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Onomastic Material in the Proverbs of Kartvelian Languages: Marking and Generalization

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of the vocabulary of proverbs and identification of the existing thematic fields is extremely important, because the lexical fund of paremic units is very close to everyday speech. Due to the social nature of proverbs, the form and content of a concrete word may point to the place of origin and/or spreading of the proverb. Analysis of the empirical material has proved that even within the related Kartvelian languages there may be thematically diverse paremic units, marked by the influence of local peculiarities. In this regard, special focus should be made on the onomastic material represented in proverbs. Since understanding locally marked proverbs is linked to additional problems for language learners, the issues raised in the article are equally relevant in the context of teaching a second language.

Keywords: *Paremiology; Proverb; Culturology; Onomastics; Kartvelian languages.*

1. Introduction

A proverb is an object of interdisciplinary research. Various disciplines and related fields are interested in the study of proverbs. Observation of paremic units from diverse perspectives is important for linguistics proper, as well as folklore, culturology, literary studies, ethnology, translation studies, multicultural studies and so on. Contemporary paremiological research, which chiefly embraces European languages (Rusieshvili, 2005; Mieder, 2014; Grzybek, 2014; Jesenšek, 2014; Sergienko 2016), and analyzes proverbs from diverse perspectives, focuses on the study of the vocabulary of paremic units and identification of the existing thematic fields. All this helps reveal the culture, daily activities, history and traditions of the speech community which has created the paremic units and actively uses them even nowadays. Above all, based on the pragmatic aspects of paremic units, their lexical fund is closely linked to everyday speech and routine. This proves the

¹ The paper was presented at a scientific session dedicated to the memory of Parnaoz Ertelishvili on February 28, 2022. Currently it is being published in an altered and enriched form.

social nature of the proverbs². Due to this social nature, the form and meaning of a concrete word may point to the area of origin and/or spreading of a proverb. In this regard, special attention should be paid to the anthroponyms, toponyms, hydronyms etc. represented in the proverbs. The fact that the language of proverbs is diverse, peculiar and interesting, is conditioned by various reasons³.

Analysis of the empirical material has proved that Kartvelian proverbs refer to various themes and reflect the daily life and activities of peasants. In such way, these proverbs reveal general wisdom which is of crucial significance for everyone. Although Georgian, Megrelian, Laz and Svan proverbs reveal certain similarities, even within this family of related languages there are thematically different proverbs, reflecting the activities and geographical environment of a certain speech community. Hence, it is not surprising that, alongside with the universal lexical-thematic data of Kartvelian languages, we can distinguish certain groups of paremic units marked with original features of specific regions (Jgharkava, 2020).

It is common knowledge that when teaching a second language, proverbs, idioms, and other such linguistic units that are significant from an ethno-cultural perspective require special consideration. In this regard, it is important to note that the lexical-thematic variety found in Kartvelian proverbs and the lexemes that are characteristic to a particular region, distinctive in a particular way, and imprinted with originality, reflected in paremic, present some challenges in the study and teaching of Georgian or other Kartvelian languages. A unique method is needed when using historical, geographical, or other local data during language teaching.

In order to illustrate all the above-mentioned, below I analyze those Megrelian, Laz and Svan proverbs which are peculiar of these regions and reflect specific lexical units (anthroponyms, toponyms) and historical-geographic data.

2. Analyses of the empirical materials (anthroponyms)

Megrelian:

(1) ახალაიაშ ოსურეფ პატარაიაშ ოსურეფს მიშარაგადანდესია.

axalailaiaš osurepi paṭarailaiaš osureps mišaragadandesia (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 16).

“The Akhalaias’ wives mix with the Pataraias’ wives”.

The given proverb says that the women of the Akhalailaia family tried to establish close relationships with the wives of the Patarailaia family. The proverb implies the supremacy of the

² L. Lezhava dedicates special analysis to the lexical peculiarities of Georgian proverbs (See Lezhava 1959).

³ For more information, see: G. Jgharkava, Lexical-Thematic Characteristics of Proverbs of Kartvelian Languages, East European University, Collection of Scientific Papers, 2020, №2, pp. 149-155.

Pataraiia family over the Akhalaias. Thus, the content of the proverb was, from the very start, **defined (marked)** by the historically proved social supremacy of certain families. Due to its very nature, a proverb is always inclined to **generalization**. The above-mentioned paremic unit is nowadays quite general in its content, whereas the social status of certain families is of secondary importance (this can be proved by Megrelian proverbs of the same meaning, containing different anthroponyms).

(2) ახალაიაჲ პატარაიას მიშასხაპუა.

axalaiak paṭaraias mišasxapua⁴ (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 16).

“Akhalaiia mixed with the Pataraias”.

(3) ახალაიაშ ჯოღორი გოშუაშ ჯოღორენს მიშალალანდუა.

axalaiaš žoğori gošuaš žoğorens mišalalandua (ibid, 16).

“Akhalaiia’s dog barked together with Goshua’s dogs”.

There are other examples of Megrelian proverbs referring to surnames:

(4) დარსალიემქ თქვისია – შარა გიბრთათ დო ოულარო მუთა ფხვადუნანია.

darsaliemk tkvisia – šara gibrtat do oularo muta pxvadunania (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 35).

“The Darsalias said – let us divide the road and we will have to travel less”.

(5) ჭილაიაშ ხოჯი ეკოხონს ხონუნსია.

čilaiiaš xoži ekoxons xonunsia (ibid, 175).

“Chilaiia’s ox ploughs uphill”.

The proverbs (4) and (5) are semantically different from the previous examples. Yet, it should be noted that the anthroponyms mentioned in these proverbs must have had concrete referents in the past. However, on the synchronic plane, this aspect is vague. The following proverbs are examples of generalization of originally marked proverbs:

Megrelian:

(6a) სონი ჩიქახე, სო მიშახე.

soni čikaxe, so mišaxe (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 124).

“Fancy where Chikava’s daughter has happened to be”.

(6b) სონი ჯიქახე, სო მიშახე.

soni žikaxe, so mišaxe (Folk Speech. II 1991, 526).

“Fancy where Jikia’s daughter has happened to be”.

⁴ Literally: “Akhalaiia interfered with Pataraiia’s dance”.

(6c) სონი მიქახე, სო დიშახე.

soni mikaxe, so dišaxe (field materials).

“Fancy where Mikava’s daughter has happened to be“.

The concrete referents found in the above-mentioned proverbs become generalized with time. The examples (6a), (6b) and (6c) presented above are also interesting from another viewpoint. In particular, the additional basis of their marking is the rhythmic nature of proverbs i.e. the rhyming of the constituent words (cf. *čikaxe – mišaxe, žikaxe – mišaxe, mikaxe – dišaxe*).

Existence of such paremic units is natural and can be explained objectively: a monolithic nature of a phrase, its laconic, musical nature and flexibility are of special significance for a proverb. All this is achieved by rhymed anthroponyms. Other Megrelian proverbs are given below in order to provide examples of arranging the rhythm and rhyme by means of proper names:

(7) გიორგი ცხონდია – ირკოჩიში მორდია.

giorgi cxondia – irkočiši mordia (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 35)⁵.

“Giorgi Tskhondia is a godfather of everyone” (“every man”).

The concrete facts which happened in the past have given rise to the following proverbs:

(8) უტუში ნინა მუში ნაჭკადაში უჯგუშო ჭკირუნცია.

uṭuši nina muši načkadaši uǰgušo čkiruncia (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 137).

“Utu’s tongue is sharper than his smithery”.

The above proverb is explained in the second volume of “Georgian Folk Speech” (Megrelian texts, 1991): “Utu Mikava was a smith, the leader of peasants’ rebellion in Samegrelo in 1858. He was famous for his skills of an orator” (Xalx. Siṭq̄v. II, 1991, 446).

(9) უჭირო საჭირო ჩანგელიაშ კარსია.

učiro sačiro čangeliaš karsia (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 138).

“There was no trouble in Changelia’s family until he himself looked for trouble”.

This paremic unit has been explained as follows: “Changelia was a peasant who found a salmon on the bank of the Enguri river. As a sign of respect, he brought the salmon to Prince Dadiani. The

⁵ There are also Georgian proverbs in which concrete lexemes, namely, anthroponyms are used for the purpose of rhyme:

ა) ეგრე არ უნდა, **თაყაო**, შენ რო მამული გაყაო.
egre ar unda, **taqao**, šen rom mamuli gaqao (<https://idioms.tsu.ge/?p=13088>).
“Taka, this is not a proper way to divide the land”.

ბ) რაც მოგივა, **ალიაო**, ყველა შენი ბრალიაო.
rac mogiva, **aliao**, qvela šeni braliao (field materials).
“Alia, whatever happens to you, is your fault”.

გ) ეგრე, ჩემო **თანანო**, მიყვარს შენისთანანო.
egre čemo **tananio**, miqvars šenistananio (field materials).
“Good job, Tanani! I love people who are like you”.

Prince reproached him saying: “Why didn’t you bring such presents before?” and he ordered Changelia to bring him salmon every year” (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 138).

The empirical material has yielded another important topic for analysis, namely, the proverbs based on **toponyms**, the local marking of which is related to geographical names. In this case, generalization can be proved by the diversity of toponyms (cf. toponyms of Eastern and Western Georgia, as well as the toponyms currently on the Turkish territory mentioned in the Laz proverbs) as well as the wisdom-advice provided in the proverbs.

3. Analyses of empirical materials (toponyms)

Megrelian:

(10) არმა ართი ჯვარალეფი რენანია.

arza arti žvaralepi renania (Sherozia & Memishishi, 1994, 13)⁶.

“All of them are from Jvari anyway”.

(11) მარტვილს ნახარებუთ ქელუმენესია.

martvils naxarebut kelušenesia (ibid, 83).

“They built Nakharebavo near Martvili Church”.

(12) ხორგას კოჩი გოლახეს დო ხეთას გურქ მურთუა.

xorgas koči golaxes do xetas gurk murtua (Sherozia & Memishishi 1994, 185).

“The man who was beaten in Khorga, got angry in Kheta”.

Cf. a Georgian proverb:

(13) ერთი კაცი გორში გალახეს და გული ცხინვალში მოუვიდაო.

erti kaci gorši galaxes da guli cxinvalši mouvidao (Jorjaneli 2003, 81).

“A man was beaten in Gori and got angry in Tskhinvali”.

(14) ჯვარული კოჩქ თქუა: ზარბაზანქ მობხვადასგნ, იშა დობღურე ქომისხუნუნია.

žvaruli kočk tkuaa: zarbazank mobxvadasən, iša dobgure komixununia (Sherozia & Memishishi 1994, 192).

“A man from Jvari said: “I’d rather die than be hit by a cannon”.

Laz:

(15) პოლის ჯუმორი დვაბერენან დო ნჩხალას ხარჯი იკვანტერენან.

polis žumori dvaberenan do nčxalas xarži ikvanterenan (Sherozia & Memishishi 1994, 249).

⁶ This proverb must be related to the rebellion of peasants led by Utu Mikava. “When they wanted to capture the leader of the rebellion, the residents of Jvari said: “All of us together led the rebellion “(Xalx. Siṭq̄v. II, 1991, p. 525).

“Someone spilled vinegar in Istanbul and demanded recuperation of damage in Chkhala“.

(16) ხოფას ლაზი ღურუ, პოლის ბგარა დოდგეს.

xopas lazi ġuru, polis bgara dodges (ibid, 264).

“A Laz man died in Khofa and people mourned him in Istanbul”.

Svan:

(17) აშუ ლეთ ხანსარჟი ესერი ლჷლეთი.

ašû let xansarġi eseri läleti (Davitiani 1973, 17)⁷.

“One night can be spent even on the icy mountain peak”.

(18) იჷალადედ ხუნ ესერ ლახმელ ი ზეგირ ჩუბეკეჷ.

iûalâdeġ xun eser laxmæl i zegir čubeqeû (ibid, 43).

“Lakhamula has always been a foundation, and Chubekhevi – the roof”.

(19) ნაბაჷ ი ნაჷაიშდ მაიდს ესერ უშხუარ ხამშერალახ.

nâbaû i naġâišd maids eser ušxûar xamšeralax (ibid, 107).

“A man who had been in Becho and a man who had been in Khaishi complained to each other about hunger”.

There are certain rare cases, when both anthroponym and toponym are simultaneously represented in one proverb.

Megrelian:

(20) ართ სენ ფაფირს ონოღია გიოდინუ ხინტკირიაჟია.

art sen papirs onoġia giodinû xintġiriakia (Sherozia & Memishishi 1994, 11).

“Khintkiria lost Onoghia for one portion of porridge”.

Svan:

(21) დერჷალე ჯენის ესერ ესფეშუდა ი გადრანარს კჷცხთე ხჷწრალა.

jerûale qenis eser espešûda i gadranârs ġăcxte xăçrala (Davitiani 1973, 123).

“A man fell down in the Kheni gorge and cursed the Gadrani family all the way until he reached Katskhi village“.

⁷ Cf. a Georgian proverb: ერთი ალილუია მღვდელსაც შეეშლებოა.
erti alilua mġvdelsac šešlebao.
“Even a priest makes one mistake in saying “Hallelujah”.

Conclusion

Thus, in the Kartvelian proverbs, the local peculiarities are often marked based on the onomastic material, although proverbs are inclined to generalization and provide universal wisdom which is used in every place and understood by everyone. The examples analyzed in the paper have proved that, although the above-discussed Kartvelian proverbs are marked with different historical-geographical peculiarities and the universal values characteristic of proverbs are marked by local features, the meaning of the analyzed proverbs is viewed within a common Kartvelian framework and is easily comprehensible for everyone. Megrelian, Laz and Svan proverbs require additional explanation of the historical background only in a couple of cases (examples (8) and (9)). Yet, the wisdom expressed by a paremic unit is still quite clear, hence, the proverb achieves its aim.

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