



Universität  
Basel

## Research Project

### (Neo)Orientalism, Gender and Sexualities. European Identity-Discourses and the Politics of Visibility

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** (Neo)Orientalism, Gender and Sexualities. European Identity-Discourses and the Politics of Visibility

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Fachbereich Religionswissenschaft / Doppelprofessur Religionswissenschaft (Mohn)

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NWO project Gender and Sexuality in (Neo-)Orientalism and Occidentalism1: An Entangled History of European and Middle Eastern Identity Discourses.

#### Abstract

In the post 9/11 decade, debates on 'Islamophobia' have raised new research questions concerning patterns of exclusion. As in historical Antisemitism, gender and sexuality play a pivotal role in topical national identity debates. In right-wing populism, "sexual nationalism" defines itself in opposition to the stereotype of the Muslim male as pre-modern, patriarchal, and homophobic, especially in the Netherlands. Conversely, Islamist intellectuals emphasize the degenerate Westernness of sexual licentiousness. To overcome the binary structure of this political discourse we pursue the research hypothesis of an entangled history of (neo-) Orientalism and Occidentalism, uncovering 'third spaces' of reflection in scholarly discourse, literature, and art. In order to analyse how European and Islamist identity discourses mutually stereotype each other, experts working in the fields of history, religious studies, gender studies, and literature need to join forces.

The reconstruction of a "histoire croisée" of (neo-)Orientalism and Occidentalism requires interdisciplinary cooperation. This need becomes even more pressing if we also want to compare Islamophobia and Antisemitism. Thus far, neo-Orientalist discourse has been studied by social sciences that only deal with the present. Taking its cue from the humanities, this project aims to correct this historical amnesia. It studies current Islamophobia from the historical perspective of 19th-century Orientalism, so as to unearth the intertwined history of sexuality, Orientalism, and Antisemitism. Experts working on these new theoretical and historical approaches are scattered over many different countries, disciplines, and institutions. This project aims to unite these scholars in a network that will work towards a COST application.

#### Financed by

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