

Traces of Orientalism in the Construction of Modern Islamic Science

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Abstract: This study examines traces of Orientalism in the construction of modern Islamic scholarship as an epistemological issue in contemporary Islamic studies. The main focus of the study is to identify how categories of knowledge, standards of truth, and scholarly authority regarding Islam are formed, institutionalized, and reproduced in modern academic traditions. The research uses a qualitative method based on a literature study with a historical-critical approach to academic texts from three traditions: classical Orientalists, post-Orientalist thinkers, and Muslim scholars. The data are analyzed comparatively to trace patterns of continuity and transformation of epistemic categories used in Islamic studies. The results show that modern Islamic studies operate within the framework of epistemic categories such as objectivity, historicism, textual criticism, and scientific methodology rooted in Western scientific traditions. Islamic scientific traditions tend to gain academic legitimacy to the extent that they can be translated or harmonized with these categories. The dominance of Orientalism is therefore not only a historical legacy, but also works structurally through the university system, curriculum, and mechanisms of publication and global scientific legitimacy. This study contributes by systematically mapping these epistemic mechanisms, thereby expanding the analysis of Orientalism from the level of discourse representation to the level of operational structures in contemporary academic practice.

Keyword : Orientalism; Modern Islamic Studies; Critical Reading;

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji jejak orientalisme dalam konstruksi ilmu keislaman modern sebagai persoalan epistemologis dalam studi Islam kontemporer. Fokus utama penelitian adalah mengidentifikasi bagaimana kategori ilmu, standar kebenaran, dan otoritas keilmuan tentang Islam dibentuk, dilembagakan, serta direproduksi dalam tradisi akademik modern. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan historis-kritis terhadap teks akademik dari tiga tradisi: orientalis klasik, pemikir post-orientalis serta sarjana Muslim. Data dianalisis secara komparatif untuk menelusuri pola kontinuitas dan transformasi kategori epistemik yang digunakan dalam studi Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa studi Islam modern beroperasi dalam kerangka kategori epistemik seperti objektivitas, historisisme, kritik tekstual, dan metodologi ilmiah yang berakar pada tradisi keilmuan Barat. Tradisi keilmuan Islam cenderung memperoleh legitimasi akademik sejauh dapat diterjemahkan atau diselaraskan dengan kategori tersebut. Dominasi orientalisme karena itu tidak hanya merupakan warisan historis, tetapi bekerja secara struktural melalui sistem universitas, kurikulum, serta mekanisme publikasi dan legitimasi ilmiah global. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan memetakan secara sistematis mekanisme epistemik tersebut, sehingga memperluas

analisis orientalisme dari level representasi wacana ke level struktur operasional dalam praktik akademik kontemporer.

Kata kunci : Orientalisme; Ilmu Keislaman Modern; Pembacaan Kritis;

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Introduction

Since the 19th century, Orientalism has developed as an academic approach that positions Islam not as a source of normative truth, but as an object of study that must be explained through Western historical, cultural, philological, and sociological categories. Within this framework, Islam was transferred from the realm of faith into a modern scientific system of analysis that emphasized rationality, historicism, and objectivity as measures of valid knowledge. Over time, this approach became more than just a method of study; it shaped the epistemic structure of modern science, namely a set of standards about what is considered scientific, what methods are considered valid, and what kind of academic language is considered legitimate for discussing Islam. It is this legacy that has influenced the way modern Islamic studies are constructed, including in determining the criteria for the legitimacy of knowledge used in contemporary academic practice. (Mudzakkir et al., 2024)

Inequality in the production and legitimization of Islamic knowledge is not only evident in the number of publications or journal rankings, but also in the way academic discourse on Islam is shaped and validated through scientific texts. Several academic journals and books still use epistemic categories such as objectivity, historical methodology, and textual criticism that originated from Western scientific traditions to assess and explain Islamic phenomena, even though these works were written by scholars from the Muslim world themselves. This is in line with the finding that Orientalism presents epistemological bias in contemporary Islamic studies, even though it still provides academic contributions in several aspects. (Cahya & Wardati, 2025) In this context, power relations of knowledge are not only produced by institutional bodies, but also reproduced in the structures of argumentation, conceptual choices, and epistemic categories used in academic texts on Islam. For example, studies on the development of Islamic studies in Indonesian academic circles show that the methodological orientation and scientific legitimacy of scholarly works are still heavily influenced by Western academic formats and standards. (Badarussyamsi, 2016)

In much academic literature, the influence of Western traditions and categories of knowledge is also evident in the way Islam is framed as an object of study that needs to be analyzed through the lens of historiography, philology, or sociology developed in European epistemology. In these studies, terms such as historical criticism, scientific objectivity, and textual validity are used not only as analytical tools but also as measures of scientific truth, thereby positioning Islamic discourse within a framework derived from Western scientific traditions rather than from Islamic epistemological traditions themselves. This phenomenon is evident in

studies showing that criticism of Orientalism in Indonesian academic circles often stops at the description or evaluation of texts without systematically tracing the historical mechanisms behind the use of these epistemic categories. (Hadi et al., 2025)

In Indonesian academic literature, criticism of Orientalism and emphasis on the importance of Muslim scholars' perspectives have indeed been widely discussed. However, most of these studies still focus on ideological positions or normative criticism of the West, without exploring how epistemic categories such as objectivity, scientificity, historicity, or rationality work concretely in academic texts on Islam. As a result, the relationship between the critique of Orientalism and the internal structure of scientific discourse, in this case, how Islam is defined, evaluated, and given authority in scientific writing, has not been systematically analyzed. (Hadi et al., 2025)

These limitations are also evident in the lack of studies that take a historical and comparative approach to examining how academic texts, whether from the Orientalist, post-Orientalist, or Muslim scholar traditions, construct Islam using the same methodological standards. Existing studies more often discuss Orientalism as an ideological discourse or as colonial history, but rarely trace how these epistemic mechanisms continue to be reproduced in the form of curricula, research methodologies, and scientific publication practices in the contemporary era. This lack of textual analysis indicates an important gap in understanding how the epistemic legacy of Orientalism still operates within the structure of modern Islamic scholarship. (Saidin & Rashid, 2022)

In the Indonesian context, discourse on the need for a contextual Islamic epistemology has developed in various academic publications, particularly in response to the dominance of Western scientific frameworks in Islamic studies. However, most of these studies tend to stop at normative appeals and conceptual reflections, without concretely elaborating how established epistemic structures work in everyday academic practice, such as in the way texts are structured, scientific authority is claimed, and the legitimacy of knowledge is constructed. This tendency shows that the epistemological problem lies not only in the absence of alternative concepts but also in the lack of systematic analysis of epistemic operations in academic texts themselves. (Montasir, 2021)

Based on these conditions, this study methodologically takes the position of reading the corpus of academic texts on Orientalism and modern Islamic studies through a historical-critical approach. By comparing the works of Western Orientalists, post-Orientalist thinkers, and Muslim scholars, this study traces how categories of knowledge, standards of truth, and scientific authority are constructed, negotiated, and reproduced in contemporary academic discourse. This approach not only allows for the mapping of the epistemological positions of each scholarly tradition but also opens up space for understanding the continuing influence of historical epistemic frameworks in the practice of modern Islamic studies.

Thus, this study focuses on two main objectives. First, to identify how Orientalism operates as an epistemic framework in the construction of modern Islamic scholarship through a historical-critical analysis of academic texts. Second,

to trace how this epistemic framework is represented in discourses on curriculum, research methodology, and the legitimacy of knowledge in Islamic higher education, as reflected in contemporary academic literature.

Literature Review

Studies on Orientalism in modern Islamic scholarship have developed in various directions, ranging from historical analysis to methodological criticism of Islamic studies in the West and the Muslim world. Several important studies show that Orientalism has not only shaped the discourse on Islam, but also the epistemological structures that underpin contemporary Islamic scholarship.

Afandi, in "The Three Phases of Islamic Studies in the West," identifies three main phases in the development of Islamic studies in the West, namely the Orientalist, missionary, and colonial phases. These three phases form the epistemological framework that underpins modern Islamic studies in Western universities. Afandi asserts that many of the categories, methods, and basic assumptions in Islamic studies today are still rooted in epistemological constructs that arose from colonial power relations. However, his study focuses more on historical mapping and has not yet developed a systematic conceptual framework for decolonizing the curriculum or methodology of Islamic studies. (Afandi, 2025)

Meanwhile, Yunus highlights the problem of Orientalism from the perspective of exegesis studies. He criticizes the dominance of Western philological and historicist methods, which tend to separate the text of the Qur'an from the spiritual, normative, and practical dimensions of Islam. According to him, the Orientalist approach often constructs the Qur'an as a mere historical object, rather than as a source of meaning in life. Although it offers a direction for decolonization in interpretation, this research is still limited to one discipline and has not yet reached the broader issue of Islamic epistemology. (Yunus, 2025)

Al-Shuqairat and Aldajah, in their study of Islamic historiography, show that modern Islamic historical narratives are still largely constructed using categories, periodizations, and conceptual language derived from the Orientalist tradition. Even in the postcolonial context, many works of Islamic history continue to reproduce Western frameworks in understanding Islamic civilization. However, this research is descriptive in nature and has not yet proposed an alternative epistemological model that can replace the Western historiographical paradigm. (Al-Shuqairat et al., 2025)

These three studies show that Orientalism has transcended its position as an external approach and transformed into an epistemic framework that influences the way Islam is understood in modern studies. However, these studies generally stop at historical mapping, discourse criticism, or analysis of a particular discipline, and have not yet systematically traced how categories, standards of truth, and scientific authority rooted in the Orientalist tradition continue to operate across texts and scientific traditions to form the structure of contemporary Islamic knowledge.

Starting from this gap, this study positions itself not to formulate a normative model of decolonization, but rather to conduct a historical-critical reading of the corpus of academic texts from various traditions, namely Orientalist, post-

Orientalist, and Muslim scholars, to identify the epistemic mechanisms that allow the legacy of Orientalism to remain as a frame of reference in the construction of modern Islamic scholarship.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach based on a literature review with historical-critical analysis of Islamic scientific discourse. The research data consists of academic texts on Orientalism and modern Islamic studies, which are analyzed to trace how categories, standards of truth, and scientific authority regarding Islam have been formed from the tradition of Orientalism to contemporary Islamic studies. The analysis was conducted by systematically reading these texts to: (1) identify the definitions of Islam, concepts of science, and criteria of truth used, (2) compare the epistemological positions between texts, and (3) trace the historical origins of these concepts in the Orientalist and modern traditions. In this way, the study reveals how the colonial legacy still influences the construction of modern Islamic scholarship.

The data sources were selected using purposive sampling techniques with thematic and historical criteria. The texts analyzed must meet three criteria: (1) explicitly discuss Islam, Islamic studies, or the methodology of Islamic studies; (2) contain reflections on the relationship between knowledge, objectivity, and scientific authority; and (3) originate from or represent the traditions of Orientalist scholarship, post-Orientalist scholarship, or Muslim intellectual responses to them. Sources are limited to academic works in the form of books and journal articles that represent the period of the formation of modern Islamic studies to its development in contemporary studies. The selection was carried out in stages by identifying works that are widely influential and frequently referenced, then including critical texts from Muslim and post-Orientalist scholars as comparative discourse.

The validity of the analysis is maintained through source triangulation, namely by comparing texts from various scientific traditions, Western Orientalists (Goldziher-Schacht), Post-Orientalists (Sehlikoglu, Ali 2025 etc.), and Muslim Scholars (Makki 2019, Kasim 2021, etc.) to examine the consistency, differences, and patterns of meaning construction regarding Islam. In addition, the main texts were reread to ensure consistency of interpretation and avoid selective conclusions.

Result And Discussion

Result

The Genealogy of Islamic Construction as an Object of Study in the Tradition of Orientalism

The initial construction of Islam as an object of study can be traced back to the classical Orientalist tradition that developed in Europe in the 19th century. In this context, Islam was not positioned as a tradition of knowledge with internal epistemic authority, but rather as an object of scientific study that had to be explained, verified, and tested through methodologies developed in Western academic traditions. Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht

became central figures in this process, particularly through their philological-historical approach to Islamic sources. In the study of hadith, for example, Goldziher cast doubt on the authenticity of many narratives by interpreting them as products of the social and historical development of the Muslim community, rather than as normative texts rooted directly in the time of the Prophet. (Humairah et al., 2025) This approach shows how Islam has been treated from the outset as a historical object that must be critically deconstructed, rather than as a system of meaning understood from within its own epistemic framework.

This process of objectification goes hand in hand with the use of certain epistemic categories, particularly historicism, textual criticism, and claims of scientific objectivity. These categories serve as scientific prerequisites that determine whether knowledge about Islam is academically acceptable. Within this framework, Islamic texts are treated as historical data that must be verified externally, while traditional knowledge, such as tafsir, hadith, and fiqh are not positioned as an autonomous science but rather as objects that need to be reanalyzed using modern methods. These findings show that the construction of Islam as an object of science is not neutral, but rather depends on a set of epistemic assumptions derived from the modern European scientific tradition.

(Afandi, 2025) notes that the development of Islamic studies in the West can be understood through three main phases, namely: Orientalist, missionary, and colonial, each of which shows a close relationship between knowledge production and specific historical interests. In the early Orientalist phase, Islam was understood through philological, historical, and anthropological methods that developed in European universities. This approach placed Islam within an external epistemic framework, in which the categories of analysis, standards of truth, and scientific legitimacy were determined by Western academic traditions. Thus, from the outset, Islam was constructed as an object of anthropological and textual study, rather than as an epistemic tradition with its own internal logic and authority. However, Ali's research (Ali, 2025) shows an effort to position Islam as a dynamic intellectual tradition with its own internal history and epistemology. This shift signals a critique of the classical Orientalist approach. However, the results of this study also show that despite differing ideological positions and academic objectives, many contemporary works continue to use the same epistemic categories, such as historical approaches and scientific standards of objectivity to validate their arguments. This indicates an epistemic continuity between the classical Orientalist tradition and modern Islamic studies, including those written by Muslim scholars.

Based on the genealogy of the above construction, it appears that the definition of Islam as a neutral object of study cannot be separated from the process of institutionalizing Orientalism in Western universities. Study structures such as

Middle East Studies in Europe and America function as intellectual apparatuses that support geopolitical and colonial interests, so that the production of knowledge about Islam has developed from the outset within certain power relations. This shows that scientific standards of truth in modern Islamic studies were not formed in a vacuum, but are rooted in historical configurations that were later accepted as valid and universal academic frameworks.

The Reduction of Islamic Epistemology in Modern Islamic Studies

The reduction of Islamic epistemology in modern Islamic studies can be observed through the way Muslim thought is classified and evaluated using epistemic categories derived from Western scientific traditions. (Deka, 2025) shows that Ibn Khaldun's thinking is often reduced through the framework of modern social science, where he is constructed as a proto-sociologist. This classification places the value of Ibn Khaldun's thinking primarily on his contribution to the birth of modern sociology, while the theological, metaphysical, and epistemological dimensions rooted in the Islamic worldview tend to receive less attention. This shows that Islamic epistemology is not explicitly rejected, but narrowed through selective emphasis on aspects that are considered relevant to modern disciplines.

A similar pattern can be traced in the classical Orientalist tradition, particularly through the historical-critical approach in philological studies and criticism of the normative aspects of Islam. Early studies of hadith by Goldziher and Schacht, for example, treated Islamic sources as historical material that had to be verified externally. (Humairah et al., 2025) Based on this situation, the epistemic authority of Islamic tradition does not function as a basis of knowledge, but rather as an object of scientific analysis. These findings indicate that the reduction of Islamic epistemology occurs through methodological mechanisms, in which the standards of objectivity and validity of science are determined by Western academic tradition.

Conversely, research (Atha, 2019) and (Anggraina et al., 2025) places Ibn Khaldun within an Islamic epistemological framework that integrates revelation and rationality. In this approach, Ibn Khaldun's thought is understood as part of an Islamic intellectual tradition that has its own cosmology and epistemic structure. This comparison reveals two different standards of assessment: Western tradition assesses Islamic thought based on its contribution to modern secular disciplines, while Islamic tradition assesses the coherence of thought with the Islamic theological and epistemological framework.

Based on this explanation, it can be seen that the dominance of Orientalism in modern Islamic studies works not through direct rejection of Islamic epistemology, but through a process of translation and adaptation into Western epistemic categories. This process is also reproduced in contemporary studies, including by Muslim scholars, when academic legitimacy is measured based on

conformity with global methodological standards and knowledge systems. Thus, the reduction of Islamic epistemology is a structural mechanism in modern Islamic studies that limits the role of the Islamic scholarly tradition as an autonomous knowledge framework.

The Mechanism of Epistemic Domination in Contemporary Knowledge Production

In the global academic sphere, what is recognized as legitimate science is determined by the structure of knowledge legitimacy, and it is through this mechanism that epistemic domination operates in the production of contemporary science. Oldac's research (Oldac, 2022) shows that there are limitations to the contribution of Muslim countries to global scientific publications, while high-reputation journals are mostly managed by Western institutions. This situation has shaped a system of scientific validation in which standards of quality, objectivity, and research methodology are determined by Western academic traditions. Given this, the production of knowledge about Islam is not assessed solely on the basis of scientific substance, but also on the basis of its compatibility with global publication and evaluation mechanisms.

This structure of dominance is reinforced by the infrastructure of contemporary scientific production, such as globally reputable journal systems, peer review mechanisms, the use of international academic language, and the concentration of research centers in Western institutions. A number of studies have shown an imbalance in scientific publication contributions between Western countries and the Muslim world (one of which is Oldac's 2022 study above), which has an impact on the formation of standards of knowledge legitimacy. This infrastructure functions as an academic selection mechanism that requires methodological conformity and a specific discursive format. In this context, approaches to Islam that are not in line with the dominant methodology tend to face legitimacy barriers in the mainstream publication system, even though they have internal coherence within the Islamic epistemological tradition.

(Sehlikoglu, 2025) shows that in dealing with this structure, Muslim scholars often adjust their theoretical frameworks, analytical language, and research methods to conform to global academic standards. This adjustment is not always done coercively, but rather through a process of internalizing established scientific norms. This shows that epistemic domination in contemporary Islamic studies works through a mechanism of reproduction, in which local actors play a role in maintaining dominant epistemic standards in order to gain academic recognition. It also shows that the mechanism of epistemic domination has an impact on the form of Islamic knowledge that is produced and widely promoted. Islamic studies that are descriptive, historical, and critical of normative aspects are more easily accepted

in the global academic system, while approaches that position Islamic epistemology as an autonomous knowledge framework tend to be marginalized. Thus, epistemic domination in contemporary knowledge production not only limits who can speak academically about Islam but also determines how Islam can be discussed scientifically.

The Reproduction of Orientalist Frameworks in the Muslim World

Nabil's research shows that modern Islamic reformism in Southeast Asia developed through intense dialogue with Western modernism, in which categories such as rationality, progress, and modernity were used as the main benchmarks for assessing Islamic traditions. The use of these categories indicates that the Orientalist framework not only operates from outside the Muslim world, but is also reproduced internally through the discourse of Islamic renewal. Based on this, Islam is positioned as a tradition that needs to be adapted to universal standards of modernity, rather than understood through its own epistemological framework. (Nabil et al., 2025)

The reproduction of this Orientalist framework cannot be separated from the role of Islamic higher education institutions. (Makki, 2019) and (Kasim, 2021) show that the epistemological crisis of Islam in higher education is closely related to the dominance of Western epistemic categories in the curriculum and teaching methodology. The academic process in Islamic universities tends to place Western epistemology as the evaluative standard, while the Islamic scientific tradition is treated as an object of study or a separate normative source from scientific practice.

The above argument shows that Muslim scholars are not only objects of global epistemic domination but also act as agents of the reproduction of the Orientalist framework through the internalization of dominant epistemic standards. The use of Western methodologies, analytical language, and conceptual categories in assessing Islamic traditions is the main mechanism of this reproduction. This process is gradual and is often considered an academic necessity rather than a form of epistemic domination.

Thus, it can be understood that the reproduction of Orientalism in the Muslim world works through the normalization of Western epistemic standards in the discourse of reformism and Islamic educational institutions. This reproduction reinforces the position of Western epistemology as a legitimate framework of knowledge, while limiting the possibility of developing Islamic epistemology as an autonomous system of knowledge in contemporary science production.

Based on the above explanations, this study shows that there is a relatively consistent pattern of knowledge construction in modern Islamic studies. Islam tends to be understood and explained through Western epistemic categories such as objectivity, rationality, historicism, and textual criticism methodology, which serve

as the main frame of reference in the process of assessing, interpreting, and validating knowledge about Islam, regardless of the cultural or religious background of the author. This finding shows that the Islamic scholarly tradition in the modern academic context is more often recognized as valid knowledge to the extent that it can be translated or reframed in accordance with these epistemic categories, while Islamic epistemology itself is rarely used as an autonomous evaluative basis. This pattern shows that scientific legitimacy in modern Islamic studies operates through epistemic standards that were formed in the history of Western scientific development. This epistemic structure, as shown in the previous subsections, is rooted in the historical context of Orientalism, but in contemporary practice continues to operate through institutional mechanisms such as the university system, higher education curricula, and global scientific publications, and is reproduced in academic practice by scholars and institutions in the Muslim world.

Discussion

Orientalism as an Epistemic Structure: A Historical-Critical Interpretation of Research Findings

The results section has shown how Islam was constructed as an object of study through philological and historical approaches in the traditions of Goldziher and Schacht. At the interpretive level, these findings can be understood as the initial phase of the formation of external epistemic standards regarding Islam. Here, Edward Said's ideas in *Orientalism* help explain that Orientalism is not merely a representational bias, but rather a system of knowledge that determines how Islam can be discussed scientifically. (Said, 2003) Thus, categories such as objectivity, historical criticism, and methodological neutrality found in Orientalist texts are not understood as neutral technical procedures, but as part of an epistemic configuration formed within the power relations of colonial modernity.

The apparent continuity between classical Orientalist texts and the works of modern Muslim scholars, such as the reduction of Ibn Khaldun to a proto-sociologist or the adoption of global methodological language by Muslim academics, shows that epistemic domination did not end with the classical colonial phase. (Atha, 2019) To explain this continuity, Anibal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of knowledge is relevant as an analytical tool. Quijano explains that coloniality did not end with the collapse of formal colonialism, but rather persists as a matrix of power that regulates the hierarchy of knowledge, in which European modern rationality and epistemology are positioned as universal standards for scientific validity. Within this framework, global methodological standards function as an evaluative horizon that internalizes this hierarchy, even when used by scholars who are ideologically critical of the West. (Quijano, 2007) Thus, the uniformity of epistemic categories found in texts across traditions is not merely a methodological coincidence, but a consequence of the globally institutionalized structure of knowledge legitimation.

Findings regarding the dominance of reputable journals and international publication mechanisms reveal the operational form of this epistemic structure. In this regard, what is referred to in the literature as academic gatekeeping (i.e., the mechanisms of scientific selection and legitimation that regulate what knowledge is worthy of publication based on certain methodological and discursive standards) can be read as the transformation of Orientalism from representational discourse into institutional mechanisms of scientific production. Scientific authority is determined not only by the quality of arguments but also by conformity to globally normalized formats, methodologies, and theoretical languages. Therefore, epistemic dominance operates procedurally and administratively, but is rooted in an epistemological history that has been traced genealogically in research results.

In addition, findings regarding the dichotomy between religious and modern sciences in Islamic higher education reveal the internal dimensions of this structure. The separation between revelation and scientific rationality does not appear to be an inherent characteristic of Islamic tradition, but rather a consequence of the adoption of the modern university model based on secular disciplines. The discourse of *naqliyyah*-*'aqliyyah* integration in this case can be understood as a discursive response to this epistemic fragmentation. However, as shown in the data, the scientific evaluation standards used in academic practice still refer to Western epistemic categories, so that integration often stops at the level of institutional rhetoric. Therefore, the idea of *ta'dib* from Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Masrufah et al., 2025) is not positioned as a normative solution, but rather as an internal epistemological reflection on the problem of modern scientific fragmentation. Its presence in Muslim intellectual discourse shows that awareness of the dominance of epistemological structures has emerged from within the tradition itself.

Overall, this discussion shows that the main issue in modern Islamic studies is not merely a matter of biased representation or methodological differences, but rather the persistence of epistemic structures that govern the definition of Islam, standards of truth, and scientific authority. Through a historical-critical reading, this study shows that Orientalism functions as an epistemic framework that continues to operate in the production of contemporary knowledge, whether through conceptual categories, institutional mechanisms, or internal reproduction in the Muslim world. Thus, epistemological issues in modern Islamic studies need to be understood as issues of historical and institutionalized knowledge structures, not merely differences in methodological approaches.

Conclusion

The main findings of this study indicate that the fundamental problem in modern Islamic studies does not lie in the content or theme of the study of Islam, but rather in the epistemic standards used to assess and validate the study. Through

a historical-critical reading of classical Orientalist texts, the works of modern scholars in the Western epistemological tradition, and the writings of contemporary Muslim scholars, this study shows that categories such as objectivity, historicism, textual criticism, and methodological neutrality function as an evaluative horizon that is accepted as scientific and universal. In fact, these categories have historical roots in the configuration of modern Western knowledge that developed in the context of colonialism and the institutionalization of Orientalism. The dominance of Orientalism in modern Islamic studies, therefore, does not primarily work through explicit ideological statements, but rather through the normalization of scientific standards that have been internalized in academic procedures, publication systems, curricula, and global scientific legitimacy mechanisms.

This study does not stop at repeating classical critiques of Orientalism as a representational discourse, but shifts the focus of analysis to the level of operational epistemic structures in contemporary academic practice. By mapping the continuity between the genealogical construction of Islam as an object of science, the epistemological reduction of Islam through the process of modern categorization, gatekeeping mechanisms in global science production, and the reproduction of Orientalist frameworks in Muslim higher education institutions, this study shows that the crisis of modern Islamic epistemology is more related to the workings of knowledge legitimation structures than simply the absence of alternative models. The main contribution of this research lies in its systematic effort to trace how scientific standards are formed, institutionalized, and reproduced across scientific traditions.

However, this study has a number of limitations. First, the data corpus is limited to purposively selected academic texts, so it does not cover the entire spectrum of scientific practices and debates in various contexts in the Muslim world. Second, the library approach with historical-critical analysis has not been supplemented with empirical field data, such as curriculum studies, interviews with academics, or institutional policy analysis, so that the actualization of epistemic structures is mainly read through textual representations. Third, variations in geographical and institutional contexts have not been analyzed comparatively. Therefore, further research with more diverse methodological approaches, such as institutional case studies, higher education policy analysis, and cross-national comparative research, is needed to deepen our understanding of how these epistemic structures work in concrete practice. The development of this type of research is expected to provide a stronger analytical basis for the formulation of academic policy and the development of epistemologically and contextually reflective Islamic studies in the face of global knowledge structures.

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