

Original Paper

An Analysis of the Role of the Arab Centennial Translation Movement and Its Guiding Significance

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Abstract

The Arab Centennial translation movement is a long and complex historical practice that set off a wide spread of ideas and culture in the world, promoted the rapid development of Islam and the exchange and integration between different cultures in the world, brought a new way of life to the Arabs, and at the same time promoted the development of civilization in the Islamic world.

Keywords

Arab Centennial Translation Movement, Islamic Culture, Abbasid Dynasty, the Belt and Road Initiatives

1. Introduction

The Arab Centennial translation movement is a historical testimony to the cultural exchanges, collisions and integration of Islamic civilization between the West and the East, which has promoted the cultural development and social progress of the Islamic world and civilizational exchanges among the peoples of the world. This Centennial translation movement is also a long and complex historical practice that has had a far-reaching impact on future generations. For example, it spread Islam to European countries; promoted the spread and development of Islam; and facilitated cultural exchanges and cooperation between Arab countries and China.

From the 8th century A.D. onwards, a force emerged on the Arabian Peninsula against foreign invaders. They responded to the Islamic world in their own unique way: on the one hand, they fought against the foreign colonizers with their own inherent culture and customs; on the other hand, they spread the foreign invaders by "translating" them into the Arab culture and Arabic language with their own national characteristics, or reflecting their national characteristics and positive significance.

On the one hand, they spread Islam to European countries and China, and on the other hand, they

spread Islamic thought and culture to other parts of the world. The dissemination of Islamic thought and culture through their translation activities has had a far-reaching impact on the Islamic world: on the one hand, it has contributed to the development of civilization in the Islamic world; on the other hand, it has also promoted civilizational exchanges and cooperation among other peoples of the world. The Abbasid dynasty was the golden age of the Arab Centennial translation movement. Its capital, Baghdad, with its advantageous geographic location, created good conditions for cultural exchanges between the East and the West, and the large number of intermarriages between pagans and Muslims made it possible to externalize the increasingly diversified inner religious spirit into the source of the Centennial translation movement, accelerated the flow of books and the development of science and technology, and created the conditions for the vigorous development of the Centennial translation movement. The academic research and cultural activities carried out on the basis of translation completely changed the material and spiritual deprivation of the Arab nation in the early period, promoted the development of natural science in the Middle Ages, and gave birth to the Arab-Islamic culture. Under the background of the “Belt and Road” initiative, the Centennial translation movement has certain significance for the cultivation of translation talents and cross-cultural exchanges of the countries along the route.

2. The Rise of the Arab Centennial Translation Movement and Its Development

The Arab Centennial Translation Movement inherited the ancient civilizations of the East and the West in the form of translations, and has been called the “Third Wave of Oriental Wisdom”. The Centennial translation movement of this period began with the Omayyad dynasty, when a small number of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, who were fluent in many languages, translated Greek medical, philosophical, and natural science works into Arabic. The Abbasid dynasty, on the basis of inheriting the rich cultural heritage of the previous dynasty, absorbed the culture of the Arabian Peninsula and foreign cultures of the same period, and pushed the translation movement to a climax on a scale never seen before.

The transfer of the political center facilitated the import of ideas. And the Islamization of the regions under the empire was already in its final stage. Cultural traditions rooted in the Qur'an and the Arabic language were permanently preserved, and a new Islamic civilization, characterized by Islam and multi-ethnic integration, began to take shape.

The city of Baghdad was strategically located at the key node of the East-West commercial route, and moreover, the Silk Road. The Arabs had emphasized commerce since ancient times, which could bring huge profits to the empire. Citizens lived a comfortable and affluent life, with a full range of entertainment venues and leisure facilities, and the caliph's court was luxurious and lived a lavish life, making Baghdad just like a world city.

The fusion of peoples allowed the ancient civilizations of Byzantium, Persia, and India to begin to influence the Arabian rulers. For the Arabians were bound to be dwarfed by these civilizations, but they

brought with them from the desert keen senses, intense curiosity, an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a greater potential for talent. They tirelessly studied, absorbed and assimilated the cultural heritage of these ancient lands and made it their own, making it an intrinsic ingredient of Islamic civilization.

In addition, the scope of the submissive people was widened, and the believers of all religions that were not Islamic could not only enjoy the same treatment, but also hold on to their ancient cultures and maintain their national languages in the countryside and in their own homes. Coupled with the conversion of some of the believers to Islam, they also acquired Arabic, the official language of the empire, and subsequently gained multilingual knowledge.

In addition, the papermaking technology was also introduced to the Abbasid Empire with Tang prisoners of war in 751 A.D., providing a material medium for the preservation and dissemination of cultural achievements. The replacement of expensive parchment with relatively inexpensive paper by the Arabs made written records and the circulation of books more convenient, expanding the demand for scholarly works and thus contributing to the emergence of the translation movement on a large scale (Philip, 2008).

3. Characteristics and Influence of the Arab Centennial Translation Movement

The Arab Centennial translation movement has had a far-reaching impact in the Islamic world, and the exchanges and collisions between the Arab countries and the European culture have brought about profound changes in the culture of the Islamic world, and have played a great role in promoting the cultural development and social progress of the Islamic world. The Abbasid dynasty was the golden age of the Arab translation movement, and the academic research and cultural activities carried out on the basis of translation revolutionized the material and spiritual deprivation of the Arab nation in the early period, promoted the development of natural sciences in the Middle Ages, and gave birth to Arab-Islamic culture.

3.1 Promoting the Development of Natural Sciences

During this era, a large number of works on natural sciences and medicine were translated into Arabic. Translators studied astronomical and geographic knowledge, digested the source texts and then translated them creatively, annotating and explaining in Arabic any unclear or obscure points, and then exporting them in the target language, which was easy for Muslims to accept, thus enhancing the universality of the texts and promoting the popularization of Muslim science and culture. In this way, the essence of the nation's culture was recorded in Arabic, and the Arabs, who were originally ignorant of terms such as arithmetic and medicine, and who knew nothing of Aristotle's philosophy, were able, in a very short time, to express the finest theories of Euclid, and to express the theorem of sines in Indian mathematics, in Arabic.

All up and down the Abbasid dynasty, there was a strong academic culture. Aristotle's Theory of Instruments, among others, soon gained importance and became the basis for the study of humanism in Islam, which still holds an important place today. The influence of Neoplatonism can be clearly seen in

Sufism in Islam. The doctrinal ideas of Aristotle and Plato were introduced to Europe through Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushaid, thus exerting a decisive influence on the study of philosophy in medieval Europe. Influenced by the translation movement, the Islamic world ushered in an era of original contributions to science.

3.2 The Formation of Arab-Islamic Culture

While the natural sciences flourished, the Centennial translation movement also gave birth to the magnificent Arab-Islamic culture. With the expansion of the empire, Islamic civilization was spread to the vast conquered areas. During the Omayyad period, Islam only existed as a foreign religion in the conquered regions, while Christianity still had a profound influence in the region, and the beliefs of the inhabitants did not change much (Huang & Zhang, 2021). With the influence of intermarriage, politics and other factors, the Islamization of the Arab empire was gradually promoted in the conquered areas, and fused with the local culture to form a splendid and complex Arab-Islamic culture.

The unity of language is conducive to resolving ideological conflicts and promoting national cultural identity. In the course of the Centennial translation movement, Arabic became the official language of the empire, the civilization of the neighboring countries declined, and the status of Arab-Islamic culture gradually took shape. Since then, Arab-Islamic culture has shone brightly and left a deep mark on the formation of European civilization. Although the Arab empire fell apart due to religious and political struggles, the Arab-Islamic civilization left behind by the translation movement still shines brightly.

4. Guiding Significance and Inspiration

4.1 Historical Significance

Although various cultures in the world collide, the main thing is to exchange and learn from each other, to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, and to integrate them. The Arabs translated the cultural essence of ancient Greece, ancient Rome, ancient India, ancient Persia and other countries, and on this basis created a rich and colorful Arab-Islamic civilization, which later in turn influenced the European Renaissance and the development and progress of Europe. Later on, Napoleon's eastern expedition brought about cultural exchanges and fusion between the Arab and Western cultures. Culture is both a value created by human beings and characterized by ethnicity, region and era, so different cultures need to communicate. Such communication cannot be separated from translation, because language and writing are the most important carriers of culture.

From a general point of view, the Arab Centennial translation movement is a historical and cultural movement promoted by a group of intellectuals with a high level of thought and cultural cultivation. Due to the serious cultural imbalance within the Arab nation, the Arabs could not understand Muslim thoughts and concepts, and in order to popularize Islam in Muslim countries, it was necessary to disseminate and propagate the concepts of Islam through the translation of Islamic classics. Therefore, this movement not only set off a wide spread of ideas and culture in the Islamic world, but also promoted the exchange and integration of different cultures in the cultural system of the Islamic world.

The Arabs, through the unprecedented translation campaign of the mid-century, hungrily imbibed the cultural and academic legacy of the ancient civilizations. However, they were not satisfied with the knowledge gained through translation, but went on to conduct more extensive and in-depth research. In the process of translation, they carried out meticulous proofreading, interpretation, evaluation and correction of the original versions. Through this kind of “borrowed” academic research, many new inventions were added, thus creating a new type of Arab-Islamic culture, which was introduced to Europe through Spain and Sicily, and had a catalytic effect on the European Renaissance movement in the 14th-16th centuries. It catalyzed the Renaissance movement in Europe in the 14th and 16th centuries.

The history of the Arab Centennial Translation Movement, as a history of Islamic translation, has promoted the popularization, dissemination and development of Islam in the Arab countries; its rich experience and achievements are also important guides for other fields. The impact of the Arab translation movement has been enormous, and its influence has been rare in the history of the world, and it has changed the way of life of the people in the Islamic world and the Arab region as a whole. We should fully recognize the Arab translation movement and its significance, and deeply understand its complexity and twists and turns.

4.2 Practical Significance

With the in-depth promotion of the “Belt and Road” initiative, cultural exchanges among countries along the route are becoming more and more frequent, and the discipline of translation is not only limited to the field of language, but also interdisciplinary translation has become a future trend, which is a new challenge. During the time of Abbasid translation movement, some translators in the Palace of Wisdom were also outstanding astronomers, who needed to carry out precise celestial measurements and calculations while translating, in which translation facilitated the development of natural sciences as a tool for acquiring knowledge. As far as the translator is concerned, the translation activity is complex, and the knowledge of mathematics, astronomy and linguistics is indispensable to accomplish the translation task, which requires a high level of comprehensive quality for the translator. Translation is not an isolated and soulless code conversion, but an act of transmitting information through the medium of one or more languages, and its ultimate goal is to meet the needs of human civilization and the information transmission of different societies and cultures, which is far from being enough to limit oneself only to the language itself. Contemporary translation research should realize the in-depth integration of multiple disciplines, break the barrier of “language-centrism”, promote interdisciplinary development, and strive to build a new disciplinary community. Translation talents should actively seek new academic growth points, focus on different fields, conduct multi-dimensional translation research, combine translation with specific disciplinary practices, integrate interdisciplinary translation research results, and enhance the core competitiveness of translation talents.

A good academic environment is a prerequisite for promoting knowledge progress and realizing academic innovation. During the Abbasid period, translation activities were organized and carried out

on a large scale under the call of the state, focusing on and rewarding academic activities, establishing academic institutions, and the whole city of Baghdad had a strong academic atmosphere, and both natural and social sciences were developed greatly. This provides a reference for the further creation of academic environment in other countries. Under the promotion of the “Belt and Road” initiative, international academic exchanges have become increasingly close, and the establishment of the “Palace of Wisdom” has brought the translation movement to a climax, with different schools of thought expressing their views freely, and the winds of academic controversy and free discussion prevailing, which has brought useful benefits to the construction of academic culture in colleges and universities in countries along the Belt and Road. This has brought useful inspiration for the construction of academic style in colleges and universities in countries along the Belt and Road. As the wind vane of scientific research, universities and colleges shoulder the important responsibility of cultivating and delivering scientific research talents for the society. College students, as the main body of college education, are highly plastic, so how to cultivate students’ innovative consciousness and improve their interdisciplinary comprehensive ability is a problem that needs to be solved urgently in college teaching and research. Excellent academic style is the foundation of academic governance, and a good scientific research culture can educate people in the invisible, and play an enlightening and promoting role in the cultivation of students' innovative consciousness and innovative ability. Academic development and academic environment are inseparable, creating a good academic atmosphere for the training of innovative talents to provide security conditions, and further promote the development of scientific and technological innovation.

Today China is engaged in exchanges and cooperation with other countries in the world and faces some problems and challenges arising in the process of economic globalization. As to how to correctly recognize and deal with the increasingly close economic, political and cultural relations with other countries, and to play a greater role in the international arena, the successful experience of the centuries-old Arab Centennial translation movement has also inspired us: We must adhere to the path of development in line with national and social conditions and with Chinese characteristics.

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