GENETIC INTERRELATIONSHIP OF FOLKLORE GENRES: PROVERB, APHORISM, AND PHILOSOPHICAL LYRIC POETRY

Tina Shioshvili
Doctor of Philological Sciences,
Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University
Email: tina.shioshvili@bsu.edu.ge
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4745-9260
Tamar Matchutadze
Doctor of Philology,
Assistant Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University
Email: t.matchutadze@bsu.edu.ge
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5709-9764

Abstract. Due to its inherently social nature, isolation is foreign to any branch of art; this is especially true of oral tradition, whose principal specificity is collectivity - the expression of the aspirations of many and the tempering of all social strata within the spiritual furnace of the community. In folklore, this characteristic is manifested in the genetic interrelationship between genres.

Clear examples of genetic connections among genres in folk verbal art include the relationships between the proverb and various forms of poetry, the proverb and the fable, the proverb and proverbial speech material, mowing songs and lament poetry, heroic and historical oral narratives, heroic-historical and lament traditions, as well as the multifaceted traditional interrelations among legend, tale, and oral account, and between myth and legend. These many-sided traditional correlations are revealed in the merging of individual episodes and motifs within works belonging to genetically related genres.

From the standpoint of genetic interrelations among folklore genres, the issue of the relationship between proverb-aphorisms and folk philosophical lyric poetry is of particular interest, and the present study is devoted to this problem.

Keywords: folklore, genetic relationship, proverb, aphorism, anecdote, philosophical lyric.

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Introduction. The oral tradition of all peoples of the world, including that of the Georgians, has undergone a long process of development. Along this path, among many other phenomena, a genetic relationship between genres was formed, conditioned by the centuries-old oral tradition and the continuous creative process of verbal art, which, as noted, was determined by “oral tradition and the uninterrupted creative process of the centuries-old branches of verbal art” (Sikharulidze, 1964: 279).

Within this process, quite naturally, a folkloric work of a particular genre, regardless of its genesis, often appears as multifunctional and becomes connected with other genres as well. Such a situation can be observed in heroic and historical narratives, heroic-historical and lament traditions, labor poetry (mowing songs) and lament poetry, legend, tale, and oral account, myth and legend, proverbs and proverbial speech material, proverbs and aphorisms, proverbs and various forms of poetry, proverbs and fables, and others. This represents a many-sided traditional interrelationship, manifested in the fusion of individual episodes or motifs belonging to works of genetically related genres.

Methods. The research employs descriptive, comparative-contrastive, critical analysis, and synthesis methods.

Discussion. From the standpoint of the genetic interrelationship among folklore genres, the problem of the correlation between proverb-aphorisms and folk philosophical lyric poetry is of particular interest. It is noteworthy that very often a Georgian folk proverb is transformed into various types of proverbial verse, and quite frequently into philosophical lines, since the inventive sententiousness of folk paremias represents, in essence, folk philosophy formed through centuries of experience. It should also be noted that the proverb—one of the most ancient and lapidary genres of oral tradition—naturally tends toward transformation into an aphorism, and numerous examples of this tendency exist. In general, as Professor Ksenia Sikharulidze once observed, "at times one branch of poetry (and not only poetry – T. Sh.) gives rise to another" (Sikharulidze, 1964: 281), which constitutes one of the important and noteworthy processes of oral tradition and necessarily requires the proper study and analysis of the themes, motifs, and functions of genetically related genres.

Over many epochs the folk proverb was refined, acquired a lapidary form, became established as a genre, and in its best examples assumed the shape of an aphorism. In the course of time, as the well-known scholar of Georgian paremias Pikria Zandukeli notes, "the gradual development of national oral tradition facilitated one of the paths of the folkloric origin of proverbs, which is genetically connected with some other genre of folk verbal art" (Zandukeli, 1980: 191). Naturally, these related genres are diverse; among them, distinguished by a high level of development, poetic expressiveness, and exceptional wisdom, stands folk philosophical lyric poetry, created through the experience of many epochs and through long observation of life.

In one philosophical poem widespread in the oral tradition of Adjara, the moral injunction of serving goodness is conveyed through the synthesis of several proverbs:

Use wisdom in life,
Help the one in distress;
Do no evil to anyone,
Do not lose the truth;
Wherever you go, it will follow you,
It will shine as light before you…
(Shioshvili, 2002: 89)

It is not difficult to recognize in this admonition the centuries-old wisdom of Georgian folk proverbs such as: "Truth is light," "Truth lasts to one's grandchildren," "Do no evil and fear no evil," and "Do good and it will meet you again."

According to the didactic character of Georgian paremiological speech, sowing goodness is the highest virtue, whereas evil brings misfortune upon a person. As Iakob Gogebashvili points out:

"Unfortunate is the man who sows tares in society. These tares sprout, multiply, poison compatriots, hinder revival, increase moral deficiency, and corrupt the country" (Gogebashvili, 1990: 202).

Folk proverbs such as "A thorn grows where a thorn was," "No violet grows from the root of a thorn," "As you sow, so shall you reap," and "In old age one reaps what was sown in youth," have been shaped by the wisdom of the people into aphoristic verse:

The growth of thorns from thorns
Is the rule of nature;
The old man reaps only that

Which he sowed in youth.
(Alibegashvili, 1992: 312)

Or:

What you sow, that you shall reap;
It will meet you in the hereafter;
In this world the flesh
Falls like the leaves of a tree.
(Umikashvili, 1964: 189)

The folk paremia "Do not rejoice at another's misfortune" has been shaped by the folk poet into beautiful lines of philosophical lyric poetry:

I lived at the head of the village,
And not the village upon my head;
The village treated me well
If I treated the village well;
What I wished for the village
Came back upon my own head.
(Georgian Folk Texts, 1970: 380)

Our ancestors well understood the power and value of the word, which is reflected in numerous proverbs and proverbial verses. The need for careful and measured speech is expressed in proverbs such as: "The tongue has no bone, the word has no tax," "The tongue says everything," "The tongue is man's sleepless enemy," and others. This unquestionable wisdom is vividly reflected in Georgian folk philosophical lyric poetry:

A gentle tongue, a kind word
Put the sword back in its sheath,
Made the cocked gun
Lay aside its flint,
While the proud and evil man
Placed his hand upon the dagger.
(Umikashvili, 1964: 200)

According to another folk poem widespread in Adjara:

One pierced by the tongue
Needs no healer;
The aged man will be ashamed,
Yet the cost will be great.
(Shioshvili, 2002: 32)

Thus, the wise admonition of Georgian folk philosophical lyric poetry calls for prudence and measured speech, which represents one of the finest examples of the elevation of folk proverbs into aphoristic verse:

Must everyone drink
Black beer and red wine?
Must every word
That comes to the tongue be spoken?
(Georgian Folk Poetry, 1979: 69)

The irreconcilability of folk proverbs toward evil and wickedness ("Do not even ask fire from a bad neighbor," "Wish no good from the wicked") is also spread in proverbial philosophical verse, one Gurian variant of which reads:

A lock needs a key
Fitted to its own measure;
Wish no good from the wicked,
Nor anything that comes from him.

Condemning evil and praising goodness, folk proverbs express the charm of good character: "Goodness takes years, wickedness appears in a moment," "Do good, lay it on a stone, you will pass and meet it again." This true sententiousness sounds in philosophical proverbial verse as follows:

From the kid of a white goat
The he-goat is known from afar;
Your own good nature
Will serve you again.
(Umikashvili, 1964: 195)

The wisdom of the paremia and the proverbial verse genetically connected with it is often expressed through the mouth of the epic hero Rostom:

Rostom said: my answer
Is written on the stone of China:
The one for whom I wielded the sword
Became my enemy.
(Umikashvili, 1964: 196)

These verses are genetically related to proverbs such as: "The one I clothed undressed me," and "The one I taught to shoot aimed at me."

The same hero proclaims the proverbial wisdom "A brave man dies once," transformed into aphoristic verse:

Rostom said: nothing is better
Than this thought of mine—
Better to die once
Than to grieve forever.
(Folk Songs, 1965: 366)

In folk proverbs, our people expressed with optimism and philosophical stoicism both the inevitability of death and the refusal to submit to it: "Death stands behind the ear," "Life and death are brothers," "Death is God's debt," "You cannot escape death," and others. The same wisdom appears in folk philosophical lyric poetry, emphasizing dignity, courage, and an honorable life:

While a man lives,
Let him follow honor always;
When he dies, with him goes
Only a few yards of shroud.
(Shioshvili, 2002: 165)

The same idea is expressed again:

Why are you amazed?
Wealth is but a dream;
Why be troubled by death?

Death is God's due.
(Georgian Folk Poetry, 1979: 64)

Or:

This world is a field;
No one remains here,
All must depart.
(Umikashvili, 1964: 188)

The perseverance of the Georgian people and the idea of conquering death through a meaningful life are vividly expressed both in philosophical lyric poetry and in proverbs: "He who fears death dies twice," "A brave man dies once," "Where a man is shamed, there is his grave." Hence the well-known philosophical lines:

We are guests in this world,
We shall go and others remain;
What joy we give each other—
What else will stay with us?
Beyond three yards of cloth,
What follows us to the grave?
(Georgian Folk Poetry, 1979: 33)

Finally, the proverb "Skill is better than strength if a man can devise it" was transformed into a philosophical verse later used by Akaki Tsereteli in *Bashi-Achuki* as the motive for the hero's wise decision:

Do not struggle with the flood,
Seek the ford instead;
Skill is better than strength
If a man can think.
(Tsereteli, 1989: 147)

Conclusion. Thus, Georgian folk proverbs, aphorisms, and philosophical verses convey the moral ideals that have been contemplated by our people over the course of centuries and forged in the strict and sincere spiritual furnace of collective experience. They reflect reflections on good and evil, the earthly purpose of human beings, brotherhood, friendship, and mutual assistance, as well as meditations on the eternal problem of life and death, the profound love of life, heroism, courage, and humanism. More generally, they express the essence of humanity and moral living in this transient and twilight-like world, through which even death itself may be overcome.

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