

Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān in Western Academic Writings: A Case Study of Andrew Rippin

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Abstract

The contemporary western Qur'ānic scholarship is flourishing swiftly with the manifestation of diverse and multifaceted approaches. At present, the western averments of studying the Quran with objectivity and impartiality cannot be overlooked. Yet, despite this, many contemporary scholars. Muslims and non-Muslims link the western tradition with the norms of oriental scholarship. The present article endeavors to trace whether the contemporary western scholarship approaches the Quran with the pure academic and neutral spirit that separates it from the epistemological hierarchy or it still follows the polemical theological agenda. For this purpose, the work of a renowned contemporary western scholar Andrew Rippin is selected on the theme of the foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān. The critical analytical approach is selected to investigate his work. Rippin has contributed thoroughly to exploring the classical Muslims' dealing with the subject while adding his etymological source theories. However, it is concluded that despite a few variances perpetuated by Rippin, the gross foundation does not go beyond the demarcation set by his predecessor Arthur Jeffery in the field of the foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān that indicates a lack of academic approach.

Key Words: Qur'ānic Studies, foreign vocabulary, Islam and West, Arthur Jeffery, Andrew Rippin.

Introduction

Western academia has exercised painstaking efforts in tracing out the foreign vocabulary in the Qur'ān. For instance, Arthur Jeffery (d.1959) strongly convicted that a sound interpretation of the Qur'ān is not practicable without an exhaustive study of the vocabulary of the Qur'ān and its etymology. ¹He was convinced that the Qur'ān abounds in material borrowed

from the great religions extant at that time. Thus, building his work on this theory, he was able to trace out the roots of various words in Aramaic, Hebrew, Persian, and many other middle-eastern languages.

Primarily, the study of foreign words is connected to the branch of etymology that seeks to investigate the history of the word, its origin and examines the changes through which the specific word has gone. A linguist, by applying the comparative methods seeks the origin, root, and meaning of the specific term in the light of the language in question or the cognate languages. In this way, one can trace out whether the specific word is taken from any other language and hence, foreign or has its etymology in the same language.

It is a worldwide social phenomenon that all languages of the world contain foreign words as an outcome of the social, commercial, and academic connections with others nations. For instance, the English language abounds the foreign vocabulary borrowed from Latin, French, German and Spanish through various forms of historical, mercantile, intellectual, and warfare exchange among the nations. Thus the etymology of a word is considered quite apt for a firm grasp of expressions and detection of the nature of the word as foreign or intrinsic.

A glance at the western studies of the Old and New Testaments demonstrates that initially biblical scholars investigated the original expressions by tracing the roots of the words in the cognate languages.² Consequently, western scholars regarded it as a sound and valid method to be applied in the study of the Qur'ānic text. As Jeffrey states that the examination of the foreign terms in the Qur'ān assists in a better understanding of the Qur'ān.³

The Traditional Muslim Standpoint

The conventional Muslim scholarship has provided a vigorous stance on the issue in the voluminous commentaries as well as in the books of Qur'ānic sciences. The Qur'ān itself states in many places that it is sent down in pure Arabic. For instance, it declares:

*"Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand."*⁴

In another place it is said:

*"And thus We have sent it down as a Qur'an in Arabic".*⁵

These verses are interpreted variously by the Muslim commentators which can be classified as three major standpoints:

One group of scholars, establishing their premise on the above-mentioned ayahs, held the view that the entire language of the Qur'ān is pure Arabic and hence, denied the existence of foreign vocabulary in it. At the forefront of this opinion, are famous jurist Shāfa'ī (d. 204), Abū 'Ubaida Ma'mar bin Muthanna (d. 209), Ibn Jarir al -Ṭabari (d.310), Ibn Fāris (d.395) and Fakhar al Rāzī (d. 606). They viewed that the entire Qur'ān is in pure

Arabic and there is not a single word from any other language. Abū 'Ubaida is reported to say;

"whoever suggested the occurrence of the foreign words in the Qur'ān, has made a charge against Allah and the Qur'ān".⁶

These thinkers believed that there can be similarities in the languages and there is always a possibility of usage of the same words in two or more languages by coincidence. The fundamental reason for their forceful opposition to this notion is various Qur'ānic verses which negate the existence of non- Arabic words in the Qur'ān.

Moreover, among the basic factors for their denial was the view that the Qur'ānic principle of sending the message in the language of its recipients necessitated the revelation of sole Arabic Qur'ān. Thus, how could it be claimed that the Qur'ān had unknown words in it? To sum up, one cannot say about a specific term that it is Coptic or Persian and not Arabic. But, one is supposed to say that the term is Arabic and Coptic as well for instance.⁷

On the other hand some scholars do not hesitate to admit the existence of these words in the Qur'ān absolutely as according to them the earlier authorities such as the companion Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68) and his pupils Mujāhid (d. 103), 'Ikrama and Saeed ibn Jubair(d. 95) acknowledged the occurrence of non- Arabic words in the Qur'ān. The classical exegete Ṭabarī declared many words, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās and Said ibn Jubair, to be foreign. Moreover, they are reported to state that the Qur'ān contains words from every language.⁸ There are many works comprising the lists of the foreign words in the Qur'ān. For instance, the works of Siyūṭī and Ibnul Jawzī contain comprehensive catalogs of these words. They viewed that although the Qur'ān is declared to be in Arabic, the appearance of some words does not affect its Arabic nature. To elaborate, the words of the Qur'ān, they argue, are 77934 among which the number of the foreign terms is only approximately 119. Consequently, they cannot influence the nature of the Arabic Qur'ān.⁹

The third group of scholars such as Abū 'Ubaid Qāsim bin Salam (d.224) attempted to reconcile both opinions suggesting that there are words in the Qur'ān originally from other languages but, they were incorporated in Arabic and became part of it. The Arabs, by their adaptation, altered them according to their language and hence, in the course of adaptation, the words have undergone alterations and modifications.¹⁰

At present, one can find the proponents of both approaches. Yet, the majority tends to lean towards the solution proffered by Abū 'Ubaid. A recent scholar, Mohr Ali elaborates in this regard stating that Arabic, Aramaic, and Syriac have the same origin as they all belong to the identical group of Semitic languages. They contain several words and expressions in common yet, their connotations have changed according to the influence of time and place.¹¹

Another recent scholar explicates in this regard that some of the scholars strictly opposed the occurrence of non- Arabic words in the Qur'ān.

Most probably, what they meant is its existence in the Qur'ān without alterations according to the rules of Arabic.¹²

Accordingly, it can be observed that the early exegetes, whenever declared any word to be of non- Arabic, added the phrase that the Arabs arabized this term according to their rules.¹³ This denotes the fact that not a single word of non- Arabic origin, contradicting the rules and syntax of Arabic, is used in the Qur'ān.¹⁴

It seems that the later scholars did not hesitate to admit the occurrence of the foreign terminology in the Qur'ān viewing that it does not go against the eloquence and coherence of the Qur'ān and it endorses the idea that as the Qur'ān comprises the knowledge of everything, in the same manner, it contains the words from every language that demonstrates its universality. Moreover, it is not considered a drawback about the Qur'ān as had it been so the Muslim scholarship would have shown indifference to the matter.

As a social phenomenon, every language adopts some vocabulary from other languages. To reject the idea of adaptation means to declare any language as dead. In this sense, Arabic contains the borrowed terms and the Qur'ān has employed those terms at the time of its revelation. The scholars who rejected the idea of the non- Arabic terms in the Qur'ān were probably predominated by their religious zeal as they adhered to the apparent meanings of the ayahs and did not investigate the issue from the linguistic angle.¹⁵

The Western Views

The idea that Prophet Muhammad is the sole author of the Qur'ān is unanimously established by western scholars. Moreover, they consider that in the composition of the Qur'ān, the Prophet took help from the extent sources of that time. This view is addressed from diverse and multiple approaches. To closely examine the influence of those sources, the study of the non- Arabic terms in the Qur'ān is considered to be vital.

From the nineteenth century onwards, western works concentrated on the theme of the foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān as a result of etymological investigations. It is aforementioned that the issue was not fresh as the traditional Muslim scholarship has produced many works long before the western scholars. Though, the difference is due to the outlooks and approaches applied differently. The classical scholarship did not ever associate the issue with the Divine nature of the Qur'ān. Conversely, the western scholars raised the question to prove the foreign sources of the Qur'ān designating authorship of the Qur'ān to Prophet Muhammad. Among the western scholars who addressed this theme are Springer, Fraenkel (d. 1970), Noldeke (d.1930), and Jeffery(d.1959). Probably, the most prominent of them is Jeffery who has authored a combined enterprise based on the earlier works in this regard.

The theory of the foreign vocabulary or loan words is established on

the premise of supposed superior and sophisticated Christian and other civilizations that influenced the Qur'ānic phraseology in a great deal. Moreover, it is supposed that it was the Prophet who first used these words or introduced them in the Qur'ān as a result of his contact with some of the Christians and others.

The majority of western scholars hold the view that the Prophet Muhammad himself composed the Qur'ān and by doing so he got help from whatever sources were extant at that time. Accordingly, by employing historical-linguistic approaches, attempts are made to trace out the origin of Qur'ānic vocabulary in other languages. The western scholars addressed the issue with the mindset that the study of the foreign words would help understand the influences of the sources that Prophet Muhammad used to come up with his religion as Jeffery declares.¹⁶ Therefore, an emphasis in the modern scholarship can be witnessed on the theory of interconnections of Arabia with the other world at the advent of the Prophet.

The western historian H. A. R Gibb (d.1971) also seems to support this opinion stating that it would be natural to imagine that the splendid religious ideas were carried to Makkah through Caravans and in the Qur'ān there is a great number of vocabulary that support this idea.¹⁷ The work of Alphonse Mingana is worth mentioning in this regard (d.1937) who attempted to locate the origin of all Qur'ānic religious terms in Syriac.

Similarly, recent scholarship focused its attention on the text itself and does not perceive otherwise. It has also attempted to find out the social, cultural, religious, and mercantile influences of thence society on the text of the Qur'ān with the premise that this method would assist in gaining a firm understanding of the context of the Qur'ān.¹⁸

For instance, an attempt is made by Manfred Kropp to reveal the theological influences of Ethiopic Christianity on the religious terms of the Qur'ān. In his examination of some specific terms, he demonstrates that the Prophet, through his contacts with the Christians, was influenced by the Christian theology, the impact of which is very apparent in his usage of these terms. Though, he admits that there are only loose and vague allusions to the oral transmission of these contents to the Prophet.¹⁹

In the context of the discussion, one noticeable point is that the western scholarship is not settled on one point concerning the most influential and dominant language on the text of the Qur'ān. Some, like Mingana, are resilient that it was the Christian sway that appeared in the text while others such as Abraham Geiger (d.1874) and Charles Torrey (d.1956) try to seek the origin in Judaism. In addition, to support the assumption of influence, even some scholars have focused on pointing out that the written Christian sources especially the Greek, Latin, and Syriac versions of the Bible were in circulation in Arabia. However, it was Syriac, according to them, in most of the cases that influenced the most. A contemporary scholar, Walid Saleh²⁰ declaring the method unruly, points out the competition in assigning the origin of the

Qur'ān to Judaism or Christianity saying that by only reading the titles of the works about this issue one realizes that there is a race as to who could claim Islam as their progeny.²¹

The fundamental factor for this attitude might be the subjective approaches of the scholars and overlooking of philological rules. In this regard, scholars see that the findings of western scholars are reflections of their settings. Those who are inclined to attribute the Christian background to Islam would prefer Syriac etymology and those who favor the Jewish milieu would choose Hebrew as the mainspring of the Qur'ān.²²

Another significant aspect of the western scholars' approach is that they remarkably disagree in a number of the foreign words in the sense that the Muslim scholars have detected almost one hundred and nineteen words of foreign origin. On the contrary, observation of only Jeffery's work demonstrates that he has determined more than three hundred words of non-Arabic origin. More additions are also expected on the behalf of the western philologists in upcoming works.

The basic criterion for the detection of the loan or non-Arabic terms for the western philologists is the absence of a unanimous approach of the medieval Muslim exegetes on the expression of the term. According to them, this is an indication that the word was foreign to them, and hence, it is of non-Arabic origin. Jeffery, in his explanation of the term 'Furqān', describes that the early savants have shown uncertainty in determining the meaning of this term. Consequently, this confusion and uncertainty are itself sufficient to suggest that the word is problematic and hence, foreign.²³ This datum has worked as a yardstick for future academics.

The standard offered by Jeffery is however challenged by the recent philologists. According to the recent scholarship, to assume disagreement of the early exegetes on one meaning as the criterion for locating non-Arabic words is inappropriate. To allow this condition to work would ultimately demand to declare all those words as foreign that do not have one agreed meaning and hence, we have to declare a large amount of the Qur'ānic terminologies as foreign without historical proofs.²⁴ To elaborate the point, the anthological nature of the exegesis works shows that the early scholars very rarely agreed on one meaning of the terms because of the vast expression of the Arabic language. Hence, their disagreement does not symbolize their ignorance and dearth of knowledge.

The important point to note is the differences between the Muslim and western approaches in this regard. For traditional Muslims, even those who denied the existence of the foreign words in the Qur'ān; the issue was not dogmatic as it did not affect the Divine nature of the Qur'ān. Instead, for them, it was only the matter of reconciling the ayahs of the Qur'ān that inform about the Pure Arabic nature of the Qur'ān with the notion of the occurrence of loan words therein.

It is already mentioned that the work of Jeffery is the most influential

in this regard and hence, its grave influence can be witnessed on the upcoming western works concerning the issue of foreign vocabulary. It is thus vital to present some of the highlights of his works. Jeffery, with wide linguistic knowledge, attempted to present his old hypotheses of the sources of the Prophet with a new methodology.

It is quite clear from the above discussion that the fundamental line that distinguishes the western views from that of the Muslim standpoint is the authorship of the Qur'ān. Western works attempt to ascribe the Qur'ān to the Prophet. In this regard Jeffery says:

"In the 6th century, Arabia was surrounded by the higher civilizations and religions, and both the Christians well as Jewish doctrines were at work in his time. As a young boy, he was highly impressed by the great ideas of that time. Consequently, it was natural that the Qur'ān would contain the religious and cultural terms borrowed from other religions more specifically Judaism and Christianity. In addition, to assign the term a fresh and new look, the Prophet attempted to change them according to his perceptions".²⁵

Jeffery supports his statement with narrations that report the Prophet's journeys to Syria and other places. Moreover, in doing so, he attempts to show the contacts of the Prophet with merchants, slaves, and even the Christian churches.²⁶

Another significant thread that runs throughout his book is his depiction of the traditional Muslim scholarship. He, quite frequently, reiterates the point that the Muslim scholars indeed failed to attain success in tracing out the origins of the terms. He deems that the Muslim scholars assigned those terms the foreign origin about which they did not have a clear knowledge and to cloak their ignorance, they attributed it to any language they wished.²⁷ The worth mentioning point is that he could not refrain from attributing the fabrication to the earlier scholars saying that some of the scholars assigned the origin of words to other languages and placed it back in the mouth of Ibn 'Abbās.

His attitude towards the Muslim philologists' efforts and works is considered as 'patronizing' by recent scholars and his criticism of the Muslim savants as 'motivated by a desire to conceal ignorance' is directed towards Jeffery himself by A.S. Tritton regarding his designation of some of the terms as non- Arabic.²⁸

On contrary to his stance for the Muslim scholars, Jeffery places the Modern western scholarship in high regard and affirms that the recent scholars have detected much more foreign terminology in the Qur'ān that the Muslim scholars could not notice.²⁹

Andrew Rippin on Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān

Rippin is a renowned scholar of the Qur'ānic studies and has authored many celebrated works on the Qur'ān. He wrote a brief article on the said

theme in Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān. After providing a background of the theme, he puts forward the question that why the Muslim scholars assigned some words to foreign origins despite the Qur'ānic assertion about the Arabic nature of the Qur'ān. He believes that this practice arose out of some specific considerations. According to him, it was the exegetes who created the problem not necessitated by the exegesis of the actual Qur'ānic text.³⁰

In his discussion of the factors that led the exegetes to the affirmation of foreign words in the Qur'ān, he counts the following factors:

The early exegetes other than Arabs, specifically Persians, noticed the similarity between Arabic and their spoken language and hence, declared correctly these words as foreign.

Another reason he deems can be the relationship of the meaning between Arabic and the known language. The early Arab exegetes and grammarian had a language other than Arabic as their mother tongue and it was their knowledge of other languages that brought the study of loan words in Arabic.

Among these factors was the rise of grammatical studies that led to the understanding of the forms which, in turn, indicated the aberrance. The consequences were that words violating these grammatical rules were declared as foreign.

According to him, the designation of the foreign has hermeneutical significance because if the word is to be declared as foreign, it is open for a broader interpretation. It is also clear, Rippin states, that the Muslim scholars could not succeed in their designation of loan words. Mainly, they attributed the words to other languages without historical and linguistic grounds. He elaborates the point by giving a specimen of the Hebrew language. In his view, many of the biblical characters that relate to Hebrew were assigned to other languages instead of Hebrew. Also, the Muslims attributed certain pejorative words to Coptic because of their social conceptions of Coptic as a deceptive nation.

The Muslim scholars, according to him, ignored the apparent relationships in assigning the origins. Sometimes, it happened that the words were located wrongly by the earlier scholars who do not know other languages. When those who came later with better knowledge, it was not possible for them to reject the tradition. The reason for this behavior as he sees is that the Muslims have elevated tradition to the level that they simply could not throw away anything from tradition.

Analysis

In his work, Rippin did not deal with a list of foreign words determining their origins. The reason might be that he does not consider the etymological knowledge indispensable for the comprehension of the Qur'ānic message as he showed in his other work concerning the meaning of Ḥanīf. Rather, he criticizes the approaches that seek the origin of this word to

understand the word in its Qur'ānic context and declares that as "problematic".³¹

The work can be considered succinct yet comprehensive as Rippin surveys the earlier literature on this issue expounding the salient features of those works. In a modern scholar's observation, the recent works on foreign vocabulary seldom go far beyond Jeffery's work.³² This is also manifested as Rippin seems to be contingent on the former's work in the formation of his several views if not all. Mainly, his work can be considered an extension of the ideas offered by Jeffery in his monograph. More specifically, his comments concerning Persian designations of the words, Greek commercial influence on the Muslims, perception of the Coptic community, and dearth of knowledge in the Muslim scholarship are verbatim of Jeffrey's remarks. Nonetheless, he has not indicated the key source of his ideas.

It is pointed out previously that Jeffery has discussed some of the aspects of the Muslim philologists' methodology; Rippin does so but, to some extent, in a different way. As the former's remarks concerning the Muslim savants are declared as patronizing in the sense that frequently he informs his readers about the incapability of the Muslim scholars in this field, Rippin in contrast, attempted to underline the key features of their methodology concerning the genre of foreign vocabulary. In his analysis, he shows that exegetes had a set of rules in declaring any word as foreign. By doing so, he attempts to support the Muslim scholarship with a description of their set methodology with a good measure of knowledge in the detection of foreign expressions. However, on some issues, he also could not manage to escape from offering pejorative remarks.

As far as the contentions of Rippin about the knowledge of the Muslim scholars are concerned, his statements, again, are the echo of Jeffery's remarks. According to him, the little knowledge of other languages, bias, and dearth of historical observations of the Muslim scholars resulted in designations of words in other languages incorrectly.

Jeffrey, as mentioned in the previous clause, also charges the Muslim scholarship of the identical points in various clauses of his book such as a work of "mere guesswork", "based on the personal bias" and "lack of linguistic knowledge".³³

This observation is true regarding some of the cases such as the incorrect designation of some words or over-concision in the citation, but, this is not always the case. Recently a few other scholars agreed to his conclusions while indicating these problems in their works.³⁴ Moreover, they also illustrated that the earlier philologists and exegetes mingled the Qur'ānic vocabulary with the secular in their treatises.³⁵ Quick browsing of the pages of these classical works proves the validity of this observation. Scholars such as Al Maqdasī (d. 582)³⁶ and others did not distinguish between the vocabulary of the Qur'ān and the Arabic language. Additionally, there is another observation, made by the editor of Al Jawālīqī's work, that in some cases the

Muslim philologist mistakenly attributed the words to non- Arabic roots.³⁷

But, as it is said that this was unlikely in most of the cases, the Muslim scholars produced a rich legacy on the subjects of philology, grammar, and lexicography. A recent scholar convincingly defends the earlier scholarship writing that the earlier linguists and philologists did not address the issue technically as they cited the foreign words with very little elaboration without mentioning historical factors. However, this does not suggest that they overlooked the issue of non- Arabic words. Some experts excellently dealt with this genre by producing exhaustive works. Moreover, they established the rules of Arabic grammar and syntax to identify the non- Arabic terms.³⁸

Rippin cites some of the works as specimens such as the work of Ibn Jinni (d. 392) who had a firm grasp of Greek and Persian as his father was a Roman and he had a Persian teacher.³⁹

He illustrates another point that the lexicographers such as Rāghib al Iṣfahāni entirely ignored the description of the foreign words or described them in brief without going into detail. The basic factor might be, as elaborated by scholars, that they considered those words as Arabic after they had been in the use of Arabs for long and did not think it necessary to mention its foreignness.⁴⁰

Putting aside this issue of ignorance of the Muslim scholars for a moment, the assessment of the arguments itself reveals the validity of the claims. Talking in a like manner about the Muslim scholarship, Rippin illustrates that the traditional Muslims declared any word foreign without putting necessary historical investigations. Following the footsteps of Jeffery, the author affirms that the Muslim scholars attributed some words that are undoubtedly of Arabic origin to Coptic as a result of their negative conception of that community. The same has been uttered by Jeffry as he narrates the view of a nineteenth-century German scholar:

*“Dvorak, arguing from the fact that the philologists stated that الأولى meant الآخرة in Coptic, and الأخرى meant الأولى, suggests that the Muslims simply made these statements to throw contempt on the Coptic community”.*⁴¹

It seems that Rippin while charging the Muslim scholarship of the scarcity of historical investigation, himself expressed the same approach as he transmitted the earlier scholars’ statement without estimation. This proclamation illustrates that the earlier scholarship declared the words of pejorative sense such as Ghassāq (pus) to Coptic because of their disdain for them. On contrary, the words that were declared by the Muslim scholars as Coptic are pure Arabic.

A glance at historical accounts demonstrates that this was not the actual case. The historical accounts inform that prophet would send his messengers and viceroys to nearby countries with his letters. Ḥāṭib bin AbiBalt’a, accompanied with another companion was sent to the Coptic king

(Maqqas) and the king sent back some of the gifts to the Prophet including Maria Qibṭiyya and her sister, honey, crystal goblet, a mule and a donkey.⁴² The Prophet married Maria and had a son from her.⁴³ Later, the Prophet advised his followers to always be kind and benevolent to the Coptics.⁴⁴ Consequently, the Muslim conception of Coptic was not pejorative. Rather, they always tried to follow the Prophet's advice in their treatment of the Coptic.

Secondly, the three scholars could not proffer historical factors for this pejorative conception if it was there. What was the fundamental factor for this perception and whether it originated in a later period or at the Prophet's age; are the crucial points one has to counter.

Thirdly, if for the sake of argument, it is admitted that the conception of Coptic was a negative one that what is the possible justification Rippin and similar scholars can give for the word 'Moses' that is declared by the Muslim scholars as Coptic.⁴⁵ The fact strikingly reveals the point that the author based his views by looking at few terms or, to be exact, has followed the 'pick n choose' strategy as he referred to the pejorative expressions (according to him) merely and did not cite the word Mūsa in this regard.

Besides, Rippin comments on the extreme importance of tradition for the Muslims declaring that the earlier authorities did not have the knowledge of languages and hence, assigned the words erroneously. The later philologists possessed better information but they simply could not discard the tradition. Consequently, following the footsteps of their predecessors, they also announced the term as foreign.

Furthermore, he elaborates that Suyūṭī cites words attributed to various authorities without any questioning. The fact demonstrates the power of tradition in a way that nothing could be left if comes from tradition.⁴⁶

It is a fact that the Muslims rank tradition very high, nonetheless, one cannot generalize this phenomenon. Some specifics may elaborate the point:

The first and foremost source of inspiration in this regard is the Qur'ān that frequently directs the believers not to believe anything blindly without necessarily questioning. Even the very fundamental creeds are established on rational grounds.

As far as the Prophetic traditions are concerned, undoubtedly, it has a particular status in the Muslim scholarly works including exegesis and jurisprudence. Yet, a rapid survey of the forwards of the earlier works, including Tafsīr, ḥadīth, and fiqh, makes it clear that the acceptance of the Prophetic traditions is also conditional on the authentication and integrity of the chains of transmission. Further, Muslims are advised to utilize their insights and rationale while following the tradition. Even in the comprehension and interpretation of the Qur'ānic texts, an inquisitive approach is encouraged.

Ibn 'Āshūr, a notable exegete, explicate in this regard saying that there it is evident from the debates of Islamic jurisprudence that the early

authorities' elucidation for any ayah should not avert the later scholars to express their views about the ayah in question. Moreover, he cites that 'Umar would ask the companions about the connotation of the ayahs without putting the condition to narrate from the Prophet.⁴⁷ The anecdote shows that the early generations were encouraged to participate in theological and other discourses expressing their own opinions.

The division of the genre of Tafsīr into *Tafsīr-bi-Dirāya* and *Bil-Rriwāya* in itself is convincing proof that not all of the stock of exegesis is based on tradition. The inclusion of the second category of numerous works denotes the vital significance of opinion in Tafsīr.

The extent voluminous and exhaustive critical works of the scholars on various issues such as the authenticity of reports, reliability of the transmitters, the rationality of the statements, the possibility of the events, etc are the live examples of vigilance of the classical Muslim savants. The sciences of 'Uloomul Qur'ān itself is a valid and sound proof for the critical observations of the Muslim scholarship. Moreover, one can find numerous debates in exegetical works, criticizing specific opinions and preferring one on another based on the soundness of the evidence.

In the concern of the foreign words too, one can observe the critiques of later scholars to the lists of loan words offered by Siyūṭī and other scholars. Rather, Siyūṭī himself has critiqued some scholars for declaring the pure Arabic terms as non- Arabic.⁴⁸ Such as Al Jawaliqī declares in his discussion of the proper nouns, that all of the proper names in the Qur'ān are non- Arabic except the four; Adam, Shu'aib, Ṣāleḥ, and Muhammad. He deemed these words to be pure Arabic.⁴⁹

Despite his prolific knowledge, he was criticized by the later philologists such as Zamakhsharī and Al Baiḍāwī. Zamakhsharī rejects this view about the name Adam and affirms that this is purely a non-Arabic term.⁵⁰

Similarly, about the term Iblīs, the noted scholars such as Rāghib al Iṣfahanī and Ibn 'Arfa state that this is solely Arabic word. They further reinforce their claim by tracing its roots into Arabic on the basis that it is derived from Iblās.⁵¹ Again, it is Baidhāvī who refuses this explanation and declares the word to be foreign saying that the Iblīs is of non- Arabic origin and does not come from Iblās.⁵² The anecdotes show that in the genre of the foreign vocabulary too, the scholars have been vigilant and observant enough in acceptance of any tradition or discarding it.

Moreover, the discussion confirms that the exegetes did not always accept the traditions without delving into the issue of authentication, reliability, and sagacity. Consequently, they did throw away the traditions not fulfilling these criteria and affirmed that the Tafsīr tradition has been inquisitive throughout its history.

At present, the Muslim scholars express a great deal of reverence for the early scholarship reserving for them the right for the difference of opinion.

What they emphasize is that despite the traditionalist's great services, the possibility of the lapses in their works cannot be ruled out. Hence, their works can also be examined on a critical basis.⁵³

Conclusion

Though, a glance over various historical stages of western quranic studies reveals a transformation of style and approaches. Yet, an echo of polemic tone filled with the sense of 'we know better' can be heard even in the most so-called academic works. There always has been an insistence to build the research on the foundation that disregards the Classical Muslim Tradition.

The point that western writers often underestimate the significance of the traditional Muslim scholarship is even acknowledged by contemporary western intellectuals. The present article as well lies in this line. Various statements of the writer indicate the Muslim tradition as problematic or unauthentic. Moreover, the writer has presented his few findings without a sound historical foundation.



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References

¹Arthur Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of Qur'an* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), vii

²The method is criticized by many experts with the argument that it intended to ignore the changes to the meaning made in course of time and further, it overlooks the expression of the word under discussion in its specific context. Moreover, according to these scholars, the etymology of the word is a poor indicator of its expressions in contemporary text. On this issue, a profound discussion can be viewed in the work of James Barr, *Comparative Philology, and the texts of Old Testament* (Eigenbranes: 2001), 90.

³ *Foreign Vocabulary*, Introduction, 1.

⁴ 12: 2

⁵ 20: 113

⁶ See: Abū'Ubaida Al Baṣarī, *Majāzul Qur'an*, ed. Fuad Sezgin (Cairo: Maktab tul Khānjī, 1381), vol. 1. 17.

⁷ Abū'Ubaida, *Majāzul Qur'an*, vol. 1. 17.

Abū Aḥmad Al Sāmri, *Lughāt fil Qur'an*, ed. Salāḥuddīn (Cairo: Mataba tul Risāla, 1946), vol. 1. 19.

Muḥammad bin Idris Shāf'ī, *Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Egypt: Maktabatul Ḥalbi, 1940), vol. 1. 40-46.

⁸ Al Ṭabarī Ibn Jarīr, *Al Jame' al Bayān* (Egypt: Mo'ssisatul Risala, 2000), 11. vol, 1. 13.

⁹Jalāluddīn Siyūṭī, *Al Muhazzab fīma Waq'a fil Qur'ān minal Mu'arrab* (Saudi Arabia: Maktaba Faḍala), vol, 1. 57.

¹⁰ Ahmad Ibn Fāris, *Al Ṣahībīfī Fiqhul lughā*, ed. 'Alī, Muhammad (1997), vol, 1. 33.

Siyūṭī, *Al Muhazzab*, vol, 1. 65.

¹¹ See: *The Orientalist s and the Qur'ān*, 306

¹² Ibrāhīm Ṣāleḥ, *Dirāsātīfī Fiqhul Lughā* (Bairūt: Dārul 'Ilmlīl Malayyīn, 1960), vol, 1. 317

¹³ See for instance: Rāzi, *Mafātīh*, vol, 17. 347. Zamakhsharī, *Kashāf*, vol, 4. 140

¹⁴ Zuḥailī, Wahba. *Al Tafsiṛ Al Munīr* (Bairūt: Dārul Fikr al Mu'aṣir, 1418), vol, 1. 34

¹⁵ Shukaib Hilālī, *Ma Waq'a fil Qur'ā min ghair lughatil' Arab* (Madina: Al Jamia al Islamiyya, 1970), 21

¹⁶ Jeffery, 2

¹⁷ *Mohammadanism Historical Survey* (London: 1961), 37

¹⁸ For a brief study of the writers who have worked in this regard see: Mikhail Bukharin, "Mecca on the Caravan Routes in Pre-Islamic Antiquity" in *The Qur'ān in context*, 115- 134.

Samir Khalil, "The theological Christian influence on the Qur'ān: a reflection" in *The Qur'ān in historical context*, 141- 162.

¹⁹ "Beyond single words: *Ma'ida- Shaytan- jibt and taghut* Mechanisms of transmission into the Ethiopic Bible and the Qur'ānic text", *The Qur'ān In its historical context*, 204- 216.

²⁰ He is a specialist in Quranic studies and recently serving at the University of Toronto. He published extensively on the Qur'ān.

²¹ "The etymological fallacy and Qur'ānic studies: Muhammad, Paradise, and late antique", *The Qur'ān in context*, 649-698. 653 (footnotes)

²² Walid, *The etymological Fallacy*, 653

²³ *Foreign Vocabulary*, 225

²⁴ Walid, *The etymological Fallacy*, 651

²⁵ *Foreign Vocabulary*, 38

²⁶ *Foreign Vocabulary*, 13, 22

²⁷ *Foreign Vocabulary*, 18

²⁸ A.S. Tritton, Review of *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* by Arthur Jeffery, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942), 1009-1011

²⁹ See for instance: *Foreign Vocabulary*, 32, 30, 37, 28

³⁰ *Encyclopaedia of the Quran*, ed, Jane Dammen McAuliffe. (Leiden: Brill, 2003) vol, 1. 227

³¹ In his analysis of the term 'ḥanīf', he does not trace its etymological roots. Instead, he endeavors to understand the word in the Qur'ānic context. "Reḥmān and Ḥanīf". In W. Halaq and P. D. Little, eds. *Islamic studies presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 153-168.

³² Carter M., "Foreign Vocabulary," in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān*, (UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 121

³³ See for instance; *Foreign vocabulary*, 13, 18.

³⁴ Hilālī, *Ma Waq'a fil Qur'ān*, 23.

³⁵ Carter, "Foreign Vocabulary", 121

³⁶ Abū'Abdullah, *Fī Ta'ribw al Mu'arrab*, ed. Ibrāhīm Sāmārāi (Beirut: Moassa tul Risāla)

³⁷ Abū Mansūr al Jawālīqī, *Al Mu'arrab*, ed. Abdul Raḥī (Damascus: Dāru lQalam, 1990), 6

³⁸ Abdul Ṣabūr Shāhīn, *Al Qira'āt Al Qur'ānia fī daw'Ilmilugha al ḥadīth* (Cairo: Maktaba al Khanjī.), 336

³⁹ Shāhīn, *Al Qira'āt*, 337

⁴⁰ Shāhīn, *Al Qira'āt*, 343

⁴¹ *Foreign Vocabulary*, 29

⁴² Ibn Khaldūn'Abdul Reḥmān, *Tārīkh ibn Khaldūn* (Beirut : Dārul Fikr, 1988), vol, 2. 87

⁴³ Ṭabarī, *TarīkhulṬabarī*, vol, 3. 167

⁴⁴ Muslim Ibnul Ḥujjah, *Al Musnad al Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Fuad, 'Abdul Bāqī (Beirut : DārIhyaulTurāthul'Arabī, 1970), vol, 4, . H, no. 2543

⁴⁵ Ibnul Jawzī, *FunūnlAfnān*, 351

⁴⁶ *Encyclopeadia of the Quran*, vol, 1. 232

⁴⁷ *Al Tahrīr wa Tanwīr*, vol, 1. 32

⁴⁸ See for instance the works of; *Itqān* by Ṣiyūṭī, vol.2. 134. Ibrāhīm, *Dirāsāt*, vol.1. 318.

⁴⁹ Abu Mansur, *Al Mu'arrab*, 102

⁵⁰ Al Kashāf, vol, 1. 125, *AnwārulTanzīl*, vol, 1. 69. The discussion relates to the proper noun Adam ,2: 31.

⁵¹ Ibn Manzur, *Lisān*, Root, (ب, ل, س), 343

⁵² *Anwārul Tanzīl*, vol, 1. 69

⁵³ Maudūdi, Abula'la. *Tafḥīmāt* (Lahore: 2006), vol, 1. 356.