

## Muslim Backwardness and Rejection of The Discipline of Religious Studies

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**Abstract:** *According to the QS World University Rankings for Theology, Divinity, and Religious Studies 2024, religious studies in Muslim regions are inadequately developed. The Muslims' dismissal of religious studies is intricately linked to the underdevelopment of the field. Nevertheless, the dismissal of religious studies by Muslims is frequently regarded as commonplace without additional scrutiny. This study aimed to examine the Muslim aversion to religious studies and propose solutions to address the underdevelopment of religious studies within the Islamic world. Western religious scholars have frequently positioned modern European history, particularly secularism, as the core of their explanation of religion. For them, scientific examinations of religion must exclude the sacred aspect of religion. Consequently, Muslims perceive that their interpretation of Islam is limited. The hostility and rejection of religious studies by Muslims fundamentally signify a repudiation of secularism, which negates the transcendence of God and dismisses the role of religion in society. The debate on religious studies has not established a neutral environment for Muslims. The author contemplates this antagonism to counter the narrative surrounding religious studies. This study aimed to develop Muslim conflict as a contemporary phenomenon, integrating religious studies, particularly Islamic studies, into Islam's worldview or epistemology framework, devoid of any characterization as non-rational or non-scientific. The underdevelopment of religious studies in Muslim nations is attributed to a deficiency of experts educated in contemporary academic approaches to religion. The normative-doctrinal approach has thus far been the predominant method employed by Muslim scholars in the study of Islam. To address the stagnation of religious studies in the Islamic world, Muslim scholars must amalgamate the normative-doctrinal approach with the social sciences methodology.*

**Keywords:** *Backwardness, Muslim Rejection, Religious Studies, Secularism.*

**Abstrak:** *Dari data QS World University Rankings for Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies 2024, studi agama di wilayah Muslim mengalami keterbelakangan. Penolakan Muslim terhadap studi agama berkaitan erat dengan keterbelakangan studi agama tersebut. Namun penolakan Muslim terhadap studi agama sering dianggap sebagai hal yang wajar tanpa analisis lebih lanjut. Tulisan ini bertujuan menganalisis penolakan Muslim terhadap studi agama dan bagaimana mengatasi keterbelakangan studi agama di dunia Islam. Selama ini Sarjana agama Barat sering menempatkan sejarah Eropa modern khususnya sekulerisme sebagai pusat analisis mereka dalam memahami agama. Bagi mereka, kajian ilmiah atas agama harus menghilangkan dimensi sakralitas dari agama. Atas dasar ini, Muslim merasa prespektif mereka dalam memahami agama di kekang. Pertentangan dan penolakan Muslim terhadap studi agama pada dasarnya adalah penolakan terhadap paham sekulerisme yang menyangkal adanya trandensendensi Tuhan dan menolak kehadiran agama dalam masyarakat. Dalam hal ini wacana studi agama telah gagal memberikan lapangan bermain yang netral bagi pihak Muslim. Penulis merefleksikan pertentangan tersebut sebagai usaha perlawanan terhadap wacana studi agama. Dengan menjadikan pertentangan Muslim sebagai realitas modern, penulis berusaha membawa studi agama*

*khususnya studi Islam dalam pandangan dunia atau epistemologi Islam itu sendiri tanpa labelisasi non-rasional dan non-ilmiah. Di sisi lain, keterbelakangan studi agama di negara Muslim disebabkan oleh kurangnya sarjana yang terlatih dalam studi akademis modern tentang agama. Selama ini pendekatan normatif-doktriner menjadi pendekatan dominan yang digunakan sarjana Muslim dalam mengkaji Islam. Untuk mengatasi keterbelakangan studi agama di dunia Islam, sarjana Muslim perlu untuk Mengintegrasikan pendekatan normatif-doktriner dengan pendekatan ilmu-ilmu sosial.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Keterbelakangan, Penolakan Muslim, Studi Agama, Sekulerisme*

## **Introduction**

During a seminar on religious studies at the Royal Institute London, Friedrich Max Muller asserted that the discipline should be founded on an impartial and genuinely scientific examination of all global faiths.<sup>1</sup> While the focus of inquiry pertains to spiritual, holy, and sacred occurrences, the approach employed in religious studies must remain devoid of religious bias. Consequently, Max Muller is regarded as the "Father of Religious Studies" and the pioneer of the scientific examination of religion by applying a rigorous scientific methodology. Max Muller's concepts significantly impacted researchers of religious studies for a century after that. Peter Berger further expanded upon Max Muller's ideas in his work, "The Sacred Canopy". Berger asserts that any religious inquiry confined to empirical issues must adhere to the "methodology of atheism".<sup>2</sup> The technique of atheism entails repudiating the paramount definition of religion concerning reality. According to Berger, the scientific examination of religion must exclude its sacred aspect. If the holy dimension remains intrinsic to the study of religion, it cannot be classified as scientific research on religion. The scientific standard established here is grounded in the positivist paradigm, which evaluates scientific knowledge based on observable, objective phenomena without value judgments.

The principal issue with the philosophy of atheism is its rejection of supernatural entities, such as God, which are foundational beliefs in all religious communities. This violates the convictions of spiritual individuals, especially those of Islam. In *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, Timothy Fitzgerald asserts that religious studies is a construct of Euro-American discourse regarding religion and secularism. The conceptualization of religion as a global and cross-cultural examination subject has evolved over a protracted historical trajectory influenced by Western imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. One aspect of this process involves establishing a distinction imbued with ideological significance between the religious and secular

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<sup>1</sup> Moch. Nur Ichwan, "Sintesis Keilmuan Studi Akademik Agama: Menimbang Kontribusi A. Mukti Ali Dan M. Amin Abdullah," in *Studi Antar Agama: Metode Dan Praktik*, ed. Fatimah Husein and M. Iqbal Ahnaf (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2023), 29–30.

<sup>2</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Newyork: Anchor Books, 1969), 100.

realms.<sup>3</sup> Secularism is an ideology akin to atheism, as it negates the transcendence of God and dismisses the role of religion in society. Consequently, the most apparent challenge to the Euro-American (secular) paradigm arises from non-Western cultures, particularly Islam.

The Muslim challenge to religious studies is inextricably linked to the contentious heritage of Orientalism studies. Orientalist studies primarily encompass Western scholars, predominantly non-Muslims, who focus their research on the East, particularly Islam and its origins in Arabia. Consequently, the ramifications of Western academics examining Islam via the lens of religious studies frequently elicit apprehensions among Muslim intellectuals (*ulama*). Some Muslims perceive orientalists as missionaries aiming to disseminate Christian doctrines.<sup>4</sup> The Muslim challenge to Religious Studies is inherent, as Islam encompasses both a religion and a comprehensive way of life. This statement is widely acknowledged among Muslims, although it is frequently overlooked without regard for its implications or significance in conceptualization and analysis. Shahab Ahmad asserts that the fragmented understanding of Islam has inadequately elucidated the reality of Islam as its whole. Understanding Islam just via the dichotomy of religion versus secularism or religion versus culture fails to offer a comprehensive perspective of its essence. The phenomenon of human and Islamic history constitutes a domain of significance whereby truth is constructed, structured, and perceived through interrelated and complementary concepts.<sup>5</sup>

The objection of Muslims to religious studies is frequently characterized as a regressive and irrational stance, as the secular perspective that delineates religion from temporal affairs regards eschatological concepts, such as God, as inherently irrational. The characterization of Muslims as backward or illogical for rejecting the rhetoric of religious studies is frequently viewed as a banal notion lacking deeper conceptual analysis. Alexander Henley is a scholar who addresses this issue in his work, "Islam as a Challenge to the Ideology of Religious Studies: Failures of Religion Studies in the Middle East." Henley posits that a contributing element to the inadequacy of Middle Eastern scholars in establishing a discipline of religious studies is the literature on the subject, which elucidates many aspects of secular ideology that seek to delineate religious existence from secular existence.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the study titled "Discourse on the Phenomenology of Religion in the Study of Religions" by Ryan Arief et al. Arif et

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rahmat Ramadani, Firman, and Andi Tri Saputra, "Orientalisme Dan Pengaruh Renaisans Terhadap Sejarah Perkembangannya," *Rihlah: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Kebudayaan* 11, no. 01 (2023): 21.

<sup>5</sup> Shahab Ahmad, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 115-116.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Henley, "Islam as a Challenge to the Ideology of Religious Studies: Failures of Religious Studies in the Middle East," *Implicit Religion* 22, no. 3-4 (2019): 376.

al. assert that the disparity in religious studies manifests not only in its historical evolution but also in its methodological approaches. The technique employed by Western scholars in the study of religion is biased, resulting in a lack of objective knowledge. This strategy prompts religious intellectuals to renounce their faith. It is inapplicable to Muslims, as a Muslim researcher will not forsake their religious convictions in the context of religious study.<sup>7</sup>

In response to this inequality, Arif et al. endeavoured to Islamize the methodologies of Western researchers, particularly the phenomenological approach. Arif et al. aimed to gain acceptance of the technique among Muslim scholars by adapting Western methodology to Islamic principles. Bustami Khir's work titled "Islamic Studies within Islam". Bustami Khir asserted that Islamic Studies in the West has not emerged as an autonomous discipline but has been included in departments such as theology, oriental studies, and Middle Eastern and Asian studies. All of these departments fall under the broad category of Religious Studies. The inability to recognize Islamic Studies as a distinct discipline has impacted the methodologies employed by Western colleges. Western scholars' theories and methodologies in Islamic Studies are predominantly broad theories pertaining to religious studies, social sciences, and the humanities. This results in disregarding paradigms and techniques from the Islamic perspective in Islamic Studies.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing this gap, Bustami proposes an alternate approach to researching Islamic Studies from the viewpoint of Islam itself.

The literature, as mentioned earlier assessment, indicates a scarcity of studies addressing the problems and rejections faced by Muslims regarding religious studies. Prior research merely exposes the ideology of religious studies that seeks to dissociate religion from secular life, lacking a comprehensive analysis of the underlying issues contributing to Muslim rejection. Numerous studies provide solutions for examining Islam from an intrinsic perspective or adapting Western methodologies to align with Islamic principles. This study investigates the rationale behind Muslim rejection and opposition to the discourse of religious studies, the degree of Muslim dissent against religious studies, and the appropriate methodologies to be employed in religious studies. The Muslim repudiation of religious studies is not attributable to the shortcomings or retrogression of Muslims. This rejection can be comprehended if we grasp the complete idea of Islam since it encompasses not merely a religion but also a way of life. Muslim society continues to prioritize religious normativity as a fundamental component of its way of life. The author uses the challenges and replies from Muslims to examine the discourse of religious studies.

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<sup>7</sup> Ryan Arief Rahman et al., "Diskursus Fenomenologi Agama Dalam Studi Agama-Agama," *Al-Adyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama* 16, no. 2 (2021): 163.

<sup>8</sup> Bustami M.S. Khir, "Islamic Studies within Islam: Definition, Approaches and Challenges of Modernity," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 28, no. 3 (2007): 258.

Moreover, the proposal to study Islam from an Islamic perspective initially appears to be a viable option; however, it is essential to recognize that this approach constrains the breadth of Islamic Studies to restrictive parameters and restricted doctrinal positions. Understanding the rationale behind Muslims' repudiation of religious studies and the degree of this rejection allows us to explore diverse Western techniques to address the stagnation of religious studies within the Islamic world. This study is categorized as library research. Library research involves the examination of literature, including books, journals, and reports from prior studies pertinent to the investigation. The employed methodology is a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach. The relevant data is detailed and examined comprehensively to derive conclusions that address the problem formulation in this study.

### **Discussion and Results**

There are three themes that will be discussed in this paper: (1) From Orientalist Studies to Cosmopolitan Religious Studies, (2) Muslim Rejection towards Religious Studies, and (3) Approaches towards Islam in Religious Studies. The following is an explanation of these three themes.

#### **From Orientalist Studies to Cosmopolitan Religious Studies**

Orientalism derives from the term "orient," signifying Asia and the Far East. An orientalist refers to an expert in the languages, civilizations, and other aspects of Islamic countries. Edward W. Said defines an orientalist as an individual who instructs, authors, or investigates the Middle East.<sup>9</sup> According to Edward Said, orientalists may include linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, or theologians who examine the Middle East, particularly Islam, in general and specialized contexts. The endeavours or outcomes of Orientalist studies are referred to as Orientalism. Studies of Orientalism are not a novel concept. Initially, orientalist studies focused on the linguistic analysis of prominent languages of that era. This linguistic study has evolved into a tradition for both Jews and Christians. The phrase classical studies of Greece pertains to examining the significant legacies of the Greek civilization.

Consequently, the term Hellenist developed, referring to individuals who study Greek. Studying other nations' cultures is closely intertwined with language study, as language serves as a medium for exploring the significant heritages of a civilization. Similarly, when orientalists seek to examine history, culture, politics, economics, or religion in the Middle East, language undoubtedly serves as the primary gateway. In this perspective, Orientalism is frequently linked to Islam. Orientalists advance their research in language studies, particularly with Islamic subjects such as the Qur'an and hadith. Research on the Middle East and Islam has garnered significant interest from Western scholars. For instance, Bernard Lewis noted that Arabic is the most translated language globally, regarding the volume of translated works and the variety of

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<sup>9</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 2.

languages employed for translation.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Arabic is the most meticulously and thoroughly analyzed in translation. Orientalism studies have garnered significant attention from both Western and Muslim academics. This critical focus is evident in the extensive discourse among academics. These conversations and debates aroused doubts and worries among Muslims over the Oriental studies undertaken by Western intellectuals. Edward W. Said epitomizes anti-orientalism. Said posits that Western discourse toward the East perpetuates Western convictions about cultural differences and superiority, hence bolstering its supremacy over the East, particularly during the period of European colonialism. The West is portrayed as superior, whereas the East is characterized by violence, cruelty, corruption, and authoritarianism.<sup>11</sup> Initially, Orientalism studies focused on critiquing others while consolidating their stance. It is evident in examining comparative religion, which utilizes a comparative framework. Waardenburg illustrates in his book "Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion" that comparisons are infrequently conducted among religious traditions that occupy an equivalent analytical level. Christianity is considered superior, while other religious traditions are considered inferior. Concepts are juxtaposed to captivate the reader, frequently with religious informants expressing animosity towards non-Christian traditions, asserting that Christianity epitomizes the pinnacle of spiritual evolution.<sup>12</sup> Theology thus emerges as a broad analytical domain that facilitates comparisons, leading to its uncritical utilization as a tool to advocate for one religion while disparaging others.

Specific orientalist texts also sought to undermine fundamental elements of Islam, including questioning the validity of the Qur'an and hadith. Critiques about the validity of the Qur'an are evident in Hartwig Hirschfeld's "*Judische Elemente im Koran*," Abraham Geiger's "*Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume*," John Wansbrough's "*Qur'anic Studies*," and Richard Bell's "*The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment*."<sup>13</sup> Certain writings endeavoured to illustrate the impact of Judaism and Christianity on the Qur'an. The first concern in critiquing hadith is its integrity. Hadith commenced documentation a century after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, early orientalist academics believed that no hadith could be deemed genuinely authentic due to the probable presence of additions or omissions within the texts.<sup>14</sup> Certain writings have sought to critique the personal life of the

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Translation from Arabic," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124, no. 1 (1980): 41.

<sup>11</sup> Hsu-ming Teo, "Orientalism: An Overview," *Australian Humanities Review* 54, no. 2013 (n.d.): 9.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods and Theories of Research*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> Latifah Anwar, "Hadis Dan Sunnah Nabi Dalam Prespektif Joseph Schacht," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist* 3, no. 2 (2020): 185.

Prophet Muhammad, asserting that he was a figure inclined towards violence and warfare, obsessed with power, of low social standing, and predisposed to sexual activity. In the latter decade of the 20th century, numerous contentious books regarding Islam persisted, such as *The Origins of "The Muslim Descriptions of the Jahili Meccan Sanctuary"* by Judith Koren and Yahuda D. Nevo. An archaeologist performed excavations in multiple locations in Palestine and Syria. Based on the archaeological evidence discovered, they contended that the Prophet Muhammad was a mythical character (ahistorical) as the term Muhammad (praised) emerged solely during the era of Abdul Malik bin Marwan as an epithet. Koren and Nevo regarded all narratives concerning the Prophet and the Khulafa' Rasyidun as myths due to the absence of supporting archaeological evidence.<sup>15</sup> Nevo and Koren endeavoured to reconstruct the early history of Islam utilizing non-Muslim sources. The findings of their investigation significantly diverged from the prevailing ideas of Muslims to date. In addition to the literature mentioned earlier, several orientalist polemical studies persist, which critique Muslim scholastic approaches as traditionalism susceptible to uncritical acceptance (*taqlid*). By the conclusion of the 20th century, contentious Oriental studies transitioned to objective and scientific Islamic studies. This paradigm shift was unavoidable. The disintegration of European colonialism and the emergence of independent nations in Africa and Asia were significant elements that contributed to this paradigm shift.<sup>16</sup> The adverse Western stereotype of Islam began to diminish, leading to a willingness to undertake more objective research. Islamic studies became integrated into a broader category known as religious studies to attain this objective. The historical approach aimed to extricate Islamic studies from the realm of Orientalism and integrate it into religious studies by embracing critical perspectives. This transformation has rendered Islamic Studies more palatable to certain Muslims but has not fully resolved the issue. Muslims remain wary of Western intellectuals examining Islam. The Western paradigm, rooted in enlightenment logic, fundamentally contradicts the Islamic paradigm, which maintains the principle of divine transcendence. Muslims recognize that the analytical approach employed in the study of Islam may also compromise the normative aspects of the Islamic faith. Consequently, the transition from orientalist studies to cosmopolitan religious studies did not effectively eradicate Muslim scepticism towards Western researchers examining Islam.

### **Muslim Rejection towards Religious Studies**

Initially, religious studies emerged as an academic discipline in Western colleges. This religious studies research was conducted in Christian universities in the West. Religious studies were deemed to lack scientific rigour as they exclusively

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<sup>15</sup> Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, "The Origins of the Muslim Descriptions of the Jahili Meccan Sanctuary," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (1990): 23–44.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmad Bahrudin and Achmad Ghufon, "Pergeseran Paradigma Dari Orientalisme Menuju Islamic Studies," *Al-Thiqah: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman* 5, no. 2 (2022): 9.

focused on normative Christian ideas. After World War II, state colleges established faculties of religious studies. Subsequently, transformations and alterations in novel paradigms commenced within religious studies.<sup>17</sup> Two modifications have occurred. Religious studies encompass not only biblical studies and Protestant theology but also the examination of other religions. The normative approach to religion was subsequently abandoned in favour of a socio-humanities approach. As a result of these transformations, Islam and Muslim society emerged as subjects of inquiry within religious studies. Nevertheless, religious studies within the Islamic world encountered problems and reactions from the Muslim community. Most scholars examining the status of Religious Studies within Muslim society regarded it as a manifestation of backwardness, perceiving it as a natural and self-evident phenomenon. In the preface of *Religious Studies: A Global View*, Gregory Alles delineates the aims of his eighteen writers who examine religious studies' conceptual and institutional evolution across ten global areas.<sup>18</sup> The book highlights the significant deficiencies in Religious Studies across the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in areas inhabited mainly by Arab Muslims. It indicates that religious studies in Islamic countries are stagnant and underdeveloped.

Turkey is the sole representative country in the Middle East and North Africa. Alles asserts that Turkey is the sole Islamic nation to have excelled in religious studies. Alles utilizes the International Association for the History of Religions as the standard for evaluating the advancement of religious studies, which has national affiliates globally; nevertheless, Turkey is the sole representative of the entire Middle East and North Africa region. The underdevelopment of religious studies within Muslim nations is evidenced by the QS World University Rankings for Theology, Divinity, and Religious Studies in 2024.<sup>19</sup> Among the top 55 universities, only the International Islamic University Malaysia, the University of Malaya Malaysia, and the University of Ankara Turkey exemplify nations within the framework of Muslim societies. In the Middle East and North Africa region, non-Muslim societies are exclusively represented by the Hebrew University in Israel. The results indicate that religious studies in the Middle East and North Africa, or areas predominantly inhabited by Muslim populations, are largely underdeveloped. Josef Meri articulated that the deficiency of Muslim scholars educated in contemporary academic and religious studies significantly contributes to the underdevelopment of religious studies in Middle Eastern Muslim nations. He asserts that most colleges in the Middle East eschew modern methodologies

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<sup>17</sup> Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, "Perubahan Paradigma Studi Agama Pada Program Studi Perbandingan Agama Universitas Islam (UIN) Sunan Ampel, Surabaya," *Religio: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 2 (2016): 194.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory D. Alles, "Introduction," in *Religious Studies: A Global View*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2007), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Accessed from <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-subject-rankings/theology-divinity-religious-studies>

in religious studies or the examination of other religions, perceiving them as threats to the Muslim faith. Conversely, Muslim social researchers employ a reductionist methodology in their examination of religion as a cultural phenomenon. This method fails to offer a scientific viewpoint for addressing crises and social issues in various Islamic nations.<sup>20</sup>

Turkey is frequently characterized as a success narrative in religious studies within a Muslim-majority framework. In 2004, Bulent Senay identified 23 theological schools in Turkish universities where the secular phenomenological approach to religious studies had been readily adopted. Senay elucidates that the Turkish-Muslim experience in navigating the gap between modernity/secularization and Islam has resulted in the broader trend towards intellectualism.<sup>21</sup> Turkey's engagement with the Western world has introduced concepts such as rationalism, nationalism, and democracy.<sup>22</sup> The Turkish-Muslim response to modernity strongly contrasts with that of the Muslim-Arab experience, resulting in the underdevelopment of Religious Studies in the Muslim-Arab region. Patrice Brodeur has noted the correlation between the rise of contemporary academic studies of religion and the evolution of democratic nation-states. He contends that feudal governments, prevalent in numerous Muslim nations, have contributed to the stagnation of religious studies within the Islamic world. Brodeur asserts that the discourse surrounding religion necessitates more than what universities often offer, which inherently demands a certain level of freedom of expression within society.<sup>23</sup> Jacques Waardenburg and Sjoerd van Koningsveld highlight the enforcement of sanctioned interpretations of Islam by numerous Muslim governments, particularly those in the Arab world.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the empirical and analytical examination of Islamic interpretations may be politically questionable. It also renders the examination of religions other than Islam dubious.

Societal constraints on freedom of expression influence the direction of academic research and educational curricula. During Alexander Henley's fieldwork in Jordan, researchers operated under stringent scrutiny from both governmental authorities and societal entities. Three themes were deemed prohibited for discussion in the classroom: politics, religion, and sex. Jordan exemplifies a monarchy that endorses official Islam and actively funds research initiatives, the instruction of religious studies, and interfaith dialogue. In Jordan, the monarchy and governmental entities govern

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<sup>20</sup> Josef Meri, "Teaching Interfaith Relations at Universities in the Arab Middle East: Challenges and Strategies," *Journal Religions* 12, no. 5 (2021): 11.

<sup>21</sup> Bulent Senay, *The Study of Religion, the History of Religions and Islamic Studies in Turkey* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 72.

<sup>22</sup> Husyein Bayir, Yucel Dilek, and Ahmet Bugra, "Modern Islamic Education Reform in Turkey," *Journal of Islamic Educational and Social Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2023): 24.

<sup>23</sup> Patrice Brodeur, "North Africa and West Asia," in *Religious Studies: A Global View*, ed. Alles Gregory D, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2007), 88.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Waardenburg, "Observations on the Scholarly Study of Religions as Pursued in Some Muslim Country," *Numen* 45, no. 3 (1998): 248.

official religious speech. The Sunni Muslim identity has consistently been a crucial component of the Hashemite monarchy's legitimacy, with a certain level of doctrinal uniformity upheld by a series of official religious ministries and departments referred to as *al-mu'assah al-diniyyah al-rasmiyyah*. Conversely, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, the King's Chief Advisor for Affairs, initiated the "Amman Treatise and the Common Word" initiative in 2005 to foster comprehension across Islamic schools of thought and between Muslims and Christians. Similarly, Crown Prince Hasan bin Talal established the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in 1996, with one of its objectives being the creation of a Master's program in the study of religions (*dirasah al-adyān*). This master's degree was the inaugural initiative in the Arab world to provide an "objective study of global religions." Despite receiving governmental or royal endorsement, the concept of a religious studies program encountered sufficient controversy that, for several years during its development phase, it failed to secure a partner university in Jordan for accreditation.<sup>25</sup> The Institute's challenges did not arise from governmental pressure, insufficient finance, or inadequate teaching quality; instead, the opposition to religious studies originated from other Muslim scholars who regarded its interpretation of Islam and global religions with scepticism.

This inclination parallels the connection between the evolution of religious studies in Turkey and the Turkish-Muslim experience in reconciling modernity/secularization with Islam. Butami Khir offers a depiction of Muslim perspectives toward modernity and secularization. The assimilative attitude refers to the inclination to accept Western modernity without engaging in critical analysis. Secondly, a contemptuous attitude fosters the repudiation of Western ideological infiltration into Islam and advocates for a return to traditional pre-modern thought and interpretation. The third attitude, characterized as confronting, mediates between the assimilative and dismissive stances. This third stream addresses the rejuvenation of Islam while being anchored in the foundational principles of early Islamic tradition.<sup>26</sup> Turkey, characterized as a continuum of religious study within the Muslim world, has not eradicated the spiritual aspect of its existence.

The core inquiry of this issue is whether the repudiation of modernity or secularism (the distinction between the religious and non-religious realms) signifies a benchmark for the efficacy of religious studies. The primary distinction to understand is between modernization and secularization. Koenjaraningrat posits that modernization is a deliberate endeavour undertaken by a nation to acclimate to the global landscape. Modernization is applied throughout nearly all facets of human existence, including economics, politics, social structures, education, and more. Modernization is perceived

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<sup>25</sup> Alexander Henley, "Islam as a Challenge to the Ideology of Religious Studies: Failures of Religion Studies in the Middle East," 377-378 .

<sup>26</sup> Bustami Khir, "Islamic Studies within Islam: Definition, Approaches and Challenges of Modernity," 264.

as a deliberate necessity to enhance aspects of human existence and address contemporary demands.<sup>27</sup> Secularization represents a perspective of human emancipation from religious and metaphysical constructs, specifically the redirection of human focus from the afterlife to the present existence.<sup>28</sup> Secularization seeks to eliminate religious symbols from various aspects of life.

The secular perspective that delineates religion from secular existence is evidently at odds with Islam, as Shahab Ahmad articulated, for Islam encompasses not merely a faith but a comprehensive way of life. Charles Adam also asserted that religious academics and Islamists have not succeeded in enhancing our comprehension of Islam as a faith or in adequately elucidating the phenomenon of Islamic religiosity. In response to this scholarly issue, Adam defines Islam and religion. He asserts that Islam, from the perspective of Muslims, constitutes a culture and a way of life.<sup>29</sup> The concerns that numerous Muslims have with Religious Studies are consistently portrayed as an unreasonable apologetic stance. It is regarded as the self-imposed backwardness of Muslims due to their rejection of modernity. Muslims accept modernity; instead, they oppose the concept of secularization. Timothy Fitzgerald asserts that the discourse of religious studies is a byproduct of the Euro-American discourse of religion and secularism. Fitzgerald alleges that the phenomenology of religion constitutes a variant of liberal ecumenical theology. In contrast, 19th-century phenomenologists in comparative religion have broadened and redefined the conventional soteriological interpretation of faith in Jesus Christ and the cultural framework of Christian institutions in diverse cross-cultural contexts. The universal Church of Christ has fragmented via the Reformation into various competing sects and denominations, subsequently emerging within the new comparative religion framework as a world religion of Christianity that coexists with similar organizations.<sup>30</sup> Abdulkader Tayob similarly asserted that religious studies are intricately linked to the European enlightenment effort, emphasizing the revitalization or establishment of liberal Christian theology. Tayob contends that religious studies are intertwined with Western national and colonial agendas.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the Western perspective is deemed unjust when addressing Islam, as Islam is not a byproduct of contemporary Western society. Islam should be comprehended through its epistemological framework rather than through the lens of Western supremacy. Religious studies seeks to unify the discipline as a

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<sup>27</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan, Mentalitet Dan Pembangunan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1976), 131.

<sup>28</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 15.

<sup>29</sup> Abdurrahman Shobirin, Ahmad Fakhri Aziz, and Hikmat Abdurrochman, "Kerangka Pemikiran Studi Agama Menurut Charles J. Adam," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education and Local Culture* 1, no. 1 (2023): 32.

<sup>30</sup> Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Abdulkader Tayob, "Decolonizing the Study of Religions: Muslim Intellectuals and the Enlightenment Project of Religious Studies," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 31, no. 2 (2018): 14.

worldwide endeavour. It indicates that all religions can be examined from a universal perspective. The ideology of liberal ecumenical theology, concealed inside religious studies, has been masked by the purported scientific examination of religion. It suggests that Muslim resistance to religious studies frequently stems from Western scholars employing double standards, particularly when analyzing Islam via a Western religious lens.<sup>32</sup> This issue must be addressed through open discourse as a conciliatory approach to the often dichotomous categories of religion and secularism.

The primary opposition of Muslim society to religious studies is the repudiation of secularization. Critiques from Muslims on the classifications of religion and secularism should heighten our awareness of this matter. The inquiry into the reasons behind this criticism serves as a gateway to comprehending the stagnation of religious studies in the Islamic world. For instance, the term *din* can be readily translated as religion in English, yet does the lexicon of religion adequately encapsulate the concept of *din* as comprehended by Muslims? Abū 'Ubaid elucidates that *dāna* can signify to subjugate/colonize (*ad}olla*) and to enslave (*ista'bada*), or conversely, to be subjugated/insulted (*d}olla*) and to exhibit submission/obedience (*at}a'a*) to another. Additionally, Abu Ubaid asserts that when discussing *din* about God, the phrase signifies obedience and servitude to Him.<sup>33</sup> In Arabic, the concept of religion emphasizes humanity's obligation to God, but in English, it transitions to a secular, scientific perspective. Another instance is the term faith. In Arabic, *īmān* denotes an individual's internal commitment to a concept grounded in a rational cognitive process. However, in English, terms such as belief or faith frequently falter as they have transitioned from the religious domain to the secular (scientific) sphere.<sup>34</sup> To comprehend others on their terms, we must engage in critical analysis when utilized as a description or translation. The translator must maintain the original meaning and potency of the text.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, translating words from Arabic to English necessitates a profound comprehension of the Muslim perspective.

The subsequent Muslim critique of the study of religion pertains to the methodologies of atheism and agnosticism. The technique of atheism is not inherently objective; instead, it aims to create a realm of objective, non-religious neutrality. This critique is seen in the work *'Aqidatunā Islāmiyyah*. In the book, atheism (*al-ilhād*) is characterized not as a neutral stance but as a competing ideology rooted in opposition to

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<sup>32</sup> Adeng Muchtar Ghazali and Aan Hasanah, "Understanding The Religious Tolerance in Indonesia: The Islamic Theological Perspective," *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 8, no. 1 (2020): 704.

<sup>33</sup> Abū 'Ubaid al-Qasim b. Sallām, *Ghārib Al-Hadīths*, ed. Husayn Muhammad Muhammad Sharaf (Kairo: Al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah li-Shu'ūn al-Mat}abi' al-Amī}riyyah, 1984), 576-577.

<sup>34</sup> R. Kevin Jaques, "Belief," in *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, ed. Jamal J. Elias (Oxford: Oneword Publications, 2010), 55–59.

<sup>35</sup> Md. Faruquzzaman Akan, Md. Rezaul Karim, and Abdullah Mohammad Kabir Chowdhury, "An Analysis of Arabic-English Translation: Problem and Prospect," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019): 58.

the beliefs of the faithful. Agnosticism, or the school of doubt, is a classical Greek philosophy articulated by Immanuel Kant, characterized by the rejection of the senses and reason's capacity to ascertain certainty, employing doubt and the concept of probability as foundational reasons. The book correlates the emergence of modern agnosticism with Europe's enlightenment history, viewing it as a reaction to religious oppression and clerical dominance that suppressed intellectualism and opposed knowledge and scholars.<sup>36</sup> By situating agnosticism within the intellectual emancipation of Europeans from the church, these Muslim scholars assert that this epistemology of Enlightenment scepticism is neither neutral nor compatible with the academic examination of Islam.

The stagnation of religious studies in the Islamic world signifies a failure within religious studies' discourse. Western scholars frequently attribute Muslim rejection and opposition to religious studies to problems stemming from regional authoritarianism and dogmatism. Nonetheless, we cannot regard regional authoritarianism and dogmatism as the primary determinants in the failure of religious studies within the Islamic world. Western-initiated religious studies have not established an impartial framework. Rushain Abbasi asserts that researchers within the critical camp prioritize current European history in their analyses, hence obstructing Muslims' capacity for self-representation.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Muslim populations perceive that their interpretations of religion are dismissed and restricted by Western influences. Consequently, religious scholars must empathetically consider the perspectives of diverse cultures to generate objective analyses. To attain a more impartial and objective study, it is essential to transcend ideologically laden classifications and see the Muslim community as an integral component of contemporary social reality. Consequently, religious studies, particularly Islamic studies, should be examined within the epistemological context of Islam itself, refraining from characterizing it as regressive, irrational, or unscientific.

### **Approaches towards Islam in Religious Studies**

Bustami Khir elucidated that Western universities have extensively established and examined Islamic studies for an extended period. It is important to emphasize that Islamic studies in the West have not been recognized as autonomous subjects; instead, they have been incorporated within departments such as theology, oriental studies, and Middle Eastern and Asian studies. All of these departments fall under the broad category of religious studies. The lack of Islamic studies as a distinct discipline has impacted the methodologies employed by Western colleges. The theories and methodologies used by Western scholars in Islamic Studies are predominantly broad theories about religious studies, social sciences, and the humanities. Bustami asserts that

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<sup>36</sup> Muhammad Al-Malkawi et al., *Aqidatunā Al-Islamiyya* (Amman: Dār al-Nafāis, 2019), 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> Rushain Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims Distinguish the Religious and Secular? The Din-Dunya Binary in Medieval Islamic Thought," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 2 (2020): 193.

this results in disregarding paradigms and techniques from an Islamic perspective in Islamic studies. Recognizing this gap, Bustami proposes an alternate approach to researching Islamic Studies from the viewpoint of Islam itself (traditional Muslim doctrines). This proposal by Butami appears to be a viable alternative initially; however, it is essential to recognize that Bustami's attempts effectively constrain the breadth of Islamic studies to restrictive confines characterized by exclusive dogmatic perspectives. To enhance Islamic studies, it is essential to broaden the field of research. Islamic theological studies must be amalgamated with examining Muslim culture and society. The primary challenge encountered by Muslims in the study of Islam is not a deficiency in material comprehension but rather in the methodologies employed for data processing and presentation; in essence, Muslims lack mastery of the methodological approach. Consequently, Muslims perceive the necessity to adopt many strategies that have emerged in the West for the study of Islam. In Islamic studies, Muslims generally uphold conventional science in its entirety rather than engaging in empirical research subject to testing, verification, critique, and falsification. Discussions regarding this subject are consistently upheld and cannot be refuted. To date, we have identified a more significant number of justificatory settings in Islamic religious studies than in objective scientific discoveries. From the standpoint of the philosophy of science, any scientific discipline must be organized and founded on hypotheses derived from rigorous methods. Furthermore, prior theories cannot be deemed absolute. The advancement of science necessitates an ongoing process of examining hypotheses and theories proposed with rigorous attempts to disprove them.<sup>38</sup> To address this issue, it is essential to endeavour to broaden the intellectual horizons of Muslims by elevating their intellectual standards. Subjecting Islam to scientific inquiry is frequently characterized as an attempt to undermine the sanctity of the Islamic faith. There exists a presumption that the scientific study of Islam aims to undermine the faith within.<sup>39</sup> Waardenberg asserted, "The paramount consideration is whether Muslims perceive our studies as a threat or as a means to truth and intellectual and humanitarian advancement." The academic pursuit of Religious studies is not to analyze phenomena beyond rational comprehension but to investigate, comprehend, and elucidate the meanings and repercussions of reality and human religiosity in general. Examining Islam via a scientific lens does not entail relinquishing its normative character as a faith. The normative idea of Islam can be philosophically articulated through a conversation between the theoretical framework of science and the normative framework of religion. Essentially, all aspects of Islamic beliefs are normative. Kuntowijoyo identifies two

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<sup>38</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Preliminary Remarks on Philosophy of Islamic Religious Sciences," *Al-Jamiah*, no. 6 (1998): 12.

<sup>39</sup> Asif Trisnani, Asep Awaludin, and Manzilatul Fadhilah, "Scientific-Cum-Doctrinaire Dalam Studi Islam Menurut Mukti Ali ( Studi Analisis Perspektif Worldview Islam )," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam* 13, no. 2 (2022): 220–21.

methods by which normative ideals manifest in daily life. Initially, normative ideals are directly manifested in conduct. Second, they convert normative values into scientific theory before their manifestation in behaviour. Converting ideas through scientific theory into practical application necessitates multiple formulation stages: the theological phase, the social philosophy phase, the social theory phase, and the social change phase.<sup>40</sup> Kuntowijoyo's proposal appears to seek the empirical realization of Islam. Kuntowijoyo's proposition can be a foundation for establishing an epistemic framework that integrates religious values and norms with the social sciences.

A significant topic frequently discussed in Islamic studies is the insider-outsider dilemma. The inquiry is: Should Islamic researchers or scholars be adherents of Islam (insiders)? Do Western scholars (outsiders) possess the right to explore and study Islam? Kim Knott is a scholar engaged in the discourse on insiders and outsiders. Knott delineates four tiers of researcher involvement: pure participants (total participants), researchers as participants (observer as participant), participants as researchers (participant as observer), and pure researchers (complete observer).<sup>41</sup> The author asserts that this categorization of participant levels does not ensure that a researcher will execute a study impartially, devoid of specific motivations. Fazlur Rahman argues that a primary prerequisite for an Islamic scholar is that the research subject must eradicate antagonism or bias while remaining open and, if feasible, empathetic. This bias extends beyond the religious or emotional circumstances of others. Intellectual bias may manifest as preconceived views or classifications. Experts educated in a given discipline are primarily accountable for this bias. Non-Muslims who are unbiased, wise, and informed about Islam can attain a profound intellectual grasp and appreciation of the religion.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, non-Muslim (Western) scholars are entitled to study Islam within the earlier stipulations. This assertion is corroborated by the observation that numerous Muslim and Western academics exhibit a similar inclination to analyze the Qur'an through a descriptive methodology.<sup>43</sup> This indicates that Muslim and Western scholars can collaborate in academia and intellectual discourse. In the volume *Approaches to Islam in religious studies*, Richard C. Martin (editor) endeavours to situate Islam within the context of religious studies. He asserts that Islam warrants significant focus in religious studies due to the growth and global influence of the

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<sup>40</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi Untuk Aksi*, ed. A.E. Priyono (Bandung: Mizan, 1991).

<sup>41</sup> Uswatul Jannah and Ahmad Effendi, "Kim Knott ; Studi Agama Perspektif Insider / Outsider," *Tafhil Al-'Ilmi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 1 (2020): 185–86.

<sup>42</sup> Fazlur Rahman, "Pendekatan Terhadap Islam Dalam Studi Agama: Catatan Resensi," in *Pendekatan Terhadap Islam Dalam Studi Agama*, ed. Richard C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: SUKA-Press UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2010), 205.

<sup>43</sup> Mahbub Ghazali, "Normatif Dan Deskriptif Dalam Studi Al-Qur'an Modern: Pertarungan Kepentingan Epistemologis Barat Dan Islam Dalam Prespektif Chrles J. Adams," *Al-Iman: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 8, no. 1 (2022): 176.

Muslim people.<sup>44</sup> <sup>45</sup>The book contains several writings that seek to elucidate Islam as a religion while interpreting religion from an Islamic viewpoint. Articulating religion from an Islamic perspective does not necessitate Islamic scholars being adherents of Islam. In his book, most authors are non-Muslims. However, they offer an objective comprehension of Islam. The acquired Islamic data is regarded as it is, without categorizing it as irrational, regressive, or regionally dogmatic. It is an endeavour to allow Islam to articulate itself based on its epistemology or worldview. Syed Muhammad Naqueb asserts that Islamic epistemology encompasses physical reality and acknowledges the ontological character of metaphysical entities as understandable to humans. In Islamic epistemology, revelation constitutes the fundamental source of knowledge. Examining Islam through its distinct epistemology is a crucial aspect of Religious Studies that scholars should not overlook.

Mukti Ali asserted that in religious studies, a researcher may examine their religion scientifically while maintaining their faith. Mukti Ali recognized the potential for collaboration between religious studies and social sciences. It does not constitute an endeavour to Islamize knowledge. The fundamental premise of this assertion is that religion encompasses not only beliefs but also scientific elements. Mukti Ali's concept subsequently became recognized as the term "*Scientific-cum-doctriner*". Scientific pertains to the anthropological, sociological, historical, and philosophical methodologies of studying religion. Doctrine is a dogmatic methodology that utilizes religious texts to comprehend religion. "*Scientific-cum-doctriner*" seeks to integrate theological studies with social sciences.<sup>46</sup> Amin Abdullah also perpetuated a similar concept. He asserts that the historical phenomenon of Islam and its diverse characteristics may be examined from multiple viewpoints outside the conventional sacred approach that has historically prevailed. Amin Abdullah categorizes knowledge into three primary domains: religion, social sciences, and natural sciences. This interdisciplinary approach necessitates a dialectical relationship among the three primary knowledge domains as interrelated components.<sup>47</sup> Amin Abdullah advocates for a thorough, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary examination of religion, employing historical-critical research alongside doctrinal-normative techniques. M. Arkoun constructs a conception of religion that diverges from the conventional perspective of Muslims. He elucidates the concept of religion using sociological and

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<sup>44</sup> Richard C. Martin, "Islam Dan Studi Agama: Sebuah Catatan Pengantar," in *Pendekatan Terhadap Islam Dalam Studi Agama*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: SUKA-Press UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2010), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ahmad Zayyadi, Abdul Basit, and Mahmudin, "Islamic Epistemology Paradigm : Worldview of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies Syed Muhammad Naqueb Al-Attas," *International Journal of Social and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2021): 33.

<sup>46</sup> A. Mukti Ali, *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1988), 47-48.

<sup>47</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas Atau Historitas* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2011), 7.

anthropological frameworks. Arkoun identifies five domains in the study and analysis of religion: intellectual, political, economic, and cultural.<sup>48</sup> It is implemented to prevent religions from being trapped by ideology. Arkoun designates the five domains as socio-historical areas. Sociological and anthropological methodologies, such as those proposed by Arkoun, are frequently employed as alternatives in the study of Islam. The sociological method aims to comprehend the impact of religion on society. The sociological approach to religion encompasses various objectives, including examining the effects of religion on societal transformation, analyzing how structure and societal change shape the interpretation of teachings, assessing the degree of religious experience within society, and investigating patterns of social interaction in Muslim communities. The anthropological method aims to comprehend religious phenomena by examining diverse religious practices that evolve within society.<sup>49</sup> In summary, observing religious phenomena throughout society is interconnected with several aspects of life, including agriculture, economics, and politics. The primary assertion is that Islamic data can be analyzed using historical, anthropological, sociological, phenomenological, and many methodologies beyond the theological perspective. Alternatively, Islamic data may be analyzed through a theological lens while incorporating a social scientific perspective. Nevertheless, when the subject of investigation pertains to faith, a researcher must not disregard the theological perspective or relinquish their beliefs. The study of Islam must be confined to its epistemology or worldview. Islamic data should be elucidated from an Islamic viewpoint without categorizing it as regressive, irrational, or unscientific. Furthermore, an external researcher must thoroughly comprehend the Islamic worldview and eradicate any antagonism or bias regarding their work. When examined through many methodologies, the extensive corpus of Islamic data will yield new insights and a more holistic perspective in addressing Islamic issues. This deliberate initiative seeks to enhance Islamic Studies and religious studies broadly.

## Conclusion

Religious studies is a construct of Euro-American discourse regarding religion and secularism. Secularism is an ideology akin to atheism and agnosticism, as it negates the transcendence of God and dismisses the role of religion in society. This perspective seeks to impart a secular comprehension within the realm of objectivity rather than being devoid of values. This perspective contradicts the Islamic viewpoint, which does not distinguish between religious principles and secular existence. The primary

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<sup>48</sup> Nasiruddin, "Metodologi Studi Agama Prespektif Arkoun Dan Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi'," in *Studi Islam Prespektif Insider/Outsider*, ed. M. Arfan Mu'ammar and Abdul Wahid Hasan (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2012), 149.

<sup>49</sup> Asriana Harahap and Mhd Latip Kahpi, "Pendekatan Antropologis Dalam Studi Islam," *Tazkir: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman* 07, no. 1 (2021): 54.

opposition of Muslim society to religious studies is the repudiation of secularization. Muslim critiques of the classifications of religion and secularism should enhance our understanding of this issue. The inquiry into the reasons behind this criticism serves as a gateway to comprehending the stagnation of religious studies in the Islamic world. The underdevelopment of religious studies within Muslim society can be elucidated through at least two perspectives. The study of religious studies does not offer an impartial framework. Critics assert that scholars prioritize current European history in their analyses of religion, so impeding Muslims' capacity for self-representation. Consequently, Muslim society dismisses and regards their perspectives on interpreting religion as invalidated and restricted by Western influences. Consequently, religious studies, particularly Islamic studies, should be integrated into the epistemology of Islam itself without categorizing it as irrational, unscientific, or regressive. Secondly, there is a deficiency of Muslim intellectuals educated in contemporary religious studies. Numerous Muslim scholars eschew modern methodologies in religious studies or examining other faiths, perceiving them as tricky to their beliefs. Muslims must relinquish such assumptions. To comprehend Muslims' aversion to religious studies, we must adopt a cordial approach that does not exclude the element of faith in the examination of religion. This initiative can be achieved by amalgamating the normative-doctrinal perspective of Islam with the methodologies of social sciences to address the stagnation of religious studies in the Muslim world.

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