

Construction of Denominational Reality: A Theo-Political Discourse Analysis of “Muhammad: The Messenger of God”

Gerçekliğin Mezhepsel İnşası: “Hz. Muhammed: Allah’ın Elçisi (Mohammad Rasoolollah)” Filminin Teo-Politik Söylem Analizi

Bahset KARSLI

Doç. Dr. Akdeniz Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Din Sosyolojisi Anabilim Dalı
Assoc. Prof., Akdeniz University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Sociology of Religion,
Antalya / Turkey
bkarsli@akdeniz.edu.tr

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6810-0900

Ayşegül TÜRKERİ

Öğretmen, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı
Teacher, Ministry of National Education, Antalya / Turkey

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7976-6935

Makale Bilgisi | Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Type: Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Geliş Tarihi / Date Received: 14 Temmuz / July 2020

Kabul Tarihi / Date Accepted: 15 Kasım / November 2020

Yayın Tarihi / Date Published: 31 Aralık / December 2020

Yayın Sezonu / Pub Date Season: Aralık / December

DOI: 10.29288/ilted.768917

Atıf / Citation: Karslı, Bahset – Türkeri, Ayşegül. “Construction of Denominational Reality: A Theo-Political Discourse Analysis of “Muhammad: The Messenger of God” / Gerçekliğin Mezhepsel İnşası: “Hz. Muhammed: Allah’ın Elçisi (Mohammad Rasoolollah)” Filminin Teo-Politik Söylem Analizi”. *ilted: ilabiyat tetkikleri dergisi / journal of ilabiyat researches* 54 (Aralık / December 2020/2), 109-130. doi: 10.29288/ilted.768917

İntihal: Bu makale, özel bir yazılımca taranmıştır. İntihal tespit edilmemiştir.
Plagiarism: This article has been scanned by a special software. No plagiarism detected.
web: <http://dergipark.gov.tr/ilted> | <mailto:ilahiyatdergi@atauni.edu.tr>

Copyright © Published by Atatürk Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi /
Ataturk University, Faculty of Theology, Erzurum, 25240 Turkey
Bütün hakları saklıdır. / All right reserved.



Abstract*

For social analysis, cinema offers researchers a comprehensive data store. The time and space having been redesigned through cinematography cannot be shaped independently of the director's internalized ideological, social, cultural and political realities. The argument of the paper is the instrumentalization of the cinema to construct daily realities with discursive codes through the director's personal perceptions reflected to the film. Throughout the paper questions such as through which methods the director develops his cinematic language to shape the reality, how he reshapes society's realities to create a new image of The Prophet and what kind of motivations inspire him to practise a retrospective outlook are tried to be answered. Discourse analysis of our data has been carried out with the phenomenological method. In the analyses, it has been observed that theo-political associations such as language, lineage, ahl al-bayt, evaluation of past events with today's concepts play an active role in denominationally-constructed realities. The implications of contemporary Shiite views is conveyed to the audience with cinematographic techniques such the disruption of time integrity with flashbacks, the narrator of the film, the reflection of miracles with the deus ex machina technique, etc.

Keywords: Psychology of religion, Theo-politics, Cinema, Construction of reality, Discourse analysis, Phenomenology, Majid Majidi, Shi'a.

Öz

Toplumsal çözümlemelerde sinema, araştırmacılara kapsamlı bir veri deposu sunmaktadır. Sinematografik yönden yeniden tasarlanan zaman ve mekân, yönetmenin içselleşmiş ideolojik, toplumsal, kültürel ve politik gerçeklerinden bağımsız şekillenememektedir. Çalışmanın konusu, yönetmenin bireysel algılarının filme yansımaları olarak gözlemediğimiz söylemsel kodlarla sinemanın gündelik gerçeklik inşasında araçsallaştırılmasıdır. Çalışmada yönetmenin hangi yöntemler geliştirerek gerçeklik oluşturduğu, toplumun gerçekliklerini nasıl şekillendirerek Hz. Peygamber algısını yeniden ürettiği ve hangi motivasyonlarla geçmişe dönük okumalar yaptığı gibi sorularına cevap aranmıştır. Filmde uyguladığımız fenomenolojik yöntemle verilerimizin söylem analizleri gerçekleştirilmiştir. Analizlerde dil, soybağı, ehl-i beyt, geçmişteki olayların bugünün kavramlarıyla değerlendirilmesi gibi teo-politik çağrışımların mezhepsel yönden inşa edilmiş gerçekliklerde aktif rol oynadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Filmde zımnen bulunan çağdaş Şii bakışı, flashbacklerle zaman bütünlüğünün bozulması, filmin anlatıcısı, mucizelerin deus ex machina tekniğiyle yansıtılması vb. sinematografik tekniklerle seyirciye aktarılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Teo-politik, Sinema, Gerçeklik inşası, Söylem analizi, Fenomenoloji, Majid Majidi, Şia.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema studies have turned into an indispensable part of Social Sciences. After its appearance in the late 1800s, cinema has become a symbol of social changes, which has served as a ground on which social realities have been analysed. It could be understood that the cinema has formed its own language, which is sometimes even symbolic, that enables researchers to track the discourse embedded in a film by the director and approach the cinema as a data store for analysing the society.

* This study is a part of master's thesis entitled: "The Analysis of Theo-political Discourse-Cinema-Construction of Reality Within The Sample of Muhammed: The Messenger of God" prepared by Ayşegül Türkeri under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahset Karşı./Bu çalışma Doç. Dr. Bahset Karşı danışmanlığında Ayşegül Türkeri tarafından hazırlanan "Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi Film Örneğinde Teopolitik Söylem-Sinema-Gerçeklik İnşası" isimli yüksek lisans tezinden üretilmiştir.

Symbolically enough, the cinema itself, the language of the cinema and the cinematographic perspective have the capacity of creating, manipulating or reconstructing the perception of reality. At this point, there appeared a series of debates such as thought of reality, relation between space and time, history and social understanding, ideology and identity connection etc., and there have been director-centred analyses. As Gök mentioned, the director uses the language of the cinema so that s/he could reconstruct the concept of time by preferences of camera angles and lighting during image recording¹ with the help of this language. In other words, real life objects and space can change in accordance with the director's perspective and aim. To make it clear, it can be said that the product of cinema presents a phenomenological understanding of the director, and his perspective, as being one of the key points, could lead him/her to "suspend" the reality. To Gök, the product of the cinema reveals phenomenological understanding of a director. Therefore, it is possible to state that the reality in cinema is a shaped-reality within a fictional frame.

The potentials of cinema are quite abundant that it provides an opportunity to the director to create a brand-new world. Supporting the idea that "actual events can be changed, new realities can be created",² Arnheim evaluates the opportunities of the language of cinema as follows:

The film artist chooses a particular scene that he wishes to photograph. Within this scene he can leave out objects, cover them up, make them prominent, and yet not interfere with reality. He can increase or decrease the size of things, can make small objects larger than big ones, and vice versa. He can put beside, behind, among one another, things that are entirely separate in space and time. He can pick out what is important, however small and inconspicuous it may be, and thus let the part represent the whole. He can lay down what is upright, and set upright what is recumbent, can move what stands still, and arrest what is moving. He thereby brings others into higher relief, ingeniously making them take the place of those that are missing. He can let the dumb speak and thereby interpret the sphere of sound. He shows the world not only as it appears objectively but also subjectively. He creates new realities, in which things can be multiplied, turns their movements and actions backward, distorts them, retards or accelerates them.³

Arnheim not only emphasizes the director's phenomenological interference to the film, but also raises concerns over his/her reconstruction of the reality. In other words, the director reshapes the realities that s/he has taken as a section from the everyday life and reflects them as s/he envisages in his/her mind. In just the same way as Arnheim, Pudovkin also underlines the reality drawn by the director. According to Pudovkin, "the foundation of film art is editing."⁴ Therefore, the source where the cinema and its language get power is the way it is edited, and how the

¹ Cüneyt Gök, "Sinema ve Gerçeklik", *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1/2 (2007), 115.

² Rudolf Arnheim, *Film As Art* (the USA-California: University of California Press, 1957), 101.

³ Arnheim, *Film As Art*, 132-133.

⁴ Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin, *Film Technique And Film Acting*, trans. Ivor Montagu (London: Vision Press Limited, 1966), 13.

reality is reconstructed. The common ground Arnheim and Pudovkin meet in the reconstruction of reality is subjectivity. For this reason, the film, which could be accepted as an attempt to interpret the reality with the director's personal/subjective experiences, is reconstructed from a subjective perspective by bracketing the realities.

The arguable relation between cinema and reality could result in the instrumentalization of cinema. That cinema reconstructs the reality cannot be explainable by "cinematographic culture" alone.⁵ The concept of cinematographic culture, basically meaning the director's liberalization complication during image recording, is based on the issue whether a director can elude his/her culture, ideology, values and moral norms. For the very reason, the discussion of instrumentalization becomes apparent. Writers of *Politik Kamera*, Ryan and Kellner elaborate the relation between reconstruction of reality through cinema and instrumentalization of it in detail. It is not just cinema when the director recording images, it is also reconstruction of reality, precisely shaped by the director's tendencies and priorities. Therefore, this brand-new reality contributes to an aim. Underlining that the representation of the world is politic, Ryan and Kellner explain that each narrative style is related with representative strategies. That is why cinema is not merely about performing or describing "reality". Moreover, cinema itself constructs a phenomenological world in which the audience are situated to witness the world from a particular perspective.⁶

When a phenomenological world is constructed, the question of through which methods the director constructs reality arises in mind. The reality experienced and interpreted by the individual consciousness brings out a new language as it suspends all objectivity except itself. In another word, a particular phenomenological perspective requires its own language and consequently its own discourse. As it is witnessed throughout our sample film, the director's phenomenological world develops its own discourse by means of a theo-political discourse. It could be obviously uttered that a director's reconstruction of reality is inevitably shaped by his/her way of nurture by the society. From a "Bergerian"⁷ phenomenological understanding, a director gets through a series of processes at the end of which s/he becomes a member of that society and its culture. When the process is followed, the first step, which is externalization, shows a particular society in which the director is born. It is obvious that his/her understanding and outlook are constructed by the objectified norms and realities of that society. At the end, s/he internalizes all these

⁵ Gülseren Güçhan, "Sinema-Toplum İlişkileri", *Kurgu Dergisi* 12 (1993), 55.

⁶ Michale Ryan- Douglas Kellner, *Politik Kamera*, trans. E. Özsayar (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Pub., 2010), 419.

⁷ Robert Wuthnow et al., *Cultural Analysis* (the UK: Routledge, 2012), 21.

norms and realities, and is transformed into a product of that society.⁸ Thus, it could be expected his/her product to be non-conflicting with the society, even to be identical to the society's norms. Therefore, as conceptualized as cinematographic culture and as emphasized by Arnheim, Pudovkin, Gök, Güçhan, Ryan and Kellner, it is underlined that a director could not be independent of his/her own subjective and politic perspective during the creating process, even s/he could manipulate realities in accordance with his/her perspective. At this point, the visual and verbal discourse analysis applied to the analysis of our sample film helps to examine the language of cinema organized from the phenomenological point of view. Along with the question that through which methods the director constructs the reality, as one of the main problems of the study, there arises inevitable sub-problems such as the extent to which social memory can affect the cinema, the integrity of objectivity and subjectivity of reality, the role of culture and ideology -as productions of externalization- in building social memory, the traces of ideology and culture during the social construction of reality, etc. Therefore, the essential purpose of this study is to analyse the problems of the paper by realising the motivations led to the theo-political discourse in the phenomenologically drawn world. As a result, it could be reached that there is a theo-political pattern background of a film instrumentalized by theo-political discourse.

The main reason why discourse analysis has been applied to this study is that discourse analysis serves a comprehensive analysis of data among such methods. Discourse analysis, basically, comprises language and "other stuff".⁹ Namely, since discourse includes ways of acting, interacting, feeling, believing, valuing, objects, symbols, tools etc. as well as language itself, discourse analysis serves a sound way of interpreting an understanding. Gee defines discourse as political¹⁰ and its key as recognition.¹¹ In addition, in discourse analysis, the idea that language serves to shape the world of its users is quite dominant¹². In addition, discourse analysis depends on the meanings behind words and implicit values.¹³ Hence, the presence of the social codes learned by the director through the socialization process, namely the usage of recognizable images, in the film is a sign of phenomenologically and socially constructed mentality of the director. That is to say, since it would not be sufficient to hold only visual and verbal categories, the film is held as a whole. Dis-

⁸ Peter Ludwig Berger, *The Sacred Canopy Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011), 10.

⁹ James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 7.

¹⁰ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*, 1.

¹¹ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*, 18.

¹² Ali Balcı, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntem, Teknik ve İlkeler*, (Ankara: Pegem Akademi,2016), 194.

¹³ Balcı, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntem, Teknik ve İlkeler*, 195.

course analysis stands for analysing values, symbols, attitudes, etc. embedded in the film implicitly by the director by means of using cinematographic language.

In our sample, which we approach with Bergerian social construction paradigms, a denominationally constructed understanding is analysed with theological discourse method. For the film, it could be possibly asserted that the director Majidi's approach to deep-rooted Islamic debates are phenomenologically reconstructed by suspending certain historical realities. Majidi has penetrated problematic issues into the film in order to make his denominational worldview recognizable to the audience, which is the main driver of discourse analysis. Majidi, through a wide variety of symbolic scenes from the beginning to the end of the film, tends to create a brand-new model of The Prophet by dealing with the issues extending from the past to the present from a denominational perspective. That he situates Abu Talib at the heart/centre of the plot is one of the remarkable symbolic and discursive elements. Abu Talib's narration could be understood as the first implication of the director's denominational reality penetrated in the depths of his film. Together with this central figure's contributions to the theo-political analysis, it enables us to construct other theo-political comments on him. Therefore, the analysis of the film is divided into three categories through visual and verbal scenes. The first category contains analyses related to Shiite realities which can be regarded as effective in the formation of the director's own phenomenological world and how he perceived the Prophet. For our sample film, highly claimed that it is based on the director's personal understanding of The Prophet, it is concluded that both ideological and theological justifications construct phenomenologically shaped realities. Reconstructed perception of prophet has formed the second category. Since The Prophet is portrayed in an intense relation with miracles, he draws parallels with Jesus Christ, who is a commonly recognizable figure in the cinema. The last category comprises some iconic scenes which function evaluating past events through today's understandings. Especially events happening in the 21st century are interpreted with references to the 7th century leading the film to anachronism.

Majid Majidi, one of the eminent and worldwide-known Iranian directors, is known as a Neo-Realist and is strictly attached to ancient Iranian culture. His filmography, dating back to 1980s, reveals that he takes part every step of cinema such as acting, producing and directing. *The Children of Heaven*, which was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film in 1999, is one of the most characteristic examples of his cinematic language. This nomination was accepted as the transformation of Iran's showcase from carpet and pistachio as it was before Revolution.¹⁴ As a Neo-Realist, Majidi both prefers amateur actors and

¹⁴ Ufuk Uğur, "İran Yeni Dalga Sineması ve Majid Majidi'nin "Cennetin Çocukları" Filmi", *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7/2 (Temmuz 2017), 335.

real characters instead of stars and is loyal to theological understanding of his society.¹⁵ Frequently emphasizing his Iranian-Muslim identity, his film dealing with identity and sectarian understanding is quite appropriate to be chosen as a sample.

1. PHENOMENOLOGICAL BASIS OF THEO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The theo-political concept comprises of both theology and politics. In the film, it is observed that theological and political discourses are presented relatedly. Cündioğlu, who had the opportunity to observe the authentic set atmosphere and consider the details of the film with Majidi, writes about the theo-political implications of the film in his article.¹⁶ The film could be theological because it obviously deals with the life of the Islamic Prophet, which helps us hold the film theologically. On the other hand, the film is political because it situates socio-political priorities of a nation, which are accepted as indispensable parts of their state and social life. Moreover, that the film is sponsored by the Government¹⁷ makes it inevitable to hear the echo of official ideology in the film. The film is somehow beyond Majidi's choices as a director. As discourse analysis includes values, symbols, attitudes, implications, etc., the fund of the film brings the film up for discussion inevitably. In Islamic Republic of Iran, it is widely accepted that the line between ideology and politics is blurred. That is why ideology and politics are regarded as interwoven. The Shi'ite ideology, which has given shape to the film, can be observed due to the government's intervention to the film.

In other respects, denominational reproduction of the film's editing draws attention to the characterization of the film as theo-political. Since the foundation of film art is editing, and editing could create a new reality, this brand-new reality is shaped within the context of its own discourse. A director could edit his/her film in thousands of different possibilities. Monaco, underlining the relation and interaction between editing and discourse, points out that "Anything that happens in life that can be seen or heard can be recorded on film, tape, or disc."¹⁸ As stated, a film reveals an alternative reality and discourse chosen among possible ones. In other words, the recording arts comprise an entirely new mode of discourse, parallel to those already in existence. Just like Monaco, Cündioğlu utters that anything included in editing is arbitrary¹⁹ and the real reason why the director chooses/prefers *that* particular parallel mode of reality unearths the discourse. That is to say, each scene is preferred consciously and phenomenologically by the director.

¹⁵ Uğur, "İran Yeni Dalga Sineması ve Majid Majidi'nin "Cennetin Çocukları" Filmi", 338.

¹⁶ Dıçane Cündioğlu, "Bir Theo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi", *Hürriyet* (5 November 2016).

¹⁷ Cündioğlu, "Bir Theo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi".

¹⁸ James Monaco, *How To Read A Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38.

¹⁹ Cündioğlu, "Bir Theo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi".

The rhetoric of the brand-new/alternative reality carries a great importance while analysing the theo-political discourse. Besides, the striking aspect of this rhetoric is the language itself. Language is widely accepted as a symbol of a culture, namely of an understanding. As reported by Balci, language is characterized by historical, cultural and political experiences of its users. At the same time, the usage of language is associated with different aspects of life such as social, economic, political and cultural aspects.²⁰ Therefore, the language preferred by the director enables us to assert the idea that it has a specific function in the film. In *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*, it is remarkable to focus on the original language of the film, namely Persian, which is the director's native language, as well. In fact, the language preference displays the theo-political discourse of the director; because language itself is at the heart of a world understanding, rhetoric and eventually discourse. It could be deduced that the director interferes a historical fact, that the Prophet Muhammad spoke Arabic, and manipulates reality for his own understanding. Persian language of the film puts forward the rhetoric, which not only takes it shape from discursive codes but also aims to transmit its functions to the audience. Majidi, as a Shi'ite director, gives clues about his denominationally constructed mind-set. Therefore, the director has reconstructed the Islamic Prophet, who speaks Persian, and ahl al-bayt.

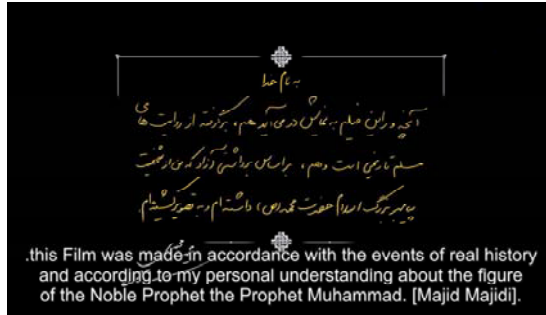
When we consider the comments on the director's denominational emphasis throughout the film, it could be said that these comments are not groundless. Majidi himself apparently reveals his intention on shooting a film on behalf of Islamic position. In one of his interviews, Majidi underlines his artistic and politic sensibility against Islamophobia. He puts his preference into words that a response to the rise of Islamophobia in the West should be via cinema instead of burning their flags.²¹ His attempt is an obvious sign of his political attitude, so with the help of the film he replies to the Islamophobia in accordance with his own social, namely Shi'ite, realities. In other words, Majidi's artistic temperament against a theologically and politically based discrimination movement such as Islamophobia gives the film a theo-political characteristic.

Another hint of the director's denominational mind-set reflected in the film is the note presented just before it starts.

²⁰ Ali Balci, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntem, Teknik ve İlkeler*, 193-195.

²¹ Majid Majidi, "Kendi Festivalimizi Üretmemiz Gerekıyor" (Interviewer: Majid Majidi, trans. Farzad Samadli, Interview Transcription), *TRTakademi* 3/5 (Ocak 2018), 382.

Figure 1: Majidi's Note. This film was made in accordance with the events of real history and according to my personal understanding about the figure of the Noble Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad. Majid Majidi



This note straightforwardly shows that the film is not solely based on historical records about the Prophet Muhammad and his life. Majidi warns the audience beforehand that the film also contains the implications of his own perception of the Prophet Muhammad. This is, indeed, a way of acknowledging bracketing historical realities to convey his phenomenological approach. What the audience watch on the screen is ambiguous because the line between historical data and Majidi's personal understanding becomes vague. At this very point, it could be inferred that Majidi, by using cinematic techniques, instrumentalizes the cinema to reconstruct a new model of the prophetic perception in harmony with his denominationally objectified realities. As an outcome, after the audience's internalization process, there would be a reconstructed and new Shi'ite version image of prophet in their minds.

The director's note is a clear evident of his phenomenological approach. Thus, the note urges analysts to apply theo-political discourse analysis to this film. It is essential to remark that Majidi's note tends the audience to get the impression of "Majidi's Prophet".²² As a matter of fact, though The Prophet was not limited to the 7th century, but reached beyond his time, it could be observed that Majidi has portrayed him restricted to the special characteristic of a sectarian group. When two prophetic images are compared, Majidi's Prophet is bounded by Shiite realities by suspending the historical realities. To make it clear, it would be helpful to apply historical and sociological facts. The Prophet Muhammad is a member of the Hashemites as a historical reality. The social codes before and during his lifetime have lots of sociological, political and economic meanings to be a member of a house. Especially, being a member of a society, which is embodied by the concept of *'asaba*, is the basis of tribal system. The concept of *'asaba* stands for the agnates and it is vital for Arabic society to support each agnate without questioning.²³ That Prophet Muhammad is a member of the Hashemites makes sense with the *'asaba*

²² Cündioğlu, "Bir Teo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi".

²³ İbrahim Sarıçam, *Emevî-Hâşimî İlişkileri İslam Öncesinden Abbâsilere Kadar* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Pub., 1997), 24-25.

understanding in Arabic society. Although such a practice was a shield for the Prophet Muhammad at the beginning of his declaration, it is noteworthy that this concept of ancestry is highly emphasized throughout the film. In other words, the concept of ‘*asaba* turns to be another theo-political symbol in the film. Discursively, it is a denominational attempt to stereotype the Prophet Muhammad by means of ‘*asaba*. This is, in fact, closely connected with one of the controversial polemics of Islam, which is caliphate.

According to Shi’ite doctrine, the Prophet Muhammad explicitly pointed his successor who is definitely Ali. Moreover, some verses of the Qur’an and a series of hadiths were offered by the Shi’a as proof of their claim. The polemic related with the successor dates back to the Prophet Muhammad’s death. Ali’s followers (the Shi’a) heatedly defended that the caliphate should remain in Hashemite house. From this point of view, the film could be evaluated as a 21st century discursive, denominational and theo-political interpretation of caliphate’s legitimacy. In other words, the concept of ‘*asaba*, which makes sense among the society, turns to be a social construction tool with the help of cinematic techniques talentedly applied by the director, Majidi. For, it could be said that the idea of lineage in the chain of caliphate in the Shi’a understanding is discursively embodied by ‘*asaba* with the language of cinema.

Why the film is evaluated as a theo-political discourse highly depends on Shi’ite doctrine. It is widely believed that the imam undertakes the Prophet Muhammad’s general power of attorney. Therefore, Shi’ite Islam understanding assumes the Imamah as a continuation of *nubuwwah*.²⁴ In plain, Shi’ite doctrine esteems the Imamah as an institutionalized version of Islam. By doing so, there appears an organic bond between the Prophet Muhammad and the Imamah, the concept on which Islamic Republic of Iran builds its ideology. Depending its ideological premises on the Prophet Muhammad and emphasizing it through a film in the 21st century can be read as an attempt of reconstructing a new understanding of the Prophet Muhammad.²⁵

One of the critical theo-political features of the film is embodied by a witness. Applying a witness for or against is a cinematic technique stressing historical reality of the film. That is to say, the audience tends to accept the film as a real section taken from –real- ongoing history.²⁶

²⁴ Hanifi Şahin, *Şiilerin Gözüyle Sunniler* (İstanbul: Mana Pub., 2016), 98.

²⁵ Şahin, *Şiilerin Gözüyle Sunniler*, 35.

²⁶ Ryan-Kellner, *Politik Kamera*, 241.

Figure 2: Abu Talib at the Beginning and at the end of the Film



Most of the incidents take place between these two scenes. The witness and the narrator of the film is Abu Talib, who is the Prophet Muhammad's uncle and Ali's father. He is a precious and honourable character in Islamic history. Abu Talib is portrayed as a protection figure for The Prophet in most of the scenes, one of which is the boycott scene. He has comprehensive knowledge of both pre-Islamic period and the first years of Islam. Hence, it is quite reasonable for Majidi to choose him as a witness, namely the narrator. On the other hand, that Majidi uses omniscient point of view²⁷, which means he even knows what is in the Prophet Muhammad's mind or how he feels although they are apart, which could be accepted as remarkable. In a sense, the audience watches, understands and interprets incidents through Abu Talib's eyes, namely from his perspective. In Shiite doctrine, ahl al-bayt is identified with Ali to some extent, and Abu Talib is Ali's father. Historically there occurs an obvious link between Abu Talib and ahl al-bayt. Therefore, it could be inferred that ahl al-bayt is symbolized by Abu Talib in the film. Situating Abu Talib at the heart of the narration becomes meaningful under the light of Fiğlali's explanation about Shiite claims on Ali's legitimacy. He reports that terminologically the Shi'a accepts Ali and ahl al-bayt as the caliph as *res judicata* and divine appointment. Moreover, successor caliphs will remain through his descendants.²⁸ In other words, the caliphate depends on lineage. To get to the main point, the Imamah is an objectified reality for the Iranian society. Internalized by each of its member, Ali, Abu Talib and ahl al-bayt are recognizable signs, which is the key point of discourse analysis. Even without any words, Majidi discursively and phenomenologically points out familiar concepts to his audience.

2. A BRAND-NEW PERCEPTION OF THE PROPHET

Upon watching the film, it could be evaluated that the perception of The Prophet, who has been portrayed in the context of a particular discourse, seems to be reconstructed by the director. It could be underlined that the function of Ali in

²⁷ The omniscient point of view (third-person point of view): The omniscient point of view. This is a common term for the many and varied works of fiction written in accord with the convention that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents, actions, and events, and has privileged access to the characters' thoughts, feelings, and motives; also that the narrator is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character, and to report (or conceal) their speech, doings, and states of consciousness. Meyer Howard Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 241.

²⁸ Ethem Ruhi Fiğlali, *Çağımızda İtikadi İslam Mezhepleri* (İstanbul: Şa-To Pub., 2001), 133.

the reconstruction of The Prophet's perception empowers the theo-political discourse. First of all, that the role Majidi assigned to Ali is basically protective, just like to his father Abu Talib, which is thoroughly noticeable. Since his appearance is solely limited to a specific scene, it could be asserted that Majidi includes Ali in the film purposely just to protect the Prophet. He has merely a short scene in which he undertakes the duty of protecting The Prophet from his opponents. That Ali is included in the film with just a mission can be disclosed by the film's theo-political discourse. Moreover, it is notable that none of the Rashidun exits in the film except for Ali. Indeed, Ali's presence in the film itself and his role as a protector of The Prophet could utterly be regarded as a theo-political discourse. Additionally, Ali is screened in a physically limited way. While the director makes the Prophet Muhammad visible, which is another controversial issue in Islamic understanding, he does not screen Ali entirely as it is seen in the pictures below.

Figure 3: The Only Scene Where Ali is Presented.



The fact that Ali's existence has a protective role in the film and is kept physically secret/unseen can be explained as the manifestation of the holiness attributed to him. The reason why his secret appearance is accepted as holiness could be deduced from the film itself. This specific scene takes place just after Abu Talib has heard that The Prophet's opponents are planning to hurt him. At that exact time, Ali shares limited stocks "fairly" among the The Hashemites under the boycott. Worried that the Meccans might harm The Prophet, Abu Talib entrusts only his son, Ali, to protect The Prophet. Therefore, the holiness attributed to Ali discursively brings to mind the thought of redeemer, that is Mahdi. In just the same way as Judaism and Christianity, some Islamic sects, especially the Shi'a, are in expectation of a redeemer. The Battle of Karbala and martyrdom of Imam Husain ibn Ali in 680 AD caused a severe trauma among the Shi'a and led them to expect a redeemer.²⁹ According to Shi'ite doctrine, there are twelve imams in the Imamah line beginning with Ali. All imams are descendants of Ali and the last imam is Muhammad al-Mahdi,³⁰ who is believed to be currently alive but hidden until he returns to bring justice to the world. The idea of a redeemer of Judaism, Christianity and Islam almost have the same qualities and the redeemer will occur after a series of similar incidents. This theologically corresponding concept has also theo-

²⁹ Ethem Ruhi Fiğlalı, "Mesih ve Mehdi İnancı Üzerine, Mezhepler Tarihi Açısından Bir Bakış", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 25/1 (1982), 198.

³⁰ Allamah Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: State University of New York Press, 1975), 169-186.

political echoes in social realities. The fact that some of the social groups expect a redeemer as a part of their religious belief also turns to be their objectified social reality. Furthermore, along with the idea of redeemer, the existence of apocalyptic prophecies that predict a destructive and final war, which is commonly known as Armageddon, unearth both political and sociological grounds of this understanding. Considering the idea of a redeemer independent of whether this is just a fantastic belief or not, theo-political aspect of it is eminent. This is a social reality for particular groups and it could be highly influential on politicians while determining not only domestic policies, but also foreign ones. In short, a phenomenological religious understanding and social reality of groups could irreversibly be dominant on the fate of the world and could reconstruct realities for the whole world at the same time. Therefore, it could be elucidated that the ideas of an imam and a redeemer, the implications of whom is closely related with Ali, strengthen the claims of the film's theo-political discourse.

It can clearly be stated that the mahdi belief is symbolized with Ali in the film. Therefore, it could be repeated that Ali's presence is itself a sign of the theo-political discourse of the film. Mahdi expectation together with the Imamah could be regarded as both theological and political priorities of Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, the inclusion of the belief of Mahdi, which is a theo-political discourse, in a film that is the biography of The Prophet clearly reveals Majidi's denominationally constructed mentality through objectified realities of his society. Furthermore, it could be evaluated as an attempt to reproduce the concept of the sacred.

Apart from being more visible, what is also significant about the physical appearance of The Prophet is the striking resemblance between The Prophet's image and the image of Jesus Christ. The image of The Prophet the audience see on the screen reminds directly Jesus Christ images in their minds. Moreover, this similarity could be observed even in the official poster (Figure 4) of the film. The scene in the official poster gives us the chance to compare the image of The Prophet and his mother to the widely known paintings and mosaics of Jesus Christ and Mary.

Figure 4: Official poster of the film, *Madonna And Child, The Grand Duke's Madonna, Madonna Of The Long Neck, Madonna And Child With Saints John The Baptist And Paul*, Apsis Mosaic, L'arrivée De Jésus-Christ Pour Son Règne De Mille Ans, A Miracle Scene from the Film³¹



These paintings and the poster together with a scene from of the film are almost thematically identical. They are not likened each other in terms of physical appearance solely. Besides, both of them are nearly presented as similar as in terms of the power of magic. Although there is a Qur'anic emphasis that the only miracle of The Prophet is the Qur'an itself, there are dozens of miracles attributed to the Prophet. Especially in traditional understanding, these miracles have been strongly influential on people while constructing their mind-set. As for Shi'ite kalam, the concept of miracle is evaluated within the nubuwwah. Miracles are accepted as an obvious proof of a prophet.³² On the other hand, in Shi'ite hadith literature, there are also references to The Prophet's miracles. Especially in Al-Kafi compiled by Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, which is one of the Four Books, there are miracles attributed to The Prophet and even to Ali. This hadith collection of al-Kulayni is precious to analyse that there is an understanding of miracle in collective memory of Shi'a, which means the audience is familiar with all these miracle scenes thanks to their social learnings. On the other hand, the director recalls these recognizable

³¹ *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*. (Poster, 2015, IMDb), Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*. (Painting, 1500, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child*. (Painting, 1500, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), Raphael, *The Grand Duke's Madonna*. (Painting, 1505, Florence: Pitti Palace), Parmigianino, *Madonna of the Long Neck*. (Painting, 1535, Florence: Uffizi), Don Silvestro dei Gherarducci, *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Paul*. (Painting, ?, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), *Apsis mosaic*. (Mosaic, İstanbul: Ayasofya Museum), Pinterest, "L'arrivée de Jésus-Christ pour son règne de mille ans".

³² Avni İlhan, "Şia'da Usulü'd-Din", *Milletlerarası Tarihte ve Günümüzde Şiilik Sempozyumu* (İstanbul: İlmî Neşriyat, 1993), 413.

miracles through a cinematic technique called *deus ex machina*.³³ That is to say, whenever The Prophet is in trouble in the film, he is saved divinely. Therefore, we could infer from these miracle scenes that this cinematic technique enables Majidi to convey his phenomenological miracle perception to the audience. Bearing in mind that Majidi's mentality has been shaped by social realities, miracles also contribute to the theo-political discourse of the film together with depicting a new version of The Prophet as a protagonist, who seems to be in a "competition" with Jesus Christ.

3. THEO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE: RECONSTRUCTING PAST WITH TODAY'S UNDERSTANDING

In the film *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*, there are certain references to the past including hints of theo-political discourse. The importance of these references could be explained by the fact that they are not just historical but also theo-political. At the very beginning of the film, for instance, there is a boycott scene, which is known as Shi'b Abi Talib terminologically and lasts seven years. It is a really dramatic scene because of the severe behaviours towards The Prophet and the Muslims. However, it is remarkable to start a film with this scene, which highly supports the claims of its theo-political discourse. The director's choice of a boycott scene to start the film's editing could not be explained by coincidence. On the contrary, this scene could be considered as a conscious move. This is because Islamic Republic of Iran was subjected to a series of sanctions³⁴ as well during the shooting of the film. It is obvious that the director draws a parallelism between past and present through the film. In other words, Majidi is able to portray the past and present in a similar context by pointing out the embargo that his society was subjected to by showing the boycott against The Prophet, which is a historical reality, at the very beginning of the film. Since it was a public boycott against the Banu Hashim house, the members of this social group had to stand up to difficulties and survive on their own. Similarly, Islamic Republic of Iran is also constricted economically and politically, and is exposed to severe sanctions. In the film Iran's current situation through sanctions in the 21st century is associated with the isolation policy towards

³³ As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus, a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence. It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by the 'Deus ex Machina'—as in the *Medea*, or in the *Return of the Greeks* in the *Iliad*. The 'Deus ex Machina' should be employed only for events external to the drama,—for antecedent or subsequent events, which lie beyond the range of human knowledge, and which require to be reported or foretold; for to the gods we ascribe the power of seeing all things. Within the action there must be nothing irrational. If the irrational cannot be excluded, it should be outside the scope of the tragedy. Such is the irrational element in the *Oedipus of Sophocles*. Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. S. H. Butcher (London: McMillan and Co., Limited, 1902), 55-57.

³⁴ Ashish Kumar Sen, "A Brief History of Sanctions on Iran", *Atlantic Council*. (Access 12 Feb 2019).

the Prophet Muhammad through a boycott in the 7th century. From this point of view that Majidi provides, the film refers to a theo-political discourse at the opening scene. Furthermore, it is almost obvious that this film gives an opportunity to Islamic Republic of Iran to flout sanctions and make propaganda of the state and its ideology.

Apart from its theo-political discourse emphasis, the boycott scene has another function in terms of reconstruction of reality in the film, as well. Appealing to a historical event's testimony is accepted as a cinematic technique to stress the strength of the reality of the film.³⁵ Sociologically, Shi'b Abi Talib, the Battle of Karbala and sanctions on Islamic Republic of Iran are supposed to point a sort of chosen trauma.³⁶ These events, stuck in the society's mind and passed down throughout generations in fact indicates the socialization process. Therefore, chosen trauma, the concept used to describe a group's collective memory of a disaster that befell their ancestors,³⁷ plays an important role for a society to gain a group identity. According to Volkan, chosen trauma band together thousands of people, who possibly would not live together in their lives. The basic motivation for them to come together is to belong an ethnical, religious, ideological or national group. Moreover, the group's identity comes to light in case of a danger.³⁸ In this case, Majidi places a traumatic event at the beginning of the film so that the audience can sympathize with the scene thanks to their pre-existing collective unconscious codes. In other words, the director directs the audience to establish a connection between a historical reality and a reproduced reality through the film.

Just like the boycott scene, comparison of characters is another theo-political discourse of the film. Characterization in the film could be categorised in two groups: those whom the director foregrounds to empower the theo-political discourse, and those whom the director situates as the "others". It could be expressed that confrontation of a series of characters in the film refers to theo-political discourse of the film. These confrontations include Abd-al Muttalib vs. Abraha, Hamza vs. Abu Lahab and most notably Abu Talib vs. Abu Sufyan.³⁹

The latter comparison, mostly confrontation, of Abu Talib vs. Abu Sufyan could be held as a comparison contributing to both theo-political discourse and phenomenological reconstruction of the film. Majidi ingeniously pits Abu Sufyan against Abu Talib so that through this confrontation the audience could read between the lines of denominational realities. Upon considering these two figures'

³⁵ Ryan-Kellner, *Politik Kamera*, 421-422.

³⁶ For more information see Vamik D. Volkan, *Kan Bağ: Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre* (İstanbul: Bağlam Pub., 2000).

³⁷ Volkan, *Kan Bağ: Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre*, 63.

³⁸ Vamik D. Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç*, trans. Ö. Karaçam (İstanbul: Minerva Pub., 2005), 14.

³⁹ Cündioğlu, "Bir Teo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah'ın Elçisi".

historical background, this is more than their confrontation. As a characteristic of discourse analysis, not just their dialogues but also their confrontation itself turns into a discourse. It could be read as the first step of an age-long dispute. Therefore, the discourse of the confrontation of this pair speaks more than their challenge. It is a reminiscent of many other contradictions such as Ali vs. Muawiya, Husain ibn Ali vs. Yazid, the Umayyad vs. the Abbasid, Safavid vs. Ottoman and so on. At this sense, the film reveals its theo-political discourse once again. We could infer from this confrontation that Majidi looks back with a 21st century point of view and considers that Abu Talib is representative of the Shi'a and Abu Sufyan stands for the Sunnah because of his standpoint. Thereupon, he transfers his phenomenological perceptions to the film as a reality. By doing so, Majidi tends to marginalise Abu Sufyan ontologically, discursively and differentially.⁴⁰ Majidi not only accepts the other, embodied by Abu Sufyan, but also preserves him as the other. The reason why Majidi needs the other is related with forming a group identity and reinforcing its consciousness.

Another discourse bridging past and present is verses of the Qur'an read by The Prophet upon the end of boycott at the end of the film. Majidi chooses three verses to be read by The Prophet. It is quite clear that they are not selected randomly. That is to say, each verse has symbolic and discursive meanings. The verses, by following this sequence, are from Surah Ali 'Imran 3/64,⁴¹ Surah Al-Baqarah 2/256⁴² and Surah Ma'idah 5/8.⁴³ These verses address to People of the Book, polytheists and Muslims respectively. The reason why these verses draw our attention from a theo-political aspect is that the film starts at the 7th year of revelation; however, these verses do not date back⁴⁴ to the boycott period. In other words, with the help of anachronism, Majidi emphasizes his theo-political discourse. Majidi as a director manipulates a historical reality in order to attribute to the theo-political discourse of the film. Majidi tries to verify his phenomenological understanding through Qur'anic verses; however, his attempt somehow distracts the historical reality. In

⁴⁰ Bahset Karşlı, *Farklılık ve Birlikte Yaşama Göksun İlçesi Örneğinde Din ve Sosyal Bütünleşme* (Ankara: İlahiyat Pub., 2016), 103-111.

⁴¹ Say, 'O Prophet,' "O People of the Book! Let us come to common terms: that we will worship none but Allah, associate none with Him, nor take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we have submitted 'to Allah alone'." Quran, "Surah Al 'Imran" (Access 5 August 2020).

⁴² Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Quran, "Surah Al-Baqarah" (Access 5 August 2020).

⁴³ O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do. Quran, "Surah Al-Ma'idah" (Access 5 August 2020).

⁴⁴ Surah Ali 'Imran was revealed in the Medinah period between the 3rd and the 9th years of the Migration. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, "Âl-i İmrân Süresi" (Access 12 September 2020); Surah Al-Baqarah was revealed in the Medinah period in about nine-year-process. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, "Bakara Süresi" (Access 12 September 2020); Surah Ma'idah was revealed towards the end of the Medina period. Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, "Maide Süresi" (Access 12 September 2020).

fact, this is quite a propagandist attitude because he deliberately decontextualizes verses for legitimating his denominationally constructed social reality. Repeatedly, by the use of verses, Majidi hides his 21st century perspective in the details of the film, and by doing so, he constructs a theo-political discourse.

CONCLUSION

As a paradigm for social analysis, the phenomenological approach makes the interactive functioning of social relations meaningful. This interaction reveals that not only society constructs its members' mind-set, but also members of a social group hold the power of shaping the social trends. Cinema, as a repository of data to understand and analyse the society, turns to be a golden opportunity for a director to mirror his/her society's social understandings and make them recognizable for all other societies. In other words, cinema could be instrumentalized by a director to propagate his/her mentality. In the case of this study, the sample film *Muhammad: The Messenger of God* is examined phenomenologically within the context of theo-political discourse shaped by the director's denominational religious and prophetic understanding. Note that Majidi is an Iranian director, it is traced how he has applied theo-political discourse throughout the film.

First of all, denominational reality reconstructed on the grounds of phenomenological understanding has been analysed within the context of theo-political discourse analysis. The parallel but fictional reality of the rhetoric created by the director supports the arguments that the film is both theological and political. Majidi concretes this theo-political rhetoric through the themes of language, 'asaba, witness, and his own personal perception of The Prophet. When it comes to discourse and rhetoric, language turns to be one of the strongest signs of a group's identity. Thus, Majidi includes a denominational discourse and rhetoric with the help of Persian itself and a Persian speaking Islamic prophet. In other words, Majidi could bring his theo-political discourse into view by the language The Prophet speaks. That is to say, Majidi lifts Prophet Muhammad out of his context and reconstructs his new context through language. Together with his brand-new context, Majidi restricts the Prophet within a house, the Hashemites. Denominationally claiming that the Shi'a is a follow-up ahl al-bayt, the film purposely underlines the 'asaba concept. Moreover, he foregrounds the necessity of 'asaba through Abu Talib's narration, which leads the audience to perceive the events from Abu Talib's standpoint. Nevertheless, all these theo-political discourses are verified at the very beginning of the film with Majidi's note. The audience are acknowledged that script of the film is partly drawn up personally, namely phenomenologically. So, it could be inferred from the film that the film is instrumentalized by means of combining facts and personal understandings.

The fact that Majidi constructs a new perception of The Prophet of Islam through his film contributes to theo-political discourse of the film. The brand-new prophetic perception reconstructed by Majidi is shaped by the function of Ali, redeemer implications and especially miracles in the film. The fact that Ali is included in the film for just one specific scene and he is almost completely in darkness in that scene could be explained by the understanding that the Hashemites are the only suitable group to hold the power of caliphate of the Islamic world. Symbolically showing him as the protector of The Prophet, Majidi cuts the bond of The Prophet with the whole humanity, but restricts him to a specific family. By doing so, Majidi draws a denominational line around The Prophet. Therefore, Shi'a is presented as The Prophet's earthly and spiritually legitimate successor. Indeed, the presence of Ali is itself an indicator of and an attribution to theo-political discourse. Furthermore, Ali is one of the key figures of ahl al-bayt, which is the source of redeemer belief. The concept of redeemer, mahdi, is another theo-political discourse because of its active role in determining policies. Another theme reinforcing a brand-new prophetic perception is miracles, which are held sociologically, not theologically, in this article. Occupying a great part in hadith literature, it is a component of a social realities constructing its members' mentality. Therefore, miracles, as they exist in hadiths, could make it possible for Majidi to reconstruct the image and perception of The Prophet's. However, reconstructed image of The Prophet through miracles with the help of *deus ex machine* thoroughly reminds the audience of the image of Jesus Christ.

Eventually, by referring to Shi'b Abi Talib, comparable characterization and references to Qur'anic verses, Majidi bridges past and present, which empowers theo-political discourse of the film. It is quite possible to observe that Majidi bases today's ideological issues on the events taking place during the first years of Islam. In this way, Majidi could address to the collective subliminal codes of the society. In addition to placing the chosen trauma at the very beginning of the film, Majidi directs the audience to assume what they watch as a reality. As for characterization, he points out the first sparkle of an ongoing struggle between Islamic sects. With the help of marginalization, he foregrounds a group of characters in the film to justify his theo-political discourse. What is more, even Qur'anic verses turns to be a means of verifying his theo-political attitude. Yet, he is unable to avoid the fallacy of anachronism because he assesses past events with a 21st century Shi'ite judgement.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, Meyer Howard. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

- Apsis Mosaic*. Access 24 December 2018. <http://ayasofyamuzesi.gov.tr/tr/mozapsis-mozai%C4%9Fi>
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. ed. S. H. Butcher. London: McMillan and Co., Limited, 1902.
- Arnheim, Rudolf. *Film As Art*. California: University of California Press, 1957.
- Balcı, Ali. *Sosyal Bilimlerde Araştırma Yöntem, Teknik ve İlkeler*. Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2016.
- Bellini, Giovanni. *Madonna and Child*. Painting, 1500. New York City: Metropolitan Museum of Art. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Madonna-religious-art#/media/1/355920/107467>
- Berger, Peter Ludwig. *The Sacred Canopy Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011.
- Cündioğlu, Dücan. “Bir Teo-Politik Film: Hz. Muhammed: Allah’ın Elçisi”. *Hürriyet* (5 November 2011), <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bir-teo-politik-film-hz-muhammed-allahin-elcisi-40269320>
- Fiğlalı, Ruhi Ethem. *Çağımızda İtikadî İslam Mezhepleri*. İstanbul: Şa-To Pub., 2001.
- Fiğlalı, Ruhi Ethem. “Mesih ve Mehdi İnancı Üzerine, Mezhepler Tarihi Açısından Bir Bakış”. *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 25/1 (1982), 179-214.
- Gee, James Paul. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Gherarducci, Don Silvestro. *Madonna and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Paul*. Painting, ?. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Madonna-religious-art#/media/1/355920/141410>
- Gök, Cüneyt. “Sinema ve Gerçeklik”. *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1/2 (2007), 112-123.
- Güçhan, Gülseren. “Sinema-Toplum İlişkileri”. *Kurgu Dergisi* 12 (1993), 51-71.
- İlhan, Avni. “Şia’da Usulü’ d-Din”. *Milletlerarası Tarihte ve Günümüzde Şiilik Sempozyumu*. 409-433. İstanbul: 1. Pub., 1993.
- Karlı, Bahset. *Farklılık ve Birlikte Yaşama Göksun İlçesi Örneğinde Din ve Sosyal Bütünleşme*. Ankara: İlahiyat Pub., 2016.
- L’arrivée de Jésus-Christ pour son règne de mille ans*. Access 22 January 2019. <https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/763852786769896880/>

- Majidi, Majid. "Kendi Festivalimizi Üretmemiz Gerekiyor" (TRTakademi, trans. Farzad Samadli, Interview Transcription). *TRTakademi*, 3/5 (2018), 374-382. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/424461>
- Monaco, James. *How To Read A Film*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Muhammad The Messenger of God*. Poster, 2015. IMDb. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3921314/mediaviewer/rm1234064128>
- Parmigianino. *Madonna of the Long Neck*. Painting, 1535. Florence: Uffizi. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Madonna-religious-art#/media/1/355920/36202>
- Pudovkin, Vsevolod Illarionovich. *Film Technique And Film Acting*. trans. Ivor Montagu. London: Vision Press Limited, 1966.
- Quran. "Surah al-Baqarah." Access 5 August 2020. <https://quran.com/2>
- Quran. "Surah al 'Imran". Access 5 August 2020. <https://quran.com/3>
- Quran. "Surah Ma'idah." Access 5 August 2020. <https://quran.com/5>
- Raphael. *The Grand Duke's Madonna*. Painting, 1505. Florence: Pitti Palace. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Madonna-religious-art#/media/1/355920/12771>
- Ryan, Michale – Kellner, Douglas. *Politik Kamera*. trans. E. Özsayar. İstanbul: Ayrintı Pub, 2010.
- Sarıçam, İbrahim. *Emevî-Hâşimî İlişkileri İslam Öncesinden Abbâsîlere Kadar*. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Pub., 1997.
- Sen, Ashish Kumar. "A Brief History of Sanctions on Iran". *Atlantic Council*. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-brief-history-of-sanctions-on-iran>
- Şahin, Hanifi. *Şiîlerin Gözüyle Sunniler*. İstanbul: Mana Pub., 2016.
- Tabatabai, Allamah Sayyed Muhammad Husayn. *Shi'ite Islam*. trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. New York: State University of New York Press, 1975.
- Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi. "Âl-i İmrân Sûresi." Access 12 September 2020. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/al-i-imran-suresi>
- Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi. "Bakara Sûresi." Access 12 September 2020. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/bakara-suresi>
- Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi. "Mâide Sûresi." Access 12 September 2020. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/maide-suresi>

Uğur, Ufuk. “İran Yeni Dalga Sineması ve Majid Majidi’nin “Cennetin Çocukları” Filmi”. *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7/2 (July 2017), 333-342.

Volkan, Vamık D. *Kan Bağı: Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre*. İstanbul: Bağlam Pub., 1999.

Volkan, Vamık D. *Körü Körüne İnanç*. trans. Ö. Karaçam. İstanbul: Minerva Pub., 2005.

Wuthnow, Robert et al. *Cultural Analysis*. the UK: Routledge, 2012.