

Seminario Permanente di Antropologia 2022-23

Defining Alevism

Secularism, the State and the Alevi Recognition in Europe

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<https://www.ozyegin.edu.tr/en/faculty/bernazengin>

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Link Zoom all'evento: <https://univr.zoom.us/j/84530612286>



Abstract: Alevi recognition, a process that started in 2012 in Hamburg, Germany, and Basel, Switzerland, gave Turkish Alevism the same legal status as Sunni Islam for the first time. Currently, Alevism is also recognized in Austria, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark. Based on my preliminary ethnographic fieldwork—at the *Fédération Union des Alévis en France* (FUAF) and the *Centre Culturel des Alévis* in Paris, and the Berlin Cemevi in Kreuzberg—my talk focuses on the Alevi organizations in France and Germany and comparatively discusses their politics of recognition. I first show that even though the majority refuse to define Alevism as a “religion”, distinguishing themselves from sharia-based Shia and Sunni Islam, the process of recognition in Germany ironically pushed Alevis to institutionalize themselves as a religion. Relatedly, I demonstrate how this process triggered an intensified debate within the Alevi community in Europe and Turkey on the definition of Alevism. Secondly, I show how these organizations represent themselves differently – as a religious community in Germany and as a secular Alevi organization in France – in parallel with the legal and normative secular framework of each state.