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## 'A MALAY KNIGHT SPEAKS THE WHITE MAN'S TONGUE' - AN ANALYSIS OF MUHAMMAD HAJI SALLEH AS A TRANSLATOR

USM, PENANG, 28 November 2016 – Having served at USM from 1972-1974, Harry Aveling makes it a point to take time out of his busy schedule to come to Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) whenever he is in the country.

He has many fond memories of USM and returns to the university from time to time to give talks on matters regarding his field of expertise, translation.

Aveling was recently on campus to present a talk entitled "A Malay Knight Speaks the White Man's Tongue: Notes on Translating Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh".

During the talk, he shared with the audience his views on the development of Muhammad, whom he refers to fondly as his 'brother', as a bilingual scholar, poet, translator and self-translator. In particular, Aveling looked at the principles adopted by the National Laureate in translating the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* into English.

Quoting the translation scholar Anthony Pym, Aveling stressed the need to focus not on the text or its language features but on the human translator. By the same token, the central focus should be not only Muhammad's translations but also Muhammad himself a translator.

"Muhammad considers himself as a native or natural translator," Aveling highlighted.

Muhammad, despite his numerous translations, never had any formal training in translation theories and methods. He is, by and large, a self-taught translator, Aveling said.

Aveling explained that Muhammad followed the source text closely in his early translations of Indonesian and Malay poetry into English, producing rather literal translations of the poems. He noted a change in Muhammad's thinking later on. Muhammad, according to Aveling, expressed that "a poem in translation should read like a poem in the translated language of the translation...".

In spite of this, Muhammad at times reverted to more formal approach. Over time, however, he has adopted a more dynamic approach, especially in the translation of his own poetry and the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. As Muhammad translated, he took the liberty of adding in details deemed necessary. This, according to Aveling, brings to the fore the issue of translation as rewriting.

Aveling also touched on the practice of translating in Southeast Asia. He believes that more needs to be done in terms of translating local Asian writings, especially the major literary works produced in the main ASEAN languages.

The talk was held at the Conference Hall of the School of Humanities, USM and was attended by academics and close to 80 USM students currently pursuing their degree in Translation and Interpreting at the School of Humanities.

The session was chaired by Associate Professor Dr. Haslina Haroon and was also attended by Associate Professor Dr. Goh Sang Seong, the Coordinator of the Translation and Interpreting Research Unit (UniTI) of the School of Humanities, USM.

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