

gall. oct. 38

Binding:

Half binding made of brown leather. Covering made of “pulled paste” type marbled paper, used in the 18th century. Pastedowns and flyleaves of white paper. The binding is surely original.

History:

Considering the handwriting and the binding, the manuscript was undoubtedly created in the 18th century. Martin Mussow, who devoted a study to this copy (cf. *infra*), dates it to around 1710. Considering the language of the copy, it is possible that it was transcribed in France. The copy was acquired by the Preußische Staatsbibliothek in Berlin in 1927. It comes from the collection of one doctor Fränkel from Vienna. It is possible, that the person in question is dr. Ludwig Herzberg-Fränkel, a barrister.

Content:

The first cards of the manuscript (fols. 3r^o do 1r^o) bear an inscription in Hebrew. The other cards of this exemplar contain copies of letters from a Frenchman signing with the name Aaron D’Antan to Mr. La Croze, that is Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze (1661-1739), a librarian of the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin. They contain the confessions of a convert to Judaism. Their content lets us gain an understanding of the motives guiding the young man, and is a rare case of auto-documentation among persons who have decided on a conversion of this sort. The addressee of these letters is also very interesting – he was educated as a historian, studied the humanities and theology, spent a long period of his life in a Benedictine monastery which he subsequently left due to his environment’s aversion to scientific progress. As a librarian of the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin, he maintained correspondence with many great minds of his time. The letters are presented in both French and an Italian translation. The French text was located on the versos of the cards, and the Italian translation – on their rectos. No other manuscripts containing this text are known. The French part was published by Martin Mulsow in his article *Cartesianism, Skepticism*

and Conversion to Judaism. The case of Aaron d'Antan, in Martin Mulsow, Richard H. Popkin, *Secret conversions to Judaism in early modern Europe*, Brill, Leiden, 2004, pp. 123-181. Ms. gall. oct. 38 is an incredibly interesting subject of research for every historian dealing in history and history of ideas of that period.