

ISLAM AND WEBER: RODINSON ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION FOR CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

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MAXIME Rodinson's *Islam and Capitalism* was first published in France in 1966 and translated into English in 1974. It seeks to examine whether or not Islamic tenets can explain why capitalism did not develop indigenously in Muslim countries but had to rely on its introduction from outside. It also seeks to determine whether or not Islam is opposed to capitalist development, as is often claimed. In particular, Rodinson addresses himself to refuting the Weberian thesis that Islam lacks the rationalism necessary for the successful development of capitalism. He outlines the elements of economic doctrine present in the Koran and the Sunnah (the modified body of Islamic tradition) and examines the relationship between doctrine and practice in both the medieval and contemporary Muslim world. He identifies certain areas of ambiguity and contradiction within the doctrine itself and reveals the divergence between doctrine and economic practice in the Islamic world. He examines Islamic ideology and questions whether it has hindered or favored capitalist development, on the one hand, and whether it has a sufficient basis for an anti-capitalist struggle or for promoting socialism, on the other. His answer to both these questions is negative. He further argues that the economic paths followed by Muslim countries, historically and today, cannot be attributed to Islam, but rather are primarily the result of the social forces of production.

The economic doctrine of Islam is found in both the Koran and the Sunnah [13, p. 14]. According to Rodinson, there is no passage in the Koran which opposes private property. In fact, inequalities apparently go unchallenged, though wealth is held to be useless in the face of God's judgment and also provides a temptation to neglect religion. Nothing is said about the ownership of the means of production, and wage labor is held to be a natural institution. In the realm of economic activity, the Koran appears to favor commerce, to condemn fraudulent practices, and to require abstention from trade during festivals. The clearest and strongest prohibition is on *riba* ("increase"),¹ and there is an obligation to pay *zakat*—alms for the needy distributed through a welfare fund controlled by the prophet.

The Sunnah has little to add to the Koranic doctrine. It seems to uphold the

¹ *Riba*: an additional charge added on to the total amount owed when the debtor cannot pay it back at the moment it falls due. Used generally to include the practice of usury, the earning of interest and profit on credit.

right to private ownership, subject to customary and state restrictions in some countries, and "the right of everyone to life." That is, a man dying of hunger is justified in taking the minimum amount of food necessary to keep himself alive—even at the expense of the "legitimate" owner. The Sunnah favors the search for profit, trade, and production for the market to the same extent as the Koran. But any selling in which there is an element of uncertainty, such as sale by auction, is prohibited, as are aleatory contracts based on risk or chance. Some traditions advocate absolute honesty in trade, prescribing that one should not praise one's merchandise but should point out any defects in it and so on. These may pose obstacles to commercial competition.

In his examination of economic practice in the Muslim world of the Middle Ages [13, p. 35], Rodinson shows that it generally conflicted with the prescribed doctrine. He argues against those historians who try to show that the prohibition of *riba* prevented certain types of economic activity among the Muslims. In fact, Muslim legalists found many ways to get around the theoretical prohibitions. These methods were called *hiyal*, meaning ruses. The ease of borrowing from non-Muslims tended to encourage specialization in usury by the latter in a society where trade specialization was the norm among particular religious, ethnic, or local groups. But where such non-Muslim groups did not exist or were insignificant, Muslims readily took on these tasks themselves; and even where these specialists did exist, there was frequently a thinly disguised challenge by Muslims. Thus, usury, practiced by both Muslims and non-Muslims, was rife throughout the Muslim world. Rodinson cites many examples of this in different periods and regions.

Rodinson also discusses the existence of a capitalistic sector in the Muslim world of the Middle Ages, that is, a sector in which a capitalist socioeconomic formation might have been able to develop, given certain conditions. But Rodinson does not elaborate systematically on what these other conditions might have been. There was substantial development of commercial and financial capital and less in productive capital [13, p. 53]. This capitalistic sector was already extensive and highly developed in the Muslim world, before the rise and expansion by conquest of the world market dominated by the Western European bourgeoisie. Its failure to indigenously develop into a full-blown capitalist system was not exceptional—this was experienced by many other civilizations—and according to Rodinson, was due to factors other than Islam. It is possible, for example, that the existence within the Islamic world of various economic systems based on a variety of agrarian modes of production could have been an obstacle to the development of capitalism.

It seems that Islamic doctrine was not obeyed even in the limited field in which it prescribed a certain mode of economic attitude [13, p. 72]. Reality fell consistently short of the ideal. Rodinson suggests that the medieval Muslim society provided itself with ideological precepts which conflicted with its practice as a means of dealing with social problems affecting some of its members. That is to say, there is always a need for some ideal doctrine which encompasses, or even anticipates, problems which might arise in society. Thus, Islam has an

ideal of "social justice" and a concept of a "right to life." But the welfare activities of the governments and individuals usually did no more than mitigate only the worst effects of the unequal distribution of the social product for a small minority in the traditional Muslim state.

In spite of the divergences between economic doctrine and practice, Rodinson believes that the economic practice of the traditional Muslim world was not technically unfaithful to the theoretical precepts of the Koran since these precepts neither prescribed nor prohibited any particular economic activity [13, p. 74]. Further, the calls for justice and charity in Islam were observed neither more nor less than in other religions. It was inevitable that these ideals were not realized since the divine precepts did not grant the majority any effective, popular political control over the ruling minority; nor apparently did they undermine the basis of the minority's power by attacking private property.

In the ideological sphere, the Koran emphasizes rationality, e.g., in the "evidences" of God, the internal coherence and consistency of divine revelations, rational proof of Allah's omnipotence, and so on [13, p. 78]. Faith in Islam is to be developed on the basis of reasoning. Rodinson thus disputes Weber's contention that Islamic ideology is inimical to capitalist development because of its alleged irrationality, in contrast with Calvinist Protestantism. He also argues that the idea of predestination in Islam is present to more or less the same degree as in the Christian scriptures and in no way involves an encouragement to "wait passively for Allah's help." In fact, the Koran exhorts men to be active in their individual and social lives. It does not deny the role of magic, but subordinates it to divine will, again as in the Christian testaments.

Thus, in Rodinson's view, there is nothing in Koranic ideology which inhibits the development of capitalism. Post-Koranic ideology, as represented in the Sunnah, includes numerous contradictory tendencies; passages can frequently be found in it which favor conflicting views [13, p. 101]. Rodinson argues that "post-Koranic ideology is not an external force moulding society, but an expression of tendencies emanating from social life as a whole" [13, p. 102]. This does not rule out a certain gap or distance between the ideology and the contemporary society. If Weber was correct in saying that Islamic ideology was inimical to the rationalism necessary for capitalist development, the cause would lie not in Islam itself but in all factors which shaped this ideology—i.e., the social life of the Muslim world and previously existing ideologies, including Christianity in its Eastern form. Unfortunately, Rodinson does not expound further on this proposition. He believes that post-Koranic ideology in the Middle Ages did not provide as sharp a contrast with Christian ideology as Weber implies. By the time the ideological evolution of the two religions began to diverge, the economic paths taken by the two worlds had already separated.

Rodinson also discusses specific elements of Islamic ideology which, in his view, do not constitute a barrier to capitalist development. Magic has historically "never diverted men from activity in the technical sphere," and there is nothing else in Muslim doctrine which "could have served as an obstacle to technical activity" [13, p. 107]. He suggests that there was less resistance to the constant

striving for profit, the driving force of capitalism, in Islam than in Christianity. Islam apparently did not hinder Muslim traders in their search for profit; thus from the standpoint of religious morality, it could hardly have stopped them, or other Muslims, from similar activities which would have led to further development along the lines of modern capitalism [13, p. 112]. The mystical tendency and reliance on reason were generally synthesized. If peasants of the Muslim world are fatalistic, Rodinson argues, this is not an irrational attitude on their part, but a correct estimation of the discouraging conditions in which they function. Deductions taken by the landlords and the state were often so exorbitant that work efforts were discouraged since any improvement would only benefit others. From all of this, Rodinson deduces that the ideas of Islam on economic life and general conduct are not opposed to capitalist activity.

Rodinson then examines Islam and capitalism in contemporary Muslim societies [13, p. 119]. None of these countries developed a full-fledged indigenous capitalist system despite the existence of a capitalistic sector in their economies. The development of native industrial capitalism was constrained by the subjection of these countries to European imperialism. Capitalist penetration into the dominant agricultural sector was not complete and, in any case, was incapable of transforming society into a capitalist socioeconomic formation. Manufacturing existed in the capitalist sector, but, as in many other societies, this did not necessarily develop into a capitalist formation. Other features necessary for the transition to a capitalist formation existed, such as urban development, ground rent, and private property, but they were still not sufficient. Again, Rodinson fails to suggest why capitalism failed to develop autochthonously. Rodinson concludes that it is not possible to prove that, had it not been for colonialism, Muslim societies would have developed along the capitalistic lines of the European type; but neither can the contrary be proved.

Rodinson argues that Islam has not been an obstacle to the development of the capitalist mode of production in present-day Muslim countries, just as in the Middle Ages [13, p. 137]. On the theoretical level, Islam presents no serious objections to capitalist practices. The theoretical prohibition of Islamic laws against certain economic practices, necessary for the formation of a capitalist economic system—usury and contracts based on risk or chance—did constitute a hindrance to the development of a capitalistic sector. But this prohibition was circumvented from the very beginning; therefore, the only practical consequence was to encourage economic specialization along religious or ethnic lines and to sanctify the unwillingness to invest, which was common in these societies. Virtually all the Muslim countries of the world today officially tolerate the earning of interest. Unwillingness to invest, especially in productive activities, has historically been a feature of many societies, not only Muslim ones [13, p. 141]. This is usually the result of socioeconomic factors such as uncertainty, risk, low returns, more attractive alternative investment outlets in land, usury, and trade, etc., rather than of religious invocation.

Rodinson also argues that the specific form of capitalist development in Muslim countries is not fundamentally determined by Islamic influences. However, a

diversity of national styles of economic behavior may be found within the same socioeconomic formation. Islam and the cultural factors associated with it may contribute to a particular national style [13, p. 159]. But this possibility has yet to be confirmed. For example, no one has dared claim that the behavior of Muslim capitalists reflects the justice and compassion that Islam preaches. Islam has not significantly influenced the functioning of the capitalist sector in Muslim countries, for example, in the treatment of workers. The weak development and dynamism of the capitalist sector, the important role played by the state in the economy from the beginning, the trend towards more pronounced forms of state-managed economy, etc.—all have been attributed by some writers to Islamic influence. Rodinson denies this, stating that it is futile to seek the basis for social conduct in the temporal world mainly in the Koran and Sunnah, which only provide the religious veneer for behavior which is conditioned by other factors. In his opinion, ideology shows itself to be less powerful in the long run than the requirements of social conditions and the struggle for power and privilege by societies and social groups.

What about the relevance of Islam to the anti-capitalist struggle and socialism? Rodinson believes that the ideal of "social justice" in the Koran is not a socialist concept, and that Islamic precepts alone cannot be used to advocate socialism. But the prestige of Islam may support socialistic programs originating outside the religious sphere. However, reactionary Muslims can also use Islam to combat proposed socialist solutions; in fact, they have certain advantages over the more progressive interpreters [13, p. 175]. The Islamic texts evolved in an era when the right to property was not seriously challenged; centuries of traditional interpretation have considerable weight and prestige; and ministers of religion are often inclined to support the traditionalist interpretations.

Can Islam be used to bring about a minimization of class differences and the building of an ideal society? Concepts such as solidarity, mutual aid, and a communal way of life that some Muslims claim are inherent in Islam can be found in almost all types of societies and tend to disappear under the impact and spread of capitalist-based human relationships and ideology. Certain noble principles do exist in Islam, but their practical applicability has been overlooked for centuries.

It is not clear why that Muslim solidarity which did not prevent the landlords from sucking the blood of the peasants, the owners of houses from bleeding their tenants white, the usurers from reducing their debtors to poverty, should prevent the owners of capital from applying to their wage-workers the (often gentler) laws of capitalist exploitation. [13, p. 180]

Rodinson claims that these principles have not prevented, but rather camouflaged, to the benefit of the exploiters, the existence of two classes, one rich and one poor. Alms-giving merely serves to clear the consciences of the rich for the small price of rescuing a few poor people from the worst consequences of poverty. The only way that the welfare of underprivileged sections of society can be insured is by obtaining political power, abolishing privileges, and establishing

an adequate and solid framework to safeguard and promote their own interests. Islamic principles, like those of other religions, may serve to give a religious blessing to a society without privilege. But up to now these same principles have been used to justify societies based upon privilege and have weakened the ability to mobilize people to seek redress for their grievances. In any case, one cannot rely on these religious principles alone to transform the world. They have so far played hardly any role in checking capitalist forces or in orienting countries towards socialism or a state economy [13, p. 184].

Rodinson's thesis, then, is this—There is no justifiable correlation between Islam and any particular economic activity or system. The precepts of Islam have not seriously hindered capitalist orientations in the Muslim world, nor are they opposed to socialism. They have not created a radically new social or economic structure anywhere in the world. There is no longer any third way between capitalism and socialism. In the past, Islam has never mobilized the masses for economic ends. The masses are attached to Islam for national and class, as well as spiritual, reasons. Under colonialism, Islam provided them with a national identity against the European imperialists. Since independence, the local ruling class or upper strata have proclaimed their attachment to Islam in their search for an ideological guarantee for their own social and material advantage. To this end they have been supported by the Islamic clergy who were leaders of the oppressed masses under colonialism, but have since risen in status and power after independence and have become defenders of the status quo in alliance with the local upper strata. The reactionaries use Islam to give religious endorsement to conservative attitudes, using appeals to Allah, tradition, and traditional morality to disguise their exploitative relationship with the masses. They will resist the abolition of exploitation. The radical overturning of old structures requires class struggle, but it is difficult for the devoted masses to oppose oppressors of the same faith, especially when the latter pretend to be defenders of that faith and of nation. The attractions of socialism are limited by the fact that the highest religious ideals are super-terrestrial. Socialists would have to apply themselves to drawing from the Koran and Muslim tradition, values which are applicable to the modern world and which call for the abolition of privilege and exploitation. But such economic and social precepts as are found in the Islamic scriptures need in any case to be developed for and adapted to contemporary conditions.

The economic doctrine of Islam originally developed partly as a critique of the social and economic practice at the time. It appears to have been progressive within that specific historical context, with an ideal of social justice and ethical concerns directed against some of the forms of exploitation which prevailed then. However, as times change and the forms of exploitation in society change, the critique of society must also follow suit. In the environment Muslims face today, this should translate itself into a critique of capitalism and its contemporary imperialist manifestation.

Despite the general excellence and comprehensiveness of Rodinson's work,

there are certain omissions which need to be pointed out. For example, Rodinson asserts that the capitalist mode of production and productive capital "was known to the Muslim world of the Middle Ages" [13, p. 50 and *passim*], but he does not demonstrate this convincingly. He suggests that the capitalist mode characterized by the wage-labor relationship existed in a primitive form in the medieval Muslim world. But he fails to suggest why it did not develop further into a full-fledged capitalist system. Throughout his book, there is no discussion of what really hampered the development of capitalism in the Muslim world, if, as he convincingly argues, it was not the Islamic religion. Granted that what Rodinson attempts is largely a critique of the Weberian view of Islam and economic development, a critique also needs a valid alternative in order to be fully convincing. Rodinson does hint at the influence of the development of social forces of production but does not elaborate on what they might have been.

Rodinson also tends to underestimate and be too pessimistic about the revolutionary potential of Islam and its possible compatibility with socialism. In fact, he has elsewhere characterized the Koran as "the message of an oppressed man who, at a given moment, had turned against injustice and oppression. It carried . . . much invective and defiance of the mighty, and many appeals for justice and the equality of man" [12, p. 296]. The rapid spread and popularity of Islam in the Middle Ages was, to a considerable extent, due to its dynamic evolution in opposition to the oppressive social conditions of the time. However, subsequent generations of Muslims—like the followers of most other religions—inherited their religion without struggle, and so it tended to become identified with the status quo. It has been pointed out that the dominant societal role of religion has generally been the legitimization of existing structures, rather than the motivation for and initiation of social change.

However, as Rodinson has also pointed out, under the rule of European colonialism, which most Muslim countries have experienced, Islam offered the potential for an anti-imperialist struggle [5] [4]. In fact, the Islamic-Marxist dialogue was born during the anti-imperialist struggles for national liberation by the peoples of the Third World. One of the most eloquent advocates of this dialogue, Sukarno of Indonesia, had this say:

The Muslim with a broad outlook, the Muslim who understands the needs of our fight, will certainly agree to friendship with the Marxists, because he will realize that consuming profits and imposing interest are acts prohibited by his religion, that they are forbidden things; he will realize that it is in this way that Islam wages war on capitalism down to its roots and right to its seeds, because, as I have already explained above, profit is the same thing as surplus value which is the very breath of capitalism. He realizes that, like Marxism, so Islam too, "with faith in Allah, acknowledging the Kingdom of God," is a protest against the wickedness of capitalism. [15, p. 152]

Historically, there have been several attempts to establish Muslim communities based on egalitarian ideas, with an equitable division of the social product and a well-developed mutual aid and sharing system. One such period was that

idealized by the Sunni during the first twenty-nine years of Islam itself, between the prophet's death and the victory of the Omayyad dynasty. Though not without its problems, this represented an attempt at creating a "just society."

Does Rodinson's thesis that Islam is not the reason for the economic backwardness of Muslim countries and their failure to become fully capitalistic hold when applied to an Islamic country outside his main area of interest, the Middle East? Looking at Malaya,² which received the first Islamic influences from Arab traders who came to Southeast Asia in the fifteenth century, it seems to hold. The pre-colonial indigenous Malay peasant society was a class society in which wealth accumulation by the ruling class did exist. The distribution of the social product was determined by class relations and by different forms of exploitation. Usury was practiced in various forms by Muslims in both pre-colonial and colonial Malaya. This continues even up until the present day despite the presence in later periods of other ethnic and religious immigrant groups, who also performed this function. Mokhzani,³ for example, had detailed the different credit mechanisms existing in the Malay peasant economy.

Thus, according to certain interpretations, some specific economic doctrines of Islam were generally not observed in Malay peasant society. In fact, some writers suggest that Islam has not deeply penetrated the social fabric of the economic organization of Malay society; rather, traditional custom, or *adat*,

² Malaya refers to the geo-social unit spanning the Malay Peninsula. Since 1963 it has been incorporated into the political entity of Malaysia and is now referred to as Peninsular Malaysia.

³ Mokhzani states: "The central position of Islam, which prohibits usury, in the Malay self-definition, and the existence of Malay Reservations, which legally limits such lands to Malays, leads to the formation of a special idiom of Malay moneylending in which there is a need to ignore and often deny interest taking between Malays. This adds to the high cost and onerous terms in Malay moneylending" [10, p. 2].

Also see S. Gordon [3]. Gordon has shown that the system of *jual janji* is an effective disguise for usury. *Jual janji*, loosely translated as conditional sale, resembles mortgage, with the important exception that the proprietary right is transferred to the creditor, to be returned to the debtor only if and when the debt is repaid in time. "...*Riba* was taken to mean only interest which was undisguised, and a disguise evolved which took the *apparent form of a sale*, the transaction being really usurious. Such an apparent form of sale is the *jual janji* system, a system of 'conditional sale'... This vicious form of gaining *riba*, an 'excess' or 'addition,' is not categorised as *riba* in Malaya where *riba* has been watered down to mean undisguised 'interest' only... We must remember that the money involved in the *jual janji* does not represent the actual value of the property, demonstrating that there is *no* real intention to sell—the *intention is to borrow and the gain* is an 'excess' or 'addition'" [3, p. 32]. Arguing that the Islamic institution of *zakat* is intended to redistribute income by the taxation of the wealth accumulated, Gordon shows that the main burden of *zakat* has fallen on the most impoverished sector of the Malayan peasantry—the rice cultivators—and not on the wealthier classes (nor even upon other relatively less-impooverished peasants). Further, the *zakat* burden is mainly borne by the tenant and owner-operator cultivators and not by landlords. "Thus, the contradiction that it is not he who is most able or most liable who pays the *zakat* but he who is least able and possibly not liable according to Islam itself" [3, p. 35].

appears to have been a stronger force than Islam.⁴ This was because *adat* itself was conditioned by the prevailing social forces of production which were determined by the historical and environmental circumstances of the Malay society. Thus, for example, certain cooperative tendencies, e.g., *gotong-royong*, *tolong-menolong*, are more correctly attributed to the traditional nature of the organization of Malay production than to the influence of the Islamic ideal of fraternity.

Nevertheless, some Western social scientists still insist that the influence of Islam, particularly the attitude of "fatalism," is responsible for the economic retardation of the rural Malays.⁵ They hold that the customs and religious beliefs strongly held by the Malays make them resistant to change through the adoption of an attitude of resignation—since "all things come from Allah"—rather than the acceptance of human innovation and enterprise. This is seen to be a barrier to capitalist economic development. To the extent it has occurred in Malaya, this has largely been the result of British colonialism and has primarily involved other ethnic and religious groups until quite recently. The ostensibly "passive reaction" of the Malays to British colonialism is also attributed to their racial and cultural personality, which is allegedly strongly influenced by the Muslim religion. Few of these scholars even allow that Islam was adapted by its local adherents to the historical environment and cultural practice of indigenous societies, or that it is of a syncretic nature in Malaya. Acknowledgment that there is often a difference between what the Koran preaches and actual practice in Malay communities is rare. However, this is otherwise acknowledged by the recognition of the tension between religion (*ugama*) and custom (*adat*), as is manifest in Malay peasant life.

Generally, these writers have uncritically adopted the Weberian view of Islam's supposed discouragement of capitalism.⁶ Then, proceeding on this assumption, they attribute what they see as peasant fatalism to the Muslim religion, often

⁴ For example, with regard to early colonial Malaya, a contemporary observer remarked that, "...there is a never-ending struggle between the *hukum 'adat*, the 'customary law' of the Malays, and the *hukum shar'a* or 'religious law' of the Koran. Muhammadan priests, who would sometimes seek, if they could, to enforce the latter, are met by the plea that the practice denounced is lawful by Malay custom, and it is thus that debt-bondage, like opium smoking, gambling, etc. is always defended.... This institution of debt-bondage is a native Malay custom, and is wholly opposed to Muhammadan law, which is most lenient to debtors.... In the district of Kinta, ... debts were swelled in amount by a species of compound interest hardly conceivable among a people who profess to regard usury as sinful" [9, pp. 247-48, 251].

⁵ Parkinson [11]. See also the critique by G. Sivalingam [14].

⁶ See S. Hussein Alatas [1], for a different critical perspective on Weber. Alatas criticizes Weber's attribution of the "capitalist spirit" to Calvinist Protestantism. Alternatively, he suggests that "what is decisive here is not religious but other factors." He suggests that for communities in Malaya and Indonesia, the decisive "factors which released the capitalist spirit" are "their emigrant spirit and their position outside government service." Apparently, Alatas does not break with Weber's central proposition that it is "this spirit that released the tremendous energy characterizing modern capitalism." Thus, according to Alatas, the dynamic emergence and development of capitalism is, therefore, still primarily explained by ideology, despite his differences with Weber's particular formulation. For a similar, but less explicit argument, see W. Wilder [16].

ignoring other factors. While this argument can be quite elegantly formulated, Rodinson has persuasively demonstrated the fallacy of its basic assumption that Islamic ideology opposes capitalist-oriented, socioeconomic change. Therefore, it is necessary to look at factors other than Islam for an explanation of the economic "inertia" supposedly found in rural Malay society. As Rodinson suggests, such behavior, where it actually exists, may well be a rational response to existing conditions confronted by the peasantry.

If Islam has not been antagonistic to capitalism in Malaya, what is its relationship to the various political tendencies in the country? The current government of Malaysia, constitutionally an Islamic state, proclaims its adherence to Islamic principles, while endeavoring to control Muslim religious interpretation and practice. On the other hand, the chairman of the Malayan Peoples Socialist Party claims that his organization represents the left-wing political tendency within Islam in the country, while asserting that the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP)⁷—which joined the ruling government coalition in recent years—embodies Islam's right wing. Certain other Muslim groupings, such as the Malaysian Islamic Youth Force, also profess an antipathy to certain aspects of the capitalism which is evolving in the nation. Even the underground pro-communist movement includes an Islamic Brotherhood Party. This wide variety of political tendencies which aspires to the Islamic mantle in the Malayan context, as in other Muslim countries, appears to validate Rodinson's claim that Islam is not obviously identifiable with any particular economic system or political tendency. "...Islam has served as a means and justification for both liberation and suppression... Religion has been 'the opium of the people,' but it has equally been, to quote at greater length from the text in which Marx's famous sentence is found, 'the sigh of the oppressed creature, the kindness of a heartless world, the spirit of unspiritual condition'" [2, pp. 120–21].

⁷ In two articles, Kessler argues that the PMIP embodied the interests of the rural Malay lower strata, especially those of the independent but hard-pressed yeoman peasantry involved in intra-Malay political conflicts in the Malayan State of Kelantan. The PMIP and its brand of religious politics were, according to him, the behavioral expression of oppressed peasant class interests. See [6] [8]. With the benefit of hindsight—after the PMIP joined the ruling government coalition in late 1972—Kessler amended his argument in his "Islam and Politics in Malay Society" [7]. This time, he acknowledged the limitations of an opposition which employs such a medium to express discontent. Rodinson, approaching the matter more generally, had anticipated PMIP-type "betrayals": "The Muslim 'clergy,' largely poor, and treated without respect by the occupying power, faithful to the values of the traditional society in which they lived, were their own people, providing them with leadership and speaking to them in their own language, a language at their own level. With the coming of independence, however, the 'clergy' gradually rises in the social scale. The (more or less exploiting) upper strata increasingly proclaim their attachment to Islam, in a frenzied search for an ideological guarantee for their social and material advantages. The more successful the 'clergy' become in raising their standard of living, or even merely in becoming integrated in the nation, the less will Islam serve as an exclusive slogan for the disinherited" [13, p. 226].

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