

**ZEYNEP OKTAY**

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## **ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

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- May 2019-* **Boğaziçi University, Department of Turkish Language and Literature**  
Assistant Professor
- June 2014-May 2019* **Boğaziçi University, Department of Turkish Language and Literature**  
Part-time Instructor
- February 2017-June 2017* **Boğaziçi University, Department of History**  
Part-time Instructor
- December 2014-December 2016* **University of St. Andrews School of History, Fife, Scotland, UK**  
Research Fellow  
ERC project: The Islamisation of Anatolia, c. 1100-1500

## **EDUCATION**

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- November 2010-June 2017* **Sorbonne University École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France**  
PhD in Islamic Civilization
- October 2006-June 2010* **Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey**  
MA in Turkish Language and Literature  
Area: Classical Turkish Literature
- September 2002-June 2006* **Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, USA**  
BA in Comparative Literature (French and English Literatures)
- September 1995-June 2002* **Robert College, Istanbul, Turkey**

## **ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS**

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- Vice Director, Nafi Baba Sufism, History and Cultural Heritage Research Center (since December 2021)  
Vice Chair, Boğaziçi University Department of Turkish Language and Literature (November 2020-November 2023)  
Executive Board Member (deputy), Nafi Baba Sufism, History and Cultural Heritage Research Center (December 2019-December 2021)  
Board Member, Nazım Hikmet Culture and Art Research Center (since May 2021)

## **AWARDS**

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- Turkish Science Academy's Young Scholar Award (BAGEP) 2025, in Literature  
BAGEP Social Sciences Award 2025, in Memory of Asım Kocabıyık

## **SCIENTIFIC BOARDS**

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- Institut français d'islamologie (since 2022)  
Zemin Edebiyat, Dil ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi, peer-reviewed journal (since 2021)  
The Federation of Alevi Foundations (AVF), Research Prize in Alevi and Bektashi Studies (since 2022)  
Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi, peer-reviewed journal (since 2022)

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Books

*I am the Essence of God: Kaygusuz Abdal and Dervish Poetry (with a translation of the Book of Prattle)*. Brill, forthcoming.

*Yol Benem Menzil Benem: Tasavvuf ve Alevilik Yazıları*, Alfa Kitap, forthcoming.

*Mesnevî-i Baba Kaygusuz*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 2013. 320 pp.

### Peer-reviewed articles & book chapters

With Ulaş Özdemir, "Değiş in Transmission: Alevi Music and Poetry as Religious Tradition." *New Perspectives on Turkey* (2025), 1–20. doi:10.1017/npt.2025.10045.

"Anadolu'da Türkçe Edebiyatın Doğuşu ve Mesnevi Nazım Biçimi: Yerelleşme, İcra, Ritüel." *Nesir: Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8 (2025):127-152.

"Selfhood and Mystical Meaning in the Poetry of Yunus Emre." In *Handbook of Turkish Literature*, ed. Didem Havlioğlu and Zeynep Uysal. Routledge, 2023, 40-55.

"Alevism as Islam: Rethinking Shahab Ahmed's Conceptualization of Islam through Alevi Poetry." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 49 No 2 (2022): 305-326.

"Historicizing Alevism: The Evolution of Abdal and Bektashi Doctrine." *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* Vol. 13 No 3-4 (2020): 425-456.

"Alevi-Bektashi Literature as a Discursive Tradition: Interpretive Strategies, Orality, Charisma Loyalty," In "Entangled Literatures and Histories in the Premodern Ottoman World," ed. N. İpek Hüner Cora and Michael Pifer, special issue, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* Vol 7. No 2 (2020): 33-53.

"The *şatıyye* of Yünus Emre and Kaygusuz Abdâl: The Creation of a Vernacular Islamic Tradition in Turkish." *Turcica* 50 (2019): 9-52.

### Other articles and book chapters

"The *Velâyetnâme* on the saintly presence and sensory regime of Hâccî Bektâş." *Islamic Sensory History, 1500-2000*, ed. Christian Lange et al. Brill, forthcoming.

"The *Mesnevi* Form and the Beginnings of Islamic Literary Culture in Anatolia." In *Jalal al-Din Rumi and his Legacy: Religion, Literature and Culture Between Medieval Anatolia and the Persianate World, 13th-14th Centuries*." ed. Andrew Peacock, Scott Redford and Richard McClary. Gingko Library, forthcoming.

"The Speaking Qur'an in Alevism: Poetry and the Word of God." In *Esotericism and the Qur'an / L'ésotérisme et le Coran*, ed. Wissam Halawi and Bruce Fudge, forthcoming.

"Sufi Metaphysics as Literary Theory: Şeyh Galib's *Beauty and Love*." In *Pre-modern Comparative Literary Practice in the Multilingual Islamic World*, ed. Hany Rashwan and David Larsen. Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

"Ottoman Dervish Poetry in the Sixteenth Century: The Religious and Poetic Discourse of Muhyiddin Abdâl." In *De la lettre à l'esprit / From the Letter to the Spirit: Travaux en hommage à Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi / Studies in Honour of Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi II*, ed. Mathieu Terrier ve Orkhan Mir-Kasimov. Turnhout: Brepols, 2025, 289-304.

"Bir Bilim Sahasının Doğuşu: Alevilik Çalışmalarının Metodolojisi Ne Olmalı?" In *Sosyal Bilimler Perspektifinden Aleviler ve Alevilik 1*, ed. Şükrü Aslan, Çiğdem Boz, Cemal Salman. Ütopya Yayınevi, 2023.

“Alevilik Bize Güncel İslam Tartışmaları Hakkında Ne Söyler?” In “Dinin Geleceği,” ed. Ayşe Çavdar and Volkan Ertit, special issue, *Pasajlar Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* Vol. 8 (2021): 53-78.

“Erken Dönem Bektaşî ve Abdal Şiirinde Farsçanın Rolü: Kaygusuz Abdal Örneği.” Festschrift in Honor of Zehra Toska, ed. Fatma Büyükkarcı Yılmaz and Tülay Gençtürk Demircioğlu, *Journal of Turkish Studies: Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları* Vol 54 (2020): 251-264.

“Yunus Emre Şiirleri ve Kemal Ümmî'nin *Kırk Armağan*'ının 15. Yüzyıla Ait Bilinmeyen Bir Yazması Üzerine.” *Journal of Turkish Studies: Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları* 50 (2018): 389-398.

“Giriş: Aleviliğin ve Bektaşîliğin Kültürel ve Edebi Kaynaklarını Nasıl Anlarız?” Special Section on Alevi-Bektashi Literature, ed. Zeynep Oktay Uslu, *Şerhh Şiir ve Eleştiri Dergisi* 6 (2017): 112-117.

“Yunus Emre ve Kaygusuz Abdal'ın Türkçe Şathiyeleri: Yerel Bir Dindarlık Geleneği Nasıl Doğdu?” Special Section on Alevi-Bektashi Literature, ed. Zeynep Oktay Uslu, *Şerhh Şiir ve Eleştiri Dergisi* 6 (2017): 176-199.

“Layers of Mystical Meaning and Social Context in the Works of Kaygusuz Abdal.” In A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (eds). *Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-century Anatolia*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Kommission (Istanbul Texts and Studies), 2016, 73-99.

“Hüseyin Ferhad İçin Üç Kör Nokta.” *Yeniyazı* 9 (2011): 50-61.

Preface. *Berlinde Üç Gün*. By Ahmet Mithat. Istanbul: Notos Kitap, 2009, pp.13-20

## Translations

(Trans. Zeynep Oktay). Corbin, Henry. *Bir'le Bir Olmak: İbn Arabî Tasavvufunda Yaratıcı Muhayyile*. Istanbul: Pinhan Yayınevi, 2013.

(Ed. Zeynep Oktay). Ahmet Mithat Efendi. *Berlinde Üç Gün*. Istanbul: Notos Kitap, 2009.

## Book Reviews

Book review for: Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds.), *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) and Vefa Erginbaş (ed.), *Ottoman Sunnism: New Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), *Die Welt des Islams* 63/3 (2023): 372-375.

## Poetry Book

*Birlerken*. Istanbul: Epona Kitap, 2024.

## PRESENTATIONS

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“L'alévisme comme islam: une lecture critique de la poésie alévie,” *Diversité(s) en islam: Fondements et implications d'une pluralité complexe*, Université de Strasbourg / Institut français d'islamologie, 8-9 September 2025.

“Persian and Turkish Sufi Literature Between Affect, Embodiment and Subjectivity,” *Tenth Biennial Convention of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies* (ASPS), Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, 12-16 August 2025.

“The Sensory Regime of the Saint's Body in the Hagiography of Hacı Bektaş,” *Sensescapes of War and Ritual in the Early Modern Islamic World*, Utrecht University, 13-14 February 2025.

“Alevi and Bektashi Manuscript Traditions: A Methodological Overview.” Austrian Academy of Sciences, 10 December 2024.

“Shapeshifting and Embodiment in the Hagiography of Hacı Bektaş.” *La métempscyhose en Islam / Metempsychosis in Islam*. Aix-Marseille University, 14-16 November 2024.

“The Body, Senses and Spiritual Power in Late-Medieval Turkish Texts.” *Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting*, 11-15 November 2024.

“Sufism Between Affect, Embodiment and Subjectivity.” *Material Religion in Turkey*. Orient-Institut Istanbul, 17-18 October 2024.

Instructor at weekly camp: Anadolu’da Dervişlik ve Erenlik (Dervishhood and Sainthood in Anatolia), Arkhé Project, Şirince Turkey, 20-23 July 2024.

“The *Mesnevi* Form and the Beginning of Islamic Literary Culture in Anatolia.” *25th Symposium of the Comité International des Etudes Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes (CIEPO)*. Tirana, Sami Frasheri Institute, 21-24 June 2024.

“Türkçe Edebiyatın Doğuşu ve Anadolu’nun İslamlaşması Bağlamında Mesnevi Nazım Şekli.” Doğuş University Department of Turkish Language and Literature, 26 March 2024.

“Sözlü ve Yazılı Geleneğin Kesişim Noktasında Alevi-Bektaşî Edebiyatı.” *Mainz Türk Edebiyatı Günleri*. Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, 26-27 January 2024.

“Alevi Literature Between Oral and Written Tradition.” *Lecture Series Interdisciplinary Studies in Alevism*. University of Vienna, 7 November 2023.

“Alevi Studies as an Emerging Field: A Methodological Discussion.” *Alevi Pasts Contested: Workshop on Alevi Historiography*. Leipzig University, 6 October 2023.

“The Masnavi Form Between Orality and Literacy in Fourteenth Century Anatolia.” *Jalal al-Din Rumi and his Legacy: Religion, Literature and Culture between Medieval Anatolia and the Persianate World, 13th-14th Centuries*. British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 6-7 July 2023.

“The Bektashization of Yunus Emre’s poetic tradition: What the earliest manuscripts tell us.” *Sufi Manuscript Cultures II*. Boğaziçi Üniversitesi. 5-6 June 2023.

“The History of Popular Religion in Turkey: Conceptual and Methodological Issues.” *Religion and its History in Turkey: New Approaches, Alternative Perspectives*. Leipzig University, 27-28 January 2023.

“Preeternity and Time in Turkish Sufi Poetry.” *Conference: Faces of Islam: Of Tolerance and Coercion*. Utrecht University, 13-14 October 2022.

Instructor at weekly camp: Beylikler Dönemi Anadolu: Siyasi Tarih & Kültürel Panorama (Anatolia in the Beylik Period: Political History and Cultural Panorama), Arkhé Project, Şirince Turkey, 13-20 August 2022.

Instructor at weekly camp: What is Islam?, Arkhé Project, Şirince Turkey, 18-25 June 2022.

“The Speaking Qur’an in Alevism: Poetry and the Word of God,” *Conference: Esotericism and the Qur’an*. Université de Lausanne, 5-7 May 2022.

“Beyond Doctrinal and Confessional Boundaries: The Religious Doctrine of Muhyiddin Abdal.” *New Horizons in Kizilbash/Alevi-Bektashi History Workshop*. William&Mary, VA-USA, 29 April-1 May 2022.

“Yunus Emre Şiirinde Benlik ve Mana.” *Yunus Emre, Hacı Bektaş Veli ve Ahi Evran Sempozyumu*. İstanbul Lütfi Kırdar Kongre ve Sergi Sarayı, 4-5 December 2021.

“Sufi Metaphysics as Literary Theory: Şeyh Galib’s Beauty and Love.” *Pre-modern Comparative Literary Practice in the Multilingual Islamic World(s)*. OCCT, University of Oxford, 22-24 July 2021.

“Aux sources de l’alévisme : l’évolution des doctrines abdāl et bektachi.” Institut Français d’Études Anatoliennes, Istanbul, 7 December 2020.

“Alevi-Bektashi poetry as discourse: Interpretive communities and discursive categories.” *Online workshop: Approaching the pir-talip relationship as a tool for understanding Alevi deyiş/nefes*. Leipzig University, 9-10 October 2020.

“Alevism as Islam: How Alevi Poetry Forces us to Rethink Shahab Ahmed’s Conceptualization of Islam,” *Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting*, New Orleans, 14-17 November 2019.

“The Role of Persian in Early Bektashi and Abdal Poetry: The Case of Kaygusuz Abdal.” *Persian as a Lingua Franca in the Ottoman Empire*. Hamburg University, 12-13 July 2019.

“Rum Abdallarının Eserlerinde İnanç Unsurlarının Dönüşümü: 14.-17. Yüzyıllar.” *Zehra Toska Onuruna Sempozyum*. Boğaziçi University, Department of Turkish Language and Literature, 9 February 2018.

“The Making of a Genre: How Folk Tradition and Sufi Tradition Come Together in the Turkish *Şaḫhiyye*.” *Aesthetic Dimensions of Alevi Cultural Heritage Lecture Series*. Orient-Institut Istanbul, 11 October 2017.

“Situational Identities in Late Medieval Sufi Poetry: The Case of Kaygusuz Abdal.” *New Religiosities in Turkey Workshop 2 (2016): Biography, Personal Identity, Ego, the Self, and Self-Transformation*. Orient-Institut Istanbul, 17-19 March 2016.

“The notion of syncretism and its relation to orality in the formation of the doctrines of Alevism and Bektashism.” *International Conference, Islamisation: Comparative perspectives from History*. University of St. Andrews, Scotland UK, 20-21 March 2015.

“Kaygusuz Abdal and the Religious Doctrine of the *Abdâlân-ı Rûm*.” *Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting 2014*. Washington DC, 22-25 November 2014.

## LANGUAGES

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|------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| <b>Turkish</b>         | Native    | <b>English</b> | Excellent |
| <b>Ottoman Turkish</b> | Excellent | <b>French</b>  | Excellent |
| <b>Persian</b>         | Very Good | <b>Arabic</b>  | Very Good |
| <b>Russian</b>         | Fair      |                |           |