

### **Interaction between Islamic and Chinese civilizations**

The Islamic and Chinese civilizations interacted through military conflict followed by dialogue involving technology. The encounter began when the Muslim army had successfully expanded its influence to Central Asia. Following this, they were engaged in dialogue which resulted in transfer of technology.

According to Wan Fuad (1990) and Mazhar (1998), the Chinese society developed technology for making paper. The history of paper-making began with a court officer of the Han dynasty named Ts'ai Lun who created paper using bark, tree fibre, fish net, shreds of cloth and straw waste. With this discovery, Ts'ai Lun contributed to refinement of methods, materials and process of making paper. Then, paper-making technology evolved with innovation of paper made from a mixture of raw porridge, starch, gypsum and gelatin with a touch of beautiful colour. Extant specimens of Chinese paper dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE show that the innovation was achieved then. From that moment, paper began to take over the role of bamboo and silk sheets as medium to write government announcements. According to Lombard (2003), the earliest paper documents are manuscripts dated the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries CE obtained from East Turkestan.

This technology was absorbed into the Islamic civilization due to expansion of power into Central Asia which opened wide the influence of the Islamic world across Central Asia right up to Turkestan and Samarkand. Ibn al-Athir (1965), Ibn Kathir (1997), Baker (2011), Park (2012) and Kitagawa (2013) revealed that the expansion of power occurred when the Muslim army defeated the T'ang Dynasty (China) in a war on the banks of the Talas River situated in Kazakhstan in the year 133H/751CE. The Muslim army was led by Ziyad bin Şaleh al-Khuza'i. Many among the inhabitants of the territory became prisoners of war. Among those brought back were Chinese skilled in paper-making. They then passed on knowledge of making paper primitively from the Chinese civilization to Muslims. The condition in Samarkand was conducive to making paper as the place had natural abundance of fine hemp, which was the main ingredient for the process of making paper. Thus, the skill of paper-making was indirectly transferred to the Islamic civilization. This marked the beginning of the episode of paper-making industry in the Islamic civilization, the result of interaction in the form of dialogue between the Islamic and Chinese civilizations.

As a result of power expansion, Samarkand territory was annexed by the Muslim kingdom. Prior to that, Samarkand was an important centre of the Eastern civilization for paper production. This paper-making industry was said to exist since even the first Century CE. Under Muslim control, the paper-making technology spread and was taken over by the Muslim world as a whole, including the Maghrib (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria). The first paper factory was set up at the end of the year 751CE. Under Muslim rule, the paper factory in Samarkand was streamlined and expanded to cater for the increasing demands of the surrounding territories under Muslim rule. Samarkand then emerged as the leading centre for paper production of the Muslim world at that time. The peak of success in this interaction was the founding of the first paper factory in the Islamic civilization at