

Karaosmanođlu, Kerem, Yildiz Technical University, Turkey

Beyond the Realm of Essentialism: Towards a New Alevi Identity in the City?

The Alevi cultural ‘revival’ in Turkey of the 1980’s has been followed by a multifaceted identity-formation process that involved conflicting cultural/religious agendas, intersecting discourses and a contestation of differing political/ideological affiliations. This tensional process lacking a focal point, which is still triggering an enriching public debate on the Alevi identity has been coined as an ‘enigma’, ‘ambiguity’ or ‘ambivalence’ by many. What lies beneath the veil of ambiguity, I argue, can be a potential ‘anti-essentialist’ transformation of *Alevilik* with an urban emphasis reaching beyond religious, cultural or political orthodoxies. I will analyze and question the limits of this transformation referring to my ethnographic research based mainly on in-depth interviews and the recent discussion on *Alevilik*. To what extent the equivocal tone of the Alevi subject can lead to a democratic possibility transcending the scope of politics of representation and identity?