After Orientalism
Leiden Studies
in Islam and Society

Editors

Léon Buskens (Leiden University)
Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden University)

Editorial Board

Maurits Berger (Leiden University) – R. Michael Feener (National University of Singapore) – Nico Kaptein (Leiden University)
Jan Michiel Otto (Leiden University) – David S. Powers (Cornell University)

VOLUME 2

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/isis
Contents

Acknowledgements  IX
Preface  X
   François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin

PART 1
Alternative Historiographies of Orientalism

Orientalism, Dead or Alive? A French History  3
   François Pouillon

The Real Discourses of Orientalism  18
   Robert Irwin

The Invention of Islamic Law: A History of Western Studies of Islamic
Normativity and Their Spread in the Orient  31
   Léon Buskens and Baudouin Dupret

The Forbidden Orient! Endo-Exoticism and Anti-Anthropological
Nationalism in the Writings of Some Contemporary Moroccan
Intellectuals  48
   Zakaria Rhani

Between Tolerance and Persecution: North Africans on North African
Jewish History  64
   Jessica M. Marglin

“It is Good to Know Something of Various Peoples' Ways of Life”  74
   Olivier Herrenschmidt

PART 2
Other Imperialisms

The Ottoman Empire and Orientalism: An Awkward Relationship  89
   Edhem Eldem
“Go West”: Variations on Kemalist Orientalism 103
Emmanuel Szurek

Some Side Effects of a Progressive Orientology: Academic Visions of Islam in the Soviet South after Stalin 121
Stéphane A. Dudoignon

Minority Nationalities in China: Internal Orientalism 134
Elisabeth Allès

PART 3
Recovering Non-indigenous Heritages

Jean-Gabriel Leturcq

A Genealogy of Egyptian Folklore: Ahmad Amîn as a Reader of Edward Lane 162
Emmanuelle Perrin

Mohamed Galal (1906–1943): a Pioneering Egyptian Anthropologist 175
Nicholas S. Hopkins

Italian Colonial Knowledge and Identity-Shaping in Libya: A Dual Instrumentalization of Endogenous Anthropological Knowledge 188
Mouldi Lahmar

PART 4
Inventing Orientalist Traditions

Arab Receptions of the Arabian Nights: Between Contemptuous Dismissal and Recognition 199
Sylvette Larzul

The Invention of the Moroccan Carpet 218
Alain de Pommereau
Creative Differences, Creating Difference: Imagining the Producers of Moroccan Fashion and Textiles  236
  Claire Nicholas

Middle Eastern Collections of Orientalist Painting at the Turn of the 21st Century: Paradoxical Reversal or Persistent Misunderstanding?  251
  Mercedes Volait

After Orientalism: Returning the Orient to the Orientals  272
  Jean-Claude Vatin

List of Contributors  279
Index  282
Acknowledgements

François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin

These texts principally originate from a series of seminars and a symposium organized in Paris in the course of the academic year 2011-2012. The meetings were supported by the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA). Additional support was offered at the EHESS by the Centre d’Histoire Sociale de l’Islam Méditerranéen (CHSIM) and the Institut d’Etude de l’Islam et des Sociétés du Monde Musulman (IISMM), and by the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), through its Institut national des Sciences humaines et sociales and its area studies centers: Center for the Study of Modern and Contemporary China, and Center for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkan, and Central Asian Studies (CETOBAC). We also gratefully acknowledge the role of the following institutes, French and foreign: the Centre Jacques Berque (CJB), in Rabat, Morocco; the King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saoud Foundation for Islamic Studies and the Social Sciences in Casablanca, Morocco; the Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain (IRM) in Tunis, Tunisia; The Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS) in Leiden, the Netherlands, gave important support for this publication; and the Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia in Princeton, USA, gave specific help for the translation into English of most of the texts published in this volume.

In addition to the institutions which have generously supported the meetings and the publication of the articles in which they resulted, we in are indebted to a number of colleagues for helping us to make this publication possible: Robert Ageneau (Editions Kathala, Paris); Léon Buskens (LUCIS, Leiden); Dominique Casajus (CNRS, CHSIM, Paris); Pierre-Noël Denieuil (CNRS, IRMC, Tunis); Baudouin Dupret (CNRS, CJB, Rabat); Mohamed Sghir Janjar (King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saoud Foundation, Casablanca); Bernard Haykel (Transregional Institute, Princeton), Bernard Heyberger (EHESS, IISMM, Paris); Lucette Valensi (EHESS, Paris); Mercedes Volait (CNRS, InVisu, Paris); and François Zabbal (IMA, Paris).

We are also grateful to the two translators who worked on this volume for their care and their craft, Amy Jacobs and Jessica M. Marglin, and to the anonymous peer reviewers solicited by Brill for their constructive reports.
Preface*

François Pouillon and Jean-Claude Vatin

The debate concerning Orientalism began over half a century ago with decolonization. The scholarly turn that came in the wake of Edward Said’s landmark book *Orientalism* (published in 1978) was in fact part of a larger political critique of “colonial science” which had already made a significant impact on the humanities and the social sciences. Today, it is time for an historical evaluation of the assertion that the various forms of Orientalism (literary, artistic, linguistic, architectural, cultural)—as both fields of scholarly inquiry and styles of creative expression—were fundamentally subservient to an enterprise of Western domination whose ultimate incarnation was colonialism.

Although the field of Orientalism extends significantly beyond this relatively brief period and the specific territory of the colonial regime, we do not intend to provide an inventory of the criticisms that were levelled at this thesis. Nor do we claim that the link between Orientalism and Western imperialism is entirely false. Our goal here is instead to broaden the discussion. Until now, scholarship on Orientalism has focused on establishments located in the metropolis and on the agents of science and power that were involved in this enterprise of knowledge, representation, evocation or domination. This unilateral approach is inherently limited and should be corrected.

In the framework of the *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française* (Paris: IISM M & Karthala, 2008), we undertook a nearly comprehensive study of those in the francophone world who, in one way or another, were associated with Orientalism: their social and political affiliations, their itineraries, their motivations, as well as their *modus operandi*. This endeavor demonstrated the extraordinary diversity of situations and levels of involvement among so-called Orientalists. Moreover, the dictionary showed that the field of Orientalism is riddled by inherent contradictions and utterly devoid of the consensus, notably in ideological terms, with which it is most often portrayed. Moreover, we limited ourselves to the French-speaking world; far greater discrepancies would appear were we to extend the comparison to what took place in other regions, starting with the Anglo-Saxon world, and to an even greater extent with other western powers whose colonial histories were significantly different and followed their own specific chronologies (such as Germany).

* Translation by Jessica M. Marglin.
Much remains to be done to illustrate not just one but many histories, according to the languages used (Orientalism in German, Italian, English, Russian, etc.), fields of activity (in addition to more “classic” disciplines such as the study of languages and civilizations, artistic productions, religious sciences, travel literature and so on, greater attention should be paid to music and the arts), and cultural regions (beyond the Arabic, Turkish and Persian Islamic world, which has already been largely explored, more consideration should be given to India, China, Japan and other outlying regions). In order to be conclusive, these “regional” endeavors would have to adopt a rigorous comparative approach.

The present volume does not attempt impossibilities, i.e. on the one hand to refute Said’s statement or to discuss the pros and cons of his thesis nor, on the other, to survey all questions regarding stereotyped Orientalism. Rather, this is an attempt to broaden the scope of the debate by raising new issues through an innovative perspective: we propose to study these issues not from the center but from the peripheries.

One of the sharpest criticisms aimed at Edward Said’s thesis emphasized that it reduced Orientalism to a unilateral action on behalf of the West. As a result, Said’s understanding of Orientalism implies that the Orient, or rather Orients in the plural, did not have recourse to any agency or intervention in the global movement for the production of self-knowledge, not to mention power. They would remain eternal victims, a status which might suit them in certain ways but does not by any means capture the entirety of their experience. This point of view not only ignores the acculturation processes and group strategies employed by the people who lived in these Orients, but also fails to take into account the dynamic that notably led to the emergence of various fundamentalisms, from which the notorious theory of the “clash of civilizations” stems.

It is precisely this part of the story that we would like to examine by addressing the question of Orientalism from the point of view of those places called Oriental. Our aim is to analyze the effects on local societies of what was both an important intellectual and institutional movement—one which necessarily changed not only their world, but also how they represented their world. In 2010–2011 we began working on a significant project in various seminars at the Écoles des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and the Institut du Monde Arabe. This collaboration resulted in an international symposium entitled “L’orientalisme et après” (“Orientalism and afterwards”) that was held in Paris on 15–17 June 2011 and which has already resulted in several publications in Paris, Tunis and Rabat.¹ This symposium was truly international, gathering

¹ Special issue, ‘L’Orient créé par l’Orient’, Qantara, 80, (July 2011); Après l’orientalisme: l’Orient
together not only Europeans but also scholars from the Middle East, North Africa, India, China and the United States. Nonetheless, the majority perspective was quite opposed to the tone of “subaltern” or “postcolonial” studies which helped make Orientalism a foundational text, and this perspective is evident in all the resulting publications. The contributions to the present volume are the outcome of this symposium.

What follows is an abridged version for an Anglophone audience of earlier publications. In order to offer a more detailed view of what we would like to demonstrate about Orientalism as we see it today, we will deal first with alternative historiography, before addressing the question of “other” forms of imperialism. Then we will turn to local chief actors, both to the ones able to recover non-indigenous heritage and to those literally inventing Orientalist traditions.

We begin with a series of historiographical analyses that are intended to elaborate on the thesis that the history of Orientalism is neither uniform nor unequivocal. Rather, this history demonstrates surprising twists and turns as well as paradoxical relationships between intellectual metropoles of the colonial period and new peripheries. Indeed, local debates and contexts took precedence over a supposedly global history in what were ultimately quite decentralized—and thus extremely dynamic—spaces.

The lessons of world history, which assumes a plurality of worlds, ask us to go beyond a notion of empire which is limited to metropolis and colony (or post-colony). A contemptuous and even objectifying attitude towards peripheral populations is generally characteristic of imperialisms—each of which has its “Orients” and its “Orientalisms.” Going beyond this binary should make us question the specific character we have imbued to Orientalism in the West.

Hence the opportunity to explore whether Said’s critique would also apply to empires other than those of Western European powers. The three cases that are analyzed in the present collection of essays—those of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian (and Soviet) empire, and the Chinese empire—demonstrate the characteristics these hegemonic powers shared in common and how they


2 The contributions were originally written in English or translated thanks to the support of the Transregional Institute of Princeton. They all offer condensed versions which aim to capture the main argument of each piece. Readers interested in longer and more detailed versions of these texts can find them in the above-mentioned French-language publications, especially in the edited volume published by Karthala (2011).
differed in their construction of knowledge about other, usually dependent, societies and cultures.

Another important aim of the book is to observe how post-independence states have made use of the knowledge accumulated under colonial rule. A number of contributions examine how these states appropriate the discourse of their former masters for the sake of national identity and the building of nation-states and how they reflect passages from “colonial” scholars to “post-colonials” who shift, adapt, and re-organize what was once the hegemonic discourse of the imperial powers for their own purposes.

The greatest contribution of these essays is to re-examine cultural creations born in the encounter (colonial or not) with foreigners—productions that mirror or echo the construction of the self by the other—and understand it as an indigenous production. This is more than a mere ruse; it is the result of a creative practice that belongs to all groups, and is a manifestation of their liberty.

What emerges from the essays in this book is nothing less than a new landscape in which to situate past, present and future research on cultures and societies of the non-Western world. Together they provide a guide that leads us beyond the restrictive dichotomy of a confrontation between West (which is usually limited to Europe) and East (normally meaning the Middle East).

All of these re-examinations have another point in common; they refuse to mount an antithesis to the thesis that has been critiqued and found problematic. Nonetheless, they are useful insofar as they bring to the fore the critical faculty encouraged by anthropology; no one is spared from the imperative to counter what is best seen as an “ideological lullaby” with a plausible historical narrative, concrete albeit uncertain; in other words, French empiricism instead of French theory.
PART 1

Alternative Historiographies of Orientalism
Orientalism, Dead or Alive? A French History*

François Pouillon

Disjointed Histories

The Orientalism debate was launched over half a century ago at the time of decolonization and as part of the wave of critical analysis then rolling through the social sciences, and it is fair to say that Edward Said’s famous work1 was neither the first nor the most striking publication in this field, at least for a time. The debate was first launched by secular-minded French-speaking intellectuals armed with a dual culture but enrolled in the nationalist movement: entitled “Orientalism in Crisis,” an article by the Egyptian Marxist sociologist Anouar Abdel Malek dates from 1963;2 the Algerian nationalist intellectual Mohamed Sahli published “Décoloniser l’histoire” in 1965;3 and in 1976, the Moroccan novelist Abdelkebir Khatibi published a broadside against Jacques Berque later entitled “L’orientalisme désorienté.”4 Khatibi presumably did not know that as early as 1960, during an Orientalist conference, Berque himself had already opened fire on the discipline by criticizing certain practices.5 Considering the terms “Orientalist” and even “anthropologist” politically and scientifically obsolete, Berque preferred to call his chair at the Collège de France “Histoire sociale de l’islam contemporain.”

This deconstructive work being undertaken in France was to extend still further. Above and beyond Orientalism as the scholarly study of a body of languages and civilizations, what came under fire was the political dimension of the organized social sciences and their close connections with the colonial enterprise. That was the substance of an essay on the history of the Maghreb published by Abdallah Laroui in 1970 with the activist publishing house François Maspero.6 Laroui objected to a textbook that had been in use for four decades, the work of Charles-André Julien, senior professor in the

---

* Translation by Amy Jacobs.
History of Colonization at the Sorbonne and himself an intransigent activist in the decolonization cause. What is important to note here is that the initial move to reassess colonial history was relayed by French intellectuals. As early as 1964, Julien published the first volume of an *Histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine*,\(^7\) a work that has not been superseded to this day; the second volume was written by another major historian of the region, Charles-Robert Ageron.\(^8\) These were “Français de France” (as opposed to French citizens born in Algeria), recognized by the academic institution and with no connections to activist undertakings, and yet they too, in the same period, were committed to a thorough overhaul of what Ageron termed the “colonial vulgate.”

It was similarly as a critique of “colonial science”—another name for Orientalism, at that time, in France—that an entire generation infused with anti-colonialist convictions became involved in the “coopération,” a program of development aid that followed on from the independence of former French colonies.\(^9\) Publications in connection with this experience include Philippe Lucas and Jean-Claude Vatin’s *L’Algérie des anthropologues*,\(^10\) criticized for being overly schematic, and *Le Mal de voir*, an anthology of papers presented at a conference held in the wake of May 1968 and quite explicitly subtitled “Ethnology and Orientalism: Politics and Epistemology, Critique and Self-Critique.”\(^11\) Meanwhile, an anthology entitled *Anthropologie et impérialisme*,\(^12\) likewise published by Maspero, denounced scholars’ involvement in America’s imperial enterprise in Southeast Asia. So an entire library was already on French academics’ bookshelves before Said’s work was published, which itself marked the birth of “postcolonial studies,” which originated in the United States. This explains why the French translation of the work, published in 1980,\(^13\) went virtually unnoticed in France.

While most French-language researchers working in the Arab zone agreed that social science research was fully entangled in colonial history, Said’s

---

handling of this question seemed greatly oversimplified: on our side of the Atlantic we had already left behind ideological critique and moved on to another phase of inquiry. At that time, for us, the point was to study the social history of intellectual productions, and so to do monograph studies of individual or collective actors at pure and applied research institutions. At a conference he organized at Princeton University on “social sciences and colonialization,” Jean-Claude Vatin launched a new research program along those lines, and it was in that direction that we worked for the next two decades, producing a thorough critical assessment entitled *D’un Orient, l’autre* and a collective study of “scholarly explorations” from the Mediterranean. All researchers working in and on the Middle East at that time agreed that Said’s argument was as self-evident—and therefore fundamentally well-founded—as his analysis was simplistic. But though we shared his sensitivity for all ex-colonized peoples, his concern to emphasize the entanglement of knowledge and power and even his political commitment to Palestine, made the work seem to us dangerously reductive as Maxime Rodinson, a man of immense Orientalist erudition and a steadfast commitment to the left, showed in bringing together some of his own remarkable articles on the subject in *La fascination de l’Islam*. In the private preserve of specialists of Islam and the Arab world, Said became the target of much criticism on both theoretical and historiographical grounds. The combination of convincing scholarly critiques of *Orientalism*, advancements in the history of sciences in the region, and the return to grace of “Orientalist” painting led scholars working on these questions in France to stop thinking of Said’s book as a required reference work.

**The Assault from America**

It was therefore with some astonishment that two decades later we found ourselves watching as Said’s work became in the United States the banner for the “postcolonial” movement. It seemed to us that in those intervening decades our representations of things had significantly evolved. After the enthusiasm of