

Islamization of research in history: A critical analysis

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Abstract: History is the storehouse of knowledge and students of history must know how and why this knowledge is stored. Many sophistic authors have manipulated information about the human past in order to serve their self-centered motivation. A critical evaluation and a rational assessment of such manipulation may be recognised as Islamization of Knowledge. In modern times, the perception of man has made significant impact in history writing. This article critically evaluates the manipulation of history by some historians and then examines how Darwinian and Freudian “scientific” perceptions have impacted history writings. There is a dire need to challenge such views by rational historians.

Keywords: Islamization of history, Sophistic manipulation, Origin of man, Darwinism, Freudianism.

Introduction

The term “Islamization of Knowledge” has been understood differently by seekers of knowledge during the past few decades when the term began to be extensively used in the academia. Wikipedia as a popular source captures the different dimensions of the term as:

... variety of attempts and approaches to synthesize the ethics of Islam with various fields of modern thought. Its end product would be a new *ijma*’ (consensus) among Muslims on an appropriate *fiqh* (‘jurisprudence’) and a scientific method that did not violate Islamic ethical norms. However, some Muslims both liberal and traditional are sceptical of the approach, viewing the construction of fields such as Islamic science and Islamic economics largely as propaganda created to further the Islamist view that Islam is an all-encompassing social system (Wikipedia, 2015).¹

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¹ Although Wikipedia is not a credible source of information for academic writings, it helps an initial understanding of academic terms and themes.

This article deals with Islamization of knowledge of history as a discipline. It asks: what the problems with historical knowledge are and how they can be corrected.

History has witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, and has stored for future generations enormous amount of information to learn from. Throughout history, philosophers have used their knowledge of history to support argumentation. Religious texts such as the Bible and the Qur'an also urge their readers to learn from history for ideas in governing the society. However, following the Enlightenment tradition in Europe around the middle of the nineteenth century, many enthusiastic European scholars, who claimed to have adapted the Newtonian philosophy and the Cartesian worldview in the study of history and changes in society, introduced new approaches to the understanding of history. Terms such as social science, human science, behavioural science, and social engineering were coined, and many disciplines were introduced at universities to study social and human phenomena. The new approaches to history demanded methodological rigour to be called scientific.

What is this scientific research methodology? How is it scientific and methodical? How does this methodology differ from pre-nineteenth century method of studying history and society? Does research methodology in history differ from those in other disciplines? How different are other methodologies? These and similar other questions have been raised by students of research methodology in history.

Answers to these questions demand some reflections on the foundation of research methodology in modern times. This methodology originated in Europe following the contributions of scholars and scientists such as Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and many others. As Europeans made new discoveries and inventions and gained considerable amount of control over the nature, they developed confidence in human ability to arrive at the truth through experiment and observation. Many scholars identified this development with the Newtonian Revolution. The followers of this revolution believed that a rational, progressive, systematic, and verifiable method could be established for all purposes. Although Newton himself and many of his contemporaries were believers and religiously motivated, this process laid the foundation of a new worldview in Europe which came to be known as secular or non-religious worldview. The new methodology of history, therefore, emerged as a by-product of this new world-view, which has been claimed to be scientific. The implications of this new approach to history have been enormous for the discipline subsequently.

Followers of the new methodology accused the old methodology of being unscientific and of believing in historical changes as acts of providence. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, major floods were seen as punishments from God. Normal natural activities such as rain or storm were explained in mystic religious terms. The new methodology ridiculed the ideas of any connection between religious ethics and historical events.² However, because of the supposedly non-rational approach in the name of religion the earlier methodology was condemned to the extent that almost all religious ideas were discredited by the new methodology. The new social science methodology held the view that all religious ideas must be removed from explanations in historical changes.

A degenerative tendency of the modern scientific approach to history is the manipulation and misinterpretation of knowledge to serve interests of Sophists type of scholars and philosophers. Although the methodology adopted by the Sophists came from the tradition, contemporary scholarship has espoused their approach to historical interpretation. This is a more serious predicament in history than any other discipline. But since history is considered the storehouse of knowledge and delivers raw material for all other disciplines, no academic discipline can escape from the problem caused by maltreatment of knowledge in history.

Clearly, modern historical knowledge is deduced from the methodologically faulty approaches to history. These approaches facilitate manipulation and misinterpretation of history leading to arriving at false conclusions. Islamization of Knowledge of history, therefore, corrects these deliberate manipulations and misinterpretations, and helps arrive at true knowledge.

Manipulation of knowledge in history

A contemporary example of manipulation of historical knowledge is “clash of civilization” thesis. In order to demonstrate the validity of his thesis, Samuel P. Huntington resorted to manipulating history of both Western and Islamic civilizations. Introducing the discussion on “Islam and West” during the Clinton (1992-2000) administration, Huntington suggested that:

Some Westerners, including President Bill Clinton, have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamist

² For example, a scholar of legal history arguing against the role of ethics in law ridiculed the suggestion of the Roman emperor Justinian that “homosexuality was the cause of earthquakes” (Riddall, 1999: 308).

extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise. The relations between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox and Western, have often been stormy. Each has been the other's Other (Huntington, 1996: 209).

Huntington holds the view that no true friendship could be cultivated without true enemies. Therefore, in order to create a true sense of friendship among diverse Westerners he identifies Muslims as true enemies of Western civilization.

In suggesting the above, Huntington manipulates history of both Islamic and Western civilizations. The Qur'an, it must be noted, does not single out Christians as enemies of Muslims. In fact, the Qur'an encourages friendly relations with Christians not only because the Christians believed in the existence of God, but also that they are *ahl al-kitab* (people of the divine book). It is a historical fact that the early Muslims persecuted by their fellow tribesmen in Mecca sought refuge with the Christian king of the modern day Ethiopia. The Qur'an also favoured the Byzantines who were mostly Christian in their clash against the Persians who were mostly pagans. Huntington has apparently ignored these facts and seemed to have learned the distorted history from Bernard Lewis who in 1990 advocated the original clash of civilizations thesis (Lewis, 1990). A more authentic work on this issue is by Columbia professor Richard Bulliet which shows the prevalence of a closer relation between Islam and Christianity in history than Bernard Lewis' "Judeo-Christian heritage" (Bulliet, 2004). Therefore, one needs to examine the idea of the Christians and Muslims being "the other's Other."

It is not true that Muslims always constituted the "Other" for Christians. Christianity was born as a reform movement within the Jewish tradition and the two communities became other's other during the early days of Christianity. Huntington romanticizes Christian history by suggesting that the "twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and Christianity" (Huntington, 1996: 209). Perhaps the Cold war was too contemporary to be erased from the memory of his readers. But the historical facts, for instance, of Crusades against Orthodox Christians, the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), the Thirty Year's War (1618-1648), and the two devastating world wars of the 20th century testify that intra-Christian conflictual relations have never been a superficial historical phenomenon.

That Huntington has deliberately manipulated intra-Christian tension and conflict is evidenced by his overlooking of the motivating factors behind the

American war of independence. There has been an explosion of references to the Judeo-Christian heritage of the American republic during the past decade or so which suggest that like many Enlightenment philosophers, the founding fathers of America were religious but vehemently anti-clerical. The fundamental forces of human rights and dignity that motivated the founding fathers for war of independence have had their origins not only in the revived Renaissance ideas and enlightenment tradition, but also in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A thorough understanding of history cannot escape these historical truths. However, this is not to suggest that there has not been any conflict between Muslims and Christians in the past; rather, this is to argue that Muslims and Christians have not been each other's "Other" throughout history as has been suggested by Huntington. This point can be further explained through a proper understanding of colonial expansion in the Muslim world and identifying problems of colonial historiography.

European colonial expansion and history writing

European colonialism came as a major challenge to the Muslim world. Writing on the impact of colonialism in Africa and Asia, Hans Kohn, a historian of colonialism and nationalism, claimed, "... thanks to colonialism, for the first time capable native cadres for the administration of the country and for all walks of civilized life have come into existence"(Kohn, 1996: 6).³ According to Hans Kohn:

Poverty has existed in Asia and Africa since time immemorial, as it existed in Europe until the rise of liberalism and capitalism, though in Asia and Africa it has, for reasons and geography, been more acute and more ubiquitous than in Europe. As far as historical memory goes, there has been perpetual warfare in Asia and Africa; ... Western imperialism ... has brought lasting benefits to both continents... (Kohn, 1996: 10).

A historiographic analysis of the general pattern of the European colonial rule in British India (Bengal) and French Algeria can be of help in analyzing Kohn's claim.

European penetration into the Muslim world began following the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain (1492) and with the Portuguese capture of Goa (1510) on the Indian coast and Malacca (1511) in the Malay Peninsula along with aggressive Portuguese activities in the North and East African coasts.⁴ The

³ As one of the earliest historians on the subject, Kohn's views have made deep impact on studies in economics, history, political science, and sociology.

⁴ For a good description on the nature of colonial penetration into Asia, see Panikkar (1993).

Portuguese believed that in order to gain commercial supremacy over the Indian Ocean it was necessary to occupy and control certain strategic points in the region. They were reported to have been making over 500% profits by importing goods from Asian markets. This attracted other European countries to the region. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the European trading companies became more organized: the Dutch, the French and the British formed East India Companies as joint stock enterprises along with many other similar ventures. These companies were all supported by their governments who competed against each other for commercial privileges from local rulers in Asia and Africa. Occasionally, Eastern rulers took advantage of the presence of these enterprises close to their territories. The Persian Safavids invited the British to fight against the Portuguese: the Portuguese had already established colonies in Hormuz, Bahrain and Muscat in the Persian Gulf coast. The Sultan of Johor began to cooperate with the Dutch against the Portuguese settlement in Malacca (Emerson, 1979: 67). As a result, the territory changed hands, the Netherlands capturing it in 1641. In the process, European countries began to acquaint themselves with the internal politics of Muslim countries and occasionally secured and increased the amount of trade concessions from Muslim rulers.

Powerful Muslim rulers did not seem to have been concerned about the interference of European countries in the affairs of some Muslim populated areas. In the 1680s, however, when the British East India Company (EIC) attempted to capture Bombay (now called Mumbai), a major trading centre on the coast of India, the powerful Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1657–1707) cancelled all concessions granted to the British. This had a devastating effect on the British interest in the region. Rupert Emerson wrote:

. . . [t]he company was forced to go on bended knee to Aurangzeb and ask his indulgence with respect to continuing Company trade with India. Fortunately, as far as the Company's future was concerned, Aurangzeb took the view that the English were nothing more than an irritant in the greater imperial scheme of things, . . . the Company had to issue abject apologies . . . unfortunate incidents were forgotten and trade relations returned to normal (Lawson, 1993: 50).

There were many reasons for the EIC to apologise to the Indian Emperor: the Indian trade had already become the backbone of the British economy. In fact, all European countries were making huge profits by selling eastern goods in European markets. In the seventeenth century, the British EIC was making at least 200% profit and providing substantial amount of loans to the British government.

Bengal was one of the richer areas of the world in the seventeenth century.⁵ By the middle of the eighteenth century, the British EIC conducted 60% of its trade with Bengal. At that time although Bengal was a part of the Delhi centered Mughal Empire, it practically had separated itself from Delhi. In 1756 the new *Nawab* (ruler), Siraj ad-Dawlah (1729-1757), cancelled all trade concessions granted to the EIC because of misbehavior of some Company officials. The young Nawab had many rivals within the royal household. Company officials began to conspire with Siraj ad-Dawlah's rivals and succeeded in inducing the Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's army. In 1757 in the battle of Polashi (Plassy), the Nawab was defeated and killed and Mir Ja'far Ali Khan (d. 1765), the Commander-in-Chief, was declared the new Nawab. The EIC demanded and received a huge sum of money from Mir Ja'far. According to one British source:

Before Plassy, it was privately agreed that in addition to the official compensation, £400,000 should be given to the army and navy and £ 150,000 to the select committee of six [the Board of Directors]. The members of council received £50,000 to £80,000 each (Spear, 1958: 473).

Muslim sources put the figure much higher. One Muslim historian puts the figure at:

... [r]upees 22,900,000 [about £5,000,000] under various heads. This amount was in addition to secret and private promises for huge rewards to Clive [commander of the Company forces] and his associates which stipulated the payment of at least £550,000 (Ali, 1988: 2A: 11).

The EIC was in desperate need for money to fund other colonial wars and continued to exert pressure on the Bengal government for funds. The same British source says, "... the discovery that the Nawab's treasury contained only 1½ millions sterling instead of the 40 millions which were rumored led to no abatement in the demands" (Spear, 1958: 473). In fact, there could be no proper record for the total transfer of wealth from Bengal to England during this period because of the lack of order and strong government immediately after the British occupation. When the treasury ran out of gold and silver coins, the colonialists collected jewels, precious stones and every item of luxury goods that were available among the royals and the aristocracy. On May 24, 1769, one EIC official

⁵ Here one must dispute Kohn's claim that poverty existed in Asia as it existed in Europe. In fact, studies dealing with the economic situation obtaining during this period will suggest that Bengal was much wealthier than England and that is why Bengal attracted European merchants in the area. See Mukherjee (n.d.).

reportedly wrote: “It must give pain to an Englishman to have reason to think that since the accession of the Company to the *Dewani*, the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before. ... This fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government, is verging towards ruin” (Quoted in Pannikar, 1993: 79). According to *The Oxford History of India*, “men made fortunes, returned to England, lost them and returned to India for more” (Pannikar, 1993: 474). This process continued for a long time. This new found wealth created havoc in the British society. On the impact of Bengal wealth on 18th century British society, *The Oxford History of India* further records:

This sudden affluence of the Company’s Bengal servants had a variety of results. It started a stream of returned ‘Indians’ to England who became the ‘Nabobs’ [*Nawabs*] of eighteenth-century England, scandalizing society by their ostentation and creating jealousy by their wealth. Their influence began to be felt by 1760 and they were a parliamentary force by 1767 (Pannikar, 1993: 519).

This parliamentary force played an important role in institutionalizing colonialism and establishing the British Empire that was originally initiated by some trading companies. Bengal government’s failure to generate funds for EIC led Company officials to assume direct control of the government. In 1765, EIC officially secured the Mughal emperor’s permission to collect tax in Bengal. EIC administration was consolidated in 1772 with the appointment of Warren Hastings (1732-1818) as the Governor General of India who used cruel methods for collecting money from the people of Bengal. As a result, Hastings was impeached and while arguing against him in the hearing, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), an Irish conservative member in the British parliament, highlighted the sufferings of the Indians under Company rule:

Those who could not raise the money were most cruelly tortured: cords were drawn tightly round their fingers, till the flesh of the four on each hand was actually incorporated, and became solid mass: the fingers were then separated again by wedges of iron and wood driven in between them. – Others were tied two and two by feet uppermost; they were then beat on the soles of the feet, till their toe-nails dropped off.

They were afterwards beat about the head till blood gushed out at the mouth, nose, and ears; they were also flogged upon the naked body with... some poisonous weeds, which burnt at every touch... a father and son tied naked to each other by the feet and arms, and then flogged till the skin was torn from the flesh;...

The treatment of the females could not be described: - dragged from the inmost recesses of their houses, which the religion of the country had made so many sanctuaries, they were exposed naked to public view: the virgins were carried to the Court of Justice, where they might naturally have looked for protection; but now they looked for it in vain; for in the face of the minister of justice, in the face of the spectators, in the face of the sun, those tender and modest virgins were brutally violated. The only difference between their treatment and that of their mothers was, that the former were dishonored in the face of the day, the latter in the gloomy recesses of their dungeon. Other females had the nipples of their breasts put in a cleft bamboo, and torn off... the fathers and husbands of the helpless females were the most harmless and industrious set of men... they gave almost the whole produce of their labor to the East India Company:... produced to all England the comforts of their morning and evening tea: for it was with the rent produced by their industry, that the investments were made for the trade to China, where the tea which we use was brought (Mill, 1990: 3, 66-67).

Yet, Warren Hastings, under whose command this brutality was carried out, was acquitted in the view of the “valuable services” he had rendered to the country in establishing the colonial administration. This “valuable service” continued to be rendered by officials till 1857, when following a major revolt against the Company rule, the whole of India was transferred to the British crown.

The early French colonial experience in Algeria was no different from that of the British. Initially, the French refrained from establishing direct colonies in Muslim countries because of the Capitulation Treaty signed between Francis I (1515-1547) and the Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman (1494-1566) the Magnificent in 1536. Under the treaty the French enjoyed the status of separate *millet* within the Ottoman administrative system and secured the right to conduct trade in Ottoman territories. With the changing situation and increased weakness of the Ottomans, however, the French also became active in direct colonization efforts in Asia and Africa. Slowly, the French turned out to be the primary rivals of the British. The British success in Bengal and the wealth they had acquired in the newly founded colony created envy among the French. Following the French Revolution, the Directory Government (1795-1799) entrusted General Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) with the responsibility to attack Britain. Napoleon decided to attack Egypt instead because he believed that by capturing Egypt he would be able to block routes to India and thus eliminate the newly acquired economic power of Great Britain. Although France failed in achieving its goal, it increased interest in its direct colonization process. It also needed to settle its dispute between the nobility

and common people who were affected by the Revolution, particularly by Jacobin (1792-1793) policies. Years later in 1830 the French Monarchists decided to invade Algeria.

During the early years of the Revolution, the French army bought grains from Algeria through two Jewish Algerian merchants. Arrears of the payment of this grain amounted to about 8 million francs. On their part the Jewish merchants were indebted to the *dey* or the Ottoman governor of Algiers in 1798. In 1818, when Hussain Dey came to power, he wanted to recover this amount. The *dey's* efforts continued for several years and tensions increased over time. In 1827, the *dey* was accused of slapping the French consul in Algiers and the French government began to threaten the Algiers government through various unsuccessful means including a naval blockade and fortifying the existing French factories in the region. Meanwhile, the French government found another reason to attack Algiers: the general elections in France were scheduled to be held in July 1830 and King Charles X wanted to gain support by providing a potential place for settlement to displaced farmers of the revolutionary era.⁶ The French Minister of War General Bourmont himself led the attack against Algeria. According to one historian:

It is estimated that one hundred million francs reached France from Algiers in 1830, obtained from the *dey's* captured treasures and looting of private property. Only about half of this sum reached the [French] treasury ... The rest was pocketed by officers and other personnel who took part in the invasion (Abun Nasr, 1987: 251).

The French Government officially explained to other European countries, however, that an invasion of Algeria was necessary in order to counter “piracy” and “contain slavery.” In reality, France enslaved the total population of Algeria and made it a dumping ground for European settlers. Again, in 1871, many refugees from Alsace and Lorraine were accommodated in Algeria. These European settlers became the middlemen between the colonizers and the colonized in Algeria. By 1953, just before the armed struggle for independence by Algerians began, there were about one million French and other European settlers in Algeria out of a total population of about 9 million.

Slowly, the French colony began to expand beyond Algiers. The people of Algeria faced a similar situation as was faced by the people of Bengal at the hands

⁶ In 1824 after the death of Louis XVIII when Charles X came to power he had returned the properties to the emigrés which were earlier distributed among the common farmers by the Jacobins in 1793.

of the British. One French eyewitness account describes the occupation of Tlemcen (a city in Algeria):

In 1833 Tlemcen was occupied and its population subjected to force exile and the arbitrary imposition of war tributes exacted from them by General Clauzel (successor of General Bourmont), who was impressed with the city's prosperity. Those who could not pay in cash were forced to bring their wives' jewelry... The indigenous population is in a terrifying state of misery and deprivation... by expelling the traders, by taking all sorts of violent measures, we have spread misery everywhere (Quoted in Bennoune, 1988: 38).

Similarly, a Dutch historian describes the occupation of Indonesia as "destruction, resistance and reprisals were the monotonous story of the Moluccas" (Quoted in Pannikar, 1993: 86).

This behavior of European colonizers raises questions about European values which during this period were inspiring them for what has come to be known as the Enlightenment. Historian Panikkar explains a response citing the case of the Netherlands:

[t]hough the Government of Holland continued to profess revolutionary principles they added the rider that 'the doctrines of liberty and equality ... cannot be transferred to nor applied to the East Indian possessions of the State so long as the security of the possessions depends on the existing and necessary state of sub-ordination (Pannikar, 1993: 79).

Another historian, M. Ricklefes, noted that:

Although the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) as an organization was Dutch, many of its personnel were not. Adventurers, vagabonds, criminals and the unfortunate from throughout Europe took its oath of allegiance. Inefficiency, dishonesty, nepotism, and alcoholism were widespread in the VOC (Ricklefes, 2001: 31).

However, the historian justifies the behaviour of the Dutch East India Company by saying, "There was much brutality which modern minds find repellent, but it must be remembered that this was a brutal age, and Indonesians showed no greater gentleness" (Ricklefes, 2001: 31).

These historiographies suggest that the norm of history writings in the 20th century has been distorted, partial and manipulated. Deliberate hiding of the facts and presentation of subjective views of historical truths have produced distorted historical knowledge. Clearly, the objectivity of history has been intentionally compromised following the so-called scientific methodology in history.

Modern knowledge about man, religion and civilization

Another major problem in history writing is the perception of man in social science literature. Since pre-Enlightenment, perception of man commonly originated in religious understanding of man, this question relates to the connotation of religion itself. This question can become clearer through analyses of Freudian view of man. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) made a deep impact on the understanding of man, and thus influenced almost all social science disciplines including history. Earlier Charles Darwin (1809-1882) had made a deep impact on the perception of man challenging the pre-Enlightenment view of man as God's creature. Darwin dethroned man from the status of God's special creation. Following Darwin's perception, Freud went further in complicating in concepts of man and the fundamental understanding about religion in history and society. He endorsed Marxist understanding of religion as illusion and predicted its failure (Freud, 1961). An unbeliever, as his translator and biographer calls him (Freud, 1961: xi), Freud tried to comprehend the origin of religion from his knowledge of history and what he called the science of psychology. He believed that religion originated in history out of man's perplexity and helplessness in the face of nature's dreaded forces. He says, "I have tried to show that religious ideas have arisen from the same need as have all the other achievements of civilization: from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushing superior force of nature" (Freud, 1961: 26-27). He continues suggesting that, "this body of religious ideas is usually put forward as a divine revelation. But this presentation of it is itself a part of the religious system, and it entirely ignores the known historical development of these ideas and their differences in different epochs and civilizations" (Freud, 1961: 27).

Referring to his earlier work on the origin of child's fear of father in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud says:

When the growing individual finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, that he can never do without protection against strange superior powers, he lends those powers the features belonging to the figure of his father; he creates for himself the gods whom he dreads, whom he seeks to propitiate, and whom he nevertheless entrusts with his own protection. Thus his longing for a father is a motive identical with his need for protection against the consequences of his human weakness. The defence against childish helplessness is what lends its characteristic features to the adult's reaction to the helplessness which *he* has to acknowledge – a reaction which is precisely the formation of religion (Freud, 1961: 30).

Freud raises interesting questions about authenticity of religions. He says:

When we ask on what their claim to be believed is founded, we are met with three answers, which harmonize remarkably badly with one another. Firstly, these teachings deserved to be believed because they are already believed by our primal ancestors; secondly, we possess proofs which have been handed down to us from those same primaevial times; and thirdly, it is forbidden to raise the question of their authentication at all. In former days anything so presumptuous was visited with the severest penalties, and even to-day society looks askance at any attempt to raise the question again (Freud, 1961: 33).

Freud made these observations as a believer in the Enlightenment philosophy, but unlike Enlightenment philosophers he did not believe in any role of God in the process of creation. Yet he tried to conceptualize a believer's belief in God, and he attempted to do so by subscribing totally to the Enlightenment methodology – experiment and observation – as the foundation of his own belief.

Freud seems to have believed mainly in two sources for his knowledge of religion and society: one is history and the other is the human nature which he tried to understand scientifically. On history he says, “[t]he less a man knows about the past and the present the more insecure must prove to be his judgment of the future” (Freud, 1961: 5). But his understanding of history seems very shallow—he does not know the beginnings of any civilization in history. In fact he relies heavily on the history of Western Europe of which the Enlightenment tradition was very critical. His knowledge of Western Europe also seems to be confined to medieval and modern times. Yet, citing problems of relying on information from history he accuses that religions have imposed restrictions on raising questions about validity of doctrines. He says:

We ought to believe because our forefathers believed. ... The proofs they have left us are set down in writings which themselves bear every mark of untrustworthiness. They are full of contradictions, revisions and falsifications, and where they speak of factual confirmations they are themselves unconfirmed. ... Thus we arrive at the singular conclusion that of all the information provided by our cultural assets it is precisely elements which might be of the greatest importance to us and which have task of solving the riddles of the universe and of reconciling us of the sufferings of life – it is precisely those elements that are the least authenticated of any (Freud, 1961: 33-34).

He then depicts religion as illusions which, according to him, is “derived from human wishes” and is a kind of “psychiatric delusions” (Freud, 1961: 39) This

understanding of Freud about man and religion, and its impact on history and civilization can be examined critically.

Freud recognized that “religion has clearly performed great services for human civilization” (Freud, 1961: 47). It is interesting to note that Freud based his understanding of history and civilization as “the characteristic features of civilization remains to be assessed: the manner in which the relationships of men to one another, their social relationships, are regulated – relationships which affect a person as a neighbor, as a source of help, as another person’s sexual object, as a member of a family and of a state” (Freud, 1930: 41-42). He also suggests that, “the first requisite of civilization, therefore, is that of justice – that is, the assurance that a law once made will not be broken in favour of an individual” (Freud, 1930: 41-42).

Yet self-contradiction in Freud on man, religion and history is clear. On the one hand he believes in the golden rule of religion “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” from pre-Christian era (Freud, 1930: 56), and considers justice as a cornerstone of civilization. On the other, he finds no role of religious ideas, in which justice originates, in establishing civilizations in history. Furthermore, Freud puts man in contrast with civilization that “every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization” (Freud, 1961: 6), that, “civilization is something which is imposed on a resisting majority by a minority which understood how to obtain possession of the means to power and coercion” (Freud, 1961: 7). It is obvious that Freud’s understanding of history and civilization is parochial that civilizations put man into conflictual social relations over self-interest, power and dominance. Whereas historians of civilizations generally agree that human cooperation results into growth and progress of civilizations and the lack of it lead civilizations to decline.

Methodological problems of filtering knowledge about history

Charles Darwin’s views were not an accident in 19th century Europe. It was a natural consequence of the trend that was set by the Newtonian worldview and the Enlightenment tradition in the 18th century. Although Newton was a believer and most Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers were practicing Deist, the 19th century scholars deviated substantially from the religious beliefs of their predecessors. The total rejection of miracles, and overemphasis on rationalism in the world of phenomena, led European scholars to explain everything on the basis of empirical studies and observation. Many philosophers wholeheartedly believed in the infinite and unlimited possibility of human progress. Darwin’s

contemporary, August Comte (1798-1857) introduced a new method of studying social phenomena, and asserted that the human mind progressed through three broad historical stages: theological, philosophical, and scientific. In the theological stage, the mind was satisfied with the supernatural explanation for the origin and purpose of things, and priests governed the society. In the metaphysical stage, man tried to explain various aspects of life through faith and belief rather than empirical investigation. This period included the Enlightenment tradition. His own time, Comte believed, was the period of scientific or positive stage of historical development. Another contemporary of Darwin, Karl Marx (1818-1883), also believed in the progressive growth of history. He believed that history was governed by rational principles and that history advanced dialectically, that the clash of opposing forces propelled history into a higher stage- an idea earlier developed by Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Social science methodology today derives its inspiration mainly from these two mid-nineteenth century intellectuals.

Is it wrong to believe in such a progressive view of historical development? After all any student of history would observe that a slow and gradual progress of the human mind has occurred in history. Therefore, it is probably not wrong to assume that there has been progressive growth of the human mind and intellect with the passage of time. George Sarton, a historian of science, has demonstrated this phenomenon very successfully by producing some empirical evidences (Carton, 1927: I, 9-10).

Following such evidence, historian E. H. Carr has defined the relationship between history and progress saying, “[h]istory is progress through the transmission of acquired skills from one generation to another” (Carr, 1987: 114). However, such observation may lead to over-simplification of progress in history, and such over-simplification could result into very controversial or even disastrous consequences. One anthropologist, for example, claims that, “According to analyses, modern humans can trace their genetic ancestry to a female who lived in Africa perhaps 150, 000 years ago. It should be borne in mind, however, that this one female was part of a population of as many as 10, 000 individuals; she was not a lone Eve with her Adam” (Leaky, 1994: 96). Following the Darwinian revolution, one observer noted, social scientists generally “argued that man is not only continuous with the animal kingdom and subject to the laws of nature; they also asserted that his mental, moral, and spiritual qualities evolved by precisely the same process that gave the eagle its claws and the tapeworm its hooks” (Beckner, 1967: 303). Such an understanding of man and history had a severe implication on the spiritual state of affairs of an individual in society as one historian observed, “Darwin deprived people of the

privilege of being God's special creation, thereby contributing to the feeling of anxiety that characterizes the twentieth century" (Perry, 1985: 549). This puts religion and social sciences in contrast with each other on which of the two provides true knowledge.

In Europe many Christians were outraged at Darwinian view of creation.⁷ However, most religious thinkers tried to reconcile saying that God created and then directed the evolutionary process which culminated in human beings. In reality, however, from the religious perspective, the evolutionary theory resulted in *The Death of Adams* (Greene, 1961). Social science literature generally accepted Darwin's evolution theory as scientific, and tried to interpret most related issues in its light. More extremists among the social theorists wanted to remove the role of religion on society by launching severe attack on priests who had earlier exploited religion for their selfish motives. Many took their cue from the 18th century sceptic David Hume (1711-1776) who attacked both revealed religions and deists' natural religion. Hume found many followers from among the social theorists who specialized in the study of religions. More liberal social scientists followed August Comte and Karl Marx and defended the Darwinian tradition of progress in history by interpreting various social phenomena in the light of those theories.⁸ These scholars wanted to study religion as a social phenomenon devoid of any connection with what the 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) called the *neumenal world*. In other words, they rejected revealed religion completely and wanted to understand religion only from the practices of the devotees. Scholars such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in psychology and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in sociology are the best examples of this tradition in the 20th century.

Following the nineteenth-century social science methodology (both Comtian positivistic and Marxist), books in history and other social science disciplines have been produced, based on the belief that human beings have emerged from sub-human beings. This methodology pre-conceives that the earliest men and women in history were savages as was held by Charles Darwin. Perry describes that:

For survival groups of families formed bands consisting of around thirty people; members learned how to plan, organize, cooperate, trust and

⁷ These were mainly fundamentalist Christians who were known for their non-rational belief and behaviour.

⁸ Here one must keep in mind the Comtian Religion of Humanity. Although Comte accepted the idea of the existence the Supreme Being, he allowed a very limited role of that Supreme Being in human affairs and history.

share. The men hunted for meat, and the women cared for young, tended the fires, and gathered fruits, nuts, berries, and grain. Hunters assisted each other in tracking and killing game, finding cooperative efforts more successful than individual forays. By sharing their kill and bringing some back to their camp for the rest of the group, they reinforced the social bond. So, too, did women who gathered food for the group. Bands that did not cooperate in the hunt, in food gathering, or in food distribution were unlikely to survive (Perry, 1985: 6).

Does not such a view of the savage sound very naive? If the human nature were so positive, that human beings would cooperate with one another whenever they need to do so, or they would cooperate in order to build the civilization, then why have there been wars in history? Such description of cooperative human social progress in the unknown pre-historic past seriously questions the 'civilized' human nature and society culminated much later in the 20th century when the English, French, Italian, German and European colonisers fought savage wars among each other over land and possession in Asia and Africa. Does it indicate that the savages usually cooperate, and not the civilized ones? This raises question as to what makes civilizations rise and fall. In this regard Sarton's insightful observation on Greek civilization is relevant to refer. He said-

We might be tempted to conclude that if mankind had walked humbly and constantly in their (Greek) footsteps, the progress of civilization would have been considerably accelerated. But if we did this, we would have shown that we did not entirely understand the nature of progress. It is undoubtedly a function of the increase of positive knowledge, ... (but) Greek Civilization ended in failure, not only because of the lack of intelligence, but also because of the lack of character, of morality (Sarton, 1, 9-10).

Sarton's observations about the need of character and morality in human history and civilization puts anthropologists' and historians' views about the origin of human history and progress into question.

To take an example, historians generally agree that civilization began around five to seven thousand years ago in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and Egypt with the invention of writing. This view is supported by archaeological findings found in the respective areas. However, these evidences do not indicate anything about the mechanism of the rise of civilizations. The ruins simply indicate that civilized people lived in the area; people had organized community life, and had built cities and facilities for their inhabitants. But these evidences hardly indicate the mechanism of their original system of government. For example, how they

originally secured cooperation of members of their communities? Who was their leader? How did the leader manage to secure the position of leadership? How did the leader manage to gain confidence of his people? These are all essential elements for building of any civilization. Based on their studies of human behaviour later in history, the pre-Enlightenment historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and 20th century historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) speculated about the mechanism of the rise of civilizations. Ibn Khaldun suggested about the existence of a concept called *asabiyyah* in the human nature that led humankind to cooperate with each other which resulted in a civilization. And according to Arnold Toynbee civilizations grew in response to challenges: these challenges might have originated out of the natural environment, or in response to challenges from the human society itself. However, these scholars have provided very little or no information about the growth of early civilizations. These theorists speculated about the subject only on the basis of their general understanding of the human nature or human history of a later date. This means authentic knowledge about the historical past is at best speculative, let alone be accurate. And speculative knowledge is always subject to distortion and manipulation.

Archaeologists, however, have provided some information about early civilizations. For this, of course, the anthropologists have depended heavily on the excavated material by archaeologists. These generally agree that religion was the basis of early civilizations. Religion was their frame of reference for understanding the nature, society and themselves. The temple was the cultural and economic heart of ancient cities. All properties belonged to God and the religious authorities administered them in the name of God. Priests and temple authorities collected rents, operated business, and received contributions. They also maintained documents about their citizens' birth, marriage, and death records. Religion also encouraged and justified wars, including enslavements and massacres. It is also believed that there existed different gods for different cities, and spheres of influence of different gods in different aspects of human life. This has led some scholars to conclude that the "beginning of civilization occur in the age of gods."

However, one should be very careful while deriving information from these archaeological remnants. Should we accept all the information as they appear? Do these evidence represent the genuine teachings of the religion? Most information is derived from fragments of writings or "sacred" objects or figures or figurine that have been discovered in archaeological excavations. But how reliable these sources are, one may ask. Nobody is sure about the authors of these writings, whether the author represents the mainstream scholarship, or had any vested interest. This is a logical question because, for instance, an archaeological

remnant on Second World War written by a German in the early forties of the twentieth century and found a thousand years later is unlikely to represent the accurate general situation of the time. Rationally, one could agree with the idea that religion played a very significant role in organizing societies in early civilizations, but it is very equally difficult to accept the idea that worship of numerous objects or polytheism was the earliest form of religion in world history.⁹ This view must be re-examined thoroughly mainly because archaeological findings also suggest that most early civilizations were destroyed due to natural disasters at the peak of their material progress. So, the question that emerges is the finding and establishing true knowledge of historical facts and events.

Conclusion

What is Islamization of knowledge for the discipline of history? It is argued in this article that history is a storehouse of knowledge, but the stockpile of knowledge, its presentation and interpretation may become subject to manipulation and distortion according to the worldviews of the researchers. Firstly, it has demonstrated through historiographic analysis that the European mainstream historians have presented an untrue picture of the Asian and African people and society. The British and French colonizers deliberately hid the truth about their savage faces behind the untrue picture of the colonial people and society. Secondly, it is argued that the modern understanding of the origins of man and religion based on Newtonian and Cartesian worldview of rationalism and scienticism has led to development of rational tradition which discounts religion and ethics from man's life and society. Hence, the origin of man, society and civilization are traced in speculative psychology and modern anthropology.

And finally, historical knowledge constructed by the modern social science following the positivist methodology fails to filter the true knowledge of history. Therefore, Islamization of knowledge of history involves correction of the historical facts presented incorrectly in conventional history books, and distilling historical truth with true monotheistic religion's assertions.

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⁹ This is the most accepted view among social scientists.

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