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Snouck Hurgronje and the Tradition of Orientalism in Indonesia

Harda Armayanto

Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS)

Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

harda@unida.gontor.ac.id

Adib Fattah Suntoro

Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS)

Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

adibsuntoro42100@mhs.unida.gontor.ac.id

Zen Anwar Saeful Basyari

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

2220040109@student.uinsgd.ac.id

Nurul Aminah Mat Zain

Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion,

Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences,

International Islamic University Malaysia

nurul.ameena83@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to reveal and analyze the works and thoughts of Snouck Hurgronje's orientalism in Indonesia. Hurgronje was the most influential orientalist in formulating the Dutch Colonialism policy in Indonesia. Unlike most orientalists who only studied Islam through literature studies, Hurgroje also penetrated directly into the Muslim community and mingled with them, he even managed to infiltrate Muslim intellectuals by pretending to convert to Islam. This research is a qualitative study that uses literature to collect data from books, journals, and other documents related to Hurgronje's thoughts. This research found that there is a deep relationship between orientalism and colonialism as seen in Hurgronje's works. Among his most phenomenal orientalist thoughts is his thesis that the Hajj ritual in Islam is a pagan legacy. Hurgronje also made a strategic move in the Aceh War by advising the Dutch East Indies government to separate religion and politics (secularization). According to Hurgronje, if Islam was integrated with politics, it would encourage people's resistance,

which was dangerous for the Dutch. In addition, Hurgronje also developed the Receptie theory which aims to dwarf Islamic law and uphold traditional law to clash the two.

Keywords: *Snouck Hurgronje; Orientalism; Indonesia; Holland.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap serta menganalisis sepak terjang dan pemikiran orientalisme Snouck Hurgronje di Indonesia. Hurgronje merupakan orientalis yang paling berpengaruh dalam merumuskan kebijakan kolonial Belanda di Indonesia. Tidak sebagaimana kebanyakan orientalis yang hanya mengkaji Islam melalui kajian literatur saja, Hurgronje juga terjun langsung ke tengah komunitas Muslim dan berbaur dengan mereka, bahkan ia berhasil menginfiltrasi kalangan cendekiawan Muslim dengan berpura-pura masuk Islam. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan menggunakan studi kepustakaan dalam pengumpulan datanya, yang diambil dari buku, jurnal, maupun dokumen lain yang berkaitan dengan pemikiran Hurgronje. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa terdapat hubungan era tantara orientalisme dan kolonialisme sebagaimana terlihat dari sepak terjang Hurgronje. Di antara pemikiran orientalismenya yang paling fenomenal adalah tesisnya bahwa ritual haji dalam Islam merupakan peninggalan kaum pagan. Hurgronje juga menyusun langkah strategis dalam perang Aceh, yaitu dengan menyarankan Pemerintahan Hindia-Belanda agar memisahkan agama dan politik (sekularisasi). Sebab menurutnya, jika Islam bersatu dengan politik akan meningkatkan semangat perlawanan rakyat, yang mana itu berbahaya bagi Belanda. Selain itu, Hurgronje juga mengembangkan teori Receptie yang bertujuan untuk mengerdilkan hukum Islam dan menjunjung tinggi hukum adat dengan tujuan membenturkan keduanya.

Kata Kunci: *Snouck Hurgronje; Orientalisme; Indonesia; Belanda.*

Introduction

Western scholars have been studying Oriental culture for centuries. The rise of these studies then shaped a movement that in the 18th century began to be called orientalism.¹ However,

¹ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam: Gerakan Bersama Missionaris, Orientalis dan Kolonialis," *Tsaqafah* 5, no. 1 (2009): 56, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v5i1.145>. Liberalism in social sciences and politics in Western Civilization has marginalized religion or separated religion from social lives and politics step by step. When liberalism became parts of religious thought of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, it had subordinated the church under the political interest and humanism, and reduced its theological role in almost all aspects of social lives. Therefore, in liberalism of religious thought, the main problem to be argued is the concept of God (Theology

according to A.J. Arberry (1905-1969) the term orientalist has appeared since 1638, which was used by a member of the Eastern (Greek) church. According to him, an orientalist is a person who studies various languages and literature of the Eastern world.² This means that the term orientalist appeared a century earlier than the term orientalism.

If the term orientalist is associated with the subject or agent of oriental studies, then the term orientalism is associated with the field or branch of science related to oriental studies. As for the definition and scope of orientalism studies in terms of its root words, the term orientalism comes from the word orient (East) which is the opposite of the word occident (West), namely the study or scholarship on eastern objects (scholarship or learning in oriental subjects).³ This definition is held by Denis Sinor, who defines orientalism as a branch of scholarship that uses Western methods to explain problems in the East.⁴ In this definition, Sinor does not limit the scope of orientalism to the study of a particular religion.

In further studies, orientalism became identical to Christians who were passionate about the study of Islam and the Arabic language.⁵ Thus, Muhammad Salih al-Bunḍāq concluded that the orientalism movement was very concerned about Islam with its in-depth study of the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, Islamic groups, language, and everything else related to Islam.⁶ So, it is not

² Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Tradisi Orientalisme dan Framework Studi Al-Qur'an," *Tsaqafah* 7, no. 1 (2011): 3.

³ *Longman Dictionary of English Language* (Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1984), 1035.

⁴ Denis Sinor, *Orientalism and History* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970), xiv.

⁵ Muhammad Izat Tahtawiy, *Tabsyir Wa Al-Istisyraḡ* (Kairo: Majma' Buhuts Islam, 1977), 35.

⁶ Muhammad Saleh Al-Bunḍāq, *Al-Musytasyriqūn Wa Tarjamah Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm* (Bairut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1980), 87.

surprising that orientalism tends to connote the study of Western scholars on Islam.

Indonesia, which is classified as part of the Eastern civilization and as a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, is certainly not immune from the study of Orientalists. One of the most prominent orientalist in the region was Snouck Hurgronje. With his various controversies, Hurgronje received serious attention from scholars, especially regarding his work and thoughts. One of the controversial issues of this Dutch orientalist was his conversion to Islam, which he used to penetrate the inner Muslim community, study Islam and its adherents, and then produce ideas that were used by the Dutch colonialists as a reference in the formulation of their war and political strategies. The advice Snouck gave to the Dutch East Indies Government was very helpful to the Dutch colonialism and imperialism project. Therefore, it is worth studying and research the biography and thoughts of the controversial Snouck Hurgronje.

Surely many studies and works analyzed Snouck Hurgronje's thoughts and role as an Orientalist. Among these works, is the work by Léon Buskens and Jean Kommers entitled "Mekka as an Ethnographic Text: How Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje Lived and Constructed Daily Life in Arabia". The work examines the life and contributions of Dutch scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), focusing on his research in Mecca, his advisory role in the Dutch East Indies, and his influence on modern Islamic studies, while the contributors provide new insights that challenge conventional views in European academia.⁷ On another occasion, Léon Buskens wrote a piece entitled "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, "Holy War" and Colonial Concerns". This research mainly centered on Snouck Hurgronje's understanding of the

⁷ Léon Buskens and Jean Kommers, "Mekka as an Ethnographic Text: How Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje Lived and Constructed Daily Life in Arabia," in *Scholarship in Action: Essays on the Life and Work of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936)* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 1–92, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004513617>.

facts and his construction of ethical judgments in the context of the relationship between Orientalism and the formulation of colonial and nationalist policies, particularly the role of the ulama in the instrumentalization of Islam.⁸ There is also another study, entitled “Looking at Indonesians: Snouck Hurgronje’s Arab Lens on the Dutch East Indies”, written by Kevin W. Fogg. The research explores how Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje’s fundamental perspective as an Arabist influenced his study of the Dutch East Indies, leading to a preference for Arab orthodoxy and the perception of Indonesians as inferior Muslims with non-Islamic cultural practices, as evidenced by his work “The Acehnese.”⁹ However, unlike these studies, this paper seeks to describe Snouck Hurgronje’s biography and thought and analyze his framework in his research in Indonesia.

This article is categorized as qualitative research, which is descriptive and tends to use analysis.¹⁰ The method used in this research is library research, which means that The data sources of this research are taken from Snouck Hurgronje’s works as primary sources and the works of other authors as secondary sources. The data collection technique of this research is documentation, searching for data or theories relevant to the research topic. The data analysis techniques used are content analysis techniques and descriptive analysis.¹¹

⁸ Léon Buskens, *Jihad and Islam in World War I* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 29-51.

⁹ Kevin W Fogg, “Seeking Arabs but Looking at Indonesians : Snouck Hurgronje ’ s Arab Lens on the Dutch East Indies,” *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)* 8, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/19370679.2014.12023237>.

¹⁰ Iwan Hermawan, *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan Mixed Methode* (Kuningan: Hidayatul Quran Kuningan, 2019), 24.

¹¹ W. C John, *Research Design Pendekatan Kualitatif, Kuantitatif dan Mixed* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013), 84.

Results and Discussion

Traditions and Frameworks of Orientalism

Orientalism as a field of study cannot be separated from its historical roots, which are influenced by the ideological, religious, and belief background of Western society. According to Edward Said, the history of orientalism is influenced by religious, political, and scientific milieu.¹² The history of the growth and development of orientalism is characterized by strong religious motives, especially anti-Muslim sentiments.¹³ Western scholars consider Islam as a religion that triggers a conflict with Christianity. For them, this conflict has existed since the Christian army led by Abrahah attacked the Kaaba, two months before the Prophet Muhammad was born.¹⁴ This religious sentiment then encouraged Western scholars to study Islam.

In addition, the political milieu also influenced the emergence of orientalism in the West. Before the Renaissance era of the 14th to 17th centuries in the West, the dominance of the Islamic state was very dominant politically. Even parts of Europe, such as Spain, had long been under the control of Islam. Meanwhile, Europe was still very weak in many aspects. Moreover, the defeat of the Crusaders in 1291 added to the wounds of European society.¹⁵ Therefore, the Church leaders, who at that time became the highest institution in Europe, began to introspect their steps, so that a new strategy emerged in destroying the power of Islam in addition to military strategies, namely through a scientific approach. This was the origin of orientalism. Starting from the activities of translating Arabic literature by European scholars in an unorganized manner,

¹² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 204.

¹³ Moh. Isom Mudin, "Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik atas Pemikiran Orientalis dan Liberal," in *Framework Studi Islam*, ed. Harda Armayanto (Ponorogo: CIOS, 2021).

¹⁴ Zarkasyi, "Tradisi Orientalisme dan Framework Studi Al-Qur'an," 4.

¹⁵ Syamzan Syukur, "Perang Salib dalam Bingkai Sejarah," *Jurnal Rihlah II*, no. 1 (2014): 55.

until later in 1312 the Vienna Church Conference was published which was the beginning of official orientalism.¹⁶ From this time, the development of the orientalism tradition was more scientific than political.

From its historical chronology, orientalism as a field of oriental studies experienced several phases of development. The first is the missionary and anti-muslim phase.¹⁷ A Western writer, R.W. Southern in his book *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, wrote that “Christians wanted the East and West of Europe to agree that Islam was a misguided version of Christianity.”¹⁸

The second phase was the phase of study and criticism, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Western people at that time dominated the Islamic world and its empires. They brought the original Arabic and Islamic manuscripts to many libraries in their countries. If we calculate, the number of Arabic literatures that moved to European libraries until the beginning of the 19th century was no less than 250,000 volumes and continues to grow to this day.¹⁹ In this phase (the end of the 18th century), orientalists changed their strategy by presenting a “new face” of orientalism, which they called the liberation of orientalism from missionary purposes to the course of scientific research only. Although the scientific label has been attached to the orientalism movement, it does not mean that the study of orientalism is completely devoid of fallacies and biases.

Orientalism then moved into its third phase, namely the study and colonialism phase, and lasted from the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century. In this phase, the tradition

¹⁶ Muhammad Bahar Akkase Teng, “Orientalis Dan Orientalisme Dalam Perspektif Sejarah,” *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya* 4, no. 1 (2016): 52.

¹⁷ Egi Sukma Baihaki, “Orientalisme dan Penerjemahan Al-Qur’an,” *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 1 (2017): 24, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiu.v16i1.1355>.

¹⁸ R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1978), 91–92, 108–9.

¹⁹ Hasan Abdul Rauf M. El-Badawiy dan Abdurrahman Ghirah, *Orientalisme Misionarisme: Menelkung Pola Pikir Umat Islam* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007), 5.

of orientalism became more inclined towards scientific research and became less abusive. At this time in the West, institutions of Islamic and Oriental studies were established in various places in close proximity to each other. In 1822, the Asiatic Society of Paris was founded in Paris; in 1823, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in England; and in 1916, the School of Oriental Studies, now the School of Oriental and African Studies, was established at the University of London.²⁰ From these institutions, various scientific journals on Islamic and eastern studies were published.²¹ The establishment of these study centers and the publication of scientific journals further established orientalism as a framework for Western studies.

Finally, the fourth phase is the study and politics phase. In this phase, the study of orientalism is not only for academic purposes, but also for political and even business purposes.²² In this phase, the style of orientalism changes again, vulgar religious sentiments are no longer used, so criticism of Islam tends to be softer. For example, Cantwell Smith, who argued that revelation was a representation of Prophet Muhammad's personal experience.²³ Likewise, Juynbool was known as an orientalist who intensely criticized the hadith methodology formulated by Muslim scholars.²⁴ The transformation in the attitude of the orientalists in this phase is very visible compared to the attitude of the previous orientalists. Although it seems scientific and objective, the framework of orientalist studies cannot be separated from the pattern and background of religion, politics, worldview, and values of Western civilization. Therefore, orientalist studies are still based on their

²⁰ Zarkasyi, "Tradisi Orientalisme dan Framework Studi Al-Qur'an", 6.

²¹ Susmihara, "Sejarah Perkembangan Orientalis," *Rihlah* 5, no. 1 (2017), 51.

²² Teng, "Orientalis dan Orientalisme dalam Perspektif Sejarah," 58.

²³ Lihat W.Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam-Selected Studies* (the Hague, 1981), 286.

²⁴ Faisal Haitomi and Maula Sari, "Mutawatir dalam Gugatan Outsider Kajian Pemikiran Juynbool Atas Hadis Man Kadzaba" 22, no. 2 (2021): 177–88.

subjectivity as Western people.²⁵

Edward Said recognizes this. According to him, orientalist studies of other cultures still seem discriminative. In other words, the demarcation between “us” and “them” is deeply embedded in the study of history, linguistics, race theory, philosophy, anthropology and also biology.²⁶ As a result, the framework of these studies forms a kind of pattern and model that is typical of the Western secular-liberal perspective. The problem then becomes that this perspective is used as the standard of truth in Islamic studies. In fact, this orientalist worldview subsequently influenced a lot, even tended to dominate the perspectives of a number of contemporary Islamic thinkers towards the Qur’an.²⁷

Orientalism in Indonesia and the Work of Christian Snouck Hurgronje

Historically, the orientalism movement that developed in Indonesia has existed since the pre-independence era, which was concurrent with the wave of European colonialism. However, when exactly this movement began is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, at least the influence of orientalism in the Islamic education system was first felt in 1607 when the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) established the first school in the city of Ambon. Subsequently, the establishment of Dutch schools was quite massive in various regions. Through its ethical policy in Indonesia, the Dutch allowed indigenous people to receive formal education in their schools. In 1907, General Van Heutz established village schools which later became the forerunner of Dutch schools for the indigenous people.²⁸ However, there was one sector of education that the

²⁵ Zarkasyi, “Tradisi Orientalisme dan Framework Studi Al-Qur’an,” 9.

²⁶ Edward Said, *The World, The Text, and The Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 14.

²⁷ Moh Isom Mudin, “Sejarah Kodifikasi Mushaf Utsmani: Kritik Atas Orientalis & Liberal,” *Tasfiyah* 1, no. 2 (2017): 311, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiyah.v1i2.1855>.

²⁸ Evayatun Nimah, “Pengaruh Orientalisme dalam Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia,” *Majalah Ilmiah Tabuah: Ta’limat, Budaya, Agama Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 2 (2021): 24.

Dutch could not touch at that time, namely pesantren education, because the Dutch Government did not have enough knowledge and data about Islam and Arabic.

Therefore, the Dutch government, followed by the British, began sending their best orientalists to conduct research in Indonesia. The results of the orientalists' research would be used as references and important insights for Dutch and British strategic policies in Indonesia, especially on issues directly related to Muslims. Among these orientalists were Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826) who focused much of his research on Java; William Marsden (1754-1836) who focused his research on Muslim communities in Sumatra; and Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) who focused on the study of Muslim communities in Aceh.²⁹

The last mentioned name, as the focus of study in this article, is a controversial Dutch orientalist figure. Perhaps Hurgronje is the most popular of all orientalists. This is because in order to collect in-depth and accurate information, he infiltrated the Muslim community in Aceh by pretending to convert to Islam. In addition, his role in supplying information and political advice to the Dutch colonial government was enormous.

Hurgronje has the full name Christian Snouck Hurgronje. He was born in Oosterhoud, Netherlands, on February 8, 1857. His father was a Protestant pastor named J. J. Snouck Hurgronje and his mother named Annamaria who was also a pastor's daughter. Van Koningsveld in his writing about Hurgronje recounts that his parents' marriage was preceded by an illicit relationship, which led to both of them being dismissed from Herford Church in Thalthen (Zeeland).³⁰ This unsavory past prompted them to

²⁹ Syukri Syukri, "Dampak Pemikiran Orientalis di Indonesia pada Masa Kolonial," *FiTUA: Jurnal Studi Islam* 2, no. 1 (2021): 43, <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitua.v2i1.286>.

³⁰ Saidin Ernas, "Pandangan Sonouck Hurgronje Tentang Islam dan Implikasinya Terhadap Praktik Hukum dan Politik di Indonesia," *Dialektika* 12, no. 2 (2019): 133, <https://doi.org/10.33477/dj.v12i2.1114>.

educate Hurgronje to become a pastor as a form of atonement for their past mistakes. However, the young Hurgronje was more interested in studying Semitic literature than becoming a pastor. After graduating from the Hogere Burgerschool (Five-Year Secondary School) at the age of 18, he entered Leiden University in 1875 to study Theology.³¹

While he was studying at Leiden University, Hurgronje's interest and talent in Islamic studies became stronger and more honed. Especially in 1878, after graduating from the faculty of Theology, Hurgronje began to plunge into the orientalism field. His encounter with the Leiden modernists made Hurgronje change his previous goal of becoming a pastor to become an orientalist.³² On November 24, 1880, his studies at the university ended with a doctoral dissertation on the pilgrimage to Makkah entitled *Het Mekkaansche Feest* (The Mecca Feast).³³ The dissertation focused on the origins of the hajj rituals that were based on the primary textual sources of Islamic teachings in the form of the Qur'an and authoritative traditions, such as Bukhari and Muslim.³⁴ After completing his doctoral program and performing well, Hurgronje was appointed as a lecturer at Leiden & Delf Academy.³⁵ Here, his intellectual career as an orientalist flourished. He played an important role in molding the cadres who would be sent to the Dutch East Indies.

Due to his doctoral research on the hajj, Hurgronje was assigned by the Dutch government to conduct research on the

³¹ Humar Sidik, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Dinamika Islam di Aceh Pada Masa Kolonial Belanda," *Jurnal Artefak* 7, no. 1 (2020): 36, <https://doi.org/10.25157/ja.v7i1.3282>.

³² Muhamad Misbachul Munir, "Keterlibatan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Menaklukkan Aceh Tahun 1899-1906 M" (Universitas Jember, 2019), 24.

³³ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *Het Mekkaansche Feest* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1880).

³⁴ Sidik, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Dinamika Islam di Aceh Pada Masa Kolonial Belanda," 36.

³⁵ Dita Hendriani, "Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936): Biografi dan Pemikirannya Tentang Islam di Indonesia," *Jurnal Widya Citra Pendidikan Sejarah* 1, no. 1 (2020): 58.

Dutch East Indies hajj pilgrims in the holy city of Makkah in 1884. The story of his journey in Makkah was documented in a diary that has been translated into English titled *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*.³⁶ Hurgronje first arrived in Jeddah and stayed at Raden Abu Bakar's house and learned Malay from him.³⁷ Raden Abu Bakar then introduced Hurgronje to his Moroccan teacher, Sayyid Abdullah al-Zawawi, who later became his patron while in Makkah. In order to accomplish his mission, Hurgronje needed to integrate into the Muslim community. So, he converted to Islam in front of the Qadhi of Jeddah on January 16, 1885 and took the name Abdul Gaffar.³⁸ Hurgronje's conversion to Islam has caused controversy among researchers, many of whom say that he converted to Islam only as a tactic to carry out his mission.

After converting to Islam, Hurgronje was able to freely enter the city of Makkah on February 21, 1885. There, he had many opportunities to meet with Indonesian pilgrims, as a result he received a lot of information about the ongoing war in Aceh.³⁹ However, Hurgronje was not satisfied with just gathering information from Acehnese pilgrims in Makkah. He then wanted to come directly to Aceh. The opportunity came when in 1889, the Dutch government gave him a position as Advisor on Native and Arab Affairs (*Adviseur voor Inlandse en Arabische zaken*) and sent him to Aceh. In fact, Hurgronje's curiosity about Aceh arose when he met a figure named Habib Abdoerrahman Az-Zahir, the former Chief Advisor to the Sultan of Aceh, who was dismissed for treason and defection to the Dutch.⁴⁰

³⁶ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, vol. 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

³⁷ Munir, "Keterlibatan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Menaklukkan Aceh Tahun 1899-1906 M," 25.

³⁸ Ernas, "Pandangan Sonouck Hurgronje Tentang Islam dan Implikasinya Terhadap Praktik Hukum dan Politik di Indonesia," 133.

³⁹ Sidik, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Dinamika Islam di Aceh pada Masa Kolonial Belanda," 36.

⁴⁰ Imam Subchi, "The History of Hadrami Arabic Community Development

Hurgronje made a secret trip to the hinterland of Aceh and arrived at the palace of the Sultan of Aceh in Keumala. This secret trip aimed to gather information on military strategy for the Dutch war effort in Aceh. On May 11, 1889, Hurgronje continued his mission as a spy agent to Batavia (Jakarta) which was the first step of his mission in Java. Accompanied by Haji Hasan Mustapha,⁴¹ he began his research exploring West Java and Central Java. Starting from Bandung on July 17, 1889, he went to Garut, Calincing, Cirebon, Ciamis, Tegal, Pekalongan, Bumiayu, Purbalingga, Wonosobo, and so on, until he returned to Garut and ended in Cianjur on December 15, 1889.⁴² After that, Hurgronje remained in Java. He even married a Sundanese girl named Sangkana in Ciamis. From this marriage, he had four children: Salamah Emah, Umar, Aminah, and Ibrahim. But in 1896 his wife died. Hurgronje then remarried the daughter of R.H. Muhamad Su'eb named Siti Sadijah in 1898.⁴³

After his journey in Java, Hurgronje was assigned to Aceh (July 16, 1891-February 4, 1892). This assignment did not significantly differ from his previous assignment in Makkah, which was to investigate the religion and politics of the region.⁴⁴ Hurgronje began his initial report on the social life of the Acehnese people covering various aspects, including customs, religion, social and

in Southeast Asia,” *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 14, no. 2 (2019): 247, <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2019.14.2.229-256>.

⁴¹ Haji Hasan Mustapha was a Sufi scholar from Sunda who was a close friend of Snouck Hurgronje. See Jajang Jahroni, “Book Review: Menemukan Haji Hasan Mustafa (1852-1930),” *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 2 (2018): 405–22, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i2.8974>.

⁴² V. Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje dan Islam*. (Jakarta: PT Girisukti Pasaka, 1989), 204–7.

⁴³ Jajang a Rohmana, “Persahabatan Penjajah dan Bangsa Jajahan di Hindia Belanda: C. Snouck Hurgronje dan Haji Hasan Mustapa,” *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 148, <https://doi.org/10.18196/aiijis.2016.0060.144-168>.

⁴⁴ Munir, “Keterlibatan Snouck Hurgronje Dalam Menaklukkan Aceh Tahun 1899-1906 M.”

politics. The findings of his research were then summarized in a report entitled “*Verslag Omtrentreligiens Politike Toestandenin Atjeh*”, a report on the political and religious situation in Aceh that was very useful as strategic input for the Dutch colonial government.⁴⁵ The reports were later booked under the title *De Atjehers* and translated into English under the title *The Achehnese* in 1906.⁴⁶

Snouck Hurgronje’s journey in Indonesia ended on March 12, 1906 and he returned to the Netherlands.⁴⁷ In his home country he was appointed Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at Leiden University. In between his activities, he also taught Zending candidates in Oestgeest. On June 26, 1936, Hurgronje died at the age of 81.⁴⁸ To this day, he is remembered as a “legend” in the fields of Arabistiek-Islamology and Orientalism. Because of his extraordinary services to the Netherlands, a monument of Snouck Hurgronje was erected in Rapenburg, which still exists today.⁴⁹ Looking at his career as an Orientalist, we can realize that Snouck Hurgronje was one of the most credible Orientalists in studying and researching Islam. He did not hesitate to infiltrate the Muslim community to collect accurate and valid information and data. Therefore, until the present day, his thoughts are still very relevant to be studied and observed.

Snouck Hurgronje’s Orientalist Thought

The beginning of Hurgronje’s thinking in orientalism studies has evolved since he was educated at Leiden University. This fact

⁴⁵ Sukirno Irfan Dame, T. Junaidi, “Pertentangan Antara Christian Snouck Hurgronje Dan Johannes Benedictus Van Heutsz Dalam Penetapan Kebijakan Kolonialisme Belanda Di Aceh (1898-1904),” *Seunenboka Lada* 2, no. 1 (2014): 33.

⁴⁶ Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, vol. 2 (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1906).

⁴⁷ Paul Van’t Veer, *Perang Aceh: Kisah Kegagalan Snouck Hurgronje* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1985), 230.

⁴⁸ Munir, “Keterlibatan Snouck Hurgronje dalam Menaklukkan Aceh Tahun 1899-1906 M,” 40.

⁴⁹ Ernas, “Pandangan Snouck Hurgronje Tentang Islam dan Implikasinya Terhadap Praktik Hukum dan Politik di Indonesia,” 134.

was proven by his success in compiling a doctoral dissertation on the pilgrimage to Makkah entitled “*Het Mekkaansche Feest*” (Mecca Feast).⁵⁰ This scientific work then becomes the starting point for him to further explore the field of orientalism. The following are some of Snouck Hurgronje’s orientalist thoughts on Islam, which include strategies in dealing with Muslims, especially Indonesian Muslims.

1. On the Hajj

Hurgronje pointed out the urgency of the Hajj in Islam and described its rituals in detail. In his explanation, he believed that the Hajj ritual in Islam was a relic of the paganism (*watsaniyah*) of the Arabs.⁵¹ Not only that, even for Snouck some of the Islamic teachings were adopted by the Prophet Mohammed from previous religions.⁵² From an Islamic perspective, this is obviously a misleading conclusion. If analyzed, Hurgronje’s conclusion is because he did not reveal the historical fact that the Hajj ritual has existed since the time of Prophet Abraham and the Kaaba building has existed even since the time of Prophet Adam.⁵³ Admittedly, the Hajj rituals underwent many deviations during the Jahiliah era with the inclusion of various pagan rituals. But with the sending of Prophet Muhammad, the ritual of Hajj became an obligation that must be performed by Muslims until the Day of Judgment.⁵⁴ Thus, Hajj is not a pagan ritual adopted by Muslims.

His views on the Hajj above show that the framework of orientalism dominated his thinking, where he linked the teachings of Islam with the teachings of previous religions in order to raise

⁵⁰ Hendriani, “Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936): Biografi dan Pemikirannya Tentang Islam di Indonesia,” 58.

⁵¹ Syukri, “Dampak Pemikiran Orientalis di Indonesia pada Masa Kolonial,” 50.

⁵² Read more in Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism: Lectures on Its Origin, Its Religious and Political Growth, and Its Present State*, Project Gutenberg Licence (Raleigh: Forgotten Books, 2003).

⁵³ Ali Musthafa Yaqub, *Haji Pengabdian Setan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2008), 3.

⁵⁴ Ibn Taimiyah, *Fiqh Al-Hajj* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1989), 7.

doubts about the purity of Islamic teachings.⁵⁵ Whereas previous orientalists, such as Abraham Geiger⁵⁶ and Theodore Noldeke,⁵⁷ compared the Qur'an with other books, Hurgronje compared the Hajj ritual in Islam with its practice during the Jahiliah period. The aim was the same: to distort historical facts and cause doubts among Muslims.⁵⁸ In this way, they wanted the number of the Hajj pilgrims to decrease. This was important because, according to Snouck's research, most of the people who opposed the Dutch were those who had returned from the Hajj pilgrimage.⁵⁹

Therefore, the Dutch Colonial Government has long intervened in regulating the practice of the Hajj in Indonesia. They tried to reduce the number of pilgrims, one of which was by making resolutions (policies) that made it difficult for pilgrims.⁶⁰ The policies issued by the Dutch East Indies government regarding the Hajj are known as "Hajj politics". The background to the emergence of this "Hajj politics" was because the Dutch saw that the Hajj had a special position in society, so they had the opportunity to become a mobilizer to oppose the Dutch. In fact, there were many rebellions and oppositions by the people against the Dutch that were pioneered by the hajjis, such as the Palembang jihad war and the Cilegon jihad war. In addition, the Dutch saw the hajj as cosmopolitan, allowing for the gathering of pilgrims from all over the world.⁶¹ Thus, the Dutch feared the spread of Pan-Islamism in the country.

⁵⁵ Zarkasyi, "Tradisi Orientalisme dan Framework Studi Al-Qur'an," 10.

⁵⁶ Abraham Geiger, "What Did Muhammad Borrow from Judaism?," in *The Origins of the Koran*, ed. Ibn Warraq (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 165.

⁵⁷ Theodore Noldeke, *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*, ed. Ibn Warraq (New York: Prometheus Books Amherst, 1998), 36–65.

⁵⁸ Syukri, "Dampak Pemikiran Orientalis di Indonesia pada Masa Kolonial," 50.

⁵⁹ E. Gobee and C. Adriaanse, *Nasihat-Nasihat C. Snouck Hurgronje Semasa Kepegawaiannya Kepada Pemerintah Belanda 1889 – 1936* (Jakarta: INIS, 1990), xxxix.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Gifari Syah Qohar Musa, "Politik Haji Belanda di Indonesia pada Masa Kolonial Belanda Tahun 1853-1902" (Universitas Nusantara, 2015), 7.

⁶¹ Husni Rahim, *Sistem Otoritas dan Adminitrasi Islam* (Ciputat: Logos, 1998), 180.

Hurgronje participated in formulating policies related to the hajj. In a 1922 regulation, he proposed that pilgrims should have a return ticket so that there would be a time limit for their stay in Makkah. Through this regulation, Hurgronje wanted to reduce the number of Hajj enthusiasts and narrow the opportunities for exchanging ideas between pilgrims in Makkah.⁶² But in reality, this did not work, because the number of pilgrims never decreased. On the contrary, the number increased. What the Dutch feared eventually happened. As Pieter Korver noted, in the early years of the 20th century there was an extraordinary revival of Islamic reform. One of them was the spread of the thoughts of Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin al-Afghani which led to struggles in the education sector. So, in those years Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama founded by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and Muhammadiyah by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan were born after they returned from the pilgrimage and studied in Mecca.⁶³

2. On Strategy in the Aceh War

Hurgronje's research mission in Aceh was inseparable from military objectives. Thus, any data and information would be directed towards formulating the Dutch East Indies' military strategy. According to Hurgronje, the Aceh war was not a war between armies alone, but a people's war. The war would not be over as long as there was still a spirit of struggle in the people's hearts.⁶⁴ For this reason, the government had to prevent any attempt to lead the people to pan-Islamic political fanaticism.⁶⁵ All political elements in Islam must be suspected and dealt with firmly. Even

⁶² Uswatun Hasanah and Aan Budianto, "Melawan Dominasi Kolonial: Implikasi Terhadap Kebijakan Haji," *Jurnal Candi* 21, no. 2 (2021): 92.

⁶³ Pieter Korver, "Gerakan Islam," in *Colin Wild Dan Peter Carey, Gelora Api Revormasi: Sebuah Antologi Sejarah* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1986), 20.

⁶⁴ Muhammad Said, *Aceh Sepanjang Abad* (Medan: P.T. Harian Waspada Medan, 1981), 95.

⁶⁵ Ernas, "Pandangan Sonouck Hurgronje Tentang Islam dan Implikasinya Terhadap Praktik Hukum dan Politik di Indonesia," 135.

if necessary, they must be suppressed by armed military force. Preventing the growth of pan-Islamic ideals can be done through the politics of association, namely westernization programs in all fields, both economics, education, and culture.⁶⁶ So, when Muslims are far from their culture and religion, they will be easily defeated.

In addition, Hurgronje also advised the Dutch East Indies Government to encourage the movement to separate religion and politics (secularization). According to Hurgronje, if Islam was integrated with politics, it would increase the spirit of people's resistance, which was dangerous for the Dutch.⁶⁷ Hurgronje proposed that military operations be carried out in the villages of Aceh to paralyze people's resistance. If these military operations were successful, it would open up opportunities to build cooperation with local leaders. Hurgronje's strategy was successful thanks to the strong support of the intelligence network of native spies.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Hurgronje initiated the politics of "*Divide et Impera*" (politics of divide and conquer) aimed at the Islamists (*ulama*) and the adat (*uleebalang*). With this political strategy, Hurgronje hoped to create conflicts and clashes that would weaken the unity of the Acehnese people.⁶⁹

3. On Islamic and Traditional Law

One of Hurgronje's strategies to undermine the unity of the Acehnese people was to clash Islamic and traditional law. As an experienced ethnologist, he encouraged local traditions to

⁶⁶ Budi Ichwayudi, "Hipokritisme Tokoh Orientalis Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje," *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 1, no. September 2011 (2011): 147.

⁶⁷ E Gobe, *Nasihat-Nasihat Snouck Hurgronje Semasa Kepegawaiannya Kepada Pemerintah Hindia-Belanda* (Jakarta: INIS, 1990), vol. 1, 41.

⁶⁸ One of the natives who helped Snouck in formulating his thoughts was a Pekojan Arab named Sayyid Uthman Yahya ibn Aqil al-Alawi. He was so loyal to the Dutch East Indies government that he was awarded the "Dutch Lion Cross Star" on December 5, 1899. He even led Friday sermons containing prayers in Arabic for the welfare of Dutch Queen Wilhelmina. See: Hussein Badjerei, *Al-Irsyad Mengisi Sejarah Bangsa* (Jakarta: Presto Prima Utama, 1996).

⁶⁹ Koningsveld, *Snouck Hurgronje Dan Islam*.

develop and advance.⁷⁰ This was important because Islamic law was considered the basis of resistance and the spirit of opposition to the Dutch, so traditional law was used to inhibit the widespread influence of Islamic law. For this reason, Hurgronje presented the “Receptie Theory” which states that only traditional law applies to the indigenous people. Meanwhile, Islamic law can only apply if the indigenous community accepts it.⁷¹ With this theory, Hurgronje had the ambition to make Islamic law an inferior law. If we pay attention, Hurgronje’s theory is not much different from William Marsden’s view, which suggests that the culture practiced by the Sumatran people is indigenous, the product of people’s creativity that has nothing to do with Islamic teachings.⁷² This kind of view is typically used in the framework of orientalist studies.

The experts on Indigenous Law in post-independence Indonesia, such as Hazairin, Sayuti Talib, and Ichtijanto, expressed the opposite theory. According to them, traditional law is not the main guideline for indigenous people, but Islamic law.⁷³ Traditional law will be used when it is in accordance with Islamic law. The counterargument to Hurgronje’s Receptie theory is stated in three theories. First, the Receptie Exit theory was proposed by Hazairin. This theory states that Islamic law is a partner of traditional law.⁷⁴ Second, the *Receptio a Contrario* theory was proposed by H. Sayuti Talib. This theory wants to reaffirm that traditional law may apply if it does not contradict Islamic law.⁷⁵ Finally, the Existence Theory

⁷⁰ Ernas, “Pandangan Sonouck Hurgronje Tentang Islam dan Implikasinya Terhadap Praktik Hukum dan Politik di Indonesia,” 134.

⁷¹ Amiur Nurudin dan Azhari A Tarigan, *Hukum Perdata Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2004), 8.

⁷² Syukri, “Dampak Pemikiran Orientalis di Indonesia pada Masa Kolonial,” 49.

⁷³ Syukri.

⁷⁴ The receptie exit theory was developed by Prof. Dr. Hazairin, S.H. as an antithesis of the receptie theory developed by Snouck Hurgronje. This theory states that Islamic law is a partner of traditional law. See: Hazairin, *Tujuh Serangkai Tentang Hukum* (Jakarta: Bina Aksara, 1981).

⁷⁵ The *receptio a contrario* theory is an elaboration of the receptie exit theory. The theory developed by Sayuti Thalib wants to reaffirm that traditional law may apply

proposed by H. Ichtijanto S. A. states that Islamic law exists, in the sense that it is an integral part, the main ingredient and filter of Indonesian national law.⁷⁶

By examining the preceding evidence, we can conclude that Snouck Hurgronje's orientalist thinking, as seen from his early works on the hajj and its role in the Aceh War, reflected his perspective on Islam and Muslim communities, particularly in Indonesia. His comparisons between Hajj rituals and pre-Islamic practices, as well as his attempts to juxtapose Islamic law and traditional law, illustrate his orientalist frame of thinking and his intention to undermine the unity of the Acehnese community. This approach aimed to undermine resistance to Dutch colonial rule and reflects the complex interplay of knowledge, politics, and colonial goals of his time.

Conclusion

Orientalism before becoming a scientific field of study as it is today, has experienced a long history of development. The historical background of the emergence of Orientalism is influenced by the ideology, religion, and beliefs of Western civilization. Therefore, no matter how scientific the study presented, it will still not be separated from the subjective impression due to the influence of the Western worldview attached to the Orientalists. The influence of this Western worldview eventually shapes the typical study framework of the Orientalists. In essence, although orientalism is presented as a scientific study, the purpose behind it is actually to launch the mission of Western colonialism, imperialism and missionaryism.

if it does not conflict with Islamic law. Sayuti Thalib, *Receptio a Contrario: Hubungan Hukum Adat dengan Hukum Islam* (Jakarta: Bina Aksara, 1980).

⁷⁶ This theory of existence initiated by Ichtijanto states that Islamic law exists, in the sense that it is an integral part, the main ingredient and filter of Indonesian national law. Ichtijanto SA, *Hukum Islam dan Hukum Nasional* (Jakarta: Ind-Hill Co., 1990).

Christian Snouck Hurgronje was one of the most successful orientalists in carrying out this mission. Armed with his experience studying in the Islamic world and his success in developing Islamic studies based on an orientalist perspective, Hurgronje successfully infiltrated the Muslim community in Aceh and obtained a lot of information that was used as a reference for the political and military strategies of the Dutch East Indies Government. Among his most phenomenal orientalist thoughts was his thesis that the Hajj ritual in Islam was a pagan relic. In addition, Hurgronje also developed the Receptie theory which aims to downplay Islamic law and uphold traditional law with the aim of clashing the two. Hurgronje's method showed that he had succeeded in becoming an Orientalist while carrying out a colonialist mission in Indonesia.

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