

Markus Dreßler: “What is Alevism? Contemporary Debates vis-à-vis Historical and Systematic Considerations”

Abstract

In Turkey, the question of defining Alevism (Alevilik), especially with regard to its relationship to Islam, is highly political. Due to the hegemonic role of the state in the regulation of religion and its investment in the assertion that the Alevi are Muslims, formulations of Alevi identity are highly contested and this sometimes leads to social and legal disputes. Against the backdrop of contemporary contestations on the nature of Alevism and its place within Turkish society, the chapter attempts to provide an introduction into the contours of Alevism as a set of socio-religious traditions that developed in Anatolia and the Ottoman Balkans at the margins of Ottoman society, related to historical currents such as the Babai, Bektaşî, and the Kızılbaş. The chapter further sketches contemporary enunciations of Alevism against the background of Turkish nation-building. In this context, new and competing sets of knowledge with regard to Alevi essence and origin, including the contested question concerning its relationship to Islam, are being addressed.

Dreßler, Markus. “What is Alevism? Contemporary Debates vis-à-vis Historical and Systematic Considerations.” In *The Alevi in Modern Turkey and the Diaspora. Recognition, Mobilisation and Transformation*. Edited by Derya Ozkul and Hege Markussen, 17–44. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022.