



RESEARCH PAPER

Occidental Approach in the Historiography of Orientalists

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: October 05, 2020</p> <p>Accepted: December 25, 2020</p> <p>Online: December 31, 2020</p> <p>Keywords: Civilized, Colonialism, Occidentalism, Orientalism, Uncivilized</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: javedsarparah@gmail.com</p>	<p>Orientalism is a western school of thought undermining oriental people and justifying their colonialism over Oriental World. To justify it, Western writers produced a bulk of literature on orient citing them as uncivilized, under-developed and a hazard towards development. Such was their prejudice that their artists even portrayed this bias in their artwork like paintings which portrayed Arabs as mere exotic people with belly dancers. In a counter theory, Edward Said coined the term Orientalism which criticized the western school of thought and argued that theories like white supremacy over oriental people are nothing but attempts to rationalize their colonialism. This approach of historiography was not aimed at improving foundations of oriental knowledge but to present oriental people as incapable of producing literature and art, thus, rendering them unable to administer government. They deemed it their responsibility to colonize Arabs for enhancing their civilization. Thus, the relation between West and East was of colonizer and colonize</p>

Introduction

In order to comprehend the concept of orientalist approach in history, it is essential to understand the very term Orientalism. Prior to understanding orientalism and being familiar with its various dimensions and history, one may not be able to grasp the concept of the orientalist approach in history as a framework used in history. Therefore, the researcher will try his level best in the following pages to have brief overview of orientalism and the way it is used as a framework for writing history.

According to Edward's analyses and evaluation of the set of faith famous as orientalism forms a significant basis for post-colonial studies. It is the long practice of western scholarship on eastern culture. It is a school of believed grounded upon "ontological and epistemological" difference made among Orient and Occident. It deciphers the power relationship between the Eastern and the Western to examine how the west utilizes knowledge of biases for the orient and to elucidate how the east is inclined and existed in knowledge (Manjula 2004).

"Orientalism is a method of seeing that imagines, emphasizes notices and distorts variances of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the U.S. It often

includes viewing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times fatal. Edward W. Said, in his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism*, well-defined it as the acknowledgement in the West of the primary division between East and West as the pioneering point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts regarding the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny and vice versa"

In the view of Edward Said, the Orientalism takes its roots since the era of western Clarification and colonialism of the no-westerns world. Orientalism bestowed a justification for European colonialism grounded on a self-made history in which "the west built the east" as greatly dissimilar and ordinary, and thus in necessity of Western involvement.

Instances of preliminary Orientalism can be establish not only in European photographs and paintings but also in images from the World's Fair in the U.S. in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The images, formed by European artistes of the 19th and early 20th centuries, show the Arab World as an exotic and shadowy land of sand, harems and belly dancers, imagine a prolog history of Orientalist fantasies that have persisted to infuse our contemporary renowned culture (Said 1978).

Orientalist Approach in History

Orientalist approach in history is a historical methodological framework which a historian applies in producing a historical work with the assistance of that knowledge or literature which has been jotted down on eastern cultures or societies by the western or orientalist scholars. The orientalist knowledge or orientalism is an imperialist phenomenon which was patronized by colonial powers like Britain and France (Freitag 2002). The colonial power's patronage of knowledge was not for the sake of preserving the knowledge of the less developed oriental peoples rather they wanted to dominate the Orientals and restructure the knowledge in order to have authority over orient. Edward Said considered it as Oriental style for dominating, rearrangement and taking hegemony on the non-western (Said 1978).

Orientalism derives from orient which is a term utilized for the eastern sphere of the world Asia and Africa in opposite of occident which refers to entire Europe and America. Hence, orientalism refers to the knowledge produced by western scholars during the colonial era in late Eighteenth, Nineteenth and early Twentieth century's about oriental people and their cultures and Societies. It is considered to be a colonial phenomenon. When the western imperialists colonized the less developed nations of the east or orient, they began generating knowledge about them and reproduced their literature to get information regarding the society of east and fathom their psyche (Shaheen 2012), due to the fact that, without understanding the psyche of the people and lacking knowledge of their ways of living, it would not be possible for them to rule them. However, the knowledge created by orientalists was not only incomplete and generalized but also prejudiced and negative. In such knowledge the oriental people are portrayed as exotic, uncivilized and at the same time very hazardous. For instance, they regarded Islam as a religion of sword and considered perilous for western civilization (Daryabadi 2010). Besides this, Western school of thought providing a justification for colonizers colonization focused on a self- protection history in which the occident displayed the

Orient by means of exceedingly unlike and substandard and hence in requirement of Orient intervention as Edward Said noted (Said 1978).

The history of orientalism can be drawn from late 18th century when the European colonialist came in contact with oriental people. The most noteworthy and initial colonial powers were Britain and France which colonized Asia and Africa and patronized western scholars to produce knowledge about their colonies.

The French Orientalism

The French orientalism dates back to the Napoleon Bonaparte's unsuccessful subjugation of Syria and Egypt in 1798-1801A.D which aroused an immense public interest in Egyptology. Even the court historians of Napoleon acknowledged the Egyptian classical knowledge. A well-illustrated "*Description de l'Egypte*" was published by the French government in twenty volumes between 1809 A.D and 1828 A.D focusing on antiquities of Egypt (Shaheen 2011). In addition, Algeria came under French imperialism in 1839 till 1862 A.D and colonized by it. From 1900A.D to 1930A.D, French artists and entrepreneurs created post cards of Algerian women and depicted in those snapshots for example if camera was taking a real flash in their daily lives and circulated in France. As validated by Malek Alloula, an Arab historian these snapshots were spread in Europe as a proof of mysterious, backward and bizarre customs of the people Algeria, while in real sense they disclose almost the French royal viewpoint than regarding the Algerian, life in the early 1900s. This is an ample evidence of how Arabian ladies have been "exoticized and eroticized" for the desire of colonial men in those pictures.

Artistically, the paintings of Eastern women produced by the Western painters depict them to be half-naked while in their harems to give an exotic and mysterious concept of them to the opinion of the Westerners. Thus, it is found that the Orient was represented with a characteristic of female exoticism that biasedly aimed at driving male inclination towards the Orient. This inclination with the unknown oriental females in actuality reflects the perception of Western exoticism itself (Halliday 1993).

Like the artists also the French orientalist scholars did not hold the Arab culture and religion of Islam in good regards. Ernest Renan, a French Orientalist reasoned that 'Islam set up a severe hurdle to the development and Arab's lack of scientific progress was enriched by the characteristic aggression of the Arab race (Feirtag 2002). Renan further articulates, what was known as Arab Science was either pure linguistic or else merely owing to the influence of Christians and Persians'.

Above and beyond this, the orientalists held that Islam was plagiarized from Abrahamic religions i.e. Judaism and Christian and considered it to be a paradox of Christianity. Additionally, Islam was regarded as an alien hazard which historically had abundant military and political triumphs and was considered a threat to western civilization (Daryabadi 2010).

The other most notable colonial power was Britain which patronized orientalist painters and scholars. The British orientalist portraits in Nineteenth century obligated more to religion than armed invasion or the bare women. One of the leading British

painters, Sir David Willkie, travelled to Istanbul and Jerusalem in 1840A.D and painted many religious paintings. William Holman Hunt, another British painter formed a number of key portraits of holy Bible themes during his Central East explorations.

Moreover, the Britain orientalist commenced working on the Indian religions and society after their invasion of Bengal in 1757 A.D. Bernard Cohn, while censuring the British orientalist, says that Orientalist considered Indian society as stationary, time loss and space less(Kumar 2012). Another scholar Ronald Inden cited by Arum Kumar an Indian Historian disputes that western scholars have mostly branded Indian thoughts as dream, India as effeminate, caste system as centrifuge, rural Indian as adjacent economy and Hinduism as a forest. Inden proposes that orientalist writing did not portray India as it was rather they constructed it (Kumar 2012).

The scholar pertaining to orient who first worked on the subject of orientalism was the Palestinian scholar Edward Said. He published his work under the title of orientalism in 1978 A.D. In his book Said defied the theory of Orientalism or the variances between East and West and held by means of a colonial phenomenon to govern the people of the occupied areas (Said 1978). The knowledge produced by westerners about east, he alleged, was fragmentary, generalized and that it only deals with the negative facet of the eastern societies (Said 1978). Furthermore, Said discusses that the orientalist had bifurcated the World into two imaginary parts (East and West) Orient and Occident, civilized and uncivilized. It means that they considered Europe as rationally civilized also active, and regarded the eastern oriental peoples as uncivilized, unreasonable. According to Said they did this comparison to delineate themselves. Another aspect of the orientalism highlighted by Said is that the orientalist look upon the oriental peoples lower to west socially, politically, economically and institutionally. Besides, they considered themselves as a superior race and it was their liability to civilize and educate the less developed uncivilized and uneducated Eastern people (Said 1978). In order to defend their rule, the orientalist opined that the oriental people are not capable to manage their government affairs subsequently it was the duty of the white man to rule them (Said 1978).

Conclusion

Thus, orientalist approach in history is a historical methodological framework which a historian applies to produce a historical research by using orientalist literature as a source. The literature produced by western scholars with a colonial mentality in European colonial period date from late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this knowledge the orientalist portrayed a negative picture of the eastern cultures considering people with uncompleted and generalized knowledge to justify their unjust claim of colonialism.

To conclude, Orientalism is a term introduced by Edward Said citing it as west constructed Knowledge about Eastern. The history of orientalism can be traced from late 18th century when the European colonialist came in interaction with Asian and African people. The initial colonial supremacies were Britain and France which colonized the orient and patronized western scholars to produce knowledge about their colonies. Thus, the Orientalism gives a conceptual framework to debate the issues between Orient and Occident.

The Western studied and analyzed the Eastern geographies, histories, arts and cultures to understand their psyche. In this way, they have occupied their land and minds as well. In this regard they have collected information or knowledge about eastern and tried to show the negative side of the mirror means the character of orient and hide the positive ones. So, it often includes programming Orient culture as exotic, regressive, uncivilized and at times fatal. Additionally, a French Orientalist trying to show Islam as a set up a severe hurdle to scientific development and have developed conservative nation as the Arab race. Further they criticize the oriental people citing that no pure Science, linguistic or else merely owing to the influence of Christians and Persians. The objective behind these activates to prove their superiority and justify their unjust colonialism. Moreover, it was a psychological war against orients.

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