HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

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ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ ПОСЛОВИЦ И ПОГОВОРОК

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Tayanch so'zlar: maqollar, matallar, tarixiy rivojlanish, og'zaki an'ana, yozma an'ana, paremiologiya, paremiografiya, madaniy xotira, jamoaviy tajriba, paremiologik til.

Rezyume. Maqolada maqol va matallarning tarixiy rivojlanishi, og'zaki va yozma shaklda avloddan-avlodga o'tishi hamda asosiy funksiyalari yoritiladi. Shuningdek, paremiografiya va paremiologiyaning shakllanishi, maqollarning madaniy va lingvistik ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi.

Ключевые слова: пословицы, поговорки, историческое развитие, устная традиция, письменная традиция, паремиология, паремиография, культурная память, коллективный опыт, паремиологический язык.

Резюме. В статье рассматривается историческое развитие пословиц и поговорок, их устная и письменная передача из поколения в поколение, а также их основные функции. Кроме того, анализируется становление паремиографии и паремиологии, а также культурное и лингвистическое значение пословиц.

Key words: proverbs, sayings, historical development, oral tradition, written tradition, paremiology, paremiography, cultural memory, collective experience, proverbial language.

Summary. The article examines the historical development of proverbs and sayings, their oral and written transmission from generation to generation, and their main functions. It also analyzes the formation of paremiography and paremiology, as well as the cultural and linguistic significance of proverbs.

Introduction. A proverb is a concise traditional expression that conveys a general truth, practical wisdom, or observation based on collective human experience. As an important form of traditional verbal culture, proverbs have been transmitted across generations and have preserved linguistic, social, and cultural knowledge throughout history. Proverbs and sayings represent one of the oldest and most enduring forms of traditional verbal expression. They have accompanied human communities throughout different periods of social and cultural development and have served as important means of preserving collective experience, transmitting knowledge, expressing moral principles, and regulating social behaviour. Unlike individually authored literary works, proverbs are generally associated with collective experience and are transmitted from one generation to another. Their long-term existence demonstrates the ability of language to preserve socially significant ideas and knowledge in a concise and memorable form.

The historical origin of proverbs cannot be established with absolute certainty. The main reason for this is their close connection with oral tradition. Human beings used language to communicate experience and knowledge long before the emergence of writing systems. Consequently, many traditional expressions must have existed orally for a considerable period before they were recorded. The first written occurrence of a proverb, therefore, should not automatically be considered the date of its creation. It represents only the earliest surviving evidence available to researchers. Taylor emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the history of an individual proverb and the much broader history of proverbial expression as a cultural phenomenon [3:15].

The emergence of proverbs can be connected with the human need to observe, generalize, remember, and transmit experience. In everyday life, people encounter similar situations and identify relationships between actions and their consequences. When a particular observation is repeatedly expressed and accepted within a community, it may gradually acquire a traditional form. Through this process, individual experience can become collective knowledge. Proverbs consequently represent condensed formulations of observations, judgments, advice, and social experience.

The purpose of this article is to examine the historical development of proverbs and sayings from their oral origins to their written preservation and modern scholarly investigation. Particular attention is paid to their transmission, functions, semantic and structural characteristics, cultural significance, and the development of paremiological studies.

Literature Review. The study of proverbs has gradually developed from the simple collection and preservation of traditional expressions into a broad academic field. Two closely related areas have emerged in this process: paremiography and paremiology. Paremiography is concerned with the recording, organization, classification, and publication of proverbial expressions, whereas paremiology focuses on their theoretical and analytical study. These two fields are interconnected because theoretical research depends on the availability of documented proverbial material.

Mieder considers traditionality and conventionality among the important characteristics of proverbial expressions. Proverbs may communicate wisdom, advice, knowledge, or observations that have become recognizable within a particular speech community [1:8]. Their concise

form contributes to memorability, while their traditional status gives them additional communicative authority. When a speaker uses a proverb, the statement can be understood not simply as a personal opinion but as an expression supported by accumulated experience.

Norrick's research demonstrates the complexity of defining proverbs. Proverbs exist alongside related forms such as sayings, maxims, aphorisms, idioms, quotations, slogans, and proverbial phrases. The boundaries between these categories are not always absolute. According to Norrick, traditionality, fixedness, pithiness, didactic content, and poetic features are among the characteristics relevant to the description of proverbial expressions [2:31]. He also distinguishes between literal and figurative proverb meaning and emphasizes the importance of analysing both levels of interpretation [2:101].

Taylor's work is particularly significant for understanding the historical dimension of proverbial expressions. He emphasizes the distinction between the history of an individual proverb and the broader history of proverbial expression as a cultural phenomenon [3:15]. This distinction is important because the first written record of a proverb does not necessarily represent the moment of its creation.

The oral nature of traditional verbal culture has also been examined by Finnegan. Her research demonstrates that oral forms possess their own mechanisms of transmission and should not simply be regarded as incomplete written texts [6:20]. Oral communities use repetition, rhythm, parallelism, formulaic structures, and concise expression to support memorization and transmission.

The history of ancient proverbial traditions has been extensively documented by Alster. His study of Sumerian proverb collections provides evidence that proverbial expressions were recorded and organized in ancient Mesopotamia [4:20]. These collections demonstrate the antiquity of proverbial traditions and their connection with written knowledge and education. Alster also highlights the educational value of ancient proverbial material, which could transmit observations about human behaviour, social relationships, practical experience, and moral principles [4:287].

Mieder and Dundes emphasize the cultural significance of proverbs and their relationship with collective wisdom and experience [5:15]. Ong's research, meanwhile, provides a broader theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between oral and written forms of cultural transmission [7:15].

Overall, the reviewed scholarship demonstrates that proverbs should be studied as complex linguistic and cultural phenomena. Existing research covers their historical origins, oral and written transmission, structure, semantics, pragmatics, educational function, and cultural significance.

Discussion. The earliest stage in the history of proverbs belongs to oral culture. Before the development of writing, knowledge was transmitted through speech, memory, imitation, and repeated social interaction. Oral communities developed techniques that supported memorization, including repetition, rhythm, parallelism, formulaic structures, and concise expression. Proverbs were particularly suitable for oral transmission because their compact and often rhythmical form made them easier to remember and reproduce.

The oral character of proverbs makes their precise historical dating difficult. An expression may circulate within a community for many generations before appearing in a written source. Therefore, the earliest documented form of a proverb cannot necessarily be regarded as its original form. Oral transmission may produce changes in vocabulary, grammatical structure, pronunciation, and meaning. At the same time, the central idea of the expression can remain recognizable over a long period.

The development of writing fundamentally changed the conditions of cultural transmission. Once writing systems became established, traditional knowledge could be recorded and preserved independently of individual memory. This allowed proverbial expressions to be documented, organized, and transmitted to people who were geographically or historically distant from their original users. Nevertheless, writing did not replace oral tradition. Oral and written forms continued to influence each other, and proverbial expressions could move from speech to writing and later return to oral use [7:15].

Some of the earliest surviving written evidence of proverbial material is associated with ancient Mesopotamia. Sumerian collections are particularly important because they demonstrate that proverbial expressions had already been recorded and organized in ancient written culture. The existence of such collections demonstrates that proverbs were considered sufficiently valuable to be preserved as part of written knowledge [4:20].

The educational function of proverbs is one of their most significant characteristics. A proverb can express a general principle through a small number of words. This allows a complex observation to be remembered and later applied to different situations. Through this process, traditional expressions contribute to informal education by transmitting socially accepted forms of knowledge and evaluation [1:8].

The moral and didactic functions of proverbs are closely connected with their educational role. Communities use proverbs to express approval, criticism, warning, advice, encouragement, and disapproval. A traditional expression can indicate how a particular type of behaviour is evaluated by society. Proverbs therefore contribute to the transmission of moral and social norms without functioning as formal laws.

Another important characteristic of proverbs is their traditionality. Traditional expressions are generally recognized as products of collective linguistic and cultural experience rather than spontaneous statements created by an individual speaker. However, traditionality does not imply complete fixedness. Proverbs can appear in different variants while maintaining their recognizable identity. This coexistence of stability and variation is essential for understanding their historical development [2:31].

If a traditional expression were completely fixed and unable to adapt, its use might become restricted as social conditions changed. At the same time, if it changed completely, speakers would no longer recognize it as the same traditional expression. Proverbs therefore occupy an intermediate position between stability and flexibility. Their basic form and conceptual identity can remain recognizable while particular lexical or grammatical elements change.

The semantic characteristics of proverbs further distinguish them from ordinary statements. Many proverbs communicate meanings that extend beyond their literal wording. Figurative interpretation may involve metaphor, analogy, metonymy, irony, hyperbole, and other semantic mechanisms. Norrick distinguishes between literal and figurative proverb meaning and demonstrates the importance of analysing both levels of interpretation [2:101].

The meaning of a proverb is also strongly dependent on context. A traditional expression can perform different functions in different communicative situations. It may be used as advice, criticism, explanation, warning, encouragement, humour, or evaluation. Consequently, the meaning of a proverb cannot always be determined by its dictionary-like interpretation alone. Its pragmatic function depends on the relationship between the speaker, listener, situation, and communicative purpose [2:11].

The communicative effectiveness of proverbs is closely related to their brevity. A speaker can use a short traditional expression instead of presenting a lengthy explanation. Because the expression is familiar to members of a speech community, it can communicate a relatively complex idea economically. In this respect, proverbs can function as compressed arguments. Their rhetorical force is strengthened by the fact that they are associated with collective experience rather than with the individual speaker alone [2:30].

Proverbs also possess a significant social function. They can contribute to the maintenance of social relationships by providing culturally recognized ways of giving advice, expressing criticism, resolving disagreement, or encouraging particular behaviour. Their use may allow speakers to communicate potentially sensitive evaluations indirectly. A proverb can therefore make a statement less personal while still conveying a clear social judgment.

The cultural significance of proverbs is particularly evident in their relationship with collective memory. Traditional expressions preserve observations, values, practical knowledge, and attitudes that have been transmitted between generations. In this sense, proverbs may be regarded as linguistic repositories of selected elements of cultural memory. Their continued use demonstrates that particular formulations of experience remain meaningful for later generations [5:15].

At the same time, proverbs should not be considered a completely unified system of thought. Different traditional expressions may offer different or even contradictory evaluations of the same situation. Such contradictions demonstrate that proverbial knowledge is not a systematic philosophical doctrine. Instead, it constitutes a broad collection of culturally available observations and interpretations. Speakers select particular proverbs according to the communicative situation and the meaning they wish to express [1:12].

The aesthetic organization of proverbs also contributes to their durability. Parallel structures, repetition, rhythm, alliteration, rhyme, antithesis, and metaphor can make an expression more memorable and rhetorically effective. These formal characteristics are particularly important in oral communication because they support memorization and reproduction. Thus, the artistic dimension of proverbs is closely related to their practical function as memorable units of traditional speech [3:15].

The development of proverb collections represents another important stage in the history of proverbial traditions. Collectors transformed dispersed oral material into written corpora that could be studied and preserved. Collections made it possible to document variants, classify expressions, compare structures, and investigate the historical distribution of proverbial material. Mieder's work demonstrates the importance of collections for the development of systematic proverb scholarship [1:29].

The activity of collecting proverbs gradually developed into paremiography. Through the recording and classification of proverbial expressions, researchers created an important documentary foundation for later studies. Paremiology developed alongside paremiography as the theoretical study of proverbs. It examines questions concerning definition, classification, structure, meaning, origin, transmission, pragmatic use, cultural significance, and historical development.

The relationship between language and experience is another central feature of proverbial traditions. Proverbs frequently refer to everyday activities, interpersonal relationships, work, family, nature, time, knowledge, and human behaviour. Through such references, concrete experience is transformed into generalized linguistic structures. Proverbs therefore provide valuable material for studying how language represents human experience and how communities organize knowledge through traditional expressions.

The cognitive function of proverbs is closely connected with this process of generalization. An individual observation can become a generalized proposition and, through repeated use, a culturally available conceptual model. Speakers can then apply this model to new situations. Proverbial language consequently contributes not only to communication but also to the interpretation and organization of experience [2:144].

The historical survival of proverbs demonstrates their capacity for adaptation. A traditional expression may continue to exist even after the social circumstances in which it originated have changed. Speakers can reinterpret its meaning and apply it to new situations. In this way, proverbial traditions combine continuity with innovation. Their survival depends partly on their ability to remain recognizable while acquiring new pragmatic uses.

The development of printing significantly increased the circulation of proverbs. Printed collections enabled traditional expressions to reach larger audiences and helped establish proverb scholarship as a more systematic field. Later, newspapers, radio, television, and other mass communication technologies created additional opportunities for proverbial language to circulate. In the modern period, digital communication has further increased the speed and variety of proverb use.

Modern proverb studies are therefore interdisciplinary. Linguistics examines their structure, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse functions. Folklore studies investigate transmission, traditionality, and variation. Literary studies explore their use in written texts. Cultural studies examine their relationship with values and collective memory, while anthropology considers their relationship with social behaviour and cultural practices.

The historical development of proverb studies reflects a broader movement from collection toward interpretation.

Early researchers and collectors concentrated primarily on documenting traditional expressions. Later scholarship increasingly focused on questions of meaning, structure, context, function, and cultural significance. Contemporary approaches regard proverbs as dynamic communicative units rather than merely isolated sentences. This perspective makes it possible to understand how traditional expressions function within real social interaction [2:30].

Conclusion. Proverbs and sayings constitute one of the oldest and most durable forms of traditional verbal culture. Their exact historical origin cannot be established because proverbial expressions existed in oral communication long before the development of writing. The earliest written examples should therefore be understood as evidence of the existence of proverbial traditions rather than as definitive records of their original creation.

The transition from oral to written transmission played an essential role in preserving and organizing proverbial material. Ancient written collections, particularly those associated with Mesopotamia, demonstrate the considerable antiquity of proverbial traditions and their connection with education, knowledge, and cultural transmission [4:287]. Throughout their historical development, proverbs have performed numerous functions. They have served educational, moral, didactic, social, communicative, pragmatic, rhetorical, aesthetic, and cultural purposes. Their concise and memorable form enables communities to preserve and transmit accumulated experience from one generation to another.

The development of paremiography and paremiology transformed proverbs from objects of traditional transmission into important objects of systematic academic study. Paremiography provided the documentary foundation through the collection and classification of proverbial material, while paremiology developed theoretical approaches to their structure, meaning, function, context, and cultural significance.

The historical durability of proverbs is based on the interaction of stability and variation. Their traditional character allows them to remain recognizable, while their flexibility enables speakers to adapt them to changing social and communicative circumstances. Therefore, proverbs should be viewed not as static linguistic forms but as dynamic cultural units that continue to function in contemporary communication.The study of the historical development of proverbs and sayings demonstrates that these expressions represent an important connection between language, collective memory, knowledge, and culture. Their continuing existence confirms that traditional verbal forms can preserve accumulated human experience while adapting to new historical and communicative conditions.

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