

Kebab Connection

By Sharan Knoell

Director: Anno Saul
Music: Marcel Barsotti
Writers: Fatih Akin, Ruth Toma, Jan Berger, Anno Saul
Release: 2004, 96 minutes
Stars: Denis Moschitto (Ibo), Nora Tschirner (Titzi), Emanuel Bettencourt (Sifu), Hassan Ali Mete (Onkel Ahmet)

The Turkish-German Connection

The relationship between Germans and Turks began in the 1800s in the Ottoman Empire, representing a very tiny immigrant population within Germany's borders. The large-scale migration of Turkish citizens to western Germany developed during the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) of the 1960s and 70s. At this time, western Germany was suffering a shortage of manual laborers due to the economic boom. In 1961, Turkish workers (among other nationalities) were invited to move to Germany to fill this gap, especially in factories and other "blue collar" occupations. Turks soon became the largest group of immigrant workers in western Germany.

In January 2009, the Berlin Institute for Population and Development published a study called "Unutilized Potentials" about cultural integration in Germany: "Europe's number one immigration country". Examining the status of the 7 million people living in Germany without German citizenship, the institute has been able to come up with "specific statements on the socioeconomic characteristics of the overall group of immigrants".

Germany's second-largest migrant group is made up of ethnic Turks, representing some 3 million people. About one half of this group was born in Germany – higher than any other ethnicity. As former guest workers, these individuals often arrived in Germany without any formal education or training, a factor in the culture's collective lack of integration into German society.

Furthermore, Turks are very community- and ethnocentric. They settle mostly in urban areas and tend to encourage fellow persons with a Turkish affiliation to associate mainly with persons from the same

background. This makes it particularly difficult for Turkish women, who often are unemployed, to learn German – and subsequently teach their young children the language skills they need prior to starting in a school. Their kids often begin their education already behind their classmates. This could lead to the fact that the amount of German-born Turks that earn an *Abitur* (the diploma needed to enroll in an institute of higher learning in Germany) is 50% lower than native Germans.

Arguably the most interesting statistic is the fact that 93% of people with a Turkish background who marry in Germany select a partner with the same background. Thus, marrying or parenting a child outside of one's own ethnicity is frowned upon in the Turkish culture.

Fatih Akin – Director, Writer, Actor, Producer

One of the most popular and successful filmmakers in Germany, Fatih Akin was born in 1973 to Turkish parents in Hamburg. He began studying Visual Communications at Hamburg's College of Fine Arts in 1994. In 1995, he wrote and directed his first short feature, "Sensin - You're The One!" ("Sensin - Du bist es!"), which received the Audience Award at the Hamburg International Short Film Festival.

His second short film, "Weed" ("Getürkt"), received several national and international festival prizes in 1996.

His first full length feature film, "Short Sharp Shock" ("Kurz und schmerzlos", 1998) won the Bronze Leopard at Locarno and the Bavarian Film Award (Best Young Director) the same year.

His other films include "In July" ("Im Juli", 2000), "Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren" (2001), "Solino" (2002), the Berlinale Golden Bear-winner and winner of the German and European Film Awards "Head-On" ("Gegen die Wand", 2003), and "Crossing the Bridge - The Sound of Istanbul" (2005), and "Auf der anderen Seite" ("The Edge of Heaven").

Further Reading

To learn more about cultural integration in Germany, please visit www.berlin-institut.org. The site can be read in English or German.