

Ijtihad Journal Continues to Consolidate Islamic Academic Knowledge in the European Context¹

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In fact, we are very pleased to announce the release of the fifth issue of *Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies* in Europe. This undoubtedly reflects the continued growth of this academic project. Through the *Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training* in Belgium, the journal seeks to support serious and high-quality research on Islam in the European and Western context. Since its launch, it has aimed to provide a scholarly platform that respects the rich

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heritage of Islamic scholarship while also engaging with modern academic approaches to the study of Islam and Muslim societies, including perspectives from Islamic studies, anthropology, sociology, and related fields.

The vision of Ijtihad Journal is based on the epistemological and methodological conviction that the study of Islam and the understanding of its historical, social, and intellectual dimensions require an objective, internal approach rooted in authentic Islamic sources and the interpretive logic of Islamic scholarship. This approach also actively engages with analytical tools, research methods, and scholarly findings from Western academic traditions. Such engagement enables the journal to benefit from scholarly and methodological advancements while critically evaluating interpretations that may deviate from scholarly objectivity or the realities of Islamic texts and their historical and cultural contexts.

Since its inception two years ago, the Ijtihad Journal, which appears twice a year, has achieved results that exceeded initial expectations. This is particularly evident in the high quality of the published studies and articles, which demonstrate scholarly rigor, intellectual diversity, and the ability to address current issues concerning Islam and Muslims in diverse contexts, especially within Western societies. The journal's growing reputation is further underscored by the increasing number of researchers and academics from Arab and European universities and research institutions that choose it as a platform for the dissemination of their work, thereby strengthening its scholarly presence and reputation.

A significant portion of this success is attributable to the strict editorial policy implemented since the journal's establishment. The editorial board maintains that academic credibility is achieved only through strict adherence to internationally recognized scholarly standards. Accordingly, submitted manuscripts undergo a comprehensive evaluation process, beginning with an initial screening for compliance with publication requirements and quality criteria. This is followed by a double-blind peer-review conducted by subject-matter experts. Authors are then required to revise their manuscripts based on reviewers' feedback. Subsequently, articles are subjected to linguistic and methodological editing before final review by the Editor-in-Chief.

This editorial policy has resulted in a highly selective publication process. Only approximately 25 percent of submitted manuscripts are accepted for

publication, while between 75 and 80 percent are rejected either because they fail to meet the required academic standards or because they contain substantial methodological shortcomings. Although such a rejection rate may appear high, it reflects the journal's commitment to maintaining the quality of its scholarly output and promoting a culture of rigorous academic research grounded in originality, methodological soundness, and intellectual precision.

These efforts have earned the journal increasing recognition within Arab and European academic and research circles. Articles published in the journal are now widely respected, cited, and acknowledged within various universities and research institutions. The journal has also been progressively indexed in several important databases and abstracting services, including the *Marefa* database affiliated with the Arab Citation and Impact Factor initiative (Arcif), Dar Almandumah, and the Arab Impact Factor, as well as several European and international indexing platforms. Furthermore, the journal has made significant progress in inclusion in additional international databases and indexing systems, and it is expected that these procedures will be completed in the near future after meeting certain technical and administrative requirements, thereby further enhancing its international visibility and academic reach.

Today, we present the fifth issue of our journal in its Arabic version, which continues to reflect the scientific approach established since the beginning of the journal. This issue features a collection of Islamic, intellectual, social, and humanistic studies concerning Islam and Muslims in contemporary contexts. The issue includes an editorial by Editor-in-Chief Dr. Tijani BOULAOUALI, five peer-reviewed research articles, three book reviews, an academic translation from English to Arabic, as well as a section highlighting news and activities of the *Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training* and presentations of recent publications related to Islamic studies and Islam in the West.

The research section begins with a study by Dr. Abdelhak EL KOUANI, titled "*The Principle of Considering Custom ('Urf) in the Maliki School and Its Impact on the Contemporary Issues of Muslims in the West.*" This article examines a central juristic principle in Maliki jurisprudence, emphasizing its *maqāṣid*-based dimensions and practical applications for addressing emerging issues encountered by Muslims in Western societies. The study highlights the necessity of understanding prevailing customs in new environments and their

significance in ensuring the appropriate application of Islamic rulings, while maintaining fidelity to foundational texts and sensitivity to social realities.

The second article, by Dr. Ilyas ELHANI, explores representations of women in contemporary Islamic thought through a critical epistemological perspective. It discusses the methodological and intellectual foundations underlying various conceptions of women within contemporary Islamic currents, aiming to move beyond traditional polemical approaches toward a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of women's issues within the broader project of renewal and *Ijtihād*.

Building on this examination, the third article by Dr. Lahcen AAFIR discusses anomalous fatwas and their impact on Muslims in Western countries. This topic is increasingly significant due to changes in Muslim minority communities, many religious authorities, and digital media spreading religious discourse. The study examines the intellectual and social consequences of such fatwas and urges stronger scholarly authority and responsible contemporary fatwa discourse.

In the fourth article, Ashraf LAROUSSE deals with institutional work among Muslim minorities from the perspective of both religious obligation and social necessity. The article emphasizes the significance of Islamic institutions in preserving religious identity, coordinating collective efforts, and fostering positive integration within Western societies, arguing that institutional engagement has become a religious, social, and civilizational necessity.

The fifth article, by Dr. Abdeallah ALBAKKALI, examines trends in Sufi epistemology and their positions regarding reason and rationality through an analytical study of Sufi theories of knowledge. The article reviews the major currents within the Sufi tradition concerning the relationship between reason, mystical unveiling, and spiritual experience, offering a critical analysis of their diversity and complexity and clarifying areas of convergence and divergence in their approaches to knowledge and truth.

The issue also includes three book reviews. The first review, by Dr. Aziz BAAZI, discusses Dr. Abdelmalek Hibaoui's book "*Annemarie Schimmel: A Bridge Between Islam and the West*," which offers an insightful examination of one of the most prominent German Orientalists who contributed significantly to fostering mutual understanding between the Islamic and Western worlds. The second review, by Dr. Mustafa Attia JUMAA, focuses

on Elbachir Lasyoud's book "*Building the Human Being Between Philosophy and Gnosis*," which seeks to reconcile rational and spiritual dimensions within a comprehensive vision of human development. The third review, by Mr. Abdelkarim ELGHAZI, examines Majda Bouazza's book "*The Identity of Moroccan Migrants and the Question of Cultural Difference in the German Context*," an important contribution to the fields of migration, identity, and integration studies within the European context.

This issue also features an Arabic translation of anthropologist Alexander Horstmann's study on secular and religious shelters and humanitarian support networks for Karen refugees and migrants in the border regions between Thailand and Myanmar. Prepared by Dr. Salah CHIG, this translation grants Arabic readers access to recent research in political and humanitarian anthropology, with a particular focus on the intersections of religion, humanitarian action, migration, and refugee issues.

The thematic and methodological diversity of this fifth issue reflects the journal's commitment to fostering an academic environment that welcomes multiple disciplines and perspectives, while upholding rigorous scholarly standards. This approach also demonstrates the editorial board's dedication to supporting studies that integrate Islamic scholarly traditions with critical analysis and empirical research, thereby advancing understanding of the transformations experienced by Muslims in contemporary contexts, particularly in Europe and the West.

In concluding this editorial, we extend our sincere gratitude to all researchers who entrusted the journal with their work and enriched this issue. We also thank the reviewers and experts who devoted time and expertise to improving submitted manuscripts and upholding high academic standards. We are grateful to the editorial board and the scientific, advisory, technical, and administrative committees. Their efforts made the publication of this issue possible.

Ghent – Belgium, June 14, 2026