

## Platform of Anatolian Religions and Beliefs Platform / Those who are backing our cultural heritage Vanguards of Our Cultural Heritage / Part 7

Traveller Yolcu Bilginç and the Tahtacıis

**TOPICS:** History of the Tahtacıis, Bademler Village, Tahtacısi today

*In this part of our "Those Who Back Our Cultural Heritage Vanguards of Our Cultural Heritage" interviews series, we are with Yolcu Bilginç, President of the Federation of Tahtacı Associations, conductor of the Izmir Metropolitan Choir and bağlamabağlama (long-necked lute) player.*

"Tahtacı culture continues to exist."

Yolcu Bilginç- I was born in Izmir's, Urla, Bademler vVillage in Urla in 1966. Inspired by Aşık Veysel's poem "We are travelling in an inn with two doors a two-doored inn, day and night" (*iki kapılı bir handa gidiyoruz, gündüz gece*), my father named me Yolcu (the Turkish word for traveller). At that time, the registrar did not accept the communist name Yolcu because it was a Russian name. They asked for a comrade name They wanted to choose the name Yoldaş (meaning comrade, fellow traveller). When they said no to the name Comrade Yoldaş, my father said decided on the name Yolcu. After studying at the bBağlama dDepartment of Istanbul Technical University's Turkish Music State Conservatory, I did my master's degree in folklore research at the Institute of Social Sciences. I gave lessons at a private music course with Arif Sağ. Then I worked with Suavi and Ahmet Kaya respectively. I started to work and afterwards with Edif Akbayram. I have been taking part in concerts with him for 22 years without interruption. 14 years ago, I was appointed the head of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality's Turkish Folk Music Choir.

We said let's decided to establish an association for the woodcutters Tahtacıis, for our own culture,. We established our association. L which we did and later we turned it into a federation. We have five legs branches in Mersin, Antalya, Denizli, Izmir, Balıkesir. They elected and appointed us me as the president of the society which continues until today. It is still going on. We still have not used ballot boxes in our elections until today.

We come together a week before the election and determine our list. We continue vote without any ballot box. It was a nice unity. We have approximately 300 villages from Çanakkale to Gaziantep. If we were to go back 200-300 years ago, there will be would have been many more villages. There is the "Mahmut Türkmenoğlu Cooperative Foundation" in my village. which was founded by one of the first pioneers of co-operatives in Türkiye. We are l'm currently in this facility. We established Bboth a natural life village life was established, and we planted flowers and worked on vegetable cultivation in on 280 decares of land. Gradually, rural tourism has also been taken into consideration. We are in a facility founded by Mahmut Türkmenoğlu, one of the first pioneers of co-operatives in Turkey.

**Nükhet Everi- Yolcu Hocam, there are those who know and those who don't not. Why is it called the word 'Tahtacılar' used, who are the Tahtacılar? Can we talk a little bit about them? Can you talk about them briefly?**

Yolcu Bilginç- The main accepted expression of the name consensus about the meaning of the word Tahtacı is woodworking. It is a name that comes from the profession carried out by our people. They did not say "We are Alevis". ; rather, Tthey said "We are Tahtacıis". This is the first expression. We have our own grandfather *dede* (religious and spiritual leader) Ali Ekber Ateş. His statement is that we are the faith leaders who sit on the throne and crown the agha. This is within according to the Turkmen interpretation. But I know that we are the children of the 8th Imam Reza (766-818), one of the 12 Imams. We learnt Islam from the 8th Imam Reza in Mashhad in the Khorasan province of

Iran. We are not from Turkmenistan, we are Turkmens. anyway. We are from Turkmenistan. We have never been connected to Hacı Bektaş Veli, to the dervish lodge. We have always been a closed society that has always practisedpracticed its beliefs on its own. Since we were engaged in woodworking on the mountain tops and did not descend from there too far, and since we did not go down too far, our culture and the way of living our faith has remained in its original form. We have not been assimilated much,; we have remained pure. We have 25 villages in Çanakkale. We are spread inover 11 provinces downwards. Our most extreme pointfurthest location is Kabaklar Village in Gaziantep-Islahiye. The tomb of our grandfather İbrahim Sani is there. We also have a tomb in Durasan Dede in Adana-Ceyhan. Our brotherdear friend Doğan Bermek also camevisited us there,. They coinciding with ouran event. We arehave been here for 800 years ago, we are from Adana-Ceyhan and we aresettled in Kabaklar village in Gaziantep-Islahiye. Our tomb there is tThe tomb of our grandfatherdede İbrahim Sani is located in the latter, and that of . And his brother Durhasan Dedeis in Adana Ceyhan in the former, in Durhasan Dede Village. Its old name is Evcik Village. After Durhasan Dede passed away, his wife was a very beautiful woman. T the Bey of Adana sets his eyes on his widow who was a very beautiful women and her and wants to buy herwanted to marry her. My parents objected . They say, saying, "In our family, dede and dede's lineage marry.". They say, "We cannot give a girlwoman to a non-Alawite non-Alevi, we will be degraded as an oba". It growsThe matter grew and turned into a fight. Six thousand five hundred woodcuttersTahtacis were massacred in the Ceyhan region of Adana. Then people fled to the mountain tops. Their profession up there iswas animal husbandry. But on the summit of the Taurus Mountains, Medetsis Hill, and Bolkar Mountains in the Pozantı district of Adana, they witnessed that Greeks were runningmanaging sawmills. Our woodcutter Tahtacı men learnted how to cut wood there. Those who learnted the job, put their children and relatives to work, and then moved on to the next mountain. They came here towards the Aegean, towards Çanakkale. They settled wherever there were forests and trees. If there is a tree, there is bread, you can eat, there is animal husbandry, and there is security of life. They came down to city life with small touchessporadically descended from the mountains to life in the city.

When Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, may he rest in peace, said that everyone is equal before the law regardless of religion, race and sect, there was a relief. But despite this, mountain culture still exists. Perhaps one of the flattest villages is my village, Bademler Village. We also have villages on the seafront, in Muğla and Milas. We stayedsettled in a beautiful region. Here, of course, we lived intertwined with Greek culture. That great Greek culture also has an influence on our plays, food, books, and theatre.

Let me enterdiscuss the subject with the genetics way of life of the Tahtacıs. Every Tahtacı continues to do agriculture in the field inherited from his grandfather, with thea tractor inherited from his grandfather. He lives in a house inherited from his grandfather. Whether he is an MP or a holding company owner, he comes to his village on the weekends and grows his tomatoes. He is always in his village even in his retirement. For him, his summer home is primarily his own village. In other words, Tahtacıs live inon their own land in a very different way from the other Alevi population living in TurkeyTürkiye. I keep an office for the federationI have a small office for the Federation of Tahtacı Associations, for which I pay rent and withholding tax for a small office for nothing. N because no one comes. Everyone is in the villages. I say to those who come to see me, "Let's meet at the Federation office", they say, "No, let's come to Bademler.". We sit in the village square, have a beer, a cup of tea, and chat. In other words, our woodcutterTahtacı culture lives in villages. We have a homogenous structure. You asked the question "Are people happy in Bademler?", tYes, they are happy. We used to say that televisions were now are entering the bedrooms of our young children, and now we have telephones. I wish everyone would go tobe interested in scientific developments and philosophy, but there are some of us who spend time on Facebook and Instagram involved with

very empty things. But life somehow makes people take care of themselves. A virus came, everyone started to plant something in their garden. Our doctor is also planting, and our archaeologist has returned. I said mentioned that there are no grandfathers *dedes* in our village, but come and see, all traditions continue in that trilogy we call birth, wedding marriage, and death. From the birth of the child, the fortying raising of the child, the cutting of the sash when the child grows up a bit, the circumcision, the wedding, the tying of the bride's head at the wedding, Hidirellezi, Sultan Nevruz, Friday evenings, Thursday evenings, Tuesday evenings, a beautiful mosaic of Alevi beliefs has been formed and mixed with Turkmen traditions.

### **Nükhet Everi- What is the place and importance of Bademler Village in Turkey Türkiye and in the culture of the woodcutters Tahtacı's culture?**

Yolcu Bilginç- In Bademler Village, they started theatre in the form of middle plays on special days in the village square in 1933-34s. Then Mustafa Anarat, one of the military teachers, came arrived. He focused on the theatre. A play was prepared every year. Then, they started to write small sketches themselves. Towards the 1960s, Mahmut Türkmenoğlu emerged from our village as a Republican intellectual. In During the same years, Turkey Türkiye's best film "Thirsty Summer" (Susuz Yaz) was shot filmed in our village. Directed by Metin Erksan, the film was selected as the best film at the Golden Bear Film Festival in Berlin, Germany. In During the same years,, a library was established in the village. A a library consisting of 10,000 thousand books was established in Bademler Village under the Ministry of Culture. The villagers started to build construct the theatre building by means of collective labour. The people of our village work at their jobs during the day, then work at the theatre in the evenings for three months, and always put on a play. Primary school students would also put on a play. I remember I used to play the lead role every year. We put on a play towards on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, or towards the end of the year, towards the rationing period. Theatre became indispensable for us.

Mahmut Türkmenoğlu also started a co-operative. He rented 180 acres of land from the treasury. He brings brought water from the opposite mountain and soil from the plain. He started the first co-operative here. Not only the Alevism aspect of the village, but also this production and rural development stands out as an distinguishing element that makes it different from other Tahacı villages and makes it a pioneer.

Religiously, there is no *dede* lineage in Bademler. The grandfather *dede* used to come from Narlıdere. In 1953, the last grandfather *dede* to arrive who came last took 3 thousand liras of money took 3,000 liras to make two rich people in the village permissible [müsaip yapmak için]. Someone A villager who was economically poor and weak in the village said, "I don't have 3,000 thousand liras, I have a thousand 1,000 liras. Will you allow me too?" he said asked. "I won't," said the grandfather replied the *dede*. Then that person complained to the gendarmerie. The gendarmerie came and who raided the village, the *cem* dispersed. After that, the *dede* never came here again returned. We have such a bad memory. When Alevism and belief were more intense, life was more complicated. People were interconnected. Modernity has nothing to do with living in this age.

### **Nükhet Everi- Let's us talk a little bit briefly about what is being done in the village to keep Tahtacı culture and traditions alive. Can we talk about the museum? What other activities are there?.**

Yolcu Bilginç- One of the valuable people of Bademler Village was the astrologer doctor Dr. Musa Baran. He was also the director of the Izmir Museum. He created founded a museum on about children's toys in our village. He passed away 20 years ago, his museum remained. Now his nephew

Mustafa Şapkan has established a foundation that will also include this museum of children's toys. Sabiha Tansu, whose picture is on the back of our old iron 50 coins, donated all her Turkmen clothes to this foundation. It will be operational and functioning in the near future.

**Nükhet Everi- Actually, Bademler Village is also important in terms of tourism. When the museum is renovated and put into operation, it will be a touristic attraction. What do you think?**

Yolcu Bilginç- Tourism is not a field we know much about. During the term of Aziz Kocaoğlu, the former mayor of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, a rural and agricultural development model was established that also included tourism. The products grown in all agricultural development cooperatives in Turkey Türkiye come here and are sold here. There are also flower sales. There are bungalows for accommodation. We have a cafeteria here. We have a meeting room. All of them are wooden. Incoming clubs and associations hold their general assembly meetings here. We have a walking track. The person staying in the bungalow gets up in the morning and 70 workers work here. He learns to produce flowers with them, he can make his own tomato paste. He can crush his own olives. They can dry tomatoes. He can make his own pickles. He learns to exist in agriculture. At a time when tourism is becoming popular in the countryside, our villagers people have just started to learn how to be a host in tourism hospitality. This is the pointplace with the cleanest air in Turkey Türkiye and the Aegean. Urla is the place where the world's first olive oil factory was established. As you know, Seferisar has become a "slow city". With Karakılçık wheat, a return to our ancestral seeds was started here. This region has also adopted an understanding that is orientated towards agriculture and distanced from the smokestack industry. Bademler Village is also gradually carving a role for itself. As Egethe Aegean, we look to the future with hope. We are in a good mood.