

Loq-Man Translations

EUROPEAN TRANSLATORS (Toledo)

As early as eleventh century Toledo became a center for the transmission of Arabic (Islamic) culture and science to Europe. A number of translators flourished there. Among the scholars, who flocked to it from all over Europe, were Gerard of Cremona (1117- 1187) and John of Seville. Other famous translators were Adelard of Bath, Robert of Chester, Michael Scot, Stephenson of Saragossa, William of Lunis and Philip of Tripoli. The early translations were primarily into Latin and some into Hebrew. Subsequent translations were done from Latin or Hebrew into vernacular languages of Europe. Many translators at Toledo had neither command over the Arabic language nor sufficient knowledge of the subject matter. They translated word for word and, where they failed to understand, Latinized the Arabic words. Under the supervision of Archdeacon Domenico Gundisalvi, and with the cooperation of the Hebrew Johannes ben David, the school of the Archbishop of Toledo rendered into Latin a large number of Arabic works on science and philosophy.

Gerard, who reminded Hunayn ibn Ishaq of Toledo, translated into Latin more than seventy Arabic books on different subjects. He was born in 1114 in Cremona, Italy. He went to Toledo, Spain to learn Arabic so he could translate available Arabic works into Latin. Gerard remained there for the rest of his life and died in 1187 in Toledo, Spain (Andalusia). Gerard's name is sometimes written as Gherard. Among his translations were the surgical part of Al-Tasrif of Al-zahravi (Albucasis), the Kitab al-Mansuri of AL-Razi (Rhazes) and the Qanun of Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Banu Musa's works, Al-Biruni's commentry on Al-Khawarizmi (after whom concept "Algorithm" is named), the tables of Jabir b. Aflah and Zarqali. John of Seville under the patronage of Raymond translated several works of Avicenna, Qusta Ibn Luqa and Al-Faraghni.

Gundisalvi translated the Kitab al-Nafs (Anima), the Kitab al-Shifa (Sufficiencia) of Ibn Sina, Al-Kullyat (Colliget) of Ibn Rushd's (Averroes) commentary on it. The Italian Plato of Tivoli, Michael Scotus, Robert of Chester and Hermanus Allemanus

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(Teutonicus) were other famous translators of the thirteenth century. They flourished at Tarragona, Leon, Segovia, Pamplona, and other northern cities of Spain. Thus Spanish Arab learning permeated through all Europe. It passed from the portals of Toledo through Provence and the Alpine passes into Lorrains, Germany, Central Europe and England.

Adelard of Bath was the first of a long series of Arabic scholars of England who traveled extensively in search of Arabic books. Adelard was born in 1075 in Bath, England. He studied and taught in France and visited Syria, Sicily and Spain before returning to Bath. He became a teacher of the future King Henry II. Adelard died in 1160. He translated several works on Mathematics and Astronomy. Among the most important works he translated was the Astronomical tables Al-Majriti (1126). Adelard made a Latin translation of Euclid's Elements from Muslim sources. He also translated Al-Khwarizmi's tables and other works on the abacus and astrolabe. His 'Quaestiones naturales' consists of 76 scientific discussions derived from Muslim sciences.

Sicily and Spain were the principal gateways of propagation of Arab (Islamic) civilization to Europe. The two "baptized Sultans" of Sicily, Roger II and Frederick II, Hohenstaufen, were the patrons of Arab culture and learning. (Muslim presence in Sicily began in 827 C.E., and they ruled it for more than 250 years, ending in 1091 C.E.). From Sicily the fruits of Islamic sciences and culture spread through Italy across the Alps, Lotharingia (Lorraine), Liege, Gorze and Cologne. The other gateway was Spain through which it penetrated slowly beyond the Pyrenees into western and south-western France.

Several European orientalist like Mirabilis, after making the tour of the Muslim countries, were so much impressed that on their return home encouraged their students to leave the European schools for those of the Arabs and this yielded beneficial results. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Christian Europe was learning medicine, mathematics, physics, chemistry and astronomy, through its students returning home from the Universities of Cordova, Toledo, Seville and Granada.

Constantine, the African, traveled for thirty years in Muslim lands and studied under Arab (Muslim) teachers. He translated several Arabic works into Latin. Constantine organized the first medical school at Salerno. This was followed by the

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opening of schools at Montpellier and Paris. Recognizing that all scientific works were written in Arabic, several European universities and schools, including those at Toledo, Narbonne, Naples, Balogna and Paris, taught Arabic to speed up the transmission of Arab (Muslim) knowledge

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