

TRANSLATIO STUDII AND CROSS-CULTURAL MOVEMENTS OR WELTVERKEHR

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Summary

Translatio studii is a figure of cultural history. It refers to the *transportation* of studies and cultures from generation to generation and through geographical areas and historical periods. It operates by means of educational, academic and editorial institutions, generally in the framework of a hegemonic ideological discourse. Traditional *translatio studii* was mainly of an imperial and colonialist kind, and thus linked to a *translatio imperii*, a transnational extension of political power; but a non-imperial, merely influential kind of cultural transfer was possible, too, as the *translatio* of Greek culture toward the Roman Empire demonstrates. In traditional interpretation, *translatio*

followed a symbolic pattern, that of the cosmic progression of the sun from Orient to Occident. Whereas the Orient was considered to be the origin of culture, the Occident was regarded as its fulfillment. After the Occident's displacement from Europe toward America the *translatio* of imperial and partly cultural hegemony eventually shifted as well. Besides, there has been a complementary shift towards a South-North configuration of *translatio* since the 18th century with the Northern empires Russia and the USA as the main reference points from a Southern point of view.

In the era of modern world traffic or *Weltverkehr*, which Goethe connected with the concept of *Weltliteratur*, and especially in the era of postcolonialism, there was an important change in cultural movements. With the acceleration of *Weltverkehr* the process of *translatio studii* speeded up, too; its linear progression was disrupted and diverted, the transfer of culture and learning took a multilateral and a cross-cultural turn. Cultural hegemonies tended to be punctual, partial and plural. Multidirectional and non-hierarchical *translatio studii* even appeared to be mere movement, without a definite destination, renewing itself constantly in a continuous polylogue of cultures and values. The open structure of the internet contributes a great deal to the worldwide decentering of communicative and educational processes. It has been preceded by the literary configuration of a reverse world and by the academic networks and pedagogical methods of cross-cultural and creative learning since the second half of the 20th century. There are also oppositions to cross-cultural processes in the field of learning and imagination, mainly on the part of traditionalism, neocolonialism or fundamentalism in different parts of the world. In view of these ideologies, a pragmatic and rhetorical relativism supports the concept of a cross-cultural *translatio studii* in which cultures are considered as mobile configurations, as translations and metaphors of each other.

1. Terminology and Basic Conception

Translatio studii is the traditional term for geographic and historical movements of studies and cultures in the world. As a topic it has been elaborated since the European Middle Ages; its roots go back to Greco-Roman antiquity, the Bible and the ancient Orient. The idea of *translatio studii* has been modernized in the era of world literature and worldwide communication first stated by Goethe who fundamentally linked the concepts of *Weltliteratur* (world literature) and *Weltverkehr* (world traffic and communication), on the basis of the acceleration of the means of transport, including information, and the commerce of material and cultural goods: "*alles ist veloziferisch*" ("velocity is everywhere").

In technological, political and cultural terms, world literature and world traffic have considerably developed since Goethe's statement. The phenomenon and the general meaning of *Weltliteratur* and *Weltverkehr* remained, but their sense changed considerably. Both concepts, in addition to that of *translatio studii*, need to be adapted to the postcolonial and postmodern world, with its cross-cultural scenery and its manifold interfaces. The traditional *wandering about* has to be questioned, its *wondering about* becoming a concurrent *wondering if*. Yet the term *translatio studii* will be kept because of its multiple semantic and etymological links with terms like tradition, transformation, transfer, transport, translation and metaphor.

2. The Traditional Concept of *Translatio Studii*

2.1. *Translatio* as a Cultural Figure

The term *translatio studii* represents a rhetorical figure of cultural history or, more precisely, a metaphor of historical developments in correlation with geographic areas, seen as an emblematic transportation of cultural goods and scholarship through time and space. An iconographic figure of *translatio* can be found in Europe's most precious *Wunderkammer* (wonder-room), the *Grünes Gewölbe* (Green Vault) of August the Strong at Dresden Royal Palace, in the form of an allegorical cabinet configuring the four empires, continents, rivers and metals, with the latter symbolizing the four ages of history. The crowning allegory of Christian truth as the goal of history has been missing since the Second World War, which may be seen as a symptom of modern deconstruction of traditional *translatio*.

2.2. Political, Cultural and Religious *Translatio*

There are three types of *translatio* in the traditional sense of the word: 1) the *translatio imperii* or *militiae* (the transfer of empires by mostly military means) 2) the *translatio studii* or *artium* (the transfer of studies or arts) 3) the *translatio ecclesiae* or *religionis* (the transfer of church or of religion). There has always been a close correlation between *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, between political and military power on the one hand, and cultural evolution on the other hand. This parallelism has been expressed by the traditional coupling of *artes ac arma* (arms and arts) and *chevalerie et clergie* (chivalry and scholarship). Despite its parallelism, the relationship between the two types of *translatio* is asymmetrical, although the classical ideal is one of symmetry (see Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*, Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and Cervantes' *Don Quijote*). Usually, military and political power dominates the arts which are dependent on the first. But the arts can become relatively autonomous and partly hegemonic in the process of *translatio*. They may be transplanted from a militarily inferior society to a militarily superior empire, as it happened in antiquity with the *translatio studii* from Greece to Rome. Both *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* are often combined with the *translatio ecclesiae* or *religionis*, though the latter obviously loses its importance in secularized societies. Monastery and missionary schools, Pontifical Universities, or its Islamic equivalent, the Madrasah, are the institutions which operate this religious *translatio* in frequent coalition or even union with imperial and cultural *translatio*. Historically speaking, the religious idea of *translatio* preceded and determined the political and cultural one. Apart from mythic Oriental sources, it originates in the Biblical *Book of Daniel*, in both its historical and apocalyptic vision of the succession of the four Empires and their final destruction and replacement by the Kingdom of God (see Section 2.6). Until the 18th century the Biblical foundation of *translatio imperii* served as a religious legitimation of imperial power.

2.3. The Threefold Concept of *Translatio Studii*

The main components of the traditional concept of *translatio studii* are the following: 1) the construction and transmission of a cultural tradition, which is normally linked to the legitimation of a national or imperial power, inside the same political or cultural area,

and in addition, eventually, to the religious legitimation of that power; 2) the transfer of a hegemonic tradition to other cultures, which is mostly a colonialist and imperialist imposition, sometimes combined with a certain degree of intercultural exchange and mixture, while a merely influential transfer is possible as well; 3) the historical shift of hegemony from the former superior to the former inferior cultures, from the colonizing to the colonized ones, becoming themselves hegemonic or even new colonialist cultures; in a religious reading the historical shift becomes an eschatological one.

2.4. *Translatio Studii* as Cultural Tradition

In concrete terms, literary and cultural tradition is based on a system of aesthetic, political and social values materialized in a canon of books that are ‘translated’ from one generation to another in a given society. This transmission takes place through different cultural institutions like colleges, monasteries, universities, academies, libraries and publishers, following specific corpora of texts, curricula of learning or cultural programs, fitting with the hegemonic discourse of the respective society. If this cultural transmission occurs in an empire, it is usually linked to the other form of *translatio studii* that is the colonialist one.

2.5. *Translatio Studii* as Cultural Transfer and Colonialism

One of the most conspicuous transfers of non-imperial cultures toward other cultures is the *translatio studii* from Greece to Rome, as stated already by Horace and Cicero, followed in modern times by the *translatio* of classic and romantic German culture, including the concept of *Weltliteratur*, toward bigger parts of the world, without Germany even being a nation and partly under foreign rule. The most comprehensive and enduring transfer of an imperial culture was the *translatio studii* of the ancient Roman and Greek *humanities*, from the center of the Roman Empire toward its colonies, that later became independent States, like Spain, Portugal, France, Germany and England. On their part, these countries (except Germany) transferred the same *humanities* that had become, together with Christianity, the core of their own culture, toward their American colonies. In this transatlantic *translatio imperii et studii et ecclesiae* a whole continent was colonized, in political, cultural and religious respects. The hegemonic European culture assimilated some elements of the indigenous Amerindian and the Afro-American cultures ‘imported’ later. A really hybrid culture on a Euro-Afro-Amerindian basis has only partly been developed, especially in the Latin American countries, since independence in the 19th century. The transatlantic *translatio studii* first took place in a very literal way: as an extended maritime transportation of books, missionaries and scholars who implanted their language, culture and religion in the New World, eliminating or marginalizing the autochthonous ones. The very name of the discoverer of America, Christopher (i.e. Christo-phoros) Columbus (i.e. the dove of the Holy Ghost), symbolizes the idea of *translatio* on an etymological level: the ‘transporter’ of Christ toward the New World, in his humanistic Greco-Neo-Latin vest, as it has been represented in European iconography since the emblem on Juan de la Cosa’s world map of 1500. A dual system of Christian and humanistic scholarship was established, both in monastery schools or municipal colleges, in Pontifical or Imperial Universities, that replaced the highly sophisticated system of Incan, Aztec or Mayan education and their schools, like the *calmécac* (palace school for sacerdotal and cultural studies) and *telpochcalli* (common and military school) of the Aztecs and the

yachaywaci and *acllawaci* (houses of knowledge either for men or for women) of the Incas. The Latin, Spanish, Portuguese and English languages removed the Náhuatl, Mayan (Mexico), Quechua, Aymara (Peru, Bolivia), Tupi (Brazil), Guaraní (Paraguay) or Iroquoian and Navaho (North America) languages, which only continued in restricted regions or functions, many of them until today. Only one of them (Guaraní) has survived as a (co)official language (Paraguay, Mercosur), while others, like Taino in the Caribbean, disappeared completely. The dual system of Christian and humanistic culture was ruled by the Jesuits who gave it an institutional shape in the *Ratio studiorum*, a kind of reasoned curriculum for higher education, with the formal principles of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* (emulous imitation). Since its promulgation in 1599 it dominated Latin American colleges and universities during the colonial time. Up to a certain degree, the humanistically inspired pedagogy of the Jesuits, in addition to that of the Franciscans and Dominicans, gave room for a kind of religious and cultural syncretism. This syncretism allowed, for instance, the multilingual theatre of the Jesuit missionary José de Anchieta to lay the foundations of Brazilian literature; it let the hybrid poetry of Sor Juana de la Cruz become a forerunner of a mestizo American identity; it also enabled Guaraní language and culture to play a part in the intercultural dialogue of modern Paraguay. But basically, the Bible replaced the *Popol Vuh* (the Holy Book of the Mayan Quiché people); the 'books of the brave', like the *Aeneis*, the antique model of imperial and cultural *translatio*, took the place of the Aztec and Mayan codices and their *ocelocuícatl* (heroic jaguar songs) or *huehuehtlahtolli* (words of the old wise men). The indigenous codices were almost totally destroyed in a bookburning organized by the colonial authorities, especially the Catholic Church, in order to ensure the triple *translatio imperii et studii et ecclesiae* from Europe to America.

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Biographical Sketch

K. Alfons Knauth is professor of Romance Literatures at the Ruhr University of Bochum. Since 1998 he has been collaborating in several Research Committees of the ICLA/AILC. His research is centered upon literary multilingualism, intertextual and intercultural processes between Europe and Latin America, the theory of interpretation, literary symbolism, the theory and history of literary genres, classical traditions, modernism and creative writing. Among his publications, besides numerous articles in various international journals and miscellanies on the above mentioned subjects, are *Invarianz und Variabilität literarischer Texte* (1981), *Literaturlabor - La muse au point* (1986) and *Mutierende Tiere* (1989). In 1981 he founded the literary group and review *Dichtungsring*.