

PEIRESC AND ETHIOPIA: HOW? AND WHY?*

PETER N. MILLER

When the Marseille merchant Jean Magi returned to Provence from Cairo in early July 1633, he visited the humanist Peiresc at Aix. We know this because Peiresc made detailed notes on the meeting, which take the form of an annotated list of Magi's various contacts in Cairo.¹ Later that same month, two Capuchins returning to France from Cairo, Fathers Gilles De Loches and Cesarée de Rosgo, stopped in Aix to visit Peiresc. Their meeting, on the 25th and 26th July, also left a documentary trail.² The story of Peiresc's Ethiopian quest begins here.

Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637) was, in his lifetime, one of Europe's most celebrated scholars.³ With interests that ranged from astronomy to zoology we can, nevertheless, identify a focus on Mediterranean civilizations past and present.

* Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, at the Seminar of the Department of History of Philosophy at the University of Rome, and at the Intellectual History Seminar at Oxford. I thank in particular David Freedberg, Marta Fattori and Noel Malcolm for these invitations and their comments, and Jérôme Delatour, Jacob Soll and Louise Rice for their help with transcriptions and translations. My gratitude also for the suggestions of two anonymous readers.

¹ Carpentras, Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine (hereafter: CBI), ms. 1864, fol. 256^{r-v}. I discuss this document in 'Peiresc, the Levant and the Mediterranean,' in Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert and Bart Westerweel, eds, *The Republic of Letters in the Levant*, Leiden, 2005, pp. 103-122 (118). The text is published in Sydney Aufrère, *La Momie et la Tempête: Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc et la curiosité égyptienne en Provence au début du XVII^e siècle*, Avignon, 1990, pp. 106-107. For more on Magi see id., *La Momie et la Tempête*, 105-108 and id. 'Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc et ses correspondants de la nation du Caire Santo Seghezzi, Jacques Albert et César Lambert,' *Annales Islamologiques* 25, 1991, pp. 311-319; Anne Boud'hors, 'François Daniel: Un marchand "marchant d'Égypte" provençal au service des premiers orientalistes français,' *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, vol. 4, Cairo, 1994, pp. 19-27.

² The date of their visit, and some of the contents of their conversation, is recorded in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter: PBNF), ms. N.a.f. 5174, fol. 25^v. For Peiresc and De Loches, the key source remains P. Apollinaire de Valence, ed., *Correspondance de Peiresc avec plusieurs Missionnaires et Religieux de l'ordre des Capucins 1631-1637*, Paris, 1891.

³ For biographical information about Peiresc see my *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century*, New Haven and London, 2000, and the bibliographical references there. The most important treatment remains Pierre Gassendi, *Viri Illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc Senatoris Aquisextiensis Vita*, Paris, 1641.

He was a leading figure in the development of what a generation later could with justice be called oriental studies, spearheading the collection of texts, artifacts and knowledge for the study of Samaritan, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic.⁴ He was able to do this because of his extremely close working relations with the merchants of Marseille and with the diplomats and missionaries who passed through on their way to postings in the Levant. Most of this face-to-face intellectual life is lost to posterity; a smaller part is preserved in correspondence and working notes. These bring us into contact with many forgotten and unknown collaborators who survive, sometimes only as bare names, because Peiresc worked with them. A narrative that is true to this reality necessarily confronts the reader with many unfamiliar names.⁵

But if Peiresc's interest in Ethiopia began in Provence, it was focused on Rome. By the 1620s, Rome had replaced Venice as the capital of European oriental studies. The presence in Rome of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, hereafter: the Congregation), headquarters of missionary orders like the Jesuits, as well as the Maronite College established by Gregory XIII, made Rome a magnet for those interested in teaching or studying the languages of the Near East. The Medici Printing Press in the 1590s marked a key moment, and so too François Savary de Brèves' establishment of his own oriental language press in Rome in 1613.⁶ But it was in Barberini Rome,

⁴ See my 'An Antiquary Between Philology and History: Peiresc and the Samaritans,' in Donald R. Kelley, ed., *History and the Disciplines*, Rochester, 1997, pp. 163-184; 'A Philologist, a Traveller and an Antiquary Rediscover the Samaritans in Seventeenth-Century Paris, Rome and Aix: Jean Morin, Pietro della Valle and N.-C. Fabri de Peiresc,' in Helmut Zedelmaier and Martin Mulsow, eds, *Gelehrsamkeit als Praxis: Arbeitsweisen, Funktionen, Grenzgebiete*, Tübingen, 2001, pp. 123-146; 'Copts and Scholars: Kircher in Peiresc's Republic of Letters,' in Paula Findlen, ed., *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything*, London, 2004, pp. 133-148; 'Peiresc and the Study of Islamic Coins in the Early Seventeenth Century,' in Alan G. Stahl, ed., *The Rebirth of Antiquity: Numismatics, Archaeology and Classical Studies in the Culture of the Renaissance*, (= Princeton University Library Chronicle, Winter, 2008), pp. 315-385.

⁵ Peter N. Miller, 'The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Peiresc,' in Id., ed., *Peoples & the Sea: Thalassography and Historiography in the Twenty-First Century*, Ann Arbor, 2011 [forthcoming].

⁶ Guglielmo E. Saltini, 'La Bibbia Poliglotta Medicea secondo il disegno e gli apparecchi di Gio. Battista Raimondi,' *Bollettino italiano degli studi orientali*, new series 22, 1882, pp. 490-495; Berta Maracchi Biagiarelli, 'La Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana: una nuova sala per l'attrezzatura della stamperia orientale,' *Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia*, 39, 1971, pp. 94-99. See also John Robert Jones, 'The Medici Oriental Press (Rome 1584-1614) and the Impact of its Arabic Publications on Northern Europe,' in George A. Russell, ed., *The 'Arabick' Interest of Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 88-108, drawing on John Robert Jones, *The Arabic and Persian Studies of Giovanni Battista Raimondi (c.1536-1624)*, MPhil thesis, Warburg Institute, London, 1981; Gérard Duverdiér, 'Les Caractères de Savary de Brèves et la présence française au Levant au XVII^e siècle,' [Bibliothèque nationale de France, ed.], *L'Art du livre à l'Imprimerie nationale*, Paris, 1973, pp. 69-87 and Id., 'Du livre religieux à l'orientalisme. Gibra'il

and especially in the patronage circle of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, that many of these interests converged. Peiresc used his Ethiopian contacts as bait for engaging the Cardinal's interest, and then harnessing his power.⁷

The narrative of Peiresc's maneuvering in these turbid waters is in itself an impressive demonstration that a learned life in the seventeenth century could require skills quite removed from those associated with erudition or erudites. Peiresc the magistrate, Peiresc the humanist secretary, and Peiresc the friend and collaborator of merchants and sea captains – all these dimensions came into play when trying to persuade the Cardinal and through him manage the missionary agenda of the Congregation. Peiresc's authority may ultimately have derived from the respect in which his learning was held, but his ability to get things done, and others' confidence that he could get things done, reflects these other talents.

Viewed from a Romano-, as opposed to Aix-centric vantage point, Peiresc's interest in Ethiopia belongs to a moment of readjustment in a century-long campaign. Ethiopia had been a focus of missionary efforts since the establishment of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.⁸ The Catholic cause had reached its apogee under Susenyos, or Seltan Sagad (1607-32). His defeat at the hands of Fasilidas (1632-67) led to the expulsion of the Jesuits and the persecution of other missionaries who attempted to enter later.⁹ It was at just this moment of change that Peiresc's attention was drawn to Ethiopia.¹⁰

And, finally, viewed from the standpoint of a *European* engagement with Ethiopia, the story of Peiresc and Ethiopia represents a first step towards the beginning of serious Ethiopic study that would blossom in the years after

as-Sayuni et François Savary de Breves,' [AGECOOP, Unesco, ed.], *Le livre et le Liban jusqu'à 1900*, Paris, 1982, pp. 159-172.

⁷ For a survey of this world, see most recently Lorenza Mochi Onori, Sebastian Schütze and Francesco Solinas, eds, *I Barberini e la cultura Europea del Seicento*, Rome, 2007; Peter Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies*, Leiden, 2006, and Ingo Herklotz, *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1999.

⁸ For general historical background, see Arnold H.M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1955; Paul B. Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, New York, 2000; Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002, 2nd edn. For the missionary story in particular, see Philip Caraman, *The Lost Empire: The Story of the Jesuits in Ethiopia, 1555-1634*, London, 1985 and now Hervé Pennec, *Des Jésuites au Royaume du Prêste Jean, 1495-1633*, Paris, 2003, and the bibliography there.

⁹ These events echoed through Europe. See for example, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé au royaume d'Ethiopie es années 1624. 1625. & 1626. Tirées des lettres écrites & adressées au R.P. Mutio Viteleschi, general de la Compagnie de Iesus. Traduite de l'italien en françois par un pere de la mesme compagnie*, Paris, 1629.

¹⁰ Peiresc passed along news of the Jesuits' expulsion to the jeweler Álvares in Paris in a letter of 29 May 1633; the news had come to him 'arrivées du Moucal par le Cayre' (CBI ms. 1871, fol. 336'; this letter is omitted in Philippe Tamizey de Larroque, ed., *Lettres de Peiresc*, 7 vols, Paris, 1888-1898, vol. 7).

Peiresc's death. In fact, it was Ethiopic that would be the key to 'discovery' of the Semitic family of languages in the middle of the seventeenth century in the work of Christian Ravius (1613-77), Thomas Reinesius (1587-1667) and, especially, Job Ludolf (1624-1704).¹¹ Peiresc lived and worked in what we might call the last generation of pre-disciplinary oriental studies. Looking closely at his questions and initiatives helps us see both continuities with what came after, and approaches that were dropped, or ignored. Both what was carried on, and what was not, have had long-term effects on the shape of European oriental studies.¹²

1. Ethiopia in Peiresc's Provence

Peiresc's interest in Ethiopia grew directly out of his sense of the inter-relationship between the languages of the Near East. Already in 1628, as he began to develop an interest in Samaritan alongside the more conventional fascination with things Egyptian that he shared with most of his generation, he began to talk about Ethiopia. Writing to Girolamo Aleandro in September 1628, a letter ostensibly about the Samaritans, we see Peiresc sliding from one language project to the other. Peiresc speculated that 'Abyssinians' in Rome could help make sense of the 'Lengua Aegyptia' in the books of Pietro della Valle. And after further discussion of these Egyptian (Coptic) texts, Peiresc turned to Ethiopic.

It would in addition be very good to know what it is, what they say of a certain bible in *Lengua Aethiopica* that is said to have been printed in Rome a hundred years ago, and the original conserved there intact; if it's an antique thing or not, and if it's very different from that *Aegyptia* of S.^t Pietro, or if it has some conformity to it, or to that of the Abyssinians.¹³

¹¹ See Daniel Droixhe, *De l'origine du langage aux langues du monde: études sur les XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, Tübingen, 1987, pp. 37-40. The encounter with Ethiopia went back to the fifteenth century. A bibliography of printed works on Ethiopia would begin with Johannes Potken's publication (Rome, 1513) of his edition of the Psalter, the first book printed in Europe in the Ethiopic language and characters. As Peiresc noted, the Ethiopic New Testament was printed at Rome, in two volumes in 1548-1549. The first grammar of the Ethiopic language, Marianus Victorius' *Chaldaee sive Aethiopicae linguae institutiones*, was also printed at Rome, in 1552.

¹² Reading Robert Irwin's important if flawed *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*, London, 2006, in this light is instructive.

¹³ Peiresc to Aleandro, 25 September 1628 (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Barberini-Latina (hereafter: BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat.) 6504, fols 219^r and 220^r): 'Sarebbe molto buono ancora d'intendere che cosa sia ciò che si dice di certa biblia in Lengua Aethiopica che si dice essere stata stampata in Roma già una centinaia d'anni et l'originale conservato intiera costì, se è cosa antiqua ò nò, se è molto diversa di questa Aegyptia del S.^t Pietro ò se ci ha qualche conformita, ò con quella degli Abyssini.'

In 1631, after thanking Cardinal Barberini for helping a friend acquire for him a Georgian dictionary in Rome, Peiresc added that he had a 'a great desire to see the studies done on the Samaritan and Coptic languages, when it will be possible, since your munificence has favored that of the Abyssinians, which could be of much benefit.'¹⁴

Peiresc's Ethiopian project was based in Cairo and relied upon merchants like Jean Magi and missionaries like Gilles De Loches, who, as mentioned earlier, visited Peiresc in 1633. A memoire from July 1633, derived from the conversation with Magi, begins, in fact, with Ethiopia:

Sr. Vermeil of Montpellier, a Gascon, who works emeralds and fabricates medals, has gone to Ethiopia, where he is favored by the Emperor, for whom he seeks books from Europe, and for which he addressed himself to Sr Jacques Albert merchant of Marseille, who has the greatest credit in Cairo in the absence of Sr Jean Magi. This Albert passed the commission to Sr Joseph Baulme, druggist at Marseille, for the recovery of said books.¹⁵

This memo directly reflects information that is also found in the letters written by Magi to Peiresc immediately upon his return to Marseille from Egypt. His letter of 14 July 1633, labelled by Peiresc 'JEAN MAGI/ avec le memoire des livres & graines/ pour le ROY D'AETHIOPIE', is indexed on the flyleaf 'Le memoire du PRESTE IEAN ou Roy des Abyssins par le S.^r Vermeil[,] le S.^r Albert, le S.^r Joseph Baulme.'¹⁶ Peiresc was so entranced by the possibility of contact with Ethiopia that he wrote back to Magi on the very same day.¹⁷

¹⁴ Peiresc to Barberini, 14 March 1631 (BAV, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 30^r): 'Et la supplico di volere schusare la temerità mia in farle queste suppliche troppo indiscrete, poich' in altra maniera non è possibile di ricuperare questi opuscoli, havendo gran desiderio di vedere i saggi che si sonno fatti costì delle lingue Samaritana e Copeta [sic], quando sarà lecito, secome la sua munificenza ci ha fatto favorire di quello dell'Abyssini che puo essere di molto frutto.'

¹⁵ CBI, ms. 1864, fol. 256^r: 'Le Sr. VERMEIL de Montpellier, Gascon, qui faisoit des Esmeraudes y medailles artificielles, est allé en Aethiopie, ou il est favoris de l'Empereur est pour qu il demande des livres d'Europe pour raison desquelle il s'est adressé au sieur Jacques Albert, marchand de Marseille au Cayre, qui a le plus de crédit en absance du sieur Jean Magi, lequel Albert a renvoyé la commission au sieur Joseph Baulme, droguiste à Marseille, pour le recouvrement desdits livres'. On Vermeil, see Pierre Humbert, 'Un aventurier montpelliérain du XVII^e siècle', *Bulletin de l'Académie des Sciences et Lettres de Montpellier*, 1932, pp. 132-141.

¹⁶ Magi to Peiresc, 7 July 1633 (CBI, ms. 1777 fols 376^r and 377^v). Magi wrote that 'J'ay recouvre desdit Sr Joseph Baume la memoire des Sr Vermeil que Mr Albert l'a mander pour le Roy... on ma dict que a le tout acheter sauf deux livres que a mander querir a Lion... j'espere avant passer une annee avoir lettre desdit Sr Vermeil' [underlining in the original].

¹⁷ Peiresc to Magi, 14 July 1633 (CBI, ms. 1874, fol. 310^v).

He also addressed a letter to Monsieur Vermeil, the Gascon jeweller who, according to Magi, resided at the Ethiopian imperial court. This letter, dated, 25 February 1634, is among the most spectacular he ever wrote.¹⁸ Pierre Gassendi, in the *Vita Peireskii*, noted that Vermeil,

at first a Jeweller, had given himself to be a Souldier, and having spent what he had, he returned to his former Art; and having got together Jewels, he set sail in a Ship of Marseilles for Aegypt, and the next opportunity, to the innermost part of Aethiopia.

The Queen of Abyssinia liked his jewels and once famous at court he soon after became a military advisor to the Emperor.¹⁹ A stunning letter from Peiresc to the Portuguese New Christian jeweler Henrique Álvares in Paris traces Vermeil's path from Montpellier to Constantinople, Cairo and then the Red Sea, but it also makes the direct connection between his military advising in Ethiopia and his having been in Holland – where the military revolution began.²⁰ There was even a report that he had married the Emperor's niece.²¹ Peiresc's initial contact with him, and all their subsequent relations, were mediated through Provençaux living in Egypt.²²

¹⁸ Most of the letter was published in Caix de Saint-Aymour, *Histoire des Relations de la France avec l'Abyssinie chrétienne sous les règnes de Louis XIII et de Louis XIV (1634-1708)*, Paris, 1886, pp. 273-288. The text supposedly follows CBI, ms. 1876, fols 550^r-554^r but with silent omissions and errors. All references here will be to Peiresc's autograph draft (ms. 1821, fols 468^r-743^r) unless otherwise indicated. The letter and associated boxes of gifts were sent to Jacques Albert in Cairo, who was to handle the trans-shipment to Vermeil (Peiresc to Albert, CBI, ms. 1874, fols 327^r-328^v). Raymond Lebègue, who never missed an opportunity to score Philippe Tamizey de Larroque for his sloppy editorial practices, without explanation omitted this passage of the letter to Albert from his *Supplement au tome VII de l'édition Tamizey de Larroque*, Paris, 1985, p. 15. I will discuss Vermeil and the world of Red Sea-Indian Ocean jewelers at length in 'The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Peiresc.'

¹⁹ Gassendi, *The Mirror of True Nobility and Gentility*, London, 1657, year 1633, p. 93.

²⁰ Peiresc to Álvares, 1 August 1633 (CBI (as in n.1), ms. 1871, fol. 334^v): 'Sr Vermeil of Montpellier, que vous avez possible cogneu, au moins de reputation, car il faisoit profession de lapidaire, mais au siege de Montpellier il s'estoit mis aux armes et aprez au negoce du Caire en Constantinople qu'il luy fallut abandonner pour un malheur qui fut son bien, car s'estant retiré je ne sçais ou sur le mer Rouge, il trouva moyen de passer en l'Aethiopie et de s'insinuer dans la maison du Roy et de la Reyne par le moyen des pierreries, et enfin d'employer ce qu'il avoit apprins des artifices du feu et des tranchées pour attaquer ou deffendre des places, car il avoit esté en Hollande. Ce qui luy a si bien succédé qu'il a eu l'honneur de commander une armée de huit mille hommes et avec icelle de dompter un grand prince voisin et luy dissiper une armée de cinquante mille, au retour de laquelle expedition l'Empereur des Abyssins est demeuré si satisfait de luy, qu'il l'a crée surintendant de toutes ses armées qui sont de plusieurs centaines de milliers d'hommes.' This letter is omitted in *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. 7 (as in n. 10).

²¹ Peiresc to Magi, 21 December 1633 (CBI, ms. 1874, fol. 319^v).

²² Peiresc discussed Vermeil with De Loches (Peiresc to De Loches, 20 December 1631[1633] (*ibid.*, fol. 318^v)), with Jean Magi (Peiresc to Magi, late December 1633 (*ibid.*, fol. 319^v)), and with Jacques Albert (25 February 1634 (*ibid.*, fol. 328^v)).

Peiresc never received an answer from Vermeil, and spent the next two years trying to ascertain if he had received Peiresc's letter and, even, if he existed at all.²³

But Ethiopia and sub-Saharan Africa were of interest to Peiresc even independently of Vermeil. Magi sent him information on the ethnography and economics of the sub-Saharan, cross-African caravan route.²⁴ Thomas d'Arcos, prisoner in Tunis and renegade Christian, also answered Peiresc's questions about Africa beyond the coast.²⁵ The Capuchin Columbin de Nantes was Peiresc's interlocutor in a series of extraordinary documents about ritual in Benin and the Guinea Coast of West Africa.²⁶

The Magi memoir also points towards another extraordinary tale immured in Peiresc's Ethiopian dossier. 'S^r Magi saw in Cairo the fugitive prince of Ethiopia, Saga Christos, who is now at Rome,' it begins. The entry went on to explain that he was accompanied by two Ethiopian servants and bore a recommendation from the Bassa of Cairo attesting to his qualities and asking for assistance. Many Christians, including those in the Abyssinian church at Cairo, 'and all the Coptic Christians' 'had recognized him for what he claimed of himself.'²⁷ Saga Christos turned out to be an impostor, pretending to be the son of the Emperor Jacob, defeated and killed by Seltan Sagad, or Susenyos in 1607. Upon the latter's death in 1632, this heir to the throne appeared in Egypt. Magi must have met him there; but from Cairo he travelled to Nazareth where he met Jacques de Vendôme, the Franciscan Guardian of Jerusalem, and converted to

²³ It was to De Loches, in February 1634, that Peiresc expressed some uncertainty about Vermeil: 'Pour ce qui est du sieur Vermeil, vous aurez vu, par ma dernière despeche, qu'il n'en est pas, je m'assure, tout ce qu'on a dit. Mais toujours fault-il qu'il en soit quelque chose.' Peiresc to De Loches, 13 February 1634 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 23; this is CBI, ms. 1874, fol. 326^r). After receiving no reply to his letter, Peiresc's attempts to ascertain whether the letter had been received were also all mediated through Egypt, viz. Peiresc to Magi, 6 January 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 363^v); Peiresc to Magi, 27 July 1636 (*ibid.*, fol. 422^r).

²⁴ We can date this communication to the first part of 1636 as Peiresc explicitly thanks Magi for it in his letter of 27 July 1636 (*ibid.*, fol. 422^r). A memorandum based on their conversation is printed in Miller, 'Peiresc in Africa: Arm-Chair Anthropology in the Early Seventeenth Century,' in Marianne Lion-Violet, ed., *Les premiers siècles de la République européenne des Lettres (1368-1638)*, Paris, 2005, pp. 523-525.

²⁵ Discussed in 'Peiresc in Africa' (as in n. 24), pp. 496-509.

²⁶ Peter N. Miller, 'History of Religion Becomes Ethnology: Some Evidence from Peiresc's Africa,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 67, 2006, pp. 675-696.

²⁷ CBI, ms 1864, fol. 256^r: 'Le Sr. Magi avoit veu au Cayre le prince fugitif, d'Aethiopia SAGA CHRISTOS, qui est a present a Rome. Il estoit fort jeune prince accompagné de deux serveurs Abyssins, et porta des attestations au Bassa du Cayre de sa qualité, luy demandant secours, mais il le r'envoya en Constantinople, plusieurs chrestiens le recognoissent pour celuy qu'il se disoit. En l'eglise des Abyssins du Cayre et tous les chrestiens Cophtes.' Quoted in Aufrère, *La Momie et la tempête* (as in n. 1), p. 106, and cited indirectly by Caix de Saint-Aymour, *Histoire des relations* (as in n. 18), p. 61, n. 2.

Catholicism. He arrived in Rome early in 1633 and departed for France in 1634, where he died. As we will see, Peiresc followed up this lead in letters to his Roman friends in 1633-34. The story of this impostor is told briefly by Beccari in the introduction to the eighth volume of *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales*, and by Ludolf in his *Historia Aethiopica*.²⁸

The Magi memo concludes with mention of a 'P. Gilles de Losches,' who is described as a friend of the Venetian Santo Segueti.²⁹ Still another list of Cairene contacts is labelled 'P. Gilles de Losches Cappuchin/ revenant du Cayre.'³⁰ In the final letter written by Magi to Peiresc from Marseille, before returning to Egypt on the 21st July 1633, he reported the passage of the Capuchin father through Marseille.³¹ Gilles De Loches had arrived in Sidon in 1626 to establish a Capuchin mission. As early as 1628 he was already thinking of moving to establish missions in still more distant places – Ethiopia, Madagascar, Lahore and Ormuz.³² In 1629 Ethiopia became a reality after he came into contact with Ethiopian pilgrims in Jerusalem who asked him to return home with them.³³

De Loches came to Peiresc's attention in 1628, and Peiresc wrote to De Loches in Sidon, but that letter has gone astray.³⁴ Their surviving correspondence begins with a letter from De Loches dated September 1631, and written after friction with the Franciscans had led to his transfer to Cairo.³⁵ Perhaps responding to

²⁸ Camillo Beccari, *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales*, 15 vols, Rome, 1903-1917, vol. 7, pp. xvii-xxi; further references are found in vol. 1, pp. 27-28. Also Hiob Ludolf, *A New History of Ethiopia*, book 2, ch. 8, p. 190. It is as an authority on this episode that Peiresc is hailed in Teodosio Somigli di S. Detole, ed., *Etiopia Francescana nei documenti dei secoli XVII e XVIII*, 2 vols, Florence, 1928, vol. 1 (1633-1643), p. cxxiv, note 6 (this is Tome 1.1 of Girolamo Golubovich, dir., *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa e Dell'Oriente Francese* serie terza-documenti). On Ludolf, see Siegbert Uhlig, *Hiob Ludolfs 'theologia Aethiopica'*, Wiesbaden, 1983.

²⁹ CBI, ms. 1864, fol. 256^v.

³⁰ CBI, ms. 1864, fol. 257^r. This document is in the hand of Peiresc's brother, Vallavez.

³¹ Magi to Peiresc, 20 July 1633 (CBI, ms. 1777, fol. 370^o).

³² Gilles De Loches to Raphael de Nantes, 20 March 1628 (PBNF, ms. N.a.f. 10220, p. 72).

³³ Gilles De Loches to Raphael de Nantes, 1 March 1629 (PBNF, ms. N.a.f. 10220, p. 92): 'J'ay receu une lettre des Aethiopiens, qui sont en Jerusalem, qui me prient d'aller avec eux en leur pais, m'ayant envoy  un nouveau testament en leur lange depuis hier seulement, en tesmoignage de leur affection.'

³⁴ He is mentioned, though not by name, in the letter of Franois-Auguste de Thou to Peiresc from Sidon, 30 October 1628 (PBNF, ms. F.franais 9537, fol. 292bis). This part of the letter is printed in Henri Omont, 'Recherches de Peiresc en Orient,' *Biblioth que de l' cole des Chartes*, 79, 1918, p. 507. Peiresc wrote to him on 14 December 1628 (CBI, ms. 1876, fol. 374^r). In Peiresc's register of outgoing correspondence this letter is listed as sent to a 'P. _____ Cappucin de Seyde' (PBNF, ms. N.a.f. 5169, fol. 37^v).

³⁵ For background on De Loches, whose dates remain unknown, see Aufr re, *La Momie et la temp te* (as in n. 1), pp. 112-116. He came to Cairo around December 1630.

Peiresc's likely initial query, about books, he explained that 'There is found in this country books in Egyptian, Ethiopian and Armenian, not to count the Arabic and Turkish.' These latter were far more numerous but 'more difficult to export, because everything is inspected at customs and the Mahometans jealously guard that none send books in their language to Christendom.'³⁶ But, in 1633, he was sent home from there, and replaced by another Capuchin, Agathange de Vendôme. It was on his way home that De Loches visited Peiresc in Aix.

Another memoire, derived from information conveyed by Magi and Cesar Lambert, and also structured around the names of contacts in Egypt, lists De Loches and Rosgo, identifying the former as living 'a la contrade de France devant le consul, superieur predicateur.' In the margin Peiresc scribbled 'est a Rome,' suggesting a date of composition in the early summer 1633, or an emendation at that time. Rosgo is also described as 'encore a Rome.' But there is a still later redaction because in smaller letters, between the two marginal references to Rome, Peiresc wrote: 'ils ont passé par Aix le 25 et 26. Juillet 1633.' The final paragraphs, in a smaller hand, are devoted exclusively to information which came from De Loches during this visit. Two of the items in the memoire continue the theme of individual contacts in Cairo. The other two, however, opened new horizons for Peiresc. The first observed that these Capuchins had returned to France 'in order to establish a mission and connection from La Rochelle to the Congo, and from there by caravan to Ethiopia.'³⁷ This theme would run through De Loches's correspondence with Peiresc and beyond. The second item – which of course we read through the filter of Peiresc's interests – makes a connection between the Ethiopia which was known to Europeans, and the neighboring sub-Saharan peoples who were not. The Galli mentioned in the memoire (who did in fact exist) Peiresc and De Loches linked to the ancient Gauls, and posited for them an innate sympathy for the French and hostility to the Ethiopians.³⁸

The date of the meeting between Peiresc and the two Capuchins is confirmed in another memo, dated '1633. 26 Juill.' and labelled 'TURCS. ABYSSINS/

³⁶ Gilles De Loches to Peiresc, 3 September 1631 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 2; this is PBNF, ms. F.français 9539, fol. 300^r): 'Il se trouve en ce pais des livres Aegyptiens, Aethiopiens, Arméniens, sans compter les Arabes, Turcz... plus difficiles à embarquer; car on visite tout à la douane, et les Mahomettans sont jaloux qu'on envoie les livres de leur langue en chrestienté.'

³⁷ PBNF, ms. N.a.f. 5174, fol. 25^v: 'pour establir une mission et creance de la Rochelle à Congo, et de là par les caravanes en Aethiopie.' Printed in Miller 'Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and the Mediterranean World: Mechanics,' in Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Hans Bots and Jens Häselser, eds, *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la République des Lettres. Études de réseaux de correspondances du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècles*, Paris, 2005, p. 125.

³⁸ PBNF, ms. N.a.f. 5174, fol. 25^v.

P. Gilles de Losches.³⁹ It begins ‘Le P. Gilles de Losches Cappuchin que nous avons gouverné a Aix le 25 Juillet et traicté le lendemain avec M. Valloys nous a dict...’ – and then continued with a series of observations about the customs of the Turks, with vignettes about a village headman in Syria who sought De Loches’ help in curing a paralytic, an astrologer in Cairo who foretold the ruination of the Ottoman empire by France and Ethiopia, and the numbers attending the ‘College du Cayre’ – al-Azhar. Another memoire deriving from that same conversation focuses on the numbers and kinds of Jews in Cairo.⁴⁰ A third memoire in this series derives from Magi and is devoted to meteorological conditions and unusual natural phenomena in Ethiopia, Arabia and Sinai, including volcanic activity. It ends with a paragraph ‘Le P. Gilles de Losches Cappuchin, avec le P. Cesaree de Rosgo Bas breton, nous ont confirmé cet embrasement’ with the marginal note ‘le 25. et 6 Juill./ 1633 a Aix.’⁴¹

De Loches and Rosgo add something to the ethnographic and naturalistic material communicated by Magi:

That this mountain [of Sem], was inhabited in some sixty-odd villages by Jews, who were masters under the sovereignty of the Emperor of Ethiopia. But they had been almost totally taken by surprise by this fire, and burned or ruined in hate that, as if reproched, searched them in these places, because of the opposition they had given to the Prince of the Abyssinians who is a good Catholic, in favor of the schismatic Copts.

Nature, in this account, elides into politics and the civil strife in Ethiopia that had already forced out the Jesuits.⁴²

The visits by Magi and De Loches in July 1633 happened to coincide with the second of the missions to the Levant undertaken by Théophile Minuti on Peiresc’s behalf. Minuti was sent to find books, coins and artifacts from the

³⁹ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁰ CBI, ms. 1864, fol. 261^r.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, fols 263^r-264^r.

⁴² *Ibid.*, fol. 264^r: ‘Que cette montagne [Sem] estoit habitée en une soixantaine de villages par des Juifs lesquels en estoient les maitres soubz la souveraineté de l’Emp. d’Aethiophie. Mais qu’ils avoient esté presque tous surprins de cet incendie, et bruslez ou ruiner [sic] haine comme en leur reprochoit sur les lieux, des traverses qu’ils avoient faictes à la prince des Abyssins qui est bon Catholique, en faveur des schismatiques cophytes’. This information is repeated, almost word-for-word in the letter Peiresc wrote to Pierre and Jacques Dupuy in Paris describing the meeting (23 July 1633, *Lettres de Peiresc* (as in n. 10), vol. 2, pp. 569-570). In a contemporaneous letter to Jacques Gaffarel intended for him and for Gabriel Naudé, Peiresc added that the Jews ‘y estoit les maitres soubz l’Empire du prestre Jean ce qu’ilz n’ont en aulcun autre lieu du monde. Car par tout ils sont esclavez et despouillez du toute administration & jurisdiction. Mais ce feu les à surprins et brusslez et ruinez la plus part’ (Peiresc to Gaffarel, 25 July 1633 (CBI, ms. 1873, fol. 404^r). In his comment on the flyleaf of Magi’s letter of 20 July, cited above, Peiresc noted that the Capuchins had confirmed Magi’s information about the eruption (CBI, ms. 1777, fol. 371^v).

ancient and modern Near East. It was through Minuti, and another religious, Daniel Aymini, that Peiresc accumulated many of his Samaritan materials, in particular. With Minuti in the East, Peiresc focused his conversations with De Loches on possible Ethiopian books in Ethiopia and Egypt. De Loches supplied him with inventories.⁴³ In a memo sent to Peiresc on 22 November 1633, De Loches described three of the rarest books, but explained that it would be difficult to acquire them.⁴⁴

This memo must have reached Peiresc in time for him to incorporate its information into a longer memo destined for Jean Magi in Cairo and sent off on 22 December 1633. Its first part describes the three Ethiopic books named by De Loches, with their Ethiopic titles and French translation.⁴⁵ The second part contained a note directed to Jean-Baptiste Magi – the Cairene merchant’s Marseille-based partner and brother – intended for Minuti. It contains the amounts Peiresc was actually willing to pay for the manuscripts, and emphasizes that his highest priority was recovery of the Book of Enoch.⁴⁶ Soon after they first met,

⁴³ Even Peiresc’s chief advisor on these matters, Gilles De Loches, possessed only two Ethiopic books of prayer, and no Coptic materials whatsoever; see PBnF, ms. Latin 9340, fol. 304^r, filing title: ‘Livres MSS. Arabes, Turquesques, [sic] Syriaques, Armeniens, Aethiopiens, du R.P. Gilles de Losches Cappucin.’

⁴⁴ PBnF, ms. Latin 9340, fol. 111^r: ‘Dans la maison des Abyssins ou Aethyopiens [sic] du Caire sont force livres Aethiopiens manuscriptz en parchemin, les plus rares desquelz sont les suyvantz. ሙሙሙ፡ ሙሙ፡፡ mazhofa manda. C’est a dire livre des commandementz d’aultres le nomment ሙሙ፡፡ ጸብጸብ፡፡ mazhofa Abethilis. qu’ilz disent que ce livre à esté composé par les Apostres, & le tiennent en pareille estime que la Bible et le reçoivent pour regle de leur foy. ሙሙ፡፡ ሙሙ፡፡ mazhofa Enoch: qu’ilz disent avoir esté composé par Enoc, avant son ravissement, ou par esprit prophetique. Il declare les succez qui doivent arriver jusques à la fin du monde. ሙሙ፡፡ ሙሙ፡፡ mazhofa Lamalaacht. C’est à dire livre des Anges, pour ce qu’il contient toute la Theologie qu’ilz tiennent avoir esté revelée aux hommes par les Anges... Il est fort malaisé d’avoir les livres des Abyssins car ilz ne les veullent point vendre allegantz qu’ilz ont esté laissez à leur maison par testament, à cause de quoy ilz ne s’en veullent deffaire pour ne frustrer les trespassez de leur intention.’ Professor Steven Kaplan identifies the second title as ‘Māshafā abtelisat’, which is the Senodos or ‘Apostolic Constitutions’. The final title he thinks likely ‘Māshafā māla’ekt’ (Book of Angels), which is a Bētā Esra’el (Falasha) text derived from an alleged homily of James of Sarug, suggesting that the author is implying by this title some other work. Kaplan notes that aside from a different convention of transliteration, the Ge’ez letters are accurately inscribed. I am extremely grateful to him for this information and for the generosity of his assistance with this material.

⁴⁵ PBnF, ms. Latin 9340, fol. 112 (Livres mss Abyssins, Cophtes & ARabes): ‘Record ou memoire au Sr Jean Bap. Magi de trois volumes qui se trouvent dans la maison des Abyssins ou Aethiopiens du Cayre, que le Sr. de Peiresc achepteroit volontiers s’il est possible de les avoir à pris honneste. Et en deffaulte de ce, feroit volontiers la despence de les faire transcrire, s’il se trouve quelque personne de ceste nation là asséz intelligente pour s’en pouvoir asséz dignement acquitter. Auquel cas il faudra que ce soit en papier du plus fort & du meilleur qui se trouvera. S’il ne se peult faire en parchemin mesmes, ce qu’il aymeroit beaucoup mieux.’

⁴⁶ ‘Record du Sr. de Peiresc au Sr. Jean Ba[p]tiste] Magi de Marseille avec priere de ne le communiquer à personne qu’au R.P. Theophile Minuti tout seul.’

Peiresc had put Gilles De Loches on notice that he desired a copy of Enoch and that neither money nor energy was to be spared.⁴⁷ A few months later Peiresc mused about how happy he would be if the book could be located and how he would insist on De Loches translating it.⁴⁸

2. Ethiopia in Peiresc's Rome

It was right at this point that Peiresc directed his interest in Ethiopia towards Rome. The presence in Rome of the headquarters of the missionary movements was significant, but most important was his relationship with Cardinal Francesco Barberini and with the scholars he sponsored. It was here, in a circle which included Cassiano dal Pozzo, Pietro della Valle, Lucas Holstenius, Jean-Marie Suares, Jean-Jacques Bouchard, Giovanni Battista Doni, and Athanasius Kircher (and which had included his dear friend Girolamo Aleandro until his death in 1629), that Peiresc found some of his most important interlocutors on the subject of oriental studies.⁴⁹ But Peiresc's relations with the Cardinal himself were no less important. The 94 letters that Peiresc wrote to him were not those sent to an aristocrat, or an ignorant but important patron. These were the kind of letters sent to a scholar, full of seriousness and without condescension.

Peiresc's first attempt to connect De Loches, and Ethiopia, with Cardinal Barberini, was made through books. Peiresc was committed to oriental language publishing. He took for himself an active role in the publication of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and through his agents in Egypt was deeply committed to the recovery of Coptic texts, as well. In Rome, we know of his support for Cardinal Barberini's idea of creating a Greek-language printing shop, itself taking shape alongside debates about reform of the printing office of the Congregation, and Peiresc's sense of the proximity of Greece and Greek to the Levant, and oriental studies.⁵⁰ Hence,

⁴⁷ Peiresc to De Loches, 20 November [1633] (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), pp. 12-13).

⁴⁸ Peiresc to De Loches, 13 February 1634 (*ibid.* p. 22).

⁴⁹ For general background on this milieu, see David Jaffé, 'The Barberini Circle: Some Exchanges between Peiresc, Rubens, and their Contemporaries,' *Journal of the History of Collections*, 1, 1989, pp. 119-147; Agnès Bresson, 'Peiresc et le commerce des antiquités à Rome,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 85, 1975, pp. 61-72.

⁵⁰ Peiresc to Francesco Barberini, 2 June 1633 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat., 6503, fol. 52^v). Praising the German-born Lucas Holstenius as just the one to manage such a project, Peiresc noted that he was a product of 'quelle academie settentrionali che solevano essere tanto barbare, dove hora comminciano a fiorire con tanto vantaggio, non la Greca solamente ma tutte l'altre Lengue Orientali, et piu isquisite' (fol. 52^v). Peiresc renews his urging that Barberini establish a Greek printing press in Rome in his letter of 5 October 1633 (fol. 73^v). There is now an entire book

Peiresc's pleasure, in March 1634, at hearing that Gilles De Loches had his own scheme for low-cost polyglot printing.⁵¹ Peiresc thought this invention so important that failure to support it would amount to a crime. De Loches followed with a detailed discussion of his method.⁵² Peiresc's reply, in a letter of 20 May, hailed his discovery and thanked him 'for communicating to me the core of your secret for this new printing press.' He felt also that it imposed upon him 'one of the most keen obligations that anyone had ever acquired of me.'⁵³ His immediate thought was to bring it to the next Assembly of the Clergy in 1635 and propose its use in the publication of oriental books.⁵⁴

Peiresc encouraged De Loches to offer some of his oriental manuscripts as a gift to Cardinal Barberini. De Loches's letter to the Cardinal of October 1634 emphasized the risk he ran in bringing Arabic books to Europe, and Peiresc's role as his sponsor.⁵⁵ In Peiresc's monumental letter to Francesco Barberini of 5 December 1634, famous for its exculpation of Galileo, he demonstrates the extent of his information network by sharing with Barberini information about events in Syria and Yemen.⁵⁶ He informs Barberini about Vermeil and explains

devoted to Barberini sponsorship of Greek philology: Ingo Herklotz, *Die Academia Basiliana: griechische Philologie, Kirchengeschichte und Unionsbemühungen im Rom der Barberini*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2008. For reform of the Congregation's printing office, see Willi Henkel, 'The Polyglot Printing-office of the Congregation. The press apostolate as an important means for communicating the faith,' in Jozef Metzler, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria Rerum*, vol. 1.1, Rome, 1971, pp. 335-350.

⁵¹ Peiresc to De Loches, 20 March 1634 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 30). Typical of Peiresc, he added, thinking aloud: 'Et me semble avoir ouy dire je ne sçay quoy de la Chine qui n'est pas trop esloigné de vostre poste, dont je vous felicite de tres bon coeur l'invention.'

⁵² It is printed and discussed in Henri Omont, 'Procédé d'imprimerie pour les langues orientales communiqué a Peiresc par le P. Gilles De Loches (1634),' *Revue des langues romanes*, series 4, 36, 1892, pp. 488-495.

⁵³ Peiresc to De Loches, 20 May 1634 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 54).

⁵⁴ Peiresc to De Loches, 20 May 1634 (*ibid.*): 'Mais il fault tascher de le faire proposer et appuyer à la prochaine assemblée du clergé de l'année 1635, pour la faire mettre à execution et vous faire employer dans Paris à la lecture de ces rares langues estrangeres, que personne n'a jamais sceüs comme vous.'

⁵⁵ De Loches to Barberini, 9 October 1634, *Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), pp. 106-108 (this is CBI, ms. 1809, l. 207). The list of books is in PBNF, ms. Latin 9340, fol. 304^r. The gift was acknowledged in Barberini's letter to Peiresc of 2 January 1635 (CBI, ms. 1809, fol. 208^r).

⁵⁶ He informed the Cardinal of the arrival in Cairo at the beginning of October of four religious Abyssinians planning to depart for Rome at the behest of the Patriarch Alfonzo Mendoza. Peiresc urged that one of his staff be detailed to take down a 'Relatione' of that land, disavowing interest in any matter other than 'delle cose naturali' and, if possible, further word on the identity of the mysterious Vermeil. See Peiresc to Barberini, 5 December 1634 (BAV, ms. Barb-Lat 6503, fol. 108^r).

that born a Huguenot he had been converted to Catholicism in Cairo by none other than De Loches.⁵⁷ This neatly introduced De Loches's offer to Francesco Barberini of a selection of his Arabic books, 'hoping that from them great use could be extracted one day for the Christian faith against Mahometanism.'⁵⁸

On 30 January 1635, Peiresc explained to De Loches that from Barberini's letters it appeared that there were few in Rome who could read Ethiopic, thus accentuating the value of his linguistic skills.⁵⁹ A day later, writing to François-Auguste de Thou in Paris, Peiresc summarized the state of his Ethiopian project. There were three tracks: Vermeil, De Loches, and Barberini Rome, whence all paths converged. At the time, there was talk of de Thou being sent on an embassy to Constantinople to seek relief for the condition of French merchants there. Peiresc took the opportunity to inform him – indeed, he presents this kind of communication as his job ('pour maintenir ma possession et vous communiquer tout ce que je pourray apprendre de plus curieux des païs estrangers') – of news he had received from Cairo of the passage of several Ethiopians who were on their way to Rome, and then, later, of three audiences facilitated by a translator which had thus far made little progress. Peiresc hoped also to find out something more of Vermeil. The same unnamed Roman source, he continued, informed him that a month before 'un More,' or Muslim, from Ethiopia had arrived and declared that the presumed imperial heir, then in Piedmont, was not in fact the direct heir to the throne.⁶⁰

The very next day, 31 January 1635, Peiresc rolled this same information into his next letter to Cardinal Barberini. This letter praised De Loches's abilities as a scholar of oriental languages, and offered a rationale for an investment in the study of Ethiopic in particular. Peiresc was concerned that no reply to De Loches's proposal had been received. He stressed the Father's credentials as a linguist. At the same time, he was no shirker, wishing only 'to go and sacrifice himself in preaching the Christian faith among those barbarous peoples of the

⁵⁷ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 December 1634 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 108^r): 'un [sic] certo Francese nominato Vermeil, che è persona molto curiosa, il quale di semplice gioelliero, et soldato. Dicono essere subito à charichi di guerra nobilissima <et governi di[...]>. Egli era stato Hugonotto, et si converto, alla fede Catholica, in mano del Pre Egidio di Losches Cappucino della missione Orientale, et doppò molte sventure del suo negozio fu costretto di passar piu oltre, et s'inscrivo, sino alla corte del Re d'Aethiopia'

⁵⁸ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 December 1634 (BAV, ms. Barb-Lat 6503, fol. 108^v): 'sperando che da essi, grand utile si possa ca[...] un giorno per la fede Christiana contra il Mahometismo...'. It is only after this long presentation that Peiresc broached the subject for which this letter is generally known: his first plea on behalf of the imprisoned Galileo.

⁵⁹ Peiresc to De Loches, 30 January 1635 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 115).

⁶⁰ Peiresc to de Thou, 30 January 1635 (CBI, ms. 1877, fols 422^v-423^r).

Indies.⁶¹ Peiresc thought that his great store of knowledge, acquired with such difficulty, was best committed to paper before he went off on another dangerous mission. And, at the moment, what was preventing De Loches from preparing these texts was his preaching duty. Peiresc hinted, none too subtly, and not for the last time, that Cardinal Barberini should intervene to free him from these quotidian responsibilities. He concluded this section of the letter by thanking the Cardinal for sending him ‘the most curious relation’ of the Holy Land and Ethiopia.⁶²

In a letter to Barberini of 29 March, Peiresc again urged freeing De Loches from his provincial responsibilities. De Loches’s Ethiopian books would be sent to the Pope himself, under the cover of Cardinal Francesco, so as to insure that he would know of their arrival. The books were five in number, accompanied by some copies on papyrus made by another Capuchin, Father Epiphanius of Orleans, his assistant, using De Loches’s method for facilitating easy and cheap printing in foreign characters, ‘which new invention they had thought to avail themselves of in an Ethiopian Mission, which they had always desired more than any other Mission.’⁶³ Having heard that the emperor was keen to establish a printing press in his territory, this invention might allow for direct access to the emperor himself with whom the Capuchins could discuss ‘religious matters and others more important’ (*‘delle cose delle religione et altre piu importanti’*) – a strategy reminiscent of what the Jesuits would achieve in China at the end of the seventeenth century. Peiresc explained that this top-secret invention did not print on cotton, nor on wood, ‘but on a certain material of very little cost,

⁶¹ Peiresc to Barberini, 31 January 1635 (BAV, ms. Barb-Lat, 6503, fol. 114^{r-v}): ‘Havendo notizia non volgare per quelle Lengue orientali, et specialmente per l’Aethiopia & Abyssinia della quale egli haveva composto una grammatica, degno de gran stima. Per la cui editione io gli hò fatto la maggior premura che mi è stata possibile, sapendo che in quella Lengua si sonno conservati libri antiqui isquisitissimi et perduti da molti secoli, in ogni altra Lengua. Egli ha ancora gran compositione non solamente dell’Arabica, ma della Turchesca, et della Persiana, et ha fatto grammatiche. Ma egli non ha altro pensiero che di andarsi sacrificare nella predicatione della fede Christiana frà que’ popoli Barbari dell’Indie.’ This letter, like the previous one of 5 December, ends with a plea for the life of Galileo.

⁶² It is in the form of a letter, entitled ‘Viaggio de gl’Etiopi.’ The text describes the voyage across the desert made by a group of Ethiopians fleeing the victorious forces of Fasilidas, and focuses on the flora, fauna and topography they encounter. The relation, in the form of a long letter to Peiresc dated 17 January 1635, may have survived unnoticed because because it was part of PBnF, ms. Dupuy 475, a manuscript volume some of whose documents have a Peireskean provenance, and which later ‘disappeared’ – but was in fact transferred, perhaps by Colbert’s librarian Baluze, and is preserved in PBnF, ms. V Cents Colbert 483, fols 565^r-566^r.

⁶³ Peiresc to Barberini, 29 March 1635 (BAV, ms. Barb-Lat, 6503, fol. 124^r): ‘della cui nuova inventione havevano pensiero di valersi nella missione Aethiopica la qual’hanno sempre in vista molto maggiore di qualsiasi voglia altra Missione.’

and great durability' and was of such compactness 'that a single man could carry on his back, without discomfort, all the things necessary for this printing.' 'These three alone,' he continued – Father Gilles De Loches, Father Epiphanius of Orleans, and a 'Carlo di Cosna' –

could do miraculous things and have a stupendous success, printing books in these foreign languages, with a huge savings of cost and of time. Having seen not without amazement certain essays of their invention already more than two years ago, and which was able to make the composition of text for printing with almost the same speed that could be written on paper.⁶⁴

Peiresc followed up this lure by returning to a previous one: he was awaiting completion of the first book of De Loches's Ethiopian grammar, which was promised him the following Easter, though delayed by all of his preaching duties. The grammar had to be finished for one reason: to read the Book of Enoch 'which I understand to be discovered in that language.'⁶⁵

It is in this letter that Peiresc emphasizes the two great themes of his later Ethiopian project: the possibility of establishing a Mission to Ethiopia headed by De Loches, and the search for the Book of Enoch. Already in their first meeting, De Loches had suggested to Peiresc the possibility of reaching Ethiopia from across the 'isthmus' of Africa, and Peiresc now duly reported to Cardinal Francesco that this was feasible, 'the confines of his realm [Ethiopia] being very close to that of the Congo.'⁶⁶

Two months later Peiresc was finally able to send De Loches's five manuscript volumes as well as samples of the work produced by De Loches's printing device. Peiresc again urged the establishment of a mission to Ethiopia led by De Loches, with Fathers Epiphanius and Carlo di Cosna. He stressed the difference between the local knowledge they possessed, and what was already accessible in Rome via resident Maronites. 'I see that notwithstanding the great number of Maronites,' Peiresc wrote, 'and others there, who are most expert in oriental

⁶⁴ Peiresc to Barberini, 29 March 1635 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 124^r): '...C'è un altro Padre Carlo de Cosna dell'istesso Ord.^{ne} ancora che non ha minor zelo ne minor industria e valore, et questi tre soli potrebbero far cose mirabili e di stupenda riuscita pero la stampa di libri in coteste lingue straniera, con grandiss.^a spargnia di spesa, e di tempo. Havendo io visto non senza stupore certi saggi dell'invention loro già piu di due anni sonno, et che puonna far la compositione della scrittura da stamparsi, quasi con la medesima velocita con che si potrebbe scrivere suo la charta.'

⁶⁵ Peiresc to Barberini, 29 March 1635 (*ibid.*, fols 123^v-124^v).

⁶⁶ Peiresc to Barberini, 29 March 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 124^v): 'Et si faceva una missione et Compagnia per il Regno di Congo, da donde egli haveva speranza di poter co'l tempo penetrare in Aethiopia. (Laquale porta i confini del suo Imperio assai vicini da quelli da Congo).'

languages, it is very difficult to find interpreters in the family of those Ethiopians.⁶⁷ Peiresc added a post-script suggesting that if the Cardinal wished to go ahead with the establishment of a press at Rome, a copy of whatever instruction he sent to De Loches should be sent him, too, ‘since many jealousies, and zeal of family and friends, with the best of intentions, could lay obstacles to insure that Father Gilles [De Loches] not leave the country.’⁶⁸

Over the summer Peiresc pushed his plan to have De Loches relieved of parishes responsibilities so as to enable him to plan an expedition.⁶⁹ The idea met with an immediate positive response from Rome. Just a day later Peiresc wrote again to De Loches. He had heard from Barberini, ‘who strongly desires to employ you on the Ethiopian Mission with those that you will find good to choose, and to see you in advance at Rome in order to give you there necessary instructions for carrying out that mission.’ Peiresc remained concerned about obtaining permission from De Loches’s immediate superiors, however.⁷⁰

The plan to establish an Ethiopian Mission seems to have become more concrete over the summer of 1635 – either that, or Peiresc just mis-read the signals he was getting. For his letter of 4 October was full of enthusiasm for what he clearly took to be Cardinal Francesco’s support (or complaisance?). ‘As for the business of that good Father,’ Peiresc wrote, he was pleased at the thought of an apostolic letter ‘that would establish him, if it were possible, as head of the Ethiopian Mission, or of other lands between there and Africa, especially of Western as of Southern Africa, from whence one could enter Ethiopia.’ As head of mission De Loches would be able to choose his companions.⁷¹ Peiresc noted that this effort faced a new obstacle, the election of an unsympathetic Provincial, but was confident that this could be fairly easily

⁶⁷ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 May 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 132^v): ‘Poiche veggo che nonostante la gran numero di Maroniti et altri, che fanno costì peritissimi della Lingua Orientali, si stenta tanto à trovar interpreti della famiglia di que’ Aethiopi.’

⁶⁸ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 May 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 132^v): ‘poi che le lettere di S.Em.^{za} non sono state ricapitate, già che molte Jelosie, et zeli de Parenti et amici, à buon voglio potrebbero mettersi alla traversa per inspedire che non uscissero del paese il P. Gidio, e altro Compagni.’

⁶⁹ Peiresc to De Loches, 23 July 1635, *Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 148.

⁷⁰ Peiresc to De Loches, 24 July 1635, *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁷¹ Peiresc to Barberini, 4 October 1635 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 152^v): ‘Et quanto al neg.^o di quel buon Pre. sara buoniss.^o l’espedito di commetterlo come dice V.Em.^{za} a qualsiasi servitore, che si piglio l’assonto di sollecitudine per procurare la spedition del breve Apostolico, che le stabilisca se fosse possibile capo della missione Aethiopica, ò altro paesi di ritorno all’Africa (massime) dell’Africa Occidentale si come dalla meridionale per dove si puo entrar nell’Aethiopia, con facultà di prendere et fare la scelta di quattro ò cinque Compagni quali à cui pareranno piu atti et à quel San.^o proposito, di andarci a predicare la Religione Catholica. Conoscendo egli molto bene il soggetti piu atti à questa gloriosiss.^a impresa.’

overcome.⁷² There is also in this letter a hint of something else. For Peiresc seems to offer his services to Barberini for some project related to an Ethiopian mission, but not yet spelled out.

And if Your Eminence and these Eminent Cardinals of the Congregation are content that I take upon myself this task with the aid of those Fathers, and other friends that I have in those lands, I have sufficient spirit to quickly make a much bigger operation than would be believed, God willing.⁷³

Peiresc's next letter, from the end of October 1635, turns back to Vermeil. Apparently, Peiresc's attempt to positively identify Vermeil finally succeeded, for he thanks Barberini for the relation the Cardinal had sent him about 'S.r Zacharia Vermeil' – information presumably gleaned from the Ethiopians come to Rome.⁷⁴ He takes this opportunity to remind the Cardinal that it was none other than De Loches who had converted Vermeil from Protestantism to Catholicism while they both coincided in Cairo.⁷⁵

In January 1636 Peiresc announced receipt of Barberini's letter of 8 December in which the Cardinal had informed him that he had passed over to the General of the Capuchins 'il negozio del P. Gilles de Losches.'⁷⁶ In April, Peiresc's letter was all about the African quadruped being sent to Paris as a gift.⁷⁷

But immediately following it in the Vatican dossier containing the Peiresc-Barberini correspondence is the single most important document of Peiresc's Ethiopian project, an undated manuscript simply titled 'Per la missione Aethopica.' This may well be the service that Peiresc hinted at the previous Autumn. For in

⁷² Peiresc to Barberini, 4 October 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 152^v).

⁷³ Peiresc to Barberini, 4 October 1635 (*ibid.*, fol. 153^r): 'Et se V.Em.^{za} et cotesi Em.^{mi} SS. Ca[r]dinali] dalla congregazione de propaganda fide si contentano ch'io mi pigli qu[esto] assonto, con l'aiutto di que' padri, et degli altri amici ch'io tengo in que' paesi, me basta l'animo di farci in breve molto maggior operatione che non sarebbe creduto, dio bene giovante.'

⁷⁴ A letter of early August – mis-read by Tamizey de Larroque as April – shows Peiresc asking Pierre Bourdelot to inquire from these Ethiopians about whether they knew Vermeil rather under his given name, 'un nom du Vieil Testament que j'ay oublié et tel que pourroit estre Zacharie et en effet j'estime que ce soit ce nom là soubz lequel le Prince le nommé et tous les autres de sa cognoissance' (Peiresc to Bourdelot, 2 August 1635, *Lettres de Peiresc* (as in n. 10), vol. 7, p. 733; this is CBI, ms. 1872, fol. 465^r).

⁷⁵ Peiresc to Barberini, 31 October 1635 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 158^v): 'Rendendole infinite grazie cosi della relatione di quel Zacharia Vermeil con cui ho potra prender qualche buoniss.^a et utiliss.^a corrispondenza, se vi potra intervenire il R.P. Gilles de Losches, nelle cui mani egli abjurò l'heresia, et di quella del Patriarcha Athanasio (da cui vita io haveva qualche notizia ma non di questo suo viaggio tanto importante, ch'io tenerò secreto secondo che può convenire).'

⁷⁶ Peiresc to Barberini, 3 January 1636 (*ibid.*, fol. 160^v).

⁷⁷ Peiresc to Barberini, 3 April 1636 (*ibid.*, fol. 169^v).

the manner of a legal brief, Peiresc, wearing his jurist's beret, sets out the grounds on which the Congregation would be able to establish a Capuchin mission to Ethiopia *independent* of the desires of the French Capuchins. The grant to the Capuchins to establish their own missions was restricted to the destinations so named, for instance Greece, Syria, Persia, Egypt, England, and Canada. Specific provinces were also given rights, viz. Guinea to the Breton fathers, the Islands of S. Christopher to the Normans, Holland to Flanders and Ireland to the Hibernians in exile. The power to send missions to all other places was expressly reserved by Pope Gregory XV to the Congregation.⁷⁸ Thus, Peiresc wrote, coming straight to the point, the Congregation – and Peiresc noted that his interlocutor was one of its Prefects – could decide to appoint anyone it wished on a mission to any other place, without needing to obtain any consent.⁷⁹ Nor were the Father General and Procurator General of the Capuchin Order likely to object, as they were already very favorably disposed to De Loches.⁸⁰ As for the heads of the French order, Fathers Joseph and Leonard, their objections could have no effect on a matter that lay outside their jurisdiction.⁸¹ Beyond legal liability and sensitivity, there remained the small matter of serving the cause of Christianity.⁸²

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 171^r: 'Intorno alle missioni de' RR.PP. Cappucini, introdotte in Levante et altrove. Si ha da presupporre che la Prefettura a diretione che se non diede già alli RR.PP. Leonardo et Giosepe di Parigi, non fu Generale in qual si voglia parte del mondo, ma ristretta alle missioni che si potevano fare solamente nella Grecia, Syria, Persia, Aegypto, et di piu nell' Inghilterra, et in Canada. Sendo rimasta la perfectione et dispositione della missione verzo La Guinea, amessa alli padri della Provincia di Bretagna. Et quella dell' Isole di S.Christof,^o amessa alli padri della Provincia di Normania. Si come li padri della Provincia di Fiandra hanno la Missione di Hollanda. Et il R.P. Barnaba d'Hybernia ha la piena dispositione della mission di Hybernia, senza alcuna dipendenza d'alcuno di questi prefetti dalli altri. & per tal rispetto fu spedita bolla da PP Gregorio XV (della quale si ha coppia), laquale in termini espressi, riserba alla Congregatione de Propaganda fide, la piena facultà di commettere a tali missioni quelle persone che gli piacerà, senza conditione alcuna, di prendere il beneplacita di quelli à cui si sonno date alcune commissioni di questa natura.'

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 171^r: 'Di maniera che se la Sacra Congregatione vorrà commettere qual si voglia persone ad altre simili missioni, lo può fare assolutamente senza cercare, l'intervento del consenso di qual si voglia altro già comesso in altri luoghi. Il che non può essere difficile all'Em.^{mo} S.^r Card.^{al} Prefetto dell'istessa Congregatione, mentre nella persona proposta non si troveranno altri ostacoli, come si crede, che possa essere'.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Già che dalla parte del R.^{mo} P.^{te} Generale de' Cappuccini, et dal R.P. Procurator Generale dell'istesso ordine, si e testificata già verzo la persona propostà, ogni sorte di buona corrispondenza et approbatione delle sue attioni passate, et buof[...] dispositione ancora d'approvar le future, in questi santi proposti, d'andarsi sacrificare al giovamento degli infedeli, alle quali sicur[amente] non faranno ostacole alcuno, come si spera, et se ne son visti [...] assai evidenti'.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 171^v: 'Senza che possa essere necessario alcun beneplacito delli RR.PP. Leonardo et Giuseppe di Parigi direttori di quelli altre missioni, poiche l'Aethiopia et tanti altri gran paesi si trovano esclusi della commission loro, et della lor giurisdictione.'

⁸² *Ibid.*: 'Non comportando l'interesse della gloria di Dio, che rimanghino [sic] defraudate queste sante anime dell'opportunità d'andare essercitare la charità loro in luoghi dove c'e n'e si

But, as Peiresc warned in an attached note, it was best not to make the Secretary of the Congregation, Monsignor Francesco Ingoli, the instrument of this plan, notwithstanding his position, as he had already ‘shown not a little aversion, every time there was discussion about the person proposed.’ Peiresc explained this in terms of De Loches’s strenuous efforts to establish Capuchin Missions in Syria and Egypt over the objection of other parties – which had been sustained by Ingoli.⁸³

Peiresc’s suspicion of Ingoli was not groundless. On 3 October 1633 the Congregation by mandate of Cardinal Barberini to Secretary Ingoli had decided to send a mission to Ethiopia of three Franciscans: Simonis de Selza, Antonio Vergoletta and Paulus Romanus. On 10 January 1634 the Franciscan mission to Ethiopia was confirmed.⁸⁴ Ingoli, writing on 21 August 1635, noted that a ‘missione d’Ethiopia’ was more needed than ever. With the Jesuits expelled, Ingoli wished to throw open the doors to other orders, and his view prevailed.⁸⁵ In an opinion of 14 January 1636 Ingoli suggested sending four Capuchins to accompany Antonio Virgoletta who had been appointed Prefect.⁸⁶

Barberini’s reaction to Peiresc’s proposal was lukewarm – not surprising given this back story. It was only deep in the body of a letter to Peiresc of 7 March 1636 that we can find his response. While thanking Peiresc for his help – ‘Your Lordship merits a thousand blessings for the help which you wish to give to the good works of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*’ – he had not been able to make use of the memorandum yet. Since ‘the business of Father Gilles De Loches does not go’ he had decided to pass the dossier to another. He would pursue the matter with his superiors but excused himself in advance as ‘being little friend to certain unusual ways.’ This was as much as Cardinal Barberini would say on the matter. Later in the same letter, however, we are given another clue. Barberini explained that he had looked into the matter of

gran carestia et bisogno, mentre si puol eseguire senza derogare all’Authorità degli altri stabilità in altri luoghi, et sopra altre persona tanti diverse di queste, che sonno in buon numero.’

⁸³ *Ibid.*, fol. 172r: ‘Ma si ha da avvertire, che non sara forzi buon instrumento a promuovere questa devotiss.^a impresa, Monsig.^r Ingoli secretario ded.^a Congregatione, quando si fosse trovato a proposito di impiegarlo per haver egli (forzi à gran torto però) monstrato non poca aversione, ogni volta che s’e trattato della persona che si propone. In conseguenza delli vivi officii ch’havea fatti in Levante per resistere alli violenze d’alcuni che volsero imperdirle di stabilir la mission de’ cappuccini in quei paesi, alli quali non mancava mai il favore et protettione di d.^o Monsig.^r ma nulladimeno fu forza che si approvassero finalmente le cose stabilite con l’authorità legitima alla quale si hebbe ricorze in cotesta corte.’

⁸⁴ *Etiopia Francescana* (as in n. 28), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁵ Ingoli notes, 21 August 1635 (*ibid.*, pp. 43-44).

⁸⁶ Ingoli notes, 14 January 1636 (*ibid.*, p. 45).

De Loches's coming to Rome and found no difficulty 'on the part of the Capuchin fathers, as long as he is not coming to get in the way' of the Congregation. Their Eminences were not pleased by the disputes that had arisen between him and the Franciscans in the Levant 'which, I confess to you, would not please me any more, as I am Protector of the Observant Franciscans.'⁸⁷

In his letter of 29 April 1636, Peiresc urged Cardinal Francesco's personal support for De Loches, to protect him against those who would impede the mission, and again singled out Father Ingoli. As in the roughly contemporaneous memo, Peiresc noted that since the Capuchin superiors had no objections, 'it seemed that they ought not to be found among those Eminences of the Congregation who have plenipotentiary power in all negotiations of this nature.' This was Peiresc's way of reminding his correspondent of what was expected from him. If there were those who held against De Loches his behavior in the Levant towards other orders, further investigation revealed that the blame was not his.⁸⁸ None of this, he thought, ought to affect decisions about the merits of an Ethiopian Mission and the publication of Ethiopian texts which, Peiresc declared, 'I see above any other thing for the present advantage of the Church.'⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Barberini to Peiresc, 7 March 1636 (PBNF, ms. F.français 9537, fol. 113^v): 'Merita VS mille benedictioni per l'aiuto che vuol dare alle buone opere della Congregatione de' Propaganda Fide, et questi Signori Eminentissimi di essa ne rimarrano singularmente gustati: l'essere io mancato alla Congregatione è stato cagione che non hanno potuto godere la scrittura da VS inviata, ma in breve la vedranno. Mentre io vedo che niente cammina il negotio del P. Egidio di Losches posto in mano a un mio familiare, l'ho mutata, dando gl'ordini a un altro, che spero sarà sollecito et di qua invierà ciò che sarà conveniente, et do bisogno... Ho procurato d'intendere ciò che si poteva sperare per la venuta qui del P. Egidio et non la trovo difficile <dalla parte dei padri Cappuccini> quando egli non venga impedito dalla Congregatione de' Propaganda Fide, parendo che a questa non piacesse già le dissensioni che furono tra esso Padre, et i preti Osservanti Franciscani, il che confesso a V.S. non piacerebbe ne meno molto a me, che sono Protettore della Religione dei Padri dell'Osservanza.'

⁸⁸ Peiresc to Barberini, 29 April 1636 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 174^r): 'Quanto al P^{re} Egidio di Losches, poi che non si trovano impedimento della parte delli Superiori Cappuccini, pareva che non dovessero trovarsi da quella di cotesti Em.^{mi} della Congreg.^{ne} de propaganda fide li quali hanno plenipotenza in tutti li negozi di questa natura e se ben fu richiamato da Levante per certi dispareri con persone piu sollecite di preoccupar gli animi di cotesti SS.ⁱ nulladimeno quando egli fu diritorno, et che passò per costà, l'essame del suo procedere mostrò che il torto non era dal canto suo tutto la suo negotioni sendo stata approvata da cotesti SS.^{ri} con testificatione di esserne ben sodisfatto, al contrario, li successori, li hanno posto ogni cosa sotto sopra.'

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*: 'Et la si passa oltre alla missione Ethiopica non è haverà à contrastare con quelli che gli volsero impedire al stabilimento della lor missione in Egitto. ne con quelli che possono essere sotto special protezione di V.Em.^{za} et poi si puonno chiarire cose costì, prima che si essequissa la missione longinqua, et in tanta volersi dell'editione di qualche nobiliss.^a operà costì in quelle lengue, à che io miro piu che ad ogni altra cosa per l'utile presente della Chiesa, non pensando alla missione, che per compatire et condefraudare al suo zelo devotione particolare, ma subordinatamente agli

Peiresc would not end without again reminding Cardinal Barberini of the enmity of the secretary of the Congregation towards Father Gilles.⁹⁰

When Peiresc referred to the judgment of a distant future, he was usually signalling his surrender to present, practical difficulties. In his next surviving letter to Cardinal Francesco, from July 1636, Peiresc offered that the promises made to Father Gilles ‘would be one day of a most notable utility for the public.’ But then he added that the support of the Congregation for the Mediterranean-wide eclipse observations he was organizing in these years would ‘aid the public and draw most exquisite conclusions and consequences’ – abandoning any reference to the Ethiopian Mission.⁹¹ It would never reappear in their correspondence.

In December 1636, Peiresc could finally report the long-anticipated capture of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch in Egypt (though it turns out to have been something else entirely).⁹² Father Gilles had promised to translate it and already had a grammar ready to be printed. In a last bit of seduction, Peiresc dangled the manuscript in front of Cardinal Barberini ‘if over there the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* wouldn’t desire to undertake the enterprise.’⁹³ To De Loches, however, Peiresc was more direct: he had given up on the possibility of an Ethiopian Mission:

As for the Ethiopian Mission, it’s the truth that those Roman men really desired it. But, as the current wars have diminished their revenues by a good half, in general as in particular those of Cardinal Barberini, they fear being touched in a strange way, fearing so strongly that their purse will be touched that they are capable of abandoning all those things which are most honorable and advantageous for them.⁹⁴

altri interessi pubblici di coteste editioni, lequale io vorrei pure che egli potesse stabilire costì, co’l mezzo delli suoi compagni, prima ch’haver licenza d’andare in paesi barbari.’

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*: Vi potra V.Em.^{za} pensare naturalmente et poi ordinare a suo beneplacito alquale io sarà sempre prontiss.^o a conformarmi ma non si scordi, alla causa di sospetto, contra le persona del S.^r Ingoli per conto da questo buon padre, che non lo puote vincere facilmente, in cose pur chiariss.^o et che non si potevano revocar in dubbio, per quanto intesi.’

⁹¹ Peiresc to Barberini, 4 July 1636 (*ibid.* fol. 181^v): ‘La memoria ch’ella si degna conservare degli officii promessi per il S^r. del Chasteuil, et per il P. Egidio sarà un giorno di utile notabilissimo per il publico, et io nulladimeno le ne rimarrò obligatissimo. Ma ben di rinovarle mie istanze accio ella si degni passare officio apprezzo cotesti Em.^{mi} della Congreg.^{ne} di propaganda, et apprezzo la S.^{te} di N.S. ancora se sarà di bisogno. Per fare ordine alli missionari che si mandano in paesi Barbari et infedeli che vi farono qualche osservazione delle eclissi solari o lunari, per ajutarne il publico et cavarse le conclusioni et conseguenze isquisitiss.¹ che se ne cavono.’

⁹² Pierre Dubois, ‘Peiresc, Enoch, et les Capucins’, in Jacques Ferrier, ed., *Fioretti II. L’été Peiresc*, Avignon, 1988, pp. 184-201; and Joseph Tubiana, ‘Peiresc et le Manuscrit ‘Eth. 117 (ex 37)’ de la Bibliothèque Nationale,’ in *ibid.*, pp. 203-213.

⁹³ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 December 1636 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 190^r): ‘se costì se ne volesse far l’impresa dalla congregazione de propaganda fide.’

⁹⁴ Peiresc to De Loches, 14 April 1637 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 316): ‘Quant à la mission d’Ethiopie, c’est la verité que ces messieurs de Rome l’ont fort goustée, mais,

Peiresc's passion of these years was his quest for the Book of Enoch, on the basis of which Daniel Morhof called Peiresc 'that great hunter of books' ('magni illius librorum venatoris.')⁹⁵ Like his hot pursuit of the Pentateuch of the Samaritans five years earlier, the quest for the Book of Enoch was a tribute to Scaliger's influence. Scaliger had incorporated chunks into his *Thesaurus Temporum* (1606), taken from Syncellus, including a passage containing a letter to St Jude. Its authenticity – and Peiresc was certainly ready to concede the possibility of fabrication – was what he hoped would be settled by De Loches's edition.⁹⁶ The long haul preceding its recovery elicited from Peiresc a typical philosophical reflection. 'It is necessary in this world,' he wrote, 'to give oneself a little more patience in order to live without displeasure... But for the Ethiopian language you will have made a big mistake to have abandoned it, there being more reason than ever to value it...'⁹⁷ A successful result would be more than equal compensation for the frustrations of working with the Jesuits and the Congregation.⁹⁸

Indeed, in his last fully preserved letter to Francesco Barberini, Peiresc announced the plan he had for publication of the Book of Enoch. Its combination of text and translation, along with commentaries, grammar, and parallel liturgical texts suggests it as his mature model of polyglot publication. Though it was never achieved, this ideal stands as a concrete reply to the limitations he pointed out to Jean Morin in the Paris Polyglot Bible's publication of Samaritan texts, and to Cardinal Barberini in Athanasius Kircher's *Prodromus Copticus*.⁹⁹ Peiresc envisioned De Loches working with friends to produce an edition that included 'a grammar, a Psalter, a New Testament, and a ritual in Ethiopian language.'¹⁰⁰

comme les guerres presentes ont diminué leurs revenus de la bonne moitié, tant en general qu'en particulier ceux du cardinal Barberin, ils craignent la touche [sic] d'une estrange façon, et apprehendent si fort que leur bource ne soit atteinte, qu'ils sont cappable d'abandonner toutes les choses les plus honorables et avantageuses pour eux, m'assurant que ce n'est que cela seul qui a accroché toute cest proposition, qui avoit esté fort au goust de nostre Saint Pere comme l'ay sceu de bon lieu.'

⁹⁵ Daniel Morhof, *Polyhistor*, Lubeck, 1708 [1688], p.50.

⁹⁶ Peiresc to De Loches, 26 May 1637 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 319).

⁹⁷ Peiresc to De Loches, 4 November 1636 (*Ibid.*, p. 276; this is CBI, ms. 1874, fol. 433^v): 'Il fault, en ce monde, se donner un peu plus de patience pour vivre sans desplaisir... Mais, pour la langue ethiopienne, vous auriez grand tort de l'avoir abandonnée: y ayant plus de subject que jamais de la faire valloir et de [...] les errements, car le volume des revelations d'Enoch es[...] tombé entre mes mains, et je l'ay originellement, et je l'ay su[...] receu ce jourd'huy de Marseille, au lendemain de la reception de vostre lettre où vous tesmoignez vostre desgoust si sensible: tellement que vous voillà.'

⁹⁸ Peiresc to De Loches, 20 January 1637 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 308).

⁹⁹ See Miller, 'A Philologist, a Traveller and an Antiquary Rediscover the Samaritans,' and 'Copts and Scholars' (both as in n. 5).

¹⁰⁰ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 February 1637 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 193^v): 'M'obligherà sommamente l'Em.^{za} Vostra, nelle grazie che si degnero procurare all R. P. Egidio de Losches et

While Peiresc was trying, and failing, to win Cardinal Barberini to his vision, plans for an Ethiopian Mission under the auspices of the Congregation were moving ahead.¹⁰¹ In the meantime, however, Peiresc's Egyptian contacts, Fathers Agathange and Cassien decided to go on their own. Their efforts did not stop with Peiresc's death on 24 June 1637. On 2 August, Agathange de Vendome wrote to the Congregation expressing his confidence in the feasibility of an Ethiopian mission, and the importance of forestalling the Jesuits.¹⁰² Agathange offered that, ideally, the Church ought to provide missionaries with instruction in Ethiopian and vernacular Arabic in Rome, 'and then to send them disguised to Alexandria, and without the merchants knowing that they have to go to Ethiopia, and make them pass through Cairo without stopping – or truly they will come to be discovered as missionaries,' with all sorts of complications.¹⁰³ Switching from the general to the very particular, he concluded by noting that he and Father Cassien, who knew sufficient Ethiopian, were ready to go.¹⁰⁴

By January 1638 they had left Cairo, by March they had reached Suaquin, and by 25 April they left for Ethiopia dressed as Coptic monks, joining a caravan

se gli mancherà costì occasion di godere la communicatione delle persone letterate et d'imbarco in Galere ò altre navi piu sicure del solito per Roma ci sarebbe facile di consolarci pur che ne fosse lecito di goderlo qui noi medesimi, et d'impiegarlo intanto alcuni mesi nella version de libri d'AENOCH. per la quale io gli ho raddunando da diversi amici et mettendo insieme, una grammatica, un Psalterio, un nuovo testamento, et un rituale in lingua Aethiopica & se posso haver notizia che si trovino altri libri dai Levante gli ricercherò dovunque mi sarà possibile per poter giovare il publico et fargli godere questa opera [di] tanta veneranda antiquità.' Peiresc was writing simultaneously to Cardinal Barberini's librarian, Lucas Holstenius, asking after any Ethiopian grammars that were found in Rome and that could be useful for the project of an edition of the book of Enoch; see Peiresc to Holstenius, 6 February 1637 (CBI, ms. 1873, fol. 169^v). Indeed, in the very last letter that Peiresc wrote, to his brother Vallavez in Paris the day before he died, he urged its publication. See Peiresc to Vallavez, 23 June 1637 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 3612, fol. 79^r): 'je suis bien asseuré que vous n'y manquez pas, et vous prie de continuer le dessein que j'avois de faire imprimer le livre d'Enoch. Et pour cette effet faire venir la P. Gilles de Loche pour le traduire, afin que ce livre qui a esté incogneu jusques à cette heure et que j'ay eu avec tant de peine et de depense, ne vienne à se perdre et le public en demeure frustré.'

¹⁰¹ A letter of the Congregation to the Nuntio of France dated 31 March 1637 (*Etiopia Francescana* (as in n. 28), p. 54) announced the renovation of the Ethiopian Mission 'by some Reformed Franciscan Fathers under the prefecture of Father Antonio Vergoletta of that same Order'.

¹⁰² Agathange de Vendome to the Congregation, 2 August 1637 (*Etiopia Francescana* (as in n. 28), pp. 73-75).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 74: '...e poi mandarli in Alessandria travestiti, e senza che gli mercanti sapessero che hanno di andare in Etiopia, e fargli passare il Cairo senza fermarsi in esso, o veramente venendo essi scoperti per missionarii è necessario che si scriva alli Consoli che in case che gli venga qualche danno per causa degli missionarii gli sarà rescrito il danno.'

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*: 'e con queste lettere'—from the Coptic Patriarch to King prohibiting molestation of Christians and to the Bishop recommending me—'haveva volontà di andare in Ethiopia in compagnia del P. Cassiano nostro il quale sa della lingua ethiopica quanto basta per questo negotio.'

from Suaquin to Dibárua, capital of border province of Sarave.¹⁰⁵ Fathers Agathange and Cassien reached the Ethiopian frontier some time in July 1638. They were apprehended as they tried to cross the border and were sent by the governor to the capital in Dambia (now Gondar). They arrived on 5 August and were executed two days later.¹⁰⁶ In May 1639, news of their deaths reached Rome.¹⁰⁷

But even this is not the end of the story. For two years later, in a letter to the secretary of the Congregation, Gilles De Loches returned to the question of the difficulties and risks of an Ethiopian Mission. Despite the martyrdom of his colleagues, De Loches still believed that the way from Egypt was the best, if undertaken cautiously, and ‘not directly, as did Father Aganthange and his companion.’ He also thought an Ethiopian Mission should be organized methodically, with acclimatization in Cairo as well as in Nubia on the Ethiopian frontier. De Loches put himself forward as best placed to run such a mission. De Loches asked that he be sent the decree of the Congregation along with a Papal letter addressed to the King of Ethiopia. Furthermore, he insisted on the right to read any book he deemed necessary to prepare for the trip.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ R.P. Francisco Leite da Faria, ‘Um Filho de Portugueses, Martir na Abissinia: o Beato Cassiano de Nantes,’ *Itinerarium*, 10-11 (1956) pp. 492-507 (502). When the titular head of the Ethiopian Mission authorized by the Congregation, Antonio Virgoletta, left Malta on a French ship in September 1637 bound for Sidon and then Jerusalem he knew nothing of their plans (Virgoletta to the Congregation, 17 August 1637 (*Etiopia Francescana* (as in n. 28), p. 59)). When Virgoletta first heard of their plan, in Nazareth in January 1638, he was annoyed and surprised (Virgoletta to the Congregation, Nazareth, 17 January 1638 (*ibid.*, p. 76)). In May, Ingoli explained to Virgoletta that the Congregation had approved two missions, one of Franciscans and one of Capuchins. The latter were ready to go, and possessed letters from the Coptic Patriarch, so were allowed to proceed (Ingoli to Virgoletta, 8 May 1638 (*ibid.*, p. 76)).

¹⁰⁶ Leite da Faria, ‘Um Filho de Portugueses’ (as in n. 105), p. 502. The martyrs are remembered in cyberspace, as well: <http://www.franciscanos.org/santoral/agatangela.htm> [accessed on 11 June 2008].

¹⁰⁷ Virgoletta to Ingoli, 2 May 1639 (*Etiopia Francescana* (as in n. 28), p. 97).

¹⁰⁸ De Loches to Ingoli, 20 January 1641 (Antonio Brásio, ed., *Monumenta Misionaria Africana. África ocidental* vol. 8, Lisbon, 1960, pp. 480-483): ‘non di prima fronte, come fecero il Padre Agathangelo e suo compagno... Andarò donch’allo Cairo, et ivi vederò quel che sarà da fare, poi si sarà comodità da passar inansi, lascerò alcuni miei compagni quivi, per corrispondere in Rome et altri luoghi di Christianità e passerò in Tebaide; quivi ancora vederò da stabilir la mission et lasciando altri compagni, sequitarò in Nubia overo altri Regni vicini al Etiopia e fondata la mission pigliarò tempo comodo per intrar in Etiopia... Però sarai bene commetermi la cura d’Egitto, Tebaide, Nubia, Etiopia, et altri Regni vicini coll’numero di vinti Fratri da me eligendi nelle provincie dove s’incontrorono essere di buona voglia, havendo parola di tanti d’accompagnarmi nelle parti dove sarò mandato... Scrivere et stampare libri senza nome d’autore, etc. Dare la confirmatione, conficere gli Olii Santi, et finalmente amplificar in tutto gli privilegii.’

A few months later, De Loches seems to have changed course, telling Ingoli that it would be too difficult for him to go to Ethiopia, ‘under the direction proposed in your last letter.’¹⁰⁹ Whatever Ingoli’s plan was, it obviously contained elements that De Loches rejected. But he offered an additional justification of great interest. French ships, he added, were no longer sailing to the Levant, making access via Egypt difficult.¹¹⁰ He proposed instead to go by way of the Cape Verde Islands and Congo – exactly as he had mentioned to Peiresc in their very first conversation, eight years earlier. He thought this ‘a shorter and less dangerous route to Ethiopia than that of Egypt.’¹¹¹

On the same day, 10 March 1641, De Loches also wrote to the Congregation’s Prefect, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, reminding him of their earlier contact, through Peiresc, and of the latter’s efforts to further De Loches’s missionary ideas. Peiresc was keen to establish an Ethiopian mission; here, De Loches seems to have relegated that to a later stage – if at all – of a project whose immediate focus was on West Africa.¹¹²

3. Why Ethiopia? Peiresc and the History of Semitics

Thus, it is not easy to say whether Peiresc succeeded or failed. True, he did not get the Congregation to authorize a mission led by his own people, but yet, a mission was authorized and, separately, his own people did go to Ethiopia. On the one hand, Peiresc’s hope for a regular and substantial flow of Ethiopic texts, artifacts and information did not materialize. On the other hand, correspondence between him and Claude Saumaise, in particular, shows just how far Peiresc was able to mobilize the information he had received for a broader Near Eastern history through its surviving languages. Peiresc was fascinated by

¹⁰⁹ De Loches to Ingoli, 10 March 1641 (*ibid.*, pp. 492-495): ‘sotto la direction proposta nella vostra ultima lettera.’

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*: ‘Di più, nostri vascelli di Francia, per diversi rispetti non vanno più in Levante, e così non possiamo imbarcarsi per andar dalla banda d’Egitto.’

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 492-493: ‘Mai io hò commodità sì la Sacra Congregatione vuol mandarmi l’ubbedienza di stabilir una nuova missione n’i paesi di negri che sono dal Capo Verde in sino allo Regno di Congo, i mercantanti quali ho a tal effetto disposti non spettando altro sino da me venga di Roma la licenza per me et otto altri Fratri da me in questa Provincia di Turena overo altra vicina eligendi. Con lo tempo, potrà acrescersi il numero di missionari, et all’hora pigliare non solamente di tutte le Provincie dalla nostra Religione ma ancora d’altri ordini e Sacerdoti Secolari. E con tal occasion scoprirò una strada più breve e meno pericolosa per andare in Etiopia, che quella d’Egitto.’

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 494-495: ‘Fa qualch’ anni che per mezzo dall’illustre già Signor Abbate di Peiresc io fù favorito d’una lettera dall’Eminentia Sua, colla qual degnava offerirmi suoi favori n’i bisogni occorrenti: d’onde m’inardisco proponergli comm’a Prefetto dalla Sacra Congregatione de Fede Propaganda, di volerci concedere Licenza di stabilir la mission n’i Regni di Negri che sono dal Capo Verde, insino al Regno di Congo, tutti distiuti dalla cognitione d’Iddio.’

Ethiopia less because of its associations with the legendary Prester John – these hardly figure at all as motivations – than because of an insight into the possibility that language could be read as historical evidence, and comparative linguistics as evidence for the history of a region and the interactions of its peoples. This might be seen to represent the flowering of philology as the late humanist poly-disciplinary integrator par excellence, and more than half way towards August Boeckh's famous view of philology as the master science for knowledge of the past.¹¹³

In a letter of 1 June 1635, Claude Saumaise reported receiving from Johann Elichmann (d.1639) – a native of Silesia, colleague at Leiden in the medical faculty and an astonishing linguist who is associated with the study of Scythian and who provided Peiresc with his copy of Ole Worm's *Fasti Danici* – 'an alphabet that was relayed to him by a Moravian who lived a long time in Egypt, [and] that he called *Forma Aegyptiorum*.' Elichmann had also 'transcribed some verses of the Psalms in that same languagæ, which he said was Egyptian, which had nothing at all like that of the Copts.' Saumaise promised to send the alphabet as soon as possible.¹¹⁴

What was this 'Forma Aegyptiorum'? The idea of a language partaking of both Egyptian and Ethiopian and spoken on their frontier may have been introduced into currency already by Leo Africanus (Al Hassan al-Wazzam).¹¹⁵ Peiresc would likely have received Saumaise's letter some time in the early summer of 1635. In his reply, written in September, he wondered aloud if it weren't closer to Ethiopic than Coptic, given that the liturgy in the mountainous borderland was in Ethiopic.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Daniel Droixhe long ago recognized that the history of languages was important for Peiresc ('Sur la correspondance linguistique de Peiresc' in Id., *De l'origine du langage* (as in n. 11), pp. 81-90. But deeper familiarity with Peiresc reveals how much richer this line of inquiry actually is.

¹¹⁴ Saumaise to Peiresc, 1 June 1635 (Philippe Tamizey de Larroque, ed., *Les Correspondants de Peiresc*, 2 vols, Geneva, 1972 (reprint), vol. 1, p. 237: '... un alphabet, qu'il en a rapporté d'un Moravien qui a longtemps demeuré en Egypte, qu'il appelle *Forma Aegyptiorum*, lequel est si extravagant et différent de celui que j'ai eu de vous, et des autres caracteres dont sont escrites les livres des Coptes, tant en la forme des lettres, qu'aux noms d'iceles, qu'il ne se peut rien voir de si dissemblable; il a transcrit aussi quelques versets des pseumes en cette mesme langue, qu'il dit estre égyptienne, qui n'a rien d'approchant d'avec celle des Cophtes.' Saumaise acknowledged receiving the alphabet in a letter to Elichmann dated 26 January 1635. Elichmann had been mentioned earlier, in Saumaise's letter to Peiresc of 2 September 1634 (see Peiresc, *Lettres à Claude Saumaise et à son entourage (1620-1637)*, Agnès Bresson, ed., Florence, 1992, p. 386).

¹¹⁵ Leo Africanus mentions that in Nubia there was a mixed language of Arabic, Chaldean (i.e. Ethiopic) and Egyptian (i.e. Coptic), see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*, New York, 2006, p. 133.

¹¹⁶ Peiresc to Saumaise, 11 September 1635 (*Lettres à Claude Saumaise* (as in n. 114), p. 175): 'il semble qu'il [an 'Aegyptien' alphabet drawn up by Elichman at Leiden] y en aye quelqu'un assez conforme à celluy des Aethyopiens, ce qui ne seroit pas si incompatible puis que vous vous

But the only way to be sure was to send someone there. That was why Peiresc passed along the snippet sent by Elichmann via Saumaise to the Capuchin Cassien de Nantes in Cairo. Thinking aloud, again, Peiresc speculated that this Upper Egyptian language might be ‘Nubian.’ He thought that, whatever it was, as a language it represented an intermediate or transitional stage – linguistically, ecclesiologically, and historically – between Egypt and Ethiopia.¹¹⁷

Peiresc surmised that there had to be some kind of structural relationship between Coptic and ancient Egyptian, and thought it similar to that between modern and ancient Greek. Here, as there, the moderns could not speak to the ancients.¹¹⁸ Peiresc also realized that languages lived and died in communities. Hence his tremendous fascination with the differences captured in dialects, the subtle shady zone where languages met, mingled and lived, for a time. ‘I also understand that there is in the mountains of Egypt,’ he wrote, transmitting the thinking of professors in Leiden to missionaries in Egypt, ‘a spoken language among the people, that is called Forma and which has, it is said, something of Nubian and Ethiopic, and in which are found the Psalms and other written books, in an alphabet totally different from that of the Copts.’¹¹⁹ Peiresc was not,

demeurez d’accord que les lyurgies de ces peuples des montaignes voysines de l’Aegypte sont en langue aethyopienne. Car quand il y auroit quelques differendz, je ne la tiendrois pas moins de l’origine aethyopienne. Comme dans le caractere des Cophtes, nous voyons le caractere grec majuscule un peu alteré ou interposé de quelque autre lettre de plus et ne ferois pas de difficulté de croire que ceste langue soit corrompue de l’aethyopienne, aussy bien que des caracteres dont le temps vous éclaircira bien tost. J’attendz dans peu de jours une grammaire aethyopienne qui comprend ce dict-on d’autres langues et dialectes qui en approchent fort et possible que [ce soit] celle dont vous estes si en peyne.’

¹¹⁷ Peiresc to Cassien de Nantes, 29 September 1635 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), pp. 190-192): ‘On dict qu’ils celebrent leurs liturgies in ethiopien, tel que celluy qui se void en l’edition ethiopienne d’un Nouveau Testament, qui n’est quasi qu’un idiome syriaque corrompu, qu’ils ont receu vraysemblablement avec la religion chrestienne. Mais on dict aussy que leur langage vulgaire est beaucoup plus conforme à l’ethiopien, et plus different du cophte: de quoy je voudrois bien que vous nous peussiez éclaircir, esperant qu’il s’en tireroit de trez excellentes notices, et capables de faire juger de la verité des primitives origines de langue des ethiopiens.’ Peiresc seems also to have raised the subject with the Maronite scholar Jean Hesronita. In an undated letter to Peiresc, probably from the 1630s, Hesronita discussed a Coptic book that he had been sent. It apparently contained the text of the mass in two languages, Arabic and the other ‘Cophito o Egyttio del quale anco se ne servono li Nubiti, et altri sottoposti al Patriarcato de Cophiti’ (Hesronita to Peiresc, undated (CBI, ms. 1774, fol. 397^r; Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanés, ms. 206 (1024), p. 421).

¹¹⁸ Peiresc to Cassien de Nantes, 29 September 1635 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), p. 190): ‘Car je crois bien que le vulgaire qui souloit parler ce langage l’a tellement changé, qu’à peine le sçauroit il entendre, non plus que les Grecs naturels, qui parlent le vulgaire, n’entendent pas le grec des livres s’ils ne l’estudient avec grande peine.’

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*: ‘J’entends mesme qu’il y a dans les montaignes d’Egypte un langage vulgaire parmy des peuples qui se nomme Forma <FORMA AEGYPTIOR. AZ Kawa BE’ Bach CN Triricuzai

however, surprised by such a divergence, seeing it as the natural consequence of a language being used. Changes in Ethiopic were the result of changes internal to its use in the same way that the alteration and transposition of the Greek characters in the Coptic alphabet could be explained by its use.¹²⁰

Ever so politely, another Capuchin, Father Agathange de Vendôme, explained to Peiresc in December 1635 that in the large library of the monastery of St Macarius in Wadi Natrun there were no books in a ‘Nubian’ language. Moreover, inhabitants of the Egyptian-Ethiopian marches all spoke Arabic. Father Agathange did, however, leave open the possibility that once upon a time Arabic was much less diffused and another vernacular more prominent.¹²¹ Peiresc, in reply, speculated that the sheikh who was Agathange’s source simply knew nothing other than Arabic himself and that one would have to journey further towards Ethiopia in order to find any traces of this ‘Nubian’ language.¹²²

Peiresc’s serious thinking about borderlands shaped his approach to the languages of the Near East. Another exchange with Saumaise makes this perfectly

DT Brach> [These are the letters used by Peiresc’s secretary to transcribe the sounds of the letters and found in the margin of the text- PNM] le quel tient, se dict on, quelque peu du nubien et de l’ethiopien, et qu’il se trouve des Pseulmes et autres livres escripts en ce langage, et d’un caractere tout different de celluy des Cophtes, et plus approchant à l’ethiopien.’

¹²⁰ Peiresc to Saumaise, 11 September 1635 (*Lettres à Claude Saumaise* (as in n. 114), p. 175). Saumaise was in agreement with Peiresc’s sense of the relation between these languages, and greeted the news of the arriving Ethiopian grammar with enthusiasm; see Saumaise to Peiresc, 15 October 1635 (*ibid.*, p. 388): ‘Je ne doute point au reste, que l’autre opinion que j’ai, ne se trouve pareillement vraie, que le vulgaire aethiopien n’approche du cophte, s’il n’est le même; à quoi nous apportera un grand esclaircissement vostre grammaire aethiopienne, puis qu’elle contient aussi d’autres dialectes semblables ou approchants.’

¹²¹ Agathange to Peiresc, 20 December 1635 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), pp. 210-211; this is PBNF, ms. F.français 9543, fols 254^r-257^r): ‘Cependant il y a des livres fort grands, escripts en tres elegant caractere, et en grand nombre. Pour ce qui est du nubien, que vous demandez, je vous diray qu’il n’est pas tres aisé d’en recouvrer icy. La langue arabe a tellement prevalu en tous ces pays, laquelle a éstouffé la nubienne, sinon quant au parler, au moins quant a l’écriture. Car, depuis que ces peuples on receu le mahometisme, ils ont commencé à lire l’Alcoran en arabe, et petit à petit ont laissé leur langue, specialement ceux qui sont ès quartiers proche d’Egypte et y frequentent. Peut estre ceux qui demeurent plus avant la conservent encore. Il doit venir bien tost icy une caravane où il y aura peut estre quelqu’un qui nous en donnera plus de cognoissance que ceux qui sont aujourd’huy icy, que ni scavent pas lire. Pour ce qui est de ceux que vous appelés Forma Egyptiorum, qui sont habitants dans des montaignes d’Egypte vers la mer Rouge, je vous assure qu’ils ne cognoissent autre langue que l’arabe bien corrompu, et ceux de Syammay pareillement. Bien est vray que plus avant, approachant des Abyssins, on y parle une langue qui semble estre un meslange d’ethiopien et arabe, et se fait entendre facilement des Abyssins et des Arabes.’

¹²² Peiresc to Cassien de Nantes, 1 November 1636 (*Correspondance de Peiresc* (as in n. 2), pp. 271-272): ‘[J]’ incline tousjours du costé de ceux qui tiennent qu’ils ont quelque caractere et langage particuliere different de l’arabe, quoy qu’on vous puisse dire au contraire.’

clear. To know Coptic, Peiresc opined, it was necessary to understand all of its neighboring languages – Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Ethiopian – ‘which ones often borrow and keep something from the others, according to the vicissitudes of things and the change of dynasties and the reciprocal subjection of one people by another.’¹²³

His model for explaining the unknown was the known. The history of Europe’s languages reflected confusions caused by

the migrations of peoples, the expulsion of the possessors of one land or town and its occupation by others; and, then again, sometimes the conquerors are content with domination and superiority rather than expulsion. All of which makes for strange mixtures which are recognized chiefly along the frontier and limits of one language and another, like between French and Flemish, French and Bas Breton, or Basque.¹²⁴

He brought the explanatory model home to Provence, too (one suspects this may in fact have been the kernel of the theory). ‘In our own times,’ he began, land-hungry migrants from Liguria settled the back country of Provence where two languages were now conserved, the corrupted Genoese dialect, ‘which we call Fignon’ and the ‘natural’ vernacular, Provençal, with, of course, some mixture between the two.¹²⁵

Another example of the layering of languages was buried in the divergent fortunes of Greek in the West: surviving in pockets on the southern shore of Sicily but long gone in and around Marseille. The causes of its disappearance there – commerce with, and conquest by, Rome – led Peiresc to speculate on the disappearance of the Etruscans, and others, whose languages ‘could have conserved the locutions and the circumstances of the origins of the language of

¹²³ Peiresc to Saumaise, 10 April 1634 (*Lettres à Claude Saumaise* (as in n. 114), p. 91): ‘... n’estimant pas qu’elle soit facile à comprendre et bien manier, si on n’a aultant de congnoissance du fonds de la langue grecque et de tous ses dialectes que de cez orientales, qui ont quelque rapport à l’hebraïque, syriaque ou arabe et possible à la persiene, et aethiopienne ou abyssine dont les unes ont souvent emprunté et retenu quelque chose des autres, selon les vicissitudes des choses, et changementz des dynasties, et subjection des uns soubz les autres reciproquement.’

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*: ‘Ce qui a engendré tant d’autres confusions dans nostre Europe, par les transmigrations des peuples, et expulsion des possesseurs d’un pais ou d’une ville, pour y recevoir des nouveaux hostes; et d’aulcunesfoys les nouveaux se contentoient de la domination et superiorité sur les anciens sans les chasser. Ce qui faisoit d’estranges meslanges qui se reconnoissent principalement aux lieux de frontiere et limitrophes, d’une langue à une autre, comme entre les François et Flamandz, entre les François et Bas Bretons, ou Basques.’

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*: ‘Et de nostre temps il s’est emmené des colonies de la Riviere de Genes (où les peuples n’ont guieres de terre à cultiver) pour venir habiter des villages en ceste province, dans lesquelz se sont conservez les deux langages, tant du genoï corrompu, que nous appellons fignon, que du naturel vulgaire provençal, avec bien de la meslange des locutions de l’un en l’autre’.

the peoples who were established there at the beginning ('primitivement'), before the occupation and invasions of the Pelasgians and Tyrrhenians.' If surviving inscriptions and remains, like the Eugubine Tablets, could be studied in terms of the same language family ('matrice') from which emerged the German, Celtic and Ibero-Celtic languages, he thought it likely that other connections would emerge. These would document not only maritime exchange but also political subordination.¹²⁶ This fascinating discussion, moving as it does from the ancient Near East to modern Europe and back to old Europe, follows Scaliger's foundational framing of the problem of comparative linguistics in terms of 'matrices.'¹²⁷ The recipient of the letter found Peiresc's observations 'fort curieuses et tres belles.'¹²⁸

Peiresc's thinking about Europe's ancient languages in general, and the Etruscans in particular, came together in a very late letter – perhaps one of the last he wrote in his own hand – to Curzio Inghirami, soon to be famous across Europe for his *Ethruscarum antiquitatum fragmenta*. Peiresc 'confessed that until now I have not encountered anything that had more grabbed my curiosity.' From time to time he had collected some Etruscan things, including medals, cups, and vases. By means of all these Peiresc hoped to 'dig down to the most obscure origins of the linguistic matrices, with the help of which one could come to knowledge of the etymology of proper names and places and of persons, and to penetrate even to the interpretation, sometimes, of certain phrases believed vanished for many centuries.' Inghirami's achievement would be praised by all the literati, 'now that one is seeking with more exactitude than was typical the primitive origins both of histories as of the human sciences ('scienze humane'),

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93: '... j'estime aussy que les plus anciennes langues des peuples étrusques, osques, et autres des environs de Rome, pouvoient avoir conservé des locutions et dependances des origines du langage des peuples qui y estoient primitivement establi, auparavant les occupations et invasions des Pelasges et Tyrrheniens. Et si le langage dont il reste quelques fragmentz dans les anciens autheurs, et dans les vieilles inscriptions des Tables Eugubines et autres de pareille nature estoit examiné par les regles de cette matrice, source des langues todesque [sic] ou germanique, celtique ou gauloise et celthyberique ou espagnolle, je ne sçay s'il ne s'y trouveroit pas aultant de rapport des uns aux autres, comm'il y en a possible eu, non seulement dans le commerce d'Italie en Espagne, dez cez premiers siecles, mais dans la soumission ou alliance des peuples qui habitoient l'une et l'autre region...'

¹²⁷ Daniel Droixhe, *La linguistique et l'appel de l'histoire (1600-1800)*, Geneva and Paris, 1978, pp. 60-63. See also: Toon van Hal, 'Moedertalen en taalmoeders'. *Methodologie, epistemologie en ideologie van het taalvergelijkend onderzoek in de Renaissance, met bijzondere aandacht voor de bijdrage van de humanisten uit de Lage Landen*, PhD Thesis, Catholic University Louvain, 2008, pp. 174-186. I thank Dirk van Miert for this reference.

¹²⁸ Saumaise to Peiresc, 2 September 1634 (*Lettres à Claude Saumaise* (as in n. 114), p. 386).

with their advancements.’ It is hard not to be astonished that it is by reflecting on the implications of a key to an ancient language – Etruscan – for understanding the inter-related bases of social life that Peiresc introduced what might be the first use of the term ‘human sciences.’¹²⁹ Independent of this initiative, Peiresc had written to Cardinal Barberini of his desire to print the Eugubine Tables and asking for his assistance in locating an exemplar to publish.¹³⁰

Peiresc’s thinking about these questions was likely shaped by the fifteenth-century debate about the relationship between ancient Latin and Europe’s modern successor languages. A century later still, the sixteenth-century Florentine antiquary Vincenzo Borghini followed Alberti and Biondo, against Bruni, in dignifying the vernacular. He clearly articulated a theory of nations as defined by languages, and national languages as boxes containing dialects spoken in different provinces, or even regions of provinces. Moreover, these differences were sometimes only apparent to natives; foreigners would be oblivious to distinguishing nuances. Finally, Borghini paid special attention to the spread of Provençal in Italy – driven by the power of its courtly poetry as well as the power of its (Angevin) court – as an example of how history shaped the development of language as much as language shaped the course of history.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Peiresc to Curtio Inghitramio [sic], 2 June 1637 (CBI, ms. 1873, fol. 453^r): ‘L’intitolatione del libro de’ fragmenti dell’Antiquita Etrusche nuovamente scoperti vicino à Volterra, ci promette origini tanto nobili così di Roma, come d’altri genti, en secoli tanto incogniti che non potrà riuscire se non à sommo honor dell’authore, et gloria della sua natione. Ogni minima notizia di quei tempi antichi bastando per acquistar gran merito nel mondo apprezzo i litterati. Hora che si vanno cercando con piu essattezza che non si soleva, l’origini primitivi così dell’historie come dell scienze humane con i progressi. Io confesso che sin’hora non havero incontrato cosa che maggiormente havesse toccato la curiosità mia, che la generosissima impresa di queste gentilhuomo dell’editione di cotesti monumenti in che maggiormente ne potesse prevenire, havendo da lungo tempo in qua presa gran gusto nella raccolta di quanti fragmenti mi sonno potuto venir in mano delle cose Etrusche, per incontratene parecchi, forzi delli piu curiosi & degni di consideratione così in materia di medagli dell’istesso tempo della dynastia Etrusca (ò ristorate in secoli sussequenti) et d’altri monumenti di quei popoli, cide patere & vasi à pietre & tavole di metalli con iscrizioni nobilissimi. Come dell’altre memorie & istruzioni, che se me puo cavar dalle piu reconditi origini delle lingue matricie, con l’aiutto delle quali si puo pervenir alla cognitione delle etymologie dei nomi propri de’luoghi et delle persone, et penetrar sino all’interpretatione tale volta di certi locutioni tenute per disperatissimi da molti secoli in qua.’ For more on Inghirami and his book see Ingrid Rowland, *The Scarith of Scornello: a Tale of Renaissance Forgery*, Chicago, 2004.

¹³⁰ Peiresc to Barberini, 5 May 1637 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, unfoliated fragment).

¹³¹ On the identification of ‘language’ with ‘nation’ Borghini pointed to evidence from the Crusades (John R. Woodhouse, ed., *Vincenzo Borghini, Scritti inediti o rari sulla lingua*, Collezione di Opere Inedite o rare pubblicate dalla Commissione per i testi di lingua, Bologna, 1971, p. 32: ‘Sommario e indice della materia filologica’), to national languages as common containers for diversity down to the micro-regional level (*ibid.*, p. 26); to foreigners hearing one language where locals heard diversity (p. 27). For the historical example of Provençal in Italy, see

Peiresc knew of Borghini's writings, but of course could not communicate with him. Peiresc could, however, and did, exchange letters with Celso Cittadini, a Sieneese, who published a *Trattato della vera origine e del processo e nome della nostra lingua* (1601). While not offering a larger historical perspective, he presented a view of the decay of Latin over time which Peiresc found compelling, perhaps influencing his own later thinking.¹³² And, as we have already seen, Peiresc's approach to these issues was always filtered through his own long reflection on Provençal and its relationship to Catalan, French and Latin.¹³³

Peiresc's thinking about the historical experience of language belongs to a century of reflection on language-as-history. Edward Brerewood, *Enquiries touching the diversity of languages, and religions, through the cheife parts of the world* (1614) had drawn the link between ethnography and linguistics. Bishop Walton, in his *Prolegomena* to the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57), turned from ethnography to historical linguistics, using the platform afforded him by the Bible's apparatus to discuss language change in the history of the sacred versions. Leibniz, at the end of the century, most coherently articulated the possibility of finding evidence in the very structure of language. 'I believe that of all that is non-written, languages themselves are the best and greatest signifier of the ancient world, from which one could shed light on the origins of peoples

'Delle voci nostre cavate o le medesime di Francia', *ibid.*, pp. 349-350. On the roots of Borghini's approach see Riccardo Drusi, 'Ancora su Borghini e i testi volgari antichi,' in Eliana Carrara and Silvia Ginzburg, eds, *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, Pisa, 2007, p. 442. Peiresc acknowledged Borghini's preeminence in the study 'delli piu antiqui authori Toscani in lingua volgare' (Peiresc to Constantino Gaetano, 6 March 1637 (CBI, ms. 1873, fol. 172^v)).

¹³² Peiresc, in a letter to Cittadini, 22 March 1602 (PBnF, ms. N.a.f. 5172, fols 8^r-9^r; Aix, Bibliothèque Méjanes, ms. 203 (1021), pp. 328-330), engaged his correspondent directly on the question of the variety of ancient Latin letter forms and the possible relationships to neighboring peoples that they suggested. Peiresc was still asking after him and his work years later (Peiresc to Aleandro of 31 Jan 1617 (Jean-François Lhote and Danielle Joyal, eds, *Correspondance de Peiresc et Aleandre*, vol. 1, Clermont-Ferrand, 1995, p. 73). A brief note shows that Peiresc was at least aware of 'Justus Lipsius de pronunciatione latinae linguae dialogus' (CBI, ms 1831, fol. 330^r).

¹³³ Peiresc was consulted as an expert on these matters. See his correspondence with Francesco Barberini, Vincenzo Noghera and Francesco Ubaldini on medieval Provençal manuscripts and the relationship between Spanish, Catalan and Latin in the winter and spring of 1637 (Peiresc to Barberini, 5 December 1636 (BAV, ms. Barb.-Lat. 6503, fol. 189^r); Noghera to Dupuy, 5 January 1637 (PBnF, ms. Dupuy 688, fols 27^r-30^r); Noghera to Peiresc, 27 January 1637 (PBnF, ms. F.français 9540, fol. 176^r); Peirese to Ubaldini, 7 March 1637 (PBnF, ms. N.a.f. 5172, fol. 77^r). On Ubaldini, see Santorre Debenedetti, 'Tre Secoli di Studi Provenzali', in Vincenzo Crescini, ed., *Provenza e Italia. Studie*, Florence, 1937, pp. 164-165. Peiresc had been interested in this material for some time (Peiresc to Niccolo Alemanni, 1 February 1617 (CBI, ms. 1871, fol. 274^r)).

and, often, that of things.¹³⁴ And Leibniz himself, it must be added, speculated about the structure of yet a different language family: the Chinese, with its connections to Tartar and Mongol.¹³⁵ It was Ludwig August von Schlözer, almost a century later, who went a step further, not arguing as had Leibniz that language was a form of non-written evidence, but that in the absence of written evidence comparative linguistics could itself provide ‘documents’ for the historian.¹³⁶

In the end, what makes ‘Peiresc’s Ethiopia’ interesting is not just the way he made use of his wide and variegated international network of correspondents, or the density of information he amassed from and disseminated through that network, but his questions, and their integration into a whole perspective on the languages and histories of a region covering Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. Teodosio Somigli, one of the few modern scholars to notice Peiresc’s role in Ethiopic studies, wrote that

Peiresc was, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, long before the works of Ludolf, the great promotor of oriental studies. Thanks to his encouragements, his munificence, Europe was then enriched by many oriental manuscripts. To him is owed the discovery of the text of Enoch in Ethiopia. The monks of S. Stefano published Ethiopic eulogies on his death. Two are preserved.¹³⁷

This accurate judgment was made without examining Peiresc’s manuscript materials; it is only more true in the light of them.

Bard Graduate Center
New York, NY 10024
USA
E-mail: miller@bgc.bard.edu

¹³⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Schriften und Briefe zur Geschichte*, Malte-Ludolf Babin and Gerd van den Heuvel, eds, Hannover, 2004, p. 63: ‘...je tiens que de tout ce qui est non-écrit les langues memes sont les meilleurs et les plus grands restes significatifs de l’ancien monde, dont on pourroit tirer des lumieres pour les origines des peuples et souvent pour celles des choses.’

¹³⁵ André Robinet, ‘La Rencontre Leibniz-Grimaldi à Rome et l’Avenir des Académies’ in Wenchao Li and Hans Poser, eds, *Das Neueste über China. G.W. Leibnizens Novissima Sinica von 1697*, Stuttgart, 2000, p. 83. This was question 22 to Grimaldi from Leibniz’s questionnaire of 1689.

¹³⁶ Schlözer, in his *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (1771), quoted in Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity. The Theory of Travel 1550-1800*, Chur, 1995, p. 256.

¹³⁷ *Etiopia francescana* (as in n. 28), p. cxxiv, note 6: ‘Peiresc fu al secolo XVII, molto prima dei lavori del Ludolf, il grande promotore degli studi orientali. Grazie ai suoi incoraggiamenti, alla sua munificenza, l’Europa s’arricchì allora di molti manoscritti orientali; a lui si deve la scoperta del testo di Enoch in Etiopia. I monaci di S. Stefano pubblicarono in etiopico elegie sulla sua morte. Se ne conservano due.’