

BRIDGING CULTURES IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN

Translators, interpreters, brokers, and their practice in the service of the diplomatic activities of the Crown of Aragon in the Mediterranean during the 14th century

THE RESEARCH GAP: UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN AGENTS OF TRANSLATION

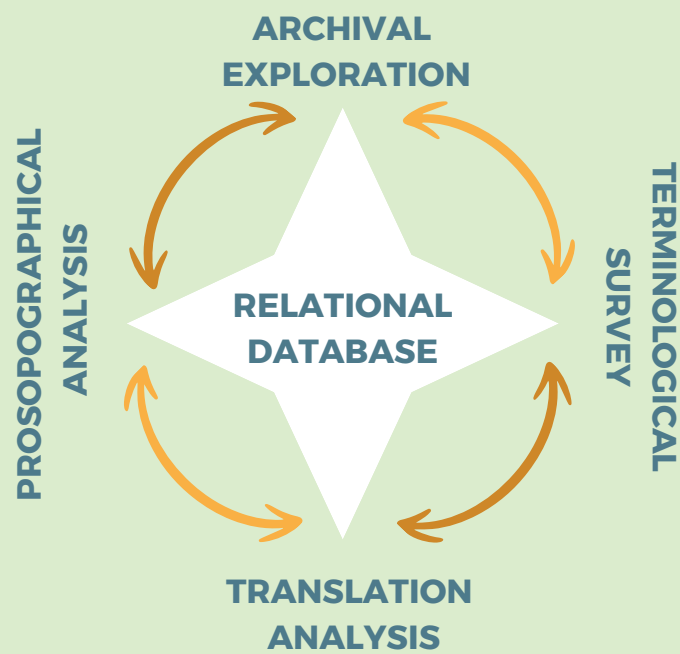
Traditional diplomatic history typically emphasizes the outcomes and official figures of state interactions. Instead, this research shifts the focus to the essential but frequently neglected intermediaries: the translators, interpreters, and brokers. These agents served as crucial linguistic and cultural conduits in the complex diplomatic web of the 14th-century Mediterranean.

This project seeks to shed light on their identities, professional and social networks, and the translation methods they employed, moving beyond traditional diplomatic history to uncover the hidden agents of cross-cultural exchange.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Who were the agents of translation involved in the diplomatic relations between the Crown of Aragon and the Mamluk Sultanate, and what can documentary and narrative sources tell us about their identities, roles, professional milieu, methods, training, and recruitment?

A MULTI-FACETED METHODOLOGY



A DIVERSE ARRAY OF SOURCES

The research is based on a systematic survey of thousands of published materials and unedited documents from the Archive of the Crown of Aragon (ACA), offering a vast dataset for analysis.

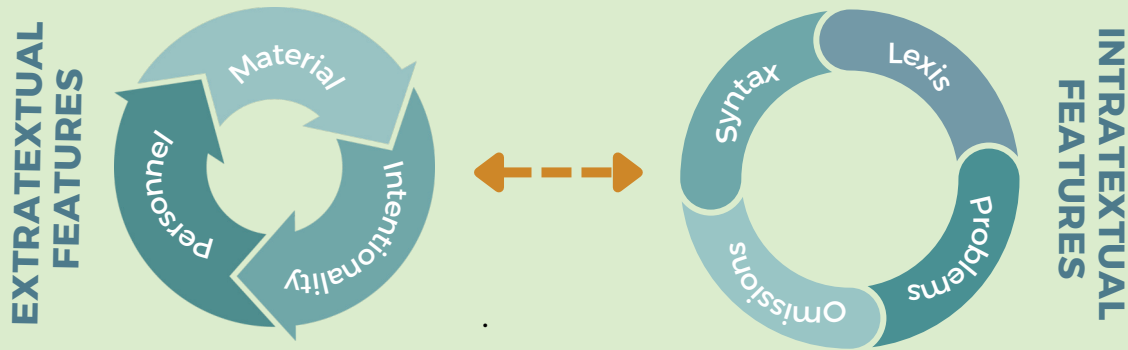
- ARABIC LETTERS** > 240 documents
Including Latin / Romance translations + Romance originals
Core documents revealing translation in action
- ROYAL LETTERS** > 30.000 analyzed documents
Received official correspondence
Drafts & informal documents
- CHANCERY REGISTERS** > 187 surveyed registers
Copies of the dispatched documents & translations of received correspondence
Focus on unspoilt series
- ROYAL TREASURY BOOKS** 33 surveyed books
Names, roles, and activity of local & visiting agents
- TRAVELOGUES, CHRONICLES, CHANCERY MANUALS**

KEY INSIGHTS & PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Mediterranean
> 3.500 Sultanates
identified documents
Mamluk **600**
Sultanate
100 documents
+ contemporary translations
on translating agents
& processes

TRANSLATION ANALYSIS

A customized analytic model designed to deconstruct translated texts, uncovering the choices and strategies of medieval translators.



TRANSLATION AGENTS

scribe

interpreter

envoy

alfaqui

- ≈ 50 translation agents identified**
- Specialized personnel in both Christian and Muslim Chanceries
 - Scope of action at local & international levels
 - Emerging institutional framework (potentially more structured in the Muslim context?)
 - Questioning of traditional assumptions regarding the origins of agents & the place where translations were carried out
 - Addressing difficulties in identifying the agents (ambiguity, anonymity...) & the invisibility of these translation agents in the sources



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