



Religiöse Orte in der Türkei: Wandel, Wechsel, Fortbestand
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KEMERÊ DUZGI – THE PROTECTOR OF DERSIM: SACRED PLACE CULTS IN KURDISH ALEVISM

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ABSTRACT: This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive overview of sacred places (*jiares*) among Kurdish Alevi in Dersim, focusing on a pilgrimage site named Kemerê Duzgi. For centuries, Kurmanji and predominantly Kirmancki speaking Kurdish Alevi communities of the Dersim region have practised the Raa Haqi belief system. My ethnographical studies indicate that, even though the traditional socio-religious networks have long collapsed, *jiares* have intriguingly sustained the continuity of the religion by helping to maintain religious practices, discourses, ethno-politics and symbols in everyday life. Kurdish Alevi keep believing in Dersim as an ancestral sacred land and sustain new religious-political discourses by referring to mostly non-human entities today, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, wild animals, etc. More specifically, *jiares* produce unique connections with mystical beings through various forms of personal-religious experience, which is now the dominant way of conceptualising Kurdish Alevi ethnic identity.

AHMET KERİM GÜLTEKİN is an exiled ethnologist in Germany. He received a PhD in Ethnology from Ankara University in 2013. His areas of interest are related to Kurdish Alevism, anthropology of religion, sacred places, nature and culture, new animism, pilgrimage, and ethnography, here especially new methodological approaches to oral history and collective memory.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

‘Kemerê Duzgi – The Protector of Dersim (Pilgrimage, Social Transformation and Revitalization of the Raa Haqi Religion)’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2022, doi: 10.1080/13530194.2022.2126350.

‘Dersim as a Sacred Land – Contemporary Kurdish Alevi Ethno-Politics and Environmental Struggle’, in St. E. Hunt (ed.), *Ecological Solidarity and the Kurdish Freedom Movement*, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021, 225–243.

‘Kurdish Alevism: Creating New Ways of Practicing the Religion’, *Working Paper Series of the HCAS ‘Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities’*, 18 (2019), https://www.multiple-secularities.de/media/wps_18_gueltekin_alevikurds.pdf.

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