



University of Tehran Press

## Classical and Contemporary Islamic Studies (CCIS)

Online ISSN: 3060-7337

Home Page: <https://jcis.ut.ac.ir>

# Analysis and Criticism of the Researches of German Orientalists about the Ashura Movement of Imam Hussein (Peace Be Upon Him)

Baqer Riahi Mehr 

Department of Comparative Studies of the Qur'ān, Qur'ān and Hadith Specialized University, Al-Mustafa International University, Qom, Iran. Email: [dr.riahi@chmail.ir](mailto:dr.riahi@chmail.ir)

### ARTICLE INFO

**Article type:**  
Research Article

**Article History:**  
Received: 23 September 2023  
Revised: 03 April 2024  
Accepted: 15 April 2024  
Published Online: 23 September 2025

**Keywords:**  
Imam Hussain (PBUH),  
Ashura event,  
orientalists,  
Islamic studies,  
German orientalists.

### ABSTRACT

Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) and Ashura are among the topics that each of the Orientalists and Western Islamologists have paid attention to. The purpose of studying the opinions of the Orientalists regarding Ashura and Imam Husayn (PBUH) is to find out the goals and motives of the Orientalists. This article has been written with the aim of introducing and recognizing the research conducted on Imam Hussain (PBUH), with a focus on German Orientalists. This article, employing a descriptive-analytical method, seeks to address the question: What kind of image did the German Orientalists show to the audience of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Ashura? The hypothesis of this article, proved to be the answer to the main question of the research, is based on this statement. The extra-religious view, prejudice and the lack of access of German Orientalists to authentic Islamic sources have influenced their analysis in this field. The findings of the research indicates that the findings from the studies of German Orientalists and Islamologists are different from the reality in some cases, and they have not been able to present a correct image of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Ashura in the Shiite religion.

**Cite this article:** Riahi Mehr, B. (2026). Analysis and Criticism of the Researches of German Orientalists about the Ashura Movement of Imam Hussein (Peace Be Upon Him). *Classical and Contemporary Islamic Studies (CCIS)*, 8 (1), 1-10. <http://doi.org/10.22059/jcis.2024.365738.1344>



© Authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights.  
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jcis.2024.365738.1344>

**Publisher:** University of Tehran Press.

## Introduction

The event of Ashura in the history of Islam has been one of the subjects of interest and research by orientalist and historians. This important historical event is of such importance that, from the point of view of some Shia scholars and researchers, this event should be considered as the emergence point of Shiism. This important historical incident in the wake of the development of Shiite studies in the West has been one of the significant dimensions of Shiism for Western researchers. The event of Ashura is considered the most stable political-religious movement in the Shia culture, and in fact, the last Shia ideological attempt to return the rule to the family of Imam Ali (AS). Two points are necessary before entering to the discussion. First, significant events, especially war, affect the personality of people, while in the incident of Karbala, Imam Hussain (AS) was not only not affected by the incident, but also affected the incident itself.

The second is the transformation of the incident into a school, whose essence, character and purpose became teachable. Shi'ism and the Karbala movement, from the past to the present, have had wide ambiguities due to the dominance of Sunnis over the studies and researches of Western societies. Nations and Sunni writers generally consider Shiites as deviants from the correct path, who have exhibited a ritualistic bias against proper rituals. Consequently, many Western researchers who have studied Islam have adopted these distortions and have labeled Shi'ism as heretical within the Islamic faith. Regarding the limitations of this research, it is noteworthy that nearly one out of every 350 books and articles about Islam pertains to the Twelve Imam Shiites, which is significantly fewer than the writings available on Zaidi and Ismaili Shiites. German orientalist have conducted various research about Islam, among them the research conducted in connection with Shiism are the Ashura uprising and the character of Imam Hussein (PBUH), which they think is important and have paid attention to. Additionally, some have independent writings in this field. As one of the centers of Shiite studies in Europe, this country has had a longer history than other European countries, which could be attributed to the presence of prominent thinkers and research institutes as well as its scientific depth and relative research accuracy. The long list of eminent orientalist and prestigious German research centers, as well as publications and magazines indicate the high quality of this country in this field. However, the biased approach of evangelistic distortion and, on the other hand, the emergence of the school of Marxism, which has a material-economic interpretation of the historical developments of Karbala, have led the general Orientalists to an undesirable result. This paper examines the views of German Orientalists, including Annemarie Schimmel, Kurt Frischler, Marbin German, Carl Brockelmann, Julius Wellhausen, regarding the Ashura event, and in some cases, their views have also been criticized.

## Annemarie Schimmel

Out of a sense of honesty and truth, he took a significant step toward understanding the culture, civilization, and history of Islam. Through his works, he not only opened the eyes of Westerners to a certain extent regarding the truths of Eastern culture, but he also assisted Muslims in gaining a deeper understanding of the scientific and cultural heritage of their ancestors. Moreover, he contributed to his own understanding, which is rooted in the religious tradition (Hosseini, 2008).

In some of his works, he has expressed his views on Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Ashura. In his book, *An Introduction to Islam*, he writes: "When Yazid, the son of Muawiyah, took power in 680 AD, the younger son of Ali (PBUH), Hussein (PBUH), who was nearly 60 years old at that time, tried again to gain power for the benefit of his family. After all, was he not the legitimate grandson of the Prophet of Islam? His elder brother, Hasan Mofatseh, had died ten years earlier, although he had abandoned his claim to the caliphate. Hussain (PBUH) along with his companions and family members were killed in the battle of Karbala in southern Iraq on the 10th of Muharram. The anniversary of his martyrdom is still one of the days of mourning in the Shiite world. The sufferings that have befallen them have inspired hundreds of pious poets to write touching Marathi poetry, especially in Persian languages. The ceremonies and rituals that are performed on this day in the Shiite cities of Iran and India, while believers beat their heads and chests, are well known. Many recent events in Iran, such as the enthusiastic participation of all these people in the war against the enemies of religion, were explained by Mit Wan based on this feeling of following and loyalty towards Hussein (PBUH), the greatest martyr of Islam. Hussain's (PBUH) struggle against the Bani Umayyad regime is

depicted in religious writings and literature as a manifestation of the people's yearning for freedom and liberation from oppressive rulers. In later eras, this struggle has also symbolized the quest for freedom from the shackles of foreign colonial governments that have been viewed as oppressors of believers” (Schimmel, 2017, P. 38-39). He also considers Yazid worthy of the curse of Muslims in the book, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, and blames him for the disaster of Karbala. Yazid was the second Umayyad caliph who was responsible for the incident of Karbala in 680 AD, in which the Prophet's grandson was martyred along with his family members, and from then on, his name became the subject of curses for all true believing Muslims (Schimmel, 2006).

Shimmel views the uprising of Imam Hussain (PBUH) as an attempt to restore power to the Alavi family, whereas the Shia perspective on the caliphate differs. Additionally, while it is commonly accepted that the death of Imam Hassan occurred naturally, authoritative Shia documents suggest that he was, in fact, poisoned by the hand of his wife at the instigation of Muawiya (Schimmel, 2017).

### **Carl Brockelmann**

Brockelmann explains how the Ashura incident happened based on the sources, believing that the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (PBUH) caused the survival of the Shia religion. Muawiya died on 18 April 680 AD. During his lifetime, he had forced people to pledge allegiance to Yazid and succeeded him. Nobles and elders of Islam, such as Hussain bin Ali (PBUH), Abdullah bin Umar, and Abdullah bin Zubair, refused this pledge. After the death of Muawiyah, the ruler of Medina was ordered to ask him for allegiance. Abdullah bin Umar agreed, while Hussein bin Ali (PBUH) and Abdullah bin Zubair went to Mecca to refuse to accept the allegiance. In the meantime, the people of Kufa strongly requested Hussein (PBUH) to accept their leadership and government, and he accepted this invitation; however, the necessary help did not arrive from Iraq, and his cousin, Muslim bin Aqil, was captured by Ubaidullah bin Ziad, the ruler of Yazid. At the same time, the vanguards of Yazid's army reached Hussain (PBUH) and when he refused to return and pledge allegiance, they came with him to Karbala, which is next to the desert and approximately one hundred kilometers southwest of Baghdad, on the west bank of the Euphrates. Hoping that he would yield to the pressure of thirst, they cut off the water supply. On the 10th of October 680, corresponding to the 10th of Muharram in the year 61 A.H., Omar, the commander of the army and son of Saad bin Abi Waqqas—one of the esteemed leaders of Islam and a well-known companion of the Prophet—sent forces against Husayn to complete the confrontation. Husayn (PBUH) had become disillusioned with the Kufis following the murder of Muslim and no longer expected any assistance. He did not surrender, and perhaps because he was the grandson of Holy Prophet, he thought he was safe, but the war began. Soon after that, Hussain (PBUH) was killed and his head was cut off and sent to Yazid, but Yazid regretted this incident and showed great love to the survivors of Ali's family who had died from the brutal slaughter and returned them to Madinah. In addition to political results and effects, the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) strengthened and spread the Shia religion, turning it into the center of anti-Western tendencies. In Karbala, the grave of Hussain (PBUH) is now the biggest pilgrimage site for Shiites, especially the people of Iran. Their love towards him is such that each of them wishes to be buried next to him after death (Brockelmann, 1956, P. 108).

Bruckelman considers the emergence of Shiism in the event of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (PBUH). This perspective of Bruckelman is drawn from Sunni works and intertwines the emergence of Shiism with the evolution of Shiite thought and various political events, including the uprising of the Tawabin. Additionally, the rise of certain Shia sects, such as the Kisaniyyah, has been attributed to the entire Shiite movement. On another note, he adopts a political and racial perspective regarding the Ashura uprising, asserting that the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (PBUH) not only led to significant political ramifications but also facilitated the spread of Shiism as a religion. He posits that the center of anti-Western sentiments is rooted in racism, and by highlighting the prominence of Imam Hussain's (PBUH) shrine among Iranians, he seeks to establish a connection between Shiism and Iranian identity.

### Kurt Frischler

Kurt Frischler, a German orientalist, discussed the Ashura incident in his book *Imam Hussein (PBUH) and Iran*. However, he has not cited the sources used, and it appears that he did not have access to Shiite sources. The work resembles more of a novel than historical material, and the analysis demonstrates a lack of detailed knowledge of the events of Karbala. Although he articulates well the themes of freedom, courage, piety, and masculinity embodied by Imam Hussain (PBUH), he seems to emphasize his righteous warfare more than the Imam himself. In this book, the author frequently relies on Sunni texts and has less access to significant Shiite sources, leading him to sometimes present incomplete and inaccurate theories. Consequently, despite these shortcomings, the author has made mistakes and oversights that can be overlooked. Overall, it should be noted that this book can be valuable to most Muslims, especially Shiites. The martyrdom of Hussain (PBUH) and his companions, irrespective of any particular theory or ideology, represents one of the great martial epics of the world, deserving of a place in history alongside other martial epics.

Frischler has mentioned the participation of Iranians in the Karbala conflict, while historians have not corroborated this. Additionally, he refers to the daughter of Imam Hussain (PBUH) in Ray as his representative, a claim not found in the sources. The author interprets the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (PBUH) through the lens of Arab authenticity, while Shiites regard Imam Hussain (PBUH) as an Imam, regarding the self-sacrifice of the Prophet and his companions as being solely for the sake of God and the preservation of Islamic rituals. He likens the Hosseini Ashura epic to other martial epics of the world, despite the fact that such an incident, with its profound complexities, has never occurred in any other historical period.

Frischler believes that Imam Hossein's (PBUH) decision for absolute sacrifice was neither a result of stubbornness nor driven by whims and caprices. Instead, he was determined to make complete sacrifices based on reason, ensuring that he would not be compelled to act against his beliefs and lofty ideals. Rather than living under Yazid bin Muawiya, he chose the path of sacrifice to uphold his principles (Frischler, 2006).

Frischler writes: This narration is considered weak based on our understanding of the spirit of Hussain (PBUH). A man who witnessed the killings of his children, brothers, nephews, and friends with composure and without emotion could not be one who felt lonely and wished for someone to rush to his aid. He was fully aware that he would be killed after rejecting Ibn Saad's offer. If he were to complain about the lack of support, it would diminish the significance of his sacrifice. Throughout the Ashura conflict, whenever one of his relatives or friends expressed a desire to join the battle, Hussain (PBUH) would respond, 'Go, I will follow you,' indicating that he understood his fate. The only way to interpret his lamentation is as a form of chanting; by expressing this sentiment, he aimed to convey that he was alone in his struggle—not to seek help, but to affirm his solitude in the fight." (Taghizadeh Ansari, 2001, P. 358)

In the book *Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Iran*, Frischler says: "Among the martyred Christians, we can find only one person who remembered the *pishwa* during his illness, in this respect he is similar to Hussain (PBUH). He was Rasic Nos II, the Pope of Rome. After he became emperor, Valerian decided to exterminate the Christians. Valerian killed all the Christian clergy and ordered them to be flayed alive. While the executioner was being tortured, the pope wailed saying, "Jesus Christ! I am satisfied with this torture. Because this has become a means for me to think about you more" (Frischler, 2006, P. 406). Of course, Frischler made an error with this simile. It would have been more appropriate for him to compare the great sacrifice of Imam Hussain (PBUH) to that of one of the devoted companions of the Imam, all of whom were thinking of and remaining loyal to the Imam until their last breaths (Elhami, 1999).

### Marbin

Perhaps Marbin is the best person who has described this uprising, stating in the book of *Islamic Politics*: "Hussein's (PBUH) uprising against Yazid was the steely will of a great man of heart, for whom compromise and early victory were impossible, as a result, with his people and his relatives. He rose up in such a way that it would lead him to eternal victory after death and revive a failed cause that had no other way to survive" (Bara, 1999, P. 289). After reaching power, Yazid was determined to kill Hussain (PBUH) before any action, and this was the biggest political mistake of the Umayyads. Due to

this one political mistake, they erased their name from the world. In the eyes of political sages, resisting the burden of tyranny is regarded as the noblest slogan and embodies the most virtuous qualities and happiness of every human being. This principle is particularly evident among the Shiites through their mourning for Hussain (PBUH). Until individuals cultivate this habit of resistance, they will not accept subjugation (Marbin, 1969, p. 12-18).

The German author, Marbin, writes about Hussein bin Ali (PBUH), the causes of his uprising and its results:

"Hussein bin Ali, the grandson of Muhammad (PBUH) who was born from his beloved daughter, Fatima, is the only person who stood against the unjust and cruel government in fourteen centuries. The morals and qualities, liked during the Arab rule and respectable, was all observed in the son of Imam Ali. Hussain (PBUH) had inherited courage and bravery from his father. He had a complete mastery of the orders and rules of Islam. He was unparalleled in his generosity and charity. He was great in speech and expression, and he captivated everyone, Muslims everywhere, with his statements. They have indescribable devotion to Hussain (PBUH) and mourn for him every year in a certain month (*Muharram*). Many books on the merits of Hussain (PBUH) have been written by Muslims, and they talk about his good deeds. The issue that cannot be overlooked is that Hossein (PBUH) was the first politician who did not adopt such an ineffective policy, a distinction that remains relevant today. To support this assertion, we must consider the history preceding Islam. The Bani Umayyah and Bani Hashem were two clans that were related; both Umayyad and Hashem were descendants of Abd Manaf. Prior to Islam, there was significant hostility between these cousins, and they frequently quarreled with one another, as the so-called Arabs were known for their bloodthirstiness. Among the Quraysh clan, Bani Hashem and Bani Umayyah were both esteemed and respected, with Bani Umayyah excelling in wealth and leadership, while Bani Hashem were recognized for their knowledge and spirituality.

At the beginning of Islam, the obscurity of Bani Hashim and Bani Umayyad increased until Muhammad conquered Mecca and took over the tribe of Quraysh, and thus, Bani Hashim gained superiority and Bani Umayyad were forced to obey Bani Hashim. This incident ignited the fire of jealousy among the Banu Umayyads, leading them to seek revenge against the Banu Hashim. Following the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), they seized the opportunity to ensure that the principles of guardianship would not be upheld by anyone other than themselves. These successors unjustly augmented their own honor and glory while intervening in the affairs of the Muslim community.

### **Julius Wellhausen**

Wellhausen was born in Hamlen in 1842 and died in Göttingen in 1918. He devoted his whole life to research in the history of the Sami race (Wellhausen, 1996). He was very interested in the history of Islam, and has spoke in detail about Imam Hussain (PBUH) and the incident of Karbala in two works: a book on the conflict between political and religious parties in Islam and a book on the Arab state from the rise of Islam to the end of the Umayyad state. Wellhausen has studied the role of Imam Hussein (PBUH) in the period of the Umayyad caliphate from historical, sociological, and theological perspectives. Wellhausen, who spent his life studying and researching Semitic and Arab history, especially early Islamic history, had a significant impact on Western research fields, and his writings, especially on Imam Hussein (PBUH), became the basis for many subsequent works (Mousavi Zavaraq, 2012). Wellhausen quoted the incident of Karbala according to the report of Abi Makhnaf, maintaining that the martyrdom of Hussein (PBUH) was more important than the martyrdom of his father Ali (PBUH) in the eyes of Shiites, as Ali (PBUH) was not the son of a prophet; therefore, a new era for Shia opened up. Even though the martyrdom of Hussain (PBUH) did not inherently and necessarily create incidents and effects, but what caused incidents was his memory and name in the hearts of people (Wellhausen, 1996).

The German orientalist, Wellhausen, made judgments about the character of Hussein (PBUH) after carefully studying the sources they had access to. He denies any religious motivation in Hossein's (PBUH) action, considering it an attempt by an ambitious person to gain superior power (Taghizadeh Davari, 2006). Indeed, the gentle behavior that Yazid showed towards the rest of the family of Hussain

(PBUH) is one of the facts that cannot be criticized, although this gentle behavior did not originate from a sincere and believing heart, rather from a cunning one.

The definitive judgment about all these people depends on their role and position towards Hussain (PBUH). Hussain (PBUH) is the center of the circle, with all efforts revolving around it, so everything related to the center is ignored. However, the exact lines of this circle reflect emotions and sympathies, and this has been the subject of numerous hadiths (Wellhausen, 1996).

After the uprising of Mukhtar, Shiism took a new form in Kufa. Regarding the original meaning of "Shia," it should be noted that "Shia" was a broad political trend that the people of Iraq resorted to in the struggle against the central power of Syria. At the beginning, the nobles of Kufa formed a single line with other people and were in charge of leading the people. However, when danger threatened them, they showed flexibility to deceive the Umayyad government in Syria. They were subsequently employed by the Umayyad government to end the Shia revolutions and, thus, they separated from the Shia. Therefore, the circle of Shia followers narrowed, and Shia gradually took the form of a religious sect involved with the aristocracy and the tribal system. The blessing of the martyrdom of its leaders and followers became an idealistic ideology. Suleiman bin Sard's followers were drawn to the revolution against the tribal aristocracy in Kufa, but Mukhtar was the first to realize this goal and make it practical. Additionally, Mawali was also attracted to the same movement. It was easy to attract followers because they had obvious tendencies towards Madhi rule, not a nationalist rule, even though, the Arabs had been in charge of a nationalist rule until then. Moreover, they did not like the Arabs' desire for sovereignty and supremacy. Shiism is a pure Iranian religion. The origin of this issue is the existence of Abdullah Ibn Saba, who was originally a Jew and then converted to Islam. This represents the continuation of the thought that existed among the Jews before; therefore, it is appropriate to consider the origin of Shiism as rooted in Judaism rather than Iranian influences (Wellhausen, 1996).

Wellhausen's source in narrating such events is Tabari's history. He supports the Umayyad government and justifies their crimes. He has also examined the history of Islam with special prejudice, even attributing Shiism to Judaism unrealistically and biasedly. While narrating the history of the two religions, Kharijite and Shia and commenting on each of them, he considers Shia to be an Iranian thought and belief. After narrating the story of Mukhtar and Kisaniyeh, Wellhausen accuses Iranians of a new type of religion, which is related to the old Islam, while it was new, and considers the Shiites to be a sect that seeks political rule.

## Analysis

Oriental research in the field of Islam, Shiism and Ashura is an international method established by Western orientalists of different nationalities, and the results of their knowledge, including Ashura, indicate that they have mainly used available sources, while having less access to authentic Islamic and Shiite sources. A number of these orientalists from different nationalities have shown the movement of Imam Hussain (PBUH) as a purely power-seeking and mainly political trend, demoting him to the level of a political leader. Shiites and their humanitarian and peace-loving actions, including their sobhats, have not received adequate attention and have primarily focused on the uprising of Ashura. However, many Orientalists and Western thinkers have also made valuable comments about the character of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and the events of Ashura. This summary can be derived from the collective insights of their statements:

What European thinkers, elders of nations, and orientalists recognize in the description of Imam Hussain's (PBUH) uprising is that the Imam's movement was based on morality, martyrdom and public interest, and Jihadi was considered to spread virtue and vice, and the reason for the uprising were survival. Additionally, they know the greatness of Islam and the rule of the Qur'an, the responsibility of Imamate, protecting the honor of people, improving the condition of the Ummah, enjoining the good and forbidding the bad, defending the oppressed, and the interests of the public.

It teaches zeal, courage, sacrifice, and persistence in the face of adversity and steadfastness on the path of truth, demonstrating the sanctity of silence against falsehood and corruption, and proving that truth, virtue, justice, and faith can overcome arbitrariness, deceit, and oppression in any situation, thereby overcoming disbelief. Imam Sadiq's companions also taught the world the best lesson of faith in God and opened the way for nations to follow, indicating that believers always win, even with a small number and strength. Regarding the significance of mourning for Hussein (PBUH), it is believed

that the mourning assembly for Hussein (PBUH) evokes emotions that enable individuals to overlook suffering and danger, even death, in the pursuit of truth. The mourning ceremony serves as a form of religious education; the mention of this event fosters intellectual improvement, and therefore, it should be remembered and repeated. These mourning rituals are a means of cultivating the spirit of courage and strengthening the will in the pursuit of truth.

It demonstrates the sanctity of silence against falsehood and corruption and proves that the right, virtue, and justice of Oriental, Islamic, Shiite studies, as well as Iranian studies in German scientific and academic centers have a long history, almost since the 18th century. In other words, among a number of German scientists who were trained in Paris, Ferdinand Westenhoff is noteworthy for his contributions to the growth of Arabic and Islamic studies in Germany. One of the orientalist institutions that were established in Germany at that time include The German Oriental Society, which was founded in 1845 by Fleischer and a group of prominent orientalists. The Orientalism of the Germans is essentially an academic orientalism or, at least, a classical one. The task of the German academic orientalist environment was to apply techniques to texts, myths, ideas and languages that were almost all provided by the British and French colonists from the East. Since Germany had a limited presence in the East and its colonial aspect was very weak compared to England, the development of German Orientalism had more of an academic and scholarly focus and was less political; it was also not economic. The practice of scientism in German Orientalism is more pronounced than that in Western countries, and they employ a phenomenological research method that is significant for Shiites as well, bridging the historical and phenomenological perspectives of German Orientalism. German Orientalists are known for their perseverance and patience. Their activities were so persistent and extensive that some of them suffered from physical complications due to the sheer volume of studies and research. The Egyptian writer, Ahmed Amin, has stated that Germans are known for their accuracy in research, patience, and ability to gather scattered details to obtain the most accurate and profound results from them.

The First World War, which led to the liberation of several East African Islamic countries from German colonial rule, although it limited the ability of German Orientalists to conduct direct research among Muslims, also eroded the motivations and orientations of colonialism. Consequently, the field of scientific Orientalism became devoid of motivation and served the colonial purpose.

German scientific Orientalism continued well until the Second World War; however, in 1933, with the start of World War II and the domination of the Nazis and the killing or emigration of many German Orientalists and the destruction of material facilities, German Orientalism was slow for a long (temporary) time. Despite the fact that Germany had established a strong bond with the Ottoman Empire since the end of the 19th century, calling itself a supporter of Islam against the aggression of France and England to the Muslim world since then, the research of some German orientalists has also sometimes been conducted in line with colonial demands.

The attention that German Islamic scholars and Orientalists give to "is" rather than "was" signifies that they focus more on the current facts than on the historical context of those facts. This subtle point, if overlooked, can affect the entire research related to opinions and thoughts, potentially harming Germany's Islamologists. German intellectuals found the opportunity to pay scientific attention to Islam and to closely understand the Islamic world through their expertise, which led to a transformation of the perception of Islam. Since the mid-19th century, Oriental studies have been moving towards the search for pure truth, and they do not expend effort on insignificant secondary demands.

Heintshalm's research in two decades indicate that he did not violate the principles of research before the political currents of Islamic countries, and he got rarely involved with political issues and debates (Moussovian, 2015). At the beginning, German Orientalism was a linguistic tendency. At that time, every Orientalist had to master not only Arabic but also the Arabic language of the Old Testament (Schimmel, 2006). Oriental studies since the middle of the 19th century, have been oriented towards the search for pure truth, with a scientific motive that is in motion and does not pursue side purposes (Hamdi Zagzouq, 2012). Germany did not put Orientalism at the service of hegemonic politicians, but its culture of friendship and scientism was evident. They also paid special attention to literature and phenomenological method. German orientalists believe that political Islam came into

being gradually. To understand Islam, the fundamental ideas must be understood correctly in order to make a generalization, and then, analyze the problem of mixing politics with religion.

The German Oriental Society was founded by Fleischer in Halle in 1845, expanding significantly since then. This article indicates the attention of German intellectuals to the East and Islam as well as the brilliance of German Orientalism (Motaghi, 2010). German Orientalism, compared to other European countries, started much later, and until the 18th century, there was basically no significant activity for German Orientalists. In fact, their activities began at this time. In this way, it is possible to trace the nature of German Orientalist activities that focused on linguistics and its influence on religious motivations. One of the factors that led German Orientalists to linguistics in the 19th century was the discovery of oil in some Eastern countries and the expansion of German trade relations with Arab countries. As a result, Orientalist activities were directed towards researching local dialects and languages as a means of consolidating relations between these countries, which became a focal point of their studies.

From the beginning of the 19th century, German Orientalism was followed on Islamic studies in Germany. In this way, the German school of oriental studies was different from other schools of oriental studies due to its focus on studying the Arab world and the Islamic religion, overlooking other oriental languages and religions. The most important distinguishing feature of German Orientalism is its attention to the history and ancient culture of the Middle East and Islamic lands. Additionally, its obvious sign is the high focus on activities related to the dissemination of Islamic cultural heritage, to the extent that, according to Salahuddin Monjad, it is impossible to publish works that are not proposed by a German orientalist in a scientific forum.

German orientalists are known for their patience in research, and their activities are wide-ranging. They pay attention to the ancient history and culture of the Middle East and Islamic lands, with their Islamic and oriental studies focused on linguistics. Moreover, German orientalists first studied language and then the sources. The German school of oriental studies differed from other schools of oriental studies due to the ban on studying in the Arab world and paying attention to the language and Islamic issues. German Islamic scholars tend to refer to the oldest books in the subject of research and have a special interest in Islamic topics with a critical spirit (Mousavian, 1996). Therefore, there are two points in German orientalism: 1- Germany did not have colonies in Arab countries; therefore, German orientalists were free from the yoke of political issues. 2- Germans did not have evangelistic and Christianization activities, so German orientalists were free from manipulation and distortion. They are deemed leaders in the history of Islam (Karbala website, 1995).

In the discussion of understanding the concepts of this event within German Oriental studies, it is emphasized that the analysis is based on linguistics and lexicology. Despite the lack of authentic Shiite sources, a general picture with details of the incident can be examined from the perspective of these Orientalists. German Orientalists have shown interest and scientific motivation in studying the Ashura incident. Scholars such as Fleischer and Marbin have specifically addressed this event in their works. Marbin has effectively explained the historical context of the Ashura incident using the method of historical phenomenology. With historical information closely aligned with Shiite sources, he depicted the situations and characters of this uprising. Similarly, Frischler, in his book, *Imam Hussein (PBUH) and Iran*, although relying on unclear sources, narrated the history of Karbala and discussed the practical aspects and impacts of this uprising in society, providing a more vibrant portrayal (Al-Ziyadi, 2013).

Anne-Marie Schimmel is one of the famous German orientalists who has discussed the life and rise of Imam Hussain (PBUH) and in his writings. Imam Hussain (PBUH) is the epitome of honor, holiness, purity, originality, sacrifice and magnanimity, together with their brother, father and grandfather. The martyrdom of Hussain (PBUH) and his companions in the year 61 of the lunar year caused the Shiites to show their devotion to the Imam by holding a religious ritual and to keep the memory of his companions alive by mourning and singing poems.

Non-comprehensiveness of the contents and not addressing the important issues in the discussion of "Ashura Research" is present. One of the most important features of a good research is that it provides relatively comprehensive information about a topic, referring to its most important aspects, to the extent that the researcher does not need secondary sources; however, this point has been neglected in the subject under discussion. It seems that it would have been better for orientalists to discuss some of the less important, secondary issues. Most of the Muslim scientists and scholars were engaged in



conducting such research, and all these scientists have commented on these topics and presented their views. Discussions and topics about Imam Hussain are rarely observed in the studies and researches of German scholars, and this is one of the weak points of this research. The non-comprehensiveness of the sources used is also one of the problems that generally affects most orientalists in religious studies, it is the lack of attention to Shia opinions and sources, while Shia religious thought, due to the element of rationalism, has analysis and interpretations. Due to this feature, it is expected that the orientalists, who are characterized by rationalism, naturally pay special attention to Shia views; however, for numerous reasons (lack of access to Shia sources, negligence and scientific weakness of the author, or prejudice and stubbornness), in many of the interventions they do not present pure Shiite ideas. In other words, one of the characteristics of a desirable scientific research is the diversity and originality of the sources, while in most of the research surrounding this issue, we have observed that some of the references and sources are considered secondary, which is one of the serious weaknesses of a scientific research. Even in some cases, sources that do not have much credibility have been used and cited. For example, the German orientalist, Kurt Frischler, in his book, *Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Iran*, discussed the incident of Ashura, but secondary sources were used, and it seems that he did not have access to Shiite sources; therefore, it is more of a novel than a historical analyzes, indicating that he did not have detailed information about the events of Karbala, even though he has well legislated the freedom, courage, and piety of Imam Hussain (PBUH). He also discusses his righteous warfare more than his being Imam. In this book, the author often used Sunni books and had less access to important Shiite sources, so sometimes, he stated incomplete and incorrect theories. The biggest drawback of a research is not citing accurate sources or not paying attention to correct and first-hand sources. As mentioned, this weakness is very evident in some research by orientalists, which results in the lack of validity and strength of their research. It is clear that, in addition to the non-exclusivity of referring to Shia sources, the article in question represents a specific opinion. The author was not Shia. In other cases, Shia sources were not cited, and therefore, the agreement or disagreement of the Shia opinion with the presented content is not clear.

## Conclusion

Due to the importance of the Ashura uprising among Muslims, especially the Shiites of Islam, many scholars have paid special attention to the issue of Ashura and Imam Hussein (PBUH). This paper discussed the subject, considering that the sources they used were not mostly Shia sources; therefore, the intellectual and scientific atmosphere governing the studies of these Orientalists is different from Shia Muslim thinkers. Regardless of their biased views and their familiarity with this enduring character, a brief historical epic has been presented.

The uprising of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and the great tragedy of Ashura is something that most orientalists from different dimensions have paid attention to in different perspectives and have understood the message of Imam Hussein (PBUH). However, the view of western orientalists towards Imam Hussain's (PBUH) uprising holds a grave mistake. That is they do not actually refer to the main sources. Generally they refer to the sources of the second hand or they have not paid attention to the words of Imam Hussain (PBUH) at all. Moreover, in some cases, they have accused him of political action and an attempt to gain power, leading them to claim that Shia was born in Ashura. Anne-Marie Schimmel is one of the German orientalists who views the Karbala event a turning point in the history of the world. Novel insights is observed in her view towards Islam, especially to Imam Hussain (PBUH). In his book, *Imam Hussain (PBUH) and Iran*, Frischler discussed the incident of Ashura, although the sources he used are unclear, and in some cases, he made references for which there is no evidence in Islamic sources. In this way, German orientalists have investigated the Ashura uprising from their point of view. According to the studies conducted, German orientalists in Islamic studies, including those on Ashura, have paid attention to the Ashura uprising with specific purpose and motivation.

## References

- Bara, A. (1999). *Imam Hussein (a.s.) from the point of view of a Christian* (A. Ahadbanpour, Trans.). Zaman Aho. (In Persian)
- Brockelmann, C. (1956). *History of The Islamic Peoples* (H. Jazayeri, Trans.). Book Translation and Publishing Company. (In Persian)
- Elhami, D. (1999). *Distortion of Ashura in the light of imamology*. School of Islam. (In Persian)
- Frischler, K. (2006). *Imam Hussein (a.s.) and Iran* (Z. Mansouri, Trans., 10th ed.). Javidan. (In Persian)
- Hosseini, G. (2008). *Shia studies and English-speaking Shia scholars*. Shia Studies. (In Persian)
- Marbin, (1957). *Qiyam Hossein and his companions* (N. Dehghani, Trans.). Javid. (In Persian)
- Marbin, (1969). *Siyat al-Husayniyyah*. Haqit. (In Persian)
- Mousavi Zavaq, D. (2012). *Ashura event from the perspective of orientalists* (2nd ed.). Misbah. (In Persian)
- Schimmel, A. (2017). *Mystical dimensions of Islam* (A. al-Rahim Tashteh, Trans.). Islamic Publishing and Culture Office. (In Persian)
- Schimmel, A. (2006). *Following the footsteps of Muslims* (M. H. Khajezadeh, Trans.). Amir Kabir. (In Persian)
- Taghizadeh Ansari, B. (2001). *Imam Hossein (AS) in the mirror of history*. Uloom Roz Publishing. (In Persian)
- Taghizadeh Davari, M. (2006). *Image of Shia imams in the encyclopedias*. Shiism. (In Persian)
- Wellhausen, J. (1996). *Political history of the early days of Islam* (M. Iftikharzadeh, Trans.). Islamic Education Publishing House. (In Persian)