

*The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*



*International Journal of Social Science*

Volume 5 Issue 3, p. 271-298, June 2012

**HACIBEKTAŞ FESTİVALLERİ'NDE ALEVİLERE YÖNELİK  
OLARAK YAPILAN CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI  
KONUŞMALARININ ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİ**

*A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES  
TOWARDS ALEVIS HELD DURING THE HACIBEKTAŞ FESTIVALS*

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***Abstract***

Since the beginning of 1990s, Alevis (a religious community adopting heterodox interpretation of Islam in Turkey) have abandoned their accustomed silence declared that they lack of their basic rights in Turkey. The state did not stay indifferent to demands of Alevis and opened some dialogue channels one of which has been the Hacibektaş Festival. This study intends to do critical discourse analysis (CDA) of official political speeches of two consecutive presidents of Turkish Republic (namely, Süleyman Demirel and Ahmet Necdet Sezer) aiming Alevis during the Hacibektaş Festival. It is assumed in this article that these speeches form an important dimension of official discourse relating to Alevis. Main questions of the study can be summarized as follow: What kind of discursive regularities and discursive strategies were employed in the presidential speeches in the Hacibektaş Festival towards Alevis? How did the presidents approach Alevis in their official statements expressed during the Hacibektaş Festival? What kind of changes and continuities can be observed in the official stance of the presidents concerning Alevis? What are the contextual elements (both national and international) affecting content of the speeches aiming Alevis? The answers of these questions will be searched within the general framework of CDA a methodological approach developed by Teun van Dijk.

***Key Words:*** Alevis, Hacibektaş Festival, Official Discourse, Presidential Speeches, Critical Discourse Analysis.

## Öz

Türkiye'de İslam'ın heterodoks bir yorumunu benimsemiş olan Aleviler, 1990'lı yılların başından itibaren alışlagelmiş sessizliklerini bir kenara bırakıp temel bazı haklardan yoksun olduklarını kamuoyuna ilan ettiler. Alevilerin talepleri karşısında kayıtsız kalamayan devlet bir takım diyalog kanalları açtı. Bunlardan biri de Cumhurbaşkanlığı seviyesinde devlet elitinin uzun yıllar boyunca katıldığı Hacıbektaş Şenlikleridir. Bu çalışma, sırasıyla 9.ve 10. Cumhurbaşkanları olan Süleyman Demirel ve Ahmet Necdet Sezer'in söz konusu şenliklerde yaptıkları Alevilere yönelik konuşmaların eleştirel söylem analizini yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Alevilere ilişkin resmi söylemin önemli bir parçasını oluşturan bu konuşmaların analizi sırasında şu soruların cevaplandırılması amaçlanmaktadır: Bu konuşmalarda Alevilere yönelik ne tür söylemsel düzenlilikler ve stratejiler kullanılmıştır? Cumhurbaşkanları söylemlerinde Alevileri ve Aleviliği nasıl tanımlamışlardır? Alevilere yönelik resmi söylemde ne gibi değişiklikler gözlenmektedir? Cumhurbaşkanlarının Alevilere yönelik söyleminin ortaya çıkmasına yol açan ulusal ve uluslar arası bağlamsal faktörler nelerdir?

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Aleviler, Hacıbektaş Şenlikleri, Resmi Söylem, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Konuşmaları, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi.

## Introduction

At the end of 1980s, Alevi (a religious community adopting heterodox interpretation of Islam in Turkey) have abandoned their accustomed silence and started to question the discriminations from which they have endured for a long time, such as, Sunni-biased compulsory religious courses in the state schools excluding Alevism, and discriminatory applications of Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB) rejecting to recognize congregation houses (*cemevleri*, places of worship for Alevi) as a form of sanctuary. In 1989, a number of Alevi intellectuals systematized demands of Alevi and issued *Alevilik Bildirgesi* (Manifesto of Alevism) declaring that Alevi lack of their basic rights in Turkey, these rights should be given to them, and that Alevism should officially be recognized. By questioning unjust state applications and demanding official recognition through media channels and their organizational structure, Alevi have always succeeded to be part of social and political agenda of Turkey.

Parallel to the emergence of Alevism in the public sphere as a remarkable social movement, religious content and historical development of Alevism, social and political transformation of Alevi in modern Turkey and transnational dimensions of Alevi movement have been subject matters of numerous academic and popular studies. However, this article focuses on a relatively untouched dimension of the issue: official discursive practices towards Alevi and Alevism. Specifically, this study intends to do critical discourse analysis (CDA) of official political speeches of two consecutive presidents of Turkish Republic (namely, Süleyman Demirel and Ahmet Necdet Sezer) aiming Alevi during the Hacıbektaş Festival. The festival is the most important Alevi event in Turkey, and the state was represented at this festival by its highest post (the presidency of Turkish Republic) regularly since 1994. Content of the presidential speeches held during this festival, including important official statements aiming Alevi, served as a channel used by the state to respond demands of Alevi. Being aware of the fact that there exist many other official institutions having discursive practices on Alevi (such as Ministry of Education, Directorate of Religious Affairs and Turkish Parliament) this study limits itself with official discourses produced only by presidency of Turkish Republic.

By doing a critical discourse analysis of seven presidential speeches<sup>1</sup> held in the Hacibektaş Festival between 1994 and 2003, following research questions will be answered: What kind of discursive regularities and discursive strategies were employed in the presidential speeches in the Hacibektaş Festival towards Alevis? How did the presidents approach Alevis in their official statements expressed during the Hacibektaş Festival? What kind of changes and continuities can be observed in the official stance of the presidents concerning Alevis? What are the contextual elements (both national and international) affecting content of the speeches aiming Alevis? The answers of these questions will be searched within the general framework of CDA which developed by Teun van Dijk. Following van Dijk's approach, the analysis in this chapter will focus on the properties of the text (such as, **topics**, **genre**, **local meanings**, **style** and **rhetoric**), and properties of **context** in which discourse was created (such as **access patterns**, **settings** and **participants**).<sup>2</sup>

As stated above, Hacibektaş Festival and the presidential speeches held during this festival can be taken as one of the platforms/domains through which we observe the official discourses towards Alevis. These presidential speeches signify one of the materialized forms of official discourses concerning to Alevis. It is argued that discourse can be perceived as the material form of ideology (Pecheux, 1982: 110). In this sense, for Pecheux, ideology determines the meaning of a text and "words, expressions, propositions change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them...by reference to the ideological formations...in which those positions are inscribed" (Ibid: 111). In other words, meanings are specified in discursive formations by extension of ideological formations. He employed the term discourse to emphasize the ideological nature of the language use. Similar to Pecheux, Fairclough (1992:67) also perceives discourse as a mode of "political and ideological practice" that "constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations." He elaborates in his studies the "embedded" nature of ideologies in "discursive practices" and the role of these discursive practices in "the production, reproduction and transformation of relations of domination" (Ibid: 87). Under the light of these

<sup>1</sup> Full-text of these speeches was obtained through a series of correspondence with Directorate of Press and Public Relations of Presidency (*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Başkanlığı*). The directorate provided the writer texts of the speeches via e-mail upon his request which is based on the Law Pertaining to Rights for Information Access (*Bilgi Edinme Kanunu*) promulgated in 2004. The directorate sent seven speeches (five of them were held by 9<sup>th</sup> president Süleyman Demirel, and other two were held by 10<sup>th</sup> president Ahmet Necdet Sezer). It is stated by the directorate that there is no record concerning the Hacibektaş Festival held in 1995. In addition, it is stated that Ahmet Necdet Sezer participated to the festival only in 2001 and 2003.

<sup>2</sup> It is aimed in this article to uncover the implicit arguments and meanings in the texts (speeches) by employing the parameters developed by van Dijk. In van Dijk's approach **topics** refers to semantic macrostructures or the most important textual elements that "defines the overall global coherence that assigns the necessary unity to a text" (van Dijk, 1994: 117). **Schemata** refer to the overall argumentative structures or organizations of a discourse (van Dijk, 1984:105). **Local meanings** refer to the analysis of micro level of words, sentences, and individual paragraphs. **Style**, as put by van Dijk (1991:209) has to do with the choice and variation of the words in presentation of the ideas. **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, etc. (van Dijk, 1993:278). **Context**, in van Dijk, is defined generally by the social, political and historical structures in which the discursive practices take place (2001: 108).

theoretical approaches it is argued in this article that discursive practices of two presidents are strongly shaped by their ideological affiliations which are corresponding constitutional characters of existing state order in Turkey.

To analyze discursive practices of two presidents concerning Alevi, the present study will employ the conceptual tool of “official discourse,” a concept developed by Burton and Carlen (1979). Burton and Carlen conceptualize and define official discourse as follows (1979:48):

Official discourse is...systematization of modes of argument that proclaim the state's legal and administrative rationality. The 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... To create a discourse of unity and cohesion between parties, the power bloc, through the production of periodic manifestos demonstrates the state's sovereign reason.

Burton and Carlen (1979:51) argue that functions of official discourse include incorporation, legitimacy and confidence. Incorporation refers to “the application of knowledge in a way that promotes strategies of state control” over the masses. Under the light of the principles stated above, it is argued in this article that official discursive practices of the presidents intend to provide legitimacy and justification for state practices concerning Alevi through the systematization of arguments. In addition, it is argued here that official discourses of the presidents towards Alevi aim “political incorporation” of them to the existing order against the rise of political Islam. This study argues also that another aim of discourse of inclusion employed by two presidents in Hacıbektaş Festival is to incorporate Alevi to the existing constitutional order against Kurdish Nationalism by stressing the “Turkish” characteristic of Alevism.

It is argued that discourses constitute or construct different identities, and people were positioned by discourses to different social positions (Burton and Carlen, 1979:46-48). In that sense, this article aims to observe how these presidential speeches (as one of the important manifestations of official discourses) try to place, fix and orient subjects (Alevi) to desired positions by means of ideological discursive mechanisms. This discursive effort of fixation and orientation is nourished and circumscribed, at the same time, by the tenets and priorities of official ideology (such as, principle of secularism and preservation of unitary nation-state). It is argued that official discourse, in general, contains “systematization of modes of argument that proclaim state's rationality;” and official discourse claims superiority over unofficial ones (Ibid: 48). In that sense, analysis of these presidential speeches important for this study since the speeches (as a form of official discourse) celebrate and polish official perspectives and try to discredit and despise alternative/unofficial ones about Alevi and Alevism.

August 16 of 1994, when a president (Süleyman Demirel) attended the Hacıbektaş Festival for the first time, signifies an important date in terms of the relations between state and Alevi. Whilst two preceding presidents (Turgut Özal and Kenan Evren) did not attend the festival, Süleyman Demirel and his successor Ahmet Necdet Sezer attended several times. Why? It is argued in this study that the answer of this question, which is closely related with the trajectory of official discourses towards Alevi, may also provide a fruitful historical context in answering the questions of this study. For this reason, it is necessary to present here a short historical review of the Hacıbektaş Festival. This historical review shows us the

existence of two main periods in the history of the festival (concerning the period covered this study). While the first period (between 1980 and 1994) can be characterized by lack of participation in presidential level,<sup>3</sup> the second period (between 1994 and 2003), on the other hand, can be characterized by intense and stable participation of the presidents (together with other state elite to the festival).

### Historical and Political Context of the Hacibektaş Festival

Since the early 1990s, the Hacibektaş Festival has appeared as one of the major public events of Alevis in Turkey, and together with several others, it has been among the main platform in which Alevi culture and Alevi identity are publicized and passed to the current Alevi generation. In that sense, the Hacibektaş Festival, which gathers a crowd of hundreds of thousands every year in a single place, has served as an important site for the process of identity formation for Alevis. The Hacibektaş Festival has become a site that is suitable for political negotiation, expression of demands and making promises. As will be discussed below, through this occasion Alevis have been targets of inclusive and incorporative official discourses, systematically.

Among many others, the Hacibektaş Festival is the earliest saint-oriented Alevi festival in Turkey. The dervish lodge (*tekke*) at Hacibektaş, which was founded around the name of Hacı Bektaş Veli (the most revered saint for Alevis)<sup>4</sup> since fourteenth century, was closed in 1925 together with all other dervish lodges in Turkey. The law of 667/1925 not only closed the *tekke* but also banned its followers from propagating their faith. After having been closed in the early republican period, the restoration of the *tekke* began in 1958; and it was opened as a museum on 16 August 1964 by General Directorate of Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*), as a result of “a relaxation in anti-religious drive” in Turkey (Norton, 1992:191). Although the *tekke* of Hacibektaş stayed closed about forty years between 1925 and 1964, it had continued to be a place of pious visits due to its ritual functions and the existence of Hacı Bektaş Veli’s mausoleum (Massicard, 2000:29). Nearly every year since 1964, from 16 to 18 August, ceremonies of commemoration have been held in honor of Hacı Bektaş Veli. It is argued that organizers of the festival, at the beginning, did not acknowledge any religious motives, and had to portray it as a touristic event in order to persuade the authorities to allow their annual festival in every August (Norton, 1992:192; Massicard, 2000:29). Although even today the tomb of Hacı Bektaş Veli is officially a museum; for Alevis it is more than that. As it can be seen during the festival, many of Alevis perform their religious duties by following a set of patterned actions; for many of them, visiting town of Hacibektaş is an alternative to visiting Mecca for duty of pilgrimage.

During the 1970s, parallel to general political polarization in Turkey, influence of politics upon the festival increased markedly. In this political climate, the control of the

<sup>3</sup>Although participation of Demirel in 1994 signifies a real turning point, it should be noted here that since 1989, there existed participations in the level of state ministry. For example, in 1989, Namık Kemal Zeybek (Minister of Culture) attended the festival and he made a speech. In his speech, Zeybek highlighted importance of Ahmet Yesevi and Hacı Bektaş Veli in Turkization of Anatolia: “It is thanks to them that today there is an existence of Turk. We will organize the next year’s ceremony as international; do you agree with it? The Culture Ministry is at yours service” (cited in Şener, 1990:55).

<sup>4</sup>Hacı Bektaş Veli is one of the foremost figures in thirteenth century. He is regarded by Alevis as main source (*serçeşme*) of their belief system. After Ali (nephew and son in law of the Prophet Muhammad), Hacı Bektaş has been the most revered personality for Alevis.

festival was taken hold by young Alevi generation who were mainly under the effect of revolutionary Marxist ideology (Norton, 1992:193). The festival in this period turned into an arena where younger and leftist generation of Alevi had the opportunity of disseminating their political views. For these people, Hacı Bektaş was a protagonist in the war against fascism, and he “was not, as many people may think, a religious leader, a saint or a seer... He was a socialist revolutionary thinker and leader who brought a plan for a new human social system” (Hacıbektaş Turizm Derneği, 1977:8). The official stance towards Alevi (in general) and towards the festival (in particular) in the 1970s was closely bounded with the general political polarization and tension in the country. As shown by Poyraz (2005), the state chose to ignore Alevi during the 1970s mainly because of the prevalence of revolutionary Marxist ideologies among Alevi. It can be argued that the state, especially during the late 1970s, appeared in the festivals only as suspicious police power by arresting some participants or banning some activities of the festival. For example, in 1975 the attendance of *Ruhi Su*<sup>5</sup> to the festival was not allowed by the authorities (Sarıaslan, 2003:9); *Görgü Cemi*, a play about Alevi philosophy and traditions, was prohibited by the state before its first performance in the festival (1977) (Poyraz, 2005:5); performance of another play, *Pir Sultan Abdal*, was also banned by the authorities (Massicard, 2003:126).

Although general official stance towards the Hacıbektaş Festival in the 1970s can be characterized as “ignorant” and “prohibitive,” level of ignorance and prohibition varied according to the government in power. Together with the military take-over of 12 September 1980, the festival was interrupted for three years (until the first election after the military intervention). Mainly because of the continuing effects of military intervention, during the 1980s, the festival became considerably apolitical which was welcomed by those of Alevi who attended the festival chiefly out of their religious devotion to Hacı Bektaş Veli ((Norton, 1992:193). Although most of these Alevi inclined the left-wing parties, they preferred traditional interpretation of Hacı Bektaş Veli in order not to jeopardize the future of the festival by creating conflict with the state in any case. Since 1984, the organization of the festival was held by the municipality of Hacıbektaş; this situation was also supported by the state in order to guarantee a-politicization of the festival. In the post-1980 period, political character of the festival decreased considerably and the organization turned into again more religious and traditional activity as it was at the beginning.

In terms of the state elites' interest to the Hacıbektaş Festival, 1990s signifies a turning point. In this period, the state emerged as one of the important actors in the festival. Since 1990s, contrary to 1980s and 1970s, increasing number of politicians (including presidents, ministers, prime ministers and members of opposition parties), and military and civil bureaucrats have attended to the festival. Especially since 1994, there has been regular attendance even at the presidential level. It may be argued here that main reasons of this shift are closely related with dangers brought by the rise of political Islam in Turkey, and intensification of separatist PKK terrorism. In relation to these reasons, etatization of the festival (in terms of both organizational control and participation of political authorities) were also accompanied with official interpretation of Alevism as moderate and tolerant form of Islam and Hacı Bektaş Veli as a state-loyal Turkish-Islamic saint.

Since the early 1990s, the Hacıbektaş Festival has been one of the main platforms for Alevi to manifest their political opinions (in general), and to exhibit their dissatisfactions/reactions about problems concerning to their rights and securities in Turkey (in

<sup>5</sup> A famous *ozan* of that time who was known with his revolutionary Marxist/socialist ideas and was classified by the state among the “dangerous” persons. An important portion of his repertoire was composed of the songs that belonged to the Alevi tradition.

particular). Since 2 July 1993, Sivas Event (*Sivas Olayları*)<sup>6</sup> has become one of the main events commemorated in the festival. By protesting this event, Alevis demanded apprehension and punishment of the criminals from the state representatives who visited the festival. Posters, photographs and exhibitions reminding the massacre and its victims have continuously been part of the festival. Since 1995, similar activities were conducted in the festival to protest and commemorate the Gazi Event (*Gazi Olayları*).<sup>7</sup> The protestations and reactions of Alevis during the festival concerning to these massacres were also accompanied by the protestations concerning to the rise of political Islam in Turkey. During the festival, Alevis showed their discontent and reactions towards rise of political Islam through different ways. For instance, in 1996, İsmail Kahraman (Minister of Culture in the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) government), who visited the festival, had his share from this Alevi reaction against political Islam; he was not welcomed and his speech was booed by Alevi audiences in the festival (Poyraz, 2005:10).

It can be argued that starting with the 28 February process (*28 Şubat süreci*)<sup>8</sup> the festival became more important not only for Alevis, but also for the secular state bureaucracy who declared war against political Islam in Turkey. In this period, increasing number of politicians and bureaucrats participated to the festival, and manifested/stressed Turkish-centered interpretation of Alevism. In that era, Alevis and Alevism were presented as defense line/insurance against the influence of Arabic version/mode of Islam over Turkish culture. For example, during the opening ceremony of Hacibektaş Festival on 17 August 1998, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz expressed in his speech that:

Today, there are people who want to replace our lucent Turkish-Islam with a reactionary Arabic/Persian form of Islam. They want to take control of our conscience claiming that their reference point is Islam. They want to monopolize Islam claiming, “Only those ones who shares our way of life are the Muslims.” They are the separatists. Turkish Muslims are going to give them necessary answers (Cumhuriyet, 1998).

Hacı Bektaş, Yunus Emre and Ahmed Yesevi were also presented as Turkish nationalists and saviors of Turkish culture from the Arab domination. Because of the fact that Turkish is used during the worshipping ceremonies in Alevism, and some Alevi rituals contain elements from the shamanist culture, Alevism was exalted as Turkish-Islam.

<sup>6</sup> Sivas Event, which is known as *Sivas Olayları* in public opinion, is an event took place on 2 July 1993 in Sivas. In this event, 37 people (most of them are Alevi artists, poets and musicians) were burned to death. The massacre took place during an Alevi cultural festival called Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Festival. Local authorities, police, troops did nothing to prevent this tragedy.

<sup>7</sup> On March 12, 1995, unknown gunmen riddled tea-houses with bullets in Gazi District (a district inhabited mainly by Alevis) of İstanbul, killing one wounding several other Alevi persons. Alevis of Gazi took the streets in protest and the demonstrator directed their anger to the police. The police shoot into the crowds and killed 21 people.

<sup>8</sup> On February 28 of 1997, the National Security Board (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*) identified political Islam and reactionary movements as the main threats to the Republic, and sent a warning to the coalition government led by political Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). In the following months, the government had to resign as a result of pressures coming from army, some portion of media, business circles and some NGOs. These series of event started on 28 February 1997 were called as February 28 processes.

In addition, in this period, proclamation of Alevi as the “liberal interpreters of Islam” by the state elite was supported also by several other activities. For example, the Presidential Symphony Orchestra gave concerts during the festival in 1997. One of the most important educational reforms made against “Islamic radicalism” (following the resignation of Welfare Party government), known as “Eight Years Uninterrupted Education” (*Sekiz Yıllık Kesintisiz Eğitim*), was presented by Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz and vice-prime minister Bülent Ecevit as a gift to Alevi who were “the guaranties of secularism and democracy in Turkey” (Hürriyet, 1997). Speeches of both Yılmaz and Ecevit, during the festival, were applauded by Alevi with enthusiasm; Alevi audiences responded to the speeches by shouting together “Turkey is secular and will stay secular” (Hürriyet, 1997).

Starting with February 28 process, as well as political state elite, military bureaucracy also contributed to this flirtation between Alevi and the state. Following cases are meaningful to illustrate this contribution: Names of the associations, to which members of Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*- TSK) may join, are declared and controlled regularly by Turkish General Staff (*Genelkurmay*). As such, in 1999, *Genelkurmay* declared that members of TSK may join to Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultural Association, an Alevi association founded to disseminate thoughts of Hacı Bektaş Veli and Alevi culture (Cumhuriyet, 2002). In another case, 149 high-level officers of TSK visited Hacıbektaş town and its newly elected mayor Ali Rıza Selmanpakoğlu<sup>9</sup> in 2004, and they discussed on the illuminating ideas of Hacı Bektaş Veli, visiting made by Mustafa Kemal to Hacıbektaş dervish lodge during the Independence War, and support of Alevi to the Independence War (Cumhuriyet, 2004a). Alevi also welcomed the military intervention to the political order of country during February 28 process and resignation of Welfare Party government because of this intervention. Because, they evaluated that, this kind of intervention is inevitable and necessary to protect the republican revolutions.<sup>10</sup> Support of Alevi to February 28 process was also showed during the Hacıbektaş Festival in 1998; civil and military state elite was met by March of Military (*Harbiye Marşı*) and by the slogans: “Turkey is secular and it will stay secular” (Zaman, 1998).

The festival continued to be a political arena during the early 2000s. Especially in 2001 and 2002 (when the election of parliament was going to be renewed), the number of politicians participating to the festival reached its peak; Alevi's demands have been a matter of party politics. Leader of Democratic Leftist Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP), Bülent Ecevit, made a speech in the festival and promised that a new university will be founded in Hacıbektaş (Cumhuriyet, 2002b). Almost a month later, making a public announcement, Ecevit declared that Alevi will take their share from general budget and Alevism will be included in new curriculum, if he becomes the prime minister after the elections (Cumhuriyet, 2002c). Mesut Yılmaz, leader of Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP), argued that problems of Alevi

<sup>9</sup> Selmanpakoğlu, a retired general from TSK, became mayor of Hacıbektaş in the local elections of March 2004. He had no connection with any political party, and he won the elections as an independent candidate. Selmanpakoğlu appeared on the written media with his ideas about relationship between Kemalism, Independence War, Hacı Bektaş Veli and Alevi. Some examples from his arguments: “We disseminate Kemalism from Hacıbektaş to whole Turkey...Alevi, without exception, supported National Struggle” (Cumhuriyet, 2004b). “Alevi, who have always been main bearers of democracy, secularism and enlightenment in Turkey, will keep supporting republican revolutions” (Cumhuriyet, 2004c).

<sup>10</sup> Declarations of İzzettin Doğan can be read as a typical example this evaluation. Doğan argued that February 28 process was legitimate and correct; because it was launched against those circles who aimed to move Turkey away from the earnings of republican revolutions and Atatürk (Aydın, 2002:327). In addition, he states that if February 28 process did not take place, Turkey would be transformed into Iran (Ataklı, 2000).



cannot be ignored anymore; he will do his best to solve these problems, which is also necessary to maintain social peace in Turkey (Cumhuriyet, 2002d). On the other hand, in the festival arena, Alevi speakers presented their demands to the politicians through speeches or posters. The issue of congregation houses (*cemevleri*), punishment of people responsible for Sivas Massacre and Gazi Event and issue of compulsory religious courses have been main problems Alevi speakers demanded solution.

Protestation of political Islam, exaltation of secular order and republican revolutions by the audiences were other common features of the festival in early 2000s. In 2003, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was criticized by the Alevi speakers since he did not attend to the festival, and he was booed by the audiences because of his anti-secular activities (Cumhuriyet, 2003a). Erkan Mumcu (Minister of Culture and Tourism in Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government), who attended to the festival and made a speech, was also booed and criticized. When the names of Erdoğan and Mumcu were announced the audiences shouted together: “We will not be soldiers of USA...Turkey is secular and it will stay secular” (Vatan, 2003). Another reason for protestation of Erdoğan by Alevi speakers was that the government issued a law (*Topluma Kazandırma Yasası*) that forgives those people responsible for Sivas Events (Cumhuriyet, 2003a).

On the other hand, 10<sup>th</sup> president Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who attended to the festival twice (in 2001 and 2003), was welcomed with enthusiasm, and his speeches were interrupted by slogans: “Turkey is proud of you” (Cumhuriyet, 2003b). Sezer stressed, in his speeches several times, the idea that secularism is the foundation of contemporary society together with democracy and rule of law that are immutable characteristics of the founding philosophy of the Turkish Republic. Because of these argumentations, Sezer was placed, by Alevi speakers, in an opposite position to government of Justice and Development Party. Another reason for sympathies of Alevi speakers to Sezer was his efforts in order to eliminate some of the legislative activities of AKP government, which were interpreted in public opinion as anti-secular. During his reign, Sezer became main oppositional center against government of Justice and Development Party by rejecting to promulgate many laws and regulations adopted by the parliament. Before ending this short historical review about Hacibektaş Festival it is necessary to mention that, since 1999, World Ahl al-Bayt Foundation (*Dünya Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı*)<sup>11</sup> organized a series of meetings to commemorate Hacı Bektaş Veli in İstanbul. These meetings were organized every year in the same time with Hacibektaş Festival (August 16-19), which is interpreted in the public opinion that the foundation attempts to create alternative activities to the Hacibektaş Festival. Politicians known as conservative or political Islamist (such as Recai Kutan) have been main participant of these “alternative meetings.”

#### **CDA of Süleyman Demirel’s Speeches in the Hacibektaş Festival (1994- 1999)**

Süleyman Demirel, who has been the first president participating to the Hacibektaş Festival, visited the festival six times between 1993 and 1999, and he made long and fervent speeches in his every visit. In the following pages, analysis of these speeches will be done according to the principles of CDA. Genre, topic, schemata, local meanings, style, rhetoric and context will be main categories of my analysis.

<sup>11</sup> This foundation is one of the well-known Alevi organizations in Turkey. The foundation and its leader Fermani Altun is accused of being Sunni-minded by most of Alevi speakers.

**Genre:** Genre generally refers to a category or type of discourse (such as parliamentary speech, news article, poems, etc.). The creation and interpretation of certain genres is accessible to only a limited powerful few. In addition, certain genres of discourse are powerful since the ways in which they are written and interpreted can influence decisions that affect the whole of society (such as laws, regulations and political speeches). The corpus of the text analyzed in this chapter (presidential speeches of Demirel and Sezer in the Hacıbektaş Festival) may obviously be defined as political speech that has fundamental roles in both democratic processes and their consequences for citizens (specifically Alevi). Political speeches belong to the general class of discourse genres that may be named as political discourse (van Dijk, 2000:45). Different from many other forms of discourse, political discourse is disseminated extensively through various media channels. In addition, this kind of discourse is meaningful for the majority of the population. There are few syntactic structures or lexical items at surface level peculiar to political discourse. Political discourse is predominantly argumentative, oriented towards persuasion. Regarding its rhetorical dimensions, political discourse, consisting of generous promises, is opinion based and persuasive in nature. Political actors using these strategies try to influence public opinion in order to gain votes and thus power. In this study, I classify discourse as political when it is acted out by political actors (such as Demirel, Sezer), in the context of specific political institutions (such as presidency or political parties), and has a direct functional role as a form of political action, such as in meetings or debates (such as the Hacıbektaş festival), as part of the political process. It is safe to argue here that speeches of both Demirel and Sezer carry many of the characteristics of political discourse just mentioned above. First, these speeches are full of promises concerning Alevi. Second, there are a lot of rhetorical elements aiming to persuade the audiences. Third, via the media, the speeches reach millions of people (including both Alevi and the Sunnis) living in Turkey. Lastly, these speeches have some goals: the speeches try to make Alevi believe that they are as important as the Sunnis citizens; the speeches aim to encourage and incorporate Alevi in the direction of protecting national unity and social togetherness.

**Topics:** Under the category of topics, the global, overall thematic structure of the speeches will be dealt with. As proposed by van Dijk, topics may be characterized as the most important or summarizing ideas expressed in a discourse. In that sense topics provide us the “gist” or “upshot” of a text by telling what a text is about. The following propositions are the main results of topical analysis of Demirel’s speeches:

**T1-** Hacı Bektaş Veli represents a composition of high values of Turkishness and Islam, at the same time. (1994)

**T2-** Hacı Bektaş Veli teaches us that in order to reach peace and social tranquility we have to have social unity at first. (1994)

**T3-** The Ottoman State was founded and erected on the high principles represented by Hacı Bektaş Veli; and via these principles, Ottomans spread all over the world. (1994)

**T4-** Hacı Bektaş Veli advises us to be tied with fraternity no matter we have different religions, sects and races. (1994).

**T5-** Hacı Bektaş Veli made great contributions to the conquest and Turkization of Anatolia; today his role and spirit is still important for us to keep our unity. (1994)

**T6-** Differences in our society in terms of belief and worshipping do not refer to weakness; instead, these differences refer to social richness. (1994).

**T7-** Being harmonious parts of the same nation, Alevi and the Sunni together form a social unity. (1994)

**T8-** Every citizen of this country, is free to choose and practice his/her belief and worshipping. (1994)

**T9-** Although they were tried to be deceived many times in history, Alevi and the Sunni struggled against these efforts together and stayed loyal to their state. (1994)

**T10-** Alevi and Sunni are in the same boat; they share the same destiny. (1994)

**T11-** Hacı Bektaş Veli is respected by almost all segments of our society including Turks, Kurds, Alevi and Sunni. (1996)

**T12-** As the president of Turkish republic, I am here to set up and to secure social justice. (1996)

**T13-** Alevi should resort to legitimate means in pursuing their interests; violence, quarrels and illegitimacy/terror never solve their problems. (1996)

**T14-** Loving this country, this state and this flag (even more than our lives) is not only a common value for all of us, but also a prerequisite for realizing our rights. (1996)

**T15-** Alevi should refrain from abuse of malevolent powers who aim to provoke Alevi. (1996)

**T16-** If there are some inequalities, in Turkey, at the expense of Alevi, we must find peaceful ways of solving this problem; Hacı Bektaş's ideas necessitate this. (1996)

**T17-** Alevi and the Sunni believe in the same God and the same prophet; everybody in this country loves Hacı Bektaş and Ali. (1996)

**T18-** Although Alevi have some problems in this country, their conditions will improve year by year. (1997)

**T19-** No one can despise Alevi because of their beliefs and they are as honorable as other citizens of Turkey. (1997)

**T20-** Alevi and the Sunni are brothers. Both groups need to be hand in hand to keep Turkey in peace; because we are in the middle of fire circle. (1997)

**T21-** Both principles of Islam and philosophy of Hacı Bektaş Veli do not allow violence for any purpose. (1997)

**T22-** Every person in this country loves Hacı Bektaş Veli who is among the common values for Turkish nation. (1997)

**T23-** Instead of complaining about existing problems, and mentioning about unfortunate disasters of the past, Alevi should be more positive for their future and against our state. (1998)

**T24-** Though we have some failures concerning the rights of Alevi, they must feel that they are first class citizens of this country, and they must protect our state. (1998)

**T25-** Although there are some differences in this country in terms of race and belief system, we are all brothers, and citizens of this state. (1999)

**T26-** Alevi and the Sunnis should recognize each other; and the state should recognize and embrace all of them. (1999)

**T27-** Do not follow those people who is trying to divide our people in terms of their races; you do not have interest in following these people. (1999)

**T28-** The state will deal with problems of Alevi, without destabilizing existing delicate balances of our country. (1999)

**Schemata:** Roughly, schemata refer to the general “argumentative structures...the argumentative moves people make in the defense of an opinion or position” (van Dijk, 1984:105). The schemata of a text are the ways in which topics are organized (van Dijk, 1991:118). 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. To van Dijk, “the presence, absence or order of specific categories or argumentative orders may be significant and influence the structure of mental models” and may manufacture ideologies in the minds of recipients (1994:119).

Under the light of these theoretical considerations, it can be argued that the main body of argumentative structure of Demirel’s speech was developed around historical personality and importance of Hacı Bektaş Veli. Through following prepositions:

**P1:** Hacı Bektaş Veli is a sacred personality/saint (*evliya*) for Alevi.

**P2:** Hacı Bektaş Veli argued/did the followings: x, y, z...

**P3:** Hacı Bektaş Veli and personality signifies a common value for both Alevi and the Sunnis.

It is concluded in the text that

**C:** If we (Alevi and Sunnis together) really love Hacı Bektaş Veli, we should follow his footsteps and advices that correspond, today, the followings: x, y, z...

In order to support the first proposition (**P1**), Hacı Bektaş Veli and his ideas were exalted with reference to important personalities of Islam and Turkish history. For example, Ahmet Yesevi, Imam Caferi Sadık, the fourth caliph Ali and the prophet Muhammad were presented as the ancestors of Hacı Bektaş Veli. In addition, Hacı Bektaş was also characterized only with reference to “his services in the Islamization and Turkization of Anatolia;” he was defined as “the main spiritual figure behind the success of the Ottoman State” (1998).

After guaranteeing greatness and holiness of Hacı Bektaş Veli as presented above, Demirel enumerated systematically what Hacı Bektaş Veli said/did in his life, and what kind of lessons should Alevi take from his life. In relation with this aim, Demirel lists main pillars of Hacı Bektaş Veli’s philosophy in the following way:

According to Hacı Bektaş unity is the source of social peace/tranquility... Science is among the main components of Islam... Hacı Bektaş advised that irrespective of our nationality, religion, sect, gender and color we should come together on the bases of brotherhood... Stating, "Do not injure even if you are injured," Hacı Bektaş forbids violence... (1994)

In the last step, Demirel expects the audiences (in particular) and Alevis (in general) to perform what Hacı Bektaş advised. Demirel legitimizes his invitation by arguing that loving Hacı Bektaş from heart necessitates doing what he advised: being away from violence, refraining from separatist activities, being loyal to the state, being tolerant against people from other beliefs. Hacı Bektaş Veli's ideas were presented as a kind of panacea for the problems of Turkey: ensuring inner peace and national unity, realization of rights and freedoms.

Another argumentative move or structure that is frequently used by Demirel is that contrary to the traditional stance of official discourse in the republican period (according to which Turkey has a homogenous society in terms of ethnicity and religion), he stressed heterogeneous character of Turkey's population. This argument was supported by several sub-arguments, and presented as the strength of Turkey, not a weakness of it. In addition to the Sunnis/the Caferis/the Hanefis/Alevis were also mentioned as one of the different sub-groups that together form the whole in a harmonious manner:

Diversities of our country in terms of religion and sect can be defined as "multiplicity in unity" (*kesretteki vahdet*). Being parts of the same whole Alevis and the Sunnis are free to practice and belief, and should be tolerant against each other. That is what Islam demands from us (1994).

Demirel argues that being different does not necessitate being enemy against each other. Because:

These people have been living together for centuries... They have same homeland, same state, same history and same future; they do not allow dissensions; they make up a nation: glorious Turkish nation... (1994)

In Demirel's speeches, recognition of existence of diverse groups in society is followed by the recognition of the problems concerning to rights of these diverse groups. Several times it is argued that there are some problems concerning to the situation of Alevis in Turkey:

Turkey is constitutional state of law, but there may be some inappropriateness, disorders and inequities (1996). I cannot say that there is no problem and everything is perfect for you (1997). I acknowledge that, as state, we have some deficiencies or failures (1998). You are right but we are considering the right time to compensate your loss (1999).

In the next step of this argumentation, it is clearly and strongly stressed by Demirel that, there are legitimate, democratic, legislative ways of correcting these failures, inequities and inappropriateness; these ways open for Alevis. For this reasons, Demirel argues, Alevis should not give credit the ways other than legitimate ones (such as violence, provocations and terrorism). In relation with this position, Demirel also argues that by choosing the legitimate ways of pursuing their interests, Alevis will also show that they are loyal to their state, and respectful to the laws. In the last step, Demirel finalizes his argumentation, stating that staying

behind the legitimate line is vital for Alevi because we are in danger and some sources of dark powers threaten our unity and existence.

In his speeches, Demirel try to provide plausible reasons for Alevi in order to convince them to own and to protect the state. For Demirel, both the Sunnis and Alevi should, hand in hand, own and protect this state because:

- a) - In addition to believing in the same God and the same prophet, and respecting Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli together, they also have one common state and one common homeland (1996).
- b) - There have been malevolent circles aiming our togetherness and unity; Turkey is circumscribed by fire circles (1996, 1997).
- c) - Our state provided us an open regime in which everyone can say whatever she/he wants, can go/inhabit wherever she/he wants, can do whatever she/he wants (1998).
- d) - Not only the Sunnis, Alevi were also recognized by the state as the first class citizens, without questioning no one's belief, age and origin (1997, 1999).
- e) - This country gave us wealth and different opportunities; in return, we should protect it; which refers to protect our self and our quality of life (1999).

Demirel's speeches during the festival were always finalized with a series of promises towards Alevi and their social and legal conditions in Turkey. It is argued by Demirel that there is no reason for Alevi to be pessimist; existence of some inequities does not necessarily mean that these unjust situations will continue forever. It is promised also that the ideal situation will be created for Alevi, as long as they stay loyal to their state or as long as they do not be part of illegality.

If you want to reach your aim, you should be patient; and you should continue to express your problems outspokenly. No one has power of doing injustice to you (1996)... Concerning the issues that bother you, the situation will get better year by year. By cleaning out these bothering issues, we will create a country you will proud of being a citizen of it. That will be realized via collective effort (1997)... In the near future, Turkey will overcome the problems it encounters today; no mistake can survive forever (1998, 1999).

**Local Meanings:** Although at the level of macro analysis some characteristics of Demirel's discourse towards Alevi may be observed, it is necessary to make an analysis at micro level of words, sentence and paragraphs to observe possible discriminations, bias, implicitness, presumptions and negligence. Topic avoidance, omitting, deleting, implicitness and vagueness are some of the main categories for local level analysis of discrimination that will be considered here.

**a) Implicitness:** Implicitness appear as one the most prominent structures and strategies of local meaning in the discourse of Demirel. For example, in his speeches, without directly mentioning, Demirel aims at Kurdish separatism and Islamist political movements in Turkey. In addition, he warns Alevi about the fallacy of these tendencies:

Look, what I am going to say you. Those people who try to divide our people on the basis of their races are in complete fallacy; do not follow them, you do not have any interest in following them (1999). It is important that religious

beliefs of people should not be made a matter of politics... You should not also add political features to this festival (1996).

The other example of implicitness can be observed when Demirel is trying to express the importance he gave to the Hacı Bektaş Festival and to Alevi. Implicitly he argues that the state is aware of the existence of Alevi by attaching importance to them:

As the president of Turkish Republic, I am here not because of I do not have anything else to do; instead I am here to convey you important messages (1996). I am here; the prime minister is on my right; vice president of the parliament is on my left... the state is sitting here (1998).

Arguing, "I listened to what the speakers/orators have talked in this festival, and thought that what else can be said if Turkey was more democratic," Demirel implies that today Turkey is democratic enough for different groups (specifically for Alevi) to express their ideas. In addition, it is also implied that, for Alevi, this freedom of speech is the suitable way to pursue their interest. When Demirel said, "We can also assure peaceful atmosphere in this country by force; but we prefer to assure it by considering democratic rights," he implicitly warns about what will happen if any group (including Alevi) abandon democratic ways to express themselves.

**b) Topic Avoidance or Deleting:** Topic avoidance and deleting are observed among the most common strategies of discourse used against the minorities (van Dijk, 1984:119). When we look at Demirel's speeches at micro level, we can encounter talented use of this discursive strategy. For example, Demirel often refers to history in order to show that "how Hacı Bektaş Veli and his ideas were always in harmony with the state authority." In order to do that Demirel highlights the periods where there were relative harmony between the state and Hacı Bektaş's ideas/followers, and deletes times of clashes. In other words, giving examples from the early Ottoman period (where there were relatively harmonious relations between Hacı Bektaş's heterodox ideas and the state), Demirel systematically avoids from historical periods (such as reign of Selim I, abrogation of Janissaries (1826), and Dersim Events) where followers of Hacı Bektaş and his ideas had serious problems with state authority. Demirel argued that being one of the powerful sources of Turkish nationality, Hacı Bektaş Veli had inspired the Ottoman sultans in their actions. Demirel mentions that the Ottoman civilization was erected on Hacı Bektaş's principles which were also main motivating factor for the Janissaries. Demirel continues with narrating how Mehmed II (Fatih Sultan) and Beyazid II (son of Mehmed II) were impressed by Hacı Bektaş's ideas and behaved in a tolerant and philanthropic manner. Demirel never mentions about actions of Selim I (Yavuz) or Süleyman I (Kanuni) and the persecutions of this period that Kızılbaş groups endured. No sufferings and troubles that Alevi endured, and no disputes between them and the state were mentioned in Demirel's speeches; instead, the mode of relationship was always defined with reference to loyalty and harmony both in the Ottoman and republican period.

**c) Creating and Damning Ambiguous Enemies:** Demirel's speeches are full of examples of this kind of strategy. Without exactly pronouncing the names of these "dark powers," Demirel systematically creates unknown enemies, and offends them. As can be seen below, in order to describe "the enemies who aims our unity," grammatically, Demirel always use passive voice (without owner of action) or vague subjects which signifies no specific person, group or state:

Peoples of this country have been living together for centuries. Different seditions and instigations were launched against them; but realizing this danger, they stayed together against these plots (1994). We should not be instrument of dark powers (1996). This country is surrounded by a fire circle (1998). If some malevolent people abuse your beliefs, you-the Sunnis and Alevi should be against this abuse (1998).

**d) Inclusiveness:** Demirel repeatedly employed inclusive discursive strategies towards Alevi in order to persuade them for that they will not be discriminated anymore by the state; and they are esteemed citizens, like the Sunnis:

My Alevi citizens, do not be anxious about anything. You are full citizens of this country; you are in equality. No one can insult you; you have nothing to hide (1997). Everyone, who embraces the principles of Atatürk and undividable unity of Turkey, belongs to us/this country. You should say yourself “We are first class citizens; and this country is our land” (1998).

**Style and Rhetoric:** Style and rhetoric play important roles in presentation of opinions. Sometimes delicate topics or fragile cases must be subtly and persuasively formulated in order to both inform and persuade the audiences. Style, as put by van Dijk (1991:209) 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, 1993:278; 1980:131). Rhetorical elements in a discourse aim to enhance the “persuasiveness of the message” by using several expressive devices mentioned above (van Dijk, 1984:139).

Concerning the choice of words and expression (style), it appears among the most distinctive character of Demirel’s speeches that the expression of “*Alevi*” was outspokenly pronounced. Sometimes, this word was pronounced alone; some other times it was used together with the expression of “*Bektaşî*.”

Alevi peoples of this country... our Alevi-Bektaşî citizens (1994). Alevi-Bektaşî community of this country... Who can accuse of you because of your Aleviness... (1996). My Alevi-Bektaşî citizens... Alevi citizens of this country... (1997).

As can be seen from the passage, Demirel directly address Alevi without recouring to any indirect expression, instead of “*Alevi*.” Systematically pronouncing it, he used this word 16 times in his speeches. He also did not refrain from using the following words in order to denote other belief groups in Turkey: “the Sunnis, the Hanefis, the Şafis, Caferis, Malikis, Hambelis” (1994, 1996). Together with Alevi, Demirel mentioned also these groups in order to show “how this country has diversity and richness in terms of culture and belief.”

The other important stylistic feature of Demirel’s speeches is that Demirel managed to use Alevi terminology in a talented way to express his arguments and opinions. In other words, while Demirel was talking about Hacı Bektaş Veli, his thoughts or Alevi belief system, he recoured to the terminology that is used by Alevi such as, *hünkar* (repute used for Hacı Bektaş among Alevi), *veli* (saint), *pir* (patron saint), *mürşid* (spiritual leader), *himmet* (spiritual help), *yol* (way), *ocak* (hearth), *sır* (secret), *tarikât* (religious order), *marifet* (acquisition), *hakikat* (truth), *türbe* (shrine).



...*hünkar* Hacı Bektaş Veli...(1998, 1996) ...Hacı Bektaş is the *mürşid* and *pir* of ... with the *himmet* of Hacı Bektaş Veli... Let God makes your secret sacred (*Allah sırrınızı kutlu kalsın*) (1994) ...the *ocak* of Hacı Bektaş... (1997)  
...

As discussed above, under the title of genre, this text can be categorized as a political speech. Resulting mainly from the genre of the text and from the context of the event, Demirel, sometimes, opted to use formal words as follow: “Dear guests...Dear citizens...My reverend citizens...From the bottom of my heart I salute all of you (1996)...I commemorate Hacı Bektaş with respect” (1996, 1998).

In conformity with the most prominent topic of the text, that is encouraging and incorporating Alevis in the direction of protecting national unity and social togetherness, the text is full of the words that support this general argument. For example, “*birlik*” (unity) appeared ten times in the text; “*beraberlik*” (togetherness) appeared eighteen times; “*bütünlük*” (integrity) appeared nine times; “*vatan*” (homeland) appeared eleven times; “*devlet*” (the state) appeared sixty-seven times; “*bayrak*” (flag) appeared three times; “*kardeşlik*” (brotherhood) appeared twenty-seven times. While discussing the necessity of maintaining “national unity and social togetherness,” Demirel presented his arguments by highlighting especially two words: Atatürk (which appeared eight times in the text) and Turkishness (which appeared eleven-times).

In terms of **rhetoric**, Demirel’s speech contains various discursive strategies of persuasion:

a) In order to make his arguments more believable Demirel, systematically, use history as source of persuasion. For example, to support the idea that how Hacı Bektaş and/or his followers were in harmony with the state he refers to Janissaries (who were historically tied to Bektaşî order) or the role of *bacıyan-ı rum* (social group of women in Anatolia formed in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) (together with their close relation Hacı Bektaş Veli) in Turkization and Islamization of Anatolia. In addition, in Demirel’s speeches, Turkish character of Hacı Bektaş Veli and his ideas were stressed with reference to Turkistan (historical homeland of Turks), Ahmet Yesevi (spiritual leader of Hacı Bektaş lived in Turkistan), and Gülbaba (a Bektaşî saint served in Turkization and Islamization of the Balkans).

b) Literature was used another source of persuasion in the text to construct a “state-friendly” figure of Hacı Bektaş. For example, poems of Yunus Emre (another important personality for Alevis being one of the seven greatest poets in Alevi tradition) were referred to emphasize the role of Hacı Bektaş in the Ottoman era:

*Ali Osman oğluna hüküm yürüten*

(He made Ottoman family rule over)

*Nazar ile dağı taşı eriten*

(He melted mountains with his look)

*Hacı Bektaş derler veliyi gördüm.*

(I saw him known as Hacı Bektaş Veli)

A Poem of Celaleddin Rumi was also used in the same way:

*Yüzünde ermişlik nurları gördüm*

(Saintliness shines on his face)

*O kimdir? İki alem sultanı veli Hacı Bektaş*

(Who is he? He is Hacı Bektaş sultan of two worlds)

Demirel also refers to Hacı Bektaş's own sayings in order to make Alevi believe in what he is proposing. Some of the sayings Demirel attributed to Hacı Bektaş:

Be master of your hand, loins and tongue" (*Eline, beline ve dilne sahip ol*). Even if you are offended, do not offend in return (*İncinsen de incitme*). Educate your women (*Kadınlarınızı okutunuz*). Do not forget that even your enemy is a human being (*Düşmanınızın bile insan olduğunu unutmayınız*). Do not behave the others in a way that you do not want to be behaved (*Nefsine ağır geleni kimseye tatbik etme*).

c) Directing questions to the audiences, and providing "suitable" answers to these questions is another rhetorical strategy in the texts:

We want to live in this country in unity, togetherness, brotherhood and peace, don't we? ...Who does make discrimination in this country because of you are Alevi? (1996). Who does need peace in Turkey? Alevi need, the Sunnis need.

d) Exaggeration was also used several times in the text in order to make the arguments stronger. For example, to stress the importance of Hacı Bektaş Veli, it is argued that "his ideas will bring peace and tranquility; not only to our country but also to all countries of the world where there exist conflict" (1996).

e) Lastly, I will dwell on utilization of discourse of sincerity in Demirel's speeches as a rhetorical tool. Demirel, often, refers to the words and expressions that show sincerity and intimacy towards Alevi. By using these words, Demirel probably aims to locate himself as close as possible to Alevi, and tries to show that the state is tolerant and close against them, as it is against the Sunnis. Some of the expressions of sincerity in the texts: "*Sevgili hemşerilerim!*" (My dear countrymen!); "*kardeşlerim*" (My brothers); "*hepinizi sevgiyle kucaklıyorum*" (I embrace all of you with love).

**Context:** Context, in van Dijk, is defined generally by the social, political and historical structures in which the discursive practices take place (2001:108). Context models control all levels of style of discourse, such as lexical choice, rhetorical choices, syntactic structure and other grammatical choices that depend on how situations are defined. Context models also include mental representations (results from immediate, interactional situations such as politics, economy) that control many of the properties of discourse production such as genre, access, setting and participants.

**a) Access and Setting:** To van Dijk, while ordinary people are passive targets of text or talk produced by the authorities (such as officers, judges, politicians), "members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the elites), have more or less exclusive access to the tools of persuasion (such as media, political offices), and control over one or more types of public discourse" (2003:356).

As mentioned above, Süleyman Demirel conducted his speeches as the president of Turkish Republic. He addressed to the audience by taking advantage of being at the top of the state structure. His power and authority stems mainly from this position that has been the most

prestigious and powerful political position of Turkey in the state hierarchy. In the current legal and political structure, the president of Turkey has tremendous duties and power, relating to executive, legislative and judiciary branches, the range of which was clearly stated in the constitution. According to the constitution, the president of the republic is the “head of the state.” In that sense he or she shall represent “the Republic of Turkey and the unity of the Turkish Nation;” he or she shall “ensure the implementation of the Constitution, and the regular and harmonious functioning of the organs of state.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these features of the orator (Demirel), there are other factors that affect the power of his discourse. First, it should be remembered that before he became the president, Demirel had become prime minister at six different times. He had been dealing with party politics since early 1960s. As a result, he spoke at Hacibektaş as an experienced and talented politician, not as an ordinary orator. He took advantage of his experiences about addressing people. This factor can obviously realized, if we closely look at the rhetorical skills that were used in the text: sincerity, direct dialogue with the audiences, exaggerations, comparisons, etc. The role and importance of Demirel’s long experiences of politics on the strength of his discourse becomes apparent if we compare his words with that of Sezer who is not experienced on party politics. Demirel had been the first president visiting the festival; his visits opened the way for other upper level state elite. After his visit, increasing number of politicians and bureaucrats including prime ministers, ministers, governors, mayors and generals have visited the festival and entered into direct dialogue with Alevis. Alevis also appreciated Demirel’s leading role in this process. In 2002, Demirel was given traditional peace price by Hacibektaş Municipality, because of being first president visiting the festival, and because of his contributions to the social peace.

The power and authority of Demirel’s speech is also enhanced by elements of the setting, such as the presence of other members of state elite at the square where the speeches were held (the prime minister, head of the parliament, vice-prime minister, ministers, military and civil bureaucrats, leaders of political parties, local governors and members of parliament). The festival, which is organized by the municipality of Hacibektaş and Ministry of Culture in cooperation, turns into an official ceremony, and was opened with national anthem. Another factor affecting power of Demirel’s discourse is that the speeches have attracted intense attention of media. There existed a lot of journalists and reporters who observed the events. Almost all TV channels (including TRT-state television) broadcasted the festival and Demirel’s speeches in the news bulletins. The festival and some parts of Demirel’s speeches appeared on many daily newspapers and magazines all over the country.

#### **CDA of Ahmet Necdet Sezer’s Speeches in the Hacibektaş Festival (2001-2003):**

Ahmet Necdet Sezer was chosen to the post immediately after Süleyman Demirel. Following Demirel, Sezer continued to participate to the Hacibektaş Festival until 2004. Directorate of Press and Public Relations of Presidency specified no reason about why Sezer did not participate to the festival after 2003; I am told that Sezer kept releasing short

<sup>12</sup> Visit the following link for more information about duties and responsibilities of the president in Turkey: <http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/images/loaded/kitap/1982ana.doc>

congratulatory messages every year to the festival.<sup>13</sup> The following propositions are the main results of **topical** analysis of Sezer's speeches:

**T1-** Hacı Bektaş's ideas, which can be understood more clearly under the light of scientific republican tradition, is humanistic and harmonies with universal values such as tolerance, peace and love. (2001)

**T2-** Hacı Bektaş contributed a lot, in his age, to the formation of social identity and social togetherness; his thoughts are still playing an important role in the consolidation of democratic understanding in Turkey. (2001)

**T3-** Hacı Bektaş Veli showed next generations the way of living together in peace, brotherhood and unity, despite the existence of diversities/ differences in terms of nationality, religion and sect. (2001)

**T4-** Secularism is among the main pillars of our national unity. According to this principle, no one can be blamed/despised because of his/her beliefs. (2001)

**T5-** As necessitated by this principle, no specific race, religion or sect can be given a privileged status at the expense of the others. (2001)

**T6-** Existing difficult conditions of our country make it compulsory to cooperate and to keep our unity and togetherness. (2001)

**T7-** Even under difficult situations we should stay loyal to our state, and believe our democracy. (2001)

**T8-** For better tomorrows, we must prefer compromising and tolerance, instead of conflicting and quarrel; this is what Hacı Bektaş Veli advises us. (2001)

**T9-** Hacı Bektaş Veli's general perspective in many terms is harmonious with Atatürk's aims and ideals. (2001)

**T10-** Hacı Bektaş's principles are still functional for prevention of violence and consolidation of peace in our country. (2003)

**T11-** Hacı Bektaş Veli made great contributions to both formation and preservation of Turkish language, culture, identity and social unity. (2003)

**T12-** Hacı Bektaş Veli's ideas played important role in the formation of democratic and modern characteristics of Turkish Republic, which corresponds an enlightenment movement. (2003)

**T13-** By converting its differences into a kind of richness, Turkey managed to accomplished national unity. (2003)

**T14-** Basic human rights and freedoms cannot be used to create separate identities based on religion and sect; and these rights cannot be used to found a state based religion or sect. (2003)

**T15-** All the citizens of this country are obliged to own and protect this state with its democratic and secular principles; this perspective exists also in the messages of Hacı Bektaş Veli. (2003)

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<sup>13</sup> I came across discussions in conservative Sunni media criticizing Sezer's participation to the Hacıbektaş Festival. It is argued that Sezer makes discrimination by not attending similar ceremonious of Sunni circles such as Mevlana commemoration organized every year in Konya (Dumanlı, 2003).

**Schemata:** As in the case of Demirel's speeches, in Sezer's speeches too, Hacı Bektaş Veli is the central figure of argumentative structure of the text. However, different from Demirel who portrays Hacı Bektaş with reference to Islamic terminology (such as Ahmed Yesevi, Imam Caferi Sadık, Ali, Muhammad, God, spirituality, miracles, etc), Sezer characterize him within a secular framework. In other words, while Hacı Bektaş Veli appears in Demirel's speeches as an Islamic saint who served in Islamization and Turkization of this country, in Sezer's speeches he appears as a philosopher who was known with his universal ideas such as humanism, tolerance and love. As will be seen in the following statements, in Sezer's speeches, Hacı Bektaş was depicted with reference to mainly philosophical and secular terminology:

Hacı Bektaş Veli is a philosopher whose peaceful perspective, humanism and universal ideas on love of nature and tolerance are still valid today... Hacı Bektaş Veli, who was raised by Anatolia, is the source of a lot of virtue from which humanity can take serious lessons (2001).

As discussed above, Hacı Bektaş Veli was presented by Demirel as the product of Islamic and Turkish traditions in general, and he was referred in relation with Alevis and in the context of Alevism. Whereas in Sezer, he was mentioned as the product Anatolia, there are no reference to Islam and Alevism in the text in relation to Hacı Bektaş Veli. Personality and prominence of Hacı Bektaş in Alevi tradition is totally absent in Sezer's argumentation. Hacı Bektaş's prominence was systematically stressed in Sezer's speeches not only via his philosophical side but also with reference to his sayings about science:

Hacı Bektaş's following sayings, "All the ways, except for those one opened by science, are full of darkness" and "Our ways were based on science and love of human being," shows us the essence of his ideas (2003).

Contrary to Demirel, Sezer nowhere in his speeches addressed Alevis. As will be discussed below under the subtitle of "lexical choices," by preferring to use words of "my citizens" or "people of Hacıbektaş," Sezer refrained to stress Alevi identity in his speeches. Although Sezer's participation to the festival, by itself, is important for Alevis in terms of being addressed by the state, he never mentioned (unlike Demirel) about the demands of Alevis and inequalities about which they complain. Instead, he systematically, stated benefits of secularism established by republic, and importance of supporting /accepting existing state with its principles stated in the constitution:

Atatürk founded democratic republic of Turkey with a modern and dynamic structure. Secularism is essence and unchangeable character of this republic. According to principle of secularism, basic human rights and freedoms cannot be used to create separate identities based on religion and sect; and these rights cannot be used to found a state based religion or sect. No person, family, group or class has privilege before the laws; according to principle of equality no religion, sect or race may have different status from the others. All the citizens of this country are obliged to own and protect this state with its democratic and secular principles (2001).

As can be seen above, Sezer, by reciting the constitutional principles concerning the secularism and equality, portrays an ideal picture of Turkey for the audiences. In fact, this portrait is very delicate, and can easily be damaged by the exceptions and inequalities Alevis have been enduring since the beginning of republican period. As if there is no problem, all the citizens (including Alevis) are invited to own and protect the existing order. In addition, Hacı Bektaş Veli and his system of ideas are used, in Sezer's speeches, to mobilize people in the direction of protecting existing secular order. In relation with this, Sezer highlights duties and responsibilities of individual citizens against the state, instead of dwelling on their rights and freedoms. Again, in doing that he utilizes Hacı Bektaş to persuade the audiences:

Together with the republic, political and social privileges were cleared off, and equality and freedom were settled among all the citizens. In addition, secularism was realized in all segments of life... Hacı Bektaş Veli's ideas contributed a lot to the formation of this modern and democratic structure of the republic, and to the sustainability of this enlightenment movement... Individuals have some duties and responsibilities to society and state; they have to possess characteristics of democracy, which is pre-condition for the survival and consolidation of the regime. This understanding was coded in the messages of Hacı Bektaş Veli, centuries ago. (2003)

Sezer, several times in his speeches, emphasizes the idea that today (as in the past) Hacı Bektaş Veli's ideas are important for the formation of Turkey's national unity and social togetherness. He also pointed out that Hacı Bektaş Veli, during his life, gave great importance to the preservation of Turkish language and culture. In this sense, parallel to Demirel, Sezer presented Hacı Bektaş Veli as one of the outstanding figure who internalized Turkish customs and tradition, and transmitted these values to next generations. It can easily be observed from the discussions above that Hacı Bektaş Veli and his system of ideas were instrumentalized by both Sezer and Demirel in order to incorporate<sup>14</sup> Alevis to existing system.

Another common argumentative strategy that can be seen in the speeches of both Demirel and Sezer is to construct parallelism between Atatürk and Hacı Bektaş Veli in order to secure loyalty and support of Alevis for the republic. The most obvious example of this parallelism is that both Atatürk and Hacı Bektaş were mentioned, in Sezer's speeches, with reference to the importance they gave to "scientific thought," and their fight against "darkness." By citing sayings of both persons related with scientific thought, Sezer defends that how Hacı Bektaş and Atatürk have together illuminated our future, although they lived in different ages.

The other dimension of the relation between Atatürk and Hacı Bektaş Veli is formulated through the foundation of republic. According to Sezer, Atatürk has founded "a republican order which is modern, dynamic, secular and governed by rule of law" (2001, 2003); and Hacı Bektaş Veli's ideas played important role in the formation of these modern characteristics of Turkish Republic. In sum, to Sezer, these two persons, hand in hand, opened the door of enlightenment movement for the Turkish nation (2003).

Sezer, likewise Demirel, finalizes and justifies his arguments by giving good reasons for the following questions: Why should we own and protect the republican order, "in every condition," together with its modern, secular and democratic characteristics? Why it is "more urgent today" to maintain our national unity and social togetherness than ever? Why should all

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<sup>14</sup> As I discussed in the first chapter, incorporation refers "to application of knowledge in a way that promotes strategies of state control" Frank and Burton (1979:51).

the citizens fulfill their duties and responsibilities against the state, today “by leaving their personal interest aside?” One can easily find the answers of these questions in Sezer’s speeches. Sezer several times argued that:

Today, our country is walking through a critical passage. The difficult conditions we are enduring are growing day by day; and under these circumstances, it becomes necessary to maintain our unity, well-being and solidarity. By leaving our personal interest aside, we should give priority to the interest of our country and society. Maintaining our beliefs, under every condition, to our state and nation is the key factor for the illuminated future of this country (2001). For a better future, we chose tolerance and reconciliation instead of disputing (2003).

**Local Meanings:** In terms of local meanings, the most prominent feature of Sezer’s speeches is that by refraining from using the expressions such as “Alevi, Sunni, Islam,” he, implicitly, tends to put the issue without referring to religious and sectarian parameters. By addressing Alevis by means of the following words, “dear peoples of Hacibektaş,” “peoples who follow Hacı Bektaş’s illuminating ideas,” “my dear citizens,” Sezer does not emphasize an Alevi identity separate from republican citizenship. Instead of interpellating/labeling people as Alevis, or the Sunnis, Sezer prefers to call and unite them under the general title of “citizens of secular, democratic republic.” We can summarize his underlying logic from the text as follow: there are no Alevis or no Sunnis; instead, there is a state with its secular and democratic characters, and there are citizens (they altogether form Turkish nation) who are expected to obey these rules. As stated several times in the texts, “basic human rights and freedoms cannot be used to create separate identities based on religion and sect” (whether under the title of Alevis or Sunnism). In addition, “these rights cannot be used to found a state based religion or sect;” with these words Sezer also rejects demands of political Islamists.

It can be argued that ignoring a series of existing malfunctions in Turkey (concerning to rights and freedoms of Alevis, and implementations of secularism), Sezer, several times in his speeches, chose to idealize the current situation. In other words, instead of referring to demands and complaints of Alevis, Sezer idealized existing order by means of the following expression:

Together with the republic, political and social privileges were cleared off; additionally, equality and freedom were provided for all the citizens. In addition, secularism was realized in all segments of life. Turkey has accomplished its nation-building process/national fusion by transforming its differences; only a few number of nation managed to do that (2003). No person, family, group or class has privilege before the laws; according to principle of equality no religion, sect or race may be treated differently or may have different status compared to the others (2001, 2003).

As can be inferred from the passage, in addition to idealization of contemporary Turkey, in terms of rights and freedoms, ethnic and religious heterogeneity of Turkey was also ignored in Sezer’s speeches. He mentions principles of secularism and process of nation-building process as if there is no problem pertaining to these areas.

**Style and Rhetoric:** Style, has to do with the choice and variation of the words in presentation of the ideas. Concerning the word choice, it is among the most conspicuous

characteristics of the text is that Sezer preferred to use newly produced Turkish words, instead of the words originates from the other languages such as Arabic and Persian. For example, he opted to use “*göñeç*” (welfare), “*erek*” (purpose), “*ulus*” (nation), “*yurttaş*” (citizen) and “*ileti*” (message) instead of “*refah*” (welfare), “*gaye*” (purpose), “*millet*” (nation), “*vatandaş*” (citizen) and “*mesaj*” (message). Sezer’s choice in this matter is harmonious with his nationalist stance (in general) and his perspective concerning the purification of Turkish.

As I mentioned above, Sezer opted not to use any of the following words “Alevi,” “Alevilik,” “Sunni,” “Sunnilik;” and refrained from using any words that may connote separate identity other than being the citizen of Turkish republic. In that sense, he used “*yurttaş*” (citizen) twenty times during his speeches. He opted to present his ideas by emphasizing principles of republic. In this context, the other important set of words that were mostly repeated: “*laik, laiklik*” (secular, secularism) that appeared fifteen times; “*çağdaş*” (modern) that appeared nineteen times; “*demokrasi*” (democracy) that appeared eighteen times; “*aydınlanma, aydınlık*” (enlightenment, luminous) was used seven times; “*bilgi*” (knowledge) that appeared six times.

Like Demirel, Sezer also highlights “the importance of togetherness and unity,” which can easily be observed through his word choices: “*birlik*” (unity) was used seven times; “*kardeşlik*” (brotherhood) was used six times; “*sevgi*” (love) was used twenty-four times; “*barış*” (peace) was used fourteen times; “*hoşgörü*” (tolerance) was used seventeen times; “*dirlik*” (tranquility) and “*dayanışma*” (solidarity) were used twice each. “Türk” and “Atatürk” are other important words, while the former appeared thirteen times and the latter appeared seven times.

In terms rhetoric, it can be argued that Sezer’s speeches correspond to a good example of formal speech. From its beginning to the end, the text is full of the examples of formal addressing such as “honorable quests... I salute you with respect... I present my gratitude...” Expressions of informality, directing instant questions, declamations, using singular pronouns, which were some of the rhetorical strategies in Demirel’s speeches, were completely absent in Sezer’s speeches. Consistently refraining from informality, Sezer always used plural pronouns, and considering grammatical rules, he preferred to use proper sentences, instead of irregular one.

Similar to Demirel, Sezer also refer to historical personalities (such as Mevlana, Yunus Emre, Ahmet Yesevi) in order to be more convincing in presenting his arguments. In addition, Sezer also tried to benefit from sayings of Atatürk and Hacı Bektaş as a rhetorical strategy. For example, the following sayings of these two persons were cited twice in the text:

*Gerçek yol gösterici ilimdir.*

(The real guide, in life, is science.) Atatürk

*İlimden gidilmeyen yolun sonu karanlıktır.*

(All the ways are dark, except for scientific one.) Hacı Bektaş

**a) Access and Setting:** It can be argued that Sezer has some privileges and advantages in accessing to the tools of persuasion. As I discussed above (relating to Demirel’s speeches), Sezer, as a president, is at the top state hierarchy. He has lots of duty and power that were guaranteed by the constitution. Being the head of Turkish Republic, Sezer speaks as the



representative of the state. He speaks with a title that is theoretically expected to be neutral position above all institutions of the state and before all the segments of the society. According to the constitution, he represents “the Republic of Turkey and the unity of the Turkish Nation;” he or she shall “ensure the implementation of the Constitution, and the regular and harmonious functioning of the organs of state.” In addition, by means of media channels, his speeches reach all country. The messages of Sezer are available not only for those people in Hacibektaş but also for all the citizens of Turkey (whether Alevi or Sunni). Many television channels (including TRT, the state television), daily newspapers and magazines were interested in the events, and disseminated the Sezer’s messages all over the country. Audiences, in our case, are permitted to be passive parts of the setting; the control belongs to Sezer during his speeches. It should be noted that Sezer encountered with very friendly atmosphere in Hacibektaş. The audiences in the square welcomed Sezer by chanting slogan: “Turkey is proud of you” (*Türkiye seninle gurur duyuyor*) (Vatan, 2003). In addition, the festival (especially the opening part) was conducted as an official ceremony: attendance of state elites other than Sezer (the prime minister, ministers, bureaucrats...), presence of thousands of police and gendarmes,<sup>15</sup> performance of national anthem, observance of protocol rules.

### Concluding Remarks

As a conclusion, it can be argued that, apart from the contents of their speeches, even the participations of two presidents (Demirel and Sezer) to the Hacibektaş Festival is important itself, and carry special meaning for Alevis. Since it was obvious that the festival was an Alevi event; by participating to the festival and by addressing Alevis the presidents showed that they are aware of/recognizing existence of Alevis in Turkey. Via these participations, for the first time in the republican period, the state contacted Alevis at the highest level. Alevis welcomed both Demirel and Sezer; because they were addressed by the state at the highest level. Alevis, who were previously ignored or treated with suspicion during 1970s and 1980s (ignorance or suspicion also refers to a form of official discourse), were discovered (during 1990s) by the presidents as a potential power to buttress republican regime against those who oppose it. As I showed in chapter two, Alevis (who were defined before as “interior threats” to the state) were considered, in the speeches of two presidents, as important allies of Turkish Republic or as precious treasure that made Turkish modernization possible. It can be argued that main reason behind this change in official stance of the presidents towards Alevis is closely related with threats coming from rise of political Islam and intensification of Kurdish separatism in Turkey. Especially, since 1999 (when the European Union (EU) recognized Turkey’s candidacy), the EU process of Turkey emerged as another factor affecting this change.

As for the questions of the study, (How did the presidents define Alevism and Alevis in their official statements? What kind of discursive regularities and discursive strategies were employed in the presidential speeches on Alevis?), it can be argued that there are some common points in the speeches of two presidents, as well as differentiating points.

Both of the presidents, tried to emphasize that their presence in Hacibektaş represents “existence of state” in the festival. Both Demirel and Sezer worked hard to emphasize that Hacı Bektaş Veli and Alevis (being his followers) are “Turks, and they made great

<sup>15</sup> The number of security forces in the festival varied depending on the number of high-ranking official participants; but almost every year there existed intense security precautions. For example in 1998 there were more than 1000 polices and 200 gendarmes (Cumhuriyet, 1998).

contributions to Turkish culture and tradition.” In relation with this argument, the presidents gave special importance to distance Alevis and Alevism from Kurdish separatism and political Islam. Alevis were systematically presented as “tolerant, modern and enlightened face of Turkish-Islam.” The presidents warned Alevis also for being away from Kurdish separatists who aim to harm national unity of Turkey. Another common point in these presidential speeches is that Alevis and their beliefs are portrayed harmonious with the principles of Atatürk and pillars of Turkish Republic.

Both Demirel and Sezer see a close relationship between issue of Alevism and security priorities of Turkey. It is argued that Turkey, being “in the middle of a fire circle,” is experiencing “hard conditions;” under these conditions, Alevis were asked to stay loyal to the state, and to be respectful to laws and regulations under all conditions that are vital for “preserving national unity of Turkey.” The presidents alert Alevis against “malicious plans of shady powers who aim division of Turkey.” Instrumentalization of Hacı Bektaş Veli (and his ideas) in order to mobilize Alevis in the direction of preserving existing order appears as another common point between Demirel and Sezer. In the speeches of both presidents, Hacı Bektaş Veli appears a state-loyal figure who had “always served for unity, togetherness, fraternity and consolidation of the state order.” They argued that Hacı Bektaş Veli and his ideas, that inspired Atatürk in the formation of republican order, are perfect models for Alevis of today in the direction of owning/protecting existing state order. In the speeches of both Demirel and Sezer, there exist apologetic statements against Alevis, which want Alevis to forget traumatic memoirs of the past, and to look at future.

These changes in official stances of the presidents (starting from 1994) do not mean that the identity and existence of Alevis were completely recognized by them. Although differences in Turkey (such as Alevism) were presented as “richness,” the presidents presented a partial representation of existing situation by referring to discursive strategy of omitting/deleting. The speeches emphasize Alevis’ similarities and common points with the Sunnis, rather than highlighting their *sui generis* and different sides from the Sunnis. Both Demirel and Sezer stated that no one in this country (including Alevis) can be blamed for their beliefs and worshipping. But, none of the problems of Alevis (including status of congregation houses, compulsory religious education) were mentioned in these speeches. Alevis were advised to be patient about their problems, and not lost their belief to the state under all conditions.

As for the differentiating points between two presidents, it can be argued that while Demirel addressed directly “Alevis,” Sezer employed an indirect discourse such as “followers of Hacı Bektaş Veli.” While introducing the issue Demirel referred to religious terminology and Islamic context, Sezer refrained from doing that; instead he presented Hacı Bektaş Veli and his ideas with reference to universal ideas such as secularism, science and enlightenment. Another differences is that while Demirel is more eager to confess that Alevis are enduring (and endured in the past) important problems, Sezer, ignoring discontent of Alevis, tried to portray an ideal picture of Turkey for the audiences (by reciting the constitutional principles concerning the secularism and equality).

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