

## 2.1 DEVELOPMENTS OF THE THEORY OF TRANSLATION IN EUROPE

Europe, in its broader sense, during the golden Greek and Roman Empires eras and even after the fall of the Constantinople leading to the Renaissance, has been the center for scientific and systematic contributions and researches in all fields of science including translation. This statement, of course, does not prevent us from stating the fact that other non-European nations and communities have also made great contributions to the exaltment of the theories of translation as well as to other scientific developments. Nevertheless, ancient Greece and Rome are always credited for their systematic works.

### 2.1.1 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN ANTIQUITY (BEFORE CHRIST'S BIRTH TO THE BEGINNING OF THE MIDDLE AGES)

The first traces of translation date back from 3000 B.C. during the Egyptian Old Kingdoms. Fragmentary versions of the Sumerian Gilgamesh Epic have been found in four or five Asiatic languages of the second millennium B.C. (Academic Encyclopedia Americana, 1986). Inscriptions have been found in Cataract which indicate that two languages were used in the explanation of the same text (Newmark, 1981:3). The Rosetto Stone belonging to the Second Century B.C. provide us with keys and clues to the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics which also include a translation into Greek (Nida, 1964:11). It has also been documented that when the captive Jews returned from Mesopotamia to Nehemiah (397 B.C.), they found themselves unable to understand the Hebrew language of the Scriptures and they demanded for the text to be translated by translators (Nida, 1964:11). From the third century onward, we witness a great bulk of Greek literature being systematically translated into Latin (Robin 1967:16). Around 130 B.C. the Old Testament was translated from



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Hebrew into Greek (Newmark, 1981:13).

In earlier eras, translations might have been carried out but no definite records are available. What is known is that interpreters played significant roles in translating from one language into another, particularly to serve the then empires of Persia and Greece.

When Joseph, Jacob's (the Holy Prophet) son, was rescued from the well by some travellers and was taken to Egypt, according to Genesis, he used another language, and years later, he talked to his brothers through interpreters:

"They knew not that Joseph understood them, for he spoke unto them by an interpreter"

(Genesis: 42:23)

In Pharaoh Psamtik II's reign (594-588 B.C.), a great number of Egyptian boys were despatched to Greece, as scholars, to learn the language and to act as translators and interpreters (Ronald, 1982:28). A Lycian boy whose father was a Persian has been recorded to have accompanied Alexander the Great and interpreted for him in the two languages during Alexander's invasion of Persia (Ronald, 1982:28).

A monolith at the wall of Persepolis, Darius's capital, dating from 513 B.C. has inscriptions with three languages: Persian, Akkadian and Elamite. Even from the time of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Monarchy (600-530 B.C.), despite the Aramic tongue which was the most official widespread language, bilingualism was quite commonly used among inhabitants of the Persian Empire. Ronald quotes two interesting cases of the deficiencies in interpretation in antiquity. She mentions that Artaxerxes I (464-504 B.C.),



dispatched a bilingual messenger named Artaphernes to Sparta to inform the Spartan officials that the translators did not do a good job and they could not be understood. She, further, mentions a case where Alexander the Great became interested in learning more about the Hindu religion. According to her, three interpreters transmitted the Brahmin priests' words to him. The priests, noticing that the interpreters knew the languages but not the philosophy, declared that "... to attempt to expound the doctrines through such a filter would be like expecting water which flows through mud to remain pure" (Ronald, 1982:33).

As mentioned earlier, in Hellenistic Age (The Post Alexandrian Age), the first translation of the Old Testament was carried out into Greek by Jewish scholars. At the same time, Zeno, a semitic born, who founded the Stoic school of thought, learned Greek later in life and used the two languages effectively (Robin, 1967:16).

When Rome ruled the western civilized world, due to its expansionist and hegemonical nature, contacts between nations developed and as a consequence there were contacts between the speakers of other languages. Numerous inscriptions were translated into more familiar languages. Interpretation became popular and new techniques were developed to improve the old ones. Nevertheless, exact documents of what these specific techniques were are not accessible today.

The most prominent scholars of this era who devoted most of their times to translation as well as to other scholarly contributions to science and humanities are as follow: