
Deep Throat. Morality and Politics through Turkish Series and Soap Operas

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Résumé

Biography

Petra de Bruijn obtained a PhD from Leiden University (1997) and has been a Lecturer at Leiden University since 1995. She is specialised in Turkish studies.

Bibliography:

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Abstract

Since the re-emerging of Islam in Turkish society a broad spectrum of cultural activities for a Muslim-orientated audience has occurred. Religious music, films and television is big business. This presentation will explore the current status of Turkish series and soap-operas targeting a Muslim public. Concentrating on the most productive television channel in this respect, Samanyolu (the Milky Way), the variety and trends of its current soaps and series will be discussed. The difference between soaps and series broadcasted on Samanyolu and other more secular orientated channels has decreased in recent years. In the past soaps and series on Samanyolu used to contain many supernatural elements. However, at the moment, highly popular soaps and series such as Şefkat Tepe (Compassion Peak) and İki D'unya Arasında (Between Two Worlds), do not openly rely on religious symbols; although, a certain honest morality, fighting corruption and other evils, forms the leading element. Since the start of the controversy between the leading AKP government and the Hizmet or Cemaat (Service or Community, in the West better known as the G'ülen movement), Samanyolu soaps have been used as a medium to inform the Turkish public about what is going on in the political arena. This happened quite openly through the insertion of scenes in which a Karar Kurulu (decision board) commented on topical political events, such as the 17 December corruption scandal and the government's reaction against the arrests and accusations of highly placed persons within in the inner-circle of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against the G'ülen movement. In addition, many of the series display a strong Turkish nationalist

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anti-Kurdish view. Several series are located in Kurdistan, at the Syrian border. Turkish soldiers and 'good' Turkish Kurdish citizens fight against Kurdish (PKK) terrorists, Syrian Kurds and, recently, extremely cruel Syrian rebels. It is interesting to see how Samanyolu carries on the political debate in its soaps and series. Reality and fiction are mixed and probably Samanyolu reaches a much wider public with this moral and political message than they would have done through news bulletins and current affairs programs only.