



PAREMIAS OF THE LATVIANS AND THE RUSSIANS IN LATGALE: FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURE TO MODERN EXISTENCE

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Introduction

Paremiias, proverbs above all, reflect the interaction of cultures and languages in the religious, the ethnic and the regional aspects.

The component of religion is the deciding factor in a multi-cultural and multi-denominational Latgale – south-eastern part of Latvia. This is the factor that has ensured a peaceful coexistence of two dominant ethno-religious groups (Latvians/Latgalians and Russians – Catholics and Old Believers/Orthodox) living on the same territory for a long time, during the hard times of wars, the Soviet time with its ideology of atheism which has inflicted serious harm to faith, the conflicting times of changes of power in the 1990s, as well as during the present epoch of world-wide globalization. The aim of the study is to analyse prototypical paremiias from the Holy Scripture and trace the history of their existence and further development among the Latvians and the Russians in the Latgale region based on the qualitative data analysis.

Methodology

The research is focused on tracing the historic-genetic and contact parallels of the paremiias of the two above-mentioned nations living in Latgale. Such an approach is identified in works by Boris Putilov (1976) who developed the methodology of comparative folklore, as well as in research by Elza Kokare (1978, 1988) who offered a comparative historical study of Latvian paremiias, and also by the representatives of the paremiological school of Valery Mokienko (2008) who is engaged in comparative research and lexicographical description of paremiias of different nations.

The study is an attempt to recover and document lost experiences and memories. The entire corpus of the Russian paremiias was recorded 1) in the period 1977–2019 from the Old Believers who have been living in Latgale since the seventeenth century after the splitting of the Russian Orthodox Church into an official church and the Old Believers movement, i.e. after the Church Schism of 1666 and 2) in the period 1970–2015 from the Orthodox living in Pytalovo, Russia, that used to be the territory of the Republic of Latvia (from the 1920s to the 1940s). To compare them with the Latvian/Latgalian proverbs, this research uses folklore collections, phraseology dictionaries, archive materials of the Latvian Academy of Sciences as well as a field material.

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Results

In the speech of informants in the Latgale region, variations of three Biblical paremiias have been widely used:

1) *A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as a wobbler and thy want as an armed man* (Proverbs 24: 33–34):

“Nemīlē miegu, ka nepaliksi par nabagu” [Do not love sleep or you will grow poor] (Kokare, 1978, p. 173–174); “Mīgs maizi napeļnej” [Sleep doesn’t earn bread] (Opincāne, 2000, p. 51); “Много спать – добра не видать” [The one who sleeps a lot won’t see any good] (Jēkabpils district, Liepsala); “Коли хочешь есть баранки, так проснись спозаранку” [If you want to eat bagels, wake up early in the morning] (Ludza district), etc.;

2) *Honour thy father and thy mother* (Exodus 20: 12):

“Kas neklausā tēvu ar māti, to pasaule māca” [Who disobeys his father and mother, he will be taught by the world] (Kokare, 1978, p. 249); “Ka cylvāku mōte ar tāvu naimōcies, tot sveši cylvāki ivujcies” [If the mother and the father do not teach a man, strangers will] (Krāslava district, Skaista); “Как говорится в нашем писании: ‘Чти отца и мать своего, и Бог удлинит годы твои!’” [As our scripture says: ‘Respect your father and mother, and God will lengthen your years!’] (Preiļi), etc.;

3) *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?* (Matthew 7: 3):

“Cyta acīs skoborgu redz, pats sovā – bolkas naredz” [In another’s eye he sees a splinter, but he doesn’t see the log in his own] (Opincāne, 2000, p. 12); “Pošam grāku pylns maiss – cytam mozu kuleiti redz” [One has a full sack of sins, but he sees other man’s little bag] (Opincāne, 2000, p. 64); “В чужом глазу соринку видим, в своем бревна не замечаем” [We see a speck in another’s eye but we don’t notice a log in our own] (Daugavpils); “В чужом глазу соломинку видим, в своём бревна не видим” [We see a straw in another’s eye, but we don’t see a log in our own] (Rēzekne district, Malta), etc.

Conclusion

The conducted research allows concluding that similar worldview patterns of the Latvians/Latgalians and the Russians are to be searched for in Christianity.

The analysis testifies to the historical and genetic, as well as typological parallelism of the basic proverbs and their derivatives. Reception can be a calque from a church language, modification of some components, interpretation, analogy, further development of a motif. In all these cases, the semantics of the prototype remains unchangeable.