

TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE FROM ARABIC

INTO SOMALI: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to draw attention to a series of translations from Arabic into Somali which began in 1980 and is now in progress. These translations can be of considerable value to linguists working on Somali since they contain a large specialized vocabulary of religious terms and can also provide useful insights into Somali syntax through the comparison of their texts with their Arabic originals and in some cases with the English translations which are also available for them, though in separate volumes. As the Somali translations in this series are of high aesthetic quality they can be regarded as part of Somali literature and deserve the attention of anyone interested in the characteristics of the modern prose which has developed in Somali in the last thirteen years.

They are also of importance to the study of Islam in Somalia in view of the fact that, as far as I have been able to ascertain, they are read by a significant number of people and thus must at least to some extent influence public opinion on religious matters.

Since 1972, when Somali was introduced as the official language of Somalia and as the medium of instruction in schools and adult education, numerous publications have appeared.⁽¹⁾ Till 1980, however, conspicuously absent among them, considering that Somalia is a staunchly Muslim country, were translations of works of Islamic literature. This gap could perhaps be explained by the fact that some Somalis can read Arabic, the language in which most Islamic literature is written, and thus have direct access to the original texts. While this no doubt is the case the majority of the Somali

public do not know enough Arabic to read books in that language. In spite of the intensive efforts of the educational authorities in Somalia, including crash programmes, it will take several decades to remedy this situation.

In contrast with Arabic, Somali is the mother tongue not only of Somalis living in Somalia but also of those in the neighbouring territories of Ethiopia, Kenya and the Djibouti Republic and of a large number of emigrants in the Arabian Peninsula, Europe and America. In Somalia the number of people who are fully literate in Somali vastly exceeds the number of those who are literate in Arabic and is rapidly growing. Literacy in Somali is also spreading among Somalis outside Somalia through contacts across the borders and through recent emigrants many of whom are fully literate.

It is with this situation in mind perhaps that the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations launched in 1980 a series of translations of Islamic works into Somali. The authors selected in this series are all established writers and some of them, such as Abū A^clā al-Mawdūdī, Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Bannā (2) have achieved fame throughout the Muslim world. With the exception of al-Nawawī, a well-known scholar of the 13th century, all these writers are modern and among their works selected for translation only those of Mustafā al-Sibā^cī are devoted to purely historical themes. All the others deal with contemporary issues in Islam, even when they view them in a historical perspective or take their inspiration from the early periods of Islamic thought and practice.

The translators of the books in this series are Somalis who acquired their knowledge of Arabic in Somalia and then perfected it through long residence in Arab countries.

2. Bibliographical data

In the books of this series their own bibliographical data, i.e. names of the authors, translators and publishers, and the place and dates of publication, are provided in a manner which departs from the practice usual in Europe and America and requires some explanation. These data are provided on the front cover, on two title pages and on the last page of each book. They are in three languages: Arabic, Somali and English, but the three versions are not parallel i.e. some data are given in one language and not in another.

The data in Arabic are:

- (a) The title of the original work from which the translation was made, followed by the words bi-al-lughah al-Sūmālīyah "in the Somali language".
- (b) The name of the author, but this is given only in four books and is omitted in all the others.
- (c) The name of the publisher: Ittiḥād al-Islāmī al-^cĀlamī li-al-Munazzamāt al-Tullābiyah. "International Islamic Federation of Students Organizations".
- (d) The years of publication according to the Muslim and Christian calendars.

Data items (a) to (d) appear usually on the first title page while item (c) is also given on the front cover. It should be noted that all specific data in Arabic given in this paper are represented by means of a roman transliteration.

Although the titles of the original works are given in Arabic on the title pages, the texts of the books consist of Somali translations only. The only exception to this is Afartanka Xadiis ee Imaam Nawawī, edited and

translated by Cabdiqaadir Maxamed, where the translations are accompanied by the original Arabic texts.

The data in Somali are:

- (a) The title of the book in Somali translation.
- (b) The name of the author in a Somalized form.
- (c) The name of the translator, but this is omitted in some of the books.
- (d) The name of the publisher, translated into Somali:
Midowga Islaamka Caalamiga ee Ururada Ardayda.
- (e) The years of publication according to the Muslim and Christian calendars.

Items (a), (b) and (c) are provided on the front cover and are usually repeated on the second title page. Items (d) and (e) are normally given on the second title page only.

The Somalization of the names of the authors, mentioned in item (b) above consists of adapting them to Somali phonology and representing them in Somali orthography. In the case of some composite Arabic names Somalization can involve the combining of their separate components into a single graphic unit, e.g. Cabdilkariim for ʿAbd al-Karīm. It should be noted that such treatment of foreign proper names is a standard practice in Somalia in all publications written in Somali.

It may be useful to note that in the Somali orthography the letters c and x represent the same consonants as the Arabic ʿ and h respectively and that long vowels are represented in it by the doubling of the vowel letters.

The Somali translations of the titles of the books are usually very close to their originals. There are however some departures from this method of translation and they are accounted for in the list in Section 3 by

means of providing separate English translations of both the originals and the Somali translations. Most of these departures are minor and seem to be motivated by the wish to make the title clearer to the Somali readers or more indicative of the contents of the books. In two cases however the Arabic titles are shortened in the Somali translation and the reason for this appears to be that of economy of space. The titles in question are very long since they are composed of lists of titles of the separately paginated parts of these books.

The data in English are limited to the following items:

- (a) The name of the publisher in English translation:
International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations.
- (b) The place of publication: Salimiah - Kuwait, to which the number of the P.O. Box is added: 8631.

Item (a) appears on the front cover and on the last page while item (b) appears only on the last page.

There are no other data or texts in English in any of the books.

3. Uniform presentation of the data

In this section a list is provided in which the bibliographical data concerning the translations under discussion are presented in a uniform manner, suitable for reference purposes and for the inclusion in bibliographies of works in the fields of Somali studies and Islam in general. Each entry in the list begins with the name of the author in its Somalized form, followed by the original Arabic form. The names are not inverted but are given in their traditional order used in Somalia and several other Muslim countries. Thus, for example, the name "Cabdilqaadir Cawdah" is given without any change, instead of "Cawdah, Cabdilqaadir" which would be the normal practice in the case of non-Muslim names.

The title of each book is given first in Somali translation and is followed by an English translation of that translation. The original title in Arabic comes next and is provided with an English translation only if the meaning of the Somali translation departs appreciably from the original. Otherwise it is omitted.

The names of authors and the titles when they are in Arabic are given in transliteration and the name of the translator is preceded by the abbreviation "Trans.". The name of the publishing organization is given in its English form, and is abbreviated to IIFSO (International Islamic Federation of Students Organizations). The years of publication according to the Muslim calendar precede those of the Christian calendar.

In the list an extensive use is made of parentheses, brackets and the oblique stroke. Parentheses are used for English translations of titles and indicate that they have been inserted by the author of this article and are not found anywhere in the books listed. The brackets are used for a similar purpose: they indicate that the information given was obtained from sources other than the books themselves. They are used for Arabic forms of the names of the authors and for information about the authorship of translations, when these are not given on the title pages. Occasionally they are also used for explanatory notes or for numerals which identify parts of a composite title.

The oblique stroke divides what is written in Somali from what is written in Arabic, and it should be noted that the Somali text always precedes the Arabic one.

When a title is composite i.e. contains several autonomous titles, these are divided by full stops.

When the letter E is placed after an entry it indicates that an

English translation of the Arabic original is available in a separate volume published by IIFSO.⁽³⁾

The list of the translations published so far in this series is given below.

Abu-Acla al-Mawduudi/[Abū Aclā al-Mawdūdī]. Habka nolosha Islaamka

(The Islamic Way of Life)/Nizām al-hayāh fī al-Islām. Trans.

Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 82 pp. [E].

Abu-Acla al-Mawduudi/[Abū Aclā al-Mawdūdī]. Mabaadii'da Islaamka

(The Principles of Islam)/Mabādī' al-Islām. Trans. Cabdirisaaq

Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 190 pp.

Abulxasan al-Nadawi/[Abū al-Hasan al-Nadawī]. Maxaa kaga lumay

caalamka bur burkii Muslimiinta (What Losses Has the World Suffered as

a Result of the Breakdown of the Muslims?)/Madhā khasira al-cālam fī

inhiṭāt al-Muslimīn. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/

1983, 420 pp.

Al-Bahi al-Khuwali/[Al-Bahī al-Khulī]. Islaamka iyo haweenayda casrigan

(Islam and the Woman of this Era)/Al-Islām wa-qadāyā al-mar'ah

al-mu'asirah (Islam and the Problems of the Contemporary Woman).

Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 287 pp. [E].

Cabdilbadiic Saqar/[ʿAbd al-Badīʿ Saqr], Sideebaynnu dadka ugu baaqnaa

(How Should we Present Our Call to the People?)/Kayfa nadʿu al-nās.

Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 166 pp.

Cabdilkariim Saydaan/[ʿAbd al-Karīm Zaydān]. Fardiga iyo dawladda ee

shariicadda Islaamka (The Individual and the State Based on the

Islamic Law)/Al-fard wa-al-dawlah (The Individual and the State).

Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 106 pp. [E].

- Cabdilaadir Cawdah/[^cAbd al-Qādir ^cAwdah]. Islaamka iyo dhigaalada inoo degsan (Islam and the Laws Imposed on Us)/Al-Islām wa-awda^cunā qānūniyah (Islam and Our Juridical Practices). Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1401/1981, 186 pp. [E].
- Cabdiqaadir Cawdah/[^cAbd al-Qādir ^cAwdah]. Islaamkii oo dhexyaalla dhallintiisa jaahilka ah iyo culimadiisa hawaarta (Islam as It Dwells amidst Its Ignorant People and Its Indolent Learned Men)/Al-Islām bayna jahl ibnā^oih wa-^cajz ^culamā^oih (Islam between the Ignorance of Its Sons and the Impotence of Its Learned Men). Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 105 pp. [Cabdiqaadir is an optional variant of Cabdilaadir.], [E].
- Cabdiqaadir Maxamed [^cAbd al-Qādir Muḥammad], ed. Afartanka Xadiis ee Imaam Nawawi (The Forty Traditions of Imam Nawawi)/Matn al-arba^cin al-nawawīyah (The Text of "The Forty" of al-Nawawī). Trans. Cabdiqaadir Maxamed. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 105 pp. [The book contains the original text and the translation.], [E].
- Maxamed al-Qasaali/[Muḥammad al-Ghazālī]. Akhlaaqda qofka Muslinka (The Morals of the Muslim)/Khulq al-Muslim. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 295 pp.
- Maxamed Qutub/[Muḥammad Qutb]. Islaamka qaladka laga fahmay (Misconceptions about Islam)/Shubhāt hawla al-Islām. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1401/1981, 307 pp. [E].
- Mustafa al-Subaaci/ Mustafā al-Sibā^cī. Ilbaxnimo fiicnideenna (Splendours of Our Civilization)/Min rawā^oic ḥadāratinā. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 247 pp.

- Mustafe al-Subaaci/Mustafā al-Sibā^cī. Siiradii Nabiga: Duruus iyo cibrooyin (The Life History of the Prophet: Lessons and Admonitions)/Al-sīrah al-nabawīyah: Durūs wa-^ccibar. Trans. Cabdiqaadir Maxamed. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 232 pp. [Mustafe is an optional variant of Mustafa.]
- Sayid Qutub/[Sayyid Qutb]. Diintan (This Religion)/Ḥadha al-dīn. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 135 pp. [E].
- Sayid Qutub/[Sayyid Qutb]. Tilmaamaha jidka (Signposts). Ma^cālim al-tariq. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1401/1981, 264 pp. [E].
- Saynab al-Qasaali/[Zaynab al-Ghazālī]. Maalmo nolosheyda ka mid ah (Certain Days of My Life)/Ayyām min ḥayātī. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 316 pp.
- Siciid Xawa/[Sa^cīd Hawā]. Heerka tusaalooyinka (The Horizon of Guidance)/Fī āfāq al-ta^cālīm. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 316 pp.
- Xasan al-Banna/[Ḥasan al-Bannā]. Jihaadka Ilaahay dartii (The Holy War in God's Cause)/Al-jihād fī sabīl Allāh. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980, 51 pp.
- Xasan al-Banna/[Ḥasan al-Bannā]. [1] Saddexda dhambaal (The Three Messages). [2] Dhallinyarooy (O Young People!). [3] Shalay iyo Maanta (Yesterday and Today). [4] Dacwaddeennu waxay ku jirta xilli cusub (Our Mission Is in a New Phase)/[0] Majmū^cah rasā^oil al-imām al-shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā, al-juz^o al-awal (A Collection of Messages of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Imam and Martyr, Part One): [1] Al-rasā^oil al-thalāthah. [2] Ilā al-shabāb (To Youths). [3] Bayna al-ams wa-al-yawm (Between Yesterday and Today). [4] Da^cwatunā fī tawr jadīd. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 137+22+45+42 pp. [Each section of the book

is paginated separately. The part of the Arabic title preceded here by the figure "0" is not included in the Somali title.]

Xasan al-Banna/[Hasan al-Bannā]. [1] Mushkiladaheennna oo lagu ifinayo habka Islaamka (Our Difficulties Illumined by the Light of Islamic Order). [2] Dhanbaalka Shirkii Shanaad (The Message at the Fifth Congress). [3] Caqiidooyinka (The Tenets of Faith). [4] Baaqa tusaalooyinka (The Call of Guidance). [5] Walaalaha Muslimiinta oo hoos jooga calanka Quraanka (The Muslim Brethren under the Flag of the Koran). [6] Ducada (Prayer)./[0] Majmū^cah rasā^oil al-imām al-shahīd Hasan al-Bannā, al-juz^o al-thānī (A Collection of Messages of Hasan al-Bannā, Imam and Martyr, Part Two): [1] Mushkilātunā fī daw^o al-nizām al-Islāmī. [2] Al-mu^otamar al-khāmis (The Fifth Congress). [3] Al-^caqā^oid. [4] Risālat al-ta^cālīm. [5] Al-akhwān al-Muslimūn tahta rāyat al-Qur^oān. [6] Al-munājāh. Trans. [Cabdirisaaq Caqli]. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 97+86+57+40+24+39 pp. [Each section of the book is paginated separately. The part of the Arabic title preceded here by the figure "0" is not included in the Somali title.]

Yuusuf al-Qardaawi/Yūsif al-Qardāwī. Aqoonta baaqyahanka (The Skills of the Preacher)/Thaqāfat al-dā^ciyah (The Education of the Preacher). Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 200 pp.

Yuusuf al-Qardaawi/Yūsif al-Qardāwī. Barbaarinta Islaamka iyo dugsiga Xasan al-Banaa (Islamic Education and the School of Hasan al-Bannā)/Al-thaqāfah al-Islāmīyah wa-madrasah Hasan al-Bannā. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1403/1983, 160 pp. [Al-Banaa is an optional variant of al-Banna.]

There is one translation, published in 1980, which is not included in the list given above. It was out of print and unobtainable at the time when

the research on which this paper is based was conducted. The details of the book are as follows: ⁽⁴⁾ Abu Acla al-Mawduudi/Abū Aclā al-Mawdūdī Kaalinta ardayda ee dhismaha mustaqbalka caalamka Islaamka (The Role of Students in the Construction of the Future Muslim World)/Dawr al-talabah fī banā^o mustaqbal al-^calam al-Islāmī. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1400/1980.

4. Continuation of the series

The series of translations described here is not a short term venture. In addition to the volumes already published four more are awaiting publication. They are: ⁽⁵⁾

Al-Bahī al-Khuuli/Al-Bahī al-Khulī. Xasuusta baaqyahanka (The Reminder for the Preacher)/Tadhkirat al-du^cah (The Reminder for the Preachers).

Trans. Cumar Faarax.

Maxamed al-Qasaali/Muhammad al-Ghazālī. Siiradii Nebiga (The Life History of the Prophet)/Fiqh al-sīrah (The Understanding of the Life History of the Prophet). Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli.

Sayid Qutub/Sayyid Qutb. Astaamaha aragtida Islaamka (The Characteristics of the Islamic Concept)/Khaṣā^ois al-tasawwur al-Islāmī. Trans. Cumar Faarax.

Sayid Qutub/Sayyid Qutb. Mustaqbalka diintan baa leh (The Future Belongs to this Religion)/Al-mustaqbal li-hādha al-dīn. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli.

It seems very likely that further volumes will follow in view of the positive response which the series seems to have met so far among some sections of the Somali public. It is difficult to assess with any accuracy whom these books reach but it appears that the main demand comes from Somalis living in the Arabian Peninsula and Kenya. In Somalia books of this

series are not available in bookshops but they find their way into private possession through contact with expatriate Somalis.

It should be noted that the series of Somali translations forms part of a larger publishing venture undertaken by the IIFSO. This organization not only publishes translations into several other languages, such as Urdu, Swahili, English and French ⁽⁶⁾ But also issues new editions of the original works in Arabic and Urdu.

NOTES

1. Bibliographical information concerning Somali literature is available in Bernth Lindfors (ed.) Research Priorities in African Literatures (München, New York, London and Paris: Hans Zell, an imprint of K.G. Saur, 1984).
2. Information concerning these three authors can be found in Gilles Kepel, Le Prophète et Pharaon (Paris: Editions Découverte, 1984), also available in an English translation by Jon Rothschild, The Prophet and Pharaoh (London: Al Saqi Books, distributed by Zed Books, 1985). A biography of al-Mawdūdī and a bibliography of his works are available in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds) Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlānā Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī (Leicester and Jeddah: The Islamic Foundation, U.K. and Saudi Publishing House, 1979).
3. Note also that an annotated translation of some sections of Majmū'ah rasā'il of Hasan al-Bannā was published by Charles Wendell under the title Five Tracts of Hasan al-Bannā (1906-1949) (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978).
4. I am grateful for this information to Mr Cabdirisaaq Caqli.
5. See Note 4.

6. As there is some latitude in the way in which titles are translated into different languages it is advisable to mention the original Arabic titles when ordering copies from bookshops or from the publishers.

ADDENDUM

After this paper had been completed I acquired the following book in the IIFSO series which had previously escaped my attention:

Musdafa Mash-huur/[Mustafā Mashhūr]. Jidka da'wada (The Path of the Call)/Tariq al-da'wah. Trans. Cabdirisaaq Caqli. Salimiah: IIFSO, 1401/1981, 229 pp.

I also acquired since then Kaalinta ardayda ee dhismaha mustaqbalka caalamka Islaamka mentioned at the end of Section 3. The bibliographical details are as given there, except that the name of the translator is not stated on the title page. The number of pages is 39.