

AN ANALYSIS OF NEWS REPORTING AS MEDIA RITUALS:
MARTYR FUNERALS

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TELEVİZYON HABERLERİNDE ŞEHİT CENAZELERİNİN MEDYA
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ABSTRACT

In today's world, the concept of ritual has changed immensely. The ever changing and improving media play a critical role in the maintenance of the rituals. Martyr funerals as social phenomena are of particular importance since they are regarded as national tragedies and draw an immense participation. As for the media's treatment of these funerals, it is only natural to say that the reporting is in unique fashion and form; hence only the application of media rituals theory in analysis can deepen the understanding of this news coverage. Even though an existing ritual is being reported and it is news coverage, the news making process, editing and presentation changes the nature of the ceremony and creates its own ritual. As the ritual literature suggests these performances offer a way to experience the ongoing armed conflict in southeastern Turkey as the whole country, seeking to create a sense of togetherness and unity.

ÖZET

Günümüz dünyasında rituel bir kavram olarak büyük değişiklik göstermiştir. Sürekli değişen ve gelişen medyanın bu kavramsal değişiklikte ve ritüellerin devam ettirilmesinde önemli bir rolü vardır. Toplumsal bir olgu olarak şehit cenazeleri önemlidir çünkü ulusal bir trajedi olarak görülür ve ciddi bir katılımı gerçekleştirilir. Medyanın bu ritüelleri ele alırken oldukça farklı bir yol takip eder ve bu ele alış biçiminin anlaşılması içerik analizinin medya ritüeli kavramı üzerinden yapılmasıyla mümkün olabilir. Ele alınan bir ritual olması ve haber içeriği olarak hazırlanması, bir medya ritüeli olarak sunulduğu gerçeğini değiştirmez. Medya kendi ritüelini yaratarak Türk toplumuna Doğu Anadolu’da yaşanan çatışmayı haberleştirir ve birlik ve beraberlik hissi yaratmayı amaçlar.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades of Turkish Republic, the Kurdish problem must be one of the most debated and reported issues in the mainstream media in addition to being a highly controversial political and sociological issue which has been being widely discussed by politicians, scholars, and activists as well as ‘the public.’ One can simply ask what the role of the media is during this process, considering the upper hand gained through technological developments, the effect of media on our lives is unquestionable and the effect in question has been an academic research matter for almost a century. Many scholars have been tackling how media is used as a tool of propaganda, how national identity is constructed and shaped via media so and so forth. However, the simple question, which led up to the thesis at hand, is the one over the media and its practices while covering the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Embracing the limited scope of a master’s thesis, the main purpose here is to explain the practices employed by the media within the sample, method and theoretical framework determined, which are to be explained in detail below.

1.1. Research Problem

The history of the conflict between the Kurdish insurgents and the state goes back to the reign of the Ottoman Empire. There have been several occasions of Kurdish rebellions against the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. However the PKK (Kurdistan Worker’s Party), which was founded in a small town in Diyarbakır in 1978 by a university graduate Abdullah Öcalan, marks a turning point in the history of Kurdish movement.¹ Since

¹ International Crisis Group (ICG), Turkey: “The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement”, (September 2012).

the armed attacks on Eruh and Şemdinli on 15th of August 1984, the most violent and the longest period of conflict between the security forces and the PKK has been going on.² This armed struggle is characterized by the random clashes between the security forces and the militants in the southeast of Turkey as well as the terrorist attacks in some city centers. Even though it is very hard to talk with certain numbers, it is often quoted that 40.000 people including the PKK militants, the Turkish military, and both Kurdish and Turkish civilians were killed in these clashes and attacks.³ In 1999, Abdullah Öcalan – the leader of insurgency- was captured and jailed in İmralı.⁴ This event was followed by a unilateral ceasefire, which had lasted for a brief period of time and followed by a rise in violent attacks in 2004.⁵ The ruling AK Party (Justice and Development Party) initiated a process called “Democratic Opening” or “National Unity and Brotherhood Project” to end the conflict. Later in 2009 it was rephrased as the Kurdish Opening or Kurdish Initiative.⁶ However, in July 2011 right after the parliamentary elections large-scale hostilities between the PKK and Turkish security forces resumed and had killed 711 people by mid-August 2012, including 222 soldiers, police and village guard militia, 405 PKK militants and 84 civilians.⁷ The period between July 2011 and August 2012 is notable from many angles and worth a lot of thought. It also appears to be a period of time, which can provide a good solid data for the investigation of media practices in Turkish mainstream media while covering the Kurdish issue

² Çağlayan, Muttalip. *Turkey's Kurdish Conflict Through the Lenses of Conflict Resolution* (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Ankara: Middle East Technical University, September, 2013. p.6.

³ International Crisis Group (ICG), Turkey: “Ending the PKK Insurgency”, (20 September 2011).

⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), Turkey: “The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement”, (September 2012).

⁵ Çağlayan, *op. cit.*, p.90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁷ International Crisis Group (ICG), Turkey: “The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement”, (September 2012).

within the restrictions of decided frame and scope; therefore, it is chosen as the time period from which the data for research will be retrieved.

Even though the thesis at hand sets forth to look into the media practices implemented while covering the Kurdish problem, it is obvious that the PKK and its actions are covered much more than the other issues related to Kurdish ethnicity and community therefore the PKK coverage is chosen as the focus of further analysis during the research process. Furthermore, the thesis purports to be a media study and seeks to contribute to further understanding of media and its practices in Turkey though media is a vast area to be studied and practices implemented are varied. Hence, television is determined to be the medium from which the data regarding the media practices will be collected. The reason behind opting for television is the fact that television has been one of the most powerful media tool for almost half a century in the world. Even if its history in Turkey is more recent when compared to the rest of the world, it is incomparable with any kind of Internet novelty. Television is still the most popular and widely used media in Turkey regardless of the increasing use of the Internet and other media tools. As shown by the RTUK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) research on television watching tendencies, 57.2 % of the participants watch minimum two hours of television on weekdays and this increases on the weekends.⁸ Moreover, the average level of television watching during weekdays is 5,09 hours⁹; hence television proves to be the best media tool to be studied within the scope of a thesis. As it is shown in the same research, it can be claimed that most of the television audience in Turkey regard television as the source of news since 74.8 % of the participants state that they watch news programs on a daily basis.¹⁰ Considering the nature of the research problem, it is safe to assume that the issue has been mostly covered

⁸ Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu (RTUK) “Televizyon İzleme Eğilimleri Araştırması- 2”, (2009).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

in the news programs; therefore, television news appear to be a good source of data for the purpose of this thesis.

As the present author reviews the news coverage of the PKK, the most noteworthy and frequently referred concept is by far ‘martyrdom’, which has a rooted tradition in society along with certain connotations. Thus, the coverage of martyrdom in the television news is established as the research problem of the thesis. Setting the news reporting of martyrdom on television as the research problem leads to further analysis of the most frequent and notable coverage of the issue that happens to be ‘martyr funerals’.

Before moving to the detailed discussion of the aim of thesis, it is necessary to elaborate on martyrdom as a concept. Yasemin Akyol employs the definition provided by Sevan Nişanyan who proposes that the etymological origin of the word ‘martyr’ is the Greek word *mártys*, which means to ‘witness’ something or ‘to be witness’. Akyol refers to Nişanyan’s further explanations on the concept in general terms, which should be noted here as well. Nişanyan states that people who would not reject and dismiss their beliefs and for that particular reason suffer from certain maltreatments are considered martyr. In the most well known sense, people who are killed for what they believe in are martyr and they are and the act of death are regarded so in the society.¹¹

It is widely accepted that Christianity and Islam are the two religions, which put martyrdom in a core position, presents it as something desired by its practitioners in their teachings. It is also known that the concept of martyrdom played a significant role in the early emerging periods of each religion thus the related practices have been shaped by the concept. Despite the fact that author does not wish to discuss martyrdom in detail, it is a must know that in both religions, with certain differences though, martyrdom is

¹¹ Akyol, Yasemin. *Dinsel Ritüeller ve Modern Milliyetçilikte Ritüel İnşası: Şehit Cenazeleri* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis) İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University, 2009. p.35.

highly praised and martyrs have some special spiritual privileges such as eternal life and so forth.¹² Even though the concept of martyrdom has well-established bonds with certain religions, people have always reflected on what is worth living and dying for.¹³ Needless to say, the concept of martyrdom is borrowed from religions; however, it has been transformed into something more extensive, which encompasses dying for motherland that is especially true for Turkish history and culture.

In order to have a thorough understanding of the issue, one should also recall that there is a mandatory military service system in Turkey. Each Turkish man has to serve in the army for a given period of time, which changes from 6 months to 15 months. Most of conscripts are around the age of 20 during their military service. These conscripts receive a basic training for three months and then sent to military bases. Arzu Kıbrıs points out that due to the ongoing armed conflict with the PKK, most of the conscripts are assigned to the southeast as well as the army professionals and other public servants who are obliged to serve in the southeast for a given time thus very few of the conscripts and army professionals are originally from the area.¹⁴ It is also commonly acknowledged that if a conscript or professional is killed in service, the person is considered to be a martyr by the state and the people. Kıbrıs points at the fact that martyrdom is legally categorized according to the manner of death such as in battle, in accident and so on. The conscripts and professionals who are killed in the armed conflict with the PKK are considered ‘terror martyrs’ and both the state and the society regards it the highest.¹⁵ The thesis at hand employs the concept of martyrdom as it is culturally and officially accepted.

¹² Jensen, P. Michael, *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self On Trial*, (London: Continuum Books, 2010) pp.27-34.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Kıbrıs, Arzu, “Funerals and Elections: The Effects of Terrorism on Voting Behavior in Turkey”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol.55, No.2, 2011) pp. 220-247.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.226.

1.2. Aim of Thesis

The reflection upon the research problem led up to an increased interest in the news reporting of martyr funerals especially because of the unique aspects of these ceremonies with and without the effect of medium in question. As Kıbrıs summarizes that state funerals are held in the place of burial, which is generally the hometown, for each conscript killed. These funerals are public events with the presence of high-level military and state officials. Many people attend these events especially for nationalistic demonstration purposes. Kıbrıs reflects on the funeral attending behavior and points out that it is considered to be ‘a citizenship and religious duty’ to attend to a martyr funeral.¹⁶

Yasemin Akyol also indicates an explicit link between the concept of martyrdom and the Kurdish issue in Turkey in the analysis of representative case of martyr funerals. It is suggested in her thesis that martyr funerals have been constructed over the Kurdish issue and Turkish nationalism in Turkey; a link between PKK (Kurdistan Worker’s Party) and Kurds has been provided and nationalist ideas have been fed through ritualization of these funerals. The ritual characteristics of martyr funerals, in addition to being a *rite de passage*, are indicated as the presence of statesmen and politicians, high-rank army professionals and the nationalist groups that create an atmosphere anticipating social and political conflict. Akyol also indicates the fact that funerals in Turkish context are generally held in quiet reverence however in the case of martyr funerals the atmosphere is tense and loaded with potential clash and reaction.¹⁷

Having said the rationale behind, the author believes that the televising of these significant social phenomena can provide insight to the media’s ways and manners; thus the main aim is to establish the news coverage of martyr

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.236.

¹⁷ Akyol, *op. cit.*, p.87.

funerals as media rituals, which happen to be very enlightening in this particular case. It should be stated that the literature on media rituals haven't reached a consensus on the broadcasting of existing rituals in the analysis of media rituals as well as the use of news coverage. However, with its local characteristics of Turkish mainstream media, news coverage of martyr funerals as ceremonial events¹⁸ is good example of media rituals with abundant symbolized and ideological texts within. Thus, the thesis aims to demonstrate media ritual characteristics of news coverage, reveal the ideological connotations and mechanisms of meaning production.

1.3. Research Question and Research Methods

The main research question is through which means the news coverage of martyr funerals are ritualized. In order to answer this question and demonstrate how news coverage of the issue in question is a media ritual with ideological discourse, the author will analyze a set of primary materials retrieved from television archives. No secondary material is used for analysis purposes. As for the sources and materials, the materials i.e. videos of the television news are retrieved from archives of the television channels, which are chosen as Kanal D, Show TV and Kanal 7. The rationale behind choosing these television channels is very simple since using data retrieved from only one television channel is not only limited but also open to ownership critique. Thus author opts for three different television channels of which prime time news have been listed in top rating lists during the given period¹⁹ and the channels are believed to represent a variety of ownership structures. As explained above the data are retrieved from the period between July 2011 and September 2012 due to its relevance and significance.

¹⁸ Dayan, Daniel and Katz, Elihu, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, Harvard: Harvard University Press. 1992.

¹⁹ <http://www.medyatava.com/rating>

As for the manner of data collection, the list of martyrs is accessed on the related website²⁰ to decide on the specific dates for the archive research. The list will be provided in the analysis chapter in detail. Since the news reporting the killings as breaking news which is innately disruptive and the reporting of funerals as ceremonial events i.e. media rituals are assumed to carry distinct characteristics, the present author opts for including the reporting of breaking news of the killings and the funerals of the same conscripts in the analysis. To be more specific, the days are determined first, then the breaking news in prime time news only is reviewed and the coverage of the funerals on the following day is analyzed with regard to media ritual characteristics. It is also assumed that the comparative analysis between breaking news and media rituals may shed light on the media practices used while covering the main concepts of this thesis, the PKK and martyrdom, in mainstream media in Turkey.

The research method is a qualitative one. Structural analysis will focus on the design and symbolism in text, camera shots, editing of the footage, commentary, interview and so on in order to explain their ritual characteristics; on the other hand semiological analysis will focus on the meaning reproduction, ideological discourse and ritual functions of the aforementioned parts. A comparison between disruptive events and ceremonial events will be provided especially to indicate the media ritual characteristics of the latter despite the fact that the broadcast was a part of news program that is evening news which is a rather controversial issue in media ritual literature. The present author insists that prime time news on television is utilized as ritual space of media²¹ and the coverage carry distinct features of media rituals.

²⁰ <http://www.mehmetcik.org.tr/sehitlerimiz.html>

²¹ Couldry, Nick, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*, London: Routledge, 2003, p.37.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Ritual Theory

2.1.1. The Concept of Ritual

The concept of ritual has been around since the late nineteenth century tackling the issues related to culture, society and religion. It is frequently defined under the category of human experience. Several scholars attempted to interpret the concept from different academic perspectives. Some attempts to define ritual depend heavily upon the religion and practices of magic; however, non-religious rituals also draw some attention and become a part of literature. The earliest interpretations of ritual focus on how religion is rooted in rituals and the social functions of rituals. These interpretations evolve into more non-religious forms, which focus on the behaviors, secular performances, traditions and customs so and so forth.

Steven Lukes extracts a definition from this immense amount of interpretations, which defines ritual as a “rule-governed activity of a symbolic character, which draws attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance”.²² He also contributes more to the common concepts employed to define ritual and these are its being rule-governed, patterned, symbolic with normative requirements on the side of its participants. To elaborate more on the characteristics of rituals, Roy Rappaport considers the term ritual “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers”.²³ Many scholars attempt

²² Lukes, Steven, “Political Ritual and Social Integration, Sociology”, *Journal of the British Sociological Association* (Vol.9, No.2, 1975) p. 291.

²³ Rappaport, A. Roy, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.24.

to explore how ritual activities function and what they mean from various perspectives coming from diverse fields of social sciences, as it will be discussed further in this chapter.

2.1.2. Ritual Studies

i. Myth, Religion and Ritual

While discussing religion and its origins the early scholars dealt mainly with concepts of myth and ritual. William Robertson Smith suggests, "the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable, the ritual was obligatory and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshipper."²⁴ In the ongoing debate between setting myth or ritual as the origin of religion Emile Durkheim in his book '*Elementary Forms of Religious Life*' opts for putting myths and rituals under the system of religion.²⁵ In addition to description of religion as a 'social phenomena', a division between 'sacred and profane' is provided. The opposite domains of 'sacred' and 'profane' represent the spiritual and transcendental nature of the world and the everyday activities respectively. Religious phenomena are also divided into spiritual and behavioral levels in which beliefs are innately spiritual however rituals, since they require physical attendance, are behavioral.²⁶

Adopting a similar perspective, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown interprets that the reason why anthropologists are involved with the myth and rituals as the

²⁴ Robertson Smith, "Lectures on the Religion of the Semites", p. 18 (As cited in Bell, Catherine, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, London: Oxford University Press. 1997.)

²⁵ Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Karen Fields (trans.) (New York: The Free Press. 1995) p. 34.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

urge to explain how religious beliefs are formed and believed.²⁷ It is also suggested in his work that ritual behaviors play a determining role in the formation of beliefs; besides, rituals behaviors can be also be regarded as symbolic forms of feelings. Radcliffe- Brown proposes that first and foremost “rituals are the steadiest and most lasting factors of all religions. Moreover, rituals are more enlightening than myths.” Hence he indicates the central position of rituals in interpretation of religions.²⁸ Many of the early scholars ponder over the concept of ritual and myth in its relation to religion, they also draw attention to another issue that religion creates and maintains community and therefore paving the path for discussion of ritual and society. Since rituals are behavioral and certain obligations are conducted by the society as explained above, it is only natural to assume that rituals have a lot to say about society.

ii. Society and Ritual

One of the many perspectives from which religion and ritual practices have been discussed is the functionalist perspective thanks to the functionalist foundation put forward by Emile Durkheim who explains that “religion contains in itself from the very beginning, even in an indistinct state, all the elements which have given rise to the various manifestations of collective life.”²⁹ For Durkheim religion is not something that goes on in one’s individual psyche, rather it is a way of organizing social life. Functionalist perspective mainly deals with how society is integrated by means of religion and religious rituals through which social cohesion is gained and maintained.

"All known religious beliefs . . . present one common characteristic: they

²⁷ Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses*, (Illinois: Free Press, 1965) p. 172.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁹ Lukes, Steven, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) p. 237.

presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by. . . the words profane and sacred”.³⁰

The way he argues beliefs and the rituals basically represents sacred things and “rules of conduct” which determines how people are supposed to act in the situations related to sacred things or objects. As periodic opportunities for the social group to assemble itself and project sacred images that actually represent the community, rituals are designed to arouse a passionate intensity, feelings of “effervescence” in which individuals experience something larger than themselves.³¹ Influenced immensely by Durkheim’s work, Alfred Radcliffe- Brown claims that religion should be approached as an “essential part of the social machinery”³² which neatly arranges social relations. He claims that the origins of religion are not the main concern; instead the social functions of religion and the contributions made to formation and maintenance of the social order are of importance.³³ He also coins the concept “ritual value,” which proposes that certain basic social values can be set by means of rituals, and most of the rituals’ values constitute the common values of the society.³⁴

Bronislaw Malinowski however, puts more emphasis on individual’s emotions and indicates the individual needs as the roots of religion.³⁵ Malinowski also attempts to categorize rituals as magical and religious.³⁶ In this categorization religious rituals are defined as the ways of

³⁰ Durkheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-56.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³² Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.*, p.154.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.145, 161, 180.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.134.

³⁵ Malinowski, Bronislaw, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960) p. 159.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26.

communication with gods however magical rituals may play different roles especially related to emotions of anxiety and fear.³⁷

Returning to the discussion of ritual and society and the relationship of ritual to social organizations, Arnold Van Gennep puts forward the notion of “rites of passage”, which are simply described as transitions from certain distinctions such as age, occupational group to other distinctions enveloped in ceremonies.³⁸ In *Rites of Passage*, he concludes that in semi civilized societies, actions and reactions in one’s life especially during the life changing situations are regulated and guarded through rituals thus the society does not suffer discomfort and injury. Catherine Bell suggests that in Van Gennep’s discussion different situations and different ritual stages have different understanding of the sacred herewith the sacred is not absolute entity or quality, which “alerted scholars to the ways in which ritual can actually define what is sacred, not simply react to the sacred as something already and for always fixed”.³⁹ Bell’s perspective puts rituals in a core position with certain abilities to produce meaning for the society.

A different perspective on the ritual and social cohesion is put forward by Max Gluckman who emphasizes that it is actually very hard to accomplish social unity thus proposes that rituals are ways of expressing social tensions and conflicts rather than affirming the social unity.⁴⁰ Gluckman’s approach to ritual differs from the former scholars since he does not emphasize the social cohesion but develops ritual as an occasion to deal with the social tension through exaggeration thus achieving a catharsis that can affirm the unity at the same time. Considering the fact that not all social conflicts are connected to sacred or religion and as suggested by Gluckman, rituals are

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 68.

³⁸ Van Gennep, Arnold, *The Rites of Passage*, (London: Routledge, 1960) p.3.

³⁹ Bell, Catherine, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p.37.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.38.

mostly about social relations, which comprise religious activities along with nonreligious ones.

Victor Turner puts forward a quite different definition of the social world – which is a dynamic one- as well as a dramatic form in the process of social time and puts more emphasis on the participation of the agents and interaction among them contributing to the becoming of the social world.⁴¹ Therefore, rituals, for him, cannot only restore social equilibrium since they were already parts of the ongoing process. Turner also produces the terms social order –structure- and a period of social disorder and liminality – antistructure- that he refers as “communitas”; he attempts to describe the role of rituals in affirming social order and how disordered inversions are facilitated to legitimize or modify the original order.⁴² The transitions suggested are mainly, birth, puberty, marriage and death; however, he regarded transitions in one’s lifetime more than a mere movement but a transformation; therefore rituals involved in these liminal periods are transformative whereas ceremonies involved are only confirmatory. Couldry elaborates on Turner’s liminality and suggests that the core of liminality is separation especially in the case of ritual action and everyday action. Couldry’s perspective is that separation of everyday and ritual action is upgraded as every day action is limited to local, ritual action has the potential to beset the whole society.⁴³

iii. Communication and Ritual

Studies involved with communication and rituals are mainly concerned with the interpretations of rituals as a form of communication and the ritual view of communication itself. Mary Douglas is one of the scholars who discusses how ritual “is pre- eminently a form of communication” and she cites Basil

⁴¹ Turner, Victor, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974) pp. 32-33.

⁴² Turner, Victor, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1967) pp. 94-101.

⁴³ Couldry, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Bernstein to explain that “ritual forms, like speech forms, as transmitters of culture, which are generated in social relations and which, by their selections and emphases, exercise a constraining effect on social behavior”.⁴⁴ Bell suggests that in her ‘structural’ interpretations of purity and pollution, food taboos in the *Biblical Book of Leviticus*, Douglas shows how symbolic communication of ritual activity produces real social relations among human beings.⁴⁵ Most of the academic work, which focuses on the rituals as a form of communication, use the terminology borrowed from linguistics and socio linguistics in order to tackle the issues of syntax and semantics of ritual language. It can be clearly understood from the studies that the certain ways with which language is formulated have an effect on the social interactions. One of the ritual language studies provided by Maurice Bloch points out that one of the distinct features of the ritual is the restriction it puts on the syntax of the language, which formalizes and stylizes the language.⁴⁶

As for ritual view of communication, the most influential scholar is undoubtedly James W. Carey who also coins the term himself. Carey initiates the discussion by elaborating on two alternative conceptions of communication, which are transmission view of communication and ritual view of communication. The transmission view of communication is common across cultures and defined by terms such as “imparting,” “sending,” “transmitting,” or “giving information to others.” Moreover, the basic premise of this idea of communication is transmitting signals or messages over some distance in order to employ some sort of control. As he points out, the discussions surrounding the concepts of ‘communication’, ‘technology’ and ‘transportation’ indicates that communication secures

⁴⁴ Douglas, Mary, *Natural Symbols, Explorations in Cosmology*, (New York: Routledge, 1996) pp.41-42.

⁴⁵ Bell, *op. cit.*, p.44.

⁴⁶ Bloch, Maurice, “Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?” *European Journal of Sociology*, (Vol.15, No.1, 1975) pp. 54-81.

superiority over transportation thanks to unprecedented developments of technology. Ritual view of communication, however, “is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs”. In the ritual model, “communication is linked to terms such as “sharing”, “participation”, “association”, “fellowship”, and “the possession of a common faith”. Ritual view of communication is very much affected by religion; as Carey suggests ritual view of communication “derives from a view of religion that downplays the role of the sermon, the instruction and admonition, in order to highlight the role of the prayer, the chant, and the ceremony. It sees the original or highest manifestation of communication not in the transmission of intelligent information but in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action”.⁴⁷ Carey summarizes how ritual view of communication placing an emphasis on producing a coherent world led to a postulation to all practical purposes emphasizing “the construction and maintenance of paradigms rather than experiments; presuppositions rather than propositions; the frame, not the picture”. Ritual view of communication achieves a significant breakthrough in communication studies in many ways. First and foremost communication studies goes beyond the technical and mechanical level. As given in the example of newspaper by Carey, the significance of newspapers does not only stem from the importance of the news in it but also from the act of buying and reading it everyday. Besides, in this view, meaning is not merely represented but constituted through human interactions with the world through providing “coherence” and “order” to achieve certain goals.⁴⁸ The great power of symbols in representing the reality and the role of media in constructing reality are also rooted in the ritual view of communication. Last but not least, through the lenses of ritual view of communication,

⁴⁷ Carey, James, *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1989) pp.12-15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

communication studies are more involved with the participants' since this view dwells on shared beliefs, feelings and recognition.

2.1.3. Characteristics of Rituals

Above it is attempted to ponder on the concept of ritual and the studies flourished from the concept, which has been around for a quite long time. As for the specific characteristics of rituals, Rappaport's definition of ritual should be revisited "the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers" it can be deduced that 'formalism', 'invariance', 'symbolism' and 'performance' are the primary characteristics of rituals.⁴⁹

i. Formalism

First and foremost, the formality of ritual activities has been underlined in many studies. Formality is based on the contrast between informal and casual. As Mary Douglas discusses the formalism is achieved by the use of linguistic code, which is highly limited in terms of syntactic alternatives and rigidly organized, i.e. "restricted code".⁵⁰ As she explains Basil Bernstein's theory in her work, "the restricted code is deeply enmeshed in the immediate social structure, utterances have a double purpose: they convey information, yes, but they also express the social structure, embellish and reinforce it".⁵¹ She also attempts to consider ritual as a restricted code since just like rituals, restricted code also shortens the process of communication through condensed units of pre-arranged coded forms with implicit meaning.⁵² While analyzing the formality as a feature of rituals, Bloch reflects on its linguistic characteristics through analysis of formalized

⁴⁹ Rappaport, *op. cit.*, p.24.

⁵⁰ Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp.35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.57.

language and authority.⁵³ His analysis is focused on identifying language uses in rituals, which are mainly the adoption of formal oratory, intonation and singing. The formal oratory is characterized by restricted archaic vocabulary, certain syntactic forms, impersonal and traditional language. Intonation is mostly about repetition and the sets of formula, chanting voice and non-lexical shouts. Lastly, singing with fixed rhythm, phrases and pitch is a common use of language in rituals. While formalization of speech dramatically restricts he suggests that it effectively maintains the social hierarchy and traditional authority.

ii. Invariance

One of the primary characteristics of rituals is commonly cited as ‘invariance’ and as Bell expresses “it is usually seen in a disciplined set of actions marked by precise repetition and physical control”.⁵⁴ Paul Connerton underlines the repetitive quality of the ritual acts and he claims that this repetition automatically implies the continuity with the past⁵⁵ and it positions itself in the opposite of change. In his work, it is also stated that “invariance is intrinsic to the nature of rituals, they specify the relationship that obtains between the performance of ritual and what it is that the participants are performing”⁵⁶ hence ritual performance of individuals turns into an innate almost automatic action.

iii. Symbolism

In the ritual definition provided by Lukes, symbolic characteristic of rituals are underlined.⁵⁷ Turner gives more detailed interpretation over symbolism

⁵³ Bloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-81.

⁵⁴ Bell, *op. cit.*, p.150.

⁵⁵ Connerton, Paul, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.45.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.57.

⁵⁷ Lukes, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

and rituals as well as considering rituals as symbolic actions. He suggests that “a symbol is the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is a "storage unit" filled with a vast amount of information”.⁵⁸ Symbols, in his account, can be objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units. He also states “rituals are storehouses of meaningful symbols by which information is revealed and regarded as authoritative, as dealing with the crucial values of the community”. Therefore symbols, in his account of rituals, serve as meaningful vehicles and manipulation of them are fundamental to ritual performances.

iv. Performance

Performance is undoubtedly the most obvious aspect of rituals. Rappaport states that not all performances, even if they are composed of highly invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances, are rituals, however, rituals are definitely one of many performance forms. He also clarifies the role of participants in ritual acts in which sometimes participants act like audience and watch the performers however in some occasions they are assigned certain roles which are generally highly differentiating and they become performers themselves.⁵⁹ Eric Rothenbuhler is a contemporary media theorist whose definition of ritual also highlights the performance aspect of rituals. He defines rituals as “the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life”⁶⁰ though the concept of ‘serious life’ is borrowed from Durkheim. One last concept, which has been emphasized in understanding ritual performance, is ‘framing’. Gregory Bateson exemplifies the role of frame in understanding the meaning of behaviors since the meaning denoted

⁵⁸ Turner, Victor, *The Drums of Affliction A study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) p.2.

⁵⁹ Rappaport, *op. cit.*, pp.38-40.

⁶⁰ Rothenbuhler, Eric, *Ritual Communication*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998) p.27.

by one certain behavior changes in a frame of ‘play’ or ‘ritual’⁶¹ i.e. meaning depends on the context. Douglas states that ‘ritual focuses attention by framing; it enlivens the memory and links the present with the relevant past. In all this it aids perception’.⁶² It is frequently suggested in many studies that rituals refers to the connection between ritual actions and wider social space and values.

2.2. Media Theory

Considering the purpose of the thesis, this section should be devoted to media theories, which are of relevance to the question at hand. Since relevance is mentioned, a few key concepts regarding television studies should be underlined before moving to the discussion of ‘media events’ and ‘media rituals’, which are more central theories to this thesis. The detailed account given above regarding the concept of ritual and ritual studies aims to shed light particularly on the concept of ‘media rituals’.

2.2.1. Understanding Television

Needless to say, television as the object of study is ‘colossal, chaotic and complex’.⁶³ As John Hartley notes major differences and the lack of unity are the key features of television studies due to scholars speaking languages of different disciplines and adopting the use of different methods. The scholars involved in television studies deal with mainly technology, ownership of media outlets from mostly political economy perspective, textuality i.e. the content and quite expectedly audience i.e. its public.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Bateson, Gregory, *Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind*, (London: Fontana, 1973) pp.187-188.

⁶² Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger*, (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 64.

⁶³ Hartley, John, *Uses of Television*, (London: Routledge, 1999) p.18.

⁶⁴ Miller, Toby, *Television Studies: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 2010) p.23.

Here, the present author attempts to summarize the most influential and relevant approaches to the medium.

i. Functional approach to television

The oldest academic approach to the medium is granted by sociology of mass communication which handles the question how television message and everyday reality of audience are related and the how television functions for that audience. As John Fiske and John Hartley effectively summarize, the main assumptions employed by this approach are individualism, abstraction and functionalism producing many theories to understand the functions of the medium better. Individualism regards each and every viewer as an individual with certain needs which ultimately determines individual's response; moreover, abstraction underlines the universality and timelessness of human nature and claims that individual psychological needs are quite similar across cultures disregarding cultural processes, and finally functionalism purports that viewers actively and consciously use television to satisfy their needs and attempts to understand how the system works and functions performed.⁶⁵

ii. Semiotic approach to television

In any critical attempt to understand television and how it produces meaning, a good grasp of semiotics is required since today's television studies employ a lot of specialized vocabulary endowed by semiotic theory. As Ellen Seiter suggests since semiotics can see the patterns of visual and verbal sign production in television, semiotics differs from traditional approaches in social studies in a radical way and has a lot to offer as explanation to understand the medium as a communicative system.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Fiske, John. & Hartley, John, *Reading Television*, (London : Methuen, 1978) pp.49-53.

⁶⁶ Seiter, Ellen, "Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television", Allen, C. Robert, (ed.), *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled : Television and Contemporary Criticism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) p.33.

Semiotics or semiology, proposed and developed by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles S. Pierce, is the study of signs which aims to understand the relationship between a sign and its meaning and how signs are combined into codes. The primary terms of semiotics are the 'signifier' i.e. the physical object, the 'signified' i.e. the mental concept and the 'sign' i.e. the ultimate form brought up by the former two though they are inseparable in actual communication and innately conventional and culturally determined.⁶⁷ Semiotic approach to television simply refers to how television uses the signs and implies that television turns signs into 'broader signs with a new level of culturally determined meaning'. Semiotic analysis of television, as Seiter suggests, aims to raise consciousness especially in the connotative –another term derived from linguistics and literature, use in television and show whatever seems naturally meaningful on television is determined by culture, historical and subject to change; therefore, television signs should be seen as a historical system. As for criticism directed towards semiotic analysis of television, many scholars criticized its approach to the referent i.e. the producer of television messages and the receivers as well as the context of significance. Semiotics is criticized for restricting itself to the text by ignoring the referent, the sender and everything else in between. Another major criticism towards semiotic approach to television is the way change is disregarded and television is not seen as an unstable system of communication instead it is regarded as a stable system of which production of meaning is also pre-determined and not subject to change.⁶⁸

iii. Audience-centered approach to television

Audience-centered approach indicates the divisions in the society inspired by Marxist class definitions in order to comprehend the nature of television and the response to the medium from audience though it is clear that

⁶⁷ Danesi, Marcel, *Understanding Media Semiotics*, (London: A Hodder Arnold Publication, 1992). p.17.

⁶⁸ Allen, C. Robert, *op. cit.*, p.31-36.

television operates on the assumption of a 'mass mode', which recognizes basically similar social conditions of existence of all regardless of obvious differences. John Fiske wraps up the audience discussion and states that mass medium is 'classless' even though the content is gathered from and carried out for the subordinate class.⁶⁹

The discussion on the audience in other words the receiver reaches a turning point with Stuart Hall's contributions. Hall proposes a new model, an alternative to 'sender- message- receiver' linearity. According to Hall, in the production stage the message and meaning, which are in the form of signs, are produced in specific codes i.e. encoded in certain discursive forms. When circulation of the product takes place, the discourse needs to be 'translated' i.e. 'decoded' into social practices again. Hall puts emphasis on the importance of discursive form in 'communicative exchange' and points out the moments of encoding and decoding as 'determinate' moments. In television communication process, the institutional structures of broadcasting with their practices, networks, relations and infrastructure produce the 'message', which is constructed with certain discursive aspects. Hall cites Philip Elliot who indicates audience as the 'source' and 'receiver' of television message and therefore states that production and reception of television message are inherently connected to each other. The reception is the process of decoding in which meaning in its signified form is transformed into 'practice and consciousness'. As for transmission of messages and accomplishing the mission of communication otherwise misunderstanding, Hall clarifies that encoding and decoding are not necessarily parallel to each other even though encoding 'prefers' it cannot 'prescribe' decoding since decoding has 'its own conditions of existence'. Nevertheless, a meaningful and effective communicative exchange requires some degree of reciprocity. As for Hall's elaboration in decoding televisual discourse, three hypothetical positions are offered. These are dominant-hegemonic position in which a viewer decodes the message within the terms

⁶⁹ Fiske and Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp.78-82.

of reference code, negotiated position in which a viewer accepts the hegemonic definitions for further negotiations especially for local conditions and finally a viewer may understand the preferred code but opt for decoding in global terms with alternative framework and reference.⁷⁰

iv. Television as Myth and Ritual

Mass media scholars are very much attracted to analyze television through the use of anthropologic terms and implementing semiotic methods. To begin with, Edmund Leach points out that television appears to be a social ritual since it goes beyond individual differences and through which communication with ‘collective self’ is achieved on account of the fact that encoding and decoding in messages are individually learned but culturally determined.⁷¹ Fiske and Hartley, on the other hand, coins the term ‘bardic function’ of television to explain the role television plays in today’s society especially in its collective sense in comparison to the role, played by bards in oral tradition of pre-modern societies. The bardic functions of television can be observed mainly in the use of specialized language, which is specific and available to the culture, also in the construction of messages, which is shaped by the needs of its culture. Also, as bardic function of television is being discussed, authors point out how television is at the centre of its culture, it is primarily ‘oral’, ‘positive’ and ‘dynamic’ and employed by communicators to make sure the culture in its larger sense is affirmed owing to its ideologies and mythologies and the individual members of the culture are exposed the dominant value-systems during their daily interaction with known and unknown.⁷² To elaborate on the perspective of television as myth and ritual, Myles Breen and Farrell Corcoran refer to Mercea Eliade, a historian of religion, and link the work with television

⁷⁰ Hall, Stuart, “Encoding/decoding”, Hall, Stuart, Hobson, Dorothy, Lowe Andrew, Willis, Paul, (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language*, (London: Hutchinson. 1977) pp.117-127.

⁷¹ Leach, Edmund, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by Which Symbols Are Connected*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p.36.

⁷² Fiske and Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp.65-69.

studies. Eliade claims that myth in the modern society hasn't disappeared; indeed it has been repressed into other relatively unimportant activities of society such as leisure activities. According to Breen and Corcoran Eliade's elaborations on modern man's life and the changes which modern man has been through may help media scholars understand television better since it is the most common leisure time activity for modern man who spends hours in front of it. This leisure time activity i.e. watching television may be serving as a liminal activity as Turner points out in his account for rituals thus leisure time is a liminal space in which people own their time and thrive for creativity and imagination. The authors elaborate on how television appears to function as myths in the society as it conveys the messages constructed in the dominant perception mode even if unfamiliar situations are covered in these messages. Television represents reality through the codes of society thus aiming a common social understanding of any new situation in the society.⁷³ Roger Silverstone also attempts to understand the role of television in everyday life and similarly regards television viewing as a ritual activity since ordinary life is disrupted with a ritual that is marked by a special time and space. Silverstone asserts that prior ritual spaces are replaced with ritual spaces related to television as television represents reality in symbolic forms and produce material to be reflected in everyday culture.⁷⁴

2.2.2. Understanding Televised Events

Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 is a milestone in the study of televised events from various perspectives. First and foremost, Edward Shils and Michael Young emphasize not only the formal ceremonial characteristics of the ceremony but also the collective nature of the experience, which is achieved 'when listening to the radio, looking at the

⁷³ Breen, Myles, and Farrell, Corcoran, "Myth in the Television Discourse", *Communication Monographs* (Vol. 49, 1982) pp.127-136.

⁷⁴ Silverstone, Roger, *Television and Everyday Life*, (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.166-168.

television, walking the streets to look at the decorations’.⁷⁵ Couldry regards the fact that ‘through television an already established ritual could be simultaneously enacted for an audience stretched across multiple locations’ as the most striking thing about the media coverage of the 1953 coronation. Couldry also emphasizes the studies about British national television broadcasting and asserts that ‘ritual always works to transform society’ and the transformation in British rituals in the twentieth century lay in the way television ‘provides a fragmented audience with a common culture, an image of the nation as a *knowable community*’.⁷⁶ Another scholar who provides extended analysis regarding the civic and royal rituals in Britain in the 1950s is David Chaney, who is of importance to understand the interdependence of mass media and certain rituals. Chaney argues in his article that is mostly about royal rituals in Britain, that civic rituals have become a genre of mass communication since a considerable amount of media space is given to the rituals and the activities in the backstage. He also elaborates on the large audiences-otherwise unimaginable- of which participation is of vicarious quality; however, they are even more intimately present during these rituals. Another preliminary argument noted by the author is the infinite reproducibility of media performance as well as the extension and transformation of any collective experience in the cultural forms of mass communication.⁷⁷ Couldry summarizes the impact of these early studies on mass communication and public rituals and cites Scannell who claims that television essentially changed the nature of public rituals with its informed audience who vicariously participates in the ritual.⁷⁸ Even though the discussion regarding the role of television and broadcasting process on the nature of an event which takes place in society is very much

⁷⁵ Shils, Edward, and Young, Michael, “The Meaning of the Coronation”, *Sociological Review* (Vol.1, No. 2, 1956) 63–82.

⁷⁶ Couldry, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷⁷ Chaney, David, “A Symbolic Mirror of Ourselves: Civic Ritual in Mass Society”, *Media, Culture and Society* (Vol. 5, No. 2, 1983) 119–136.

⁷⁸ Couldry, *op. cit.*, p.71

inspired by broadcasting of British royal rituals, events which are not innately ritual have become more commonly analyzed. One good example provided by John Hartley, which analyzes the broadcasting of the America's Cup, a yacht race. He explains how traditional order of events is disregarded and actuality has become a media production matter indeed. The nature of event, which is being televised, has been changed into something, which can only be seen by television audience.⁷⁹

i. Media Events

Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan provide one of the most influential and detailed studies of televised ceremonial events where anthropology of ceremony meets mass communication process. In their work they call these events 'media events' which are called television ceremonies, festive television or cultural performances in other studies. These events are 'epic contest of politics, sports, mission and rites of passage of the great' in other words 'high holidays of mass communication' as in the well-known examples of Olympic games, coronations, and Kennedy funeral and so on.⁸⁰ Dayan and Katz underline the significance of media events as genre, which requires more focused attention and also transforms the viewing experience itself. The significance of media events stems from the number of audience they draw in giving television a moment to achieve its full potential as media technology and taking hold of the time and space as well as rearranging the social structure even quite briefly. The significance of media events is also derived from the fact that 'reality is uprooted by media events' and production can be turned into a Hollywood act. As phrased by Dayan and Katz with reference to Walter Benjamin, the reproduction is not only as important as the original but also even more important in these exceptional circumstances. Interestingly, the original form of the ceremony may not be available to participants of the ceremony as in the royal wedding

⁷⁹ Hartley, John, *Tele-ology*. (London: Routledge, 1992) p.185.

⁸⁰ Dayan, and Katz, *op. cit.*, pp.1-7.

example given since one person cannot exceed the limits of space and see the whole thing except for the director and millions of people TV viewers at home. Both scholars emphasize the importance of studying media events as genre since it has the potential to provide extended apprehension of the 'aesthetic of television production' analyzing the framing of the story, how interest is captured and kept or what kind of roles audience adopt or assigned so and so forth. They also oppose the simple interpretation of media events as means of political manipulation as 'public approval' is needed and individuals are not alone at home. Dayan and Katz refer to 'commemorative', 'restorative' and 'transformative' characteristics of media events with their potential to liberate, persuade and ensure support from them as well as to transform homes into public space to note the significance of media events among other television genre.⁸¹

ii. Characteristics of Media Events

Dayan and Katz put emphasis on the differences between other genres of broadcasting and media events. The characteristics of media events are summarized as:

- Media events are innately not routine as a matter of fact they are interruptions of routine since they interfere in the normal broadcasting.
- These events are frequently 'awe-filled' and offer 'exceptional' things to think about, to witness and to do.
- The broadcasting of these events is monopolistic as all channels switch away from their routine and broadcast these events, which draw amazingly large audiences such as a nation or even the world.
- These events are 'live' and 'unpredictable' also gives audience a kind of connection to a remote place however of central value.
- They are 'preplanned'; 'announced' and 'advertised' to create a sense of anticipation also allow the audience and broadcaster to be

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.14-24.

prepared.

- ‘Reverence’ and ‘ceremony’ describe the way of broadcasting these events.
- Intrusion from the broadcaster during the event is highly rare.
- Audiences encourage each other to view these events therefore they are generally in front of television in groups not alone.
- Broadcast of these events ‘integrates societies in a heartbeat and evoke a renewal of loyalty to the society and its legitimate authority’.⁸²

Dayan and Katz asserts that media events give media or medium i.e. television a chance to realize its ‘full potential’ which is as a matter of fact restricted by society for various different reasons.⁸³ These events are ‘rare moments of intermission’ through which society is ‘atomized’, ‘integrated’ and ‘structurally designed’ even if it is for a very brief period of time.⁸⁴ Media events are transformative media ceremonies which can address conflict, offer solutions to unsolvable and reorganizes time and space especially updating the status of the living room through television set and the broadcasting of a ‘sacred event’. The broadcast of media events can be somehow regarded as a connection between ‘center’ and ‘periphery’ and may offer ‘mechanical solidarity’ for a short period of time though.⁸⁵

2.2.3. Media Rituals

Nick Couldry initiates the discussion of media rituals by underlining the difference between media rituals and media events which is the fact that media ritual analysis does not focus on interpreting certain performances in isolation, instead it attempts to understand the ‘ritual space of the media’

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.7-9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.160, 190.

which is a social space in which any rituals related to media takes place. To elaborate on this issue, it should be stated media ritual analysis is not about understanding media rituals as expressions of certain ideas but understanding the wider social process of “ritualization” which makes any media rituals possible. Couldry defines media rituals as “any actions organized around key media-related categories and boundaries and performance of these rituals reinforce and legitimize the value underlined in the idea that media is our access to the social order”.⁸⁶ Since comprehending ritual space of media is of utmost significance in media related actions as interpreted as media rituals, Couldry puts an emphasis on the study of ritual space of the media. As he suggested, ritual space of media make it possible to focus the analysis beyond local context to a larger social scale. Particular performances, which are analyzed in isolation and held out as significant, cannot help the analysis and comprehension of functioning patterns, categories and boundaries everywhere.⁸⁷ Couldry identifies media rituals as a theory of actions adopting Rappaport’s account for rituals being essentially about actions not ideas. He accounts for the underlying feature how media rituals are primarily media related patterns of actions, which reproduce ‘categories, and patterns of thought’ without making them explicit thus eliminating the risk of rejection in the society.⁸⁸ Another important characteristic of media rituals suggested by Couldry is the fact that the social is framed via media categories and boundaries in media rituals. A ritual action cannot be regarded as media rituals only because it is produced in the media or consumed as a media output. A ritual action can be regarded as media ritual due to the media related categories it is constructed around and the media related values that are pointed out.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Couldry, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

Couldry refers to Bell's account of ritualization which describes it as a process in which people's movements are organized around the space, ritualized features of the space make the environment experienced as real and ritualization process itself reproduces symbolic authority. Couldry asserts that understanding ritualization is critical in understanding media rituals since they act very similarly. Media rituals also organize actions around media related categories that could be media people, thing, place and the categories of 'reality' and 'liveness'.⁹⁰

Media rituals are also involved in the debate over media power and ideology. First and foremost, the 'center' issue is clarified in order to follow the discussion. Whether society has a center or not has always been discussed. Another discussion is whether media has a privileged relationship with this center and representing and framing that center is what media does. Obviously Couldry considers society with a center and media is responsible for representing that center since it is a centralized system, which produces and distributes images, information and opinions. Couldry's media rituals are ideological since the idea of social center and the concentration of symbolic resources are for the benefit of media institutions. Therefore, it is only natural that media attempts to legitimize this concentration and act as its representatives. As for media's representative role, media rituals are the highlighting points of this role and they naturalize this power and reproduce the underlying categories of thought and speech.⁹¹

Couldry refers to media events theory quite frequently in his discussion of media rituals, which are innately linked. This link is especially clear in the organizing frame, which is ultimately the 'affirmation of social bond through the media process'. Therefore, many media events with their local characteristics are media rituals since they are connected to media-related values with their action-frame. Besides, media events are always referred as

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

media's special times in which the authority of media is the most intense and this authority, as a matter of fact, is the underlying feature of media rituals.⁹²

Couldry's 'liveness' as a ritual category is relevant to the thesis at hand hence it will be briefly discussed. He underlines that media is especially known for its claim to present social reality and liveness is directly related to this claim. Liveness for Couldry is a 'socially constructed' term and liveness appears to guarantee that people have an access to 'shared social realities' thus it is a quite distinct ritual category and a ritual force indeed. Liveness is significant because gaining access to something live generally means gaining access to something socially significant and should be accessed now not later, the people who could access are representative group of society and media is the only means for this access. This indicates an ideological stand of media since it also naturalizes its power through liveness. Last but not least, liveness as a ritual category is important since it suggests that society is a common space, which is concerted around a commonly shared ritual center, which happens to be the media, and it is privileged in its access to social center.⁹³

As a final remark, Couldry points out that media rituals are about affirming categories and divisions and building up social unity. Media's ritual categories are innately divisive and it naturalizes this division and reinforces media's authority and power. All in all, media rituals assert the significance of media representation of the world and affirm the hierarchy of this representation over any other possible representation.⁹⁴

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-100.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.131.

2.2.4. Television news as rituals

In this part of the discussion, it should be restated that the data utilized in the discussion at the scope of this thesis is retrieved from the prime time news footage videos; therefore, the relevant characteristics of television news to the rituals should be noted.

As Klaus Jensen puts forward news is of central significance to the institutions with certain economic and political power, numerous media scholars and theories have been devoted to the analysis of news since the preliminary studies of public opinion and propaganda. News has been studied from political communication perspective in which the content is supposed to have some effects on the audience with some suspected power to change or shape their opinions, beliefs and ultimately behaviors and actions. The research following political communication perspective focuses on the uses of news and how audience received it as well as the agenda-setting functions of the news.⁹⁵ Despite some negative connotations brought up especially by propaganda research, television news is also regarded as of major importance in the democratic process since it is the main source of information for the public regardless of technological and social changes. Studies of news are crucial as it can be clearly seen from the history of television which is initially viewed as the medium for entertainment only yet people loved news and the number of bulletins increased and news formats are fixed especially in the 1960s and 1970s when the most important evening occupation was watching the news and it was almost a national ritual in some countries.⁹⁶ Other than focusing on the audience, news research also focuses on the news flow to understand and explain production of news and emphasize the power relations in the national and

⁹⁵ Jensen, Klaus, *News of the World: World Cultures Look at Television News*. (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.4-7.

⁹⁶ Schaap, Gabi. "Interpreting Television News", *Communication Monographs*, (Vol. 7, 1999) pp.36-46.

international institutions. Obviously, the power relations were not only structured in the institutions but also enacted through the flow of news thus the link between the political processes and the production of news has always been an appealing field of study for media scholars.⁹⁷

Gabi Schaap restates the ritual characteristic of the news and explains that making and watching the news are highly ritualized activities, particularly the activity of watching news is combined with feelings of ‘citizen duty’ and ‘ritual sacrifice’ which can be explained as complying with the requirement of watching the news as citizens and enduring it despite certain disturbances. Even though the details of the ritual aspects of the news making process are not discussed, the ritual aspects of watching news process are discussed to quite some extent. First and foremost, watching and processing television news act on two complementary components, which are cognitive and affective, thus the emotional reactions to the news along with the judgments, interpretations and evaluations are clearly linked.⁹⁸ To elaborate on the ritual characteristics of watching the news, Jensen revisits Scannell’s perspective that points out the fact that television has a certain ruling power on the lives of its viewers who seem to arrange their daily routine around television schedule. More importantly, television news can be regarded as boundary rituals, which mediates between different time periods of the day in addition to mediating between private and public spaces of everyday. He concludes from his research that news watching is more important and prestigious for Danish audience in comparison to other genres as it is regarded as a link between individual’s political involvement and everyday life. News watching is seen as an obligation for the ‘viewer citizen’ and news consumption is a daily political ritual of the citizens.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Jensen, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁹⁸ Schaap, *op. cit.*, pp.36-46.

⁹⁹ Jensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

Tamar Liebes, on the other hand, proposes displacement and surveillance to the interpretation of television news as rituals. Displacement refers to releasing family tensions and taking a 'time out' from the daily routine through television news. As for surveillance, it is based on the content of news. As it can be suggested, displacement is more relevant to the ritual aspect of viewing, in which personal conflicts are set aside, as a matter of fact, displaced with social conflicts. News is particularly useful for this purpose since it provides common and legitimate problems to be concerned about as members of a community or society rather than dealing with personal issues and controversies.¹⁰⁰

Change in the manner of broadcasting of news is another issue, which may shed light on the process of news making and watching. Michael Schudson asserts that even serious news institutions are turning news into forms of entertainment especially in the case of media events in which news becomes a mixture of news and entertainment through symbolic rituals, which take place in the whole process.¹⁰¹ Hartley also elaborates on the change in television news programs from 'news as a discourse of power to news as a discourse of identity'. He suggests that concepts such as national security, wars, defense and civil order were predominant in the news however now news is made more focused on persons.¹⁰² These changes are quite explanatory in the analysis of news from ritual perspective.

2.2.5. Criticism Towards Media Rituals

As frequently debated, the grounds for criticism towards media events and media rituals are especially founded on the obvious decline of public television as a result of social and technological changes. The

¹⁰⁰ Jensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁰¹ Schudson, Michael, *The Power of News*, (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1998) p.179.

¹⁰² Hartley, John, *Uses of Television*, (London: Routledge 1999) p.159.

unprecedented rise of the Internet use as well as the privatization has changed the well-established national broadcasting concept. Considering the number of television channels provided by cable and satellite, it is not quite probable for television to play the role it played in the 1960s and 1970s delivering national rituals. It is also stated by many scholars that television can only reach certain segment of the society thus it cannot be considered as a medium of social integration.

Many scholars who dealt with rituals from critical perspective are involved with the discussion of rituals in modern societies since it is an anthropological concept adopted for the studies of pre-modern societies. Simon Cottle refers to Walter Benjamin and suggests that in democratic societies, there is no place for rituals since they have lost their 'aura' with modern means of reproduction i.e. those mediated representations of rituals are not comparable to the ones in pre-modern societies. Rituals are also criticized for serving for power holders, which are indulged in conservative and pre-modern traditions, and striving for the maintenance of hegemonic power. Cottle elaborates on Baudrillard's discussion of modern media and its relevance to the criticism of media rituals. Baudrillard points out the 'bombardment of signs', which causes 'semiotic excess' in today's media hence the discussion of reaching people and building up social solidarity becomes quite irrelevant and implausible particularly in the terms of media rituals. Cottle also asserts that many of the arguments dealing with mass mediated rituals are media-centric and media essentialist thus cannot evaluate the other social dynamics involved in audience reception.

In addition to overall criticism, Cottle also proposes the concept of 'mediatized rituals' in place of media rituals to emphasize that the media are doing something more than just reporting rituals; that media are 'performatively enacting' them. Mediatized rituals are "those exceptional and performative media phenomena that serve to sustain and/or mobilize collective sentiments and solidarities on the basis of symbolization and a subjunctive orientation to what should or ought to be".

Cottle discusses six cases of ‘exceptional media phenomena’ – moral panics, celebratory and conflicted media events, media disasters, media scandals and mediatized public crises – and asserts that they display defining characteristics of ‘mediatized rituals’. Expectedly, the concept of mediatized rituals is intended to show the shortcomings of the concept of media rituals, which are being ‘event-focused’, not involving ‘longer-term dynamics’, not being ‘consensual’ and ‘conflicted’, ‘affirming’ and ‘challenging’ at the same time. Cottle suggests that the concept of mediatized rituals offer a better understanding of the relationship between different social classes -elites and non-elites- and challenge the power of certain institutions. Through mediatized rituals, media could adopt and perform a variety of roles, which may be of use to understand the situation of media especially in the heart of conflict. Cottle elaborates on the audience reception of mediatized rituals and claims that the theory comprehends the differences among audience and does not treat them as a uniform whole, rather complex, segmented, differentiated, and reflexive societies. Another issue underlined is the ‘voluntary’ nature of rituals since rituals require willing participation as the media producers, performance and participating audience. However, in the concept of mediatized rituals the ‘voluntary’ aspect of ritual enactment and participation is not considered as an ultimate requirement rather an idea, which cannot be empirically studied or even achieved in reality.¹⁰³ Even though Cottle has been criticized for not making a unique contribution to the ritual dimension of media, the point regarding the negligence of conflicts in favor of consensus seems to be making a point that should be considered however the media coverage reviewed for this study does not act like mediatized rituals and attempt to be ‘conflicted’ and ‘consensual’ at the same time. Instead the coverage acts like media rituals and does not adopt a crisis perspective hence the ultimate goal here is to set the news reporting of martyr funerals as media rituals.

¹⁰³ Cottle, Simon, “Mediatized Rituals: Beyond Manufacturing Consent”, *Media Culture & Society*. (Vol. 28, No. 3, 2006) 411-432.

3. METHODOLOGY

The communication research has been dominated by quantitative research, which is mostly done through statistical methods and analysis. Even though traditional empirical approach to media-related data has not changed much since the 20th century, there is an increasing interest in the use of qualitative research methods in communication research as well as other fields of social and cultural studies.¹⁰⁴ Ruth Kowak suggests that this change cannot be only explained with preferences for research methods since it thrives for conceptual and theoretical frameworks, which are different from traditional models such as sender-receiver model and so forth.¹⁰⁵ This new interest in qualitative methods seems to be originating from the new perspectives in theory and this new theory seems to be seeking for new research tools.

Quantitative research methods are well known for their use of counting and measuring as data collection methods. The collected data are mostly processed through statistical methods focusing on incidences of X in texts. The methods in question aims to describe and explain the data and make some further predictions based on the given data. On the other hand, qualitative methods undertake the evaluation of data with the employment of carefully selected concepts. The data are mostly explored through a focus on the aesthetics of the text and their interpretation is sought for as the outcome of these endeavors.

As for methodological stance of the thesis at hand, the aim should be recalled which is the analyzing the news coverage of martyrdom in video format which is innately a media text in attempt to show their media ritual characteristics thus the use of qualitative methods serves for the underlying purpose. The recent interdisciplinary approaches such as semiotics to media

¹⁰⁴ McQuail, Denis, *Mass Communication Theory*, (London: Sage, 2000) p.235.

¹⁰⁵ Wodak, Ruth, "What CDA Is About—A Summary of Its History, Important Concepts and Its Developments", Wodak, Ruth and Michael, Meyer, (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (London: Sage. 2001) pp. 1–13.

texts leads to a shift and media texts are ‘decentralized’ and analysts engage in the social, political and cultural context and ‘localization’ of meaning in media texts thus they offer deeper insights, which explains why the author opts for qualitative, specifically semiological, approach to media texts to be analyzed in the scope of this thesis.¹⁰⁶ Other noteworthy aspects of the approaches such social semiotics, pragmatics, Foucauldian discourse analysis and sociocognitive approach is abandoning “text-internal readings, where readers are theorized as decoders of fixed meanings, and turning to more dynamic models, where meanings are negotiated by actively participating readers”.¹⁰⁷ In this interactive model, the texts are viewed as dialogic and any kind of interpretation of the text depends on the receivers as well as the setting, which also explains why the present author sees news coverage of martyrdom as a media ritual which is innately a social phenomena with multiple categories meaning and level of participation.

To be more specific about the choice of methodology, it is useful to recall Carey’s ritual view of communication in which it is emphasized “the production of a coherent world that is then presumed, for all practical purposes, to exist. It is to emphasize the construction of and maintenance of paradigms rather than experiments: presuppositions rather than propositions, the frame, not the picture. The objective of doing all this –looking at the practices that organize communications, the concepts such practices presuppose, and the social relations they bring into existence -is a hermeneutic one”.¹⁰⁸

Under the guidance of this overall methodological insight, qualitative

¹⁰⁶ Garrett, Peter, and Bell, Allan, “Media Discourse: A Critical Overview”, Bell, Allan and Garrett, Peter, (Eds.), *Approaches to Media Discourse* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1998) pp.1-21.

¹⁰⁷ Meinhof, Ulrike, “Double Talk in News Broadcasts”, Graddol, David and Oliver Boyd-Barrett (Eds.), *Media Texts: Authors and Readers*, (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters and The Open University, 1994) pp. 212–223.

¹⁰⁸ Carey, James, *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (London: Routledge. 1989) p. 65.

content analysis, structural analysis and semiological analysis will be employed as methods of this thesis. Qualitative content analysis and structural analysis will be employed to demonstrate the ritual characteristics of television news coverage of martyrdom in mainstream Turkish media through theoretical argumentation of relevant concepts such as ritual and media ritual, ritual view of communication and so forth. Semiological analysis of the text will help to understand more than the mere representational features of the language, the articulation and construction of specific images and symbols in the news coverage as well as the mechanism of meaning construction and the nature of assumed collective experience.

3.1. Semiological Analysis

Roland Barthes proposes that semiology is a part of linguistics which focus on signifying units of discourse and aims to ‘take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual convention or public entertainment which constitute systems of signification’.¹⁰⁹ To elaborate on the semiology, the core concepts are explained below.

i. Signs

The essence of this methodology lies in the critique of *signs*, which is divided into two components by Ferdinand Saussure, the signifier (or “sound-image”) and the signified or (“concept”) and suggested that the relationship between signifier and signified is of arbitrary nature.¹¹⁰ Another important scholar in the field of semiotics Charles Pierce elaborates on the aspects of signs, which are iconic, indexical and symbolic. Arthur Berger

¹⁰⁹ Barthes, Roland, *Elements of Semiology*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968) p.9.

¹¹⁰ Berger, A. Arthur, *Media Analysis Techniques*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 2004) p.11.

provides a table to deliver a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts provided by Pierce, which can be seen below.¹¹¹ (See, Table 1.)

Table 1: Three Aspects of Signs

	Icon	Index	Symbol
Signify by	Resemblance	Causal connection	Convention
Examples	Pictures and Statues	Fire/smoke	Flags
Process	Can see	Can figure out	Must learn

Barthes also refers to the rivals of signs, which are summarized as signal, index, icon, symbol and allegory, and asserts that ‘they all refer us to a relation between two relata’ despite the clear dissimilarities between them¹¹² hence the discussion is reduced to the level of two elements i.e. the sign and the signified.

ii. Language and Speech

Barthes defines *language* as a ‘purely social object, ‘of which ‘systematized set of conventions’ are necessary to communication. On the other hand, *speech* is involved with the ‘purely individual part of language’. In his elaboration of the two concepts, it is stated that language obviously encompasses speech and speech cannot occur outside the language. Language as an abstract being is defined as a norm, which is established and obviously out of the reach of individuals, however speech reproduces or enacts the language in infinite occasions.¹¹³ In semiological analysis *texts* (e.g. media texts) are generally regarded as somewhat similar to speech thus it is frequently assumed that the meaning can only be conveyed through implicit grammars and languages. Barthes, on the other hand, points at a difference between the work and the text. The work is limited to the established signifiers on pages while the text refers to the meaning making

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹¹² Barthes, *op. cit.*, p.35

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

in other words reading process.¹¹⁴ John Fiske is one of the numerous media scholars who adopts Barthes' view on the text and purports to a media analysis. In his account of Barthes, Fiske attempts to make a differentiation between a program (on television) and a text and claims that "programs are produced distributed, and defined by the industry: texts are the product of their readers. So a program becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings/pleasures that it is capable of provoking".¹¹⁵

iii. Mythology

In Barthes's semiology, the analysis of mass culture leads to a unique analytic approach, which is the mythological approach. For Barthes myth is a 'type of speech', 'a message' and 'a system of communication'. Barthes points out that myth 'can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech'.¹¹⁶ Myth is mostly about the manner of uttering the message, the aesthetics of the text instead of the message itself.

The semiological structure of the myth operates on two semiological systems, which are the linguistic level of myth and the mythical level. The linguistic level of a myth can be explained with the signification process in structural linguistics, which is defined as 'the act, which binds the signifier and the signified, an act whose product is the sign'.¹¹⁷ The mythical level is an embedded form of linguistic level of which sign becomes the signifier in the mythical level and the signified is 'general, global and diffuse... it is a

¹¹⁴ Barthes, Roland, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative. Complete Works*, Marty, Éric, (Ed.) (Vol. 2, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972) pp.1-42.

¹¹⁵ Fiske, John, *Television Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) p.108.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.48.

fragment of ideology ... these signifieds have a very close communication with culture, history and it is through them ... that the environmental world invades the system'.¹¹⁸ To further analyze these two embedded levels signification Barthes opts for replacing the sign in the linguistic level with 'meaning', which becomes the signifier in the mythical level though it is replaced with 'form' and the signified in the latter, is replaced with 'concept' and sign in the mythical level becomes signification itself. In Barthes's view, the linguistic level is a denotative system, i.e. the meaning is literal and explicit whereas the mythical level is a connotative system which suggests meaning which can be inferred with reference to denotative system and beyond as in the case of symbols.¹¹⁹

According to Barthes, modern societies are characterized by ubiquity of myths, which functions to naturalize the concept i.e. the signified in the mythical level. The concept, to be naturalized, is built on a specific and socio-historical context and naturalization seeks for making it seem intrinsic, universal and non-ideological. This naturalization process serves for the coding of dominant ideology in the texts. In other words, signs in connotative systems turn into myths that serve for some specific purposes.¹²⁰

3.2. Applying semiological analysis in television

Arthur Berger suggests that medium that function as signs should also be considered in the center of applying semiological analysis in television texts e.g. camera shots can be explored from this perspective and a list of some important camera shots are explained in a table provided by Berger.¹²¹ (See Table 2.)

¹¹⁸ Barthes, Ronald, *Writing Degree Zero*, (London: Beacon Press, 1953) p.91.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.115.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹²¹ Berger, *op. cit.*, p.33.

Table 2: Camera Shots

Signifier (shot)	Definition	Signified (meaning)
Close-up	Face only	Intimacy
Medium shot	Most of body	Personal relationship
Long shot	Setting and characters	Context, scope, public distance
Full shot	Full body of person	Social relationship

Berger provides another table that shows how camera work and editing techniques can be examined similarly for semiological analysis in television text.¹²² (See Table 3.)

Table 3: Camera Work and Editing Techniques

Signifier	Definition	Signified
Pan down	Camera looks down	Power, authority
Pan up	Camera looks up	Smallness, weakness
Dolly in	Camera moves in	Observation, focus
Fade in	Image appears on blank screen	Beginning
Fade out	Image screen goes blank	Ending
Cut	Switch from one image to another	Simultaneity, excitement
Wipe	Image wiped off screen	Imposed conclusion

Berger explains that this kind of approach to shots, camera work and editing simply creates a grammar of television. He also comments on the complex nature of television with its use verbal language, visual images and sound to create meaning and naturalize concept and it is important for a semiological

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.35.

analysis to comprehend how it is possible to do so and to what extent it is achieved in the coverage.¹²³

3.3. Application of Semiological Analysis in Thesis

Keeping the aim of the thesis in mind, structural and semiological analysis will be built on isolating and analyzing the important signs in the text. These signs can be an object frequently used, a place, a word and even the angle of the camera. The signification process behind the signs, in other words, the signifiers and what they signify will be pointed out. The signification level to be explained is expected to shed some light on the highly complex relationship between the visual and audio content of the news and the meaning produced through it. The ideological and sociological matters involved in the text will also be unpacked. Moreover, the influence of the medium of television on the preparation and form of the text will be indicated. The use of different kinds of shots, camera angles, and editing techniques will also be utilized in the analysis of important signs. The underlying sign in the coverage is the visual signs therefore they are of more central value to the analysis. Due to the nature of the events covered, the signification in the linguistic level of myth is assumed to provide sufficient input to explain the ritual characteristics of news coverage and establish them as media rituals. However, the signification in the mythical level, in other words, the creation of myths and ideology discussion will be built on the discussion of ritual categories. It should be stated that the mythical level is not considered to be the center of study hence the discussion provided might appear a bit narrowed down.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp.36-38.

3.4. Data

During the data collection process as mentioned above, the date of killings between the given periods are retrieved from an official website.¹²⁴ (See Table 4.)

¹²⁴ <http://www.mehmetcik.org.tr/sehitlerimiz.html>

Table 4: Collected Data

Date	Number of Killings	Analysis
January 19, 2011	2	Not used
July 14, 2011	13	Used
August 14, 2011	3	Used
August 17, 2011	9	Used
28 August, 2011	3	Used
September 11, 2011	1	Not used
September 16, 2011	1	Not used
September 17, 2011	1	Not used
September 21, 2011	1	Not used
September 25, 2011	6	Used
October 19, 2011	24	Used
May 04, 2012	2	Not used
June 19, 2012	8	Used
June 27, 2012	4	Used
August 5, 2012	6	Used
September 3, 2012	10	Used

As it can be seen above, some of the data had to be excluded for some restrictions. The data employed in the analysis are the news reporting of killings and funerals, which are directly related to the armed conflict with the PKK. Besides, the data also indicate to a certain period in which the

PKK is active and all these cases occur back to back and lead to an excessive amount of coverage in the media. It can also be assumed that the tension in the society rises with these back-to-back events and this may play a role in the media practices employed during the coverage especially with the substantial number of martyrs.

It should also be restated that the data employed are prime time television news broadcast by three different television channels, which are Show TV, Kanal 7 and Kanal D. The airing time of the prime time news is 7 p.m. on both Show TV and Kanal D and 6 p.m. on Kanal 7. It can be clearly seen in the table given above that the data cover a period of two successive days; the breaking news broadcast and the news reporting of martyr funerals. It should also be clarified that only the following day coverage of the funerals is included in the analysis even though the reporting of martyr funerals may have continued.

Data used for analysis are given in the table below. (See Table 5.)

Table 5: Analysed Data

Date	Number of Killings	Place	Details
July 14 & 15, 2011	13	Diyarbakır, Silvan	Ambush during the filed search for the kidnapped public servants
August 14 & 15, 2011	3	Şırnak, Beytüşşebap	Shootouts on the field
August 17 & 18, 2011	9	Hakkari, Çukurca	Bombing attack (landmines used)
August 28 & 29, 2011	3	Hakkari, Şemdinli	Bombing attack on the troops in motion
September 25 & 26, 2011	6	Siirt, Eruh	Shootouts on the field
October 19 & 20, 2011	24	Hakkari, Çukurca	Several attacks on the military bases and troops in motion
June 8 & 9, 2012	8	Hakkari, Yüksekova, Dağlica	Attack on the military base
June 27 & 28, 2012	4	Siirt, Eruh	Ambush on troops in motion
August 5 & 6, 2012	6	Hakkari, Çukurca	Several attacks on military bases
September 3 & 4, 2012	10	Şırnak, Beytüşşebap	Several attacks on military bases, city center and public buildings

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The gathered data through semiological and structural analysis provides the grounds for discussion however in order to deliver a comprehensible discussion, the present author decided on certain ritual categories which are unique characteristics of television audience and viewing experience, uniqueness of time and space, the narrative style and images, representation of people in the martyr funerals, representation of authorities (state and military), the unique place of media and media professionals and symbolism in the coverage of martyrs funerals. Before moving to the characteristics of each category, it is helpful to provide some comparison between breaking news coverage of killings and the coverage of martyr funerals.

4.1. Breaking news versus ceremonial events

As Dayan and Katz explain the innate difference between reporting the news of a shocking event and a planned ceremony differ notably in terms of its social functions as well as the way it is produced and broadcast. First and foremost, news broadcast does not attempt to offer any possibility of ‘flowing with the event’ to its viewers even if a sympathetic approach is adopted.¹²⁵ Breaking news is shocking and traumatic news therefore they are innately disruptive and arouse despair with its interruption of the regular broadcasting and an adoption of dramatic announcement. On the other hand ceremonial events are carefully edited and scripted in other words the grief and tension are carefully edited since they do not seek to create tension instead they offer reconciliation and integration.

The coverage of the October 19, 2011 killings shows these particular characteristics mentioned above. There are many common features of broadcast in all there channels viewed. One good sample can be provided from Kanal D prime time news. The first image provided is a gunshot scene in the dark, taken from archives, intensifies the atmosphere of loss and fear.

¹²⁵ Dayan, and Katz, *op. cit.*, p.114.

(See Appendix 1.1.) The following part is devoted to counterattacks from the Turkish Military. It simply reproduces a scene of battle with bombings and shootouts. The counterattack is affirmed again through a live broadcast from Diyarbakır, which is a very close city to the place of killings and a large military base for Turkish Military. The rest of the coverage is devoted to the comments from state officials: the president, prime minister and ministers. In the comments explicit statements of damnation and oaths of revenge can be seen. (See Appendix 1.1.) The coverage of the same news in Kanal 7 prime time news also demonstrates assumed characteristics of the breaking news. The tension is not attempted to be calmed down since it is not a catharsis moment as it is in the case of funerals and ceremonies. Disruptive nature of the news can be clearly observed in the narrative style of the news as well, since it creates an anticipation and tension in the society, which is supposed to be released during the martyr funerals. This style of news reporting can be summarized as the scenes of bombings, mostly taken from archives, live broadcast from the scene of killings, state officials taking the pledge to do whatever is required to do and the reaction of the families when they are being informed (See Appendix 1.2) Even though the images of families may seem a sympathetic way of delivering the news, the viewer is not allowed to become a part of the mourning instead the viewer witnesses a traumatic event as it is given in the Show TV prime time news which starts with the pictures of the killed conscripts in the background and the following scenes of shootouts in Hakkari. (See Appendix 1.3) The breaking news can be regarded as the peak points of tension since the conflict is embraced in the coverage especially in the cases of the political parties (government and opposition) blaming each other for not taking the responsibility and ending the armed conflict or not taking part in the Kurdish Initiative effectively. Voicing out the conflict is highly restricted and formulated hence almost nonexistent in the funeral coverage.

4.2. Uniqueness of television viewers and the viewing experience

Arzu Kıbrıs states that these funerals are the only times most Turkish people realize and feel the negative effects of the armed conflict with the PKK and terrorist acts since the acts take place mostly in the southeastern Turkey and for the rest of Turkey it is something they hear on the news. She explains how people face the reality and feel the tangible loss when a soldier from their hometown is killed, the ritual performance of the martyr funerals are characterized with ‘thousands marching on the streets following the cascade’, ‘the demonstrations of public anger towards terrorism’, ‘the cries of the family members, and ‘the nationalistic fervor at these funerals’.¹²⁶ Though the ritual performance itself is a different social phenomenon, the ritual performed by the media in the news reporting of martyr funerals cannot be considered as mere television viewing experience on the side of audience and mere news reporting in terms of television production and broadcast. The role of media has been underestimated with a statement claiming that funerals are the only times people feel the loss. The ubiquity of the coverage of the funerals on television has certain uniqueness in terms of audience experience. As Dayan and Katz suggest ‘not being there’ is very much changed with the unique experience offered by television.¹²⁷ The authors refer to a study on Indira Gandhi’s funeral broadcast, which suggests that ‘people who watched the cremation were actively participating’- ‘most people prayed as Indira Gandhi was consigned to the flames’.¹²⁸ Even though, Dayan and Katz indicate the lack of empirical data on the television viewing performance of the audience, they still suggest that we all have our experience to refer to.¹²⁹ Admitting the limitation of the

¹²⁶ Kıbrıs, Arzu. “Funerals and Elections: The Effects of Terrorism on Voting Behavior in Turkey” . *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (Vol. 55, No. 2, 2011) pp. 220-247.

¹²⁷ Dayan, and Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.135-136.

study at hand, the present author does not regard audience as passive receivers of the news in the case of martyr funerals; instead audience is actively participating in the ritual performed by the television. They weep and pray while television performs its own ritual. To be more specific, most of the anchors delivering the news are moved to tears, get a lump in their throats and have difficulty in speaking for a few seconds. (See Appendix 2.1) This cannot be explained with a mere individual emotional reaction. The anchor does not lose the eye contact with the camera at all times, knowing that the feeling is mutual and shared by the audience at the very same moment. As a matter of fact, people all around the Turkey feel and realize the negative effects of the armed conflict with the PKK especially through the news coverage of funerals and the experience is on a much bigger social scale than any local funeral can ever be. The prevailing 'we' language is also based on the assumption of active audience participation as in the example of 'we weep for our sons, our martyrs' and 'the sons of this land' which are the most frequently used phrases while referring to the conscripts.

Mervi Pantti and Johanna Sumiala indicate some features of news reporting in the national tragedies in Finland which are especially utilized in order to create a sense of participation for the audience, which are –they say– addressing the audience directly, using close-ups actively and interviewing people in the scene of the event.¹³⁰ These features given can be observed in almost all news reporting of the funerals. As explained above 'we' language is an indicator of addressing the audience directly. Besides, close-ups and interviews are frequently employed. (See Appendix 2.2) The sample provided in Appendix 2.2 is the highest military authority in the scene and he delivers a speech during the ceremony and several close-ups of him are used to give the picture of emotion and arouse emotions on the side of audience who are active participants.

¹³⁰ Pantti, Mervi, and Johanna, Sumiala, "Till Death Do Us Join: Mourning Rituals and the Sacred Centre of the Society", *Media, Culture and Society*, (Vol. 31, 2009) pp. 119-146.

Moreover, as Schaap concludes from his study, watching news is regarded as a political ritual in Turkey as well.¹³¹ It is an obligation for the citizens, a duty to be fulfilled especially in the times of mourning and grief.

The main assumption on which any media ritual is based is obviously the unimaginably large and uniform audience. The concept of imagined communities coined by Benedict Anderson paves the way of inventing and explaining the television audience.¹³² The coverage of martyr funerals takes audience as uniform and treats the event as a collective experience. Even though there are some representations of social tension and conflicts, the unity is emphasized repeatedly as in the phrases such as ‘the whole nation weeps’ along with the footage of people protesting the terrorist acts. (See Appendix 2.3) The scenes of people protesting the terrorist acts in the funeral site or in other cities in Turkey are frequently employed in the coverage of martyr funerals. They are sometimes given before the funeral footage though most of the time follows the funeral. It is quite notable that the picture of protesting people is an essential part of the coverage. The present author believes that the picture provided aims to underline the collective nature of experience. Besides, the picture never really focuses on the controversial issues behind the conflict. The picture provided is quite predictable in many ways since it presents a uniform picture of people and the other party is never represented and the focus on ‘peace’ is central thus these protests are innate parts of the funeral coverage.

As for the common use of interviews in the coverage gives the audience to become part of the event. Most of the time people interviewed are family members. (See Appendix 2.4) In the sample given in Appendix 2.4 shows typical characteristics of interviews in which the father is being interviewed and along with the photo of his son on the screen. In this particular one the

¹³¹ Schaap, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-46.

¹³² Hartley, John, *Tele-ology*. (London: Routledge, 1992) p.104.

utterances are also noteworthy since he says ‘I brought him up for this country and he died for it thus I do not feel sad’.

4.3. Uniqueness of time and space

As it is commonly practiced, martyr funerals are not broadcast live on national television channels though local television channels broadcast them live most of the time. Between the dates given for analysis, none of the funerals were broadcast live therefore it can be suggested that the prime time news which is broadcast around 7 p.m., when families unite at home in front of television set, is not randomly chosen time slot instead there is an attempt to create a unique time for the ritual in question. In other words, the time slot used for news is employed to create a prime time ritual with all intends and purposes. The data also demonstrates the uniqueness of time since all three channels reviewed report the news in the beginning of the prime time news concurrently even though the duration of coverage changes from channel to channel. When we look at the data in more detail, the image on the screen in each television channel at a given time is almost indistinguishable as if it is broadcast live from a certain scene of an event. (See Appendix 3.1) In the sample given, the coverage starts with the live broadcast from the city in question. All three of them give details on the counterattacks conducted by the Turkish military. In addition to creating its own unique time of ritual, the media ritual also enacts in a unique ritual space of media. Obviously, the funeral site is not the actual space of the ritual in this case. The living room, the city of attacks, the city of funerals, the scenes of protests and the media itself are the spaces of ritual at some point. It is also explicitly and repeatedly stated in the coverage that each and every house in Turkey is the house of mourning hence the ritual. (See Appendix 3.2) Before looking at the sample in more detail, it should be stated that the tradition is to put a Turkish flag in the house of martyr and also there are flags on their tombstones and in the cemetery. In the given sample it is shown that there are flags in other houses in the same neighborhood. In the footage narrator points at the flags everywhere and

explicitly states that every single house in Turkey is the house of mourning and through the media ritual at hand, it becomes so even momentarily.

4.4. The representation of people

Dayan and Katz emphasize how television underlines ‘response’ and highlight ‘reactions’ of the people who are present at the event in person and point out the role of media professional in choosing ‘relevant’ reactions for communication.¹³³ Unsurprisingly, they tend to emphasize ‘communal nature of the experience’ and a picture of ‘consensus’ overcoming differences is provided to construct solidarity and togetherness.

In the news reporting of the martyr funerals, an abundant amount of public mourning images are provided. (See Appendix 4.1) In the sample given the number of the people in the cortege is repeatedly emphasized by the narrator. People are given more active roles in these representations with gathering immediately, weeping and crying, showing their emotions and compassion publicly. (See Appendix 4.1) In the same sample, the footage used to demonstrate the feelings of people is particularly important since in the picture provided a group of people in the funeral site shout ‘Mesut, we are proud of you’ so obviously the range of emotions experienced varies from national pride to grief.

Another notable characteristic of the coverage is showing the emotional reactions of the people protesting in different cities especially on the day of funerals. The close-ups are frequently used to show people weeping and crying for the people they have never met thus the present author is of the opinion that it is even more effective and moving. (See Appendix 4.2) Obviously the representation of people in traditional media events is limited to people in the site of the event whereas the news reporting of martyr funerals as media rituals has more means to create a bigger representation of

¹³³ Dayan, and Katz, *op. cit.*, p.80.

people. This representation aids the perception of society as a unified whole and togetherness.

4.5. Narrative style and images

Pantti and Sumiala point to the privileged position held by the media especially with regard to the tragic events and borrow the concept of ‘ritual mastery’ of mourning to refer to media’s skillfulness in representing them.¹³⁴ Many discursive aspects of news reporting present a ‘doing’ of ritual. For instance, the news coverage of martyr funerals is characterized with the frequent use of family photos and videos of the soldiers are frequently used in the news to create a sense of intimacy and familiarity, and to arouse emotions. (See Appendix 5.1) In the example provided, a scene from the wedding video of the conscript is used, which is a common choice for all channels. The picture of the scene of happily married couple, who are dancing in their wedding, is followed by the mourning wife of the conscript.

It should be recalled that the news at hand does not purport to report the ‘real’ performance instead it creates its own actuality of the issue. As for the coverage of funerals, it does not abide by the temporal order of the events. It reorganizes the order and creates its own actuality. To be more specific, the media ritual can be performed in an unconventional order like starting with a live broadcast from the Council of National Security or the military base of the armed conflict. (See Appendix 5.2) It can be clearly seen in all coverage, the event is cut and most of the details are not given, the sequence is not followed and there is no clear spatial connection between images. As Dayan and Katz underline this treatment should not be seen as some ordinary changes or additions since they transform the whole thing into a media ritual.¹³⁵ The visual messages are highlighted at the image level as it

¹³⁴ Pantti and Sumiala, *op. cit.*, pp.119-146.

¹³⁵ Dayan, Daniel and Elihu Katz (1992) *Ibid.* p.86

can be seen in the image of a woman, related to the martyr, literally wearing the Turkish flag and at the narration level the significance of this message is interpreted and stated, as the martyr is ethnically Kurdish and they had to leave their hometown because of the terrorist acts. (See Appendix 5.3) In ritualized reporting the pictures always mean more than the words as it can be seen in the picture of a baby boy on his father's coffin- covered with Turkish flag- held by his grandfather and wearing a soldier's beret. Three generations of men in the family are illustrated in the picture. Another picture of a baby boy sleeping and his father's picture given on the side of the screen also illustrates the power of imagery. (See Appendix 5.3)

4.6. Representation of the state and military authorities

The representation of authorities is quite prevailing and positive in the news coverage. They are seen while attending the funeral, offering comfort to the families, briefing press and making public statements on terrorism and the PKK and purporting to voice the public. (See Appendix 6.1) Authorities play an important role in media rituals since they represent the unity of nation. The emotional reactions from authorities are also a regular image in the coverage as in the examples of crying ministers and soldiers in the martyr funerals. (See Appendix 6.2) In the example picture given, the Commander of Turkish Armed Forces is seen crying and the narrator stresses how he could not help crying. And another pictures shows a female soldier holding as narrator says 'the martyr's orphan'. Another common representation of authorities suggests that authorities seek to fulfill their duties as the statesmen are gathered in urgent summits, and military teams chasing the terrorists and assumedly killing them. Also the state authorities incessantly emphasize the unity of nation in press briefs. (See Appendix 6.3) The number of terrorists killed is often given in the coverage of counterattacks though no other detail is disclosed since in media studies it is often suggested that the television protects the ritual and leaves out the irrelevant details as in the example coverage of Kennedy funeral in which

the details regarding the killing of the assassin is not given in detail. (See Appendix 6.4) It is of utmost importance to state that the representation of military authority may carry unique characteristics that can only be meaningful with a detailed analysis of the history of Turkish Republic, which cannot be achieved in the limited scope of a master's thesis.

4.7. Symbolism

Expectedly the most ubiquitous symbol is the Turkish flag in these rituals. The flag is the symbol of the nation, which is being incessantly reproduced through these rituals. Another key point is the symbolic value of the people killed in this armed conflict, as they are young and male, they represent the future of the society. The symbolism is more intensified with the presentation of women -mother and wives- left behind. (See Appendix 7.1) The crying and weeping mothers and wives also signify the symbolic value of the people killed. Religious symbols are quite explicit in the news reporting since religious officials perform the prayer at a funeral and martyrdom is a highly valued concept in Islam, which is the most commonly practiced religion in Turkey. (See Appendix 7.2)

In most cases, there are certain spiritual concepts employed such as 'sensing the death and asking for mother's and father's blessing' and so on. (See Appendix 7.3) In the examples which can be found in the Appendix 7.3, the interviews with family members (mostly father or mother) disclose that the conscript calls his family right before a military operation and insinuates something about becoming a martyr, asks for their blessing and if they have children they ask them to take care of the children. Most of the archaic vocabulary is employed in these utterances that are culture and religious specific thus they directly contribute to the ritualization. All in all, most of the symbolism employed in these media rituals is linked with nationalist ideas and the dignity of martyrdom.

4.8. The role of media professionals

As suggested by the literature media assumes the existence of a social center and undertakes to speak on behalf of it to legitimize and naturalize the dominant hegemonic power as well as its symbolic power. Media professionals perform a unique task of ritualizing the reporting process through employing a variety of things, which also get the people, participate in the ritual. Media's portrayal of itself is very pivotal and essentialist, it regards itself as the conveyor of the common values of the society as in the case at hand 'fighting for your county'.

5. CONCLUSION

All these attempts here aim at understanding the society and culture in which we live and thrive. Martyr funerals, as social phenomenon has not been studied extensively considering the highly troublesome three decades of the armed conflict. The link between the Kurdish issue and the PKK acts has always been perceived within the same frame. Understanding the stance of media in the construction of this perception has motivated the present author. Expectedly, news coverage of martyr funerals is beyond mere reporting with the versatile use symbolism and representation. The studies suggest funeral ceremonies as ritual performances may function in certain ways in the society such as constructing identity, solidarity and a sense of togetherness. It is only natural to assume that ritualization of martyr funerals coverage function in the same way. However, the critical question is how media performs the ritual restricted by time and space as well as the lack of first hand experience. The thesis at hand shows that martyr funerals are not reported as news but performed as media rituals with the unique characteristics.

The whole society experiences the adverse effects of the ongoing armed conflict through media rituals. This coverage of martyr funerals is neither mere news broadcast nor televising an already happening ritual. The analysis on the nature of breaking news makes it clear that martyr funerals do not seek to create tension or despair instead it is a time period in which a pledge for 'peace' in the southeastern of Turkey is voiced more than it ever is. Television takes the liberty to rearrange the time and space of the funerals as well as the daily life of the people even if it is quite briefly. One cannot deny the fact that the media ritual performed in the news coverage is the space provided for the society to experience a momentary national grief and feel a part of a whole nation with common values and beliefs. Furthermore, one can suggest that viewers regard the watching experience

as citizenship duty hence certain reverence and respect accompanied with tears is assumed to be present in the living room space of the ritual.

As many scholars state the utterances in media rituals carry two-fold meaning with an attempt on one level to convey the message and also reconstruct or affirm the existing social structure. It can be claimed that the peaks of social tension, which are apparent result of the martyr funerals, have characterized these three decades of conflict and reconstruct the social structure over and over.

One of the biggest limitations of this thesis is the lack of empirical data since the viewers and the viewing experience are claimed to carry ritual characteristics of participation while watching martyr funerals. However, author cannot provide an empirical data especially due to the theoretical framework required for an audience study. Conducting an audience study to explore how the viewers interact with the ritual can provide invaluable data. Another major drawback of this thesis is the archive work since most television channels in Turkey do not keep the prime time news in the archives since they are daily and circulatory. Even the professional companies, which follow media, tend to provide highly fragmented data thus not suitable for analysis. Providing an analysis of data from three decades and the changes in the rituals over time could have been a big step in understanding media institutions changes in practices over time, political agendas and the society.

Many scholars would agree that there has been a change in the way news are produced and presented. It is safe to assume that martyr funerals were not covered in the beginning of the conflict for a variety of reasons such as technology, media power and national broadcasting issues. The lack of complete archives in television channels as well as time and space limitations of a master's thesis did not allow the author to conduct such an extensive study; however, the framework and analysis provided here can be quite helpful in future studies of martyr funerals.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

1.1. October 19, 2011 Kanal D *Prime Time News*





1.2 October 19, 2011 Kanal 7 Prime Time News





1.3 October 19, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News*



Appendix 2

2.1 August 18, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*



2.2 August 18, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*



2.3 October 20, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News*



2.4 August 28, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News*



Appendix 3

3.1 October 20, 2011 Kanal 7, Kanal D & Show TV *Main News* (in order)



3.2 August 28, 2012 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*



Appendix 4

4.1 June 28, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News* & Show TV *Prime Time News* (in order)



4.2 October 20, 2011 Show TV Prime Time News



Appendix 5

5.1 August 18, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*



5.2 October 20, 2011 Kanal D *Prime Time News*



5.3 August 29, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News*, June 10, 2011 Kanal D *Prime Time News* (in order)



5.4 June 28, 2012 Show TV *Prime Time News* , August 29, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News* (in order)



Appendix 6

6.1 June 28, 2012 Show TV *Prime Time News*



6.2 October 20, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*



6.3 October 20, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News* , June 10, 2012 Show TV *Prime Time News* (in order)

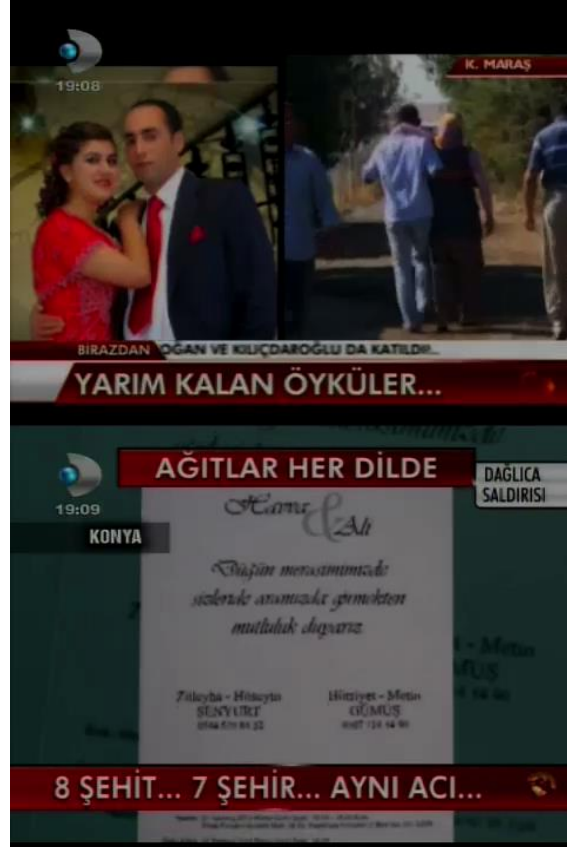


6.4 October 20, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News*, June 10, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News* (in order)



Appendix 7

7.1 June 20, 2011 Kanal D *Prime Time News*, June 9, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News* (in order)



June 9, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News*



October 20, 2011 Kanal 7 Prime Time News



7.2 August 18, 2011 Kanal 7 *Prime Time News* & October 20, 2011 Show TV *Prime Time News* (in order)



7.3 June 28, 2012 Kanal D *Prime Time News*

