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The Proverbial Wisdom of a Georgian Language Island in Iran

The Georgian language island in Iran is not yet on the radar of international scholars. Studies by Georgian scholars have mostly focused on linguistic, ethnologic and historic issues concerning the Georgian community living in Isfahan province; no paremiological approach has been undertaken. This article is based on the analysis of Fereydani proverbs recorded from 1968 to 2014. Study reveals that the proverbs used by the Georgians of the Fereydan region in their mother tongue are: proverbs translated from Persian; proverbs of Georgian origin and proverbs existing in both Persian and Georgian paremiological funds. Archaic Georgian vocabulary preserved in proverbs is also considered. This paper highlights the need for a deeper paremiological approach to the proverbs of the Fereydani Georgians.

Keywords: Georgian Proverbs; Persian Proverbs; Iranian Georgians; Fereydunshahr

Historical and Academic Background

From the various viewpoints, the Safavid era (1501–1722) holds a special place in the centuries-old period of political, economic and cultural interactions between Georgia and Iran. The time, which saw numerous military campaigns of Persian rulers in Georgia, was also marked by the increasing role of Georgians at the Safavid court and in their army. The process of deporting Georgian families from their homeland and settling them in the territory of Persia began under Ṭahmāsb I (1524–76). According to Persian, European and Georgian sources, the largest number of Georgians was sent into Persia during Shah Abbas I's military campaigns. Under pressure from the state's official policy, Georgians abandoned Christianity and accepted Islam. This process had a logical outcome—the majority of Georgians step by step gave up their mother-tongue. Today, the Fereydunshahr region in Isfahan province is the only place in Iran where the Georgian language has been preserved.

The earliest mentions of the presence of a Georgian community in Persia, and some peculiarities of their residence in their new “homeland,” can be traced in the dairies of the famous European travelers who visited Persia during the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries. Direct or indirect information presented in the travelogue literature of authors such as Pietro Della Valle (1586–1652), Adam Olearius (1599–1671), Sir

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Thomas Herbert (1606–82), John Fryer (1650–1733), James Baillie Fraser (1789–1856), Austin Henry Layard (1817–94), James Bassett (1834–1906), Jacques De Morgan (1857–1924) and others provide scholars with valuable evidence on the issue.¹

Over the centuries, ties between the exiled Georgians and their homeland were cut. In 1871, the first Fereydani Georgian Atam Onikashvili came to Tbilisi.² His appearance caught the interest of Georgian society as to the faith of their compatriots living in Iran.³

Academic interest in the Georgian population living in Iran, particularly in the dialect they spoke, came later—in the 1920s.⁴ In the late 1960s and 1970s, scholars from Soviet Georgia (Z. Sharashenidze, M. Todua), visiting Iran for various purposes, among them participation in international exhibitions, short-term scholarly missions, etc., managed to obtain and record the speech of the Fereydani Georgians. D. Chkhubianishvili, T. Uturgaidze and J. Giunashvili⁵ were team members of the first academic expedition to Fereydunshahr and Georgian settlements in the Isfahan region in 1998, when a considerable number of Fereydani texts were recorded. The fixation of this dialect of the Georgian language is still on the agenda of later generations of linguists and Iranologists (G. Tsotsanidze, M. Beridze, L. Bakuradze, Z. Purtskhvanidze, R. Ramishvili, and N. Nakhutsrishvili).⁶ Almost

¹A concise description of the earliest relevant Georgian, Russian, European and Persian sources is given in: Sharashenidze, *P'ereidneli "gurjebi"*; Gotsiridze, *K'orcineba*.

²Z. Chichinadze described Onikashvili's visit in his book *K'art'velebi sparses'ši*. That was the earliest publication about the Fereydani community to appear in Georgia.

³Lado (Vladimer) Aghniashvili (1860–1904), a teacher, public figure, ethnologist, folklorist and musician, was the first Georgian to travel to the Fereydan region, in 1894. Aghniashvili's experience in Persia appeared in his diaries *Sparses'i da ik'auri k'art'velebi* in 1896. Documentary materials introduced in Ambacko Chelidze's (1878–1940) booklet *P'ereidneli k'art'velebi*, published in 1935 in Tbilisi, is also valuable as an early source. This edition was destroyed by *Mtavlit'i*—an official body controlling the printed word in Soviet Georgia. A second edition was issued in 1951. In 2011, based on the single surviving copy of the 1935 edition kept in the archive of A. Chelidze, the Giorgi Leonidze State Museum of Georgian Literature published the complete text of the book, including the author's comments made in the margins of the surviving copy. The edition is accompanied by photographs taken during Chelidze's visit to Iran.

⁴V. Topuria and A. Chikobava were pioneer researchers of the peculiarities of Fereydani Georgian. Their first publications concerning the issue are: Chikobava, "Qe nacilaki"; Topuria, "Nimušebi." According to E. Shvarc, "in the history of Iranian folklore studies, Yuri Marr, Georgian by origin, was the first to have collected and investigated materials regarding the oral heritage of Fereydani Georgians living in Iran for a long time." Shvarc, *K istorii izuchenija*, 18. Y. Marr, during his stay in Iran (1925–26), had contact with Fereydani Georgians.

⁵In the frames of the historical-ethnographic, linguistic, folkloristic and social expedition of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, the same team of linguists had worked with Fereydani Georgians repatriated in 1973 and settled in the Sagarejo region of Soviet Georgia. Darejan Chkhubianishvili's publications on the issue were collected and republished by the A. Chikobava Institute of Linguistics of the Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University. See Chkhubianishvili, *Saenat'mec'niero cerilebi*.

⁶At the ISEIL conference in 2018 in Berlin Prof. Donald L. Stilo presented an audio file of Fereydani texts recorded by him in Iran in 1964. It is thought to be the earliest audio-fixation of Fereydani speech ever made. Interestingly, one of the texts he introduced was later recorded several times by Georgian scholars.

all existing records are considered by the website of the Georgian Dialect Corpus (GDC)—Corpora.co—the information-reference system *Language Portrait of Georgia* (<http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>).⁷

The Georgian community of Iran in general, and Fereydani Georgians and their language (dialect) in particular, lack the attention of international scholars.⁸ Even in Iran, scholars have yet to express any interest. Almost all publications in Iran appeared after the Islamic Revolution and belong to the Iranians of Georgian origin.⁹ The majority of the publications are far from academic: their authors are amateurs whose intention it was to show the individuality of their community, to underline their “different identity” and “special history.”

It is safe to say that, in general, studies done on Georgians living in Iran have been focused on, or limited to, historical, linguistic, ethnologic or social issues.¹⁰ One can hardly find any paremiological approaches to the recorded texts. The present article is the first step in this direction, the goal of which is to show that Fereydani proverbs deserve to be studied not inter alia but as a special issue that may have multiple outcomes: “the need to preserve an endangered language or dialect is a strong reason to elevate the value of proverbs in this language.”¹¹

Methodology and Sources

While speaking about proverbial wisdom, the focus is only on the proverbs as such and not on the other forms (proverbial expressions, proverbial exaggerations, etc.) related to the proverbs.¹² Only a few exceptions can be made. Without entering into a potentially endless discussion about the definition of a proverb, I will merely clarify what is

⁷There are three exceptions—texts recorded by non-dialectologists: (1) forty-one proverbs of Fereydani Georgians, written down by Hossein Qaplanashvili (Qalāni) on 29 January 1968 in Tehran and published by Sharashenidze in his *Axali masalebi*, 40–1; (2) sixty-six proverbs and sayings introduced by the brothers Hossein and Sa’id Gugunashvili (Gugunani) and published by Bartaia in his *Sak’art’velo da irani*, 77–80; (3) Sa’id Gugunani, one of the brothers, included twenty-five Fereydani proverbs written in Georgian, transliterated with Arabic graphics and accompanied by Persian translation and comments in the book Gugunani, *Ākōreh* (*‘Alia*), 434–7.

⁸Over the last decade Babak Rezvani, an Iranian scholar of Georgian origin, has demonstrated an ethno-historical approach to Fereydani Georgians and contributed articles to the issue of their identity and ethnogenesis. See also Kazemzadeh, “Latest Status,” 255–61.

⁹Sepiani, *Īrāniān-e gorji*; Muliani, *Jāygāb-e gorjihā*; Rahimi, *Gorjihā-ye irān*; Rahimi, *Tarikh-e siāsī*; Heydari Gorji, *Tarikh-e gorjihā-ye irān*; Qalāni, *Pesv*; Sepiani, *Dibāce-i bar tarikh*; Gugunani, *Ākōreh* (*‘Alia*); Rahimi Fereydūnsāhri, *Gorjītabārān-e irān*; Sepiani, *Gūše-gūše-ye zādghāb-e gorjīan*, among others.

¹⁰The bibliography of scholarly publications of Georgian researchers on the Fereydani dialect and the Georgian population of the Isfahan region is too extensive to be listed here, only some necessary references are given.

¹¹Lauhakangas, “Categorization of Proverbs,” 52.

¹²Analysis of the phraseology of Fereydani Georgian cannot be done within a single article. The issue should be subjected to a broader study which necessitates fluent knowledge of both the Georgian and Persian languages and phraseology. For a certain period, Georgian dialectologists worked without an Iranian on their team, hence a number of inaccuracies can be seen in records and analyses.

meant here under the term “a proverb as such.”¹³ In doing so, I find it useful to quote Professor Wolfgang Mieder’s definition, which he formulated on the basis of a study of the frequency of words contained in over fifty definition attempts. In his opinion, “a proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.”¹⁴

Taking into consideration the definition, only proverbs as such have been chosen for analysis in the present paper. Preference has been given to (a) proverbs that appear in various records and at different periods of time and (b) proverbs containing archaic Georgian vocabulary. The proverbs presented in a single record have been chosen with particular care.

The main sources used in this paper for the proverbs circulated among Fereydani Georgians are:

- texts of Fereydani dialect recorded and published at different times in Georgia and uploaded to the website of the GDC (Georgian Dialect Corpus);¹⁵
- proverbs written down in 1968 by Hossein Qaplanashvili (Qalānī);¹⁶
- texts recorded by Magali Todua;¹⁷
- proverbs introduced by the Gugunashvili (Gugunani) brothers;¹⁸
- proverbs published by Sa’id Gugunani;¹⁹
- proverbs recorded randomly by me over the last two decades.

For the Persian equivalents given in the paper, the following publications served as the main, but not the only, sources:²⁰

¹³I fully agree with W. Mieder’s statement: “not even the most complex definition will be able to identify all proverbs.” Mieder, *Proverbs*, 4.

¹⁴Mieder, “Popular Views,” 119.

¹⁵<http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

¹⁶See note 7. Hereafter Qalānī 1968.

¹⁷Magali Todua made audio records of Fereydani texts in Fereydūnšahr on 29 January 1969 as well as during his next visits to Iran in 1970–72. The texts were published in 1975 in his *K’arī’ul-sparsuli etiu-debi*, II, in cooperation with Maia Machavariani (hereafter Todua 1975).

¹⁸See note 7. Hereafter Gugunashvili 2013.

¹⁹Gugunani, *Ākōreh* (*Āliā*) (hereafter Gugunani 2014).

²⁰For the survey of Persian paremiography, see Shurgaia, “General Review of Persian Paremiography.” After a brief review of the studies of Persian proverbs in Iran, the author comes to the conclusion that, thanks to Ahmad Abrishami’s works, the situation in the field of proverb scholarship in Iran changed in the 1990s. According to Shurgaia, Abrishami “is the only author among Iranians who is well aware of contemporary achievements in paremiology on a global scale. His recent works are newcomers to the studies of Iranian folklore” (382). It is noteworthy that, even though Hassan Zolfaghari, the compiler of numerous collections of Persian proverbs, the researcher and the editor in chief of the quarterly *Farhang va adabyāt-e āme* (*Folk Literature*), is very productive in the field, his works lack international theoretical background and are based largely on the achievements of local paremiology. Evaluation of proverb definitions made by Iranian researchers and paremiographers, as well as the discussion of the terms related to proverbs in Persian and Georgian languages, their correlation and etymology, is given in T. Shurgaia’s PhD dissertation “Sparsuli paremiograp’ia da sparsuli andazis semantikuri struk’tura.”

*The Comprehensive Dictionary of Persian Proverbs;*²¹
*The Modern Dictionary of Persian Proverbs;*²²
*10,000 Persian Proverbs;*²³
*Dehkodā's Proverbs and Aphorisms;*²⁴
*Bahmanyārī's Book of Proverbs.*²⁵

The main collections of Standard Georgian proverbs which I compared with Fereydani ones are those collected by Lia Lejava from multiple proverb collections and manuscripts²⁶ and the proverbs published by Levan Metreveli,²⁷ Tedo Sakhokia²⁸ and Petre Umikashvili.²⁹

Specific Problems and Challenges

It is widely understood that one of the main difficulties when recording proverbs during a fieldwork study is that in the majority of existing records, the proverbs are presented without context—they are simply listed by an interviewee without a supporting background. The same is true of the Fereydani texts. Indeed, “Only a specific context will reveal what the proverb does in fact want to say ... The meaning of any proverb must therefore be analyzed in its unique context, be it social, literary, rhetorical, journalistic, or whatever.”³⁰ Thus, complete analysis of the material without certain context seems impossible or at least very complicated. This has also been a challenge in the case of the present study.

Modern communication tools and social media can be responsible for another issue—increasing the possibility of proverbs penetrating from “outside,” especially among the new generation. As a case in point I'd like to cite a proverb (or rather an aphorism) introduced by A. Ahmadi, an interviewee from Boyn Miandasht:

Mze k'veqanas at'bobs da megobroba—gulsa.

The sun heats the earth and friendship warms the heart.

The proverb is proven neither by the Georgian proverbial fund nor by the collections of Persian proverbs. I was lucky to find it in the ABADIS online dictionary

²¹Zolfaghari, *Farhang-e bozorg*.

²²Abrishami, *Farhang-e novin*.

²³Shokurzadeh Boluri, *Dab bezār maṭāl-e Fārsī*.

²⁴Dehkoda, *Amṭāl va ḥekam*.

²⁵Bahmanyari, *Dāstān-nāme-ye Bahmanyārī*.

²⁶Lejava et al., *Xalxuri sibržne*.

²⁷Metreveli, *Kart'uli andazebi*.

²⁸Sakhokia, *Kart'uli andazebi*.

²⁹Umikashvili, *Xalxuri sit'qviereba*.

³⁰Mieder, *Proverbs*, 9.

under the title “Georgian proverbs.”³¹ The dictionary also offers a Persian translation: “*k̄ôršīd zamīn rā garm mikonad, dūstī del rā.*”

One can hardly define the strict origin of a proverb or be sure about the nation that first coined or later borrowed it. Close literary, linguistic and cultural relations between Georgia and Iran make the task much more complicated, especially in the case of the Fereydani proverbs. Literary contact between the two goes back at least to the eleventh/twelfth centuries—to the time when Georgian secular literature was developing. According to A. Gvakharia:

During the 16th–18th centuries, close relations with the countries of the Middle East, especially with Persia, influenced considerably the way of life and the culture of some segments of Georgian society. In one of his letters to Rome, Padre Bernardi, a Catholic missionary from the 17th century, mentions with great regret that Georgian readers prefer such books as *Bezbaniani*, *Rostomiani*, and *Baramguriani* and pay less attention to religious works. The first two compositions belong to the Georgian *Šāh-nāma* cycle, the last one is a Georgian version of the legend of *Bahrām Gōr*.³²

Collections of fables and exhortations, mirrors for princes, were also popular among Georgians of the time. Thus, the popularity of Persian classic literature in Georgia during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, and long experience of translating Persian literature into Georgian, could also be responsible for Georgians’ easy reception or borrowing of the proverbial wisdom of Iran. The situation makes it difficult to decide whether borrowing or influence took place after settlement in Iran or if the Georgian version of a Persian literary monument is responsible for the resemblance between Georgian and Iranian paremias. The following Fereydani proverb recorded by Professor Magali Todua can serve as a case in point:

Jorsa gamahkitxes: šen āga min ario? tk’o: č’em deda c’xenio.

A mule was asked: who is your father? He said: my mother is a horse.

Persian proverb collections give a slightly different wording for this so-called “dialogue proverb”:

Az qāṭer porsīdand: pedarat kīst? goft: asb āqā da’īam ast.

A mule was asked: who is your father? He said: a horse is my maternal uncle.

³¹<https://dictionary.abadis.ir/fatofa/%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%AC%DB%8C/>

³² *Encyclopædia Iranica*, s.v. “Georgia iv. Literary Contacts with Persia,” by Alexandre Gvakharia. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/georgia-iv-1>

The same content is given in Fakhr-al-Din As'ad Gorgānī's (eleventh century) romantic poem "Vīs ō Rāmīn," translated into Georgian soon after it was written. The excellent prosaic translation of the monument became more popular in Georgia than the original in its homeland. Here is the hemistich from "Vīs ō Rāmīn" with its English word-for-word translation:

Tō ze gōwhar hamī-mānī beh astar keh čōn porsand faḵr ārad beh mādar.³³

Your nature is like that of a mule—when he is asked [about his father] he becomes proud of his mother.

The Georgian translator of the poem faithfully followed the original:

Šeni gūari ... jorsa hgavs gūarianobitā—ra mama hkitxon, dedasa axsenebs.³⁴

Your nature ... is like that of a mule—when he is asked about his father, [he begins] to speak about his mother.

Another challenge is the ability to identify when the Iranian vocabulary presented in Fereydani proverbs was borrowed. As M. Andronikashvili argued, "the presence of Iranian words in Georgian is confirmed at all stages of the development of these two languages (old, middle and new) mainly through well-preserved phonetic forms."³⁵ Regarding the Georgian language island in Iran, it is safe to say that:

During a long historic period, under the influence of a number of extra-linguistic (social and political, cultural, religious) factors "Iranisms" penetrated into all spheres of the Fereydani language system. This kind of interference took place in different directions (word borrowing, development of new meanings, semantic narrowing and widening, loan translation, etc.).³⁶

Thus, in some cases one can hardly identify whether Iranian words in Fereydani Georgian are early borrowings or are the result of the direct influence of the Iranian environment on the Georgian language island.

Proverbs of the Fereydani Georgians

Iranians widely use proverbs, sayings and proverbial expressions both in colloquial and official languages. The mother tongue of those Georgians, forced to reside in the

³³Todua and Gvakharia, *Vīs ō Rāmīn*, 192

³⁴Gvakharia and Todua, *Visramiani*, 116.

³⁵Andronikashvili, *Narkvevi*, 6.

³⁶Chkhubianishvili and Giunashvili, "Iranizmebis kvlevis", 32.

Isfahan province for centuries, has been deeply influenced by Persian phraseology and the figurative thinking of the host nation.

Before citing a proverb, Fereydani Georgians frequently use phrases like: “we have a proverb,” “there is a Georgian proverb,” “there is a Persian proverb” or “they say.” Thus, they formally differentiate between the proverbs of the two languages. Under “we,” Fereydani Georgians usually mean themselves, not Iranians. “They say” (“*izaxian*”) is a formula semantically corresponding to the Persian “*mīgūyand*,” which was and still remains the common Persian phrase for introducing a proverb, fable, anecdote or story. As seen from GDC records, a Fereydani Georgian, after quoting a proverb in Persian, provides the Georgian translation (taking into consideration that the listener/recorder is a Georgian native speaker). One example recorded in 2010 in Tehran can illustrate the situation:

Izaxian: *harče az ḥadd bogzarad rosvā šavad* (Pers.)—*rac’ andazas gadac’ilda, garosavdevbao* (Fereydani Georgian).³⁷

They say: Whatever is done beyond [reasonable] limits becomes disgraceful.

Here we deal with a loan translation. The Persian compound verb *rosvā šavad* (inf.: *rosvā šodan*) is transmitted into Fereydani dialect via the denominative verb *garosavdebao* (inf.: *garosaveba*) using the Persian root.³⁸

The remainder of the paper focuses on proverbs quoted in the Fereydani dialect which the representatives of this language island consider to be of Georgian origin. Even though the majority of these proverbs reflect features of the Fereydani dialect on the phonetic, lexical and grammatical levels, still the question remains: does their belief in the Georgian origin hold true?

The study of the recorded material reveals that the proverbs used by Georgians of the Fereydan region in their mother tongue can generally be divided into four groups:

- (1) Proverbs translated from Persian and quoted in the Fereydani dialect;
- (2) Proverbs possibly of Georgian origin which are unfamiliar to Iranians, the majority of which have preserved archaic Georgian words;
- (3) Fereydani proverbs which contain Persian vocabulary;
- (4) Common proverbs or proverbs existing in both the Persian and Georgian par-emiological funds.

This paper provides not only examples of these groups but considers, to some extent, the problem of the archaic or penetrated vocabulary presented in Fereydani proverbs.

³⁷Marina Beridze and Lia Bakuradze, “Handwritten Collection of Fereydani Texts” (2009–14). GDC, <http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

³⁸All underlines are mine.

Group 1—Translated proverbs. Some fifteen years ago, I recorded a proverb cited by two young Georgian men from Isfahan. To the best of my knowledge, it has no exact Georgian equivalent. They insisted on its being Georgian even though, to demonstrate my doubt, I introduced the same proverb with exactly the same meaning and wording in Persian. The Fereydani proverb was as follows:

Ak'lemze siaruli kont-kont ar šaik'nebis.
You can't ride a camel stooped.

Two other variants of this proverb are:

Ak'lemzeg ro šayje, kont-kontat' nu daxolo (GDC).
If you sit on a camel don't ride it stooped.
Sen ro ak'lemze zixar rat' kont kontat' daxol? (Gugunani 2014).
Why do you walk stooped if you ride a camel?

The proverb says that if you want to hold high positions, you can't hide yourself from society.

The Fereydani proverb does not contain any Persian word. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it is translated from Persian. Compare:

Šotor-sāvārī dōl[l]ā- dōl[l]ā nemīšavad.
One can't ride a camel stooped.

The Fereydani adverb “kont-kont // kont-kontat” (“bent over”/“in a stooping posture”) is a loan translation of the Persian dōl[l]ā-dōl[l]ā and is formed by means of a reduplication of the Fereydani Georgian root “kont” (stoop) according to the Persian pattern.

Although I have limited my discussion to proverbs as such, the following Persian saying is too interesting to let go without spotlighting:

Gūšt-e yek digar rā bekōrand ostokānešān rā pīš-e ġarībeh nemī-andāzand.
Even if they eat each other's flesh, they do not throw the bones before a stranger.

The saying means that people may have bad relations, but they do not let others know about it. In other words, one does not wash one's dirty linen in public.

In the text recorded in 1998 Fereydani Georgian Reza Onikashvili attributes the following to Georgians:

K'art'velma t'qo, ro t'u ert'manetis xorc'sa šafščamt, zolsğa aġar gaftexaft'o.³⁹
A Georgian said: [even] if we eat each other's flesh, we don't break the bones.

³⁹Darejan Chkhubianishvili, ed. GDC, <http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

Apart from its main proverbial meaning, the saying also contains another idiomatic overtone—"bones" may be an allusion to the Fereydani people, their "ethnic solidarity." According to Babak Rezvani, an Iranian of Georgian origin, Fereydani Georgians "call each other *čem-dzowli* (*čemi dzvali* in Standard Georgian), which means 'my bones.' This designation indicates a sense of primordial attachment and ethnic solidarity."⁴⁰

Group 2—Proverbs of Georgian origin. Proverbs are traditional, set expressions that do not undergo many changes and so are good vocabulary keepers. A number of Fereydani proverbs are remarkable for having preserved archaic Georgian vocabulary which has been lost to Standard Georgian. These words, with Georgian phonetic structure (*čunčrukeli*, *cqarcqena*, etc.), seem to be colloquial and no evidence in official Georgian literature of that period (before the seventeenth century) has been found. The following Fereydani proverb is a very rare case of preservation of the archaic word "xarmuloba." The word appears in Fereydani texts recorded at various times (1968, 1976, 1998 and 2008).

Mokda p'uri da gamaycqda xarmuloba.⁴¹
The cow died and xarmuloba faded away.

"Xarmuloba" is a kind of cooperation when village cow owners form a temporary commune (for 9–10 days) to milk cows in turn in order to make butter.

According to the explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language, "xanuloba" is an archaic word, preserved in some central dialects of the Georgian language. The dictionary cites the proverb above to illustrate the meaning of the word.⁴²

P'uri mokvda, xanuloba gadavardao.

*The cow died, xanuloba faded away.*⁴³

The correct form of the word is "xanuloba," which should be derived from the root xan-i⁴⁴ (*khan-i*), meaning "period of time." There is another word, "xanul-i" ("xarmul-i" in Fereydani dialect), derived from the same root. According to Sulkhan-Saba

⁴⁰Rezvani, "Fereydani Georgian Representation," 52.

⁴¹There are two more records of the proverb with slight phonetic and grammatical changes, reflecting the peculiarities of the Fereydani dialect: 1. *p'urma mokda da gamaycqda xarmuloba*; 2. *mokda p'uri da gardahcyda xarmuloba*.

⁴²The electronic version of the Georgian Explanatory Dictionary. <http://www.ena.ge/explanatory-online>

⁴³The proverb is included in only one, academic, collection of Georgian proverbs. See Lejava et al., *Xalxuri sibržne*, 170. I suggest that the proverb was picked from Petre Umikashvili's *Xalxuri sit'qviereba*, which served as a source for the named academic collection. Of note is that Petre Umikashvili was a pioneer in collecting Georgian proverbs. His first publication of 990 Georgian proverbs appeared in 1876.

⁴⁴The suffix "i" is a nominative case marker for Georgian words with a consonant final stem.

Table 1. Georgian vocabulary preserved in Fereydani proverbs

N	Fereydani word	Meaning
1	adužva	to spit out
2	c'ic'a	cat
3	c'urav-i (< mc'urav-i)	snake, reptile
4	circiali	to turn
5	cqarcqena (< cqalnacqen-i)	epilobium
6	čunčrukeli	cricket
7	kočoba	small clay pot
8	šušproba	to dance
9	xarmuloba < xanuloba	temporary cooperation for milking

Orbeliani's eighteenth century *Dictionary of the Georgian Language*, “xanul-i” is a woman who shares milk with others.⁴⁵ “Xarmul-i” in Fereydani dialect has the same meaning.

Table 1 introduces the Georgian vocabulary preserved in Fereydani proverbs. The following examples illustrate the data shown in the table.

1. C'ic'a—a cat.

(a) T'agyma t'xara, t'xarao da c'ic'a gamayt'xarao (Todua 1975).
The mouse kept on digging until he found a cat.

“C'ic'a”—a cat, is still preserved in some dialects of Georgian language and is considered to be a colloquialism if it is used in literature. The proverb is currently popular in Georgia, but the word “c'ic'a” is replaced by the standard one—“kata” (a cat): “t'agyma t'xara, t'xarao, kata gamot'xarao.”⁴⁶ The proverb is used to assert that excessive diligence can damage the deed.

(b) Cicila rom dedasqe cin iaros an c'ic'a daičers an qvavi (Gugunashvili 2013).
A chick walking before its mother will be caught by a cat or a crow.

Another proverb with the same message (he who does not obey his elders, will get into trouble) appears in earlier records of Fereydani speech:

Virsa-qe cin ro t'avis mutruki gayk'c'evis-qe, geli gahxevs (Todua 1975).
The donkey that runs before the mule (= his parent) will be devoured by a wolf.

⁴⁵Orbeliani, *Lek'sikoni k'art'uli*.

⁴⁶There is another corresponding proverb in Standard Georgian: *k'at'amma č'xrika, č'xrika da t'avisi dasaklavi dana gamoč'xrika*—The hen kept on digging until she found the knife to be beheaded.

Another wording of the proverb was recorded later, in 1998:

Mutrukma ro dedasa-qe cin cayda, geli gayxevs an čač'i č'avardebis.
The donkey that runs before his mother will be devoured by the wolf or will fall into a well.

Variations of a similar proverb are well known and still popular in Georgia. For example:

De-dis cin rom kvic'i gaik'c'eva, an mgeli šečams an turao.
When a foal runs before his mother, he will be eaten either by wolf or by jackal.

(c) Sad aris is t'agvi rom c'ic'as zanzalaki gadac'os?

*Where is the mouse that will put the bell on the cat's [neck]?
Pers.: ān kasī ke zang rā beh gardan-e gorbek bebandad kojāst?
Where is the one who will tie the bell on the cat's neck?.*

This well-known proverb attributed to the Aesopian fable is very popular among Iranians and Georgians. They both consider it to be native.

2. Kočoba—a small pot.

According to A. Ahmadi the proverb below is used among Georgians of Boyen Mian-dasht. Even though the word “kočoba” (a small pot) appears in a number of recorded Fer-eydani texts, there is no other evidence proving circulation of the proverb in the region except that of A. Ahmadi:

Kočobam etara da sark'eli monaxa.
A small pot walked [a lot] and [finally] found its lid.

Of note is the fact that none of the variants of this proverb in Standard Georgian con-tains the word “kočoba”:

K'ot'ani dagorda, sark'veli ipovao.
The pot rolled down [and finally] found its lid.

The word “kočoba,” which has faded in Standard Georgian, is replaced here by another word for “pot”—k'ot'ani.

3. C'uravi < mc'uravi—a snake, a reptile.

Čiaqelam undoda c'uravs mecios, ik'teni gaizara, ro gacqda.⁴⁷
The worm wanted to reach a snake; it stretched itself so long that it broke apart.

Gugunani quotes his version of the proverb:

Čiaqela učirebda c'uravs mecivos, gacqda.
The worm forced itself to reach the snake [and] broke apart.

Georgian paremiographic collections introduce the following wording of the proverb:

Gvelt'an zmanebaši xvliki gacqvetilao.
The lizard, while trying to reach the snake, broke apart.

Only one corresponding Persian proverb could be found for it:

Pers.: Mārmūlak raft az mār taqlid konad kōdeš rā az bām andākt va zakmī šod.
The lizard went to imitate the serpent, threw itself down from the roof and was injured.

“Mc'uravi” is used in dialects of Georgian language even today.

The Fereydani proverb quoted below with the Georgian word “mc'uravi” is not recorded in Georgian paremiographic collections and seems to be a translation of the Persian one:

C'uravma tā⁴⁸ ar gascordes, xrelč'i ver ševa.⁴⁹
Pers.: Mār tā rāst našavad beh sūraḵ naravad.
A snake can't slide into a hole unless it straightens.

The proverb is a warning to swindlers: one can't succeed unless one acts rightly and justly.⁵⁰

There is a Fereydani proverb which deserves special attention. The following versions of it have been recorded at different times (1968, 2010):⁵¹

(a) Somexma ro sop'eli uzaḡlo naxos ujoxo ivlis.
When an Armenian sees a village without a dog, he walks through it without a stick.

⁴⁷This variant of the proverb was recorded in 1998 by D. Chkhubianishvili. See GDC, <http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

⁴⁸“tā” is a Persian conjunction (tā—till, until) transmitted here from Persian.

⁴⁹Gugunashvili 2013.

⁵⁰Bahmanyari, *Dāstān-nāme-ye Bahmanyārī*, 488.

⁵¹Qalāni 1968; Marina Beridze and Lia Bakuradze, “Handwritten Collection of Fereydani Texts” (2009–14). GDC, <http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

(b) Sop'eli vnaxe uzağlo šig gaviare ujoxo.
I saw a village without a dog and went through it without a stick.

According to the interviewee Mukhtar Darchiashvili (Aslānī), the proverb exists both in Persian and Fereydani Georgian. I was not able to find such a proverb in Persian sources, but there are several versions of it in the Georgian proverbial fund:

Sop'eli vnaxe uzağlo šig gaviare ujoxomo.
I saw [that] a village [was] without a dog; I walked through it without a stick.
 Sop'eli vnaxe uzağlo, ujoxo daviarebi.
I saw [that] a village [is] without a dog, I am walking around without a stick.
 Mgvdelma uzağlo sop'eli naxa, ujoxod gaiarao.
A priest saw a village without a dog, [and] walked through it without a stick.

As seen above, the word “Armenian” does not appear in Georgian proverbs but there is a “priest” (“mgvdel-i”) instead. I suggest that in the earliest version of the proverb, there may have been the word “priest” and later it was replaced by the word “Armenian,” associated with Christianity. B. Rezvani’s remark serves to strengthen my idea. According to him, Fereydani Georgians often confuse the religious designation “Christian” and ethnic designation “Armenian.”⁵² It is noteworthy that “priest” usually has a negative connotation in Georgian proverbs. The proverb under discussion points to the greed and parsimony of clergymen.

There is another Fereydani proverb about Armenians, recorded in 1968:

Somexma gadagdo uğeli mokla kurdğeli.
The Armenian threw the yoke away and killed a hare.

Here, the core message is that any activity of an Armenian proves profitable for him: he never comes off a loser. A similar Persian proverb about Armenians has yet to be found, although Petre Umikashvili recorded an interesting version of it:⁵³

Terteram uğeli gadaagdo, mokla kurdğeli.
The Armenian priest threw a yoke away [and] killed a hare.

“Tertera” (< Arm. “terter”) is a colloquial word for an Armenian priest and usually has an ironic connotation.

For the present discussion, the following Persian saying should be of interest:

Beh bujār-e Lenjān mīmānad keh az har ʔaraf bād byāyad bād mīdahad.
Some so-and-so is like a Lenjani winnower—from which side the wind blows, in the same direction he winnows.

⁵²Rezvani, “Fereydani Georgian Representation,” 73.

⁵³Umikashvili, *Xalxuri sit'quiereba*.

Lenjan is located in the Isfahan province where both Armenians and Georgians settled. The fact likely resulted in the appearance of two Persian versions of the saying: in one, “Lenjani” is replaced by “Armenian” and in another it is replaced by “Georgian”:

Meṭl-e karman-e aramaneh /gorjihā mīmānad keh az har ṭaraf bād mī-āyad gandomhā rā havā mikonad.

*Some so-and-so is like an Armenian/Georgian threshing-floor: from which side the wind blows, in the same direction winnows wheat.*⁵⁴

According to the GDC dictionary, “Armenian threshing-floor” (“somexis kalo”) is a Fereydani idiom for a hypocritical person who is on good terms both with a person and with that person’s enemy.⁵⁵ Without going deeper into the issue of reflecting the binary of Self and Other in Georgian and Persian proverbs, once again I would like to emphasize the importance of the investigation of Fereydani proverbs not only through a linguistic light but also in the context of cross-cultural studies and a paremiological viewpoint.

Group 3—Proverbs containing Persian vocabulary. More frequent are the cases where Persian vocabulary (including Arabic loanwords in Persian) is assimilated into Fereydani proverbs. A linguistic approach would shed more light on the problem and draw a more complete picture of the situation, but analysis of loaned Persian vocabulary is not the purpose of the present article and I shall refrain from going much into the issue of phraseological calquing and instead focus my attention on the proverbs as such that are complete sentences and “signs of a situation” (Permyakov).

The Persian (Persian-Arabic) vocabulary presented in Fereydani proverbs is listed in [Table 2](#) and illustrated by relevant examples. Here we deal with two alternatives: (1) the proverb is a loan translation of Persian into the Fereydani dialect, or (2) there exists a similar proverb both in Standard Georgian and in Persian.

Examples:

1. Gedayas t’el pur ar ejerebiso (Qalānī 1968).

A beggar can’t believe being given a whole loaf of bread.

Pers.: gedā nān-e dorost bāvaraš nemī-āyad.

2. Sadac’ ro šeni gap’i gayge, xalgis gap’i gayge (Todua 1975).

Where did you hear the story about yourself?—In the same place you heard [your words] about others (i.e. if you say bad things about others, others will say the same about you).

⁵⁴Shurgaia, “Regional Dialogue,” 135.

⁵⁵Marina Beridze and Lia Bakuradze, GDC Dictionary of Fereydani Georgian. <http://www.corpora.co/#/dictionaries>

Table 2. Persian (Persian-Arabic) vocabulary presented in Fereydani proverbs

	Fereydani word	Meaning	Persian/ Arabic word	Meaning in context
1	dasmal-i	handkerchief, napkin	dastmāl	handkerchief, napkin
2	gap'-i	story, tale	gap	chat
3	gedaya	beggar	gedā	beggar
4	guy-i	ball	gūy	ball
5	haq-i	truth	ḥaqq	truth, justice
6	k'ač'i	dish of flour, sugar and fat; halva pudding	kāčī	dish of flour, sugar and fat; halva pudding
7	k'ulux-i	clod	kolūk	clod
8	p'at'ir-i	unleavened bread	faṭīr	unleavened bread
9	šualtuz-i	bodkin	javāldūz	bodkin
10	t'azia	hound	tāzī	hound
11	t'ark'a	switch	tarkeh	switch

Pers.: Ḥarf-e kōd rā kojā šanīdī? Ānjā keh ḥarf-e mardom rā.

Where did you hear words about yourself?—The same place you heard your words about others.

3. Mecisk'ilem šimšilit' mokda, t'k'es, ro p'at'irs gooxet'k'iao.⁵⁶

A miller died of famine, people said that he burst with faṭīr (unleavened bread).

The earlier record of the proverb has Standard Georgian “p'ap'a” (a meal made by diluting flour in water and boiling, i.e. porridge) in it instead of “faṭīr”:

Mecisk'ilem šimšilit' mokda, xalxi ambobs p'ap'is gaxet'k'iliao (Qalānī 1968).

The proverb seems to be a translation of the following Persian dialogue proverb:

Āsyābān az gorosnegī mord, goftand: “az bas keh faṭīr kord.”

The two-volume *Comprehensive Dictionary of Persian Proverbs* introduces eight slightly different versions of the proverb. In two of them, the fact of “overfeeding” has been intensified by replacing “faṭīr” with “sweet bread” (“nān-e širmāl”/“kōmāj-e kām”).⁵⁷

⁵⁶Darejan Chkhubianishvili, ed. GDC, <http://www.corpora.co/#/corpus>

⁵⁷Zolfaghari, *Farhang-e bozorg*.

4. T'ark'a rogorc' dakavo dakavdebis (Todua 1975).

A switch can be easily bent to any side.

Pers.: tarkeh tā narm ast, kam mišavad.

A switch can be bent while it is young.

There exists a Georgian proverb akin to the above:

Cneli sanam nedlia, manam unda moigrixoso.

A switch must be bent while it is young.

The proverbs stress that young ones must be trained and taught before they grow up.

5. K'ač'is šešinebuli dos uberavso (Qalānī 1968).

He who once feared kāč'i will blow on the buttermilk.

(English equivalent: A burnt child dreads the fire).

In later records of this proverb, “kāč'i” (Persian halva pudding) is replaced by “ze” (< Standard Georgian “rže”—milk):

Zes šešinebuli dos uberebdao (Gugunashvili 2013).

The proverb is popular in Standard Georgian and has equivalents in both languages:

Geo.: P'ap'it' šešinebuli dosac' suls uberavdao.

He whose mouth was once burnt with porridge blows even on the buttermilk.

Pers.: az šir-e dağ dahānaš sūkteh beh dūğ fūt mikonad.

[He who] once feared hot milk blows on the buttermilk.

The Persian synonymous proverb is:

Mārgazīdeh az rismān-e syāh-o-sefid mīarsad.

He who has been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a black and white rope.

6. Žalit' gamotevil t'azia nadirs ar daičerso.

A hound forced to hunt cannot catch game.

Even though a number of Georgian proverbs have similar wording and content, the Fereydani version is closer to the Persian proverb introduced by Bahmanyar. Compare:

Geo.: Žalat' mitevebuli mcevari kurdgels ver daičerso.

A hound set on game by force cannot catch a hare.

Žalat' gatanebuli žaḡli cxvars ar gamoadgebao.
If a dog is taken to the pasture by force, it won't be of use for sheep.
 Žalat' dasmuli kruxi cicilas ver gamoč'ekso.
A hen forced to sit on eggs cannot hatch a chick.
 Pers.: Tāzī beh zūr šekār nemikonad.
A hound cannot be forced to hunt.

Zolfaghari gives three more versions of the proverb.⁵⁸

Group 4—Common Georgian-Persian proverbs. Common Georgian and Persian proverbs have been presented in previous groups as supplementary material to prove or strengthen arguments; to allow for additional comments regarding a particular proverb or subject of discussion. An attempt was made to introduce patterns not only with the same message but with the same or similar structure, vocabulary or metaphor. My intention was to demonstrate how complicated it is to specify the origin of a particular Fereydani proverb. There are, of course, proverbs with common messages, introduced in different forms. In this case, a broader approach is needed: such proverbs should be correlated with universal proverb patterns to reveal how they are represented in the proverbial funds of other nations. Classification of Fereydani proverbs according to their logico-thematic groups and subgroups in the frame of Grigorij Permyakov's *Theory of Cliché* could be the next step in future studies.

In the final part of this paper, further examples of Fereydani proverbs with their Standard Georgian and Persian equivalents are presented:

1. Fer.: Qors vebnebi, ro zalma gaygos.
I am telling [my] daughter, in order for the daughter-in-law to hear.
 Geo.: Mulo, šen geubnebi, rzalo, šen gaigoneo.
Sister-in-law, I am telling you; daughter-in-law, you are to listen!
 Pers.: Doḡtar, beh tō mīgūyam, 'arūs tō bešenow.
Daughter, I am telling you; daughter-in-law, listen!
 Dar, beh tō mīgūyam, dīvār, tō bešenow.
The door, I am telling you; the wall, listen!

2. Fer.: Dedas mixe da qori it'xove.
[First] see the mother and [then] marry the daughter.
 Geo.: Deda ukit'xe da kvic'i ise iqideo.
[First] ask [who is] the mother of the foal and [only] then buy it.
 Deda naxe, mama naxe, švili ise gamonaxe.
See the mother, see the father [and only] then find their child.
 Per.: Mādar rā bebīn, doḡtar rā begīr / bepors.
See the mother [and] take /ask for the daughter.

⁵⁸Zolfaghari, *Farhang-e bozorg*, 680–1.

3. Fer.: At'xel gazome da ert'xel gaxive.
Geo.: At'jer gazome da ert'xel gačeri.
Measure ten times and cut once.
Per.: Şad bār gaz kon yek bār bebor.
Measure a hundred times and cut once.

4. Fer.: Koka mudam cqals ar caigep's.
A pitcher cannot always carry water.
Geo.: Koka mudam cqals ar moitans.
A pitcher cannot always bring water.
Per.: Kūzeh hamīšeh az āb sālem bar-nayād.
A pitcher cannot always come out of water unharmed.

There are other examples, but as the Persian proverb says, “mošt nemūne-ye karvār ast”—the sack is known by the sample. I believe the presented material has revealed the need to study in more detail the Fereydani proverbs, as well as Fereydani folklore in general. Proverbs can be more than a mere supplement to an investigation into the Fereydani language island. It is true enough that

Using proverbs of your own language or dialect has a central function to be a kind of speech that strengthens the identity of the community. This is also true when we consider the ways how a subculture or minority uses proverbs. Their specialty is emphasized and compared to the generalizing truths, which are favored by the dominant culture. On the other hand, the ideas of proverbs are mostly international.⁵⁹

Conclusion

This article is based on analysis of around 180 Fereydani proverbs and their variants recorded from 1968 to 2014 and published in various printed and online sources, as well as on personal experience. Only proverbs as such have been considered. Existing data reveals the great resemblance between Fereydani and Persian proverbs. Archaic Georgian vocabulary preserved in Fereydani proverbs once again stresses the significance of their study for multiple purposes. Fereydani Georgians consider the proverbs which they quote in the Georgian language as evidence of their different, distinctive identity within Iranian society. They are good Muslims and therefore religion is not the distinctive feature in their case: the specificity lies in their language, and even though many Fereydani proverbs are translations of Persian ones or are largely influenced by them, “universal truth” is introduced via the “mother tongue,” not in Persian. The collective lore passed on from generation to generation is considered a means of keeping in touch with the lost homeland; of being a part of the “national” wisdom.

⁵⁹Lauhakangas, “Use of Proverbs,” 83–4.

Further paremiological study of Fereydani proverbs will reveal their local and international values; will demonstrate how the proverbs function; and will show the mechanism of proverbial exchange between the language island and the surrounding culture in various circumstances. Identification of the logico-thematic groups and subgroups of Fereydani proverbs, and their correspondence to the Georgian and Persian funds, will shed more light on many related issues.

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