

## Editorial

"The All-merciful has taught the Qur'an. He created man, and He has taught him the Explanation" (al-Rahman 55:1-4).

The first issue of Volume 38 comes on the heels of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the JCSIS. This special issue contains a number of research papers presented at the International Symposium on Contemporary Western Trends in Quranic Studies, The Problem of Objectivity and Bias: An Epistemological Perspective, held 2-3 May 2018. This symposium fulfilled the mission statements of Qatar University and the College of Sharia regarding achieving productive international collaboration with prestigious universities. It is the mission of the College to be known regionally and globally for leadership and excellence in Sharia education, Islamic studies, scientific research, and community service through a grounded moderate approach. Additionally, the College aspires to be a reliable benchmark of Arab-Islamic identity, to represent Islam in all its cultural dimensions and to promote coexistence and dialogue.

Faced with the plethora of challenges posed by contemporary life, we must pay careful attention to the Holy Quran as it is the first constitution of Islam. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Quranic studies in its various forms has enjoyed a prominent position in universities globally and more specifically in the West. Therefore, the College, with support from the Dean, the faculty, and the editorial committee, determined to publish this special issue highlighting research presented at the symposium, which was hosted by the College in collaboration with the Islamic Studies Research Unit. At the symposium, scholars specializing in Quranic studies from United States of America, Canada, Britain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, and Algeria presented their research.

There is a pressing need to examine all scientific aspects of the Holy Quran, including its preservation, documentation and translation, to increase our understanding of valuable Quran-related manuscripts in libraries, and to encourage contemporary studies on the Quran by scholars worldwide. This issue of the journal presents a set of studies that offer informed clarifications of several misconceptions regarding the preservation of the Holy Quran and its transmission since its revelation to Prophet Mohammad, orally as well as in writing. Other research papers demonstrate that the Quranic text consists of verses and chapters that are intertwined and consistent despite the fact that these words were revealed over twenty-three years. The studies additionally confirm that the canonical recitations emanate from the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and that they are a rich source of knowledge regarding recitations and understanding of the Quran and its exegesis. The papers included in the volume also address other issues, including the impossibility of applying historical criticism to the Holy Quran because the way the Quran was conveyed and preserved is completely different from how other religious books, such as the Torah and Bible, were transmitted. These studies have opened doors for future collaborative interdisciplinary research with Western scholars.

This issue of the journal is pioneering in that it contains a study by Dr. Alba Fedeli on the use of novel methods in examining Qur'anic manuscripts. Her research focuses on a new interdisciplinary area referred to as digital humanities, a recently established field that uses technology to develop better understandings of manuscripts of different types and languages. Dr. Alba applied digital humanities tools in the study of early Quranic manuscripts, which will lead to a collection of tagged and classified manuscript information. This digital database will be available to researchers worldwide. It should be particularly helpful to Arab scholars seeking in-depth understanding of Arabic manuscripts. Additionally, information technology borrowed from biology will contribute to the understanding of historical continuity and precisely determining the age of manuscripts while revealing shared connections between manuscripts.

Other research topics include the following:

- 1- The effect of abstraction of the script in the emergence of Quranic recitations according to Orientalists.
- 2- The Problem of the Meccan Verses in the Research of Certain Orientalists.
- 3- Corpus Coranicum from Philology to Literary Analysis: Critical Vision.
- 4- The *Journal of Quranic Studies* published by SOAS London University: The Problem of Objectivity and Prejudice.
- 5- The Composition and Writing of the Quran: Old Explanations and New Evidence.
- 6- Historical Criticism and Recent Trends in Western Scholarship on the Quran: Some Hermeneutic Reflections.
- 7- Quranic Studies Made in Austria: Approaching Quantitative Arabic Linguistics.
- 8- Between Dogmatism and Speculation: A Critical Assessment of Qirā'āt Studies.

In conclusion, this volume appears in the midst of the spread of COVID-19. We ask Allah the Almighty to end this pandemic and to protect humanity from its destructive effects. The current situation requires that all people collaborate in developing knowledge and research in fulfillment of Allah's words: "Help one another to piety and God-fearing and do not help each other to sin and enmity" (5:4) and "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you" (49:13). This last verse shows that the origin of the creation is one, extending back to Adam (PBUH). The goal of diversity is to help people understand one another and coexist, and not to fight and give in to division. The spirit of this goal is evident in the scientific papers of this symposium by Muslim and Christian scholars from the West and East.

May Allah (SWT) accept our efforts and help us create successful collaborations between scholars from different parts of the world.

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