

# Introduction

This collection of essays is an attempt to understand both the historical mind-set of Muslims confronted by modernity and the more contemporary articulation of the Muslim agenda concerning post-modernity. It takes mostly the Ottoman/Turkish experience into consideration, but, in doing so, it also serves the larger aim of providing a new paradigmatic shift and a new methodology to explain what is happening in the world of Muslim societies, which are rapidly integrating with global networks.

Since Geertz it has become an old hat to talk about different Islams in the global geography.<sup>1</sup> Here, we are taking Turkey as an example to discuss the rise of Islamic persuasion of more recent times. The Turkish case is neither the Taliban's Afghanistan, nor is it Pakistan or Yemen. The Turkish case represents what is today new in the Islamic world, more so than the above-mentioned examples. What is remarkable in the Turkish case is that the rise of Islamic practice has come on the heels of a century of secularization which only accelerated in the latter half of those hundred years. Furthermore, we strongly disagree that Islam has been a latent, subterranean force which only kept its head submerged because of the authoritarian nature of the secularist state.

We disagree on this last position on two counts. Secularization had already taken root in Ottoman society before the Kemalist republic. Mustafa Kemal was only one of the more daring and politically more ambitious of the

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1 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968.

many secular urban members of the elite and the middle class of his period. Secondly, the democratization of Turkish politics after the Kemalist party had lost the elections in 1950 did evince a rise of the religious discourse in the political arena; yet, this was far, and also qualitatively different, from constituting the discourse of upward mobility and an instrument of hegemonic intent as we notice it today.

The experience of the 1950s was not very different from what one might observe in the US or Europe today with regard to the common use of religious discourse in the mundane world of everyday politics. Today's experience of Islamic politics is something radically different, new and fresh. Obviously, we are not dismissing the deeply seated Islamic conservatism that pre-existed in Turkey among a sizeable population. Indeed, their presence is essential for our argument. However, different from the conservative Islam inherited from a long past, it is the new energy which distinguishes the current period and which might also be representative of something new in today's global politics beyond Turkey's borders. If our study encourages other researchers to find similar avenues of new energy in other societies, we will feel more confident that we have noted a new universal phenomenon in the globalism of the last two decades.

It is impossible to tell how much the recent rise of Islamic politics has been due to the encouragement it received from the great *volt face* of Carter and Brzezinski who thought of Islam as a relatively inexpensive weapon to fight communism and the Cold War. Here, we are concerned with the void that emerged when the ideology of the modern lost its nerve, its self-confidence, interventionist logic, and expansive spirit, and became *degonflé* and insipid. History is in no position yet to tell whether this has been due to the rise of the critique of modernity and the ascendant anti-colonialist history-writing of subaltern studies that, in our mind wrongly, associates modernity's logic with colonialism. Or was it due to a new phase in the development of capitalism, much beyond what Hobson had seen? Or was it just that the modernist paradigm had run out of steam in a Spenglerian fashion, which might also have allowed Carter and Brzezinski, in their inner religiosity, to push for their *volt face*?

Our argument focuses on the other side of the equation, not the void that the abyss of the modern created, but the new actors which came to possess the moment. All these structural factors might be in operation for the apparent demise of the modern, but here we are interested in the phenomenol-

ogy of the rise of political Islam in that emergent abyss. We think that only with a particular mode of organizational *élan*, Islam could fill that void and in turn be shaped by the very process of its own success.

Too much attention is given to Islam as the religion of the dispossessed, but its capacity to forge social organization by means of zeal has not been sufficiently recognized. In that context, Islam is the source of a unifying medium to forge a high organizational capacity with allegiance and participation, which only a revolutionary movement at its height could ever muster. Notwithstanding the language of the dispossessed, if Islamic resurgence had not had the zeal of the upwardly mobile, if it had not contained empowerment for the new claimants of social status, it would not have acquired such a universal presence. It is this blending of the old and the new that is of particular interest to us.<sup>2</sup>

Islam as bearer of human capital is not only a great economic instrument, but also a great communal force, both for mending the fissures that come with economic success and for creating solidarities which in terms of depth as well as solidity go much beyond what any network analysis would suggest. This is a solidity that we hardly find in any other elite formation, or in any other type of social organization, beyond a kinship group.

Today's Islamic discourse in Turkey contains both a "language of the dispossessed" and a language of "(a)possessing" and empowerment, in one. This new language refers to two stories, each demanding a different methodology: one to observe the empirical consequences of relative deprivation, and the other to understand the politics of relative affluence and empowerment. The two aspects of the Islamic discourse in its new format require the use of both of the two methodological paradigms in the same context: the structural and the phenomenological. Otherwise, a mono-paradigmatic logic fails to see the new in the new and, hence, the totality in the new phenomenon where both the dispossessed and the newly possessing constitute an interactive whole—each with a different story and a different history.

Structuralism is reading the story from outside. It is dispassionate, dispirited, and surgical. It is, for example, an excellent tool to observe the repositioning of groups and classes. However, phenomenology works much better for constructing the actors' point of view in arriving at these new positions. Phenomenology is reading the story from the inside. It is at its best in

2 Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1996.

telling when contexts are broken, new structures created, and roles expanded. It is expansive, interactive, fluid, and Heisenbergian. Its methodology defeats precision. Its methodology is to be found in *verstehen*, in Weber, when he describes a mind-set, a life-project, a conviction, a struggle for salvation.

The allure of the early work of Marx is in his effort to merge both methodologies. One foot in phenomenology, he talked of labor as human toil, not only of creating the world but also of creating itself, of defining itself while disempowering itself. He talked of alienation as emptying one of its own powers, while with it—and here structuralism steps in—in each historical conjuncture a particular world is created. In Marx’s later work, alienation and labor are only powerful analytical categories. *Das Capital* is an analytical edifice. Its logic is without blemish. Yet, it remains as a hypothetical world that depicts the inner grammar of capitalism—a tremendous discovery, a magical construct—without its interaction with the species world. It is lean and directional, but without the potential little stories it might contain in its interstices. Human species only come in through the backdoor as a metaphysical category with a foretold history of passing toil and ultimate freedom—the Talmudic story of Job and the Christian rendition of the Original Sin.

The purpose of this book is to celebrate several aspects of Şeref Mardin’s work which we believe has so well anticipated and elucidated this new Islamic politics. Mardin’s “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?” was published in *Daedalus* in 1973. It put a *bona fide* structural model into the heart of Ottoman-Turkish history. It was a landmark. Most of us became Mardin’s scientific coteries. When Mardin later developed his binary of High Islam and Folk Islam, again the same juxtaposition was running through our work.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, Mardin’s work was no Wallersteinian tautology. It was not pre-determined whether the center or the periphery would ever prevail. It was a see-saw that fit Ottoman history very well, but more so our then understanding of the history of the Turkish Republic. In terms of the latter, Islam was the latent periphery resisting the radical secularist policies of the Republic. Some of us even took it further and argued that radical secularism was a political instrument to entrench, strengthen, and render the center powerful in its struggle against its periphery. In the midst of this structuralist reading of Ottoman-Turkish history—which almost universally prevailed in many ap-

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3 Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Ideology*, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Ankara, 1969.

parent formats and languages and whose empirical concerns, if any, would only be with the “nature” of the central state—Mardin had already moved to another theoretical realm.

His *Religion and Social Change in Turkey* was published in 1989.<sup>4</sup> This was a study of a particular Islamic community in one of the major provincial towns in Anatolia. This was no little Islam, and its *élan* had little to do with its relations to the center. It was a whole world of its own. Mardin described almost from inside the processes which led to the building of a robust community where culture, organization and social power intermeshed, interacted, and evolved. This was a phenomenological rendition at its best, of how social power and modern religion interacted in a provincial urban setting to empower its beholders. This was no more relative deprivation, but it was, to use the language of one of the articles in this volume, relative affluence which made Islam a social force.

Most of the articles in this volume start with this second aspect of Mardin’s work. They are concerned with the self-confidence, the *élan*, the *assabiyah*,<sup>5</sup> which is developed in the formation of (to hazard a now popular term) a civil society by means of Islamic reconstruction. We find Mardin’s second paradigm most apt in deciphering the contemporary transformation of Islam from a religion of the dispossessed to becoming the cradle of a new secular social and economic power and, as a consequence, in understanding how that ascendant phenomenology gets to define the nature of a new politics that baffles the traditional political actors of the left and the right and tears apart at its seams the modernist Turkish Republic.

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The collection begins with an article by Faruk Birtek and Zafer Toprak, which attempts to decode the paradox of the neo-liberal reconstruction of the Turkish economy in the 1980s and the rise of Islamic politics. It describes the irony of how, in incorporating a hidden Islamic discourse into state ideology, the staunchly secular military created the elements of a socially powerful Islamic community. In the hope that Islam and its emphasis on a community of believers would serve as a unifying force between different strata and check the conflicts that the rapid marketization of economic relations would bring,

4 Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Saidi Nursi*, State University of New York, Albany, 1989.

5 For the meaning and relevance of the term, see the article by Faruk Birtek in this volume.

the military inadvertently opened a space for communally organized political networks to permeate the state. The authors argue that the resurgence of Islamic sentiment and its growing influence in politics could be explained by this new role of religious organization in the political setting. Published seventeen years ago, and included in this volume because of its contemporary relevance for a new readership, the article anticipated both the role of religion for upward social mobility and the hazards of a technocratic/economic understanding of modernity for a liberal society.<sup>6</sup>

The second article by Birtek concentrates on the new energy of urban society due to economic expansion and how it relates to the intertwining of religion and power. Revisiting Ibn Khaldun's concept of *assabiyah*, which the author explains as a "nervous political effervescence/energy arising within groups, which are based on primordial or semi-primordial ties, in their claims to assert their own primacy during attempts to wrest hegemony from the established powers," Birtek analyzes how politics moved from the politics of relative deprivation to a politics of relative affluence. Taking the Turkish example as a possible prototype of new Islamic politics, he discusses the crisis of the modern state facing a periphery with a new *assabiyah* that is much more powerful and mobilizational than the traditional, conservative opposition to the political center. This is no longer an *assabiyah* of response to modernity, but a new potential that peripheral groups have as a result of the economic boom and the real possibility of repossessing structural power. He ends with a call for a new political anthropology that serves as a science of "political ecology" of village, town, and *metropole*.

The following article by Georg Stauth again uses Ibn Khaldun's concept of *assabiyah* as a fresh theoretical construct to understand the Mediterranean. Stauth argues that classical social theory, when reflecting the social roots of modernity, takes a paradoxical stand with respect to the Mediterranean. On the one hand, it stresses the Mediterranean roots of social differentiation, mostly with respect to Greek and Roman sources of asceticism and rationality. On the other hand, a certain nostalgic holism can be observed with respect to moral economy, social bondage, and an ethos of solidarity. Stauth takes Hellmut Ritter, a German Orientalist who had spent most of his life in İstanbul, and his discussion of *assabiyah* as the point of departure for his critical reflections on conventional concepts and the need to broaden the

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6 Faruk Birtek and Binnaz Toprak, "Conflictual Agendas of Neo-Liberal Reconstruction and the Rise of Islamic Politics in Turkey," *Praxis International* 13, 1993, 192-212.

conceptual limits of modern social theory. He argues that, rooted in an exclusive view on the Mediterranean, Western rationality encapsulates too much of a potential that is limiting its acclaimed openness to the world. A more critical view (that includes the Mediterranean) on life-economy, *assabiyah*, as a universal concept of irrational solidarity groups, visions of (and from) locality, and related forms of power construction—they all could help to reflect “modernity” and the Mediterranean in a non-exclusionist way. Thus, he argues, the broader contexts of global mass societies are demanding conceptual flexibility rather than depending on conventional views focusing on systems and structures.

The article by Sabri Sayarı on political clientelism and patronage in Turkish politics is partially a corrective to a possible exaggeration of the concept of *assabiyah*. With analytical precision, it takes the structural view of seeing alternatives to *assabiyah* politics. Sayarı analyzes coalition formations and interest politics, which are endemic in any form of modern conceptions of politics. It helps to draw the logical boundaries much in the spirit which we have discussed above. His is a reminder of the rationalist, calculating, deliberating politics that one would more likely associate with the “anonymity” politics of urban ecology; he alerts us to the overstressing of the phenomenological view. Nevertheless, the differentiation he makes between political clientelism as a “dyadic” relationship of two individuals who are unequal in socioeconomic status on one hand and patronage as a more modern practice of distribution through party politics on the other does reflect the themes we discuss in this volume. Sayarı argues that, contrary to the early literature on clientelism which assumed that economic development and industrialization would undermine the saliency of clientelistic politics, recent research has shown that political clientelism has exhibited “a remarkable durability and resilience,” by adapting to political and social changes. This adaptation occurs through new strategies followed by both local patrons and political parties, as well as citizens and clients. Sayarı’s article contains striking examples of emotional solidarity in the Turkish context despite the country’s current economic and political complexity. He cites current statistics from the official website of the President’s Office in Ankara, which shows that 11,973 people appealed directly to the president of the country for assistance in finding jobs or for financial aid. He gives similar examples of petitions to opposition parties, which emphasize that the person voted for the party in every election and therefore “deserved” to be helped. Some of these petitions even openly asked

the party leader to use his political clout to influence the results of exams for jobs. In a sense, therefore, one can read Sayarı's article as a combination of the above-mentioned structural and phenomenological paradigms. It fits well with our contention that "these two methodologies can operate side by side to enhance our understanding of any data as a whole."

The article by Deringil situates the nineteenth-century Ottoman elite in the world context of the period. Taking several statesmen and men of letters as his examples, Deringil examines the mind-set of these individuals who were caught between an Islamic idiom upon which the century-old traditions of their world were based and the hostile world of the nineteenth century, when the empire faced the apparent superiority of the West. Reminiscent of Şerif Mardin's classic work *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*,<sup>7</sup> Deringil tries to decipher the identity, or rather, the mentality of the Ottoman elite as it was confronted with what he calls (borrowing from Anthony Giddens) "ontological anxiety." Using Mardin's analytical categories as his guide, Deringil refers to "clusters of meaning" informing the thinking of these men. The first, he argues, is Islam as a residual pride in being the descendants of a great civilization. The second is western education and influence, ranging from the superficial to the quite sophisticated. The third is their reaction to an ever-more conceited West which was forcing them into the corner of "exotic Orientals." He concludes with the observation that the "collective attitude" on the part of the characters mentioned as his protagonists was a combination of self-assurance, cynicism, self-criticism, and a sense of urgency when confronted by modernity.

Esenbel turns her gaze away from Turkey and its domestic issues, to the Far East and transnational networks. In doing so, she starts with a collection of nineteenth-century Chinese coins that she discovered among the finds of an archaeological site in Turkey and proceeds to outline both the trading routes and the political connections between the world of the Far East and the transnational geography of Muslims. Arguing that global historical perspectives have to take into account local histories, she demonstrates the interconnection between transnationality, nationalism, and world power strategies. These she discusses in the context of Japanese imperialist aims to build an Asian empire and become a world power between 1868 and 1945. Using the historic Silk Road/Asian Muslim networks along the route, which later

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7 Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1962.

became also a political highway for nationalists and Pan-Islamists, she shows how the Japanese collaborated with Muslim and Turkic nationalists as well as Pan-Islamic movements on a transnational platform in Asia and Europe. For her, transnationality means the international history of nationalism outside of the perceived borders of the nation and/or nation-state as a domestic historical experience that makes use of community networks. In this context, she sees religious movements as transnational phenomena frequently propagated through diaspora elements. Her conclusion is that there exists a whole history of nationalist-*cum*-religio-political movements (Pan-Islamists) that takes place outside of the perceived home country of these ethno-national activists on a transnational platform, where they collaborate with the representatives of world powers through clandestine, informal, covert or overt intelligence activities and diplomatic relations. Her article can be read as an interesting story that shows the historic roots of the Al Qaeda transnational network and geo-political map of today, where Pan-Islam, nationalisms, and world power confront each other.

Finally, the brief article by Michael Meeker relates to the sub-theme of this volume, the importance of Şerif Mardin in social-science theorizing, and especially his distrust of mega-theories that pay no attention to circumstance. He points out that Mardin's work covers three different moments of Turkish reception of modernity—namely, the center of official power *versus* the periphery, elite *versus* popular, and bureaucrats *versus* the learned men of religion. The first moment was about the quest by Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals to find the means of integrating Enlightenment ideas with Islamic principles. In the second instance, Meeker points to Mardin's discussion of Said-i Nursi who gave ordinary believers the intellectual tools to respond to Turkish secularism and to integrate science and technology in their religious vision. This point is especially relevant to our discussion in this volume—that is, Mardin's attention to the power of Islam and community, to the “interpersonal ethics of exchange and association,” to use Meeker's terms, in accommodating modernity. As Meeker argues, Mardin's scholarship, which takes into account not only what is central and elite but equally what is peripheral and popular, was singularly novel in an academic milieu that celebrated intellectual fashions. The third moment of reception is refusal, when center and periphery unite against Western influences. Here, Meeker gives reference to Mardin's analysis of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century novels which ridicule the Westernized Ottoman dandy, a theme that finds resonance

even today—for example, in a recent critique of Turkish diplomats who were parodied by the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the “*mon chér corps*.”

The essays in this collection were written for a workshop organized at Boğaziçi University in May of 2007 as a tribute to Mardin’s work by his friends and colleagues.

## APPENDIX TO THE INTRODUCTION: A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

We believe that a good part of the perennial methodological debate of the last several decades in sociology and political science has been due to a confusion over the “intimacy” of a particular type of paradigmatic methodology and the internal logic of the data that social scientists peruse. Any piece of data that by its logic and grammar lies beyond the analytical boundary of one particular paradigm has to be excluded from that paradigm’s practice. Conversely, its inclusion only weakens the explanatory strength of that paradigm. For example, Marx or Durkheim would most adamantly and explicitly exclude any discussion of emotions or intentions from their respective analyses, whereas Weber takes the historical particularity of emotions and intentions of a period as his gateway to the understanding of its universe of socio-cultural meaning. These are all questions about constructing explanatory paradigms.<sup>8</sup>

The unbounded claims that social science paradigms tend to make in their “imperialist” manner only signify their lack of rigor. Economics is the exception and has much to teach to sociologists and political scientists in this question of paradigm rigor and methodology. Our concern with methodology arises from that experience. Notwithstanding Kuhn’s overblown influence, physics is the wrong place for social scientific mimesis.<sup>9</sup> Kuhn can only refer to the systematic exclusion of any particular data from the perusal of the scientific community. In the social sciences, the question is much more profound. This is because of the very nature of the data collected and observed. Often diverse and antithetical data are interwoven in such a manner that they

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8 Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987; Charles West Churchman, *The Design of Inquiring System: Basic Concepts of Systems and Organizations*, Basic Books, New York, 1971.

9 For economics, see F. H. Hahn and R.C.O. Matthews, “The Theory of Economic Growth: A Survey,” *The Economic Journal* 296 (1964): 779-902; for the case of physics, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970.

appear in an illusionary singularity. This, we claim, is the case with the *new* political discourse of Islam. We fear that most of the contemporary debate on Islam suffers from this confusion. We thus think that the *new* in the Islamic upsurge is a fruitful terrain to reflect on this very important methodological issue.

On the whole, one could suggest that two paradigms compete in sociological and political science analyses. The first is structural.<sup>10</sup> Here, we are not talking about “deep structures” *à la* Chomsky or Levi-Strauss, but we are turning our attention to patterns and second-degree abstractions about interdependent totalities, without any concerns about subjectivity, as represented in the works of Marx and Durkheim. The other paradigm is the phenomenological paradigm that we think Weber represents best.

We are not here to prefer one over the other, as it will become clear in the rest of the book. We do see that the fields of sociology and political science have been more grounded in the structural paradigm. Their “forefathers”—from Aristotle, over Hobbes, to Marx and Durkheim—did marvels in this tradition. Yet, due to this grounding they also have often fallen short when explaining processual data. The latter question calls for a phenomenological paradigm.

We think that most of the apparent competition arises from an insufficient attention given to the boundary-markers of each paradigm to distinguish any piece of data which by its logic and grammar would more likely lie beyond that paradigm’s analytical boundaries. This expansive will of each methodological paradigm has been at the root of most of an unnecessary debate. That expansive drive, the source of each paradigm’s nemesis, compels the paradigm to reach for data which by its nature it cannot absorb, to result in the very weakening of that paradigm’s explanatory power. These two methodologies can very well operate side by side in order to enhance our understanding of any data as a whole, as long as we are clear about which aspect of any given data is explained by which of the alternative methodologies.

Here we shall show how the two aspects of the current Islamic discourse in its *new* format require the use of both of the two contrasting methodological paradigms and how each refers to a different set of data in this otherwise apparently singular process.

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10 Jean Piaget, *Structuralism*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970.