



INVITATION

Lecture:

> Islamic Roots of Capitalism after 25 years <

by Prof. Peter Gran

Temple University, Department of History
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Zentrum Moderner Orient

Tuesday, 23 May, 17:00 hrs

Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin

Islamic Roots of Capitalism raised two questions and began on an answer to one of them. The first of these questions concerned what kind of history can replace an Orientalist picture of Egyptian history. The second one not dealt with at all in *Islamic Roots* was if one abandoned the idea of an Orient what kind of picture of Europe and the West would one have. These questions remain up in the air and have induced many in this past generation to turn against the study of history altogether. Ironically, one could conclude that the very success of fields such as social history over the past generation in countries such as the US, fields that have brought Orientalism into question, subsequently produced a Nietzsche revival in reaction to them. What after all can one do with information about modern Egypt, the reason for this question being that there was and there is nothing to replace Hegel's meta-narrative of the Rise of the West and following Hegel there is only one modernity, Western modernity? If one persists with the idea of an Egyptian modernity what is there to do but proclaim that we are at the end of the utility of the study of history?

Prof. Gran's involvements in such matters not surprisingly came from work on Egyptian history. He wrote a book showing that the Napoleonic impact on Egypt was not necessarily best characterized following the Hegelian model as one of the enlightened West awakening a sleeping Orient so much as it was a French imperialist adventure which had a disruptive effect on the development of a kind of Egypt-centered development toward modernity, the Napoleonic invasion beginning the process of replacing it with a kind of trajectory of development closer to that of periphery capitalism and underdevelopment.

To enter into these questions, the lecture takes up where the book *Islamic Roots* came from and in what kind of context it appeared when it was published and the ways it was simultaneously used and ignored over the past quarter century. The lecture concludes with some brief comments on what else one might put in Orientalism's place assuming a desire to stay with history but to go beyond the Hegelian formulation of Egyptian history.

Professor Peter Gran (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1974) is Professor of History at Temple University (Philadelphia). His wide-ranging research and teaching interests include Modern Arab Studies, Comparative Third World History and Political Economy Theory. Professor Gran edits a series for Syracuse University Press entitled "Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Middle East Studies". In 1990 Professor Gran was guest lecturer at the Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and was elected president of the research group on "Imperialism and National Liberation Movements" of the International Sociological Association.

With the completion of a book about world history, he is refocusing on modern Egyptian history and hopes to carry on with the long term project of comparing Egyptian and Italian history.

Amongst his representative publications are:

- *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* (1996).
- *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (1979).
- "Medical Pluralism in Arab and Egyptian History", in: *Social Science and Medicine* (1979).
- "Political Economy as a Paradigm for the Study of Islamic History," in: *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (1980).
- "Studies of Anglo-American Political Economy: Democracy, Orientalism and the Left," in: *Theory, Politics and the Arab World*, ed. by Hisham Sharabi (1990).

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