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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

An Analysis of Western Quranic Scholars' Interpretive Approaches to the Mysterious Letters in the Opening Verses of the Qur'an

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ABSTRACT

The disjointed letters appearing at the beginning of certain chapters of the Holy Qur'an have long constituted one of the most enigmatic topics in Qur'anic studies. Despite their variation in form and occurrence, these letters have prompted a wide range of interpretations and speculations throughout history. This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to elucidate and critically assess the interpretive methods adopted by Western Qur'anic scholars and Orientalists in addressing this phenomenon. The central research question addresses the perspectives advanced by Western scholars, including Nöldeke, Blachère, Montgomery Watt, and Goldziher, on the disjointed letters, and evaluates the extent to which their interpretations are grounded in rigorous scientific and logical reasoning. The present study surveys various explanations proposed by these scholars, such as connections to the "*Abjad*" numerical system, thematic relevance to specific chapters, associations with the names of Companions, or classification as ambiguous and esoteric verses. The analysis demonstrates that most Western interpretations are predominantly speculative, lack robust scholarly and logical foundations, and are shaped by presuppositions that diverge from the established principles of Islamic exegesis.

KEYWORDS

Qur'an, Disjointed Letters, Orientalists, Western Qur'anic Scholarship.

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Extended Abstract

An Analysis of the Interpretive Approaches of Western Qur'anic Scholars Regarding the Disconnected Letters (Muqatta'at) in the Openings of the Qur'anic Surahs

The Muqatta'at, or disconnected letters, appearing at the beginning of twenty-nine Qur'anic surahs, represent one of the most mysterious and widely debated elements in Qur'anic sciences. These unique combinations of letters—such as "Alif-Lām-Mīm" or "Ḥā-Mīm"—have puzzled Muslim commentators and scholars for centuries due to their enigmatic phonetic and syntactic nature. Traditional Islamic exegesis has offered various explanations, ranging from symbolic and allusive interpretations to the view that they are *tawqīfī*—divinely ordained mysteries whose full meaning is known only to God and His Messenger. However, with the rise of Orientalist scholarship in the West from the nineteenth century onward, these letters became subject to entirely different analytical lenses grounded in historical criticism, comparative linguistics, and often skeptical approaches to the divine origin of the Qur'an.

This study presents a descriptive-analytical investigation that reviews and critiques the interpretive methodologies of Western Qur'anic scholars regarding the Muqatta'at. It evaluates the logical consistency and methodological validity of their claims, highlighting fundamental differences between Western and Islamic approaches to the sacred text.

Western Qur'anic studies emerged within the broader framework of Orientalism, influenced by scientific curiosity, cultural interests, and occasionally missionary goals. Rather than approaching the Qur'an as divine revelation, many Western scholars treated it as a historical document reflecting the socio-cultural environment of seventh-century Arabia. In this paradigm, linguistic phenomena like the Muqatta'at were analyzed through comparative methods, linking them to pre-Islamic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, or South Arabian dialects) or numerical systems such as the Abjad. Key figures who shaped early discussions include Theodor Nöldeke, Richard Bell, Régis Blachère, Ignaz Goldziher, and later Montgomery Watt.

Nöldeke, in his influential *History of the Qur'an*, proposed a chronological classification of surahs and viewed the disconnected letters as possible markers related to the compilation and collection process of the Qur'anic text. He suggested they might represent cryptic notations or identifiers for early manuscripts. Blachère adopted a more literary-structural perspective, using statistical analysis to argue that the letters likely served a phonetic or rhetorical function—perhaps to capture the audience's attention during recitation—rather than carrying a direct thematic link to the surah's content. Montgomery Watt interpreted them as remnants of pre-Islamic oral traditions whose original meanings had been lost over time. Goldziher, taking a more radical critical stance, largely denied any specific symbolic or exegetical significance, seeing them instead as an arbitrary early inscription method unrelated to the surah's message.

While these interpretations appear sophisticated and rest on linguistic or historical arguments, the study argues they suffer from significant methodological shortcomings. Western approaches are heavily shaped by epistemological presuppositions: a developmental view of the Qur'an as a humanly composed text that evolved over time, a reduction of revelation to historical and cultural processes, and skepticism toward its divine authorship. Consequently, explanations for the Muqatta'at tend to be speculative, relying more on external comparative data than on rigorous internal analysis of the Qur'anic text itself.

The research identifies three major weaknesses in Orientalist exegesis. First, there is a notable linguistic deficiency. Many Western scholars lacked deep mastery of classical Arabic lexicography and rhetoric, leading to interpretations that overlook the Qur'an's unique stylistic and linguistic features. Second, their analyses rarely employ an intra-textual (intra-Qur'anic) approach. In contrast, the Islamic exegetical tradition frequently connects the Muqatta'at to the broader themes of the surah, viewing them as introductions that highlight the Qur'an's linguistic miracle (*iʿjāz*) and the majesty of divine speech. Third, the dominant historical-critical outlook inherently questions the revelatory nature of the text, dismissing interpretations that acknowledge spiritual or enigmatic dimensions as unscientific.

In the analytical section, the study re-examines recurring concepts in Western scholarship. One prominent idea is "literary cryptography," which posits the Muqatta'at as devices for establishing rhythm, cadence, or mnemonic patterns in oral recitation. Another is the correlation with the Abjad numerical system, where scholars attempt to decode hidden meanings related to dates of revelation, historical events, or names of individuals by assigning numerical values to the letters. The author critiques these hypotheses for lacking sufficient internal

Qur'anic evidence. Such interpretations often depend on external sources, statistical conjectures, or assumptions that do not align with established principles of Qur'anic exegesis, such as contextual analysis (*siyāq*), linguistic precision, and reliance on authentic interpretive traditions (*tafsīr* narrations).

Ultimately, the study concludes that the Muqatta'at are multi-layered phenomena encompassing theological, rhetorical, and miraculous dimensions. Fully appreciating them requires acceptance of the concept of divine revelation and the special status of the Qur'anic language. Western interpretations, constrained by their anthropocentric and historicist frameworks, fall short of grasping this deeper semantic and spiritual reality. While these studies offer some value for comparative linguistics, historical research, or methodological critique, they lack the epistemological coherence and analytical depth found in the Islamic interpretive tradition.

This divergence underscores a profound cognitive and methodological gap: the Islamic tradition is built upon faith in the text's divine origin, internal semantic coherence, and the interplay between revelation and language, whereas Western scholarship prioritizes external historical reconstruction and critical deconstruction. The research emphasizes that examining Orientalist views remains valuable for cross-cultural dialogue. It allows Muslim scholars to defend the originality and miraculous nature of the Qur'an while engaging rationally with alternative perspectives. Such critique not only strengthens confidence in traditional exegetical methods but also opens pathways for more balanced, faith-informed contributions to global Qur'anic studies.

In conclusion, although the precise meaning and purpose of the Muqatta'at remain among the Qur'an's divine enigmas—known ultimately only to God—the critical evaluation of Western scholarship highlights the limitations of purely historical and skeptical approaches. The study advocates for an interpretive framework that integrates rationality with recognition of the text's sacred character. By doing so, it contributes to a richer understanding of Qur'anic sciences and promotes constructive engagement between Islamic and Western academic traditions.

K E Y W O R D S

Qur'an, Muqatta'at, Disconnected Letters, Orientalism, Western Qur'anic Scholarship, Exegesis, Historical Criticism.

Introduction

The disjointed letters found at the beginning of 29 chapters of the Holy Qur'an represent one of the most intriguing and complex subjects in Qur'anic studies. These letters, which differ in number and arrangement across chapters, have engaged exegetes, Qur'anic scholars, and thinkers from the earliest period of Islam to the present. Their enigmatic character and seemingly obscure meaning have generated a wide array of interpretations, including associations with the "*Abjad*" numerical system, references to names or concepts, and allusions to mysteries of the unseen. Within the extensive body of Islamic scholarship on these letters, the interpretive approaches of Western Qur'anic scholars have acquired particular significance. These scholars, employing diverse methodologies and interpretive frameworks, often characterized by critical or skeptical perspectives toward religious sources, have advanced interpretations that reflect Western scientific, philosophical, and ideological orientations in engaging with sacred texts. While these interpretations may diverge from traditional Islamic exegetical principles, their examination is essential, as they influence perceptions of the Qur'an's revelatory status and scientific character, and serve as instruments for critical analysis. This study seeks to systematically examine, with reference to authoritative interpretive sources and a commitment to scholarly fairness, the approaches of Western Qur'anic scholars (Orientalists) such as Nöldeke, Blachère, Montgomery Watt, Goldziher, and others regarding the status of the disjointed letters in the Qur'an. The research employs a descriptive-analytical method, utilizing library research, documentary analysis, and note-taking from relevant sources. The primary objective is to present and critically evaluate selected interpretive views of Western Qur'anic scholars concerning the disjointed letters at the openings of Qur'anic chapters. Achieving a deeper understanding of the Qur'an's language in relation to these ambiguous yet significant elements, and comparing the methodologies and intellectual backgrounds of Western scholars with those of Islamic thinkers regarding the semantic status of the disjointed letters, are central to this research's aims.

1. Literature Review

Significant articles have been written on the views of Western Qur'anic scholars regarding the disjointed letters. For example: "Disjointed Letters from the Perspective of Western Qur'anic Scholars" by Sayyid Kazem Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Journal of Islamic Studies, No. 6, Summer 2003 AD/1382 SH; "Critique and Review of Orientalists' Views and Rashad Khalifa on Disjointed Letters" by Mohammad Reza Rasouli Ravandi, Proceedings of the International Congress on Culture and Religious Thought, 2014 AD/1393 SH; "Study of Disjointed Letters from the Perspective of Orientalists" by Sayyid Mohammad Razavi and Sakineh known as Mahin Jafari, Hosna Quarterly, Year 8, No. 29-30, Summer and Autumn 2016 AD/1395 SH. Each of these studies has critically addressed important aspects of Western Qur'anic scholars' views, revealing their ideological weaknesses.

Sayyid Mohammad Reza Hosseininia et al. (2023 AD/1402 SH), in a study entitled "Comparative Re-examination of the Meanings of Disjointed Letters in the Thought of Orientalists and Exegetes of the Two Major Sects with Emphasis on the View of the Supreme Leader," comparatively examined the nature and meanings of the disjointed letters in

the Holy Qur'an, focusing on the views of Orientalists and exegetes of the two major sects (Shia and Sunni), highlighting the perspective of the Supreme Leader. The findings of this study indicate that the hypotheses of Orientalists, which often originate in the belief in the non-revelatory origin of the Qur'an, in cases such as abbreviations of manuscripts, adaptation from Jewish tradition, or symbols of the Basmala, do not align with the views of exegetes, and their evidence lacks sufficient substantiation. In contrast, the view of the Supreme Leader presents these letters as the "Artistic Miracle of the Qur'an" and as a symbol of the greatness of its revelatory origin, a point reinforced by the Qur'an's mention of them in the following verses. Despite the diversity of views (five general views from Orientalists and eleven views from exegetes), achieving a comprehensive and definitive meaning for these letters remains challenging; the authors ultimately believe that the connection of their views with the Qur'an and its rhetorical aspects is a matter of relative consensus (Hosseininia et al., 2023 AD/1402 SH: 127-154).

Although numerous studies on the disjointed letters have been conducted by Qur'anic scholars and those interested in Qur'anic sciences, each worthy of reference and citation, the present writing aims to compare some of the abundance of scholarly works on the disjointed letters by Qur'anic scholars and specialists in Qur'anic sciences, this study seeks to compare selected divergent and contradictory perspectives of Orientalists with the interpretive findings of Islamic exegetes and Qur'anic scholars. The aim is to identify the most contextually appropriate interpretation of the disjointed letters in the Qur'an by critically engaging with both perspectives.

2. Conceptualization

2-1 Disjointed Letters

Disjointed letters are letters that appear in the first of some Quran Surahs; of 29 chapters of the Qur'an and a total of 78 letters, which, with the removal of repetitions, become 14 letters. In the Qur'an and Islamic traditions, no explicit view is found regarding the interpretation and exegesis of these verses and the reason for their existence." (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 2, 65-66) Most chapters that begin with these letters are Meccan, except for the chapters of *al-Baqarah* and *Āli ʻImrān*, which were revealed in Medina (Wahidi Nishaburi, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 211).

Other names for these letters include *Muqaṭṭaʿāt* (Majlisī, n.d.: 89, 373), *Ḥurūf al-Fawātiḥ, Awā'il al-Suwar*, and *Fawātiḥ al-Suwar* (Ṭabarī, 1954: 1, 234; Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, 1968: 1, 236). The titles *Awā'il al-Suwar* and *Fawātiḥ al-Suwar* are used with some imprecision, as the disjointed letters are actually part of and a type of the chapter openings (Suyūṭī, 1967: 3, 361).

2-2 Orientalist

"Orientalist" in lexicography means bright and radiant and in terminology refers to Orientalists, scholars, researchers, and those knowledgeable about matters of the East (Dehkhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: Letter M, 347). This word was first used in 1769 AD, and the term "Orientalism" was used in the Oxford English Dictionary and later recorded in the French scientific dictionary in 1838 (Badawī, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 15).

Most Orientalists are Christian, and in fact, with closer examination of the Orientalists' definition of Islam and their slanders against the religion of Islam and the Qur'an, it can be understood that most Orientalists were agents of Western governments to fulfill colonial purposes (Zamani, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 126). In

other words, it is a category of Western research concerning the heritage of the East, particularly issues related to its history, language, literature, art, sciences, religion, customs, and traditions (Ali al-Ṣaghīr, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 13; Disūqī, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 88). Among the most important of these are research and theorizing in the field of Qur'anic studies and its history, each of which, especially regarding the disjointed letters, which they refer to as "Mysterious Letters," is open to critique and examination.

3. Epistemological Status of Disjointed Letters in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is a heavenly book and the last and most complete divine word revealed to the purified heart of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), intended to guide humanity toward happiness. This revealed word stands at the peak of inimitability and is completely different from other heavenly books in terms of comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, to the extent that Voltaire, the French philosopher and writer, said in praise of the Qur'an: "I am certain that if the Qur'an and the Gospel were presented to a non-religious person, he would certainly choose the Qur'an; because Muhammad (PBUH) outwardly teaches thoughts that are sufficiently based on reason." (Shahed, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 124) On the same basis, in defense of the Holy Qur'an, which was inappropriately compared to the Torah by the Frenchman Larcher, he referred to him as a "Disgraceful libertine and illiterate debauchee" and spoke of the superiority of the Holy Qur'an (Hadidi, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 216); thus, one of the manifestations of the Qur'an's inimitability that distinguishes and elevates it above other heavenly books, such as the Gospel and the Torah, is the presence of disjointed letters in the Qur'an.

The explanation and understanding of these letters have engaged the attention of exegetes and Qur'anic scholars from the beginning of exegesis to the present, with numerous and varied opinions expressed. Among Islamic scholars, this diversity of views is evident and accessible. For example, it has been said: "The disjointed letters are among the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an, knowledge of which is specific to God." (Suyūṭī, 1967: 3, 24; Ṭabarī, 1954: 1, 72)

"The disjointed letters are oaths from God that this book is from Him." (Qurṭubī, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 1, 110; Majlisī, n.d.: 88, 7)

"These letters are actually a secret between God and the Prophet of Islam, known only to the Prophet and the pure." (Balāghī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 1, 64)

"These letters were revealed to inform the Prophet of the revelation and to distinguish it from human speech." (Suyūṭī, 1967: 3, 31)

Or, "By contemplating the chapters with common disjointed letters, it becomes clear that their themes and contexts are similar and proportionate." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974: 18, 6)

It should be noted that other interpretations of the "Disjointed Letters" have been offered by Qur'anic scholars, and numerous traditions have also been narrated in this regard. It has been said that if we examine the disjointed letters at the beginning of each chapter separately, the largest volume of that chapter belongs to these letters. For example, with the letters "*Alif, Lām, Mīm*" at the beginning of Surah *al-Baqarah*, by examining and counting all the letters of this chapter, it is concluded that the letters "*Alif, Lām, Mīm*" are used more than other letters in Surah *al-Baqarah* (Zarkashī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 1, 53; Ḥuwayzī, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 3, 320). However, this does not hold true for most chapters beginning with other letters, such as Surah *Ṭāhā* and chapters beginning with the

disjointed letters "*Ṭā Sīn*" and "*Ṭā Sīn Mīm*," where "*Alif, Lām, Mīm*" are more frequent in these chapters than the letters "*Ṭā* and *Sīn*." Thus, it is not a simple matter.

Some others believe that in twenty-seven of the twenty-nine chapters beginning with these letters, the word "Book" or a word with the same meaning, such as "Remembrance," "Qur'an," or "Writing," appears after them. The mention of the word "Book" after the disjointed letters expresses the truth that despite the composition of God's Book from these letters, no one has been able, and will not be able until the end of the world, to produce speech like it (Gharavi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 3, 887-889). All the words of the world from the beginning to this age have arisen from these same letters, which alone are mere sounds, and the means of communication among humanity and the development of sciences are the result of the combination of these limited letters, and the Qur'an is no exception, acquiring meaning and various forms after combination (ibid.). In any case, the approaches and epistemological perspectives of Islamic Qur'anic scholars in their understanding of the Qur'anic disjointed letters and God's intended meaning from these letters are completely distinct from one another, as they are based on conjecture and sometimes on contextual clues.

In this regard, Western Qur'anic scholars, with Orientalist motivations, have also presented conflicting opinions and views based on their conjectures and speculations. Although, in some respects, they are close to the views of Islamic thinkers, this will be addressed briefly in this writing, after outlining the threefold motivations of Orientalism.

4. Motivations of Orientalism

Researchers, each from their own perspective, have cited different motivations for Orientalism. Some have presented a completely pessimistic view, some an optimistic one, and some a differentiated one. In general, these motivations can be divided into three categories:

4-1 A group of researchers believes that the first and most important goal of Orientalists was "Missionary" activity. They argue that anyone who traces the history of Orientalism and Christian missionary activity will see that these two movements are two sides of the same coin, sharing a common goal, though sometimes using different tools. In this regard, efforts to translate sacred texts and disseminate them in Eastern societies have also been considered as tools for this goal.

Ali al-Ṣaghīr, with a more precise approach, states in this regard: "We cannot deny these accusations summarily or in detail, because some of these accusations (the accusation of missionary nature of Orientalists' efforts) seem to some extent correct. On the other hand, we cannot consider all Orientalist research and efforts useless and regard them all as missionary endeavors. Such a judgment is not without exaggeration and extremism. Rather, we can consider some Orientalist efforts as correct and question others. Naturally, Orientalists are also human, and among humans, there are both superficial individuals and precise, deep-thinking ones." (Disūqī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 88)

4-2 Colonial motivations: Some researchers consider colonial motivations among the most important factors in Orientalism. Service to colonialism is manifested in Orientalist views, views through which they attempt to discredit Islamic values in the eyes and hearts of Muslims, cut off the bridges of connection and understanding among them, and slander and criticize them in international arenas (Khorramshahi, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 125).

Edward Said, in his work "Orientalism," argues that Orientalists often presented a fixed, stereotypical, and unrealistic image of the East, portraying the East as the "Other" or "Different" and consequently "In need of management" by the West (Said, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 165).

Badawī also believes that "Once, Orientalism was a weapon in the hands of Western colonialism to penetrate the culture and thoughts of Eastern nations, but today it has become a university discipline with various branches and orientations." (Badawī, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 13)

4-3 Scientific motivations**:** Alongside the political and colonial motivations mentioned earlier, many Orientalists also studied the East with purely scientific and research motivations. Some researchers believe that some Orientalists had scientific, cultural, or humanistic motivations, though there were also profiteers who used the results of these studies for non-scientific and non-humanitarian purposes. Therefore, not all Orientalists can be considered biased and subservient to colonialism. Although "The concentration of material and human resources in the West and the development of European and American countries, and the backwardness of the East, necessitated Western scientific and cultural dominance over the East." (Disūqī, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 77) Others believe that the most important goal of Orientalism was to understand and re-read the traditional texts of the great Eastern nations for the purpose of political-cultural domination over them and to quench the thirst for knowledge of Europeans, and that distortion and undermining of Islamic traditions being the most important goal of Orientalists and Orientalism is highly debatable, requiring wise consideration and critical expression of opinion (ibid.).

Ali al-Ṣaghīr states: "Many Orientalists have experienced Arabic as the language of culture, literature, and civilization, and have considered the Qur'an the pinnacle of this language. With scientific motivations and merely for the sake of understanding the Qur'an and enjoying it, they have explored and researched this great book, leaving behind great and praiseworthy works in this path. Of course, this judgment is not universal, and rare exceptions contrary to what has been said can also be found. *Najīb al-ʻAqīqī* has stated that Orientalism is a scientific and free endeavor based on the principles of research, translation, and authorship." (Ali al-Ṣaghīr, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 6-7)

In this regard, some Orientalists observed fairness and acknowledged that their understanding of authentic Islamic issues differs from that of Muslim scholars. An Orientalist, "Gerre," says: "Undoubtedly, the understanding of a non-Muslim thinker of Islamic teachings differs from that of a Muslim thinker; because the former has no way to understand the teachings and views of the Prophet of Islam except through translation of his words, and moreover, the perspective of a non-Muslim differs from that of a Muslim. Therefore, it is not surprising if an Orientalist reaches conclusions in Islamic studies different from those of a Muslim thinker." (al-ʻĀnī, n.d.: 126) The American Orientalist "Fred Guillaume" also stated: "There is no greater mistake than for a non-Muslim to express opinions about Islam based on his incomplete and weak knowledge, especially since various Muslim sects with different beliefs are scattered throughout the world, and it is impossible for him to offer a correct theory. Rather, the solution is for him to associate with Muslims enough to understand the reality of their views up close." (ibid: 127) In line with such approaches, *Muḥammad Kurd Alī*, a Syrian

Muslim author and researcher, explicitly states regarding our expectation from non-Muslim researchers and Orientalists: "It is not reasonable for us to expect non-Muslim scholars to analyze Islamic phenomena and issues as we do (as sacred and divine); rather, our only expectation is the observance of scientific standards and fairness in research." (Mousavi, 1993: 19)

Therefore, not all Orientalists' motivations can be considered merely colonial. Many of them, with a completely scientific approach and the aim of expanding human knowledge, discovering the beauty and depth of Eastern cultures, and better understanding the world's past and present, turned to these studies. Although these studies were sometimes accompanied by specific presuppositions and biases, they contributed significantly to the richness of global knowledge and the introduction of many unknown aspects of the East to the world. Distinguishing and understanding both dimensions of this phenomenon (both colonial and scientific motivations) is essential for having a complete and fair picture of Orientalism. Nevertheless, even if it is assumed that all Orientalists engaged in Islamic studies solely with scientific motivations and out of research sincerity, and no "Missionary" or "Colonial" purposes existed among them, caution and precision in dealing with their research, especially in the field of Qur'anic studies, is necessary; because their methods and conclusions are mainly based on foundations distant from the principles of authentic, insider understanding of the Qur'an.

5. Orientalists and the Works of Qur'anic Scholars

Although the scope of Orientalist research includes all sciences, arts, customs, and traditions of Eastern nations, the Qur'an, as the most fundamental and important text of Islam, one of the greatest Eastern traditions, has attracted the attention of Orientalists.

Among the Qur'anic research efforts of Orientalists, one can mention the "Translation of the Qur'an into European languages, which was the beginning of Orientalists' Qur'anic endeavors. According to a world bibliography, by 1980, more than 295 complete translations and 131 partial translations of the Holy Qur'an into English had been produced." (Khorramshahi, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 2, 2049)

The Orientalists' inclination toward the history of the Qur'an began in the early nineteenth century and continued until the second half of the twentieth century. These studies mainly revolved around the order, readings, dialects, compilation, and transcription of the Qur'an (Ali al-Ṣaghīr, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 15).

Writing and compiling books, producing encyclopedias, etc., are among other efforts of Western Orientalists. The production of books, encyclopedias, and related scholarly works by Western Orientalists constitutes a multifaceted phenomenon with both positive and negative consequences. While these efforts have contributed substantially to the preservation, dissemination, and analysis of various aspects of Eastern civilizations, thereby enriching the global intellectual heritage, they have also introduced epistemological biases that have facilitated the expansion and reinforcement of colonial and power-driven discourses. A critical examination of both dimensions is necessary for a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of this intellectual legacy.

1) Theodor Nöldeke, the great German Orientalist and author of the History of the Qur'an, which was completed after his death by Otto Pretzl and published under the title "Geschichte des Qorāns." (History of the

Qur'anic Text) This book contains very important material about the Qur'an and Qur'anic sciences and is among the most important books that have faced criticism and anger from Muslims (Khorramshahi, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 1, 525).

2) Ignác Goldziher, of Jewish origin and one of the greatest German-speaking Orientalists, authored many works in the field of "Islamic Studies." His most important book among Muslims is "Schools of Interpretation." In addition to this book, he has numerous works in the field of Qur'anic studies (Anwār al-Jundī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 45).

3) Régis Blachère: Among the most important works of this French Orientalist on the Qur'an are "Introduction au Coran" (At the Threshold of the Qur'an) and his "Translation of the Qur'an into French." Its Persian translation was done by the late Dr. Mahmoud Ramyar (Ali al-Ṣaghīr, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 7-8).

4) Richard Bell, an English Orientalist, translated the Qur'an into English. After this translation, his most important work on the Qur'an is a book entitled "Introduction to the Qur'an." (Nouri, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 180)

5) Montgomery Watt, one of the great Scottish Orientalists. His most important book in the field of Qur'anic studies is "Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an," a revision and reworking of his teacher Richard Bell's work. He also has an English commentary on the Qur'an. He announced to all Orientalists and Westerners that, if only for the sake of research ethics and norms, they should not consider the Qur'an as the book of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his work, but rather, like Muslims, regard it as revelatory and divine (Khorramshahi, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 2, 248).

Among the Qur'anic studies and research of Orientalists, numerous views have been presented. Within the body of Qur'anic studies conducted by Orientalists, a variety of perspectives have been advanced regarding the Qur'an and its history, including the subject of the disjointed letters, which remains one of the most complex topics in Qur'anic scholarship. This research aims to critically examine these interpretations, noting that many of the propositions advanced have been the subject of significant scholarly critique and are often considered unsubstantiated.

6. Evaluating the Approach of Western Quran Scholars in Describing Disjointed Letters

The views of Orientalists regarding discovering the meanings of the disjointed letters are, in most cases, derived from conjectures they have made about the meanings of these letters. Their intellectual foundations regarding the non-revelatory nature of the Holy Qur'an have prevented them from seriously engaging with the cryptic nature of these letters between God and the Prophet (PBUH), as well as with other views presented by Islamic Qur'anic scholars. Instead, they have mostly repeated their own views, attributing superficial matters and non-revelatory symbols to them.

At the beginning of 29 chapters of the Holy Qur'an, immediately after the *Basmala*, there is a single letter or a group of letters that, in Islamic tradition, are read separately and disjointedly. For example: "*Kāf, Hā, Yā, ʿAyn, Ṣād*." For this reason, Muslims often call these letters "*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭaʿah*" or "*al-Muqaṭṭaʿāt.*" (Ṭabarī, 1954: 1, 208; Suyūṭī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 658; Ramyar, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 951; Welch, 1954: 412; Glasse, 1989, under the entry "al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭaʿāt")

However, Western Qur'anic scholars, who consider that the meaning of these letters has remained a sealed secret, have called them "The Mysterious Letters." (Welch, 1954: 412, 428)

The question of what the meaning and signification of these letters are has always occupied the minds of searching individuals, compelling them to contemplate and speculate about them. Consequently, one can rarely find a book on Qur'anic exegesis and sciences that does not address this matter or express an opinion. Even independent works and books have been produced on this subject, such as: "*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqattaʿah fī al-Qurʾān*" by *ʻAbd al-Jabbār Ḥamad Sharārah* (Qom: 1993 AD/1414 AH); "*Awā'il al-Suwar fī al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*" by *Ali Nāṣūḥ al-Ṭāhir* (Amman: 1954 AD/1373 SH); and "The Miracle of the Qur'an" and "Statistical Analysis of the Disjointed Letters" by *Rashād Khalīfa*. However, since in Arabic these letters have no meaning other than their names as alphabetical letters, and no correct and reliable interpretation of their intended meaning has been reported from the Prophet (PBUH), scholars have remained perplexed, resulting in a diversity of opinions; to the extent that some have considered these letters among the mysteries known only to God. Some have also considered it probable that these letters constitute a code between God and the Prophet, which God did not wish anyone other than the Prophet to know (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1974: 18, 9; Shaltūt, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 11, 124).

In this context, some Western Qur'anic scholars have also sought to determine the meaning and significance of these letters. It seems this effort began when Theodor Nöldeke first published his famous book, "History of the Qur'an," in 1860. In that book, he held the view that the disjointed letters should not be part of the Qur'anic text; rather, they could be initial letters or symbols of the names of believers who, during the Prophet's lifetime, had compiled personal collections of chapters for themselves. When *Zayd ibn Thābit* collected the Qur'an, he incorporated the owners' symbols into the codices. For example, in "*Alif Lām Rā*," "*Rā*" symbolizes *al-Zubayr*; in "*Alif Lām Mīm Rā*," the symbol of *al-Mughayrah*; and in "*Ḥā Mīm*," the code for *ʻAbd al-Raḥmān*. He suggested that these symbolic signs, once Muslims no longer knew their meanings, were accidentally incorporated into the Qur'anic text. According to this hypothesis, these are simple ownership marks that were carelessly inserted into the Qur'anic text during transcription. This opinion, which gained general acceptance in Europe for a while, was later abandoned by Nöldeke himself, and consequently, in the second edition of his book, completed through the efforts of Schwally, that hypothesis was not repeated. However, H. Hirschfeld revived and defended it in new research in 1901. He considered each of these letters as the initial letter or code of another manuscript owner. For instance, "*Rā*"=Z, representing *al-Zubayr*; "*Mīm*" representing *al-Mughayrah*; "*Ḥā*" representing *Ḥudhayfah*; "*Ṣād*" representing *Ḥafṣah*; "*Kāf*" representing *Abū Bakr*; "Hā" indicating *Abū Hurayrah*; "Nūn" indicating *ʻUthmān*; "*Ṭā*" indicating *Ṭalḥah*; "*Sīn*" indicating *Saʻd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ*; "*ʻAyn*" indicating *ʻUmar, ʻAlī, Ibn ʻAbbās*, or *ʻĀyisha*; and "*Qāf*" indicating *Qāsim ibn Rabīʻah*. Hirschfeld's reasoning is that if the origin of these letters were Muhammad (PBUH), then "He must have had an important share in the arrangement of the chapters, and this conflict with everything we know about the compilation of the Qur'an. But when Hirschfeld's book was published, Nöldeke, who first proposed this hypothesis, had already abandoned it." (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 169; Welch, 1954: 412)

Nöldeke did not mention owners for the letters "*Lām*," "*Yā*," and "*Alif*." The weakness of this theory becomes more apparent when

considering the history of the Qur'an's compilation and the status of this sacred book among Muslims. Such was the piety and reverence of Muslims toward the Qur'an, as also noted by Loth and Buhl (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 17), that such an act could not have occurred; as when *Zayd ibn Thābit* was asked to compile the Qur'an, he said: "By God, if they had charged me with moving a mountain, it would not have been heavier for me than the task of compiling the Qur'an." (Sijistani, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 6)

In any case, this hypothesis not only failed to satisfy Muslims but also did not convince Western Qur'anic scholars. So much so that some of them stated: "It is absolutely incomprehensible that the compilers of the manuscripts would have preserved disjointed letters in their copy of the codex, knowing they were the initial letters of some of their contemporaries." (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 170) Furthermore, it can be said: "Such an unfounded hypothesis should at least be applicable to the names of the owners of personal manuscripts from the time of the Prophet (PBUH)?" (Ramyar, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 333-392)

It should be noted that Nöldeke's change of position was based on a brief but insightful study conducted by O. Loth on this subject. According to Loth, these letters appear only in the last Meccan chapters and the first Medinan chapters, i.e., at a time when, according to him, the Prophet was approaching Judaism; in some cases, the opening verses of these chapters contain references to these letters. For example, "These are the verses of the Book." He concluded that these letters are Kabbalistic symbols (from a Jewish sect) placed before these chapters as keywords or phrases. Loth's arguments led Nöldeke to abandon his previous opinion and conclude that these letters are part of revelation, but, apart from cryptic references to the heavenly Book, they contain no specific meaning. Shortly after, F. Schwally, while finding Loth's main argument interesting, rejected his specific suggestions as too arbitrary. However, he could not accept Nöldeke's later opinion, deeming it "Doubtful and Debatable," and emphasized that "These symbols are still somewhat related to the compilation of the chapters." By suggesting the possibility that these letters are part of revelation, he generally accepted that the arrangement of parts of revelation in these cryptic chapters originated from the Prophet himself. Thus, Schwally pioneered the work of Karbel in the 1930s (Ramyar, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 373-392).

Following Loth's theory that these letters are abbreviations, two other efforts were made:

1) An Orientalist named Hans Baur, in 1921, provided statistical evidence for Schwally's first point that "These letters are related to the compilation of the chapters." However, he fell short in following Schwally's second point. Instead, he offered a list of keywords, claiming that these letters were ancient abbreviations of those keywords, which was unconvincing. For example: "*Yā Sīn*" for "*Yas'ā*" (one who runs) in Surah 36, verse 20; "*Ṣād*" for "*Ṣāfināt*" (swift horses) in Surah 38, verse 31; "*Qāf*" for "*Qarīnuhu*" (his companion) in Surah 50, verses 23 and 27; and the like. For several other chapters with the same letters, he sought a kind of "Internal or external connection" and stated that "*Ṭā Sīn (Mīm)*" in Surahs 26 and 28 symbolizes "*Ṭūr Sīnīn*" and "*Mūsā*," because the chapters beginning with "*Ṭā Sīn*" speak about "Mount Sinai and Moses." He also considered "*Alif Lām Mīm*" as a symbol of "*al-Mathānī*." (Welch, 1954: 413) However, according to Blachère, "It is highly coincidental, like Baur, to want to consider the

opening of each chapter as an indication of its content." (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 171) Of course, it is said that Baur himself was the first to view these interpretations with skepticism (ibid.).

2) Another Orientalist named E. Gossen, in 1923, in an article, independently offered another similar opinion that these letters are abbreviations of the titles of abrogated chapters. For example, "*Qāf*" is an abbreviation of "Qur'an" and "*Nūn*" is an abbreviation of "*al-Nūn*" or "*Dhū al-Nūn*." (ibid.)

Baur and Gossen, in turn, inspired another "Abbreviation" theory expressed by Morris Seale in his book "Qur'an and the Bible." He said these letters evoke the themes of their chapters. Seale accepted Baur's interpretation of "*Ṭā Sīn Mīm*" as "*Ṭūr Sīnā* and *Mūsā*" and Gossen's interpretation of "*Alif Lām Rā*" as "*al-Rusul*" (the messengers). However, for "*Alif Lām Mīm*," he preferred "*al-Mawʿiẓah*" (the admonition), and for "*Yā Sīn*," he preferred "*Yūnus*" (Jonah). Here it is evident that with such an approach, various hypotheses can be proposed that do not necessarily contradict other hypotheses, and these very diverse hypotheses, which have not even convinced their own proponents, have led Orientalists themselves to admit the futility of such an approach (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 170; Welch, 1954: 413).

In critique of this theory, it must be said: "Firstly, the Qur'an was revealed gradually over twenty years, and Muslims always attended to its recitation and contemplation. It is a reasonable expectation that the Prophet (PBUH) would have established names for the chapters. This reasoning, along with traditions concerning the virtues of the Qur'an (ʻAsqalānī, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 69) and other evidence, has led a group of Muslim scholars to consider the chapter names to be divinely appointed." (Suyūṭī, 1967: 1, 62) Secondly, the names of the chapters are given according to the topics and common concepts in them; with this explanation, what reason is there for naming Surah "*Yā Sīn*" after "*Ilyās*" (Elias), when there is no mention of Prophet Elias in this chapter? Thirdly, not all disjointed letters have been determined to refer to specific proper names. For example, several of them are similar, such as chapters with "*Alif Lām Mīm*," "*Ḥā Mīm*," and "*Ṭā Sīn*." If all refer to one name, the ability to distinguish chapters from one another is lost, and if each refers to a different name, there is no reason for this difference (Sadeqi, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 185)

Recently, James A. Bellamy published an article titled "The Mysterious Letters of the Quran: Ancient Abbreviations of the *Basmala*" in 1973. In this work, he presents an alternative perspective on abbreviated letters, striving to ensure that his viewpoint is neither baseless nor arbitrary, unlike others. Bellamy draws on the insights of classical commentators who propose that letters such as "*Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ḥā, Mīm*, and *Nūn*" symbolize "*al-Raḥmān*" (The Most Gracious) or "*al-Raḥīm*" (The Most Merciful), or both. He identifies these letters as equivalent to these terms within the "*Basmala*" and posits that all other disconnected letters represent abbreviated forms of the same phrase.

To support his hypothesis, Bellamy suggests several emendations and modifications. He argues that the letter "*Ṭā* corresponds to *Bā, Ṣād*" and "*Qāf* correspond to *Mīm*," "*Yā* corresponds to *Bā*," and "*ʻAyn* corresponds to *Bas* or *Sīn*." By altering just one letter, combinations such as "*Ṭā Sīn Mīm, Ṭā Sīn, Ṭā Hā, Yāsīn, Alif Mīm Ṣād, Ṣād*, and *Qāf*" transform into "*Basm, Bas, Bah, Bas, Alif Mīm Mīm, Mīm,* and *Mīm*," each being suitable abbreviated signs for the *Basmala*.

As for the letters "*Ḥā, Mīm, ʻAyn, Sīn, Qāf*," and "*Kāf, Hā, Yā, ʻAyn, Ṣād*," Bellamy believes these can also be modified into "*Ḥā, Mīm, Basm*" and "*Bah, Basm*" with two and four changes, respectively. He asserts: "When the *Basmala* was first introduced in the middle and later Meccan surahs, the scribes of the Prophet abbreviated *Basmala* in various forms and placed them at the beginning of these 29 surahs. However, later compilers, who could not recognize these abbreviated forms, designated them a fixed place in the text and positioned the complete *Basmala* before the abbreviated letters." (ibid.)

"However, despite Blame's claim, his theory, especially his proposed revisions, is far less substantiated than the views of his predecessors. This is because, firstly, these letters are not all Meccan. Secondly, the hypothesis that unknown scribes in Mecca assigned abbreviated forms to the *Basmala* in various ways and then died without clarifying their meanings is highly improbable. Thirdly, assuming the preceding hypothesis is correct, the notion that known Medinan scribes knew nothing about the Meccan-era scribes and their abbreviated signs is supported by historical reports and accounts, which offer little to no evidence.

The existence of such unsubstantiated hypotheses has compelled A. T. Welch to state: "Any solution to the puzzle of the disjointed letters must offer a plausible theory that is consistent with all the textual evidence of the Qur'an." (ibid.) Through comparison and application of these letters to the text of the relevant Surahs, particularly their opening verses, and by comparing these Surahs with adjacent ones, he attempts to find clues to solve this enigma. By presenting a list of Surahs containing the disjointed letters and their opening verses, he emphasizes two points: "First, that the disjointed letters influenced the final order of the Qur'an, such that collections of Surahs with identical letters but varying lengths have been placed side by side; second, that the letters in question have a close relationship with the opening sentences and also with "The Book," because in every instance, after these letters, a form of revelation is immediately mentioned." (Shaltūt, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 61-64)

"Unlike some of his predecessors, he admits that "These letters are part of the revelation and have been recited as disjointed letters from the very beginning." By searching the text of the Surahs, he also notes that most of these letters, when read as alphabetical letters, initiated the rhyme and rhythm of their respective Surahs." The seventeen Surahs that are accompanied by letters ending in "*Alif-Yā-Mīm*," "*Alif-Yā-Nūn*," or "*Alif-Wāw-Nūn*"; meaning six Surahs starting with "*Alif-Lām- Mīm*," six Surahs starting with "*Ḥā-Mīm*," two Surahs starting with "*Ṭā-Sīn-Mīm*," and three Surahs respectively with "*Ṭā-Sīn,Yā-Sīn*," and "*Nūn*"; all, with minor exceptions, possess this rhyme. The twentieth Surah, which begins with the disjointed letters "*Ṭā-Hā*," has rhyme from verses 1 to 24 with the rhyme "*Ā*"; the thirty-eighth Surah, which begins with "*Ṣād*," with the rhythm "*Āq,*" *Āṣ*"; the eleventh Surah, which begins with "*Alif-Lām-Rā*," in its first five verses, is accompanied by the rhyme "*Īr*," and "*Ūr*"; and the thirteenth Surah, which begins with "*Alif-Lām-Mīm-Rā*," and the forty-second Surah, which begins with "*Ḥā-Mīm-ʻAyn-Sīn-Qāf*," in their first five verses respectively have the rhyme "*Ūn*" and "*Īn*" and then these rhymes, in turn, transform into "*Āb*," "*Ār*," "*Īl*," and "*Īr*." Although the correspondence discussed here is not very precise and exceptions are also observed, this close connection between the disjointed letters and

the rhymes, or in other words, the harmony between the vowels of the Surahs, should be considered something more than a random coincidence." (Welch, V, 1954: 414)

"The discourse of the Orientalists' speculations does not end with what has been said. Among these views, although occasionally subtle and amazing points are observed, most of their hypotheses are weak, unscientific, and consequently unconvincing. For example, Sprenger, unable to find a clear equivalent for "*Ṭā-Sīn-Mīm*," reversed it to derive the letters "None shall touch it save the purified" (al-Wāqi'ah: 79) from it (Blachère, 1986 AD/1365 SH: 170).

Therefore, a true and fair understanding of the transcendent nature of the Qur'an, including the arrangement of its eloquent and profound words and meanings, which is one of the most significant aspects of the Qur'an's miraculousness, is not compatible with such unfounded presuppositions and speculations by Western Qur'anic scholars like Noldeke and his contemporaries: "Bell," "Browne," "Goldziher," and others who, in stating one of their conjectures, believed that the disjointed letters were not an original part of the Qur'an at all. In response, it must be said: "The truthful assertion is that all the disjointed letters have been and are an integral part of the Surahs from the beginning of their revelation, and various interpretations have been offered for their meaning and significance." (Miqdadi, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 142) For instance, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* stated in the commentary on Surah *al-Shūrā*: "If one ponders the Surahs that begin with disjointed letters, such as the "*Alif-Lām-Mīms*," "*Alif-Lām-Rās*," "*Ṭā-Sīns*," and "*Ḥā-Mīms*": "Indeed, you will find that these Surahs are similar in content and their style is uniform." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1974: 18, 6)

It appears that among the Orientalists, Blachère has chosen the most judicious path. He, who was not convinced by the various hypotheses of his peers (ibid.), states: "All of these are word and meaning games, and the pious Muslims, who in their judgment considered any effort to uncover these secrets a futile task, were, without discussion, the only ones who possessed any wisdom." (ibid: 171)

"In contrast to the weak and absurd theories of the Orientalists, Islamic Qur'anic scholars, based on rational reasons, religious texts, and the opinion of the majority of Shi'a interpretive scholars, have stated that the disjointed letters, while pointing to the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, are secrets and mysteries between God, His Messenger, and His chosen saints. This is because if knowledge of the meaning and purpose of these letters were possible for others, there would have been no need for them to be stated cryptically from the beginning." (Ma'rifat, 2016 AD/1396 SH: 5, 314)

In response to the question, 'Does the Qur'an not describe itself as *Mubin* (clear)?' So why should it be clear only to His Messenger and His Imams?' it is answered: "The same Qur'an that calls itself *Mubin* explicitly states elsewhere that it requires the explanation of the Prophet and the Imam: "And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them, and so they might give thought." (al-Naḥl: 44) And in another verse, it commands people to ask the Messenger and the Imam: "So ask the people of the message if you do not know." (al-Naḥl: 43) Based on this, "Being *Mubin* does not contradict asking from the Messenger and the Imam, because some verses of the Qur'an are clear, and others become clear through inquiry." (ibid.)

Nevertheless, it is essential for Western Qur'anic scholars to complement their

understanding of the history of the Qur'an's compilation with a thorough awareness of the epistemological dimensions of the Qur'an's content and context, particularly regarding the explanatory discourse on the disjointed letters. Such an approach would facilitate more nuanced and balanced interpretations.

Conclusion

Some theories, as previously noted, have been criticized for lacking rigorous scientific investigation and for being formulated in ways that may foster doubt and controversy of the status of the disjointed letters in the Holy Qur'an indicates that an analysis of Western scholars' interpretations concerning the disjointed letters in the Holy Qur'an reveals that these theories are often grounded in speculative reasoning and, at times, influenced by Orientalist perspectives. Proposals such as linking these letters to the "*Abjad*" system, associating them with the content of specific Surahs, or interpreting them as ambiguous or allegorical symbols, while ostensibly research-driven, frequently lack a firm basis in the linguistic, historical, and interpretive traditions recognized within Islamic scholarship. Critical evaluation demonstrates that many of these approaches, including those of Noldeke, Blachère, Montgomery, and Goldziher, have not provided a comprehensive or scientifically convincing explanation for the nature and function of the disjointed letters. In some cases, these interpretations have overlooked textual evidence, interpretive indicators, and the established Sunni narrative tradition, resulting in incomplete or contradictory understandings. By contrast, interpretive approaches rooted in Islamic principles, which prioritize the apparent meaning of the text, reference to authentic narrations, and contextual analysis within the Qur'an's revelation, offer more robust and logically coherent foundations for elucidating these Qur'anic mysteries.ve often lacked the necessary scientific comprehensiveness, precision, and coherence, and remain a considerable distance from achieving a reliable understanding. This conclusion, while emphasizing the necessity of adopting a critical approach based on Islamic principles when confronting Western interpretations regarding the explanation of the Qur'anic disjointed letters, has found that the best way to understand these letters is to consider the opinion of a majority of renowned Shi'a commentators who have stated that these letters are among the miracles of the Qur'an and are secrets between God and His Noble Messenger, and to avoid speculative and ambiguous interpretations."

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چکیده

حروف مقطعه قرآن کریم، همواره از موضوعات اسرارآمیز و مورد بحث در مطالعات قرآنی بوده‌اند. این حروف، با وجود تنوع در ظاهر، تفاسیر و گمانه‌زنی‌های بسیاری را در طول تاریخ به خود دیده‌اند. این پژوهش به شیوه توصیفی تحلیلی و با هدف تبیین و تحلیل رویکردهای تفسیری قرآن‌پژوهان و مستشرقان غربی پیرامون این پدیده، انجام شده است. سؤال اصلی پژوهش این است که دیدگاه‌های مطرح شده توسط قرآن‌پژوهان غربی (مانند: نولدکه، بلاشر، مونتگمری، گلدزیهر) در خصوص حروف مقطعه چیست و تا چه اندازه این تفاسیر، بر مبنای علمی و منطقی استوار هستند؟ در این تحقیق، ضمن معرفی تفاسیر ارائه شده از سوی این پژوهشگران، که غالباً شامل ارتباط دادن حروف مقطعه به نظام ابجد، اشاره به محتوای سوره، ادعای ارتباط با نام برخی صحابه، یا در نظر گرفتن آن‌ها به عنوان آیاتی متشابه و رازآلود است، به ارزیابی مبانی فکری و اعتبار علمی آن‌ها پرداخته می‌شود. نتیجه‌گیری پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که تفاسیر غربی ارائه شده، اغلب فاقد بنیان‌های قوی علمی و منطقی لازم بوده و بیشتر بر اساس حدس و گمان، یا پیش‌فرض‌های خاص تفسیری بنا شده‌اند که با اصول تفسیری اسلامی فاصله دارند.

واژه‌های کلیدی

قرآن، حروف مقطعه، شرق‌شناسان، قرآن‌پژوهان غربی.

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