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"Eastern Languages and the Origins of Academic Orientalism: Translation, Critique, and Analysis of Daniel Stolzenberg's Perspective"

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ABSTRACT

Objective : This article examines the intellectual and institutional origins of academic Oriental studies in early modern Europe and seeks to address a gap in critical studies of Orientalism, which have largely focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The central question of the study is whether "Oriental studies" can be considered a relatively coherent field of knowledge prior to the nineteenth century.

Methodology: The article consists of two main layers. The first layer, which constitutes the major part of the study, involves the translation, analytical summary, and critical rereading of Daniel Stolzenberg's argument. This part is based on Stolzenberg's bibliometric and historical analysis of works related to the concept of "Oriental languages" during the period 1450–1750. The second layer presents the author's independent analysis in the sections on theoretical critique, comparison with the Islamic tradition, academic Orientalism, and Islamic studies, drawing on the works of Marchand, Irwin, and Rubiés, as well as primary Islamic sources.

Findings: The findings demonstrate that during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, what later became known as "Orientalism" was primarily constituted as "Oriental philology," centered on the study and teaching of languages such as Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, and Arabic. The Protestant universities of Germany and the Netherlands played a crucial role in developing the disciplinary self-consciousness that shaped the epistemic foundations of modern Orientalism and Islamic studies.

Conclusion: The results indicate that modern Orientalism had its intellectual and institutional roots in European academic traditions of Oriental language studies and philology before the nineteenth century. These developments provided the epistemic foundation for the emergence of modern Orientalism and Islamic studies.

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1. Introduction

No domain of humanistic inquiry in recent decades has been subjected to as intense a degree of contestation, re-reading, and rethinking as Orientalism. Since the publication of Edward Said's Orientalism in 1978, the field has been analysed primarily through a critical lens and in relation to power, colonialism, and ideology. Nevertheless, the preponderance of these critiques has focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the institutional and epistemic origins of academic Orientalism in earlier periods—particularly in early modern Europe—have received comparatively little systematic attention.

The present article endeavours to address this scholarly lacuna through the translation, analysis, and critique of Daniel Stolzenberg's perspective. It is essential to delineate a clear boundary at the outset: a substantial portion of this article constitutes an analytical reconstruction of Stolzenberg's findings and arguments, rather than an independent investigation by the present author. The bibliometric data (335 book titles by 192 authors within the period 1450–1750) belong to Stolzenberg. The author's original contribution resides in: (a) a methodological critique of Stolzenberg's approach; (b) a comparative engagement with other scholars, including Marchand, Irwin, and Rubiés; (c) an analysis of the relationship between this tradition and Islamic scholarship; and (d) a consideration of the relevance of this historical account to contemporary Islamic studies.

The principal question is whether "Oriental studies" may be characterised as a field of knowledge or an academic discipline prior to the nineteenth century, and, if so, what its internal logic, central subject matter, and institutional structure comprised.

The theoretical framework of this article rests upon three axes: first, the approach of Begriffsgeschichte (conceptual history) for tracing the semantic evolution of the term "Oriental languages"; second, institutional analysis for examining the structure of academic chairs and positions; and third, postcolonial critique—particularly a critical re-reading of the Saidian framework—for assessing the relationship between knowledge and power in the pre-colonial periods. The distinction between "historical description" and "theoretical judgement" is observed throughout, and whenever the author moves from the level of historical reportage to theoretical assessment, this transition is explicitly indicated.

The foundational hypothesis of the article is that in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe, "Orientalism," prior to being concerned with the study of Eastern civilisations or religions, was constituted predominantly as "Oriental philology," organised around instruction and research in specific languages—above all Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, and Arabic. From this vantage point, linguistic mastery was regarded not merely as an instrument but as a precondition for the formation of scholarly authority regarding the "Orient."

The experience of studying at the Sorbonne and engaging with Western scholars of Islamic studies brought to light the significance of understanding Orientalism for the comprehension of Islamic studies and Shia studies. It is generally acknowledged that the roots of Oriental studies extend to the Renaissance, when European scholars turned to the study of Hebrew and subsequently other languages designated as "Oriental."

Following the publication of Said's work in 1978, research on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries expanded considerably, yet the investigation of earlier periods remained largely neglected. Only in recent years have studies on Arabic scholarship, biblical archaeology, and Christian Hebraism gained momentum, although no systematic effort has been made to define "Oriental studies" in its formative phases.

Although the terms "Orientalism" and "Orientalist" are products of later periods, the category of "Oriental" held a distinct and operationally significant meaning for early modern scholars. On this basis, through an examination of the conceptual history of "Oriental languages," this article has elucidated the nature of Oriental studies and the manner in which European scholars understood them.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Developments in Academic Orientalism

Scholarly investigations indicate that academic Orientalism assumed institutional form in Europe from the nineteenth century onward, with the study of Oriental languages serving as the principal foundation and instrument of the discipline (Said, 1978; Stolzenberg, 2015). Suzanne Marchand, in her meticulously documented German Orientalism in the Age of Empire (2009), has demonstrated that the nexus between German Orientalism and biblical theology persisted even at the zenith of the nineteenth century, when the field had acquired an ostensibly "scientific" and non-theological character.

Robert Irwin, in Dangerous Knowledge (2006), offers a comprehensive critique of the Saidian narrative, arguing that Said, by conflating the entirety of Orientalism's diverse strata—philological, literary, and diplomatic—produced a reductionist representation. Joan-Pau Rubiés, in his studies of travel writing and the representation of the "Other" in early modern Europe, has uncovered further layers of complexity within this relationship.

2.2. The Role of Languages in the Cultural Representation of the Orient

Published studies have demonstrated that languages serve not merely as vehicles for the transmission of meaning but as instruments for cultural reproduction. For instance, Ganj'ali and Salmani Haghighi (2025) have analysed the translation of two Arabic novels within Umberto Eco's theoretical framework. Similarly, the research of Afzali and Shams (2025) on language varieties and foreign language teaching methodologies underscores the role of language in

shaping cultural understanding. These studies may serve as a basis for analysing the origins of academic Orientalism.

2.3. Philological Traditions in Orientalism

Another foundational element in the formation of academic Orientalism was the philological approach, which placed the study of texts and linguistic structures at its centre. This tradition, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onward, constituted the principal pathway for the development of specialised branches within universities (Mousavi, 2021). Anthony Grafton, in Defenders of the Text (1991), has shown that Renaissance philology provided the milieu in which scholars acquired the skills to read ancient texts with historical and linguistic precision—the very procedure that was subsequently replicated in Oriental studies.

2.4. Theoretical Critiques of Orientalism

Edward Said (1978) contends that Orientalism is not simply a scholarly study of the Orient but rather a discourse of power and domination. This critique, for all its significance, cannot substitute for an analysis of the institutional and methodological history of academic Orientalism. An adequate understanding of Western Islamic studies requires a differentiation among its several strata: the philological and academic stratum, the literary and travel-writing stratum, and the political-colonial stratum. Irwin (2006) has argued that Noel Malcolm, in Agents of Empire (2015), demonstrated that European knowledge of Islam in the early modern period was considerably more profound than the image presented in the Saidian narrative.

2.5. Daniel Stolzenberg's Perspective

Stolzenberg (2015), focusing on the origins of academic Orientalism, demonstrates that the Oriental languages—including Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic—constituted the foundation for the emergence of Oriental studies and that the philology of these languages was the point of departure for the discipline. His most significant contribution consists in a bibliometric analysis of the WorldCat database for the period 1450–1750, which yielded a dataset comprising 335 book titles by 192 authors. These data form the principal basis of the historical analysis in the present article.

3. Research Methodology

This article employs a mixed methodology operating on two levels:

First Level: Critical Re-reading of Stolzenberg. The primary component of the article rests upon the translation, analytical reconstruction, and critique of Daniel Stolzenberg's perspective. In his research, Stolzenberg employed the WorldCat bibliographic database to extract Latin titles of works published before 1750. Access was gained through the database's advanced search interface, which permitted the execution of complex compound queries—a necessity given that early modern terminology could appear in varied grammatical forms and

constructions. The initial results required manual refinement: duplicate references, later editions, and non-Latin titles were excluded. The outcome of this process was a database comprising 335 book titles.

Second Level: The Author's Independent Critical Analysis. Alongside the re-reading of Stolzenberg, the author offers independent analyses: a critique of Said's theoretical framework, an examination of the relationship between Orientalism and Islamic studies, and an assessment of the place of the Islamic scholarly tradition. These analyses draw upon primary sources (al-Tabari, al-Biruni, al-Shahrastani) and secondary studies (Marchand, Irwin, Rubiés).

The year 1750 was selected as the terminal date, as subsequent developments in Indo-Iranian studies would have rendered the analysis considerably more complex. It should be made explicit that the methodological approach of this article, at both levels, is essentially "descriptive-analytical" in character, rather than "data-driven quantitative analysis" in the strict sense. Stolzenberg's bibliometric data have not been presented in the form of statistical tables or quantitative charts, and the process of their extraction and refinement from the WorldCat database is not fully reproducible. The primary objective has been not the provision of rigorous quantitative analysis but rather a critical re-reading and conceptual analysis of the deployment of the term "Oriental languages" within the scholarly tradition of early modern Europe.

The principal limitations of Stolzenberg's approach, which the author has taken into account in evaluating the results, include: the heterogeneity of WorldCat data, irregular cataloguing of titles, the lack of cross-referencing with other archives, and the fact that the presence of a term in a book's title does not necessarily indicate the centrality of that concept within its content. Furthermore, German scholars may have had a greater propensity to include academic titles on title pages, thereby producing an "over-representation" of Germany in the data.

A summary of Stolzenberg's bibliometric data is as follows: total works surveyed, 335 titles by 192 authors (time span 1450–1750). Geographical distribution: Germany 231 works, the Netherlands 60, Italy and England 10 each, Austria and Switzerland 9, France 8, Scandinavia 7. Confessional distribution: 51 Protestant cities versus 6 Catholic cities. Language frequency: Hebrew 76 instances, Arabic 50, Chaldean and Syriac 22 each, Ethiopic and Persian 10 each. Works associated with professors of Oriental languages: 173 of the 335 titles. It is emphasised that all of these data derive from Stolzenberg's research; the present author has confined himself to their analytical re-reading and critique.

4. The Nature of "Oriental Languages" in the Early Modern Period

When early modern authors referred to "Oriental languages" in their Latin works, they designated a set of languages comprising Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, Syriac, Ethiopic, Persian, Samaritan, Armenian, Turkish, and Coptic. Among the sources surveyed, 28 titles are of

particular significance, as they explicitly enumerate several languages under the heading "Oriental." Analysis of these titles reveals that four languages predominate: Arabic (23 instances), Hebrew (22), Chaldean (22), and Syriac (22). These are followed by Ethiopic (10), Persian (10), Samaritan (9), Turkish (6), and Armenian (3).

Hebrew was in every respect the pre-eminent Oriental language and occupied a central position within the database as a whole: its frequency of mention surpasses that of any other language (76 instances compared to 50 for Arabic). Indeed, Hebrew may be regarded as the paradigmatic Oriental language—the language universally considered the most ancient in the world. The primacy of Hebrew is further evidenced by the recurrent use of the phrase "Hebrew and the other Oriental languages" (24 instances); no other language is accorded such priority.

Five works in the database refer to the "principal Oriental languages," in all of which Hebrew occupies the first position, with the exception of Pierre Victor Palma-Cayet's Paradigmata de quatuor linguis orientalibus praecipuis (1595), which is devoted to Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Ethiopic. The four exceptions to Hebrew's priority all belong to Viennese authors, where a school for Oriental languages, under imperial patronage, promoted the study of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian for diplomatic purposes.

After Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, and Syriac constituted the most important Oriental languages. In sources that enumerate multiple Oriental languages, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Syriac are frequently cited together and almost invariably in this order. This privileged triad has its roots in the inception of Oriental studies in the first half of the sixteenth century, when Christian Hebraism naturally extended to the study of various Aramaic dialects.

Far Eastern languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Indian vernaculars, attracted considerable attention in early modern Europe but were not customarily classified as "Oriental" languages. In 1672, August Pfeiffer referred to "Oriental and non-European languages," distinguishing Chinese, Japanese, Congolese, and Malay from the Oriental languages proper. Similarly, in a treatise of 1737, the Swiss preacher Georg Heinrich Werndly drew a distinction between "Indian languages" and "Oriental" languages.

Oriental philology in the European academic tradition maintained an intimate connection with "sacred philology." The field of study encompassed, in the first instance, those languages that were of significance to Christian scholars: languages indispensable for the comprehension and exegesis of Scripture, languages of early Christianity, or languages employed by Eastern Christian communities.

5. The Teaching of Oriental Languages in the Universities

The concept of "Oriental languages" was powerfully linked to university instruction. Slightly more than half of the works in the database (173 of 335 titles) refer to individuals who held the

position of professor of Oriental languages. Although a considerable number of the identified works treat subjects related to Orientalism, a significant proportion does not fall directly within this framework. Professors of Oriental languages, who occasionally held multiple university chairs simultaneously, sometimes published works bearing no evident connection to their Orientalist specialisation.

The title "professor of Oriental languages" did not gain currency before the 1630s. Thereafter, it became prevalent primarily in Protestant schools of Germany and the Netherlands. Of the 173 titles associated with professors of Oriental languages, 137 pertain to German institutions—nearly all Lutheran—recording the names of 56 individuals. Beyond the Lutheran sphere, the largest group of professors was found among the Dutch Reformed (21 titles attributed to 15 individuals).

In 1612, the Lutheran Hebraist Valentin Schindler published a multilingual lexicon whose title page identified him as "professor of Oriental languages" at Wittenberg. Thomas Erpenius, too, in his oration on the pre-eminence of the Arabic language (1613), referred to his appointment as professor of Arabic and "other Oriental languages" at Leiden. These examples demonstrate that the title "professor of Oriental languages" was in use by the early seventeenth century, although one cannot derive from them a rigid definition of the linguistic territory covered by the term.

The sole exception in Catholic Germany is Athanasius Kircher, who, in a text published in Rome, identified himself as "professor of Oriental languages" at the Jesuit college in Würzburg, whereas his official title was "professor of Hebrew." This case exemplifies the descriptive use of the title rather than evidence of an institutionally established position. In Catholic regions, the title typically referred to a specific language. The Society of Jesus, in its Ratio Studiorum of 1599, had stipulated that professors of Hebrew should, insofar as possible, possess knowledge of Syriac and Chaldean as well.

The shift from "professor of Hebrew" to "professor of Oriental languages" may indicate that, after the mid-seventeenth century, command of several Oriental languages in addition to Hebrew had become more widespread. One possibility is that this change was associated with the expansion of Arabic studies, since Arabic was far more difficult to subsume under Hebrew studies than Chaldean and Syriac. Nevertheless, this change of designation did not necessarily reflect a dramatic transformation in the nature of instruction, given that the combined teaching of Hebrew with Syriac and Chaldean had already been customary.

6. Geographical Mapping: Germany, the Netherlands, and Other Regions

The pre-eminence of Germany and the Netherlands in this field is not predicated solely upon the number of university chairs. The database comprises 231 works published in Germany and

60 in the Netherlands, whereas only 10 works are recorded for Italy and England, 9 for Austria and Switzerland, 8 for France, and 7 for Scandinavia. Even when those works that entered the database merely by virtue of a reference to professors are set aside, the distribution remains weighted in favour of Germany (81 works) and the Netherlands (38 works). In aggregate, the database records works from 51 Protestant cities compared with only 6 Catholic cities.

The absence of Spanish works—despite an active community of Orientalists—and of works from the Spanish Netherlands, birthplace of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, is noteworthy. Equally striking is the near-complete absence of works from Catholic Germany, particularly when compared with the volume of production in Protestant Germany. The sole item from Catholic Germany is a study published in Munich in 1718 referring to "Oriental editions" of the Bible.

These findings require cautious interpretation. Several key questions arise for future research: Does the preponderance of Protestant Germany reflect a genuine superiority in the number of scholars, or does it stem from a propensity to include academic titles on the title pages of books? How is one to account for the under-representation of Protestant England, given that it was one of the foremost centres of Hebrew and Arabic studies? Did the structure of German publishing in the recording of bibliographic information differ from that of other regions?

7. Oriental Philology as a Scholarly Discipline

Did Oriental studies constitute an independent scholarly discipline prior to the nineteenth century? According to the definition proposed by Donald Kelley, a discipline must possess "a distinctive method, a specialised terminology, a body of authoritative references, an agenda of problems open to investigation, and formal markers of professional standing." The historical evidence indicates that the field of "Oriental languages" exhibited such characteristics, at least in Lutheran Germany and the Netherlands.

This discipline, which early modern scholars designated "Oriental philology," derived its coherence above all from a foundational rationale: the concentration upon languages deemed essential for the understanding and interpretation of Scripture. Oriental philology thus substantially overlapped with "sacred philology."

The study of Hebrew stood at the centre of this discipline. Moving outward from this nucleus, one encounters Chaldean and Syriac, which, like Hebrew, possessed a biblical status. Even Arabic was studied primarily within the framework of sacred philology and for the purpose of deepening the understanding of Hebrew.

Chairs of Oriental languages, by furnishing an institutional framework for professors and a curricular structure for students, formed the principal foundation of this scholarly community. The requirement to deliver inaugural orations on the subject of "Oriental languages"—rather

than on a single language in isolation—could have prompted scholars to conceive of these languages as a coherent whole. The findings of the database confirm the existence of such a discipline, at least in Lutheran Germany and the Netherlands.

8. Analytical Critique of Stolzenberg's Approach

In this section, the author advances independent analytical critiques of Stolzenberg's argument:

(a) Methodological limitations. Stolzenberg's bibliometric approach, although innovative, oscillates between "description" and "explanation." The presence of the term "Oriental languages" in a book's title does not necessarily bespeak the disciplinary self-consciousness of its author. The present article is ultimately "descriptive" rather than "data-driven" in the strict sense; Stolzenberg himself acknowledges this in his discussion of limitations. Moreover, the heterogeneity of WorldCat data and the probable over-representation of German works render conclusions predicated upon geographical distribution somewhat equivocal.

(b) The place of Islam. The claim of "Islam's marginality" demands greater precision. "The marginality of Islam in book titles" is not equivalent to "the marginality of Islam within European knowledge." In the same period, Ottoman studies, translations of the Qur'an, Islamic discourse, and Christian Arabic scholarship were all actively pursued. Noel Malcolm, in Agents of Empire, has shown that European knowledge of Islam was more profound than what the evidence of book titles alone might suggest. The crucial distinction is that these Islamic studies were often conducted within non-philological contexts: travel writing, diplomacy, and religious reportage.

(c) The absence of serious comparison. Stolzenberg engages in limited critical dialogue with other researchers. The perspectives of Suzanne Marchand, Robert Irwin, and Joan-Pau Rubiés are notably absent from the discussion. Marchand has shown that the bond between Orientalism and biblical theology in Germany persisted into the nineteenth century; this historical continuity could have enriched Stolzenberg's argument. Rubiés has demonstrated that non-philological strata of knowledge about the Orient existed in the same period, which Stolzenberg's account overlooks.

(d) The problem of organic linkage. The studies of Muslim scholars such as al-Tabari, al-Biruni, and al-Shahrastani on the Semitic languages, which appeared in scattered fashion in the earlier version of the article, naturally belong within a comparative analysis alongside the European academic tradition. However, their proper place is as an independent analytical section, not as an appendage to Stolzenberg's narrative.

9. Orientalism and the Islamic Tradition: An Institutional Comparison

This section constitutes the author's independent analysis and offers a direct response to the article's central question: if Oriental philology was institutionalised in the West, why did an analogous scholarly tradition fail to take form in the Islamic world? The answer to this comparative question, which secures the organic connection of this section to the article's overarching argument, proceeds through an analysis of the differing "institutional logics" of the two traditions, and corrects inaccurate generalisations found in the existing literature.

The assertion that "such studies did not exist in Islamic regions" is imprecise and reductionist and stands in need of correction. Muslim scholars devoted considerable attention to the Semitic languages and to other religions, albeit within institutional frameworks distinct from the European university tradition (cf. Rosenthal, 1968; Versteegh, 1997). Al-Tabari, in Jami' al-Bayan, discusses Hebrew as "the language of the Torah" (lisan al-Tawrat); Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari (d. 276 AH) treats Hebrew terminology in Ta'wil Mushkil al-Qur'an; al-Mas'udi (d. 346 AH), in Muruj al-Dhahab, examines the differences among Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic; Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (362–440 AH), drawing upon Jewish calendars and religious texts, undertook a cross-cultural comparison of religious and temporal concepts; and al-Shahrastani (479–548 AH), in al-Milal wa'l-Nihal, furnished the first systematic Iranian account of Judaism and Hebrew texts.

The fundamental difference lies not in Muslim scholars' ignorance of these languages but in the differing "institutional logic": these studies were conducted within the frameworks of kalam (speculative theology), religious disputation, or historiography, rather than within the paradigm of "comparative philology" directed toward the textual stabilisation of the scriptural text. In the Nizamiyyah schools and the classical Islamic madrasas, language was essentially conceived as an instrument for the comprehension of revelation and the sacred law; accordingly, only Arabic—in the disciplines of nahw (syntax), sarf (morphology), and lugha (lexicography)—was systematically taught.

In contrast, in the Christian West from the sixteenth century onward, Hebrew and other "Oriental" languages entered the universities by virtue of their direct connection to the Old Testament, the text-centred theology of the Reformation, and the imperative of recourse to the "original text." The Reformation created a theological necessity for the multilingual collation of the sacred text that had no equivalent in the Islamic tradition, since the Qur'an, as the direct revelation of God, was not susceptible to "correction" by reference to an original version. This process was accompanied by the formation of a disciplinary self-consciousness and the nexus among linguistic research, theology, and subsequently historical scholarship and scientific Orientalism.

10. Academic Orientalism

Academic Orientalism emerged in European universities from the early modern period and was progressively organised as an institutionalised discipline. What distinguishes this section from the foregoing analyses is its focus upon the concept of the "Other" and its relationship to the self-understanding of Christian Europe.

Within this framework, the "Orient" was valued in the first instance not as a cultural or political Other but as a linguistic and textual resource for the reconstruction of Christian history and the understanding of the Old Testament. It was only from the nineteenth century onward, concurrently with the expansion of imperial projects, that this body of knowledge entered into new relations with power. Academic Orientalism, therefore, cannot be reduced to ideology alone; it must be understood as a historical institution of knowledge production.

At its foundation, early modern Orientalist knowledge constituted a particular form of cultural introspection. Its primary focus was not Islam but Hebrew and the traditions of Eastern Christianity. If there was an "Other" at its centre, it was ancient Judaism—a Judaism that, as a consequence of modern scholarship, was re-presented as a tradition alien to institutionalised Christianity.

Within this epistemic horizon, the position of Islam requires further elucidation: Islam was marginal as a philological subject, yet a substantial body of work concerning the Ottoman Empire and the religion of Islam was produced within non-philological genres—travel narratives, diplomatic reports, and polemical treatises (cf. Malcolm, 2015; Irwin, 2006). Neglecting this distinction results from projecting the assumptions of contemporary Orientalism onto earlier periods.

It is here that Edward Said's critique must be evaluated with greater care. Said considers the "ontological" distinction between East and West to be a legacy of Orientalism; however, scholars such as Marchand and Irwin have shown that the binary framework dominant in the nineteenth century owed more to secularisation and the Aryan-Semitic discourse than to any early modern inheritance.

Marchand, in her detailed study of nineteenth-century Germany, demonstrates that even when German Orientalism had assumed a "scientific" appearance, its bond with biblical studies remained intact. The most salient distinction between early modern Orientalism and modern scholarship lies precisely in the absence of essentialist categories as an organising principle in the earlier period.

After approximately 1750, this field underwent fundamental transformations: the rise of colonialism, the professionalisation and secularisation of academic research, and the expansion of Indology and comparative philology. Nevertheless, a notable continuity persisted. Professors

of Oriental languages in the nineteenth century were the direct successors of their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century counterparts, particularly in Protestant Germany. Even when "comparative philology" emerged from the study of Sanskrit, its founders continued to work within the frameworks of sacred philology. Hebrew and the Bible remained central preoccupations of German Orientalists well into the twentieth century, as Marchand has demonstrated.

11. The Significance of Orientalism for Understanding Islamic Studies in the Western Academic Tradition

Any examination of the history of Islamic studies in the West that fails to take account of the tradition of academic Orientalism inevitably leads to a reductionist reading. Islamic studies, as an academic discipline, was not constituted independently but took shape within the very institutional, linguistic, and methodological mechanisms that had previously been developed under the rubric of "Oriental philology" and biblical scholarship. An understanding of the internal logic of Orientalism—particularly in its classical and academic sense—is a necessary condition for comprehending the manner in which concepts, sources, and problems in Western Islamic studies were formulated.

At its origin, Western Islamic studies was neither a civilisational nor a political project but rather an extension of linguistic and textual scholarship. The first systematic academic engagement with Islam was made possible through the teaching of Arabic—an institution that had been established earlier for the comprehension of the Old Testament, Aramaic texts, and the heritage of Eastern Christianity. Thus, Islam entered European knowledge not as a "separate subject" but under the same philological logic. In the formulation of Régis Blachère, Arabic in European universities was regarded less as "the language of Islam" than as an instrument for reconstructing the history of the Semitic languages.

The significance of Orientalism for comprehending Islamic studies is not merely historical but epistemological. The methods employed by Western Islamicists for the analysis of the Qur'an, the Sira, jurisprudence (fiqh), and the history of Islamic thought—textual criticism, codicological analysis, comparative linguistics, and dating—were all cultivated within the tradition of classical Orientalism. Even when Islamic studies assumed a more secular appearance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this methodological heritage continued to underlie its foundations.

From an institutional perspective, many of the prominent figures of modern Islamic studies—in the fields of Qur'anic studies as well as the history of Islamic thought—were originally philologists who had received their training within the framework of Orientalism. Marchand has clearly shown that the chairs of Arabic, Semitic studies, and Oriental languages

at the universities of Germany, France, and the Netherlands furnished the principal milieu for the education of Islamicists.

Within the Iranian intellectual tradition, a number of contemporary thinkers have likewise emphasised this continuity. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, adopting a critical stance, drew attention to the nexus between Orientalist knowledge and power. Seyyed Javad Tabatabaei has shown that the modern West achieved a systematic reconstruction of non-Western traditions through philology, historiography, and textual criticism. Daryush Shayegan has affirmed that the modern Western understanding of Islam is the product of textual and linguistic encounter, not solely of colonial experience; academic Islamic studies, before becoming a knowledge of the "Other," constituted part of the West's project of self-understanding.

Said's critique, for all its importance in exposing the discursive linkages between knowledge and power, cannot serve as a substitute for the analysis of the institutional and methodological history of Islamic studies. An adequate understanding of Western Islamic studies requires a differentiation among its several strata: the philological and academic stratum, the literary and travel-writing stratum, and the political-colonial stratum. The conflation of these strata not only distorts the history of this field of knowledge but also forecloses the possibility of effective critical engagement with its achievements.

In the final analysis, academic Orientalism, notwithstanding all its historical shortcomings and biases, was the condition of possibility for the emergence of Islamic studies as a textual, historical, and criticisable body of knowledge in the West. The recognition of this truth does not entail an unconditional acceptance of the results of Western Islamic studies; rather, it represents a necessary step toward a conscious and critical entry into scholarly dialogue with that tradition.

12. Conclusion

The findings of this study, derived from the combination of a critical re-reading of Stolzenberg with the author's independent analyses, move beyond a rehearsal of premises to arrive at five analytical conclusions, each of which opens a fresh horizon for future research:

First, early Orientalism (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) was predominantly a philological project, not a civilisational one. This finding carries an important methodological implication: the model of "Othering" that Said documents for the nineteenth century cannot be projected onto this earlier period. Future research must compare indigenous narratives of encounter with the "Orient"—including those from the Ottoman and Safavid traditions—with this Eurocentric account.

Second, the pre-eminence of Protestant Germany and the Netherlands was structural and institutional in character, originating in the theological logic of the Reformation. This

conclusion raises a fresh question: why is Protestant England, despite its rich tradition of Hebrew and Arabic scholarship, under-represented in the bibliometric data? The answer may reside in differences in academic publishing practices rather than in genuine scholarly disparities.

Third, the claim of "Islam's marginality" must be refined into a more precise distinction: Islam was marginal as a subject of philological inquiry, but it was actively studied as a diplomatic, literary, and polemical subject. This distinction, upon which Malcolm (2015) and Irwin (2006) have also insisted, demonstrates that equating Orientalism with the totality of European knowledge about Islam constitutes a methodological error.

Fourth, the difference between the Islamic and European traditions lay not in scholarly capacity but in institutional logic. The Protestant Reformation generated a theological imperative for the multilingual collation of the sacred text that had no counterpart in the Islamic tradition—owing to the distinctive status of the Arabic Qur'an as direct divine revelation. This comparative analysis, which has not hitherto been systematically advanced in the literature on Orientalism, represents one of the principal original contributions of the present article.

Fifth, academic Islamic studies is the product of the same philological mechanisms that constituted early Orientalism, and its evaluation requires a differentiation among the philological, the literary-travel-writing, and the political-colonial strata. This article has demonstrated that the conflation of these strata—whether in the Saidian critique or in Orientalist apologetics—leads equally to a one-sided reading. The future of research in this field depends upon a more effective dialogue between Western and Islamic scholarly traditions, as well as upon the deployment of more rigorous quantitative approaches (network analysis, digital bibliometrics).

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