

## IN MEMORIAM

**Şerif Mardin**  
**1927–2017**

Şerif Mardin, the preeminent Turkish social scientist of his generation who left a deep mark on the study of Ottoman and Turkish society, passed away on 6 September 2017 in Istanbul.

Mardin received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Stanford in 1958 with a dissertation on *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1962). Starting with this early work he rejected deterministic, homogenizing theories of modernization and Marxist economism alike. He instead examined the late-Ottoman and republican trajectory as a variant of modernity which wove together Western and local cultural and institutional elements. At the same time, his work remained sensitive to the contradictions, tensions, and disorientations that resulted from the experience of modernization as Westernization. As Mardin pointed out in *Genesis* and *The Political Ideas of Young Turks 1895–1908* (published in Turkish in 1964), the ideologies of Young Ottomans and Young Turks were based on relatively superficial understandings of European ideas and often entailed an inconsistent eclecticism.

With *Religion and Ideology* (published in Turkish in 1969) and *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (SUNY Press, 1989), Mardin shifted his attention to the sociology of religion. In the latter book, he studied Said Nursi as a religious thinker who drew on traditional Islamic idioms inherited from Ottoman culture but articulated them in new ways to respond to the spiritual crisis brought about by Turkish modernization. This work thus developed an insight that would become central to the literature on fundamentalism that emerged in the early 1990s: While professing to advocate a return to the original precepts of religion, fundamentalist movements typically respond to the experience of modernization, introduce radical innovations in the religious tradition, and use modern techniques of social mobilization.

Mardin's theoretical background drew from both Anglo-American and Continental European intellectual traditions and spanned sociology, political science, anthropology, and history. Max Weber's influence runs throughout his work, not least in his emphases on the importance of understanding in social analysis, the relative autonomy of culture and politics from the economy, and multidirectional causality between cultural, political, and economic factors. While Mardin drew on a variety of anthropological theories and interpretive methods, it is arguably Geertzian interpretivism which most centrally informed his understanding of ideology and religion. Mardin approached ideologies as cultural maps that help individuals orient themselves in society, during crises of meaning instigated by social change. And he attributed the distinctive power of religion to its capacity to provide individuals with an ethos and worldview based on a relationship to the sacred. These Geertzian notions underlie Mardin's core insight on the crisis of Turkish modernity: while displacing the religious legitimation of political authority and deep-seated Islamic idioms regulating their everyday life, secular nationalism largely failed to provide a resonant meaning structure for the masses. This observation, Mardin argued, goes a long way toward explaining the Islamic revival in Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century.

In his article "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" published in *Daedalus* in 1973, Mardin argued that the basic trajectory of Turkish politics might best be understood by focusing on the evolving relationship between the society's center and periphery. Under the Ottoman polity, Islam provided the main linkage between the imperial center and Muslim subjects. The secularizing reforms of the early Republican period largely severed this link, and Islam was reconfigured as the idiom of the periphery against the secular and Westernized central bureaucracy. This dynamic, Mardin argued, further helps explain the electoral appeal of conservative populism in the 1950s and the military coup of 1960 which restored the privileges of the secular center. The conceptual framework Mardin developed in this article had a pervasive influence on subsequent work in the political sociology of Turkey.

Although Mardin's oeuvre won him widespread recognition as the most distinguished Turkish social scientist of his generation, his work was considered controversial by Kemalist circles in the Turkish academia. To their consternation, Mardin refused to dismiss Islamic movements and *tarikats* as reactionary forces and instead sought to understand their meaning world and the basis of their social appeal. His study on Said Nursi in particular raised the suspicions of republican intellectuals and was reportedly the reason that

he was not elected to the Turkish Academy of Sciences despite repeated nominations by some of its members.

Mardin also made crucial contributions to the institutional development of the social sciences in Turkey. In the mid-1970s, he founded the interdisciplinary Division of the Social Sciences at Boğaziçi University where he gathered a bright group of young sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists. This division—and its successor departments—would produce some of the most important social science research conducted in Turkey and train innumerable future social scientists. In 1999, he helped found the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University as an innovative interdisciplinary body without departments. Mardin's legacy will live through his path-breaking work, his formative influence on former students and colleagues, and his pivotal contributions to the development of the social sciences in Turkey. ✂

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### **Rula Quawas** **1960–2017**

**O**n 25 July 2017, Jordan lost one of its great educators and feminists: Rula Quawas. Rula was an outstanding educator for generations of young Jordanian and Arab feminists. She took on challenges that no one else dared to approach in a conservative patriarchal society, knowing fully well that she might have to pay a dear personal price for each of these battles.

She received her B.A. (1981) and M.A. (1991) in English Language and Literature from the University of Jordan, while simultaneously teaching at high schools in Amman. She earned her Ph.D. in American Literature and Feminist Theory from the University of North Texas in 1995. After receiving her Ph.D., she began her collegiate teaching career at the University of Jordan. For more than two decades, she tirelessly worked and served her graduate and undergraduate students, helping them to become strong women and leading voices for change.

Her sad demise due to a medical error shocked all those who knew and loved her, but it also brought to light many facets of Rula's contributions that even her closest family members and friends did not know. Rula had a long