

***Translations from Arabic in Czech Republic, 1990-2010***  
***a study by the Next Page Foundation***

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## Introduction

Despite existing Middle Eastern and Arabic studies and its relatively long history in the Czech Republic, the situation on the field of systematic translations of Arabic literature to Czech language has been very unsatisfying since 1990's. The number of published works has been negligible if compared to the translations from other languages and there has been a complete lack of any conception or programme. As I am going to briefly show, it was not necessarily the case in the period before 1989.

The first oriental studies in Czech language were present at Prague University as early as in late 1870's. The earliest known translations of Arabic literature to Czech language appeared in 1913, well before the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. It was the first translation of the Qur'an from Arabic to Czech, carried out by a catholic priest Ignaz Weselly.<sup>1</sup> In the period between the Wars, the professors of oriental studies in Prague were active in producing the most important works of classical Arab literature. Another Czech translation of Qur'an, this time with a strong academic background of the translator, was achieved by Alois R. Nykl in 1934<sup>2</sup>. A complete and very scholarly approached translation of the One Thousand and One Night Stories was achieved by Felix Tauer in 1929-1955<sup>3</sup> and the old Arab poetry by Duraid ben as-Simma was translated by Rudolf Růžička in 1925 in the frame of his monograph on the Hejaz society of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>4</sup>

After 1945 the system of overall planned economy also touched the cultural sphere with some positive effects on systematic production of translated Arabic literary works which would be hardly published under purely market economy conditions. We have to take into account that the Czech population of would-be readers was less than 10 millions (plus less than 5 millions Slovaks, who were due to the proximity of both languages able to read Czech) was quite small for absorbing any reasonable print-run of a classical Arabic literature work.

The task of producing of translated works of classical world literature was put on the publishing house Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění [State Publishing House of Belle-Lettres, Music and Arts], later on, in 1960's, renamed Odeon. In its series Živá díla minulosti [Living Works of the Past], several important titles were published, translated very precisely by Czech professors of Arabic and Islamic studies: works by Avicenna (1954), Ibn Tufail's *Alive*,

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<sup>1</sup> Ignaz Weselly (Ignác Veselý, 1885-1964) published the first part of his translation *Koran* [Qur'an] in 1913 and the rest was published in 1925. In 1945, the second, complete edition was published in Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Alois Richard Nykl (1885-1958), Czech arabist and hispanist, the first edition of his translation *Korán* [Qur'an] was published in Prague in 1934, the second edition in Prague in 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Felix Tauer (1893-1981) was a professor of Islamic history at Charles University, Prague. His translation *Tisíc a jedna noc* [One Thousand and One Night] was published in several editions (1928-1955, 1958-1963, 1973-1975, 2001-2002).

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Růžička (1878-1957) was a professor of Arabic and Semitic languages at Charles University, Prague. In 1925-1930, he published this monography *Duraid ben as-Simma: obraz středního Hidžázu na úsvitě islámu* [Duraid ben as-Simma: The View of the Central Hejaz at the Dawn of Islam] in three volumes.

*Son of Awake* (1957), *Travelogues of Ibn Battuta* (1961), *The Life of Antara* (1968), another academic translation of Qur'an by Ivan Hrbek (1972), Ibn Khaldoun's *Al-Muqaddimah* (1972) and Al-Mas'udi's *The Meadows of Gold and the Mines of Gems* (1983).<sup>5</sup> These publications were supplemented with scholarly introductions and commentaries. The quality of both the translations and the technical execution of these series was outstanding and unfortunately was never reached again in Czech translations after it stopped to be published in 1991. Besides this series, few other classical works were translated: Avicenna's *The Book of Definitions* (1954), Al-Jahiz's *Book of Misers* (1975) and *The Book of the Experience of the Arab Warrior with the Crusaders* by Usama ibn Munqidh (1972).<sup>6</sup> These books were published mostly by the same Odeon publishing house, albeit in different series. Two critical anthologies of classical Arabic poetry were also published in 1970's.<sup>7</sup>

In the period of 1945 to 1989, certain attention was also paid to contemporary literature by Arab authors, albeit less consistently than to the classical works. Few novels by Egyptian authors were translated: *The Land* by Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi (1958), *The Call of the Curlew* (1964) and *The Days* (1974) by Taha Hussein and *Modern Cairo* by Naguib Mahfouz (1968).<sup>8</sup> Besides this, two Palestinian works were published: an anthology of short stories by

<sup>5</sup> -Avicenna: *Z díla* [Selected Work]. Selected and translated from Arabic and Persian by Věra Kubíčková and Karel Petráček. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, Praha 1954.

-Ibn Tufajl: *Živý syn bdícího* [Alive, son of Awake]. Translated from the Arabic original رسالة حي ابن يقظان by Ivan Hrbek. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, Praha 1957.

-Muhammad ibn Abdalláh ibn Battúta: *Cesty* [The Travels]. Translated from the Arabic original edited and published in Paris under the title *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah* by Ivan Hrbek. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury a umění, Praha 1961.

-*Román o Antarovi* [The Life of Antara]. Translated from the Arabic original سيرة عنتره ابن شداد by Karel Petráček. Odeon, Praha 1968.

-*Korán* [Qur'an]. Translated from Arabic original القرآن الكريم, arranged and commented by Ivan Hrbek. Odeon, Praha 1972. Second edition: Odeon, Praha 1991; third edition: Academia, Praha 2000.

-Ibn Chaldún: *Čas království a říší. Mukaddima* [The Era of Kingdoms and Empires. Muqaddimah]. Translated from the Arabic original المقدمة by Ivan Hrbek. Odeon, Praha 1972.

-Abu l-Hasan 'Alí al-Mas'údí: *Rýžoviště zlata a doly drahokamů* [The Meadows of Gold and the Mines of Gems]. Translated from the Arabic original مروج الذهب و معادن الجواهر by Ivan Hrbek. Odeon, Praha 1983.

<sup>6</sup> -Avicenna: *Kniha definic* [The Book of Definitions]. Translated from the Arabic original رسالة في الحدود by Jarmila Štěpková. Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, Praha 1954.

-Al-Džáhiz: *Kniha lakomců* [The Book of Misers]. Translated from the Arabic original كتاب البخلاء by Svetozár Pantůček. Odeon, Praha 1975.

-Usáma ibn Munkiz: *Kniha zkušeností arabského bojovníka s křižáky* [The Book of the Experience of the Arab Warrior with the Crusaders]. Translated from the Arabic original كتاب الاعتبار by Rudolf Veselý. Odeon, Praha 1971 (2nd edition Academia, Praha 2009).

<sup>7</sup> -*Cestou karavan* [Following the Footprints of Caravans]. Selected, arranged and translated from the Arabic originals by Karel Petráček. Československý spisovatel, Praha 1975.

-Karel Petráček: *Básníci pouště* [The Poets of the Desert]. Selected, commented and translated from the Arabic originals by Karel Petráček. Československý spisovatel, Praha 1977.

<sup>8</sup> -Abdarrahmán aš-Šarkávi: *Země* [The Land]. Translated from the Arabic original الارض by Ivan Hrbek. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění, Praha 1958.

-Taha Husajn: *Volání hrdličky* [The Call of the Curlew]. Translated from the Arabic original دعاء الكروان by Ivan Hrbek. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury a umění, Praha 1964.

-Táhá Husain: *Kniha dní* [Book of the Days]. Translated from the Arabic original الايام by Karel Petráček. Odeon, Praha 1974.

-Nagib Mahfúz: *Skandál v Káhiře* [A Scandal in Cairo]. Translated from the Arabic original القاهرة الجديدة by Jaroslav Oliverius. Odeon, Praha 1968.

Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmoud Darwish's *Diary of the Usual Sadness*, and a novel by a Sudanese Tayeb Salih *Season of Migration to the North*.<sup>9</sup> Only one collection of contemporary Arabic poetry appeared.<sup>10</sup> Because this collection contains also some Arab authors who write in French, we should also mention here several pieces of contemporary Arab prose, translated from its French original to Czech. This group contains a Moroccan author Driss Chraïbi and Algerians Mouloud Mammeri and Malek Haddad.<sup>11</sup>

Several Czech Arabists represented a stable group of translators. The most productive was Ivan Hrbek, followed by Karel Petráček, a specialist in Arab poetry, and Svetožár Pantůček, who translated works by Arab authors from both Arabic and French. Other important Arabists also attributed by their translations: Jaroslav Oliverius, Rudolf Veselý and Luboš Kropáček.<sup>12</sup>

It is necessary to mention here the *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] magazine that is published by the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Since the publication of its first issue in 1945 it has regularly brought translations of short selections of works by many Arab authors. The magazine still continues in this activity today.

A solid situation of Arabic and Islamic studies in Czechoslovakia from 1950's to 1980's, joined by the close political relations with most Arab countries at that period, stood behind a steady, albeit not huge, production of quality translations of important Arab works. This can be supported by the fact that the translated books were published in a print-run of several thousand copies (for example Al-Jahiz's *Book of Misers* as well as Al-Mas'udi's *The Meadows of Gold and the Mines of Gems* reached 5,000 copies, Mammeri's *The Opium and The Stick* 20,000 copies etc.). Neither the technical quality of the translations of this period nor its print-run was achieved again after 1990.

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<sup>9</sup> -Ghassán Kanafání: *Muži na slunci a jiné povídky* [Men in the Sun and Other Stories]. Selected and translated from Arabic originals by Ivan Hrbek. Svoboda, Praha 1982.

-Mahmúd Darwíš: *Deník všedního smutku* [Diary of the Usual Sadness]. Translated from the Arabic original *يوميات الحزن العادي* by Luboš Kropáček. Novinář, Praha 1989.

-Sáleh at-Tajjib: *Cesta na sever* [Season of Migration to the North]. Translated from the Arabic original *موسم الهجرة الى الشمال* by Svetožár Pantůček. Odeon, Praha 1986.

<sup>10</sup> -*Zelená lampa poezie* [Green Lamp of the Poetry]. Selected, arranged and translated from the Arabic and French originals by Karel Petráček. Odeon, Praha 1974.

<sup>11</sup> -Malúd Mammerí: *Zapomenutý pahorek* [Forgotten Mound]. Translated from the French original *La Colline oubliée* by Svetožár Pantůček. Odeon, Praha 1971.

-Mulúd Mammerí: *Opium a hůl* [The Opium and The Stick]. Translated from the French original *L'opium et le bâton* by Věra Švestková. Naše vojsko, Praha 1982.

-Driss Chraïbi: *Případ v Atlasu* [The Investigation in the Atlas Mountains]. Translated from the French original *Une enquête au pays* by Kateřina Vinšová. Mladá fronta, Praha 1988.

-Malek Haddad: *Noční rozhovor* [The Talk in the Middle of the Night]. Translated from the French original *L'élève et la leçon* by Břetislav Štorm. Mladá Fronta, Praha 1964.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan Hrbek (1923-1993) was an arabist and historian of Middle Eastern and African countries. Karel Petráček (1926-1987) was an outstanding Czech arabist working at Charles University in Prague. Svetožár Pantůček (1931-2000) was an arabist and Russian language scholar, later specialised in North African literatures. Jaroslav Oliverius (b. 1933) is a specialist in Arabic and Hebrew languages at Charles University. Rudolf Veselý (b. 1931) is an arabist and historian who led the Department of Middle Eastern and African Studies at Charles University for many years. Luboš Kropáček (b. 1939) is a highly estimated arabist and islamologist, giving lectures at Charles University.

## **Notes on Relevant Changes in Czech Society after 1989**

The obvious decrease of the amount of translated Arabic titles published after the 1990 as well as the character of the publications that was different from that before 1989 resulted from significant changes that had undergone Czech economy including the publishing market. Compared to the fact that the choice of the titles translated from Arabic into Czech before the 1989 shows signs of systematization in order to widen cultural horizons and to tighten significant economical relationships with the Arab-speaking countries, there are no such features to be found among the titles published after 1989 revolution. Rapid socio-economical changes including the privatisation of state-owned publishing houses and the emergence of many new private enterprises have great impact on what is published nowadays. The majority of the publishers are not willing to undertake the risk of printing „exotic“ titles that don't secure financial profit. All factors mentioned above have made conditions for translators more complicated as they have troubles to find sufficient financial support for their exhaustive and time-consuming work. The lack of finances leads to the fact that despite the long tradition of Arabic studies and relatively high amount of students graduating every year, there are only very few of them who decide to start this task.

Beside the economical reason for the lack of interest from the side of the publishing houses, one quite significant social reason also plays its role: certain general aversion of the Czech society towards Arab and Muslim world after 1989. This phenomenon certainly deserves a profound analysis, but my personal and maybe simplified explanation is as follows: the good relations of Czechoslovakia with Arab countries and the support for Palestinian movement in the previous period is felt by Czech media and society as one of the signs of the communist regime. The Czech foreign policy after 1989 turned its back to the former "Arab friends" and started to maintain warm relations with the Western countries and in the region of the Middle East with Israel. An interesting phenomenon of a sort of "Jewmania", or the fashion to be interested in the Jewish culture that was present in Czech society especially in 1990's, is just a small example of this overall turn.<sup>13</sup> On contrary, Arab and Muslim society is generally considered as a symbol of tyranny, social and economical backwardness and as a source of terrorist activities in the world.

## **Publication of Czech translations of Arab works after 1989**

The amount of books published in the Czech Republic almost doubled in the period from 1990 to 2010. In figures, in 1993 the publishing houses produced 2433 titles and in 2009 this number increased to 4475. However, the number of translations from Arabic into Czech rather

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<sup>13</sup> As an example we can mention here a rock music group *Šalom*, very characteristic for this fashion wave. Czech media also show big interest in the reborn Jewish community in the country and there are many programmes on Jewish feasts etc.

stagnated: for example, in 1993, 2 titles were published, 4 titles in 2008 and only one title in 2009.<sup>14</sup>

After 1989, the majority of the titles translated directly from Arabic to Czech was conducted by arabists or islamologists linked to the Department of Middle Eastern and African Studies at Charles University in Prague.

Direct translations from Arabic almost disappeared from the lists of the titles published by influential publishing houses and thus found their own path to the readers via modest private publishers that almost completely took over the role of presentation the Arabic literature to the Czech public. At this point, we must take into account that due to the lack of finance these publishers handle with small print-runs and their titles face difficulties in entering the book market at finding a proper distribution. In this context there is no way but to mention a small Dar Ibn Rushd publishing house found in 1991 by Charif Bahbouh who, originally from Syria and long time living in Prague, took over the initiative of offering the Czech public an insight to the world of Arabic literature of different genres. 14 out of the total of 24 titles translated directly from Arabic to Czech and published between the years 1989 and 2010 were produced by Dar Ibn Rushd.

## **The List of the Titles by Genres**

### ***Short fiction***

One of the most productive Czech translators of Arabic literature was the above mentioned Svetozár Pantůček who continued his life-long work in the 1990s by publishing anthologies of short fiction from Arab-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa and thus offered to the Czech readers first opportunity to get acquainted with Arabic short fiction for the very first time.<sup>15</sup>

*Moderní tuniské povídky* [Modern Short Stories from Tunisia]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Patůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1996.

*Moderní syrské povídky* [Modern Short Stories from Syria]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Pantůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1997.

*Moderní alžírské povídky* [Modern Short Stories from Algeria]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Patůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1999.

*Moderní marocké povídky* [Modern Short Stories from Morocco]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Patůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2000.

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<sup>14</sup> These figures are based on the annual reports of Czech National Library available at: <http://www.nkp.cz/pages/page.php3?navez=Vyrocnizpravy&submenu3=59>.

<sup>15</sup> See fn. 12.

Another two anthologies of short stories were published in the period between 1990 and 2010, also by Dar Ibn Rushd:

*Svátek na zemi: moderní libyjské povídky* [The Feast on the Earth: Modern Short Stories from Libya]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Jaromír Hajský. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2003.

Hasan Nasr: *Šest slz Hasana Nasra* [Six Tears of Hasan Nasr]. A bilingual Czech-Arabic anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Jana Břeská. Dar Ibn Rushd, Brandýs nad Labem 2008.

### **Fiction**

Only two Arabic novels were translated to Czech in the twenty years between 1989 and 2010. The translation of the work by the famous Libyan author Ibrahim al-Koni was supported by the Libyan government, the other one by Egyptian Son'allah Ibrahim was published by Dar Ibn Rushd:

Ibráhím al-Kóní: *Krvácení kamene* [The Bleeding of the Stone]. Translated from the Arabic original *نزيف الحجر* by Jaromír Hajský. Libyjský lidový úřad, Praha 1996.

Sun 'alláh Ibráhím: *Komise* [The Committee]. Translated from the Arabic original *اللجنة* by Ondřej Beránek. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2005.

### **Poetry**

Two collections of poems by contemporary Arab authors were published in Czech translation in the reviewed period:

Nizár Kabbání: *Nizár Kabbání, kníže lyriků, básník pro všechny* [Nizar Kabbani, The Prince of Lyrics, Poet for Crowds]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Jaromír Hajský. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2000.

Mahmúd Darwíš: *Přicházím do stínu tvých očí: výbor z tvorby palestinského básníka* [I Am Coming into the Shadow of Your Eyes]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Burhan Kalak. Babylon, Praha 2007.

### **Classical Arabic Works**

A reprint of: *Tisíc a jedna noc* [One Thousand and One Night]. Translated from the Arabic original **ألف ليلة و ليلة** by Felix Tauer. Ikar, Praha 2001 (4<sup>th</sup> reprint).

*Kalíla a Dimna* [Kalila and Dimna]. Translated from the Arabic original **كليلة و دمنة** by Jaroslav Oliverius. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2005.

### **Children's books**

*Tucet tváří Nasreddinových* [Dozen Faces of Nasreddin]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Miloš Mendel. Vyšehrad, Praha 1990 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition Orientální ústav AV ČR, Praha 2004).

*Tajemství pěti bran* [The Secret of Five Gates]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Charif Bahboub and Hana Bičovská. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1993.

*Zakletý sultán: arabské pohádky* [The Bewitched Sultan: Arab Tales]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Pantůček. Najáda, Praha 1993.

*Malá mořská víla a jiné arabské pohádky* [The Little Mermaid and Other Arab Tales]. An anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Svetozár Pantůček. Delta, Kladno 1995.

### **Philosophy**

Abú Hámíd al-Ghazzálí: *Zachránce bloudícího* [The Deliverance From Error]. Translated from the Arabic original **المنقذ من الدلال** by Luboš Kropáček. Vyšehrad, Praha 2005.

### **Religion**

*Translations of the Qur'an:*

A reprint of: *Korán* [Qur'an]. Translated from the Arabic original **القرآن** by Ivan Hrbek. Odeon, Praha 1991 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Academia, Praha 2000 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).

*Vznešený Korán* [The Holy Qur'an]. Translated from the Arabic original **القرآن** by Ivan Hrbek and supplemented by a commentary by 'Abdulláh Júsuf 'Ali, translated from English by Josef Procházka. A.M.S. trading, Praha 2007.

*Other religious books:*

*Hledání skrytého pokladu* [The Quest for the Hidden Treasure]. An anthology of Medieval Arabic Sufi texts in commented Czech translations arranged and translated by Bronislav Ostřanský. Orientální ústav AVČR, Praha 2008.

Jahjá al-Nawawí: *Zahrady spravedlivých* [Gardens of the Righteous]. Translated from the Arabic original **رياض الصالحين** by Petr Pelikán. A.M.S. trading, Praha 2008.

### ***Others***

*Moudrost starých Arabů* [The Wisdom of the Ancient Arabs]. An Anthology arranged and translated by Charif Bahbouh and Miloš Stejskal. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1995.

Muhammad Šejch Sídí an-Nafzáwí: *Zahrada vůní pro potěchu mysli* [The Perfumed Garden]. Translated from the Arabic original **الروض العاطر في نزهة الخاطر** by Svetozár Pantůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2001.

*365+1 arabské přísloví a mudrosloví* [365+1 Arabic Proverbs and Wise Saws]. An Anthology arranged and translated from Arabic by Charif Bahbouh and Martina Bahbouhová. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 2001.

### **Translations of works by Arab authors from other languages**

It is obviously easier for commercial publishing houses to find, select, and translate authors writing in Western languages than those writing in „exotic“ languages such as Arabic. The main reason can be that the publishers follow mainly European or Western literary events and critics and the Arab authors writing in Western languages are often regarded as belonging to the literatures of these respective languages. Thus, many works by a Lebanese Khalil Gibran written in English have been translated since 1989 as well as three titles by a Moroccan Taher Ben Jelloun written in French. A few works by Arab authors representing „easier“ genres and written in Western languages were also translated to Czech, such as an Algerian Yasmina Khadra or Moroccans Nedjme and Hafid Bouazza. However, several titles written by Arab authors in Arabic were translated to Czech from translations to Western languages. It means that publishing houses for some reason didn't take the advantage of Czech arabists for translation of these works from the original language.

### ***Works by Arab authors written in and translated from the Western languages***

Chalíl Džibrán: *Prorok* [The Prophet]. Translated from the English original *The Garden of the Prophet* by Eliška Merhautová and Boris Merhaut. Vyšehrad, Praha 1992.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Blázen a jiné paraboly* [The Madman and Other Parables]. Translated from the English original *The Madman, The Forerunner, The Wanderer and Khalil the Heretic* by Svetozár Pantůček. Dar Ibn Rushd, Praha 1994 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition Vyšehrad, Praha 2008).

Chalíl Džibrán: *Zlomená křídla* [The Broken Wings]. Translated from the English original *The Broken Wings* by Josef Hermach. Synergie, Praha 1996.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Písek a pěna* [Sand and Foam]. Translated from the English original *Sand and Foam* by Eliška Merhaoutová. Vyšehrad, Praha 2001.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Prorok* [The Prophet]. Translated from the English original *The Prophet* by Dagmar Steinová. Academia, Praha 2002.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Ježíš, syn člověka* [Jesus, the Son of Man]. Translated from the English original *Jesus, the Son of Man* by Valentová. Eugenika, Bratislava 2006.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Poutník: jeho podobenství a výroky* [The Wanderer: His Parables and His Sayings]. Translated from the English original *The Wanderer: His Parables and His Sayings* by Vlasta Hesounová. Vyšehrad, Praha 2006.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Slzy a úsměv* [Tears and Laughter]. Translated from the English original *Tears and Laughter* by Vlasta Hesounová. Vyšehrad, Praha 2006.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Bohové země* [The Earth Gods]. Translated from the English original *The Earth Gods* by Martin Pokorný. Vyšehrad, Praha 2007.

Chalíl Džibrán: *Slova jako ranní červánky* [Words like Rosy Dawn]. An anthology arranged and translated by Josef Daněk, Iva Daňková and Eliška Merhaoutová. Vyšehrad, Praha 2010.

Tahar Ben Jelloun: *Tichý den v Tangeru* [Silent Day in Tangiers]. Translated from the French original *Jour de silence à Tanger* by Anna Lukavská and Erik Lukavský. Dauphin, Praha 2003.

Tahar Ben Jelloun: *Tati, co je rasismus?* [Racism Explained to My Daughter]. Translated from the French original *Le racisme expliqué à ma fille* by Anna Lukavská and Erik Lukavský. Dauphin, Praha 2004.

Tahar Ben Jelloun: *Posvátná noc* [The Sacred Night]. Translated from the French original *La Nuit Sacrée* by Anna Lukavská and Erik Lukavský. Dauphin, Praha 2007.

Hafid Bouazza: *Abdulláhovy nohy* [The Legs of Abdullah]. Translated from the Dutch original *De voeten van Abdullah* by Veronika Havlíková. Labyrint, Praha 2002.

Nadžma: *Mandle* [The Almonds]. Translated from the French original *L'Amande* by Věra Šťovičková-Heroldová. Brána, Praha 2005.

Yasmina Khadra: *Kábulské vlaštovky* [The Swallows of Kabul]. Translated from the French original *Les hirondelles de Kaboul* by Hana Krejčí. Alpress, Frýdek-Místek 2006.

Yasmina Khadra: *Černá vdova* [The Attack]. Translated from the French original *L'Attentat* by Michal Šťovíček. Alpress, Frýdek-Místek 2007.

### **Works by Arab authors written in Arabic and translated from translations to the Western languages:**

Muhammad Šukrí: *Nahý chleba* [For Bread Alone]. Translated from the French translation *Le Pain nu* of the Arabic original *الخبز الحافي* by Anna Lukavská and Erik Lukavský. Agite/Fra, Praha 2006.

Rajaa Alsanea: *Děvčata z Rijádu* [Girls of Riyadh]. Translated from the English translation *Girls of Riyadh* of the Arabic original *بنات الرياض* by Blanka Berounská. Metafora, Praha 2008.

Ibn Ishák: *Život Muhammada Posla Božího* [The Life of Muhammad, God's Prophet]. Translated from the English translation *The Life of Muhammad, Apostle of Allah* of the Arabic original *السيرة النبوية* by Viktor Svoboda. Leda, Praha 2009.

Beside the works listed above, the *Nový Orient* magazine continues to publish translations of short samples of the works by Arab authors and it is mostly young Czech arabists and students of Arabic language who contribute here. The magazine, published now quarterly, thus represents a platform for presenting contemporary Arabic literature in translation of young generation of Czech arabists.

### **Note on Arabic Translations of Czech Literature**

The number of Czech works translated to Arabic is not very high. However, it is not easy to get much information even by browsing the Arabic web sites. The Unesco databases of translations lists several works by important Czech authors Božena Němcová, Josef Škvorecký, Jan Drda, Jaroslav Hašek, Jaroslav Seifert, and Milan Kundera (some of these Kundera's works were, however, originally written in French, so we doubt about classifying them as translations from Czech) published in Syria mostly in 1980's.<sup>16</sup> This is well plausible regarding good political and economic relations between Czechoslovakia and Syria at that period. According to the Unesco databases, some more Kundera's translations were published in Egypt, as well as one work by Miroslav Holub. One novel by Karel Čapek was translated and published in Kuwait.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, the Unesco databases proved not to be very reliable.

<sup>16</sup> The databases is accessible via: <http://databases.unesco.org/xtrans/stat/xTransStat.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Following literary works are listed in Unesco databases:

–) بوجينا نيمتسوا (Božena Němcová) مختارات من اقصيص التشيكية و السلوفاكية: [Selection from Czech and Slovak Popular Stories]. Three volumes. Translated from the Czech original by Nizar Abdalla. وزارة الثقافة و الارشاد القومي, Damascus 1980.

Apart from the Unesco list, we have found several recent translations published in Egypt. In 2002, it was a novel *Nesmrtelnost* [Immortality] by Milan Kundera, in 2004 a book by a Czech Egyptologist Miroslav Verner *Pyramidy, tajemství minulosti* [The Pyramids, Secret of the Past], and in 2009 several short stories by contemporary Czech authors Jan Balabán, Stanislav Beran and Jáchym Topol, published as a part of collection of central European works under the title *Stories from the Heart of Europe*.<sup>18</sup> In 2010, another work joined these translations: an essay by Czech president Václav Klaus criticising the global climate warming theories *Modrá, nikoli zelená planeta* [Blue Planet in Green Shackles].<sup>19</sup>

Another endeavour to translate Czech works to Arabic can be found by the above mentioned owner of the publishing house Dar ibn Rushd in Prague Charif Bahbouh. He has already published his translation of Czech short stories and tales and is planning to publish more works.<sup>20</sup> This brief note on Arabic translations of Czech literature doesn't claim to be a complete list.

الجبناء (Josef Škvorecký) [The Cowards]. Translated from the Czech original *Zbabělci* by Husayn al-Awdat and Isa Asfur. وزارة الثقافة و الإرشاد القومي, Damascus 1982.

انسان مرسوم أليا : (Karel Čapek) [R.U.R.]. Translated from the Czech original *R.U.R.* by Taha Mahmud Taha. وزارة الاعلام, Kuwait 1983.

الجندي الطيب شفيك و ما جرى في الحرب العالمية : (Jaroslav Hašek) [The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk During the World War]. Translated from the Czech original *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* by Tawfiq al-Asadi. وزارة الثقافة و الإرشاد القومي, Damascus 1986.

يان دردا (Jan Drda) [The Higher Principle]. Translated from the Czech original *Vyšší princip* by Charif Bahbouh. دار نشر المنتني للاطفال و اليافعين, Damascus 1987.

ياروسلاف سايفرت (Jaroslav Seifert) [Lover from Prague]. Translated from the Czech original by Morris Isa. Union des ecrivains arabes, Damascus 1985.

فالس الوداع : (Milan Kundera) [Farewell Waltz]. Translated from the Czech original *Valčík na rozloučenou* by Muhammad Eid Ibrahim. مؤسسة دار الهلال, Cairo 1998.

میلان كونديرا (Milan Kundera) [The Novel]. Translated by Amal Mansour. المؤسسة العربية للدراسات و النشر, Amman 1999.

المزحة : (Milan Kundera) [The Joke]. Translated from the Czech original *Žert* by Antun Homsí. دار الورد, Damascus 1998.

الموصايا المغدورة : (Milan Kundera) [The Betrayed Testament]. Translated by M. Aqil. الاوائل, Damascus 2000.

الجهل : (Milan Kundera) [Ignorance]. Translated by Rif'at Uta. دار الورد, Damascus 2000.

فالس الوداع : (Milan Kundera) [Farewell Waltz]. Translated from the Czech original *Valčík na rozloučenou* by Rose Makhoul. دار الورد, Damascus 2000.

خمس دقائق بعد غارة جوية : (Miroslav Holub) [Five Minutes After the Air Raid]. Translated from the Czech original by Fadil Al Sultani. الهيئة العامة لقصور الثقافة, Cairo 1998.

الخلود : (Milan Kundera) [Immortality]. Translated from the Czech original *Nesmrtelnost* by Amr Shatury and Khalid Biltagi. Cairo 2002.

سر الاهرام : (Miroslav Verner) [Secret of the Pyramids]. Translated from the Czech original *Pyramidy, tajemství minulosti* by Khalid Biltagi. المشروع القومي للترجمة, Cairo 2004.

قصص من قلب اوربا : (Jan Balabán, Stanislav Beran, Jáchym Topol) [Stories From the Heart of Europe]. Czech stories translated from the Czech originals by Khalid Biltagi. Sphinx Agency سفنكس, Cairo 2009.

كوكبنا الازرق في قيود خضراء فاتسلاف كلاوس : (Václav Klaus) [Blue Planet in Green Shackles]. Translated from the Czech original *Modrá, nikoli zelená planeta* by Emira Klimentová. دار الشروق, Cairo 2010.

قصص و حكايات تشيكية : (Jan Balabán, Stanislav Beran, Jáchym Topol) [Czech Stories and Tales]. Arranged and translated from the Czech originals by Charif Bahbouh. Dar ibn Rushd, Praha 2009.

## **Conclusion**

The quality and number of translations from Arabic to Czech decreased after 1989 when compared to the situation in previous period. Privatisation of publishing houses and their largely market oriented policy together with certain general antipathy of Czech society towards the Arab world means that the interest in publishing Arab authors is very low. On the other hand, there is quite strong group of young graduates from Arabic and Middle Eastern studies at Czech universities promising better future for Arabic literature in the Czech Republic on condition that they take initiative in persuading publishers to translate Arab authors and in looking for financial support for mostly non-profitable projects of this kind.