

## 12. MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER AND THE LEIDEN MANUSCRIPTS

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### *Introduction*

How and under what conditions Moritz Steinschneider wrote the catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in Leiden, the Netherlands—this is the subject of the present paper.<sup>1</sup> Which collections required his expertise and what earlier descriptions could he use? What were the trends in bibliography when Steinschneider was invited to come to Leiden? What sort of catalogue did the owners of the manuscripts wish him to compile? What has been the fate of his catalogue in our day? These are a few of the questions that I will try to answer.

It must have been some forty-five years ago that I first read an article by Moritz Steinschneider. His name did not ring a bell at the time. I was a beginning student, merely looking for any information on Ibn Sīrīn's work on the interpretation of dreams, and I had come across a reference to one of Steinschneider's articles.<sup>2</sup> The acquaintance could not have been made in a better way. Immediately I had arrived *in medias res*: pseudepigraphical literature, obscure themes shifting between Muslim, Jewish and Christian spheres of culture, together with numerous references to periodicals, which were, if not obscure, then at least obsolete and impossible to find. This has always been the problem with Steinschneiderian bibliographies, and not for nothing did Heinrich Malter and Alexander Marx decide to collect the numerous bits and pieces of this "father of Hebrew bibliography" into his collected works.<sup>3</sup> The plan to publish "Collected Works" was proposed to the master on his 90th birthday, March 30, 1906, and it received his blessing.

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<sup>1</sup> Cat. Leiden [*Catalogus codicum hebraeorum bibliothecae academiae Lugduno-Batauae*], auctore M. Steinschneider (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1858).

<sup>2</sup> Moritz Steinschneider, "Ibn Shahin und Ibn Sirin. Zur Literatur der Oneirokritik," *ZDMG* 17 (1863): 227–244.

<sup>3</sup> *Gesammelte Schriften von Moritz Steinschneider*, vol. I (Berlin, 1925). Steinschneider's honorific title, "father of Hebrew bibliography," comes from the article about him in the English *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

However, the first, and apparently only, volume to appear was published in 1925. Steinschneider had let loose his 1,400 or so bibliographical children with a massive quantity of references. Upon reading the Preface, which describes the preparatory activities of Malter and Marx for this great undertaking, one loses courage altogether. It was their ambition not only to republish Steinschneider's works, but also to supplement these with his own notes and remarks on his own articles, which can now be found in the Steinschneider collection in the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. No wonder the project misfired.

There is yet another aspect of Steinschneider's work that effectively restrains us from fully utilizing his knowledge. Here I mean not his use of the Latin language in some of his works, but rather his running remarks addressed to other bibliographers who had overlooked important details which had not escaped his sharp eye. Relevant and true as these comments may have been at that time, now they tend to detract from the readability of many of his articles and books. Steinschneider's article on Daniel's Book of Dreams,<sup>4</sup> which I also read as a beginning student, is a case in point. Half of it is about pseudographical literature and oneirocritics and the other half consists of his ongoing discussion with the scholarly world. Not only have the issues, hotly debated back then, faded away, but also the adversaries he tilted have long since died.

#### *The Leiden Hebrew Manuscripts*

The Leiden University Library, founded in 1575, had already obtained important Hebrew and other Oriental manuscripts as early as 1609. They are connected with the name of the great Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609), but not all of them had in fact been in Scaliger's possession, contrary to what later librarians and bibliographers, including Moritz Steinschneider, thought.<sup>5</sup> It is a small collection of Hebrew manuscripts of less than twenty volumes, including texts in

<sup>4</sup> M. Steinschneider, "Das Traumbuch Daniels und die oneirokritische Litteratur des Mittelalters. Eine bibliographische Studie," Part 1, *Serapeum* 24 (1863), no. 13: 193–201.

<sup>5</sup> A. Hamilton, "'Nam tirones sumus.' Franciscus Raphelengius' Lexicon Arabico-Latinum (Leiden 1613)," *De Gulden Passer* 66–67 (1988–1989): 557–589. (On pp. 586–588 is: "Appendix. Raphelengius' Arabic Manuscripts in the Leiden University Library.")

Judeo-Italian, Judeo-German and Judeo-Arabic, reflecting all sorts of traditional Jewish scholarship and Jewish activity in transmitting the sciences.

In or shortly after 1665 the Hebrew manuscripts bequeathed by Levinus Warner (1619–1665) to the Leiden library arrived from Constantinople in Leiden. Scaliger's Hebrew manuscript collection could be characterized as a typical Renaissance European collection of Hebrew manuscripts, but Warner's manuscripts were different, at least to a certain extent. His collection did indeed contain the usual subjects also represented in Scaliger's collections but, in addition, its numerous Karaite texts were a conspicuous novelty. For a number of years Warner had been the Dutch Republic's representative to the Sublime Porte and, being a bibliophile and scholar as well as a diplomat, he had succeeded in assembling an important collection of some 1,100 manuscripts. Of these some one hundred volumes contained numerous Hebrew texts. His Karaite manuscripts, which are not particularly ancient for the most part—some of them may even have been commissioned by Warner from his Karaite friends in Constantinople—give that collection an entirely distinct character. Today these two bequeathed collections still constitute the centerpiece, both in quantity and in quality, of the Leiden Hebrew manuscript collection. New acquisitions since 1667 have never been able to rival the Scaligerana and the Warneriana.<sup>6</sup>

The greatest surprise is probably that the Leiden Oriental manuscripts were at first hardly used and remained little known. It is true that they had been described in the subsequent library catalogues, from 1625 onwards, and that a few of these manuscripts indeed served as the basis of text editions, but after the demise in 1667 of Jacobus Golius, the professor of Arabic and mathematics at Leiden University, manuscript-related activities came almost to a standstill. It is a telling example that Adrian Reland (1676–1718), the professor of Oriental languages and Hebrew antiquities at Utrecht University and

<sup>6</sup> A few exceptions may be mentioned here. First: two manuscripts from Fez, including a *Machzor*, purchased in 1853 from Moses Hecht, a Moroccan bookseller (now Leiden, Or. 4813 and Or. 4814, receipts signed in Hebrew by Hecht are in the Archive of the Legatum Warnerianum). Second: several manuscripts of texts by Herz Ullmann (Or. 4807–Or. 4809). In October 2005 the Leiden Library succeeded in acquiring one more Ullmann manuscript at a Sotheby's auction in New York (now Or. 26.509). But these are exceptions.

an outstanding figure in the early European Enlightenment,<sup>7</sup> for his important publications used his own modest collection of manuscripts, those of his friend, the ill-fated Herman Sike (d. 1712), and a few from the Amsterdam library, rather than the Leiden collections, which in the meantime were gathering dust on the bookshelves. Which they were and how they were stored is told by the 1716 catalogue of the Leiden library.

In 1729 Leiden University decided to devote extra attention to the study of the relatively large collection of Oriental manuscripts in its library, some 1400 volumes at that time, by creating the special post of “Interpres,” the interpreter of the Oriental collections, or rather of Warner’s legacy, which by then had become the generic name of the Oriental collections there. From 1732 onwards that post was in personal union with the professorship of Arabic at Leiden University.<sup>8</sup>

The printed catalogue of the entire library holdings, both manuscript and printed, was published in 1716. It was the last time that the entire library collection could be listed in a single catalogue volume.<sup>9</sup> Warner’s legacy was fully described in it, also the collections brought together by Golius and the smaller legacies, such as the Scaliger bequest and a few other acquisitions. Although the Leiden library traditionally considered Hebrew to be an Oriental language, quite a number of the Hebrew manuscripts were actually of European origin.<sup>10</sup> In the 1716 catalogue the Hebrew materials were treated separately from the “other” Oriental manuscripts. Within each chapter or sub-collection, the principle of order in the Leiden library catalogues had always been the book’s size (large volumes first, small volumes at the end), and that is still the case for the library’s older collections. Steinschneider’s catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts reflects that principle in its numbering. The entries in the 1716 catalogue were short, a few lines at

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Israel, in the chapter “Rethinking Islam. Philosophy and the ‘Other,’” in his *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 615–639, places Reland in a European intellectual context.

<sup>8</sup> Till 1992, when the present author obtained the title while not being the professor of Arabic. On 1 December 2010 the present author has become *Interpres emeritus*, and a new interpres has not been appointed.

<sup>9</sup> *Catalogus librorum tam impressorum quam manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Publicae Universitatis Lugduno-Batauae* (Leiden: Pieter van der Aa, 1716). A supplement was published in 1741.

<sup>10</sup> The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Or. 4720 = Scaliger Hebr. 3), which came from Italy, and the *Tehilim* (Or. 4725 = Scaliger Hebr. 8), which came from England, are the two most noteworthy examples of European Hebrew manuscripts in the Leiden library.

most per title, with somewhat more space for collective volumes, the contents of which had not always been completely described. Often the entries gave no more information than the earlier catalogues, but were merely repetitive. As a simple guide through the collection, however, this was sufficient, and the 1716 catalogue served that purpose for over a century.

In the first half of the 19th century, ideas of what a manuscript catalogue should be changed drastically, not only in the Netherlands. No longer was the catalogue a guide through a particular collection nor did it serve as an inventory of such a collection, but it was supposed to provide the reader with a set of building materials as complete as possible for a literary history of a particular language or cultural area. In Leiden several plans were drawn up to produce just such a new type of catalogue; progress and modernity were in the air. The most notable result was the Leiden catalogue of Oriental manuscripts started by Reinhart P. A. Dozy (1820–1883) in 1851 and completed in six volumes a quarter of a century later.<sup>11</sup> For some languages, such as Syriac and Persian, it is still the most recent printed catalogue in existence. Hebrew manuscripts, however, were at first not included in this project.

#### *Changing Ideas on Catalogues*

A word should be said here about the attempts to compile more informative catalogues. There were a few precursors to the extensive Leiden catalogues of Oriental manuscripts of the second part of the 19th century. Interpres H. A. Hamaker (1789–1835) had several great projects in mind. His rather grandiose, if not megalomaniac, research projects included Semitic languages, Sanskrit and Indo-Germanic studies, the study of the languages and cultures of the Berbers and of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, cultural anthropology, the origin of species (long before Darwin) and, last but not least, catalogues of the Oriental manuscript collections in the Netherlands. In the end, however, reality always overtakes the great dreams, and the actual catalogue published by Hamaker, a mere specimen of the multi-volume project that he

<sup>11</sup> *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae*, 6 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1851–1877). The successive authors were R. P. A. Dozy, P. de Jong, M. J. de Goeje and M.Th. Houtsma.

seems to have had in mind, contained descriptions of a mere *twelve* volumes of historical manuscripts.<sup>12</sup> The extensive entries and the long quotations in Hamaker's specimen catalogue provided the reader with a broad view of the manuscripts' contents. The catalogue as a genre had evidently changed: from being the guide to a collection it had become a primary source in itself.

Hamaker was succeeded by H. E. Weijers (1805–1844) who had similar ideas about manuscript catalogues. Because of his premature death, however, not much more than a pile of learned notes came of his plans, of which some were incorporated into later catalogues.<sup>13</sup> Weijers was innovative, founding in 1840 a journal called *Orientalia*, which contained texts and studies based on the Leiden collections. Two volumes appeared. Concerning the Hebrew collection, he was of the opinion that it would be a good idea for a Jewish scholar to describe the Hebrew manuscripts in the Leiden library. A rather revolutionary suggestion, it reflects the changing ideas within the Protestant establishment about (re)involving "other" groups who had been disenfranchised before the French Revolution. However, Weijers did not live to implement his ideas.

That would be done by his successor, Th.W.J. Juynboll (1802–1861). With the permission of Leiden University's board of directors he invited Moritz Steinschneider to Leiden and commissioned the writing of the catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts. The lack of archival materials on the negotiations between Steinschneider and the University's directors may be explained by the circumstance that Steinschneider visited Leiden several times, on his way from Berlin to Oxford, where he was working on a major catalogue, and again on the way back from Oxford to Berlin, where he lived. So he did not need to correspond, but could discuss his plans directly with Juynboll. During these travels, from about 1852 onwards, his curiosity about the holdings in Leiden may have brought him into contact with the librarian and the Orientalists there. The first installments of Steinschneider's Oxford catalogue may have convinced the Leiden academics that Steinschneider was the right person for the job.

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<sup>12</sup> H. A. Hamaker, *Specimen catalogi codicum manuseriptorum orientalium bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batauae* (Leiden: Luchtmans, 1820). It is a quarto volume of 256 pp.

<sup>13</sup> P. de Jong, *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Regiae Scientiarum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1862). This work was based on scholarly notes by Weijers.

The first work of making notes and excerpts was done in the month of July 1854. Later on, a few of the Leiden manuscripts were sent to Berlin, to Kaiserstrasse 3, Steinschneider's home address, for further study. They were returned by Steinschneider personally in July 1858, when he was again on his way from Berlin to Oxford, where he was to resume work on his catalogue of Hebrew books in the Bodleian Library.<sup>14</sup>

### *Steinschneider at Work*

What would be the best method of describing Hebrew manuscripts, Steinschneider asked, rather rhetorically. In his Preface to the Leiden catalogue he declared himself incapable of conclusively answering this question, and explained how he had in fact proceeded. Accuracy, completeness and clarity should be the entry's characteristics, and the description of the form should balance that of the contents. The University's directors had asked Steinschneider to proceed so that his catalogue would answer the needs of the modern age. Otherwise they imposed no restrictions. For his part, Steinschneider was so wise as to maintain the order and number system of the Hebrew manuscripts as indicated in the 1716 catalogue. Later on, it was decided that the work would be illustrated, in this case by facsimiles reproduced lithographically, a costly addition as we will see.

Despite all the good qualities of Steinschneider's work we may mention here a mystification created by him which lasted for over a century. It had not escaped his attention that quite a number of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Leiden collection bore a beautifully penned owner's name, which he read as J. van Hill, though in fact the name should be read as J. van Hell. Steinschneider devoted more than three pages of small print to an attempt to identify this as yet unknown scholar who had apparently been interested in Hebrew manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> The persistent quest for the identity of the unknown Hebrew scholar Johannes van Hell found its apogee in the conjectures by

<sup>14</sup> M. Steinschneider, *CB* (Berlin, 1852 and 1860). The borrowed manuscripts were returned by Steinschneider; see "Uitleen-Register II," p. 64, in the Archive of the Legatum Warnerianum.

<sup>15</sup> Steinschneider, Preface to *Cat. Leiden*, note on pp. xii–xv.

G. W. J. Drewes (1899–1992).<sup>16</sup> In the end it all proved to be a canard, as my father demonstrated: Johannes van Hell was a notary-public in Amsterdam who, while inventorizing Warner’s manuscripts, but being unable to read exotic languages, wrote his name in some of Warner’s bequeathed manuscripts upon their arrival in Amsterdam.<sup>17</sup>

Originally Steinschneider’s catalogue was considered to be the third volume in the catalogue of Oriental manuscripts in the Leiden Library, after the two volumes published in 1851 by R. P. A. Dozy. The invoices of E. J. Brill,<sup>18</sup> who both produced the book on his press and sold it through his bookshop in Leiden,<sup>19</sup> mention the Steinschneider project as volume 3 of the catalogue of Oriental manuscripts in the Leiden Library, but it never was. From the beginning the typography and format of Steinschneider’s catalogue differed from the technical specifications according to which Dozy’s two earlier volumes of the Oriental-manuscripts catalogue had been produced from 1851 onwards. On June 13, 1857, Brill charged the University the sum of 240 florins for work in 1856, for the printing in Latin and Rabbinical Hebrew type of ten sheets (each with sixteen pages) in a print run of two hundred copies (190 copies on ordinary paper and ten copies on luxury paper). For postage to Berlin he charged 15.71 florins. In an invoice over work done until December 1857 Brill charged the University the sum of 336.00 florins for the printing of fourteen sheets with the same specifications. For postage expenses to Berlin the sum of 53.89 florins was mentioned. For the work of the lithographer, Mr. Hooiberg in Leiden, who made two hundred copies of the eleven facsimiles, the sum of 118.60 florins was calculated. Ugly, simple and too small in size as these facsimiles may seem to us now, they were then yet another sign of modernity and progress—exactly what Leiden University was after.

<sup>16</sup> *Levinus Warner and his Legacy. Three Centuries Legatum Warnerianum in the Leiden University Library* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> H. J. Witkam, “Johannes van Hell en het Legatum Warnerianum,” in idem, *Dagelijkse Zaken van de Leidse Universiteit, van 1581 tot 1596*, 6e deel, 2e stuk (with summary in English) (Leiden, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> E. J. Brill’s invoice (“declaratie”) for work done in 1856, dated 13 June 1857, and a similar invoice for work done up to December 1857, sent to Prof. Juynboll on 19 June 1858, are kept in the Archive of the Legatum Warnerianum.

<sup>19</sup> Brill earned double on the project, first by producing the book on his press and then by selling it through his bookshop, for which he was allowed a discount of 40% off the shop price.

All in all, producing Steinschneider's catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in Leiden in a print run of two hundred copies had cost the Dutch government the rather formidable sum of 764.20 florins. In order to merely break even with this project, the shop price per copy had to be  $764.20 \times 100/60 = 1273.67$ , divided by  $190 = 6.70$  florins, theoretically speaking, and only assuming (1) that Brill received his usual 40% on the shop price, (2) that the ten luxury copies were not for sale and (3) that all 190 ordinary copies would be sold. The actual shop price, however, was slightly less than that, which means that somewhere in the chain of calculation the margin must have been narrower, yet the catalogue never was a cheap book. For reasons unknown, the Dutch National Bibliography does not mention Steinschneider's catalogue<sup>20</sup> but we are nevertheless informed about its actual shop price. E.J. Brill's static archives, which are kept in Amsterdam University Library, tell us that the shop price of Steinschneider's catalogue was in fact 6.00 florins.<sup>21</sup> From the book's sales, apart from the typesetting and printing profit which we are unable to calculate, Brill must have earned a total of  $190 \times (40\% \text{ of } 6.00 \text{ florins}) = 456$  florins, if all 190 copies were sold and if the ten luxury copies had not been for sale. If Brill's net profit on the typesetting and printing had amounted to, say, 100 or 150 florins, his total profit on the project would have amounted to well over 100%, and without much risk at that. We do not know the amount of the fee paid to Steinschneider by Leiden University.

Such governmental outlay for Orientalist publications was by no means exceptional, however. Relatively large sums of money had been spent in the preceding decade, and were to be spent later, on text editions and catalogues, exactly the sort of scholarly production for which Leiden has become famous.

<sup>20</sup> R. van der Meulen, *Brinkman's Catalogus der boeken, plaat- en kaartwerken, die gedurende de jaren 1850–1882 in Nederland zijn uitgegeven of herdrukt, in alphabetische volgorde gerangschikt* [...] (Amsterdam: Brinkman, 1892, reprinted Leiden: Sijthoff, 1966). Steinschneider's catalogue should have been mentioned on p. 1114.

<sup>21</sup> Information based on Brill's own sales catalogue, *Vijfde vervolg van den fonds-catalogus van E.J. Brill 31 December 1859*, kindly supplied to me by Mr. Nico H. Kool of Amsterdam University Library.

*After Steinschneider's Catalogue*

On October 16, 1858, the Interpres of the Legatum Warnerianum, Th.W.J. Juynboll, wrote a remarkable letter, or rather an internal memorandum,<sup>22</sup> to the University's board of directors about the lending of the library's manuscripts and, more particularly, its Hebrew manuscripts. Steinschneider's catalogue was at that moment on the point of coming out. In his letter Juynboll explained that there had never been problems in lending manuscripts to private scholars in the Netherlands and abroad. In fact this had been done on a rather wide scale, as the still extant lending registers show.<sup>23</sup> And when one reads the acknowledgments in the prefaces of many of the text editions produced by the 19th-century Orientalists, it is evident that numerous manuscripts were indeed lent for purposes of collation and of textual criticism. Editing could not have been done otherwise, since photography, still in its infancy, was hardly used then: its high cost and low quality made it an unviable option for textual editing anyway. Juynboll wrote further that if the manuscripts were in good physical shape and if the persons wishing to borrow them were well-known scholars, lending was usually no problem. For the Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts Juynboll did not foresee any problem if this practice was continued. However, with the Hebrew manuscripts the case was different, so he wrote. There were two reasons for this, he argued. One reason was connected with the manuscripts themselves, the other with the persons who requested permission to borrow them.

"The condition of some of the Hebrew manuscripts requires, because of their great antiquity, the greatest possible care, in order to prevent deterioration. Other manuscripts contain more than one text within a binding, and lending of one text would imply that all the other texts in the same binding would be unavailable for a certain period." True as this was, Juynboll did not see this particular feature, common to both Islamic and Hebrew manuscripts, as an impediment to lending the Islamic manuscripts to outside readers. The reason for his hesitation to lend Hebrew manuscripts had rather to do with the persons who requested, or were expected to request, permission to borrow the

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Th.W.J. Juynboll to the Curatoren Hoogeschool te Leijden, 16 October 1858, kept in the Archive Legatum Warnerianum.

<sup>23</sup> Two volumes of the "Uitleen-Register" over the period are preserved in the Archive of the Legatum Warnerianum.

Hebrew manuscripts. Some of them were less familiar to Juynboll, and not all of them were academics. He intimated to his directors that a large readership of German Jews, learned but non-academic, would start using the generous facilities of the Leiden library to the full. This development could already be discerned and could be expected to increase after the publication of Steinschneider's catalogue. Would it not be prudent, Juynboll then asked, to be more restrictive in this case? About two months later, the answer from the directors, in the building opposite Juynboll's office on Leiden's central canal, arrived.<sup>24</sup> He was given authority to act according to his own judgment. We do not know how many subsequent borrowing requests were refused by Juynboll and to whom. The library's lending registers, however, do show the names of scholars who received Hebrew manuscripts after the publication of Steinschneider's catalogue.

It was the first time that a section of Dutch society from outside the academic world could be identified as cultural stakeholders in a sub-collection of the manuscripts in the Leiden library—one effect of the emancipation of the Jews in the first half of the 19th century, and of Roman Catholics for that matter. It would be anachronistic to think that learned members of the flourishing Jewish communities in Amsterdam and other Dutch cities in the 17th and 18th centuries could have found their way to such collections, or that they would have had free access to a university's Hebrew manuscripts. But now times were changing and Juynboll expressed his hesitations about these changes. It may be added that 15th- and 16th-century Christian scholars of Hebrew did not develop their knowledge on their own, but made extensive use of the reference works compiled earlier by Jewish scholars. As soon as they had acquired the knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic necessary for understanding the Scriptures, however, they could do without traditional Jewish scholarship.<sup>25</sup> This comfortable isolation had existed for several centuries, but now suddenly came to an end. Jewish scholarship in Europe, both academic and private, was claiming access to its own heritage.

<sup>24</sup> Curatoren to Juynboll, no. 172, dated 8 December 1858, in the Archive Legatum Warnerianum.

<sup>25</sup> The process has now been eloquently described by Albert van der Heide, *Hebraica Veritas. Christopher Plantin and the Christian Hebraists* (Antwerp: Plantin Museum/Printroom, 2008).

The two hundred copies of Steinschneider's catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in Leiden were probably sold out soon enough. In the early 1970s a plan was devised to update it in two ways. New acquisitions since 1858, very few in any case, would be added and Steinschneider's codicological information on all the manuscripts would be upgraded to meet modern requirements. Steinschneider's description of the manuscripts' contents did not need correction, however, it was thought. The work on the supplement was done by Albert van der Heide. When I was appointed curator in the Leiden library in November 1974, I found the project in full and unstoppable swing. Van der Heide's supplementary catalogue was published a few years later.<sup>26</sup> The decision to publish only a supplement had been taken because Biblio Verlag, a publishing house in Osnabrück, was reprinting Steinschneider's 1858 catalogue in 1977 and it was thought that the two volumes, the reprint of the original catalogue and the extra volume by van der Heide, would nicely complement one another. These expectations did not pan out, however. The two different channels of distribution never converged, since neither party saw it as its own interest to communicate with the other and to coordinate their common business. Another, more serious, disaster befell van der Heide's catalogue: the majority of the copies was lost early on! The publisher, Leiden University Press, had meanwhile changed hands several times. From an institution founded out of idealism just after World War II,<sup>27</sup> it had become, thirty years later, the lucrative channel of University subsidies granted to publish books that would never sell on the open market. As a source of subsidies, for which hardly any performance was expected in return, its possession was eagerly coveted by several commercial publishers. Within a few years I saw Leiden University Press pass from Stenfert Kroese in Leiden into the hands of Nijhoff in The Hague and from there to Brill in Leiden, which company after a while lost the imprint as well. Currently owned by Amsterdam University Press, it is still very lucrative for its proprietor, and for the same reason as before.<sup>28</sup> At a certain moment in the hectic 1980s the cartons containing

<sup>26</sup> A. van der Heide, *Hebrew Manuscripts* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> The basic idea was that the proceeds from bestsellers, such as the *Guide de la littérature française du moyen âge* by Louis Kukenheim and Henri Roussel (Leiden, 1957, and frequently reprinted), would finance the "difficult" books. The subsequent privatization of Leiden University Press quickly ended this utopia.

<sup>28</sup> The juridical framework within which these changes took place consists of the Foundation "Universitaire Pers Leiden," lawful owner of the name of the Press, pre-

van der Heide's supplement to Steinschneider's catalogue must have fallen off a truck and were never seen again.<sup>29</sup>

The idea behind the publication of van der Heide's supplemental catalogue had been an unhappy one. In itself it was an unattractive and indeed unreadable book, entirely dependent on Steinschneider's catalogue, which few can read because Latin as the scholarly language had been replaced in the meantime by English. Van der Heide's supplement could only be used in a meaningful way if the reader had Steinschneider's original work on the table as well. That reader has proved to be purely fictive, however, but the consequences of the loss of van der Heide's supplement may not have been too serious after all. That most of the copies have perished by now may even be considered a blessing in disguise, as it makes room for new initiatives. In the years between 1995 and 2000 I started to look around for prospective authors and sponsors who could help to put together a scholarly coffee-table book in English to be an upgrade of Steinschneider's catalogue, which might even become a profitable proposition. For several reasons this did not work out either, unfortunately. It was a pity because the marvelous collection of Hebrew manuscripts in Leiden deserves a better fate, and much of the work by Steinschneider could have been recycled. Finally I opted for the poor man's solution. Between 2001 and 2002 I made a summary translation of Steinschneider's catalogue from Latin into English, which has now been published, as part of a large project of Oriental manuscript inventories, on my professional website.<sup>30</sup> I can say that from this translating I learned a lot from Steinschneider's catalogue about the manuscripts he so diligently described, and also about him as an author and a person. That is why I am now happy to tell you the story of Moritz Steinschneider and the Leiden manuscripts.

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cluding an exclusive contract with any of the aforementioned commercial publishers. In the course of 2010 Leiden University Press was revived as a separate entity with an ambitious publication program. I do not know whether it has also gained its juridical independence from Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>29</sup> To this may be added that on 29 May 2008 the opening of the new Special Collections reading room of Leiden University Library was festively inaugurated. On that occasion a number of remnant copies of van der Heide's supplemental catalogue, and many other manuscripts catalogues for that matter, were distributed free of charge among the guests—a civilized form of book destruction.

<sup>30</sup> Use as a portal: [www.janjustwitkam.nl](http://www.janjustwitkam.nl)

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