

# Identity, *Questione della Lingua*, Humanism and Translation. The Role of Juan Fernandez de Heredia, Grand Master of Knights Hospitaller, and the Translations of Greek Classics into Romance Languages

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PD en Transferencias Interculturales e Históricas en la Europa Medieval Mediterránea  
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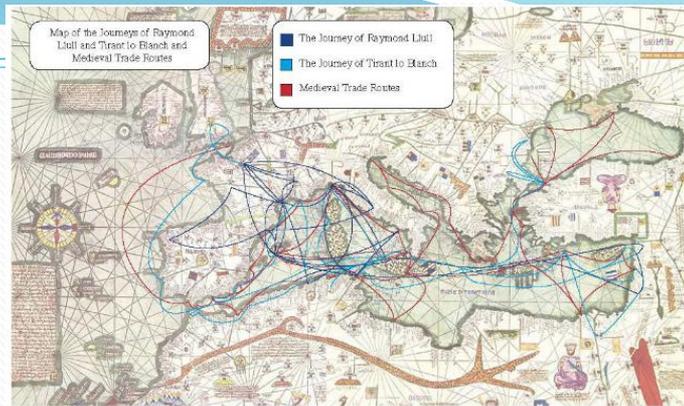
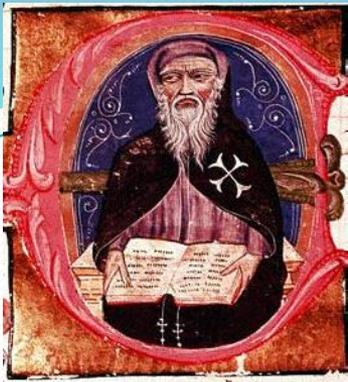
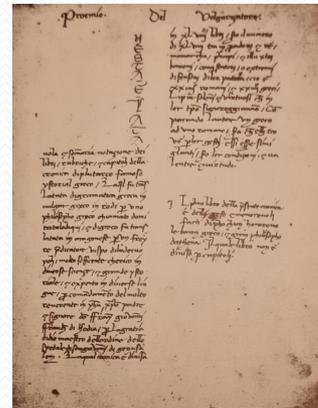
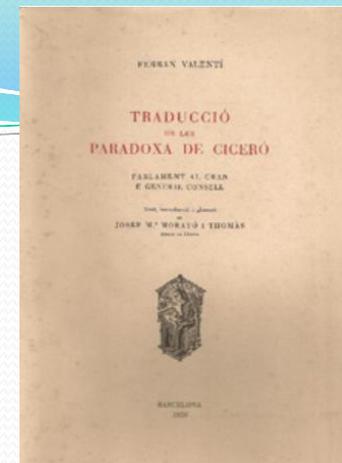


ILLUSTRATION 4. MAP OF ALL-IN-ONE JOURNEYS OF RAMON LLULL AND TIRANT LO BLANCH, ALONG WITH THE (MAIN) MEDIEVAL TRADE ROUTES. INFOGRAPHICS BY JORDI ANTELLI, BASED UPON AN IDEA OF VICENT MARTINES. CREATED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY. ORIGINAL SOURCES: BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE. "L'ATLAS CATALAN". EXPOSITIONS, 5 MARCH 2015 <[HTTP://EXPOSITIONS.BNF.FR/CRL/CATALAN/INDEX.HTM](http://expositions.bnf.fr/crl/catalan/index.htm)>; THE CRESQUES PROJECT. "HOME". THE CRESQUES PROJECT. 20 MARCH 2015 <[HTTP://WWW.CRESQUESPROJECT.NET/](http://www.cresquesproject.net/)>.



- This study repositions the birth of Humanism in European culture within the frame of the Western Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is historically paramount in the transmission of ideas. It has been studied the contribution of Byzantine experts such as Manuel Chrysoloras and his stay in Italy (Florence, for instance, with the role played by Coluccio Salutati). But in spite of his great relevance, we must pay attention to other contemporary figures such as the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller, Juan Fernández de Heredia. Because of his position, he knew Greece first hand (Rhodes, the Aegean and the Epirus in particular) and gave impulse to a direct translation of the Greek classics (Plutarch for instance) to romance languages (Aragonese), in many cases through translations into Catalan performed in the context of the Royal Chancery of the Crown of Aragon, during the same years when Bernat Metge occupied relevant positions in this institution. Coluccio Salutati himself requested from Juan Fernández de Heredia a copy of the Plutarch translation into Aragonese for his Italian translation (Salutati ignored Greek). The analysis of these translation endeavors will help us understand a movement of such relevance for the history of Western culture as Humanism.



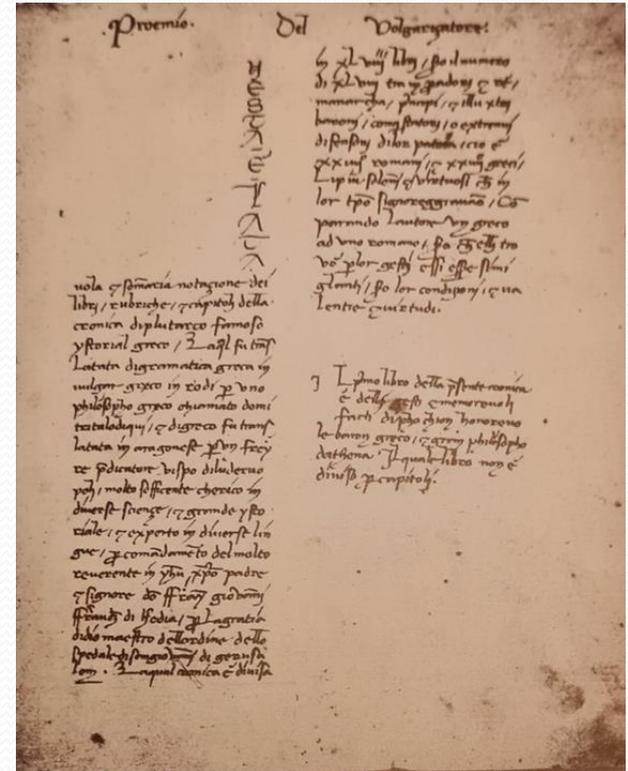


- That is very easy to observe by comparing translations from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century with those of the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In this case it is very convenient taking into account the criteria of Ferran Valentí in his version of the *Paradoxes* by Cicero, which brings another dimension to translation. We have seen that translation can be very useful when it comes to the study of literature and language; we have even proven that medieval translation can be very close to *avant la letter* philology and we have even talked about one of the first cases of critical translation.
- Valentí carries out a historical justification of translation and of the literary use of vernacular "in order to teach how to make people more learned, who are not literate in the erudite language, Latin". Valentí declared himself disciple of Bruni ("my father and private tutor") and he shows a sense learned in the environment and the criteria of contemporary Italian humanism.
- All in all it is convenient not to consider him a "humanist", his translation is no more than rudimentary regarding the linguistic criteria skills, still debtors of Latin.
- This is the same principle that guided humanists when they approached classics, and also one of those that we could, no doubt, count among the precursors of Humanism, as the Grand Master of Knights Hospitaller, Joan Fernández de Heredia, who, without giving up being himself, meets the requirements of Humanism mastered by the Italians such as Salutati.
- The Grand Master of Knights Hospitaller translated (or commissioned to be translated) and paid attention to that that the classics said so that they were useful for his order and his political-military action and that of the Crown of Aragon and for other powers his order served, and, in general, "be useful for many" –as Ferrando Valentí would say—. It is about the value of usefulness of the classics... even if it just was for the only benefit of the author, as in the case of Bernat Metge in his *Lo Somni*... with which another requirement of Humanism is met, the assertion of the personal I. And with John Fernández d'Heredia we can participate a little bit in the appearance of Humanism in the Western world and another previous and alternative way of incorporation of Greek classics translated.

# John Fernández de Heredia, Grand Master of the Hospital (with his headquarters at Rodes), has works by Hellenic classics translated for the first time, directly from the Greek.

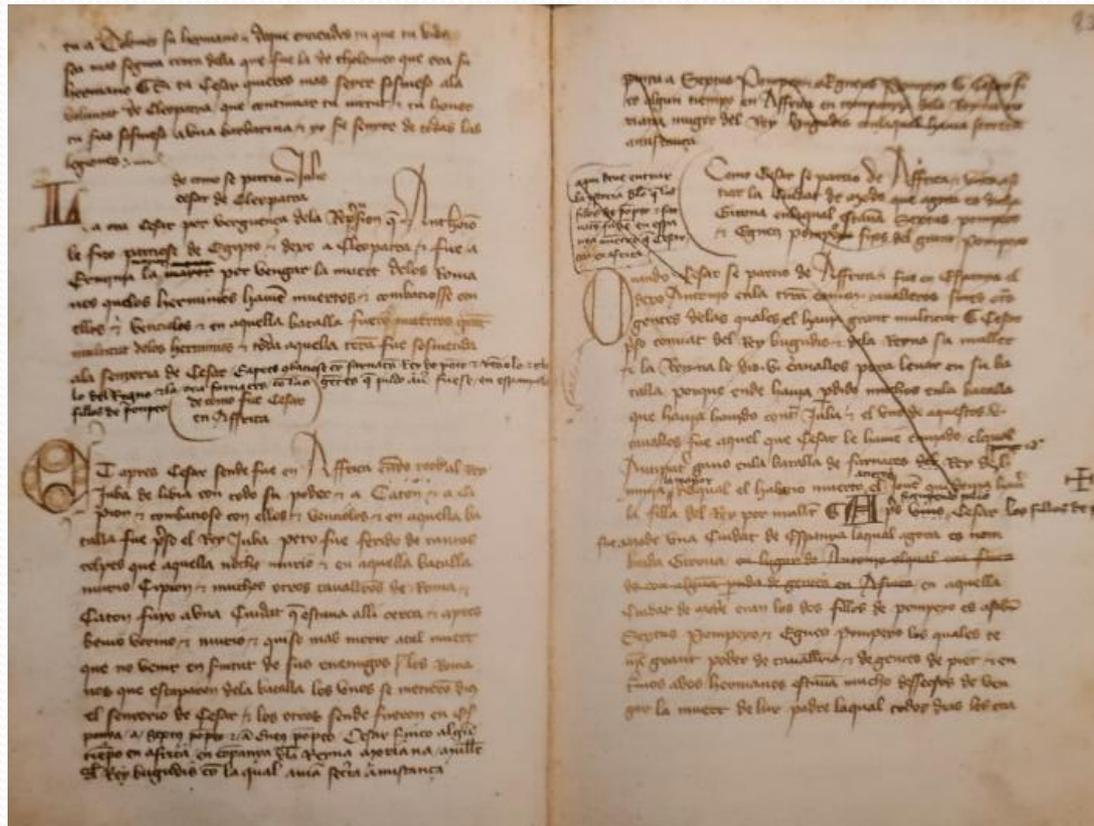
- John Fernández de Heredia, Grand Master of the Order of Saint John, often uses rough or intermediary translations into Catalan, produced at the Royal Chancellery. His translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* ('the Plutarch'), *Vidas semblantes*, was a much-sought-after book among such a remarkable figure in Italian civic humanism as Coluccio Salutati, secretary of the Signoria of Florence. He did not know Greek and had not yet 'hired' Manuel Crisoloras – the Orthodox *metropolitan* who would be ordained a Catholic bishop and 'orchestrate' the Florentine Platonic Academy under Salutati's auspices. Salutati considered it of the utmost importance to have a copy of the '*famoso ystorial greco*' which the Master of the Hospital had had the strategic foresight to order translated.
- Coluccio Salutati, a key figure in the rise of 15th-century humanism in Florence, from his high office as chancellor of the Signoria, writes the 'Proemio' to the *Cronica di Plutarco* (Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence, phil. 26, sin. 7) the successive translations the text underwent: from the 'Greek grammar' [Classical Greek] to "current Greek" ['vulgar Greco', Byzantine], and from that language to Aragonese, by command of the Master of the Hospital:

**“cronica di Plutarco, famoso ystorial greco, la quale fù trans-/latata di gramatica greca in/ vulgar greco in Rodi per uno/ philosopho greco chiamato Domi-/ tri Calodiqui et di greco fù trans-/ latata in aragonese per un frey-/ re predicatore obispo [...] esperto in diverse lin-/ gue per comandamento del molto/ reverente in Yesuschristus reverendo padre / e signore dom Ffrayre Giovanni/ Ffernandez di Heredia, per la gratia/ di Dio Maestro dell'Ordine dell'O-/ spedale di San Giovanni di Gerusa-/ lem”.**



Coluccio Salutati, "Proemio" de la Cronica di Plutarco (Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florència, phil. 26, sin. 7).

- John Fernández de Heredia had chain translations made to render the texts. It is a tribute to the functionality of multilingual work, and his ‘team’, in effect the ‘popularisation’ arm, often demonstrates that he has linguistic judgement.
- See The Figure that contains an image of the working notebook of the Grand Master of the Hospital's ‘team’ (Ms. 355 BNC, ff. 82v–83r). It shows us the life of Caesar, based on *Li Fait des Romans*, via an intermediate Catalan translation. All these changes are taken into account in the final version of the *Grant crónica de Espanya* (lib. X, ff. 321v–ss).



Workbook of the ‘team’ of the Grand Master of the Hospital (Ms. 355 BNC, ff. 82v–83r)

- One proof of the strategic importance of ‘power’ expressed through language policy is the way we include our leading figures in the international canon;
- we see it in the manner in which the Grand Master of the Order of Saint John – who never lost sight of the fact that he was a ‘subject’ of the King of Aragon and of his tradition — introduced the figure and biography of James I into his work The Grant Chronicle of the Conquerors (II, XVIII, BNM, ms. 10134, f. 289v). (See Figure below)



Joan Fernández de Heredia (ed.), *Grant corónica de los conquiridores*, caplletra historiada representant Jaume I el Conqueridor (II, XVIII, BNM, ms. 10134, f. 289v).

## CONCLUSION

In this tradition of self-aware reflection on the *Questione de la lingua* and, at the same time, the effective use of languages in multilingual environments and the respect for them and the respective cultural context that this entails, We have noted that, at the turn of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, there are translations into Catalan that demonstrate the linguistic power to render great literary and ideological works and, at the same time, provide stratigraphic evidence of a contribution to the canon of Humanism.

In this regard, we have noted some pioneering figures. Joan Fernández de Heredia, Grand Master of the Order of Saint John, who had works translated for the first time, and directly from the Greek, works by Hellenic classics, and puts into practice a strategic measure of cultural policy so that it is useful to politics and good government (for the Christian efforts to confront the Turkish threat), which will prove equally strategic for the rise of 15th-century Humanism in Florence. Salutati, who did not know Greek, asks the Grand Master of the Hospital for a translation into Aragonese of Plutarch. The translation becomes a strategic tool of politics and cultural policy.

شكرا

ευχαριστώ

Moltes gràcies

Muchas gracias

Muito obrigado

Grazie senza fine

So many thanks

Merci beaucoup

Gratiam plurinam vobis ago