

Translations from Arabic in Slovakia, 1990-2010
a study by the Next Page Foundation

conducted by Marek Brieška
November 2010

Next Page Foundation series of studies on translation flows

in partnership with "Translating in the Mediterranean" project of Transeuropéennes and the
Anna Lindh Foundation

This work is licensed under Creative Commons



Introduction

Arab/Oriental studies have a long tradition in Slovakia. Oriental languages (Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew) started to be taught at the Philosophical faculty as early as 1929. One of the founding figures was professor Ján Bakoš (1890 – 1967), who studied in Gotingene and habilitated at Charles University of Prague. Despite long tradition of Oriental studies until now there are only three outstanding Arabists in the whole Slovakia – Prof. PhDr. L. Drozdík, CSc. (Institute of Oriental studies), Prof. PhDr. J. Paulíny CSc. (Philosophical faculty UK), Doc. PhDr. K. Sorby, DrSc. (Director of Institute of Oriental studies). Only two of them ventured into adventures of translating Arabic literature, whereas the third one dedicated his time to teaching the Arabic language and history. He is currently the Head of the Institute of Oriental and African studies in Bratislava. These three scholars are the outstanding figures of Oriental studies in Slovakia.

Another problem that started to be perceived as a rather alarming is the fact that the new generation of young Arabists was underrepresented until very recently. Those who graduated and majored in Arab studies before year 2000 pursued either another career track altogether or were not necessarily interested in translation of the Arabic literature. As a rule, when graduated Arabist have also majored in the second language e.g. English, they find work in this field either as translators of interpreters. Some of graduates work abroad either for international organizations as UN or for commercial companies. Small portion find work at embassies. There is no common patter that would predestine the future vocation of an Arabist.

However, the last couple of years have witnessed some kind of revival in translation scene with new names emerging along with new projects being implemented. Besides the aforementioned three doyens of Arab studies there are currently three active young Arabists with the sufficient knowledge and linguistic background to be able to translate the Arabic literature: Mgr. Zuzana Gažáková, PhD (Assitant professor at Philosophical faculty of Comenius University), Mgr. Emanuel Beška, PhD. (Arab scholar at the Institute of Oriental and African Studies) and Mgr. Marek Brieška, PhD. (Chief advisor for the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak republic). These three young people represent what might be termed a new generation of the Slovak Arabists. As for even the younger generation there are approximately three graduates in Oriental studies per year taking into the consideration the possibility for the enrolment at Comenius University every four years. Comenius University in Bratislava is the only official institution that teaches fully-fledged Arabic studies syllabus in Slovakia.

Publishing and translations market in Slovakia – an overview

The number of publishing houses in Slovakia, which would be willing to publish translation from the Arabic language, is rather negligible. Also there is no single publishing house that would publish exclusively translations from the "exotic" languages. From the personal experience of

the author of this study, smaller publishing houses are more willing to undertake the risky adventure of publishing a book translated from the less spoken language given the scope of readers market in Slovakia. Despite being small (5.3 million inhabitants and a language used only within its borders) the Slovak book publishing market is growing rapidly. The number of published books has increased from 4,854 in 2005 to 8,168 in 2006. There were 6,853 newly published titles in 2006 and title reprints represented about one sixth of the total of published books. Annual growth of non-periodicals between 2005 and 2006 was 56%.

Number of Books and Brochures Published in the Slovak Republic

	2004	2005	2006
Brochures	2965	1321	1470
Books	5096	4854	8168
Total	8061	6175	9638

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic

The structure of the Slovak book production market has not changed much over the past few years. Slovak language publications remain dominant and the standard number of translated languages is 22. In 2006 there were 1,283 foreign book translations published in Slovakia, which represented a 69% increase over 2005. The most translated languages were English, Czech, German and French.

	2005	2006
English	370	570
Czech	41	248
German	110	149
French	60	76
Total	761	1238

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic

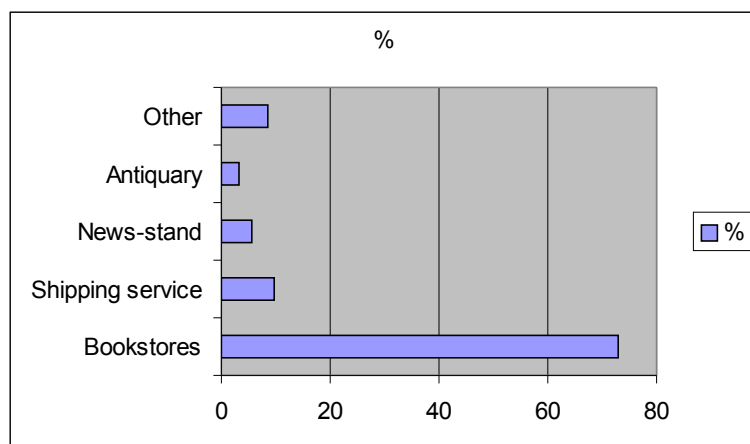
Generally, there are many book genres to choose from. The total book market is estimated at \$100 million per year. Ikar, Slovart, Reader's Digest Vyber and Slovensky spisovatel are the largest Slovak publishers among the 1,155 publishers officially registered with the Slovak Ministry of Culture. Dan Brown, J.K. Rowling, Dick Francis and John Grisham are the best selling foreign authors in Slovakia. The top selling domestic authors are Maxim E. Matkin and Tatiana Keleova-Vasilkova. On-line sales have only a 1% share of the market and thus are a good business prospect.

Slovak readers

Referring to The Slovak Ministry of Culture and statistics provided by Slovak libraries, the number of registered book readers in public libraries declined in 2006 by 14,849 to 563,341, readers in scientific libraries grew by 3,948 to 114,350, and readers in specialized libraries expanded by 8,726 to 84,325. Academic and school library statistics are not available.

According to the latest survey on reading, approximately ten percent of Slovak citizens read books daily. This percentage is relatively high compared to cinema, theatre or concert attendance. Every sixth present given is a book and people are willing to pay more for a quality book that has a nice cover. The survey also showed that, despite new electronic media, people continue to buy hardcover books.

The focus of Slovak readers is moving from fiction to more expensive special literature and encyclopedias. Also popular are astrological, numerological and spiritual books. Paperback books are not common in Slovakia. Slovak readers prefer buying books in shops, which are located in large shopping malls. The Slovak Postal Service remains the biggest shipping player in the market. Direct marketing sales is quite popular especially with Reader's Digest Vyber, which holds almost one quarter of the market. Bookselling via Internet, with only a 1% share, has not yet developed but represents an excellent opportunity.¹



Source: Project MML (2005)

The Czech Republic and Slovakia have very well educated and literate populations with long traditions of book reading and book buying and today English is the foreign language of choice for most people. Taken together they imported nearly £13m of books from the UK in 2007, putting them ahead of China, Russia and New Zealand, markets to which British publishers tend to devote much more attention. Imports are strongest in mass-market fiction, travel and

¹ Data and information obtained from Slovak Literary Centre.

illustrated books, some children’s books, academic and professional books, particularly in medicine and business, and, especially, ELT.

Both markets also have potential for rights sales, though the Czech Republic is significantly stronger in this respect than Slovakia. Fiction, certain general and illustrated non-fiction titles, children’s books and some academic books are genres with particular potential.²

In neither country is publishing particularly well served with commercial statistics, though bibliographic data is good. Informed current estimates say that the Czech book publishing market is worth around £350m in terms of final user sales and the Slovak market around £120m (though other estimates are substantially lower). Sector information is also not readily available, but educational and ELT sales probably amount to 25 per cent of the markets by value, academic, professional and e-book sales 20 per cent, adult consumer sales 45 per cent and children’s books 10 per cent.

Czech publishers produced over 18,000 new titles in 2007 and Slovaks around 9,000. This places them amongst the most productive countries in Europe in terms of new books per 1,000 head of population. They also have a very high rate of translation from other languages, with English being by far the most important source language³.

In both countries there are single joint organisations for publishers and booksellers and most, but by no means all, significant players belong to them. The Czech Association appears to be much more active and is responsible for the successful Prague Book Fair. The professional associations run alongside a number of other publishing related bodies, both private and public. In general there is a good publishing infrastructure except in terms of sales data.

The main set piece opportunities for marketing into the Czech Republic and Slovakia are the Prague and Bratislava book fairs, of which the former is more important in international terms. Publishers from both countries also attend the main international book fairs in Europe, especially Frankfurt and to a lesser extent London.⁴

Information about the Slovak market is less easy to access. According to the National Library there has been an overall increase in the number of titles published and in the number of publishers.

Table 2.10 New Title Production and Publishers, Slovakia, 2003–2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
New ISBNs Assigned	8,252	7,769	7,865	8,351	9,532

² RICHARDSON, Paul. *The Publishing market profile. Czech and Slovak republic*. Research survey. The Publishers Association. 2008. Page 11.

³ Ibid. Page 12.

⁴ Ibid. Page 13.

Registered publishers	3,600	3,792	4,004	4,148	4,085

Source: National Library of Slovakia

These figures are only indicative. Some of the ISBNs were assigned to titles that did not actually appear and the number of significant and active publishers is fewer than 100, but the overall picture is quite clear. As in most markets alongside the growth in the number of new titles there has been a steady decrease in print runs. Popular novels may print 3,000 to 10,000 for real bestsellers, but literary works may have a print run of less than 750 and academic works 250–600.

In terms of publishing in other languages, some Slovak publishers are very active in publishing in Czech (for popular science and children’s publisher Priroda, Czech books make up 20 per cent of their output, for instance). Approved educational books are published in Hungarian. Otherwise English is the most common foreign language for local publishing followed by German.

In terms of translation, a significant proportion of Slovak output is drawn from English, followed by Czech and German. In 2006 translations from 22 languages were published.

Table 2.11: Publication of Translated Books in Slovakia, 2005–2006

Language of Origin	2005	2006
English	370	570
Czech	41	248
German	110	149
French	60	76
TOTAL	761	1238

Source: Slovak National Library

These figures might suggest that there is a growing resistance to reading in Czech, but that is not confirmed by publishers or booksellers.

In terms of genres of publishing the main categories seem to have remained fairly stable in recent years.

Table 2.10 Major Genres of New Books, Slovakia, 2005–2007

Genre	2005	2006	2007

Fiction	1,044	1,050	954
Children's Books	691	877	862
Non-Fiction	6,168	7,614	6,402
Educational/Academic	1,158	1,436	1,277

Source: Slovak National Library

The largest trade publisher in recent years has been Bertelsmann-owned Ikar, including the book club. Slovart is probably the next largest. Readers Digest have quite a big presence. Fragment and Ottovo are Czech publishers with significant positions in the market. Several former state houses such as Priroda and Slovensky Spisovatel remain important players in their genres. The old state textbook publisher SPN and the state children's publisher Mlade Leta, which are now owned by the same media group, are also significant in their sectors..

Academic publishing relies especially on the university presses and the Academy of Sciences, but also on the import of Czech and to some extent English and German.

For more information on leading Slovak publishers and providers and contact links and website links go to the Slovak country listing at <http://www.publishersglobal.com> and Appendix XX.

When looking at publishing and translation market in Slovakia during the recent decades one will find that the most striking tendency bibliographic data acquired revealed is the developmental curve significant decrease of translations from Arabic after 1989 as compared to the previous period. We assume that this fact might be attributed to socio-political changes that Slovakia underwent at end of eighties and beginning of nineties.

Many publishing houses were transformed from state-owned agencies into private enterprises. For many years two publishing houses were addressed when it came to publishing translations from Arabic – Tatran. Tatran since its beginning 60 years ago has undergone significant transformations. Not only its name was changed couple of times (Tatrín, Slovenské vydavateľstvo krásnej literatúry, Slovenský Tatran, Vydavateľstvo beletrie a umenia) also as a form of economic activity it used to be first state than national enterprise, than as a shareholders company and currently its commercial form is one of company with limited liabilities. Currently it holds its previous name Tatran and also covers whole scope of publishing activities as before. Slovenský spisovateľ followed more or less the same fate of restructuralization.

Combined with the insufficient number of skilled translators versed in Arabic language this phenomenon caused a gap that manifested itself during nineties, when only couple of titles from the Arabic language was published. Just for the illustration we include list of titles published during eighties at the end of our report.

Total number of 15 translations was published in the period from 1980 - 1990. Topics ranged from classical literature, poetry to modern literature. In contrast, during nineties only two books were published – *Al-shi' r bila watan* (Verses without Home) - small anthology of four Palestinian poets: Bratislava, Spoločnosť slovensko-arabského priateľstva 1991 and a book on interpretation of dreams Ibn Sirin: *Muntakhab al-kalam fi tafsir al-ahlam* (Dream Book of Arab sages) 2 parts, Bratislava, 319 pages, 1996, Nestor.

As was mentioned earlier, socio-political changes and emerging private enterprises led to transformation of publishing houses more focused on the commercial success of published titles. This subsequently led to reduction of number of works translated from Arabic language.

Translations from Arabic into Slovak language

As mentioned earlier, translation activities from Arabic language significantly decreased after 1989 Revolution. The outstanding translator and Slovak foremost Arabist and professor. L. Drozdík translated only one title - a small anthology of four Palestinian poets. In comparison professor J. Paulíny was somehow more successful in finding publishing houses for his translations. He published three books, diverging a bit from the realm of literature. One is more of a scholarly book working with manuscripts and records of the Arabs concerning Slavs. Another one is on interpretation of dreams, whereas the last one is concerned with biography/historiography related to life and deeds of the Prophet.

1. *Al-shi' r bila watan*. (Verses without home)

- small anthology of four Palestinian poets: Bratislava, Spoločnosť slovensko-arabského priateľstva 1991.

2. Ibn Sirin: *Muntachab al-kalam fi tafsir al-ahlam*. (Dream book of Arab sages) 2 parts, Bratislava, 1996, Nestor, 319 pages.

3. J. Pauliny: *Arab reports on Slavonians* (9th –12th century), Bratislava, VEDA, 1999.

4. Ibn Ishák: *Sirat Muhammad rasul Allah*. (Biography of Muhammad, God's Prophet). Bratislava, Institute for relations of State and Churches, 2003, 308 pages.

As compared with the previous decade, when total number of fifteen titles was published, this is rather alarming. This number does not represent even one third of the previously published titles. Reasons for this were dealt with at large in the previous section of this report. As for the publication of poetry, this decade saw the only one – small anthology of four Palestinian poets. This title was published by Society of Slovak-Arab friendship as opposed to the previous publishing houses, where professor Drozdík used to publish his translation of Arabic books. Moreover, this society is not active anymore.

However, the first decade of the current century witnessed blossoming of various projects and translations related to the Arab/Islamic world. After the period of long lack of Arabic books translated into Slovak language one of the smallest publishing houses in Slovakia – BAUM agreed to undertake a risky adventure of publishing a translation of a less known book by N. Mahfouz: *Rihlat Ibn Fattouma* (Journey of Ibn Fattuma). It is worth mentioning that to find the suitable publisher has taken more than five years of intensive search. It was exclusively project of the translator, from the very onset of choosing a title, then translating it and finally finding a publisher. Surprisingly enough, it was not a big publishing house, but a small and independent BAUM, which was willing to implement the project. The aforementioned publishing house also succeeded in receiving a small grant from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic. The book was finally published in 2007 with print run 300 books and sales up till now reached 220 books sold.

Book publications by genre

Holy texts and theology

Slovak republic hosts only a marginal minority of Muslims. The number of Muslims in Slovakia according to the 2001 census is negligible. There are 5 000 Muslims in Slovakia - less than 0.1% of the country's population). They represent either students who came for university education and usually leave the country upon completion of their studies. The second group are settled Muslims usually married in Slovakia and living normal life of an average Slovak citizen. But this decade witnessed translation of the holy book for Muslims – the Quran. Long-term living Slovak citizen of Syrian origin Abdulwahab al-Sbenaty financed mainly from his own private resources translated it. *Korán*: A. al-Sbenaty, 2008, Bratislava, Alja s.r.o.

Humanities and social sciences

There is currently great lack of any historical books or various titles written by Arab historians translated into Slovak language. One title that may closest to what term translation of historical book covers is probably by professor PAULÍNY, J.: *Arab reports on Slavonians*. Bratislava: Veda. 1999.

Poetry

Besides some works of modern and contemporary poets were published in the magazine Revue of World, only three examples of collections completely dedicated to poetry can be found from 1990 - 2010:

1. *Al-Shi' r bila watan*. Verses without home. Small anthology of four Palestinian poets: Bratislava, Slovak-Arab friendship society, 1991.
2. *Al-Lu 'lu ' wa al-Balah*. Pearls and dates. [Slovak] / Shihab Ghanem; Peter Zsoldos / s. l.: s. n. [United Arab Emirates], 2003. English [orig. Arabic] – published in U.A.E.
3. *Contemporary Poems from Arabian Peninsula*. Shihab Ghanem. Peter Zsoldos. Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage. 2010. (Trilingual). Published in U.A.E.

The last two books were published in U.A.E, the latter on with the help of Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority. Both books are available in English, Arabic and Slovak. They were printed in their trilingual version in U.A.E. Books are distributed in Arab market and certain number was transported to Slovakia.

Classical literature

1. Ibn Hazm: *Tawq al-Hamama*. Doves' s necklace. (11th cent.) – Kamil Hasan al-Sayrafi, Cairo, 1959). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1984 (219 pp);
2. *Al-Qasa 'id al-Sab 'a min Jazirat al- 'Arab*. Poetry studs. Seven odes from ancient Arabia (in collaboration with the poet L. Feldek Translated from the edition of Arnold: *Carmina antiquissima Arabum*. Lipsiae 1850. Mit Commentar von al-Zauzana. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1986 (127 pp);
3. Al-Jahiz: *Kitab al-Bukhala*. A book on scrooges. (9th cent.). Translated on the ground of the Egyptian edition, Cairo, Dar al-Ma 'arif 1963. Bratislava, Tatran 1989 (254 pp).
4. *Alf layla wa layla*. One thousand and one night. Tatran. 1987.
5. *Alf layla wa layla*. One thousand and one night. Ikar. Complete edition. 2010.
6. *Travels in Africa, Asia and Europe in 1325 – 1354*, Muhammad Ibn Abdallah Ibn Battuta, SAP, Slovak Academic Press, 2010, (446 pages)

Modern literature

1. Mahmud Darwish: *Madih al-zill al- 'ali*. (Praise to high shadow). (Selection from the poetry of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1984;
2. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra - Abdarrahman Munif: *'Alam bila khara 'it*. (World without maps). Bratislava, Tatran 1986;

3. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: *Al-Madar al-mughlaq*. (Enclosed orbit). - a small anthology of Jabra 's poetry. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1986;
4. Gassan Kanafani: *Man qatala Layla al-Hayik/Rijal fi al-shams*. (Who killed Layla al-Hayik. Men at sun). Bratislava, Smena 1988;
5. Abdarrahan Munif: *Al-Nihayat*. (The living desert). Bratislava, Pravda 1989;
6. Nizar Kabbani - Abdalwahhab al-Bayati - Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: *Law'at al-shams*. (Tormenting passion of sun). - small anthology of the Arabic love poetry. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1989;
7. Nagib Mahfuz: *Al-Liss wa al-kilab*. (A thief and dogs). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1989;
8. Abu al-Hasan al-Kisa'i: Book on beginning and end, Islamic myths and legends. Bratislava, Tatran, 1980
9. Nagib Mahfuz: *Rihlat Ibn Fattouma* (Journey of Ibn Fattouma). Prešov. Baum. 2007.
10. Gamal al-Ghitani: *Zayni Barakat* (Zayni Barakat). Bratislava. Kalligram. 2009.
11. Ala al-Aswani: *'Imarat al-Yaqoubian* (Jacobian Building). Bratislava. Slovart. 2010
12. Nagib Mahfuz: *Ahlam fatrat al-nakaha* (The Dreams). Bratislava. Drewo a Srd. 2010.
13. Gamal al-Ghitani: *Mutun al-Ahram* (Pyramid texts). Prešov. Baum. 2010.

Other publications

Revue of World Literature, magazine dedicated to publishing works of world literature in translation published one issue dedicated to the Arabic literature and poetry (May 2009). It reaches several generations of readers and focusing on publishing translation of authors predominantly from 20th Century. It publishes drama, essays, literary criticisms, reviews and cultural publicity. Slovak society of translators of belle letters literature publishes it with financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic. As for this particular issue on translation from Arabic literature translators were chosen mainly from the ranks of young Slovak Arabists. Choice of works depended pretty much on the taste of the respective translator, however only modern and contemporary authors were chosen. Majority of authors were Egyptians (N. Mahfouz, G. al-Gitani, Y. Idris) but also regional variations were represented – I. Al-Kouni from Libya, A. Munif of Saudi-Iraqi origin. Along with work of fiction, also poetry was translated.

The other quarterly magazine concerned mainly with mapping the contemporary art scene in Slovakia and abroad called VLNA published an issue entitled East that was dedicated to works from the Eastern part of the world (September 2010). The issue included translation of three poets and one Moroccan writer:

Poetry

Ahmed Yamani: *The Utopia of Cemeteries*

Yahia Lababidi: *Digest*

Basim al-Ansar: *Three poems*

Prose

Abdellah Taia: *Wounded man*

ENTER, which is another magazine for the contemporary art will publish translation of Egyptian writer Yahia Lababidi Aphorisms through English. The issue is due September 2010.

Translations in the other direction

One of the greatest achievements in the field of translation in the other direction was publication of the V4 Anthology (January 2009) under a title *Qasa'is min qalb Uruba* (Stories from the Heart of Europe), where fiction works of young famous writers from Visegrad countries was selected and subsequently translated into Arabic language. The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic supported translation and publication of this book.

One of the best literary weekly magazines in the Arab world *Akhbar al-Adab* regularly publishes some Slovak classic writers and poetry. One issue was dedicated completely to Slovak literature (April 2008). The first contact was made through the Slovak Embassy in Cairo when the Slovak Ambassador P. Zsoldos and Editor-in-Chief G. al-Ghitani met. Mr. Gamal expressed the interest in publishing some works of Slovak classical and modern literature. After the consultation with Mr. Kh. al-Biltagi who closely cooperates with Slovak Literary Centre the selection was made and subsequently translated into Arabic and published in the magazine. Mr. Al-Ghitani also travelled to Slovakia in 2010 on the occasion of publication of his Pyramid texts and met with representatives of cultural life in Slovakia among them State Secretary of the Ministry of the Culture of the Slovak republic J. Lang, owner of the publishing house Drewo a Srd and Director

of Slovak Literary Centre A. Havolník. Mr. al-Ghitani expressed his interest in publishing various Slovak modern and contemporary poets in one of the forthcoming issues of the magazine.

List of titles translated from Slovak into Arabic: (All translation were published with support of SLOLIA Literary Information Centre Commission) as off 16.6.2010:

Publishing house: DAR AL-ZAKIRAH, Homs, Syria

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria

Publishing house: Sphinx Agency, Cairo, Egypt

Publishing house: Akhbar Aladab, Cairo, Egypt

1. Ladislav Mňačko: Taste of power – *Ma Lazat al sulta*

Publishing house: DAR AL-ZAKIRAH, Homs, Syria, 2000

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

2. Alexander Dubček: Hope dies last – *Al amal la yamut*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2001

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

3. Ján Johanides: Punishing crime – *Ikab al garima*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli Homs, Syria, 2002

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

4. Milan Richter: Slaughter in Beyouth (Selecion of poetry) – *Mazbaha fi Bejrut*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2002

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

5. Pavel Vilikovský: Cruel enginer driver – *Saek alkitar alzalem*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2004

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

6. Peter Jaroš: Thousand year old bee – *Al nahla al affia*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2005

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

7. Peter Jaroš: Hot snows – *Sulug sachina*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2007

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

8. Pavol Rankov: Intimacy – *Karib gidan*

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2007

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

9. Samko Tále: A book on cemetery – *Al Makbara*

Publishing house: Dr. Mousli Ghias, Homs, Syria, 2008

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

10. Milo Urban: Behind the mill

Publishing house: Akhbar Aladab, Cairo, Egypt, 2007

Translation: Khalid El Biltagi

11. Ján Hrušovský: A man with prosthesis

Publishing house: Sphinx Agency, Cairo, Egypt, 2009

Translation: Khalid El Biltagi

12. Anton Hykisch: Murderers (short stories)

Publishing house: Sphinx Agency, Cairo, Egypt, 2009

Translation: Khalid El Biltagi

13. Július Balco: Sparrow king — *Malek al Asafir* (a book for children)

Publishing house: Dr. Ghias Mousli, Homs, Syria, 2010

Translation: Dr. Ghias Mousli

Translations of Arabic authors via other languages

Majority of Arab authors in Slovakia are translated via Arabic language, scarcely French or English is used. The Arab literature does not have many paths to enter to Slovakia unless enthusiastic Arabist or some Arabophile decides to embark on a risky adventure of translating a few pieces of Arabic writing. Some exceptions include the following:

Yahia Lababidi: *Signposts to Elsewhere* (ENTER magazine, August 2010), Poems (VLNA magazine due September 2010). Translated from English.

Abdellah Taia: *Wounded man* (VLNA magazine, due September 2010). Translated from English.

In principle translation via other languages while being available in their original – Arabic language is not widely used practice in Slovakia and renowned translators and academic circles usually look down upon it. Very well received was a translation of eponymous Prophet from the Lebanese writer Kh. Gibran made by Milan Richter.

Prorok /*Prophet*/. Milan Richter. Mladé letá.2008.

Translators from Arabic language – working conditions and training

Being a translator of Arabic literature carries some exotic flavour and certain social recognition. However, in Slovakia not a single freelance Arabic language translator is to be found. The answer is quite simple; he would not be able to sustain himself if relied solely on these translations from Arabic as the main source of his income. People who used to translate Arabic were either professors or scholars with predilection for translating works of Arab authors. As for the new generation of Arabists, some of them also translate but not a single one would be able

to make a living on it. From the personal experience of the author of this study, who is also a translator, fees for translations are never set but rather always negotiated and depending upon many external factors e.g. availability of grant, size of the respective publishing house, donation from other sources etc. The price is usually based on consensus of both parties involved, so the fee would vary accordingly. Is rather an exception that the fee is calculated on basis of pages or number of keystrokes. Usually, there is an overall budget for the respective project and both parties agree which part shall go to a translator and which into binding, printing, promotion etc.

As for royalties, given the small size of the Slovak market and usually friendly relations between the authors and their translators, unless translated posthumously, royalties are usually very low if not altogether omitted if the author agrees. Even if it is actually awarded the sum of royalties tends to be rather symbolic.

As concerns domestic grants and subsidies, their role in the whole process is rather marginal. There is a state agency called Slovak Literary Fund that awards grants for a particular work to translators of *belle lettres* literature. However, in order to be eligible for their grant the applicant has to meet the criteria of having already three translated books published prior to the application for the grant. The sum of money granted depends on the scope of the book to be translated, which represented into euros can vary from 100 – 200 EUR. However, there are other forms of support i.e. Creative Order for a work of outstanding quality, Creative Scholarship, when for a period of six month, the respective translator receives financial support needed for finishing the work, Creative Journey when 50 percent of travelling cost is reimbursed, Artist in Residence program etc.

List of active translators from Arabic language into Slovak

Besides the older aforementioned generation of Arabists there are two active translators to this date:

Mgr. Emanuel Beška, PhD – 1 published title

Mgr. Marek Brieška, PhD – 4 published titles

As far as the training is concerned there is a seminar called Summer school of translation that takes places annually and for which can the respective translator apply. This provides platform for meeting the fellow translators and also people who work in this field on the long-term basis. The Slovak Literary Fund has also various schemes for supporting authors/translators in form of a contribution for their travel expenses or artist-in-residence programs.

Mediators

The role of translators in the whole process is pivotal and indispensable. It is a rule that the respective translator chooses a book, then reads it, evaluates its artistic value and finally

embarks on process of translating it, after finding suitable publisher and of course also a the sufficient source of funding. In this respect he has to heavily rely on international funding and his own personal contacts with publishing houses. Nevertheless, the publishing house may ask for a grant the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic. Translator is left with his own resources or may apply for small support from Slovak Literary Fund though with no preconditions (three works of translation published prior to the application for a grant). The publishing house actively seeks funds with the respective translator. The most active publishing house in this field is probably BAUM. They have managed to publish two Arabic translations within the scope of three years and plan to continue in this course. However, the aforementioned publishing house currently suffers from lack of funds sufficient even for its operational costs. The role of libraries in this respect is diminutive and almost negligible. As for funding programs the Slovak Literary Funds awards small grants to translator with a precondition to have already three titles published. As far as publishing houses are concerned they may apply for grants within grant scheme of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic for 2010 – Program 4 – Art, Subprogram 4.5 Literature and Book Culture.

In Slovakia the book trade organisation is the Association of Publishers and Booksellers of the Slovak Republic, which can be found at <http://www.zvks.sk>. It contains a list of about 50 members' addresses and in some instances e-mail addresses or websites, but little else and the English version did not seem to be working at the time of writing. Most but not all the big publishers are members and some of the bookstores and chains, but again by no means all the most important book outlets.

Some publishing support activities are undertaken in Slovakia by the Centre for Information on Literature, which has the remit to promote Slovak literature at home and abroad and has a useful website devoted to Slovakian adult and children's literature supported by the Slovak Ministry of Culture on <http://www.litcentrum.sk/English>.

The Slovak Association is not an active member of the European Publishers or Booksellers Federations and appears to be less active in terms of researching industry data etc than its Czech counterpart. It was unresponsive in the production of this profile⁵.

Publishing and Related Organisations

Association of Slovak Writers (Slovak Language only),

<http://www.aoss.sk>

Bratislava Book Fair

⁵ Ibid. p. 37.

Incheba, P.l.c.

Viedenská cesta 3-7

851 01 Bratislava

tel: +421 2 6727 1111

fax: +421 2 6241 1838

e-mail: incheba@incheba.sk

<http://www.incheba.sk>

Centre for Information on Literature

Nemestie SNP 12

812 24 Bratislava

tel: +421-252 964 475

fax: +421-252 964 563

e-mail: lic@litcentrum.sk

<http://www.litcentrum.sk>

Ministry of Culture

<http://www.culture.gov.sk>

National Library

<http://www.snk.sk>

Slovak ISBN Agency

<http://www.snk.sk>

Slovak Publishers and Booksellers Association

<http://www.zvks.sk> ⁶

Slovak Writer's Society

Laurinska 2

815 84 Bratislava 1

tel: +421-254 418 670

fax: +421-254 435 371

e-mail: spolspis@stonline.sk

<http://www.spisovatel.sk>

Events, Festivals

The Bratislava Book Fair is a smaller event held in November – 13–18 November in 2008. Details can be found on <http://www.incheba.sk>. It is organised by a commercial company at the Bratislava exhibition centre. It does not attract a lot of international support beyond the region and a number of leading Slovak publishers do not exhibit there.

There are a number of Slovakian book prizes such as the Dominik Tatransky Literary Award and the Anasoft Litera prize. The Slovak Literary Fund supports translations into foreign languages and awards prizes for translation of Slovak literature. Details of other prizes can be found in the *Europa Directory of Literary Awards and Prizes*, <http://www.europa-directory-literary-awards.com>.⁷

BSlovak publishers exhibit collectively or individually at the main European book fairs including Frankfurt and London.

In 2009, under the auspices of the Embassy of the Arab republic of Egypt V4 anthology – Stories from the Heart of Europe (translated from Slovak – Arabic language) was presented and vice versa it was presented in annual Cairo Book Fair in Egypt.

Otherwise there are minor public readings and literary events hold in Bratislava but not focusing exclusively on Arabic literature or literature in translation. Organizers of poetry festival Ars Poetica in 2009 invited Egyptian-Lebanese poet Yahia Lababidi, who writes in English to participate at the festival. Bookstore Artforum organizes on a regular basis public readings of new titles or introducing new authors, but these events are of usually very limited audience.

⁶ Ibid. p. 86.

⁷ Ibid. p. 34.

Artforum also provided premises for the presentation and interviews on the occasion of translating Pyramid texts of G. al-Ghitani into Slovak language. The visit was co-organized by the translator, Slovak Embassy in Cairo and Egyptian Embassy in Bratislava. During visit the author met couple of representative of cultural and intellectual life in Slovakia. He plans to dedicate one issue of the Egyptian literary weekly magazine Akhbar al-Adab to the modern and contemporary Slovak poetry. Also a visit of two Egyptian poets is foreseen for the next year poetry festival Ars Poetica. There is also a biggest multimedia festival in Slovakia Pohoda, where occasionally Slovak authors do their readings.

Reception

As for the aforementioned titles no second edition is known. The highest publicity was given to the translation of One thousand and one night. This complete edition of the book (7 volumes) is hardcover, gold inlaid of a very good visual quality. The book was heavily promoted in media and excerpts from it on radio. As for the other books in translation, usually some reviews appear immediately after the publishing and some radio stations contact publishing house or translator in order to grant them rights to make a reading of some passages from it. Arabic literature in Slovakia is so marginal that such a publication does not stir much interest in general reading public, although warm reception is guaranteed in academic circles, among Arabists and usually people who prefer less trodden paths of the world literature. Good promotion is something that is really lacking in the process of from translation from making its way to a Slovak reader. This fact, apart from the lack of sufficient funding creates the biggest obstacles in disseminating Arabic literature in Slovakia.

Evaluative assessment and recommendation

As for the quality of translations and its frequency, it has increased tremendously as compared to the period of nineties. Majority of titles were hard bound with elaborated front page. However, all this can be improved dramatically by possibility of awarding grants that are specifically aimed at translation from "exotic" or less-known languages. Without state or international support publishing houses are very reluctant to embark on the project involving translation of an unknown Arab author.

Appendix

The bibliography of translations from Arabic to Slovak in the period 1989 – 2010

Holy texts

Korán: A. al-Sbenaty, 2008, Bratislava, Alja s.r.o.

Poetry

1. *Al-shi' r bila watan*. (Verses without home)

small anthology of four Palestinian poets: Bratislava, Spoločnosť slovensko-arabského priateľstva 1991.

2. *Al-Lu'lu' wa al-Balah*. Pearls and dates. [Slovak] / Shihab Ghanem; Peter Zsoldos / s. l.: s. n. [United Arab Emirates], 2003. English [orig. Arabic] – published in U.A.E.
3. *Contemporary Poems from Arabian Peninsula*. Shihab Ghanem. Peter Zsoldos. Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage. 2010. (Trilingual). Published in U.A.E.

Classical literature

1. Ibn Sirin: *Muntachab al-kalam fi tafsir al-ahlam*. (Dream book of Arab sages) 2 parts, Bratislava, 1996, Nestor, 319 pages.
2. J. Pauliny: *Arab reports on Slavonians (9th –12th century)*, Bratislava, VEDA, 1999.
3. Ibn Ishák: *Sirat Muhammad rasul Allah*. (Biography of Muhammad, God's Prophet). Bratislava, Institute for relations of State and Churches, 2003, 308 pages.
4. *Alf layla wa layla*. One thousand and one night. Ikar. Complete edition. 2010.
5. *Travels in Africa, Asia and Europe in 1325 – 1354*, Muhammad Ibn Abdallah Ibn Battuta, SAP, Slovak Academic Press, 2010, (446 pages).

Modern and contemporary literature

1. Nagib Mahfuz: *Rihlat Ibn Fattouma* (Journey of Ibn Fattouma). Prešov. Baum. 2007. Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic.
2. Gamal al-Ghitani: *Zayni Barakat* (Zayni Barakat). Bratislava. Kalligram. 2009.
3. Ala al-Aswani: *ʿImarat al-Yaqoubian* (Jacobian Building). Bratislava. Slovart. 2010.
4. Nagib Mahfuz: *Ahlam fatrat al-nakaha* (The Dreams). Bratislava. Drewo a Srd. 2010. Next Page Foundation.
5. Gamal al-Ghitani: *Mutun al-Ahram* (Pyramid texts). Prešov. Baum. 2010. Next Page Foundation.

Arabic literature in translation published in eighties

Classical literature

1. Ibn Hazm: *Tawq al-Hamama*. Doves' s necklace. (11th cent.) – Kamil Hasan al-Sayrafi, Cairo, 1959). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1984 (219 pp);
2. *Al-Qasa ʿid al-Sab ʿa min Jazirat al- ʿArab*. Poetry studs. Seven odes from ancient Arabia (in collaboration with the poet Ľ. Feldek Translated from the edition of Arnold: *Carmina antiquissima Arabum*. Lipsiae 1850. Mit Commentar von al-Zauzana. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1986 (127 pp);
3. Al-Jahiz: *Kitab al-Bukhala*. A book on scrooges. (9th cent.). Translated on the ground of the Egyptian edition, Cairo, Dar al-Ma ʿarif 1963. Bratislava, Tatran 1989 (254 pp).
4. *Alf layla wa layla*. One thousand and one night. Tatran. 1987.

Modern literature

1. Mahmud Darwish: *Madih al-zill al-'ali*. (Praise to high shadow). (Selection from the poetry of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1984;
2. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra - Abdarraḥman Munif: *'Alam bila khara'it*. (World without maps). Bratislava, Tatran 1986;
3. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: *Al-Madar al-mughlaq*. (Enclosed orbit). - a small anthology of Jabra's poetry. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1986;
4. Gassan Kanafani: *Man qatala Layla al-Hayik/Rijal fi al-shams*. (Who killed Layla al-Hayik. Men at sun). Bratislava, Smena 1988;
5. Abdarraḥman Munif: *Al-Nihayat*. (The living desert). Bratislava, Pravda 1989;
6. Nizar Kabbani - Abdalwahhab al-Bayati - Jabra Ibrahim Jabra: *Law'at al-shams*. (Tormenting passion of sun). - small anthology of the Arabic love poetry. Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1989;
7. Nagib Mahfuz: *Al-Liss wa al-kilab*. (A thief and dogs). Bratislava, Slovenský spisovateľ 1989;
8. Abu al-Hasan al-Kisa'i: Book on beginning and end, Islamic myths and legends. Bratislava, Tatran, 1980