

A Significant of Bait Al-Hikmah in Development of Scientific Work in Abbasids Period and Downfall of this Revolutionary Institute

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Abstract. The house of wisdom was a large library and translation institute of medieval period. It was established by Abbasids in Baghdad, Iraq. It was known as Bait al-Hikmah. The establishment of Bait al-Hikmah was revolutionary step where Greek, Persian, India etc. scientific work were translated into Arabic. The study examines the importance of this scientific institute which contributed to the scientific advancement and growth of Muslim world. It was a very important institution of translation works and it was consider a major intellectual centre. Its precious effects influenced Eastern and Western world for many years and the most eminent universities throughout the world took the advantages of its blessings. Bait al-Hikmah was not translated but also many scholars contributed original works. Abbasid caliph Harun al Rashid and Mamun emphasized on scientific works. That period Abbasids was flourished all over the world because of that Abbasid period called golden period of Islam. In this paper I focus significant of Bait al-Hikmah to the preserve of Greek, Persian and Indian work and developed the scientific work.

Keyword: Bait al-Hikmah, Abbasid Period, Translation, Greek, Persian, Indian, Scientific Work.

1. Introduction

The House of Wisdom was a collective institutional and imperial expression of early Abbasid intellectual ambition and official state policy. Over time, the house of wisdom came to comprise a translation bureau, a library and repository and academic scholars and intellectuals from across the empire. It was known as Bait al-Hikmah. It was a very important institution of translation works and it was consider a major intellectual centre during the Islamic Golden Age, I fully realized that this was the revolutionary institution. All over the world scholar came here to gain the knowledge and Baghdad became richest in knowledge and also other field. Muslim believe in one God and fellow the Quran instructions, they did hard work on knowledge and gave emphasised to scientific works and also recognised the importance of knowledge. So that period Muslim had have political and economic power that was this period called golden period of Islam and no doubt Bait al-Hikmah was most important part of this period.

2. Bait Al-Hikmah

Al mighty Allah has invited man in the Holy Quran to study science in different ways. Allah, in many verses of the Holy Quran has asked people to observe and study or think carefully different natural objects, like, stars, rivers, plants, animal, birds etc. and learn or gather knowledge from them: thus Allah says:

“See how Allah did originate creation” (29:20)

“See they not how Allah originates creation?” (29:19)

And Prophet Muhammad himself introduced a novel and peculiar ideology base on divinity. This ideology which was based on the belief in unity of God and Resurrection Day led the human being to a world beyond the world of nature and material. Although this ideology opened people’s eye into the world of nature and material, it taught them how to conceive the essence of the objects, creatures and the wonders of nature. It invited mankind to speculate and take the advantage of observation, sense and experience. Undoubtedly, under the shadow of this ideology, Muslims’ knowledge and insight became deeper and they became more motivated to acquire knowledge and Wisdom. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad’s eloquent statements and the remarks of his famous followers regarding the high position of knowledge, made the

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people more eager to acquire knowledge and Wisdom. Prophet Muhammad himself highly encouraged Muslim to learn. Even after the battle of Badr, those captives who were not able to pay ransom, but had the ability to teach reading and writing to ten children from Medina could be freed.⁵ I fully analysed that Inspired by such Ayat the scientists and scholars of Abbasid period had great stress on the scientific learning and knowledge. Abbasids caliph especially Harun-al-Rashid and Mamun fully realized the truth that the actual happiness of the people is knowledge and education means to search truth.

So Bait al-Hikmah was established and about the founder of House of wisdom the two type of opinion founded. Generally known as that the house of wisdom founded by Harun al Rashid and Culminating under his son at Mamun, who reigned from 813-833 AD and he credited with its institution. To impute of Bait al-Hikmah Mamun brought the well known scholars to share their thoughts, ideas, information and culture in the house of wisdom. Many of the most learned Muslim scholars were part of this excellent research and educational institute in Baghdad from 9th and 13th centuries.

In fact it appears that Bait al-Hikmah so represented and frequently called Khizanat-al-Hikma, had already existed in the time of Al Rashid and the Barmakids who had began to have Greek work translated. Al Mamun may only have given a new encouragement to this movement, which was to exert a significant influence of the development of Islamic thought and culture.

Bait al-Hikmah was the very first institution of higher scientific studies among the Muslim world.¹¹ where books were translated and copied by graceful famous scholars, while another part of this institution to serve as a library for these books. Mamun commissioned sent to Byzantine to search for books on Greek philosophy and sciences and purchase them for him. These works translated by scholar of this academy. This centre house of wisdom (Treasure of Wisdom) is famous for learning and translation in Muslim history.

Ibn Nadim and Qifli call it Bait al-Hikmah, but Yaqut- Hanmani called it Khazanatul al-Hikmah. Khizanatul al-Hikmah (Library of Wisdom), a large library established by Harun al Rashid.

The Abbasids represent a very strong and important role in the development of science because they encouraged scientific learning and tried to establish solid scientific developments in the Islamic world, especially after they established Baghdad as a new capital instead of Damascus. As we know the Abbasids were rationalistic. Most of the scholar was the Mutazilah scientist. Through the adoption of rationalism, Science was flourishing in Bait al-Hikmah.

It was during of the reign of al Mamun (813-833), the Greek Philosophy made its main thrust into the cultural centre of Islam. He was himself a scholar and an author too. He was well used in all branches of learning noble to extreme and to give large quantity generous. Al Mamun agree with the Mutazilata view that aql (intelligence, creative, reason) should be applied to reading the Quran, against the literal interpretation or naqal(mimesis) advocated by the traditionalists.

Al Mamun was very affectionate of listening to be debates between people belonging to be different religious, and he used to allow them complete liberty of thought and speech.¹³It is generally said that Mamun was founded it on the advice of Mutazilate.

3. Contribution of Bait Al-Hikmah

Bait al-Hikma worked as an academic library and translation bureau in Baghdad. It had strength of 65 translators, working from Greek, Syriac, Persian, Sanskrit and Aramaic. Al Nadim in his book Al Fihrist says that in Bait al-Hikmah alone 47translatives worked from Greek and Syriac, 17 from Persian, two from Sanskrit and one from Aramaic.

In the ninth Century most of the translations were produced in Baghdad. During the reign Abbasid caliph al Mamun (813-33) has ability to translation activates moving fast and it was continued under several of his successors. Translations were frequently produced at the request of patrons who commissioned and finance them. In addition to such rulers as al Mamun, their Patrons included government official and civil servants as well as scientist and physicians often employed by members of the political elite. Some of the officials who commissioned translator were involved in court politics as well as large scale development projects undertaken in the rapidly growing urban centers, the most famous example of this group were Banu Musa brothers, who in additions to their political involvement were among the leading practicing scientists of this

time. Some translations were also prepared for various practicing scientists of this time. Some translations were also prepared for various members of the social elite.

However the scope of the heightened translation activity and the fuller articulation of thought it fostered far outran any initial aim of the original sponsors. As the Banu Musa b. Shakir become match to al Mamun in the pursuance for manuscripts, sending their own agents to Byzantine. They are said to have spent some 500 gold dinar a month on translations and used the work to write pioneering Arabic treaties on medicine, mathematics astronomy and theologically transported topics like the atom and the eternity of the world. Among the translators they patronized were the Sabain mathematician Thabit b. Qurrah (836-901) and the great translator physician Hunaya b. Ishaq.

The most distinguish scholar was Hanayn bin Ishaq who was paid by Al Mamun is gold, making the weight of books be translated. He is credited with translating around 100 manuscript into Syriac and 39 into Arabic, including the works of Aristotle, Plato and Ptolemy. Hunayn also wrote at least twenty nine original treaties of his own on medical topics and a collection of ten essays on ophthalmology which concerned in systematic fashion the anatomy and physiology of the eyes and the treatment of various diseases which affect vision. The first known medical work to include anatomical drawing, the book was translated into Latin and for centuries was the authoritative treatment of the subject in both western and eastern universities. After his death most of his work was continued by his pupils and by his nephew Hubasih. This man Hubasih also wrote book on medicine among which was a treatise on nutrition. Hunayn studied medicine under Yahanna b. Masawayah of the Bait al-Hikmah at Baghdad.

A great number of the translator active during this period were also Christian. Yahanna Bin Masawayah was the most notable who headed Bait al-Hikma and wrote Daghhal Al-Ayn (Disorder of the eye). Yahanna bin Musawayh (measure senior) was an early director of house of wisdom. He served fewer than four caliphs: al Mamun, al Mutasim, al-Wasiq and Mutawakkil. He wrote about medicine especially gynaleological problem.

Most notable translation on Aristotle's Ethics, were the first to be translation of Greek work on moral philosophy by Thabit bin Qurrah which laid the foundation for the native version of philosophy known as Ibn Al Akhlaq. Thabit bin Qurra not only the translated the work but also to contribute to the development of various field science, mathematics, astronomy, geometry etc. During this period the translators like Yonana Ibn Bitriq, Hajjaj Ibn Mater (d.833) Qosta Ibn Luqa al Bulabakki (922), Abdul Masikh Ibn Abdullah Naima al Himsi (220) Honayn Ibn Ishaq (809-73), Ishaq Ibn Honayn (290), Thabit Ibn Qurrah (d.901), Hobaish ibn al Hassan (800), flourishes, these people translated mostly books of the Hypocrites, Galen, Aristotle and to some extent Plato. Plato's book the Timaeus, Siyasatul al Madinah, Kitab ul al Nawamis.

In the 10th Century the work of the translations was still proceeding. Among those who especially distinguished themselves were Abu Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus al Qannai (940), Abu zakarya yakhya Ibn Adi al Mantigi (974), Abu Ali Isa Ibn Ishaq, Ibn zura (1008) and finally Abu al Khair al Hassan Ibn al Ammar (born 942).

In Bait al-Hikama most not only translations work there but also development in various field of science. Bait al-Hikama has an astronomical observatory. Here many work developed related to astronomy, Medicine mathematic, geography, physics, philosophy etc .These works further provide translated Arabic into many other languages and these works were developed in Abbasids period because of translation and development of science Abbasid priced so called the Golden age of Muslim.

Here I mentioned some Muslim scholar who contributed original work on various field and their works were translated many other languages. They were famous in west and great role in European renaissance.

Muhammad bin Musa al Khwarizmi (780-850) the greatest mathematical genius of Islam, flourished in the time of Caliph al Mamun. He was the first and most eminent author on arithmetic and algebra. Unfortunately the original Arabic versions of both books are lost. We are extent today only in his Latin translation. His *Hizab al Jabr wal Muqabalah* (The calculation of integration and Equation) was translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona in the twelfth Century, which the Latin version of his book on arithmetic was edited and published by prince Bonocompaqni at Rome in 1857 under the title De Numero Indico.

Jabir al Battani (850-925) was one of the greatest Muslim Mathematician and astronomers of all times. Several books on mathematics and astronomy are assigned to him. But his claim to fame rests on his hand book of astronomical tables which remained influential in the west until the Renaissance.

Jabir ibn Haiyan, the alchemist Geber of the Middle Ages is generally known as the father of chemistry. His major contribution was in the field of chemistry. He introduced experimental investigation into alchemy, which rapidly changed its character into modern chemistry.

Ishaq al kindi was a contemporary of al Mamun, Mutasim and Mutawakkil and flourished largely at Baghdad. Al Kindi was a philosopher, mathematician, physicist, astronomer, physician, geographer and even an expert in Music. It is surprising that he made original contribution to all of these fields. On account of his work he became known as the philosopher of the Arabs.

Al Razi (863-930 AD) was a Hakim, an alchemist and a philosopher. In medicine, his contribution was so significant in medicine that it can only be compared to that of Ibn Sina. Some of his work in medicine Kitab al Mansoori, Al Hawi, Kitab al Mulooki and kitab al Judari wa al Hasebah achieved everlasting fame. Kitab al Mansoori, it was translated into Latin in the 15th century A.D. Comprised in volumes and dealt thoroughly with Greco-Arab medicine. Some of its volumes were published separately in Europe. His al Judari wal Harabah was the first practice on smallpox and chickenpox. Razi's outstanding scientific contribution has more than 200, out of which about half deal with medicine of 21 concern alchemy.

The Banu Musa was the three sons of Musa b. shakir, called the three brothers and were named Muhammad Ahmad and Hasan. They lived in reign of al Mamun and they were mathematicians, astronomers and great patrons of the sciences. They were served in the 'houses of wisdom' on they visited this houses to consult books or for the sake of copying or translation on compilation.

Naubakt (976-77AD) was a Persian astronomer and engineer and helped in the construction of Baghdad But his son Fadl (d.815-16 AD) was the chief librarian to Harun al Rashid. He was translated from Persian into Arabic and also wrote various astrological treaties.

Several descriptions of roads and courtiers come into existence in the ninth century A.C. Ibn Khurdadbin a geographer of Persian origin composed such description entitled the *kitab-al-Masalik-wa-Mamalik*.

Abdul Husain Abd-al Rahman –Al Safi was a permanent astronomer of the medieval times. His knowledge of both the Islamic and great astronomy particularly uninometry was comprehensive. He was the first to observe the change of the color of star.

Baghdad was known as the world's richest and center for intellectual development of this time, and had a population of over a million, one of the largest in its time. Many foreign works were translated into Arabic from Greek, Chinese and many other languages like Sanskrit in the Abbasid Empire. Large libraries were constructed and scholars persecuted by the Byzantine Empire were welcomed. The House of Wisdom (Bait al -Hikmah) was introduced the concept of the library catalogue and other medieval Islamic libraries, where books were organized into limited genres and categories. In this academy introduced different type of categories like translators, scientist, scribe, authors, man of letter, writers, scribing, discourse, dialogue and discussion. Many manuscripts and books in various scientific subjects and in different language were translated in the house of Wisdom.

4. Downfall of Bait Al-Hikmah and Its Consequences in Muslim Community

Early Abbasids caliph was most rationalistic in which Mumun and his successor tried hard to promote the rationalist views. Because of this reason the house of wisdom flourished under al Mamun,s successor al Mutasim and Wasiq (842)but decline under the of al Mutawakkil(847-861). He wanted to stop spread to Greek philosophy which was of the main tools in Mutazila. Actual real downfall of scientific learning was started. In the starting the determination of spreading Islamic teaching and idealism was the guiding force to the progress of science and achievement and this was at its peak when the Muslim states were stable and, their economic conditions were sound. Muslims were slowly deviating themselves from the teachings of the Holy Quran and their political power was declining one after another. The Christians at this time started to realize their religious superstition and there was renaissance in Europe. During this period Sufism, a new

practice introduced. Their thought of not being much involved in the materialistic world became widespread in Common people. In Muslim dominated countries also the conditions of science education were frustrating at this time of rising of European dominance: There were number of reasons for this frustration: no encouragement or incentives were there for new scientific ideas or discoveries, instructions in the Holy Quran on science education were wrongly interpreted by some ignorant or vested interests to keep people away from science studies, influence of Sufism was increasing at this time and many responsible Muslims and Ulemas started to give more attention to Sufism rather than science education, an apprehension was growing at this time that as reasoning, rationalism, deduction, experiments, proof, etc, are the basis of science, there is a chance of science students of becoming unbelievers of Allah or religious deserters. But this propaganda had no basis; rather it was contradictory to the instructions laid down in the Holy Quran. Muslim became political weak and Halaqu Khan. Grandson of Mongol Chengis Khan in the middle of the 13th century the Mongol army destroyed many cities such as Samargand and Bukhara, killing all their inhabitants, particularly the intellectuals, and burning libraries. In 1258, Halaqu Khan, burned and destroyed Baghdad, killed the Khalifa al-Mutasim (by tearing him alive, tried to two horse, or by beating in seek to avoid spilling the royal blood in another versions), massacred most of the inhabitants and destroyed books and libraries, many by burning.

5. Conclusion

Bait al-Hikmah became a biggest scientific centre in the medieval world. because Abbasids understand that Islam always encouraged human being towards knowledge. In Quran Allah calls human “Ashraf-ul-Makhlukat” because He gives them mind (intellect). In Quran, many ayat emphasized on investigation, observation, use of intellect and encouraged them to study the sky and the earth to find proofs to their faith. The prophet Mohammed (pbuh) himself had besought his disciple to seek knowledge and talk us how knowledge is important. So Abbasid were the economically and politically sound and strongly believe in oneness of God. That period many scholars contributed remarkable works on science. These works were translated into Latin and various other European languages. No doubt we can say that these books played an important role in European renaissance before that Europeans were very superstitions and there were conflict between their religion and science. No doubt in Abbasids period Muslim was in flourishing position in the world because of science. They were respected all over the world. But downfall of Bait al-Hikmah was not a downfall of an institution its downfall of science in Muslim community. They lost their power, their identity, their confident, and their respect. After demolishing of Baghdad most of the science work transferred in Europe and European takes a help to the development of science. These works had the greatest impact scholar of the West. We are well acquitted with the fact that if any community has scientific knowledge they acquire higher position in the world. I think we should strong believe in one God and intellectually understand Quran and also the purpose of Quran.

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