



**Mediterranean Programme**  
**10th Mediterranean Research Meeting**

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**Workshop 3**

***Language and Cultural Mediation in the Mediterranean, 1200-1800***

**directed by**

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***Workshop abstract***

In recent years, the role of language in cultural mediation and boundary-making in medieval and early modern societies has attracted significant scholarly attention. Recent volumes have centered on "cultural translation" and "translation and travel" to point to the close relationship between practices of translation and emerging consciousness of sociocultural and political boundaries. A growing literature now exists on the role of language ideologies, institutions, and experts in colonial expansion in Northern Europe, the Atlantic, and the Pacific. In studies of the Mediterranean, however, the role of language in defining regions and people as well as their inter-relations (like the concept of *Lingua Franca*), while often acknowledged as essential to the constitution of sociocultural boundaries, has not yet come into focus. This workshop thus aims to address processes of cultural mediation in the Mediterranean by attending to the ways in which language served as a central site for the elaboration and contestation of sociocultural boundaries in the period from roughly 1200 to 1800.

### *Workshop description*

The organizers seek empirically-grounded papers from scholars in all pertinent disciplines (history, literature, linguistics, performance studies, historical anthropology, etc.) whose focus falls within the medieval and early modern Mediterranean (Iberia, North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans, Italy and France). Papers may address any aspect of the following four clusters of questions:

1. What role did institutions such as chancelleries, academies, universities, and schools, play in developing, defining, and standardizing “official” vernacular languages and in distinguishing them from other language varieties? What role did such institutions play in processes of language instruction and socialization across metropolitan and peripheral settings? How were these institutions themselves shaped by the range of (often multilingual) milieus in which they operated?
2. To what extent, in the contexts of colonial expansion, imperial consolidation and inter-imperial rivalry, did specialized cadres—including diplomatic interpreters, commercial brokers, missionaries, court scribes, notaries, lexicographers, and philologists—develop to regulate linguistic and cultural difference?
3. What language ideologies and practices emerged in the inherently bilingual contexts of imperial frontier regions, such as Venetian Dalmatia and the Eastern Mediterranean, Ottoman Bosnia, North Africa, and Syria?
4. How were linguistic and cultural differences objectified and mapped onto one another through a range of genres, from court records and commercial manuals to geographies and polyglot comedies?

### **Format**

The purpose of this workshop is not only to facilitate the sharing of expertise and empirical materials, but also to develop a more coherent, methodologically complex, and explicitly transdisciplinary analytical framework for future work. Papers may range in format and genre from empirical case studies to methodological and conceptual reflections. Participants are also encouraged, when appropriate, to provide transcripts and translations of primary texts for further discussion at the workshop. All papers will be pre-circulated, and rather than the oral delivery of papers, workshop sessions will include:

1. Brief introductions by paper authors to recapitulate their main arguments and to situate their pieces in a broader historiographical context
2. Comments on papers by designated commentator(s)
3. Ample time for group discussion of papers by all workshop participants

This format aims to foster an open dialogue about the intersections between the different papers, and to ensure conceptual continuity between the different sessions. Participants will be able to engage each other’s materials, bring insights from their own field of expertise to a broader methodological and conceptual discussion, and begin to draw out connections between what are often seen as disparate fields of knowledge.

Please submit a proposal (up to 500 words) by 1 September 2008. Completed papers of 15 to 30 pages will be due no later than 15 January 2009. Please contact the workshop organizers by email for further information.