

ALEVI MINORITY IN TURKEY AND OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper investigates trajectory of Turkish state's official discourse towards the Alevi, a heterodox and syncretistic religious community in Turkey (approximate population of Alevi in Turkey reaches 15 million), specific to the time period between 1980 and 2015 by taking into account main contextual factors influencing the formation of this discourse. Discursive analysis of school textbooks provides a fruitful instrument to specify position of Alevi in official discourse. For this reason, this paper deals with the following specific questions: How were the Alevi included or excluded in the compulsory religion textbooks prepared by Ministry of Education. What kind of discursive strategies were employed in these religion textbooks concerning Alevi? What kind of continuities and changes can be observed in these textbooks concerning the Alevi? This analysis will be conducted by means of methodological tools of critical discourse analyses (CDA). The central goal of CDA, as stated by van Dijk, is to provide an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, power, society and culture. In addition, CDA aims to uncover the implicit arguments and meanings in text that tend to marginalize non-dominant groups, while justifying the values, beliefs and ideologies of dominant groups. In that sense, discursive analysis of compulsory religious education may show us systematic marginalization of Alevi in Turkey.

Keywords: Alevi, Turkey, Religion, Non- dominant group, Religious education.

1. Introduction

For many years, the public has seen the content of curriculum programs and school textbooks as neutral, objective and beneficial for the students; however, many studies in the last 25-30 years suggested new perspectives about the nature of curriculum programs and textbooks. Today, the content of curriculum program and school textbooks, in particular, are not viewed as neutral or value-free by scholars such as Apple(1982), van Dijk (2004), Whitty (1985), Luke (1988) and Fairclough (1995). It is argued that formal education systems and schools (as state apparatuses) are among the significant institutions which take part in the reproduction of the societies (Apple, 1982, pp. 1-33); and curriculum programs, together with textbooks are viewed as "legitimizing the ideological forms necessary for the recreation of inequality"(ibid, 13). Focusing on the curriculum, Apple suggest that it should be investigated "Why and how ...particular aspects of a collective culture are represented in schools as objective factual knowledge" (ibid, 19). Likewise, Whitty (1985, p. 20) argues that an examination of the curriculum will reveal how knowledge is selected and presented in a way that supports the *status quo*. He claims "pupils were likely to accept as an immutable fact what was but one ideological version of the world" (ibid, 19).

The scholars of CDA also emphasize the importance of these points. For example, van Dijk (1993a, p. 197) argues that not only the social norms and values are transferred but also "the inculcation of the dominant ideologies" are achieved through education systems and textbooks. He points out that the representations provided in textbooks are authoritative and influential, especially for young readers who may lack the knowledge or awareness to reflect

critically on how events are depicted. Perceiving education system as a complex set of discursive and ideological practice,¹ van Dijk (1993a, p. 197) asserts that the results of those practices are embodied in what count as official knowledge. Similarly, identifying the content of textbooks as 'official knowledge,' Apple (1993, pp. 46-50) points out that the dominant groups in social, economic and political fields aim to control what counts as legitimate knowledge in school for their own interests. With reference to Gramsci, Apple defends the general argument that the state is not a neutral arbiter between conflicting social groups, but is one of the multiple sites of struggle over ideological hegemony among classes as well as among gender and racial groups (Apple, 1982, pp. 13-16).

From the arguments above, it is inferred that textbooks and curriculum programs in schools signify an exclusive construction of reality or a particular way of selecting and organizing knowledge out of a broader universe of knowledge. The leading rationale of this selection and construction is the principles of the dominant ideologies. In that sense, textbooks, as material manifestations of the official discourse,² are shaped in line with the principles of the official ideologies by emphasizing certain meanings and knowledge, and neglecting or excluding some others. Being in line with this perspective, this study aims to analyze/indicate the patterns of omission and exclusion in the official discourse concerning the Alevis³ in the

¹Following van Dijk, I will use discourse and ideology closely connected manner and try to link structures of discourse with structures of ideologies. He defines ideologies as "basic frameworks for organizing the social cognitions shared by members of social groups, organizations or institutions" (van Dijk, 1995a, p. 18), and he defines discourse as "text in context" and perceives it as a form of social practices (van Dijk, 2004b, p. 3). As for the relationship between ideology and discourse he proposes that discourses are controlled by ideologies (ibid: 3). Van Dijk believes that "ideologies are... expressed and produced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies" (1995a, p. 17). In sum, van Dijk argues that discourse makes ideologies "observable," and by means of discourses, ideologies are expressed. For this reasons he present discourse analyses as an effort to uncover the ideological content of language and discourse through "close reading, understanding or systematic analysis" (van Dijk, 1995b, p. 135). In addition, it is assumed in this study that discourse is used and needed by the owners of an ideology, to persuade the others in the direction of their ideology, to convey their ideologies to others, to propagate and to defend their ideology against opposing peoples. In other words, inspired from van Dijk, the present work argues that in order to know about ideologies (their production, functions, etc.) we should closely look at their material manifestations: discourses. According to van Dijk, ideologies have the function of determining the arrangement and contents of discourses (1998, p. 6), and ideologies and discourses can be reproduced through special institutions such as education (van Dijk, 2004b, p. 3).

² To analyze the state's discursive practices concerning the Alevis, the present study will employ the concept of "official discourse," a concept developed by Burton and Carlen (1979). According to Burton and Carlen, "official discourse is...the systematization of modes of argument that proclaim the state's legal and administrative rationality" (ibid, 48). It is argued that official discourse is "a necessary requirement for political and ideological hegemony. These hegemonic discourses are a requirement not only to achieve the political incorporation of the dominated classes, their pedagogy also functions to sustain the confidence and knowledge of the hegemonic fractions..." (ibid, 48). Burton and Carlen argues the official discourse is employed to create a discourse of unity and cohesion between parties to the power bloc through the production of periodic manifestos demonstrating the state's sovereign reason.

³ Being one of the groups, newly emerging in social and political arena, the Alevis appeared in the public sphere at the end of the 1980s, and demanded a series of rights in line with their group identity. Today Alevism appears as a complex concept and there are lots of different definitions of "Alevism." Lack of both binding texts and central authority among the Alevis also support the existing disputes on what is Alevism. As a result, there is no agreed-upon definition of Alevism in Turkey, considerably different conceptions of Alevism co-exist, and every conception is based on selective use of tradition, history and belief system. Despite the fact that there exists more than one group of the Alevis, it is possible to talk about a series of common features of the Alevis. Some of their main objective characteristics: The Alevis make up 11 to 30 percent of Turkey's total population (Üzüm, 1997, p. 11). They do generally practice endogamy and being an Alevi is possible only through the blood relationship

content of curriculum program and of textbooks of DKAB. The analysis will be conducted under the light of following questions: How were the Alevis/Alevism included or excluded in the school textbooks prepared by Ministry of Education for the courses of Culture of Religion and Moral Knowledge (*Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi-DKAB*)? What kind of discursive strategies and regularities were employed in these textbooks concerning the Alevis? Are there any changes in the official discourse of Ministry of Education towards the Alevis? What kind of continuities and changes can be observed in these textbooks concerning the status of the Alevis? This analysis will be conducted by means of methodological tools of critical discourse analyses (CDA), one of the most influential and visible branches of discourse analysis.

2. B- Research Methods and Corpus of the Study

The present study was conducted within the general framework of CDA. One of the prominent approaches in CDA was developed by van Dijk and I will mainly employ his approach in my analyses. The main aim of critical discourse analysis (CDA), in van Dijkian sense, is to provide an account of intricate relationships between discourse, ideology, society and culture (van Dijk, 1993b, p. 253). Following this principle, this paper will intend to uncover the implicit arguments and meanings in texts (textbooks) which tend to marginalize non-dominant groups (the Alevis), while justifying the values, beliefs, and ideologies of dominant groups (the Sunnis). This chapter examines some of the discursive strategies and regularities of the Ministry of Education (as one of the state apparatus) concerning the Alevis in the educational system. Van Dijk's approach focuses on the properties of the text (such as **topics, local meanings, schemata, style and rhetoric**), and properties of **context** in which discourse was created (such as **access patterns, genre, settings, participants and historical context**).

In CDA, **topics** refer to the most important textual elements that “defines the overall global coherence that assigns the necessary unity to a text” (van Dijk, 1994, p. 117). Topics also can be defined as “semantic macrostructures derived from local (micro) structures of meaning” or “global meaning that language users constitute in discourse production” and it tells us what a discourse is about, roughly (van Dijk, 2001, p. 101).

Schemata refers to the overall superstructure or organizations of a discourse. More specifically, it is defined by van Dijk as “the argumentative structures...the argumentative moves people make in the defense of an opinion or position (1984, p. 105). People generally provide reasons for their actions and positions; and outline, order and built up their argumentations in order to make their opinions “plausible” or “reasonable” (ibid, 106).

Local meanings refer to the analysis of micro level of words, sentences and individual paragraphs. In CDA of van Dijk, it is important to focus on the forms of implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions and vagueness. Problematization, stereotyping, prejudice, exclusion, denial, omission, deleting, avoidance, proscription, lacking voice/negligence are main categories for local level analysis of discrimination in textbooks offered by Van Dijk (1993a, pp.218-233; 2004a, p.136).

(to be born into the community). Preserving several un orthodox (non-Sunni) religious practices (such as using intoxicants and not attending to mosques), the Alevis form a heterodox religious community (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2003); and they generally emphasize the inner spirituality or the esoteric (*batuni*) side of the faith, not the external (*zahiri*) side of it. The Alevis, historically named redheads (*Kızılbaş*), are predominantly Turkish speaking but also there are considerable number of Kurdish and Zaza-speaking Alevis.

Style, as put by van Dijk (1991, p.209) has to do with the choice and variation of the words in presentation of the ideas. An analysis of style tells us what the appropriate use of words is in order to express meaning in a specific situation or discourse.

Rhetoric, on the other hand is concerned with enhancement of understanding and acceptance of discourse by the recipient by means of devices such as, alliterations, metaphors, metonymy, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, parallelism, comparisons, contrasts, ironies and US/THEM comparison (van Dijk, 1980, p.131; 1993b, p.278). Rhetorical elements in a discourse aim to enhance the “persuasiveness of the message” by using several expressive devices mentioned above (van Dijk, 1984, p.139).

Context, in van Dijk, is defined generally by the social, political and historical structures in which the discursive practices take place (2001, p. 108). This category of CDA searches the answers of the following questions: In which culture was the text produced? In what typical social situation was the text used? From what historical period is the text? What category of speakers has produced it? Context models control all levels of style of discourse, such as lexical choice, pronouns, syntactic structure and other grammatical choices that depend on how situations are defined.

The corpus that forms the subject matter of this study comprises the school textbooks of compulsory religious courses in Turkish education system: Culture of Religion and Moral Knowledge (*Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi*- DKAB). These textbooks, which were published by Ministry of Education and its use is mandated in both at primary and high schools, will be taken as one of the material manifestations of official discourse.⁴In this study, textbook will be defined as the set of state-sanctioned standard books used in the schools. Although textbooks of DKAB are compulsory, in Turkey, starting from forth grade of elementary schools until eleventh grade of high schools, I will conduct CDA of only eleventh-grade textbooks of DKAB.⁵Volume of such a paper is not enough to cover all the grades in which courses of DKAB are compulsory; it is obvious that analysis of all the textbooks of DKAB which were mandated in the Turkish education system can be the subject matter of large-scale studies.

Through a close examination of 11th grade textbooks of DKAB, under the light of the analytical categories and schemas offered by CDA, I explore the order and incoherence in state discourse towards the Alevis. The central goal of CDA, as stated by van Dijk, is to provide an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, power, society and culture. In addition, CDA aims to uncover the implicit arguments and meanings in text that tend to marginalize non-dominant groups, while justifying the values, beliefs and ideologies of dominant groups. This study aims to uncover whether there are discourse strategies present in the school textbooks that produce and perpetuate discrimination against the Alevis concerning to the post-1980 period.

⁴In Turkey, until 1982-83 education seasons, religious courses were offered under the title of “Knowledge of Religion” (*Din Bilgisi*). These courses, which covered all the grades between 4th and 11th, were optional. With the constitution of 1982, religious courses were mandated in all primary and secondary schools (for all the students from 4th grade until the end of 11th grade) under the title of “Culture of Religion and Moral Knowledge” (*Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi*). The courses were arranged as two hours in a week in primary education and one hour for the secondary education.

⁵Concerning to eleventh grade, I will focus on two books. The first one (from now on it will be referred in the text as *DKAB11-1982*) was written by Mehmet Aydın, and published as textbook by Ministry of Education for the period between 1982 and 2005. The second book (which will be referred as *DKAB11-2005*) was written by a commission (formed by Mahmut Balcı, Turgut Çiftçi, Ahmet Karaçoban, Hüseyin Paşa, Ali Sacit Türker and Muharrem Yıldız), and published as textbook by Ministry of Education for the period after 2005.

C- CDA of Eleventh Grade textbooks of DKAB

1. DKAB11-1982

3. Genre

This textbook (that will be referred as *DKAB 11-1982*) was written by Mehmet Aydın (a professor of philosophy in divinity school) in 1982 and were mandated by Ministry of Education until 2005. *DKAB11-1982* is a textbook which analysis concerning its genre is more or less identical with the other textbook analyzed in this paper.

Like many other textbooks, *DKAB11-1982* presents to the students an officially sanctioned version of knowledge about religion, culture and Islam. The most important environmental/contextual factor for the school textbooks of *DKAB11-1982* is that it is legally enforced and sanctioned in public schooling for all the students. This means that it has legally-guaranteed participants or audiences that increases the authority of the book for all the students. In addition to the compulsory nature of it, *DKAB11-1982* was presented in a “neutral” frame (under the label of school knowledge), which appears as another important feature of it. Textbooks, which form a basic source of instruction or a frame of reference for cultivation of a favored society, play significant roles in the formation of thoughts of students in primary and secondary education. By means of these features, “textbooks and their hidden curricula also play an important role in the dissemination of dominant ideologies...” (van Dijk, 2004a, p. 133). It can be argued that by means of school textbooks, those persons in positions of official authority obligate a deliberate selection and organization of knowledge promoting official ideology that was regarded as beneficial for society in general and for all the students in particular. According to van Dijk, textbooks are selective in presenting the knowledge and in relation with this, they are also restrictive to the alternative perspectives of knowledge (van Dijk, 2004a, p. 136). I argue below that this is true also for the textbooks of DKAB. As can be seen in the following pages there is little or no place in these textbooks for the alternative discourses other than official one. In these textbooks official authorities try to develop a “national identity and a social togetherness” that necessitate promotion of a particular worldview and social homogeneity, instead of heterogeneity and social plurality. For these reasons textbooks of DKAB, in general, chose to stay silent about of alternative religious understandings. In this context, I will try to analyze how dominant official discourse in textbooks of DKAB, excluded the dominated perspectives and communities and ignored their social existence. The emphasis on homogeneity, social unity and absence of heterogeneous elements in these books are harmonious with the argument of van Dijk who asserted that educational systems in general and school textbooks in particular aimed to ethnic and racial integration of different entities in many part of the world (1993a, p. 199).

4. Topics

Under the category of *topics*, I will deal with the global, overall thematic structure of the text. As proposed above, topics may be characterized as the most “important” or “summarizing” ideas expressed in a discourse. As such, topics provide us with the “gist” or “upshot” of a text by telling what a text is about.

By topical analysis, I aim to produce data about what information *DKAB11-1982* deems important. I will adopt a normative perspective in doing topical analysis. In other words, I am not only interested in what kind of topics were dealt with, but also interested in what information should be included concerning to the Alevi (but are absent). Before starting topical analysis of the text, it is necessary to argue that Alevi were not directly referred in the book but instead there exists complete silence about the Alevi and Alevism. The main topics in the book are as follows:

T1- God is the absolute creator of universe, and his existence is separate and independent from the universe/creatures. God is separate from everything, and he does not resemble any of his creatures, including human (p.2-13).

As can be inferred from these arguments, in *DKAB11-1982*, dominating perspective concerning the relationship between God, universe and human being is based on belief of *tevhid* (unity), which is not enough to reflect understanding perspectives of Alevism concerning the story of creation and the relationship between God, universe and human being. While explaining the principles of belief in Islam, the book is silent about imagination of God, universe and human being in Alevism, according to which: a) God, universe and human being cannot be imagined separately, b) human being was created as an appearance of God, c) human being is a divine creature (Keçeli, 1997, pp. 97-99).⁶

T2- In Islam, Qur'an and sayings of the prophet are two main references in determining what is forbidden (*haram*) and what is permissible (*halal*). For example, drinking intoxicants is forbidden in Islam (p.20, 23).

T3- Daily prayers (*namaz*), hajj (*hac*), fasting (*oruç*) and charity (*zekat*) are main forms of worshipping in Islam (p.21, 68).

Several times in *DKAB11-1982*, forms of worshipping in Islam were discussed with reference to Qur'an and sayings of the prophet. However, no form of worshipping in Alevism such as *ayini cem* (congregational or assembly meeting), *semah* (ritual dances of the Alevis) and fasting in *Muharrem* were mentioned in the book. As will be discussed below in detail, forms of worshipping in Alevism were systematically ignored in *DKAB11-1982*.

T4- Mosques, which are the worshipping places for all Muslims, also have educational functions in society (p.68, 72, 73, 100). Parallel to the curriculum program of 1982 and *DKAB* textbooks of other grades, *DKAB11-1982* also presents mosques as worshipping houses for all Muslims. The issue of congregation houses (*cemevis* that are places for worship for the Alevis) were never mentioned.

T5- Atatürk was not against Islam; in addition, he advised our nation to be religious because there is no contradiction between Islam and science (p. 101-103).

T6- In history, Turkish-Muslims (for example, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Yunus Emre, Fuzuli, Ahmed Yesevi, İbni Sina, Fatif Sultan Mehmet, Farabi, Mimar Sinan, Atatürk) made great contributions to the civilizations (p.95-125). Although some of the spiritual leaders of the Alevis (such as Hacı Bektaş Veli and Yunus Emre) were mentioned in the book, none of them were mentioned in relation with Alevism, their role and significance for the Alevis were systematically ignored in the text.

5. Schemata

The schemata of a text are the ways in which topics are organized (van Dijk, 1991, p. 118). Text schemata consist of a special order. In other words, they determine what content or argumentative elements come first, second and last; and how arguments will be supported by which sub-arguments.

It can be argued that corroborating understanding of *tevhid* (unity) forms one of the most important segments of argumentative structure of *DKAB11-1982*. At first, the book sets principles of *tevhid* in detail; then it discredits alternative ideas to understanding of *tevhid*. After presenting "weakness" of other theories that tries to explain the relationship between

⁶ Keçeli classifies Alevism's understanding of God, human being and universe with reference to the concepts of *vahdet-i vücud* and *vahdet-i mevcud* which are vital for the Alevis in explaining the relations between God and universe.

God, universe and human being, the writer excludes these alternative ideas (other than *tevhid*) by the following words: "...these kinds of ideas are harmful for our religious life" (p.6).

In addition, the book also relates *tevhid* (unity) with social structure. It is argued that: "Islam intends to create a society based principle of *tevhid* (unity)...and in such a society there is no place for discrimination... Islam takes every measure for a healthy society" (p.15-16). The book associates "unity" with "healthy society" in which there must be no diversity in terms of "world view and aims of people" (p.15). On the other hand, "diversity" is associated with "*fitne*" (incitement) and "conflict" (p.16). As a result of logical sequences presented in the book, the readers were canalized to the following conclusion: any kind of diversity or different demand raising from society may possibly injure unity/healthiness of society.

Discussions about "the relationship between Islam and science," "Atatürk's stance against Islam and "necessity of religious education" form another main segment of schematic structure of *DKAB11-1982*. Systematically, these three issues were associated with each other and discussed together. In the first step, it is proposed that there is no contradiction between Islam and modern sciences as it states:

If God's order in the universe did not exist, there would be no sciences (p.4)...Science tries to explore what God created (p.7)... No religion in the world gives importance to ration and science as much as Islam does (p.26).

It is argued that Atatürk was not against Islam; in addition, he advised our nation to be religious. This "friendly" relationship between Islam and sciences was also supported by a series of sayings of Atatürk such as:

Turkish nation should be more religious, I mean it should be religious with all its sincerity... We have a strong-based religion (p.102)...Our religion is the most reasonable religion, and it is in harmony with science, logic and technique (p.103).

In the second step, it is argued that religious education is necessary and it must be served/performed by the state. It is strongly argued that this does not violate the principles of secularism (p. 100).

Religious education in schools and mosques does not contradict our principles of secularism. Atatürk also explain this issue arguing that "schools are the most suitable place for our citizens to learn their religions" (p.100).

6. Local Meanings

Local meanings refer to the analysis of micro level of words, sentences and individual paragraphs. Proscriptions, negligence and topic avoidance are some of the categories inferred from the text.

a) Proscriptions

In *DKAB11-1982*, drinking intoxicants (which are not forbidden in Alevism, and are used as part of their *ayini cem* in some regions) are defined as a sinful act that is forbidden by Islam (p.20-23). The arguments forbidding intoxicants are based on verses of Qur'an and prophet's sayings stating "intoxicants are forbidden in Islam" *DKAB11-1982* implies those Muslims (including the Alevis) are performing sinful act by using intoxications.

b) Negligence

It can easily be realized by looking at the pictures that appeared in the book that the Alevis and their beliefs were neglected in many occasions. For example, there are two pictures of mosques (Sultan Ahmet Mosque (p.73) and Konya İnce Minareli (p.96). In addition, on page 107, there is a picture that shows Mustafa Kemal praying during *Kurban Bayramı* (sacrifice festival). There is no picture of a congregation house (worshipping houses of the Alevis); and no picture showing performance of an Alevi worshipping in the book. Also, bias is noted not only by pictures but also by argumentation where “the importance and centrality of mosques in Turkish social life” was highlighted (p.72-73). This is an obvious negligence of the Alevis, because many of them accept congregation houses as their place of worshipping, instead of mosques.

This negligence is not limited with the content of the pictures; the verbal content of the units also manifests the same negligence. Daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan, hajj and charity were presented in *DKAB11-1982* as “required religious duty for all Muslims” (*farz*) (p.21). In practice, it is known that most of the Alevis do not follow daily prayers and do not perform fasting in Ramadan. They also do not go Makka for hajj. No forms of worship recognized by the Alevis (such as *ayini cem*, *musahiplik*- spiritual brotherhood among the Alevis) were mentioned in the book. Forms of worship other than those recognized by Sunni Islam were neglected in the book. Hence, all of this negligence appeared in *DKAB11-1982* results in a difference-blinded discourse towards the Alevis.

The Alevi perspective was neglected not only in the sphere of worshipping but also in the presentation of personalities of Islamic history. In Alevism, according to the principle of *tevella* and *teberra* (cherishing and glorifying *Ehli Beyt*-family of the prophet respected by the Alevis, and disliking and contempting the ones who oppose *Ehli Beyt*), Ömer (the second caliph), Ebu Bekir (the first caliph) are among the person who should be contempted. *DKAB11-1982* glorifies these persons and presents them as model for all the Muslims: “Glorified Ömer and Ebu Bekir were among the great Muslims; they always followed the prophet” (p.87).

c) Topic of Avoidance/Lacking Voice/Deleting

The Alevis' point of views concerning the Islamic history, Islamic rituals and principles of beliefs, which show considerable differences from the Sunni perspective, were disregarded in *DKAB11-1982*. Diverse understanding or interpretation of the Alevis from the orthodox Islam (Sunnism) concerning the (history, principles of belief and worshipping) was systematically avoided being discussed. In other words, Alevi perspective stayed untouched. As discussed above, selection of some portion of knowledge and tradition, and omitting the others were among the techniques employed in the textbooks to transmit dominant cultural values and ideologies. Techniques of omitting and deleting were systematically used in *DKAB11-1982* concerning to Alevism.

For example, it is argued in the book that “all the Muslims recite *besmele* (with the name of God the most beneficial and merciful) before starting their work” (p.113), but, we know that at the beginning of *ayini cem*, some other instances the Alevis use the following expression “with the name of Shah” (*Şahın adı ile*), instead of “with the name of God.” The book refrains from mentioning about this *sui generis* characteristic of the Alevis, and chooses to identify all Muslims with Sunni practice.

In page 41, the prophet Muhammed's famous Sermon of Farewell (*Veda Hutbesi*) was presented with the following expressions:

I leave behind me two things, which are the book of God and applications the prophet. If you follow them, you will never go astray.

It is known that the Sermon of Farewell has more than one version. The most important difference between these versions is about the end of the sermon where the prophet Muhammed states what he leaves behind him. For example, different from the version that was just mentioned above, the other version has the statement: "I leave behind me Qur'an and *Ehl-i Beyt*." Like the first one, the second version was also reported by prestigious saying reports but the writer chooses the first version (which does not have the expression of "*Ehl-i Beyt*"), and he omits the second version. While the Sunnis generally accept the first version, the Alevis (who believes in holiness and leadership of *Ehl-i Beyt*) believes the second version of the sermon. By omitting the expression of "*Ehl-i Beyt*," *DKAB11-1982* adopted a Sunni perspective, and deleted voice of the Alevis.

Under the title of "Muslim-Turkish scientists and thinkers," the book mentions about Imam Azam Ebu Hanife: "Ebu Hanife...is the founder of sect of Hanefism. Today, there are millions of Muslims who behave according to his principles and adopts his ideas" (p.67). As well as his significance in terms of Islamic disciplines, Ebu Hanife's importance and meaning for his followers were also explicitly stated in the book. Under the same title, some other "important personalities" of Turkish-Islamic civilization were also mentioned in the text, such as Ahmet Yesevi, Yunus Emre, Hacı Bektaş Veli and Fuzuli (p.78-79). However, all of these personalities were presented as "important figures of Sufi literature." Their roles in the formation of Alevism and their importance for the Alevis were not mentioned. Instead of context of Alevism, they were placed into the context of "Islamic literature;" and the connections between these figures and their followers (the Alevis) were systematically omitted in the text.

7. Rhetoric

Rhetorical elements in a discourse aim to enhance the "persuasiveness of the message" by using several expressive devices mentioned above (van Dijk, 1984, p. 139). Here are some of the rhetorical tools used in *DKAB11-1982*:

The arguments stated in the book were explained and supported by direct citations from Qur'an. From its beginning to the end, there are more than 150 references to verses of Qur'an. Not only verses of Qur'an, but also sayings of the prophet Muhammed and Atatürk have been other main resources that were used to buttress the thesis of the book. In addition, poems from some famous poets (such as Mehmet Akif Ersoy, İsmail Hakkı Ertaylan, Yunus Emre), and declarations of some non-Muslim famous persons who exalted Islam in their writings (such as Gothe, Bismark, Bernard Shaw) were employed to defend basic arguments of the text.

The book contains a series of pictures, photos, maps, miniature and examples of calligraphy that are placed according to the content of each unit.

8. Context

DKAB11-1982 was written in 1982. It must be stated that social and historical context in which *DKAB11-1982* was written were strictly determined by the climate of military intervention of September 12 1980, and Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (*Türk-İslam Sentezi*), a new ideological formulation gained credibility among the state elite of this era as the "panacea for social unrest and political instability" of the country (Toprak, 1990, p. 12). Especially the leftist groups, inspired by socialist and Marxist ideas (many of the young Alevis were also attracted by these ideas), were held responsible by the generals for much of the disorder and anarchy throughout the country (particularly in high schools and in universities). For this reason, the military government aimed to create politically docile generations who are loyal to the state; and education was seen a significant instrument to

serve this aim. The generals of military intervention started to make use of Islam to enhance the cohesion among citizens and hoped for help from the idea that there is a harmony between religion and nationalism in many segments of social and political structure including the curriculum. It can be argued that Turkish-Islamic Synthesis gained acceptance as part of the official state ideology in the preparation of new constitution, reformation of educational system and different cultural engineering projects. Starting just after the military coup of 1980, supporters of Turkish Islamic Synthesis achieved to affect educational reforms in the country in the direction of their worldviews. Under the strong effect of this world view the generals launched a new constitution which mandated compulsory religious courses in all primary and secondary schools. Being far from including different interpretation of Islam, the courses were simply the manifestation of Sunnism. As discussed above there was no room in these courses for Alevism. For this reason, the compulsory religious courses have always been criticized especially by the Alevis. Sunni Islam was proposed as a kind of “common value” for all different segments of society to achieve social integrity and togetherness.

2. DKAB11-2005

Parallel to the changes occurred in the content of curriculum program of DKAB, Ministry of Education issued new textbooks according to new curriculum program in 2005. The book that I will analyze here (*DKAB11-2005*) was written by a commission according to the new curriculum program. Different from *DKAB11-1982*, *DKAB11-2005* mentions about the Alevis and Alevism. As will be discussed below in detail, Alevism were mentioned several times in relation to the following issues: “Love of Muhammed” and “Love of Ehl-i Beyt in our culture.” Alevism were discussed only in terms of the importance it gave to prophet Muhammed and *Ehli Beyt*. That is to say, *sui generis* side of Alevism in terms of worshipping or principles of beliefs, which differentiate them from Sunnism, stayed untouched. Like the new curriculum program, the new book claims a supra-sectarian stance. In other words, the book was alleged to be neutral against different interpretation of Islam and to be supra-sectarian. But, in reality, there are serious problems in the content of the book in terms of “sectarian neutrality” and “supra-sectarian” position of Ministry of Education. For example, forms of worshipping and place of worshipping recognized by the Alevis were systematically absent in *DKAB11-2005*.

9. Topics

The global, overall structure of the text (semantic macro-structure of *DKAB11-2005*) can be summarized as follow:

T1- It is very normal that social, political, geographical and cultural variations among the Muslims gave rise to different interpretations of Islam (p.58-73).

T2- Alevism-Bektashism (*Alevilik-Bektaşilik*) is one of the mystical (*sufi*) interpretations which appeared in Islamic thought (p.53).

T3- In spite of the fact that there emerged numerous sects/groups in Islamic history, there is no fundamental disagreements concerning to basic principles of religion (p.69-72).

T4- Different interpretations of Islam have consensus on main principles of belief and forms of worshipping; but there may be some disagreement on performance of these worshipping (p.69)

T5- Main forms of worshipping in Islam are prayer, fasting in Ramadan, hajj, alms, sacrifice, ablution, *gusül* (ablution of whole body) (p.27-38).

T6- In addition to forms of worshipping, Qur'an, judgment day, heaven, hell and divine punishment are matters of consensus among different Islamic interpretations (p.72)

T7- Mosques, which have also social functions, are the places of worship, and *imam* (leader for prayer) and *vaiz* (preacher) are religious personnel for all Muslims (p.88, 92, 105).

T8- Love of prophet Muhammed and love of *Ehli Beyt* (family of the prophet Muhammed) are two important concepts that unite Turkish nation (p.50-55).

T9- Leading figures and saints of Alevism had produced magnificent literature products on love of prophet and *Ehli Beyt* (p.54-55).

T10- Existence of Presidency of Religious Affairs, founded by Atatürk in order to provide healthy religious services to our people, aims national integration and solidarity; this existence does not violate principle of secularism (p.86-92).

10. Schemata

It is possible to delineate schematic structure of *DKAB11-2005* as follow: Principally, it is accepted in the book that there may be/are more than one different understanding or interpretation of Islam. Possible reasons of this plurality were discussed in detail under the titles of “Geographical Reasons,” “Social Reasons,” “Political Reasons,” and “Cultural Reasons.” In the book, Alevism was evaluated and mentioned together with Bektashism: “Alevism-Bektashism” (p.51, 53). Alevism-Bektashism were defined as one the “Turkish mystic groups” (*Türk sufi zümreler*) in Islam (p.53). By means of this expression, ethnic character of Alevism was “elucidated,” as well as its religious status. Although content and basic principles of some other Islamic groups/understandings (such as *Hanefilik*, *Malikilik*, *Şiilik*, *Caferilik*) were discussed in *DKAB11-2005*, there is no information about the content and principles of Alevism. None of its principles of belief and worshiping were portrayed in the book. Instead of peculiar characteristics of Alevism, “the common elements that unites different Islamic understandings” were stressed. We cannot see any information about what makes Alevism different from the other Islamic understands (such as Sunnism). On the contrary, the book uses “love of prophet and *Ehli Beyt*” as a fertile ground in order to prove that how much the Sunnis and the Alevis have in common:

“Love of Ehli Beyt has been a uniting factor for all Turks...Our nation named her children after Ali, Fatma, Hasan, Hüseyin and Zehra all of whom are members of Ehli Beyt...Our nation has always exalted glorified Ali, and named him as “lion of God,” “Shah of Heros” and “Combatant Lion” (p.53).

In addition, the book accommodates some poems of “Alevi- Bektashis’ leading figures” (such as Pir Sultan Abdal, Kaygusus Abdal, Hatayi and Yunus Emre) on “love of prophet Muhammed” in order to prove that the prophet was respected by also Alevi tradition.

As will be discussed in the following pages, believing Qur’an, heaven (*cennet*), hell (*cehennem*), punishment-rewarding (*azap-mükafaat*) and afterworld (*ahiret*) were systematically highlighted, in the text, as the common points upon which all-different Islamic groups agreed. In addition, it is argued in the book that there is no disagreement about the forms and place of worshipping among Islamic groups. Several times in the book, it is also argued that mosques are common places of worshipping for all Muslims. Arguments of the book concerning to mosques were also buttressed by a sermon of Atatürk, given in Balıkesir.⁷

Presidency of Religious Affairs (PORA)’s “importance and vitality for Turkey” appears as another subject, in the text, which was defended with the help of Atatürk and his revolutions. In other words, PORA and its functions are presented as an indispensable part of republican revolutions that were launched by Atatürk in early republican era. It is argued, in the book, that: “Atatürk was so sensitive about presentation of religious services...According to Atatürk, foundation of PORA was the only way of providing healthy religious services” (p.87).

11. Local Meanings

It is possible to infer some local semantics (at the micro level of words, sentences and paragraphs) and formulations from *DKAB11-2005* concerning to the Alevis.

Some examples of **negligence** in *DKAB11-2005*:

1- It is argued in the book that religious functionaries of Islam are composed of *müftüs* (authorized religious officials for a province or district), *imams* (leader for prayer) *vaizs* (preachers), *müezzins* (callers to prayer)) (p.87). These religious functionaries (all of which are paid employees of the state) and their duties were explained in detail in the text. We know that *dedes* are the religious leaders for the Alevis; but there is no information about *dedes* and their functions for the Alevis in the book.

2- The Alevis and Alevism were also neglected in the contents of photos, pictures and diagrams of the book. For example, there are four pictures of worshipping place in the book (p.69, 103), all of which describes mosques from different provinces of Turkey. *Cemevis* were neglected in the contents of pictures appeared in the book, as well as its textual content. While the authors devote two separate pages to the functions of mosques, and prominent functions in the world (p. 105-105), *cemevis* were not mentioned even by a single word.

3- One of the main principles of belief in Alevism, *tevella* and *teberra* (cherishing and glorifying *Ehli Beyt*, and disliking and contempting the ones who oppose *Ehli Beyt*), was neglected several times in the book. Ömer (the second caliph), Ebu Bekir (the first caliph) and Ayşe (wife of the prophet, fought against Ali in the war of Cemel) are among the person who should be contempted for the Alevis. *DKAB11-2005* glorifies these persons several times and presents them as model for all the Muslims (p. 45, 63).

4- It is stated in the book that ablution (*abdest*) and ablution of whole body (*gusül*) are compulsory religious duty for all Muslims (p.28). Ablution is interpreted differently in Alevism; rather than external cleaning the Alevis emphasize internal cleaning. For this reason, they differ from the Sunnis in practicing and theorizing ablution. Obviously, the book neglected Alevi interpretation in this issue.

There are also examples of **deleting/omitting** in *DKAB11-2005*:

1- Although the book mentioned about some pillars of Alevi belief system (such as *Ehl-i Beyt* and Twelve Imams), these concepts were not presented in accordance with perspective of Alevism. For example, it is argued that both the Sunnis and the Alevis love Muhammed, Ali and *Ehli Beyt* (p. 52- 53). The following facts were deleted: Conceptualization of Muhammed and Ali, and the relationship between these two in Alevism are highly different from that of Sunnism. In Alevism, Muhammed and Ali are identified with each other (like the same soul in different bodies); and it is believed that Ali is the representative (*vekil*) of Muhammed (Keçeli, 1997, p. 119). The concept of Twelve Imam was also presented in relation with Şiism (p. 63), but not Alevism.

2- Disagreements between Alevism and Sunnism on many issues such as forms of worshipping, issue of caliphate, missing verses or completeness of Qur'an were systemically omitted in the book.

12. Style and Rhetoric

Concerning the choice of words and expression (**style**), it appears among the most distinctive character of *DKAB11-2005* that it contains a lot of words and expressions belonging to/originating from Alevi tradition. Here are some of the words from that kind: *Zülfikar* (name of Ali's sword), *Şah* (leader (*pir*) in Alevism), *murtaza* (one of the titles of Ali), *nefes* (a kind of poem in Alevism recited during *ayini cem*), *Ehl-i Beyt* (family of the

prophet Muhammet including Ali, Hasan, Hüseyin, Fatma), *Allah'ın Arslam* (lion of God used for Ali), *Şah-ı Merdan* (shah of heros, used for Ali), *Haydar-ı Kerrar* (combatant lion, used for Ali). In addition to these words and expressions of Alevism, the book, also, makes use of names of important figures in Alevi tradition in order to present its arguments effectively. Some of the names of that kind mentioned in the book: Ali, Fatıma, Hasan and Hüseyin, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Ahmed Yesevi, Yunus Emre, Hatayi (Şah İsmail), Pir Sultan Abdal, Kaygusuz Abdal, and other members of Twelve Imams (Zeynel Abidin, Muhammed Bakır, Caferi Sadık, Musa Kazım, Ali Rıza, Muhamed Taki, Ali Naki, Hasan Askeri, Muhammed Mehdi).

In terms of rhetoric, it can be argued that there are a lot of rhetorical questions at the end of every unit aiming to reiterate and to summarize what has been presented in the related unit. The book contains a series of pictures, photos, maps, miniature, schemas and examples of calligraphy that are placed according to the content of each unit, and expected to strengthen the ideas presented in the book.

The arguments stated in the book were explained and supported by direct citations from Qur'an. From its beginning to the end, there are more than 100 references to verses of Qur'an. Not only verses of Qur'an, but also sayings of the prophet Muhammed and Atatürk have been other main resources that were used to buttress the thesis of the book. In addition, poems from some famous poets of the Alevi (such as Yunus Emre, Hatayi, Pir Sultan Abdal and Kaygusuz Abdal) were cited in the book in order to support the arguments presented in the text.

13. Context

Turkey-European Union relations and an Alevi citizen's appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (in order to get exemption from compulsory religious education classes for his girl) were two important elements of historical context where *DKAB11-2005* was produced. The principle of 1982 constitution, concerning the compulsory religious education, also stayed at the center of the discussions. The legal status of DKAB courses has been criticized mainly by the Alevi for being against the principle of secularism. DAKAB courses were criticized not only for their legal status (violating principles of secularism), but also for the content of the textbook. It is argued by the Alevi that these books do not include the principles of Alevism in their contents.

In 2005, when the criticisms toward DKAB course reached its peak, Turkish state tried to justify existing application of compulsory religious education by employing several interrelated arguments which aimed to convince both the Alevi and European Court of Human Rights about "neutrality" of DKAB courses. Preparation of new curriculum program for DKAB courses and publication of new textbooks, in which Alevism was ostensibly included, were among the efforts aimed to justify compulsory religious courses.

In European Court of Human Rights (concerning the case opened by an Alevi citizen), Turkish government defended its position by arguing that "religion is thought in DKAB classes similar to how chemistry is thought in chemistry classes" (Sabah, 2005). The same position was also shared by Hüseyin Çelik (Minister of National Education); he argued that "We do not teach religion to students religion. Rather, we teach them religious culture... It is the religious culture and knowledge of morality classes, rather than the religious education classes that are compulsory in Turkey" (Star Gazetesi, 2005). Under the strong demands of Alevi organizations and pressure from European Union circles, Hüseyin Çelik (Minister of National Education) declared that issues related to Alevism will be included in the textbooks of DKAB high schools starting from the beginning of the 2006 academic year.

D- Conclusion

It can be concluded that official discourse towards the Alevi, in DKAB textbooks, is not stable, invariable, coherent and continuous. There are differences between *DKAB11-1982* and *DKAB11-2005*; while in the first one the Alevi were completely absent, in the second one their existence was recognized to some extent. We can talk about a change in the official discourse concerning the Alevi (from complete denial to the recognition). Nevertheless, this recognition has some limits. Although there have been changes from a complete denial to the recognition. This recognition is not completely harmonious with the expectations of the Alevi. In other words, the changes in the official discourse concerning the Alevi do not correspond to a complete acceptance of the Alevi identity with its social and religious content. Claims of the Alevi for religious and cultural authenticity and diversity are not completely recognized by the state. Instead, content of this changed discourse of the state towards the Alevi aims political incorporation of the Alevi against the danger of political Islam and terror of separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Apart from these local political reasons of discursive change in official discourse, it is also expected in this study that there exist global political factors (such as intensification of the relationship between European Union and Turkey) affecting this change.

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