



# **Transmitting and Preserving Languages in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean**

Second International Workshop

4 June 2026

Balliol College, Oxford and online

An event sponsored by  
Balliol Interdisciplinary Institute,  
MGSA, NAASR, OCBR,  
and the TORCH Network *Poetry in the Medieval World*

This workshop brings together international scholars from a range of disciplines to explore how and why languages were taught, learned, and sustained across the diverse and shifting socio-cultural landscapes of the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean. By weaving together these perspectives, the workshop seeks to uncover patterns and connections that are often overlooked when studied within the confines of a single field.

The workshop aims to identify shared trends, comparable elements, and distinctive features in language learning and transmission. This approach offers a renewed perspective on the interconnected Mediterranean world—a region where multilingualism, mobility, and intercultural exchange were and are central to daily life. The impact of these dynamics on language teaching, preservation, and use has often been underestimated.

The workshop offers a comparative examination of the strategies employed by polities and communities, élites and subaltern groups alike. It investigates the relationship between literacy and spoken language, the emergence of new teaching methods, and their long-term influence on writing practices, diplomacy, translation, and the role of lingua franca. Particular attention is given to less visible actors—students, scribes, teachers, and migrants—whose linguistic practices shaped cultural and social life, even when their voices are largely absent from the historical record.

The workshop seeks to rethink how language functioned as a social and cultural force in a deeply interconnected Mediterranean. It highlights how linguistic creativity crossed boundaries and contributed to the formation of shared and shifting identities. This year, we will focus on Greek and Armenian.

The event will include dedicated time for discussion and reflection, allowing participants to engage in a broader conversation about language and cultural transmission. At its core, the workshop presents the medieval and early modern Mediterranean as a space of teaching, learning, and multilingual exchange.

Attendance is free.

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Venues:** Balliol College, Gillis Lecture Theatre and Massey Room (Oxford OX1 3BJ) & online  
Weston Library, Horton Room

**Convenors:** Daniel Gallaher and Ugo Mondini

For registration and link for online attendance (Teams): [ugo.mondini@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ugo.mondini@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)

**Sponsors:**



**Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2026**, morning sessions (Balliol College, Gillis Lecture Theatre)

8:45 a.m.      **Registration**

9:00 a.m.      **Welcoming address**

**Introduction**

Daniel Gallaher (Balliol College – Faculty of History)

Ugo Mondini (Exeter College – Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages)

9:15 a.m.      **First Session**

Chair: Alice Rio (All Souls College – Faculty of History)

*Preserving and Transmitting Language and Scholarship: The Role of Armenian Exegetical Activity from the Middle Ages Onward*

Valentina Calzolari (University of Geneva)

*A Tale of Two Medieval Greek Languages: Hellenic and Romaic*

Anthony Kaldellis (University of Chicago)

10:45 a.m.      Coffee break

11:00 a.m.      **Second Session**

Chair: Theo Maarten van Lint (Pembroke College – Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies)

*Atticism as Cultural Competence: Grammar, Register, and Encyclopaedia in the Greek Middle Ages*

Andrea Cuomo (Ghent University)

*Antioch and the Armenians in the Twelfth Century: Translations and Language Use*

Benedetta Contin (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

12:30 p.m.      Lunch for invited guests

**Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2026**, afternoon session (Balliol College, Gillis Lecture Theatre)

2:00 p.m.      **Third Session**

Chair: Stratis Papaioannou (Exeter College – Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages)

*Teaching Through Romance: Overt and Covert Pedagogy in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Fictional Narratives*

Markéta Kulhánková (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic)

*Hagiography as Creative Writing: How Nersēs Šnorhali Revised and Adopted the Translated Hagiographical Texts*

Karen Hamada (University of Tokyo)

*Connections Beyond Languages: The Mystical Poetry of Symeon the New Theologian and Grigor of Narek*

Marina Bazzani (University of Oxford – Faculty of Classics)

4:15 p.m.      Pause

4:45 p.m.      **Roundtable** with refreshments (Balliol College, Massey Room)

5:45 p.m.      **Concluding remarks and discussion** followed by drinks

Dinner for invited guests

**Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2026** (Weston Library, Horton Room), 9:00–11:00 a.m.

**Exhibition and workshop on Greek and Armenian Manuscripts from the Bodleian Libraries**, organised by:

- Nina Sietis (University of Cassino and Southern Lazio)
- David Zakarian (California State University, Fresno)

in collaboration with Nicholas Kontovas and Péter Toth (Bodleian Libraries),  
Ugo Mondini and Daniel Gallaher

Due to limited capacity, advance registration is required to the manuscript exhibition at the Weston Library. Places will be allocated in order of registration, with priority given to the students and staff of the University of Oxford.

The manuscript workshop is co-sponsored by the JFF Project *Euripides Byzantinus*.