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SPINOZA IN THE LIBRARY OF AN  
EARLY MODERN DUTCH SEPHARDIC RABBI

On 28 April 1728, Rabbi David Nunes Torres passed away. He had been the rabbi of the Honen Dal congregation, one of the two Sephardic congregations of The Hague. About three months after his death, his impressive library was put up for sale. Johannes Swart, the book dealer who arranged the project, edited the catalogue of the collection, which contained 2,148 volumes, with somewhat more than 1,525 separate titles.<sup>1</sup> The catalogue did not include the rabbi's Hebrew books, which were not meant to be sold. Given his Talmudic erudition and his activities as a publisher of rabbinical literature, we may assume that the collection of Hebrew books was also rich, like the collections we know of other Sephardic rabbis who were active in Western Europe in the Early Modern Period.

Books in French comprised more than a third of the vernacular works in Nunes Torres' collection: 526 titles. Of the remaining books, 324 were in Latin, 289 in Spanish, 265 in Dutch, 48 in English, 40 in Italian, and only 39 in Portuguese. This division reflects some of the changes that took place in the cultural milieu of the Western Sephardic Diaspora in Europe from the end of the seventeenth century on. French had become the language of the *République des lettres*, infringing on the hegemony of Latin, and it also became the language of high culture for the Western Sephardic Jewish Diaspora. Similarly, in the Dutch Republic, the language of the country began to occupy a central place in the lives of the descendants of the Iberian marranos, who settled there from the end of the sixteenth century on, as English did for the Sep-

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<sup>1</sup> The only extant copy is at the British Library, London: *Catalogus Librorum quibus (dum viveret) usus est Vir admodum reverendus David Nunes Torres, olim Rabbini Synagogæ Judaicæ Lusitanorum Hagæ Comitit.*

hardic Jews of London. The Spanish language, though it had not yet lost its vigor, no longer played the unique role that it had previously held among these Jews. Moreover, although the Sephardic Jews continued to use Judeo-Portuguese for internal communications in their congregations, the Portuguese language no longer served as a source of broad cultural identification for them.

The first perusal of the sixty-seven dense pages of the catalogue of Nunes Torres' library perplexed me. The eclectic contents of the collection, which is brought out even more by the character of the catalogue, which was arranged according to the format of the volumes without any thematic order, as was the practice at the book sales at that time, creates the impression, at least at first glance, that the collection was arbitrary and unsophisticated.

Examination of the phenomenon of private libraries within the Western Sephardic Diaspora in the Early Modern Period and of their common denominator brings out some of the cultural and intellectual characteristics of the intellectual elite of that society. Analysis of the philosophical and theological works shows the richness of their reading culture. They were well versed in all the currents of Christian theology, in neo-scholastic philosophy, in classical literature, in medicine, geography, and in the Iberian literature of their time, as well as in political thought.<sup>2</sup> However, I admit without embarrassment that in the first stage my estimation of Nunes Torres' library was influenced by the sharp words written by Johann Burkhard Mencke (Menckenius), in his book, *De Charletaneria Eruditorum*, which was printed in Amsterdam about thirteen years before Nunes Torres' demise. The German scholar from Leipzig referred to the phenomenon of *pseudo-eruditi*, who believed that they could attain an image of erudition if only they wasted their fortune on amassing books, though they would never read them, and even if they did read them, they would not be able to understand what was written in them.<sup>3</sup>

Some of my doubts regarding Nunes Torres were dissipated after I managed to discover something about his biography, for, until recent-

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<sup>2</sup> H. DEN BOER, *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá, 1996, pp. 107-114; D. M. SWETCHINSKI, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans. The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth Century Amsterdam*, London and Portland, Oregon, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2000, pp. 302-308.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. MENCKENIUS, *De charletaneria eruditorum declamationes duae*, Amsterdam, 1715, p. 35.

ly, almost nothing was known about him. Thanks to a fine pioneering and exhaustive study by Harm den Boer and Herman P. Salomon, the portrait of that man began to grow clearer.<sup>4</sup> From the details of his biography, Nunes Torres emerges as an erudite rabbinic scholar. However, the information about him does not yet tally with the intellectual variety that is reflected in the contents of his vernacular library, in which there was a huge amount of Christian theological literature from every period, historiographical literature from all times, works of philosophy and political science, juridical books, philology, geography, ethnography, science, and medicine, and a rich sample of classical, medieval, and contemporary literature – in seven languages, both the original texts and translations.

What then is known to us about David Nunes Torres? He was born in Amsterdam in 1660 to a family of New Christians from Portugal who returned to Judaism in the Dutch Republic. His parents were among the Jewish settlers in Pernambuco, in northeastern Brazil, who were forced to return to Holland in 1654, when Portugal conquered the region from the Dutch, and the Jewish community there died out.<sup>5</sup> Nunes Torres was an outstanding student in the Ets Hayim Yeshiva (rabbinical academy) and was regarded as a disciple of the Haham (chief rabbi) Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, who died in 1693.<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Jacob Sasportas inherited Aboab's position,<sup>7</sup> but when he fell ill in 1698 and was unable to continue teaching in the yeshiva, Nunes Torres was asked to take his

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<sup>4</sup> H. DEN BOER ET H. P. SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres (1660-1728), bezitter van het enig overgebleven exemplar van Uriël da Costa's Exame das tradições fariseas*, «Studia Rosenthaliana», 28, 1, 1994, pp. 10-98.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; A. WIZNITZER, *Jews in Colonial Brazil*, Morningside Heights, NY, Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 141-142.

<sup>6</sup> M. KAYSERLING, *Isaac Aboab, the First Jewish Author in America*, «American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly», 5, 1897, pp. 125-136; J. MEIJER, *Encyclopædia Sefardica Neerlandica*, 1, Amsterdam, Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente, 5709 [1949], pp. 11-14; A. ALTMAN, *Eternality of Punishment: A Theological Controversy within the Amsterdam Rabbinate in the Thirties of the Seventeenth Century*, «Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research», 40, 1972, pp. 1-88; Y. KAPLAN, *El perfil cultural de tres rabinos sefardies a través del análisis de sus bibliotecas*, in J. Contreras, B. J. García García et I. Pulido, eds., *Familia, Religión y Negocio. El sefardismo en las relaciones entre el mundo ibérico y los Países Bajos en la Edad Moderna*, Madrid, Fundación Carlos de Amberes, 2003, pp. 271-277.

<sup>7</sup> E. MOYAL, *Rabbi Yaakov Sasportas*, Jerusalem, 1992 (in Hebrew); M. GOLDISH, *Rabi Jacob Sasportas: Defender of Torah Authority in an Age of Change*, MA thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991; ID., *The Sabbatean Prophets*, Cambridge, MA. and London, Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 130-151.

place in the highest class. After Sasportas' death, however, Nunes Torres was shunted aside. One can imagine his great disappointment when he learned that, along with Rabbi Solomon de Oliveyra, who was appointed as the Haham of the Talmud Torah community,<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Solomon Ayllon was appointed as the second dayan (judge of the rabbinical court), and for that purpose he was invited to come from London, where he was the Haham of the Sephardic community.<sup>9</sup> The Mahamad (board of governors) passed over Nunes Torres. He was not appointed as the third dayan, nor did he even receive an appointment as an alternate. At that time, the seed was planted for the envy that Nunes Torres felt for Ayllon, who was only two years older than he, envy that never faded throughout his life.

Nunes Torres then decided to devote himself entirely to his business as a publisher of Hebrew books in the well-known printing house of Joseph Athias, and also to market thousands of copies of books printed in Amsterdam in Eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup> In 1704 he moved to The Hague, but he maintained his connections with the Amsterdam community. The Mahamad of the Sephardic Jews of the Dutch metropolis even gave him the sole authorization to publish an edition of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud, an ambitious plan that never came to fruition.<sup>11</sup>

In 1707, one of the Sephardic congregations of The Hague became an organized community and took the name Bet Jacob, in honor of its wealthy patron, Jacob Pereira, and Nunes Torres was appointed as the Haham of the new community. Jacob Pereira, one of the most important military suppliers of Holland and one of the prominent wealthy men of the Sephardic Diaspora in Western Europe, moved from Am-

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<sup>8</sup> J. D'ANCONA, *De Portugese gemeente 'Talmud Torah' te Amsterdam tot 1795*, in H. Bruggmans et A. Frank, eds., *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*, 1, Amsterdam, Van Holkema et Warendorf n.v., 1940, pp. 270-305; A. VAN DER HEIDE, *Selomoh de Oliveyra: 'Ayyelet Ahamim. Een zeventiende-eeuwse bewerking van het verhaal van Abrahams offer*, in L. Dasberg et J. N. Cohen, eds., *Neveh Ya'akov. Jubilee Volume Presented to Dr. Jaap Meijer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1982, pp. 207-242.

<sup>9</sup> MEIJER, *Encyclopædia* cit., p. 37; L. D. Barnett, ed., *Bevis Marks Records*, 1, Oxford, University Press, 1940, pp. 27-28; A. M. HYAMSON, *The Sephardim of England*, London, Methuen, 1951, pp. 68-70; D. S. KATZ, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 177-179, 196-199.

<sup>10</sup> L. FUKS ET R. G. FUKS-MANSFELD, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands 1585-1815. Historical Evaluation and Descriptive Bibliography*, 2, Leiden, Brill, 1987, pp. 301, 322-323, 325-326, 327-329, 331-333.

<sup>11</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres*, pp. 16-17, 68.

sterdam to The Hague in the early eighteenth century, in order to be near the leaders of the Dutch Republic, with whom he had close ties.<sup>12</sup> Most probably, Nunes Torres was one of his familiars. In any event, he dedicated the first part of his edition of Maimonides' treatise *Mishneh Torah*, which he published in 5462 (1702), to Moses (Antonio Alva-res) Machado, Pereira's partner in the military supply business, who also moved to The Hague at that time.<sup>13</sup> It would not be far from the truth to suppose that Nunes Torres moved to The Hague because these two magnates had settled there, and that it was thanks to their sponsorship that he was appointed as the Haham of the Bet Jacob community.

Jacob Pereira died soon after the community was established, and shortly afterward the first open confrontation between Nunes Torres and Ayllon took place. Ayllon had meanwhile been appointed as the Haham of the Amsterdam community. Because of Jacob Pereira's honor and status, it was decided to bury him in the splendid cemetery of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, in the nearby town of Ouderkerk. To make it possible to bury him near the honorable plot of the Pereira family, it was decided to move the remains of Abraham da Mattos from his place of burial to another place in the cemetery. Nunes Torres launched a vehement battle against this violation of Jewish law. He objected not only to the gravity of this act but also to the permission apparently given to several of Pereira's sons, who had not taken part in the funeral in Amsterdam, but who had begun to observe the seven day mourning period in The Hague, to rise during that time and «to depart from the place of his decease and his city and to travel away from brotherhood on the roads and to come to another city and eulogize him». Nunes Torres printed his severe words on July 1707 in a letter of

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<sup>12</sup> J. ZWARTS, *De Joodse gemeenten buiten Amsterdam*, in Brugmans et Frank, eds., *Geschiedenis* cit., pp. 400, 418; W. C. PIETERSE, *Daniel Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn 'Triumpho del gobierno popular*, Amsterdam, 1968, pp. 86-88; SWETSCHINSKI, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans* cit., pp. 138-140; D. SWETSCHINSKI and L. SCHÖNDUVE, *De familie Lopes Suasso, financiers van Willem III*, Amsterdam, Joods Historisch Museum, 1988, pp. 35-36; J. I. ISRAEL, *Conflicts of Empires. Spain, the Low Countries and the Struggle for World Supremacy 1585-1713*, London and Rio Grande, Hambledon Press, 1997, pp. 268, 279, 344-346, 392.

<sup>13</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., p. 16; FUKS ET FUKS-MANSFELD, *Hebrew Typography* cit., 2, pp. 331-333; ZWARTS, *De Joodse gemeenten* cit., p. 397; J. G. VAN DILLEN, *De economische positie en betekenis der Joden in de Republiek en in de Nederlandse koloniale wereld*, in Brugmans and Frank, eds., *Geschiedenis* cit., pp. 584-585; SWETSCHINSKI, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans* cit., pp. 138-140, 193, 207.

eight pages, which was supposed to be included in a never published *responsa* collection, entitled «Shevet Mishor» («Right Scepter», Ps. 45: 6), the only copy of which is preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.<sup>14</sup> Although he directed his criticism against the students of Ayllon, whom he accused of drafting the writ of permission, the real target of Nunes Torres sharp arrows was evident to everyone. Ayllon did not respond to the pamphlet, and the Pereira family, as far as is known, forgave the slight and refrained from responding. Thus the episode does not appear to have had immediate consequences.

But shortly afterward, Nunes Torres found himself in a confrontation with the Mahamad of his community in The Hague. The governors were unwilling to grant him the authority that he demanded and even complained that on a number of occasions, he had made decisions independently without asking their permission. Nunes Torres did not restrain himself for long. In a ceremonial sermon that he gave on Simhat Torah (the Feast of the Law) in 1712, he aroused the anger of the congregation when he reprimanded the worshippers, because many of them had violated Jewish law and had themselves shaved during the intermediate days of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles). On that occasion he also announced publicly that he was removing the ban that had been imposed on the delinquent men who had been shaved. Thereby he sought to emphasize demonstratively, by bluntly provoking the governors, that he, the Haham Nunes Torres, was the supreme authority in the community.<sup>15</sup> This action was entirely opposed to the regulations instituted in all the communities of the Sephardic Nation, according to which only the Mahamad had permission to declare and remove bans and excommunications.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after this incident, when it became known to Nunes Torres that the governors were planning to discharge him from his post, he declared a ban against all the members of the Mahamad, an unprecedented act in the history of the Nación. The confrontation between the two sides was taken to the highest court in The Hague, and Nunes Torres was ultimately deposed.<sup>17</sup>

Then, before the turmoil had died down in The Hague, our man

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<sup>14</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 18-19, 61.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>16</sup> Y. KAPLAN, *An Alternative Path to Modernity. The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe*, Leiden, Boston and Köln, Brill, 2000, pp. 118-120.

<sup>17</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 25-29, 70-89.

became involved in another conflict. In 1714 he girded his loins and took part in a controversy that was held in Amsterdam surrounding the work *Mehemnuta de-Khula* by Rabbi Nehemia Hiyya Hayoun, who was then living in Holland.<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Haham Zvi, the rabbi of the Ashkenazic community of Amsterdam, contrary to the position taken by Haham Ayllon and the Mahamad of the Sephardic community, condemned the book because of its Sabbatean contents, and they in turn were banned by the Mahamad and even expelled from the city.<sup>19</sup> Just then, before the ink was dry on the writ of excommunication against Hagiz and the Haham Zvi, Nunes Torres published a pamphlet condemning Hayoun, which has not been preserved. For this act, which was a blunt challenge to the authority of the governors of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, he was declared «apartado da nação» (expelled from the Nation), a punishment that entailed absolute severance from the community, a kind of public excommunication without the sacral meaning of that status, though it did include the loss of all communal rights.<sup>20</sup>

Nunes Torres tried in vain until 1723 to have the decree rescinded, so he remained cut off from the principal community of the Sephardic Jewish Nation, the community where he had been born and to which many members of his family belonged.

Surprisingly, the punishment of severance did not prevent him from being appointed as the Haham of the Honen Dal congregation in 1717. This was the second Sephardic congregation in The Hague, supported by another group of wealthy Sephardim, whose financial activities also brought them close to the Dutch authorities in The Hague. These wealthy men, who were not different in their ways from the members of the Bet Jacob community, sought to endow their congregation with an aura of majesty and splendor similar to that which enveloped the Amsterdam community. Consequently, they built a splendid synagogue, which was designed by the court architect of the House of Orange. Its

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<sup>18</sup> I. S. EMMANUEL, *Documents Related to the Nehemia Hayon Controversy in Amsterdam*, «Sefunot», 9, 1965, pp. 211-246 (in Hebrew); M. FRIEDMAN, *Letters relating to the Nehemia Hiya Hayon Controversy*, «Sefunot», 10, 1966, pp. 483-619 (in Hebrew); E. CARLEBACH, *The Pursuit of Heresy. Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1990, pp. 75-121.

<sup>19</sup> CARLEBACH, *The Pursuit of Heresy* cit., pp. 104-121; DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 36-43; KAPLAN, *An Alternative Path to Modernity* cit., p. 145 n. 7.

<sup>20</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 39-43, 91-93.

design was influenced by the royal Louis Quatorze style, as can be seen to this very day.<sup>21</sup> This synagogue was completed while Nunes Torres was in office, and we may imagine his satisfaction as he gave the sermon at the festive dedication of the building in 1726. Two years later, while still serving as the Haham, he passed away, just nineteen days after the death of his sworn adversary in Amsterdam, Haham Ayllon.<sup>22</sup>

Now that we have become acquainted with the man, whose life shows him to have been a resolutely opinionated rabbi, it is time to ask: what was the connection between the man and his library? How does the contents of this library fit in with the figure of an uncompromising and severe Talmudic scholar? Perhaps the library can reveal other sides of his personality, sides that were not expressed in his public activity as rabbi, preacher and publisher of halakhic literature.

As I have already mentioned, the fact that a rabbi who was active during the golden age of the Western Sephardic Diaspora possessed books in a number of European languages and a most impressive collection of gentile books is not surprising. Knowledge of European languages was very widespread among that Jewry, and the Talmudic scholars among them, including the rabbis who were educated in Amsterdam «ate at two tables», as it were: that of the Jewish tradition and that of contemporary high European culture.<sup>23</sup> Nor is it a coincidence or exceptional to find that about thirty percent of Nunes Torres' book collection consisted of works of Christian theology, including a variety of thinkers from the origins of Christianity, such as the works of Justin Martyr, in French translation, and works by his Huguenot contemporaries such as *Histoire critique des dogmes et des cultes de l'église* by Jurieu. The Christian past of the members of the Western Sephardic Diaspora encouraged the intimate connection that was forged between them and Christian theologians, of all the churches, denominations and sects, with whom they continued to struggle and dispute as part of the construction of their new identity. This Christian literature served them not

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<sup>21</sup> ZWARTS, *De Joodse gemeenten* cit., pp. 309-400; J. F. VAN AGT, *Portugese synagogen in Den Haag*, in J. F. van Agt et al., eds., *De Tempel van Salomo. Een terugblik in het nabije en verre verleden ter gelegenheid van de feestelijke opening van de Synagoge bij de Princessegracht in Den Haag*, 's-Gravenhage, 1976, pp. 23-35.

<sup>22</sup> DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 46-47.

<sup>23</sup> KAPLAN, *El perfil cultural de tres rabinos sefardies* cit., pp. 269-286; M. STUDEMUND-HALÉVY, *Codices Gentium. Semuel de Isaac Abas, coleccionista de libros hamburgués*, in Contreras et al., eds., *Familia, Religión y Negocio* cit., pp. 287-319.



only for the composition of polemical treatises against Christian theologians. It also supplied them with ammunition for the struggles they waged within their communities against heterodoxy, signs of radical skepticism, which had begun to take hold in their world.<sup>24</sup>

Nunes Torres had a large selection of the writings of Erasmus and Calvin. Of the Dutch Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century, the presence of the spokesmen of the Remonstrant Church such as Arminius, Grotius, and Limborch is conspicuous. There are also liberal Calvinists such as Cocceius. Nor is it surprising to find in the library of a Dutch Sephardic rabbi of that time the significant presence of the works of Iberian Catholic thinkers of the Counter Reformation, such as the *Meditaciones devotísimas* by the Franciscan friar Diego de Estella, or the four volumes of the collected writings of the monk Manuel de Guerra y Ribera.<sup>25</sup> I have mentioned just a few of the works in this rich collection, which also included very rare editions. Nunes Torres also collected books of sermons by Iberian friars such as Cristoval de Almeida, Manuel de Naxera, and the well-known Jesuit millenarian Antonio Vieyra.<sup>26</sup> This, too, is no innovation, because even Nunes Torres' rabbi and teacher, Haham Aboab da Fonseca, who was scrupulous to avoid mentioning gentile books in his own writings, and in his Hebrew translations of the Neo-platonic writings of Abraham Cohen Herrera, he left out the author's citations from classical and Christian literature, he himself possessed a modest vernacular library, which contained Christian sermons in Spanish and Portuguese.<sup>27</sup>

The rhetorical models of Catholic sermons, especially those of Jesuits, served the rabbis of the Nación for their own sermons, and it has rather frequently been found that the preachers in the Sephardic congregations were inspired by Christian sermons although they didn't reveal the sources of their ideas. This is also true of anti-Machiavellian Spanish thought, including the books of the diplomat and political thinker Saave-

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<sup>24</sup> Y. KAPLAN, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 235-262.

<sup>25</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 2 nos. 19-20; fol. 3 nos. 52-53; fol. 12 no. 30; fol. 13 no. 51; fol. 15 nos. 67, 68, 72, 85; fol. 17 no. 110; fol. 40 no. 119; fol. 60 no. 765; fol. 64 no. 922.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 16 nos. 88, 91, 93, 96, 97.

<sup>27</sup> N. YOSHA, *Myth and Metaphor. Abraham Cohen Herrera's Philosophic Interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah*, Jerusalem, Ben Zvi, 1994, pp. 74-81 (in Hebrew); KAPLAN, *El perfil cultural* cit., pp. 272-274, 276.

dra Fajardo or the Augustinian theologian Juan Márquez, or Fernández de Navarrete, a contemporary of Nunes Torres. This literature is frequently cited in the discourse of the members of the Sephardic Diaspora, especially in their polemic works against Spinoza and his followers.<sup>28</sup> A selection of this literature is found in the second half of the seventeenth century in the private libraries of Sephardic Jewish merchants in Amsterdam such as that of the magnate Abraham Israel Pereira, who intended to emigrate to the Land of Israel to greet there the Messiah Shabetai Tsevi. He based his arguments on these anti-Machiavellian works in order to condemn the “Machiavellians” in his community, which is to say Spinoza, Prado, Ribera, and their followers.<sup>29</sup> It should also be mentioned that Spinoza himself owned a copy of *Corona gótica* by Saavedra Fajardo, along with a 1550 edition of *Tutte le opere di Machiavelli*, which is the edition that was also found in Nunes Torres’ possession.<sup>30</sup>

Though he was a polyglot, with respect to *belles lettres*, Nunes Torres concentrated in clear fashion on Spanish works from the Iberian baroque period. But he also owned eleven volumes of poetry by Jacob Cats, the most popular Dutch poet of his time. However, one must assume that he was attracted to that work because of his interest in the Calvinistic contents that typified it.<sup>31</sup> Nor does the presence of two volumes of the vast literary work of Vondel, the greatest Dutch playwright and poet of the seventeenth century, alter the impression that Dutch literature did not play an important role in his cultural world.<sup>32</sup> One volume represents English literature: *Shakespear’s comedies Histories and Tragedies*.<sup>33</sup> However it is possible that Nunes Torres did not classify it as literature but rather placed it among his collection of 180 historical works that he acquired, which included many chronicles of the lives of kings and princes.

As noted, the Spanish classics outshone all other literature in this

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<sup>28</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 3 no. 36; fol. nos. 157, 162; fol. 10 no. 184; fol. 12 nos. 33, 34; fol. 16 no. 89; fol. 20 no. 179; fol. 22 no. 214; fol. 23 no. 241; fol. 26 no. 314; fol. 46 no. 363; fol. 47 no. 403.

<sup>29</sup> KAPLAN, *From Christianity* cit., pp. 322-325.

<sup>30</sup> A. DOMÍNGUEZ, ed., *Biografías de Spinoza*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1995, p. 208 nos. 38, 40.

<sup>31</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 27 nos. 327-331; fol. 57 no. 656; fol. 63 nos. 906-908; fol. 64 no. 909.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 56 no. 618; fol. 64 no. 924.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 10 no. 189.

collection, and it is represented in its full splendor, in impressive quantity. It included: *Celestina* by Rojas; the first Spanish novel, *Guzmán de Alfarache* by Mateo Alemán; the *Novelas Ejemplares* and *Don Quixote* by Cervantes; the complete works of Góngora; and the complete works of Quevedo, his arch-rival; all the comedies of the greatest Spanish playwright, Lope de Vega, along with his works in prose.<sup>34</sup>

Once again, there was nothing exceptional about the presence of these works. A selection of them can also be found in the libraries of other rabbis such as that of Aboab da Fonseca. Moreover, with respect to the connection with the Spanish literary heritage, Nunes Torres' collection was not as full as that of Rabbi Samuel Abas from Hamburg, whose library was put on sale in Amsterdam in 1693.<sup>35</sup>

What, then, is distinctive about Nunes Torres' library, aside from the very large number of books, which is unparalleled among the private libraries of the Jews of the Sephardic Nation? What is the unusual feature that makes this library so important for the historian of the Western Sephardim? After I managed to decipher the catalogue of books and to identify almost all of the works mentioned in it, my first impression changed completely. This was not simply an instance of pure book collecting. Nor was it another, larger version of the private Sephardic Jewish libraries typical of those times. Rather some of the large blocs that comprise this library reflect in the clearest fashion the intellectual ferment of that generation, which historians of the Early Modern period used to call 'the generation of Paul Hazard'. It is as if Nunes Torres had read the work of that great Belgian historian, *La crise de la conscience européenne*, which was first published in 1935, opening a window onto the crisis of consciousness that Hazard sought to locate between the years 1680 and 1715.<sup>36</sup> It is as if Nunes Torres had read Hazard's book and built a significant number of the blocs that comprise his library according to the subjects that are raised in that fascinating study according to the thinkers, the heroes of the crisis in consciousness, who are brought into prominence there.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 20 nos. 174, 182-184, 186; fol. 21 nos. 188, 193-196; fol. 22 nos. 210, 211, 219, 227-229; fol. 41 no. 260; fol. 44 no. 316; fol. 51 nos. 490, 494, 510, 514; fol. 52 no. 520; fol. 53 no. 560; fol. 55 no. 600; fol. 56 no. 617; fol. 61 no. 799.

<sup>35</sup> KAPLAN, *El perfil cultural* cit., p. 281.

<sup>36</sup> P. HAZARD, *La crise de la conscience européenne*, Paris, Boivin et Cie, 1935; the English translation by J. Lewis May, was published with the title *The European Mind 1680-1715*, Harmondsworth, Pelican, 1964.

Even if we accept the reservations voiced by Jonathan Israel in his monumental book, *The Radical Enlightenment*, and we bring the beginning of the turning point back one generation, Hazard's insights are still valid with respect to the contents that characterized the change that took place.<sup>37</sup> The old question, *quid est veritas* (What is the truth?), resonated in the air, following the scientific, philosophical, Cartesian revolutions, the beginning of biblical criticism, the metaphysics of Spinoza, the elusive skepticism of Pierre Bayle, with the slow penetration of radical deistic views into the consciousness of extensive circles. However, the curiosity and the confusion were nourished no less by the expansion of the world horizon following the geographical discoveries and as a result of the extension of colonial trade, in which Iberian New Christians also took part, as well as many Sephardic Jews. Hazard began his book with a fascinating discussion of the huge influence of travel literature and the many geographical and anthropological works of that period, which made the Europeans aware of the existence of cultures beyond the circle of the Western Christian tradition. Interest in China, in the Tatars, in the Arabs, and in Peru received great momentum. What mainly attracted people in these books were the colorful details that were presented in them about the nations who dwelled in those unknown climes, their laws, their patterns of government, their customs, and their mores. Some writers went out of their way to praise the Chinese, their ancient culture, and the rational character of their beliefs, and that enthusiasm doubtless contained a subversive and challenging element. Behold, there are ancient and splendid cultures, beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition, but they are not inferior in their morality and their natural rationalism.

Although Nunes Torres apparently never left the boundaries of the Dutch Republic, he traveled the four corners of the world by means of thirty-six books of travel and voyages that were present in his library. China occupied a prominent place in that collection, which contained a copy of *Tweede en derde gesandschap na het Keyserrijk China* by the Dutch Olfert Dapper, an account of the visits of two official missions to the court of the Quing Dynasty in the 1660s, along with a comprehensive book in Spanish on the ceremonies and customs of the great Chinese empire: *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del Gran Reyno*

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<sup>37</sup> J. I. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 20-22.

*de la China* as well as *Voyage au Grand Mogol*.<sup>38</sup> In the light of his special interest in the writings of Spinoza, which I shall soon discuss, it is difficult to assume that he did not consider the fact that Spinoza used the Chinese to refute the idea that the Hebrews were chosen, and it is possible that he also knew of the arguments of the deists, such as Collins, who claimed that some of the Chinese conceptions of God were identical to Spinoza's conception «that there is no other substance in the universe but matter, which Spinoza calls God, and Strato Nature».<sup>39</sup> Nunes Torres also owned a copy of the journeys of the Dutch to Indonesia, *Alle de gedenkwaardige Reyzen der Hollanders in Oostindien*, the five volumes of Dampier's *Voyage autour du Monde*, three volumes of Tavernier's trip to Turkey, Persia, and India, and many more.<sup>40</sup> In his imagination he traveled to countries far and near, making use of four globes that were in his office, two large ones and two small ones, made by the Blaeu firm, the famous family of Dutch cartographers.<sup>41</sup> He could also draw information about the regions that had been discovered from the ten geographical lexicons and encyclopedias that he purchased, such as Noblot's *Geographie universelle*, *Wells of Ancient and Present Geography*, or the work called *Méthode pour étudier la Géographie*.<sup>42</sup> Such an extensive collection of geographical and travel literature in a private library could not have been coincidental. Moreover, in addition to these, one must mention a long series of hefty tomes on the religions of the world, which provided a generous selection of comparisons among the customs and mores of the nations of every land: the six volumes by Jovet, which were printed in 1714, *Histoire des religions du Monde*, and the colorful book by F. de Thamara, *Costumbres de todas las Gentes del Mundo or Réflexions sur les differences de la Religion*, a work that aroused great curiosity, for it compared the customs of the East Indians to those of the Jews, or the book by Reland, *Religion des Mahometans*.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fols. 4-5 no. 69; fol. 42 no. 273; fol. 46 no. 161.

<sup>39</sup> A. COLLINS, *An Answer to Mr Clark's Third Defence of his Letter to Mr. Dodwell*, London, A. Baldwin, 1708, p. 89; quoted from ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment* cit., p. 617.

<sup>40</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 19 no. 147; fol. 42 no. 271; fol. 44 no. 318.

<sup>41</sup> On the globes produced by Willem Jansz. et Joan Blaeu see *De Mercator a Blaeu. España y la Edad de Oro de la Cartografía en las Diecisiete Provincias de los Países Bajos*, Madrid, 1995, p. 154

<sup>42</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 5 no. 73; fol. 8 no. 148; fol. 10 no. 169, 177; fol. 43 no. 304; fol. 44 no. 327, etc.

<sup>43</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 38 no. 176; fol. 44 no. 333.

Nunes Torres did not leave behind a full and systematic presentation of his ideas, which would permit us to see how the contents of these books were absorbed and internalized in his consciousness and how they influenced his views. Although he did not leave a systematic presentation of his ideas, not only was Nunes Torres a good collector and reader, he also was a gifted preacher. He published a collection of three sermons in rich and precise Portuguese in 1690, while he was still a young rabbi in Amsterdam, and these reveal his way of thinking.<sup>44</sup> In a sermon that he gave on Shevuot to the students of the *Abi Yetomim* (Father of the Orphans) society in that year, Nunes Torres made a theological and philosophical comparison between the Torah of Moses and Roman law and between the Jewish faith and the creeds of the gentiles, spreading a wide canvas of different periods and a variety of cultures. The tone is apologetic, and Nunes Torres went out of his way to prove the superiority of the Torah of Moses on the holiday of the giving of the Torah. However, although his purpose was to sing the praises of the Jewish religion, his words show not only knowledge of pagan religions and of Christianity, but also an attitude of respect toward them. He had no problem with quoting a verse from the Evangel of Luke: «Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus» – something rather unexpected in a sermon given by a rabbi on the holiday of the giving of the Torah.<sup>45</sup> However, the rabbi in question here owned fourteen different editions of the New Testament in various translations, as well as thirty-nine Christian Bibles in various languages. That, too, is no trivial matter.

The second sermon in the volume was given in 1686 at the funeral of Sara Pinto, the widow of the highly influential magnate Isaac de Pinto.<sup>46</sup> This sermon is seasoned with another element from his li-

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<sup>44</sup> *Sermoens de David Nunes Torres Pregador da Celebre irmandade de Abi Yetomim*, Amsterdam, 5450 [1670], British Library, London, f. 16. 4034.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, *Sermam Apologetico das Preminencias de nossa ley. Pregado A Festa de Sebuhot do Anno 5450 Na Illustre irmandade de Abi Yetomim...*, Amsterdam, 5450 [1690], p. 10. DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., p. 12-13. And see NUNES TORRES' *Dedicatoria* to the administrators of the confraternity: «[...] pois por ley Divina, et humana, lhe toca de direyto; visto que nossos sabios ensinaõ, et as leys das doze Taboas establecem, que seja do Senhor, todo o adquirido por industria do Criado [...]».

<sup>46</sup> D. NUNES TORRES, *Sermam Funeral et Panegirico, A vida e virtudes, da muy illustre Senhora Sara de Pinto, Pregado em 2 de Tebeth do Anno 5446*, Amsterdam, 5450. On Isaac de Pinto see H. P. Salomon, *The 'De Pinto' Manuscript: A 17<sup>th</sup> Century Marrano Family History*, «*Studia Rosenthaliana*» 9, 1, 1975, pp. 1-62.

brary. Nunes Torres sought this time to defend the argument that a person can prove that he exists, the fact that his soul exists, and the fact that God exists, in that order, on the basis of the principle, «eu duvido, ergo eu sou», which is a Portuguese translation of Descartes' basic principle, «cogito ergo sum» – «I think, therefore I am», which he formulated in the *Discourse de la Méthode*.<sup>47</sup> Once again, Nunes Torres surprises us both by the subject of his sermon and by the source that he used for the words that he addressed to a society for Torah study. Despite the adamant opposition encountered by Cartesian philosophy in large parts of the Calvinist establishment of the Dutch Republic, it had a strong presence in the Dutch universities, especially because of the separation between philosophy and theology instituted by prominent Calvinist theologians such as Heidanus and Witichius.<sup>48</sup> Nunes Torres' sermon might hint at a parallel phenomenon among certain circles of the Sephardic rabbinical elite, who also found in Descartes' systematic doubt an effective way of struggling with the religious skepticism that had spread in their communities. The fact that he was only twenty-six years old shows his daring. Moreover, the fact that his words did not arouse a negative response shows that he was not alone in his approach. Can we find evidence in his library of his affinity for Cartesian philosophy? Indeed, nine items in the catalogue relate to works by Descartes and include in fact all of his work, in French and Latin: eleven volumes of his complete works in French, two volumes of his *Opera philosophica* (in Latin), and *Les Méditations [touchant la première philosophie dans lesquelles l'existence de dieu et la distinction réelle entre l'âme et le corps de l'homme sont démontrées]* in French, the first French edition of the *Principes philosophiques* (1647), *Les Passions de l'Ame*, and a volume of his letters.<sup>49</sup> There is even a copy of *Le monde ou traité de la lumière*, which Descartes had decided not to publish when he heard about the trial of Galileo. It is clear that such an extensive selection shows more than undirected book collecting.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Sermam Funeral* cit., p. 10: «[...] que de tudo se pode duvidar, mas, que eu que suponho, e que duvido, nam tenha algo de existente he o unico ponto que nam se pode supor. A consequencia he forçosa, eu duvido, ergo, eu sou: eu imagino, ergo exsisto [...]».  
DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment* cit., pp. 25-29.

<sup>49</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 53 no. 547; fol. 28 nos. 376-377; fol. 23 nos. 243-244; fol. 39 no. 210; fol. 28 no. 375.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 23 no. 245.

To continue relating to the landmarks of the ‘generation of Paul Hazard’, biblical criticism, too, is present in this library. Indeed, Nunes Torres possessed works that were the cornerstones of early biblical criticism. First, there was the Dutch translation of *Preadamitae*, by Isaac la Peyrère, thoroughly studied by Richard Popkin. The Dutch version of this book, in which its author sought to prove, by a critical reading of scripture, that people existed before the creation of Adam, was first published in Amsterdam in 1661.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Nunes Torres owned a copy of Spinoza’s Theological-Political Treatise, which contains a critical, philological, and historical reading of scripture, employed to present the author’s doctrine of the relation between religion and the state, faith, and philosophy.<sup>52</sup> It appears that Spinoza’s excommunication did not deter Nunes Torres from making direct acquaintance with his works, despite the explicit prohibition against reading all of his writings («nem leer papel alcun feito por elle»)<sup>53</sup> Not only that, he possessed a copy of the first edition, published anonymously in 1670, which he had bound with five works against Spinoza that were published in the first seven years after the appearance of his book.<sup>54</sup> His library also contained the clandestine, and of course anonymous, French and Dutch translations of Spinoza’s Treatise published under the titles *La Clef du Santuaire* and *Rechtzinnige Theologant*, and printed in Amsterdam in 1678 and 1693 respectively.<sup>55</sup>

Nunes Torres’ collection also included the 1685 edition of the *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* by Richard Simon, and of course it also had his parallel work on the New Testament.<sup>56</sup> From this work he could learn not only the principles of Simon’s philological and critical exe-

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 36 no. 131; Cfr. R. H. POPKIN, *Isaac la Peyrère (1596-1676). His Life, Work and Influence*, Leiden, New York, København and Köln, Brill, 1987, pp. 13-16, 26-59, 69-79.

<sup>52</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 14 no. 55.

<sup>53</sup> The formula of Spinoza’s excommunication (*Livro de Ascamot A*, Municipal Archive of Amsterdam, PA 334, No. 19, fol. 408) is cited in full in several studies; see I. S. RÉVAH, *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado*, Paris and La Haye, Mouton, 1959, pp. 57-58; H. P. SALOMON, *La vraie excommunication de Spinoza*, in *Forum Litterarum. Miscelânea de Estudos Literários, Linguísticos e Históricos oferecida a J. J. van den Besselaar*, Amsterdam and Maarsen, 1984, pp. 181-199.

<sup>54</sup> The five bound books against Spinoza were works by J. Melchior, R. van Mansvelt, J. Bredenburg, F. Kuyper and P. van Mastricht.

<sup>55</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 36 no. 147; fol. 16 no. 99.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 13 nos. 39-40. Nunes Torres’ collection included the French translation by Richard Simon of Leone Modena’s Italian work *Historia de gli riti hebraici* (Paris 1637), which appeared since 1674 in many editions, and see *ibid.*, fol. 36 no. 130.



getic method but also the ideal image of the Karaites as «les juifs épurés» (purified Jews). This image kindled the imagination of a number of heterodox Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam, who had reservations about rabbinical Judaism and declared that they were Karaites, just at the time when the crisis erupted regarding the work of Nehemiah Hayon.<sup>57</sup> As for Pierre Bayle, everything indicates that Nunes Torres showed great interest in his work as well. In addition to the gigantic volumes of Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, which contained philosophical and moralistic criticism of the Bible and of Jewish ethics, criticism that is extended over many entries, including the famous iconoclastic article on King David, he also possessed the *Réponses aux questions d'un Provincial*, in which Bayle sharpened the distinction between «religionnaires», who dealt with religion and theology, and «rationaux», who dealt with understanding and philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

Not only did Nunes Torres own all the foregoing subversive books, we can point out another disruptive element, extremely surprising in a rabbi's library: books that the Sephardic community of Amsterdam had banned – and he was not averse to owning them. He managed to obtain a copy of the erotic poetry of Jacob de Pina, *Chanças del Ingenio*, an extremely rare book that was banned shortly before the excommunication of Spinoza, with explicit mention that the ban also applied to anyone who owned a copy of it.<sup>59</sup> He also owned a copy of the book of poems, *Flor de Apolo* (The Flower of Apollo) by Daniel Levi de Barrios. This book had been forbidden even before its publication, with the intervention of the Hakhm Rabbi Isaac Aboab da Fonseca, because of the many pagan images woven into it, drawn from Greek mythology, according to the best tradition of Spanish baroque poetry.<sup>60</sup>

Not only that, Rabbi Nunes Torres also owned a copy of *Examen das*

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<sup>57</sup> KAPLAN, *An Alternative Path* cit., pp. 261-271; cfr. R. H. POPKIN, *Les Caraites et l'émancipation des Juifs*, «Dix-Huitième Siècle» 8, 1981, pp. 134-147.

<sup>58</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 5 nos. 75-76; fol. 36 nos. 139-143; fol. 38 no. 184; fol. 49 no. 439.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 20 no. 185. On books banned by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam in the Early Modern Period see H. DEN BOER, *La literatura hispano-portuguesa de los sefardíes de Amsterdam en su contexto histórico-social (siglos XVII y XVIII)*, PhD. Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1992, pp. 100-113; *Id.*, *La literatura sefardí* cit., pp. 82-97.

<sup>60</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 21 no. 206; I. S. RÉVAH, *Les écrivains Manuel de Pina et Miguel de Barrios et la censure de la communauté Judéo-Portugaise d'Amsterdam*, «Tesoro de los Judíos Españoles», VIII, 1965, pp. 74-91; DEN BOER, *La literatura sefardí* cit., pp. 85-86.

*tradições phariseas* by Uriel da Costa!<sup>61</sup> This was a work in Portuguese in which da Costa explained at length his rejection of the Oral Law and denial of the immortality of the soul. The work was printed in 1624 and banned by the community in Amsterdam, and the secular authorities of the city also forbade reading it and ordered the burning of every copy of it. The book is regarded as so rare that only a single copy of it is known, discovered in the royal library of Copenhagen by H. P. Salomon in 1990. Quite likely this was the copy that had been owned by Rabbi David Nunes Torres.<sup>62</sup> In any event, after the banning of the book, there is no evidence of its presence in any library at all. Rabbi David Nunes Torres also owned the book on the immortality of the soul by Semuel da Silva, a Portuguese Jewish physician who resided in Hamburg and had written against da Costa, after several pages of his treatise against the Pharisaic tradition came his way, even before the book was published.<sup>63</sup>

With respect to collecting books, it is clear that the intellectual curiosity of the rabbi from the Hague overcame his religious orthodoxy, as we can learn, especially from his attitude toward the works of Spinoza. In addition to the various editions of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in different languages, he also owned a copy of the *Opera Posthuma*, printed in 1677, which contained almost all of Spinoza's writings.<sup>64</sup> The special interest of Rabbi David Nunes Torres in the *Ethica* by the philosopher of Amsterdam was expressed in an article that he published in the French literary journal *Bibliothèque raisonnée des ouvrages des savants de l'Europe*, which began to be published in Amsterdam in 1728. This publication, which continued to appear until 1753, published re-

<sup>61</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 33 no. 76.

<sup>62</sup> S. SEELIGMANN, *Bibliographie en Historie. Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der eerste Sephardim in Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, M. Hertzberger, 1927, pp. 54-55; URIEL DA COSTA, *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions, supplemented by Semuel da Silva's Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*, translation, notes and introduction by H. P. Salomon et I. S. D. Sassoon, Leiden, Brill, 1993, p. 17 n. 35; DEN BOER ET SALOMON, *Haham David Nunes Torres* cit., pp. 10-11. On Da Costa see the comprehensive research by I. S. RÉVAH, *Uriel da Costa et les Marranes de Porto*, Edition présentée et annotée par Carsten L. Wilke, Paris, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 33 no. 77. For some reason Rabbi David Nunes Torres had this book bound with the work by ALONSO NUNES DE HERRERA (alias Abraham Cohen Herrera) *Epitome de la lógica* which was also present in Rabbi Samuel Abas' library. On this rare book see YOSHA, *Myth and Metaphor* cit., pp. 64-68; KAPLAN, *El perfil cultural* cit., p. 280. Could it be that Nunes Torres bought this rare book at the public auction of Samuel Abas' books in 1693?; cfr. STUEDEMUND-HALÉVY, *Codices Gentium* cit., p. 291.

<sup>64</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 16 no. 98, listed in Dutch: «B.D.S. nagegate Schriften».

views of works that had appeared in Europe, and the article by Rabbi David Nunes Torres was a review of the Hebrew work by Nehemia Hiyya Hayoun, *Oz leElohim* (Power to God). It may be assumed that some of his remarks were not dissimilar from what he had written about Hayoun earlier, arousing the wrath of the leaders of the Amsterdam community. Rabbi David Nunes Torres' review was published in the second issue of the French journal, dated in July–September 1728, and it was reported that he had requested withholding publication of the article before his death. Regarding the matter we are dealing with here, Rabbi Nunes Torres' explicit mention of Spinoza is noteworthy, as is his comparison between Spinoza's philosophy and Hayoun's approach to the «ein sof» (the infinite, a Kabbalistic term), «qui est à peu près conforme au système de Spinoza», although in his opinion Hayoun had later distanced himself from the philosopher's views.<sup>65</sup>

Rabbi David Nunes Torres tirelessly followed publications on Spinoza and his teaching. About twenty works that were published on Spinoza's philosophy between 1671 and 1727, mainly critical of him, found their way into the library of the rabbi of the Honen Dal congregation, making it one of the richest private collections of its time on that subject. These books represented the early reception of Spinoza in the Dutch Republic, during the first two generations after the publication of his writings. There were decidedly anti-Spinozan works such as those by Johannes Melchior and Johannes Bredenburg, who later became a Spinozist *malgré lui*.<sup>66</sup> Other anti-Spinozan works were the essays of Petrus Jens, John Ray, and Fénelon against the *Ethica*<sup>67</sup> as well

<sup>65</sup> *Bibliothèque Raisonnée des Ouvrages des Savants de l'Europe*, no. 2, Juillet–Août 1728, pp. 334–352: «Exposé Concernant un nouveaux Livre Hebreu imprimé à Berlin en Caractères Rabiniques... don't le titre est Mehemut a (!) de Cola c'est-à-dire la Croyance de tous».

<sup>66</sup> See above, n. 53. The work by Melchior is listed in the catalogue only by the initials of its author: *J. M. V. D. M. Epistola ad Amicum, continens Censuram Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. It was published in Utrecht, C. Noenaert, in 1671. On Bredenburg and his work see W. VAN BUNGE, *Johannes Bredenburg (1643-1691). Een Rotterdamse Collegiant in ban van Spinoza*, Rotterdam, Erasmus Universitatis Drukkerij, 1990; ID., *On the Early Dutch Reception of the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, «Studia Spinozana», 5, 1989, pp. 225–251.

<sup>67</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 27 no. 118: P. Jens, *Examen philosophicum sextae definitio-nis part 1 Eth. Benedicti de Spinoza* (published in Dordrecht, Th. Goris, in 1697); *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 37 nos. 157–158: *L'existence et la sagesse de Dieu par le Sieur Ray*, Utrecht, Broedelet, 1714 (the English original was published in London, William Innys, in 1691); *L'existence de Dieu par Fénelon*, Amsterdam, 1713 (the author of this work is F. de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon and the book was published in that year also in Paris). Nunes Torres owned two copies of that work.

as the biography of Spinoza by Colerus.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, Rabbi Nunes Torres obtained the work by Balthazar Bekker, *Le monde enchanté*, in four volumes, influenced by Cartesian philosophy, which attracted great interest because of the polemics against the writings of Spinoza. Bekker denied the existence of spirits without bodies and was accused of having an affinity with Spinoza, despite his vigorous objections to the latter's ideas.<sup>69</sup> Not even *Leven van Philopater* (The Life of Philopater), a Spinozan *roman à clef* that aroused a storm with the publication of its two parts in 1691 and 1697, was not absent from the bookshelves of the Rabbi from the Hague. The author of this novel was a radical Enlightenment figure named Johannes Duijkerius, who published the work anonymously.<sup>70</sup> Rabbi Nunes Torres also obtained a series of works by thinkers who rejected Spinozan philosophy from a Cartesian point of view, such as the two books by the French writer Silvain Régis, and a work by Ruardus Andala, a Calvinist minister from Friesland.<sup>71</sup> He also owned works by other decidedly anti-Spinoza authors, including two books by Abbadie, a Huguenot minister active in Berlin,<sup>72</sup> and a work by Blijenbergh, a grain merchant and lover of philosophy, resident in Dordrecht. Blijenbergh corresponded with Spinoza from December 1664 to June 1665, after reading about the foundations of Cartesian philosophy in his book, because he himself admired Descartes. He feared

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<sup>68</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 38 no. 187: *Verité de la resurrection de J. C. defendue contre B. D. S etc. avec sa vie par Colerus*; Nunes Torres owned the French edition published in the Hague in 1706. The book had first been published in Dutch in 1705, but it is not clear whether Colerus wrote it in that language or in German.

<sup>69</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit. fol. 53 no. 545: *Le monde enchanté par Bekker*, 1-4, Amsterdam, 1694. The Dutch edition was published in 1691-1693 with the title *De Betoverde Weereld*. On Bekker and his work see A. FIX, *Fallen Angels. Balthasar Bekker, Spirit Belief and Confessionalism in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic*, Dordrecht, Springer, 1999.

<sup>70</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 64 no. 911. On this book see ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment* cit., pp. 315-320.

<sup>71</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 14 no. 62: *L'usage de la Raison et de la Foy, par P.S. Régis*, printed in Paris, J. Cusson, in 1704; *ibid.*, fol. 24 no. 265: *Système de philosophie contenant la Logique, la Métaphysique et la morale, par Silvain Régis*, 1-3, Paris, D. Thierry, aux dépens d'Anisson, Posuel et Rigaud, libraires à Lyon, 1690. The work by Andala appears in the catalogue in rather corrupt form on fol. 17 no. 105: *Compendium Theologus supernoalis [!] per Ruardi Andala, Franeq[uer]* 1713. It was printed in the years 1710 and 1725 with the title *Compendium theologiae naturalis*; cfr. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment* cit., pp. 480-485.

<sup>72</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 36 no. 132-133: *Verité de la Religion Chrétienne par Abbadie*, 1-2, Rotterdam, R. Leers, 1688; *Traité de la Divinité [!] de J. Christ par Abbadie*, Rotterdam, 1709.

that Spinoza's words implied that one could conclude that God was responsible for the existence of evil, if «God is the cause not only of the Soul's substance, but also of the Soul's every Motion or Striving, which we call will [...]». The extended correspondence did not lead the two to agree with one another, nor did a meeting between them that took place in Spinoza's house in Voorburg in March 1665, and after a penetrating discussion a deep rift opened between the two, which could not be bridged.<sup>73</sup> In 1674, Blijenbergh published a comprehensive and aggressive work against the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, and a copy of this work was owned by Rabbi Nunes Torres.<sup>74</sup> The hefty tome by the Huguenot preacher, Isaac Jaquelot, published in 1697, when he was living in the Hague, also found its way to Nunes Torres' library. Jaquelot, although he was an advocate of rationalism and despite his great enthusiasm for the flourishing of the sciences in the Age of Enlightenment, expressed deep apprehension about the fact that the new scientific and philosophical ideas were leading people to think that it was possible to believe only in what could be proven with certainty, a principle that was necessary for science but foreign and contradictory to religious belief and liable to lead to skepticism and atheism. Therefore, he attacked Spinoza and held him responsible for the rebirth of Epicureanism.<sup>75</sup> Nunes Torres also obtained two works by Noël Aubert de Versé, another French author who was involved in the ferment aroused by Spinoza's writings. Shortly after de Versé settled in Holland, he launched a vehement attack against Spinoza, and in his book, published in 1684, he called him «the most sophisticated atheist that hell has ever spat out».<sup>76</sup> Just as de Versé changed his religious affiliation several times, converting from Catholicism to Calvinism, then from Calvinism to Socinianism, and final-

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<sup>73</sup> The correspondence between the two was published in Spinoza's *Epistolae*, and see the English translation in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Edited and Translated by E. Curley, 1, Princeton, 1985, pp. 354-392, 394-395, and the editors comments, pp. 349-352; and see also W. KLEVER, *Spinoza Interviewed by Willem van Blyenbergh*, «Studia Spinozana», 4, 1988, pp. 317-320; ID., *Blijenbergh's Worsteling met het kwaad en Spinoza's reactie*, «Tijdschrift voor Filosofie», 55, 1993, pp. 307-329.

<sup>74</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 14 no. 64: *De waerheyt van de Christelyke Godsdienst tegen 't Boek genaamt Tractatus Theologico Politicus door W. van Bleyenberg*, Leyden, Daniel van Gaesbeeck, 1674.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 14 no. 63: *Dissertations sur l'existence de Dieu, par Jaquelot*, La Haye, 1697.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 37 no. 148: *L'impie convaincu, ou Dissertation contre Spinoza*; cfr. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 352-353.

ly back again to Catholicism, he also shifted his philosophical outlook. The book that he published in 1687, ostensibly anti-Spinozan like the former one, was seen by a sharp-eyed reader such as Pierre Bayle, as an effort to undermine the views of Descartes and Malebranche and as a concealed and sophisticated step toward the dissemination of Spinozan philosophy.<sup>77</sup> Both books by Aubert de Versé were in the rabbi's collection, apparently bound together.

The auction catalogue shows that Rabbi David Nunes Torres strove to collect books on Spinoza, especially against him, until the end of his life. Two apologetic works by Bernard Nieuwentijt, a physician resident in Purmerend in the province of North Holland, which were very widely circulated in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, did not evade the rabbi's eyes, and he also saw fit to purchase them. He purchased *Gronden van zekerheid* (The Foundations of Certainty), which was published in 1720, two years after its author's death. The book sought to prove that Spinoza's mathematical, deductive method could prove nothing about the real world. Nieuwentijt maintained that knowledge of reality was based on experiment and on faith in reports of experiments conducted by others. In his view scripture contained reliable accounts of knowledge touching upon the creation and composition of the things in this world.<sup>78</sup> Nunes Torres also obtained an edition of the French translation of Nieuwentijt's earlier book, which emphasized, with reference to scientific literature and to his own research, that the conclusions from the study of nature did not lead to loss of faith, but rather showed that an omnipotent and infinitely wise God had planned creation, assigning a purpose and function to everything. Thus Nieuwentijt sought to refute those who argued, influenced by Spinoza, that nature is merely chance and necessity, and that what was written in the Bible was not the word of God. The copy of this book that was owned by the Sephardic rabbi was printed in 1727, so he must have purchased it shortly before his death.<sup>79</sup> Nunes Torres found no contradiction between his uncompromising commitment to Halakha, as expressed in

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<sup>77</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* loc. cit.: *Le Tombeau du Socinianisme avec le nouveau visionnaire de Rotterdam*, Francfort, F. Arnaud, 1687 (the book was published in Amsterdam).

<sup>78</sup> *Catalogus Librorum* cit., fol. 16 no. 100.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 14 no. 58: *L'existence de Dieu démontrée [par les merveilles de la nature]*. The translation was first published in Paris in 1725 but the edition mentioned in the catalogue was printed in Amsterdam in 1727; R. VERMIJ, *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende eeuw: Bernard Nieuwentijt*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1991.

his sharp confrontations with the Sephardic leadership of Amsterdam and the Hague, and openness to the new intellectual discourse of the Western European philosophers. He collected books out of indefatigable intellectual curiosity and attraction toward the various cultures with which he felt an affinity and closeness. However, he also devoted himself eagerly to the collection of forbidden literature and sought to familiarize himself with the opinions of the new heterodox and skeptical thinkers, who were undermining the foundations of traditional religious faith. He collected the writings of Jewish heretics, who continued to threaten the integrity of the faith of Western Sephardic Jewry, even after they were removed from the community and excommunicated. To satisfy his intellectual appetites and in order to gain thorough knowledge of the arguments of the heretics, he was willing to defy the bans that forbade possession of their works.

The Sephardic leadership feared Spinoza's shadow no less than the Christian religious establishment did. Rabbi Nunes Torres was not unlike contemporary Christian intellectuals in Holland, France, England, Germany, and elsewhere, who were drawn into the new discourse in the wake of the Cartesian revolution and the deep impression made by Spinoza's philosophy, without leaving the religious camp to which they belonged. On the contrary, many of them girded their loins and set out to battle fiercely against the challenge to the old foundations of theology and philosophy. The rabbi from the Hague sought to be one of them, and he delved deeply into the works of the chief spokesmen of Protestantism and Catholicism, whose books he acquired systematically. Similarly he drew both encouragement and new philosophical arguments from the Dutch and French Cartesians, whose works he collected with compulsive thoroughness, in order to use them to refute the Spinozan and deistic views, which at that time were seen as the embodiment of atheism and the denial of religious faith. The rabbi had much in common with the ideas of Christian intellectuals in the Dutch Republic, including conservative Calvinists, liberal Remonstrants, Huguenot ministers, and Socinian exiles. By means of the works they wrote against Spinozism and deism, or the books they kept in their libraries and lent to their associates, they contributed to the circulation of the new ideas even if their intention was the opposite. Quite likely, some of the wealthy Jewish men whom Rabbi David Nunes Torres frequented made use of his book collection, so they could peruse the writings of Descartes and Spinoza or learn about their views from the condemnations that their opponents had written against them. In a sense, Nunes Torres was an

unwilling agent of the new Enlightenment not only within the Western Sephardic Diaspora but also in Dutch society itself.

The linguistic and thematic variety in Nunes Torres' book collection is a fascinating indication of the broad intellectual horizons and complex views of the learned religious elite of the new Sephardic communities in the early Enlightenment period.