



## THE FUTURE OF ORIENTALIST TRENDS ON INTERNET SITES AND THEIR IMPACT ON QURANIC STUDIES

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### Abstract

*Orientalist trends on Internet sites differ from the old classic form of Orientalism, and these sites have varied among sites for Middle Eastern studies and sciences or politically or socially specialized research centers and so on. There is no doubt that the Orientalist movements have provided some services for Quranic studies in the indexing, translation, and investigation of manuscripts ... etc. but they have been right in matters and wrong in others, as some Orientalists attacked the Qur'an and its sciences, which had a significant negative impact among the generation of Muslims. The orientalist's view of the Holy Qur'an varied in terms of holiness, belief and idea in each of them, so their perception of the Qur'an differed accordingly. There are literatures that require consideration, attention, and even republishing for the goodness that it contains, and there are works that needed to review supported by arguments and statement and making the people aware of it and even should use our all sources to stop it from republishing it again. Likewise, among the Muslims who adopted the technique of the orientalists and their literature as a model for himself and started repeating and spreading some of their suspicions (uncertainty regarding to Islamic studies) either intentionally or being ignorant of what he means, so he should be corrected if he is unaware of it or she should be answered by arguments if he was intended to do so.*

**Keywords :** The Internet, Orientalism, Orientalists, Quranic studies

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## **I. Introduction**

The concept of Orientalism: In the terminology, it has two meanings: general and special. Common meaning: a general term for every Westerner who studies the East in its languages, literature, civilization and religions entirely. Special meaning: which is the western study related to the Islamic East in its languages, history and beliefs [I]. What do orientalists mean? Orientalists are those Western professors and academic researchers who have specialized in the study of the Arabic language, Arab civilization, Arab world issues, and the Islamic religion [II].

Orientalists' goals and motives: Dr. Muhammad Hussein Al-Saghir mentioned some of these motives, and he said; "It seems to me, through the experience of the Orientalist movement in general, that the scientific goal behind studying the Holy Qur'an and Arab heritage may constitute the safest and most noble motives for them. Many of these orientalists found in the Arabic language taste of a language of culture, literature and civilization and they found the Qur'an is at the peak of this language, so they conceived to study it with a purely scientific motivation, challenging knowledge and accompanying it, so they left great and gigantic contributions for us [III].

After that, we have to stand cautious and vigilant about the efforts of these orientalists and their jurisprudence with regard to Qur'anic studies. They submit the Holy Qur'an to methods and techniques, which suit their languages and may not be appropriate to the Arabic language with its characteristics as each language has its own characteristics and elements. While techniques and methods cannot be combined in the study of languages [IV]. Especially in the field of interpretation and translation of Holy Quran. Interpretation however precise, may not be available in other languages as it is in Arabic. Similarly, we must monitor everything, which has written in the history of the Qur'an and the claim of distortion, with a vigilant perspective so we will not fall into what some Orientalists fall because of the chaos and confusion [V].

Orientalist varieties: The types of orientalists vary according to their goals and objectives. Some of them are honest and truthful in their work, devoted to his research and this type mostly ended up declaring Islam and embracing it. Moreover, among them there are orientalists, whose source of livelihood is only Orientalism and few of them who are fair and honest but many of them are ungrateful, and some of them were fanatics and extremists, some who are hostile and unfriendly who always deliberately winking and blinking at Islam and Muslims.

## **II. Neutral or Fairly Thinking Orientalists**

There is group of orientalists who committed themselves in their study of Islam to objectivity and scientific integrity. In addition, they conducted fairness to Islam and Muslims to some extent. Even though the matter is not without their aberration and deviation in some cases because it is difficult for a person to be completely hollowed of his inclination to his religion and belief. For an example, the German Orientalists Johann Jacob Reiske (December 25, 1716 – August 14, 1774) he praised the Islamic religion and expressed his opinion frankly, so the churchmen

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ignored him, fought him, accused him of heresy. He lived his life in financial hardship and died at the age of fifty-eight.

### **III. Mercenary Orientalists and Fanatic Orientalists**

This is a group of mercenary Orientalists recruited to conduct (specific) studies and research in the service of Western economic, political and colonial interests [VI].

Orientalists who are extremely fanatical and hateful of Islam are having a majority. Although they benefited Islam in some aspects. Such as preserving and publishing Islamic manuscripts. Their harm to Islam and its civilization and distorting its image and disgrace from it and its people has reached a great amount in all aspects. They stole the civilization of Islam and accused it of backwardness, reactionary, violence, terrorism, etc., and they were the first nucleus and the great spark that filled the West with hatred against Muslims.

Among the kind of these fanatical orientalists who misunderstood Islam and hatched it: (George Sale) 1697 - 1736 AD. And William Bedwell 1571 - 1632 A.D. Based on this, there are many Orientalist attitudes in general towards the Holy Qur'an and its studies according to the multiplicity of the classes of orientalists and their different destinations and schools from which they drew from..

### **IV. Orientalist Trends on Websites**

The Orientalist activity or the activity of Arab and Islamic studies in the West was not limited to scientific departments, research centers, and specialized institutes, but it reached the Internet strongly. Indeed, the Orientalist websites are in thousands, the Orientalist works on the Internet have counted in three forms:

- I. Sites bearing the word Orientalism. In addition, articles and subjects under this topic.
- II. Special sites for the Middle East or Near Eastern Studies Departments, Departments of Area Studies or Departments of Religions, and the news, which these sites provide about the activities of these departments and their faculty members.
- III. Research centers and institutes specialized in studies & research related to the Middle East or political, economic, cultural and social studies and interested in the Islamic world. For example, (The Middle East Institute) and (Brookings Institution) and (Near East Policy Institute) and (Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies), the Association of Middle East Studies in North America, and others.

Orientalism is not dead, but what ended is the use of the word Orientalism to define studies about the Islamic world in the vast majority of universities in Europe and America, especially in the United States, which had the precedent in creating what has called regional or area studies. That is why the Internet provides us with a tremendous amount of information about Islam and Muslims, even though the vast majority of these sites are in European languages, especially English, and the

prevailing ideas in these sites still provide the European and Western view of the Islamic world and Muslims [VII].

The defamation of the Noble Qur'an and its sciences still fill tens of thousands of websites on the Internet from those who were influenced by Orientalist thinking previously and recently. The bulk of these sites are nothing more than a transferring of its Orientalist origins but with new names that are different from the past. Therefore, anyone who understands the reality of Orientalism in the old classical form can stand on its recent reality on the Internet very easily.

## **V. The Orientalist Stance on The Qur'an**

Orientalists have studied everything related to Islam in every field of Islamic studies. As for the field related to our research, it is their position on the Holy Quran. It was a different position that combined the provision of beneficial deeds and the service of the Qur'an at one time with defamation and Distortion at other times. As for the first position, some of them succeeded but they made some unintended mistakes due to the difference in language, environment, or intellectual background of these people. As for the second position, they have put many suspicions about the Qur'an and its collection process, dictation of Quran, Quranic interpretation, transcribed. etc. Moreover, there are few translations, which deliberately distort the image and obscure the truth and this is due to several reasons, including:

- I. Lack of objectivity in the study and analysis, so that these orientalists did not adhere to the rules of scientific research based on accurate measurements, as they put the result in advance and then proceeded to formulate the premises, and this is contrary to the original method of scientific research.
- II. Lack of understanding of the Arabic language: The study of some orientalists on the Qur'anic text was not an in-depth and serious study rather it was superficial. Which made them fall into contradictions in understanding and deduction.
- III. If they want to read and analyze the Qur'anic text, therefore these orientalists must be impartial, open-minded, adhere to the scientific spirit in research, refrain from corroborating the unilateral vision related to the results, and acknowledge the results even if they contradict their perceptions.
- IV. Orientalists should enjoy the scientific honesty in research and not be malicious hatred of their opinions where they amputate the Quranic text and not study it fully [VIII].
- V. Orientalists should not pass final rulings on the Qur'anic text except after inferring evidence and arguments that prove what they say.

Dr. Abd al-SabourShaheen mentions the causes of orientalist errors in their research (regarding to Islam and Islamic studies). He says; "The Orientalist scourge is that they are merely driving the mental possibilities, the course of facts and measuring the past that was not part of their history. Subsequently, they were not from the components of their conscience on the scale of their present with the difference in space, time, mentality and spirituality and the reason is that they close their eyes On

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the metaphysical nature under which the events of Quranic history and the era of prophecy arose, and they reject the methods of Muslims in criticizing the reports and its narratives.” [IX].

And some orientalist scholars admit that the nature of Orientalist understanding is different from Muslim scholars and the evidence for that is what the German orientalist d. Delcois Morani: (The Orientalist understanding of the Qur’an is completely different from that of Muslims in general, and Muslim researchers in particular, and this has aroused tension; indeed, hatred. It maybe the correct expression between the Islamic and European understanding of Quran that the orientalists who study the text of the Qur’an and its sciences don’t study it with the absolute faith as Muslims as the Quranic text is a revealed revelation, which means they don’t study it from the standpoint of faith but rather from the standpoint of knowledge which is separate from all that falls in the section of faith and belief. In addition, Orientalism deals with the Quranic text in accordance with the standards of the sciences of public religions, and according to the sciences of history, hence, we can say, “The text of the Qur’an in The opinion of orientalists is only a precious historical document, as a fundamental principle in the faith and belief of Muslims.” This is what Muslim researchers should consider when reading in Orientalist studies or discussing them so that the imbalance in understanding and results does not occur.

Another important aspect of the paradoxes of Orientalist understanding is that it emanates from an ideological angle. The Orientalist may consider the Qur’anic text as a civilized text, while the Muslim looks to it as a sacred text. We cannot ask an Orientalist to see the Qur’an with the eyes of Muslims. Therefore, we do not take it more than his academic mission does. Some of Orientalists may neglect the holiest side of the Qur’an and do not see it as negligence and it may fall short of what he presented an accurate view and did not find it negligently [X]. He sometimes explains some topics comprehensively that do not demand serious consideration in our view. Yet we have seen few others orientalists who treat the Qur’an more than his treatment of the Torah and the Gospel, whether he is a Jew or Christian considering the Qur’an as one of the major divine sacredness as the pious God fearing Muslims do.

In this background, the researcher (among orientalists) must be fair in the Biographical evaluation (chronical study of narrators based on praise and criticism levels) and does not require the Orientalist movement more than it claims for itself, or something that is permitted by the circulating religious initiation. This does not mean that we ignore their huge mistakes (if they we find any) or their extreme conflicts if they are discovered. We will not cover up the suspicious intentions. Will not stand the tolerant position of the subjective decision. However, we must not be tempted to conceive of the Orientalists as pious and unbiased, so that we take them more than their common abilities. We also do not arrogate and make them an example of selfishness as they are human beings and there are good and bad people everywhere. They hold and follow certain beliefs; their commitment may accompany by their lust which may lead them towards imposed objectives:

- I. The Orientalist understanding of the Qur’an may sometimes differ from our understanding of it for proven reasons dictated by psychological, social or

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economic circumstances. On the other hand, may be dictated by hostile tendencies and missionary at other hand. Here is the aggravating danger, as the Orientalist in these cases may deviate from the right, and at this point, the scientific text is treated with a perspective Vigilance, caution and carefulness, as it may derive from knowledge and truthfulness.

- II. Sometimes it differs from our understanding of it for scientific and academic concerns that are more beneficial to them and more attained than we do.
- III. Sometimes it differs from our understanding of it because they do not look at the Qur'an with a view of holiness as their view of the Torah (Old Testament) and the Bible, so default is imposed from within the Orientalist itself.
- IV. It may sometimes differ from our understanding of it because they see that the Qur'an is a cultural and civilizational book that is studied from this aspect. It does not address anything related to revelation, and if this aspect is addressed it may address the treatment of those who do not have faith in it nor depend on it, which is another issue [XI].

#### **VI. Orientalist Interests in Quranic Studies**

Upon scrutiny in this aspect and highlighting the spotlight on it, there have emerged dozens of various researches and various studies on the Holy Qur'an from a group of orientalist and for example but not limited to those studies and research can be classified into groups such as:

- I. Beliefs and Religions
- II. Narrative Art in the Qur'an
- III. Jurisprudence of the Arabic Language in the Quran
- IV. Rhetoric of the Quran

There are various other researches in the Qur'anic studies, which revolve around its relationship with human, the universe, life, medicine and philosophy. Some of these topics may talk about the origins of interpretation and the sciences of the Qur'an. Unlike the various translations of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an. So far, translations of the Holy Quran have counted in a hundred and twenty-one languages around the world.

Dr. Abu Laila comments on these translations of the Qur'an and says, (The translators' mistakes, introductions, and comments on these translations are a living embodiment of their biased position against the Noble Qur'an and the Messenger of God Muhammad S.A.W. They are either ignorant or distorted, they translate the Qur'anic phrase, and the Qur'anic word with words and phrases that degrade the phrase on its miraculous rhetorical rank, and it has descended to a human level ... or close to it.

Among the milestones of oriental orientalist's efforts in the fields of Qur'anic studies are publishing a precious collection of books, and achieving a range of sources that examine reading, interpretation, and the sciences of the Qur'an. The

collection of such work is mostly completed which reveals to us the reality of the suffering, patience and hardworking in delivering the text to the reader as his author left it, and as the author wrote, and the Orientalists didn't content with this only but also the investigative work was crowned with indexes and appendices that illuminate in front of the reader the way to benefit from texts.

The French orientalist Jules La Beume translated the details of the verses of the Noble Qur'an in the French language. By arranging, the verses related to one subject in one chapter, as if he had divided the Qur'an stars according to his subjects and collected them on a subject topic. The Professor Muhammad Fouad Abdel Baqi, (writer of the indexed dictionary of words of The Noble Qur'an) translated this great work into Arabic with a reference from Sayyad Muhammad Rashid Ridhawriter of tafsir al-Manar, and he spent whole seven months in its translation, which ended on (8 March 1924 AD) and has printed several times. Moreover, it had appended after the first edition finished with a detailed index that the French orientalist professor Edouard Louis Montet (later titled with the Mustadrak) after he also translated it to Arabic. Professor Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqi (may God have mercy on him) provided the researchers with a great opportunity when he translated these two immortal works, as one of them complemented the other, even they both did not contain the articles and topics of the Qur'an or his verses in general.

## **VI. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Orientalist studies had an effect on Quranic studies. Few of these studies were positive that the Islamic Library directly benefited and some Muslim scholars benefited from in their research and ideas. Such as Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqidid when he got an idea of his famous work. (The indexed dictionary of the words of the Holy Qur'an) on what presented by Professor Gustav Leberecht Flügel (1802 AD - 1870 AD). He tracked what Professor Gustav Vogel had missed and corrected him in the right way in what was not clear to Gustav.

Unfortunately, some of Orientalist studies on Qur'anic studies were negative in itself or some Muslims were influenced by the false ideas and suspicions, which published in the books of Orientalists. Later those Muslims presented these false ideas and suspicions by their names publishing them in their books such as Mohammed Arkoun, Taha Hussein, Salman Rushdie and others have done.

In the end, perhaps what I like to highlight here and warn of it is the suspicious role that some Muslims now play. Because of the seriousness of this thought and its spread by using the name of some Muslim scholars, which may help to publish and spread these ideas and replace them with other main and correct ideas in this matter. We find this trend in the writings of many Arab thinkers affected by Orientalism, such as: Al-Tayyeb Tizini in his book: (The Quranic Text in Front of the Problem of Structure and Reading).

- I. Abed Al-Jabri in his book: (Heritage and Modernity).
- II. Translator of Muhammad Akron's books, Hashem Saleh in: (The Qur'an from the inherited interpretation to the analysis of religious discourse).

- III. In a number of books of Ali Harb, such as (Criticism of the Text) and (Criticism of the Truth).
- IV. In a collection of books of Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid, such as (Discourse and Interpretation), and (The Concept of Text).
- V. Muhammad Akron's student: Ramadan bin Ramadan in his book: (Characteristics of Dealing with Heritage).
- VI. Muhammad Ahmad Khalfullah in his book: (Narrative Art in the Qur'an).
- VII. Muhammad Shahrour in his book: (The Book and the Qur'an: Contemporary Reading).
- VIII. And Sadiq Jalal al-Azm in his book: (Criticism of Religious Thought).
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