

plaine coroit el cune. **U**ns banissier
a ptot lost. anz que li souleuz cou
qui dist. **R**etort sen chascune en sa
ensa tte. li rois fu donc moiz; z portez
imane. z il lenfourment ensamane
erent son cune en lapiscine d'sama
lich en lednerent son sanc z sec resne
ne la pole que dier auoit dite delui.
plue tee poles achab z toutes lee cho
ue il fist. tout est esent el liure dec
il rois isrl. achab se dormi donc ose
z ocoznee ses filz; regna poi lui. **J**osa
li filz; asa auoit omencie aregner
ex filz; iuda el qnt an del regne achab
isrl. il estoit de. xxv. anz. qnt il co
ica aregner z regna. xxv. anz. e ihrlm.
ere ot non azuba la fille salay. Il a
toute la uore asa son pere z ne sen d

la uore son pere et samere et en la uore
therob. **L**esill nabath qui fist peche le:
pueple isrl. **I**l fui abial. et la oura z co
reca damedieu autresi come sec peres
auoit fait. **C**i omee li qnz lunc dec rois
Il. **F**il
moab se
reuelerit
cote les
filz isrl a
pres ce q
achab fu
moiz z o
choznee ch
ai plese
nestre de
la chabre
que il auoit ensamane. et fu maladee

Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 27, f. 214v - Bible du XIII^e siècle



CLAUDIO LAGOMARSINI

The Three Versions of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (Old Testament)

CORPUS MASORETICUM WORKING PAPERS 16 (2026)^o

ISSN 2751-2894

^o This conference paper was written for a conference that was held within the long-term project entitled "Bible Glossaries", funded by the Heidelberg Academy of Humanities and Sciences (<https://www.hadw-bw.de/en/research/research-center/bible-glossaries-hidden-cultural-carriers>)

Claudio Lagomarsini

The Three Versions of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (Old Testament)

Claudio Lagomarsini, Università degli Studi di Siena

Summary

The *Bible du XIII^e siècle*, the earliest comprehensive translation of the Latin Vulgate into French, circulated widely and dynamically. One of the earliest records of its dissemination (1274) attests to its use among the Beguines in Paris. By the early fourteenth century, the second part of the text had been joined to manuscripts of Guiart des Moulins' *Bible historiale*. This broad and rapid transmission led, on the one hand, to early textual corruption due to scribal errors, and on the other prompted some scribes dedicated to preserving the sacred word to undertake revisions against the Latin. Consequently, surviving manuscripts of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* contain not only minor scribal variations but significant textual divergences, reflecting multiple versions of the translation. Determining which of these represents the earliest—and potentially original—version, and which are later revisions, is a key challenge. This study examines the versions of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle*, focusing on manuscripts of the Old Testament. A philological investigation is relevant both for reconstructing the original text, which can provide insight into the characteristics of a thirteenth-century Parisian biblical translation, and for understanding its reception and reuse in later contexts.

^o Claudio Lagomarsini, Università degli Studi di Siena, Via Banchi di Sotto 55, 53100 Siena, Italy, claudio.lagomarsini@unisi.it.

1 The Early Dissemination of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle*

In 1274, the Franciscan monk and preacher Guibert de Tournai sends a report to Pope Gregory X, in which he denounces what he considers the current “scandals of the Church” (*scandala Ecclesiae*). Among these, he includes the spread of a Bible in French (*bibliam gallicatam*), which the Beguines are reading both in small private groups (*in conventiculis*) and in public (*in plateis*). Guibert further notes that this French translation is widely circulated in Paris, openly sold by booksellers (*stationarii*), and that he himself has consulted a copy, finding it rife with heresies and errors.¹

It is highly probable that this French Bible widely known in Paris during the latter half of the thirteenth century is the *Bible du XIII^e siècle*,² the first complete translation of the Latin Vulgate into the vernacular.³ The dating of the text, which is largely unedited and unexplored,⁴ remains a matter of debate. The earliest extant manuscripts, which display Parisian linguistic features, can be dated to between 1260 and 1280. In some passages, the translation appears to draw on Hugues de Saint-Cher’s *Postillae super Bibliam*,⁵ a detail that not only places the translation after the 1230s but also suggests a potential link between the anonymous team of translators and the Dominicans of Paris.⁶

1 Here is the complete passage: “Sunt apud nos mulieres, quae Beghinae vocantur [...]. Habent interpretata scripturarum mysteria, et in communi idiomate gallicana [...] et [...] legunt ea communiter, irriventer, audaciter, in conventiculis, in ergastulis, in plateis. [...] Vidi ego, et legi et habui bibliam gallicatam, cuius exemplar Parisiis publice ponitur a stationariis ad scribendum haereses et errores, dubietates et inconcinnas interpretationes” (see Autbert Stroick, “*Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae*. Nova editio,” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 24 (1931), 33–62, here 61–62, § 25).

2 See Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, “Paris 1274. Un point de repère pour dater la *Bible (française) du XIII^e siècle*,” in *La Bibbia del XIII secolo. Storia del testo, storia dell’esegesi*, ed. Giuseppe Cremascoli and Francesco Santi (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 35–45.

3 For an overview, refer to 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), 109–56; Charles A. Robson, *Vernacular Scriptures in France*, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *The West from the Fathers to the Reformation*, ed. Geoffrey W.H. Lampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 436–51; Clive R. Sneddon, “The *Bible du XIII^e siècle*: its Medieval Public in the Light of its Manuscript Tradition,” in *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, ed. Willem Lourdaux and Daniël Verhelst (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 127–40; Clive R. Sneddon, “The Bible in French,” in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2: *From 600 to 1450*, ed. Richard Marsden and E. Ann Matter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 251–67.

4 The only books published so far are *Genesis*, *Ruth*, *Judith*, and *Esther*: cf. *La Bible française du XIII^e siècle. Édition critique de la Genèse*, ed. Michel Quereuil (Genève: Droz, 1988), and *La Bible française du XIII^e siècle. Édition critique des livres de Ruth, Judith et Esther*, ed. Claudio Lagomarsini (Genève: Droz, 2024).

5 In my recent edition (ed. Lagomarsini 2024, xi), I discussed the case of *Ruth* 3:4, where the Latin expression “archonium manipulorum” is translated as “moncel de jarbes,” likely influenced by Hugues de St-Cher’s note “id est acervum gerbarum”.

6 According to Sneddon, “the immediate initial audience of the *Old French Bible* is thus the growing family of Louis IX, but particularly his eldest surviving daughter Isabelle, and the nuns struggling to join the Dominican order that are educating her” (cf. Clive R. Sneddon, “On the Creation of the Old French Bible,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 46 (2002), 25–44, here 43).

As suggested by Guibert de Tournai, who is alarmed by the availability of copies from virtually any Parisian bookseller of his time, the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* (hereafter *BXIII*) enjoyed significant success, particularly in female reading circles, and spread rapidly. It is more difficult to determine exactly what Guibert means by heresies (*haereses*) and errors (*errores*), as the translation adheres to the Vulgate without introducing evident unorthodox interpretations. Furthermore, the glosses integrated into some books of *BXIII* present the usual elucidations found in the *Glossa ordinaria*, which often accompanied Latin Bible manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

2 The Translation and Revision Process of the Old Testament

Of course the translator(s) of *BXIII*—following a common medieval practice—take(s) certain liberties.⁷ For example, in a passage from *Leviticus* regarding sexual impurities (Lv 15:25–30), several verses about menstruation are omitted in French, with the note “Ci a bien .xii. lignes qui ne font pas a dire” (‘Here there are twelve lines that are not to be pronounced’).⁸ Elsewhere, the translator simplifies Latin expressions that are difficult to convey in French or considered unnecessary to translate verbatim. In one instance, in a passage from *Judith* (2:23), the geographical indication *ad Austrum* (‘towards the south’) is rendered as *d’autre part* (‘elsewhere’). This is likely because the context refers to the Euphrates region, unfamiliar to medieval French readers, where retaining precise geographical details would be of little relevance.

To explore the text further, let us focus on the first part of *BXIII* (*Genesis-Psalms*), surviving in fewer manuscripts than the second (*Proverbs-Revelation*), which has enjoyed wider circulation,⁹ as this second part was integrated into the *Bible historiale complétée* by Guiart des Moulins, leading to its widespread dissemination.

A close analysis and comparison of the manuscripts reveals that Guibert de Tournai was not alone in his concern over interpretations of the sacred texts that might be considered loose, even if not entirely heretical or erroneous. In fact, numerous passages show a fairly liberal version preserved in most manuscripts of *BXIII*, contrasting with a more literal rendering of the Vulgate found in other copies. To examine these opposing versions, we

7 The exact number of translators involved is unknown, but certain discrepancies in the translations suggest that at least three distinct individuals contributed (cf. Berger 1884, 145–47). For simplicity, I will use the singular throughout, referring each time to the translator responsible for a specific section or passage of the text.

8 This same censorship appears in Guiart des Moulins’ *Bible historiale*: see Jeanette L. Patterson, *Making the Bible French: The “Bible historiale” and the Medieval Lay Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 122–25.

9 In the following pages, I will refer to the following manuscripts, containing the first part of *BXIII*: A (Paris, Bibl. de l’Arsenal, 5056), B (Paris, BnF, fr. 899), B1 (Paris, BnF, fr. 6), Be (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 27), C (Cambridge, UL, Ee III.52), Ch (Chantilly, Musée Condé, 4), E (Évora, Bibl. pública e Arquivo, CXXIV/1-1), L (London, BL, Harley 616), L1 (London, BL, Add. 40620), N (New York, Morgan Library, M.494), Ph (Philadelphia, Free Library, Widener Collection, 2).

can consider the following example, with the relevant reading highlighted in italics and manuscripts transmitting a variant indicated in parenthesis:¹⁰

(Vulgate, Idt 5:6–7)

Hic [populus] primum in Mesopotamiam habitavit, quoniam noluerunt *sequi deos patrum suorum qui erant in terra Chaldeorum*

(BXIII)

- Cil pueples si est de la ligniee as Caldex et habita premierement en Mesopothamie, car il ne vorrent pas *aorer les dex que lor peres aoroient* (B Be B1 L C N E Ph L1)

- [...] car il ne vorrent pas *ensuivre les dex de leur peres qui estoient en la terre des Caldieux* (A Ch)

Both translations are acceptable. However, the first, transmitted by B plus eight other witnesses, is more liberal, as the Latin verb *sequi* ('to follow') is rendered as *aorer* ('to worship'), and the last part of the sentence is translated in a phrasing that is not perfectly literal; the Latin states: '[...] because they did not want to follow the gods of their fathers, who were in the land of the Chaldeans', while the French reads: '[...] because they did not want to worship the gods that their fathers worshipped'. In contrast, the version transmitted by A and Ch translates *sequi* with the corresponding French verb *suivre* and adheres more closely to the source, preserving the syntax and vocabulary of the Vulgate. However, it is also worth noting that the version found in A and Ch repeats the name 'Chaldeans', which appears both at the beginning and the end of the sentence.

At first glance, this textual divergence could be seen as a gradual degradation of the French text. Faced with a version that is very—perhaps too—literal, such as that found in the A Ch manuscripts, a scribe-editor might have chosen to make the text more accessible and fluid in French by taking certain liberties. However, the opposite interpretation is also possible: confronted with a freer and more nonchalant translation, a later scribe concerned with the accuracy of the sacred word might have revised the French to realign it with the Vulgate. Given these opposing possibilities, how can we determine the direction of the revision?

An additional element that emerges from the textual evidence suggests a possible answer. Based on a comparison of four manuscripts of BXIII, Michel Quereuil noted several examples of dual translations, strangely copied one after the other in manuscript A (Arsenal 5056).¹¹ By extending the analysis to all surviving manuscripts of the Old Testament, we can add that the dual translations preserved in A are also found in manuscript Ch (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 4). Let us examine two cases:

(Vulgate, Ex 25:29)

Parabis et *acetabula ac fialas, turibula et cyatos* in quibus offerenda sunt libamina ex auro purissimo

10 The Latin Vulgate is quoted according to the so-called 'Paris Bible' version (*Biblia Parisiensis*), which is likely the source of BXIII: refer to *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, ed. Adolph Rusch (Strasbourg: Koberger, 1480-1481). The digital edition is accessible on the *Gloss-e* Project website, coordinated by Martin Morard, CNRS, Paris: <https://gloss-e.irht.cnrs.fr/php/livres-liste.php> [accessed 04/11/2024].

11 Cf. ed. Quereuil 1988, 48–50.

(BXIII:)

- Tu appareilleras vesseaus de diverses manieres d'or tres pur en quoi l'en offerra les sacrefices (B Be B1 C L N E Ph; L1 *is missing*)

- Tu appareilleras *vessiaux de diverses manieres d'or tres pur acythabula et phyalas, tuthybula et thyates* en quoi l'en offerra les sacrefices (A Ch)

(Vulgate, Lv 19:18)

Non quaeres ultionem nec memor eris iniuria civium tuorum

(BXIII:)

- Ne quier pas vengence ne ne te souviengne pas du tort que ti voisin te font (C Be B1 L N E Ph; B and L1 *are missing*)

- Ne quier pas vengence ne ne te souviengne pas du tort que ti voisin t'ont fait (te font Ch) *ne ne soies pas remambrables de l'injure de tes citoiens* (A Ch)

The first, less literal translation (underlined) is common to both versions, while the second (in italics), included only in A and Ch, is more conservative. In the first example, the free translation merges the names of the various vessels mentioned in the Vulgate into the generic phrase *vesseaus de diverses manieres d'or tres pur* ('vessels of various types of purest gold'), while the conservative translation preserves the Latin names of the four different vessels. In the second example, the free translation renders the expression *nec memor eris* ('do not be mindful') into *ne te souviengne pas* ('do not remember'), while A and Ch provide a literal rendering (*ne soies pas remambrables*), which is copied alongside the first solution. Additionally, *iniuria* is initially rendered as *tort* and, in the second translation included in A and Ch, as *injure*. Finally, the expression *civ[es] tu[i]* from the Vulgate ('your [fellow] citizens') becomes *ti voisin* ('your neighbors') in the free translation, while the conservative version added by A and Ch has *tes citoiens*.

Because, in many passages, A and Ch consistently present a more literal translation than other manuscripts, without the odd repetitions we have just discussed, Quereuil considers their conservative version to be the original, which was later rendered more liberal in a subsequent reworking of the text. For this reason, in his edition of *Genesis*, he adopts A as his base manuscript.

However, the instances of dual translation suggest otherwise: the common ancestor of A and Ch (which I propose to call *y^r*) likely contains a revision of the original translation preserved in most manuscripts. In *y^r* the revisions probably appeared as alternative readings copied in the margins of the page alongside the base text, which the scribe expunged to make way for the marginal reading. In the cases of dual translation, we can assume that the reviser forgot to expunge the base reading, causing the scribes of A and Ch to copy both the base text and the revision intended to replace it.

The following example can further clarify this complex dynamic of revision and copying:

(Vulgate, Idt 3:2-3)

²Melius est enim ut viventes serviamus tibi Nabuchodonosor regi magno et subditi simus tibi *quam morientes cum interitu nostro ipsi servitutis nostre damna patiamur*.

³Omnis civitas nostra omnisque possessio, omnes montes et colles et campi et armenta boum gregesque ovium et caprarum equorumque et camelorum et universe facul-

tates nostre atque familie in conspectu tuo sunt.

(BXIII:)

– (B Be B1 C L N E Ph L1) ²Mielz nos est il que nos vivons et que nos servons Nabuchodonosor, le grant roi, et soions sozmis a vos *que nos muirons*. ³Tout ce que nos avons soit a fere voz volentez, si come noz citez, noz possessions, noz montaignes, noz chans, noz bués, noz vaches, noz berbiz, noz chievres, noz chevaus, noz chameus, et toutes noz faculitez et nos meisnies

– (A) ²Mieuz nos est que nos vivons et que nos servons Nabugodonosor, le grant roi, et soions souzmis a toi. ³Noz possessions, noz montaignes, noz champs, noz bués, noz vaches, noz brebiz, noz chievres, noz chevaux, noz chamieux et toutes noz faculitez et noz mesniees sunt devant toi, *que nos moranz souffrions le damage de nostre servitude*

– (Ch) ²Mieulz nous est il que nous vivons et que nous servons Nabugodonosor, le grant roi, et soions sozmis a toi *que nous moranz souffrions le damage de noustre servitude*. ³Noz possessions, noz montaignes, noz chans, noz bués, noz vaches, noz berbiz, noz chievres, noz chevaus, noz chamels et tutes noz faculitez et noz masniees devant toi

Setting aside some irrelevant details, it is important to note that the lengthy Latin subordinate clause that concludes verse 2 (“quam morientes ... patiamur”) has been simplified to *que nos muirons* in the free version of B and other manuscripts. As usual, A and Ch provide a literal and complete translation (“que nos moranz ... servitude”). However, this translation is inserted at different points of the passage: A copies it improperly at the end of verse 3, while Ch places it correctly at the end of verse 2.

This situation suggests that the ancestor γ^R presented the text in a layout similar to this:

[BASE TEXT]	[MARGINAL NOTE]
² Mieuz nos est que nos vivons et que nos servons Nabugodonosor, le grant roi, et soions souzmis a toi * <i>que nos muirons</i> . ³ Noz possessions, noz montaignes, noz champs, noz bués, noz vaches, noz brebiz, noz chievres, noz chevaux, noz chamieux et toutes noz faculitez et noz mesniees sunt devant toi	<i>*que nos moranz souffrions le damage de nostre servitude</i>

At the time of copying from γ^R , Ch likely inserted the marginal substitute reading in the correct position, that is, after the first *toi* at the end of verse 2. In contrast, A, misled by the repetition of *toi* at the end of verse 3, copied the revision in the wrong place.

Further confirmation that A and Ch transmit a revised version of an earlier, potentially original translation comes from philological analysis. In a previous study,¹² I pointed out several instances where A and Ch share copying errors with three manuscripts—L, C, and N—that form a textual grouping. Let us discuss an example concerning a passage that describes a feast offered by the Pharaoh of Egypt:

12 Claudio Lagomarsini, “Primi accertamenti sulla trasmissione manoscritta della *Bible du XIII^e siècle (Antico Testamento)*,” *Medioevo romanzo*, 45.2 (2021), 253–83.

(Vulgate, Gn 40:20)

Exinde dies tertius natalicius Pharaonis erat, qui faciens grande convivium pueris suis, recordatus est *inter epulas* magistri pincernarum et pistorum principis

(BXIII)

Au tierz jor fu la feste de la nativité Pharaon, si fist grant mengier a ses serjanz, et, *si come il menjoit* (B Be B1 E Ph) / *si come il jugent* (L C N A Ch), il li souvint del mestre des bouteilliers et des pasteurs

The expression *si comme le jugent* ('while they judge'), which should translate *inter epulas* ('during the feast'), is nonsensical, while *si comme il menjoit* ('while he ate') is perfectly acceptable. The reading *jugent* shared by L C N A Ch is a clear scribal error, likely facilitated by an earlier variant *menjoit* > *menjent* (or *mengent*), which was then further corrupted due to confusion between the letters *m/iu*, and *n/u* (*mengent* > **iueugent* > *jugent*).

In fact, the manuscripts L C N contain numerous errors and innovations throughout the text, suggesting that their common source (*y*) was highly inaccurate.¹³ It is likely that *y*^r (i.e. the *y*-type ancestor of A and Ch), when copying the French text from this corrupted source, recognized the need for a systematic revision based on the Latin. In many cases, *y*^r not only corrected small transcription errors but also retranslated the text in a more conservative manner. However, in some instances—as in the one just discussed—certain errors of *y* went unnoticed and were transmitted to *y*^r, and then to A and Ch.

3 An Unexplored Manuscript of the Bible du XIII^e siècle

As previously mentioned, Quereuil's edition considers only four manuscripts of BXIII, (i.e., A B C L) and does not use or cite manuscript L1, an interesting but fragmentary Anglo-Norman copy of the text dating back to the late thirteenth century. In the cases discussed above, where L1 can be consulted, it attests to the same version found in B and other witnesses of the freer translation, which I have proposed as closer to the original state of BXIII. However, in many other instances, L1 contains a text that diverges from all other manuscripts and offers translations closer to the Vulgate; for example:

(Vulgate, Idt 3:11)

Nec ista tamen facientes *ferocitatem eius pectoris mitigare* potuerint

(BXIII)

Et neporquant nule de cez choses ne pooit *abatre son ire* (B Be B1 C L N A Ch E Ph L1) / *asuager la cruialté de son quer* (L1)

As is evident, while L1 provides a literal translation of the Latin (which we can interpret as 'they could not mitigate the ferocity of his soul'), the majority translation offers a freer rendering: 'they could not calm his anger'. It is noteworthy that A and Ch, usually quick to realign the translation with the source when the rendering is too loose, conform to the majority reading.

13 For further discussion on the *y* group, see *ibid.*, 260–61, and ed. Lagomarsini 2024, xxxiii–xxxv.

In another passage, manuscript L1 is the only manuscript to translate a brief clause that is omitted by all the others, including A and Ch:

(Vulgate, Est 6:10)

fac ut locutus es Mardocheo Iudeo, *qui sedet ante fores palatii*

(BXIII)

fai Mardochés le Juyf (le J. *qui siet devant la porte del palés* L1) tout ce que tu as dit

Again, how should we interpret these variants? The most intuitive hypothesis would be that L1 preserves the earlier, possibly original translation. This text may have degraded in the version preserved in B and other manuscripts and may have later been corrected and revised—though not entirely systematically—by y^R (A Ch). Alternatively, one might hypothesize that L1 contains its own independent revision, distinct from that of y^R .

Given these opposing possibilities, this case is particularly complex to interpret:

(Vulgate, Est 2:1)

recordatus est Vasthi et que fecisset vel que passa esset

(BXIII:)

- Vasthi se recorda et s'aperçut que ele avoit fet et que ele avoit soffert (B Be B1 C L N E Ph)

- il se recorda que Vaschi avoit fait et que ele avoit souffert (A Ch = y^R)

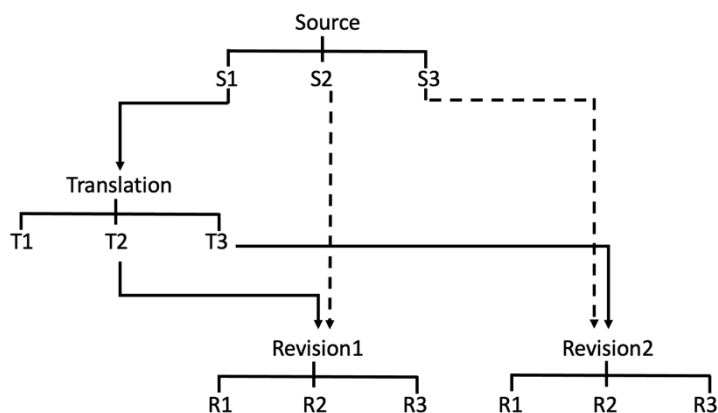
- il li sovint de Vasthi et s'aparçut k'ele aveit fet et k'ele l'aveit soffert (L1)

The perfect tense Latin verb *recordatus est* ('he remembered') implies a masculine subject, which, in the context of the passage, must correspond to King Assuerus, the husband of Vasthi. Therefore, the first translation appears to be incorrect, as it makes Queen Vasti the subject of the verb. Both the versions transmitted by y^R and L1 maintain a masculine subject (*il*), but they present reciprocal variants: y^R translates *recordatus est* with a single verb (*il se recorda*), while L1 uses a hendiadys, *il li sovint [...] et s'aperçut* ('he remembered and realized'). In the other manuscripts (B Be etc.), we again encounter a hendiadys, where the first element (*se recorda*) corresponds to y^R , while the second (*s'aparçut*) aligns with the additional verb included in L1.

To understand this textual dynamic, it is essential to note that some Latin manuscripts present the variant *recordata est*, implying a feminine subject.¹⁴ Clearly, the first translation (*Vasthi se recorda*) is based on this alternative reading, while y^R and L1 rely on the reading *recordatus*. Such translational discrepancies, which align with variant readings found in the source, serve as important indicators of potential revision during the transmission of the vernacular text. The following diagram illustrates, for example, the textual transmission of a translation based on one of the source manuscripts (S1). Revisions 1 and 2 are carried out on copies of the translation (T2 and T3) and collated with the source text, but using manuscripts S2 and S3, which differ from the manuscript S1 on which the original translation

14 For further details, refer to the apparatus of *Biblia sacra iuxta Latinam Vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidem*, iussu Pii PP. XI, cura et studio monachorum abbatiae pontificiae Sancti Hieronymi in Urbe Ordinis Sancti Benedicti edita, 18 vols. (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1926-1989).

was based. As a result, these revisions will reflect the textual variants of the manuscripts used as their control witnesses.



Another indicator of revision is found in passages where the variants in the translation cannot be explained as mere copying errors but instead suggest direct consultation of—and reflection on—the Latin text. An example of this can be seen in the following passage, which describes a feast organized in the royal palace, ‘at the entrance of the garden and grove, which had been cultivated and planted by royal hands’:

(Vulgate, Est 1:5)

in vestibulo horti et nemoris *quod regio cultu et manu consitum erat*

(BXIII)

- en l’apentiz del cortill et del bois *le roi qui avoit esté plantez et faiz o grant cultivement*

(B Be B1 L C N Ph)

- [...] del bois *qui estoit assis par main de roi et par cultivement* (A Ch = y^R)

- [...] del bois *qui de real cultivement et main esteit plantez* (L1)

The first translation is quite free, if not outright incorrect, as the adjective *regio* (‘royal’) seems to have been interpreted as referring to *vestibulo* (‘entrance’). In the variant reading found in y^R, *regio* is connected to *cultu* (‘cultivation’), while in L1 it is associated with *cultu et manu* (‘cultivation and hand’). Additionally, the verbs used to translate the Latin *consitum* (‘planted’) differ: *plantez et faiz* in B and other manuscripts; *assis* in y^R; and *plantez* in L1. In this context, it is more plausible to view the discrepancies as different interpretations of Latin grammar than to attribute them to scribal innovations generated during the copying of the French text.

That said, the position of L1 within the broader tradition of *BXIII* still needs clarification. Unlike A and Ch, the surveys conducted on this manuscript have not yet revealed instances of dual translations that would highlight a reviser’s activity. However, the following case suggests the possibility of textual revision:

(Vulgate, Ex 10:4)

ecce ego inducam cras *locustam* in fines tuos

(*BXIII*:)

- ge amenrai demain par toute ta contree *unes bestes qui sont apelees locuste en latin et ge ne sai pas le françois* (B Be B1 L C N E Ph)

- je amenerai demain par toute ta contree *unes bestes qui sont apelees locustes* (A Ch = y^R)

- jo menrai demain par tote ta contree *aostereles* (L1)

According to the majority reading, the French translator would have struggled to find an equivalent for the Latin term *locusta* ('locust'). In fact, the explanation provided by the *Glossa ordinaria* is not very helpful in identifying the insect:¹⁵ "Locusta, que longiora retro crura habet, vocatur locusta quasi 'longa hasta', grece vero *hastago*" ('The locust, which has longer hind legs, is called *locusta* as if from *longa hasta* [i.e., long spear]. In Greek, it is referred to as *hastago*'). Papias's glossary offers a similar explanation, drawing from Strabo:¹⁶ "Locusta dicta quod pedibus longa ut hasta, unde Greci tam maritimam quam terrestrem *astacon* vocant" ('The locust is so named because it is long in the legs, like a spear; hence, the Greeks call both the marine and terrestrial kinds *astacon*'). Finally, William the Breton simply states that the locust is an "animal parvum, dente noxium" ('a small creature with harmful jaws').¹⁷

The hesitation found in most of the manuscripts of *BXIII* is also reflected in y^R , which, however, omits the note in which the translator admits to being unfamiliar with the French equivalent of the Latin term. In contrast, L1 directly offers the translation *aostereles* ('grasshoppers'), that is an effective solution. In other passages of *Exodus*, corresponding to further occurrences of *locusta*, the same divergence appears among the French manuscripts; for instance:

(*BXIII*, Ex 10:14) Et au matin li venz leva toutes ces *locustes* (all MSS) / *aostereles* (L1)
qui monterent sus toutes les terres d'Egypte

If we assume that L1 transmits the original translation, the textual dynamics observed in the case of Ex 10:4 would be puzzling. Given a perfectly plausible translation like *aostereles*, why would a scribe feel the need to consult the Vulgate, replace an effective translation with the Latinism *locusta*, and then confess to not knowing what this word means in Latin? The reverse hypothesis seems much more plausible: faced with a Latin term that the translator admits to being unable to interpret, a skilled reviser like L1 would have masked the problem of his source by proposing a solution. In fact, other French Bibles present no interpretive issues: the *Bible d'Acre* uses the translation *langostes*, 'locusts' or 'grasshoppers'.¹⁸

15 For the text of the *Glossa ordinaria*, refer to the edition provided on the *Gloss-e* Project website mentioned above.

16 I quote from MS Paris, BnF, lat. 17162, f. 113rb.

17 See *Summa Britonis, sive Guillelmi Britonis expositiones vocabulorum Biblie*, ed. Lloyd W. Daly and Bernardine A. Daly, 2 vols (Padua: Antenore, 1975), here 395.

18 See *La Bible d'Acre: Genèse et Exode. Édition critique d'après les manuscrits BNF nouv. acq. fr. 1404 et Arsenal 5211*, ed. Pierre Nobel (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2006), here 77.

A similar term (*laoustes*) is found Guiart de Moulin's *Bible historiale*,¹⁹ while the *Bible of Jean de Sy* has *sauterel* ('grasshopper') in the text and *laoustes* ('locusts') in the marginal glosses.²⁰ Finally, the *Bible anglo-normande* adopts the Latinism *locoustes*, without any note from the translator.²¹

L1's tendency to conceal issues or gaps found in its French source is confirmed by the previously mentioned passage in *Leviticus* concerning menstruation. While most manuscripts omit several verses, inserting the note discussed earlier, *y^{re}* turns to the Vulgate to restore the missing translation. L1, however, simply removes the note without reinstating the omitted verses.

Another detail supports the idea that L1 was a skilled reviser. While all *BXIII* manuscripts, like the Latin Bibles circulated in 13th-century Paris, follow the sequence *1-3Esdras-Tobit*, L1 also includes the rare *Apocalypse of Esdras* (4Esr), but with a distinctive structure (1Esr; 2Esr; 4Esr 1-2; 3Esr; 4Esr 3-16; Tob). This arrangement is found only in a Latin Bible produced in Canterbury—therefore in Anglo-Norman England, where L1's manuscript was copied too—now held in Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, MS 5. This circumstance, along with specific textual evidence, suggests that L1 consulted a source closely related to this manuscript to introduce 4Esr into *BXIII*.²² The same Latin manuscript may have been used by L1 for the other revisions discussed above.

4 Conclusion: The Translation of the Old Testament and its revisions

In essence, the hypothesis I propose can be summarized as follows: for the first part of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle*, which includes the majority of the Old Testament, there was a 'primitive version', preserved in eight of the surviving manuscripts (B Be B1 L C N E Ph). The most reliable witness of this version is manuscript B (Paris, BnF, fr. 899), produced in Paris during the latter half of the 13th century. Since manuscript B is ultimately a copy, its text must be compared with other witnesses of the 'primitive version', as in some passages these may retain readings closer to the original where B shows innovations or errors.

Although generally faithful to the Vulgate, this early translation occasionally takes certain liberties. Additionally, it displays a few interpretative errors or idiosyncrasies, some of which may stem from variants in the Latin manuscript used as its source. Later on, the 'primitive version' appears to have been amended by two independent revisers: *y^{re}* (represented by A and Ch) and L1. It is fairly evident that these revisers consulted distinct Vulgate manuscripts, as shown by certain mutual discrepancies that correspond to different Latin variants found in the Vulgate.

19 I have consulted MS Paris, BnF, fr. 152.

20 Refer to MS Paris, BnF, fr. 15397.

21 Refer to MSS London, BL, Royal 1.C.III, and Paris, BnF, fr. 1.

22 For further details, see Claudio Lagomarsini, "Un inedito volgarizzamento antico-francese dell'*Apocalisse di Esdra*," *Medioevo romanzo* (in press).

From the perspective of a philologist focused on reconstructing the original textual layer, it seems pressing to prioritize the publication of the ‘primitive version’. However, this is not the only possible approach, as the textual revisions offer valuable insights into how *BXIII* was reworked and received throughout the Middle Ages. For example, if it turns out that Guiart des Moulins did not use the original translation but one of the revised versions,²³ scholars studying the *Bible historiale* may need to explore these subsequent textual transformations. The same observation applies to other texts and traditions related to *BXIII*, such as the Hebrew-French glosses analyzed in the project *Bibelglossare als verborgene Kulturträger*, coordinated by Stephen Dörr and Hanna Liss.

For this reason, I believe that a scholarly edition of the *Bible du XIII^e siècle* should include a comprehensive apparatus—such as the one I provided for the books of *Ruth*, *Judith*, and *Esther*—featuring variant readings from L1 and *y^R*. The goal of textual philology, which approaches texts from a diachronic perspective, is always twofold: to reconstruct (as far as possible) the ancient and potentially original state of the text, while also documenting its transformations over time.

23 A survey of the translation of the Psalms suggests that the earliest version of the *Bible historiale* (attested by manuscripts Paris, BnF fr. 152 and 157) drew its material from the *y^R* revision of *BXIII*. For a detailed demonstration, I refer to my forthcoming essay, “Notes on the History of the Old French Psalms, with an Edition of *Psalm* 68 (67) from the *Bible du XIII^e siècle*”.

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