Rethinking Western Orientalism on Islamic Male and Female Relation

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This study is a descriptive analysis intended to criticize Western Orientalism, specifically in gender issue. Combining the qualitative methods, and library research technique, we found some interesting conclusions 1) Embedded Oriental Identity on Islam; is a product of European envy and jealousy towards the success of Islam in the Middle Ages; 2) The anxiousness, imply European point of view on Islam as prominent rival; 3) In the egalitarianism context, the universalistic imagination expressed by Western as Oriental is an hyperbolic statement of Islam; 4) Islam provides clear segregation amongst Men and Women based on the Divine Nature of human being as a the world caliphate; 5) The development of the society leads to the multi layered aspect that affect the behavior of each society.

Keywords: orientalism, Islam, Europe, man and woman relation

Penelitian ini merupakan analisa yang ditujukan untuk memberi kritiktehadap pandangan orientalisme bangsa Barat terhadap Islam, khususnya dalam konteks diskriminasi gender.Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif yang dipadukan dengan teknik pengumpulan data studi literatur, data sekunder kami menemukan beberapa kesimpulan diantaranya adalah 1) Pandangan Barat terhadap Islam yang oriental; pada dasarnya dilandasi oleh rasa iri dan dengki terhadap kejayaan Islam pada abad pertengahan; 2) Rasa iri dan terpojok yang dirasakan oleh Eropa terhadap Islam, berimplikasi pada pandangannya terhadap Islam sebagai rival sejati; 3) Dalam konteks hubungan laki-laki dan perempuan, gambaran yang diutarakan oleh bangsa Barat merupakan sebuah imaji kesimpulan yang hiperbola; 4) Islam memberikan segregasi jelas antara Laki-laki dan perempuan, hanya dalam konteks konteks kodrati, peran dan fungsi manusia sebagai khilafah di dunia, tidak pada yang lainnya; 5) Perkembangan Islam dan Masyarakat mengakibatkan terlalu banyaknya variabel yang harus juga dilihat untuk menjelaskan behavioral sebuah umat.

INTRODUCTION

This is an analytical descriptive research aimed to criticize the Western Orientalism, specifically focus on Gender issue. The place of the Muslim woman in society has been seen by Western social scientists, feminist writers, and Islamic scholars alike as being especially problematic (Maumoon, 1995). The word 'Islam' in the Western sphere, particularly in the media and popular culture, tends to give rise to a particular image of the Muslim woman and her position and place in society. This image is of an 'oppressed' and subservient Muslim woman. She is usually, seen to be veiled, passive, under-educated and exploited.

The above explanation seemingly wasn't wrong on every side; however, if we take a closer look at Islam in developing countries like Indonesia -a Dutch post-colonial developing country, which is also largely known as the most Muslims populated country, gender still becomes a dynamic issue Indonesia. One simple picture of this issue was clearly shown by the shortage of woman developmental participation in Indonesia as a nation-state (Garcia, Greenley, Martin-Onraë, & Pollack, 2016; Retnowati, 2014; Sofiani, 2009). Based on Central Bureau of Statistics data released in 2000, Indonesian population amounted as 209 million; 105 million (50.24%) were women and 104 million (49.76%) were men. This data also show the comparison of Indonesian highest level education among man and women aged 10 years and older. From this comparison, they conclude that educational attainment of women in every aspect is lower than men.
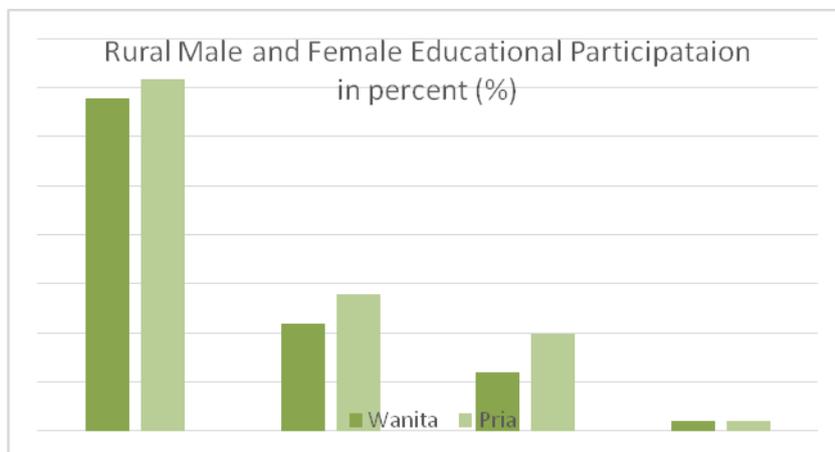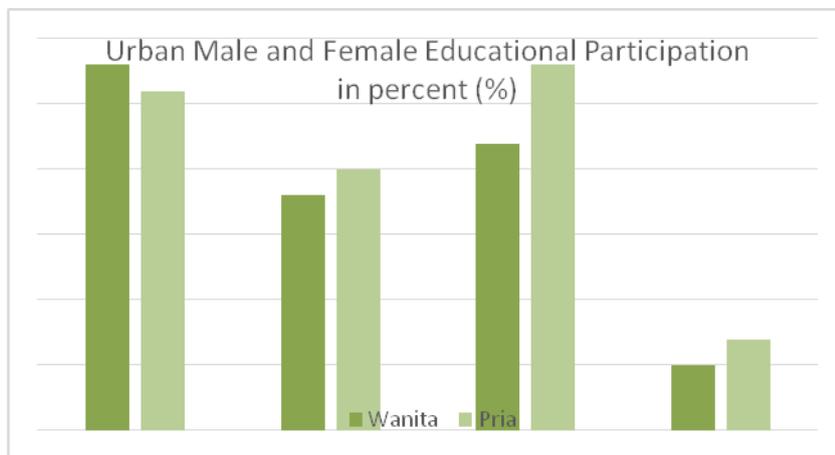
It, of course, would negatively imply the development of Indonesian women as the part of Indonesian society. The low level of education of Indonesian women leaves only a tiny opportunity for them to ultimately participate in the various domains of life in economically, social, or even governmental. Straightly speaking, low educational levels will somehow lower their opportunities to obtain strategic position.

The diagram shown above does not draw the condition of Indonesian woman Muslim specifically. However, the Muslim domination in this country undoubtfully will affect the way of life on every Indonesian. As stated by Epely (2010) on her Thesis

"*Voices of The Faithful: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Indonesia,*" she states that Indonesian behavior is connected with Islamic value. Particularly in its contemporary development, Islam is seen more than a religious guideline. It has been influencing the very foundation of Indonesian way of life, stretching from political environment, business, economy, culture and norm of their daily lives. Thus, somehow, the small data stated above contrarily conclude something more interesting. It seems that Islamic value and guidance aren't fully implemented or even ignored.

Shortly speaking, woman participation in Islam, as stated in the Qur'an, the source of all Muslim guidelines, is mentioned in various verses. It means that Islam appreciate and has had provided opportunities for women (and men) to actively and fully engaged in every aspect of human as human being, for example, in the Political field (QS.Al-Ahzab / 33: 35), (QS.At-Tawbah / 9: 71); education and capability (QS.Al-Mujadilah / 58: 11), (QS.Al-Isra / 17: 70), Employment (QS. An-Nahl / 16: 97). Besides, the idea of egalitarianism on al -Qur'an, the practice of equalitarianism of men and women is done by the Prophet Muhammad itself, for instance, *Aisha* lead the Jamal war; *Um Amarah* participated in the Battle of *Uhud* and *Haibar* War; *Zainab bin Jahsh* successfully engaged in business.

The contrasting practice of egalitarianism of man and women with the Islam guidance through the holly al-Qur'an, undoubtfully would raise various questions, starting from an analytical question such "why could this practices of a such happened in the middle of Islam civilization" to the question of discretion of Islam "Is this practice was the real image of by Islam?" or "Whether is it true what have been always said by the Western on Islam as discriminatory and exploitative religion?". Thus, it would become an offset legality for the west to perpetuate an imaginary justification of Islam which is always correlated with such discrimination and oppression against women *-Oriental*. Hence, in accordance with the focus mentioned above, this study (critics) is directed, at least, as Muslim refutation against slur and condemnation. Furthermore, this paper hopefully would become a cornerstone toward our Muslims colleague, especially in Indonesia, to re-think all of the practice of contemporary Islam. Is it in accordance with the *Shari'a*; whether the practice is properly taught in Islam; whether the practice in accordance with the teachings of Allah SWT.

To achieve the desired expectations, formulation research question becomes an essential part to carry the effective discussion of this research. Due to the characteristic of this study as a Islamic critique in the context of Gender, we will base our arguments on the Islamic position with the aim to sound Islamic opinions "**How the relationship between Men and Women on Islamic Perspectives**". Additionally, to gain a comprehensive understanding, we will divide the discussion in this paper in several sub-chapters. The following chapter will be used to explain Western perspectives on Islam such as the historical explanation and contemporary development related gender issues. The second part is the epitome of this study, which describes the Islamic view on man and woman relationship. Deriving out of both explanation, the discussion, will follow in the next chapter addressing the correlation of Islamic thought and the origin of historical aspect of the Western imaginary of Orientalism. At the end of this article we will create some remarks of our findings, and addressing further research.

MTHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive analysis which attempts to identify and clarify the premise that has existed. It means that the research will only see the characteristics of an incident to match the facts with the general formula (general pattern) that has been previously known. This study does attempt to describe the causality of an event; mostly contemplated with questions "why". Using the combination of qualitative analysis and study literature techniques, this research will be conducted from secondary data. The data collection is done by searching the relevance issue; which have linkages with the title obtained through a variety of literature such as books, journals, internet.

FINDINGS

Western Perspective on Islamic Gender Equality

Europe began its sociopolitical project of creation of a European or western identity since the eve

of seventeenth century. Everything, rationalism, political democracy, individualism, and in short,

Europe was supposed to begin at Greece's border against the *"Orient"* – a constructed geographical line with great socio-cultural and political consequences for the whole world. All properties that came to identify the West against the rest of the world, such as science, philosophy, democracy, were presented to have their roots in the ancient Greece (Kamali, 2016).

Edward Said, in his renowned work Orientalism, describes how the discourse of Orientalism justified political domination through colonialism (Said, 1978, p. 3). This discourse defined the Muslim and the Oriental as "irrational, depraved, immature and incapable of immature and incapable of representing himself or governing himself (Said, 1978, p. 40). According to Said, the European encounter with the Orient turned Islam into the very epitome of an Outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle ages was founded on. The Orientalist vision of Islam, which to an extent persists in scholarly works even today, shows a virulent dislike of Islam. Islam is presumed to be a unitary phenomenon as no other religion is shown to be antihuman, incapable of development, self-knowledge or objectivity.

The creation of a western imaginative world and the spreading of its joined universalistic ideas were highly Eurocentric attempts. The universal was nothing more than the particular experiences of the western European understanding and socio-culturally embedded construction of themselves and "the others". Although Orientalism came during the Middle Ages to include even the non-Muslim countries, such as China and India, it is always related to what was territorially called the 'Muslim World' and religiously Islam. The foundation of Orientalism was laid by John of Damascus, a Christian scholar who was a great friend of the Ummayad Caliph, Yazid. His declarations, that Islam was a pagan cult, the Ka'ba in Makkah an idol, and the prophet Muhammad an irreligious and licentious man, became the classical source of all Christian writings on Islam. The Christian Western's attitudes towards Muslim countries have historically been very negative and full of prejudices (Kamali, 2016).

Islam and Islamic societies were considered as 'the others' or the other side or counterpart of reason. Consequently, Islam and modernization were considered as two incompatible phenomena. Therefore, modernizing the Islamic countries was not possible without eliminating or 'destroying' Islam as a religion and as a political ideology and doctrine. The West was the motherland of modernization and had the prophetic mission to change the world according to a blueprint created by Western intellectuals, social scientists, and of course its superior military power. The West was the model and, as Aziz al-Azmeh (1981) formulates it, the Orient was and is reduced to 'the mirror image of the West' and so is defined and disfigured

The peculiar practices of Islam with regard to its 'oppression' of women have always formed part of the Western narrative of the quintessential 'Otherness' and inferiority of Islam. The issue of women emerged as the center-piece of the Western narrative of Islam in the late 19th Century, as Europeans established themselves as colonial powers in Muslim countries. This reorganized narrative was created by a coalescence of the old narrative of Islam with the language of feminism (Ahmed, 1992). There was a fusion between the issues of women, their oppression and the cultures of Other men. Victorian woman-hood and mores with respect to women came to be regarded as the civilized ideal. The thesis of the new colonial discourse was that Islam was innately and immutably oppressive to women. The 'veil' was the most visible marker of the 'Otherness' and inferiority of Islamic societies.

One example of the western imaginary embodiment of discriminative men and woman relationship in Islam relationship is Conflict perspective. The conflict perspective explains various aspects of our social world by looking at which groups have power and benefit from a particular social arrangement. For example, feminist theory argues that we live in a patriarchal society—a hierarchical system of organization controlled by men. Although there are many varieties of feminist theory, most would hold that feminism demands that existing economic, political, and social structures be changed (Moffit, 2017).

The origins of the conflict perspective can be traced to the classic works of Karl Marx. Marx suggested that all societies go through stages of economic development. As societies evolve from agricultural to industrial, concern over meeting survival needs is replaced by concern over making a profit, the hallmark of a capitalist system. Industrialization leads to the development of two classes of people: the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the means of production (e.g., factories, farms, businesses); and the proletariat, or the workers who earn wages. The division of society into two broad classes of people—the "haves" and the "have-nots"—is beneficial to the owners of the means of production. The workers, who may earn only subsistence wages, are denied access to the many resources available to the wealthy owners (Mooney, 2007).

According to Marx, the bourgeoisie use their power to control the institutions of society to their advantage. For example, Marx suggests that religion serves as an "opiate of the masses" in that it soothes the distress and suffering associated with the working-class lifestyle and focuses the workers' attention on spirituality, God, and the afterlife rather than on such worldly concerns as living conditions. In essence, religion diverts the

workers so that they concentrate on being rewarded in heaven for living a moral life rather than on questioning their exploitation (Ellwood & Alles, 2007, pp. 160-161).

Gender and Sexuality: An Islamic Perspective

Started with the definition of gender stated by Heddy Shri Ahimsa Putra (2001), we find the origin of the term comes from the interpretation of separate roles and responsibilities amongst male and female due to their social and cultural development over time. Whereas this is a new term, the appearance of different perspectives due to the comprehension of gender as sexwould still raise amongst our society. As already explained, gender is a cultural construction, while sex is natural existence which can't be changed by virtue of the Societal and cultural value development. Sex won't change, while inversely, gender will always dynamically change throughout the development of human life. Comply with the social progress and the Societal culture pattern (Subhan, 2002).

The definition above is identical with the Qur'anic concept of the creation of human beings. They are two different sexes of male and female, and they come from various races and cultures that aim to know each other, understand each other, and of course complement each other.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓا۟ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ١٣

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (Q.S. Al-Hujarat : 13).

It is essential in discussing issues of gender and sexuality from the Quranic and prophetic directives to distinguish texts with definite meanings -*qat'iyyah*- from those with hyphothetical meanings -*zhanniyah*-. The definite texts may not be great in number, but instructions therein are sound and clear, and the hyphothetical texts on the contrary are subject to interpretations according to varying understandings of historical events that surround implementation, selection of jurist opinions and traditions of communities. Al-Quran provides directives on several issues related to gender and sexuality, ranging from equality, identity, functions, needs, rights, responsibility, sexual interaction. It is, therefore, unfounded to assume that it pays greater attention to sexual aspects of marriage, most especially to the sexual satisfaction of husbands. Attested to this fact is that Quranic chapters dedicated to discuss wide-ranging issues on women, such as al-Nisa', al-Nur, al-Talaq, al-Mujadilah. Other chapters such as al-Baqarah and al-'Ahzab dedicate many verses to gender and sexuality (Dastebala, Shojaeifard, & Amiri, 2014).

Normatively, there was some verses which dedicatedly explain and annunciate of egalitarianism of male and female (Mulyadi, 2012),
1. Firstly, the general statement of male and female egalitarianism. In this regard, al-Qur`an explicitly explained that the wife is the husband's counterpart and the husband

is wife's companion. Both are described serves as a shirt *-libas* (Al-Qur`an, al-Baqarah (2): 228).

2. Secondly, the origin of Mankind creation. The Equality conception in the origin of human creation confirmed in two verses of the Qur`an. This verses affirm that man is made of the same type and demarcated to two distinct type male and female (Al-Qur`an, Al-Nisâ' (4):1 dan al-Hujurat (49):13).

3. Thirdly, charity. Equality and reward of each work can be seen in several verses. Al-Qur`an asserts that "the yield of what has been done will only harvested by the one who did, and vice versa. The husband and wife's reward won't be interchangeable. (Al-Qur`an, Alî Imrân (3):195 and al-Nisâ' (4): 32). Obedient men and women promised a paradise, and conversely the prevailing evil will be promised the opposite. Both will be rewarded in kind, if the lawless one will be misguided and if for mercy to be forgiven (Al-Qur`an, al-Tawbah (9): 72, al-Ahzab (33): 35-36, al-Mu'min (40): 40 dan al-Fath (48): 5). And at the very base the differences amongst male and female is just their level of love to the God – *Allah ta'ala* (Al-Qur`an, al-Hujurat (49): 13).

4. Fourthly, mutual affection and love. Egalitarianism in this case are elaborated in al-Qur`an specifically in family relationships that should be characterized by love and fun. In fact, the purpose of creation was to create both tranquility *(Sakinah)*, compassion *(rahmah)* and mutual love *(mawaddah)* (Al-Qur`an, al-Isrâ' (17): 24, al-Rûm (30): 21, al-Ahqaf (46): 15 dan al-Baqarah (2): 187).

5. Fifthly, justice and equality. al-Qur`an explicitly uphold justice and equality between people, include men and women. As explained before the rights of male and female correlated with its obligations and charity both are equally dependent on the results of their own effort (Al-Qur`an, al-Baqarah (2): 228 and al-Nahl (16): 97). Thus, the opportunities amongst them had the same degree, regardless gender conditions. Even in a broader context, both of them are commanded to creat a mutual relationship(Al-Qur`an, al-Baqarah (2): 177 and al-Tawbah (9): 7).

6. Sixth, educational opportunities. Educational opportunities amongst them are equal. It can be seen from how al-Qur`an praise whose have the knowledge. Al-Qur`an give the same respect to those who excel regardless of gender (Al-Qur`an al-Mujadalah (58): 11 and al-Zumar (39): 9).

DISCUSSION

Islam has during one and half millennium of its existence gone through many theological and social transformations. The expansion of Islam as religion to far reaching areas with different socio-cultural structures in Asia, Africa, and Europe, forced the Islamic conqueror and theologian to adjust both themselves and Islam to the new societies' traditions, history and institutional arrangements. The mutual adjustment of Islam and the new societies helped to create very diverse societies such that the Islamic dimension was just one of many different properties that separated every single 'Islamic' society from each other. How one can compare the Islamic Iran, Arabic peninsula, and Spain as the same component of a 'Muslim world'? One does not need to compare these remote areas to gain understanding of many differences between these countries. The simple comparison of countries very closed to each other, such as Iran, Turkey and

Afghanistan, give us enough reason to put in question the imagined construction of the 'Muslim world'. Furthermore, the internal differences, such as urban/rural, elite/popular, diverse religious and ethnic groups, and different socioeconomic and cultural classes, in Muslim countries make the concept more problematic. Denying these internal and external diversities has been a part of Western Orientalists' and social scientists' 'value-free' attempts to construct Muslims as 'the others' who crystallizes 'backwardness', 'the traditional', 'the failure', 'the irrational', etc.

Islam, argue that Since God has created mankind in pairs, logically and metaphysically there must exist some element of difference which distinguished one member of the pair from the other, for if two things were the same in every way they would be identical. There is, therefore, of necessity a difference between the two sexes. They are not the same, at least if one takes the totality of being of each sex into consideration, while they may be equal under certain aspects and features. From the Islamic point of view, their equality in fact first and foremost involves the entelechy of the human state as such, in which both men and women participate by virtue of belonging to the human race. Both man and woman were created for immortality and spiritual deliverance. Below that level, however, there are differences between the two sexes whose reality cannot be ignored in the name of any form of egalitarianism.

Furthermore, the difference between the two sexes cannot be only biological and physical, because in the traditional perspective the corporeal level of existence has its principle in the subtle state, the subtle in the spiritual and the spiritual in the Divine Being Itself. The difference between the sexes cannot be reduced to anatomy and biological function. There are also differences of psychology and temperament, of spiritual types and even principles within the Divine Nature which are the sources *in divinis* of the duality represented on the microcosmic level as male and female (Nasr, 1980). God is both Absolute and Infinite. Absoluteness and Majesty, which is inseparable from it, is manifested most directly in the masculine state, and Infinity and Beauty in the feminine state. The male body itself reflects majesty, power, absoluteness, and the female body beauty, beatitude, and infinity. But these principles are also reflected in all the intermediate realms of existence which, in each type of microcosm, male and female, separate the corporeal state from the Divine Presence.

While some religions have emphasized the negative aspect of sexuality, Islam bases itself on its positive aspect as a means of perfection of the human state and on the highest level a symbol of union with God, sexual relations being of course governed by the injunction of the Divine Law. Addressing itself to man in his primordial nature (*al-fiṭrah),* to "man as such",Islam envisages the love of man and woman as being inseparable from the love of God, and leading to God on the highest level. There exists in Islamic spirituality, as a result of this perspective, a hierarchy of love stretching from what is called "metaphorical love" (*al-'ishq al-majāzī*) to "real love" (*al-'ishq al-ḥaqīqī*) which is the love of God Himself.

Of course, both sexes contain something of both the male and female principles, the yin and yang of the Far Eastern traditions, within themselves; only in men the male principle, and in women the female principle, is dominant. But the attainment of the "whole" which comes from the union of man and wife is not achieved by reducing both

sexes to a kind of "neuter" sex containing each principle in "equal proportions". To attain this state, in fact, is to move in the other direction. Islamic spirituality tends towards a clarification and complete differentiation of the two human types. Its social patterns, art of dress, and many other aspects help to create masculine types who are very masculine and feminine types who are very feminine. If sexual union symbolizes the androgynic totality which both sexes seek consciously or even unconsciously, this union itself requires the distinction and separation of the two sexes, which can in fact participate in the sacred act precisely because of their distinctness.

The tenets of Islam based upon sexual purity, separation of the sexes in many aspects of external life, the hiding of the beauty of women from strangers, division of social and family duties and the like all derive from the principles stated above. Their specific applications have depended on the different cultural and social milieus in which Islam has grown and have been very diverse. For example, the manner in which a Malay woman hides her female beauty is very different from a Syrian, a Pakistani or Senegalese and even within a single country what is called the veil (ḥijāb) has never been the same among nomads, villagers and city dwellers. Nor has the complementary role of the two sexes in all walks of life prevented Muslin women from participating in nearly all aspects of life from ruling countries to owning major businesses in bazaars or even running butcher shops.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from above explanation are as follows:

1. Western view of Oriental Islam; inherent the nature of old-fashioned, traditional and irrational, is essentially a reciprocal action based on envy and jealousy of the Islam glory in medieval times. Western, desperately try to restore its identity as an empire. Hence, to define itself as an entity that is superior they require a clear limit boundary between Europe and other nations. Finally, European identity and Oriental emerge as the solution.

2. Europe's Envy, jealousy and anxiousness, *imply their point of view towards Islam as prominent rival*. Just like all the enemy, Islam embedded image is closely related to the inferiority, blaming and demonizing; Orientalism. However, if we take a closer, toward the relationship of men and women, the idea expressed by the Western could is just a hyperbolical conclusion to justify their superiority.

3. Basically, Islam provide a clear segregation between male and female. In the context of their nature, role and function of the human as a world caliphate. However, egalitarianism idea still took Islam concern, through advice and command from various verses of the al-Qur'an.

4. Islam has during one and half millennium of its existence gone through many theological and social transformations. The expansion of Islam as religion to far reaching areas with different socio-cultural structures in Asia, Africa, and Europe, forced the Islamic conqueror and theologian to adjust both themselves and Islam to the new societies' traditions, history and institutional arrangements. It would *na'if* if

one deny the diversity of Islam world, externally and internally; or somehow, blame Islam as the only one who has the responsibility of misbehavior of a nation.

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