

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

***conducted by Teon Dzingo***  
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## Introduction

If you take a walk through any city in Macedonia and ask about a book that is written in Arabic language usually you would get two answers: *The Quran* and *One thousand and one nights*. It doesn't matter if your interlocutor is Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian or Turk. It matters if that person is secular or religious. The only chance to get different answer is in case when you ask someone that is connected with the publishing industry or someone that is great admirer of the Arabic literature. Mainly the perceptions of the Arabic world in the Macedonian society are in the theological and in the folk sphere.

Based on the historical facts, the links between the Arabic and the Macedonian world in the past were the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of the XX century, and later it was the Non-aligned movement created by the presidents of Yugoslavia and Egypt, Josip Broz Tito and Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The distillates of those connections from the past are still present today.

If we take a view over the publishing industry in Macedonia and if we seek for the segments that are weakening the Macedonian-Arabic cooperation in the world of translations, we can put a stress mark on several things. First is the fact that in Republic of Macedonia there is not an academic program on the universities for studying Arabic language. If someone wants to learn the language and be closer to the Arabic world, the nearest place to do so is the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Belgrade, Republic of Serbia. There are no scholarships in Macedonia because of the absence of the Arabic language in the Macedonian academic world. The only possibility for financing a student to learn the Arabic language and to visit for example Saudi Arabia is mediated by the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia and has theological character.

The second reason why the relations between Macedonia and the Arabic world are insufficient is the fact that Republic of Macedonia has only two embassies, one in Egypt and one in Qatar out of 22 Arabic countries located in Southwest Asia and Northern Africa. On the contrary, only the embassy of The Islamic Republic of Iran is present in the diplomatic community in Macedonia. The insufficient diplomatic relations are weakening the insignificant cooperation in both directions. The total number of three embassies in the both directions gives the precise picture of the nonexistence of the projects that should support the translation in the both languages.

Today in Macedonia there is only one institution that is attempting to improve the Macedonian-Arabic relations. The strongest segment of the Macedonian -Arabic cooperation is The Macedonian-Arabic Conjunctive Friendship created in 1998. According to the information presented on their web page, in Macedonia today there are about 200 citizens with Arabic origin. These people are the keeping the spiritual, intellectual, educational, cultural and economical cooperation between the both societies. Most of them came in Macedonia via the student-transfer policy between the members of the Non-alignment movement. They graduated

on the medical or technical faculties and became Macedonian citizens and eminent members of the society.

The Struga poetry evenings are one of the strongest cohesive factors between Macedonia and the Arabic world. Many Arabic poets are participants on this event, organized since 1961. Their masterpieces are presented in front of the Macedonian audience and other poets from all around the world. Whenever there is a participant from the Arabic world, his masterpieces are published in the titles created under that occasion.

### **Publishing and translations market in Macedonia - an overview**

The Macedonian publishing industry and its development can be divided in two periods. The first one was the period between 1944 and 1991 when Macedonia was in the frames of the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the second one is the period of the independent state of Macedonia. In both cases the intercultural cooperation between Macedonia and the Arabic world was insufficient.

Today in Macedonia there are 121 registered publishing houses. Most of them are publishing publications created by Macedonian authors. Every publishing house is obligated to donate several copies (usually five) of each publication in the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski". The new publications are now present and at disposal of the audience.

The period that is subject of this study can be divided in two decades. The total number of the published and translated titles in these two decades is given in the table.

<b><i>Period<sup>1</sup></i></b>	<b><i>Number of titles</i></b>	<b><i>Number of translations</i></b>
<b><i>1990-1999</i></b>	<b><i>12.997</i></b>	<b><i>1.060</i></b>
<b><i>2000-2009</i></b>	<b><i>22.969</i></b>	<b><i>4.100</i></b>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>35.966</i></b>	<b><i>5.160</i></b>

According to the information gained by the Macedonian State Statistical Office, in the last decade the number of the published and translated books in Macedonian language is varying through the years.

<b>YEAR<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Number of</b>	<b>Circulation</b>	<b>Number of</b>	<b>Number of</b>	<b>Circulation</b>
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<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistical Department of the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski"

<sup>2</sup> In some cases the numbers of the published titles present in the statistical information given by the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" and the one given by the Macedonian State Statistical Office are different. Having in mind the fact that in Macedonia there is an obligation to report the new publication in the National Library, we must take the information given by the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" as more relevant.

	titles	(In thousands)	translations	translations reprinted	(In thousands)
2003	910	1106	149	1	113
2004	967	1064	132	5	90
2005	1062	1822	213	17	599
2006	1176	1213	257	12	247
2007	943	1143	248	13	204
2008	658	585	218	11	189
2009	635	405	249	19	243

## **Translations from Arabic into Macedonian**

### **1. General statistics and genre division**

The total number of the translations from Arabic into Macedonian language is 34. Divided by years, the publications were published as follows:

Year	Number of publications
1990	/
1991	1
1992	/
1993	1
1994	3
1995	2
1996	2
1997	1
1998	1

1999	2
2000	/
2001	2
2002	1
2003	/
2004	1
2005	1
2006	4
2007	2
2008	3
2009	6
2010	1

## 2. Book publications by genre

### Holy texts and theology

According to the statistical data provided by the Macedonian national institutions that are connected with the history of publishing, it is obvious that the biggest number of the translated titles can be placed in the theological group. There are two editions of the Quran directly translated from Arabic into Macedonian language. One of the versions is translated by Hasan Dziljo, professor on the Islamic theological faculty in Republic of Macedonia. Nine, out of fourteen titles translated directly from Arabic into Macedonian language can be placed in the theological group. Except the holy Muslim book, there are seven more titles that are directly connected with the Islamic world and its believers. We should mention titles such as Muhammad El Gazali's *Life after death* and *The character of the Muslim believer*, Aid el-Karni's *The happiest woman in the World* and Ibn Tejmijje's *Beautiful word*.

### Humanities and social sciences

In this group we can place only one title that is directly translated from Arabic into Macedonian language. Salih bin Husejn El-Ajid's publication *The rights of the non-Muslim believers in the*

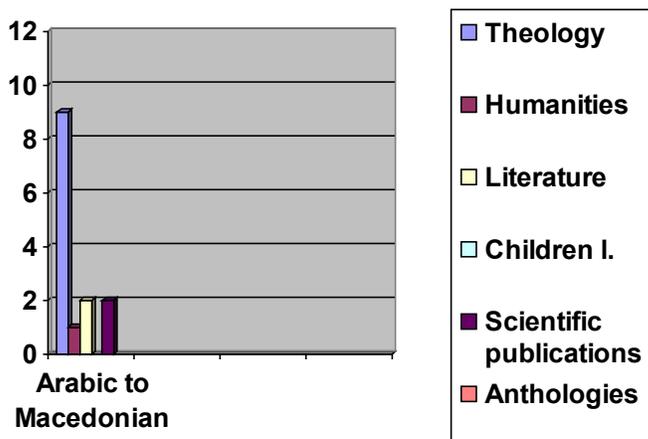
*Islamic constitutional countries*, a publication that is a symbiosis of the theological and the social-humanitarian segments. The publication is consisted of the lecture made by the author in Rome in the year of 2000 in which he gave closer approach of the Islamic world and he was answering the questions of the audience. The target group of this title are both the Muslim and non-Muslim believers and its goal is to bond the different religious groups.

## Literature

In the sphere of the literate work only two titles can be placed here. Opposite of this group that describes the directly translated titles, the number of the translated titles via other languages in this genre is much larger. The first publication in this group belongs to the classical Arabic prose and is probably the best Arabic publication product in the World. *One thousand and one nights (Kitab Alf Layla wa Layla)* has only one edition in Macedonia. Parts of that publication are present everywhere, from children’s literature to stories showed on the Macedonian national television (Makedonska radio televizija- MRT). The second title in this group is the Naguib Mahfouz’s novel *The beginning and the end*. It is part of a project supported by the Government of Republic of Macedonia called Translations of authors that won the Nobel prize. The publication treats the social and political changes in the Egyptian society through the life of one ordinary family.

## Scientific publications

We have placed the articles of the scientific Arabic workers published in the Macedonian literature publications in this group. There are only two of them and they are diverse by the subject that they are treating.



Total number: 14

## **Translations in other directions**

According to the data provided by the Statistical Bureau of the National and University Library "St. Kliment Ohridski" only the poem *T'ga za jug (Sorrow for the south)*, written by the Macedonian poet Konstantin Miladinov, was translated by Fatima Lahbabi Lamai from Macedonian into Arabic language and it was published by the Macedonian publishing house Detska radost in the year of 1994. But there is one more title that is being translated at this moment. It is the book originally named as *Vakufite vo Makedonija vo periodot na osmanliskoto vladeenje (The Vakufs in Macedonia in the period of the Ottoman Empire)* written by PhD Amet Sherif, scientific worker of the Institute of National History of Republic of Macedonia. His scientific publication is being translated by Taljat Kurtishi from Macedonian into Arabic via Albanian language. This translation is requested and financed by the Ministry of culture of the state of Kuwait.

## **Translations of Arabic authors via other languages**

Because of the small number of translators from Arabic into Macedonian language, there are several Arabic speaking authors that are translated into Macedonian via other languages. Most of their publications are translated via English or French language, but also via the languages that were spoken in the Former Yugoslavia, such as Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian. These translations are present in every field of the publication industry. The lack of direct Arabic-Macedonian translations is supplemented with the translations via the other languages.

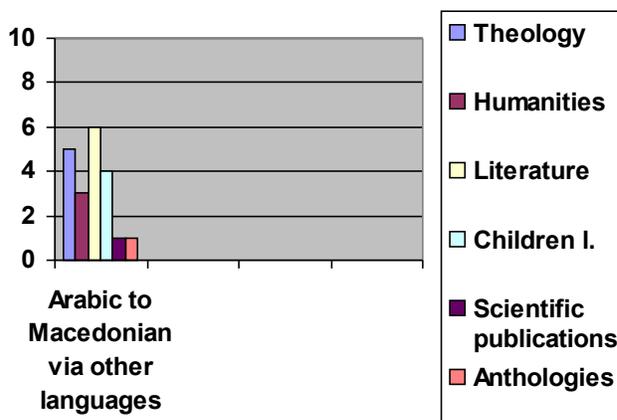
Contrary to the group of works directly translated from Arabic, the ones that are indirect translations are of secular nature. Because of the fact that thirteen out of twenty titles are prose, poetry and children's literature we can give an opinion that the projects that backed up the translations between Arabic and Macedonian language via other languages had less theological character.

The translations from the religious genre such as Abdurrahman Rafat el-Basha's *The life of the Ashabs (Zivotot na Ashabite)* and Ibn Hazm el-Endelusi's *The healing of the souls (Lekuvanje na dushite)* are translated into Macedonian via Bosnian language. There are two translations from English into Macedonian language such as *A brief illustrated guide of understanding Islam (Kratok ilustriran prikaz na Islamot)* written by Ibrahim I. A. and *Replies to the most common questions asked by non-Muslims (Najcesto postavuvanite prasanja za Islamot)* written by Zakir Naik, both translated by Mrs. Smailovic Mersiha.

The profane titles are mostly translated via English or French language. At first we should mention Ali Ahmad Said Esber- Adonis's *The Empire of the desert (Carstvoto na pustinata)*

translated via French language. The work of the poets of Arabic origin that participated on the Struga poetry evenings is always translated in the publications created after that manifestation. The poems written by Adonis, winner of the Golden wreath prize of the Struga poetry evenings in the year of 1997, (*Almanac 2001*), Lebanese poet Fuad Rifka (*Kingdom, Contentment and Fruit*) can be found in the publication from the year of 2001. The Palestinian poet Darwish Mahmud also won the prize Golden wreath of the Struga poetry evenings and his *Selected poems* were published by the Organization Committee of the Struga Poetry evenings in the year of 2007.

Also the children's literature is present in this group. Mainly there are parts of *One thousand and one nights* published in the magazines dedicated for the youth population. Some parts from the novels written by Naguib Mahfouz are at disposal of the pupils in Macedonia in the newspaper called Razvigor.



Total number: 20

### Translators from Arabic- working conditions and training

In Macedonia there are several dozen of people that are speaking the Arabic language, but only few of them are translating from Arabic into Macedonian. During our research we found only five active translators from Arabic. Their names are: Dzevad Hot, Taljat Kurtishi, Jasmin Redzepe, Arif Ramadani and Hasan Dziljo. In general, there is no average fixed fee for translators. The language, the publisher and the financier of the project are often dictating the translator's fee. For common languages the average fee is approximately 5-6 euros per page, and in cases with less popular languages, like the Arabic language, the fee is around 7-9 euros per standard page of 1800 characters.

## **Mediators**

The process of translation depends on many factors, but usually the financial part is the biggest problem. We think that well organized project with strong financial background can push the wheel of cooperation. In general the translators, the editors and the publishing houses in Macedonia are willing to cooperate, as well as the libraries. The publishing houses that are most prominent in the publishing sphere in Macedonia are Tabernakul, Matica Makedonska, Kultura, Feniks, Tri and Detska radost. The titles of theological character are mainly published by three publishing houses: The Students club (Studentski Klub), Inter Rina and Nun with the so-called library Hatundzuk.

## **Reception**

The reception of the titles translated on Macedonian language written by Arabic authors depends on several matters, but mostly by the subject or the genre of the title. The literature titles based on the folk tradition such as *One thousand and one nights* are widely accepted by the public. The stories that are part of that title are present in various parts of the Macedonian society. The Macedonian population is dominantly Orthodox Christian and the titles that are based on the Islamic theological thoughts are not widely accepted by that group. According to the changes made in the Macedonian constitution in 2002, there are seven nationalities in Republic of Macedonia: Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs, Bosnians and Roma. The publishing houses are publishing titles with theological connotation in various languages, but those publications are not subject of this study. The Arabic poets and scientists are well accepted by their colleagues in Macedonia. The permanent presence of the Arabic poets on the poetry meetings is great evidence of the previous statement.

## **Evaluate assessments and recommendations**

The Arabic literature remains insufficiently known in Macedonia. Besides the efforts made in the last two decades for introducing to the Macedonian readers audience, the translations of the Arabic authors are still far away of theirs wide acceptance. The flow of the English writing authors and their translation is the strongest part of the translators community. Several things can be done for the closer approach between the Macedonian and the Arabic world. Organizing Arabic cultural events or manifestation of one particular country that belongs to the Arabic world can attract some parts of the Macedonian population. Presentations of movies that are made by Arabic directors, or based on the scripts written by Arabic authors, will strength the communication between the both societies. Donations for translations of the Arabic literature

and giving scholarships for students outside the theological framework can improve the relations. The Macedonian and the Arabic world have so much in common, the only thing that should be done is to bring them closer.

## Appendix

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

#### Humanities

1993

1. Amin Maaluf, *Krstonosnite vojni videni od Arabjanite*, (The Crusades seen by the Arabs), Misa, 1993, Skopje.

2002

1. Abu Hamid Muhhamed Al-Gazali, *Bladanjata na filozofite* (Raving of the philosophers), Tabernakul, 2002, Skopje.

#### Literature

1994

1. Abu Hasan, *Od Iljada i edna nokj*, (From One thousand and one nights), Tabernakul, 1994, Skopje.

2. Adonis, *Carstvoto na pustinata*, (The Empire of the desert), Detska radost, 1994, Skopje.

1995

2. *Poetika na dva brega*, (Poetry on two shores), Detska radost, 1995, Skopje.

2001

1. Mohamed Benis, *Darot na prazninata*, (The gift of the emptiness), Struski veceri na poezijata, 2001, Struga.

2. *Zbornik poeti ucesnici na Struskite veceri na poezijata*, (Collection poets participants on the Struga poetry evenings), Struski veceri na poezijata, 2001, Struga.

2006

1. *Gilgamesh: sumersko vavilonski ep* (Gilgamesh: Sumerian Babylonian epic poem), Matica makedonska, 2006, Skopje
2. Amin Maaluf, *Poveke gi sakam patekite otkolku korenite* (I like more the paths instead of the roots), Nase pismo: vesnik na nezavisnite pisатели, year XII, number 60, 2006, Skopje

2007

1. Mahmud Darwish, *Odbrani pesni*, (Selected poems), Struski veceri na poezijata, 2007, Struga.

2009

1. *Iljada i edna nok: prikazni za Seherezada*, (One thousand and one nights: Stories for Scheherazade), Feniks, 2009, Skopje.
2. Nagib Mahfouz, *Pocetokot i krajot* (The beginning and the end), Mikena, 2009, Bitola.

## **Children literature**

1991

1. Dzubran Hal Dzubran, *Biserot ne e nisto drugo*, (The pearl is nothing else), Razvigor-magazine for children, year XXVI, number 6, 1991, Skopje.

1996

1. Zekerija Tamir, *Imitiranje*, (Imitation), Razvigor- magazine for children, year XXXIV, number 7, 1996, Skopje.

1995

1. Nagib Mahfouz, *Oci polni neizvesnost*, (Eyes full of suspense), Razvigor- magazine for children, year XXXI, number 13, 1995, Skopje.

## Scientific publications

1997

1. Abdulah Al- Udhari, *Arapskiot mit za sozdavanjeto*, (The Arabic myth for the foundation) Lettre internationale, year II, number 8, 1997.

2004

1. Ibrahim Ibn Kajan, *Kukja dodeka da najdes* (A house until you find), Glasnik na makedonskite duhovni konaci, year V, number 9-10, 2004, Skopje

## Anthologies

1994

1. *Antologija na svetskata lirika*, (Anthology of the world's lyrics), Makedonska kniga, 1994, Skopje

## ***Theological translations from Arabic into Macedonian language in the period 1990-2010***

1996

1. Hasan Nevevi, *Rijadu El-Salihin*, Urtsia, 1996, Skopje.

1998

1. *Kuran so prevod* (Quran with translations), B.M., B.I., 1998, Skopje

1999

1. *Sura Jasin so prevod i transkripcija* (Sura Jasin with translation and transcription), translated by Dzilo Hasan, B.I., 1999, Skopje
2. *Kuran so preevod* (Quran with translations), Melik Fahd, 1999, Medina.

2005

1. Ibn Tejmijje, *Ubaviot zbor* (The beautiful word), Nun, 2005, Skopje.

2006

1. Salih bin Husejn El-Ajid, *Pravata na nemuslimanite vo zemjite so islamski ustaven poredok* (The rights of the non-Muslim believers in the Islamic constitutional countries), Logos-A, 2006, Skopje.

2. Group of authors, *Namazot vo islamot: sustina, forma, vidovi* (The Namaz in the Islamic religion: essence, form, types), Studentski klub, 2006, Skopje.

2007

1. Ibrahim I. A., *Kratok ilustriran prikaz na Islamot* (A brief illustrated guide to understanding Islam), Studentski klub, 2007, Skopje.

2008

1. Muhammed El-Gazali, *Karakterot na muslimanot* (The character of the Muslim), Studentski klub, 2008, Skopje.

2. Aid el-Karni, *Najsreknata zena na svetot* (The happiest woman in the World), Inter Rina, 2008, Skopje

3. *Zbornik Ova e Pratenikot Muhamed, Bozjiot Verovesnik za celoto covestvo* (This is the Prophet Mohammed), Islamski mladinski forum, 2008, Skopje.

2009

1. *Nova Sufaja: so objasnuvanje na makedonski jazik* (New Sufaja: with explanations on Macedonian language), Inter Rina, 2009, Skopje

2. Aid el Karni, *Tvojot den e samo tvoj: Iskoristi ja segasnosta* (Your day is only yours: Use the presence), Studentski klub, 2009, Skopje

3. Zakir Naik, *Najcesto postavuvanite prasanja za islamot* (Replies to the most common questions asked by non-Muslims), Studentski klub, 2009, Skopje.

4. Es-seih Muhammed Rahmetullah ibn Halil El Hindi, *Triumf na vistinata* (The triumph of the truth), Kanoj Sh., 2009, Skopje.

2010

1. Zakir Naik, *Najcesto postavuvanite prasanja za islamot* (Replies to the most common questions asked by non-Muslims), Zdruzenie na gragani Legis, 2010, Skopje.