

## **Framing Translated and Adapted Children's Literature in the Kilani Project: a narrative perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Despite the fact that translated literature accounts for a significant percentage of the literary production directed at Arabic-speaking children, very few studies have examined children's literature in the context of translation in the Arab World. Drawing on narrative theory and the notion of framing as elaborated in the social sciences and translation studies, the present study aims to examine the types of frames that Kāmil Kīlānī sought to construct for his publishing project, entitled *Maktabat al-'Aṭfāl* (Children's Library). It analyzes the way framing is effected at sites around the translated or adapted text proper, including introductions, titles, cover blurbs, footnotes, glossaries, poems attached to text, testimonials and questions listed at the end of books. Framing strategies employed within the translated or adapted text proper include employment of *Fuṣḥa*, bracketed glossing, vocalization, headings and subheadings, extensive reference to the Qur'ān, and various additions and deletions.

The data used in this study consists of 196 (illustrated) stories, which constitute the Kīlānī project. They are rewritten, adapted and translated by Kāmil Kīlānī, who initially also acted as publisher of the various series in the Library. The stories appeared between the 1930s and 1950s; however, they are still in print today, with some having been reprinted twenty-six times, such as *al-Sindbād al-Baḥari* (Sinbad the Sailor). The stories are divided into series, roughly classified by Kīlānī and other scholars according to the age group they address, starting with Kindergarten stage and ending with stories targeting seventeen-year olds.

The study reveals Kīlānī's' adoption of an explicitly pedagogical frame, going beyond the kind of didacticism that we typically encounter in children's literature. His project does not just serve an indirectly didactic agenda but at times seems to engage in explicit teaching of formal knowledge (linguistic, encyclopaedic) rather than simply communicating values and morals as is common in children's literature. Kīlānī clearly framed his library as part of the child's formal learning experience, offering her/him specific, linguistic, historical, religious, geographical and scientific knowledge, and in the process narrating the world for the child reader as a space full of wonder, a space of discovery. For both parents and children, this space is also narrated as one that can only be conquered with knowledge and sound moral values.

**KEYWORDS:** Arabic, children's literature, framing, Kīlānī, narrative theory, translation

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