

# BALIKESİR ÇEPNİLERİNDE AĞIT GELENEĞİ VE AĞITÇI KADINLAR

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper discussing the tradition of lament and female mourners among the Chepni Balıkesir, the performance field, performers, texts, structures, contents and functions of laments have been determined and evaluated. Then, it has been concluded that it is lamented in ceremonies, funerals and tot days by female mourners and companions, this role is generally inherited from family to female mourners, companions performing the Kerbela laments. The event of Kerbela has a significant effect in continuity of this tradition.

**Keywords:** Balıkesir, Chepni, the tradition of lament, female mourners.

## ÖZ

Balıkesir Çepnilerindeki ağıt geleneğini ve ağıtçı kadınları konu eden bu makalede, ağıtların icra ortamı, icracıları, metinleri, şekil, yapı, içerik ve işlev özellikleri üzerine tespit ve değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır. Ayrıca Balıkesir Çepnilerinde ağıtların, ağıtçı kadınlar ve kamberler tarafından düğün, ölüm ve cem törenlerinde icra edilmek olduğu, ağıtçı kadınların bu mesleği çoğunlukla aileden miras aldığı, kamberlerin ise halk şairlerinin Kerbela ağıtlarını icra ettikleri ve Balıkesir Çepnilerinde ağıt geleneğinin devamlılığını sağmada Kerbela olayının etkili olduğu gibi sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Balıkesir, Çepni, ağıt geleneği, ağıtçı kadın.

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## The Tradition of Lament Among The Chepni In Balıkesir and Female Mourners

### INTRODUCTION

Death, which causes the end of human life, has prepared the ground for some beliefs and behaviors in culture. Some of the cultural reflections of death are the actions and behaviors after death as a lament, mentioning the pain and sorrow in death, the implementations that are made for the dead to be in peace in the after-life and for the life to be far away from death, the organizations and beliefs about graveyards, arranging remembrance days for the dead after their death. Beside the changing and converting elements, some of the traditions in Turkish culture about death seem to be in existence today as well. In other words, as it is in many fields, despite the fact that some cultural values about death were left by Turks, some groups have kept these values alive. A similar process has been efficient in the tradition of lament which had occurred depending on death. Especially after the acceptance of Islam, as it was not approved to cry, to whine and to react as a rebellion; it caused the exclusion of the tradition of lament out of the traditions of death. However, the existence of Turkish tribes in Anatolia in which the tradition of lament has not been interrupted is known. The tradition of lament includes in the practices belonging to death in Chepni, one of the Oguz tribes, especially in Chepni who has got Alawi-Bektashi beliefs.

This study discusses the tradition of lament among Chepni in Balıkesir and the female mourners, the performers of lament. In this paper which aims to identify and evaluate the place of lament in the daily life of Chepni in Balıkesir, the environment where the lament is performed, the reasons of lamentation, identities of the mourners, the form, structure and content of the laments, some results were concluded about the functions of the tradition of lament. It consists of two parts. In the first part, information about the concepts, materials and method used in this work will be given, and in the second part which is the analysis part, the tradition of lament among the Chepni in Balıkesir, female mourners, the form, structure and content of the laments are emphasized.

## 1. CONCEPTS, MATERIALS AND METHOD

### 1.1. Concepts

“Lament” which is one of the main concepts in this study has been expressed as “sığıt”, “sagu”, “mersiye”, “deyişet”, “deme”, “yakım”, “yas”, etc. during the periods of history (Görkem, 2001: 16-18). Among the Turkish tribes that live out of Anatolia, different words are used instead of “lament”: “ağı” in Azerbaijanis, “märsiyä, äy tiv” in Bashkirs, “märsiyä” in Uzbeks, “joktov” in Kazakhs, “coktov” in Kirghizs, “yas” in Kumyks, “bozlav” in Nogais, “märsiyä” in Tatars, “ağı” in Turkmens (Görkem, 2001: 49-62; Kaya, 2004:259). We meet the first information about lament during the Hun and Kok Turk era. The text of the lament that had been lamented for Atilla the ruler of Hun has survived to present. Mourners (sığıtçı) and lament (sıgtamak) are mentioned in Orkhon Inscriptions. We learn from the written sources belonging to Uighur, Karakhanid, Seljuk and Ottoman periods that lament ceremonies have continued uninterruptedly (Bali, 1997: 14; Görkem, 2001: 35-48).

Pertev Naili Boratav accepts the laments as lyrical ballads (Boratav, 1995: 150-151). According to him, lament is “the entire of the ballads that are bounded to a ceremony or not, hosting a pathetic event, and whose text and melody are available to keep that even alive in all aspects” (Boratav, 1991a: 444). According to Şükrü Elçin, “the ballads which express the wails, rebellions, misfortunes, complains of humankind against death or the sorrow, flurry and excitement at the time of lose of a living-lifeless being by regular-irregular texts and melodies are generally called “lament” in Western Turkish” (Elçin, 1990: 1). There are other definitions besides these, but almost all of them emphasize the similar aspects of lament. These aspects are: the laments mentions the wails of people against the events that give the sense of sorrow and despair like death, are mostly lamented depending on the disasters like death or war, are performed by “mourners” (Görkem, 2001: 16-18).

Laments are formed on the base of the tradition of lament. Many information and materials about lament have been recorded so far. The tradition of lament has appeared in Burdur, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Şanlıurfa, Denizli, İzmir, Muğla, Tokat, Erzincan and Kars (Görkem, 2001: 18, 19, 21, 22). Şükrü Elçin determined lament after death in Taurus Mountains, Binboğa Mountains, Cukurova, Gaziantep, Siirt, Erzurum and Kozan. According to the information by Elçin, the household sits in a circle, looking at the deceased’s belongings brought in front of them in a bundle lament with or without rhythm. In the weeping rituals in which

mourners lead, there are many women and these women cry together with the mourner (Elçin, 1990: 5).

The studies in the recent years show that the tradition of lament is widespread mostly among Alawi-Bektashi groups. Some beliefs are effective on this tradition. The saying of a Dede who is the member of Naldöken Takhtadjys “Dirge is remained us from Mother Fatma” reflects that the lament has faith, origins in Alawi-Bektashi culture (Yetişen, 1977: 8145). Culture of lament is more alive in Chepni and Takhtadjy. The information and materials detected among Takhtadjy are quite important. Today, among the Takhtadjy in which the tradition of lament is carried on, women continue organising lament ceremonies all together. In addition to women, it is recorded that cambers in Takhtadjy also lament (Yetişen, 1977: 8145). In the past, among the Mersin Takhtadjy, “funeral poems” accompanied with “saz” had been sung much more but now this tradition has been weakened. Funeral poems belong to the minstrels like Shah Hatayi, Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet Üstadım and Kul Mustafa (Çıblak, 2005: 196). Mehmer Eröz records that when a death occurs, Silifke Takhtadjy get together in funeral home and lament accompanied with “saz” player. In the meantime, Eröz explains that women lacerate their faces and rive their hair (Eröz, 1990:342). In addition, in İzmir Takhtadjy, women lament after death. Women lament and cry “in order to show that they mourn for the deceased and to express their sorrow”. Laments can be said just after the death or the burial of the dead. (Yörükan, 2002: 234, 237).

We can follow from the related studies that the tradition of lament has been kept alive till the recent years among the Western Anatolian Chepni (Şahin, 2006: 70-71).

Balıkesir Chepnis whose tradition of lament is observed should be considered briefly as well. The sources which give information about Chepni claim that Chepni is an Oğuz tribe. According to a more specific information, Chepnis are from one of the tribes in the Three Arrows branch of Oguz Turks (Togan, 1982: 51-51; Köprülüzade, 1925: 206; Ögel, 1993: 344-345). The name Chepni is also known as the name of one of four sons of Gök Khan son of Oguz (Togan, 1982: 51). It is said that before coming to Anatolia, Chepni went to Iran from Turkistan, and to Anatolia from there (Bostan, 2002: 299). It is claimed that while Chepni were entering Anatolia, Haji Bektash Veli who lived in the 13th century was with them, and also Haji Bektash’s first disciples in Sulucakarahöyük were the Chepni. According to this knowledge taken from Menakıbname of Haji Bektash

Veli, there are some people who claim that he was Chepni as well (Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli “Vilayet-name”, 1958: 125; Eröz, 1990: 54-55). Chepni, who came to the district during the Oguz flocks had an important role in Anatolia’s and especially Eastern Black Sea Region’s being Turkicized. In the recording book remaining from Ottoman period, it is seen that Chepni had great importance in making Anatolia a homeland (Çelik, 2002: 312).

Compendium of the languages of the Turks is one of the first written sources that include Chepni. While Mahmud al-Kashgari, who used the information and materials gathered among Turkish clans, gives information about Oguz tribes, he says that Oguz had got twenty two tribes, each of these tribes had got its own document and its sign to stamp animals, and he gives a stamp that belongs to Chepni (Divanü Lügat-it Tercümesi I, 1998:54; Divitçioğlu, 1994: 33-41). In addition, the stamps that belong to Chepni were seen in Camiü’t-Tevarih (Togan, 1982: 49-52), Şecere-i Terakime, The Great History of Seljuks (Çelik, 2002: 313), Cihannüma, The Book of Understanding Turkish Language (Sümer, 1992: 9).

It was seen that the Chepni migrated to Black Sea Region just after they entered Anatolia (Sümer, 1992: 323), they fought against the Trabzon Greek Empire and had important success as a result (Çelik, 1999: 16), they had a great contribution in taking this region under the control of Turks (Telloğlu, 2004: 110-111). Besides Black Sea Region where Chepni population lives intensively we know that Chepni live in the south, middle and west parts of Anatolia as well. Especially, most of the Chepni/Chetmi who live in the west part of Anatolia are in the borders of Balıkesir.

According to the historical records, the Chepni around Balıkesir came in Balıkesir in the beginnings of 18th century. The records show that as the Chepni didn’t pass into sedentism, they bothered the groups that passed into sedentist life in those times. There is an opinion about Balıkesir Chepni comprised of the movement of a group which lived in the Turkmen of Aleppo and Bozulus to west (Sümer, 1992: 17). In addition, M. Fuad Köprülü claimed in his article “The Historical Notes on the Ethnology of Oguz” which he wrote in *Turkiyat* magazine that the Kizilbash Turks which migrated to Rumelia turned back to Anatolia during the time of Karasioğlu İsa Bey, and the Chepni are the grandchildren of the Kizilbash who turned from Rumelia (Köprülüzade, 1925: 207).

Today, the settlement of the Chepni in Balıkesir is as the following:

Village	The Unit it is Connected	The Tribe
Kavakbaşı	Balıkesir City Center	Karalar
Çukurhüseyin	Balıkesir City Center	
Karamanlar	Balıkesir City Center	
Ortamandıra	Balıkesir City Center	
Koruköy	Balıkesir City Center	
Dübecik	Balıkesir City Center	
Çoraklı	Balıkesir City Center	
Kabakdere	Balıkesir City Center	
Çiftlik	Bigadiç	
Akyar	Bigadiç	
Yumruklu	Bigadiç	
İnkaya	Balıkesir City Center	
Kozpınar	Bigadiç	
Elyapan	Bigadiç	
Kuşkaya	Balıkesir City Center	
Soğanbüktü	İvrindi	Yalınayaklar
Deliklitaş	Balıkesir City Center	
Değirmendere	Balya	
Danaveli	Susurluk	
Gökçeören	Susurluk	
Kocabük	Balya	
Armutlu	Kepsut	Nusratlı
Kapaklı	Manyas	
Kalebayırı	Manyas	
Söğütlü	Susurluk	
Gücemçepni	Bigadiç	Ellezi
Kocasinan	Sındırgı	
Macarlar	Balıkesir City Center	Avanlar
Yeşildere	Bigadiç	Garili

(Şahin, 2004: 73-74)

## 1.2. Materials

The information in this paper about laments and environment of lament has been recorded during the research about Balıkesir Chepni. Many important information and materials were acquired during the interviews with female mourners Dilber Solak and Zeynep Kaplan. The problems that most of the lament researchers lived, were met in this study as well. It is important to set up the materials that are used in folkloric researches in natural environments but it is important to respect the ideas and to sympathize the feelings of the people who create, quote and perform that folklore as well. The difficulty of gathering laments in a house, where the death has just occurred and the grief is too fresh, is known by everybody. Because of this, in order not to hurt the feelings of the people in the research field, the gathering laments has been done out of natural environment.

Although gathering laments for death has been out of natural environment, the place of the perform has been followed in bride and Muharrem laments. Especially who is lamenting and how is lamented the laments while the bride was being taken from her house were recorded. The observation on the performance field of Kerbela laments which are performed during Cem, provided us to get information about the natural environment of these laments.

## 1.3. Method

As it is in the other types of folk literature, laments are performed by professional or amateur performers. The “amateur” and “professional performers here affect the shape, constitution and content of the lament. In this regard, it is very important whom the laments are performed by and the identity of these mourners or performers. The female mourners and cambers that perform the lament are emphasized separately in this study. In the study, in which the places laments are performed, the people existing in these places, the time of lament are evaluated, establishment and appreciation on the shape, constitution, content and function of the lament has been done.

## 2. THE TRADITION OF LAMENT IN BALIKESIR CHEPNI

Performance of mourning and the poems are called “lament” in the region. Laments are performed according to death, wedding ceremonies and “cem” in Balıkesir Chepni. In the previous years, laments were performed while consigning soldiers but recently this practice has disappeared. Let’s have a look at the events and environments that cause lament in Balıkesir Chepni.

## 2.1. Female Mourners

Balıkesir Chepni calls the women who lament in funerals and wedding ceremonies as “mourner”. There are one or more of these women in Chepni villages. Each mourner, generally, performs for the people of her own village. As there are mourners in the other villages, they don’t have to go to other places. But in some circumstances, especially when one of their relatives die, some female mourners go out of their villages to lament. Out of these exceptions, female mourners prefer staying in their villages. This occupation hands down mostly from mother to daughter. The mourners that are interviewed confirmed this. The daughters, who stay with their mothers at the place of lament, continued their job later on.

The lament in Balıkesir Chepni is a role that female mourners assume. There is no one who wants to lament among men. When the reasons of this were inquired, it was noticed that it is seen as a female behavior. Female mourners stated this clearly by saying “Men don’t cry”. Besides, the attendance of only women to the lament ceremonies caused this job to form a female job. Pertev Naili Boratav has also deduced a similar result in the fields he researched. Boratav, notices the ceremonies of lament after deceased are peculiar to women as these ceremonies are arranged among only women (Boratav, 1991a: 445). The information gathered in Anatolia and among the Turkish communities that live out of Anatolia, confirms this thought. The ones who lament after the deceased can be his/her mother, sister, cousin or a female mourner live around. Female mourners who are seen in many parts of Anatolia performs lament almost as a job (Boratav, 1991: 445). Today, although the number of these female mourners reduced, they still survive. According to Boratav, mourners “enumerate the deceased’s glorifiable parts temperamentally and physically; praise his/her beauty, bravery, and benevolence. If the deceased is a person who never had happiness during his/her life, she couches his/her lifelong sufferings; if he/she was fortunate by destiny and affluent, she couches his/her property, goods, cattle, and the favors that he/she did to the people around him/her... The mourner informs about the daily life in village or town without any affectation, anxiety of artificial unassumingly, intensively (Boratav, 1991a: 447).

Female mourners are prone to poetry and words said in melodies. They are kind of people who learned after long years how to behave and mourn in the time of death by the ethics and well-manners that they gathered from the traditions. As most of the women in folk culture, these didn’t get a professional



poetry education as well. In other words, they are not the people who got the education of playing a musical instrument and saying faultless poetry in the manners of shape, structure and contents as poets or other artists. But all these don't mean that mourners are away from creativity or formation. Mourners perform their job in the shapes that are created or used by women.

Female mourners' ability to improvise is very strong. They can rearrange many times mostly poetry like quatrains that they got from oral traditions. They can change and re-tell the existing quatrains by changing their lines and getting new structures, and they can tell their own poetry as well. In order to see the female mourners' ability of improvisation and the style how they rearrange the laments, we interviewed with one of the female mourners of Balıkesir Chepni, Dilber Solak, about similar subjects on different days. Dilber Hanım informed us about lament and the elegies she tells. During these interviews, we had the chance to record a lament lamented in different times and differently. For example, in the interview on 07.08.2011 Dilber Solak lamented the lament like this:

Erzurum dağları kar ile boran,	Erzurum Mountains are snowy and stormy,
İçerimi aldı dert ile verem,	Trouble and sorrow took me away,
Sal oralardan bir kurşun kalem,	Send me a pencil from there,
Senin aşkına ben de yazayım destan,	I shall write an epic, too, with it,
Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?	Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

The lament that we listened from her on 14.08.2011 was like this:

Erzurum dağları kar ile boran,	“Erzurum Mountains are snowy and stormy,
İçerimi aldı dert ile verem,	Trouble and sorrow took me away,
Sal oralardan bir kurşun kalem,	Send me a pencil from there,
Yavrum sana diye yazayım bir açık selam,	Dear, to write you a clear greeting,
Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim.	Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

As you see, the mourner changed faintly the fourth line. The same thing is in question for the following poetry. The mourner has changed the lament she had previously lamented:

Susuz yerde kavak biter mi ? Is a poplar planted in a waterless place?  
 Yapraksız dalda bülbül öter mi? Does a nighingale sing on a leafless brunch?  
 Ne kadar olsa baba ananın yerini tutar mı? Does a father, whatever he is, take place of the mother?  
 Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim? Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

(07.08.2011)

Susuz yerde kavak bitmez, "Is a poplar planted in a waterless place,  
 Yapraksız yerde bülbül ötmez, Does a nighingale sing on a leafless brunch,  
 Ananın yerini baba tutmaz, A father doesn't take place of a mother,  
 Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim? Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

(14.08.2011)

A lot of laments like these ones, have been compiled from Dilber Solak and other mourners. These compiles show that female mourners lament new laments or they lament the laments they rearrange by using some specific templates. In other words, female mourners represent lament in a new style and a new structure each time.

In Çukurhüseyin which is a Chepni neighborhood in Balıkesir there are two female mourners named Dilber Solak and Zeynep Kaplan. Dilber Solak was born in 1944 and she continues lament which inherited from her mother as well. She expressed how she started lament in the following way:

*"One day, I went to the mountains near our village to bring wood. Soon, my father arrived and said 'Let's go home, daughter'. I couldn't understand this. 'Why are we going? I haven't collected firewood yet' I said. 'Let's go dear' he said. I didn't ask another question and we arrived home. I learned that my aunt had committed suicide by hanging herself. The public prosecutor of the state came there. I said to him:*

*Üstleri ipek yorganlı,  
 İlikleri yağlı urganlı,*

*Did you who has got silk quilt on,  
 Who has got thick clothes on,*

*Sen de bunun derdini sarmaya mı geldin hakim bey? Come here to ask her problems, Mr. Prosecutor?*

*Biz soramadık bunun yaman halını We couldn't ask her frightful state,*

*Soran bulunsun hakim bey." Let the one who asks find, Mr. Prosecutor.*

*I lamented my first lament to my aunt. Prosecutor takes everybody out of the room, only I stayed there and lamented."*

Dilber Solak, who attended many lament ceremonies since her childhood, uses her ability to compose poetry in lament.

Zeynep Kaplan, sister of Dilber Hanım, is known as a mourner in the neighborhood where she lives as well. Zeynep Hanım, who assumes the role of mourner in "Cem"s, has also inherited this job from her mother.

## 2.2. TYPES OF LAMENT

### 2.2.1. The Laments Which Were Lamented For The Deceased

There is the tradition of lament in every village of Balıkesir where Chepni are settled. The lament and weeping ceremonies which are arranged by women who mostly come together after death are held under the leadership of the female mourners. After the death of the deceased, his/her relatives come together in the house where the dead is. Here, these women make a circle and start crying. There are only women in the room during this crying. The tradition of lament is a tradition which is performed by only women. Therefore, the mourners in Chepni are women. There is no male who laments or attends lament ceremonies.

The ceremony of lament after death comes with the female mourner's arrival to the house where the death happened. Other women accompany them by crying, weeping and laying themselves out. These laments that are lamented nearby the deceased are very touching because the death is very new and the female mourners mourn with sad poems. The women who do the last duty for the deceased weep and cry according to the degree of proximity. Some of the laments that are lamented in these places are as the following:

Karşıdan karşıya atılamadım,

I couldn't jump across

Kırıldı kantarım tartılamadım,

I couldn't weigh out as my weighed broke down

Ben bu kara ölümün elinden kurtulamadım,

I couldn't get away from the hands of this black death

Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?

Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

(Dilber Solak)

Köprüye vardım köprü yıkıldı

I arrived the bridge, the bridge fell down

Kınalı geyikler suya döküldü

Hennaed deers fell into water

Allı gelinin boynu büküldü

The neck of the bride with red are bent with sorrow

Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?

Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

(Dilber Solak)

Çiçekler içinde menekşe baştır

Violet is the head of flowers

İnsanı gösteren göz ile kaştır

What shows a person are eye and eye-brow

Bir çiçek vereyim sana

Let me give you a flower

Bunu götür akrabama ulaştır

Take this and deliver it to my relative

(Zeynep Kaplan)

### 2.2.2. Laments For Brides

Laments for brides are also lamented among Balıkesir Chepni. These lament which are lamented during henna night usually about the bride are family and the sorrow they feel for their daughter's departure. The bride was made cry by lament during the henna night while her close relatives and friends were there. There again the female mourners can take place. During the henna night the bride, her mother and the close ones can mourn but the time when the sorrow of departure and the voice of the laments reach the top is just before she goes out from the door of her home leaving her mother, father, sisters and brothers. At that time, the bride and her mother hug and cry for a long time. In the meantime, the women around them start lament and drying. As it is in the henna nights, female mourners take place

and mourn. Some of the laments for bride that are mourned by female mourners are as the following:

Akşam oldu mu haklarını saklardım	I used to keep her rights in the evening
Sabah oldu mu yerlerini yoklardım	I used to check her place in the morning
Gelir diye yollarına bakardım	I used to await her arrival
Elleri kınalı yavrum, güle güle.	Farewell my dear whose hands are hennaed.

(Zeynep Kaplan)

Benim dertlerimden biliydin kızım	I wish you knew my troubles daughter
Yaralarımı sarıydın kızım	I wish you healed my wounds daughter
Her derdimi sana söylüydüm kızım	I wish I told all my troubles to you daughter
Beni kimlere emanet ettin de gidiyin kızım	whom did you entrust me while going daughter.

(Zeynep Kaplan)

Kara bulut değilsin ki hava savrulsun,	You aren't a black cloud that the weather breaks
Sulu yağmur değilsin ki yerde çevrilsin,	You aren't the wet rain that you can't turn on the ground
Anadan babadan körpe yavru ayrılısın,	The young leave their mothers and fathers
Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?	Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

(Dilber Solak)

### 2.2.3. Mournings For The Soldiers

According to information that we got in the field researches, laments were used to be mourned during the henna ceremonies for the soldiers, but the tradition of lament for the conscripts has disappeared in the recent years. Even if it is not in practice, the commemoratives of these lament ceremonies are still alive in the memories of the female mourners and the people in the region. Female mourners led in the lament ceremonies for conscripts as well as the in the other lament ceremonies. With their leadership, while the soldiers are hennaed, laments are lamented. Some of them are like the following:

Asker yolu beklerim	I await for the arrival of the soldier
Gününe gün eklerim	I put a day after another
Sen git yavrum askere	You, my son, go and join the army
Ben vatani beklerim	I wait for the homeland.
(Zepnep Kaplan)	

Yüce dağ başından yuvarlandı indi bir taş	A rock rolled down from the almighty top of the mountain
Ne anam kaldı, ne babam ne bacım ne kardaş	Neither my mother, my father, nor may sister, brother stayed
Verin bana bir beşli tabanca	Give me a fived pistol
Olsun bana yolda giderken arkadaş	Let it be a friend to me on my way. (Dilber Solak)

#### 2.2.4. Laments For Hazrat Hussein and The Martyrs of Karbala

The historical event of Karbala has got important reflections on Turkish culture (Özkırımlı, 1993:25-38; Köksal, 1984). In Alawi-Bektashi belief, the memories of Karbala have been kept with all its vitality. The event of Karbala which is commemorated with belief practices during Muharram is also commemorated out of this month in Cemevi. As it is known, there have been dirges that express and commemorate the event of Karbala in Turkish culture depending on the types and structures of the folk literature. Minstrels like Minstrel Yunus, Pir Sultan Abdal, Teslim Abdal, Dedemoğlu, Noksani Baba, Deli Boran, Mirati, Sıdki, Hüzni, Yesari, Fakiri, Seyyah Dede, Haki Baba, Ali Rıza Özbektaş have got dirges that are told with the eight-syllabic and eleven-syllabic (Noyan, 73, 358-359, 373, 719; Çağlayan, 1997: 430-459, Özmen, 2002: 108-111). Some of these dirges are told in cems by cambers today as well. It is possible to meet these dirges which we can name as Karbala laments among Balıkesir Chepni.

One of the prominent cambers of Balıkesir Chepni, Rahmi Ayhan, tells these dirges on Karbala in cems and in the conversation arranged in Muharram. Rahmi Ayhan, who is talented on playing the saz, has been performing the poems of “seven great minstrels” (Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet, Yemini, Virani, Teslim Abdal and Nesimi) first and then other minstrels and poets who were trained in Alawi-Betkashi beliefs. Cambers do not compose new dirges but performs the

ones they learned from the oral and written sources. One of the dirges that Rahmi Ayhan performed and named as Karbala lament is as the following:

İmam Hüseyin'in kolları bağlı	Imam Hussein's arms are tied
Yezit'in ciğerinde ciğeri dağlı	His lungs are seared on Yazid's lungs
Muhammet'in torunu Ali'nin oğlu	Grandson of Mohammed, son of Ali
Gel dinim imanım İmam Hüseyin	Come, my religion, my belief, Imam Hussein

Senin abdallarının yanar yakılır	Your abdals pour out their woes
Katarımız On İki imam'a katılır	Our convoy joins twelve imams
Yezitlere binlerce lanet okunur	They curse thousands of time to Yazid
Gel dinim imanım İmam Hüseyin	Come, my religion, my belief, Imam Hussein

Senin dervişlerin semahı döner	Your dervishes return to the whirling
Kadir gecesi چراğlar yanar	Candles burn in The Night of Decree
İnşallah yükümüz dergâhı tutar	Hopefully, our load keeps the lodge
Gel dinim imanım İmam Hüseyin	Come, my religion, my belief, Imam Hussein

Abdal Pir Sultanım imamlar nerde?	My Abdal Pir Sultan, where are the imams?
Aşkına nur doldurduğumuz yerde	They are where we filled heavenly light for his love
Kendi sırda kaygısız ehil yerde	He is secret, careless competent is there
Gel dinim imanım İmam Hüseyin	Come, my religion, my belief, Imam Hussein

Female mourners has also told some laments for Karbala in addition to the cambers':

Kerbela'ya varalım,	Let's arrive at Karbala,
Ciğer börek doğrayalım,	Let's chop lung patty
Şah Hüseyin şehit olmuş	Shah Hussein had martyred
Gelin yana yana ağlayalım	Let's pour out our woes. (Dilber Solak)

Kerbela'nın yolları, The roads to Karbala,  
 Zincirle bağlı İmam Hüseyin'in kolları, Imam Husseins are bound with chains  
 Şehit olmuş Fatma ananımın oğulları Fatma Mother's sons had martyryzed  
 Gelin dostlar yana yana ağlayalım Come friends, Let's pour out our woes  
 (Zeynep Kaplan)

Ah Hüseyinim, vah Hüseyinim Oh my Hussein, woe my Hussein  
 Şehit giden vah Hüseyinim, My Hussein who martyryzed  
 İmam Hüseyinim My Imam Hussein (Zeynep Kaplan)

### 2.3. The Shape, Structure and Content Features on Laments

Lauri Honko expresses the main point that they must be taken into account to identify the shapes and structures of laments and generally folk poetry products as following: "This brand is characterized as telling extemporaneously. If telling extemporaneously is explained as "composing a new folk song while singing one", it is quite obvious that, laments are not lamented in the exact meanings of the words. They are full of traditional elements; word, inclination of poetry and performing are the other elements in lament... In addition, no laments are told in the same words for a second time." (Honko, 2003: 338-339). This feature of laments, prevented to emphasize general rules on the shapes and structures of them.

Pertev Naili Boratav points out that laments are divided into two in terms of verse orders. According to him there aren't consistency and stability in the verse orders of some laments. There aren't measure and rhyme scheme in these laments. There are some exclamation and poetry pieces that provide harmony. Besides these laments, there are laments which were lamented regularly. Generally laments that emanate from "aaba, ccdb" rhymes and eight-syllabic stanzas, can sometimes have a verse cluster as "abcb, defe, ..." Moreover, the existence of laments that have "aaab, cccb, ..." rhymes and eight-syllabic or eleven-syllabic stanzas (Boratav, 1991: 448-450). By dividing laments into two in terms of verse orders, Boratav emphasizes on the reality that all laments aren't lamented in the same way. While doing this division, Boratav does not claim directly that it is because of the identities of the performers, in the later explanations he explains indirectly that this is shaped according to the mourners or the abilities of the mourners. While the laments that are lamented by the people who get music



and poetry education like minstrels are regular for measure and verse cluster, some shape and structure irregularities can be seen in the laments of the ones who don't have professional education and mourn naturally.

We encounter two points when we look at the shape and structural features of the laments that are identified from Balıkesir Chepni. The first one is the laments that are lamented by female mourners show some shape and structure irregularities. Sometimes disruptions can happen in the measures and line scheme of the laments which are lamented as quatrain poems. In other words, female mourners don't lament in the other templates of folk poetry except quatrain type. In some laments, it gets difficult to talk about measures and a versification. Besides them, in some laments there is consistency in measures and verse cluster. Shortly, certain standards do not occur in the shape and structure features of the laments that female mourners lament. Let's have a look at the shape and structure features of some of these laments:

Karanfilim dal yerde	7	Carnation is branch on the ground
Bülbül ötmez her yerde	7	Nightingale doesn't sing everywhere
Ne ötersin bülbülüm	7	Why do you sing my nightingale
Yavrularım gurbet elde	8	My children are far from homeland

The measure of this lament which has got a verse cluster as "aaxa" is quite consistent. There is only one extra syllable in the fourth line. Except that, the other lines composed in seven-syllabic. It is quite successful in shape and structure, but not all laments have the same features.

In the following lament which was composed in quatrain form, verse cluster is appropriate for quatrain but the measures are inconsistent:

Bugün günlerden Pazar	7	Today is Sunday
Beş kardeş oturmuş sana destan yazar	12	Five brothers sitting and writing an epic for you
Alemin dertleri iyi olmuş yavrum	12	The troubles of others were healed, dear
Benim dertlerim günden güne artar	11	My troubles are increasing day by day

There are laments that are composed in aaab form, not in aaxa form as in the above one:

Aşar giderim ben de dağları yol deydi,	I cross the mountains as a road,
Deste güller toplarım domur gül deydi,	I pick up bunch of roses blister roses,
Mektup yazdım, saldım çabuk gel deydi,	I wrote a letter and sent it, to make you come quickly,
Kefen giydim ana baba tez gel.	I wore shroud, dad mom, come quickly.

In this poem, the mourner who was successful in rhyme and reputations couldn't show the same success in measures. He/She increased poesies with the rhyme and reputations at the ends of the lines. We have to mention one more thing here. Mourners affect the people around them not only with shape and structures of the lament but also their lament style and shape. To cry during the lament, to behave sorrowfully, to lay themselves out as a relative of the deceased, to try to calm down the people around by saying various sentences about death, are the indispensable elements of the lament ceremonies. The points that look like inconsistency or fault in shape and structure hide themselves in the representation that we mentioned. Because of this, although they don't use a regular measure and verse cluster, mourners succeed to get a certain harmony by melody and make cry.

Besides the laments that female mourners lament in Balıkesir Chepni, the laments that cambers perform are regular in shape and structure. As it is in the minstrel tradition, as cambers learn how to play the saz and perform dirge from the master cambers, this provides that their dirges are more successful in shape and structure. Let's have close look on the poem that was compiled from Camber Rahmi Ayhan:

İşte geldim işte gittim	a	8	Here I come, here I went
Yaz çiçeği gibi yettim	a	8	I grew up as a summer flower
Şu dünyada ne iş ettim	a	8	What did I do in this world
Ömürçeğim geçti gitti	b	8	My life has gone away
Çağırdılar imam geldi	c	8	They called the imam, he came
Her biri bir işe yeldi	c	8	Each of them was a wind
Azrail pençesin saldı	c	8	Grim Reaper let off his claws
Can kafesten uçup gitti	b	8	Soul flew away from a cage

Teslim Abdal oldu tamam	ç	8	Teslim Abdal completed
İşte geldi ahir zaman	ç	8	Here came the last time
Yardımcım On İki İmam	ç	8	My helpers are Twelve Imams
Ten türaba karıştı gitti	b	9	My body was involved in the soil

There is inconsistency in two lines of this eight-syllabic measure and free-formed folk poem. There aren't any other problems in the shape and structure of this poem.

Complaining about death, the sorrow felt for the death of the deceased and the difficulty of filling his shoes, shortly, the grief caused by death are mentioned in the contents of laments. The sexuality and social status of the person who are told about in the lament affects the content of the lament. If the deceased is a women and a mother as well, a lament like the following was lamented:

Trene bindim, tren salladı,	I got on the train, the train swung
Zalim doktor geldi yaram bağıladı,	Cruel doctor came and bounded my wound
Arkamdaki yavrularım anam diye ağladı,	My remaining children cried saying 'mom'
Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?	Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

Mourner tells these words from the deceased mouth and by this way she saddens her remaining children.

If the deceased is a married and young man, his remaining wife is mentioned definitely. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the stripling got married newly, and died very young:

Köprüye vardım köprü yıkıldı	I arrived the bridge, the bridge fell down
Kınalı geyikler suya döküldü	Hennaed dears fell into water
Allı gelinin boynu büküldü	The neck of the bride with red are bent with sorrow
Yol ver dağlar yol ver, nere gideyim?	Allow me mountains; allow me, where shall I go?

## 2.4. Functions Of Laments

Products of folk culture can survive when they get a role in social life. Otherwise, culture winds up the values that are disused and don't have function in social life. It is possible to say that the reason of why the tradition of lament is still alive today is the need and having a social function. The evaluations we are going

to do about the functions of lament is not only for Balıkesir Chepni, but also for the other groups that keep the tradition of lament alive.

As a result of our interviews with Balıkesir Chepni and our observations on the region, we can say that laments provide relaxation, farewell and social sharing. The people, who distended because of death, relax by crying together with the laments that the mourners lament. The source people in the region supported this idea as well. In these ceremonies, especially the relatives of the deceased fling off the tendency upon them. Of course people can cry out of lament ceremonies, but these crying are quite different from the ones in lament ceremonies. In these ceremonies which crying is legitimate and has social acceptance, women can cry easily. For this reason, lament ceremonies must be seen as social places of physical and psychological relaxation.

The farewell phenomenon in lament ceremonies has got great importance. The relatives of the deceased say farewell to whom they lost; mothers and fathers say farewell to their bride daughters or soldier sons symbolically. Laments are used as an element of saying farewell among brothers and sisters at the time of marriage and compulsory. The phenomenon of saying farewell in the laments that female mourners lament is quite superior. Mourners want to convey the trusts to the other side by saying “take this letter” or “take this flower” in their laments. They say farewell to the deceased person or the person who got out the house like a person who is going on a holiday.

Laments have duty not only as a relaxation or saying farewell but also as a social sharing. Social relations between the people who come together for lament improve, solidarity increases and this provides integrity of the community strengthen, and indirectly social sharing realizes. The attendance of women the lament ceremonies is seen as an essential component of the social life among Balıkesir Chepni. Especially the lament ceremonies that are arranged after the deceased people are more important than the others (weddings, compulsory, etc.). Because, these ceremonies are accepted as the last duty for the deceased person. Shortly, lament ceremonies arrange the life among Balıkesir Chepni in social manners and improve the social convergence and responsibility between people.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of the establishments and evaluations, we can say that Balıkesir Chepni continue the existence and the tradition of lament in weddings, funerals and “cem”s. Although the tradition of lament decreased in Balıkesir except for the villages where Chepni settled down, there is a different situation in Chepni. Lament and lamenting for Karbala in Muharram caused keeping the tradition of lament alive among Chepni. In addition, commemorating Karbala for every reason and crying for Hz. Hussein and his retinue during “cem”s contribute to continuity of the culture of lament. Furthermore, with the effect of the Alawi-Bektashi belief Chepni didn't lose its tribe identity as an Oguz tribe, and this explains the continuity in the tradition of lament. As it is known, Turks had a strong tradition of lament before Islam. With Islam, it was seen that this tradition went out slowly, disappeared in some groups and has continued in some groups partially. Chepni, who had been known as Alawi before they came to Eastern Anatolia, the tradition of lament didn't go out, it was kept alive in every stages. By the way, it is necessary to specify that Alawi-Bektashi values have been effective in permanence of the tradition of lament among Chepni.

Some changes and transformations have occurred in the tradition of lament among Balıkesir Chepni. Giving up lament for the ones in the draft age, while it had been done previously, claims that there are some changes in this tradition.

In our research field, laments are performed by the female mourners and cambers. Female mourners perform this job that they inherited from their families or close relatives by lament for the deceased and the bride. Female mourners learned the texts and melodies of laments by being in the places where laments were lamented since their little ages. Female mourners mostly mourn improvisationally. Besides lament, their cryings and body movements are important issues of the lament ceremonies. Mourners who are talented in saying and singing poetry are chosen from women. Among Balıkesir Chepni where no male mourners were met, realizing the lament ceremonies between only women had an active role on determining the identities of the mourners. Except for the female mourners, cambers also mourn. Their laments are generally about the event of Karbala, the poetry of the great minstrels who composed their work in Alawi-Bektashi beliefs. The laments of the minstrels like Pir Sultan Abdal, Kul Himmet, Teslim Abdal, Hatayi about Hz. Hussein and innocents of Karbala are lamented in cems and in religious practices in Muharram by the cambers.

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