

EARTHQUAKE AND THE BREAKDOWN OF SILENCE: THE TRAUMA-LAMENTATION INTERACTION

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Abstract: *The life cycle, which reflects chaos on one side and cosmos on the other, manifests itself in the structure of the human spirit and body. Within this cycle, individuals encounter both joys and traumas, which leave deep imprints in their memories. Accumulated experiences in memory find expression for various reasons; disasters such as death, loss, accidents, earthquakes, and floods are etched into memory and profoundly affect the psyche. The pain, deprivation, and struggle to cope with sudden changes experienced by individuals or collectives after trauma give rise to the lamentation, a ritual form of mourning. Lamentations are expressions of the pains embedded in memory and serve as methods of coping with the disruption of order. Unexpected and sorrowful changes prompt the mind to seek cooperation and explore physical and psychological outlets. Earthquakes, being sudden and devastating disasters, have been articulated through laments that express the profound suffering they cause. This study examines contemporary lamentations recorded on YouTube shortly after the two significant earthquakes that struck the Kahramanmaraş-Pazarcık region on February 6, 2023. It evaluates how these lamentations are related to traumatic experiences and their functions within collective memory. The trauma-lamentation-healing paradigm is critical for understanding the emergence of laments. The reasons for their performance by the public and their placement within collective memory form the central focus of the investigation. Additionally, the triangle of lamentation, trauma, and healing is discussed in the context of ancient human behavior, emphasizing how this triad is situated within memory.*

Keywords: *February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake, trauma, social trauma, lament, YouTube.*

Deprem ve Sessizliğin Bozuluşu:

Traumata-Ağıt Etkileşimi

Öz: *Yaşam döngüsü, bir tarafıyla kaos, diğer tarafıyla kozmos olarak insanın ruh ve beden yapısına yansımaktadır. Bu döngü içinde insan, var olan çatışmalardan payına düşeni alarak, sevinçlere olduğu kadar travmalara da maruz kalır. Bu deneyimler, bireyin belleğinde derin izler bırakır. Bellekteki birikim, çeşitli sebeplerle dışavurum bulur; travmalara zemin hazırlayan ölüm, kayıp, kaza, deprem ve sel gibi felaketler hafızaya kazınır ve ruha işler. Bireyin ya da kolektifin travma sonrası yaşadığı acı, yoksunluk ve ani değişimle başa çıkma mücadelesi, yasın ritüel biçimlerinden biri olan ağıtı doğurur. Ağıt,*

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hafızaya yerleşen acıların dışavurumu ve düzenin sarsıntısıyla başa çıkma yöntemidir. Beklenmedik ve keder verici değişimler, zihin ile iş birliği arayışına yönlendirir ve bedensel ile ruhsal çıkış yolları arar. Özellikle depremler, ani ve yıkıcı felaketler oldukları için doğurduğu derin acılar ağıt formunda dile getirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, 6 Şubat 2023'te Kahramanmaraş-Pazarcık merkezli meydana gelen iki büyük depremin ardından YouTube'da kaydedilen güncel ağıtlar incelenmiştir. Ağıtların travmatik deneyimlerle nasıl ilişkilendiği ve toplumsal bellekteki işlevleri değerlendirilmektedir. Travma-ağıt-sağaltım paradigması, ağıtların ortaya çıkışını anlamak açısından kritik öneme sahiptir. Ağıtların halk tarafından söylenme nedenleri ve kolektif bellek içindeki yerleri, incelemenin merkezine yerleştirilmiştir. Ağıt-travma-sağaltım üçgeni, kadim insan davranışları açısından ele alınmış ve bu üçlünün hafızada konumlandırılması üzerinde durulmuştur.
Anahtar Sözcükler: 6 Şubat Kahramanmaraş depremi, travma, toplumsal travma, ağıt, YouTube.

Introduction

The consequences of natural disasters are difficult to surmount. People have to contend with the physical and emotional devastation they face. Making sense of this catastrophe and the pain caused by the losses occur at the same time. In this regard, the persistent traces of the great sufferings of the past living on in narratives are remarkable. These records are not only testimonies of deep suffering that remain in memory, but also the sad narratives of people who mourn for many years and try to rid themselves of their trauma. As the natural reaction to nature and the pain caused by it is kept alive through narratives, the extent and social impact of the trauma are also recorded and transmitted.

Kızıldağ, in his book *“Laments of Earthquakes in the Language of Minstrels and Poets”*, compiles 81 laments composed in the aftermath of the twin earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş. He describes these laments as “expressions of the magnitude of the earthquake and the lives it destroyed, sung through the language of the heart” (Kızıldağ, 2023: III). Özdemir, in his article titled *“Earthquake Epics in Minstrel Poetry Tradition”*, examines poems by minstrels written about significant earthquakes such as the 1766 Istanbul Earthquake, the 1893 Erzurum Tortum Earthquake, the 1894 Istanbul Earthquake, the 1939 Erzincan Earthquake, the 1943 Tosya Ladik Earthquake, and the 1992 Erzincan Earthquake. He highlights how minstrels convey the traumas experienced by individuals and communities (Özdemir, 2023: 230, 253). Bakırcı, in his article *“Earthquake Centered in Kahramanmaraş in the Language of Minstrels”*, analyzes 31 poems composed by minstrels in response to the two major earthquakes on February 6, 2023. He categorizes the earthquake-related elements in these poems under seven thematic headings.¹ This study shows that “minstrels were not indifferent to the disaster of this century” (Bakırcı, 2023: 49). Özdal, in her article analyzing the functional aspects of laments and epics shared on YouTube regarding the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, explores in detail how the consequences of this tragic disaster are conveyed through poetry (Özdal, 2023: 397-404). Similarly, Özmen provides an analysis of the poems written by minstrels about the Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquake, outlining the messages conveyed in these compositions (Özmen, 2023: 1951-1958). Türkan, focusing on Hatay, one of the regions most deeply affected by the earthquakes, examines 32

¹ For details of the classification by Nedim Bakırcı, refer to pages 35-48 of the article titled “Earthquakes Centered in Kahramanmaraş in the Language of Minstrels.”

earthquake-related poems composed by both minstrels and survivors. These poems are classified into eight thematic categories in his study (Türkan, 2023: 155-159).

Natural disasters entail individual and social struggles. People strive to escape from the physical and emotional effects of the disasters they face. Trauma ensues and the subject(s) on the other side of the chaos try to tackle the situation. Salvation is sought to adapt to the new situation after destruction. One reaction to these unforeseen changes is the desire to narrate. These retellings, which are repeated until they evolve into narratives, are natural reactions that stem from the functions of making sense, recovering from trauma, and reducing pain by sharing it. The words spoken after the shocking event disclose the devastation's existence and enormity. The chaotic structure of human beings and the cosmos is like that. Similar to the narration of metaphysical situations and supernatural events, the narration of a traumatic experience and chaotic event is a call. These calls or the narratives that emerge after these experiences have spawned myths, cosmogonic legends, epics, and dirges. Humans do not have an immutable, static life, always moving forward on a linear scale. Boundaries are transgressed occasionally; surprises happen; in short, chaos can strike at the center of life at any moment and upset the routine. This is why unanticipated losses, incurable wounds, and devastating natural disasters such as earthquakes are tied to trauma in this chaotic order. This unavoidable relationship between pain and trauma prioritizes the need for narration. Lamentations, a natural progeny of trauma narratives, start to serve a therapeutic function with the cries, wishes, complaints, and spiritual and heavenly communications they offer.

The lament is the testimony of great sorrows, especially death, a reality that human beings cannot prevent or resist in any way. With the lament, which is the peak of the magic of the word, facts, unspoken words, and cries are unveiled. In some cases where people are desperate during their lives, the pain they experience is voiced as a cry; the cry that is put into words becomes a scream and a heart-wrenching lament. Ş. Elçin defines a lament as “folk songs that voice one's sorrows, cries, wails, rebellions and misfortunes in the presence of death or any kind of loss, fear, anxiety and excitement with regular and irregular words and melodies” (1986, s. 290). The February 6, 2023 earthquake, which struck ten provinces centered in Pazarcık, Kahramanmaraş, and caused collective grief and social trauma, is one of the most tragic events in Turkish history. This earthquake, which shook the hearts and showed that the order/lives could not go on as before, was also expressed in laments, and the sorrows were shouted out.

1. Lamentations on the Line of History

In English, lament is referred to as “mourning song, elegy, dirge”, and in the Turkish language, it is associated with the act of weeping. It is defined as “mourning music” and follows grievous events such as death and various disasters (New Redhouse Dictionary, 1962). Lament is a sort of song that arises from the need to express one's pain regardless of its cause, a natural reflection of universal emotions, and perhaps the oldest common product of humankind. As J. Campbell argues, “human psyche is essentially the same in all corners of the world” which points to the communion of mourning, pain, and certain emotional states. Human beings share “the same motives, the same impulses, contradictions, fears, the same inner experience” (2013, s. 77). The inescapable reality and universality of lament also trace the origins of this genre far back in time. Indeed, A. Yakıcı states that laments are “among the oldest genres” of Turkish literature (2007, s. 214). The utter existence of death creates pain and lament. A. Koçak argues that death,

which is an “organic event,” is “endowed with activities that give it a very special meaning” and that one of these activities is lament (2013, s. 141). Lament can unfold at any moment with human grief through an unexpected tragic event. A. Duymaz ascribes the occasion for the emergence of laments to “various events that imprint themselves on society, such as wars, natural disasters, and diseases, or that affect individuals, such as sudden deaths” (1990, s. 40). Lamentations are diverse in terms of the context of creation; all kinds of wounds inflicted on society have prepared the ground for lamentations. Depending on this, we can argue that the therapeutic function of lamentation, which inevitably emerges after traumatic experiences, is also very old.” Even though it is reported that there were groups in the Sumerians who sang laments after the deceased, the texts of these laments have not survived to this day” (Uludağ, 1988, s. 470). T. Halman, in his work entitled *Eski Uygarlıkların Şiirleri* (Poems of Ancient Civilizations), includes laments from Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Egyptian, Hittite, Sanskrit, Persian, Mayan, Aztec and many other civilizations. An examination of the content of these laments reveals that there are laments with individual, social and religious content, as well as death-related laments (2010).

The earliest lament of the Turks was composed in 119 B.C. when the Huns forfeited their lands north of Ordos to the Chinese and came as far north as the great desert (Banarlı, 1971, s. 45). Interestingly, the subject of the first lament is not death, but the loss of land. Loss of land/homeland or related casualties cause collective wounds in society, which are still influential today. This issue not only involves traumatic experiences such as communal or individual suffering, pain, loss, but also requires a solution. Among the most well-known examples of laments that can be traced back to ancient times are the laments of the bards at the Yug ceremony organized upon the death of Attila (Köprülü, 2004, s. 154). The Yenisei and Orkhon Monuments, which are two of the most important sources of Turkish history and literature, also host data that can be regarded as laments. M. Köprülü noted that some fragments in the Orkhon Monuments resemble the lamentations in *Dîvânü Lûgâti't-Türk* regarding form and style (1999, s. 99). The people who sing laments are mentioned in the Orkhon Monuments under the name of “sığıtçı” (Thomsen, 1993, s. 120). The monuments serve as an important source for types and practices such as lament, mourning, Yug ceremony. Uighur texts also provide important sources of information on examples of laments, mourning traditions, and the functioning of funeral ceremonies. It is possible to track the traces of laments and folk knowledge in this field from literary texts and gravestones. One of the most explicit examples of this is the Hungry Panther Story (Gülcalı, s. 2013). Laments can also be found in the written sources of Turkish culture and literature in the ongoing process.

2. Lament and Trauma in Memory: The Verbalization of Trauma

Man and the cosmos are both born into chaos. Throughout the functioning of the cosmos and the life of human beings, this chaotic order persists in various ways. One of the jarring points of a dynamic and chaotic life is natural disasters. “The world has faced an increasing number of natural (i.e., earthquakes, tsunamis, and flood) and man-made disasters (i.e., wars, terrorism, and industrial crises). Such disasters cause community-level traumatic reactions and generate direct social and economic costs” (Lee et al. 2020, s. 99). Subjects of trauma or traumatized communities need to share their stories. The need to tell can arise out of nowhere and suddenly, or it can be attributed to a therapeutic

function. Regardless of the area of impact, traumatic experiences are spoken. Lamentations arise voluntarily or involuntarily after sadness, loss, or any disaster. Given the connection between disaster and trauma, lament can also be integrated into this connection. Lament breaks out in the last step. Lament, which we can read as a cry, represents a way out and communication. Trauma victims communicate with themselves, with their losses, with the Creator, with their victimized partners and with anyone who will listen. In other words, laments are a way of telling and transmitting trauma. R. Mollica argues that the trauma story is primarily a narrative of survival and healing and plays a key role in self-healing of the traumatized person (2012, s. 4). The motivation to tell can also be attributed to healing. Healing must occur in order to balance and normalize order.

Collective traumas and individual experiences that harbor painful experiences are unveiled in laments. The laments after the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquake are indicative of this situation. While the lamenter expresses his own pain and wailing, his trauma partners also vent their emotions through him. The earthquake directly struck a large number of people, disrupting their psychological balance and creating economic and social difficulties. V. Volkan calls traumas caused by natural phenomena such as tropical storms, floods, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes “massive traumas” (2021, s. 17). The term “massive trauma” with its meaning of imposing and great refers to the magnitude of the physical and emotional destruction caused by the nature of the earthquake. The earthquake caused great sorrow not only for the people of the region but also for the whole country. Besides the sadness of the losses, the fear that “it could happen to us at any time” envelops society, which represents another aspect of the trauma.

The lost social fabric, the fear, anxiety, and psycho-trauma caused by the fact that humanity has faced a catastrophe and may face one again in the future, confront the masses with struggle. On the individual scale, lost youth, family members, loss of spatial and personal memories, etc. destroy the fabric of the soul. People seek a remedy for loss and pain. In the aftermath of the earthquake, a definition of time like “before and after the earthquake” has entrenched itself in the language of people living in Türkiye. The interrupted time and the disrupted balance need to be restructured in some way.

At first, the transition to this new order is gradual and challenging. It can take a long time to heal completely. Lamentation and other forms of spoken words sometimes trigger comforting stimuli, if only temporarily. The organism is trying to respond to all that has happened, and lamentation is a response in this context. It is also plausible to read lamentation as a sign of acceptance. In this respect, it is not surprising that laments are sung immediately after the earthquake and that they are listened to by thousands of people. It shows us the scope of the lament. The mediation of the disaster, i.e. the transformation of the traumatic experience into the form of a lament, indicates its social and psychological function. Moreover, the lament takes on the task of remembrance. It ensures the transmission to future generations. The lament touches on the destructive effects of the earthquake. We can also see laments as monuments. Laments describe the earthquake and translate people's feelings during and after the earthquake.

Trauma is regarded as a series of events that require individuals to struggle with the resources they have (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Traumatic events that occur after natural disasters are shattering and destructive events that endanger people's lives and affect their physical and mental states (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Trauma

is the most essential and immutable fact in human nature. Trauma holds factors such as memory, identity, and social conjuncture. Although these phenomena are related to trauma and to each other, the focus of the study did not allow us to go beyond the primary meaning of trauma.

The laments sung after the February 6 earthquake reveal that two groups of people, those who experienced the disaster firsthand and the rest of the society, were confronted with a traumatic series of events; they were physically and psychologically injured and witnessed irreversible loss and destruction. This tragedy is still with us and there is a need for social repair. Lamentation, which perpetuates the pain, also has a function in the acceptance of the trauma and the grieving phase. The destruction expressed in the form of laments is, in a sense, a healer for today and tomorrow.

*I wish I hadn't seen my hometown like this
I wish I hadn't heard the wailing of mothers like this
Keferdiz, Nurdağı, Maraş, Hatay, Pazarcık
I wish I hadn't seen Malatya and Akçadağ like this
I wish I hadn't seen it this way.
I wish I hadn't wiped the tears of the cubs like this (Kara Hasan, 2023).²*

In this lament, the poet expresses a longing to have never experienced the pain of the disaster, using the word "I wish" to convey this sentiment. These words and verses emphasize the ongoing nature of the trauma, as the poet and the listener would have needed to escape the lingering effects of the catastrophe through death itself. From this lament, it becomes evident that "the state of the homeland," "the cries of mothers," and "the tears of children" are vividly witnessed, with the word "I wish" serving as a vehicle for articulating the profound grief and anguish.

Lament is an essential piece of the mourning process. The February 6, 2023 earthquake led to a seven-day national mourning period in Turkey. Following this event, which plunged the country into depression, society experienced mourning in several ways. Earthquake laments are tangible outputs of the mourning period.

*Mothers hugged their babies under the rubble
Turkish nation in black mourning
Tears in eyes and prayers on the tongue
Turkish nation in dark mourning
Tears in eyes and prayers on the tongue (Hilmi Şahballı, 2023).³*

² Memleketim bu halini böyle görmeseydim keşke
Anaların feryadını böyle duymasaydım keşke
Keferdiz, Nurdağı, Maraş, Hatay, Pazarcık
Malatya'yı, Akçadağ'ı böyle görmeseydim keşke
Böyle görmeseydim keşke
Yavruların gözyaşını böyle silmeseydim keşke (Kara Hasan).

³ Göçük altında analar sarılmış yavrularına
Kara yasta Türk milleti
Gözlerde yaş dilde dua
Kara yasta Türk milleti
Gözlerde yaş dilde dua (Hilmi Şahballı, 2023).

The lament emphasizes the mourning of the Turkish nation and the collective sense of helplessness within the community. It conveys that, in the face of such devastation, all that remains for the lamenter and those witnessing these laments is to pray. Considering the content and the repetition of the verses, the words "mourning," "tears," and "prayers" take center stage. Shedding tears and praying are integral aspects of the grieving process. Through the lament, the actions the community must undertake are highlighted, ultimately calling people to prayer.

V. Volkan and E. Zintl, points out that the mourning process is quite exhausting and refers to the two dimensions of the mourning process by saying that "grief consoles us in a strange way; on the other hand, the termination of grief can be felt as a betrayal" (2010, s. 41-42). A lament is also a form of consolation as an expression of grief. Y. Kemal claims that lament is one of the tools that "human beings create and take refuge against death" and he defines lament as "the thing that lightens the pain of death" (2001, s. 21). Just as lament is characterized as a tool in the healing of trauma within the scope of this study, Kemal also perceives lament as a place of "refuge". The main objective of lamentation is to remember miseries and cries and to tell the story of the event as a kind of discharge (Çelik, 1994, s. 19).

Osmaniye, Adıyaman, Adana

Everywhere has become a burial ground for thousands of lives

The ground shifted meters to one side

This was not an earthquake but an apocalypse

Realms were asleep, faults were broken

Survivors hug each other

Bridges collapsed and roads cracked

This was not an earthquake but an apocalypse (Âşık Erol Erğani, 2023).⁴

In the lament, the phrase "not an earthquake" rejects the notion of a natural disaster in the context of the February 6 earthquakes, emphasizing instead that what transpired was akin to an apocalypse. While the destructive impact of natural disasters is acknowledged, the lament conveys that the events exceeded the boundaries of a mere disaster. It highlights the profound perception of this unexpected devastation on individuals. Furthermore, by stating that all the remaining people embraced one another, the lament underscores the unifying force of the "apocalypse," illustrating how shared calamity fosters solidarity.

While this explains one function of the lament, it also points to another aspect of it. Lament can be person-centered, but it is also the voice of society. Although the mourning process is considered personal, society also participates in it at certain times and points.

⁴ Osmaniye, Adıyaman, Adana
Her yer mezar oldu binlerce cana
Zemin metrelerce kaydı bir yana
Bu bir deprem değil kıyamet idi
Alemler uykuda, faylar kırıldı
Sağ kalan birbirine sarıldı
Köprüler yıkıldı yollar yarıldı
Bu bir deprem değil kıyamet idi (Âşık Erol Erğani, 2023).

In this way, lament is as important in the healing of communal trauma as it is in the healing of individual trauma.

“The pain of the irreversibility of loss makes up the anthropological basis of mourning in all societies. Mourning is the expression of the pain and sorrow felt with the loss of people defined as important in the community’s perception and the loss of someone from the circle” (Çağlayan, 1997, s. 87). Lament is one of the most concretized forms of this. “Grief can be shared by a whole culture. (...) Mourning, on the other hand, demonstrates how to deal with grief or cultural trauma so that healing can be achieved” (Arbuckle, 2020, s. 47). This is where the “I” goes out of the picture and the discourse of “We” becomes dominant. So much so that the disaster of February 6 brought sorrow not only to Turkey but also to the world.

*Adıyaman Diyarbakır and Malatya
Elbistan collapsed and Antakya (Antioch) collapsed
There are people in the world who come to help
Hands reaching out for help are crying (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).⁵*

Examining the lament examples presented throughout the study, it is evident that they often include the names of provinces and locations affected by the earthquake. This aspect of laments underscores their role in contributing to the preservation and enrichment of collective memory. In this particular lament, the phrase "there are people in the world who come to help" highlights that the disaster's impact was not confined to the nation but resonated globally. Years later, individuals or researchers seeking to understand the effects and emotional responses to this catastrophe through the eyes of those who experienced it may use these laments as valuable sources.

In earthquake laments, even though the discourse of the “I” is mostly encountered, there is a situation of being united with the victims.

*The earthquake disaster crushed my back
Come and see what I've become
Fate has broken my wing and my arm
I've turned into a branch cut off from its trunk (Âşık Maksut Feryadi, 2023).⁶*

In earthquake laments, it is often observed that events are narrated from the perspective of those who experienced them, typically using the first-person plural. However, some laments convey the pain and experiences directly from the lamenter’s own voice, in the first-person singular. Laments expressed in this manner not only share the lamenter’s personal suffering but also position the listener or reader as a subject of the narrative. This approach transfers the emotional weight of the tragedy onto the audience, allowing them to internalize the sorrow. By revisiting these expressions of grief, readers may experience a sense of catharsis, finding solace through the act of remembering and empathizing with the pain.

⁵ Adıyaman Diyarbakır bir de Malatya
Elbistan yıkıldı bir de Antakya
Dünyada yardıma gelenler var ya
Yardıma uzanan eller ağlıyor (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).

⁶ Deprem felaketi kırdı belimi
Gelin görün ben ne hallara döndüm
Felek kırdı kanadımı kolumu
Gövdesinden kopmuş dallara döndüm (Âşık Maksut Feryadi, 2023).

Although Feryadi's lament seems to be an individual trauma and refers to the "I" firstly, the subject here moves out of the individual with the reality and expression of the "earthquake". In fact, in the second stanza of the lament, the discourse of "I" turns into the discourse of "We", and although the personal experience continues to be presented, the presence of a traumatized mass is obvious in the lament.

We have moments that cannot be transcended

Under the debris are lives that we have (Âşık Maksut Feryadi, 2023).⁷

In the continuation of this lament, a shift to the first-person plural perspective is observed. The phrase "moments that cannot be transcended" can be interpreted as referring to trauma. These lines, spoken in the immediate aftermath of events marked by both emotional and physical pain, not only reflect a striking reality but also embody the collective emotional state of Turkish society. The lament captures the profound impact of the disaster on the national psyche, offering a poignant expression of shared grief and resilience.

Just as individual memory gains validity and visibility through social memory, C. Caruth emphasizes the primacy of social trauma: Drawing on Freud's Moses and Monotheism, he argues that "like trauma, history is never simply one's own, history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas", underlining a universalist view of trauma as undermining the psyche (1996, s. 24). This perspective also points to the inherent transhistorical or intergenerational nature of trauma, which can be transmitted over time. In light of this subtext, the occurrence of the earthquake and the subsequent emergence of wails and cries are socially trauma-centered. The catastrophic impact of the earthquake leads to social trauma and spreads to the entire population and even the world.

The destruction of places, lives, and memories; the loss of lives, many losses, and feelings of helplessness are recorded in laments and give voice to the pain. The lament that comes to light with the current catastrophe remains up to date and is the recording reservoir of society. Looking at the laments analyzed within the scope of the study, it is seen that many information and traumatic moments have been recorded. Owing to its structure, "trauma's transhistorical potential means that a cultural group's traumatic experience in the historical past can be part of the psychic landscape of the contemporary individual who belongs to the same cultural group" (Mambrol, 2018). In this respect, laments serve the function of intergenerational transmission.

My heart is with you, write with a pencil on the page

My fate is mine too, my heart is shrouded in this grave

What happened to us will be sung and read for seventy years

Let them listen to our stories (Artı TV, 2023).⁸

The lines spoken in the first-person singular emphasize the "unforgetting" aspect of trauma. There is a clear desire for the pain experienced and the disaster that took place

⁷ Bizim aşılmayan anlarımız var

Enkazlar altında canlarımız var (Âşık Maksut Feryadi, 2023).

⁸ Kalbim benim de kalbim bu mezarda kefenle

Kaderim benim de kalbim bu mezarda kefenle

Başımıza gelen yetmiş yıl boyunca söylenecek ve okunacak

Yaşadıklarımızı dinlesinler (Artı TV, 2023).

to be remembered permanently. Through this lament, these lines speak to future generations, revealing the fear of being forgotten. The plea for remembrance is a central theme, highlighting the collective anxiety surrounding the erasure of such profound loss from both personal and societal memory.

We can say that through narrative, positive assimilation is realized on the scale of memory and trauma, because not forgetting entails mobility, action, and resistance. Beyond the intergenerational transmission of trauma, the embodiment of trauma in its current form as a lament can be seen as a step towards permanence in the memory of the next generations. In this way, collective trauma is recorded in social memory and transformed into social action. When the calamity is left behind, social memory can take precautionary measures against potential danger and trauma signals. The lament symbolizes the collective action that can result from this image; it is a basis for society. Given this function, the lament is much more than just a concrete social memory, a comforting element, a means of repaying debts, a means of expression, and so on.

A. Sarı, in his work titled *Edebiyatın İyileştirici Gücü* (The Healing Power of Literature), argues that people resort to writing wherever the soul finds a crevice in order to discharge the soul's pus that may turn into distress and that writing "comforts" (2022, s. 30). Drawing, singing, and even crying are healing in the same way as writing, that is to say, in the end, somehow transferring the inner distress outward. Although these acts do not offer relief with the same effect in every case, it is undeniable that they play a role in healing. "Crying is a language that conducts our deepest feelings of pain and joy" (Reynold, 2014, s. 10). Crying is a normal reaction in the soul's functioning and when the balance is disturbed. It helps to relieve the pain to some extent by providing a short-term discharge. Minstrel Erol Şahiner not only expressed his pain but also expressed that he cried with the following lines in his Lament for the Earthquake:

*Indescribably terrible pain
This pain has gripped the heavenly homeland
Hopes are exhausted; there is no cure
My tears turned into floods
My tears turned into floods
Crying for Adana and Malatya (Âşık Erol Şahiner, 2023).⁹*

The words, if considered as a tool for healing through expression and narration, suggest that these verses both convey the deep pain felt by the witness of the disaster and emphasize the indescribability of the suffering. The lament, by vocalizing this grief, creates a cathartic release through the verses, indicating that the act of lamenting allows for an emotional outpouring. These lines reflect how the articulation of pain, through words, becomes a means of coping with the overwhelming loss, providing a form of emotional release while acknowledging the enormity of the tragedy.

⁹ Tarifi imkânsız çok büyük acı
Cennet vatani sardı bu sancı
Umutlar tükendi yoktur ilacı
Gözyaşlarım sele döndü çağladı
Gözyaşlarım sele döndü çağladı
Adana'ya Malatya'ya ağladı (Âşık Erol Şahiner, 2023).

E. Leveton discusses the therapy path pursued through sociodrama and states that “crisis sociodrama is narrated after a catastrophic event (e.g., earthquakes, wars, terrorist attacks).” The traumatic event is re-enacted in this therapy method, and participants are given opportunities to share their experiences (2010, s. 67). The person who sings the lament creates his own therapeutic tool. The manifestation of reality, the revitalization of the experience, and the repeated suffering appear in the verses of the lament:

*Halfway through the night, as dawn breaks
While everyone eats and drinks in their sleep
So many lives have died too soon
Men weep for the dead ones
Two earthquakes came at close interval
Since seven point seven hit us
Thousands are dead, and many are wounded* (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).¹⁰

3. A tool in Breaking the Silence: Lament

J. Dickie views laments, which he exemplifies through the Bible, as vital parts of the healing process and suggests that the use of poetry in the form of laments can facilitate the healing of trauma survivors [both with respect to psychotherapy and lament studies] (2019, s. 145). Lamentation does not have the power to eliminate all trauma, but it helps to diminish it. Even the acceptance of the disaster, of the pain suffered, is a phase. By satisfying the need for confrontation through lamentation, people conveyed the state of mind they were in. Of course, this conveyance is not one-dimensional and serves multiple purposes. A lament is especially important in memorializing a mass disaster. Besides ensuring that the deceased is not forgotten and kept alive in an oral culture, laments are “a tool that carries the mortal person to the social psyche and makes him immortal” (Korkmaz, 2008, s. 80). The lament perpetuates the pain of the lost; thus, the pain belongs not only to the individual but to everyone:

*Black news in Maraş
Buildings destroyed to the ground
His home became Hasan's grave
His father digs a well with his hand
Hasan, your mother is calling
Cansu, Fatoş call Hasan
She can't bear your pain
She's wailing* (Doğan Doğan, 2023).¹¹

¹⁰ Geceleyn yarısı şafak sökerken
Herkes uykusunda yer içerken
Nice canlar öldü daha çok erken
Ölen canlar için kullar ağlıyor
İki deprem geldi yakın aralık
Yedi nokta yedi bizi vuralı
Binlerce ölü var çok yaralı (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).

¹¹ Maraş'ta kara haber var
Yerle bir olmuş binalar
Evi olmuş Hasan'a mezar
Babası eliyle kuyu kazar
Hasan anan çağırıyor
Cansu, Fatoş, Hasan diyor

The lines vividly depict a moment at the site of an earthquake. The cry of the mother within the lament is reflected in these lines. In this sense, it can be said that there is a lament within a lament. The cry, often described as a "wailing lament," here can be interpreted as an expression of resilience in the face of unbearable pain, a way of articulating what cannot be borne. The act of vocalizing this sorrow, despite the overwhelming anguish, becomes a means of surviving the emotional devastation.

Lamentations can occur in the aftermath of any unforeseen or unaccepted event, and this entails a process. D. Soelle identifies three phases in the process of suffering: (1975, s. 72 -73).

Phase1	Phase2	Phase3
Mute	Lament (moving towards change)	Change

Tablo 1. *Soelle's Lamentation Table* (Soelle, 1975, s. 75).

Soelle refers to a process of mute > lament > change. The diagram of these phases is as follows: "The first phase (the mute phase) results in a sense of impotence and isolation. In this first phase, it is very important to create a "safe space" for the victim. The second phase is lamentation to convey one's pain and place it in its social context. Lamentation allows the victim to pass to the third phase (1975, s. 73-75). Although the fear and confusion caused by the earthquake mute the lament creator for a while, this muteness does not last long, and the lament, which is the second phase, is sung. As Soelle states, with the lament, the victim passes to the third phase.

Has the world darkened, or has the sun set?

Has the sun gone down? Has the sun gone down

I thought the whole place collapsed on me

It collapsed on me; it collapsed on me

All hell broke loose on a black winter night (Mehmet Bakıray, 2023).¹²

The lament presents the weight of the emotion experienced through a literary expression. The question "Has the sun set?" refers not only to the weather conditions at the time of the event but also to the darkness of the situation. The phrase "it collapsed on me" spoken in the first person highlights both the physical and emotional devastation caused by the earthquake. In these lines, the speaker's direct experience of being overwhelmed by the tragedy is conveyed, underscoring the profound impact of the disaster on both the individual and the collective psyche.

Independently of these three phases, Hilbert states: The first step towards healing is to "find a discourse that releases one from the prison of the mute" (1999, s. 44). This discourse is the lament, in fact, after the earthquake, the ring of silence is interrupted by

Acınıza dayanmıyor
Feryad figan ediyor (Doğan Doğan,2023).

¹² Dünya mı karardı güneş mi battı
Güneş mi battı güneş mi battı
Ben sandım ki her yer üstüme çöktü
Üstüme çöktü üstüme çöktü
Kara kış gecesi kıyamet koptu (Mehmet Bakıray, 2023).

cries beginning with “Cry, my eyes cry” (Hilmi Şahballı, 2023). This is a manifestation of a need, of expressivity.

İ. Başgöz argues that social solidarity increases thanks to laments; people hug and end resentments, and laments reconcile the sulks (2008, s. 78). In earthquake laments, too, there is a common pain. Moreover, the pain covers the whole of Turkey. Therefore, the catastrophe increased the “unity, the power to act together, and social solidarity” of the masses survived. After the February 6 earthquake, financial and moral support indicates this. Moreover, the comments on the earthquake laments verify this cooperation. It is observed that both those who directly experienced the disaster and those who were secondarily affected thank and pray to the lamenter.

*Mothers hugged their babies under the rubble
Turkish nation in dark mourning
Tears in eyes and prayers in tongue
Turkish nation in dark mourning
Tears in eyes and prayers in the tongue* (Hilmi Şahballı, 2023).¹³

One of the comments to the lament that contains given verses is as follows: “Really, sir; we are crushed as a nation. Our condolences, you are in our prayers”. The comments on all the laments, both those included in the study and those not included, are consistent. The comments emphasize the shared nature of pain, the importance of lamentation, and the expressions of gratitude.

W. Brueggemann asserts that the purpose of lament is “to move God again by trusting that things can change” (2008, s. 232). Researchers such as Paul Wayne Ferris, Hermann Gunkel, and Craig C. Broyles also suggest that a lament seeks to access divine power.

May God be with the rest of us (Mehmet Karahan, 2023).¹⁴
*O Lord, give us consolation.
Look at the mess we’re in.
O Allah, give us consolation* (Doğan Doğan, 2023).¹⁵
Help us, Lord, pity us (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).¹⁶
Does anyone other than “Hak” run to help (Rifat Ablay & Ahmet Tanyıldız, 2023).¹⁷

The laments provided above convey that death is a matter not of the one who has departed, but of those who remain. The lamenter contacts his creator and tells him about his hopes and what he is going through. The person begs the creator to help deal with the crisis to alleviate the pain.

¹³ Göçük altında analar sarılmış yavrularına

Kara yasta Türk milleti
Gözlerde yaş dilde dua
Kara yasta Türk milleti
Gözlerde yaş dilde dua (Hilmi Şahballı, 2023).

¹⁴ Kalanlar Allah’a emanet ola (Mehmet Karahan, 2023).

¹⁵ Ya Rab bize teselli ver

Şu halimiz bir gör
Allah’ım bize teselli ver (Doğan Doğan, 2023).

¹⁶ Yardım et yaradan sen bize acı (Yüksel Nihal, 2023).

¹⁷ Hak’dan gayrı imdada koşar mı kaldı (Rifat Ablay & Ahmet Tanyıldız, 2023).

Conclusion

This study concludes that unresolved emotions, when not processed in a healthy and constructive manner, constitute a fundamental source of psychological disorders. Among these, the inability to mourn appropriately holds particular significance. Laments, as a form of folklore, emerge as a response to the psychological needs of society and play a vital role in sustaining socio-cultural memory and promoting collective psychological well-being. This is particularly evident in the aftermath of disasters, where laments serve as a means of emotional processing and societal healing. The February 6 earthquakes provide a striking example of this dynamic, as explored in this study. This study covers the laments that followed the earthquakes that struck ten provinces on February 6, 2023, nine hours apart, with epicenters in the Pazarcık and Elbistan districts of Kahramanmaraş, respectively. The two earthquakes, with magnitudes of 7.8 Mw (± 0.1) and 7.5 Mw respectively, shook the whole of Turkey financially and psychologically. The earthquake caused trauma in individuals and therefore to Turkish society. The painful event created the need for narration. Accordingly, we studied earthquake laments. We ascertained that laments depict the agonizing scenes experienced during and after the earthquake. We also deduced that laments are sung to survive, remember, and relieve pain to some extent. The singing of laments with various media tools shortly after the earthquake and the listeners' thanks to the lamenter indicate that people need to verbalize their pain. Trauma, lamentation, and the urge to tell begin with the birth of a human being, and the human psyche and mind take action to get rid of the distressing aspect of the traumatic experience. The forty laments analyzed in the context of this study have, therefore, shown us that laments can have functions such as healing, remembrance, informing, memorializing, making grief partners feel not alone, unity, validating the acceptance of pain, comforting the survivor, communicating with the Creator and making oneself heard.

One of the reactions of the people to the earthquake disaster, the impact of which reverberated around the world and disrupted life in many perspectives, was the lament, and the lament form in Turkish culture dates back to ancient times, which we believe is related to the three effects of the lament: Lament, by its nature and content, provides a cathartic space for human beings. Lament allows the person left behind to pay his debt to himself and his loss. This function applies not only to the lamenter but also to the partners of the lament. The creation of a lament indicates that a step of healing is taken with the acceptance of the catastrophe. It is an effective means of stabilizing the individual/social order.

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