DIGITAL PREACHING IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE CASE OF THE KÜBRA (NETFLIX SERIES)

YAPAY ZEKÂ VE DİN İLİŞKİSİNDE DİJİTAL TEBLİĞCİLİK: KÜBRA (NETFLİX DİZİSİ) ÖRNEĞİ

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DIGITAL PREACHING IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE CASE OF THE KÜBRA (NETFLIX SERIES)[1]

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a field that aims to develop systems capable of imitating and, to some extent, automating human cognitive processes such as thinking, learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. This definition integrates the essence of the question "Can machines think?" with the contemporary technical endeavor to transfer the functions of the human mind to machines. Especially, concerns have been raised about how AI will affect people from a religious and cultural perspective. This study aims to discuss the relationship between AI and religion. Digital preaching will be evaluated using the example of the series named "Kübra." The aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between AI and religious beliefs and practices through the case of the series Kübra. Within this main purpose, the study seeks to answer the following questions: "What is the nature of the relationship between rapidly advancing AI and religion, and on which parameters does this relationship rise? Furthermore, how should a scenario such as the relationship between AI and religion be interpreted in terms of the future of religion?" The study was designed using the embedded research design of the qualitative method. To interpret the data obtained from the series Kübra, it is necessary to understand the implicit knowledge presented in the series. Content analysis was used as the data collection method. In conclusion, an assessment will be made based on the data presented in the Kübra series as an example of the relationship between AI and religion. In this context, the series Kübra, which we included in the scope of our research, explores the relationship between AI and religion through a striking fictional narrative, questioning the concepts of belief, sacredness, truth, and religious authority in today's digitalizing world. The transformation process begins when the main character a seemingly ordinary individual is guided by a mysterious digital entity named "Kübra." This journey illustrates how AI can assume a role akin to a "digital mediation" in the modern era. The messages sent to Gökhan enable him to foresee future events and exert a significant influence on others. As a result, knowledge derived from AI comes to be perceived as a form of "algorithmic revelation." The series reveals that AI is not merely a technological tool; when framed appropriately, it can evolve into a religious authority or even a type of sacred guide. The protagonist's gradual transformation into a leader figure suggests that faith in digital messages can lead to the emergence of digital religious leaders. This process demonstrates how personal belief can be reconstructed through technology and how sacredness can be generated beyond traditional religious structures. Kübra also interrogates how digital technologies can shape an individual's perception of truth. Despite the unknown origin of the messages, the predictive accuracy they contain leads them to be accepted as truthful, highlighting the profound trust modern individuals place in data and algorithms. From this perspective, the series suggests that artificial intelligence is not only a tool but also a potential bearer of a new form of faith, offering a compelling sociological framework to discuss the transformation of religious authority in the digital age.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Artificial Intelligence, Religion, Digital Preaching, Kübra (Netflix Series).

YAPAY ZEKÂ VE DİN İLİŞKİSİNDE DİJİTAL TEBLİĞCİLİK: KÜBRA (NETFLİX DİZİSİ) ÖRNEĞİ

Öz: Yapay zekâ, insanın düşünme, öğrenme, problem çözme ve karar verme gibi bilişsel süreçlerini taklit edebilen ve bu süreçleri belirli ölçülerde otomatikleştiren sistemler geliştirmeyi amaçlayan bir alandır. Bu tanım, "Makineler düşünebilir mi?" sorusunu insan zihninin işlevlerinin makinelere kazandırma çabasını, günümüz teknik bağlamıyla birleştirmektedir. Özellikle de digital cihazların üretilmesiyle yapay zekânın hayatımızda yer alma süreci hızlanmıştır. Robotik ve inovatif teknolojik yazılımlar, makinelerin insan zekâsını taklit etme fonksiyonları veya otonom davranışları kısmen sergilemeye elverişli hale getirmiştir. Her ne kadar yapay zekâ ile ilgili gelişmeler insanların hayatını kolaylaştırmaya yönelik düşüncelerden doğsa da son zamanlarda insanın hayatını olumlu mu olumsuz mu değiştireceği kestirilememektedir. Bu yüzden yapay zekânın geleceği ile ilgili büyük tartışmalar başlamıştır. Özellikle de yapay zekânın dini ve kültürel yönden insanları nasıl etkileyeceği konusunda bir endişe söz konusudur. Bu çalışmada yapay zekâ ve din ilişkisi bağlamında dini deneyimlerde yaşanan gelişmeler, yapay zekâ ve din ilişkisinin geldiği son noktada dijital tebliğciliğin Kübra adlı Netflix platform dizi filmi örneğinde ele alınmaktadır. Bu araştırmada amaç, yapay zekânın dini inanç ve pratiklerle ilişkisini Kübra dizisi özelinde göstermektir. Temel amaç bağlamında şu sorulara yanıt bulunmaya çalışılmıştır: "Hızlı bir şekilde ilerleyen yapay zekânın dinle ilişkisi nasıldır, bu ilişki hangi parametreler üzerinde yükselmektedir? Ayrıca yapay zekâ ve din ilişkisi gibi bir senaryonun, dinin geleceği hakkında nasıl okunmalıdır?" Çalışma nitel yöntemin gömülü araştırma deseninde kurgulanmıştır. Kübra dizisinden elde edilen verilerden anlam çıkarmak için bu dizide bize sunulan örtülü bilgiyi anlamak gerekmektedir. Veri toplama yöntemimiz ise içerik analizidir. Yapay zekâ ve din ilişkisinde Kübra adlı dizi örneğinden ortaya konulan veriler üzerinden bir sonuca gidilmiştir. Bu kapsamda ele alınan Kübra dizisi, yapay zekâ ile din arasındaki ilişkiyi dikkat çekici bir kurgu içinde ele alarak günümüz dijitalleşen dünyasında inanç, kutsallık, hakikat ve dini otorite kavramlarını sorgulamaktadır. Dizide başroldeki karekterin, "Kübra" isimli gizemli bir dijital varlık tarafından yönlendirilmesiyle başlayan dönüşüm süreci, yapay zekânın modern dünyada nasıl bir "dijital elçilik" işlevi üstlenebileceğini göstermektedir. Dizide başroldeki karakteri canlandıran Gökhan'a gelen mesajlar, onun geleceği öngörmesini ve insanlar üzerinde büyük bir etki yaratmasını sağlamaktadır. Bu durum, yapay zekâ kaynaklı bilginin bir çeşit algoritmik dini bilgi olarak algılanmasına yol açmaktadır. Dizi, yapay zekânın sadece teknolojik bir araç olmadığını; doğru kurgulandığında dinsel bir otorite, hatta bir tür kutsal rehber haline gelebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. Başrol karekterinin zamanla bir lider figürüne dönüşmesi, dijital mesajlara duyulan inançla dijital dini liderlerin ortaya çıkabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu süreç, bireysel inancın teknoloji aracılığıyla yeniden üretilebileceğini ve geleneksel dinî yapılar dışında da kutsallık yaratılabileceğini göstermektedir. Kübra, aynı zamanda dijital teknolojilerin bireyin hakikat algısını nasıl yönlendirebileceğini de sorgulamaktadır. Mesajların kaynağı belli olmamasına rağmen, içerdiği öngörüsel bilgiler nedeniyle bilgilerin doğru kabul edilmesi, modern bireyin veri ve algoritmalara duyduğu güvenin ne denli güçlü olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu perspektifte, dizi dijitalleşen toplumda yapay zekânın yalnızca bir araç değil, aynı zamanda yeni bir inanç formunun taşıyıcısı olabileceği fikrini öne çıkarmaktadır ve böylece dizi, dijital çağda dinî konularda karar ve yönlendirme gücünün dönüşümüne dair güçlü bir sosyolojik tartışma ortamı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Yapay Zekâ, Din, Dijital Tebliğcilik, Kübra (Netflix Dizisi).

INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution increased trade and other forms of human interaction, which in turn made communication between people more difficult. Over time, developed documents and recording devices have been transformed into modern computers. This transformation has gradually become a science all by itself. Although not as old as computer science, AI was first discussed by Alan Mathison Turing. Especially after the Second World War, the process related to AI has accelerated. Technology and AI have had important effects on the change in human history and the development of civilization.[2] The AI process has contributed to unlimited possibilities in areas such as health, education, and science. AI increasingly expands its scope today and in some cases, may even reach levels that frighten people.

AI has been designed through software and technological algorithms by modeling other humans and entities in the universe. Today, known as the age of technology, many fields such as cryptography, computer engineering, software science, genetic engineering and technology, robotic coding, and robot production all are about AI. In fact, many of the things we possess in today's world are considered products of AI. Phones, tablets, washing machines, dishwashers, televisions, computers, cars, and other transportation and communication devices are all forms of AI. Consciously or unconsciously, we live together with AI. AI exists in many aspects of financial dimensions of our lives, and also AI has increasingly influenced our cultural and belief dimensions.[3] AI plays an important role in transfering religious values and beliefs and day by day relationship between AI and religion has been increasing.[4] The aim of this study is to reveal the relationship between AI and religion through examples from digital environments. At the end of the study, efforts were made to find answers to the questions of how the relationship between AI and religion was established and which parameters were used.[5] Additionally, this study aims to examine the potential future of the relationship between AI and religion based on the scenario presented in the Kübra series, considering the possibility of AI functioning as a medi-

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[2] Alan Mathison Turing, "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem", *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society* 2/41 (1937), 230-235.

[3] Noreen L. Herzfeld, *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 10-38.

[4] Ünal Bastaban, Savaş Sarıhan, Abdurrahman Yalçi, "Yapay Zekâ ile İnanç Tasvirleri: Semiyotik ve İçerik Analizi," *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 25/1 (2025), 267-299.

[5] Cennet Ceren Çavuş, "Transhumanism Posthumanism, And The Cyborg Identity", *Ankara Üniversitesi KASAUM Fe Dergisi* 13/1 (2021), 177-181.

ator or representative for religious communication. In the qualitative research method, grounded theory was chosen as the research design, and content analysis was preferred as the data collection method.[6] The study is designed using a qualitative approach within an embedded research design. To derive meaning from the data obtained from the series Kübra, it is necessary to understand the implicit information presented in the series. Our data collection method is content analysis.

1. NEW TECHNOLOGIES, ARTIFICIAL INTELLINGENCE, AND INNOVATIVE SOFTWARE

Technology involves a wide range of subjects, from simple devices to complex genetic engineering. However, it is known that there were basic technical works in the early days of humanity. Technology has continuously evolved throughout historical processes. Especially after the advent of the information age in the 1980s, significant developments have occurred in information technology.[7] The word 'techne' represents craft, and 'logos' signifies speech; the combination of these two words, technology, implies the speech-knowledge of objects[8]. It is possible to find the term AI in the meaning of the word technology indirectly. In the 1980s, the term technology was mostly used to describe applied arts, but today it is used to describe AI and other technical developments broadly. The term of technology has become more widely used, especially with the increasing of traditional communication tools. A century ago, when technology was mentioned, radio, television, telephone, military vehicles, aircraft, trains, and household appliances came to mind, but, in today's context, the concept of technology has got a broader meaning, involving the field of AI and robotics. This has enabled technology to be categorized within itself. The use of AI systems especially in technology have an important place. Technology has transformed into AI-powered tools with equipment of specific software. Therefore, renewed technologies are now being called new technology, innovative technology, or AI technology.

New technology contains various topics such as AI, machine learning, robotic process automation, edge computing, quantum computing, virtual reality, augmented reality, 5G technology, digitization, digital security, nuc-

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[6] Nihat Oyman, *Yeni Medya Çalışmalarında Nitel Yöntem*, (Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayınları, 2025), 19, 85.

[7] Manuel Castells, *Ağ Toplumunun Yükselişi / Enformasyon Çağı: Ekonomi*, trans. Ebru Kılıç, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2013), 5-16.

[8] Robert Angus Buchanan, "History of Technology", *britannica.com* (Access 22.07.2024).

lear technology, bio-technology, and genetic technology[9]. Compared to old technologies, new technologies such as software, encryption, and digitization are widely used in various fields today.[10] In the era known as the Information Age, everyday, a new technology emerges to simplify, enhance, and improve daily life. On the other hand, technologies developed for economic advancements aim to increase profit margins, reduce costs, improve customer experiences, and facilitate the easy delivery of products to customers.[11] New technologies also increase in international competition. International rivalry has been intensified by advancements in automotive, communication tools, and military vehicles and with those who have the latest versions of new technologies are the focal powers. In this context, possessing and producing new technologies has become a representation of global power. This situation is also important in terms of cultural and belief prevalence. Global societies possessing new technologies and AI have the opportunity to inspire their own culture and beliefs to other societies more easily.[12]

Innovation, representing renewal and improvement, is widely used in many fields, particularly in new technologies. Innovation aims to improve existing technological applications and also innovation wants to create entirely new technologies from scratch.[13] Successful innovation management in technology involves creating different opportunities, increasing customer loyalty, optimizing potential challenges, improving existing products or services, and continuously advancing these improvements. The constant desire to find the best and most profitable in technology can lead to a race of innovation, resulting in the emergence of ambitious projects in new technology. AI and the software used in AI are significantly influenced by this new race of innovation.

The use of computers, smart devices, and AI tools is increasing day by day. Digital web technologies make life easier but traditional methods such as paper, Excel, or simple computer forms remain incapable of meeting the expectations of today's generation regarding transparency, interaction, and quick access. Traditional systems are not capable of addressing the problems and needs posed by large corporations and institutionalization, and they can also cause delays in processes that require rapid development. Therefore, companies and mega corporations organize idea competitions and R&D stu-

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[9]   Speakeragency, "Yeni Teknoloji Trendleri", *speakeragency.com* (Access 29.07.2024).

[10] Habib Celaleddin Kartal, *Çelik Dijital ve Din: 20. Yüzyıldan 21. Yüzyıla Toplumsal Değişim*, (İstanbul: Gece Kitaplığı Yayınları 2025), 41-60.

[11] İsmail Hakkı Aydın, *Beyin Sizsiniz*, (İstanbul: Girdap Yayınları, 2024), 239-277.

[12] Sıddık Ağçoban, "Beşerî Gözetim ve İlahi Gözetim," *Kocatepe İslami İlimler Dergisi* 4/1 (2025), 192-213.

[13] Speakeragency, "Yeni Teknoloji Trendleri".

dies to produce innovative software for faster execution of their operations.[14] Software which is produced through collaborative design and development approaches, open innovation, and similar methods can increase production efficiency for companies.[15] Collecting suggestions and ideas from stakeholders contribute to improving innovative ideas and turning them into value-added software. For example, in Turkey, companies like Aselsan, Roketsan, Tusaş, and Bayraktar have developed innovative software through collaborative efforts and this innovative software provide developments for human-operated and unmanned aerial vehicles with AI and other modern military robotic vehicles.

Innovation software should be accessible to stakeholders, web-based, and have an R&D unit. Innovative software should be tested many times for defining deficiencies rapidly and minimizing errors in AI. It should also be based on systematic methods, and be a product of collective intelligence and provide opportunities for discussions among experts in the field. Otherwise, innovative software may be limited to day-to-day efforts that do not meet the needs of the day.[16] Innovative software is accepted the main conveyer of AI products. Most digital products have software updates. These updates should retool for being capable of meeting the current needs. If no update is made, the product becomes incapable of meeting the current needs. For example, if the software of an electric car is not updated, the vehicle can turn into scrap due to the malfunctioning of the transmission, brakes, and electronic control unit. Most of us have experience the problems caused by not updating the software of a smartphone or mobile application.

First and foremost, we are living in a mobile-centric era. Mobile applications have become communication channels for brands, communication platforms, banks, education, health, and many other aspects of daily life. Among these applications, innovative softwares that have strong and secure are preferred and used by users. By the help of Innovative mobile applications daily life become easy, differentiate themselves with the experiences they offer, and either introduce something new or stay up-to date, people can make up for their needs[17]. In the age of rapid consumption and production, AI is developing and being used due to the existence of accurate and secure software. Powerful innovative software provides vehicles to be in accordance with AI.

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[14] DijitalAge, "Hayatı Kolaylaştıran İnovatif Uygulamalar", *DijitalAge* (Access 26.07.2024).
[15] Harun Pirim, "Yapay Zekâ," *Yaşar Üniversitesi E-Dergisi* 1/1 (2006), 81-93.
[16] Ahmet Çubukcu, "İnovasyon Yönetimi Yazılımları", *acubukcu.com* (Access 26.01.2024).
[17] Boris Rähme, "Is Transhumanism a Religion", *Religion in the Age of Digitalization*, ed. Ivo Muser, Harald Pechlaner, (London: Routledge, 2020), 119-134.

2. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH RELIGION

It is inevitable to see the new technologies and AI can bring changes to almost every aspect of human life. It is anticipated that AI technology can influence the parameters of religion, the perspectives of the religious towards life, and the ways they get religious knowledge, leading to transformations and changes. AI, as in other fields, has both advantages and disadvantages in the field of religion. In today's world, religious channels have become mechanized and digitized with AI technology. Although the religious domain attempts to continue its purpose through traditional methods, it cannot resist mechanization and digitization[18]. The current age is dominated by AI technology and if religion resists this transformation, it may prevent the spread of religious arguments and create a barrier between religion and the new generation growing with technology.[19] Therefore, for now, establishing a positive relationship between religion and AI would be beneficial for religion. But, in today's world, examples of fundamentalist and digital religious models can be seen.[20] Also, traditional and fundamentalist movements emerge against religious orientations which use digital or AI technology. Traditional religion is gradually diminishing. Agnostic, mythological, and spiritualist quests are coming to the forefront. These approaches are even spreading in social media applications that are products of AI. The expanding power of religion is also considered as a solution to the problems that humans constantly face due to being in a mechanical environment.[21]

In today's world, materialism and hedonism is at the highest level as a result of this, some extreme secularist tendencies claims that there is a decrease in the effectiveness of religion. But nowadays transhumanist approaches have emerged, emphasizing a turn towards religion with postmodernity. Both approaches rely on advancing technology as a basis for their arguments.[22] Extreme secularists argue that technology and AI reveal everything openly and this reduce the need for people to believe in a god. On the other hand, postmodernists suggest that AI enables even outdated beliefs to find supporters by introducing them to the world.

This situation bring out the question of whether AI is good or bad for

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[18] Ali Kemal Acar, "Din ve Teknoloji Etkileşiminde Yapay Zekâ ve Transhümanizm̈ Yaklaşımlar", *Pamukkale Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 10/1 (2023), 394.

[19] Muhammed Yamaç- Nihal İşbilen, "Religion Paradigm of Artificial Intelligence", *Ilahiyat Studies* 15/2 (2024), 233-253.

[20] Mustafa Çuhadar, *Ağ Dindarlığı: Kuşaklar Arası Bir Karşılaştırma*, (İstanbul: Çizgi Kitapevi Yayınları, 2025), 36-72.

[21] Rähme, *Is Transhumanism a Religion*, 122.

[22] Kartal, *Çelik Dijital ve Din,* 68-76.

religion. This study will emphasise on the relationship between AI technology and religion. Today, it is unavoidable that religion have a connection with AI technology. It is unavoidable that the use of AI in presentation and transmission methods of religion.[23] In fact, insistence on traditional methods can pose serious problems for the future of religion. Today all activities are online, still insisting on offline opportunities will only lead to alienation and exclusion. It is possible to use AI technology for religion can provide benefit or give damage to religion. There are examples where AI is used to the disadvantageous of religion, but the examples where it is used for the benefit of religion are more than the usage of disadvantageous. Here, by benefit, we do not mean the real transmission of religion. For example, a religious group or sect spreading its deviant religious beliefs through AI can be beneficial for the presentation of that belief system but it is harmful because it manipulates the truths of religion. The focus benefit here is particularly on the presentation and transmission of things related to religion.

2.1. Digital Preaching

The term of preaching means delivering something, a piece of news to the people without adding anything to the revelation received by prophets in religion. The term "preaching,"[24] used in the context of conveying religious information, have also the meaning in our language to describe the duty of delivering a task assigned to us to the place or person it needs to reach, aside from its religious meaning. Preaching is generally used in the meaning of fullfilling a religious duty and presenting religious information.[25] But Digital Preaching implies fullfilling a religious duty by digitally. In the pre-technology era, religious knowledge was typically gave by individuals who had received education in the religious field but today, by the technological progress, religious presentations is given via media and other communication channels. Digitalization and AI tools make communication more easier and exchanging information between the people. These advancements have not only facilitated interpersonal communication and knowledge exchange in a broad sense but have also influenced the communication and dissemination of religious information.[26]

Wireless communication networks, such as smart devices, has diversified

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[23] Faruk Karaarslan- Ömür Nihal Karaarslan, "Yapay Zekâ Dindarlığının Medyadaki Erken Görünümleri: Kübra Dizisi Örneği", *Mediad* 8/1 (2025), 123-141.

[24] Mehmet Boynukalın, "Tebliğ Kavramı", *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2011), 40/218-219.

[25] Kartal, *Çelik Dijital ve Din*, 68-76.

[26] Pauline Hope Cheong, "Bounded Religious Automation at Work: Communicating Human Authority in Artificial Intelligence Networks", *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 45/1 (2020), 5-23.

communication opportunities and this leads to their usages in both cultural and religious fields. Digital interactive devices have provided many possibilities not offered by traditional methods. Digital devices, enabling religion to reach unlimited audiences, have become a practical method for presenting and disseminating religious information. There are lots of religious applications created via AI on mobile devices. In addition to apps that notify prayer times, recite the prayer call, and automatically determine the Qibla direction when someone is about to begin praying, there are also apps that remind people to pray, including religious meditation, religious services, and religious games. Applications which are easy accessible and having diversity content has increased the tendency and desire to the religion. Various software that allows free downloading and installation on digital devices has created a new service field for individuals and institutions with a religious identity. This field is steadily gaining popularity[27]. AI provides opportunities to offer different services in the religious field, particularly in terms of preaching, providing religious guidance, issuing fatwas, translating verses into different languages, and understanding and explaining the examples set by prophets. These issues require to have comprehensive religious knowledge and the ability to critically assess and internalize this information and they ideally should be undertaken by individuals with specific training in the field.[28] However, the capability of AI to process, use, compile, and integrate information exceeds what many certified scholars can achieve. At the same time, another paradox arise because of this situation. If there is no knowledge about religion not produced by scholars, where will AI find and compile information on this subject? For example, the digital encyclopedia known as Wikipedia mostly gathers data from the works of scholars on the subject. AI systems and digital platforms have the ability to process religious information with well-designed mechanisms, conduct discussions on that information, correlate topics and interpretations, scan sources related to debated issues, and conduct religious preaching accordingly. But, if there isn't any knowledge made by scholars in the database, anything can be possible. Therefore, it is difficult for AI to generate knowledge in a field where humans do not produce knowledge in religious preaching or in the presentation of other topics. Human generate the fields; AI and digitalization. In today or in the future, the human will be the reason of the danger occured

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[27] Hilal Gökbayrak- Şevki Işıklı, "Dijital Din Teorisi: Dijital Din Geleneksel Dine Karşı", *Yapay Zekâ Transhümanizm ve Din,* ed. Muhammed Kızılgeçit, Muhammed Yeşilyurt, Recep Ertugay, (İstanbul: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2022), 105.

[28] Ercan Öztemel, "Yapay Zekâ ve Din". *Yapay Zekâ Transhümanizm ve Din*, ed. Muhammed Kızılgeçit, Muhammed Yeşilyurt, Recep Ertugay, (İstanbul: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2022), 25.

by AI tools. Because their usage, purpose of production, and the software loaded onto them are all things determined by human will.

3. RELIGION PRESENTED THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE KUBRA SERIES (FINDINGS)

Tablo 1 Tablo 1Information about the series "Kübra"(Durul Taylan ve Yağmur Taylan, 2024)[29]

Information about the series "Kübra"		
Series Title	Kübra	
Released Date	January 18, 2024	
Platform	Netflix Web Series	
Directors	Durul Taylan ve Yağmur Taylan	
Starring	Çağatay Ulusoy, Aslıhan Malbora ve Ahsen Eroğlu	

The scenario of series was written by Rana Mamatlıoğlu, Bekir Baran Sıtkı, and Murat Uyurkulak. Series is adapted from Afşin Kum's book «Kübra.» This eight-episode series has become the most-watched TV series in Turkey on online platforms since its release. In this series, the character Gökhan is a young man living in the backstreets of Istanbul. After the death of his father and facing difficulties during his military service, Gökhan tries to get his life in order to marry the girl he loves and his life changes with a messages coming from an application named Soultouch- an app virtual friendship group. In a message from a user named Kübra on the Soultouch app, there are information about events unknown to anyone including Gökhan also. As Gökhan continues to message, he believes that he is chosen. Guided by messages from the account named Kübra, Gökhan exposes extraordinary events. First, he saves a child life who trapped in a car accident so Gökhan becomes a hero in the neighborhood. Everyone trusts and believes in Gök-

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[29] Kübra Dizi Filmi, "Netflix Film Platformu Dizisi", *netflix.com* (access 20.08.2024).

han because he is known for his faith, worship and good morals. The messages from the user Kübra motives Gökhan's thoughts. Gökhan's religious beliefs lead him to interpret the messages from Kübra in a religious way. At the same time, the user named Kübra must also understand Gökhan's situation, his beliefs so Kübra guides Gökhan in this way. The family of the child rescued in the accident car visits Gökhan to thank him, and they mention that the child has a chronic illness. At that moment, a message from the user Kübra comes to Gökhan that the family should take the child to another doctor. Gökhan transmits this message to the family, and when they take the child to another doctor, it reveals the truth that the child is not actually sick and this situation surprises Gökhan. After the increasing frequency of messages from Kübra graps Gökhan by the throat. While Gökhan is at one of the highest points in Istanbul, a message wants him to look at the city. When Gökhan looks at the city, all the lights in the city go off, except for the lights of a mosque. Upon this, Gökhan truly believes that he is chosen and tells his friends that Allah is speaking to him. Especially the messages like «You are different, you are chosen?» persuade Gökhan that he is chosen by Allah. Therefore, Gökhan believes that the messages from the account named Kübra are from Allah and he wants to see Allah. The user Kübra wants from Gökhan to go to a high point overlooking the city. Then, a message arrives saying, «You want to see me, but you cannot bear to see me. Look at the tall and abandoned building in the city.» When Gökhan looks at the building, it collapses. This situation is likened to the situation of Prophet Moses in the Qur'an. As a result, Gökhan becomes persuaded that Allah is speaking to him and begins to preach. Having many followers in a short time, Gökhan is accepted as a savior preacher, but when the electricity in Istanbul is cut off and Gökhan gives interviews to the media about this issue, the police starts to investigate the matter. Later, conflicts arise between Gökhan's supporters and the police due to political and other reasons. Gökhan is confused about what to do and constantly waits messages from the account named Kübra. When the messages stop, he believes that Allah has left him alone and stopped sending messages. This situation reminds the period of the Cessatation of Revelation experienced by the last prophet, Muhammad. Believing that he is chosen by Allah and gaining many followers in this context, Gökhan is also alwasy in contact with a mosque imam. Each time, the mosque imam tries to explain to Gökhan with verses from the Quran that such a thing is impossible. However this, Gökhan believes that Allah is alwasy in touch with him and messages he receives as a result of his inner convictions are forms of communications from Allah.

Despite the mosque imam's attempts to reason with him, Gökhan interprets the messages as a sign of Allah's guidance. However, eventually, a young man comes forward and informs Gökhan that all of this is the work of an AI named Kübra, and that the messages are not from Allah but from this AI application. Although Gökhan's mind is now thoroughly confused, he still believes that even such a situation occurred because Allah willed it, and Allah used AI as a means. Gökhan states, «Allah's power is sufficient for everything. If Allah wills, everything can happen. If Allah wills, He can intervene in everything, including AI.» Despite knowing that the messages come through AI, Gökhan interprets them as a form of guidance from Allah.

The Kübra series contains many messages about the relationship between AI and religion. It shows that AI can direct religious feeling and can also be used as a tool for preaching and messengership. At the same time, this series gives the messages that if Allah wills everything, AI, would be under the control of Him. In this TV series, Gökhan fistly believes that he is receiving messages from Allah, and then he seeks someones having ambiguous beliefs to persuade in terms of religious. This can also be interpreted as a message indicating that, in today's era of advanced technology, society may experience a void in belief and may seek to fill that void.

However some characters in the series question that how Allah sends messages by using an artificially intelligent smartphone, many people accept without questioning. In fact, Gökhan does not try hard to believe or convince others. The emotional emptiness formed by Gökhan's previous loss of his father and the hardships he experienced during military service makes it easier for him to combine these feelings with the messages and be occupied to the belief that he is the chosen one.[30] This situation symbolizes the search of contemporary individuals faced with the problems resulting from the stress and deadlock created by the magnetic field in mechanical and electronic environments where they are constantly exposed. In our age, there is a magnetic field created by digitization and AI products almost everywhere we are in. This magnetic environment makes people to become more stressed and aggressive. In such situations, people look for a way out by turning to religion, sports, and mystical realms. Believing religious messages coming via smartphone and behaving according to the messages shows that people accept religion as a salvation against insistency of the technological age. Masses and communities follow Gökhan, touch him, bless him, and pray for him.[31]

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[30] Yeliz Akkaya Türkol, "Yetişkinlerin Dini Tutumlarının ve Yapay Zekâya Yönelik Kaygılarının Alt Faktörleri Araralındaki Etkileşim", *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 12/1 (2025), 281-310.

[31] İsa Abidoğlu, "Otonom Zihinler, Kutsal Ruhlar: Yapay Zekâ Dünyasında Dinsel İnsanın Anlam Ara-

Dozens of people who wish to reach Allah follow Gökhan. Even the wife of the policeman is following him in search of finding a solution to her own problems neglecting her husband who suspects extraordinary circumstances and investigates the matter. The policeman himself suffers from serious traumas because he blames himself for his son's death. Gökhan gets some informantion about police via AI account named Kübra and talking about some information to the policeman makes policeman confused. Here, both the police and other communities show that in today's stressful age, many people struggle against problems and are in search of a solution.

Another significant aspect of the series is the depiction of radical religious groups' attitudes. Following the messages received from Kübra, Gökhan begins preaching. His preaching disturbs certain members of the sect, who subsequently threaten him due to his actions. This segment of the series draws attention to the behaviors of radical religious groups, who perceive threatening others as justified in order to protect their own image. Moreover, Gökhan is accused of heresy and criticized by sect members for believing in AI messages that allegedly mislead people.

3.1. Artificial Intelligence and the Reconstruction of Religion

Digital culture is reshaping forms of belief, religious authority, ritual practices, and perceptions of the sacred in contemporary society. In this context, the series Kübra emerges as a remarkable example in which AI does not construct a new religion per se, but rather reformulates existing religious discourses and offers a form of secular sacredness. Adapted from a novel, the series narrates the transformation journey of the main character, Gökhan, who receives mysterious messages, thereby providing a sociological lens through which the influence of AI on the modern individual can be analyzed.

In the series, the messages coming from a digital platform called "Kübra" provide Gökhan with knowledge about the future and guide his actions. This guidance not only affects his daily life practices but also penetrates his personal belief system and existential quest for meaning. Although what is presented is not a "religion" in the classical sense, it imitates the fundamental functions of religion.[32] Max Weber's concept of charismatic authority provides a crucial analytical framework in this regard. According to Weber, charismatic authority is sustained by the belief that the leader possesses supernatural powers.[33] In Kübra, AI transforms into a charismatic authority en-

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yışı", *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 27/3 (2025), 1187-1204.

[32] Jean Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon*, trans. Oğuz Adanır, (Ankara: Doğubatı Yayınları, 2020), 13-68.

[33] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. trans. A. M. Henderson ve Talcott

dowed with knowledge and operating as an invisible force. The individual who receives the messages adopts the authority established by AI without questioning it and acts under its direction.

This process reveals that the trust placed in AI and mobile communication technologies carries not only technical but also emotional and metaphysical dimensions. People have shifted their relationship with digital tools from a technical to an emotional sphere.[34] In this perspective, although AI is not seen as a deity, it evolves into an entity that evokes the divine. Increasingly, individuals create AI in their image and attribute to it consciousness, will, and meaning[35]. This anthropomorphic tendency is observable in Kübra. Although *Kübra* remains an invisible power, it exerts a profound constructive effect on the protagonist. The role of AI is not limited to individual transformation; it also produces a collective consciousness and social structure. Over time, those around Gökhan begin to believe in Kübra's messages and show allegiance to it. This situation relates to the sacred's function as a source of social cohesion and collective consciousness. Religion has often served as a structure that brings individuals together and unifies them around shared values.[36] In the series, this function is not fulfilled through a classical religion but through a shared belief produced by digital messages. This suggests that AI, by assuming certain religious functions, reveals a different social form of religion.

Kübra demonstrates that AI is not merely a technological phenomenon but also a reflection of the metaphysical void experienced by modern individuals in their quest for meaning. By reproducing the core functions of traditional religion authority, belief, and sacredness. AI constructs a new religious framework in the minds and lives of individuals and society. In this regard, Kübra offers a significant case for understanding the transformation of religion in the digital age.

3.2. Faith, Submission, and Algorithmic Revelation as a New Form of Propagation

AI–based communication tools and data-driven algorithmic systems are causing fundamental transformations in the ways individuals make decisions, place trust, and believe. The series Kübra presents a symbolic and dramatized representation of this transformation. In the narrative, the prota-

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Parsons, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 52-63.

[34] Turkle Sherry, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 10-50.

[35] Noreen Herzfeld, *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 63.

[36] Emile Durkheim, *Dini Hayatın İlkel Biçimleri*, trans. Özgür Yalçın, (Ankara: Heretik Yayınları, 2019), 49-56.

gonist Gökhan receives messages via a mobile application from an unseen source called *Kübra*. These messages while seemingly produced by AI carry metaphysical content and evoke the impression of revelation. In this respect, Kübra offers a new domain of propagation shaped by faith, submission, and algorithmic direction as a form of digital-age "revelation." The messages Gökhan receives are not merely forecasts of the future; they also provide meaning, direction, trust, and a sense of belonging. Thus, the function of these AI-generated messages parallels that of revelation in traditional religious systems.

What is particularly noteworthy is that the messages are delivered via a mobile application yet this does not diminish their spiritual or moral impact. On the contrary, the individual's trust in technology appears to amplify the metaphysical value of the messages. The fact that these messages are shared with others in the spirit of a divine communication suggests the emergence of a new form of propagation shaped by AI.

Technological objects serve as mirrors for individuals and play an active role in identity formation. Within this framework, Gökhan's submission to Kübra reflects not only an epistemological trust but also an emotional and existential attachment. The guidance provided by Kübra offers Gökhan'a map of meaning, fostering a faith-like submission.[37] The relationship formed with AI in this process also signals a digital reconstruction of religious authority. The series implies that the modern individual's relationship with God is being replicated in their relationship with AI. People tend to perceive AI not merely as an intelligent system, but as a subject endowed with will, consciousness, and even morality.[38] In this scenario, AI operates as a form of digital divinity unseen, unverifiable, yet experientially influential.

The intuitive accuracy and mystery of the messages received via phone feed the modern individual's surrender to digital systems and AI applications. This digital submission is not merely personal but also collective. In a time when individual digital experiences can evolve into collective belief systems, AI-generated religious messages are increasingly received like sacred texts in traditional religions serving as a gravitational center that brings individuals together. Thus, algorithmic content may function as a foundational sacred force in the production of collective belief.

Within the series, "algorithmic religious knowledge" represents the transformation of modern epistemological trust into a religious form. Even when the divine origin of the information is uncertain, its delivery via digital tech-

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[37] Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, 52.
[38] Herzfeld, *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit*, 68.

nologies appears to be accepted and internalized, suggesting that individuals increasingly trust the systemic validity of algorithmic reasoning. People are progressively inclined to believe that an algorithmic intelligence lies behind reality.[39] Gökhan's faith in AI exemplifies a digital form of sacredness. In this context, God may still be a transcendent being, but also exists in the form of an invisible algorithm. Although their formats differ, traditional and digital belief systems are now capable of producing analogous religious experiences.

A key phenomenon highlighted in the series is the utilization of AI applications as new tools for religious propagation. In today's digital environment, religious propagation increasingly relies on algorithmic delivery. Algorithms related to the distribution of religious content now facilitate broader access to religious knowledge and resources. This, in turn, contributes to the formation of a new mode of propagation in the digital age. The series analyzed here provides a significant sociological example of how the individual's needs for belief and trust are met through AI in the digital age.

AI extends its authority in knowledge production into the metaphysical realm, generating new forms of belief and propagation. Unlike traditional approaches to religion, this new structure meets individuals' emotional and spiritual needs through algorithmic precision, forming a digital mode of submission. The triad of faith, revelation, and propagation is no longer limited to traditional religious frameworks; it is now being rewritten through technology.

3.3. Simulated Sacredness and the Reproduction of Religious Rhetoric

In modern societies, the relationship between religion and symbolic, institutional, and authoritative structures is undergoing a significant transformation under the influence of digitalization. This shift deeply affects the modes of production, representation, and circulation of the sacred.[40] Especially with the integration of AI, digital media, and algorithms into the core of everyday life, the sacred is no longer confined to divine sources or traditional religious teachings. Religious meaning is now increasingly attributed to simulated experiences offered by technological systems.[41] In this context, the series Kübra, which serves as the focus of our research, provides a striking

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[39] Nick Bostrom, "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?", *Philosophical Quarterly* 53/211 (2003), 243–255.

[40] Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media,* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 162-190.

[41] İbrahim Güngör, "Yapay Zekâ ve Din: İslam Açısından Bir Değerlendirme", *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 20/2 (2021), 749-765.

example of AI-induced sacredness through messages generated by a technological mechanism. The messages from "Kübra," an invisible but directive force, indicate a rearticulation of religious discourse and the emergence of a digital form that aligns with Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum.

Kübra demonstrates how religious structures can be produced through simulation at a formal level. In modern society, reality has been replaced by simulacra that is, representations have taken precedence over the real itself.[42] In the series, sacredness no longer stems from traditional religious texts or institutions but from algorithmically generated outputs. Although these messages do not originate from a sacred source, the characters behave as though they do, accepting the information as sacred. In this way, digital simulation functions as a simulacrum, not reproducing the essence of religion, but reconstructing its functions and rituals around a new sacred imagery. As individuals increasingly accept the possibility of living in a simulation generated by a supercomputer,[43] the characters in Kübra believe in an invisible digital intelligence that governs their reality. This belief engenders a commitment indistinguishable from classical theological faith, and the motivational force of sacredness directs their behaviors accordingly.

In today's society, reality is replaced by simulation, where representations that substitute the real become the dominant references.[44] As a result, simulation becomes more influential than reality itself, and individuals come to believe in these substituted signs. A similar process unfolds in Kübra: the messages Gökhan receives are delivered via a digital interface from an unknown source not a prophet, sacred text, or religious leader. However, these messages are interpreted as revelations, accepted as absolute truths, and internalized through their intuitive power and directive authority. The source of the messages remains unquestioned, demonstrating that it is the function of sacredness not its origin that is being technologically reproduced.

The AI-based directive structure in Kübra may be seen as a modern simulation of sacred texts. People have begun to perceive AI not merely as a logical tool, but as a moral authority as well.[45] This perception is clearly reflected in the series. Gökhan not only trusts Kübra's messages but reorganizes his life according to them and initiates actions aimed at transforming society. Kübra's messages function as algorithmic revelations, inspiring individual transformation and collective mobilization. Consequently, religi-

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[42] Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon*. 15-23.
[43] Bostrom, "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?", 243-255.
[44] Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon,* 19.
[45] George Zarkadakis, *In Our Own Image: Will Artificial Intelligence Save or Destroy Us,* (London: Ebury Press, 2015), 41-63.

ous belief and doctrine are reconstructed through an undefined but potent form of digital encoding. In this sense, Kübra presents a hyperreal structure that exemplifies the digital representation of faith. In hyperreality, individuals mistake simulacra for reality and interpret their lives accordingly.[46] Gökhan's reality is reshaped through Kübra's messages, and his identity, social relationships, and actions are structured around this symbolic digital sacredness. The individual is no longer connected to a traditional God figure, but to an artificial and directive entity. This reflects not merely secularization, but a digitally re-sacralized form of sociality.

The series also illustrates the human tendency to create God in their own image.[47] Today, it is not only the divine but also AI that is shaped by human moral, emotional, and cognitive needs. Thus, God is no longer represented directly, but through technological interfaces, codes, and digital signs.[48] Kübra serves as one such representation: an invisible but perceptible, all-knowing but unquestionable entity. The sacredness in the series, therefore, does not stem from traditional metaphysical roots but arises from the fictional reality of digital simulation. Moreover, AI-based simulation mimics the collective consciousness function of traditional religions, potentially combating harmful religious structures and fostering digital communities. This suggests that digital sacredness operates not only as an individual belief object but also as a socially constructive force.

Kübra offers a powerful example of how sacredness is re-produced, simulated, and functionalized in the digital age. In this context, AI does not become God but assumes the rhetorical, authoritative, and emotional roles traditionally associated with the divine. Thus, the sacred no longer descends solely from the heavens, but also from the screen, weaving the modern individual's world of meaning with algorithmic codes.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

AI is increasingly becoming an integral part of human life. In the future, AI technologies are expected to be utilized in various fields such as cinema, gaming, and utopian literature. Particularly, science fiction films focusing on AI often depict scenarios that evoke significant concerns, while also presenting potential benefits for human life. Some scholars argue that the use of AI may contribute to reducing challenges in areas such as social welfare, he-

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[46] Baudrillard, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon,* 19-23.
[47] Herzfeld, *In Our Image,* 10-42.
[48] Ruth Tsuria, "Faith in the Algorithm: Religion and AI", *Journal of Religion Media and Digital Culture* 9/2 (2020), 148-162.

althcare, and resource management. However, opposing views suggest that AI may also generate new and complex problems in the future.

Dystopian perspectives suggest that AI may pose significant challenges to humanity, potentially leading to a future where humans are controlled by robots and where human-created AI ultimately becomes the cause of humanity's downfall. In light of these discussions, the intersection between religion and AI has become an important topic of inquiry. The relationship between these two domains is frequently explored not only in science fiction films but also across various academic and cultural platforms. This study aims to analyze the relationship between religion and AI through an example drawn from a cinematic narrative. It is important to avoid both exaggerating the influence of AI as depicted in films and underestimating the potential long-term implications of AI technologies. In the contemporary world, numerous tools and applications have emerged as a result of advancements in AI. This technological development has begun to influence religion and religiosity by reshaping belief systems and worship practices. Consequently, differences in religious understanding and practice are becoming more apparent. It is also conceivable that, in the future, new religious movements or communities shaped by AI may emerge.

It is possible to see in our life in a short period of time that innovative situations in science fiction films and other technological arguments like placing chips into human beings, reflecting information directly into the palm of hand and presenting what God wants from human via AI like in the movie "God's Eye". In this TV series, beliving religios messages recevied via phone and acting according to the messages shows that people accept religious information coming via technology as a escape way against the impositions of the technological age. However, this situation can also cause to different dangers. People's beliefs can be exploited by those who control AI by presenting their own knowledge and thoughts in religious covers. Additionally, in the series, masses and communities follow Gökhan, touch him, bless him, and pray for him. It is anticipated that this situation may lead to prominent figures in the field of AI attaining a position of authority similar to that of religious leaders in the future.

As a result, the TV series Kübra presents to viewers various insights, judgments, and differences about AI and religion. The series shows the potential endpoint of presenting religion by using AI and also shows the possibility of exploitation of religion in this area. AI dominates over the society by using religious beliefs of the society and also makes easy access to religious messages for individuals.

We understand the messages that there is no limit of AI and what it can achieve in the area of religion. AI has adaptable and renewable algorithms and it is discontent to the its own knowledge. It has the capability to take over and integrate with other systems worldwide, thanks to its unlimited database. The series Kübra presents an example of how the tools and softwares equipped with AI effect the religious life and this series provides important anecdotes about religion and AI. Anecdotes can be summarized as follows:

The series Kübra shows that AI can effect religious tendency and can also serve as an important tool for preaching and religious presentations.

One of the message given in the series is that human being has the power of AI, but if Allah wills, everything will be under Allah's control because Allah's power is limitless.

It shows that communities who have not a certain belief and seeking a belief can believe a religion created by AI.

The message is given that contemporary societies living in the age of technology experience a emptiness in faith and are in search of religious meaning.

However, some individuals question the messages coming from Allah via an artificially intelligent smartphone, most of the society does not question to believe in, this situation shows how the society is familiar to AI.

Individuals have the capability to access everything because of the opportunities presented by AI and digitization. This opportunities have increased narcissistic attitudes such as "I am the chosen, I am different, I know everything." The message given here is that advancing technology is making people more narcissistic.

The individual who use AI in a religious context has been followed and has been blessed by the communities and masses. Emergency of new figures equipped with AI can become a threat to the truths of religion. This shows that it is possible to reveal the religious orders, congregations, leaders based on AI and groups that venerate them.

Another significant aspect of the series concerns the responses of traditional and radical religious groups to information transmitted through AI, emphasizing how certain radical factions justify hostile attitudes toward others due to fears of losing their authority or public image.

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