

"...absence of private property in land...", the character of the "Asiatic state," and the "self-sufficiency of the village commune." Marx considers the absence of private property in Asiatic societies as the "...real key to the Oriental heaven..." (Marx and Engels, 1972:99). "In the Asiatic form (or at least predominantly so,)" Marx states: "...[T]here is no property, but only individual possession; the community is, properly speaking, the real proprietor—hence property only as communal property in land..." (Marx, in Hobsbawm, (ed.) 1965: 79).

In a special reference to the Ottoman Empire, Marx attributes the absence of private property to religion, stating that: "The Muhammedans..[were] the first to establish the principle of 'no private property in land' throughout the whole of Asia..." (Marx, S.C. (n.d):80). This claim will not be dealt with in this study. The reader, however, is advised to consult Maxime Rodinson's extensive study, Islam and Capitalism, which is based on examining the Koran and the "Hadith" and which concluded that "...far from discouraging economic involvement, Islam provides an explicit legitimation of trade and commerce." "Economic activity, the search for profit, trade, and consequently, production for the market," Rodinson demonstrated, "are looked upon with no less favour by Moslem tradition than by the Koran itself. We even find eulogistic formulations about merchants..." (cited in Turner, 1984:57). Also worth consulting here is Sulaiman Bshir's study which dismissed the notion that Islam was a proponent of communalism, and suggested that the Islamic state itself emerged in the class struggle between the nomads and the mercantile class to secure the interests of the latter (Bshir, 1978).