

PROVERBS OF THE DESCENDANTS OF THE GEORGIAN MUHAJIRS

TINA SHIOSHVILI

PhD in Philology,
Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University,
E-Mail: tina.shioshvili@bsu.edu.ge
ORCID: 0000-0002-4745-9260

TAMAR MATCHUTADZE

PhD in Philology,
Invited Teacher at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University,
E-Mail: t.matchutadze@bsu.edu.ge
ORCID: 0000-0002-5709-9764

Abstract: The first generation of Georgian emigrants experienced profound sadness and worry from their separation from their motherland. They bequeathed to their descendants a precious legacy: one of the most unmistakable expressions of their identity – oral traditions, including proverbs, which have been shaped and refined by the harsh lessons of life over the centuries. This article presents research based on a scientific expedition that reveals how the Muhajirs have created something new, adapting their cultural expressions to the social environment of their new home. Philanthropic by nature, they are deeply committed to brotherhood and friendship. They live fully in their communities, speak their native language, and express genuine concern that the new generation may struggle to do the same for various reasons.

Keywords: Muhajirs, paremia, word of mouth, folklore.

* * *

Introduction: Proverbs are often referred to as the treasure of a people, and rightly so. No other genre of folk creativity can so concisely and vividly convey a nation's wisdom, keen sense of observation, and the fluidity and flexibility of its language. Proverbs encapsulate the essence of a people's life – everything that has touched them directly, everything they have experienced – joy or sorrow, bitterness or sweetness, despair or elation, hope or helplessness. All of these emotions and experiences are masterfully distilled into brief yet powerful phrases.

The folklore of the descendants of the Muhajirs, documented between 2012 and 2018 by the permanent complex expedition of the Center for Kartvelology at the Faculty of Humanities of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, is both rich and diverse. As Gogla Leonidze would say, it „has roots in the motherland.“ Among the most distinctive genres of this oral tradition is the proverb, which Professor Zurab Kiknadze aptly described as the „poetry of wisdom“ (Kiknadze, 2008: 324).

The proverb is deeply rooted in the natural evolution of language, seamlessly woven into its twists and turns. Its creator is both a contemporary witness to the people's lives, a visionary of the future, and a chronicler of the past. Proverbs serve as a powerful force of inner resilience in times of adversity, consistently acting as a faithful guide and teacher throughout all eras. These maxims have been passed down as a precious legacy to the present generation of Georgian Muhajirs, who, like their fathers and grandfathers, continue to heed their wisdom.

Methods: The research used descriptive, critical analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction methods.

Discussion: Most of the proverbs found in the oral traditions of Georgian Muhajir descendants have parallels in various regions of Georgia, particularly in Adjara. Like the proverbs passed down across different parts of Georgia, these Muhajir expressions of wisdom promote humane values such as brotherhood, friendship, neighborliness, and mutual tolerance. The collective memory of those living in remote corners of the country has deeply internalized the strength found in unity. A testament to this is the proverb: „ერთი ხელი რამე არაა, ორი ხელით ხმა იქნება“. ([erti kheli rame araa, ori khelit khma ikneba] „One hand is nothing; with two hands, it becomes a voice.“)

Our ancestors have long embraced the wisdom of the Bible: „Wise speech is silver, but silence is the preferred gold.“ In the proverbial language of the Adjarian Muhajir descendants, this idea is expressed as: „სიტყვა გუმიშია (ვერცხლი), უხმოზა – ალთუნი (ოქრო)“ ([sitkva gumishia, ukhmioba – altuni] „Words are like gumish (silver), silence is like altun (gold).“)

The proverbs of the Georgian Muhajir descendants also reflect the deep sorrow of those separated from their homeland – a constant companion of exile. The longing for one's native land and people is poignantly captured in the saying: „Let it be Georgian and be muddy“ or „Let it be ours and be muddy.“

The wisdom of the Georgian proverb „როცა გშია, ზაქარია, ცივი მჭადიც შაქარია“ ([rotsa gshia, Zakaria, tsivi mchadits shakaria] „When you are hungry, Zekeria, even a cold chadi (maize bread) is sugar“) takes on a slightly different form among the Georgian Muhajirs: „შენ არ გშია, ზეკერია, რომ შეგემშეს, ჰელვა გიგიხდება ცივი ჭადი“ ([shen ar gshia, zekeria, rom shegemshes, helva gigikhdeba tsivi chadi] „You are not hungry, Zekeria; when you are hungry, you will eat cold chadi like halva.“)

The striving for goodness is expressed by Chveneburebi (Muhajirs) in a proverb similar to the general Georgian („გაიარე, ქვაზე დადე, გამოიარე, წინ დაგხვდება“ [gaiare, kvaze dade, gamoiare, tsin dagkhvdeba]) („Go, put it on a stone, come back, it will meet you“).

The Georgian folk proverb „I spat up – it hit my mustache, I spat down – it hit my beard“ is very popular in the wisdom poetry of the Georgian Muhajirs and we have recorded it in many variants: („ზეით ავფურტნე, ულვაშზე მომხვდაო, ქვეით დევფურტნე, წვერზე მომხვდაო“ [zeit avpurtne, ulvashs mokxvdao, kveit devpurtne, tsverze momkhvdao]; „ზეით ევფურტნე, ბუილია, ქვეით დევფურტნე, წვერიაო“ [zeit evpurtne, buigia, kveit devpurtne, tsveriaio]). This proverb is also found in the oral language of Adjara with identical vocabulary.

Prudence, restraint, and a reasonable, sober attitude to the spoken word are preached by our proverbs: „იფიშმანო, იფიშმანო და ისე'და თქვა“ ([ipishmano, ipishmano da ise'da tkva] „first think and then say“); „ათჯერ'ნა დაზომო, ერთჯერ'ნა დაჭრა“ ([atjer'na dazomo, erter'na dachra] „Measure ten times, cut once“); „ატეხვას თავის გატეხვა აქ“ ([atekhvas tavis gatekhva ak] „If you don't stop, you'll lose your head“), and others.

The descendants of Georgian Muhajirs regard work, the virtue of labor, and the commitment to contributing to society as fundamental human responsibilities. Their proverbial speech frequently praises hardworking, tireless individuals, emphasizing the importance of a diligent and timely approach to work. This perspective is reflected in their proverbs: „აგორვებულ ქვას ღონსული არ ექნება“ / „გაგორვებული ქვა ხავს არ დეკავებს“ ([agorvebul kvas ionsuli ar ekneba / gagorvebuli kva khavs ar deikavebs] „A rolling stone gathers no moss“); „ადრელაჲ ადგები, საქმეს მალე დალევო“ ([adrelai adgebi, sakmes male dalevo] „Rise early, finish your work sooner“); „ერთი დღის საქმე წინ'ნა მეგდოვო“ ([erti dgis sakme tsin'ns meigdovo] „Set the day's work before you“); „სალამოს საქმეს დილის საქმე სჯობსო“ ([sagamos sakmes dilis sakme sjobso] „Morning work is better than evening work.“).

The desire and love for hard work is indicated by the proverb of Chveneburebi: „დედაბერ საქმე დალევია, შალვარი უუნგრია, შუუკერია“. ([dedaber sakme dalevia, shalvari uungria, shuukeria] „Out of boredom, the old woman cut off her pants and sewed them back together“). The crowning glory of such sayings can be considered the proverb: „რვა დღის ომრითვინ ცხრა დღე'ნა ისაქმო“ ([rva dgis omritvin tskhra dge'na isaqmo] „You have to work nine days to live eight days.“)

Along with hard work, the proverbial wisdom of the Georgian Muhajirs also speaks of properly planned, purposeful work: „ღელი ქენერში სიმინდ დათესავ ღვართვინაო“ ([geli kenershi simind datsav gvaritvinao] „You sow corn for the flood by the riverbank.“)

The wisdom poetry of the Georgian Muhajirs, like the general Georgian, condemns greed and coveting others' property: „სხვის ვირზე რომ შეჯდები, მალე ჩამოხვალო“ ([skhvis virze rom shejdebi, male chamokhvalo] „If you ride someone else's donkey, you will soon fall“); „სხვის ცხენზე რომ შეჯდები, სოფლის შუაში ჩამოხვალო“ ([skhvis tskhenze rom shejdebi, soplis shuashi chamokhvalo] „If you ride someone else's horse, you will fall in the middle of the village“); „ღორი ყანაში რო შევა, გაძღომამდე ჭამსო“ ([ghori kanashi ro sheva, gadzgomamde chamso] „When a pig enters a field, it will eat until it is full“); „რაცხამდონი საბანი გაქ, იმდონე განვადე ფეხებიო“ ([ratskhamdoni sabani gak, imdone gatsvade pekhebio] „Spread your legs as much as you have a blanket.“)

The expression of universal humanism is the proverb of Chveneburebi: „ღმერთის გაჩენილი არ მეკლებაო“ ([gmertis gachenili ar meiklebao] „What is born of God cannot be killed.“)

The proverbial wisdom of our ancestors has not overlooked humanity's eternal contemplation of life and death. The inevitability of death is expressed through sayings such as: „შავი მორგვი სუნყველას კუჩხეში მიგორდება“ ([shavi morgvi sunkvelas kuchkheshi migordeba] „A ball of black thread is rolled up in everyone's corner“); „რომ დღე დეგველევა, მოვკვდეთ უნდა“ ([რომ დღე დეგველევა, მოვკვდეთ უნდა] „When the day is over, we must die“).

For a skilled worker, attentiveness and precision are innate traits; a good farmer knows exactly what he will need and when. This wisdom is reflected in the proverb: „შეინახე ბზე, მუა მისი დრო“ ([shein-akhe bze, mua misi dro] „Take care of the shed, its time will come“. The traditional Georgian proverb, „მულო, შენ გეუბნები და რძალო, შენ გაიგონეო“ ([mulo, shen geubnebi da rdzalo, shen gaigoneo] „Daughter-in-law, I'm telling you, and sister-in-law, you hear me“) which is widely known across Georgia, has been preserved among the Adjarian Muhajirs as: „გოგო, შენ გებნევი, გელინო, შენ გეგონე!“ ([gogo, shen gebnevi, gelino, shen geigone!]).

The ancient Georgian folk proverb about the power of sweet speech, magnificently expressed in Shota Rustaveli's masterpiece „The Knight in the Panther's Skin“ („გველსა ხვრელით გამოიყვანს ენა ტკბილად მოუბარი“ [gvelsa khvrelit gamoikvans ena tkbilad moubari] „A tongue that is sweetly spoken will draw a snake out of a hole“), is preserved in the oral tradition of Chveneburebi as: „ლამაზი ენა გველს გამეყვანს ღერიდანო“ ([lamazi ena gvels gameikvans ieridano]).

Georgian folk proverbs consistently condemn hypocrisy and insincerity and expose those who merely pretend to act. The well-known Georgian saying about the crow dreaming of laying a white egg is also preserved among the descendants of the Muhajirs: „ყორან უთქმია, აქზე შავ კვერცხ ვდეფო, გაღმაზე გავალო, თეთრ დავდეფო. გასულა და იქაც შავი დუუდვია“ ([koran utkmia, akze shav kvetskikh vdepo, gaghmaze gavallo, tetr davdepo. Gasula da ikats shavi dudvia] „The crow said, 'I will lay a black egg here, but over there, I will lay a white one.' Yet when it moved, the egg remained black“). Another version states: „ყორანსა უთხრობიაო, აქზე შავ კვერცხ ვდეფო, იქზე გავალ, თეთრ დავდეფო. ვერ უქნიაო“ ([korans utkhrobiao, akze shav kvetskikh vdepo, ikze gaval, tetr davdepo. Ver ukniao] „The crow said, 'I will lay a black egg here, and a white one over there,' but it could not do so.“). This wisdom is concisely summarized in the saying: „გონჯი ინსანი კაი არ გახდება“ ([gonji insani kai ar gakhdeba] „A bad person will not become good“). Humility is also emphasized in a proverb common among Georgian Muhajirs: „ჭიაყელაჲ გველზე დაზმანებია, მიენიო'ნაო, განიწულა, წელიდან გადანყვეტილა“ ([chiakelai gvelze dazmanebia, mietsionao, gatsitsula, tselidan gadatskvetila] „The worm compared itself to the snake, liked it, stretched out, and split in half from the waist down“). Parallels to this saying can also be found in broader Georgian folklore.

Respect for the older generation, especially parents, is a central and honorable theme in Georgian folk proverbs. The wisdom of Chveneburebi also condemns arrogance and ingratitude in children. This sentiment is reflected in sayings such as: „ნაბლი ბუჯგიდან გამოვდაო, ბუჯგს აღარ კადრულობსო“ ([tsabli bujgidan gamovdao, bujgs agar kadrulbso] „The chestnut came out of the husk and no longer deigns to acknowledge it“ or: „ნაბლი ბუჯგიდან გამოვდა, ბურჯგელა არ მოენონაო“ ([tsabli bujgidan gamovda, burjgela ar moewonao] „The chestnut that came out of the husk didn't like the husk itself“ or even: „ნაბლი რომ გამოსულა, იშტე ბუჯგიდან, აღარ უკადრია“ ([tsabli rom gamosula, ishte bu-

jgidan, agar ukadria] „The chestnut that fell out of the husk, it no longer liked it.“ These proverbs, with slight variations, are widely spread across Georgia, especially in Adjara.

The appreciation of elders and belief in their wisdom is also reflected in the proverb „ბერი ხარის რქამან მოხნისო“ ([Beri kharis rkaman mokhniso/Beri kharis kats khniso] „Even the old bull’s horn is plowing“), which is widespread in the oral traditions of almost all regions of Georgia and is expressed as: „ბებერი ხარისა რქანიც ხნავენო“ ([beberi kharisa rkanits khnaveno]), or „ბებერი ხარის რქანიც ეწევიანო“ [beberi kharis rkanits etsevia]. Modesty and respect toward elders are emphasized in the proverbs of our people, such as: „დიდი ილაპარიკებს, პანაჲ უყურებს“ ([didi ilaparikebs, patsai ukurebs] „When the elder speaks, the younger listens.“)

The proverb widely spread in Georgian oral speech – „ავი ძაღლი არც თვითონ ჭამს და არც სხვას აჭმევს“ ([avi dzagli arts tviton chams da arts skhvas achmevs] „A bad dog neither eats itself nor feeds others“ – sounds identical to the descendants of Georgian Muhajirs: „ძაღლმა არც მან შეჭამა, არც სხვას აჭამა“ [dzaglma arts man shechama, arts skhvas achama].

A very popular proverb in Georgian oral tradition – „დედა ნახე, მამა ნახე, შვილი ისე გამონახე“ ([deda nakhe, mama nakhe, shvili ise gamonakhe] „Find the mother, find the father, find the child“) – has been preserved in our oral speech in various forms: „დედას უნდა შეხედო, ციცაჲ ითხოვო“ [dedas unda shekhedo, tsitsai itkhovoo], „ბასმას შეხედე, ძაფი ნახე, ნენეს შეხედე, ფაციაჲ ითხოვე“ [basmas shekhede, dzapi nakhe, nenes shekhede, patsiai itkhoveo], „ნენეს’ნა შეხედო, გოგო ისე ითხო“ [nenes’na shekhedo, gogo ise itkhuo].

Georgian folk proverb teaches us „კარგი შვილი დედის გულის ვარდიაო“ [kargi shvili dedis gulis vardiao] „A good child is the rose of a mother’s heart“. Among the descendants of the Adjarian Muhajirs, this wisdom is expressed in this way: „კარგი შვილი ნენესი გულია“ ([kargi shvili nenesi gulia] „A good child is the heart of a mother“).

Neighborhood has been highly valued in Georgia since ancient times. The ancestors of the descendants of the Muhajirs who settled in various regions of the Republic of Turkey from Adjara, along with many other humane customs, bequeathed love and respect for one’s neighbor, which was magnificently expressed in proverbial wisdom: „შორ ბაბა-ნენესა ახლოს დუშმანი მეზობელი სჯობსო“ ([shor baba-nenesa akhlos dushmani mezobeli sjobso] „Better a neighbor near than a distant enemy“); „მეზობელ რო ფუში ატკივდება, შენც ხელი’ნა მესვავო“ [mezobel ro pushi atkivdeba, shents kheli’na meisvao] „If your neighbor has a stomachache, you should rub your stomach too“). This last proverb is also found in a generalized form, which indicates an even higher level of philanthropy among our people: „სხვას მუცელი ატკივდება, შენც ხელი’ნა მესვავო“ [skhvas mutseli atkivdeba, shents kheli’na meisvao] „When someone else’s stomach hurts, you should rub your stomach too“).

Our wise ancestors understood well the fundamental connection between the past, present, and future; they knew that everyone and everything has its own prerequisites and destiny. The proverb common in all corners of Georgia, reflecting this idea – „ჭინჭრის ადგილზე ჭინჭარი ამოვა“ ([chinchartan chinchari amova] „In the place of a nettle, a nettle will grow“) – was also recorded among the descendants of the Muhajirs in variations such as: „ჭინჭარი ძირიდან ჭინჭარი ამოვაო“, „ჯინჭართან ჯინჭარი ამუა“ [chinchri dziridan chinchari amovao / chinchartan chinchari amua]. A proverb conveying a similar sentiment states: „ცხემლის გადანაჭარზე ცხემლა ამუაო, აბა, ფთხმელა ხომ არ ამუაო!“ ([tskhemlis gadanacharze tskhemla amua, aba, ptkhmela khom ar amua] „The same tree will grow from the same root“).

The proverb widely spread in Adjara folklore, „ყველაჲ მისი ჭლიკით დეიკიდებო“ ([kvelai misi chlikit deikidebao] „Everyone is hanging by his ankle,“) has been almost identically preserved in the speech of the descendants of the Adjara Muhajirs as: „ყველა მის ფეხიდან დეიკიდება“ ([kvela mis pekhidan deikideba] „Everyone is hanging by his feet.“) This profound human wisdom also serves as a warning – that one should always sow goodness, for everything hidden eventually comes to light.

The Georgian man has always longed for knowledge; learning, books, and wisdom are inseparable themes of Georgian folk proverbs. The descendants of the Adjarian Muhajirs expressed their attitude

toward this issue with the proverb: „კაცმა, რომელმაც კითხვა არ იცის, ძროხასავითაა“ ([katsma, ro-melmats kikhva ar itsis dzrokhhasavetaa] „A man who doesn't know how to read is like a cow“).

As part of the broader Georgian oral tradition, proverbs are frequently incorporated into the folklore of Georgian Muhajirs, often appearing within poems of various genres (primarily for parallelism). This is exemplified by a romantic poem written by Gulizar Kolati, a 53-year-old woman from the village of Nuruosmaniye, Geyve district, Sakarya (Adabazar) province, on July 10, 2018:

გავლაჲ ქვა ქვაზე დადე,
გამოვლაჲ დიგიხდება;
შენი ლამაზი თვალებზე
მაგ წარბები გიხდება!

([gavlai kva kvaze dade,
Gamovlai digikhdeba;
Sheni lamazi tvalze
Mag tsarbebi gikhdeba!])

When passing, place a stone on a stone,
When leaving, it will meet you in front;
Those eyebrows suit
on your beautiful eyes!)

We have many such proverbial poems in the oral tradition of all corners of Georgia.

Conclusion. Proverbs encapsulate the centuries-old experiences of our people, reflecting both positive and negative events. Their content often reveals the era in which they were created. The essence of proverbs is profoundly expressed in both linguistic and cultural aspects through the words of Iakob Gogebashvili: „The accumulated experience, observations, thoughts, and wisdom of an entire nation – its beliefs, views, struggles, intelligence, morality, nature, and character – are reflected and crystallized within these concise sayings.“ [Gogebashvili, 1990:12].

The proverbs preserved in the folk language of the Muhajirs of the Georgian Muhajirs are, on the one hand, the wisdom bequeathed by our ancestors, which is an indicator of the moral and ethical level of our people, and on the other hand, they are a kind of spiritual guide to strengthen and preserve the „Gurjoba“ (Georgianness) of the descendants of the Muhajirs living in the Turkish environment.

References:

- Materials of the expedition of the Center for Kartvelology of the BSU, 2018, Batumi;
Gogebashvili, I. (1990) On Proverbs, Publishing House „Tbilisi“.
Kiknadze, Z. (2008). Georgian Folklore, Tbilisi.
Sakhokia, T. (1967). Georgian Proverbs. Tbilisi. Publishing House „Ganatileba“
Sakhokia, T. (1979). Georgian Idiomatic Words-Sayings. Tbilisi. Publishing House „Merani“
Chikovani, M. (1986)a. Issues of the History and Theory of Proverbs. Tbilisi. Publishing House „Metsniereba“.
Chikovani, M. (1986)b. Issues of the History and Theory of Folk Creativity. Tbilisi: Publishing House „Metsniereba“.