

The Methodological Influence or Contribution of Orientalism to the Re-Reading and Re-Thinking of Basic Islamic Texts (the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*)

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Abstract

As is already well-known, especially in the modern period, Orientalism and theories have been used by Orientalists have methodological influence on the re-reading and re-thinking of basic Islamic sources like the Qur'an and hadiths. We can see the remnants of this influence in some aspects of studies related to the Qur'an and the Sunnah in Islamic countries, including Turkey. It is also possible that this influence can be seen as having two different dimensions that diverge according to the points of view the respective scholars take: positive and negative. In this article, we will first try to give very brief information about some terminologies and methods that have been already used by some prominent Orientalists in their analyses of religious texts (the Bible, the Qur'an and hadiths), such hermeneutics, semantics, historical-philological and literary criticism, narrative/narratism. But the rational-analytical method, which is based in many respects on scepticism, is the most important one among these methodologies. According to these scholars, this method especially must be used in any kind of study in the basic Islamic sciences. Ignaz Goldziher, John Wansbrough, Theodore Nöldeke, Joseph Schacht, Günter Lüling, Christian Lüxenberg, Kenneth Cragg, Patricia Crone, G.H. A Juynboll, Michael Cook, Uri Rubin, Andrew Rippin, John Burton are some important representatives of these Western scholars/Orientalists who have used many of these methodologies in one way or another in their studies. After presenting their views, we will look at the scope and limits of this methodological influence on Muslim scholars in Islamic world as general and Turkey in particular.

Key words: Qur'an, *Sunnah*, Bible, influence, contribution, Orientalism, Occidentalism, re-reading, re-thinking, rational-scepticism reductionism

Introduction:

The influence of Orientalist studies, especially in the modern era, on the reading and understanding of basic islamic texts in almost all areas of islamic sciences is an undeniable fact. In the Islamic world in general and in Turkey in particular, we can see the traces of Orientalist studies and the methodologies used in these studies in some of the interpretations and methods and views for structuring these interpretations

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regarding the two basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the same situation obtains in some or other way for the interpretations and readings of the texts in the fields of Islamic sciences like *fiqh*, *kalām*, *sīra*, history, and sufism. But here we will take the conceptual and methodological effect of understanding and interpretation of the texts regarding the Qur'an and the Sunnah as our basis. It is also possible to see this "influence" from some points of view as a "contribution." Similarly, this influence can be considered from two different points of view as "positive" and "negative".

In this contribution we will look primarily at the general view of the Orientalists on Islamic texts and the basic parameters they use in their interpretations, whereby we will emphasize especially, regarding the methods of "hermeneutics," "historical criticism," "rational scepticism," "reductionism," "phenomenological approaches," "semantics," "narratives," and "philological-linguistic analysis," that the "scientific approach" that is used in the determination of the authenticity of the information and revelations in the Islamic sources is the method of "rational analysis" that is based on extreme "sceptical" and "reductionistic" approaches. According to this, it is not possible to speak about any scientific aspect of the texts on Islamic sciences before they are considered again from the perspective of this method and until that happens, they are not trustworthy. This view, which is especially prevalent in the classical period of Orientalist studies, is, regarding the Islamic sources, an approach which can be characterized as "radically revisionist." The representatives of this method or methods includes prominent scholars like Ignaz Goldziher, J. Schacht, John Wansbrough, Theodore Nöldeke, Günter Lüling, Christian Luxenberg, Kenneth Cragg, Patricia Crone, G.H. A Juynboll, Michael Cook, Uri Rubin, Andrew Rippin, and others.

Another important subject of this article is the question whether these methods have influenced Muslim researchers in the modern period and if so, to what extent, in understanding Islamic texts and their re-interpretation. However, to introduce this subject, we will refer briefly to the history of Orientalism in a classification that has been tacit until now, and then we will discuss in general the methodologies of the Orientalists in interpreting the Islamic texts.

Orientalism and its General Methodologies in Interpreting Islamic Texts

It is not the aim of this article to give detailed information on Orientalism that can be qualified as an activity which started in a professional/institutional sense at the end of the XVIIth century. However, by way of introduction we will briefly discuss Orientalism and Orientalist studies, and put forward a relatively new term, i.e., "Occidentalism."¹ We will then reveal a relatively different classification, after which

¹ "Occidentalism," which may be understood as "Western knowledge" or *istighrāb*, is the counterpart of the terms "Orientalism" and *istishrāq*. The word is taken from Arabic and is used in other languages. For this reason, the scholars involved in this field are also referred to as *mustaghrib*, as opposed to *mustashriq*. Occidentalism is the branch of knowledge that

we will briefly touch on Orientalist methodologies. According to this classification, which has speculative aspects, it is possible to view Orientalism in four different historical stages.¹ These are:

1. From the Crusades and continued up to the XVIIth century
2. From the XVIIth century (institutionalisation of Orientalist studies/classical stage) up until 1950.
3. 1950-2000
4. 2000- Post-modern or Neo-Orientalism

When these stages are attentively explored, it can be observed that there are different approaches to the general view of Islam as well as the reading and presentation of the basic religious/Islamic texts. For example, the view in the stage classified as "From the Crusades," which in fact goes back to some studies² at the

studies the West in every aspect: beliefs, worship, customs, history, politics, and socio-cultural features. It is the attempt (by the East, by Muslims) to discuss the West in literary and intellectual, academic works. It is not a term as widely used as or encompassing a field of study like "orientalism." In fact, Occidentalism can not even be viewed at present as an independent scientific discipline. On Occidentalism or *'ilmu'l-istighrâb* as a concept and its function with regard to Orientalist studies, see Hasan Hanafi, *Muqaddimatun fî 'ilm al-istighrâb*, Beirut 1992/1412; Özcan Hıdır, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism: Hadith Occidentalism - Fuat Sezgin and Example of Mustafa el-A'zamî," *The Journal of Hadith Studies*, April 2007. The need to study Occidentalism, if not to define the term, was also raised by the German orientalist Rudi Paret, at the international conference in Lahore in 1957. He pointed out the need for the Islamic world to establish an institution of "occidental studies" to carry out serious research for the purpose of knowing and understanding the West. Paret was the first orientalist to use the term "occidentalism" (see Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities*, Wiesbaden 1968, p. 5). For more information, see also Özcan Hıdır, "Occidentalism versus Orientalism in the post-September 11 Era," a paper presented at MESA, USA, 01-04 December 2011. As can be seen, our definition, perception, and perspective is different from the perception and perspective of the following studies regarding Occidentalism: Alastair Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History*, Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; I. Buruma and A. Margalit, *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004; James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory Of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

¹ For more information about this classification, see Özcan Hıdır, "Silahsız Haçlı Savaşı," *The Journal of EskiYeni*, 2007, 4, p. 57-68.

² The first and most striking of these studies is the Greek treatise *De Haeresibus of John of Damascus* (675-750) who is accepted as the last one by the church fathers. This treatise, which is taken as a basic source by medieval Christian writers and the majority of temporary Western writers for their claims regarding Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, is at the same time one of the first examples of anti-Islam literature. John of Damascus

beginning of Islam,¹ differs from the stage classified as "From the XVIIth century (up until 1950" with respect to concrete methodologies and concepts of reading Islamic texts. This was a period in which the reading of Islamic texts was institutionalised as "a discipline." However, there are also many similarities. This method of perception and manner of reading in the first stage is, as stated by Norman Daniel, the writer of the important work, *Islam and the West*,² a perception that was later passed on from "generation to generation" and is a very polemic way of perception and reading in which Islam is seen as a "heretical/perverted movement," the Qur'an as the book of this movement, and finally the Prophet Muhammad as its leader. Even the fact that Islam is an authentic monotheistic religion, in the the European imagination of that time in general perceived as "idolatry." There is of course no need to explain that this is a "reductionist" view and reading of Islam (and its sources).

From this point of view, we can state that many European writers who stated their opinion of Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad, including those who had access to restricted sources during the medieval period, the majority of whom were Christians, preferred subjective information and documents to the objective ones. This subjective information and these documents were reflected in their views and used in their writings.

Thus, for a correct understanding of orientalists or Western writers and academicians in general, it is necessary to research and to comprehend the medieval Western legacy on Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammed that was formed by the Crusades. To understand the reading of the Islamic texts by contemporary Orientalists, it is necessary to examine and understand this historical process that forms its background and shows continuity with the present. In this period, Islam was perceived as a general "threat" and the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad are considered within total "reductionist" and "sceptical" rational approaches, and the discourses were intended to constitute an Islamic image generally based on false stories and anecdotes.

The stage in which we stated that Orientalism was institutionalised and that is also seen as "Classical Orientalism" differs from the "1950-2000 stage and our

wrote this treatise as a rejection of the Islam under the title of "The Heresy of the Ishmaelites," which is no longer than ten pages in which he presented Islam as essentially a heretical and perverted religious movement. For more information on this, see Özcan Hidir, *Yahudi Kültürü ve Hadisler (Jewish Culture and Hadith)*, Istanbul 2006, pp. 173-74.

¹ We can trace the beginning of Orientalism back to ancient times. In this aspect, orientalism can be accepted as a process that started as a decision of the "Council of Vienna" in 1312 or if we go further back to the "Crusades," or even further back to the beginning of Islam. In this sense, it must be said that orientalism goes 700 years – or even 1300 years old. It is possible to consider all discourses and works that opposed Islam, the Qu'ran and Muslims from its beginning, as orientalist approaches in nature.

² See Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, part IX.

contemporary stage in which “neo-Orientalism” or “post-Orientalism” is discussed and in which the “post-modernist” view is dominant regarding methodology and the results produced as a result of these methodologies. As we stated while discussing the previous subject, it is obvious that the Western people lacked, from the Crusades until the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, correct information on Islam and had a perception that in general is of a “negative” and “imaginative-fanciful” Islam and was formed over the course of centuries. Despite the mass communication possibilities available in our time, this is an ineradicable ignorant view that still continues to this day. At the beginning of the 1800s, the initial years of institutionalised and professional studies, scientific studies on Islam, the Qur’an, the Prophet Muhammed, and Muslims were started. It is stated that from the 1800s until the 1950s, there were more than 60,000 works on the “East” published in the West.¹ In general, in their aims, scope, and methodology, these works, as indicated by Edward Wadie Said (d. 2003), gave birth to a conceptual system or, if this term is correct, an “ideology” called “Orientalism” whose influence in a wide sense can still be seen.

Aside from one part a “hidden Crusader mentality” has taken place in Orientalist studies under the guise of science/scholarship, and Islam and Muslims are defined and characterised as “the other.” In these studies Islamic texts are subjected to “positivist,” “philological,” and “anthropological” reviews in which it was attempted in general to define them as contrary to Western values and to science and development. On the one hand, Orientalist studies have continuously expanded the knowledge of Westerners of the basic Islamic sources as the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and on the other they have sharpened the Western mind implicitly against Islam, the Qur’an, and Muslims. Essentially in respect to the classical stage, Orientalism has built a scientific and conceptual tradition between the West and the East that is based on the ontological distinction it took over as a legacy from the medieval period. In a political sense, Orientalism has also provided the ideological legitimacy for the international colonialism that was carried out during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries.

Thus, on the one hand, during this stage in the Western imagination, the East was, in popular opinion, an anthropological centre of interest, splendid and supernatural, but on the other viewed as lecherous, ferocious, brutal, bigoted, primitive, and violently barbaric. Again, in particular Islam is a religion whose exotic form of veiling entails restraints in woman-man relations. The Islamic woman is imagined in a veil from head to toe. Thus, the contradiction between Islam as, in the minds of the ordinary Western citizen for centuries, sets strict limits to lust and desire and the view of Islam as lecherous promulgaed by European travellers have existed next to each other without any need to be questioned. This situation shows, in fact, that Westerners lack true

¹ Mustafa al-A’zamī, “Why Muslims Have to Reject Orientalists? I,” *Zaman*, 08.12.06.

information on Islam and have an image of Islam, the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad that has been formed over centuries. In fact, this is a deeply rooted ignorance. However, Orientalism, which is based on this rooted ignorance, has been created in the struggle between Islamic and Western civilization according to the European/Western way of thinking, and, in addition to the fact that it presents subjective material, it has led in general to two important results for Islam.

First, its new philological reading, in particular the Qur'an and the Sunnah as well as basic Islamic texts, intended to remove the status of revelation from them, formed the foundation for a positivist, extreme rational sceptical point of view.

Second, its readings of the texts in the Qur'an and the Sunnah placed Islam especially in a religious axis opposed to science and legitimating violence.

Thus, by applying the "positivist and extreme rationalist" attitude, which was formed in the Renaissance and Enlightenment against the church to Islam in an identical way, it has produced an image of Islam that is in accordance with the lies told by those who travelled the Islamic world. The main focus in the philological research was, in the majority of the cases, also aimed at emptying the Qur'anic revelation of its content. In these studies, the reading is as follows: all the human and civilized values that Islam has brought are not based on revelation but are the continuation and repetition of aspects of the ancient Semitic civilizations prevalent in the Middle East. Many personal and social values were explained as the generosity, bravery, and dignity of the ignorant Arabs and the attempt was made to empty the Islamic revelation of its content. Philological studies were, on the one hand, based on the existing tradition, and, on the other, it was claimed that the main terminology introduced by the Qur'an, were the terms *jihād*, war, expansion, plunder and brute force. All these explanations clearly show that, as the "weaponless dimension of the Crusades," Orientalism and Orientalist studies, which has produced numerous works since its emergence until 1950s and which incorporates various branches and formation of schools, has, together with its exceptions, developed an ideologically based reading and point of view, on Islam and Muslims. This was based on presenting it in terms of "war," "*jihād*," "violence," and "expansion." This point of view in fact forms the paradigm of the understanding of the Islam and the Islamic texts in the contemporary Western world.

Since the 1950s, however, we can speak about a "change in paradigm" in Orientalist studies. After 1950 until now there has been, in my view, a relatively different point of view dominating Orientalist studies. Nevertheless, in this stage, there is also no essential change at the core of the Western paradigm fed by the reading of the Islamic texts as described above in the main¹ and viewed as "weaponless Crusades."² But, in

¹ It is not our intention to categorically reject all Orientalist studies and all Orientalists. As we will show, there are many Orientalist studies that do not fall into this definition.

² According to some studies, the Crusades are a continuous process. For example, Paul Rousset's *Histoire d'une: Ideologie, La Croisade* (published in 1983) made this claim. In *The*

contrast to the previous stages, its scientific character was strengthened and it was professionalised in a methodological sense and is very well institutionalized. Thus, today, unlike the past, we are confronted with an Orientalism that has gained quite a sophisticated dimension and also, in general, a "phenomenological" style that is impossible to detect by superficial methods, and with the studies and ways of reading that are guided by it.

Thus, it is especially important to study thoroughly the history, methodology, and goals of Orientalism, and the aspect of "influence" on Islamic sources. As we have mentioned above, turning to "Occidentalism" studies, some qualified examples can be found in different periods of the history and partially in recent years. But when we pay attention to the emergence, the development, aims, methods and results of Orientalism, it is important to determine the methodology of Occidentalism studies. Because as it is also clear from the as yet unsurpassed work of Edward Said, Orientalism is in fact a problem of "knowledge" as well as a problem of a "sovereignty," "colonialism," and "power," and a form of utterance on hegemony.¹ As such, it is necessary to say that Occidentalism, from the point of view of usage as well as that of the line of historical development, is not similar to Orientalism and will not be similar. If we consider that Edward Said defines Orientalism in three levels as an academic discipline, a method of thinking, and a legal institution,² it will be clear that Occidentalism will not fit this definition. Again, occidentalism has no structure like the colonialist institutions in Orientalism, and it has no institutional structure that produces opinions and terminologies for the West. According to this, Occidentalism has only one of the three elements, i.e., a way of thinking. Together with this, there are many basic, political-ontological differences between the ways of thinking in Orientalism and Occidentalism. This difference is the result of the fact that the way of thinking in Orientalism is the outcome of its being an academic discipline as well as its being an institution of colonialism. This style has also determined to a great extent the collective memory of the poets, writers, and scientists who are important building blocks of Western culture. Whereas the historical conscience that has given birth to the occidentalism discourse is

Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades, edited by Jonathan Riley Smith, the Crusades are also described as a continual process from the XIth century to our time. Also, Christopher Tyerman's *The Invention of the Crusades* (published in 1998) describes the Crusades in the same way. We know that this is not a hot war but a cold one and a war that consists of theories, terminologies, opinions, and images. For more information see Özcan Hıdır, "Silahsız Haçlı Savaşı," *The Journal of EskiYeni*, 2007, 4, p. 57-68.

1 See Hilmi Yavuz, "Oryantalizm Üzerine Bir Giriş Denemesi," *The Journal of Ma'rife*, 11/3, 2002, p. 62. See also Özcan Hıdır, "Orientalism versus Occidentalism: Hadith Occidentalism-Fuat Sezgin and Example of Mustafa el-A'zamî," *The Journal of Hadith Studies*, April 2007.

2 See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 15-33.

related to the new epistemic level that originated in the orientalist discourse that has been going on for centuries in its weaponless dimension and the modernity. The state of consciousness on which this level is formed has in the socio-cultural and scientific meaning to do with a delay of historical consciousness.

In this respect, it is very important to consider orientalism as a phenomenon, to determine the coordinates of its manner of reading of the Islamic texts and then to evaluate it on the basis of reason, objectives, and results. But the intent here is not to judge Muslims through the glasses of the West. For Edward Said, who said that the worst that can happen to Easterners is to view themselves through Western glasses, this is a justified complaint. Because, as also Hilmi Yavuz, a Turkish philosopher, explained, the fact that nowadays – particularly in Turkey but also in whole of the Islamic world in general – there are only a few studies on Orientalism, which is the number one issue on the intellectual agenda, and on the Orientalist ways of reading of Islamic texts, as well as on Western considerations. Yavuz also points out that most of the existing ones are in majority works that examine the East with Western glasses show this.

In the increasingly globalizing conditions in the world, it is clear that it is not possible to rescue oneself from the negative effects of the view, ideology, and Orientalist works that are imposed by the Western culture we classified as the "weaponless Crusades" by retreating into one's own shell. Moreover, it is obvious that it is only possible to overcome Orientalistic opinions by confronting them, by filtering them through knowledge and thus by putting forward alternative opinions and methods with this background. In this context, one of the important Egyptian thinkers, Muhammad Umāra, also declared that the prior task to be fulfilled here is to advance the distinctive characteristics of Islamic culture and Western culture and to determine the main ways of reading in the works of Orientalists and their methodology. According to Umāra, it is Islam that forms our cultural identity, and this is what differentiates us from the other.² This is only possible through thorough knowledge and understanding of primarily the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the other Islamic basic sources, i.e. by knowing oneself and one's own values. The fact that the majority of Orientalists are very good with the Holy Book – in fact, the majority of writers and academicians in the West, apart from the theologians, are similar – shows that someone who does not know his own religious-cultural sources and roots cannot understand the other easily or not at all, whereby it is possible that one can be seen as the other if he does not watch out.

Thus, "understanding the other" in a real sense is only possible by knowing oneself very well. And it is only by being aware of the "egocentric/Eurocentric" attitude of the

¹ See Hilmi Yavuz, "Oryantalizm Üzerine Bir Giriş Denemesi", p. 62-63.

² See Muhammed Umāra, "Makānatu al-Islām fī siyāghati namūzajinā al-saqāfi," *el-Hayāt Newspaper*, August 1996.

West that has developed throughout history that it is possible not to praise in an extreme manner the views and theories of the other (West), not to have a continuous feeling of inferiority and weakness.¹ On the other hand, understanding the “other” by investigating and by trying to understand him, by not acting out of vengeance against Orientalism, by not approaching the issues wholesale perception but by bringing to the fore the good aspects of the other (phenomenological analysis) is in fact what Islam promoted from the beginning on. It is possible to show many examples from the Qur’an on this matter.

The second important reason here is the fact that Muslims have no or little knowledge of the historical-literary methods of criticism and methods of text analysis and criticism that have been developed to criticise the Qur’an, such as “hermeneutics,” “semantics,” “philological-linguistic methods,” and “narratology” that started to develop in the West, especially after the rise of Protestantism and have advanced considerably in the last two centuries. They have also no knowledge of the Orientalists who use those methods in their works. An important role also is played here today by the fact that the methodology that is used often in Orientalistic research and for which there is a “school” and a world of meaning and ways of writing somewhere in the background is not fully grasped. Thus, by itself, it is an Occidental task to be aware of the history of Orientalism as well as some of its methodologies that we already mentioned above and will mention especially below with respect to the historical reading of the Islamic texts and for a subjective determination of Orientalism’s influence on and contribution to potential new readings.

Methodological Discussions on the “Influence/Contribution” of Orientalists on the “Re-reading” of Islamic Texts (the Qur’an and the Sunnah)²

¹ For more opinions on this, see Hasan, Hanafī, *Mukaddimetün fi ilmi’l-istighrâb*, p. 28.

² Here we have used the word “contribution” purposely. It cannot be denied that Orientalists have up to now contributed a great deal to the development of the Islamic sciences. They have collected many handwritten Arabic works that were in danger of being lost and they have also published many works after conducting investigations. Furthermore, they have also produced important glossary works. Many important works on Islamic history were also first published by Orientalists. For example, Ibn Hishām’s *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, was published for the first time in 1860 by Wustenfelt. Ibn Sa’d’s *Tabaqāt* is published in 1904 in Leiden, by E. Sachau. *Al-Tarikh* of Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī was published in full for the first time between 1879-1900 in Leiden by de Geoje. Ibn al-Athīr’s *al-Kāmil* was published for the first time by Tornberg and al-Maqdisī’s *Kitābu’l-Bad’ wa’t-ta’rikh* was published by Claman in Paris. Ibn al-Nadīm’s *al-Fihrist* was published in 1872 in Leipzig by Gustave Fluel, Yaqūt al-Hamawī’s *Mu’jam al-buldān* for the first time between 1866-1873 in Leipzig by Wustenfelt. Also, should note here that the alphabetical hadith index *Concordance* and the first *Encyclopedia of Islam* were also prepared by the Orientalists, mainly by Dutch Orientalists in Leiden.

In the reading of the Qur'an and the Sunnah texts we can see several methods with different points of view among Orientalist methodologies. In general, however, we can say that the "rational sceptical reductionist" method and the "phenomenological" system are the main ones.

This method, using sources and information on Islam that are false, thus rendering it is unable to produce any objective information and based on the hypothesis that the sources and revelations belonging to Islam have to be read by testing them according to the methodologies developed in the West, was introduced systematically by Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) in his *Muhammedanische Studien/Muslim Studies*. We can say that this work was a turning point in the "sceptic/sceptical hadith and *sīrah* research" in the West. With this work, Goldziher played a seminal role, and his authority in this matter was accepted by other Orientalists who refer to him as the master.¹ Representatives of this approach amongst the orientalists include those leading Orientalists who have worked mainly on the Qur'an, the Sunnah-*sīrah* fields, such as Theodore Nöldeke, Joseph Schacht, John Wansbrough, Kenneth Cragg, Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, Andrew Rippin, John Burton, and G. H. A. Juynboll.

In this approach, Islam is researched, and, on the basis of the results of the research into the origins of the basic Islamic texts like the Qur'an and the Sunnah, an attempt is made to reveal how it is formed. Here the conclusion is reached that there are many problems to be solved by questioning the traditional assumptions and methodologies that are produced that will be effective in solving those problems. We can say that, nowadays, this understanding has aspects that are worth evaluating and considering with respect to interpreting Islamic texts. But here the basis must be not the "rational sceptical" method but the "rational analytical" one that does not deny the tradition. One of the basic differences between those two methods is that the first entails a point of view towards the Qur'an and Sunnah texts that is "prejudiced," "extremely sceptical," "wholesale oriented," and "reductionist." The second, on the other hand, is constructive, based on understanding and a way of reading in which the map of understanding within the Islamic tradition, i.e., terminologies, movements, schools, and other basic dynamics are constantly taken into account.

As mentioned above, as one of the most important representatives of these claims of the Orientalists, which essentially cannot be considered independently of the basic claims made regarding the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and the main formation period of the Islamic basic sources, and is has a rational-sceptical basis is John Wansbrough. His two most important works are *Quranic Studies* and *The Sectarian Milieu*, and he has formed a movement with the students he trained as well as the theories he has put forward. Wansbrough, who claims that the Qur'an was put into writing no earlier than the 11th

¹ *The Tradition of Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Hadith Literature*, Oxford, 1924, p. 5.

century after the *hijra*¹, has also followed an “extremely sceptical” method in interpreting the Qur’an and has questioned its source. Essentially, it is necessary to say that he is questioning directly how the Qur’an came to be and the source of the Qur’an in a way that leaves no room for doubt instead of trying to understand it. Questioning the source of the Qur’an and naturally of the Sunnah, has always had priority above reading/interpreting the Qur’an and hadith texts in almost all the classic Orientalists. This concept lies behind the allegations, which are generally “negative,” regarding the relation to revelation and prophethood of the blessed Prophet. According to this concept, the prophet and the messages he has brought will become dubious through the “extremely sceptical” method and Islam itself will be put in a position whereby it is not an original but a “derived” religion/tradition.²

One of the other basic methodology problems in the works written by Orientalists on the Quran and Sunnah texts is that they reflect far more the personal scholastic and intellectual concerns of the relevant writer and of society instead of determining the place of the Qur’an and the Sunnah in Islam. In this sense, there is an intensive leading and personal contribution of the writer, and the subjects and data take on a totally different and new character. The attempts to appear objective and positive in their analysis, which is for the most part subjective and negative, should also be highlighted in an equal way. From this perspective, the literature on the Qur’an and the Sunnah is various and in most cases contradictory. It is therefore possible to observe changes over the centuries. Although there are differences in language, style, and method amongst the notions and claims, in essential matters and in the reading, a general continuity in an “extremely sceptical” approach can be observed. Although “equity (objectivity)” is claimed, generalizations, subjectivities, and stereotypes come to the fore in the analysis of the data in whatever interpretation. In this respect, the image of Qur’an and the Sunnah in the Orientalist works, is not the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Islamic hierarchy. The Orientalists have, namely, conducted intensive studies of the Islamic sciences since the beginning of the XIXth century. Here, they have used the Judeo-Christian, Greek-Roman and humanist way of thinking and information methods to view the data about the Islamic sources by using a general method of Western thinking, reading, and interpretation method for these sources. Furthermore, this concept of thinking and the field of data that has received the name “Orientalism” has in one way or another used, with an “egocentric” attitude, reading formats and

¹ Wansbrough’s view was also passionately defended by Patricia Crone; she has even narrowed the time to the last quarter of the IInd century (see *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, p. 3).

² For the Orientalist claims about the influence of the judeo-christian culture on Islam, the Qur’an and the hadith, see Özcan Hıdır, *Yahudi Kültürü ve Hadisler*, p. 414-480; Özcan, Hıdır, “Discussions on the Influence of the Judeo-Christian Culture on Hadiths,” *The Journal Rotterdam Islamic and Social Science (JRISS)*, 2010, 1/1, pp. 33-58.

methods that have been developed in the social and human sciences in accordance with the new conditions in which such studies occurred.

Here it is about the testing of the Qur'an and Sunnah texts from outside but there are also Orientalists like Joseph van Ess who declare that it is more important and preferable to evaluate them within their own dynamics rather than test the truthfulness of the sources relating to the beginning period of Islam. In a sense, this can also be seen as a reaction from "inside" to the "extreme sceptical reading" of the origin of Islamic sources and this reaction which is from the inside and which is awareness of the various readings, is especially important in understanding the method of orientalism regarding Islam and the reading of the Islamic texts.

It is possible to evaluate in a general sense and in some specific subjects, the influence, which we have not yet looked at, of the "rational sceptical" view and the other methodologies used by orientalists for the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and other Islamic texts, from two different dimensions. By "general influence" we are referring to the methodological, interpreting, and conceptual influence of the "reductionist rational sceptical" view of the aforementioned orientalists on many studies in Islamic countries, in the field of basic Islamic sciences, *tafsīr*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, *kalām* and *sīrah*. Essentially, from this point of view, with the influence of Orientalist studies, we can speak of a "new reading" of the Qur'an and Sunnah texts in particular and the whole of the Islamic sources in general. This situation has accelerated in recent years and with translations of Orientalist studies not subjected to any serious interpretation and critics. The use of these studies is widespread. The essential factor in this effect is the "extreme rational sceptical" point of view in analysing the information and sources belonging in general to the Islamic sciences and in particular reading the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As manifestations and reasons for this effect and view, we can sum up the following:

1. By denying or neglecting the tradition, not being able to approach the issues with a Muslim point of view. This is manifested by generally denying the tradition regarding the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the dynamics and methodologies of its approach. In other words, instead of integrating and mixing the "traditionalist perspective (tradition of thought)" with new dynamics, it shows a tendency to exclude it partially or completely. Actually, because, in doing this – even though it seems like a paradox – it brings the rationality and scepticism to the fore as much as possible, it shows a *mu'tazilī/post-mu'tazilī/neo-mu'tazilī* manifestation; because it does not pay attention to tradition, which it has handicapped by opacity and counterfeiting, it develops a "protesting" and "neo-salafī" discourse.¹ Similarly, we see an extreme concentration on the first and

¹ Nowadays the relation that is claimed from time to time between "Protestantism" and "Salafism" must arise from this, in fact. Although they have different tones and hues, in

development period of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah¹ and the period in recent centuries. In this situation evaluations are brought to the fore that are disconnected from a long period in between. This long period in between have even been attempted to be viewed as periods without any dynamism, of intellectual opaqueness, and as "scolastic" periods and understandings. This means that an immense legacy of knowledge is being ignored. This, in turn, brings forth an idea whereby concentration to a large degree on on the texts brings to the fore a "new establishment and reading" concept of Islam and gives birth to a concept of Islam, the Qur'an, and the Sunnah that is isolated from its tradition. This opens the door, in fact, to a kind of Orientalism that we can classify as "modernist and neo-salafi" and that effaces the methods used in the Islamic sciences.

2. It is not possible to form a "rational analytical" reading by advancing a "reductionist" and extreme "reductionist" and "rational sceptical" view in understanding and interpreting the Qur'an and the Sunnah texts.
3. The methodologies of the Orientalists cannot be grasped as a whole. By this we mean that the Orientalist movement and schools and the historical-literary methods for criticism are not completely known in the Islamic world. This has led to the fact that the "Occidentalists" works, i.e., methodologies developed to research Western thought and the methodologies developed in the West in social sciences havenot been developed to an important extent. By this we mean that there is no familiarity in Turkey with the real character of the West, particularly after the emergence of Protestantism and historical-literary criticism methods and the methods developed for criticising the Bible developed in the last two centuries that were later adapted to Orientalist studies, like "textual criticism," "historical criticism," "literary criticism," "hermeneutics," "semantics," "linguistics," and "narratism," except for some works in recent years. Similarly, the fact that there is an inability to grasp fully the meaning of some of the Latin terms that are often used in Orientalist studies and behind which lies a world of methodology and meaning essentially plays a role here. Orientalists like Ignaz Goldziher, J. Schacht, G.

both movements we can speak about a "text-centered approach" that denies the tradition, and works from this perspective can produce remarkable results.

¹ When talking about the science of Hadith, it is called as the "period of clasification (*tasnif*)" which is the period of the formation of the basic *musannafs* of the hadith science, which begins, according to the *hijra* calendar, approximately in 150 and ends in approximately 500. For information about the period of *tasnif* and the hadith literatuur in this period, see Özcan Hidir, *Inleiding tot Hadithwetenschap*, Rotterdam 2010, p. 49-67.

H. A. Juynboll, M. J. Kister, M. Cook, and H. Motzki, whom we can classify as the "Qur'an-Sunnah and *Sīrah* Orientalists" rely for the most part on these methods and terms in reading and criticising the Qur'an and Hadith texts.

The above in fact means that the background of the conceptual traditions of the Orientalists, the forming of a movement and a school cannot be grasped fully either. In this case, this means that there is no awareness of the factors that influence their methodologies and the religious, philosophical, political, economic, and socio-cultural effects. For example, the "philological attempts" found mainly in the Orientalist studies of the XIXth century, are also used to fully understand the Islamic sources and culture. Again, the method and disciplines that were developed as products of XVIIIth-century Enlightenment philosophy are the ones primarily used in reading the Qur'an and Sunnah texts and the texts from the first period of the Islam. The studies by Ernest Renan, J. Wellhausen, I. Goldziher, J. Schacht, and John Wansbrough on Islamic sources carry the scientific, academic and socio-cultural traces of the environment in which they lived. For example, J. Wellhausen has tried to apply his successes in the criticism of the Bible to the first period of Islam. I. Goldziher, influenced by the reformist founder of Judaism, Abraham Geiger (d. 1874), embarked, with a protesting and salafī perspective, on the study of the origins of Islam and developed the theory that the "Islam and thus the Qur'an and the Sunnah" have a Jewish origin.¹

In this respect as also Bryn S. Turner has stated, it is necessary to produce works that study the relation of orientalism to some doctrines that have not lost anything of their impact nowadays, like Marxism. For example, the Hegelian "linear" historical concept, which lived its childhood in Asia but reached its real maturity in the Germanic tribes in Europe and has, according to us, a substantial influence on the "historical criticism" methodology of Ignaz Goldziher, has to be analysed very closely.² At the same time, it is possible that Joseph Schacht, because of his proximity to Max Weber, used the "Weberian" way of thinking and methodology in his analysis of the Islamic sources.

In fact, it is possible to categorize this general influence as "positive – negative." It is certain that - if we ignore the effect of the Orientalist works on the minds of Muslims, which is unpredictable in the majority of the cases – there is no reason that prevents us from thinking that they offer chances to the Muslim scientists in the other branches of the Islamic sciences as well as in the presentation and interpretation of the texts on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, to see the weaknesses and to develop methodologies from within that will lead to the regeneration/revitalisation of the tradition with a new style

¹ See Özcan Hıdır, *Yahudi Kültürü ve Hadisler*, Istanbul 2010, pp. 417-442, and also see Özcan, Hıdır, "İslam'ın Yahudi Kökeni Teorisi İle İlgili İddialar ve Çalışmalar (Studies on regarding the Jewish Roots Theories of Islam)", *İLAM Araştırma Dergisi/The Journal of İLAM Centre*, III/1, pp. 155-169.

² For some views in this direction, see Ahmet Davudoğlu, "Batı'daki İslam Çalışmaları Üzerine," p. 43.

and understanding. In this regard, what one should do is act confidently, knowing what one does, without being prejudiced against Orientalist works, following the path of profiting from their "scientific method," "critical view," "ability to produce significant results from the apparently circumstantial information and revelations," "capacity for an interdisciplinary view," "linguistic-philological analysis," the ability to ask some questions that are not being asked from the point of view of Muslim understanding and perception, the ability to renew the information and method under new circumstances and other interpretation techniques, methods, and dynamisms. When doing this the orientalist thinking and reading must not be the center but the dynamics of the Islamic science and tradition of interpretation. In other words, the aim must not be to act only in line with the maxim, "It is time to say new things today" and with Orientalism as one's basis or to attempt to "be more orientalist than the orientalists," "re-imagining" the Islamic sciences. If the methods that are formed in the Islamic tradition are put aside, one will rely on some methods, terminologies, and concepts produced by the Orientalists for Islamic studies and on what they should look like, each of them representing a different cultural and methodological movement and school and which, in our view, do not correspond with the basic concepts of Islam.

The perspectives regarding the (albeit) partial isolation of the Qur'an in the meaning of "occurrence without doubt/resources" from the level of revelation, "evaluation of it as a historical text," "human influence/contribution to the Qur'an (the human character of the Qur'an) and its historicity," and other areas like this that are attempt to abrade partially or totally the concept that the Qur'an represents a revelation that was sent by Allah via Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad and the methods and understandings emerging in these areas must be, in essence, indicators of the negative effects of orientalism on Qur'anic studies. Naturally, what we mean here is not, after accepting the revelational character of the Qur'an in the sense of the "realization/occurrence without doubt," abstaining from the determination and understanding of the "evidences" of those texts in which the revelation is embodied, within the framework of some systems in the modern stage parallel to the systems of understanding and interpreting that were developed within the historical conditions and the history of the Islamic sciences and *tafsir* without falling into anachronism. It is obvious that Orientalist works used the method of "hermeneutics," which was developed to establish the authenticity of the Bible and some other methodologies parallel to this, to research the "authenticity" of the Qur'an and Sunnah texts. Parallel to this, regarding the Qur'an, they have concentrated mostly on the "problem of authenticity" and the works in this direction have formed a significant amount of the classic orientalist works. This can be exemplified by T. Nöldeke's *The History of the Qur'an*, which he published in 1860. Nöldeke's work is recognized in the West as the most prestigious work in its field. In essence, what the classic orientalists, who have focused on the occurrence, have done in particular can be classified as an endeavour by

themselves to "re-establish," instead of attempting to understand, Islam and the Qur'an.

Whereas, according to Muslim commentators and the other Islamic scholars – Sunnī scholars – it is not possible to talk about the "authenticity problem" of the Qur'an. Thus, in their works, they have set their heart, within the framework of the understandings and systems of *tafsīr-ta'wīl* and "recorded narrative acumen and symbol," on the understanding of the signification of the Qur'anic texts. As a result, a magnificent amount of literature of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* has been produced in almost all periods.

In regard to the hadith and the Sunnah we must say again that Orientalist studies have developed many methods and perspectives. The most basic aspect that distinguishes these methods and perspectives from those of the Islamic scholars is the assumption that the sunnah of the Prophet, the framework of which is outlined via oral, practical, and tacit data, is a form(alised) "tradition" within centuries and that there is a maximum of doubt on which actually belong to the blessed Prophet. Thus, it is obvious that the tradition, which on which the Islamic sciences depend (formed by data on the Sunnah that is doubted and and even stated to be impossible) that they belong to the Prophet Muhammed, becomes problematic. Although even different schools and understandings have developed in Islam's history, there is not one understanding and way of reading that aims to reject the "evidence of the hadith or Sunnah" as a whole. The first group to rejected the authority of the Sunnah in one way or another was the *Ahl-al Qur'ān*, the *Qur'āniyyūn* School, which emerged on the Indian subcontinent and was established in the XVIIIth century, when we find the extreme influence of the "missionary Orientalists." The wide impact of Orientalism is obvious in their (partial or total) denial of the authenticity of the *sunnah*.¹ From the *Ahl al-Qur'ān* until now this impact has been manifested in various geographies of the Islamic world and in Turkey, but it must be stated that the "common link" method and way of reading founded by J. Schacht, intensively used and developed by G.H. A. Juynboll as a method based on a "rational sceptical" foundation and is intended to demonstrate that the Hadith texts as a whole are not authentic,² is very influential in the Muslim mind in the sense that we mentioned earlier.

Therefore what the Islamic *tafsīr* tradition and the Muslim researchers of Qur'an

¹ For their approaches to the hadith/sunnah, see Özcan Hıdır, *Inleiding tot Hadithwetenschap*, Rotterdam 2010, pp. 162-164; Zafarullah Dawudi, *Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları (Hadith Studies in Pakistan and India)*, İstanbul 1995, pp. 275-281.

² For the "methods of dating the hadith," which have been developed to date the hadith and thus make their authenticity questionable and therefore the "common link" method and the application of them to hadith texts, see Özcan Hıdır, "Şarkiyatçıların Hadisi Tarihlendirme Metotları (The Orientalist Methodologies of 'Dating Hadiths')," *Hadis Tetkikleri Dergisi/The Journal of Hadith Studies*, 2003, 1/1, pp. 97-11. See also Motzki, Harald, "Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey," *Arabica*, 2005, 52/2, pp. 204-253.

and the Sunnah have to do, especially in the sense of modernity, postmodernity, globalisation, religious-cultural meaning, in the contemporary world where the interwoven transitions between East-West are being experienced, is to study closely the history of Orientalistic work, their change, their breaking points, their ways of reading of primarily the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the other Islamic texts, their discourse, their style and terminologies, the "political and neo-Orientalist variants" that have currently evolved in some respects and subject aspects they can use and those they should reject to a phenomenological and analytical analysis. Orientalist readings and the works that result from them render it possible to sometimes reconsider the conventional concepts and terminologies and to strengthen the weak points in the framework of understanding the texts and their interpretation. It is possible to see this in fact as a "contribution." In recent times we have been seeing, although still not enough, some quality studies in which the works of Orientalists are analysed and in particular their views of and claims regarding the Quran and the Sunnah are evaluated methodologically. An example of such, if we ignore the excessive defensive and almost emotional assessments, is Muhammed Mustafa al-A'zamī's book, *Qur'anic Text*. It will be also appropriate to mention the efforts of some contemporary young academicians in this regard.

However, the main problem here lies in the fact that a comprehensive and thorough review of "Orientalism," which we think had an extreme effect from angles we are aware of or not on the way of thought in the Islamic world, as a phenomenon that converts minds, has not been done sufficiently since Edward Said. Because this is so, evaluations of the Orientalist's views of the Islamic sciences in general and the Qur'an and the Sunnah in particular, which we can classify as "Occidentalism," remain peripheral in most cases of course.

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