

LINGUO-ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF GENDER RELATIONS AND FAMILY MODELS IN ARMENIAN PAREMIOLOGY

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Abstract

This article presents a linguo-ethnographic analysis of gender relations and family models as reflected in Armenian paremiology. Utilizing a purposive sample of sixty proverbs from fundamental academic collections, the study examines the strict spatial, economic, and moral divisions within the traditional patriarchal *gerdastan* (extended household). A comparative methodology is employed, juxtaposing Armenian proverbs with English and Russian equivalents to identify universal structural models of gender complementarity and national peculiarities. Statistical analysis of character frequency and spatial domains reveals that the primary target of social regulation is the woman, whose activity is largely confined to the internal hearth, yet she wields absolute domestic authority. Furthermore, dialectal material from the Syunik-Artsakh region highlights the tension between biological-social preferences and moral justice. Ultimately, the research demonstrates how paremias encapsulate the psychological depths of social institutions, serving as mechanisms for both social control and the preservation of familial integrity.

Keywords: Armenian paremiology; Gender roles; Linguo-ethnography; Traditional family models; Comparative linguistics; Syunik-Artsakh dialects

INTRODUCTION

In traditional society, the family constitutes the fundamental socio-economic unit. Language records these norms not only in accordance with kinship ties (Khachatryan et al., 2026), but also by social status (*dirk*՝) (Hovhannisyan, 1973). Folklore and paremiology (proverbs and sayings) transmit models of social behaviour across generations. Armenian paremiology provides extensive material for the study of gender roles. The medieval Armenian family was characteristically patriarchal, retaining certain vestiges of domestic servitude (Adoyan, 1965, pp. 49–66). This structure persisted until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The primary form of the family was the large, multi-generational extended household (*gerdastan*), which functioned as the central economic unit. In historical sources, this unit is expressed through various terms, including *əntanik* ' (family), *tun* (house), *erd* (hearth), and *cux* (household) (Hovhannisyan, 1973, pp. 195–208). Within the patriarchal *gerdastan*, gender roles were strictly allocated: men managed external relations, while women governed the internal domestic economy. This division was codified in folk wisdom. The present research is interdisciplinary, combining linguistic analysis with ethnographic data, focusing on the "woman–man–child" model.

A comparative method is employed; where necessary, Armenian proverbs are examined within the context of English and Russian equivalents. English paremiology reflects a certain progression in the sphere of gender equality, yet historical stereotypes remain present (Karapetyan & Danukhyan, 2023, p. 62). Structural and semantic comparisons of Russian and English proverbs reveal differing attitudes toward marriage. English culture often approaches marriage critically, whereas the Russian tradition views it positively. However, Russian proverbs created from a female perspective describe the hardship of family life. This weight and sense of hopelessness are best expressed in the following classic paremia: "*V devkakh sizheni — plakano, zamuzh khozheno — vyto*" (In girlhood we sat and wept; in marriage we went and wailed) (Zhukov, 1966). The analysis reveals the psychological state of society and illustrates historical transformations. All materials are analysed through the prism of the psychology of the individual in the given era.

STATISTICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASES

The empirical foundation of this study consists of sixty Armenian proverbs and sayings, collected via purposive sampling from the fundamental academic source of Armenian paremiology: the *Aratsani* collection compiled by A. Ghanalanyan (Ghanalanyan, 1960). The proverbs have been classified into five primary thematic groups, pertaining to various aspects of family life. The quantitative distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic Distribution of Selected Proverbs

Thematic Group	Quantity	Percentage (%)
<i>Social status of girls and daughters</i>	12	20.0
<i>Gender roles and spatial division</i>	10	16.7
<i>Motherhood and heredity</i>	10	16.7
<i>Morality and honour</i>	10	16.7
<i>Age, experience, and hierarchy</i>	18	30.0

An analysis of the frequency of characters (actors) in the proverbs illustrates the degree of social targeting. Table 2 demonstrates the linguo-gender representation.

Table 2: Frequency of Characters in Paremiological Material

Character (Actor)	Number of Mentions
Girl / daughter (ał*ik / dustr)	38
Woman / wife / bride (kin / knik / hars)	28
Boy / son (tła / ordi / manč')	24
Man / husband / son-in-law (tłamard / erik / p' esa)	16

Female characters appear 66 times, while male characters appear only 40 times. This numerical disparity is not coincidental; it attests to rigorous social control. Within the Armenian paremiological system, women are observed to a significantly greater extent. Their behaviour is constantly scrutinized and regulated, whereas male conduct is regarded as the standard norm and is discussed less frequently in proverbs.

Another significant indicator is spatial segregation. Table 3 illustrates the distribution of territorial domains, defining the boundaries of an individual's physical and social activity.

Table 3: Distribution of Spatial Domains by Gender

Gender	Internal (Home / Family)	External (World / Public)
<i>Woman / girl</i>	24 proverbs (80%)	6 proverbs (20%)
<i>Man / boy</i>	4 proverbs (20%)	16 proverbs (80%)

Statistics confirm the existence of traditional prohibitions. The activity of women is 80% restricted to the domestic environment, effectively excluding them from the public sphere. For men, the "outer world" predominates, accounting for eighty percent of mentions. Axiological analysis complements this picture: violations of moral norms are most severely condemned in the case of women. Table 4 presents the axiological polarization.

Table 4: Axiological Polarization of Gender Roles

Thematic Domain	Female (Pos.)	Female (Neg.)	Male (Pos.)	Male (Neg.)
<i>Honour and virtue</i>	5	12	8	2
<i>Labour and social role</i>	2	4	10	3
<i>Intellect and wisdom</i>	3	7	5	4
<i>Biological/familial</i>	8	2	4	1

Negative labeling is primarily directed toward the female gender. Honour and virtue have twelve negative mentions for women, compared to only two for men. This is driven by patriarchal anxieties; men fear the loss of their social status through the conduct of women.

THE SOCIAL STATUS OF GIRLS AND DAUGHTERS

In traditional Armenian society, kinship ties operated on the principle of exogamy. For centuries, this principle was also codified in Armenian canon law, strictly prohibiting consanguineous marriages. This physically and psychologically mandated the irrevocable relocation of the bride to a foreign *gerdastan* (Galstyan, 2018, pp. 107–115), a practice of exogamy. The girl was regarded as a transient member of her paternal home, prepared both physically and economically for her move to another patriarchal household. This process had a profound psychological impact on the family. Table 5 presents the primary proverbs of this group, rendered according to international translation standards.

Table 5: Selected Proverbs on the Status of Daughters

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic Equivalent
<i>Աղջիկն ուրիշի տան ճրագն է:</i>	<i>Aljikn uriši tan čragn ē.</i>	A girl is a lamp in someone else's house.	A daughter belongs to another family.
<i>Աղջկանը ի՞նչ վայթան:</i>	<i>Aljkanə i'nc' vat'an.</i>	What homeland is there for a girl?	A woman has no permanent roots.
<i>Աղջիկը միսաֆիր է, ժամանակն եկավ վայել է:</i>	<i>Aljikə misafir ē, žamanakn ekav vayel ē.</i>	A girl is a guest; when the time comes, it is proper [to leave].	A daughter is a temporary resident in her father's house.
<i>Աղջիկը դռան ետևն ա:</i>	<i>Aljikə drān etewn a.</i>	A girl is behind the door.	A girl is always ready to leave her home.
<i>Ծակ հուլունքը գեղնին չի մնա:</i>	<i>Cak hulunk'ə gednin čī mna.</i>	A perforated bead will not stay on the ground.	A girl will eventually find a husband.
<i>Պառաված աղջիկը շատ անբախտ կըլնի:</i>	<i>Pařavac aljikə šat anbaxt kəlni.</i>	An old maid will be very unfortunate.	An unmarried older woman faces a miserable life.
<i>Հարս վրը ձիուն ո՞ն գինա վիր դամաթ կեղնի:</i>	<i>Hars vər jiun o'n gina vir lsmat' kəlni.</i>	The bride is on the horse; who knows whose share she will be?	Until the marriage is finalized, nothing is certain.
<i>Աղջիկը որ կա, անկտրիի ձմերուկ ա:</i>	<i>Aljikə or ka, anktril jmeruk a.</i>	A girl is an uncut watermelon.	A girl's true nature is unpredictable.

Չը գովված աղջիկը սասն է մնացեր:	<i>Č'ə govvac aljikə tann ē mnac'er.</i>	The unpraised girl stays at home.	Without a good reputation, a girl will not marry.
Աղջիկը օրորոցով հոր սունը չի նստի	<i>Aljikə oske ororoc'ov hor tunə č'i nsti.</i>	A girl will not stay in her father's house even in a golden cradle.	A daughter's departure is inevitable.
Աղջիկն որ հարս կերթա գորպի պես է. Քանկեն, նորեն կը գործեն:	<i>Aljikn or hars kert'a gurpi pes ē. K'anden, noren kə gorcen.</i>	A bride is like a sock: unraveled and knit again.	A new bride's personality is completely reshaped.

Linguistically, the word *črag* (ծրագ) symbolizes the hearth (*ōax*), ensuring life and continuity. However, this light does not serve its own blood; it does not warm the father's house. The psychological imperative of alienation is universal. In English, a similar approach is found in Biblical texts; Psalm 45:10 states: "Hearken, O daughter... forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Bible, 2016). The daughter must forget her people and her father's home. In Russian paremiology, the same image persists: the birth of a girl is often viewed as service to another's economy. A shared attitude exists in both Russian and Armenian contexts regarding this matter.

The Arabic loanword *misafir* (միսաֆիր) denotes a guest or traveler. Psychologically, the family perceives the daughter as a temporary phenomenon. In American and English cultures, daughters are often regarded as the family's treasure—described in English as the "treasure of the house"—viewed as fragile and special (Karapetyan & Danukhyan, 2023, pp. 62–83). In the Armenian reality, the emphasis is not on fragility but on the inevitability of alienation. Her homeland (*vat'an*) is not determined; she has no roots until marriage. This psychological stance reflected in paremias—regarding the irrevocable alienation of the daughter—has maintained its negative influence into modern times. Contemporary sociological reports on domestic violence attest that the prohibition on returning to the paternal home (or the traditional requirement to "forget the way back") continues to serve as a serious lever for subjugating women and making them vulnerable within the family (Zhamakochyan & Khalatyan, 2017, pp. 47–48). Even today, during a daughter's wedding, one may hear parental advice such as: "Do not keep your eyes toward our house", "There is no road back", and so forth.

The space "behind the door" (*d'an etewə*) represents a liminal or transitional space. The girl remains at the threshold of exit within the home, holding an intermediate status. At the moment of marriage, this boundary is crossed irrevocably. The only justified model for a woman's existence is marriage. An unmarried woman falls outside the social norm, and an "old maid" (*pa'avac at'ik*) is considered deeply unfortunate. This social anxiety is also highly characteristic of English paremiology, where marrying off a daughter as soon as possible is viewed as a domestic necessity: "Daughters and dead fish are no keeping wares" (Smith, 2008). Furthermore, in the classic English tradition, the fate of an unmarried woman receives as harsh a verdict as in the Armenian environment, expressed in the proverb "Old maids lead apes in hell" (Smith, 2008). In both cultures, the unmarried woman receives a severely negative label for failing to fulfill her reproductive and social functions. The stigmatization of the unmarried woman and the presumption of her inevitable misery are not merely folkloric expressions; they reflect women's economic and social vulnerability. The fear of becoming an 'old maid' has historically served as an instrument of social pressure, often compelling women into marriages of convenience just to secure social standing and survival (Nordau, 1913).

A vivid manifestation of psychological pressure is the metaphor of the sock (*gurpa*). The bride is viewed as raw material; she is completely "unraveled" by her mother-in-law and the husband's family, then reconstructed according to the requirements of the new home. This is an element of psychological violence within the Armenian patriarchal family: individuality is erased, and identity must merge into the husband's lineage. The "perforated bead" (*čak hulunk'*) illustrates that all girls must marry, yet their fate remains uncertain (*t'smat'*) until the final moment.

GENDER ROLES AND SPATIAL DIVISION

The division of labour into male and female spheres is of vital importance, as it maintains the agrarian

economy. The perception of space reflects the boundaries of authority. Table 6 presents the paremias belonging to this group.

Table 6: Proverbs on Gender Roles and Domestic Space

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic/Artistic Equivalent
Տղամարդ որ կա դրսի պատ է, կնիկ որ կա ներսի պատ է:	<i>Tlamard or ka drsi pat ē, knik or ka nersi pat ē.</i>	A man is the outer wall; a woman is the inner wall.	Men protect from the outside; women manage the home.
Էրիկմարդը դուրս, վաստակը ներս:	<i>Erikmardə durs, vastakə ners.</i>	The husband is outside; the earnings are inside.	The husband brings wealth into the home.
Կնկա շինած տունը աստոծ չի քանդի, աստու շինածը կնիկը կը քանդի:	<i>Kənkə šinac tunə astoc či k'andi, assu šinacə knikə kə k'andi.</i>	God won't destroy a house built by a woman, but a woman will destroy a house built by God.	A woman wields ultimate power over her family's fate.
Կնիկը տղամարդի հոգին ա:	<i>Knikə tlamardi hogin a.</i>	The woman is the man's soul.	A woman is the emotional core of a man.
Կնոջ սուգն ի սեղան, մարդուն փողան:	<i>Knoj sugn i selan, mardun p'olan.</i>	A woman's mourning is at the table; a man's is in the street.	Women grieve openly at home; men grieve silently outside.
Գեշ կնիկմարդե դեերը փախիլ ին:	<i>Geš knikmarde dewerə p'axil in.</i>	Devils flee from a wicked woman.	A malicious woman is more terrifying than demons.
Կնիկ պետք է Հալապի, որ տղա բերե Չալախի:	<i>Knik petk' ē Halapi, or tla bere Ć'alaxi.</i>	A woman must be from Aleppo to bear a boy from Chalach.	A strong woman is needed to produce a strong son.
Կնիկարմատը հավ չի մորթի:	<i>Knikarmatə hav či mort' i.</i>	A woman will not slaughter a hen.	Women are inherently unsuited for violent acts.
Ո՛ր տուն գնաս, կնկա բարեկամ ըլիր:	<i>O'r tun gnas, kənkə barekam əlir.</i>	Whichever house you go to, be a friend to the woman.	Win the favour of the woman to be welcomed in a house.
Կնկան շինածը աստված չի շինե:	<i>Kənkən šinacə astvac či šine.</i>	What a woman builds, God cannot build.	A woman's creative role in the home is unparalleled.
Կնիկմարդ որ կա մարդու կյանքն ա:	<i>Knikmard or ka mardu kyank 'n a.</i>	A woman is a man's life.	The husband's existence depends on the wife.
Աղջիկը էլու պատ ա:	<i>Aljikə əlu pat a.</i>	A girl is an external wall.	A daughter provides no foundational support to her family.

Architectural metaphor forms the basis of structural sociology: without the outer wall, the house would collapse, and without the inner wall, it would lack comfort. This territorial dichotomy and the strict segregation of functions find an ideal parallel in the English tradition: "Men make houses, women make homes" (Smith, 2008). In English culture, men are traditionally identified with the outside and the acquisition of earnings ("breadwinners"), while the woman's domain is restricted to the internal economy ("housekeeping"). This limitation of female space and activity is also vividly recorded in the following paremia: "The foot on the cradle and the hand on the distaff is the sign of a good housewife" (Smith, 2008). In both folkloric systems, the roles of men and women are complementary, and the integrity of the family is achieved only through their unity. This phenomenon is universal and equally strikingly expressed in Russian paremiology, where the outer walls built by a man are not considered complete without the presence of a woman: "Bez zheny dom ne kryt" (Without a wife, the house is not roofed) (Zhukov, 1966).

Economic circulation ensures the stability of the rural family: the man is outside, bringing earnings in, while the woman's role is the preservation and processing of the acquired resources. The prosperity of the family is constructed around this axis. Notably, the role of the woman is overestimated within the internal space: a house built by a woman even God will not destroy. This echoes the Proverbs of Solomon in the Bible; in English translation, it reads: "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down" (Bible, 2016). God's role is subordinated to the activity of the woman. Within the internal space, the woman acts as an absolute sovereign. Inside the home, the woman's intellect and cunning acquire a mystical power; even demons flee from a "wicked woman" (*geš knik*). Similar paremias exist in English, for example: "It takes a woman to outwit the devil." A woman's tongue is considered a destructive weapon.

The psychological and ethnographic roots of this phenomenon are deep. One must consider the daily life of a woman in the nineteenth century. The life of Armenian women in the districts of Alashkert and Bagrevand was filled with arduous physical labour. Materials recorded by the ethnographer Sargis Haykuni attest to the inhuman work performed by women (Haykuni, 1894, p. 39). In folklore, it is recorded: "K 'a-sun erkan knik kuzim ult ba-nan" (I want forty tall women to carry camels/loads). Elsewhere it is stated: "K 'a-sun azap al' ik kuzim erkank ' atan" (I want forty maiden girls to grind the quern). Grinding the quern (*erkank '*) was heavy stone-work. This heavy physical yoke induced psychological pressure. In beliefs, brides were often viewed as mysterious beings. Animistic conceptions were widespread, a vivid example being the *gelven* (werewolf-woman) belief. According to this, the bride would leave the house naked at midnight, transform into a wolf, and later regain human form (Abeghyan, 1944, p. 35). This mythological image is a product of suppressed psychology: the prohibition on entering the external world leads to projections of mystical liberation.

Emotional expression also follows spatial norms. A woman's mourning is "at the table" (*i setan*); she has the right to weep at home. The manifestation of a man's emotions must be far from the public eye or in the street (*p ' olan*) through pragmatic solutions. This reaffirms the dichotomy of the "inside" (*ners*) and the "outside" (*durs*).

MOTHERHOOD AND HEREDITY

The reproductive function of the family is of paramount importance in an agrarian social order. It relies upon the production of male offspring. A son provides labour and protection, preserving the name and heritage of the *gerdastan* (Adoyan, 1965, pp. 49–66). This imperative is distinctly echoed in Armenian epic traditions, where the birth of a male heir is perceived as the ultimate guarantee for the preservation of the family name and lineage (Nahapetyan, 2019, p. 58). The birth of a girl is often perceived as an economic loss. Table 7 illustrates the paremias related to motherhood and children.

Table 7: Proverbs on Motherhood and Offspring

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic/Artistic Equivalent
Կինն որ մանկ ծնի տան պատերն ալ կը խնդան:	<i>Kinn or manč' cni tan patern al kə xndan.</i>	When a woman gives birth to a boy, even the walls of the house rejoice.	The birth of a son brings immense joy and stability.
Մանկ օսկի փարչ, աղջիկ հողե փարչիկ:	<i>Manč' oski p'arč', aljik hole p'arč'ik.</i>	A son is a golden jug; a girl is a clay pitcher.	A son is highly valued; a daughter is ordinary and fragile.
Աղջիկ ունեցող մոր ձեռքը ծոցը կրկա:	<i>Aljik unec'ol mor jerk'ə coc'ə kəlla.</i>	The hand of a mother who has a daughter will always be in her bosom.	A mother will always secretly support her married daughter.
Մանկ բերող աղջկան դրսեցի չեն տալ:	<i>Manč' berol aljkan drsec'ii č'en tal.</i>	They do not give a girl who brings a boy to a stranger.	A woman who bears sons is kept within the close community.
Կնկան խոսքը յա աղջկա վրեն է, յա տղու:	<i>Kənkən xosk'ə ya aljka vren ē, ya thu.</i>	A woman's word is either about the daughter or the son.	A woman's entire world revolves around her children.

<i>Տղուն կերածը հալալ է, հագածը հարստ:</i>	<i>Thun keracə halal ē, hagacə haram.</i>	What a son eats is halal; what he wears is haram.	Invest in a son's nutrition; his clothing is secondary.
<i>Տղին ինչպես բռնիս, այնպես էլ կը մեծնա:</i>	<i>Tlin inč'pes brnis, aynpes ēl kə mecna.</i>	As you hold/raise a boy, so he will grow.	Early discipline shapes a man's future character.
<i>Պուճուրը լալեն կը մեծանա:</i>	<i>Pučurə lalen kə mencana.</i>	The little one grows through crying.	Hardships and tears are natural for a growing child.
<i>Հորթը մարագն է պարպել, տղան հացին տաշտը:</i>	<i>Hort ə maragn ē parpe, tlan hac'in taštə.</i>	The calf empties the manger; the boy empties the bread-trough.	A growing son consumes a vast amount of resources.
<i>Տղին դալիպն օրոցքն ա:</i>	<i>Tlin lalipn oroc'k'n a.</i>	The cradle is the boy's mold (łalip).	A boy's character is forged from early infancy.

A woman's social status rises sharply after she gives birth to male offspring. She is no longer an "outsider" (*ōtar*); she becomes the mother of the future master of the house. This transformation is celebrated by the entire family (even the walls "rejoice"). Material metaphors attest to an inequality of value: gold is permanent, unchanging, and precious, whereas earth or clay represents cheap and easily breakable materials. The daughter is viewed as a "clay pitcher" (*hole p' arc' ik*), illustrating her vulnerability and low social value.

The perception of heredity included an embryonic understanding of genetics. If a *gerdastan* observed that a girl had a predisposition for bearing male offspring, she was kept within the close circle; she was not married off to a "stranger" (*drsec' i*). This was aimed at the genetic strengthening of the lineage. The valuation of male offspring was also expressed in matters of nourishment: what a boy consumes is considered *halal* (permissible/blessed), an investment in future labour. Spending on clothing, however, is considered *haram* (forbidden/wasted). English paremiology also emphasizes motherhood; in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, mothers are described as protective lionesses (Karapetyan & Danukhyan, 2023, pp. 62–83), infinitely devoted to their descendants.

In Armenian proverbs, one also observes infinite maternal devotion. The hand of a mother with a daughter is said to be always "in her bosom" (*coc' ə*). Despite patriarchal structures, the mother finds secret economic paths to support her daughter who has been married off. This speaks to an internal solidarity; a network of mutual aid operates among women. A woman's entire life is circumscribed by her children; her discourse pertains only to her son and daughter. A woman possesses no right to political or public discourse. Historical sources illustrate that from the early feudal period, a woman's legal status was tied to the composition of the family (Hovhannisyan, 1973, pp. 195–208). Her ontological field consists solely of her offspring.

MORALITY, HONOUR, AND AXIOLOGY

Armenian proverbs strictly delineate the moral obligations of men and women. The concept of honour, or *namus* (նամուս), is of fundamental significance, manifesting in both vestiary and semiotic forms. Table 8 presents proverbs pertaining to this theme.

Table 8: Proverbs on Honour and Morality

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic/Artistic Equivalent
<i>Մարդի նամուսը գտակն ա, կրնկանը լաշակը:</i>	<i>Mardi namusə gtakn a, kənkənə lačakə.</i>	A man's honour is his hat; a woman's is her headscarf.	A man's dignity and a woman's modesty are visually marked.
<i>Գինին կընտրին</i>	<i>Ginin kənttrin hamov,</i>	Wine is chosen by taste;	A woman's true value

հասնով, աղջիկը հասնով:	<i>aljikə namov.</i>	a girl by her modesty.	lies in her virtue.
Աղջիկը որ կա շուշա է, որ կոտրվեց, չի կարկաստվիլ:	<i>Aljikə or ka šuša ē, or kotrvec', či karkatvil.</i>	A girl is like glass: if broken, it cannot be mended.	A ruined reputation cannot be restored.
Աղջկերանց տերը դուռը հուսի կուտա:	<i>Aljkeranc' terə dunč'ə hup' kuta.</i>	The owner of daughters keeps his mouth shut.	Having daughters requires a man to be humble and silent.
Կնկան արտասունք աչիչ ծերն ի:	<i>Kənkən artsunk' ač' ič' cern i.</i>	A woman's tears are at the edge of her eyes.	Women are inherently emotional and quick to cry.
Կնոջ հերսը կճռճի եռն ա:	<i>Knoĵ hersə kčuč'i ern a.</i>	A woman's anger is like the boiling of a pot.	A woman's anger brews internally and continuously.
Լավ աղջիկը օխտը տղին ածե:	<i>Lav aljikə oxtə tlin aže.</i>	A good girl is worth seven sons.	A virtuous daughter is more valuable than many sons.
Ամեն ծառի հազար քար կը շարտեն:	<i>Amen cari hazar k'ar kə šprten.</i>	A thousand stones are thrown at every tree.	Every girl is subjected to rumours and scrutiny.
Առյուծը առյուծ է էգ լինի թե ործ:	<i>Aryucə aryuc ē ēg lini t'e orj.</i>	A lion is a lion, whether female or male.	True strength and bravery are independent of gender.
Կնկա իրեր բաժինը լաց է, մեկն էլ չորեղեն:	<i>Kənka irek' bažinə lac' ē, mekn ēl šorelen.</i>	Three parts of a woman are tears, and one is clothes.	Women are dominated by emotions and vanity.

The hat or cap (*gtak* / *gdak*) symbolizes a man's social position, expressing his independence and authority. The *lačak* (լաչակ) or headscarf represents the covering of female sexuality. Without these attributes, an individual loses their social persona. Notably, the outward appearance of women is strictly regulated: physical beauty is seen as capital, yet it must be rigorously concealed in public. Virginity and *namus* are a woman's only capital prior to marriage. The breaking of glass (*šuša*) symbolizes the destruction of her social viability; once broken, it cannot be mended. The "owner of daughters" is compelled to remain silent in public, unable to boast or contend, as the honour of his daughters remains under constant threat.

In the Armenian reality, wine is selected for its taste (*ham*), while a girl is chosen for her *nam* (modesty/honour). It is noteworthy that the comparison between female morality and the qualitative attributes of wine is universal and finds an exact reflection in English paremiology: "A fair woman without virtue is like palled wine" (Smith, 2008). As T. Orlova observes in her comparative analysis, the process of selecting a bride in English culture was often viewed as a potential error and a significant risk (Orlova, 2021, p. 1086). This approach is directly reflected in classical paremiology, which demands maximum vigilance: "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards" (Smith, 2008). According to Orlova's observations, the greatest behavioral defect of a woman in family life, within classical English perceptions, was considered to be complaining and grumbling (Orlova, 2021, p. 1089). This manifestation of public control, highly consistent with Armenian reality, is vividly recorded in the following English saying:

"It is a good horse that never stumbles, and a good wife that never grumbles" (Smith, 2008).

The study of axiological and moral norms becomes more comprehensive with the inclusion of dialectal and folkloric material from Syunik and Artsakh. Recent studies of the Syunik-Artsakh dialect have demonstrated that synonymic and conceptually related lexical units preserve important semantic, stylistic, and cultural distinctions reflecting traditional systems of values and social perception (Kumunts, 2026). Traditional Artsakhian paremias demonstrate that perceptions of beauty, modesty, and mutual marital respect were strictly regulated. Table 9 presents unique specimens of Artsakhian paremias (examples from Harutyunyan, 1991).

Table 9: Paremias from the Artsakh Region

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic/Artistic Equivalent
Վե՛ք փիս ախճի՛ց տեսե՛, Վե՛ք լավ կնե՛ց:	<i>Več' p'is axčig tese, več' lav kneg.</i>	See neither a bad girl nor a good wife.	A woman's true virtue is kept private, away from the public eye.
Ղնգո՛ղթունը սարու ծյուն ա, սարը բղի դաշան՛գ (ընի):	<i>Lšngot'unə saru cyun a, sarə bdi lašang (əni).</i>	Beauty is mountain snow; the mountain itself must be beautiful.	Outer beauty is fleeting; a woman's true worth lies in her character and roots.
Թեկու՛ղ մարթ ու կին, էլի մարթը կնգանան բղի հման՛ի, կնեգը՝ մարթան:	<i>T'ekuz mart' u kin, ēli mart'ə knganan bdi hmanč'i, knegə' mart'an.</i>	Even as husband and wife, the man must be shy of the woman, and the woman of the man.	Mutual respect and modesty are the foundation of a lasting marriage.

In the aforementioned examples, it is clearly evident that outward beauty ("mountain snow") is viewed as a deceptive and temporary phenomenon unless supported by a solid moral foundation ("the mountain"). At the same time, even within strict patriarchal orders, the necessity of mutual modesty (*hmanč' el*) between spouses is recorded.

However, a sense of injustice leads to the suppressed anger of the woman. A woman's anger is likened to the boiling of a pot (*kčuč*). The metaphor of food cooking in a clay vessel is highly domestic, illustrating that the anger is not explosive but rather enduring, slow, and constantly simmering. This psychological description attests to the accumulation of emotions; women often lacked overt means of expression (Adoyan, 1965, pp. 49–66).

Despite the rigid patriarchal model, folk wisdom occasionally bypasses dogmas, establishing justice on a moral level. A "good girl" is said to be "worth seven sons." This contrasts with the biological-social preference and demonstrates that high morality overcomes gender inequality. A virtuous daughter brings honour to the family, whereas "bad sons" can destroy it. This conflict between social and moral norms is also present in animal allegories: a lion remains a lion regardless of sex. This idea dates back to the Armenian epic: "*Այլս ա՛յլս է, ըց լինի, տ' է օրյ*" (A lion is a lion, whether female or male), said of Khandut, the mother of David. This egalitarian approach is deeply rooted in the Armenian epic *Daredevils of Sassoun*, where female characters often assert their equality, demonstrating that high moral and behavioral qualities transcend strict patriarchal boundaries (Nahapetyan, 2019, p. 72). This is the most striking egalitarian assertion in Armenian paremiology: if an individual manifests high behavioral qualities, gender identity becomes secondary. The theme of the "wise woman" has ancient roots in Armenian folklore (Khemchyan, 2021); she can save an entire *gerdastan* through her intellect.

AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND FAMILY HIERARCHY

Age is a paramount factor in traditional society, where old age is associated with experience and wisdom. Within the lineage-based family, elders possess the absolute right to make decisions. The status of the elderly woman, in particular, undergoes a significant shift. Table 10 presents the proverbs of this group.

Table 10: Proverbs on Age and Hierarchy

Armenian Original	Transliteration	Literal English Translation	Semantic/Artistic Equivalent
Պառա՛վը տան բռճի է:	<i>Paravə tan boji ē.</i>	An old woman is the house's pillar.	A matriarch holds the internal family structure together.
Ահեղի աչքով աղջիկ առ, շահեղի աչքով ձի:	<i>Aheli ačk'ov aljik ar, jaheli ačk'ov ji.</i>	Choose a girl with the eye of an elder, a horse with the eye of a youth.	Rely on the wisdom of older generations when choosing a life partner.

Ծերություն- գերություն:	<i>Cerut 'yun-gerut 'yun.</i>	Old age is captivity.	Aging brings physical limitations that feel like imprisonment.
Զահեղությունը մաշի, սպառնալիությունը քաշի:	<i>ĵahelut 'inə maši, pařavut 'inə k 'aši.</i>	Wear out your youth; endure your old age.	Enjoy your youth, for old age brings suffering.
Կենճութ վաստակածը ծերութ ծալած ոսկի է:	<i>Kenčut ' vastakacə cerut ' calac oski ē.</i>	What is earned in youth is folded gold in old age.	Hard work in youth secures a peaceful old age.
Ծերն ու տղան մեկ են:	<i>Cern u tlan mek en.</i>	The old and the child are one.	The elderly become as vulnerable and dependent as children.
Աղջիկն իր քեֆին թողուս, կերթաւ քեչեկը կառնէ:	<i>Alĵikn ir k 'efin t 'oſus, kert 'a k 'ečekə kařne.</i>	If you leave a girl to her own will, she will marry a frivolous youth.	Young people lack the wisdom to make proper life choices.
Տղին երես տալու ըլլաս, սաստառն ալ հետը կուգես:	<i>Tlin eres talu əllas, astařn al hetə kuze.</i>	If you give a boy a face [an inch], he will want the lining (asta®) as well.	Children will exploit leniency; strictness is required.
Կուզրկին աղջիկ չեն տալի, նա ուզոյմ ա զանքանչն էլ սիրուն ըլնի:	<i>Kəŋkan fel barjer en sel, selə č 'ə tare kəŋkan fel.</i>	They don't give a girl to a hunchback, but he wants even his mother- in-law to be beautiful.	Unreasonable demands from those with little to offer.
Աղջիկը պիտի մարդանց տանը դուս կանգնի. մարդանց տունը քուրսխանա է:	<i>Alĵikə piti mardanc ' tanə dus kangni. mardanc ' tunə k 'uraxana ē.</i>	A girl must stand up in people's houses; people's houses are a crucible.	Marriage is a test of character and endurance for a girl.
Մանչ ունենամ ապալոր, հարս կը բերեմ կապալոր:	<i>Manč ' unenam apavor, hars kə berem kapavor.</i>	If I have a son with a father [lineage], I will bring a bride with a dowry.	Lineage and status determine marital alliances.
Աղջիկն օր կա, տան ծաղիկն ա:	<i>Alĵikn or ka, tan calikn a.</i>	A girl is the flower of the house.	A daughter brings beauty and joy to her home.
Տղա ունենամ ջիբալոր, աղջիկ կու նարիմ ջիղալոր:	<i>Tla unenam ĵibavor, alĵik ku čarim ĵilavur.</i>	If I have a son with money, I will find a girl with head-ornaments.	Economic status is the primary factor in choosing a bride.
Կնկան ֆել բարձեր են սեղ, սեղը չը տարե կնկան ֆել:	<i>Kuzəkin alĵik č 'en tali, na uzəŋ a zank 'ančn ēl sirun əlni.</i>	They loaded a woman's wiles onto a cart, but the cart couldn't carry them.	A woman's cunning is immense and unmanageable.
Զահեղություն խոշություն, թե կարենաս մաշի:	<i>ĵahelut 'yun xošut 'yun, t 'e karenas maši.</i>	Youth is pleasure; wear it out if you can.	Enjoy your youth while you have the strength.
Էրեխին բանի դիր, հետը գնա:	<i>Erexin bani dir, hetə gna.</i>	Assign a task to a child, but go with them.	Children cannot be trusted with responsibilities unsupervised.
Մարոն հավնալ Կարոյին, Կարոն չը հավնալ Մարոյին:	<i>Maron havnav Karoyin, Karon č 'ə havnav Maroyin.</i>	Maro liked Karo, but Karo did not like Maro.	Mutual affection is rare and often unrequited in youth.

The young bride (*hars*) is disenfranchised and must remain silent. However, the elderly woman becomes the axis of the home. When a woman's reproductive years conclude, she acquires a new social power.

As the mother-in-law (*skesur*), she governs the other daughters-in-law and coordinates the entire domestic economy. The linguistic diversity of kinship relations manifested in Armenian dialects—such as the terms *skesur* (mother-in-law), *hart' nə* (daughter-in-law), *tal* (husband's sister), and *k' ēni* (wife's sister) preserved in the Syunik-Artsakh area (Acharyan, 1913; Khachatryan, 2009)—attests to a rigorous internal hierarchy of subordination among women, wherein each had a clearly defined space and function. The old woman (*paṣav*) is considered the foundational pillar (*boji*) of the house.

In the world of men, experience is likewise prioritized. Marital selection is conducted through the "eye of the elders" (*aheli ačk' ov*). A youth may be captivated by outward appearance and err as if choosing a horse, whereas elders evaluate a woman's capacity for labour and her lineage (*tohmabanut' yun*). They seek a girl with *nam* (virtue/honour). The Russian tradition similarly subordinates outward attractiveness and amusement to industriousness and thrift in the selection of a bride, advising: "*Vybiray zhenu ne v khorovode, a v ogorode*" (Choose a wife not in the ring-dance, but in the vegetable garden) (Zhukov, 1966). In English proverbs, we encounter similar warnings: marriage is viewed as a potentially fatal error if based solely on emotion (Karapetyan & Danukhyan, 2023, pp. 62–83). This pragmatic and economic foundation of marital selection, often devoid of romantic affection, was fiercely criticized in early twentieth-century socio-philosophical literature as a conventional 'lie' driven primarily by material security and social preservation (Nordau, 1913).

Old age, however, is also viewed as a period of vulnerability. As an individual loses physical strength—the basis of survival in a rural economy—old age is equated to "captivity" (*gerut' yun*). This applies equally to men and women. The vigour of youth must be utilized for earning; that which is acquired in the years of *kenčut' yun* (youth) becomes "folded gold" (*calac oski*) in old age. In the final stage of life's development, the elder and the child are equated; physical helplessness renders them identical.

The attitude toward children and youths is demanding; they must obey. If a girl is left to her own devices, she will marry a *zuṣnach' i* (musician), symbolizing a frivolous and low social choice. Society does not trust the judgment of the adolescent; regulation is absolute. Tasks assigned to children require constant supervision: when sending a boy to fetch water, one must follow behind him. This underscores the complexity of instilling responsibility within a patriarchal environment.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Armenian paremiological units reveals a rigid social structure, wherein gender relations have been shaped by the imperatives of an agrarian economy. Territorial and economic division is distinct: male activity is reserved for the external world, while the internal space is assigned to the woman. Despite the disenfranchised status of women in the public sphere, they wield absolute authority within the internal hearth (*ōṣax*), possessing the power to "build or destroy" the house. The psychology of alienation is central to the upbringing of girls; the daughter is regarded as a guest (*misafir*) and temporary labour force, a phenomenon confirmed by historical and ethnographic data.

The comparative method illustrates structural similarities with English and Russian paremias. The roles of the man as protector and the woman as housekeeper function as universal models. Nevertheless, a national peculiarity lies in the Armenian proverbs' heavy emphasis on biological heredity. The cult of the male offspring and the preservation of *namus* (honour) are of fateful significance. Linguistic statistics prove that the primary target of social normalization is the woman; her morality and capacity for labour have ensured the continuity of the *gerdastan*.

In an international context, the traditional Armenian model serves as a vivid example of gender complementarity. Only the cooperation of the two sexes and the strict division of functions created familial integrity. Paremias reflect the psychological depths of social institutions. The translation and interdisciplinary study of these proverbs allow for an understanding of the true origins of historical transformations, representing human adaptability under arduous labour and social conditions.

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