

History Of Proverb Studies And Modern Paremiological Approaches

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Abstract: This article analyzes the main stages in the history of the scientific study of proverbs as well as modern paremiological approaches. It highlights the formation of paremiology as an independent scholarly field beginning from the 19th century and examines the contributions of such scholars as Karl F. V. Wander, V. Dal, Archer Taylor, R. Norrick, and A. Prahlad to the study of proverbs. The article also discusses the scientific views of Wolfgang Mieder and Lutz Röhrich in contemporary paremiology, the concept of the “paremiological minimum,” and the functional significance of proverbs in social life. Proverbs are interpreted as important expressions of national mentality, cultural memory, and axiological value systems. Special attention is given to proverbs related to family relations and values, which are analyzed from a linguocultural perspective, revealing their educational and social importance.

Keywords: Paremiology, proverb, paremia, linguoculturology, proverb studies, paremiological approaches, national mentality, axiology, family values, paremiological minimum, folklore, cultural memory.

Introduction: The history of the scientific study of proverbs dates back to rather distant times. In the 19th century, Karl F. V. Wander published the five-volume “Dictionary of German Proverbs” in Germany and was recognized as one of the first modern paremiologists. During the same period in Russia, V. Dal compiled the collection “Russian Folk Proverbs,” preserving in written form thousands of proverbs that reflect Russian national mentality. In the 20th century, American folklorist Archer Taylor raised theoretical issues concerning the definition and genre characteristics of proverbs and published his work entitled “The Proverb” in the 1930s. Taylor emphasized that it is difficult to give a precise definition of a proverb, noting that “the quality that turns a saying into a proverb is felt, but cannot be expressed.” Nevertheless, subsequent researchers attempted to define proverbs through a set of various characteristics. For example, the American scholar R. Norrick proposed a table of linguistic criteria distinguishing proverbs from other types of expressions, while another researcher, A. Prahlad, argued that proverbs should be differentiated from such genres as similes, winged expressions, and aphorisms.

In modern paremiology, Wolfgang Mieder is one of the

leading specialists on a global scale. His numerous studies on proverbs cover not only their structure and history, but also their role and function in society, as well as their use in mass communication (for example, proverbs in political speeches). Mieder and his colleagues introduced the concept of the “paremiological minimum,” which represents a collection of proverbs that every average member of a given society is expected to know. This concept serves as a means of measuring cultural literacy and shows which sayings are the most relevant and stable among the people. For instance, in contemporary German society it would be difficult to find a person who does not know the proverb “Blut ist dicker als Wasser” (“Blood is thicker than water”), since this expression conveys the educational idea that family ties are stronger than all other relationships. According to Mieder, even in the age of modern technologies, proverbs continue to live on, and new proverbs are also emerging, which demonstrates the continuity of folk wisdom.

The name of Lutz Röhrich occupies a special place in German paremiology. The German folklorist Röhrich, in his work “Sprichwort,” provided an in-depth analysis of the origins of proverbs, their variants, and their

folkloric context. He also compiled a fundamental three-volume dictionary of fixed expressions and proverbs used in the German language. In Röhrich's research, proverbs are regarded as concise expressions of folk wisdom and as an integral part of folklore. His approach is aimed at studying proverbs by placing them within an ethnographic and historical framework. Wolfgang Mieder, who wrote primarily in English, focused more on the general theory of proverbs and their manifestation in modern society. Both scholars emphasize that proverbs serve as an important source for studying national character and mentality.

Proverbs are highly diverse in content and encompass almost all spheres of life. In particular, family relations and values often appear as central themes in proverbs. Relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, and siblings are expressed in proverbs as moral examples, reflecting the people's views on family. For instance, the German proverb "Ein Mann ohne Frau ist ein Baum ohne Laub und Zweige" ("A man without a wife is a tree without leaves and branches") figuratively conveys the importance of a spouse for a man. Likewise, the proverb "Kinder sind des armen Mannes Reichtum" ("Children are the wealth of a poor man") glorifies children as the greatest source of happiness and wealth in life. Such sayings and proverbs provide substantial information about German family values, including attitudes toward child-rearing, spousal relations, and the pursuit of family harmony. Indeed, proverbs function as a unique mirror of a people's way of life and moral views, preserving and transmitting from generation to generation the observations, worldview, character, customs, and traditions of the nation. As researchers note, proverbs reflect all human, social, and family aspects of social life, as well as the axiological (value-based) system of a people. Therefore, paremiological analysis is an invaluable tool for revealing the moral standards and values characteristic of a particular nation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the scientific study of proverbs acquired a systematic character with the formation of paremiology as a discipline beginning in the nineteenth century. The collections compiled by Karl F. V. Wander and V. Dal introduced proverbs into scholarly circulation as an important layer of oral folk creativity. In the twentieth century, Archer Taylor demonstrated the complexity of defining the proverb genre, while later researchers (R. Norrick, A. Prahlad) sought to clarify the linguistic and genre characteristics of proverbs.

In modern paremiology, Wolfgang Mieder and Lutz Röhrich interpreted proverbs as expressions of national

mentality, social experience, and cultural memory. The concept of the "paremiological minimum" proposed by Mieder highlights the stability of proverbs in society and their significance in determining cultural literacy.

Family relations and values occupy a special place in proverbs. Through paremias related to parents, children, and spouses, the moral norms and educational views of a people are expressed in a figurative manner. Therefore, proverbs represent important cultural units reflecting the historical experience and axiological system of a nation, and their study from paremiological and linguocultural perspectives reveals the close interconnection between language and culture.

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