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MEDITERRANEAN TOPONYMS IN TRANSLATION

Sonia VAUPOT
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Translation Studies, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
e-mail: Sonia.Vaupot@ff.uni-lj.si

ABSTRACT

This article examines toponymic translation in the French, Italian, and Slovene editions of Predrag Matvejević's Mediterranean Breviary. Drawing on Thierry Grass's typology of translation strategies, equivalence theory, and Mona Baker's concept of narrative framing, it analyses a corpus of 158 toponyms from the Maps section, treating the three versions as parallel texts, to examine how place names are transferred across languages and how these choices participate in the construction of distinct representations of Mediterranean space. The findings reveal variations in translation strategies, graded equivalence patterns reflecting linguistic proximity, and narrative positioning that differentiates the three versions.

Keywords: toponym translation, narrative approach, equivalence, derivational substitution, Mediterranean space

TOPONIMI MEDITERRANEI IN TRADUZIONE

SINTESI

L'articolo esamina la traduzione dei toponimi nelle edizioni francese, italiana e slovena di Breviario Mediterraneo di Predrag Matvejević. Sulla base della tipologia delle strategie traduttive di Thierry Grass, della teoria dell'equivalenza e del concetto di "narrative framing" di Mona Baker, l'articolo analizza un corpus di 158 toponimi della sezione Carte, trattando le tre versioni come testi paralleli, per esaminare in che modo i nomi dei luoghi vengono trasferiti nelle varie lingue e come tali scelte partecipano alla costruzione di rappresentazioni distinte dello spazio mediterraneo. I risultati rivelano variazioni nelle strategie traduttive, diversi gradi di equivalenza che riflettono la prossimità linguistica e un posizionamento narrativo che differenzia le tre versioni.

Parole chiave: traduzione dei toponimi, approccio narrativo, equivalenza, sostituzione derivazionale, spazio mediterraneo

INTRODUCTION[1]

Born in 1932 in Mostar, in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Predrag Matvejević worked in Zagreb, Paris, and Rome.[2] He died in 2017 in Zagreb.[3] The author of over thirty essays written in Croatian, French, and Italian, Matvejević explored subjects ranging from French existentialism, examined in his 1965 essay on Jean-Paul Sartre, to questions of cultural identity, nationalism, and intercultural relations. His major work, *Mediterranean Breviary*, is a poetic essay, the result of extensive research on the Mediterranean.

Originally written in Croatian and first published in Zagreb in 1987, *Mediteranski brevijar* has since been translated into numerous languages. An Italian translation by Silvio Ferrari was first published in 1990 by Hefti Edizioni in Milan under the title *Breviario mediterraneo*. The revised and expanded Garzanti edition, *Mediterraneo. Un nuovo breviario*, followed in 1991, and a further revised edition, again entitled *Breviario mediterraneo*, appeared in 2004. The French edition, *Bréviaire méditerranéen*, translated from the Croatian by Évaine Le Calvé Ivičević, was published in 1992. The Slovene version, *Mediteranski brevir*, translated by Vasja Bratina, followed in 2000. Matvejević took an active part in the translation of his work and was closely involved in the French and Italian versions. The work comprises three sections (*Breviary*, *Maps*, and *Glossary*), which explore Mediterranean complexity through poetic reflection, cartographic representation, and historical terminology respectively.

In *Mediterranean Breviary*, Matvejević approaches toponyms as narrative devices that participate in the construction of a poetic discourse informed by Mediterranean history and cultural complexity. Beyond their referential function, place names in the work bear symbolic and ideological significance accumulated over centuries of Mediterranean history and political transformation. They embody what the author describes as "the eternal rituals of rise and fall, departure and return, grandiloquence and parody, palingenesis and palimpsest, circlemaking and circlebreaking" (Matvejević, 1999, 92). Translating these toponyms raises three questions: how translation strategies vary across the three versions, how historical factors shape the observed patterns, and how toponymic choices contribute to narrative construction. This study addresses these questions in the French *Cartes*, Italian *Carte*, and Slovene *Karte* texts of the *Maps* section, drawing on frameworks from onomastic studies and translation theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Onomastics, the study of proper names, encompasses toponymy as a principal branch concerned with the origin, meaning, and use of place names. Despite its interdisciplinary scope, toponymic research has struggled for institutional recognition (Murray, 1994) and, owing to "the vagaries of academic history" (Zelinsky, 1997, 465), remains dispersed across linguistics, geography, and history. Within this fragmented field, Vuolteenaho and Berg (2009, 3–7) distinguish three traditional research orientations. The philosophical orientation, traceable to Antiquity, addresses abstract questions concerning proper names and their referential capacity. Formal accounts within this tradition hold that proper names identify objects individually without describing them (Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009, 8; cf. Searle, 1969, 163). The technical-authoritative orientation developed alongside modern state-building, when cartography and the collection of national toponymies became instruments of state administration (Harley, 1989; Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009, 4). Rooted in philological and etymological enquiry and dominant in nineteenth-century German-speaking Europe, the historical-culturalist orientation treats toponymic layers as sources for reconstructing language, settlement history, and past landscapes (Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009, 5–6). Vuolteenaho and Berg (2009, 6) nevertheless argue that traditional name research has "been afraid of politics" (Palonen, 1993, 103) and has failed to acknowledge its complicity in power struggles. More recent scholarship in critical toponymy draws on social theory to approach place naming as "a political practice par excellence of power over space" (Pinchevski & Torgovnik, 2002, 367). From this perspective, commemorative naming inscribes official versions of history into the cityscape (Azaryahu, 2009), street naming becomes contested terrain when marginalised groups seek recognition (Alderman, 2006), naming contributes to national narratives (Perono Cacciafoco & Cavallaro, 2023), and place names acquire economic value in urban branding (Medway & Warnaby, 2014). Linguistic

1 This paper is the result of research carried out in the research program "Theoretical and Applied Linguistic Research: Contrastive, Synchronic and Diachronic Aspects" (ARIS, P6-0218), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS).

2 Matvejević taught comparative literature at the University of Zagreb, the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris 3), and the University of Rome "La Sapienza". In 2000 he received a Slovene state honour for his efforts to preserve the chair of Slovene at the University of Rome after the retirement of Srečko Renko (Mladina, 11. 9. 2000, 37).

3 Matvejević received numerous awards, notably the European Essay Prize of the Charles Veillon Foundation (1992), awarded for *Mediterranean Breviary*, the Best Foreign Book Prize in the essay category (Paris, 1993), and, posthumously, the Jean d'Ormesson Prize (2020) for the French edition of the Breviary. In Italy the book was also honoured with the Malaparte Prize (Capri, 1991), the Boccaccio Europeo Prize (Certaldo, 1992), the Obiettivo Europa Prize (Milan, 1995), and the Marinità Prize (Rome, 1995) (cf. Premio Malaparte (n.d.); Matvejević (1993)).

research also remains central to the study of toponyms, particularly in relation to languages in contact (Baylon & Fabre, 1982). Tent and Blair (2011, 85–86), for their part, develop a typology based on the mechanism of the naming process, identifying nine principal categories: descriptive, associative, occurrent, evaluative, shift, indigenous, eponymous, linguistic innovation, and erroneous. Their typology classifies place names by what the authors call the mechanism of naming, that is, the procedures, methods, and motivations behind a given name (Perono Cacciafoco & Cavallaro, 2023). The present study applies a comparable principle at a later stage in a name's life: where Tent and Blair (2011) classify the mechanism by which a name is first bestowed, the categories used below classify the mechanism by which an established name is carried across languages.

Toponymic forms often carry a historical weight that determines both their use and their translation, since established forms reflect centuries of cultural contact and territorial relationships rather than contemporary translation practices. In Slovene, for instance, forms such as *Oglej* (Aquileia), *Benetke* (Venice), or *Rim* (Rome) are historically established names, reflecting long-standing connections with Mediterranean space, particularly with the Patriarchate of Aquileia and the Venetian Republic. Italian forms such as *Ragusa* or *Cherso* are associated with the centuries-long Venetian presence along the eastern Adriatic coast, whilst contemporary preferences for endonyms may reflect different ideological positions (Monmonier, 2006; Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009). Yeoh (1996, 300), for example, shows how colonial administrators used street names as markers to order and divide colonised groups into "recognisable containers". Toponymic translation thus reflects tensions between cultural memory and territorial identity, and requires approaches that account for historical and ideological factors. Ballard (1993; 2001) argues that place names are culturally marked and often ideologically motivated, and that their translation depends on cultural context as much as on formal criteria. Vaxelaire (2006, 734–738) warns against automatic translation procedures for proper names, whose semantic, contextual, and cultural complexity resists them. Within the Prolex project (Agafonov et al., 2006), Grass (2006, 667) observes that in Alsace the older Germanic forms of local toponyms are avoided when translating into German because of their pan-Germanist connotations, showing that the choice or avoidance of a toponymic form can serve to neutralise unwanted associations.

Literary translation differs from cartographic practice in its relationship to normative constraints. The United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names recommend reducing the use of exonyms in international use (resolution II/31, 1972), whilst recognising that certain conventional or traditional exonyms form living and vital parts of languages (resolution II/28, 1972; United Nations, 2007). These recommendations govern official and international usage. In literary translation, translators may retain established exonyms (fr. *Venise*; it. *Ragusa*) or replace them with forms adapted to the target language (sl. *Benetke*, *Dubrovnik*). This study analyses toponymic translation strategies, cross-linguistic equivalence patterns, and narrative positioning in the three versions of the *Maps* section. The analysis adopts Grass's (2006) framework, grounded in Gaston Gross's theory (1994) of object classes, to examine how translation choices convey implicit positions that may contribute to different perceptions of places. The framework is combined with approaches to equivalence (Nida, 1964; Nord, 1997; Reiss, 2000; Lederer, 2003) and with Baker's (2006) concept of narrative framing.

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

According to Michel Arrivé, in literature, geography is toponymy (Arrivé, 2013, 47). In *Mediterranean Breviary*, toponyms form a fragmented cartography of the Mediterranean world. The analysis examined the three translations independently of the Croatian source. This approach aligns with descriptive translation studies (Toury, 1995, 29), which treat translated texts as autonomous products within target systems rather than as derivatives of an original. Moreover, Matvejević's direct involvement, particularly in the revised 2004 Italian edition, complicates the notion of a singular source text and renders direct source–target comparison less straightforward. Cross-version correspondences are therefore established against the French edition, which serves here as a *tertium comparationis*: a common baseline of comparison, adopted for methodological convenience, rather than a source from which the other versions derive. Italian and Slovene renderings are accordingly coded by reference to the corresponding French form, whilst French renderings are coded by reference to the originating form of the referent, whether a local endonym or a classical antecedent. The three columns therefore record different relations and are not directly comparable. The study focuses on how each published language version renders Mediterranean space through toponymic choices, drawing on Venuti's (1995, 17–24) conceptualisation of translation as cultural inscription. The three editions are thus examined as parallel texts, each rendering Mediterranean geography through a distinct cultural framework. The term translation strategy is accordingly used in an extended sense: it designates the relationship between corresponding forms across the published versions, not a reconstructed decision taken against the Croatian source, which distinguishes this parallel-text comparison from a classic source–target analysis. The *Maps* section was selected because it offers the most comprehensive toponymic itinerary through Mediterranean

space and the densest concentration of place names, and thus the fullest material for comparing translation strategies.

The three corpora (the *Maps* sections of each translation) were entered into Sketch Engine (https://www.sketchengine.eu/) for concordance searches and textual navigation. Toponyms were identified and extracted, resulting in a corpus of 158 toponymic referents, each counted once regardless of its number of occurrences. The inventory is defined from the French edition: the 158 referents are those attested in the French text, which serves as the baseline of comparison. Indeed, the three editions do not render a completely identical text. The revised Italian edition of 2004 contains a few passages with no counterpart in the French edition of 1992, and material present in one version is occasionally absent from another, so a small number of these referents are not rendered in the Italian or the Slovene version. Such absences are treated here as edition-level differences and fall outside the typology, which applies only to attested renderings. Variant surface forms used for the same referent (*Hesperide/Esperide* in Slovene; *Aquileia/Aquilée* in French) were recorded, but only the first-attested noun form entered the similarity calculation. Three analytical approaches were applied. Typological classification followed Grass's five-fold framework, developed within the multilingual Prolex database project (Agafonov et al., 2006): borrowing/retention, adaptation, transcription, calque, and transliteration. A sixth strategy, derivational substitution, was added to account for patterns observed in the Slovene corpus. Quantitative analysis measured formal equivalence through a graphemic similarity index, computed as normalised Levenshtein similarity (Levenshtein, 1966) between citation forms, that is, the number of character insertions, deletions, and substitutions separating two forms, divided by the length of the longer form and subtracted from 1. The comparison is case-insensitive, and diacritics count as distinct graphemes. Articles and hyphens belonging to the name (*La Mecque*, *Aix-en-Provence*) are retained, and adjectival endings are not normalised, because forms attested only as derived adjectives are excluded from the calculation. Of the 158 toponyms, 142 are attested as noun forms in all three versions and enter the calculation. The remaining 16 are excluded on two grounds: 13 lack a counterpart in at least one version (among them *Chypre*, absent from the Slovene text, and *Colchide*, *Catay*, *Ithaque*, and *Jordanie*, absent from both the Italian and the Slovene), and 3 appear in Slovene only as derived adjectives (*kirenajški*, *numidijska*, *dubrovniška* in *Dubrovniška republika*, the Ragusan Republic as distinct from the city of Dubrovnik), which belong to the derivational substitution category and have no comparable noun form. Three levels were distinguished: complete equivalence (100%), as with *Adria* in all three pairs; high equivalence (at least 75% but below 100%), as with the French–Slovene pair *Jérusalem/Jeruzalem* (77.8%); and divergent forms (below 75%), as with *Venise/Benetke* (42.9%). A 90% threshold would classify most one-character differences as divergent, whereas the 75% threshold keeps them within the high-equivalence band. Finally, narrative analysis employed Baker's (2006) framing concepts to examine how each version constructs relationships between readers and Mediterranean space. The extracted toponyms were classified into four categories: terrestrial toponyms (109 instances), including countries (21), contemporary regions (11), contemporary cities (43), ancient settlements (23), and historical regions (11); maritime toponyms (27 instances), encompassing islands, straits, gulfs, and ancient coastal ports; hydronyms (13 instances), referring to seas, rivers, and bays; and legendary or mythical places (9 instances). These four categories form a partition: each referent is assigned to a single primary category.

Corpus analysis

The Mediterranean region is understood here in an extended sense, encompassing places associated with Mediterranean civilisation beyond the coasts, and the overview below distinguishes terrestrial, maritime, hydronymic, and legendary toponyms.

Terrestrial toponyms

The terrestrial toponyms in the text refer to twenty-one contemporary countries, among them Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Palestine, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey. The text also presents eleven contemporary regions, such as Campania, Catalonia, Crimea, Cyrenaica, Dalmatia, Istria, the Maghreb, the Peloponnese, and Provence.

Forty-three contemporary cities appear: thirty-two European sites, including Adriatic cities such as Dubrovnik, Split, and Zadar; the French Mediterranean centre of Toulon; Greek cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki; major Italian centres including Florence, Genoa, Naples, and Venice (Rome is counted among the legendary toponyms); and Spanish cities such as Murcia and Valencia. Eleven cities are situated outside Europe, including the North African centres of Alexandria and Tunis; the Middle Eastern cities of Jerusalem, Beirut, Byblos, Sidon, Tyre, and Damascus; the Arabian city of Mecca; and the Anatolian city of Tarsus.

The corpus contains twenty-three terrestrial ancient settlements representing different phases of habitation in the Mediterranean region. Selected examples

include, among the European sites, the Croatian settlement of Osor; the ancient Greek foundations of Miletus and Pergamon; the historical centres of Ragusa, Delphi, Ostia, and Pompeii; and the Sicilian cities of Kimmerios, Germanossa, and Himera. Non-European ancient cities include the North African centres of Cyrene, Leptis Magna, Ptolemais, and Carthage; the Middle Eastern cities of Antioch, Caesarea, and Dor; the Anatolian settlements of Ephesus and Smyrna; and the possibly mythical Tarsis, traditionally associated with ancient Spain. Rhodes is counted among the maritime toponyms described below, owing to its role as an ancient maritime polis. Ancient coastal settlements such as Salona, Aquileia, and Phocaea are classified among the maritime toponyms described below, so the terrestrial count of twenty-three ancient settlements does not include them.

Eleven historically defined territories include the Greek lands of Argolis and Hellas, and the colonial extension of Magna Graecia; the North African regions of Ifriqiya and Numidia; the Anatolian provinces of Caria, Cilicia, and Lycia; and the ancient Tunisian centres of Thuburbo Maius and Thugga.

Maritime toponyms and hydronyms

The section features numerous maritime toponyms: straits, gulfs, islands, and ancient coastal settlements. Through toponyms such as Gibraltar, the Bosporus, the Gulf of Salerno, the Gulf of Taranto, and the Great Syrtis, the narrative portrays the region as a basin structured by maritime routes. Major Mediterranean islands named in the text include Sardinia, Majorca, Sicily, Crete, Rhodes, and Capri, alongside more symbolic islands such as Issa (now Vis), Patmos, Leucas (formerly Santa Maura), and Cythera (now Kythira); Malta and Cyprus, counted among the countries, and Ithaca, counted among the legendary toponyms, are also named as islands. Ancient coastal ports include the Adriatic centres of Salona, Aquileia, and Adria; the southern Italian and Sicilian settlements of Sybaris and Lilybaeum; the Anatolian port of Phocaea; the Cyrenaican harbours of Apollonia and Berenice; the ancient Greek foundation of Heraclea; and the Black Sea ports of Apsaros, Gorgippia, and Theodosia. Together these sites present the basin as a space of circulation extending from the Adriatic to the Black Sea.

Hydronyms articulate the Mediterranean's internal structure: the Aegean, the Ionian, the Sea of Marmara, the eastern Adriatic, and the Tyrrhenian subdivide the central sea. The French reference to the Adriatic as "la mer d'Hadria" links contemporary geography with ancient conceptions. The Danube and the Iron Gates mark a transition towards continental Europe, and the reference to the Atlantic Ocean indicates the spatial and historical scope of the narrative.

Legendary toponyms

Matvejević also integrates legendary toponyms into the symbolic geography of the Mediterranean. Their function is conceptual rather than cartographic, anchoring the narrative in a space informed by literary and mythological traditions. Among them are Ultima Thule, the Fortunate Isles, Taprobana, Panchaea, Colchis, Ithaca, Arcadia, and the Hesperides. Rome holds a dual status: a real contemporary city, it is included here because the text invokes it as the Eternal City, grounded in civilisational legacy and myth rather than in cartographic position, and in the corpus partition it is counted once, under this category. Ultima Thule marks the outer boundary of the known world. Taprobana and Panchaea locate abundance and wisdom in remote eastern lands, whilst the Hesperides and the Fortunate Isles place reward in the distant west. Colchis, tied to the Golden Fleece, introduces the theme of quest and connects the Mediterranean with the Black Sea region. Ithaca, known from the Odyssey, evokes return, nostalgia, and home. Arcadia extends the Mediterranean's role in producing utopian imagery beyond geographical reference.

TRANSLATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Translating toponyms presents particular challenges when the languages differ in grammatical structure, naming conventions, or degrees of standardisation. In the Mediterranean context, many place names refer to regions that have disappeared or changed in scope, and the name must retain its historical value without anachronism.

Classical toponyms illustrate the range of approaches. Some names are semantically translated (*Grande Grèce/Velika Grčija*), whilst Italian tends to retain classical or Latin forms (*Magna Grecia*). Ancient toponyms such as Cilicia or Heraclea take different shapes: French uses Gallicised forms (*Cilicie*, *Héraclée*), Italian tends to preserve the classical spelling (*Cilicia*, *Heraclea*), and Slovene adapts phonetically (*Kilikija*, *Herakleja*). This variation reflects distinct phonological systems and the tension between classical consistency and the norms of each language. A comparable divergence appears in the Pytheas episode: French uses the modern toponym *Grande-Bretagne*, Italian employs the Latin form *Britannia*, and Slovene adopts the Latinised adaptation *Britanija*. In this instance French tends towards contemporary standardisation whilst Italian and Slovene privilege classicising forms. Conversely, for the navigator's home city, French retains the ancient name *Massalia* where Italian uses the modern *Marsiglia*.

Beyond formal considerations, toponym translation involves trade-offs between tradition and standardisation. The rendering of the Greek city of Thessaloniki

varies across the versions. The Slovene text uses *Solun*, a long-established Slavic form. Italian adopts *Salonicco*, the standard modern Italian toponym. The French translation uses *Thessalonique* rather than *Salonique*, the older French form, and this choice aligns with the Hellenised form and places the version between historical usage and contemporary standardisation. A comparable shift occurs with *la côte de Numidie*, rendered in Slovene as *numidijska obala* but generalised in Italian as *spiagge africane*: the French and Slovene versions preserve historical specificity, whereas the Italian prioritises contemporary geographical description. In the French translation, the use of both *Dubrovnik* and *Raguse* marks a distinction between the modern city and its historical identity as a maritime republic. Italian predominantly uses *Ragusa*, maintaining historical continuity and shifting the temporal framing towards the city's earlier political identity. Slovene adopts *Dubrovnik* or the derived adjective *dubrovniški*, showing how morphosyntactic constraints intersect with cultural positioning. Finally, certain toponyms present in one version are absent from another: *Jordanie* and *Chypre*, present in the French text, have no counterpart in the Slovene, a difference that contributes to distinct geographical representations across the editions.

Toponym translation strategies

Table 1 presents a selection of toponyms as they appear in the French, Italian, and Slovene versions. The examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive. Where relevant, coexisting forms are shown, and for the similarity calculation, only the first-attested noun form was retained. The strategies underlying these examples are analysed in the following section.

These examples point to distinct translational patterns. Slovene shows systematic adaptation through morphological integration (*Neapelj*, *solunski*, *dubrovniški*), with *Benetke* as a long-established Slovene name. Italian exhibits historical forms (*Ragusa*, *Cartagine*) rooted in Latin and Venetian traditions. French favours established exonyms, and its dual use of *Dubrovnik* and *Raguse* distinguishes modern from historical nomenclature, a form of deliberate temporal framing (Baker, 2006, 112–113). The Italian version predominantly uses *Ragusa*, whilst also providing double designations such as *Dubrovnik (Ragusa)* in some passages. The dominant choice privileges historical continuity.

Table 1: Comparative translations of selected toponyms across the French, Italian, and Slovene editions (Source: Matvejević, 1992; 2000; 2004).

French version	Italian version	Slovene version
la mer d'Hadria	il mare Adriatico	hadrianska morja
Antioche	Antiochia	Antiohija
Aquileia/Aquilée	Aquileia	Akvileja
Carthage	Cartagine	Kartagina
Dalmatie	Dalmazia	Dalmacija
Dubrovnik/Raguse	Ragusa	Dubrovnik/dubrovniški
Grande Grèce	Magna Grecia	Velika Grčija
Hespérides	Esperidi	Hesperide/Esperide
Ifriqiya	Ifrikia	Ifrikija
Jérusalem	Gerusalemme	Jeruzalem
La Mecque	La Mecca	Meka
Losin	Lussino	Lošinj
Naples	Napoli	Neapelj
Thessalonique	Salonicco	Solun/solunski
Thuburbo Majus	Thuburbo Maius	Thuburbo Maius
Toulon	Tolone	Toulon
Venise	Venezia	Benetke
Zadar	Zara	Zadar

Typological analysis

Thierry Grass developed a typology of proper name translation within the Prolex project, a multilingual database for the automatic processing of proper names (Agafonov et al., 2006). Drawing on Gaston Gross's theory of object classes (Gross, 1994), Grass (2006, 662–663) distinguishes borrowing, transliteration, and transcription, together with translation proper, which comprises calque and adaptation. The present study treats these as five strategies for the transfer of toponyms. Each of the 158 toponyms extracted from the *Maps* section has been categorised according to its dominant strategy, although overlaps are common and indicate the complexity of toponymic transfer.

Translation strategies were analysed at two levels: a global distribution assigning each toponym to a single category based on the predominant strategy across the three versions, and language-specific distributions calculated independently for each translation. In the latter approach each rendering counts separately, so that corresponding forms may be assigned to different strategy categories across the three versions. The same duality explains why derivational substitution accounts for 7.0% of toponyms globally but 17.1% of Slovene renderings: the strategy is largely confined to the Slovene version, and the global label records the treatment prevailing across the three versions. Table 2 is accordingly indicative of overall tendencies, whereas the analysis that follows rests on the language-specific distributions.

Borrowing, or direct retention, is the most frequent approach, accounting for 29.1% of cases. Complete retention occurs with names such as *Adria* and *Tripoli*, which remain unchanged across the three versions. Partial retention is more common: *Toulon* remains unchanged in French and Slovene but becomes *Tolone* in Italian, and *Cres* becomes *Cherso* in Italian. This practice corresponds to what Grass (2006, 662) identifies as the default treatment of proper names, the borrowing of a recognisable form without graphic change.

Adaptation accounts for 28.5% of the data and involves the transformation of toponyms according to target-language conventions and cultural traditions. Such forms rest on usage that has sometimes existed for centuries and depends largely on cultural factors (Grass, 2006, 663). Examples include the semantic translation *Črna Gora* for *Monténégro*; cultural adaptations such as *Solun* for *Thessalonique*, reflecting Slavic-Byzantine nomenclature, and *Meka* for *La Mecque*; and phonetic adaptations such as *Dalmacija* for *Dalmatie* and *Kartagina* for *Carthage*.

Transcription accounts for 17.1% of cases and involves the phonetic adjustment of a form to the target language's sound system. This strategy is anchored in the target language's phonological norms rather than in those of the source language, which improves readability but renders the process irreversible (Grass, 2006, 663). It appears in Slovene forms such as *Bejrut* (fr. *Beyrouth*), *Antiohija* (fr. *Antioche*), and *Efez* (fr. *Éphèse*), and in Italian *Antiochia* and *Salonicco* for the same referents as French *Antioche* and *Thessalonique*. In the French version, the form *Losin* (for *Lošinj*) shows simplification through the omission of diacritics. The Slovene forms *Pergam* and *Smirna* correspond to French *Pergame* and *Smyrne*, historical forms adjusted to Slovene phonology. The modern Turkish name *Izmir*, by contrast, is generally reserved for contemporary contexts.

Calques, constituting 13.9% of the corpus, are particularly prominent in Slovene renderings of geographical features. This strategy involves the literal translation of meaning, as in *Velika Grčija* for *Grande Grèce*, which reproduces the conceptual structure of the French phrase, used here as the reference form, with Slovene lexical resources, and *Gibraltarska ožina* for *le détroit de Gibraltar*.

Transliteration, relatively rare at 4.4%, typically arises where names derive from non-Latin alphabets. Transliteration adapts a toponym's graphic representation to the target alphabet whilst maintaining reversibility to the original script (Grass, 2006, 662–663). One notable instance is the Slovene rendering *Taršiš* for *Tarsis*, which reflects the name's Hebrew origin and adjusts it to Slovene phonology and morphology through graphemic correspondence. The French version applies the same procedure to Arabic names, retaining *Ifriqiya* and *Al-Iskandariyah* rather than the conventional French equivalents. The latter is followed in the text by the gloss *Alexandrie*, which confirms that the transliterated form is the one adopted.

Grass's typology, however, does not account for morphosyntactic transformations of the kind observed in the Slovene version. To address this gap, the present study introduces a sixth category, derivational substitution, observed in 7.0% of cases and concentrated in the Slovene corpus. This strategy differs from adaptation as defined by Grass (2006, 663). Whereas adaptation involves the phonetic, semantic, or cultural reshaping of the corresponding form in another version (*Solun*, *Meka*), derivational substitution responds primarily to the grammatical and syntactic requirements of the language of the version concerned, without substantively altering the toponym's phonological or semantic form. It designates a procedure whereby the reference form corresponds, in another version, to a form derived through morphological affixation, resulting in a change of grammatical category. Derivational substitution is closely related to transposition in

Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958) sense, but is retained here as a narrower, toponym-specific category for noun-to-adjective derivation under the morphosyntactic constraints of the language concerned. In the Slovene corpus, the noun phrase *la côte de Numidie* corresponds to the adjectival construction *numidijska obala*, references to Cyrenaica appear in the adjectival form *kirenajški*, and *la mer d'Hadria* is rendered as *hadrianska morja*. The procedure is not confined to Slovene: in Italian, *la mer d'Hadria* corresponds to the adjective *Adriatico*, and *de Naples* to *napoletani*. Athens- and France-related references likewise appear as the adjectives *atenski* and *francoski*, and *Thessalonique* as *solunski*, wherever the syntactic context requires adjectival agreement. Two degrees of constraint are involved. In multi-word geographical names of the pattern adjective + noun, the derived adjective is grammatically imposed: *hadrianska morja* follows the productive type of *Jadransko morje*, where a genitive noun would be ungrammatical as a name. In other contexts the adjectival form is the conventionally preferred variant: *numidijska obala* stands where the genitive construction *obala Numidije* would be grammatical but unidiomatic. The introduction of derivational substitution extends Grass's typological framework to morphosyntactic transformations that occur independently of cultural appropriation or phonological adaptation.

Language-specific distributions bring out distinct translational tendencies, revealed by each linguistic system's relationship to the Mediterranean toponymic heritage.

The French version shows a marked preference for retention (77.2%), reflecting the tendency to preserve historically established exonyms, particularly those with Latin antecedents. Adaptation (12.7%), transcription (5.7%), calque (3.2%), and transliteration (1.3%) account for the remainder, and derivational substitution was not observed. The Italian version exhibits a balanced profile between retention (41.1%) and adaptation (41.1%), with transcription (12.0%), calque (3.8%), and derivational substitution (1.9%) in secondary roles. The Slovene version displays the greatest procedural diversity: retention accounts for only 13.3%, adaptation through established endonyms for 22.2%, and the remaining strategies comprise transcription (24.1%), calque (18.4%), derivational substitution (17.1%), and transliteration (5.1%). This distribution indicates a tendency, in the Slovene version, to prioritise grammatical integration with internal linguistic norms over the replication of the forms found in the other versions.

EQUIVALENCE AND NARRATIVE FRAMING

Equivalence patterns across language pairs

According to Marianne Lederer (2003, 67), equivalence does not necessarily rely on structural replication but on conveying meaning through functionally appropriate forms in the target language. This observation applies particularly to place names, in line with Nida's (1964, 166) dynamic equivalence and Baker's (2006, 122–134) argument that translation involves repositioning that affects meaning construction. Table 4 presents the distribution of equivalence levels across language pairs for the 142 toponyms attested as noun forms in all three versions.

The data indicate graded variation in formal equivalence across language pairs. Mean graphemic similarity orders the pairs by linguistic proximity: French–Italian (70.7%), Italian–Slovene (66.9%), and French–Slovene (62.1%). The French–Italian proximity is concentrated in the high-equivalence band (32.4%) rather than in complete identity, because the two languages render shared Latin and

Table 2: Global distribution of translation strategies (N = 158).

Strategy	Percentage	N
Borrowing/Retention	29.1	46
Adaptation	28.5	45
Transcription	17.1	27
Calque	13.9	22
Derivational substitution	7.0	11
Transliteration	4.4	7

Table 3: Language-specific distribution of translation strategies (in %).

Strategy	French	Italian	Slovene
Retention	77.2 (122)	41.1 (65)	13.3 (21)
Adaptation	12.7 (20)	41.1 (65)	22.2 (35)
Transcription	5.7 (9)	12.0 (19)	24.1 (38)
Calque	3.2 (5)	3.8 (6)	18.4 (29)
Derivational substitution	—	1.9 (3)	17.1 (27)
Transliteration	1.3 (2)	—	5.1 (8)

Table 4: Formal equivalence of Mediterranean toponyms by language pair (N = 142, in %).

Measure	French–Italian	Italian–Slovene	French–Slovene
Complete equivalence (100%)	16.9	23.2	22.5
High equivalence (≥75% but <100%)	32.4	27.5	15.5
Combined high equivalence (≥75%)	49.3	50.7	38.0
Divergent forms (<75%)	50.7	49.3	62.0
Mean graphemic similarity	70.7	66.9	62.1

Hellenistic exonyms with systematically different endings: lighter differences remain within the high band (*Italie/Italia*, *Tunisie/Tunisia*, *Dalmatie/Dalmazia*), whilst heavier ones, as in *Carthage/Cartagine* (66.7%) or *Jérusalem/Gerusalemme* (63.6%), fall below the threshold. The pairs involving Slovene show the converse pattern: a larger share of complete identity (23.2% and 22.5%), produced by ancient names retained unchanged in all versions (*Adria*, *Salona*, *Thugga*, *Apsaros*), combined with substantial morphophonological adaptation. The French–Slovene pair exhibits the lowest combined high equivalence (38.0%) and the highest divergence (62.0%), reflecting the linguistic distance between the Romance and Slavic families. Whereas French prioritises the retention of established exonyms, Slovene generally adapts toponyms through morphophonological transformation and adjectival derivation, producing pairs such as *Venise/Benetke*, *Naples/Neapelj*, and *Thessalonique/Solun* that show minimal formal similarity despite identical referential function.

Analysis by toponym category reveals further distinctions. Ancient settlements (n = 19 in the equivalence dataset) reach combined high equivalence of 63% in French–Italian and 74% in Italian–Slovene comparisons, against 29% and 42% respectively for contemporary cities (n = 31). Forms such as *Carthage/Cartagine/Kartagina* maintain recognisable shapes grounded in Latin or Hellenistic traditions, a pattern consistent with shared classical heritage and scholarly conventions that stabilise historical toponymic forms. The French–Slovene pair inverts this hierarchy: contemporary cities reach 58% against 47% for ancient settlements, because both versions retain the modern endonyms of Adriatic and Mediterranean cities (*Dubrovnik*, *Split*, *Zadar*, *Toulon*), whereas Gallicised classical forms such as *Éphèse* and *Césarée* diverge from their Slovene counterparts *Efez* and *Cesarea*. Some historical names attract divergent treatments. The city of Ragusa illustrates the range: *Ragusa* in Italian reflects Venetian nomenclature; the French version uses both *Raguse* and *Dubrovnik* to distinguish the city's historical and contemporary identities; Slovene adapts the name morphosyntactically as the adjective *dubrovniški*.

Series such as *Naples/Napoli/Neapelj* and *Thessalonique/Salonicco/Solun* nevertheless indicate that contemporary city names remain open to phonological adaptation. *Venise* and *Benetke* exemplify functional equivalence despite formal divergence, maintaining identical reference through culturally adapted forms (Reiss, 2000, 72; Nord, 1997, 29). Similarly, *Monténégro* becomes *Črna Gora* in Slovene, a calque that maintains semantic equivalence. By contrast, formally similar toponyms such as *Jérusalem*, *Gerusalemme*, and *Jeruzalem* may evoke different associations depending on readers' cultural backgrounds, so that formal similarity does not guarantee equivalent cultural resonance.

Dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964, 159–160) prioritises communicative effect over formal correspondence. French *la côte de Numidie* corresponds to *numidijska obala* in Slovene through adjectival transformation, whilst Italian *spiagge africane* replaces the specific toponym with a generalised description. These variations show how morphosyntactic restructuring and lexical substitution maintain discursive coherence through different means. Toponymic equivalence thus operates as a graduated system, with each language pair employing strategies appropriate to its linguistic and cultural context.

Narrative framing in toponymic translation

Baker (2006, 105–106) posits that translators actively contribute to the elaboration of narratives through their choices, and she identifies four framing strategies: temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, framing by labelling, and repositioning (Baker, 2006, 112–132). Temporal and spatial framing, which operates through paratextual embedding rather than textual modification, is acknowledged but lies beyond the present enquiry, which concentrates on the remaining three mechanisms.

She defines framing by labelling as "any discursive process that involves using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key element in a narrative" (Baker, 2006, 122), and observes that such a label supplies an interpretive frame that both guides and limits the reader's response. The treatment of the city of Thessaloniki illustrates this mechanism. The French version employs *Thessalonique*, the Italian *Salonicco*, and the Slovene *Solun*: French aligns with contemporary Hellenised usage, Italian keeps the standard Italian form, and the Slovene *Solun*, a form of the Slavic tradition, can be associated with Balkan and Orthodox cultural memory.

The Dalmatian toponyms *Dubrovnik/Ragusa* and *Kotor/Cattaro* reveal further divergence. The Slovene text employs the endonyms exclusively: *Dubrovniška republika*, *dubrovniške kapitane*, *nad Dubrovnikom in Kotorjem*. The Italian version provides double designations: *Dubrovnik (Ragusa) e Kotor (Cattaro)*, *fortezze di Ragusa (Dubrovnik)*. The French distributes the forms contextually: *Dubrovnik* for geography (*les escarpements qui dominent Dubrovnik*), *Raguse* and *ragusaine* for historical references (*la petite république ragusaine*, *les capitaines de Raguse*). Italian exonyms such as *Cattaro* are consistent with the naming conventions of the Venetian and Italian presence in Dalmatia.

Baker (2006, 114) further describes selective appropriation as realised in patterns of omission and addition that suppress, accentuate, or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative. The etymological discussion of a Punic term illustrates this through differential attribution. The French provides an explicit scholarly reference, "D'après Quintilien, il venait du punique", whereas the Italian and Slovene present the Punic origin without attribution: "viene forse dalla lingua punica" and "morda je prišla iz punskega jezika". The French addition appears to situate the text within classical learning. Such a difference counts here as a feature of the published version, whether it originates in a translator's decision or in the author's revision of a given edition. The Pytheas episode, by contrast, shows elaboration running the other way: the French states that the navigator "longea la Grande-Bretagne et l'Irlande", whilst the Italian and Slovene versions follow the episode with a passage, absent from the French, on ancient mariners carried by the trade winds to the islands now called the Canaries, the Hesperides of old, and on the Azores as the islands of return, thereby extending the Mediterranean's conceptual boundary westward.

Finally, Baker defines repositioning as realignment "through the linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect, register, use of epithets, and various means of self- and other identification" (Baker, 2006, 132). The passage describing Venetian censorship of mapping in relation to competing powers reveals register variation across the versions. The French employs a neutral concessive construction: "Venise fit de même … malgré Gênes et Byzance, les califes arabes et le sultan turc". The Italian substitutes the colloquial idiom *alla faccia di*, and hedges the assertion with *cercò di farlo* ("attempted to do so"): "Venezia cercò di farlo … alla faccia di Genova e Bisanzio, dei califfi arabi e del sultano turco". The colloquialism introduces a shift in tone that repositions Venice's relationship to the other Mediterranean powers with marked emphasis. Although the shift concerns register rather than the form of a place name, it bears on toponymic framing because the names Genoa, Byzantium, and Venice can be read within the evaluative frame the register sets up: the same powers are presented neutrally in one version and polemically in another. The Slovene aligns with the French register, employing the neutral concessive preposition *navkljub*: "navkljub Genovi in Bizancu, arabskim kalifom in turškemu sultanu". The French–Slovene alignment, contrasting with the Italian colloquialism, is consistent with target-language or edition-specific conventions, although the parallel-text design does not permit the source of the variation to be determined.

Applied to the corpus, Baker's framework shows that toponyms operate as narrative elements open to framing. Framing by labelling may activate distinct associations: *Solun* can thus be read as evoking Orthodox contexts, whereas *Cattaro* reflects Italian Dalmatian naming conventions. Because reader response is not tested here, such effects are stated only as interpretive possibilities. Selective appropriation also modulates geographical scope and scholarly attribution, and repositioning through register (*alla faccia di* versus *malgré/navkljub*) appears to encode evaluative stances. These patterns suggest that toponymic choices may contribute to shaping differentiated spatial representations across the published versions.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined toponymic translation in the French, Italian, and Slovene editions of Predrag Matvejević's *Mediterranean Breviary*, showing that place names operate as cultural markers that participate in the construction of distinct Mediterranean representations. The analysis addresses the questions posed in the introduction concerning cross-linguistic variation in translation strategies, the role of historical factors, and the contribution of toponymic choices to narrative construction.

The quantitative analysis establishes a graded hierarchy of equivalence reflecting linguistic proximity and historical contact. Mean graphemic similarity decreases from French–Italian (70.7%) through Italian–Slovene (66.9%) to French–Slovene (62.1%), and the French–Slovene pair shows the highest proportion of divergent forms (62.0%), consistent with the

distance between the Romance and Slavic language families. The French–Italian affinity operates through near-identical forms, an effect of shared Latin heritage filtered through each language's ending conventions. These patterns indicate that toponymic equivalence operates through culturally specific strategies rather than through formal correspondence alone, with each language version developing a distinct relationship with Mediterranean space.

Two contributions emerge from the analysis. First, the introduction of derivational substitution as a sixth translation strategy extends Grass's (2006) framework to the noun-to-adjective correspondences observed in the present corpus, particularly in the Slovene version. Closely related to transposition (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958), derivational substitution is retained as a narrower category, specific to one class of toponyms, and its recognition makes grammatical mediation visible as a distinct translation process in the study of proper names. Second, the integration of Baker's (2006) framing concepts with toponymic analysis suggests how translation choices may contribute to cultural positioning: the published versions exhibit framing by labelling (*Thessalonique* versus *Salonicco* versus *Solun*; the contextual distribution of *Raguse* and *Dubrovnik* in French; the Italian double designations *Dubrovnik (Ragusa)* and *Kotor (Cattaro)*), selective appropriation, and repositioning through register (*alla faccia di* versus *malgré*) to construct target-specific Mediterranean narratives.

The scope of these findings is defined by the corpus: the analysis covers the *Maps* section of *Mediterranean Breviary*, not the *Breviary* or *Glossary* sections, and concerns three European languages that share, to varying degrees, historical connections with Mediterranean civilisation. Within these limits, the three versions do not translate one geography, but produce three. The sentence recording Pseudo-Scylax's voyage sends the French reader across *la mer d'Hadria*, the Italian reader across the Adriatic, and the Slovene reader across *hadrianska morja*: one itinerary, rendered as three distinct Mediterranean spaces.

SREDOZEMSKI TOPONIMI V PREVAJANJU

Sonia VAUPOT
Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za prevajalstvo, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
e-mail: Sonia.Vaupot@ff.uni-lj.si

POVZETEK

Članek obravnava prevajanje toponimov v francoski, italijanski in slovenski izdaji dela Predraga Matvejevića Mediterranean Breviary, in sicer v razdelku Zemljevidi (Cartes, Carte, Karte), na korpusu 158 toponimov. Pri tem odgovarja na tri vprašanja: kako se prevajalske strategije razlikujejo med jezikovnimi različicami, kako vzorci ekvivalence odražajo jezikovno bližino in zgodovinske dejavnike ter kako izbire toponimov prispevajo h konstruiranju narativne strukture. Metodologija združuje tri pristope. Tipološka klasifikacija sledi okviru Thierryja Grassa (2006), ki razlikuje med prevzemom, adaptacijo, transkripcijo, kalkom in transliteracijo. Kvantitativna analiza meri formalno ekvivalenco z indeksom grafemske podobnosti. Kvalitativna analiza uporablja koncept okvirjanja, kot ga opredeljuje Mona Baker (2006), zlasti selektivno prisvajanje (selective appropriation) in okvirjanje z označevanjem (framing by labelling). V prispevku je kot šesta prevajalska strategija predlagana izpeljavna substitucija, s katero se pojasnijo oblikoslovno-skladenjske spremembe, ugotovljene v slovenskem prevodu, kjer se samostalniške oblike zaradi slovničnih omejitev lahko prevajajo v pridevniške oblike. Ta kategorija razširja Grassovo tipologijo na samostalniško-pridevniške ustreznice, opažene v obravnavanem korpusu. Rezultati kažejo na razlike med jezikovnimi pari. Povprečna grafemska podobnost je najvišja pri francosko–italijanskih parih, srednja pri italijansko–slovenskih parih in najnižja pri francosko–slovenskih parih, ki kažejo tudi največji delež razhajajočih se oblik, kar odraža jezikovno oddaljenost med romanskimi in slovanskimi jeziki.

Ključne besede: prevajanje toponimov, narativni pristop, ekvivalenca, izpeljavna substitucija, sredozemski prostor

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