Conclusion

The present work has been a modest cross-sectional exploratory and investigative study of Islamic Economy and Social Mobility with Religion and Cultural Considerations. Using exclusively explanatory power of stratification, inequality and statuses, the work is not limited just to the explanations of those issues traditionally within the social science enterprise. For his explanation, Max Weber introduced and emphasized on interaction and cultural components to make sense of the contributions of Protestantism to capitalism. Thus, we are indebted to his endeavors in methodological approach based on interaction/explanation fostered by historical consideration and causality. On religious parallelism and their differences in regard to stratification, we have focused on Iranians who had turned to Shi‘ite Islam and a mode of differentiation solidified by the Safavid dynasty turning Iran away from Sunni Islam. Nascent when the Prophet was alive, the seed of differentiation was ingrained sociologically in ascribed and achieved statuses for political ascension. Culturally it was nourished from significance of sacred genealogy and secular gerontology both, phenomenologically, based on closeness and farness to the source of charisma and the power to develop Islamic pattern maintenance for the new community of Muslims to survive. All took place in an economy context of agricultural, trading, and unintegrated tribally diversified Arabian Peninsula.

In view of regional, political and geography domains, from the Middle East to Africa and in the Western countries, it was Sunni Islam that presents its majority position to a world less informed of the contesting minority Shi‘ites. It took a while until Shi‘ite Islam was finally acknowledged globally through Iranian Revolution in 1979. Sociologically, not only did it re-awakened academic study of Islam already a paved way by Max Weber’s assertions on religion and social changes challenged Marx, but also the revolution germinated a critical understanding of an Islam with political agenda that became known as political Islam, Islamism, Islamists, radical Islam, or other branding to serve the purpose of furthering “clash of civilizations”. The testimony of Islam versus the West appeared in populous claims by Ayatollah Khomeini and his anti-imperialist stand as an element of Iran’s foreign policy, and in establishing the rule of law domestically.

On the Sunni side, an event merited attention due to its egregious attack on American soil, fed by and motivated by Wahhabism whose foundational function was reinforcing the structure of Saudi monarchy. Iranian enthusiasm to export its style of social revolution was halted by the West, particularly by the United States while Al Qaeda challenged the western domination and manifested itself in September 11, 2011 attack on the World Trade Towers in Lower Manhattan in New York City. In essence, both Iranian and Al-Qaeda projections were the same, that is, they were oriented to re-stratification of the world.
Conclusion

In 2007, Professor Porthero, the chairman of the Department of Religion at Boston University, wrote Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know. Since September 11, 2001, he argued, religion had become an increasingly visible topic on college campuses. “Enrollments were up sharply in religious studies courses at my university. But most colleges-Harvard included-continue to churn out graduates who do not know the first thing either about Christianity, or about Islam, the Bible or the Qur'an. That is not just a shame-it is a scandal.” (Porthero, 2007). Porthero continued that in debates about the fate of the Middle East, the propriety of gay marriage, and the politics of Islam the stake were too high to defer to politicians and pundits. Given the ubiquity of religious discourse in American public life, and the public power of religion at home and abroad, we Americans whether liberals or conservatives, believers or unbelievers need to learn about evangelism and Islam for ourselves, to see for ourselves what the Bible said about family values, homosexuality, war, and capital punishment, and to be aware of what Islam said about these things as well. The debate on the nature of and the fate of the Middle East is still a hot topic since its political implications affects the entire region and North Africa with vast economic and human capitals.

Our exploration of stratification and social mobility with reference to history, philosophical outlook, politics and endeavor of Muslim reformers shed some light on the limitations and aspirations for a better life in societies experiencing the transition from agricultural to industrialization and information society concomitant with the erosion of hierarchical structures in some Islamic societies. In that regard, the role of the ulama as exclusive guardians of textual interpretation must open space for the secular intellectuals. Methodologically, we have synthesized the explanation and the interpretation and philosophically, a priori and a posteriori wherever needed. Empirical findings and interpretations presented in this book have several implications for those students interested in learning more about inequality, stratification, social mobility and Middle Eastern/Islamic studies including the general public curious to understand the complexity of meanings when religion, culture and economics have functional influences upon each other, or where ideology failed to address why so many of the Islamic countries fall behind the Western technological and scientific achievements.

Analysis of less-developed countries, or what is referred nowadays as low income countries in comparison to the middle and high income ones attracts the attention of scholars and students interested in learning more about domestic and global inequality at three levels of industrial, agricultural and tertiary sectors. In this work, Gini index as a measure of inequality, provides an empirical lens, and indicates the percentage of distribution in a selected sample of the Islamic countries. Although in this book, we have focused on the Islamic conception of society and various constructions of ascribed and achieved statuses, a detailed comparative analysis shows that regardless of their theologies, there are variations on the theme of inequality and reproduction of inequalities in all monotheistic religions.

This book is the result of a long-term collaboration between two authors who originally come from the Middle East, and were trained and versed in the fields of sociology and economics. As a gratifying project of inter-sectional scholarship, it has been a passionate endeavor for the authors to share with readers a new approach for analysis of what is called as Islamic economics, a cross-sectional study originally indebted to Max Weber’s magnum opus k on The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism. We have humbly called our work an investigation in theological, historical, social-theoretical, philosophical and other modes of knowledge acquisition to demonstrate the universality of stratification and interplay between achieved and ascribed statuses in Islamic societies. We have incorporated Ibn Khaldun's mode of scholarship, a major Muslim scholar in the medieval period, to contemporary authors of sociology, philosophy and economics to shed some lights on problematics of contemporary Islamic societies by
considering internal and external diversity within and among so vast geographical and cultural parts of the world.

Long before the Egyptian theorist Sayyed Qutb’s radicalized Islamic vision encountered the Western values in juxtaposition to his own Islamic values, the 19th century Muslim reformers Afghani and Abdull had undertaken to address the problematics of Islamic societies and its lagging behind the West—a socio-economic condition that has continued to the present.

The future generations of social scientists and humanities will use different lens to analyze what is known today as Islamic societies. Predictably those countries will be much more susceptible to unforeseen changes in terms of shrinking, merging, or expanding their social classes with the aim of creating social justice in a world immersed in a unified global economic system affecting income, wealth, and education as we have maintained in this book.

In regard to history, there are fresh comparative references to the last Turkish Sunni Ottoman Caliphate and the Iranian Shi’ite Safavid dynasty, two political-cultural entities representing Muslim kingdoms before the fall of Caliphate. Turkey and Iran’s geographical proximity and cultural affinity as well as territorial conflicts during the height of the Ottoman period (1500 to 1700) can be described as two stratification systems nourished by religious forces for domination. Incidentally, while the Turkish Islamic Caliphate kingship ended in a republic the longstanding 16th to 20th-century Iranian monarchy was sustained till the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, both neighboring countries experienced different social, political and cultural changes as Islamic empires and as a member of Islamic world—even then, they maintained different stands towards the west in forming their respective national identities.

Middle Eastern Islamic power elites have not developed a military-industrial complex as Eisenhower warned the United States to avoid. Rather, they have imported American, Russian, and Chinese military products and can be categorized as “military-trading complexes” since they are not as industrialized as the West. That is the same case with an ambitious wealthy Iran in contrast to poor but equally ambitious Pakistan with regard to nuclear power. In 1953, former President Eisenhower promised to the UN General Assembly to give underdeveloped countries quantities of uranium as part of the US Atoms for Peace start-up incentives towards nuclear energy and research. Ironically, Iran, Pakistan, and Israel were the first recipients’ of the US program. Economics of developing nuclear power for industrial or military purposes is less driven by cost/benefit and comparative advantage analysis than by political exigencies, and national prestige that was pushed as much by religious zealotry as it has for territorial and political protection. Iran ventured in a risk taking status achievement via development of nuclear power. Itself, an example of inequality among social classes, Iran also was hurt but endured in a bewildering process from external limitations mixed with its own misguided domestic foreign policy. In a stratified world of nuclear armament, Iran was perceived an existential challenge by and to Israel, itself a Western nuclear by proxy. Iran was threatened and forced by the Western countries to go through economic sanction from 1995 to 2015 whose lower class suffered the most with high inflation.

The book investigates complexity of the idea of creatio ex nihilo in respect to Muslims’ belief in ascribed and achieved statuses depending on God’s providence as to whom He grants upward and downward positions in Creation. The theory of parallelism of status legacy in Islam denotes that competitive claim for such a status engaged the Shi’ite and Sunni theologians in the development of methods of hermeneutics and exegesis as two methods of interpretation and explanation of the truth and the flow of charisma. Both methods were synthesized in Islamic Sufism with emphasis on the human capability to achieve perfection. Ascribed and achieved statuses as a foundation of stratification and inequality have
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been delineated in detail. The reality is that all Islamic societies have examples of modernity and poverty, social change and undemocratic political establishments within their own histories.

Among other topics, this book addresses the correspondences between work, salvation, piety and economics, by discussing the complexity of meanings of statuses in Islam, and by a discourse on Islamic culture, both theoretically and empirically. We argue that work and social mobility have advanced by placing emphasis on achieved status rather than ascribed status, as in the Protestant vision. The prevalent assumption is that everybody is born with equal capabilities that can be actualized by individual endeavors. Thus, from the Protestant viewpoint, achieved statuses, and the social roles attached to them to build up the social structure, are more individually than societally based. By de-emphasizing ascribed status, individual endeavors to gain rewards in this world not only contribute to capital accumulation, but also open the avenue for salvation, innovation and scientific experimentation.

Religious belief emerges by attributing *creatio ex nihilo* to God, or to the birth of metaphysical outlook. Following the origination comes the explosion of ideas related to the third stage that in sociology is known as the institutionalization of religious belief and a period of routinization of charismatic authority by the *ulama*. This view is presumed to be connected to traditional economy and agricultural composition of production as a secondary economic sector. No assumption is made in this work that the emergence of information society will dismantle *ulama* as a status group, or a religious class. It is noteworthy that religious conviction either among Sunnis or Shi’ites is in favor of and supporting free economic enterprise that grants possibilities for achieved status to Muslims to see the fruits of their endeavor. In that regard, Islamic pragmatism more than its contribution to capitalism addresses an amelioration of all members of society, and is not purely skewed toward one group. Throughout this book, we have stressed the social class gaps in all Islamic societies. Hence, the tendency to promote service economy and importing goods from the West and Asian countries particularly from China that keeps Islamic societies dependent and subservient to the global market. From comparative advantage perspective, most wealthy Arabs and non-Arab Islamic countries trade oil for consumer goods. That is a failure since natural resources will be depleted sooner or later in countries low in scientific establishments or industrialization at present time as well as the encouraging of the brain drain from some Islamic countries particularly from Iran in its post revolution period to the West - a case of human capital flight irreplaceable by any foreign investment.

Evans and Timberlake’s (1980) research on the special case of dependency on foreign investment, inequality, and the growth of the service sector indicates that foreign investments cause high level of inequality by distorting the evolution of the labor-force structure. It is suggested by Evans and Timberlake that economies of less developed countries penetrated by foreign capital will have unusually rapid growth of the proportions the labor force employed in the tertiary, and its growth of this proportion which mediate some of the effects of dependence on inequality. Whereas the functionalist position started by Davis and Moore suggests that a person’s social position is based solely on his or her innate talents and efforts, though their theory has been met with criticism by other sociologists. For example the United States is not entirely a meritocratic society. Those on the top tend to have unequal access to economic and cultural resources, such as the highest-quality education, which helps the upper classes transmit their privileged status from one generation to the next. For those without access to these resources even those with superior talents, social inequality serves as a barrier to reaching their full potential (Giddens, 2015). Islamic societies are not mirror images of class structure in the U.S. Presently, the picture of the class structure in the U.S is much more diversified, composed of the upper class, the middle class, the upper middle class, the lower middle class, the working class, the lower class and finally, the “under-
class.” Certainly, just being diversified in terms of social class neither justifies inequality due to the spread of wealth, income, and education nor is there a foreseeable future strategy for bridging the gaps in a capitalist/individualist society.

The question of inequality in almost fifty (50) less developed countries from Latin America, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia in regard to their dependence on foreign investment also includes Islamic societies such as Turkey, Iraq, United Arab Republic, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Pakistan (Evans, Timberlake, 1980). Juxtaposing modernity with poverty in the Third World countries, observed and investigated by Evans and Timberlake in the 1980’s changed at least in some of Islamic countries including Dubai and its movement toward modern sector of economies relying heavily on immigrant labor or investing their capital in United States and other western countries. Due to the complexity of citizenship limited to indigenous people, immigrant labor cannot begin to dream of upward mobility, or citizenship. The power structure and wealth remain permanently in the hand of Dubaians. Dubai has transformed itself to what Forbes magazine calls the richest city in the world. This is a country that in the late 1950s had neither electricity nor paved roads. A significant social problem, hidden from the investment bankers and tourists who visit Dubai is the treatment of the massive number of immigrant laborers. About 95 percent of Dubaians are foreigners from India, Iran, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, North Korea, Bangladesh, China and Yemen. Most of these migrant laborers sell everything they owned to come to Dubai and took on unskilled jobs, such as stacking bricks, watering lawns, and cleaning floors. The pay is relative good compared to their home countries, for example, $275 a month for a skilled electricians, but extremely poor compared to what the lowest paid citizen of Dubai earns (Schaefer, 2015).

Special cases of charismatic authorities combined with legal-rational and the emergence of a class of ulama in this book have been treated as a major force for both maintenance and revival of a purified Islam. Muslim population growth and conversion set Islam on a competitive edge with two branches of Christianity, that is, with Catholicism and the Protestant Evangelism. Fear of Islamic population growth in the West is partially due to encroachment of secularism and responses of each religion to scientific achievements, promises of each religion to pragmatic approach to social justice, debunking conspicuous consumption, and indeed the simplicity of the populous message of an Islam that puts both limitations and expansions on human behavior, some acceptable and some questionable from modernist position and critics of Islam. While there is no Christian phobia in Islamic world, fear of Islam and hate crime against Muslim exists in the West particularly after September 11 and the emergence of ISIS. Various branches of radical Islam in Africa set out another ground for competition. We can speak of “Islamic Effects” as translated in the West as “Islamic Fear Effect” whose causal roots are not fully investigated for instance in America where a profound ignorance of religion according to Prather exists. This book attempts to advance knowledge rather than passing information to the readers. Ironically, the fear effect is not limited to the Europeans and North Americans, but also to Muslims who were victims of radical Islam, a mode of aggressive Islam that gives more ground to Christianity whose symbolic and ontological understanding of the cross suggest forgiveness and salvation - a message not too far from Islamic ethics. To be sure, American Christians and Jews enjoy a higher level of wealth in a prosperous capitalism, following Weber’s theses on the Protestant work ethics.

A question that Muslims and non-Muslim usually raise is that why all Islamic societies are economically lingering behind the West, a question that implicitly criticizes the role of Islam as a barrier to progress, and its conception of well-being. In addition to Weber’s conception of Islam and Christianity’s concern for other worldliness, we have offered four other positions in regard to economic dimension of Islam. There are two notable positions on this question; one that has challenged such an assumption,
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and the other, empirically, has shown that Islamic economy is not practiced in Islamic societies. This book has attempted to clarify historical, intellectual and political roots of this question in terms of global inequality according to which Islamic societies are not the only examples of low income in process of transition of their stratification systems.

Trusting God and encounter with centrality of humanism and excessive individualism at the cost of communal bonding have endowed different capacities to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their competitive intensities, in spite of their affiliations with each other, shapes various forms of social-political, economic and theological structures and functions in an outlook sustained in this work as “Islams” and celebrating differences. As the post-modernism project suggests, celebrating differences implies pluralism, through which individuals and groups are enabled to check, and to recognize each other in advancing the capacity of learning the consequences of which will benefit the world at large. Islamic Sufism in this work can stand the rigorous tests throughout history of Islam for propagation of individualism, a service-based-faith fed by meticulous contemplative bonding with human service and nature. Sufism assures a universal bonding by which preservation and moderation of ethics not only for consumption, preservation of the nature as a manifestation of love of God for humanity but also to invoke human capacity for egalitarianism to break away the presumptuous power and wealth that come from ascribed status or achieved statuses. It was pivotal for brotherhood and workmanship as mentioned in case of guilds.

We are witnessing the formation of changes in Islamic societies influenced by the West, particularly by the United States. For those who are concerned about the future of Middle Eastern Islamic countries, or Islam as a religion, the Western plan is intended to go with democratization and a favorable liberal economy along with moderate Islam. Social and political movements, including the Arab Spring, on the other hand, have shown irrefutable power of people to ameliorate their life, and aspiring for democratic legislation. However, there is on the horizon a likelihood of an emergence of a new phase of Islamism as a superstructure, in the Marxian sense, which may consolidate capitalism with elements of socialism. This assertion is based on a historical observation that Muslims have no problem with the rich, but it takes both the State and the rich as being ethically responsible for there to be a fair distribution of wealth. Crony capitalism is a disease that affects trends of access to greed and opportunities that penetrates into the occupational structure and that erodes chances for competition and prevents democratic free enterprise to grow. In the post-Iranian Revolution, Mehdi Bazargan, the newly appointed prime minister warned Iranians about their unprecedented urge for what he phrased as “quick profit and profit quick” in an Islamic society oriented to morality.

What is hidden from Muslims concerned about global inequality is that none of Islamic countries are integrated in global financial system. Accordingly, they are saved unconscious of fluctuations of global market. If an Islamic country is integrated into the global financial market, they have to follow the rigorous standards and methodic approaches related to tradable economic sectors and lower cost of production. There is a fear of an expansion of free enterprise in certain Islamic society that adopted subsidies to keep the lower working and lower middle classes at bay as a silent and impoverished majority. This mechanism whose goal is intended to bridge social class gaps discloses a latent function of economic support to the needy. In a high stratified Islamic society, people’s politico-theological loyalty can function as a crutch to lean on whenever the state needed to maintain its rulings. This mode of economic support, a variation of co-optation via dependency on the state is adopted in the name of social justice. The state can claim that Islamic social justice is being applied. Covering up social class gaps by adopting economic subsidies, like fuel subsidy in oil rich countries, indeed, will channel grievances towards behavioral and group conformity. The more a stratification system is designed by authoritarian
state and its accompanied crony capitalism, the more likelihood of social class gaps exists. It is in more
democratic condition of free enterprise and existence of necessary regulatory role of government, that
the possibility of innovation can grow.

It is notable that very limited Islamic countries are a member of World Trade Organization (WTO)
with all its arduous tasks of meeting their standards. The goal of joining the WTO will change the exist-
ing economic and educational structures. Although non-tradable qualities and skills in the labor force,
including typical services culturally agreed upon in a society, or occupations such as nursing, teaching,
or a labor-intensive occupation are resources of a society, but the high standards of services need regular
technological and information improvements. The bar of customer service, so prominently high in the
Western service-oriented countries, strikingly enough is absent in societies that Weber characterized
as traditional capitalists. The nightmare of inefficient bureaucracy lingers over those societies in which
decisions are made by informal networks. Tying flexible social mobility ends to accepting dull salaried
jobs as well as developing ritualism leads to the means determining the ends.

In conclusion, the authors’ notion of cause and effect rests upon investigation and the power of ex-
planation limited to the Middle East with some reference to Islamic Africa. Reference to the parallelism
of Shi’ite and Sunni Islam, concept of Islams, and the dispute over political legitimacy would take us
to another level of concern. We would like to close by concurring with Friedman’s causes and effects
as a concerned journalist who is well aware of plights of the Mother Nature activity - a Mother who
does not give in or recognize any parallelism or power conflict between Shi’ism and Sunnism but is
apprehensive about destruction of its own system which is beyond any stratification system. No social
scientist as well as commoners can be blind to the plight of thousands refugees from war stricken Syria,
Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya who land terrified at the borders of European countries knowing full
well that other Islamic countries will be right behind them. Friedman writes:

All the people in this region are playing with fire. While they’re fighting over who is caliph, who is the
rightful heir to the Prophet Muhammad from the seventh century — Sunnis or Shi’ites — and to whom
God really gave the holy land, Mother Nature is not sitting idle. She doesn’t do politics — only physics,
biology and chemistry. And if they add up the wrong way, she will take them all down. The only “ism”
that will save them is not Shism or Islamism but ‘environmentalism’ — understanding that there is no
Shi’ite air or Sunni water, there is just ‘the commons,’ their shared ecosystems, and unless they cooperate
to manage and preserve them (and we all address climate change), vast eco-devastation awaits them all.

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