

# Islamic Studies in the West and the Need for an Internal Approach<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The editorial article, titled *Islamic Studies in the West and the Need for a New Approach*, is written by Dr. Tijani Boulaouali, the Editor-in-Chief of the Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies in Europe. This topic is particularly important due to the urgent need to adopt an internal approach to Islam in Europe and the West, in addition to the external Western approaches that often strip Islam of its religious, jurisprudential, and historical specificities. An objective understanding of the nature of the Islamic religion can only be achieved by studying its original sources and observing the actual religiosity of Muslims.

The article is divided into three main sections. While first section addresses Islam from the perspective of external Western approaches, the second one highlights the importance of adopting an internal approach in Islamic studies in the West. The third section provides an overview of the articles and reviews included in the previous issue of the journal.

## KEYWORDS

Islamic Studies; Internal Approach; External Approach; Orientalism; Islamology.

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## ISLAM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXTERNAL WESTERN APPROACHES

When examining the history of intellectual and academic interaction with Islam in Europe and the West, one encounters a variety of theories and approaches that fall under what is known as Orientalist studies. In this regard, it is worth noting the dialectical and apologetic approaches that dominated traditional Orientalist studies for centuries, specifically from the first translation of the Qur'an into Latin in the twelfth century CE (1143) by Robert of Ketton (in Latin Rodbertus Ketenensis), up until the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, its influence persists to this day among some university researchers and theologians who remain committed to the old Orientalist and missionary theses<sup>1</sup>.

The paper seeks to highlight two examples of European academic researchers who adhered to the traditional apologetic approach in terms of their starting points, vision, and methodology. The first example concerns the Dutch Protestant theologian Dirk Sijblot Attema (1910–1989)<sup>2</sup>, particularly in his book *The Origin and Content of the Qur'an*. In this work, Attema seeks to widen the perceived gap between the Qur'an and the Bible, asserting that while the two books may appear similar, the “true nature” of the Qur'an will gradually become apparent to the reader as its ideas are examined. According to Attema, these ideas differ from what is “known and trusted,”<sup>3</sup> thereby elevating the Bible above the Qur'an.

The second example pertains to the Catholic theologian and academic Emilio Platti (1943–2021), who was Italian by origin and Belgian by upbringing and residence. After producing a series of engaging research studies and books on Islam, such as *Is Islam an Enemy by Nature? Is Islam Strange?* and *Islamism*, Platti published a book in 2021 titled *Rediscovering the Qur'an*. I previously reviewed this work in both Arabic and Dutch<sup>4</sup> and concluded that his approach, whether in the book on the Qur'an or in his earlier works, remains within the confines of traditional and contemporary Orientalist studies. These studies have historically approached

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<sup>1</sup> Vrolijk, Arnoud; Leeuwen (van), Richard, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands. A Short History in Portraits, 1580–1950*, trans. Hamilton, A., Brill, Leiden, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Daiber, Hans, In Memoriam prof. dr. D.S. Attema, in: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Jaarboek 1989/1999, (85–86).

<sup>3</sup> Attema, Dirk Sijbolt, *De Koran: zijn ontstaan en inhoud*, J.H. Kok, 1979, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Boulaouali, Tijani, Review of Emilio Platti's Book: *De Koran herontdekt (Rediscovering the Qur'an)*, Reviews Supplement, Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Sultanate of Oman, (10-11), July 2021.

the Qur'an outside its historical, theological and linguistic context without paying attention to the internal doctrinal and jurisprudential foundations that govern dealing with it.

Platti's methodology does not engage with the Qur'an as a text inspired by God, as unanimously agreed upon by the Muslim community; comprising individuals, groups, and scholars alike. Instead, his perspective views the Qur'an as a human-authored text, composed by the Prophet Muhammad and later modified by his Companions until it reached its present form. Furthermore, this approach reduces the Qur'an to nothing more than a human reinterpretation, in the Arabic language, of the contents of previous Jewish and Christian scriptures. This perspective is clearly reflected in Platti's critical historical approach, which does not truly "rediscover" the Qur'an but instead seeks to reinforce a series of longstanding Orientalist conclusions. These conclusions are often infused with an apologetic and dialectical tone, emphasizing a narrative that aligns with ancient and modern Orientalist interpretations<sup>1</sup>.

Since the nineteenth century, the early apologetic approach has been largely supplanted by new methodologies, such as philology and historical criticism. Philology<sup>2</sup>, in particular, has been employed by Orientalists as a linguistic and historically critical tool to analyze ancient Islamic texts, including the Qur'an, Hadith, and jurisprudential manuscripts. This approach aims to understand the original language and historical contexts in which these Islamic texts were written, providing in-depth, external academic interpretations of Islamic texts and the history of Islam.

The German Orientalist Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) is widely regarded as a pioneer of this trend. His foundational work, *The History of the Qur'an*, exemplifies the philological approach. In this book, Nöldeke restructured the surahs of the Qur'an based on historical and linguistic considerations, making him one of the first Orientalists to apply philological methods to the study of Qur'anic texts<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Boulaouali, Tijani, Review of Emilio Platti's Book 'De Koran herontdekt', November 8, 2021, <https://www.nieuwwij.nl/opinie/recensie-van-de-koran-herontdekt-van-emilio-platti/>.

<sup>2</sup> Philology (or linguistics) is the study of the history of language, including the historical study of literary texts (see Encyclopedia Britannica). Philology is also called historical and comparative linguistics, especially when the focus is on comparing the historical states of different languages. Philology is also known as the study of human speech, especially as a medium for literature and as a field of study that sheds light on cultural history (see Merriam Webster Dictionary).

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, et al. *The History of the Qur'an*, trans. Wolfgang H. Behn, Brill, Leiden -Boston, 2013.

Nöldeke was followed by the orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), who approached the Hadith and Sunnah from a philological and critical perspective, particularly in his book *Muhammadan Studies*, which is considered a significant reference in traditional orientalist studies of Islam<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the Australian orientalist Arthur Jeffery (1892–1959) focused on the study of the Qur’anic text and its historical evolution. In his book *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, he explores how the Qur’anic language was influenced by other languages<sup>2</sup>.

It is also worth mentioning the Dutch Arabist Michael Jan de Goeje (1836–1909), one of the pioneers in the study of Islamic geography and historical texts. He supervised a series of ancient Islamic texts as part of the *Arabic Geographical Literature* project<sup>3</sup>. In this context, the contributions of the German orientalist Joseph Schacht (1902–1969) cannot be overlooked. Schacht is regarded as a pioneer in the study of Islamic jurisprudence and the history of Islamic Law His book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*<sup>4</sup> remains one of the most important works in this field.

In addition, there are other Orientalists who focused on philological and historical-critical methodologies in their study of Qur’anic, Hadith, and Arabic literary texts, including Carl Brockelmann, Johann Fück, Reynold Nicholson, Hamilton Gibb, Friedrich Schwally, and others.

In the contemporary era, European researchers have developed new methodologies in their approach to Islamic studies in general and the Qur’an in particular. One notable development is the emergence of an approach that examines the origins of early Islam and questions the authenticity of its primary sources. Fred M. Donner has provided an overview of the most significant Western studies on early Islam, spanning from the work of the Scottish orientalist William Montgomery Watt to 2015, the year of the presentation of his lecture on this topic at the University of Edinburgh.

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<sup>1</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, (ed.) S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber & S. M. Stem, Aldine Publishing Company Chicago, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffery, Arthur, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Goeje, M. J. de (Michael Jan), *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum*, Brill, 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford University Press, London, 1950.

Donner identifies the German researcher Albrecht Noth (1937–1999) as one of the first scholars to critically examine early Islamic sources. In his doctoral dissertation<sup>1</sup>, Noth raised questions about the reliability of these sources. However, his work initially received limited attention because it was written in “a rather difficult German at that” and was not published by a specialized academic press until much later<sup>2</sup>.

Noth particularly questioned the accuracy of Islamic historical narratives about early Islam, especially the accounts of the conquests that followed immediately after the death of Muhammad. For the first time, he applied formal critical analysis and textual criticism, methods long used in studies of the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels, to these Islamic sources. However, Noth’s work primarily raised doubts about the reliability of traditional Islamic sources without proposing an alternative framework or perspective to replace them<sup>3</sup>.

In the midst of Orientalist studies of early Islam, the revisionist approach emerged in the 1970s. This approach posits that the Qur’an is not the word of God, as held in traditional Islamic sources, but rather the authorship of Muhammad himself. The German Orientalist Günter Lüling (1928–2014) was among the first to propose this idea, particularly in his university thesis on the original Qur’an: *Über den Ur-Koran. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qu’ran* (1970). However, his work did not gain widespread acceptance due to political and academic reasons. Lüling argued that the Qur’an was, in part, a reworking of ancient liturgical hymns belonging to a previously unknown Arabic-speaking Christian community in Mecca. According to his thesis, Muhammad began his life as a member of this Christian sect but disagreed with some of its doctrines. Consequently, he adapted these hymns to align with his evolving religious views<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps the most daring and challenging contribution to the internal Islamic approach, based on traditional Islamic sources, is John Wansbrough’s (1928–2002) book on the origins of the

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<sup>1</sup> Noth, Albrecht; Conrad, Lawrence I., *The Early Islamic Historical Tradition*, trans. Michael Bonner, Darwin Press, Princeton, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Donner, Fred M., *The Study of Islam’s Origins since W. Montgomery Watt’s Publications*, Presented Friday, November 23, 2015, at the University of Edinburgh, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 6-7.

Qur'an, published in 1977<sup>1</sup>. Wansbrough argues that the Qur'anic text was not primarily a product of Muhammad's time but rather emerged as a closed canon of earlier sacred texts over a period of more than two centuries. Furthermore, he suggests that the original context of the Qur'an's development was not Mecca, as traditionally believed, but somewhere in the Fertile Crescent, possibly southern Iraq, where religious debates among various sects were widespread. This implied that the traditional narrative about how Islam began was not just wrong, but was actually intentionally misleading."<sup>2</sup>

The noisy phase of the wave of revisionist scholarship, as Donner calls it, came first and foremost with the publication of *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* by Patricia Crone (1945–2015) and Michael Cook in 1977. Building on the skeptical views of their predecessors regarding the rise of Islam, such as Noth, Goldziher, Schacht, and possibly their colleague Wansbrough, Crone and Cook radically reshaped the narrative of early Islamic history. They dismissed Islamic sources as historically questionable and instead relied primarily on non-Islamic sources from the seventh century CE, written in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, and other languages<sup>3</sup>.

Crone and Cook proposed that Islam emerged when Jews, expelled by the Byzantines, fled Edessa to Arabia and joined Muhammad's followers in an effort to reclaim the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem, from Byzantine control. They further argued that Muhammad was still alive when the conquests of Palestine began and that the original Islamic sanctuary was located somewhere in northern Hijaz rather than Mecca. Perhaps most controversially, they claimed that the Caliph Abu Bakr never existed, suggesting he was "invented" to account for the gap between the revised date of Muhammad's death and the beginning of Umar's caliphate. According to their theory, Umar should have assumed the caliphate immediately after the Prophet's death. Donner interprets Crone and Cook's work as a direct challenge to historians

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<sup>1</sup> Wansbrough, John, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Foreword, Translation and Expanded Notes by Rippin, Andrew, Prometheus Books, New York, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Donner, p. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 8-9.

of early Islamic history, advocating for a rigorous critique of Islamic sources rather than an unquestioning acceptance of their religiously motivated narratives<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to the above ones, other approaches have emerged within the framework of the general revisionist trend, such as the inclusion of Islam in the studies of “late antiquity,” particularly with Peter Brown’s influential work *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (1971)<sup>2</sup>, as well as through papyrology and archaeological studies of the early stages of Islam<sup>3</sup>. Notably, the book *Early Islam*, edited by Guillaume Dye, brought together a collection of studies in which the authors sought to explore the history of the Qur’an and formative Islam using methodological tools traditionally applied in the study of the Bible and the New Testament. They adopted a multidisciplinary approach to early Islam, framing it as an integral part of the broader religious landscape of late antiquity<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, later revisionist Orientalist approaches introduced a range of interpretations. Some proposed the existence of an Arab monotheistic movement predating Muhammad, others questioned Muhammad’s historical existence, while some emphasized Arab nationalism as distinct from the Islamic state. Still, others viewed Islam as a reinterpretation or extension of Christianity<sup>5</sup>.

After this historical survey of major Western historical and revisionist critical approaches, Fred M. Donner concludes that these perspectives collectively contradict the traditional model, which posits that Islam emerged as a fully developed and distinct religion from the very beginning, at the time of Muhammad<sup>6</sup>. This traditional view is based on an internal approach that relies on Islamic sources, which we will address in the following section.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 13-15.

<sup>4</sup> Dye, Guillaume, *Early Islam The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?* Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Donner, p. 16-19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

## THE INTERNAL APPROACH AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE STUDIES OF ISLAM IN THE WEST

It appears from the previous paragraphs that the common denominator between the critical and revisionist Orientalist approaches is that they present and study Islam from an external perspective, and they adhere to the old Orientalist and apologetic theses that strip the Qur'an of its divine source, deny the prophethood of Muhammad, and consider Islam a mere copy of the two previous monotheistic religions: Judaism and Christianity. There are even those who exaggerate when they deny the connection between Islam and its divine origin, referring it to pagan origins, as Dozy did in his treatment of the Hajj rituals, and received severe critique from Snouck<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, these approaches cast doubt on traditional Islamic sources, and ignore or undermine them, stripping them of their historical and cognitive value, as is noted in an entire Orientalist movement in its dealings with the Prophet's biography. Harald Motzki mentions a group of absolute skeptics of the usefulness of Islamic sources in studying the Prophet's biography, namely: Leone Caetani, Henri Lammens, Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Schacht, Régis Blachère, John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, Uri Rubin, Jacqueline Chabbi, Wim Raven, Ibn Warraq, Marco Schöller, and Stephen J. Shoemaker. They share the view that it is not possible, or difficult, to reconstruct the history of the beginnings of Islam on the basis of Islamic sources<sup>2</sup>.

In contrast to the external orientalist approach, there is an internal Islamic one, which includes European and Western researchers who have studied Islam from within its original sources, without questioning their efficacy and importance. In addition to those who are absolutely skeptical about the sources of the Prophet's biography, Motzki highlights another category of skeptics who question certain detailed aspects. These include the issue of the longtime interval between the events of the Prophet's life and the late date of their recording.

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<sup>1</sup> Hurgronje, Christiaan Snouck, *Het Mekkaansche feest*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1880, p. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> Motzki, Harald, *Reconstruction of a Source of Ibn Ishāq's Life of the Prophet and the Early Qur'an Exegesis. A Study of Early Ibn 'Abbās Traditions*, pp. 9-19, p. 10.



Notable scholars in this category include Frants Buhl, W. Montgomery Watt, Maxime Rodinson, M. J. Kister, Michael Lecker or Tilman Nagel<sup>1</sup>.

What is striking, however, is that Motzki overlooked a group of contemporary Orientalists and Islamists who approached Islamic sources in general, and the sources of the Prophet's biography in particular, with openness and objectivity. They did not doubt to some extent the authenticity of these historical sources, nor did they completely reject the events, narratives and data they contain. Instead, they engaged with them as documented in the original Islamic sources, offering reasonable and objective discussions of some of their controversial aspects. Notable in this regard are scholars such as Van Koningsveld, Karen Armstrong, Hans Küng, John Esposito, Henk Vroom, Jonathan Brown, among many others.

Their studies of Islam intersect with what we call the internalist approach to Islam, which draws its vision from traditional Islamic sources without any problem. The significance of the internal approach to Islam in the West lies in its effort to understand and analyze the Islamic religion from within its own context and original sources, rather than interpreting it through external perspectives often tainted by cultural, political, ideological, or racial biases.

This approach emphasizes Islam's primary sources, namely, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Islamic jurisprudence, and the intellectual and spiritual legacy of Muslims throughout history. Its aim is to offer an authentic and comprehensive understanding of the various components of Islam, including faith, jurisprudence, ethics, and history, while steering clear of external interpretations and orientalist methods often characterized by stereotyping, generalizations, distortions, and projections. Thus, the concepts of "inside" and "outside" become crucial in delineating academic boundaries, defining the context of the texts, figures, and religious elements we study, and expressing our perspectives on the religions we analyze<sup>2</sup>.

The internal approach to Islam in Europe and the West not only contributes to providing a correct and foundational understanding of the Islamic religion, but also helps demarcate the methodological and cognitive boundaries between what is internal and external. This approach can further achieve several necessary objectives in the relationship of Muslims with their

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Knott, Kim, *Inside, Outside and the Space in-between: Territories and Boundaries in the Study of Religion*, *Temenos*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2008), 41-66. DOI: 10.33356/temenos.4597

pluralistic and secular Western reality. It allows European and Western Muslims to explore their religious and cultural identity in an objective and conscious manner. Additionally, it fosters dialogue between religions and philosophies, as the internal understanding of Islam is considered a necessary step for engaging in dialogue with religious or non-religious others. This dialogue aims to identify common denominators and establish civil and social coexistence.

Moreover, the internal approach presents Islam in a correct and accurate manner that refutes the stereotypes woven around it, correcting the ready-made judgments often promoted by ideological media and influenced by unjust political decisions. Some European researchers have recognized the importance of the internal approach to Islam, taking into account the nature of Islamic doctrine, jurisprudence, and ethics. In this context, it is worth mentioning the Dutch philosopher of religion Henk Vroom, who argued that “it is unreasonable to ask Muslims to put Islamic ethics aside. Of course, Muslims should ask for space to practice their own lives in their own way. It is clear that Muslims in the West will have to adapt to the rights and freedoms of others and to democracy.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, Vroom underscores the importance of the internal approach to Islam, even if he was looking from an external perspective.

Anthropological studies have played a significant role in the development of the internal (Emic) and external (Etic) approaches. The roots of the distinction between these internal and external perspectives can be traced back to the early twentieth century, with American linguist Kenneth L. Pike credited with introducing and formalizing these two concepts. The “Emic” approach refers to studying the beliefs, values, and practices of a particular culture from within, i.e., from the perspective of those who live within that culture, in order to understand their behaviors, traditions, and customs as they understand and practice them<sup>2</sup>. This aligns with the internal approach adopted at the Ijtihad Center and Journal, which aims to present and study Islam based on original Islamic sources and the faith, moral, and social experiences of Muslims. This contributes to a correct and objective understanding of Islam and the religiosity of Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> Vroom, Henk, *Plaatsbepaling christelijk geloof in een seculiere en plurale cultuur*, Meinema, Zoetermeer, 2006, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Mostowlansky, Till; Rota, Andrea, *Emic and Etic*, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, (eds) Felix, Stein, et al., 2020, <http://doi.org/10.29164/20emicetic>

On the other hand, the “Etic” approach refers to the external perspective, where researchers who do not belong to that culture observe and analyze its behaviors and practices to understand their functional or evolutionary importance<sup>1</sup>. This approach is contrasted to European and Western studies, which often engage with Islam from an external academic viewpoint. In these studies, Islam is typically examined through the lens of Orientalism in its various forms: apologetic, historical-critical, revisionist, and others. This external approach remains prevalent in most European and Western universities and research centers. However, there are a few exceptions, such as some faculties of theology and religious studies, as well as teacher training schools, where Islam is studied from its original sources with openness to various Western perspectives and readings of Islam.

The internal approach to Islam has become a necessity today, especially in European and Western academic studies that deal with various aspects of Islam, such as doctrine, jurisprudence, Qur’an interpretation, history, and ethics. This approach targets not only all categories of Western Muslims, including recent generations and new converts, but also everyone with a connection to Islam through study, knowledge, and interest. The importance of the internal approach to Islam in Europe and the West, as indicated above, is determined by the fact that it presents Islam as it is in its approved sources and as Muslims practice it in reality. This is a necessary step for anyone who wishes to acquire objective knowledge about any religion or culture, as we cannot understand Islam correctly if we reject its original sources and seek to replace them with external sources. These sources, often presented by Orientalists, revisionists, and Islamologists, are alien to the history and reality of Muslims on the one hand, and were composed by non-Muslims in exceptional circumstances characterized by conflict, rejection, and skepticism on the other hand.

The internal approach cannot be dispensed with in the process of building the self and identity of Muslims in Europe and the West. It is not possible to establish mutual coexistence and an objective understanding of the other in the absence of the necessary knowledge of the self. This knowledge is rooted in understanding the Islamic vision of the Creator, humanity, society, and existence, as well as realizing the universal values brought by the Qur’an and the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Sunnah of the Prophet, or giving them an Islamic character that does not conflict with what is human. Perhaps the reason for many of the problems that Muslims in general, and Muslims in Europe and the West in particular, suffer from today is ignorance of the internal Islamic perspective. The narrower this gap is, the wider the scope of understanding and the broader the vision will be. This contributes to building a solid and balanced personality, rooted in its original identity, while remaining open to foreign knowledge, interpretations, and values.

The internal approach to Islam in Europe and the West will not be strengthened except through four essential mechanisms: Islamic education, dialogue, media, and academic research. The educational mechanism is not limited to establishing purely Islamic institutions that present Islam from an internal perspective, such as the parallel Islamic education offered during weekends, or in Islamic colleges and institutes spread across many major European capitals and cities, or in some experiments in Islamic education within formal education present in a number of European countries, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Britain, and others. It appears that most of these types of education are organized by Muslims themselves. In addition, academic initiatives have been launched by European universities and academic institutions that adopt an internal approach to teaching Islam. It is worth noting that most of the colleges for training Islamic religious teachers accredited by the Belgian and Dutch ministries of education teach Islamic sciences from an internal Islamic perspective<sup>1</sup>. This applies to institutions such as the VU University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands<sup>2</sup> and the KU Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven) in Belgium<sup>3</sup>, where Islam is presented primarily in the faculties

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<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands there are academic trainings aimed at teachers of Islamic religion, where Islam is usually taught from an internal perspective. We refer here to the Regional Training Centre (ROC), the Fontiches College of Applied Sciences, and the Windsheim College of Applied Sciences. See the following two links for more information:

<https://www.roc.nl/default.php?fr=details&id=2159>

<https://www.deeltijd-opleidingen.nl/onderwijs/lerarenopleidinggodsdienst/>

In Belgium, the training of Islamic religion teachers at the primary and secondary levels is organized within the framework of what is called the Bachelor of Education. This training is available in six colleges in the Flanders region: Erasmus College in Brussels, Odyssey College in Brussels, Thomas More College in Mechelen, Artveld College in Ghent, Artesis Plantin College in Unvers, and the University Colleges of Leuven and Limburg. The websites of these colleges can be found through the link below:

[https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/hoger/hoger\\_detail.php?richting=182](https://www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/hoger/hoger_detail.php?richting=182)

<sup>2</sup> See the Islamic formations page on the VU University website:

<https://vu.nl/nl/onderwijs/bachelor/theologie-en-religiewetenschappen/traject/islam>

<sup>3</sup> See the Islamic Studies page on the KU Leuven website:

of theology and religious studies based on its original sources, with openness to Western Orientalist and Islamologic studies.

As for the dialogue mechanism, it is indispensable in the European and Western context, which is characterized by religious, cultural, and social pluralism. This dialogue brings together various components of society and enhances cooperation, coexistence, and integration. True dialogue will only achieve its goals through mutual acquaintance, in which each party presents itself based on its internal vision of the beliefs it holds and the acts of worship it practices. This type of dialogue is referred to as the “dialogue of life,” where people meet to spontaneously discuss beliefs, acts of worship, and holy books<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, the media can play an important role in presenting Islam as Muslims believe and practice it, through various programs, meetings, and reports that address the issues of faith, jurisprudence, society, and the history of Islam according to authentic Islamic sources and based on the reality of Muslims. This will provide an objective and correct image of Islam, refuting ready-made, stereotypical, projective, and generalizing judgments. Many media programs, documentaries, and digital platforms have emerged over the last decade in various European and Western contexts and in various languages, including a significant segment that contributes to bringing Islam closer from an internal perspective. However, these platforms need cognitive and methodological guidance to avoid remaining confined to a closed understanding and intellectual isolation.

Moreover, the mechanism of scientific research cannot be ignored. Although this is of great importance in approaching Islam through academic studies and methodological research, Islamic centers and institutions in Europe and the West have not yet fully realized its value. This may be because they usually focus on the traditional teaching of the Arabic language, the Qur’an, and Islamic sciences without allocating sufficient space to scientific research in Islamic sciences and related topics, particularly the new issues and incidents that affect Muslims in the West today. These issues can only be understood by conducting in-depth studies that consider the new context in which Muslims live today. Unfortunately, specialized research on Islam and

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<https://theo.kuleuven.be/nl/toekomstigestudenten/islam-studeren>

<sup>1</sup> Vroom, Henk, *Een waaijer van visies, godsdienstfilosofie en pluralisme*, p. 259-260.

Muslims in the West, from an internal Islamic perspective that adheres to methodological and research standards recognized by universities, is rare. There are studies written by Muslim researchers in the form of articles, studies, and academic dissertations, but they are not framed by a clear internal vision and tangible goals derived from the original Islamic references.

This is in fact one of the reasons that led to inaugurating the Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training and to publish the Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies in Europe, where we adopt an internal approach to Islam, in contrast to Orientalist, Islamological, and revisionist studies that address the topics, texts, and concepts of Islam from an external perspective.

### ARTICLES AND REVIEWS OF THE SECOND ISSUE

The second issue of *Ijtihad Journal* has been divided into the three main sections, such as articles, reviews, and translations, with some new additions aimed at enhancing the content of the journal and keeping pace with scientific, intellectual, and academic activities related to or intersecting with the journal's editorial, cognitive, and methodological vision. This is a necessary step for two important reasons. The first is to follow the status of Islamic studies in the European and Western context, particularly in its research dimension, which includes studies, reviews, seminars, training, and intellectual interactions. The second is to systematically document activities, events, and publications related to Islamic studies in Europe and the West. The new sections will complement the main sections and strengthen the internal and comprehensive approach that we adopt, both at the *Ijtihad Center* and in the *Ijtihad Journal*. They will also open up new opportunities for students, researchers, interested parties, and specialists to explore the latest publications, seminars, and research projects.

The new sections are as follows: Publications, Miscellaneous, and News of the *Ijtihad Center*, and we aim to activate other sections in the future, such as Academic Interviews and University Theses. In the Publications section, we will include new works related to or intersecting with the topics of Islam in the European and Western context, regardless of the languages in which they were written or the contexts in which they were issued. The Miscellaneous section will cover various events, news, statistics, reports, and activities of fellow researchers from universities, centers, and institutions inside and outside Europe, as long

as they focus on Islam and Muslims in Europe and the West, or overlap with them in some way. Finally, the *Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training in Belgium* will have its own space in the journal, where we will present the various activities we regularly organize at the center, either to introduce or document them.

The second issue of the journal includes an editorial article and eleven articles: three in English and eight in Arabic, along with three reviews in French, English, and Arabic, and one translation from Arabic to English of an article published in the first issue of the journal. This translation is part of a tradition we aim to establish, where one article from each issue will be translated into English and published in the next issue. Over time, this will build a translation collection of studies and articles addressing various issues such as faith, jurisprudence, Qur'an interpretation, Hadith, theology, Sufism, and Islamic history. This translation effort adds significant value, especially in light of the growing demand for reading about Islam by non-Arabic speaking groups, including new generations of Muslims, converts, and non-Muslims.

It is worth noting that the journal received more than fifty articles and a few reviews for publication in the second issue. After internal reading and double-blind peer review, 30% to 40% of the articles that did not meet the methodological publishing standards or the quality of academic writing were rejected. The remaining articles were accepted after double blind review and final proofreading, and were distributed in the second and third issues of the journal.

The editorial article is written by the editor-in-chief, Dr. Tijani Boulaouali, who discussed the concept of the internal approach to Islam in Europe and the West. He emphasized the importance of this topic, noting the urgent need to adopt an internal approach to Islam, as opposed to external Western approaches that strip it of its religious, jurisprudential, and historical specificities. An objective understanding of Islam can only be achieved by studying its original sources and observing the real religiosity of Muslims, which can help avoid errors and fallacies often seen in the media, social networks, political statements, and even in academic studies.

In addition, the editor-in-chief provided an overview of the works published in this issue to acquaint the reader with the most important contents and issues addressed by the researchers.

The first article, titled *The Jurisprudential Adaptation of Sham Divorce in the European Context*, is written by Dr. Abdelhak EL KOUANI, a member of the Scientific Committee of the European Council of Muslims in Germany. The article addressed the phenomenon of “Sham Divorce,” which is prevalent among Muslims in European countries and has raised many jurisprudential questions. The article contributed to addressing this issue through four sections: the first section defined the concept of sham divorce, the second section discussed the reasons for this type of divorce and its forms in the European context, the third section reviewed the views of contemporary Muslim jurists on the ruling of fictitious divorce in the European context, and the fourth section concluded by offering the most appropriate opinion on this issue.

The second article, titled *The Pantheistic Reading of Islam: Conflating the Transcendental Islam with the Historical Muslimanic*, is written by Ahmed Amir Mohamed FARES, from the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Arts at the KU Leuven in Belgium. He discusses the blurred boundaries between normative Islam as a reference for values and Muslims in history, as they interact over time and space with the normative source of Islam. This paradox is not limited to Western studies but is also present in traditional Islamic literature. The researcher calls for distinguishing between the actions of Muslims throughout history and the normative values of Islam, as this constitutes a fundamental starting point to avoid cognitive confusion. He also suggests using the term “*Muslimanic*” as a solution to overcome this terminological and epistemological confusion.

The third article, titled *The Jurisprudence of the Friday Sermon in the European Context*, is written by Selaiman Wagueg IDRISSE from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco. In this article, he discusses the importance of the Friday sermon in the European context, where civilizations intertwine, cultures converge, and backgrounds diversify. As a result, the Friday sermon gains additional value, becoming a platform from which we can address our realities, engage with our issues, build bridges of communication with our societies, and strengthen our Islamic identity. The article is divided into five sections: the importance of the Friday sermon in Islam and the European context, the functions of the Friday sermon in Europe, the characteristics of an effective Friday sermon in



Europe, and a set of proposals for its development in the European context. In addition, the article includes a field study.

The fourth article, titled *Applying the Principle of ‘Considering Differences’ and Clarifying Legal Rulings on Jurisprudential Issues in the European Context*, is written by Hamza BENBOUBEKRI from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Mohammed I University in Oujda, Morocco. This article discusses the jurisprudential rule of “taking into account disagreement” when issuing Sharia rulings on emerging questions and issues. This rule is especially necessary in the contemporary European context, where jurists refer to the opinions and rulings of imams to derive appropriate decisions, while avoiding excessive leniency or exaggerated severity. The researcher also distinguishes between “the consideration of different” and “avoiding disputed matters,” emphasizing the flexibility afforded by the “principle of considering differing opinions,” especially within the Maliki school, which is prevalent in Morocco, Africa, and some European countries.

The fifth article, titled *The Obscenity of Adultery between Judaism and Islam: A Comparative Critical Analytical Study*, is written by Abdelmalek AYAD from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez Sais, Morocco. This article examines the issue of adultery, a sin rejected by both Judaism and Islam. Judaism prescribes the punishment of stoning in various forms, including drowning, burning, or stoning to death, without distinguishing between humans and animals or between married and unmarried people, and with no conditions for its application. In contrast, Islamic law is more merciful, applying stoning only to married individuals, with strict conditions to prevent suspicion and preserve privacy and honor.

The sixth article, titled *The Religious Approach to Combating Radicalism in Morocco*, is written in English by Dr. Abdelali AL-MOUTAKI from the Faculty of Sharia at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir, Morocco, and Dr. Mustapha AIT KHAROUACH from the College of Education and Arts at Lusail University in Qatar. The authors address the issue of extremism, which has had global repercussions since “Black Tuesday” (September 11, 2001), affecting various parts of the world, including Morocco. The article reveals how Morocco, affected by terrorism both in terms of terrorist attacks and as a source of individuals affiliated with terrorist

groups, has developed alternatives since 2003 to combat religious radicalism. This includes religious approaches, as well as the context, methodologies, and mechanisms of their operation.

The seventh article, titled *The Influence of Arab-Islamic Thought and Culture on Jewish Philosophers and Thinkers: Ibn Kammuna as a Model*, is written by Youssef CHATER and Charif ELGLITI from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Morocco. This article examines the influence of Arab-Islamic thought on Jewish philosophy, specifically the thought of Ibn Kammuna. The researchers explore the reasons and factors behind this influence and highlight its manifestations in Ibn Kammuna's books, opinions, and positions. They focus on Ibn Kammuna as the best example of Jewish-Islamic intellectual cross-pollination, noting his close relationship with Islamic civilization. He is considered one of its own, having grown up within it, been nurtured by it, and written in the style of its scholars.

The eighth article, titled *Does the First Latin Quran Translation Mark a Shift from Ignorance to Understanding? A Critique of Richard Southern's Thesis*, is written by Dr. El Hassan ASSOUIK, a professor and researcher at the Multidisciplinary Faculty in Nador, affiliated with Mohammed I University in Oujda, Morocco. In this article, he reviews the historical context of the first Latin translation of the Qur'an, completed by Robert of Ketton in 1143 AD, under the commission of Peter the Venerable, the Abbot of the Monastery of Cluny, as the first Oriental translation. He also discusses the ideological background of this project, particularly the influence of Byzantine theologians, such as John of Damascus and Abdul-Masih bin Ishaq Al-Kindi, which led to the deliberate distortion of the Qur'anic text and biased judgments presented in the introduction to the translation. Furthermore, the researcher expresses hesitation regarding the translation of John of Shaqoubi, which was more faithful to the original text, indicating that the failure of the first translation was not due to external reasons, but rather the nature and objectives of the project, which were aimed at refuting Islam rather than understanding it, as the researcher concludes.

The ninth article, titled *The Claim the Absence of Islamic of Values in Islamic Jurisprudence: The Issue of the Lineage of a Child Born out of Wedlock as a Model*, is by Dr. Mohammed ABAJTIT, President of the Manahil Center for Studies, Research, and Heritage

Revival in Morocco. This article aims to uncover the relationship between Islamic jurisprudence and values and morals, refuting the claim that Islamic jurisprudence is free of values and that jurists do not take them into account when implementing Islamic law. The researcher provides a theoretical framework for understanding the basic concept of values in Islamic jurisprudence and law. He then moves from theory to practice by analyzing the issue of proving the lineage of a child born out of wedlock, considering its relationship to the values of child care through various legislative and jurisprudential resources.

The tenth article is written by Dr. Mohammed GARMAT, President of the Moroccan Center for Sahrawi Cultural and Historical Studies in Laayoune, Morocco, and is titled *The Intellectual Capital of Participatory Banks in the Knowledge Economy: Reality and Prospects*. The researcher emphasizes the importance of intellectual capital as the most valuable asset in the knowledge economy, which emerged at the end of the twentieth century. In this new economy, knowledge has become one of the main assets for economic and social growth, shifting the focus from competition for scarce resources to competition for the largest possible share of knowledge. This transformation requires paying attention to scientific intellectual forces capable of advancing projects and achieving a competitive advantage for institutions, particularly Islamic/participatory banks, which must focus on this type of capital.

The eleventh article, in English, is titled *The Mediating Role of Economic Security in the Conflict Between Family Requirements and Professional Duties Among Teachers in Yemen*, and is authored by Dr. Mabrook Saleh AL-SOUDI from the Faculty of Education at Amran University in Yemen. The study explores the mediating role of economic security in the conflict between family requirements and professional duties among teachers in Yemen. The researcher employs a qualitative research methodology, collecting and analyzing data through semi-structured interviews with a random sample of 133 male and female teachers from various Yemeni regions. The study concludes that the difficult economic conditions in Yemen have led to increased feelings of economic insecurity among teachers, whose irregular salaries hinder their ability to meet their families' needs. This insecurity negatively impacts their professional duties and increases psychological pressure, contributing to various family, professional, and material challenges.

The second issue of the journal also includes three reviews. The first review, in French, is by Dr. Luc BARBULESCO from the University of Côte d'Azur in Nice, France. He highlights one of the most significant European academic projects on the Qur'an: *The Qur'an of Historians: History of the Text, Historiography, History*, authored by Ali Amir Moezzi and Guillaume Dye, and published in 2019 in Paris. This three-volume work, spanning 3408 pages, provides an assessment of the historical dimension of the Qur'an, reviewing the general context of its revelation, followed by an analysis of each surah and verse, including their reading, translation, and interpretation.

The second review, in English, focuses on the book *Islam, Secularism and the Muslim Dilemma* by Sayed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, published in 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The review is presented by Youssef EL-ASSIJI from Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco.

The third review, in Arabic, discusses *Feminism Now: Provocative Issues and Open Fronts* by the Spanish researcher and philosopher Amelia Volcarcel, published by Catedra Publications in Madrid in 2019. It was reviewed by Dr. Kelthoum BOUTALEB from the Comparative Studies Laboratory at Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco.

Additionally, the second issue of the magazine includes a translation of Dr. Nouraddin KARRAT's article *The Objectives of Islamic Law and Their Relationship to Legal Evidence*. This translation is part of an initiative introduced by the journal to select and translate one article from each issue into English for publication in the following issue. The translation was carried out by Sara EL HADI from Mohammed V University in Rabat, an active member of the *Ijtihad Center for Studies and Training*.

What distinguishes the second issue is that it includes new sections, as mentioned above. First, the publications section that focus on issues of Islam in Europe and the West, or intersect with them in some aspects. Second, the news section of the *Ijtihad Center*, which aims to introduce and document them. Third, the Miscellaneous section that serves as a space to highlight various research, intellectual, and academic activities and events organized around Islam in the West.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the contributors to the second issue of *The Ijtihad Journal for Islamic and Arabic Studies in Europe*. They are divided into three

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