

## Samah in the Takhtajis of Kongurca and Turkali Villages in Balikesir Province in Turkey

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**Abstract:** This work aims to study Samah which is the foundation Stone of the ‘cem(gathering)’ ceremonies in Takhtajis that make up an auto-control system within social structure. Samah, which is one of the twelve tasks, is an act performed particularly to keep alive and strengthen the ritual. Different opinions have been put forward as samah is a religious dance; but samah is not a religious dance; it is a sect dance; samah is worldly dance. What is the difference of Samah from other dances? The answer to this questions will be answered with the villages of Kongurca and Türkali that located within the province of Balıkesir.

**Key words:** Samah • Cem (gathering) • Ritual

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### INTRODUCTION

This study’ findings gathered from the Ph.D. dissertation that completed in 1998<sup>1</sup>. In Kongurca and Turkali villages that located in the province of Balıkesir, built-in, Alaouite- Turkmen- Takhtadji are experiencing. In this culture, Samah that one of the twelve tasks<sup>2</sup> in ‘cem’ceremonies<sup>3</sup> make up auto-control system is the subject of this study. Different opinions have been put forward as samah is a religious dance; but samah is not a religious dance; it is a sect dance; samah is worldly dance. What is the difference of Samah from other dances? The difference will be answered with the villages of Kongurca and Türkali that located within the province of Balıkesir.

Takhtadji -Turkmen-The Alaouite sect constituted the whole beliefs reflecting their worldview that meaning set out in the pro Ali and belonging to Hz.Ali, who lived in Anatolia over time and are living in the religion and culture by feeding, nesting, fused with items.

Alaouite of Anatolia was founded by Shah-i Merdan Ali, lived Ehlıbeyt descent, Hacı Bektash Veli led the way belief. Various Alaouite groups formed according to region they live, ethnic origin or named by others. Takhtadji, Turkmen, Abdal, Çepni, Kızılbash, Bektashi, AvŞar, Nalci, Amuca etc. There isn’t any difference in the fundamental of ‘road’(yol). All of these groups are Alaouite and full of love for Ali and Ehlıbeyt. Grouping are superficial, is not of the essence. Important thing that the unity of ‘road’(yol), does not change the essence. Sürek, ie, applications can change. This situation

describes that statement the “ Yol bir sürek birbir (A road, application numerous).”

The essence is taken in faith and worship. Worship means in the formal sense as well as the aim is to be mature people. It is not enough that people attend to *cem* and fast, in addition he should implement the principle that ‘ Eline, diline, beline sahip ol(Edeb)’(Possess your hand, language,sperm)<sup>4</sup> Worship that the man who doesn’t love being the most sacred and immature people is vain. These people aren’t taken to ‘cem’ ceremonies and also are excluded from society Foundation of Alaouite belief is based on the love God-Muhammad-Ali.

‘Cem’ ceremony is usually religious nature. It includes the function of people worship and spiritually renewed and the cleaning, also the individual and social inquiry work. Especially during Ottoman it was served as a folk court. People did not go to Ottoman court for solving the problems they live. Individual, familial and social problems were solved in the ‘cem’. Even today, it has continued to function require except for crimes that legal sanctions in some circumstances such as anger, resentment etc. Here the aim is providing community association, common affection, peace and brotherhood [1].

Dede (Spiritual leader) leads to woman a co ensemble that are gathered in ‘cem’ house and sat in manner look at face to face. There is a strict order of placement in ‘cem’. Spiritual leader(Dede) sits on his ‘post’(cushions). Sazandar (Troubadour) sits on the right Dede, also guide sits on the left. The others sit in front of this trio in

manner semi-circle and can get *niyaz*<sup>5</sup> (petition) from each other. Space that remained manner circle in the center is called 'meydan'(arena). The way of sitting is done above on the couple of knee or cross-legged.

Samah is played/turned in cem. *Deyiş* (oral song)) is song belong to Pir Sultan, Hatayi and Kul Himmet. Lokma (eaten food in 'cem' house) is distributed, Event of Kerbelâ<sup>6</sup> is told. *Musahiplik* is performed. *Düşkün*<sup>7</sup> is interrogated in Dar<sup>8</sup>. If he doesn't fulfil his penalty, he is excluded from society.

**Takhtadjys:** Takhtadjys who usually providing his livelihood from forest products, in the past nomadic, now living in the settled, starting from the west of Maraş to along the Taurus, climbed to the Aegean and living in the area which is Mount Ida are Turkmens. They are located in the Anatolian Alaouite faith [2].

They have still continued the language of Central Asian Turks, their customs and traditions. Though there is no consensus about their origin, the common opinion is that they are grandchildren of Ağaçeri who come to Anatolian in the Mongol invasion, migrated to Syria and Iraq for faced the same danger here. Takhtadjys have also different properties from Alaouites although they are included Anatolian Alaouite in terms of the traditions and customs. They don't recognize Hacı Bektash Ocak<sup>9</sup>. Each has a separate Patriarch house. Takhtadjys spiritual leaders come from two lineages that named as a ocak(lineage) and had sacred dignity. One of them is Yanınyatır/Yanyatır in the village Narlıdere of İzmir, other is Hacı Emir in the district Reşadiye of Aydın. *Dede* of these two are not connected to each other. There isn't another Dede their chief or sub. These Dede manages the ritual traveling village connect him while crops has been collecting, takes his right, if any one commits a crime, he punishes or releases him; deposes one person for rituals that will remove winter to manage in every village after he returns to his village.

Spiritual leaders(Dede) who connected to the family Yanınyatır says Takhtadjys have come from Baghdad. They lived for a long time in the vicinity Ceyhan of Çukurova, moving from Baghdad a long time then at the first settled 'Mount Ida' in Edremit later the towns and 'Narlıdere'. The tomb of Durhasan Dede who Ancestor of Yanınyatır is located the village Durhasan Dede in the vicinity Miss of Adana. Ancestors of *Hacı Emir* is Abraham Sâni who buried in the township of Güvercinlik of İslâhiye. Today depending on who Yanınyatır has resided the village Narlıdere, depending on who Hacı Emir has resided the village Gümüş between Aydın and Söke.

Takhtadjys have continued their lives in forested areas and near forests of main countries of Anatolia Maraş, Adana, Isparta, Mersin, Antalya, Muğla, Denizli, Aydın, İzmir and Balıkesir [3].

#### **Ritual of Samah in the Kongurca and Türkali Villages:**

Kongurca village was founded 142 years ago. It has remained like a hidden town due to limitation of cultural interaction, its natural landscape, transportation difficulties, no Alaouite village around and other similar reasons and closed its gates to foreigners with its traditional structure.

Türkali village was founded 190 years ago. It is close to the city and has a condition open to cultural interaction.

According to the research, the access roads of the two villages are like as follows:

Horasan→Adana→Toros Mountains→  
İzmir→İstanbul→Kazdağı→Kongurca village

Horasan→Adana→Toros Mountains→Türkali village

The cem (gathering) ceremonies which constitute an auto-control system within the social structure have been used continuously in the Kongurca village but have been abandoned in Türkali between in the years 1979-1996. The reason was: the number of university graduates, the numbers of whom have increased in Türkali when compared with the Kongurca village, had an effect to influence behaviours such as evaluating the Rank of the Dede (spiritual leader) who leads the *cem* and to criticize and control his practices and also the fact that Dede's brought about a financial burden by staying in the villages for a long time; behaved from time to time in ways which disregarded Alaouite principles and traditions; took decisions and actions which damaged respect to justice; not kept up with developments and changes and remained behind modern lifestyle.

Partaking of those who have immigrated to Germany in cem ceremonies held in Berlin and similar cities, the diminish of the threat of expansion of the Alaouite sect, those who have permanently returned to their homeland searching cem gatherings, the decline of the level of education, the recurrence of historical events similar to the latest Sivas events and the dissolution of social values have had an effect on people to cling on to traditions; thus cem rituals have restarted after 17 years.

In the Kongurca and Turkali villages, samah which is the foundation block of the cem ceremonies brings forth the concept of a religious task prior to the concept of dance. Samah, which is one of the twelve tasks, is an act performed particularly to keep alive and strengthen the ritual<sup>10</sup>.

The dance is, in this sense, the realization of a function. The Samah dance which appears as a religious task, cannot be accepted as a dance which is performed just only to take pleasure as an amusing competition free of any profits which relies on coincidence or dexterity and which helps people have a nice time and dance. There is a voluntary action and activity here. In accordance with the mandatory rules, there is commitment to the ritual in order to fulfill a religious aim, in a determined place and time [4]. Moreover, the dance has the function of keeping alive consciousness and certain rituals by transcending beyond ordinary life; strengthening visual quality by means of repetition; instilling in the mind through music; firmly settling the habit of listening and permanently keeping alive a certain behaviour. M.Eliade expresses the sanctity present in the dance as follows:

“...it reminds a mythical moment by imitating the step and archetypical gesture during sorcery, totem, god, hero, production, commemoration of the dead, rituals and religious ceremonies. In brief, it is to live and resurrect once again the illud tempus/ those days”. [8].

#### Different Opinions Have Been Put Forward:

- Samah is a religious dance. [5-7].
- Samah is not a religious dance. It is a sect dance [7, 8, 9].
- Samah is a worldly dance [10, 6, 11].

As a matter of fact, the first and second opinions are the same. The sect is in the religion<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, both claim same things. The third opinion puts forward that Samah is not only a religious and a sect dance, but it is a worldly dance and a cultural act. This point of view, while transforming man's need to move, to speak, to survive by dancing and to self-express himself by putting language and body language into practice, emphasizes that this need is put forth with the accompaniment of music and in relation with music and rhythm. The realization of aesthetic emotions and behaviours along with the accompaniment of music forms the art of dancing. It is known that the art of dancing changed according to the cultural structure and lifestyle, underwent change according to the cultural interaction and that it is experienced as long as it is performed...

If so, what is the difference of Samah from other dances? Is it enough to accept the dance as religious by attributing religious meaning to the figures incorporated in the dance? The same kinds of behaviours are seen in Anatolian folk dances such as bar, halay and also in ballet. It means that these dances may also be seen as religious dances. While to see animals, fire and water as sacred and to worship them in other dances is deemed normal, what will be the measure which will deem sema and samah as religious? When examining them solely as a dance, it will be apparent that in all of them there is a symbolic behaviour of the man searching the art between the cultural structure models. Although samah was a dance formed by the old intellectuals, nowadays the approach which recognizes folk art as primitive can deem samah as primitive as it is classified as a religious dance. When we can look at samah as an art of dance, we can see it as a worldly dance. For instance; M. Eliade clarifies the issue by saying [12].

“...every action directed to a certain aim, is a ritual for the archaic world. But it is known that most of these actions have passed through a long process of being purified from sacredness and acquired a non-religious quality in contemporary societies.” [12].

The field research performed in Kongurca and Turkali regarding samah have exposed the following findings:

- Samah is a form of dance with two or three divisions. It starts from slow and accelerates gradually. The slow division is called *ağırlama* and the fast division is called *yeldirme*. The rotations during the *yeldirme* division are evaluated as the third division.

In this aspect, samah resembles the form of halay and bar dances. It symbolizes the Prophet Mohammed's ascent to heaven. The *ağırlama* division (*Bihana billah*) is known as the journey between Mecca and Masjid un Nabawi (The Prophet's Mosque); the walking division (*Seyrallah*) is known as the journey between Masjid un Nabawi and *Sidrei mütalaa*, the path to ascent to God; and the rotation division (*Feraa-fillah*) is known as *Sidrei Mütalaakaabu-Kavsein*, the place where Prophet Mohammed has met God.

- The samahs danced during the cem ceremonies are called the *erkan samahı* (samahs of important persons), the closed dance, *namaz* (ritual worship), cem dance. The persons who, perform samah are called *hizmet samahı* (samahs of service) since they are selected by the watchman among the experts serving in the cem (meeting). The dance cannot be

performed by people having the same service expertise. The baci and the dervish have different service expertise.

It is danced seriously, within a sacred feeling and appearance. There are no moves to the right and left. It is danced with pointed moves and small rotations. Its speed is slow; the steps are serious and sedate. The words are placed with full of melody for the purpose of principle and discipline.

However, the same dance, purified from the Alaouite principles and advices and with the words suitable to the contemporary life, is danced outside of the cem. In this way, youngs and children are able to readily learn and perform samah without participating in cems.

The samahs danced outside of the cem are called open dance, coarse dance, culture dance or coarse samah because they may be danced by the persons without prayer and without acknowledgement. The dancers are aware that this dance has a meaning of worship, a ritual worship.

#### According to Minstrel M.Ali Kaya:

“Man needs to worship and as well as to dance. It is only natural for man to use the religious dance for this purpose if there are not any or if there is only a few dances in a man's life (to substitute, replace)...”

In the coarse samahs, which are performed outside of cem ceremonies, there is a lot more speed and the steps are livelier. There are moves to the right and left. When the third step is performed in a style open for walking in the opposite direction with a stretching elevation the dance is called double feet samah; and when the third step which is performed in a continuous way in the opposite direction without the stretching it is called single foot samah.

The samah is performed with left to right movements of the female's arms at chest height and up and down movements of the male's arms (the hands in a form of a fist) at chest height during the ağırlama division; whereas during the yeldirme division, wherein oval circles are performed, the position of the hands and the arms stay same; and in the opposite direction of the dance during double feet samah and in the dance direction during the single foot samah one of the arms is placed at chest height and the other hangs a little bit lower.

It is seen that the dance is the same but the lyrics and the place where the dance is performed is different. However, this may not be enough for samah to be deemed as a religious dance. But, we can put forth that its name has changed by attributing or interpreting some religious meanings and symbols to the art of the dance...

- Samah is danced in the cem (cem) by groups of 2 to 12 persons; by groups of 2 to 4 persons if danced outside cem in a varied style. This may be considered as proof that it is a worldly dance.

#### The below Quatrains Confirm the Explanation The Quatrain Read During Conversation Meetings and Festivities:

*Bards are awake the lutes are played  
All pleadings and prayers will be mature then  
Let's brides and girls come and perform semah  
Through this the believers' wishes are made*

The quatrain read during the Friday's meetings:

*Friday nights the music begins for the gathering  
All pleadings and prayers will be mature there  
Brides and girls perform semah for the Truth  
Treat festivities, the Friday nights*

- On the samah dances the women kindly invite the men to the samah. The men do not invite the women. This emphasizes that women are respected.
- On the area, the council of forty's is accepted as the source of samah. To dance samah during the cem ceremony and conversation meetings is based on the sercesme (fountainhead) legend of the council of forty. The *sed* (belt) attached to the waist represents the belt of Prophet Ali and the tulbent (scarf) represents Prophet Mohammed's turban and it is believed that dividing them into forty pieces and being worn on the waists and heads of the council of forty is an activity carried out in memory of the two prophets.

*The forty sacred men also drunk and were mesmerized  
The Shah of all men became the superior of all  
The nightingales descended and became the 17 brave people  
They performed semah, uttering his Name, Hu*

*The great men became union with the one, uttering Hu  
The joy of the Truth was witnessed with great pleasure  
All the lovers perform semah  
Ali visited us for forty times*

- Samah is danced barefooted in the cem ceremony, without holding hands, without attachment and in the welcoming style.

**Rhythmic structure:** Attention is paid to the rhythm and tempo. All the samahs on the area are with *aksak* rhythm. The measures are with 9 as per the piece beat; with 4 beats as per the beat. The internal division is in form of 2'2'2'3. The used tempos<sup>12</sup> are:

a) Samah tempo, Welcoming, Aksak, (Kasap) tempo:

1. ağırlama, aydın.aksak,kasap usulü,samah usulü

2+2+2+3

düm te ke düm tek te

Musical Note I

b) Samah tempo, (Zeybek) tempo

samah usulü,zeybek usulü

2+2+2+3

düm te ke te ke tek düm tek tek tek

Musical Note 2

c)

samah usulü ,zotlatma

2+2+2+3

düm te ke düm te tek

Musical Note 3

**Melodic Structure and Scales:** Melodi shows downwards. Starting from the thin voices, after it makes a show a force at the sixth and seventh pitch, it stops at first eighth pitch then stop pouring to dominant. This pause is a helper tonic. Treble pitches provide transition to tonic scale creating a sense of mode. After Tonic scale is worked on, made a show a force at supertonic and mediant then finished at tonic.

Hüseyni V Uşşak IV

Muhayyer V Bayat IV

Musical Note 4

Scale is established at Dügâh(Lâ, A). When intervals are arranged from bass to soprana, intervals are 0.8.5.9.9.8.5.9 comma. This is UŞŞAKLI Hüseyni scale. When it is used as a downwards scale, sixth and second pitch lessen one apiece comma.In this case, Scale is Bayatlı Muhayyer (0.7.6.9.9.7.6.9 comma).

Cruising of Ağırlama part is a descendant character, Helper tonic is fifth pitch. The melody usually has been

consist of the second and the third intervals. Sixth interval has placed at the beginning of lyrics of the composition.

Also Yeldirme part is downwards. Tonal structure is the same. A helper tonic note is the third pitch. Yeldirme part's expression is more enthusiastic than ağırlama part's. Leaped interval has not used but expect second and third pitch.

In order of, Samah can be seen from the Table 1.<sup>13</sup>



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

Table 1: Process of Samah (Kaplan's archive)

### CONCLUSION

Samah which shows similarities in common construction in Kongurca and Turkali villages in terms of melody, word and dance construction; shows differences in the construction of melody, word and dance

at Yanyatir (Narlidere-Izmir) organization to which it is attached.

The local differences are sourced from mobility of the life style of the nomadic society. The situational nomination is an evaluated situation of the essence meaning as per situation [13].



If need to the rules according to a way of life, they are revised [5]. In other words, to find out the non changed in changed, the essence meaning in interpretation, is putting forward a view with the interpretational behaviour in order to catch the truth in samah<sup>14</sup>.

The situation that samah is played certain and by certain person, may vary for reason above can be attributed to the same phenomena Who: by groups 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 40; Who:3, 5, 7, 9, 12 are played. In our research field is played by persons 2 - 4 or 2 -12. Playing style are different according to these numbers. Even if motion is different, essence meaning protect it. The explanations and interpretations concerning the samah is put forward by the behaviour in the samah. It may be said that the figures and the steps existing in the dance are directed to interpret the facts and describe beliefs in a symbol and symbolism way due to mysticism. The history shows that the religions are always using the symbols.<sup>15</sup> In B. Temren [14]. Also M.Eliade, have pointed out by the words [12]:

“.....the symbolism plays an important role in the religious life of the humanity., the world is transforming into transparency by means of the symbols, is showing the transcendentalism.”

The seriousness is set down by the moral pressures of religion. It is accepted as a dance which symbolises the flight of Archangel Gabriel with a bodily explanation and flapping of the arms both symbolises flying and the purification from the sins.

The same findings are also valid for tempo and melody too. Those which are wanted to be explained are presented by the interpretation in the music whereas by the determined tempo in the movement. Word usually starts in forth beat of measure (3 of 2.2.2.3 ) This is interpreted God-Muhammad-Ali completeness.

The interpretation, in the motional explanation, explains the content of the core meaning in a behavioural manner even if the movement is different. This is the function of samah.

#### Notes

1. Balıkesir Tahtacı Köyleri Kongurca ve Türkali'de Halk Bilimsel Açından Müzik Yapısının Araştırılması, Ankara University, Ankara, 1998.
2. Services are implemented in 'cem' ceremonies.
3. 'Cem' ceremonies have adopted as a form of worship in Tahkthadjy-Turkmen-Alaouite presenting the features of community. In addition to having religious views, has taken an important functions for social organization and order the establishment. It provides the social order as the folk court.

4. That is the moral principles. It has moral behavior such as into the hands: not to steal, not to use brute force, not evildoer. The tongue: not to denigrate anyone, not to lie, not to break one's heart. The sperm: to rein sexual desire, not to take a slant at somebody else's wife.
5. It means praying to God to offer respect through an important person of sect and things that represent to authority.
6. It is event that Hz. Muhammad's daughter Fatıma, Ali's son Hussem and his followers are killed by soldiers Umayyad caliph Yezit in Kerbelâ.
7. The people act contrary to moral principle.
8. The person that commits a crime was interrogated in the presence of those who join *cem* and if he is found guilty, punished.
9. Ocak is lineage that the religious leader depends on it.
10. For rituals and their functions see: Prof. Dr. G. Erginer 1997:47. [15].
11. Sect is " each of the branches of a religion created following the differences of view and understanding" Turkish dictionary TDK. 1992:1201.
12. There are different classification of these certified tempos. See Y.Öztuna, 1985: Usul Kavramı [16].
13. These photos are gotten Oğuz Kaplan's archive.
14. Herve and Rouse applies this rule to the religions."...The variation between religions is an appearance. The religion and truth are something from the classification of mistake. Is not from the Feeling Sort. Whereas the truth may not be multi directional.(Trans. B.Temren, 1995:91.)
15. B. Temren, 1995:88-96; Also M.Eliade, 1991: in 108 have pointed out by the words: ".....the symbolism plays an important role in the religious life of the humanity., the world is transforming into transparency by means of the symbols, is showing the transcendentalism

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