

**Acteurs des transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale. Sphères d'activité, contributions, fonctions**

**Veranstalter:** Research group FranceMed at the German Historical Institute of Paris

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As a part of the activities organised by the research group FranceMed, the German Historical Institute in Paris hosted the second of a cycle of four conferences on processes of cultural transfer in the medieval Mediterranean, partially financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). Dealing with the agents of cultural exchange, the conference aimed at offering an insight into the wide array of people involved in moving objects of an immaterial and material nature across the medieval Mediterranean and its peripheries.

The conference began with a *first section* on travellers: Dealing with accounts of pilgrimages ELISABETH RUCHAUD (Paris) dealt with the question, how a Muslim 'Other' was depicted in such accounts. Comparing the reports of Willibald (8th century) and master Thietmar (13th cent.), she concluded that early travellers seemed to focus on their spiritual quest while later travellers, especially from the 13th century onwards, displayed stronger curiosity for the surrounding Muslim societies.

YANN DEJUGNAT (Paris) analysed the specific notion of travel found in the works of the Jewish poet Juda Halévi from al-Andalus (d. 1141). Halévi had moved from one Andalusian taifa-principality to the next before emigrating to the Orient to escape Almora-vid rigour, thus leading a life of mobility also characteristic of medieval Muslim scholars. His poem on Zion, analysed during the talk, blends different cultural traditions: Standards of classical Arabic poetry are given a spiritual dimension in which a Jewish heritage and Islamic mysticism intermingle.

The *second section* dealt with actors involved in transmitting intellectual and practical knowledge. Concentrating on the case of maps as objects of mixed cultural composition,

SONJA BRENTJES (Seville) distinguished between the different uses of medieval maps, which were used as tools providing information on routes and localities, as objects of scholarship, means of propaganda, luxury objects, diplomatic gifts and even as evidence in trials. Highlighting the importance of travelling and 'third spaces' for the introduction of novel information and new visual designs, she treated various actors involved in the commission, production and use of maps as well the many tasks needed to assimilate different geographical traditions in various languages as well as contemporary evidence.

JEAN-CHARLES DUCÈNE (Brussels) dealt with a variety of Arab-Islamic actors involved in the description of Europe. Mentioning several texts produced in the Eastern Mediterranean and its peripheries, he underlined the importance of the antique heritage before stating that the earliest texts on Europe focused on its Eastern part as well as on the Byzantine Empire while Western Europe at large was comparatively underrepresented.

JULIETTE SIBON (Albi) analysed the case of Jewish and Christian physicians within the context of Jewish-Christian relations in Marseille of the 14th century. Examining the documentation of a lawsuit provoked by the malpractice of Abraham Bondavin of Avignon in 1389, she defined the Jewish physicians' fields of competence, emphasising their role as transmitters of medical knowledge from the Muslim world to their Christian colleagues.

RAPHAELA VEIT (Tübingen) treated the transfer of medical knowledge in a more general way by dealing with the translation of medical treatises from Arabic to Latin by scholars such as Constantinus Africanus and their successive diffusion in Italy and Northern Europe. She emphasised the importance of analysing the various social conditions, motivations and qualifications of the persons involved in these processes.

Technical aspects of cultural transfer were treated by YASSIR BENCHIMA (Paris) who, after pointing to the difficulties of reconstructing the biographies of engineers in the Muslim West, analysed the polysemy of the Arab term 'muhandis' (engineer) and the position of the equivalent science in the medieval clas-

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sification of knowledge. He ended by presenting four cases of technicians-engineers who, each with a different biography and technical profile, contributed to introducing antique technologies to the Muslim world or, as Mudéjares, of Muslim technologies to the Christian realms.

RANIA ABDELLATIF (Paris) talked about different actors involved in the transformation of churches into mosques in the Middle East between the 8th and the 12th century. Focusing on the example of the Ummayyad mosque of Damascus – the former church of Saint John – as well as on the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem – used as a church in the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem – she looked at the different motivations and actors involved in such forms of cultural transfer, placing them in their social, economic and political context.

Finally, REGULA FORSTER (Berlin) introduced the audience to a very extravagant case of literary transfer by tracing the diffusion and reception of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat from its Indian Buddhist origins via translations to Arabic (to Georgian, Hebrew, New Persian and Castilian), Greek (to Armenian, Christian-Arabic, Ge'ez and Latin) and Latin (to various European vernaculars as well as back to Greek) to its 'reintroduction' into Japan by Christian missionaries of the 16th century in a Japanese version which probably leads back to a Latin translation.

The *third section* dealt with questions of identity and collective psychology: Focusing on bi- and multicultural personalities as regards their capacity to be active as cultural transmitters between the Latin-Christian and the Arab-Islamic world of the 7th to 13th century, DANIEL KÖNIG (Paris) presented several cases taken from contemporary Latin and Arabic sources. These cases provided insight into the different possibilities of acquiring the necessary linguistic and cultural qualifications, the different motivations to be active as a cultural transmitter as well as different contexts stimulating, encouraging, impeding or even sanctioning the active use of these qualifications.

STEFAN LEDER (Beirut), in turn, explained the revival of the Islamic concept of Jihad at the beginning of the 12th century as a direct effect of the first crusade on the Isla-

mic Middle East. Crusader aggression engendered a multiplicity of intellectual and political, but also social, architectural and other reactions which aimed at achieving unity within a new form of polity defined exclusively by Islam. Thus, a doctrine or principle of early Islam which had been restricted to the theological-intellectual sphere during the preceding centuries was revived, consequently becoming a principle of political, military and social policy.

FILOMENA BARROS (Évora) discussed the situation of Muslim minorities in late medieval Portugal. Although highly acculturated and sharing the same language and lifestyle with the Christian inhabitants of the Portuguese kingdom, these Mudéjares retained specific characteristics as regards the legal sphere (Muslim inheritance laws), the linguistic sphere (hybrid onomastical forms, knowledge of Arabic among the elites) as well as their placement in an urban setting ('Moreria': Muslim quarters). Their Muslim identity was reinforced by regular contacts with the Maghreb.

The *fourth section* dealt with actors moving in the commercial and political sphere: Concentrating on the case of Filippo di Malerbi, GEORG CHRIST (Heidelberg) introduced the audience to the illegal trade of wine to the Mamluk capital of Cairo, effectuated by the Venetians and their Alexandrian trade diaspora with the help of specific intermediaries. Analysing the different personalities of Filippo di Malerbi – more or less official representative of the Venetian merchant community, integrated citizen of Mamluk Egypt as well as independent agent within a political and commercial network – he underlined the importance of such multi-faceted personalities for processes of cultural transfer.

Presenting work in progress, GEORG JOST-KLEIGREWE (Münster) reflected upon the possibilities of analysing political relations between France and the Levant between the 14th and 15th century. Given the fact that late medieval France was still far from developing the concept of an institutionalized and government-directed foreign policy he emphasized the need to use the tools of prosopography, network as well as discourse analysis to understand how foreign policy was

made in the period before the emergence of the early modern state. The analysis of concrete examples served to illustrate his methodical proposals and provided insight into the shift of networks and their effects on the relations between France and the Levant.

MICHEL BALARD (Paris) talked about different migratory phenomena in the Eastern Mediterranean of the high and late middle ages, calling attention to the migratory flows between Constantinople, several Mediterranean islands and the crusader states on the one side, the European continent and especially the Apennine peninsula on the other hand. He analysed motivations, migratory conditions and the effects of migration, always pointing to the varying explanatory power of the sources.

The role of embassies and diplomatic contacts between Byzantium and its Latin-Christian and Islamic neighbours was at the centre of a talk held by NICOLAS DROCOURT (Nantes). Underlining the importance of gift exchanges during these embassies, he gave an overview of the large number of documented embassies, highlighting how the respective documentation could contribute to an understanding of the mechanisms of cultural exchange.

Aside from introducing the audience to aspects of Spanish historiography in the 20th century, MARIBEL FIERRO (Madrid) raised several questions concerning the relevance of hostages in medieval Iberia for inter- and transcultural exchange. Starting out from an anecdote provided by the 10th-century historiographer Ibn al-Qutiyya in which the appropriate way of educating child hostages is discussed, Fierro deployed the lack of research on the subject of hostages in the Iberian context and reflected on the opportunities available to children and adults forced to spend time in a different cultural environment out of political considerations.

Returning to the East, JOHANNES PAHLITZSCH (Mainz) questioned established opinions according to which the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt had completely renounced from making its commercial and political presence felt beyond its terrestrial territory. Focusing on the example of Cyprus, Pahlitzsch pointed to various transcultural

phenomena involving Mamluk elites, thus proving that the Mamluks were an integral part of the political and commercial landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean.

For PIERRE GUICHARD (Lyon), who concluded the conference, the recent focus on processes of cultural exchange, transculturality etc. has to be regarded as the product of a recent change of paradigms in the study of the medieval Mediterranean, a change of paradigms strongly related to current discussions about cultural identity in Western Europe. According to Guichard, such approaches rejected all kinds of cultural essentialism with good reason. Nevertheless, their random use incurred the danger of going too far in the deconstruction of established medieval identity patterns. Although such identity patterns – produced within the orbits of the Latin West, Byzantium, the Islamic world and the Jewish diaspora – were highly flexible, they were nevertheless influential and thus have to be regarded as an important factor in cultural relations across the Mediterranean.

During the *panel discussion* presided by Maribel Fierro (Madrid) several well established researchers discussed the state and prospects of Mediterranean research from a scientific as well as from an administrative point of view. Michel Balard pointed to the large discrepancy between research on the crusades in the Western hemisphere (including Israel) and the Arab world. DENIS MENJOT (Lyon) spoke about the different forms of financing projects on the Mediterranean in France and deployed institutional and, increasingly, linguistic problems which complicate cooperation with the countries of the Maghreb. Maribel Fierro explained the possibilities of financing projects in Spain on the background of political developments since the end of the Franco era. Stefan Leder equally presented different forms of project funding possible in Germany and emphasised the importance of introducing the Arabic language to scientific discourse in exchange with the Arab world. Finally, WOLFGANG KAISER (Paris) stressed the opportunities inherent in the current reorganization of the European research landscape and encouraged researchers to concentrate on the quality of their research proposals in spite of the many difficulties linked with the restructuring

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turing of universities and research institutes.

All in all, the conference provided insight into the wide range of scholarly horizons as represented by Western European academia from different historical disciplines. The large variety of academic backgrounds and specialisations encouraged a continuous and lively debate on a wide range of topics. The positive results confirmed that approaching the medieval Mediterranean as an area of cultural exchange allowed scholars of different linguistic and scientific qualifications to exchange knowledge and opinions on a common topic.

### Conference Overview:

FRANCEMED (Paris): Présentation du groupe de recherche

#### *Section 1: Travellers and pilgrims*

ELISABETH RUCHAUD (Paris): Les pèlerins chrétiens vers Jérusalem

YANN DEJUGNAT (Paris): Juda Halévi, un poète juif à la croisée d'une culture islamique du voyage

#### *Section 2: Transfer of knowledge*

SONJA BRENTJES (Sevilla): Who Participated in Transferring Knowledge Across the Medieval Mediterranean? The Example of Maps

JEAN-CHARLES DUCÈNE (Brussels): Les sources et acteurs de la connaissance de l'Europe chez les auteurs arabes

JULIETTE SIBON (Albi): Echanges de pratiques et de savoirs entre médecins juifs et chrétiens à Marseille au XIVe siècle

RAPHAELA VEIT (Tübingen): Transferts scientifiques entre Orient et Occident: Centres et acteurs en Italie médiévale dans le contexte de la médecine (XIe-XVe s.)

YASSIR BENHIMA (Paris): Figures d'ingénieurs et transferts techniques en Occident musulman médiéval

RANIA ABDELLATIF (Paris): Pouvoirs et élites civiles : Les acteurs impliqués dans la transformation des bâtiments religieux

REGULA FORSTER (Berlin): Buddha in Disguise. A Very Short History of „Barlaam and Josaphat“

#### *Section 3: Questions of identity*

DANIEL KÖNIG (Paris): Caught Between Cultures. Bicultural Personalities and their Capacity as Cultural Transmitters

STEFAN LEDER (Beirut): Jihad Revival and Crusades: Parallels and Frames of Reference.

FILOMENA BARROS (Evora): Mudéjars du Royaume portugais: les enjeux identitaires

#### *Section 4: Commerce and politics*

GEORG CHRIST (Heidelberg): Filippo di Malerbi – un spécialiste de transfert clandestin (ca. 1380-1450)

GEORG JOSTKLEIGREWE (Münster): „Affaires Étrangères“? Les acteurs politiques français et les réseaux méditerranéens (XIVe-XVe siècles)

Panel discussion led by Maribel Fierro (CSIC, Madrid) with Michel Balard (Paris), Wolfgang Kaiser (Paris), Stefan Leder (Beirut), Denis Menjot (Lyon): „Etat et perspectives des études et recherches sur les transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale“

MICHEL BALARD (Paris): Les migrants génois vers l'outre-mer, acteurs des transferts culturels

NICOLAS DROCOURT (Nantes): Transferts culturels, transferts de savoirs : le rôle des ambassadeurs. Le cas des contacts diplomatiques entre Byzance et ses voisins (VIIe-XIIe s.)

MARIBEL FIERRO (Madrid): Hostages and Cultural Transfer in Medieval Iberia

JOHANNES PAHLITZSCH (Mainz): The Mamluks and Cyprus. Transcultural Relations between Muslim and Christian Rulers in the Eastern Mediterranean.

PIERRE GUICHARD (Lyon): Conclusion

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