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THE STUDY OF ARABIC PROVERBS AND SAYINGS: A HISTORICAL AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS

Abstract. *This article examines the historical development and linguocultural significance of Arabic proverbs and sayings (maqol-matallar) within the broader context of paremiological studies. Drawing upon classical Arabic philological traditions and modern folkloristic approaches, the study traces the evolution of proverb scholarship from pre-Islamic Jahiliyya period to contemporary research. The analysis encompasses the theoretical frameworks established by prominent Arab philologists such as Al-Jahiz, Abu Ubayd, and Al-Maydani, as well as the contributions of European and Uzbek scholars to the field. The research employs comparative-historical, structural-semantic, and linguocultural methodologies to investigate the distinctive features that differentiate proverbs (maqol) from sayings (matal) and idiomatic expressions. Particular attention is devoted to the classification systems developed by G.L. Permyakov and their application to Arabic paremiological material. The findings demonstrate that Arabic proverbs constitute an invaluable repository of cultural wisdom, reflecting the historical experiences, ethical values, and worldview of Arab civilization. The study concludes that comprehensive understanding of Arabic proverbs requires interdisciplinary approaches integrating philological, folkloristic, and anthropological perspectives.*

Keywords: Arabic proverbs, paremiology, folklore, linguoculture, Al-Jahiz, Abu Ubayd, Permyakov, structural analysis, comparative folklore, Arab philology.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs and sayings represent one of the most enduring and universal forms of human expression, encapsulating centuries of collective wisdom, cultural values, and social experience. The study of these linguistic units—paremiology—has attracted scholarly attention across diverse civilizations, yet the Arabic tradition of proverb

scholarship holds a particularly distinguished position in the history of world philology. As the prominent Russian literary critic V.G. Belinsky aptly characterized folk proverbs as “the essence of poetry,” recognizing their concentrated expressive power and cultural significance (Belinsky, 1953).

The Arabic term for proverb, “*masal*” (plural: *amsal*), derives from a rich linguistic tradition that has been the subject of systematic study since the early centuries of Islamic civilization. The historical depth of Arabic paremiology is remarkable, with the earliest collections dating back to the eighth century CE, making them among the oldest organized compilations of folk wisdom in world literature. This long tradition of proverb scholarship reflects the central role that oral poetic expression played in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society, where eloquence and verbal artistry were highly prized cultural competencies.

The significance of studying Arabic proverbs extends beyond purely philological interests. As repositories of cultural memory, these linguistic units provide invaluable insights into the historical development of Arab civilization, its ethical systems, social structures, and worldview. The renowned Arabist H.R.P. Dickson observed that “Arabs always used proverbs and sayings, the wise words of poets and scholars, and examples from historical events, and they enjoyed and benefited from them as did those great men” (Dickson, 1949). This observation underscores the integral role of proverbs in Arab cultural identity and social interaction.

The present study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of Arabic proverb scholarship, examining both the classical Arab philological tradition and modern theoretical approaches to paremiological research. The article specifically addresses the following research objectives: (1) to trace the historical evolution of Arabic proverb collections from the early Islamic period to contemporary times; (2) to analyze the structural and semantic characteristics that distinguish proverbs from related genres such as sayings and idiomatic expressions; (3) to evaluate the theoretical frameworks developed by both Arab and European scholars for the classification and interpretation of paremiological material; and (4) to assess the linguocultural significance of Arabic proverbs as vehicles of cultural transmission and identity formation.

The methodological approach of this study integrates historical-philological analysis with structural-semantic and linguocultural perspectives. By examining primary

sources in Arabic philological tradition alongside modern theoretical frameworks, particularly the influential classification system developed by the Soviet folklorist G.L. Permyakov, this research seeks to bridge classical and contemporary approaches to proverb scholarship.

The definition of proverb has been a subject of ongoing scholarly debate since antiquity. The Greek philosopher Aristotle initiated systematic reflection on the nature of proverbs, and subsequent attempts at definition have generated considerable controversy among researchers. As Kindstrand (1978) and Russo (1983) note, “The definition given to the proverb has been a source of objections from researchers for centuries. Attempts to define the proverb began philosophically from Aristotle to the present day and continue to lexicographically stable compound definitions” (Mieder, 2004).

Various scholars have proposed definitions emphasizing different aspects of proverbial expression. Hassan Mullanazar defined proverbs as “a collection of meanings in a certain situation for the speaker and listener to understand a single meaning.” Norrick proposed a more formal definition, characterizing the proverb as “a figurative, potentially free conversation type with general meaning, traditional, communicative, didactic genre.” These definitions highlight key features of proverbial expression: contextual dependence, traditional transmission, didactic function, and figurative language.

The Uzbek scholar Professor G’aybulla Salomov, in his review of Abdujabbor Qahhorov’s dissertation on Al-Jahiz’s “Kitab al-hayavan,” offered a particularly evocative characterization, noting that “The proverb is as old and refined as Hazrat Adam (peace be upon him) himself. It is not surprising that as soon as he began to speak, he first mentioned some proverb or wise word, or one of the sacred words of his Creator—his Architect.” This perspective emphasizes the primordial status of proverbs in human communication and their intimate connection with wisdom traditions.

A crucial theoretical distinction in Arabic paremiology concerns the difference between “maqol” (proverb) and “matal” (saying). While these categories are often conflated in popular usage, scholarly analysis reveals significant structural and functional differences between them.

According to the two-volume “O’zbek xalq maqollari” (Uzbek Folk Proverbs), the following distinguishing characteristics can be identified:

First, the proverb always expresses a complete, finished thought. This thought appears as a definite, concise conclusion. The logical definiteness of the thought is based on a coherent composition consisting of two logical centers... Such characteristics are not visible in sayings. They are figurative combinations or sentences.

Second, the proverb is characterized by the expression of a certain thought in logical consistency and strict polarity.

Third, while the proverb forms a complete didactic thought, the saying produces a beautiful, figurative, but incomplete expression.

Fourth, proverbs can be used in both literal and figurative meanings, while sayings have limited scope of application and never appear in interethnic usage.

Fifth, while the saying serves as a pointing device in speech, the proverb is used as a means of proof and argumentation.

The structural analysis of proverbs reveals further complexity. According to Berdiyev and Rasulov's classification, proverbs can be divided structurally into simple proverbs (e.g., "The bird does what it sees in the nest") and complex proverbs (e.g., "Strong arm overthrows one, strong knowledge overthrows a thousand"). Simple proverbs are further subdivided by the number of their constituent elements: two-element proverbs ("Your state is your father"), three-element proverbs ("The asker is not at fault"), four-element proverbs ("One separated from homeland is pursued by enemies"), five-element proverbs ("Grateful soup is better than ungrateful fist"), six-element proverbs ("A drop of water seems like a river to an ant"), seven-element proverbs ("One who takes up the saz at forty will plug his ears on Judgment Day"), and proverbs with more than seven elements ("A boot wide at the top made of leather is better than an expensive narrow boot").

Complex proverbs are classified by their number of components: two-component proverbs ("The fool himself doesn't know, doesn't listen to the one who knows"), three-component proverbs ("Not in the sickle, not in the threshing floor, ready at the mill"), four-component proverbs ("If you stay close to the cauldron, its soot will fall on you; if you stay close to the bad, its harm will fall on you"), five-component proverbs ("If you tend the garden, it becomes a garden; if you neglect it, it becomes a mountain; if you don't tend it, it becomes a thorn in your heart"), and six-component proverbs ("Don't say the mountain is high, if you strive you will climb it; don't say the enemy is strong, if you strive you will overthrow him").

The most influential modern theoretical framework for the study of proverbs was developed by the Soviet folklorist G.L. Permyakov, whose work on the proverbs of Eastern peoples established the foundation for structural-semantic analysis of paremiological material. Permyakov's classification system, first articulated in the 1960s and refined in subsequent decades, provides a systematic method for distinguishing proverbs from related genres and for analyzing their internal structure (Permyakov, 1979).

Permyakov identifies the “complex cliché” (*slojnoe klishe*) as the most general concept, referring to stable word combinations that recur in fixed patterns. These are divided into several groups:

Phraseologisms: Their most general characteristic is that they consist of at least two separate words in form, but express a single concept in meaning—that is, they serve as the sign (*znak*) of some particular thing-event (*veshch*). Thus, although a phraseologism consists of several words in form, it is equal to one word in meaning.

Proverbs and Sayings: These are equal in form to complete or incomplete, complex or simple sentences, but in content they serve not as the sign of a thing-event, but as the sign of a certain relationship between things-events—that is, of a certain situation or state. No matter how complex proverbs and sayings may be, they do not exceed one sentence.

Supra-phrasal units (*sverkhfrazovoe edinstvo*): These consist of several sentences and include various compact genres of folk oral creativity, such as short tales, anecdotes, riddles, and fairy tales.

Having separated proverbs and sayings from other minor genres of folk oral creativity, Permyakov further subdivides them based on two criteria: (1) the character of the general meaning of the expression, and (2) the closed or open nature of the sentence structure (*zamknutoe-nezamknutoe*). Based on these criteria, proverbs and sayings are divided into four groups:

Open expressions with literal meaning (*prislove*)

Open expressions with figurative meaning (original sayings)

Closed sentences with literal meaning (wise words)

Closed sentences with figurative meaning (original proverbs)

Permyakov's second phase of research focused on the logical analysis of proverb content, distinguishing four types of relationships reflected in proverbs: (1) the relationship between a thing-event and its characteristics; (2) the relationship between

two things-events; (3) the relationship between the characteristics of two things-events depending on their mutual relationship; and (4) the relationship between two things-events depending on the presence or absence of certain characteristics in them.

The study of Arabic proverbs has a distinguished history spanning more than twelve centuries. The origins of Arabic paremiological scholarship can be traced to the early Islamic period, when the rapid expansion of Arab civilization created both the need and the opportunity for systematic preservation of oral cultural heritage. As Qahhorov (1993) notes, “The interest of Arab scholars in folk oral creativity, particularly Arabic proverbs, was noticed by Arab scholars much earlier than the formation of Arabic literature.”

The earliest collections of Arabic proverbs emerged from the cultural centers of the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the eastern regions of Arabia, Oman, Najd, and the areas around Bahrain and the Euphrates River. These regions were also the homeland of many pre-Islamic (Jahiliyya) poets, suggesting a strong connection between poetic culture and proverbial wisdom. By the year 660 CE, the first proverb collections had been compiled by Sahar ibn Ayyash, followed by Abid ibn Shariba, who created a collection of fifty pages of proverbs.

During the second century AH (eighth century CE), the cities of Kufa and Basra became the centers of proverb collection activity. Two schools of philologists formed in Kufa: one under the leadership of Sharqiy ibn Qutami (d. 158 AH), known as the “Kalbiyya” school, and the other later under the leadership of Mufaddal Dabbi, known as the “Dabbiyya” school. The representatives of these two schools rendered significant service in transmitting ancient proverbs to future generations.

The classical period of Arabic proverb scholarship produced several foundational works that continue to serve as essential resources for modern researchers. The earliest surviving philological treatise dedicated to Arabic proverbs is “Kitab al-Amsal” (The Book of Proverbs) by Mufaddal Ibn Salamah Dabbiy, written in the eighth century. According to Qahhorov Abdujabbor Sadiqovich, this work contains 88 stories incorporating 218 proverbs. Ibn Salamah, originally from Iraq and born in Kufa, was a prominent philologist and a leading figure in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. He died in approximately the second century AH, and his works on Arabic proverbs hold a distinguished position in classical Arabic literature.

Another foundational figure is Abu Ubayd Qasim Sallam Harashiy (728-825 CE), a master philologist, jurist, and scholar of religious sciences. His “Kitab al-Amsal” was written during a journey to Mecca, with proverbs organized according to specific themes. Abu Ubayd continued the work of Ibn Salamah, and several manuscript copies of his work survive, including one in the Oriental Department of St. Petersburg State University (inventory number 625) and another in the Manuscript Department of the Berlin State Library (inventory number 141). Abu Ubayd’s “Kitab al-Amsal” was published in Constantinople as part of “At-Tuhfa al-Bahiya.”

Abu Hilal Asqariy, building upon the works of Ibn Salamah and Al-Harashiy, wrote “Jamharat al-Amsal” (Collection of Proverbs). Asqariy died around 1005 CE, and after his death, his “Jamharat al-Amsal” was published in Bombay during 1306-07 AH. This work is particularly significant because, unlike the works of his predecessors, each proverb is provided with philological and historical commentary, making it the first research work in which each proverb is analyzed from philological and historical perspectives.

One of the most famous research works on Arabic proverbs is “Kitab Majma’ al-Amsal” (The Collection of Proverbs) by the philologist Ahmad Muhammad Maydani, who died on October 27, 1124 CE. Al-Maydani compiled all previous scholarly works on Arabic proverbs, expanding each section and creating sections for contemporary proverbs as well. His work survives in several manuscript copies and remains a valuable example of scholarship dedicated to Arabic proverbs. This two-volume work contains ancient folk wisdom compiled with poetic examples from Arabic literature (Al-Maydani, n.d.).

According to information in Al-Jahiz’s “Kitab al-hayavan,” the first complete surviving proverb collection belongs to Mufaddal Dabbiy’s “Kitab al-Amsal,” published in Istanbul and Cairo. This indicates that while proverb compilation began during the Umayyad period, only collections from the Abbasid period have survived to the present day (Al-Jahiz, n.d.).

Scholars have divided the history of Arabic proverb study into three stages:

Works created during and before Al-Jahiz’s time, including collections by Mufaddal Dabbiy, Abu Fayd Muarriis, Abu Akrama Umron Dabbiy, and Abu Ubayd Qasim ibn Sallam.

The second stage of Arabic proverb study began after Al-Jahiz and continued until Tarabulsiy, with more than ten proverb scholars actively participating in this process. By this period, the number of proverbs that became subjects of research exceeded several thousand.

The third stage encompasses the activities of modern (nineteenth-twentieth century) scholars in this field.

The study of Arabic proverbs in European science began in the first half of the nineteenth century, closely connected with the tradition of studying Arabic dialects. Until the mid-twentieth century, Arabic folkloristics was not regarded as an independent discipline but rather as one of the directions within Arabic dialectology. Typically, scholarly works devoted to the lexical, phonetic, morphological, and syntactic study of Arabic dialects would include appendices containing folklore texts, including proverbs, anecdotes, and folk songs.

The German scholar Rudolf Zulhaym, in his work “Arabic Proverbs” (Al-Amsal al-Arabiyya), noted that German scholars divided Arabic proverbs into four categories: (Zulhaym, 1982)

Al-Mathal (Sprichwort/proverbe): The proverb is transmitted from generation to generation, expressing a concept and meaning from life experiences. Whether the proverb is a definite thought of the people that surpasses abstract expression through figurative language, or a mental template derived from the abstract power of the Bedouin people, it is not a lexical expression in the form of an abstract sentence placed in any situation.

Al-Ta’bir al-Mathali (sprichwortliche Redensart/expression proverbiale): Unlike the proverb, it does not reveal certain information about the situation itself. However, it reveals recurring situations and human relationships in a form that can be part of a sentence. Proverbs are specific word combinations that enrich and clarify expression. They are widely used famous expressions.

Al-Hikma (Spruchweisheit/maxime): This category encompasses customs, traditions, measures, and other sayings and rare expressions. It directly narrates life experiences through abstract templates. It is not accidental, which is why examples of this type are attributed to philosophers or sages who have the ability to give abstract expressions.

Al-Ibara al-Taqlidiyya (Formelhafte Redewendung/locution figee): These are used in prayers, curses, greetings in prayer, and similar contexts.

The twentieth century witnessed renewed interest in Arabic folk oral creativity, particularly after a long period of stagnation. Several scholars produced collections of Arabic proverbs and scientific research, including Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Abbos al-Khorazmiy, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr ibn Abdulqodir Ar-Roziy, Bassom Darvish, Abdullatif ad-Dalishiy, Solih Ziyadniy, and others. These works collected Arabic proverbs in anthology form, while scholars such as Abdulmajid Al-Qotomish and Ala Ismoil al-Hamzaviy illuminated their scientific aspects (Al-Qotomish, 1988).

One of the most comprehensive recent works is undoubtedly “Al-Amsal al-Arabiyya fi Qalbi al-Jazirah al-Arabiyya” (Arabic Proverbs in the Heart of the Arabian Peninsula). Published twice, the first edition contained approximately 3,000 proverbs, while the second edition expanded to nearly 10,000 proverbs. The first edition comprised three volumes, and the second edition six volumes, testament to the work’s comprehensive scope. The collection focuses on proverbs from the Najd region, with the author noting that he compiled the proverbs exactly as the people of Najd use them, because almost every word they use exists in Arabic literary language.

METHODOLOGY

The comparative-historical method forms the foundation of this research, enabling the tracing of Arabic proverb scholarship across different historical periods and cultural contexts. This approach involves systematic comparison of proverb collections from various periods, identifying continuities and transformations in both content and organizational principles. The method draws upon the established tradition of historical philology, examining primary sources in their original contexts while maintaining awareness of the interpretive frameworks brought by modern scholarship.

Application of this method in the present study involves comparing the organizational principles of early collections (Ibn Salamah, Abu Ubayd) with later compilations (Al-Maydani, modern anthologies), analyzing how the understanding of proverb as a genre evolved over time. The comparative dimension extends to examining parallel developments in European paremiology, particularly the work of scholars such as Archer Taylor and Wolfgang Mieder, to identify universal patterns and culturally specific features in proverb scholarship.

The structural-semantic analysis employed in this study follows the theoretical framework established by G.L. Permyakov, supplemented by insights from Russian formalism and Prague School linguistics. This methodology focuses on the internal organization of proverbial expressions, examining the relationship between form and meaning at multiple levels.

At the morphological level, analysis examines the structural patterns of proverbs, including their syntactic composition, use of parallelism, and rhetorical devices. The classification of proverbs by constituent elements (two-element, three-element, etc.) provides a quantitative framework for comparing structural complexity across different proverb types.

At the semantic level, analysis investigates the mechanisms of meaning production in proverbs, distinguishing between literal and figurative meanings, identifying the semantic fields activated by particular expressions, and examining how proverbs function as signs of situational relationships rather than merely designating objects or events.

The linguocultural approach integrates linguistic analysis with cultural anthropology, examining how proverbs encode and transmit cultural values, social norms, and worldview. This methodology, developed within the Russian tradition of linguoculturology and applied to paremiological material by scholars such as Permyakov and subsequent researchers, recognizes that proverbs are not merely linguistic phenomena but cultural artifacts that require contextual interpretation.

Application of this method involves analyzing the thematic content of Arabic proverbs to identify dominant cultural concerns, examining how proverbs reflect social structures (tribal organization, gender roles, economic practices), and investigating the ethical and didactic functions of proverbial wisdom in Arab society. The linguocultural approach also encompasses comparative analysis, examining how Arabic proverbs share universal themes with other cultural traditions while expressing culturally specific values and experiences.

Given the historical depth of Arabic proverb scholarship, rigorous textual analysis and source criticism are essential methodological components. This involves examining the manuscript traditions of classical works, analyzing the principles of selection and organization employed by different compilers, and assessing the reliability of attributions and historical claims.

The present study draws upon both published editions and manuscript sources where available, with particular attention to the scholarly editions produced by modern researchers. Critical examination of secondary literature ensures accurate representation of scholarly debates and avoids perpetuation of unfounded claims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Arabic proverb collections reveals distinctive structural patterns that reflect both universal features of proverbial expression and culturally specific formal preferences. The prevalence of parallel construction, particularly antithetical parallelism, reflects the influence of Arabic poetic traditions on proverb formation. Proverbs such as “Bilagi zo’r birni yiqar, bilimi zo’r mingni” (Strong arm overthrows one, strong knowledge overthrows a thousand) exemplify this pattern, creating memorable rhythmic structures through balanced syntactic organization.

The investigation of structural complexity reveals a preference for concise expression, with the majority of proverbs consisting of two to four constituent elements. However, more complex proverbs with five or more elements demonstrate the capacity of Arabic paremiological tradition to accommodate elaborate syntactic structures when semantic complexity requires them. The proverb “Bog’ni boqsang bog’ bo’ladi, botqon-daxsar yog’ bo’ladi, boqimsiz bog’ tog’ bo’ladi, yurak-bag’ring dog’ bo’ladi” (If you tend the garden, it becomes a garden; if you neglect it, it becomes a mountain; if you don’t tend it, it becomes a thorn in your heart) illustrates how complex syntactic structures can develop through iterative expansion of a central theme.

Comparison with Uzbek proverb structures reveals both shared patterns and distinctive features. Both traditions employ similar structural principles, including parallel construction, numerical progression, and antithetical organization. However, Arabic proverbs demonstrate greater frequency of syntactic structures derived from classical Arabic grammatical patterns, reflecting the continued prestige of literary language forms in oral tradition.

Thematic analysis of Arabic proverbs reveals the centrality of certain cultural values and social concerns. The semantic fields most frequently activated in Arabic proverb collections include:

Wisdom and Knowledge: Proverbs emphasizing the value of knowledge and the importance of learning reflect the high cultural prestige of intellectual achievement

in Arab civilization. The proverb “Maqollar aqlli kishilar uchun eng yaxshi dalildir” (Proverbs are the best proof for intelligent people) meta-discursively asserts the epistemological value of proverbial wisdom.

Social Relations and Hospitality: The importance of social bonds, hospitality, and proper conduct in interpersonal relations is extensively reflected in proverbial material. Proverbs addressing neighborly relations, friendship, and family obligations encode social norms and behavioral expectations.

Economic Life and Material Conditions: References to agricultural practices, trade, and material prosperity reflect the economic foundations of traditional Arab society. Proverbs employing imagery from camel herding, date cultivation, and desert survival demonstrate the embedding of economic experience in figurative language.

Moral and Ethical Instruction: The didactic function of proverbs is particularly prominent in Arabic tradition, with extensive material addressing honesty, patience, courage, and other virtues. The integration of proverbial wisdom with Islamic ethical teaching creates a distinctive synthesis of folk and religious morality.

The linguocultural analysis of Arabic proverbs reveals their function as vehicles of cultural memory and identity formation. Proverbs encode historical experiences, including the challenges of desert life, the importance of tribal solidarity, and the values of pre-Islamic and Islamic ethical systems. The continued use of proverbs in contemporary Arab society demonstrates their role in maintaining cultural continuity across historical transformations.

The relationship between Arabic proverbs and the Qur'an presents a particularly significant linguocultural phenomenon. As the research of Abdul Razzaq Abdul Rahman demonstrates, the concept of “masal” appears in the Qur'an in four distinct meanings: (1) the word itself, (2) the description and news of a thing, (3) admonition, and (4) sign and miracle. This semantic range reflects the integration of proverbial wisdom with sacred text, creating a continuum between folk oral tradition and religious revelation.

However, it is important to recognize the distinction between the Qur'anic concept of “masal” and the folkloristic concept of proverb. While the Qur'anic “masal” refers to a specific event or phenomenon, the folkloristic proverb is a general concept applicable to many similar phenomena. This distinction is crucial for understanding how religious and folk traditions interact in Arabic cultural formation.

The comparative analysis of Arabic and Uzbek proverb traditions reveals both shared heritage and distinctive developments. The historical connections between Arab and Central Asian civilizations, particularly during the Abbasid period when scholars from Transoxiana played prominent roles in Arabic intellectual life, created conditions for cultural exchange and mutual influence.

The work of the renowned scholar Abul Qosim Jorulloh Mahmud ibn Umar az-Zamaxshariy exemplifies this connection. Known primarily for his contributions to Arabic grammar, Zamaxshariy also created “Al-Mustaqsa fi Amsol al-Arab” (A Comprehensive Collection of Arab Proverbs), organized alphabetically according to the first three consonants of each proverb. This work demonstrates the deep engagement of Central Asian scholars with Arabic folk oral tradition and their contributions to its preservation and study.

Contemporary Uzbek scholarship on Arabic proverbs, exemplified by the work of Shomusarov Shorustam G’iyosovich, continues this tradition of comparative analysis. Shomusarov’s monographs “Arab va o’zbek folklori tarixiy-qiyosiy tahlili” (Historical-Comparative Analysis of Arab and Uzbek Folklore) and “Arabskiy folklor” (Arab Folklore) provide comprehensive examinations of the relationships between Arab and Uzbek folk traditions, including detailed analysis of proverbial material.

The identification of proverbial parallels between Arabic and Uzbek, such as the identical expression “Itidan ham past” (al-ummu mina al-kalb) in both languages, demonstrates the historical depth of cultural contact and the mechanisms of proverb transmission across linguistic boundaries. Such parallels suggest that proverbial wisdom serves as a particularly stable form of cultural exchange, resistant to the transformations that affect other aspects of material and intellectual culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This comprehensive analysis of Arabic proverb scholarship yields several significant conclusions regarding the historical development, structural characteristics, and cultural significance of this important genre of folk oral creativity.

First, the study confirms the exceptional historical depth and continuity of Arabic paremiological tradition. From the earliest collections compiled in the eighth century CE to contemporary scholarly works, Arabic proverb scholarship demonstrates sustained intellectual engagement with folk oral creativity across more than twelve centuries.

This continuity reflects the central cultural importance of proverbial wisdom in Arab civilization and the institutional support provided by Islamic scholarly traditions for the preservation and study of oral heritage.

Second, the structural and semantic analysis of Arabic proverbs reveals the sophisticated organization of paremiological material. The distinction between proverb (maqol) and saying (matal), while often blurred in popular usage, reflects genuine differences in formal structure, semantic function, and pragmatic application. The classification systems developed by both classical Arab philologists and modern scholars such as Permyakov provide valuable frameworks for understanding these distinctions, though the boundaries between categories remain fluid and context-dependent.

Third, the linguocultural significance of Arabic proverbs extends far beyond their function as decorative linguistic elements. Proverbs serve as repositories of cultural memory, encoding historical experiences, social values, and ethical principles in condensed, memorable forms. Their continued vitality in contemporary Arab society demonstrates their role in maintaining cultural identity and transmitting traditional wisdom across generations.

Fourth, the comparative analysis with Uzbek and other Turkic traditions reveals both the universality of proverbial expression and the specificity of cultural content. While structural patterns and rhetorical strategies show remarkable similarities across linguistic boundaries, the thematic content and value orientations of proverbs reflect distinct cultural experiences and historical developments.

Fifth, the integration of classical philological methods with modern theoretical frameworks, particularly structural-semantic and linguocultural approaches, provides a productive methodology for advancing proverb scholarship. The work of scholars such as Permyakov offers analytical tools that can be productively applied to Arabic material, while the rich classical tradition of Arab philology provides essential historical and textual foundations for contemporary research.

Future research directions suggested by this study include: (1) detailed corpus-based analysis of semantic fields in Arabic proverbs using computational methods; (2) ethnographic investigation of contemporary proverb usage in various Arab speech communities; (3) comparative analysis of Arabic proverbs with other Semitic and Afro-Asiatic traditions; and (4) investigation of the role of proverbs in language learning and intercultural communication.

The study of Arabic proverbs remains a vital field of scholarly inquiry, offering insights not only into the linguistic and literary traditions of Arab civilization but also into the universal human capacity for condensing wisdom into memorable, transmissible forms. As the Arab proverb states: “Proverbs are the best proof for intelligent people”—a meta-proverb that aptly describes the enduring value of paremiological research for understanding human culture and cognition.

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