

★ Why another Transliteration? ★

A further question has been raised as to exactly why the community needs another transliterated version of the Qurʾān, given the excellent job done by Muhammad A.H. Eliasi in his transliteration, first printed at the Golden Press in Gowliguda, Hyderabad in 1978, which I gratefully acknowledge as an excellent work and a check and a guide to me in my own efforts. I would have been satisfied with his version, which in the first edition is without flaw (though the reader should beware of a more recent edition of Eliasi which is filled with typographical errors), but for several important points.

First, the Arabic text in this Tajwīdī Qurʾān, approved both in Pakistan and by al-Azhar in Egypt, is very clear and easy to read.

Here the Arabic text is given a whole page, compared to Eliasi's single narrow column in which the Arabic suffers from often blurred printing. The clarity of the text is of the utmost importance, since the final goal of our work is to bring people to the point of actually being able to read the Arabic in accordance with the order of Allāh ﷻ and the widely used method of Ḥafṣ 'an 'Aṣim.

Secondly, those who *can* read the Arabic and who *do* consult the charts provided will find that the Tajwīdī Qurʾān has additional orthographic notation that aids in following the laws of ^ʾ*idhār*, ^ʾ*idghām*, *mulqalqalah*, both with and without *ghunnah*, ^ʾ*iqḷāb*, ^ʾ*ikhfā*, *sākin*, *mufakḥḥam*, *tarqīqq*, *tafhīm*, *muraqqaq* as well as the various beats or counts (*harakāt*) for the *madd* and so forth. This kind of enhanced notation, which alerts the reader to important aspects of tajwīd, does not exist in any of the three available editions of Eliasi's text.

Thirdly, in the Eliasi version, the various markings denoting *waqafah* (whereby the reader knows when to stop, how long to stop, when to pause, when not to pause, when it is good to continue but not imperative etc.) are often not clearly marked and visually apparent. This may be all right for a reader whose mother tongue is Arabic, but it is difficult for those who have no idea of Arabic grammar. In the Tajwīdī Qurʾān all of the punctuation marks are obvious, and they are also clearly explained in the notes.

Familiarity with orthographic notation and punctuation translates into a smoother flow in the recitation and an overall more harmonious sound to the recital of the Qurʾān.

Fourth, when you look at the transliteration, you find that Eliasi, employing the technology of his day in terms of what was available by way of the characters in the printing fonts then obtainable in India, made Latin typographical equivalents which, only naturally, reflected his hearing of the Arabic.

Just as we know that English speakers have problems with 'ayn and ḡayn or with ḥa' and khā', so do Sub-continental speakers have a problem with substituting z for ḍ and ḍha and s for ṭh.

This is demonstrated in his representation of such words as [zāāllīn], which should more correctly be *dāāllīn*, or [ramazān] for what should more correctly be *ramadān*, or [wuzū] for *wudḥu*, or [kawṣar] instead of *kawthar*, etc. Generations of sincere students have learned these letters incorrectly.

In the Tajwīdī Qurʾān we have made every effort to represent them in a way that is closer to the true Arabic pronunciation.

Again the reader gains a lot overall from the larger size of the print and the fact that it is not constrained by tight columns.

I mention this not to find fault, but to say that whilst we all work on the shoulders of those who went before us and, whilst there is no doubt that M. A. H. Eliasi advanced the cause, there is room to advance it further and make the transliteration more accessible.

In general our objective has been to firmly tie the transliteration to the phonics of everyday American English heard and learned by those raised in Indiana rather than India, in Paterson rather than Persia, or Jacksonville rather than Jakarta.

In that same context we tried to bring the translation closer to the language of today than the more dated Pickthall text employed in the Eliasi editions. And whilst it is not aggressively modern, as say T. B. Irving's translation is, it does reflect contemporary speech patterns, dropping the *ye's*, the *thee's* and the *thou's* as well as the *thy's* and the *hath's* and many other archaic or obsolete words or spellings. Along this same track all numeration is rendered by Arabic numerals rather than Roman numerals, making textual searches a lot easier.

We have tried to make the Tajwīdī Qurʾān more genuinely *useful* to the reader than the Eliasi version and we of course hope that the reader agrees and benefits from our efforts.