

# FROM PAREMIOGRAPHY TO PAREMIOLOGY: THE ROLE OF AIP-IAP AS AN INTERNATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE FACILITATOR<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The wisdom of proverbs is an established fact well documented in the thousands of works by paremiographers when collecting, writing and classifying proverbs. For centuries, the popular sayings were, and continue to be, popular in many cultures and languages as a way of maintaining and passing on traditional values and thoughts from one generation to the next.

The increasing number of publications universally and the higher degree of connectivity between people internationally have facilitated the migration of proverbs around the world and made it possible to study these expressions on a comparative basis. The need for a common pattern in the global village leads paremiologists to address questions such as definition, content, structure, function, meaning, style, and value of proverbs, and how to be involved in the domain of proverbial databases.

The Associação Internacional de Paremiologia / International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP) arises from the need for a facilitator of the exchange and diffusion of paremiological studies and related areas through the establishment of international network-based information systems. The AIP-IAP encourages international cooperation between academics and motivates young researchers to conduct paremiological studies in order to protect and preserve the cultural heritage transmitted by our elders.

**Key words:** association, cultural heritage, paremiographer, paremiologist, proverbs, tradition

## PAREMIOGRAPHERS

### 1. Sources of collections

The popular sayings are largely of unknown origin and the authors of proverb books, even the most respected, are not unanimous about the multiple origin of such expressions but always agree to recite the following ten sources of inspiration: **a)** frequent and important events; **b)** tales, legends and traditional stories; **c)** habits of human beings and peoples; **d)** fables; **e)** statements of

scholars, wise and distinguished people; **f**) timely phrases that have become refrains; **g**) incomprehensible and wonderful phenomena; **h**) the nature of things, **i**) oracles and prophets; **j**) landmark theatrical pieces. With the advent of the Internet we now have access to an innumerable spectrum of options, such as sources of study that are listed in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paremiographer>.

## **2. Registration of information**

In a first stage the variety of sources determines the appearance of numerous works, each one trying to cover everything the author knows about proverbs. It is usual to watch the overlaps resulting from ignorance of what is already published or even the intent to multiply the sources of transmission for subsequent generations. A good portion of these works are handwritten, others were published by priests, noting a pedagogical aspect for mass education. One form of dissemination was the publication on calendars, journals and textbooks and currently in newspapers and electronic books.

## **3. Ordering the information**

The emergence of cultural societies and writers has given new impetus in the dissemination of proverbial expressions to consider these as a form of expression of popular culture or folklore – a manifestation of social and spiritual life of the people, either at local, regional or national level. At this stage there is a significant increase in the emergence of dictionaries and collections, the latter depicting aspects related to traditions and national folklore. The special collections are an interesting field of research by its partial view, and sometimes unusual. An example is the special collection on the Greek police.

## **4. Comparing variants**

The valuable work of correspondents scattered within each country and those who followed closely the work published in other countries, especially the neighboring ones, forced the compilation of a proverbial diversity of expressions and other features of folklore. Such activity has been echoed by many personalities from the academic and politic worlds that led to the foundation of the first ethnographic museums and archives. Donations of “cultural patrons” have enabled the establishment of funds with thousands of records. Some of

these institutions are, today, authentic international references by the value of their contribution to the construction of the collective imaginary.

## **5. Classification by key-words**

In possession of such a large and rich variety of texts we assist with a qualitative leap in the study of collections of proverbial themes because they see their intimate connection to other areas of knowledge. The documentary research funds through keywords, lexical units, topics or sociological ideologies and mobilizes experts from various fields to search for a systematization of existing content and the preparation of instructions to be given to informers and collaborators. The concern with the accuracy in obtaining the original recordings and with the distinction between different structures, as well as the inclusion of a remarkable amount of material in textbooks, genuinely marks the passage of the activity of the paremiographer to that of the paremiologist.

## **6. Storing the information**

The type of storage is very variable, depending on the time at which the material was published, on the resources of the authors / editors, on the endorsements and institutional interests, on the audience to whom they are addressed, on the internal structure of data, etc. The emergence of the computer with all possibilities of manipulating the information contained herein has determined the use of informatics' storage in drives that supports HD, CD, DVD. The data on storage devices can be in the form of files, audio, databases, video, etc.

# **PAREMIOLOGISTS**

## **1. Searching for a definition**

The transition from empirical to theoretical level recommends setting in which the proverb belongs. Such understanding comes from ancient Greece where there appeared the first definitions, sometimes indicating the action of making public, sometimes manifesting an intention in favor of action, or even to publicize the word and knowledge. Over times the different meanings of the word "proverb" have been patented by world-renowned academics such as Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov, Matti Kuusi, Arvo Krikmann, Alan Dundes, Shirley Arora, Zoltan Kanyo, Peter Grzybek, Neal Norrick, and of course Wolfgang Mieder who proposes the following definition: "*short phrase, usually from the folklore,*

*containing wisdom, truth, morality and traditional perspectives expressed in a metaphorical sense, stable and trainable and transmitted from generation to generation.”*

## **2. Different perspectives**

Due to the variety of definitions for saying it is common to find names as synonymous: *adage, aphorism, anexim, apothegm, axiom, maxim, saying, example, gnome, maxim, paroemia, prologue, proverb, sentence*, that are consistent with each others in their essence but differ in intentionality. In a wide spectrum of opinions, which varies from the brief and elegant expression to the use of vile and low language, it is usual to accept that they all are resumes of human experience, accumulated over time. Whatever the term is used, “*Proverbs are the condensed good sense of nations*” and their permanence is not in danger if we believe that “*Time passes, but the sayings stay*”.

## **3. Theoretical aspects**

According to Mieder, the recent theoretical research about proverbs has been primarily driven by linguists with particular emphasis on structural and semi-otic aspects of proverbs and by comparative via. It follows that these contributions have provided important advances with regard to the definition, language and meaning of proverbs, as well as other studies related to specific areas. Peter Grzybek has given special interest to the traditionalism and familiarity of proverbs, aspects related with time and space, which require the use of statistics and application of mathematical models. The importance of human migration opens new areas of theoretical research, particularly when combined with local folklore and culture.

## **4. Priority areas of study**

One area that has gained more adherents is that of historical research. This is a complex area highlighting the use of dictionaries (with variable support) and allowing, through the study of variants of a proverb, to determine with the maximum extent possible, the provenance of a proverbial expression. Collections such as of Antonio Delicado (Portugal), or others, are a source of the connection of paremiology to related areas. The ethnographic work of Leite de Vasconcellos (Portugal) is an example of openness to other fields of knowledge as, for example, riddles, tales, folk poetry, legends, customs, festivals and su-

perstitutions, etc. In terms of language and literature other significant impulses are given, especially in lexicography, lexicology and phraseology. In this year 2010, it is relevant to mention the work of one ex-President of the Portuguese Republic – Teófilo Braga – once during these 100 years of Republic in Portugal he was the only politician devoted to cultural and folklore issues.

## **5. Promoting scientific exchanges**

In a changing world, the exchanges of knowledge are inevitable either through direct contact of migrants or by the growing use of technological means placed at our disposal. The Associação Internacional de Paremiologia / International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP) includes in its aims the achievement of international scientific exchanges and establishment of trans-national projects aiming to promote the institution and their activities, at the same time creating partnerships with other organizations working in related scientific areas. Thus we will be able to confront methodological approaches and know the state of the art in paremiology research at various levels of knowledge. The main activity of AIP-IAP that contributes to the exchange of experiences between paremiographers, paremiologists and citizens interested in the proverbial thematic is the realization of Interdisciplinary Colloquia on Proverbs (ICPs) (<http://www.colloquium-proverbs.org>), annually held at Tavira, Portugal. The 5th meeting (ICP 2011) will take place from 6 to 13 November 2011. Other activities can be seen on the website <http://www.aip-iap.org>.

## **6. Integrating into education**

The importance of the study of proverbs is not an exclusive activity of research at the university level or a private field for linguists. This is an issue that can and should be addressed transversely from the earliest years of schooling. Topics such as months or seasons, agriculture, food, animal life, etc. provide opportunities to include activities for reading, writing, revision, recovery, reflection, comparison, inference, prediction, of interpretation, or entertainment. One example of the AIP-IAP activity started with a cultural session to promote inter-generational communication skills and ended with the publication of a book “*Brincando com Provérbios = Playing with proverbs*” (<http://cpsetavira.blogspot.com/2010/01/brincando-com-proverbios-11-de.html>). Members of the AIP-IAP have been involved in different activities and they participate regularly in debates. Every morning a local radio announces the proverb of the day and receives comments; other strategies are used to spread the

wisdom condensed into proverbs among the new generations. Visitors of Tavira have seen painting exhibitions with proverbs and some restaurants in Tavira have proverbs on their walls.

## CONCLUSION

In summary we can say that the activities of the AIP-IAP are:

- to enhance the empirical aspects and also the scientific ones
- to strengthen links with related areas
- to build bridges between people and nations
- to motivate youth to the preservation of traditions
- to influence educational authorities
- to emphasize the intangible heritage

... and finally

- to transform Tavira into the “CAPITAL OF PROVERBS”

**Note:** *Professor Arvo Krikmann was unanimously nominated Honorary Associate of the AIP-IAP by the General Assembly for his contribution to the advancement of the AIP-IAP. He has participated in all the four meetings of the Interdisciplinary Colloquia on Proverbs.*

## NOTE

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