

# WOMEN'S LAMENTS AND MOURNING HYMNS: FUNERAL RITUALS OF TAHTACI COMMUNITIES IN THE AEGEAN REGION OF WESTERN TURKEY\*

Kadın Ağıtları ve Yas Nefesleri: Ege Bölgesi Tahtacılarında Ölüm Ritüelleri

Rıza AKYÜREK\*\*

## Abstract

Societies establish the building blocks of life with their traditions, values, experiences and cultural heritage. The culture of each society reflects such vital values. Death, like birth is an important ritual of passage in the cycle of life. In the case of Tahtaci communities of Western Turkey, rituals associated with death include musical forms such as hymns and laments that are performed in free rhythm and with specific syllabic meters or syllable lines. Laments are improvised by women at the place of mourning, while the nefeses are performed in cem rituals and other ceremonies of Tahtaci communities. The lyrics of the nefeses are selected from well-known Alevi poets and sung to the accompaniment of instruments such as long-necked, plucked lutes (*cura*, *bağlama*, and *divan saz*), and the violin. The data of this study were collected through observation a structured interview method. Intensive research concerning funeral rituals and religious ceremonies was conducted for three years and five months in villages densely populated with Tahtacis, and interviews took place with individuals familiar with the repertoire and rituals associated with lamenting. Methodology: The research process or ethnography involved participant-observation and documentation of contexts for lamenting, lamenting as performance practice, and interviews that were compiled and analyzed on the basis of written observations, recordings, and transcriptions in the form of musical notation and lyrics. The data compiled in this study contributes to the dearth of publications concerning the data investigated. The results of the investigation illustrated that mourning hymns (*yas nefesler*) and women's laments (*ağıtlar*) feature prominently in the oral traditions of Tahtacis.

**Keywords:** Tahtacis Identity, Mourning Hymns, Women's Laments, Ağıtlar and Nefesses, Funeral Rituals.

## Öz

Toplumlar yaşama ait yapı taşlarını gelenekleri, değerleri, birikimleri ve kültürel mirasları ile karşılarlar. Her toplum kendi kültürünü bu yaşamsal değerlere yansıtır. Yaşam döngüsü içerisinde doğum nasıl döngünün bir parçası ise ölüm de bir o kadar bu döngünün bir gerçeğidir. Nefes ve ağıtlar müzikal olarak serbest ölçülerde usulsüz ve belirli hece ölçüsü gözetilerek icra edilen müzikal formlardır. Ağıtlar, tahtacılar yas yerinde kadınlar tarafından söylenirken, nefesler cem törenlerinde, tahtacıların diğer topluluk törenlerinde sözleri daha önceden yazılmış olan ve icracı tarafından seçilen ve bir çalgı (bağlama, divan sazı, cura, keman) eşliğinde söylenen müzikal formlardır. Bu araştırma kapsamındaki veriler, alan araştırmasında gözlem ve yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırma bu alanda sayısı giderek azalan kadın ağıtları ve yas nefesleriyle ilgili derlemelerle alan yazıya katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir. Aydın iline bağlı tahtacı köylerinden Almut Köyü, Dutluoluk Köyü, Yeniköy ve Yılmazköy'de alan araştırması yapılmış, adı geçen köylerdeki cem törenleri, cenaze merasimleri ve yas kurbanları gözlemlenmiş, cem törenlerinde uzun yıllardır hizmet etmiş Mürebbi (Rehber/Yol Gösterici) ve Güvender (Sazender/Zakir/Kamber) hizmetini yürütmüş/yürütmekte olan kişilerle görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

\* Geliş Tarihi/Date of Submission: 09.09.2020, Kabul Tarihi/Date of Acceptance: 09.11.2020.

DOI: 10.34189/hbv.96.011

\*\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi. Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi, Muğla/Türkiye. rizaakyurek@mu.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6493-4871

Araştırma sonucunda kadın ağıtları ev yas nefesleri ile ilgili elde edilen sonuçlar, derlemeler ve müzikal analizlerin tahtacılar a ait sözlü kültür geleneklerini ortaya çıkarmak, yaşatmak ve geleceğe aktarmak bağlamında katkılar sunabileceği düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tahtacı kimliği, Yas Nefesleri, Kadın Ağıtları, Ağıtlar ve Nefesler, Ölüm Ritüelleri.

## 1. Introduction

Birth is a part of the cycle of life, and similarly, death is the reality of the termination of the cycle. Societies embrace and respect the building blocks of life with their traditions, values, experiences and cultural heritage. These vital oral traditional values are reflected in society through calendrical rituals, life cycle rituals and festivals, and passed on from generation to generation. Thus, all kinds of social events such as birth, weddings, farewells, welcoming, entertainment, death and mourning are passed on from generation to generation together with the traditions, customs and values of that society. In other words, unwritten and verbal cultural exchanges are transferred to the present day through such life cycles.

Rituals have been one of the basic dynamics of social life with their important role in sociocultural life. This is partially a repetition of what is found in the first sentence. The two sentences should be combined: Rituals, with their symbolic and sequential behavioral patterns (Honko, 1979: 372), are older than humanity and function as one of the most important Dynamics in sociocultural life. Their place, importance and functions in multiple interactive networks became the focus of academic, interdisciplinary study in the 1970s (Karaman, 2010:227). Of particular interest in this study is rituals in Turkey associated with death that involve laments (*ağıtlar*) as performed by women and hymns (*nefesler*) of mourning as performed by both men and women with instrumental accompaniment.

Rituals, which are described as stereotyped behaviors and traditions in social life, provide social solidarity, keeping the values and traditions in the society alive. They also have the function of organizing religious life (Günay, 1990: 2). In order for rituals to maintain their social functions and find a place in life, they must be based on certain beliefs. These are mostly sacred narratives, which are narrated or staged in rituals. Religious, rituals, in particular are explained and made meaningful by some unquestionably respected and believed narratives. It is as if the ritual survives with sacred narratives describing what ancestors did in ancient times, and each ritual revitalizes what the ancestors did first through narratives (Şahin, 2015: 101).

Death, an important ritual of passage for humankind, affects us all deeply and in many symbolic ways depending on our world view and religious orientation. The main focus in this study will be ways in which Tahtacis mourn the loss of family members and friends through female lamenting and the singing of *yas nefesler* by music specialists and sometimes minstrels (*aşıklar*) accompanying themselves on the long-necked folk lute known as *bağlama* or *saz*. (Yıldız, 2007: 93).

## 2. Historical Origins and Settlements of Tahtacis

The Tahtacis are a subgroup of the wider Alevi socio-religious community in Turkey. Like Alevis, they practice endogamy, share Alevi beliefs, and engage in Alevi-related sacred rituals. They are affiliated with different patrilineages and two specifically Tahtaci-related holy lineages (Kehl-Bodrogi 1987). This structure of Alevism has emerged with the Tahtaci traditions that have been discovered to a greater extent in recent years. These communities, can be said to preserve traditional features of Alevism successfully because of their nomadic lifestyle and isolation from broader society. These traditions enable us to gain insights into proto-Alevism. (Bozkurt, 2012).

Early sources (Hasluck, 1921; von Luschan, 1891) postulate the conversion of Tahtaci tribes from Christianity to heterodox Islam. In a similar fashion, Humann, in his work "Asia Minor Ethnology", advocates the thesis that some Tahtaci traditions and rituals may have been transferred from Christians. The Austrian ethnologist and physical anthropologist von Luschan refers to the Tahtacis of Lycia, meaning the provinces of Mugla and Antalya and theorizes about the common ancestry of Tahtacis and Armenians being that of the ancient, pre-Greek population of Anatolia, potentially that of the Hittites (Dressler, 2013).

Tahtaci is a Turkish term meaning the occupation of cutting or chopping wood or one who deals with timber. Tahtacis increasingly became a sectarian community (Fıglalı, 1981). At the end of the 19th century and in the 20th century in Turkey, different ideas were put forward by many historians, writers, researchers regarding the origins of the Tahtacis. The claim in particular that the Tahtacis are not Turks and later Islamized has been completely overridden today. Instead, most scholars concur that the Tahtacis were a branch of the Turkish-speaking Oghuz tribe known as Ağaçeriler who adhered to Central Asian Turkic traditions and were related to various Kipchak and Uyghur Turkic-speaking tribes as well (Çıblak, 2005).

Agaceri communities live in forested areas extending from the Taurus Mountains bordering the Mediterranean Sea to the Kaz Mountains bordering on the Aegean Sea. These communities are also referred to as *Cemaat-i Tahtacıyan* or *Tahtaci* meaning wood cutters or individuals who work in forests with trees as mentioned previously (Yilmaz, 1948). Nomadic in the past and isolated from Anatolian society for the most part, Tahtacis preserved their customs and traditions even though they are more settled today. Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic, they began opening their doors to the outside world, moving from forestry to agriculture and other means of subsistence, but continue to live in harmony with nature (Demirbag, 2019).

Though isolated in the past, the Alevi-related Tahtaci Turkmen communities began abandoning a nomadic way of life and made the transition into a more settled

lifestyle after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s. In the new settled context, the Tahtacis were given the opportunity to be given an education and this and other factors affected their cultural life. Because they began to acquire different professions, their engagement with forestry work has decreased considerably (Coşkun, 2013).

With respect to Alevi-related religious organization Tahtaci religious leaders (*dedeler*) belong to two lineages (*ocaklar*) that are separate from one another, the the Yanyatır Ocağı” in Narlıdere, and the “Hacı Emirli Ocağı” in Kızılcapınar, a village in the Germencik district of Aydın (Coşkun 2013). According to the information obtained from the Dedes belonging to these Ocaks Çobanlı, Çaylak, Sivri Külâhlı, Cingöz, Üsküdarlı, Enseli, Ala Abalı, Çiçili, Mazıcı, Kâhyalı, Gökçeli and Nacarlı clans are connected to the Yanyatır Ocağı. Şehepli, Kabakçı and Aydınlı are Tahtaci clans connected to Hacı Emirli Ocağı. Among these clans scattered in different parts of Anatolia, Çaylak Clan is the largest and most influential among those connected to the Yanyatır Ocağı while the Şehepli Clan is the largest and most influential one among those connected to the Hacı Emirli Ocağı (Yörükân, 1998).

In the Aegean region, which constitutes the area of the research, there are Tahtaci settlers in the provinces of İzmir, Aydın, Muğla, Denizli and Manisa, which are connected to the Yanyatır Ocağı. Hacı Emir Ocağı is less in number than the Yanyatır Ocağı and it is connected to the Tahtacis in the village of Kızılcakınar in Germencik district of Aydın province. It is considered as the center of the Yanyatır Ocağı in the other settlements and especially in the Narlıdere district of İzmir province. Within the scope of the research, in Aydın province, where intense fieldwork was conducted the Tahtaci communities belonging to the Yanyatır Ocağı are mainly connected to the Çaylak Clan. Information concerning the origins of the Yanyatır Ocağı was gleaned from Durhasan Dede from the Ceyhan district of Adana province. Being a nomadic community, the Tahtacis eventually established their homeland in the regions from Adana to Canakkale and strived to maintain their traditions until today. Today, the center of the Yanyatır Ocağı is located in the Narlıdere district of İzmir province. Aegean Tahtaci communities continue their traditions under the leadership under the leadership of a dede (religious leader) in the center of Narlıdere. Today, the Dedes of both the Yanyatır Ocağı and the Hacı Emirli Ocağı carry out their Dede duties in their villages and other villages connected to them. However, it is a wellknown fact that because of sociocultural changes, traditions cannot be preserved as they were in the past, one of the reasons being that the dede in unable to travel to the villages under his jurisdiction. In some villages, the mürebbe, those who lead ceremonies in the absence of the dede, are assigned role of dede (religious leader).

### 3. The Relationship Between Worship and Music in Tahtaci Expressive Culture

In the Alevi belief system, music and dance are crucial as a way of worship and integration with God. Living in remote villages far from the center for centuries, Alevis, who had to live their social life and worship secretly, maintained their cultural identity thanks to the oral culture. The Dedes, who are the religious leaders of the Alevi society, have undertaken the most important task in carrying the Alevi belief system, culture and cultural memory to the present day (Akdeniz and Ersoy, 2012). Music is often a form of creating and maintaining group identity through strengthening communication. In other words, music is the most important unifying element that strengthens the solidarity within the group and ensures its continuity by separating the cultural identity of the group from that of the others (Kaemmer, 1993).

The place and importance of music is undoubtedly important in Tahtaci traditions, worship and rituals. Music figures prominently in sacred cems and other rituals such as births, weddings, funerals, etc. In the Tahtaci society, music sometimes appears as a lament, sometimes a “*nefes*”, sometimes an appeal to God, and sometimes an element performed for entertainment. In Tahtaci communities, music is performed by music specialists known as *guvender* or *zâkir*, *âşık*, *sazcı*, *kamber sazende* or *sazandar*. These specialists assume the function of one of the most important of the twelve services (*on iki hizmetler*) in ritual cem ceremonies where genres such as *nefesler* (hymns), *agıtlar* (laments) and *semahlar* (sacred movement) are performed to the accompaniment of the long-necked lutes of the *saz/bağlama* family and sometimes the violin or the rebab.

Although the *nefes* and *semah* genres figure prominently in Tahtaci communities, *agıtlar*, *gülbanklar* (prayers) and *mengiler* (fast-paced dance forms for young people) are other musical forms. *Nefesler* are in free rhythm and *semahlar* are in strict meter, generally a meter of 9/8 (2+2+2+3). During cem ceremonies more than one *sazender* can perform and sometimes this task is carried out by *dedes* who sing and accompany themselves on musical instruments (Akyürek, 2018).

For Tahtacis, the *nefes* genre refers to poetry that reinforces Alevi/Bektashi theological motifs, religious beliefs, religious identity, values, and ethics. The poetry, typically verses written by Hatai, Kul Himmet, and Pir Sultan Abdal, articulates and reinforces the Alevi/Tahtaci worldview and is an integral part of the liturgical component of communal worship; it also serves as a model for social behavior and relations. The *semah* genre, on the other hand, is a form of worship expressed by sacred movements. The movements are executed by cem members who have been ritually initiated into the sect, and often ritual specialists who are a part of the twelve services. *Semahlar* consist of three main sections or sequences whereby the movements are accompanied by sung mystical poetry in the Turkish vernacular and accompanied by the *saz/bağlama* or violin. The meter of the music is generally 9/8 (Tamay, 2009). In combination, *semahlar* and *nefesler* serve to transport cem participants into a state of transcendence where they are unified with God.

#### 4. Music in Tahtaci Communities in Turkey

The Tahtaci musical genres mentioned above have been transmitted until the present day through oral tradition and the master-apprentice method. Unfortunately, much of this repertoire has vanished because the tradition bearers as music specialists have died. Because of this, it is important to document through written accounts of interviews and collected materials, the analysis of musical transcriptions, and audio and video recordings of what remains of these undocumented traditional poetics-musical and dance forms so that they will serve as an archive for future generations. The research this paper is based on will serve this purpose.

Music, as an easily accessible art form, contributes greatly to the sharing of religious expression through communal rituals (Stokes, 1992: 214). Through these rituals, musical features such as rhythm, meter, stereotypical phrases, sequences, in combination with the music's symbolic semantic content ensure the solid reinforcement and perpetuation of the belief system. In this way, belief as an individual experience, gains a social dimension in the context of rituals accompanied by music resulting in the building of strong bridges between individuals and society (Şahin, 2008: 283).

#### 5. Mourning Hymns (*Yas Nefesleri*) and Women's Laments (*Kadın Ağıtları*)

##### 5.1. *Yas Nefesleri* (Mourning Hymns)

One category of nefesler – yas nefesleri – are performed as expressions of mourning and remembrance in the event of the death of family members, close friends and acquaintances, of natural disasters such as war, fire, floods and earthquakes, the pain of separation when men enter military service or leave home for employment abroad as well as the pain of separation experienced by young village women who leave their family members and home upon marriage (Artun, 2018: 184) (Pekşen, 2007: 27); Oğuz et al 2010: 210). The lyrics of yas nefesler are chosen from the poems of Hatai, Kul Himmet and Pir Sultan Abdal and often in the koşma poetic form (Tamay 2009: 201).

##### 5.2. *Kadın Ağıtları* (Women's Laments)

In addition to yas nefesler, mourning is also expressed in the form of laments or ağıtlar, sung by women. Because ağıtlar are improvisatory in nature, they are performed in free meter, the poetry is based on syllable lines (*hece vezni*) or syllable meter. In performance, the women lamenting reflect on positive memories of the deceased's character and event's from the deceased's life. Yas nefesler are also performed in free meter, the sung poetry utilizing syllable lines (*hece vezni*).

Alevi/Bektashi and Tahtaci theology believes in the unity of man of God and the manifestation of God in man (vahdet-i vücüt). Because of this belief, expressions in the poetry and among individuals include phrases such as “to be one with God,”

to return or walk to God,” and not to die, to disappear, or to be separated from the Creator. The funerary rituals are therefore often referred to as “the rule of walking to God” instead of “funerals” (Aktaş, 2015: 19).

## 6. Tahtaci Cultural Practices Associated with Death and Mourning

In Tahtaci culture, after the news of a death is announced, spouses, relatives and neighbors gather together to commiserate. A wide variety of lamenting practices then occur in the home of the deceased, after the funeral ceremony takes place, and before the burial as a means of comforting family members and others (Yörükan, 1998).

With the news of death, all friends, relatives and neighbors gather in the funeral house, and the pain of death is shared by everyone. Yetişen (2008: 46) states these laments performed by the women after the death are similar to elegies. In the same source, Yetişen (2008: 46) mentions that the laments consist of words about the good manners and good times of the deceased, that women stand by the deceased to take turns for lamenting, that these laments slightly resembled lullabies, and the weeping that occurs and the phrases utilized and words are characteristic of laments. If the deceased person is male and the burial takes place in the morning the saz is played by someone who has established spiritual brotherhood (*musahiplik*) with the support of three other *musahipli* men as well. The ritual behavior they engage in involves lighting a candle (*delil*) close to the body of the deceased and then singing three *ölüm* (death) *nefesler* by Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet, and Hata’i with saz accompaniment. (Ersal, 2019: 255).

## 7. Aim of Study

This study aims to learn about the death rituals that are belong to the Tahtaci, who lived in the Aegean region, through observations, interviews and field researches, to compile the women’s laments and mourning hymns that are frequently performed at the death rituals, present their musical notations, and contribute to the literature. Based on the fact that there are very few scientific studies in the relevant literature, another aim of this study is to demonstrate the gap in the literature on this subject matter, and to introduce the academic studies on this subject to the literature.

## 8. Data Collection Process

The data for this project were collected over a period of three years and five months through participant observation and structured interviews conducted during fieldwork with Tahtacis in the villages of Alamut and Dutluoluk, Yeniköy and Yılmazköy in the Aegean region of Western Turkey. Funeral rituals, cem ceremonies and mourning traditions were observed and interviews conducted with religious leaders (*murebbi*) and music specialists referred to as *guvender* (*sazender/zakir/kamber*). Recordings were made of traditional improvised women’s laments together with the mourning hymns, which are almost forgotten today. These materials were then compiled and

transcribed so that the resulting musical notation could assist greatly with a detailed musical analysis that was executed with the assistance of the *güvenders*.

## 9. Results

### 9.1. Contexts for Tahtaci Women's Laments and a Case Example of Musical Analysis

Research concerning women's laments was conducted in the Alamut, Dutluoluk, Yeniköy and Yılmazköy Villages in the Aegean province of Aydın. During the research process, it was observed that according to longstanding traditions, all the residents of the village gather in the home where funeral ritual observances take place and share expressions and gestures of condolence in support of grieving family members. On the day of the funeral, all work-related activities are abandoned. If the funeral takes place in the morning, the deceased is left in his home until the late afternoon when preparations are made for the burial. During the waiting period, the women of the village stand by the deceased person, and perform laments that are completely attributed to him/her, involving lyrics where the performer describes the deceased person. These laments are improvised at that moment. The most interesting point during the observation of the laments within the scope of the field research was the fact that the laments were performed by women in the form of verses, and that when one lament finished, another woman's lament continued in approximately the same fashion, making use of a similar melodic mode and melodic structure as well as beginning and ending pitches.

This was the case with nearly all the twenty laments performed by ten different women observed and recorded. Figure 1 includes a transcription with lyrics (11 syllable metric structure) of a performance by a woman who lamented for her deceased brother. When the woman was interviewed subsequently, she stated that her laments were performed intuitively and emotionally in order to express the loss of her brother whose passing would create never-ending grief and desolation in her life without him.

Although the melodic structure of Tahtaci women's laments was similar to the *nefesler*, it was found that there were differences in the approach to improvisation, vocal style, beginning pitches, structural pitches, and tonics (*karar sesler*). An analysis of the musical transcription in Figure 1 illustrates a typical melodic progression in the laments that generally begin on the fifth degree of the scale, in this case e natural. This pitch is a main focus in the melodic makekup. Despite the prominence of the pitch E natural, this researcher believes that that the mode (*makam*) in the example resembles Gulizar because of the presence of the pitches B, 2 commas flat on the second degree of the scale and also E flat.



**Ağıt**

Dinleyen/Notaya Alan Rıza Akyürek

Ağır ve serbest

Ye-tim go-dun git-tin bur-da sı-la- yı... sı-la- yı...  
Ne- di- yim sen-den so- na o-ba- yı... o-ba- yı...  
Hin-di gör-me z gö-züm A-na Ba-ba- yı... Ba-ba- yı...  
Ok- süz gal- dı sen-siz el- ler Gar-da- şı... Gar-da- şı...  
Gar- da- şı... Gar- da- şım

Yetim godun gittin burda sılayı  
Needyim senden sonra obayı  
Hindi görmez gözüm Ana Baba'yı  
Öksüz kaldı sensiz eller Gardaşım

(Godun: koydun, bıraktın Needyim: ne yapayım  
Hindi: şimdi, Galdı: kaldı)

**Figure 1:** Collection of women's lament from Aydın Yılmazköy.

Figure 1 Translation;

You left us mourning here

What do I do with the land without you?

My eyes no longer see Father or Mother

World is left mourning, brother

(Godun: you left Needyim: What do I do Hindi: now Galdı: left)

## 9.2. A Music Analysis of Tahtaci Mourning Hymns (Yas Nefesleri)

If a death occurs in the evening, Tahtacis from the Aegean region wait until the next day for the funeral service to take place. The spouse and family of the deceased as well as friends and many village residents keep a vigil with the body of the deceased to mourn together. The body is covered with a white cloth and women perform laments by sharing memories of the deceased by valorizing their virtues and sharing beautiful moments

In addition to women's laments, yas nefesleri are performed by men such as the religious leader (*mürebbi*), the music specialist for cems known as *güvender*,

sazender, zakir or kamber, and the *musahip* (male with whom ritual kinship has been established). The Mürebbi and the others perform mourning hymns accompanied by the saz played by the Guvender. According to data obtained from the field research, observations and interviews, the most important feature of the mourning hymns is that they are not improvised like the laments. Although there are verses from Shah Hatayi, Kul Himmet, Teslim Abdal and Pir Sultan in the Tahtaci culture of the Aegean Region, the greater number of nefesler belonging to Shah Hatayi is noteworthy. The hymns involved verses about gathering with the God, transmission of the soul, death, Prophet Ali, Imam Hussein, Imam Hasan and 12 Imams. Another feature that differentiates the mourning hymns from women's laments is that they are performed commonly with instruments that are part of the *saz* or *bağlama* family of plucked, folk lutes such as the smallest, the cura and the largest, the meydan sazi. Although the mourning hymns are similar to the nefesler found in cem rituals, there are differences in the structural pitches involved, the differences in the initial and pause notes differentiate the mourning hymns from the other types of nefesses. An analysis of the mourning nefes in Figure 2 corresponds to the melodic progression (*seyir*) typical of makam Hüseyni. It begins on the fourth degree of the scale, ending with the second degree at the close of the first phrase, returns to an emphasis on the fourth degree and then makes its way back to the *karar ses* (tonic). The poetry of the nefes is that of Hata'i, based on an 11 syllable meter.

**Yas Nefesi**

Derleyen-Notaya Alan: Rıza Akyürek

Ağır ve serbest

Saz.....

O- tur muş-lar A-na- lar da sa-çın yo- lar- lar saz.....

Bir ha-ber ver di-ye..... du-a- sını kı-la.....f saz.....

Hur-ma a-ğaç-ın dan ta-bu- tun yo- nar saz.....

Yu-yu-yor- lar Şa- hı Mer- dan A-li- yi A- li- yi.....

A- li- yi..... saz.....

Oturmuşlar Analar da saçın yollarla  
Bir haber ver diye duasını kılar  
Hurma ağacından taputun yonar  
Yuyuyorlar Şah-ı Merdan Ali'yi

Hasan ile Hüseyin'in payına  
Kast ettiler Şah Ali'nin soyuna  
Battırdılar Ali-su zencereyi soyuna  
Yuyuyorlar Şah-ı Merdan Ali'yi

Şah Hatay'ım eder hava ile  
Arşa direk verilmiş dua ile  
Yuyusun çektiği ak deve ile  
Gönderdiler Şah-ı Merdan Ali'yi

**Figure 2:** Mourning nefes, poetry by Hata'i, as performed by Aydın Yenikoy.

Figure 2 Translation;

Seated, the mothers pull their hair,

Make a prayer to give news.

They bury you within a date palm tree.

They are cleansing Şah-ı Merdan Ali.

## 10. Conclusion

The results of musical analysis of both women's laments (*ağtlar*) and mourning hymns (*yas nefesleri*) illustrate that both genres are performed in free meter and in an unpretentious, simple manner.

Women in Aegean-based Tahtaci communities perform laments and mourning hymns in traditional fashion by expressing their respect and gratitude along with positive memories of the character of the deceased together with the longing and grief experienced through separation from the loved one who has passed. Improvised vocal genres without musical accompaniment that are syllabic and speech-like without ornamentation, Tahtaci laments are typically performed by female relatives of the deceased as well as older women and other women of the village. The melodies are in free rhythm and generally begin on the fifth degree of the mode's scale and then gradually descend to the tonic. Performed during the actual funeral cycle as well as on the third, seventh, and fortieth day after the death, these traditional expression of grief are also found at other commemorative events.

*Yas nefesleri* (mourning hymns) are performed in free rhythm with instrumental accompaniment (*divan sazı* and *cura sazı*), the melody set to the verses of poets such as Hata'ı, Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet, and Teslim Abdal. These hymns are performed by the religious guide (*mürebbi*), the cem musical specialist (*güvender/sazender*) and individuals in the community who are married and have established spiritual brotherhood (*musahipli*) through special rituals. Both women and men can perform mourning hymns.

While women's laments are performed only by women, mourning hymns can be performed by both women and men. The only compulsory condition of the mourning nefes is that it can only be performed by the *musahip* (companion). In musical terms, it has been determined that the mourning hymns begin on the fourth degree of the scale, descend to the second degree for a brief pause, and then ascend to the fifth degree before returning to the tonic.

An analysis of the materials compiled and studied reveals that the typical mode (*makam*) utilized for women's laments is Gulizar, a mode that is related to Karcıgar. The most frequently used mode for mourning nefesler, on the other hand, is Huseyni with its unique use of pitches and melodic movement.

This study contributes to a lack of scholarly literature concerning rituals related to death and the laments and mourning hymns that figure prominently during such

rituals. Because increased urbanization and rapid technological changes in society that contribute to the loss of traditional ways of life, the data collected will serve as archival resources for future generations of Tahtacis, but also for scholars researching Tahtaci expressive culture in its many forms and contexts who wish to present other perspectives.

### References

- Aktaş, Ali (2015). “Alevilerde Ölüm, Cenaze, Yas İlgili İnanış ve Ritüeller”. *Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları Dergisi* 12, 17-66
- Akdeniz, Serap. Ersoy, İlhan. (2012). “İzmir Tahtacıları Ekseninde Kültürel Kimliğin İfade Aracı Olarak Semahlar”. *The Journal of Alevi Studies* 4, 239-262.
- Akyürek, Rıza. (2018). “Ege Bölgesi Tahtacılarına Ait Müzikal Unsurlar: Nefesler ve Semahlar Aydın İli Örneği”. *Social Sciences Research Journal* 7(2), 315-321.
- Artun, Erman (2018). *Aşıklık Geleneği ve Aşık Edebiyatı. Edebiyat Tarihi/Metinler*. Adana: Karahan Kitabevi.
- Bozkurt, Fuat. (2012). “Ocaklara Ve “Buyruk” Kitaplarına Göre Çeşitli Alevi Gelenekleri”. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi* 63, 385-410.
- Coşkun, Nilgün, Çıblak. (2013). “Tahtacılar ve Tahtacı Oymaklarına Bağlı Ocakların Yerleşim Alanları”. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi* 68, 33-54.
- Çıplak, Nilgün. (2005). “Mersin Tahtacıları”. *Halk Bilim Araştırmaları*. Ankara: Ürün Yayınları, 35-47.
- Demirbağ, İlknur. (2019). “Tahtacı Semahlarının Hareket Olarak İncelenmesi”. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi* 89, 71-81.
- Dressler, Markus. (2013). *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ersal, Mehmet (2019). *Alevi Cem Zakirliği*. Ankara: Barış Kitap Yayınları.
- Fırlıklı, Ethem, Ruhi. (1981). “Tahtacılar”. *Türk Ansiklopedisi*, c. 30, Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, s. 352-353.
- Günay, Umay (1990). “Ritüeller ve Hıdırellez”. *Milli Folklor Dergisi* 26, 2-3.
- Honko, Lauri (1979). “Theories Concerning the Ritual Process”, *Science of Religion Studies in Methodology*. Paris: 369-390.
- Karaman, Kasım (2010). “Ritüellerin Toplumsal Etkileri”. *SDÜ Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 21, 227-236.
- Kaemmer, John E. (1993). *Music in Human Life, Antropological Perspectives on Music*. Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Kehl, Krisztina, Bodrogi. (1987). Die Tahtacı Vorläufiger Bericht über Eine Etnisch-Religiöse Gruppe Traditionnel Holzarbeiter in Anatolien. Berlin: pp:10-11.
- Küçük, Murat. (1995). *Horasan'dan İzmir Kıyılarına Cemaat-ı Tahtacıyan*. İstanbul: Nefes Yayınları.

- Oğuz, M. Öcal vd. (2010) *Türk Halk Edebiyatı*. Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları.
- Pekşen, Gani (2007). "Anadolu Tahtacılarında Dans; Müzik, Çalgı, Giyim Kuşam Geleneğinin Araştırılması". *Ege Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma Projesi İzmir*: (Proje No: 09 DTMK-001).
- Regelski, Thomas A. (2006). "Music Appreciation as Praxis". *Music Education Research* 8(2), 281-310.
- Stokes, Martin (1992). "Islam, the Turkish State and Arabesk". *JSTOR, Popular Music*, 11(2), 213-227.
- Şahin, İlkay (2008). "Dinî Hayatın Ritmi: Ritüel ve Müzik". *Ankara Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2, 269-285.
- Şahin, Halil İbrahim (2015). "Ritüel ve Kutsal Anlatı İlişkisi Bağlamında Balıkesir Çepnilerinin Cem Törenlerindeki Miraçlamalar Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme". *Millî Folklor Dergisi* 105, 99-110.
- Tamay, Sedat (2009). "Tahtacı Semahları ve Mengi". Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İzmir.
- Yılmaz, Abdurrahman. (1948). *Tahtacılarında Gelenekler*. Ankara : C.H.P. Halkevleri Yayınları.
- Yıldız, Harun (2007). "Alevi Geleneğinde Ölüm ve Ölüm Sonrası Tören ve Ritüeller". *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 42, 92-112.
- Yetişen, Rıza (2008). *Tahtacı Aşiretleri: Adet, Gelenek ve Görenekleri*. İzmir: Prizma Matbaacılık.
- Yörükkan, Yusuf Ziya (1998). *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar*. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.

### Interviews

Research explanations: This research's findings were carried face to face meeting, observations and fieldworks for 3 years 5 months in Aegean Region Tahtacis Villages.

- Akmen, Mehmet. Interviews Date: (08.02.2017). Mürebbe. Yılmazköy/Aydın.
- Akyürek, Durmuş. Interviews Date: (11.04.2019). Güvender. Yılmazköy/ Aydın.
- Bozdağ, Bircan. Interviews Date: (17.05.2019). Güvender. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın
- Bozdağ, Hüseyin. Interviews Date: (17.05.2018). Selman. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın
- Cevher, Hasan. Interviews Date: (14.08.2018). Güvender. Dutluoluk/Çine/Aydın
- Çıvgın, Hüseyin. Interviews Date: (15.07.2019). Güvender. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın
- Ece, Hüseyin. Interviews Date: (05.03.2018). Güvender. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın.
- Ece, Zeki. Interviews Date: (15.05.2019). Güvender. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın.
- Gedik, Hüseyin Cemal. Interviews Date: ( 22.09.2018). Güvender. Yeniköy/Çine Aydın.
- Kulakoğlu, Hasan. Interviews Date: ( 27.09.2017). Sakkacı. Yeniköy/Çine/Aydın.
- Yıldırım, Ahmet Interviews Date: (16.11.2017). Saki. Yılmazköy/Aydın.

