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THE BOOK OF DEDE KORKUT: EPIC NARRATIVE AND PERFORMATIVITY

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This paper presents the communicative system of *The Book of Dede Korkut*, the medieval Turkish epic, within the framework of M.M.Bakhtin's theory of speech genres and J.L.Austin's concept of performativity. The performativity in the epic acts as an important part of plotting. The extracts from the Koran, praises of sacral names, well wishings and maledictions, speech etiquettes, and dream interpretation are considered in respect of the ritual function of the epic language

Keywords: Epic, Performativity, Ritual, Sacral Names, Speech Genres

INTRODUCTION

The performativity in the Book of Dede Korkut is the most substantial component of plotting and originates from the performative resources of the epic language. The performativity in the epic is not only the similarity of a word and an action or a word and activity; at the same time, it is an expression of social power or social authority. The oral character of the Book of Dede Korkut, and the magic essence of a spoken word transform any ritual dialogue in the epic into the universal mechanism of communication.

The performative units in the epic - ritual or ritualized performatives - primarily realize in a sacral semiosis and include the sacral and divine worship performatives, hagiographical texts (or sacral narrative performatives), religious performatives, ritual performatives (supplications, recourses, eulogies, votives, prophetisms, kerygmatics, etc.).

The execution of rites, ceremonies, living norms and games (performance) was very important for the life of an ethnic community in the Middle Ages. The man's daily life as though theaterized in a scene, and the performativity "arranged" the play.

The performativity patterns the relationship of certain communicative situations, a community and an individual with the external world. Performance becomes a basic form of social memory and a main channel of transmission of the ethnic social practice.

One of the reasons for our special attention to this issue in our research is that the phenomenon of performativity in the literary and folklore studies of Azerbaijan is not well-studied. Though the performativity is extensively investigated in the structure of different languages, the epic poetics, particularly in the context of the communicative semantics of folklore texts failed to be a target of research.

The poetic system in the Book of Dede Korkut consists of performative units (utterances, formulas, performative and discursive practices and constructions). The linguopoetic analysis of the Book of Dede Korkut shows that some constructions are a part of the system of performative utterances.

“Performative constructions realize almost in all the types of speech acts. They are functionally equivalent to 1) declarations (constative – affirmative), 2) directives (injunctive – command and requestive – request), 3) verdictives (decision, appraisal and undervaluation), 4) permissives

(permission), 5) exercitives (decision, cancel), 6) commissives (guarantee, responsibility, oath, promise), 7) expositives (agreement, dispute, protest), 8) satisfactives (gratitude, regret, excuse, desire), etc.” (Hamidov I., 2009, p.82). The sacral semiosis is intensively implemented by the certain genres of performative speech.

The epic narrator (epic characters, as well) believed that information was sent from off-worlds, and such a religious thought constitutes a basis of many performative acts.

Performativity as linguoculturological category has a different essence in our epic: on one hand, the Book of Dede Korkut itself as a creative act, as a narrative act is completely a performative. On the other hand, functionally it is directly connected with the ethno-social environment, religious world and the system of mythological ideas of an oghuz man.

One of the signs stipulating the performative nature of the epic (epic creative work) is first and foremost its “oral nature”. The formation of the epic, its sounding and narration every time is its act of performance.

The performative practice (so to speak) reveals the relationship between characters and sacral creatures, the internal mechanism and logic of events, and the world of values

and thus introduces the audience into the sacral world of “knowledge”. For instance, the performativity of traditional motives such as “dream – warning”, their behaviour in the epic plot are subject to the principles of “programming”.

The Book of Dede Korkut is a ritual speech phenomenon, and a fine example of the ritual function of language and archaic performative practice. The performativity is also closely connected with the ritual practice of the ethnic community, and thus is “a particular mindset, a special mythopoetic word – a sacral word-action” (Toporov V.N., 1998, p.60). Some performative speech acts such as homilies, interdicts, dreams and oneiromancy form the basis of the characters’ behaviour in Oghuzname. Homilies, warnings, dreams, and dangers related to the initial hardships of the young Oghuz determine “the words of his destiny”. The performativity in the epic expresses an indexical essence: the identification of the hero occurs in the context of interdicts and dangers.

Hunting, marriage and battling are important links of syntagmatic plotline, particularly hunting is “an event defining the flow of events <...>. All the subsequent run of events gradually comes out of this situation and develops” (Abdullayev K., 1991, p.55).

Extolling a neophyte in a field of battle (trial), in an act of initiation is one of the widespread verbal acts of the archaic ritual practice. Praising an epic hero is closely connected with the social nature of community and of a performative nature.

The audience also becomes a party (a virtual character) of epic events through the formation of face-to-face emotional contact between the narrator and the audience (majlis) (“Hey, my khan!”) and the ozan’s addressing to the audience. The ozan appears as a witness and participant of events occurred in “the times of those oghuzs”, as a person who intimately knows epic heroes and bears a direct responsibility for their destiny.

Any text (particularly, a literary text) reflects the character of audience as such¹. The character of audience is formed in the process of communication and on the basis of respective speech genres.

The appearance of the character of audience (majlis) in the Book of Dede Korkut is surprising. The Oghuzname narrator – ozan’s position is consistent with that of audience (khan majlis): they share the same belief and worldview in one rhetorical-ideological and ritual word space.

The addresses of the narrator to the khan ozan's majlis – the epic audience in fact are stereotypes of ritual speech, one of the forms of art etiquette.

Such stereotypes are a ritual exchange of replica communication between the narrator and the audience. The content of cliché-etiquette formulas is ceremonial in this ritual communication. A. Lord believed that an epic formula in oral poetry was of a ritual origin because the sound setup by repetitions distinguished the word or the notion which had a magic power..." (Lord A.B., 1997, p.81).

Each story included in the Book begins with performances – formulas like addresses to the khan:

"Bughaj khan, son of Dirsa khan, narrates his story, my khan, hey!"

"Salur narrates the story about the despoliation of Ghazan's house"

"Bamsi Beyrek, son of Gambora, narrates his story, my khan, hey!"

"Ghazan bey narrates that his son Uruz is captured, my khan, hey!"

Such performances of the epic narrator (ozan) turn into a plot-poietic event, into a performative act in the process of narration. After such addresses are made, the plot as if

"starts to work" and revives followed by the sequence of situations.

The listing of the names of Oghuz nobles coming to the rescue of the hero at the end of the story is also performatives:

"At the mouth of black abyss, the best brave heart Garagune, Ghazan beys' brother, sitting in the saddle neat with black bull wool and blazing angrily through everything in his path, raced on the horse and said: "Wing your sword in the air, I am here, my brother Ghazan!"

Dede Korkut's well-wishing addressed to Dirsa khan and Baybora bey at the name day is a performative text of a favoring nature in terms of rhythm-intonation. The expressiveness appropriate for incantations and supplications, and lexical reiterations enhance the magic effect of Dede Korkut's word of well-wishing:

"Listen to me, Baybora bey! Allah the Almighty sent you a son. Let it be! May the Muslims support him when he bears the heavy flag! May Allah the Almighty give your son a pass should he ever cross black snowy stretching mountains! May Allah help your son to defeat the bloody unfaithful Garabalig! You gently call him "my Bamsa". Let's call him Bamsi Beyrak!

"Hear my words and listen to me, Baybora bey. Almighty Allah gave you a son, and may He preserve him. May he ever be followed by Muslims as he bears his white banner? When he has to cross those snow-covered mountains lying yonder, may Allah help him cross them? When he has to ride through bloody rivers, may Allah grant him safe passage? When he has fallen among the crowds of infidels, may Allah give him yet a chance? You will pamper him and call him still 'My Bamsi', but let his full name now be Bamsi Beyrek with the Gray Horse. I have given him his name. May Allah give to him long life?"

"The Oghuz nobles gathered on the occasion of the boy's birth and greeted him. Sonn Dede Korkut came. He took the boy and passed him to his father. Hey, Dirsa Khan! Grant him with the title of nobility and throne cause he is generous!..."

Name taking is one of principal forms of the social status in the epic. By taking name a young Oghuz hero gets rid of associability, i.e. takes on significance.

The world of beliefs and ceremonies of oghuzs fully consists of wishes. The Dede Korkut space is a performative one that meets the desires of heroes.

Their offering up prayers is not only an act of signs and behaviour connected with belief,

but also a form of relationship between the social status and modality expressing desire.

The plot of Bamsy Beyrak' story begins with the sacral word of Dede Korkut and Oghuz nobles, i.e. the realization of the performative act.

The communicative position of a person making entreaties – addresser depends on a person whom entreaties are made to – the addressee.

In order to make entreaty, or rather for the prayers to be accepted, certain rituals are carried out in Oghuz: the hungry are fed, beggars dressed and shod, and dervishes given offerings.

"Dirsa Khan took the advice of people and arranged a wedding feast. He made entreaties and ordered horses, camels and sheep to be slaughtered. Then he gathered together the Inner and Outer Oghuz nobles' people. He provided the hungry with a meal, dressed and shod them, paid debts, pick a hill of meat and ordered a pond of koumiss to be milked. Then they stretched out their arms making entreaties. Their prayers were heard and accepted and Allah the Almighty sent him a wife".

The Dirsa Khan's wife "being sent a son through entreaties" was followed by certain rituals:

“I helped people and make donations to dervishes in black. I fed the hungry, dressed and shod the destitute, and I am lucky to have a son with difficulties by making entreaties”.

Matchmaking in the Book of Dede Korkut is an important element of marriage proposal, the discourse of marriage rite. Dede Korkut’s asking Garchar for Banu Chichek’s hand and Ganturaly’ Trabzon matchmaking are implemented subject to the forms of ritual behaviour:

I have come to you to ask your heavenly beautiful sister Banu Chichek to marry Bamsi Bayrak as willed by God and wanted by the Prophet!!

Like trials, dreams are also one of the acts which have a metaphoric-symbolical language. The events’ being lucky/unlucky, useful/ non-useful are interpreted in the dream interpretation texts and they are similar to the rules according to their composition, signs and trials, and communicative intension.

The main function of dreams is not only to give prognostic (foresight) information, but also to provide news about events that have already happened.

Both dream telling and dream interpretation is built as a ritual dialogue in *The Book of Dede Korkut*. In fact, dream interpretation means the finding of certain meaning identity

between an event and a sign and interpretation of symbolical signs. According to L.Wittgenstein, it is the replacement of one symbol with another or placing one event instead of another (Wittgenstein L., 1989, p.252). Dreaming or dream interpretation in the epic happen between high authoritative heroes like Qazan Khan and Qaragune. K.Q. Yung writes that East African tribes consider ordinary people’s dreams to be of no significance; generally, tribal members deny that they dream. Only “the high” dreams seen by tribal leaders and shamans assume a great importance for life and welfare of the tribe.

On Englishmen’s arrival there, having “high” dreams was pertaining to the chairman of county committee only (Yung K.G., 197, p.46).

Depending on the dream reader’s communicative purpose, interpretation of signs in a dream ”content” may sound as rules, trials and aphorisms (proverbs, sayings).

The interrelation between the Islamic ideology and epic culture of war in *The Book of Dede Korkut* stipulates the existence of “the epic islam” conception.

“The epic islam”, epic conflict, i.e. “friends - strangers” (muslims - infidels) ethnic-religious confrontation is so-called esthetic

phenomena established as a result of the gradual islamisation of heroic warrior code. It is the event created as a result of unity of the classical epic practice and the ontological practice of Islam.

The organic unity of Islamic ideas and the Book's plot narration shows itself in performative speech genres and verbal belief practice of characters and this generates from the nature of Islam and its phenomenology in the ethnic and cultural context of the Middle Ages. Besides, the epic Islam enables to determine the value of the word in the medieval Turk community, the place and role of little speech genres in the poetical system of composite genre.

The systematic analysis of *The Book of Dede Korkut* poetics specifies that archetypical Oghuz creatively mastered the Islamic sacral word and sacral text (meaning) space and determined the beauty of the name of Allah the Almighty, one of the actual issues of classical belief aesthetics and other "impressive" meanings space, as well as the status not only on an informative didactic level, but also in the formation of epic speech and communicative strategy of the narrator (ozan).

Oghuzs' transition to the Islamic renaissance represents their living in the Middle Ages and

a deep semiotic revolution they went through. "The Islamic elements" which can be observed in Oghuzname from outside generates from Turkmenism that certainly seems uneasy. This refers to the people whose history starts from Islam. These people's mentality we come face to face with in the Oghuzname is formed by the synthesis of "elements coming from traditions" and "Islamic elements".

As described, Oghuzname associates the appearance of ethnos in the historical area with the idea of belief in the existence of one God. That's why Oghuzs' conquest campaigns are willingly or unwillingly interpreted as the intention of believers in the existence of one God to dictate their political will to the world" (Asgar A., 2007, p.32).

Entreaties and prayers, supplications, praises of sacral Name, etc. made to the Supreme Creator in the speech genre paradigm specified in *The Book of Dede Korkut* are related with the ritual opportunities and performative function of the epic language.

An Oghuz believed in the performative power of the word. Islamic performatives (ismi-azam, amin, kelmeyi-shehadet) specified in *The Book of Dede Korkut* act as an element of verbal magic.

A citatory word as a performative speech act expresses belief in oghuz heroes' victory over gjaours. The Book of Dede Korkut is a text where a ritual word, gesture, mime, and speech are actively implemented. A.Gurevich wrote: "The Middle Ages is a period when rite, conventional, demonstrative gesture, a word of malediction or wishful thinking, and etiquette in all social spheres has important and significant advantages" (Gurevich A.Y., 1983, p.65).

The etiquette discourse is one of the types of ritual discourse in an epic text and it is no coincidence that the phatic communication and ritual dialogues of characters (information sharing, eulogy) in many cases are built as etiquettes of speech and behaviour. Here we can relate the dialogues of a domestic ceremonial type and the speech genres of a "conflict" nature.

The behavioural stereotype and etiquette of Oghuz nobles at such meetings is an expression of ideas regarding the permanence of the epic heroic world. Etiquette is one of the factors conditioning epic characters' behavioural functionality.

The breach of etiquette in Bayindir Khan's diwan is a sign of the breakdown of the oghuz heroic world and social order. It is the khan feasts the heroic and valiant socium is fully

and successively embodied in. The form of social communicative and ethical relationship between Bayindir Khan, Ghazan Khan and Oghuz nobles, fathers and sons is confirmed in the khan ritual etiquette place. Beyrak who returned from "the strange world" – the country of infidels (where he was in capture) greets and praises Ghazan Khan and then joins to his friends. The etiquette of greeting allows us to cross the border of "the worlds".

The ritual eulogy - the Book of Dede Korkut consisting of twelve legends evokes an impression of a completely panegyric text. The ritual eulogy determines a narrative ozan strategy in the communicative etiquette structure of each legend. The ritual function of *the Book of Dede Korkut* language makes eulogy as the panegyric genre a priority among other speech genres.

The ozans who were performers of the panegyric were social opinion givers. They implemented "the words of destiny" of heroes and the heroic chronicle of "the times of those oghuzs" in the genre of eulogies.

In the Book of Dede Korkut the salutation and eulogy of the khan occur in the khan majlis and the khan diwan. Bayindir Khan and Ghazan Khan represent a higher social hierarchy and supreme authority in Oghuz. The ritual salutation and eulogy expresses the

level of archetypical power – society relationship.

The ritual eulogies in the foreword are of a performative nature and form a magic universum. Such eulogies are mainly addressed to the real (the khan) and the idea, sacral hearers (the Almighty, Islamic holy ones of God).

The elementary figure of the repetition – the anaphor (impressive... impressive... the Almighty...) is present in these eulogies. Being an ancient rhetorical figure, repetition is a form of semiotic inclusion into supertemporal sphere. Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher of the 20th century wrote about the essence of repetition that “... repetition <...> itself is a synthesis of time - a transcendental synthesis of time; <...> it consists of the past, the present and even the future...” (Deleuze G., 1991, p.264-265)

These eulogies “put in one rhetorical framework” in the foreword make it possible to fully grasp the sacral logic of the text. The ritual repetitions bring an air of ceremony into the text of the foreword. Therefore, it can be noted that the sacral magic effect of the eulogies in question is obtained by the repetition of the words “impressive” and “the Almighty”.

Thus, the genre of ritual eulogy in the Book of Dede Korkut is an act of behaviour-etiquette. It is also a display of valiance and nobility. Praises to the Almighty, the extolment of the hero's horse and armour is one of the widespread speech genres in the medieval heroic discourse. It can be supposed that the functions of Oghuznames of eulogic nature are also connected with the sphere of religious cult and ritual-social etiquette.

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