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On the tracks of literary structure in literary work (a sumerian poem)

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Abstract

Poem is thinking with images; art is the one that cannot become without poem and image. Whether it is written in the eras B.C 4000-2000 in Sumerian language with cuneiform script or in modern-day language, poem takes its source from human soul which carries universe’s soul. Even a daily life moment, a birth which is ordinary to us, has poetry inside that carries the traces of the first act, the cyclical image. (Mother Goddess) The first word, name that is whispered into newborn’s ear with breath, is a symbolic expression of his life’s refreshing power. Since the synthesis of common symbols of imagination is created from personal and social unconscious, despite of conscious will, it protects its continuity in every era and it can be seen in different branches of art. This study is focused on the first example of literary work; literary output, in other words Sumerian Poem, abstract literary interpretation and the analysis of the tracks of literary structure in here and its tangible expression. In the study, visual expression is also used. Style is examined within the frame of main tendency of “name and the refreshing power of word” in poem’s subject. In the study, stylistics’ methods of literary works examination are considered. Internal structure in poem is studying as a communication. It has been presented that the language must be approached not only with grammatical structure as it is in theories of linguistics sees and studies the language as a social entity after 1970, when literary work is in question in Sumerian language and poem, but also relevant with spiritual, semantic, symbolic, logical, physical, social, semiotic and religious.

Key Words: literary Structure, Image, Stylistics, Sumerian Poem

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1. Introduction

Sumerian literary outputs represent the archaic ontology, in other words the understanding of entity and authenticity that can be read in human behaviors in pre-modern societies. Sumerians are among antique cultures as pre-modern or traditional society. Archaic society’s metaphysics notion states a complicated system as symbol, myth and rite.

Sumerian is the first community in human history that invented the writing convenient with its language. The first Sumerian literary outputs dated mostly from B.C 2100 to 1800. The writing which has started as picture is written lately on clay tablets that constituted of slimes from rivers. “Sumerian literature is the oldest readable poetry in the world. It was written down on clay tablets in the cuneiform script by scribes in Southern Iraq some 4,000 years ago and has been again only within the last sixty years” (Black, J., Cunningham, G., & Robson, E., 2004.). Sumerian texts had been removed from Nippur, (current name is Niffer city, Baghdat’s south) Sumerian’s culture center. Osman Hamdi also choose Nippur in Iraq for excavation work. The process that had been started firstly as a recovery of Assyria’s literary outputs, Sumer civilization’s literary entity is also showed up. According to “1883’s Regulation” the first excavation started in Nippur in 1889 by Philadelphia University and the tablets that have found from these excavations which continued internally till 1900’s, are shared half and half with Istanbul University” (Çığ, 2007:40). During the recovery of Sumerian literature, the pieces of Sumerian tablets that are present on both museum, got together and the experts had been united for the analysis of cuneiform script and texts are copied.

The aim in that study is to evaluate the tracks of literary structure of the Sumerian poem which is one of the first examples of literary work, based on ontological perspective, with the stylistics’ examination methods for literary work. Stylistics, as an examination method about linguistic performance, is the examination of linguistic performance that presents literary language in literary output. In Sumerian poem example; the common, universal, basic linguistic performance that has humanity’s idea essence and structures is rehashed. Poem analysis is accepted as one of the most important subject of stylistics as a result of the developments on linguistics.

A Sumerian poem which is about to name and the refreshing power of word and the creation of Goddesses (the birth myth of grain and sheep goddesses) that discussed in this study:

* When, upon the hill of heaven and earth,
  An spawned the Anuna (Anunnaki) gods,
  Since he neither spawned nor created Grain (Aşnan) with them,
  and since in the Land he neither fashioned the yarn of Uttu nor pegged out the loom for Uttu-
  with no Sheep (Lahar) appearing, there were no numerous lambs, and with no goats,
  there were no numerous kids,
  the sheep did not give birth to her twin lambs,
  and the goat did not give birth to her triplet kids;
  the Anuna, the great gods, did not even know the names Ezina-kusu (Grain/Aşnan) or Sheep(Lahar).
  There was no mus (şeq) grain of thirty days;
  there was no mus grain of forty days;
  there was no mus grain of fifty days;
  there was no small grain, grain from the mountains or grain from the holy habitations.
  There was no cloth to wear; Uttu had not been born;
  Lord, the precious lord, had not been born; Sakkan (Sumugan) had not gone out into the barren lands.
  The people of those days did not know about eating bread.
  They did not know about wearing clothes; they went about with naked limbs in the land.
  Like sheep they ate grass with their mouths and drank water from the ditches.
  At that time, at the place of the gods’ formation, in their own home, on the Holy Mound,
  they created Sheep and Grain (Aşnan and Lahar).
  Having gathered them in the divine banqueting chamber,
  the Anuna gods of the Holy Mound partook of the bounty of Sheep and Grain but were not sated;
  the Anuna gods of the Holy Mound partook of the sweet milk of their holy sheepfold but were not sated.
  For their own well-being in the holy sheepfold, they gave them to mankind as sustenance.
  (Black, J. & Cunningham, G., 2004: 226)
Gods and Goddesses in Sumerian Poem:

An: said as Anu in Babel. In Sumerian, there is also Anu instead of An. “Anu (Sumerian): Nintu’s (queen of mountainous country, fertile queen, noble queen, mother goddess of Sumerian, great goddess, wife of Anu and mother of all goods, it is said that she created the first man from mud) husband, father and master of all gods. God of heaven in both of them” (Rosenberg, 1998:226). According another source, “An is Sumerian’s God of Heaven, the meaning of word is “heaven”. In Akad, Anu” (Kramer, 1999:464), Așnan: Goddess of grain. Lahar’s sister, Uttu: Weaving goddess, Lahar: Goddess of Sheep. Așnan’s sister, Sumugan is the god who is responsible of steppe and animals, Anunnakis: Anunnna or Anunnaki is the name of a group of gods of “heaven” but, even so, some of them should be out of favor or sent to underworld.

Other words: şeş: an undefined grain type, duku: the creation rooms of gods. (Holy Mound) (Kramer, 1999 :464-476)

2. One of the first examples of Literary Work: Sumerian Poem and Stylistic Study

2.1. Image Layers in Sumerian Poem – Image Centered Analysis

Image, like any other arts, is a skill of fiction and subtlety of explicating also seen in literature. Image is a message that is not told clearly in work, which is placed on social, mythological and cultural basis and which can’t be recognized clearly. “Even if image’s formation is accepted as inner act, it is a production of a relation of subconscious and productive society” (Düşgün,2011 : 17).

On image’s layers and image centered analysis of poem, it is made a point of images in Sumerian poem which are revealing the explicating situation as part of belief. The images in Sumerian poem result from the universe’s order which has came down to two main principles (Heaven and Earth) in Universalist dichotomy. Cosmologic explanation and sense-making which was born from Sumerian’s myths, try to be seek through the birth of universe (cosmogony) heuristic or perceptual ideas about man’s and other beings’ creation and fiction. In Sumerian poem, sense of text, in other words, its content must be examined within spiritual and cosmological symbolism layer.
“The symbols pass on the holy reality as the situation that the world and the universe is a work of supernatural or spiritual power as “code” and as with an imaginary expression of the fiction skill of language (Düşgün, 2011:32).

Image layers in Sumerian poem are: -Social Image, -Holy Image, Nature Image

-Social Image

In the poem that discussed, subtlety of explicating and fiction skill is presented mostly as a social image in the image of name and the refreshing power of word. The poem given us is the best way the importance of naming in Sumerian. Here, the Sumerian poem which’s part is about the creation of grain and sheep gods, is going about the part right before Lahar and Aşnan came down to earth. Afterwards, the descent to earth of Lahar and Aşnan and their cultural domains that they brought to humans are told. At the end of the discussed part of the poem, also the creation of the first human and giving breathe is presented. “Name, breathe, life, blood, soul are related with the first creator. The one who gives the name, also gives a life by blowing its breathe.” (Çibiroğlu, 1996:45)

In a Sumerian myth that is written about the first human’s creation, in order to do God’s increasing works, the first humans are made of mud and Goddess Ninmah (in other name Ninhursag, Sumerian mother goddess) gives breathe to human by blowing from her own breathe. God Enki (God of wisdom, sea, and river) tells human theirs faiths.

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After the heaven is separated from the earth,
After the earth is separated from the heaven,
After human is named. (Adopted from Kramer, Çibiroğlu, 1996:49)

In the poem, Aşnan’s name hasn’t been born yet and Anunnaki’s don’t know wise Aşnan’s and Lahar’s name. Because in the heaven, the names of grain and sheep goddesses hasn’t been named yet. “Name is sign that shows the power identities and life stories of mother gods.” (Çibiroğlu, 1996:44) Also, to name, is related with giving destiny of Mother-God like God Enki’s telling the first human its destiny. Producer, inventor goddess’ names are given after they proved their selves with a beneficial discovery. (Agriculture, animal breeding, etc.) Also, the ones who know the names of objects and creatures are the gods who product, make, know and measure (goddess’ universal name: Ma’s qualifications) here, masculine gods (major gods – Anunnakis) don’t know how to product and the names of goddesses.

-Holy Images

The Hill of Heaven and Earth (Upon the hill of heaven and earth) spiritual and cosmologic center is an important sign of symbolism. It puts an appearance of Buddhist and Heaven God terminology. “According to Mesopotamia beliefs, there’s mountain in the center that reunites earth and heaven; Countries named that mountain is an interborder connection.” (Eliade, 1994:27) For example, Holy Olympos Mountain, (in Greek Mythology, holy mountain) and Sumeru (Meru Mountain) in Tibet, are holy mountains also for Sumerians. According to Tibetians, that mountain is natural Mandala which is the innate symbol of micro cosmos, mystical center and holiness.

Sumerians, like any other poems about cosmologic universe creation, gives cosmologic elements on the instruction of poem. Also in Sumerian tablet that is exhibited in 17th place in University Museum, Hursah ankibida (Heaven and Earth) statement has place (Kramer, 1999:303). Like Kramer remarks, “… Sumerians’ poets were starting their myths or epics with an cosmologic explanation which is not related with the work’s fullest extent.” (1999:111)

On that poem, even heaven and earth are combined with a center mountain image which’s piedmont is under the earth and peak’s is on the top of the heaven, Heaven and Earth elements are given as 2 separate elements. In this poem, heaven moved from earth, means it is separated. The poem starts with cosmic mountain. But, we can find the traces of primary factor (primary sea), the holy symbol exists before that mountain, at the beginning, before heaven and earth separates. In Sumerian myths, about primary factor, Kramer summarizes the doctrine about the universe’s creation or cosmogony from the Sumerian texts that he examined. In a tablet that gives the list of Sumerian gods, Nammu (mother of God Enki) who’s written with a picture-caption shows primary ”sea”, is defined as “the mother who gives life to heaven and earth.” In that case, Sumerians were accepting that heaven and earth are the products created by primary sea” (Kramer, 1999:112). The followings are the notions that explain universe’s source:
1- At the beginning there were primary sea, there’s no information about its source or birth. Sumerians may thing that it was there all the time.

2- Primary sea formed cosmic mountain which came into existence by the combination of heaven and earth.

3- When Gods were personalized as human, An (heaven) was masculine, Ki (earth) were feminine. With their intercourse, Enlil, god of air was born.

4- Enlil was separated the earth from ground; his father An captured the heaven, Enlil and his mother Ki captured the earth. Enlil and his mother started the arrangement of universe, the creation of human, animals and plants and organization of civilization (Kramer, 1999:113).

Now, in poem, heavenly factor (An) is presented as a precipitating of creation. As a shadow of cosmologic and absolute, a reference for the creation of center world with the image of holy mountain, principally, the reality is up on heaven is reflected. In the book of Eliade called “Le Mythe de l’éternel retour” as it is defined in Area’s, Temple’s, City’s, Archetypes part “According to Mesopotamia’s beliefs, Dicle’s model found in Anuitt star and Firat’s in Kurlangıç star (Eliade, 1994 :21). Also Eliade talks about in the Sumerian poem that we’re discussing, “God’s creation place” (god’s room of creation – Duku House) where droves and grains live. According to Sumerian, there is response in earth for the places, lands, rivers, temples and cities that have places in heaven. At first, heavenly ones are known and these superworld models (archetypes) are in eternity’s ideal area.

As a holy space, in Heaven and Earth Mountain, is the place that earth and heaven combine. “Holy mountain space archetype is not only about center fact but also symbolizes the beginning of life. A mountain as a midsection can be a sign for the birth of human, more precisely the birth of universe (Düşgün, 2011 :42).

-Nature Images

Nature images, creation of seasons, nature’s natural cycle and the happenings are accepted as a sacred and spiritual fact. Change of seasons was connected to cosmic factors. Heavenly facts like wind, rain and cloud were organizing a cosmic time. Also in Sumerian poem, seasons (spring) referred to suchlike changes in earth. In nature images after the introduction part of poem, the living creatures’ equivalents don’t have place in heaven and on earth because the cosmic gods haven’t born, named and shaped in cosmic superworld.

the sheep did not give birth to her twin lambs, and the goat did not give birth to her triplet kids;

The nature images in here, sheep and goat are not only the animals; they are the images of expanse, reproduction and variations. They’re related with the creation of God (Sumugan) and the Goddess (Lahar). The nature which will invigorate with spiritual powers is not resume and variation and creativity. Before grain goddess wise Asman (who granulated the grain and made bread), Anunnakis did not know to eat bread. Due to cosmic cycle’s (repeat of symbolic creation) natural images haven’t been created in heavenly place, they weren’t on earth.

There was no mus (sêq) grain of thirty days;
there was no mus grain of forty days;
there was no mus grain of fifty days;
there was no small grain, grain from the mountains or grain from the holy habitations.

Apart from the poem, in the examination made with the archaic texts which are official, five administrative – religious positions, in other words, office is determined. These are fishing, domestic animal and animal products, labor force organization, grain and grain products (Vanstiphout, H.L.J., 2006). In cuneiform script's applications and education, a related number system is used in the official/religious positions or offices, defined product, object or harvest. They are related with the counting of sheep, goats, cows, pig etc., even with milk and documents. Grain office is related with the production of beer, a fewer group is related with managerial texts, metal objects. Also these kinds of supplies and archaic counting reference to people time and places. In Sumerians, even if people’s and gods names do not disappear in oral texts, fewer names are in office’s lists. In grain and sheep discussion
The Sumerian poem belongs to the patriarchal period and has been written after a while that writing has found An, Anunnakis, Heavenly and Male are the Gods. In Sumerian, the ones who know the cuneiform script were masculine writers. Just as précised before, in that poem, we can find the traces of matriarchal period (mother given life to Heaven and Earth) that’s in heaven, on earth and under earth. Heavenly God was dominating the earth and was feminine. “Trees, vegetables, breeds, spawned animals (the feminine ones, who gave products, this is so important) are his appearance. Dane and calf that are the products of plants and animals are mother earth’s children” (Cibiroğlu, 1996:53).

2.2 Stylistic Areas in Sumerian Poem and Its Evaluation

In the Stylistics’ poem examinations, modern linguistics and classical rhetoric structures are in use. Even if Sumerian poem is so different than daily poem’s structure, the examination of the stylistics’ fields in Sumerian poem; prolepsis, reiterations, mimesis, have importance as daily poem examinations. The poem that is discussed is one of the first written texts in history which has poetic characteristics and originating from Sumerian Mythology and sacred personifications. To examine one of the oldest poem’s morphology, syntax, image and semantics fields, presents the poem’s literary value. “Sumerians usually wrote every subject in the style of poem. They don’t quite use rhymes. Instead of rhymes, by using reiterations, analogy, metaphor and similers, they gave them a way of poem. Heaven creatures, nature, plants, animals and human’s skills inspired Sumerians and they enriched their literary outputs with similers” (Çığ, 2007:47). In literary articles, especially in poem’s language, like Çığ has specified, the similers are effective and they bring power to expression. “… Yet in 4th century B.C, Aristoteles mentions the importance of similer and indicates it is the sign of its natural creating ability” (Aksan,2003:43). In Sumerian poem, to empower the meaning and to present the power of God Lahar who is created by God of Heaven An, Anunnakis’ (major gods) case’s, before knowing Ašnan and Lahar’s name, before they present their abilities, they are liken to the primitive man as it was at the first time. Anunnakis, like sheeps, eat herb with their mouths and drink water from ditch. Like the primitive man, they don’t know how to dress and eat bread.

The creation of Sheep and Grain Gods’ poem is basically long poem of 3 chapters. Here the first part is on discussion. This chapter, in archaic writing, according to formal criterias, can be separated in 3 chapters (introduction, development and conclusion) in itself. In first part, generally some clues about poem’s meaning in general composition and functions. Especially in the final chapter, there are no numbers but temple or holy place and a managerial center (Holy Mound) are mentioned.

“The first consists of a short and enigmatic introduction of just two lines, which was expanded to four in later versions. The middle section is formed by a long passage which lists quantities of animals, food items and other commodities; this passage is repeated in its entirety, word for word and sign for sign. The third section, finally, is another long passage that may contain words and expressions that refer to raw materials and to work on the land. Admittedly, this last section contains many items and may therefore include other themes as well” (Vanstiphout, H.L.J.,2006).

The Sumerian poem titled The Debate and Grain is written in debate style. The official debates in Sumerian, is one of the popular entertainments generally in Urim’s 3rd dynasty king’s palace. In incoming written records, it is written that the one has is mention had the payment. (Black, j,Cunningham, G&Robson, E.,2004) Like it happened in Sheep and Grain Gods’ debates, the debates occur like contest and contain 2 important fact of man’s life. For example; poems develop between the debates of summer-winter, bird-fish, sheep-grain, tree-reed, persimmon-tamarisk, mattock-plow, silver-copper. In that Sumerian poem, in the debate between Sheep and Grain Gods and in the developing parts, every personified contestant, in order, frequently speaks by getting ill-tempered. Goddesses convince the audience that they are much more beneficial for mankind. For that reasons, the debate weighs in their attitude on environment with an aesthetical language. At the same time, we can also find Sumerian’s people oriented special set in these poems that are written in the form of debate. This poem starts with a short and special creation myth. That myth gives as the world before sheep and grain, where heaven earth have not separated yet, God’s sacred, mythic site, when they were living on holy mound. Mankind lived at Holy Mound’s foot and at the end Gods gave those sheep and grain. Ašnan and Lahar were created in Holy Mound and came down to earth. In
following chapters, Aşnan and Lahar conquer An’s and Enlil’s (Top God of Sumerian Pantheon, Master of Air) hearts. In debate, Aşnan became prominent.

Sumerian poetry, sacred myth structure in terms of cosmic feature, in contrast to the prose has repetitions and iterations. In phraseology, iterations are discussed as an aesthetic element and element that reinforces the meaning in the poem. The poem has literary value and a melodious harmony with iterations. Due to the sacred myth structure of the poem, the doctrine of the poem is reinforced by the repetition of sound phrases.

Since he neither spawned nor created Grain (Aşnan) with them, and since in the Land he neither fashioned the yarn of Uttu nor pegged out the loom for Uttu-with no Sheep(Lahar) appearing, there were no numerous lambs, and with no goats, there were no numerous kids, the sheep did not give birth to her twin lambs, and the goat did not give birth to her triplet kids; the Anuna, the great gods, did not even know the names Ezina-kusu (Grain/Aşnan) or Sheep(Lahar). There was no mus (ses) grain of thirty days; there was no mus grain of forty days; there was no mus grain of fifty days; there was no small grain, grain from the mountains or grain from the holy habitations. There was no cloth to wear; Uttu had not been born; Lord, the precious lord, had not been born; Sakkan (Sumugan) had not gone out into the barren lands. The people of those days did not know about eating bread. They did not know about wearing clothes; they went about with naked limbs in the land.

Grain God concept considers equal to grain itself, with metaphor way, to plant grain which is humanistic skill and the verb to product products -bread is personalized. Lahar, in the same way, as a Sheep God, in taming and gaining animal products, is personalizing with sheep. The name of the poem is also written as grain debate. Along with the metaphors, personifications and reiterations, and poem’s structural and grammatical specialties about Aşnan and Lahar, it forms the structures about understanding and connotations. Before Aşnan, Lahar and Uttu was known, their names and places were given, the first mythic view when heaven and earth have not been separated yet, is enriched within a natural order about nature.

2. Conclusion

Whether it is written in the eras B.C 4000-2000 in Sumerian language with cuneiform script or in modern-day language, poem takes its source from human soul which carries universe’s soul. Even a daily life moment, a birth which is ordinary to us, has poetry inside that carries the traces of the first act, the cyclical image. Like the first word, name that is whispered into newborn’s ear with breath, is a symbolic expression of his life’s refreshing power, in Sumerian poem, it is the imaginary, symbolic literary expression of natural order and refreshing power to given a god’s creation room and given breath to mankind after the productive goddesses who proved their selves with a beneficial creation (agriculture, stockbreeding, eating, weaving etc.).

As a result, it is presented that; the literary structure on literary work (Sumerian poem), in the examination of the universal, common and basic language use and structures, inner parts, fiction, imaginary structure that has mankind’s idea’s spirit, with stylistics’ way, that has been presented that the language must be approached not only with grammatical structure as it is in theories of linguistics sees and studies the language as a social entity after 1970, but also relevant with spiritual, semantic, symbolic, imaginary, social, faithfully and semiotic.
References