
**THE EXPRESSION OF PATTERNS AND RESOLUTION METHODS
OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE MEDIEVAL ARMENIAN FABLE
LITERATURE: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FABLES BY M.
GOSH AND V. AYGEKTSI***

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The area of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) is based on the core idea, according to which a comprehensive and detailed analysis is necessary for effective resolution of social conflicts²⁴. Professionals of the mentioned discipline have worked out numerous methods, which assume a theoretical investigation of conflicts as social phenomena and dynamic processes to contribute to their efficient resolution in practice. Among those a unique place holds the method of “Conflict mapping”²⁵.

Particularly, D. Sandole has worked out the method of “A comprehensive mapping of conflict and conflict resolution: a three pillar approach” using theoretical approaches on conflicts formed in the frames of the CAR, which is applicable for analysis and resolution of both interpersonal and international conflicts. According to him, “it is based on the assumption that "mapping" any particular conflict in terms of various categories - e.g., (i) *conflict*; (ii) *conflict causes and conditions*; and (iii) *conflict intervention perspectives and processes* - constitutes a preliminary step to designing and implementing an effective intervention into it”²⁶.

Thereby, under conflict (latent conflict (pre-Manifest Conflict Process), Manifest Conflict Process and Aggressive Manifest Conflict Process) a conflict analyst or potential third party needs to collect information on conflict parties, issues, objectives, means, orientations (strategies) and environments of the conflict. Under conflict causes and conditions a researcher has to find out the potential sources of the conflict operative at individual, societal, international, global/ ecological levels.

* Paper presented at the International conference on “Social Construction of Reality: Chances and Risks for Human Communications”, Yerevan State University, Faculty of Sociology, Yerevan, September 25-27, Armenia.

²⁴ In the frames of the CAR the concept “social conflict” is interpreted as a situation, which assumes a perception of existence of mutually incompatible goals by two or more parties, which is accompanied by negative attitudes and perceptions of each other and leads to conflict parties to implement actions against each other (See **Mitchell C. R.** *The Structure of International Conflict*. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1981, pp. 16-34; **Miall H., Ramsbotham O., Woodhouse T.** *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 14-15).

²⁵ See **Hocker J., Wilmot W.** *Interpersonal Conflict*. USA: Brown and Benchmark Publishers, 1995, pp. 160-167; **Sandole D.** *A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach*// *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, December, 1998. <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/sandole.htm>.

²⁶ **Sandole D.** *A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach*, p. 1.

Meanwhile, according to the statement of Sandole, “no matter at what level a conflict occurs - at the interpersonal, intergroup, interorganizational, or international levels - factors operative at each of these four explanatory levels may be impacting the conflict (although, depending upon the level at which the conflict occurs, perhaps in terms of varying “weights”). And if the causes and conditions of a conflict are multi-level, then attempts to deal with it must be multi-level as well”²⁷. And, finally, before intervening into the conflict the potential third party needs to be clear about his/her own objectives, which could include conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict settlement, conflict resolution and conflict transformation or some combination of them. According to Sandole, the potential third party could choose the following orientations to conflict handling: competitive and cooperative processes, negative peace (prevention/cessation of hostilities) and positive peace (elimination of underlying causes and conditions of hostilities) as well as track-1 (governmental) and track-2 (nongovernmental) processes of conflict resolution.

At the same time, some scientists insist that the effective analysis of the conflicts, first of all, presupposes a cultural analysis. According to K. Avruch, “this requirement is especially keen in cases of intercultural conflict, where one can expect that the greater the cultural divide the more acute the requirement”²⁸. However, in the opinion of the author, “...many more conflicts –ethnic, class, religious, occupational, gender – are “intercultural” than may be initially apparent”²⁹.

Particularly, K. Avruch and P. Black think that for the efficient analysis and resolution of conflicts it is necessary to collect knowledge on perceptions, patterns of conflicts and ideas about their consequences, which they call “ethnoconflict theories”, as well as find out local techniques and practices to resolve social conflicts - “ethnoprxes”. As a result, the cultural research of social conflicts in the way of working out “ethnoconflict theories” and exploring “ethnoprxes” gives an opportunity not only to form a theoretical knowledge on perceptions, patterns and resolution methods of social conflicts in the given culture, but also contributes to the effective analysis and resolution of intercultural conflicts in practice³⁰.

Actually, it is possible to work out the “ethnoconflict theories” and clarify the “ethnoprxes” through an analysis of fables, allegories, sayings, proverbs and other elements³¹ of folklore formed within the certain culture. To take the first steps to work out “ethnoconflict theories” and clear up “ethnoprxes” peculiar to the Armenian culture it is represented in the frames of this research the sociological analysis of the fables of the famous Armenian fabulists of the 12th-13th centuries M. Gosh and V. Aygektsi³², which seem to be the most interesting scientifically in terms of conflict analysis and resolution.

²⁷ Same place, p. 12.

²⁸ “Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention”/ Ed. by S. Cheldelin, D. Druckman and L. Fast. London, New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 149.

²⁹ Same place.

³⁰ See same place, pp. 147-151; **Avruch K., Black P.** Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Settings: Problems and Prospects// Conflict Resolution theory and Practice: Integration and Application. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993, pp. 132-133.

³¹ See “Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention”, p. 147.

³² See **Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի, Առակներ**, Կազմ.՝ Կ.Սաֆրազյան, Խ. Գյուլամիրյան, Եր., «Լույս», 1986:

Before beginning the analysis of the fables it is necessary to mention that in Webster's New World Dictionary the concept "fable" is interpreted as: (1) "a fictitious story, usually about animals, meant to teach a moral lesson, (2) a myth or legend, (3) a falsehood"³³. In the same source the synonym of the term "fable" - "allegory" is defined as "a story in which people, things, and events have a symbolic meaning, often instructive"³⁴.

The analysis of the works by Mkhitar Gosh and Vardan Aygektsi shows that conflicts are described in most of them. It indicates not only the existence of the conflicts in the medieval Armenian society, but also the recognition and urgency of the issue. Particularly, it is talked of different social conflicts existed in all levels and spheres of the medieval Armenian society.

To make out a complete view on fables under study it is expedient to cite the fables and then represent their analyses.

"The magpie usually cries in the forest, especially when it sees animals. When its chick wanted to find out the reason of it, mother magpie answered: "So that the enemies always see me alert and not think to attack me for hunting"³⁵.

Although there is no manifest conflict in the above mentioned fable by Gosh, there is a latent conflict. It is hinted symbolically about the existence of potential social conflicts in the society, their recognition and necessity "to keep alert" permanently to prevent violence.

"Once the lion, bear and wolf said:

- Why do we eat raw meat? Let us catch a human being so that one will prepare our game as food, according to human custom.

They captured someone and made him a cook. Harassed, the man devised a way to get free. He split a large log and placed wedges on either end. Then he said to the lion and others:

- Help me split this log. Each of you put your paws into it and pull.

When they put their paws, the man pulled out the wedges. Animals were trapped. Then the man took a chopper and said:

- Let us start with the lion.

He told this and hacked them"³⁶.

The analysis of the cited fable by Gosh shows that there is described a "person-group" conflict, where "parties" are a man and animals. The conflict arises over their mutually incompatible interests, i.e. between intention of the animals "to have a cook and be tasty fed" from one side and the man, who does not want "to serve them free of charge" from the other side. Recognition of the conflict by the man and formation of appropriate negative attitudes leads to the expression of conflict behavior. Particularly, the man chooses a competitive orientation in the conflict expressed in the way of fight, which terminates in favor of the man over animals, resulting in their physical elimination. Actually, the fable by Gosh presented in a figurative sense discusses the keen nature of conflict relationships between peasants and feudal lords in the medieval Armenian society conditioned by exploitation of the peasants³⁷.

³³ "Webster's New World[™] Dictionary"/ Editor in chief M. Agnes. Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2003, p. 233.

³⁴ Same place, p. 17.

³⁵ Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի, Առակներ, p. 21.

³⁶ Same place, p. 12.

³⁷ See «Հայոց պատմություն», խմբ.՝ Վ. Բ. Բարխուդարյան: Եր., «Լույս», 1993, pp. 191-192:

“A man was having a store and selling honey. A drop of honey fell to the ground and a bee sat on the drop. The cat ran and caught the bee. After it the dog ran and caught the cat. The shopkeeper hit the dog and killed it.

There was a neighboring village and the dog was from that village. As soon as the owner of the dog learned that the shopkeeper had killed his dog, he came and killed the shopkeeper. Then the peasants from both sides rose and waged a large war against each other. A massacre took place and only one man from both sides remained alive for a drop of honey”³⁸.

The process of conflict escalation is described remarkably in the fable “A Drop of Honey as a Cause of War” by Aygektsi. The conflict arose between “animals” in the beginning, in leaps and bounds, turns into an interpersonal conflict between the shopkeeper and the owner of the dog and then – an intergroup conflict between two villages. So, it characterizes the transformation during the process of conflict escalation, particularly, in this case a phenomenon of “few-many”³⁹, when the number of parties in the conflict grows during the escalation of the conflict. It is also described explicitly in the fable how at the first sight “an insignificant” incident leads to the uncontrollable development of the conflict and eventually to destructive resolution of it. Meanwhile, in contrast to the former fable, where we have a “win-lose” result, thus the victory of the one party leads to the loss of the other, here the consequence of the conflict is “lose-lose”, because the conflict leads to the total elimination⁴⁰ of both parties. In this sense, the phrase “...only one man from both sides remained alive for a drop of honey” in the context of discussion of the conflict, where two villages are involved has per se a symbolic meaning.

“There was a king and he had a loved snake, which was yielding a one red coin every day. The king had a baby and he was nursing it on the throne. He was throwing the snake to the neck of the baby and the snake and baby were playing. When baby grew, once during the game it drew the sword, cut off the tail of snake and threw it on the ground. The snake got angry, bit the baby and the baby passed away immediately. The snake left for other country. When the king came and saw the baby black of the venom of the snake and died, the tail of the snake on the ground, he learnt that the baby had cut off the tail of the snake by sword. He mourned the loss of the son, buried him in the cemetery.

And after a time the king sent supplicants to that snake and said.

- I know that my son made a mistake initially: he cut off your tail, and then you bit him. What has happened that happened and you left for nothing. Come back and we will love each other and live together as in the past.

And the snake answered:

- It is not so: because I will be watching to my tail, and you will be watching to your son’s grave, then the hostility between us will not disappear. It is better that you and I part from each other, in order that other great misfortunes are not born between us”⁴¹.

Aygektsi describes a conflict in the fable “The King and the Snake”, which takes place between the son of the king and a party represented figuratively by the

³⁸ **Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի**, Առակներ, p. 48.

³⁹ See **Рубин Д., Пруйт Д., Ким С. Х.** Социальный конфликт: эскалация, тупик, разрешение. М., 2002, p. 128-129.

⁴⁰ See «Конфликтология». СПб., 2001, pp. 294-299.

⁴¹ **Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի**, Առակներ, p. 45.

image of the snake. To the rapid development of the conflict stimulates an incident during the game - that is cutting off the tail of the snake by the kid, which is followed by snake bite and death of the kid. When the king finds out that the conflict has begun on his son's initiative, mourns his death and after a time asks the snake to return. However, the snake does not agree as it thinks that the event took place may lead to other disasters. So, the conflict conditioned by irretrievable losses for both parties is being resolved in the way of their separation⁴².

“A king had a son. He ordered his deputies to take his son out every day and honor him.

Once a deputy took out the son of the king to honor him. In the evening he took him to the king’s house and went away. The son of the king was very drunk. He went out drunk and fell into the landfill and died.

The king ordered to close all gardens under his power and break all crocks. It was done as he ordered.

A widow had a son. She kept her wine press and wine. She was giving two bowls wine to the son during meals every morning and evening.

Once the son of the widow went out in the nighttime and killed the lion of the king. In the morning the king ordered, if the killer of his lion come and tell him he would not punish that person.

The widow and her son came.

The king asked how he killed the lion. He told that he went out in the nighttime, met the lion and killed it. The mother told that she gave him wine in the nighttime and told how she gave the wine.

The king ordered to plant gardens and drink wine to kill lions, rather than to die in the landfill”⁴³.

The cited fable “A Wine” by Aygektsi illustrates a conflict, which takes place over the killed lion of the king. Meanwhile, the conflict is asymmetrical (unbalanced)⁴⁴, because the parties – the king from the one side and the widow and her son from the other side possess extremely different statuses and are characterized by asymmetrical (unbalanced) powers (the parties are in different positions in the sense of availability of resources). Although there is a strong status difference between the parties and the king possesses exclusive authorities to make a decision, he does not punish the confessor of the crime, when he confesses it (including the fact of drinking wine, which was restricted by the king). Moreover, the king orders to found gardens and drink wine to kill lions, rather than to die for accidents. Thereby, the conflict between the king and the widow and her son is being resolved constructively by the efforts of the parties⁴⁵.

“A churchman stole a widow’s cow and tied it in the stable. The woman learned about it and said to the churchman:

- Father, it is time for my death: let’s go to the stable, so I could confess.

Then the churchman took the cow to the inner room, then to the chapel and from there to the church. The woman said.

- Father, the last confession before death I should make in the church.

⁴² See «Конфликтология», pp. 284-285.

⁴³ **Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի**, Առակներ, p. 40.

⁴⁴ See **Sandole D.** A comprehensive mapping of conflict and conflict resolution: A three pillar approach, p. 6; “Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention”, p. 44.

⁴⁵ See «Конфликтология», pp. 285-286.

The churchman lifted the cow onto the altar and pulled the curtain on it. When they entered into the church and sat down, the woman raised the curtain and said to the cow:

- You, bad beast, I considered you a cow, tell me, who has appointed you a celebrant now?"⁴⁶

It is obvious that in the fable presented by Aygektsi the widow avoids to be involved in a manifest conflict with the representative of the church, because she realizes that there is a power imbalance between her and the churchman determined by high societal position of the churchman. However, she wants to get back her property by any means, although the churchman fights indirectly and continuously to make the property of the woman his own illegally. Finally, the interpersonal conflict over incompatible interests is being resolved in favor of the woman. She "finds" her property in the church, but behaves in a reasonable and sly way, as she pretends not to understand how the animal appeared in the church and, thereby, keeps "good" relationships with the churchman.

"A man had an evil wife. Once the wife fell out with him and said.

- Do you think that all your three sons are born of you? The only one is born of you and two are born out of wedlock. He asked, who his son was, but the wife did not answer. When the father was passing away, he said.

- I want my own son to receive all my property.

Brothers were falling out with each other. One was telling that he was the own son, the other that he was. They applied to a wise judge. The judge ordered to take out the body of the father from the grave and shoot an arrow at him. The own son would be that one, who would shoot and the arrow hit the body of the father. Two brothers shot at the father, but the true son took out the knife to kill the brothers and then cried with bitter tears and buried the body of the father.

It was found out that he was the own son and he was given the property of the father"⁴⁷.

In the fable "The Wise Judge" by Aygektsi (based on the story from the Bible, according to which Solomon king resolved wisely the conflict between two women over a baby⁴⁸) a conflict of interests between three brothers related to the issues of being an own son and inheritance of the paternal property is represented. For the cause of not being able to resolve the family conflict on their own, the parties apply to a third party (acting as a judge). The latest finds out who is the own son and makes a decision to hand to him the inheritance. Thus, the resolution of the conflict between brothers through the intervention of the third party occurs in chime of the criteria of the system of justice⁴⁹, because all property is received by the own son.

"When the coppersmith and blacksmith became relatives by marriage, they fell out: each of them was lauding to the skies one's craft and a dissension took place between them: they applied to the instance of elders. The elders told that the occupation useful to the society is honorable"⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի, Առակներ, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Same place, p. 78.

⁴⁸ See «Կոնֆլիկտաբանություն, գեներ և խաղաղություն»/ Թարգ.՝ Ա. Դարոբյան, Վ. Օսիպով, Ե., 2003, p. 243.

⁴⁹ See «Конфликтология», pp. 289-291, 402-403.

⁵⁰ Մ. Գոշ, Վ. Այգեկցի, Առակներ, p. 27.

It is represented an interpersonal conflict between craftsmen in the mentioned fable by Gosh. There is a conflict over values related to the perception of the importance of their professions within the society. Because of not being able to resolve the conflict on their own, they apply to a third party. “The instance of elders” (acting in the role of arbitrators⁵¹) as a third party contributes to the resolution of the conflict emphasizing that the craft helpful to the whole society is honorable and valuable. So, it is mentioned in the fable not only the importance of the useful crafts by the Armenian society, but also the possibility of resolution of the conflicts through the intervention of the third party and, particularly, the functioning of the “instance of elders” as an Alternative Dispute Resolution⁵² method in the medieval Armenian society.

Thereby, the research of the fables by Gosh and Aygektsi throws daylight on the social conflicts in the medieval Armenian society, their perceptions, patterns as well as features of the methods towards their resolution.

The fables by Gosh and Aygektsi have a preachy meaning, as the fabulists eulogize evidently peace, honesty, justice, courage and criticize strongly exploitation, illegality, swindle, arrogance, ignorance and social conflicts determined by these vicious phenomena in their fables.

Taking into consideration the results of the analysis of the fables we could conclude that in social conflicts, emerging in the medieval Armenian society, the parties mostly preferred to apply competing strategies. As to the methods of resolution of the social conflicts, they were resolved both by conflict parties and third parties. Particularly, the resolution of the social conflicts on the efforts of the conflict parties included destructive methods, such as the use of violence (up to the physical elimination of one of the parties or all of the parties), separation, as well as constructive ones leading to the achievement of agreements between the parties. At the same time, in the cases the parties were not able to resolve the conflicts on their own, they were applying to the third parties, which were characterized by authorities of making decisions for the parties.

ԷԼԵՆ ՔԵՐՈՒՅԱՆ – Սոցիալական կոնֆլիկտների դրսևորումների և լուծման մեթոդների արտացոլումը միջնադարյան հայ առակագրությունում. Մ. Գոշի և Վ. Այգեկցու առակների սոցիոլոգիական վերլուծություն – Կոնֆլիկտների վերլուծության և լուծման բնագավառը հիմնվում է այն ելակետային դրույթի վրա, որ սոցիալական կոնֆլիկտների արդյունավետ լուծման համար անհրաժեշտ է դրանց համակողմանի և խոր վերլուծություն: Միևնույն ժամանակ, որոշ գիտնականներ պնդում են, որ կոնֆլիկտների արդյունավետ վերլուծությունը նախ և առաջ ենթադրում է մշակութային քննություն: Կոնֆլիկտների արդյունավետ վերլուծության և լուծման համար անհրաժեշտ է հավաքել գիտելիքներ տվյալ մշակույթում առկա կոնֆլիկտային ընկալումների, դրսևորումների ու

⁵¹ See **Menkel-Meadow C., Love L., Schneider A., Sternlight J.** Dispute Resolution: Beyond the Adversarial Model. New York: Aspen Publishers, 2005, pp. 448-449, 452-453.

⁵² See **Sander F. E.** Alternative Methods of Dispute Resolution: An Overview/ Ed. by Freeman M. “Alternative Dispute Resolution”. England: Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1995, pp. 97-100.

դրանց հետևանքների մասին պատկերացումների վերաբերյալ, որոնք գիտնականներն անվանում են «էթնոկոնֆլիկտի տեսություններ», ինչպես նաև բացահայտել սոցիալական կոնֆլիկտների լուծման տեղական տեխնիկաները և պրակտիկաները՝ «էթնոպրակտիկաները»: Դա նպաստում է ոչ միայն տվյալ մշակույթին բնորոշ կոնֆլիկտային ընկալումների, դրսևորումների և լուծման մեթոդների վերաբերյալ տեսական գիտելիքների ձևավորմանը, այլև գործնականում միջմշակութային կոնֆլիկտների արդյունավետ վերլուծությանը և լուծմանը:

Մասնավորապես, «էթնոկոնֆլիկտի տեսությունների» մշակումը և «էթնոպրակտիկաների» բացահայտումը հնարավոր է տվյալ մշակույթի շրջանակներում ձևավորված առակների, այլաբանությունների, առածների, ասացվածքների ու ժողովրդական բանահյուսության այլ տարրերի վերլուծության շնորհիվ:

Չայ մշակույթին բնորոշ «էթնոկոնֆլիկտի տեսությունների» ձևավորմանը և «էթնոպրակտիկաների» բացահայտմանն ուղղված առաջին քայլերը կատարելու նպատակով հոդվածում ներկայացվում է միջնադարյան հայ առակագիրներ Մ. Գոշի և Վ. Այգեկցու երկերի սոցիոլոգիական վերլուծությունը: Առակների վերլուծության համար կիրառվում է Դ. Սանդոլիի առաջարկած «Կոնֆլիկտի և կոնֆլիկտի լուծման համակողմանի քարտեզագրություն. եռասյուն մոտեցում» մեթոդը, որը հնարավոր է դարձնում կոնֆլիկտների տեսական վերլուծությունը՝ արդյունավետ միջամտություն նախագծելու և իրականացնելու համար:

ЭЛЕН КЕРОБЯН – Отражение в средневековой армянской басне методов разрешения социальных конфликтов: социологический анализ басен Мхитара Гоша и Вардана Айгекци. – Чтобы эффективно разрешать социальные конфликты, необходим всеобъемлющий и детальный их анализ. Более того, существует мнение, что их анализ предполагает и культурную составляющую. Нужно иметь представление, как проявляются, воспринимаются и какими последствиями чреваты конфликты в той или иной культуре, т. е. требуется разработать «этноконфликтные теории» и понять местные техники разрешения социальных конфликтов – «этнопрактики». Сделать это можно, в частности, анализируя басни, притчи, пословицы и другое литературное и фольклорное наследие.

В статье делаются первые шаги к «этноконфликтной теории» и выявлению «этнопрактик», характерных для армянского общества. Для этого с социологической точки зрения проанализированы басни, принадлежащие Мхитару Гоше (1130–1213) и Вардану Айгекци (XIII в.). Используется метод «всесторонней картографии конфликта и его разрешения: подход трёх столбов», предложенный Д. Сандоли и облегчающий теоретический анализ конфликта для эффективного в него вмешательства.