The **Arabic translation movement** was a widely supported movement under Islamic ruling that resulted in the translation of materials from various different languages, especially middle Persian texts to Arabic.
According to Ibn an-Nadīm in his Fihrist the translation movement seems rather to have been instigated by Barmakids. [1]

Dmitri Gutas, in his Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic translation Movement in Baghdad mentions that available evidence shows that the translation movement privileged Persian texts. He emphasizes that Ibn an-Nadīm writing about a translation of the Almagest in the library of Harun al-Rashid was the only explicit reference to a contribution of the library of Harun al-Rashid to translation of Greek texts. [2]
It successfully formed an overlap of civilizations and established new cultural and political maps. Islamic rulers contributed to the movement in several ways, including the creation of translation classes to organize its flow of throughout the different periods of the Islamic Empire. 

The translation movement played a significant role in the development of Arab scientific knowledge, as many scientific theories had emerged from different origins.
Later, Western culture was introduced to the preserved Arabic translated collections because majority of their original scripts were lost.\[5\]

**Pre-Islamic period**

The Sasanian Empire was the last Persian Empire before the rise of Islam. During the Pre-Islamic period, there was not an Arabic writing system. Arabs learned a variety of languages including Syriac and Aramaic in order to be able to communicate when they traveled for trading.\[4\] They traveled in what was called the "journey (caravan) of summer and winter", and were led by one
of the famous Arab tribes, Quraysh. Translation has been traced back to the beginning of the second century CE when Syriacs translated their customs and beliefs into Arabic.[6]

Academy of Gondishapur

The ninth Sassanid king, Shapur II, built the Academy of Gondishapur, a medical center, library, and university in which anatomy, medicine, philosophy, and theology were taught.[7]

Khosrow I later added an observatory that taught dentistry, astronomy, mathematics, military command, architecture,
workmanship, and agriculture and irrigation. The Academy of Gondishapur became the most important medical center in the sixth and seventh centuries CE.\[7\]

Later in the seventh century CE, the Sasanian Empire fell to Muslim armies, but the Muslims preserved the Academy of Gondishapur.\[7\]

**Islamic Golden Age**

The Islamic Golden Age was considered to be the landmark for the translation of the Arabic language.\[4\]
The Lifetime of Muhammad (610-632 CE)

Muhammad, the founder and prophet of Islam, sent messages to many political leaders and communities of Persia, Syria, and Rome that did not speak Arabic, urging them to consider adopting his new religion of Islam. This led Muhammad on the search for a personal scribe that would be responsible for translating the Arabic messages into the languages possessed by the recipients, as well as encouraging Muslims to learn foreign languages. Zayd ibn Thabit, Muhammad's most accomplished scribe, was ordered to learn
Syriac, Hebrew, and Persian so that he could communicate with Jews in their own language.[4]

The central principle adopted by Islam was to urge others to search for knowledge because they believed that understanding the relationship between the creation and Allah (the creator of the universe) to be the best way to understand the world. This principle was the key concept behind their endeavors to spread their religion around the world.

Rashidun Caliphate Period (632-661 CE)
Upon the death of Muhammad in 632 CE, four caliphs collectively known as the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" were appointed to lead the Islamic Empire. Together, they formed the Rashidun Caliphate.

During the second Rashidun caliph, Omar ibn al-Khattab's, time leading the Islamic Empire, the message of the Quran had become increasingly popular among surrounding civilizations. The Islamic Empire expanded, contributing to the search for multilingual teachers and translators to teach the word of the Quran and the Arabic language.
The expansion of the multilingual empire led the third Rashidun caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, to order that the Quran be compiled into a unified language.

**Umayyad Period (661-750 CE)**

Translation gained propulsion during the Umayyad period and Arabic became the official and common language of the Islamic Empire.

Arabs began to encounter the knowledge of Greeks, most of which came from remaining scholars of the Byzantine period.[4] Syriacs were a key factor in the
translation of Arabic materials because while Arabs were unable to understand the Greek language, Syriacs had been communicating with Greeks for over ten centuries. The first translation from Greek to Arabic was produced by Khalid ibn Yazid, the son of the second Umayyad caliph, Yazid ibn Muawiya.\[5\]

During the fourth Umayyad caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan's, time as king, the translation of official documents and medicine and astrology treaties began to take place. The translation of Byzantine and Persian songs began to take place by Ibn Misjah. Greek gnomologia ("wisdom
literature"), including that associated with Aristotle, was translated during this period and significantly influenced Arabic poetry in later centuries.\[4\]

A polyglot fluent in Arabic, Syriac, Persian, and Greek, Hunayn ibn Ishaq, was known as one of the best translators of his time. He focused on the field of medicine, including work by Aristotle, Plato, Galen, and Hippocrates. With the help of his son, Ishaq ibn Hunayn, and his nephew, Habash al-Hasib al-Marwazi, at least ninety-five works by Galen, fifteen works by Hippocrates, Plato's Timaeus, Aristotle's Metaphysics, On the Soul, and On
Generation and Corruption were translated.[8]

The Arabic language reached communities in Transoxiana, Morocco, and Andalusia, and was soon adopted as their official language.[5]

The Umayyad caliphs significantly contributed to the translation of science and arts, which laid out a long-term foundation for the Islamic Empire.[4]

As Islam expanded, Muslims preserved other cultures and utilized their technology and knowledge in science to stimulate the development of their own knowledge.
Abbasid Period (750-1258 CE)

The Arabic translation movement continued to develop throughout the Abbasid period. The Abbasid period included one of the most important markers in the history of the movement: the translation of Islam's central religious text, the Quran. [9]
The second Abbasid caliph, Abu Ja'far Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur, moved the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, the location of the Persian Library. Here, Abu Ja'far Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur ordered the translation of many science and philosophy books as well as other
literature written in Greek, Syriac, and Persian into Arabic.\(^\text{[10]}\)

**House of Wisdom**

Under the fifth Abbasid caliph, Harun al-Rashid, the House of Wisdom was founded as a library for the collections of translated books and works. It imitated the Academy of Gondishapur by employing its past graduates.\(^\text{[5]}\) Later, under the seventh Abbasid caliph, Abu al-Abbas al-Ma'mun ibn Harun al-Rashid, the House of Wisdom was turned into an institute of translation.\(^\text{[10]}\)
When the Mongols invaded Baghdad in 1258 CE, the House of Wisdom was burned down and its collections were thrown into the Tigris river, concluding the Islamic Golden Age.[10]

See also

- Islamic Golden Age
- Islamic philosophy
- Science in the medieval Islamic world

References


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Further reading


'Abbasaid Society (2nd-4th 5th-10th centuries). Routledge.

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- Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
- How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs, in which the Barmakids play a considerable role. They also translated Indian mathematics books of Aryabhata and Brahmagupta. Arabs were mostly responsible for spreading of Indian number system and arithmetic throughout the world.
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title=Translation_Movement&oldid=912383048"

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