Boundaries of innovation: Turkish religious politics between pedagogic inventiveness and theological transgression

Janson, Torsten

2019

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
Boundaries of innovation
Turkish religious politics between pedagogic inventiveness
and theological transgression

Torsten Janson
Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University

This paper discusses the Turkish state sponsored celebration of ‘Holy Birth Week’ (HBW), commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammed. Successfully transformed from 2010 into a massive, national celebration, it was considered a success for the Islamically oriented AKP government. It however not only infuriated the secularist opposition. More significantly, it spurred theological critique, alleging HBW to represent an unacceptable religious innovation (bida’), leading to a complete re-formulation and downsizing from 2017.

This paper explores the HBW controversy as indicative of the current blurring of the sacred/secular, traditional/modern, public/private binaries in Turkish religio-politics. Re-medialized and innovative celebrations sacralizes secular institutions and public spheres, while simultaneously secularizing religious practices and imaginations. Religo-pedagogical inventiveness thus requires delicate boundary-drawings, between aspirations of mobilization and the dangers of transgressing institutional mandates and theological sensitivities.