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An Evaluation about the Grievance Based Expressions on Turk- Islamic Gravestones

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Abstract

It can be seen that happiness and sorrow, which have important places in our social lives, constitute important theme of our culture and art works. As in other artistic elements, this theme can widely be encountered on the tablets depicted on the gravestones. However, whatever has a historical background is exposed to different external influences and inevitably affected in different ways. The widely seen stalagmites of Turks before Islam, human / animal-shaped, figurative and with praise / sorrow epigraphs, gain a different dimension with Islam, as well. However, this variation does not remove the old tradition completely. It can be seen that the ancient theme, patterns and forms were continued in one way or another. Considerable studies have been done related to the grave epigraph of Turks including the comparison of the pre-Islamic Turkish inscriptions with the ones in Islam period in Turkey. However, considering the studies have been conducted, it is believed that how the Yenisei expressions, with the content of “grievance”, affected each Seljuk and Ottoman period have not been questioned adequately. In this study; by quoting from different sources, we tried to examine how pre-Islamic Turk grave epigraph influenced the grave epigraph of Seljuk and Ottoman period (XIX.-XX. Century) comparatively.

Keywords

Grave epigraph • Grievance • Pre-Islamic • Seljuk • Ottoman

Türk-İslam Mezar Taşları Üzerindeki Yakınma İçerikli İfadeler Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

Öz

Mezar taşları adına dikilen kişileri temsil ederler ve bunlara bakıldığında adına dikildikleri kişilerle ilgili birçok bilgiye ulaşılabilir. Ancak mezar taşlarının biçimsel özellikleri, üzerlerine işlenen süslemeler ve hakkedilen kitabelere bakıldığında temanın sadece vefat eden kişilerle sınırlı olmadığı görülür. Çünkü mezar taşları da diğer sanat eserleri gibi bir toplumun kültürel mirasının önemli birer unsurudurlar. Bunun için de konu ile bağlantılı bir topluma ait bütün değer yargıları ve yetenekleri yansıtılır. Mezar taşlarına hakkedilen önemli temalar arasında vefat eden kişi ile ilgili duyulan hüznü dile getiren sözlerdir ve bunun kültür ve sanatımızın da önemli bir temasını oluşturduğu görülür. Türk mezar epigrafisi ile ilgili pek çok önemli çalışma yapılmıştır ve İslam öncesi Türk yazıtlarının Türkiye’deki İslam dönemi mezar taşları yazılarıyla karşılaştırılması da bunlar arasında yer alır. Ancak, yapılan çalışmalara bakıldığında, Yenisey mezar taşları üzerinde bulunan “yakınma” içerikli sözlerin Selçuklu ve Osmanlı dönemleri mezar epigrafisinin her birini ne derecede etkilediği

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konusunun yeterince sorgulanmadığı kanaati taşınmaktadır. Bu çalışmada; farklı kaynaklardan alıntı yaparak, dönemleri karşılaştırmalı olarak irdelemeye çalıştık.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Mezar epigrafisi • Yakınma • İslamiyet öncesi • Selçuklu • Osmanlı

Death Conception in Ancient Turks

It is a fact that we all feel sorry when we lose someone, especially if it is one of our family members, very close relatives, or someone who achieved a phenomenal success and did good things for the sake of humanity when they were alive. In effort to pay the duty of loyalty in a way, we can say that Turkish society gives great importance to their elders, not only when they are alive, but also after their death. The procedures to be fulfilled during and after the funeral, are mainly depending on how important the deceased was when he/she was alive. Among the duties that are fulfilled, is the tradition of erecting a gravestone at the burial site on which different decorations and inscriptions can be seen that could remind a person of the dead. As for the content of the inscriptions of Turks belong to pre-Islamic period, the following points are put forward:

“On small inscriptions, primarily, there are; 1. The grievance of the deceased due to leaving those he had blood-relation such as his children, father-mother, wife or a tribe he led, 2. The deceased’s name or names, his position and missions, 3. Age, 4. The warnings made for the alive on behalf of the deceased (Von. Gabain, 1953:543), 5. Notes related to erecting the monument”¹

Mourning and Lament for the Dead in Ancient Turks

There are various traditions and customs that have been carried from the past to our era that are related to funeral ceremonies and mourning take an important place among them. Although there have been a lot of changes in the funeral processes since ancient times, we can see some traces of the past traditions. For example, offering meals to the guests who come to express their condolence is still continuing widely. Erecting gravestones with various decoration and inscriptions is also another tradition that has been continued since ancient times.

Of course all of the kinsmen, kinswomen and the loved ones of the deceased feel very upset due to his/her departing this world and leaving them. Nothing can be done in continuing anyone’s life when death comes. However, lots of things can be done for the deceased in bidding farewell. We can see that one of the important duties fulfilled for the deceased is organising a funeral ceremony.

¹ Edward Tryjarski, **Türkler ve Ölüm**, Pinhan, İstanbul, 2012, p.504.

Pain, sorrow or joy are not pertinent only to certain places or communities. Their affect can be seen in the worldwide. That's why you can see related traditions and culture throughout the world. It can be said that the Asian continent is a good example for this. Regarding the traditions and customs of burial ceremonies and sorrow expressions, here is what is suggested about ancient Kazakhs:

“Kazakhs, related to the banquet and the procedure against the dead in the burial ceremony, the women and relatives who see the dead, start to cry with a voice similar to the howling. The women would follow the funeral up to grave and on the way, they would scratch their faces with needles and tear their hair out. Later, until the seventh day, they would sit in the tent and pitched for the deceased. They would tell long lamentations in front of his clothes. In this way, it takes a year to tell the lamentations after a death in the country”².

The degree of the sorrow depends on how deeply that person influenced those around him/her when was alive. Expressing the degree of the sadness at losing the things which made you happy once is beyond expression because your happiness's source disappears. Most particularly, if this is a person you gave a great value to once, it is not possible to describe the pain endured due to his/her departure. So, when someone who had a great place in your life died, you are more deeply affected. So, it is expected to make every effort in honoring him/her after his/her death. Here are some suggestions in this issue:

“Closeness, age, gender, personality, social statues, social environment, how counted and liked, the way of death, the number of the condolence and etc. can cause the level of the funeral ceremonies and related activities when someone deceases”³.

Grief is revealed for various reasons; however none of them are more touching and painful than the lament for the deceased. It seems that when one of the Turks passed away in the past, during his funeral, grief poems were read. In this respect, the following points are expressed about the mourning:

“Mourning is uttering of the verses and grievances of the intense suffering and depression which are dramatized from the feelings, discernment and behaviors of the people on the basis of their value judgments, life and death, the haves and the have-nots. The mournful lament started in ancient Turks period and it is still continued, especially in rural areas”⁴.

Beyond any doubt, “death” is the most heartrending fact that human beings could face. A deceased leaves an indelible impression on his/her loved ones and relatives due to leaving

² Firdevs Güneş, *Türklerde Defin Geleneği*. Erciyes Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Kayseri, 1995, p.49.

³ Güneş, **op. cit.**, p.54.

⁴ Güneş, **op. cit.**, p.59.

them. Therefore, those who were around him/her when he/she was alive would like to show the depth of their sadness and when bidding farewell to him/her, they would like to do their last duty. The sorrow people feel for the deceased can be revealed in various ways. Here is an explanation regarding how ancient Turks fulfilled their duties when someone died:

“If one of them dies, his body is laid out in the tent. Each of the relatives of the deceased kills a sheep and a horse (cattle and horses) and places them in front of the tent as a sacrifice. Then they ride their horses seven times around the tent, crying and mourning, and they cut their face with a knife. They are weeping until their tears mix with blood running from their faces. They do this seven times and then (only) cease. They choose a day and take their horses with the garments and objects of daily use of the deceased and burn it with the body... At the day of the funeral, his relatives again bring sacrificial gifts, ride their horses and cut their faces. The entire ceremony is exactly the same as on the day of death”⁵.

When someone dies, many people rush to help his/her relatives. They start to help them in all burial procedures as soon as they hear the bad news and they try to console them. The saying related to joys and sorrow “while happiness increases when you share it, sadness decreases when you share it” explains how important it is to share someone's sorrow. Considering this, we can see that when someone passes away, not only the inhabitants and the relatives but many people from the surrounding areas also give their condolences to the deceased’s close relatives. This tradition is conveyed by as follows: “They (the lords) thus passed away (lit.: 'fled away to God). There are mourners and laments came from the east such as the representatives of the people of the Böküli Čölüg (Korea), Tabγač (Chinese), Avar, Rome, Kirgiz, Uc-Quriqan, Otuz-Tatar, Qitaŋ and Tatabi, they all came and mourned and lamented. So famous kagans were they. Then the younger brothers became kagans, and their sons became kagans”⁶.

If we are to draw a conclusion from mourning and lament for the dead in ancient Turks, we can see that instead of bowing to fate, there is grievance. Here are some suggestions related to lament for dead:

“The sorrow of leaving someone close and objecting the irresistible destiny, and the statement in the family and in the social structuring can be seen in the lament which is subject to self-feelings of man, the requirements and rules of society. The lament for the deceased is considered to be the starting point of the dead burial ritual process that begins immediately

⁵ Lucie Šmahelová, **Kül-Tegin Monument**, In “Turkic Khaganate and Research of the First Czechoslovak-Mongolian Expedition in Khöshöö Tsaidam”, 2014, p. 49.

⁶ Šmahelová, **op. cit.**, p.49.

after death. It is continued until the commemorative carriage and repeated during the burial. It is not only a natural expression of a painful and lively dilemma, but it is also a duty. Even though the lamentations of men are heard, there is a kind of distinction of the lamentations, especially, of wives and daughters. (Volkskundliche Texte, 1933:17)".⁷

Regarding the grave epigraph of the pre-Islamic Turk and Ottoman periods, the following points on the main theme of the inscriptions of Yenisei is included: "The main theme of the Yenisei epigraph is the sadness that the deceased felt for leaving his/her family, all of his/her lovers, all of his/her possessions, his/her country and more generally the world; land, the sky, the sun and the moon. The text of the inscription is often interrupted by words that express bitter exclamations and infelicity and many of them ask people to bemoan with commands such as ayit! "cream out!" or "ökün!" "read!".⁸

Expressions Including Grievances on Pre-Islamic Turkish Funerary Steles

All the signs such as rock paintings / tombstones, monuments, etc., on which we can see the traces of the past, nearly have the same significance in terms of being the bridges between the past and the present. Besides the social life and the important events encountered in the pre-Islamic period, it is seen that the cultural heritage associated with culture, traditions, customs and beliefs have been transferred to Turk-Islamic period in a way. As for the base of the sorrow inscriptions on the gravestones of Turk-Islamic period, it is necessary to search about the theme of the inscriptions on the pre-Islamic Central Asian Turkish gravestones. In this way, after giving a place to the citation of the inscriptions on the gravestones of both periods, it will be possible to get an idea to make an inference.

Yenisei Inscriptions

Yenisei is the name of one of the longest rivers in Asia and also a vast region which is mainly along the border between eastern and western Siberia. It is one of the regions where ancient peoples used to live as well. One of the means that bears the traces of the people lived there in ancient times is the funerary steles called "Yenisei inscriptions". We can see that the theme of the inscriptions on the funerary steles or gravestones belong to each era come into prominence in a specific point. As for the inscriptions on the Yenisei funerary steles, they

⁷ Tryjarski, **op. cit.**, p.148.

⁸ Louis Bazin, **Osmanlı Mezar Taşlarında İslamiyet Öncesinden İzler ve Yenilikler**, İletişim Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2016, p.35.

mainly comprise grievance expressions about the deceased. Besides the sorrow expressions, you can see the theme related to the social life, culture, beliefs, economy and information about family members, heroism in war, hunted animals and what / who was left behind. The texts are usually transmitted from the first individual. Here is what is expressed about the funerary steles of Yenisei in this issue:

“In the Yenisei inscriptions, often the heroism of warfare or hunting is presented, and more often, they especially mention about the possessions comprising herds / flocks and the most valuable ones are their horses. However, the main theme of the Yenisei inscriptions is the sorrow felt for the family, all of the lovers, all of the possessions, the country and more generally the world, the land, sky, sun and the moon he had to leave”⁹.

Kormuşin and others transfer the inscriptions of Yenisei, Altay and Kirgizstan in detail; however, only three of the extracts were included here:

E-11 (Begre) Inscription¹⁰

(1) I am Tör Apa. Oh, my wife, I married when I was fifteen, what a pity, I left (you)! Me poor thing, Oh, sun and moon, (I am) not able to see (you) anymore!

(2) Oh, my three-son, I left (you)! What a grief! I have not got enough (of you)! (My sons) stay strong!

(3) From the age of fifteen I have been with lady Tabgaç. With the bravery and courage of a warrior; I captured gold and silver, camels and bondwomen.

(4) I killed seven wolves, leopards. I didn't kill (?).

(5) Oh, my land, what a pity! Oh, my rivers and lakes (I) left you. Me poor thing, alas, pity!

(6) Oh, my people, my dynasty and relatives (I) left you. I have not got enough (of you)!

(7) Oh, my state, wife, I have not got enough (of you)! I am at the age of sixty (seventy - ?) and I cannot feel (the life) anymore!

(8) Oh, my brothers-in-law, who are far away, I left you!

⁹ Gilles Veinstein, **Osmanlılar ve Ölüm**, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2016, p.18.

¹⁰ Igor Kormuşin et. al. **Yenisey – Altay – Kirgizstan Yazıtları ve Kağıda Yazılı Runik Belgeler**, BilgeSu, Ankara, 2016, p.76.

(9) My comrade, with whom I have oath of allegiance and friends with whom I don't have oath of allegiance, I left (you)!

(10) I left (my) eight-legged asset (that is, my tent) and left three types of all my possessions and I have not got enough of them! What a grief, I could not see my white (tent) and black (possessions and animals) any longer.

E-42 (Bay-Bulun) Inscription¹¹

(1) For my merit, I took the road with my lord together. What a pity! What a grief! I killed (my enemies) for my merit.

(2) My warrior's name is Öz Togi. My sons, what a pity! My wife, we left!

(3) My relatives held a yog meal ceremony by crying out and They erected the fine stone. Kim (Yenisei) river. The land of forever... I have not got enough (of you)!

(4) This is me who has inscribed (this), young Sangur. Thousands of my eight-legged possession (tent), I have not got enough of you.

(5) I died at the age of seventy. I killed seventy warriors (of the enemy). Thousands of ... horses (?)

(6) I increased the number of the inside patrol guards. (But now) oh, me poor thing, without getting enough of them, I left them!

(7) Pity, my land, my holy land, pity! Pity my state, khans, sun and moon, oh, pity!

(8) Hundreds of my kinsmen, me poor thing! My community.... (?) This is your fine stone!

Here is the sum up of the theme of the inscriptions on the funerary steles in Yenisei and Talas in such a way: "The inscriptions on Yenisei and Talas seem to be trails of the written laments read in front of the deceased."¹²

Concerning this issue, the study by Kormuşın and others, called "Yenisey – Altay – Kırgızistan Yazıtları ve Kağıda Yazılı Runik Belgeler", give us plenty of information about the related inscriptions. In fact the total number of the Yenisei inscriptions is 129¹³; however,

¹¹ Kormuşın et al., **op.cit.**, p.137.

¹² Veinstein, **op.cit.**, p.18.

¹³ Halit Çal, "Orta Asya'dan (8-9. YY) Türkiye'ye (11-17. YY) Mezar Taşlarında Yazılar", **V. International Congress**, 2013, p.47.

only 71 of them were included as the inscriptions on the others have not been obtained fully due to the destruction, abrasion, etc. of the grave stones. It is thought that if they had not been destroyed, similar information would be got, as well. If we are to have a look on the general content of the Yenisei inscriptions, we can get probable knowledge with its extent as in the table below.

Table 1

The Expressions on Yenisei Inscriptions Related to What / Whom the Deceased Didn't Get Enough of during His/Her life

What / whom the deceased did not get enough of – out of 71 inscriptions			
1	State / country (16)	9	Horses (2)
2	Wife /wives (15)	10	Friends (2)
3	Sons / children (6)	11	Water / lakes / rivers (3)
4	Relatives (7)	12	Bey (lord) (4)
5	Community / tribe (6)	13	This world (1)
6	Soldiers (4)	14	Property (1)
7	Dynasty / family (5)	15	Tent (1)
8	Sun and moon (4)	16	Elders / youth (1)

As we can see in the table; what/who is left behind after someone dies draws a great attention and two of the values come to the forefront among them. One of them is the state / country and the other one is the deceased's wife (family). We should remind about "Table 1" that similar expressions may take place in the same inscription. For example, besides "I didn't get enough of children", we can see "I didn't get enough of my wife" or "I didn't get enough of my horses", etc. in the same inscription.

Table 2

Some of the Expressions that Imply Grievances on the Yenisei Inscriptions (Out of 71)

Oh, my wife! (8)	Oh, calamity (my death)! (2)
Oh, my country! (6)	Pity me! (24)
What a pity! What a bummer! What a sorrow! What a disaster/fate! (37)	Oh, sun and moon! (3)
Oh, rivers and lakes! (1)	Alas! (5)
Oh, my noble lord! (4)	Oh, my people! (7)
Oh, my treasury! (1)	Oh, my camels! (1)

Considering the "Table 2", we can see that the deceased is very sorry for leaving this world and leaving what / who is very important for him and when expressing the sorrow due to the separation, there is a grievance which reflects lamentations. In "Table 2", we can see similar expressions including grievances in "the same inscription. For example, besides "Oh, my people!", we can see "Alas!" or "me poor thing!" in the same inscription.

Orhun Inscriptions

Orhun inscriptions have a significant importance and place in Turkish history and art works as they are among the oldest cultural assets of Turkish society. The monuments erected in the name of Bilge Khan, Kultegin and Tonyukuk are the ones come to the forefront of all. The theme regarding sorrow for the deceased does not take an important place while comparing with the other issues. Here is a part of inscription related to lament on the monument of Bilge Khan:

“Now, my younger brother Kültigin died. I myself mourned for him. My eyes to see became as if they were blind, my mind to think became as if it were unconscious. I myself mourned for him. When the world (sky) was created, man was born to die. So I mourned. Crying over, crying in heart, I mourned again and again. I thought that two of your brave men, my young brothers/sisters, nephew/niece, sons, rulers and society would cry until their eyes deteriorated. Except for the mourners and lamenters of Qitan and Tatabi people, udar Senun (general) came. They brought unmeasured amount of valuable goods, gold and silver, valuing ten thousand”¹⁴.

Death Conception in Turk-Islamic Period

In Islam, in connection with the death tradition, there is an addressing to both those who are left behind and deceased. With this, it is reminded that the people who are left behind will meet with the same fate one day and they are expected to take a lesson from death. On the other hand, regarding what is aimed at addressing the deceased person, following particulars are mentioned; “besides, in addressing a deceased person, it is a fact that, even if it is temporary, the hard reality of death is broken. Because, to establish a dialogue with the death, even if it is a one-sided, it seems a little to overcome the separation of death and death lead to”¹⁵.

People can be helpless because of not having much to do about some events that happen around them and “death” is one of the significant events among them. The reactions such as crying, lamenting, and etc. are the sign of the hopelessness in a way. Depending on the traditions and beliefs of the communities of each era, the reactions against such grief events may vary. While some of these reactions have a cautious approach, others can be extremist.

¹⁴ Tryjarski, **op. cit.**, p.508-509.

¹⁵ Mehmet Samsakçı, **Ölüme Açılan Estetik Kapı – Türk Mezar Taşı Edebiyatı**, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, İstanbul, 2015, p.108.

Islam does not approve of extremism neither in joy, nor in sorrow. Here is what expressed about what Islam suggests related to the attitude towards the death: “No doubt, the orders of Islam do not forbid crying; however, by means of reliance, they necessitate sedateness and equanimity. In Islamic countries, what often strikes the travellers is the conception of seeing the cortege following the coffin in silent and deep thought”¹⁶.

Then, if Islam does not approve extreme behaviours in lamenting, what makes people react like this? Here is some suggests in this issue: “There is no doubt that non-random similarities have been identified between the two epigraphic groups: In both, in the parts related to grievances, there is a tendency to give place to exclamations; at the same time, it can be seen that due to the separation and passing away of the deceased, there is repetition in the parallel patterns of bemoaning theme. However, Islam's religion understanding is not open up to this theme, very common and systematically took place in pre-Islamic inscriptions, it is not included in the inscriptions of sheikh and leading religious functionary... In both epigraphic compilations, it is even more evident to express the pain of leaving the life and his/her relatives with a verb stand for “not get enough of something”... As this grievance is not a cultural element stemming from Islam, here, we think that an ancient theme continues its existence”¹⁷.

Grievance Expressions on the Gravestones in Turk-Islamic Period

There are many factors that cause changes of human life style and one of the prominent factors is the role of the religions. Although all religions offer something in common such as emphasizing differentiation of good from evil and higher ethical values, there are some differences, as well. No doubt, as the main objective of each of the religion is to shape the lives of the societies on the basis of its rules and they try to generate a new way of life. However, they can't avoid the variation and diversity of beliefs and practices in a society.

Cultural values carry the traces not only of the era they emerged, but also of the past. So, cultural assets provide a bond between the eras. The influence of the past beliefs can be decreased, but they cannot be eliminated completely. The dominant belief of the era has more impact on the society and so does on the cultural assets. That's to say, the traces of the past cultures and beliefs can be encountered in later periods, but not as common as the period they

¹⁶ Veinstein, **op. cit.**, p.18.

¹⁷ Bazin, **op.cit.**, p.42.

stem from. As for the gravestones / funerary steles of Turks from the past to the present, we can say that despite some changes, they also carry the traces from the past to today, as well.

However, as mentioned above, the effect of the beliefs of the era they belong to is dominant. Considering a comparison the theme of the inscriptions between the pre-Islamic Turk and Turk Islamic period, while there are mainly sorrow expressions in one period (pre-Islamic Turk period), you can see the praise expressions come into prominence in Turk Islamic period:

“In pre-Islamic or Ottoman inscriptions, being strongly integrated into the community does not hinder expressing the individual painful feelings. This is a very general phenomenon not only specific to the Turks; however, what interesting is to identify non-random similarities between the two epigraphic groups: In the parts on which grievances take place on one and on the other, there is a tendency to give place to a style with exclamation; at the same time, as the deceased depart this life, it is seen that the parallel patterns are repeated in the theme of bemoan. However, Islam's religious understanding is not open up to this last theme, which is frequently encountered and constantly found place for itself in the pre-Islamic inscriptions, in the inscriptions of the sheiks and prominent religious functionary this theme is not included”¹⁸.

Grievance Expressions on the Gravestones in Ahlat, Bitlis in the Seljuks' period:

Although the theme of the inscriptions is mainly about praising the deceased for what he/she had done when he/she was alive, we can see sorrow expressions on many gravestones, as well, especially related to leaving in his/her young ages.

Table 3

Sorrow Related Inscriptions on the Gravestones in Ahlat, (12-15th centuries).

I/N	Grievance related expressions	Number – out of 118
1	Short-lived -	6
2	Short-lived + Şabb (young)	20
3	Short-lived + Şabb (young) + Not got enough of his youthfulness	7
4	Short-lived + Şabb (young) + Not got enough of his youth + taken away from / longing for/ faraway from / remain separate from - his brothers (4), comrades (5), friends (3), family (1) , children (2), compeers (1), ancestry (1), lovers (3)	10
5	Poems	2

¹⁸ Bazin *op. cit.*, p.42.

As seen in the “Table 1”, there are 39 gravestones out of 118 that comprise grievance expressions directly, on which we can see “short-lived, young; short-lived, not got enough of his youthfulness; and short-lived, not got enough of his youthfulness and taken away among his brothers / sisters and compeers / friends / lovers. Sorrow for the deceased.is expressed in two of the poems. On the other hand, the gravestones with “short-lived”, without including young or not got enough of his/her youthfulness, can be evaluated in a different way. To us, “short-lived” is a term which is related to life period of human beings in general.

Here are four inscriptions transferred by Karamağaralı:

(1) He, the newly grown up rose, passed away.

Spring branch was envious of his appearance.

Unfortunately the newly groom, Alau’d-Din, is hugging the soil.

Where that tall orchard rose is?

Where that sweet-voiced, tuneful nightingale is?

If you do not believe that the world is a place of drawing a lesson from, then, look and say,

Where is Alau’d-Din Osman?”¹⁹

(2) This grave belongs to worshipped, believer/martyr, young, short-lived, not got enough of his youthfulness, taken away among his compeers and family...²⁰

(3) Young, worshipped, believer/martyr, respectable, wise, short-lived, not got enough of his youthfulness, far away from his children and lovers, longing to his ancestry and lovers...²¹

(4) The rotation of the earth tears the heart of the fearless human being out all year long. He was like a rose in his youthfulness orchard. A wind full of death arose and buried him in the ground.²²

Besides seeing the influence of sorrow/ grievance expressions of the ancient Turk inscriptions on the gravestones in Turkey in the period of Seljuk and Ottoman, we had a chance to see an example in another country, i.e. Kirgizstan, where a similar culture

¹⁹ Beyhan Karamağaralı, **Ahlat Mezar Taşları**, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara, 1992, p.118.

²⁰ Karamağaralı, **op. cit.**, p.148.

²¹ Karamağaralı, **op. cit.**, p.165.

²² Karamağaralı, **op. cit.**, p.134.

dominated once. Cumagulov made a detailed study about the inscriptions on the gravestones in Kirgizstan.²³ Here is one of the extracts:

Trouble swirl is turning around you,
The door of the eternity was opened by whoever entered first,
Most break down in tears like the rain, whoever remembered you.
I lost my friend during the blossoming of the red roses,
I am weeping by hitting my head with my two hands,
And I am speaking with the soil. Look, ground,
Protect my true friend scrupulously!
May Allah forgive whoever inscribed this writing!”

Grievance Expressions on the Gravestones in Istanbul in the period of Ottoman

The gravestones belong to Ottoman period, especially erected in 19-20th. century, attract a great attention in terms of both their decoration and the inscriptions depicted on them. As they are big enough to give place to decoration and inscriptions, the theme of both is very rich. Sorrow expressions are also one of the themes that can be seen widely on them. Here is what is suggested.

“The theme of separation, which is continuously expressed as a separation in pre-Islamic grave epigraphy, is treated as a literary style which refers to various forms of "separation" in Arabic in the Ottoman epigraphy. In both epigraphic compilations, it is a more specific feature to express the pain of leaving life and relatives by a verb that means "not satisfied"... However, in the Ottoman inscriptions, expressing the pain of not being able to get enough of your youth, the “unsatisfactory” is often used with the words “youthfulness and freshness” together.”²⁴

Here are some suggestions in making a comparison between the inscriptions of Ottoman period and Yenisei related to grievance expressions: “In Yenisey inscriptions; it is stated that the deceased are longing for only earthly life, it seems to reflect a pessimistic viewpoint for the other world... In the Ottoman inscriptions, there is no doubt that there isn't a close link of these bemoan. Here, handling the theme of separation, despite the sorrow and torture which expresses outcry, the patterns such as “not got enough of youthfulness” express longing for

²³ Cumagulov, Ç., **Kirgiz Epigrafisi**, II, Frunze, 1982, pp.134.

²⁴ Bazin, **op. cit.**, pp.42-43.

worldly life; however, at least with the call of Fatiha, a hope for a paradise for the deceased man or woman. In this case, it is understood that with Islam, there is a radical change in the attitudes of those who are alive towards the deceased who were close relatives. As well as, Fatiha, compassion and mercy are a call to Allah, the aim of their grievance is to draw the mercy of Allah upon death.”²⁵

Here are some of the sorrow expressions taken from “Fatih Külliyesi, (Özcan, 2007, 41-43 & 254-266).

He is the Eternal.

Alas! She was the wife of Hacı Ahmet from the Hayriyye merchants (a group of merchants established by Sultan Mahmud II to promote commerce). The time of death has come; there is no cure for my heartache. The wind of death destroyed my life’s rose garden. It separated me from my family and my relatives, and this is why I yearn for them. I am one of the candles of Sultan Abdulmecid. Allah took me to the palace in the eternal world, even though I could not realize what I dreamed for while young in this world. The flood of my tears covered the entire world. A poet named Kerimi composed poetry.²⁶

He is the Eternal.

Fatiha to the soul of Selahaddin Efendi... He was in his thirties. He had come to his maturity like the full moon. Alas to the sun of virtue, wisdom and intelligence. All persons of heart lamented for losing him. But now everybody speaks about his good deeds and words. He fell into the sea of blessings of Allah and went to the Paradise. Lamih has stated his chronogram with sorrow and while tears were falling from his eyes: “Selahaddin Efendi has been lost from the eyes. 6 April, 1893.”²⁷

Some other inscriptions including grievances in the inscriptions of Fatih Complex:

Alas!

The unfaithful world spared also the life of Fatma, the Sultan’s nurse. The infidel fate gave his body into the earth. It never showed mercy and compassion to her.

²⁵ Bazin, *op. cit.*, p.50.

²⁶ Fevzi Günüş & Ali Rıza Özcan, *Türk Kültür ve Medeniyet Tarihinde Fatih Külliyesi III - The Fatih Complex III, In the History of Turkish Culture and Civilization*, İstanbul, 2007, p.41.

²⁷ Günüş & Özcan, *op. cit.*, p.43.

After hearing the firman of “Return”, she instantly submitted herself to that order.²⁸

God ordered such, I could not satiate to my youth years. The wind of death had wilted my sensitive skin. I could not realize my wishes in this world. May Allah, who is the only Ruler, realize my wishes in the Paradise.

The wind of death destroyed my life’s rose garden. It separated me from my family and my relatives, and this is why I yearn for them. Allah took me to the palace in the eternal world, even though I could not realize what I dreamed for while young in this world. The flood of my tears covered the entire world.²⁹

Table 4

Some of the Expressions that Imply Grievance on the Gravestones (out of 377) at Fatih Complex in Istanbul in the Period of Ottoman

Great loss (2)	Alas! (6)	In a very early age (1)
Oh! (1)	What a pity! (2)	Destroyed by the mill of fate (1)
Oh, death! (4)	The wind of death (1)	Her parents began grieving (1)
Oh, separation! (1)	Oh fate! (1)	Left this world instantly (1)

Considering the content of the inscriptions on the gravestones and the form of the gravestones of Turks, belong to both pre-Islamic and Islamic period, we can say that both the content of the inscriptions and the form of the gravestones have had similar development in terms of being affected by different religions and other external effects. Here are some suggestions in this regard:

“In the context of Bedouin-nomadic culture, it is useful to mention that the marking of a man's burial place was strictly forbidden during the times when Islam was once fussily implemented (Kerimov, 1978, p.51). On the grounds that family mausoleums, sarcophagi and mozzarella may have feelings of jealousy in the poor members of the society, the construction of monumental tomb structures has never been openly recommended in Islam (Kerimov, 1978, p.57). The tombs are prohibited from being decorated with religious inscriptions or living creatures, especially the portraits of the deceased. The desire to have a grave to be visited by close relatives, deep rooted, has led to the erection of grave monuments as a concession today... These monuments (Ottoman-Muslim gravestones) depicts a schematic human form consisting of body, neck and head. The stones and columns are usually decorated in Arabic writing... Like the stela or baba with writings, emerging of these man-shaped

²⁸ Günüç & Özcan, *op. cit.*, p.254.

²⁹ Günüç & Özcan, *op.cit.*, p. 266.

(anthropomorphic) structures in Turkish land, a kind of reflection of ancient Turkish graves, is explained by skillfully concealing of their old traditions after embracing Islam”.³⁰

Similarities and Differences

If we are to mention about the similarities and differences about the grievances-related expressions on the inscriptions of both Turk pre-Islamic—Yenisei—and Turk-Islamic periods—Ahlat and Fatih Complex, the following points can be conveyed:

1. Besides the term “not got enough of someone”, “short-lived” and “short-lived and young” can be seen in the 43 out of 118 inscriptions of Ahlat. As for the Yenisei Inscriptions; besides “not getting enough of someone”, we can see that “not getting of something” is also often mentioned. The total number of the Yenisei inscriptions which include both “not getting enough of someone/something” is 50 out of 71; that’s about 70%. The Yenisei inscriptions which don’t include “not getting enough of someone/something” have very short inscriptions. That can be the main reason for not giving them a place. That we don’t encounter any inscriptions that include “not getting enough of someone/something” in Ottoman period — Fatih Complex—is very interesting while seeing 37% of the inscriptions in Ahlat including “not getting enough of someone” and leaving this world in early ages.

2. The inscriptions of Ahlat and Fatih Complex differ from the Yenisei inscriptions in terms of not mentioning “not got enough of something”. While it is about 70% in Yenisei inscriptions, it is 0% in Turk-Islamic period—in the inscriptions of Ahlat and Fatih Complex.

3. “Exclaiming expressions” which express grievance in a more strict way, also attract great attention. When comparing such expressions, we can see that while none of the Ahlat inscriptions comprise such expressions, we can trace them in the inscriptions of Fatih Complex. There are 22 out of 377 inscriptions of Fatih Complex which include exclaiming expressions, that’s about 12% percent. As for the Yenisei inscriptions, the “Table 4” may not give the exact percentage as we can see more than one similar expressions in the same inscription. After looking through, we saw that 50 out of 71 inscriptions contain “exclaiming expressions”, that’s about 73%. Considering the ones which don’t comprise such expressions, almost all of them have very short inscriptions. When comparing the “exclaiming expressions” of both Yenisei and Fatih Complex; by 70% (Yenisei) and 12% Fatih Complex, we can see that there is a significant decrease in numbers in Turk-Islamic period.

³⁰ Tryjarski, *op. cit.*, p.483-484.

4. The “exclaiming expressions” in the Yenisei inscriptions such as “what a sorrow/fate/disaster/pity!” are expressed in a heartrendingly way and the “exclaiming expressions” of Fatih Complex inscriptions, such as “Oh, separation/fate/death!” reflect nearly a similar sorrow level for the deceased.

5. By means of the “exclaiming expressions” in the Yenisei inscriptions such as “pity me!”, the deceased attract the visitors by arousing pity for himself and he would like the visitors to share his sorrow. On the other hand, in the inscriptions in Islamic period, instead of arousing pity for himself, he would like the visitors to pray for him and recite the Fatiha for being granted by Allah.

6. “Short-lived” and “not got enough of something/someone” may imply leaving this world in early ages. However, on the other hand, we can see the same expressions inscribed for the ones who lived over the age of 70—in the Yenisei inscriptions. Here, some of the inscriptions—both in Yenisei and Ahlat—may belong to the ones who died when they were young. As for the others, the expressions “short-lived” and “not got enough of something/someone” might be related to the desire to live more/not to leave this world due to a happy life they have and still have lots of things to do in this world.

Evaluation and Result

Turkish gravestones and the steles in the function of the gravestones, with their stylistic specialities and the inscriptions depicted on them, convey important information about pre-Islamic and Islamic burial customs. As in the other cultural assets and art works, there have been some changes in the form and themes of the inscriptions on the gravestones of Turks since ancient times. While the steles in the form of the deceased and tombstones with figures were widely erected on the tombstones in pre-Islamic period, they were replaced with the ones only headpieces such as quilted turban, headgear, cap, and headscarf engraved on the top of the tombstones. The animal shaped ones, such as sheep/ram-shaped, horse-shaped and etc., were continued to reduce in a significant number. As for the tombstones with figures, they were mainly replaced with the decoration of calligraphy, geometrical shapes and various plants.

Regarding the theme of the inscriptions on the pre-Islamic Turk gravestones, such as sorrow, grievances, praise, advice, wish, and etc., they have been mainly replaced with prayers from verses of the Qur’an and Hadith of the Prophet Hz. Muhammed related to death and the other world. As for the continuation of the sorrow and grievances expressions, Islamic

religion does not look with favour on them. Thus, despite continuation, there is a significant decrease. The expression “may Allah forgive who wrote this / grievances expression”, reveals the attitude of Islam clearly about giving a place to grievances / sorrow expressions in the inscriptions.

Considering the differences between the grievances expressions of both periods (pre- Islamic and Islamic), as the grievances expressions on the funerary steles (in pre-Islamic period) are the laments directly expressed in the funeral ceremonies, they were oppressed with a great grief. On the other hand, Islam recommends us to be patient against sorrow events and not to lament. However, due to the influence of both periods, pre-Islamic and Turk-Islam periods, we can see a confusion about whether / how to give a place to grievances expressions in Turk-Islamic period. So, we can see that the grievances expressions were neither given up in including in the inscriptions, nor expressed in a heartrending way. They mainly seem to be moderated.

Result

It can be said that, in the long way from the ancient times to today, there has been significant developments and various changes in whatever we encounter today. Regarding the gravestones and the theme they comprise since ancient times, it can also be said that despite some external effects such as different religions and cultural interactions of different societies, they still carry the trace of ancient traditions and customs to a large extent. While making a comparison between the grievances expressions in the inscriptions of Turks in pre-Islamic period and the ones in Islamic period; in the Yenisei inscriptions, besides the grief for leaving the loved ones and relatives, there is a great grief for leaving this world and what the deceased possessed such as a house, sheep, herds, horses and etc.

Regarding the Islamic period, to Islam, “death” is just a travel to another world and everybody will finally join that travel. Thus, there is no reason for mentioning and regretting for this world and whatever is left behind. As for the reasons of seeing inscriptions on the gravestones that are inconsistently with Islamic understanding, it can be said that, as in the other way of living, it is not always possible to get rid of the old traditions and habits. Although the new beliefs aim to provide control over them, they intervene in the events whenever they are also in question and they sometimes have control over them.

As for the influence of Yenisei inscriptions on the Turk-Islamic period—Ahlat (Seljuk period) and Istanbul Fatih Complex (Ottoman period)—we can see their influence on both

periods, surprisingly in different ways. While they had effect in terms of “exclaiming expressions” on Ottoman period inscriptions (Fatih Complex), they can be traced with “not getting enough of someone” in Seljuk period (on Ahlat inscriptions).

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