The Heresy of the Judaizers and the Translations from Hebrew in Muscovite Russia in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century

In the first two chapters we dealt with the group of early translations from Hebrew in Rus′ carried out between the thirteenth and the early fifteenth centuries, translations of accounts about Jewish figures from the Old Testament and somewhat later, all of interest to Christians. All the accounts are preserved in Russian compilations and must have been made with the participation of Jews, perhaps of Jewish converts to Christianity. All the translations are anonymous.

TEXTUAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSES OF THE TRANSLATIONS

Our present topic, the latter group of translations, belonging to the second half of the fifteenth century, is different in its makeup as well as in its language. It consists mainly of scientific and philosophical texts, most of which go back to Arabic works that were translated into Hebrew in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and then, one century later, from Hebrew into Slavic.

The language of the translations is Ruthenian, the written language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Nevertheless, with few exceptions (to be discussed below), these texts, consisting of fifteenth-century Ruthenian translations, are preserved mainly in Russian copies from the sixteenth century and later (up until the eighteenth century) that underwent some Russification and no little corruption by Muscovite copyists.

The emergence of such a corpus of scientific work is quite remarkable, given that "Neither Kievan nor Muscovite Russia had an equivalent of scholasticism or

Renaissance; there were no universities, only occasional schools, and no learned professions; there was little knowledge of Greek, effectively none of Latin" (Ryan 1999, 10). And, regarding Orthodox Slavic Christianity in general: "The Orthodox Slavs translated fewer of the scientific and philosophical works available in Byzantium than did the Syrians, Arabs or Latins, and indeed no complete major work of Greek antique philosophy or science was translated and no sophisticated ancient Greek or Byzantine work of history or literature (apart from works of Josephus and George of Pisidia) was available in Slavonic until comparatively modern times" (Ryan 1999, 9–10).

Here is the list of the items in this group, to be presented in detail further below:

a. Immanuel bar Yakov Bonfils's *Shesh kenafajim* (Six wings).
b. Johannes de Sacrobosco's *Book of the Sphere*.
c. Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers*.
    (c1. Logic c2. Metaphysics)
d. Moses Maimonides's *Logical Terminology*.
e. Pseudo–Aristotle's *Secret of Secrets*, including the following interpolations:
    Maimonides's *On Coitus*;
    The second part of Maimonides's *On Poisons and the Protection against Lethal Drugs*;
    chapter 13 of Maimonides's *Book of Asthma*;
    chapter on physiognomy from Rhazes's *al-Kitāb al-Manṣūri fi l-ṭibb*.
f. An eight-line sorites on the soul titled "Laodicean Epistle" whose Hebrew source remains unidentified, probably related to item **e**.
g. A collection of Old Testament Hagiographa in the sixteenth-century Vilnius Codex, Lithuanian Academy Library, F 19–262, including: the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Job, Proverbs, and Daniel, translated from Hebrew (the latter only partly from Hebrew); the Psalter in this collection was translated from Greek and corrected by comparing it to the Latin.

Items a and b—that is, the *Six Wings* and the *Book of the Sphere*, are known only from the excerpts published by Sobolevskij (1903, 409–19) from the single sixteenth-century Ruthenian copy that contained them (Chełm, Museum of the Holy Theotokos Brotherhood), which disappeared without trace after World War I, along with the whole collection of manuscripts and works of art in that Museum.

Item c1—that is, the section on Logic from al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers*—is attested in a unique Ruthenian manuscript from 1482, now lost, but fortunately published in 1909 by S. L. Neverov, a student at Kyiv University who was not even able to identify the text and thought it might be a work by al-Farābī.

Items c2 and d—that is, al-Ghazālī's section on metaphysics (theology) of his *Intentions of the Philosophers* and Maimonides's *Logical Terminology*—were

combined (in reverse order) in the Slavic translation to form a single text titled *Logika* (published in Taube 2016).

Item e—the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets* is attested in Russian copies from the sixteenth century onward (published recently by Ryan and Taube 2019).

Item f—the eight-line sorites "On the Soul" is likewise attested in Russian copies from the sixteenth century onward (published by Ja. S. Lurie in Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 256–76).

Item g—the Vilnius Florilegium containing nine Old Testament books, (eight of them translated from Hebrew), is a unique sixteenth-century copy, parts of which have been edited by my teacher Moshe Altbauer and myself (see Altbauer 1992).

The items a, b, c1 and g are (for the first two, now lost: *were*) preserved in single Ruthenian copies, and never reached Muscovy.

The language of item c1 consequently served me in the 2016 edition of the *Logika* as a comparative tool for identifying the instances of Russification in the copies of the other portions of the *Logika* that did reach Muscovy, and as a frame of reference for choosing among the variant readings the ones that, to my mind, reflected the language of the translator.

For this later group, too, we must assume the participation of Jews in the translation, and for the same reason as with the early group—that is, the absence of Christian Hebraists in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a fortiori in Muscovy. This time, however, the translators are no longer shrouded in anonymity, since we are fortunate to be able to name the translator of at least two items, and possibly of the whole group of texts. On this—later.

We now proceed to discuss in detail the items of this list.

The *Shestokryl* (*Shesh kenafajim*) (Six wings) (item **a**), whose original was written in Hebrew by the fourteenth-century Provençal Jewish mathematician and astronomer Immanuel bar Yakov Bonfils (1300–77) of Tarascon. It is an important astronomical work with calendric and navigational uses. Bonfils is known mainly as the inventor of decimal fractions, but he was also the translator from Latin into Hebrew of *The Book of the Gests of Alexander of Macedon* (see Kazis 1962, 40). The Ruthenian translation of the *Shesh kenafajim* (Six wings), made directly from the Hebrew original, apparently reached Muscovy, since Archbishop Gennadij of Novgorod (on him and his polemics against the Judaizing heresy, see below) mentions it in two of his letters, from 1487 and 1489 (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 311, 318–19), as a text that he had read and in which he found heresies. The *Six Wings* indeed appears in the list of works banned by the Russian church as heretical for being of a divinatory nature.[1]

Actually, the *Six Wings* is a purely astronomical work (see Solon 1970), without a hint of astrology or of any other kind of mysticism. It comprises six astronomical tables (from which it derives its name, alluding to Isaiah 6:2), in which, inter alia,

solar and lunar positions are calculated. The tables are preceded by an introduction (see Taube 1995a, 191ff.) explaining in detail how the numerals in the tables should be used, to which the translator added in Slavic explanations for some basic terms of the Jewish calendar, such as the nineteen-year cycle of the Hebrew lunisolar calendar.[2] The "divinatory" power of the work lies simply in its enabling the user of the tables to figure out ahead of time the day and hour for the appearance of the new moon and for upcoming solar and lunar eclipses, with corrections according to geographical location, whether in Provence, Italy, or even Byzantium. The work was translated from the original Hebrew into Latin in 1405 and from the Latin into Greek in 1435 (see Solon 1970), and its calculations were used by sailors and explorers well into the seventeenth century.

The Latin cosmography titled *De sphera* (item **b,** ed. L. Thorndike 1949) by the thirteenth-century English scholar Johannes de Sacrobosco, (ca. 1195—ca. 1256) who taught mathematics at a very early Sorbonne, was a major handbook for students of astronomy all across Europe in the Middle Ages and well into the seventeenth century. By the end of the fourteenth century it had two Hebrew translations, one by Solomon Abigedor, titled *Marʾeh ha-ʾofanim* (The appearance of the wheels) and one by an anonymous translator, titled *Sēfer ha-galgal* (The book of the orb) and *Sēfer ha-esfēra ha-qatan* (The little book of the sphere), and it is this anonymous translation that was rendered into Ruthenian in the second half of the fifteenth century. We have identified (see Taube 1995a, 172ff.) the copy of the Hebrew anonymous translation that served as an exemplar for the Ruthenian version, a Hebrew manuscript of the Russian National Library (Firkovich collection, Evr. I 355), copied in Kyiv on the September 18, 1454, by Zechariah ben Aharon (on him, see in detail below).

A probative argument for the identification of this copy as the Hebrew exemplar of the Ruthenian translation is the unique description of the seventh clime of the Northern Hemisphere, *clima diaripheos*. This term, usually understood as referring to the Ural Mountains, is rendered in most Hebrew witnesses by *nof rifios* or *nof rifomas*. The copy made by Zechariah, however, has here *nof rusios hem harej sheleg u-kfor ve-ʾerets ashkenaz* (The seventh clime . . . is the clime of *Russia*, which are the mountains of snow and ice and the land of Ashkenaz). This unique rendering corresponds quite precisely to the Slavic, known to us only from the excerpts of the Chełm copy (now lost) published by Sobolevskij (1903, 412): *iklima 7-ja klima **i russkaja** i nemetskaja* (The seventh clime . . . is the clime of both Russia and Germany . . .).

We now turn to items **c** and **d,** constituting in Slavic the work called *Logika*.

The Arabic work titled *Maqāṣid al-falāsifah* (*Intentions of the Philosophers*) by the Persian theologian Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) expounds Aristotelian philosophy as it was known in the Muslim world through al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). It basically borrows, without acknowledgment, whole sections from Avicenna's Persian work *Danish nameh* (*Book of Knowledge*) (see

Alónso 1963, xlvi). The *Intentions of the Philosophers* was meant to be an introductory volume to al-Ghazālī's second work, the *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (*Destruction of the Philosophers*). The second volume is what won al-Ghazālī his fame in the West, since a century later Ibn Rushd (Averroes) wrote a refutation of this refutation of philosophy, the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (Destruction of the destruction), soon to be translated into Latin as *Destructio destructionis*, as well as into Hebrew, as *Happalat ha-happalah*. Judging by the small number of Hebrew manuscript copies of the *Destruction of the Philosophers* compared with the massive number of copies of the *Intentions of the Philosophers*, it seems that Jewish readers were not interested in the refutation, but only in the introductory volume, which served as a popular handbook of logic for Jewish readers well into the sixteenth century (see Harvey 2001).

There were no fewer than three Hebrew translations of the *Intentions of the Philosophers* as well as many commentaries. We have at least seventy-two handwritten copies of the three Hebrew translations taken together, whereas there are few witnesses of this text in Arabic. The three Hebrew translations of the *Intentions of the Philosophers* were made in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: in Catalonia, by Isaac Albalag; in Provence, by Yehuda Natan (Maestro Bongodo); as well as by an anonymous translator. The anonymous translation, named *Kavanot ha-filosofim*, served as the basis for the fourteenth-century commentary by the philosopher and physician Moses Narboni (ca. 1295–1362, Perpignan), and it is this version (without the commentary) that was translated into Ruthenian in the second half of the fifteenth century, somewhere between 1458 and 1482 (see Pereswetoff-Morath 2006, 37–41). Out of the three sections of the work—logic, metaphysics, and physics—only the first two, the section on logic (item c1) and the initial chapters on metaphysics (item c2), were translated into Ruthenian. The section on physics apparently was not translated.

The short exposition of logic titled in Arabic *Maqālah fi ṣinaʿat al-mantiq* (Treatise on the art of logic) and in Hebrew *Millot higgajon* (*Logical Terminology*, lit. Vocables of logic [item d]) is traditionally ascribed to Maimonides; and while there have been a few voices doubting his authorship (e.g., Jacob Reifmann [1884, 18ff.] and Herbert A. Davidson [2001]; cf. also Taube 2016, 46–48.), the established view remains unchanged (see Harvey 2016). In any case, for the Jew who translated it from Hebrew this was without a shadow of doubt an authentic Maimonidean work. Of the three extant Hebrew translations of this work, by Moses ben Samuel Ibn Tibbon, by Aḥituv of Palermo, and by Joseph Ibn Vives of Lorca the translator into Ruthenian used the first two—Ibn Tibbon's and Aḥituv's—as is borne out both by the doublets and by the contamination of the two versions (see Taube 2016, esp. 48).

Items c2 and d were combined in Slavic, as mentioned above, to form a philosophical miscellany called *Logika*, of which I published a critical edition in 2016. The editor who combined them replaced al-Ghazālī's section on logic

(c1) with Maimonides's *Logical Terminology* (d) and attached to it the first eight chapters from the metaphysics section of al-Ghazālī's *Maqasid* (c2). The attribution of authorship in the Slavic translation is of great interest. Thus, Moses Maimonides, the supposed author of the *Logical Terminology*, who is referred to in the Hebrew translations as *ha-rav moshe* ("the master Moses") or simply as *ha-rav* ("the master"), is called in Slavic *Mojsej Egiptjanin* (Moses the Egyptian), probably reflecting the fact, known to some learned Jewish and Christian scholars at that time, that Maimonides, a native of Cordoba, spent most of his adult life in Egypt. It is doubtful, however, whether any Slavic reader of the text at the time would have known that.

Even more noteworthy is the attribution of authorship in the Slavic version of al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers*. Both in the logic section of the *Intentions* and in the metaphysics section, Abu-Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī is referred to in the Hebrew version by his teknonym Abū Ḥāmid. In the Slavic translation, however, he is Christened (or rather Judaized) Aviasaf, a clearly fictitious name.[3] Thereby, al-Ghazālī's work is presented to the Slavic readership as if it were part of Jewish wisdom. This misrepresentation of al-Ghazālī as Aviasaf seems to reflect an ulterior motive, one that we will try to spell out further on, when proposing a possible motivation for the whole enterprise of translations.

Beside the general arguments for the translator being Jewish by default—namely, owing to the absence of Christian Hebraists in Eastern Europe—we have, in the case of the *Logika*, direct evidence of the translator's Jewishness. Thus, in chapter 13 of the *Logical Terminology*, in the discussion of instances of hyponymy, where a general term is used also for a more specific member of that genus, we observe a significant deviation of the Slavic translation from both the Arabic and the Hebrew (see appendix 27).[4] For illustrating this usage, the Arabic and the Hebrew give as examples the general words for "grass" and for "star," which may also denote "cannabis" and "the planet Mercury," respectively, whereas the Slavic has as an example the name "Israel," which "is the name of us all as well as the name of an individual from among us." There can be no doubt here about the referee of "us."

The translation of the philosophical works of Maimonides and al-Ghazālī from the heavily arabicized Hebrew versions of the Tibbonide translations was no doubt quite a challenge for the East European Jewish translator who undertook to render them into Ruthenian, of which he may have had practical knowledge sufficient to communicate orally with his neighbors, but hardly more than that. We may also assume that he did not know Arabic. This is suggested by his rendering of the discussion of the four elements and of prime matter in the *Logical Terminology* chapter 9 (see appendix 28). Our translator apparently ignored the meaning of the Arabic term transliterated as ʿnṣr (*hyle*, prime matter), since the word is not used in Hebrew. This is probably the reason for its omission in his translation, unlike

TABLE 1

Slavic	Literal sense of Hebrew and Slavic	Arabic	Hebrew	English term
prilepēnie	gluing, sticking	*mulāzimah*	*dvēqut*	inalienability
udarenie	hitting	*ḍarb*	*hakaʾah*	multiplication
pozhichenyj	borrowed	*mustaʿār*	*mušʾal*	metaphorical
ponovlen	renewed	*muḥaddaṯ*	*meḥudaš*	created
zabludshij	misleading	*sufisṭāʾī*	*maṭʿeh*	sophistic
popushchenyj	released	*muṭlaq*	*mešulaḥ*	absolute
pognanyj	pursued	*murādif*	*nirdaf*	synonym
rechenyja	they said (pl.)	*maqūlāt*	*maʾamarot*	the Categories
obrētenyj	found	*mawjūd*	*nimcaʾ*	existent

cases where a word of Arabic origin is current in medieval Hebrew literature—for example, *handasa* (geometry) or *timsaḥ* (crocodile), in which cases he either translates or transliterates the familiar Hebrew terms (see Taube 2016, 57).

The translator also ignored the philosophical terminology current in Slavic, not that there was much to ignore. In contradistinction to the West Slavic regions, where, at the universities of Prague (founded 1349) and Cracow (founded 1346), Aristotle was being taught (in Latin), in the East Slavic regions, where there were no universities, we observe little knowledge of Aristotle apart from occasional references and fragmentary quotations (see Ryan 1986). Moreover, no philosophical terminology was available, with the exception of some terms in the *Pēgē gnōseōs* (*Fount of Knowledge*), by Saint John of Damascus, the philosophical chapters of which circulated in Russia in translation in a very small number of manuscript copies, under the title *Dialektika*. Our Jewish translator of course knew nothing about this and had to invent a brand new terminology. His approach was simple: translate literally, if possible. Some examples of this literality are given in Table 1.

In all the examples in the table above the Slavic renders literally the Hebrew, which is itself usually a literal translation of the Arabic. The only exception, the Slavic term for "sophistic"—namely, *zabludshij* (misleading)—is the result of interpretation by the translator into Hebrew of Arabic *sufisṭāʾī* (a calque of the Greek) (sophistic) as *maṭʿeh* (misleading).

All the Slavic terms are everyday words, but in their scholarly sense they are semantic neologisms, not found anywhere else in Slavic with this meaning.

Sometimes, though, when deemed necessary, we witness in Slavic an attempt of interpretation, or, where appropriate, an added explanation (on the latter, see below p. 50).

From among the terms that the translator interprets, according to the sense they acquired in philosophy, I will focus on *tsura* (form). This is a central concept in medieval thought, whether Muslim, Jewish, or Christian, adopting the Aristotelian doctrine of hylomorphism, according to which all substances (except God) are composed of form and matter. The term *form* in this context does not refer to a thing's "shape," but to its definition or essence—for example, "human form," denoting what it is to be a human being. A statue may be human-shaped, but it is not a human, because it cannot perform the functions characteristic of humans: thinking, perceiving, moving, desiring, eating, growing, and so on. (See "Matter vs. Form," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, last revised March 25, 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/form-matter/.)

In the Slavic translation of the *Logika*, the Hebrew term *tsura* (form), when employed in its Aristotelian meaning of *eidos* (form), in opposition to *hulē* (matter), is rendered by a Slavic word containing the semantic component "soul" (*dushevenstvo*, lit. "animacy," see appendix 29). This choice is motivated by the Jewish translator's awareness that, within Aristotle's hylomorphic framework, the rational soul is the form (= essence) of man, a view echoed in Maimonides's writings (see appendix 30). Such rendering, without an explanatory addition, undoubtedly makes the text hard to understand for a reader lacking access to the Hebrew, as evidenced by the faulty glosses of this term in several manuscripts of the *Logika* (see Taube 2016, 59).

Beyond the particularities of terminology, an important characteristic of the Slavic version of the *Intentions of the Philosophers* is that it displays several instances of additions, modifications, and omissions by the translator that should be seen as a conscious attempt to adapt the text for a Christian readership.

Thus, Aristotle's pagan teaching is legitimated by naming some of the Jewish prophets as contemporary sources of his thinking—indeed, as his mentors. In a paragraph added at the end of the metaphysics (theology) section of al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers* in Slavic, Aristotle is said to have learned the natural sciences from the Jewish prophets (see appendix 31).

Furthermore, formulas that might raise questions about the differences in the understanding of God's unity in Judaism (and Islam), as opposed to their understanding in Christianity, are omitted.

A significant instance of changes made in the Slavic, apparently in order to accommodate a Christian readership, is found in the Logical section of al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers*, where the discussion of the types of negation in Slavic radically deviates from the Hebrew. The Hebrew here, closely following the Arabic, explains that the negation of a constituent (namely, the subject), called "privation," is different from negative predication; indeed, it is positive (lit., negative digressing into the positive), since its truth-value remains intact even when predicated of a nonexistent subject. The Arabic and the Hebrew, respectively, give as examples of such a nonexistent subject *shariq allah* and *shutaf ha-ʾel* (God's associate).

Given that God's unity is so deeply entrenched in their respective faiths, a Jewish or Muslim reader would immediately grasp the notion of "God's associate" as absurd or fictitious. However, the Jewish translator apparently considered it too dangerous a notion for an Orthodox Christian readership familiar with the concept of the divine trinity. As a consequence, "associate" was dropped from the text, and since the subject of the example in the "corrected" Slavic version is now "God", the dropping of his "associate" inevitably leads to leaving out the affirmation that "the demonstration thereof is that the negation is true (even) when applied to the non-existent." What remains, then (see appendix 32), is a garbled, corrupt passage, without even the little comforting assertion (found in Arabic and Hebrew) that the distinction of the two types of negation is clearer in Persian.

Similarly indicative of the translator's sensitivity regarding fine points of distinction between the Jewish and the Christian views of God's unique oneness is the example from the third chapter of the theological section of the *Intentions of the Philosophers*, where the Arabic and the Hebrew give as examples of true unity "the point, and the essence of the Creator," whereas the Slavic has only the latter (see appendix 33). Since God's absolute and unparalleled unity is one of the basic articles of the Jewish religion,[5] the Jewish translator into Slavic could not or would not allow his Christian readership to learn that anything else, even the point, could share with God in "real" unity, and therefore preferred to leave out "the point" altogether, although this sharing is stipulated by al-Ghazālī and by his unacknowledged source, Avicenna, and is maintained in the Hebrew translation.

Whether translating literally, interpreting the less transparent terms, or adapting the text to the non-Jewish readership, there can be no doubt that the translator was a learned Jew from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where, in contrast to Muscovy, there was a considerable Jewish population. He displays in his translations an impressive knowledge of medieval Jewish philosophy, manifested by his adding, in many places in the *Logika*, explanatory notes and examples to clarify the text.

Thus, in chapter 2 of the logical part of the *Intentions of the Philosophers*, we are apprised that man's true definition can only be supplied by giving his essential quality as a rational animal, while accidental qualities, such as laughing and erectness, may distinguish him from other animals, but are merely descriptive. The translator into Slavic adds here (see appendix 34) a qualifying phrase about using such accidental qualities: "but [thereby] you do not express his quiddity [sc., his true essence]". Man's "quiddity"—that is, his essence or true definition—as the translator correctly emphasizes, is his being a rational animal.

Even more impressive is the example (see appendix 35) from the discussion of the figures of syllogisms found in chapter 7 of the *Logical Terminology*, which, in addition to several omissions, contains a long explanatory addition in Slavic.

The whole Hebrew passage summarizing the syllogistic figures is actually not a translation of Maimonides's words, but of an "explanation not from the discourse"—*bēʾur she-lo min ha-maʾamar*—interpolated into Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew

version of the *Logical Terminology*. The explanation is ascribed by Efros (1938, 13) to the thirteenth-century scholar and physician Jacob Anatoli, and is preserved in four manuscripts of Ibn Tibbon's translation.

In the Slavic version of this passage, we observe in the final two sentences further additions to this interpolation, made by the Jewish translator into Slavic:

> And both these figures, the second and the third, revert to the first [i.e., in order to yield a conclusion], while the first [need] not revert to them, and it yields the four aforementioned quantifiers. And the three figures are equal in that there is no syllogism from two particular premises, nor from two negative ones, nor from a negative minor and a particular major.

The translator thus displays his mastery of logic by adding to the text a similar summary deriving from the logical section of al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers* (see Taube 2016, 504–6). He also adds a reference to an otherwise unknown work that he calls "Long logic," where all the characteristics of valid and invalid syllogisms are given: "And for more [details] look in the Long logic."

The reference to the mysterious "Long logic" here (as well as in five more cases in the *Logika*), absent in all instances from the Hebrew and from the Arabic, probably points to Jacob Anatoli's Hebrew translation of Averroes's *Middle Commentary* (edited by Herbert A. Davidson, 1969) on the logical books of the *Organon* (*Categories, Prior* and *Posterior Analytics, Topics*), containing the longest discussion available at that time of valid and invalid syllogisms and of demonstrative proof.

In contrast to his familiarity with the subject matter, the translator reveals some difficulties when struggling with the heavily arabicized phraseology and terminology of the Hebrew translations from Arabic. In the discussion of the parts of speech in the logical section of the *Intentions of the Philosophers* (Taube 2016, 452–53), going back all the way to Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, we witness (see appendix 36) the translator bravely tackle the difficult terminological comparison of linguistic and philosophical terms for "verb," "noun," and "particle"/"function word," clinging to literality as much as possible but also consulting similar texts.

Thus, the rendering (in the final phrase) in Slavic of ʾ*ot* (particle, lit., letter) by *slovo* (word) and not by *sudno* (vessel/tool), as in the first instance, is probably owing to the translator having consulted the parallel discussion of terminology in the first chapter of the *Logical Terminology*, where both ibn Tibbon and Aḥituv render Arabic *ḥarf* (particle) by *milla* (word) (cf. Taube 2016, 154–55).[6]

A different example, testifying to the difficulties facing the translator into Slavic in dealing with the arabicized Hebrew, especially when the Hebrew turns out to be a faulty rendering of the Arabic, is attested in the opening sentences of the introduction to the theology section of the *Intentions of the Philosophers* (see Taube 2016, 262–63). Al-Ghazālī states in his introduction that "they [sc., the philosophers] usually put the exposition of Natural Science before Theology," but he chooses to invert the order of presentation, since theology is the core and primary

intent of all science, and its placement at the end is owing only to its being deeper and more difficult to comprehend before mastering the natural sciences.

The author announces nevertheless that he will occasionally discuss physical matters inasmuch as they are vital for the exposition of theology (see appendix 37). His statement in the Arabic original is: "But we shall quote in the course of the discussion from the natural sciences what the comprehension of the intended [point] depends upon." The anonymous translator from Arabic into Hebrew took *khalal* in its alternate sense of *harm*, *injury*, *imperfection*, yielding a mistranslation,[7] so that in the Hebrew version, the Arabic phrase, "in the course of the discussion," was erroneously rendered "in the deficiency/weakness of matters/words."[8] The translator into Slavic, in his turn, sensing that the Hebrew was somehow wrong, but lacking the means to check or correct it, simply omitted the phrase, "in the course of the discussion."

Since the translator presumably did not know Arabic, his only recourse in case of difficulty was to commentaries on the works he was translating or to other Hebrew works dealing with similar subjects (cf. n. 6 above). Traces of such consultation can be found in the Slavic *Logika* (see list in Taube 2016, 50n44).

One such trace is the rendering in Slavic by магмуда (*mahmuda*) of the Hebrew plant name *ēśev ha-iśqamonija* (the herb of scammony), a transliteration of the Arabic *suqmūnījā*, ultimately from Greek *skammōnia*. The form *mahmuda*, not attested in any Slavic dictionary, derives from Arabic *maḥmuda* (commendable, praiseworthy), a word also known in Persian and Turkish (in Romanized script: *mahmude*). It apparently was unfamiliar to the Muscovite scribes, since most of them corrupted it. This, however, does not necessarily indicate that our translator knew Arabic, Persian, or Turkish; he more likely knew this word from a Hebrew medical text. Thus, in a fifteenth-century Hebrew *Glossary of Medical Terms* (Saint Petersburg, RNB, MS Evr. IIa 321, f. 46), we find:

saqmonijaʾ hu be-ʿarvi qaruy be-shēm aḥēr maḥmudah u-be-yevani saqmonija ve-khēn be-laʿaz niqrēt kakh.

Saqmoniya is called in Arabic by another name *maḥmuda*, and in Greek scammony, and likewise in Romance.

The Slavic translations appear to be the result of collaboration between the learned Jew and a Christian Slavic scribe who wrote it down in Cyrillic. Such collaboration is by no means a unique phenomenon. Similar collaborative enterprises, involving translators and scribes of different faiths and with differing knowledge of languages, are recorded throughout the Middle Ages—for example, in Spain and southern France in the eleventh- and twelfth-century translations from Arabic into Latin (see Alverny 1986; Freudenthal and Glasner 2014). In our case, the translations seem to have been produced as follows: the Jewish translator, who had before him a Hebrew version, and sometimes several Hebrew versions, dictated his literal rendering into a vernacular, heavily polonized Ruthenian, presumably

the only variety of Slavic with which he was familiar. His Slavic collaborator put it down in writing, occasionally "correcting" it in accordance with the scribal conventions of the written language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the bookish "chancery language" to which he was accustomed.

This collaboration between an erudite Jew, whose mastery of the local variety of Slavic vernacular must have been rather limited and his knowledge of the written language practically nonexistent,[9] and a Slav not acquainted with the subject matter, produced a heterogeneous, at times impenetrable text that reflects the input as well as the shortcomings of both collaborators.

There is evidence for such a joint effort in the translation of the *Logika* (as well as of the *Secret of Secrets*, to be discussed below). It comes in the form of doublets, not just any kind of doublets, not of single words written twice as happens with scribal doublets (see list in Taube 2016, 51n45), but of whole clauses, reflecting self-corrections by the Jewish translator that were noted down by the Christian scribe in both wordings. This second variety of doublets in the *Logika* is found only in the logical section of Al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers* (**c1**), the part that did not undergo any further editing and, consequently, any linguistic or textual correction.

Of the many examples (see Taube 2016, 51n46), we will present one that is especially revealing about the method of oral dictation. It appears in the discussion of the difference between the designation of proper names as opposed to their literal meaning (see appendix 38). Here we encounter the following rendering (additions in Slavic marked by italics): "And when we say, 'God's servant' as a sobriquet/nickname, then it would be [considered] simple, since you do not intend by it anything more than what you intend by saying, *properly speaking, it will be: for you do not intend anything more than if you had said* 'Jesse', 'David.'"

The reformulated clause marked by italics, as written down by the scribe, includes here the translator's aside *zovomo samostiju* (properly speaking), which the scribe obviously failed to understand as metatext, including it in the text.

The next item (e) on the list of the late fifteenth-century translations (see p. 39 above) is pseudo-Aristotle's *Secret of Secrets* (in Hebrew *Sod ha-sodot*). This is a tenth-century Arabic work, a "mirror of princes" probably connected with the circle of the "Brethren of Purity" (*ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*) in Baṣra, but pretending to be Aristotle's book of political advice, titled in Arabic *sirr al-asrār* (see Ryan and Taube 2019).

The *Secret of Secrets* purports to be a series of letters from Aristotle addressed to Alexander the Great, a fiction enhanced in the Slavic version by the epistolary nature of the long interpolations from Rhazes and Maimonides that were also addressed to a ruler or person of high rank. These "letters" are claimed in the introduction by the supposititious translator into Arabic, Yaḥya ibn Biṭriq, to be the work of Aristotle and to have been translated from Greek into Rumi, supposedly Syriac (the language of most Middle Eastern Christians and the common medium for the transmission of Greek scholarly texts into Arabic in the Abbasid

caliphate), and from Rumi into Arabic. However, there is no known Greek version of any part of the text.

The preface of this supposititious "translator" of the *Secret of Secrets* explains that Aristotle was aged and infirm and therefore unable to accompany his pupil Alexander on the latter's military campaign into Asia and instead acceded to Alexander's request for advice by letter. In these letters Aristotle offers Alexander moral and practical advice on a wide variety of topics deemed to be of importance to a ruler. These include advice on ethics and kingship, sometimes benevolent and sometimes Machiavellian; on the selection and management of court and state officials and military officers; on the purchase and treatment of slaves; on the conduct of diplomacy, on the strategy, tactics, and weapons of war; and on health and diet.

Aristotle warns Alexander to beware the wiles of women, and to avoid taking into his service men whose bodily features predict bad character, such as blond hair and blue eyes. From among his potential enemies (apart from his close relatives who are always prime suspects), he warns him in particular against the Persians, the Indians, and the Turks (!). Aristotle advocates astrology and alchemy; he describes the use of magic talismans, of poison, of a magic ring; he lists the virtues of precious stones; he includes a manual of physiognomy, seasonal dietary advice, and an onomantic table for predicting the outcome of battles from calculating the numerical value of the names of the opposing commanders.

The Slavic translation of the *Secret of Secrets* adds numerous small remarks reflecting ideas found in the works by Maimonides (see Ryan and Taube 2019, 46ff.), mainly in his *Guide of the Perplexed*, but it also includes four major interpolations, three of them from medical works by Maimonides, supplementing chapters of similar content within the *Secret of Secrets* itself.

1.   Maimonides's *On Coitus* (*Maʾamar ha-mishgal*); in Arabic *Maqāla fī l-jimā ʿ* (see chapter on Slavic version by Ryan and Taube in Bos 2018).
     This treatise was written by Maimonides for an unnamed, high-ranking official, who inherited from his father a large harem with pretty maidens, and needs advice from his physician on how to maintain, sustain, and entertain his harem without ruining his health. Maimonides supplies his client with practical advice concerning nutrition and physical exercise, naming types of food and drink, including recipes considered to be propitious for enhancing the sexual drive and capacity, of which the most potent is wine (for those not prohibited from it by their religion), and emphasizing the importance of a favorable atmosphere for indulging in the pleasures of the flesh, induced by such activities as listening to fine music and poetry, contemplating beautiful faces, and so on.

2.   Maimonides's *On Poisons and the Protection against Lethal Drugs* (Hebrew: *Samej ha-mavet ve-ha-refuʾot negdam*); (Arabic: *Kitāb al-sumūm wa-l-taḥarruz min al-adwiya al-qattāla*) (see Bos 2009).

This is a treatise composed by Maimonides in 1199 CE at the request of ʿAbd al-Raḥim bin ʿAli al-Baysāni, called al-Qāḍi al-Fāḍil, counselor to Saladin. It aroused great interest among Jews and Muslims alike. There are seven manuscript copies of the work in Arabic characters, and two Hebrew translations, one by Moses Ibn Tibbon, preserved in fourteen manuscripts, and one anonymous, probably by Zeraḥyah ben Isaac ben Sheʾaltiel Ḥen, which survives in only two fragmentary manuscripts. What we have in Slavic is a translation of only the second part of Maimonides's text in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation, devoted to vegetable and mineral poisons and their antidotes, while the first part, dealing with poisonous snakes and scorpions was not translated for obvious reasons—it wasn't relevant to East European readers.

3. Maimonides's *On Asthma* (Hebrew: *Sēfer ha-qatseret*); (Arabic: *Maqāla fi-l-rabw*) (see Bos 2002; Bos and McVaugh 2008).

This treatise, written for an unnamed, high-ranking official, was translated three times into Hebrew and twice into Latin. The Slavic version reflects the Hebrew translation made by the fourteenth-century physician Samuel Benveniste, who served in the house of Don Manuel, brother of King Pedro IV of Aragon. Only chapter 13 of the treatise was translated into Slavic. It deals with general hygienic and ecological advice, such as the importance of fresh air and clean water, and warns against the behavior of patients such as that observed by Maimonides in Egypt, of someone consulting a physician, getting a diagnosis, then going to another physician for a second opinion without telling him about the first, thus making the patient the one who decides by himself which physician to follow. The correct way, says Maimonides, for those who can afford it of course, is to do what kings and rich people do—that is, to call a consultation of several physicians simultaneously.

4. A chapter on physiognomy from the work of the Persian physician and philosopher Muḥammad ibn Zakariya al-Rāzī (854–925). In Arabic the title of the work is *Kitāb almaṇṣūrī fi-l-tibb*; in Hebrew it is *Sēfer almaṇṣuri*.

The chapter titled ʿ*al ḥokhmat ha-partsuf* (On physiognomy, lit., On the wisdom of the face) describes various traits of the body and what they say about a person's character. This constitutes a more detailed supplement to the chapter on physiognomy already present in the *Secret of Secrets* itself.

Beyond the additions from other Jewish sources, the *Secret of Secrets* in Slavic contains several additions apparently of non-Jewish origin (see Ryan and Taube 2019, 48ff.), additions that should hence be ascribed to the Slavic collaborator. For example, in chapter 2, which is on the conduct of kings, we encounter additions on provisioning and manning the defenses of towns, on not taxing landowners too heavily, on appointing inspectors to tour estates, on the necessity of having maps of the king's lands,

and on the necessity for provincial governors to have maps and censuses of the population, to provide written reports of all their decisions, and, if inadequate, to have them replaced. In chapter 7, which is on the conduct of war, we observe additions on the necessity for the king to have a special regiment of brave and experienced guards who have been in foreign lands, to accustom his horses to the sound of cannon and wild animals, and to let every spearman have a hand cannon at the end of his spear to terrify the horses of the enemy. The sources for these additions remain unknown.[10]

We now turn from the enumeration of the components of the Slavic *Secret of Secrets* to an analysis of its textual and linguistic particularities and its affinities with other Slavic translations.

The Slavic text survives in some twenty-five copies from the sixteenth century onward. The earliest witness, nowadays preserved at the National Library of Belarus in Minsk (MS 096/276K; see Ryan and Taube 2019, 69), shows characteristics of Belarusian and was made ca. 1560. The other surviving witnesses (see Ryan and Taube 2019, 70–77), ranging from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, were made by Muscovite copyists. Mikhail Speranskij, who in 1908 published the *Secret of Secrets*, based his edition on the earliest copy and characterized the language of the translation (1908. 117–18) as "West Russian" (sc., Ruthenian), but then went on (1908, 119) to conclude that the translator was a "Belorussian,"[11] basing his claim on the earliest manuscripts. In other sections of his edition—thus, for example, on p. 66 and elsewhere—he speaks of "the Russian text." On the other hand, A. Krymskij (1910, 229), in his recension of Speranskij's edition, states that the translator was a "Jew, speaking Little-Russian [sc., Ukrainian]—specifically the dialect of Kyiv," and that the earliest witness used by Speranskij was only a sixteenth-century Belarusian copy of an earlier Kyivan translation, in which many glaring Ukrainian features were observable.

And indeed, supporting Krymskij's claim, the *Secret of Secrets* in Slavic demonstrates several indications of affinity with another text translated by a Kyivan Jew—namely, the *Logika*—strengthening the probability that both texts were translated by the same person. Thus, both texts share the following innovative terms, not attested at that time outside our corpus of translations from Hebrew:

samostʹ (essence/substance, lit., selfness) for Hebrew *ʿeṣem*.
vsjachestvo (genus/species, lit., generality) for Hebrew *kolel/sug*.
razdrobenstvo/razdrobnyj (individuality/individual, lit., fragmentation/fragmented) for Hebrew *ʾish/ʾishi*.
ravnanie/rovnanie (syllogism/deduction/analogical reasoning, lit., comparison) for Hebrew *heqēsh/ḥibbur*.
hijulʹ/hijulʹnyj (hyle/material) for Hebrew *hijuli* (a transliteration of Greek [hulē] through Arabic [hajūlā]).
svētskij (political , lit., worldly) for Hebrew *medini*.

The *Secret of Secrets*, like the *Logika* (cf. above p. 51–52), shows traces of oral dictation. Thus, in chapter 2 of the *Secret of Secrets*, Aristotle is said (see appendix 39) to give the following advice to Alexander (additions in the Slavic marked by italics):

> Alexander, people obey the king only for four reasons [lit., by four things]: 1. for (your?] being steadfast in (God's?) Law 2. for *your* love *for them* 3. for ambition 4. for awe. And by redressing their wrongs *you will induce in them all four aforementioned things*, ‹. . .› and if they dare speak *ill* of you they will also dare to act. Therefore do not let them talk *about you* lest you also let them act, *otherwise [said], you shall not prevent their deeds unless you prevent their words*.

The last sentence has a doublet, a rewording of the phrase, preceded by the metatextual expression "otherwise [said]," a clear indication of the method of oral dictation, when the Jewish translator apparently proposed two alternatives for the Hebrew sentence, and his Slavic collaborator noted them both down in writing, including the metatext.

From the numerous instances of corruption and faulty glossing that the Slavic text, in its primary Ruthenian (specifically Kyivan) form, suffered at the hands of the Muscovite copyists, the following examples are quite characteristic.

The Ruthenian word *porobnik* (lecher, womanizer, debauchee, fornicator) appears four times in the *Secret of Secrets*.[12] When it occurs in a passage speaking of the qualities required of the king's first minister, it appears in the Muscovite copies without comment or gloss, allowing the possibility that, in a series of traits preceded by a negation, the meaning was somehow guessed by the copyists (TT 4.5.23; see Ryan and Taube 2019, 136).

> *chto by ne byl opoj ni ozhirja ni porobnik.*
>
> He should not be a drunkard or glutton or lecher.

On the other hand, in the lists of physical traits and their significations from Rhazes's *Physiognomy* (RM) interpolated into the *Secret of Secrets*, where it is not always obvious whether a specific physical trait signifies something good or bad, the copyists had to make a guess about the meaning of the unfamiliar word; as is to be expected, the results are mixed. The word is either replaced by a wrong equivalent or glossed by a wrong gloss (or both).[13]

> RM 7.30.14 (Ryan and Taube 2019, 228): *porobnik* (lecher), variants A: *posobnik* (helper) and gloss *pomoshch* (help); Q: *pobornik* (supporter).
> RM 7.32.4 (Ryan and Taube 2019, 230): *porobnik* (lecher), variants A: *pobor'nik* (supporter) and gloss *zastupnik* (defender, intercessor).

Another example of a Ruthenian word misunderstood and wrongly glossed by a Muscovite scribe is *rechi frievny* (flirtatious conversation). It appears (see Ryan and Taube 2019, 264) in Maimonides's treatise *On Coitus* interpolated into the Slavic *Secret of Secrets*, in a discussion of the kind of atmosphere propitious for sex, and Maimonides, in the best tradition of physicians, recommends, among

other things, gaiety, laughter, coquetry, and so on. The expression *rechi frievny* for "flirtatious conversation" is maintained (with minor spelling differences) by the Muscovite copyists, but whether they understood the meaning is questionable, since one of them, the copyist of manuscript A, adds an erroneous gloss: *slova poleznyje* (helpful words).[14]

We now turn to the two remaining items, **f** and **g**, in the list of fifteenth-century translations from Hebrew (see p. 36).

Item **f** is an eight-line sorites where each line begins with the word ending the previous line, or put simply, a cyclical chain of maxims "on the soul," which, as we shall show below, was most probably part of the previous item, the *Secret of Secrets*, but is now preserved in Slavic as part of a miscellany named the Laodicean Epistle.[15]

Actually, the Slavic miscellany is not an epistle at all, but a heterogeneous text that in one of its parts mentions the Laodicean Epistle. It is attested in Russian manuscripts from the sixteenth century onward, and it contains three principal parts (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 256–76): (1) a treatise named *litoreja v kvadratekh* (Cipher in squares), which is of obscure content (in each square figure there are letters of the Slavic alphabet, with commentaries like *sila* [power], *stolp* [pillar], etc.); (2) a sorites in eight lines on the sovereignty of the soul (and it is this part that interests us); and (3) a riddle that begins with the words *ashche kto khoshchet povedati imja prevedshago Laodikijskoe Poslanie* (if anyone wants to discover the name of the translator of the *Laodicean Epistle*), followed by a series of simple numerical combinations that have been deciphered as *Feodor Kuritsyn diak*—that is, the name of the leader of the Moscow Judaizing heretics (see discussion below, p. 63ff.), the Muscovite secretary of state Feodor Kuritsyn.[16]

It is clear, then, why the entire text was traditionally named *Laodicean Epistle* as a *pars pro toto*, and why its link to the Muscovite Judaizing heresy could be important, for we may learn from it something about the ideology of the heretics, given that the text is considered by Russian scholars to be an original work of the Judaizers. The oldest version of the sorites is found in two sixteenth-century manuscripts, given together with translations reflecting my understanding of the text (see appendix 40).

When I began investigating this text some thirty years ago, a discussion was in progress, mainly in the pages of *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, about the interpretation of this sorites, with various opinions, all of them starting from the assumption that it was an original text of the Judaizing heretics, all of them emphasizing the freethinking reflected in the first line, "the soul is sovereign," and all of them focusing on the problematical point (from a Christian perspective) in the fifth line, of the seemingly positive depiction of "the pharisaic way of life." Some scholars (e.g., Fine 1966; Kämpfer 1968; Maier 1969) pointed to the Jewish provenance of some expressions, including the positive viewing of "the pharisaic way of life" as reflecting *ḥajēj prishut*, which in Hebrew signifies a "life of abstinence."

By a happy chance, I recalled a passage promising a sorites in eight lines that I had come across when reading W. F. Ryan's 1978 paper on the *Secret of Secrets* (see appendix 41):

> And I am drawing for you a gnomic philosophic divine figure divided in eight parts
> . . .

In Hebrew, like in the Arabic original, the promise of the figure is indeed followed by a circle divided in eight parts, as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

The circle contains the following sorites in eight parts (see appendix 42):

1. The world is a garden, hedged in by the kingdom.
2. The kingdom is a power exalted by law.
3. Law is a custom administered by the king.
4. The king is a shepherd supported by the army.
5. The army are helpers nourished by money.
6. Money is sustenance gathered by the people.
7. The people are servants subjected to justice.
8. Justice is bliss and the basis of social order (lit., reparation of the world).

As noted by Ryan (1978, 252), in Slavic, unlike in Hebrew (and Arabic), we encounter a rather different text (see appendix 43).

The first surprise: *two* circles are promised instead of one (Ryan and Taube 2019, 126–27; portions added in Slavic are marked by italics):

> And therefore I wish to inscribe for you *two* circle*s, one worldly and the other spiritual. And I will begin the worldly one with "world" and the spiritual with "soul," and each of them* [has] eight parts and in them I shall draw together for you all the requirements for their attainment, and had I written for you only these *two* circles, that would suffice you, *for it is not possible for a king to master worldly matters without mastering spiritual matters except by learned discourse, and without this not even his planet shall help him*, and all that is discussed at length in this book is contained in concise manner in these circles, *Amen.*
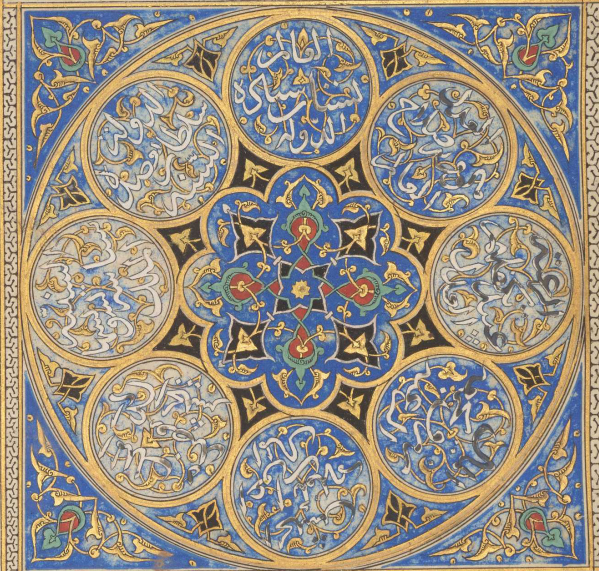
The second surprise: the two promised circles are *missing* from all Slavic manuscripts.

Two questions have to be asked, then: (1) Where does the second promised circle, unattested in Hebrew or Arabic, come from? (2) Where and why have both circles vanished?

For the first question, one has to assume that it is an addition by the translator from Hebrew. It remains unclear, however, whether he took the second circle from an unknown Hebrew version of the *Secret of Secrets*, from another unidentified Hebrew work, or he made it up himself, since no similar Hebrew text has been unearthed so far.

In Arabic, to be sure, there is a whole work influenced by the *Secret of Secrets*, destined to serve as a *spiritual* mirror of princes. This is the *Divine Governance*
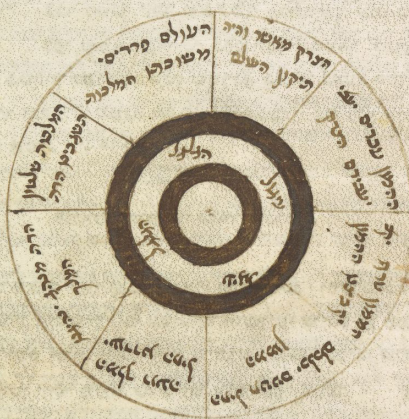
لك فتد بره نظر صادق وفهم ثاقب سلس لك

ما دام كل و نقرب عليك جميع محابك وكل با ذكر نه

فى هذا الكتاب مطولا منسرا فهو فى هذا الكتاب مكملا

مجمل مختصر والله حارسك وهذه صورة فكن يه سعيدا

فى وصف وزبره ووجه سياسته ونحرته را

وصورت العقل المركب فيه ياسكنه نفهم هذا المثاله

FIGURE 3. *Circle in Eight Parts*, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library MS Ar 4183, f. 12r pseudo-Aristotle *Sirr al-Asrār*, copied in Herat (Afghanistan) by Jaʿfar al-Bāysunghuri, 829 AH/1425–26 CE. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Chester Beatty Library.

of the Human Kingdom written in the early thirteenth century by Muḥyiddin Ibn al-ʿArabi (Nyberg 1919), which I was thrilled to discover and placed high hopes on for finding the second circle. To my great disappointment, despite the many parallelisms between the two texts, it did not contain the circle beginning with "soul" parallel to the one beginning with "world" in the *Secret of Secrets*. Hence, until shown otherwise, one has to assume that the second circle is the work of the Jewish translator.

As for the second question, we have only a partial answer. The worldly circle has not been traced so far in Slavic, but the spiritual circle beginning with "soul" is undoubtedly the sorites in the *Laodicean Epistle*. And since we know now that it contains eight sections, this allows us to better choose among the variants in order to arrive at the following reconstruction of the Slavic (see appendix 44).

1. "Soul" is a separate substance whose constraint is religion.
2. "Religion" is a [set of] commandments established by a prophet.
3. "Prophet" is a leader authenticated by working miracles.
4. "Miracle working" is a gift strengthened by wisdom.
5. "Wisdom"—its power is in a temperate ("pharisee") way of life.
6. "Temperate" ("Pharisee") way of life—its goal is learning.
7. "Learning" is most blessed—through it we attain the fear of God.
8. "The fear of God" is the incipience of the virtues—by it is edified the soul.

On the basis of this reconstructed text, we may attempt a retroversion into Hebrew (see appendix 45).

The importance of this text lies in its content, which is undoubtedly heretical from the perspective of the Russian church that persecuted the Muscovite heretics (see below p. 65ff.). The "Pharisee way of life," viewed as being positive, certainly raised objections among Christians versed in the New Testament, where the Pharisees are depicted as the "bad guys" who opposed Jesus and his teachings. According to the Jewish interpretation of the term, however, *ḥajēj prishut* is a life of temperance, of abstention from excess, from worldly pleasures (but distinct from Christian asceticism), a life whose goal is learning, in order for one to understand, each according to his ability, the greatness of God manifest in the creation of the world.

The definition of religion (lit., faith) in the second line as "a law established by a prophet" must also be considered heretical from the point of view of the church. In contrast to its being perfectly acceptable to Jews and Muslims, representing prophetic monotheism, this definition does not at all fit Christian dogma, where instead of the prophet we have Christ the son of God. By establishing the link between this sorites, formerly considered an original text of the Muscovite heretics, and the translations from Hebrew, specifically the *Secret of Secrets*, the Jewish provenance of this text is clearly validated. However, a Hebrew text similar to the one reconstructed on the basis of the Slavic has not yet been found.

The final item in the list of fifteenth-century translations to be discussed is (item **g**), a collection of nine Old Testament Hagiographa (*Ketubim*) preserved in a unique manuscript written between 1517 and 1530 (see Temchin 2008), now in the Academy Library in Vilnius. The text, written down by a Christian, is clearly a copy of a translation that must be somewhat earlier, probably the late fifteenth century (see Thomson 1998, 876). With the exception of the Psalms, adapted from the extant Russian Church Slavonic version (see Taube 2004), the remaining eight books were translated from Hebrew, either entirely—thus Proverbs (see Taube 2015), Job (see Taube 2005b), Ecclesiastes (see Altbauer 1992), Esther (see Peretts 1915; Altbauer 1992), Ruth (see Altbauer 1992), Lamentations (see Altbauer 1992), Song of Songs[17] (see Altbauer 1992)—or partly also on the basis of earlier translations: thus Daniel (see Evseev 1902; Arkhipov 1995, 147–240).

In the translation of Daniel, whose Masoretic text is bilingual, with some parts in Hebrew (1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13) and the rest in Aramaic, the translator made a surprising choice: in order to show the bilingual nature of the book, the translator rendered the Hebrew into Ruthenian, whereas for the Aramaic part, except for chapter 3, he took the pre-Symeonic version (i.e., the earliest, perhaps tenth-century Old Church Slavonic translation) as his basis and revised it from the Aramaic (see Thomson 1998, 878–79). This attempt at preserving the bilingualism of the source version evidently required a collaboration between the Jew who translated it and a Slavic Christian partner who would have had knowledge of and access to the Church Slavonic texts.

This choice of rendering the Hebrew portions in the Ruthenian vernacular, while rendering the Aramaic portions in the bookish Russian variety of Old Church Slavonic, may sound counterintuitive to modern linguists who think of Hebrew as the sacred written language, as opposed to spoken Aramaic, the lingua franca of the ancient Middle East. However, from the perspective of a medieval Jew, Aramaic was the supersacred language, only available to the erudite few, the language of the most holy books, the Talmud and the Zohar, and of the most holy prayers, *Kol Nidrej* and *Kaddish.*

The biblical texts in this group (namely, item **g**), most of which, as has been said, were translated from Hebrew, may after all turn out not to belong to "the Literature of the Judaizers," though their time of translation coincides with the other items of the list. In any case, there is no positive proof for such a link. Some scholars (see Peretts 1908, 25–26) suggested that the translation of the biblical books was made for Christians in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania who wanted to read the biblical text in its original form, while others (see Sobolevskij 1903, 399–400; see also Alekseev 1999a, 134) proposed that they were made for Jews who knew no Hebrew. Both suggestions seem highly improbable, and both remain unproven. Recent research (see Grishchenko 2018) on late fifteenth-century Russian-Slavonic Pentateuch manuscripts corrected according to the Masoretic tradition and containing glosses traceable to a Turkic Targum, as well as to Jewish exegetic and

Midrashic sources, constitute a promising new direction (the author links both the Pentateuch and the Vilnius collection of the biblical texts to the "Literature of the Judaizers") that may yield new insights into this problem.

To sum up our discussion of the latter group of translations, we observe that it consists of Ruthenian texts, reflecting the language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, though some of them underwent a certain degree of Russification when being copied and glossed in Muscovy. In terms of content, it is made up (except for the biblical translations in item **g**) of medieval scholarly, scientific, and philosophical texts, mostly of Arabic-Muslim provenance, which have nothing specifically Jewish about them, although in some cases they are falsely presented in Slavic as Jewish works—for example in the *Logika*, where the name of al-Ghazālī, who is called Abu Ḥāmid in both the Arabic and Hebrew, is modified in Slavic to Aviasaf. This group of translations is traditionally called "the Literature of the Judaizers," following Sobolevskij's 1903 appellation.

<h2 style="text-align:center">THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
OF THE TRANSLATIONS AND THEIR LINK
TO THE JUDAIZERS</h2>

In order to be able to address the question why the translations called "the Literature of Judaizers" were made at all, and why the specific texts discussed above were chosen for translation, I will first draw a picture of the historical circumstances in which the translations of the second group emerged, and of the Jewish figures from Eastern Europe who, I suggest, participated in producing them.

The two major polities of Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century were Muscovy, a conservative Christian Orthodox principality that had recently begun to rise to the status of a major power, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Both claimed to be the successors to the Rus′ principality of Kyiv, whose autonomous existence ceased after the Mongol conquests of the mid-thirteenth century and that afterward found itself incorporated into the Grand Duchy.

As regards a Jewish presence, however, there is a radical difference between the two. Muscovy did not have Jews living within its borders, whereas the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did. Yet in the fifteenth century the Grand Duchy was still recovering from the Tatar occupation and was not known as a center of learning, either Jewish or Christian. By the middle of that century, as pointed out in the first part, we are still unable to name a single Jewish author living there.

But in the second half of the fifteenth century we do finally encounter two figures, both from Kyiv, whose scholarly activities bore fruit that subsist to this day. They were Rabbanite Jews, certainly, but apparently not Ashkenazi. In the last moment, before being totally overrun and absorbed without trace by the Ashkenazi newcomers from the West, the original Jewry of Eastern Europe had finally two names to bear witness to its scholarly tradition, a tradition that, like that of the

Karaites in this area, is intellectually oriented southward to Constantinople and Byzantium, and, after 1453, to Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire. In the conventional typological division of European Jewry into north and south, Kyivan Jewry is clearly part of the South.

First among these figures (see Taube 2010) is, finally, the first Jewish author from Eastern Europe whose works subsist and whose name is known to us, R. Moses son of Jacob (1449–1520), called R. Moses the Exile (*rabbi moshe ha-gole*), R. Moses the Russian (*rabbi moshe ha-rusi*), or R. Moses the Second (*rabbi moshe ha-shēni*), in order to distinguish him from the twelfth-century rabbi, Moses of Kyiv, student of Rabbenu Tam, mentioned in chapter 1.

Rabbi Moses the Exile applied himself to biblical exegesis, poetry, grammar, astronomy, and, last but not least, as we shall see, to kabbalah. We are relatively well informed about his life, since he furnished us with many details in colophons to his writings. He studied in his youth in Constantinople, both with Rabbanite teachers such as the author of *Birkat Abraham*, the Talmudist R. Abraham Sarfati, and Karaite teachers like Elijah Bashyatsi. In later years, after returning to Kyiv, he engaged in polemics against the Karaites, and inevitably attracted virulent attacks on the part of the Karaite leaders in Constantinople, including his former Karaite teacher Bashyatsi and his disciple Caleb Efendopulo.

Rabbi Moses is the author of several works that have reached us either in print or in manuscript form.[18] These include:

1. *Otsar neḥmad* (Coveted treasure), a supercommentary on R. Abraham Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Torah, in which he displays an acquaintance not only with the most important Jewish exegetes and thinkers (e.g., Rashi, Maimonides, Nahmanides, Gersonides, Joseph Ibn Kaspi, Moses Narboni) but also with lesser known figures, such as Joseph ben Eliezer Bonfils and Samuel Ibn Motot, as well as with rarely cited ones, such as Abraham of Crimea. He also mentions Muslim thinkers, including Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, and Averroes.
2. *Jesod ʿibbur* (Principles of intercalation), a work on the Jewish calendar.
3. *Pērush shēsh kenafajim*, a commentary on the *Shesh kenafajim* by Immanuel bar Yakov Bonfils (see above, p. 40).
   And, significantly, two kabbalistic works:
4. *Pērush sēfer jetsira*, a commentary on the early esoteric work, *Book of Creation*.
5. *Shoshan sodot*, (Lily of secrets), a kabbalistic work so named since it contains שוש״ן— that is, in numerical value, 656 secrets.

Rabbi Moses the Exile's exegetical and astronomical works seem to have had little impact. The first three items in his list of works remain unpublished and are preserved in manuscript form only—the first in five copies (two of them Karaite), and the second and third in single copies.

His kabbalistic works, on the other hand, seem to have had a somewhat greater impact: his commentary on *Sēfer Yetsira* was first printed in 1779 as *Otsar Hashēm*—(The treasure of the name), and has since been included in printed editions of *Sēfer Yetsira*.

His work *Shoshan Sodot* (Lily of secrets) was first printed in 1874 and has been reprinted twice since then—in 1970 and in 1995.

Rabbi Moses is remembered chiefly as the initiator of the liturgical rite common to the variegated Jewry of Crimea, the rite known as *nusaḥ Kaffa* (version of Kaffa) or *minhag Kaffa* (custom of Kaffa). Only a few years after being definitively exiled from Kyiv in 1495 and settling in Kaffa (Theodosia) in Crimea, he became head of the community there, and introduced for it a new, commonly accepted canon of prayer (see, however, Shapira 2012, 71), which constituted a compromise between the various components of the Jewish community there, the Romaniote, the Sephardi, the Ashkenazi, the autochthonous Krimchak, and the Iranian (Tat). Undoubtedly, the establishing of such a commonly agreed on canon of prayer is quite a remarkable achievement, as anyone who ever went to a synagogue could testify.

Rabbi Moses, I suggest, is also linked to the second group of translations from Hebrew into Slavic. Before elaborating on his possible role, however, I wish to introduce a second Jewish figure from fifteenth-century Kyiv known by name, and in this case not only from Hebrew testimonies, but also from Christian sources.

This other figure is Zechariah ben Aharon ha-Kohen, copyist and annotator of scientific and philosophical texts copied between 1454 and 1485. He also, I submit, participated in rendering into Slavic the second group of translations.

Following is the list, in chronological order, of the Hebrew manuscripts copied and annotated by Zechariah, as evident from the explicit marking of his name in the colophon:[19]

1. *Sēfer ha-galgal.* Johannes de Sacrobosco's cosmographical work *On the Sphere* (see above p. 39), ms. RNB Firkovich Evr. I 355. Copy completed by Zechariah on September 18, 1454, in Kyiv.

2. *Mesharet Moshe* (Moses's servant), a commentary on (and defense of) Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, attributed to Qalonymos of Provence and attested in many manuscripts from the thirteenth century onward. Zechariah's copy is ms RNB Firkovich Evr. I 502. Copy completed on September 2, 1455.

3. *Ruaḥ ḥēn* (Spirit of grace), ms. RNB Firkovich Evr. I 494. Copy completed on October 31, 1456. This anonymous thirteenth-century philosophic encyclopedia, in the Maimonidean vein, has been variously ascribed to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, to Jacob Anatoli, and to Zeraḥiah ha-Levi Anatoli.

4. *Sēfer alfargani* (Book of al-Farghānī). Aḥmad al-Farghānī, *Elements of astronomy*. Ms. Vienna Imperial Library, codex hebr. 60 II (Schwarz 1925, no. 183). Copy completed by Zechariah on 14.1.1468 in Kyiv.
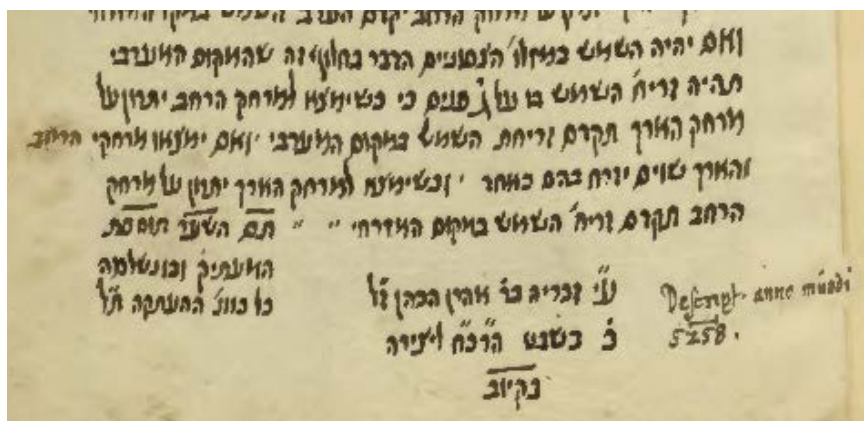
FIGURE 5. Zechariah's 1468 colophon, Vienna, Austrian National Library MS 60 II (183), f. 40r. *Al-Farghāni: Elements of Astronomy*. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Austrian National Library.

This compendium of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, prepared in in the ninth century by the Persian astronomer Aḥmad al-Farghānī (ca. 800–70), was translated into Hebrew by Jacob Anatoli in Naples in the thirteenth century, on the basis of both Arabic and Latin versions. Above is a photocopy of Zechariah's colophon.

5. Two missing pages from the third chapter of *Be-ʿetsem ha-galgal*, Solomon ben Joseph Ibn Ayyub's Hebrew translation of Averroes's *On the Substance of the Celestial Sphere*, ms RNB Firkovich Evr. I 436 (the rest of the manuscript is written in a different hand). The missing pages (f. 69v.–70r.) were copied by Zechariah on the 27.5.1485 in Damascus, and in the colophon he calls himself "man of Jerusalem," which indicates that in the meantime— that is, sometime between 1468 when he was still in Kyiv, and 1485 when he reemerged in Damascus—he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Below is a photocopy of the final page the text, with the colophon on the two bottom lines reading:

> Completed by Zechariah man of Jerusalem son of the honorable Rabbi Aharon,
> Kohen Tsedek [just priest] of blessed memory
> in Damascus, 13 of Sivan of the year [5]245.

Zechariah's name came down to us not only in the colophons of the five surviving manuscripts he copied between 1454 and 1485, but also from Russian sources depicting the upheaval surrounding the rise and eventual demise of "the Heresy of the Judaizers" movement that threatened to take Muscovy by storm, or so at least it is depicted on recent nationalistic Russian Orthodox websites celebrating "five hundred years since the victory over the Judaizers" (see below, p. 75–76).
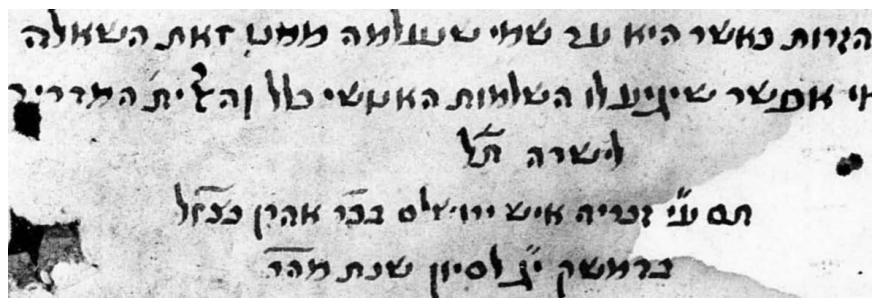
FIGURE 6. Zechariah's 1485 colophon, Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, MS Firkovich Evr I 436, f. 70r. Averroes's *On the Substance of the Celestial Sphere*. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Russian National Library.

Here are the few details outlining what we know about this movement, deriving from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sources and, as usual, limited to testimonies stemming from the camp of their detractors, in this case the Russian Orthodox Church (the sources are presented extensively in Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 256–523).

According to the two main representatives of the Russian church who persecuted them, Archbishop Gennadij of Novgorod and Iosif Sanin, also known as Saint Iosif Volotskij, founder and abbot of Volokolamsk Monastery, the Judaizing movement started in Novgorod in 1470, shortly before the annexation of Great Novgorod by Ivan III, grand prince of Moscow. It was in that year that Prince Mikhailo Olelkovich of Kyiv visited the city-republic of Novgorod in the company of several nobles and merchants, among them a Jew named Scharia, a man "knowledgeable in matters of astrology, astronomy, necromancy, and magic," according to Saint Iosif Volotskij in his *Prosvetitel'* (Enlightener)—written several years after the heresy had been crushed, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century (see appendix 46).

On his arrival in Novgorod, according to the *Prosvetitel'*, Scharia succeeded (Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 469), in first enticing a Novgorod priest by the name of Denis and leading him astray into Judaism (*i toj prezhe prel'sti popa Denisa i v zhidovstvo otvede*, "after which Denis brought to him another priest by the name of Aleksej"). With the arrival of a few more Jews from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, their activity expanded and more names were added to the list of heretics, up to some two dozen.

The Novgorod group of heretics included *diaks* (clerks, scribes), merchants, and priests of the lower white clergy (the nonmonastic clergy). Two of the heretics (the aforementioned Denis and Aleksej) were later invited—surprisingly enough, by Ivan III himself during his visit to Novgorod in 1480—to come to Moscow, where they were appointed by Ivan to major churches in the Kremlin. There they went on with their efforts to expand the heretical movement, obtaining protection and support from within Ivan's court—namely, from Fedor Kuritsyn, chief diplomat of Ivan III, as well from Ivan's daughter-in-law, the Moldavian princess Elena, whose son Dmitrij was the destined heir to the throne of Russia.

In 1487, Gennadij, the newly appointed archbishop of Novgorod, discovered the heresy in his city and began persecuting the heretics, though without strong backing from either the secular power—Ivan III, who had appointed him archbishop—or the ecclesiastical authorities in Moscow. This lack of cooperation is reflected and complained about in Archbishop Gennadij's letters to other archbishops, bishops and abbots written between 1487 and 1490 (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 309ff.).

The church lacked the conceptual and institutional tools to carry on a serious discussion with the heretics, which might have resulted in its either eliminating or assimilating their ideas, whatever those might be. It therefore chose the juridical path and accused them of being "Judaizing apostates," by which accusation they hoped to eradicate the heretics along with the heresy.

After several delays, the heretics were finally brought to trial and punished severely. This was done in two phases. In the 1490 trial, the reforming Novgorod clerics were sentenced and punished. Then, in 1502, Princess Elena and her son, the heir-designate Dmitrij, were imprisoned by Ivan, who for reason of state shifted his support to his son of his second marriage, Vassilij III. Only a year later, in 1503, were the Muscovite functionaries and clerics accused of heresy finally tried and heavily punished in their turn, although some of the more powerful ones, first and foremost their leader Feodor Kuritsyn, escaped persecution. By 1504, the heresy had been crushed.

While there is general agreement regarding this chain of events, the nature of the heresy, its ideology, and especially its affinity to Judaism are subjects of ongoing controversy. The specific accusations made in the chapters *o novojavishejsja jeresi* (on the newly appeared heresy) by Iosif Volotskij that were incorporated into the *Prosvetitel'*, written many years after the events, are seen by most scholars (the most influential being Jakov S. Lurie [see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 109ff., 146ff.]) as unreliable calumnious fabrications.

Such is the very detailed yet hardly believable claim in the *Prosvetitel'* (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 469) that Denis and Aleksej were so strongly attracted to the Jewish faith (*zhidovskuju veru*), that they continuously socialized with the Jews, ate and drank with them and learned Judaism [*zhidovstvo*] from them. Not only that; they also taught their wives and children Judaism. They even wanted to undergo circumcision, but the Jews advised them not to do so and to keep their Judaism secret, while outwardly pretending to be Christians. They (sc., the Jews) changed Aleksej's name to Abraham and called his wife Sarah.

The accusations made by Archbishop Gennadij of Novgorod in his letters to his colleagues, although they were written during the actual time of the heresy, the 1480s and 1490s (Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 309ff.), are rather unspecific and are also considered unreliable. The few specific details in the accusations, obtained either through denunciation or forced by interrogation, such as denying the

divinity of the Holy Trinity, desecrating holy icons, and using heretical psalms for praying in the manner of the Jews, are also considered by most scholars unreliable or at least fuzzy (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 130).

No wonder, therefore, that different scholars have described the Judaizers variously as Anti-Trinitarians, Arians, Bogomils, proto-Reformers, Freethinkers, Humanists, Rationalists, Hussites, or even Waldensians.

The most convincing reading of the heresy is that given by the German philosopher Thomas M. Seebohm, to whose interpretation, as given in his Habilitationsschrift "Ratio und Charisma" (1977, 530ff.), I subscribe.

According to Seebohm, the heresy was an original, sui generis Russian phenomenon, for which only very partial analogies, and certainly no affiliate influences, can be traced in the West. It started in Novgorod as a movement within the white clergy to reform the church from within. After its transfer to Moscow, however, it became a *Bildungsbewegung* (educational movement), espoused mainly by the newly emerging class of educated lay functionaries serving in the administration of the Muscovite state. Their keen interest in worldly-scientific literature was greater than their interest in religious issues. However, the underlying ontological concepts of the translated literature, echoed in the original literature of the heretics, reflected a strict prophetic monotheism incompatible with central concepts of Christian dogma, such as the Trinity, incarnation, and resurrection. The heretics assigned sovereignty to reason, which was posited as the foundation of any religion, and claimed legitimacy for exploiting every possible source in the search for truth, including the Hellenic pagan Aristotle, who is compared in their literature to a prophet. The church justifiably saw this as a threat to its monopoly on determining the literary canon. Since the translated texts were of Jewish origin and displayed a pronounced monotheistic conception, which can easily and with good cause be interpreted as anti-Trinitarian, the Russian church had every reason to suspect the heretics of "Judaizing." Thus far Seebohm.

We are not sure how much these heretics were interested in Judaism as a religion, but they, or at least some of them, certainly were interested in the scientific and philosophical texts that the Jews possessed, and that at the time were completely unknown in Muscovy; nor were there any similar texts of non-Jewish provenance available anywhere in the *Slavia Orthodoxa*.

For whom, then, were Scharia's translations intended? Was it for the Judaizers in Muscovy just mentioned or for a Christian readership in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as suggested by Romanchuk in 2005? Or perhaps, as some have claimed (e.g., Florovskij 1937, 13), for "internal usage among Jews without sufficient knowledge of Hebrew"?

The "internal" hypothesis can be dismissed right away. Generally, Jews in all their places of dispersion acquired the local tongue and spoke it. There is a great distance, however, between speaking and writing. Regarding the translations of the

biblical texts in the Vilnius Codex, Altbauer (1992, 20) resolutely states: "it is highly unlikely that Jews in Belorussia in that period generally were able to read texts not in Hebrew characters."

As for the nonbiblical texts, whether on astronomy, logic, theology, or medicine, these do not belong to the kind of literature likely to have been translated for Jewish men or women undereducated in Hebrew. Such texts were known to and read by only a few highly cultivated Jewish scholars who, ipso facto, were fluent in Hebrew (and Aramaic) and consequently did not need a translation, certainly not into Ruthenian. In short, in the fifteenth century, Slavic of any variety cannot be considered a cultural language for Jews.

Were, then, the translations made for the Judaizing heretics in Muscovy or for Christians in the Grand Duchy?

While the question of the intended readership does not have a clear-cut answer, the evidence regarding the *actual* readership points to Muscovy, given that the overwhelming majority of witnesses comes from Russian copies made in Muscovy. Nevertheless, a small number of copies suggest that the translations were also read in their place of translation, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Thus, as mentioned above (p. 36), two of the translations, Immanuel bar Yakov's *Six Wings* and Sacrobosco's *On the Sphere* (items a and b), were preserved in a single Ruthenian copy, kept at the library of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of the Holy Theotokos in Chełm, a manuscript that disappeared after World War I, of which only small excerpts had been published by Sobolevskij (1903, 409–19). Of the component texts of the Slavic *Logika* only one Kyivan manuscript of item **c1** in the list is known, a Ruthenian translation of the section on Logic from al-Ghazālī's *Intentions of the Philosophers* that did not reach Muscovy (see above p. 36). All the other translated texts are preserved in Russian copies only.

The second piece of evidence substantiating the affirmation that the readership (perhaps not the primarily intended, but certainly the overwhelming majority of the actual readership) is to be looked for in Muscovy is the fact that some of the translations called "the Literature of the Judaizers" are explicitly mentioned in Archbishop Gennadij's letters with reference to the Judaizing heretics:

Thus, the *Six Wings* (item a) is mentioned (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 315–20) by Gennadij as being used by the Judaizers in a letter from 1489 CE (= 6997 from Creation, according to the Orthodox Christian calendar), where he quotes one of the heretics, Aleksey, claiming the following: "Three years will pass and the seventh millennium will end, and then, he says, we [sc., the heretics] will be needed." And Gennadij continues: "I have therefore studied the *Six Wings* and found in it heresy." The heresy consists, according to Gennadij, in the different calculation of the years elapsed since Creation, whereby the heretics "have stolen years from us"—украли у нас лет (*ukrali u nas let*)—by using the data of the *Six Wings,* according to which "only 276 complete nineteen-year cycles have elapsed since Adam," yielding, according to Gennadij, the number 5228 (actually it should be 5244; see discussion in Taube 1995b, 177). They (that is, the heretics using the

Hebrew calendar) claim that the year 7000 from Creation (the year of the expected Second Coming), was still far away—*i potomu ino u nikh eshche prishestvija Khristova net, ino to oni zhdut antikhrista* ("and therefore, according to them, there is yet no Second Coming of Christ, and thus they are awaiting the Antichrist").

Likewise, another translation, the *Logika*, corresponding to items c and d, appears (see Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 320) in a list of desiderata in the same letter from Gennadij to a colleague, enquiring whether in his monastery there might be found, among other works, a copy of the *Logika*, since, he writes, "*u jeretikov vsjo jest*" (the heretics have everything).

The firm link between the translations and the Judaizing heretics is thus clearly established. Nevertheless, the question remains: were they the originally intended readership of this corpus of translations? We do not have definite proof for that.

In 2005, Robert Romanchuk suggested that the translations were commissioned by and destined for a Kyivan readership, most likely for the princely court of the Olelkovichi. This suggestion was embraced by a number of scholars (e.g., Temchin 2017; Grishchenko 2018; Shapira 2018), but it should, as of now, be considered unproven.[20]

As for the identity of the Jewish translator, we have several clues strengthening our claim that this was the Kyivan Jew Zechariah ben Aharon (see above, p. 62ff.). For example, there is some overlapping between the list of translations from Hebrew into Slavic and the list of texts copied by Zechariah ben Aharon, and this is hardly by chance. Thus, Zechariah is the copyist of Sacrobosco's *On the Sphere* in a Vienna MS, which turns out to be (see Taube 1995a) the Hebrew version closest to its Slavic translation (item **b,** see above). One may add also that the Vienna MS copied by Zechariah is part of a codex having belonged to Rabbi Moses the Exile.

Beyond these clues, we have explicit evidence pointing to Zechariah as being the translator of the *Logika* (items **c1, c2** and **d**). The evidence comes from an overlooked manuscript, (Kyiv, Vernads′kyj Library, no. 117п, published by V. N. Peretts in 1906) where in a preface to the Psalter we find two lists of the seven sciences.[21] In one of these lists, the names of the sciences are attributed to Scharia (Схарїа), while the other list has names of Byzantine origin attributed to a certain Thomas the Greek, probably the thirteenth-century Byzantine scholar Thomas Magister. In Table 2, we added for the purpose of comparison the names of the sciences in the *Logika*.

It appears clearly from the table that the names attributed to Scharia are identical with the names found in the translation of the *Logika*.

Scharia is thus undoubtedly identified as the translator of the *Logika*, and hence, using Occam's razor, this attribution is extended to the whole corpus of late fifteenth-century translations from Hebrew (perhaps with the exception of the biblical texts, item **g.**, see above p. 59).

Now that we have a name for the translator, as well as a probable identification of the intended (though perhaps not primarily) audience and ample evidence of

TABLE 2

Scharia	Thoma Grek	*Logika*
Arithmetic (*chislennaja*)	Grammar (*gramotika*)	Arithmetic (*chislenaja*)
Geometry (*mērnaja*)	Rhetoric (*ritorika*)	Geometry (*mērnaja*)
Music (*spēvalnaja*)	Geometry (*idiomytria*)	Music (*spēvalnaja*)
Astronomy (*nebesnaja*)	Philosophy (*filosofiky*)	Astronomy (*nebesnaja*)
Politics (*svētskaja*)	Theology (*theologia*)	Politics (*svētskaja*)
Physics (*prirozhenaja*)	Astronomy (*astronomia*)	On nature (*o prirozhenii*)
Theology (*bozhestvenaja*)	Orthography (*orthografia*) (!)	Theology (*bozhestvennaja*)

the actual readership, it is time to return to the question: Why and for what purpose were the translations made at all?

In order to try and understand the tendencies and aims of these translations, we need to look at the large addition in the Slavic *Logika*, placed at the very end of Maimonides's *Logical Terminology*, just before al-Ghazālī's section on theology in his *Intentions of the philosophers*. This addition has to be ascribed to the Jewish translator. It constitutes a rationalist manifesto, reflecting views found in the writings of Maimonides's followers (see appendix 47).

The first words, "And this Wisdom was perfected by Aristotle," are from the final chapter of Maimonides's *Logical Terminology*, but the remainder (marked by italics in the English translation) is an addition by the translator.

> 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, since 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. For it is inconceivable that a prophet be incomplete in the seven wisdoms, and especially in Logic ‹and in› the Mathematical sciences. And he completed it in the aforementioned eight books, for it guides everyone in those wisdoms, and it is like a weight and a measure and like a touchstone for gold.*

The Slavic then resumes with several sentences from Maimonides's chapter 14 on the division of the sciences, until we arrive at the seventh science, theology, where another long addition appears:

> And he completed it in the aforementioned eight books, for it guides everyone in those wisdoms, *and it is [for them] like a weight and measure and like a touchstone for gold*. And art is [a term by which] sometimes is designated the theoretical science and sometimes the practical [craftsmanship]. The first among the seven wisdoms is Arithmetic, second Geometry, third Music, fourth Astronomy. 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 land and its rules. ‹ . . . › The sixth is Physics, *and the books thereof are ten, under which is also Medicine*. The

> seventh wisdom is Theology, *which is the crowning of all seven as well as the core of their purpose. For through it will the human soul survive in eternity. And this a man of any creed will admit, that he who is ignorant, cannot be with the Lord. For this is as if one were to say: 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. And these seven wisdoms are not in accordance with any [particular] religion, but rather in accordance with humanity. And a man of any creed can embrace them. As we see that in all creeds it is asserted that the jurist resembles the keeper of the treasury, whereas the wise man resembles him who adds to it. And to whichever thing one fails to add according to it(s nature), that thing perishes. Said Alexander [Aphrodisiensis]: The reasons for ignorance of the truth are four. (1) Its depth for the shallow mind, (2) the weakness of the intellect, (3) striving to overpower and dominate, (4) cherishing that to which one is accustomed. And this is a greater hindrance than any other. And these accomplishments cannot be [achieved] but in combination with the political science by shedding all vices. 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's *Logical Terminology*, seem most revealing about the ideology and perspective of the Jewish translator.

Basically, the ideas exposed here draw on the traditional sources of reference, ultimately the Bible and the Talmud, using in a skillful manner citations that have served in the past in discussions about wisdom and faith.

Thus, the acknowledgment of Aristotle as "chief of the Philosophers" is paralleled, for example, in Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* (1, 5), and the insistence that Aristotle's views accord with those of Jewish law is commonplace in the *Guide* (e.g., 2, 6). Maimonides compares Aristotle's wisdom to that of the prophets in his 1199 letter in Arabic (see Forte 2016, 51) to Samuel Ibn Tibbon, regarding the translation of the *Guide:* "Aristotle's intellect manifests the highest possible perfection except for those who, having received divine inspiration, became prophets."

The right to add to the divine law, reserved exclusively for the sage, is also stipulated by Maimonides—for example, in the introduction to his Commentary on the Mishna, in al-Ḥarizi's translation from Arabic (see appendix 48).

> For there is no Torah given after the first prophet [sc., Moses] and one must not add to or subtract from it, as it is said [Deuteronomy 30:12] "it is not in heaven," and God has not allowed us to learn [the Law] from the prophets, but [only] from the sages, masters of logical argumentation and knowledge.

The statement associating stagnation with demise—"And to whichever thing one fails to add according to it[s nature], that thing perishes"—derives from the Babylonian Talmud (see appendix 49).

The universality of wisdom is a frequent theme in the writings of the Maimonideans. Thus, Shem Tob Ibn Falaquera, the thirteenth-century follower of Maimonides, in his *Book of Grades* (Venetianer, 75), remarks (see appendix 50):

> For all nations have a part in the Wisdoms, and they are not the particular [property] of any given nation.

The notion that scientific wisdom was in the possession of the ancient sages of Israel and was lost with the exile of the Jews appears in the *Guide of the Perplexed* (1, 71), and is also mentioned in Falaquera: "Undoubtedly Solomon of blessed memory composed books in the Wisdom of Nature and Divinity, only that these books were lost in exile" (*Book of Grades*, ed. Venetianer, p. 12).

The incompatibility of ignorance with true worship of God is stipulated by Falaquera (see appendix 51).

> And Plato said that no one can worship God in true manner, except for a prophet or a sage full of wisdom.

The four reasons of discord attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias appear twice in Maimonides's writings: once in chapter 13 of his *Book on Asthma*, interpolated into the Slavic translation of the *Secret of Secrets*, as the reasons for the ignorance of truth (see appendix 52), and once in Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* (1, 31) as the reasons of disagreement (translation from the Judaeo-Arabic by S. Pines):

> Alexander of Aphrodisias says that there are three causes of disagreement about things. One of them is love of domination and love of strife, both of which turn man aside from the apprehension of truth as it is. The second cause is the subtlety and the obscurity of the object of apprehension in itself and the difficulty of apprehending it. And the third cause is the ignorance of him who apprehends and his inability to grasp things that it is possible to apprehend. That is what Alexander mentioned. However, in our times there is a fourth cause that he did not mention because it did not exist among them. It is habit and upbringing. For man has in his nature a love of, and an inclination for, that to which he is habituated. (Maimonides 1963, 66)

The additions by the translator of the *Logika* in the afterword thus evidently represent an ideological manifesto of a progressive and universalist, indeed cosmopolitan, nature. These ideas are typical of the Jewish rationalists, disciples and followers of Maimonides, who for three centuries had been waging a hopeless, retreating battle against fundamentalist and mystical tendencies that were gaining ground in mainstream Judaism, marginalizing and delegitimizing rationalism as alien to orthodox Jewish thought. Intended for a Christian readership, these ideas are meant to present a progressive, attractive image of Judaism, an image hardly representative of Judaism at that time and place.

What could be the motivation on the part of these Jews for undertaking such an enterprise of translations? Why would a Jew from the Great Duchy of Lithuania take on himself the difficult task of translating the heavily arabicized Hebrew versions of al-Ghazālī and Maimonides into Ruthenian? Why would he go to such lengths in order to disguise the Arabic origin of many of these works and misrepresent the Islamic theologian Abu Ḥamid al-Ghazālī as Aviasaf? Money? Fame?

Hardly, if we were to extrapolate evidence from any other time and place about one's chances of becoming rich and famous, or even of earning a decent living by translating philosophical texts.

The idea that a supposedly rationalist Jew such as Zechariah ben Aharon from Kyiv, the erudite annotator of philosophical texts, would collaborate with Christians thirsty for wisdom out of sheerly altruistic motives, for the promotion of science and knowledge in a spirit of solidarity between freethinkers, sounds far-fetched, though it cannot be absolutely excluded. That is actually what I thought when I started working on these translations some thirty years ago, but I was never satisfied with this hypothesis. The answer, definitely, has to be sought elsewhere.

The key to the answer could be the approaching year 1492 CE, since both Orthodox Christians and some Jews were expecting the End of Times to come about at close to that time.

The movement of the Judaizers in Muscovy, the most noticeable (though perhaps not the primarily targeted) readership for this corpus of scientific texts, thrived in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, a time of high excitement and of eschatological fervor, as the Muscovites were expecting the world to end on September 1 of the year 7000 from Creation, which, according to the Christian Orthodox calendar, corresponds to 1492 CE. Indeed, the Russian church authorities had a real Y7K problem on their hands, given that the Paschal Tables, the cycle of mobile feasts in the calendar that have to be calculated every year on the basis of the date of Easter, were not carried beyond 1492, since, with the Second Coming and the end of the world expected in that year, the End of Time would come about as well.

The archbishop of Novgorod Gennadij relates in his letters, written between 1487 and 1490 (Kazakova and Lurie 1955, 309–20), that the heretics were mocking the Orthodox believers, using the tables in Immanuel bar Yakov's *Six Wings* to the effect that according to the Jewish calendar only 5228 years have elapsed since Creation (see above p. 67), and the end was not to be expected any time soon. Some of them, according to Gennadij, even dared to challenge their opponents and claim that the Grand-Prince of Moscow was on their side, claims which, at that time, were apparently correct.

Thus, Gennadij (see appendix 53) writes in 1490 to Zosima, metropolitan of Moscow, who was deposed in 1494 after being accused of secretly sympathizing with the heretics, as follows:

> A newly baptized Jew has arrived here [i.e., in Novgorod], by the name of Daniel, presently a Christian, and told me at the table, in front of everyone: "I set out for Moscow from Kyiv, and then," he says, "the Jews began to insult me": "You dog, they say, where are you headed for? The great prince in Moscow, they say, has swept all the churches out of the city."

The final detail of the account turned out not to be exact (some wooden churches had indeed been moved out of the city walls to prevent fires), but the great prince

Ivan III did protect his chief diplomat Fedor Kuritsyn, head of the Moscow heretics, even as the other heretics were being tried and punished.

Are we, then, in this crucial period of high eschatological fever, as the Moscow heretics, apparently protected by the grand prince, seemed to be gaining the upper hand by offering a Jewish-based alternative to the Orthodox Christian calendar and casting doubts on the imminency of the Second Coming, actually looking at an attempt to proselytize Muscovy from the top down? An attempt that almost succeeded? Possibly yes. In order to supply some corroboration for this hypothesis we have to return to R. Moses the Exile and his views on proselytes.

There is a long-standing myth that Jews shy away from proselytizing,[22] but in our case we seem to have some evidence to the contrary. I am indebted for the lead toward that evidence to the late Michael Schneider, who in 1999 delivered a talk in Jerusalem about R. Moses and the Judaizers, a talk that remained unpublished until 2014.

Following a hint by Shmuel Ettinger, who wondered (1961, 236n39), "Perhaps it is no coincidence that Jewish 'calculators of the end' [*meḥashvej ha-qitsin*] also predicted the End for the year 252 [i.e., 5252 from Creation = 1492 CE]," Schneider (2014) pointed to the influential Kyivan figure of R. Moses the Exile and his views on the coming of the Messiah—the *Geʾulah* (Redemption)—as well as on the importance of proselytes for bringing it about.

These views, expressed in his work *Shoshan sodot*, derive from a cabalistic work written in Byzantium in the 14th century—*Sēfer ha-qanah*. In that work, too, the Redemption (*Geula*) is predicted for 1490, or 1492, depending on whether one counts the numerical value of the preposition *be-* in the word *beron*—referring to the famous verse in the book of Job (38:7): "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (*beron jaḥad kokhvēj boker va-jariʿu kol bnēj elohim*). Without the initial *be-* (with), the Hebrew characters of the first word, ברן (*beron*), have a numerical value of 250, taken as a reference to the year 5250 (= 1490 CE), whereas adding the preposition would yield 5252 (= 1492 CE). Here is the relevant passage from *Sēfer ha-qanah* (see appendix 54).

> And in the twilight of the seventh millennium the world will stop and the coming of the Messiah [is] when 5250 [years] have elapsed, which is half of the five-hundred-year reign of the Sefirah of Keter, then will the Messiah come, that is "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And that man [i.e., Jesus] called the subjugation of the nations under the hand of Israel the Destruction of the World for he was afraid to announce their demise lest they persecute him.

However, since the writing of *Shoshan sodot* took R. Moses many years and was achieved only in 1509, long after the expected date of redemption, he no longer quotes the exact date of 5250 as in *Sēfer ha-qanah*, but allows some latitude, reaffirming nevertheless that the Redemption shall come sometime in the five hundred years

of the reign of *Sefirat keter*, which began in the year 5000 from creation [= 1240 CE]—that is, at some unspecified date between 1240 and 1740 CE (see appendix 55).

> And here we are today in the [year] 269 of the sixth millennium [= 5269 (= 1509 CE)] in the five hundred years of [the *sefirah* of] *Keter* during the reign of which the Redeemer will come. For *gaʾal* [redeem] in *aʺtbaʺsh* [cipher mapping the alphabet to its reverse] is *keter*.

Rabbi Moses also refers in a hint to the passage in *Sēfer ha-qanah* asserting that Jesus, [“that man” (*oto ha-ʾish*)], knew this prediction, and that when he announced the end of the world—doomsday—he was referring to the demise of the nations and their subjugation to Israel, but he was afraid to say so, lest he be persecuted.

In this context, R. Moses quotes another passage going back to the ninth-century Midrash Tanhuma, lekh lekha 6, where it is said that proselytes are of a higher value than those born Jewish, adding the reason “since the proselyte shed his garment of impurity and donned a skin of purity,” while the Jews, who were present at Mount Sinai, made the golden calf and thus “shed the garment of God’s law and donned a skin of impurity.”

Rabbi Moses adds the kabbalistic explanation that the proselytes are essential for the Geulah, since those who made the golden calf had “destroyed the saplings” (*qitsetsu ba-neṭiʿot*)—a mystical metaphor for disturbing the harmony of creation, while the proselytes would bring about “the union of Ecclesia Israel with its part-ner” (*ḥibbur kneset israʾel be zugo*)—that is, they would enable the mystical union necessary for the redemption (see appendix 56).

> The secret of the Midrash that says: proselytes at this time are greater than the Isra-elites who stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. And this is a strange statement that the mind refuses to accept, that somebody who indulged in idolatry all his life will now, once he turned into a Jew, be preferable to an Israelite who got to perceive by voice the giving of the Torah. And it seems that the reason lies in the following secret: since those who had stood at Mount Sinai, they themselves made the [golden] calf “While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance” [Song of Songs 1:12] they polluted and destroyed the saplings and were soiled with impurity, whereas the proselyte has shed off his garment of impurity and brought about ‘the union of Ecclesia Israel with its partner.

This testimony about the views of the Kyivan Jewish leader and scholar R. Moses the Exile seems to point to a theological motive for a Jewish “mission to the Slavs,” in the context of the eschatological fervor around the year 1492. Here, I suggest, lies the missing link connecting the Muscovite heretics with the Ruthenian trans-lations of scientific texts from Hebrew.

The scenario I propose is a hypothesis, and one hard to prove in the present state of the evidence, but it offers an explanation, the only plausible explana-tion in my view, for the nature of the chosen corpus of translations and for the

modifications made in them: Zechariah, a learned Jew, versed in scholarly and scientific literature, translated, at the instigation of R. Moses the Exile, a variety of works of rationalist tenor for Slavs eager to gain access to such scholarly treasures.

He was careful to mix these purely scientific rationalist works with more practical works of applied science that were quite removed from the rationalism of the Maimonidean type, in order to enhance the attractiveness of the mixture. Thus, the *Secret of Secrets* has medical and magicomedical elements such as a "regimen of health," a section on the curative and talismanic properties of precious stones, onomantic tables, and so on.

As pointed out by Seebohm (1977, 216), the great authority of all these writings is Aristotle, and specifically not the original Greek Aristotle referred to by the humanists, but the Aristotle of Islamic scholastics—that is, a figure under whose ample cloak enter, also in the Kyivan translated literature, Neoplatonic and Platonic ideas in the domains of theology and ethics, such as Neopythagorean numerology, natural magic, astrology, and alchemy. A positive view of astrology and other relics of this kind can hardly be reconciled with the rationalism and scientism of a thinker such as Maimonides.

It seems, therefore, that the true agenda of the Jews involved in the translation movement might well have been to attract their Slavic readers to Judaism, for mystical motives that they were very careful to hide from the recipients of the translations.

I must admit that I feel somewhat uncomfortable in proposing the possibility of a "Jewish plot" to proselytize the Muscovite state from the top down, since I may thereby have been supplying ammunition to people searching for the historical antecedents of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and unwillingly find myself in the company of some of the most venomous antisemitic Russian historians.

Some of these historians have tried to minimize the possible impact of the heretical movement and the "Literature of the Judaizers," either by discarding the translated texts as "obsolete pseudo-science" (e.g., Golenishchev-Kutuzov 1963) or by denying any link between the translations and the heresy (e.g., Lurie in Kazakova and Lurie 1955),[23] while nationalistic figures in the post-Soviet Russian political and social domain usually linked to the church, accorded great importance to the Jewish danger of the distant past, leaving no doubts about the contemporary analogies that may be drawn from this curious episode, as can be seen in postings from 2004 and 2005 celebrating the five-hundred-year anniversary of the defeat of the Judaizers (see appendix 57).