

Three rings, one story? Reconstructing the historical connectivity of religious encounters within the OTRA project (Ontology for the Transmission and Re-Use of Argumentative Patterns)

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Throughout history, Islam has often been very irritating to Christian theologians. After all, the Qur'an presented itself as an upgrade to the Gospel, the number of believers grew rapidly, and military conflicts were frequent. This proximity has led to fierce polemics (see e.g. Norman 1993, Tolan 2002, Burman 2007), in which references to the Bible, the Qur'an, and other authoritative scriptures constituted a vital part of argumentation (Mann 2015). To better understand the history of these religious encounters, it would be invaluable to know which parts of scripture were used when to support what kind of arguments. The best path to this information right now might be to read as many studies and sources as possible, but the picture remains incomplete and inhomogeneous.

With the OTRA project, I propose to record the connectivity of the Christian-Muslim religious encounters (CMRE) in a different way, utilizing a Digital Humanities approach. Information about references, text re-use, argumentation, and religious concepts is to be represented as linked open data. For example, one might record that different texts refer to the same passage of the Qur'an at different times under a different topics, such that: 'passage a' refers to 'Q. 4:21' and 'passage b' refers to 'Q. 4:21', but 'passage a' is About 'The Trinity'; 'passage b' is About 'Paradise'. Collecting such knowledge would enable us to study constants and changes in discourse over time.

A first knowledge base will be created, augmented by other researchers' findings, and shared among the community. The goal is to allow for flexible additions, broad sharing of data, and advanced analysis of patterns, potentially changing the way research is conducted in the field. While this first proof-of-concept focuses on Christian-Muslim relations, the relation to Judaism and possibly more religions can and should be incorporated in the long run. The projects ontology and knowledge base will be available as Open Data and will be shared through public repositories.

In this talk, I present the goals and the current state of the project along four central questions. The first, methodological part will be presented in greater detail and the second analytical part will contain more open questions – yet both will profit from further discussion.

1. *How to describe connectivity in Christian-Muslim religious encounters with a shared vocabulary?* OTRA is based on the CIDOC CRM ontology in the LRMoo implementation (Bekiari et al. 2021). As re-use of existing vocabularies is strongly

preferred (Jansen 2019, p. 3), references are described along with the HypermediaDanteNetwork (HDN) (Bartalesi et al. 2021), and text re-use from the Sharing Ancient Wisdoms (SAWS) project (Hedges et al. 2017). Multiple argumentation modelling ontologies exist, with the simplest being the Argument Model Ontology (AMO) (Vitali / Peroni 2011). I will shortly introduce these different models, discuss what kind of homogenization has been done and what is still needed.

2. *How to use existing knowledge and scholarship?* In 'classical' scholarship, connections between texts are expressed in scholarly studies and especially in the apparatuses of critical editions. I therefore pursued mining critical editions for information, which provides basic data entries that can then be refined by researchers. I explain the work pipeline, show some first results, and discuss constraints.
3. *How to allow researchers to bring their knowledge into the process?* In order for OTRA to be a "shared conceptualization" (Guarino et al. 2009), broad support in the research community is necessary. I show how research results obtained in a "classical" way can be integrated into the OTRA framework.
4. *How do we analyze the data in order to find out more about the history of Christian-Muslim religious encounters?* I performed a first case study in connectivity that is centered on the Dominican missionary Riccoldo da Monte di Croce (d. 1320) and his influential work *Contra legem Saracenorum* (Against the law of the Saracens) (Mérigoux 1986). Being one of the few authors to have mastered Arabic, he both used a number of specific sources, and was used as a source by others (Villads Jensen / Scotto 2023). I present some preliminary OTRA-based analyses of the way he connected to his sources and to those who used his texts.

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