

Contributions of Translations Activities In Malay, Chinese and Indian Civilization

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Abstract: This paper intends to propose the activities of translations in transferring knowledge from one civilization to another. In this paper, the translation activities among the Malay, Chinese and Indian civilizations will be revealed. Hence, it will be seen that translation is a very big medium to transfer knowledge from any sources from this world. At this point, the paper sheds a light on translation activities among three major races in Malaysia which is Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Key words: Translation; Malay; Chinese; Indian; Civilization

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation activities gave very big contributions in past civilizations. The activities of translations were responsible in transferring knowledge from one civilization to another. These efforts played a big part in developing past civilizations. Contributions of translations in the development of past civilizations were enormous. A positive process of interaction between civilizations is the transfer of knowledge through translation. This process is said to happen smoothly and had positive impacts on the development of each civilization.

Translation activities are even more significant in modern civilizations. The rapid development of knowledge in various fields such as sciences, technology, languages, literatures, and so on so forth, require us to obtain information as fast as we can. As we can't possibly master other languages in a short period of time, we need translation to allow us gain knowledge and information from the other languages.

Nowadays in Malaysia, there are three major races. These races are Malay, Chinese and Indian. Among these three races, Malay is majority. In this paper, we will reveal the translation activities among the Malay, Chinese and Indian civilizations. Hence, we will see that translation is a very big medium to transfer knowledge from any sources from this world.

2. MALAY CIVILIZATION

In the Malay civilization, translation played an important role in the movement of knowledge and ideas from other civilizations. In the earlier century, some of the ideas and knowledge from the epic Ramayana and Mahabrata (Indian civilization) was rewritten in books written by locals. Buddhist script and text were also translated from Sanskrit to Chinese while thousands students came to Srivijaya to study Buddhism.

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*Received January 30, 2011; accepted March 15, 2011.

When the Islamic religion was spread to Southeast Asia, the translators play the major role of translating books written in Arabic into Malay language. Some of these translators were foreigners, Arab and Indian traders who settled in major ports in Southeast Asia (Malacca, Aceh, Brunei, etc) while some of them were locals who came back after studying in Mecca, Madinah and Egypt. From the activities of translation, Islam was spread quickly among the Malay people.

In the Malay world, Islam began to spread in the 12th century in northern Sumatra and soon Muslim kingdoms were established in Jawa, Sumatra and mainland Malaysia. Despite the colonization of the Malay world, Islam spread very fast in that area covering present day Indonesia, Malaysia, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand.

One of the reasons why many writers were keen to write about the Islamic history was historical writings mainly about religious teachers; prophets and messengers of gods and historical events related to the Islamic religion are something that is encouraged in the Islamic society. Malays who have accepted the Islamic religion since the 12th century are not exceptions to this. Hence, it is considered as an everlasting contribution to the world and hereafter. As long as it is read and used by the Muslim society, the writer will continue to receive the rewards. So for those who knew about this will strive to produce as many religious books as possible.

So that, many villagers from Malay societies were keen to send their childrens to study in Mecca and Madinah in order to understanding Islam. After they have finished their studies, they will come back and gave very good contributions to the Malay societies especially in the translation activities. For instance, in Southeast Asia, the Malay people recognized Hujjatul Islam al-Imam al-Ghazali very well through his famous book *Ihya' Ulumiddin* that has been translated to Malay language in Jawi script. The book was translated by a Muslim scholar Syeikh Abdul Samad al-Falimbani who had studied in Mecca and Madinah for 35 years.

The translation's book from *Ihya' Ulumiddin* is namely as *Sayr al-Salikin*. Besides the *Ihya' Ulumiddin*, others books of Imam al-Ghazali also has been translated by Syeikh Abdul Samad al-Falimbani such as *Bidayatul Hidayah*, etc. These translations activities contribute very good knowledge about Islam among the Malay people. Besides that there was a Malay scholar Syeikh Idris al-Marbawi. He was studied in al-Azhar University for many years. He has translated *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* to Malay Language namely as *Bahrul Madhi*. This book is very popular until now.

In the other hand, the Malay civilization was also spread to others with the translations activities. The *Sejarah Melayu* or the Malay Annal has been translated into many languages. The English translation was done by John Leyden, German by Paul Bruch, Dutch by C. Hooykaas, Japanese by Asahi Tairo, French by A. Mersier, Tamil by Rama Subbiah and Chinese by Tsu Yun-Tsiao (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim : 1992).

Moreover, *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, was translated into French by Edouard Dulaurier in 1849 and Arristide Marre in 1874, into English by J.P Mead in 1914 and certain parts of *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* were translated by James Low in 1849 into English (Sidek Fadzil : 2001). These Malay works were translated into other languages for deeper understanding of the Malay people and their culture. Whatever the scholars' rationale, through those translation works, European gained knowledge of the Malays at the turn of the last century.

3. CHINESE CIVILIZATION

Buddhism was founded in India in the 6th century BC and spread to China during the first century BC. As Buddhist scriptures were written in Sanskrit, the Chinese had difficulties in understanding it. One of the efforts done was the translation of Buddhism scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. Within a period of more than 700 years, Chinese managed to reorganize the Buddhist doctrine into a collection called *Tripitaka*, which involved the efforts of more than 200 translators (Cheng Gek Nai : 2001). Among the translators who made big contributions were monk Fa Xian during East Jin Dynasty and monk Xuan Zang during Tang Dynasty. The translation works were said to be carried out until the 13th century.

According to Chinese records, the Sui Dynasty had listed a collection of 60 titles on Indian astronomy, which were translated into Chinese. Meanwhile, there were medical books of Indian medicines and surgery

techniques in ophthalmology, pediatric and gynecology translated during the Tang Dynasty (Cheng Gek Nai : 2001).

4. INDIAN CIVILIZATION

During the Indian civilization, translation activities also took place actively. During the Delhi administration, Indian's writings especially literatures were translated into Persian. Two great Muslims scholars played important roles. They were Zainul Abidin of Kashmir and Hussain Shah of Bengal. Meanwhile, knowledge of Indian astronomy and medicine attracted the Muslims' scholars' interest. It was said that al-Biruni, a great Muslim scholar, an expert in Sanskrit and Prakrit, translated those articles into Arabic (Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja & Ayadurai Letchumanan : 1998).

Translation activities became vigorous during the Moghul Dynasty, especially during the administration of Akhbar Khan. He encouraged the translation of works like Mahabarata and Ramayana, and the writings of Buddhist and Jain into Persians. On the other hand he encouraged Persians books to be translated into Hindi (Azaharudin Mohd. Dali : 2000). These efforts gave an opportunity to the local community to understand Islamic knowledge and facts about Islam. Likewise, Muslims would be able to understand the Indian religion, culture and thoughts. These sharing of traditions, created harmonious environments between Muslims and Hindus whilst strengthening the Indian civilization.

CONCLUSION

Translation continues to play a major role in development of knowledge from other parts of the world. Translation activities also play a big role to transfer knowledge between any civilizations in this world. Although the work of translators became easier by the day with the modern technology and with the use of tech equipment, translators still need the skill and knowledge of source and target language in order to translate efficiently.

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