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A Good Book is an Old Book?

Hebrew Manuscripts and Prints in 16th-Century Christian Book Collections

1 Introduction

With the rise of humanism in Renaissance Europe, the desire to access biblical truth directly through the original Hebrew and to reach even beyond the bible to humanity's primordial wisdom concealed in Jewish mystical traditions stimulated Christian interest in the Hebrew language and Jewish books. Already in the 15th century, Christian scholars in Europe were able to draw together collections of Hebrew manuscripts of considerable size, which allowed them to pursue Hebraic studies independently from Jews.[1]

These collecting trends went rapidly beyond the narrow scholarly circles of those who mastered the Hebrew language and became a norm that every learned man was expected to follow, even if he could neither read nor understand Hebrew texts. This led to the rise of noblemen's collections of Hebraica. By owning Hebraica, aristocrats wanted to enhance the prestige of their libraries and sustain their own status as belonging to the learned elite.[2] Formed for display rather than for reading, noble Hebraica collections usually followed the lead of learned Hebraists. As in the case of Latin and Greek books, scholars provided a model for collecting Hebraica and assisted their noble patrons in finding and obtaining Hebrew texts.[3]

While Christian Hebraists and noble collectors of Hebrew books first and foremost wanted texts, whether printed or not, other factors may have been as important as content. In what follows, this article seeks to elucidate the place of Hebrew manuscript books in contrast to that of Hebrew printed books in Christian Hebraica collec-

1 For an overview of the Hebraica collections of that time, see Steimann 2020, 35–52.

2 On Hebraic libraries of the nobility, see, for example, Burnett 2012, 171–174.

3 Cf. Pettegree 2015, 74.

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tions by examining two libraries of the brothers Hans Jakob Fugger (1516–1575) and Ulrich Fugger (1526–1584), Augsburg patricians and bankers.[4]

Active in the middle of the 16th century when the two modes of book production had coexisted side by side already for some time, Hans Jakob and Ulrich Fugger collected manuscripts and prints without distinction, as to them they were both vehicles for texts. Their libraries do not reveal any obvious manuscript/print divide, neither in terms of collecting preferences nor in the modes of the books' preservation. Manuscripts and printed texts were mixed on the shelves of Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's libraries.[5] They were all bound by the same binders in the same style so that the outside of the volumes did not indicate what was contained inside, a manuscript or a printed book.[6] However, a closer look at Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's Hebraica complicates this picture. By reconstructing the Hebraica collecting practices of Hans Jakob and Ulrich in their context—the textual scope of the collections and the books as objects, the circumstances and channels of collecting, practical limitations, and the roles of the various actors and networks involved—it is possible to get a deeper insight into the different values and cultural connotations associated with each of the media of book production in the post-incunabula period. It must be emphasized, however, that the picture shown here on the basis of Hebrew book collecting practices would likely have been different if detailed analysis of collecting Latin, Greek, and other books had also been taken into account; such an analysis and comparison is a subject for further research.

2 Manuscripts versus Printed Books in Christian Hebraica Collections

The spread of printing in early modern Europe had major effects on culture and society, especially its reading and book collecting practices. Hebrew printing expanded rapidly, and during the 16th century more than 2672 titles were produced.[7] Printing greatly impacted the composition of Jewish book collections already in the post-incunabula period, and by the end of the 16th century Jewish libraries were mostly com-

4 About the Fugger family, see for example, Kluger 2013.

5 Generally speaking, it was not before the 17th century that manuscript and printed volumes came to be regarded as two distinct categories, shelved separately in libraries (cf. McKitterick 2018, 47). Before the medium took priority over content, the books were classified according to subject and language (for Hans Jakob Fugger's classification system, see Hartig 1917, 223–240).

6 For the bindings of Hans Jakob's books, see Hartig 1917, 235–240; for the Hebrew volumes, see Steimann 2017, 1255 n. 113. Although Ulrich's books were later rebound (Mittler 1986, 463), according to the practice of the time it is unlikely that their original bindings differed on manuscripts and printed books.

7 Cf. Heller 2004, xiii.

posed of printed editions.[8] As the main clientele of Hebrew printing presses was Jewish, the kind of literature that was put into print in the first half of the 16th century was tailored to the religious needs and reading priorities of the Jewish communities. By producing bibles and the Talmud, rabbinic commentaries, and halakhic and liturgical texts, which served Jews on a daily basis, the printers could ensure that the books would sell well.[9]

Christians were interested in another sort of literature, however. Rather than bible-related books, which were the focus of earlier Hebraica collectors, Hebrew works on philosophy, science, and especially Kabbalah provided the main stimulus for collecting Hebraica in the Fuggers' time.[10] During the first half of the 16th century, these kinds of texts mostly remained unprinted, not only because of the lower demand among Jews but also because of Jewish sensitivities involved in printing esoteric matters.[11] As a result, Christian Hebraica collectors of the time could profit from the existing printed production in Hebrew only to a limited extent and they still largely depended on the old medium of manuscripts.[12]

Members of a wealthy family of bankers, Hans Jakob and Ulrich Fugger patronized scholarship from a young age, supported authors and printers financially, and collected books with devotion.[13] Books in the three biblical languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, which humanists considered the most important languages of scholarship, naturally occupied the central place in their collections. Although Hans Jakob and Ulrich could not read Hebrew, they appreciated knowledge contained in Hebrew books in a wider sense and wanted to preserve this knowledge in their libraries.[14]

Hans Jakob and Ulrich loved books passionately and spent a great deal of money on them, to the point that their bibliophilic passion caused them to go through a financial crisis. As a result of the economic difficulties and his conversion to Protestantism in 1564, Ulrich moved to Protestant Heidelberg. Deposited in the Palatine Library in the *Heiliggeistkirche*, his book collection became the property of the Palatine Library

8 Cf. Hacker/Shear 2011, 2–4.

9 Cf. Baruchson 1994, 19–26. On the contents of Jewish libraries in Italy, see also Bonfil 1989, 270–323.

10 For example, see Campanini 2004, 135–241; Scholem 1997, 17–51.

11 Cf. Idel 2014, 85–96; Nielsen 2011, 72–75. For the debate within the Jewish community about whether or not to print books of Kabbalah, see Tishbi 1967–1968, 134–135, 138–139.

12 Such was the book collection of the Orientalist scholar Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter, who was particularly interested in kabbalistic works. Out of 185 Hebrew volumes in his library, which his heirs sold *en bloc* to Duke Albrecht V in 1558, only 53 were printed editions (Molière 2021, 11–14). See also the search for kabbalistic manuscripts by Widmanstetter's contemporary and colleague, Andreas Masius, and his library (Dunkelgrün 2010–2011, 197–252).

13 On the Fugger family, see Häberlein 2012.

14 It is unknown whether the two brothers cooperated with each other on the acquisition of books. There is no direct evidence that they sold each other books or acquired books from the same source. It is also possible that the competitive character of their book collecting prevented them from sharing books with each other.

after his death in 1584.[15] According to the inventory of Ulrich's books compiled in Heidelberg in 1571, his library contained around 8 200 printed books and ca. 1 300 manuscripts.[16] Among the ca. 175 volumes of Hebrew texts that Ulrich owned however, there were no printed books.[17]

Hans Jakob, for his part, had to sell his book collection in 1571 *en bloc* to Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria-Munich for his *Hofbibliothek* ('court library') in Munich. At the moment of the sale, his collection included around 10 000 printed volumes and more than 1 000 manuscripts.[18] Nonetheless, the number of Hebrew printed books was rather insignificant in Hans Jakob's library: Out of 100 volumes of Hebraica, only 25 were printed editions.[19] These were mainly biblical and Talmudic commentaries and halakhic works produced between 1519 and 1552. Many of them derived from the Venetian Hebrew press of Daniel Bomberg.[20]

As these numbers show, the scope of printed books in a collection largely depended on the printed outputs in a given language. Naturally, Latin and German books were printed in greater numbers and covered a wider range of subjects and literary genres than those in Hebrew. In contrast to Hebrew prints, their scope in Fugger's libraries was therefore much larger than that of manuscripts.[21]

3 A Universal Library

Adding a Hebrew section to noble book collections was, of course, not a new idea. Already in the 15th century, aristocrats and princes were interested in Hebrew books. They acquired old and valuable Hebrew codices and commissioned skilled scribes to produce luxurious copies. The best examples of this phenomenon are manuscripts copied for the private library of the Medici in Florence by Isaac ben Obadiah, a Jewish convert to Christianity.[22] Another example is the library of the Duke of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro that contained around 900 manuscripts in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. It was regarding this library that the leading Florentine bookseller and Federico's biographer, Vespasiano da Bisticci, wrote around 1482: *In quella libraria i libri tutti sono belli in superlativo grado, tutti iscritti a penna, e non ve n'è ignuno a stampa, che se ne sarebbe vergognato* ('In this library all the books are superlatively good, and written with the pen, and had there been one printed volume it would have been

15 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 17.
16 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1921 (Mittler 1986, 376–377). The inventory can be viewed online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.lat.1921 (accessed 24/02/2022).
17 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 86–96.
18 Cf. Hartig 1917, 135–137; Jansen 2019, 121.
19 Cf. Hartig 1917, 252.
20 For the production of Bomberg's printing press, see Haberman 1980.
21 For printing outputs of European printing presses, see Pettegree 2015, 76.
22 Cf. Pasternak 2009, 156–164.

ashamed in such company').[23] Federico da Montefeltro's library included 82 Hebrew codices, at least half of which derived from the book collection of the wealthy merchant Menaḥem ben Aharon Volterra, seized by Federico upon the sacking of the city of Volterra in 1472.[24]

If many 15th-century noble book collectors regarded printed production as a cheaper surrogate that imitated manuscripts,[25] in the Fuggers' time the printed book already established itself as an artifact in its own right and was interchangeable with manuscripts. Noble book collectors were no longer fixed on the books' beauty and expensive materials but rather on the textual content of the library that had to conform to the standards of humanist scholarship. In an attempt to create a comprehensive library that would encompass all branches of science and humanities, Hans Jakob and Ulrich acquired books through a network of agents of the Fugger firm, scholars and experts, who were responsible for finding new editions printed in various parts of Europe and manuscript texts that were not yet printed.[26] With regard to Hebraica, these were professional Hebraists who advised Hans Jakob and Ulrich on which Hebrew books to obtain and where to find them as well as recommended professional scribes to make new copies if a manuscript of a given text was not available for sale.

The scholar who apparently provided the intellectual agenda for Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's book collecting was the Swiss physician, naturalist, and bibliographer Conrad Gesner. In 1545, Hans Jakob Fugger invited him to tutor his children and take responsibility for his library. Although Gesner could not accept the invitation, he enjoyed the patronage of both Hans Jakob and Ulrich in the following years.[27] Gesner's ideas about books and libraries possibly provided the basis for Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's universal collection of knowledge assembled in one place. In his bibliographical work *Bibliotheca universalis* ('The Universal Library'), published in 1545, Gesner codified in alphabetical order almost all the authors known at the time (ca. 3 000 authors) along with the works they had written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (ca. 10 000 works) and gave printing details wherever these were applicable. A second part, a topical index to the work, the *Pandectae*, appeared in 1548.[28]

According to Gesner, his goal was to bring together a *Bibliotheca Vniversalis, siue Catalogus omnium scriptorum locupletissimus, in tribus linguis, Latina, Graeca, & Hebraica: extantium & non extantiu[m], ueterum & recentiorum in hunc usque diem, doctorum & indoctorum, publicatorum & in Bibliothecis latentium* ('Universal library or most substantial catalogue of all writers in the three languages, Latin, Greek, and

23 Bisticci/Frati 1892, vol. 1, 302; trans. in Bisticci/George/Waters 1997, 104.
24 Cf. Proverbio 2007, 50–61.
25 Cf. McKitterick 2003, 30.
26 For agents and scholars involved in Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's book collecting activities, see Lehmann 1956, vol. 1, 41–92.
27 Cf. Maasen 1922, 83 n. 5 and Delisle 2008, 117 respectively.
28 See, for example, Blair 2010, 56; Wright 2014, 25–26.

Hebrew: extant and not, ancient and recent, learned and not, published and hidden in libraries').[29] Realizing the loss of great libraries of the past, Gesner saw in his work a remedy that could prevent any further loss of knowledge. Together with printing, which offered further protection of texts through the production of large numbers of copies, the *Bibliotheca universalis* was supposed to preserve information about the texts for future generations.[30]

However, Gesner did not conceive of his library, documented on the pages of the *Bibliotheca*, as a virtual entity; rather, he provided instructions on how to create a real universal library: *Uiam aperui, & magna[m] alijs occasione[m] praebui, qua facile diuites aut principes uiri Bibliothecas instituant, libris ad posteritatem transmittendis necessarias* ("I have opened a way and given a great occasion to others, by which the wealthy and the princes can establish libraries, which are necessary for transmitting books to posterity").[31] Regardless of whether or not Gesner had Hans Jakob and Ulrich Fugger, who had the means to bring such a project to life, in mind, they apparently used the *Bibliotheca* as a model to form their ideas of the universal library and also possibly as a practical guide for specific works to acquire.[32]

While the *Bibliotheca* and its associated topical index were undoubtedly useful for information about Latin and Greek literature, the practical service Gesner's universal library could provide with regard to Hebraica was rather limited.[33] The *Bibliotheca* describes merely a small number of Hebrew works, most of which were printed editions arranged in the alphabetical order of their authors. Among Gesner's sources were catalogues of humanist private libraries and printing shops. Included in Gesner's *Pandectae* was the list of 75 printed Hebrew books that were found in the shop of Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1542.[34] The list contains not only the books printed by Bomberg's press but also editions published in other cities, which could be acquired in Bomberg's shop as well. Nevertheless, most of the Hebrew works Gesner mentioned were printed editions of Jewish texts reworked by his fellow humanists, which he could easily find in his surroundings.[35] By contrast, genuine Jewish works that were found only in manuscripts went largely unmentioned in the *Bibliotheca*.

Gesner was well aware of the fact that the list of Hebraica he provided was by no means exhaustive and addressed this problem in the *Pandectae*:

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29 Gessner, *Bibliotheca universalis*, title page. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own.

30 Cf. Blair 2017, 7–12.

31 Gessner, *Bibliotheca universalis*, fol. *3r (quote and trans. in Blair 2017, 9–10).

32 Hans Jakob's nephew, Philip Eduard Fugger, had indeed used Gesner's catalogue as a guide for book acquisition and marked in its margins the books he owned (Jansen 2019, 119 n. 20). See also Burnett 2012, 144–145.

33 See Burnett 2012, 140–144.

34 Cf. Gessner, *Pandectarum*, fols. 41v–42v, published in Freimann 1906, 38–42.

35 For an overview of the Hebrew works mentioned in the *Pandectae*, see Sabba 2018, 105–149.

> *Quandoquidem pauci Hebraicae & confinium linguaru[m] libri extant, si Graecorum & Latinorum multitudini comparentur (quanquam non dubito quin boni aliqui codices in his linguis nondum publicati lateant, cu[m] apud nostros, tum Iudaeos & alios eius linguae peritos in diuersis partibus orbis terrarum) pauciores autem publicantur, quoniam rari admodum studiosi his linguis incumbunt: uisum est rem gratam fore bibliothecam structuris librorum Hebraicorum & similium.*[36]
>
> Since there are few books of Hebrew and related languages, if they are compared to the multitude of Greek and Latin [books] (although I do not doubt that some good codices in these languages remain unpublished, as it is with us, so too with Jews and others knowledgeable in their language in diverse parts of the world), and fewer [still] are published, since very few students devote themselves to these languages [Hebrew, Aramaic, etc.]: it seems good for there to be a library of Hebrew and similar books.

Gesner's call to action possibly had an actual effect on Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's collecting, as the timing of their acquisitions of Hebraica shows. Hebrew codices first entered Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's libraries in 1548, around the time when the *Pandectae* was published. In 1548, Hans Jakob began to employ Jewish scribes in Venice to produce Hebrew codices for him.[37] The Jewish scribes worked for him until 1552 and copied 55 Hebrew manuscripts that became the core of Hans Jakob's Hebraica collection. The year 1548 was also apparently the time when Ulrich Fugger acquired his first volumes of Hebraica: a Cretan group of 156 Hebrew manuscripts. It is therefore possible that specifically Gesner's *Bibliotheca universalis* served as a strong catalyst for Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's collecting of Hebrew books.

4 Creating Noble Hebraica Collections

For Christian Hebraica collectors, Venice was the main location to acquire Hebrew books. The city was the European capital of Hebrew printing, thanks above all to the activity of Daniel Bomberg, who was assisted by noted Jewish scholars such as Elias Levita and Jacob ben Hayyim Adoniyah in the ambitious plan of printing the most important Hebrew texts. Printing houses not only produced and traded printed books but were also the place where many older manuscripts circulated, while Bomberg's co-workers contributed much to the flow of books and manuscripts through scholarly networks, to which they themselves belonged. Seekers of Hebraica often used their assistance in finding sought out Hebrew manuscripts to acquire or to copy from Christian and Jewish libraries in Venice.

One such scholar who had unlimited access to manuscripts and printed books and provided his service to many Hebraists and book collectors was Cornelius Adel-

36 Gessner, *Pandectarum*, fol. 40r. Gesner's own library contained just a few Hebrew volumes (Leu/Keller/Weidmann 2018, 19).

37 The earliest codex, BSB, Chm 40, was copied in March 1548 (cf. Cohen-Mushlin 2020, 180–184).

kind, the master printer and corrector of Bomberg's Hebrew press.[38] Through his mediation, Hans Jakob Fugger could build up significant Hebraica collections within a short span of time by commissioning new copies. Between 1548 and 1552, Adelkind was recruiting Jewish scribes in Venice to copy 55 Hebrew codices containing ca. 270 individual treatises for Hans Jakob. The scribes worked in a kind of a scribal workshop, in a manner comparable to that of contemporary printing presses.[39]

The majority of the copied codices contain kabbalistic treatises (some are different redactions of the same texts), suggesting that Hans Jakob's initial stimulus for collecting Hebraica came from literature on Kabbalah. Additionally, the codices copied in Venice contain works on philosophy, science, and medicine, including many treatises that were often found in the Hebraica collections of professional Hebraists. Most of the copied works did not appear in print at the time. Yet, two treatises may have been copied from printed editions or from manuscripts that were based on a print copy. These are Abraham ibn Ezra's grammatical work *Safah berurah* ('The Clear Language'), which repeats verbatim the colophon of the Constantinople edition of this work (1530), and Judah Messer Leon's work on Hebrew rhetoric, *Nofet tzufim* ('The Honeycomb's Flow'), which contains the colophon of the Mantua edition (ca. 1474).[40]

Nevertheless, many manuscripts produced for Hans Jakob in Venice were apparently copied from manuscripts that were found in a famous Hebraica collection of the cardinal of Aquileia, Domenico Grimani. Grimani bequeathed his book collection to the Venetian convent of Sant'Antonio in Castello, and it had been preserved in the convent after Grimani's death in 1523.[41] According to his last will and testament, the monks were forbidden to sell his books. This may have been the reason why Hans Jakob could not acquire this collection *en bloc* but had to commission copies from it, which was undoubtedly a time consuming and possibly more expensive enterprise.

Grimani's book collection included some 123 Hebrew volumes that he acquired *en bloc* in 1498, four years after the death of their former owner, the Florentine noble and humanist Pico della Mirandola.[42] In the following years, Grimani expanded the number of Hebraica volumes he owned to 193 manuscripts and printed books.[43] Grimani's book collection was well known to other humanist scholars who visited the library in

38 Cf. Amram 1909, 146–190, 209–213. On Adelkind and his apparent conversion to Christianity, see Frojmovic 2020, 121–130.

39 Cf. Steimann 2017, 1240–1246.

40 BSB, Chm 47, fol. 421v and BSB, Chm 55, fol. 457r respectively (Cohen-Mushlin 2020, 203–208 and 230–233); see also Steimann 2017, 1249–1251.

41 Cf. Freudenberger 1936, 15–45.

42 On Pico's library and its inventories, see Kibre 1936. A reconstruction of Sant'Antonio in Castello's Hebrew books, based on additional documents, was presented by Michela Andreatta ("Ghostly Library: For a Reconstruction of the Hebrew Books of Sant'Antonio di Castello in Venice") during the conference held in Münster, *The Jewish Book 1400–1600: From Production to Reception*, June 24–27, 2019 (unpublished).

43 Cf. Tamani 1997, 497; Tamani 1995, 8.

Sant'Antonio in Castello, and they circulated copies of its catalogues.[44] Possibly in this way, Hans Jakob and his agents could get an idea of the scope of Hebraica found there.

At least four Hebrew manuscripts produced for Hans Jakob were evidently copied from Pico-Grimani's manuscript exemplars.[45] Whether Hans Jakob's Jewish scribes in Venice copied more Hebrew codices from Pico-Grimani collection is unknown, as the library of Sant'Antonio in Castello burned down in 1687. However, on the basis of the extant book inventories of the libraries of Pico and Grimani and other evidence, it seems that more than half of the Hebrew codices copied for Hans Jakob in Venice could have been based on Pico-Grimani's exemplars.[46]

Apparently, the copies could not replace the originals. Therefore, when the opportunity presented itself around 1553,[47] Hans Jakob acquired 11 of Grimani's manuscripts (three of which derived from Pico's collection) from the library of Sant'Antonio in Castello, including those which had been copied for him by the Jewish scribes in 1549–1551.[48] The 11 manuscripts acquired by Hans Jakob, together with some codices preserved today in Udine and Leiden,[49] are all that has survived from Pico's and Grimani's book collections.

Ulrich Fugger was more fortunate in obtaining a significant collection of Hebraica *en bloc*. In addition to 13 Hebrew codices that derived from the library of Giannozzo Manetti, a diplomat and humanist scholar from Florence,[50] and a number of Ashkenazi manuscripts of unknown provenance, the earliest and largest segment of Ulrich's Hebraica—around 156 Hebrew manuscripts—originated from Crete. This group of Cretan Hebrew codices was obtained in Candia (modern-day Iraklio) by an anonymous Christian from the members of the local Jewish community between 1541 and 1543.[51]

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44 As Gesner mentioned in his working copy of the *Bibliotheca*, he also visited the library of Sant'Antonio in Castello in 1543 and obtained a copy of the catalogue of the Greek manuscripts found there (Sabba 2018, 108).

45 Fugger's BSB, Chm 41 is copied from Grimani's BSB, Chm 266; Fugger's BSB, Chm 53 is copied from Grimani's BSB, Chm 209; Fugger's BSB, Chm 56 is copied from Grimani's BSB, Chm 341 and BSB, Chm 357; Fugger's BSB, Chm 57 is copied from Grimani's BSB, Chm 121 and BSB, Chm 357 (Steimann 2017, 1252–1254). For description of Hans Jakob's copies, see Cohen-Mushlin 2020, 184–187, 222–226, 233–242. respectively.

46 Cf. Steimann 2017, 1256–1261.

47 In Hans Jakob's library, the Hebrew volumes were arranged chronologically, corresponding to the progression in the dates of the book acquisitions. The shelf marks imprinted on the bindings reflect when the volumes were produced for or acquired by Hans Jakob and integrated into his library (cf. Steimann 2017, 1255).

48 BSB, Chm 79; BSB, Chm 80; BSB, Chm 121; BSB, Chm 209; BSB, Chm 223; BSB, Chm 266; BSB, Chm 267; BSB, Chm 268; BSB, Chm 278; BSB, Chm 341; BSB, Chm 357 (Tamani 1995, 13). For description of Grimani's codices, see Steinschneider 1895, 50, 76, 90–92, 101, 130–131, 137, 184–187, 200–202.

49 Cf. Tamani 1971, 1–25 and Heide 1977, 6–7, 63–64 respectively.

50 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 44–47. Manetti's Hebraica is also discussed in Pasternak 2018, 101–110.

51 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 29–44. The Cretan Hebrew manuscripts feature a series of Hebrew numbers from 1 (א) to 175 (קעה) written at the beginning of each codex that suggest at least 175 volumes must have

Some Jewish sellers of the manuscripts belonged to the local elite: At least 20 manuscripts, for example, were obtained from Elijah Capsali, who was then the head of the Candiote Jewish community.[52]

Although the anonymous purchaser of the manuscripts in Candia inscribed the acquired volumes with his acquisition note, nothing is known about his identity. Where the Cretan manuscripts were before they were acquired by Ulrich is also unknown. The book inventory compiled by Ulrich's librarian in Augsburg, Martin Gerstmann, contains the earliest evidence of the Cretan Hebraica in Ulrich's library.[53] Gerstmann compiled the inventories of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin manuscripts around the same time. He indicated the dates 1553 and 1555 at the beginning of the Greek and Latin sections respectively.[54] The Hebrew section that appears in between them must have been written between these years. The Hebrew section is incomplete and contains only 154 Candiote manuscripts.[55]

There may have been an earlier inventory of Ulrich's library that included Hebrew manuscripts, however. Umberto Cassuto suggested the existence of an earlier inventory on the basis of Gerstmann's note regarding a Cretan Hebrew codex with kabbalistic treatises in his inventory. Next to it, Gerstmann wrote, *Liber Cabalistarum. Descriptus Rhodi ante annos 155* ('A kabbalistic book; copied in Rhodes 155 years ago').[56] The scribal colophon in this manuscript states that the scribe Moses Kimḥi copied it in Rhodes in 1383.[57] With the addition of 155 years, this could indicate that Gerstmann compiled the inventory in 1538, but this is impossible, as the manuscript had not been acquired in Crete yet at that point in time. Cassuto therefore assumed that Gerstmann had mistakenly copied '155' from an earlier inventory that read '165' and suggested that the Cretan section of Ulrich's Hebraica was acquired by Ulrich in 1548.[58]

The Hebrew codices obtained in Crete reflect a similar collecting tendency that was obviously shared by the manuscripts' original Hebraist purchaser and other Christian

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been acquired, even though not all of them are extant (Cassuto 1936, 38–40). The story of the acquisition of these manuscripts in Crete is examined in my forthcoming paper "The Story of One Acquisition: Hebrew Manuscripts from Venetian Candia", to be published in *Mediterranean Historical Review* (2023). For Cretan Hebrew manuscripts in general, see also Corazzol 2015.

52 On Elijah Capsali, see, for example, Benayahu 1983.

53 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fols. 109v–120r (Cassuto 1936, 8–9). The inventory can be viewed online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.lat.1925 (accessed 24/02/2022). Regarding the identification of Gerstmann's hand, see Lehmann 1956, vol. 2, 52–56.

54 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fols. 103v (1553), 122r (1555), 124r (1555).

55 A copy of this inventory made by Gerstmann around the same time, which in addition to the Cretan manuscripts (nos. 1–154) contains the Hebrew codices from Manetti's collection (nos. 155–167), is found in BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1951, fols. 143r–145r (Cassuto 1936, 7–8, 107–15). The inventory can be viewed online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.lat.1951 (accessed 24/02/2022).

56 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fol. 114r, no. 75.

57 BAV, Cod. Pal. ebr. 221, fol. 67r (Beit-Arié/Richler 2008, 159–60). The manuscript can be viewed online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.221 (accessed 24/02/2022).

58 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 9.

Hebraica collectors of the time. Around two thirds of the Cretan collection contain kabbalistic and philosophical texts, as well as works on medicine, astrology, and astronomy—a scope similar to that of Hans Jakob Fugger's Venetian Hebraica.[59] It is also noteworthy that the Candiote collection contains no printed books. While it is evident that in the 16th century, the members of the Cretan Jewish communities must have owned printed books, the anonymous purchaser of Hebraica in Candia was not interested in printed production and acquired exclusively manuscripts. As a result, no Hebrew prints deriving from Cretan Jewish libraries or elsewhere appear in Ulrich's collection.

The Candiote group of Hebrew codices as well as Pico-Grimani's Hebrew manuscripts bear traces of their provenance in the form of colophons, owners' inscriptions, and records of purchase. To Hans Jakob and Ulrich, Grimani's name inscribed in the manuscripts and the names of Jewish former owners of the codices acquired in Crete that the anonymous Hebraist mentioned in his purchase notes apparently served as evidence that the manuscripts derived from authoritative sources. For the same reasons, the alphabetical catalogue of Ulrich's Greek books compiled by Martin Gerstmann refers as well to the former owners from whom the manuscripts were obtained.[60] In the case of larger collections bought from an important scholar and inscribed with the scholar's name, the books could be given a special, separate place in the library. This was the case for the multi-lingual collection of the Nuremberg physician and humanist Hartmann Schedel that was sold by his heirs *en bloc* to Hans Jakob Fugger in 1552. Stored as a separate unit in Hans Jakob's library, Schedel's collection contained around 670 printed works (many of which are incunabula) and 370 manuscripts, including eight Hebrew codices.[61]

In this context, it is worth mentioning the work of Tyler Williams on vernacular manuscripts in Early Modern India, which argued that colophons, ownership records, and owners' marks should be not only read as documentary evidence, but also that their meaning for imagined audiences and the actual books' patrons and successive users should be reconsidered.[62] Reconsidering the function of the ownership records among noble bibliophiles shows that the provenance of books, which was often used by earlier humanist scholars for establishing the authenticity of manuscripts on which they based their scholarship,[63] came to play an important role in assessing the value of a book collection as a whole. The former owners of the older collections were

59 Cf. Cassuto 1936, 34–35.

60 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1950, fols. 183r–198v (Mittler 1986, 378).

61 These numbers, however, give no indication of the real size of Schedel's collection, since many of its books were lost in the course of time (cf. Hartig 1917, 262). For Schedel's Hebrew manuscripts, see Steimann 2014, 23–40.

62 Cf. Williams 2019, 154. I am grateful to Pia Eckhart for bringing this paper to my attention. For more about the importance of manuscripts' provenance in the Hebraist book collectors' circles, see my forthcoming article "Jewish Exemplars and Hebraist Copies of Hebrew Manuscripts", to be published in Jürgen Paul and David Durand-Guedy (eds.), *Writing for Oneself* (2023).

63 For example, see Grafton 1991, 57–62.

usually scholars in their own right who assembled books gradually, carefully selecting the items to be included in their libraries. To the noble book collectors, the reputation of the scholar who originally created the collection guaranteed the quality and importance of the collection in its entirety. The fact that the source collections largely consisted of manuscripts turned the medium itself into an attribute of quality. Older scholarly collections acquired *en bloc* or replicated in newer copies not only enabled the noble book collectors to build up impressive libraries within a short period of time, but also, and even more significantly, suggested an exclusive status of these libraries.

5 The Authority of Old Manuscripts

While in the 16th century printed books could be neither old nor rare, many manuscripts that were acquired *en bloc* by noble book collectors were unique copies that could not be found elsewhere. It is therefore no surprise that although printed books were welcomed in the noble libraries, it was the manuscripts that earned special attention and treatment.

In contrast to printed texts, manuscripts were subject to hierarchy. The hierarchy was a result of bibliographical research conducted by librarians and scholars who were responsible for describing the noble collections. An inventory of Grimani's books compiled around 1520, for example, denoted 17 Hebrew manuscripts (out of 193 volumes) as *rarus* ('rare').[64] Giuliano Tamani has attributed the authorship of this inventory to the Jewish scholar Abraham de Balmes, the personal physician of Grimani.[65] Due to his wide knowledge of Jewish literature, de Balmes undoubtedly had the necessary skills to assess the rarity of certain Hebrew texts. The 'rare' manuscripts contain biblical commentaries of Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome, David Kimḥi and others, Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle, astronomical works, and kabbalistic treatises. Needless to say, none of the books defined as rare existed in print at the time.

As most of Grimani's books were destroyed by fire, it is impossible to examine the actual manuscripts that were described as 'rare' in Grimani's inventory. Only two 'rare' manuscripts have come down to us. One is a 14th-century codex of Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome's commentary on Genesis, which is housed in Udine.[66] In Grimani's inventory, this manuscript was identified as possibly Immanuel of Rome's autograph.[67] The term *rarus*, then, not only indicated the presumed scarcity of manuscript copies of the given work but also the particular manuscript found in Grimani's library, which in this case was apparently an autograph.

64 BM, MS latini cl. XIV, 182 (4669), published in Tamani 1995, 5–52.
65 Cf. Tamani 1995, 8.
66 Bertolla Lib., MS 245 (Tamani 1971, 17–18).
67 *Expositio rabi Emanuelis super Genesis, et forte est scriptus manu autoris* ("Rabbi Emanuel's exposition on Genesis and it is possibly written by the author's hand") (Tamani 1995, 41, no. 184).

The second extant manuscript of the 'rare' group supports the assumption that the range of values attributed to manuscripts depended not only on the texts that they contained, but also on the physical vessels that contained those texts. It is a kabbalistic compilation from Pico's library, produced in Spain in 1298.[68] It contains *Sefer ha-bahir* ('The Book of Brightness'); Asher ben David's *Sefer ha-yiḥud* ('The Book of Unity'); Isaac ben Jacob Hacohen's *Pirush ma'aseh merkabah* ('Commentary on the Works of the Chariot'); commentary on the ten *sefirot*; and the kabbalistic commentary to Psalm 19, *Sha'ar ha-razim* ('The Gate of Secrets') by Todros Halevi Abulafia.[69] What was special about this compilation were not only the texts, which were difficult to find elsewhere, but also the early date of copying stated in its two colophons.[70] Moreover, this compilation was produced shortly after the death of the authors of the treatises it contains.[71] Already Pico apparently appreciated its antiquity and rarity, which may have been the reason it was used as the source for the Latin translation completed by Flavius Mithridates in 1486 upon Pico's request.[72] This compilation was one of the 11 codices Hans Jakob acquired from Grimani's collection around 1553. Before that, this manuscript was copied for Hans Jakob in its entirety by Jewish scribes in Venice (in 1550),[73] so Hans Jakob's library eventually had both the original exemplar and the copy.

The concept of rare manuscripts, then, referred to the codices containing texts that had been not yet printed and were not widespread in manuscript form, as well as to the uniqueness of the manuscripts as objects.[74] Both autographs and old codices were imbued with a certain aura of exceptionality that rendered them one of a kind. They also had another thing in common: authenticity. The autographs preserved original texts, while old copies were supposed to transmit the text as close as possible to originals, since fewer stages of transmission intervened between them and the original texts.

Humanist efforts to recover such old, reliable texts had been underway for more than a century before the invention of printing. Scholars from Petrarch on had sought out, copied, and collated antique Greek and Latin codices. They visited old monasteries in different parts of Europe, searching there for ancient texts that could be useful

68 BSB, Chm 209 (for this item in the inventory of Pico's library, see Cesis 1897, 46). The manuscript can be viewed online: https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00103931?page=,1 (accessed 24/02/2022).

69 Referred to by the titles of two treatises it contains: *Liber Bhair et liber secretorum. Qui est rarus* ('The *Book of Brightness* and the *Gate of Secrets*, which are rare') (Tamani 1995, 18, no. 34); see also Campanini, 2007, 21–43.

70 BSB, Chm 209, fols. 36v and 104r.

71 About the authors of these works, see Ben-Shalom 2014, 188–217.

72 Cf. Campanini 2005, 63–76; Freudenberger 1936, 33. See also Steimann 2017, 1254 and the bibliography there.

73 BSB, Chm 53, fols. 1r–76r (Cohen-Mushlin 2020, 224). The manuscript can be viewed online: https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00107456?page=,1 (accessed 24/02/2022).

74 For the development of the concept of rare books, see McKitterick 2018, esp. 43–49.

for humanist scholarship.[75] The most authoritative sources were those that were found in the oldest codices, since they were supposed to transmit more authentic versions of texts.[76]

With the advent of printing, the former reverence for ancient manuscripts gave way to greater awareness and a more systematic, critical approach. As printing was supposed to stabilize the textual content of books and make it available for a wide audience, the urge to restore the texts that were corrupted in the process of later transmissions became apparent.[77] These kinds of concerns were reflected, for instance, in a letter to the printer Johann Amerbach in Basel sent in 1511 from Stuttgart by the noted humanist scholar and Hebraist Johann Reuchlin, whom Amerbach recruited to contribute to the complete printed edition of Jerome's works (*Opera omnia*):

> *Sed interea putaui me op[r]ere precium esse facturum, si opus epistolare aggrederer, quod ad me tanta cura dedisti. Quamvis nec eiusdem habeam vetus exemplar, coepi vires exercere ingenii, et tanto labore tantoque conatu vix primam eius partem, quae aliarum tamen est omnium castigatu facillima, sine duce consummaui, ut iam desperandum mihi sit de reliquis posse absque vetustis exemplaribus vllum consequi honorem.*[78]
>
> Meanwhile I think that it will be worthwhile for me to undertake the work on [Jerome's] letters that you gave me with such a great concern. Since I do not have an old exemplar of the letters, I have begun the intellectual struggle, but working without a guide, even with great work and effort I have completed hardly the first part of it, which is the easiest of all to correct. Now I despair about getting copies of the remainder and, without old exemplars, despair of gaining any glory.[79]

Despite obvious idealism surrounding antique codices, however, many printed editions were based on poorly chosen late manuscripts—the only ones then available.

No less than printers, Christian collectors of Hebraica appreciated the antiquity of manuscripts that passed into their hands. It is in this sense that the words of Reuchlin himself should be understood, which he added in 1501 to the old Hebrew manuscript of the Prophets that was in his possession. On its first folio, Reuchlin emphasized the antiquity of this manuscript by calculating 396 years that according to its original colophon passed since its production.[80] This was a typical humanist practice of dating manuscripts: Rather than stating the date of production, humanists often calculated the temporal distance between the production of a manuscript and their own

75 For example, see Gordan 1974, 42, 48, 62, 110.

76 Cf. Grafton 1991, 55–62; see also Reynolds/Wilson 1991, 166–167.

77 For example, Hellinga 2014, 41–43.

78 Hartmann 1942, vol. 1, 417, no. 451. For Amerbach's efforts to find manuscripts in monastic libraries that serve as the basis for his printed editions, see Halporn 1981, 134–142.

79 Trans. in Halporn 2000, 353, no. 251; see also Nielsen 2011, 58.

80 Cf. BLB, Cod. Reuchlin 3, fol. 1^{a}r (Abel/Leicht 2005, 97–103). The manuscript can be viewed online: https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/titleinfo/3395233 (accessed 24/02/2022).

time, so that 396 years indicated both when the manuscript was produced and when it passed into Reuchlin's hands. By doing so, humanists could measure the antiquity of a manuscript from their point in time. This does not mean that later codices or printed editions were avoided, but only that old copies were attributed with special significance.[81]

It is also apparent that no objective criteria for rarity and antiquity existed. 'Rare' could refer to a complex of textual and material features of a manuscript, whereas 'ancient' was a relative term, often meaning very old, just old, or that the date was uncertain or even that the codex was worn.[82] Antiquity was rendered a criterion for evaluating manuscripts in Martin Gerstmann's remark that opens his 1553 inventory of the Greek volumes of Ulrich's library: *Omnes hi libri sunt manu scripti et magna ex parte antiquissimi* ('All these books are manuscripts and a large part of them is extremely old').[83] The need to single out the oldest codices makes the hierarchy of values apparent: The highest value was placed on the most ancient manuscripts, followed by later manuscripts, which were followed by printed books. Further, Gerstmann wrote *antiquus* ('ancient'), sometimes *antiquus et bonus* ('ancient and good') or *antiquus et optimus* ('ancient and the best') next to some codices in the inventory. A closer look at these codices reveals that the term 'ancient' could stand for manuscripts produced in the 11th century as well as for those produced in the 14th century and that the term was applied inconsistently.[84]

For the Hebrew manuscripts, Gerstmann did not assess their age or quality. Instead, he wrote *impressos* ('printed') or *non impressos* ('not printed') next to each manuscript in the inventory, adding: *Intelligi volo, eos etiam libros reperiri impressos, aut non impressos* ('I want to understand whether these books are found in print or not') at the beginning of the inventory.[85] Gerstmann was undoubtedly a learned man, but it is unclear how well he knew Hebrew. At the beginning of inventorying, he may have been assisted by an Ashkenazi Jew (or a convert) who added the titles of the texts in Hebrew next to the running numbers of the manuscripts; these appear irregularly and only in the manuscripts numbered from one to 22. It is also possible that the same Jew helped Gerstmann to find out which of the inventoried texts had already appeared in print.

81 Among Reuchlin's own ca. 50 Hebrew volumes were five printed books (cf. Abel/Leicht 2005, 221–234).

82 Cf. McKitterick 2008, 29; cf. Nagel/Wood 2009, 55.

83 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fol. 103v.

84 See, for example, an 11th-century compilation of works of Johannes Climacus (BAV, Cod. Pal. gr. 380) and another 11th-century manuscript of the letter of Aristeas to Philocrates and other works (BAV, Cod. Pal. gr. 203) that were described by Gerstmann as *antiquus* in the inventory (BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fol. 105r, no. 28 and fol. 106v, no. 73); a 14th-century codex of Euripides' Tragedies (BAV, Cod. Pal. gr. 98) was described as *antiquus* as well (BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fol. 104r, no. 2).

85 BAV, Cod. Pal. lat. 1925, fol. 109v.

According to Gerstmann, out of 154 Hebrew texts mentioned in the inventory, two thirds did not exist in print at the time. This helped Gerstmann differentiate between Hebrew texts that could only be found in manuscripts and texts that were potentially widespread due to printing. Gerstmann thus used printing as the main point of reference to underline the relative rareness of unprinted Hebrew texts, thereby attributing a similarly high value to them compared to that suggested for 'ancient' Greek codices.

How Gerstmann treated actual printed books which were found in Ulrich's collection (in Greek, Latin, and other languages) is unknown, as the only inventories that have come down to us document manuscripts. It is also not possible to compare his approach to Hebraica with that of Hans Jakob's librarians, since no inventory of Hans Jakob's Hebraica is extant. To present a fuller picture of cataloguing Hebrew manuscripts versus prints, it would be also useful to consult the 16th-century inventories compiled by the librarians of the Munich *Hofbibliothek*, in which Hans Jakob's collection was incorporated, as well as the librarians' descriptions within Hans Jakob's Hebrew printed volumes.[86] Further study of this material could possibly indicate other criteria, beyond rarity and antiquity, according to which Hebrew printed books were evaluated. These aspects remained, however, beyond the scope of this paper, which was entirely focused on Hans Jakob's and Ulrich's Hebraica collecting.

6 Concluding Observations

Acquiring Hebraica by Christians was never an easy task because of the relatively limited scope of Hebrew manuscripts in circulation and traditional unwillingness to sell them to Christians on the part of Jews.[87] Although in the middle of the 16th century the number of Hebrew books in Christian book collections could reach 200 volumes per library, collecting Hebraica remained a time and energy consuming process. Printing made Hebrew books more widely available to all kinds of audiences. But since Hebrew printing of the time was still limited to certain sorts of literature, it could not fully meet the needs of Christian collectors, especially with regard to the works on Kabbalah that were usually the focus of scholarly Hebraica collecting. The number of Hebrew manuscripts in the Hebraist book collections consequently far surpassed that of Hebrew printed books.

The thematic content of noble book collections was similar to that of the collections of professional Hebraists on whose example they were based. One of the main strategies to obtain Hebraica among noble bibliophiles was acquiring *en bloc* already existing Hebraica collections or commissioning Jewish scribes or converts to produce

86 For 16th-century inventories of Hebraica in the *Hofbibliothek*, see BSB, Cbm Cat. 36, Cbm Cat. 36m, and Cbm Cat. 37 (Kellner 1996, 4–6).

87 For Jewish attitudes towards the issue, see Steimann 2020, 21–25.

new copies if no collection was for sale. As a result, noble collections of Hebraica were not a co-location of carefully chosen items, but reflected the scope assembled by someone else. They were often acquired or copied from the libraries of important Christian and Jewish scholars, rendering the provenance a guarantee of the quality of the collection as a whole. Naturally, such source collections, especially when they were older, were largely composed of manuscripts. Manual copying of Hebrew texts for noble book collectors, mainly those that did not exist in print, also contributed much to the persistence of Hebrew manuscripts in the noble libraries well into the 16th century.

While the prevalence of manuscripts can be easily explained by these kinds of practical reasons, the differentiation between manuscripts and printed books came into play when evaluating the collection. This was done by experts and librarians who could read Hebrew and were responsible for explaining the collection to their owners not only by describing the books but also by establishing a scale of values. The uniqueness attributed to manuscripts, in particular to old copies, is especially evident in the book inventory of Martin Gerstmann. Not only did he categorize Greek manuscripts according to their presumed antiquity, but he also introduced a new criterion of printing to assess the rarity of texts in his description of Hebrew codices. Both antique manuscripts and rare texts, which had not yet been printed and were therefore not widespread, were essential for establishing the exclusive status of noble libraries.

These attitudes towards old and rare manuscripts were shared by both scholarly and noble collectors of Hebraica. The differences are quite apparent, however. If the scholarly use of Hebraica found its expression in annotations and comments that the Hebraists added to Hebrew texts while reading them, the manuscripts of the noble collectors are usually free from such additions and other changes that were integral to usage. Untouched and frozen in time, Hebrew manuscripts in the noble collections symbolized scholarship rather than serving it, turning texts into collectable objects.

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Abbreviations

BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican Apostolic Library)
Bertolla Lib. Biblioteca P. Bertolla del Seminario arcivescovile Udine (P. Bertolla Library of the Archbishop's Seminary of Udine)
BLB Badische Landesbibliothek (Baden State Library)
BM Biblioteca Marciana (Marciana Library)
BSB Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library)

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– Chm 267
– Chm 268
– Chm 278
– Chm 341
– Chm 357
– Chm 40
– Chm 41
– Chm 47
– Chm 53
– Chm 55
– Chm 56
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