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Between identity and variation: notes on the translation of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (with regard also to other Romance language versions of the Bible)

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Between identity and variation: notes on the translation of the *Bible du XIII^e^ siècle* (with regard also to other Romance language versions of the Bible)

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Summary

The article aims to verify the degree of translation homogeneity of a basket of selected lemmas from the *Bible du XIII^e^ siècle*. This should contribute to the resolution of one of the basic questions that have been raised about this important medieval translation of the Bible: namely, how was it achieved? Is it – as it is claimed – the result of collective work with a clearly visible breakdown? Our analysis will focus first on the music-related headwords (as they could be potentially problematic for a medieval translator), and then cross-reference the data with those of other special cases already highlighted by previous studies. As we shall show, the observation of all the different occurrences of these chosen lemmas makes it possible to identify precise stitches that might correspond to a change of hand (and thus of translator, or textual source).

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1 The *Bible du XIII^e siècle*: state of research

The *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (henceforth *BXIII*) is known as the first complete translation of the Vulgate into French prose. Due both to the complexity of its manuscript tradition and to the considerable length of its text, this version has been only partially published so far.[1] Despite this limitation, *BXIII* has been the subject of a series of studies over the years which have allowed a significant framing of the phenomenon in its spatial and temporal coordinates. In view of the forthcoming examination of translation solutions, it seems useful to summarise the main turning points in the critical debate.

In his pioneering 1884 study,[2] Samuel Berger was the first to shed light on the importance of *BXIII* in the panorama of medieval Bible translations and to attempt – albeit based on the few manuscripts known at the time – an initial chrono-geographical collocation of its origin. The scholar's merit lies primarily in having traced *BXIII* back to the revision of the Vulgate produced at the University of Paris in 1226.[3] The clue concerns the adoption in the French translation of the new system of book order and chapter division introduced by the *Parisiensis.* In view of this, the date proposed by Berger for the translation project is to be placed between 1226 and 1250,[4] the latter being the year in which the important codex Paris, BnF, fr. 899 was set. As regards the *milieu* of origin, *BXIII* presents itself, always according to Berger's reconstruction, as the result of the work of a team of scholars linked to the University of Paris:

> La centralisation que la royauté française et l'Université de Paris ont apportée dans l'administration et dans les études a eu son effet sur la traduction de la Bible. Le règne de saint Louis a vu se produire, sans doute à Paris et dans l'Université, la première traduction complète de la Bible.[5]

1 Two critical texts are available to date: Michel Quereuil, *La Bible française du XIII^e siècle. Edition critique de la Genèse* (Genève: Droz, 1988) and the most recent Claudio Lagomarsini, *La Bible française du XIIIe siècle. Edition critique des livres de Ruth, Judith et Esther* (Genève: Droz, 2024). Unfortunately, Clive R. Sneddon's doctoral thesis on the Gospels (1978) is still unpublished.

2 Samuel Berger, *La Bible française au Moyen Âge. Étude sur les plus anciennes versions de la Bible écrites en prose de langue d'oïl* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1884), 109–156.

3 Berger formulates the date of 1226 based on two arguments. The first concerns the testimony of the Franciscan Roger Bacon, who in a passage of the *Opus minus* (1266–1267) states that, forty years earlier (therefore in 1226), theologians and booksellers of Paris had published an extremely corrupt "exemplar vulgatum" of the Bible. The second is internal to the text: the manuscripts of the *Parisiensis* present the division of the chapters attributed to Stephen Langton, who taught in Paris between about 1180 and 1206, the year in which he moved to Cambridge to become archbishop. This new arrangement coincides almost perfectly with the one still in use today. The same is true for the books, which appear arranged as follows: Octateuch, *1–4Rg*, *1–2Par*, *1–4Esr*, *Tb*, *Idt*, *Est*, *Iob*, *Ps*, *Prv*, *Qo*, *Ct*, *Sap*, *Sir*, Prophets, *1–2Mcc*, Gospels, *Pauline Epistles*, *Act*, *Catholic Epistles* and *Apc* (please refer to the end of this article for the dissolution of the acronyms).

4 Berger actually proposed 1239 as *terminus ante quem*, which is the year of the transfer of the Crown of Thorns to Paris by Louis IX: an event that is curiously not mentioned in the glosses on *John* 18 (see Berger 1884, 150). This argument *e silentio* has seemed to later scholars a bit slippery and therefore avoidable (see in particular Eugenio Burgio, "I volgarizzamenti oitanici della Bibbia nel XIII secolo (un bilancio sullo stato delle ricerche)", *Critica del testo* VII (2004), 1, 1–40, here 11, note 30.

5 Berger 1884, 110.

We will return more extensively in § 2 on the assumption that multiple translators cooperated in the enterprise.

The first objection to Berger's ideas regarding the dating and composition of *BXIII* came already a few decades later on behalf of Paul Meyer (1909), who questioned the very consistency of the biblical redaction. According to the scholar, Berger postulated the existence of *BXIII* without actually identifying a codex that contained it in its entirety. We recall that the fr. 899, on which Berger had based much of his theories because he considered it to be the oldest codex in the tradition, is in fact incomplete (it contains only books from *Gn* 2:13 to *2Pt* 1:21). For the scholar, however, this was a mere fact of transmission that in no way detracted from his idea of an original unitary project.[6]

Later, in 1969, Meyer's position was reiterated by Alan Robson, but with some variation. Against the former's arguments, Robson brought three manuscripts containing the complete *BXIII* and dating from c. 1300 onward.[7] He thought, however, that it was a compilation, i.e. an assemblage of independently translated books or groups of books, and not, as Berger wanted, the result of a unified project conducted systematically by a group of scholars:

> Apart from the glosses, and the condensation, omission or mistranslation of individual passages, *BXIII* resembles any modern translation from the Vulgate. But is a compilation, not a work of literature; a publishing venture carried out by anonymous editors financed by a group of stationers in Paris or Picardy.[8]

The heterogeneous nature of the work already highlighted by Berger, who – as we shall say – identified a substantial difference in the amount of glosses and style of the various books or groups of books, was thus traced by Robson to a diversified origin of the texts. This conclusion was based on the reassessment of the content and relative chronology of a number of important codices: the oft-mentioned fr. 899 (the so-called *Bible de Thou*, named after its former owner); Philadelphia, Free Library, Widener 2 (according to the scholar, a copy of the fr. 899 dated to the 15th century); Paris, BnF, fr. 24728; and Paris, Bibl. de l'Arsenal 5211 (i.e., the oldest witness of the *Bible d'Acre*).

According to Robson, these manuscripts – of which Berger was only partially aware–,[9] bearers of partial and mutually different versions of the Bible, would testify to an early fragmentary phase from which the process of constituting *BXIII* may have originated. Compared to Berger, this should also be postdated to the latter half of the century.[10]

6 Clive R. Sneddon, "The Origins of the *Old French Bible*: the Significance of Paris, BN, MS fr. 899", *Studi francesi* CXXVII (1999), 1–13, here 2.

7 Alan Robson, "Vernacular Scriptures in France", *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. by G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 436–451, here 448.

8 Robson 1969, 446.

9 In addition to the fr. 899, Berger only knew the *Acre Bible*, which he talks about in the chapter entitled *Essai de Bible abrégée* of Berger 1884, 100–108.

10 "whereas the Acre Bible is dated c. 1250–4, the whole of the remaining corpus of material under discussion is not earlier than c. 1280. The movement leading to the constitution of *BXIII* belongs to the latter

The scholar thus distinguishes two intermediate stages in the creation of *BXIII*: a first one, with the pre-existing translations of *Ps* and *Apc*, that constitute the "archaic stratum" of the redaction; and a later one that saw the assemblage of the so-called *de Thou-Widener compilation*, i.e., a selection of books equally present in the fr. 899 and Widener 2, which would thus be alleged copies of the same compilation.[11]

However, this theory has been disproved in more recent years by Clive R. Sneddon (1999), who in taking stock of the origins of *BXIII* demonstrates with rather convincing arguments that: first, the texts present in the two codices are not related to each other; and then that the manuscript *de Thou* actually transmits a mutilated version of *BXIII*.[12]

According to Sneddon, the errors of evaluation made by Robson were first of all due to a cursory knowledge of the Philadelphia manuscript, known to the scholar only indirectly, through the census of De Ricci. On closer inspection, the contents of the codex in fact appear quite different from those of the fr. 899, so much so that we can unhesitatingly rule out the possibility that they might be two copies of the same textual source (the inconsistency of the *de Thou-Widener compilation* is thus proved).

Considering possible explanations about the incomplete state of the fr. 899 – namely, 1. the possibility that the present state is the original; 2. that the text may have been conceived as a historical compilation, since the remaining contents are substantially (but not exclusively) historical; and 3. that the codex originally contained the complete *BXIII* –, Sneddon inclines toward the third one, supporting his hypothesis with robust arguments based on the content and consistency within the text.

Ultimately, the fr. 899 appears as an early copy of a highly successful version of *BXIII*; a version, however, that may already no longer coincide with the original translation.[13] The current state of the codex is instead the result of material mutilations sustained over time.

Regarding the dating and context of production, in a more recent contribution the scholar has advanced the hypothesis that the translation may have been carried out in the 1240s, in a Dominican environment, perhaps for the nuns of the convent of Montargis (near Orléans) entrusted with the education of Louis IX's daughter Isabella (1242–1271).[14] A further temporal specification comes from the research of Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, who found in a

half of the century; the existence of the Acre Bible suggests that some of the abridged bibles may be earlier than the complete ones" (Robson 1969, 446, note 1).

11 The fr. 889 contains: the unglossed Octateuch, *Rg*, *Tb*, *Idt*, *Est* and *Iob*; then *Ps* and glossed Gospels; *Acts* and *Catholic Epistles* (only *Io* and *1Pt*). According to Robson, Widener 2 should include the same selection of books up to the end of the Gospels (Robson 1969, 445).

12 Sneddon 1999, 4.

13 Sneddon formulates this hypothesis on the basis of a more careful study of the transmission of the Gospels, according to which an older redaction (*x*) seems to have been followed by two distinct independent revisions (*a* and *b*), with the fr. 899 at the head of branch *b* (see Sneddon 1999, 11).

14 The translation project was inspired, according to Sneddon, by an earlier revision of the *Bible moralisée* that belonged to Blanche of Castile and her son Saint Louis. Initially addressed to a member of the royal family, presumably Louis' daughter Isabella, the version would then have reached the Parisian book market around 1260 and from there copied and revised (see Clive R. Sneddon, "On the creation of the Old French Bible", *Nottingham Medieval Studies* XLVI (2002), 25–44).

Latin text of 1274, the *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae* of the Franciscan Guibert de Tournai (post c. 1200–1284), a probable allusion to *BXIII*:

> Vidi ego, et legi et habui *bibliam gallicatam*, cuius exemplar Parisiis publice ponitur a stationariis ad scribendum haereses et errores, dubietates et inconcinnas interpretationes.[15]

If it is true, as Eugenio Burgio believes, that the "biblia gallicata" (i.e., in French) in question is indeed our *BXIII*, then the *terminus ante quem* must again be shifted to 1274. The allusion is all the more relevant when we consider the connection established by Guilbert between the translation and the 13th-century Parisian book market: an idea that, as we have seen, was already Robson's,[16] but which Sneddon finds hard to agree with due to insufficient evidence.[17]

More recently, Akiko Komada has argued for the absolute chronological priority of the manuscript Cod. CXXIV/ 1-1 preserved at the Biblioteca Pública in Évora, which, as the oldest witness of *BXIII*, could convey to us "un des meilleurs états du texte original".[18] These hypotheses were formulated primarily on the basis of a study of the manuscript's miniatures, attributed to a Parisian artist active in the third quarter of the 13th century (such Maître Duprat). Decisive for the identification of the production context and original content of the codex were, moreover, two tables inscribed respectively on the verso of a guard leaf at the head of the volume and in the margin of the first leaf of *Par*. The first case arouses particular interest because it contains an explicit exhortation to read addressed to laymen ("Ici desouz sont les livres qui sont bons a lire a lais gens").[19] The second table, on the other hand, consists of a list of books, from *Par* to *Mcc*, which are almost totally absent in the present volume (that conveys only the first part of the Old Testament, from *Gn* to *Ps*) and which thus might suggest that the original book project included the entire OT. Based on these data and a paleographic analysis of the codex, Komada inclines, finally, toward a date between 1265 and 1279 – as opposed to the fr. 899, which, because of the activity of its illuminator, the so-called "Maître de Bari", and other decorative elements, should be dated to 1280. As mentioned, the *milieu* of production of the manuscript was most likely secular, and perhaps specifically legal.[20]

2 Translation strategies, between identity and variation

As emerged from the overview now presented, there is still no clear idea of the production context of *BXIII*. We have seen that the proposals lean mainly now toward the secular

15 See Burgio 2004, 11–12.

16 See Robson 1969, 446.

17 See Sneddon 1979, 138.

18 Akiko Komada, "La première génération de la *Bible française du XIII^e siècle*", *Lusitania sacra* XXXIV (2016), 105–135.

19 Komada 2016, 113. The column is followed by a selection of OT books with decidedly historical content (a modality that recalls the *Historia Scholastica* by Peter Comestor).

20 See Komada 2016, 125–127.

milieu of the University, now toward the *milieu* – equally cultured and provided with easy access to libraries – of the Order of Preachers. On two points, however, scholars generally agree: 1. on the priority to be given to the manuscript fr. 899, the oldest and most authoritative of the preserved witnesses (with the possible exception of the recently acquired manuscript of Évora); and 2. on the composite nature of the translation, which could be due either to the reuse of pre-existing translations or to the division of the translation work among several scholars.

Berger was the first to notice a discrepancy in the style and glossing of the various books:

> Mais la Bible tout entière a-t-elle été traduite par la même main? Le premier coup d'œil nous fait voir que la Bible du XIII[e] siècle est une ouvre mêlée et inégale, dont certains livres sont entièrement glosés, d'autres fort peu, d'autres point. Dans certaines parties, la traduction est d'un fort bon style, ailleurs elle est presque inintelligible; tantôt elle paraît l'œuvre d'un homme de talent, tantôt d'un scribe sans mérite, d'un vulgaire *latinier*: c'est le mot employé par notre traduction elle-même.[21]

According to Sneddon, the presence in the text of an apparatus of glosses carefully selected from several sources, and not only from the *Glossa ordinaria*, would be a sign of a conscious editorial operation, whose complexity may have required the collaboration of multiple translators:

> The scale of the work involved in not only translating the Bible but going through commentaries and deciding on the extent and choice of glossing in any individual book makes this a very substantial enterprise, which seems inevitably to have involved more than one translator. Berger identified differences in style and vocabulary choice between sections of the Bible, and firmly concluded that several translators were involved, though I would explicitly add presumably under some overall editorial control, since the choices made are clearly not haphazard.[22]

The unevenness of the glossing, which appears thicker in some books and missing in others, is also attributed by the scholar to a deliberate editorial choice. According to him, the frequent glosses found in the Octateuch, which seem to emphasize the elements of continuity between the Old and New Testaments and the necessity of good works, would serve as an interpretive texture to the rest of the Bible, that is generally marked by greater perspicuity and does not need glosses except in special cases.[23]

In addition to the glosses, Berger noted disparities in the treatment of some particular lemmas.[24] The case of the Latin LOCUSTA is particularly illustrative: it appears twice in the form of a loanword, *locuste* (*Ex* 10:4, 12:12); it is then translated, for a stretch, with *langoste* (from *Nm* 13:34 to *2Par* 7:18); and finally with *ao(u)sterele* (from *Iob* 37:20 to *Ps* 108:23). Other zoonyms were examined more recently by Claudio Lagomarsini, who was able to

21 Berger 1884, 145.

22 Sneddon 2002, 33.

23 The Psalms and the Gospels, for example, which are the most widely read books, are accompanied by an apparatus of literal glosses (see Sneddon 2002, 43).

24 Berger 1884, 146–147.

confirm this uneven treatment.[25] The scholar focused in particular on the two lists of animals found in *Lv* 11 and *Dt* 14, which, despite their similarity and relative closeness in the Latin text, show substantial divergences in French translation.

Some difficult lemmas, on the contrary, turn out to be translated equally in several books, suggesting the possibility that there is some kinship between them. This is the case of the Latin interjection VAE, which, according to Berger, is translated, both in *Is* and in *Mtt*, with the singular expression *la mort d'enfer*;[26] or of the tendency, common to the books of the Pentateuch, to omit out of modesty the translation of certain parts of the text considered scabrous.[27] We will return to these cases in more detail later.

In order to better understand how *BXIII* might have been translated, we therefore consider it useful to supplement the data just reported with an examination of the translation homogeneity of a basket of selected lemmas. Our analysis will take as its starting point the semantic field of music, which, being neither very extensive nor widely attested in the Bible, can provide a rather exhaustive overview of all recurrences. Furthermore, it includes terms that are potentially insidious for the medieval translator, who is required to devise non-trivial translation solutions.

We give a preliminary account of the choice of manuscripts consulted. Not having a complete critical edition of *BXIII*, we resorted: for the first volume (*Gn–Ps*), clearly to the manuscript BnF, fr. 899 and, in case of gaps, to Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 27 (13th cent.); for the second volume (*Prv–Apc*) to BnF, fr. 398 (13th cent.) and, in case of gaps or illegibility, to Bern, Burgerbibliothek 28 (13th cent. ex.).[28]

In some cases, it seemed worthwhile to compare the data from *BXIII* with those of other two medieval Romance language translations: the Italian Bible (*Bita*) and the so-called *Bible anglo-normande* (*Ban*). For the first one, we consulted the two fifteenth-century manuscripts BnF, it. 1 and 2, bearers of a full version of the biblical text, although sometimes probably revised on the Latin.[29] For the second one, we referred to the manuscript BnF, fr. 1, the more complete of the two codices preserved for this redaction, dated to the mid-fourteenth century.[30]

25 Claudio Lagomarsini, "*Et ge ne sai pas le françois*. La traduzione degli zoonimi esotici in alcune bibbie romanze medievali", *Critica del testo* XXV (2022), 1, 95–113.

26 Berger 1884, 146.

27 Berger writes: "M. Reuss a remarqué que bien souvent le traducteur du Pentateuque hésite, par pudeur, à traduire son texte: «Je n'ose dire autrement» (*Lv*, 15:19); «ci a bien xii ligniées qui ne font pas a dire» (*Lv*, 15:25–30; comparez *Lv*, 20:15 et 16, et *Gn*, 2:25; 38:9) " (Berger 1884, 147).

28 We obtained code data from the table set up by Burgio 2004, 33. Except for the *optimum* fr. 899, the choice of reference manuscripts was dictated mainly by reasons of availability of reproductions. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 27 is nevertheless considered authoritative. On this point and the problems related to the tradition of the second volume see Claudio Lagomarsini, "Primi accertamenti sulla trasmissione manoscritta della *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (Antico Testamento)", *Medioevo romanzo* 45 (2021), 25–283.

29 The two Parisian manuscripts bear witness to the second collection of the "organic tradition", for which a textual revision has been detected (see Lino Leonardi, Caterina Menichetti and Sara Natale, *Le traduzioni italiane della Bibbia nel Medioevo: catalogo dei manoscritti (secoli 13.–15.)* (Firenze: Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini), XIX).

30 See at least Pierre Nobel, "La Bible anglo-normande et la Bible d'Acre: question de source", *L'histoire littéraire, ses méthodes et ses résultats. Mélanges offerts à Madeleine Bertaud*, réunis par L. Fraisse (Genève : Droz), 429–448.

In the filings we have consistently relied on the comparison with the Masoretic text[31] and with the Latin counterpart of the Vulgate according to the Rusch edition,[32] which is very close to the *Parisiensis*.
So, from the observation of all occurrences of music-related lemmas in *BXIII*, four different translation strategies can be identified:

1. a regular and homogeneous translation, at the limit of calque, throughout the Bible, with biunivocal correspondence (*a = 1*, *b = 2*, etc.: this means that one Latin lemma corresponds to one French lemma):

Hebr.	Lat.	Fr.
מַשְׁרוֹקִי (*mashroqi*)	FISTULA (4 occ.)	*frestel*; *frestele*[33]
עוּגָב (*uggav*)	ORGANUM (4 occ. + 13 occ. with the generic sense of 'musical instrument')	*orgre*; *orgue*
נֵבֶל (*nevel*) or פְּסַנְטֵרִין (*pisanterin*)	PSALTERIUM (24 occ.)	*psaltere*; *psalterium*; *psautier*
סוּמְפּוֹנְיָה (*sumfonyah*)	SYMPHONIA (4 occ.)	*chyfonie*; *symphonie*[34]

2. a regular and homogeneous translation, at the limit of calque, throughout the Bible, without biunivocal correspondence (*a*, *b = 1*, etc.: this means that several Latin lemmas are translated with a single French lemma):

31 The Hebrew Bible is cited in the electronic edition available on the *Bible Hub Online Parallel Bible* portal, at https://biblehub.com [accessed 02/2025].

32 *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, ed. Adolf Rusch, Strasbourg, 1481, correcta et emendata ex manuscriptis selectis, available online on the *Glossae Scripturae Sacrae-electronicae* portal, at https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr [accessed 02/2025].

33 Also in *Bita*, FISTULA, that is the pan flute, is regularly translated as *festula*/*fistula*. In one occurrence, the term is accompanied by an explanatory gloss: "fistula sono una maniera di strumenti fatti di canne". In fact, the Hebrew מַשְׁרוֹקִי (*mashroqi*), derived from the verb *sriqa*, 'to whistle', indicated some form of reed aerophone, perhaps a double oboe (see Curt Sachs, *Storia degli strumenti* musicali (Milano: Mondadori, 1996; first edition: 1980), 85).

34 In the case of SYMPHONIA, the gap between the Hebrew/Latin and the vernacular referents is well marked. Little is known about the Hebrew סוּמְפּוֹנְיָה (*sumponeyah*): some identify it with the bagpipe, while others believe it is not a single instrument, but rather a collection of sounds and instruments (see Sachs 1996, 85). Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* II, 21) spoke of it as a kind of drum: "Symphonia vulgo appellatur lignum cavum ex utraque parte pelle extenta, quam virgulis hinc et inde musici feriunt, fitque in ea ex concordia gravis et acuti suavissimus cantus" (see *Summa Britonis sive Guillelmi Britonis Expositiones vocabulorum Biblie*, ed. Lloyd W. Daly et Bernardine A. Daly (Pavia: Aedibus Antenoris, 1975)). Around the 13th century, the term then came to denote the hurdy-gurdy, which is a stringed musical instrument; hence the ancient French *chyfonie* (see *DMF*, s. v. *chifonie*), the ancient Italian *symphonia* (see *TLIO*, s. v. *sinfonìa*), etc. (see Sachs 1996, 317–320).

Hebr.	Lat.	Fr.
שׁוֹפָר (*shophar*)	BUCINA (35 occ.)	*boisine*; *buisine*
חֲצֹצְרָה (*chatsotsrah*)	TUBA (more than 50 occ.)	*boisine*; *buisine*
כִּנּוֹר (*kinnor*) or קִיתָרֹס (*qitharos*)	CITHARA (45 occ.)	*harpe*
נֵבֶל (*nevel*)	LYRA (6 occ.)	*harpe*

As can be seen in the table, both the Lat. BUCINA, which corresponds to the Hebrew *shophar*, signifying the horn, and the TUBA, that is the trumpet, are translated in *BXIII* as *boisine* (in *Bita* the *bucina* is instead always distinct from the *tromba*). The same happens with the Lat. CITHARA and LYRA, which are both translated as *harpe* (in *Bita* with *cetera* and *lira* or *leuto*).

3. diffraction (*a* = *1*, *2*, *3*, etc.: this means that a single Latin lemma is rendered with several French lemmas):

Hebr.	Lat.	Fr.
צֶלְצַל (*tslatsal*)	CYMBALON (21 occ.)	*cimbale*; *citole*; *cloche*; *clochete*; *instrument*; *timbre*
סַבְּכָא (*sabbekha*)	SAMBUCA (4 occ.)	*sambuce*; *viel*; *viele*
חָלִיל (*chalil*)	TIBIA (11 occ.)	*boisine*; *boisine et pipe*; *harpe*; *pipe*; *pipe et estive*
תֹּף (*toph*)	TYMPANUM (19 occ.)	*timbre*; *tympan*; *tympane* (+ glosse: *tympan est une maniere d'instrument que l'en fiert et il rent orrible son, et est apelez en francois "tabor"*)

Note the variety of translation solutions in *BXIII*. The Lat. CYMBALON, which is a percussion instrument consisting of two metal cymbals,[35] can be found both effectively as a percussion instrument (*cimbale*, *cloche*, *clochete* or *timbre*, which is a drum or tambourine with rattles, like the Italian *cembalo*)[36] and as a string instrument, the *citole*, a kind of guitar.[37] It is sometimes referred to generically as an *instrument*. Similarly, the SAMBUCA, which is a string instrument to be identified – always according to Sachs – with a horizontal angular harp,[38] is correctly translated as *sambuce*, but also as *viele*, which is a rubbed string instrument. The TIBIA, which is a flute,[39] is still rendered with *boisine* (overlapping with the *boisine* of the BUCINA and the TUBA we saw earlier), but also with *harpe*, *pipe* and two couples of synonyms, *boisine et pipe* and *pipe et estive*. Finally, the TYMPANUM, which is a drum

35 See Sachs 1996, 134–136.
36 See *DMF* s. v. *timbre 1*; *TLIO* s. v. *cémbalo*.
37 See *DMF*, s. v. *citole*.
38 See Sachs 1996, 85; 152–154.
39 See Sachs 1996, 157–158.

corresponding to the Hebr. *toph*,[40] is rendered as both *timbre* and *timpan*; in one place, the translation is accompanied by a gloss: "tympan est une maniere d'instrument que l'en fiert et il rent horrible son, et est apelez en françois tabor". As we shall see, this abundance of different translation solutions may be symptomatic of a plurality of hands at work.

4. mistranslation or absence of translation:

Gr.	Lat.	Fr.
κινύρα	CINYRA (2 occ.)	*autres* / *divers instrumenz*
Hebr.	Lat.	Fr.
נֵבֶל (*nevel*)	NABLUM (4 occ.)	*autres instrumenz de musique*; *boisine*; ≠
שְׁלִישׁ (*shalish*) or מְנַעְנַע (*mena'na*)	SISTRUM (2 occ.)	*autres instrumenz*; *viele* (?)

In the case of more difficult lemmas, whose referent might not be well known to the medieval translator, some substitute formulae as *et autres* / *divers instrumenz* were used. Similarly, in *Bita* the Lat. CINYRA (which is a lyre, corresponding to the Hebr. *kinnor)*[41] is now left untranslated, now rendered with *cynaci* (manuscript It. 2) or *emari* (It. 4): two errors presumably resulting from a misunderstanding of the Latin text. Instead, *Ban* translates correctly with *harpe*. For the Lat. NABLUM, which is a plucked instrument,[42] *Bita* presents a calque, *nablo* (not attested in the *TLIO*), but also *naccaro* and *nachara*, which refer to a percussion instrument like the timpani and the drum (see *TLIO* s. v. *nàcchera*), that get employed perhaps by analogy with NABLUM. Here too, *Ban* translates well with *saltrie* and *nable* (another calque which is not attested in the ancient-French dictionaries). Finally, the Lat. SISTRUM, which indicates a rattle,[43] is once mistranslated as *viele* in *BXIII*, but appears in *Bita* and in *Ban* respectively as *sistro* and *cistre*.

We will now focus on the third grouping of lemmas characterized by diffraction. Indeed, if we record in sequence, i.e. respecting the order of appearance in the text of *BXIII*, all the different occurrences of CYMBALON, TIBIA e TYMPANUM, as in the table below:

40 See Sachs 1996, 117–118.
41 See Sachs 1996, 115–117.
42 See Sachs 1996, 126–127.
43 See Sachs 1996, 134.

Vulg.	*BXIII*	Bible books
CYMBALON (21 occ.)	***citole*** (1)	***2Rg***
	≠ (1); ***et autres instrumenz*** (4); ***timbre*** (6)	***1–2Par***
	cimbale (2)	*1–2Esr*
	clochete (1); *clochet* (2)	*Idt*, *Ps*
	cymbale (1)	*Is*
	autres instrumenz (1); ***tymbre*** (1)	***1Mcc***
	cloche (1)	*1Cor*
TIBIA (11 occ.)	***boisine*** (1)	***1Rg***
	pipe et estive (1)	*Idt*
	pipe (1)	*Sir*
	boisine et pipe (1); *harpe* (1)	*Is*
	pipe (2)	*Ier*
	buisine (1)	***1Mcc***
	pipe (2)	*Lc*, *1Cor*
TYMPANUM (19 occ.)	***timbre*** (7)	***Gn*, *Ex*, *1–2Rg*, *1Par***
	tympane (6)	*3Esr*, *Idt*, *Iob*, *Ps*
	tympane (1); *tymbre* (1)	*Is*
	tympan (1)	*Ier*
	tymbre (1)	***1Mcc***

we can notice: first of all, starting from the bottom, that TYMPANUM is now repeatedly translated with *timbre* (in the books from *Gn* to *Par*), now with *tympane* (from *Esr* to *Ps*); in the following books (from *Is* to *Mcc*) it is rendered with either one or the other lemma. Something similar occurs with CYMBALON, which up to *Par* is variously translated (mainly as *instrumenz* or *timbre*), then, in *Esr*, it appears twice as *cimbale*. Finally, TIBIA is translated a first time with *boisine*, then, after *Rg*, with other different solutions, and mainly with *pipe*. In short, there seems to be a gap between a first group of books up to *Par* (which we highlight in bold), and a second one starting with *Rg*.

It can then be observed that *Mcc* always presents the translation solution of the first grouping: *tymbre* for TYMPANUM, *buisine* for TIBIA and *instrumenz* or *tymbre* for CYMBALON. This leads us to believe that there may be a link between the two.

Let us now see if applying the same method to other particular lemmas already highlighted by Berger and Lagomarsini's studies gives a similar result. Looking for example at the following zoonyms:

Vulg.	*BXIII*	Bible books
COTURNIX (4 occ.)	*coturnix* (1)	*Ex*
	quaille (2)	***Nm***
	oiseau (1)	*Ps*
IBEX (2 occ.)	***cegoingne*** (< IBICIBUS) (1)	***1Rg***
	ibices, ibices sont manieres de bestes sauvaiges (1) [*Lv* 11,17 IBIN > *segoigne*; *Dt* 14,16 IBIN > *cegoingne*]	*Iob*
LOCUSTA (32 occ.)	*locuste* (2)	*Ex*
	langoste (7)	***Lv, Nm, Dt, Idc, 3Rg, 2Par***
	aousterele (23)	*Iob*, *Ps*, *Prv*, *Sap*, *Sir*, *Is*, *Ier*, *Io*, *Am*, *Na*, *Mtt*, *Mrc*, *Apc*

we find that: always starting from the bottom, LOCUSTA is actually translated as *langoste* up to *Par*, then systematically with *aousterele*.[44] Similarly, IBEX appears – due to confusion with IBIS – once as *cegoingne* 'stork' in *Rg*, then as a loanword *ibices*. COTURNIX 'rock partridge', on the other hand, is rendered twice as *quaille* at the first book group, then more generically as *oiseau* in *Ps*.

Note here the singularity of the book of *Ex*, which, in the case of both COTURNIX and LOCUSTA, presents its own translation in the form of a loan from Latin (*coturnix* and *locuste*). Further confirmation of our hypotheses comes from the following two cases:

Vulg.	*BXIII*	Bible books
VAE	***las chetif*** (2)	***1Rg***
	la mort de enfer soit a cels...; *je aurai la mort d'enfer* (2)	*Idt*, *Iob*
	las a... (2)	*Qo*, *Sir*
	la mort d'enfer sera a... (2); *las a...* (5)	*Is*
	las a... (4)	*Ier*, *Ez*
	la mort d'enfer (1); *las a...* (1)	*Os*
	las a... (4)	*Am*, *Mic*, *Na*, *Ab*
	las chetis (1)	***1Mcc***

44 The two lemmas are documented in the *DMF*, s. v. *langouste* and *aousterelle*.

	la mort d'enfer... (1); *las a*... (5 +)	*Mtt* (*Mrc*, *Lc*, *Cor*, *Apc*)
VULVA	*ventre* (3)	*Gn*
	≠ (3)	*Ex*
	ventre (10 +)	*Nm*, *Iob*, *Ps*, *Ier*
	con (1)	*Os*
	ventre (1)	*Lc*

The first concerns the already mentioned Latin exclamation VAE, which Berger used as an argument to prove the existence of a link between certain books: in particular, between *Is* and *Mcc*, which for the scholar would be the only books to bear the singular expression *la mort d'enfer*. Our table shows, however, that the latter (*la mort d'enfer soit / sera a* (*quelqu'un*)) together with *las a* (*quelqu'un*)[45] are the most recurrent translations throughout the Bible. In contrast, *las chetif*[46] is only found in *Rg*, thus in the first section of books we have isolated, and – in confirmation of the above – in *Mcc*.

The study of the second case was done in response to Reuss' statement reported by Berger on the particular modesty of the translator of the Pentateuch, compared, for example, to that of *Mtt* and *Mc*. On the basis of this observation, we wanted to verify the translation solutions of the Latin VULVA in the various Bible books. What emerged was that it is almost always rendered neutrally as *ventre*, except in *Os*, where it is translated with *con* ('vagina', from Lat. CUNNUS), and in *Ex*, where three times it's not mentioned at all. The particularity of *Ex* emerges once again, further supporting the veracity of the data we have collected so far.

3 Conclusions

Although aware of the slipperiness of a terrain not yet perfectly established from a philological point of view,[47] it does not seem inappropriate to us to formulate some final remarks on the data just examined.

In relation to a selected group of lemmas, *BXIII* presents an alternation of different translation solutions, ranging from a maximum to a minimum of adherence to the Latin source. Evaluated as a whole, the occurrences of these lemmas can then be indicative of the degree of translation homogeneity of the text, which may be significant for understanding wheth-

45 As an interjection, *las* expresses pain, regret, withdrawal into oneself. It can be translated as 'wretch! miserable!' (see DMF, s.v. *las*, adj.).

46 *Chetif* signifies 'miserable' (see DMF, s.v. *chetif*, adj.) and is used as a reinforcement of the expression *las a*.

47 As we have said, a systematic study of the tradition has been fruitfully initiatied by Claudio Lagomarsini, who is working on the edition of the books belonging to the first volume of *BXIII*. In order to be able to base our lexical study on more reliable data, we hope that the philological work can be extended also to volume two in the future.

er *BXIII* is the result of a collective work, as speculated by some scholars. From the data registered, it seems possible to identify some specific stitches, that could correspond to a change of translator (or at least of textual source, if *BXIII* was the result of an assemblage of pre-existing Bible translations, as Robson, for example, believed). As we have seen, these breakdowns isolate: 1. the book of *Ex*, which in several cases translates differently from all other texts; 2. the books from *Gn* to *Par*, except *Ex* and with the addition of *Mcc*; the books from *Esr* onwards, except *Mcc*. This leads to assume, with all due caution, that at least three or four different people may have cooperated on this important translation venture.

Abbreviations of Bible Books[48]

Gn	Genesis
Es	Exodus
Lv	Leviticus
Nm	Numbers
Dt	Deuteronomy
Ios	Joshua
Idc	Judges
Rt	Ruth
1Rg	1Kingdoms
2Rg	2Kingdoms
3Rg	3Kingdoms
4Rg	4Kingdoms
1Par	1Chronicles
2Par	2Chronicles
1Esr	1Ezra
2Esr	2Ezra (or Nehemiah)
3Esr	3Ezra
4Esr	4Ezra
Tb	Tobit
Idt	Judith
Est	Esther
Iob	Job
Ps	Psalms
Prv	Proverbs
Qo	Qoheleth (or Ecclesiastes)
Ct	Canticles (or Song of Songs)
Sap	Wisdom

48 We will refer to the ones used in our reference edition of the Vulgate, *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, ed. Adolf Rusch. The dissolution of acronyms is given directly in English.

Sir	Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)
Is	Isaiah
Ier	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Bar	Baruch
Ez	Ezekiel
Dn	Daniel
Os	Hosea
Ioel	Joel
Am	Amos
Abd	Obadiah
Ion	Jonah
Mi	Micah
Na	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
So	Zephaniah
Agg	Haggai
Za	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
1Mcc	1Maccabees
2Mcc	2Maccabees
Mt	Matthew
Mc	Mark
Lc	Luke
Io	John
Rm	Romans
1Cor	1Corinthians
2Cor	2Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians

Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1Th	1Thessalonians
2Th	2Thessalonians
1Tim	1Timothy
2Tim	2Timothy
Tit	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Hbr	Hebrews
Act	Acts of the Apostles
Iac	James
1Pt	1Peter
2Pt	2Peter
1Io	1John
2Io	2John
3Io	3John
Iud	Jude
Apc	Revelation

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