

Nicholas Donin's Thirty-Five Articles Against the Talmud

A Case of Collaborative Translation in Jewish-Christian Polemic*

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The thirteenth century deserves a particular place in the long history of Christian-Jewish relations, since it heralded the discovery of the Talmud by the Christian world. Earlier authors such as Peter Alfonsi and Peter the Venerable had already mentioned and criticised the Talmud; however, a greater awareness of this fundamental post-biblical Jewish corpus among Christian authors did not arise until the late 1230s when the Jewish convert Nicholas Donin submitted a Latin anthology of Talmudic fragments to Pope Gregory IX.

Nicholas Donin's translation, also known as the thirty-five articles against the Talmud, was to have an enormous impact on the Christian attitude towards Judaism. Thus, in 1239 the Pope wrote to Kings and Bishops across Europe urging them to seize and examine the manuscripts of the Talmud in their dominions, as a result of which a process against the Talmud took place in Paris in 1240. Though the Talmud went up in flames at the Place de la Grève in 1241/42, the controversy on the Talmud continued over the following years, as the so-called *Extractiones de Talmud* prove, a translation of hundreds of Talmudic passages prepared in the mid-1240s for Odo of Châteauroux, Legate of the Apostolic See, that served as the basis of his final condemnation of the Talmud in May 1248.

The texts surrounding this infamous controversy have survived in several manuscripts, the most complete of which – though not the original one –¹ is MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558. This manuscript offers a com-

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¹ On the manuscript tradition of the Latin Talmud, see A. Fidora, 'Die Handschrift 19b des Arxiu Capítular de Girona: Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferungsgeschichte des lateinischen Talmud', in *Zwischen Rom und Santiago. Festschrift für Klaus Herbers zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Alraum et al., Bochum: Winkler, 2016, pp. 49-56.

prehensive 'dossier' on the Talmud affair, its first part containing the *Extractiones de Talmud*, while the second part includes Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles against the Talmud along with other materials. Though scholars have been dealing with this dossier for more than 130 years, we still lack a thorough interpretation of the two parts of this dossier, of which there is no complete edition to date: Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles were published in 1881 by Isidore Loeb,² a critical edition of the *Extractiones de Talmud* is currently under preparation by our research group.³

In this paper, we will focus on Nicholas Donin, whose appraisal varies very much in recent literature on the Talmud trial. Some authors, like Robert Chazan, have described him as 'well versed in the Oral Torah',⁴ while others, and most prominently Gilbert Dahan, depict him as 'une figure lamentable', 'un personnage totalement inintéressant et peu cultivé' –⁵ so 'uninteresting', in fact, that Dahan has banned his name from the indices of his books.⁶ In the first place, we wish to discuss the information that the Talmud dossier provides on Nicholas Donin. This will allow us not only to correct some recurrent misrepresentations of his biography, but it will also lead to a new hypothesis regarding the redaction of his Talmud articles, which will then be corroborated by means of a philological analysis of the text.

² I. Loeb, 'La controverse de 1240 sur le Talmud', *Revue des études juives* 1 (1880), pp. 247-261; 2 (1881), pp. 248-270; 3 (1881), pp. 39-57, edition in no. 2, pp. 253-270 and no. 3, pp. 39-54 [hereafter ed. Loeb]. For a recent English translation see J. Friedman, J. Connell-Hoff and R. Chazan (eds.), *The Trial of the Talmud: Paris, 1240*, Toronto: PIMS, 2012, pp. 102-121 [hereafter *The Trial of the Talmud*].

³ For an outline of the edition project see A. Fidora, 'The Latin Talmud and its Influence on Christian-Jewish Polemic', *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 1:2 (2014), pp. 337-342.

⁴ R. Chazan, *The Trial of the Talmud*, p. 40.

⁵ G. Dahan, 'Un dossier latin de textes de Rashi autour de la controverse de 1240', *Revue des études juives* 151 (1992), pp. 321-336 (p. 325) [hereafter 'Un dossier latin']; G. Dahan, 'Les traductions latines de Thibaud de Sézanne', in *Le brûlement du Talmud à Paris 1242-1244*, ed. G. Dahan and É. Nicolas, Paris: Cerf, 1999, pp. 95-120 (p. 101) [hereafter 'Les traductions latines'].

⁶ This is true not only for the book mentioned in the previous note, but also for G. Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au Moyen Âge*, Paris: Cerf, 1990.

The Two Prologues of the Talmud Dossier

As was said before, the Talmud dossier contained in the Paris manuscript consists of two parts, namely the *Extractiones* (which are given in two versions)⁷ and Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles, along with other related texts.

These two parts are introduced by two prologues by the anonymous compiler of the dossier, who uses the occasion to share extremely valuable information on the redaction process of the dossier that has not been properly interpreted until now.

Concerning the translators involved in the project, the first prologue, preceding the *Extractiones*, states the following:

'God sent two Catholic translators who were very learned in the Hebrew language. It was an unquestionable proof of their reliability for me that, having translated some time before from the mouth of the first translator (*ab ore prioris interpretis transtuleram*) many important and remarkable passages from the aforesaid books, this translation, as well as that of the second translator, who did not know what I had translated previously and how it had been rendered, both expressed the same opinions and yielded the same sense, though they sometimes used different words because of the difficulty and obscurity of the Hebrew language'.⁸

Gilbert Dahan, who has discussed this passage, takes it to mean that three persons were involved in the translation of the *Extractiones*: one translator T₁, who worked with the compiler, translating *à quatre mains*, that is, T₁ translated the Talmud from Hebrew into French, and the compiler translated it from French into Latin; and a translator T₂ who, at a later moment in time, prepared a Latin

⁷ One version offers the Talmudic translations following the order of the Talmudic tractates, whereas the other one arranges them according to subjects of controversy. The latter, which is found at the beginning of the manuscript, seems in fact to be a posterior rearrangement of the material which follows it in the codex. Also from a codicological point of view, this part seems to have been attached later to the manuscript, which originally began with the 'sequential' translation. For a more detailed overview of the Paris manuscript see U. Cecini, Ó. de la Cruz, E. Vernet, 'Observacions sobre la traducció llatina del Talmud (París, med. s. XIII)', *Tamid* 11 (2015), forthcoming.

⁸ *Praefatio in Extractiones de Talmud*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 97ra: 'Deus autem duos sibi providit interpretes catholicos in hebraea lingua quam plurimum eruditos. Hoc autem fidelitatis eorum infallibile mihi praestitit argumentum, quod, cum multa magna et notabilia de praedictis libris diversis temporibus, posteriore ignorante quae vel qualiter, ab ore prioris interpretis transtuleram, etsi propter difficultatem et obscuritatem hebraici quandoque variaverint verba, eandem tamen sententiam et sensum tenuerunt'.

version, which the compiler compared to the first translation. Dahan calls this procedure a 'version améliorée des traductions "à quatre mains"'.⁹

If this were all the information we had, one would have to subscribe to Dahan's account of a medieval version of blind peer review for the translation of the *Extractiones*. Yet, if one takes into consideration the prologue to the second part of the dossier, which introduces Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles against the Talmud, things appear in a very different light. In order to justify why, after offering the text of the *Extractiones*, the anonymous compiler now brings Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles, he explains that:

'Since every matter is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses [Matthew 18.16, Deuteronomy 19.15], in order to increase the firmness and certainty of what has been said, I thought it useful to repeat and to add some passages which were translated from the mouth of the other translator (*ex ore alterius interpretis*) some five or six years before, even though here they are given afterwards. [...] Around the year 1236 of the Incarnation of our Lord, the Father of mercies [i.e. God] called to the faith a certain Jew, named Nicholas Donin of La Rochelle, who was so knowledgeable in Hebrew, even according to the Jews, that one could hardly find anybody who knew so much of the nature and grammar of the Hebrew language as he did. He addressed himself to the Apostolic See and pointed out to Pope Gregory [Gregory IX, 1227-41] of happy memory in the twelfth year of his pontificate [i.e. 1238-39] the impious wickedness of the aforesaid books, and summarised in particular some Articles [...].'¹⁰

The expression '*ex ore alterius interpretis*' clearly points back to the first prologue and more precisely to translator T₁, the '*prior interpres*', who is now identified with Nicholas Donin. In this light, what the first prologue actually comes to say is: T₁ and the compiler indeed translated together the Talmud; yet this translation must not be identified with the *Extractiones*, as Dahan does; instead the anonymous compiler is referring to Nicholas Donin's thirty-five articles. The *Extractio-*

⁹ See G. Dahan, 'Les traductions latines', pp. 99-100.

¹⁰ *Prologus in secundam partem*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 211rb: 'Quoniam in ore duorum vel trium testium stat omne verbum [Mt 18.16, Dt 19.15], ad maiorem praecedentium firmitatem et certitudinem quaedam repetere, quaedam superraddere utile iudicavi quae ex ore alterius interpretis sunt translata quinque vel sex annis prius, licet hic ponantur posterius. [...] Anno enim ab incarnatione Domini .mcccxxvi. circiter, Pater misericordiarum Iudaeum quemdam nomine Nicolaum Donin de Rupella vocavit ad fidem, in hebraeo plurimum eruditum etiam secundum testimonium Iudaeorum, ita ut in natura et grammatica sermonis hebraici vix sibi similem inveniret. Hic accessit ad sedem apostolicam et bonae memoriae Gregorio Papae, pontificatus eius anno xii^o, praedictorum librorum nefandam detexit malitiam et quosdam specialiter expressit articulos [...].'

nes, at least in their original version, are the work of T₂, who remains to be identified. At the final stage the anonymous compiler compared Nicholas Donin's anthology, which he co-translated, and the original version of the *Extractiones* of T₂. The result of this comparison is in all likelihood the rearranged version of the *Extractiones* in the Paris manuscript which incorporates material from Donin's anthology, as has been shown elsewhere.¹¹

In addition, the second prologue offers a series of important data, concerning both Nicholas Donin's life and the sequence of events:

- 1) Donin converted in the year 1236.
- 2) Donin presented his thirty-five articles to Pope Gregory IX in the year 1238-39, i.e. in the twelfth year of his pontificate (1227-41).
- 3) The *Extractiones de Talmud* were produced in 1244/45, namely five or six years after Donin's thirty-five articles from 1238-39.¹²

It is worth stressing these three very basic facts which follow from the second prologue, since in current scholarship there is a considerable amount of confusion regarding these data. Jeremy Cohen, André Tuilier and Alex J. Novikoff,¹³ for instance, maintain that Nicholas Donin approached the Pope in 1236, to which Piero Capelli¹⁴ adds that it was the Pope himself who baptised the Jewish convert.

¹¹ On the relation between the original sequential and the rearranged thematic version of the *Extractiones*, see A. Fidora, 'Textual Rearrangement and Thwarted Intentions: The Two Versions of the Latin Talmud', *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 2:1 (2015), pp. 63-78.

¹² Ch. Merchavia, 'Latin Translations of the Talmud in the Margins of Ms. Florence and Ms. Paris 16558' (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 41 (1965-1966), pp. 543-556 (p. 555), dates the translation to the years 1248-1255, based on the wrong assumption that its addressee, Odo of Châteauxroux, did not become Bishop of Tusculum and Legate of the Apostolic See before 1248. Yet, this title, which is mentioned in the Talmud dossier, was bestowed on him already in the year 1244. This is also the reason why the year 1243, i.e. five years after 1238, is not possible, because by then he was not yet Apostolic Legate.

¹³ See J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews. The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca - London: Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 60; A. Tuilier, 'La condamnation du Talmud par les maîtres universitaires parisiens, ses causes et ses conséquences politiques et idéologiques', in *Le brûlement du Talmud à Paris 1242-1244*, Paris: Cerf, 1999, ed. G. Dahan and É. Nicolas, pp. 59-78 (p. 60) [hereafter 'La condamnation du Talmud']; and A.J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation. Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 191.

¹⁴ See P. Capelli, 'Conversion to Christianity and Anti-Talmudic Criticism from Petrus Alfonsi to Nicolas Donin and Pablo Christiani', in *Transcending Words. The Language of Religious*

While all these claims are untenable, they persist tenaciously. In this context, it may be added that also the contention by Alexander Kisch that Donin was condemned by Pope Nicholas III in 1287 does not find any support in the documents either.¹⁵

The Thirty-Five Articles: Hebrew-into-French-into-Latin

While the close reading of the two prologues unravels the redaction process of the *Extractiones*, it also calls for a reappraisal of Donin's thirty-five articles. Strangely enough, no one has raised so far the question of how a neophyte was capable of producing a fluent Latin translation of Talmudic passages that could be presented to the Pope. Only Robert Chazan asked himself quite timidly whether the thirty-five articles 'were composed simply by Donin himself'.¹⁶

As we know from other prominent converts, such as Alfonso de Valladolid, it was by no means the rule that neophytes acquired proficiency in Latin;¹⁷ rather the opposite seems to have been the case. Hence, one has to take seriously the anonymous compiler's assertion that he translated from Nicholas Donin's mouth, that is, that Nicholas translated into French orally and the compiler rendered his words into written Latin. However, such a claim needs to be substantiated through philological evidence from Donin's Talmud articles.

For this purpose, the analysis of the Gallicisms contained in the thirty-five articles seems to be very promising. It is true that these do not have to point *per se* to an oral intermediary French version of the translation. Nevertheless, some Gallicisms in the thirty-five articles deserve our particular attention, i.e. those where French or Judeo-French expressions are not added as a secondary explana-

Contact Between Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Premodern Times, ed. G.K. Hasselhoff and K.M. Stünkel, Bochum: Winkler, 2015, pp. 89-102 (p. 93).

¹⁵ Cf. A. Kisch, 'Die Anklageartikel gegen den Talmud und ihre Vertheidigung durch Rabbi Jechiel ben Joseph vor Ludwig dem Heiligen in Paris. Nach theilweise ungedruckten, gleichzeitigen Urkunden in der Nationalbibliothek zu Paris', *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 23 (1874), pp. 10-18, pp. 62-75, pp. 123-130, pp. 155-163, pp. 204-212 (p. 126). Kisch refers to the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. XXI, p. 293, which does indeed mention a certain Nicholas who was condemned in 1287 by the Pope. Yet, all we learn about this Nicholas is that he was 'docteur en théologie' and 'ministre de la province de France'; no mention is made of any Jewish origin that would allow identifying him with Donin.

¹⁶ See R. Chazan in *The Trial of the Talmud*, p. 39.

¹⁷ As Walter Mettmann has noticed in the introduction to his edition of Alfonso de Valladolid's *Mostrador de la justicia*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994-1996, vol. I, pp. 7-8, Alfonso was probably not very familiar with Latin.

tion to the primary Latin rendering, but the vernacular expressions are given as the primary translation, taking priority over the Latin equivalent, which is added as a secondary translation.

Two of the four passages in question concern the verb 'miauder', which is introduced already in the anthology's first article against the Talmud. Focusing on the purportedly divine origin of the Talmud, here one reads the following translation from Tractate Šabbāt 31a:

'In cezer Mohed, in macecta Sabaz, in perec Bama madlikym, quod interpretatur in quo illuminantes, dicitur sic: "Miaudent, i. e. dicunt, magistri: Accidit in quodam goy, gentili, quod venit coram Samay dixitque ei: Quot leges vobis? Respondit: Duae, una in scripto, alia in ore"¹⁸.

In this quotation 'miauder' renders the Aramaic *tanû* from *Šabbāt*, which derives from the root *t-n-y*, literally meaning 'to repeat' or 'to teach'.¹⁹

¹⁸ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 211va (ed. Loeb, no. 2, p. 253); here and in the following quotations the underlining is from the manuscript. English translation (*The Trial of the Talmud*, p. 103): 'In *Seder Moed*, Tractate Shabbat, in the chapter *Bameh Madlikin* (which means with what may we light), it says as follows: "The masters *miaudent* (i.e. say): It happened that a certain *goy* (gentile) came before Shammai and said to him: How many laws do you have? Two, he replied, one written, the other oral". The corresponding passage in the modern edition of the Talmud *Babli*, *Šabbāt* 31a' (*Talmud Bavli*, The Schottenstein edition, New York: Artscroll – Mesorah, 2012 (3rd ed.) [hereafter ed. Schottenstein] reads: תנו רבנן: מעשה בן־נורי אקד שקא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: כמה תורות יש לכם? אמר לו: תנו רבנן: מעשה בן־נורי אקד שקא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: כמה תורות יש לכם? אמר לו: שתיים, תורה שבכתב ותורה שבעל־פה. English translation: 'The Rabbis taught: [the following] event [occurred] to a gentile, who went before Šammai [and] said to him: How many Torahs do you have? He said to him: Two – the Torah, which is in writing, and Oral Torah [lit. which is on the mouth]'. In the Latin translation the passage is quoted correctly as belonging to the Order (סדר; *sēder*) of the Appointed Time (מועד; *Mō'ēd*), more precisely to the tractate (מסכתא; *massektā*) *Šabbāt* (שבת) and in its [second] chapter (פרק) named (after its first words) 'With what [are we allowed to be] kindling [the *Šabbāt* lights]' (במה מדליקין; *bamme madliqin*). Note that the reading נכרי (*nākri*: stranger, gentile) is peculiar to the Vilna edition, on which the modern one is based. There are however manuscripts (e.g. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 95, fol. 12v), which have 'gōy' as in the Latin translation ('in quodam goy').

¹⁹ The related Hebrew root *š-n-y* is at the base of the word 'mishna', which literally means 'repetition', but also, referring to the repetition of orally transmitted teaching, 'study' or 'oral teaching'. Hence the verb *tanû* referred to the Rabbis means 'they taught by repeating orally transmitted material'. The meaning of 'studying' is attested in the thirty-five articles too. Cfr. Article XXII (quoting 'Abôdâ Zarâ, 3b), MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 215va (ed. Loeb, no. 3, p. 44): 'XII horae sunt diei, in tribus primis sedet Deus et *myaude*, i.e. studet, in lege'. Ed. Schottenstein, 'Abôdâ Zarâ, 3b²: והא אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: שתיים עשרה שעות הוי היום, שלש הראשונות הקדוש ברוך הוא יושב ועוסק בתורה. English translation: 'But surely Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Twelve hours constitute the

The same rendering can be found in Article III, which addresses the claim that the Oral Torah is implanted in the Jews' minds. Translating from *Babâ M'si'â* 33a, the text states:

'Ad idem in cezer Iessuhot²⁰ in macecta Bava mecia, i.e. porta media, in perec Illumecioz,²¹ i.e. istae inventiones, in fine,²² ibi dicitur: "Miaudent, i.e. dicunt, magistri: Qui studet in Mikara, Biblia, modus est et non ille est modus"²³.

Again, *tanû* is rendered as 'miauder' and subsequently explained by means of the Latin 'dicere'. As was already pointed out by Isidore Loeb, 'miauder' or 'mauder' was Judeo-French jargon and finds its parallel in 'meldar' among the Spanish Jews or 'melden' among the German-speaking communities. Its meaning varies between 'reading' and 'teaching', the latter of which seems to be intended in the present context.²⁴

day. [During] the first three, the Holy One, blessed is He, is sitting and applying himself to [the study of] the Torah'. Here the verb 'myauder' is used to translate the original עוסק/oseq (present participle of 'asaq: to apply oneself, to study), which is glossed with the Latin 'studet'. The same Aramaic verb 'asaq is present in the quotation from *Babâ M'si'â* 33a (העוסקין/ha'ôsqin), discussed below no. 23, where it is also translated into Latin with 'qui studet' (collective singular instead of the plural in the original).

²⁰ The Order in which we find the tractate *Babâ M'si'â* is today called *N'ziqîn* (נזיקין), i.e. 'Damages', however this is a relatively recent designation.

²¹ I.e. אלו מצינו/ellû m'si'ot ("These findings"), which is the second chapter of *Babâ M'si'â*.

²² Through a comparison with the original it becomes clear that here the end of the chapter is meant, not the end of the tractate.

²³ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 212ra (ed. Loeb, no. 2, p. 255-256). English translation (*The Trial of the Talmud*, p. 104): 'On the same point, in *Seder Yeshuot*, Tractate Bava Metzi'a (i.e. the middle gate), in the chapter *Eliu Metziot* (i.e. these finds), at the end, it is written there: "The masters miaudent (i.e. say): He who studies the Mikra (the Bible), it is and is not a virtue". Ed. Schottenstein, *Babâ M'si'â*, 33a⁴: תנו רבנן: העוסקין במקרא מדה ואינה מדה. English translation: 'The Rabbis taught: those who apply themselves [to the study] of the Scripture [accomplish] a measure, but it is not a [real; or large] measure'. In what follows it is said that by studying the Mishna a (real) measure is accomplished and by studying Mishna and Talmud the greatest measure is accomplished. This is due to the oral nature of Mishna and Talmud, which threaten them to disappear in absence of study, which is less likely in the case of the written Torah.

²⁴ In addition to Isidore Loeb's remarks (no. 2, pp. 251-252), see D.S. Blondheim, *Les parlers judéo-romans et la Vetus Latina. Étude sur les rapports entre les traductions bibliques en langue romane des juifs au Moyen Âge et les anciennes versions*, Paris: Champion, 1925 (reprint Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), s.v. *meletare*.

With regard to the translation method employed in the thirty-five articles, it is remarkable that a Judeo-French term, which etymologically does not depend on the Hebrew (*tanû*), was chosen as the primary translation of the original. This expression was of course familiar to a Jewish convert like Nicholas Donin, to whose habitual language use it belonged; yet it was certainly not familiar to a Latin co-translator who may have asked for further clarification, which resulted in the very generic and colourless 'dicunt'.

A third passage uses the French word 'menier'. It is introduced in Article IV, which addresses the passage of the Talmud from orally transmitted wisdom to a written corpus. At this juncture, a text from *Gîtîn* 60a is quoted, which apparently raises objections against the codification of the Talmud:

'Hoc legitur in cezer Nassym,²⁵ in macecta Guitym,²⁶ in pereg Hanizakim,²⁷ ubi dicitur: Rava et Rab Ioceb dicunt ambo: "Iste liber de Aftarta, liber est lectionum sumptarum de Biblia in quo legitur in synagoga, vetitum est legere in ipso. Quare? Quia non fuit datus ad scribendum".

Glossa: Quia non fuit concessum scribere de Mikara, Biblia, minus quam librum integrum. Mor, filius Rab Asse, dicit: "Vetitum est accipere *menier*, i.e. manuale dictum legendarium. Quare? Quia non est conveniens legere in eo".²⁸

According to these objections, short versions of the Bible with selections of the prophetic books, the so-called *haftarot*, and *a fortiori* other religious compilations were not authorised. Yet, as the argument continues, with the time this rule needed to be attenuated, since the hearts and minds of the believers got weaker, and unless it were written down, the Law would have fallen into oblivion. In this

²⁵ סדר נשים / *sēder nāšîm* ('Order of women').

²⁶ גיטין / *gîtîn* ('Bills of divorce').

²⁷ הנזקין / *hannîzzāqîn* ('The damaged ones'), which is the fifth chapter of *Gîtîn*.

²⁸ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 212ra-b (ed. Loeb, no. 2, pp. 256-257). English translation (*The Trial of the Talmud*, p. 104 [slightly modified]): 'One reads this in *Seder Nashim*, Tractate Gittin, in the chapter *Hanizakin*, where it says: "Rabbah and Rav Joseph both say: That book of haftarahs (a book of readings taken from the Bible which is read from in the synagogue), it is forbidden to read from it. Why? Because it was not permitted to write it". Gloss: Because writing anything less than a whole book from the Mikra (Bible) was not permitted. Mar, son of Rav Ashi, says: "It is forbidden to carry a *tmeniert* (i.e. the aforementioned handbook). Why? Because it is not fit to read from it". Ed. Schottenstein, *Gîtîn*, 60a¹: מאי קאמר רב יוסף דאמרין תרויהו: האי ספר אפטרמא - אסור למקרי ביה בשבת; מאי קאמר רבא ורבי יוסף דאמרין תרויהו: האי ספר אפטרמא - אסור למקרי ביה בשבת; מאי קאמר רבא ורבי יוסף דאמרין תרויהו: האי ספר אפטרמא - אסור למקרי ביה בשבת; מאי קאמר רבא ורבי יוסף דאמרין תרויהו: האי ספר אפטרמא - אסור למקרי ביה בשבת. Mar bar Rav Ašī said: carrying [it] around is also prohibited. Why? Because it is not fit to read from'.

context a word of Rabbi Ašī's son Mar is quoted according to which such a short version, which is called a 'menier', should not be carried around nor read from (on Šabbāt).

While Isidore Loeb confessed not to understand the word, its meaning is obvious.²⁹ 'Mainier' – with *ai* instead of *e* – is, according to the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, an adjective meaning 'handy', with the twofold sense of 'portable' and 'skilful'.³⁰ In the present context the word is used in the first sense, that is, to designate a portable version of parts of the Holy Scripture. This is confirmed by the Latin equivalent of the term, namely 'manuale'.

In fact, the Hebrew/Aramaic original of the Talmud as it has come down to us does not mention any such 'handbook' at this place; instead the reader is implicitly referred back to the *haftarah*. 'Mainier' seems to have been Donin's attempt to supply a more explicit grammatical object for the sentence in question. In his mind it was of course clear that the *haftarah* was a kind of biblical handbook or anthology; yet, for his co-translator the relation between 'mainier' and *haftarah* was far from evident; thus, while he accepted the term as a more or less technical expression which he incorporated into the Latin translation, he asked for further explanation, which he then appended to the French term, that is, 'manuale dictum legendarium'.³¹

Such a scenario allows us to make sense of the passage, since it explains why the French term 'mainier' appears as the primary translation, whereas the much more meaningful Latin paraphrase 'manuale dictum legendarium' is given as the secondary translation only.

The three examples discussed so far would be difficult to account for in a direct Hebrew-Latin translation, for in such a translation one would expect that ver-

²⁹ More difficult is another unidentified Gallicism which occurs several times in the Talmud dossier, as for instance in Article XXII, where the word 'audecoz' or 'audecot' is used to expand the Latin translation 'reus est'. In the Latin translation from Rashi's Bible commentaries on fol. 229vb of our Parisian MS, the term reappears in order to explain the Latin 'debitrix'. Gilbert Dahan's explanation, which is based on the aforesaid Rashi passage, namely that some form of 'en dehors' should be assumed, is not convincing. cf. G. Dahan, 'Un dossier latin', p. 33 (with n. 46). Instead, the manuscript from Girona, Arxiu Capitular, 19b, which transmits part of the dossier, yields a reading which is certainly at the origin of the strange form 'audecot': *andetee* (fol. 38rb [80]). This is an orthographical variant of the word *endettée*, i.e. 'indebted', see <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>, s.v. *endetter* (last visited 16/08/2016).

³⁰ See <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>, s.v. *mainier*² (last visited 16/08/2016).

³¹ The term 'legendarium' should not be understood as a book of 'legends', but of 'readings', as in this context it recalls the previous designation of the aforementioned (*dictum*) *haftarah* as a *Liber lectionum*.

nacular terms were used only when they either allow to render the original in a more literal and thus more faithful manner, or when they may help the audience or readership to better understand the text. Yet, with regard to both 'miauder' and 'mainier' this is not the case; on the contrary: 'miauder' is neither a more literal translation of the Hebrew than could be provided in Latin nor does it facilitate the understanding of the text for a Christian public; likewise 'mainier' is neither a more literal translation (actually it is not a translation at all, but the translator's expansion of the Hebrew text) nor is it easier to understand than its Latin paraphrase – and even less so for a non-French addressee such as the Italian Pope.

A fourth and last case yields even more compelling evidence. *Prima facie* it is related to the last example concerning 'mainier'. In Article XIV, which blames the Jews for maintaining that three Jews can release anyone from every oath, the reader comes across the following passage from *Nedarim* 78a:

'Item in Nassim, in macecta Nezarim,³² in perec Naara hameoracha,³³ i.e. puella desponsata, legitur: "Absolutio votorum in tribus ydiotis". Obicitur: "Nonne scriptum est 'capita tribuum' ibi: Loqutus est ad principes filiorum Israel: Si quis virorum votum Domino voverit, etc. [Numbers 30.2-3]? Ergo ydiotae non debent absolvere, sed magistri". "Dicit Rab sive Rby Iohan: In uno manuali, gallice *menier*, i.e. uno magistro". Per hoc probant quod tres ydiotae vel unus sapiens potest absolvere a votis'.³⁴

The Talmud discusses here whether three laypersons can indeed absolve from an oath or whether this requires an expert, a *magister* in Latin, with the result that both is possible. What calls for attention in the translation is the sequence 'in uno

³² נדרים/*n'darim* ('Vows').

³³ נערה הנאורסה/*na'ra ham'orasa*.

³⁴ MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 214va-b (ed. Loeb, no. 2, pp. 269-70). English translation (*The Trial of the Talmud*, pp. 111-12 [slightly modified]): 'Also in *Nashim*, Tractate Nedarim, in the chapter *Naara Hameurasa* (i.e. a betrothed girl), one reads: "The dissolving of votes [is made] by three laypersons". An objection is made: "Is it not written *the heads of the tribes* at: He spoke to the leaders of the children of Israel [and said]: If any man should make a vow to the Lord, etc. [Numbers 30.2-3]? Therefore, not laypersons but masters ought to release". "Rav or Rabbi Yohanan says: By one *manualis* (*menier* in French, i.e. one master)". Through this they prove that three laypersons or one sage can release from vows'. Ed. Schottenstein, *Nedarim*, 78a¹: אמר רב אחא בר יעקב: להקשיר שלשה. והא ראשי המשוחות קתיבי! אמר רב חסדא, ואיתימא רבי יוחנן: ביהיד מוקחה. English translation: 'Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov said: To declare valid three laymen [to annul vows]. But it is written "The heads of the tribes"! Rav Ḥisdā said – some say [it was] Rabbi Yoḥanan –: [it refers] to a single expert'.

manuali, gallice menier, i.e. uno magistro', since it establishes an identity between an object and a person, namely a handbook and a teacher. Apparently something went wrong with the translation at this place.

We can offer an explanation of this slip, which presupposes again a Hebrew-into-French-into-Latin collaborative translation. Nicholas Donin did indeed translate 'mainier' at this place. Yet, in doing so, Donin was not referring to the first sense of the word, as noted above, i.e. a portable object, but to its second, more figurative meaning, namely a skillful person or an expert. However, his Latin co-translator did not perceive that at this place Nicholas Donin was drawing on a different aspect of the word which he had already used before, and thus the co-translator continued glossing it as 'manuale'. Realizing, however, that the translation was not understandable in the given context, the co-translator would have asked Donin once more for clarification, which led him to add 'in uno magistro', that is, 'in one expert'. The final result was hence a quite elaborate construction consisting of a supposedly literal translation, a gloss in the Romance vernacular which originated from the first translation and a gloss of the gloss, which further explained the Romance terminus according to the context.³⁵

The erroneous translation of *N^edarim* 78a can thus be accounted for if one posits two translators who communicate in French: the translation mistake would go back to a case of mechanical, uncritical translation, where the second translator did not realize that Donin used different meanings of one and the same French word at different moments.

Altogether the four examples confirm the hypothesis which was formulated on the basis of the anonymous compiler's self-attribution of a share in Donin's Talmud translation: there is certainly enough philological evidence to assert that Nicholas Donin translated the Talmudic texts orally into French and that the compiler of the Talmud dossier worked as his Latin co-translator.

³⁵ Another explanation of the faulty translation could possibly come to one's mind: Nicholas Donin did not say 'mainier' at all; what he uttered was the Hebrew expression which features in the Talmud, namely 'mûmhe', the expert, which may have sounded like 'muné', which, in turn, is phonetically close to 'mainier'. Since the word 'mainier' had already appeared prominently before, the co-translator may have been biased and thus he misheard what Donin said and consequently mistranslated it into Latin as 'manuale'. Noticing, however, that the translation did not read well, Donin's co-translator proceeded to add the presumably French word along with a clarification which he would have obtained from Donin. In this second case the flaw would originate in the fragility of oral communication, which is always prone to phonetic confusion and distortion, all the more when several languages, such as French and Hebrew, are used concomitantly.

Concluding Remarks

These philological findings have far-reaching consequences both for our appraisal of Nicholas Donin and of the Talmudic controversy of the thirteenth century in general.

As for Nicholas Donin, it has often been asked what drove the Jewish convert to direct such a harsh attack at his former coreligionists. While it is probably useless to speculate about his motives (frustration, revenge, etc.), we now definitely know that Donin was not the lone gunman as which he is usually portrayed. The thirty-five articles against the Talmud were not his private initiative, but must be seen in a larger and most probably already institutional context.³⁶ Moreover, the fact that Donin had to rely on a Latin co-translator revives the question of the role of vernacular in the Christian-Jewish disputations of the thirteenth century and beyond.³⁷

As for the Talmud controversy of the 1240s, one extremely important outcome is the strict continuity of the polemic. Though we do not know who was the compiler of the Latin Talmud dossier, we can say that he was directly involved both in the redaction of the thirty-five articles which were presented to Pope Gregory IX and in the preparation of the *Extractiones* under Pope Innocent IV. Hence, the unity of the Talmud dossier is not only a literary one, but it reflects the unitary and purposeful efforts of the compiler over the years.³⁸ Along with Odo of Châteauroux, who was likewise present during the various phases of the Talmudic controversy, this compiler must be considered one of its driving forces and will certainly be key to fully understanding the Christian anti-Talmud movement in thirteenth-century Paris.

³⁶ See, in the same line, A. Tuilier, 'La condamnation du Talmud', pp. 61-62.

³⁷ See the recent article by D.J. Lasker, 'Latin into Hebrew and the Medieval Jewish-Christian Debate', in *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies. Volume One*, ed. R. Fontaine and G. Freudenthal, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013, pp. 334-347.

³⁸ Therefore, Henry of Cologne could be a suitable candidate, since he was not only involved in the 1240 procedure against the Talmud, but was also among the signatories of its final condemnation in 1248. See N. Bériou, 'Entre sottises et blasphèmes. Échos de la dénonciation du Talmud dans quelques sermons du XIII^e siècle', in *Le brûlement du Talmud à Paris 1242-1244*, ed. G. Dahan and É. Nicolas, Paris: Cerf, 1999, pp. 212-237 (217-221). Berthold Altaner suggests that Henry knew Hebrew; yet there is no evidence for this. We know of other figures, such as Albert the Great, who participated in the controversy against the Talmud without being familiar with the language. See B. Altaner, 'Zur Kenntnis des Hebräischen im Mittelalter', *Biblische Zeitschrift* 21 (1933), pp. 288-308 (p. 298).