



SUREK Journal of Alevism – Bektasism and Cultural Studies, Sayı 2, 2024, 1-18.

E-ISSN: 3023-5529

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi


THE HISTORY OF THE ALEVIS IN GERMANY, WHICH BEGAN IN 1961

1961'DE BAŞLAYAN ALEVİLERİN ALMANYA TARİHİ

Bülent KELEŞ

PhD, Grundschule Goldbach

bulentkeles@hotmail.de

 0000-0002-5397-7478

ABSTRACT

ÖZ

Received:
(Geliş Tarihi)
10.04.2024

Accepted:
(Kabul Tarihi)
11.06.2024

Published:
(Yayın Tarihi)
30.06.2024

Keywords
Alevi
Germany
Migration
Immigration
Alevi
Institutionalisation

Anahtar Kelimeler
Aleviler
Almanya
Göç
Uyum
Alevi
Kurumsallaşması

Alevi gained social visibility with the urbanisation process that started in the 1950s. With the labour migration abroad, thousands of Turks who had never seen the city turned to European countries in the hope of economic prosperity. Alevi are one of the groups affected by labour migration to Europe. They were hesitant to express their Alevism until the 1980s. In Germany, the first institutionalisation in the 80s took place on the axis of religious identity. The initiative to establish the "Association for the Promotion of Hacı Bektaş Veli Culture in Cologne and its Surroundings", which started in 1984, was formalised in 1987 and then associations were opened in other cities under the leadership of "dedes". However, the "Alevi Cultural Centres" established after the "Alevi Culture Week" in 1989 were organised by Alevi with political identities.

In our article, the history of Alevi in Germany, which is divided into "dede-centred" and "culture-centred", has been examined in general terms and an attempt has been made to evaluate it in a way to shed light on the history of Alevi in the modern period. In our study, in which we applied the qualitative research method of social sciences, phenomenological approach was preferred as a design. Participant observation and interview methods were also utilised.

Alevilerin toplumsal görünürlük kazanması 1950'lilerde başlayan kentleşme süreciyle gerçekleşmiştir. Yurtdışı işgücü göçüyle birlikte şehir yüzü görmemiş binlerce Türk, ekonomik refah umuduyla Avrupa ülkelerine yönelmiştir. Avrupa'ya yönelen işgücü göçünden etkilenen kesimlerden biri de Alevilerdir. Aleviler, 1980'li yıllara kadar Aleviliklerini ifade etmekte çekimser davranmışlardır. Almanya'da, 80'li yıllarda ilk kurumsallaşma, dinî kimlik ekseninde gerçekleşmiştir. 1984'te başlanan "Köln ve Çevresi Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültürünü Tanıtma Derneği" kurma girişimi, 1987'de resmîleşmiş ve ardından diğer şehirlerde de "dedeler" öncülüğünde dernekler açılmıştır. Ancak 1989'daki "Alevi Kültür Haftası" sonrası kurulan "Alevi Kültür Merkezileri" politik kimlikli Alevilerce örgütlenmiştir.

Makalemizde "dede merkezci" ve "kültür merkezci" olarak ayrılan Alevilerin Almanya tarihi, genel hatlarıyla incelenmiş ve Alevilerin modern dönem tarihine ışık tutacak şekilde değerlendirmeye gayret gösterilmiştir. Sosyal bilimlerin Nitel araştırma yöntemini uyguladığımız çalışmamızda, desen olarak fenomenolojik yaklaşım tercih edilmiştir. Ayrıca katılımcı gözlem ve görüşme yönteminden de istifade edilmiştir.

Cite as/Atıf: Keleş, B. (2024). The history of the Alevi in Germany, which began in 1961. *SUREK Journal of Alevism – Bektasism and Cultural Studies*, 2, 1-18.

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Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma ve Uygulama Enstitüsü. Her hakkı saklıdır.



Introduction

Although Alevis are known to be Alevis by the environment they live in, for centuries they have preferred not to be visible in public spaces where they did not appear before. Of course, there are various reasons forcing them to make this choice. Foremost among these reasons is their certainty that they will be harmed. In order not to be harmed, they have made mountain villages, where only Alevis live outside the public sphere, their home. However, the process of urbanisation, which began in parallel with changing living conditions, also affected Alevis, and they tried not to make their Alevism visible and open in the public sphere. In this context, the main theme of this article is the processes of existence of Kızıldağ/Alevis in Germany with their Alevi identity, who managed to remain outside the public sphere until the 1950s, except for extraordinary cases.

1. Immigration to Germany

On 30 October 1961, as a result of the Labour Force Agreement signed between Türkiye and West Germany, Alevis who came to Germany - albeit to a lesser extent than those who remained in Türkiye - had to conceal their Alevi identity. Even though they did not express their Alevi identity, it seems to have been revealed through their distinct behaviour and attitudes. Halis Tosun explains that when they were active in workers' associations, they were referred to as "Janissaries" and their Alevism was emphasised (Tosun, 2002, p. 28). Those who moved away from the places where they settled and where they felt they belonged, and entered foreign environments, which they called expatriation, did not declare their Alevism because they were afraid of possible negative incidents. We believe that the fact that Alevis do not declare their religious identity in the public sphere in the process starting with migration should be seen in relation to secularism, one of the founding dynamics of modern Türkiye. As a matter of fact, secularism paved the way for them to participate in social life in the public sphere and made it easier for them to exist in cities without making their religious identities obvious.

Almost all Alevis living in Germany today are of Turkish origin. Therefore, we believe that a brief overview of the history of Turkish migration to Germany will be useful. The 30 October 1961 Labour Force Agreement, which followed the acceptance of the freedom of movement as a fundamental right for Turkish citizens under Article 18 of the 1961 Constitution (Abadan-Unat, 2002; Abadan-Unat vd., ts., p. 29), enabled low-income citizens experiencing economic difficulties in Türkiye to turn to West Germany as workers. While the number of Turks abroad before 1962 was 42,989, it was determined that 468,096 Turkish citizens were abroad as labour force in 1971 with the freedom of movement and reciprocal labour agreements. The number of Turkish citizens in Germany in 1961, given by Nermin Abadan-Unat as 6.700, reached 457.300 in 1972 (Abadan-Unat, 1972, p. 21, 22, 37). The "oil embargo", which caused oil prices to quadruple in 1973-74, caused a major economic crisis throughout the world and consequently an increase in unemployment rates in European countries. In order to cope with unemployment, European countries, including Germany, took the decision known as "Anwerbestop" (stopping the recruitment of foreign workers). According to this decision, while the recruitment of new workers was terminated, existing workers were encouraged to return to their countries of origin. However, the cessation of labour recruitment did not stop migration and this new situation facilitated the increase in the Turkish population through family reunifications. The number of Turkish workers in all European countries, which was 711.302 in 1973/74, increased by more than one million to 1.765.788 after family reunifications (Abadan-Unat, 2002, p. 47, 48). It is observed that family reunifications were also reflected in the number of associations established by Turks. In fact, between 1974 and 1987, there was a large-scale organisation based on institutionalisation throughout Germany and the number of associations established by Turkish citizens alone increased to over 3000 (Altuntaş, 2008, p. 121). While Germany was the first choice of Turkish citizens going abroad in the beginning, it was followed by other European countries such as France, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium (Gelekçi & Köse, 2011, p. 57, 58).

The migration of Turks to other European countries, especially Germany, continued to increase in the following years. While family reunification was the main factor in migration, asylum applications became the second most important factor after the 1980 military coup. According to the results obtained by researchers on the subject, the number of Turkish citizens, mostly Kurds and leftists, who applied for asylum in Germany during the 1980s, declaring that they were persecuted due to their political activities, was around 125.000 (Abadan-Unat, 2002, p. 56, 257, 266). Erkan Perşembe gives the number of Turkish citizens who

applied for asylum in Germany in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1985, 1990, 1992, 1995 as 165.710 (Perşembe, 2005, p. 70, 71; Özbek, 2012, p. 18). Although there was a decrease in asylum applications to Germany in the 2000s (Aydın, 2012, p. 40), the 15 July 2016 coup attempt caused a significant increase in asylum applications of Turkish citizens (Schührer, 2018, p. 16).

The population of Turkish origin living in the countries of the European Union was estimated to be around 4 million before 2005. Turks living in Europe have started to form a new Turkish identity such as Belgian-Turkish, French-Turkish, German-Turkish by adding the country they live in to their Turkish identity. Kaya and Kentel attribute the emergence of such identities to the adaptation of Turks living in Europe to the lifestyles of the societies in which they live (Kaya vd., 2008, p. 8, 26, 41, 128-131; Kaya & Kentel, 2008, p. 133-135; Kaya, 2006, p. 88). Caldwell argues that the Republican revolutions have harmonised Turks with Germany in particular and Europe in general and that they need less adaptation policies than other immigrant groups (Caldwell, 2011, p. 178-179). Klausen, on the other hand, takes Caldwell's observation one step further and underlines the secular identity of those who live in European countries and are integrated into the society they live in (Klausen, 2008, p. 308). When a general evaluation is made, Alevi come to the fore among the groups that are visible with their secular identities among immigrants of Turkish origin.

1.1. Estimated Turkish and Alevi Population

Until the 1950s, Alevi generally endeavoured to live in rural areas. However, the inability of the economic conditions in rural areas to feed the growing village population pushed the villagers, who were in a hurry to make a living, to seek new opportunities. In this context, labour migration to Western Europe, which started in 1961, became a good alternative for those who wanted to get out of the economic bottleneck. In fact, almost all Alevi villages within the city borders of Tunceli, Erzincan, Malatya, Sivas, etc., where Alevi live densely, have a representative who has settled abroad as a labourer, whom they call "Germans". In Table 1, the estimated population data of 9 European countries where Turks, and therefore Alevi, live densely are given.

Table 1. Muslim, Turkish and Alevi Population by Country

Country	Total Population	Muslim Population	Turkish Population	Estimated Alevi Population
1 Germany	83.100.000	5.500.000	3.000.000	600.000
2 Austria	8.716.700	700.000	282.800	65-80.000
3 Belgium	11.492.621	800.000	240.000	25-30.000
4 Great Britain	67.000.000	4.130.000	430.000	150-200.000
5 Denmark	5.837.000	250.000	64.492	10.000
6 France	67.063.703	5.430.000	700.000	250-300.000
7 Netherlands	17.478.853	875.000	420.000	80-100.000
8 Sweden	10.327.589	640.000	100.000	10-15.000
9 Switzerland	8.606.033	500.000	130.000	40.000
Total	279.621.499	18.825.000	5.367.292	1.230.000-1.375.000

As seen in Table 1, the estimated Alevi population living in European countries has exceeded one million. Parallel to the Turkish population, the country where Alevi live most densely is Germany.¹ This situation has also been effective in the emergence of Alevi in Germany with their Alevi identity in both faith-based services and institutional mobility. In fact, not only in Germany but also in other European countries, Alevi in Germany have played a leading role.

1.2. (Türkiye) Union Party Linked Political Process

Like other Turkish labourers whose main goal was to improve their material situation, Alevi were not visible in the public sphere in the early years. Since all workers lived together in the dormitories (Heim), regardless of their religious and ethnic identity, the common denominators of the Turkish nation were taken into consideration. In addition, the fact that Alevi's religious practices, which made their religious identity

¹ For detailed information, see Keleş, 2021, p. 51.

visible, were closed to non-Alevis and that many rituals were not applicable in the living conditions of the first workers coming to Germany contributed to the Alevis keeping their religious identity hidden. Therefore, they had to wait until the 1970s to mobilise their Alevism. According to our findings, the first gatherings around the Alevi identity in Germany started with the trip of Mustafa Timisi, the President of the Union Party (Türkiye Birlik Partisi - TBP from November 1971 onwards) and his Deputy Secretary General, Av. Hasan Doğan, in September 1970 with the aim of “making the party’s policies known to the workers in Germany and determining the workers’ problems on the spot”. Within the scope of the trip, Timisi and Doğan visited cities where Alevis were densely populated, such as Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, Duisburg and Bremen, and organised interviews and conferences in various venues (Keleş, 2022, p. 242-243; Aydoğdu & Timisi Nalçaoğlu, 2021, p. 125, 127). The TBP was not the only party to visit Turkish workers living abroad in those years. The National Nizam Party, which emerged with Sunni-religious motives, parties belonging to the National Vision tradition such as the National Salvation Party (Millî Selamet Partisi - MSP), which was established after the party was shut down in March 1971, and Nationalist/Nationalist political formations also saw Turkish workers working in European countries as a solution to their financial problems and encouraged Turkish workers to institutionalise with their religiopolitical identities (Yavuz, 2008, p. 281; Çakır, 1990, p. 50, 216; Wunn, 2007, p. 42-54).

Founded in October 1966, the TBP experienced economic problems as it did not have sufficient voter support in the period following its foundation. It is possible to consider the trip to Germany that the party executives made in September 1970 as a project to get rid of the financial difficulties the party was in (Ata, 2007, p. 315-316; Birlik Partisi III. Büyük Kongresi, 1971, p. 33; Keleş, 2022, p. 543). Whether the reason for this trip was “making the party policy known to the workers in Germany and determining the workers’ problems on the spot” as explained in the party programme or providing financial relief with remittances, it can be said that this trip helped Alevis to come together in large groups. As a matter of fact, the data we have obtained suggest that small-scale party committees that paved the way for the institutional structures that would later turn into the Patriotic Union Federation were established as a result of these travels (Keleş, 2021, p. 221). However, it will be necessary to wait until 1976 for the formation of association structures.

Nermin Abadan-Unat states that the number of associations used by Turkish workers until 1974 was 112 (Abadan-Unat, 2002, p. 54). It should be considered natural that Alevis, who had no experience of association even in Türkiye, had not established an association in Germany until that date. However, this should not mean that they had no experience of association. As a matter of fact, it is known that they have been active in associations established for labour rights. The need to socialise as a result of family reunions was an important factor for the associations, which were almost entirely made up of Alevis and made their Alevism overt (Keleş, 2021, p. 218). Those who came together in support activities for the TBP started to create institutional spaces that would also be frequented by families. At a meeting held in February 1976 in Groß-Zimmern, near the city of Darmstadt, the TBP volunteers decided to establish associations in their respective cities and to unite these associations under the umbrella of a federation (Keleş, 2021, p. 222-223). Following this decision, the first petition to establish an association was submitted to the Munich associations desk by Süleyman Cem on 16 May 1976 and became official on 9 June 1976 with the name “Türkischer Arbeiterbund Eintrager Verein”. The second association, founded as “Turkish Labour Union” and abbreviated as TALEB, is located in Augsburg. The Augsburg association, which preferred the same name as the association established in Munich, applied to the table of associations on 06.11.1976 and was officially registered on 27.12.1976. Among the founders of the Augsburg association was Musa Kömürcü, Süleyman Cem’s brother. Another TBP-affiliated association whose exact founding date we were able to determine was the “Hamm Turkish Workers’ Association” (Verein der Arbeiter aus der Türkei), which was registered on 27.06.1978 by the Hamm Associations Desk. According to the information provided by Sabit Yıldız, who took an active part in the establishment of the association, the TBP started to work on establishing an association in Hamm in 1972.

The Maraş events of 19-26 December 1978 seem to have encouraged Alevis in other cities of Germany to leave left-wing organisations and establish TBP-affiliated associations. As a matter of fact, protest marches were organised in many cities of Germany after the events.² 40 Alevis who were members of the Popular Revolutionary Union (Halkçı Devrimci Birliği - HDB) in Hamburg until the Maraş events resigned from the HDB, which had a stance close to the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi

² “MHP-ADÜTDF Maraş Katliamının Hesabı Sorulsun Yürüyüşlerine Katıl”. (1979, Aralık). *HBF Haberleri*, (1), p. 8.

- CHP), citing the CHP's passive attitude after the Maraş events in December 1978, and founded a new association called the Turkish Workers Peace Union on 13 March 1979 with new members. Founded with a large participation of 70 people, this association soon joined the Patriotic Union Federation and changed its name to Patriotic Peace Union (Tosun, 2002, p. 33; Sökefeld, 2015, p. 410; Sökefeld, 2003, p. 141-143; Sökefeld, 2008, p. 21-22). The Turkish Patriotic Union West Berlin association in Berlin was also founded in 1979. This association, which Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi states to be in contact with the Turkish Unity Party, devoted a wide space to social activities for its members, especially folklore, theatre, karate, reading/writing and saz courses, as well as political activities protesting the 1980 military coup (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2002, p. 50, 51). It is also mentioned that there were TBP-affiliated associations in cities such as Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Ulm and that these associations acted with the YBF (Keleş, 2022, p. 546).

When the Patriotic Union Federation (YBF) was first established is a controversial issue, as there are no official records available. Although the people whose testimonies we consulted claim that it was founded in February 1976, this claim does not seem realistic since there was no YBF/TBP-affiliated institutional structure registered by the table of associations until that date. The Hamburg-based organisations, who have always stated that the Alevism movement started with them, claim that the Patriotic Union Federation was founded in 1979, when the Hamburg association joined the YBF. Sökefeld, who started his work in Hamburg, takes their claim as a basis and gives 1979 as the date of the establishment of the Patriotic Union Federation. This dating has been used unchanged in many subsequent studies (Sökefeld, 2003; Sökefeld, 2015, p. 410; Dettling, 2006, p. 33; Spuler-Stegeman, 2002, p. 36-41; Perşembe, 2005, p. 162; Tosun, 2002, p. 36; Kaplan, 2009, 215; Kehl-Bodrogi, 2002, 38). However, this claim of theirs pales in comparison to the fact that Süleyman Cem participated in the elections of the 16th term of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on 05.06.1977 as the president of the federation and as the TBP's Ankara first-place deputy candidate. Mustafa Timisi also emphasises 1976 as the date of the establishment of the YBF, stating that in the same year, money was collected from associations in Germany and he was allocated an office car with that money (Aydoğdu - Timisi Nalçaoğlu, 2021, p. 169; Keleş, 2022, p. 548). In this case, it is safe to infer the federation must have been founded between June 1976 and December 1976.

The YBF, which did not seem to be very active until the Maraş incidents in December 1978, started to mobilise with the new institutional structures organised by breaking away from the existing leftist associations after that date. This mobility seems to have reached its peak with the foreign trip of Mustafa Timisi, the chairman of the TBP, between 13 May 1979 and 30 June 1979. Timisi was also present at the general assembly of the Patriotic Union Federation held in Frankfurt between 23-24-25 June 1979 and witnessed the participation of new associations to the federation.³ By 1980, it is said that 34 associations organised in different cities of Germany were operating under the roof of the Patriotic Union Federation. It is among the information that these associations were organised under the name of Amele Union in many cities and provided financial support to the Turkish Unity Party (Şener & İlknur, 1995, p. 115; Ata, 2007, p. 316). Muhammad S. Abdullah states that 30 associations were represented under the roof of the federation as of 1981 (Abdullah, 1981, p. 139).

The dissolution of the TBP together with other parties on 16 October 1981 following the military coup of 12 September 1980 (Güler, 2008, p. 16; Ata, 2007, p. 299-302) initiated the disintegration process of the Patriotic Union Federation. Until 1983, the YBF tried to be active and preferred Munich as its headquarters in the first years. However, the fact that the contributions of the Berlin Patriotic Union Association came to the fore in the post-1980 activities led the federation to adopt a Berlin-based structure. The Berlin association, which also undertook the responsibility of publishing the magazine *Yurtsever Birlik* (Patriotic Union), which bears the same name as the TBP's organ *Yurtsever Birlik* (Patriotic Union) and whose first issue was published in February 1982, carried out both the organisation and the preparations for the theatre performances titled "Karaba in Türkiye's Truth", directed by Ali Haydar Cilasan and featuring the 1978 Maraş events, which were staged in 17 different cities in Germany.⁴ In the 1980s, representatives of the YBF in Berlin regularly participated in 1 May celebrations with a red flag and presented themselves as an Alevi community of the proletariat (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2006, p. 8).

After the federation started to act from Berlin, it first changed its name to the Federation of Patriotic Union of Turkish Patriots in Europe (ATYBF - Föderation der Vereinigungen der Patrioten aus der Türkei

³ "Yurtsever Adaylarımızla Halkımızın Huzurundayız". (Eylül 1979). *Yurtsever Birlik*, (4-5), 1-4; Keleş, 2022, p. 548.

⁴ "Yurtseverler Tiyatroda Başarıldı". (Şubat 1982). *Yurtsever Birlik*, (1), p. 12,13.

in Europa e.v.) (Cem, 1 Şubat 1982, p. 2, 3). But it did not use this name for long and continued under the name Democratic Patriotic Union Federation (DYBF) until 1983 when it decided to dissolve. With the joint decision taken at the meeting held in Nuremberg in 1983, the activities of the DYBF were terminated (Tosun, 2002, p. 74; Gül, 1995, p. 44). Massicard states that the transition of TBP President Mustafa Timisi to the Populist Party led to the closure of the Patriotic Union Federation and gives 1983 as the closing date (Massicard, 2007, p. 317). However, as Massicard believes, Mustafa Timisi did not join the Populist Party, but the Social Democracy Party (SODEP), which was founded under the chairmanship of Cezmi Kartay. (Aydoğdu - Timisi Nalçaoğlu, 2021, p. 203-206) Şener and İlknur state that the decision to dissolve was taken in 1989, without specifying the place. However, it was not possible to find any information on this issue either from our witnesses or from the memoirs (Şener-İlknur, 1995, p. 117). After the Federation dissolved itself, the remaining associations, except for Augsburg, Berlin and Munich, were closed down. The Berlin association continued its activities as the Union of Turkish Patriots and in 1991 it changed its statute and name and started to serve as the Berlin Anatolian Alevi Cultural Centre Cemevi. The Munich association changed its name in 1990 and became the Munich Turkish Alevi-Bektashi Cultural Centre. The longest-lasting association of this period in the eyes of the official authorities was the association established in Augsburg, but the Augsburg association did not have any activity after 1980 and as of 2009, its registration in the table of associations was deleted due to loss of members (Keleş, 2021, p. 226).

2. Orientation Towards Alevism

It is very difficult to find information and documents about Alevi in Germany covering the 1960s. The narratives about the Alevi presence in Germany begin in the 1970s. In fact, this situation is also valid for other groups of Turkish origin. For example, the National Vision Organisation (Millî Görüş Hareketi), which is now considered one of the most established Sunni organisations in Germany, was first institutionalised in Braunschweig in 1972 (Perşembe, 2005, p. 142), while the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs was only established in 1982 with the support of the Republic of Türkiye. Even if Sunni religious organisations started to become visible at such a late date despite the absence of any social pressure on them, the delay in the “visibility” of Alevi, who have problems in expressing their religious belonging or affinity, thousands of kilometres away from the lands to which they belong, should be considered normal. From this point of view, the attempts to “break out of their shells” in the 1970s are important initiatives with very few examples. The most widely attended of such initiatives was the *Hızır Cem* in Hamm in February 1977. Hundreds of Alevi came together for worship, and Christian clergy and officials of official institutions were also invited. Niyazi Bozdoğan, a member of the Ağuşen Ocaq, was the *post dede* of the cem. Bozdoğan and Ahmet Kömürçü, a member of the Kureyşan Ocaq living in Munich, are the rare names who were able to serve as *post dede* in the cems in Germany in the 1970s. According to the information conveyed to us, the cems organised in those years were mostly held within a narrow framework and in houses. It is stated that all Alevi can participate in these cems - unlike the cems held in the villages - regardless of their *Ocaq* (dede family) affiliation and without any distinction between *Dede/Talib*.⁵ On the other hand, there were also some dedes who lived in Türkiye and travelled to Germany to see their *talibs*.⁶

2.1. Alevism Centred Institutionalisation

In the 1980s, the visibility of Alevi in Germany increased. Different elements played important roles in this increase. Şinasi Koç, in particular, is one of the names that we should definitely recognise. Born in 1911 in Tunceli/Perçek, Koç, who had travelled to Germany infrequently before, started to travel more frequently after his retirement. From 1982 onwards, he travelled not only to Germany, but also to countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, where Alevi live in dense populations, and was instrumental in bringing people together around the Alevi identity through the cems he conducted in the places allocated to him and the conversations he held in homes. He also actively contributed to the institutionalisation process of Alevi by encouraging those gathered around him (Keleş, 2021, p. 232-233). The Association for the Promotion of Hacı Bektaş Veli Culture in Cologne and its Surroundings (*Verein zur Förderung der Hacı Bektaş Veli Kultur in Köln und Umgebung e.v.*), which became official on 1 March 1987 with the registration

⁵ Religious leaders among Alevi are called “dede”. Those who listen to the advice of the dede and shape their religious life accordingly are called “talib”. Dedes are believed to trace their lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad and are also called Ocakzade. Alevi outside the families of the Dede are Talib.

⁶ According to the information given by Ocaklıoğlu, İbrahim Kamil Karaman, who was also a lawyer, was among the dedes who travelled to Germany both to visit their talibs and for sightseeing purposes. KK-1.

number 9599, was founded by the people who came together under his guidance and under the chairmanship of Niyazi Bozdoğan. Şinasi Koç passed away on 28 April 1990 at the home of his *talib*, Sadık Satılmış, who lived in the city of Homburg Saar.⁷

In our opinion, one of the important elements that contributed to the visibility of Alevi and which is not often mentioned is the international colloquium “*L’ordre des Bektachis et les se Réclamant de Hadji-Bektach*” held in Strasbourg between 29 June and 2 July 1986. Irène Mélikoff, who is known for her research on Alevism-Bektashism, organised this colloquium in her capacity as the Director of the Institute of Turkish Studies before she passed away. 36 academics participated in this colloquium with their presentations, while almost all of the guest list of 70 people consisted of well-known scholars and experts in their fields.⁸ Although the colloquium was held in France, many listeners from Germany were present in the halls where the presentations took place. Within the scope of the colloquium, an “Ayn-i Cem” was organised in order to reflect the tradition to the participants. Niyazi Bozdoğan was first approached for the Cem, for which preparations had begun weeks in advance, but upon learning that it was to be a spectacle, Bozdoğan decided not to participate in this Cem, to which he had initially given his consent. As a new post dede could not be found in the conditions of that day and in the limited time left, Ali Duran Gülçiçek had to take on the task of conducting the cem, even though he was not a Ocakzade. In this new situation, Gülçiçek, who did not want to break away from the tradition, included Hasan Taşkale, a member of the “*Şex Delil-i Berxecan*” Ocak, in the team. Even though it was a demonstration, the 12 services of the cems performed in the Koçgiri region (Zara/Imranlı) were fulfilled in full. Within the scope of the colloquium, Alevi sayings were also performed by artists.

The Strasbourg colloquium not only contributed to the visibility of Alevi in Germany, but also set an example for the emergence of institutional structures that we call “*culture-centred*”. The “Alevi Culture Week” held at Hamburg University between 2-7 October 1989, the programme held at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin between 26-31 March 1991 and the event held in Cologne between November 1991 under the name Anatolian Alevi Culture Days brought similar elements to the fore. Within the scope of these programmes, as in the Strasbourg example, scientific presentations were made, public Cems were held and Alevi sayings were performed by artists (Keleş, 2021, p. 240-251). On the other hand, the interest shown in these events encouraged the organisers to create institutional structures.

The most frequently emphasised issue as to why Alevi waited until 1987 to establish institutional structures based on religious affiliation has been taqiyya (Sökefeld, 2008, p. 7-35). However, we believe that what should be emphasised is the fact that those do not have religious places like mosques, churches and synagogues in their tradition. Unless the place of residence is a “*Ocak*” centre, almost none of the Alevi villages had a place of worship until the 1990s. Cems in the villages were generally held in the large spaces of houses called “house roofs” (Turkish: Ev Damı) by the villagers. In addition, it is also stated that “The East and the West (the whole earth) belongs to Allah. Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah. Verily, Allah is the One whose grace is wide, the One who truly knows.”⁹ The 115th verse of Sûrah al-Baqara, translated as “The whole earth belongs to Allah.” reflects the Alevi’s broad perspective on the issue of places of worship. In the process that started with migration, Alevi, who have moved away from tradition but whose memories of the tradition are still fresh, have turned to the search for the transfer of tradition to future generations. This search has brought the need for a place of worship to the surface. The organisational experience of Alevi, who were previously active in political formations, combined with the introduction of international relations networks and Germany’s multiculturalism policies, institutional structures with Alevi identity began to emerge.

Institutional structures have emerged with two different orientations. The first to take action in this context are what we call “*dede-centred*” (Keleş, 2021, p. 11-17) organisations that prioritise belief and tradition. The first of these organisations, mostly led by dedes, was founded in March 1987 under the leadership of Niyazi Bozdoğan under the name of Verein zur Förderung der Hacı Bektaş Veli Kultur in Köln und Umgebung e.V. (Association for the Promotion of Hacı Bektaş Veli Culture in Köln and its Surroundings). The Cologne association was followed by the Ahlen and Vicinity Alevi Cultural Association (Türkischer Kulturkreis HBV. e.v.), which was formalised in February 1988 under the chairmanship of

⁷ “Şinasi Koç’u Kalbimize Gömdük”, *Gerçek İlim Özel Sayı* (Mayıs), p. 1-4.

⁸ We would like to thank Ali Duran Gülçiçek for sharing the list of participants of the colloquium with us.

⁹ *Kur’an-ı Kerim Meâli, Bakara Sûresi, 2/115*, (2008) Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı.

Muhsin Cevahir and organised around the Gerçek İlim Magazine. The Alevi associations in Duisburg and Mainz were formalised simultaneously. The Mainz Bektashi-Gemeinde e.v. (Mainz Bektashi-Gemeinde e.v.) was approved by the table of associations in December 1988 under the chairmanship of İsmail Yağlı, while the Duisburg Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş Veli Culture and Promotion Association gained a corporate identity on 28.05.1987 under the chairmanship of Zeynel Demir. By 1990, there were around 20 associations identified as *dede-centred*. Seven of them came together under the umbrella of the Federation of Alevi Communities (ACF) in May 1990, while seven others decided to publish the Gerçek İlim Journal together.¹⁰

At a time when *dede-centred* organisations began to formalise their institutional structures, people who broke away from left-wing political structures and turned towards Alevi identities began to plan cultural activities. As mentioned above, with reference to the Strasbourg Colloquium of 1986, they tried to blend science, religion and culture in a single pot. Hamburg was the first place where the first movement in this direction started. However, the fact that the first widely attended cems in Hamburg and Hamburg/Altona were organised in 1984 under the post-dedate of Şinasi Koç, and the distribution of pamphlets on the Kurdish movement at the cem held at the Hamburg Mümmelmannsberg Gesamtschule is an interesting example in terms of showing the diversity of Alevis living in Hamburg (Tosun, 2002, p. 81, 92; Sökefeld, 2002, p. 171). In this respect, Hamburg is a cosmopolitan city with both “*culture-centred*” (Keleş, 2021, p. 25-30) and “*dede-centred*” Alevis, as well as those who are devoted to the “Kurdistan Alevis Union”, which announced its establishment in November 1992 with a declaration labelling the first Alevi institutionalisation as pro-Turkish (Keleş, 2021, p. 274-276).

The “Alevi Culture Week” programme, which was organised at the University of Hamburg between 2-7 October 1989 in Hamburg, home to a dense Alevi population, took its reference from the Strasbourg Colloquium and, in our opinion, served as a model for the events to be held in Berlin and Cologne. Within the scope of the event, scientific conferences were organised, well-known Alevi artists performed Alevi sayings and a public cem was held. What made the Alevi Culture Week truly valuable was the 4-page Declaration on Alevism. The Declaration of Alevism was not limited to Germany, but was also published in national newspapers such as Hürriyet and Cumhuriyet in Türkiye.¹¹ In the text published under the signature of the Alevi Culture Group Hamburg and the title “Declaration”, it is stated that 98% of the population of Türkiye is Muslim, and it is emphasised that both the Republic of Türkiye considers Alevis as Muslims and that Alevis identify themselves as Muslims. The titles of the declaration are as follows; 1) 20 million Alevis live in Türkiye. 2) Freedom of religion is a human right. 3) There is freedom of belief in the Constitution. 4) Religious Affairs represents only the Sunni branch of Islam. 5) Alevi identity is ignored. 6) Alevis are forced to hide their identity. 7) Human rights are violated. 8) Alevi - Bektashi teachings advocate democracy, secularism and tolerance. 9) Between 350,000 and 400,000 Alevis live in Germany. 10) Alevi teaching is a contribution to a multicultural society. 11) Alevi culture must be kept alive. 12) In Germany it is necessary to provide moral support for the second generation. 13) Alevis and Sunnis need to understand each other better. 14) Germans should recognise the Alevi teaching. 15) Events will be organised to promote Alevi culture in Hamburg.

The interest shown in the Alevi Culture Week and the acceptance of the declaration by the social base necessitated the emergence of an institutional structure centred on Alevism in Hamburg. After about 8 months of preparation, the Hamburg Alevi Cultural Centre was founded in June 1990 under the chairmanship of İsmail Kaplan, following a congress chaired by Ali Haydar Cilasun, a prominent figure in the Kurdish Alevi movement. As stated by Kaplan, Alevi organisations that became institutionalised in other cities in Germany after that date preferred the name Alevi Cultural Centre (if they had a “*culture-centred*” orientation) (Sökefeld, 2008, p. 22-24; Kaplan, 2009, p. 216; Keleş, 2012, p. 158; Dettling, 2006, p. 35; Tosun, 2002, p. 113-117). As a matter of fact, the Alevis in Berlin, who set out with the “Culture Week” event, have preferred a similar method. However, we would like to emphasise that the institutionalisation in Berlin was a continuation of the Turkish Patriotic Union West Berlin Association (Deutsch Türkische Arbeiterbund e.v.), which changed its name and goal and became the Berlin Anatolian Alevis Cultural Centre Cemevi. After the “Anatolian Alevis Culture Week” (Yüreklik, 1991, Mart 31), which was organised between 26-31

¹⁰ Wuppertal, Gladberg, Rheda-Wiedenbruck, Kamen, Bergkamen, Saarland and Ahlen associations “Gerçek İlim’in dernekler arasında ortaklaşa çıkarılması memnunluk yaratıyor!”. (1990, Eylül). *Gerçek İlim Dergisi*, 4.

¹¹ The Declaration of Alevism was announced to the public by Hürriyet on 6 May 1990 and was also published on page 15 of Cumhuriyet on 15 May 1990. See also M. D. Özbaş, 1999, 58; Tosun, 2002, p. 98-101; “Alevilik Bildirgesi”. (1989, Mayıs).

March 1991 and had a similar character to the Hamburg event of October 1989, Alevi living in Berlin transformed their institutional structure into an Alevism-centred organisation. Another event worth mentioning, which was not different from the Hamburg and Berlin events in terms of content but was shorter in duration, and subsequent institutionalisation, took place in Cologne. The programme, which took place on 23-24 November 1991, was named “Alevi Culture Days” (Gülçiçek, 2018, p. 70). On 23 February 1992, three months after the event, the Cologne Alevi Cultural Centre gained an official identity.

Until 2 July 1993, Alevi continued their existence in a relatively calm manner, but after the events that took place in Sivas on that date, they entered into an intense process. Even though they were institutionalised with different orientations, they quickly coordinated and organised the Sivas Massacre Protest March in Cologne/Eberplatz on 10 July 1993, which was attended by around 60,000 Alevi. Thus, the Sivas events were a bitter experience that showed them that they should act together. While the Federation of Alevi Unions of Germany (ABF) held its general assembly in May 1992 with representatives from 29 associations, with İsmail Elçiöğlü elected as the general president,¹² the number of associations represented in the general assembly held in Frankfurt in October 1993 increased to 40 with the participation of “*culture-centred*” organisations (Keleş, 2021, p. 262). In the *Mürşid* magazine of the same date, the number of ABF member associations is given as 47 (Aydemir and Tur, 15 Ekim 1993, p. 4). The general assembly on 30/31 October 1993 was instrumental in the transformation of the ABF administration, which until then had a “*dede-centred*” line, into a cultural-centred one. The board of directors chaired by Ali Rıza Gülçiçek decided to move the ABF headquarters in Gustavsburg to Cologne. In October 1994, the name was changed to the European Federation of Alevi Unions (AABF) in order to facilitate the membership of associations established in other European countries.

In the 1990s, the AABF directed its institutional energies towards Türkiye due to the fact that its leaders were the first generation of Alevi who came to Germany from Türkiye, and the events in Sivas and Gazi Neighbourhood remained demonstrative (Keleş, 2021, p. 263). This seems to have delayed the rights that could have been obtained earlier in Germany. However, there have been attempts, albeit on a small scale, for them to obtain rights in Germany. In particular, efforts to promote German citizenship have been initiated since the first half of the 1990s¹³ in addition, the first application for public legal personality on behalf of the AABF was made in 1995 (Şen & Aydın, 2002, p. 65).

2.2. Alevi Against Alevi

The 90s also witnessed internal conflicts among Alevi. The first of these conflicts were the articles published in the *Gerçek İlim* (Real Science) Journal, which were aimed at fixing the time of the Muharram fast according to the Gregorian calendar, and the articles arguing that it was Isaac, not Ishmael, one of the sons of Abraham, who had to be sacrificed (Kutlu, 1991, p. 6, 7; Savaşan, 1991a, p. 11-12; Cevahir, 1991, p. 6, 7; Savaşan, 1991a, p. 11-12; Savaşan, 1991b, p. 21; Savaşan, 1992, p. 19-21, 23). In fact, Halil Öztoprak was the first to voice such claims (Öztoprak, 2012, p. 199, 200, 225, 226). Since the *Gerçek İlim* Journal was in the sphere of influence of Şinasi Koç, he continued the same arguments. Mahmut Savaşan, who lived in Neu-Ulm, claimed in his articles in the *Gerçek İlim* Magazine that the event of Karbala took place in April, citing the Laupheim Observatory officials. Following his claims, the federation authorities contacted the authorities of the “Volkssrennwarte Laupheim e.v.” and endeavoured to refute Savaşan’s claims, and the correspondence between them and the observatory authorities was published in the official publication of the federation, “*Mürşid*”, under the title “To All Association Managers, Both Included and Not Included in the Federation, and to All Alevi Who Have Been Deceived.” (Aydemir, 1992, p. 3-6). Despite the harsh correspondence between them, it was also observed that when it came to the rights of Alevi, the officials of *Gerçek İlim Dergisi* and the federation executives acted together. As a matter of fact, in March 1992, they came together with Alevi organisations in Türkiye and participated together as a German delegation in visits to state ministers.¹⁴

Another rivalry among Alevi emerged when the Kurdistan Alevi Union (KAB) announced its establishment in November 1992. In their declaration, the KAB accused the Republic of Türkiye of being a fascist state (Tur, 2016, p. 230), described the existing institutions as unrepresentative of Alevism, and

¹² “Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu 3. Genel Kurulunu Yaptı” (1992, Temmuz). *Mürşid*, (7), p. 21.

¹³ “Konferans”. (1993, Eylül). *Mürşid*, (14), p. 23.

¹⁴ “Türkiye ve Almanya’daki Alevi Derneklerince Hükümet Yetkililerine Sunulan Rapor”, *Mürşid* 6 (Mayıs 1992), p. 5; “Alevi Heyeti Türkiye’deydi”, *Gerçek İlim Dergisi* 33-34 (1992, Nisan), p. 3.

accused Alevi institutions of trading in Alevism (Aydın, 1994, p. 30). The Federation wing, on the other hand, in a public statement signed by its president İsmail Elçioğlu and secretary general Ahmet Ayverdi, implicitly referred to the KAB and described it as an organisation that had been established to serve dark ambitions due to the disagreement with the organisation of the Alevi community (Aydemir & Elçioğlu, 1993, p. 24). Ruşen Çakır states that the Alevi Movement of Kurdish origin first tried to infiltrate existing Alevi institutions, but when it failed to do so, it was founded under the guidance of the PKK, and that after the 1993 Sivas Incidents, it took advantage of Alevis' resentment against the state and tried to draw them into the ranks of the Kurdish Movement (Çakır, 1995, Temmuz 8). Kehl-Bodrogi, on the other hand, argues that the PKK had the Kurdistan Alevis Union, an ethnically based organisation, established in order not to lose Alevi sympathisers who had not yet joined the Alevi institutionalisation (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2002, p. 42).

Although the KAB announced its establishment in November 1992, its institutionalisation took place in 1994. Zülfikar magazine, the first issue of which was published in June 1994, was used as the publication organ of KAB. In its first issue, the magazine used the city of Duisburg as its contact address, but from issue 14 onwards it was based in Düsseldorf, from issue 21 onwards in Frankfurt, and from issue 28 onwards in Cologne. As Massicard rightly points out, the most determined aspect of the magazine was to declare Alevi associations and administrators who worked smoothly with Turkish institutions and organisations as agents and collaborators, and to accuse them of assimilating Alevis (Massicard, 2007, p. 134). The most interesting of the names that came to the fore both in Zülfikar magazine and within the KAB was Ali Haydar Cilasun, who had been known among Alevis since the Patriotic Union process. In addition to his writings in the magazine, Cilasun's interview with Abdullah Öcalan, which was published in the 5th and 6th issues of Zülfikar magazine, did not escape our attention. The Cilasun-Öcalan interview was published in the magazine under the signature of Abdullah Öcalan (Öcalan, 1995, Mart, p. 23-31; Öcalan, 1995, Mayıs, 17-23, p. 17-23).

2.3. The Public Corporation Process

As the 2000s began, Alevis' demands for their rights in Germany began to manifest themselves. Firstly, the Berlin Anatolian Alevi Cultural Centre (Berlin AAKM) applied to the Berlin Senate for Alevism classes and was authorised to give Alevism classes in public schools in the State of Berlin with the decision taken in April 2002. Following this development, the name of the organisation was changed to "Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland e.v." (Alevi Community of Germany e.v.) at the AABF Statute Assembly held in September 2002 and the article "AABF defines itself as a faith institution within the framework of the German Constitution" was added to the statute. In addition, the statute states that the AABF "protects the interests of its member associations against third parties - legal entities, public legal entities and individuals. It endeavours to promote the Alevi faith and the entire Alevi culture. In particular, it endeavours to ensure that German schools offer courses in accordance with the Alevi-Bektashi faith. The AABF endeavours to obtain the status of a public institution according to the German Constitution" (Kaplan, 2002, p. 42, 43; Gümüş, 2005, p. 509-511; Kehl-Bodrogi, p. 15; Keleş, 2021, p. 165-166). The reports prepared by Ursula Spuler-Stegemann and Stefan Muckel on the AABF (Spuler-Stegeman, 2003, Temmuz) confirmed the AABF's status as a religious community "Religionsgemeinschaft". In December 2004, the authorities of the State of NRW announced to the public that the AABF met the requirements for the status of a religious community as defined by the Federal Constitution. The religious community status strengthened the AABF's hand with regard to Alevism classes, and the Alevism classes, which started in the State of Berlin in 2002, were first implemented in the State of Baden-Württemberg in the 2006/2007 academic year in accordance with Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the Federal Constitution, and have since expanded to include the States of NRW, Bayern, Hesse, Niedersachsen, Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz (Keleş, 2021, p. 160).

Among the states where the Federation of Alevi Associations in Germany has completed its state structure, the first state to sign an agreement on equal rights was Hamburg on 13 November 2012. Hamburg was followed by the agreements signed with Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) on 29 September 2013 and Bremen on 14 October 2014. The demand for equality of rights in the State of Rhineland-Palatinate, which started in February 2013, resulted in the agreement signed on 9 April 2019 (Çopur and Aksünger, 2017, p. 601, 602; Coşan-Eke, 2015, p. 98; Aksünger, 2013, p. 42-54; Ataman, 2019, p. 10, 11; Duman Karaboğa, 2018, p. 83). As a result of this recognition, Alevis were granted the right to represent the sacred symbols of religious beliefs in the Chamber of Faith (Andachtraum) of the German Parliament (Bundestag), and with the ceremony held on 29 June 2017, Alevis began to be represented in the room where Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Sunni Islam were represented, with a baglama, a portrait of Hz. Ali and the

figure of canes performing Semah. 10 December 2020 was a milestone for Alevi in Germany, as the Federation of Alevi Associations of Germany was recognised as a “Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts” (Public Legal Entity) by the official authorities of the State of NRW (Laschet, 2020, Aralık 10, p. 1-4) On 6 December 2023, the Berlin State Senate became the second state to grant the AABF the status of a public legal entity.

The AABF has a strong institutional structure as it is the first institution with broad participation in Germany, has signed bilateral agreements with official authorities, and has the largest organisational network among Alevi institutions. In this respect, it has been recognised by the German state as an interlocutor in relations with Alevi and has been a founding member of the Islamic Conference of Germany, which was launched in 2006. However, the AABF is not the only representative of the Alevi, whose population in Germany is estimated at 600,000. The Alevi Faith Community Germany - AITA (Der Bund Alevitischer Gemeinden E.V. - BAG), which was formed by the coming together of 7 associations in February 2020, has managed to come to the fore with its educational and social activities for Alevi in NRW. Claiming to have set out in 1994 as an alternative to all Alevi organisations, including the AABF, the BAG is now called the Federation of Democratic Alevi (FEDA). Although its number is not clear, FEDA, which we believe represents around 20 associations, has moved away from its claim of being an alternative in the years of its establishment and started to get closer to AABF and organise activities together. The AABF’s close stance to the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in pre-2000 Turkish politics must have played a role in this rapprochement, as the AABF’s stance towards the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in pre-2000 Turkish politics shifted significantly towards the HDP after 2013, and Turgut Öker became the first-place parliamentary candidate from the HDP for Istanbul 2nd District in the parliamentary elections held on 7 June 2015.

Conclusion

Almost all Alevi in Germany are of Turkish origin. However, those in Germany have much broader rights than their relatives left in Türkiye. The acquisition of rights took place after many years of struggle. Alevi, like many other immigrant elements, came to Germany in 1961 as guest workers. During the first 15 years in Germany, they did not engage in any socialization activities, thinking that they would return, like all other Turkish workers. Of course, they did not remain indifferent to the political events in Türkiye. Their membership in left workers’ associations shows how active they are politically. In addition, it is voiced by both the then TBP chairman Mustafa Timisi and the names that supported the Alevi that they offered significant support to the Unity Party (Türkiye), which was the first political attempt of the Alevi. Moreover, by transforming their support to TBP into an institutional structure under the umbrella of the Patriotic Union Federation, they gained experience of organizing before faith-based institutional structures. Because, within these institutional structures, Alevism has not been brought to the fore as a belief. However, the Maraş and Çorum events, where violent acts against Alevi took place, were protested by different events.

The faith-centered Alevi awakening in Germany started with Şinasi Koç’s frequent trips to European countries. Koç, who was one of the rare writers on Alevism among Alevi in those years, encouraged the crowds gathered around him in the cems he conducted, on the way to institutionalization, with the advantage of being a *Ocakzade*. The associations that emerged under his guidance were considered by us as *dede-centrist*. Koç was also influential on Alevi in Germany with his ideas. Especially the associations that came together around the Journal of Real Science took Koç’s ideas on the Eid al-Adha and Muharram fasting further and had an intellectual conflict with the members of the AABF and became the cause of the first separatist views among the Alevi.

Melikoff’s colloquium, which was held in Strasbourg University in 1986 with his personal efforts, was found to be inspiring by left-wing figures who thought much more secularly than their Alevi dedes and wanted to market Alevism as a culture, and similar events were organized first in Hamburg and then in other cities of Germany. The intense interest shown in these events has revealed the institutional structures that we call cultural centre. Alevi, who have attained unparalleled institutional structures in their traditions, have increased the number of their institutional structures even more after the 1993 Sivas events and started to be the addressee of both the Turkish and German governments and demand rights from them. The grievances they have experienced in Türkiye have elevated them to an advantageous position in Germany

compared to other formations of Turkish origin. As a matter of fact, while Sunni institutions such as Milli Görüş, DİTİB and Süleymanlılar, which completed their institutional structures long before the Alevis, could not obtain the “Public Legal Entity Right” in any state in Germany, they gained this right in the NRW and Berlin States.

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KK-1: Veli Ocaklıoğlu, 74, Pensioner, University Graduate, Nauheim.

1961'DE BAŞLAYAN ALEVİLERİN ALMANYA TARİHİ (Genişletilmiş Özet)

Aleviler, içinde yaşadıkları çevre tarafından Alevi oldukları bilinmesine rağmen, yüzyıllar boyu öncesinde boy göstermedikleri kamusal alanlarda görünür olmamayı tercih etmişlerdir. Elbette ki onları bu tercihe zorlayan çeşitli sebepler vardır. Bu sebeplerin başında da zarar göreceklelerinden emin olmaları gelmektedir. Zarar görmemek için çoğunlukla kamusal alan dışında dağ köylerine sığınmayı tercih etmişlerdir. Ancak değişen yaşam koşullarına paralel olarak başlayan kentleşme süreci, Alevileri de etkilemiş ve Aleviler, Aleviliklerini görünür kılmamaya gayret göstererek kamusal alan içinde var olmaya başlamışlardır. Bu bağlamda makalemizin ana teması, 1950'li yıllara kadar, istisnai durumlar hariç kamusal alanın dışında kalmayı başaran Kızılbaş/Alevilerin¹⁵ Almanya'da Alevi kimlikleriyle varoluş süreçleridir.

Günümüzde Almanya'da yaşayan Alevilerin tamamına yakını Türkiye kökenlidir. 1961 Anayasası'nın 18. maddesi ile Türk vatandaşlarının seyahat hürriyetinin temel bir hak olarak kabul edilmesini takip eden 30 Ekim 1961 İşgücü Antlaşması, Türkiye'de ekonomik sıkıntılar yaşayan dar gelirli vatandaşların işçi statüsünde Almanya'ya yönelmesini sağlamıştır. 1973-74'te petrol fiyatlarının dört kat artmasına neden olan "petrol ambargosu", dünya genelinde büyük bir ekonomik krize sebep olmuş ve buna bağlı olarak Avrupa ülkelerindeki işsizlik oranlarında artış gerçekleşmiştir. İşsizlikle baş etmek isteyen Almanya'nın da içinde bulunduğu Avrupa ülkeleri "Anwerbestop" (yabancı işçi alımını durdurma) olarak bilinen kararı almıştır. Ancak İşçi alımının durdurulması göçü durdurmamış, ortaya çıkan bu yeni durum, aile birleşimleriyle Türk nüfusunun artmasını kolaylaştırmıştır. 1973/74 döneminde tüm Avrupa ülkelerinde 711.302 olan Türk işçilerinin sayısı, aile birleşimlerinin ardından bir milyondan fazla artışla 1.765.788'e yükselmiştir.

Bu bağlamda, 1961'de başlayan batı Avrupa'ya yönelik işgücü göçü, ekonomik darboğazdan çıkmak isteyenler için iyi bir alternatif olmuştur. Öyle ki; Alevilerin yoğun olarak yaşadığı Tunceli, Erzincan, Malatya, Sivas vb. şehir sınırları içerisinde kalan neredeyse tüm Alevi köylerinin "Almanca" olarak isimlendirdikleri, yurtdışına işçi olarak yerleşmiş bir temsilcisi bulunmaktadır. Avrupa ülkelerinde yaşayan tahmini Alevi nüfus, bir milyon rakamının üzerine çıkmıştır. Türk nüfusuna paralel olarak Alevilerin de en yoğun olarak yaşadıkları ülke Almanya'dır. Tespitlerimize göre Almanya'da Alevilik kimliği etrafında ilk bir araya gelişler, *Birlik Partisi* Genel Başkanı Mustafa Timisi ve Genel Sekreter Yardımcısı Av. Hasan Doğan'ın Eylül 1970'te gerçekleştirmiş oldukları seyahatle başlamıştır. Timisi ve Doğan, Alevilerin yoğun olarak yaşadığı şehirleri ziyaret ederek, değişik mekânlarda söyleşi ve konferanslar gerçekleştirmiştir. Elde etmiş olduğumuz veriler, 1976'da Yurtseverler Birliği Federasyonu'na (YTB) dönüşecek olan kurumsal yapıların önünü açan küçük çaplı parti komitelerinin bu seyahatler sonucunda kurulduğu yönündedir.

YTB'ye bağlı ilk dernek, 9 Haziran 1976'da Süleyman Cem başkanlığında "Türkischer Arbeiterbund Eintrager Verein" ismiyle resmîyet kazanmıştır. "Türk Ameleler Birliği" (TALEB) olarak kurulan ikinci dernek Augsburg şehrinde 27.12.1976 tarihinde resmî olarak tescil edilmiştir. Augsburg derneği kurucuları arasında, Süleyman Cem'in kardeşi Musa Kömürcü de bulunmaktadır. 19-26 Aralık 1978'de meydana gelen Maras olayları, Almanya'daki Alevileri TBP bağlantılı dernek kurmaya yönlendirmiş ve dernek sayısı 34'e kadar çıkmıştır. Bu derneklerin birçok şehirde Amele Birliği adıyla örgütlendiği ve Türkiye Birlik Partisi'ne finansal destek sağladığı söylenmektedir.

1970'li yıllarda, Alevilerin Cem bağladıklarından da söz edilmektedir. Tespit edebildiğimiz en geniş katılımlı Cem, Niyazi Bozdoğan'ın post dedeliğinde, Şubat 1977'te Hamm şehrinde gerçekleşen Hızır Cemi olmuştur. Yüzlerce Alevinin bir araya geldiği ceme, Hıristiyan din adamları ve resmî kurum yetkilileri de davet edilmiştir. Bozdoğan ve Ahmet Kömürcü, 1970'li yıllarda Almanya'daki cemlerde post dedeliği yapabilen ender isimlerdir. Şinasi Koç'un da katkısıyla 1980'li yıllarda Almanya'da Alevilerin görünürlüğü artmaya başlamıştır. Alevilerin görünürlüğüne katkı sunan unsurlardan bir diğeri de 29 Haziran-2 Temmuz 1986 tarihleri arasında Strasbourg'da düzenlenen uluslararası "L'ordre des Bektachis et les se Réclamant de Hadji-Bektach" Kolokyumudur. Irène Mélikoff'un, akademik hayata veda etmeden önce Türk Etütler Enstitüsü Müdürü unvanıyla, düzenlemiş olduğu bu kolokyum, her ne kadar Fransa'da düzenlenmiş olsa da Almanya'dan çok sayıda dinleyici, sunumların gerçekleştiği salonlarda hazır bulunmuştur. Kolokyum

¹⁵ Alevilerin kökenine dair modern dönemde biri diğerinden farklı birtakım görüşler ileri sürülse de bu satırların yazarı, Alevileri Müslüman olarak görmekte ve onları Batınî İslam geleneğinin temsilcileri olarak kabul etmektedir.

kapsamında katılımcılara geleneği yansıtmak maksadıyla bir de “Ayn-i Cem” tertip edilmiştir. Strasbourg kolokyumunun, Alevilerin Almanya’da görünür olmasına katkı sağladığı gibi “kültür merkezci” olarak isimlendirdiğimiz kurumsal yapıların ortaya çıkmasına da örnek teşkil etmiştir. Kurumsal yapılar, *dede merkezci* ve *kültür merkezci* olmak üzere iki farklı yönelimle ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda ilk harekete geçenler, bizim “dede merkezci” dediğimiz, inanç ve geleneği önceleyen yapılanmalardır. Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu’nu kuran ana unsur da yine dede merkezci oluşumlardır.

Alevilerin Almanya’ya yönelik hak talepleri, 2000’li yıllarla birlikte kendini göstermeye başlamıştır. İlk olarak Berlin Eyaleti’ndeki devlet okullarında, Alevilik dersleri başlamıştır. Ardından, Eylül 2002’de gerçekleşen AABF tüzük kurultayında, kamusal tüzel kişiliği kazanma sürecinde AABF’ye, inanç kurumu olma özelliği kazandırılmıştır. Aralık 2004’te AABF Dinî cemaat statüsü elde ederek, Alevilik dersleri konusunda Federal Anayasanın 7. Maddesinin 3. Bendi uyarınca yetkili kılınmıştır. 10 Aralık 2020 tarihi, Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu’nun “Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts” (Kamusal Tüzel Kişilik) statüsüyle NRW Eyaleti resmî makamlarınca tanınmasından dolayı, Almanya’daki Aleviler için bir milattır. 6 Aralık 2023’te ise Berlin Eyalet Senatosu, AABF’ye kamusal tüzel kişilik hakkı tanıyan ikinci Eyalet olmuştur. Ancak Almanya’daki nüfusunu 600.000 olarak tahmin ettiğimiz Alevilerin günümüzdeki tek temsilcisi, AABF değildir. Şubat 2020’de 7 derneğin bir araya gelmesiyle oluşan Alevi İnanç Toplumu, Almanya - AITA (Der Bund Alevitischer Gemeinden e.v. - BAG), NRW’de Alevilere yönelik yapmış olduğu eğitim ve sosyal içerikli çalışmalarla ön plana çıkmayı başarmıştır. 1994’te AABF’nin de içinde bulunduğu tüm Alevi kurumlarına alternatif olarak yola çıktığını iddia eden KAB, günümüzde Demokratik Alevi Federasyonu (FEDA) ismini almıştır.

Article Information / Makale Bilgisi

Cite as / Atıf

Keleş, B. (2024). The History of the Alevis in Germany which began 1961. *SUREK Journal of Alevism – Bektasism and Cultural Studies*, 2, 1-18.

Keleş, B. (2024). 1961’de başlayan Alevilerin Almanya tarihi. *SÜREK Alevilik – Bektaşilik ve Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2, 1-18.

Author / Yazar

Bülent KELEŞ

PhD, Grundschule Goldbach

Dr., Grundschule Goldbach

bulentkeles@hotmail.de,  0000-0002-5397-7478

Received / Geliş Tarihi

10 April /Nisan 2024

Accepted / Kabul Tarihi

11 June /Haziran 2024

Published / Yayın Tarihi

30 June /Haziran 2024

Pub Date Season/ Yayın Sezonu

June/Haziran

Issue / Sayı

2

Pages / Sayfa

1-18

Article Types / Makale Türü

Research Article /Araştırma Makalesi

Scope / Kapsam

Social and Humanitarian Sciences / Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler

Ethical Statement / Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited. / Araştırmacı verilerin toplanmasında, analizinde ve raporlaştırılmasında her türlü etik ilke ve kurala özen gösterdiğini beyan eder.

Plagiarism / İntihal

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Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article / Yazarların Makaleye Katkı Oranları

The article is single authored / Makale tek yazarlıdır.

Declaration of Interest / Çıkar Beyanı

There is no conflict of interest in the preparation of the article. / Makalenin hazırlanmasında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

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Published by / Yayıncı

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Institute / Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma ve Uygulama Enstitüsü.