



## تاريخ الترجمة في الوطن العربي

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The History of Translation in the Arab World

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### الملخص

تعد الترجمة وسيلة بالغة الأهمية لنقل الثقافات المختلفة، إذ تسهم في تسهيل التواصل بين الشعوب من خلال نقل المعرفة والأفكار والآراء، وقد لعبت دوراً محورياً في تقدم الحضارة العالمية، لظالما كانت الترجمة وسيلة تواصل بين الحضارات، وعلى مر التاريخ لعبت الترجمة الكتابية والشفوية دوراً حاسماً في التواصل بين الشعوب، يهدف البحث إلى دراسة تاريخ الترجمة في العالم العربي والعصر الإسلامي، ووصف المراحل التي مرت بها الترجمة بدءاً من عهد النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم، مروراً بالدولة الإسلامية، والعصر الأموي والعصر العباسي، ومدرسة طليطلة، والعصر العثماني الذي يشمل عهد محمد علي، وصولاً إلى مشاريع الترجمة في العصر الحديث، كما يوضح البحث الدور المحوري الذي لعبته الترجمة في نقل المعرفة عبر مختلف العصور الإسلامية، ويختتم البحث بتأملات حول الوضع الراهن والمستقبلي للترجمة في العالم العربي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترجمة، تاريخ الترجمة، العالم العربي، الحضارة الإسلامية.

### Abstract

Translation is very important for transmit different culture It helps make a good commendation between different people through the transmission of knowledge, ideas and opinions It has played a pivotal role in the advance world culture Translation has been always a mean of Communication between civilization, actually throughout history, written, and spoken translations have played crucial role interhuman –Communication. The researcher aims at presenting brief chronological account of how the translations has developed form point of view of the Arab world. The researcher also aim to study the history of translation in the Arab world and Islamic era and describe the stages that the translation has passed through from prophat Mohamed peace be up on him era, Islamic state, und Umyyad period, Abbasid period, school of Toled, Ottman period which Cover Mohamed Ali era and the translation projects in the modern era. The study also explain how translators played a key role in

translating knowledge through the different Islamic periods. The paper ends with reflections on the Current and future situation of the translation in the Arabic world.

**Key words:** Translation, History of Translation, Arab World, Islamic Civilization.

### **Introduction**

The emergence of translation as human activity keep pace with human social development. That translation has always been the tool of communication between nations and peoples whose languages differ. Hey–Seung (2006, p. 368). In the same, the Artical at www. ae, Likedin.com mentioned, the translation emerged as result of human activity, including religious, economic and military activities which were able to take peoples out of their geographical borders to intract with their neighbors. The first forms of translation were oral translation due to the Simplicity of liguistic systems and there was not writing. The translation was the tool of understanding between tribes and human groups, whether during Commercial activities that take place in times of Peace, or treaties and agreements that appear in times of war. In ancient times, translation played an important role in spreading religious teachings, artistic and Literary production, and helped in creating interaction between ancient civilizations such as Babylonian (البابلية) , Assyrian (الاشورية) Phoenician(الفينيقية) pharaonic ( , الفرعونية )Syrian and Greek

### **Translation in the drab world**

The Arabs didn't live in isolation from their neighbor of other nations, but rather they mixed with their neighbors from Persian, Romans and others, so they communicated with them and Influenced with each other.

The commercial activity of the Arabs contributed to expand the scope of communication with their neighbors, where strong relations arose which we find it's effect in the Linguistics and cultural Content of these nations. There is no dout that this influence would not reached this level without the activity of translation between the languages of these nations. There are some foreign Words that Arabs used in their speech, and in the same way, the Romans and Persian Languages in included Arabic words, terms and structure which appeared in what they transmitted from Arabs Literature and sciences that contributed to build and develope their civilization.

The Arabs showed great interest in translation since the beginning of the dawn of Islam, during.Which the process of calling to Islam was active outside the borders of the Arabian Peninsula, and the begining of the islamic conquests during the era of the Rightly Guided caliphs(الخلفاء الرشدين) and during the time of the Umaryyad stated ( الدولة الاموية ) where Khalid binyazid bin Muawiya bin Abisufyan was intersted In translating and Arabizing offices in

attempt to Arabize the system of government, then this interest increased in the Abbasid era (الدولة العباسية) due to the conquests that extended east and West, which required Constant Communication to learn about their cultures, sciences and literature. As a result, there was a shift in Arabic from being mainly spoken language to a written and spoken Lingua franca of a vast civilization comprising many ethnic and Linguistics groups (Baker, 1998, p318).

The Arab's Interest in translation reached its peak during the era of Caliph Harun al-Rasheed and his son alMamun, who lavished translators and gave them generous gifts in return for translating non-Arabic books into Arabic.

The most famous translators during this period were Hunayn ibn Ishaq, his son Ishaq ibn Hunayn, Thabit Ibn Qurra, Ibn Al-Batrik, Ibn Al-Himsi, Abu Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus Yahya, Ibn Adi and Ibn al-muqaffa. They were famous for their mastery of the Arabic and Syriac languages, and their expertise in the sciences and fields in which they translated.

In addition, some of them resided for a period in the countries of the source language.

It has been proven that Hunayn ibn Ishaq travelled to Greece and lived in order to master the Greek language. It is worth to mention that the translation movement during the Abbasid era was not limited to translation into Arabic, but rather many Arabic works were translated into foreign languages.

We can distinguish the course of the Arabic translation movement according to the following stages.

#### **Translation in the Arab Islamic state**

In the Arab world, translation dates back to the first half of the second Century AD, during the Assyrians (الاشوريين), who translated a large amount of heritage into Arabic language (Prince, 2000)

Standard Arabic dates back to about 1600 Years, while its origins go back much earlier, and it is the most spoken language within the group of Semitic languages and one of the most widespread languages in the world and is spoken by more than 476 million people distributed over the Arab world and many other neighboring regions.

Before Islam, the Arabs used to travel and move from one region to another during the summer and Winter Period for the purpose of trade. They used Arabic Language every day, as well as other languages.

Such as Syriac and Aramaic. They had to learn those languages in order to communicate with people during their journey. At that time there was no writing system for the Arabic Language.

The emergence of Islam in the seventh century AD was an important historical change, this period was the most important one in the history of the Arab Peoples. The emergence of Islam changed the cultural, political and Linguistics map of the people of that area. The history of translation in the Arab world goes back to the era of the Syrian, in which heritage belonging to the era of paganism was translated into Arabic Accord to Addidaouil (الديداوي) (2000) Jarjas was one of the best of Syrian translators due to his famous Syrian translation of Aristotle's book in the world (2000).

Indeed the era of prophet Mohammed peace up on him is the most important one in the history of Translation in the Arab world. In order to spread Islam, the prophet sent messages to various political

rulers and non-Arabic speaking communities urging them to adopt the new religion. This pushed the prophet to Look for translators to translate the messages from Arabic into other languages and encourage ekourages Muslims to Learn other Languages as well . there are many indications that the era of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, witnessed translation activities, especially with urgent need to spread Islam religion in terms of communication with non-Arab nations. It is said that Salman Al-Farsi was the first to translate the meaning of Surat Alfatiha (the first seven verses on the Holy Koran) into the Persian Language during the days of the prophet Peace be upon him (Hosameldin Mostafa, 2019). Khan (1983, p.44) said that Zaid bin AL-Ansary was famous for being the first translator in Islam, He used to write to Kings and answer in the presence of the prophet, Peace be up on him, and he was fluent

In Syriac, Persian and Greek. There is also an ancient cloak -dating back to 22 AH (هجري),22), and on it a text in the name of Omar bin AL- Aas was written in Greek and was translated in to Arabk

### **The translation in the Umayyad era (750-661)**

As the article at [www.ae.linkedin.com](http://www.ae.linkedin.com) notes, despite the Umayyad interest in conquests and expanding their state, their interest in translation and transfer was no less than their interest in expanding this state, with the aim of strenthing this state and moving it to wards stages of modernty. They tranlated and transferred into Arabic the most Important books of Latin and Greek Sciences, and stso transferred medicine, astronomy, chemistry and architecture in to Syriac (السريانية) In addition to chemistry, which Khalid bin yazid (خالد بن يزيد) was Intersted in to transform metals in to gold. During his reign, the first book was translated from Greek to Arabic Ahkama Nujum" (احكام النجوم) written by the sage "Herms (الحكيم هرمس), The first book on medicine translated during the reign of Marwan bin Al-Hakam Whitten Ahran bin Ayan"

(أهرن بن أعين), the physician who was Contemporary of Heraclius (هرقل) and lived in Alexandria around the year 610 AD, was translated by the Basra physician "Masarjuwayh (من السريالية الى العربية) (الطبيب البصري ماسرجويه) from Syriac to Arabic in the Umayyad era (مصر الدولة الأموية) was Yaqub Al-Rahawi (يعقوب الرهاوي), who translated many books from from Greek to Arabic.

During the Umayyad era, the books of diwans (الدواوين) were translated from Greek to Arabic in the day of Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan ( ( الخليفة عبد الملك بن مروان ) ) in Syria , and from Persian to Arabic in Iraq in the reign of Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf Al-Thaqafi (الحجاج ابن يوسف الثقفي) Like wise, in Egypt, Coptic books were translated into Arabic during the reign of Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Malik (عبد العزيز ابن عبد الملك) .

According to Baker (1998, p. 318), Khalid bin Yazid bin Muawiyah (خالد بن يزيد بن معاوية) nick named Hakim Almarwan (الملقب بحكيم ال مروان) sent to Alexandria to request some books on medicine and chemistry to be translated into Arabic. Ibn Al-Nadim in 1988 says in his book AL-fihrist, Khalid was virtuous, and had a love for Science, so he ordered to bring Greek philosophers who had settled in Egypt, and they were fluent in Arabic. This was the first translation in Islam from one language to another. Khalid was the first to interest in translation and bring close the people of Wisdom and the heads of every craft Al-Jahid said furthermore the reign of the king Marwan bin Abd Al-Malek, Arabicizing the administration naturally revised a certain amount of translation of official documents, especially in the involved stages. Baker (1998, p. 319) added that Byzantine and Persian songs began to appear in translation during this period (661-750) and the translations were done by said Ibn Misjah (1998).

The translation also included treaties on medicine and astrology during this period. The Umayyad Caliphs, no doubt, contributed toward progress in science, arts and translations and laid down the foundation for the great cultural scientific and material progress of the Abbasid period .

#### **Translation in the Abbasid Period (ترجمة في العصر العباسي)**

The translation movement was very active in the Abbasid era after they had established the foundation of their state, which started from the era of Abujaafar Al-Mansur .

The history of translation movement can be divided into two stages. The first stage begins from the establishment of the Abbasid state, until the era of Al-Mamun (750-815 AD). The second stage begins from the era of Al-Mamun until his death (815-833AD). The movement of translation into Arabic in the Abbasid era was helped by the encouragement and collective sponsorship of translators by the Abbasid Caliphs, while the translation in Umayyad

era was Individual attempts linked to the activity of individual Caliphs, not a successive caliphate system, as the Abbasid Considered translation as apillar of their state.

The second Abbasid Caliph Al Mansur (136–158 AH) was intersted in translating books into Arabic from Greek or persion and during his reign some books by Hippocrates and Galen were translated,As well as the book "Kalila and Dimna ( Lindberg, 1978, P.55).

Delisle and Woods Worth (1995) told us that : the translation movement took a distinctive direction.

In the Abbasid Period (750–1250), as they were centered on the translation into rate of Greet Scientific and philosophical material info Arabic, often with Syriac as an intermediary Language" (P. 112)

This period witnessed important developments in Arab translation, which was encouraged and enhanced by the Caliphs During this period, translators focused on Greek philosophy, Indian Sciences and Persian literture.

Through out this period, as the artical at [www.muslim.Philosophy.com](http://www.muslim.Philosophy.com) remarks a new impetus was given to the translation movement thanks for enlightened Patronage of three of the early Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, AL–Mansur, Harun and his son Al–Mamun who founded the "House of wisdom" in Bahgdad to serve as a Library and institute of translation. It was during the reign of AL–Mamun that the translation of medical, Scientific and philosophical texts, chiefly from Greek or Syriac, was placed on an official footing. According to Delisle and Woods Worth (1995), the major translators who flurshed during Al–Mamun's reigh Included yaha Ibn Al–Bitriq, who was credited with translating Into Arabic Plato's Timeaus, Aristotle's on the Heavens and Prior Analytics as well as the Sectr of Secrets.

Alarge number of translators were active during this period.

One of them most out standing them among them is Hunyan Ibn Ishaq , who was paid by Al–Mamun in gold, matching the Weight of the books he translated (Baker, 1998, p. 320)

The artical adds that Harun Al–Rashid was intersted in translation, and sought the help of translators from Lebanon, Egypt and Syria, they are Muslims or non–Muslims who were fluent in a foreign Language In addtion to Arabic. He was keen to provide the house of wisdom in Baghdad with books that were transferred from Asia and Constantinople (القسطنطينية).

As Baker 1998, P.321) remarked the translation movement that took place during the Abbasid era is considred the first organized in history due to Its multiple sources. The Arabs translated from Greek, Persian, Indian, Syriac and Coptic. It was also distinguished by its

diversity, as it covered all Sciences, including philosophy, Logic, medicine, astronomy. mathematics, chemistry, Physics and literature.

In summary the foundation of the House of wisdom school in 830 was decisive factors in bringing about the Arab assimilation of the cultural treasure of china India, Persian, above all, Greece. Intense translation activity continued throughout the empire until it fell in the 13th century.

#### **AL-Jahiz and translation**

Accord to the artical of [www.ae-linked.com](http://www.ae-linked.com), most translation theorists focus on modern and westren theories that have addressed translation from different aspects and deny Al-Jahiz's right to be the first to consider translation as a science, and he set rules for practicing translation His real name Abu Uthman Amr bin Bahr (sic) He was born in Al-Basra in 159 AH during the caliphate of Al-Mahdi, the third Abbasid Caliph, and died there In 255 AH during the caliphate of AL-Muhtadi He was contemporary of the Abbasid caliphs when Arab Islamic culture and civilization were at peak,He wrote in his book (AL-Hayawan) the oldest theory in translation, and thus he preceded the theorists that,we know by about a thousand years.

#### **School of Toledo (مدرسة طليطله)**

According to Delisle and Woods Worth (1995, P.115), the term School of Toledo has been used to designate the flourishing translation activity that took place during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries in Spain, mainly around Toledo. The school was fundamental to the transmission of scientific and philosophical knowled to medieval Europe, The activity was centered on the philosophical and scientific achievement of the Arab world in medicins, mathematic astronomy and astrologey.

More over, Delisle and Woods Worth (1995,p 116), maintained that the introduction of the key words of Arabic scholarship to Europe brought with it increased breadth of knowledge and a more comprehensive View of the world. The western world became acquainted with the Arabic system of numeration, algebra, the prolemiac world system and the works of Hippocrates and Galen, along with important body of Greek and Arabic medical knowledge. The impact of this movement in Creating a kind of renaissance was great.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, translations were essentially from Arabic to Latin, where as in the 13th century they were from Arabic into Spanish.

As can be seen the Arabs undontly are credited with the first organized, large scale translation activity,In history. This activity started during the reign of the Umayyad and reached its peak under the Abbasid.

According to the website, en.m.wikipedia, org, traditionally Toledo was a center of multilingual culture and had prior importance as a center of Learning and translation, beginning in its era under Muslims rule.

Numbers classical works of ancient philosophers and scientists from Persia, India and China; these enabled Arabic speaking Population at that time both in the east and in the west or north Africa and Iberian peninsula to Learn about many ancient classical disciplines that were generally inaccessible to the Christian Parts of western Europe, and Arabic speaking Scientists in the eastern Muslim lands such as Ibn Sina, AL-kindī, Al-Razi, and others had added significant Words to that ancient body of thought.

Some of the Arabic literature was also translated into Latin, Hebrew, and Spanish, such as of Jewish Philosopher Moses Maimonides, Muslim Sociologist, historian Ibn Khaldun, Carthage Citizen Constantine the African, or Persian Al-Khwarizmi.

#### **Translation Under Mohammad Ali**

According to Baker (1998, P. 322) in 1805 Mohammad Ali Ottoman sultan who was originally sent to take control of Egypt on behalf of the Caliph, managed to establish himself as the governor of Egypt and later of Syria and Sudan, He realized that the state could not progress without Learning from the achievements of other civilizations and benefiting from their advancements, Therefore, he prioritized translation, considering it a cornerstone for building his state. To achieve this goal, he commissioned Rifaa al-Tahtawi to establish the School of Language, the first specialized translation school in modern Egypt. He also sent numerous missions abroad to acquire foreign languages and learn about western advancement. Most of these missions were sent to France, the cradle of culture and Civilization, followed by Britain and Russia. The translated works during this period were characterized by their diversity both in the fields of translated sciences such as medicine, engineering, history, philosophy, etc, and in the languages from which they were translated. This diversity proved highly effective.

#### **The translation projects In the modern era**

The revival of translation in the Arab world coincided with establishment of the modern Egyptian state under Muhammad Ali Pash (1805–1848).

This came as part of his policy aimed at advancing education, which included sending scientific missions to European countries such as Italy and France, and establishing higher education institutions. Translation was seen as a means of transferring modern European Knowledge to Egypt. In 1835 Muhammad Ali established the School of Translation,

later known as the School of Languages, as a high education institution Specilizing in the teaching of European Languages.

Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi was appointed its director selecting 80 students.

The school focused on teaching Arabic , French ,Turkish and English languages .

The school successfully produced adist inquished Cader of specialized translators , and its graduates translated 2,000 books in different fields of knowledge Muhammad Ali also purchased scientific books recommended by his emissaries and employees for translation . Acommittee of editors from AL-Azhar university reviewed and standardized the terminology of the translated words .

The first translate book in medicine was " the correct in saying Anatomy " , Muhammad Ali estabhshed the "Amiriyah" press' in Bulaq in 1822 and numbers of other presses to print the translated books and distributed them to employee, students, memberssof the army and members of the public who could obtain them.

the translation movement under Muhammad Ali's successors suffered a decline similar to that of the education system and the nascent state institutions , resulting in a relative contraction.

It did however ,exponence some improvement with the return of Rifa'a al -Tahtawi to head the school of languages during the reign said pash in 1854.

The translation movement then witnessed a second revival with Khediue Ismail's educational reforms, in which al-Tahtawi and Ali Mubark participated Translation flourshed with the return of missions to European schools. In addition to their contribution to journalism, Levantines played a prominent role in translation movement at the end of the 19th century Generally, translation efforts during this period, especially with the beginning of the British occupation of Egypt, focused on translating western works that addressed issues of reforms, modernization, and the relationship between Islam and the west.

Among the most important organized translation experiences in the Arab world in recent times.

#### **The committee for Authorship, Translation, and Publication**

The committee for Authorship, Translation, and publication , established in Egypt at the beginning of 20th, is a good example of dilligent and productive work among intellectuals. The committee Composed of graduates from the High Teachers' Training College and the School of

Law in 1914, Its membership later expanded to Include Individuals from other professions.

Its bylaws were established in 1915, and was headed by Ahmed Amin from that time until his death in 1954, The Committee aimed to elevate education by Authoring, scientific text books for school students and to advance and educate society through the systematic expansion of authorship and translation in different fields.

#### **The Thousand Books Project (First and Second)**

The first editions of this project appeared in 1955 under the supervision of the Cultural administration of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. It focused on major international works and classics, including pure science applied sciences, general knowledge, philosophy, psychology, religion, social sciences, languages, fine arts literature in its Various branches, history, geography and biographies, The project ceased in 1986 under. It was resumed under the title "The Thousand Book Project II, published by the Egyptian General Book Organization. This second phase focused on translating a modern books as attempt to engage with the contemporary global scientific and cultural revolution. The project's publications were divided into 19 fields of knowledge.

#### **The Arab organization for Translation**

The Arab Organization for Translation was established in 1999 in Beirut with the aim of transferring knowledge, publishing global thoughts and developing the Arabic language. This was after conducting several surveys procedures studies of the state of translation in the Arab world. The organization works to achieve qualitative and quantitative leap in translation activity in the Arab world, and contributing to the integration of science within contemporary Arab Culture, promoting science education and scientific research in Arabic, and stimulating demand for translated books and encouraging their use in various fields of development. Further more. The organization operates by establishing a network of relationships with translators in the Arab world and exchanging information.

#### **Conclnsion**

The translation movement in the Arab and Islamic world between the third and fourth centuries AH ((s), provided important services to the Arabic Language, enriching It with terms and expressions related to various sciences ,and raising the cultural and scientific level of students

The translation movement in the modern era has had an undeniable impact on raising the scientific and cultural level of the present generation. There is considerable different depending on the level of interest in each Country, Moreover this movement in our Arab

countries is generally less impetus than in developed Countries, where 2840 foreign books Were translated between 1970 and 1980.

The goals of translation in the Arab world can be summarized as follows, to emphasize the unity of the Arabic Language and Its ability to express the needs of the modern age, and to include this language in the list of internationally recognized languages.

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