

Eurocentrism in Reinhart Dozy's Spanish Islam: A History of The Muslims in Spain

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Doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n29p74

Abstract

Eurocentrism is an ideology which influenced the works of Orientalists in the 19th century to elevate and raise the prestige of European culture and civilisation. Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883) was among the most famous and well-known Orientalist scholars who lived around the 19th century and he produced a majestic work on the history of Islam in al-Andalus entitled Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain. In relation to that, the objective of this study is to analyse the influence of Eurocentrism in Spanish Islam authored by Dozy. This study wholly employed a qualitative approach via historical research method and content analysis by examining specifically the work of Spanish Islam. Results of this study argued that Spanish Islam produced by Dozy was influenced by Eurocentrism which spread in the 19th century. This is proven by the existence of Eurocentrism characteristics in the work of Dozy which ignored and degraded the values of the Muslims, characterised the Muslim community as despotic and evaluated and interpreted the history of Islam according to Western perspective and imagination. Hence, the presence of these features makes the piece Spanish Islam less authoritative as a source of reference for Islamic history and civilisation researchers.

Keywords: eurocentrism; Dozy; Spanish Islam; al-Andalus; 19th century; Europe;

1. Introduction

Europe is a continent respected and admired by the global community for the advancement and modernity it enjoys in various aspects such as politics, economy, society, intellect, civilisation and culture. This achievement causes Europeans to feel that they are more advanced and civilised than the Orient, in particular the Muslims. This belief indirectly leads to an ideology known as Eurocentrism which makes Europe the centre of civilization, progress and modernity. Hence, European community often views and portrays the life and attitude of Muslim community with a negative perception such as static, irrational, backward, despotic and uncivilised. These negative perception and imagination are elements which are found in Romantic Orientalism works and indirectly these literatures become a medium for the spread of Eurocentrism ideology among Oriental communities, especially the Muslims.

Researches on the indoctrination of Eurocentric ideology by Orientalists have abundantly been done by researchers in putting forth actual historical facts and great contributions of Oriental civilisations to global advancement and progress of today. To name a few, there are works by Almeida and Joseph (2004) on the spread of Eurocentrism in the history of calculus development and the actual facts on this subject of Indian civilization scholars and that of Mazama (1998) on the influence of Eurocentrism on the works of European scholars in their attempt to uplift the status of Europe and ignore achievements of other civilisations. Thus, the infusion of Eurocentrism in the writings of Orientalists, particularly in Islamic history and civilization, is not at all impossible.

Examining the history of writings on Islamic history and civilisations in the West, there were many Orientalist figures who emerged in the 19th century. Among them was Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883) who was among the well-known Dutch Orientalists who studied in the field of Islamic history and civilisation, in particular of al-Andalus. He produced a masterpiece in the field of Islamic history and civilisation in al-Andalus, which is 'Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain'. However, based on the account by Collier (1975) and Weststiejn (2004), Dozy's writing in 'Spanish Islam' highlighted more of the negative side of the rule and life of the Muslims who were often at war and in conflict with each other as compared to the achievement and success of the Islamic community in al-Andalus. This indirectly makes Dozy's

work prejudicial in examining Islamic history and civilisation, containing characteristics of main Eurocentric elements. Hence, this study was carried out to analyse and identify the presence of Eurocentrism which was widespread in the 19th century in Dozy's piece 'Spanish Islam' which was authored within the same period.

2. Eurocentrism in the Works of Islamic History and Civilisation Orientalists

Scrutinising the history of achievement and progress of European civilization, most of the advancement and progress enjoyed by the Europeans today are not an absolute result of discoveries made by the Europeans themselves. Most of the success and achievements attained by the Europeans are resultant from the drain of knowledge and innovations from other civilisations, especially those of the Orient such as Islam, Chinese and Indian which were later adapted by the European civilisation. However, contributions by these Oriental civilisations were often concealed and only the greatness of Europeans was highlighted to the world to the extent that they are considered to be the impetus of revolution in various fields such as philosophy, civilization, science and technology. This is classified as Eurocentrism.

Mondal (2006) and Hostettler (2012) defined Eurocentrism as a thought of European exceptionalism as development centres of great history and culture as compared to other nations. Meanwhile, Blaut (1993) and Dibua (2010) argued for Eurocentrism as a label to all beliefs deemed true on the past and present superiority of European nations, compared to non-Europeans. Blaut (1993) asserted that the Europeans believed that they were better than other races because of their lighter skin and braver nature. Meanwhile, Amin (1989) defined Eurocentrism as a cultural phenomenon which views the history and culture of non-Europeans from the perspective Europeans or the West.

Based on those definitions, Eurocentrism is defined as a thought of European exceptionalism as a centre of development in great history and culture of the past and present time. Hence, Europe considers its culture universal which should be made an example for other civilisations to follow (Amin, 1989). Therefore, this indirectly proves that European culturalization is a form of Eurocentrism because of its anti-universal qualities, which are to reject and side-line the culture and values of other civilisations which are viewed as stagnant, backward, despotic, irrational and uncivilised. Therefore, Amin (1989) asserted that the difference in views between the Orientals and the Occidentals became the prejudice which exists in Eurocentrism. At once, this ideology also divided the global community into two, namely the Europeans who are civilised and non-Europeans who are primitive, backward and despotic (Dibua, 2010).

Miles (1989) shed a light that many views and illustrations frequently held by Europe towards non-Europe are in form of belittling the latter with the intention to insult. He also stated that whatever portrayal the Europeans put forward about non-European societies, the theme still revolved around the achievements and superiority of Europeans and the inferiority and backwardness of others. This view was used as an excuse to justify the exploitative policy of Europeans to colonise countries of the Orient (Arifin, 2007). The negative view towards Oriental societies was a view and imagination of the Europeans and not a reality. This perception existed when the Europeans were far away from countries of the Orient and they attempted to visualise the life of the Orientals as uncivilised, stagnant, tyrannical and irrational as compared to the European communities who were thought to be more civilised, rational, advanced and decent. Moreover, this negative perception was for the purpose of highlighting the higher civilisation of the Europeans compared to other nations whereas Orientals in Arabic lands, Persia, Turkey, India and China had already achieved great heights of civilization in politics, social, economy, culture and intellect before European revival during the age of Renaissance.

Such views and imaginations were elements in found Romanticism ideology which spread widely in the 19th century. This element of imagination was often used by the nations of Europe, especially the Orientalists, to interpret and visualise the life and history of Orientals, especially the Arabs. This perception and imagination of Orientalists is known as Romantic Orientalism. According to al-Dabbagh (2010), Romantic Orientalism movement was a method employed by Orientalists in spreading deviation and misunderstanding towards Islam. Mohammed Sharafuddin (1994) also asserted that the portrayal of despotism of the Oriental community was a major signpost in Romantic Orientalism works. In fact, he also stressed that the works of these Romantic Orientalists were also used as literary cannon in the effort to bring down Islamic states and thus bringing about European dominance over these states.

This negative perception of the Orientalists towards the Orientals especially Muslims, indirectly contributed to the dissemination of Eurocentrism ideology among the Muslims. The implication of this negative notion was that people of the Orient believed the superiority and greatness of the Europeans and the Orientals felt inferior and ashamed of their own civilization and culture. The view on the spread of Eurocentrism was stated by Berger (2003) as follows:

Europe is held up as the fountainhead of democracy, economic progress, and modernity, even as its long history of colonialism and its history of dictatorship and authoritarianism (until well into the twentieth century) is disregarded or downplayed. Eurocentrism also refers to the practice of viewing the rise and spread of Europe as the driving force in

world history.

The wrong perception towards the Orientals had caused imagination and misunderstanding to rise up, especially towards Islamic civilisation. This situation elevated the status of European civilization as an exceptional and great civilisation in the world history from the aspects of politics, economy, society, culture, and intellect as compared to other world civilisations.

Therefore, based on the reviews and discussions on the concept of Eurocentrism, it is clearly proven that the Orientalists played an important role in spreading the ideology of Eurocentrism, particularly through their writings on the people of the Orient, especially the Muslims. In relation to that, the researcher can conclude the three qualities which can be linked to Eurocentrism in the works of Islamic history and civilisation Orientalists, which are (Talib, Sidik, Jamsari & Sulaiman, 2013):

- Neglecting and debasing the values of non-Europeans, especially Islam by portraying them as a primitive and uncivilised society from the angle of attitude, thinking and way of life.
- Characterising non-Europeans, especially Muslims, as nations which rule based on autocracy (despotism). They depicted the rulers and Islamic society as tyrannical, inhumane and reckless.
- Evaluating the history of non-European societies and Islam only according to Western perspectives and imagination.

3. Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883M) and His Book 'Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain'

Reinhart Dozy was a famous and most well-known Dutch scholar and Orientalist historian in the 19th century (al-Zirikli, 2002). He was born on the 21st of February 1820 in Leiden and received his early and higher education there, in particular at the University of Leiden for his bachelor degree until his doctorate degree. He was a scholar famous for his research on the history and civilisation of Islam, particularly on the history and Islamic civilisation in al-Andalus and also for his work in lexicography (Dugat, 1870; De Geoje, 1883; Inayatullah, 1960; Brugman, 1989; Badawi, 1993; De Geoje, 2012; Dugat, 2013; Jamsari, Ashari, Kamaruzaman & Sulaiman, 2012a; Jamsari, Ashari, Sidek & Nor, 2012b; Jamsari, Talib, Sidik & Ashari, 2014). Dozy's stature in the field of history was proven when he was appointed a professor of history at the same university replacing Petrus Hoffman Peerlkamp (1786-1865) in 1850 (De Geoje, 2012; Jamsari, Talib, Sidik & Ashari, 2014). Throughout his involvement in the history and civilisation of Islam in al-Andalus, Dozy authored more than 10 books and some articles on the subject. Among his books on the history and Islamic civilization in al-Andalus were *Commentaire Historique d'Ibn Badroun sur le d'Ibn Abdoun* (1846M), *Historia Abbadidarum* (1846), *Notices sur Quelques Manuscrits Arabes* (1851M), *Scriptorum Arabum loci de Abbadidis* (1852 & 1863), *Researches sur l'Histoire Politique et litteraire de l-Espagne Pendant le Moyen Age* (1849, 1860 & 1881), *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne jusqu'à la Conquete de Andalousie par les Almoravides* (1861) and *Description de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne* (1866M) (Dugat, 1870; Dugat, 2013). In fact, according to Rawlinson (1884), Inayatullah (1960) dan Brugman (1989), *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne jusqu'à la Conquete de Andalousie par les Almoravides* published by E. J. Brill in 1861 was considered a masterpiece throughout his involvement as an Orientalism scholar.

The book *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* is very much acclaimed and often referred to by researchers and writers of the history and Islamic civilisation in al-Andalus. The reason for this is that Dozy's masterpiece was based on his examination of primary and authoritative sources on the history and civilisation of Islam in al-Andalus, be it from Arabic manuscripts or Christian narrations (De Geoje, 2012; Jamsari, Talib, Sidik & Ashari, 2014). In fact, his work in this piece virtually brought back to life the living atmosphere of the Andalusian. This was due to the fact his main goal of producing *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* was to display the historical facts of history and actual Islamic civilisation in al-Andalus based on the facts contained within primary sources, the Arabic sources in particular. Moreover, Stokes (2001a) stated that the book was a response to the work *Historia de la Dominacion de los Arabes en Espana* (1820M) by José Antonio Conde (1725-1820). In addition, composing of *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* was based on a collection of authoritative sources on the history and Islamic civilization in al-Andalus which Dozy studied for almost 20 years. These sources were obtained from libraries across Europe in Leiden, Gotha, Oxford and London.

The fame of this book which was written in French was clearly proven by the many translations of this book into several languages such as German (1874), Spanish (1877), English (1913), Urdu (1939) and Arabic (1994) (Weststeijn 2004). The book was translated into English by Francis Griffin Stokes in 1913 and published in London by Chatto & Windus with the title 'Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain'. The translation work in English is the main material for the researcher of this article in analysing the content of *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne*. This is due to the fact that Spanish Islam composed by Stokes is a complete translation of the original work, *Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne* (Stokes, 2001b).

In short, the work 'Spanish Islam' is divided into four volumes. The first volume centred on the pre-Islamic history and life of the Arabs, the era of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, the Companions and Umayyad rule in Damascus. The second volume meanwhile discusses the rule of the Visigoth over the Iberian Peninsula and the conquest of Muslim army onto the peninsula. In this volume also the scenarios of the Arabs, the Berbers and the Spanish in al-Andalus under Islamic ruling of the Umayyad were portrayed. In this volume Dozy presented the many conflicts between the Arabs and the original residents of al-Andalus, who were the Spanish who attempted to overthrow Arab rule in the territory.

The third volume still discusses al-Andalus under the Umayyad Caliphate, which was from the aspect of the rise of the kingdom during 'Abd al-Rahman III's rule until the decline of the caliphate institution during the rule of Hisham II. In this volume Dozy highlighted the rivalry between heirs of Umayyad for the position of Caliph in Cordova. Next, the final volume tells the fall of the caliphate institution and the emergence of *Muluk al-Tawa'if* (*taifa* or petty kingdoms) in al-Andalus. This break-up of Islamic rule and community gave opportunity to Christian kingdom to the north of the Iberian Peninsula to expand their control over Muslim territories. This scenario brought about the arrival of the Almoravids in al-Andalus to repel the advancement of the Christian kingdom and later on expanded the control of the Berbers over the region (Dozy, 2001).

4. Eurocentrism in 'Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain'

Resultant from an analysis on *Spanish Islam*, the researchers found that Dozy's writing has statements and facts which were in contradiction to the actual historical and Islamic civilization facts. Most of his scribbles portrayed negative aspects of the history and life of the Muslims in Arabia and al-Andalus. In fact, based on an assertion by Collier (1975) who did a review study on 'Spanish Islam', he showed the prejudicial attitude of Dozy towards the Arab race as exhibited in Dozy's writing. According to Collier (1975):

Nonetheless, there is no question that Dozy regarded Arab accomplishments as inferior to those of the West: "It may be that they have more elevation of character and true greatness of soul with a keener sense of the dignity of man; but they do not possess within them similiar germs of development and progress; and such are their passionate cravings for personal liberty and their complete lack of political instinct, that they seem incapable of submitting to social laws.

Besides, Weststeijn (2004) and Talib, Sidik and Jamsari (2014) also explained that in 'Spanish Islam', Dozy put more focus on the history of conflicts which occurred between two Arab clans, which were Banu Yaman and Banu Qays as well as conflicts between the Arabs, who were considered superior, and the Berbers, who were considered inferior to the former. However, in the end the Berbers which was the Almoravids succeeded in controlling al-Andalus and destroying Arabic culture over there. Dozy was prone to display the turmoil and conflicts in al-Andalus by brushing aside the role of al-Andalus as a centre of glory for Islamic rule and the peaceful life enjoyed by its citizens composed of various races.

Based on this statement of Weststeijn and Collier, it clearly highlights Dozy's view on the history and civilization of Islam as well as his his prejudice towards the Arabs. This prejudice indirectly makes the writing of 'Spanish Islam' by Dozy have the infusion of Eurocentric elements. In fact, his writing evidently revealed him as a Eurocentrist who attempted to highlight the Muslim community as one which constantly fought each other and Islami rule which practiced despotism. In addition, he hid the achievement and peacefulness of the Islamic society in al-Andalus at that time.

Resultant from an analysis on the scholarly work of 'Spanish Islam', the researchers found that this Dozy's writing cannot be categorised as an authoritative source for Islamic history research because Dozy's 'Spanish Islam' clearly shows that it was influenced by the three characteristics of Eurocentrism, which are ignoring and degrading the values upheld by the Muslim society, characterising the Muslims as a nation which practised despotism and finally evaluating the history of the Muslim society through his perspective and imagination only. The work of Dozy (2001; Talib, Sidik & Jamsari, 2014) was found to be embedded with Eurocentrism values as in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Eurocentric Elements in Dozy's 'Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain'

No.	Issues in Dozy's writing	Page no. in 'Spanish Islam'	Characteristics of Eurocentrism
1.	Denying the development and achievement of Islamic civilisation.	9	Neglecting and debasing the values upheld by the Muslims.
2.	Negative portrayal of the personality of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with prejudice.	12, 24 – 25	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only.
3.	Brutality of Khalid ibn al-Walid (r.a.) and his army in fighting the apostates.	21 – 22	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only.

4.	The disappointment of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Talhah ibn 'Ubay Allah and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam on the appointment of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan as the Caliph.	27 & 31	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
5.	Questioning the actions of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan who appointed his officials from amongst his family members, compiled the Qur'an and burnt the other copies.	27 & 31	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
6.	The Fitnah of The Battle of the Camels.	32	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
7.	Enmity between Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan.	35	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
8.	Dispute on the election of al-Hassan ibn 'Ali as Caliph replacing his father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.	39	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
9.	Dispute on the appointment of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah as Caliph.	40 – 41	Appraising the history of Muslim society according to his perspective and imagination only
10.	Comparison of the factors of conflicts which occurred among the Arabs with those of Europeans.	66 – 67	Characterising Muslims as a nation which practised despotism.
11.	Conversion into Islam of residents in Muslim-occupied territories to avoid paying <i>jizyah</i> and <i>kharaj</i> .	123	Neglecting and debasing the values upheld by the Muslims.
12.	Unsuitability of monarchical rule for Arabs and Berbers.	221, 239 – 240	Characterising Muslims as a nation which practised despotism.
13.	Praises for Christian community in al-Andalus.	392 & 240	Neglecting and debasing the values upheld by the Muslims.

Nevertheless, 'Spanish Islam' is not completely considered as nonauthoritative. On one hand, Eurocentrism influence in his work is evident through his wrong interpretation and depiction of Islamic historical events, especially those involving the personality and viewpoints of Prophet Muhammad PBUH and the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them). This is because majority of the sources he referred to in stating the facts of history during the era of Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his Companions were secondary sources written by Western scholars such as Jacob Buckhardt (1818-1897), R. F. Burton (1821-1890), A. P. Caussin de Perceval (1795-1871) and Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893). For example, Dozy pictured the personality and nature of Prophet Muhammad PBUH as someone weak, in despair, quiet, loving aimless roving, like to be alone in a quiet place, constantly sad and frequently crying like a woman in constant pain. He infact contrasted the Messenger's personality with that of the Arab youths of his time who were tough, energetic, war-loving, who disliked day-dreaming and crying.

On the other hand, the Islamic history part of al-Andalus in Dozy's work can be categorized as authoritative because it was based on primary and authoritative sources such as al-Dhakhirah (Ibn Bassam), Nafh al-Tib (al-Maqqari), al-Ihatah fi Tarikh Gharnatah (Ibn al-Khatib), al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Maghrib (Ibn 'Idhari) and Tarikh al-Andalus (Ibn al-Qutiyah). Nevertheless, on the whole the work of Dozy in 'Spanish Islam' is seen as an attempt to highlight the tyranny and despotism of the Muslim rulers and communities there. At the same time, he also presented the courage and difficulty of the Christians in al-Andalus under Islamic rule. This lop-sided comparison and portrayal indirectly persuade readers to interpret that Muslims are a nation fond of repression and tyranny towards non-Muslims whereas kindness shown by Muslim rulers towards the non-Muslims in al-Andalus was not highlighted in his writing. Dozy's piece also portrayed the Muslim rulers and Muslim society as irrational and often at war with each other over petty matters. Therefore, based on the above evidence, the researchers assert that Dozy's writing was indeed influenced by the ideology of Eurocentrism which aimed to portray the lowliness, tyranny and irrationality of the Muslim society in the Middle Ages.

5. Conclusion

All in all, 'Spanish Islam' is a huge contribution by Dozy to the history and Islamic civilisation in al-Andalus. This is because this book was a result of his study for almost 20 years in collecting and researching accredited sources of Islamic history and civilisation in al-Andalus. In fact, what is most amazing is that his work could bring the reader to experience life situations of the Islamic society in al-Andalus as if reliving the history as it happened at that time. Nevertheless, the environment surrounding him amidst the spread of Eurocentrism ideology also influenced his writing. This study has proven that the composition of 'Spanish Islam' written by Dozy was influenced by Eurocentrism ideology. Therefore, the authors stressed that the existence of Eurocentrism ideology in the work of Dozy indirectly reduces the authority of 'Spanish Islam' as a source of reference for Islamic history. This is because there was wrongful interpretation of the facts of Islamic history when Dozy attempted to imagine the historical events which occurred, in particular during

the life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH and the Companions. However, based on analyses on his writing on Islamic history in al-Andalus, most facts presented by Dozy are true as reported in many authoritative works. Thus, the work 'Spanish Islam' is categorised as semi-authoritative source, which is that its authority is in the writing of Islamic history in al-Andalus only.

6. Acknowledgement

This study is financed by the Research Group of Arabic Culture and Islamic Civilization (KUKAPI, DPP-2014-068), UKM; the Action/Strategic Research Project (PTS-2012-061; PTS-2014-068), UKM; the University-Industry Incentive Grant (SAKTI: INDUSTRI-2012-006), UKM; the Research Group of Modelling Interaction Between Civilisations (FRGS/1/2012/SSI05/UKM/02/1); and the *Arus Perdana* Project (AP-2012-001; AP-2013-017; AP-2014-006), UKM.

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