

Arabian Nights editions and translations: facts.

Antoine Galland's translation, *Les Mille et une nuits* (1702-17), in part based on a fifteenth-century manuscript, but with a lot of extraneous additions.

1708 The probable date of the first English translation of the first part of Galland's French translation of the *Nights* (the so-called Grub Street translation).

1814-18 The Calcutta I Arabic edition of the *Nights*, two volumes, edited by Shaykh Ahmad al-Shirwani, based on the late eighteenth-century Russell manuscript (Syrian)

1825-43 The Breslau edition of the *Nights*, by Maximilian Habicht and completed by Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer, allegedly based on a Tunisian manuscript. The Arabic text followed on from his German translation. Though its various sources are unknown, there are indications that one of the manuscripts Habicht drew upon was an early one. Moreover, unlike the later Bulaq editors, he did not seek to improve the Arabic of his source materials.

1825 the German version of Hammer-Purgstall's French translation of the *Nights*. The French translation and its manuscript source had been lost, but not before it had been translated into German.

1835 The first Bulaq (Cairo) edition of the *Nights* first appeared in two volumes under the editorship of Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman al-Safati al-Sharqawi. It was the only important printed edition produced by Arabs for an Arab readership. Al-Sharqawi corrected the Arabic of this version which was based on several Egyptian manuscripts, some from late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and mainly on a late eighteenth-century redaction. Just over half the stories date from the Ottoman period, i.e. post 1517. This type of material is known as Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension (ZER). The main manuscript used by the Bulaq press, consisting of some 160 stories, carefully arranged in blocks, was compiled by a skilled though anonymous scholar, probably circa 1770. The target readership of this main manuscript and then the printed text seems to have been relatively well-educated and moneyed Egyptians. Some stories in Bulaq are given in abridged versions. The second edition of the Bulaq text was

further corrected by another Egyptian scholar and this and later editions of the Bulaq text appeared in four volumes.

1838-41 Gustav Weil's German translation of the *Nights*, mostly based on Bulaq and Breslau. Second corrected edition 1865.

1838-41 Edward William Lane's translation of the *Nights*, based on Bulaq, but sometimes crosschecked against Calcutta I and Breslau. The first English translation to be made directly from the Arabic. Lane's translation owed a great deal to the editing and advice of Shaykh Muhammad al-Tantawi.

1839-42 Calcutta II (Macnaghten) Arabic edition of the *Nights*, based on the lost Turner Macan manuscript and drawing additional material from the Calcutta I, Breslau and Bulaq editions. This is the most compendious of the editions. In 1915 Josef Horowitz published a short survey of the text in which he counted 1,420 poems or fragments of poems, of which 170 were repeated. Most of what was quoted was anonymous and not very good, though al-Mutanabbi (d.965) and Baha' al-Din al-Zuhayr (d.1258) were among those who could be identified. Most of the poets quoted date from ninth to fourteenth centuries.

1863 A second edition in four volumes of the Bulaq text, edited by Muhammad Qutta al-'Adawi with corrections, especially regarding the metre of poems.

1882 John Payne's translation of the *Nights*, purportedly based on Calcutta II, though probably drawing heavily on earlier French and German translations. (Payne had learnt Arabic suspiciously fast.)

1885-8 Sir Richard Burton's translation of the *Nights*, also purportedly based on Calcutta II, but he evidently relied quite heavily on Payne's translation. Burton's misbegotten attempt to translate *saj'* (Arabic rhymed prose) must have deterred many who came after him from doing the same.

1899-1904 Joseph Charles Mardus's influential though bogus French translation of the *Nights*. Originally he claimed to be translating from Bulaq, but when it became clear that this was not the case, he claimed to be working from a mysterious and unidentifiable Tunisian manuscript. This translation

was acclaimed by literary folk, but not by scholars, as a significant number of the stories do not appear in any manuscript or text of the *Nights*.

1921-8 Enno Littmann's scholarly German translation of the *Nights*, based on Calcutta II, collated with Bulaq, but with the poetry omitted. But Littmann did attempt to reproduce the rhymed prose.

1984 Muhsin Mahdi's edition of the oldest substantially surviving Arabic manuscript (fifteenth century) i.e. the Galland manuscript, containing forty stories, extending over 282 nights. A landmark in scholarship (even though he had mistakenly dated the manuscript to the fourteenth century). Mahdi stressed the literary rather than folkloric nature of these stories.

1990 Husain Haddawy's *Arabian Nights*, a translation of Mahdi's edition of the late fifteenth-century Arabic manuscript that had served as Galland's main source for his translation

2008 Malcolm Lyons's *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*, (three volumes), a translation of Calcutta II. Lyons regarded the text he translated as popular literature and the written version of what were essentially orally transmitted stories with the consequent repetitions and inconsistencies of oral delivery. Moreover the effect of the original stories depended heavily on rhythm and assonance and this was all but impossible to translate.