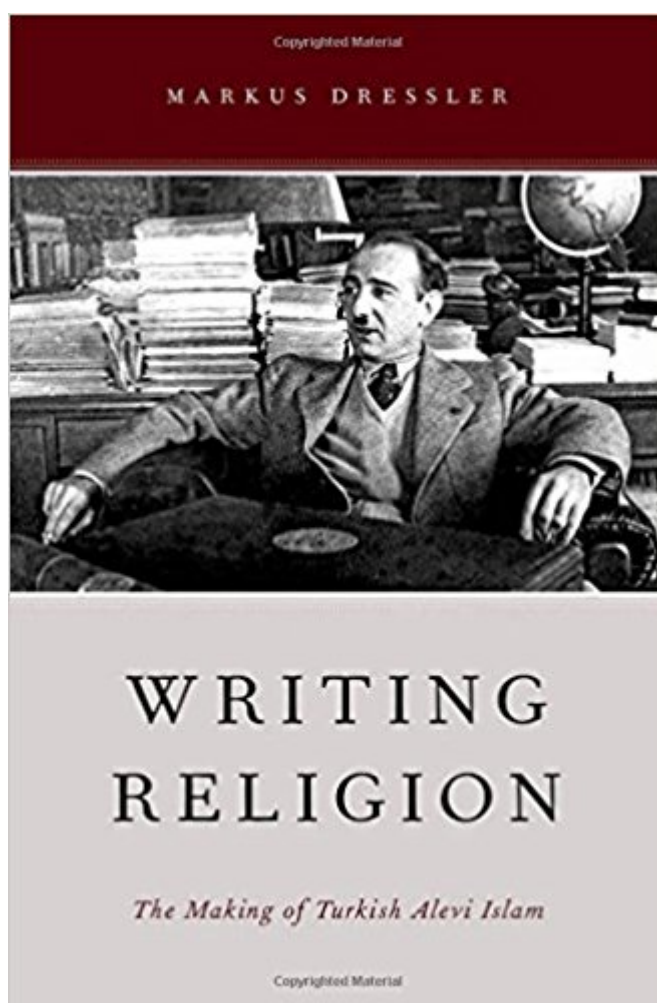


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# Writing Religion: The Making Of Turkish Alevi Islam (AAR Reflection And Theory In The Study Of Religion)



## Synopsis

In the late 1980s, the Alevis, at that time thought to be largely assimilated into the secular Turkish mainstream, began to assert their difference as they never had before. The question of Alevism's origins and its relation to Islam and to Turkish culture became a highly contested issue. According to the dominant understanding, Alevism is part of the Islamic tradition, although located on its margins. It is further assumed that Alevism is intrinsically related to Anatolian and Turkish culture, carrying an ancient Turkish heritage, leading back into pre-Islamic Central Asian Turkish pasts. Dressler argues that this knowledge about the Alevis-their demarcation as "heterodox" but Muslim and their status as carriers of Turkish culture-is in fact of rather recent origins. It was formulated within the complex historical dynamics of the late Ottoman Empire and the first years of the Turkish Republic in the context of Turkish nation-building and its goal of ethno-religious homogeneity.

## Book Information

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"Markus Dressler's work is absolutely brilliant in its critical and elaborate reading of the ways in which the Alevi identity in Turkey has been historically and politically constructed." --Middle East Journal  
"A most valuable book on Turkey's politics...rigorously researched...Dressler's study of Alevism in Turkey is a highly valuable contribution to the understanding of the problems posed by the Kemalist policies of authoritarian or assertive secularism in Turkey." --Today's Zaman  
"Writing Religion is at once the first 'critical genealogy' of the field of Alevi studies and an outstanding investigation into the impact of Euro-American concepts commonly used in the study of religion on

the representation, scholarly examination, and governmental management of religious communities outside western contexts. Dressler sets a new standard in the study of 'Alevism' in Turkey and simultaneously makes a major contribution to methodology in the study of religion." --Ahmet T. Karamustafa, Professor of History, University of Maryland"Writing Religion is a masterful study that attends to method for history's sake. It is at once a revealing cautionary tale about the missteps of 'back reading' history and a guide for moving forward with analyses unencumbered by classic modernist constraints. Markus Dressler's keen study of Alevism--and its myriad constructions in the hands of scholars and politicians, among others--establishes a veritable roadmap for 'thinking Islam' in fresh ways." --Greg Johnson, author of Sacred Claims: Repatriation and Living Tradition "This thought-provoking and provocative but historically sensitive contribution is the best examination I have seen of the political foundation for the Kizilbas communities renamed 'Alevi.' Dressler's interpretation will be a prime resource for both scholarship and public policy concerning the religio-secular debate in Turkey." --M. Hakan Yavuz, author of Toward an Islamic Enlightenment: The Gailen Movement

Markus Dressler has published widely on modern Alevism and secularism. His research focuses on the sociology and politics of Islam in Turkey, nationalist Turkish historiography, and Sufism in the West with special attention to the work of concepts in the study of religion and Islam. He is the editor, with Arvind Mandair, of Secularism and Religion-Making.

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