Impact of the Orientalist Scholarship on the British Policy and Identity Formation in the Present Day Pakistan

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Abstract

This article argues that Orientalist scholarship played a critical role in the formation of British colonial policy and the identity crisis in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the region currently Pakistan. This article explores how British Orientalists interacted with local languages, histories and cultures to create administrative strategies and narratives that legitimized the colonial rule. The study reveals the dual impact of Orientalist scholarship: first, as a tool for control; and second, as a catalyst for identity formation among colonized populations, by analyzing key texts, policies and their socio-political implications. The article also discusses the lasting legacies of these dynamics on contemporary cultural and political identities in Pakistan. Writing as a historiographical work in the context, this article confronts the existing debates on Orientalism that are relevant and applicable to current thought in post-colonial discourse. The output has been strongly indicated to draw a complex mutual interplay amidst knowledge production with governance and identification politics during the British colonial scenario.

Keywords: Pakistan, Colonial Rule, Identity Crisis, Postcolonial Studies

Introduction

The advent of British colonial rule in South Asia, particularly in the regions of present-day Pakistan, to a great extent, was an offshoot of Orientalist scholarship. Orientalism, as conceptualized by Edward Said (1978), refers to the academic, cultural and political framework through which Western powers constructed and interpreted the East. This paradigm was not just an intellectual exercise but a tool that profoundly shaped the policies, governance strategies and cultural narratives imposed by colonial rulers. British administrators and scholars, such as William Jones, James Mill, and Henry Thomas Colebrooke, sought to study and codify local languages, religions and legal systems, ostensibly to "understand" the subcontinent but ultimately to consolidate colonial control (Cohn, 1996; Metcalf, 1995). In the region of contemporary Pakistan, Orientalist scholarship was a double-edged sword. It provided the British with mechanisms for administering a varied and complex society, while influencing the identity formation of the colonized population. The West, in its self-perceived right, constructed the Orient as the "Other" and highlighted dualisms modernity against backwardness and Christianity against Islam. The dualism, however, was not accidental; it was aimed at reasserting Western superiority, while at the same time vindicating colonial dominance. Scholars such as Bernard S. Cohn (1996) believe that the colonial knowledge systems played a role in developing a framework that placed British rule as a civilizing mission. Abbasi further clarifies that Orientalists deliberately constructed narratives based on selected material to align with their

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imperialist objectives (Abbasi, 2023). This "knowledge-power" dynamic facilitated the British in their ability to establish dominance by manufacturing perceptions of the East as stagnant, despotic and inferior, which was then translated into policies in Punjab, Sindh, and other regions that they controlled (Dirks, 2001; Talbot, 2007). Beyond governance, Orientalist scholarship sank deep into the cultural and political identity of the colonized regions. Abbasi emphasizes how this framework was applied to subvert the local values and to establish Christian ideals as the supreme, with the redefinition of South Asia as an area that refused to progress without the guidance of Western enlightenment (Abbasi, 2023). This redefining of local histories and traditions was important for the formation of communal identities, identity crisis, and often heightened differences between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs (Khan, 2017; Pandey, 1990). For example, the British census reified religious categorizations, deeply impacting the Muslim identity that would later form the nucleus of the Pakistan movement (Gilmartin, 1994). This article seeks to analyze the various ways in which Orientalist scholarship shaped British colonial policies and the identities that followed in the territories that are now Pakistan. The study examines how Orientalist knowledge systems were used to justify and sustain colonial rule by looking at key texts, archival records, and secondary literature.

Through a critical historiographical approach, this work engages with debates in postcolonial studies, emphasizing the importance of revisiting colonial narratives to understand their influence on contemporary socio-political realities. The article is structured into three sections: an examination of Orientalist texts and how they have impacted British administrative policy; a critical appraisal of the influence on local identities; and a reflexive consideration of the broader significance of Orientalism for postcolonial scholarship. Through this process, the article attempts to contribute to the debate over the nature of the interaction between knowledge, power, and identity in colonial and postcolonial settings.

Literature Review

Extensive critique and analysis have been placed on the orientalist approach as a cornerstone of colonial historiography. Said's Orientalism (1978) revolutionized the study of the West's engagement with the East by showing how knowledge production was used as a tool for domination. The West, according to Said, imagined the Orient as a monolithic entity, marked by static traditions, irrationality, and cultural inferiority. This construction was highly influential in legitimizing colonial expansion and the imposition of Western values.

1- Important Contributions of Orientalist Scholarship

Orientalist scholars such as William Jones and Henry Thomas Colebrooke attempted to write down the languages, religions, and histories of South Asia. Often, these subjects were represented in a context of Western superiority. Such selective representation of the Orient's cultural realities facilitated imperial domination, as the British used their "knowledge" of local traditions to restructure governance systems and reinforce their authority. For instance, the British codified Islamic and Hindu laws, not as they existed but as they were interpreted through colonial perspectives. These reforms alienated traditional systems and justified British legal intervention (Cohn, 1996; Metcalf, 1995).

2- Role of Power Dynamics

Oriented from the conceptions of power and knowledge by Michel Foucault, Orientalism worked as a cultural hegemony. This structure enabled colonial powers to construct narratives that subordinated the Orient, thus making it compliant with Western political and social hierarchies. This was reflected in the British administration's use of census data and legal reforms to enforce

divisions along religious and ethnic lines, particularly in Punjab and Sindh. Such strategies were not only administrative but ideological, reshaping local identities in ways that aligned with imperial interests (Dirks, 2001; Gilmartin, 1994).

3- Criticism and Reappraisal

Orientalism has been strongly criticized for its intrinsic bias and reductionist narrative. The approach failed to recognize the fluidity and heterogeneity of South Asian societies' realities. Instead, it continued to reproduce stereotypes that inform historical scholarship as well as the contemporary imagination of the region. Scholars in postcolonial studies, including Partha Chatterjee and Gayatri Spivak, have argued against these narratives by centering the indigenous voice and perspective in understanding colonial histories.

4- Legacy in Contemporary Pakistan

Orientalist discourses played a critical role in the formation of the cultural and political identities of regions that are now part of Pakistan. British policies, which focused on Islam as an identity marker and difference, inadvertently created the ideological basis for Pakistan. This history is important to understand the current debates on national identity, secularism, and cultural heritage in the region (Khan, 2017; Talbot, 2007).

5- Regional Impact: Present-Day Pakistan

During British administration in the Indian subcontinent, which included what is now Pakistan, Orientalist studies greatly influenced regional development. Although Orientalism had a self-serving colonial goal, it had a legacy that helped the region after independence, including improvements to infrastructure, changes to education, and the codification of local languages.

Methodology

This article is based on the historiographical method to assess how orientalist scholarship influenced British colonial policies and the formation of British identity in what are now parts of Pakistan. Methodologically, this article has followed the route of analyzing both primary and secondary sources to research how knowledge and its production contributed to colonial rule. The subsequent sections detail the methodological structure:

Data Collection

Primary Sources:

From such documents as the census, official administrative policies and codes of laws of the British colonial administration comes the most immediate knowledge about orientalist influence upon governance.

Orientalist texts, such as William Jones and Henry Thomas Colebrooke, are analyzed to understand the narratives constructed by colonial scholars.

Secondary Sources:

This paper is theoretically based on Orientalism (1978) by Edward Said and the writings of postcolonial scholars Gayatri Spivak and Partha Chatterjee.

Bernard S. Cohn and Ian Talbot, two historians, studied the social and political effects of Orientalism in South Asian countries to provide background.

Analytical Framework

Historiographical Analysis:

The article critically analyzes the production and circulation of orientalist discourses, focusing on their function in the formation of British administrative policies and cultural policies.

It evaluates the role that such discourses play in the processes of identity among Muslim subjects under colonial rule, particularly in the cases of Punjab and Sindh.

Foucault's Concept of Power and Knowledge:
The framework by Michel Foucault provides the analysis of the justification of colonial dominance and control in terms of orientalist knowledge, which explains the power relations.

Comparative Analysis:
This research aims to bring out the bias and contradictions in colonial discourses by comparing and contrasting orientalist representations with indigenous viewpoints.

Limitations
This research aims to bring out the bias and contradictions in colonial discourses by comparing and contrasting orientalist representations with indigenous viewpoints.
This study does a good job in analyzing the impact of orientalism, but it may miss out on the richness of the indigenous viewpoints as it is more reliant on English language sources such as Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi regional languages.

Discussion
The Orientalist approach fundamentally shaped the British colonial governance and identity formation in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the areas that are now in Pakistan. Oriental knowledge was utilized by the British policymakers through a combination of historical narratives, legal codifications, and administrative reforms to consolidate their rule. This section explores the dual impact of Orientalism: the role it played in the justification of colonial dominance and its unintended effects on shaping the indigenous identities.

The Use of Orientalism in Colonial Administration
Orientalist scholarship was fundamental to the indirect rule strategy devised by the British: understanding and codifying local traditions was a crucial instrument of governance. Scholars like William Jones and James Mill produced texts that defined South Asian cultures as exotic yet inferior, and it was in their interest to establish British intervention. This, for instance, is how British legal reforms in Punjab and Sindh have been informed, at times misleadingly or in extremely simplified terms, by orientalist interpretations of Islamic and Hindu law (Cohn, 1996; Metcalf, 1995). Moreover, the British census system institutionalized communal divisions by classifying populations according to religious and ethnic groups. This orientalist approach to governance, which was data-driven, helped the British to maintain administrative efficiency while also furthering the divisions in the society. The use of religious identity, especially for Muslims, paved the way for later political movements that led to the formation of Pakistan (Gilmartin, 1994; Khan, 2017).

Identity Formation and Resistance
Orientalist narratives went beyond mere reflection of the colonial attitude, actively shaping the self-perception of the colonized populations. British portrayals of Islam as monolithic and static helped to generate a unified Muslim identity in Punjab and Sindh, which further served as the rallying point of resistance against the colonial rule as well as becoming the cornerstone of the ideological underpinnings of Pakistan (Talbot, 2007). However, these narratives were also opposed by local scholars and activists who wanted to counter the colonial representation. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, for instance, was advocating for Muslims to learn modern education while maintaining their cultural identity. This duality represented an attempt to reclaim control within the strait-jacket of colonial narratives (Shaikh, 2014).

Lasting Legacy in Pakistan

Orientalism is visible in the contemporary socio-political scene of Pakistan. The orientalist focus on religion continues to dominate debates on nationalism and secularism as well as issues related to cultural heritage. The legal and educational apparatuses, whose elementary features were gelled during colonial times, still reflect orientalist biases in structure and content (Nair, 2008). Furthermore, the orientalist practice of depicting South Asia as a region that is not receptive to progress has left an indelible mark on global perceptions of Pakistan. This stereotype, perpetuated through media and academic discourse, underlines the need for a critical reevaluation of colonial narratives in postcolonial scholarship.

British Legal Policies

Codification of the Laws and British Views of Indigenous Legal Traditions

Before British occupation, South Asian legal systems were plural, with Sharia (Islamic law), Hindu law, and customary laws existing side by side in various areas. The British, following orientalist scholarship, regarded these legal traditions as backwards and un-systematic (Said, 1978). They tried to codify and standardize laws to ease the process of governance (Cohn, 1996).

Important Legal Policies:

The Regulating Act of 1773 was a turning point in Indian legal history as it created the Supreme Court at Calcutta, introduced English common law to British-held areas and centralized administration under the Governor-General of Bengal. The Cornwallis Code of 1793 even reorganized the judiciary again by making revenue administration autonomous of judicial supervision and providing jurisdiction to British-trained judges over conventional legal specialists such as qadis and pandits. The Charter Act of 1833 sought a common legal code in British India, speeding up Anglicization of the legal system. In 1860, the Indian Penal Code codified criminal law on English principles, and the Code of Criminal Procedure in 1861 standardized criminal procedure but retained religious differences. Lastly, the Shariat Act of 1937 institutionalized religious distinctions in family law by distinguishing legally between Islamic and Hindu personal laws.

Orientalism and the British Justification for Legal Intervention

Orientalist scholars such as William Jones and Henry Maine were instrumental in influencing British legal interventions.

William Jones (1746–1794) – Learned Sanskrit and Islamic law texts, encouraging British administrators to govern through pre-colonial legal traditions instead of imposing English law directly. Yet, his translations tended to misrepresent indigenous legal traditions, and this resulted in distortions in the implementation of Islamic and Hindu law.

Henry Maine (1822–1888) – Contended in Ancient Law (1861) that Indian society was "static" and had to be brought up to date by British law. His ideas strengthened the notion that indigenous legal tradition was old-fashioned and could not evolve (Cohn, 1996).

These orientalist readings gave the ideological cover to British legal reforms, which reorganized identity construction in colonial India.

British Legal Reforms and Their Impact on Identity Formation

Legal Codification and the Marginalization of Indigenous Jurisprudence

The codification of British laws eliminated legal flexibility and instituted strict structures according to European legal standards. Indigenous legal scholars, such as *qadis* (judges of Islamic law) and muftis, were excluded, lessening their role in legal decision-making. The

implementation of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1860 (Government of India, 1860, 1861) provided a uniform criminal justice system, marginalizing customary tradition and local modes of dispute resolution (Maine, 1861).

Impact on Identity Formation:
Islamic legal scholars lost jurisdiction, resulting in a religious identity crisis, especially among Muslims. The differentiation between "official" and "customary" law further entrenched communal divisions since various religious communities were governed by various legal regimes.

Personal Laws and the Entrenchment of Religious Identities

Before British rule, legal traditions were more elastic, and personal conflicts were frequently settled through local practices. The British codification of Hindu and Muslim personal laws (e.g., inheritance, marriage, divorce) made religious differences a legal identity. The Shariat Act of 1937 made Islamic law official for Muslims in personal affairs, further deepening religious identity in the legal system (Hallaq, 2012).

Effect on Identity Formation:
Legal codification solidified communal boundaries, shaping the subsequent political demand for Pakistan, whereby Muslims demanded a distinct legal identity. The state's intervention in the construction of religious law reduced the pre-colonial pluralistic legal culture, legalizing identity to be rigid and not fluid.

British Census and Legal Construction of Identity

British census activities (initiated in 1871) categorized individuals according to religion, caste, and ethnicity, which furthered legal distinctions (Dirks, 2001). These legal categories contributed to the Muslim-Hindu divide and, in turn, communal tensions in later periods (Metcalf, 1994).

Impact on Identity Formation
Census-based identity categorization shaped electoral policies, resulting in Hindu and Muslim separate electorates (1909, 1919, and 1935 Acts).
These divisions directly contributed to the ultimate partition of India in 1947.

Postcolonial Legacy of British Legal Reforms in Pakistan

Continuation of Colonial Legal Systems

Pakistan retained British legal systems, such as the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure, and personal law system (Hallaq, 2012). Even post-independence, British-instilled legal categories continued to inform debates regarding Sharia law vs. secular law in Pakistan.

Legal Identity and Sectarianism

The strict categorization of religious identity in legal frameworks led to subsequent sectarian and religious tensions. The Ahmadi question in Pakistan (resulting in their legal categorization as non-Muslims in 1974) (Metcalf, 1994) was a direct extension of British census and legal categorization practices. British legal policies in colonial India were deeply influenced by Orientalist thought (Said, 1978), which viewed indigenous legal traditions as inferior and in need of reform. The codification of laws, restructuring of personal laws, and census-based identity classification reinforced religious and communal divisions. These policies had a long-lasting impact, shaping identity formation in ways that persist in modern Pakistan's legal and political systems (Cohn, 1996). The postcolonial state inherited and carried over many of these structures, which led to current debates regarding law, religion, and identity.

British Educational Policies in Colonial India and Their Impact on Identity Formation in Present-Day Pakistan

The British education policies in colonial India were strongly impacted by orientalist scholarship, which constructed British notions of South Asian society. The policies contributed to the construction of identity, the production of knowledge, and social divisions in regions that are now part of Pakistan. Through domination of education, the British attempted to reconstruct indigenous knowledge systems, instill Western values, and establish a loyal administrative class. These long-term impacts can be traced in the language issues, education syllabus, and identity politics of Pakistan until today.

Orientalist Rationale for British Education Policies

Early Orientalist Strategy (Late 18th - Early 19th Century)

In the initial period of British occupation, certain scholars and officials felt that Indian knowledge traditions must be preserved and encouraged together with Western-style education. William Jones (1746-1794): Urged study of Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic for knowledge of indigenous legal, religious, and literary customs (Jones, 1788). The Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784): Established by Jones, it advocated Oriental language and culture study (Metcalf, 1994).

Important Policy:

Calcutta Madrasa (1781) and Benares Sanskrit College (1791): Organized to sponsor the study of Muslim and Hindu traditions under British supervision.

The Anglicist Shift (Early to Mid-19th Century)

By the early 19th century, British policy-makers, based on James Mill (1817) and Thomas Macaulay (1835), contended that indigenous knowledge was inferior and that Western education was required for advancement. James Mill's "The History of British India" (1817): Portrayed Indian civilization as backward and not deserving of serious scholarly consideration, justifying the necessity of British intervention (Mill, 1817). Thomas Macaulay's "Minute on Education" (1835): Propounded the use of English in place of Persian and Sanskrit education, arguing that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (Macaulay, 1835).

Key Policy:

English Education Act (1835): Established English as the language of instruction, placing greater emphasis on Western education at the expense of conventional learning institutions (Sharp, 1920).

British Educational Policies and Identity Formation

The Development of Westernized Elite

One of the key objectives of British education policies was to establish a class of English-educated Indians who would act as intermediaries between the British authorities and the indigenous people.
Wood's Despatch (1854): Set up a hierarchical system of education, with universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, and English-medium schools for the elites (Basu, 1982).

Hunter Commission Report (1882): Promoted the growth of primary education, but since there was scant funding available for mass education, it meant that elite supremacy continued (Rao, 2010).

Effect on the Formation of Identity:
Bifurcation of Society: Established a dichotomy among the English-educated elite (identifying with Western values) and the vernacular-educated masses (still adhering to indigenous tradition).
Religious Identity Conflicts: Substitution of English for Persian as an official language excluded Muslim elites and precipitated opposition from individuals such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

The Role of Education in Religious Identity Formation
Muslim Resistance and the Formation of the Aligarh Movement
Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898): Criticized British exclusion of Islamic education and established Aligarh Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (1875) to modernize Muslim education while maintaining religious identity (Lelyveld, 1996). Nadwatul Ulama (1894): A response against Western education, advocating traditional Islamic knowledge while dealing with modern subjects (Rahman, 1996).
Hindu Nationalist Educational Institutions
Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj Schools: Promoted Hindu nationalism and Vedic knowledge in response to British and Christian missionary education (Jones, 1976).
Benares Hindu University (1916): Established to counterbalance Muslim institutions like Aligarh (Metcalf, 1994).

Impact on Identity Formation:
Muslim-Hindu Educational Polarization: British policies, combined with community-driven initiatives, deepened sectarian divides in education.
Foundation of Separate Identities: The Hindus and Muslims' divergent education experiences led to the subsequent demand for separate nationhood (Pakistan Movement).

British Educational Policies and the Creation of Pakistan

Separate Electorates and Communal Politics
Morley-Minto Reforms (1909): Established separate electorates for Muslims, strengthening political and educational segregation (Hardy, 1972).
Government of India Act (1935): Increased communal representation, further solidifying religious identities (Jalal, 1985).

Impact on Identity Formation:
The education system consolidated communal awareness, laying the foundation for the Muslim League's call for Pakistan. Political segregation of communities by educational institutions played a role in the ideological rationale for partition.

Postcolonial Legacy of British Educational Policies in Pakistan

Ongoing Impact of British Educational Frameworks
Maintenance of the British University Model: Pakistani universities persisted with the colonial curriculum, with little focus on indigenous knowledge (Rahman, 1999).
Language Policy Debates: English continued to be the language of instruction for the elite, but Urdu was now the national language, establishing a new class division (Rahman, 1996).

Islamization and Counter-Colonial Narratives

Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization (1977-1988): Redirected the curriculum from British secular models to a focus on Islamic identity, partly in response to colonial-era secular education (Ali, 2009). Curriculum Revisions in the 2000s: Attempts were made to reconcile modern education with Islamic values, but colonial-era frameworks continued to dominate (Hoodbhoy, 1998). British education policies in colonial India, shaped by orientalist thinking, were central to remaking identity formation in the territories that now constitute Pakistan. By advancing English education, the British excluded indigenous knowledge systems and produced Westernized elite, further polarizing social and religious divisions. These policies of education helped perpetuate Muslim-Hindu communal polarization, sowing the seeds for the demand for Pakistan. Post-independence, too, Pakistan's educational system retained colonial inheritance, shaping contemporary contestations over language, identity, and curriculum content.

British Census Classification and Its Impact on Identity Formation in Present-Day Pakistan

The colonial British government in India employed census classification as a means of governance, social categorization, and identity formation. The colonial census, taken at regular intervals between 1871 and 1941, was pivotal in the construction of religious, caste, and ethnic identities. The classification reified orientalist views of South Asian society, shaped British legal and educational policies, and facilitated the communal divisions that later shaped the Pakistan Movement.

Purpose of British Census Classification

The main purposes of the British colonial census were:

- Administrative Control: To provide for taxation, land revenue arrangements, and rule.
- Legal Categorization: To establish separate religious and social categorizations for legal and political functions.
- Electoral Representation: To establish independent electorates on the lines of religious and caste identities.
- Social Engineering: To impose strict categorizations that were not as differentiated in the past in indigenous society.

Early Census Attempts (Pre-1871) and the Impact of Orientalist Thought

Before the systematic census of 1871, the British used travel reports, land records, and revenue surveys to categorize populations.

Orientalist scholars like James Mill (1817) and William Jones (1788) perceived Indian society as segmented by religion, caste, and ethnicity, perpetuating the British idea of fixed social hierarchies (Mill, 1817; Jones, 1788).

Early categorizations were shaped by Persian and Mughal administrative divisions but were oversimplified and hardened during British rule (Dirks, 2001).

Major British Censuses and Their Impact on Identity Formation

- **First Systematic Census (1871-72) and Religious Categorization**

Guided by Henry Beverley, the census in 1871-72 made an attempt at categorizing Indian society into religious, caste, occupation, and ethnic (Beverley, 1872) lines.

Religion started emerging as the central category to distinguish between Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and others to categorize them separately (Cohn, 1987).

Before British colonial rule, Hindu-Muslim identities were indeterminate, having mutual cultural and linguistic spaces (Metcalf, 1994). The census made the identities rigid, giving rise to sectarianism.

Muslims, as a monolithic entity, lost political representation, resulting in protests demanding exclusive identity recognition (Jalal, 1985).

- **The Census of 1881: Caste and Ethnic Classification**

Had brought in caste detail classifications, solidifying the varna-jati framework within Hindu society (Dirks, 2001).

Among Muslims, Ashraf-Ajlaf differences were recorded, influencing social mobility and affirming class divisions (Bayly, 1999).

Impact on Identity Formation:

Caste emerged as an administrative and legal category, shaping subsequent reservation policies and political representation (Rao, 2010).

Among Muslims, the census legitimized "noble" (Ashraf) versus "common" (Ajlaf) Muslim distinctions, influencing social status and legal rights (Metcalf, 1994).

- **The 1901 Census and Linguistic Classification**

George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903-1928) grouped languages and dialects, commonly equating them with religious affiliations (Grierson, 1903).

Urdu and Hindi were formally recognized as separate languages, furthering Hindu-Muslim linguistic differences (Rahman, 1996).

Effects on Identity Formation:

The British encouraged Urdu for Muslims and Hindi for Hindus, further solidifying communal identities (Brass, 1974).

Pakistan's language conflicts (Urdu vs. Bengali) following independence were based on these colonial groupings (Rahman, 1999).

- **1911 and 1921 Censuses: Consolidation of Distinct Religious Identities**

Separate counting of Hindus and Scheduled Castes was started during the 1911 Census, splitting Hindu society.

Separate Muslim electorates (initiated in 1909 under Morley-Minto Reforms) were justified on the grounds of census statistics (Hardy, 1972).

The 1921 census classified Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and "tribal groups", consolidating distinct political and legal identities.

Impact on Identity Formation:

Systematized the idea of "Hindu majority" and "Muslim minority", which was a key contention in the Pakistan Movement (Jalal, 1985).

Empowered Muslim League's call for a distinct Muslim identity, since census figures were utilized to substantiate demands for political representation (Shaikh, 2009).

- **The 1931 and 1941 Censuses: Preparing the Ground for Partition**

The 1931 Census was communalist in its approach, shaping the Government of India Act (1935) provisions regarding separate electorates (Metcalf, 1994).

The 1941 Census was politically motivated, with religious populations being utilized to frame the partition debate and Muslim majority provinces (Moon, 1998).

Impact on Identity Formation:

The census statistics supported calls for Pakistan, with Muslim-majority provinces such as Punjab and Bengal being emphasized in partition talks (Jalal, 1985).

The last census legitimized the Two-Nation Theory, resulting in communal violence and eventual partition (Talbot, 1996).

Postcolonial Legacy in Pakistan

Even after independence, Pakistan continued British census practices:
1961 Census: Strengthened Islamic identity, listing Ahmadis as a separate category (Rahman, 1999).
1981 Census: Islamization policies of Zia-ul-Haq brought sectarian identity questions (Ali, 2009).
Current Census Controversies: Caste, ethnicity, and sectarian divides continue to hold significance in the politics, the quota system in employment, and the legal frameworks of Pakistan (Rahman, 1996).
The British census classification system, informed by orientalist scholarship, was instrumental in remaking religious, caste, and linguistic identities in South Asia. By instituting strict social categories, the census reinforced communal awareness and laid the groundwork for partition. The long-term implications continue to influence Pakistan's identity politics, census practices, and sectarian divisions today.

Identity Formation and Resistance Under British Orientalist Policies in Present-Day Pakistan

The British colonial state was instrumental in constructing the identity formation of South Asians, especially in modern-day Pakistan, through orientalist legal policies, educational policies, census categorization, and administrative policies. These policies consolidated religious, linguistic, and ethnic identities, frequently with the aim of population control. Yet they also generated resistance movements, as local intellectuals, religious figures, and political activists contested colonial discourses and claimed alternative identities.

Identity Formation through British Colonial Policies
  • **Religious Identity: The Divide Between Muslims and Hindus**
The religious divide between Muslims and Hindus was one of the most important dimensions of identity formation under British colonial rule, and it was institutionalized through policies shaped by orientalist scholarship.
Orientalist Apologies: European scholars such as James Mill (1817) and William Jones (1788) divided Indian society into Muslim and Hindu civilization, depicting them as being incompatible by nature (Mill, 1817; Jones, 1788).
Legal distinctions: The Anglo-Muhammadan legal regime created distinct sets of laws governing Hindus and Muslims, affirming religious identity within marriage, property, and penal law (Metcalf, 1994).
Census Classification: The British census of 1871 officially classified Indians according to religion, which consolidated community identities and formed the basis of the Two-Nation Theory (Cohn, 1987).
Electoral Representation: Separate electorates for Muslims were instituted through the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms, which further cemented their political identity as a separate group (Jalal, 1985).
Impact on Present-Day Pakistan
Hindu-Muslim dichotomy, fostered by British policies, came to the fore of the Pakistan Movement, with Allama Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah promoting Muslim identity (Shaikh,

2009). Postcolonial Pakistan maintains religious identity as the root of law, statecraft, and national identity construction (Ali, 2009).

- **Linguistic Identity: Urdu vs. Hindi and the Legacy in Pakistan**

Colonial Language Policies: British linguists such as George Grierson (1903) labelled languages by religion, defining Urdu as the Muslim language and Hindi as the Hindu language (Grierson, 1903).

Impact on Education: The Macaulay Minute of 1835 advocated for English as the administrative language and furthered Urdu as the language of the Muslim ruling classes (Macaulay, 1835).

Partition Influence: British promotion of Urdu among Muslims helped shape the linguistic identity of Pakistan but also resulted in post-Partition tensions, including the Bengali Language Movement (1952) (Rahman, 1996).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

Urdu was made Pakistan's national language, solidifying a Muslim national identity (Rahman, 1996).

Linguistic tensions between Urdu and provincial languages (Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, Balochi) continue to influence ethnic identity politics in Pakistan (Rahman, 1999).

- **Ethnic Identity and Caste: Ashraf vs. Ajlaf and Colonial Classification**

Orientalist Racial Classifications: British anthropologists split Muslims into "Ashraf" (noble) and "Ajlaf" (commoner) categories, reaffirming pre-colonial social hierarchies (Dirks, 2001).

Pashtun, Punjabi, and Sindhi Ethnic Classification: The British brought in martial race theories, designating Pashtuns, Punjabis, and Gurkhas as "martial races" and labelling "Bengalis and Sindhis as weak and effeminate" (Metcalf, 1994).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

Ethnic hierarchies remain in Pakistan, where Punjabis control the military and bureaucracy, and Baloch and Sindhi communities are marginalized (Ali, 2009).

The Ashraf vs. Ajlaf divide remains in socioeconomic systems and access to education among Pakistani Muslims (Shaikh, 2009).

Resistance to British Orientalist Identity Formation

- **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Muslim Response**

Counter-Narrative to British Orientalism: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1875) refuted British views of Muslims as retrograde and tried to modernize Muslim education while retaining Islamic identity (Lelyveld, 1978).

Aligarh Movement: Developed a Western-style education system for Muslims focusing on Islamic culture in addition to modern sciences (Rahman, 1996).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

Pakistani education policies are guided by Sir Syed's focus on Islamic education in addition to modern subjects (Ali, 2009).

The ideology of the Aligarh Movement underpinned Muslim League identity-based politics (Jalal, 1985).

- **Religious Intellectuals and Islamic Reform Movements**

Deobandi and Barelvi Movements (1866): Muslim religious intellectuals started madrasas to challenge British secular education and maintain Islamic identity (Metcalf, 1994).

Jamaat-e-Islami (1941): Abul A'la Maududi founded this movement, which was opposed to British influence and sought to Islamize law and administration (Nasr, 1994).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

Islamic movements continue to shape Pakistani politics, education, and law (Ali, 2009).

The Deobandi and Barelvi movements continue to define religious identity, shaping sectarian politics in Pakistan (Nasr, 1994).

- **Political Movements: The Pakistan Movement (1906-1947)**

The Muslim League (1906) was a political reaction to British census-based separate electorates (Jalal, 1985).

Allama Iqbal's dream of an independent Muslim state (1930) was a reaction to British religious categorization policies (Shaikh, 2009).

The Lahore Resolution (1940) institutionalized calls for Pakistan as a separate Muslim identity-based state (Metcalf, 1994).

Impact on Contemporary Pakistan

The Pakistan Movement consolidated religious nationalism, shaping the legal and political framework of the country (Talbot, 1996).

Postcolonial Pakistan's identity has a strong relationship with Islam, with ongoing controversies regarding the place of religion in state governance (Ali, 2009).

British orientalist policies in law, education, and census classification were instrumental in defining identity formation in modern-day Pakistan. Yet, resistance movements by Muslim scholars, religious leaders, and political activists opposed these British-imposed categories, resulting in the Pakistan Movement and the creation of a unique Muslim identity. The colonial legacy of identity formation continues to shape Pakistan's religious, linguistic, and ethnic divisions to this day.

Postcolonial Legacy of Orientalism in Present-Day Pakistan

British Orientalism's postcolonial legacy still determines education, politics, legal frameworks, and national identity in Pakistan. Colonial policies, formulated in orientalist scholarship, embedded religious, linguistic, and ethnic identities, which remain in governance, law, and cultural narratives. The postcolonial state inherited polarizing policies, consolidating British-imposed categories, frequently in ways that support hierarchies of power and societal conflict.

The Postcolonial Legacy in Law and Governance

- **Legal System: Continuity of Anglo-Muhammadan Law**

The British brought Anglo-Muhammadan law, a syncretic legal system that selectively adopted Islamic principles and English common law. Post-independence in 1947, Pakistan inherited most colonial legal frameworks, resulting in ongoing controversies regarding the application of Shariah vs. secular law (Kennedy, 1998).

Continuation of Colonial Laws:

The Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), 1860, initially prepared by the British, continues to apply with minimal adjustments (Lau, 2006).

The Government of India Act (1935) acted as the constitutional basis for the first laws in Pakistan.

Islamization and Legal Identity:

General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization (1977-1988) brought in the Hudood Ordinances and Blasphemy Laws based on colonial legal differentiation between religious communities (Ahmad, 2017).

The Federal Shariat Court (1980), in the style of British "indirect rule", enables the state to decide what laws are consistent with Islam (Kennedy, 1998).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

The legal system is still dualistic, striking a balance between British-era secular codes and postcolonial Islamic legislation (Lau, 2006).

The blasphemy laws, a legacy of British sedition laws (Section 295-A, 1927), remain politically and socially sensitive (Ahmed, 2017).

- **Bureaucracy and Military Dominance**

British colonial rule instituted a centralized bureaucracy and a potent military as instruments of domination. Post-independence, Pakistan followed and consolidated these institutions, which resulted in enduring authoritarianism (Jalal, 1995).

Centralized Civil Services:

The Indian Civil Service (ICS) was retained by Pakistan as the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), continuing the colonial legacy of upper-level bureaucratic domination (Sayeed, 1967).

This elite bureaucracy has been largely unaccountable to the masses, sometimes preferring military domination to democracy (Jalal, 1995).

Militarization and the Colonial Martial Race Theory:

The British marked Punjabis and Pashtuns as martial races, to be recruited preferentially into the military.

These ethnic groups continue to dominate Postcolonial Pakistan's army, marginalizing other ethnic communities (Cohen, 2004).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

The army remains the most influential institution, often intervening in politics (Lieven, 2011).

Ethnic disparities in the military and bureaucracy are among the causes of regional complaints, especially in Balochistan and Sindh (Ahmed, 2017).

The Postcolonial Legacy in Education and Knowledge Production

- **3.1 British-Introduced Educational Structures**

British colonial education policies introduced a dichotomy between Western-type schools and traditional Islamic madrasas, which continues to exist in Pakistan's education system to this day (Rahman, 1996).

Westernized Elites vs. Traditional Religious Education:

The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy (1835) resulted in the encouragement of English-medium education for the elite and madrasa education for the masses (Metcalf, 1994).

Postcolonial Pakistan follows this same educational bifurcation, with elite English-medium institutions churning out bureaucrats and military officers and madrasa alumni finding it difficult to enter modern professions (Rahman, 1996).

Curriculum and National Identity:

History books remain dominated by colonial accounts, depicting Pakistan's past as a unidirectional path from Muslim to British to independence (Shaikh, 2009).

The curriculum for Pakistan Studies focuses on Islamic identity at the cost of regional and pre-Islamic pasts (Hoodbhoy, 1998).

Impact on Present-Day Pakistan

Educational disparities remain in place, with elite schools graduating policymakers, and madrasa students experiencing economic and social marginalization (Rahman, 1999).

Colonial-era educational compartments have stifled scientific advancement and critical thinking, as curricula tend to perpetuate state-controlled discourses (Hoodbhoy, 1998).

The Postcolonial Legacy in National Identity Formation

- **Religious Nationalism and the Two-Nation Theory**

The British census categorization and separate electorates (1909, 1919, 1935) consolidated religious identity politics. Post-independence, Pakistan formalized Islam as the essence of national identity, frequently excluding non-Muslims and regional identities (Jalal, 1995).

Islamization of National Identity:

Pakistan's Constitution (1956, 1973) makes Pakistan an Islamic Republic, following the British-era segmentation of religious communities (Malik, 1996).

The Objectives Resolution (1949) prioritized Islam as the foundation for the government, replicating colonial-period policies of religious categorization (Shaikh, 2009).

Marginalization of Minorities:

Colonial census categories were responsible for marginalizing Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis in postcolonial Pakistan (Ahmed, 2017).

Second Amendment (1974) labelled Ahmadis as non-Muslims, perpetuating colonial legal differentials between religious communities (Malik, 1996).

Effect on Present-Day Pakistan

Religious minorities are discriminated against, explained by colonial-era legal constructs (Ahmed, 2017).

The Two-Nation Theory continues to hold a central role in national identity, shaping policy on education, politics, and foreign affairs (Shaikh, 2009).

British Orientalism's postcolonial heritage continues to influence Pakistan's legal, political, educational, and national identity systems. Postcolonial Pakistan inherited British policies of legal codification, military supremacy, educational stratification, and religious classification, which consolidated authoritarian rule, identity-based nationalism, and social disparities. Although certain postcolonial reforms have sought to reverse these trends, most colonial legacies are deeply rooted in the state's institutions and ideologies.

Conclusion

Orientalist scholarship helped British colonial policy makers and inculcated a sense of identity in the Indian subcontinent, especially today's Pakistan. Constructing narratives where the Orient is portrayed as inferior, static and exotic served as a reason for British rule and governance structure in line with imperial objectives. This "knowledge-power" dynamic, based on orientalist assumptions, not only enabled colonial control but also rewrote the identities of colonized populations.

In the regions of Punjab and Sindh, religious and communal divisions emphasized by the British during the colonial period only intensified the existing lines of division in the socio-political arena. While resistance to colonial narratives has shaped a united Muslim identity, Orientalism's lasting imprint in the perception of self and communal unity continues to influence. These legacies continue to shape Pakistan's socio-political landscape, which reflects the persistent nature of colonial knowledge systems in the context of modern governance, legal frameworks, and cultural discourses.

Recommendations

   1- Revisiting Colonial Narratives:

Postcolonial scholarship should remain critical to colonial narratives while promoting indigenous narratives that contest orientalist stereotypes. This calls for revisiting the history books, legal codes, and educational curricula in a deconstructive approach.

   2- Educational Reforms in Pakistan:

Pakistan's educational system needs to adopt plural historical narratives which better describe the colonial era with the emphasis of agency among the local populations who resisted colonialism.

3- Interdisciplinary Studies:

Historical, sociological, and political science scholars may come together and discuss the myriad ways in which Orientalism has influenced Pakistan in the post-colonial era. A holistic study on this would yield an understanding that colonial legacies continue to evolve national identity and governance.

4- Publicity Campaigns:

Public history initiatives, such as exhibitions, documentaries, and community programs, will be able to spread critical thinking on orientalism to broader audiences, allowing them to get a better feel of its implications for Pakistan's history and culture.

5- Policy Recommendations for Cultural Preservation:

Policies that conserve the vast diversity of culture in Pakistan, as well as a variety of voices to contest the orientalist myths, would be significant. The tradition to be celebrated locally may contest stereotypes and is more inclusive of national identity.

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