



MEDİAD

Medya ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi | Journal of Media and Religion Studies

ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Haziran 2024, 7(1), 59-72

Geliş: 31.05.2024 | Kabul: 26.06.2024 | Yayın: 27.06.2024

DOI: 10.47951/mediad.1493352

The Role of News in Alevi Television Channels: Approaches to Addressing Both General and Alevi Audiences

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Abstract

This article examines the function of news media on Alevi television channels. The increased visibility of faith-based identity movements in the public sphere during the 1990s led to the study of these communities in media research. This study contributes to these discussions by focusing on news media, an area not yet extensively examined concerning faith communities. The research is based on an 18-month field study involving participant observation and in-depth interviews, focusing on the news production processes of Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10, during 2014 and 2015. The study argues that news media serves a dual function for faith communities like the Alevis, enabling them to address both a general audience and their own community simultaneously. Alevi broadcasters create news bulletins that appeal to a general audience while also including news relevant to Alevis. They achieve this in two ways. The first is by utilizing television technology to include an “Alevi news” segment at the beginning of the news, covering developments particularly relevant to Alevis. The second way is by maintaining a more “neutral” language in the news bulletins while expressing opinions on developments concerning Alevis in news and discussion programs.

Keywords: Television, News Media, Alevis, Audience

Alevi Televizyon Kanallarında Haberin İşlevi: “Genel” ve Alevi İzleyiciye Hitap Biçimleri

Öz

Bu makale, Alevi televizyon kanallarında haber medyasının ne gibi bir işlevsellik kazandığını incelemektedir. 1990’larda artan inanç temelli kimlik hareketlerinin kamu alanında görünürlük kazanması, medya çalışmalarında bu toplulukların incelenmesine yol açmıştır. Bu çalışma, inanç toplulukları açısından henüz yeterince incelenmemiş bir alan olan haber medyasına odaklanarak bu tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktadır. Araştırma, 2014-2015 yılları arasında yayın yapan Cem TV, Yol TV ve TV 10 kanallarının haber üretim süreçlerine odaklanan, 18 ay süren ve katılımcı gözlem ile derinlemesine mülakatlar içeren bir saha araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, haber medyasının Aleviler gibi inanç topluluklarının hem genel izleyiciye hem de kendi kitlesine aynı anda hitap etmesini sağlayan bir işlevselliği olduğunu savunur. Alevi yayıncılar haber bültenlerini hem Alevi olmayan genel bir kitleye hitap edecek hem de Alevileri içerecek bir haber diliyle oluşturmaktadır. Haberciler bunu, iki şekilde başarır. Televizyon teknolojisinin imkanlarını kullanarak haberin başına Alevileri özellikle ilgilendiren gelişmeleri kapsayan bir “Alevi haberleri” segmenti yerleştirmek bu yollardan ilkidir. İkincisi ise haber bülteninin dilini daha “tarafsız” olacak şekilde oluştururken, Alevileri ilgilendiren gelişmelerle ilgili görüş belirten yorumları haber ve tartışma programlarında dile getirmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Televizyon, Haber Medyası, Aleviler, İzleyici

ATIF: Özkan, N. (2024). The role of news in Alevi television channels: Approaches to addressing both general and Alevi audiences. *Medya ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi (MEDİAD)*, 7(1), s. 59-72.

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Introduction

Secularism, as one of the essential building blocks of the modern state, predicted that the significance of religion in the public sphere would gradually diminish. However, the faith-based identity movements that gained visibility in the 1990s proved this prediction wrong. This led to the examination of the public visibility of faith communities from various perspectives in the fields of social sciences and communication studies. In both Turkey and other Muslim-majority contexts, scholars have explored how religious rituals, traditions, politics, and identities have been reformulated in the context of post-1990 public visibility and revival trends (Deeb, 2006; Hirschkind, 2009; Mahmood, 2012; Öncü, 2006; White, 2005). Media has played a significant role in these analyses, especially since it is one of the most fundamental tools of visibility today. Studies on religious and Islamic media have demonstrated how religious communities skillfully use television by examining TV series (Rajagopal, 2005), televangelist programs (Larkin, 2008) and faith-based entertainment programs (Moll, 2010). These studies have shown how communities develop their faith practices through media in a world where being openly religious is “particularly challenging.” (Moll, 2010).

My study contributes to these discussions by focusing on news media, an area that has not been sufficiently examined concerning faith communities. In addition to faith-based programs such as TV series and televangelist shows, faith groups use news programs to bring the experiences of their community members into the public eye. One of the most prominent examples of this is the news bulletins and programs of Alevi television channels in Turkey. Since the early 2000s, Alevi television channels in Turkey have managed to survive despite numerous economic challenges. These channels, with limited resources and personnel, have paid special attention to news production. In addition to broadcasting news bulletins three times a day, news and discussion programs form a significant part of their programming. In this article, I will examine the function of news media for faith communities by focusing on three Alevi television channels—Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10— during 2014-2015.

Television, as a medium found in every home and often left on in the background even when not actively watched, has the capability to reach large audiences. A television channel aimed at a specific faith community, such as the Alevis, seeks to leverage this ability to reach a broad audience. The managers of the three Alevi channels I studied emphasized this goal. In fact, Yol TV collaborated with BirGün newspaper to expand the impact of its news bulletins. In this respect, news media provides communities like the Alevis with the opportunity to address both the general audience—i.e., non-Alevis—and their own community simultaneously. The programming of these channels, which includes shows like *deyiş* (Alevi songs) programs, *cem* (Alevi ritual) ceremonies, and conversations with *dedes* (religious leaders), targets Alevis specifically. This is balanced with news and discussion programs that also appeal to non-Alevi audiences. However, while addressing a general audience, it is equally important to maintain content that continues to target Alevis. News bulletins and programs offer Alevi media producers the opportunity to address both non-Alevi groups and Alevis simultaneously. In this article, I will examine how the Alevi reform package proposed in 2014 was reported on Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10, providing a detailed analysis of how the news addressed both Alevi and non-Alevi audiences. Based on 18 months of observations and interviews, this article highlights the role of the “Alevi news” segment in achieving this aim.

The following section details the study’s methods and field site. Subsequently, the historical processes leading to the emergence of Alevi television channels are discussed, along with general information about these channels. Broadly, Alevi television channels are an extension of the private television channels that emerged during Turkey’s neoliberalization. However, they distinguish themselves from mainstream channels by representing a specific faith community. Following the historical context, the findings from the field research are examined. This includes an analysis of how each of the three television channels presents news relevant to Alevis, an explanation of the

“Alevi news” segment in news bulletins, and a description of how the distinction between news bulletins and news programs helps Alevi journalists manage the different audiences they address.

Field Site and Methods

During the research period from September 2014 to January 2016, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and daily media research were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with journalists working for Alevi television networks. To contextualize the news stories covered by these networks within the wider media landscape, coverage by mainstream outlets on the same stories and overall political developments concerning Alevis was also monitored. Four months were spent at the Istanbul news centers of each network, Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10, observing and contributing to the news production processes as part of the participant observation. This included closely following how reporters at each network covered Turkey’s rapidly changing news agenda and observing these reporters during onsite filming. These outside shootings facilitated the development of relationships with media producers through long conversations during trips in Istanbul’s busy traffic and by assisting each other in carrying heavy technological equipment—sometimes up four floors in buildings without elevators.

Despite occasional trips outside the network, most of the news production occurred inside the newsroom due to limited resources, which restricted the networks’ outreach. Producers often had to work with material from larger news agencies, especially when reporters and technical equipment were unavailable. Participation in media production varied at each network, enhancing the understanding of the news production process. At Cem TV, onsite reporting and daily media searches about issues concerning Alevis were assisted, including reading major daily newspapers to find relevant stories. At Yol TV and TV 10, work as an editor included dubbing news texts and assisting with onsite coverage.

Following the observation period, in-depth interviews were conducted with news center staff, addressing questions that arose during the observations. In total, 43 journalists were interviewed. These interviews, lasting from one to three hours, began with collecting life history narratives through questions about education, career track, family background, etc., and then delved into the overall workings of the newsroom and specific news stories covered. These interviews with Alevi reporters were crucial for elaborating on the significance of the “Alevi news” category, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Daily media research involved reviewing ten to twelve print newspapers each day as part of the contribution to news production. Additionally, a Google Alert for the word “Alevi” was set up, and updates on news involving Alevis were primarily obtained from Twitter (now X) and the websites of major newspapers and television networks. After identifying relevant incidents, journalists who covered these stories were contacted for interviews. All names used in the article are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants.

Historical Context of Alevi Television and News Programs

Since the 1980s, mass media has become a crucial platform for Alevis to fulfill their information needs as they increasingly detached from oral traditions and traditional ties (Şahin, 2005). The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the rise of a new educated Alevi intelligentsia, the material mobilization of the first-generation Alevi immigrants, and the targeted attacks on Alevis in the 1990s have all contributed to the increased visibility of Alevis in the public sphere and accelerated the development of Alevi media (Çaha, 2004; Poyraz, 2005).

Like other faith communities worldwide, such visibility in the public sphere reached its peak during the 1990s. In Turkey, this visibility was also result of economic and political changes linked to neoliberal transformations. Beginning in the early 1990s, as a result of economic liberalization and privatization policies endorsed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkey witnessed

the end of the state's monopoly over media production tools (Öncü, 2006). The deregulation policies of the era enabled the establishment of private television channels broadcasting from countries like Germany to Turkey, posing strong competition to state media. In the absence of laws and official bodies to regulate the emerging private media sector, new opportunities arose for various groups in the country to enter the commercial media market (Öncü, 2006). Within this political context, different identity groups, including the Alevi—despite not yet having the infrastructure to establish their own television channels—began to use privatized mass communication tools more actively.

The Alevi Manifesto, published in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper in May 1990, represents one of the first organized efforts by Alevi to utilize news media effectively. Many Alevi and non-Alevi intellectuals, journalists, and artists signed this manifesto, emphasizing the need for the state to be more inclusive of Alevi and Alevi's demands for recognition (Çaha, 2004). The 1990s also witnessed a significant surge in both popular and academic publications on Alevism-Bektashism (Yaman, 1998). Following the Alevi Manifesto, the 1990s brought the publication of Alevi magazines such as *Nefes*, *Cem*, *Serçeşme*, and *Pir Sultan Abdal Culture and Art Magazine*, as well as the emergence of Alevi radio stations like *Cem Radio*, *Radio Barış*, and *Mozaik Radio*. As more Alevi began to utilize expanding media technologies, books also took their place among radios and magazines as mediums to revive, reshape, and reformulate both collective and personal Alevi identity. These books created a unique wave of publications related to Alevism, enabling a reevaluation and reinterpretation of a specific “history” and “tradition.” (Vorhoff, 1998).

Even before the advent of television, the representation of Alevi in visual culture was evident in the realm of cinema. On screen representation of Alevism can be traced back to *Yeşilçam* cinema, although it was not explicitly named at the time (Koluçak, 2023). Especially since the 2000s, movies such as “*Başka Sementin Çocukları* (The Children of Another Neighborhood)” turned cinema into an additional medium for Alevi to express their identity more openly (Uyanık, 2014). In addition to nationalism (Çökerdenoğlu, 2022), significant elements of the Alevi belief system—such as humanism, justice, enlightenment, social hierarchy, *musahiplik* (brotherhood), adherence to tradition, ostracism, death, suicide, etiquette, and rituals—are symbolically represented throughout these films (Çebi & Nacaroğlu, 2015). From a critical standpoint, some of these movies fail to address class and ethnicity differences, resulting in an “unrealistic” depiction of the unifying and tolerant process experienced by Alevi (Ulusoy, 2013).

In the early 2000s, the Alevi community, already active in various media realms such as books, magazines, movies, and radio, established their first television channels. The establishment of television channels such as *Cem TV* (2005), *Su TV* (2005), and *Düzgün TV* (2006) marked the initial steps of the process (Massicard, 2007). In 2006, the Cem Foundation founded *Cem TV* in Istanbul. Around the same time, another Alevi television channel, *Su TV*, was established in Cologne, Germany. The founders of *Su TV* were immigrants who had left Turkey for political reasons. Unlike *Cem TV*, which views Alevism as part of Islam in Turkey, *Su TV* adopted a broadcasting strategy that highlighted the relationship between Alevi and leftist movements. Following internal political and economic disagreements within *Su TV*, the split led to the emergence of two more Alevi television channels continuing *Su TV*'s political agenda. In 2006, the Confederation of European Alevi Unions (AABK) established *Yol TV* in Cologne. Some former members of *Su TV* founded *Dem TV* in Istanbul in 2007. *Su TV* continued its broadcasts, eventually moving its headquarters to Turkey. Among these channels, *Yol TV* stood out as a long-lasting Alevi television channel. It adopted a broadcasting policy that emphasized the diversity of Alevi and avoided defining Alevism in a single way. *Dem TV*, with its explicit agenda of publicizing the issues of Kurdish Alevi, continued to expand the Alevi television audience. After *Dem TV* closed, *TV 10*, established in Istanbul in 2010, continued this agenda. *TV 10*, particularly known for its *Zazaki cem* broadcasts, attracted a wide viewership.

In addition to Turkey, Alevis have also gained broadcasting experience abroad, notably in Germany (Emre, 2023; Kosnick, 2007) and Australia (Hopkins, 2009). Kumru Berfin Emre's recent book on the transnational presence of TV 10 and Yol TV is an important study that complements my research on the broadcasting practices of these networks in Turkey. Emre introduces the concept of "transversal citizenship" to elucidate how Alevis in Europe utilize various spatial dimensions to assert their rights, including the village, the national (which may pertain to Turkey, Germany, or the UK), the regional, and the transnational relationship between Turkey and Europe. Understanding how Alevis dynamically interact with these diverse spaces necessitates an examination of their media production, as emphasized by Emre, as television serves as a platform for the convergence of these spaces in efforts to enhance the status of Alevis. Emre's book also explores the repercussions of the 2016 emergency decree that revoked Yol TV and TV 10's access to the TURKSAT satellite. Aligning with the analysis in this article, Emre notes that following the satellite limitations in Turkey, Yol TV transitioned from a community television channel to an alternative news outlet. In a sense, Yol TV's effort to strengthen its news production through collaboration with a newspaper accelerated when the channel lost satellite access to its audience in Turkey.

There are also several other Alevi television channels that were not mentioned here, which had short-lived broadcasts. Since television is an expensive media tool, some Alevi television channels have had to cease operations. In my study, it is important to note that the three channels I focused on due to their longevity have continued broadcasting despite significant economic difficulties—until satellite limitations in 2016. These channels often struggled to pay their employees' monthly salaries on time. A lack of technical equipment could cause significant disruptions. For instance, broadcasters could face difficulties in arranging cameras for outdoor shooting because of the limited number of cameras available. With limited resources, a small number of employees had to perform multiple jobs simultaneously. The financial resources of the three continuing channels varied. The Cem Foundation helped finance some of Cem TV's expenditures. Cem TV members also generated revenue by collaborating with local businesses like private hospitals and creating special programs. Most of Yol TV's financing was provided through membership donations from the Confederation of European Alevi Unions (AABK). One of the main sources of income for TV 10 was the two outdoor broadcasting vehicles it owned. Throughout the year, these vehicles traveled to Alevi villages and towns in Anatolia at different times, broadcasting festivals, cem ceremonies, and the daily lives of residents, thereby generating revenue. Lastly, all channels generated some income daily from music video clips of various folk and Alevi music artists they broadcasted.

All three television channels had a wide range of programming. Both the viewers and the Alevis working at these channels, however, emphasized news media as a significant medium of expression for themselves, which is why this article prioritizes news programs. In terms of program lineup, Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10 were very similar to each other. Cem ceremonies, music programs on Alevi *deyiş*, and *sohbet* programs about the characteristics of the Alevi faith with Alevi dedes formed the basic broadcast diversity of all three channels. However, in addition to these, each channel also aired three news bulletins a day and several political discussion programs. Despite a lack of resources and media personnel, each of these television stations had at least 5 or 7 employees in their news centers. In an environment where a single media worker is often responsible for many different tasks beyond their area of expertise, allocating such a number of staff to a single task underscores the importance of news production for these channels. As I mentioned earlier, for example, Yol TV had collaborated with BirGün newspaper to produce higher quality news programs and to compete with other news outlets.

Bayram Çağlar's study on Yol TV, TV 10, and Cem TV also underscores the importance of news media for Alevis by contrasting Yol TV's news production with the mainstream network ATV's news production (Çağlar, 2021). Çağlar conducts a content analysis of Yol TV and mainstream media outlet ATV's prime-time news bulletins by examining the framing characteristics of the first seven

news items in the main news bulletins of these television channels. Yol TV reshapes and reinterprets news from mainstream news agencies according to its own ideology. The network potentially subjects popular culture products, or news, representing the culture of the powerless and oppressed, to a transformative process. Conversely, the journalistic approach of mainstream television, which could be argued to represent the dominant culture, is described as selective and prone to omit certain truths. Çağlar's study illustrates the disparity in the approach to news production between mainstream media and Alevi television networks, emphasizing the need for Alevis to engage with news media to represent their perspective accurately.

My brief interviews with Alevi viewers underscored their agreement regarding the necessity of incorporating the Alevi perspective into news production, while also revealing the importance of news media for Alevis. When I interviewed Alevis to find out whether they followed Alevi television channels, in addition to immediately recognizable Alevi channels like Cem TV and Yol TV, viewers also listed news channels such as Hayat TV and Halk TV as "Alevi television channels." The fact that Alevis identify these news channels as Alevi channels points to the increasing importance of news media as a form of expression within the community. These viewers sometimes criticized Alevi television channels for not dedicating enough time and effort to news and discussion programs. As one viewer mentioned, they wanted to see "quality discussion programs similar to those broadcast on CNN Türk" on Alevi television channels.

News Hours, "Alevi News," News Programs

Alevi media producers aim to create a news language that addresses both the general public and Alevi viewers. News reporters on Alevi television channels aimed to achieve this in two ways. First, by utilizing the capacities of television technology to include an "Alevi news" segment at the beginning of the news that covers developments specifically relevant to Alevi interests. Second, while crafting the language of the news bulletin to be more "neutral," they expressed opinions on developments relevant to Alevi concerns in news and discussion programs. The coverage of the Alevi reform program in 2014, which came to the agenda during Ahmet Davutoğlu's prime ministry, is a good example of this. This reform package led to a certain expectations among Alevi reporters on all three channels. However, instead of expressing these expectations in the news bulletin, reporters preferred to address them in news programs, thus preserving the structure of the news bulletin for both the general audience and Alevi viewers.

The "Alevi news" segment is an implicit way of addressing Alevi viewers within a news bulletin aimed at the general audience. Marisol de la Cadena, in her study on indigenous political activism in the Andes, argues that indigenous leaders make themselves politically understandable by "speaking in modern terms, translating their practices into a politically acceptable language, and leaving behind what is 'unacceptable'" (De La Cadena, 2010). It can be said that Alevi media producers follow a similar path for the news media. While their other programs are mostly related to Alevi tradition, the main goal of news programs on all three channels is, as expressed by their staff, to appeal to the "general" audience. In this regard, Cem TV, Yol TV, and TV 10 aim to address both Sunni Muslim and Alevi audiences. Alevi broadcasters achieve this by transforming what de la Cadena calls the "not entirely abandoned" into a broadcast language that will also appeal to non-Alevis, using the possibilities of television technology. In this way, television provides Alevi broadcasters with new tools to convey various ideas. The most important of these tools are news sequencing and news segments.

Both Cem TV and TV 10 have a news segment called "Alevi news," which includes different developments every day. This segment is presented at the beginning of the bulletin to cover the first three to four news items on both channels. In this section, broadcasters generally address policies and initiatives concerning Alevi interests. These may include government reform efforts regarding the status of cemevis or activities of Alevi associations. Both channels group these developments under the title of "Alevi news," fostering the expectation that any story within this

segment is related to Alevi interests. This is particularly emphasized in Cem TV broadcasts. When the Cem TV news bulletin starts with a topic related to Alevi interests, the host would often announce the news with the following words: “We are opening our news bulletin with a topic directly relevant to all Alevi citizens in Turkey.” This statement serves as verbal confirmation of the “Alevi news” segment on television.

However, in the majority of bulletins, there is no explicit verbal cue that clearly denotes Alevi news. In times when such a statement is absent, both channels use visual separators, which the broadcasters refer to as “ayraç” (separator, or abbreviated as “sep” by reporters), to serve the same purpose. After the Alevi news segment, a visual separator marks the end of the segment, and the host usually transitions to other news items related to Turkey's general political agenda.

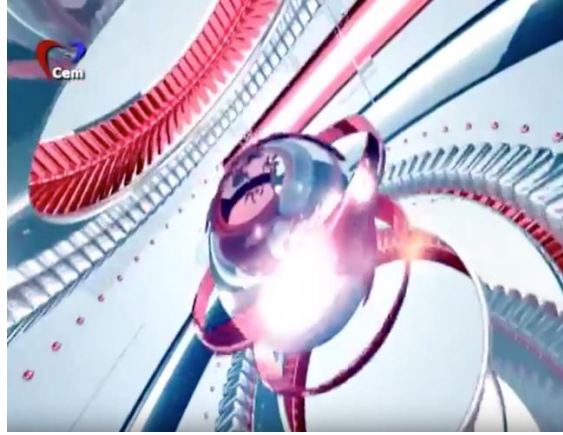


Figure 1. Cem TV Separator

This indirect, implicit emphasis on the Alevi news section was a common strategy among reporters to simultaneously appeal to both Alevi and general audiences. The message conveyed through news prioritization and visual separators, though not explicitly stated, can only be understood by regular viewers, mostly Alevi, who are familiar with it. Occasionally, for other viewers tuning in to the channel, these news items could be coded as developments relevant to everyone living in Turkey. Apart from the segments labeled as “Alevi news,” the rest of the bulletin did not differ significantly from news bulletins broadcasted on other media channels. In this sense, while indirectly incorporating news relevant to Alevi viewers, the bulletin also emphasizes the importance of covering other agendas in the country, aiming to appeal to both Alevi and non-Alevi audiences.

All developments regarding the government’s reform package targeting Alevis, which began on October 21, 2014, were communicated to the audience through the “Alevi news” segment. At that time, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, stated that he and his team were working on a new reform process aimed at Alevi citizens and would soon announce the details. This initiative was a step taken towards the general elections in June 2015. Davutoğlu signaled the start of the new reform process with a press conference announcing a new internal security package. This news quickly reached the news center of Cem TV. Editors were hesitant about whether this reform initiative, with its details still unclear, was a suitable headline for Alevi news. In the newsroom, Meryem, the news director, turned to Rıza, one of the editors:

Meryem: Rıza, have you seen the news? For the first time, there is a state regulation specifically addressing Alevis with the new security package.

Rıza: Yes, but he [Davutoğlu] isn’t talking about a clear regulation. How can I report on this?

Meryem: Yes, but Cumhuriyet wrote about it.

Rıza: I saw it, but Cumhuriyet's version didn't convince me.

Meryem: Maybe you're right. If it were something significant, all media outlets would be talking about it by now.

Meryem, who holds a bachelor's degree in radio and television, and Rıza, who is also a graduate in the same field, often consulted each other while editing news texts. Rıza managed to convince Meryem that Davutoğlu's claims did not have news value.

Although the details were not yet clear, the statements about this reform package were enough to create anticipation among Alevi news producers. In this regard, Meryem was not alone in her excitement about the initiation of a possible legislative reform agenda. Since the shared details did not allow for the inclusion of the reform package in the news bulletin, Alevi broadcasters began expressing their expectations in news and discussion programs. For example, TV 10 had aired several discussion programs examining what the expectations from the reform package should be. Participants in the programs emphasized that for the reform package to succeed, it must necessarily introduce a constitutional amendment. A main legal regulation was essential for a more permanent step.

The editors at Alevi channels decided that Davutoğlu's statements had reached maturity to be included in the news bulletin following the remarks made by Bülent Arınç, who was the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, on A Haber. Arınç emphasized that the Prime Minister had a special team working on the Alevi reform package and that this package included some legal changes. Immediately after this statement, all major news channels began broadcasting news about the new Alevi reform package. Cem TV and TV 10 started airing these developments in the Alevi news segment. During the period of my research, a similar segment did not exist in Yol TV's news, which was produced by BirGün. However, the Yol TV news bulletin also regularly covered developments related to the Alevi reform package, albeit not as a priority.

The government had promised that the reform package would pass before January 2015. Until mid-December 2014, Alevi issues were constantly on the news agenda. Alongside news articles discussing possible legal formulas, Davutoğlu made many statements and visits to keep the Alevi reform package on the agenda. For example, during the last week of November, coinciding with the month of Muharram, Davutoğlu visited the Hacı Bektaş Veli shrine in Nevşehir and made statements regarding the reform package. Two days after the visit to Nevşehir, journalist Nagehan Alçı announced that Davutoğlu would visit a cemevi in Dersim. Alçı wrote that Davutoğlu said, "Alevis need to say 'this state is ours' and he is ready to take steps towards that." This news created high expectations for Davutoğlu's visit to Dersim on all three television channels. One morning, Rıza, at the Cem TV news center, broke the silence by asking a question as everyone quietly focused on the screen in front of them. After checking if the government had made a new statement regarding the reform process, he turned to Ayça, one of the editors:

Rıza: Ayça, I trust your opinion a lot, what do you think about this reform process?

Ayça: Well, I think the government is sincere this time.

Rıza: Do you really think so?

Ayça: Yes, I believe Davutoğlu will take concrete steps.

Ayça's idea of concrete steps referred to, for example, the legal regulations needed for granting official status to cemevis.

This atmosphere of expectation could not be discerned from the news bulletins. Since the bulletins of all three channels presented the news of the Dersim visit in the same tone as other news about the reform package, viewers could not grasp the anticipation that the visit would be a significant turning point in the reform program. Due to the journalistic principle of neutrality, the bulletins conveyed such developments to the audience in a language that did not reflect the

expectations of the reporters. However, the trace of anticipation could be found not in the news bulletins but rather in the live debate programs aired by all three channels on the day of the visit.

The special broadcasts by Yol TV and TV 10 that followed Davutoğlu's visit to Dersim is a product of the expectations of Alevi media producers. The broadcast on Yol TV was hosted by Emek Günay. Günay also prepared the front page of the BirGün newspaper that day, detailing his expectations regarding Davutoğlu's visit. Dividing the front page into two columns, Günay listed Davutoğlu's expected reform package on one side and the demands of the Alevi community on the other. There was nothing new in the list of demands: equal citizenship rights, and equal status for cemevis. However, the reform package put together by Günay just before Davutoğlu's official announcement was surprisingly optimistic—even when trying to be pessimistic. The items were as follows:

- Although the Cemevis won't gain equal status, their electricity and water expenses will be covered.
- There will be an elective course on Alevism in schools, and more details about Alevism will be added to religious education textbooks.
- Alevi dedes will be sent to Mecca for Hajj and to Karbala for pilgrimage.

During her special broadcast on Yol TV, Günay emphasized similar expectations. When Davutoğlu's speech ended, it became clear that the reform package did not include any legal changes. The package did not grant any official status to cemevis nor provide any budget allocation for the community. Instead, Davutoğlu opted for two changes: firstly, the name of Tunceli University, located in a region with a dense Alevi population, was changed to Dersim University. Additionally, entry to the Hacı Bektaş Veli shrine was made free. Despite his efforts to be cautious, Günay's expectations from the reform package exceeded the changes it actually brought. While it was impossible to discern these expectations from the news bulletins, the tone of the special programs broadcasted for the visit reflected these expectations.

TV 10's coverage of Davutoğlu's visit echoed Günay's expectations. The broadcast on TV 10 was conducted by the host Tuna Akdoğan and participants Hüseyin Çetin and Zeki Timur. When it became clear that the reform package did not meet the expectations, which were carefully reconsidered to be more realistic, the participants pointed out that these plans were only postponed and would be reconsidered in the future. Similarly, while writing the news on Cem TV, Meryem murmured to herself, "Okay, these changes will find their way eventually but not until the election." In this regard, Alevi news producers' expectations have an independent and future-oriented characteristic apart from the current agenda. While following the Alevi reform package, Alevi news producers have directed their expectations towards special discussion and news programs rather than news bulletins, aiming to maintain the ability of their channels to appeal to the general audience while also seeking to establish a separate dialogue with their own audience.

Conclusion

This study has examined the function of news media for Alevi television channels. The data obtained indicates that Alevi networks aim to address both their own communities and the general audience through news programs. Despite the limited resources of Alevi media, the importance they attach to the news production process and the effort they put in have allowed these channels to develop a unique broadcasting policy. The coverage of the Alevi reform package in 2014, along with the strategies employed to engage non-Alevi viewers, illustrates how Alevi producers navigate the demands and expectations of both Alevi and general audiences. Alevi television channels serve as both an intra-community communication tool and a platform for Alevi visibility, allowing Alevi to express their identities and beliefs through the media. In this context, it is concluded that the

news media plays a critical role for belief communities like Alevi and strengthens their presence in the public sphere.

Alevi news producers closely follow topics such as the reform package in 2014 that concern their communities with a certain expectation. Since these expectations are also the expectations of the viewers, this strengthens the communication of the journalists with their own audience. However, since news bulletins also serve as a gateway to the general audience for journalists, they prefer not to address the expectations shared by Alevi viewers in the bulletins, instead opting to convey this through news programs. On the other hand, the “Alevi news” segment allows journalists to strike a balance, as they aim to address the expectations of both Alevi and non-Alevi viewers without excluding either group. By using television technology tools such as separators, editors aiming to speak to both Alevi and non-Alevi groups simultaneously have conveyed the steps regarding the reform package to their viewers through this segment. The atmosphere of expectation among the Alevi journalists in all three channels has been reflected in discussion programs and special news programs broadcasted for Davutoğlu’s visit to Dersim.

The examination of Alevi television channels and their coverage strategies reveals significant insights into the nuanced media landscape in Turkey, especially in light of the current socio-political environment. As Alevi media outlets strive to balance addressing their community’s specific needs with appealing to a broader audience, they exemplify the ongoing struggle for visibility in Turkey. This dynamic is particularly relevant today, as issues of religious and cultural diversity and government reforms are constantly on the agenda. The Alevi networks’ approach to news production, which includes the strategic use of “Alevi news” segments and special programs, not only reflects their community’s aspirations but also highlights broader societal challenges. These channels provide a platform for voices that usually go unheard, contributing to a more inclusive media landscape much needed in Turkey.

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Alevi Televizyon Kanallarında Haberin İşlevi: “Genel” ve Alevi İzleyiciye Hitap Biçimleri

Nazlı ÖZKAN*

Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Giriş

Bu makale, Alevi televizyon kanallarında haber medyasının işlevini incelemektedir. 1990’larda artan inanç temelli kimlik hareketlerinin kamusal alanda görünürlük kazanması, medya çalışmalarında bu toplulukların incelenmesine yol açmıştır. Müslümanların çoğunlukta olduğu ülkelerde yapılan çalışmalar, dini ritüellerin, geleneklerin, politikanın ve kimliğin, 1990 sonrasında nasıl yeniden formüle edildiğini irdlemiştir (Deeb, 2006; Hirschkind, 2009; Mahmood, 2012; Öncü, 2006; White, 2005). Bu makale inanç toplulukları açısından henüz yeterince incelenmemiş bir alan olan haber medyasına odaklanarak bu tartışmalara katkıda bulunmaktadır. Araştırma, 2014-2015 yılları arasında Cem TV, Yol TV ve TV 10 kanallarının haber üretim süreçlerine odaklanan, 18 ay süren ve katılımcı gözlem ile derinlemesine mülakatlar içeren bir saha araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, haber medyasının Aleviler gibi inanç topluluklarının hem genel izleyiciye hem de kendi kitlesine aynı anda hitap etmesini sağlayan bir işlevselliği olduğunu savunur. Alevi yayıncılar haber bültenlerini hem Alevi olmayan genel bir kitleye hitap edecek hem de Alevileri içerecek bir haber diliyle oluşturmaktadır. Haberciler bunu, iki şekilde başarır. Bu yollardan ilki, televizyon teknolojisinin imkanlarını kullanarak haberin başına Alevileri özellikle ilgilendiren gelişmeleri kapsayan bir “Alevi haberleri” segmenti yerleştirmektir. İkincisi ise haber bülteninin dilini daha “tarafsız” olacak şekilde oluştururken, Alevileri ilgilendiren gelişmelerle ilgili görüş belirten yorumları haber ve tartışma programlarında dile getirmektir.

Metod ve Saha

Araştırmanın temelini katılımcı gözlem (etnografi) ve derinlemesine mülakat yöntemleri oluşturmaktadır. Veri toplama aşamasında Cem TV, Yol TV ve TV 10’un İstanbul’daki haber merkezleri dörder ay süreyle gözlemlenmiş ve katılımcı gözlemin gereği olarak bu süreçlere katkıda bulunulmuştur. Cem TV’de özel haber yapımı ve günlük medya taramalarına destek verilmiştir. Hem Yol TV’de hem de TV 10’da araştırmacı editörlük ve seslendirme yapmıştır. Daha sonra haber merkezi çalışanlarıyla derinlemesine mülakatlar yapılarak, gözlem sırasında ortaya çıkan çeşitli sorular sorulmuştur. Toplamda 43 haberci ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Alevi Televizyonlarının ve Haber Programlarının Tarihsel Bağlamı

Dünya genelindeki diğer inanç toplulukları gibi Aleviliğin de kamusal alanda görünürlük kazanması 1990’lı yıllara rastlar. Türkiye’deki bu görünürlük hem ekonomik hem de siyasi alanlardaki

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neoliberal dönüşümün bir sonucuydu. 1990'ların başından itibaren, Uluslararası Para Fonu'nun (IMF) onayladığı ekonomik liberalleşme ve özelleştirme politikalarının bir sonucu olarak, Türkiye medya sahnesi, medya üretim araçları üzerindeki devlet tekelinin ortadan kalkmasına tanık oldu (Öncü, 2006). Dönemin deregülasyon politikaları, Almanya gibi ülkelerden Türkiye'ye yayın yapan özel televizyon kanallarının devlet medyasına güçlü rakipler olarak kurulmasının önünü açtı. Yeni ortaya çıkan özel medya sektörünü düzenlemek için yasaların ve resmi kurumların yokluğunda, ülkedeki çeşitli grupların ticari medya pazarına girmesi için yeni fırsatlar oluştu (Öncü, 2006). Bu siyasi bağlamda, Aleviler—henüz kendi televizyon kanallarını kuracak altyapı olmasa da—özelleştirilmiş kitle iletişim araçlarını daha aktif kullanmaya başladı. Kitaplar, dergiler ve radyolar yoluyla 1990'larda medya üretim süreçlerine dahil olan Aleviler 2000'lerin başında Alevi televizyon kanallarını kurdu. Bu kanallardan en uzun ömürlü olan Cem TV, Yol TV ve TV 10 kaynak ve medya personeli eksikliğine rağmen, haber medyasını yayın yelpazesinde ayrı bir önem attetti.

Haber Bülteni, “Alevi Haberleri,” Haber Programları

Alevi medya üreticilerini haber bültenlerini genel izleyici kitlesine hitap edecek şekilde düzenlemekteydi. Değiş programları, cem yayınları gibi ana yayın akışını belirleyen ve özellikle Alevilere hitap eden programların içinde haber bülteni bu kanalların Alevi olmayan kitlelere açılan kapısıdır. Türkiye'deki ana gündem maddelerinin herhangi bir haber bültenini aratmayacak özenle verildiği bültenlerde, Alevi yayıncıların amacı genel kitleye hitap ederken Alevileri de içeren bir haber dili yakalamaktır. Alevi televizyon kanallarındaki haberciler bunu, iki şekilde başarmayı hedefler. Bu yollardan ilki, televizyon teknolojisinin imkanlarını kullanarak haberin başına Alevileri özellikle ilgilendiren gelişmeleri kapsayan bir “Alevi haberleri” segmenti yerleştirmektir. İkincisi ise haber bülteninin dilini daha “tarafsız” olacak şekilde oluştururken, Alevileri ilgilendiren gelişmelerle ilgili görüş belirten yorumları haber ve tartışma programlarında dile getirmektir. Saha araştırmam sırasında Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun başbakanlığı döneminde gündeme gelen Alevi reform programının haberleştirilme şekli bunun iyi bir örneğidir. Bu reform paketi her üç kanalda da Alevi haberciler arasında belli bir beklenti oluşmasına sebep olmuştur. Ancak haberciler bu beklentilerini haber bülteninden ziyade haber programlarında dile getirmeyi tercih ederek haber bülteninin hem genel izleyici kitlesine hem de Alevilere yönelik yapısını korumuşlardır.

“Alevi haberleri” segmenti genel izleyiciye hitap eden haber bülteninin içinde Alevilere özel bir şekilde hitap etmenin örtük bir yoludur. Hükümetin Alevilere yönelik reform paketi ile ilgili gelişmelerin hepsi “Alevi haberleri” segmentiyle izleyiciye iletilmiştir. Bu segment ilk üç-dört haberi kapsar ve bültenin açılışında verilir. Alevi haberleri bittikten sonra görsel bir “ayraç” segmentin sonunu belirtir ve sunucu, genellikle Türkiye'nin genel siyasi gündemiyle ilgili diğer haber öğelerine geçer. Alevi haber bölümüne yapılan bu dolaylı, açık olmayan vurgu, muhabirler arasında Alevi ve genel izleyici kitlesine aynı anda hitap etmek için yaygın bir stratejidir. Haber sıralaması ve görsel ayrıyla örtük yollardan ifade edilen bu haberlerin Alevileri ilgilendiren haberler olmasıyla ilgili verilen bu “mesajı” sadece düzenli olarak, çoğunlukla Alevi olan izleyicilerin anlaması mümkündür. Öte yandan, reform paketinin Aleviler arasında yarattığı beklentiler ise tartışma ve haber programlarında ele alınmıştır. Bu beklentilerin genel izleyici kitlesinden ziyade Alevileri ilgilendirdiğini düşünen haberciler, haber bülteni ve tartışma programları arasındaki ayırmadan faydalanarak hem genel izleyiciye hem de Alevilere hitap etmeyi hedeflemiştir.

Sonuç

Bu araştırma Alevi televizyon kanallarının haber medyasını nasıl işlevselleştirdiğini incelemiştir. Elde edilen veriler, Alevi kanallarının haber programları aracılığıyla hem kendi topluluklarına hem de genel izleyici kitlesine hitap etmeyi hedeflediğini göstermektedir. Alevi medyasının sınırlı kaynaklarına rağmen, haber üretim sürecine verdikleri önem ve gösterdikleri çaba, bu kanalların kendilerine özgü bir yayın politikası geliştirmelerine olanak tanımıştır. 2014 yılında öne sürülen Alevi reform paketinin bu kanallardaki haberleştirilme şekli, Alevi olmayan izleyicilere yönelik stratejilerle birlikte, Alevi topluluğuna dair taleplerin ve beklentilerin nasıl

yansıtıldığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, katılımcı gözlem yoluyla elde edilen bulgular, haber üretim süreçlerinin ve haber içeriklerinin toplulukların ihtiyaçlarına nasıl cevap verdiğini de ortaya koymuştur. Alevi televizyon kanalları, topluluklarının kimliklerini ve inançlarını medya aracılığıyla ifade edebilecekleri bir platform sunarak, hem topluluk içi bir iletişim aracı hem de dışa yönelik bir görünürlük mecrası işlevi görmektedir. Bu bağlamda, haber medyasının Aleviler gibi inanç toplulukları açısından kritik bir rol oynadığı ve bu toplulukların kamusal alandaki varlıklarını güçlendirdiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Çalışmanın Etik İzin Bilgileri / Ethics Committee Approval

The data used in the article were collected during the author's doctoral studies at Northwestern University. The Northwestern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) provided the ethical approval necessary for the conduct of the research under approval number "STU00200148.

Makalede kullanılan veriler yazarın Northwestern Üniversitesi'ndeki doktora çalışmaları sırasında toplanmıştır. Northwestern Üniversitesi Kurumsal İnceleme Kurulu (IRB), "STU00200148" onay numarası altında araştırmanın yürütülmesi için gerekli etik onayı sağlamıştır.

Araştırmacıların Katkı Oranı Beyanı/ Contribution of Authors

Araştırma tek bir yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür.

The research was conducted by a single author.

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı / Conflict of Interest

Çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.
There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of the study.

İntihal Politikası Beyanı / Plagiarism Policy

Bu makale bir benzerlik taramasından geçirilmiştir ve dergi beklentilerini karşılamaktadır.

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Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı / Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Statement

Bu çalışmada "Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi" kapsamında uyulması belirtilen kurallara uyulmuştur.

In this study, the rules stated in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed.