



## Rereading Edward Said and Richard King's Works on Orientalism

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### ABSTRACT

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The awareness to respond to the studies conducted by Western scholars about the East and the Arab world, in particular, is the influence of the modernization of theory. Edward W Said's work Orientalism is one of the responses and criticisms of Western scholars' studies of the Arab World. The work also indicated the institutional research of Arab word related to European cultural domination. Said rejects all forms of Western hegemony over the Arab world and denies the thesis that the Islamic world can develop due to Western intervention. On the one hand, in his book Orientalism and Religion, Richard King tries to offer another perspective on Orientalism. According to him, although Orientalism has its negative side, under certain conditions, Orientalism has also awakened the consciousness of the East to build their distinctive scientific discipline, which is then known as subaltern studies.

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### Introduction

In general, the Arab and Islamic worlds experienced an era of decline starting in the 19th century, marked by European powers' entry into the region (Lane, 2011). Some Arab thinkers see European power as a threat and a trigger for the birth of Islamic reform movements in the Arab world. This reform movement manifested in various forms, such as the emergence of the national independence movement, religious reform movement, and education (Feriyadi & Hadi, 2018; Lughod, 1963; Yoyo, 2018). Before full colonialism into the Arab region and the Islamic world in general, European rulers had sent scholars with expertise from various disciplines to study all aspects of Arab society's life. The results of this study will be a reference for European rulers in making policy towards the region. So at first, the motivation of Western scholars to study the Arab world was driven by the desire to colonize (Findlay, 2002). Since then, Western scholars have continued to conduct studies on various aspects of life in the Arab and Eastern worlds. This discipline came to be known as Orientalism, a discipline practiced by Western scholars against the Eastern world (Islam, Arabia, Asia, and other Muslim countries) (Breckenridge & van der Veer,

1993).

As a discipline with various study results, Orientalism has given birth to multiple responses from Eastern (Arabic) scholars (Shoukany, 1990). These Arab scholars realized that something was wrong in the studies conducted by Western scholars on the Eastern World (Lewis 1982). These errors are allegedly the result of a lack of information or a lack of comprehensive knowledge about the East. In addition, the wrong picture of the East is also assumed to be one of the justifications for the West to expand into the region to spread the ideas of European modernism such as democracy, egalitarianism, and other modern values. One of the most critical responses to the ambiguity in studies conducted by Western scholars is Edward W Said's phenomenal work *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). The book has been printed many times and translated into various world languages (Ersheidat & Tahir, 2019). This book in the era is the most influential and most-read book. This book marks the courage of Eastern people to say no to the wrong conceptions and studies of the West towards the East (Lughod, 1963). On the other hand, Richard King, in his work *Orientalism and Religion*, asserts that Orientalism has its negative side and positive values (King, 2013). Therefore, this paper attempts to present two views on Orientalism to find common ground between the two views.

## Discussion

Orientalism is a discourse that depicts the exotic, erotic, foreign East as an understandable phenomenon, understandable in a network of categories, tables, and concepts through which the East is constantly constrained and controlled (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001). Orientalist discourse consequently forms an appropriate framework for analyzing, which, expressed through theology, literature, philosophy, and sociology, is colonial relations and a sphere of political power. Orientalism has created a character typology, distinguishing between a rational West and a lazy East (Schirato, 1994). Orientalism aims to reduce the endless complexities of the East into standard forms, characters, and constitutions (Turner, 2002). However, if we take a closer look, Orientalism has undergone four critical growth phases in its historical development. The first phase started in the sixteenth century. In this phase, Orientalism can be regarded as a symbol of the anti-Islam movement driven by Jews and Christians. If traced, this movement is a reaction to the substance of Islamic teachings that from an early age opposed Christianity and Judaism (Çelik, 1996). The defeat of Christian Europeans in the Crusade also fueled this anti-Islamic spirit. The second phase of Orientalism occurred in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. This second phase is a crucial phase of Orientalism because it is a movement that coincides with Western modernization. The West has been interested in learning how Islam can become a reliable civilization for seven centuries. During this period, the kings and queens of Europe agreed to support collecting all kinds of information about the east. To name a few, Erpernius (1584-1624) published the first Arabic grammar, followed

by his student Jacob Goluis (1596-1667), and by Lorriunuer Franz Meurnski of Austria in 1680. In addition, Bedwell W (1561-1632) edited seven volumes Arabic Dictionary book and wrote about the life history of the Prophet Muhammad (Zarkasyi, 2005).

The third phase of Orientalism is the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. This phase is the essential phase of Orientalism, both for Muslims and Orientalists. Because in this phase, the West has controlled the Islamic countries politically, militarily, culturally, and economically. Many orientalists contributed works in Islamic studies in this phase, not a few edited and translated, and published in Arabic and Persian. Maybe because the West had entered and controlled Islamic lands, they could quickly get materials about Islam. The Second World War marked the fourth phase of Orientalism. Especially in America, Islam and Muslims have become popular objects of study. The study was conducted for academic purposes and to design political and business policies. Once again, in this phase, the study of Orientalism changed again, from vulgar religious sentiments to becoming softer (Zarkasyi, 2005).

### **Edward Said on Orientalism**

According to Said, Orientalism is a mode of thinking based on the ontological and epistemological to distinguish the East and the West. Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as a legal institution for dealing with the Eastern world – dealing with it by making statements about it, describing it, teaching it, making it a place of settlement, and ruling it. In short, Orientalism is a Western style to dominate, reorganize and rule over the East. Orientalism is not an empty European fantasy about the East but a deliberately created figure of theory and practice. Over many generations has received an enormous heap of material investment. This continuous investment makes Orientalism a knowledge system of the East as a purported filter for filtering the East into the Western consciousness. At the same time, it multiplies and makes truly productive the statements that proliferate from Orientalism into the sphere of general culture. The East is eastern not only because it is found to be "Eastern" in all things considered typical to the average European, but because it can be, i.e., it is easy to be Eastern (Said, 1978).

Orientalism responds more to the culture that gave birth to it than its alleged object, which the West also creates. Thus, the history of Orientalism has both internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships with the dominant culture around it. Consequently, Said's analysis shows the form of Orientalism and its internal organization, its pioneers, its patron authorities and canonical text, its doxological ideas, and the new authorities (Said, 1978). The aim of writing Orientalism, such as that proposed by Said, is to present the genealogy of Orientalist intellectuals in a new way and critique assumptions that are often undisputed. For the general reader, Said's study aims to discuss issues that have always attracted attention, all of which are related to Western conceptions and treatments of the "other world" and the singularly important role of Western

culture in what it means as a world of nations (Said, 1978). According to Said, Orientalism can be considered a way of writing, insight, and study that is made regularly dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases, which are deemed suitable for the Eastern World. The Eastern world is taught, researched, regulated, and assessed in distinctive ways (Said 1978). Orientalism ended in a weighty period in the last half of the nineteenth century, when aspects of Orientalism tended to be slow, abstract, and projective. It would already have a new sense of worldly mission devoted to formal colonialism. It is this project and moment that Said portrays, which will show the crisis of twentieth-century Orientalism and the rise of political and cultural power in the East (Said, 1978).

Said notes that every Orientalist leader displayed a tendentious vision of Islam in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are five Orientalist figures portrayed by Waardenburg as well as Said, who are the strongest and best in the Orientalist tradition during the period roughly 1880s to the years of World War I and II. The five figures are Ignaz Goldziher, Duncan Black Macdonald, Carl Becker, C. Snouck Hurgronje, and Louis Massignon. East for the Orientalists is not a sudden discovery or historical coincidence but an area in eastern Europe whose primary value is European boundaries. They claim that Europe made the East today (Said, 1978). In the early twentieth century, Orientalism used two methods to present the East to the West. The first is by using the disseminative capabilities of modern science, its diffusion apparatus in intellectual professions, universities, professional societies, exploratory and geographical organizations, and the publishing industry. As we have seen, all of this relied on the highly accomplished authority of the pioneering scholars, travelers, and poets whose cumulative insights had shaped the essential East. Such doctrinal—or doxological—and Eastern manifestations are what Said calls latent Orientalism. The second method that Orientalism uses to present East to West is the result of a significant convergence. For decades, Orientalists have discussed the East, translated texts, and explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, and mentalities—as academic objects of Europe (Said, 1978).

### **Richard King: Orientalism and Postcolonial Discourse**

The era of the 1990s was a contemporary postcolonial era marked by the emergence of some works with the slogan "beyond Orientalism." On this development, Richard King (2013: 187) is skeptical if these claims mean that the period of domination of the "remaining hemisphere" by the West is now over and that scholars who have worked in the post-Edward Said "postcolonial space" have found claims no longer deal with domination regimes. On the other hand, King raises whether the postcolonial wave of studies tends to raise prices and privilege colonial spaces with what he calls postcolonial (King, 2013). Loomba expressed the same thing in the following text:

"Analyses of 'postcolonial' societies too often work with the sense that colonialism is the only history of these societies. What came before colonial rule? What indigenous ideologies,

practices and hierarchies existed alongside colonialism and interacted with it? Colonialism did not inscribe itself on clean state, and it cannot, therefore, account for everything that exists in postcolonial societies" (Loomba, 2007).

The methodological footing used by King in his book can be described as an attempt to '*anthropologize*' the West. Its primary aim is to change contemporary Western constructs of 'exotic' reality by paying attention to cultural knowledge systems' particularity and historical involvement. It is a strategic foothold (or perhaps in Certeau's terms, a tactical one), set against King's institutional location as a British scholar in Indian religion and philosophy working at a Western metropolitan university (King, 2013). King's approach is context-sensitive, in the sense that his book should be seen as a response to the colonial past of his field of study (Indology/Orientalism). In addition, his book is an attempt to see the terms of the British colonial legacy in which he was born. As a scholar specializing in ancient Indian philosophy and religion, King is endowed with the authority to 'to speak about' or 'represent' these phenomena over their institutional location in the modern academic world. King tries to see how Western scholars present and narrate religion in India. It is an initial exercise before questioning the knowledge paradigms that continue to divide the world into 'us' and 'them'-which perpetuate the asymmetrical relationship between the relatively powerful and the relatively disempowered. Of course, intellectual and ethical malaise exists in many forms outside of the classical Orientalist division between East and West that Edward Said so fiercely attacked and is by no means a 'disease' of the Occidental West (King, 2013).

Now for King, rather than the division of 'East' and 'West', one would more correctly speak of the division between 'North' and 'South' or between the 'First' and 'Third Worlds.' Such binary oppositions tend to function in any way as the same style of Orientalist discourse. Differences are felt more in oppositional terms than in pluralistic terms, and differences between cultures are at the same time revered as internal heterogeneity across each culture that is obliterated. Furthermore, King cites the opinion of a Marxist and Urdu poet, Aijaz Ahmed, who notes in his critique of the theory of the 'Third World.' It divides humanity into three worlds that tend to privilege a nation's category as a paradigmatic unit of sociopolitical identity. It also separates, in reality, interactive networks of human activity and power relations globally (King, 2013). As a Marxist, Ahmed asked us to understand this global unity regarding the universality of class divisions. This was not a step that would be taken by many (including King). However, he strongly supported Ahmed's call for a study of the complementarity of the 'First' and 'Third' worlds and calls for rejecting continued Western involvement (especially in the form of 'multinational corporations' and direct and indirect forms of political intervention) in a neo-colonialist separation of the two worlds. In this sense, King believes that the 'Three Worlds' theory should be discarded, not only for reasons such as those described by Ahmed, but also because the 'modernization' agenda underlying the use of the term is as problematic as a Eurocentric issue (King, 2013).

The history of Europe, or especially the history of England, cannot be separated from the unfolding of events outside England. The history of colonialism is tied to the population and the territories it has conquered and colonized. However, in this increasingly internationalized world, the constructed homogeneity such as '*Englishness*' has become problematic (King, 2013).

### Post Colonialism and the 'Subaltern Studies' Project

Perhaps the most conspicuous attempts to tackle this project have been made by members of a group of Indian historians (especially those that spread), known as the Subaltern Studies Collective. Ranajit Guha is perhaps the prominent exponent of this approach, which defines the subaltern as the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those described as the "elite". For Guha, the elite is a heterogeneous category consisting of dominant foreign groups (British colonial officials, missionaries, and industrialists). Meanwhile, dominant indigenous groups work on Indian society and groups at regional and local levels. These groups must be distinguished from 'subaltern classes' or 'people'. Therefore, the interest of subalternist historians is focused on the 'history of the people'-indigenous voices that do not belong to the indigenous elite and have been silenced by 'elite historiography' (King, 2013). For O'Hanlon, the subaltern goal is to rediscover the voices of society that were silenced so easily lost by the restoration project of liberal humanism that seeks to recapture the history of a society freed from the oppressive influences of elite forces or external leadership. Moreover, as suggested by Haynes and Prakash, the search for an autonomous subject becomes a barrier to understanding how the subaltern is placed in the arena of heterogeneous power relations. Subaltern historiography aims to conceptualize all aspects of history, namely, a movement that grew out of the opposition between two different social powers (King 2013).

This subaltern project is characterized by its critique of the history of colonization and its rejection of the nationalist Indian model of history, which is seen as a product of European colonial influence and other examples of elite historiography. In fact, in India, subaltern historiography is often understood in its purported anti-nationalist footing. Perhaps because of the comparative "novelty" of the Indian nation and a perception that India's period of nation-building is still an ongoing process, there is no doubt a tremendous sensitivity in Indian academic circles to the implications of this critique for the stability of the 'modern India'. Aijaz Ahmed has criticized this footing among postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, the subalterns, and Roland Inden. Their tendency to view the entire colonial archives as the realm of pure untruth, which splendidly mentions that all modern Indian problems such as nationalism, communalism, and casteism were placed under British colonial rule. Of course, the problem with such views is that they deprive the ingenious Indians of known agency, thereby perpetuating the passive and lazy Eastern myth. Likewise, these kinds of approaches remove the instability and ambivalence of colonial rule, which

is in line with the Manichean view that separates the virtuous (the colonized) from the envious (the colonizer). While it is undeniable that there is a need to try to balance the historical perspective and emphasize cultural and material violence in the name of European imperial expansion. It is also essential to recognize the existence of pre-colonial forms of oppression in India and the agency of indigenous peoples (both elite and subaltern) during the colonial period (King, 2013).

### **Complementary between Religion, Culture, and Power**

We have seen the Foucauldian imprint in King's book, although it was modified by Michel de Certeau to emphasize the micro-politics of resistance. The Foucauldian analysis provides a useful pair of glasses for observing the power relations involved in truth/knowledge claims. The Foucauldian emphasis on force relations appears to be a negative and conflictual view of how power works. However, Foucault's concept of power is complex and multifaceted. His work can be seen as an attempt to undermine ideas of power that are destructive, repressive, or based on a dichotomy between those who have power and those who do not (King, 2013). However, acceptance of Foucault's works and the subversive purpose of his writings tend to instill hermeneutic suspicion of all knowledge/truth claims. For example, for Dorothy Figueira, today's desire to fit everything under a hegemonic agenda means ignoring a rich history of extra-political motivation. Figueira argues that the totalization of discourse has abandoned individual goals and thus tends to a more Gadamerian and psychologically nuanced approach to the study of Orientalist literature (King, 2013). What is needed in the study of Indian culture and religion in a postcolonial context is an attempt to think beyond Orientalist representations to transcend the boundaries set by the normative Western religious model. This effort must involve the interrogation and replacement of Western (Judeo-Christian) paradigms of what religion is, a problem that continues to follow the discipline of religious studies. However, it leads clearly to unconventional and non-theological orientations. Then, what is the role of the academic world in this new situation? (King 2013)

Bryan Turner cites four intellectual responses to the problem of Orientalism. First, there must be a commitment to self-reflexivity—that is, an awareness of how one's prejudices (in the Gadamerian sense) rub against representations of what one is observing. It involves adopting an anti-essentialist stance, avoiding the dichotomy and stereotypical formulation of complex heterogeneity. Second, Turner argues that the discourses of difference that have characterized the problematic Orientalists in the past should be replaced by sameness discourses. It examines diverse cultures in the context of global interpenetration with world systems. Third, scholars should try to replace the nationalistic analysis and cultural parochialism supported by these approaches. The last, Turner emphasized that anthropological glances must also be directed at the otherness of Western culture to uproot the particular position of dominant Western culture (Turner, 2002).

## Conclusion

Said's efforts in studying Orientalism are by criticizing and clearly showing the missions behind the study of the East carried out by the Western Orientalists. Edward Said enthusiastically presented the lameness of studies conducted by the West on the East. According to him, the East is not the real East as it is, but it has been constructed and modified in such a way by Western Orientalists. Therefore, the East appeared as a collection of anti-progress, undemocratic, and other negative traits deliberately pinned for the region. Unlike Said, King tries not to constantly talk about the negative impact of Orientalism discourse. King is more trying to photograph and present the positive sides of the presence of the Orientalists in the East, especially in India. He argues that if Orientalists were not present in India, India might not be as advanced today. Of course, King's view is not necessarily wholly correct. However, historical facts show that one of the motivations for the revival of Eastern society, India, was caused by the expansion carried out by Europeans.

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