

Emanuele Colombo

Lost in Translation: Early Modern Jesuits and the Creed

Early modern Jesuit missionaries translated the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) into different languages, trying to adapt it to the local cultures of the mission lands. In my paper, I will reflect on the successes and failures of this cultural transfer process and comment on the widespread use of the idea of “accommodation” in contemporary historiography.

Diego Pirillo

Mistranslating Indigenous America in the ‘Age of Reason’: Epistemological Hybridity and Colonial Violence

In recent years, historians of the Atlantic world have increasingly focused on ‘indigenous science’ and ‘epistemological hybridity’, challenging the ‘Eurocentric narrative’ about the origins of ‘modern science.’ Instead of being simply exported from Europe and imposed on the ‘colonized’, Western science was conceived in close dialogue with indigenous systems of knowledge and depended on them for accurate information about plants, lands, medicine, as well as about religious and cultural practices. Yet, hybridity did not exclude asymmetry or violence. The information that Western scholars collected on the ground was often decontextualized and repurposed, making Indigenous knowledge invisible and ultimately enhancing Euro-American imperial plans. This paper focuses on two ‘Enlightenment’ scholars, the Swiss antiquarian Pierre Eugène du Simitière (1737-1784) and the Italian natural historian Luigi Castiglioni (1757-1832) and considers their work to discuss the relationship between epistemological hybridity, translation practices and colonial violence. Working at the intersection between antiquarianism, ethnography and natural history, Du Simitière and Castiglioni ‘translated’ Indigenous knowledge for the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters, and at the same time facilitated its destruction and appropriation by colonial powers.

Alexandre M. Roberts

Oikonomia Understood and Misunderstood: The Latin and English Reception of Byzantine Chemical Terminology

Western medieval scholars writing about the transformation of matter (chemistry) were heirs to at least two ancient traditions: Aristotelian philosophy and the so-called alchemical tradition. The standard narrative of the transmission of science tells us that the Latin West inherited both traditions from the Arab world, only gaining access to the earlier Greek representatives of these traditions in the early modern period. My talk will complicate this story by tracing the fortunes of the Greek term *oikonomia*, which has a particular technical sense in Greek recipes for gold-making (chrysopoeia) and other metallurgical procedures, in medieval Latin and Middle English texts. I will argue that the evidence points to direct western European and especially English engagement with contemporary Byzantine science, in ways that shed light not only on how

westerners thought about the practices that historians today understand as “alchemy,” but also on broader patterns in the intellectual history of western Afro-Eurasia.

Cecilia Martini Bonadeo

Rebellious, but Effective Medieval Translations into Arabic

In medieval Islam, between the 8th and 10th centuries, an unprecedented movement in the history of human civilization took place: the translation of ancient secular knowledge from Greek, Syriac, Middle Persian, and Sanskrit texts into Arabic. Works on astrology, astronomy, alchemy, mathematics, geometry, medicine, pharmacology, and philosophy were translated and circulated throughout the ‘Abbāsīd *dār al-Islām*, stretching from the Byzantine Empire’s territories to the banks of the Indus, encompassing Syria, Iraq (centered in Baghdad), and the wider Near and Middle East.

The main figures driving this phenomenon—the translators—faced numerous challenges: the assimilation of foreign knowledge, the necessary expansion of Arabic lexicon, and a careful consideration of cultural sensitivity for new readers. Despite the countless translations produced during this period, very few reflections on translation theory or practice remain. In *Al-Ġayt al-Musaġġam fī Šarḥ Lāmiyyat-‘Aġam* (*Flowing Desert Rains in the Commentary on the L-Poem of the Non-Arabs*)—a detailed analysis of the famous L-rhymed poem by al-Ṭuġrā’ī (1061-1121), as well as a discussion of a wide range of literary topics—the 14th-century scholar, historian, and poet Ḥalīl ibn Aybak al-Šafadī simply distinguished between two methods of translation: literal *ad verbum*, aiming for close adherence to the source text while respecting the *ordo verborum*, and *ad sensum*, which aimed to facilitate the reader’s understanding through a sense-based, reader-oriented approach. Scholars have critiqued this dichotomy as an oversimplification. In my talk, I will attempt to add nuance to this view, drawing on selected examples from literary and philosophical texts to provide a more complex perspective.

Karla Mallette

Hang Time: Gambling on the Future in Late Medieval Italy

This talk traces the journey of the word “risk” from its (probable) origin in the Qur’an, through Arabic and Greek-language contracts, to its appearance in 12th century Genoese notarial documents and beyond. Economic historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have studied the new financial products that allowed medieval men and women to protect themselves from catastrophe and to share in the risks of investments that might bring profit or loss in the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean. New vocabulary that emerged in late medieval contracts and literary works was central to this history: words that stared down the future and named contingency with precision. This talk uses philology and literary history to build on the work of social scientists and to explore the strategies that medieval men and women used to bet on the future. Focusing on the Latin word *resicum*, origin of the Italian *rischio* and the English *risk*, it surveys what we know and what we can’t know about the genealogy of modern risk

management regimes. *Resicum* took shape in the transmission of contractual practices across the Mediterranean and relied on emergent understandings of time and history in the twelfth century, while still retaining core elements of its meaning in the Qur'an.

Ivan Lupić

Communicating in Manuscript, Miscommunicating in Print: The Siege of Curzola (1571) and Its Media Aftermath

In 1571, between the fall of Famagusta in early August and the Battle of Lepanto in early October, the small town of Curzola (modern-day Korčula) situated on the Adriatic island of the same name was attacked by an Ottoman fleet of twenty galleys led by Uluj Ali, beylerbay of Algiers. Scared by the news of the approaching Ottoman forces, the Venetian governor fled from the city together with a great number of others who decided to seek shelter further north. The remaining local population, joined by some people from other towns on the island, organized a defense in which the leading role was played by members of the native patrician family Rosaneo (Rožanović), especially by Antonio (Antun) Rosaneo, a trained lawyer and archdeacon of the Korčula cathedral. Though outnumbered by the Ottomans, the defenders of Korčula managed to repulse the attack on August 15, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In an extended Latin account of the battle Rožanović composed and later (1578-1580) presented to doge Nicolò da Ponte, the event was described as a miracle and a detailed description was given of the heroic acts of the Curzolani during the few days the Ottoman ships spent in the area. However, the account remained unpublished; its manuscript circulation, though long-lasting and quite fascinating, seems to have been limited to Dalmatia. On the other hand, the accounts of the battle that were published in print by other writers offered a somewhat different version of the event. This presentation will focus on the role that different early modern media played in the production and transfer of knowledge and will ask how our own research, informed by archival sources from the periphery, can respond to the ongoing challenge of, often wilful, miscommunication.