Nicholas Donin’s Thirty-Five Articles Against the Talmud
A Case of Collaborative Translation in Jewish-Christian Polemic

Alexander Fidora and Ulisse Cecini
ICREA – Autonomous University of Barcelona

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 criticized 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 Extractions 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\footnote{On the manuscript tradition of the Latin Talmud, see A. Fidora, 'Die Handschrift 19b des Arxiu Capitular 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.} is MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558. This manuscript offers a com-
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' — so 'uninteresting', in fact, that Dahan has banned his name from the indices of his books.⁵ 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.

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) 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'.

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, T, 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

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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, Ò. de la Cruz, E. Vernet, 'Observacions sobre la traducció llatina del Talmud (Paris, 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 interpretis 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, eti propter difficul- tatem et obscuritatem hebraici quandoque variaverint verba, eandem tamen sententiam et sensum tuerunt'.

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

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 [...]'.

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 Extractiones...

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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 superaddere utile ludicavi quae ex ore alterius interpretis sunt transita quinque vel sex annis prius, licet hic ponantur posterius. [...] Anno enim ab incarnatione Domini mccccxxvi. cincter. Pater misericordiarum Iudaem quemdam nomine Nicolaum Donin de Rupella vocavit ad fidem, in hebraeo plurimum eruditum etiam secundum testimonium Iudaorum, 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, praedictorum librorum nefandam detexit malitiam et quosdam specialiter expressit articulos [...]'.

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nes, at least in their original version, are the work of T., 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 T.. 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.\(^\text{11}\)

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.\(^\text{12}\)

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,\(^\text{13}\) for instance, maintain that Nicholas Donin approached the Pope in 1236, to which Piero Capelli\(^\text{14}\) adds that it was the Pope himself who baptised the Jewish convert.

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\(^\text{12}\) Ch. Merchavia, ‘Latin Translations of the Talmud in the Margins of Ms. Florence and Ms. Paris 16558’ (Hebrew), Körát 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 Châteauroux, 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.


\(^\text{14}\) 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.\footnote{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', \textit{Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums} 23 (1874), pp. 10-18, pp. 62-75, pp. 123-130, pp. 155-163, pp. 204-212 (p. 126). Kisch refers to the \textit{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.}

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

While the close reading of the two prologues unravels the redaction process of the \textit{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’.\footnote{See R. Chazan in \textit{The Trial of the Talmud}, p. 39.}

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;\footnote{As Walter Mettmann has noticed in the introduction to his edition of Alfonso de Valladolid’s \textit{Mostrador de la justicia}, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994-1996, vol. I, pp. 7-8, Alfonso was probably not very familiar with Latin.} 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 substantially 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-
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 'miaudēr', 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 Sabbath 31a:

'In cezer Mohed, in maceca Sabaz, in perec Bama madlikym, quod interpretatur in
quo illuminantes, dicitur sic: "Miaudent, l. 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."' /8

In this quotation 'miaudēr' renders the Aramaic tanū from Sabbath, which derives
from the root t-n-y, literally meaning 'to repeat' or 'to teach'./9

/8 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
Bamah Madlikin (which means with what may we light), it says as follows: "The masters mi-
audent (i.e. say): It happened that a certain goy (gentile) came before Shamai and said to
him: How many laws do you have? Two, he replied, one written, the other oral." The corres-
ponding passage in the modern edition of the Talmud Babli, Sabbath 31a (Talmud Bavli,
טביש. English translation: 'The Rabbis taught: [the following] event [occurred] to a gentle, who went before Samay [and] said to him: How many Tor-
ahs 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 belong-
ing to the Order (סדור; seder) of the Appointed Time (ימין; ModEd), more precisely to the
tractate (קיקסנה; masektah) Sabbath (שבת) and in its [second] chapter (תבש), named (after its
first words) 'With what [are we allowed to be] kindling [the Sabbath lights]' (תבש,ך却不פקך זוחלת ידך,;
bamne madlikin). Note that the reading ימכרה (nakybr; stranger, gentle) 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 'goy' as in the Latin trans-
lation ('in quodam goy').

/9 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 tanū 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 'Abodā Zard, 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, 'Abodā Zard, 3b: 'ויהיו
אתו רבי ייסמך שערת שערת כי נין, שערת אכתרשר שערת כי נין, שערת ואכתרשר שערת
אתו רבי ייסמך שערת שערת כי נין. English translation: 'But surely Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Twelve hours constitute the

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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 Babá M'si’dá 33a, the text states:

'Ad idem in cezer lessuhot\(^20\) in macecta Bava mecia, i.e. porta media, in perec il-lumecioz,\(^21\) i.e. istae inventiones, in fine,\(^22\) ibi dicitur: "Miaudent, i.e. dicunt, magis-tri: Qui studet in Mikara, Biblia, modus est et non ille est modus'.\(^23\)

Again, tanu 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 'mynaed' is used to translate the original ṣaṣeq (present participle of 'asq: to apply oneself, to study), which is glossed with the Latin 'stude'. The same Aramaic verb 'asq: is present in the quotation from Babá M’si’dá 33a (ןַשׁוּשׁה/חָסֶק), 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 Babá M’si’dá is today called N’shán (נסון), i.e. 'Damages', however this is a relatively recent designation.

\(^21\) I.e. סעש יושב/מיהע המידא ('These findings'), which is the second chapter of Babá M’si’dá.

\(^22\) 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 Metzí’á (i.e. the middle gate), in the chapter Eliy Metz依托 (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, Babá M’si’dá, 33a: נַשׁוּשׁה נושא ינש ונתא חָסֶק אברב. 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.

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 (תנינא), 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 Gittin 60a is quoted, which apparently raises objections against the codification of the Talmud:

'Hoc legitur in cezer Nassym,²⁵ in macecta Guitym,²⁶ in perec Hanizakim,²⁷ ubi dicitur: Rava et Rab Icoeb dicunt ambo: "Iste liber de Aftarta, liber est lectionum sumpturum 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 haftorot, 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 (‘Order of women’).
²⁶ חטיב הר (‘Bills of divorce’).
²⁷ ד’ai niniyim ha’innizakim (‘The damaged ones’), which is the fifth chapter of Gittin.
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 Hanizakim, where it says: “Rabbah and Rav Joseph both say: That book of haftaras (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 menier (i.e. the aforementioned handbook). Why? Because it is not fit to read from it”. Ed. Schottenstein, Gittin, 60a': אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר - אָרָא נַיִּיתֵי הַחֲטַב הַר. English translation: ‘Rabbah and Rav Yoseg both said: This book of haftaras: it is prohibited to read from it on Sabbath. Why? Because it is not meant to be written. Mar bar Rav Ashi said: carrying [it] around is also prohibited. Why? Because it is not fit to read from'.

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context a word of Rabbi Aši’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 Sabbath).

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 dicturn 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 ‘audecox’ or ‘audocot’ is used to expand the Latin translation ‘reus est’. In the Latin translation from Rashi’s Bible commentaries on fol. 229v 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 endetée, 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 (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 *N'darîn 78a*:

‘Item in Nassim, in macecta Nezairim, in perec Naara hameorachâ, i.e. puella desponsata, legitur: “Absolutio votorum in tribus ydiotis”. Obicitur: “Nonne scriptum est ’capita tribuum’ ibi: Loquus est ad principes filiorum Israel: Si quis virorum votum Domino voerit, etc. [Numbers 30.2-3]? Ergo ydiotae non debent absolvare, sed magistri”. “Dicit Rab sive Rhy Johan: In uno manuali, gallice menier, i.e. uno magistro”. Per hoc probant quod tres ydiotae vel unus sapiens potest absolvare a votis’.

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
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'darin 78a can thusly 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 'mūmē', the expert, which may have sounded like 'munē', 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.
Nicholas Donin’s Thirty-Five Articles Against the Talmud

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. 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.

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. 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.

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36 See, in the same line, A. Tuillier, ‘La condamnation du Talmud’, pp. 61-62.
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 XIIIe 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).