

A CHANGE OF THE ASPECT OF THE TRADITIONAL CHARACTER IN ARMENIAN MEDIEVAL FABLES COMPARED TO PARABLES AND FABLES IN 'KALILA AND DIMNA' AND 'PANCHATANTRA' AND THOSE OF AESOP

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The character of a Fox is often met in fairy-tales, proverbs, sayings, riddles and especially in fables of Armenia. Not only in Armenian, but also in literary monuments of many peoples as well as in the world folklore the Fox with his various adventures is a commonly met character. Thus, for example, the stories about mean tricks, swindles of a desperate bold spirit, a lout Reynard the Fox with their versions are well-known in almost all the world literary and folklore works. Under the influence of these stories Goethe's famous poem *Reinecke-Fuchs* was written in 1793. Before that numerous treatments and expositions existed belonging both to famous and unknown medieval poets. The Old French versified *Novel of a Fox* also appeared at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. To the same genre belong numerous works about animals created in the East already in the deep antiquity. The poem *The Novel of a Fox* has its parallels in the literary folklore monuments of the *Panchatantra* and its translated Arabic version *Kalila and Dimna*, which got its name after two brother-jackals in the first chapter of this book.

In the Armenian reality the Fox was also the leading character, which is witnessed by the medieval collections of fables under the name *The Book of the Fox*, greatly popular and repeatedly published as early as the 17th century. Its first edition was issued in Amsterdam in 1668. Besides *The Book of the Fox*, the Fox is a frequent character in many fables by Vardan of Aigek. To characterise this versatile image as well as to investigate the modifications of the trickster with different peoples, we took for a basis the following fables by Vardan: *The Affectedly Sick Lion* (V-4), *The Sick Lion and the Donkey without a Heart and Ears* (V-5), *The Lion, the Fox and the Bear* (V-96), *The Lion and the Tortoise* (V-158), *The Lion and Ice* (V-74), *The Lion and the Drum* (V-59), P III.¹ The aforementioned fables have their parallels among the Indian, Arabic and Greek ones.

The subject of *The Affectedly Sick Lion* with its five editions is presented quite originally. The versions differ from each other both as for the characters and the moralising endings. The main characters of this fable are the affectedly

sick Lion, the Ounce - gate keeper and the Pig, a visitor. The Lion has the leading role and the action is going on around him. Some of the beasts visit the Lion out of respect, but the majority of them do so because of fear and they fall victims to him.

Among the visitors the central place is occupied by the Pig. As according to his nature a pig always looks down, it notices the traces only of the beasts who entered, but not of those coming out. A conflict arises between the Pig and the gate-keeper: the Pig refuses to enter the cave. Having got angry by the Ounce's blow, the Pig tears him to pieces. In the edition of *The Book of the Fox*, the gate-keeper is replaced by a faithful and obliging bear.

In edition C we again see the Ounce as a gate-keeper, but a new detail is introduced here: the Lion from the one side and the Ounce from the other side attack the next victim.

In edition F there are no gate-keepers. The Lion himself informs the beasts of his illness and demands that they should visit him. The Pig is replaced by the Fox. Here the conflict takes place between the Lion and the Fox. The Fox comes and stops at the entrance of the cave. The Lion orders him to come in, but the Fox does not obey and thus the conflict takes place.

In Zlatochrev's edition a tiger and an ounce are the gate-keepers.

Approximately a similar fable can be met in the *Olympiana* edition, but there are no gate-keepers in it, the place of action is not defined and the Pig is replaced by the Fox. This edition is known under the title *The Aged Lion And the Fox*. We find this fable among the ones by the sage Lukman (*The Lion and the Fox* V-VI).

After a detailed consideration of the subject of *The Affectedly Sick Lion*, we come to the conclusion that the fables of this group with some modifications in the editions represent the same subject. However, the replacement of the main character (the Pig by the Fox) has considerably changed the colour of the fable. For example, edition F under the *The Lion and the Fox* coincides with the fable by Aesop N 142 under the same title. In the *Olympiana* edition the Pig is also replaced by the Fox. And in the latest Vardan collections there is a fable (p. III, p. 105, N 35) which is a translation of the 142nd fable by Aesop, where the Fox is in the role of the Pig. In spite of the fact that so different characters are in the main role, eventually none of them gets into the Lion's trap. However, the Fox escapes due to cunning and wit, characteristic of his nature - cunning as a goal of self-protection. But the image of the Pig created by the Armenian author as a parallel to the Fox is deprived of cunning and it escapes due to its natural habit (to look down). The passage is so convincing and typical of the character of the Pig that it added quite a new aspect and colour to the Armenian fable.

The next fable V-5 is *The Sick Lion And the Donkey Without Heart And Ears*. The main characters are a sick Lion, a cunning Fox and a naive Donkey. Doctors advise the Lion to drink as a medicine a broth made of the Donkey's heart and ears. The Fox takes the Donkey to the Lion by fraud. At first the Donkey manages not to get into the Lion's clutches. But the Fox persuades the Donkey again and takes it to the Lion for the second time. The lion instantly kills the Donkey and retires to have a rest. Seizing the opportunity, the Fox takes out the Donkey's heart and ears and eats them up and tells the Lion and the doctors that if the Donkey had a heart and ears, it would not have returned after having heard the Lion's roar.

The edition of the *Book of the Fox* differs from the main subject only in details. The Fox, deceiving the Donkey, says that the sick king wants to see it before his death in order to bring it in his kingdom (this passage is very similar to the correspondent subject of Aesop).

This fable of Vardan is parallel to the fable *The Lion, the Jackal and the Donkey* from the chapter *Monkey and Tortoise* from the collection *Kalila and Dimna*. The given chapter of *Kalila and Dimna* is a bright example of a framed story. It consists of two interrelated subjects. In this chapter the monkey tells the tortoise the parable *The Lion, the Jackal and the Donkey*. This parable is essentially similar to Vardan's fable *The Sick Lion And the Donkey Without Heart And Ears*. The original of the Armenian fable testifies that it is written in a laconic style, characteristic of the fable, and it has the same laconic moral. Here is the fable in the first place. The Arabic parable is written in a narrative style and it is given as an example. It bears a descriptive nature and is rich in dialogues. The scene of actions is a thicket covered with luxurious oriental plants. Here the Fox is replaced by a Jackal, who, unlike the Fox, really lives on the remnants of the loots of the king of the beasts (a fact witnessing to the oriental origin of the fable). In Vardan's fable the Fox, cheating the Donkey, says: 'Your elder brother, the king, has found you. Go and you'll reign together with him'. In the Arabic parable the Jackal tempts the Donkey with a pedigree she-ass. After the killing of the Donkey the ritual of ablution follows, peculiar to the Moslem religion. The Lion, leaving the killed Donkey, goes away to wash himself and at that time the Jackal eats the Donkey's heart and ears. The motif of the open temptation of a male by a female is peculiar to the oriental tradition and literature.

Working out the oriental subject that could have been brought into Armenia in a verbal way,² Vardan could not have taken a pure oriental motive of invitation, for the motivation of temptation of the Donkey by reigning, of course, is closer to the medieval Christian shyness than the motivation of the Jackal's invitations. It is this motive of the invitation that makes Vardan's fable similar

to the 313rd fable *The Lion, the Fox and the Deer*³ by Aesop. (In Aesop the Fox cheats the Deer saying that the Lion has made up his mind to nominate him king before his death). In this fable one thing is striking that is missing in the Armenian edition: when the Deer's skull fell out, the Fox caught it and ate all the brain to reward himself for the trouble.

Indeed, the Fox has said to the point that the Deer had not any brain at all, and how such a beast could have it when having escaped once, it gets again into the Lion's paws. This passage is entirely missing in the Arabic and Armenian editions. But there is a detail quite strange for the Greek fable: the similarity of the style with that of the Arabic fable. Leaving aside the problem of replacement of the characters (the Jackal by the Fox, the Donkey by the Deer), let us note the fact that while for the Arabic fable the narrative style with its abundant dialogues is peculiar, it is not inherent in the Greek fable. Besides, the cunning Fox and the naive and open-hearted Deer were more acceptable for the Greek mode of life, people's world outlook and Aesop, while the obliging Jackal licking the shoes of the Lion or the Tiger and, certainly, the Donkey, the symbol of naivety and stupidity, are more peculiar for the oriental mode of life and environment.

Speaking about the stylistic similarity of Greek and Arabic fables, it should be noted that the Armenian and Arabic editions of the given subject are closely connected with the story of the same name from the *Panchatantra*. As for the time of its origin, *Panchatantra* preceded *Kalila and Dimna* and the fables of medieval Armenia. In the *Panchatantra* as well as in *Kalila and Dimna* the given subject is framed by a story with the same characters. The characteristic feature of the Indian literature is that here the characters have names. Indian, Arabic and Greek fables are similar according to the style of narration. The Armenian fable is similar to the Arabic one as to the development of actions, and also, to the Indian versions, but it is written in the laconic style. These four similar subjects, according to the character in question, are divided into two groups: a) in Armenian and Greek fable the Fox is represented as cunning and obliging, which quite corresponds to the Armenian natural world; b) in Indian and Arabic fable, as a rule, the place of the Fox is constantly occupied by a representative of the oriental animal kingdom - the Jackal; but it hardly changes anything. The Fox in both the Armenian and Greek fables and the Jackal in Arabic and Indian ones are exclusively negative characters: they are cunning, deceptive and insidious. It is these features that are common for them. The difference is only that with different peoples the performer of the same part is an animal that is more characteristic of the given nature and people.

The next fable, *The Lion, the Fox and the Bear* is similar to the 273rd fable *The Lion, the Fox and the Wolf* by Aesop. The central motif of these fables is

that of the affectedly sick Lion: the Lion has fallen ill; all the animals have come to visit him; the Fox is late and the Bear (in the Greek fable the Wolf) has slandered the Fox in front of King Lion. But the Fox manages to justify himself and takes severe revenge on the slanderer. The Fox convinces the sick Lion that to get well it is necessary for him to get wrapped into a wolf- (bear-)skin: the subject of a well-known fable tradition and reproduced in Branch X of the French *Novel of the Fox*. Immediately the Bear was caught, its skin was flayed off and thrown on the Lion. The Fox escaped and the slanderer was severely punished. As we have already mentioned, in these fables the Fox once more uses his craftiness but this time he does it for the sake of self-protection and is considered to be a positive hero.

The motif of hostility between the Wolf and the Fox (in the Armenian fable the Bear) penetrated into the Armenian fable tradition independently from this Greek fable.

The fable *The Fox and the Tortoise* by Vardan is compared with *The Monkey and the Tortoise* from *Kalila and Dimna* and *The Monkey and the Dolphin* from the *Panchatantra*. The subject is as follows: the Monkey made friends with the Tortoise. When the Tortoise's sons got ill, the doctors advised the kidneys of a fox as a medicine. The Tortoise managed to get the Fox by cheating into the depth of the sea, but here the Fox found out the truth and pretended regretting not to have known about it before, otherwise he would have taken his kidneys with him. The Tortoise took the Fox back to the shore for kidneys. The Fox jumped to the shore and saved himself. In the Arabic version the Monkey appears in the part of the Fox. The Tortoise and the Monkey are friends, but the Tortoise's wife is jealous and that is why she pretends to be ill and asks for a broth made of the Monkey's heart and kidneys as a medicine. The Tortoise decides to sacrifice his friend for his wife's sake, but the Monkey manages to outwit the Tortoise. In the Indian version the tortoise is replaced by a dolphin, the rest of the characters being the same as in the Arabic version. We already know that in *Panchatantra* this story is called *The Monkey and the Dolphin*. While translating into Arabic Ibn-al Mucaffa, the translator replaced the dolphin by the more familiar to Arabs tortoise. Working out his fable borrowed from the Arabic *Kalila and Dimna*, Vardan Aigek replaced the Monkey with the Fox that was more familiar to Armenians. The Armenian Fox and the Indian and Arabic Monkey are different characters having nothing in common. But in Vardan's fable artfulness is a means of rescue typical of the Fox, while the oriental Monkey is allotted with mind, artfulness not being peculiar to it.

In Vardan's fable *The Fox and Ice* and in *The Fox and the Stone* from the Arabic edition of the *Book of the Fox* it is told how in winter the Fox, finding nothing to eat, eats ice and says: how horrible the crackle is, but it is cracking

only in the head and teeth, and the stomach is empty. In the edition of the *The Book of the Fox* the Fox found a brittle stone and taking it for cheese began eating it and said: 'Woe is me! It has neither smell nor taste!'

A medieval Latin fable *The Fox and the Reflection of the Moon* ⁴ from *Robert's Romulus* is compared with these fables. At night the Fox saw the reflection of the moon in the water and took it for cheese. He began to drink the water to reach the cheese and doing it without rest he choked. As we already noted, instead of using artfulness, deception and impudence to reach his goal, in these fables the Fox displays himself as a helpless, imbecile and foolish animal. These features of the Fox's image are rarely met, but they have found their place both in Armenian and Latin fables and the Arabic edition of *The Book of the Fox*. Probably it is explained by the common source which to our opinion is the Indian story *The Jackal and the Drum*. In Vardan's version there is also a fable of the same name. In all these fables the Fox arouses sympathy. A drum tied to the tree and clanking against the branches calls up the Fox. Thinking that it is something edible full of fat and meat, the Fox tears it and seeing it empty leaves disappointed.

In the Arabic parable finding the drum empty the Fox said: 'It seems the most worthless ones have a large body and a loud voice.'

In the Armenian fable the angry Fox says: 'There should rather be fat in this huge body than such a noise.'

The 27th fable of Aesop under the title *The Fox and the Mask* is compared with the given fables in the typological aspect. In this fable the Fox finds a tragic mask and says: 'What a head! But no brain!'

At the end of the studied fables *The Fox and Ice*, *The Fox and the Stone*, *The Fox and the Reflection of the Moon*, *The Fox and the Drum*, *The Fox and the Mask*, the Fox's words reflect his mind, while his tricks comprise his character. Here the Fox is not endowed with those typical features which the tradition tends to attribute to his image. In the fables *The Fox and the Tortoise* and *The Monkey and the Tortoise* the personages of the Fox and the Monkey are somewhat contradictory. The given fables may be examples of introducing an animal into a story not because it has a definite character, but because of common properties of its nature or life, it can personify a definite action. Such view on the animal world is probably due to the influence of Indian beliefs. Animals lack set features, as an Indian believing in metempsychosis regards the animal world the same as that of people, only in different forms of existence. That is why an animal reminiscent of a man by its behaviour is not a comic personage here, neither is the animal whose habits do not correspond to the behaviour of the real world. Such an approach to the expression of the animal world is reflected in the *Panchatantra* and in some way it was accepted in the Middle

East due to its translations into Persian and later into Arabic.

In our article we repeatedly speak of the Indian influence on the medieval Armenian fables among which there is a whole number of Indian fables borrowed through Arabic translations. Therefore the discrepancy of the image of the Fox is inherited by Armenians from the oriental borrowings. And as the aforementioned Armenian fables V-158, V-74, B-59 are in typological connection with the Greek ones and in genetic connection with the Indian and Arabic ones, it proves once more that the given approach is not inherent in Armenian fables but is an alien element.

Literature

¹Marr, N. *Sbornik pripichi Vardana*. II, III. Sankt-Peterburg, 1899.

²Ibid.

³*Basni Ezopa*. Moscow, 1968.

⁴Op cit., fable 20/48, p. 207.

OSKAR LOORITS UND DIE UNGARISCHE FOLKLORE

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Am II. Internationalen Anthropologischen und Ethnologischen Kongreß in Kopenhagen (1.- 6. August 1938) lernte ich einen jungen estnischen Folkloristen kennen, den man hauptsächlich in Gesellschaft von F. Linnus, G. Berg und S. Erixon sehen konnte. Er hieß Oskar Loorits. Bei dieser Gelegenheit konnten wir nur flüchtig einige Worte wechseln, und erst viel später, im Winter 1947/48, trafen wir wieder zusammen, diesmal in Stockholm. In der Bibliothek des Nordiska Museum lasen und notierten wir gemeinsam, und ich bestaunte insgeheim seine umfangreiche wissenschaftliche Tätigkeit. Auch er gehörte zu den vorzüglichen estnischen Wissenschaftlern, die ihre Heimat wegen des roten Wahnsinns verlassen haben, in Schweden freundschaftlich aufgenommen wurden und somit dem tragischen Schicksal der Deportierten entgingen. G. Ränk, I. Talve, E. Laid, H. Hagar und andere gehörten zu den estnischen Gelehrten, denen die schwedischen Kollegen ein Zuhause und schöpferische Möglichkeiten sicherten.