One of the many shifts or turns in historical thought and historical writing in the last generation has been the turn from intellectual history to cultural history, from the history of ideas to the history of meanings. Like most such shifts or turns, this one is not complete. Some intellectual historians continue as they did before, while others produce what we might call ‘hybrid’ studies. That is, they approach topics that used to be viewed as part of intellectual history – the history of ideas, the history of knowledge – from a broader, cultural or socio-cultural point of view. This broader approach is the central theme of this paper.

In an age of globalization, in which the internationalization of knowledge is visible on the screens of our computers and televisions, historians are coming to view past knowledge as the result of an international or even an intercontinental process of cultural exchange or cultural transfer. To offer a recent example from the area and the period on which I usually work, between 1997 and 2002, the European Science Foundation sponsored a programme devised by the French historian Robert Muchembled and entitled ‘Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe’. One of the four international teams, the one of which I was a member, was concerned with information and communication.

As is usually the case with a new turn or a new trend, problems arise in the course of research, leading us to question the very concepts with which we started. It might for example be better to use the term ‘knowledge’ in the plural than in the singular, to speak of different knowledges or systems of knowledge in different parts of the world or among different social groups – professors and artisans, men and women, young and old, etc.

Again, the idea of a ‘transfer’ of knowledge is less helpful than the idea of the transfer of technology on which the concept was modelled. For one thing, when there is an encounter between two cultures, information usually flows in both directions, even if in unequal amounts. We might therefore speak of intellectual or cultural ‘exchanges’.

But even the term ‘exchange’ is unsatisfactory in some ways. Like the old term ‘tradition’, it implies handing over something that remains more or less unchanged. However, it has become increasingly apparent in the last generation, in studies ranging from sociology to literature, that ‘reception’ is not passive but active. Ideas, information, artefacts and practices are not simply adopted but on the contrary, they are adapted to their new cultural environment. They are first decontextualized and then recontextualized, domesticated or ‘localized’. In a word, they are ‘translated’.
II

The phrase ‘cultural translation’ can be heard on many lips today, including those of anthropologists, linguists, literary critics and students of religion as well as cultural historians. The metaphor now seems an obvious one, and it goes back at least eighty years. In the 1920s, the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski, for example, claimed that ‘the learning of a foreign culture is like the learning of a foreign tongue’ and that he was attempting ‘to translate Melanesian conditions into our own’. A few years later, in the Thirties, the Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim, complaining about the difficulty of explaining the sociology of knowledge to the British, remarked on ‘the urgent need and the great difficulty of translating one culture in terms of another’. He should know. Mannheim was himself translated to England (in the sense of transferred, as a refugee). Indeed he was part of what we might call the great Translatio Studii in which Central European scholars, mainly German-speaking and Jewish, took refuge the Hitler regime, mainly in Britain and the USA.

In a broader, looser sense, the idea of cultural translation is still older, taking us back to the Renaissance. Florio, in his preface to the reader justified his translation of Montaigne, in a kind of captatio benevolentiae, by saying that we all translate, even the writers of ‘original’ works. If there is nothing new under the sun, ‘What do the best, then, but glean after others' harvest? Borrow their colours, inherit their possessions? What do they but translate?’

However, the more precise idea that understanding an alien culture was analogous to the work of translation first became current among anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s in the circle of Edward Evans-Pritchard. As one of them has claimed, ‘Anthropology is an art of translation’. We might say the same thing about history, since ‘the past is a foreign country’ where they do things differently and perhaps think differently as well.

As translators know, the passage of a text from one language to another is not a smooth or easy one. It requires negotiation. Many words in one language lack exact equivalents in another. Keywords or Grundbegriffe are part of a given culture and resist translation. Translators learn to live with a dilemma: should they be faithful to the original text from which they are translating, or intelligible to the readers of the text they are writing?

There are two opposite solutions to the problem, two strategies to follow, the maximalist and the minimalist. The maximalist strategy is better known as domestication, while the minimalist has become known as ‘foreignizing’. In the famous words of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the choice lies between taking the text to the reader, in other words adapting it to the culture in which it is a ‘guest’, or taking the reader to the text, that is, producing a version that allows or encourages the new readers to become aware of the text’s alien or foreign qualities. One strategy follows the model of cultural translation, the other rejects or resists it.

To take a couple of examples from the field of Catholic missions, especially the practice of the Jesuits. Christian missionaries, like translators, faced a dilemma when adapting (or as was said at the time, ‘accommodating’) the Christian message to the culture in which they were working. In China, Matteo Ricci chose the maximalist solution. He translated the word ‘God’ by the neologism Tianzhu, literally ‘Lord of Heaven’, and allowed Chinese Christians to refer simply to Tian, ‘Heaven’, as Confucius had done. Ricci also discovered that if he dressed as a priest no one would take him seriously, so he dressed like a Confucian scholar instead, thus ‘translating’ his social position into Chinese. He allowed the Chinese whom he converted to pay
reverence to their ancestors in the traditional manner, arguing that this was a social custom rather than a religious one.

In Rome, the Jesuits were accused of having been converted to the religion of the Chinese rather than converting them to Christianity. What appeared in Beijing to be a good cultural translation looked more like a mistranslation in Rome. Other Jesuit missionaries chose the other horn of the dilemma from Ricci, the minimalist one, keeping their traditional black robes and also the Latin word *Deus*, glossing rather than translating it into different languages, from Huron to Tagalog.

### III

It is time to move closer to the case-study with which this lecture will end. It is a case-study in the translation of knowledge in early modern Europe, using the term ‘translation’ in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. To link the two kinds of translation is indeed my main purpose, stressing the point that interlingual translation is one of the most visible or audible parts of cultural translation. In other words, we need a historical anthropology of interlingual translation.⁷

Translation between languages is obviously of central importance in any history of cultural exchange, including exchanges of information about history, geography, politics, natural philosophy, architecture and so on. A historical anthropology of translation might focus on two questions: What was translated? How was it translated? What was translated, and where, reveals what one culture finds of interest in another, separated from it either in space or time. Take the case of historical writing. Ancient historians were translated more than any modern authors. In different European vernaculars, nearly 300 translations of 25 ancient historians were published between the invention of printing and the end of the eighteenth century. To this figure we have to add the translations of Greek historians into Latin.⁸ The leading historians translated were Sallust, Valerius Maximus and Caesar, in that order, a choice that says something about the difference between the early modern and later periods.

Among ‘modern’ historians, from Leonardo Bruni onwards, I have so far discovered 553 published translations of 340 texts by 263 historians, and there may well be many more. Italian, French and Latin were the languages from which most historians were translated. English, Latin, French, Dutch and German led the languages into which texts were translated. The importance of translations from the vernacular into Latin is worth noting, as a major means for the dissemination of information across Europe.⁹ The historians most translated were Comynxes (eleven translations in the period), then the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini’s account of the fall of the Ming dynasty in China (nine translations). Four texts tie for third place because they were translated eight times each: Francesco Guicciardini’s *History of Italy*, the Italian bishop Paolo Giovio’s *History of His Own Time*, Sleidan’s *Commentaries* – which might be described as a political history of the Reformation – and Sarpi’s *History of the Council of Trent*.

How were these texts translated? In other words, what was the dominant ‘regime’ or ‘culture’ of translation in the early modern period? Despite frequent references to the ‘laws’ of translation, the early modern culture of translation was one of relative freedom. Translators generally followed what Venuti calls the ‘fluency strategy’, the one that ‘domesticates the foreign text’, offering the reader ‘the narcissistic experience of recognizing his or her culture in a cultural other’.¹⁰ If they still used that once fashionable term, anthropologists might describe what these translators were doing as a form of ‘acculturation’.
Translations were often made indirectly, at second hand, as title-pages (‘shamelessly’, as we might say) admit. French was a common medium: Italian or Spanish texts were translated into English via French, while English texts followed the same route into German. Modern texts were not infrequently considered capable of improvement by their translators (Rawlinson’s version of Lenget du Fresnoy’s method for studying history, published in 1728, was described on the title-page as ‘translated and improved’). What were described at the time as ‘translations’ often differed from the originals in major respects, whether they abridged the texts or amplified them. Major changes of this kind were often made without warning the reader.

The borderline between translation and imitation was drawn less sharply than it would be in the nineteenth century. In some cases the context was shifted from one locale to another, a process that may be described in musical terms as ‘transposition’ or – following the practice of current translators of software – as ‘localization’. The translation of Machiavelli’s *Arte della Guerra* into Spanish displaced the dialogue from Italy to Spain and turned the speakers into two Spaniards, the Great Captain Gonzalo Fernández de Cordoba and the Duke of Najara, perhaps because Spanish readers of the period would not have expected to learn anything about war from Italians.

Even more shocking for modern readers, translators of works of history or natural philosophy sometimes allowed themselves to express opinions that the original author would have repudiated. With characteristic boldness, when Cardinal de Retz, who had been a rebel himself, translated Agostino Mascardi’s history of the conspiracy by Count Fieschi, he contradicted his source text by turning the protagonist from a villain into a hero.

However, no dominant regime lacks opposition, whether in translation or in politics. Attempts at foreignization can be found long before the nineteenth century, most obviously in the case of the Bible: some translations of the Old Testament into English and Dutch took pains to imitate Hebrew formulae and syntax. Nicolas D’Ablancourt is notorious for the freedom of his French translations from the classics, but even he retained some technical terms such as ‘cohort’ or ‘centurion’ when translating ancient writers, since their armies were very different from ‘ours’. The reason for this temporary shift into foreignization, which led D’Ablancourt to provide his translation of Appian with a glossary, was probably that he was writing for noblemen who took considerable interest in the details of military organization.

IV

What follows is concerned with the cultural translation of the Turks by western travellers writing in their own language and also with the translations of those translations into other languages, especially Latin, Italian, French, English, German and Dutch. In Spanish, relatively little on the Turks appeared in print at this time, whether original works or translations. However, a number of translations remained in manuscript, together with one fascinating sixteenth-century text, the *Viaje de Turquía*. Scholars are still discussing who wrote the *Viaje* and whether it represents first-hand observation or should be treated as a work of fiction based on secondary sources.

The problem for all the writers discussed here was that of deciding which technical terms to translate (and how) and which were better left in the original Turkish. When their books were translated into other languages, translators had to make the same decision, crucial for the transmission of both information and ideas.
In early modern Europe, let us say from 1453 to 1789, the Ottoman Empire and Turkish culture were translated in two very different ways. On one side we see the persistence of traditional stereotypes. On the other, we find examples of a fresher vision, generally the result of direct observation at close quarters. Some individuals combine or at any rate juxtapose schematic and fresh perceptions.

The stereotyped ways in which western Europeans viewed the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period are well known. The medieval stereotype of Muslims as ‘the scourge of God’, ‘the enemy of the Cross’, ‘perfidious infidel’, ‘the new barbarian’ was carried over to the Ottomans. These ideas form part of the discourse of ‘orientalism’ described by Edward Said 30 years ago, though with more emphasis on cruelty and less on passivity – unsurprisingly enough, since the Turks conquered and colonized Eastern Europe, not the other way round.

What was new at this time was the emphasis on the Ottoman political regime. Five keywords in different languages recur to describe this regime: tyranny, despotism, absolutism, slavery and lordship (the sultan as il grande signore, owning all the land in the Ottoman Empire).

Another kind of stereotyping was associated with Renaissance humanism. Take the case of Pietro Bembo, author of a Latin history of Venice which naturally had much to say about the neighbours of the Venetians. Bembo was a purist who believed that Latin prose should imitate Cicero. Hence Bembo calls the Turkish galleys biremes, the spahis equites, the admiral of the Turkish fleet prefectus classis Thraciae and the sultan Regem Thracium. The janissaries were often described as the ‘praetorian guards’, praetoriani milites.

V

A different style of translating the Turks was based on relatively close encounters and on more or less first-hand information from former prisoners, ambassadors or consuls who had lived in the Ottoman Empire. These writers generally ‘foreignized’ the Turks by keeping technical terms in their original language – as anthropologists do in their ethnographies – explaining rather than translating them, even when writing Latin and referring to dragomani, bassae, janizari and so on.

In an oral presentation, I don’t want to overwhelm you with Turkish words that I probably won’t pronounce correctly, although the force of the argument is proportional to the number of such indigenous terms, especially the names for different kinds of official, that are to be found in western texts.

In the case of the vernaculars, domestication was even less common than in the case of Latin, although a few translators were supporters of linguistic purism. Take the case of the Italian bishop Paolo Giovio, for instance, whose Italian account of the Turks had at least eight Italian editions in the sixteenth century as well translations into Latin, German, English and Spanish. Giovio left terms such as aga, beylerbey or timariot in Turkish. The prevalence of foreignizing might be linked to the increasing interest in foreign manners and customs shown by Europeans from the sixteenth century onwards.

In the seventeenth century, foreignizing becomes still more obvious. Take the case of Paul Rycaut, an Englishman of Flemish descent who lived in Istanbul and Smyrna (Izmir) from 1661 to 1678, as consul or secretary to the ambassador (incidentally, Rycaut was a translator himself, from the Spanish). Rycaut saw the
Ottoman Empire from the point of view of a merchant and diplomat interested in peace and trade.\textsuperscript{16}

In his The history of the present state of the Ottoman Empire (1667), several times reprinted as well as being translated into French, Dutch, German, Polish, Italian and Russian, Rycaut called the Turks ‘men of the same composition with us’, so that they ‘cannot be so savage and rude as they are generally described’. He noted the danger of ‘contempt of the Turk’, of treating them as ‘barbarous’. Indeed, echoing Montaigne, he wrote of the ‘prejudice’ of treating as barbarous whatever is ‘differenced from us by diversity of Manners and Custom, and are not dressed in the mode and fashion of our times and Countries’.

When he comes to speak of the political regime, he shows his concern for cultural specificity. ‘The Constitution of the Turkish Government being different from most others in the World’, he wrote, ‘hath need of peculiar Maxims and Rules, whereon to establish and confirm itself’.

For this reason Rycaut used many Turkish terms, explaining them in the text or margin as he goes. Some of these terms are religious (\textit{mufti, mullah, dervish, hoja, imam}), some are military (\textit{Spahees}) and a high proportion are political and administrative (among them \textit{Bey, Defterdar, Divan, Kadi, Pasha, Pashalik}).

The translation of books from Turkish into western languages (and vice versa) was rare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of the rare exceptions was the \textit{Annals [Tac al-Tevarikh, literally ‘The Crown of Histories’]} of Khojah Efendi [also known as Sa’duddin Bin Hasan Can, 1535-99].

The English translation of Khoja Efendi was made by the clergyman William Seaman, who had served as an embassy chaplain in Istanbul and translated the New Testament into Turkish. Despite the interest in missionary activity revealed by his Bible translation, Seaman did not domesticate the text. He retained the system of dating by the year of the Hegira (adding the year of Our Lord), left technical terms such as \textit{sanjak bey} or \textit{bassalik} in the original language, filled up his margins with Turkish words in the Arabic script, and went so far as to retain the term ‘unbelievers’ to refer to Christians.

What is more, in the preface, Seaman justified his approach in words which may remind modern readers of Schleiermacher’s famous formulation of the translator’s task, taking the reader to the text rather than vice versa, or as Seaman puts it, ‘desiring rather a little to change our propriety to fit theirs, than much to alter their phrase to put it in ours’.

We should not imagine that we, or even our early 20\textsuperscript{th}-century predecessors, were the first people to be interested in what is specific to particular cultures and to try to preserve that specificity in translation. Some early modern writers were already of the opinion that a successful strategy for understanding other cultures is precisely the refusal to translate their keywords.
1 P. Burke, A Social History of Knowledge (Cambridge, 2000).
5 Umberto Eco, Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation (London, 2003).
10 Venuti (1992), 5.
11 Giovio’s book on the Turks appeared in Spanish in 1543 but it is a rare book with only one edition; Sagredo’s history was published in Spanish translation in 1684.
16 Paul Rycaut, The history of the present state of the Ottoman Empire (London, 1667).