

## **ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTE OF ALEVI BEKTASHI CULTURE**

1990's was a period when political, military and economical polarity ended and a new world system began to be established. Since that period statements and applications rooted in political polarizations after the Second World War have been discharged. Thus, capitalist living style and production process went into a self-evaluation. Political, cultural and social innovations occurred in Turkey where was also affected by the developments all around the world.

Alevi-Bektashi thought-belief system, one of the basic components of Anatolia since the 13th century, was influenced by the social, political and cultural transformation that world went through. Through out history Alevism has faced reactions form conservative thought as it dwelled apart from the central administration and construction. Alevi people were a closed society for Alevism existed as a rural thought-belief system. That social profile had continued until the middle of the 20th century. With migration, which is a fundamental problem of Turkey since the 1960's, the city became the new social, economical and cultural fact for Alevi people. Migration from Turkey to European countries provided a number of Alevi population to establish a new life in western countries. Urban life provided the Alevi society, who had struggled for presence in Anatolian rural for centuries, with some advantages; however it brought social, cultural and spiritual problems together. In multicultural structure of the city Alevi people faced dilemma of maintaining their traditional-historical identity. As Alevism developed in rural area around Alevi belief-dede hearths (ocak) and based on dede-disciple (talib) system, urbanization of Alevism caused some problems. The difficulties Alevi people faced in urban life had continued increasingly till 1990's. The developments occurred in the world and specifically in Turkey after 1990 have led problems of Alevi people to be discussed. Alevi society has begun to represent its identity by establishing non-governmental organizations. As a result, one of the most important nongovernmental organizations established.

Bektashism, which finds its historical and spiritual representation in Hacı Bektaş Veli's charismatic character, is on the other hand has an urban structuring. Bektashism has been organized in Anatolia and Balkans. The spiritual and institutional arrangements by Balım Sultan who is called as the Second Pir carried the traditional organization to the present. Bektashism reached to North Africa with the tekke (dervish lodge) established in Egypt by Kaygusuz Abdal who lived between the 14th and 15th centuries. The Bektashi tekkes organized in city centers in Istanbul, Anatolia and Balkans existed as important cultural-spiritual units especially in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. Being

intellectual centers that prioritize human Bektashi tekkes played a significant role in social life. At the present, via Bektashi tekkes Bektashi doctrine provide intellectual and spiritual contribution to people all around the world.

The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture was established in 1997 in Germany with the aim of performing scientific, cultural and spiritual activities on Alevism and Bektashism historical transformations of which are mentioned above. The main mission of the Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture is to research on Alevism and Bektashism. The institute also aims to preserve and carry intellectual, historical, spiritual line of Alevi- Bektashi thought-belief systems to future. In this context, the Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture has performed intellectual, historical, spiritual activities since its establishment. One of these activities is the “I. International Alevi-Bektashi Symposium” held in 10-11 January 1998. Academicians and intellectuals from various countries attended to the symposium which took place in Bonn. This symposium is of importance as Alevi-Bektashi fact analyzed academically and the symposium was a prototype for such activities. Alevism and Bektashism were introduced to international science world and European universities via this activity. In the symposium, Irene Melikoff, Belkis Temren, Ilhan Selcuk, Fikret Otyam, Mehmet Temren, Mehmet Yaman, and Veliyettin Ulusoy presented papers. G. Wiessner and Mahzunî Serif couldn't attend but contributed to the symposium by sending the texts of their papers. After the symposium papers published into a book titled “I. Alevi-Bektashi Symposium” and the book was sent to scientific institutions. By this way, academic information was socialized.

The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture has also followed academic agenda by attending to symposia on Alevism and Bektashism held by various universities with and without papers. Moreover, the Institute held conferences and panels. The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture is going to continue its academic activities progressively.

The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture also published scientific books on Alevism and Bektashism. The Institute's first publishing was “Alevi-Bektashi Bibliography” by Assist.Prof.Dr. Ali Yaman in 1998. This work is of importance as it catalogs literature of Alevi Bektashi studies listed scientifically and presents to use of researchers. “Muharrem in Bektashi and Alevi Tradition” by Prof. Dr. Belkis Temren is another work published by the Institute. In this book dated 2000, historical and spiritual issues about Kerbela and Muharrem month are analyzed. In 2004 the institute published Ibrahim Bahadir's work titled “Woman Devishes of Alevism and Bektashism”.

The book is on Alevi-Bektashi approach to woman and woman's place in this belief system. Historical and charismatic women in history of Alevism and Bektashism are also introduced in the book.

The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture welcomes scientific researches on Alevism-Bektashism. The Institute believes in the necessity of contributing to researches from different disciplines on Alevism-Bektashism. Therefore, the institute supported Ali Duran Gulcicek's research on Tahtaci Alevi people, and Ali Haydar Avci's research on Pir Sultan Abdal around Yildizeli-Banaz district of Sivas. Detection and registration of verbal and written sources about Alevi-Bektashi history is among the main aims of the institute. The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture perceives archive studies on Alevi-Bektashi history as fundamental. In this context, the institute registers archives of researchers and institutions by copying system in the institute center. By this method written and visual materials of Gazi University Havi Bektash Veli Research Center have been added to the institute's archive. Records of Gazi University Havi Bektash Veli Research Center, which the only academic institution studying on Alevism and Bektashism, is among the respectable archives on the field around the world. Besides, works of Ayhan Aydin registered to the institute's archive recently. The archive is of importance especially in terms of photograph and interview records. The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture cooperated with the Charity of Sahkulu Sultan in photography and interview recording projects. The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture is going to continue recording studies and documents of scientific value on Alevism and Bektashism. The documentary interview with Prof. Dr. Irene Melikoff, who is the honorary president of the Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture and died in 2009, is among the institute's studies. In this documentary interview Irene Melikoff makes significant analysis on Alevism and Bektashism. The Institute of Alevi Bektashi Culture also made substantial recording on the tradition of amorousness (aşık).

The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture has also performed spiritual, cultural and social activities in parallel with the scientific studies. In this respect, the Institute takes part every year in organizations such as Haci Bektash Veli commemoration activities which is one of the most important elements of Alevism-Bektashism and its culture. The institution supports and takes part in any kind of researches which have importance of scientific, spiritual and cultural studies. The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture leads common projects with other certain Alevi-Bektashi institutions while doing spiritual and cultural researches. The institution performed studies with the Society of Karacaahmet Sultan Culture and the Charity

of Sahkulu Sultan in the past. The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture holds spiritual and cultural programs such as nevrouz, hidirellez and muharrem month every year. The hidirellez celebration, which has become traditional, has been organized in the central part of the institution in Germany and has a great number of attendants.

The hidirellez celebration has not only attendants from Alevi-Bektashi people but also from other religions and faiths. The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture has decided to make some reforms in its charity model in order to continue its studies. Official works that are necessary to establish a charity has been almost completed the institution will be turned into a charity in a very short time. The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture has been continuing to operate since 2007 at the address of Malberg 1 53547 Hausen (Wied). The service departments of the institute have a landscape of 4 acres and a two floored central building. The central building has a dining room, a guest house, a library, a conference hall and accommodation rooms for guests. There is also a meydanevi and a cemevi in which Bektashi and Alevi rituals are performed respectively. The Institute of Alevi-Bektashi Culture will continue to its studies about conceptual forms of thought and belief of Alevism-Bektashism with much more enthusiasm.