

An Example of The Connection Between Imperialist Politics and Orientalist Studies: British Orientalism

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Abstract

The British Empire pursued imperialist and colonialist policies in the Middle East, America, Asia, Australia and Africa for many years. Political, military, religious, commercial and scientific organisations were tasked with maintaining the dominance of the Empire and British Crown on these continents. An overarching goal of these organisations was to protect, develop and glorify the imperialist policies of their states in these regions. Institutions often acted collaboratively in pursuit of this goal, at times undertaking initiatives in support of each other. In this context, orientalists were sent by these organisations to Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East to conduct research. Orientalists carried out studies on the history, archaeology, geology, botany and geography of the regions they visited. Under the pretext of science(!), they also served the political and military interests of their countries. This article analyses the contribution of British imperialist policy to orientalist institutions and studies and the ways in which British orientalists supported their country's imperialist policy through their research.

Keywords: Imperialism, Orientalism, British Empire, Middle East, Far East

Highlights

- British orientalists conducted multidisciplinary research in colonised regions, often aligning with the political and military goals of imperial policy.
- Imperial institutions collaborated across sectors to promote and sustain British dominance in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and beyond.
- Scientific exploration by British orientalists served not only academic purposes but also reinforced colonial authority under the guise of knowledge production.

Introduction

In Europe, orientalist studies began at different times in each state. German orientalist studies began in the 15th century with research on religious texts. However, orientalist studies only truly reached an academic level in the first quarter of the 17th century after the establishment of the German state. German orientalists from this time conducted research in the East, with the support of political and scientific institutions (Avcı, 2018, pp.27-28). In a French context, orientalist studies started at an earlier date than in other European countries, reaching an official level in the state during the Napoleonic period (Metin, 2020, p.7).

In the long history of British orientalism, the first wave of orientalist studies was initiated through independent research carried out by merchants, travellers, soldiers and clergymen (Arberry, 1943, pp.10-12.; Öğünç, 2018, p.249.; Burian, 1992, p.587). These independent research projects continued until the end of the 16th century. Following that in the 17th century, British orientalists also came to hold political positions, which was in line with the wider interest of the state (Bulman, 2015, p.41). By the 18th century, Britain had colonised the Americas, Africa, the Far East, Australia, New Zealand and India, and had almost occupied a quarter of the world. In this way, orientalist studies in Britain gradually became supported by official institutions affiliated to the state (Arberry, 1948, pp.12,16). Therefore, by the 19th century, the scope and organisation of orientalist studies in Britain had reached a very advanced level. Orientalist research had become institutionalised.

The British orientalists working in the East began to act for the colonial and political interests of their country (Pyenson, 1989, p.1.; Spivak, 1998, p.243. Brantlinger, 1988, p.58.; Curtis, 2009, p.16). Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Britain sent many orientalist researchers to Africa, the Far East and the Middle East by official and private associations, to facilitate the transfer of information back to British universities and institutions (Said, 1998, p.65.; Brantlinger, 2009, pp.55-82.).

In summary, the main topic addressed in this study is an exploration of how British imperialist politics impacted orientalist institutions and research, and conversely, how the studies conducted by British orientalists supported the imperialist policies of the United Kingdom. The methodology of this paper is framed through the lens of Colonial Studies. Specifically, it will focus on the contribution of Orientalism to imperialist politics, and which institutions supported Orientalist research. In this way, this research aims to make evident the link between imperialism and Orientalism in the British Empire.

Tools and institutions used in the development of British Orientalism

British orientalists made use of various tools provided by the empire in the Far East and the Middle East. The commercial, religious, scientific and political organisations that Britain utilised in the Far East and the Middle East to impose imperialist policy, enabled orientalist studies to be carried out with ease (Lake, 2000, pp.10-22). They provided a safe environment for British orientalists working in the region, while simultaneously protecting British state interests. In the following sections, the ways in which institutions built in line with Britain's colonial policy supported and protected orientalists are evaluated under different main headings.

Commercial organisations and Orientalism

Trade was the main basis of the British Empire's foreign policy in the Middle East and the Far East and the main source of its dominance in these regions (Kent, 1996, p.165). British foreign policy recognised the importance of these centres of land and sea trade, and the rich raw materials of these regions. British commercial organisations, sailors, orientalists, ambassadors and consuls were established in the region (Lake, 2000, pp.20-22). Thanks to both official and private organisations, statesmen and scientists, the British Empire subsequently gained a strong position in Far East and the Middle Eastern trade networks.

The Levant Company and the East India Company were the two most important commercial organisations that enabled that development. These two organisations not only protected the commercial interests of their states, but also attracted many British orientalists to live in the Far East and the Middle East. They enabled researchers to work as managers and assistant managers in the companies. Orientalists were subsequently able to carry out their archaeological, linguistic and historical research with ease - thanks to the salaries and cash grants they received from the commercial companies. In this context, the individual contributions of the Levant Company and the East India Company to orientalist studies will next be analysed under two separate headings.

The Company of Mercants of The Levant

The Mediterranean region (Levant) has been an important zone of commerce since ancient times. British ships came to this region for commercial purposes at the end of the 15th century, slightly later than some of its European counterparts due to geographical distance. Antony Jenkinson was the first Englishman to receive a commercial concession during the reign of the Magnificent Suleiman. In 1581, The Company of Mercants of The Levant was established with the maritime trade agreement between Queen Elizabeth and Murat III (Wood, 1964, pp.1-3.; Chew, 1937, pp.152-153.; Bruian, 1992, p.569). With the establishment of the Company, ambassadors and consuls were appointed by the Queen to Istanbul, Izmir and Aleppo in

order to conduct political and commercial relations between the Ottoman and British Empires. Appointed ambassadors and consuls undertook initiatives advancing commercial interests in the region (Laidlaw, 2010, pp.20-23). The ambassadors within the company also defended the rights of British merchants, travellers, pilgrims and orientalist coming to the region. Some of the ambassadors opened their homes to the orientalist and supported their research in the Mediterranean basin (Howard, 1789, p.63).

The company further financially supported and provided accommodation for doctors, explorers and priests (missionaries) sent to the Mediterranean region and Arabia (Laidlaw, 2010, p.43). Care was taken to ensure that most of the researchers to be sent to the region were highly educated. Through the economic support it provided it encouraged distinguished researchers from respected institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities to come to the region. As such, in the 17th century important British orientalist such as Henry Denton, Thomas Smith, John Corvel, Robert Frampton, Robert Huntington, William Hallifax, Henry Maundrell, Edward Pococke came to the Middle East on behalf of the company, or while working for the company, and carried out their orientalist studies. For example, the famous English orientalist Paul Rycaut worked as an ambassador in Izmir (1667-1678) on behalf of the company (Lake, 2015, pp.51-82; Laidlaw, 2010, pp.82-87).

Later in the 18th century, reknowned British orientalist continued to visit the Mediterranean region including Alexander Drummond, who worked as a consul for the company and became famous for his orientalist studies. Others such as John Hemming, Alexander Russell, Thomas Dawes, Charles Maitland, Benjamin Pickering, Andrew Turnbull, Patrick Russell, and James Dallaway also carried out scientific studies in the region. The company supported the travelling of British orientalist to the Mediterranean region until 1825, when it was dissolved. Many ancient and medieval artefacts were copied or purchased by British researchers and priests who came to the region with the support of the company, and subsequently sent to the libraries of universities in England.

In this way, the Levant Company was an influential scientific financier that enabled the development of British orientalism, the training of British orientalist and the knowledge of the British on Middle Eastern languages (Laidlaw, 2010, pp.103-220). At the same time, the company was an important example of how imperialist politics, trade and orientalism became interconnected.

The East India Company

Colonialism has been an important method for European countries to develop their economies since the 15th century. Overseas activities initiated by Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal made a great contribution to the economies of these countries within a short time frame. Britain however, started to participate in colonial activities in the Far East later than other European

states towards the middle of the 16th century (Özcan, 2012, pp.113-114). Britain however followed a different, more strategic path to the rapid plundering policy of other European countries. It first explored the regions systematically with the aim of establishing a permanent colonial structure, perhaps most explicitly exemplified by the establishment of the East India Company (Erçin, 2017, p.111).

Prior to the establishment of the company, the Spanish and Portuguese, who has a strong position in India, prevented British traders from entering the region. When the commercial initiatives of the British merchants failed at first - powerless in the face of the state-sponsored Spanish and Portuguese merchants - they realised that they could not hold on in the Far East trade without the official support of their own states. British merchants asked Queen Elizabeth I, who had a vested interest in the economic development of the Empire, for help in Far East trade. She agreed, and provided state support to British merchants with the edict of permission on 30 December 1600 (Günarslan, 2020, p.101). The East India Company was hereafter established.

As a result of their effective political manoeuvres, British merchants quickly took their place amongst powerful economic players in the regional trade network. They later increased their influence in the region by forming military units. The defeat of the Portuguese by the British in 1612, the loss of Dutch influence in Asia after 1670, the decline of French control during the 18th century, and the capture of Bengal by the British in 1757 increased the hegemony of the British on land and oceans.

As Britain came to dominate in the region, political and cultural missions were added to the commercial mission of the company. Thus, although the East India Company initially prioritised trade, it soon had a say in political, ideological and missionary activities. In other words, the British had begun to establish a colonial order in India not only in the economic sphere but also in the political and cultural sphere (Özcan, 2000, p. 294.; Büyüktaş, 2019, p.281.; Luraghi, 2000, p.154.; Headrick, 2010, p.84).

After the British conquered Bengal, commercial and cultural activities began to be carried out under the auspices of the company. British administrators working on behalf of the company thought that the establishment of a permanent administration in India would only be possible if they learnt the languages, culture, history and literature of the lands they ruled well. For this reason, the company executives supported British orientalist researchers, who would subsequently conduct research on Far Eastern cultures. The company chose Calcutta, which it had established as a port city in 1690, as the administrative centre of its cultural research activities in the Far East.

As a result, this city became the centre for British orientalists to come and carry out their cultural research (Özcan, 2000, p.294). In 1772 William Hasting was appointed as the governor of the region on behalf of the British state, charged with managing the affairs of the company. Hasting, who had

worked for the company in the region before his appointment as governor, had experience in Urdu, Persian and other languages of the region. Therefore, he emphasised language studies and provided scholarships and support to those who could translate, ushering in a heyday of British Orientalism. He ensured the training of emerging academics who would research Indian languages, history and literature (Robins, 2012, p.17.; Kopf, 1969, p.17-18). Hasting's appointment as governor-general of the region indicated that the British gave importance to cultural education and experience, while distributing duties.

During his governorship, Hasting supported orientalist scholars such as Charles Wilkins (1749-1836), Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751-1830), Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837) and Jonathan Duncan (1756-1811), who carried out influential research regarding Asian culture. For example, Wilkins and Halhed published extensively on the languages of India. Through his cultural endeavours, Hasting had laid the groundwork for other British orientalists. Perhaps Hasting's greatest contribution to the development of British orientalism was his support for the academic studies of William Jones, who is considered one of the most prominent British orientalist scholars (Bulut, 2003, pp.93-94; Macfie, 2002, p.30). Jones, in collaboration with other British merchants and elites interested in cultural matters, decided to establish a scientific institution for the study of Hindu and Islamic civilisation in India. Hence, the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in 1784. The Company would also later support the establishment of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1823, to promote scientific and cultural activities in Asia. As such, it can be stated that in addition to commercial and political activities, the East India Company also significantly supported the development of orientalist studies, and engineered the arrival of prominent orientalists to the Asian region.

The East India Company further provided financial support for British orientalists to conduct research in China, India, Japan, Malaysia and other Asian countries. At the same time, orientalist scholars were also included in the management staff of the company. In some instances, they contacted the Mughal state on behalf of the company and were influential in the formation of political relations between the British and the Mughal state (Kopf, 1969, pp.10-20). British orientalists supported by the Levant Company collected manuscripts from Arabia and Mesopotamia and conducted studies on Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish languages. In summary, both the Levant and East India Company were among the most important institutions supporting the commercial, military, political and scientific activities of the British Empire in their respective regions.

Scientific institutions and Orientalism

British educational establishments such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Fort William College, the Palestine Research Fund,

the Royal Geographical Society were amongst institutions that supported British orientalist to study the East. This support enabled orientalist researchers to travel across long distances, and acquire accommodation in the areas where they would conduct research. Scientific institutions supported these orientalist studies for various political-economic national interests. Since each of the British scientific institutions supported orientalist studies from different perspectives, the contribution of the institutions to orientalist studies is given in the following sections under different subheadings.

Oxford and Cambridge Universities

Since their foundation, Oxford and Cambridge universities have established themselves as some of the most prominent educational institutions in Britain. Although distinguished in various disciplines, both institutions are widely known for their support of orientalist studies on the East. Both institutions established chairs dedicated to Oriental languages including Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Turkish, via support provided both by the British royal family, and commercial companies. Courses dedicated to the study of Eastern languages increased in numbers, and students enrolled on these courses had the opportunity to travel to the region to practice the languages and conduct research with scholarships. As a result, many academic books were published, and various manuscripts found in the East were collected. The manuscripts were brought to Britain and kept in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, becoming an invaluable source of information for researchers who would study the East (Macfie, 2002, pp.26-28).

University professors and students subsequently took up positions in the Orient or in Britain (in particular in London), with some working for commercial companies and others in political positions. It became state policy to assign these educated, specialist oriental scholars who had experience of the region, to carry out political, commercial and sometimes military affairs (Derin, 2017, p.35). This state policy continued for many years, with scholars appointed to the Levant Company, East India Company, embassy and consulate appointments. It is known that most of the British agents, soldiers and scientists who travelled to Mesopotamia and Arabia during World War I, included prominent British orientalist who had worked in the Middle East prior. Examples include Gertrude Bell, Thomas Edward Lawrence, David George Hogarth, who served in World War I. After the outbreak of the war, some took part in the Arab revolt in Egypt with the permission granted by British administrators.

The support of Oxford and Cambridge Universities for the activity of these researchers in the region is a good example of the link between education, colonial politics and orientalism. The examples of Bell, Lawrence and Hogarth shows that British administrators gave importance to people with education and experience when appointing their representatives. Additionally, this example shows how Oxford and Cambridge Universities can be said to have developed the field of orientalism, through educating and financing many

orientalists who would come to shape the history of education, imperialist politics and economy.

Asiatic Society of Bengal

William Hasting, as governor of the East India Company, aimed to consolidate British rule in India through appointing officials who knew Asian cultures, languages and religions. With this in mind, he endeavoured to train young British civil servants and send officers and officials who knew the local languages to India. Many orientalists who came to Asia during the Hasting period conducted research for Britain's imperialist policy (Franklin, 2011, p. 20.; Schwab, 1984, p.33). During this period, Jones, then a law graduate from Oxford University and fluent in several languages, came to India as a high judge (Schwab, 1984, p.33). Hasting, seeing Jones's knowledge of Eastern languages, supported his research on Sanskrit. Jones' curiosity and research on Asian languages gave him the idea of establishing a new institution. Jones told Hasting and other his orientalist friends in the administration building of in Calcutta that he wanted to establish a new society for research on Asian history, culture and languages. Jones' idea of a new society was accepted and the Asiatic Society was founded on 15 January 1784 (Rizvi, 2001, p.266).

Jones, the first president of the Asiatic Society, held this position until his death in 1794 (Kahraman, 2001, p.582). Like Hasting, Jones he carried out scientific research under the name of the Asiatic Society for the benefit of empire. In Michael J. Franklin's "Orientalist Jones" and Edward Said's "Orientalism", it is stated that the scientific studies (orientalism) of Jones and his colleagues within the Asiatic Society were carried out under the name of British colonisation of Asia (Franklin, 2011, pp.205-250.; Said, 1998, pp.118-220). Jones not only founded the Society but trained new orientalist scholars through a master-apprentice relationship (Franklin, 2011, p.240). Jones and his orientalist colleagues helped other European orientalists to expand their interest in Asia, revealing the rich culture through their studies.

Since its foundation, the Asiatic Society has enabled many British orientalists to come to Asia and conduct research. Although the Society served British imperialism, it also enabled important research and discoveries to be made in Asia in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, astronomy, botany, ethnology, geography, music, literature, physiology, languages and inscriptions, mythology and religion. The academic research conducted within the Society was published in the "Journal of Asiatic Studies". The Asiatic Society continues to exist as an institution that supports studies on Asia.

Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and Fort William College

After the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the number of British orientalist researchers increased across India, China, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and other regions. The cultural studies of British orientalists in

Asia also facilitated the work of British administrators in the region. British administrators learned about the cultures of these places and therefore were able to manage the regions they ruled in accordance with their cultures and traditions.

The success of the Asiatic Society encouraged British orientalists to establish new societies for the political and commercial interests of their countries under the name of scientific studies. Among these institutions were the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and Fort William College.

The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in London on 15 March 1823 with the support of the British state under the presidency of Henry Thomas Colebrooke, also trained by Hasting. From its foundation until the 1940s, the Society served the British colonial policy. It provided scholarships to a large number of students and academics, and trained many British orientalists. Scientific studies were published in journals issued under different names within the organisation. The institution still supports academic research today (Rocher and Rocher, 2012, pp.65-75).

Fort William College was another institution used train British civil servants for work in Asia. Founded in Calcutta in 1800 by the Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, the college comprised a number of academic departments. Different departments were responsible for different fields of social sciences. The institution was especially known for its research on Sankrit. The college did not last long like other British institutions in Asia and the school was closed in 1854 (FWCC, 2025).

The Palestine Exploration Fund

The Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was established in 1865 by Arthur Stanley and Sir George Grove under royal patronage with the support of Queen Victoria (PEF, 2025). The original aim of the Fund was to find ancient cities mentioned in the Bible in the Palestine region. The institution however provided financial support to British academics researching in the fields of archaeology, topography, geology, botany, zoology and meteorology in the Palestine region (PEF, 1865, pp.1-4). With the support of the PEF, a large number of British orientalists and missionaries came to the Palestine region to conduct research in the above-mentioned fields (Henderson, 1956, p.239). These included Angela Georgina Burdett, John James Moscrop, Charles Wilson, Charles Warren, Claude R. Conder, Frederick Jones Bliss, Gottlieb Schumacher, Elizabeth Anne Finn and William M. Flinders Petrie—all important orientalists, missionaries, geographers, cartographers and archaeologists of the period (Frantzman and Kark, 2008, p.119.; PEF, 2025).

Other important PEF staff included Horatio Herbert Kitchener, who was Britain's Minister of War in World War I; Charles Gordon, who served in China and participated in the Crimean War; D. G. Hogarth, T. E. Lawrence, G.

Bell, Reginald Campbell Thompson and C. L. Woolley, who served in World War I (Frantzman and Kark, 2008, p.120). Different academic disciplines worked in the Palestinian territories or neighbouring countries within the PEF. It enabled many orientalist archaeologists to excavate in the Palestinian region. As such, the establishment of the PEF contributed significantly to the development of British orientalism and archaeology in Palestine.

The Royal Geographical Society

The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) founded in 1830 with the support of the British Crown, was established to support scientists conducting research in the field of geography. The RGS has trained and provided travel support to many researchers in the fields of geography and other related sciences such as geology and cartography. In addition, with the financial support of the RGS, a large number of ancient and medieval books on geography and other fields were collected and sent to RGS libraries in Britain. Much of this research was also published in the institution's journal, or in books published by institution's printing house (Crone, 1955, pp.27-29). The RGS, support for research in the region increase from the mid-19th century onward (Long, 2014, pp.14).

The RGS impact on the imperialist policies of the British Empire is evidenced by the fact that most of the founders of the society were politicians and military commanders. The statesmen who took part in the founding of the society were chosen from those who shaped Britain's policies in the Middle East and the Far East. The fact that orientalist academics carried out cartography, geology and topography studies in the Middle East and Far East for military operations on behalf of the imperialist policies of their countries, provides more evidence that the institution served British imperialism (Baigent, 2025). In World War I, the RGS worked as an intelligence service of the Admiralty. Individuals such as Lord Curzon (1911-1914), Thomas Hungerford Holdich (1917-1919) and D. G. Hogarth (1925-1927), who headed the society, also took part in military operations (Palin, 2012, p.12.; Nash, 2016, p.1.; Baigent, 2025). Under the auspices of the RGS, many manuscripts and printed works were collected and taken under protection. The institution, which is responsible for the education of many students of geography, continues to support research today. The Society's contribution to the world of science cannot be underestimated, however it also operated on behalf of its country's imperialist policies.

Other scientific institutions

Thus far in this research, it has been established that through the financial support of the Levant Company and the East India Company, and academic support of Oxford, Cambridge and other universities in terms of teaching staff and students, the British opened different scientific institutions in different regions such as Arabia, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Balkans. They advanced the study of oriental languages (Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Hebrew, etc.). Most

of these institutions established at home or in the colonies contributed in some way to orientalist studies. (Çelik and Çoker, 2021, p.380).

Others included - The Sri Lanka Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1845), The Korean Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1900), The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1877), The Asiatic Society of Japan (1875), The Bihar Research Society (1915), The Burma Research Society (1910-1980), The Madras Literary Society (1812) and The Mythic Society, Bangalore (1909) (RAS, 2025). These institutions had a similar impact to those already mentioned in the text – facilitating research on Asian culture, training students, collecting manuscripts, books and plant species to be sent to Britain. This is how British orientalism developed.

Beyond Asia, societies were also established in Africa, which allowed Britain to advance in the field of orientalist studies beyond their European counterparts (Turner, 1948, pp. 285-287). In 1916, the School of Oriental and African Studies was established at the University of London to carry out orientalist studies in Africa as well as Asia (Turner, 1948, p.285). The Royal Society of South Africa was also founded in 1908.

During the industrial revolution, fast-moving steamships, telegraph lines and railways that were sent to many parts of the world with the developing British technology. While these developments enabled the British to gain power in the political and military fields, they also led to many researchers, clergymen and engineers coming to these regions and taking office. Technological developments in Britain led to the development of a harmonious link between politics, power, domination, science, technology and orientalism.¹

Imperialist policy was also influential in the establishment of scientific institutions developing this technology (Schofer, 2003, pp.736-737.; Palladino, 1993, p.97). In this way, Britain amassed vast imperialist power in the 19th century (Alam, 1977, p.8). By the end of the 19th century Britain had grown into an enormous empire, and had established nearly 170 scientific colleges in India and its neighbouring regions, especially in Asia. Most of the colleges were located in Bombay, Madras, Lahore and Delhi. The colleges established in different scientific fields (archaeology, botany, medicine, meteorology, geography and mining) which in turn further helped develop the Empire (Macleod, 1975, pp.348-349.; Alam, 1977, p.8-9).

Religious institutions and Orientalism

The British tried to spread the Protestant sect of Christianity through their missionaries within their official church, the Anglican Church (Çatalbaş, 2012, p.121). Missionary societies and organisations such as the Levant Company and the East India Company, were material and spiritual supporters of British

¹ For detailed information on the impact of technological developments in Britain on British imperialism and orientalist studies, see (Headrick, 1988).

missionaries. The Society for the Propagation of Christianity, The London Missionary, The Church Missionary Society, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, The Society Christian Knowledge Society and other similar societies and societies trained British missionaries and sent them to many parts of the world (Sezer, 1999, p 3.; Polat and Ayaz, 2017, p.35.; Buzpınar, 2003, p.109.; Laidlaw, 2010, pp.75-79). British missionaries not only spread the Christian religion in the regions they visited, but also worked for the political and economic interests of their countries. In the Middle East, British missionaries tried to attract people living in this region to their own beliefs (Protestantism) by spreading religious propaganda against French Catholic and Russian Orthodox missionaries. The aim of the missionaries here was to help to prevent the French and Russians from gaining political and economic power in the Middle East (Sezer, 1999, pp.171.; Polat and Ayaz, 2017, p.1).

From the 17th century onwards, missionaries travelled to America, the Middle East, the Far East and Africa to spread the Protestant faith of their countries, also participated in cultural activities and research. From the 17th century to the end of the 19th century, Henry Maundrell, Jon Luke, Edmund Chishull, Robert Frampton, Robert Huntington, William Hallifax, Joseph Wolff, John Evelyn, Thomas Smith, Edward Pococke, Henry Martyn and other unnamed missionaries and priests conducted linguistic, cultural and historical studies on the East (Laidlaw, 2010, pp.75-115.; Çatalbaş, 2011, p.168).² They also carried out linguistic study on local languages, preparing English dictionaries with the word equivalents of local languages - especially concerned with religious matters (Tamur, 2006, p.17).

Missionaries' diaries, reports, drawings and the works they wrote on the cultures of the geographies they worked in contributed to British Orientalism. The missionaries, who received the support of the British Church, missionary societies, the Levant Company and the East India Company, worked to spread the Protestant sect of their countries in the regions they visited and helped to protect the political and economic interests of their countries.

Political organisations and Orientalism

Thus far it has been established that institutions and organisations made significant contributions to the determination and execution of the British Empire's political, military and commercial policies in the Mediterranean, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Africa, America, Australia and Asia. Among these institutions, the Colonial Ministry, the Government of India, ambassadors and consuls were the most influential units fighting for the interests of the empire. Like those discussed in earlier sections, in addition to their duty to protect the imperialist interests of their countries, these institutions also supported orientalists who carried out scientific activities for their countries. Some of these institutions even employed orientalists. The contributions of

² For other missionaries who contributed to orientalist studies, see (Bird, 1956).

these institutions to British orientalism will be discussed under different headings.

The Colonial Office

The colonial activities of the British Empire increased from the 1600s. As the largest colonial state in the world, it needed institutions to maintain administration in the colonies and to control political connections. As such, the War and Colonial Office was established in 1801 to manage any arising challenges (Yüce, 2015, p.127.) The Ministry provided great support to the British Empire in military operations, especially in World War I and World War II.³ The ministry was another institution that employed orientalist researchers, including some ministers working in the Colonial Office. Names such as Viscount Milner, Winston Churchill and Leo Amery (Yüce, 2015, p.128). Arabist Hubert Young and archaeologist T.E. Lawrence were among those who worked temporarily for the Office (Huneidi, 1998, pp. 24-25). The Colonial Office was abolished in 1966.

The Government of India

The Indian landscape had attracted the attention of European imperialist states since the 15th century due to its rich natural resources. At the beginning of the 17th century, with the support of the East India Company, British merchants, soldiers and orientalists were active in the Indian subcontinent. With the Industrial Revolution, Britain's imperialist exploitation in India increased. After the dissolution of the East India Company by the British Crown, the Indian territories were subsequently administered by the Government of India established in 1857⁴, though still under the British Empire. They ruled the Indian territories on behalf of the British Crown until 1947 (Shan and Haitao, 2021, p. 62). For many years, Indian territories remained a colony of the Empire, materially and morally exploited by the British rulers in the region. British Indian government administrators also supported orientalist studies, alongside political, commercial and military concerns – though perhaps less than that of the East India Company (Tolman, 2016, pp.1-2). The reason for this is that the first priority of the Indian government representatives was to protect and maintain the political interests of the British crown.

Ambassadors and consuls

Britain sent envoys to Europe and the Ottoman Empire in order to shape its political and economic relations (Yurdakul, 2020, p.57). Specifically, the duty of British envoys was to protect the rights of their citizens engaged in trade, and to conduct political correspondence and negotiations between the British Crown and other states. As Britain grew politically and economically, so did the responsibilities of its ambassadors, working to make alliances and protect their interests against enemy states. As Britain's commercial and

³ For a detailed account of the Colonial Office's contribution to the British Empire's policy of imperialism, see (Greene, 2000, pp.25-47,125-164).

⁴ Other names for the Government of India: Delhi or Raj Government.

political hegemony increased after the industrial revolution, it also started to establish consulates to assist its ambassadors and to protect Britain's interests in critical regions. Attaching importance to their interests in the Mediterranean and Far East trade, the British opened consulates in different places on the borders of the Ottoman and European states (Yurdakul, 2021, pp.26-27).

The ambassadors and consuls serving within the borders of the Ottoman Empire further supported the orientalist working in Anatolia, Greece, Mesopotamia and Arabia (Laidlaw, 2010, pp.5,43). Ambassadors and consuls were responsible for the accommodation and security of British orientalist. William Harborne (1583-1588), the first British ambassador to Istanbul, obtained assurances from the Ottoman Empire for the protection of the rights of the British (pilgrims, researchers and merchants) travelling in Ottoman lands. Harborne's initiative facilitated the work of orientalist travelling to the Ottoman lands for research (Rawlinson, 1922, p.5). During the reign of John Murray (1766-1775), the ambassador to Istanbul, orientalist such as Robert Wood and James Bruce were supported in their studies on the East (Laidlaw, 2010, pp.43-45). Robert Liston, ambassador to Istanbul between 1794-1795, supported the historical and archaeological studies of orientalist James Dallaway in Western Anatolia (Yalçınkaya, 1998, p.198). The orientalist researchers Jacob Spon and James Stuart, who were sent to Greece during the reign of Lord Elgin (Thomas Bruce), ambassador to Istanbul between 1799-1803, took the Parthenon Marbles and sent them to the British Museum with the support of the ambassador. Lord Elgin also took the Sigeion Inscription during this period and sent it to the museum (Albasan, 2019:, p.171). During the period of Lord Stratford Canning (1824-1858), the ambassador to Istanbul, the orientalist and archaeologist Austen Henry Layard carried out his excavations in Nineveh (Mosul), the capital of the Assyrian Empire in Mesopotamia (Pehlivan, 2016, pp.95-96).

Apart from the ambassadors, the consuls of Aleppo, Izmir, Egypt, Baghdad, Basra and many other places defended the rights of the British orientalist who worked in regions under their jurisdiction. Some of the consuls were chosen from those who had orientalist research. The orientalist P. Rycaut worked as the consul of Izmir and the orientalist Harford Jones Brydges as the consul of Baghdad (1798-1806) (Searight, 1979, p.79.; Yurdakul, 2020, p.35). During the period of the Egyptian Consul orientalist Henry Salt (1815-1825), important orientalist such as John Gardner Wilkinson, John Lewis Burckhardt (Swiss orientalist), Giovanni Battista Belzoni (Italian orientalist), William Richard Hamilton and Edward William Lane were supported (Özden, 2021, p. 154; Mahmoud, 2016, pp.30, 36, 40). The works on Egypt prepared by Lane and Wilkinson with the support of Salt was hugely influential on later orientalist who would go on to work in Egypt.

The works prepared by British orientalist under the patronage of political rulers became a guide for other European orientalist who would conduct

research on the Middle East in the following years. In the context of politics-imperialism and orientalism, the influence of ambassadors and consuls on orientalist studies was strong.

Other political institutions

In addition to the Colonial Office, the Indian government, consuls and ambassadors, the British Empire had various other political organisations. For example the British had occupied Sudan in 1896 under General Herbert Kitchener, a soldier and orientalist (Şenel and Sleman, 2019, p.75). They established an administration 1899 in Sudan, which also became a political institution that supported orientalist researchers coming to Sudan and its surroundings. Orientalist Sir Harold MacMichael, Reginald Wingate and many other soldiers, administrators, academics and missionaries, whose names are not mentioned here, carried out their orientalist studies while working under the British Sudanese administration established in 1899. The Sudanese administration is important in terms of showing the link between imperialism and orientalism (Greene, 2000, pp.164-165,170-184).

A large number of artefacts from ancient, medieval and more recent histories of the colonies of the British Empire were collected by engineers, administrators, soldiers, priests, orientalists and archaeologists and sent to The British Museum and The Ashmolean Museum. The British Empire showed that it ruled many nations on different continents by exhibiting their artefacts in its own museums. This was a display of military and political power. In addition to museums in Britain, the rulers of the empire also opened museums in the colonies, in Africa, America, Asia and Australia. In this way they exhibited their imperialist power to the local people and states they ruled, supported by the artefacts collected by, and research carried out by orientalist scholars. The museums were like showpieces of power, demonstrating the political and military might of the British Empire, which is further proof of how imperialism influenced orientalist studies (MacKenzie, 2009, pp.2-13).

There were influential political, military and orientalist figures supporting British imperialism in these centuries, such as Lord Curzon, Balfour, M. Sykes and Lord Cromer (Nash, 2016, pp.5-22). However, perhaps the most influential political institution supporting British orientalist studies was the British Crown. British queens and kings supported the establishment of most of the institutions mentioned above. In particular, during the reigns of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and King Edward VII (1901-1910), who ensured the development of British imperialism in every field from the 19th century to the mid-20th century, orientalist studies flourished.

Conclusion

At first, orientalist studies in Britain consisted of independent research carried out by merchants, clergymen and soldiers. This practice continued

until the beginning of the 16th century, when a new era began in British orientalist studies. In this century, the political, military and commercial rivalry between European states, began to have impact on scientific research. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Britain began vying for colonial power, competing with its European counterparts. It emerged in a strong position, and the process by which it established itself in various region was supported by orientalist research.

The commercial, scientific, religious and political institutions and organisations established on behalf of the British Empire in these centuries provided a great advantage to British orientalists working in the Far East and the Middle East. Britain expanded its borders with its increasing political and military power in the 18th and 19th centuries, opening the territories in which this research could be carried out, enabling British orientalism to reach its peak.

This research has show in detail how the British Empire, the royal family, state administrators, commercial, scientific, religious and political institutions as a whole supported the discipline of orientalist studies. British orientalist scholars also contributed to the imperialist policy of their country with their research and the political, military and religious duties they received. As such, it can be stated that driven by the power and finance of commercial, political, religious and military institutions and organisations, and aided by imperialist policy, these institutions and orientalists scholars acted in tandem, a united effort to allow orientalism to flourish in the Empire.

Ethical Statement (Etik Beyan)

This study does not require ethics committee approval (Bu çalışma, etik kurul izni gerektirmemektedir).

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AI Disclosure (Yapay Zeka Beyanı)

This article meets ethical standards on AI use. If AI tools were used, their role has been disclosed; if not, this note is for clarification (Bu makale, yapay zeka kullanımıyla ilgili etik standartlara uygundur. Kullanım varsa beyan edilmiştir; yoksa bu ifade bilgilendirme amacıyla eklenmiştir).

Complaints (Etik Bildirim)

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Emperyalist Politika ve Oryantalist Çalışmalar Arasındaki Bağlantıya Dair Bir Örnek: İngiliz Oryantalizmi

Mübarek İpek 

Özet

Britanya İmparatorluğu, emperyalist ve sömürgeci politikalarını Orta Doğu, Amerika, Asya, Avustralya ve Afrika kıtalarında uzun yıllar boyunca sürdürmüştür. İmparatorluğun ve İngiliz kraliyet tacının bu kıtalardaki egemenliğini sürdürmesi amacıyla, siyasi, askeri, dini, ticari ve bilimsel kurumlara bağlı kişiler yoğun bir mücadele vermiştir. Bu kurumların temel hedefi, devletlerinin emperyalist politikalarını diğer devletlere karşı korumak, geliştirmek ve yüceltmek olmuştur. Kurumlar bu amaç doğrultusunda birlikte hareket etmiş, zaman zaman da birbirlerini destekleyen girişimlerde bulunmuşlardır. Söz konusu kurumlar, görevlendirdikleri oryantalistleri Asya, Balkanlar ve Orta Doğu'ya araştırma yapmak üzere göndermiştir. Doğu bilimcileri, gittikleri bölgelerin tarihi, arkeolojisi, jeolojisi, botanigi ve coğrafyası üzerine çalışmalar gerçekleştirmiştir. Oryantalistler, bilim şemsiyesi altında(!) ülkelerinin siyasi ve askeri çıkarlarına hizmet etmişlerdir. Bu çalışmada, İngiliz emperyalist politikasının oryantalist kurumlara ve çalışmalara nasıl bir katkı sağladığı ile İngiliz oryantalistlerin araştırmalarıyla ülkelerinin emperyalist siyasetine hangi açılardan destek verdikleri konusu incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Emperyalizm, Oryantalizm, Britanya İmparatorluğu, Orta Doğu, Uzak Doğu

Öne Çıkanlar

- İngiliz oryantalistler, sömürge bölgelerinde çok disiplinli araştırmalar yürüttüler ve bu araştırmalar genellikle imparatorluk politikasının siyasi ve askeri hedefleriyle uyumluydu.
- İmparatorluk kurumları, Asya, Orta Doğu, Afrika ve ötesinde İngiliz hakimiyetini teşvik etmek ve sürdürmek için sektörler arası işbirliği yaptı.
- İngiliz oryantalistlerin bilimsel keşifleri sadece akademik amaçlara hizmet etmekle kalmadı, aynı zamanda bilgi üretimi kisvesi altında sömürge otoritesini de güçlendirdi.