Abstract

Translating knowledge about Eastern Europe: Editions and translations of Maciej z Miechowa’s *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis* in the 16th and 17th centuries

At the beginning of the 16th century, knowledge about the geography, history and population of Eastern Europe was rather vague. Antique geographers and Italian humanists had called the region between Vistula and Caspian Sea “Sarmatia” and described it either as an idyllic or barbaric place. This image was rectified in 1517 when the Cracovian scholar Maciej z Miechowa published his *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis* – the first work which offered detailed information about the nature and the people of the region and thereby eliminated traditional legends. As the treatise was published in several Latin editions outside of Poland, it initiated the humanists’ scientific exchange of geographical knowledge about the eastern parts of Europe. Moreover, translations in German, Polish, Dutch and Italian appeared from 1518 to 1606, providing knowledge about the depicted area also for a non-scholarly readership.

Although studies about Maciej z Miechowa emphasize that the *Tractatus* has been broadly disseminated, none of its translations has yet been analyzed. By focusing on the different vernacular editions of the *Tractatus*, the presentation aims to compare translations of a text which served as an original source for Early Modern geography, ethnography and historiography. I will thus investigate how the practice of the translators in Cracovia, Augsburg, Strasbourg, Antwerp and Venice has led to modifications in the translations of the text. With special regard to the contextualization of the *Tractatus* with contemporary overseas travels, I will finally discuss in how far its translations contributed not only to a broader dissemination of the text, but also to Early Modern practices of Othering and the creation of cultural borders.
Short Bio

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Research interests: cultural transfer and translation studies, mental mapping and geopoetics