

Medieval literature

Across languages

a multi-lingual summer school



Ton Iviron 463, fol. 15r (12th-13th cent.)

Summer School

17–28 May

2021

Swedish Research
Institute in Istanbul

This summer school seeks to provide PhD students with a first immersion into the study of medieval literature across languages. Language training, with the aim of inviting PhD students to become acquainted with new medieval languages, will here be combined with lectures on case studies, addressing various methodological issues and approaches. The summer school focuses on five medieval languages: Georgian, Arabic, Greek, Latin, and Old French. Together these languages cover an immense geographical and literary expanse, yet they all involved various areas of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Texts of obvious interest are the story of Barlaam and Ioasaph (Josafat), the Alexander Romance, the *Secretum Secretorum*, the fables of Kalila wa-Dimna, the Apocalypse of Ps-Methodius, and Scriptures (the Bible, the Qur'an). These were all far-travelling texts, whose long trajectories and multiple linguistic interpretations elicit surprise and interest. Through language study, lectures, and by reading together the same text (e.g., the Barlaam and Ioasaph) across five different languages, the summer school aims to show how these literatures worked as a multi-lingual common resource.

The summer school will explore the exchanges and mutual enrichment between medieval languages and literatures. Key texts and entire literary genres passed from one language to another through the intense work of translators and thereby made a significant impact on their target world, just as they themselves underwent changes in order to speak to it. Indian texts travelled far and reached the Mediterranean through multiple translations; Greek philosophy journeyed to Khorasan and beyond, primarily in Arabic translations; romances and fables created inter-continental chains of literary interconnectedness.

These themes have received increased scholarly attention in recent years, and the study of these processes holds great promise and interest to a world searching for models of how to write global (hi)stories of past cultural exchange. Some impediments, however, often hold back students within these fields: the lack of linguistic proficiency and methodological concerns (can and should we compare, and if so, how? which cultural implications can we deduce from translations, often the product of a single and perhaps exceptional person? are we exaggerating transcultural aspects in the light of modern interests? etc.).

Programme

The summer school will be organized around language teaching and tutoring, lectures and group work, and time for informal conversation. In the mornings, language teaching will be followed by study time. In the afternoon, PhD students assist each other as tutors and will themselves receive help from others. Small excursions will take place, especially during the weekend. Substantial work will be required of students in advance of the summer school (learning of new alphabets, initial reading exercises). Lunches and two dinners will be in common.

Organizers of the summer school are Julian Yolles (University of Southern Denmark) and Christian Høgel (University of Southern Denmark).

Among confirmed lecturers are Stratis Papaioannou (University of Crete, Rethymno) and Lars Boje Mortensen (University of Southern Denmark).

Practical Information

Applications

Applications should be sent before 1st of October 2020 to hogel@sdu.dk.

We encourage applications from PhD students from any field in medieval studies who wish to learn any of these languages. Previous knowledge of (reading abilities in) another medieval language is **required**, preferably another (or more) on the list.

Lectures and seminars will be held in English. Your application should include an abstract of your current research and a statement addressing the contributions you can make to the summer school and what you hope to gain from participating (together no more than a single A4 page, single spaced). You must also name one referee who will be willing to write in support of your application. Referees of short-listed applicants will be contacted directly by the organizers of the summer school.

There is no cost for attending the Summer School.

Bursaries

Five bursaries (cost of transportation to Istanbul) will be available. Please address your application to hogel@sdu.dk before 1st of December 2020, detailing your costs and financial need.

Accommodation and transport

Accommodation will be provided for the participants at the Swedish institute or at hotels in the vicinity.

Meals

Lunches and two dinners will be provided by the organizers. The participants will be responsible for the other meals.

This project is organized by the Retracing Connections project (Uppsala University) and the Centre for Medieval Literature (University of Southern Denmark and the University of York).