

A Non-Orientalist Representation of Pakistan in Contemporary Western Travelogues

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ABSTRACT

Travel writings by Western visitors of the Orient have often been rebuffed for disseminating a stereotypical discourse on the people and the culture of the East. The rationale for the collective dismissal of such narratives, however, is built upon a limited canon whose myopic perspective creates a monolithic Orient. It is argued that since this dominant discourse leaves nearly no room for non-conformism, it has conveniently overlooked a large body of travel writings of western writers that adopt a non-Orientalist approach to appreciate cultural differences. To pursue this argument, the present study aims to explore Jürgen Wasim Frembgen's *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi: Five Days & Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan* (2011) to examine how the autobiographical narrator's travel accounts present an alternative narrative about the East that subverts prevailing discourses on travelogues as apparatuses to reinforce colonial/Western norms. To achieve this goal, the study benefits from Debbie Lisle's (2006) theories on the cosmopolitan vision of a travel writer as well as Edward Said's (1978) theory of Orientalism. Frembgen's cosmopolitan vision throughout the narrative neutralizes negative perceptions about Muslim communities in Pakistan as uncultivated and declining by offering a counter view of the country that underscores its vibrant and positively transformative qualities. The celebration of Eastern culture and religion in Frembgen's travel writing indicates the need for the re-examination of the Orientalist thought that has, wittingly or unwittingly, dismissed a significant segment of western works about the east in order to legitimize its theoretical and hypothetical cases.

Keywords: Travel writing; Orientalism; Sufism; Pakistan; cultural transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Travel writings by Western visitors of the Orient have often been the subject of profound distrust and denunciation for their stereotypical, biased, and homogenizing depiction of the people and the culture of the East (Of the many examples of Western travelogues, see: Polo, M., Yule, H., & Cordier, H. (1993). *The travels of Marco Polo: The complete Yule-Cordier edition*. New York: Dover; Forester, G.A. (1808). *Journey from Bengal to England (Vol. II)*. London: Foudler & Son; Hugel, B.C. (1845). *Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*. London: John Petheram.). Over the past few decades, developments in Postcolonial and Orientalist theory and practice have paved the way for problematizing the gaze of the Western writer as objectifying and arguing that the cultural encounter portrayed within majority of life narratives recounted by Westerners offer neither sound nor constructive representation of the East (Edwards, 2018; Hadi & Asl, 2022; Lindsay, 2015). The mainstream postcolonial theory considers travel writing as a genre that is traditionally filled with oriental presuppositions and discursive prejudice. It is usually argued that the traveler holds a superior western perspective whose critical or scornful eyes objectifies the East as the inferior or the exotic (Alù & Hill, 2018; Huggan, 2000). The criticism is usually corroborated by textual readings of certain classical pieces of the genre such as *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1993) that offer an essentially myopic perspective on the Orient (Clark, 1999). More recently, many of the life narratives by European and American writers that document their observations of the East have been labeled as New Orientalist—i.e., of having an exaggerated, oversimplified, and distorted rhetoric. This claim is particularly substantiated by the social and cultural contextualization of the writings in relation to the post-9/11 discourse of ‘war on terror’—which has brought about a new form of Orientalism called American Orientalism—that have had a profound effect in the way narratives about Muslim countries in the Middle East and South Asia are formulated and consumed (Abbas, 2004; Pourya Asl, 2019, 2022). Like the traditional Orientalism described by Edward Said, American Orientalism is characterized as having a “dual focus on the putatively exotic other and his customs” (Edwards, 2010, p. 362). However, the limited textual selection that is used as criteria to debunk Western travelogue genre makes the underlying reasoning faulty and reductive as the deduction is built upon a specific canon, to the omission or the detriment of other, minor or major, works. As this dominant discourse leaves nearly no room for non-conformism, it suffers precisely from that which postcolonial thought is believed to have fought against so far—i.e., an uncritical approach toward foreign cultures. In other words, this totalizing perspective turns the brilliantly rich cultural encounter made possible by postcolonial thought into a call for mass rejection and retaliation insofar as any western narrative on the Orient is cast aside as essentially homogenizing.

In this context, an epistemological question concerning the philosophy of writing, literature and travelogues arises; whether a present-century western traveler-writer can move beyond cultural clichés on the Orient and reproduce a culture in its opulent entirety and not paint a hackneyed picture. To address this question, the present study aims to explore Jürgen Wasim Frembgen’s *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi: Five Days & Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan* (2011) [hereafter *Red Sufi*] to examine how the autobiographical narrator’s travel account presents an alternative narrative about the East that subverts prevailing discourses on travelogues as apparatuses to reinforce colonial/Western norms. Frembgen is a German anthropologist and the Chief Curator in the Oriental Department of the Museum of Ethnology in Munich (Frembgen, 2006, p. 248). His lifelong interest in Islamic Studies and his particular fascination with Sufism, described as the “tolerant, gentle face of Islam” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 5), have motivated him to

travel to Pakistan for a few times to find out more about the country and its Sufi communities. His empirical observations resulted in discovering the country “in a way that goes beyond the stereotypical image given by the media” (Menghini, 2013, p. 275). Over the past thirty years, Frembgen has published his accounts and reflections in numerous articles and books that mainly deal with Sufism and the veneration of Muslim saints in Pakistan. *Red Sufi* is an ethnographic narrative that documents the German narrator’s journey through Pakistan, where he participates in ecstatic nights of music at Sufi shrines.

As a form of Islam, Sufism has a very long tradition in Islamic societies in South Asia. From historical, ethnographic, and architectural perspective, Sufism is generally defined as “embodied in the persons of representatives of the chains of spiritual power and piety that believers ultimately trace back to the Prophet Muhammad” (Green, 2004, p. 123). The term is also often used to designate the spiritual theories and practices that Muslims adopt with the aim of transcending the affairs of this world and seeking a closer individual relationship with the Almighty (Hussain, 2019; Wassan, 2022). In this sense, Sufism is crucial in uniting individuals of various social, economic, cultural, and political groups. In postcolonial Pakistan, Sufi Islam has played a central part both in the creation of “decolonial thinking and knowledge within Islam” and in the establishment of “an inclusive, tolerant, and peaceful society” (Wassan, 2021, p. 849). Understanding the politics of Sufism in contemporary Pakistan is significant in the processes of decoloniality and of disrupting the stereotypical images of the country as host to orthodox, fanatical, and militant Islam. In this regard, *Red Sufi* recommends itself for the present study because it is a precious anthropological work based on years of field research that offers objective insights and sharp reflections about a country and Sufi Islam that Westerners still have limited knowledge of.

The present study argues that like post-colonial writers who seek to challenge and change the grand narrative of colonial history, Frembgen contests and reconstructs the hegemonic representations of Pakistanis. His *Red Sufi* transforms the readers’ perception of the reality of life in Pakistan by calling attention to unacknowledged voices and histories, and in doing so, it operates as a decolonizing apparatus for the way Pakistanis are depicted within Western master discourses. To analyze Frembgen’s *Red Sufi* in pursuit of this argument, the present study benefits from Debbie Lisle’s (2006) theories on the cosmopolitan vision of a travel writer and Edward Said’s (1978) theory of Orientalism. Unlike the prejudiced colonial writer for whom the locals are merely an uncivilized mass, the cosmopolitan travel writer not only appreciates the complexities and intricacies of the Orient but also seeks to liberate the Western audience from their colonial bigotry by drawing attention to the harmonizing effects of globalization (Gholi, 2017). Through a close reading of the text with reference to Said’s postulations on Orientalism, this study aims to initiate inquiries into the discursive representation of power and identify the various ways in which the narrative demonstrates alternative views of Pakistani people and culture to debunk certain Orientalist presumptions.

Traditionally, travel writing is described as a genre which aims at charting the essence of the indigenous people and geography of the traversed terrain (Forsdick, Kinsley, & Walchester, 2019). In Europe, the genre has developed from stories of pilgrimages, of extended oceanic voyages, and of the grand tours around the world, to colonial accounts in which the writers’ point of view is contaminated with the cult of exclusion and cultural superiority (Adams, 1983; Bate, 2010; Kumar, 2021). Over the past couple of decades, however, the genre has embraced modernist sensibility, distanced itself from blatant racism/sexism, and blended external world with the inner world of travel writer (Bassnett, 2002; Clarke, 2018; Thompson, 2011; Withers, 2021). More

recently, the genre has incorporated postmodernist features such as stream of consciousness, collage, and intertextuality that have helped to the dismantling of the traditional dichotomy of the Orient/Occident (Culbert, 2018; Quaireau & Ounoughi, 2020). In all these forms, according to Peter Whitfield (2011), travel writers perform the dual role of spectator and protagonist. As spectators, the travelers' observations of the locals are affected by the former's own culture. As protagonists, travel writers tend to construct for themselves the personae of a hero who surmounts obstacles and returns home with applause and celebration. Hence, "travel narrative is addressed to the home culture (Clark, 1999, p. 1).

Besides, travel writing is the genre of identity construction in which cross-cultural encounter takes place between the self (traveler) and the other or the visited foreign world and its people. This meeting ends in either cultural understanding or misunderstanding (Borm, 2017; Korte, 2000). Whereas the latter occurs when the traveler-writer insists on interpreting the new world based on their Eurocentric norms and values, cross-cultural understanding happens when the writers abandon their own cultural standpoint and strive to view the alien world from the viewpoint of native inhabitants (Bednarczyk, Kubarek, & Szatkowski, 2019; Menon, 2003). In this case, the traveler's vision is less reductive or monological and is more dialogical and insightful. As travel writing often serves to circulate stereotypes (Chandran & Vengadasamy, 2018), resisting the lures of generalizations, clichés and hackneyed assumptions is an arduous task that requires cultural relativism to counter the pernicious impacts of cultural chauvinism.

In this study, the underlying definition around which the idea of travelogue revolves is the one that describes the genre, according to Paul Fussell (1980), as a sub-category of "memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative ... claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" (as cited in Hannigan, 2018, p. 15). Frembgen's *Red Sufi*, however, moves beyond the clichés of the genre as it blends scientific observations with literary, anthropological and personal at the same time. This particular approach distinguishes the narrative to be less in the service of political expansionism and colonialism, and be more socially responsible and reflexive of the political clashes that are happening in the world today—that is, being mainly oriented toward multiculturalism as well as cultural critique (Menghini, 2013; Rozehnal, 2014). It is because of its unconventional form and content that Frembgen's narrative has remained tremendously under-researched. Noting the unorthodox deconstruction of Orientalism throughout *Red Sufi*, Gholi (2017) aptly observes that,

From his [Frembgen's] perspective, his timeless traveled locus is rife with violence, yet a space to escape from dehumanizing ambience of the West. Additionally, for him the women in this tribal region are tyrannized by husbands and victimized by Muslim extremists. Last but not least, he portrays this remote oriental space as an object of curiosity which needs to be salvaged textually.
(p. 84)

Published and consumed at the juncture of ideological and political tensions between Pakistan and the United States, Frembgen's *Red Sufi* can easily be situated within a post-9/11 discourse that has reinforced the heterogeneities between Pakistan and the United States. Therefore, *Red Sufi* is not only lending itself to interpretations within dominant modes of reading, such as American Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism, but also forging alternative ones that capture the nuances of real life in the country—behind the existing political facade. Using the postcolonial concepts of alterity, Self and Other, and Orientalism, in what follows, the present study aims to

examine the multiple ways in which Frembgen provides alternative views of Pakistani people and culture in his travelogue. A brief overview of the three notions would be helpful.

ALTERITY, SELF/OTHER, AND ORIENTALISM

Alterity is generally used to refer to the domain beyond the self. As one of the first propagators of the concept, Emmanuel Levinas used the term to designate the other's manifold difference (Keintzel, 2020). For postcolonial scholars, this difference consists of cultural, racial, ideological, or religious dissimilarities. With alterity comes an awareness coupled with respectful recognition of the other that was neglected by colonial narratives (Dirlik, 2002; Loomba, 2007). In other words, alterity highlights the otherness of the other as something that deserves special attention, care and focus. When a European encounters alterity, as JanMohamed (1985) observes:

the European theoretically has the option of responding to the Other, in terms of identity or difference. If he assumes that he and the Other are essentially identical, then he would tend to ignore the significant divergences and to judge the Other according to his own cultural values. If on the other hand, he assumes that the Other is different, then he would have little incentive to adopt the viewpoint of that alterity: he would again tend to, turn to the security of his own cultural perspective. Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible, only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture.
(pp. 64-65)

The present study uses the term to theorize the otherness that is at the root of the cross-cultural encounter. The superior Europe is thus characterized as the focal point of intensity and all that is outside that center is at the edge or fringe of intensity, culture, and human progress. For postcolonial scholars, the deconstruction of the focus/edge pattern dismantles the colonizers' discourse of the fixity of culture.

The provincial polarity of Self/Other is thus a key term in postcolonial domain which stems from alterity. The parallel division has served not only to impose certain traits on colonizers and colonizing subjects but also to structure the way one perceives the world and differentiate self from the other. The colonized is traditionally portrayed as the "other" through discourses of primitivism and barbarianism in the process of characterizing the colonizer as "self" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2003; Asl, 2021; Hadi & Asl, 2021). Hence, the connection between "self" and "other" fits to imply Hegelian Master-Slave vernacular. Hegel accepted that people or identities are forged in meeting with something that is not self. The truth of this found self is explained in two different ways: I should have the cognizance that I am a self which Hegel calls "being for self," and my reality must be recognized or perceived by other individuals, that is "being for other people" (Leitch et al., 2001, pp. 626-627). The alternative perspective that the present study seeks to show in Frembgen's travel writing aims at underlining the existing contradictions and inconsistencies within this traditional Master-Slave logic, in which the relationship between self and other suggests that mastery is not complete in itself, and "self" and "other" are bolted together.

The logic of alterity forms the backbone of the discourse of Orientalism, which is described by Said (1978) as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident" (3). The discourse includes all the clichéd, pre-given concepts, ideas, definitions and thinking frameworks through which the westerner regards the eastern man. Said later states that Orientalism eventually turns into "a political vision of the real world" whose structure advances the division between the recognizable

Europe or the West ("us") and the weird Orient or the East ("them") (Said, 1978, p. 43). Within the contemporary context, as Said's observes, Orientalism works in transit wherein Islam and Muslims are depicted in Western media as backward and fundamentalist. According to him, such depictions can never be genuine since portrayals "are implanted first in the language and afterward in the way of life, organizations, and political feel of the representer" (Said, 1978, p. 272). Within the more recent context of globalization, transnationalism, and multiculturalism, however, the structure of race as a hierarchy can no longer be considered as the only parameter informing Orientalist discourses (Weir, 2019). This complication, as Edwards argues, can best be described as American Orientalism, which like its predecessor has a "dual focus on the putatively exotic other and his customs" (Edwards, 2010, p. 362). Even though this new Orientalist discourse marks certain shifts "in the selection of its subject and locale, it nonetheless reproduces certain repetitions of and conceptual continuities with its precursor. Like classical orientalism, neo-orientalism is a monolithic discourse based on binarism between the superior American values and the inferior" other. (Altwaiji 2014, 313). The present study uses the term Orientalism to refer to the sum total of the cultural practices in the west that present a clichéd, politically charged depiction of the eastern man and culture. Orientalist thought attempts to bring the subject of its concern under its dominion. It is argued, however, that not all western texts about the east should be classified as colonialist misrepresentations that aim to denigrate and exoticize the Orient.

SUBVERSION OF ORIENTALISM IN *THE SHRINE OF THE RED SUFI*

FREMBGEN ENCOUNTERS THE ORIENT

Frembgen's anti-colonialist view of the Orient is quite explicit in his travelogue. It is noteworthy that the Oriental is often stereotypically shown as gullible, devoid of energy and irrational, debased, childlike, and different, who live within despotic social orders. For Frembgen, however, the journey to Pakistan, the country, its people and their culture are mesmerizing and venerable. The author considers his first journey to the Sufi Shrine in Pakistan as filled with magic and wonder which lasts for five days. This journey is not only physical but a spiritual one that polishes his thoughts. It is in this "archaic and magical" (Frembgen, 2011, p. 3) world that the narrator goes through self-discovery. In fact, the journey functions as an epiphany for the narrator that he might achieve transcendence. The context is replete with rich culture and religious traces that impress the author. This observation contrasts the whole preconception regarding the Eastern culture as the clichés signify the Easterners are deprived of human qualities. Throughout the book, the negative features which one can find under the wide blue yonder are to be examined within the margins of the eastern borders. However, Frembgen subverts such accepted beliefs regarding the Orient and celebrates its astonishing nature through its religion and cultural practices such as rituals, music, women that create moments of self-transformation for the traveler-narrator.

CELEBRATING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Marshall and Williams (1982) introduce the Orient as "a continent of bizarre religions, fanatically adhered to and it was a continent whose people changed very little" and then continue that "the one stereotype explained the other as it was their religions that required Orientals forever the same" (p. 158 as cited in Mousavi & Mohseni, 2012, p. 275). Nevertheless, Frembgen dismisses such claims by associating positive features with Islam which is "marked by trust, tolerance and a

feeling of togetherness' of trances and a Dionysian spirituality – a joyful counter-culture in contrast to that of a rather cheerless orthodox Muslim” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 3). These observations regarding Islam celebrate the feeling that that the Oriental religions can transmit to the people. Frembgen is exposed to the gaiety, unity, and delight of the religious context which denounce all negativity regarding Islam. He replaces the imagery of the outlandish, evil, and destitute of vitality, with that of jubilation, glee, exultation, and pleasure. In this Shrine, the narrator learns about Islam and realizes that all stereotypes about this religion and culture must be thrown away. This recognition is best realized through the stories of Khizr and Arif Sain.

Through the story of Khizr, Frembgen shows that the stereotypes about Islam and the Orient can be altered and transformed. Khizr was raised in a strict family with a religious father whose dogmatic principles made him run away. He was not allowed to listen to music nor go to the movies, and he has been reprimanded for violation of his father's laws. However, during his stay in a mosque in Lahore and after meeting several Muslim fellows, Khizr experiences Schwan: “It was masti (intoxicated madness), and I stayed with dervishes. The Qalandar became my father and the malangs my brothers. It was there that I really experienced for the first-time what Islam means – complete devotion to God, until your own heart becomes gentle and soft. (Frembgen, 2011, p. 12). The story of Khizr's transformation greatly influences the narrator and he urges Khizr to tell him more about how he has become Shia Muslim. Such stories regarding religion and culture feed up the narrator with the Orient and its wanders. Khizr is passionate about holy figures in Shia including Hazrat Ali and other Imams in this religious branch of Islam. These holy figures could penetrate both minds and spirit of Khizr as a Suni and the same feeling is transmitted to the writer.

Arif Sain is another character whose presence affects the narrator and his perception of the Orient. Arif obeys the ideal norms of Sufism as he dismisses all mundane aspects of life. As the world and its material belongings are worthless for Arif, he has devoted himself to God in a selfless manner. Through Arif and his Sufism, Frembgen realizes that vanity, which is so common in the West, has lost its meaning in the East. In fact, Sufism is the most significant factor for the transformation of the narrator and his ideology. Sufism is usually related to notions like spirituality and Divine passion (Buehler, 2016). In fact, Sufism can be realized as Love of the Absolute and is tied emphatically to a social way of life that advocates equity and equality. Accompanied with its theological essence, Sufism is related to a cultural manner of life, creatively developed for local dispersion and didacticism. Frembgen shows that Sufism denounces ambition and greed of the kings and royal families and celebrates the simple life of the religious leaders and dervishes. The simplicity and humbleness of the people in the Orient, who give the narrator what he needs for the journey, are perfect demonstrators of their humility that is obtained from religious practices and that lead to the narrator's cultural metamorphosis.

The Sufi shrine in the Pakistan is the symbol of a greater cultural manifestation in the precolonial context. It is a depiction of a native modernity, referring to a particular era, context, and society (Abbas et al., 2020). The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, located in the small town of Bhitshah in the province of Sindh, Pakistan serves as a perfect symbol of subversion of Orientalist stereotypes, and it functions as the physical and socio-cultural haven molding the realm on which the Sufi culture lingers. The culture and the shrine are so impressive that they enchant the author: “I was gradually shedding my cultural affiliations with German society and adopting the culture I had found in Pakistan. I was heading away from the western, mole-like existence and into the emotional warmth and the fullness of life of the east with all its uncertainties” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 5). The narrator is immersed in magic and confusion simultaneously. Unlike postcolonial tenets signifying the otherness of the indigenous subjects, it is the author – who is originally a

western citizen – that feels alienated and other to his own culture as he finds the new culture spiritually more satisfying. This journey marks the author’s metamorphosis to the oriental subject as he denounces his own western self and cherishes the eastern culture.

Having spent some time on the examination of the local manifestation of Sufism, he finds out that that Sufism is the pleasant façade of Islam and its religious connotations. Frembgen recalls the harbingers that he has to face in order to approach the culture in Pakistan. Though he was exposed to terrorism, drastic heat, and language barrier, he eventually finds the entire journey enlightening and transformative. Unlike the postcolonial motifs that associate the eastern people with being idle and inactive, the narrator identifies the people in Pakistan as “extremely mobile and communicative; whether farmer or businessman, mullah, or Sufi, they are on the road, doing business, maintaining contacts and forging friendships. Pilgrimages to holy shrines seem to be an intrinsic feature in some sections of this mobile culture” (Frembgen, 2011, pp. 5-6). There are several views about the emergence of Orientalism. As Sardar contends “the story of Orientalism could be a record of the Western self” (1999, p. 20). Orientalism shows the hypotheses, feelings, passions, confinements and the deeds of the Westerners. History of Orientalism commences with that of Islam as an extraordinary trial to the Christian world. What is depicted here is the tension between Christian legacy and Islamic structure in which Islamic Sufism is favored. The narrator is Christian but he has grown passionate towards Islamic culture and symbols in Pakistan as he mentions “there was much that I had not yet experienced and I was curious to see the extent of devotion of the faithful and the intense emotions that they evince at the countless shrines of the friends of God in the Punjab and Sindh” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 6). The context and visual simulation of Orientalism is meshed with concepts of power and superiority, developed initially to make a colonizing task simple on the part of the West and perpetuated through a wide variety of discourses and policies. However, Frembgen shows that power is in actuality associated with the Orient. Frembgen admits that he “gradually developed an idea of sharing ecstatic experiences in the crowd of believers and of discovering a new place, which could become an inner location in my mind for my memories” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 6). His journey to Pakistan is thus an adventure, a venturing movement from one condition to another. Experience is the basis of journey, which might seem excruciating and unpleasant at first glance, but as soon as it is finished, it transforms the narrator’s awareness of the world and identity.

One of negative images about Pakistan is the role of Islam which is perceived to be strict and meddling with other religions. However, Frembgen notes otherwise:

I enjoy the togetherness, the harmony and feeling of security in the deva. It is an island of leisureness; inhabited by a community of pious pilgrims and seekers of a spiritual goal, intoxicated by Allah, the Qalandar and hemp-frugal, altruistic, without possessions, and sharing a fraternal spirit...Here there are neither Islamists nor secular Muslims...No one asks whether someone is Sunni or Shia; Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. My companions in the tent are enraptured by the love of the prophet, of Maula Ali...and wish to benefit from the power of the saint’s blessing.

(Frembgen, 2011, p. 91)

The author manifests the truth and real nature regarding Sufism. It is known that Sufism has strict ideological essence, it is linked strongly also to a cultural manner of lifestyle, devised for spiritual didactic and purposes. In this extract, Frembgen emphasizes the issue of unity and safety that he feels in this context. Although the Sufis are Muslims, they are not extremists or liberalist. The only important goal for them is dedication to God and his prophets. They follow the unique manner of life and their own religious principles. They are not obliged by any kind of ideological movements or schools as Frembgen mentions “We are neither Sunni nor Shia. We are non-violent

toward everyone” (Frembgen, 2011, pp. 91-92). The flexibility of Sufis’ manner and their behavior in engaging with the local people differ from the extremists who use violence in disseminating their ideology. For Frembgen, the purpose of a Sufi is to unite people with each other, rather than scatter them within Islamic context. He respects the Sufi holy person as a person who adores God like a man cherishes her wife. The narrator continues that “In the meaning of this bridal mysticism, the saint is united in death with God. In death he achieves dissolution in the absolute; the fusion of lovers and visaal, the mystic merger of man and God” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 94).

Here, Frembgen mentions that the Sufi is in the process of seeking for truth through the unity with the divine force that is God. The narrator is aware that there is a gap between his own identity and the divine force and the only path to reach that divine force is through practicing some religious experience. By use of Sufism in this context, the author shows that practicing Sufism is direct awareness or experience of God. Such a life or culture that is connected with God depicts the positive aspect of that culture which is associated with devotion to spiritual aspects. This means that the majority of people in this region have selected a selfless and pious life. In fact, being raised in such a culture has educated the Oriental people and their humanist behaviors towards other people. Frembgen recalls an incident in which he perceives the difference between the Oriental and the Western culture:

People pass the beggar, give him something and continue on their way. Just a few steps away, a bearded man dressed all in green, with a tiny head sits in a wheel chair...while in Europe in the nineteenth and even in the twentieth century, these mentally retarded people were displayed along with other misshapen individuals in freak shows, in Pakistan they live as religious wandering beggars, usually accompanied by someone in good health who fees them and cares for them, often attentively, as I have frequently observed in Punjab. (Frembgen, 2011, p. 104)

Despite the geographical differences between both cultures, and the idea that Western people are more civilized and educated than the Oriental, the incident shows the contrary. The Western people make money out of retarded and misshapen ones while the people in the East help such people. The oriental people consider these abnormal people in need of help, so that instead of disdain, they chose to help as their religious manner of life has taught them. These observations reject the entirely negative image of the Orient and provides an impressive picture of the Orient for Frembgen.

REJECTION OF ORIENTALIST THINKING THROUGH COMPARISON

For Edward Said (1978) a rejection of Orientalism entails a rejection of biological generalizations, cultural constructions, and racial and religious prejudices. It is a removal of the line between 'the West' and 'the Other.' Said argues for the use of "narrative" rather than "vision" in interpreting the geographical landscape known as the Orient, meaning that a historian and a scholar would turn not to a panoramic view of half of the globe, but rather to a focused and complex type of history that allows space for the dynamic variety of human experience. Rejection of Orientalist thinking does not entail a denial of the differences between 'the West' and 'the Orient,' but rather an evaluation of such differences in a more critical and objective fashion. 'The Orient' cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner; rather, the scholar is obliged to study more focused and smaller culturally consistent regions. The person who has until now been known as 'the Oriental' must be given a voice. Conducting research from afar and second-hand representation must take a back seat to narrative and self-representation on the part of the 'Oriental.' As Said (1978) explains:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poet, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on...the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient.

(pp. 2-3)

The comparison between the East and the West and the culture to which the author is exposed to is repeatedly drawn throughout the life writing using multiple parameters such as landscape, music, dance, and women's condition. In other words, the cultural transformation that the author goes through is derived from the comparison of two different cultures.

The Oriental landscape of Pakistan appears to be fascinating for the author, and it is the mixture of both harshness and subtle beauty that signifies the whole nature of the East:

I continue to muse, while at the window the ancient desert and steppe landscape glides by. First there appear gently rolling hills whose forms seem to follow their own melody and go their own way. Gradually, the hills give way to increasingly barren and inhospitable scenery toward the west with the rugged Lakki mountains and the landscape becomes flatter, greener, and more fertile towards the east on the other side of the Indus, with palm trees, banana groves and cotton fields.

(Frembgen, 2011, p. 33)

The author's description of the scenery can be interpreted metaphorically as the comparison between the east and the west. In contrast to colonial writings that attempted to show the Orient as the inferior place, the narrator describes the east as fertile and green, while the west remains as barren and inhospitable. While for the West, the death of nature would bring the birth of technology, for the East, the absence of technology would bring about the rebirth of nature so that nature would remain untouched and safe from the destructive power of the technology instituted by the West. For the East, wherever technology stride, the results would be destruction, death, and annihilation of life. Such destruction of environment is mostly due to their insatiable ambition for more power in production of structures, buildings and weapons. The destruction that has been brought upon by these technological advancements is correlated with industrialization. Here, Frembgen is completely under the influence of culture and environment in Pakistan. When he is asked about his home, Frembgen's reply depicts how Oriental culture is influential and enticing for him: "Uncle where is Germany? How many hours by bus? Beti (daughter), it is very far away, in Europe; a cold country, no darbar anywhere, no dhamaal" (Frembgen, 2011, p. 58). Being friendly with environment is another positive aspect of the Orient which impresses the narrator, "Since toilet paper-as in other Muslim countries- is not used in Pakistan, latrines are among the few comparatively environmentally friendly places in the country-but only in this context. In contrast, every German consumes on average more than a kilometer of toilet paper annually" (Frembgen, 2011, p. 63). This means that the rise of consumerist culture in the west emphasizes the anthropocentric ideas in the world. It is believed that human culture and physical world are interconnected and as a whole everything in this world is connected to each other. What the narrator appreciates is that the oriental culture seeks to enlighten mankind about the dangers of being indifferent to environmental issues.

Moreover, unlike many stereotyping narratives that portray Islam with rigid and strict rules that denounces music, the narrator observes that music is cherished in the Orient after he meets a “brass band from Lahore” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 25). The band is a traditional one who have been performing at ceremonies and weddings. Moreover, the members of this band are able to play “classical Indian ragas” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 25) on the instruments that are used in the west. This means that this oriental band can exert their influence on Western culture through their own skill—a fact that contradicts postcolonial principles. The discourse located in the novel displays the consistency of the Orient which is organized based on the principles of a civilized country. The author observes the harmony of music which transforms and alters the harshness of the Orient. Frembgen is under the magic and power of music that takes him to the world of wonder and fascination. He recalls that “The musicians stow their clarinet, trumpets, trombones, and tubas on and under the benches in our compartment. . . Fascinated, I watch how he rolls a five-hundred rupee bill in his hands, unties a knot of the nara and conveniently sticks the bill in the tunnel-shaped” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 25). The unity that music reflects in this context signifies the unity of Pilgrims that gather annually. The pilgrims are mixtures of different races, ages, and genders but they celebrate the same goal. Like the members of a musical band, they have different instruments, yet they follow the same melody. This means that the narrator is impressed by both visual and audial elements of the Orient.

The Orient for Frembgen is thus not monolithic with no hope of flexibility and excitement; rather, the narrator recalls it as positively transforming as it is mingled with music and dance:

Several groups of drummers strike up for the dancers who begin to dance themselves into a state of ecstasy. All are barefoot. Didn't the barefoot Arif Sain tell me at midday that God has spread the earth like a carpet for us! So why should we wear shoes? The dancers in the courtyard are not separated by gender. However, most of the dancers are men. They gyrate in groups of twenty to forty, at different speeds, but mostly remaining synchronized and close together. . . Some of the dancers become really wild, frenzied, and feverish, disrupting the order with their abrupt leaps into the air. (Frembgen, 2011, pp. 51-52)

Frembgen's observation in this excerpt displays the harmony of the culture as well as the dance. The movements of the dancers which are coordinated with the music illustrates the flexibility of the culture in the Orient which can be both conservative and impulsive at the same time. Being barefoot while dancing signifies security and simplicity that people experience in the east. For these people, the spiritual aspects of life matter the most. Unlike the postcolonial and colonial principles which emphasize that the oriental people are drawn into the western culture and become other, here, it is the western traveler-narrator that is attracted to the Oriental culture. The narrator is trapped in a conversation in which he is asked whether he is a journalist and Muslim. His reply shows the majesty of the Oriental culture as he remarks that “I am just interested in culture and such things. I am researcher and work in a museum” (Frembgen, 2011, p. 52). The narrator's passion and desire towards the Oriental culture signifies the fact that this tradition which he is exposed to in Pakistan is more appealing than his own culture. The Orient is usually the most abnormal and exotic context for western writers. In fact, by working on Orient or displaying their own ideas and pictures about Orient, some writers create the dominant ideology of the West. The Orient signifies a mechanism of manifestations developed by political forces that has taken the Orient into Western world, Western awareness, and Western domination. The Orient has been developed by the West, and is made by and in relation to the West (Said, 1994). It is a display of what can be realized as inferior and other to the West. According to Said (2001), representation of the east in European literary context, travelogues and other writings play a key role in creating the

binary between Europe and its others. However, in Frembgen's journey, what is shown superior takes place in the Orient. In this relation, Sardar (1999) observes that:

Orientalism is very much alive in contemporary cultural practice': 'All of its main tropes have been seamlessly integrated into modernity. [...] Orientalism [...] has different stylistic moments, diversity of opinions, changing fashions and emphases. Nevertheless, it has reworked itself from one historical epoch to another, from the Middle Ages to the "Age of Discovery" to the enlightenment to colonialism to modernity, maintaining conventional representations of "the Orient" at the forefront of the European mind'. (p. 107)

Accordingly, the west has acquired a negative and disdainful attitude towards the East. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that Islamic fundamentalists and extremists have greatly contributed to the production of a negative image of the Muslim East (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2018; Saeed, 2015; Werbner, 2005). Likewise, Frembgen points out that numerous Islamists despise music as they believe that both music and dance have been sent by Satan to deceive mankind. Hence, the bomb assaults and shootings by extremists at wedding ceremonies and holy figures' celebrations. Although music is drastically banned and reprimanded by some Islamic groups, those Muslims who are into Sufism consider music as a significant element for their own spirit. A decree on music in the universe of Islam has consistently been undecided and ambivalent as communicated in a progression of opposing sentiments and ideas. Perspectives about the tolerability of music and this art in the realm of Islam run from downright invalidation of it as the apparatus of the devil to artistic appreciation of it as moving and totally otherworldly; hence the complexities and nuances of life in the East as acknowledged by Frembgen.

Like music, some consider dancing as a taboo as it is believed to be tempting for both genders. In most parts of Islamic societies, dancing opposite sexes together is not acceptable. In fact, it is widely presumed that females in all Muslim contexts are only meant to dance with each other, "always separate from the men and never in public. This makes what is happening here all the more incredible. Is this an expression of a counter culture and utopian freedom for women in Pakistan? (Frembgen, 2011, p. 54) What Frembgen observes, however, is the fascinating multiplicity of cultures that subvert this dominant perception. Moreover, the narrator notices the liberty and freedom which the Oriental females enjoy in the context. Traditionally, the woman is conceptualized as belonging to her nation. National identity is thus a great factor in constructing her individual and collective identity. The national identity of women in Pakistan or the sense of belonging to a specific place in the world is eroded by more contemporary issues in cultural studies that claim cultural identity to belong to global scope. The narrator notices how women themselves in this context reject their role and want to emphasize their own contribution in Pakistani culture. Frembgen realizes that the patriarchal, conservative culture of Pakistan which wants to separate women from the rest of the society could be opposed which, as he notes, is perfectly carried out by the Sufi culture that advocates the equality between male and female. Likewise, the book recounts daily experience of women in Pakistan as the author attempts to show how the male-dominated culture is disseminated, challenged and reformed. As he observes:

I notice that the modestly covered, married women usually begin with gentle, solemn movements and gradually work themselves into a trance. Some keep their hair bound in a knot covered with a scarf. The greatest pride of Punjabi and Sindhi women is their long hair which sometimes reaches to their calves. Displaying this erotic, magnificent head of hair would mean baring their inner selves... Another woman soon summons up the courage to enter the circle, others rapidly follow and

soon they are rapt in the dance again...Two young women are in delirious ecstasy which is interpreted as an expression of the presence of the divine. (Frembgen, 2011, p. 122)

Here, the narrator observes groups of women who desire freedom. Through this scene, he finds the prevailing negative image of the Oriental women questionable. It is the physical beauty, spirituality, valor, and ecstasy that fascinates him and paves the way for his cultural transformation.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored Frembgen's *At the Shrine of the Red Sufi: Five Days & Nights on Pilgrimage in Pakistan* (2011) to examine the various ways in which ideological stereotypes about the Orient are subverted by the western traveler-writer. Drawing upon Debbie Lisle's theories on cosmopolitan travel writer, it was argued that Frembgen's cosmopolitan vision throughout the narrative neutralizes negative perceptions about Muslim societies—in particular the Pakistani people and culture—as primitive and declining by offering an alternative view of the country that underscores its vibrant and positively transformative qualities. Not only the geographical setting is depicted as an idyllic place that brings about peace and tranquility but also the sacred figure, the holy Sufi, is shown as similarly intriguing as the travel-writer finds through him the answers for his inner conflicts and queries. The narrative also shows that Sufism is the wonderful façade of Islam and its seemingly strict undertones. Furthermore, the traveler-narrator is intrigued by other exciting aspects of this religion and culture that are blended with music and dancing. For Frembgen, music is the most powerful device for understanding the Eastern culture as it allegorically mirrors the amicability of the Orient. Moreover, it is revealed that contrary to western perceptions about gender inequality in Islamic societies, the Sufi culture in Pakistan advocates equality between men and women. For instance, women's participation in religious dances contradicts the Orientalist generalizations of Pakistani women's exclusion from the public sphere. It is through cultural practices such as music and dance that solidarity and security is established in the society. The solidarity that such cultural and religious practices generate in this setting indicates the solidarity among the pilgrims of various races, ages, and sexual orientations that gather together every year in the shrine of the Red Sufi. The celebration of Eastern culture and religion in Frembgen's travel writing indicates the need for the re-examination of the Orientalist thought that has, wittingly or unwittingly, dismissed a significant segment of western works about the east in order to legitimize its theoretical and hypothetical cases. In other words, the specific modes of reading and frameworks that postcolonial and Orientalist discourse have formulated to approach Western travelogue genre are limiting and could be seen as repeating the very oppression that their proponents are aiming to break.

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