Katrin Kogman-Appel

Hebrew Book Art in Shared Spaces: Perpignan, *c.* 1300

Abstract: A lavishly illuminated Hebrew Bible was produced in Perpignan in 1299. Around 1300, it served as a model for at least three other Bibles from the same region. While the predominantly aniconic decoration of these Bibles is anchored in Islamicate visual culture, its style and technique are Gothic. A recent discourse in cultural history, in part from a perspective of postcolonial theory, sheds a lot of light on the dynamics of transcultural interactions and entanglements. One aspect, however, has not entered the discussion, namely, how such encounters can be explained in terms of the spatial constellations in which they took place. This paper examines how these constellations shaped the decoration schemes of the 1299 Bible. These constellations were complex, as they imply agents of different cultural backgrounds – artists, scribes, patrons – living and moving about in various parts of the urban space. The paper shows that the producers of the Bible and its patron created a visual dialogue with the surrounding architecture by means of the decoration schemes, and, in a way, seem to have participated in the design of visual trends in the public space.

1 Introduction

In a forthcoming paper on the work of Joshua ibn Gaon, active from 1299 on in Tudela (Navarre, Spain), I describe the decoration of three Bibles with a focus on ornamental motifs that attest to transcultural entanglements that transpired in the specific spatial constellations observable in that city.[1] Around the same time, just after the Shavuot festival of 1299, in Perpignan (Roussillon, present-day France), the mainland capital of the Kingdom of Majorca, another, perhaps non-professional scribe, Solomon ben Raphael, penned a Bible for his own use: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 7 (henceforth, Paris 7).[2] Similar to many

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1 Kogman-Appel forthcoming.

2 A digitised version of the manuscript is available online: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10549487b> (accessed on 10 February 2022). For the colophon, see fol. 512ᵛ. For a very interesting discussion of the phenomenon of scribes copying their own Bibles as acts of piety, see Frojmovic 2014. Based on the observation that scribal errors abound in the manuscript, Fro-

of Ibn Gaon's works, this book was decorated with micrographic patterns for the Masorah, carpet pages and painted embellishments. Three similar Bibles soon followed in the early years of the fourteenth century: Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, T. 3.8 and M. 8.4 (henceforth, Modena 3.8 and Modena 8.4, respectively), and Copenhagen, Det Kgl. Bibliotek, heb. 2 (henceforth, Copenhagen 2).[3] The last has a colophon that dates it to 1301, but no location is given, and the name of the scribe, who also indicated that he copied the book for his own use, has been erased (fol. 521ʳ). By and large, these Bibles display similar decoration schemes and, thus, have been attributed to the same artistic 'school' or workshop, hence, to Perpignan or the larger Roussillon region.[4] This current contribution approaches these manuscripts (particularly Paris 7) and their decoration schemes with a focus on the transcultural dynamics they reflect in relation to the nature of the urban space of Perpignan around 1300. It attempts to understand the interactions between Jews and Christians within their spatial settings and is, thus, a piece of microhistory focusing on one specific locale at a certain point in time. It offers some insights which complement my parallel observations concerning Tudela, and yields a synchronic view of how specific settings shaped the cultures of the people living in these two cities.

Ibn Gaon's works feature types of decorations somewhat similar to those from Roussillon: abundant micrography with floral and animal designs, carpet pages (Fig. 1) and arch designs (Fig. 2). However, in contrast to the Perpignan group, Ibn Gaon's carpet pages display Mudéjar-style interlace patterns, and some of the arches have decorated spandrels in Mudéjar-style floral designs. Hence, despite their similarities, these illuminations diverge in the style and nature of the adornments. Both groups of illustrations feature elements typical of Islamicate art, along with those that are associated with Gothic style and techniques, but they combine these features in different ways. Thus, these manuscripts are vivid testimonies of the different cultural encounters that took place in the environs of their makers.

jmovic 2015 suggests that Samuel was not a professional scribe but a man of wealth, who penned the book with pious intentions.

3 On these manuscripts, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 131–140, with earlier literature.

4 On the traditional notion of artistic schools as pertaining to Iberian Jewish book art, see e.g. Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin and Tcherikover 1982, 13–16.

Fig. 1: Carpet page, Tudela, 1301, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 21, fol. 1ᵛ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 2: Calendric tables, Tudela, 1301, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, hébreu 21, fol. 2ᵛ (image in the public domain).

I first introduce the manuscripts and follow with a brief discussion of the current discourse on transcultural entanglements and historical approaches to space. I then go on to deal with Perpignan's spatial constellations around 1300 and consider the close ties between the urban space and the transcultural dynamics that were in evidence there. In pursuing this study, I had at my disposal the copious archival resources from Perpignan that have been discussed extensively in the historiography of the city as well as several publications about recent archaeological campaigns that offer a great deal of information about urban development, the location of institutions and neighbourhoods, and their physical conditions. Similar to Tudela, the spatial constellations in Perpignan, among other considerations, determined the decisions that the artists and their patrons made in their choices of decoration patterns. It will be argued that what these people saw while attending to their daily business, the location of the Jewish quarter, the sites of public institutions and their design, all had major influences on the making of these Bibles.

2 The manuscripts

Analogous to many other medieval Hebrew Bibles, Solomon bar Raphael's codex (Paris 7) opens with a set of lists of Masoretic material arranged in columns of varying widths, either four, three or two columns on a page, which afforded framing designs incorporating architectural elements.

The first opening of Paris 7 features an arcade of eight elegantly shaped, narrow Gothic arches in blue, supported by slim, red columns. The spandrels appear in the colour of the parchment and feature modest pen decorations with small roundels (Fig. 3). The reader turns three pages altogether encountering such arcades of eight arches each (fols 2ᵛ–5ʳ). This scheme is continued in a similar fashion with three openings showing broader columns and, thus, only four arches with larger spandrels adorned with trefoils (Fig. 4, fols 5ᵛ–8ʳ). Three more openings follow with six arches each (Fig. 5, fols 8ᵛ–11ʳ). Thus far, the reader has leafed through three sets of three such openings, eighteen pages altogether with fifty-four arches, which evoke an association with a walk through a space defined on three sides by arcades of slender columns supporting elegantly shaped, simple pointed arches, similar to a courtyard or a cloister.

Fig. 3: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 2ᵛ–3ʳ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 4: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 5ᵛ–6ʳ (image in the public domain).
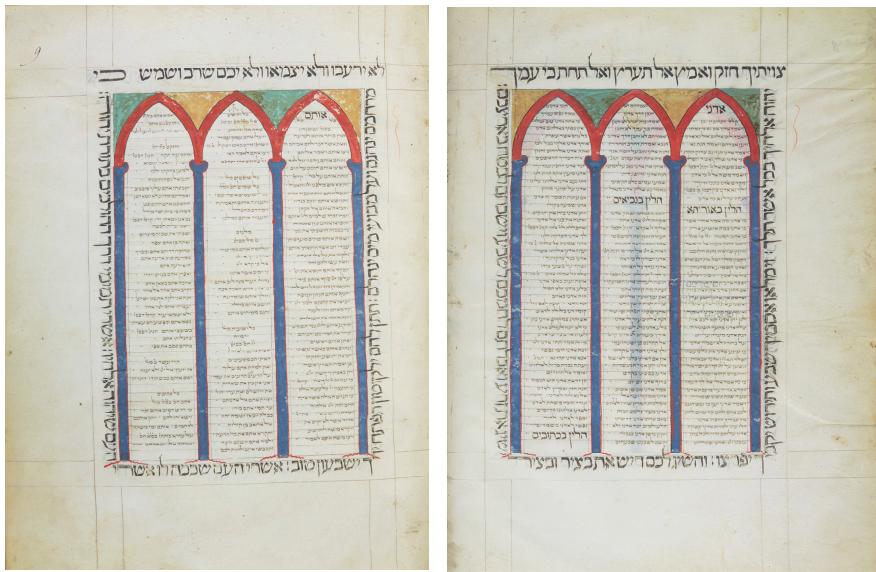
Fig. 5: Masoretic Tables, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 8ᵛ–9ʳ (image in the public domain).
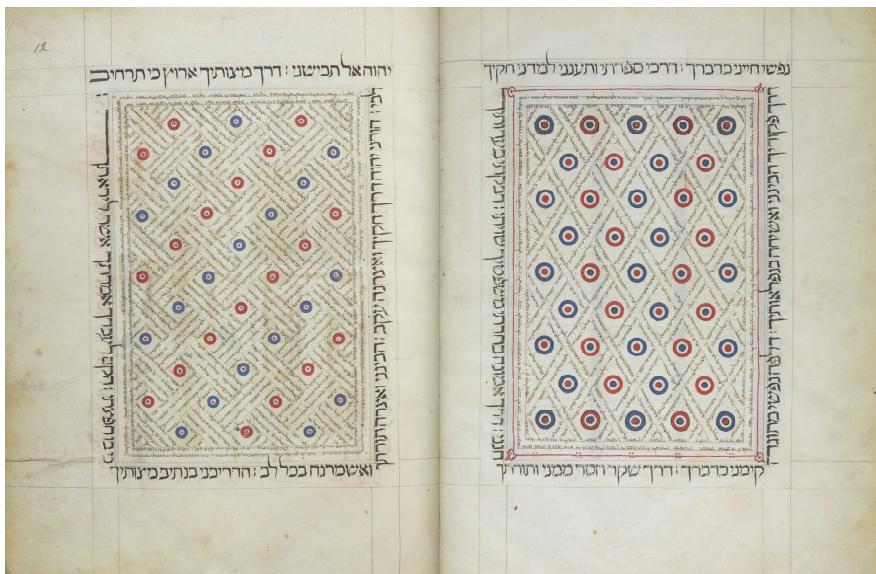
Fig. 6: Carpet pages, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 11ᵛ–12ʳ (image in the public domain).

Fig. 7: Temple vessels, Perpignan, 1299, Paris 7, fols 12ᵛ–13ʳ (image in the public domain).

The reader turns the page again and encounters a pair of micrographic carpet pages (Fig. 6). These are followed by yet another opening displaying the Temple vessels as golden silhouettes against the parchment ground (Fig. 7), an allusion to the understanding of the Bible as a 'minor Temple' and the first known such image in Catalonia, which introduced a design that would soon become quite popular.[5] Thus, the carpet pages could have been meant to serve as a passage from the courtyard into the 'minor Temple' as a marker of the transition into a sacred realm.[6] Architectural motifs abound in Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and are

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5 Revel-Neher 1998, 61–120; the scholarship on the meaning of the vessels as a reference to the messianic Temple and the 'minor Temple' notion is rich and cannot be listed here; for a recent discussion citing the earlier literature, see Kogman-Appel 2023. The Temple metaphor in relation to the Bible was first discussed by Wieder 1957.

6 Baker 2007, 30, regarding manuscripts of the Qur'an; see Kogman-Appel 2020 applying this notion to a Hebrew Bible. For recent suggestions that carpet pages in Hebrew Bibles carried iconographic meaning, see Cohen and Safran 2021, who read the carpet pages of the Kennicott Bible (Corunna, 1476) as symbolising the infinity of the divine; Harris 2021a and 2021b links thirteenth-century carpet pages to the Torah and its study. She suggests that the arch design symbolises gateways and the carpet pages allude to 'fabrics veiling the Temple Implements pages' (Harris 2021a, 135); I discuss some of these suggestions in the last section.

often interpreted as building metaphors, while arch designs are commonly associated with gateways.[7] I suggest that the careful design of these pages as three sets of differently sized arcades was meant to make readers feel as if they were walking through a large courtyard, rather than through gateways. A final star-shaped micrographic carpet page leads the reader to the first page of the Book of Genesis (fol. 14ʳ).

The other three Bibles attributable to Roussillon reflect very similar schemes, even though the courtyard metaphor does not always function as perfectly as it does in Paris 7, the apparent archetype of this group. Thus, the pages with the tables in Modena 8.4 show irregular sets of openings (fols 2ᵛ–9ʳ). Copenhagen 2 follows quite closely with a similarly irregular pattern of openings displaying not only pointed but also trefoil arches (fols 1ᵛ–10ʳ). The spandrels above the arches are decorated with painted floral designs typical of Gothic book art (Copenhagen 2 also incorporates animals and dragons) in all the Bibles except for Paris 7. Modena 3.8 lacks the carpet pages. Unlike Paris 7, which shows the vessels against a plain parchment background, the other arrays of the Temple implements are set against a diapered pattern typical of Gothic illumination.[8]

The lack of figural representation in these Bibles with only extremely scarce humanoid elements,[9] a feature that is shared by almost all other Iberian Hebrew Bibles, has often been pointed out and is commonly associated with the artistic norms of Islamic religious culture. Eva Frojmovic describes the decoration in Paris 7 in terms of 'Mudejarismo' because of its leaning towards aniconicity.[10] She focuses elsewhere on the micrographic carpet pages and points out that Mudéjar-style elements are found in the Gothic palace of Perpignan on the painted wooden ceiling in a room in the queen's private chambers and once appeared on the no longer extant door of the chapel.[11] The painted ceiling displays a wealth of Gothic floral motifs, hybrid creatures on the beams, while interlaced decorations remotely inspired by Mudéjar style (but not genuinely Mudéjar) can be seen between the beams (Fig. 8). This type of decoration, often merging Mudéjar and Gothic motifs, abounds everywhere in fourteenth-century Iberia. More such mixed motifs can be seen on the walls of the king's private chamber.

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7 For Middle Eastern examples, see Milstein 1999; see also the references to Harris's work, n. 6.

8 Kogman-Appel 2023, 264–265, figs 10.3 and 10.4.

9 Frojmovic 2010, 250, identifies a *parashah* marker in Paris 7, fol. 115ʳ, with humanoid faces as cherubs. This is unlikely, as they accompany Numbers 33–36, describing the route of the Israelites to Canaan.

10 Frojmovic 2010.

11 Frojmovic 2014, 324–325, with references to the scholarship on these paintings; on which see also Alcoy Pedrós 2014.

Fig. 8: Perpignan, *c*. 1270–1295, royal palace, painted decoration on the ceiling of the queen's chamber (photograph: author).

However, there are only a very few Islamicate motifs in Paris 7, with the carpet pages displaying instead a variation of geometric designs found in Middle Eastern predecessors,[12] but no motifs that are typical of fourteenth-century Mudéjar art. I return to both Frojmovic's argument and the Perpignan palace further on. In terms of aniconicity, the Perpignan group shares a lot with Ibn Gaon's work. However, unlike most earlier Castilian examples, these Bibles are not fully aniconic: the Temple images are representational and not fully abstract and neither the animals nor the few humanoid elements can be defined as aniconic in the purest sense of the term. However, as the Temple imagery tends to be abstract and the animals and human facial traits have primarily decorative functions, the overall visual language is defined by minimal representationalism. Furthermore, the presence of carpet pages, which is the case for almost all the Bibles in question (except Modena 3.8), is a prominent feature of this approach.

However, looking at the styles and techniques of the ornamental motifs in detail, we can observe significant differences. The Perpignan group diverges from

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12 Kogman-Appel 2004, 69, 132.

Ibn Gaon's work in one striking aspect: whereas the latter's decorations are over-whelmingly Islamicate, a characteristic that is most clearly visible in the arch designs and the carpet pages (Figs 1 and 2), the former employs a wealth of Gothic motifs and limits the carpet pages to geometric micrographic decorations. Similar to Ibn Gaon's Bibles, the blend of Gothic and Islamicate elements in the Perpignan group speaks of entangled cultures, but the specific circumstances and constellations differ significantly. Even though all these books were produced at around the same time, earlier scholarship discussed them diachronically. According to that discourse, Ibn Gaon's work represents transcultural exchanges with Islamic Iberia, whereas the Perpignan group signals a transition to a predominantly Christian surrounding culture. All these Bibles, finally, were thought to carry some elements of an earlier tradition of Hebrew Bibles from the Middle East and northern Africa.[13]

3 Transcultural dynamics within space

The scholarship on the demography of medieval Iberia has yielded a set of terminologies designed to explain the cultural landscapes and complex relationships among the coexisting religious and ethnic cultures: Christians under Islamic rule were referred to as Mozarabs, Muslims under Christian dominance were known as Mudéjares, and 'Moorish' was a term for Muslims and objects of Islamic culture in general, both in al-Andalus and the Christian areas. The last term, naturally, went out of use in the wake of the postcolonial discourse of recent decades. Cultural interactions were often explained in terms of *convivencia*, a term coined in the 1940s by Américo Castro, but often criticised in subsequent discussions.[14] In the 1970s, Thomas Glick introduced the anthropological notion of acculturation, a process observable among minorities in their relationships with surrounding majorities, into the historiography of medieval Iberia. He argued that the accul-

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13 Narkiss, Cohen-Mushlin and Tcherikover 1982, 13–16; Sed-Rajna 1992.
14 Castro 1984. For critical revisitations of the term, see Nirenberg 1996, 9, 245, who shows that *convivencia* in its original understanding as coexistence implied many moments of intolerance and violence; with a focus on the Crown of Aragon, Catlos 2001–2002 notes that *convivencia* was not a given, but that intercultural interactions depended on changing mutual political and economic interests; Soifer 2009 argues not only that *convivencia* cannot be reframed, but also that the situation of the Jews in the Iberian kingdoms was, altogether, not so different from that in other countries as is commonly assumed; see also Novikoff 2005; Wolf 2009; and Szpiech 2013; all these titles also offer concise summaries of the critical approaches.

turation of the Jews in Islamic Iberia proceeded at a different pace from that in Christian environments.[15] Since the 1990s and especially the early 2000s, research into intercultural exchange and transcultural dynamics in general and in Iberia in particular has gained more theoretical ground. In 2004, I approached the decoration of Iberian Hebrew Bibles in the terms introduced by Glick and suggested interpreting the preference for Islamicate motifs and patterns as the result of the choices of Jewish patrons rooted in a centuries-old al-Andalusian heritage expressing their cultural-religious identity within a larger, diverse Jewish society.[16]

In 2010, Frojmovic studied some of the Iberian Hebrew Bibles in general and Paris 7 in particular and defined their art as 'Jewish Mudejarismo', as a cultural phenomenon taking place in a *zona de mestizaje*,[17] borrowing a term from the postcolonial discourse regarding the Americas, which is closely linked to the better-known notion of cultural 'contact zones'.[18] Luis Girón-Negrón defines 'Mudejarismo', a term coined by Castro, as 'the cultural engagement of Spanish Christians and Spanish Jews – respectively – with Arabo-Andalusian civilization'.[19] Thus, in recent scholarship, Mudéjar is not defined solely in terms of Islamic culture but used to describe the triangular setting of intercultural relationships in Christian Iberia. According to Frojmovic, 'Jews adopted Mudejarismo in order to distance their definition of visible holiness from the Christian one'.[20] With a focus on the arrays of Temple vessels in Paris 7 and other Iberian Bibles, she refers to their abstract style rather than their content.[21] As noted above, however, Paris 7 does not feature any kind of decoration that falls into the traditional category of Mudéjar style. It is only the almost complete lack of figural art and the presence of carpet pages that suggest Islamicate culture. The geometric design of the carpet pages in micrography has no Mudéjar parallels (Fig. 6).[22]

All these approaches speak of encounters and exchanges among different religious cultures as separate entities, even if those cultures lived side by side within the same political space. The more recent notion of transcultural entanglements

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15 Glick 1979, 3–18.

16 Kogman-Appel 2004, 10–33 and 171–202.

17 Frojmovic 2010.

18 These notions go back to Pratt 1992, 1–14; Bhabha 1994, 1–18.

19 Girón-Negrón 2005, 232–233.

20 Frojmovic 2010, 253.

21 She returned to Paris 7 and Copenhagen 2 in Frojmovic 2014 for further observations on their Mudéjar features offering links to contemporaneous Christian Mudéjar works of art from the region.

22 For a recent critique of attempts to associate the use of Mudéjar style among Jews as expressions of identity, see Gutwirth 2019.

offers an alternative perspective in which these cultures, different as they may have been, can be approached as ever-changing 'entangled' entities, where none remained as it was before coming into contact with the others. In such areas of entanglement, groups of different cultural background do not influence one another, and they do not create cultural hybrids, but they live in constantly changing constellations in which some elements are shared, and others create and maintain religious divides. 'Entanglement' is but one term in a whole set of metaphors discussed in the literature to define basically the same phenomenon.[23] Whereas past scholarship explained these blends of different styles diachronically either as an outcome of broad historical developments from Islamic Iberia to post-'reconquest' culture as passive influences or active expressions of identity (coping with the otherness of the majority),[24] I suggest a shift towards a synchronic perspective. That is, rather than looking at religious divides, I argue for a focus on the shared elements, which past scholarship has never regarded as factors, considering them more as symptoms to be taken for granted. By that, I do not necessarily mean to reject any notions of this art as expressions of identity, but to propose an additional angle, which influences the recent historical discourse: I look at entanglements as they emerged and developed in shared spaces.

Space as an analytical category began to lend itself to historical research at a moment when scholars sought ways of tackling cultural and social developments in other than chronological or diachronic terms. Modern historiography has approached space as an abstract notion in terms of political territories and modern nation-states. By contrast, recent definitions see space as concrete and physical but, at the same time, as a socially constructed and constantly changing reality.[25] The complex connection between social spaces as heterogeneous entities that seem to have grown organically and the authorities that govern them is among the central questions in this discourse.

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23 For a recent detailed discussion of these terms and their earlier history, see Christ et al. 2016, 25–80.

24 See also Shalev-Eyni 2017, who focuses on the earliest extant Hebrew Bibles from Toledo indebted to the Christian environment, on the one hand, and to Jewish traditions harking back to the early medieval predecessors from the Middle East, on the other. She argues that Islamicate elements are part of this Middle Eastern tradition. The strong presence of Mudéjar culture in Toledo is not considered a factor in her analysis.

25 Spatial theory goes back to Henri Lefebvre's 1974 triad concept of lived space, conceived space and perceived space (in English: Lefebvre 1991). For an introduction on the meeting points between geography and history, see Warf and Arias (eds) 2009, 1–10. Yet, the medieval perspective confronts scholars with specific challenges: see Hanawalt and Kobialka (eds) 2000, ix–xviii; Cohen and Madeline (eds) 2014, 1–20 (introduction, together with Dominique Iogna-Prat).

Whether defined as entanglements or in other terms, transcultural interactions have always been conceived of as abstract phenomena. Even when they were observed taking place in specific locales, transcultural phenomena (such as the Islamic and Christian conquests in Iberia) were explained only from the perspective of their political histories rather than in terms of the concrete physical constellations in which they took place. Urban spaces offered copious occasions for transcultural interaction, and, in the following, I suggest looking at the Hebrew manuscripts from Perpignan in the light of actual spatial settings, where some aspects of the culture diverged and others were shared. It is with an eye towards these spatial constellations that we can more easily understand the degree to which these cultures were actually entangled. These entanglements occurred despite the religious divides that constantly caused them to seek to express their different religious identities – expressions that, more often than not, put them into situations of religious polemic and hostility.[26] I build here on methodological premises of transcultural entanglement research, considerations of space and observations about specific locales at specific times. David Nirenberg set the stage for the latter approach regarding the Crown of Aragon in the 1990s in his discussion of the violent encounters between the different populations in the early fourteenth century. Writing at a time when big narratives tackling large questions were prominent, Nirenberg broke with the search for overarching schemes extending over long periods and dealt with the local contexts of specific historical events.[27]

Medieval societies lived within their immediate physical spaces, which were determined by a certain measure of territorial perception. At the same time, they also lived within deterritorialised spaces constructed by networks which the members of these societies maintained, whose spatiality can, in fact, only be grasped from a cartographic perspective.[28]

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26 For some observations about Jewish spaces as they were 'entangled and interconnected with their respective environments as well with other Jewish spaces throughout the world' (Lipphardt, Brauch and Nocke 2008, 3), see Lipphardt, Brauch and Nocke 2008, who, however, focus on modern and contemporary circumstances, and approach these Jewish spaces, again, as 'other' spaces.
27 Nirenberg 1996, 3–17.
28 Deterritorialised space is most often approached as a phenomenon of present globalisation and modern diasporas: see Appadurai 1991, 191–194. However, what I mean by deterritorialised space has more in common with the observations made by Lauwers 2008 regarding early medieval dioceses (while, of course, the power relationships in the dioceses differ largely from those between Jewish communities and their non-Jewish environs). On networks and co-spatiality, see also Lévy 2002, 137–140; Cohen and Madeline (eds) 2014, 6–7.

In most medieval cities,[29] the Jews lived in their own neighbourhoods, which grew out of their communal organisations, their cultural and religious cohesion, and a sense of 'belonging and identification'.[30] At the same time, these neighbourhoods were also spaces determined and assigned by the Christian authorities. Even when they did not emerge as assigned spaces, Jewish neighbourhoods most often turned into areas of restriction and confinement. These were spaces where the Jews could be segregated and marginalised, on the one hand, and more easily protected on the other. While they were, thus, areas of both exclusion and inclusion, none of the medieval Jewish neighbourhoods was hermetically sealed.[31] Hence, Jewish spaces were not only dynamic but also permeable, ambiguous and difficult to define or demarcate.[32]

Despite and beyond the religious divides, the medieval city offered plentiful opportunities for shared experiences:[33] Jews and Christians visited the marketplace, where they conversed in the same language, bought the same produce to make similar foods (even though *kashrut* laws did create a certain measure of self-segregation); Jews and Christians owned similar household objects,[34] shared similar tastes, and wore similar costumes up to the point that the authorities made numerous efforts to make sure that minorities would be recognisable by some element of clothing. Jews in Roussillon were required to wear long cloaks.[35]

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29 For a recent brilliant sketch of urban life and communal development in the Middle Ages, see Rubin 2020.

30 Baumgarten 2021, 246.

31 On Jewish integration in urban life, see the recent remarks by Rubin 2020, 56–59.

32 Ernst and Lamprecht 2010.

33 As Frojmovic suggests (n. 17), a medieval town such as Perpignan can, in a way, be defined as a contact zone in the sense of Homi Bhabha or Marie-Louise Pratt (s. above n. 18), while, at the same time, postcolonial concepts still call for redefinition towards making them fully applicable to medieval cultures in contact. However, neither Bhabha and Pratt nor Frojmovic conceptualised these zones in spatial terms: Bhabha 1994, 1–18, defines contact zones as interstitial spaces, but does not look at them in terms of specific spatial constellations, figuring them, rather, as abstract spaces; moreover, he is more concerned with the divides and the divergent aspects than with the shared elements of hybridities. Similarly, Pratt 1992, 1–14, speaks of contact zones as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (Pratt 1992, 4) in 'an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures' (Pratt 1992, 7), but while she focuses on the relationships of the subjects with one another, space remains an abstract notion.

34 This has been shown for Marseilles by Smail 2021, 423–428, analysing household inventories.

35 On sumptuary laws in Iberia, see Patton 2013, 33.

Jews and Christians were likely to have lived in similar houses, and their public institutions must have displayed similar architectural decoration.[36]

Moreover, and more importantly for the concerns discussed here, when working in similar crafts, Jewish and Christian individuals were tied together by a network that functioned across cultural divides. Professionals in the arts, the crafts and the construction industry working at the same time within the same space must have shared professional know-how, identity and practices. Concurrently, book owners and bibliophiles shared certain preferences in book design and decoration. The Jewish and Christian miniaturists of Perpignan (similar to those of any other communities, for that matter) belonged to different religions and worked for different religious institutions, authorities and patronage, but shared similar approaches to their craft. They used indistinguishable materials, which they purchased in the same shops and probably exchanged knowledge about techniques. Book trade professionals bought and used the same parchment and ruling tools and, thus, produced similar formats and page layouts.[37] They also viewed the same art in these shared spaces, and saw it not only from the standpoint of religious or cultural identity but also, or primarily, from the perspective of artists. At a more abstract and less material level, any illuminated Hebrew manuscript from anywhere in the Christian world shows eloquently that Jewish and Christian artists shared approaches to visual language, composition, and form and colour.[38] In short, they shared not only a similar professional know-how but also some sense of belonging that must have transcended cultural and/or religious divides. All these were elements that were not transmitted but rather shared.[39]

Similar dynamics have been observed in other fields. Sarah Stroumsa describes them in relation to Jewish and Muslim philosophers, scientists and poets within the Islamicate cultural sphere: 'Jewish intellectuals in the Islamicate world

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36 While there are no remains of the synagogue of Perpignan or its decoration, synagogues everywhere else in the Christian world display decorations similar to those found on churches or other public institutions, albeit significantly more modest in appearance and usually only ornamental.

37 The codicology of Hebrew manuscripts is described in great detail in Beit-Arié 2021.

38 There is hardly any publication on Hebrew illuminated manuscripts that does not point out these similarities, see, for example, with a particular focus on Christian parallels, Kogman-Appel 2006, 11–123.

39 It was often claimed that the medieval guilds functioned as yet another means of segregation and marginalisation. Yet, Shalev-Eyni 2010 and Halperin 2013 demonstrate that Jewish and Christian professionals could collaborate in manuscript workshops despite any social divides that the professional guilds were meant to establish.

(as elsewhere) breathed the same intellectual air as their Muslim neighbors, and they followed the same intellectual fashions'.[40] While my focus here is on a local community, Stroumsa speaks of a-territorial networks (employing the analogy of a 'Republic of Letters') and, specifically, of the exceptional ease in crossing community lines that was typical of philosophers, although she suggests that similar phenomena existed among other intellectual groups, such as poets. She asserts that these processes have to be defined differently for each profession.[41] In a way, Jewish book art can be looked at from a similar perspective, even though my approach diverges in two significant aspects: it considers a specific community on a micro level and a group of professionals that do not fall into the category of intellectuals.

Dwight F. Reynolds, who describes aspects of the musical scene in medieval Iberia with a focus on courtly music in both al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms, similarly asserts that neither the notion of influence typical of earlier cultural studies nor that of hybridisation is an appropriate delineation. He suggests thinking of 'complex genealogies' and promotes a discourse that would disregard any communitarian boundaries.[42] From an artistic perspective, the notion of professional networks across cultural and religious boundaries seems more suitable, for it implies that both artists and bibliophiles of different faiths shared a lot, whereas, at the same time, their interests and actions diverged at certain points.

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40 Stroumsa 2020, 168. Hughes 2017, 12, emphasises that the scholarly parameters for defining distinctions are modern and do not apply to how medieval people defined their identities. Both Sarah Stroumsa and Aaron W. Hughes focus on ideas and abstract concepts, while my observations deal, instead, with the material aspects of the craft of the (book) arts. I am indebted to Sarah Stroumsa for her conversation on this point and willingness to share material.

41 In a lecture delivered in May 2022. Stroumsa also points out that the cultural products of the different groups which emerged in a shared space were not often necessarily consumed in a shared space.

42 On the inadequacy of the notions of influence and hybridisation, at least in the medieval Iberian context and from the perspective of the history of music, see Reynolds 2009. I am indebted to Sarah Stroumsa for pointing out this reference.

4 The capital of the Kingdom of Majorca as shared urban space

The Jewish community or *aljama* of Perpignan lived in the *call*, as the Jewish neighbourhood was referred to in documents from Roussillon, Majorca and Catalonia.[43] At the same time, the Jews and the Christian citizens shared the urban space of the city. Around 1300, they belonged to the Kingdom of Majorca, which, unlike the urban space, was politically defined. The kingdom was a commonwealth of several geographically separate regions, and, hence, was some sort of deterritorialised space. The Jews of Perpignan also operated within the space of Western Christendom, where the Jewish communities created a network that functioned in another kind of deterritorialised space. Finally, Iberian Jews (and the Jews of Perpignan were certainly part of the cultural landscape of Iberia) looked back at an al-Andalusian heritage and, thus, lived within a space in which they were exposed to Islamicate art and culture. Their perception of manifestations of Islamicate culture was different from that of their Christian neighbours. Owing to that heritage, Iberian Jews participated in yet another deterritorialised Jewish space created by the networks of Jewish communities that reached beyond the peninsula into northern Africa and the Middle East. People and objects moved within these deterritorialised spaces and it is that movement, among other factors, that accounts for, shall we say, the affinities between Jewish art in Iberia and that of northern Africa. All these territorialised and deterritorialised spatial constellations had a determining effect on how Iberian and southern French Jews constructed their identities. Yet, the unique nature and history of every town and city also added their share.[44]

What, then, were the specific spatial constellations observable in Perpignan? The city had never been part of al-Andalus, neither did it ever house a Muslim community, which is, in Nirenberg's words (regarding Old Catalonia in general), 'not to say that the fourteenth-century residents [...] were unfamiliar

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43 In Assis 1997a, 199; the etymology of this term being either from the Hebrew *kahal* or from *calle* in various Iberian idioms is not quite clear.

44 Literature on Iberian Jewish culture in relation to the Islamic world is extremely vast and cannot be cited here. For examples with a focus on manuscript decoration, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 10–56, quoting a lot of the related literature, and Shalev-Eyni 2017.

with Muslims'.[45] In 1262, James I of Aragon, the Conqueror, had divided his dominions between his two sons, Peter and James, creating, thus, the Kingdom of Majorca. James II, as the king of Majorca, received the Balearic Islands, Montpellier and Roussillon. After the Conqueror's death in 1279, the relations between the two brothers and their realms grew increasingly complex and tense, while, at the same time, the Kingdom of Majorca entered a state of vassalage to and dependence on the Crown of Aragon, ruled by Peter III. In this political constellation, Perpignan became the political and economic capital of the Kingdom of Majorca, while the City of Majorca functioned as what David Abulafia defines as the 'ceremonial capital'.[46] Between 1285 and 1298, Majorca was de facto under Aragonese dominance and only Roussillon and Montpellier were held by the Majorcan king. Despite the tense political situation, the years around 1300 saw a period of intense urban development in Perpignan, characterised by numerous building campaigns. Owing primarily to its textile industry and trade, the city had already been in a stage of economic boom for some decades. Perpignan, in fact, served as a bridge between the kingdom and the European market further north.

As Abulafia points out, however, the Jews did not participate in that trade.[47] In 1299, the *aljama* of Perpignan was relatively new.[48] Benjamin of Tudela, who had travelled in the region in the 1170s, did not mention any Jewish population in Perpignan,[49] but, by 1185, a small group of Jews were living there, and in the thirteenth century, that group had grown into one of the largest Jewish communities in Catalonia.[50] In April 1243, perhaps at the initiative of the community of weavers living in the parish of Saint-Jacques, the Jews were granted a privilege to settle on the *puig*, an elevation at the northern edges of the medieval city. The weavers, a crucial driving force of Perpignan's growing textile industry, who had begun settling on the *puig* around 1240, apparently expected the presence of

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45 Nirenberg 1996, 22, n. 14. There were Muslim slaves who lived in Perpignan households: see Winer 2006, 133–158.

46 Alomar 1976, 90; Abulafia 1994, 11; see also Tréton 2014, 24–25.

47 Abulafia 1994, 96, 126, and 165–187 dealing generally with the economic history of the kingdom in the fourteenth century.

48 For historical scholarship on the Jews of Perpignan and references to archival sources that attest to the information summarised here, see Saige 1881; Emery 1959; Vidal 1992; Daileader 2000, 115–154; Denjean 2004; and, recently, Catafau 2018, with a focus on recent archaeological campaigns.

49 Daileader 2000, 115–154.

50 Winer 2006, 82.

the Jews to be economically beneficial. Until then, the *puig* had been inhabited by lepers, while prostitutes lived nearby (after the expulsion of the Jews from Perpignan in 1493, in fact, the prostitutes began to settle in the abandoned *call*).[51] Hence, the area, peripheral as it was, had been associated with marginalised groups for some time. In 1251, residence in the quarter became mandatory for the Jews of Perpignan. From 1263 on, the *call* appears in documents as a defined and named quarter for the Jews. Thus, for example, the royal *baile* (bailiff) was not allowed to enter the *call* with more than five people to avoid tension and disturbances.[52]
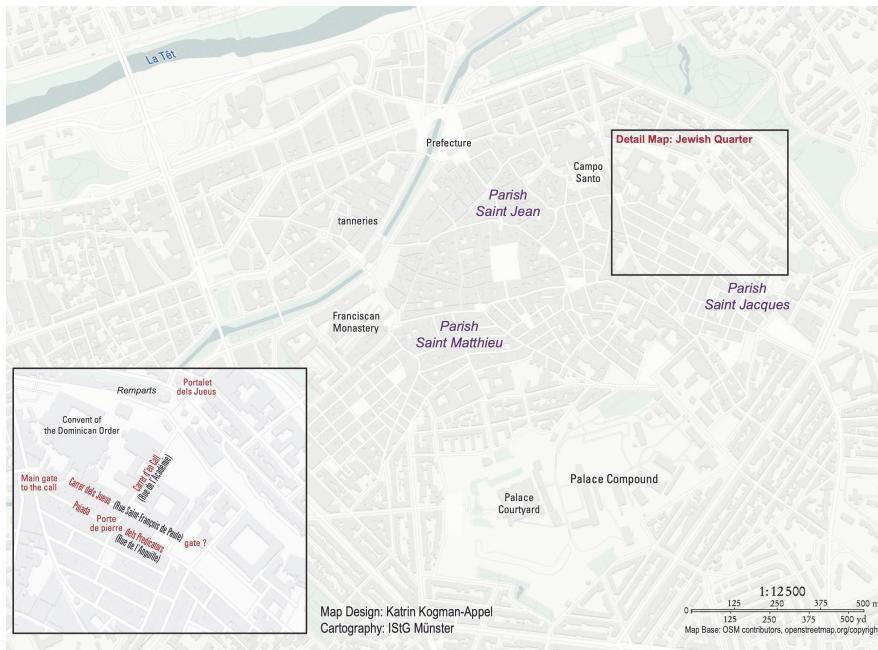

Fig. 9: Map of medieval Perpignan (cartography: Tobias Kniep, IStG, Münster).

51 Abulafia 1994, 98.

52 Assis 1997a, 207.

Fig. 10: Perpignan, remains of the northern city wall (photograph: author).

Medieval Perpignan consisted of four parishes with the La Têt River running in a south-west to north-east direction to the north of them (Fig. 9; the small rivulet Basse west of Saint-Jean followed a different course than it does today).[53] The *call* was in the north-west section of the city, adjacent to the parish of Saint-Jacques. Its main street was located where we now find Rue de l'Académie. Walking in a north-east direction, one approaches Rue François Rabelais in the north running parallel to the city wall (Fig. 10), showing remains of the wall and making the elevated location of the *call* visible. In the west, the *call* reached the eastern end of the later Dominican church in Rue Saint-Joseph in the east, and in the south, the area between Rue Saint-François de Paule and Rue de l'Anguille. The community institutions are believed to have been sited to the east and the west of Rue de l'Académie, where remains have recently been excavated near the Dominican church and the Couvent des Minimes (founded in 1575). Geraldine Mallet suggests that the convent's apse was built above the former synagogue, and that the ritual bath was near the chevet of the Dominican church.[54] The *call* housed about one hundred families around 1300.[55]

The *call* of Perpignan adjacent to the northern city wall was long believed to have been walled on its other sides. However, recent archaeological work belies this notion, as no remains of a wall have yet been excavated. This observation suggests that the quarter was demarcated by rows of houses with blind walls turned towards the Christian areas and accessible only from within the *call*.[56] Hence, there were boundaries but no walls. A document from 1281/1282 talks about the *clausura* of the *call*, so these boundaries must have been clearly perceptible, but it also mentions that some Jews bought houses outside the *clausura*.[57] Moreover, there is documentation referring to Jews residing outside the *call* until the expulsion of the Jews from Perpignan in 1493.[58]

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53 For a brief history of the urban development of Perpignan in the thirteenth century, see Passarius and Catafau 2014. Today the historical *call* is part of the Quartier Saint-Jacques.

54 Mallet 2003 assumes that the *call* reached further to the south to the modern Rue d'Anguille; more recently, Catafau 2018, 116–125, takes into consideration recent archaeological campaigns and, hence, reached more accurate conclusions pertaining to the principal institutions as they must have appeared in the fifteenth century.

55 Emery 1959, 11–16; Mallet 2003, 17; Denjean 2020, 268, speaks of about 450–500 individuals.

56 Catafau 2018, 133, 153.

57 Vidal 1992, 115, n. 31; Catafau 2018, 101–102, 133.

58 Catafau 2018, 153. Jews could own houses outside the *call* but not reside in them, as Christians could own houses in the *call* but could not live there. Jewish residence outside the *call* was thus illegal, but nevertheless quite common.

The *call* could be reached through four or five gates (Fig. 9).[59] One of them was in the west near the modern Place de la Révolution Française and led to the neighbouring parish of Saint Jean, the oldest part of the city. Another gate was in the south, where we now find the corner of Rue de l'Académie and Rue Saint-François de Paule. Other gates were further to the east at the crossing of Rue Saint-François de Paule and Rue Saint-Joseph and in the north, the *portalet dels jueus* was found somewhat outside the actual *call*, near the modern Rue François Rabelais.

Intense construction work in the *call* began in 1277. The architect, Ponç Descoll, who, soon afterwards, was entrusted with the direction of construction works for the royal palace,[60] built a fortified gate and a tower.[61] Jews were involved in the development of the urban space in various ways. In 1276, for example, one Asher of Lunel willed some of his money to the city as a contribution towards the construction of a bridge over the river. The will was signed by four Christians and seven Jews.[62] Asher, thus, was involved in the design of the physical environment. The river did not run through the city, but the bridge would have significantly affected traffic and facilitated access to the city from the surrounding areas.

The considerations about the *call* being walled or not mentioned above raise questions about how secluded it was, its potential for marginalising the Jews, whether it was home to mixed populations,[63] and to what extent the artists and patrons of the Hebrew Bibles participated in the general urban space. The existence of the *call* enabled the authorities to protect the Jews, which became a particularly critical issue during the annual riots that took place everywhere in the Crown during Easter week.[64] At the same time, according to Philip Daileader, the *call* 'limited contact between Jews and Christians' and, thus, became a site of marginalisation. Similar to elsewhere in Christian Europe, various measures were aimed at minimising contact between Jews and Christians, but the degrees of segregation and marginalisation are by no means clear. On the one hand, some Jews who lived at the edges of the *call* received licences to install doors in the outer walls of their houses so that they would be able to enter and leave the

59 Mallet 2003, 16, fig. 1; Catafau 2018, 125, fig. 4.

60 Durliat 1962, 177; Tréton 2014, 27.

61 Catafau 2018, 99–100.

62 Ben-Shalom 2017, 213.

63 As suggested by Catafau 2018, 103.

64 For a discussion of these riots, see Nirenberg 1996, 200–230. Things were stable around the time our Bibles were produced; they began to deteriorate under King Sanç, who began to rule in 1311; Abulafia 1994, 88–99 and 97.

call directly and not via one of the gates.[65] On the other hand, Christian women were not supposed to visit Jewish women.[66] An ordinance from 1299, the year the manuscript Paris 7 was copied, prohibited Jews from touching fruit in the market, a restriction that can certainly be interpreted as an act of segregation, and Maurice Kriegel even speaks of an attempt to define the Jews as 'untouchables'.[67] Daileader, however, argues that the point of such laws was not necessarily segregation in the marketplace, but that the prohibition against touching the produce was perhaps part of an effort to regulate prices and to prevent Jews from examining produce and purchasing the best goods early in the day.[68] Jews were allowed to slaughter animals only inside the *call.* Christians could sell food inside the *call,* but 'these could only be goods that they had been accustomed to sell there'.[69]

Considering to what extent the Jews were secluded naturally leads to the question of how common it was for Jews to leave the *call.* According to Yom-Tov Assis, who has studied documents from various regions of the Crown of Aragon, it becomes clear that it was economically disastrous when, for some reason, the authorities shut the gates of a *call.* As much as Jewish life depended on the infrastructure of the *call*, it depended economically on the possibility of leaving the quarter. The *aljama* was not a self-contained unit.[70] In 1959, Richard Emery suggested that the Jews of Perpignan were overwhelmingly engaged in moneylending with only a few individuals involved in crafts or other professions that were indispensable for maintaining Jewish life, such as butchers.[71] Given that acts of moneylending are more often recorded notarially than other economic activities, some scholars warn against too firm a judgement, arguing that the Jews of the Crown worked in a variety of professions.[72] Daniel L. Smail shows that for Marseille, looking at notarial material alone yields similar conclusions,

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65 Daileader 2000, 142; Catafau 2018, 104.

66 Vidal 1992, 46; Assis 1997a, 203; Daileader 2000, 132.

67 Kriegel 1976, 327–328; Ben-Shalom 2017, 217.

68 Daileader 2000, 146–147; for similar reasons peddlers were not allowed to talk to fruit sellers in the morning or buy fruit and resell it.

69 Daileader, 2000, 136, for the source, see n. 116.

70 Assis 1997a, 202–209; as much as Assis emphasised this point, he also spoke at length of the numerous dangers experienced by the Jews who left the *call.*

71 Emery 1959; on the dynamics of moneylending in the Crown of Aragon in general and the Kingdom of Majorca in particular, and the regulations pertaining to it, see Assis 1997b, 15–48.

72 Baer 1992, vol. 2, 44; Abulafia 1994, 92–95; Daileader, 2000, 115–154.

but when other types of documents are consulted, the picture changes towards more diversity.[73]

Several professions entailed interactions with Christians to a greater extent than others. There were two Jewish physicians in Perpignan in the late thirteenth century,[74] and the medical profession certainly implied contact. Scholars have shown for various locations in Provence that Jews were working as brokers and auctioneers, both professions also implying high degrees of interaction.[75] The same was true regarding crafts. Nirenberg points out that increasing professional specialisation in the regions of the Crown and elsewhere led to growing degrees of interdependence and cooperation among artisans who belonged to different religious groups.[76] Jewish craftsmen purchased commodities outside the *call*, and Jewish artists and scribes must have obtained supplies, such as parchment,[77] brushes and pigments. The production of parchment was linked with the making of leather, which was one of Perpignan's flourishing industries.[78] According to Gabriel Alomar's reconstruction of the medieval city plan, the tanneries were found outside the city on the other side of the river (Fig. 9).[79]

Finally, the nature of the moneylending business led to both tensions[80] and close relationships with Christian clients, the latter often extending over many years.[81] Whereas most Jewish loans were provided to peasants outside the city,[82] some were also granted to royal officials.[83] Significant archival information about Jewish courtiers in Perpignan is only available from the second half of the fourteenth century – after the breakdown of the Kingdom of Majorca[84] – but this does not necessarily exclude the possibility that Jewish courtiers had also

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73 Smail 2021, 417–421.

74 Emery 1991.

75 Drendel 1999; Kriegel 2006, 86–88; Smail 2021, 419–421.

76 Nirenberg 1996, 39.

77 According to Beit-Arié 2021, 229, Jews used locally produced parchment and did not produce their own. This does not apply to the parchment for Torah scrolls, which should be prepared by Jews; if a gentile prepares the parchment he has to be assisted by a Jew: see Hameiri, קרית ספר על הלכות ספר תורה תפילין, ed. 1957, *Kiryat Sefer* 1:3, 21–22.

78 Durliat 1962, 44.

79 Alomar 1976, 98–99.

80 Daileader 2000, 115–154.

81 Ben-Shalom 2017, 111–113.

82 Emery 1959, 43–61.

83 Abulafia 1994, 95; on Jewish courtiers in Catalonia touching also upon Perpignan, see Denjean 2012.

84 Ben-Shalom 2017, 670–671.

served the kings of Majorca. One document that has survived from 1323 grants a Jew named Bonjorn del Barri the privilege of travelling freely and exemption from sumptuary laws.[85] Nirenberg points out that the direct dependence of the Jews on courts engendered particularly close connections with high levels of acculturation.[86] Notarial documents from Perpignan mention one Vitalis Astruc (d. 1273) being involved in royal finances and speak of several loans made by one Jacob de Montepessulano to royal officers.[87] Vitalis Salamon Mayr, perhaps to be identified with the scholar Menahem ben Solomon Hameiri (d. 1315), was involved in several financial transactions and loaned money to the knight Bernardus de Ulmis (d. 1276).[88]

The spatial constellations and the degree to which Jews were involved in life outside the *call* described above must have affected the work of those who produced Paris 7 in many ways. Solomon ben Raphael copied Paris 7 for his own use while living in a place he referred to as '*migrash* Perpignan'.[89] The term מגרש היהודים (*migrash hayehudim*, lit. '*migrash* of the Jews') is not very common but it does appear in several rabbinic sources from Iberia. In the Bible and the Mishnah, a *migrash* is an area on the outskirts of a city intended neither as a dwelling place nor as a field but rather as grazing land.[90] In the 1160s, Benjamin of Tudela described the Jewish quarter of Constantinople as a *migrash*.[91] He apparently used this term to explain that it was outside the city, and, indeed, it was found in Pera, so, it was some sort of suburb.[92] In later sources, *migrash* could simply mean Jew-

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85 Perpignan, Archives municipales de Perpignan, B 94, fol. 45ᵛ, Régné, *History of the Jews in Aragon*, ed. Assis 1978, no. 3275. I am grateful to Ram Ben-Shalom for sharing this reference.

86 Nirenberg 1996, 28.

87 Emery 1959, 39–66.

88 Emery 1959, 46–47. On the possibility that Vitalis and Menahem are one and the same, see Emery 1959, 28, with references to earlier scholars. However, the name Vitalis Salamon suggests that this man's Hebrew name may have been Haim ben Solomon rather than Menahem ben Solomon, in which case, he may, in fact, have been Menahem's brother.

89 See above, n. 2; ׳כתבתי אני שלמה בר׳ רפאל זה הספר לעצמי וסדרתי בו תורה נביאים וכתובים בכרך אחד וסיימתיו כאן במגרש פרפיניאן בחדש סיון מחרת שבועות בשנת חמשת אלפים וחמשים ותשע לבריאת עולם׳.

90 Numbers 35:2–3; Mishnah, *Arakhin* 9:8.

91 Benjamin of Tudela, ספר מסעות של ר׳ בנימין ז״ל על פי כתבי יד עם הערות ומפתח, ed. Adler 1907, 16.

92 My thanks go to Pinchas Roth for pointing out Benjamin's use of the term and to Javier Castaño, who suggests the possibility that the *migrash* refers to the existence of two Jewish quarters, an older and a newer, the latter possibly referred to as *migrash* being located on the periphery of the city. According to Gabriel Alomar's city plan, there might, indeed, have been an older Jewish quarter further to the south-west, Alomar 1976, 98–99; Vidal 1992, 19, however,

ish quarter. Solomon ibn Adret mentioned the *migrash* of the Jews in Acre, and his student Yom Tov Asibili (Ritva, d. 1330) used the same term for the Jewish quarter of Zaragoza.[93] Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh, d. 1327) referred to the Jewish quarter in Toledo, where he resided after he had migrated from the Rhineland, as 'the large *migrash* of the Jews'.[94] He may have been familiar with the term from his time in northern Iberia/southern France prior to his arrival in Toledo. In a way, the use of the term *migrash* to define Jewish space seems to indicate a certain measure of peripherality and exclusion, which does not always have to do solely with its location within the city or on its edges but perhaps also with the social and the political situation of the Jews.

The *call* housed a number of important scholars. The most outstanding among them was Menahem Hameiri, a halakhist of the Maimonidean school, mentioned above, who completed his major work, *Bet Habeḥirah*, around the turn of the thirteenth century. In 1306, he wrote a halakhic handbook for scribes, *Kiryat Sefer*, which makes it clear that he had a great deal of interest in scribal work, particularly in connection with Torah scrolls. In this tract, he hailed a Bible by the Toledan scribe Israel ben Isaac as the most accurate model for Torah scrolls.[95] Another member of the same family, Haim ben Israel, penned a Bible, now kept in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma under the shelf mark Parm. 2668, which, in fact, may have been present in the *migrash* of Perpignan by the end of the thirteenth century. It features an array of Temple vessels strikingly similar to that of Paris 7, which suggests that the latter might possibly have served as its model.[96] Levi ben

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assumed that the few Jews who lived at the time in Perpignan were not concentrated in one particular area.

93 Responsa Solomon ibn Adret, תשובות הרשב״א, no. 272 (Responsa Project, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan); Responsa Yom Tov Asibili, *(הריטב״א) אברהם אלאשבילי*, no. 156 (Responsa Project, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan); Novellae Yom Tov Asibili, חידושי הריטב״א לרבינו יום טוב ב״ר אברהם אלאשבילי, ed. 1984 on *Ḥullin* 95b.

94 'החצר הגדולה של רבי טודרוס בן נחמיה הנזכר במגרש הגדול של היהודים יצ״ו בטוליטולה, Responsa Asher ben Yehiel, שאלות ותשובות הרא״ש, *Klal* 68, no. 21.

95 Hameiri, קרית ספר על הלכות ספר תורה תפילין, ed. 1957, *Kiryat Sefer* 2:2, 48. There were two scribes by that name, both from the same family in thirteenth-century Toledo: Kogman-Appel 2004, 62. Hameiri cites the colophon of that book, where Israel explains the connection to Meir Abulafia's prototype. Abulafia is mentioned in the colophon as deceased, hence it must have been penned after 1244. Israel the Elder is documented until 1248, and it is probable that he was the one who penned the colophon. Two Bibles signed by him survive: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Kenn. 7 (1222), and New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Lutzki 44a (1241).

96 Parma, Biblioteca palatina, Parm. 2668, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/viewerpage?vid=MANUSCRIPTS&docid=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000787980205171-1#$FL1

Abraham (d. after 1305), another Maimonidean, was living in Perpignan around the same time, and I have suggested elsewhere that it is probable that his scholarship had a strong impact on the display of the Temple vessels in Paris 7.[97] Among the other Perpignan scholars were the exegete and philosopher Joseph Caspi, still quite young in 1300,[98] and the poet Abraham Bedersi, whose exact life dates are unknown. Similar to Menahem Hameiri, he was a successful moneylender (under the name of Abram Mosse de Montepessulano) and lamented that his business did not leave him enough time for poetry. He acted, for some time, as the *aljama*'s scribe.[99] The group also included the philosopher Cresques Vidal, Moses ben Samuel, a student of Menahem Hameiri, Hameiri's nephew Abram Mayr and the poet Phinehas Halevi.[100]

The observation on the depiction of the Temple vessels mentioned above highlights two important factors involved in the production of Paris 7: firstly, the impact of the local scholarship – specifically Levi ben Abraham's impact – within the relatively intimate space of the Jewish *call* and, secondly, the impact of the Jewish networks – that deterritorialised space of the larger Jewish world inhabiting Iberia – and the possibility that Toledan codices copied by celebrated scribes were to be found in the *call*.

Moving outside the *call*, the carefully laid out arcade design on the initial pages of Paris 7 (Figs 3–5) and its relatives, finally, takes us outside the *call* into the urban space of Christian Perpignan. The economic upsurge experienced in the Kingdom of Majorca led to building campaigns all over the city and arcades in both secular and ecclesiastical contexts were particularly dominant features of local architectural taste during the reign of James II. Such arcades, whose function was primarily decorative and not fully structural, appeared repeatedly in the urban landscape of Perpignan in courtyards and cloisters, an observation that supports the suggestion that the arcades in the Bible were meant as architectural courtyard metaphors to lead the reader into the 'minor Temple', the biblical text. An example is the cloister of the newly built Franciscan church, a

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7768246> (accessed on 26 May, 2022); Gutmann 1976, 138–139, in fact, suggested that the Temple array was a later addition done in Catalonia, copied from the Perpignan Bible; on this with some scepsis, see Kogman-Appel 2004, 68–74. Either way, also according to Gutmann's scenario, the Bible might have been in Roussillon around 1300.

97 Kogman-Appel 2023.

98 About Caspi's connection to Perpignan, see Emery 1976, 29–32.

99 Emery 1959, 28; Ben-Shalom 2017, 71, 107. On scholars in the moneylending business, see also Denjean 2012, 203, and Iancu-Agou 2003 with a focus on the fifteenth century.

100 Ben-Shalom 2017, 538–554.

project that began in 1264 and was only completed in the early fourteenth century. The church was demolished in the nineteenth century, but the cloister is extant (for the location, see Fig. 9).[101] We find the large cemetery Campo Santo adjacent to the cathedral, established during the first building phase of the cathedral project from 1298 until 1302 (Fig. 11, for the location, see Fig. 9), quite near the *call*.[102] A nineteenth-century lithograph shows the courtyard of a secular building, known as the Hôtel d'Ortaffà and now incorporated into the prefecture. It shows a no longer extant arcaded gallery with similar simple Gothic arches (for the location of the prefecture, see Fig. 9).[103] Its design as a large courtyard is dominated by arcades.
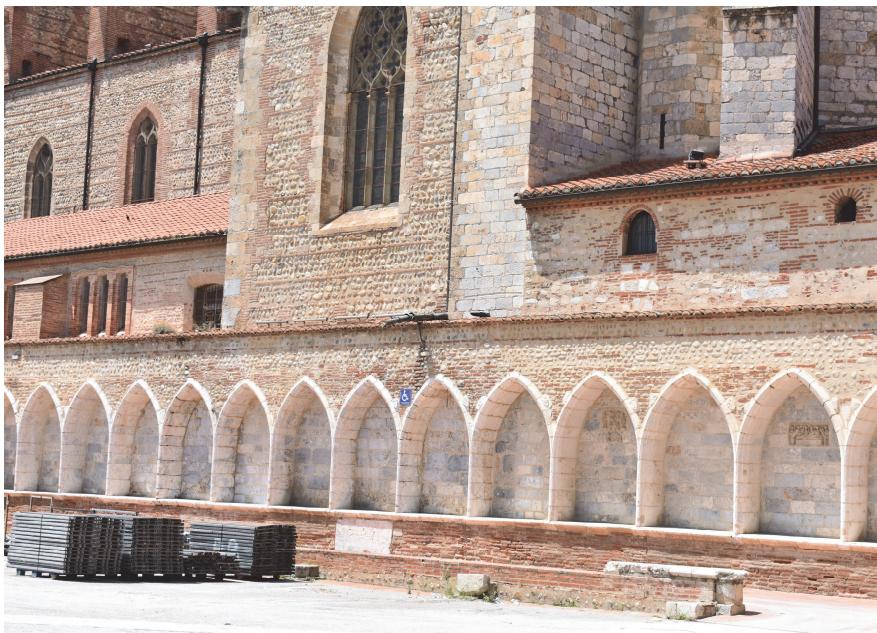
Fig. 11: Perpignan, 1298–1302, Campo Santo (photograph: author).

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101 Barrenechea 2014, 63, fig. 22.
102 Barrenechea 2014, 57–59.
103 Poisson 2014, 99, with a reproduction of the lithograph.

The decision to build a royal palace was taken in 1264, immediately after the establishment of the Kingdom of Majorca. Construction began in 1270 and was directed by Ramon Pau, who disappears from documents in 1275 to be replaced by the mentioned Ponç Descoll. As noted earlier, the latter was also active in the construction of the Jewish *call.* The royal family resided in the new palace from the summer of 1283 on, and a judge held court within the palace starting in 1286. Most of the work (including the courtyard with its arcades) was finished by 1295, but construction work continued until well into the fourteenth century (Figs 12–15). Scholars have identified three building phases up until the end of the thirteenth century.[104]

The Franciscan cloister and the Campo Santo were not accessible to Jewish residents going about their daily business, but they might well have seen by them while they were being constructed. By contrast, the outer palace courtyard was a secular public space, where the townspeople assembled on various occasions. Upon entering the courtyard from the west, one faced one set of arcades in the gallery to the east on the right-hand side, which was constructed during the second building phase (Fig. 12). A nineteenth-century lithograph of the courtyard indicates that another set of arcades was found to the left.[105] There was a further set, which was erected during the first phase, above the entrance (Fig. 13). Thus, whoever stood in that outer courtyard was surrounded by arcades, an impression that can still be felt today (Fig. 14). Beneath the eastern gallery, one continued into the queen's courtyard with another set of arcades from the final construction phase (Fig. 15). The public spaces surrounded the main courtyard on the ground floor, while the private chambers were found on the first. A throne chamber was installed behind the western arcade at the end of the fourteenth century, but scholars assume that the king received audiences in that space from the very beginning. The palace was considered the zenith of the royal construction campaigns, a visual and material manifestation of the economic boom the kingdom experienced during these decades.[106]

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104 For the construction history of the palace, see Pousthomis 2014.

105 Sandron 2014, 255.

106 Abulafia 1994, 150.

Fig. 12: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, eastern side (photograph: author).
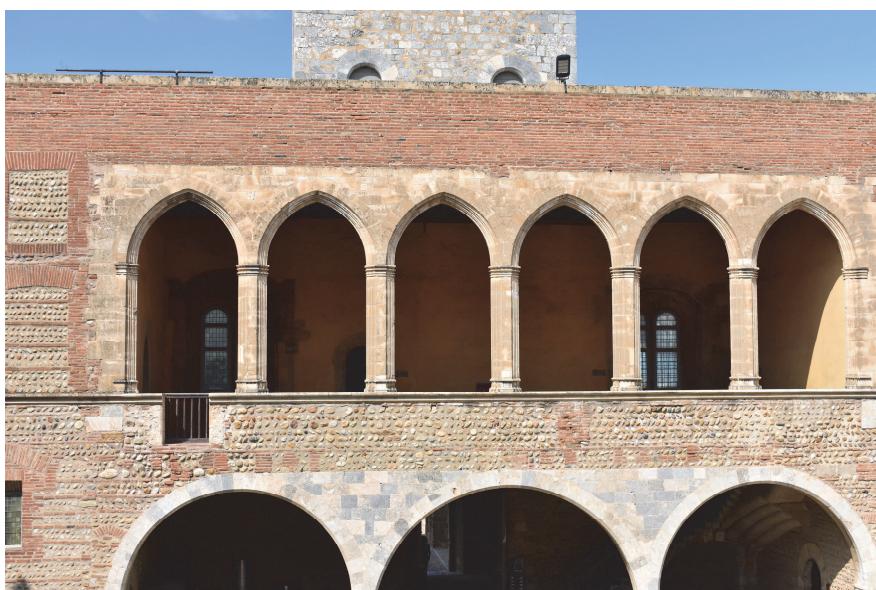
Fig. 13: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, western side (photograph: author).

Fig. 14: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, public courtyard, photographed from the eastern gallery looking west (photograph: author).

Fig. 15: Perpignan, *c.* 1270–1295, royal palace, inner courtyard (queen's chambers) (photograph: author).

Similar arcade designs appear slightly later in the City of Majorca. After the completion of the Perpignan palace in the 1300s, Ponç Descoll was entrusted with the construction of a royal palace at the site of the earlier Islamic citadel, the Almudaina, and its courtyard and front features similar arcades. Around the same time, Descoll was also involved in the construction of the Castel Bellver outside the City of Majorca, whose inner courtyard was surrounded by the same type of arcade (Fig. 16).[107]

Thus, the building metaphor of the arcaded courtyard emerged within the urban space shared by Jews and Christians and attests to the presence of Jews in the public spaces of the city. It may very well also echo an exchange among artists and designers, such as Ponç Descoll. Given that the *call* was rather crowded, it is unlikely that there was enough space anywhere in the quarter to build an arcaded courtyard. In a way, the copious use of arcades in the Hebrew Bibles copied during the time of the building campaigns seems to be a statement of participation in the urban space of Perpignan and its artistic and architectural tastes. Jews were present in the palace courtyard, when the townsmen assembled, but, more significantly, Jewish courtiers and financiers undertook business with the court, which implies their physical presence within the courtyard and the adjacent administrative quarters. The patrons of Bibles of the sort of Paris 7 might well have been among the financiers active at court. Not immediately relevant to a discussion of Hebrew Bibles from *c.* 1300 but, nevertheless, interesting is also the fact that during and after the 1391 persecutions, the Jews of Perpignan lived in the palace for three years, indicative in many ways of the dynamics between the court and the Jews.[108]

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107 On the career of Ponç Descoll, see Durliat 1962, 173–179, with references to archival documents.
108 Daileader 2000, 139.

Fig. 16: Palma, Majorca, early fourteenth century, Castel de Bellver, courtyard (photograph: author).

The micrographic carpet pages in Paris 7, finally, also tell a story. There are three such pages. One is an opening that features geometric diamond designs with roundels in the centre of each diamond (Fig. 6); another, which we find after the depiction of the Temple vessels and right before the beginning of the biblical text, has a centralised star design. As I have shown elsewhere, these pages, similar to other micrographic designs, attest to a continuous scribal culture from the early medieval Middle Eastern tradition via Toledo to early-fourteenth-century Roussillon. Both the diamond and the star design appear in the St Petersburg Bible ('Leningrad Bible') dated to 1008–1010 from Egypt, and the star design is also found in the Parma Bible.[109] Julie Harris, in her attempt to imbue carpet pages in Iberian Hebrew Bibles with meaning, links those of the Perpignan Bible with Kabbalah.[110] If that were the case and following the method pursued in recent micrography studies, one would have expected some kabbalistic elements in the text employed

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109 Kogman-Appel 2004, 132, with references and images.

110 Harris 2021a.

for the micrographic design. However, the texts on these pages are traditionally Masoretic.[111] Moreover, and more significantly, there is no evidence of any kabbalistic interest among the scholars of Perpignan during the years around 1300, nor is there any evidence of an earlier kabbalistic tradition. Rather, Perpignan scholars were famous for their intense defence of Maimonidean teachings; most prominently among this group were Cresques Vidal, Menahem Hameiri and Levi ben Abraham, the last, in fact, having found refuge in Perpignan after being 'hounded' by critics of philosophy.[112] Rather than being the outcome of kabbalistic speculations, these pages are echoes of a scribal tradition with early medieval roots. More importantly for our context here, although they do not testify to transcultural entanglement, these pages offer clear signs of the cultural dynamics within a deterritorialised Jewish space in former al-Andalus and northern Africa.

5 Conclusions

The foregoing observations elucidate a rather complex background of interaction. In terms of the spaces in which these interactions took place, we can think of the design of the manuscript Paris 7 as evolving in three different spheres. Firstly, there was the *call* with its scholars, a setting that yielded the imagery of the Temple vessels. Secondly, the arcades lead us into the larger urban space and confront us with the contemporaneous building campaigns that took place there. Did the artists of our Bibles simply stroll around the city, look at the arcades, and translate them into the small medium of book art because they shared the same visual culture? Or were there exchanges of a different kind? Did Ponç Descoll play any role in this scenario? What sort of interaction did he engage in with representatives of the *aljama* while he was at work in the *call*? Was the design of arcades something that Jewish and Christian miniaturists talked about when they met in

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111 I am grateful to Dalia Ruth Halperin for sharing her readings of the texts. On involving the content of the micrography in its analysis, see, among others, Halperin 2013, and the articles recently collected in Liss (ed.) 2021.

112 Albeit a traditional Talmudist, Cresques Vidal, who was involved in the actual outbreak of the conflict in 1303, was sympathetic to Levi ben Abraham (who at the time had already moved to Narbonne) and defended him: on this see in detail Ben-Shalom 1996, 171–176; on Levi ben Abraham, see Halkin 1966. On the dominance of philosophy and the absence of Kabbalah in southern France during Hameiri's lifetime, see in some detail Halbertal 2000, 11–21. While Kabbalah emerged in southern France (albeit not in Perpignan, but further north, in Posquières, modern Vauvert), it had moved to Catalonia and Castile by about 1250.

the parchment workshop or at the pigment sellers? In short – in what ways were these arcades popping out everywhere in the city talked about in the daily discourse of people of both cultures interested in design, art and the latest architectural fashion? We cannot expect that any of these interactions would have been recorded or documented and can only guess about their nature and effects. The Hebrew Bibles of Perpignan offer but a faint echo of the degree of cohesion that must have existed among the people engaged in these interactions. Thirdly, the carpet pages lead us into the deterritorialised space of the larger Jewish world that functioned within the Islamic sphere. Although Perpignan as a city never belonged to that sphere, owing to a collective heritage that they shared with Iberian Jews elsewhere, its Jewish inhabitants maintained strong links to Islamic culture.

Acknowledgements

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