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Home Beyond Borders: Turkish Wedding Ceremonies as the Embodied Extension of Diasporic Space in German-Turkish Context

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Abstract

This article examines Turkish wedding ceremonies within the German-Turkish diasporic context, viewing them as dynamic sites of cultural citizenship and diasporic belonging. While existing scholarship has largely concentrated on the institutional aspects of integration and citizenship, this study redirects focus to the vernacular, performative, and visually mediated expressions of identity evident in everyday diasporic life. Employing digital ethnography and visual discourse analysis, the research investigates user-generated content on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, specifically content tagged with keywords like "Turkish wedding Germany". The analysis reveals how wedding rituals serve as public performances where national symbols, religious practices, traditional music, and attire converge to express collective identity, assert cultural visibility, and negotiate belonging within the German socio-political landscape. The study identifies three interconnected themes: the reproduction of national imaginaries and symbolic belongings, the continuity of heritage and tradition, and the ritualization of religious practices in transnational contexts. By emphasising the embodied and affective dimensions of these performances, the article illustrates how mediated marriage rituals function as hybrid cultural practices that challenge marginalisation and promote diasporic connectivity. This research contributes to broader discussions on mediated diasporic identities by providing a comprehensive view of how everyday cultural performances serve as symbolic tools for maintaining a sense of home beyond national boundaries.

Keywords: diaspora; Turkish migrants; Germany; wedding culture; identity

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1. Introduction

The history of Turkish immigration to Germany dates back to the 1960s, when a bilateral labour recruitment agreement was signed between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey in 1961. Initially, Turkish migrants were invited as "gastarbeiters" (guest workers) and expected to provide temporary labour, returning home after a limited period. However, over the decades, this temporary labour migration evolved into a permanent settlement, resulting in one of the largest and most complex immigrant communities in Western Europe (Tekin 2023). Today, the Turkish-origin population in Germany exceeds 1.5 million (Nalbantoğlu 2025), comprising both first-generation migrants and their second- and third-generation descendants, who were born and raised in Germany but continue to navigate their relationship with Turkish culture and identity in various ways.

While early generations maintained strong ties with Turkey and often envisioned a future return, subsequent generations have developed hybrid identities influenced by

their experiences within Germany's socio-political, cultural, and institutional frameworks. These identity negotiations occur not only in political discourse or formal institutions but also in ritualistic and everyday cultural practices, with wedding ceremonies emerging as particularly symbolic and expressive arenas.

This article examines Turkish wedding ceremonies in Germany as performative acts of cultural citizenship and belonging. These ceremonies serve as sites where national symbols, such as the Turkish flag; folk music and dance; religious elements, including Islamic prayers; and cultural attire, such as bindallı or Ottoman-style garments, are employed to reaffirm a collective diasporic identity. By investigating how these performances are produced, circulated, and occasionally contested in digital public spaces, this study explores how members of the German-Turkish diaspora assert cultural visibility and belonging within a host society that continues to marginalise their cultural presence, despite their formal legal citizenship.

The article interprets these rituals not as static reflections of ethnic identity but as fluid, strategic, and hybrid expressions, often influenced by nostalgia, transnational memory, and the aspiration for recognition. These cultural performances serve not only as expressions of heritage but also as claims to visibility, self-expression, and symbolic resistance, engaging with the concept of cultural citizenship that transcends mere legal status.

This study employs digital ethnography and visual discourse analysis to examine user-generated content from the past five years on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. It explores how contemporary Turkish-German wedding ceremonies function as mediating spaces where identity is performed, transmitted, and reinterpreted across generational and transnational boundaries. The paper is organised as follows: The next section outlines the theoretical framework, placing the analysis within discussions on cultural citizenship, diasporic identity, and ritual performance. This is followed by a methodology discussion, which details the application of digital ethnography and visual discourse analysis as tools for examining wedding practices in online diasporic contexts. Subsequent sections present the empirical findings, categorised into three analytical themes: national imaginaries and symbolic belonging, heritage and traditional continuity, and ritualised religious practices. Lastly, the conclusion reflects on the broader implications of these findings for comprehending Turkish-German diasporic identity and the ways in which everyday cultural performances expand and transform the notion of home across borders.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research is based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates key concepts from sociology, as well as cultural and diaspora studies. The analysis draws on themes such as cultural identity, cultural citizenship, habitus and cultural capital, diaspora space, ritual performance, symbolic resistance, and everyday agency. Collectively, these perspectives offer a comprehensive understanding of how Turkish-German wedding rituals function as dynamic arenas for negotiating belonging, visibility, and cultural rights in a context characterised by marginalisation and symbolic exclusion.

Hall's (1996) conceptualisation of identity as a process of "becoming" rather than a static state of "being" serves as a fundamental starting point. For Hall, identity is historically constructed and shaped by representation, discourse, and positionality. Within this framework, Turkish-German weddings can be viewed as performative moments in which diasporic identity is not merely expressed but actively remade through negotiation with both Turkish heritage and the host society's secular, Western norms. These ceremonies emerge as sites of cultural improvisation, where identity is restaged and collectively rehearsed.

The concept of cultural citizenship, as developed by Rosaldo (1994) and expanded upon by Ong et al. (1996), provides a valuable framework for analysing how Turkish-

German wedding ceremonies assert both ethnic and symbolic rights to cultural participation. Ong et al. (1996) defines cultural citizenship as "the right to be different and to belong," highlighting the necessity for full belonging in a multicultural society to encompass both cultural and legal dimensions. In the German context, where citizenship is often conceived in narrowly secular and assimilationist terms, these weddings serve as expressions of cultural presence, featuring elements such as Turkish-language speeches, folk dances, Quranic recitations, and other symbolic references to Turkish-Muslim heritage.

Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of habitus and cultural capital are instrumental in understanding the embodied nature of these performances. The knowledge required to organise and participate in a "proper" Turkish wedding—such as selecting appropriate music, reciting specific prayers, and making aesthetic choices—constitutes a form of diasporic cultural competence that indicates authenticity, status, and a sense of community belonging. Within diasporic contexts, these practices strategically employ symbolic resources to delineate intra-group boundaries and assert cultural legitimacy.

Furthermore, De Certeau's ([1984] 1996) notion of "tactics of everyday life" is vital for comprehending the nuanced ways in which these rituals function as practices of resistance. In contrast to overt political actions, De Certeau's tactics are everyday, yet strategic, manoeuvres through which subordinate groups reclaim space, visibility, and meaning in contexts not of their own creation (Karamese 2023). When viewed through this lens, Turkish-German weddings emerge not merely as cultural reproductions but as tactical interventions within the public sphere—rituals that re-signify space and identity without directly challenging dominant power structures.

The concept of diaspora space, as articulated by Brah (1996), further expands this discussion by emphasising that diasporic identity is not solely shaped by the relationship between homeland and hostland; it is also co-constituted through relational encounters between different diasporic and majority communities. Turkish weddings, particularly when broadcast via social media, produce hybrid diasporic landscapes in which aesthetic, religious, and linguistic elements are interwoven to address multiple audiences and articulate layered identities. These performances render visible a "third space" (Bhabha 1994), where Turkish-Germans navigate liminality, hybridity, and contradiction.

Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) theory of collective effervescence introduces a ritual dimension to this analysis. Turkish-German weddings temporarily suspend ordinary time and space, allowing participants to reaffirm shared norms, values, and emotional solidarities. They become moments of intensified social energy, fusing past and present, Turkey and Germany, as well as individual and collective identities.

Complementing these theoretical frameworks is Karamese's (2018) study, which examines how religious rituals among Turkish migrants in Germany function as boundary-making and identity-affirming strategies. Karamese argues that, in the face of increasing cultural surveillance and secular norms in host societies, Turkish-Germans often articulate Islam not solely as a faith but as an ethnicized identity marker—serving to delineate communal boundaries and assert a differentiated presence. Religious practices in wedding ceremonies, from dua to Quranic recitation, thus serve as both spiritual gestures and cultural claims—symbolic enactments of a right to exist visibly and with dignity in a space that frequently renders them "other."

This argument aligns with Özyürek's (2015) work, which illustrates how secular and non-practising Turkish-Germans continue to advocate for Islamic public expressions as an integral aspect of their cultural identity, particularly within a socio-political context where Islam is racialised and stigmatised. Similarly, Göle (2011) and Fadil (2011) demonstrate that Islamic visibility in Europe transcends mere religious expression, functioning instead as a form of cultural negotiation that reshapes perceptions of modernity, public space, and

citizenship. Yükleyen (2009) contributes to this discourse by highlighting how diasporic Islamic organisations provide tools for the consolidation of identity and the transmission of culture, particularly among second- and third-generation youth.

Recent scholarship further emphasises the necessity of understanding Turkish-German community life in relation to religion, institutional negotiation, and boundary-making. Emmerich (2024) illustrates how Jewish–Muslim friendship networks serve as a medium for intergenerational negotiation of symbolic boundaries, emphasising the fluidity of everyday interactions. Kuppinger (2014), in her examination of a Stuttgart mosque, reveals how ritual practices and community identity are intricately linked with broader negotiations surrounding "German Islam". At a structural level, Koenig et al. (2016) analyse the ways in which religion influences the labour market entry of new immigrants, exposing the complex interplay of faith, integration, and socioeconomic opportunity. In a complementary study, Emmerich (2023) investigates language use within Turkish mosques in Germany, demonstrating how transnational connections and domestic expectations foster both continuity and change across generations. Collectively, these studies suggest that ritual practices, such as weddings, cannot be viewed in isolation; rather, they are situated within broader religious, social, and institutional contexts, where symbolic acts interact with boundary-making, community negotiation, and integration.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in digital ethnography and visual discourse analysis to explore the symbolic and cultural processes of Turkish wedding ceremonies in Germany. Given the performative and visual nature of wedding rituals and their widespread documentation and dissemination in digital media, these methodologies provide a proper model for exploring how diasporic identity is publicly produced and negotiated through the media.

Digital ethnography, as an approach rather than merely a set of techniques, has become increasingly significant in exploring how digitisation shapes both online and offline communicative practices. It offers researchers valuable tools to examine the complexities of global, local, and translocal interactions through people's engagement with diverse digital environments (Varis 2015). This study employs digital ethnography as its primary methodological framework to explore the cultural performances and identity-making practices of the Turkish diaspora in Germany, with a specific focus on wedding ceremonies shared on social media. Drawing on approaches such as netnography and visual discourse analysis, the research aims to understand how diasporic subjectivities are constructed, performed, and circulated through everyday digital practices.

3.1. Research Design and Data Collection

The digital fieldwork was conducted across widely used social media platforms—YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok—which serve as key public arenas for diasporic expression and cultural negotiation. These platforms were selected due to their prominence in visual and performative forms of communication among transnational communities. Over a six-month period, we analysed approximately 100 different videos and posts.

A keyword- and hashtag-based sampling strategy was employed to identify relevant content. Hashtags such as "Türk düğünü Almanya" and "Turkish wedding Germany" were used to locate user-generated content related to Turkish-German wedding practices. This enabled the researcher to collect a dataset composed of publicly shared videos, captions, images, and comments that reflect diasporic identity performances.

3.2. Data Analysis

The study combines systematic observation with visual discourse analysis (Rose 2016; van Leeuwen 2001) to examine the multimodal elements embedded in the data. The analysis focused on identifying symbolic and performative patterns across the content, including:

- National symbols: Turkish flags, portraits of Atatürk
- Traditional music and dance: Halay, zurna
- Religious rituals: Recitations of dua or Quranic verses
- Cultural dress: Bindallı, Ottoman-style garments, Western wedding attire
- Spatial aesthetics: Venues decorated with Turkish iconography

The data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model. After the initial coding of the visual and textual materials—primarily drawn from YouTube videos and Instagram posts tagged under "Turkish wedding Germany"—recurring patterns and meanings were identified. These codes that are above were then clustered into thematically coherent units to construct higher-order themes. Through an iterative and interpretive process, three overarching analytical categories were distilled, each encapsulating a distinct yet interrelated domain of cultural performance: (1) national imagination and symbolic belonging, (2) heritage and traditional continuity, and (3) ritualised religious practices.

- The first category, National Imaginaries and Symbolic Belonging, includes references to Turkish flags, Atatürk iconography, and national anthems used in wedding ceremonies, which symbolically assert a transnational Turkish identity.
- The second, Heritage and Traditional Continuities, captures the enactment of folkloric dances, traditional attire, cultural dresses and region-specific customs, often recontextualised in diasporic settings as both celebratory and identity-affirming tools.
- The third, Ritualised Religious Practices, reflects the incorporation of Islamic elements, such as pre-wedding prayers (duas), Qur'an recitations, or gender-segregated celebrations, that signal moral boundaries and faith-based belonging.

3.3. Researcher Positionality

As Turkish researchers who are not migrant, we occupy a unique insider-outsider position in relation to the field. While we share cultural familiarity with the community under study—facilitating the interpretation of symbolic and linguistic elements—we do not share the lived experience of migration, displacement, or diasporic identity. Our task required a continuous process of reflexivity, where we remained critically aware of my interpretive position and avoided projecting assumptions onto the experiences of the participants. Lastly, while the authors acknowledge their positionality as non-migrant Turkish researchers, it would be valuable for the reader if they reflected more deeply on how their background might influence their interpretation, particularly concerning the internal dynamics and hierarchies within the German-Turkish community. However, one of the researchers conducted her previous fieldwork in Germany for two years, closely observing the cultural practices of the Turkish community. This extended immersion gave the authors both an insider and outsider perspective, enriching the research by enabling a deeper appreciation for the community's internal dynamics. Thus, our dual vantage point has strengthened our interpretations and allowed us to engage with the Turkish community in a more informed manner. We will elaborate on this experience in the revised manuscript to better convey how our positionality has informed the research process and analysis.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

All data analysed in this study were retrieved from public domains. The content was produced and shared voluntarily by users on open platforms, with no passwords or permissions required to access it. Nevertheless, several ethical principles guided the research:

- Non-interventionist stance: We did not contact or engage with content creators and maintained a strictly observational approach.
- Anonymity and privacy: No usernames or identifying information were disclosed unless already publicly visible and relevant to the analysis.
- Respect for digital agency: The content was treated not as raw data but as intentional performances with cultural meaning created by agents aware of their audience.

As a result, by combining digital ethnography and visual discourse analysis, this study seeks to capture the dynamic, mediated, and performative nature of diasporic identity construction in transnational digital spaces. The methodological approach was carefully designed to remain sensitive to the ethical and epistemological complexities of researching online communities. In brief, the study seeks to discover cultural citizenship as a lived, embodied, and visual practice, revealed through the mediated rituals of Turkish wedding ceremonies in the German diaspora. These methodologies provide the analytical framework required to examine how symbolic practices shape identity formation, cultural transmission, and expressions of belonging in contexts of legal inclusion but sustained cultural marginalisation.

3.5. Limitations

User-generated content may reflect biases due to the selective nature of what individuals choose to share, potentially overlooking diverse perspectives and experiences. Additionally, certain demographics may be over-represented in the data, leading to an unequal representation that skews the findings. Furthermore, while user-generated content often captures specific moments, it may not account for the evolving views and practices of individuals, limiting the contextual relevance of the data. Lastly, the absence of direct participant voices limited access to personal narratives and emotional depth, while simultaneously shifting the focus of the study toward the performative and representational dimensions of weddings as curated in digital spaces.

4. Findings

Turkish-German wedding ceremonies represent performative sites where diasporic identities are not only enacted and preserved but also dynamically reimagined. These events transcend the boundaries of private family gatherings, functioning as culturally dense social and political arenas wherein diasporic subjects assert belonging, negotiate identity, and resist processes of marginalisation. The analysis is organised into three primary thematic categories: (1) National Imaginaries and Symbolic Belonging; (2) Heritage and Traditional Continuities; and (3) Ritualised Religious Practices. These categories collectively illuminate the multifaceted ways in which Turkish-German weddings operate as embodied expressions of cultural continuity, hybridity, and political agency.

4.1. National Imaginaries and Symbolic Belonging

One of the most striking aspects of "gelin alma" videos within the Turkish-German diaspora is the simultaneous performance of the ritual in the street and its reimagining during post-production. The live event is often imbued with symbolic significance: massive Turkish flags are carried or hung over balconies at the bride's house, male figures wield torches, and the groom, accompanied by friends and family, parades through the neighbourhood to the bride's residence, marking a celebration. These symbols are instantiated in

real space and witnessed by local onlookers, transforming an ordinary street into a stage for cultural visibility. However, when captured on film, the same images are rearranged: Mehter's marches, which are never played during the actual event, are incorporated as a backdrop; slow-motion effects dramatise the walk; and the entire moment is restructured into a stylised, almost cinematic portrayal of communal pride and symbolic arrival.

This dialectic between live action and digital augmentation prompts reflection on how ritual, memory, and identity are constructed in diaspora contexts. The use of Mehter music, evoking Ottoman military glory, alongside large Turkish flags and torches, creates a "fetih" (conquest) aesthetic that superimposes domestic events with epic connotations. This notion of conquest is not intended for geopolitical purposes, nor does it claim territorial space directly. Instead, it operates symbolically, representing diaspora, visibility, cultural continuity, and communal pride. The conquest aesthetic transforms a private ritual into a performance of strength and lineage; although Mehter music is added post-production and is not heard by local spectators, it still connects the ritual to a glorified imperial past, imbued with honour and power. Consequently, it seeks to convey and evoke feelings of resilience, strength, and loyalty among Turkish migrants, despite the negative experiences associated with migration. It also serves as an expression of their presence, incorporating national codes (Karamese 2017). By employing the conquest aesthetic—such as flags, torches, and Mehter music—the Turkish migrants temporarily reconstruct the public environment with essential symbols of their identity, claiming visibility, belonging, and an emotional presence in public space to express their cultural identity and seek recognition.

While the "gelin alma" ritual occurs in public and demonstrates some resilience against marginalisation and invisibility within the host community, the fact that these videos are predominantly posted in Turkish on Turkish social media suggests that their target audience may be internal—namely, Turkish diasporas residing in other cities or countries or individuals from their home country. Research by Aydın (2022) conducted indicates persistent biases towards Turkish individuals living in Germany, often encapsulated in the term "Almancı". The incorporation of nationalistic symbols and slow-motion editing responds to these prejudices, which imply a lack of emotional connection to Türkiye, framing them instead as individuals who travel there solely for inexpensive holidays. From this perspective, we can argue that these videos unquestionably fulfil internal desires for recognition, continuity, and emotional connection. The content and specific editing techniques aim to demonstrate that they have maintained their Turkish pride, resilience, and strength derived from their historical background, reaching out to all individuals in Türkiye who share bonds with it, whether consciously or unconsciously. In summary, beyond reducing marginalisation within German society, the videos also seek to alleviate marginalisation from their home society.

In this performance of "gelin alma", the enactment of gender roles is significant. The groom is portrayed as moving through space alongside devoted friends, suggesting mobility, intention, and public recognition. Conversely, the bride is absent from this scene, appearing instead in more private, domestic settings. This aligns with established cultural norms surrounding marriage and gendered roles while also framing the performance around a masculinity associated with leadership, action, and the symbolic manipulation of space. It is not an exclusionary or militant model of masculinity; rather, it is one entwined with ritualised power—transforming the groom into not just a fiancé but a conduit through which the group expresses its coherence and continuity.

The use of national symbols must be understood within the framework of diasporic identity politics. For many Turkish-Germans—particularly those navigating a social landscape marked by narratives of "failed integration", "parallel societies", or "Muslim incompatibility" in public discourse—such performances serve as acts of symbolic resistance. As

Hall (1996) asserts, identity is a matter of "positioning", rather than essence. The display of national symbols in diasporic weddings is therefore a deliberate and strategic act of self-positioning, resisting the pressure to assimilate quietly and instead asserting visibility in the public sphere. These actions resonate with Ong et al.'s (1996) notion of "citizenship as a claim"—not merely a legal status but a performative assertion of cultural legitimacy.

The Turkish flag, in this context, transcends being a mere nostalgic remnant of a distant homeland. It emerges as a dynamic emblem, reclaiming space for an identity that is often marginalised within German mainstream culture. In a society where Turkishness is frequently racialised, politicised, and rendered as "other", the act of publicly displaying the flag during weddings constitutes a form of embodied cultural citizenship, asserting a right to difference while preserving a sense of belonging.

This practice is deeply rooted in the cultural and emotional significance of the Turkish flag within the homeland. As Navaro-Yashin (2002) notes, the Turkish flag is regarded as a "sacralised object" in Turkey, imbued with emotion, authority, and historical memory. It symbolises unity, sovereignty, and national pride, often linked to notions of sacrifice and martyrdom. In a diasporic context, this symbolic weight does not diminish; instead, it is re-activated and recontextualised. The flag serves as a medium through which diasporic Turks articulate their emotional connections to the homeland while navigating marginalisation in the host society.

In certain instances, large portraits of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the Turkish Republic, are displayed alongside the flag, reinforcing a complex national narrative that draws on secular nationalism, historical continuity, and diasporic pride. In these performances, the image of Atatürk serves as a secular-nationalist anchor. He is not merely a historical figure but a mythic symbol of modernity, rationalism, and statehood. His image featured in wedding ceremonies evokes an idealised version of Turkishness founded on Republican values—education, progress, and national dignity—providing a counterpoint to both Western Islamophobia and internal Turkish religious conservatism. As Özyürek (2006) illustrates, even secular and non-practising Turkish-Germans continue to employ nationalist and Kemalist imagery as a means of affirming their identity and negotiating their position within the German public sphere.

Figure 1 (2025) and Figure 2 (2022) display also invoke Anderson's (2020) concept of the "imagined community." The Turkish nation, as experienced by diasporic subjects, is not lived territorially but imagined emotionally and symbolically, through rituals, images, and shared memories. Wedding ceremonies thus become diasporic nation-building projects, where the homeland is symbolically invoked and reconstituted in a foreign land. In this way, the Turkish flag and Atatürk imagery serve not only as markers of origin but also as tools for community cohesion, intergenerational transmission of values, and reaffirmation of diasporic solidarity.

Crucially, this national imagery must be understood as relational—produced not in isolation but in reaction to the sociopolitical context of Germany. German discourses on national identity have historically been shaped by ethno-cultural definitions of belonging, where full inclusion has often required cultural and linguistic assimilation. In such a context, the public celebration of Turkish identity in its nationalistic and visual forms becomes a form of semiotic defiance—a refusal to disappear, a claim to occupy space as Turkish-Germans, not merely as "migrants".

Nevertheless, these practices are ambiguous. While they function as symbolic resistance, they may also reproduce exclusionary or patriarchal logics inherent to Turkish nationalism. The flag, while unifying, may also homogenise diverse experiences within the diaspora, silencing gendered, queer, or dissenting narratives. Thus, while these symbols

offer cultural armour against external marginalisation, they may also constrain alternative forms of expression and belonging within the community itself.



Figure 1. Turkish flag and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk symbols used visibly. (Ajans68/Sarıyahşi 2025, 0:04).



Figure 2. Turkish flags were used visibly (F.K Photography 2022, 20:45).

In sum, national imagery in Turkish-German weddings—especially the Turkish flag and Atatürk portraits—operates as a multi-layered symbolic repertoire. These objects do not simply recall a homeland; they remake it in the diasporic present. They constitute ritualised performances of symbolic belonging, grounded in memory, emotion, and resistance. They assert a right to appear, a right to feel pride, and a right to participate in the cultural life of the host society on one's own terms.

4.2. Heritage and Traditional Continuities

Another important feature of these ceremonies is the playing of classical Turkish music and the performance of folk dances, such as halay, using instruments like the zurna and davul. These elements are deeply rooted in emotional and communal significance; they fos-

ter a shared atmosphere of celebration, continuity, and collective joy. These bodily practices, drawing on Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence, serve as moments where the community reaffirms its cohesion and moral unity. At the same time, the observed music and dance forms tend to be hybrid, reflecting the complexities of diasporic negotiation. For instance, it is common to witness the transformation of Turkish folk music into Arabesk or even Western popular music within wedding playlists. Music performances are also highlighted in the current literature as a means for diaspora communities to establish and maintain cultural citizenship practices. Greve (2009) notes that Arabesk was the most popular music style among European-Turks from lower socio-economic backgrounds during the 1960s, representing a longing for a distant homeland. Alongside Arabesk, the rise in Turkish-German hip-hop signals a new era in the expression of diasporic identity. Kaya (1997) documents how earlier groups like Cartel articulated nationalist and anti-racist sentiments in Germany through rap, using it as a performative resource to counter marginalisation. Additionally, Türünz (2016) conducted an ethnographic study of Turkish music choirs originating from more secular and educated backgrounds in Hamburg. Similarly to Türünz's (2016) findings regarding music as a marker of cultural distinction within Turkish choirs in Hamburg, wedding practices also reveal class-based differences: choices of venue, attire, and musical repertoire serve not only as affirmations of Turkish identity in Germany but also as indicators of socio-economic status and intra-diasporic hierarchy. Türünz found that music is a means of symbolically drawing boundaries and constructing a distinct musical style and cultural identity by performing a "refined" identity, valuing Turkish classical and folk music while rejecting the "uncultured" Arabesk, which they associate with rural and less integrated segments of the German-Turkish population. Thus, music is utilised by various segments of the Turkish migrant community to establish cultural citizenship and maintain a sense of belonging in the host society, while also creating new identities within the diaspora by delineating internal boundaries that clearly define different community segments. This dynamic intersects with class-related issues within the diaspora. As Türünz (2016) illustrates in his ethnographic study of Turkish choirs in Hamburg, music serves as a symbolic resource for establishing internal distinctions, where "refined" genres such as classical or folk music are esteemed by more educated and middle-class individuals, while Arabesk is frequently linked to working-class and rural backgrounds. A similar dynamic is observable in wedding practices: the selection of venue, attire, and musical repertoire often conveys not only cultural continuity but also socio-economic status. Lavish banquet halls, Western-style gowns, and curated playlists featuring international pop or hip-hop reflect middle-class aspirations, whereas community halls, traditional bindallı, and davul-zurna ensembles embody working-class traditions. Weddings serve to reinforce class distinctions within the Turkish-German community, acting as platforms where cultural identity and social hierarchy are expressed simultaneously.

The fusion of music reflects what Stuart Hall describes as a "diasporic identity"—a concept characterised by being neither pure nor fixed but rather contingent, fluid, and adaptive to historical displacement. Additionally, these bodily practices align with what Bourdieu (1986) refers to as habitus: the dispositions and bodily knowledge transmitted across generations. For second- or third-generation participants, dancing halay or singing the appropriate folk songs for a particular area goes beyond mere skill; it signifies a right to authenticity and serves as a marker of cultural capital within the community (See Figure 3). Such performances, if learnt at all, occur in informal family or community settings and are part of an internal hierarchy regarding who is deemed "authentically" Turkish and who is seen as culturally "diluted." In essence, the definition of "authentic tradition" is frequently shaped by various individuals and groups within the Turkish-German community, which includes cultural leaders, family elders, and local institutions. These actors can influence

perceptions through their authority, social status, or expertise in cultural practices and traditions. Furthermore, the power dynamics involved are complex and multifaceted, with factors such as gender, age, and socio-economic status significantly impacting who is allowed to define and negotiate authenticity.



Figure 3. A visual of the halay dance and the hanging of the Atatürk and Turkish flags in front of the bride's house as she leaves the house. (Saziye's World 2019, 20:13).

Turkish-German weddings often reflect a negotiated compromise between tradition and innovation in their style decisions. Brides typically wear an Ottoman-style bindallı during the henna night and later don a white Western wedding dress for the ceremony (See Figures 4 and 5). Grooms may choose to wear traditional şalvar or waistcoats for part of the celebration, while others prefer standard Western suits. These choices are not merely superficial; they serve as symbolic performances of hybrid identity. The bindallı signifies a commitment to tradition and a connection to the past, whereas the white wedding dress aligns with Western ideals of femininity. This duality exemplifies the broader experience of diasporic existence, which involves navigating cultural norms from both host and home societies. The concept of performativity is particularly relevant here (Butler 2015). Gender and cultural identity are not fixed; rather, they are enacted through repetitive performances. Weddings provide a community-sanctioned opportunity to express a notion of Turkish femininity and masculinity that is comprehensible to the community while also conforming to European standards. These performances respond to external pressures, necessitating the demonstration of integration—such as wearing contemporary Western attire—while simultaneously asserting cultural difference through traditional clothing and rituals.

Their spatial layout is revealing. Decorations mix Turkish motifs with European event styles—flowers, white tablecloths, and gold chairs adorned with crescent-star symbols or Ottoman Turkish calligraphy (See Figure 6). These spaces, typical of blue-collar German suburbs, are temporarily reconfigured into diasporic microspaces, presenting an alternative cultural geography within the hegemonic space. This appropriation of space reflects what Brah (1996) describes as diaspora space—not a material location but a relational environment where identities are reshaped through encounter, negotiation, and contestation.

The wedding reception serves as a symbolic third space, where Turkish-Germans exist neither wholly as Turkish nor entirely as German but as something distinct: a community that forges new cultural expressions from the tension between belonging and exclusion.



Figure 4. A visual of a henna night. The bride and groom sit in traditional attire before having henna applied to their hands. A woman with a tray in her hand is performing a tradition by circling around the man and woman. (Perisa 2025, 5:46).



Figure 5. Before leaving the house, the bride prays with her wedding dress and the traditional red veil covering her face. (Serdar Kalaycı 2023, 8:56).



Figure 6. A visual of the Turkish coffee service prepared to test the man in Turkish traditions during the marriage proposal ceremonies. (Almancılar 2023, 3:25).

4.3. Ritualised Religious Practices

The majority of Turkish-German weddings incorporate religious features such as prayers (dua), Quranic recitations, and blessings from elders (See Figure 7). While these elements are often brief and stylised, they serve as potent cultural markers, embedding the ceremony within a moral and religious framework. In the context of secular European societies, such rituals can be interpreted not merely as religious traditions but as symbolic enactments of cultural rights—the right to perform, transmit, and publicly display one's religion and culture without coercion or assimilation.

This form of cultural expression aligns with Spivak's (1988) concept of strategic essentialism, where marginalised groups emphasise selecting cultural features to assert collective identity and visibility. Within this framework, the religious components of Turkish-German wedding ceremonies function less as theological expressions and more as acts of symbolic resistance and identity preservation.

Building upon this, Karamese (2018) argues that for many Turkish migrants in Germany, religious identity is not only an expression of faith but also a critical boundary-making device. Her analysis demonstrates that many Turkish-Germans draw sharp symbolic boundaries between themselves and the host society by foregrounding Islamic practices—particularly in public and transitional rituals such as weddings. In this context, "being Muslim" is perceived as an inseparable component of "being Turkish", especially among second-generation migrants who navigate the tensions between cultural retention and social integration. Thus, religious rituals serve dual functions: they act as internal mechanisms for community cohesion and as external symbols of differentiation from German society.

This understanding resonates with Özyürek's (2015) study, which highlights that Islam, within the diaspora, often serves as a cultural identity marker, even for secular or non-practicing Turks. Özyürek observes that many secular Turks in Germany advocate for Islamic visibility—not due to personal religiosity but as a response to the racialisation of Muslims and the growing pressure to assimilate. Similarly, Yükleyen (2009) illustrates that diasporic religious institutions and practices provide migrants with moral

guidance and reinforce intergenerational identity transmission, acting as buffers against socio-political marginalisation.



Figure 7. The moments when prayers are made when leaving the house for the wedding area (Serdar Kalaycı 2023, 8:40).

Moreover, Fadil (2011) underscores the negotiated nature of public religious expression in Europe, particularly within Muslim communities. According to Fadil, these expressions are not static replications of tradition; rather, they are ethically and politically mediated practices shaped by migrants' interactions with dominant secular norms. This aspect is evident in Turkish-German wedding rituals, where the hybridisation of religious and secular symbols occurs—exemplified by the juxtaposition of Ottoman motifs, Quranic calligraphy, and Islamic prayers alongside Western-style banquet settings, white dresses, and European music.

Consequently, wedding venues become what Brah (1996) terms 'diasporic microspaces', where dominant spatial, cultural, and religious orders are temporarily suspended and reconfigured. Emmerich (2023) investigates the effects of microspace by questioning language use in Turkish mosques in Germany, illustrating how transnational ties and domestic demands foster both continuity and change across generations. Likewise, Kuppinger's (2014) examination of a Stuttgart mosque reveals how ritual practices and community identity intertwine with broader negotiations of "German Islam", emphasising how such micro-spaces serve as fertile grounds for negotiating belonging and identity. These rituals establish a "third space" (Bhabha 1994), wherein hybridity, negotiation, and ambivalence are central to diasporic identity. As Göle (2011) suggests, these public reli-

gious performances can create counter-public spheres in which Muslim migrants resist invisibilization and redefine their sense of belonging to Europe.

From this standpoint, Karamese's argument gains notable traction: Islamic practices in diasporic rituals function not merely as spiritual commitments but as cultural boundary markers, through which Turkish-Germans articulate their collective identity and counter normative demands for privatised religiosity. In essence, religious practices emerge as a language of cultural citizenship, enabling migrants to assert claims to public space, social recognition, and symbolic autonomy.

5. Home Beyond Borders: The Embodied Extension of Diasporic Space

All three categories suggest a redefined sense of space and home within a new context. In this regard, digital platforms serve as extensions of diaspora space, projecting cultural performances beyond local settings and into global networks of meaning-making. By sharing these moments online—through TikTok trends, Instagram reels, and YouTube montages—participants not only connect diasporic communities but also assert their right to tell their stories, which may otherwise remain unrepresented.

Turkish-German wedding ceremonies, in general, are richly textured events. They serve as rituals of love and community while also functioning as sites of symbolic struggle—spaces where cultural citizenship is claimed, identity is performed with pride, and human rights are enacted not within legal frameworks but through the rhythms of halay, the folds of a bindallı, and the whispered prayers uttered before meals. Through these performances, Turkish-Germans articulate a model of belonging that is more inclusive than formal membership, asserting a right to be different and to belong as such. Karamese's (2017, 2018) research on Turkish students in German schools provides instructive information about how diasporic communities negotiate identity and belonging through cultural rituals and symbolic acts. A particularly compelling example is the celebration of 23 Nisan (National Sovereignty and Children's Day), which functions not merely as a commemorative event but also as a symbolic assertion of presence—an embodied declaration of "we are here." In her analysis, Karamese interprets such events as subtle yet powerful forms of resistance against dominant power structures that seek to render minority identities invisible in public space. This form of resistance fundamentally reshapes the concept of "home". Participants not only reaffirm their Turkish identity through public rituals but also implicitly recognise Germany as a space where these cultural practices are not merely preserved but also actively celebrated and experienced as part of their lived reality. In this context, they transition from a state of diaspora to a model of cultural custodianship—not only maintaining Turkish heritage abroad but nurturing it so that it flourishes as a home.

This aligns with conceptualisations of home in diaspora studies, which view it not as fixed or nostalgic but as fluid, hybrid, and co-constructed. Scholars argue that for diasporic individuals, home is not a singular geographical location but a transcultural, relational space that emerges through narratives, emotions, and cultural acts (Boccagni 2017; Boccagni and Duyvendak 2019). Diaspora theorists like Berns-McGown (2008) emphasise that diaspora constitutes a dual ontology—a lived experience orientated toward both a mythic homeland and a host society—thus blurring the boundaries between here and there.

In parallel, research on Latinx and Indigenous communities has identified cultural practices that embody "home-making" in exile—such as the concept of hayandose, wherein migrants reclaim and inhabit host spaces through culturally marked performances (Nájera 2010). Similarly, diasporic communities create micro-geographies, hybrid spaces within host societies, where identity, memory, and place-making intertwine, becoming lived expressions of home that extend beyond mere nostalgia.

The urban space serves as a persistent site for performative identity work. Brah's (1996) concept of "diaspora space" underpins how migrant groups transform foreign cities into symbolic homes. In his research, Kaya (2000) posits that Turkish migrants have redefined Kreuzberg in Berlin as a symbolic vatan, crafting a diaspora space infused with their norms, values, and social institutions through everyday practices. These practices foster a resilient and positive identity politics in response to the racist policies faced by minority groups in Germany. "Little Istanbuls" serve as an example of how visible cultural presence reclaims and reshapes cities. Naturally, institutions become integral to this public spatial performance.

Rearticulations of home extend beyond visible rituals, manifesting in individual and collective narratives. Those who publicly express Turkish identity in Germany weave stories about belonging, pride, resistance, and rootedness, infusing these rituals with emotional significance. These narratives enact cultural citizenship, affirming not only what individuals commemorate but also who they have become (Hall 1996)—hybrid subjects navigating multiple identities and claims to belonging.

For these diasporic individuals, home emerges as multiple, overlapping, and lived—constructed through everyday practices, communal rituals, and narratives that resist fixed borders. It signals an evolving sense of belonging that is actively created rather than imposed, where being Turkish in Germany does not conflict with feeling at home there, and where cultural resistance serves as a declaration: this is also home.

6. Conclusions

This study examined Turkish-German wedding ceremonies not merely as private celebrations but as complex cultural performances in which diasporic identity, belonging, and resistance are actively negotiated. These rituals operate as textured and multi-layered spaces where national symbolism, traditional aesthetics, religious practices, and digital media converge to articulate claims of presence and legitimacy within a socio-political context that often marginalises migrant-origin communities.

Three core dimensions emerged from the analysis: the symbolic deployment of national imagery, the preservation and reconfiguration of cultural traditions, and the ritualised use of religious expression. Collectively, these practices constitute not only expressions of heritage but also tactical performances that challenge the boundaries of visibility and the conditions under which individuals are seen. Far from being static reproductions of a homeland's culture, Turkish-German weddings are hybrid and dynamic enactments of cultural citizenship that are mobilised to affirm community cohesion and contest narratives of cultural incompatibility. This new conception of homeland culture demonstrates that the meaning of 'home' extends beyond borders, embodying an extension of diasporic spaces.

The study contributes to migration and diaspora studies by directing scholarly attention toward ritual and performative practices—domains that remain underexplored compared to formal institutional analyses of integration or citizenship. It addresses a critical gap in the literature by foregrounding how everyday cultural expressions, such as weddings, serve as vernacular sites where identity is reproduced and actively reimagined. In doing so, it highlights the necessity of rethinking diaspora, not merely as a demographic or legal condition but as a lived, performative, and symbolic space shaped by memory, aesthetics, and emotional labour.

Moreover, the findings challenge binary conceptualisations of host and home, modern and traditional, or secular and religious. These oppositions blur, reconfigure, or engage tactically in the liminal zone of the wedding. The diasporic condition, as articulated through these ceremonies, is neither a residue of the past nor an incomplete version of the present;

it is a generative site where cultural difference is both affirmed and negotiated on one's own terms.

Nonetheless, the study is not without limitations. Its reliance on digital ethnography means it lacks the depth of insight that in-person fieldwork and ethnographic interviews might provide. The absence of direct participant voices restricts the ability to fully capture the emotional, relational, and affective dimensions of these performances. Additionally, the research largely centres on highly visible, culturally normative practices and may not sufficiently account for dissenting or subaltern voices within the Turkish diaspora—such as queer, feminist, or secular critiques of national or religious orthodoxy.

Germans perceive the observed symbolic resistance as a deviation from and incompatibility with German norms. Germans view these ceremonies as manifestations of integration problems, understanding them as forms of self-expression and resistance. They function as indicators within the framework of anti-immigrant sentiment. However, Turks living outside of Germany sometimes perceive these practices as a confusing fusion of cultures.

This new group only partially fits into the European context and only partially maintains their culture like traditional Turks, which occasionally raises questions in the public sphere. However, there appears to be a lack of scholarly work addressing this issue in the literature, suggesting that it could be a subject for future study.

Subsequent research could further develop this topic by engaging in longitudinal and multi-sited ethnographic work that examines wedding practices over time and generations and across different geographies. Comparative research involving Turkish diasporas in varied European contexts, or between distinct ethnic and religious communities in Germany, would offer a more profound understanding of the intersections of ritual, migration, and identity. Additional inquiry could also explore how global digital platforms influence diasporic aesthetics or how symbolic acts, such as weddings, relate to broader issues of class, gender, and political belonging.

In conclusion, Turkish-German wedding ceremonies illustrate how diasporic communities creatively navigate the tensions between visibility and marginalisation, tradition and transformation, and heritage and hybridity. They serve as affective archives, ritualised declarations, and aesthetic interventions—each contributing to a larger narrative of belonging that is lived, negotiated, and performed. By centring such cultural practices, this study underscores the necessity of moving beyond institutional frameworks to fully understand the complexities of migrant lives and the symbolic infrastructures that support them.

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