

TRANSLATION FROM ARABIC IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC 2010–2020

Adéla Provazníková

Series editor **Alexandra Büchler**

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Translations from Arabic in the Czech Republic

2010 – 2020

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About the author

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Introduction

The Czech literary market relies on translations. Throughout the last ten years, translations have consistently represented thirty to forty percent of the overall book production in Czechia (Turečková 2020), with English (52.5%), German (18.8%) and French (5.2%) being the most common languages of the originals (Pistorius 2019). It seems, however, that translations from Arabic remain a largely marginal phenomenon, published haphazardly in limited numbers mostly by specialized publishing houses. While this crude characterization of the position of Arabic literature within the Czech translation market does not differ greatly from the situation described ten years ago, there have been significant developments in promoting Arab culture in Czechia that could eventually lead to an improvement in actual literature exchange.

1 History and overview of sources

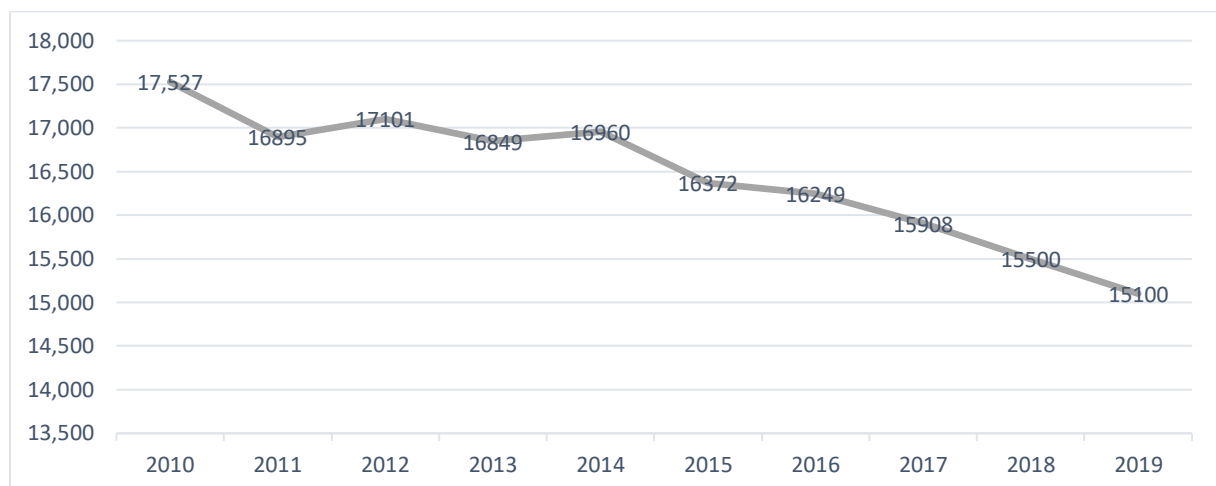
The history of Czech publishing of Arabic literature has been broadly described in the study *Translations from Arabic in Czech Republic, 1990–2010*. The authors identified the post-1989 rapid privatization of the now profit-oriented publishing industry and the 'general aversion' of the Czech public towards the Arab and Muslim world as the main reasons for the sparsity of translations from Arabic within the studied period. Only 24 titles translated from Arabic were published between 1990 and 2010 (Černá and Macháček 2010).

For earlier periods one should refer to the in-depth study by Zuzana Kudláčková *Z prŕpovĕdí arabských: Historie a současnost českého překlada z arabštiny* [Of Arab wisdom: Czech translations from Arabic in the past and present] (Kudláčková 2011). This work offers a comprehensive bibliography of translated Arabic works published in book form (69 books) and in two major magazines: *Nový Orient* [New Orient] and *Světová literatura* [World literature] in the period 1945–2005. Kudláčková also draws a broad picture of the very beginnings of cultural contacts between the Arab world and Czech lands, building mostly upon the book *Islám v srdci Evropy: vlivy islámské civilizace na dějiny a současnost českých zemí* [Islam in the heart of Europe: influences of the Islamic civilization on the history and present of Czech lands] (Mendel, Ostřanský and Rataj 2007).

The developments of the last ten years in translations from Arabic have not yet been covered systematically. Statistical information for translated books can be obtained through the annual reports of the Czech National Library,¹ while the obligation of legal deposit allows for a compilation of a comprehensive bibliography through the Library's catalogue. For information about print-runs, distribution, and other economic concerns, it is necessary to rely on estimates and interviews. Four semi-structured interviews with translators and a publisher have been conducted specifically for this study,² and some previously published interviews and reviews will also be referenced. Additionally, programmes of cultural and literary festivals and individual events have been studied to provide a fuller image of the position of Arabic literature in Czech culture.

2 Publishing

The number of books published in Czechia has been gradually dropping since the year 2010 (Graph 1), and according to the estimates of the Union of Czech Book sellers and Publishers (SČKN), only half of this amount reaches the book market.



Graph 1: Number of book titles published in Czechia, 2010–19 (Pistorius, 2019; Turečková 2020)

¹ 'Výroční zprávy NK ČR a roční zprávy dle vyhl. 323/2005 Sb..' [Annual reports of the National Library of the Czech Republic and financial reports according to Act. no 323/2005 Sb.] Národní knihovna České republiky. April 22, 2020. <https://www.nkp.cz/o-knihovne/zakladni-informace/vyrocní-zpravy>.

² Jitka Jeníková (born 1983), an established translator from English and Arabic with a PhD in modern Arabic literature, was interviewed over Skype, 16.03.2021. Petr Felčer (born 1991), an emerging translator from French and Arabic, was interviewed over email, 14.04.2021. Jaroslava Bičovská (born 1945), an artist and the editor of Dar ibn Rushd publishing house, was interviewed over Skype and email between 16.04.2021 and 19.04.2021. František Ondráš (born 1964), professor of Arabic language and literature at Charles University, translator and editor, was interviewed over MS Teams, 13.04.2021.

And while the number of publishers has been growing each year ever since 1990, not all of them remain active, e.g., publishing at least one book in a given year (Table 1). On the contrary, the number of active publishers is decreasing.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Registered publishers	4875	5074	5383	5796	6095	6389	6712	6986	7225	7414
Active publishers	2769	2530	2663	2553	2197	2296	2211	2151	2058	2087

Table 1: Number of registered and active publishers, 2010–19

This is a result of a clear monopolizing tendency in the Czech literary market. In the year 2017, the five biggest publishers shared more than 40% of the entire market’s turnover, while in 2012 it was only 13.5%. Another tendency is for the key players on the book market to combine publishing and distribution, including retail and online sales (Turečková 2020). This makes it hard for smaller publishers to be financially viable.

2.1 Publishing translations from Arabic: statistics

According to the National Library annual reports, only 43 books have been translated from Arabic in the ten-year period after 2010. Since 2013, the reports distinguish whether the language of the original was classical or modern Arabic. The number of translations published in each year varied greatly, with 2011 and 2016 being the most fruitful years (Table 2).³

Year	Translations from Arabic	From classical Arabic	From modern Arabic
2010	0	0	0
2011	13	N/A	N/A
2012	8	N/A	N/A
2013	3	1	2
2014	3	2	1
2015	1	N/A	N/A
2016	10	6	4
2017	1	1	0
2018	1	0	1
2019	1	1	0
2020	2	1	1
Total	43		

Table 2: Number of translations from Arabic, 2010–20. Source: Annual Reports of the Czech National Library

³ There is some discrepancy between the numbers provided by the annual reports and the number of titles found in the Library’s catalogue. This may be caused by the publishers sending the legal deposit to the library later or by some other factor.

This might be partially explained by the fact that in 2011 the largest international book fair and literary festival in Czechia, Svět knihy Praha [Book World Prague], featured Saudi Arabia as the guest of honour while in 2015 the festival hosted Egypt in the same role. While the financial support connected to the countries' participation was problematic,⁴ the publicity might have influenced the interest of publishers and readers.

A slightly alternative account of the number of translations published in the past ten years arises from the detailed bibliographical data obtained for this study (Table 3). Both approaches show, however, that in the first half of the decade translational activity was much more energetic, and that the presence of Arab countries at Czech book fairs probably had some effect.

Year	Number of translations from Arabic
2010	1
2011	15
2012	7
2013	5
2014	1
2015	2
2016	4
2017	1
2018	1
2019	0
2020	1
Total	38

Table 3: Number of translations from Arabic, 2010–20, based on bibliographical accounts

Compared with other world languages like Chinese (115 translated books published between 2010 and 2019) or Japanese (299), the number of Arabic translations remains very modest. In the context of Middle Eastern languages, even translations from Hebrew (76) are more numerous, while those from Turkish (21) and Persian (4) also represent only a small fraction of the overall translation production (Annual reports of the National Library, 2010–19).

⁴ Interview with František Ondráš, 13.04.2021. Similar grievances were voiced in the interview with Jaroslava Bičovská, 16.04.2021.

2.2 Trends in publishing translations from Arabic

There are two major trends in publishing translations from Arabic. The first one is a continuation of the pre-2010 developments: short fiction still represents a large portion of literary translations. Seven anthologies of short stories from different Arab countries have been published by Dar ibn Rushd since 2010,⁵ and three further short story collections appeared elsewhere. For Dar ibn Rushd, a small publishing house established in 1990⁶ by Charif Bahbouh (1941–2020) and his wife Jaroslava Bičovská, this has been an editorial choice based on the vision of Svetozár Pantůček (1931–2000) who translated and edited the first four volumes of stories from North Africa and Syria. The anthologies have followed the same graphic design since 2012. The logic behind choosing short stories is perhaps twofold. It allows for a cooperation of several translators, which also cuts the cost, as the translator is often willing to dedicate the time needed for a short story free of charge or for a symbolic reward. There are also fewer problems with obtaining rights from authors.⁷

The second trend is the growing number of translations from classical Arabic works. Nine philosophical, religious or literary texts from the classical period have appeared as part of Academia publishing house's 'Orient' series⁸. This shows the return of the academic and a state-owned publisher as a major force in Arabic translation. This used to be the case before 1990 when only academics published their translations from both classical and modern Arabic literatures (Kudláčková 2011).

Roughly half of the translations from Arabic after 2010 have appeared haphazardly from various publishing houses. The other half, as will be apparent from the bibliography, was brought forth by the two publishing houses already mentioned – Dar ibn Rushd and Academia. They are the only publishers who systematically work on bringing Arabic

⁵ Dar ibn Rushd (est. 1990) is a small family business which focuses on publishing books from Eastern literatures. Apart from translated fiction, Dar ibn Rushd also publishes textbooks, dictionaries and non-fiction. Its editor also translated and published several Czech literary works into Arabic. <https://daribnrushd.cz/index.php>

⁶ Interview with Jaroslava Bičovská, 16.04.2021. The website of Dar ibn Rushd claims it was established in 1991.

⁷ In the interview with Jaroslava Bičovská she said that Dar ibn Rushd always asks translators or editors of the anthologies to obtain rights from Arab authors themselves. When there was a problem with that, the publisher preferred to drop the text. František Ondráš, who edited two short story anthologies (one for Dar ibn Rushd), also claimed to never have faced problems with obtaining rights since they were for non-commercial purposes.

⁸ The 'Orient' series was established in 2008 and includes scientific works and translations from and about the cultures of Asia and the Middle East. See <https://www.academia.cz/edice/orient>. Academia publishing house was established in 1953 and is the publisher for the Czech Academy of Sciences. The translations published in 'Orient' are financially supported by the Academy of Sciences and through scholars' grants.

literature into Czech context, but each represent very different approaches to translation. Academia pride themselves on the quality of translation and on the erudition of their translators, who are mostly researchers at the Academy of Sciences or at Charles University.⁹ The books often include long introductions and commentary. Dar ibn Rushd, on the other hand, is often criticized for a lack of organizational strategy, and their books for having uninformative introductions and a varying quality of translation.¹⁰ Their editors, however, maintain a close relationship with the readers through personal connections and the company's website. Most of the translators who cooperated with Charif Bahboub and sometimes edited the short story collections were his friends, former colleagues or students from the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.¹¹

One of the main problems facing translators is the disinterest of publishers in general towards Arabic literature, and even a fear to publish work by Arab authors. Suggesting an Arabic book for translation to a publisher and relying on them to secure funding is usually to no avail.¹² Publishers claim to have had negative experiences with Arabic books, argue that there are no capable editors willing to work with Arabic translations and that readers are not interested in Arab authors and Arab experiences. Even Jitka Jeníková, an established translator in several publishing houses, was never able to successfully promote any Arabic book to a publisher.¹³ She was, however, approached by Jota¹⁴ after a review of the Slovak translation of Alaa al-Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* appeared on the *iLiteratura* website.¹⁵ This eventually led to the book becoming the only Arabic novel translated from the original published in Czechia after 2010.¹⁶ This needs to be stressed, because although

⁹ The 2012 translation of Ibn Rushd by Ondřej Beránek, for example, received mixed reviews. Praised in Vitásková, Magdaléna. 2013. 'Rozhodné pojednání a překlady ze středověké filosofické arabštiny.' *Plav: měsíčník pro světovou literaturu* 8 (1). <https://www.svetovka.cz/2013/01/01-2013-kritika/> and criticized for a lack of philosophical insight in Machula, Tomáš. 2012. 'Rozhodné pojednání o vztahu náboženství a filosofie.' *Filosofický časopis* 60 (2): 917–21. https://kramerius.lib.cas.cz/search/nimg/IMG_FULL/uuid:74a41859-cd69-47b3-8297-e2b908b2a8f7.

¹⁰ Reflected in various reviews at the *iLiteratura.cz* website (<http://www.iliteratura.cz/Sekce/2061/160315781576-kutub-arabske-literatury>).

¹¹ Interview with Jaroslava Bičovská, 16.04.2021.

¹² Interview with Petr Felčer, 14.04.2021, and interview with Jitka Jeníková, 16.03.2021. Both recall being repeatedly declined or ignored by publishers. Jiří Milička, who translated a short story collection by the Tunisian writer Ali Douagi, recounted a similar experience (personal interview, 14.04.2021).

¹³ Interview with Jitka Jeníková, 16.03.2021.

¹⁴ Jota is a successful publishing house established in 1990 in Brno, which produces both Czech and translated fiction and non-fiction. In 2017 it was counted among the eight economically strongest publishers in Czechia (Pistorius 2019, p. 35).

¹⁵ *iLiteratura.cz* is an independent, non-profit online literary magazine, active since 2000. It provides information on Czech and foreign literature, literary events and often reviews translations. ISSN 1214-309X, <http://www.iliteratura.cz/>.

¹⁶ Jeníková's new project – a translation of Khaled Khalifa's *Death is Hard Work*, which appeared in Czech as *Smrt je dřina* in spring 2021 – began in a similar way: the editor read a review of its English translation. Interview with Jitka Jeníková, 16.03.2021.

there are several experienced translators from Arabic, the peculiar practice of publishing Arabic books, especially novels, translated into Czech via their English or French translations persists, even among established publishing houses.¹⁷ Arab authors who write in European languages also have a better chance at being published.¹⁸

Apart from the ignorance of readers and publishers, financial reasons play a great role. It is difficult to find support from academic institutions as well as from private donors for a translation of a work of fiction.¹⁹ Czech state grants for translations are severely limited and are mostly unable to cover the entire cost of book production. No institutional support from the Arab countries exists, in the way of either promoting quality literature or financially supporting its translation.²⁰ Translators thus have to rely on publishers who chance upon an Arabic book that excites their personal interest.

2.3 Note on the translators

In general, translating from Arabic is mainly a domain of graduates of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University²¹ or graduates of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen²². Both universities now offer a Middle Eastern Studies programme with Arabic specialization. There are also several language schools all over Czechia that specialize in Arabic teaching on all levels, however, no training dedicated to translators of literature from Arabic exists. They are also rarely members of the Czech Literary Translators' Guild.²³ To earn a living,

¹⁷ This is the case for several novels, e.g., Salwa Al Neimi, *Chuť medu* [The taste of honey]. Translated from the French *La prevue par le miel* (Arabic original برهان العسل) by Alexandra Dolanová. Praha: Víkend, 2010.

Nihad Sirees. *Ticho a vřava* [The Silence and the Roar]. Translated from the French (Ar. original الصمت والصخب) by Alexandra Pflimplová. Praha: Odeon, 2014. Ziedan, Yousef. *Azazel*. Translated from the English *Azazeel* (Ar. original عزازيل) by Jan Nemejovský. Praha: Plus, 2011. And non-fiction too, including philosophy (Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Ġābirī's نقد العقل العربي translated through French) and religious writings.

¹⁸ Interview with Jitka Jeníková, 16.03.2021. This is the case for some North African authors writing in French (Tahar Ben Jelloun, Kamel Daoud, Leila Slimani), Khalil Gibran, whose work is very popular and often reprinted in the Vyšehrad publishing house, and, for example, the Palestinian author Susan Abulhawa (*The Blue Between Sky and Water* and *Mornings in Jenin* appeared in Czech translation in 2013 and 2016).

¹⁹ Interview with František Ondráš, 13.04.2021. Jaroslava Bičovská also expressed frustration with the repeated let-downs by Arab partners in Tunisia, Palestine and Saudi Arabia, 16.04.2021.

²⁰ These grievances were echoed by all interviewees.

²¹ The history of Arabic studies at Charles University goes back into the 19th century. Since the 1990s an independent Arabic studies Bachelor and Master programme opened every 2–3 years. Since 2018 the Department of Middle Eastern Studies offers Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes of Middle Eastern Studies with specialization in Arabic. <https://kbv.ff.cuni.cz/en>

²² The Department of Middle Eastern Studies in Pilsen offers Bachelor and Master programme in Cultural Studies of the Middle East with specialization in Arabic language. <https://kbs.zcu.cz/en/>

²³ This organization was established in 1990 to protect the rights and interests of literary translators. It currently has 280 members, but none is an active translator from Arabic.

translators have to combine translating from Arabic with another language or occupation.²⁴ Brief biographic notes on translators who have at least two books published are included in the bibliography.

3 Dissemination, reception and cultural activity

The interviewees cited negative attitudes of the reading public towards Arabic culture as well as stereotypes in general as reasons for publishers' lack of interest,²⁵ which agrees with the analysis presented in the last study (Černá and Macháček 2010, p. 5). It is true that especially after the European 'migration crisis' of 2015, the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the Czech media and popular discourse has been mostly negative,²⁶ while the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the mainstream media and political discourse remains largely one-sided, in favour of Israel. In reality, the Arab community in Czechia remains small, comprising around 7000 people (including the 664 asylum holders) mainly from Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria. The majority is well-integrated, of middle-class status and lives in large cities (Felčer 2020). Despite these facts, stereotypes about Arabs and a cautious, negative attitude toward them continue.²⁷ However, the growing success of cultural festivals promoting Arabic culture as well as the continuing interest of young people in studying Arabic at universities prove the situation to be more complex and open to change.

There emerged two main cultural festivals focused on Arab culture in the past ten years. Půlměsíc nad Prahou [Crescent over Prague]²⁸ was set up in 2009 by Lucie Němečková, a dramaturge and journalist, then already a director of a festival of African theatre Tvůrčí

²⁴ Jeníková and Felčer translate also from English and French, other translators are academics or language instructors, but several (Břeská, Lišková) while having a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies are not active members of the academic community.

²⁵ Interview with Jaroslava Bičovská, 16.04.2021, and interview with František Ondráš, 13.04.2021. Ondráš recounted even being asked by a sponsor to use 'Oriental short story' in the title of his anthology rather than 'Arabic short story', while Bičovská mentioned her husband being slanderously targeted as 'an Arab terrorist'.

²⁶ Bobová, Zuzana. *Analýza politického diskurzu migrační krize v krajinách V4* [Political Discourse Analysis of the Migration Crisis in the V4 Countries] [online]. Brno, 2019 [cit. 2021-04-27]. Available from: <https://is.muni.cz/th/ndu60/>. Masarykova univerzita, Fakulta sociálních studií.

²⁷ The attitudes of the Czech population towards minorities and their development over time are tracked by the The Public Opinion Research Centre at the Academy of Sciences in the project *Naše společnost – projekt kontinuálního výzkumu veřejného mínění CVVM SOÚ AV ČR*. Arabs are repeatedly judged as the second (after Roma people) most unlikeable group with a clear shift for worse after 2015. Available from: https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a5199/f9/ov200429.pdf

²⁸ See <http://nadprahoupulmesic.simplesite.com/>

Afrika [Creative Africa]. It presents plays by authors of Arab origin²⁹ and the Jordanian theatre group Dafa Puppet Theatre, and holds talks with Arab writers (Mohamed Kacimi, Arezki Mellal, Mahi Binebine), book readings (especially of newly published Czech translations) and other sessions aimed at promoting the cultures of the Middle East. The festival has a strong connection with the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Charles University, whose students perform a different play in Arabic with Czech subtitles every year since 2012. The second festival, Arabfest,³⁰ was originally started in 2010 by students of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen with the support of Charif Bahbouh. More widely culturally oriented, it has at times also featured readings, lectures on Arabic literature and theatre performances. Both festivals benefit from a determined leadership of the organisers who go out of their way to secure funding from a variety of sources, the fact that they take place in large cities, and the good situation of the Czech economy before 2020. Nevertheless, both festivals often face opposition to their work and even insults.³¹

Other events that have had an important impact on the reception of Arabic literature are the Book World Prague book fair and literary festival and the annual Prague Writers' Festival (PWF).³² Saudi Arabia's presence at the 2011 book fair was controversial, although the festival tried to separate the programme of the official Saudi delegation from the more open events organized by Prague.³³ In 2015, the guest of honour was Egypt, which also sent an official delegation organized by the General Egyptian Book Organization (GEBO). While there were readings and discussions with several Egyptian writers,³⁴ it did not result in their works being translated into Czech.³⁵ Similarly, the PWF has welcomed at least one renowned Arab

²⁹ Mohamed Kacimi's *Terre Sainte*; Adel Hakim's *Exécuteur 14*; Slimane Benaissa's *Prophètes sans Dieu* and Arezki Mellal's *Samedi la revolution*, Rachid Akbal's *Baba la France*, Amir Nizar Zuabi's *Oh my sweet land*; an adaptation of Mahi Binebine's *Les étoiles de Sidi Moumen*; Amir Ibrahim's *Rojava*; Hala Moughanie's *Mer est ma nation*.

³⁰ See <http://www.arabfest.cz/>

³¹ Interview with Jaroslava Bičovská, 16.04.2021, and a personal interview with Tereza Svášková, the director of *Arabfest*, on 04.05.2021. She recounted incidents of vandalised posters, aggressive phone calls and messages.

³² The International Prague Writer's Festival (Festival spisovatelů Praha) was started by the American poet Michael March in the 1990s and is funded through an endowment. It invites recognized writers from all over the world and aims at creating connections between cultures. <https://www.pwf.cz/>

³³ A detailed account of Saudi Arabia's presence at the festival is available at the *iLiteratura* website: <http://www.iliteratura.cz/Clanek/28357/saudskoarabsky-svet-knihy-2011>. The programme is available on <http://sk2011.ns2.greep.cz/userdata/files/2011/program/tematicke-literatura-arabskeho-sveta.pdf>

³⁴ Among these writers were Ibrahim Abdel Meguid, Mansoura Ez-Eldin, Hamdy el-Gazzar, Fatima Kandil, Mai Khaled, Ahmad Abd al-Latif and Mohamed Farid Abu Sida.

³⁵ In preparation of the book fair a special edition of the *Plav* magazine was devoted to Egyptian fiction, and *Short stories from Egypt* were launched by Dar ibn Rushd during the event.

author every year since 2012³⁶ and organized readings of their work, but none was ever fully translated. Individual literary events are held by other organizations such as the ISM,³⁷ Maramíja – Českopalestinská kulturní výměna [Czech-Palestinian cultural exchange],³⁸ and Společnost česko-arabská [The Czech-Arabic society].

The PWF is also responsible for one of several Czech magazines featuring world literature: *literární.cz*,³⁹ which presents profiles of authors as well as some cultural news from the Arab world. It also includes short excerpts translated from works of the festival's guests. Another online magazine, *iLiteratura.cz*, in turn has a dedicated Arabic section consisting mainly of reviews of Arabic books, translated or otherwise. The printed magazine, *Plav* [Flow] features geographically or thematically organized monthly issues on world literatures, and often contains shorter reviews or articles from the Arab world. In 2014 it published an Egyptian special. *Nový Orient* [New Orient], a traditional academic journal published by the Oriental Institute, has only included three translations from Arabic in the past ten years.

4 Conclusion

Literature translated from Arabic is still on the periphery of Czech cultural interest. While there has been a greater number of books translated in the last decade than during any previous one, these were mainly works of short fiction or non-fiction. It is laudable that classical works of Arab literary heritage are once more being presented in Czech, but modern and contemporary novels and poetry remain neglected. There are many reasons for this situation, including the indifference of commercial publishers and negative attitudes of the reading public. More significant, however, is the scarcity of available financial resources and lack of institutional support for translators. The serious economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the literary market will only worsen this situation. Festivals and events which

³⁶ PWF has welcomed: Assia Djebar (2010), Hamdy el-Gazzar (2012, 2018), Sonallah Ibrahim (2013), Yasmina Khadra (2013), Fatema Chahid (2014), Salah El Ouadie (2014), Bensalem Himmich (2014), Mahi Binebine (2014, 2020), Abderrahim El Allam (2014, 2015), Samuel Shimon (2015), Kamel Daoud (2016), Mohamed Metwalli (2016), Mohammed Achaari (2017), Adonis (2017, 2019).

³⁷ The International Movement of Solidarity (ISM) has been active in Czechia since 2007. It provides information about Palestine and promotes non-violent protest. It helps organize cultural events and invite Palestinian authors. On 22.11.2018 Ghassan Zaqtan, Raja'a Ghanem and Lilian Bishara read and discussed their poetry; on 23.11.2019 Ramy al-Asheq was invited. They also often organize readings of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry.

³⁸ Maramíja, Literature Across Frontiers and the Day of Poetry festival organized a reading of Mazen Maarouf's poetry on 17.9.2018 and a discussion with the author.

³⁹ *Literární.cz* is an online magazine which publishes reviews, excerpts, interviews, articles and news from the global literary world. ISSN 1803-0998, <https://www.literarni.cz/>.

promote Arabic literature are now a stable presence in the Czech cultural sphere but have yet to convince the key players in the literary market that Arabic literature has something to offer to a Czech reader. With a steady number of Arabic major graduates and an increased awareness of the need to support diversity in cultural production, the future may be brighter, but it will require a steady effort from many actors.

5 Recommendations

While the primary goal of the present study was descriptive – to describe the situation of Arabic literature within the Czech literary market and compile a comprehensive bibliography of translated books published in the past ten years, its conclusions will be complemented with several recommendations which aim to improve this present situation. They are based on the assumption that more translated works from Arabic are needed to fill a gap in the concept of world literature in Czechia. Furthermore, there is the understanding that a change in the public perception of Arabic culture can only come with more books being translated and not the other way round.

1) Arabic literature in general needs greater visibility and promotion within the Czech literary and cultural space. Not only translations but also book reviews and articles should appear more often to continually support the interest in Arab writings. This is a task for academics and literary journalists to communicate more actively with the reading public.

2) Continual and coordinated tracking of trends in Arabic literature should also be carried out by publishers. For easier orientation, the strengthening of international ties and links to networks dedicated to spreading Arabic literature to other languages should be a priority.

3) In Czechia itself, greater degree of cooperation and coordination between the different actors is needed – academics, translators, publishers and events organisers should be aware of each other's projects so as to support and promote all events connected to Arabic literature. There are strong personal links, but the community should be supported also by some external institutional means. To this end, an online platform could be established to share the developments in the field.

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Bibliography of works translated from Arabic

Short fiction

Antologie moderních arabských povídek [Anthology of modern Arabic short stories. Edited by František Ondráš⁴⁰. Praha: Setoutbooks.cz, 2011.

Moderní saúdskoarabské povídky [Modern short stories from Saudi Arabia]. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2011.

al-Tuwajdzirī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. *Myšlenky, které mě nenechají spát* [Thoughts that do not let me sleep]. Translated from the Arabic original *خاطرات أرقني سراها*. [Rijád: Království Saúdské Arábie, Ministerstvo vyššího vzdělávání], 2011. **

Moderní irácké povídky [Modern short stories from Iraq]. Edited by Zdena as-Samarraiová.⁴¹ Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2012.

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Moderní libanonské povídky: Džibrán Chalíl Džibrán a ti druzí [Modern short stories from Lebanon: Jibran Khalil Jibran and the others]. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2013.

Šuqajr, Mahmúd. *Nepatrné pravděpodobnosti* [Tiny chances]. Translated from the Arabic original *احتمالات طفيفة* by Iva Lišková. Praha: Novela bohémica, 2014.

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Moderní jordánské povídky [Modern short stories from Jordan]. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2017.

⁴⁰ František Ondráš (b. 1964) is a Czech Arabist, professor of Arabic language and literature at Charles University and a translator and interpreter. An author of Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Arabic textbooks, he also provides organizational and professional support to cultural events including the Nad Prahou půlměsíc, Arabfest, Prague Writers’ Festival, Book World Prague 2011 and 2015.

⁴¹ Zdena as-Samarraiová (b. 1941) is a Czech Arabist and Anglicist. She is the author of an Iraqi Arabic textbook and a translator.

Moderní kuvajtské povídky [Modern short stories from Kuwait]. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2018.

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Umajmat bint 'Abdallāh al-Chamīs. Wadhá: pouštní motýl [Wadhá: the desert butterfly]. Translated from the Arabic الفراشة الصحراوية وضحى. [Rijád]: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Higher Education, [2011?]. **

Widād bint 'Abd All'āh al-'Ammār. *Kapka vody* = قطرة ماء [Waterdrop]. Parallel Arabic original and Czech translation. [Rijád]: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Higher Education, [2011?]. **

Sabīl, Wafā' bint Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad. Amúna a její příběhy [Stories of Amuna]. Translated from the Arabic حكايات أمونة. [Rijád]: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Higher Education, 2011. **

Arabská lidová přísloví v minulosti a dnes [Arabic folk sayings in the past and today]. Edited and translated by Issam Ramadan⁴² and Ivan Ramadan. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2011. *

Tisíc a jedna noc [One thousand and one nights]. Reprint of a translation of ألف ليلة و ليلة by Felix Tauer.⁴³ 8 volumes. Praha: Odeon, 2011.

Bahbouh, Charif.⁴⁴ *Úsměvy po arabsku* = ابتسامات بالعربية [Smiling in Arabic]. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2011. *

Turecká, perská a arabská přísloví a mudrosloví [Turkish, Persian and Arabic sayings and proverbs]. Edited by René Kopecký⁴⁵ and Charif Bahbouh. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2013. *

Ramadan, Issam. *Arabské pohádky* = حكايات عربية [Arabic fairy tales]. Edited and translated from Arabic by Issam Ramadan. Brno: Edika, 2015. *

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Buzurg ibn Šahrijár. *Divy a záhady Indického oceánu* [Marvels and mysteries of the Indian Ocean]. Translation of the Arabic original كتاب عجائب الهند, commentary and foreword by Jaroslav Oliverius.⁴⁶ Praha: Academia, 2012.

⁴² Issam Ramadan is a Syrian-Czech sociologist and assistant professor of Arabic at the University of West Bohemia.

⁴³ Felix Tauer (1893–1958) was a Czech Arabist and professor of Islamic history at Charles University.

⁴⁴ Charif Bahbouh (1941–2020) was a Czech publisher, bookseller, translator and teacher of Arabic of Syrian origin. He ran the Dar Ibn Rushd publishing house with his wife for thirty years and actively participated in various cultural events promoting Arab culture.

⁴⁵ René Kopecký (b. 1971) is a Czech anthropologist, translator and editor. His writings and translations were published by Dar Ibn Rushd.

Chalífa, Chálid. *Smrt je dřina* [Death is Hard Work]. Translated from the Arabic original الموت عمل شاق by Jitka Jeníková. Praha: Akropolis, 2021.

Drama

Kidwah, Nu'mān. *Velké vězení: saúdskoarabská divadelní hra* [The Great Prison: A Play from Saudi Arabia]. Translated from the Arabic original السجن الكبير by Charif Bahbouh. Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2011.**

ar-Rāziḥī, 'Abd al-Karīm. *Vesničan hledá stranu* [A villager in search of a party]. Translated from the Arabic قبيلي يبحث عن الحزب and introduced by Jana Břeská.⁴⁷ Brandýs nad Labem: Dar Ibn Rushd, 2011.**

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Muḥam, Ḥisām. *Pocit osamění* = تغريبة داخلية [The exile within]. Parallel Arabic original, Czech, and English translation. Praha: Olga Krylova, 2011.*

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Ibn Rušd (Averroes). *Rozhodné pojednání o vztahu náboženství a filosofie* [A resolute treatise on the relationship between religion and philosophy]. Translated from the Arabic original فصل المقال في ما بين الحكمة والشريعة من إتصال by Ondřej Beránek.⁵⁰ Praha: Academia, 2012.

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⁴⁶ Jaroslav Oliverius (1933–2020) was a Czech Arabist and Hebraist, professor of Arabic language and literature at Charles University, author of Arabic textbooks and a translator. His is the only translation of Naguib Mahfouz (*Skandál v Káhiře*, 1968) into Czech.

⁴⁷ Jana Břeská (b. 1980) is a Czech Arabist, translator, and a public policy specialist. She cooperated with Charif Bahbouh. Her translation of Haitham Hussein's novel رهائن الخطيئة [Hostages of Sin] was translated as *Kam domů, Chatúne..?!* in 2016 and published by the Czech PEN Club. It is not included in the National Bibliography.

⁴⁸ There is also one new translation of Darwish published in Czechia, but it is in the Slovak language. Darwiš, Mahmúd. *Nástěnná malba* = الجداريات. Translated by Ladislav Drozdík. Praha: Palestinský klub v ČR, 2017.

⁴⁹ Ivan Hrbek (1923–93) was a Czech Arabist and historian; his is the most widely used translation of the Qur'an into Czech.

⁵⁰ Ondřej Beránek (b. 1980) is a Czech Arabist and Islamologist and a researcher (director 2013–21) at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He previously translated Son'allah Ibrahim's *The Committee* (Komise, 2005).

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* *Books featuring parallel Arabic text with Czech translation, or at least a part of the Arabic original.*

** *Books presented by Saudi Arabia at the Book World Prague literary festival and included in the Czech National Bibliography.*⁵¹

⁵¹ The origins and translation history of these books are mostly unclear, and the quality was described as very poor. There are probably several more titles from this event that were not included in the Czech National Bibliography. A list of their book covers is available from: https://nkidwah.kau.edu.sa/ImageGallery.aspx?Site_ID=0005047&LNG=AR&Gal=6021. Saudi Arabia presented these books at the book fair, handing them out for free (Bičovská, 16.04.2020). They cooperated to an extent with Dar ibn Rushd and Charif Bahbouh, e.g., in publishing an Arabic-Czech dictionary.