Modern Paremiology in Retrospect and Prospect

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Any attempt to describe the present state of proverb scholarship and its desiderata for the future must by necessity look back upon past accomplishments. The interest in proverbs can, after all, be traced back to the earliest Sumerian cuneiform tablets and the philosophical writings of Aristotle. Renaissance scholars, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, and modern folklorists, such as Archer Taylor, have all built on previous research as they put forth their own collections and studies of proverbs. There is indeed an impressive history of the two major aspects of proverb scholarship, i.e., the collection of proverbs (paremiography) and the study of proverbs (paremiology). Naturally these two branches are merely two sides of the same coin, and some of the very best research on proverbs combines the two in perfect harmony. Although the identification of traditional texts as proverbs and their arrangement in collections of various types are of paramount importance, proverb scholars have always known that the interpretation of their use in oral or written speech acts is of equal significance.

The following remarks can only scratch the proverbial surface of the retrospective and prospective aspects of modern paremiology. Yet I will attempt to address some major issues of past, present, and future proverb research while giving representative examples of recent scholarship that can serve as models for what lies ahead. My remarks are divided into three major categories, i.e., (1) fundamental resources, such as special journals, essay volumes, and bibliographies dedicated to proverb research, (2) the status of extant proverb collections and the direction of paremiography in the future; and (3) the impressive results of 20th century proverb scholarship and a glimpse at the desiderata for paremiology as we enter the 21st century.

1. PROVERB JOURNALS, ESSAY VOLUMES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The deep-rooted interest in proverbs throughout the world is well-attested in a number of international bibliographies as well as the twenty-five issues from 1965 to 1975 of the “old” Proverbium, ed. by Matti Kuusi et al. in Helsinki and now available as a two-volume reprint ed. by me (Bern: Lang, 1987); the short-lived Proverbium Paratum, ed. by Vilmos Voigt et al. from 1980 to 1989 in only four issues in Budapest; the “new” Proverbium: Yearbook of International Scholarship, ed. by me since 1984; the Spanish annual Paremia, ed. by Julia Sevilla Muñoz since 1993 in Madrid; and the innovative, electronically published De Proverbio, ed. by Teodor Flonta since 1994 in Tasmania, Australia. These publications have brought international scholars closer together than ever before, and it is conceivable that other such yearbooks might be started in other countries. A proverb yearbook devoted to African proverbs is doubtlessly a good idea, and the Japan Society for Proverb Studies might well enlarge its impressive newsletter into a full-fledged yearbook that

Wolfgang Mieder addresses Japanese proverbs and those of other nationalities in Asia. There are certainly enough interested scholars to fill the pages of such publications with valuable interpretative essays, collections, bibliographies, and book reviews. In any case, these yearbooks would enhance the regional, national, and international study of proverbs and assure us of the highest quality of comparatively-oriented synchronic and diachronic proverb scholarship in a global environment.

It has also become quite fashionable to publish volumes of proverb essays by different authors. There are those which give an overview of aspects of paremiology, ranging from definitional, structural, and semiotic studies to analyses of the origin, history, and dissemination of individual proverbs, and from their use in literary works or psychological testing to their depiction in art as well as the modern mass media. Alan Dundes and I edited such a volume entitled The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb (New York: Garland, 1981; rpt. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994) that included essays from the first half of this century. On the other hand, my new volume of Wise Words: Essays on the Proverb (New York: Garland, 1994) features only essays that were published after 1970. Together these two "casebooks" present forty of the most important and representative essays written in English on a broad array of anthropological, folkloristic, historical, linguistic, literary, philological, psychological, and sociological subjects.

While the scope of three additional volumes by Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov (ed.), Paremiologicheskie issledovanija: Sbornik statei (Moskva: Nauka, 1984); Annette Sabban and Jan Wirrer (eds.), Sprichwörter und Redensarten im interkulturellen Vergleich (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); and Cristina Vallini (ed.), La pratica e la grammatica: Viaggio nella linguistica del proverbo (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989) is also deliberately interdisciplinary and comparative, there are others that address specific questions: Naiade Anido (ed.), Des proverbes ... à l'affut (Paris: Publications Langues'O, 1983 [with articles on French, African, Brazilian, Mexican, and Lebanese proverbs]); Peter Grzybek and Wolfgang Elsmann (eds.), Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort. Simple Forms Reconsidered I (Tübingen: Narr, 1984); and François Suard and Claude Buridant (eds.), Richesse du proverbe. Vol. 1: Le proverbe au Moyen Age. Vol. 2: Typologie et fonctions (Lille: Université de Lille, 1984). Some years ago I edited two volumes that assembled the major German proverb scholarship of the 19th and 20th centuries, namely Deutsche Sprichworterforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts (Bern: Lang, 1984) and Ergebnisse der Sprichworterforschung (Bern: Lang, 1978). I would like to plead here for similar essay collections for other logical linguistic or subject areas. It would be quite useful to have such volumes of major scholarship dedicated to African, Japanese or Spanish proverbs and to articles dealing on a cross-cultural level with misogyny, stereotypes, religion, animals, etc. in proverbs. Such studies would be welcome research tools for students and scholars of proverbs alike and would make largely unaccessible publications available in thematically-packaged casebooks. Naturally such essay volumes should contain informative introductions and useful bibliographies that list special collections and additional analytical studies.


2 This essay collection has also appeared in French translation as Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov (ed.), Tel grain tel pain. Poétique de la sagesse populaire, translated by Victor Rosenzweig and Annette Taraillon (Moscow: Edition du Progrès, 1988).

3 It should be noted that numerous essay volumes that deal with phraseology in a broad sense and confront paremiological questions only in individual articles have appeared in recent years. These volumes are usually based on phraseological conferences in Europe and referred to generically as "Europhras". Here are a few representative titles with definite value for paremiologists: Gertrud Grebani (ed.), Europhras 88: Phrasiologie contrastive (Strasbourg: Université des Sciences Humaines, 1989); Christine Palm (ed.), Europhras 90: Aktien der Internationalen Tagung zur germanistischen Phraseologieforschung (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1991); and Barbara Sandig (ed.), Europhras 92: Tendenzen der Phraseologieforschung (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1994). See also Harald Burger and Robert Zett (eds.), Aktuelle Probleme der Phraseologie (Bern: Lang, 1987); Jarno Korhonen (ed.), Beiträge zur allgemeinen und germanistischen Phraseologieforschung (Olula: Gapsilisilia, 1987); and J. Korhonen (ed.), Untersuchungen zur Phraseologie der Deutschen und anderer Sprachen (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992).
Previous bibliographies of proverb collections were subsumed by Wilfrid Bonser’s still valuable *Proverb Literature: A Bibliography of Works Relating to Proverbs* (London: Glaisher, 1930; rpt. Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1967) and Otto Moll’s superb *Sprichwörterbibliographie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1958), with the latter registering over 9,000 references. My own annual «International Bibliography of New and Reprinted Proverb Collections» that has appeared in *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* since 1984 has by now cited 921 publications, among them some extremely important reprints of earlier collections as well as a large number of significant new national comparative collections. There are, however, also numerous smaller collections intended for the popular book market. Scholars must not forget that the general reader enjoys the proverbial wisdom of certain national, ethnic, religious or occupational groups. The phenomenon of popular proverb collections for the mass market (general readers, tourists, etc.) deserves a serious analysis, since it clearly plays the influential role of disseminating proverbs.

As helpful as these yearly bibliographies have been, there is a definite need to assemble updated national bibliographies of proverb collections with explanatory annotations. A superb two-volume example of such a book is Anatolii Mikhailovich Bushui’s *Paremiologiia Uzbekistana* (Samarkand: Samarkandskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii institut, 1978 and 1980). It registers 840 annotated paremiographical and paremiological publications of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in central Asia. Bushui includes books and articles on proverbs, proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, clichés, idioms, and phraseology in general. There are also detailed name, subject, and proverb indices that include sections on Russian, German, French, and Latin proverbs. This is without doubt one of the most complete bibliographies for a particular geographical and ethnic area, a model to be emulated for other regions and languages. There are also smaller but valuable bibliographies such as Shirley L. Arora’s «A Critical Bibliography of Mexican American Proverbs», *Aztlan*, 13 (1982), 71-80, or Katherine Luomala’s «A Bibliographical Survey of Collections of Hawaiian Sayings», *Proverbium*, 2 (1985), 279-306. Many more such specialized bibliographies are needed, but it is also high time that a critically-annotated International bibliography of the world’s major proverb collections should be put together. As paremiographers work more and more comparatively, they need to know which collections are the most reliable and inclusive for as many languages as possible. A definite desideratum, for example, would be an annotated bibliography of all extant proverb collections, small and large, for every African language, which would enable scholars to study the dissemination of proverbs throughout the African continent.

The bibliographical status of paremiology is by comparison with that of paremiography in a better state because of my *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*, 3 vols. (New York: Garland, 1982, 1990, and 1993), in which 4,599 books, dissertations, and articles have been registered with detailed and critical comments as well as extensive name, subject, and proverb indices. These massive volumes contain the major accomplishments of proverb scholars during the past two hundred years, and the most recent publications are listed in my yearly «International Proverb Scholarship: An Updated Bibliography» in *Proverbium* with the impressive number of over 200 entries per year. But this is not to say that specialized annotated bibliographies are not needed, for which the *Catalogo de bibliografía paremiológica española* (Valencia: E.C.V.S.A., 1992) by José de Jaime Gómez and José María Jaime Lorén, and my *African Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography* (Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont, 1994) serve as examples and models. There are also some specialized bibliographies for certain specific subject matters, namely my «International Bibliography of Explanatory Essays on Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions Containing Names», *Names*, 24 (1976), 253-304, and Henry V. Besso’s «Judeo-Spanish Proverbs: An Analysis and Bibliography», in Marc D. Angel (ed.), *Studies in Sephardic Culture* (New York: Sepher-Hermon, 1980), pp. 21-55. But many additional specialized bibliographies on such matters as misogyny in proverbs\(^4\), worldview expressed through proverbs, the weather in proverbs, God (or

\(^4\) Many studies have dealt with misogynous proverbs, as for example the recent comments by Sheila K. Webster, «Women, Sex, and Marriage in Moroccan Proverbs», *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14 (1982), 173-184; Charlotte Kahn, «Proverbs of Love and Marriage: A Psychological Perspective», *Psychoanalytic Review*, 70 (1983), 359-
religion) in proverbs, etc. would be welcome. The list of possibilities is endless, and the indices included in my volumes of *International Proverb Scholarship* will help scholars to find those publications that include rich bibliographical information (check under the entry «bibliography»). Nevertheless, it will always be a worthwhile service to put together additional bibliographies.

2. PROVERB COLLECTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF PAREMIOGRAPHY

While it is both reasonable and desirable that paremiographers create new proverb collections, diachronically-oriented scholars will be pleased to know that many of the major collections of earlier centuries have appeared as invaluable reprints. Especially for some of the major European languages, this has fortunately taken place before the present financial crunch experienced by libraries around the world. Thus we have most of the Danish, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish proverb collections from the late 15th century onwards available as reprints. This is not the place to comment on individual reprinted volumes of these and other languages, since they are all listed in the annual bibliography of *Proverblum*.

Instead two major events in European paremiography, one completed and the other in the early stages of publication, should be mentioned. There is the gargantuan effort of Hans Walther, who has assembled approximately 150,000 Latin proverbs and their variants from the Middle Ages through the 17th century in his seminal nine-volume *Proverbia sententiaeaeque Latinitatis ac recentioris aevi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963-1986). Since many of the proverbs were common throughout Europe either in the Latin original or through loan translations into the vernacular languages, these volumes represent a unique research tool for all historical and comparative paremiographers. For the vernacular languages of the Middle Ages, another giant research project has just reached publication. A team of scholars has been working since 1964 at Berne, Switzerland, on a multi-volume *Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi* (TPMA) based on the materials of the Swiss paremiographer Samuel Singer (1860-1948).

The first volume of this *Lexikon der Sprichworter des germanisch-romanischen Mittelalters* has just been published by the prestigious Walter de Gruyter publishing company in Berlin (1995, A-Birne, 488 pp.). While the major language of this lexicon is German, texts in Greek, Latin, French, Provençal, Italian, Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese, Icelandic, Swedish, Danish, English, and Dutch are cited. At its completion, this multi-volume research tool will unlock the intricacies of medieval proverbs, leaving paremiographers with the hope that similar mammoth projects might be undertaken for the proverbs of later centuries and other linguistic families of the world. With the use of the computer and proper funding, we might be able to accomplish such desirable tasks in the future.

In the meantime we definitely need single-language historical dictionaries based on the rigid and sensible lexicographical classification system developed by the American paremiographer *par excellence* Bartlett Jere Whiting in his celebrated and massive *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), and his many subsequent Anglo-American proverb collections. Whiting actually followed the methodology of Morris Palmer Tilley's *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1950), and both were followed by an unequalled four-volume Polish collection *Nowa księga przysłow i*

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5 The following remarks on paremiography are based on my earlier essay «Prolegomena to Prospective Paremiography», *Proverblum*, 7 (1990), 133-144. Regarding the history and future of German paremiography, see my «Geschichte und Probleme der neuhochdeutschen Sprichworterlexikographie», in Herbert Ernst Wiegand (ed.), *Studien zur neuhochdeutschen Lexikographie* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1984), vol. 5: 307-358.

wyrazen przysłowiowych polskich (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969-1978) edited by Julian Krzyzanowski and Stanisław Swirko. These collections are historical dictionaries in which the individual proverbs and proverbial expressions are arranged alphabetically according to keywords. For each proverb the editors supply historical references from the Middle Ages on, and often include the earlier classical and/or Biblical references. At the end of such historical monographs on individual proverbs, cross-references to other proverb collections of the language involved are cited as well. Even though this methodology for major historical proverb collections has been long established, it is being followed more or less exclusively only in the Anglo-American world and has resulted in several major proverb dictionaries.

Nothing like this exists for the German language, and the same is true for most other languages as well. A major goal of serious paremiographers must be the establishment of such historical collections. The time-consuming effort might be eased by scholars working in teams, as is the case with Arvo Krikmann, Ingrid Sarv, and their colleagues who have published a seminal five-volume national Estonian proverb collection, Eesti vanasonad (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1980-1988)8. On a much smaller scale, there are also such modern dialect collections as Paul F. Portmann's Di letsc/i Chue tuet s Törli zue. Schweizerdeutsche Sprichwörter (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1983); Christine Barras' Les proverbes dans les patois de la suisse romande (Diss. Université de Neuchâtel, 1984); and De Brabantse Spreekwoorden (Waalre: Hein Mandoosstichting, 1988), edited by Hein Mandoos and Miep Mandoos-van de Pol. Special mention might also be made of Mark Glazer's A Dictionary of Mexican American Proverbs (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1987), which includes Chicano proverbs and their variants collected from informants in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and reflects a corpus of proverbs in actual use by an ethnic group in the United States. We also have Shirley L. Arora's valuable collection Proverbal Comparisons and Related Expressions in Spanish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), based on field research in the Los Angeles area. This scholar of Hispanic proverbs is presently working on a major compilation of Spanish proverbs collected from informants in that city.

European paremiographers have published several major international proverb collections in the past few years. Matti Kuusi, in cooperation with seven other scholars, took the lead with the exemplary collection Proverbia Septentrionalia: 900 Balto-Finnic Proverb Types with Russian, Baltic, German and Scandinavian Parallels (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekunta, 1985). This significant synchronic comparative work registers the common proverbs of the six Balto-Finnic peoples of Finno-Ugrian origin—the Finns, Karelians, Estonians, Votes, Vepsians and Livonians—which form a linguistically and geographically unified group between the Scandinavians, Balts and Russians (p. 8). The proverb types are cited in English, and the proverbs in their original languages under each type are arranged on the basis of their distribution in the Balto-Finnic languages, always beginning with those proverbs occurring in all six languages and ending with those found in only one. Where possible, a Russian, Baltic, German, and Scandinavian parallel of the proverb type is cited. After the Balto-Finnic variants, bibliographical sources are listed. Of much value are also Gabriel Ghercoge's Proverbele românesci si proverbele limbii românce. Studia comparativ (Bucuresti: Editura Albatros, 1986), which lists 360 Rumanian proverbs with their Romance language parallels; Gyula Paezolay's A Comparative Dictionary of Hungarian, Estonian,

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8 See Ingrid Sarv and Arvo Krikmann, «Eesti vanasonade teaduslik väljaanne käsikirjas valminud», Keel ja Kirjandus, 19 (1976), 541-547, where the two authors discuss the history of this project and analyze various classification schemes and their problems.
German, English, Finnish and Latin Proverbs with an Appendix of Cheremis and Zyryan (Veszprém: VEAB, 1986) with about 680 Hungarian proverbs and their equivalents in the languages mentioned in the title; Kazys Grigas' Patarliu paraleles: Lietuviu patarės su latviu, baltarusiu, rusu, lenku, vokieciu, anglu, lotynu, prancužu, ispaniu attitikmenims (Vilnius: Vaga, 1987) with 611 international proverb types based on Lithuanian proverbs with Latvian, Belorussian, Russian, Polish, German, English, Latin, French, and Spanish parallels; and Emanuel Strauss' massive Dictionary of European Proverbs, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 1994), with its 1804 proverbs in dozens of languages. A definite paremiographical desiderátum is a comparative dictionary of Spanish language proverbs from Spain as well as South and North America. Many collections from Spain, Mexico, Argentina, etc. already exist, but they need to be fused into a multi-volume dictionary which will at one glance show the Hispanic proverb stock and its dissemination to many parts of the world.

So much for the Euro-American picture, but how do matters look for the many languages of the African continent? Missionaries and anthropologists have long collected proverbs indigenous to certain African tribes, and this work has resulted in many valuable collections. Of special merit are Cyril L. Sibusiso Nyembezi, Zulu Proverbs (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1963); M.A. Hamutylénei and A.B. Plangger, Tsuno-Shumo: Shona Proverbial Lore and Wisdom (Gwelo, Rhodesia: Mambo, 1974); Pierre Crépeau and Simon Bizimana, Proverbes du Rwanda (Tervuren, Belgium: Musée royal de l’afrique centrale, 1979); Albert Scheven, Swahili Proverbs (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981); Francis M. Rodegém, Paroles de sagesse au Burundi (Leuven: Peeters, 1983); Oyekan Owomoyela, «A Ki i»: Yoruba Proscriptive and Prescriptive Proverbs (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1988); and Hans-Ingolf Weier, Luba Sprichwörter, 2 vols. (Kòln: Köppe, 1992). Special mention, however, must be made of Matti Kuusi's collection Ovambo Proverbs with African Parallels (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1970), since this scholar has provided comparative African commentaries to the Ovambo proverbs. While Kuusi admits that his references to African parallels are limited, his admonition deserves the attention of African paremiographers: «The number of common African proverbs appears proportionately smaller than that of common European or Eurasian proverbs, but the establishment of a common Bantu tradition and that of the most general African proverbs provides a necessary basis for the determination of whether or not the peoples of the three ancient continents have a common heritage of proverbs» (p. 13). The time has surely come to assemble major comparative proverb collections based on the numerous previously published collections of small linguistic groups. Research teams need to work on this major task making use of computer technology. Only through such work will questions regarding the geographical distribution and commonality of African proverbs be answered. What proverbs are known throughout Africa? how old are they? are they indigenous to that continent? how do they relate to the common stock of European proverbs that were disseminated by missionaries, etc.? The first step should be the establishment of a computer bank of all African proverbs collected thus far. While valuable individual collections and studies of African proverbs exist, a comparative analysis of all these African texts is highly desirable.

A similar picture arises for the Asian languages, which also have a long and complex history of a rich common proverb stock. There are clearly numerous proverb collections in the native languages that are, unfortunately, inaccessible to most Western scholars. But such collections as

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Young H. Yoo, *Wisdom of the Far East* (Washington, D.C.: Far Eastern Research & Publications Center, 1972) and Gyula Paczolay, *European, Far-Eastern and Some Asian Proverbs: A Comparison of European, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and Other Asian Proverbs* (Veszprém: Central Library of the University of Veszprém, 1994) have shown that many proverbs are common to the Asian languages. There are also a few proverbs expressing the same idea in an identical or closely related form in the European and Asian languages, among them such standard texts as «Constant dropping wears the stone», «There is no smoke without fire», «Strike while the iron is hot», etc. A research team and sophisticated computer technology will be able to establish major comparative proverb dictionaries for the Asian languages, and the same is true for the Indic, Arabic, and others. Such synchronic (and possibly also diachronic) comparative collections with their scholarly apparatus of indices, frequency analyses, sources, geographical distribution, etc. are of major importance in trying to find international proverb types. Collections of this type will advance the structural, semantic, and semiotic studies of scholars like Grigorii L’vovich Permiakov and Matti Kuusi, who have been searching for an international type system of proverbs.\(^{11}\)

There is one final desideratum for prospective paremiography. Grigorii L’vovich Permiakov (1919–1983), one of the greatest theoretical paremiologists of this century, saw some very important pragmatic applications of paremiography. Utilizing his paremiological experiment conducted in Moscow in 1970, he was able to establish the general currency of 1,494 phraseological units among modern inhabitants of that city.\(^{12}\) Included were 268 proper proverbs, and the rest of the texts were proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, wellerisms, fables, anecdotes, riddles, slogans, weather signs, superstitions, fairy tales, oaths, etc. Permiakov’s list shows clearly that many long folk narratives have currency as short phraseological remnants (allusions).\(^{13}\) All of these texts are part of the general cultural literacy of Russians. Native as well as foreign speakers of Russian need to know them in order to communicate effectively in that language. Permiakov subsequently established a so-called "paremiological minimum" of 300 such texts based on this experiment and published it with an explanatory introduction and many notes as *300 obshcheupotrebitel’nykh russkih poslovits i pogovorok* (Moskva: Russkii iazyk, 1985). German and Bulgarian translations have appeared that enable foreign language instructors to teach the most frequent Russian proverbs, proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, etc., and to assure their students’ fluency in the most commonly used Russian proverbial minimum.

Similar paremiological minima of the most frequently used phraseological units of all the national languages should now be established by paremiographers (This is presently being done for

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Croatian, English, German, and Hungarian. Demoscopic research will help to determine which texts should be included. Many proverbs of classical, Biblical or medieval origin which belong to the proverbial minima of many European languages. But there will still be room for national proverbs among a list of about 300 texts. For those languages for which there are still no satisfactory historical dictionaries, the texts of such a proverbial minimum would comprise the logical starting point. In any case, it would greatly benefit foreign language instruction if paremiographers would establish paremiological minima for many individual languages. We would also finally have a much better idea as to which of the thousands of proverbs listed in the older collections are still in written and oral use. Paremiography cannot remain a science that looks primarily backwards and works only with texts of times gone by. Modern paremiographers can and should also assemble proverb collections that include the texts of the 20th century, as for example A Dictionary of American Proverbs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) edited by Stewart Kingseby, Kelsie Harder and me. We also need modern collections like my three volumes of so-called Antisprichwörter (Wiesbaden: Verlag für deutsche Sprache, 1982 and 1985; Wiesbaden: Quelle & Meyer, 1989), which document the modern use of standard German proverbs and their variants in recent literary works, graffiti, advertisements, caricatures, cartoons, etc. While impressive progress has been made in paremiography during this century and especially during the past dozen years or so, many clear challenges still lie ahead to be taken up by nationally- and/or internationally-oriented paremiographers.

3. Modern proverb scholarship and desiderata for paremiology

Anybody interested in consciously using or even collecting proverbs will sooner or later also begin to think about what makes proverbs “click”, i.e., what differentiates these short texts from normal utterances or such subgenres as proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, twin formulas, winged words (literary quotations), aphorisms, wellerisms, etc. When inquiring about the origin, history, dissemination, language, structure, meaning, use, and function of such phraseological units, one enters the realm of proverb scholarship or paremiology, as it is called by its Greek technical term in differentiation from the more limited concerns of proverb collecting or

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18 Space does not permit a discussion of these formulaic genres, but the reader is referred to my three volumes of International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982, 1990, and 1993) and my updated annual bibliographies in Proverbum (1984-ff.) for numerous references. The references to specific publications in this section are highly selective and fragmentary at best and attempt only to present some of the standard works for at least some languages.
paremiography. While scholars from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds could doubtlessly
cite a number of scholars to show the historical development of paremiology in their respective
countries, it is perhaps fair to say that the great German paremiographer Karl Friedrich Wilhelm
Wander (1803-1879), to whom we owe the five massive volumes Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon
(Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1867-1880; rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), was
also the first "modern" paremiologist with his encompassing study Das Sprichwort, betrachtet nach
Form und Wesen, als Einführung zu einem volkstümlichen Sprichwörterabsatz (Hirschberg: Zimmer, 1836; rpt. ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Bern: Lang, 1983)\textsuperscript{19}. In England we
also have an early volume On the Lessons of Proverbs (London: Parker, 1853) by the Archbishop of
Canterbury Richard Chenevix Trench (1807-1886), which in its many English and American
editions became a standard work for paremiologists interested in the definition, origin, form, style,
content, morality, and theology of proverbs. Two outstanding inclusive studies of the proverb in the
early part of the present century are F. Edward Hulme, Proverb Lore: Being a Historical Study of
the Similarities, Contrasts, Topics, Meanings, and Other Facets of Proverbs, Truisms, and Pithy
Sayings, as Expressed by the People of Many Lands and Times (London: Stock, 1902; rpt. Detroit:
Similar books exist in other languages, to be sure: Matti Kuusi, Paromologische Betrachtungen
(Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1957)\textsuperscript{20}; Lutz Röhrich and my Sprichwort (Stuttgart:
Metzler, 1977); Jean Cauvin, Comprendre: Les Proverbes (Issy les Moulineaux: Les Classiques
Africains, 1981); Cezar Tabarcea, Poetica proverbui (Bucuresti: Minerva, 1982); Julia Sevilla
Muñoz, Hacia una aproximación conceptual de las paremias francesas y españolas (Madrid: Editori-
al Complutense, 1988); and Katsuaki Takeda, Kotowaza no Retorikku (Tokyo: Kaiminsha,
1992)\textsuperscript{21}. But paremiologists are fortunate in having one seminal study dedicated to international
paremiology in an accessible language which must be regarded as a "classic" and hitherto
unsurpassed treatise of the subject. If there ever were a "Bible" of proverb scholarship, this book is
it by any standard of comparison.

I am speaking, of course, of Archer Taylor's book The Proverb (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
Harvard University Press, 1931; rpt. as The Proverb and an Index to «The Proverb». Hatboro,
Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates, 1962; now rpt. with an introduction and bibliography by Wolfgang Mieder. Bern: Lang, 1985). For over sixty years this small book of a mere 223 pages by the internationally-acclaimed American scholar Archer Taylor (1890-1973) has guided scholars and students around the world in their proverb studies, and its pages are replete with numerous sugges-
tions and desiderata for further research. In short but pregnant chapters, Taylor presents a complete
overview of the rich field of paremiology. The first section concerns itself with the origins of the
proverb, and the individual chapters deal with the problems of definition, metaphorical proverbs,
proverbial types, variations, proverbs based on narratives, proverbs and folk-verse, proverbs and
literature, loan translations, Biblical proverbs, and classical proverbs. In the second section on the
content of proverbs, Taylor analyzes customs and superstitions reflected in proverbs, historical
proverbs, legal proverbs, blasons populaires (i.e., stereotypes), weather proverbs, medical proverbs,

\textsuperscript{19} See Klaus Dieter Pilz, "Wer ist der Begründer der wissenschaftlichen Sprichwortforschung? Versuch einer
Richtungslage", Muttersprache, 89 (1979), 201-207. For 19th century German paremiology, see also my Deutsche

\textsuperscript{20} For a collection of Matti Kuusi's significant folkloric and paremiological essays in English, see M. Kuusi, Mind
and Form in Folklore: Selected Essays, ed. by Henni Ilomäki (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1994).

\textsuperscript{21} See also Louis Combet, Recherches sur le "refranero" castillan (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971); Jacques Pineaux,
zum Sprichwort im Deutschen (Berlin: Schmitz, 1977); Jean-Marie Ndzomo Malla, Proverbes: vrais ou faux? Crise et
dangers du proverbe africain (Bamumbu, Zaire: Ceiba, 1982); María Conca, Paremiología (Valencia: Universitat de
Valencia, 1987); Regine Lassen, Das katalanische Sprichwort. Literarische Tradition und umgangssprachlicher Gebrauch
(Tübingen: Narr, 1988); and Agnes Szemerkényi, "Közmondás nem hazug szóldás": A proverbiumok hasznítatának
lehetőségei (Budapest: Akadémiai Kládó, 1994).
conventional phrases, and proverbial prophecies\textsuperscript{22}. The third section addresses primarily the style of proverbs (meter, metaphor, personification, parallelism, rhyme, pun, etc.), but there are also chapters on dialogue proverbs, epigrammatic proverbs, national and ethnic traits, ethical values, obscene proverbs, and a review of proverbs in European literature. The fourth section is divided into three chapters devoted to various aspects of proverbial phrases, wellerisms, and proverbial comparisons\textsuperscript{23}. The book, filled with examples from many languages, contains generous bibliographical references, and three years after its publication, Taylor published an invaluable 105-page *An Index to «The Proverb»* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1934), which has been included in both the 1962 and 1983 reprints. There can be no doubt that this book belongs in every research library of the world and on the bookshelf of every paremiologist.

With Taylor as doyen of proverb studies in the United States in the 1930s, paremiology flourished there to a remarkable degree. Taylor's many additional publications were at least in part republished in two essay volumes: Archer Taylor, *Comparative Studies in Folklore. Asia—Europe—America* (Taipei: The Orient Cultural Service, 1972) and Archer Taylor, *Selected Writings on Proverbs*, ed. by Wolfgang Mieder (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975). Taylor's friend and at times co-author, Bartlett Jere Whiting (born 1904), rose to equal heights both as a paremiographer and paremiologist during the second quarter of the 20th century and remains there today. His fundamental studies on the origin (1931), nature (1932), and study (1939) of proverbs have recently been edited by Joseph Harris and me under the title of *When Evensong and Morrowsong Accord: Three Essays on the Proverb* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Department of English and American Literature and Language, Harvard University, 1994); a bibliography of Whiting's publications is appended. The three articles in this book comprise yet another major treatise on the proverb, and Taylor's as well as Whiting's insights into the complexities and intricacies of proverbs are as valid today as they were some decades ago. They certainly represent the cornerstone of modern international paremiology and its future. It is of little wonder, then, that basically every serious publication on proverbs throughout the world pays homage in some form or another to these two great scholars.

For me to do the same to all the many outstanding scholars, colleagues, and friends who are presently at work as paremiologists in all corners of the world is patently impossible. But in the remaining pages, I will attempt to summarize some of the major trends of recent scholarship with brief references to major publications, while at the same time focusing on some innovative studies that need to be undertaken in the future. My comments are highly selective, and no slight to any scholar, culture or language is intended by these remarks.

From ancient times to the modern age, many have attempted to solve the problem of properly defining a proverb. In fact, Archer Taylor's study of *The Proverb* as a whole can be understood as an attempt to define proverbs. The same is basically true for Neal R. Norrick's valuable book on *How Proverbs Mean: Semantic Studies in English Proverbs* (Amsterdam: Mouton, 1985). There are also valuable shorter essays on this important topic, notably Alan Dundes, «On the Structure of the Proverb», *Proverbium*, no. 25 (1975), 961-973; my «General Thoughts on the Nature of Proverbs», *Revista de etnografía y folklore*, 36 (1991), 151-164; and especially Shirley L. Arora, «The Perception of Proverbiality», *Proverbium*, 1 (1984), 1-38. In her seminal article, Arora argues that proverbiality depends on traditionality, currency, repetition, certain grammatical or syntactical features, metaphor, semantic markers (parallelism, paradox, irony, etc.), lexical markers (archaic words, etc.), and phonetic markers (rhyme, meter, alliteration, etc.). The more a given statement

\textsuperscript{22} There are, of course, many specialized studies on these subjects, a few recent monographs being Helmut Seidl, *Medizinische Sprichwörter im Englischen und Deutschen. Eine diachrone Untersuchung zur vergleichenden Paronymologie* (Bern: Lang, 1982); Brigitte Jänz, *Rechtssprichwörter im „Sachsenspiegel“* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1989); and George D. Freier, *Weather Proverbs* (Tucson, Arizona: Fisher, 1992).

contains such markers, the greater are its chances of being perceived as a proverb, as has also been shown by Bronisława Kordas in her study *Le proverbe en chinois moderne* (Taipei, Taiwan: Editions Ouyu, 1987).

Peter Grzybek and his German and Austrian colleagues have recently argued that paremiologists must work empirically to establish what proverbs in standard collections and in oral speech are known to native speakers today. It is no longer enough to define proverbs in one’s study at home based on various schemes and structural models. As Grzybek and Christoph Chlosta have shown in their «Grundlagen der empirischen Sprichwortforschung», *Proverbiun*, 10 (1993), 89-128, scholars must base their studies on demographic research methods utilizing questionnaires and sophisticated statistical analyses in order to establish lists of those proverbs which are actually known and continue to be in current use. This research methodology will also help to establish the proverbiality of the new proverbs of the modern age, as I have argued in my *Proverbs Are Never out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford, 1993). We thus need increased global field research, from highly technological societies to those parts of the world where life continues to be based on traditional and rural life.24 Such empirical work will, of course, also help to establish “proverbial minima” for many languages and cultures, as I discussed above. In any case, Grzybek is absolutely correct in claiming that empirical research must be part of modern proverb scholarship.

He is also on the proverbial right track in arguing for continued interest in the «Foundations of Semiotic Proverb Study», *Proverbiun*, 4 (1987), 39-85. Theoretical proverb scholarship has been influenced to a large degree by the semiotic studies of Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov, notably by his Russian book *Ot pogovorki do skazki: Zamekí po obschecí teorì kliše* (Moskva: Nauka, 1970) and its English translation *From Proverb to Folk-Tale: Notes on the General Theory of Cliché* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979)25. Peter Grzybek and Wolfgang Eismann (ed.), *Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort. Simple Forms Reconsidered I* (Tübingen: Narr, 1984), and Zoltán Kanyo, *Sprichwörter—Analyse einer Einfachen Form: Ein Beitrag zur generativen Poetik* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981). As scholars investigate the heterosituativity, polyfunctionality, and polysemanticity of proverbs as «einfache Formen» (simple forms), it is of great significance that they pay attention to the paradigmatic, syntagmatic, logical, and structural aspects of these traditional utterances as communicative and strategic signs. Structural analyses of texts will certainly gain in value if semiotic aspects of proverbs as linguistic and cultural signs are added to them, as Constantin Negreanu has shown in his book *Struktura proverbelor româñestí* (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopédica, 1983).

This is not to say that the linguistic approach to proverbs lacks in value, as David Cram has clearly shown in his article on «The Linguistic Status of the Proverb», *Cahiers de lexicologie*, 43 (1983), 53-71. Linguists of various schools have investigated the language, grammar, structure, and form of proverbs, and they have created an entire new field of inquiry called “phraseology” that deals with all formulaic language or phraseological units (i.e., proverbs, proverbial expressions, quotations, idioms, twin formulas, etc.). It behooves narrowly-focused paremiologists to pay attention to such publications as Aleksandr K. Zholkowski, «At the Intersection of Linguistics, Paremiology and Poetics», *Poetics*, 7 (1978), 309-332; Klaus Dieter Pilz, *Phraseologie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1981); and Dmitrij Dobrovols'kij, *Phraseologie als Objekt der Universalienlinguistik* (Leipzig: Enzyklopädie, 1988)26. The relationship between paremiology and phraseology is indeed

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25 See also the posthuminous collection of various essays on structural, semantic, and semiotic aspects by Grigorii L’vovich Permiakov, *Osnovy strukturnoi paremiológi* (Moskva: Nauka, 1988).

a very close one, as Wolfgang Fleischer has shown in «Zum Verhältnis von Parämiologie und Phraseologie», *Niederdeutsches Wort*, 31 (1991), 3-13.

The vexing problem of proverb meaning continues to occupy semantic studies. Linguists and folklorists have repeatedly attempted to explain the semantic ambiguity of proverbs, which results to a large degree from their being used in various contexts with different functions. But proverbs also act as analogies, which adds to the complexity of understanding their precise meaning in a particular speech act. Some semantic and semiotic studies along this line are by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, «Toward a Theory of Proverb Meaning», *Proverbium*, no. 22 (1973), 821-827; Richard P. Honeck and Clare T. Kibler, «The Role of Imagery, Analogy, and Instantiation in Proverb Comprehension», *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 13 (1984), 393-414; Arvo Krikmann, «On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs», *Proverbium*, 1 (1984), 47-91, and 2 (1985), 58-85; and Michael D. Lieber, «Analogic Ambiguity: A Paradox of Proverb Usage», *Journal of American Folklore*, 97 (1984), 423-441. In trying to understand the meaning of proverbs in certain contexts, we must keep in mind that they are usually employed to disambiguate complex situations and events. Yet they are paradoxically inherently ambiguous, because their meaning depends on analogy. Proverbs as devices of disambiguation, the paradox of analogic ambiguity in proverb usage, and the socio-cultural use of proverbs in oral and written communication—all require further study by paremiologists as they map out the strategies used in the appropriate employment of seemingly simple and yet so complex proverbial utterances.

Clearly the meaning and purpose of proverbs are best revealed by actual usage in social situations. Their strategic use in communication has been effectively analyzed by Kenneth Burke, «Literature [i.e., proverbs] as Equipment for Living», in his *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana University Press, 1941), pp. 253-262 and Peter Seitel, «Proverbs: A Social Use of Metaphor», *Genre*, 2 (1969), 143-161. When one considers proverbs in context, it should not be surprising that there are such contradictory proverb pairs as «Absence makes the heart grow fonder» and «Out of sight, out of mind». After all, proverbs are not universal truths but rather limited pieces of folk wisdom which are valid only in certain situations. As Kwesi Yankah explains in his article «Do Proverbs Contradict?» *Folklore Forum*, 17 (1984), 2-19, the problem of contradictory proverbs exists primarily because people ignore their social context. If one deals with proverbs only as a concept of a cultural fact or truism, contradictions are easily found in any proverb repertoire. In contextual usage, however, proverbs function effectively as social strategies. In fact, the meaning of any proverb is actually evident only after it has been contextualized. To put it bluntly: proverbs in collections are “dead”. Proverbs in normal discourse are not contradictory at all, and they usually make perfect sense to the speaker and listener. After all, people don’t speak in proverb pairs, unless they are “duelling” with proverbs as a verbal contest, as Yankah shows in his invaluable study on *The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric: A Theory of Proverb Praxis* (Bonn: Lang, 1989).

Today it has almost become a cliché to point out that proverbs must be studied in context, but it took a long time for anthropologically-oriented proverb collectors to go beyond mere texts and look at the use and function of the proverbial materials in actual speech acts. The noted anthropologist Edward Westermarck (1862-1939) began to look at proverbs from this contextual point of view in his *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco. A Study of Native Proverbs* (London: Routledge, 1930), and Cyril L. Sibusiso Nyembezi followed suit with his *Zulu Proverbs* (Johannesburg: Witwaterstrand University Press, 1963). Modern scholars trained in the theoretical aspects of speech act or performance look at proverbs as part of active verbal communication. E. Ojo Arewa and Alan Dundes laid the groundwork for this type of analysis with their study on «[Yoruba] Proverbs and the Ethnography of Speaking Folklore», *American Anthropologist*, 66, part 2, no. 6 (1964), 70-85, in

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which they looked at such questions as «What rules govern the use of proverbs? Who is using them and to whom? On what occasions? In what places?» Similar studies also dealing with African proverbs are by Tshimpaka Yanga, «Inside the Proverbs: A Sociolinguistic Approach», African Languages. 3 (1977), 130-157; Joyce Penfield, Communicating with Quotes [i.e., Proverbs]: The Igbo Case (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1983); and Johannes Fabian, Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theater in Shaba, Zaire (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990). Two further studies on Hispanic proverbs are by Stanley H. Brandes, «The Selection Process in Proverb Use: A Spanish Example», Southern Folklore Quarterly, 38 (1974), 167-186 and Charles L. Briggs, «The Pragmatics of Proverb Performances in New Mexican Spanish», American Anthropologist, 87 (1985), 793-810. Briggs studied the oral proverb performance in Córdova, a community of about 700 inhabitants located in the mountains of northern New Mexico in the United States. From transcriptions of recorded performances, Briggs isolates eight features of proverb use: tying phrase, identity of owner, quotation-framing verb, proverb text, special association, general meaning or hypothetical situation, relevance of context, and validation of the performance. We clearly need other studies of this type, but one caveat must, unfortunately, be expressed here. While performance oriented studies are publishable as articles, it is almost impossible to publish entire book-length collections of proverbs that contain contextual materials and commentaries. Most publishers will find such compilations too voluminous and of too limited interest, but one hopes that this situation might change some day.

Psychologists and psychiatrists have long been interested in proverbs for testing intelligence, attitudes, aptitudes, and various mental illnesses. Numerous so-called “proverbs tests” have been devised for this purpose, the best known and most commonly used of which is the Gorham Proverbs Test. It was developed by Donald R. Gorham in 1956 as a tool for diagnosing schizophrenia, since schizophrenics have difficulty in understanding the metaphors of proverbs. Obviously psycho- and sociolinguistic aspects of normal comprehension of metaphors by children vs. adults, native vs. foreign speakers, white-collar vs. blue collar workers, etc. enter into this, as has been shown in my early review article «The Use of Proverbs in Psychological Testing», Journal of the Folklore Institute, 15 (1978), 45-55 and Tim B. Rogers subsequent essay on «Psychological Approaches to Proverbs: A Treatise on the Import of Context», Canadian Folklore Canadien, 8 (1986), 87-104. In addition to psychologists using proverbs tests as a diagnostic tool for mental disorders, psycholinguists like Annelies Buhofer in her study Der Sprachenverb von phraseologischen Wortverbindungen (Frauenfeld: Huber, 1980) have employed proverbs to study the mental development of children and the whole question of cognition and comprehension of metaphors. Proverbs have also been utilized by social psychologists as slogans in therapeutic communities for alcohol or drug addicts. Much could be learned from additional studies like these regarding mental processes and psychological or sociological influence through proverbs.

Proverbs can be quite negative when they express, as many of them do, slurs or stereotypes. Such negative proverbial texts appear in the earliest proverb collections, and they are still used today despite attempts to be open-minded towards ethnic, religious, sexual, national, and regional differences. Three special collections are Otto von Reinsberg-Düringsfeld, Internationale Titulaturen (Leipzig: Fries, 1863; rpt. ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Hildesheim: Olms, 1992); Abraham A. (See Donald R. Gorham, «A Proverbs Test for Clinical and Experimental Use», Psychological Reports, 2 (1956), 1-12.)


Wolfgang Mieder


Strangely enough, social historians have not shown much interest in proverbs, but this appears to be changing as more and more historians are looking at how proverbs reflect the attitudes or worldview (mentality) of various social classes at different periods. George Boas, for example, examined the Latin proverb «Vox populi, vox Dei» and its vernacular European translations in his book *Vox Populi: Essays in the History of an Idea* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969). Also there are major articles by Donald McKelvie, «Proverbial Elements in the Oral Tradition of an English Urban Industrial Region», *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 2 (1965), 244-261; Natalie Z. Davis, «Proverbial Wisdom and Popular Error», in N.Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 227-267 and pp. 336-346 (notes); and J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada, «Origin, Meaning and Value of Igbo Historical Proverbs», *Proverbium*, 7 (1990), 185-206. The latter is a significant article on the origin and importance of Igbo historical proverbs to an understanding of the cultural history of Nigeria. Although the texts might not be precise history, they contain important information concerning the folk interpretation of colonialism, wars, and other events. The fact that these matters were crystallized into proverbial form brought about the remembrance and memorability of such historical facts in a primarily oral culture. Of major interest is also James Obelkevich’s essay on «Proverbs and Social History», in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 43-72, in which he discusses the users and uses of proverbs in Europe during different historical periods. He deals with various meanings of proverbs in their historical and social context, emphasizing their significance as expressions of “mentalities” or worldview. The article is primarily a social history of proverb usage in England and shows that historians ought to join literary scholars, folklorists, and anthropologists in studying proverbs as socially relevant wisdom. We definitely need more studies along these lines by cultural historians from various countries to give us a picture of how proverbs and their use mirror the mores and worldview of their times.

Philologists, folklorists, and cultural historians have occupied themselves for a long time with tracing the origin, history, dissemination, and meaning of individual proverbs and their variants. One could go so far as to say that there is a “story” behind every proverb, and it is usually a sizable task to deal with just one text in this diachronic and semantic fashion. About some proverbs, entire books have been written, as for example Matti Kuusi’s seminal 420-page study *Sonne bei

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Regenschein. Zur Weltgeschichte einer Redensart (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1957), in which he investigates the origin, history and geographical distribution of the internationally-known proverb «When it rains and the sun shines the devil is beating his grandmother» and its many variants. The German folklorist and paremiologist Lutz Röhrich has put together a three-volume Das große Lexikon der sprichwörtlichen Redensarten (Freiburg: Herder, 1991-1992), in which he discusses the history and meaning of hundreds of German texts, and I have put together a special International Bibliography of Explanatory Essays on Individual Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions (Bern: Lang, 1977). While we have exemplary studies of quite a few individual proverbs, much remains to be done for obscure regional and dialectical texts as well as for globally-disseminated proverbs. Historical studies of this type will also show that most proverbs have a monogenetic origin, but for some very basic proverbs, polygenesis might well be possible. Why should the classical proverb «Big fish eat little fish» with its occurrence in all European languages not have originated separately in Asian or African countries? Much comparative work is still needed here, but our newest international proverb collections are showing that some proverbs appear to exist in languages so different from each other that no process of cultural borrowing in the form of loan translations might have taken place, which leaves us with the possibility of polygenetic origins for some proverbs.

In this regard, proverbs derived from the sacred writings of the world’s religions have also gained wide circulation and have been studied as international expressions of wisdom. Selwyn Gurney Champion has put together a comparative proverb collection entitled The Eleven Religions and Their Proverbial Lore (New York: Dutton, 1945), but there are many more, as for example Carl Schulze, Die Biblischen Sprichwörter der deutschen Sprache (Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1860; rpt. ed. by Wolfgang Mieder. Bern: Lang, 1987), which lists those Biblical proverbs that have gained common currency in the German language, and my small book Not By Bread Alone: Proverbs of the Bible (Shelburne, Vermont: New England Press, 1990) with its 425 Biblical proverbs current in the Anglo-American language. A vast international scholarship centers on wisdom literature which has found its way into traditional proverbs. Of particular importance are the studies by Clifford Henry Plopper, Chinese Religion Seen Through the Proverb (Shanghai: China Press; 1926; rpt. New York: Paragon, 1969); John Mark Thompson, The Form and Function of Proverbs in Ancient Israel (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); Carole R. Fontaine, Traditional Sayings in the Old Testament: A Contextual Study (Sheffield, United Kingdom: Almond Press, 1988); Ronald A. Piper, Wisdom in the Q-Tradition: The Aphoristic Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Alan P. Winton, The Proverbs of Jesus: Issues of History and Rhetoric (Sheffield, United Kingdom: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); and Theodore A. Perry, Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) as well as T.A. Perry, The «Moral Proverbs» [Proverbios morales] of Santob de Carrión. Jewish Wisdom in Christian Spain (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987). But much more comparative work is needed to point out the similarities and dissimilarities of the proverbial wisdom of the various religions. We also don’t know enough yet about the influence that Biblical proverbs had on the African or Asian population due to the missionary work. An exemplary and massive study (767 pp.) along these lines is Philippe Dinzeole Nzambi, Proverbes bibliques et proverbes kongo. Etude comparative de «Proverbia 25-29» et de quelques proverbes kongo (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992). But such indigenous studies as Gerald J. Wanjohi’s «The Gikuyu Philosophy of Religion with Reference to the Proverbs», Journal of...
Religious proverbs are, of course, also used as a teaching tool, and so are proverbs in general. Entire books have been written on the pedagogical and didactic value of this traditional wisdom, notably Werner R. Herzenstiel, *Erziehungserfahrung im deutschen Sprichwort. Theorie einer freiheitlichen Erziehungspraxis* (Saarbrücken: Universitäts- und Schulbuchverlag, 1973) and Michal Wulff, *Das Sprichwort im Kontext der Erziehungstradition. Dargestellt am Beispiel deutsch-fälischer Sprichwörter* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1990). There is also Dumitru Stanciu's article «The Proverb and the Problems of Education», *Proverbium*, 3 (1986), 153-178, in which he shows that many Romanian (and other) proverbs deal with such matters as the mind, wisdom, experience, learning, authority, and the teacher. Proverbs contain much educational wisdom, and they have long been used as didactic tools in child rearing, in linguistic and religious instruction in schools, and in teaching about general human experiences. Such proverbs continue to play a major role as a pedagogical tool in modern societies, especially among family members and at school. They deserve to be taught as part of general education, and since they belong to the common knowledge of basically all native speakers, they are indeed very effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world around us. Felix Boateng reaches similar conclusions in his significant paper on «African Traditional Education: A Tool for Intergenerational Communication», in Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamu Welsh Asante (eds.), *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1985), pp. 109-122. The author argues that Western formal education in Africa did not consider traditional cultural transmission as a goal of the educative process for Africans. He calls for a return to traditional education in Africa, including in particular the rich heritage of oral literature as expressed in fables, myths, legends, folk tales, and proverbs. The educational and communicative power of proverbs in African societies lies in their use as validators of traditional ethics, procedures, and beliefs in teaching children as well as adults. Dennis W. Polzy has reached quite similar conclusions regarding the didactic function of proverbs in African-American families in his *The Poetry of African-American Proverb Usage: A Speech Act Analysis* (Diss. University of California at Los Angeles, 1991). Further studies will certainly show that the value and power of proverbs as educational tools have not diminished in traditional or technological societies.

The interrelationship of proverbs with other verbal folklore genres just mentioned has also been of great interest to paremiologists for a long time. Classical Greek and Latin writers commented on the obvious interrelationship between fables and proverbs, theorizing, as it were, about which of the genres came first. In other words, does the proverb that adds a bit of moralizing or ethical wisdom at the end of a fable summarize its content, or is the fable nothing but an explanatory comment on the original proverb? This scholarship has been splendidly edited by Pack Carnes in his volume entitled *Proverbia in Fabula: Essays on the Relationship of the Fable and the Proverb* (Bern: Lang, 1988). The use and function of proverbs in fairy tales has been studied by Heinz Rölleke (ed.), «Redensarten des Volks, auf die ich immer horche». Das Sprichwort in den «Kinder- und Hausmärchen» der Brüder Grimm (Bern: Lang, 1988), and Galit Hasan-Rokem has investigated *Proverbs in Israeli Folk Narratives: A Structural Semantic Analysis* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982). Yet all of this does not mean that we do not still need more studies on the interrelationship of proverbs with riddles, jokes, folk narratives, songs, etc.

The same is true for the use and function of proverbs in literature. Early scholarship consists primarily of annotated lists of the proverbs found in literary works, while more recent publications...
address the problems of identification and interpretation of proverbial language in poetry, dramas, and prose. In my *Proverbs in Literature: An International Bibliography* (Bern: Lang, 1978), I have shown that there are hundreds of literary proverb studies centering primarily on European and American authors ranging from the Middle Ages through the 19th century. The same has been noted by Roger D. Abrahams and Barbara A. Babcock in their essay on «The Literary Use of Proverbs», *Journal of American Folklore*, 90 (1977), 414-429. While the many monographs on famous writers as J. Alan Pfeffer's *The Proverb in Goethe* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948); María Cecilia Colombi's *Los refranes en el Quijote: texto y contexto* (Potomac, Maryland: Scripta Humanistica, 1989); and Marjorie Donker's *Shakespeare's Proverbial Themes: A Rhetorical Context for the «Sententia» as «Res»* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1992) are definitely of great importance, the time has surely come to investigate lesser-known authors from other parts of the world and especially authors of the modern age. George B. Bryan has done this in an exemplary fashion in his book, *Black Sheep, Red Herrings, and Blue Murder: The Proverbial Agatha Christie* (Bern: Lang, 1993). Together we have assembled *The Proverbial Winston S. Churchill: An Index to Proverbs in the Works of Sir Winston Churchill* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1995), which indicates that paremiologists should go beyond purely literary authors in their investigations of written sources. We also have many studies on the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, for which Adeleke Adeeko's *Words' Horse, or The Proverb as a Paradigm of Literary Understanding* (Diss. University of Florida, 1991) must here suffice as a representative example. But rather than writing yet another study on Achebe or Shakespeare, it would perhaps be even more beneficial to consider authors hitherto uninvestigated for their effective literary use of proverbs, as for example Zora Neale Hurston, Gabriel García Márquez, and Yukio Mishima. While we have Wolfram Eberhard's study of «Proverbs in Selected Chinese Novels», *Proverbium*, 2 (1985), 21-57, we need many more investigations of that type in order to draw valid conclusions regarding the use and function of proverbs during the different literary periods of various cultures and languages. It is important that studies dealing with individual authors also be placed into a comparative framework in due time, as I have done some years ago for the use of proverbs in 19th century German literature in *Das Sprichwort in der deutschen Prosaliteratur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (München: Fink, 1976). The many specific analyses of literary works ought to add up to a better understanding of the poetics of proverbs in literature, also giving us, of course, answers to what proverbs were in frequent use at what time.

Quite a similar picture presents itself when one looks at the long tradition of iconographic interpretations of proverbs, ranging from medieval wood-cuts to misericords, from book illustrations to emblems, from tapestries to oil paintings, and from broadsheets to modern caricatures, cartoons, comic strips, and advertisements. Much attention has been paid to the Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel (1520?-1569), who produced many proverb pictures, his most celebrated one being the *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559), an oil painting illustrating over one hundred proverbial expressions. Numerous books and articles have been written on this picture alone, two recent publications being Alan Dundes and Claudia A. Stibbe, *The Art of Mixing Metaphors: A Folkloristic Interpretation of the «Netherlandish Proverbs» by Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemian, 1981) and Margaret A. Sullivan «Bruegel’s Proverb Painting: Renaissance Art for a Humanist Audience», *The Art Bulletin*, 73 (1991), 431-466. As valuable as this preoccupation with Bruegel is, let us also pay more attention to the proverb pictures of other painters and eventually establish a complete history of proverb iconography. And let us not forget other artistic media, including proverb depictions on ceramics, textiles, staffs of authority, gold weights, Koshin stones (the three

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37 See also my comments on «The Essence of Literary Proverb Studies», *Proverbium*, no. 23 (1974), 888-894.

wise monkeys), coins, stamps, playing cards, etc. This is still very much an untapped field, and many new insights lie in store for us in this fascinating area of proverbial art.

Without having exhausted all the many possible areas of proverb inquiry, I wish to say a few final words regarding proverbs in the modern age. While it is perfectly appropriate for paremiologists to look backwards for the use of proverbs, we must not forget to investigate their traditional and innovative use in our own time. With the growing interest in popular culture, the mass media, and cultural literacy, paremiologists ought to look at which traditional proverbs survive today and which have actually been coined in the twentieth century. For some studies of individual current proverbs, see Nigel Rees, *Sayings of the Century: The Stories Behind the Twentieth Century’s Quotable Sayings* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984). I have dealt with the modern German scene in *Deutsche Sprichwörter in Literatur, Politik, Presse und Werbung* (Hamburg: Buske, 1983) and with Anglo-American materials in my book on *Proverbs Are Never Out of Season* (1993) mentioned above. People do not necessarily consider proverbs to be sacrosanct, and the “fun” of parodying, manipulating, and perverting them has become quite widespread. While such parodies might be quite humorous, they also often express serious socio-political satire in the form of slogans and graffiti, as Jess Nierenberg has convincingly shown in “Proverbs in Graffiti: Taunting Traditional Wisdom,” *Maledicta*, 7 (1983), 41-58. Much work has already been accomplished on the manipulative use of proverbs in advertising and the mass media as well as their (mis)use in political discourse. Proverbs as well as intentionally rephrased anti-proverbs in all types of modern communication enable and empower paremiologists to study them literally everywhere at any time.

Modern paremiology is an absolutely open-ended phenomenon with many new challenges lying ahead. There is no doubt that proverbs, those old gems of generationally-tested wisdom, help us in our everyday life and communication to cope with the complexities of the modern human condition. The traditional proverbs and their value system give us some basic structure, and if their worldview does not fit a particular situation, they are quickly changed into revealing and liberating anti-proverbs. And there are, of course, the new proverbs of our time, such as “Different strokes for different folks,” that express a liberated worldview. Proverbs don’t always have to be didactic and prescriptive; they can also be full of satire, irony, and humor. As such, the thousands of proverbs that make up the stock of proverbial wisdom of all cultures represent not a universally valid but certainly a pragmatically useful treasure. In retrospect, paremiologists have amassed a truly impressive body of proverb scholarship upon which prospective paremiology can build in good faith. Modern theoretical and empirical paremiology will doubtlessly lead to new insights about human behavior and communication, and by comparing these research results on an international basis, paremiologists might add their bit to a humane and enlightened world order based on experienced wisdom.

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