



Portrait of the Arabic Literature Existence in East Asia

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ملخص

يظهر الأدب العربي في منطقة شرق آسيا وجود شتات ثقافي مستمر منذ قرون. يمكن تخمين العوامل الداخلية للشتات السكاني من خلال عدم الراحة من العيش في مكان المنشأ بسبب النزاعات المطولة التي تتطلب هجرة العرب. تعد منطقة شرق آسيا خياراً مثيراً يجب تسليط الضوء عليه لأن لديها علاقات ثنائية طويلة الأمد مع منطقة شبه الجزيرة العربية. يستخدم هذا البحث أساليب نوعية مع نهج روبن كوهين للشتات العابر للحدود لفهم وجود الأدب العربي في منطقة شرق آسيا. تم جمع البيانات من خلال قراءة المقالات وتوثيق الأمور التي تسلط الضوء على وجود الأدب العربي في منطقة شرق آسيا. وجدت هذه الدراسة أن الأدب العربي موجود في شرق آسيا منذ الإسلام. يرتبط هذا الوجود بالعلاقات الثنائية التي تتم بين المناطق في قطاع الأعمال، وتبادل الطلاب، واتفاقيات السلام، والزواج السياسي.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الأدب العربي، روبن كوهين، شرق آسيا، وجودي

Abstract

Arabic literature in the East Asian region shows the existence of a cultural diaspora that has been going on for centuries. Internal factors

of population dispersal can be guessed by the discomfort of living in the place of origin due to prolonged conflicts that require Arabs to migrate. East Asia is an exciting option to highlight because it has long-standing bilateral relations with the Arabian Peninsula region. This research uses qualitative methods with Robin Cohen's transnational diaspora approach to understand the existence of Arabic literature in East Asia. Data was collected by reading articles and documenting matters highlighting Arabic literature's presence in East Asia. This study found that Arabic literature has existed in East Asia since Islam. This existence is related to bilateral relations between business sector areas, student exchanges, peace agreements, and political marriages.

Keywords: Arabic literature, East Asia, Existence, Robin Cohen.

Introduction

Arabic is not only the language used by Arabs but also consumed and used by speakers other than Arabic. This is due to the massive spread to countries outside the Arabian Peninsula not only because of the expansion of Islamic ideology but also the process of searching for high resource needs, so an escalation population spread is inevitable (Al-Srehan, 2020; Labanca, 2020; P T, 2023). The use of Arabic was influenced by the spread of the Arab nation, which was strengthened by human passion to reveal previously unknown things such as cultural diversity, customs, language differences, and literary works (Al-Shbiel, 2017; Nayab & Rashidi, 2020). Arabic brought by native speakers implicitly also has implications for the spread of ideology and scientific fields so that the destination region consumes the literature brought by Arabs. Through the massive Arab diaspora, one of the scientific fields that quickly spread throughout the local population is Arabic literature (Jacobi & Cantarino, 1976).

Studies of the spread of Arabic literature have shown some tendencies. First, research related to the spread of Arabs in countries other than the Arabian Peninsula with various motives (Rabahi & Amrieh, 2023). Spread with certain expeditionary routes tends to deliver immigrants to places that are not suitable for their destination so that migrating Arabs do not get proper asylum (Fakhoury, 2019; Phillips, 2022; Sater, 2014). In addition, on social media, news of Arab migration received various positive and negative responses due to the reading of political maps that were not friendly to the destination country. Second, cultural changes in a region visited by Arabs have the potential for significant changes in the field of literature (Fahrullah & Hazmirullah, 2020). These cultural changes are related to certain terms that collectively show the condition of the Arabs still holding fast to the culture brought from the region of origin (Moore, 2019). Third, research has addressed the Arab diaspora at any given time (Moss, 2016; Müller-Funk, 2020). The Arab diaspora significantly influences the cultural change of migration places because of the similarity of ideologies (Islam) adhered to (Elboubekri, 2014; Jorgensen, 2013; Moghissi, 2009). Existing studies have positioned the Arab diaspora as a result of regional conflicts that



led to population displacement and the spread of certain ideologies, failing to consider how the role of Arabic literature contributes indirectly to the dynamics of world literature.

The development of Arabic literature through varied dissemination media. Diplomatic means became relatively successful in the process of spreading culture (Berry, 2019). The entry of Arabic literature into the East Asian region can be expected through trade routes that have taken place long before Islam became a religion in *the status quo* (Hitti, 1970). In the course of history, Arabic literature that has spread in the Asian region as a whole experienced a dark period with the genocide of the Mongolians led by Genghis Khan (Man, 2016). The great war that lasted up to three generations (grandchildren) made the Arab literary world in its home region increasingly unstable, especially with the invasion of the Mongols under the leadership of Hulagu Khan, who eradicated countries in the form of religious states (Islam) (Man, 2010). Nevertheless, the course of history shows that the Mongol population had sympathy for the followers of Islam that previous generations had fought (Septianingrum, 2017).

Cultural influence can be controlled through the involvement of transnational interactions that enable diasporic nations to maintain their cultural identity (Szulc, 2023). It involves maintaining language, customs, traditions, and cultural values passed down from generation to generation. On the other hand, cultural identity can also undergo renewal and change due to interaction with the new culture in the country of residence (Sunarti & Fadel, 2018). The existence of language institutes, cultural education programs, language classes, and other learning programs is often part of the involvement of transnational interactions. It helps diasporic nations ensure that young people remain connected to the culture and identity of their ancestors.

Arab diaspora literature flourished in non-Arabic literature when Arabs first migrated abroad, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. At first, Arabs emigrated from Syria and Lebanon to Canada, the United States, and South America, but in their development, they also relocated to the Asian region (Manshur, 2021). Diaspora literature shows privileges and strangeness that may differ from other literary works (Awad, 2016). The cause is that the main object of diaspora literature is not definitively determined, so it is intertwined in many disciplines (Schwartz & Berti, 2018). In addition, the spread of Arabic literary works can also affect the interest of readers of positions because of the openness of the choice of pieces that connoisseurs of literary works can consume. Although the selection of literary works is increasing in various countries, the study of literary works is a unique attraction for academic studies because it can enter many disciplines that are not limited by specific geographies (Wargadinata, 2018).

The development of literature that enters other scientific niches has implications for the potential for higher spread because Arabic speakers become more and more from various circles (Yusuf et al., 2022). On the other hand, Arabic literati outside the Arabian Peninsula are influential in enriching literary themes compatible with the academic work's geographical location (MHA, 2022). The spread of Arabic literature was marked by the emergence of literati outside the Arabian peninsula, including Khalil Taqi al-Din (1906 – 1987 AD) a Lebanese writer famous for short stories and



essays and the monumental work *Karen wa Hasan* (1971 AD) novels about world wars; second, Ghalib Halasa (1932 – 1989 AD) Jordanian novelist and short story writer, Critics, translators, and political activists engaged in left-wing politics through the world of journalists. Ghalib Halasa's media ideas are China News Agency and East German News Agency located in Cairo for 16 years since 1956; third, Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883 – 1931 AD), a prose writer, poet, and artist born in Bishirri (North Lebanon) and active in America after studying in Europe, his magnum opus entitled *The Prophet* has been widely translated into many languages (Hutchins, 1999). The number of writers of Arabic literary works in the Asian region is still small, and the number of Arabic literary works is limited to efforts to translate Arabic academic essays.

This study aims to overcome this deficiency by examining the development of Arabic literature in the East Asian region. Thus, this study seeks to answer the portrait of Arabic literary studies in the East Asian area. The results of this study will provide an understanding of what the development of Arabic literature is like in East Asian sites with different literacy cultures.

This research is based on the argument that the East Asian region has geographical proximity and has had international relations with the Arabian Peninsula region since the pre-Islamic era. Every part of East Asia has established bilateral ties to allow the development of science in the form of Arabic literary works in East Asian countries. This, in turn, will strengthen Arab identity in the East Asian region.

Method

This study focuses on the search for units of analysis on information in literature that discusses the development of Arabic literature in East Asia. The region has different linguistic roots from Arabic but does not rule out the possibility of spreading Arabic through its literary works. Translated works have great potential in applying the language and ideology that the author wants to convey because they have an interest that contains intrinsic elements in literary works. Researchers obtain articles about the spread of Arabic literature through search engines in various sources such as Google Scholar, dimension, oversea.cnki, and Elsevier.

The research used is qualitative with a Library Research approach based on Robin Cohen's theory to strengthen studies on the diaspora. Library Research is the right approach, focusing on sources in the form of books, manuscripts, notes, and so on, with connections to Arabic literature in the East Asian region (Sari, 2020). Search for issues related to the existence of Arabic literature in East Asia Researchers divide into several searches: Google Scholar and Elsevier are used to search Arabic literature in all East Asian countries; Dimension to search for the existence of Arabic literary works on the Korean Peninsula and Mongolia; oversea.cnki is used to search for Arabic literary works in China. The use of relevant keywords is essential in searching for research data. The keywords used in the article search were translated into the destination country's language by researchers to find more comprehensive data, so the investigation was carried out with four characters: Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Mongolian.



The source of this research data is in the form of articles published online that review the spread of Arabic literature in the East Asian region. Data sources in this study include articles examining Arabic literature in the East Asian part. This research data collection method uses documentation techniques and read-record a collection of literature relevant to the existence of Arabic literary works in East Asia (Moleong, 2014). After reading the data that has been collected, the researcher classifies the data by recording it in the form of a narrative that is by this study. The use of documentation and reading-record techniques has a close cohesion in this study because the data obtained is in the form of articles that are read and mapped based on geographical countries in East Asia. The data analysis technique uses memoing with coding on data obtained from reports read with transnational readings of Robin Cohen's diaspora (Creswell, 2017). Data is collected by reading documents that have been collected and inventory them, classifying data, and analyzing data with readings based on geographical locations of countries in East Asia.

Results and Discussion

Transliteration of Arabic Literature in East Asian Countries

The spread of Arabic literature in East Asia has occurred since early AD with trade interactions between regions. This trade communication became a means of spreading Arabic literature, indirectly changing the trading area, namely East Asia. Changes in habits and interest in Arabic have made East Asian people more open to understanding languages other than the first language. Trade interaction has the potential to spread not only to one particular region. Still, it also affects surrounding areas because of interest in trade commodities, so opportunities for distributing Arabic literature can be more comprehensive through trade (Zhong, 2020).

In Japanese literature, translating many works in foreign languages caused a massive wave of transliteration. In its development, several pieces of Arabic literature also did not escape being translated into Japanese, including *One Thousand and One Nights* by Shinji Maejima, Heibonsha, and Toyo Bunko; Ibn Ishaq's *Sirah Nabawiyah*, translated by Johei Shimada; Ibn Battutah's *Three Continents Journey* translated by Kadokawa Shoten; *Ibn Jubayr's Tadzkirah bil Akhbar, 'an Ittifaq al-Asfar*, translated by Katsuji Fujimoto and Osamu Ikeda; *Bayn al-Qarayn novel* by Naquib Mahfouz, translations by Haruo Hanawa and others (Yufumi, 2021).

In addition to Japan, historical facts about the translation of foreign literary works in Korea began with the adaptation of *One Thousand and One Nights* in 1895 A.D. This shows that Arabic literature has gained much interest in world literature. However, the supply of Arabic literature to Korea in the 1970s was limited because non-Arabic language specialists carried out translations. The short story translated from Arabic by Song Kyong Sook in 1984 is considered the first Korean translation of the original text of Arabic literature. After that, in the 1980s, several Korean universities (Myongji University, Korea Foreign Studies University, Busan University of Foreign Studies, Chosun University, and Dankuk University) graduated Bachelor of Arabic while doctoral studies were only at Korea University of Foreign Studies and Myongji University. The doctoral graduate went on to become a specialist in Arabic,



Turkish, and Iranian languages by contributing to translating several literary works, focusing primarily on modern classics and novels (Kim, 2011). In general, book publishing in Korea prefers to add several Arabic stories to the world's literary collections and not print individual Arabic literary works for Korean readers. Meanwhile, the translation of foreign literary works into Korean is still limited to pieces that receive support from the Literature Translation Institute of Korea. In addition to these works, several short stories have been introduced in Korean Arabic versions by the Korea Foundation's Quarterly magazine (Gwag, 2018).

Sharaf ad-Din Sabancuoglu wrote medicine books in Arabic script and Middle Old Turkish in Mongolian literature. The choice of language is intended to adopt a language familiar to the broader community. This work is a unique work of Arabic literature because it combines medicinal materials in the form of poetry so that it has more value in the world of medicine and literature. However, the relatively tricky use of Arabic and Persian terms is rarely used because it makes it easier to read. The book is stored in several versions in the Paris Bibliotheque and another manuscript version in the Fadyh National Library, written in 873 AH or 1468 AD in the Amasia area (Abdul Raheem, 2008).

Arabic literature in China cannot be separated from the history of cooperation through friendship between China and Arab countries. The comprehensive cooperative relations between China and the Arab countries cover various fields such as culture, economy, trade, and diplomacy, reflecting the history of friendly exchanges between the two that have lasted for more than 2,000 years since Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. This cooperation via culture is a model of excellent collaboration between traditional Chinese culture, represented by Confucian civilization, and Arabic culture, characterized by literati. In a profound sense, cultural exchange is the exchange of emotions, ideas, and wisdom between people from different countries, ethnic groups, and regions. A historical review of cultural exchanges between China and Arab countries has practical significance in strengthening mutual understanding and trust between the two countries, enhancing consensus, strengthening cooperation, enhancing human resources, and expanding Sino-Arab relations in cultural exchanges. The acceptance of other nations in mainland China is closely related to a comprehensive understanding of China's development by better implementing the policy of "exiting" and "bringing in" and building the country's strength (Jianfeng, 2020).

So far, about 300 types of Arabic literary works have been translated into Chinese. During these nearly three centuries, only six types of Arabic literary works have been published, most of which are various translations and individual complete translations of the "Qur'an" and "One Thousand and One Nights" that have been circulating in China for several years. The historical period "before the founding of the People's Republic of China" the existence of Qur'anic translations spread sporadically in the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty until the abdication of the Qing Emperor in February 1912 and the Republic of China from 1912 to April 1949. In addition to the Qur'an, there are translations of influential names in Arabic literature, such as Gibran's prose poems "The Song of Heaven," "Egyptian Fairy Tales," and "Childhood Memories." But most of these works were lost three months after October



1, 1949, until the "Cultural Revolution" in 1966, referred to as the "Seventeen Years" (Lin, 2022).

In an increasingly stable environment, the translation and introduction of Arabic literature restarted. It aims to support the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in achieving national independence and liberation. The Chinese government supports the translation of Arabic literature even though it is influenced by the times, which are already based online. During the "Seventeen Years," his translation career focused on modern literary works. His most notable achievements were patriotic poems, but most were translated from other languages; some Arabic short stories are also summarised in addition to Russian, French, and other languages. The theme of most translated works is realistic works that reflect social phenomena. October 1976 was the starting point of a new stage of foreign literary translation, so Arabic literary translation began to go viral and continued to increase. Most of the translated and researched articles are the result of the 20th century, which include poems, novels, plays, essays, travel notes, reportage, biographies, memoirs, letters, folk literature, children's literature, literary theory, and even screenplays. It is necessary to highlight related explicitly to the work "One Thousand and One Nights," which has always been popular and has undergone repeated publications, writings, and translations to become the most famous work. In addition, all of Gibran's works have been translated into Chinese, and Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz triggered the translation of his works into Chinese after winning the Nobel *Prize for Literature*. This phenomenon has filled the literary void of influential Arabic literary works in China. Hence, the Chinese State continuously evaluates the quality and quantity of Arabic literary translations to obtain comprehensive ideality (Suleiman, 2022).

Conclusion

It has been proven that the transliteration of Arabic literary works has a significant role in disseminating scholarly works across languages. The dissemination of literary works is not built arbitrarily but through political processes and cultural dialogue deeply rooted in society. The academic work of *One Thousand and One Nights* became a monumental work throughout the East Asian region. Likewise, many literary works have been translated to generate interest in non-Arab readers. The consumption of Arabic literary works at the national level can be understood as a reflection of public interest in Arabic literary works so that the local government can mediate them.

By focusing on the transliteration of Arabic literary works translated into Korean, Japanese, Mongol, and Mandarin, this research has investigated the map of the spread of Arabic literary works in the East Asian region. At the same time, this research has touched on a more fundamental problem: the role of the government is needed to support the translation of Arabic literary works so that readers of world literature can more massively consume them. Translation is more than just a translation process. It also contains elements of ideology and the author's historical record, allowing him to tell the reader what he experienced. Translation became a



means of enriching international reading, including cultivating transnational ideologies that indirectly dwarfed local cultures.

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