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**Medieval and Early Modern Translations of
Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed***

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Persécution et art de la traduction : nouvelles preuves concernant la traduction latine du Guide des égarés

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הנבוכים לרמב"ם

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Persecution and the Art of Translation: Some New Evidence Concerning the Latin Translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*

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The *Guide of the Perplexed*, Moses Maimonides' major theo-philosophical work, is generally considered to be the most significant, mature and influential piece of Judaeo-Arabic thought, and is one of the only works of medieval Jewish philosophy and science to have been accorded widespread authoritative status in Christian Europe.¹ Inaccessible to most European Jews in its original Arabic language, the *Guide* was translated into Hebrew twice during the first two decades of the 13th century, first as an "authorized" version by Samuel Ibn Tibbon and later a more elegant though less accurate translation was produced by the famous poet Yehuda Al-Harizi. As of the 1220s, we begin to see evidence of Latin Christian familiarity with this work and (mostly indirect) acquaintance with its contents. By the early 1240s, its full Latin translation was already in circulation and was being closely studied by Christian scholars.²

1. Though needless to say it is not the only Jewish work known to Christian readers, see SCHWARTZ, 2017.

2. The research presented here is part of the GIF project N° G-1332-116.4/2016, "Arabic-into-Hebrew-into Latin: The Latin Translation of Maimonides' *Guide*. Critical

However, the history of the Latin translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* confronts the modern scholar with a most annoying enigma. Against a growing number of textual witnesses for a direct acquaintance with Maimonides' philosophic text among Christian Latin scholars in the second quarter of the 13th century, we encounter a persistent absence of any accurate information regarding the identity of the translator(s), the motivation and identity of the initiator/addressee, and the intellectual *milieu* in which the work of translation was located. The absence of information concerning its origins is as unusual as it is puzzling. Translations of major texts from this period (e.g., the Latin translations of works by Avicenna, Alfarabi, Averroes, Israeli, Gabirol, and many others) typically provide us with a full account regarding the translators and the circumstances of their activity. The same is true for the two Hebrew translations of the *Guide*, prepared by Samuel Ibn Tibbon (completed in 1204) and Yehuda Al-Ḥarizi (1214).

Diana Di Segni's recently published dissertation³ and the ongoing work on the complete edition of the Latin *Dux neutrorum* present the opportunity to reconsider those fundamental questions on the grounds of new evidence and with the expectation of attaining a better understanding in the future. The work is still in progress and further discoveries might provide us with more clues. Indeed, the examination of this preliminary stage of the critical edition project has not brought us much further than the state of knowledge regarding those very questions which existed in 1875, when Joseph Perles first published his pioneering work based on the discovery of one single Latin manuscript in Munich.⁴ Yet, a considerable amount of new data has been collected since then resulting in significant shifts in some of our perspectives. As we shall see, Di Segni's research has added at least two pieces of crucial evidence to our puzzle: first, there is incontrovertible proof for the fact that the work of translation involved two translators working together (*a quattro mani*), a Jew (perhaps a convert) and a Christian; second, the marginal notes, some of which seem to be able to be traced to the level of the translation work itself, give credence to the notion that an Italian or rather a Castilian hand was involved.

Edition, History and Cultural Context." I would like to thank especially Diana Di Segni for her meticulous reading and insightful remarks. For a general overview of the reception of Maimonides' *Guide* in the Latin West, see GUTTMANN, 1902, 1908. Guttman's description has been revised and updated in HASSELHOFF, 2004.

3. DI SEGNI, 2016a. Some of the most relevant conclusions of the dissertation were published elsewhere, see *ead.*, 2016b.

4. PERLES, 1875.

Even if all this could not radically change the basic picture, the new revelations do provide us with some more indirect pieces of evidence that I would like to discuss in the following. Furthermore, this is a good opportunity to reconsider some presumptions and to reexamine well-established patterns of thought that have been shaped over the course of almost a hundred and fifty years of research. Hence my remarks are aimed both to outline the present state of our knowledge and to indicate some potentially fruitful directions for future research.

Maimonides' *Guide* Among the Scholastics: Philosophical Work or Hebraist Encyclopedia?

There are many reasons to view Maimonides' *Guide* as an important major philosophical product of Judaeo-Arabic intellectual culture. Not the least of these is the way we tend to interpret some of Maimonides' own reflections regarding his intellectual project and the significance of his work. Even more, it is embedded in the way we perceive the weighty conflicts within Jewish communities in the "century after Maimonides"⁵ as a conflict between "rationalists," defined as "Maimonideans," and "anti-rationalists," who are often referred to in modern scholarship as "anti-Maimonideans." Since the 1230s, if not earlier,⁶ both parties debated the legitimacy of Jewish philosophizing, relating repeatedly to the appellation of the "great eagle."⁷ Finally it matches, to a great extent, the role played by the *Guide* in the shaping of the modern Jewish Enlightenment/Haskalah movement⁸ and the elevation of Maimonides' figure into a paradigmatic representation of the philosophical mind, occupying a niche similar to that of Thomas Aquinas in Catholic neo-Thomism. Both these scholarly shifts occurred simultaneously, originating in the last quarter of the 19th century.⁹

However, many elements point to another perception of the *Guide* among its early Latin readers that might provide us at least with an alternative framework for

5. Cf. GUTTMANN, 1964, pp. 207-235.

6. Cf. STROUMSA, 1999.

7. The most comprehensive study of the Maimonidean controversies, though in great need of corrections, is SARACHEK, 1935. Cf. also SILVER, 1965; FREUDENTHAL, 2001; STERN, 2003. For a study involving the Kabbalistic tradition as well see IDEL, 2004; WOLFSON, 2004.

8. Cf. FONTAINE, SCHATZ & ZWIEP (eds.), 2007; SCHWARTZ, 2003.

9. This approach is well represented by the two volumes edited for the 700th anniversary of Maimonides' death in 1904: BACHER, 1908. Cf. also SCHWARTZ, 2010. For the scholarly implications see SIRAT, 1997.

the overall definition of the nature of this unique composition. As Görge Hasselhoff in his study dedicated to the late medieval reception of Maimonides rightly emphasizes, this Latin reception included a series of archetypical figures, where, besides the *philosophus*, *astronomicus* and *medicus*, one can point out the *Hebraeus* and the *exegeticus iudaicus*.¹⁰ The last two were especially related to the wealth of rabbinic post-Biblical sources found in the *Guide*. Indeed, before the appearance of Ramon Marti's *Pugio fidei* in the 1270s, Maimonides' *Guide*—contemporaneously with the Parisian Talmud trial of the 1240s—constituted the most systematic sourcebook for Jewish biblical and rabbinical literature available in Latin.

The first fragment of the translation of the *Guide*, the *Liber de parabola*, translated as early as 1223-4, contained chapters 29-30 and 32-49 from *Guide* III, which discussed the logic of the commandments. Considering also the list of the precepts (*Liber preceptorum*) attached to the final translation of the *Guide*, both texts provide ample evidence of the thirst for *rabbinnica* as an important impetus for the translation, that intimately characterized the early production of Maimonides' Latin writings. This unique accentuation was reflected in affixing the appellation of *Rabbi* to the author's name. The earliest testimonies regarding the reception of the work, both in Paris and in Italy, which were the two dominant locations of the early Christian encounter with the *Guide*, effectively reflect this preoccupation with Maimonides' interpretation of Jewish exegesis and Jewish law. William of Auvergne,¹¹ Frederick II¹² and Moneta of Cremona¹³ might well be the most striking examples. Aegidius Romanus, or whoever was the real author

10. HASSELHOFF, 2004.

11. In his *De legibus* and *De universo* William relates to exegetical and rabbinical content which are clearly derived from Maimonides' works without ever referring directly to the *Guide* or to its author, cf. SMALLEY, 1974. For the connection between the Cathar heresy and the turning to the more literal and philosophical interpretation of the law suggested by Maimonides see *ibid.*, p. 22 and ff.

12. See especially the two quotations in ANATOLI, 1866, p. 53b (Emperor Frederick II on interpreting the Midrash [Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer, III], in which “the snow under the throne of his glory” represents prime matter); p. 92b (Emperor Frederick II on sacrifices). For Frederick's commentary on the biblical commandment of the red cow see STEINSCHNEIDER, 1864; SAPERSTEIN, 1992.

13. MONETA CREMONENSIS, 1743, within a discussion on the Aristotelian account of creation. As Hasselhoff claims, it is clear that Moneta does not quote the full translation but only the *Liber de uno Deo benedicto*, cf. HASSELHOFF, 2004, pp. 91-93.

of the *De errores philosophorum*,¹⁴ in the two chapters devoted to the errors of Maimonides, repeatedly uses the title *De expositione legis* in referring to the *Guide*.¹⁵

This exegetical framework of the early *Rabbi Moyses* might be relevant when considering the following data: four Latin adaptations of Maimonides were produced within less than twenty years: the *Liber de parabola* [ca. 1223-4], the *Liber de uno Deo benedicto* [ca. 1240], the *Dux neutrorum vel dubiorum* [before 1244], the *Liber preceptorum* [before 1244]. The first three were based on Maimonides' Judaeo-Arabic philosophical work, while the fourth is taken from his legal corpus in Hebrew, while ignoring the parallel, more concise, Arabic longer version.¹⁶ The three translations/adaptations of the *Guide* are the product of three different translators. None of them bears evidence of a massive reliance on the Judaeo-Arabic original, and none of them reveals the name of its Latin translator (the *Liber de parabola* in its extant manuscript also does not provide the name of Maimonides as the author, although the text include one reference to Rabbi Moyses Aegyptus).

I would like to claim that this unique case of repeated anonymity in itself should force us to reconsider the very basic nature of the early Christian Latin encounter with the figure, ideas and writings of Maimonides. In comparison, one can easily claim that all other Arabic philosophical or scientific works were translated directly from the Arabic by translators who were qualified for such a task; not only by reason of their skills in Arabic, but also because of their acquaintance with the relevant Arabic philosophical terminology. The translators of Maimonides belong to a different and distinct group. They are Hebraists, well-acquainted with Hebrew biblical and rabbinical sources, and less with Arabic philosophy. This might well explain their reliance on Al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew translation as their main source-language document. Indeed, Al-Ḥarizi himself justified his decision to re-translate Maimonides' philosophical work— which had been translated in the same *Provençal milieu* just a few years earlier by a great expert, and had been authorized by Maimonides himself—as stemming from the desire of some members of the Jewish community for a new translation that might assist them in overcoming the severe difficulties in comprehending Ibn Tibbon's translation.

14. On the authenticity of the work's attribution to Aegidius Romanus, see Koch's introduction in AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 1944; for the opposite claim, see HASSELHOFF, 2004. Hasselhoff suggests Spain as the true location for the work.

15. This title appears in Aegidius 13 times. Cf. AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 1944, ch. XII, p. 58, 8, 16, 22; p. 60, 5, 9, 11, 20; p. 62, 4, 11, 16; p. 64, 1, 12, 18.

16. Cf. DI SEGNI, 2016a, p. XL, n. 105.

Al-Harizi explains these difficulties not as an inevitable result of the nature of the original Arabic text, but as a result of Samuel Ibn Tibbon's effort to conceal some of its central ideas. Hence, the Latin translators turned out a more "popular" version of the *Guide*, which probably circulated among less professional Jewish readers. The translation of the *Liber de uno Deo benedicto* is somewhat exceptional, being the most philosophical one, and unsurprisingly it used Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew text, perhaps combined with some acquaintance with the original Arabic notions. This led, indeed, to the creation of a more philosophical figure of Rabbi Moyses as *philosophus* among its readers.¹⁷

The anonymous translator of the *Guide* is defined by Di Segni in her concluding remarks as "unprofessional."¹⁸ Regarding the question of the specific nature of this lack of qualification, Di Segni mentions the "paraphrastic character" of the translation and the instability of its philosophical terminology. This might be valid if we limit our evaluation to the effectiveness of the translator alone and, somewhat anachronistically, to his "philosophical erudition." Otherwise, I find that this judgment does not accord with the rest of the evidence which demonstrates quite the opposite. Maimonides confronts his reader with a highly intricate literary work, precisely because, methodologically, linguistically and polemically, it was not formed in any coherent manner, certainly not in accordance with any standard philosophical structure. Our translator proves himself, as Di Segni herself admits on other occasions,¹⁹ to be rather competent and precise in his work and, hence, highly "professional." He paraphrases many of the lexicographical chapters of the first part (the part already edited by Di Segni) since, as he himself declares,²⁰ much of their content will be meaningless if not unfathomable for a potential Christian Latin reader. I would like to suggest that our translator was punctiliously qualified as a Hebraist, and that this basic Hebraist orientation might also explain his anonymity—pride in authorship being much more dominant in philosophical discourse and somewhat less in other genres.²¹ If this is the case, then Rabbi Moyses the *philosophus* seems to emerge in most

17. Cf. HASSELHOFF, 2004, pp. 88-121.

18. DI SEGNI, 2016a, p. CXXXI: "Generally speaking, the translation seems to be the work of an unprofessional translator, its paraphrastic character being the first evidence for that."

19. DI SEGNI, 2016a, p. LXV; LXXIII.

20. See PERLES, 1875, p. 81.

21. On the Hebrew-into-Latin translations of passages from the Babylonian Talmud and Rashi's commentaries in Paris during the 1240s see FIDORA, 2015; CAPELLI, 2016a.

cases out of the *exegeticus hebraicus*, thanks to the mediation of a Jewish scholar or a convert of Jewish origin. Later on, during the second half of the century, this exegetical reading of the *Guide* was to be revived in Ramon Martí's *Pugio fidei*.²²

Christian Persecution Against Jewish works: Between Montpellier (1230s) and Paris (1240s)

Almost contemporaneously with the translation of the *Guide*, one of the most dramatic turning points in medieval Christian-Jewish encounters took place: the Talmud trial in Paris.²³ This was the outcome of two conterminous enterprises: the translation into Latin of newly discovered Hebrew materials (primarily sections of the Babylonian Talmud, and commentaries by Rashi on the Bible and some Talmudic passages); and decisive acts to censor these freshly translated sources. A decade earlier, a series of less documented events seemed to embody this same two-fold mechanism: at that time, major writings by Maimonides (e.g., the *Guide of the Perplexed* and the *Book of the Commandments*) were translated into Latin and Maimonides' Hebrew writings were allegedly condemned and burned by certain Latin authorities in Montpellier.²⁴ At least one of the Hebrew reports, composed by Hillel ben Samuel of Verona, does try to draw a direct connection between the two events. In his letter written in the late 1280s, Hillel connects the actions in Montpellier in 1233 to the Talmud trial of the 1240s and states that the two burnings took place in Paris within a forty-day period.²⁵

The alleged burning of Maimonides' writings in Montpellier is a no less enigmatic event than the Latin translation of the *Guide*. Indeed, in modern scholarship, the two events have often been associated with each other. Since the 19th century, historians have been drawing connections between the Hebrew translation of the *Guide*, the internal Jewish controversy prompted by the volume, and inquisitorial probing of Maimonides' writings, which purportedly led to the burning of the *Guide* in Montpellier in 1233 by Mendicant friars—Franciscans or,

22. RAYMUNDUS MARTINI, 1651; RAIMUNDUS MARTINI, 2014.

23. For a detailed study of the trial in its Parisian context see SCHWARTZ, 2015. Cf. also CAPELLI, 2016b; DAHAN (éd.), 1999; CHAZAN (ed.), 2012.

24. See SHOHAT, 1971; SHATZMILLER, 1969. For a general overview of the affair, I would still recommend Jeremy Cohen's description and annotated bibliography of the variety of scholarly opinions on this topic, see COHEN, 1982, pp. 52-60.

25. See HILLEL BEN SAMUEL, 1856, pp. 19a-b; COHEN, 1982, p. 59 and ff.; LEICHT, 2013; SCHWARTZ, 2016, p.419.

perhaps, Dominicans. This narrative can no longer be accepted without scrutiny. Had Maimonides' writings been burned, that action would presumably have been preceded by some kind of official edict, probably issued by the papal legate, Cardinal Romanus (de Sancto Angelo, d. 1243).²⁶ Such a procedure would not only have been documented—admittedly, not all documents have been preserved and transmitted—but also a significant negative stigma would then have been associated with the works of Maimonides. This would have prompted justification by the Christian scholars who intensively read and quoted his writings soon after;²⁷ moreover, it would likely have been invoked by Christian critics of Maimonides in later generations, such as the author of *De errores philosophorum*. No such evidence has yet come to light, a fact that leads to the preponderant suspicion that, at least from a Christian point of view, no such event ever took place. Rather, this was a Maimonidean propaganda and a Jewish fantasy that reveals a great deal about Jewish images of Christian control mechanisms and Christian-Jewish relations during the nascent stages of the Inquisition.

The expressions ascribed to the anti-Maimonideans by Yehuda and Abraham Ibn Ḥasdai, brothers from Barcelona²⁸ exemplify the rhetoric used by members of the Maimonidean party. They claim that Jewish anti-Maimonideans spoke to “the priests and the prelates and the Minorites” as follows:

Why do you weary yourselves and traverse distant seas to the ends of the earth in pursuit of heretics, so you might eliminate evil from your midst? We too have heretical works (*sifrei minim we-kofrim*), called the *Book of Knowledge* and the *Guide*, guilty of

26. Cf. KLUXEN, 1954, p. 43 and ff.

27. Cf. COHEN, 1991, p. 325: “The Jew Moses Maimonides thus commanded respect as a philosophical authority in the Christian academy [...] Nevertheless, this positive estimation of Maimonidean thought did not prevent Dominican inquisitors from burning the works of Maimonides as heretical.” Such a discrepancy would sound odd to any current scholar of 13th century scholastic literature and Church history. It is especially hard to accept on the basis of its frequent allusions to Mendicant involvement. Franciscans and Dominicans developed highly centralized structures during that period and, within only a decade of its “burning,” among the recipients of the Latin *Guide* there was one master from each of those orders: the Dominican Albertus Magnus and the Franciscan Alexander of Hales.

28. They are considered the most reliable source on this subject in SHOHAT, 1971, p. 46. Shohat notes that, according to this testimony, the writings of Maimonides were examined and “censured,” but not burned.

terrible crimes. You have the obligation to guard us from error just as you guard yourselves.²⁹

This quotation is nothing but Maimonidean propaganda that boldly appropriates standard Crusader *formulae* recorded by Jewish chroniclers over a century earlier,³⁰ and radically manipulates them to take on the opposite meaning, in relation to both the original Jewish chronicles and the logic of heresy articulated among Christians. (The latter being, by definition, primarily an internal Christian affair, not involved with “travers[ing] the distant seas to the ends of the world”).³¹ But it does convey an essential claim concerning the growing reach of the Church’s jurisdiction to include Jews. While there may be no reason to categorically dismiss the possibility that Mendicant orders were involved in the events that may have occurred in Montpellier, neither is there a reason to insist that Maimonides’ writings were burned there or that anything resembling an official Christian ban on his writings was promulgated. It is unlikely that Maimonides’ philosophical works were burned by the Inquisition in Paris, Montpellier or elsewhere. The fabrication of such an event by Jewish Maimonideans in the early 1230s underscores the momentous impression that the Christian inquisitorial system made on Jews. One must however look at Paris in the early 1240s for an official report on Christian censorship of Jewish writings. Paris is also the first place where we have clear evidence of the study of Maimonides’ *Guide* in its Latin translation.

To sum up, we have two central persecution events, the first of which is semi-imaginary, the second very real and well-documented. In between, we have a somewhat mysterious translation event, clearly located in time but having great opaqueness regarding authorship and place of production. Can these two sets of events somehow be synchronized?

29. English translation according to COHEN, 1982, p. 55.

30. Most of the chronicles gathered by Abraham Habermann begin with a similar ascription, *i. e.*, attributing to the Crusaders the assertion that “here we are wandering to distant lands in search of our place of idolatry (*bet ha-trafoṭ*) and in order to take our revenge from the Ismaelites, and here are the Jews who dwell among us,” see HABERMANN, 1946, pp. 24; 72; 93.

31. *Cf.* STOW, 2004, p. 12.

Persecution and Translation?

Since Joseph Perles established the medieval origin of the Latin version of the *Guide*, later to be printed by Agostino Giustiniani (Paris 1520), and lacking precise knowledge regarding its exact settings, three main hypotheses were formulated. Their chronological order of appearance seems to reflect their grades of acceptance among the community of scholars. On the basis of Diana Di Segni's research, a fourth hypothesis must be added. In the following, I shall examine and reassess those hypotheses.

But before looking closely into them, one more general remark might be in place. Many of the theories offered do not distinguish between three parallel phenomena, *i. e.*:

- . Early acquaintance with the ideas of Maimonides, often transmitted by Jews directly to their Christian interlocutors, without involving full translations into Latin;
- . Written fragments, with or without an author's name, that were circulating decades before the full translation;
- . The appearance of a full Latin translation and the testimonies for its early Latin readership.

As Hasselhoff rightly asserted,³² the fact that scholars like Gerard of Cremona, William of Auvergne, Michael Scotus and even the emperor Frederick II himself already knew about Maimonides and his ideas and had, perhaps, even been exposed to some written versions of the *Guide*, has nothing to do with our analysis of the specific translation event here under examination. Our purpose is limited to the location of the full translation of the *Guide* from Hebrew into Latin, with its different titles and documented readership from Albert the Great to Meister Eckhart and all the way to Giustiniani as its first printer and to his modern readers since the 16th century.

With these methodological remarks in mind, let us now turn to a short examination of the above-mentioned four hypotheses regarding the location of the translation:

32. HASSELHOFF, 2004, p. 16 and ff.

1. Southern Italy: For many historians, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the court of the Hohenstaufen seems to offer the most enticing notion for the place of origin. Hence, the first hypothesis is connected to the greatest scholars of the 19th century such as Steinschneider,³³ Thorndike,³⁴ Perles,³⁵ and others, and is still accepted by modern ones such as Sermoneta³⁶ and Freudenthal.³⁷ All have proposed that Maimonides' *Guide* was translated into Latin at the court of Frederick II in Southern Italy. Perles, in his comprehensive description of the Munich manuscript of the *Dux*, draws extensively on Moses of Salerno's Hebrew commentary on the *Guide* reflecting a weighty exchange with Christian scholars, in which, for the first time, a Jewish author compares his own Hebrew text with the Latin translation. This provides us with direct evidence for the presence of the Latin translation in Christian and Jewish hands in Southern Italy. Perles concludes that Moses and his Christian partners, particularly Nicholas of Giovinazzo "were in any case close to the circle from which this translation was coming, or perhaps were themselves somehow involved in it."³⁸ There are two problems with this conclusion. First, as clearly demonstrated by Caterina Rigo, the early date for Moses of Salerno's commentary on the *Guide* (in the 1240s) must be set in the 1250s or even later.³⁹ The later date of Moses' commentary testifies to the likelihood of the early reception of the *Guide* among Jews and Christians in Italy, but it is irrelevant for determining the date of the translation. The second point is even more crucial. As Perles points out, Moses' exchange of exegetical remarks regarding the *Guide* contains many items in which he repeatedly compares his text of the *Guide* with the Latin translation. The comparison between his Latin quotations and the Latin translation known to us proves beyond a doubt that Moses

33. STEINSCHNEIDER, 1893, p. 432 and ff.

34. THORNDIKE, 1965, p. 28 and ff.

35. PERLES, 1875, p. 80 and ff.

36. SERMONETA, 1969, pp. 37-42.

37. FREUDENTHAL, 1988.

38. PERLES, 1875, p. 80: "Standen jedenfalls dem Kreise, in welchem diese Uebersetzung entstand nahe, oder waren vielleicht selber irgendwie an derselbe betheiligt."

39. See RIGO, 1999, p. 70 and ff. Rigo do suggest that the collaboration with the Christian scholar happened some years before the composition of the Commentary (see *ibid.*, p. 73), but this bears no relevance to the philological question, based on the textual evidence provided by Moses' written testimony.

was using the same Latin text. A further comparison demonstrates that the Latin translation and Al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew text resemble each other closely. And yet, in comparing his own text of the *Guide* with the Latin translation, Moses does not even once give any indication that he is acquainted with the similar formulation offered by Al-Ḥarizi. If there is anything at all to be learned from Moses's commentary on the *Guide*, it is that Al-Ḥarizi's Hebrew translation, from which the Latin translation was produced, was entirely unknown in Moses's circle.

2. Southern France: This thesis was primarily propounded by Wolfgang Kluxen in the mid-twentieth century. He suggested Southern France—in relation to the inquisitorial process considered to have happened in Montpellier during the early 1230s— as the most probable historical backdrop for this translation.⁴⁰ Unlike Paris or Sicily/Naples, in which, among other pieces of evidence, there is also enough evidence for the Christian reception of the *Guide*, no such reception can be documented in the areas of Toulouse and Montpellier, the centers of the alleged inquisitorial activity, apart from the negative reaction documented by the Jews. If, as explained above, my doubts regarding those Jewish reports of the Montpellier events are valid, then this does not leave much likelihood that Southern France was any more plausible than other places as the venue of the translation.
3. Paris: Paris of the 1240s emerged as a rather new option proposed by Hasselhoff,⁴¹ by me,⁴² and to some extent by Caterina Rigo as well.⁴³ There is no doubt that the documented Christian scholarly encounter with the *Guide*, as a complete literary work, first appeared in Paris. As I have claimed elsewhere,⁴⁴ this text received the most intensive and systematic attention from Dominicans, especially Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, each of whom was active in Paris at some juncture in their career—though they all spent most of their lives elsewhere (Albert and Eckhart in Germany, Thomas in Italy). It seems highly probable

40. KLUXEN, 1954, pp. 33-35.

41. HASSELHOFF, 2004, pp. 129-136.

42. SCHWARTZ, 2011, p. 278 and ff.

43. RIGO, 2001, pp. 31-35.

44. SCHWARTZ, 2012, p. 391.

that they had access to the Latin copy of the *Guide* in Paris, a fact that can most readily be traced regarding Albert and Eckhart.⁴⁵ The Dominican Albert the Great, who signed the condemnation of the Talmud and was massively influenced by the writings of Maimonides, is the most astonishing example of this double move of “persecution and translation” (as it was repeatedly pointed out in research from the 19th century onward).⁴⁶ The hypothesis of a Parisian translation stands in opposition to most previous scholarship. And yet, the fact that the first clear evidence of Christian scholars encountering this text in its written form occurred in Paris can be easily combined with the documented activity of Jewish converts translating from Hebrew into Latin. Nicolas Donin and Thibaud (Theobald) de Sézanne both resided in Paris during the 1240s; one of them may have had a role in translating the *Guide* into Latin.⁴⁷ Hasselhoff followed Gilbert Dahan in emphasizing the role played by Theobald, who became a Dominican Master of Hebrew and who Dahan identifies with the translator of the *Extractiones de Talmud*.⁴⁸ Accordingly Hasselhoff tend toward Theobald also as major candidate for being the translator of the *Guide*. Recently, however, Alexander Fidora demonstrated that at least the early version of the *Extractiones* was produced by Donin.⁴⁹ Identifying Paris as the *center* for a specific mode of Christian creativity precisely in that period might answer another doubt raised by Di Segni. She claims that Paris should not be considered as a plausible center for the translation of the *Guide*, since this assumption would counter the conventional order of distribution, according to which translations were being produced in the peripheries (Toledo, Naples) and then migrated to the center (Paris) and not vice versa.⁵⁰ Such a description

45. This stands in contrast to major Spanish scholars, such as Ramon Martí, who read the *Guide* in its original Arabic, and the anonymous (possibly Spanish) author of the *De errores philosophorum*.

46. At least as early as JOËL, 1863, p. XXVI.

47. On Donin, his list of charges against the Talmud and his involvement in the Parisian Talmud controversy in 1240 see MERHAVIA, 1970, pp. 227-290; YUVAL, 2006, pp. 280-284. On Donin as the possible figure involved with the translation of the *Guide*, see SCHWARTZ, 2011, p. 278 and ff; HASSELHOFF, 2004, pp. 123-125.

48. DAHAN, 1999.

49. FIDORA, 2015.

50. DI SEGNI, 2016b, p. 43.

might be accepted—with great caution—with regard to philosophical texts. However, when it comes to Hebraist activity, the impressive evidence from Paris seems to make it into a most important center. Again, one must decide where the emerging figure of Rabbi Moses should be located—among the philosophers or among the Jewish exegetes.

4. Castile: It is however important to note that Diana Di Segni's textual analysis does lay the groundwork for another option, which was perhaps never before truly represented in the scholarly discourse and might deserve much more attention—that Northern Spain, most probably Castile was the venue of the translation. Indeed, the Castilian hints found in the traces of the vernacular⁵¹ make it quite an appealing locale. As pointed out by Di Segni, Toledo developed its own tradition of Christian–Jewish intellectual collaboration, including the praxis of translation “*a quattro mani*” which was certainly in use in the translation under discussion as well. When it comes to the persecution-translation framework, it might be important to remember that the Jewish community of Toledo was also a central site of the Maimonidean controversy, which could have evoked public interest in Maimonides' philosophical writings. The involvement of Spain in the Maimonidean controversies of the 1230s might be no less significant than the alleged events in Southern France. The almost instant nature of the circulation of Spanish productivity all over the continent, as documented by the rapid circulation of many classical works translated there,⁵² make it into an ideal point of departure from which the text might have very easily migrated to both Paris and Naples. Indeed, this thesis allows a lengthy debate to be solved in a most elegant way. And yet, one must also raise some serious doubts. As a Castilian project, perhaps even Toledan, our translation reveals some very uncommon features, especially in its presentation of Hebrew sources. The Toledan translations were always made from the Arabic original; however, if translated from the Hebrew, the depiction of Al-Ḥarizi might be well understood in Toledo, a place very much identified with major parts of Al-Ḥarizi's biography, as his city of birth and the place where he flourished as poet before emigrating

51. DI SEGNI, 2016a, pp. CXXVII–CXXIX; *ead.*, 2016b, pp. 27–42.

52. On the rapid dissemination of texts between Toledo, England, Italy and France see BURNETT, 1997.

to Provence and later on to the East.⁵³ This was also where Al-Ḥarizi's translation enjoyed great popularity among early Kabbalist circles.⁵⁴

Now, as suggested in the title of this paper, I find that all the hypotheses are related to the formative stage in the development of a persecuting society in Latin Europe (and its Jewish Hebrew reflections). This is most directly evident in the case of Southern France, where the general atmosphere was dominated by the Albigensian crusade, ended in 1229, and its aftermath, including the establishment of the Inquisition and the extensive activity of the Mendicants. The Jewish sources describing the Maimonidean controversy at that time clearly reflect the way Jewish intellectuals easily adapted to the new inquisitorial mechanism, even if only on a rhetorical level. Many hypothetical theories could conflate Montpellier events with the different actions that took place in Paris, but none of them is documented, except for the above-mentioned dubious assertion made by Hillel ben Samuel of Verona some fifty years later.

The intellectual atmosphere at Frederick's court, as reflected in modern scholarship, is certainly the opposite of a persecuting society but is, rather, a lively Mediterranean model of *convivencia*. And yet, if Kluxen's thesis brought together the alleged burning of the *Guide* in Montpellier, the internal Jewish Maimonidean controversy and the involvement of Mendicants and the Inquisition, Gad Freudenthal's proposition relocates this atmosphere of persecution into Frederick's court, this time as a counter measure politically competing with the papacy. When Freudenthal rejects Kluxen's Southern France thesis, he relies no less than Kluxen on the inquisitorial context, although coming to entirely different conclusions by reading into it an inverse, rather than a linear causal relationship between the factors under consideration.⁵⁵ According to Freudenthal, the combination of inquisitorial action against the *Guide* and Dominican hostility toward it led Frederick II to lend support for its translation into Latin, just as he

53. See AL-ḤARIZI, 2010, p. V.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 12, n. 2, and the references to Gottlieb and Scholem.

55. FREUDENTHAL, 1988, pp. 120-128. Freudenthal's thesis drew attention to an interest in scientific production at Frederick's court that might have been directly inspired by the reading of the *Guide*. As true as it might be, it does not really supply a proof for the full translation of the *Guide* being produced there, but only attests to the existence of Maimonidean scholarship at Frederick's court. Moreover, Freudenthal's description of the (negative) role played by the Dominicans in Paris and Toulouse seems to be somewhat one-sided, ignoring the decisive role played by the same orders in the reception and absorption of those very teachings.

supported the Averroes' translations, also initiated at the Emperor's court. Both cases reflect a policy of anti-papal propaganda, based on the promotion of works seen as a threat by papal authorities.⁵⁶

Contrary to such somewhat romantic narratives of the *Guide's* translation, I would emphasize that none of the extant evidence supports the sort of Jewish-Christian anti-papal and anti-Dominican initiative that could easily have taken place in Naples or Sicily under Frederick's reign. The data more strongly substantiates the possibility of Dominican-Jewish cooperation (likely involving Jewish apostates). This latter corroboration does not seem poised to have a direct role in the alleged burning of Maimonides' writings in Southern France, but it does relate directly, at least in terms of personal involvement, to the Parisian trial of the Talmud. We shall return to this point later.

What significance can be attributed to this persecution-translation mechanism for the case of Maimonides' *Guide*? I believe that it strongly refers to the area of inter-religious polemic and exchange, which in this case is intimately related to the other main areas of polemic in Scholasticism, *i. e.*, the one between revelation and reason. Unlike the separation between the pure rationalism of Muslim thinkers, as reflected in the translations of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts, and the degraded religiosity of the Mohammadean sect, as reflected in the parallel Toledan translations of the Koran and the biographies of the Prophets,⁵⁷ the *Rabbi* merges the two realms of philosophy and (Jewish) exegesis.

The (Jewish) Translator Reveals Himself?

Besides correcting many errors of the Giustiniani edition, the greatest contribution of the newly published critical edition of the *Dux* is related to the systematic study of the marginal notes as documented in the different existing manuscripts, some of which seem to go back to the earliest phases of composition.⁵⁸ As I have already mentioned, according to Di Segni most of the *marginalia* bear traces of a vernacular, which seems to indicate Castilian or Italian origin.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 128: "My suggestion is that the burning of the *Guide* by the papal authorities induces their archenemy, Emperor Frederick II, to have it translated into Latin with 'subversive' purposes in mind." For a similar claim see SERMONETA, 1980, p. 197.

57. See STRACZEWSKA, 2011. For a bibliography of previous research see *ibid.*, p. 455, n. 1.

58. DI SEGNI, 2016a, pp. CX-CXXIV.

As it is well-noted and well-documented, vernaculars were the main channel of communication within the pairs of translators, a Jew and a Christian working together. However, one cannot assume that this familiarity with the vernacular was identical for both partners: it may only have been close enough to allow communication. Avendauth and Gundissalinus probably did not speak the exact same dialect; Anatoli and Michael Scot certainly did not share the same “mother tongue.” If the manuscripts allow us direct contact with the original vernacular, one must ask whose tongue is documented here. In the case of the *Dux*, the answer seems to be easy. It is the Latin editor who examined the text and annotated it. Hence, the documented Castilian/Italian does not provide any direct indication of the identity of the Jewish assistant. However, the text itself, as noted already by Perles, does provide us with one exciting direct interface with the Jewish translator. *Guide* II, 30, includes a detailed discussion of the secrets of creation, as noted by Al-Ḥarizi in his list of chapters at the beginning of his translation.⁵⁹ In the Latin text, the translator intervenes with a lengthy personal statement. First, he explains to his reader the nature of Jewish arcana deriving from the scriptural formulation of divine attributes, systematically interpreted as bearing equivocal meaning. Then, he dwells on the difficulties of translating such a text with its manifold meanings. Finally, he declares his faithfulness to Maimonides’ imperative of concealment; in accordance with this, he explains his own praxis of translating:

Dixit translator: necessarium est nobis in hoc loco modis omnibus premittere propositionem quandam, a qua non possumus deviare, que est ista: Omnia nomina equivoca, que inveniuntur in lingua hebraica, tam dicta quam dicenda, indigent expositione lata et profunda et depurata per viam lingue hebraice. Nec omnes magistri lingue istius sunt apprehensores veritatis huius rationis preter singulares et electos, quos excitavit intellectus suus ad querendum gradum altum, quoniam per scientiam istarum rationum intelligent archana multa communia operi de Beresit et operi de Mercava et verbis prophetarum omnium. Ista est clavis scientie huius libri. Visum est autem michi, quod si vellem exponere modicum sensum meum super quolibet verbo communi in loco, in quo ponitur, fieret prolixitas magna, et fortassis prolixitas verborum meorum confunderet rationes capituli, cum vellem exponere verba illa, et confunderet verba alta, que sunt adinvicem colligata

59. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Héb 682, f. 10r: “and he [Maimonides] will reveal there [in *Guide* II, 30] very many secrets of the work of creation” (ממעשה בראשית ויגלה שם סודות רבות מאוד).

*sicut flamma ignis cum pruna per potentiam sapientis compositoris libri. Similiter etiam plures istarum rationum sunt prohibite, ne ostendantur populo, et vocantur secreta et archana legis. Et idcirco etiam non fui ausus ad hoc extendere manum, sed sufficit nobis dicere, que est via, per quam ingrediendum est ad archana ista. Qui vero fuerit intelligens queret eam, donec ingrediatur per eam.*⁶⁰

The translator here completely embraces Maimonides' esoteric normativity, declaring his deep inhibition against the violation of the prohibition imposed by the author on disclosing the secrets of the Law. Here Di Segni follows Perles' assumption, claiming that: "Such a statement would hardly be formulated by a non-Jew," which is quite plausible. She also points out the fact that the leading metaphor used by the translator is taken directly from the *Sefer yetzirah*. I would like to consider both these aspects.

As for the Jewish identity of the person who wrote these lines, this is certainly the most reasonable assumption. At the same time, one cannot rule out the possibility of him being a Jewish convert to Christianity. Elsewhere, I have analyzed Abner of Burgos' (alias Alfonso de Valladolid) Christian manipulation of Jewish esoteric traditions, in presenting himself to his Jewish interlocutors as a true adherent of

60. RABI MOSES AEGYPTIUS, 1520; PERLES, 1875, p. 82 and ff.; the quotation here follows Di Segni's edition of the text, cf. DI SEGNI, 2016a, p. 35, n. 42, p. LXXV; ead. 2016b: "The Translator said: in this place it is by all means necessary to offer a certain proposition, from which we cannot deviate ourselves, which is the following: all equivocal names found in the Hebrew language, necessarily aimed at the exposition, through methods of Hebrew language, are of latent, profound and pure [ideas]. Not all sages of this language possess the truth of these ideas but only the few and the elected ones, who raised their intellect to the desired elevated grade, in which, through the knowledge of those principles, they understand many of the mysteries common to the work of creation and work of the chariot, and to the all sayings of the prophets. This is the key to the knowledge entailed in this book. But it is clear to me that if I would like to explain according to my modest capacity each of these general terms in its place, it will take much space, and perhaps the length of my words, while I will attempt to clarify these notions, will stir up the meaning of the chapter, and will diffuse other words, which were connected to them by the power of the wise man who composed this book, like the flame to the burning coal. Moreover, many of those reasonings are prohibited from being exposed to the multitudes, and they are called mysteries and arcana of the law. And for this reason I do not dare to stretch my hand on that, but it will suffice us to point out the way, through which one can reach those mysteries. Whoever would like to acquire this knowledge will investigate [this way] until he reaches them."

Kabbalistic tradition.⁶¹ An earlier manifestation of the same phenomenon might lie behind the rhetoric of this passage as well.

However, whether the translator was a former-Jew or a present-Jew, what kind of Jewish tradition does this passage reflect? Its author takes Maimonides' esoteric imperative very seriously, this seems to make him a "Maimonidean." But his "Maimonideanism" seems to involve some atypical elements, at least in comparison with the normative description of rationalistic, philosophy-oriented Maimonideans. He inserts his remark in the very middle of the translation, *Guide* II, 30, a chapter in which Maimonides reveals some of the secrets of creation (*Ma'ase bereshit*). The metaphor he uses of the flame and a burning coal is indeed, as Di Segni points out, borrowed from the *Sefer yetzirah*, i. e., the Book of Creation. This work, probably composed in its final form during the Geonic period (7th-8th centuries),⁶² played a key role among different Jewish traditions in different periods. Without going into too much detail, I would like to say that the context of esoteric concealment of the secrets of the Torah, together with a less ontological and more linguistic epistemological reading of the flame and the burning coal, seem to suggest a very early reception of Kabbalistic ideas, closely related to *Hasidei Ashkenaz*. The closest phrase I have been able to find to date—and there is definitely much more work to be done here—is in Elazar of Worms' commentary on *Sefer yetzirah*.⁶³ This suggests the possibility that our Jewish translator is a rare combination of Ashkenazi and Maimonidean, a profile which can certainly explain his preference for using Al-Ḥarizi's translation as well as the Paris location for the translation.⁶⁴ The way Piero Capelli describes Donin,⁶⁵

61. SCHWARTZ, 2011, pp. 281-283; 2010.

62. Cf. WEISS, 2012.

63. ELAZAR OF WORMS, *Commentary on Sefer yetzirah*, II, a: "Since the burning coal is the principal and the flame emerges out of it and is connected to it, just as every speech act is connected to the tongue and the tongue cut it" "והשלהבת יוצאת ממנה וקשורה בה, וכן כל דיבור קשור בלשון והלשון מחתכו שהגחלת היא העיקר". Elazar connects here the metaphor of the burning coal and the flame which appears in the first chapter, dealing with the ten numerations, with the second chapter, dedicated to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This allows him a shift from the pure ontological interpretation of the metaphor, common to all previous commentators (relationship of the Godhead with creation), to a more linguistic one (relationship between thought/word and tongue/language).

64. This also characterizes Abraham Abulafia, one of the first to write commentaries on the *Guide*.

65. CAPELLI, 2016b.

according to Fidora the main translator of the *Extractiones de Talmud*,⁶⁶ almost perfectly matches this profile. He is a Northern French Jew with a smattering of philosophical knowledge but well-versed in Rabbinic literature, who is ideologically opposed to the Talmud. In that case, it might demonstrate the fact that one does not have to be a philosopher, not even philosophically oriented, in order to be deeply inspired by Maimonides. Recently, Moshe Idel again made the case that the fact that one of the earliest commentators of Maimonides' *Guide* was the Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia, who first studied the *Guide* with the very same Hillel of Verona mentioned above, should not be viewed as an individual curiosity but as representative of a typical form of early Jewish Maimonideanism spread among the early Kabbalists, especially in Christian Spain. In Idel's words: "it is difficult to let go of the idea that in the thirteenth-century there was greater interest in Kabbalistic interpretations than in philosophical ones."⁶⁷

I would like to end this overview not with a conclusive argument but by pointing out the reasons why I still consider Paris of the 1240s to be a viable option for the location of the Latin translation of the *Guide*. As I have asserted throughout this paper, the Paris thesis is not only derived from chronological considerations—Paris being the first place to leave written evidence for encountering the translation in its complete form—but more so because it is the venue for a different interpretation of the nature of the early Christian interaction with the figure and writings of Maimonides as documented in this specific act of translation. It appears to be extremely difficult for the modern scholar to avoid anachronism in approaching the philosophical and scientific ideas expressed in the work of Maimonides. And yet, there is enough evidence to suggest that this philosophic complex emerged out of a rabbinical Hebraist context. It is in this specific context that Paris must be seriously considered as the most intensively documented center of the different intellectual streams that, in converging, enable the unique production of the Latin *Guide*. Nicolas Donin's activity can be considered a direct testimony to the proximity between the internal Jewish debate concerning Maimonides' writings and the Jewish-Christian polemic concerning the Talmud. This linkage is reflected in Hillel of Verona's above-mentioned assertion that the burning of Maimonides' writings, allegedly following an inquisitorial process provoked by Jewish opponents of Maimonides, took place in Paris and was directly followed

66. Cf. *supra*, n. 49.

67. IDEL, 2004, p. 205. On the dissemination of such Kabbalistic Maimonideanism especially in Christian Spain, see *ibid.*, p. 209. For a similar claim, though based on different analysis of the basic theoretical motivations involved, see WOLFSON, 2004.

by the burning of the Talmud. Among the few details we possess concerning the enigmatic figure of Nicolas Donin, there is the fact that he was condemned by the Jewish community during the late 1220s, which precisely coincided with the first (Jewish-European) Maimonidean controversy. A few years later, Donin went to the Pope to plead his case against the Talmud. Acting against the Talmud while promoting the systematic allegorical interpretation of scriptures, as represented by Maimonides, could certainly represent two aspects of the same radical move. No definitive proof can be provided for direct or indirect involvement on his side. Yet, the presence of such a person in Paris at that time provides us with a vivid example of the rare conjunction of capacities and motivations that adequately relate to the nature of this unique translation project.

Unsolved enigmas have their own merits. They compel us to delve much more deeply into the wide range of conditions and circumstances associated with each of the alternative solutions. Who if not Maimonides could appreciate the potential benefits of a learned ignorance?

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Abstract: The ongoing work on a critical edition of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* in its medieval Latin translation, and the recently published detailed studies of the Latin manuscripts provide us with a unique opportunity to reconsider a field of study which, after more than 150 years of intensive scholarly engagement, still presents us with some remarkable *lacunae*. In confronting the new material evidence, this paper raises some basic questions regarding the unique nature of Maimonides' work itself and the way it is reflected through its reception among European readers, Jews and Christians alike. My two main goals here are, first, to emphasize the unique character of the early Latin reception of the *Guide*, which was less philosophically oriented and more Hebraistic in nature, and, second, to emphasize its close ties to a set of persecutorial acts that took place in the very same period.

Keywords: Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Translation, Persecution, Christian Hebraism

Résumé : Les travaux en cours pour l'édition critique du Guide des égarés de Maïmonide dans sa traduction latine médiévale, ainsi que les études récemment publiées à propos des manuscrits latins, nous fournissent une opportunité unique de reconsidérer un champ d'études qui, après plus de cent cinquante ans d'intense engagement de la part des chercheurs, présente encore de grandes lacunae. En se confrontant aux nouveaux matériaux, cet article soulève des questions fondamentales sur la nature unique de l'ouvrage de Maïmonide ainsi que sur la façon dont elle se reflète à travers sa réception parmi les lecteurs européens, juifs tout comme chrétiens. Cet article a comme but, tout d'abord, de souligner le caractère unique de la réception la plus ancienne du Guide, qui était peu orientée sur l'aspect philosophique mais plutôt sur le côté hébraïsant ; ensuite, de mettre l'accent sur ses rapports avec une série d'actes de persécution qui se sont passés à la même période.

Mots-clefs : Maïmonide, Guide des égarés, traduction, persécution, hébraïsme chrétien

תקציר: תחילת פרסום המהדורה המדעית לספר מורה הנבוכים לרמב"ם בתרגומו הימי ביניימי ללטינית, כמו גם המחקרים שפורסמו לאחרונה ומתבססים על ניתוח מפורט של כתבי היד הלטיניים, כל אלה מעניקים לנו הזדמנות ייחודית לשוב ולבחון תחום מחקר שבו, גם לאחר למעלה ממאה וחמישים שנות התעסקות אינטנסיבית, אנחנו עדיין ניצבים בפני כמה לקונות מחקריות משמעותיות.

המאמר הנוכחי מעלה, בהסתמך על העדויות החדשות, מספר תהיות בנוגע לאופיו היסודי של חיבורו המקורי של הרמב"ם, כפי שהוא משתקף ברצפציה האירופית המוקדמת שלו, בקרב יהודים ונוצרים כאחד. שתי המטרות המרכזיות שלי הן ראשית הדגשת האופי המיוחד של ההתקבלות המוקדמת של מורה הנבוכים בשפה הלטינית, שמשקפת התעסקות פחות פילוסופית ויותר הבראיסטית באופיה, ושנית, הדגשת הקרבה הרבה שבין מעשה התרגום עצמו לבין שורת אירוועי רדיפה וצנזורה שמתרחשים במקביל לו.

מלות מפתח: הרמב"ם, מורה נבוכים, תרגום, רדיפות, הבראיזם נוצרי