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Call for Papers

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) International Workshop

Translation and Multilingualism across the Premodern Arabo-Islamic World and Europe

2-5 December 2026

La Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, Spain

Summary:

This international workshop examines multilingualism and translation across the premodern Mediterranean, the Arabo-Islamic world, and Europe as processes of negotiation, transformation, and co-production. Focusing on scholars, translators, and intermediaries working across languages such as Arabic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Persian, it explores how knowledge was shaped and reshaped as it moved between intellectual and institutional contexts.

Main organizers:

Hany Rashwan, AGYA member, United Arab Emirates University, UAE

Nuha Al-Shaar, AGYA alumna, American University of Sharjah, UAE

Corinna Assmann, AGYA member, Heidelberg University, Germany

Linda Ammann, AGYA member, Universität Zürich, Switzerland

In collaboration with:

José Ignacio Sánchez, La Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain

Nicola Carpentieri, Università Degli Studi Di Padova, Italy



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Translation and Multilingualism across the Premodern Arabo-Islamic World and Europe

In the premodern Mediterranean and Arabo-Islamic worlds, translation and multilingualism played a central role in shaping intellectual, scientific, literary, legal, and artistic traditions. From the Abbasid translation movement in Baghdad to the vibrant scholarly environments of Al-Andalus, Sicily, and Toledo, knowledge circulated across linguistic, cultural, and religious boundaries through complex processes of translation, adaptation, and reinterpretation.

Arabic functioned as a major scholarly language across vast regions, facilitating the transmission of works from Greek, Persian, and Indian traditions. At the same time, Arabic texts were translated into Latin, Hebrew, and vernacular European languages, contributing to the intellectual developments of medieval and early modern Europe. Works such as those of Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (Rhazes), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) became foundational in European medical, philosophical, and scientific traditions. Beyond the sciences, other fields likewise attest to the interaction of languages and cultures, as reflected in notarial handbooks and notarial practices in the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily, where multilingual legal and administrative traditions developed through sustained intercultural exchange.

Rather than viewing these processes as unidirectional “transfers” of knowledge, this workshop seeks to explore translation and multilingualism as dynamic practices of negotiation, transformation, and co-production. It highlights the role of scholars, translators, and intermediaries working across languages such as Arabic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, and others, and examines how knowledge was shaped and reshaped as it moved across different intellectual and institutional contexts. Particular attention will also be devoted to the circulation and transformation of literary and poetic practices across linguistic traditions. In multilingual environments such as Norman Sicily, where Arabic, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and emerging vernacular cultures coexisted in close interaction, courts became crucial spaces for experimentation, adaptation, and literary exchange.

The workshop welcomes contributions examining how poetic forms, courtly aesthetics, themes, motifs, and performative practices moved across languages and traditions, and how vernacular literary cultures, including early Italian lyric, emerged through sustained contact with Arabic and other Mediterranean traditions. Held in Toledo (Spain), long recognised as a key site of translation, the workshop invites contributions that examine the broader networks, practices, and actors involved in multilingual knowledge production across the premodern Arabo-Islamic world(s) and Europe. It will take place in person at UCLM and will include visits to local archives.

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- The translation of scientific texts (medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy) between Arabic and Latin traditions
- The reception and transformation of works by scholars such as al-Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, and others in European contexts
- Multilingual scholarly practices involving Arabic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, and vernacular languages
- Translation and adaptation in literary production (poetry, prose, adab, narrative traditions)
- The circulation of poetic forms, motifs, and literary practices across Arabic, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and vernacular traditions

- Courtly multilingualism and literary production in spaces such as Kalbid, Norman, Swabian Sicily, al-Andalus, and the eastern Mediterranean
- The relationship between Arabic literary culture and the emergence of vernacular lyric traditions in medieval Europe
- The role of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars as intermediaries and translators
- Institutional settings of translation (courts, monasteries, madrasas, libraries)
- Translation and visual or material culture (art, architecture, manuscript traditions)
- Notarial handbooks, legal formularies, and documentary practices across the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily as sites of linguistic and cultural exchange
- Archival materials and documentary cultures reflecting multilingual administration, legal translation, and cross-cultural mediation in premodern societies
- Linguistic hierarchies and the role of Arabic and Latin as scholarly lingua franca
- Comparative perspectives on translation centres (e.g., Baghdad, Córdoba, Toledo, Palermo, Cairo)
- Understudied regions, languages, and actors in premodern translation networks
- Conceptual approaches to translation as transformation, adaptation, and reinterpretation

Submission Guidelines:

Those interested in presenting papers are invited to submit an **abstract** (300 words) and a **short biography** (150 words). Submissions should present a clear research question and a focused case study grounded in its historical context.

Please send your abstract and short biography in a Word file to: [hrashwan@uaeu.ac.ae](mailto:h rashwan@uaeu.ac.ae) by **31 August 2026**. The accommodation and travel costs for invited speakers will be covered by AGYA and cooperation partners. Funding is subject to approval.

Publication:

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed edited volume or special issue. All submissions will undergo a peer-review process by an interdisciplinary committee.

Important Dates:

31 August 2026: Application Deadline

30 September 2026: Notification of Selected Applicants

2 December 2026: Arrival Day in Toledo, Spain

3-4 December 2026: Workshop Days

5 December 2026: Departure Day from Toledo, Spain

Publication:

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed edited volume or special issue. All submissions will undergo a peer-review process.

Selected publications:

Alshaar, Nuha (ed.) (2024) *Muslim Sicily: Encounters and Legacy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Burnett, Charles (2009) *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and Their Intellectual and Social Context*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Carpentieri, Nicola (2024) 'Love poetry as social practice: On the function of medieval Sicilian love lyric in Arabic and Italian', *Postmedieval*, 15, pp.763–782.

Hasse, Dag Nikolaus (2016) *Success and Suppression: Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Metcalfe, Alex (2009) *The Muslims of Medieval Italy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Rashwan, Hany (2024) 'Editor's introduction: Beyond Arabic in premodern Islamic worlds', *Postmedieval*, 15(3), pp. 605–630.

Rashwan, Hany, Gould, Rebecca Ruth and Askari, Nasrin (eds.) (2024) *Arabic, Persian, and Turkic Poetics: Towards a Post-Eurocentric Literary Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Saliba, George (2007) *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Vagelpohl, Uwe and Sánchez, Ignacio (2022) 'Why Do We Translate? Arabic Sources on Translation', in Gutas, Dimitri (ed.) *Why Translate Science? Documents from Antiquity to the 16th Century in the Historical West (Bactria to the Atlantic)*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 254–376.

Zadeh, Travis (2011) *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the 'Abbāsīd Empire*. London: I.B. Tauris.

About AGYA

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) is based at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in Egypt. It was established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes sustainable research cooperation between outstanding Arab and German scholars (3-10 years post-PhD) from all disciplines.

The academy offers its members the unique opportunity to develop and implement their ideas and visions through research projects and joint initiatives at the interface of science and society. AGYA members share an inter- and transdisciplinary approach to scientific enquiry, with the intention of seeking solutions to societal challenges. Together, they realise innovative research on topics such as Arab and German Education; Common Heritage and Common Challenges; Dynamics of Transformation; Energy, Water and Environment; Health and Society; and Innovation.

AGYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) and various Arab and German cooperation partners.



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