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## The Price of Alfonso's Wisdom. Nationalist Translation Policy in Thirteenth-Century Castile

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My prime concern is with the way translation history is used. I am interested in the way historical references can consciously invent a noble lineage for the translator's profession (as in the FIT project on "Translators Through History"); I am worried by the way introductions to general translation studies can reduce centuries of serious thought to a misled "heated debate" about how translation should be taught at the end of the twentieth century (as in Snell-Hornby 1988, who only mentions history to get it out of the way); and I am intrigued by the way some historical concepts can work wonders for the creation of nationalist translation myths. References to the "School of Toledo" - or even to the more careful notion of "the Toledan translators" (Foz 1991) - fall into the last-mentioned category. In recent years the fame of Toledo has been used in an unsuccessful attempt to attract official subsidies to the city, in a more successful attempt to have translators work in Tarazona, and, as we shall see, in a rather comic attempt to frame the ambitions of at least one Spanish school for the training of translators. It is a strong and eminently useful myth.

Having written elsewhere on the church-sponsored translators in twelfth-century Toledo, I now want to look at the translators working after 1250 for Alfonso X of Castile, traditionally known as "el sabio", "the Wise". With apologies to philologists, my interest is not so much in the texts as in interpreting their encompassing translation policy, since policies are basically what the myth has been used for. From this perspective, I shall argue that the Alphonsine translators should not be lumped with their twelfth-century predecessors. I hope to show that any combining of church-sponsored and state-sponsored activities under a common label - even that of "the Toledan translators" - obscures the most problematic aspect of the history in question. And I shall propose that this particular patch of history, if conceptualized in terms of tension and negotiation rather than unity, can be used with greater contemporary relevance than is commonly the case. After all, if Alfonso developed one of the first national translation policies in Europe, the wisdom of his patronage could have something to do with the translation policies of today, particularly those of the European Union.

## A Common Story

I take the liberty of translating from the first right-hand page (strangely labelled “page 2”) of a recent Spanish introduction to translation studies, addressed to students at the University of Las Palmas:

“Translation began in our country at the beginning of the twelfth century, attaining full development in the thirteenth century. It all started with the conquest of Toledo. The city had become one of the most important western centres for Islamic culture, which was of course superior to European Christian culture. In the twelfth century translations from Arabic were carried out in various Spanish towns, but it was at Toledo that the work was most continuous and fruitful. When Toledo came under the Crown of Castile it was the most cosmopolitan and polyglot city in the world. Christians, Arabs and Jews lived there without problems of any kind. That is why it became the great centre for the transmission of culture to Christian Europe. Many researchers now criticize the term ‘school’, which does not correspond to the concept we now have of a school of translation. But Toledo was nevertheless a centre where a series of scholars met and worked, using the same procedures and focusing on the same field.

“The School of Toledo’s first stage began thanks to the efforts of the archbishops. Don Raimundo de la Borgoña was the first to bring together a group of translators, who worked under the guidance of the canon Domingo Gonzalbo. They basically translated from Arabic into Latin, but using Romance, the Hispanic vernacular, as an intermediary language. The intermediary versions were given by Jews, who did so orally, although we sometimes find an intermediary written version in Hebrew. [...]”

“The second great age of the School of Toledo corresponds to the reign of Alfonso X the Wise. The king, who preferred studies to wars, sponsored translations and introduced the practice of translating into Romance, since at that time it was thought that Latin scholars should not be the only ones to hear and learn from written documents. Alfonso X also widened the linguistic field, promoting translations into Latin and vernaculars other than Spanish. [...]”

I omit several inconsequential paragraphs, retaining only the statement that “after the seventeenth century, translation runs parallel to literature”, which might be a fair summary of what we know about the matter. The School of Toledo nevertheless returns at the end of the third page (“page 4”):

“We hope our modern translation schools in Spain will produce translators as good as those of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, particularly with respect to the School of Toledo’s international projection and role as a point of contact between cultures.” (Pascua & Peñate 1991: 2-4)

The encompassing ideology uses past glory as a basis for present ambitions. The Toledan translators were unquestionably good; their international projection could not be less than great; all we have to do is imitate them (?). Although this account mentions no sources, much of it follows García Yebra (1983: 323-336), perhaps with a dash of Foz (1987) to question the term “school”. The authors of the above story are recycling a series of *idées reçues*, for which they are not to be blamed. However, since the ideas are circulating publicly, a few of them should be publicly questioned.

First, how can we say where and when translation began in any country? The origins of translation are surely to be associated with the first evidence of trade, and trade was certainly carried out in the Spain of the Romans, the Visigoths, and of course the centuries of Islamic domination. As for translation specifically into Latin, there is some evidence of activity in

the ninth century (Thompson 1929) and a lot more for eleventh-century work in Catalonia (Millás Vallicrosa 1949). The only way anyone can say translation began at the beginning of the twelfth century is to limit “our country” to Castile, which is an interesting implicature for a book published in the Canary Islands (not the slightest bit Castilian until the late fifteenth century).

Second, to say “it all started with the conquest of Toledo” is to overlook the initial twelfth-century work carried out in the north of Spain, in Tarazona, in the region of Logroño, and in Barcelona, where the translators were mostly non-Hispanics or Jews. To bring all this down to Toledo is further to affirm a nationally centered history. Yet greater scholars have done as much. No one really knows where the prolific translator Johannes Hispalensis did most of his work (Seville, “Luna”, on the moon?) so he is often lumped with the Toledo mob, on the strength of one preface and for the sake of neatness (everyone following Jourdain 1819). Similarly, although we know the first Latin translation of the Qur’an was organized between Salamanca and the region of Logroño, the fact that one of the minor translators came from Toledo has been judged sufficient reason to baptize the resulting documents as “the Toledan Collection” (Kritzeck 1964). And again, the collection of properly Toledan documents edited by Hernández (1985) carries a preface in which “Herman de Carintia” is situated in Toledo, even though none of the published documents bears this out. Such assumptions are not as gratuitous as they appear.

Third, Toledo’s status as “one of the most important western centres for Islamic culture” is quite difficult to prove. The legend of a massive library being moved from Cordoba was questioned by Haskins many years ago (1924: 6). There is more evidence for cultural and scientific activity being carried out in many parts of Islamic Spain, albeit in decline in the twelfth century (Haskins 1924: 6-7; Lemay 1963: 643). But one should not forget that Averroes was working on Aristotle at Marrakesh virtually parallel to the thirty or so years Girardus Cremonensis spent translating in Spain. Islamic scholarship was not suddenly dead following the conquest of Toledo.

Fourth, to describe Toledo as “the most cosmopolitan and polyglot city in the world” is to overlook other great polyglot centres like Constantinople and, more important for our present concerns, the mixture of Greek, Arabic, Italian and Norman cultures at Palermo. Considerable respect should be accorded to Castilian multiculturalism. But attention must also be paid to the other centres where knowledge was transferred.

Fifth, to split hairs, “Raimundo de Borgoña” is actually the name some Spanish historians use for Alfonso VII’s father (see the article on Alfonso VII in the *Espasa-Calpe*). To use the same name for the archbishop of Toledo suggests our Las Palmas historians know more about the sexual activities of the French clergy than is commonly admitted. The archbishop is perhaps less ambiguously called Raimundus or “Raymond de la Sauvetât”. Further, the documental evidence of his interest in translations is limited to just one preface to just one

translation (d'Alverny 1964). Indeed, he seems to have been rather more interested in money and power than in any cultural virtue (González Palencia 1937). And if one still wants to insist that Raimundus “brought together a team of translators”, one should not overlook the fact that he was directly preceded by Peter the Venerable, who organized the team that rendered the Qur'an into Latin in 1142. The archbishop of Toledo was perhaps merely imitating strategies elaborated by the abbot of Cluny.

Sixth, following Steinschneider (1867), the “intermediary versions in Hebrew” mentioned in the above story are more likely to be original source texts. But why insist? To challenge all the details would mean never getting to Alfonso X. Let me just point out that a “school” that “does not correspond to the concept we now have of a school of translation” is essentially an empty concept. If not a translation school, then what? More thought is needed. And so to Alfonso.

### **Problems of Periodization**

The above story recognizes two periods of translation, related in such a way that the Alphonsine work is the “full development” of the previous activities. This relation could be justified by Menéndez Pidal's belief that “in Toledo Alfonso X found a scientific school in full operation” (1951: 366). The king would simply have picked up where the archbishops had left off. Unfortunately, Menéndez Pidal's continuity hypothesis is not borne out by a chronological distribution of the known translations. There seems to have been a relative absence of work between 1220 and 1250. This gap merits some attention.

We only have two translation teams associated with Toledo in the period following Michael Scotus's departure for Italy in 1220 and prior to Alfonso's first act of patronage in 1250. Yehuda ben Mosé ha-Kohen is reported as working with Guillelmus Anglicus into Latin in 1231 (Hilty xxxviii) and Hermannus Alemannus (Tuetonicus, Germanicus) is said to have translated Aristotle, Averroes and Alfarabi into Latin in about 1240-44, although some manuscripts are dated 1240 and others give 1256. There is considerable doubt here. Jourdain thought the second date might have referred to a copyist (1819: 142); Renan asked if Hermannus would really have spent sixteen years in Toledo just to do two translations (1852: 168). But the main point is that for the rest of the thirty-year gap between 1220 and 1250, the transmission of Arabic knowledge was mostly taking place through Italian and Sicilian connections, significantly influenced by the Hohenstaufen emperor Fredericus II. Having left Toledo, Michael Scotus was to become official philosopher at Fredericus's court from 1227 to 1236 (Thorndike 1965). The same court was to attract a young Jewish mathematician from Toledo, Juda ben Salomon ha-Kohen, who was in touch with Fredericus's “philosopher” - possibly the same Michael Scotus - from 1233 (Sirat 1989). Indeed, interpreting a comment by Albertus Magnus, Renan believed Hermannus Alemannus

was also attached to the Hohenstaufen court (1852: 166-167). Whatever the details, there can be little doubt that the centre of the twelfth-century transfer network had been significantly displaced away from Toledo.

Thanks to increasing trade contacts with Constantinople and, through Palermo, with the Islamic world, the Italian connection had for some time been offering direct access to certain Greek manuscripts, defeating one of Toledo's main functions. The *Almagest* had been translated from the Greek in Sicily before Girardus Cremonensis rendered it from Arabic at Toledo; Hermannus Alemannus actually stopped translating Aristotle's *Ethics* from Arabic because he learned that "Robertus Grossi Capitis" ("sed subtilis intellectus") had already rendered them from the Greek (Jourdain 1819: 140); and although Michael Scotus rendered Aristotle's books on animals from Arabic at Toledo before 1220, Wilhelmus de Moerbeka was soon to be translating them from Greek around 1260 (Thorndike 1965: 24). If the original language was available, why pass through Arabic? Why go to Toledo?

The decline of translations at Toledo after 1220 should also be associated with a certain change in demand. Whereas the twelfth-century translators in Spain had basically been motivated by intellectual concerns centered on Paris, this market had largely been satisfied by 1220. The most significant texts were available. The translations still had to be accepted by the church (Aristotle was banned in Paris from 1210) and their quality had to be improved in many cases. But by 1255 the "new" Aristotle was sufficiently acceptable and readable to be on the arts course at Paris. In this situation no one was likely to go from Paris to Toledo in search of Arabic Greeks. And even when Arabic texts were still of interest - notably Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle -, the translations carried out by Hermannus Alemannus at Toledo were shadowed by the work of Bonacossa at Padua. Toledo had lost the monopoly on what it did best.

There must thus be considerable doubt that Alfonso found any kind of translation school in full operation. There was perhaps the memory of some kind of group having worked there about thirty years earlier. But that was a whole generation ago. The foreigners who had carried out most of those translations were no longer there, and there was little likelihood of them coming back of their own accord. The only foreigner possibly forming a link across this gap was Hermannus. But the dating of his work inspires little confidence; his status as a German is not highly compatible with the translations done into Castilian under Alfonso; he may have been associated with Palermo; his name is absent from the properly Alphonsine translation teams; and his prefaces indicate he was working into Latin not for the king but for the archbishop of the day. In short, the link between the two periods is not highly convincing.

During and after this gap, intellectuals in search of Greek and Arabic knowledge were more likely to go to Italy than to Spain. This is why Toledo should not be idealized as "the most cosmopolitan city in the world", as if its sociological configuration spontaneously

generated translations. There was a lot else happening elsewhere around the Mediterranean. It was quite probably in a situation of felt absence rather than full operation that Alfonso X decided to sponsor translations, for reasons that remain to be explained.

### **Alfonso's Reasons**

No one can doubt that Alfonso X sponsored numerous translations. There can also be no doubt that the main difference between his patronage and that of the church was his general decision to use Castilian as a target rather than intermediary language. There have been some doubt about the extent to which the king actually participated in the translation process (Solalinde 1915; Menéndez Pidal 1951; Proctor 1951), but those debates need not worry us here. The real question is not what Alfonso did as a translator or editor - in practice, one Castilian hand is as good as another -, but why he should have developed a translation policy.

The above story answers this question in two ways. Alfonso apparently preferred studies to wars (who wouldn't, given the choice?); and he apparently sponsored work into Castilian so that studies would not be restricted to Latinist scholars (but what other scholars were demanding texts at the time?). Neither of these reasons is entirely convincing. Even if the king's inner inclination were to make books at Toledo, he only visited the city six times in his life, only once for more than a year, and from 1260 to 1268 he was permanently away, putting down insurrections, perhaps as a reluctant warrior. In fact his whole reign is full of wars of one kind or another. And as for Alfonso producing books for laymen, the argument simply cannot be squared with the cost of manuscripts, the protoscientific nature of the texts translated (mostly on astrology and astronomy), the use of Latin for all Christian schooling, and the fact that translations were also carried out into Latin and French. All these aspects have to be accounted for.

An alternative pair of reasons might fare a little better.

Let us suppose that the king of a recently-conquered multicultural frontier region would necessarily be engaged in a certain amount of what is now called nation-building, including a certain amount of fighting. This hypothesis would allow the use of Castilian as a written target language to be seen as part of a nation-building policy, regulating the frontier with Islamic knowledge at the same time as it unified Castilian diversity. It could even be part of the wider policy of national unification that included the introduction of a unified system of weights and measures in 1261, the writing of standard laws (the *Fuero Real* and the *Siete Partidas*) and a similarly standardized view of history (the *Historia General*). But what then of the translations into Latin and French?

Let us also suppose that, at least from 1263 to 1275, the king's foremost intercultural ambition was not so much to appropriate Islamic astrology but to advance his candidature as

emperor of the Germanic Empire. If nation-building gave him one reason for sponsoring translations (into Castilian), his imperial ambitions would have given him another (for translations into Latin and occasionally into French). Alfonso was trying to get the job of the Hohenstaufen emperor Fredericus II, whose numerous activities had included sponsoring translations and disputations at court, writing books, organizing philosophical exchanges with the Arabic world, and setting up the university of Naples to make sure that learning remained under his control. If Alfonso wanted to become an emperor, his most immediate and powerful model was the man whose job he wanted to get. The role of learning, quite apart from knowledge for knowledge's sake, could have been to make a frontier king look like a somewhat calmer version of Fredericus. The internationalist translations would then be part of a policy designed to earn strategic prestige.

These two reasons could explain a rather complete translation policy or sequence of policies. On the one hand, nation-building would account for the translations into Castilian. On the other, imperial ambitions would explain the work into Latin and French. Alfonso's policy appropriately comprised separate directives and teams for intranlations and extranlations (I adapt the terminology from Ganne & Minon 1992). Such a policy need not involve any extreme compromise or contradiction. A certain internationalism is required by any nationalism, since a nation must be recognized by other nations. And distinctions between what comes in and what goes out are at the base of any protectionism, since imports are not subject to the same criteria as exports. Alfonso was quite rational - although protectionist - in his desire to control both directions.

The king himself remained a central figure for both the inward and outward movements. This resulted in a certain ambiguity with respect to Castilian as a national language. Although there are well-known references to Alfonso personally correcting "la nuestra lengua de Castiella", there are also occasions on which he refers to "nuestro latin" and "nos los latinos" (Hilty 1954: xlvi, lii). If the national king was to become a multinational emperor, he had to have his cake and eat it too. An "in/ex" translation policy would correspond to the two identities Alfonso hoped to attain.

Nationalist strategies and imperial ambitions can thus account for a certain coherence in Alfonso's patronage. These reasons can explain most of the facts. But our hypotheses should also be able to explain why certain alternative reasons did not give rise to alternative facts.

Eloquent silence can be found in at least two areas. First, the current target-side focus of translation studies would have us look for some kind of readership demand. And yet no such demand is in evidence in this case. Second, comparison with the previous translation activities at Toledo suggests the church should have had more than a say in national and imperial power structures. And yet there seems to have been little ecclesiastic interference with Alfonso's policies. Both these aspects merit investigation.

## A Command Economy

What substantial mid-thirteenth-century public would have actually needed translations of Arabic science into Castilian rather than Latin? Can anyone name a scholar who did not know Latin? The only potential scientists who might have had real trouble with Latin were the Jews and Mozarabs, but they could read the Arabic source texts without translative mediation. Demanding readerships are conspicuously absent. This means the decision to translate into the vernacular cannot really be understood in terms of a demand economy. The use of Castilian was more probably part of a policy formulated within what one might call a “command economy”, although the term risks severely understating Alfonso’s ignorance of economics (he twice sought to increase the crown’s wealth by arbitrarily raising the value of coins, creating nothing but widespread misery). With respect to translations, however, the king was more like the planners of real socialism: he identified what the needs should be; he commanded production for those perceived needs; and he thus tried to block the formation of alternative demands. Within the logic of this specific state intervention, Alfonso’s motivation for sponsoring work into Castilian could well have been to lure scientific production and consumption away from Latin. This would of course involve challenging the institutions using Latin, notably the church.

In this light, the Alphonsine translators stand strategically opposed to the previous church-sponsored work at Toledo. Their work introduces a conflict as long-standing and as wide-ranging as church-versus-state, a scission that runs through centuries of European history and cannot easily be glossed over by any unitary “school” or group of “Toledan translators”. This is one good reason why the gap that preceded the Alphonsine translations should be significant in historical as well as archeological terms.

One must nevertheless admit that the break with Latin was neither immediate nor complete. The first Alphonsine translations were from Arabic into an oral Romance version and then into written Latin, as had been the case for the church-sponsored translations. But this was soon altered when, in 1254, the *Libro conplido* was translated into written Castilian. The year 1254 will return later in our story. Castilian then became the privileged target language, with considerable effects on the development of vernacular prose. Translations from Arabic helped form registers with marked semitic structures that were to last through to the sixteenth century. It was a significant and original contribution. There can be no question of the translators discovering any innate genius of the Castilian language. Nor can there be any question of them merely following the moves made in previous work into Latin. Analyzing three translations into Castilian, Bossong (1987) estimates that 65% of the new terms were Castilian forms with arabized meanings, 30% were Latin forms with arabized meanings, and 5% were direct loans from Arabic (on which, see also London 1975). Real work had been done to form the new registers.

Judged in terms of nationalist criteria, the Alphonsine command to translate into the vernacular should be considered a success. The readership it had to create was very much in existence some two centuries later. Whereas the Italian translators of the fifteenth century were working into Latin, the Castilian translators of the same period were supplying nobles who might have pretended to know Latin but nevertheless commissioned translations into the vernacular (Russell 1985; Round 1993). If you keep giving people translations, they finish up needing translations.

Command-economy analysis can thus say why the move to Castilian could have occurred in the absence of any real reader demand. But this does not explain why the commands came from the king rather than the church.

### **Church and Crown as Opposed Modes of Patronage**

The relations between the church and the Castilian crown are inseparable from the conquest of Muslim lands. The Spanish Crusades could not have been achieved without considerable ecclesiastic powerbroking, particularly through the order of Cluny. The kings remained politically and financially indebted to the church, which retained considerable power of its own, both alongside and within the state structure. The archbishops of Toledo were nominal heads of the royal chancery, thus ensuring nominal church monopoly over official language (Proctor 1934). This meant the king's written word could be filtered through the church, at least for as long as his words were in Latin.

Traces of this power structure can be found in Alfonso's move to set up a centre of Latin and Arabic studies at Seville in 1254 (Menéndez Pidal 1951: 366). Such a project would fit in with the general aim of emulating Fredericus, who had successfully set up a university. But whereas Fredericus openly sought to secularize both scholarship and the state (Haskins 1929: 146-47), Alfonso trod rather more lightly. His proclamation of the Seville centre was countersigned by the archbishops of Toledo, Santiago and Seville. Church approval clearly had to be sought. And why shouldn't the archbishops approve? They would see little to fear in work from Arabic into Latin, a procedure that the church itself had been sponsoring for more than a century. But the archbishops' signatures could also suggest they had enough status to bring about the failure of such a project, if need be. What would happen if a centre set up for "Latin and Arabic studies" were suddenly ordered to work into the vernacular? Where would ecclesiastic interests then lie?

We know the first translation into Castilian was completed in the same year as the Seville project, 1254. We also know the centre of learning, like the fabled university at Palencia, never got beyond the project stage. Proctor hypothesizes that "the strength of ecclesiastic patronage in Toledo contributed to the failure of Alfonso's attempt to make Seville a centre of learning" (1951: 15). The argument is fairly obvious. Translating and studying involved

the production of written language, and written language was one of the church's main sources of political power. Further, "Latin and Arabic studies" in this case implied an emphasis on astrology and astronomy, the fields of most of the Alphonsine translations. This kind of learning trusted protoscientific observation rather than authoritative sacred texts, challenging the church's "magister dixit" (Lemay 1963: 646). A shift from Latin to Castilian would involve a shift of control over potentially contestational knowledge. Such power was not easily renounced. There were grounds for considerable conflict between church and crown.

Alfonso the Wise was no fool. He must have been painfully aware that Fredericus, although in some ways a model scientist-emperor, had been excommunicated and deposed by the Pope in 1245. Alfonso could not risk taking language away from the church, since too much independence could possibly earn him the same fate. Yet he could certainly make sure he was on very good terms with the archbishop of Toledo, the nominal royal chancellor. Proctor (1934: 112) notes that Alfonso did not refer to any archbishop as chancellor until 1255, when archbishop-elect Sancho was dubbed "mio chanceler". The possessive pronoun was highly motivated: Sancho seems to have been Alfonso's brother-in-law (Proctor 1951: 14). Although the appointment was disputed, Sancho was finally confirmed as archbishop in 1266. Further, the archbishop-elect of Seville appears to have been one of the king's brothers, Felipe. In this new family situation, any tension might be expected to subside for a few decades. The translations of those decades were unambiguously carried out for the king, perhaps thanks to a few fraternally acquiescing archbishops.

The hypothesis of political tension between church and crown is of course complicated by the relatively weak position of the Castilian nobility. When compared with the situation in France, ecclesiastic patronage in Castile had far less to fear from the development of any knightly ethos. This can explain certain significant differences between France and Spain with respect to the translation of epic literature (Gumbrecht 1976: 221). But comparative sociology should not be pushed too far. The translation of scientific texts into Castilian did not depend on any knightly ethos. It had more to do with forming a group of court-based technocrats. Further, the specifically intercultural competence of such technocratic intellectuals could be as potentially uncomfortable for the church as any uncontrolled nobility would have been. The hypothesis of tension between church and crown should thus remain of interest for this particular field of patronage.

### **Jews and Italians as Intercultural Groups**

Arguments about the relations between church and crown have also been developed along rather more gratuitous lines. According to Américo Castro (1948: 493-494), Alfonso's Jewish translators were responsible for initiating the work into Castilian, since they were

strategically opposed to Latin as the language of “European Christendom”. As much as one would like to dismiss this as a weak conspiracy theory, it is not as bad as it could be. Considerably more antisemitism might be suspected of the opposed view that the Jewish translators were unable to write decent Castilian and therefore had to be controlled by elaborate translation teams (Menéndez Pidal 1951: 365). The latter argument is particularly shortsighted. The translating of technical texts should not be seen as a mere extension of street dialects. And as far as linguistic competence is concerned, d’Alverny emphasizes that the Jewish scholars knew Romance as well as Arabic and Hebrew, and Yehuda ben Moshe certainly knew Latin too (1989: 194, 200). Indeed, Foz describes Yehuda ben Moshe and Ishâq ben Sîd as the actual pillars of the Alphonsine translation teams (1991: 38). So it would be difficult to argue that the Jewish translators had no effective power or linguistic competence. But should we then follow Castro - to get back to the original argument - and hand the Jewish translators all the responsibility? I suspect not. Translators might have a few ideas, but they tend not to wield great political weight. A more balanced assessment is needed.

As far as we can tell, the Jewish translators were exclusively involved in the work into Castilian. They were clearly of some use to the king in this respect. Indeed, the “king’s Jews” would remain a useful bureaucratic group for several centuries of Spanish history. Further, the prominent references to Alfonso’s Jewish translators in the various prefaces and notes would suggest they suffered rather less inferiorization under his reign than did their twelfth-century counterparts under church patronage, where the names of Jews tended to disappear (Steinschneider 1867; d’Alverny 1964). Since they gained some prestige for their work under Alfonso, the Jewish translators might indeed have had some interest in the use of Castilian as a target language. But this does not mean there were no other interests at stake. Alfonso himself stood to gain from a secularization of learning and the formation of a national language. If Jewish translators could achieve certain political gains from the new prestige of Castilian, so much the better. But we then have no more than a case of the king and the translators ensuring their mutual benefits.

Considered in terms of a negotiation, the mutual benefits of the king and his Jews were likely to please everyone except the church. But when the king’s brother-in-law became archbishop of Toledo, ecclesiastic negotiating power would surely have been reduced. In this situation, the use of Jewish translators could become important not just with respect to the Castilian language but, more politically, as the thin end of a wedge that would slowly separate church and crown.

The Jewish translators would thus correspond to the nationalist side of Alfonso’s policy. But there was another translation department employed for the internationalist side.

At the time of his imperial ambitions, Alfonso had a specific group of at least four or five Italian clerks to carry out Latin and French translations, working from completed Castilian

versions. The presence of these Italians has been attributed to the diplomatic work involved with the imperial candidature (Proctor 1951; Samsó 1987). But their intercultural function was perhaps not entirely incompatible with Alfonso's later use of an Englishman as his notary and occasional ambassador, hired for his Latinist services even though he was simultaneously in the employ of the English crown (Denholm-Young 1934). If the local translators could be employed for work into a national language, internationalist translators could be employed for the nation's exterior projection. The national and the international were kept separate, in keeping with the two sides of Alfonso's translation policy.

These Jewish and Italian intercultural teams were of obvious strategic importance. Neither the Jewish-dominated intranslation team nor the Italian-dominated extranlation group was subject to the patronage structures of the Castilian church. Whereas the Jewish *conversos*, Italians and Englishmen in twelfth-century Spain had been no more than potential rivals for the church (the Toledo cathedral twice tried to limit the number of its canons), the foreign clerks around Alfonso were definitely strategic allies of the crown. They effectively displaced the power structure formerly controlled by the Toledo cathedral.

### **The Price of Alfonso's Wisdom**

Alfonso X was not the first to sponsor translations into the vernacular in Spain. According to Millás Vallicrosa (1949: 350), Jaume I of Aragon, Alfonso's father-in-law, had previously promoted translations from Arabic into Catalan. There is also considerable evidence of oral literature developing through translative relationships. And then, the move to the vernacular was certainly part of a general European development coming from the north. Proctor notes that the French and English chanceries occasionally used French in the thirteenth century (1934: 106); Hilty suggests that the written use of the vernacular in Spain could have come from French influence (1954: xxiv n). Alfonso's policy could have then promoted the use of other vernaculars. After visiting the Alphonsine court, the Italian Brunetto Latini wrote his *Trésor* in French. The general move towards national languages was such that, as if waking out of a dream, Roger Bacon started to argue that the language of the church and learning was also a mother language, the language of the Romans (Bourgain 1989: 322-23). If all languages were becoming national, so could Latin. A certain linguistic nationalism in Spain should come as no surprise.

However, although part of this more general development, Alfonso X would appear to have been the first to develop a properly national translation policy in Spain. It is on this basis that his wisdom should be judged.

Numerous nation-states have since realized that an "ex/in" translation policy, which keeps languages separate and ties them to national borders, is preferable to internal linguistic pluralism, which risks creating or maintaining political and ideological divisions (cf. Colas

1992: 101). Alfonso's policy might have been one of the first, but it was by no means the last. Translation into the vernacular is good for nation-building and for international regimes based on the principles of the nation-state. But it may not be good for other purposes, nor effective in all circumstances.

What was the price of Alfonso's wisdom? A numerical answer can be given. According to the notoriously untrustworthy Espasa-Calpe encyclopedia (article "Alfonso X"), the *sabios* who compiled the Alphonsine Tables cost Castile 400,000 escudos. It might be a fair price for national intellectual services. But Alfonso's unsuccessful imperial candidacy cost the state coffers some 10,000,000 escudos, a price that effectively destroyed the local economy and pulled apart any nation-building ever achieved by translations into Castilian. The two policies were ultimately incompatible. Lesson one: there must be a reasonable relationship between the "in" and the "ex" sides of business.

But there is a further question, with wider implications for a more political kind of price: What long-term effect did translations into Castilian have on Spain's participation in European learning? The question has a second part: What effect do translations into national languages have on European learning today?

In 1266-67 Roger Bacon presented his main works to Pope Clement IV. Thorndike (1923: 2.638) interestingly sees these texts as scientific research projects written in search of funding. He comments that instead of turning to the church - which finished up putting him in prison for "suspected novelties" -, Bacon might have found a more understanding sponsor in Alfonso X. But of course, Bacon did not know Castilian. He would have been somewhat lost in a Toledo that translated into the vernacular. Although Alfonso's policy brought knowledge from Arabic to Castilian and allowed some of it to pass into Latin, it also *prevented* active intellectuals from moving from Paris to Toledo. How different would Castilian learning have been if Roger Bacon had worked at Toledo? There would no doubt have been more experiments than translations, more work in Latin, or possibly translations both to and from Latin. One would expect production and exchange as well as controlled exportation. Instead, the Alphonsine translations had little extensive influence that can be documented. As far as we know, the Alphonsine Tables that spread throughout Europe were produced in Paris, taking from Alfonso little more than his name (Pouille 1987). Spanish historians are still searching for the missing links, the proof of influential knowledge being produced at Toledo, or even proof of influence on Dante. But a command economy that restricts exchange cannot guarantee high productivity or international impact.

The price of Alfonso's wisdom is ultimately invested in this small phrase "La traducción en nuestro país comienza en..." ("Translation began in our country in...") (Pascua & Peñate 1991: 2), whatever the date that then follows. The "we" of this "nuestro país" is defined - even performed - by the particular language used. It is ostensibly inclusive, addressed to students, presupposing that those in Spain all identify with Castilian (but what of the many

foreign teachers and exchange students in Spain, latter-day correlatives of Alfonso's international translators?). The phrase "nuestro país" ties the use of a language to location in a country. Everything that happens in Spain should be in Castilian. Hence translations into the vernacular. The same logic was used by Brunetto Latini, writing in French because, quite apart from the beauty of the language, "we are in France". One language for each country. The price today is a Europe where, according to Coulmas, some 40% of the European Union's administrative budget can be attributed to official multilingualism; this is a Europe where the Union "has been used by member states to defend their languages' privileged position rather than being given the chance to produce a language policy of its own" (1990: 8). We are paying a great deal for linguistic nationalism. The coming enlargement of the European Union could make the price too high for the politics to remain workable.

One could nevertheless imagine an alternative logic. Perhaps we could begin a Spanish introduction to translation studies with something like "Nuestro país comienza en la traducción..." ("Our country began in translation..."), recognizing that translations into Castilian effectively enabled the reflexive deictics of "nuestro país". The whole manual would have to be rewritten. Reference to Toledo as a model would inspire not just self-evident glory but perhaps also some serious thought about the social conditions of "international projection" and "contact between cultures". Such a text might appreciate the status of translators as members of intercultural communities. It might regret the passing of twelfth-century Latin. It might lament the loss of a stateless means of intercultural communication, relatively unowned and uncontrolled, open to all kinds of abuse and translative interference. And one might even ask, with Le Goff (1957), if intellectual progress was really helped by the later development of scholarship, located at court and separated from the active life of travelling intellectuals. Such a vision of translation would have to calculate the full price of Alfonso's wisdom.

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