

Towards Establishing an Internal Paradigm for Islamic Scholarship in Europe¹

نحو إرساء أنموذج مقاربة داخلية للدراسات الإسلامية
في أوروبا

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This editorial for the fourth issue of the *Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies* addresses three important points.

First, establishing a peer-reviewed academic journal that is published regularly is by no means an easy task. Such endeavors are usually undertaken by well-funded research centers and prestigious universities with substantial human, logistical, and financial resources. When we launched this journal

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almost two years ago, we were fully aware of the risks involved, as we were embarking on an ambitious project marked by challenges, uncertainties, and difficulties. This initiative emerged in response to a significant gap in Arab and Islamic studies in Europe and the West; namely, the lack of scholarly work that adopts an internal, academically rigorous, and objective approach to Islam. In contrast, the dominant paradigm remains an external, Orientalist, and Islamological approach. Most European and Western universities have centers, departments, or journals dedicated to the study of Islam, however; most address the subject exclusively from an external perspective, one often shaped by traditional Orientalist assumptions and ideological influences. This applies not only to Western scholars, but also to some Arab and Muslim researchers who have followed this methodological path in a largely uncritical and conventional manner. This does not imply a rejection of external approaches to Islam; rather, we maintain that such approaches, when employed in isolation, are insufficient for presenting Islam in a balanced and objective way. In recent decades, there has been a growing call within Western academia for the adoption of an internal approach to Islam in both teaching and research. The methodological orientation chosen by Ijtihad Center and Journal seeks to reconcile internal and external readings of Islam by grounding research in internal sources, concepts, and interpretive frameworks, and subsequently engaging critically and constructively with Orientalist and Islamic studies scholarship, taking advantage of its insights and objectively addressing its limitations and biases.

Second, the mission of the Ijtihad Center extends beyond merely attracting researchers to contribute articles and reviews to each issue of the journal. It carries an intellectual and humanistic vision that we seek to promote through our diverse academic and cultural initiatives. This vision integrates intellectual, spiritual, and methodological dimensions, aiming to make the Islamic and

Arabic juridical, theological, philosophical, and literary heritage accessible to both specialists and a wider audience. In doing so, it challenges reductive Orientalist and ideological representations that portray Islamic culture primarily through lenses of exoticism and mystification. Today, a noteworthy academic current is emerging in the West, seeking to rediscover overlooked aspects of Islamic civilization through rigorous research across the various Islamic sciences, arts, literary traditions, historical figures, and intellectual movements. Within a remarkably short period, The Ijtihad Journal has succeeded in attracting a group of young researchers who combine solid grounding in Islamic scholarship with Western academic knowledge and methodologies. This positions them to offer a balanced approach that neither confines itself to traditional Islamic sciences nor uncritically adopts Western academic findings, but instead engages them through careful analysis and scholarly critique. Several researchers from diverse Islamic disciplines have played a significant role in the journal's continued success, including Mohammed Hashas, Aziz El Bakkali, Mohammed Dahiri, Mimoune Daoudi, Mehdi Berriah, Abdelaziz El Amrani, Hamied Al-Hashimi, Youssef Nouiouar, Abdelhak El Kouani, and others.

Third, despite the fact that less than two years have passed since its launch, and notwithstanding the considerable material, human, and technical challenges we face, the Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies has managed to maintain its continuity, articulate a clear research vision with well-defined objectives, and publish dozens of high-quality, peer-reviewed articles and reviews in accordance with international academic standards. We have also observed a growing number of citations of the journal's publications, a positive indicator of the quality and impact of its scholarly output. It is worth noting that the journal was originally registered with the Royal Library of Belgium as a quarterly publication in both Arabic and English. However, since

its launch in January 2024, it has been published semi-annually in a print and digital editions, combining Arabic and English contributions, alongside articles in other languages such as French and Dutch. The present issue represents an important milestone, as it inaugurates the publication of a separate English issue, also open to other European languages, to be followed by a dedicated Arabic issue.

The forth issue of Ijtihad Journal includes an editorial and four articles: three in English and one in Arabic, along with tow reviews in English, and one translation from Arabic to English of an article originally published in the journal's second issue.

The editorial is written by the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Tijani BOULAOUALI, and addresses three key issues. The first concerns the methodological approach adopted by the Ijtihad Journal, which is grounded in an internal perspective on Islam while engaging critically with Western Orientalist and epistemological frameworks. The second issue highlights the journal's success in attracting a new generation of young researchers who are collectively contributing to the emergence of an innovative research current in Europe and the West; one that seeks to reconcile Islamic intellectual traditions with Western academic knowledge. The third issue focuses on the positive development of the Ijtihad Journal, which, in less than two years, has succeeded in publishing a special English issue, with a separate Arabic issue scheduled for publication.

The first article, titled *Ibn Taymiyya as a Hermeneutical Paradigm: Reception and Reactivation of Medieval Islamic Thought in the Jihadist Discourse of Ayman al-Zawāhīrī*, is authored by Dr. Mehdi BERRIAH from Institut français du Proche-Orient (Ifpo). The article analyzes how Ayman al-Zawāhīrī reinterprets Ibn Taymiyya's thought as a transhistorical hermeneutical framework. Focusing on *al-Hiṣād al-murr*, it demonstrates how

medieval rulings are decontextualized and applied to modern Muslim states through concepts such as *al-ṭā’ifa al-mumtani‘a*, *al-walā’ wa-l-barā’*, and *Jihad*, thereby legitimizing political judgment and violence.

The second article, titled *Mapping Reformist Trajectories in Modern Islamic Thought Fazlur Rahman's Islamic Modernism: A Historiographical Analysis of His Intellectual Legacy (1919–1988)*, is written by Tamim RAIHAN from Arizona State University, USA. The article examines Fazlur Rahman's intellectual legacy as a key figure in Islamic modernism. It analyzes his reformist hermeneutics, particularly the Double Movement Theory, tracing the development and reception of his thought while highlighting his enduring influence on modern Islamic theology, education, and contemporary interpretive debates.

The third article, titled *Irregular Migration of Moroccan Minors to Spain: A Sociological Study of Religious and Cultural Identity*, is authored by Dounia SEFIANI from Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. In this study, she examines the irregular migration of Moroccan minors to Spain, focusing on the challenges they face during reception and the erosion of their religious and cultural identity. Using questionnaires and interviews, the article demonstrates how migration processes contribute to identity weakening, thereby addressing a gap in existing academic research.

The fourth article, titled *De mystieke benadering van Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī en Franciscus van Assisi: Een vergelijkende analyse van de kernwaarden ascese en liefde*, is authored by Marco AGUS and Dr. Tijani BOULAOUALI from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Written in Dutch, The article compares the mystical approaches of al-Ghazzālī and Francis of Assisi, focusing on asceticism and divine love. Drawing on al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā* 'ulūm al-dīn and key Franciscan texts, it demonstrates that al-Ghazzālī emphasizes inner detachment and spiritual purification, while Francis

embodies asceticism through radical poverty and active love. Both scholars view divine love as the ultimate path to spiritual perfection.

This issue also includes two book reviews. The first review, written by Ken AVONTS, examines Declan Henry's *The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement: The Truth Will Prevail*. The second review, authored by Abdelkarim EL GHAZI, discusses Majda Bouazza's *The Identity of Moroccan Migrants and the Question of Cultural Difference in the German Context: A Sociological Study*. In addition, this issue features an English translation of Dr. Abdelhak EL KOUANI's article, *The Jurisprudential Adaptation of Sham Divorce in the European Context*, translated by Chahida BOUHANOU.

Finally, with the publication of the new issue of the Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies, we are laying a new brick in the edifice of Islamic academic research in Europe and the West. We hold strong hopes of continuing to offer rigorous and high-quality contributions that examine the jurisprudential, theological, philosophical, literary, and linguistic heritage from an internal perspective, while remaining open, in an objective and critical spirit, to the richness and diversity of Western academic scholarship.

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