
This is the second English rendering of Abū ‘Ubayd’s book, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*. The first one; badly edited (rather unedited) and poorly transliterated was made by Noor Muhammad Ghiffari and published by Pakistan Hijra Council in 1991 under the title *The Book of Finance*. The present translation is, by and large, acceptable and conveys the sense of the original. The translation under review was sponsored by The Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization set up by the ruler of Qatar and is based in the U.S.A. Long before these English translations, an Urdu translation of the book was published by Islamic Research Institute in 1968, in two volumes. Its second edition was published in a single volume in 1986.¹

Translating from one language to another is not an easy task. It becomes all the more tedious to translate the technical contents of a text into a language which is not familiar with these technical terms. For example, the Islamic term *najas* has no substitute in English. Thus *ṣadaqah*, *zakāh*, *dhimmah*, *sunnah*, *ḥadīth*, *āthar*, *aqlah*, *faḍlād*, *ḥasan*, *ṣahīh*, *gharib*, *mukātabah* etc. need to be defined and explained in order that the readers might clearly understand them. The translator has, justifiably added a 12-page glossary to define all such terms. The translation is a faithful rendering in standard English and is a welcome addition to Islamic literature in that language. The translator has been engaged in research on questions relating to Islamic law and jurisprudence and has a number of published books to his credit. These one in addition to his equally valuable translation of Ibn Rushd’s important work on Islamic law, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*.²

The 570-page translation containing 1997 paragraphs is a stupendous task and it is quite natural that some slips should have occurred. The first such slip, in our opinions is the title of the book. *The Book of Revenue* would suggest that it discusses only with sources of a government’s income although it also treats with heads of expenditure. Book of Finance is inclusive of both.

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Readers in English are supposed to be concerned with the contents of the book but not necessarily with the chain of narrators (isnād). Thus the repetition of ‘such and such related to us saying,’ often four or five times before a paragraph is irritating to the reader and badly affects the flow of the text. A better way is to avoid it as is done in the Urdu translation. Ghiffari has cut it short by using only the names of narrators; Hajjāj [Hajjāj]—Shu‘bā [Shu‘bah]—Yassār (sic) Abī al-Hīkām (sic) [Sayyār Abī‘l-Ḥikam]—Abū ‘l-Wā’il (p. 48). This seems better:

In para 277 the translator has translated the phrase “b‘ad ‘ashrin tabqā min shahr al-‘awm” as after the tenth of Ramadān. The phrase would actually mean “ten days remaining in the end of the month of Ramadān” which means after 20th of the month of Ramadān.

There are some footnotes that Professor Nyazee has translated from the original book but there are some others that he has added to clarify some ambiguity. The reader should know which have been added by the earlier editor and which one by the translator.

The glossary added at the end is a much needed requirement in such a technical work. There are, however, a few words that need to be revised.

The most repeated word Sunnah does not appear as an independent term; it is explained under the term ḥadith. It would be advisable to include this term separately with a cross reference to ḥadith. The entire explanation needs to be precisely redrafted.

Jizyah is defined as Poll-Tax on those who have entered into the contract of dhimmah. It is not a tax imposed on all abl al-dhimmah but only on adult males (except the very old), the infirm and the monks. But their entire community is included under the fold of dhimmah. Abū ‘Ubayd himself has briefly explained this under para 93.

Khums is not confined to spoils of war; it is also leviable on precious metals, rikāz, as explained under para 857 et. seq.

It should be borne in mind that many readers may not be conversant with Islamic terminology and Arabic grammar. Thus the use of words like athar, kasrāb and letter dāl, etc. may be avoided.

The few shortcomings listed above do not detract from the redoubtable usefulness of the great work that the translator has undertaken.

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