Papers

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Towards a New Approach to Medieval Cross-Cultural Exchanges*

Abstract: This paper discusses the interpretive approach to cross-cultural transfer of knowledge as proposed by early twentieth-century scholars, in particular Charles Homer Haskins, and their successors after the Second World War. It describes this approach as teleological, linear, mono-cultural and static. It traces the changes that several historians of mathematics, science and medicine proposed to this type of observer narrative and shows that in the 1990s the validity of several basic claims of Haskins’ approach was questioned. New claims were formulated, new domains included in the debate and greater attention was paid to the analysis of participant narratives. After analyzing these new trends, the paper outlines directions and views which future research needs to explore for creating a dynamic, open and non-linear model that allows for the participation of many different cultures in the production and transfer of knowledge.

Keywords: Historiography, history of religion, science and medicine, cross-cultural transmission of knowledge, observer and participant narratives

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1 The Nineteenth Century

Medieval cross-cultural exchange of knowledge began its life as an academic research topic in the nineteenth century in debates about the relevance of ‘the Arabs’ for ‘European sciences’ and their contribution to ‘the sciences’ in comparison to ‘the Greeks’. Particularly volatile were the intellectual and politi-
cal controversies in France and Italy in the contexts of modernization, revolutions, republicanism and the political and spiritual powers of the pope and the Catholic Church.¹ Most of the questions and perspectives formulated during these debates seem to haunt us even now, when our factual knowledge is much greater today than it was 200 years ago. The scholars of the nineteenth century did not propose, however, a theory of cross-cultural exchange. They were much too busy with searching for the progress of the sciences and medieval manuscripts.

2 The Impact of Charles Homer Haskins’ Work

A comprehensive and relatively consistent description of what we call today cross-cultural exchange of knowledge that has had a lasting impact on studies of medieval Catholic Europe was published after the First World War by the US-historian Charles Homer Haskins. He regarded this exchange as the transfer of written knowledge through translation. His publications established the undeniable importance of these transfers for the medieval scholarly world and, hence, their high relevance for the intellectual history of the Middle Ages. Methodologically, Haskins focused on texts. Conceptually, he favored the idea that the medieval translators into Latin sought to recover ancient Greek philosophy, medicine and the sciences.

In two works, Haskins presented a series of unknown translations from Greek and Arabic primarily into Latin, in particular texts on astronomy, astrology, geometry, arithmetic, medicine and philosophy.² Other domains of knowledge, such as magic, alchemy, divination, history-writing, geography or religious doctrines, remained largely outside his purview. The discovered manuscripts provided Haskins with names of translators, dates and localities. Some of the translations contained prefaces in which the translator legitimated his work and its purpose. In a few cases, the translations were dedicated to a patron, a friend or a colleague. Haskins selected as significant two centuries (the twelfth to thirteenth centuries), four regions (Iberian Peninsula, Southern France, Sicily and Northern Italy) and about a dozen translators (ranging from Petrus Alfonsi, a converted Jew from Huesca, to Michael Scotus, a translator of contested origin who worked in Toledo and Palermo) from among the discovered sources and their information.

¹ CHARETTE 1995; VEGAS GONZÁLEZ 2005; BRENTJES 2014.
² HASKINS 1924; HASKINS 1927.
Haskins interpreted this material in a teleological and Eurocentric manner characteristic for his time. We will call any such comprehensive, historiographical interpretation an observer narrative. Occasionally we will abbreviate this term by the expression ‘model’. We do not suggest with this term that Haskins developed a theoretical schema that he thought was applicable to any situation of translating texts. We simply use it as a label for the longer and more descriptive term ‘observer narrative’. A further terminological difficulty concerns the designation of the different societies that came into being, changed, stabilized or disappeared in parts of Europe between approximately 600 and 1500 and whose formalized elite knowledge cultures shared Latin as their language of study and other forms of communication and whose members believed mostly in some form or the other of religious doctrines sanctioned by the Church of Rome. To call them Christian, their language Latin and their territory Europe excludes too many people and communities who also lived in that part of Eurasia that Ptolemy labeled Europe and exchanged knowledge across cultural boundaries. To call them Western is as anachronistic as it is to assume a shared cultural identity. To enumerate them every time we wish to refer to them is cumbersome and inelegant. Such a list of smaller cultural entities certainly has its own conceptual insufficiencies. In a sense, the problem is not solvable in a completely satisfying manner. We have thus decided to call them Occidental Christians and their congregation the Occidental Church. This locates scholars, patrons and craftsmen alike somewhere in the Western regions of Eurasia, sets them apart from their Muslim and Jewish neighbors and highlights their adherence in general terms to what is called today the Catholic Church of Rome.

Haskins’ narrative was very successful. It was accepted by many of his successors and dominated research until the end of the twentieth century. Its key concepts are that of a twelfth-century renaissance, the recovery of ancient Greek philosophy and science and a purposeful intellectual movement. The narrative’s actors are Occidental clerics and a few lay people, most of whom travelled to the places where texts to be translated could be found. The intended recipients are archbishops and monks as well as a few royal patrons in the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, the British Isles and Northern France. They are regarded, however, as of less relevance to the narrative than the translators. They appear as shadowy figures without a clearly elucidated role of their own. The acquisition of languages and other skills remained largely outside of Haskins’ narrative framework. The cultural phenomenon of translating from one language into another was primarily understood as a unilateral process. It consisted of mainly accidental acquisitions of texts by members of one single,
homogeneous culture identified as Latin, Christian and European. It was imbued with unquestioned positive values ascribed to the work of the translators and, as a kind of projection, to the later users of the translations located primarily at the universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, because it allegedly paved the way for the later emergence of modern science in Europe.

Haskins’ macro-level interpretation of translations of philosophical, scientific and medical texts from Greek or Arabic into Latin rests on the historiographical beliefs and practices of his time. As a ‘model’ it is retrospective, restrictive, static and mono-cultural. It operates with the idea of an intentional recovery of ancient Greek knowledge as an unquestioned value that medieval clerics and schoolmen allegedly shared with the humanists of the Renaissance and the neo-humanists of the nineteenth century. Latin sources from the ninth to the twelfth centuries indicate that this was not always the case. Ancient Greek knowledge was often rejected as pagan and Byzantine knowledge was condemned as heretical. Arabic knowledge was propagated because it was presented as well as perceived as rational or because it was seen as an indispensable condition for conversion. Haskins’ observer narrative isolates the case of translation from other activities of knowledge acquisition. It separates Latin from other target languages and Greek and Arabic from other source languages of translating. It sets philosophy, medicine and the sciences apart from other fields of knowledge that were subject to translating. It posits texts above instruments, images and maps. It considers elite, written knowledge transfer of greater relevance than oral and manual exchanges of skills and knowledge among merchants, craftsmen or mariners who moved across the Mediterranean and beyond. Haskins’ observer narrative is static because it privileges translation as the only important activity in the transfer of knowledge, largely ignoring the activities necessarily preceding translating as well as those that occur concomitantly and subsequently. As a result, it is monocultural and does not recognize the various exchange processes that took place between different communities and cultures. Heterogeneous, multifaceted cultures, many and instable frontiers between them, cross-cultural relationships

3 Although Haskins recognized the importance of the translations in Salerno and in the Northern regions of the Iberian Peninsula during the tenth century, he separated them from the cultural process, which he saw as a part of the twelfth-century renaissance.
4 Recently, authors like Sylvain Gouguenheim and right-wing Islamophobe propagandists of a ‘Western cultural superiority’ underlined their adherence to such a simplified and often factually distorted understanding of the complexities of cross-cultural dissemination processes of knowledge.
5 De Libera 2009.
and shared lives, small-scale local, individually defined projects, personal encounters between members of different communities who pursued different interests and adhered to different beliefs, other actors than translators and patrons and other activities than translating, writing and reading were unthinkable or of minor relevance in Haskins’ observer narrative.

Besides Haskins’ narrative, the earlier theses of the Roman Catholic physicist and historian Pierre Duhem (1861–1916) had a great impact on how history of science developed in its study of the transformations of the translated texts by scholars at medieval universities in Occidental Christian Europe. He emphasized in particular the contribution of the clergy, a position that was part of his active participation in the struggles of French defenders of the pope and the worldly power of the Roman Catholic Church against republican and secular forces. In his monumental *Système du monde*, Duhem presents medieval science as subordinated under the classification of religious orders. He even advanced the thesis that the condemnations of doctrines taught at the university of Paris in 1277 opened the road to new ideas in natural philosophy and cosmology. Therefore, he argued, ‘the Church’ not only made medieval science, but also contributed to the renaissance of scientific knowledge. In regard to cross-cultural exchange of knowledge, Duhem represents the positions held in French academia, with variants, during the nineteenth century, i.e. a linear ascent from classical Greece to ‘the Arabs’ to ‘the Latins’, who we were in our infancy. Duhem’s variation consisted in recognizing Byzantine scientific activities in the early centuries of the East Roman Empire. There were other important discussants on what constituted medieval sciences and who participated in shaping them, such as Lynn Thorndike or George Sarton. But their historiographical positions were rarely taken as a major point of reference during the twentieth century, when issues of cross-cultural exchange of knowledge were discussed. Since we focus in this paper on the changes of Haskins’ observer narrative between approximately the 1960s and today, we have decided to abstain from including these other positions in our discussion. Our goal is to stimulate a discussion about concepts, perspectives and methods, not to write a comprehensive survey of the historiographical debates on medieval sciences during the last century.

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6 Duhem 1913–1959.
3 From Charles Homer Haskins to Our Days

The most important successors of Haskins’ studies in the twentieth century were Josep Maria Millàs i Vallicrosa, Juan Vernet Ginés, Marie-Thérèse d’Alverný, Marshall Clagett and his students, Hubertus L. L. Busard, Menso Folkerts, André Allard and Charles Burnett. While all of them subscribed to basic features of Haskins’ ‘model’ – in particular the centrality of texts, translators, movement, the recovery of ancient Greek philosophy, medicine and sciences, the hierarchy of locations and the temporal focus – each of them also modified it in important ways which reduce in particular its static, restrictive and monocultural character.

Millàs i Vallicrosa and Vernet incorporated activities of Arabic and Hebrew scholars as well as translations from these two languages into Latin, Catalan and Castilian into the narrative. Due to the specific limitations for academic work on Arabic, Hebrew and Catalan communities during most of the twentieth century in Spain, their methodological approach rested firmly on historical empiricism. They invested most of their research in the discovery, description and publication of scientific texts in Arabic, Hebrew and Catalan, introducing instruments and maps as new objects in the study of medieval knowledge transfer. Millàs i Vallicrosa extended Haskins’ study of translations and translators to users of translations, investigating in particular the impact that Arabic and Hebrew scholars and their works had exercised upon the intellectual life in the lands of the Crown of Aragon. Vernet, following Millàs i Vallicrosa in this line of publication, extended it to the Kingdom of Leon and Castile. Both scholars added to philosophy, medicine and the sciences studies of texts on agriculture, mechanics and other productive or technical arts. They pointed occasionally to the necessity of linking textual studies to investigations of material culture and included magical amulets among the objects of knowledge transfer. Occasionally, and deviating from the otherwise accepted norms among the discussants of knowledge transfer during the twentieth century, they also paid attention to political components of knowledge in the Iberian Peninsula. Conceptually, the

7 Millàs i Vallicrosa 1927; Millàs i Vallicrosa 1934; Millàs i Vallicrosa 1942; Vernet Ginés 1953; Vernet Ginés 1986.
8 Millàs i Vallicrosa 1931; Millàs i Vallicrosa 1949.
9 Vernet Ginés 1979.
10 Millàs i Vallicrosa 1943; Vernet Ginés 1988; Vernet Ginés 1993.
11 Millàs i Vallicrosa 1941.
12 Vernet Ginés 1970.
most important step towards replacing the uni-directional notion of knowledge transfer by a perspective that identified the cultural phenomenon as cross-cultural exchange of knowledge probably was both scholars’ repeated insistence on the cooperative nature of transfer activities.\textsuperscript{13}

Marshall Clagett and his students Edward Grant, David Charles Lindberg and John Emery Murdoch, as well as Murdoch’s student Edith Dudley Sylla, broadened the material basis for discussing interpretive issues for the mathematical sciences, including mechanics and optics on the one hand and Aristotelian natural philosophy on the other. Thus, they prepared critical editions of Latin translations of Greek and Arabic texts. They concentrated their efforts on sorting out highly complex and complicated paths of transmission. This work also included the study of the transformations that this new knowledge had undergone in the scholarly circles at the universities of Paris, Cambridge and Oxford.\textsuperscript{14} Murdoch and Sylla, together with Michael Rogers McVaugh, contributed substantially to a broadening of the perspectives taken into consideration when interpreting medieval transfer of knowledge: they repeatedly explored issues of context (philosophy, theology, lay public, arts, politics) and reflected on styles, methodological foundations and languages of interpretation.\textsuperscript{15}

Hubertus L. L. Busard, Menso Folkerts, Paul Kunitzsch and Richard Lorch insisted, too, on the necessity to uncover textual evidence of transfer, transmission and transformation. They produced critical editions of important mathematical texts derived from late Roman Latin translations or translated from Arabic or Greek.\textsuperscript{16} Kunitzsch, partially in cooperation with Lorch, deconstructed age-old myths about individual texts and their authors translated in the late tenth and during the twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{17} He succeeded in determining the type of Arabic manuscript text with which the Italian translator of Ptolemy’s \textit{Almagest}, Gerard of Cremona, must have worked in the second half of the twelfth century in Toledo. This enabled him to delineate precisely Gerard’s multifaceted working practices in the course of the many years which it took him to finish his translation.\textsuperscript{18} The two scholars edited a series of mathematical, astronomical

\textsuperscript{13} VERNET GINÉS 1998; VERNET GINÉS 1999.


\textsuperscript{15} MURDOCH/SYLLA 1987; SYLLA/MCVAUGH 1997; MURDOCH 2003; SYLLA/NEWMAN 2009.


\textsuperscript{17} KUNITZSCH 1981; KUNITZSCH 1989; KUNITZSCH 1993; KUNITZSCH 2004.

\textsuperscript{18} KUNITZSCH 1966; KUNITZSCH 1974; KUNITZSCH 1975.
and astrological works from Greek, Arabic, Latin and Hebrew manuscripts, elucidating in this manner the scientific canon broadly shared across time and space among various Mediterranean peoples and communities. Folkerts extended the scope of time and space by paying attention to the diffusion of Gerbert of Aurillac's (tenth century) abacus and its Arabic numerals beyond France and studying mathematical activities at universities and monasteries in Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Poland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. André Allard meticulously studied the translations of Arabic texts on Indian arithmetic and their transformations at the hands of anonymous Latin commentators and readers. He extended Haskins’ ‘model’ for Byzantium by showing that Byzantine monks translated Arabic arithmetical works and integrated them into the intellectual life of Byzantine monasteries. Raymond Mercier, Anne Tihon, Régine Leurquin, Claudy Scheuren and Paul Kunitzsch also spent much time and effort on studying the cross-cultural exchanges that took place within Byzantium and between Byzantium and its neighbors, focusing primarily on astronomical texts and tables. Their work documents the interest that Byzantine clerical scholars took, in different periods of almost half a millennium, in knowledge produced among their Arabic and Iranian contemporaries. The research of all these scholars shows that translation activities occurred in parallel and independently. It makes clear that the selection of the source as well as the target languages of translation depended largely on local circumstances. It was often not the result of deliberate choice or conscious cultural values as suggested in Haskins’ concept of the recovery of Greek philosophy, medicine and sciences. There can be no doubt that in many cases the purpose of medieval cross-cultural exchanges was the acquisition of Arabic, Persian or Hebrew texts on medicine, astrology, astronomy, arithmetic, dreams, alchemy and divination, fields to which one may add philosophical, theological and other kinds of doctrines and writings.

Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, Charles Burnett and Paul Kunitzsch were perhaps the most ardent supporters of Haskins’ observer narrative during the second half of the twentieth century. The great merit of d’Alverny and Burnett consists

20 FOLKERTS 1971a; FOLKERTS 1971b; FOLKERTS 1996b; FOLKERTS 2002.
in their meticulous verification and continuation of the many individual lines of study and suggestions for further research presented by Haskins in his two major publications on the medieval transfer of knowledge. They undertook much archival work in addition to studies of manuscripts in order to gain a clearer understanding of the identities of the translators mentioned by Haskins, the locations where they produced their works, their affiliations to individual churches, ecclesiastic and royal courts, as well as the titles and contents of their translations.24 They struggled for a better grasp on the social conditions in which the translators lived and worked, in particular their involvement with the so-called ‘school of translators of Toledo’ or with the Cluniac abbot Petrus Venerabilis.25 D’Alverny stressed the cooperation between Catholic and Jewish scholars in translating philosophical texts from Arabic into Latin via old Castilian. She included translations of Arabic religious as well as magical texts into Latin into her perspective on the medieval transfer of knowledge.26 Burnett slowly moved from Haskins’ position of the translators’ desire to recover ancient Greek philosophy, medicine and sciences to an acknowledgement of the indubitable preeminence of magic, astrology and divination in the translations from Arabic into Latin for many of the Catholic translators working in the Iberian Peninsula and, in the case of Adelard of Bath, working in Norman Sicily, in England and perhaps as a visitor in a few cities of the Latin Crusader States in the Levant.27 Before him, Richard Lemay and Sonja Brentjes already made this point for the Iberian Peninsula.28 Burnett also argued that the few known translators in the Crusader States of the Levant had made a more substantial contribution to the transfer of knowledge than Haskins had been willing to grant.29 Kunitzsch’s main contributions to Haskins’ observer narrative were, on the one hand, his discussion of the relationships between Arabic and Latin scientific texts, tables, nomenclature and instruments from a comparative perspective and, on the other hand, his introduction of images, texts of the so-called folk astronomy and troubadour-poetry, as well as other kinds of literature, into the ‘model’.30

Transfer of knowledge through oral contact and manual practices, two domains ignored in Haskins’ observer narrative, was studied in research pro-

grammes headed by Menso Folkerts, Jens Høyrup and Maryvonne Spiesser. They searched for and catalogued Latin and vernacular texts on practical mathematics taught and used outside the universities. Municipalities and private sponsors, merchants and school teachers in cities of Italy, the Provence, Aquitania, Catalonia and to a lesser degree Northern Africa were recognized as important actors in this sphere of knowledge transfer. More difficult to trace than is already the case with theoretical texts or scientific instruments, much of the interpretive work remained in the realm of suggestions and speculations.

The trajectories of medical and pharmaceutical texts between various Mediterranean cultures showed similarities with those excavated for scientific or philosophical works, but also clear differences. The study of these fields was undertaken, for instance, in major editorial projects like Avicenna or Averroes latinus. In this manner, the study of medical and pharmaceutical texts was closely related to a major approach pursued in history of philosophy, in particular through the Belgian Aristoteles latinus project. No such large-scale editorial projects were undertaken for scientific texts. This editorial work reflected important features of the accepted interpretive approach. One of these problems consisted in editing original Greek or Arabic texts separately from their Latin or Hebrew translations. Changes in this kind of approach emerged over time, in particular in the last decade of the twentieth century. The project Avicenna latinus at the Royal Academy of Belgium, for instance, began under the leadership of Simone van Riet to consider Arabic and Latin versions together. The Latin translation of Ibn Sina’s *Physics* was edited in a manner that included a mixed critical apparatus based on an analytical comparison with Arabic manuscripts. The edition of Ibn Sina’s *al-Qānūn fi al-Ṭibb*, however, is considered as too difficult a project for the time being. The difficulties result from the existence of manifold copies of the Arabic original, Latin and vernacular translations of the entire work or of some of its parts and the many different extant commentaries. The study of cross-cultural exchange of knowledge thus confirms that a broad array of historical, linguistic, disciplinary and further technical expertise is required on the side of those who wish to edit and interpret its textual documents.

A further challenge that has emerged more clearly in the last decades of editing texts that represent medieval translations from Arabic or Greek into Latin is the existence of multiple text forms. They can represent several parallel

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32 Van Riet/Verbeke 1992; Van Riet e. a. 2006.
33 Fidora 2012b.
translations, the reshaping of an earlier stage of translation by the same translator or a variety of modifications of different extent and severity executed by users of a translation. This does not only increase the difficulties for the modern editor. It is another feature of the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge that Haskins’ narrative does not make room for.

An observer narrative that makes place for the cross-cultural transfer of medical knowledge needs to reconsider periodization and places of transfer. While the importance of Salerno for translations of Arabic medical texts, either themselves translations of older knowledge or compiled on the basis of cross-culturally transmitted theories, pharmaceutics and rules of treatment, has been stressed in Haskins’ ‘model’, the role of North Africa as a place of translation from Arabic into Latin, however, is lost and its role as an intermediary between Baghdad, Cairo, Sicily and al-Andalus is marginalized. By including this region, Jacquart and Micheau took a different stance. They accept, however, the manner in which Haskins interpreted the translators’ activities in Southern Italy in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Despite acknowledging that different possibilities for interpretation exist, they write that it is clear that the goal was to transmit not Arabic, but Greek medicine and in particular Galen. Different choices made by the known translators and the critical remarks made at Constantinus Africanus’ practice of eliminating all traces of the Arabic authors whose texts he translated call, however, for a more cautious and nuanced evaluation.

Isabelle Draelants’ doctoral thesis on Arnold of Saxony’s encyclopedia (thirteenth century) reinforces this need to rethink the older positions. Her results support as well modify Alain de Libera’s depiction of the views that such scholars had of ancient authors writing in Greek, Byzantine and Arabic. Arnold of Saxony did not belong to the mendicant orders, although his work shows close links to that of members of the Dominican order. Presenting a long analysis of the texts used and the authorities quoted by Arnold, Draelants concludes that he fused in his encyclopaedia translations coming from two main areas: Salerno and Toledo. A further important indicator of attitudes held by Arnold and, according to Draelants, also by other authors of encyclopaedias in the thir-

34 Burnett 2008b.
35 Jacquart/Micheau 1990, p. 91 and 107–118.
37 Ibid., p. 101 sq.
38 Ibid., p. 100 and 107.
teenth century, like Bartholomew the Englishman or Vincent of Beauvais, is found in his medical text on causes. There, he used concomitantly texts belonging to the so-called ‘old translations’ of Aristotelian logic and ethics, new translations of Aristotelian or pseudo-Aristotelian works made from Greek as well as Arabic, translations of treatises by scholars from Islamicate societies and writings by his own contemporaries. Draelants describes this medical text as structurally copying Ibn Sina’s medical summa (Books III and IV), filling it with details from texts translated by Constantinus Africanus and material from writings of his contemporaries like Albertus Magnus. These observations suggest that Arnold and his contemporaries really did not bother to separate the different translations in any culturally defined grid. They obviously did not share the value hierarchies proposed by Haskins and exaggerated further by Gouguenheim, nor did their practice resemble Duhem’s progressist religious readings of the thirteenth century. These men apparently neither looked down on Greek authorities, independent of the period, nor put authors from Islamicate societies on the pedestal of lonely superiority. Their rich tapestry of dialogical textual practice deserves a fresh reflection about their placement in a new observer narrative.

A classical approach to the issues of cooperation and distribution in cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge by Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, namely the codicological study of extant manuscripts from al-Andalus in Arabic or Hebrew, led to impressively different results than those achieved within the prevailing ‘model’. Van Koningsveld showed for some 900 manuscripts that the two major groups in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Toledo involved in the selection of scientific texts, their copying, financing and subsequent distribution through booksellers and private owners were wealthy, prominent Jewish families and Muslim prisoners of war held by the Catholic town administration. On the basis of the identified manuscripts, he concluded that after the Christian conquest of Muslim cities, other groups like Mudejars and Mozarabs withdrew rather rapidly from an engagement with advanced sciences, medicine or philosophy. The former focused on the preservation of religious and juridical fundamentals of their communal life, adding some interest in practical knowledge such as healing and magic. The latter, van Koningsveld claims, reoriented their cultural outlook partly voluntarily and partly under ecclesiastic pressure towards norms and standards of the Roman rite of the Occidental Church whose

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 88 sq.
representatives dominated life in Toledo throughout the twelfth and in the first decades of the thirteenth centuries. These results from a different field of study present serious challenges to Haskins’ perspective and its macro-level approach to knowledge transfer.

As a result of all these investigations, Haskins’ observer narrative was modified, extended and replaced in so many of its components and details that it ceased to function as the ‘leitmotiv’ of research in the late twentieth century. The time seemed to be ripe to replace it by a new observer narrative that was dynamic, inclusive and receptive. Yet, Haskins’ ‘model’ continued a life of rhetorical veneration, appreciated for its author’s broad-scaled approach to the topic. In the 1990s, however, a historiographical shift took place that was unexpected from the perspective of medieval studies because it introduced the early modern period as an important arena to the study of cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge.

In the 1980s, the historiography of the early modern period became a field of intense debate. This debate focused primarily on the narrative of the scientific revolution, on scientific instrument builders and other craftsmen and on the gendered nature of early modern sciences and twenty-century accounts of early modern intellectual history. The other main narrative that connects late medieval with early modern intellectual history, the rise of humanism, its recovery of ancient Greek and Latin knowledge practices and its rejection and devaluation of medieval Latin translations of Arabic scientific, medical and philosophical texts, as well as medieval scholarly authorities from Islamicate societies, was challenged only in some of its components, without being questioned in its totality. Humanist rhetoric continued to be taken at face value and interpreted as an appropriate description of humanist knowledge practices.

The first major challenge of this historiographical narrative came from Nancy Siraisi, who showed that Latin translations of important Arabic medical works, in particular Ibn Sina’s opus on medicine, continued throughout the early modern period to dominate medical teaching at Italian universities. A decade later, Sonja Brentjes and Dag Nikolaus Hasse challenged two crucial features of the humanist narrative: the rejection of any knowledge coming from Islamicate societies; the rejection and exclusion of all medieval Latin translations of Arabic philosophical, medical or scientific texts. Brentjes demonstrated that many early modern Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars as well as patrons were keenly interested in acquiring materially and intellectually a

44 VAN KONINGSVELD 1991.
45 SIRAISI 1987.
broad variety of knowledge objects from past as well as contemporary Islamicate societies and invested substantial financial, material, personal and intellectual resources for satisfying their interests.\textsuperscript{46} Hasse proved that several outspoken humanist critics of medieval Arabo-Latin translations constructed their supposedly new, humanist translations of ancient Greek texts by presenting major extracts of the rejected medieval translations, at times even only slightly altered, as genuine parts of their own work as translators.\textsuperscript{47} Craig Martin, Charles Burnett and Dag Nikolaus Hasse edited or analyzed early modern Latin philosophical texts that relied substantially on the use of medieval translations of Arabic sources.\textsuperscript{48} They argued that the early modern period saw a resurgence of commentaries on Arabo-Latin philosophical texts that, in contrast to the humanist narrative, were not a last flowering of the medieval philosophical debate, but important to early modern revisions of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Brentjes proposed to reinterpret what has been seen since Johann Fück’s magisterial book on the rise of Arabic studies in early modern Europe as subjugated to philological and religious studies in terms of a much broader intellectual interest in Oriental intellectual matters that encompassed religions, languages, antiquities, the humanities, medicine and the sciences. She showed how travellers and writers altered their accounts of travelling, reading, talking and investigating in ‘Oriental’ lands under the impact of norms and customs at home, thereby invalidating their own labors abroad and discarding the foreign knowledge they had spent many hours and much money acquiring.\textsuperscript{49} Cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge in the early modern period thus consist of a much greater variety of themes, objects and actors than in the two centuries of Haskins’ ‘model’. This richness and the greater availability of contextual information demonstrate without doubt that cross-cultural exchanges are difficult, labor-intensive and costly activities that create, transport and legitimize knowledge across cultures, but often entail also acts of dismissing and even destroying knowledge. Furthermore, Kunitzsch even traced the interest of astronomers in various countries in Europe in Arabic texts, images and instruments beyond the early modern period into the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{50}

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw, partly in response to the historiographical changes in regard to the early modern period, an explosion of new proposals for how to interpret various aspects of the phenomenon of cross-

\textsuperscript{46} Brentjes 2010b.  
\textsuperscript{47} Hasse 2001.  
\textsuperscript{48} Martin 2007; Burnett 1999b; Burnett/Contadini 1999; Hasse 2004a; Hasse 2004b.  
\textsuperscript{49} Brentjes 2009; Brentjes 2010a.  
\textsuperscript{50} Kunitzsch 2006.
cultural exchange of knowledge in the Middle Ages. Senior and junior scholars participated in the intense and varied output of new ideas, illustrating a newly found ambition to classify, evaluate and interpret. Surprisingly, the majority of participants in these theoretical efforts continue to subscribe to several elements of the old ‘model’: the identification of the transfer activities as a movement; the separation of communities and languages into large cultural blocks as if they were divine immutables; the temporal fixation of the medieval activities in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries; the focus on scientific, medical and philosophical texts; the privileging of translation. The new perspectives emphasize, in contrast, difference, individuality and interdependence and thus the multiplicity of outlooks and interests; self-representation, legitimization and cultural identities; hybridity and cultural hegemony; social context and new geographical environments. Medieval exchanges are seen as fundamentally different in their social fabric from those of the early modern period, although certain cases, in particular exchanges that involve Jewish communities, are considered as processes of longue durée.

Substantially new proposals have been offered in particular by Dimitri Gutas, Dag Nikolaus Hasse, Charles Burnett, Alexander Fidora, Thomas Ricklin, Antoni Malet, Gad Freudenthal and Efthymios Nicolaidis. Gutas and Hasse argue in strong terms for the necessity of a social history of knowledge transfer. Hasse considers the lack of royal patronage and the ‘professional’ affiliation of the translators to ecclesiastic offices as the two defining features of the medieval phase. In contrast, in the early modern period physicians affiliated with universities or urban municipalities dominated in his view the transfer from Arabic to Latin. Gutas challenges the unified nature of the movement as taken for granted by most of the discussants. He suggests that the translation activities had very different contexts in different periods and locations and hence that different interpretive approaches are necessary. He offers a preliminary proposal for explaining the orientations and inconsistencies of the translations in the twelfth century in the Iberian Peninsula. This proposal rests on the observation that among the different high medieval cultures of the Peninsula only those in al-Andalus had developed a cultural identity that included introspection and explicit narratives of self-representation. These explicit narratives of self-representation culminate in singling out Andalusian scholarly culture as the best of the contemporary worlds. Gutas finds this ideology of self-aggrandizement – including the specific properties of the intellectual landscapes of al-Andalus as portrayed in the eleventh century by Sa’id al-Andalusi, one of the writers of

51 HASSE 2006.
such narratives of self-representation – reflected in the topics and texts chosen for translation in Toledo and other places of Castile, ignoring largely the activities in Catalonia, Aquitania and the Provence. Gutas suggests that the Catholic translators transferred by and large Andalusian intellectual highlights and trends of the eleventh century into Latin as the consequence of two processes: the counseling by Jewish scholars who had grown up in this culture and identified intellectually with it; the desire of the Catholic conquerors of Andalusian urban centers not merely to acquire the material objects, economic prospects and skilled labor of their Muslim neighbors, but to appropriate also their cultural reputation and splendor. He points out that most of the Catholic translators neither grew up as Arabic native speakers nor received an education in the secular sciences taught in Muslim cities in the Iberian Peninsula. Many of them rather came from other European regions and had to learn Arabic and Romance after their arrival. That is why Gutas suggests that the central actors of the translation movement of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were Jewish and Mozarabic mediators who procured the texts and provided the necessary skills, but whose names were written out of history.52

In a series of conference papers, Burnett offers a colorful bouquet of ever-changing views on motives, programmes and relationships of Catholic translators. Shedding much of his earlier allegiance to Haskins’ narrative, he introduces new themes into the debate: advertisement of skills and goals as features of a patronage culture that lacked formal, institutional procedures for raising funds and finding positions; magic, divination and necromancy as lead sciences for interpreting the universe and its symbolic interdependencies and hence as the basis and goal of the activities of translators in the Ebro Valley and Aquitania; dialectic and mathematics as seen by Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf and al-Fārābī’s philosophical work Iḥṣā’ al-'ulūm as models for Gerard of Cremona’s programme of translating and teaching; knowledge transfer as a question of intellectual property rights; Arabo-Latin translations between ‘humanism and orientalism’; blending knowledge from different cultures versus translating from one language into another.53

Thomas Ricklin, who shares Burnett’s fascination with participant narratives, disagrees with him in their interpretation, although both read them programmatically. Ricklin’s analysis of narrative plots allows him to discover three different types of self-representation as a translator (guided by a teacher; inde-

52 GUTAS 2006.
pendent selector of texts to be translated; teacher of all Christianity beyond the Iberian Peninsula) and perhaps three different types of constructing a dialogue with a potential readership: mixing private affairs (friendship) with business (translating and selection of topics); making concessions to readers unfamiliar with Arabic knowledge, but presenting the latter as the one to be emulated; mixing Arabic, Greek and Latin styles of presenting and ordering an introduction to a scholarly treatise. This reading of the participant narratives induces Ricklin to speak of far-reaching or even radical proposals for reforming the curricula of the cathedral schools. It might be worthwhile to consider whether his argument needs to be extended to other institutional contexts, since Petrus Alfonsi, for instance, one of the advocates for such a new curriculum, lived at least partially in a monastic environment.

Alexander Fidora and Gad Freudenthal focus in particular on issues related to cross-cultural exchanges between Jewish communities and between Jewish, Muslim and Catholic scholars in philosophy, medicine and the sciences. By studying the appropriation of Latin philosophical works among Jewish scholars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Fidora adds a new perspective to the study of cross-cultural exchanges in the Middle Ages. Jewish engagement with knowledge from other cultures has been seen so far as located primarily within the Arabic philosophical, scientific and medical intellectual spheres of al-Andalus and as mediating between Arabic and Latin. Alexander Fidora and Mauro Zonta, along with Harvey J. Hames and Yossef Schwartz, have helped modify this view by studying Hebrew translations of Latin treatises. One of these translations concerns a text by Dominicus Gundisalvi, one of the Toledan translators of Arabic philosophical texts into Latin. Fidora sees here new terrain for reflection. He argues for recognizing multilingual translations and interpretations of philosophical doctrines as a new research theme and asking how they have to be presented in relationship to the currently dominating traditions of separate historical narratives about Arabic, Hebrew and Latin philosophical thought in Europe. His concept of multilingualism differs from that introduced by d’Alverny, since he considers the phenomenon of multiple translations of the same or similar material into different target languages.

Analyzing Mauro Zonta’s newly compiled survey of all known translations by medieval and early modern Jewish scholars, Freudenthal proposes to differentiate the intellectual interests in Jewish communities in the Provence. He

54 Ricklin 2006.
56 Fidora 2012a.
distinguishes between a sustained long-term effort of migrants from the Iberian Peninsula to transfer and integrate Arabic sciences, medicine and to a lesser degree philosophy from al-Andalus into their new living spaces, on the one hand, and isolated cases of translating Latin medical texts into Hebrew, on the other. He justifies this schism not merely by numbers (men; books; themes), but by a deep cultural divide that defined in his view the attitudes of Jewish scholars towards the two host cultures of acquirable knowledge: Arabic and Latin. They admired and integrated themselves into the former, but rejected and denounced the latter. He also diagnoses different cultural attitudes between different professional orientations (philosophers versus physicians) and different regional affiliations (Provence versus Italy) concerning the disregard and lack of engagement with the contemporary medical, philosophical or scientific knowledge of the surrounding Latin speaking Christian communities. He attributes ‘cultural isolation’ due to ‘a deep-seated cultural attitude’ to medieval Jewish scholars in the Provence in comparison to a more accommodating practice by Jewish scholars in Spain, Italy or the Ottoman Empire.

Nonetheless, the respective teams led by Fidora and Freudenthal both agree in that the Latin-into-Hebrew translations clearly show that Jewish thought during the European Middle Ages can no longer be described as drawing exclusively on Oriental sources. In their recent two-volume publication *Latin-into-Hebrew*, which contains editions of medieval Hebrew translations of works by Gundisalvi, Albert the Great and the anonymous *Liber de causis*, they arrive at the conclusion that ‘the perception of the Jewish philosophical tradition as exclusively extraterritorial (i.e. as depending essentially on Oriental sources) will be rectified so as to take into account also Jewish interactions with the majority culture’. This confirms the existence of intellectual networks across cultures that were formed among Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars during the Middle Ages and that account for the striking parallels in the reception of certain philosophical doctrines and traditions. In addition, the studies contained in these volumes raise questions which also affect other traditions of translating during the Middle Ages, namely the complex issue of language acquisition (in this case the Jews’ learning Latin) and the use of vernacular intermediaries.

57 Freudenthal 2011a, in particular p. 74 sq., 80 and 84.
58 Ibid., p. 75 and 77–81.
59 Ibid., p. 84.
60 Fidora e. a. 2013, p. 17.
Alexander Fidora, Harvey J. Hames, José Martínez Gázquez, Sabine Schmidtke, Matthias M. Tischler and other scholars have also paid renewed attention to the translation of religious texts in the various cultural traditions of the Middle Ages. While Haskins’ limitations in this respect were partly outweighed by Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, recent studies have enlarged considerably our knowledge concerning this phenomenon. Thus, the research group Islamo-latina, led by Martínez Gázquez, has started the critical edition of all extant Latin Qur‘ān translations.61 Hames has prepared an edition of the first Hebrew translation of the Gospels,62 while Schmidtke and her group are studying translations of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament into Arabic.63 Several studies on the translation and glossing of religious texts have been recently edited by Tischler and Fidora;64 the former has also compiled the electronic database ‘Bibliotheca Islamo-Christiana Latina’,65 which is based on several studies, dealing with Arabo-Latin biographical, historiographical and religious oral66 and written text traditions on Muhammad and Islam, deriving not only from the frontier societies of the Iberian Peninsula67 but from the Byzantine world as well.68 Most recently, Fidora and his team have started preparing the critical edition of the Latin Talmud (ca. 1240).

Numerous new results were presented in the last two decades about cross-cultural exchanges in the medieval Eastern Mediterranean with Eastern Europe, Islamicate societies East and South of Byzantium and with communities in Italian colonies along the shores of the Black Sea as well as Italian and Aragonese cities. In his study of the relationship between ‘science and the Orthodox church’ Efthymios Nicolaidis presents a broadly construed survey on the extant material of translation, migration and transformation of knowledge between Byzantium and its neighbors and enemies.69 Nicholas de Lange, Anne Tihon and Nicolaidis emphasize, each from the perspectives of their different academic fields, the necessity to investigate the contributions of Jewish scholars inside and outside Byzantium to the exchange of knowledge between the Empire,
Latin Europe and Islamicate societies. Tihon insists that the Byzantines continued to believe that they were the heirs of ancient Greek scientific knowledge. But she also demonstrates that until the eleventh century, when the first astronomical text translated from Arabic (1032) is extant, Byzantine astronomy was rather limited in scope and level. Surveying the academic investigation of Jewish intellectual life in Byzantium, de Lange stresses the long-term interests of Jewish writers in medicine and philosophy and the flourishing of astronomy and astrology in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In this period, Orthodox Byzantine patrons, too, expressed a remarkable interest in Hebrew translations of philosophy, as Stefan Reif shows on the basis of codicological investigations. Nicolaidis draws attention in particular to the relationships between the Karaite communities in the Languedoc, Byzantium and the Crimea from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries and their interests especially in the mathematical and medical sciences. New insights into the transfer of knowledge by Jewish communities in Byzantium are to be expected by Daniel J. Lasker and Y. Tzvi Langermann.

In addition to this emergence of data and the diversification of research interests in Byzantine studies, historians of philosophy and science, in particular Gutas and Nicolaidis, have also offered new observer narratives about the motives and inspirations that guided the cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge in the ‘Abbāsid Empire and Byzantium. What is common to both ‘models’ is their emphasis on socio-cultural factors, in particular the need to legitimize rebellion and rule, to squelch ideologically grounded conflicts, to overcome resistance and to defeat external enemies. Gutas makes a conceptual distinction between translating as an everyday life activity in a multicultural society and translating as a sustained cultural politics of a dynasty or a ruling elite. He argues that only when cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge were part of an official ideology did they attract sufficient cultural, personal and monetary support and produce new, advanced knowledge. Nicolaidis argues in a similar manner when he speaks of the direct consequences for translating and transferring knowledge between Byzantium, Sicily, Italy or Iran due to Manuel Komnenos’ desire during the twelfth century to re-establish the Roman Empire

70 DE LANGE 2001b; NICOLAIDIS 2011, p. 106–119.
71 TIHON 2009, in particular p. 394 sq.
72 DE LANGE 2001b, p. 33.
73 REIF 2002, in particular p. 104.
74 NICOLAIDIS 2011, p. 116 sq.
75 LASKER 2011; LANGERMANN 2011.
or the newly invented classical Greek identity of Byzantine secular and ecclesiastic elites in the wake of the loss of Constantinople to the papal and Venetian mercenaries of the Fourth Crusade. He adds, however, a further explanatory argument of a different kind: the role of values attached to certain scholarly practices (in the case of Orthodox Byzantine scholars: observations and other manual activities) versus the values attached to an inimical, but knowledgeable foreign culture (depending on the period: the ‘Abbāsid Empire, Ilkhanid Iran or Occidental Europe). This argument is mixed with his own beliefs about the cultural values of the different players and objects of exchange and leads at times to problematic claims that seem to contradict some of the codicological evidence.

Antoni Malet, an outsider to the debates on cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge, proposes an interestingly different conceptual goal for identifying and interpreting the results of such activities. He rejects explicitly the position, held since Haskins by a majority of experts, which posits translation as the main cultural event that has to be investigated and explained. For Malet translation is merely one among many practices that constitute cross-cultural exchange. In his view, the truly important feature of the phenomenon is the creation of hybrid cultures that are open to continued change. This position offers a major challenge not only to the debates among the experts of medieval cross-cultural exchanges, but to current conflicts about the cultural identities in and of Europe. In a case study of fourteenth-century portolan charts, Brentjes has reached a similar conclusion. In her view, the illuminated charts that were produced in Italy and at Majorca can only be adequately understood if a shared cultural space – the so-called middle ground – is assumed that included the entire Mediterranean and the Black Sea with their adjacent cultures and their networks of commercial and cultural brokers.
4 A Glance Ahead

This fascinating mixture of old and new views on which features are relevant for understanding medieval cross-cultural exchanges of knowledge and the existence of competing observer narratives for cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond indicate that by now a critical mass of scholars and ideas is available for constructing a new interpretive ‘model’ that is rich in historical, geographical, cultural and social data, sophisticated in its methodological foundations and representational choices, and reflexive in its values and analytical techniques and methods. The controversial character of some of the new proposals provides another incentive for seriously considering the construction of a new observer narrative. Analyzing the underlying conceptual reasons for the conflicting positions will stimulate the methodological inquiry and holds the chance for enhancing the inclusive character of the new ‘model’.

Our current positions, which were highlighted in this survey, are dynamic, open, reflexive and in flux. In our view, there is no need for a single narrative for all cross-cultural exchange activities in the medieval Mediterranean, which stresses the concept of movement and linearity for two events (Graeco-Arabic translation under the early ‘Abbāsids in the eighth and ninth centuries; Arabo-Latin and Graeco-Latin translations in the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily and the Latin Crusader States in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries) and dismisses or ignores most of the other activities. In fact, there is a number of small-scale activities among contemporaneous communities whose members interact with each other. The participants in such cross-cultural activities are rarely rigidly bound by their respective communal memberships. On the contrary, cross-cultural exchange of knowledge needs cultural and other brokers. The habits, beliefs and skills of such brokers adapt to the changing conditions and circumstances of their brokerage. Sometimes they are members of a diaspora who have left country, home and family behind, but remained in limbo. At other times they settle comfortably in two or even three culturally different communities. Numerous brokers seem, however, to have stayed in the community of their birth. They shared some parts of their knowledge and skills as goods they were trading. Other parts they safeguarded as assets necessary for defining them as competent mediators for those interested in acquiring objects and knowledge from another community, but disposing only of some of the needed resources. Such brokers and their dealing with clients deserve much more attention than they have received so far.

While translations of scientific, medical, philosophical and theological texts of a formalized content and presentational format continue to be important ob-
jects of study and thus a valuable type of source for our goal of creating a new observer narrative, other textual objects of a less formalized content and set-up, such as fly leaves, notes, colophons and ownership marks, or of a different formalization, such as letters, speeches, accounting sheets or recipes, need to receive greater attention. In addition to the written word, visual and material objects were themselves components of cross-cultural exchange and transformation of knowledge in several functions. They served as commercial goods, as objects of royal gift exchange, of cultural copying and code switching, as technical tools and as containers of coveted knowledge and platforms of education. The functions of such textual, visual and instrumental objects of cross-cultural exchange of knowledge have to become an integrated part in a new narrative.

As a tool of research, material objects have the potential to serve as a corrective for a historical narrative exclusively based on scholarly texts. Eight fragments of sundials and astrolabes constructed between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries are known from different places in the Iberian Peninsula. Their study by Millàs i Vallicrosa, Barceló, Labarta, King, Samsó, Viladrich, Rius and others signals that knowledge of astronomical theories, parameters and texts arrived in al-Andalus apparently earlier than the preserved texts show.\(^82\) They reveal that their makers and patrons favoured different approaches for choosing among competing data and interpretations: astronomically determined prayer directions, astrological orientations, choices made in Egypt or attributed to companions of Muḥammad.\(^83\) Texts do not only seem to have followed instruments in their path from East to West. On the basis of the currently available material, they also seem to represent a later practice among Andalusian experts. These two observations suggest a much more substantial role of practical, instrumental transfers of knowledge as a preparatory framework for a possibly later interest in texts. Thus, we will orient parts of our investigations in this direction.

The observation, on the other hand, that the chronology of the extant astrolabes lags behind the evidence for the movement of their knowledge towards the Latin North presents a further challenge. The Latin texts of Arabic provenance are about half a century older than the oldest extant Andalusian astrolabe. Abstaining from the easiest explanation of material loss and contingency,


\(^83\) King 1978, p. 370 sq.
we think that a comparative inquiry of the relationship between texts and instruments in other cases of cross-cultural exchange of knowledge will result in creating a broader array of interpretive options. A further addition that the study of instruments brings to an observer narrative limited to scholarly texts is the insight that together with bigger socio-cultural processes of cross-cultural exchange of knowledge smaller, individual activities need to be considered. The so-called Carolingian astrolabe, which according to current opinions arrived in the North of the Iberian Peninsula before 980, may have come from somewhere in Italy, where around 900 such instruments seem to have been produced following a Byzantine tradition not yet reflecting the changes introduced by the astrologers in Baghdad.

A further important insight that we shall work on to elaborate in more detail is the embedment of these cross-cultural activities of knowledge exchange in larger cultural processes of confrontation, collaboration, dislocation and settlement. The long-lasting instability, permeability and reinvention of frontiers, dynasties, languages, tribes, sedentary populations, customs, habits and beliefs during those centuries that we label here as a short hand medieval create the multitude of contexts that encouraged mostly men and occasionally women to learn new skills from strangers, buy shiny objects from far away countries and order subordinate subjects to copy or adapt them to local taste and capabilities or collect information about such far away countries from countrymen and foreigners alike. Maps, cloths, paintings, ceramics, manuscript bindings and many other objects testify to this complexity of cross-cultural exchange. These processes bound scholars, nobility, bankers, merchants, priests, healers, sailors, itinerant traders of knowledge of plants, animals, minerals, but also of the divine and the supernatural and the many go-betweens together in a flurry of events, relationships and activities. Seen from this perspective, cross-cultural exchange of knowledge was a way of life, not merely a linear act of translating. We shall try to determine more precisely, if possible, such multifaceted interactions, their loci of contact, transfer, transport and transformation and their participants either as identifiable individuals or as a representative of a social, professional, cultural, linguistic or other group.

Two major stimulators of cultural exchange of knowledge were marriage and conquest. Marriage necessitated adaptation ideally of the two (or more) sides ceremonially united as a family and if not as a multiple undertaking, then at least of one of the parties involved. Women were here often subject and object of such cross-cultural exchanges, which included the transfer of material

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objects, religious and other beliefs, the translation of books and the creation of book collections ‘seen fit’ for the female spirit. Historical chronicles, geographies, prayer books and collections of household recipes were the primary items of such translations from scholarly languages such as Latin into vernaculars or between vernaculars.

Conquest forced adaptation not only on the side of the conquered, but also on the side of conquerors, because they often lacked recognition as new rulers or experienced resistance by the subdued population and its various civil elites. Here processes of knowledge exchange often took place as elements of the necessary everyday-life adaptation, for instance in the realm of law where translators continued to participate in court cases long after the conquered population had become bilingual and had learned, voluntarily or not, the new cultural rules. In several cases, such conquests led to cataclysmic changes in the spheres of knowledge and skills. Examples are the conquest of the Umayyad caliphate by the ‘Abbásid family and its allies in the middle of the eighth century, the Almohad dynasty’s conquest of al-Andalus between 1146 and 1173, the Aragonese and Castilian conquests of Muslim principalities of al-Andalus between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, the creation of the Lascaride dynasty after the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204 and others. Destruction of objects, suppression of knowledge and skills, the acquisition of contemporary and the appropriation of ‘old’ knowledge objects, authorities and teachings for purposes of legitimation of the new rulers, maintenance of irrigation and agricultural production or integration and subjugation of previous intellectual, legal or administrative elites were part and parcel of those turnovers, although each case possessed its specific particularities. In several of these cataclysmic changes, the conquerors used knowledge and its ability to be transported across cultural divides as one of their numerous political strategies for improving their reputation and pacifying parts of the conquered population or to unify the diverse factions of their own elites in struggles against a foreign invader. Thus, reducing such profound changes in the knowledge and skills practiced and valued in such different circumstances of conquering, defending and extending political, economic and military power of one group over others to their intellectual aspects and streamlining these intellectual aspects as stepping stones from ‘classical Greece’ to the current ‘West’ leads to a tremendous loss of the complex richness of the past. Hence, multiple methodological platforms and research methods need to be combined with a self-reflexive control of results and interpretations for their dependence on current ideological and political values and commitments in order to break free from essentializing past cultures and their scholarly handling.
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Abbreviation

CChr.CM  Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis

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