

The Sanctity of Political Power: Belief Manners, Rituals and Myths

Mehmet Şükrü Nar

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Sociology, Artvin Çoruh University, Turkey

Abstract Political power phenomenon and all structural concepts regarding it (authority, legitimacy, sovereignty...) form an important part of historical past of humanity. In traditional communities, in many cases governors who have political power or their representatives hold political power by means of various religious tools and rituals and myths related with it. Such that, spreading political power to whole community by sanctifying political power and by means of the meanings which are attached to religion, ritual and myths has become a necessity of political arena nowadays as it was the case in archaic communities. This situation can be seen through history in ancient civilizations which had a central organization, and even today in the governing mentality of Middle Eastern, African and Asian communities in a theocratic way. In this research, it is aimed to explain how and to what extent practice forms like faith, ritual, myth affect social polarization process and the political power which carries authority to represent it, and the effect of power and hegemonic mentality which may occur as a result of it on communities.

Keywords Power, Belief, Ritual, Myth, Sanctity, Political Anthropology

1. Introduction

Political power and the meanings that were attached to it have always been in the center of social science and the source for many studies. Especially this phenomenon has been studied with other parameters such as authority, culture, sovereignty, power, legitimacy...etc. because it is the reason of existence for political power in most instances. Socially accepted belief manners are among these instances. Belief manners and the sanctities which were attached to them are the most important tools in terms of legitimacy of political power in communities that are not in the form of a state. In other words, governors and their representatives who possess political power in primitive and traditional communities hold political power/control through some religious tools and rituals and myths connected with it. We can see this situation in ancient civilizations which had centralized management, and even today in governing approach of Middle Eastern, African and Asian communities in terms of theocratic sense.

History of humanity has gone through various phases both in social and biological senses from primitive societies to present societies. There was a transition from communal life which occurred in primitive communities to political organizations in which nation-states occurred and recent modernity has dominance on it. Most of the present societies

live in a global world where many communities with different races and diversities live together and ideas spread out by the influence of especially globalization phenomenon and some other factors (economical, educational, cultural...). Nevertheless, in some communities or sub-cultures of communities there are social units that we can call as relative, tribe or clan organizations. This kind of structures can come up as a result of safety, geography, economy and essentially cooperation factors in Middle Eastern, African and Middle Asian regions where elements of politics-governance are not developed and written law norms are not progressed or became insufficient.

In this research, it is aimed to explain how and to what extent practice forms like faith, ritual and myth affect and shape politicization process of societies and political power which carries authority to represent it; and also aimed to explain the effect of power and hegemonic mentality in societies which may occur as a result of these practice forms.

2. Political Power and Sanctity

In the politicization process of communities; discourses on political power and its structure have been discussed many times in similar or different ways by philosophers relevant to the era they live in. Especially the discussions in Ancient Greece and Middle Age Europe focused on how to manage and legalize political power instead of explaining the concept of political power. For instance, ancient philosopher Plato argues that people should accept their status about inequalities and injustice in order to keep the continuity of

* Corresponding author:

mehmett.sukru@gmail.com (Mehmet Şükrü Nar)

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/sociology>

Copyright © 2014 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved

social order and religion should be used as a tool to achieve this. Plato also states that democratic political power mentality is deprived of ideal state mentality in a way by saying that among the regimes; the best one is monarchy, followed by oligarchy and lastly democracy. Besides, Aristotle emphasizes that the state structure can be a kingdom, whereas it can be theocracy according to St. Augustinus, and St. Thomas argues it could be monarchy by saying that ancestry relations would represent political power. As a defender of theocratic rules, Jean Calvin claims that the right to govern is given by God in a sanctity relation and legitimate source of political power belongs to God. Thomas Hobbes argues that out of three regimes he prefers monarchy most, and then aristocracy and democracy at last place. John Locke explains political power as a tool –defender of natural rights- that would abolish the restrictions against human freedom. Jean-Jacques Rousseau suggests that democracy should be the first regime to prefer, then aristocracy and monarchy as the last one. According to Rousseau, in democracy regime political power represents the whole community or most part of it; in aristocracy it represents a small minority; and in monarchy it represents only one person. N. Machiavelli talks about two different governing forms; people should protect the order during a stable period, whereas a prince should take control if the period is unstable. Thus, as political conditions change, power of attorney is often emphasized by democracy mentality (Redhead, 1995).

In most cases, the main reason which reveals political power is people's need to be ruled. As people have biological and psychological needs, they also have social needs that would support and reinforce them. Such a result canalizes people to political power phenomenon in governing-governed relation as a result of the necessity (safety, provide food more easily, etc...) to live in communities. The continuity of community varies depending on rather political power structure representing community in harmony, relations and practices which are connected with it (Balandier, 1972; Roberts, 2013). On the other hand, there is not any political power structure which can represent the whole community; instead there can be opposing groups among community members somehow. That is, political power structure which changes depending on the type of sovereignty can create a privileged dominant class in which the benefit of the whole community is being ignored in favor of these elite groups. The political power with this approach can be despotic and self-interested partially in order to keep its continuity; meanwhile it can be the reason of existence of the community.

On the other hand, although meanings which are attached to the concept of political power are tried to be explained in an identity relation with a political organization feature; expressing the state phenomenon only with the ruling power puts limits to the political power concept, because there are many parameters which have determinative roles on political power. This can be due to economical reasons according to

someone; social, psychological or cultural according to some others. Especially, when we think that history of humanity reflects a period which was full of power struggles between individuals, groups or communities, it becomes clearer to understand, because it is possible to see the power struggles in every phase of the communal livings. For instance, we can describe it in a more broad sense covering family and relative relations, business life, organized crime groups; in short all areas whether formal or informal or political and non-political. Thus, the struggle to make a general explanation of ruling power brings forth very different definitions. For instance, firstly Fraser Foucault (1989: 18) and other post-modern theoreticians tried to explain the occurrence of ruling power as a result of power inequalities in communal actions and all other practices.

In another approach, power rises from relations which are built on inequalities. Otherwise, we cannot talk about ruling power concept at a place where everything is equal. In general terms, power can be defined as the effect of A on B or sanction power, intervention power or domination right of someone (some people) on another one (other people). We can classify the meanings that are attached to power phenomenon under three headings in this approach: (i) At first; power can be explained as a talent if we consider it in social terms (ii) secondly; it can be defined as opinion or power which put pressure on others to make them accept their wishes and opinions (iii) as a third definition; it is to have the power to use force and intervention in order to have desired things to be done (Raphael, 1990:165-166). Political power is an effect or power tool which occurs accordingly to social norms, beliefs and values of the society. It is a struggle or organization area equipped with elements like using force, directing, persuading and assenting which is based on unequal force relationships between the governing and the governed people.

Political power is a struggle between forces. Power means that individuals or groups have their orders done by any kind of enforcement. Power is an inequality relationship resulting from prestige, physical superiority or a talent. Authority is a control tool resulting from a person's own prestige or the status he is attached to. The main difference separating political power from other power elements is its power to be on legal grounds. Legitimacy is building sovereignty on righteous reasons. Otherwise, political power represents an obligation or tyranny without social approval (Bates & Fratkin, 2002; Eriksen, 2010; Balandier, 1972).

Political power phenomenon and all structural concepts regarding it (authority, legitimacy, sovereignty, etc...) constitute a significant part of historical past of humanity. When we accept the whole community as a system or structure; political power becomes an important power tool which stands in the center of subject, defines the governing form of the governed, and organizes the relations between individuals and the community or individuals and the organizations. On the other hand, inferences regarding to the state and its origin –related to early and modern state

differences- are very important in order to keep political power stable and maintain its continuity. In other words, that is state and state related model structures which give political power a political power identity in terms of its ability to represent a structure (Balandier, 1972; Roberts, 2013; Claessen & Skalník, 1978). In another approach, we can associate political power with state phenomenon which occurs based on the expectations of communities or the necessities of the era. Thus, state and the representing mentality can form a political power structure which varies based on type of sovereignty and different expectations of the individuals (providing biological, social and cultural needs...).

When we classify communities in general terms, classic anthropological division is especially being pointed out. In other words, a classification of the communities based on societies in a state structure form or not. Although this classification is accepted as a simple idea, in fact it is still an important indicator in order to reveal a basic division between communities. Stateless communities define primitive communities which don't have a political organization structure and lack a political power and its structural relationships. In this kind of communities, political order is limited with only personal relations. According to this mentality, stateless communities are organized based on relations by affinity and according to a set of religious principles (Lewellen, 2003: 17-20). Factors such as extra production (surplus value) to be stored in accordance with increasing population, developing trade with further locations, specialization at cooperation, occurrence of social classes and the need for getting organized as a result of complexity of relations which were created by these classes explain communities with state structure (Diamond, 1999: 282-289).

The differentiation which occurred depending on communal needs resulted in different expectations and similar approaches related to history of humanity. The main characteristic of Europe in 19th century is the idea that human communities developed in a particular direction gained importance by referring to social evolution thought. In other words, it is the idea that European communities are the last ring of a long progress chain which started from primitivism. This thought system has also been an important reasoning towards justification of European colonialism (Eriksen, 2010:12). During that time, evolutionary anthropologists like Morgan, Tylor and Maine stated that in these communities, people who are defined as leaders or chefs have no control on these clans, thus these communities lack every kind of political power, and they need to be governed, by calling them primitives or savages. In other words, there is no such structure in primitive or stateless communities which can bring out a political power to rule that community. Instead there is a decision making body in which all members have the right to comment on decisions within that community, and besides community members take advice of people who are trusted, experienced and known as wise. There is no

binding in the decisions, and political power relation represents a mentality which is constructed for the purpose of settling disputes between the sides and limited within the context of a sort of refereeing mission (Clastres, 2011; Lewellen, 2003).

However this is not a valid conclusion for every community. Moving from communal life to a more settled life partially and correspondingly increasing population and increasing needs forced people to gather around a particular political power structure. Whether we call it a primitive drift towards a state structure or a clan organization; there is a chef (or a leader) who represents political power more or less on the side of the community. This situation displays an inequality between community members and the leader; moreover the chef or leader is sanctified as being beyond the reach. The situation is supported by some community values such as ritual, myth and faith. We can see such a result in antique age, middle age and even in modern community mentalities. It is very common to see that governing rights or leadership pass from father to son, relationship by affinity is accepted as divine for the sustainability of that community, and there is only one family tree who governs. In fact, the power to represent political power is rather a political power structure which is controlled by religious functionary and a feudal structure that is represented by a king or an emperor in Europe and Middle Eastern countries during Middle Age times. In this kind of communities, obedience to the king or the landlords whom they are responsible to is also a religious necessity. In other words; clergy, feudal owners and related people by affinity are the most important groups who represents the political power and the state itself as a necessity of sacredness.

Within this approach, when we study archaic communities, relations by affinity often represent the political power; more importantly it is consanguinity. In this kind of organizational structures, criteria such as hegemonic power phenomenon, status or social roles which are based on consanguinity and subject to lands shows that it is an early period organization. In other words, theocratic governing forms or affinity organizations established by marriage bonds or consanguinity are one of the most important political organizations which represent political power and moreover sacredness in that time period. If we take a look at our modern community mentalities, we can see that many countries in Europe maintain their political power structures coming from monarchy period even they are more symbolic in these days (also in countries like England monarchy represents an important power but yet it is symbolic). Or Vatican country that is designated by special status is an example of countries being governed with monarchy.

It is possible to see a similar situation in sub-cultures of industrialized or developing countries, or organizational structures which function in particular geographical areas of Middle Eastern and African communities and are described as clans. And all of these structures have the trace of absolutist regime power structure which is in a consanguinity

relation and continued by descending from father to son in most cases. At the same time, in this kind of communities (especially when we consider the ones in Middle East and Africa) practices which were displayed by governing structure with moral and religious reasons are either reinforced or ignored. Based on this, we can connect formation root of political communities – archaic or early state mentality – to a structure based on patriarchal political power, more specifically to an association in which people gathered around a family organization. In modern communities, although general dominant mentality is democracy, mentioned governing manners can also be some parameters which affect the forming power in terms of political power structures.

Thus, we can't say that every community with a state has the same organizational structure in terms of historical, geographical and cultural differences. Nowadays, it is seen that some communities with a state maintain their political power body by means of traditional community approaches, whereas some others construct political power structures of communities with a state by movements like liberalism, socialism and many other variants... In other words, on one side there are primitive communities; simple organizations without a governing body and homogeneous community, and on the other side there are communities with a state; heterogeneous community representing various political power structures, bureaucratic or hierarchical qualifications. But there are mutually accepted sacred values in every community approach. These can be belief manners for some people; and social values such as ritual, myth, and thought... for some other people.

3. The Place of Belief Manners in Political Power

Every political power needs to build its structure on a particular resource in order to provide legitimacy to its governing power (establish rules, impose a ban, and apply sanctions...). Within this approach, most of the time, the source of political power has been religious beliefs implicitly or clearly from the mentality of archaic communities to our modern communities. Such that, people who have the power to govern have explained their existence with supernatural powers, divine or religious beliefs, and political area was shaped within this frame. Concepts like crime, sin, absolute obedience to political power, worship have been considered together and obedience to political power has been accepted as a religious necessity.

In fact, as an anthropologist or social scientist we have asked this question to ourselves or to people around us many times. To what extend are belief manners important for governing a community or constructing a political power? At this point we can find an answer more or less when we study primitive, traditional communities and communities with a state organization. Belief systems are one of the most

significant activity areas which are shared by people mutually. At the same time, beliefs represent an important force of political power as a symbol of sacredness. Especially today, we experience this situation more apparently. Initially in Middle East Geography, the US or European communities, religious elements can describe an important public area more or less. Once in the Middle Eastern geography and then in USA and European communities, religious elements can describe an important public area more or less.

Throughout history of humanity, belief manners and meanings which are related to them have been the most important tool for social identity moreover for political power. According to sociologist Emile Durkheim, religious beliefs represent a community's sacred values. These values can be symbolically a cross, a star, sculpture figures, an animal, a tree or various objects. These patterns bring a community to the center of religious ceremonies by gathering them under a political power. In other words, religious beliefs are connected with a community's political organization structure and thus they reflect basic features of social order which they are subject to. In more general terms, philosophers like Marx and Durkheim considered religious beliefs as a tool for continuity of power and status of the governing elites. Considering within this scope, believes contain approaches which ground social classes, in another manner, there is a connection between classes and supernatural forces – or divine force – although this connection is not absolute (Bates & Fratkin, 2002).

In this approach, referring believes with sanctity and being the most divine part of mutual values among people created political power structures based on these believes. In general terms, in political power relations concepts and myths about belief are talked somehow, and even there are some arrangements concerning it. Especially in traditional communities, in which political power phenomenon is formed by gender, age, relationship by affinity, belief manners or in pre-industrialized countries, meanings which are attached to belief concept are important. In this kind of communities, sustainability of state or community with divine sanctity are often represented by sovereignty and religious purposes. For example, in Early Egypt, Hittite, Aztec and Inca communities in which religious beliefs used to be dominant, political power (king) was symbolized by sacredness, moreover by saying that all the decisions were made in the name of God and absolute obedience was ensured in the community. Obedience to political power was considered not only as a political responsibility but also as a religious worship at the same time. In ancient Greece, Police used to have religious and divine characteristics. Rebelling to a Police law meant denial of God. It is possible to see similar cases in Europe during middle age and also in other well-known continents. It is known that during that time the church had the political power by expanding its hegemony scope, and even the church sent kings away by anathematizing them and formed political power. In other

words, legitimacy of political power was explained by holy orders or church doctrines during that time. Similarly, Ottoman sultans had advice from religious leaders, which are so called Shaykh Al-Islam, in order to decide whether the decisions they would make were appropriate according to their beliefs.

However, we can explain the thought manners which based on the relation between political power and sanctity by using believes in primitive and traditional communities (supernatural events, ancestor cult, totemism and animism). The clan chief who was accepted to symbolize his power with the soul of a dead leader or a warrior could turn out to be a divine governor representing sacredness and political power together. This kind of believes which you can see in every community may be supported by sorcery phenomenon. In fact, sorcery belief had the mission of protecting and looking out a community against foreign powers and inside organizations in clan type communities. The person who practices sorcery was provided with a prestigious status in that community or becomes a shareholder of political power or even the holder of the political power. Sometimes these people were supposed to heal sick people as they were healers and because of this they could have the most prestigious status in that community.

For example, in some primitive communities like Eskimos, shamanists were accepted to have holy powers as healers who were supposed to have inborn supernatural powers; at the same time, they have the capacity to be leaders in the eyes of people to govern that community. Among Hopi Indians living in the South-western part of America, political power is explained by means of a set of rituals, ceremonies and religious meetings. Religious discourses are powerful enough to shape the political power in Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran. In general terms, although religious belief manners vary among different communities, their deterministic influence on political power is the same. Within this context, believes have three main roles on political power. These are: (i) in theocratic terms, political power is based on religion directly (ii) governors and privileged class, who are in the role of ruling position, use religion to legalize their positions or (iii) religious beliefs can be used for directing communities by the people who want to be in governing positions (Lewellen, 2003: 65-66).

Thus, belief manners can be accepted as political power of the rulers; as well as significant indicators of legitimacy, because somehow social believes and politics can meet at a mutual ground and carry out some features which support sovereignty of ruling political power. Within this mentality, it is common to see the roles of faith manners in politics and profits come from these beliefs in favor of governors in almost every community or in their sub-cultures. For example, a tribe leader living in Africa asks for support from the souls of his ancestors and tribe sorcerer or similarly a senator asks for help from religious congregations for being elected. Such that, in the Middle East or in Europe it is

possible to see political power structures or legal political parties which were shaped based on particular sects or religious beliefs. This situation can result in severe conflicts between governors and public or between Shies and Sunnis among community members in the Middle East. Or these conflicts can be between Catholics and Protestants as it is in North Ireland example. This situation can result in spreading chaos in countries and anarchy to become permanent. That is to say, while belief manners are creating a unifying common identity among groups, they can also be the reason for conflicts in a community because of their conflictive roles.

4. Other Factors of Political Power: Rituals and Myths

In general terms, despite the fact that rituals are identified with primitive and traditional communities, they are behaviors which we can see every day also in modern community mentalities: Communication, economy, believes, politics... Such that, it is common to encounter rituals in different forms that serve for different purposes (for instance, sanctuaries, sport activities, official ceremonies, carnivals...). Within this context, rituals can be considered as an important activity area which shapes individuals' lives and community life, and adds meaning to it. In fact, it is difficult to separate rituals (religious ceremonies), religious beliefs and myths from each other. In general, rituals are symbolized/materialized forms of religious beliefs. We can make a similar explanation for myths.

Anthropologists have tried to explain rituals from different aspects considering their roles in community life. By addressing its function between individuals or groups, E. Leach explains rituals as (i) behaviors which provide intercultural transfer and share of information (ii) technical-rational actions which go towards particular purposes, produce visible results that can be seen mechanically or (iii) effective, magical behaviors towards calling concealed powers and develop on their own (Abales, 2012:148). Victor W. Turner defines rituals as repeatable actions which are designed for affecting supernatural creatures or powers in the name of the purposes that are identified by individuals, practiced from a certain point and which cover mimics, words and objects (Turner, 1973:1100). While Geertz defines rituals as a cognitive system, and as behaviors in which religious beliefs are sanctified and produced, (Geertz, 1973: 112) Max Gluckman defines rituals as the whole of activities which arrange social relations in daily lives, and contain highly sensual and exotic thoughts (Lane, 1981: 14-15).

Rituals have particular impacts on relations between politics and social structure, because as people are social creatures, politics helps to create a sense of unity between community members by generating an awareness and difference. Similarly, ritual practices make a clear difference in community. The forms of ritual practices are divine; they

represent sanctity; at the same time the places where these practices are held regularly are accepted as holy places. In this respect, rituals show practicing extent of faith on one hand (relation with sanctity) and organization on the other hand in mutual share. In relation to this topic, Durkheim states that there are no rituals which don't contain sanctity in its body in a way, and rituals reinforce mutual identity and sense of belonging by focusing on mutual senses shared in the community (Smith & Riley, 2008; Wulf, 2009). Within this approach, rituals have been tools for connecting individuals to the community by reinforcing group identity sense, at the same time they prevent some negativities such as anomaly. In other words, rituals have a significant function in terms of arranging social relations and sustainability these relationships (Peacock, 1979). For example, in Eskimo communities, sides of a conflict practice certain rituals spontaneously and within the framework of this ritual they try to resolve that problem without allowing any fights (Roberts, 2013: 60).

In a similar way, structuralism-functionalism approach highlights cohesive feature and function of regulating social processes of rituals. Turner mentions that rituals are part of social mobility that would allow foundations and organizations to stand on, evolve and be rearranged. Social problems are identified at the first phase; at the second phase, crisis resulted from these problems are accepted; at the third phase ritual patterns are activated in order to get over these crises. He indicates that rituals legalize power by creating strong feelings on community and because of that they are important tools in terms of political power. He explains especially political rituals as being governed by a certain leader, and as activities developing around natural and cosmological events. He sees rituals as an activity used for supporting the political power; similarly, as the whole of symbolic behaviors for protecting present system. Political rituals that characterize community life have created a holy place, a special language and somehow holy people in terms of their functional extent. Especially in communities governed by monarchy, loyal rituals (for example: crowning ceremonies, baptizing ceremonies) are important activity areas for political power as an imperial cult in order to show its power or legality in the eyes of the public. Even these ceremonies repeat regularly as an institutionalized structure and they are important parts of political process (Eriksen, 2010: 235-236; Mitchell, 2010: 617; Wulf, 2009: 238).

For example, in 18th and 19th centuries in Dahomey Kingdom which was ruling over southern part of Benin, a ritual called *Annual Tradition* was used to be organized. The king used to execute hundreds of prisoners in a bloody show during this ritual. At the last day of this fest, court nobles used to distribute gifts to the public from a higher ground. These rituals used to be an important source of political power as a tool for gathering people under the rule of the king. As a different example from Nigeria, the king who ruled over Jukun Kingdom guaranteed sustainability of his power by standardizing ceremonies at regular basis. Rituals

were practiced at every area of the kingdom as a symbol of sacredness. Even while the king was eating his meal, the food was served through a special ritual, because his food was as holy as the king. From this point, rituals refer to an important phenomenon which reflects ideological side of political power and provides community with an organization under the roof of political power (Canetti, 1984:139, 413-414).

In traditional communities, it is known that people worshipped and even sacrificed in a particular ritual by attaching special meanings to some objects like their ancestors' souls, trees, rocks or the moon which are symbolized objects in order to heal sick people or mostly to have a good agricultural productivity. Through historical development of humanity, sacrificing ritual can still be used for the purpose of explaining a set of political power structures or informal organizations either in archaic or in modern communities together with the construction of sacredness. Victims can be chosen from animals or mostly human beings as oblations for the purpose of showing their degree of respect to their sacred beings. In such communities, political power is far from having a central organization; practices like rituals and myths are tools for explaining political power and at the same time a participative phenomenon highlighting a common spirit of unity. In structures, in which political power is represented, they can be seen as reinforcing and powering practices towards protecting social status. But even though ritual phenomenon is an index of actions which is identified with primitive and traditional communities, it is an accepted behavior within modern community mentality with its features from many aspects. Political rituals in modern communities can be used as propaganda tools in order to support the acceptance of parties in the eyes of the public. In such circumstances where there is a competitive environment, political parties are in a struggle to show original rituals for influencing voters and make an appearance to other opponents under particular activities. At the same time these rituals must have repeatable features. For example, opening rituals are held every year regularly in party congress.

In the first millennium A.D. as a result of expansion of Indian culture from Asia to Java, Hinduism belief had a prominent influence on political organizations of the region. Local tribe chiefs developed their status and authorities with the help of religious practices and behaviors like rituals that support their actions. During that time, the relation of local rulers with the public was ensured with a ritual traditionally called as *durbar*. The prince used to accept gifts from the public and in return he used to distribute signs that showed his status. The prince ensured his status by means of settled rules which were classifying the community. These rituals were maintained by British governors after India had been invaded by Britain. A similar case was in Roman Empire. Roman emperors used traditional symbol systems (by describing the relation between the emperor and the Gods) in order to improve a political power relation between the

emperor and the public. By the help of this tool, the dominance of privileged class on public and the dominance of emperor on the elites have been strengthened. In other words, rituals have become an important part of political power network which constitutes the structure of a community (Price, 1986: 37-38; 48).

Pragmatic arrangement of rituals is necessary for the permanence of rituals' effectiveness. Historical continuity legalizes the group by stabilizing the order of the group that participate a ritual. It gives the sense that social events which were created in a ritual are natural. Thus, with its regular repetitions, it provides to create a mutual identity and transfer them to next generations (Wulf, 2009: 242). For instance, national countries arrange parades at their national festivals and they share them with the public by means of media as a historical repetition. Similarly, we can see such a case today at birthdays of kings or presidents – particularly in authoritarian regimes. In these splendid ceremonies, it is possible to encounter rituals which display the power of the political power and symbolize it. With this feature, rituals are equipped with many qualifications which provide obedience of the public to the political power. For instance, obedience and some other respectful behaviors shown to Zulu chief within a set of rituals help increase the prestige of him in the eyes of the public (Honko, 1979:131).

On the other hand, political power concept is such a wide concept that we cannot limit it to only in boundaries of political organization. Thus, the meaning of the ritual which supports and sublimates the ritual may correspond refer to many phenomenons. In other words, we can encounter rituals in many organization structures -for the purpose of strengthening sense of unity among members- whether they are political or non-political, legal or illegal. For example, we can encounter these rituals in religious congregation structures or organized crime organizations...

We can define myths as the incarnational form of rituals. Myth is the story of supernatural creatures and actions. In general terms, this story is a sacred narration about sacredness or it is a story which explains the creation history of human beings (Eliade, 1993:23). According to anthropologist Leach, rituals have a relationship with myths and deliver information about their essence, because rituals are practice tools of myths (Eriksen, 2010). Rituals are revived forms of myths. They are recreation of a myth or a historical narration in the minds of the public. They both look like a *language*. Most of the times, as there are faith elements within the content of myths, they become sacred and thus they are transferred to the future. According to him, myths reveal the present relationship among law, status and political power, and as a result they become a part of ideology. The main difference between myth and ritual is that myth gives information about the condition of the narrator. However, a ritual shows that the person who practices that ritual accepted the meaning it refers beforehand. About this subject, Kirk stated the view that myths and rituals are different from each other; as examples,

Oedipus, Gilgamesh, South America by Levi-Strauss and Tsimshian by Franz Boas, myths are different from rituals (Rappaport, 1999:107-108; Kirk, 1973: 24-26).

Malinowski explains myth as *a social law* which guarantees the system of political power, privilege and property. It has the function of keeping traditional connections and legalizing them which can be used by political power. Monica Wilson emphasizes such use of myth among Sotho and Nyakyusa communities in Southern Africa. These communities state that they have vital power for reinforcing their political powers. Leadership ceremonies, reigning rituals remind of these claims symbolically; so myths come to the fore again and again in a way to strengthen the political power (Balandier, 1972: 34, 117-118).

According to Levi-Strauss, myths are the whole of messages which are transferred to next generations by unknown ancestors' of that community. They are related to present and future time. According to him, myths depend on the features of language; and they are an inseparable part of it.

Each myth is consisted of basic units like other elements in grammar (phoneme, morpheme and semanteme) and basic units refer to a common meaning when they come together. At the same time, these basic elements contain synchronic and diachronic dilemmas and contain original features of both language and words. In this context, the myths look like a complex structure in which parts are brought together in a harmony. Then, what needs to be done is explaining the meaning of this complex structure by making it a system and afterwards analyzing social relationships based on these explanations (Levi-Strauss, 1974). According to James Frazer, myths are tools for explaining certain events and facts. He believes that myths are interpretation forms of ritual practices. In primitive and traditional community structures, rituals and myths are used as a power of political rulers. For instance, a prohibition about kings and taboo myth is fictionalized as a behavior which prohibits the public from rebelling against the system (Frazer, 1981).

Each political power structure has a stringent power to some extent which makes people accept its superiority and sanctity, and equipped with a supreme and sacred meaning. On the other hand, the main factor that distinguishes a tribe from a simple community is that members come together under a sense of unity and they feel they are different from the others. Such that, another distinctive factor that distinguishes a tribe from a simple crowd is the existence of political power which connects it with holiness and make people feel it is the authority. Myths are used for explaining not only archaic or exotic communities but also modern communities. From this point of view, being beyond a simple narration, myths picture certain sacred events and provide the ground for sovereignty doctrine as an intellectual phenomenon (Massetioli, 1974: 813-816). In this respect, myth becomes a tool that provides political privileges to political powers and can be a power that shapes community.

In regards with this topic, Malinowski states that myths are holy stories; especially for primitive communities, these myths explain the reason of ethical rules which conduct social groups, social order, religious ceremonies and customs. With these features, myths base their roots on the source of life and main necessities as a reflection of social structure and social relationships (Malinowski, 1984:193-206).

Myths are used as important tools for protecting social harmony and continuity of the ruling power. Myths encourage people to gather around a political power by creating sacredness with beliefs and tell people that it is the legitimate right of the rulers to use their powers. In this respect, political power empowers the reasons that connect community members to rulers by means of myths. Within this mentality, by being identified with sacred and supernatural stories, myths are born from emotionality of the public as a tool for evoking emotions, and they create a collective conscious. They give clues about the formation roots of beliefs, traditions, behaviors and norms... which seem incomprehensible to us; these myths try to explain them. Myths exist in a community free from human awareness and are transferred from one generation to the next one. And with this feature, myths represent power of that community (or political power authority) and its reason for being. Thus, practice forms like myths and rituals which used to be generally identified with primitive communities become a behavior form that is mentioned more often in communal groups along with today's modern community mentality.

Myths struggle to make an explanation to the role they play in social structure or different political and social events based on their role. Narrations in myths, ground the ideas which aim to protect present political position in accordance with political benefits using its feature of modelling. They are rather remembered by symbols and with this feature; they have the role of adding meanings to social arrangements as being consistent narrations in the social/cultural memories. Symbols are tools for keeping narrations in cultural memories, remembering and transferring them to the next generations. Symbols function as the meanings of the myths in this regard (Eliade, 1984; Kurtz, 2001). Ideologies and political structures maintain their existence by means of symbols in cultural memories; myths and rituals become the most significant tools being used in here. According to Kertzer, political area is built symbolically in people's minds and politics gains functionality on symbols. The rituals in cultural memories wrapped up with these symbols mediate for this (Lewellen, 2003: 96).

If we consider culture as a system of symbols, political area is a part of this system. All discourses which provide explanations to understand the political structure within this context are political. Myths are used as a model by political actors for the purpose of explaining or legalizing their actions in these days. They play an important role in creating a personal and collective memory, and narrations can build an identity and a past in the eyes of the public. Within this respect, myths turn into political-ideological figures and

become a part of creating a national identity. Thus, myths form the limitations of political area towards the struggles of legitimacy and meaningful explanations of their actions. Or they can bring a group of people together who gather around the same ideology or thought by using its integrative role: Liberalism, Socialism, Fascism... However, myths are being used by the opponent forces as much as the political power. Myths being used within this scope may not represent the political structure which they are connected with. This kind of actions may have destructive, speculative features on current political system. In fact, this kind of myth statements may cause concepts; such as nationalism and ethnicity to be emphasized more often in the sub-culture communities. In other words, such actions might be destabilizing the current political system.

5. Conclusions

By their historical aspect, practice forms like beliefs, myths and rituals which reflect mutual feelings of a community and create a sense of unity are all spiritual heritages and kind of necessities. It can be a basic need for one person; or a social, cultural or psychological for one another. If so, these concepts resemble political power phenomenon and can be tools for explaining it to some extent. In fact, political powers are structures which were formed as a necessity of social expectations, historical facts or requirement of geographical circumstances. At the same time, there are phases in which every political power is formed, developed and collapsed. In other words, sustainability of political powers is a subject of discussion in a way. On the other hand, practices like beliefs, myths and rituals that constitute the essence of a community have determinative impacts on political power and its elements. With another approach, they are the source of political power. While one of them is creating a mutual conscious within a community, the other one is trying to role on public will. Consequently, somehow political powers get benefit of these phenomena which create mutual and common feelings in a community.

Sanctifying political power by means of religious tools, rituals and myths, and expanding these situations to whole community has been a familiar approach. In another approach, almost in every community the use of religious patterns and mixing religion with politics has become nearly a necessity of politics. Because it is obvious that religious ideologies and ritual behaviors are related to cultural behaviors, political and economic processes within a community somehow. The reason for religion to become such a powerful legitimacy source is that it has a sanctifying effect on political power. Nearly every political power uses religion. Every political power has used religious social unity and harmony rituals somehow. Particularly, in eastern communities or community structures in which the dominant mentality about community is traditional, religious belief

values and elements in relation with them like ritual and myth have been accepted as sacred patterns which influence nearly all areas of a community. Such that, in this kind of social structures, it is the main characteristic feature of authoritarian regimes to refer state-political power identification with sacredness. Moreover, sanctity has become an important value which is having its source from belief manners and accepted by the community as a tool for providing continuity of the order. For example, nowadays in India which has one of the samples of most strict social classes, religious functionaries (Brahmans) have a status in which they are more powerful than even governors. Or in Asian countries, politically privileged status of Buddhist priests who represent a side of belief system is still continuing. By this way, in countries either in Middle East or in Europe and Asia, the main force shaping political power can be religious practices that are practiced in the name of the public at the background.

In fact, religious beliefs can be determinative factor about every choice approach related to preferences on which political party to vote, which food to eat and even whom to marry. Today, in many countries people belonging to various religions or sects may vote and support a political party or a politician that have the same or similar beliefs with themselves. However, beliefs were used by governors for continuity of their policy or financial benefits mostly by abusing these beliefs. It is highly possible to see a similar situation in archaic communities and today's community mentality. From many aspects, politicians or governors took advantage of beliefs and related factors like rituals and myths, which are highly acceptable in the eyes of the public and which can create intensity of emotions in people, in order to protect their present circumstances, and they will probably take advantage of these religious beliefs in the future as well.

Political rituals are considered that they activate policies of political powers and as opposed to this they provide basis for social conflicts. In this regard, the people who support the current political power and the oppositions both have separate discourses, ceremonies and rituals that might come out as a result of these practices. Within this aspect, myths and rituals are discipline tools towards legalizing political power on one hand and they become symbols of illegality on the other hand.

For example, "Gezi Parkı Movements" can be shown as an adaptation of the political rituals to our age by means of the myths. Especially the political power tried to discredit this kind of movements by using written and visual media, discourses which were repeated several times and practices (rituals like ceremony, celebration). On the contrary, there were opposite ritual samples such as; gezi activists symbolized Taksim Gezi Park; they made repeatable demonstrations by gathering in this park, and expanding this movement to big cities as an opponent power movement in the form of singing anthems and shouting slogans or pot and pan demonstrations. Or *Arabic Spring* which started in Middle Eastern Geography affected almost all Middle

Eastern communities and caused opponents of political power to rebel against tyranny regimes; *demonstrations in Ukraine* and supporting these demonstrations with various rituals and mythical discourses are similar examples.

During this period, which started with enlightening process and continued with modernity phenomenon; people have been in the search for avoiding traditional political and cultural conditionings. These changes which occurred in social circle (economically, culturally and socially) also affected cognate processes of the people. A significant progress has been made at this time period especially begins with industrialization and we become an information society. In fact, the meanings of religion, myths and rituals started to lose their charms as a result of being conceptualized inside of political power as a sacred necessity. Although claim may reflect the majority of today's community mentality, we can't say that they are completely removed from political power relationships, because the necessity to integrate individuals to the structure in which he consists by using ideological tools is important in terms of social peace during this time period. Or this is a compulsive choice offered to the communities by capitalism, because by using democratic discourses; capitalism is in the search for creating prototype individuals in order to protect economic and political power it holds. Consequently, in this new order, political powers are able to use behaviors such as belief, myth and ritual as a support tool for their political power by readapting it under the title of globalization. Especially the political powers have been creating new ideologies, religious values, new myths and sanctities together with the help of powerful shareholders and developing technologies by using the media. Thus, even today the belief manners, myths and rituals are being used as an important tool in political arena for the purpose of providing legitimacy by governors as it used to be done in the past.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abales, M. (2012). *Devletin Antropolojisi*, Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları.
- [2] Balandier, G. (1972). *Political Anthropology*, England: Penguin Books Ltd.
- [3] Bates, D. G., Fratkin, E.M. (2002). *Cultural Anthropology*, Allyn & Bacon, Incorporated.
- [4] Canetti, E. (1984). *Crowds and Power*, New York: Farrar, Straus And Giroux.
- [5] Claessen, H. J. M & Skalnik, P. (1978). *The Early State: A Structural Approach*, The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- [6] Clastres, P. (2011). *Devlete Karşı Toplum*, (Çev:M. Sert & N. Demirtaş) İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- [7] Diamond, J. (1999). *Guns Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, N.York: W.W Norton & Company.

- [8] Eliade, M. (1984). Cosmogonic Myth and "Sacred History", A. Dundes (Eds.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- [9] Eliade, M. (1993). *Mitlerin Özellikleri*, (Çev: Sema Rifat), İstanbul: Simavi Yayınları.
- [10] Eriksen, T.H. (2010). *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, New York: Pluto Press.
- [11] Frazer, J. G. (1981). *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore*, Avenel Books.
- [12] Fraser, N. (1989). *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Pres.
- [13] Geertz, C. (1973). *The Inter Pretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.
- [14] Honko, L. (1979). *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*, Lauri Honko (ed.), Mouton.
- [15] Kirk, G.S. (1973). *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- [16] Kurtz, D. V. (2001). *Political Anthropology: Power and Paradigms*, Cambridge: Westview Press.
- [17] Lane, C. (1981). *The Rites of Rulers, Ritual in Industrial SocietyThe Soviet Case*, Cambridge University Press.
- [18] Levi-Strauss, C. (1974). *Structural Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.
- [19] Lewellen, T. C. (2003). *Political Anthropology*, Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- [20] Malinowski, B. (1984). "The Role of Myth in Life," *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, Alan Dundes (ed.), Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Prs.
- [21] Mitchell, J. P. (2010). "Ritual", In A. Barnard & J. Spencer (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, London & New York, Routledge.
- [22] Maspétiol, R. (1974). Devlet, Mit ve İdeoloji, (Çev: R. Akkaya), *M. Ü Hukuk Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 808-828.
- [23] Peacock, J. L. (1979). "Notes on a Theory of the Social Evolution of Ritual", *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*, Lauri Honko (ed.), Mouton.
- [24] Price, S.R.F. (1986). *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [25] Raphael, D.D. (1990), *Problems of Political Philosophy*, London: Macmillan Edu. Ltd.
- [26] Rappaport, R.A. (1999). *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- [27] Redhead, B. (1995). *Plato to NATO: Studies in Political Thought*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- [28] Roberts, S. (2013). *Order and Dispute: An Introduction to Legal Anthropology*, New Orleans: Quid Pro Books.
- [29] Smith, P., Riley, A. (2008). *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell.
- [30] Turner, V. W. (1973). "Symbols in African Ritual", *Science*, New Series, 179 (4078), 1100-1105.
- [31] Wulf, C. (2009). *Tarihsel Kültürel Antropoloji*, (Çev: Ö. D. Sarısoy), Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları.