

# Giuseppe Simone Assemani (Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani)<sup>1</sup>

## Biography and Achievements (1687-1768)



One of the main incentives behind the publishing of the work of Assemani entitled *The Book of Divinity*, by Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani<sup>2</sup>, is the fact that it was still in its manuscript form. Hence,

<sup>1</sup> Rihani, Ameen Albert (Introduction), *The Book of Assemani – A Manuscript from 1708* by Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani, First Edition, Volume I, (Zouk Mosbeh– Lebanon, NDU Press, 2003), pp 7-10, 45-48.

<sup>2</sup> Sources have disagreed over the name of the father of Sim‘ānī: is it Sim‘ān or Sham‘ūn? Despite the linguistic interpretation that links them together, it is more accurate to choose one denomination so as to standardize the name. In order to achieve this, we have referred to 27 sources from books and articles. We have found that twelve of them use the name Yūsuf Sim‘ān Assemani, fourteen use Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani, and one uses both names without any preference: Yūsuf Sim‘ān or Yūsuf Sham‘ūn ...that is to say both names with the conjunction “or” in between. We notice that most users of the name Yūsuf Sim‘ān are authors of old references, for example Yūsuf Ad-Dibs in *The History of Syria*, Louis Cheikho in *The Arabic Manuscripts of Christian Authors*, Louis Blaibel in *History of the Lebanese Maronite Order* or prominent spiritual and intellectual figures such as Patriarch Nasrallah Būṭrus Sfayr and Philip Hitti.

As for those who chose the name Yūsuf Sham‘ūn, they included Yūḥannā Nuṭayn in “*Epitome...*” (1881), Nasser Gemayel in *Les Echanges Culturels entre les Maronites et L’Europe*, Antoine Ḍaw in an article in *Al-Waḥda* magazine (1968), ‘Abdū Khalīfah and Francis Baisiri in *Catalogue Raisonné*, Paul Qara’ī in *‘Abdallah Qara’ī: Archevêque...*, Ighnatiō Sa‘ādah in an article published in *Dirāsāt* (Studies) Magazine (1958), Boulos Sfayr in *The Fourth Centennial of the Maronite School in Rome*, and Paul Mass‘ad and Nassīb Wihāiba Al-Khāzin in *Documents Inédits*. As for Būṭrus Al-Bustānī, he mentioned both denominations in his encyclopedia: *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif*.

Hence, referring to these sources may not be as helpful as hoped in determining the full name of the personality studied here. If we study some of his manuscripts, we will notice the following: in the manuscript of *Dictionary of Syria Terms*: Lexicon number LP07 in the Monastery of Notre Dame of Louaize we read in the beginning: “started by Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani...” and on page 38 we read: “written by the most unworthy of people, Deacon Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani Al-Ḥaṣrūnī son of Sham‘ūn son of the priest Yūsuf son of the Subdeacon Sham‘ūn known as Khāṭir...”, and at the end of page 50 we read for the third time: “it was completed by Deacon Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani Al-Ḥaṣrūnī...”. This sentence is repeated verbatim at the end of page 62. In the seal used by Assemani and imprinted on the first cover page of manuscript number 124 in Bkirkī, first series, we can read the ternary name Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani. The title of this manuscript is: *Book on the Four Patriarchs of the East*. At the end of Volume I of *The Divinity* (the original copy handwritten by Assemani is kept in the Monastery of the Maronite Mariamite Order in Rome, manuscript number 257, and forms the material of the book we are currently publishing) we read: “Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Al Mārūnī...” As for manuscript number 258 (Rome), which contains 3 works: *Introduction to Science, Book of Logic, Book of Polemics*, Assemani handwrote on page 26 his name as follows: Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Ibn Sham‘ūn Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Sham‘ūn Al-Ḥaṣrūnī Al-Mārūnī, student of The School of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome”. Finally, we read in a footnote in *Natural Science* (manuscript number 260, Rome) the name of the author “Yūsuf Ibn Sham‘ūn Al-Ḥaṣrūnī Al-Mārūnī”. After these decisive proofs, we concluded that the full and accurate name of Assemani is Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani Al- Ḥaṣrūnī, known as Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani. Thus, it

its features and its intellectual stature remain unknown amongst the works of Assemani and the other major works of our literary and philosophical legacy. The neglect befalling the landmarks of our intellectual heritage since the dawn of the Lebanese Age of Illumination, in particular, and the Arab Age of Illumination, in general – since the 17<sup>th</sup> century till the present – is beyond our understanding. The only means to salvage this heritage is via projects of studies and publication. As for Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani, he is one of the greatest figures that were victims of this neglect.

### Ambiguities of his biography

Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani was a descendant of a prestigious family that gave a good number of clergymen, scholars, leaders and distinguished personalities on both the intellectual and the spiritual levels. He was born on July 27, 1687<sup>1</sup> either in the village of Ḥaṣrūn, or in the quarter of Ḥasarīnā in Tripoli<sup>2</sup>. At the age of nine, that is in 1696<sup>3</sup>, he traveled to Rome to study in the

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is inappropriate after the presentation of such proofs to replace the denomination of “Sham‘ūn” with “Sim‘ān” under the pretext of linguistic concordance because linguistic concordance is unacceptable in a proper noun especially if not confirmed by the owner of the name.

<sup>1</sup> Most Lebanese sources have agreed on the year of the birth of Assemani to be 1687. However, the Italian scholar Tipaldo erroneously indicates the year of birth as 1686 – *Tipaldo, Biografia Degli, Italiani, Vol. I: Assemani*. Cardinal Mai also inaccurately determines the year of birth as 1682 - Mai, A., *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae*, t. Xa, Rome 1905, p.391 et suiv. But, on the other hand, Lebanese sources have disagreed on the month of birth. While most researchers indicate the month of July for this birth, for example Archbishop Ad-Dibs, Abbot Fahd, Sfayr, Dib and Gemayel, a few others indicate the month of August, for example Nuṭayn, Cheikho, Ghānim and Rizk. To determine the exact date of birth of Assemani with year, day and month, in a French booklet on the testaments of Assemani and his nephews, Archbishop Buṭrus Dib quotes the epitaph on his grave that reads: “Died on January 13, 1768 at the age of eighty years, five months and 17 days”. Accordingly, Archbishop Dib concludes that his precise birth date was July 27, 1687. Dib, Pierre, *Joseph Simon Assemani et ses deux Neveux, Leurs Testaments*, G.P. Maisonneuve, Paris, 1939, pp.3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Researchers have also disagreed on the place of birth. Most of them consider Tripoli as his birthplace (Al-Ḥaṣārīnah quarter near Bāb Al-Tabbānah), among them are Nuṭayn, Ad-Dibs, Ghānim, Fahd and Sfayr. Few others mentioned Ḥaṣrūn and among them: Cheikho, Rizk and Gemayel. The only researcher who has worked on determining the exact birthplace is Father Nasser Gemayel. In an article by him, entitled *Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani Al-Ḥaṣārūnī*, he states that the birth of As-Aim‘ānī on July 27 “that is to say in the middle of summer, gives weight to our opinion that he was born in Ḥaṣrūn.” Then, he supports his opinion with another argument by saying, “as for what has been stated in some old sources that he was born in Tripoli, we would like to clarify the matter by saying that the records of names of the students of the Maronite School [of Rome] sometime mention the name of the city, state or district to which the student belonged” (*Al-Manārah*, year 29, first issue, 1988, p.36).

<sup>3</sup> Gemayel relies on a Syriac Vatican manuscript, number 410, page 77, published by Ibrahim Ḥarfūsh in *Al-Manārah*, 1935-1936 (*Al-Manārah*, 1988, p.36). As for Fahd, he indicates, just like Nuṭayn, that Assemani traveled to Rome in 1695 that is to say at the age of eight. Sfayr, (*Al-Manārah*, 1984, p. 168, and *Dirasāt*, 1985, page 220) moreover, agrees with Gemayel on the year of travel, Rizk, on the other hand, states two possibilities (*Encyclopédie Maronite*, p.440) in his French booklet, on the testaments of As-Asim‘ānī and his nephews, did prove that 1696 was the year during which Assemani traveled to Rome.

Maronite College, where he learned Latin, Italian, Arabic and Syriac<sup>1</sup>. He also studied the art of rhetoric, ethics, dialectics, history, philosophy, theology, and law. He continued his pursuit of education in the Maronite School for thirteen years and his penchant for writing began before leaving the school. Back then, he had already written books on the rules of Syriac grammar, on logic and on theology. Upon his graduation he was appointed by Pope Clement XI to index the Eastern manuscripts. On March 10, 1710<sup>2</sup> he was appointed as translator and scribe of the Eastern language in the Vatican Library (Scriptor Orientalis)<sup>3</sup>. On July 4, 1710<sup>4</sup>, Assemani received a degree (malfono)<sup>5</sup> in philosophy and theology and was later ordained as a priest in Rome according to the Maronite rite. The date of his ordination remains uncertain and subject to a conflict of opinions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some sources mentioned that Assemani mastered over thirty languages. But it is hard to determine the accuracy of this statement. However, what is striking is that mastering a large number of languages during that time indicates the vast culture of Assemani; it also indicates his scientific and literary pre-eminence on his peers, which explains the abundance of works and the diversity of subjects.

<sup>2</sup> Father Yuḥannā Nuṭayn Nuṭayn published a booklet entitled *Epitome on the Patriarchs of the City of God, Antioch*, by Yūsuf Sham'ūn Assemani, to which he annexed a preface on the life and works of Assemani. The booklet was printed in the printing press of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome in 1881. In his preface Father Nuṭayn indicated that Assemani was appointed as translator in the Vatican Library on March 10, 1710. We would, furthermore, like to point out that the preface of Father Nuṭayn is one of the oldest and rarest sources on Assemani.

<sup>3</sup> See: Father Nasser Gemayel in his book: *Les Echanges Culturels Entre les Maronites et l'Europe*, Beirut, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Ad-Dibs stated that Assemani received his doctorate on July 4, 1710; while Gemayel asserts that he received it on July 19 of the same year according to the Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Sfayr indicated this discrepancy and favored July 19, making reference to the same archives, (*Al-Manārah*, 1984, issues 1-2, p. 169).

<sup>5</sup> Some French sources refer to this degree using the term “doctor of philosophy” as stated by Gemayel in his French book “*Les Echanges Culturels...*”, (p.421), or, by Rizk in *Encyclopédie Maronite*, (p.440). But we tend to believe that this translation is not accurate and that a “malfono” degree does not imply that its holder is a “doctor”. It is useful in this case to refer to a sure historical document, if any, that equals a “malfono” degree to a “PhD”. As for the term “malfono”, it is a Syriac word meaning “*magisterium*” or “teacher”.

<sup>6</sup> Most sources do not refer to the year Assemani was ordained priest. Gemayel indicates that the name of the archbishop who ordained him is uncertain and he adds, “it might have been Archbishop Jirjis Binyāmīn, who happened to be present in the Vatican the request the removal of Patriarch Ya'qūb 'Awwād from the Patriarchal Chair” (*Al-Manārah*, 1988, first issue, p. 37). He considered the year 1711 as year of his ordination basing his conclusion on a letter sent by Assemani to the Pope during that same year. Father Nī'matallah 'Awwād gave an approximate date for the ordination of Assemani as priest before 1711 as basis for his initiation in the Vatican circles (from the *Manuscripts of Father Nematallah 'Awwād* written in Rome during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today it is among the archives of Bkirkī). If we refer back to the preface of Father Yuḥannā Nuṭayn in *Epitome on the Patriarchs of the city of God, Antioch* we notice that he indicated the dates in day, month and year to prove that Assemani had joined the clergy on December 13, 1713 and he was then ordained priest on August 25, 1719. (*Epitome on the Patriarchs of the City of God, Antioch* – The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith printing press, 1881, p.2). As for “Patriarch” Yūsuf Mubarak Ar-Rayfūnī, he addressed a letter on April 19, 1713 to the Bishop's vicar Buṭrus At-Tulāwī, arch priest in Aleppo, indication that “the aforementioned Father Superior [of Jerusalem] wrote to Priest Yūsuf Sham'ūn and others...”, (Abbot Būṭrus Fahd, *Patriarch Ya'qūb 'Awwād in The Balance*, 1981, p.61). The latter letter proves that Yūsuf Sham'ūn Assemani was ordained priest before that date.

In 1711, Assemani requested a transfer from the Maronite rite to the Latin rite.<sup>1</sup> The Pope approved his request. He was later appointed as Counselor to the Committee for the Reform of Liturgical Books of the Eastern Churches, and later as Head of the Eastern Manuscripts Mission in 1715. He toured many towns and cities in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon collecting manuscripts in order to house them in the Vatican Library. This campaign was considered an important stage in the European Orientalism movement at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1728, he was promoted by the Catholic authorities to the position of Assistant to the Second Secretary of the Vatican Library, Giovanni Vignoli. After the death of the latter on September 18, 1730, Assemani replaced him in October 21 on the same year<sup>2</sup>. Later Assemani filled many administrative and spiritual posts and he was a model of honesty and responsibility. Among the most important positions we state a few: 1732 *Camérier*, 1735 vicar of the bishop with the right to wear pontifical vestments, Apostolic delegate to Lebanon in 1736, Counselor to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1738, and the Canon (*Chanoine*) of the Basilica of St. Peter's in the Vatican on January 18, 1739. He was also appointed as conservator of the Vatican library on January 3, 1739 and he retained this position until his death. In 1751, the King of Sicily, Naples and Spain<sup>3</sup>, Charles IV, appointed him as historian of the Kingdom of Naples. And he was given its citizenship after one year. On October 25, 1759, he was appointed by Pope Clement XIII to the post of Secretary to the Congregation of the Sacrament of Penance, then as papal Seal-keeper on February 24, 1761.<sup>4</sup> In the beginning of December 1766, that is approximately one year before his death, he was promoted by Pope Clement XIII Bishop of Tyre

<sup>1</sup> See: Father Nasser Gemayel in: *Les Echanges Culturels...*, volume I, p.421.

<sup>2</sup> Nuṭayn, Yūḥannā, *Epitome on the Patriarchs of the City of God, Antioch*, The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith printing press, 1881, preface p.2. As for Gemayel, he indicated September 30 as the date on which Assemani occupied this position. See: Gemayel, Father Nasser, "Yūsuf Sham'ūn Assemani Al-Ḥasrouni", *Al-Manarah Magazine*, 1988, issue I, p.42.

<sup>3</sup> Gemayel states that "Charles IV, King of the Kingdom of Sicily and then king of Spain, appointed him in 1739 as historiographer of the Kingdom of Naples..." In French he says:

"Charles IV, alors Roi des deux Siciles, et depuis Roi d'Espagne, le nomma en 1739, historiographe du Royaume de Naples... » (*Les Echanges Culturels...*, p.430).

As for Sfeir, he states, "He was appointed by Carlos IV, King of Naples and Sicily as historian..." (*Al-Manarah*, 1984, issues 1-2, p. 173).

Nuṭayn indicates that King Carlos IV "King of Naples and Sicily" is in fact Charles III, "King of Spain".

<sup>4</sup> Nuṭayn, Yūḥannā, *Epitome...*, p. 2.

in Paribas. He died on January 13, 1768<sup>1</sup> and was buried in the Church of St. John the Evangelist in the Maronite School in Rome.

### **Works about Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani**

Historically, we can divide the treatises on Assemani into two categories: old sources from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1930’s, and recent sources that appeared in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This nominal distribution is not meant to imply a mere chronological order. There are common features among works in each of the categories. The first category, composed of sources mentioned by Father Yūḥannā Nuṭayn, Archbishop Yūsuf Ad-Debs, Father Louis Cheikho, S.J., and Yūsuf Khaṭṭār Ghānim, tends to generalize rather than specialize, and to hint without going into specifics. The intellectual aim of the treatises of the latter category, or school was to shed a light on the comprehensiveness of the heritage and to grasp its different angles without focusing on its personalities and scholars as models to follow. The second category, on the other hand, is based on the researches of Abbot Buṭrus Fahd, Father Buṭros Ḍaw, Father Būlus Sfayr and others. It tends towards specialization and focalization on names, dedicates itself to a vast study of prominent figures, and ventures into the details that were surrounded by mystery, trying to scrutinize the research process and dig in search of the desired scientific truth. That is why we adopted the headlines of the first category, and gathered the details from the second. However, we realized in the course of our research that the pioneer step taken by the second category is shadowed with imperfections cast by some of its writers and researchers, and that, in itself, requires a deeper investigation and verification of the studied subject. One of the most important gaps comes from the fact that none of the sources attempt to give a comprehensive study on the subject. I use the term “attempt” because it is hard to reach the “final” scientific truth, in which case the work of the successors will be obsolete, and we shall have to content ourselves with the works of the predecessors. But, “attempt” means direction and pursuit, meaning that the researchers must endeavor to approach what we consider as the “finality” of truth. If we take, for example, the works of Assemani as a material for research, we

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<sup>1</sup> Sources disagree on the date of the decease of Assemani. Some indicate it as December 31, 1768 (Ad-Dibs, Fahd, Ḥarfūsh) Ḥarfūsh. Others consider it to be January 13, 1768 ( Nuṭayn, Ghānim, Dīb, Rizk and Gemayel). But the book written by Būṭrus Dīb on the testaments of Assemani and his nephews settles this issue because it is based on documents and testaments. Accordingly, the exact date for the demise of Assemani is January 13, 1768.

find that the researchers did not attain, maybe they even did not try to attain, an accurate and extensive bibliography with numbers and dates that might lead us to the true achievements of this imminent figure. If we venture back to the most important references on Assemani, we find that Archbishop Yūsuf Ad-Debs cites 34 books written by Assemani and leaves the door open, since he points to other books that were also written by Assemani but are missing. Yūsuf Khaṭṭār Ghānim mentioned 33 books, noting that this collection is one of the most remarkable achievements of Assemani. As for Father Louis Cheikho, he sums up his list to 9 books ending with the statement “and others whose loss is deeply regretted”.

Furthermore, among those who were interested in the works of Assemani were Father Boutros Ḍaw, who lists 29 books and “other articles, sermons and books on various subjects”, Father Būlus Sfayr, who lists only 19 books indicating other works “tens and hundreds we did not mention... to leave a place for another detailed study”, and Abbot Būṭrus Fahd, who lists 47 books, But, the most comprehensive and factual bibliography on the works of Assemani is that compiled by Father Nasser Gemayel, who was able to list 46 books by Assemani, not counting his correspondence and his reports.

### **Latinization**

This trend originated with the strengthening of the political and religious relations between the Maronites and the West during the age of Louis XIV. The relation intensified with the settling of some Maronite clergymen in Paris and Rome; the latter left behind them writings in French or Latin or Italian<sup>1</sup>. Hence, they had an impact on the cultural movement in Europe with the beginning, and during, the Renaissance period.

Accordingly, this begs the question: Why did the Maronites choose this path? Didn't they fear that their eastern identity might disappear in the melting pot of the West? Did they give up their leading spiritual and cultural role to become followers? This line of questioning increased and turned into blame and criticism in the circles of some intellectuals, especially with the rise of prominent figures such as Assemani who solidified this unity with the West when organizing and participating in the successive Church Synods.

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<sup>1</sup> See: the book of Father Nasser Gemayel: *Les Echanges Culturels...*, Beirut, 1984, Vol. 1, pp. 209-530.

Some blame Assemani for choosing this direction and officially transferring from the Maronite Rite to the Latin Rite, hence, integrating himself with the Vatican circles and becoming an Apostolic delegate and conservator of the Vatican Library. Instead of seeking to incorporate a more distinguished Eastern Maronite presence, he contributed, knowingly or unknowingly, to the meltdown of the unique Maronite personality into a general Catholic one. Thus, rather than becoming an Eastern Maronite teacher in the West, he became a Catholic Scholar of Eastern roots.

We can answer the above argument with the following: was the West ready, even more, is it ready today, to accept Eastern intellectual and spiritual achievements that maintain their Eastern features and characteristics while in the West?

Perhaps Assemani realized the magnitude of this situation and delved into it from the back door in order to build a special platform of Western outer features and Eastern core. The Western façade is a cover that attracts the Italian or the French man and prepares him to accept the Eastern core as a new material in his culture and as another dimension among the dimensions of human heritage.

As proof of the above concept, we notice that, when Assemani visited Lebanon as Apostolic Delegate, his aim was to organize the affairs of the Maronite Church and to convene the Lebanese Synod in order to give this organizational structure an Eastern aspect. Moreover, we also remark that his first visits to the East were to collect Eastern manuscripts from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Cyprus. It is as if he unknowingly launched an intellectual Orientalist movement that searched for the origins of theological, philosophical and literary works emanating from the East before the arrival of the Westerners in the form of tourists, researchers and authors.

If we study the collective works of Assemani, we notice the following: out of fifty-six works, twenty-five are on Eastern subjects, nine on Western subjects and eighteen on general theological and philosophical subjects, while four joint works that deal with the same subject as treated in the East and the West.

If we take a look at the language that Assemani used in writing, we notice that he wrote twenty-three books in Arabic, two in Syriac, and eleven in Latin. Sources do not indicate the language of composition of the other works.

We conclude by saying that the Eastern touch is dominant in the works of Assemani both content and language-wise. This implies that the “Latinization” of Assemani was only a means and not an end. It was a way for him to spread his traditional Eastern roots in the midst of the educated West from its spiritual and intellectual rostrums. We are not saying this to defend Assemani but to reiterate a truth we have proven by numbers and facts. In that sense, Assemani does not differ from his Lebanese scholarly counterparts, who, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century up to our present day, have directed their works to the West and have used the language of the West in the hope that they can spread the Eastern culture with its heritage, interests and horizons.

### **Stature**

Despite all that has been written on Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani and on all his published works, he remains an outstanding Lebanese scholar who requires more in-depth research and study not only because of his intellectual importance but because of the confusion and debate that his works and biography entailed.

The most important paradox, in my opinion, is the common misunderstanding of the value of this prominent figure. Most researchers agree that the key of this value lies in the following: first, the prestigious titles he acquired and the high-status Vatican posts he occupied; second, the enormous quantity of writings he left behind, among which is his most famous book, the *Oriental Library*; and third, the importance role he played in preparing and organizing the Lebanese Synod. Undoubtedly, the titles and posts are clear evidence of the stature of their holder in society and in the institutions he was part of. But this eminent status is a sign of dwindling homage and supremacy that disappears with the disappearance of its owner. Certainly the role of Assemani in preparing the document of the Lebanese Synod is one of historical distinction. What is constant is the written imprint. What is everlasting is the intellectual and creative mark that records the achievements of its owner and his contribution in the history of human thought and the development of human culture. From here, I find myself an advocate of the school that believes that authorship is the most supreme and constant imprint a man can leave



behind; for one can be immortalized with the immortality of his works or can disappear with their disappearing. Hence, if we all agree that writings are more important and more constant than titles and ranks, we move to the second paradox that shades the attempt at clarifying the value of this prominent figure. Here, most researchers agree, as I have previously mentioned, that the Oriental Library was and is the key to the fame of Assemani. Thus, it is the reason for the essential value of this scholar.

However, I find myself disagreeing with this opinion on the definition and key of the intellectual value of this man. It is true that he played a great role in collecting Eastern Christian heritage and it is equally true that he classified, categorized and established a catalogue of the Eastern Manuscripts considered an encyclopedic work that unveils the “magic of the East” through its writings and not through its people, nature, archeology, and tradition. It is also true that this vital work might form the other aspect of Orientalism, a luminous and effective aspect that restores of the East its intellectual, traditional and cultural stature in the history of nations and peoples. But, despite its significance, this work remains in the category of collection and classification, meaning in the category of accumulated knowledge and not of knowledge itself. Does that mean that I am trying to belittle the status of our scholar? On the contrary, I aim at shedding light on the key behind our understanding of Yūsuf Sham‘ūn Assemani and consequently on replacing, the thought of collection and classification with the thought of research, logic and creativity in an attempt to clarify priorities and to consecrate the right sequence in our evaluation of this scholar. Hence, to me, the value of Assemani does not lie in the Oriental Library despite its grandeur, importance and fame. The value of Assemani lies in other lesser known and unpublished books, books that can be classified under theology and philosophy in which the author delved into logical dialectic and tackled issues that concerned and still concern the history of humanity. The latter reveal the intellectual capacity, scientific precision and cultural wealth that typified the author. That alone forms the primary reason for his value.