

**A STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY WESTERN
ACADEMIC APPROACHES TO HISTORY
OF THE QUR'ĀN: THE CASE OF
ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE QUR'ĀN**

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The history of the Qur'ānic text is a central point of western studies due to its vitality and significance. In the present century, many anthological works produced by the western scholarship offer a large portion to this subject.

What increases its significance is the contemporary western claims concerning the objective and impartial nature of their researches in this regard. This paper endeavors to highlight the major characteristics of contemporary western approaches to the issue of compilation. For this reason, the data in Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān is selected. Moreover, the paper draws special attention to the advancements with regard to this topic.

The paper concludes that for a better and objective understanding towards intellectual issues, it is essential for western scholarship to free itself from the bias and partiality.

Key Words: *Qur'ān, Compilation, West, Scholarship, Objectivity*

Introduction

The Qur'ān, being the Final Message of Allah, enjoys a fundamental status in Muslim societies. Due to its vital role, it has been the focus of western scholars' research in the past. In the present era as well, a massive upsurge in the production of academic literature in Qur'ānic

studies can be witnessed. Diverse approaches are used in western academia to study themes of Qur'ānic studies, such as History of the Qur'ān with its sub-branches.

A point to note is that despite the huge production of literature, non-Muslim scholarship could not gain acceptance in the Muslim world. There are many factors that affected the credibility of the Western Qur'ānic scholarship in the Muslim eye. Mostly, Muslims have related this work to the tradition of orientalism that had its own agendas and plans associated with political power and dominance, as denoted by Edward Said in his works.¹

Classical polemical works influenced Muslim thought to the extent that generally they discard Western academic scholarship, setting it in the archetype of polemic tradition. Although, one can witness a variety of styles and methodologies in the works of western scholars, yet what cannot be overlooked is the uniformity of their findings.

The consensus of western scholars on the basic themes of Qur'ānic studies affected their credibility in the Muslim eye. Hence, a sense of disapproval for western academic works can be observed in the writings of even modern Muslim scholars.² One fine example can be of the late Fazl-ul- Reḥmān, who convincingly says that the western attempts in the field of Qur'ānic studies are nothing except uncontrolled and wishful thinking with so-called canons of objectivity.³ Fahad interprets western scholarship as 'scholarly injuries' inflicted upon the Muslims.⁴

It might be for this reason that the majority of Muslim opinion does not rank the Western Qur'ānic scholarship in high esteem. Moreover, oriental scholarship, according to them, has not tried to study Islam according to the understanding of its devotees and hence it has its counterpart in the medieval Qur'ānic scholarship.⁵ On the other hand, contemporary western scholars hold the view that western academia is endeavoring to study Islam applying the new research tools that guarantee a dispassionate and objective study of the Qur'ān.⁶ Furthermore, the Enlightenment has changed the old style and set advanced frameworks for the study of the Qur'ān.⁷ A glance backward demonstrates towards an evolution in the phases of the Western Islamic studies. The medieval image of the Prophet Muhammad from the false Prophet and a mere fraud has developed in the modern ages to his recognition as a sincere leader. Even in many writings, he has been acknowledged as a true prophet although for his own time. For instance, the traces of this approach can be found in the works of Thomas Carlyle (d.1881), and Karen Armstrong. Moreover, their description of the Qur'ān as an absurd and

patchwork has changed to its recognition as a great book that had its lasting influence on the world civilization. At present, one can observe a massive upsurge in producing academic literature on the Qur'ān covering its history, manuscripts, literary styles, themes etc. This transformation of style and approaches in the study of Islam in general and the Qur'ān in specific is an aftermath of the grave change in the entire paradigm of the Western studies of art, science and religion in Modern Times.

Besides, another factor that influenced the overall methodological approaches towards the Qur'ānic studies is the Muslim contribution in the Western academia. It is quite evident that many of the renowned Muslim scholars such as Sayyed Husien Nasr, Fazlur Rehman (d.1988), Mustansir Mir, Abdullah Saeed have affected the Western academia to some extent with their contribution.

This paper intends to throw light on the issue by a critical examination of recent western academic contribution to the theme of the history of the Qur'ān, considering specifically the case of the 'Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān' by Brill. The said compendium is the foremost work devoted entirely to the Qur'ān and is a major outcome of the joint academic endeavors of western scholarship.

A critical analytical approach is followed for the evaluation of data in this paper. Likewise, the important tools that are employed for the systematic study of the material are taken from the basic standards of research methods in religious studies and the science of critical thinking.⁸ Researchers across the world are supposed to follow some technical rules in academic writing, be it related to science or religion. The negligence of these principles can affect the quality of the work. Some among these are as followings:

1. A researcher is supposed to represent 'others' fairly. He/She should respect the dignity of the subject as it has the right to be represented truly.
2. Impartiality is among the most significant prerequisites of any scholarship that claims to hold a just view on a question.
3. A researcher is supposed to build his arguments rationally.
4. He/She must NOT distort the evidence and facts. Moreover, he/she must NOT influence his/her readers by compelling expressions or argumentative deception.
5. A scholar should realize that the job of his/her scholarship is the betterment of intellectual understanding and NOT putting others down.

An introduction to 'Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān':

The abundance of academic works in the genre of Qur'ānic studies in the West determines the fact that it is a primary focus of the contemporary scholarship there. In this respect, some publishing companies are of grave significance. Brill, a publishing house founded in 1683, with the mission statement: 'to be a leading internationally publishing house in all domains of sciences' is one fine instance. Many significant, valuable and famous books have been published by Brill in the field of Qur'ānic studies in the last two centuries.⁹

In the 20th century, western academia claimed to produce the century's best work i.e. the Encyclopaedia of Islam. They also count the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān as an excellent and remarkable success of the 21st century.

After looking at the response to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān was designed to be more 'academic' and 'scientific' in approach and style. It is an extensive project on Qur'ānic studies. It is enormous and massive having almost 2919 pages in five volumes with an additional index volume of 860 pages. The back cover claims EQ to be the first multi-volume reference work on Qur'ān with nearly 1000 entries. The assertion of the participation of hundreds of scholars from both Muslims and non-Muslims illustrates that the plurality of perspectives abounds in EQ. It combines alphabetically arranged articles about the contents and themes of the Qur'ān that lie within the arena of Qur'ānic studies.

By browsing the pages of the preface, one can easily identify the objectives for creating the encyclopaedia. The most crucial of them is to generate a work that can be the best embodiment of 'scientific' and 'objective' study of the Qur'ān.¹⁰ Another important factor, according to the preface, is to bridge the intellectual gap that was created by the centuries confined scholarship of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars.¹¹ Hence, for the achievement of this task, several Muslim scholars and researchers were invited to contribute in this work by the editorial team that consisted of Jane Demmen McAuliffe,¹² Andrew Rippin,¹³ Uri Rubin,¹⁴ Angelika Neuwirth¹⁵, and Muhammad Arkoun.¹⁶ It is important to note the reception of this huge compendium in the Muslim world. A blend of opinions can be witnessed in this regard. Generally, Muslim scholars strongly nullify this piece of western scholarship. Connecting this academic contribution to the tradition

of orientalism, they consider it a new wine in an old bottle.¹⁷ Another Muslim scholar declares it a propaganda rather than learning.¹⁸ Therefore, the causes for the pejorative attitude of the Muslim scholars towards Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān must be assessed. Perhaps there are some sound realities that led them to disapprove of the work. Taking a brief glance at some of the key features of this work may help explain this to some extent.

Muslim contribution in the EQ is highlighted frequently by western scholars and mostly is introduced as an essential feature of the EQ. This paper argues that the fact is not as claimed by the western academy. Almost 278 authors have contributed to the EQ. Among them, there are 50 Muslim authors and the overall number of their entries is 111 out of 694. This statistical assessment demonstrates that from the entire material of the EQ, data coming from the Muslim pen is fifteen percent only.

Moreover, there are approximately 36 articles associated with the Qur'ānic sciences. Apart from three, all of these essential articles are contributed by non-Muslim scholars, thus making their involvement ninety-two percent in general. All significant entries, relating to revelation, compilation and chronology of the Qur'ān are primarily written by non-Muslims. This data can easily demonstrate the actual ratio of the Muslim contribution in this work. It is also noticeable, that the Muslim scholars who sustain a pivotal position in the managerial team of EQ do not represent the well-established Muslim point of view.

It is quite manifest that Muslim scholars' contribution has been marginal in the overall material. The examination of the Qur'ānic terminologies demonstrates that all fundamental issues of the beliefs are written by the non-Muslims, e.g., God, Muhammad, Sūrah, Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān, etc. The Muslim scholars were assigned topics of trivial nature such as 'Trips', 'Sinai', 'Ships', 'Barrier' etc. For the Muslim contribution to be significant, they should also have been given the essential themes of the Qur'ān to address.

Another issue worth mentioning is that traditional western writers often undervalue the importance of Muslim scholarship. In many traditional and contemporary writings, the tendency of "we know better" can be witnessed. A likewise treatment can be observed in numerous entries of the EQ. This basic thread that runs through the entire EQ is taken from the preface where the editor shows her reservations concerning the ambiguous nature of the Muslim scholarship.¹⁹

As a result of the pejorative effects of the traditional polemical

works, an unbroken chain of ideas can be identified in many regards. Specifically, the idea of the borrowed nature of Islam and the Qur'ān and a derogatory image of Muslim scholarship is entrenched in western works, both classical and contemporary. Concerning the notion of the borrowing nature of Islam, al- Aẓamī says that it is both assuming and aggravating how determined orientalist are to credit other cultures for every achievement of Islam- even something as simple as the separating of one verse from next with a dot.²⁰

The case of history of the Qur'ān:

The history of the text covers a range of subjects such as the origin, process of compilation, multiple readings and codices of Companions. The more significance it has, the more complex it is. The reason to list the topic as complex can be demonstrated by the fact that generally it generates sensitivity among the Muslims. To elaborate, the basic factor that has influenced the image of Western scholarship in the Muslim eye is their treatment of the issue of compilation, or in other words, the history of the Qur'ān. Moreover, it is important since all other issues subordinate it. This is the core question that is dealt with by foremost western scholars due to its significance. Hence, traditional western scholarship puts great emphasis on this topic. Modern western scholars also discuss the collection of the Qur'ān with the same frequency.

The Muslim Standpoint on the history of the Qur'ān:

According to the conventional Muslim understanding, the Qur'ān was sent down in fragments over a span of almost twenty-three years. Since it was not revealed in one go, its preservation in one compiled form was impossible. Thus, there arises the question of how the segregated content was put together. Moreover, does the existing Qur'ān represent the same text revealed to the Prophet? Muslim traditions report all these issues. Here, only the important details of the traditional Sunnite view are mentioned.

The word that is used for the entire course of the preservation of the Qur'ān is *Jam'*, which means collection, assemblage and gathering.²¹ In Qur'ānic Sciences, this term refers to the acts of memorization of the Qur'ān and its writing. The word with its inference to the writing denotes three historical phases.

1. The era of the Prophet (ﷺ)
2. The period of the caliph Abū- Bakr (R.A.)
3. The time of Caliph ‘Uthmān (R.A.)

The tradition states that the Qur’ānic text was preserved by the means of memorization and writing alike. During the age of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), he used to memorize every word of the Qur’ān, as did his companions. At the time of his demise, many Companions had memorized either the entire text or some parts of it. Many Muslim scholars have cited the names of those Companions.²²

As far as the writing is concerned, Muslims are agreed on the opinion that whenever the revelation descended, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered his scribes to record it in writing. Historical accounts have listed at least 40 scribes who accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) for this purpose.²³ It is reported that different materials were used for writing, such as ‘*Usub* (bark of palm trees), *likhāf* (stones), *Adīm* (leather) *Riq’* (Parchment), *Aktāf* (bones), and *Aktāb* (pieces of saddle-wood).²⁴

At the time of the Prophet’s death, the entire Qur’ān was written down, but not in the form of a complete book. During the reign of Abū-Bakr (R.A.), as a result of the deaths of various Ḥuffāz, it was feared that most parts of the Qur’ān would be lost unless a written copy was prepared. Consequently, Zaid bin Thābit (R.A.) was appointed to collect the Qur’ān in one place. In the process of collection, he took extraordinary precautionary measures to ensure accuracy and precision. In these copies, the verses were arranged but the surahs were not. Instead, every surah was written and kept separately. This was called *Ṣuḥuf*.²⁵

During the time of ‘Uthmān, disputes arose among people in the recitation of the Qur’ān. When he was informed about these clashes by his general Ḥuḍayfah (R.A.) ibn al-Yaman, he constituted a committee of four people, Zaid (R.A.) being their leader, to prepare copies from the *ṣuḥuf* that were in the possession of Ḥafṣah (R.A.), the daughter of ‘Umar (R.A.) and the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ). He also ordered his committee to prepare these copies in the dialect of Quraish.²⁶

On the completion of the mission, he dispatched these copies to main cities and ordered all other *Muṣāḥif* to be burnt. Thus, Muslims hold the view that the present Qur’ān is the facsimile of the revelation to the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Western stance

It is important to note that the matter of collection has a close

connection with 'Ilm-al-Ḥadīth (the science of prophetic narratives). Accordingly, the apprehension of the entire issue is based on the narratives of the collection process. By and large, contemporary western scholars, in their discourses referring to the case of compilation, discuss these reports highlighting their doubts towards its authenticity. Yet, some of them step forward and declare the traditions as nothing except forgery and fabrication e.g., Burton and G.H.A. Joynboll.²⁷

In fact, they are influenced by the past theories inaugurated by Gustave Weil (d. 1889), Alloys Springer (d.1893), William Muir (d. 1905) and Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) and more significantly by Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) in the twentieth century.²⁸ Nineteenth-century scholars expressed their skepticism towards the historicity of Prophetic reports and declared that the transmission of Ḥadīth remained oral in earlier centuries. Among them, Goldziher correlated the political aspect of the Muslim society with tradition, asserting that the political view of the time found its expression in the form of Ḥadīth. On the other hand, Schacht, with an entirely diverse perspective, presented the idea of fabrication of Ḥadīth, establishing his research on Islamic Jurisprudence and its development. He proposed the idea that Prophetic traditions originated in the second half of the first century in contrast to the saying of the Companions. Moreover, according to him, *Isnād* system shows a tendency to project back the narration to the Prophet (ﷺ) in order to gain a higher status.²⁹

The seminal treatise which remained the basis of all the subsequent works was that of Theodore Noldeke's (d.1930) monograph on the history of the text of the Qur'ān. Noldeke, following the norms of the western scholarship, declares the collection reports to be strikingly contradictory.³⁰

Richard Bell, famous for his rearrangement of the Qur'ān, believes that many discrepancies in the narratives can be located about the issue of collection, or in other words, history of the Qur'ān.³¹ Another scholar who dealt with this subject was Arthur Jeffery. Jeffery too accepts Islamic traditions partially along with his reservations.

A reader can notice that these scholars, although showing their discomfort with the traditional reports, accept them to some extent. Yet, another group of western scholars totally reject the collection reports such as Alfonse Mingana (d.1937), and John Wansbrough (d.2002). Many other scholars also maintain an identical premise. Among them are Crone and Crook, Norman Calder, Andrew Rippin and Angelika Neuwirth³².

Summarizing the above discussion, western scholars can be grouped into two. First is the group who rely, to some degree, on the Muslim

historical sources and recognize the traditional accounts on the subject of preservation of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, they are suspicious about the process. The second group, in short, with its rejection of the Muslim accounts, introduced multiple theories concerning the codification of the Qur'ān based on a variety of evidence. Many of these theories are dismissed by others because of the scarcity of sound evidence. Moreover, as the revisionists themselves could not present satisfactory alternatives, their approaches led to what Neuwirth deems as 'paralysis in research'.³³

The contemporary academic scholarship on 'history of the Qur'ān:

It would be appropriate to mention the basic factor behind the selection of EQ for the review of the 21st century's academic scholarship on the Qur'ān. The reason underlies the fact that this work is stated to be an advancement in the objective study of the Qur'ān. Moreover, it deals with the theme of history from various dimensions with multiple approaches. Yet, the important point is to notice whether there is any difference in the findings of the writers or not.

The article that is entirely devoted to the theme of the collection is written by John Burton titled "Collection of the Qur'ān". This article is based originally on his previous work published in 1977 under the title of "The Collection of the Qur'ān" and the works of Arthur Jeffery "Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān". In his work, he discusses the notion of the collection in detail, interconnecting the abrogation theory and collection reports.³⁴ Although his core theory is similar to other scholars to a certain extent, yet he came up with this theme from quite a different angle using the notion of abrogation.³⁵ Burton's other work that focuses on this concern is "The sources of Islamic Law; theories of abrogation".³⁶ This book is considered the first detailed, though too technical, western work on the theme of abrogation.³⁷ Burton dedicated both of his works to the notion of abrogation and its application in Islamic law. In these writings, he strongly endorses the view that the Jurists, in order to prove the operational status of the stoning rule, introduced the third mode of abrogation i.e. omission of wording without ruling.³⁸

As far as his article in the EQ is concerned, the writer, after elucidating the term collection, expresses his doubts regarding the collection reports as following: "Muslim traditions on the collection of the Qur'ān must, like any other Ḥadīth, be tested by exposure to the wider background of Islamic definition from which they emerged".³⁹

Immediately after this reservation, leaving ambiguity about the identification of the anonymous commentators, he says that most influential commentators and the majority of the legal scholars held the view that the entire Qur'ān was never collected.⁴⁰

Burton's foremost claim is that the reports on the collection of the Qur'ān, either made by Abū Bakr or by 'Uthmān, were placed to serve some specific tasks. The collection narrations, as he believes, were created by the Muslim legal scholars to explicate legal doctrines that are not found in the Qur'ān. In his works, he presents a detailed analysis of the relevant reports and points out the discrepancies in them. Explicating the motives to invent these narratives, Burton states that to validate the practices that had no base in the Qur'ān, the Muslim jurists maintained that they are based on the verses whose wording is abrogated. This idea presupposed a situation that required the exclusion of the Prophet from the collection.⁴¹ He states; "to accommodate the theory of abrogation, the collection had to be deliberately placed in the period following the Prophet's death, a motif that scholars (Jurists) were keen to emphasize by repeating it in the collection tradition".⁴²

To reinforce his claim, Burton says that the reports pertaining to the issue of the collections reveal inconsistencies and discrepancies, an indicator of the fabrication. To further elaborate the point, he brings forward some of the traditions and treats them as supplementary reports such as related to the collection of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī (R.A.). He views all relevant traditions as a part of the drama that was designed to support the abrogation theory. The western scholarship, he expounds, has shown reservations about these reports. He declares that this is not the normal duplication of attribution. But, it was an attempt to report more than one aspect of the text.⁴³

Analysis

John Burton has focused his work on the specific dimension of the Prophetic reports connecting it with jurists' abrogation theory. The writer seems to be deeply influenced by the views of his predecessors. Consequently, one can easily witness the reiteration of related phraseology such as forgery, fabricated, designed, etc. Burton's claim can be examined on many grounds. Firstly, to evaluate the argument it is essential to explore the fact on a historical basis. The writer, by a close critical textual examination of the collection reports, concluded that all reports

are contradictory. This view led him to declare them all to be fabricated. In proclaiming so, he attributed the fabrication of the collection reports to jurists and according to him, it was a group of jurists who placed the narratives to fortify the notion of abrogation. A vigilant survey of the argument reveals the fact that it lacks historical dimensions. To elaborate more, the first book of Islamic jurisprudence is Al- Risālah of Imām Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) written in the second quarter of the second century. In the developmental stages of Islamic Jurisprudence, this period is to be considered as the first phase. He was followed by the scholars of the fourth and fifth century such as Muhammad bin Ishāq al Shāshī (d.344) Aḥmad bin ‘Alī al- Jaṣṣāṣ (d.370) and Abū ‘Alī al Ḥanbalī (d.428). One can observe that in fact, the development in this discipline took place in the fifth century by the emergence of many other works in this regard.

Even if it is admitted that Burton intended an early date for this development at the beginning of the third century as Motzaki illustrates, we have at our disposal sources before the development of jurisprudence. Hence, it is very evident that the discourses of the jurists on the theory of abrogation started when the collection traditions were already known. If we go back to the earlier references of the collection reports, we find that these narratives were in circulation by the first half of the second century and even earlier. For instance, the earlier sources for these reports are *Musnad* of Ṭiyālisi (d.204)⁴⁴ and *Musnad* of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 241)⁴⁵. Even the oft-repeated and key source of his works *Kitāb-ul-Maṣāḥīf* of Abū Dā’ūd (d.316) predate the development of jurisprudence discourses. Burton, although using the plural noun of scholars or jurists, mentioned the statement of Khaṭṭābī (d. 388)⁴⁶ in this regard with the reference of Faṭḥul Bārī.⁴⁷ The statement is as follows;

يحتمل ان يكون صلي الله عليه و سلم انما لم يجمع القران في المصحف "لما كان يترقبه من ورود ناسخ لبعض احكامه او تلاوته

The above-mentioned statement of imam Khaṭṭābī would be translated as “probably, the Prophet (ﷺ) could not collect the Qur’ān in one copy as there always remained expectation of revelation abrogation of some rulings or wordings.”

Many later scholars of jurisprudence and Qur’ānic sciences followed Khaṭṭābī in this view and expressed the same reason along with other factors. This demonstrates the fact that he can be considered as the key source of this opinion. Now, by looking at the period of Khaṭṭābī, one can easily apprehend the fact that he cannot be considered the originator of

the reports in discussion as they were already in circulation before him. Besides, Burton right through his works mentions the plural noun of scholars that indicate his perception of a group of jurists that placed the tradition to fortify their position. Hence, the interconnection of abrogation with the collection reports and subsequently with fabrication is invalid on a historical basis.

Secondly, the dearth of historicity is quite visible throughout the article. The second point to be examined is to see whether the theory of Naskh, introduced by Scholars of late centuries as Burton believes, has no root in the earlier period of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions. It is a well-known fact that the Qur'ānic text itself has the root word Naskh and the term itself was well-comprehended by the Successors.⁴⁹ One instance is sufficient here. It is narrated about 'Ali bin abi Ṭālib (R.A.) that upon seeing a man in the mosque expounding the meaning of the Qur'ān for people, asked him if he had knowledge of al-Nāsikh and al-Mansūkh.⁵⁰

Moreover, the earlier works on this subject such as Qatādah b. D'āmāh (d. 117), and of 'Aṭā b. Muslim (d. 115) dismiss the validity of the claims put forward by the author as they were extant before the works of jurisprudence.

Thirdly, it can also be observed that he has supposed four stages for the validity of the claim.

1. Scholars have invented the theory of abrogation, specifically the third mode (abrogation of ayah with the continuation of law) to fortify their assertions.
2. For this purpose, they have invented verses claimed to be abrogated.
3. They have excluded the Prophet (ﷺ) from the collection.
4. They have designed numerous multiple reports about the collection.

The above-mentioned process denotes an attempt of designing a long series of fabrications to prove a single or few rulings. For the sake of argument, if it is acknowledged that the jurists had fabricated an abrogated āyah or few to fortify their claim, was it not far easier for them to find their way by simply forging a Ḥadīth instead of going through a long procedure of forging many verses and mass of traditions followed by collection reports.⁵¹ It is rather illogical that the jurists have designed a complex system of chains and texts in order to fortify the claims or rulings the number of which is approximately not more than three.⁵²

Fourthly, it was not only jurists who discussed the collection of the Qur'ān in the scenario of abrogation. Specialists of the sciences of the Qur'ān also talked about this topic. These scholars, with their understanding, tried to justify the compilation process after the demise of the Prophet (ﷺ). These Muslim scholars have endeavored to offer, according to their comprehension, some other factors also for compilation after the demise of Prophet (ﷺ). This includes that the Prophet could not compile the Qur'ān himself due to the absence of adequate writing material for that. Some others added that as revelation was in pieces and according to situations, the Prophet could not gather it in one copy. It is also narrated that there was a small gap between his death and the last revelation. Thus, this short period was insufficient for the task of compilation.⁵³

Moreover, it can be noticed that although a majority of the scholars have accepted the third mode of abrogation, some scholars and jurists have shown their reservation relating to its possibility.⁵⁴ Hence, it can be noticed that if one group of scholars has placed the reports to justify the third mode, the second group could also have expressed their disapproval and rejection in the matter of this issue. The absence of this denunciation and criticism in the vast corpus of Islamic accounts shows the weakness of Burton's arguments.

Furthermore, the author did not specify a group that invented the reports and its period. He did not explicitly declare whether they existed in the same generation or belonged to several generations. Furthermore, if they were from one generation, how far was it practicable for them to communicate with each other on the same matter in an age when distances were of the journeys of months and not a single day? The geographical conditions of that time do not support this claim. Burton did not fix the time period too. Did they not face any protest or opposition? The well-known history of Islam does not admit the existence of this absurd situation.⁵⁵

Furthermore, to have a glimpse of academic tendency, intellectual enthusiasm and historical consciousness, it is vital to mention some of the basic features of the traditional Muslim society. In this regard Abbot, describing the intellectual achievements of the second century, declares that these accomplishments could not have been possible without the initial steps of the companions and the intellectual heritage.⁵⁶ A neutral succinct look over the classical period of Islam reveals the academic trends of that era. From companions to successors and later generations,

one finds not hundreds but thousands of students, out of their academic zest, traveling from region to region to acquire even one narration. For a single narration, numerous chains can be traced with minute difference.⁵⁷

The intellectual and educational milieu of the Muslim societies was so cognizant that very subtle rules have been formed by scholars to determine the eligibility of a student of Ḥadīth and more significantly, the science of *ʿIlal al-Ḥadīth* has been designed to establish the credibility, vigilance and reliability of a transmitter.⁵⁸ In an academic world, where a slightest and delicate deficiency in a transmitter results in his denunciation, it was hard for a single scholar, let alone a group, to fabricate a narration and ascribe it easily to the Prophet. Abbot describes the measures taken by specialists of Ḥadīth that at that time oral tradition went hand in hand with the written one, not as an aid to memory only but, as a control against oral fraud.⁵⁹ Moreover, this cultural heritage does not comprise some decades or a few years, it is spanning over fourteen centuries. Consequently, it is not an easy task to just assume a narration is fabricated as one has the burden of proving evidence.

Fuat Sezgin says in this regard that to determine the validity of a narration, one has to adopt a clear methodology. But, first of all, one has to free oneself from old prejudices and mere assertions of fabrication.⁶⁰ So, here also it should be examined that whether it is excessive doubt and 'scientific method' that has been followed throughout the research or it is objectivity. As far as the general presentation of the notion of collection is concerned, the work has positive points with the predominance of academic faults.

It is a norm of the articles in the EQ to offer a general concept of the terminology in discussion with the illustration of the Muslim view on this theme primarily and then to proceed towards other theories in this regard. This facet can be considered as a positive sign and a step forward in the scholarly field. Yet, it is vital to assess the manner and style of representing the Muslim stance.

At the very beginning of his article, the writer comments that "it was held by most influential scholars and commentators that the entire Qur'ān was never collected". The attribution of the consensus that their Holy Book was never collected to anonymous Muslim scholars and commentators is very obviously a deformation of fact. An unacquainted reader can be misled by this over-generalization. Moreover, the addition of the phrase "most influential scholars and commentators", needs elucidation and clarification. For the sake of accuracy, the author is

supposed to identify the persons to whom he is referring. The methodology of inverting ideas is considered as flawed and questionable by experts of critical thinking. It draws the reader, unless well-informed, to confusion and uncertainty.

As far as the interpretation of Burton for Islamic belief is concerned, he has based his interpretation on *Fath-al-Barī*, one of the major commentaries for the text of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. But, at one very basic point, he misrepresented the original statement. Likewise, he has made the reader suspicious by indicating the discrepancies in reports of collection.

Taking into consideration the text of Ibn-Ḥajar, the reader apprehends that the basic factor for the first collection of the Qur'ān was the death of various Companions and the fear of 'Umar that the text would be lost if the situation remained the same. As Ibn-Ḥajar quotes; “فيذهب كثير من القرآن” that stands for “lest it might be lost”.⁶¹

Now coming to the phrase that Burton has used, one can easily notice that he has altered the sentence as he says: “to provide a summarized version of the Muslim reports....those passages had neither been written down nor had the Prophet's successor collected the text. Consequently, those passages had been lost.”⁶² In another place, he says; “Abū-Bakr assembled the text for the fear of *further* loss”⁶³ (the focus is on the italicized word) in the connection of the first paragraph that denotes towards the aforesaid statement about the loss of some passages. In a scholarly article, the work demands accuracy in the narration and citation of the sources, the lack of which affects the standard of the work. In the previous clause, the author committed two mistakes in citation. One is related to the translation of the exact text and the second is linked with the fallacy of addition in the citation. Moreover, in the description and explanation of the idea, one has to be very accurate and factual and free from passing value judgments. It is observed in most of the entries of EQ that authors attempt to commence the discussion with confusing remarks. Hence, one can find a plethora of sentences such as “one has to be careful”, “one should not accept the traditions as fact value”, “narratives are dubious” etc. Identical expressions are observed in this article too, as Burton frequently reiterates his reservations and doubts throughout his work.

While narrating the remaining Ḥādīth, he relied on the works that are listed in the category of secondary references. To establish primary results on secondary sources is irrational. The mainspring of these narrations in his secondary sources is *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*,⁶⁴ the work that

has been a major source of other earlier western works too. His second source is Material of Jeffery, who edited *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* with a preface. It is significant to note that both of these sources are not the first-hand sources for the issue of collection. Furthermore, Material of Jeffery is assessed by many scholars and declared as unreliable for his overgeneralization and heavy reliance on unauthentic and limited sources.⁶⁵

It is quite worth mentioning that a researcher while representing the views of others, is free to offer his/her views too. Yet, in a scholarly piece of work, one is obliged not to pass value judgments. In doing so only, one can fulfill the academic and scientific requirements of the work. In the case of Burton, he could not manage to escape from presuppositions and assumptions. He, after reporting the Western uncertainties on Muslim reports, comments that the entire drama is planned to serve some specific purposes. Furthermore, reports and counter-reports were designed to achieve some particular goals. The author himself, while passing his judgments, could not offer any sound evidence for the alleged forgery. An unbiased reader can judge himself about the phraseology used for this purpose.

The point worth mentioning here is that the theory presented by Burton is dismissed by western scholars too. For instance, a modern scholar of Ḥadīth Herald Motzki declares his discourse as artificial and implausible. A quote from him may elaborate on the issue. Motzaki writes;

“A historical dimension is completely lacking in Burton’s study of the traditions concerning the collection of the Qur’ān. He arranges different traditions to create a discourse which he thinks took place between scholars over a long period of time..... However Burton did not try to check whether his scheme of evolution historically corroborated by the sources”.⁶⁶

Finally, in the citation of canonical reports, he has not followed one consistent scheme as he has mentioned the main and primary source in Ḥadīth narration *Fath al -Bārī*, but in the narration of many reports, he has relied on secondary sources such as materials of Jeffery and the Collection of the Qur’ān. This fluctuation in the plan has affected the standard of the work. Likewise, in his primary sources, the first book he has mentioned is *Kitāb al -Maṣāḥif*. Nonetheless, he did not mention this work in his text directly despite the fact that most of the reports he has narrated are from this source.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The human endeavor cannot be announced as perfect, ideal and faultless, as to err is an indispensable part of humans. Every human attempt has its plus points and drawbacks. Hence, to address these characteristics becomes crucial for a better understanding of matters. Some significant peculiarities are as follows;

It is necessary, for a better comprehension of the issue, to draw attention to a few significant points regarding the nature of critical approaches to the Qur'ān in the West. Scholars hold that the recent approaches related to either field of Ḥadīth or Qur'ānic studies trace their roots, more or less, to the past and more significantly to the Reformation Period.⁶⁸ Among the major outcomes of that period was the treatment of religious traditions and scholarship with skepticism and uncertainty.

René Guénon (d. 1951) considers this the dilemma of western civilization and expresses his views about this era saying that it has, in general, influenced the conception of the entire human history in a pejorative sense. History has been considered as a legend for which modern writers do not allow themselves to obtain any certainty. The modern period has produced purely a material mind that denies supra-rational things. Hence, he declares the modern look towards history as anti-tradition.⁶⁹

The problem augmented when this approach was generalized in treating the traditions and texts of other religions and more significantly Islam. The profound influence of modern philosophies has resulted in the way that they try to see everything with their own lens of skepticism that leads them to the excessive doubt and even rejection of historical facts. Consequently, the thread of the fabrication of the Islamic narration could be seen throughout the history of treatment with Islam and in the present encyclopaedia as well. One fine example of this treatment is the present article.

The pejorative conception of the Church authorities resulted in the ill-treatment of overall classical scholarship. Although the positive academic contribution of the Muslim scholarship in the world's civilizations is admitted by many western scholars,⁷⁰ there is still a tendency of misrepresentation of Muslim scholars. It is a reality that the occidental scholarship does not place the classical Muslim intellectuals in high regard in the sense that their role is mostly perceived as working for their own interests and

agendas. A thorough look into the works of foremost scholars reveals the fact that to inculcate doubts about the classical Muslim scholars is a common feature of western scholarship. Some instances of the patronizing behavior towards Muslim scholarship are; “they have been twisting the Qur’ānic text for their specific agendas” and “they did not have sound and solid knowledge”⁷¹

Bennett, in his discussion of the outcome of eighteenth-century Humanist scholarship, illustrates the fact that although the secular wave did open some new ways to the study of Islam, by and large, the overall behavior remained critical and subjective. They did not attempt to understand Muslim beliefs from their perspective. A tendency of ‘we knew better’ and they (Muslims) could not be trusted to identify Islam was there.⁷² The example of the present articles fortifies this observation as Burton, very insistently, charged Muslim scholars of forgery and falsification of the facts. Contrarily, he attempted to present western scholarship in high regard, continuously using phrases such as the ‘outstanding western works’ and ‘western Experts’, leaving an impression of the western supremacy over all other works and findings.

Notes and References

1. Orientalism; Western Conceptions of the Orient with New Afterwards (London: Penguin books, 1995) See also the works of Norman Daniel, Islam and the West; The Making of an Image. Oxford, One World, 1997.
2. Jamal Zorbovo, *The Miraculous Qur’ān* (2 of 11): The Qur’ān and Orientalist <http://www.Islamreligion.com> See also; Fazl al- Rehmān, Major Themes of the Qur’ān, Minneapolis, U.S.A., 1994, pp. 6-7.
3. al- Rehmān, Fazl. Some Recent Books on the Qur’ān by Western Authors . *The Journal of Religion* 64, no. 1 (Jan, 1984.): pp. 73-95. 75
4. Fahad Ubaidullah, A critique of orientalism, its history and approach. *Hamdard Islamicus*. XV (4)
5. Pervaiz Manzoor, Method against Truth: Orientalism and the Qur’ānic Studies. <http://www.pmanzoor.info/Method-Truth.htm> see also; Tibavi A. L. English Speaking Orientalists . *The Muslim World*. L, no. 111(1963.):185-204. 193
6. Andrew Rippin, “The Reception of Euro-American Scholarship on the Qur’ān and tafsīr”: An Overview. *Journal Of Qur’ānic Studies* 14, no. 1 (2012): 1-8.
7. John Voll,” Changing Western approaches to Islamic Studies”. In Mumtaz Ahmad, Zahid Bukhari and Sulayman Nyang, eds. *Observing the Observer; the State of Islamic Studies in American Universities*. (London: The international institute of Islamic thought, 2012), p. 29.
8. I have used the analytical tools mentioned in the following books; Michael

- Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), see also; Barbara Warnick and David S. Heineman (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 2009)
9. Some of the noticeable works are; *The Qur'ān concordance*' by Thomas Milo, *The Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage*' edited by Elsaid Badawī, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*', 'God of Justice. A Study on the Ethical Doctrine of the Qur'ān', *The Qur'ān as Text*', *The Qur'ān in Context*', *The transmission of various readings of Qur'ān*', *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*' and 'A Qur'ān Commentary' by Ibn Barrajān of Seville, under the series *Text and Studies on the Qur'ān*'.
 10. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (General Editor), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006) vol, 1. x
 11. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol, 1. xi
 12. McAuliffe is a known scholar of Qur'ānic studies. She has served at many significant institutions such as the University of Toronto and George Town College. She has also offered her services to Bryn Mawr College as its eighth president. The focus of her interest in Qur'ānic studies is exegesis and interfaith dialogue.
 13. Andrew Rippin was a Canadian scholar of Islam, (former Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada). He has contributed to the arena of Qur'ānic studies with many of his notable works.
 14. Uri Rubin (b.1944) is a Professor in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Tel Aviv University in Israel. His fields of interest are early Islam, Qur'ān exegesis, and early Islamic tradition.
 15. She is a professor of Qur'ānic studies from Freie University, Berlin, Germany.
 16. Arkoun (1928-2010) was an Algerian Professor Emeritus of the History of Islamic Thought at the Sorbonne. He wrote extensively on Islam and modernity with a critical approach. He passed away in 2010 in Paris.
 17. Abdul Rahim Kidwai, "Reference Works on the Qur'ān in English: A Survey." *Journal of Qur'ānic research and studies* 1, no. 2 (2006): pp. 2-21.
 18. Munir Wasti, *The Qur'ān; The book free of doubt*, Gujrat, University of Gujrat Press. 2009, p. 243.
 19. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol, I, x-xi
 20. Muḥammad Muṣṭufā al- A'ẓamī, *The history of the Qur'ānic text*, Muḥammad Muṣṭufā al- A'ẓamī, England, Islamic Academy, p. 100.
 21. Al- B'lbakkī Munīr, *Almawrid Alwasit*, Bairut, Darul Ilm, 2002, p. 268
 22. Shamsuddin Al Jazarī, *al- Nashr fil Qir'āt al- 'Asher* (al-Makm ba' al- Tijāriyyah al-Kubra) vol, I. p. 6.
 23. Qāsim, b. Salām, *Faḍā'l al -Qur'ān*) Bairūt: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995), p. 280
 24. Ibn Jarīr, *al- Ṭabarī*, ed. Shākir, Aḥmad, *Tafsīr Ṭabari*. Moassasat al-Risala, 2000), vol, I. 59. Jalāluddīn, al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'loom al-Qur'ān*, Egypt, al-Hai'ah al- Miṣriyyah, 1974, vol, I, 202. see also: Badaruddīn, al- Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī 'loom al -Qur'ān*, ed, Muḥammad, Ibrāhīm. Egypt, Dār Ihya al- Kutub al 'Arabiyyah, 1957, vol. I, p. 297.
 25. Muhammad b. Isma'il al -Bukhārī, *Al- Jame' al Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muhammad Zuhair

- (Dār Ṭawq al -Nijāt, 1422), vol. 6. 183. 4987. Ibn Ḥajar, al- 'sqalānī, Fath al - Bārī, Bairūt, Dār al -M'erifah, vol. XI. 1379. Suyūfī, al- Itqān, vol. I. p. 60.
26. Bukhārī, al- Ṣāḥīḥ, vol. VI. 183. 4988
 27. Joynboll (1935-2010), is a contemporary author on Ḥadīth and its transmission. His major works are Encyclopaedia of canonical Hadīth; Studies on the origins and uses of Islamic Hadīth and *Muslim Tradition*.
 28. The former three scholars, in general, presented the theory of the unauthentic nature of Ḥadīth. But, it was Goldziher and Schacht approach that affected gravely on the course of hadīth studies.
 29. Goldzeher Ignac, *The origin of Mohammeden jurisprudence*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1950, pp. 4-5.
 30. *Theodor Noldeke et al, ed. Wolfgang H., The History of the Qur'ān by*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 213-233
 31. Watt, Montgomery, ed. *Bell's introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1970 41
 32. It is quite worth mentioning with regard to the last write Angelika Neuwirth that she partially acknowledges the collection tradition as she admits the 'Uthmānic collection but, with this she considers the ascription of the fixation of text to 'Abdul Malik (685- 705) more realistic. See: Angelika, Neuwirth. "Structure and Emergence of the community", The Blackwell, 143
 33. Heidemann Stephan, *The Qur'ān in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 9.
 34. For this: see the fifth and sixth chapters in the above-mentioned book.
 35. For instance, Jeffery as well, declares the reports of collection to be fictitious as mentioned earlier in the section 'views of Western scholars'.
 36. Edinburg, Edinburg University Press, 1990.
 37. Louay Fatoohi, *Abrogation in the Qur'ān and Islamic law; a critical study on the concept of Naskh and its impact* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 6.
 38. "Law and Exegesis", in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, p. 282.
 39. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I. p. 351.
 40. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I. p. 352.
 41. *The collection*, 232
 42. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I. 360
 43. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I. 361
 44. Abu Daūd, Ṭiyālīsī, Egypt, Dār Hijr, 1999, vol. I, 5. H, no. 3.
 45. (Moessesatul Risala, 2001), vol. I. 238. H, no. 76
 46. He is Imam Abū Sulaimān Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm al Khaṭṭābī. One of the legal scholars belonged to Shāfi'ī school of thought.
 47. *Collection*, 132.
 48. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, vol. XI. p. 12.
 49. See: 2: 106
 50. Qatādah b. Da'ama, *al- Nasikh wa al- Mansukh*, Baghdad, Moessesatul Risala, 1998, p. 9
 51. Ali, *The Qur'ān*, p. 243.
 52. Scholars have enlisted almost three examples in the category of the third mode of abrogation e.g. omission of wording without ruling. The most common examples are the adultery, and fasting with consecutive days. As far as the second and first

- mode is concerned, Burton's theory does not apply on this as the abrogation of the wording with ruling as well, was of no use for any ruling.
53. 'Abdul 'Azīm al- Zurqāni, *Manāhil ul 'Irfān fi 'Uloomul qur'ān*, Bairut, Dār ul Kitāb al 'Arbi. 2002, vol. I. 202.
 54. Shihab ul Dīn Ālūsī,, Rūḥul Ma'āni, ed. 'Āli bin 'Ābdul Bārī (Bairūt, Dārul kutub al 'Ilmia. 1415, vol, I. p. 351. See also: Aḥmad bin 'Alī Al Ḥanafī, *Al F aṣūl fil 'Usūl*, Kuwait, Wazaratul Awqāf al Kūwaitiyya), vol, II. p. 253. 'Abdul 'Aziz al -Ḥanafī, *Kashf al -Asrār* (Dar al -Kitāb al -Islāmī), vol, III. p. 191.
 55. I have taken help in the formation of my ideas from the works of Muhammad Mohr 'Ali, *The Qur'ān and the orientalis*, (IPSWICH: Jam'iyat Iḥyaa Minhajj al- Sunnah, 2004) and Moulana Gohar Rehman, *'Uloom al-Qur'ān* (Mardān: Maktaba Tafhīm al- Qur'ān) and the work of Herald Motzaki *The collection of the Qur'ān; a reconsideration of Western views in the light of recent methodological developments*, 15. Retrieved on 27/10/ 015. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/97592549/The-Collection-of-the-Qur-an-a-Reconsideration-of-Western-Views-in-Light-of-Recent-Methodological-Developments>
 56. Nabia Abbot, *Studies in Arabic literary papyri*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1957, Introduction.
 57. In the science of Ḥadīth, it is called Ṭuruq ul Taḥammul. Scholars have categorized eight ways for narrating a tradition. See for instance: Ibn e Hajar, *Nuzhatul Nazar fi Nukhbatil Fikr*, ed, Abdullah al Ruhaili. Riyādh, Maktabatul Malik Fahad Al Wataniyya, 2001, p. 156.
 58. Among these traits the noticeable are; prayers in congregation, refraining wine, not to be lawless in life, to be truthful, having no mental defect as defined by the graet Imam Ibnul Mubāarak. See: Al Baghdādī, Khatāb. *Al Kifāya fi 'Ilm al Riwaya*. Ed. Al Madanī, Ibrāhīm. Madānī: Al Maktaba al 'Ilmiyya. Vol. I. p. 79.
 59. Nabia, *Studies*, 9
 60. Sezgin, Fuād, *Tāikhul Turāth al 'Arabī*, Trans, Mehmud Hijazi, Riyādh, Idāratul Thiqāfa wal Nasher, 1991, vol, I. p. 151.
 61. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, vol, 9. 11.
 62. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol, I. p. 355.
 63. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol, I. p. 356.
 64. The narrative regarding the dictation of Ubayy for Zaid had been quoted in Kitāb al -Musahif. H. no, 29. 168. The second tradition about the inquiry of 'Umar about an Ayah and his order of collection is also mentioned in the same book. See H. no 30. 171. This has been declared as al- Maqtu' .See *Fath al -Bārī*, vol, XI. p. 13. The Ḥadīth regarding the allegiance of 'Ali and his collection has also been quoted from the same source. The compiler has stated that collection here in its context stands for memorization. H. 31. 170. Ibn Ḥajar commented on the narrative saying "this is a weak Hadīth for the breakage in chain". See: vol, XI. p. 13.
 65. For instance, the only oft-repeated source in his material is *Kitāb al- Maṣāḥīf*. This book is famous for its narrations of weak traditions and generalization for the author calls even two or few readings of Companions as *Maṣāḥīf*. Based on this book, Jeffery too has used the title of *Maṣāḥīf* even for two readings. Moreover, Jeffery has committed interpolations in the main text of *Kitāb al- Maṣāḥīf* while editing this book.

66. The collection of the Qur'ān; a reconsideration of Western views in the light of recent methodological developments. 15. Retrieved on 27/10/ 015. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/97592549/The-Collection-of-the-Qur-an-a-Reconsideration-of-Western-Views-in-Light-of-Recent-Methodological-Developments>
67. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol, I. p. 361.
68. Some scholars consider the renaissance and reformation of the same nature and results. Hence, they date the modern period to the thirteenth century rather than fifteenth. See for instance: Guénon, René. *The Crisis of the Modern World*. Trans: Pallis, Marco. London: Luzac & Co., 1942.
69. Guénon, *Crises*. 10- 14
70. See for instance the introduction of Nabia Abbot in which she presented a highly esteemed portrayal of Muslim savants. *Studies*, p. 11-31.
71. Reynolds, *The Qur'ān*, 172, Also see: McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians*, p. 258.
72. Bennett, "New Directions" in *The Bloomsbury companion to Islamic Studies*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 88.