

Social Class and Entrepreneurship
in a North African Setting:
Analyzing the Applications of Returning Migrants
for API Projects in Tunisia

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OUTLINE

- Questioning the universality of “class” and “entrepreneurship”
- Nicholas Hopkins: class in Testour in the 1970s
- The development of social class in Tunisia
- Max Weber and Islam
- Is there an Islamic Ethic?
- Commerce as an Islamic and Ibadi ethic
- Russell Stone: The Ibadi Islamic Ethic in Djerba
- API proposals of Tunisian migrants: commerce
- Entrepreneurship and returning migrants
- Revisiting rank and class in Tunisia

Class analysis in non-European settings

- Is class analysis applicable historically?
- Is class analysis applicable everywhere?
- “false consciousness”
- The example of Tunisia

Nicholas Hopkins: Testour (Tunisia) in the 1970s

- “rank” in Testour
- egalitarianism at Tunisian independence (1956)
- Ben Salah and egalitarian socialism (1960-1969)
- Nourira and economic liberalism (1969)
- the emergence of social class in Testour
- the emergence of class consciousness in Testour





Social Class in Tunisia during and after the 1970s

- 1969-1987: class under late Bourguiba
- 1987-2011: class under Ben Ali
- 2011-2019: class since the revolution
- class consciousness and the UGTT
- 2019-now: class under Qais Saied

Max Weber: European Exceptionalism

- Part 1: Why did capitalism and industrialization happen in Europe?
- The Protestant ethic: from religion to secular religion
- Part 2: Why *didn't* capitalism and industrialization happen outside Europe?
- Non-Western religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Ancient Christianity, Catholicism, Islam

Weber's view of Islam

- Mohamed: sensual, wrathful, unworldly
- A “warrior religion:” wealth through Holy War and tribute
- Islam is economically “feudal”
- The idea of salvation is alien to Islam
- The Islamic gambling prohibition discourages business
- Islam is orgiastic, mystical, fatalistic, magical
- patrimonialism
- contrast of Islam with Protestantism in Europe

A new application of Weber to Islam

- Weber's research on Islam was fragmentary
- Islam was adversarial: 1911 to 1914
- sources were poor for studying Islam
- valid methods but faulty application
- studying social action through the meanings given by individual actors
- In search of an Islamic ethic

The commercial ethic in Islam

- Mohamed, the merchant prophet
- Abu Bakr and Omar: the merchant caliphs
- Commercial discourse in Islam
- Life as commerce: purchasing paradise
- Politics as commerce: *bay'a*
- The last judgment as commerce: weights

Russell Stone and the Ibadi ethic in Djerba (1974)

- Ibadi merchants and their work ethic
- Djerbian patterns of commerce
- Ibadism/Islam = Protestantism/Christianity
- The fate of the Djerbians: before and after 1969
- Stone: Ibadism has a *capitalist* ethic
- Stone corrected: Ibadism as a *commercial* ethic
- distribution without production
- Ibadism is not sufficient







Gouvernorat de Médenine

Tunisian Tourism: beds by region

Djerba-Zarzis	55,426	23.8%
Nabeul-Hammamet	41,259	17.8%
Sousse-Kairouan	38,197	16.4%
Tunis-Zaghouan	21,555	9.4
Monastir-Skanes	21,527	9.3%
Yasmine-Hammamet	19,402	8.3%
Mahdia-Sfax	14,091	6.7%
Gafsa-Tozeur	9,932	4.3%
Ain Draham-Tabarka	5,905	2.6%
Bizerte-Beja	2,666	1.2%
Sbeitla-Kasserine	943	0.1%
TOTAL	230,903	

Medenine Governorship: Djerbian and non-Djerbian population

DJERBA	Population (2014)	Percent
Houmt-Souk	75,904	
Midoun	63,528	
Ajim	24,294	
TOTAL	479,866	34.2%
NON-DJERBA		
Ben Gardane	79,912	
Zarzis	75,732	
Medenine North	54,769	
Medenine South	54,640	
Beni Khadeche	25,885	
Sidi Makhlouf	25,206	
TOTAL	316,142	65.8%

Entrepreneurship

- A positively biased term
- Schumpeter: “creative destruction”
- 16% in the informal sector jobs (Cassarino)
- Employers, liberal independent workers, other independent workers (Cassarino)
- Batron, ayache, mitqa’ad, mzammar (Michalak)

Tunisian migrant investment by activity and region of residence

	agriculture	industry	construction	commerce	restaurants- cafes	other services	Total
Greater Tunis	10.6%	14.9%	8.9%	43.6%	17.0%	4.9%	100%
Northeast	29.6%	0.0%	16.5%	11.3%	5.5%	37.1%	100%
Northwest	1.6%	0.5%	27.8%	12.8%	34.1%	23.2%	100%
Centereast	0.0%	20.7%	24.1%	20.7%	24.9%	9.5%	100%
Centerwest	0.0%	18.6%	13.7%	19.8%	43.8%	4.1%	100%
Southeast	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Southwest	5.0%	11.4%	17.4%	22.0%	31.3%	12.9%	100%
Total	5.0%	11.4%	17.4%	21.9%	31.3%	12.9%	100%



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