

Transmission of Ecological Memory: Lebib's Kahtiyye on Famine in Diyarbakır

Ekolojik Hafızanın Aktarımı: Diyarbakır Kıtlığı ve Lebib'in Kahtiyyesi

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Abstract

Due to a severe famine in 1803, Timur Paşa, the governor of Diyarbakır, demanded either food supply or his reappointment to another city by a petition including a poem on the famine of 1757. Timur Paşa's tendency to keep himself away from the famine was considered a lack of human agency by Ottoman historians. However, as this article argues, local officers were active agents in expressing the impact of famines to the center and preserving the memory of famines. To illustrate, this article employs Diyarbakırlı Lebib's poem included in the petition and its circulation through the petition as a case study. For conceptualizing Timur Paşa's petition and Lebib's poem as an illustration of their agency, this paper uses concepts of memory studies informed by literary theory. Utilizing a theoretical toolkit provided by memory studies, this paper argues that to keep a record of the social and ecological impact of famines and preserve their memory, poets employed and formed narrative structures that framed traumatic environmental experiences. These structures of famine narratives in Divan poetry formed the *kahtiyye* genre. The formation process of *kahtiyye* as a genre was not independent, but intertextual, as the case study illustrates.

Öz

1803 yılında yaşanan şiddetli kıtlık nedeniyle, Diyarbakır Valisi Timur Paşa, 1757 kıtlığını konu alan bir şiirin yer aldığı bir dilekçe ile gıda yardımı yerine getirilmezse başka bir şehre atanmasını talep etti. Osmanlı tarihçilerine göre bu, ekolojik bir kriz karşısında insan failliğinin söz konusu olmadığına işaret etti. Ancak bu makalenin de iddia ettiği gibi devlet görevlileri, kıtlığın etkilerinin merkeze bildirilmesinde ve kıtlığın hafızasının korunmasında aktif aktörlerdi. Timur Paşa'nın dilekçesini ve Lebib'in şiirini bir faillik olarak kavramsallaştırmak için bu makale, edebiyat teorisi ve bellek çalışmalarının kavramlarını kullanmaktadır. Bellek çalışmalarının sağladığı teorik çerçeve sayesinde bu makale, kıtlığın sosyal ve ekolojik etkisinin hafızasını kaydetmek ve sonraki nesillere aktarmak için şairlerin travmatik ekolojik deneyimleri anlatı yapıları aracılığıyla düzenleyerek anlatılabilir kıldığını ileri sürmektedir. Divan şiirindeki kıtlık anlatıları bu yapıları içeren kahtiyye türünü oluşturmuştur. Kahtiyye'nin bir tür olarak oluşum süreci, vaka çalışmasının da gösterdiği gibi bağımsız değil, metinlerarası bir süreçtir.

Keywords

Famine, kahtiyye, agency, Ottoman Empire, divan literature, genre formation, cultural memory

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kıtlık, kahtiyye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, divan edebiyatı, tür oluşumu, kültürel bellek

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Introduction

In the Ottoman Empire, where the livelihood of the population largely depended on agriculture, climate-related conditions such as lack of or excess heat and precipitation seriously affected people's livelihood through their impact on food resources and trade in agricultural products. Southeastern Anatolia was one of the parts of the empire where famine and climate-related crises were experienced. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this geography witnessed a number of severe environmental crises such as famine, drought, and plague. The impact of such environmental crises led to the loss of population, economic resources, and administrative and social order.¹

Semih elik states that towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman administration lost its mechanisms to cope with these environmental crises. According to him, the practice of asking to be released from assigned places was so prevalent among local administrative officers in crisis-affected regions. He considers Ottoman officers' response to environmental crises, manifested through their demanding reappointment, as a means for "passively keeping away from an environmental catastrophe".² Although he is right in terms of administrative structure and its response to the environmental crisis of the Ottoman Empire, he overlooks the fact that these officers were active agents in conveying the demands related to environmental crises and recording the memory of these famines. Therefore, this article argues that although the Ottoman administrative system lacked the means to cope with environmental crises and its local officials were constrained by this structure towards the end of the eighteenth century, they were active agents in expressing the impact of famines to the central administration and preserving the memory of famines. In order to illustrate this argument, this article employs Diyarbakırlı Lebib's poem on the 1757 famine in Diyarbakır and its circulation through Timur Pařa's 1803 petition to İstanbul in which he expressed the severity of the famine and demanded his reappointment. To conceptualize Timur Pařa's petition and Lebib's famine poem as illustrations of their agency, this paper uses concepts from memory studies informed by literary theory. Utilizing a theoretical toolkit provided by memory studies, this paper argues that poets employed and formed narrative structures that framed traumatic environmental experiences to keep a record of the social and ecological impact of famines and preserve their memory. These structures of famine narratives in Divan poetry formed the *kahtiyye* genre. The formation process of *kahtiyye* as a genre was not independent, but rather intertextual, as the cases of Lebib and Timur Pařa will illustrate.

¹ Daniel Panzac, "Doęal Afetler," in *Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nda Veba 1700-1850*, ed. Ayřen Anadol, trans. Serap Yılmaz (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997), 5-15, 9-14.

² Semih elik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination' Climate Change, Famines and Empire-Building in Ottoman Anatolia (c. 1800-1850)" (PhD Thesis, European University Institute, 2017), 142-43.

Apart from discussing its main argument, this paper has several objectives. One of these is to depict the limitations of environmental history when it comes to the debates on agency or structure and nature or agency. The scholarship in environmental history tends to overlook human agency for the sake of putting forward the agency of nature, as if they are mutually exclusive phenomena.³ The study of literature and memory helps overcome such dichotomies by demonstrating the relations between humans and the non-human world and how these two elements reciprocally interact.⁴ The other objective is to challenge the old paradigm in the study of Ottoman literature, which conceives of Divan literature as the Ottoman elite's literature that is far from reflecting the social reality of a broader Ottoman population. According to this old paradigm, since poets of divan poetry are fully engaged in patronage relations, their poems do not involve any sort of criticism. Although recent studies have already gone beyond this paradigm, studying the *kahtiyye* genre contributes to this paradigm shift by introducing Divan literature to the field of environmental humanities. However, the scholarship on *kahtiyyes* was produced mostly in Turkish and therefore its audience is only limited to Turkish-speaking researchers. Although this scholarship is of critical importance in pointing out the environmental themes in the Ottoman literatures and situating *kahtiyyes* in their environmental historical context, its descriptive analysis primarily focuses on the stylistic elements of the poems. Yet it could benefit from further contextualization within literary history and interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies and environmental humanities.⁵ Introducing *kahtiyyes* as an object of study for environmental

³ For the critique of the environmental history in terms of constructing dichotomies of nature vs human agency and multiplicity of definitions of agency see Stephanie Rutherford, Jocelyn Thorpe, and Anders Sandberg, "Introduction: Methodological Challenges," in *Methodological Challenges in Nature- Culture and Environmental History Research*, ed. Jocelyn Thorpe, Stephanie Rutherford, L. Anders Sandberg (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1–11; Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?," *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (2005): 67–69, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3985846>; Richard C. Foltz, "Does Nature Have Historical Agency? World History, Environmental History, and How Historians Can Help Save the Planet," *The History Teacher* 37, no. 1 (November 2003): 9–28, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1555594>; Ted Steinberg, "Down to Earth: Nature, Agency, and Power in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 798–820, <https://doi.org/10.1086/532497>.

⁴ A call for an interdisciplinary collaboration for environmental humanities was addressed here, see. Hannes Bergthaller et al., "Mapping Common Ground: Ecocriticism, Environmental History, and the Environmental Humanities," *Environmental Humanities* 5, no. 1 (May 1, 2014): 261–76, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615505>.

⁵ Ali Yörür and Sedat Kardaş's two pioneering research on the *kahtiyyes* are significant contributions to the field in transliterating *kahtiyyes*, translating them into modern Turkish, and presenting their stylistic features through descriptive analysis. Also, Kardaş indexes all the *kahtiyyes* to available knowledge in his article. Although their contributions put *kahtiyyes* forth as an object of study for further theoretical analysis, how a theoretical analysis of *kahtiyyes* would shift the established paradigms, concepts, and dichotomies in Ottoman environmental historiography is yet to be discussed. See. Ali Yörür, "1874 Ankara Kuraklığına Bir Manzum: Kasîde-i Kahtiyye," *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 14 (March 21, 2019): 289–97, <https://doi.org/10.29000/rumelide.541021>; Sedat KARDAŞ, "Divan Şiirinde Kıtıkla İlgili Manzumeler," *Divan Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 22 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.15247/dev.2621>.

humanities to a broad audience will help raise new awareness and bring a new lens to the study of Ottoman literatures by highlighting the reflections of environmental and social reality in Divan poetry.

A Brief Overview of Famines in the Ottoman Empire

According to Yaron Ayalon, Ottoman society had witnessed several cases of famine in its course of history. Apart from the sudden changes in market prices and food shortages, both human and non-human factors contributed to disaster such as severe climatic conditions, drought, floods, plant diseases, military campaigns, and raids aimed at the caravans that carried cereal and grain, all of which were the outlying reasons for famines in the Ottoman Empire. In some cases, local power holders and government officers had an impact on the artificial increases in market prices. The underdevelopment of irrigation technologies in the empire worsened the impact of famines. In addition to local factors, global environmental problems were simultaneously affecting different geographies in different ways. For example, the materials released from the volcanic eruptions that occurred in the Pacific in the 1640s led to the reflection of the sun's rays, resulting in decreased average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere, which in turn caused excessive snow and rain in some regions and droughts in others. As a result of these volcanic eruptions, the southeast of the empire experienced extreme cold, famine, and plague.⁶ The cycles of environmental crises as such continued periodically.

The responses of state actors to these crises involved employing coping mechanisms and technologies that determined the extent to which the geographies of crises were affected afterward. Although Semih Çelik mentions sultans, grand-viziers, local notables, and privileged subjects of the Ottoman Empire as non-state and state actors that attempted to reduce the severity of environmental disasters through famine-relief measures, he represents them as limited in their actions and trapped by environmental conditions. In the pre-Tanzimat era, the state's response to such disasters was to implement famine relief measures such as tax deferrals, supplying food such as bread or flour, controlling the market prices, local governors' undertaking the task of supplying the basic needs and withdrawing the military troops from impacted areas.⁷ However, although supplying extra food aid to regions in need was more effective than sending military units and appointing new officials, making such shipments was not easy in every region. For instance, it was very costly to send grain to landlocked places such as Damascus and Aleppo. The inability of the state to solve the problems caused by famine could lead to mass migration and unrest.

When the Ottoman Empire's coping mechanisms for famines functioned properly, the system worked as follows: First, a complaint about food shortage was submitted to Istanbul through a

⁶ Yaron Ayalon, "Veba, Kıtık ve Diğer Yıkımlar," in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Doğal Afetler* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2020), 13–17, 15-17.

⁷ Çelik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination'," 132.

petition, then the sultan issued an order to send grain to the place of need.⁸ However, as Ayalon remarks, these mechanisms did not always work. Diyarbakır was one of the places that experienced severe cyclical famines, but where famine-relief measures fell short. Ayalon records the famines of 1787 and 1788 in Diyarbakır where lots of people died and the remaining population had to leave.⁹ In addition, Daniel Panzac records the 1757-58 famine, which stemmed from extreme drought in southeastern Anatolia, Damascus, and Aleppo.¹⁰ Diyarbakırlı Lebib recorded the memory of the latter famine through a poem, the case study of this article, by narrating the impact of the famine and attributing it to the grand vizier Mehmed Ragıp Paşa. It was also quoted by Timur Paşa, the governor of Diyarbakır, in his petition to the Sultan where he demanded his reappointment due to the famine in 1803.¹¹ These instances of famines in Diyarbakır indicate the cyclical nature of the environmental disasters and the severity of the famines there.

**Diyarbakırlı Lebib's *Kahtıyye*: "Arz-ı Hâl-i Kahtıyye Berây-ı Vezîr-i Efhâm u Ekrem
Râgıb Mehemed Paşa Vezîr-i A'zam-ı Devr-i Mustafâ Han"**

As indicated above, the famines in Diyarbakır were among the most severe experienced in the empire due to Diyarbakır's landlocked location and cyclical nature of these famines. Moreover, as a close reading of the poem and the context in which it was circulated will show, in the Diyarbakır famines, state actors ceased to be active in coping with the deteriorating impacts of famine. Concerning the content of the poem, what is represented is compatible with the psychological behavioral criteria related to famines that Ayalon mentions. He states that not every instance of food shortage or sudden increase in market prices can be defined as famine. In most cases, the instances in which subjects of the empire or foreign observers mentioned famines were short-term crises that did not result in extensive hunger or a high death toll.¹² Instead, he presents a psychological behavioral aspect of responses to famines according to Derrick Jelliffe and Patrice Jelliffe's behavioral criteria.¹³ It includes eating what cannot be eaten, committing violence, not giving food to friends and relatives, and not helping them. As far as these criteria are concerned, the poem displays such behavioral changes in people under the impact of famine in a broad spectrum.

Apart from Lebib's *Divan*, the poem entered the Ottoman archives through bureaucratic correspondence. In his petition to Istanbul dated in 1803, Timur Paşa, the governor of Diyarbakır,

⁸ Ayalon, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Doğal Afetler*, 76.

⁹ Ayalon, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Doğal Afetler*, 76.

¹⁰ Panzac, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Veba*, 11.

¹¹ Çelik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination'," 142.

¹² Ayalon, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Doğal Afetler*, 15.

¹³ Robert Dirks et al., "Social Responses During Severe Food Shortages and Famine [and Comments and Reply] Social Responses During Severe Food Shortages and Famines," *Current Anthropology* 21802, no. 1 (1980): 21-44.

requested his reappointment to another city unless the government purchased and dispatched enough barley and wheat to Diyarbakır from Mardin.¹⁴ Timur Paşa explained that local people had to eat straw, and everybody ran away from the city.¹⁵ Including Diyarbakırlı Lebib's poem on the famine of 1858, the petition turned into a frame-story-like narrative that denotes the cyclical nature of famines in Diyarbakır. The literary element in Timur Paşa's petition opens another narrative level that dates back to 1757. In Lebib's narrative time, there was another severe famine in Diyarbakır, and he wrote the poem to Grand Vizier Ragıp Mehmet Paşa during the reign of Mustafa III to describe the impact of the famine on the peoples of Diyarbakır. Through the poem, Lebib depicts the severity of the famine in 1757 by employing brutal scenes on the streets of Diyarbakır. After praising the Grand Vizier Mehmed Ragıp Paşa, he wants permission to narrate the famine conditions in Diyarbakır.¹⁶ He draws a contrast between the time that Ragıp Paşa saw Diyarbakır as a joyful and prosperous land and the current situation of its destruction due to unprecedented famine.¹⁷ The impact of the famine made the people of Diyarbakır migrate to Damascus. As a consequence, the famine damaged the tax farming system in Diyarbakır by causing locals to leave their agricultural lands.¹⁸ It is remarkable for showing the destruction due to the famine on social, economic, and administrative levels.

Regarding the food crisis, the poem represents the behavioral change caused by famine. It has parallels with Jelliffe's definition of behaviors of famine such as eating the uneatable, committing violence, and not giving food to other people. According to the poem, the poor crush pottery and stones and give it to the children as food. They drink the blood of sacrificed animals immediately after they are slaughtered.¹⁹ They go up to doors and chimneys and hunt cats and dogs, just like they hunt rabbits and gazelles. On the urban spatial level, Lebib describes the devastation caused by the massive death toll on the organization of the city. Due to the high number of deaths, it is impossible to bury the dead and for this reason, the streets of Diyarbakır are filled with dead bodies. Since one hundred or two hundred people die every night, it becomes impossible to walk on the streets.²⁰ These depictions of food shortage and lack of sanitary conditions reflect

¹⁴ Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hattı Hümayun [HAT], No. 5268, Gömlek No. 127, 3 Receb 1218 (19 Ekim 1803).

¹⁵ Çelik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination'," 142.

¹⁶ "Diyar-ı bekr'in ahvalin beyana ruhsat ihsan et/ Ahali kulların ta hak-paye ede inhayı." Diyarbakırlı Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, ed. Orhan Kurtoğlu (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017), 270.

¹⁷ "Neşât-âbâd-ı âlem gördüğün ma' müre-i Âmid/ Olup vîrâne yek-ser lâne-i bûm oldu her câyı" Diyarbakırlı Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 270.

¹⁸ "Yıkıldı hânesi çiftü bozuldu karyesi vîrân/Döküldü şehre etdi cû'-ı sâ'il niçe hem-pâyı," Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 270.

¹⁹ "Sifâl ü sengi sahk etmiş sufûf eyler zarûretle/Bununla ehl-i fakr işbâ' eder etfâl-i nev-pâyı/Dem-i mezbûhu karz-ı şerbetî mânendi nûş eyler/Düşürmez yere cevfinden çıkan ahşâ vü em'âyı/ Kilâb u gürbenin âhû vü erneb gibi saydından/Kemîn edip der ü bâmî ararlar zir ü bâlâyı" Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 271.

²⁰ "Be-her şeb sad-dü-sâd meyyit havâlî vü cevâmî'de/Yürünmez rehde pâ-mâl etmedikce nice mevtâyı" Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 271.

the empire's inability to cope with the conditions of the famine. In light of this, Lebib immediately begins to narrate social and judiciary problems stemming from the lack of effective state mechanisms to intervene in the deterioration of the conditions in Diyarbakır. Accordingly, Lebib requests Mehmed Ragıp Paşa to inform the Sultan about the conditions of famine in Diyarbakır. He names actors who are responsible for the corruption of public order such as bandits, and corrupt representatives of the state at the local level who forced subjects to give their remaining goods and clothes.²¹ These verses are another indication of the central government's inability to be active in providing public order and justice. Towards the end of the poem, Lebib complains about the lack of social justice in the city. He also mentions the injustice between subjects and between the judicial officers and subjects. For him, judges, followers of religious law, do not punish the evil, and those who demand their debts forcibly enjoy what they obtain from the poor people.²² By following such a sequence of narrative, at first, Lebib portrays the physical environmental situation and then problematizes the social, moral, and administrative crisis due to the famine. Touching upon social, political, and environmental issues, Lebib's poem becomes an exceptional one when compared to traditional Divan poetry whose imagery remains at a more abstract level.

Formation of *Kahtıyye* as a Genre

As indicated in the former section, Lebib's poem, framed by Timur Paşa's petition, differs from the conventional forms of Divan poetry. While its form and use of figures of speech bear similarity with conventional forms, its content and imagery are more realistic and make more explicit references to environmental, social, moral, and administrative problems. Regarding such differences, Çelik emphasizes that these differences are enough to compose another genre in Divan poetry and references Sabri Ülgener's observations on divan poetry as a source for representing famines. For him, since in times of crisis and famines, subjects were able to criticize the government and complain about the social and political condition, the poems depicting such crises are essential to hear the voices of critique against the Ottoman government. In addition, these poems are sources for understanding the emotional, moral, and psychological responses of Ottoman society to famines.²³ However, Çelik warns readers about the social hierarchical status of Divan poets. As poets of Divan literature had patrons among the elites of the Ottoman bureaucracy or were directly patronaged by the sultan himself, they tended to praise their patrons or the sultan. For Çelik, the position of divan poetry in Ottoman social relations makes it susceptible to being the voice of the hierarchically superior. Yet, he considers the poets'

²¹ "Mübâşirlerse bâkî çavuşu gibi re'âyâdan/Soyup almakda bâkî bulduğu esvâb u eşyâyı", Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 272.

²² "Ne çâre müdde'idir şer' ile da'vâsı var derler/Degildir meşreb-i hükkâm zecr etmek eşirâyı/Bu eyyâm ise şehri aç da'vâcılar almış hep//Ziyâfet 'add ederler bâb-ı hâkimde tekâzâyı" Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 272.

²³ Sabri Ülgener, *Darlık Buhranları ve İslam İktisat Siyaseti* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1956). Quoted in Çelik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination'," 193.

involvement in social criticism a significant source and challenges the old paradigm that deemed Divan poetry as the reflection of the elite's voice due to the poets' close relationship with administrators and is far from reflecting the social and economic reality of the Ottoman Empire.²⁴ Sedat Kardař carries Ülgener's and Çelik's arguments a step further and investigates other narratives of famine in Divan poetry. He brings forth the *kahtıyye* as a genre and presents a collection of *kahtıyyes* in Divan poetry. He defines, as seen in Ottoman dictionaries, the *kaht* as a word derived from the Arabic root *kahata*, meaning drought and famine. *Kahtıyye* was derived from the word *kaht* and means related to or about famine.²⁵ As far as Kardař's collection of *kahtıyyes* is concerned, apart from the couplets which narrate the impact of famines in *kaside* and *gazel* form, *kahtıyyes* as separate poems were written in the form of *kıta*, which is suitable for creating chronograms in Divan poetry corresponding to dates of famines.²⁶ That is to say, while they follow the tradition of Divan poetry by employing its forms, imagery, and figures of speech, they differ from the other genres of Divan literature in terms of their discursive and thematic differences. However, although Kardař hesitantly names *kahtıyyes* as a separate genre, the titles given to these poems denote the consciousness of the poets when writing *kahtıyyes*. Using the exact name *kahtıyye* in titles, poets indicated that they intentionally wrote poems in the *kahtıyye* genre. Moreover, this shows that the name *kahtıyye* is not a term that is used by literary historians but how Divan poets labeled the genre. Along with the active role of divan poets in the composition of the *kahtıyye* genre, their agency is visible in conveying the social and economic problems stemming from the famines and the Ottoman administration's lack of coping mechanisms with famines to the central administration. Most of the *kahtıyyes* were attributed to grand viziers, sultans, or patrons from the higher echelons of the Ottoman bureaucracy and included implicit or explicit criticism of administrative actors.

Attributing poems to sultans, grand viziers, or high-ranking bureaucrats when recording the memory of famines is significant for historical writing. Due to the social-relational status of Divan poetry, these poets had close ties with administrative circles, and they had the means to convey local problems to the center. Thanks to this intermediary status, the social, emotional, and psychological memory of the famine could be recorded. In other words, the way in which the agency of the poets operated was twofold: they transmitted the memory of famines vertically and horizontally. While the horizontal one operated in the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire, the vertical one operated in the history of Ottoman literature. By actively engaging in the formation process of *kahtıyye* as a genre, they become able to transmit the memory of the famines to future generations. At this point, the perspective of memory studies informed by literary theory is a conducive lens to informing environmental history writing about the agency of the poets and local administrators in the transmission of memory through composing literary genres.

²⁴ Çelik, "Scarcity and Misery at the Time of 'Abundance beyond Imagination'," 193.

²⁵ Kardař, "Divan Şiirinde Kıtıkla İlgili Manzumeler," 495.

²⁶ Kardař, "Divan Şiirinde Kıtıkla İlgili Manzumeler," 496.

The Transmission of Ecological Memory Through *Kahtıyye*

In the intersection of literary theory and memory studies, one objective of memory studies is to investigate the logic of individual and social traumas, the representation of memory in narrative structures and other aesthetic forms, and the social function of the literature.²⁷ As literature represents individual and collective memory, rearranging their functioning, fragility, and destruction through aesthetic forms such as narrative structures, symbols, and metaphors, *kahtıyyes* as trauma narratives of the famines in the Ottoman Empire should be studied through the lens of memory studies.²⁸ Astrid Erll, Ann Rigney, and Renate Lachmann's theoretical framework and questions provide a lens for a better understanding of the way in which the memories of the famines in Diyarbakır were transmitted across decades through literature.

Erll draws on James Wertsch's understanding of narrative structures, which he conceptualized as tools for expressing collective memory. Accordingly, thanks to these tools, traumas are better understood and expressed. In addition to being a tool for narrating and expressing trauma, narrative structures can also be considered actors in the sense of actor-network theory. She follows Latour's concept of the actor by associating it with the narratives and asks, "What happens when we follow narrative patterns as "mnemonic actors" that are used to frame "a past-that-continues-to-hurt? What happens when we study how they travel and are translated across different dimensions in ecologies of trauma?"²⁹ The concepts "mnemonic actors" and "the past that continues to hurt" allow us to conceptualize trauma as an ongoing process and highlight the agency of narrative structures in perceiving and representing traumatic experiences. Also, Erll's questions invite scholars of Ottoman literatures and environmental historians to ask how *kahtıyyes* shaped the remembrance practices and experiences of famines and how they are translated and circulated in other times and geographies.

Ann Rigney, in a similar vein, considers narrative structures and explains their function in the sphere of culture. For her, narratives are also anchors that make a particular time memorable and create cultural frames. Thanks to these features, they increase the permanence of moments by bringing them together within a cultural framework.³⁰ At the same time, they ensure the circulation of memories over time by repeating previous forms of remembering. Because narrative forms are conveyed through images, texts, and discursive genres, they can themselves become a collective

²⁷ Astrid Erll, "Traumatic Pasts, Literary Afterlives, and Transcultural Memory: New Directions of Literary and Media Memory Studies," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* (2012), 1, <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v3i0.7186>.

²⁸ Erll, "Traumatic Pasts," 2.

²⁹ Astrid Erll, "Travelling Narratives in Ecologies of Trauma: An Odyssey for Memory Scholars," *Social Research* 87, no. 3 (2020): 540, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2020.0053>.

³⁰ Ann Rigney, "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts between Monumentality and Morphing," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 350, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.5.345>.

reference point.³¹ Rigney's exploration of forms of remembering and their repetitive nature in the circulation of memories brings to mind the instances of *kahtiyyes* throughout Ottoman history. As introduced in the former section, in almost every century, *kahtiyyes* were written by poets of Divan literature and they repeated the narrative structures throughout the centuries. Repetition of the *kahtiyye* genre as a form of remembering famines across centuries contributes to the preservation and circulation of the memories of the famines. However, along with the memory of famines, the formation of the *kahtiyye* genre also deserves attention. Renate Lachmann's conceptualization of intertextuality in genre formation helps in grasping the formation of *kahtiyye* as a separate genre.

For Lachmann, while literature is composed of the memory of culture, it also records its memory through intertextuality. In terms of memory, literature is a mnemonic art. Here, the text as a witness has the functions of storing information and preserving a cultural experience.³² In this framework, the memory of the text is formed by the intertextuality of its references. Since intertextuality emerges in the act of writing, each new act of writing is the crossing of the distance between existing texts. The codes to which the elements intertwined in intertextual discourse belong retain their referential character in relation to a semantic potential and cultural experience. Thus, memory continues to be the source of intertextuality.³³ In this process, literature becomes the carrier of actual knowledge and transmitter of historical knowledge and establishes intertextual connections between literary and non-literary texts.³⁴ Memory studies focus on types of remembering and the memory of genres. These two issues are closely related to the memory of literature because intertextuality is not only about referencing individual texts but also about genres. Literary genres exist as a result of the memory of literature being formed as a result of an intertextual process.³⁵

What makes *kahtiyyes* suitable to be studied through this lens is its inclusion of the accumulation of cyclical trauma in its ecological, social, and cultural layers and its memory. The case of Lebib's poem and its circulation in bureaucratic correspondences after 45 years to convey the severity and cyclicity of the famine in 1803 illustrates the extent of the ecological trauma experienced in Diyarbakır. Timur Pařa's selection of "Diyarbakırlı" Lebib's poem rather than those produced in other geographies is remarkable because it strengthens the possibility that Lebib's poem reflects the social and ecological reality specific to Diyarbakır. Framing the poem by employing it in bureaucratic correspondence, Timur Pařa blurs the line between reality and fiction, puts his experience of trauma in a literary form, and transmits the memory of trauma vertically and horizontally. Therefore, Timur Pařa employs the narrative form and structure that Lebib provided.

³¹ Rigney, "The Dynamics of Remembrance", 350.

³² Renate Lachmann, "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 302, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.5.301>.

³³ Lachmann, "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature," 304.

³⁴ Lachmann, "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature," 306.

³⁵ Astrid Erll, "Memory in Culture," in *Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies*, ed. Andrew Hoskins and John Sutton (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 74, <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.49-5742>.

In Timur Paşa's petition, there are multiple layers of trauma cycles. While Lebib expresses his trauma with a narrative structure provided by the *kahtiyye* genre, he also leaves a framework, structure, and literary tradition to future generations to express their traumas. The fact that this structure and tradition appear in a petition as a non-literary form shows that the tradition is transferred intertextually along with the memory of the famine.

However, the fact that the frame and narrative structure that Lebib provided was also created in the rhetoric of Divan literature should not be underemphasized. In order not to overlook this, literature as a medium for the transmission of memory and its intertextuality requires more minute attention. Lebib wrote his poem in *kita* form which was generally used in Divan literature to create chronograms that remark on the narrated event's date. In addition, Lebib employs figures of speech in other genres of Divan literature. For instance, he employs a popular figure of speech in Divan literature by using the phonetically similar but semantically contrasting words *şer* and *şer*³⁶ in the same couplets to highlight the fact that the judicial system ceases to be effective in sustaining order and the evil is no longer punished by the judicial system.³⁷ On the one hand, Lebib employs Divan literature's rhetorical devices in his *kahtiyye*, on the other hand, its discourse differs from that of other genres of Divan poetry in that he employs a more realistic style to describe the situation of the people and everyday life of Diyarbakır during the time of the famine. In terms of its theme and discourse, Lebib's poem takes place in the category of the *kahtiyye* genre. However, this genre establishes an intertextual relationship between literary and non-literary forms of writing, corresponding to what Lachmann indicated by mentioning the intertextual relationship between literary and non-literary texts. For instance, there is a reciprocal relationship between Lebib's poem and Timur Paşa's petition. Through the poem, Lebib describes the famine in Diyarbakır as a demand for help. He openly mentions Mehmed Ragıp Paşa's name, the grand vizier at that time, and directly attributes the poem to him. It bears similarities with the petition form as a non-literary text. Similarly, Timur Paşa, in his petition to the sultan, describes the impact of famine in Diyarbakır, notes what is needed to ameliorate the situation, and demands his reappointment. What is common in these two forms of texts is the employment of a discourse suitable for making demands and presenting justifications for these demands. In order to justify their demands, they have to describe the conditions realistically and frame their traumatic experiences in a certain way of writing. Thus, they borrow from each other's discursive strategies. Timur Paşa's direct quotation from Lebib's poem in his petition is an explicit reference to such an intertextual and reciprocal relationship with the poem.

Therefore, the case of Lebib's poem and its circulation through Timur Paşa's petition serves as a model for the theoretical framework that Erll, Rigley, and Lachmann provided. As indicated, Lebib employed the structure of *kahtiyyes* to express and frame his experience during the time of

³⁶ While *şer* means "evil; harm; injury; suffering; misfortune. An evil act, wickedness; injustice; harm inflicted", *şer'* means "the law of God" *Redhouse's Turkish Dictionary: In two parts, English and Turkish, and Turkish and English*, 2nd ed. 2 vols. (1856), s.v. "Şer.," 1119; "Şer'," 1122.

³⁷ "Ne çâre müdde'îdir şer' ile da'vâsı var derler/Degildir meşreb-i hükkâm zecr etmek eşîrrâyı" Lebib, *Lebib Dîvânı*, 272.

famine and left this narrative structure to Timur Pařa to transmit the memory of the famine. By conceptualizing this traumatic experience and its transmission as an ongoing process, the agency of *kahtıyye* as a narrative structure in conveying the ecological memory is better understood. The narrative structure Lebib provided shaped the way in which Timur Pařa perceived and transmitted the experience of famine of Diyarbakır in 1803. However, as indicated above, the formation of the *kahtıyye* genre was not a single-handed process. It established an intertextual relation by borrowing rhetoric, figures of speech, and discursive strategies of other literary and non-literary texts. By doing so, *kahtıyye* as a literary genre became an active agent in the transmission of ecological memory. *Kahtıyye* not only left marks on history by employing chronograms in *kıta* form, but it also provides a discourse suitable for describing the ecological and social reality and conveying demands to central administration. It does so by drawing on them through its intertextual relation with petition forms. Thereby, *kahtıyye* as a genre was an active agent in this process, along with Lebib and Timur Pařa, who also actively engaged in framing and transmitting the ecological memory by referencing and continuing past narrative structures.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I discussed how environmental historiography defines agency and conceptualizes the relationship between humans and non-humans. I re-evaluated these existing definitions of agency through Lebib's *kahtıyye* and its circulation through bureaucratic correspondence. By choosing Lebib's *kahtıyye* as a case study, I showed that the *kahtıyye* genre is a form of remembering and that an Ottoman officer tried to change his position against an environmental crisis by consciously using this form of remembrance. In this case study, what was at issue was not the absolute agency of nature, as in most examples of environmental historiography, but multiple agencies. Indeed, there are agencies of humans that cause environmental crises such as famine, agency of nature in responding to this human factor, the structures formed as a result of the measures taken by political bodies in response to such crises, and the agency of the subjects who are torn between being stuck between these structures or looking for a solution. But perhaps most importantly, there is the agency of the poets who consciously created *kahtıyyes* as a genre of famine narratives for recording the memory of these famines. This emphasis on the multiplicities of agencies and multiple definitions of agencies is significant in terms of breaking down the dichotomies constructed between nature and culture, and it is helpful in redefining the agency of cultural structures in which language plays an active role. This points to an interaction that transcends the limitations of the dichotomies of humans versus non-humans, nature versus culture, agency versus structures. Understanding the complexity of these interactions requires approaching the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective. As I have shown throughout the article, critical tools and concepts from fields such as memory studies, literary theory, historiography, and cultural studies contribute to this interdisciplinary perspective. Even though there was an environmental turn in Ottoman historiography, with studies informed

by this perspective, it is possible to say that such a methodological turn is still lacking in the history of Ottoman literature and in literary studies, which take Ottoman literatures as an object of study. Looking at Ottoman literatures through this lens is of critical importance in reconsidering established dichotomies and definitions.

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