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Orientalism and Challenges to Islamic Sources

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Abstract: This study investigates the socio-cultural roots of orientalist perspectives and their impact on the study of Islam and the Eastern world. Employing a qualitative approach, the research draws from the works of key orientalists such as Joseph Schacht, Arent Jan Wensinck, and Ignaz Goldziher, alongside critical analyses from scholars like Edward Said and Muṣṭafa al-Siba‘ī. The research examines how excessive ethnocentrism and cultural *‘aṣabiyyah* (group solidarity) have historically influenced Orientalist views and actions, including the propagation of tendentious and discriminatory claims about the Eastern world and Islam. The study utilizes content analysis and critical discourse analysis to uncover the underlying ideologies and power relations within orientalist discourse. The findings reveal that the orientalist tradition of casting doubts on Islamic sources, such as the Sunnah, is rooted in a deeply ingrained cultural *‘aṣabiyyah* and a desire to assert Western cultural and intellectual dominance. By understanding these socio-cultural factors, this study aims to provide a framework for anticipating and countering the challenges posed by orientalist ethnocentrism and cultural dominance.

Keywords: *Orientalism, socio-cultural factors, ethnocentrism, ‘aṣabiyyah, Islamic studies.*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding orientalism has been extensively explored by scholars, resulting in diverse interpretations and practices among its adherents, known as orientalists. These orientalists can be broadly classified into two categories. The first category comprises subjective orientalists, who provide tendentious and discriminatory claims about the Eastern world and Islam, such as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Franz Schacht (1950). The second category includes objective orientalists, such as Edward Wadie Said, who clarify and refute the claims of the former group (Said, 2003). The Islamic heritage faces threats from the first type of orientalists, whose biased perspectives have been present since the medieval period



and continue to exist in modern times. This ongoing presence necessitates a thorough and cautious examination of their claims.

The tendentious claims made by orientalists are rooted in excessive ethnocentrism and cultural *'aṣabiyyah* (group solidarity). The differing socio-cultural contexts of the Western and Eastern worlds influence the behavior and perspectives of Orientalists specifically and colonialists in general. The achievements of Eastern civilizations, represented by Islamic nations, prompted the West to reevaluate its own culture. In this evaluation, Westerners perceived their culture as superior and believed it should dominate Eastern civilizations. This cultural *'aṣabiyyah* extended to other sectors, including religion, with Westerners asserting the superiority of Christianity and Judaism over the dominant religions of the Eastern world. Moreover, this cultural *'aṣabiyyah* influenced scholarly disciplines, with Westerners considering their historical methodologies, which emphasize written transmission from informants, as superior to oral transmission.

This study aims to investigate why tendentious orientalism occurs and the impact of ethnocentrism and cultural *'aṣabiyyah* on orientalist views. The theories of ethnocentrism by William Graham Sumner (2002) and *'aṣabiyyah* by Ibn Khaldun (al-Jābirī, 1984) offer a robust framework for understanding the discriminatory and condescending perspectives of orientalists towards the Eastern world and Islam.

This research distinguishes itself from previous studies by focusing on the socio-cultural factors that have been underexplored in the context of Orientalism. Most prior research has emphasized political and religious aspects, whereas this study will analyze the socio-cultural roots of orientalist tendentiousness. References from 'Abid al-Jabiri will support this analysis.

The objective of this study is to analyze the socio-cultural roots of Orientalism and its impact on Orientalist views. This research will be limited to the influence of ethnocentrism and cultural *'aṣabiyyah* in shaping orientalist perspectives on the Eastern world and Islam.

Viewing tendentious orientalism through a socio-cultural lens and analyzing it with the tools of ethnocentrism and *'aṣabiyyah* is necessary. There is already extensive literature on orientalism from religious and political perspectives. On the other hand, excessive *'aṣabiyyah* and ethnocentrism are prevalent phenomena when comparing the modern Western and Eastern worlds. It is hoped that this study will enable us to better investigate and anticipate the dangers posed by orientalists now and in the future.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research project employing historical and sociological approaches aimed at uncovering the sociocultural roots of orientalist perspectives and their impact on the study of Islam and the Eastern world. The data sources for this research include primary data obtained from the works of orientalists such as Joseph Schacht, Arent Jan Wensinck, and Ignaz Goldziher, as well as secondary data from literature discussing orientalism, including works by Edward Said, Muṣṭafa al-Siba'ī, and Nurcholish Madjid. Data collection techniques used are literature review and document analysis, wherein the literature review involves gathering and examining relevant literature on the research topic, while document analysis involves critically examining orientalist works and literature on orientalism.

The data analysis techniques employed in this study are content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis is used to identify and categorize key ideas in the works of orientalists, while critical discourse analysis is employed to uncover ideologies, power

relations, and biases in orientalist discourse. The theoretical framework for this research includes William Graham Sumner's theory of ethnocentrism and Ibn Khaldun's theory of *'aṣabiyyah*, as refined by Abid al-Jabiri, to understand the socio-cultural roots of orientalist perspectives.

The research procedure includes conducting a literature review and collecting relevant literature on the research topic, identifying and analyzing orientalist works, examining the views of Muslim scholars on orientalism, analyzing the socio-cultural factors influencing orientalist behavior using ethnocentrism and *'aṣabiyyah* theories, performing content and critical discourse analyses on orientalist works and related literature, and compiling research findings and drawing conclusions. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, data source triangulation and methodological triangulation will be used. Data source triangulation involves comparing data from various sources, while methodological triangulation involves using multiple data collection and analysis methods.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Orientalism from a Socio-Cultural Perspective

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said provides three interrelated definitions of "Orientalism." The first definition is academic. Said asserts that this is the most straightforward definition of "orientalism," and it continues to be used by some academic institutions. Under this definition, an orientalist is someone who teaches, writes, or researches the Orient—whether as an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist. According to Said, orientalist activities are termed "orientalism," which continues to thrive through doctrines and theses about the East and Eastern peoples (Said, 2003).

Finding the first definition too general for explaining "orientalism," Said introduces a second definition, which is the paradigm of distinction. He posits that orientalism is a framework for differentiating the East from the West, based on ontological and epistemological distinctions. Thus, writers like poets and novelists, as well as philosophers, political theorists, economists, and government officials, have been able to distinguish fundamentally—albeit within their imaginations—between the East and the West (Said, 2003).

Building on the second definition, Said presents the third definition of "orientalism" as an authoritative discourse. When those in positions of authority understand the fundamental differences between the East and the West, they use these differences as a starting point to develop complex theories in literature, sociology, politics, and cultural anthropology that explain and delimit the East and Eastern people. Authoritative discourse makes statements about the East, legitimizes certain views about it, and describes it by teaching, organizing, and governing it. Thus, orientalism can be understood as the Western style of dominating, restructuring, and exerting authority over the East (Said, 2003). This final definition also underscores that the differences between the East and the West are not merely imaginative but have become tangible.

The West has created the Eastern world through its dominance and colonization efforts. Said emphatically states, "The relationship between the West and the East is a relationship of power and domination, with varying degrees of hegemony" (Said, 2003). Ultimately, it is not an exaggeration to claim that Orientalism is intertwined with colonialism.

Despite the West's attempts to describe and even actualize these descriptions of the East, many realities still contradict these portrayals. Said acknowledges, "There are—and have

always been—cultures and peoples in the East whose lives, histories, and customs have a reality far greater than anything that can be said about them in the West. On this fact, orientalism studies have contributed little, except to acknowledge it silently" (Said, 2003).

When observing the paradigm of distinction and authoritative discourse from a socio-cultural perspective, it becomes evident that these two definitions of orientalism are imbued with strong elements of ethnocentrism. Political and social science professor William Graham Sumner offers a comprehensive definition of "ethnocentrism." According to Sumner, ethnocentrism is the technical name for viewing things in which one's group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated concerning it (Sumner, 2002).

Sumner further explains that folkways (customs, traditions, and cultural practices) are closely related to ethnocentrism, whether in an individual's interactions with their group or with others. In the context of ethnocentrism, each group maintains its pride and arrogance, claims superiority, exalts its gods, and views outsiders with contempt and disdain. Ethnocentrism highlights an individual's distinctive folkways, differentiating them from others (Sumner, 2002).

Due to this ideology of ethnocentrism, ethnic groups or those with high ethnocentric attitudes will exhibit prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and social distance toward other groups (Liliweri, 2003). The paradigm of distinction among orientalists, which sets their group (the Western, Judeo-Christian world) apart from others, is the root of ethnocentrism.

In this differentiation, orientalists imagine their group as rational, industrious, progressive, and civilized, while viewing others as irrational, lazy, static, and barbaric. This subjective distinction, born from ego and unproven empirically, fosters social class differences. The superior class is occupied by their group, while others are relegated to inferior status. Assessing other cultures by one's standards is fundamentally flawed.

Ethnocentrism in authoritative discourse is even more detrimental. When interacting with other Westerners, orientalist superiority is reinforced by perpetuating their folkways, such as unbounded freedom, and avoiding Eastern folkways, like order and "restraint." This sense of superiority carries over into interactions with other groups, imposing their concept of freedom. Even if the orientalist's imagined superiority were true, it does not justify domination, restructuring, or exerting authority over the East.

Many aspects of Eastern reality remain untouched by Orientalist imagination. For instance, had they known the traditions of Hadith scholars, they might not have created doubts about the Sunnah. Even with knowledge of these realities, they persist in seeking weaknesses. Their basis is ethnocentrism, deeming their methods superior and imposing them on others. The power and domination dynamic between the West and the East, as Edward described, would not exist without ethnocentrism.

Sumner (2002) notes that ethnocentrism involves three interrelated processes. *First*, orientalists view Western and Judeo-Christian values as the center of all values. This inclination towards their group arises in the first process. They consider unbounded freedom and individualism as the highest values.

Second, orientalists perceive competition when values other than those of the Western and Judeo-Christian worlds emerge and develop. When discipline, reflected in various social regulations in the East, and community-oriented values inherent in the culture of these regions arise, orientalists feel a new competitor threatens their Western values.

Third, this competition polarizes social interactions into two groups: those who feel superior (the West and Judeo-Christian world) and those deemed inferior (the East and Islam).

Recognizing this competition, orientalists regard their group's values as superior, fostering a sense of superiority. In authoritative discourse, this superiority drives Westerners to "educate" and reshape Easterners through domination and hegemony.

To understand Orientalism comprehensively, it is essential to explore the Orientalist mindset. Muṣṭafa al-Siba'ī, a scholar of Hadith, identifies several characteristics of orientalist research. These include distrust and misunderstanding of Islam's intentions and objectives, prejudice against Muslims and their scholars, ignorance of the true nature of Islamic society, depicting Muslims as fragmented and individualistic, portraying Islamic civilization inaccurately to belittle it, and distorting Islamic texts to fit their agendas (Sibā'ī & Shafeeq, 2009).

These characteristics also stem from socio-cultural factors when viewed through the lens of *'aṣabiyyah*, as understood by the Muslim philosopher Abid al-Jabiri from Ibn Khaldun. *'aṣabiyyah* is an individual's sense of being an inseparable part of their group (al-Jābirī, 1984). This feeling of belonging is natural for most individuals.

Al-Jabiri further explains that the basis of *'aṣabiyyah* is not absolute ancestry (blood relation) but a unique characteristic of a group. *'aṣabiyyah* arises from fellowship, prolonged association, participation in customs and traditions, a spirit of solidarity, and the strong bond between an individual's interests and the group's interests (al-Jābirī, 1984).

The last three characteristics of Orientalist thought reflect their excessive love and involvement with the Western and Judeo-Christian world. Unfortunately, this love and involvement represent an abnormal form of *'aṣabiyyah*. Orientalists excessively misappropriate this natural sentiment. Moreover, the first three characteristics exacerbate this misappropriation.

Misunderstanding, ignorance, distrust, and prejudice towards the socio-cultural life of the East, compounded by *'aṣabiyyah* towards their social-cultural values (the West), lead to orientalist deviations in *'aṣabiyyah*. These deviations manifest as tendentious and baseless claims, such as labeling Eastern figures as individualistic and belittling their existence, legal sources, and scholarly heritage. They even attempt to undermine the East with tendentious works stemming from their distortions of Eastern texts.

Orientalists would not make such imaginative, tendentious claims or undermine the East merely out of ignorance. Another reason is their love and attachment to the West. These two factors determine their deviations in *'aṣabiyyah*. Excessive *'aṣabiyyah* towards Western culture extends to their religious *'aṣabiyyah*.

Culture can intertwine with religion. Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist, explains that religion functions as a symbolic system that builds pervasive, long-lasting moods and motivations in individuals. It achieves this by formulating general conceptions of existence and clothing these conceptions in an aura of factuality (Geertz, 1973). This religious function can create new cultures.

Thus, we understand that most individual behaviors are regulated by religion. This regulation fosters good moods, making individuals comfortable behaving according to their religion. These processes endure, creating tangible cultures. For example, Christianity's relatively lenient regulation compared to Islam has created distinct cultures in regions dominated by its adherents.

We know that the West is predominantly influenced by Christian regulations, while the East is mainly Islamic. The cultural differences between the West and the East are partly due to the influence of the dominant religions. Western culture is freer than Eastern culture. Since

religion can create culture, *'aṣabiyyah* towards religion is inevitable. This process, which I call "cultural *'aṣabiyyah* extending to other *'aṣabiyyah*," clearly shows that the roots and characteristics of orientalism are deeply embedded in socio-cultural factors.

The Socio-Cultural Influence in the History of Orientalism

The roots of Orientalism can be traced back to the aftermath of the Crusades, which concluded in 1291. Despite the Western Christian defeat, they were able to carry with them some of the Islamic enlightenment and fruits of civilization that were absent in their homeland. While the common Western populace might have been satisfied with the outcomes of the wars, the kings and their lieutenants remained determined to reclaim Islamic territories, regardless of the time and expense required (Sibā'ī & Shafeeq, 2009).

After failing to conquer Islamic lands militarily, they shifted to studying Islamic beliefs and doctrines in preparation for cultural and intellectual invasion. This marked the initial emergence of orientalist groups, who continue their mission to this day (Sibā'ī & Shafeeq, 2009). This classical form of orientalism emphasized cultural and intellectual warfare.

The perseverance of these kings paralleled their cultural *'aṣabiyyah* (group solidarity) deviations. These two variables determined the success of the desired cultural and intellectual war. Building on Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'aṣabiyyah*, al-Jabiri explains that *'aṣabiyyah* transforms into a constant tendency within individuals, driving them to merge their identity with their group, essentially erasing their identity.

In this state, an individual's personality and identity are replaced by the group's identity. In other words, the individual's identity dissolves into the group they are part of. Thus, when an individual exhibits *'aṣabiyyah* for their group, they simultaneously exhibit *'aṣabiyyah* for themselves. Conversely, when a group supports and shows *'aṣabiyyah* towards one of its members, it simultaneously exhibits *'aṣabiyyah* for its identity as a group (al-Jābirī, 1984).

The relationship between individuals and their groups is representative. In the historical context mentioned above, there was a strong reciprocal relationship between orientalists—as tools of the kings to fulfill their desires—and the Western world as their group. The research and works that attacked Islamic foundations were expressions of orientalist *'aṣabiyyah* towards the Western world and themselves.

On the other hand, the material and moral support provided by the Western world, especially the kings, towards the orientalists was a form of *'aṣabiyyah* for the orientalists as members and for themselves (the Western world and the kings). Unfortunately, the orientation of cultural *'aṣabiyyah* from these two elements (individuals and their group) deviated in both method and purpose. Their foundation was love and sacrifice for the existence of their Western culture.

They excessively expressed this *'aṣabiyyah* by acting recklessly and justifying any means, even making tendentious and unproven claims. They cared little about academic ethics like scientific integrity. The aim of this *'aṣabiyyah* was not only to maintain the existence of their culture but also to destroy Islam.

Ultimately, the extent of the function of these two elements determined the extent of cultural *'aṣabiyyah* deviation. The more the function and deviation increased, the higher the success rate in dominating Eastern culture and thought. The emergence of classical orientalism was laden with socio-cultural factors. Unfortunately, the medieval period (5th—15th centuries) of Christian-Western history nourished this classical orientalist practice.

Renowned medieval English historian Richard William Southern openly explains the condition of Christian-Western societies of the past. The existence of Islam was the most crucial problem for medieval Christianity. Practically, this problem forced Western Christians to decide how to confront Islam—whether through war, Christianization, coexistence, or as business partners (Southern, 1978). This practical problem stemmed from an earlier theological problem.

In theological terms, Western Christianity was perplexed by the existence of Islam. Islam held one of four roles in their eyes: an end-times phenomenon, a stage in the development of Christianity marked by heresy and division, a new religion created by man or the devil and seen as a blasphemous parody of Christianity, or a system of thought deserving of respectful treatment. Western Christianity found it difficult to decide which role Islam should occupy among these possibilities (Southern, 1978).

However, it seems that Western Christianity tended to be hostile towards Islam. Southern continues this historical reality by stating, “The existence of Islam caused great anxiety in the West. Practically, it caused permanent unease, not only because it was a danger but also because its danger was unpredictable and immeasurable” (Southern, 1978). This hostility tendency is inseparable from the deeply rooted Christian-Western ethnocentrism.

Historical reality shows us how strongly Western Christians were inclined toward their religion and nation. On the other hand, Islam and the East emerged, bringing values that the Western Christians found different from their own. From these differences, Western Christians felt there was an unavoidable competition between the two cultures. They believed their cultural values were the best and should be the benchmark for Islamic-Eastern cultural values.

To emerge victorious in this competition, Western Christians acted superiorly, antagonizing Islam-East, which they deemed inferior. They intensified their study of Islam for cultural and intellectual warfare. They even dared to initiate colonization, believing they had uncovered the weaknesses of Islam-East through their studies.

The arguments above lead to one conclusion. The medieval Christian-Western state of confusion but hostility towards Islam-East nurtured orientalism, reflected in cultural-intellectual domination and colonization. In this conclusion, I reiterate that Orientalism is intertwined with colonization. These two phenomena synergize. Orientalist investigations into Islamic-Eastern foundations and weaknesses facilitated colonization.

Conversely, colonization eased Orientalist access to Islamic-Eastern sources through their group's authority. The synergy between orientalism and colonization indicates that one does not disappear when the other emerges. However, from a historical perspective, contemporary Arab thinker Hassan Hanafi implicitly views colonization as the precursor to Orientalism. Its purpose was to gather as much information as possible about the colonized societies (Hanafi, 1991).

Hanafi further explains that the emergence of Orientalism coincided with the peak of European colonization. At that time, Europeans were at their zenith following the Reconquista and the fall of Granada in 1492 (Hanafi, 1991). The birth of Orientalism, aimed at gathering information about colonized societies, was driven by socio-cultural factors.

Analyzing this purpose arises from the perceived relationship between the West and the East that Edward Said described as a relationship of power and dominance with varying degrees of complex hegemony. This perception indicates Western ethnocentrism. The excessive tendency of colonialists and orientalists towards their Western and Christian culture

led to competition with different cultures, such as the East and Islam. To win this competition, the West dominated the East.

The assumption of power relations and competition from the West is unfounded. The emergence and success of Islam carried the message of *rahmatan li al'alamīn* (a mercy to all worlds), spreading goodness, including equality (*musāwāh*). Islam did not view others as enemies or inferiors, nor did it see itself as superior. With the concept of *rahmatan li al'alamīn*, Islam regarded others as partners in prospering the earth, embodying the value of Khilafah stated in the Qur'an. Thus, it becomes evident that the emergence of classical orientalism was heavily influenced by strong socio-cultural factors.

In the modern era, socio-cultural factors also influence the development of orientalism. This is reflected in the "special relationship" between the West (France, England, and America) and the East. Historically and culturally, Edward distinguishes between two relationships. *First*, the special relationship between France-England and the East. *Second*, the special relationship between America and the East.

The special relationship between France and the East lasted from the early 19th century to the end of World War II. Post-World War II, the special relationship between America and the East began. From these relationships—whose dynamics were highly productive despite always showing the relatively greater power of the West (France, England, or America)—emerged many texts that Edward calls the Orientalist canon (Said, 2003).

Although the long-standing Eastern-Islamic glory, which had been a Western-Christian rival, began to fade in the modern era, Westerners' excessive and deviant *'aṣabiyyah* towards their own culture persisted. Al-Jabiri explains that *'aṣabiyyah* becomes evident in individuals when external threats and disturbances to their group's existence arise. Conversely, if the external threat diminishes or fades, the individual's *'aṣabiyyah* becomes dormant (al-Jābirī, 1984).

Since *'aṣabiyyah*—whether active or dormant—applies to all group members, it has specific characteristics. When active, it resembles collective consciousness (*al-Wa'yu al-Jamā'i*). For example, the emergence of class consciousness in societies during times of intense class struggle. When dormant, it resembles a collective (al-Jābirī, 1984). Even when not actively present, it indirectly and unconsciously influences a person's daily life, thoughts, and behaviors.

In the context of modern orientalism, the emergence and dormancy of *'aṣabiyyah* towards Western culture in orientalists are relative and subjective. This *'aṣabiyyah* does not depend on the rise or fall of Eastern Islamic civilization, nor does it depend on the attitudes of those around them. Thus, if Western peers lack *'aṣabiyyah* or have minimal *'aṣabiyyah* towards their culture, it does not mean that the orientalist loses their *'aṣabiyyah*. This results from an excessively deviant *'aṣabiyyah* within the orientalist.

Orientalist *'aṣabiyyah* manifests in the production of tendentious works. When dormant, it takes the form of cynicism and sentiments towards Islam. This excessive reaction stems from the orientalist's belief that their group's existence is threatened by external forces. Even though the Ottoman Empire has collapsed and Islamic countries are fragmented, the West still perceives Islam as a cultural threat from the East.

Given all this, it is not an exaggeration to say that orientalists have been deviating and entrapped throughout history in their cultural *'aṣabiyyah*. Many orientalists from the West do not have deviant *'aṣabiyyah*. These conscious orientalists do not misuse *'aṣabiyyah*, a natural

human sentiment. Not all Westerners are aware of this *'aṣabiyyah*; some are indifferent to their culture.

The Motives Behind Orientalists' Actions Towards Islam

The actions of orientalist towards Islam can be classified into two primary motives. The emergence and flourishing of Islamic civilization, the rivalry between the West and the East, and the study of Islam are all causes that generate consequential motives. These consequential motives include colonization and the effort to undermine Islam. All these motives, whether political, academic, or religious, are rooted in socio-cultural factors, specifically excessive cultural *'aṣabiyyah* (group solidarity).

'aṣabiyyah plays a significant role in social life generally and in historical movements or state formation specifically (al-Jābirī, 1984). The cultural *'aṣabiyyah* of orientalist, which is the root of the two aforementioned motives, manifests as an effort to strengthen the West and the Christian faith. Unfortunately, there is a deviation in the orientalist *'aṣabiyyah*. Their principle of strengthening the West and Christianity includes excessive goals, such as colonization and the destruction of Islam.

To understand the process of the emergence and flourishing of Islam, which serves as the initial cause, we need to start with the confrontation between Christianity and Islam. Indonesian Islamic thinker Nurcholish Madjid divides this confrontation into three levels. Two of these levels are religious understanding and socio-political levels. These two levels serve as initial religious and political motives.

At the level of religious understanding, Christians could not accept Islam as a continuation and development of Christianity. The Qur'an teaches all people that the emergence of Islam is a continuation and development of previous religions. However, Christians viewed Islam as an entirely new religion that posed a challenge to Christianity (Majid, 1995).

The first level of religious confrontation is the starting point for the emergence of other initial motives. Christians in the past, and perhaps even today, do not recognize the emergence of Islam and oppose its development. Therefore, all the efforts of orientalist, fueled by their excessive *'aṣabiyyah* towards Christianity and the West, stem from this religious confrontation. As previously mentioned, religion, capable of shaping culture, also becomes an object of *'aṣabiyyah* deviation.

At the socio-political level, Nurcholish Madjid (commonly known as Cak Nur) explains that Islam annexed strategic Christian territories essential for the spread, development, and strength of Christian teachings. Almost the entire Middle Eastern Islamic region today, except the Arabian Peninsula and Iran, was once Christian. The expansion of Islamic power continued, reaching Spain and Eastern Europe, including Constantinople, the capital of Europe at that time (Majid, 1995).

The flourishing of Islamic-Eastern civilization caused significant rivalry with Western Christianity. Western Christians were frustrated because their entrenched culture in these regions was replaced by a foreign one. This second level of confrontation served as a political motive that significantly influenced orientalist's actions towards Islam. Excessive cultural *'aṣabiyyah* made orientalist vengeful, willing to use any means to destroy Islam, including studying it and making tendentious claims. This is where the academic motive began.

Unfortunately, Western Christians, especially orientalist, faced obstacles in their academic motives in both classical and modern times. In the medieval Christian-Western

history mentioned earlier, they desperately sought answers to their confusion but were reluctant to study and research Islam. Cak Nur provides two reasons for their reluctance.

First, there was the language barrier. Second, their closed-minded, prejudiced attitude made them unwilling to learn for fear of being influenced by Islam (Majid, 1995). This historical reality emphasizes that Western Christians were uneasy, fearful, and irrationally irritated by Islamic cultural achievements. This academic motive, combined with excessive cultural *'aşabiyyah* aimed at destroying Islam, led Western Christians to spread baseless slander and tendentious claims about Islam.

In modern times, orientalist face similar obstacles in their academic motives. They struggle to study Islam. Al-Siba'i's personal experience during his visit to several European universities in 1956 provides an example. He met Arthur John Arberry, an orientalist and Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Cambridge University.

Arberry admitted that Orientalists made many errors when analyzing Islam. He confessed that orientalist should not delve into this field as Muslims and Arabs were more capable in this area (Sibā'ī & Shafeeq, 2009). This indicates the orientalist's inability to study Islam accurately, often resulting in erroneous claims.

Consider the tendentious claim by Leone Caetani (1907), an Italian Middle East historian, well translated by contemporary Hadith scholar Muṣṭafa al-A'dhamī. Caetani asserted that for over 60 years after the Prophet's death, the *isnad* (chain of narration) in Hadith was not used. Thus, most of the *isnad* found in Hadith collections were fabricated by Hadith scholars in the second and even third centuries (Al-A'dhami, 1980)

Had Caetani been able to study Islam thoroughly and consult the works of Islamic scholars without excessive *'aşabiyyah* towards Western Christianity, he would not have made such a tendentious claim. The tradition of *isnad* existed in the primordial Islamic period, even during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime.

It is evident that orientalist studies on Islam, often inadequately conducted, serve as academic motives leading to consequential motives of dominance and the destruction of Islam. The root of these academic motives is socio-cultural factors, specifically excessive cultural *'aşabiyyah*. This excessive *'aşabiyyah* is evident not only in their objectives but also in field observations.

For example, al-Siba'i's encounter with Anderson, an orientalist, and Dean of the Faculty of Sharia at the University of London, illustrates this point. Anderson was shocked to hear that one of his students was denied a doctoral degree after writing a dissertation on Islam's perfect rights for women. Anderson's reason was that the student was not an official spokesperson for Islam, unlike Abu Hanifah or Shafi'i (Sibā'ī & Shafeeq, 2009). This story reflects Anderson's excessive *'aşabiyyah* in his disdain for Islam. It is illogical to deny a doctoral degree for such a reason, especially from someone advocating academic freedom at his institution.

The various initial motives discussed above lead to consequential motives, such as colonization and efforts to destroy Islam. The history of Orientalism's development shows how Orientalist studies on Islam were closely linked to the domination and colonization of Islamic-Eastern territories. Colonization is a politically consequential motive.

Additionally, there are religious consequential motives aimed at undermining Islamic teachings. Cak Nur states that the core of colonial orientalist's views was to diminish the significance of Islam in their colonies by spreading disinformation and developing theories that contradict reality (Majid, 1995). If accepted by Muslims, especially laypeople, these theories could weaken their faith.

In this context, orientalist attacks targeted the Prophet Muhammad, Islamic legal sources, and scholars. Under the guise of strengthening Western culture and Christian teachings, with the ultimate goal of colonization and destroying Islam, orientalists intensified their actions against Islam with various motives, both initial and consequential. Their actions transcended time and situation, whether in classical or modern eras and regardless of the state of Islamic-Eastern civilization.

Orientalists' Doubts About the Sunnah

The effort to undermine Islam is a consequential motive of orientalist behavior towards Islam. One such effort involves casting doubts on the Sunnah. Casting doubts on the Sunnah is a tradition and culture among orientalists. It has been their habit since ancient times to question this second source of Islamic law.

Historical evidence, in the form of Orientalist accusations and rebuttals from Islamic scholars, demonstrates the existence of this negative tradition and culture among Orientalists. This tradition persists due to the deeply ingrained cultural *'asabiyyah* within them. Their guise is to strengthen the West and Christianity, but in reality, they aim to dominate and destroy the East and Islam.

One orientalist who persistently cast doubts on the foundation of the Sunnah, particularly the isnad (chain of narration), is Joseph Schacht. He claimed that isnad is the most uncertain part of Hadith. He argued that due to various tendencies behind the creation and development of isnad, it can be used to discredit Hadith in many cases (Schacht, 1950). This claim is not only tendentious but also baseless. Even if Schacht had arguments, Islamic literature, and scholars could easily refute them.

Furthermore, Schacht asserted that isnad had not been fully developed in the early Islamic period. It reached its perfection in classical Hadith collections in the second half of the third century Hijri. This makes us skeptical of what Hadith scholars refer to as "the golden chain of isnad" (first-class isnads). He argued that all technical critiques of Hadith by scholars, particularly those based on isnad, are irrelevant for historical analysis (Schacht, 1950).

Schacht also claimed that the isnad highly valued by Islamic scholars is the result of widespread fabrication by the generation before Imam Malik. These isnads were carelessly constructed, with any representative of the group (*thabaqāt*) being randomly chosen and inserted into the isnad (Schacht, 1950). According to Schacht, a Hadith's matn (text) is projected back onto an ancient authority (Schacht, 1950).

Saad al-Marshafī, an Egyptian professor and doctor in Hadith studies, is one contemporary scholar who witnessed this Orientalist tradition of casting doubts on the Sunnah. He stated that what makes orientalists exaggerate their claims is their view of the Prophet's Hadith. These Hadith have been scrutinized by scholars using immense intellectual resources and rigorous legal reasoning (al-Marshafi, 1995)

Al-Marshafī further explained that Orientalists do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad. They claim it is unreasonable for all these Hadith to originate from an illiterate prophet. Therefore, all these Hadith are the work of Muslims over the first three centuries. Al-Marshafī concluded that the main problem with orientalists is their disbelief in the prophecy of Muhammad. This disbelief is the root of their confusion, slander, and ignorance (al-Marshafi, 1995).

Among the orientalists mentioned by al-Marshafī is Arent Jan Wensinck (2013), a prominent orientalist who has authored several works on Hadith studies. Wensinck claimed

that Hadith about the creed (*shahādah*) and the pillars of Islam (*Buniya al-Islām 'alā Khams*) were fabricated by religious figures (Wensinck, 2013). He argued that various thoughts and projects developed in the decades following Muhammad's death provided opportunities for religious figures to explain the spirit of Islam found in Hadith, leading to the fabrication of many Hadith (al-Marshafi, 1995). This indicates a deviation in Wensinck's *'aṣabiyyah*. Given his works, such as *al-Mu'jām al-Mufahras li Alfādh al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī*, he should have known the authenticity of these Hadith originating from the Prophet, not from religious figures as he claimed.

In addition to Schacht and Wensinck, Ignaz Goldziher (1981) was another orientalist who frequently cast doubts on the Sunnah. Ṣubhi al-Ṣālih, a renowned Lebanese scholar, noted that Goldziher doubted the validity of many Hadith. Goldziher believed that some Hadith were fabricated by Hadith scholars, while others were fabricated by scholars of *ra'y* (personal opinion) (Goldziher, 1981).

One of the scholars who refuted orientalist claims was Manna' Khalil al-Qaṭṭan from Egypt. He rebutted Goldziher's accusations against the Umayyad caliphs and Imam Zuhri, whom Goldziher claimed fabricated many Hadith. Al-Qaṭṭan stated that Abdul Malik bin Marwan, during whose time Imam Zuhri recorded the Sunnah, was known by Ibn Sa'd, a Hadith and history scholar, and others as a devout and pious person since childhood. People even referred to Abdul Malik as "the mosque pigeon" (*Hamāmah al-Masjid*) (al-Qaṭṭan, 2007).

Regarding Imam Zuhri, al-Qaṭṭan described him as a pious defender of Islam. Imam Zuhri did not serve the rulers but remained close to them only to provide religious advice and remind them of their obligations and the rights of the people. He even educated the children of Umayyad rulers to become exemplary figures (al-Qaṭṭan, 2007). This ingrained negative tradition of orientalists is also confirmed by al-Siba'i. After he visited Europe, as mentioned earlier, he became more convinced of the danger posed by orientalists to Islamic heritage, whether legal (*tasyrī'iyyan*) or cultural (*ḥadāriyyan*). According to al-Siba'i, their hearts are filled with envy and hatred towards Islam, Arabs, and Muslims due to their ingrained *'aṣabiyyah* (Sibā'i & Shafeeq, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The behavior of orientalists towards the Eastern world and Islam, in particular, is heavily influenced by socio-cultural factors. Historical evidence has shown this influence through the emergence and development of Orientalism, the various motives behind their actions towards the East and Islam, and the doubts cast on the Sunnah, the second source of Islamic law. The actions of orientalists are deeply rooted in the spirit of ethnocentrism and the misuse of *'aṣabiyyah* (group solidarity).

'Aṣabiyyah, which should be a natural human sentiment, has been misappropriated by orientalists. They are willing to sacrifice anything to strengthen Western culture and Judeo-Christian values. Unfortunately, these sacrifices are often made without careful consideration, especially when their efforts are aimed at colonization and the destruction of Islam. This issue serves as a reminder for us as well. While *'aṣabiyyah* is a natural feeling, it is crucial to be mindful of how we express it. We must be cautious not to adopt the same blind *'aṣabiyyah* that characterizes orientalist behavior.

In Summary, understanding the socio-cultural roots of orientalist perspectives is essential for addressing and mitigating the negative impacts of their views and actions on the Eastern world and Islam. By critically examining the motives and historical context of

Orientalism, we can better anticipate and counteract the challenges posed by Orientalist ethnocentrism and cultural dominance.

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