

A GIFT FOR CHILDREN

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*An annotated translation
of the “Tuhfat al-Atfal”*

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INTRODUCTION

Method of translation

Any translation involves basically two processes: recreation and modification. Recreation refers to the process of reproducing the text of the source language (SL) in the target language (TL) with zero loss. In other words, the meaning (and form) of the SL text remains constant throughout the whole translation activity. This process does not take into consideration anything over and above the text and the author, in other words, it is “text-cum-sender centered”.

Modification, on the other hand, refers to the process of transforming and changing the SL text through the consideration of extra-textual and authorial factors, for example, the needs, sensitivities and linguistic peculiarities of the TL readership i.e. the receiver. In short, it amounts to a deviation from the black letter of the SL text while preserving its essence and spirit. A translation generally speaking amounts to a trade-off between these two processes.

There are a number of factors which influence the relative degree of recreation and modification involved in a translation. Hence, the same text can be translated in different ways and with different degrees of recreation and modification. Thus, a particular translation may be very faithful to the original meaning(s) of the source text but not very “reader” friendly while another translation may be “reader” friendly but not very faithful to the original meaning(s). However, this does not necessarily mean that the one translation is better than the other since both may serve different purposes.

In translating the “*Tuhfat al-Atfal*” I address a very specific readership i.e. a group of students who are already schooled in the art of *tajwid* and possess a working knowledge of the Arabic language. The primary purpose of the translation is to facilitate the reading of the Arabic text which they are required to memorise. Thus, the translation is not to constitute an autonomous text which is read for its own sake. In other words, rather than being seen as an end in itself it is to be regarded as a means to understanding and facilitating the study and memorisation of the original Arabic text.

Consequently, Arabic terms that my readership is already acquainted with I have left untranslated providing transliterations thereof instead. Furthermore, I have attempted to give a literal and word-for-word translation of the text with the aim of facilitating the analysis and study of the original Arabic. Such a translation I feel is more conducive and appropriate for the purpose at hand rather than one that sounds better and more acceptable in English but does not accurately reflect the form and meaning of the original Arabic text. However, there have been occasions where I was forced to grant meaning precedence over form and structure so as to avoid clumsy English. In such instances I have explained the original Arabic form and structure in the footnotes below.

Even though I have kept each line separate despite the fact that in some instances the meaning of a line extends and runs into the next, I did not divide each line into hemistichs nor did I attempt the lines to rhyme. Not only would such a task be well-nigh impossible and totally unnecessary but would also be at the expense of a literal-cum-word-for-word translation. Thus, the bare minimum that is required from this translation and which will suit the purposes of my particular audience is that it assists with the analysis and study of the original text - nothing more and nothing less. To this end the original text will accompany the translation which will be referred to from time to time.

Rough Notes

[Exactly how much modification should be allowed in order for a translation to still qualify as one is difficult to say. However, what is an undisputed fact is that during a translation some of the multitude of meanings intended by the author as well as language and culture specific meanings are going to be lost and forfeited during the translation process. Furthermore, the degree of loss is more in some texts than in others depending on how much the text is grounded in culture-specific language amongst other things.]

The science of tajwid is very peculiar to Arab and Islamic culture since it is a science that developed specifically around the manner in which the Qur'an (which is specific to Islam and its adherents) is to be articulated and recited. Even though it has much in common with modern articulatory phonetics which deals with (human) articulation in general tajwid is still very much couched in classical and "Islamic" idiom. Hence, a literal translation of any tajwid text would be unintelligible to the non-Arab speaker especially from the angle of the archaic nature of the Arabic employed (not to mention the unfamiliarity of the subject matter itself).]

TRANSLATION

“A GIFT¹ FOR CHILDREN (NOVICES)²”

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

1. Says he who is constantly hoping for the mercy and grace of the Oft-forgiving, namely, Sulayman Al-Jamzuri:
2. “All Praise is due to Allah” whilst bestowing salutations on Muhammad, his family and those who follow³ (him).
3. As to what follows⁴, this versified text on the nun, *tanwin* and *mudud*⁵ is (intended) for the seeker (of knowledge)/student.
4. I name(d)⁶ it “*Tuhfat al-Atfal*” (“A Gift for Children”) as transmitted from our Shayk, Al-Mihi, the bearer of perfection and mastery (of this fine art).

¹ Since *tuhfah* is annexed to a definite noun, viz. *al-atal*, it acquires definiteness from this noun thus becoming definite itself. However, in order to avoid clumsy English I have rendered *tuhfah* as “a gift” rather than the more literal “the gift”. Likewise I have also translated *al-atal* as “children” rather than the more literal “the children” for the same reason. In addition, not every *al* in Arabic can necessarily be translated as “the” in English due to what is called the “coverage fallacy” since *the* does not cover all the meanings of *al*. The latter is much richer in meaning.

² By “children” the author means novices even if they are adults

³ Note that the original Arabic word *tala* has connotations of ‘recitation’. Consider, for example, the related word *tilawah* which evidences the author’s stylistic ability.

⁴ Literally *Amma ba’d* or *wa ba’d* means “after completing the *basmalah*, *hamdalah* and *salawat*, and is furthermore is used to switch over to a another topic.

⁵ Obviously, the author means to say that these are only some of the topics covered in the *al-tuhfah*.

⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that the verb in the text is perfect in form its meaning is that of the imperfect because of its illocutionary function. It could be, however, that the author already gave it this title sometime in the past and is merely making reference to that fact in this instance. Consequently, I have attempted to give both meanings across.

5. I thereby hope that it will benefit the students/ardent student⁷ and (I furthermore desire through it) reward, acceptance and retribution.

Rules of the *al-nun al-sakinah* and *al-tanwin*

6. The nun, when it is unvoiced (or voiceless), and the *tanwin*, have four rules, so take/listen to my explanation (thereof).

7. The first is *al-ith-har* before the letters of the throat (pharyngeals) which are six arranged in order, so be familiar (with them)⁸.

8. The *hamzah* and the *ha'*, then the *'ayn* and the *ha'* lacking diacritical marks (i.e. dotless) and then the *ghayn* and the *kha'*⁹.

9. The second (rule) is *idgham* by means of six (letters) occurring in (the mnemonic) **يرملون** which are well established with them (i.e. the experts in this field).

10. But they (i.e. these letters) are of two groups: a group in which *idgham* occurs with *ghunnah* and is known through (the letters of) **ينمو**

⁷ The reason for the two possible translations is the fact that the word *tullab* lends itself to another variant reading, namely, *tallab*, which is the intensive form of *talib* ("seeker"/"student").

⁸ The expression "...so be familiar (with them)" and its likes are often simply additions with no substantial meaning and serves merely to fill the verse/line.

⁹ This is also the order in which they appear in their respective places of articulation.

11. Except when it occurs in a single word, then do not observe *idgham* like

دنیا then صنوان following suit.

12. The second (group) is *idgham* without *ghunnah* in the case of the lam and the *ra'* then (in addition) observe *takrir*¹⁰ (of the latter).

13. The third (rule) is *al-iqlab*¹¹ in the case of the ba' (i.e. the conversion of the nun into) a *mim* with *ghunnah* whilst also applying *al-ikhfa'*.

14. The fourth (rule) is *al-ikhfa'* in the case of the remaining letters, which is obligatory on the distinguished (i.e. the one who has become distinguished through the study of *tajwid*).

15. In five after ten (i.e. fifteen) instantiated in (the initial letters of) the words¹² of this verse (in which) I have incorporated them:

16. صف ذا ثنا كم جاد شخص قد سما * دم طيبا زد في تقى ضع ظالما

¹⁰ Specific reference is made here to the characteristic of "*takrir*" of the *ra'* which actually means to guard against repetition of the *ra'* which would otherwise result in the production of multiple Also referred to as "*al-qalb*" which to me seems more correct usage wise.

¹⁰ i.e. to repeat the *ra'* (as multiple) which is actually a negative command in the sense that one is to avoid and guard against repeating the *ra'*.

¹¹ Also referred to as "*al-qalb*" which to me seems more correct usage wise.

¹² The letters of *al-ikhfa'* constitute the initial letters in these words

Rules of the *al-mim* and *al-nun al musaddadatan*

17. Apply *ghunnah* to a *mim*, then a *nun* when augmented / made emphatic and call each (of them) a letter of *ghunnah* that has appeared.

Rules of the *al-mim al-sakinah*

18. The *mim* when it is unvowelled appears before (all the letters of) the alphabet with the exception of the¹³ “soft” *alif* according to the person of (high) intellect.

19. Its rules are three for him who strives for precision and exactitude: *ikhfa*, *idgham* and *ith-har* only.

20. The first is *al-ikhfa* in the case of the *ba'* and call it labial in accordance with the reciters/readers.

21. The second is *idgham* when occurring with its equivalent (i.e. the equivalent of the *mim* which is another *mim*) and term it minor *idgham*, O serious and diligent student.

22. The third is *al-ith-har* in the case of the remainder of the letters and call them labial.

¹³ Lit. a “soft” *alif*

23. Be careful, however, of making *ikhfa* in the case of the *waw* and the *fa* (in particular) due to its proximity and concordance (oneness) (in place of articulation and attribute), so be aware/take heed.

Rule of the lam of “al” and the lam of the verb

24. The lam has two modes (of pronunciation) (when occurring) before the letters (of the alphabet), the first of which is its *ith-har*, so be aware (thereof)

25. (When occurring) before four plus ten (i.e. fourteen) and take the knowledge thereof from: ابغ حجك وخف عقيمه

26. The second thereof is its *idgham* in four and ten (i.e. fourteen) also, so grasp and imbibe its instantiation (in):

27. طب ثم صل رحماً تفرّضف ذا نعم * دع سوء ظن زر شريفاً للكرم

28. The first *lam* call it lunar (قمرية) and the final *lam* call it solar (شمسية).

29. Observe *ith-har* of the lam of the verb in general (i.e. in all its forms and tenses) in for example: التقى and قلنا , قل نعم

Concerning two letters that are equivalent, adjacent or homogeneous

30. When two letters agree in attribute(s) and place(s) of articulation, then it is more befitting that they be equivalent.

31. When they are close in place of articulation and different in attributes, then are called:

32. "Adjacent" or agree in place of articulation but not in attributes, then they are called:

33. "Homogeneous". Then, if the first of each is unvowelled, then call it minor (*idgham*)

34. Or the two letters are vowelled in each (case), then say: major (*idgham*) and understand it with examples.

Divisions of the *al-madd*

35. The *al-madd* is either primary or secondary to it and call the first "natural" and it is

36. That which is not contingent on a cause and without it (i.e. without prolongation) these letters cannot be brought forth.

37. In fact, whichever letter, other than the *hamzah* or the unvowelled letter, occurs after a (letter of) *madd*, then the natural (*madd*) results.

38. The other one - the secondary - is dependent on a cause like a *hamzah* or *sukun* in general (i.e. throughout the Qur'an).

39. Its letters are three, so grasp them from the word: **واو** and they are (furthermore) found in: **نوحيا** .

40. That a *kasrah* appear before the *ya* and a *dammah* before the *waw* is a condition/requisite and that a *fathah* occurs before an *alif* is necessary.

41. The *al-lin* thereof is the unvowelled *ya* and *waw* when a *fathah* is made to appear/known before each.

Rules of the *al-madd*

42. The *al-madd* has three permanent and immutable rules, and they are *al-wujub*, *al-jawaz* and *al-luzum*.

43. The *wajib* is when a *hamz* occurs after a *madd* in a single word and that is counted as/considered to be *muttasil*.

44. The *ja'iz* is either extra or no extra prolongation when each (of the letter of *madd* and *hamzah*) is separated by a word and this is the *al-munfasil*

45. And like this is when the *sukun* is temporary/appears due to pausing like

نستعين . تعلمون

46. Or the *hamz* is placed before/made to precede the *madd* and that is badal

like آمنوا and إيماناً , take (it).

47. The *lazim*, when the *sukun* is regarded as original during continuous as well as broken recitation after a *madd*, is prolonged maximally (i.e. the duration of *tul* which six vowels).

Divisions of the al-madd al-lazim

48. The divisions of the *lazim* according to them are four, and these are *kilmi* and *harfi* accompanying it.

49. Both of them are (furthermore) *mukhaffaf* and *muthaqqal*, hence these are four that will be explained in (some) detail.

50. When, in a single word, a *sukun* joins a letter of *madd*, then it is *kilmi* that has occurred

51. Or it is found in trilateral letters and the *madd* is in the center of it (i.e. medial), then *harfi* has appeared.

52. Both of them are *muthaqqal* when *idgham* has occurred in them, *mukhaffaf* when none has been subjected to *idgham*.

53. The *al-lazim al-harfi* is found at the beginning of (Qur'anic) chapters and confined/limited to eight.

54. The letters: *عسل نقص* group them together, and the *'ayn* has two options with maximal prolongation being the preferred

55. And what is besides the trilateral letter not the *alif*, then its *madd* is known to be the natural *madd*.

56. That is also at the beginnings of (Qur'anic) chapters compassed in the expression: *حي طاهر*.

57. encompassing the fourteen initial letters is (the expression/pneumonic):

صله سحيراً من قطعك as it is popularly known.

Conclusion

58. This versified text was completed by the incessant praising of Allah for its completion.

59. Its verses are: **ند بدا** (“aloeswood appearing” i.e. 61 lines) for the person of intelligence, and its date is **بشرى لمن يتقنها** “glad tidings for the one who perfects/masters them” i.e. 1198 A.H.).

60. Then Peace and Salutations eternally on the seal/final of the prophets,
Ahmad

61. As well as the household, companions, every follower, every reader and every listener (of the Quran).
