

The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?

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To dramatize things a little, let me start with the declaration that not only do I strongly believe that the Ruthenian translations from Hebrew made in Kiev by Jews in the second half of the fifteenth century are linked to the Novgorod-Moscow heretics, but I also believe that the Muscovite Principality in the second half of the fifteenth century may well have been on the brink of succumbing to a Jewish conspiracy to proselytize Muscovy from the top, a plan orchestrated by learned Jews from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with mystic inclinations, with the perhaps unsuspecting collaboration of highly placed officials in the court of Ivan III, and with the sovereign himself hesitant for a while and playing his cards both ways.

The Judaizers

The series of events that led to the uncovering and eventually to the eradication of the heresy of the Judaizers in Novgorod and later in Moscow can be resumed as follows (a lucid account can be found in, e.g., Fennell 1962:324ff.):

According to church sources, namely Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod and Iosif Sanin, abbot of Volokolamsk, the two main persecutors of the heretics, the movement started in Novgorod in 1470, shortly before the annexation of Novgorod the Great by Muscovy. In that year prince Mikhailo Olel'kovich of Kiev visited Novgorod on the invitation of the pro-Lithuanian party, in company of several nobles and merchants, among them the learned Jew Zacharia or Skhariia, knowledgeable in matters of astrology, astronomy, necromancy, and magic. This Zacharia succeeded in derailing several priests of the lower white clergy, some of whom were later invited (surprisingly enough, by Ivan III himself)¹ to come to

¹ Ivan III himself apparently was sympathetic, for some time at least, to the heretical circle. Thus Zimin (1982:218) says: Но особую опасность для ревнителей православия представляло то обстоятельство, что покровительствовал московским вольнодумцам сам государь всея Руси, а наследником престола был сын Елены Стефановны — Дмитрий. The indications

Moscow, where two of them were appointed to churches in the Kremlin. There they went on with their efforts to expand the movement, obtaining protection from Fedor Kuritsyn, chief diplomat of Ivan III (heading the *posol'skii prikaz*), as well as from the Moldavian princess Elena, wife of Ivan Ivanovich the Younger. Elena (nicknamed Moldovanka or Voloshanka), Ivan III's daughter-in-law, daughter of Stefan the Great of Moldavia [1457–1504] and of Evdokiia, the daughter of Prince Olel'ko Vladimirovich of Kiev, was the mother of Dmitrii, the young prince who in 1498, after his father's death in 1490, was crowned with Monomakh's cap and pronounced in the presence of his grandfather Ivan III as the designated heir to the throne of Russia. Thus his mother Elena also happens to be the direct cousin of the aforementioned Mikhailo Olel'kovich of Kiev, as well as a cousin of the sovereign.

So this looks like a family affair, only it so happens that the family involved is the first family of Muscovy, which is certainly no accident, since the conspirators must have been aware of the example of the Christianization of Rus' by St. Vladimir, suggesting that in Russia there was no room for grass-roots revolutions, and that religious changes had to come from the top. They may also have been aware of the fact that not long before the conversion of Vladimir to Christianity, the conversion of the Khazar ruler to Judaism resulted in the Judaization of his kingdom.

In 1487 Gennadii discovered the heresy in Novgorod and began persecuting the heretics, though without strong backing from either the secular power, namely Ivan III who had appointed him archbishop, or from the ecclesiastical authorities in Moscow, certainly not from Metropolitan Zosima, appointed in 1490, who was himself accused of secretly endorsing the heretics. In this period many pamphlets and polemic letters were written by Gennadii, especially regarding the eagerly awaited end of the world in the year 7000 from the Creation, which according to the Orthodox calendar corresponds to 1492 AD. When the end did not occur, the heretics mocked their opponents by showing their calculations to have been wrong, whereas the calendar used by the heretics, based on Jewish calculations, was right. After several delays the heretics were finally brought to trial and punished severely. In 1502 Elena and her son Dmitrii were imprisoned, and by 1504 the heresy had been definitively crushed.

This chain of events relating to the years 1487–1504, repeated in practically all the history books, does not entail agreement on the interpretation of the nature of

of this patronage are: 1. It was Ivan himself who invited the two heretical Novgorod priests, Aleksei and Denis, to Moscow, and had them appointed there to the Kremlin churches; 2. His protégé Fedor Kuritsyn, head of the Moscow heretics, was never brought to trial; 3. The unusually formulated oath of Ivan given in 1488 to his brother Andrei: Князь же великий клялся ему землею и небом и богом сильным, творцом всея твари. Even Luria had to admit (1960:143) that this is an all but heretical formula (клятвой странной, не находящей соответствия в других памятниках и едва ли не еретической), especially if we compare it to the usual verbal formulations accompanying the kissing of the cross: one renounces, in case of perjury, 'God's Grace, that of His most holy Mother, and that of the great miracle workers': не будет ми милости божи и пречистой его матери и великих чюдотворцев.). For possible motives for this support see Dörpmann 1967: 77–80.

the heresy, of its ideology, and especially regarding its affinity to Judaism, but, on the contrary, an ongoing controversy surrounding these questions. The present author by and large accepts the overall interpretation of the heresy given by Thomas M. Seeböhm in his masterly 1977 book *Ratio und Charisma*, a book ignored for obvious reasons by Soviet historiography, but for less obvious reasons by Western scholarship also.² His interpretation is based on an extensive study of all the published texts relevant to the heresy, and may be summed up as follows:

The heresy is an original Russian phenomenon, or a phenomenon *sui generis*, for which only very partial analogies, and certainly no affiliatory influence, can be traced in the West. It started in Novgorod as a reformatory movement within the White Clergy, whose aim was to reform the Church from within. After its transfer to Moscow, however, it became a *Bildungsbewegung* borne mainly by the newly emerging class of the *d'iachestvo* (*дьячество*), the educated lay functionaries serving in the administration of the Muscovite state, whose interests were less toward religious questions than to worldly-scientific literature. Their interest in religious problems is, rather, of a political nature. However, the underlying ontological concepts of the translated literature, echoed in the original literature of the heretics, reflect a strict prophetic Monotheism incompatible with central concepts of Christian dogma, such as Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection. The sovereignty assigned to reason, its being posited as the foundation for any religion, and the legitimacy claimed for the search of truth at every available source, including the pagan Hellene Aristotle, who is compared in this literature to a prophet, were justifiably seen by the Church as a threat to its monopoly on fixing a binding canon of literature. Since the translated texts were of Jewish origin (and, we may add, even the Moslem ones were disguised as Jewish) and displayed a pronounced monotheistic conception (a conception, we may add, even more accentuated by

² I know of only one review of the book, written by M. Cazacu in the *Revue des Études Slaves* (1979), which briefly describes but does not really discuss its contents and conclusions. In a few papers, which I was able to trace after a prolonged effort following my own very belated discovery of the book in 1999, the book is simply referred to in a footnote as a bibliographical item, without details.

1) Frank Kämpfer 1995, reviewing Cesare de Michelis 1993b, when criticizing the author for ignoring the German language literature on the subject; 2) M.V. Dmitriev, in a 1997 paper on the scholarly legacy of A. I. Kibanov; 3) N. P. Franz, in a 1996 paper on Kliment Smoliatich. 4) F. von Lilienfeld, whose 1963 book on Nil Sorskii had been critically reviewed by Seeböhm (1965), mentions Seeböhm's 1977 book in her 1978 paper as 'forthcoming', but does not refer to it in any of her subsequent writings. The only author who does discuss and quote Seeböhm's book was the German philosopher Wilhelm Goerdit (1984:159, 161, 330–334). Nevertheless the book remained unknown to most Slavists, and is not discussed or even mentioned where it should have been, e.g. in general reviews of translated literature in Rus', e.g. I. Ševčenko 1981, F.J. Thomson 1999, or in studies devoted to specific texts discussed by Seeböhm in his book, e.g. studies, on the *Laodicean Epistle* by Ja. S. Lur'e 1982, Rainer Stichel 1991, Cesare de Michelis 1993a and b, Moshe Taube 1995b and 1998. The most recent work mentioning Seeböhm that came to my attention after this paper was complete is the essay by Joel Raba in *Russia Mediaevalis* X, 1 (2000), 126–149: «Жидовствующие» ли? История задушевной мысли.

editorial modifications in the Slavic) which can easily and with good cause be interpreted as antitrinitarian, the Russian Church had every reason to suspect the heretics in "Judaizing". The Church lacked the conceptual and institutional tools to carry on a serious, matter-of-fact discussion with the heretics in order to eliminate or assimilate their ideas. It chose therefore the juridical way, accusing them of being "Judaizing apostates," in order to eradicate the heretics and with them the heresy. This was done in two phases. At the 1490 Council the Novgorodian reformatory clerics were decimated. It was only in 1503, after Ivan III was forced to make a shift in his church policy, that the Muscovite *d'iaks* were in their turn tried, although some of the "mighty," in first place their leader Fedor Kuritsyn, escaped persecution.

Why then has this reasonable account not found its way into mainstream Russian historiography? The reason is that in recent decades the thorniest questions of the cultural history of medieval Russia had been dominated by the late Iakov Solomonovich Luria, the most prominent authority on the subject of the Novgorod-Moscow heresy. Starting with his first publication on the subject in 1955 (AFED, with N. Kazakova) and until his last paper in 1996, Luria grew more and more skeptical about the Jewish nature of the heresy (see my criticism of his position in Taube 1995a, 1995b, 1997, and 1998).

One of the consequences of Luria's dominance of the field was the discouragement of scholars from investigating the "Literature of the Judaizers," the corpus of literature translated at precisely that time from the Hebrew into Ruthenian in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The Literature of the Judaizers

Translations from Hebrew in the East Slavic area began about 1400.³ The translations present two chronological groups:

I. The first group belongs to the first half of the fifteenth century, where we encounter Hebrew works, mainly historical accounts, integrated into Russian compilations such as the *Explanatory Paleia* and the East Slavic Chronicles called "Chronographs." These translations include:

1. The "Life of Moses" integrated into the *Explanatory Paleia* (see Taube 1993), including interpolations from midrashic sources on Joseph's coffin, the golden calf, and more.

2. Excerpts from the *Josippon* in the *Academy Chronograph* (see Taube 1992) on Antioch IV Epiphanes and the Hasmonean revolt, on Zorovavel and King Darius, and on Alexander the Great in Jerusalem.

3. We also have a complete reworking of the last part of the *Josippon*, dealing with the destruction of the temple, entitled *Plenienie Ierusalima tretie Titovo*

³ For the controversy on this point see Lunt and Taube 1988, Alekseev 1993.

(Пленение Иерусалима третее Титово), integrated into the second redaction of the Hellenic and Roman Chronicler (text published by Tvorogov 1999, see also Taube 1989).

This first group, belonging to the very beginning of the fifteenth and possibly even to the end of the fourteenth century consists of texts that show traces of Ruthenian, as well as Novgorodian dialectal features which the translations presumably acquired as they underwent editorial treatment when integrated into Russian compilations. In all probability the *Book of Esther*, a Jewish translation, but one made from (Judeo-)Greek, not from Hebrew (see Altbauer and Taube 1984, Lunt and Taube 1994, 1998), belongs too to the first group, for it shares with it some linguistic traits, especially in the lexicon. The circumstances that gave rise to the translations of this first group, which precedes the emergence of the heresy, are still not clear. There is evidence, however, that some known Muscovite Judaizers showed interest in them, e.g., the scribe, annotator and editor Ivan (Ivashko) Chernyi, who extensively glossed a 1489 copy of the *Hellenic and Roman Chronicler* (AFED: 277–278).

II. The second group is traditionally called the "Literature of the Judaizers," following Sobolevskii's 1903 appellation, and it belongs to the second half of the fifteenth century. It includes:

1. Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers*, namely the two first sections: Logic (published by Neverov 1909) and Theology (excerpts published in Sobolevskii 1903: 407–408);

2. Moses Maimonides' *Logical Vocabulary* (excerpts published in Sobolevskii 1903:402–403). Items 1 and 2 combined constitute in Slavic the *Logika*;

3. Johannes de Sacrobosco's *Book of the Sphere* (Sobolevskii's "Cosmography," 1903:409–413, see Taube 1995a);

4. Emmanuel Bar Yaakov Bonfils' *Six Wings* (Sobolevskii 1903: 413–419, Taube 1995a);

5. Pseudo-Aristotle's *Secret of Secrets* (Sobolevskii 1903: 419–423, edited by Speranskii 1908), in Slavic including the following interpolations:

Maimonides' *Treatise on Sexual Intercourse*,

Maimonides' *On Poisons and their Antidotes* (excerpt),

Maimonides' *Book of Asthma* (chapter 13),

Rhazes' chapter on "Physiognomy" from the second part of his book *Al-Mansuri*;

6. The *Laodicean Epistle*, and specifically its first part, the *sortes*, or cyclical maxim on the soul in eight lines (AFED: 256–276) – a most influential text circulating in Muscovy and related to Fedor Kuritsyn (see Taube 1995b, Taube 1998 [1994]);

7. The collection of nine Old Testament Hagiographa in the single sixteenth-century Vilnius Codex (f.19 RKF 262 of the Academy Library, see Altbauer 1992), which is clearly a copy of an earlier manuscript. The precise dating of the collection, however, is unclear.

This second group⁴ consists of Ruthenian translations, most of which underwent some degree of russification when copied and glossed in Muscovy.

Who were the translators?

There can be no doubt that the translators were Ruthenian Jews. There are numerous indications in the philosophical and astronomical texts that demonstrate knowledge of Jewish tradition, of Jewish interpretation of Scripture, etc. We will, however, content ourselves here with one direct example from Chapter 13 of Maimonides' "Logical Vocabulary":

The Hebrew, like the Arabic original, has:

(LM13.6.4) And a name said of a particular and of a universal, is when a species is referred to by (the name of) the genus, e.g., 'Kokhab' is the name of any star in the heaven, as well as of a particular Planet (i.e. Mercury), or the name Hashish in Arabic referring to any plant as well as to the yellow flower used for painting.

The Slavic, however, has a different example:

(LM13.6.4) а имя реуеное во все^и и едине то иже наречеса общество вса^ичество^и, яко рече^и Израиль. **всѣмъ намъ** имя, а одному меж нами.

(LM13.6.4) And a name said of a particular and of a universal, is when a species is referred to by (the name of) the genus, e.g., 'Israel' is the name of us all, as well as of an individual among us.

This choice of example, which refers to 'Israel' in the first person plural, leaves no doubt about who was dictating the text.

How were the translations carried out?

The texts were translated by learned Ruthenian Jews with an adequate knowledge of Medieval Jewish philosophy, but with a less than adequate knowledge of the literal, massively calquing Hebrew language of the translations from Arabic. Since they presumably did not know Arabic (although there is no indication of their being Ashkenazi), their only recourse in case of difficulty was to commentaries to the works translated, or to other works dealing with similar subjects. Traces of these channels of recourse can be found in the Slavic. The circumstances of the actual work of translation as I imagine it are as follows: the Jewish translator has in front of him a Hebrew version, or several Hebrew versions of the text to be translated, and he dictates it to his Slavic collaborator, who puts it down in writing, occasionally "correcting" it according to the scribal conventions he is accustomed to. The

⁴ A separate place should be assigned to the "Psalter of Fedor," a collection of Jewish prayers for various occasions, camouflaged as an orthodox Psalter with 20 Kathismas and 8 odes, translated from memory (See Zuckerman 1987) by a converted Jew sometime between 1464 and 1473. There seems to be no connection between this translation and the heresy. The Psalms which Gennadii was given by the repentant heretic Naum (AFED 316) and which he finds "distorted" (AFED 319) will have to be sought elsewhere.

Jews dictated their literal translation into a vernacular, heavily polonized Ruthenian, presumably the only variety of Slavic they were familiar with. The dictating was done by the learned Jew, versed in Hebrew medieval philosophy, but not in the Slavic literary or scientific tradition, to a Christian proficient in the writing traditions of Ruthenian, perhaps belonging to the circle of people interested in this literature. Unmistakable marks of such a method of translation are doublets, not just of single words but of **clauses**, reflecting self-correction by the translator noted down by the scribe in both wordings. This second variety of doublets is found only in the logical section of Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions*, which did not undergo any further edition and consequently any linguistic or textual corruption or correction. These are markedly different from doublets consisting of single words, which usually result from glosses that found their way from the margin into the text. In the text below, these doublets of phrases are marked by square brackets around the repeated phrase.

A probative illustration for this method of translation comes from the explanation of the difference between common name and proper name, with the example being 'ehed ha'el – the Hebrew equivalent of Arabic *Abdullah*, both as a proper name and as designating 'God's servant'.

לא אכשר אמרת עבד האל והא שם כוני, והא נפרד, לפי שאתח לא חזון בו אלא מה שחזון באמרך יד.

(LA1.2.4) а коли ре^иемъ богорабъ, а было бы то прозвище, было бы особное. *занже ты не мыслишь тымъ, алъ ш^ито мыслишь яко ре^иеши, [зовомо самостію, ино бде^и за еже ты не мыслишь, ни^или яко бы еси ре^илъ],* исан двѣтъ.

(LA1.2.4) And when we say 'God's servant' as a surname (that is *Abdullah*), then it would be (considered) simple, since you do not intend by it but what you intend by saying [properly speaking, it would be: since you do not intend but what you would have, by saying] 'Jesse,' 'David.'

This example is particularly revealing, since the Slavic scribe wrote down not only the reformulation of the clause, but even the words 'properly speaking,' clearly a sign that the scribe was unable to distinguish between the dictated text and the translator's aside, or metatext.

What can we learn from the translated texts about the ideology of the translators?

We can of course make deductions from the choice of texts considered worthy of translating, as well as from details in the translations themselves, especially from passages that do not derive from the Hebrew version. We notice first that the corpus is made up, beside the books of Scripture, of texts that can be characterized as scientific or scholarly, but which are completely devoid of any specific theological doctrine favoring any known religion. They display the tendency, common to medieval rationalists of all religions, to mobilize the tools of rationalism, in particular logic, and especially syllogisms, for proving in terms common to all the existence of a cre-

ator. We also notice the absence of any catechistic or moralizing elements, apart from the praise of basic moral values common to all humans. These can best be seen in the conclusion of one of the central texts of our corpus, the *Logika*.

The centrality of the *Logika* stems from the fact that, from among the texts specifically mentioned by Gennadii as writings being in the possession of the heretics, it is one of two treatises (the other being the *Six Wings*) that can be identified with a Slavic text translated from Hebrew bearing that same name.

In the Slavic version of Chapter 14 of Maimonides' *Logic* we find the following text, the main part of which, *marked in the translation by italics*, is unattested in either Arabic or Hebrew:

14.2.1 А мудрость сію исполнить Аристотель голова всѣмъ философѣмъ первымъ и послѣднимъ, подлѣгъ смыслу мудрецовъ Израилевыхъ, аже по плѣненіи не нашли своихъ книгъ, а спѣстилися на его разбѣмъ иже ровень во пророческихъ фундаментахъ. 14.2.2 занеже невозможно есть абы пророкъ неполонъ быть въ седми мудростехъ, а овсѣмъ въ логикѣ «и въ» пѣт[ны]хъ. А исполнить еа осмыслии книгами прережесными. иже она направиť каждого въ тѣхъ мудростехъ. 14.2.3 а она подобна есть вазѣ и мѣре и ослѣ златои.

14.2.1 And this Wisdom was perfected by Aristotle, *chief of all Philosophers, both ancient and recent in accord with the view of the wise men of Israel, as after the exile they did not find their books, so they relied on his wisdom, which is equal in its foundations to that of the prophets.* 14.2.2 *For it is inconceivable that a prophet be unaccomplished in the seven wisdoms, and in particular in Logic <and in> the Mathematical sciences. And he completed it in the aforementioned eight books. For it guides everyone in those wisdoms,* 14.2.3 *and it is like a weight and a measure and like a Touchstone for Gold.*

The Slavic then resumes with several verses from Chapter 14 on the division of the sciences. But, starting with the seventh science, that of Theology, the Slavic text once more departs from the Hebrew (the departure is marked by italics):

14.5.1 седмаа мудрость бжѣственнаа. она естъ глава всѣмъ седмимъ. и падро иѣ статочное. 14.5.2 занеже юо оживетъ во вѣки дѣла улѣскаа. 14.5.3 а то познаеť кождое вѣры улѣк. иже жадный глѣпны ѣ ба не можеť быти. 14.5.4 а то подобно какъ бы нѣкто реклѣ иже изъ князю слѣжѣ а княса не вѣдаю. или хоужу в црковѣ, а глѣ црковѣ не вѣдаю. 14.5.5 а сіа седмъ мудрости не подлѣгъ жаднаго законѣ. нежелн подлѣгъ улѣсства. 14.5.6 а можеса кажде вѣры улѣк кохати в ниѣ. какъже видимъ иже во всѣхъ вѣрахъ сѣтъ прото иже законникъ подобенъ скарбникѣ. а мудрецъ томѣ, что дабываеť. 14.5.7 а на каторѣю рѣчь не прикладаюť подлѣгъ оное. а таа гинетъ. 14.6.1 Рече Алєксандрѣ: привоуды незнаѣта правды четыре. а се глѣбина еа краткимъ разбѣмомъ .б. непорядочно раздма .г. ищѣви перемоганіа и папства .д. любѣа то уемъ привыкъ. 14.6.2 а то наиболаша завада ниже котораа инаа. 14.7.1 а сии исполненіа не могѣтъ быти, нежелн

и сь свѣтскою мѣростію, а оставлаа вса лишнеа. 14.7.2 какоже рече дѣлѣ црѣ. блиѣ глѣ ко всѣмъ призывающимъ его. всѣмъ же призываетъ его по правдѣ.

14.5.1 The seventh wisdom is Theology, *which is the crowning of all seven as well as their core in importance.* 14.5.2 *For through it will the human soul survive in eternity.* 14.5.3 *And this will admit a man of any creed, that he who is ignorant, cannot be with the Lord.* 14.5.4 *And this is as if one said: I serve the prince, but who that prince is I do not know; or: I go to church, but where that church is I do not know.* 14.5.5 *And these seven wisdoms are not in accordance with any religion, but rather in accordance with humanity.* 14.5.6 *And a man of any creed can embrace them. As we see that in all creeds the jurist resembles the keeper of the treasury, whereas the thinker resembles him who adds to it.* 14.5.7 *And to whichever thing one does not add according to its nature, that thing perishes.* 14.6.1 *Said Alexander (Aphrodisiensis): The reasons for the ignorance of truth are four. 1. Its depth for the short mind, 2. the helplessness of the intellect, 3. striving to overpower and dominate, 4. cherishing that to which one is accustomed.* 14.6.2 *And this is a greater obstacle than any other.* 14.7.1 *And these accomplishments cannot come about but in combination with the Worldly Science by shedding all mean (traits).* 14.7.2 *As King David said (Psalms 145:8): The Lord is near unto all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth.*

The passages in italics, which, as said, do not come from Maimonides' *Logic*, could be most revealing about the ideology and perspective of the person or persons, assumedly Jewish, who produced the Slavic translation. The ideas expounded in these passages are typical of the Jewish rationalists, disciples and followers of Maimonides, who for three centuries had been fighting a hopeless retreating battle against fundamentalist and mysticist tendencies which were gaining ground in mainstream Judaism, while marginalizing and delegitimizing rationalism as alien to orthodox Jewish thought.⁵ Essentially, they draw upon the traditional sources of reference, ultimately the Bible and the Talmud, skillfully using citations that had served in the past in discussions over Wisdom and Faith (see the detailed analysis in Taube 1997).

It is obvious, then, that in this afterward the translator of the *Logic* added into the text an ideological *credo* of a progressive and universalist, indeed cosmopolitan nature, which he thought would please his audience. But who was his audience?

The Addressees of the Translations

Speculations were advanced by several Russian and Ukrainian scholars that the translations were carried out for internal Jewish or "Synagogal" purposes (e.g. Florovskii 1981:13). These speculations are absurd, though Luria (1995a: 218) seems to accept them without his usual skepticism. His statement that Altbauer

⁵ For a recent survey of the final stages of this battle, culminating in sixteenth-century Poland in the polemic between the rationalist Moses Isserles and his opponent Solomon Luria, a polemic that ended with the victory of the anti-rationalist Luria, see D. B. Ruderman 1995, ch. 1–2.

has convincingly corroborated this hypothesis by citing "direct contemporary testimonies" to the effect that in Lithuania "it is the habit of our coreligionists to speak mostly Russian" is unfounded.

Indeed, Jews in all their places of dispersion acquired the local tongue and spoke it. There is a great distance, however, between speaking and writing. Altbauer himself (1992: 20) states: "it is highly unlikely that Jews in Belorussia in that period generally were able to read texts not in Hebrew characters." Our texts – whether on Astronomy, Logic, Theology, Sex or Medicine – do not belong to the kind of literature likely to be translated for under-educated Jewish men or women. This type of literature was only known to, and read by, a few highly cultivated Jewish scholars who were *ipso facto* fluent in Hebrew, and consequently did not need a translation. In short, this is not the nineteenth, but the fifteenth century, and Slavic, any kind of Slavic, cannot be considered a *Kultursprache* for Jews at this time.

Indications that the translations were intended for a non-Jewish audience interested in Jewish writings can be derived from a detailed analysis of passages in the translations where the Slavic is deliberately modified or censored, in order to remove or to rectify statements which might not be fit for a Christian audience. Thus, in the Logical section of Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions*, in the discussion of the difference between true negation (i.e. negation of the nexus) and privation (i.e. negation of the subject), the Hebrew text, following the Arabic original, explains that one cannot assign positive attributes to a non-specific or fictitious subject, for example "God's Associate." Now the notion of "God's Associate" presents no difficulty for a Jewish or Moslem reader, for it is immediately grasped as absurd or fictitious, due to the deeply established notion of God's unity in these two monotheistic religions. It appears however, that this notion was considered by the translator unfit for a Christian reader who might be confused by the familiar dogma of hypostasis which taught him that one deity could actually contain three. (ЛА3.2.10) ויקרא זה משפט מוסר, ר"ל הוא חיוב במתא, סר בלא דרך העלילה, ואת זה שהעלילה היתה מיתנית על העדר, ואפשר שישלוק, (לא3.2.10) בשימור שותף האל חי אינו ראוי, וחבסל אינו ידוע, ואי אפשר שיאמר שותף האל חי, בלתי ראוי, כמו שלא יאמר שור, וזאת בלשון החמון יותר נראה.

Ultimately what we read in the Slavic version is: (ЛА3.2.10) и нареѣсаа осѣбѣ сѣи ѡсѣбѣныи понеѣ ѡсѣбѣныи вѣымѣ оу прилогѣ. <lacuna> (ЛА3.2.11) а могомъ речн, бгѣ не видитель, и прад-нословіе не моудрость, а не могомъ речн бгѣ не виднѣ. <lacuna> (ЛА3.2.10) and this type of proposition is called digressive, for it has digressed, being negative, into affirmation, <lacuna> the demonstration thereof is that the negation is true when applied to the non-existent" (ЛА3.2.11) and we may say God's associate is un-sighted, and idle talk is not wisdom,⁶ but we cannot say

God's associate does not see⁸ <just as we cannot say (that he is) blind, and this is even more manifest in the vulgar tongue (i.e. Persian)>.

The translator into Slavic consequently twice dropped the fictitious Associate and left God to reign alone, thus distorting the whole sense of the passage.

A second example is from the Theological section of Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions*. Here too the issue is unity.

(תא3.1.1) והאחד באמת הוא החלק הממין, ואכל הוא על שלוש מדרגות (תא3.1.2) דדרגות הראשונות, והוא האמתיות במתא, הוא החלק האחד אשר רבו בלא בכח ולא בפעל, (תא3.1.3) וזה כנודח ועצמות הבורא, כי הוא אינו מתחלק בפעל.

(ТА3.1.1) единый бо по истинѣ се естъ часть тождествена ино на трехъ степенехъ. (ТА3.1.2) а. оноже по истинѣ в неѣже нѣстъ множество ни в силѣ ни в дѣлѣ. (ТА3.1.3) и се яко самость сотворителя нераздѣльна ни в силѣ ни в дѣлѣ. (ТА3.1.4) такоже «не примаесть» множества возможностью и премѣненіа и в силѣ и в дѣлѣ. (ТА3.1.5) онже естъ единый по истинѣ.

(ТА3.1.1) 'One' in the proper sense is (that which is) part(icular) and concrete, and this (occurs) in three degrees: (ТА3.1.2) First, which is truly (one), is that in which there is no plurality neither potentially nor actually. (ТА3.1.3) And this is, e.g. <the point and> the essence of the Creator which is not divisible, neither in potential nor in act.

The Hebrew here, like the Arabic original, brings as examples of "true unity," divisible neither in reality nor in thought, the point and the essence of the creator. This equation apparently seemed to the translator to be unfit for the Christian reader, and he consequently dropped the point from the example and left only God.

Further corroborating evidence for the claim that the translation was intended for a non-Jewish audience, and that the translator had a particular tendency in mind, is the fact that in the Slavic version of *Logika* the translator tried to dissimulate the Moslem origin of Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions* by erasing any trace of Arabic. This was done either by simple deletion, or by replacing names of places and persons, including the name of the author, by Jewish names, so that by reading the Slavic text alone one might have the impression of reading a Jewish work. Thus the name of Al-Ghazālī, which appears in the Arabic and Hebrew versions as 'Abū-Ḥāmid, is Judaized in the Slavic version into 'Aviasaf,' while Zayd and 'Umar, which remained Zayd and 'Umar in Hebrew, were converted in Slavic into Abraham and Isaac. This deliberate dissimulation leaves no doubt about the tendentiousness of the translation. The Jewish translator desired to present to the non-Jewish readership an attractive picture of Judaism, as a culture which combines faith with rationality, openness and progress. This desire was so strong that he did not abstain from annexing a Moslem thinker *par excellence* like Al-Ghazālī to the Jewish heritage.

⁶ So Heb. שותף האל חי.

⁷ Hebrew 'and the void is not knowledge'. Latin omits phrase.

⁸ Arab and Hebrew have it the other way around: 'we may say God's associate does not see... but we cannot say God's associate is un-sighted'.

Yet this picture of Judaism which the translator wishes to present certainly does not correspond to reality. In the fifteenth century, after three hundred years of controversy over the rationalist heritage of Maimonides, its proponents are fighting a rearguard battle. Jewry in Ashkenaz and in its eastern extension (Poland-Lithuania) was being overwhelmed by tendencies of fundamentalism and mysticism which marginalized the rationalist tradition and tried to de-legitimize it. The tendentiousness of the translation may thus reflect internal struggles within Judaism itself.

The link between the Ruthenian translations and the Muscovite heresy

The fact that some of the texts belonging to the "Literature of the Judaizers," such as Sacrobosco's *Book of the Sphere*, were only preserved in Ruthenian is no indicator of their being excluded from the list of texts related to the Judaizers. As pointed out by Seebohm 1977: 200, such a fact is also true for the *Six Wings*, which we know to have been in the possession of the heretics. Luria (1960: 84ff.), in his effort to dissociate the corpus of translation from the Muscovite heretical movement, points out *inter alia* that the translations were carried out in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whereas the heresy thrived in Novgorod and later in Muscovy. This, however, is but a natural result of the fact that Muscovy did not have a Jewish population at that time, while Lithuania did. Translators with knowledge of both Hebrew and Slavic would thus naturally come from the Ruthenian lands. The texts, as a matter of fact, ended up being copied in Muscovy, where copyists tried to russify the text. One of them added glosses,⁹ trying to explain unfamiliar Ruthenian forms or unfamiliar philosophical terms rendered literally, by equivalent Russian terms taken from the philosophical works of John of Damascus. Mostly, however, these guesses were wrong.

As for Slavic sources indicating such linkage, there is the 1489 letter from Archbishop Gennadii of Novgorod to Ioasaf, ex-Archbishop of Rostov, in which he mentions the books in the possession of the heretics, among them the *Six Wings* and the *Logika*.

A more specific linkage is established through the person of Zacharia or Shkariia, the learned Jew fluent in astrology and magic, named by Iosif Volotskii as the instigator of the heresy in Novgorod. The name of Zacharia, whom I, following Bruckus (1930), identify with Zacharia Ben Aharon ha-Kohen, emerges as the copyist and glossator of several Hebrew scientific texts, the earliest of which is a Hebrew manuscript of the *Book of the Sphere* made in Kiev in 1454. This copy is the only one, to my knowledge, where the seventh "clime," of the northern hemisphere, is defined as "the clime of Russia" in accordance with the Ruthenian version published by

⁹ Luria (in AFED: 145) seems to be giving the impression that there were many such assiduous readers who put glosses with equivalent terms from John Damascene's *Dialectic* in the margins. It has to be emphasized that the glosses belong to a single seventeenth-century reader, and were copied along with the text from manuscript to manuscript.

Sobolevskii (1903): клима седмая и Русская (и Немецкая) whereas all other Hebrew manuscripts have *clima diaripheos*, usually explained as referring to the Ural Mountains. So far, I have unearthed (see Taube 1995a) five Hebrew manuscripts with texts of philosophical and astronomical content copied by this very Zacharia between 1454 and 1485, two of which carry an explicit indication of their being copied in Kiev, whereas the latest was copied in Damascus.

An almost contemporary independent testimony linking Zacharia not only to the project of translation from Hebrew, but explicitly to the *Logika*, comes from a preface to a sixteenth-century Ruthenian Psalter from the *Dukhovnaia Akademiia* in Kiev. Although the text was published by Peretts in 1906, it has so far gone unnoticed and was never brought up in the discussion about the Judaizers. Even Peretts himself, who had written extensively on the Judaizers, nevertheless failed to notice the implications of the excerpt he had published. It is manuscript # 117. Aa, 1287 (described by Petrov 1897: 213), where we find, on folia 415v–416, a list (cf. Peretts 1906: 63) of authors (or translators) and the terminology they use for the different sciences. Peretts (1906: 60) describes the list as follows: "Всѣхъ за "предисловіемъ надъ псалтирь" идеть списокъ авторовъ и, кажется, принадлежащихъ имъ сочинений, поскольку они были извѣстны писцу; статья, содержаніе и смыслъ которой намъ пока неясенъ." ("Following the "Preface to the Psalter" comes a list of authors and, apparently, works ascribed to them, insofar as they were known to the scribe; an item, the content and intent of which is still unclear to us.") It is quite surprising that not even a single scholar has noticed that the terms ascribed here to Zacharia correspond to the ones found in the translation of the *Logika*.

The terms ascribed to Zacharia correspond to the ones found in the translation of the *Logika*. Thus, the list quoted by Peretts (1906: 63) has:

схаріа	дома грекъ
уисленнаа	граматика
мѣрнаа	риторика
а	и диомитріа
б	философскы
г	теологіа
в	астрономіа
г	орфографіа

сѣхъ книгъ Кириѣ философы оумѣ. словѣноѣ сложивши грамотъ: –

а.	граматикоу	риторикъ	б
г	омира	арифметикъ	д
е	гнометрихъ	мѣстикъ	с
ж-а	астрономіхъ	и осми книгъ	

лоиунуѣ евреискыѣ азъкоѣ, еже ѣ бесѣдоу оу Лва и вѣтѣ.

The list in the column ascribed to Zacharia in this sixteenth-century testimony is practically identical with the one found in the afterword to the *Logika* LM14.3.1–14.5.1:

14.3.1 а первая о^т седми мѣростей уисленаа. втораа мѣрилнаа. третѣа спѣвалнаа.¹⁰ четвертаа пѣнаа 14.3.2 патаа свѣскаа. а та на четверо первое водити дѣво свою. б-е до^т сво^у. г-е вестиса гдѣрю великомѣ. д-е водити землю и сѣди еа. 14.4.1 шестаа о прироженіи сего¹¹ свѣта. а тѣхъ книгъ¹² десять. и мѣдрость лѣкарскаа по^т нею же 14.5.1 седмаа мѣростъ бж^твѣннаа. она естъ глава всѣмъ седми^{мъ}. и ядро и^{хъ} статуное.

14.3.1 The first among the seven wisdoms is **Arithmetic**, the second **Geometry**, the third **Music**, the fourth **Astronomy**. 14.3.2 The fifth is **Politics**, which divides into four: 1. self-governance (ethics), 2. household-governance (economics), 3. the conduct of a great lord, 4. governance of a country and its rules. <lacuna> 14.4.1 The sixth is **Physics** (literally: the nature of this world), which has ten branches, under which is also *Medicine*. 14.5.1 The seventh is **Theology**, which is the crowning of all seven as well as the core of their purpose.

Peretts himself, although he himself wrote several papers on the Judaizers, did not notice the significance of the passage and never commented on it. It is of the utmost significance that this sixteenth-century testimony, which does not contain anything defamatory or polemical, and which does not even mention any heresy or heretics, nevertheless attributes to Zacharia (of the heresiarch named in Iosif Volotskii's *Enlightener*) the terms we find in the *Logika*, thus explicitly ascribing to him the translation of the *Logika* and substantially corroborating the link between the Judaizers and the translations.

The link between the *Secret of Secrets* and Fedor Kuritsyn's *Laodicean Epistle*

Luria assigns great importance to the *Laodicean Epistle* (*Laodikiiskoe Poslanie*) as a source for understanding the ideology advanced by the Muscovite leader of the heretics, Fedor Kuritsyn, as this short text represents a work which he considers as the heretics' own work, since it carries the name of Fedor Kuritsyn, leader of the Moscow heretics, encrypted at the end of the *Epistle* as its presumed "translator."

I include the "Poem on the Soul," the introductory part of the *Laodikiiskoe Poslanie*, in the list of texts belonging to our corpus, since I interpret it, together with Fine, Kämpfer and Maier, as a document of Jewish provenance. I further propose an interpretation linking it to one of the texts in our corpus of Ruthenian translations from Hebrew, namely the *Secret of Secrets*. If we compare the Hebrew and the Slavic texts of the *Secret of Secrets*, we find numerous differences. The crucial one is a passage where Aristotle, the purported author, promises Alexander the

Great, the purported addressee, a drawing in form of an eight-part circle which would summarize all the good advice given in this "Mirror of Princes." It is to be found at the end of section 39 of the Hebrew *Secretum Secretorum* (Gaster 1908, Hebrew text on page 11) and English translation on page 20): "And I will give thee here the wisdom of Divine philosophy in the shape of a picture divided into eight sections, and that will tell thee all the objects of the world, and all that refers to the governance of the world, and all their degrees and qualities, and how each degree obtains its share of right. And I have divided this circle in such a manner that each section represents one degree, and with whichever section thou beginnest thou wilt find all that is most precious within the circle of the wheel. And because the thoughts stand in this world opposite to one another, one above and the other below, have I arranged it to begin in accordance with the order of the world. And this likeness is the most important portion of this book and the very purport of thy request. And if in reply to thy demand I had not sent thee but this picture, it would have sufficed thee. Therefore, study it very carefully and take heed of it, and thou wilt find therein all that thou desirest, thou wilt obtain all thy wishes. And all that I have taught thee at length is contained here, like in a brief summary."

The Hebrew manuscripts have here a circle divided into eight sections with the following poem, in eight double lines:

1. The world is a garden	hedged in by sovereignty
2. Sovereignty is lordship	exalted by law
3. Law is guidance	governing the king
4. The king is a shepherd	mustering the army
5. The army are dragons	fed by money
6. Money is food	gathered by the people
7. The people are servants	subjected to justice
8. Justice is happiness	and the establishment of the world.

The same passage, including the eight-part circle, is found also in Arabic (Badawi 1954: 126ff). But in Slavic we have something quite different (Speranskii 1908: 141 = Bulanin 1984:556, with emphases supplied):

а протже хочю ти написати два крѣжи. единъ свѣскіа а друтии дѣовныи. а почѣноу ти свѣскіа свѣтоѣ, а дѣовныи дѣіею. а ка^тдѣи б^жи^и. осми частей. а ими тобѣ завѣзю вси обыходы досѣтати и^{хъ}, а бы^{хъ} ти написа^т толкѣ два тѣи крѣоути. досѣтъ еси мѣтъ на то^у, занѣже невоз^{мо}жно прію извѣс^ти свѣтскаа. не извѣ^т дѣовнаа. но ли бесѣдоу мѣроу. а безъ того не можѣтъ емѣ ни планета его. а все^т что поминано во кнѣзѣ сѣи издѣлѣта завѣзѣта во крѣтѣ во крѣзѣ^{хъ} си^{хъ} аминь. ("And therefore I wish to draw for thee two circles, one worldly and one spiritual. And I will start for thee the worldly by 'world' and the spiritual by 'soul.' And each one of them contains eight parts. And by means of these [circles] I will draw together for thee the entirety of their purport. And had I drawn for thee but these two circles, thou wouldst have had enough of it. For it is impossible for a king to understand worldly matters without understanding the spiritual ones, except through learned conversation, and

¹⁰ P, R: востѣвалнаа.

¹¹ P, R: весто.

Or perhaps the rendering of טבע, 'nature, character,' in an astrological context, referring to the predetermined destiny of a man, written in his star, rendered by the Kabbalistic term *искра*, 'spark,' alongside with *планета*, 'planet,' and *прироженіє*, 'nature, character,' is such an indication.

In conclusion, the delicate construct of assumptions, hypotheses and speculations presented here is based nevertheless on quite a quantity of facts, which, taken together, allow us to posit that the translations made from Hebrew by Jews who dictated them orally to Christians were intended for non-Jewish readers with an interest in (and probably sympathy for) Judaism and rationalism. I see in the "Novgorod-Moscow heretics" very likely (and in fact the only tangible) candidates for this kind of readership. There remains, however, much work to be done before we can confidently affirm (or perhaps deny) that the corpus of translations known as the "Literature of the Judaizers" was indeed meant by the Jewish translators to attract to the light of wisdom Christians thirsty for knowledge, in order to convert them to Judaism for mystical motives carefully hidden from their unsuspecting audience.

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