplified study of languages was the Tübingen mathematician and Hebraist Wilhelm Schickard (1592–1635). Among Schickard's manuals for the study of Hebrew is his *Rota hebraea* (first published in 1621), featuring two superimposed concentric discs. The upper disc is perforated by a window which, on rotation, functioned together with the lower disc as a simple 'conjugation calculator' – an idea arguably more clever than instructive.¹³⁷ Schickard's *Rota* and Zechendorff's *Circuli* share a certain visual resemblance – but not a functional one. It is not clear to me exactly how Zechendorff intended his *Circuli* to be used, and my own impression is not one of lucid simplicity. Be that as it may, the slim volume consisting of ornate engravings would, in all likelihood, have been too expensive for most students, and the fact that this work only survives

¹³⁷ On Schickard's instruction in Hebrew see See W.W. Müller, 'Hebräische und chaldäische Studien', in *Wilhelm Schickard 1592–1635. Astronom, Geograph, Orientalist, Erfinder der Rechenmaschine*, ed. F. Seck, Tübingen, 1978, pp. 49–108, esp. pp. 55–62 for the *Rota hebraea*. The suggestion that Zechendorff may have been emulating Schickard's *Rota* is also raised by Friedrich Seck in his edition of Schickard's correspondence: *Wilhelm Schickard Briefwechsel*, vol 2, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 478.

FIGURE 3.3 Zechendorff, *Circuli conjugationum*, Zwickau 1645, RSBZ.

today in a handful of copies suggests that it was not a great success. Among the few extant copies of this work there is one in the Zwickau Ratsschulbibliothek printed in 1645. Apart from a few minor changes to the title-page illustration, this 'edition' differs primarily in the greater number of plates (circular and rectangular tables) and the inclusion of Persian and Turkish¹³⁸ (Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). It should also be noted that the Zwickau library holds a manuscript of an unpublished introduction to Persian grammar by Zechendorff. Although undated, the handwriting, though unmistakably Zechendorff's, suggests an old, less firm hand.¹³⁹

The *Circuli conjugationum* may have failed to gain a broad readership, and may have become, in time, a bibliographical rarity, but Zechendorff was buoyantly proud of this work. In his correspondence with Hottinger he dwells at length on their didactic merit.¹⁴⁰ In May 1651 he sent Hottinger some of the tables, and in October sent him further tables, complaining that his introductions to Persian and Turkish have not yet appeared in print owing to the lack of sponsors.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ RSBZ, MS 18.4.24.

¹³⁹ RSBZ, MS 18.5.18. In *Linguae Medicam Particam, sive Persicam Manu-Ductio*. The work interestingly is in German rather than Latin.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. ZBZ, MS 52, fol. 564^r, letter from Zechendorff to Hottinger, May 1651.

¹⁴¹ ZBZ, MS 52, fols 575^r–576^r, esp. fol. 575^v, 6 October 1651. 'Quos Circulos, uti voco, sive Tabellas in Linguis Orientales quasdam miserim, non amplius memini an etiam in Hebrae.

FIGURE 3.4 *Zechendorff*, *Circuli conjugationum*, *Zwickau* 1645, *RSBZ*.

Though it is hard to judge exactly how much Arabic teaching was actually offered in Zwickau during Zechendorff's long tenure as headmaster, the 'Qur'anic paraphrase' of the Penitential Psalms suggests that it was at the very least a prominent part of his private instruction on offer. It is also clear that his reputation as an Orientalist was sufficient to draw several aspiring scholars to spend some time in Zwickau under his tutelage – as visiting scholars rather than registered pupils in the municipal Latin school. A prominent example of the latter is the Hamburg private-scholar, and one of the most respected Christian Hebraists in seventeenth-century Germany, Esdras Edzard (1629–1708), who stayed in Zwickau in 1648 after studying in Leipzig,¹⁴² and again in 1650, probably on his southward journey from Hamburg to study with Johann Buxtorf the Younger in Basel.¹⁴³

One of Zechendorff's most remarkable students was Nikolaus Schmidt-Küntzel (1606–1671), an illiterate peasant with a phenomenal gift for languages who, despite his father's objections, was brought to Zwickau in 1631 or 1632. His patron brought the young man, who had already taught himself several languages (including several Oriental languages) to Zwickau, where the peasant prodigy, as Zechendorff recorded more than two decades later in a letter to Hottinger, made rapid progress in his studies – Arabic first and foremost.¹⁴⁴ Zechendorff dwells at length on this remarkable student's later fortunes. Years after he had left Zwickau Schmidt-Küntzel paid Zechendorff a visit, in which, he tells Hottinger with unconcealed admiration, he asked Zechendorff to show him the Coptic alphabet, of which he was hitherto ignorant. Within a few hours he could read this language too.¹⁴⁵ This proud account was in all likelihood occasioned by a query from Hottinger. Schmidt-Küntzel had published several almanacs which may have aroused his curiosity. Their

Chalda. Syriacam & Persicam? (nondum incise sunt in æs Turcici) & utinam Manuductionem in illas Linguas addere potuissem, quæ quidem publici juris hactenus non facta, p[ro]p[ter] promotorum defectum.'

142 G. Behrmann, *Hamburgs Orientalisten*, Hamburg, 1902, p. 41.

143 Edzard's letter to Johann Ernst Gerhard, 24 January, 1650, FBG, Chart. A 136, fol. 35.

144 ZBZ, MS 52, fols 572^v–573^r, 14 January 1655.

145 The (added) point of this anecdote may also have been to impress upon the renowned Zurich scholar Zechendorff's own claim to knowledge of this language. A slim printed exhortation to the study of Oriental languages, extant in Zwickau, ends with the phrase 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost' in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Samaritan, Chaldean, Syriac, Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Coptic. Zechendorff, *Incentiva ad gentem literariam aliosque demum omnes*, Zwickau, 1640, – the Coptic is added in Zechendorff's hand (like the rest of the Oriental languages, with the exception of Hebrew) on fol. A4^v.

typographical richness, including Arabic types, occasioned Zechendorff's envy.

Zechendorff's appointment in Zwickau in 1617, it must be conceded, does not mark a watershed in the study of Arabic in the West. Unlike the justly celebrated anniversary of Erpenius' appointment to the chair of Arabic in 1613, the four-hundredth anniversary of his appointment in 2017, overshadowed by the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, has not occasioned exhibitions or academic conferences. The case of Zechendorff and Oriental studies at the Zwickau Latin school is nonetheless instructive. Even if his scholarly endeavours may have been more heroic than long lasting, they have something to say about the broader landscape of Oriental studies in the seventeenth century. It may be unwise to draw too clear a divide between centres and peripheries in the field of Oriental studies of the early seventeenth century, but Zwickau was nonetheless far removed from the cutting edge of the Oriental studies of its day. In a sense this makes it particularly interesting. Oriental studies, and Arabic studies in particular, were hardly ubiquitous, but certainly more diffuse than is commonly assumed. For the Holy Roman Empire Latin schools are clearly more important for the broader dissemination of these studies – even if not always of the highest standard. Zechendorff was an exceptionally creative autodidact attentive to the intellectual trends of his day, but numerous other Latin schools in the seventeenth century offered occasional instruction in Arabic. Among the extensive collection in the Zwickau Ratsschulbibliothek of letters he received, ranging from a formal letter of release from the town council of Schneeberg (1617) to a letter from his half-brother informing him of his stepmother's death (1630), the majority are palimpsests in Zechendorff's distinctive handwriting, using the versos, margins, and occasionally the spaces between the lines to practise the conjugation of Arabic and Persian verbs or to quote passages from the Qur'an or an Arabic version of the Gospels. Zechendorff's scholarship, or at least significant portions of it, was devotional in nature. Several of the manuscript codices in Zwickau suggest that he composed personal prayer compilations in Arabic which were clearly meant for personal edification rather than publication.¹⁴⁶ It is not unlikely that, in his final years, as he remained at home, some of the prayers his eulogizer tells us he was constantly reciting would have been in Arabic. At the same time it would be misleading to conclude this short account of Zechendorff with the suggestion that he was a pious provincial. His *Specimen suratarum*, for instance, was prefaced by commendations by some of the most notable scholars of his day and among his correspondents, as we have seen, was no less an Orientalist

¹⁴⁶ RSBZ, MS 18.4.39, a collection of Arabic prayers and further Arabic psalm paraphrases.

than Hottinger. Zechendorff's correspondence with Gerhard also shows how remarkably up to date he was in contemporary scholarly developments. This ambivalence, I would argue, is instructive as an illustration of how blurred the distinction between centre and periphery still was in the field of Oriental studies in the first half of the seventeenth century. Zechendorff, for all his brilliant peculiarities, was part of a much broader network of scholars, with their eyes set on Leiden, Oxford, and Paris, and their pedagogical concerns and practices often rooted in more local circumstances. They are an essential part of the history of Oriental studies in Early Modern Europe.