

Glances from the Contemporary Orientalist Perspective Towards the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him and His Household) A Critical-Analytical Study

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Abstract

The comprehensive examination of the Prophet's biography, encompassing its various components, stages, and principles, holds significant methodological and epistemological importance in understanding the culture of the Islamic community and its interactions with the broader world and other divine religions. From the Renaissance period to the Age of Enlightenment and through to the modern era, including our present time, the study of the Prophet's biography has been a focal point. In this particular study, we will delve into contemporary orientalist studies, primarily focusing on the previous orientalist perspectives regarding the Holy Qur'an and the revered life of the Prophet. Subsequently, we will present the scholarly, theoretical, and media framework employed by contemporary orientalists in their approach to the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household).



Introduction

The comprehensive examination of the Prophet's biography, encompassing its various components, stages, and principles, holds significant methodological and epistemological importance in understanding the culture of the Islamic community and its representation of the world, as well as its interaction with other divine religions. From the Age of Enlightenment to the present day, these studies have carried great significance for Muslims. Within the fabric of these studies, feelings of respect, appreciation, admiration, and certainty permeate, requiring Muslims to find a comprehensive expression of their beliefs, rooted in their unified position on the Prophet's biography.

Oriental studies, which often approach the biography from a scientific and logical standpoint, have occasionally evoked aversion and defense among Muslims due to the clash between these studies and their deeply held beliefs. This clash is inevitable given that the biography of the Prophet is an event whose origins extend into the realm of the unseen, linked to the divine revelation and serving as a direct connection between God Almighty and His Messenger (peace be upon him and his Household). It is within this context that believers are nurtured, becoming living embodiments of their faith. Therefore, the biography cannot be approached in the same manner as molecules, atoms, or elements in a chemistry laboratory, nor can it be treated solely as a historical fact devoid of its inherent religious dimensions.

The subject at hand presents a unique experience, involving a complex interplay of factors and influences that extend beyond the realm of rational thought and defy conventional logical analysis. Religion, the unseen, and the spiritual dimension form the essence of human existence and transcend the limitations of sensory perception and intellectual reasoning.

In this study, we aim to explore the realm of oriental studies, particularly the contemporary approaches, to ascertain whether Western studies on the Prophet's biography have remained stagnant since the Middle Ages or have undergone significant changes in response to various factors and the dismantling of certain barriers. Our investigation seeks to determine whether an orientalist discourse that appropriately reflects the prophetic biography and the esteemed status of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), can be attained—one that embodies objectivity and neutrality, free from any traces of fanaticism—or if the current state of affairs will persist.

Previous Orientalism Studies Views of Quran and Prophet's Biography

The study of the Prophet's biography within the realm of Oriental studies can be categorized into three distinct stages. The first stage encompasses European writings on the Prophet's biography during the Middle Ages. It is noteworthy that since the early days of Christianity, beginning in the mid-7th century AD, Islam and the biography of its Prophet (peace be upon him) have been perceived as adversaries, rivals, and primary opponents. Consequently, extensive distortion and misrepresentation of the Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his message have been prevalent in both scholarly research and popular discourse.

The underlying reason behind this distortion is rooted in the Christian perception that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) could not have received a genuine revelation from God. These distorted depictions were constructed based on the notion that anyone who deviated from the Christian faith was deemed to be in religious error. Christians sought to find religious grounds to invalidate Islam, as Christianity maintains that the purpose of sending prophets and their teachings throughout history was merely a gradual preparation for the pinnacle of cosmic history—the divine incarnation in the person of Christ. Thus, from the Christian perspective, the appearance of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) and his beliefs, six centuries after this divine event, as the seal of prophets and messengers, receiving divine revelation to support his message, posed a theological challenge. Christians, therefore, viewed Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) as an apostate or a false prophet who merely made claims and delusions. In some less moderate interpretations, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) was depicted as an anti-Christ or even equated with Satan himself.

In that particular epoch, it is noteworthy to mention that the writings of Byzantine polemicists exhibited a scarcity of factual information, as they were not exempt from the practice of manipulation and fabrication. Consequently, these works engendered an egregiously distorted and derogatory portrayal of the Prophet of Islam. Despite the purported scholarly nature of their research, even when it pertained to dissenting religious ideologies, Byzantine historical writings often failed to discern between objective truth and subjective delusion.

During the seventeenth century, profound social, political, and economic transformations fueled the rise of centralized and potent European nation-states. These changes prompted statesmen and political philosophers of the Renaissance era to develop fresh conceptions of political systems, particularly following the successful erosion of ecclesiastical tyranny by civil forces. In this context, they revisited the ideas put forth by Aristotle and other ancient scholars. Moreover, they embraced the dichotomy presented by numerous writers of ancient Greece, which juxtaposed Greek freedom against Asian tyranny. In viewing their own society as one grounded in

liberty and the rule of law¹, these thinkers embarked on a process of reevaluation.

As the eighteenth century dawned, a distinct perspective on world history began to take shape in European discourse, emphasizing the notion of centralization. This post-Renaissance phase witnessed a surge in humanistic inclinations and religious reform movements². Simultaneously, an increasing number of European writings on Islam and the East emerged, particularly during the Age of Enlightenment. Enlightened thinkers of the eighteenth century embarked on a campaign against the intellectual oppression and restrictive dogma imposed by the Church, aiming to liberate free thought from the clutches of darkness.³

This perspective paved the way for a more impartial stance towards Islam and its rich history. Doubts arose regarding the mocking and irrational rhetoric that had characterized Church writings during the Middle Ages, leading to a revised and critical approach. This shift was influenced by both the tolerant spirit of the Age of Enlightenment and the passionate enthusiasm of the distinguished Romantic era. Concurrently, the Orientalist movement gradually gained momentum. It appeared as though Europeans had transcended their hostile perceptions of Islam and now viewed it in a positive light, appreciating its rationality and tolerance as a faith.

Broadly speaking, it is notable that from the eighteenth century until the conclusion of the nineteenth century, there was a gradual but significant increase in realistic understanding of Islam within a limited segment of European scientific circles. As a result, certain orientalists, such as Renan and his critique of Voltaire, started displaying positive attitudes towards Islam.*

Regarding Renan's statements about the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), he asserts that his scientific and historical knowledge has led him to conclude that the accusations and defamation attributed to Prophet Muhammad lack any basis in truth. He identifies these allegations as originating from certain cultural biases and prejudices held by individuals like Voltaire, who sought to redirect their shameless and fanatical inclinations by distorting the facts. He strongly disapproves of such reprehensible behavior, exemplified by Voltaire's claim that the Prophet Muhammad sought power and control. In contrast, he contends that historical evidence and the testimonies of esteemed historians prove the opposite to be true.⁴

1 Lockman, Z. *Orientalism history and politics* (S. Younes, Trans.). Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk, 2007, pp. 101-102.

2 Fok, J. *History of the Orientalist Movement* (O. L. Al-Alam, Trans.) (2nd ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Madar Al-Islami, 2008, 101.

3 Al-Jamal, S. A., & Abdul Razzaq, A. *A History of Europe from the Renaissance to the Cold War*. Cairo: The Egyptian Office, 2000, p. 83.

4 Hamdan, N. (n.d.). *The Messenger in the writings of orientalists* (D. T. Dr., Trans.). M: Publications of the Muslim World League.

* Voltaire, a French writer and philosopher, was born in Paris on November 21, 1694, and passed away on May 30, 1778. His original name was François-Marie Arouet, but he became known by the pen name Voltaire due to his satirical criticism, advocacy for reform, and defense of freedom, equality, and human dignity. His father held important positions, initially as a notary and later as an official in the Audit Office under the Duke Richelieu and the Duke de Saint-Simon. Some of Voltaire's notable works include "Letters Philosophiques" (Philosophical Letters) in 1734, "Candide" in 1759, and the philosophical dictionary "Dictionnaire Philosophique" in 1759.

Carlyle's affirmation lies in the fact that Muhammad was free from any pretense or hypocrisy. He admires Muhammad for his genuine and unaffected nature, appreciating the Prophet's steadfastness in upholding his principles without making false claims. Furthermore, Carlyle highlights that Muhammad was neither arrogant nor subservient, asserting his independence of thought and action. While acknowledging that the intense conflicts among the Arabs were not without instances of cruelty, Carlyle also emphasizes that these events were marked by acts of mercy, generosity, and forgiveness.⁵

Montgomery Watt (1909-2006) staunchly refuted the aforementioned allegations directed at the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household). He questioned the validity of such claims, emphasizing that it would be inconceivable for Islam, a religion of great significance, to have been established on the basis of lies and deception.⁶

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the positive attitudes displayed by certain orientalists towards Islam do not represent a consensus within the orientalist field or the broader Western stance on Islam. These attitudes are individual positions and do not necessarily reflect institutional or governmental views.

It should be noted that the Western world continued to perceive Islam as a potential threat to its existence, presence, and future. This perception contributed to the persistence of a state of hostility towards Islam and efforts to weaken and divide the religion.

There have been studies that sought to challenge the belief in the Qur'an as a divine revelation and instead propose that it was authored by Muhammad himself. George Sale, in the introduction to his English translation of the meanings of the Quran published in 1736, famously stated that there is no dispute that Muhammad was the actual author and main inventor of the Quran.⁷

This introduction gained popularity and served as a significant scholarly source for Orientalists, providing them with a comprehensive presentation of the Islamic religion. Consequently, it enabled them to selectively scrutinize and question narratives that lacked direct references in the Quran. This approach often involved a bias, where narrations that glorified the Prophet Muhammad were doubted, while those that aligned with Orientalist viewpoints were affirmed.

For instance, Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893) argued that the name "Muhammad" was only mentioned in four surahs of a civil nature, implying that it was not a proper name for the Prophet before his migration, but rather a name he adopted due to his exposure to Christian biblical prophecies. In response, one may question Sprenger's assertion: if the Prophet (peace be upon him and

⁵ Carlyle, T. (1899). *The Heroic in history*. London, p. 50.

⁶ Watt, M. (1899). *Muhammad at Medina*. London, p. 44

⁷ Al-Labban, I. (April 1970). *Orientalists and Islam*. *Al-Azhar Journal*, p. 44. See: Sale, G. (1734). *The Koran*. London.

his Household) derived the name “Muhammad” from his reading of biblical prophecies⁸, then what happened to the actual figure of Muhammad mentioned in the Old and New Testaments?

A prevalent viewpoint among Orientalists is the attribution of the Qur’anic text to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) as its author. According to this perspective, the Quran is seen as a composition by Muhammad, drawing from his exposure to Jewish and Christian teachings, rather than being a divine revelation from God. Rudi Bart’s statement, “It is not We have any reason to believe that there is a verse in the Qur’an that is not mentioned by Muhammad,” aligns with this interpretation.

It is important to acknowledge that this understanding of the Quran’s authorship remains a subject of debate and disagreement among scholars. In Islamic tradition, the Quran is believed to be the literal word of God, revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. The belief in the Quran’s divine origin is a fundamental tenet of the Islamic faith.⁹

Drummingham, addressing this matter, expresses deep concern regarding the approach adopted by certain Orientalists, remarking that they often engage in excessive criticism. He points out that their works can have a destructive impact, while their conclusions tend to be negative and incomplete. Drummingham emphasizes that a biography should not be solely based on negation, as that is not its purpose. He criticizes Father Lamans, a prominent contemporary Orientalist, for distorting and corrupting his otherwise remarkable books due to his animosity towards Islam and the Prophet. According to Drummingham, Lamans argues that if a Hadith (narration) aligns with the Quran, it must have been derived from the Quran itself. This approach, in Drummingham’s view, creates a dilemma for constructing a coherent history, as it necessitates the destruction of one source instead of the two mutually supporting each other.¹⁰

Numerous instances can be cited to demonstrate the Orientalists’ tendency, particularly among earlier generations, towards selectively denying or distorting historical facts within the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). One such example is Brockelmann’s omission of the role played by the Jews in inciting discord in Medina, as well as the breach of covenant by the Banu Quraydah tribe. Instead, he characterizes the Muslims’ attack on Banu Quraydah as “mysterious behavior” on their part.¹¹

The Orientalists often rely on weak or unreliable reports, using them as the basis for their judgments and presenting them as representative of the overall narrative. They highlight the

8 Ali, J. (1961). History of the Arabs in Islam (Vol. 1). Baghdad: Al-Zaim Press, p. 78.

9 Bart, R. (1980). Der Couran. Uebersetzung, p. 5.

10 Drummingham, E. (1949). The Life of Muhammad (A. Zuaiteer, Trans.) (2nd ed.). Cairo: Arab Book Revival House, 8-11.

11 Brockelmann, C. (1968). History of the Islamic peoples (Fares & Baalbaki, Trans.) (5th ed.). Beirut: Dar Al-Ilm Li’l-Malayyinm p. 53-54.

peculiar and unusual aspects while disregarding well-established accounts. They deliberately choose abnormal narratives, even if they are late in transmission or subject to criticism by scholars, as it serves their purpose of casting doubt. Their approach involves not only arbitrary denial and skepticism but also a reliance on weak and anomalous narratives that may not withstand critical scrutiny.

The Scientific, Theoretical and Media Framework of Contemporary Orientalism on the Holy Quran and the Prophet

From an intellectual standpoint, it is pertinent to examine recent studies that challenge the notion of the Prophet's authorship of the Qur'an or propose alternative explanations rooted in Christian or Jewish sources.

One such study, conducted at the University of Massachusetts, sheds light on the prevalent superstitions and erroneous scientific ideas that permeated the Arabian Peninsula during the time of the prophetic mission. While these ideas were present among the People of the Book, a closer examination of the Qur'an reveals that it remained unaffected by the prevailing cultural milieu. If indeed the Prophet or some scribes were the authors of the Quran, the study asks why they would exclude such prevalent yet false information that endured for centuries.

An illustrative example can be found in the understanding of the source of spring water. In the past, it was commonly believed that springs derived from the sea through underground channels known as groundwater. Ancient Greek philosophers posited that these channels allowed water to flow from the sea into the ground, forming springs, which subsequently returned to the sea. However, the Quran contradicts this prevalent notion, affirming that the source of spring water is rain, not gaps in the sea. The Qur'an states in Surat Al-Zumar, verse 21: "Have you not seen that Allah sends down rain from the sky and makes it flow as springs within the earth? Then He produces thereby crops of varying colors."

Here, the Quran clearly declares that rain is the source of groundwater, challenging the beliefs of the time, including those held during the Prophet's era. The Quran does not perpetuate their erroneous understanding or scientific superstitions¹². For further clarification regarding the scope of this study, a chart is provided illustrating the contrasting theories and the words of the Quran regarding the origin of spring water.

¹² <http://www.geo.umass.edu/faculty/boutt/Courses/GEOSCI587/Lecture1.pdf>

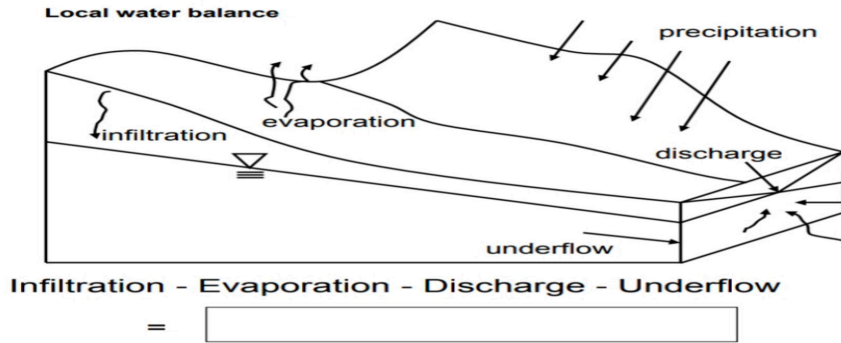


Figure 1 : The Origin of Spring Water

The second study, conducted at the University of Oxford, focused on employing advanced techniques of artificial intelligence known as “Discriminative Stylometry techniques” to determine the authorship of the Qur’an. This scientific investigation aimed to compare texts with distinct styles in order to discern whether they were authored by the same individual.

The study involved analyzing the Qur’anic text and the Hadith through three separate experiments. The results unequivocally indicated that it is implausible for both texts to have been written by a single person. The stylistic disparities between the Qur’an and the hadiths were found to be substantial.¹³

To provide further insights into the findings, accompanying charts showcase the respective word counts of the Hadith and the Qur’an, highlighting the divergences and commonalities between the two texts.

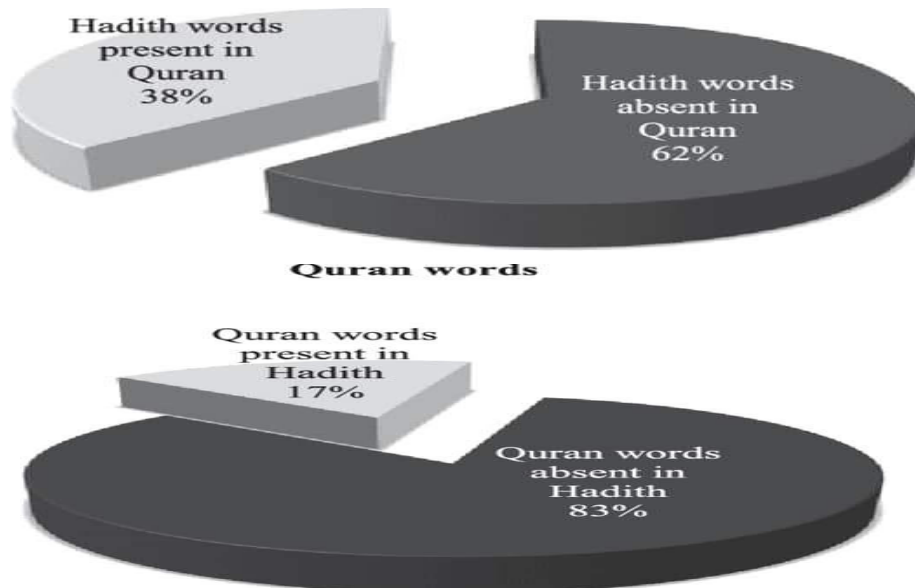


Figure 2: Comparing the Style of the Quran to the Hadith of the Prophet

¹³ Sayoud, Halim (December 2012). “Author Discrimination between the Holy Quran and prophets statements”. Literary and linguistic. v 27 (issue 4): p 427-444.

The third study, conducted at Woods Hole delved into the topic of the isthmus, which refers to the boundary between fresh water and salt water. The inclusion of this subject in the Qur'an is presented as compelling scientific evidence that it originates solely from the words of God Almighty, rather than being derived from other sources. W. Rockwell Geer, in a study conducted at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in the United States, highlights this aspect, stating, "The waters of the river do not suddenly mix with the sea, but rise above it, flow over it, and rush away into the gulf over the denser sea water, from which it is lifted."

Certain orientalists have made claims suggesting that the isthmus does not exist and that it is merely a product of the observer's imagination. They argue that the mingling of water is a continuous and rapid replenishment of quantities flowing into the sea. However, this view does not hold true even in simple experiments. As W. Rockwell Geer emphasizes in his study, a river does not descend to a specific depth and speed only to lose its strength upon encountering the Gulf. In reality, fresh water, being lighter than salt water, floats on its surface, similar to how oil or any lighter substance floats on the surface of fresh water.¹⁴

The barrier between the salty and fresh water is not a sharp and measurement-less boundary; rather, it is a region with a specific thickness where the density of salt decreases significantly from the salty water side to the fresh water side. This transition zone separating the salty water from the fresh water can be referred to as the saltwater-freshwater interface or transition.

Additionally, observations reveal that this phenomenon occurs abruptly in certain locations, such as the Fraser River. Across this boundary, salinity and density can swiftly change from oceanic to freshwater within tens of meters horizontally and a few meters vertically. A diagram depicting the coastal mixing bowl showcases the interaction between nutrient- and sediment-laden freshwater from the Fraser River in Colombia and the saline ocean water. As the tides rise, the two water masses of varying salinities and densities converge in the estuary, generating underwater turbulence and mixing that naturally stimulate the coastal system.

In summary, this study highlights the Qur'an's accurate depiction of the isthmus, providing scientific evidence for its divine origin and its distinction from sources utilized in other religious texts.

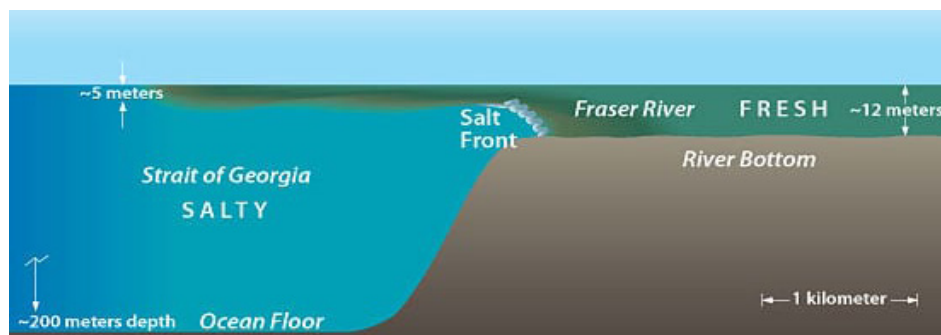


Figure 3: Coastal Water Mixing Bowl

14 <https://www.whoi.edu/oceanus/feature/where-the-rivers-meet-the-sea/?id=2486>.



Furthermore, the Qur'an contains explicit references to the existence of an isthmus and a barrier between two bodies of water, which aligns with recent scientific discoveries. The verse from Surah Al-Furqan states: "And it is He who has made two seas flow side by side; one fresh and sweet, and the other salty and bitter. And He placed between them a barrier and an impassable boundary" (Qur'an 25:53). Similarly, Surah An-Naml mentions: "Is not He who created the heavens and the earth Able to create the likes of them? Yes, [it is so]; and He is the Knowing Creator. His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, 'Be,' and it is. So exalted is He in whose hand is the realm of all things, and to Him you will be returned" (Qur'an 36:81-83).

These Qur'anic verses highlight the presence of a barrier or isthmus between two seas, emphasizing the distinction between their characteristics. It is worth noting that these verses were revealed long before the scientific discovery and confirmation of such natural phenomena.

The Qur'an's accurate description of the isthmus and the barrier between two seas serves as compelling evidence of its divine origin. The verses demonstrate a remarkable understanding of the natural world and provide insights that align with modern scientific knowledge, further enhancing the Qur'an's status as a comprehensive and timeless religious scripture.

The Quran refers to the separation between river water and sea water, indicating the existence of a temporary barrier or isthmus that prevents direct mixing. This barrier, referred to as the isthmus by God Almighty, acts as a confined area, limiting the movement of the organisms within it and preventing them from crossing its boundaries. Some of the water from this isthmus, where rivers, bays, and valleys flow, eventually mixes with the sea waters, resulting in a partial merging and emergence from the confines of the isthmus. However, the Quran does not stop at this observation.

In Surah Al-Rahman, God mentions the meeting of the meadows of two seas, highlighting the presence of an isthmus between the salty seas themselves. This phenomenon is even more remarkable than the isthmus separating fresh and salt water. The mention of pearls and corals in the Quranic verse is evidence of this isthmus between the salty seas. Pearls and corals are exclusive to saltwater environments, although some pearl shells can be artificially cultivated in freshwater. This confirms that the reference to "Bahrain" in the Quranic verse is to the salty sea, representing the isthmus that separates and moves between every two seas. Marine scientists often refer to this barrier as the "front," drawing an analogy to the front line separating two opposing armies. With the existence of this isthmus, each sea retains its unique characteristics as determined by God, creating suitable environments for the organisms living within them.

The Quranic descriptions regarding the separation between river and sea water, as well as the isthmus between salty seas, provide profound insights into the design and balance of the natural world. These observations, made centuries ago, align with our modern scientific understanding

and serve as evidence of the Quran's deep comprehension and divine origin.

The discovery of water isthmuses in the salty seas, as elucidated in the Quran, presents an extraordinary testament that leaves no rational individual with any room for doubt regarding the authenticity of the Qur'an. In light of this scientific miracle, it becomes implausible for any Orientalist or Western researcher to claim that the Qur'an was borrowed from Judaism or Christianity, or that it was authored by the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). Indeed, there is no explicit textual reference in the Torah or the Bible that addresses this specific scientific detail as precisely as the Qur'an does. I am certain that the recognition of the Western world affirms the absence of such references. The Almighty has affirmed in His words: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (Qur'an 41:53, Fussilat).

From a scientific perspective, when we examine the viewpoints of prominent Orientalists, we find them not refuting, but rather confirming that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) did not compose the Qur'an or draw its contents from preexisting sources predating him.

Ferry William Muir:

"The contents and the arrangement of the Quran speak forcibly for its authenticity. All the fragments that could possibly be obtained have evidently, with the most artless simplicity, been joined together. The patchwork bears no marks of a designing genius or a molding hand."¹⁵

Arthur Arberry stated:

"Briefly, the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original".¹⁶

As Edward Henry Palmer states:

"That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an itself is not surprising."¹⁷

While Katrina Mommsen says: "The style of the Qur'an is precise and sublime: surprising and in many places it truly reaches the height of sublimity."¹⁸ This is how Goethe described the Qur'an while he was reading its Latin and German.

In recent oriental treatises, Raymond Farrin has contributed a significant study on the structur-

15 Muir, William (1868). *The Life of Mohammad*, London, p Xxi-Xxii.

16 Arberry, Arthur J. (N.d). *The Koran interpreted*. London, p ٤.

17 Palmer, E. H. (N.d) *The Quran*. Oxford, p1v.

18 Mommsen, K. (1995). *Goethe and the Arab World* (A. A. Ali, Trans.). Kuwait: World of Knowledge, p. 148.

al analysis of the Qur’anic text. He presents compelling literary evidence that refutes the notion of the Qur’an being composed by a committee or multiple individuals*. Instead, Farrin asserts that it is a meticulously crafted text with a profound underlying structure¹⁹. Additionally, Michel Cuypers, another orientalist, elucidates the process of authorship in his work *The Authorship of Quran*, wherein he establishes the coherence of the Qur’anic discourse.²⁰

Furthermore, Martin Arzamet goes beyond these findings by stating that “Notwithstanding the literary excellence of some of the long pre Islamic poems, or qasa’id,” the Qur’an is definitely on a level of its own as the most eminent written manifestation of the Arabic language guage.”²¹

Within this scholarly context, several orientalists have highlighted noteworthy texts. One such text that particularly caught my attention is by the Marcel Boissard. He astutely characterizes the Holy Qur’an as a book that encompasses and transcends all crises, encompassing not only the past and the present but even the future. Boissard emphasizes that its relevance extends beyond a specific day or era:

“It must also be kept in mind that the Qur’an was by no means meant to reform the morals of pre-Islamic Arabia (alone), but that it brought, on the contrary, a perfect and eternal law applicable to human realities and social necessities of all times”.²²

Regarding scientific and rational reasoning, it is pertinent to conclude with a statement made by Denieh concerning Snouk Harkhroni. Denieh asserts that historical research is bound to be unproductive if it is constrained by preexisting theories or opinions²³. Researchers should free themselves from such biases, as they hinder their progress and often lead to erroneous conclusions. It is not uncommon for scholars to find themselves entangled in a web of conflicting opinions, attempting to dismantle certain narratives only to replace them with new ones—an arduous task with no guarantee of success. The complexities of the modern world, spanning the twentieth century and beyond, necessitate consideration of a multitude of crucial factors, including time, environment, region, customs, inclinations, aspirations, and the powerful internal forces that elude the confines of reason, yet profoundly influence individuals and groups.

To exemplify this point, I would like to recount an anecdote involving Yoram van Klaveren, a former close political aide to Geert Wilders, widely recognized as the “spiritual father” of the far-right party in the Netherlands. Initially writing an anti-Islam book, Klaveren’s perception of

19 Farrin, aymond .(2014). Structure and Quranic. White cloud press.

20 Michel, Cuypers.(2012).La Composition du Coran. France.

21 Zammiy, Martin R.(N.d). A Comparative Lexical Study of Quranic Arabic. Brill ,p37.

22 Boisard, Marcel A.(1988). Humanism in Islam. American Trust publications ,p73.

23 Denieh, A. (n.d.). Muhammad is the Messenger of God (A. H. Mahmoud, Trans.) (3rd ed.). Cairo: Dar Al Maarif, p. 56.

*For further details, please refer to the entire book, as it is specifically dedicated to the structure of the Quran in general: “La Composition du Coran” (The Composition of the Quran) by Michel Cuypers, published in 2012.

Muslims underwent a transformation during his research. The process of understanding Islam dispelled his doubts and fears, ultimately leading him to convert to Islam and embrace the faith wholeheartedly in 2019. Given the prevailing anti-Islam sentiments in Europe, where Quran burnings have become distressingly common, TRT World conducted an interview with Klaveren regarding his conversion. In his interview, Klaveren disclosed, “For years, I devoted all my efforts to combat Islam as a politician. I attempted to pass legislation to close Islamic schools in the Netherlands, sought the closure of mosques, and even advocated for a ban on the Quran, which I once labeled as ‘poison.’ As an active member of Parliament, I did my utmost to caution people about the perceived dangers of Islam. As an anti-Islam politician, I believed that Islam was not a true religion, but rather, ‘the most deadly political ideology in the world.’ I was convinced that Islam promoted violence, was oppressive towards women, and harbored animosity towards Christianity, all the while fostering terrorism.”

This anecdote serves as a reminder of the transformative power of genuine inquiry and unbiased exploration, demonstrating that preconceived notions can be shattered when individuals engage in open-minded study and reflection.²⁴

It is worth noting that many of these ideas originated from conservative Protestant theology, which historically regarded other religions, particularly Islam, as deviant. The rejection of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the concept of original sin are factors that have led some Christian preachers to view Islam as an aberrant cult, particularly within the sect in which I was raised.

Klaveren further explains that he had been writing an anti-Islam book as a long-standing personal aspiration after leaving his political career. However, as he delved deeper into his research, his perceptions of Islam began to clash with his preconceived notions. Recognizing the importance of crafting an accurate and well-informed book, he sought out Muslim scholars to address his questions. One such scholar was Abd al-Hakim Murad (formerly known as Timothy Winter), who personally responded to Klaveren’s inquiries, recommended relevant literature, and provided the names of other scholars from whom he could seek information.

As Klaveren already harbored doubts about certain Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity and the sacrificial aspect of Christ, his search for knowledge gradually shifted towards a quest for a deeper understanding of God. Along this journey, he encountered Islamic perspectives that provided insightful answers to his Christian inquiries. Klaveren documents the various obstacles he faced on his path to Islam in his book. The final hurdle pertained to the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household). After dedicating months to studying the life and character of the Prophet, Klaveren became completely convinced of his authenticity as the Messenger of God. As he already believed in the existence of a single deity, accepting the Messenger

²⁴ <https://www.trtworld.com>

effectively led him to become a de facto Muslim.

However, despite this realization, Klaveren initially experienced a sense of repulsion. This might appear somewhat reminiscent of a fairy tale, but it genuinely occurred. Even after completing his writing and recognizing the truth of Islam, he was hesitant to embrace it fully. While tidying his books, a few of them accidentally fell from the shelf, and among them was the Qur'an. Klaveren picked it up, and his thumb happened to rest on verse 46 of Surah Al-Hajj, which states: "Have they not traveled through the land so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts." This verse directly addressed Klaveren's inner struggle, as he realized that he could intellectually comprehend the truth presented before him. No one had compelled him to write the book, and all the facts were unequivocally clear. His struggle was not rooted in his intellect or vision, but rather in his heart and emotions.

We can consider an alternative example, which I personally gathered by posing a series of inquiries on an American scientific platform. The responses exhibited contradictory perspectives for individuals of European descent, as they grappled with the conflict between their own comprehension of truth and beliefs, and the influence of familial upbringing and ancestral traditions. Consequently, one may perceive a sense of disorientation experienced by these individuals, as they encounter a barrage of news reports without thoroughly scrutinizing their veracity. Amidst this array of questions, one particular inquiry emerged: "Was the Virgin Mary or Jesus (peace be upon him) veiled? If so, why is it that contemporary Christian women do not observe veiling practices? Did Christians not embrace the teachings of Jesus (peace be upon him) and revere his mother?"



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A question to our Christian brothers: Was the Virgin Mary, the mother of the Prophet Jesus, wearing the hijab or not?

Question

Asked January 16, 2019

If the answer is yes, why today Christian women do not wear hijab? Did Christians not believe the Prophet Jesus and his mother?

Figure 4: Questions asked on American scientific websites.

The responses provided indicated that there exists a form of head covering similar to a veil that the Virgin Mary wore. However, it is important to note that Christians do not worship Mary herself but rather hold Jesus in reverence. Additionally, it was mentioned that Jesus did not prescribe wearing a veil as a means to achieve righteousness.²⁵

The aforementioned contradiction in the knowledge of Europeans and their resistance to accepting the truth can be attributed primarily to a lack of knowledge. This is compounded by their adherence to inherited legacies from parents, grandparents, and religious authorities without conducting thorough investigations for truth. Moreover, the significant influence of extreme secularization in the Western context cannot be overlooked. This has resulted in a growing detachment from God and a diminishing visibility of the moral compass, consequently leading to a limited understanding of religion.

It is evident that the majority of Western individuals possess limited knowledge about Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). Their perception is primarily shaped by the behavior of Muslims, their exposure to online and television content, and the negative portrayal reinforced by acts of terrorism. The incessant repetition of these negative narratives by the media further perpetuates the creation of a distorted and fear-inducing image of Islam. Certain political parties exploit this ignorance to further their own agendas. Additionally, inherent racist attitudes present in all societies contribute to this issue, with the media playing a significant role in the process. The relentless dissemination of fear-inducing images, inaccurate information, and one-sided negative opinions deeply impact individuals.

These distorted ideas are manipulated and utilized by the media to serve their vested interests. The media's objective in this context is to widely promote the pattern of distortion. For instance, a study was conducted on the two most renowned journals in France, namely *L'Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*, focusing on their publications regarding Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) from September 2001 to December 2004. This period encompassed a total of 314 issues of the two journals. In one of its issues on October 4, 2001 AD, *Le Nouvel Observateur* featured a dossier titled "Islam and the Time of Self-Criticism." This dossier included an article by Josette Alia, who advocated for an international alliance to combat the Quran, characterizing Islam as the most extremist religion²⁶. The study of these two journals involved an analysis of the most significant topics covered and the subsequent calculation of repetitions. The resulting data, as presented in the accompanying table, reflects this analysis. It is important to note that the reference to Islam in this context encompasses references to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Holy Qur'an, including associated hadiths. An analysis of the prominent topics covered and the calculation of repetitions revealed the following

²⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hiba-Alrammahi?ev=hdr_xprf&_sg=o3olc7Rvpk2eI2yCScRx_lgNZ

results, as depicted in the accompanying table.

Table 1: Number of media materials related to the Muslim personality published in the two journals

Topic	L'Express		Le Nouvel Observateur		Total	Percentage
	Repetition	Percentage	Repetition	Percentage		
1- Islam	19	24.5	51	46.78	70	37.23
2- Muslims in France	22	27.84	11	10.09	33	17.55
3- Issue of Hijab	8	10.12	6	5.5	14	7.44
4- Muslim Women	4	5.06	2	1.83	6	3.19
5- Politics in the Muslim World	14	17.72	11	10.09	25	13.29
6- Muslim Leadership	7	8.86	12	11.08	19	10.10
7- Muslim Movements in the World	5	6.32	16	14.67	21	11.17
Total	79		109		188	99.97

The distorted portrayal of Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) in the media has significantly influenced the perception of Europeans, affecting their views on the possibility of coexistence and generating feelings of unfamiliarity and even fear. Consequently, there has been a general rise in anti-religious sentiments, particularly directed towards Muslims. It is noteworthy that Muslims, as practicing believers, often maintain their faith more steadfastly compared to many Christians who have drifted away from their religious convictions. It is essential to acknowledge that the gradual erosion caused by secular liberalism is impacting both individuals and society as a whole.

Given these circumstances, it becomes imperative to engage in proactive invitation to Islam to introduce Islam and the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) to those searching for truth and spiritual fulfillment in the Western world. It is our duty, as emphasized in the Qur'an (Surat An-Nahl, verse 125), to invite others to the path of our Lord using wisdom, good counsel, and engaging in the best manner of dialogue. God knows best who has deviated from the right path and who is rightly guided.

Conclusion

In concluding this study on the contemporary Orientalist perspective regarding the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) and the Qur'an, and after shedding light on various aspects of Orientalist studies in relation to his noble biography from scientific, theoretical, and media standpoints, several recommendations have emerged. These recommendations should be taken into account in order to achieve the desired objectives, including:

- It is essential to clarify that the content of this study does not advocate religious fanaticism. Rather, its purpose is to provide a scientific and theoretical perspective aimed at elucidating the truth. The negative portrayal of Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) in contemporary Orientalist visions is not a recent phenomenon, but rather the product of many centuries of intellectual and political developments. These historical changes have influenced the framework of contemporary Orientalist studies on the Prophet's biography, leading to shifts in their perceptions of Islam and its Prophet over time.

- To foster a more informed understanding of Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) among Western audiences, it is crucial to initiate this process from early childhood, starting with the youngest members of Western society, such as those in kindergarten. It is necessary to convey the true objectives of Islam, its teachings, moral principles, and the commandments of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) in a manner that aligns with their cognitive abilities. As the saying goes, "Learning at a young age is like engraving on a stone." By presenting Islam in its authentic form and sharing the teachings of the Qur'an with Western children, free from the misrepresentations of terrorism or the fabrication of the Qur'an's authorship, we can take a step towards nurturing a tolerant mindset in these children, thus fostering a future that is devoid of religious extremism. It is our responsibility to present factual information rather than relying on news reports, allowing the children to make their own choices when they mature and decide which religion offers them a path to spiritual fulfillment and security. Furthermore, it is also important to educate our children about other religions in an accurate and unbiased manner.

- Another crucial aspect to consider is the activation of civilizational dialogue, which is a feasible endeavor. Several initiatives have already taken place in this regard, such as the "Religion and Dialogue in Modern Societies" initiative held at the Academy of World Religions in Hamburg, Germany, and the preparations for an authorship project titled "Biblical Thinking" in Berne, Switzerland. These projects involve studying the books of the three major religions together, fostering interreligious dialogue. Through such tolerant dialogue, we can draw inspiration from the moral and civilizational legacies inherent in each religion, promoting mutual understanding and respect.

- Establishing positive and constructive relationships with the West necessitates engaging in consensual dialogue and fostering cooperation. As a Muslim, I advocate for approaching these discussions from the perspective and principles established by Islam, emphasizing the ethical and peaceful approach of the faith. By doing so, we can counter the values of extremism, isolation, and puritanism that have infiltrated our societies due to a projective understanding and literal interpretation of Islamic texts. Through transcending the extremist elements within Islamic thinking, we can communicate an aspect of the Islamic message that encourages people to foster mutual understanding, recognize their interdependence, and promote solidarity.

- It is also crucial to activate the role of Islamic centers in the West, ensuring they operate in a manner that accurately represents Islam. These centers are in a prime position to engage with Western individuals, effectively explaining the moral teachings, commandments, and virtues of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household). They can organize seminars and dialogues aimed at clarifying the correct interpretation of the meanings within the Qur'an, refuting the mischaracterizations that label Islam as terrorism and falsely depict Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) as a warrior.

In conclusion, we pray to God for the success and accomplishment of our intended goal in this study. It is a study that requires extensive pages to fully articulate all the ideas that come to the researcher's mind. However, my wish is that it serves the purpose of promoting Islam, rectifying misconceptions, and presenting an accurate understanding of the noble biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household) to the Western world. As God states in the Quran, "And say: 'The truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed, falsehood is ever bound to depart.'" (Quran, Surat Al-Isra, 17). The truth prevails, while the transient falsehood fades away, and that which benefits people remains steadfast on the earth. God presents such parables to facilitate understanding (Quran, Surat Ar-Ra'd, 17).

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