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International Conference on Religion, Culture and Governance in the  
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(Wednesday-Thursday) 23-24 Muharram 1440.

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## Archaeological Analysis of Arabic-Malay Translation Works of Abdullah Basmeih

Azman Ariffin\*, Kasyfullah Abd Kadir\*\* and Idris Mansor\*\*\*

**Abstract:** Utusan Melayu Company, Qalam Press Company and the Department of Islamic Affairs, Prime Minister's Department are the main contributors to the translation discipline of religious texts in Malaysia. Abdullah Basmeih has worked with these institutions as a translator. His purpose is to assist the translation of religious writings from *Al-Muṣawwar* magazine and multi-disciplinary religious texts, among them *sīrah*, stories of the Prophet's companions, *'aqīdah*, *'ibādah*, social and politics. Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih migrated to Singapore in 1939 and worked with Qalam Press Company from 1950 to 1962 as assistant author for monthly magazines published by Qalam Press. Within the 12-year period he worked in Qalam Press, he had successfully translated more than 30 books on the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his wives, children and companions. Abdullah Basmeih then returned to Malaysia. During that time, his great work was produced, which is *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian Al-Quran* in 1968 in Jawi edition, and a Roman edition was published in 1980 by the Department of Islamic Affairs, Prime Minister's Department. Another great work by him was *Mastika Hadis*, which is a translation of ḥadīth collection, produced in three volumes, also published by Prime Minister's Department on 1973. Both works become important materials to enhance the quality of lives of Muslims in Malaysia. Therefore, this study looks at his service and contributions with Utusan Melayu Company, Qalam

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Press Company and Prime Minister's Department in producing translations of academic texts. This literary study is conducted to investigate and analyse the translated texts by him in knowledge hub in reality and virtual.

**Keywords:** translation, translation archaeology, Arabic, Malay, Abdullah Basmeih.

**Abstrak:** Syarikat Utusan Melayu, Syarikat Qalam Press dan Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri adalah antara penyumbang utama dalam bidang penterjemahan teks agama di Malaysia. Abdullah Basmeih pula pernah bekerja dengan institusi-institusi ini sebagai penterjemah. Tujuannya adalah untuk membantu menterjemah rencana-rencana agama daripada Majalah al-Musawwar dan teks-teks agama dalam pelbagai disiplin antaranya sīrah, kisah-kisah sahabat, akidah, 'Ibādah, sosial dan juga politik. Syekh Abdullah Basmeih berhijrah ke Singapura pada tahun 1939 dan bertugas dengan Syarikat Qalam Press mulai tahun 1950 hingga tahun 1962 sebagai Pembantu Pengarang bagi majalah bulanan agama penerbitan Qalam. Dalam tempoh dua belas tahun beliau bertugas di Syarikat Qalam Press, beliau telah berjaya menterjemahkan lebih daripada 30 buah buku meliputi riwayat hidup Rasulullah s.a.w, isteri-isteri, puteri-puteri dan juga sahabat-sahabat baginda. Abdullah Basmeih kemudiannya kembali ke Malaysia. Pada masa inilah lahirnya karya besar beliau iaitu *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian Al-Quran* pada tahun 1968 edisi jawi dan pada tahun 1980 edisi rumi yang diterbitkan oleh Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri. Sebuah lagi karya besar beliau ialah *Mastika Hadis* iaitu terjemahan koleksi hadis yang dihasilkan dalam tiga jilid dan juga diterbitkan oleh Jabatan Perdana Menteri pada tahun 1973. Kedua-dua karya besar ini menjadi wahana kepada pembangunan kualiti hidup umat Islam di Malaysia. Justeru itu, kajian ini menelusuri khidmat dan sumbangan beliau dengan Syarikat Utusan Melayu, Syarikat Qalam Press dan Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri dalam menghasilkan karya-karya terjemahan teks agama. Kajian kepustakaan ini dijalankan dengan mengkaji dan menganalisis teks-teks terjemahan tinggalan beliau di gedung-gedung ilmu nyata dan maya.

**Kata Kunci:** terjemahan, arkeologi terjemahan, bahasa Arab, bahasa Melayu, Abdullah Basmeih.

## Introduction

Translation plays an important role in shaping manifestation of thoughts, knowledge and culture of a race. Through translation, the



process of shaping thoughts and developing the society according to the thinking patterns and positive foreign culture which are in demand and implemented. Translation works portray the demands of the society during that time. Upon entering the era of the 50's, independence was a tool to achieve the ambitions and justice aspirations of the society, prosperity and harmony of the society. The people's problem and the country's issues demand solution in many forms of struggle. The Malay Muslims have to find their own identity and free themselves from the shackles of colonial influence. Efforts to learn and dominate Islamic platforms was much needed. Due to the importance of nation and religion, a few bodies, institutions and figures appeared to contribute and educate, also spread the understanding of Islam through writing and translation. Translation of religious texts was heavily emphasized by community leaders during that time. Tunku Abdul Rahman himself led and funded efforts to translate the al-Qur'ān al-Karīm. Among the personality and institutions which ought to be remembered are Abdullah Basmeih, Utusan Melayu Company, Qalam Press Company and the Department of Islamic Affairs, Prime Minister's Department.

According to Wan Ramizah Hasan (2000: 4), the younger generation today, however are more familiar and appreciative of figures who contribute to the physical development of the country and celebrities who entertain the public compared to figures involved in spiritual development. Based on the interview he conducted, only 10% respondents are familiar with Abdullah Basmeih. Whereas the contributions by Abdullah Basmeih have been very significant for Muslims in Malaysia.

If he is not well known, what more the origins and his great works for the nation and country of course are not known especially by the younger generation today. Among great works by Abdullah Basmeih are *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian Al-Qur'ān* and *Mastika Hadis*. Both products are translation of the main source of Islam, the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, which should be read or at least known to Muslims especially in Malaysia. This matter is worrying because al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth are the source of guidance for life of mankind, whereas generally Malaysians do not understand al-Qur'ān and ḥadīth because the original sources are in Arabic. For that, translation is the only method to build understanding of the texts.

Based on the statement of this problem, this study is conducted to highlight the role and contribution of Abdullah Basmeih especially in the field of translation from Arabic to Malay language. The public needs to know Abdullah Basmeih and appreciate his service and contributions especially in producing local translations of Islamic texts since early Independence until the end of his life, which was on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1996. For that, this paper is regarding Abdullah Basmeih's contributions in the field of translation through the works he produced.

This study is a qualitative study which employs the descriptive approach in the field of translation as stated by Holmes (1988). Holmes (1988: 72) in his mapping on the translation field divided into pure and applied. Under the category of pure translation, there are two more, which are theoretical and descriptive. Descriptive is then divided into three forms of study, which are 1) product, 2) function and 3) process. These three are connected to each other. Based on Holmes category (1988), this study focuses on the product of translation by identifying and analysing translation works produced by Abdullah Basmeih. This study was conducted by referring to a theoretical framework of translation history suggested by Pym (1998) under the theory of archaeological translation. Through this theory, Pym (1998) listed the questions 'who translates what', 'how', 'where', 'when', 'for whom' and 'what are the effects'. Based on the theory of archaeological translation suggested by Pym (1998), this study limited the research scope to the only question 'who translates what'.

### **Abdullah Basmeih and Related Intellectual Works**

Abdullah Basmeih was an intellect and Muslim scholar who had contributed significantly to the development of Islamic knowledge and Malay civilization which had uplifted the dignity of Islam and Malay education (Mahmud, 2008: 144; Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah, 2011, 87). The understanding and mentality of the society during that time and the independence era was mainly influenced by Muslim scholars and their works. At the same time, the influence and effect of colonialism also formed a pattern of confusing thoughts that often conflicts with Islamic ideas. The role of Muslim scholars and writers had helped a lot in clearing and balancing these thoughts. Abdullah Basmeih was one of the intellectuals, thinkers and writers who had a high perception and deep sensitivity regarding issues relating to the community. He started

contributing officially through Utusan Malaysia Company by translating articles on religion and women from *Al-Muṣawwar* magazine issued by *Al-Hilal Company*, Egypt. Abdullah Basmeih also worked with Qalam Press Company for 12 years, from 1950 to 1962 (Mahmud, 2008: 146; Wan Ramizah Hasan, 2000: 126).

Abdullah Basmeih also wrote and translated Islamic papers covering topics like *taṣawwur*, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *‘aqīdah*, history, Muslim figures, *‘Ibādah*, *ākhlāq*, social and politics on monthly basis through *Al-Qalam* magazine (Mohd. Farid Ravi Abdullah, 2011: 73; Mahmud, 2008: 146; Wan Ramizah Hasan, 2000: 126). Works produced by Abdullah Basmeih and fellow Qalam Press Company writers attracted the attention of University Kyoto in Japan. One of the agreements made between Malaysia and Kyoto University was an effort to digitalize all issues by *al-Qalam* magazine online to that it can be accessed free of charge (“Transformasi Qalam Dalam Dunia Moden,” 2013).

Abdullah Basmeih’s prominence and importance of his contributions was highlighted when almost all writings whether thesis, research papers, articles, books and such in the field of Islamic knowledge in Malaysia or Bahasa Melayu will refer and give credits to Abdullah Basmeih especially through his famous work, *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*. His prominence was also studied through the works he produced.

A study in his biography and *tafsīr* methodology was done by Wan Ramizah Hassan in his academic training in 2000 in Universiti Malaya. Detailed information on his life and occupation has been included in the thesis. Wan Ramizah Hasan (2000: 109-202) has stated that Abdullah Basmeih was very dedicated and had sacrificed his time for writing and translation works. He was very firm and courageous in standing up for Islam and the importance of Malay people even though he was an Arab.

Nor Azrina @ Nor Azura Ab Rahman (2007) in her study entitled *Ḥadīth Methodology in Mastika Hadis Rasulullah (S.A.W)* by Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih and friends, discussed the methodology used by Abdullah Basmeih in producing *Mastika Hadis*. This study also discussed the contents of the book in details and highlighted a few weaknesses detected to improvement purposes.

Mahmud (2008) in his paper published in Arabic *‘Majallat al-Buhuth Wa al-Dirasat al-Qur ‘āniyat’* issued by Saudi Arabia has praised

Abdullah Basmeih and his contributions as a scholar and al-Qur'ān translator. However, he criticized Abdullah Basmeih's translation on *mutashābihah* verses based on *Asya'irah* 'aqīdah because to him, the 'aqīdah of the Companions and salaf is truer.

Mohd Ikbal Ahmad Zohdi (2010) in his thesis that studied the *tafsīr* methodology used by Abdullah Basmeih in his work *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman* stated that Abdullah Basmeih used the method *tafsīr ijmalī* or *tafsīr* that is enough to understand the meaning of al-Qur'ān. The language used was easy and simple. However, there are verses that have been interpreted in a manner that is too simple. Many aspects of the *tafsīr* were not highlighted and detailed such as grammatical aspects, rhetoric and *Asbāb al-nuzūl*. Mohd Ikbal also commented Abdullah Basmeih's method and ability to use Malay proverbs accurately and provide a clear idea of the meaning of the translation from some Qur'ānic verses.

Muhammad Hafiz Bakar (2012) used *Mastika Hadis* as a corpus study of a translation entitled *Terjemahan Kata Kerja Berpreposisi Bahasa Melayu Bahasa Arab dalam Kitab Mustika Hadis Rasulullah (S.A.W)*. Translation of Verbs in Malay-Arabic in book *Mustika Hadis Rasulullah (S.A.W)* -This study looks at the translation of Arabic-Malay verb collocations in ḥadīth in *Mastika Hadis* volume 1. Studies found matching verb collocations based on *Kamus Besar Arab Melayu Dewan* amount up to 83.64% valued as accurate or almost accurate, compared to the inaccuracy in meaning which is valued at 16.35%. This study concludes that the book has been successfully translated and can be accepted and applied to understand the ḥadīth in its content.

Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah (2011) in his study entitled *Abdullah Basmeih bin Mohammad Basmeih: Kajian Terhadap Mastika Hadis* discussed Abdullah Basmeih's methodology in translating ḥadīth by the Prophet PBUH to the Malay language. Mohd Farid Ravi commented that the language used in this work employed an interesting methodology, and is organized, and used a user-friendly pedagogy. Among his findings is that *Mastika Hadis* is one of the *talaqqi* ḥadīth syllabus which is the third popularly used in mosques all over Malaysia after *40 Ḥadīth* and *Riyādh as-Sālihīn* by Imam-Nawawi.

*Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman* was also made a corpus study by Nasimah Abdullah & Haji Ahmad Ismail (2015) in studying Abdullah Basmeih's approach on translating plural words to Malay language.

They concluded that Abdullah Basmeih used a few approaches to refer to plural meaning in the Qur'ān. However, there have been inconsistencies in meanings in estimation plural words of *taksir*. Therefore, they suggested a review with the purpose of improving Abdullah Basmeih's translation and to uphold the dignity of correct use of Malay language.

A study on lexical gaps in translation of verbs in the Qur'ān by Badrul Hisyam & Syed Nurulakla (2017) has chosen *Qur'ān Mushaf Malaysia and Terjemahan* and *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman* as corpus study. The study stated that lexical gaps have been discovered in both translations. Disparity of meanings have also been identified. This is not an issue of right and wrong in matching the meaning, but refers to the views and opinions of scholars in giving the meaning.

Azman Arifin & Idris Mansor (2017) also made *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman* their corpus study to observe the problems that arise in translating some of the Qur'ān's style of language to Malay language, which are analogy, metaphor, ellipsis, displacement and extraposition. This study found that the TRP translation has neglected a few implicit meanings from some language styles of the Qur'ān. This happened may be due to the reference and methodology used by Abdullah Basmeih is translation in sufficient through *ijmali* that cannot cover the implicit meaning on the data used.

Disparity in meaning when giving meaning of *rūh* to Malay language was also detected. Abdullah Basmeih has been deemed as a translator influenced by translation requirements on al-Qur'ān that has to match the '*aqīdah*' of members of Sunnah wa l-jamā'ah which are *Al-sharī'ah* and *Maturidiyah* (Kasyfullah Abd Kadir & Idris Mansor, 2017: 276). This is because he was bound to his employer's policy, who is the Malaysian government through a contract work memorandum signed with the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). Mahmud (2011) was the opinion that Abdullah Basmeih followed the *madhab khalaf Al-sharī'ah* stream in '*aqīdah*'. However, there have been some verses translated according to *salaf* interpretation which is not in line with *madhab khalaf*. One of the possibilities is because he was influenced by his early education in Saudi Arabia which is *salaf* division.

Based on this literature review, it is clear that there has been no study on Abdullah Basmeih's service and contributions in the translation field, specifically religious texts.

## Findings and Discussion

Translation is an effort of translating a work to obtain information. It has a strategic meaning as a medium of education to stimulate a nation and develop the civilization. Hence, translation plays its own role in a nation's development. Translation, according to Suhendra Yusof (1994: 31) is an activity of changing conceptual thoughts written by writer of source language with all the ideas and experience which can enrich cultures and boost development of civilization. Progress of nation is not limited to the maximum ability of fulfilling daily needs and life's comforts, but also means perfecting knowledge and thoughts, intelligence and faith that can uplift mankind's life to a higher level. With that, a nation which achieved high civilization not only have material prosperity, but also developed intellectual and spiritual values.

Abdullah Basmeih's service and contributions in this field cannot be denied. He was extremely committed with knowledge and was constantly trying to develop the thoughts of Malay people. A lot of his time was used in writing and translating religious books that become main references during that time, and until now his works continue to be the reading and reference for Muslims especially in Malaysia. His diligence was so much; he could do two works at the same time. His sincerity and interest in producing works is illustrated in his statement:

*Antara senduk dan pena saling tukar menukar kerja. Bila senduknya bekerja menyiapkan masakan yang ditempah pelanggan, penanya beristirehat. Bila pelanggannya tidak ada mata penanya mula menjalankan tugas.*

(“Tokoh Penulis Islam Yang Tak Kenal Jemu,” 1979)

His sacrifices in writing and translation was indeed huge. He focused on writing even though he was at home. He was willing to receive a lower salary even though he had many children, and he worked more than his responsibility. His persistence finally showed him as a famous translator when he successfully translated the Qur'ān which took five years. His translation of *Tafsīr Pimpinan Al-Rahmān* only was repeatedly reprinted due to high demands. It was even translated to other languages like English. The Mandarin and Tamil editions are in the process of translation. To remember his contributions to the religion and country, Abdullah Basmeih was awarded a few decrees of honour (“Kertas Kerja Biodata Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih bin Mohd Basmeih, n.d.”: 179).

Siti Hawa Salleh (1997: 223-226) stated that the literature of religious translation can be classified into a few proses or poems; 1) Literature of holy book in Islam contains explanations and Islamic lessons which are not in shape of stories, 2) Prophetic literature which is a translation of the prophetic stories, 3) Literature of Islamic figures which is a translation of stories of prophet's families for instance wives, children and grandchildren, 4) Literature of Muslim warriors, who are the Prophets companions and Muslim leaders throughout the time.

Based on an analysis conducted on Abdullah Basmeih's works, the disciplines he ventured into when translating Arabic to Bahasa Melayu are as follows:

### **Translation in the Field of Al-Qur'ān and *Tafsīr***

Among Abdullah Basmeih's efforts in translating the Qur'ān and its interpretation is translating *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an*, *Muqaddam* (1963), *Pengertian Ayat-ayat al-Qur'ān (Jawi dan Rumi)* and *Tafsīr Ahmad Shaltut* which was named *Intisari Al-Qur'ān* (1974). These works are translations from Arabic to Malay language.

*Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an* is a translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān which is very popular among Malays. At first, Tunku Abdul Rahman appointed Ustādh Faisal bin Haji Othman as the translator of the Qur'ān. He did the translation works for only a few months before he resigned. After his resignation, Abdullah Basmeih was requested to continue his translation works of the Qur'ān into Malay language ("Kertas Kerja Biodata Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih bin Mohd Basmeih, n.d.": 178). He was responsible to translate the 30 chapters of the Qur'ān into Malay language. He took five years to perfect the translation. His translation work was examined by Tuan Haji Muhammad Noor bin Haji Ibrahim, who was the former mufti for the Kelantan state government. The publishing was done in stages. In the earlier stage he published the first volume which contained only 10 chapters from the Qur'ān in 1968. Later the second volume was published on 1970 and the third volume was released on 1972. These works have propelled him as a big name in Qur'ānic translation to Malay language. The first edition in Roman writing was published in 1980 under the control of the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia ("Kertas Kerja Biodata Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih bin Mohd Basmeih," n.d.: 178)

The translation received encouraging response by Muslims in the Nusantara. This is proved when it was reprinted a few times which were on 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2010 (Nasimah Abdullah & Haji Ahmad Ismail, 2015: 2). The positive response by the society especially in Malaysia may be because of the way the meanings were translated with simple language and easy to be understood by readers, besides explanation on footnotes to explain verses that require more explanation (Ismail Yusoff, 1995: 25). The acceptance of the Qur'ān translation by the Muslim community in Malaysia was strengthened by it being JAKIM's choice, thus a guide that should be followed by all translation of the Qur'ān which have just been worked into Malay language (Mansor & Kadir, 2016: 2212). Besides that, Abdullah Basmeih's contribution towards translating of the Qur'ān to Malay language have been very significant, because the translation has been made reference for various disciplines of knowledge.

In the field of translation itself, *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an* was often made corpus study by researchers especially on values, accuracy of meaning, grammar, methods, approaches and ways of translating. Among those researches are by Wan Ramizah Hasan (2000), Muhammad Arsyad Abdul Majid (2009), Azmi Subhi (2013) Nasimah Abdullah & Haji Ahmad Ismail (2015), Kasyfullah Abd Kadir & Idris Mansor (2017), Badrul Hisyam Mohd Yasin & Syed Nurulakla Syed Abdullah (2017) and Azman Arifin & Idris Mansor (2017).

### **Translation in Ḥadīth**

In the discipline of ḥadīth, Abdullah Basmeih translated ḥadīths by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in four volumes including *Mukadimah Mastika Hadis* (1973). Efforts to publish *Mastika Hadis* in many stages took more than 20 years, beginning from the early 1970s until the end of his life. Besides that, Abdullah Basmeih also translated ḥadīth *Khutbah Haji Wida': Khutbah Rasulullah (S.A.W)* which was released remotely in Roman writing in 1976 (Wan Ramizah Hasan, 2000: 159).

Publishing and translation of the book *Mastika Hadis Rasulullah* was Abdullah Basmeih's second most important project published by JAKIM after the book *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an*. The effort by JAKIM in the early 1970s was from the inspiration of Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Husin, Prime Minister of



Malaysia at that time. The series of books was a continuation of *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an* to provide a clearer elaboration on Islam and its teachings from the Prophet's (S.A.W) ḥadīth. The volume on introduction and the first volume are the work of collaboration between Mohd. Noor bin Ibrahim, Ismail bin Yusuf and Abdullah Basmeih. The second volume was the work of Abdullah Basmieh and later examined and validated by Abdul Mohsein Haji Salleh. The third volume was also by Abdullah Basmieh. The book contains a collection of selected ḥadīths as a complete guidance from Prophet Muhammad PBUH including aspects of faith (*tawḥīd*, Islam, sharī'ah laws and *iḥsān* and *ākhlāq*) ("Kertas Kerja Biodata Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih bin Mohd Basmeih," n.d.: 181).

This ḥadīth collection became more popular within the Muslim community in Malaysia when it became the source of reference by mosques all over the country as the text of ḥadīth studies. Besides, the book was also made a corpus study and reference by academicians in the discipline of Ḥadīth. *Mastika Hadis* has been benefited by researchers in the field of ḥadīth. Among the research on *Mastika Hadis* as corpus study are by Nor Azrina @ Nor Azura Ab Rahman (2007), Mohd Farid Ravi Abdullah (2011) and Aminuddin bin Mohamed & Fadlan Mohd Othman (2017). Even so, the discipline of translation, only one study was found, which is a research by Muhammad Hafiz Bakar (2012).

### **Translation in the Field of 'Aqīdah**

With high abilities in the Arabic language, Abdullah Basmeih also learnt from the works of scholars and writers from the Middle East and also works of intellectuals and thinkers from Europe. This combination from various knowledge learned by Abdullah Basmeih finally provided him a basis to translate Arabic works which have been assimilated by elements of Malay community and Islamic teachings. Thus, all this shapes the attitude and thoughts of Abdullah Basmeih which are parallel to the aspirations of the Malay community and Malaysia's policy. Even though he came in the world of writing in the era of clash between the Old Group and Young Group, he took the moderate approach.

Malay Muslim thoughts that require change was moved by young scholars like Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Za'aba, Nahmir and many more. Many among them were fellow writers in Qalam Press Company where Abdullah Basmeih worked. However, even though he received his early

education in Saudi Arabia and mingled with the influential thinkers from the Yong Group in Malaysia, an analysis of his works showed that he is of the same flow with the traditional people of the Old Group. This can be proven through the translation of *mutashābihah* (ambiguous) verses in *Tafsīr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an*. He chose to translate it through *takwil* according to the *Al-sharī'ah* sect (Mahmud, 2008: 4). The same goes with his works in *fiqh* that showed that he practiced *maḏhab Shāfi'ī*, which is parallel to the Old Group. Among the religious books and articles on '*aqīdah*' translated from Arabic to Malay language are *Allah Jalla Jalaluhu - Tawḥīd* (1953), *Qadha dan Qadar: Menurut Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghaniy* (1953), *Berjihad Pada jalan Allah* (1953), *Taasub Menurut Pandangan Syeikh Muhammad Abduh* (1953), *Masalah Keza dan Kadar* (Qalam, no. 121, Ogos 1960, page.14) and *Orang-Orang yang Sempurna Imannya* (Qalam, no. 39, Oct. 1953, page. 33). The main result of his translation in the discipline of '*aqīdah*' is the book *Mastika Hadis Volume 1* which contains translation of ḥadīths related to '*aqīdah*' of Islam.

### **Translation in the Discipline of Fiqh 'Ibādah, Munakahat and Muamalat**

Abdullah Basmeih had his own stand and beliefs in developing the thoughts of Malays. He is with the Young Group in accepting modernism and fighting against the colonialism, and also orientalist thoughts. However, he also defended the Old Group's school of thought by writing and translating *fiqh* materials according to the local *maḏhab* which is *Maḏhab Shāfi'ī*. He even wrote about the *bid'ah* issue that became a polemic between the Old Group and Young Group in his book *Panduan Mengurus Jenazah*. He commented that the problem with *talking* within the Malay community which was disputed by the Young Group based on the proofs from *Maḏhab Shāfi'ī* that promotes the act. He concluded that their argument was based on a *khalīfahyah* issue that can be settled with forgiving one another (Abdullah Basmeih, 2015: 57-60). The rest of his works also follow *Maḏhab Shāfi'ī*. In the discipline of '*Ibādah*', among his translation works are *Panduan Kanak-Kanak Sembahyang*, the book *Panduan Mengurus Jenazah*, a translated religious article entitled *Menyambut Kedatangan Bulan Ramadan al-Mubarak* (Qalam, no. 127, Feb. 1961, page. 8), translation of religious article entitled *Ibadat haji dan hikmatnya: Amalannya dari segi Falsafah* (Qalam, no.120, Jul. 1960, page 10) and a translation of article on Hajj entitled 3

*Bulan di Tanah Suci Mekah al-Karimah* (Qalam, no. 145-148, Aug-Nov 1962).

In the discipline of fiqh women and *munakahat*, among the texts he translated is *Panduan Wanita* (1979). This book was originally written by Syed Muhammad bin Salim al-Husaini al-Hadhrami. The book explains clearly to women about Shariah laws and 'Ibādah, including principles of Islam, Iman and 'ihsān (Syed Muhammad, 1979: t. page). It is said to be the best religious text especially for women. He also translated many religious articles pertaining fiqh women, among them *Soal Berbilang Isteri Di Dalam Islam* (Qalam, no. 143, June 1962, page. 19), *Soal Talak dalam Islam* (Qalam, no. 147, Oct. 1962, page. 16) and *Hak dan Kewajipan Suami Isteri di dalam Islam* (Qalam, no.136, Nov. 1961, page. 12).

In the discipline of muamalat and Islamic economy, he translated the book *Panduan Zakat dan Khairat* (1985). He also translated the collection of recent fatwas in Egypt, among them the book *Fatwa Umum Kesatuan Hukum-Hukum Islam* (1953).

### **Translation in the Discipline of History and Muslim figures**

Abdullah Basmeih was someone who translated a lot of historical texts and stories of Muslim figures. For 12 years he worked with Qalam Press, he successfully translated more than 30 books which mostly are in these disciplines. His works were even considered the earliest translations on stories of Muslim figures into Malay language. These stories were popular in Arabic writings, known as *Sīrah Zatiyah*. His work on Muslim figures were produced through the translation method *talkhisiyah*. *Talkhisiyah* translation is reconstructing in a different style (Mo'men, n.d: 8). These works have been published in form of books and there are some published in serial release through Qalam magazine. His works in this discipline includes all classification by Siti Hawa Salleh (1997) on translation of religious literary texts.

On the Prophetic stories' category, Abdullah Basmeih translated *Riwayat Hidup Nabi Muhammad (S.A.W)*. (1952) into 4 volumes and 500 pages, published in 1952. This works were praised by Za'aba. Za'aba stated that the language used by Abdullah Basmeih is simple and easily understood. The value of these works, according to Za'aba cannot be measured with gold, as the content is very valuable and important to

the society (JAKIM, n.d: 2). According to Wan Ramizah Hasan (2000: 129), these books are the earliest to tell the story of the life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH into Malay language.

Books on history of Islamic figures among the Prophet's family that he produced are *Sejarah Hidup Siti Aisyah* (1950), *Sejarah Hidup Baginda Ali* (1950), *Sejarah hidup Saidina Husein Di Padang Karbala* (1953), *Puteri-Puteri Nabi* (1957), and *Isteri-Isteri Rasulullah* (1958). The translation works he produced on Islamic figures among the Prophet's companions are *Sejarah Hidup Abu Bakar al-Siddik* (1951), *Sejarah Hidup Umar bin Al-Khattab* (1952), *Sejarah Hidup Uthman bin Affan* (1953), *Sejarah hidup Bilal Tukang Bang Rasulullah s.a.w'*(1955), *Riwayat Yang Bersejarah : Abu Dzar al-Ghafiri* (Qalam, no. 3, Oct. 1950, page 42) and *Sejarah hidup Khalid al-Walid* (1957).

Abdullah Basmeih also translated stories on Islamic warrior figures besides the companions for example *Puteri Sepanyol* (1952), *Hikayat Salahuddin al-Ayyubi* (Mohd. Farid Ravi Abdullah, 2011: 75). Some of the works on Islamic figures have been featured in Qalam magazine, which are *Fatimah al-Zahara: Suatu Gambaran dari Riwayat Hidupnya* (in eight series from no. 134, Sep. 1961 to no. 142, Mac. 1962), *Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi* (no. 90, Jan. 1958, page. 3), *Wahab al-Jduln* (no. 41, Dis. 1953, page. 33), *Kisah Pengembaraan Ibn Batutah Mengelilingi Dunia* (no. 105, Apr 1959, page. 12) and *Musa bin Nasir* (in three series beginning from issue no. 148, Nov. 1962 to issue no. 150 Jan.1963).

Abdullah Basmeih also translated *Sejarah Islam* in three volumes on 1964 1964 (*Majalah Dewan Siswa*, July 1979, page. 4). Besides, through Qalam magazine on its seventh release, he translated parts of the events in history of Islam, which are *Peristiwa Tentera Islam Merempuh ke Mekah* (Qalam, Feb. 1951, page 43) dan *Perkembangan Islam di Negeri Cina: Riwayat Asal Mulanya Benih Islam Bercambah di Benua Itu* (Qalam, no. 119, Jun 1960, page. 12).

### **Translation on Local and International Issues**

Through observation in books and articles translated regarding local and international issues, it can be concluded that Abdullah Basmeih is someone very sensitive towards issues related to the community especially the position of Malay Muslims. This is proven through his writings that become a polemic between him and writer Yahya Ismail

who glorified orientalist and Western ideas, who is not honest about Islam (Majalah Kiblat, October 1975, page 4-5), arising debates with Kassim Ahmad and open interview with the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lim Kuan Yew.

Abdullah Basmeih actively criticized and educated the society on the teachings of Islam and promoted Islam as the solution for social issues like alcohol, gambling, divorce, splits and so on. Regarding these issues, he translated religious articles like *Arak dan Judi Racun Masyarakat* (Qalam, no. 27, Oct. 1952, page. 19), *Bahaya Judi dan Bencananya* (Qalam, no. 28, Nov. 1952, page. 43), *Dari Sebulan ke Sebulan Masjid-Masjid Kita dan Loteri* (Qalam, no. 132, Jul. 1961, page. 7), *Perikatan Suami Isteri* (Qalam, no. 41, Dis. 1953, page. 30) and *Perpecahan Umat Islam* (Qalam, no. 30, Feb. 1953, page. 18).

Disputes between the Yong Group and the Old Group due to differences in political ideas has triggered conflicts in the unity of the society. Following that, Abdullah Basmeih has urged the society to always maintain the unity and give priority to spreading Islam than trivial issues. This is proven through the articles he translated, like *Kenaikan Sesuatu Umat dan Kejatuhannya* (Qalam, no. 19, Feb. 1952, page. 6) and also, through his book *Kedudukan Masjid Dalam Islam* (1977).

Abdullah Basmeih also played a role in connecting the Muslims in Malaysia to be aware of the global issues related to Muslims in other countries. He translated the news and articles on the tragedies that befall the ummah in Palestine, Egypt and Africa. This is seen through the articles he translated like *Pujangga Islam Melahirkan Negara Palestin dan Masalah Palestin* dan *Propaganda Yahudi dan Zionis Amerika* (Utusan Melayu, 27 Oct. 1967; Utusan Melayu, 1 Jul. 1966), *Pergerakan Yahudi Sahiwni (Zionist) dan Bahayanya* (Qalam, no. 139. Feb. 1962, page. 10), *Ikhwan al-Muslimin dan Jamal Abdul Nasir* (Qalam, no. 54, Jan. 1955, page. 36) and *Afrika Menggelegak: Penjajah Dihantam dalam Segala Pelusuk* (Qalam, no. 134, Sept. 1961, page. 16).

### **Translation on Politics and Islam Statehood**

Even though Abdullah Basmeih was not directly involved in local politics, he was seen to be concerned about matters of the country and Islamic politics. He made an effort to give understanding to the

Malaysian people on the importance of politics for the sovereignty of Islam and the country. This is proven through his translation of a fatwa by al-Azhar scholars, *Perempuan dan Pilihanraya* (1952) and an article on *Wakil Rakyat Dalam Islam* (1953). Due to his concern in politics, he also gave views on the issue of merging with Singapore. He suggested that the parties involved to be firm but cautious towards communist works. This is seen through his articles entitled *Soal Percantuman dan Masalah Komunis di Singapura* (Qalam, no. 133, Ogos 1961, page. 39).

Among his valuable contributions to this discipline are; 1) Translation of *Tafsīr Mahmud Shaltut* which was named *Intisari Al-Qur'ān*. This is *tafsīr maudu'i* which means it is based on themes. A few topics in the content mentions on leaders and the people. 2) translation of articles on Islamic Law entitled *Hukum-Hukum Islam Sesuai Bagi Tiap-Tiap Tempat dan Tiap-Tiap Masa* (Qalam, no. 32, March 1953, page. 16).

### **Translation in Adab and Akhlak**

Ākhlāq (morals) and Ādāb (manners) are the third main element in *taṣawwur* in Islam after 'aqīdah and *Shariah*. Therefore, Abdullah Basmeih also contributed to this discipline through his translation works. All these works are religious articles in form of *talkhisiyah* translation which is based on Qur'ānic verses and many disciplines of knowledge in Islam. Among Abdullah Basmeih's translated works in this discipline are *Agama dan Kesannya di dalam Jiwa Manusia* (Qalam, no. 1, July 1950, page 4), *Sifat-Sifat Orang yang Takwa* (Qalam, no. 46, May 1954, page. 7), *Ākhlāq yang Buruk Bukan Hasil Penderitaan* (Qalam, no. 37, Aug 1953, page. 36), *Rahsia Al-Qur'ān: Kesannya kepada Ākhlāq* (Qalam, no. 15, Sept. 1951, page. 24), *Keadilan Islam Meliputi Kawan dan Lawan* (Qalam, no. 18, Jan. 1952, page. 16), *Orang-Orang yang Beriman: Tahan Menerima Ujian* (Qalam, no. 36, Jul. 1953, page. 17), *Tanggungjawab yang Dipercuikan* (Qalam, no. 38, Sept. 1953, page. 29) *Tabligh dan Cara Menyampaikan* (Qalam, no. 149, Dec. 1962, page. 6) also, *Hak dan Kewajiban Suami Isteri di dalam Islam* (Qalam, no. 135, Oct. 1961, page. 30).

### **Translation in Islamic Literature, Literature and Malay Language**

Abdullah Basmeih can be listed as one of the fighters for literature and Malay language. He produced critic works on language. Among those

were published in *Medan Bahasa; Bahasa Melayu Lama dan Baharu* (Qalam, no. 39, Oct 1953, page. 5), *Sejarah Terkembangnya Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu* (Qalam, no. 20, Mac 1952, page. 11), *Soal Memodenkan Bahasa Melayu* (Qalam, no. 66, Jan 1956, page. 14), *Rahsia Tulisan Melayu: Menurut Pandangan Islam* (Qalam, no. 73, Ogos 1956, page. 15) and *Pepatah Melayu dan Falsafahnya* (Qalam, no. 74, Sept. 1956, page. 16). He also wrote books on Malay literature, *Taman Cerita-Cerita Melayu*, that was released for 10 terms by Pustaka Nasional Singapura in 1963 (Wan Ramizah Hasan, 2000: 130-131).

His contribution in translation of literature and Islamic sociology can be detected in the translation of *Kisah Pengembaraan Ibn Batutah Mengelilingi Dunia* (Qalam, no. 105, Apr. 1959, page. 12). Abdullah Basmeih also translated a few poems by Syair Muhammad Iqbal in the section Mimbar Islam entitled *Pujangga Islam Muhammad Iqbal*. Wan Ramizah Hasan (2000: 138) praised and expressed admiration towards Abdullah Basmeih in translating the poems because his translation was very orderly without compromising the rhyme, as in a quality Malay poem.

Among his contribution in literature translation which is also unique is the translation of the story *Perempuan Dirasuk Iblis* (Qalam, bil 4, Nov. 1950, page 41). He translated the story from Arabic to Malay language. It was originally written in English by Margaret Elizebeth Jenkins (31 Oct. 1905 – 5 Sept. 2010). It was quite a rare literary work found during those times. The book is also very unique and very suitable to be made a corpus study to analyse the effect of multilingualism in the translation.

## **Conclusion**

Abdullah Basmeih was an individual who made great contributions to the translation field from Arabic to Malay language, especially in many disciplines of Islamic knowledge. His translation work covers various knowledge disciplines including al-Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *'aqīdah*, *fiqh*, history of Islam, social issues on local and international level, politics and statehood of Islam, *Ādāb* and *ākhlāq*, and Islamic literature. The vast scope of knowledge in translation shows that he loved knowledge, and had a high sense of responsibility to spread the knowledge to the Muslim community in Islam, who generally do not understand Arabic texts. His service and contributions in translating religious texts was

an effort to enrich the treasure of knowledge. The knowledge is able to shape the minds of the readers and become a prospect that is always available for the next generation to explore new findings in future research. Even though he had inclination to support the Young Group, he tried to take the middle road to balance the opinions of the Young Group and the Old Group. Therefore, many of his translation works are texts held by followers of the *Sunnah wa l-jamā'ah* sect *Al-sharī'ah* and *fiqh* Maḍhab Imam *Shāfi'ī*. To him, society conflicts that arise have to be put in line with the government's policies to maintain unity and harmony of the society.

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