

## The western endeavors towards academic study of the Qur'ān The case study of Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān

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### **Abstract**

*The existence of academic works concerning the genre of Qur'anic studies in the west is a sign of grave interest of western scholars in the Quran. In twenty first century, an immense increase in production of academic works on the Qur'ān can be witnessed. The significant point is that despite the presence of the vast corpus of western scholarship on the Qur'ān, it is not generally accepted in the Muslim world. The Muslim opinion is that despite the claims of objectivity, the Western scholars see Islam with their own lens and perceptions. In fact, many western intellectuals have admitted this reality in their writings. It is also argued that the so-called academic study of the Qur'ān is a presentation of the old views in new guise and appearance of the old wine in a new bottle. On the contrary, the western scholars claim for the rise of objectivity and scientific approach in their studies. The encyclopedia of the Qur'ān, being a major production of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been the focus of discussion in this regard. This article intends to analyze the scientific approach in the above mentioned work by highlighting some of its features.*

**Key word:** Qur'ān, orientalism, academic, objectivity, Encyclopedia of the Quran.

### **Introduction**

Al Qur'ān, the holy book of the Muslims, has acquired a significant place in western academia. A substantial body of literature produced by the western intellectuals is an indication of their grave interest in Qur'ānic studies. More specifically, the contemporary works in the field of Quranic studies cannot be overlooked. In past centuries as well, one can observe a chain of writings in this regard. Yet, the history of Western studies of the Qur'ān shows that it was initiated by polemics in defense of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, the Muslim scholars mostly rejected the western academic scholarship setting it in the same old prototype of old polemic tradition and orientalism. Muslim scholars are of the stance that the old attire is changed over to new fashionable apparel. They consider the contemporary western academic studies as a new weapon for old war.<sup>2</sup> Although the modern western scholars suggest innovative names such as area studies and social science to the movement of orientalism, the impression of the old legacy is still evident in their works.<sup>3</sup>

The western academicians try to inculcate the idea that the rise of objectivity and the scientific methods in the West has affected the discipline of Qur'anic studies. Hence, they claim for a transformation and change in the contemporary western Qur'ānic studies.

In the milieu of this dialogue, the present article examines one of the major western products in the field of Qur'anic studies i.e. the encyclopedia of the Qur'ān. It

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is argued that although the Qur'ānic studies in the West witnessed some positive changes; there is a reflection of centuries old views in the treatises of recent studies.

### **Literature Review**

As the Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān is produced at the dawn of the present century, not much is written about it. Perhaps, the most influential of them is the analysis of Muzaffar Iqbal<sup>1</sup>, who wrote two articles on EQ. He describes the EQ as the most extensive and ambitious work ever undertaken by the western academia. Mainly, Iqbal rejects the work on the premise that there is no room for an 'objective' and scientific study of the Qur'ān because of the fact that one cannot claim to be neutral about the Qur'ān. For him, to blur the line between the Muslim and non-Muslim is not viable as the Qur'ān itself declares only two positions. One has to either believe in its Divine nature or deny that and naturally, according to him, the second stance affects the mindset of any researcher. After an exhaustive criticism and statistical analysis, he powerfully negates the EQ to be objective and pluralistic in approach by inserting instances from the EQ.<sup>4</sup> According to him, many of the claims of EQ about the contribution of the Muslim scholars are fake as all of the fundamental Qur'ānic themes are discussed by the non-Muslim scholars.<sup>5</sup>

The level of his rejection of this work was so strong that he himself initiated the task of producing an encyclopedic work on the Qur'ān with the title of 'Integrated encyclopedia of the Qur'ān'.<sup>6</sup> The EQ is analyzed in detail by some scholars in Iran as well. Many critical articles are written in the journal of 'Qur'ān from the Orientalist's point of view' on variety of its entries such as archeology and religious pluralism. Likewise, Ali Rezaie Esfahaani, an Iranian scholar, made a thorough investigation of EQ in which he highlights the flaws of this work.

Simultaneously, he mentions certain positive points as well. The original paper is in Persian and is accessible on Journal's website. He claims inconsistencies in the EQ and views that it is an echo of the old ideas related to the Qur'ān and its history. However, he also states that on some certain points, a disapproval of Orientalist's point of view can be witnessed.<sup>7</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

This research is a combination of descriptive and critical analytical research. It is descriptive as it aims to describe the state of affairs in the past and at the present. It is analytical as it aims to study available data with critical appraisal and present the conclusion based on it. Keeping in mind that the critical analysis highlights the positive feature as well as the flaws of the evaluated work, I have attempted to emphasize the constructive elements as well in evaluation of the material. For the critical evaluation of data, the fundamental principles of the academic research methods and critical thinking have been the guideline of the present analysis.

### **The Origins of western Qur'ānic scholarship**

The classical western writings reveal the fact that Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the west as it was introduced to a western laymen as heretic religion. The Prophet Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) was portrayed with sword who determined to either kill his opponents or conquer the innocent people. He was also charged with paganism and idolatry. The tales of bull that carried the commandments between his horns were well-known in classical folks.<sup>8</sup> The companions of the prophet Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) were introduced in western literary works as fanatics. In the Song of Roland they worshiped three gods, Tervagan, Mahomet and Apollo.<sup>9</sup> The holy book of Muslims was considered as illogical and corrupt. It was held to be incompatible with logic.<sup>10</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> . He is a Pakistani-Canadian Muslim scholar known for his work on the subject of Islam and science, literature and Qur'anic studies. He is the founding president of the Centre for Islam and Science. His most recent project is : 'Integrated encyclopedia of the Qur'ān'.

propagation was due to clergy men who exceeded the moral limits as the result of their islamophobia.<sup>11</sup>

Many reasons can be traced behind the pejorative depiction of Islam. The expansion of Islam from Egypt to Syria, the Caspian Sea and North Africa and rapid growth in the areas that were under Christian rule, created an alarming situation for clergy men. So they left no mean to denounce Islam and its followers. Another significant factor was the prevailing ignorance among common people as with the exception of few, most of the Christians in Europe held their views of Islam in state of ignorance. A short and quick survey of the western literature of medieval and even modern times shows that literature had also been a contributory element in generating the negative ideas among folks against Islam and Muslims. The deep effects of that period is explained by Rudi Part in these words: “for much that happened in the earlier centuries, and what one said and accepted in those times, has its effect somehow even today”.<sup>12</sup>

It was Peter, the venerable who laid the basis for the direct study of Islam in 12<sup>th</sup> century. Although, it was a result of anxiety and fear that bound him to do so. Bernard Lewes similarly count Islamophobia to be the very rudimentary factor behind the discipline of orientalism.<sup>13</sup> Many other factors also joined the Islamic studies late centuries including economical and colonial factors. In later time, many scholars have joined the movement with the aim of objective study of Islam.<sup>14</sup> So we find among them, who studied Islam with a good intention and embraced Islam after knowing its truth.<sup>2</sup> Among them are those who did not hesitate to admire Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam). But the fact is, that because of the deep-rooted effects of the past, it is still very hard for western scholar to set them free from bias and prejudice.

Although, orientalism had been a sign of anti-Islamic activities, it changed its tone and style in recent times. Western scholars abandoned the term by themselves in the twenty-ninth international congress of Orientalists. The congress met in summer of 1973 in Paris and developed consensus in dropping this label.<sup>15</sup> The term is substituted with area study that deals with the study of non- western societies. It is believed that because of the development of scholarly and scientific approach, the chapter of orientalism is closed now.<sup>16</sup>

### **Contemporary Qur’ānic scholarship from 20th to 21st century**

In the preface of his well-known translation of the Quran, George Sale recommended clergy men to adopt a new approach to study Islam. He asked his fellows to avoid usage of critical tone for Muslims and their holy book.<sup>17</sup> In the upcoming centuries, Montgomery Watt too, suggested his fellows to bring innovations in their research works in the field of qur’anic studies. In one of his writings, he explains that western writers have stopped saying that the Qur’ans is Muhammad’s (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) own book, not because they admitted that, but because of the fact that the Christian- Muslim contacts have increased and so has trade.<sup>18</sup> Hence, a remarkable change can be witnessed in western academic writings regarding the tone of the works.

A glimpse over the history of western qur’anic studies determines that the western scholars, employed their extreme expertise in producing their works from dictionaries to encyclopedias. The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, are notable in this respect. At present, the western academic writings, in the field of Islamic scholarship, are quite on parallel lines in comparison to the Muslim scholarship. Another significant change in the western academy is the emergence of anthologies and ‘companions’ as a result of joint endeavors.<sup>19</sup> More significantly, the present century has witnessed many works that show increasing interests of the western scholars in the field of Qur’ānic studies.

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<sup>2</sup> . Among them are Brokhart (1784-1817), Krenkow (1872-1952), Marmaduk Pikthal (1875-1936), Muhammad Asad and many others.

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At the dawn of twenty first century, the event of 9/11 caused a great distress for both the Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslims had to face hatred and rejection in the west. Despite this, the event caused a great interest in the study of the Quran among the western lay people and academic circles. The emergence of academic zest for Quran resulted plethora of writings in the discipline of Islamic studies in general and Qur'anic studies in specific. In this regard, some of international institutions are worth mentioning in performing a vigorous part. Brill, as international publisher, founded in 1683, with the mission statement of 'to be a leading internationally publishing house in all domains of sciences', published a noticeable amount of academic and non-academic works.

'The Qur'ān concordance' by Thomas Milo and 'The Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage' edited by Elsaïd Badawī and Muhammad Abdel Haleem are significant in this regard. Moreover, it has many valuable books covering numerous themes of the Qur'ān and Qur'ānic studies are also published by Brill. Some of the best recent instances can be given of 'Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān',<sup>20</sup> 'God of Justice. A Study on the Ethical Doctrine of the Qur'ān',<sup>21</sup> 'The Qur'ān as Text',<sup>22</sup> 'The Qur'ān in Context',<sup>23</sup> 'The transmission of various readings of Qur'ān',<sup>24</sup> 'The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition',<sup>25</sup> and 'A Qur'ān Commentary' by Ibn Barraĵān of Seville (d. 536/1141)<sup>26</sup> under the series 'Text and Studies on the Qur'ān'.<sup>27</sup>

An academic journal "Al Bayan" is issued by Brill on the Qur'ānic and Hadith Studies. It covers a wide range of themes from collection, transmission, language and style of the Qur'ān. This publishing company also introduced many significant encyclopedias such as Encyclopedia of Hinduism,<sup>28</sup> Encyclopedia of China,<sup>29</sup> Encyclopedia of Judaism<sup>30</sup> and Encyclopedia of Christianity<sup>31</sup> and Encyclopedia of Islam.<sup>32</sup> The Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān is another recent example devoted to the study of the Quran on micro level.

The Encyclopedia of Islam' directed by the leading Orientalists such as H.A.R. Gibb, J. H. Kramers and J. Schacht was a project of grave importance in twentieth century. The Muslim academics described it as an encyclopedia about Islam but is not Islamic encyclopedia.<sup>33</sup>

The encyclopedia of Islam comprised 9000 alphabetically arranged articles. At present, three editions of this work are published. This work, translated into major languages of the world, is considered a major source of information about Islam in the West. Despite its propagation and proliferation, the Muslim intellectuals expressed a strong rejoinder on print and electronic media concerning its basic data. By a critical evaluation, major flaws and faults of this work are highlighted by the Muslim scholars. Encyclopedia of Islam *aḍālīl wa abātil* (deviations and delusions) by Ibrāhīm al 'Iwāḍ. and Al Qur'ān ul Karīm fī Dairatul Ma'ārif al Islamia" (The Noble Qur'ān in the Encyclopedia of Islam), the writer Hamid bin Nasir concluded that Qur'ān is not given its due status and is depicted as the collection of the stories and myths taken from the Bible and Torah. Moreover, according to the authors, this work portrays the Qur'ān in contradiction to traditional Muslim stance.<sup>34</sup> The encyclopedia could not obtain high rank in Muslim circles as, according to Muslim point of view, it has failed to present the true picture of Islam and its Holy Book.

Although the Encyclopedia of Islam was presented as an inclusive and across-the-board work, the western academia felt the need of another work devoted entirely to the Quran. Hence, the Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān was introduced at the dawn of twenty first century.

#### **The Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān**

The extended and ambitious efforts of western academia resulted the emergence of encyclopedia of the Qur'ān. The EQ, covering the period of thirteen years, is the sole reference work on the Qur'ān in English. If the Encyclopedia of Islam is considered by the West to be a marvelous accomplishment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Encyclopedia of the

Qur'ān, undeniably, is counted as a brilliant and outstanding achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century in the western academic circles. According to the general editor of Encyclopedia, it was planned to be more 'vigorous' and 'scientific' in approach.<sup>35</sup> It consists of 2919 pages in five volumes with an additional index volume of 860 pages. The back cover claims EQ to be the first multi-volume reference work on Qur'ān with nearly 1000 entries.

The editor, Jane McAuliffe, declares in the preface that the leading team has taken special care for plurality of perspectives in EQ by inviting scholars around the world to contribute in EQ regardless of their religious background. The EQ entries focus the contents and themes of the Qur'ān. Moreover, numerous entries deal with the science of Uloom ul Quran as well. The EQ has got the status of first and indispensable reference source on the Qur'ān globally. The reference of this work in numerous academic writings shows its grave importance in the genre of qur'anic studies. It is declared the most user-friendly reference work ever published by Brill.<sup>36</sup>

Andrew Rippin, the strong exponents of the modernism, states that this Encyclopaedia is a reflection of modernity. Furthermore, as he highlights its features, it (EQ) regards the religion to be a personal matter and expresses irrelevance to rigidity in scholarly investigations. He further says illustrating towards EQ: "The common characteristic of all such work is that it takes its subject seriously and leaves its readers to draw their own conclusions as to whether (or to what extent) the Qur'ān is a work which will be life motivating to the individual. That, of course, does reflect a modern attitude towards religion itself, and means that the study of the Qur'ān, as it is found in the academy today, is undoubtedly one fully imbued with the spirit of modernism that regards religion to be a personal matter for the individual".<sup>37</sup>

Yet, contrary to the views of western scholars, most of the Muslim academicians entirely differ in their approaches towards the EQ. Nevertheless, there are many who admire the EQ by declaring it the best example of collective endeavors. Abdullah Saeed, an Australian scholar of Islamic studies, expresses quite similar views toward EQ.<sup>38</sup>

Another fine instance is Muhammad Arkoun who highlights the need to produce such academic works on the Quran, such work. In his analysis of the discipline of Qur'anic studies, he says that 'elites' of Muslim world are not prepared to initiate the new policy of intellectual shifts and as far as the traditional dogma prevails over the intellectual activities, they will be able to produce only an Islamic encyclopedia of Islam or Islamic encyclopedia of the Qur'ān. By Islamic, he denotes to legitimate features of a classical historical experience, conditioned by subjective and mythical driving forces. He further says that the task to produce an encyclopedia in its real terms of scientific investigations remains there. The Encyclopedia of Qur'ān is a scholarly, intellectual, scientific and hopefully spiritual answer to the ideological theory of the "clash of civilizations".<sup>39</sup>

Nasr Hamid, an Egyptian scholar of qur'anic studies and chief liberal theologians, expresses identical views as Arkoun. He expresses extremely relishing comments for EQ. He maintains that EQ consists of fabulous academic data that offers diverse approaches.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to these views, many other Muslim scholars describe this work as continuation of centuries old theories. Abdul Rahim Kidwai, a well-known Indian scholar of Islamic studies, opines that the EQ reiterates the classical Orientalists' misunderstandings about the Qur'ān. He also sees that EQ articles repeats the ancient assertions about the qur'anic stories.<sup>41</sup>

A current Pakistani scholar, Munir Wasti, states that these publications are mostly polemic in tone. Therefore, these works are indeed a propaganda rather than learning. He holds that the Encyclopedia of the Quran belongs to the same category of writings.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the most powerful stance is that of Muzaffer Iqbal who links this work with orientalism. He rejects the features of this work described in its preface more specifically objectivity and impartiality.<sup>43</sup>

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### Important features of the EQ

Here we will discuss some features of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, which are as follows:

#### A brief look on EQ material and methodology

1. The articles begin, in majority cases, with a general introduction to the topic, term and concepts with the mention of the number of times it occurs in the Qur'ān followed by establishing its roots. The entries also review the grammatical position of the terminology. Light is thrown on other synonyms of the term in the Qur'ān and related ideas. This style provided a uniformity and consistency to the entire EQ. Moreover, illustrations are made to various places in which the term is used with an allusion to implication of expression in that context. In most of the entries, we observe that a brief, yet inclusive comprehensive, background is given in order to familiarize the general readers to the notion. Thus, the writers effectively attempted to elaborate the Qur'ānic notions or concepts. The length of the articles varies to great extent. Some articles are given few lines though they are of much importance and required expansion.
2. While defining the meanings, importance is given to classical Muslim writers. Views of all sects of Islam are cited in controversial issues. Plenty of space is given to modern Muslim writers as well. In a sense, the EQ can be considered a moderate anthology of classical and modern works.
3. There are certain entries that have dually fulfilled the demand for a scholarly research. A very comprehensive and thorough examination of the works of classical Muslim and non-Muslim authors along with their biographies is included. Minor details about these works are mentioned in comparison to other authors. Although it is elaborated that this compendium focuses only on the Qur'ān and not the exegesis, frequent mentions of the great Muslim commentators and their works are located.
4. A very manifest specialty of the EQ is its assertive stance towards modern research of Qur'ān and objectivity. The term 'modern' is elucidated by dispassionate and non-polemical study of the Qur'ān.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the term is defined as the treatment of the Qur'ān separately from the Muslim tradition.<sup>45</sup> Majority of the writers are observed fulfilling this criterion as they mostly attempted to base their independent research separate from the Islamic tradition. The thread of objectivity is scattered throughout the EQ as there are various writers who illustrated towards the need of this feature in their research such as Scholler, Rippin, Arkoun and etc.<sup>46</sup> The spirit of objectivity is so influential that the scholars such as Noldeke, who is considered precursor of modern study of Qur'ān, could not manage to escape from the critique for his partial acceptance of the Muslim Traditions.<sup>47</sup>
5. A strong writing usually evaluates other alternative and prevailing arguments too with regard to the specific issue. The mention of the opposing arguments in the entries increased the worth of writings. But, more often, a favorable tendency towards opposing opinions to mainstream Islam can be witnessed.
6. An in-depth, thorough and systematic introduction of the history of the Qur'ānic Studies in the West is provided with a blend of appreciative and critical tones in various entries. The detailed evaluation of the works of key western brains is conducted with the mention of their achievements, flaws, and consequences. For instance, in conducting the evaluation of the writings of Noldeke, the writer criticizes him for his view point about the literary style of the Qur'ān which is similar to that of Thomas Carlyle, who considered it a wearisome of confused jumble. In comparison to that, the writer continues, the modern study has considered the beauty of this Book and acknowledged the Qur'ān as highly artful literature.<sup>48</sup> Many of the writers have offered proposals for future studies as well. An overview of the works of Classical and Modern Muslim scholarship are provided alike.
7. Numerous references can be located around a specific terminology in several areas. For instance, if one is interested to accumulate material about the history of the Qur'ānic text, he finds references to the related issues such as multiple readings and codices as well except from the specific entry.
8. A centuries old idea about the origin of Islam, attributed to the Peter the Venerable in is as follows: "Satan gave success to evil and sent the monk Sergius, who had been expelled from the church because of his heresy, across the regions of Arabia to join the false Prophet. So he joined Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) and filled him with what he acquired from the sacred scriptures, the Old and New Testaments".<sup>49</sup> It further says: "Muhammad (Salla

Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) was instructed by the best Jewish and heretical doctors. By this, he was able to produce the Qur'ān".<sup>50</sup> This view always worked as the foundations upon which the entire building of the western works, polemic and academic along, is established. As far as the EQ is concerned, the idea of foreign origin of the Qur'ān is reiterated in numerous articles. There are authors who used piercing phrases and expressions and based their works heavily on the western sources only. Specifically, the entries that raise the slogan of borrowing theme and the uncertainty of Islamic sources announced assertively Islamic notion nothing but a replica of biblical sources and nullify Muslim accounts in totality. Most of the writers tried to find out the origins of the Qur'ānic terminology either in Christianity or Judaism. Some others found out the roots in Zoroastrianism too.<sup>51</sup>

9. As, it is clear that the core of the research is the Qur'ān, the Sacred Book of Muslims, it would be better to consult primarily the Muslim sources. Even if the Muslim sources are cited, the core conclusions are based upon the modern western research. There are entries in which complete negligence of primary Muslim sources e.g. dictionaries and commentaries can be observed.<sup>52</sup>
10. Another shared element of most of the articles is the treatment of the Qur'ānic notions with vague, uncertain and doubtful expressions. The reader can discover very easily the wording such as 'perhaps', 'it is not clear' it is highly probable' 'it's problematic', 'it remains doubtful' and likewise.<sup>53</sup> It is quite understood that the use of skeptical language put question marks on the competency of the writer and raise doubts concerning his academic experience and skills. In this regard, a well-known Muslim scholar, while discussing the work of Orientalists and their works, declares those works as speculative. He further elaborates the point by saying that they base their writings and researches on scrapes, clues, inferences and guesswork that are never satisfactory in academic works.<sup>54</sup> The reader cannot initially identify the nature of this skepticism. As it might be a collective choice of the writers to articulate the like expressions or it can be an innate upshot of the milieu in which the western academy is flourished. In this regard, it seems that most of the writers are amateur in dealing the Muslim history and the Qur'ānic text as they presented frequently these sources as problematic, complicated, ambiguous and confusing.
11. In the entry, enjoining good and forbidding bad, the writer states: "Just what is intended in the relevant Qur'ānic passages is somewhat unclear...we are not told to whom the commanding and forbidding are to be addressed and there are no further specifications of the right and wrong to which they are related".<sup>55</sup> The writer of "Illiteracy" finds confusion and uncertainty in the Qur'ān. In his discussion of the plausibility of Prophet's literacy, he insists that this issue cannot be established on historical- biographical and Qur'ānic evidences as they are equivocal and unclear.<sup>56</sup> Further, he continues "the core meaning, as well as the actual etymology of Ummi is problematic".<sup>57</sup>
12. While defining the meaning of seven letters (Ahruf), the author after quoting some traditions ending to the Prophet, writes that we are not sure that Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) ever uttered such a declaration, but what interests us here is the point that these traditions were one way to show the conviction that the Qur'ān contains knowledge of all things.<sup>58</sup> The last instance of this confusion is manifest in "Religious pluralism". The writer, after discussing the meaning and the Qur'ānic attitude towards non- believers, says in concluding remarks that the Jews and the Christians are banned from entering the limits of two sacred cities of Muslims. But, whether Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) intended such a situation is difficult to determine.<sup>59</sup>
13. Classical Muslim scholarship, although is cited frequently by way of a demand for scholarly writing, is not given a due status in the sense that in various areas, judgmental remarks are passed regarding traditional Islamic scholarship. It seems that most of the writers hold unanimous approach regarding the role of Muslim exegetes in history. It is declared that the exegetes, out of their desires and longings, invented legends and making laws to reinforce some specific ideas and readings. While discussing the signs of the last Day, the writer asserts that later Islamic literary genres added other signs to the previous ones.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, it is observed that, very frequently, the impression of evolutionary process in Islamic creeds is reinforced.
14. While discussing the idea of Houris and their connection to Jihad, the writer declares that as early as the first part of second/eighth century, the promise of Paradise virgins was connected to the motivation for holy war".<sup>61</sup> Even in the material regarding God, the writer could not refrain

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from declaring that Prophet Muhammad's (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) vision of god was intertwined with the legends that developed around his nocturnal journey".<sup>62</sup>

15. At another point, Islamic scholarship is considered liable for developing a negative approach towards non-Muslim and the people of the book. The writer updates his readers that the Qur'ān does not show a negative behavior towards the People of the Book. However, it is the later exegetical literature that has formed the lenses through which the Qur'ān is viewed. In the exegetical literature, according to him, the Muslims encouraged for a reading of the Qur'ān that can support an antagonistic attitudes towards people of the Book and non-Muslims.<sup>63</sup>
16. The writer of "illiteracy" confirms the same image of the Muslim scholarship and declares that the traditional interpretation of Ummi focuses simply on illiteracy. Rather, this interpretation reflects a post-Qur'ānic approach that seems to have evolved in some circles of the Muslim learning not before the first half of the second/eighth century and that was further shaped under the influence of the Muslim apologists.<sup>64</sup>
17. In many articles, Islamic notions are presented as a product of a gradual development either in Prophet's (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) mind or after him. The role of later generations, particularly exegetes, is determined in this regard as well. This thought is not new as many Orientalists and Isalmists dealt Islamic concepts with this approach.
18. In the course of his discussion regarding the notion of God, the writer Isaac Hasson presented the Prophet (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) as mastermind of the idea in ascribing the title Abdullah to God. He also considered the idea as a gradual product of his mind. He wrote: "The explicit message of god's oneness, the core of Islamic monotheism, however, increasingly became the focus as the Qur'ānic proclamation progressed throughout Muhammad's (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) Prophetic career".<sup>65</sup> In another place the same is reiterated. The belief in the last Day of Judgment and its characteristics are considered a production of evolutionary process in Prophet Muhammad's (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) mind. It is assumed that Prophet, at the beginning of his career tried to convince the audience by the idea of resurrection and later by considering their reactions he added the idea of the Day of Judgment. The ideas of French Orientalists Paul Casanova regarding the abundance of Qur'ānic references to the Last Day and its impact on the Prophet (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam)<sup>3</sup> are not only narrated but given an important position without mentioning the fact that Casanova's ideas were rejected even by his own contemporaries.<sup>66</sup>
19. The western academia, from modern times till now, has established a consensus upon some basic notions regarding Islam. A complete harmony and unanimity in academic works regarding some very core issues of Islam can be perceived. Those issues are the authorship of the Qur'ān, probability of Islamic sources, compilation of the Qur'ān etc. The EQ is declared by academia an academic and independent work. But, by its heavy dependency on the western sources in deriving the conclusions, it could not prove itself to be a breakthrough in the Western scholarship of the Qur'ān. Numerous reflections of following the stereotypes can be traced with favorable considerations.
20. As mentioned earlier, efforts are made towards building of academic approach and style. It seems that there is a great concern for Muslim's sensitivity towards their Holy Book but simultaneously, in many entries, this principle is overlooked by the usage of high-pitched phrases. The same can be observed in the narration of the remarks of earlier writers in their polemic treatises without any disapproval. For instance, the writer says that John of Damascus presents the marriage of the Prophet (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) with Zainab b. Haritha as an example of Prophet's (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) immoral personality.<sup>67</sup> In the same entry, after mentioning the arguments of the Christian Dominican Ricoldo about the

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<sup>3</sup> . Casanova is famous for his views of the last Day of Judgment that he presented in his work under the title "Mohammed et la fin du monde (Paris, 1911-24). He was of the opinion that there is abundance of Qur'ānic material regarding the Last Day. The plenty of references to this theme had led the Prophet (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) to conclude the close end of this world. He announced that the Last Hour will come in his life, but, when his death falsified his prophecy, his followers added some material according to which his mortality could be proven. For this reason of close end of world, Prophet (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) did not appoint a successor. See: Hurgronj, C. Snouck, Mohammedanism: Lectures on Its Origin, Its Religious and Political Growth and Its Present State, New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, 1937 AD, p: 4-5, <http://answering-Islam.org/Books/Hurgronje/hurgronje1.htm> Dated: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

unauthentic nature of Qur'ān, the author declares his work as systematic and classic. The academic or detached style demands both criticism and approval which is lacking in this entry.

21. In some entries, an independent research is conducted without the mention of the earlier western works. For instance, in the article “Alexander”<sup>68</sup> even a slightest indication towards Noldeke's view is missing who was of the conviction that the Prophet Muhammad (Salla Allahu Alaihi Wassalam) must have heard the story of Alexander along with other biblical material as they were famous in Makkah.<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusion

In the history of the western Qur'ānic studies, a grave and gradual transformation in the methodological approaches, styles and tones of the works is noticeable. But it is observed that due to the deep roots of defamation of Islam, the pejorative ideas are still extant in the academic works. The classical works of the Christian scholars intensely influenced the western thought in a way that despite an apparent change, reiteration of many of the classical ideas concerning the Qur'ān can be observed in recent works. The Muslim contribution in the EQ is highlighted frequently by the western scholars and mostly is introduced as an essential feature of the EQ. This work argues that the fact is not as claimed by the western academy. The statistical assessment of this contribution shows that in overall material the Muslim contribution is almost 15 percent. While, with regard to the essential issues of the Qur'ānic sciences, it is only 3 percent. Besides, because of the marginal participation of the Muslim scholars and distrust that the authors showed for the Muslim accounts and the Muslim scholarship, we cannot find any influence of the Muslim thought in the discourses of Qur'ānic sciences. For this reason, despite the references of the Islamic sources, the majority conclusions are in contrast to the Muslim standpoint.



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