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ROMANIAN PAREMIOLOGY, THESAURUS FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Abstract: Paremiology was somehow the field of study largely assumed by linguists and ethnologists, but lately other fine arts sciences have focused on its history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The conceptual content of Romanian Proverbs covers every aspect of social life. All abstract concepts such as truth, goodness, faith, and practical concepts (seedtime and harvest, wedding, family, play, social relationships, politics) are represented in the content area of Romanian proverbs – and all can be studied in the context of Romanian paremiological sources. The purpose of this paper is to present a (apparently) new research framework that can be extremely fruitful and productive. Romanian Proverbs make up a treasure waiting to be explored. Romanian proverbs present the life of the Romanian people from many perspectives (family, society, inner experience, identity, values, moral profile) waiting to be (re)discovered, analyzed and undertaken.

Keywords: paremiology, proverbs, Romanian proverbs, national identity, pluridisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity.

Paremiological literature is a generic concept with which we identify writings that include proverbs, sayings, phrases, and aphorisms from the beginning of mankind until today. Paremiological literature can be identified with wisdom or sapiential literature, but this notion emphasizes proverbs content rather than on their source and condition, thus eluding the ethnological sense.

The sapiential literature is usually considered a high class literature, while proverbs express the identity of a nation. The sapiential literature encompasses several genres where stoning expressions are collected in order to compress the wisdom of generations and passing it on in an accessible and memorable way. Thus, we are dealing with proverbial wisdom, monologues and dialogues, poems, fables...

The origin of wisdom literature, or sapiential, or paremiological can be found in that short and full of content popular phrases, which are designed to observe and illustrate life in a motivational way. The transition from the oral to the written form took place in Egypt around 2500 BC (eg *The Instruction of Ptahhotep*)[1], and in Sumer a little later. Throughout the Middle East there was a class of scribes who had the role to collect and polish wise sayings. They usually work under the patronage of the royal court. Sources of sayings were diverse: from schools of that times, either from the wise men who made up sayings, proverbs and riddles, or of the circulating among rich people of that time.[2]

Sapiential Biblical literature, which main feature is the teaching based on experience, tradition and the "way of the world" does not focus on direct divine disclosure as a source of truth (as in the Torah or the Prophets). This body of literature has its roots in antiquity, although it is associated with Solomon, includes observations of many wise men.[3]

[1] Nicolas-Christophe Grimal, *A History Of Ancient Egypt*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1992)
[2] J.D. Douglas, *Dicționar biblic.* (Oradea: Editura Cartea Creștină, 1995), 206, 207.
[3] Patzia Arthur G., şi Petrotta Anthony J. *Dicționar de studii biblice*. (Cluj: Editura Logos), 2008.

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Traditionally considered sapiential Biblical books are Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes (Song of Solomon is included as well, according to some classifications) and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon, the apocryphal book. There are strong sapiential influences in Psalms (eg., Psalm 1) and in many other books (eg., the narrative cycles about Joseph in Genesis, and those about Daniel and his friends, and we can add the narration about Esther). Wisdom is accessible to all, as it seeks to teach people to live judicious ways and recognizing God's intentions towards its creation. However, wisdom teachings are transmitted through "moral words" and, therefore, require the ability to interpret, the patience and the desire to investigate the riches of this life (Proverbs 1:2-6). Ancient Israel's contribution to this literature, the widespread, is the statement that has its source in God, in the "fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 1:7).

Proverbs penetrated spontaneously and often massively in early writings of mankind.[4] They came with stories, songs, ballads, poetry, prophecy, lamentations, popular celebrations and rituals, but also had an additional feature, that ancient people, like those of today, were free to use them without a particular context. The proverbs have become perennial and varied sapiential genre of ancient writings. Before they can be collected by Ezra, Solomon and Hezekiah in the Bible, and Herodotus in Iliad and Odyssey, they circulated orally, and the source and origin of many cannot be identified. By entering into written texts became known, spotted and stored.

Thus there were formed the "distinct forms of art and thought." [5] We encounter in the poetry of Thracian Greeks: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, in Latin writers like Marcus Aurelius, Horace, and Adrian. They initiated the paremiological poetry that was held in high esteem during the Renaissance.[6] Erasmus of Rotterdam has collected and commented more than 5000 proverbs in *Adagia* from Greek and Latin writers.[7]

Paremiological containing writings existed in all cultures and eras. We illustrate this idea by Cogito Collection from Albatros Publishing House, in Romania before 1989. These collections of proverbs selected topics and cultural origin as a treasure of knowledge, of a people or era. For example, *Proverbe şi cugetări armeneşti* (Armenian Proverbs and Thoughts), *Proverbe turceşti* (Turkish Proverbs), *Proverbe şi cugetări bengaleze* (Bengali Sayings and Thoughts), *Proverbe, maxime şi aforisme arabe* (Arabic Proverbs and Aphorisms), *Spicuiri din înţelepciunea spaniolă* (Spanish wisdom), *Proverbele româneşti şi proverbele lumii romanice* (Romanian Proverbs and Roman World Proverbs), *Proverbe şi cugetări despre omenie* (Sayings and thoughts about honor), *Proverbe şi cugetări despre patrie* (Sayings and Thoughts About the Country), *Munca reflectată în proverbele lumii* (Labor Reflected in World Proverbs), *Proverbe şi cugetări despre dragoste* (Sayings and Thoughts about Love), *Femeia în proverbele şi cugetările lumii* (Proverbs and Thoughts about Woman), *Proverbele lumii despre calităţi şi defecte* (Proverbs World about Strengths and Weaknesses).

Proverbs were the literary inspiration, but also the means by which they were born, were polished and especially spread. In the Romanian literature, the mark of paremiology is very pronounced. *Povestea vorbii* (The Story of Speaking), by Anton Pann, Creangă's writings, Caragiale, Alecsandri, Eminescu, Slavici, Goga, Agârbiceanu, Voiculescu, *Scrisoarea XII* - Pacală and Tândală (Letter XII) of Costache Negruzzi.

I. C. Chimiţia made a very useful terminological distinction between *paremiology* (science of proverbs) and *paremiography*, the process of gathering proverbs in collections and

[4] George Muntean, *Postfață* la *Proverbe românești*. (București: Editura Minerva, 1984), 379.

[5] Idem.

[6] Ion Dodu Bălan, *Cartea înțelepciunii populare. Proverbe.* (București: Editura Eminescu, 1974), XII.

[7] George Muntean, *Postfață* la *Proverbe românești*. (București: Editura Minerva, 1984), 381.

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dictionaries. [8] If we accept this distinction, we are dealing with two different approaches about proverbs: (1) collections of proverbs and (2) research upon proverbs. It is clear that we made a lot of collections of proverbs, but less studies and researches upon proverbs. Researches on proverbs must not be assumed by only one academic field, but must be a crossed effort of many researchers in different fields such as ethnology, linguistics, psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, and ethics.

Let's mention works related to paremiology. The first work identified as paremiological is a translation done in the late 16th century called *Albinuşa*. The first collection of Romanian proverbs belongs to Iordache Golescu and is called *Pilde, povăţuiri şi cuvinte adevărate* (Parables, exhortations and words of truth), which remained in manuscript until 1973. [9] In 1840, Gheorghe Barițiu launched a new collection of *Proverbe româneşti* (Romanian Proverbs), which included 65 paremiological units. Other 319 are contained *Diourile pentru minte şi literatură*, in 1846, by Al. Papiu-Ilarian. These two collections were not known to I. A. Zanne and, according to Vasile Netea who republished them in 1967, they are distinguished "by direct folk origin of the collected proverbs and vernacular lexicon, lacking of neologisms and forced construction."[10]

To these are added: I. C. Hinţescu, *Proverbele românilor* (Romanian Proverbs), Sibiu, 1977, and P. Ispirescu, *Zicători populare* (Popular Sayings), published in 1882. The largest collection of proverbs unquestionably belongs to Iuliu A. Zanne (1895-1903), *Proverbele românilor* work in ten volumes. Almost all other subsequent collections of proverbs have been reported in the work of Iuliu Zanne. It is worth mentioning the effort of George Muntean, who summarized Romanian proverbs in an anthology of 8177 units (1968), which adds an annex in 1984 with the second edition of his book.

The list of works related to paremiology have to remember the name of G. Dem Teodoresc, who in 1877, used for the first time scientific criteria for his paremiological research in his work *Cercetări asupra proverbelor române, cum trebuie culese şi publicate* (Researches on Romanian Proverbs, How to collect and publish them), and he mentioned the need for necessary items such as alphabetical Index, Index of topics, comments, a glossary of rare expressions...[11]

Other author worth to mention is Haşdeu in *Etymologicum Magnum Romanniae* (1893) in "Revista Nouă" (1893-1894) and "Familia" (1894). For Haşdeu, proverbs are the predominant source of ideas for fairy tales.[12] Moses Gaster gave attention to Romanian proverbs in *Literatura populară română* (1883) and considered it „currency exchange" in relations between people. Mihai Eminescu gives poetic sound to Romanian proverbs (1976) in his poetry and in his articles and emphasized the importance of gather these "gems of thought of Romanian people".[13]

In the early twentieth century, the paremiological research has been carried forward by George Coşbuc in the magazines like "Vatra", "Epoca" and "Albina" (1903).[14] Coşbuc identified sources of proverbs, illustrated and commentd on them. The everyday experience,

[8] Constantin Negreanu, *Structura proverbelor românești.* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983), 15.

[9] Perpessicius (pseudonim al lui Dumitru S. Panaitescu). *Menţiuni de istorie literară şi folclor (1948-1956).* (București: Editura de stat pentru literatură și artă, 1957), 220.

[10] Vasile Netea, „Primele colecții de proverbe românești publicate" în *Studii de folclor şi literatură*. (București, 1967), 422, 423.

[11] Constantin Negreanu, *Structura proverbelor românești.* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983), 23.

[12] Ibidem, 22.

[13] Mihai Eminescu, *Opere*. (vol. VI) (București: Editura Academiei, 1964), 16.

[14] George Coșbuc, *Despre literatură şi limbă.* (București: Editura pentru literatură), 1960.

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history, nature observation, ridiculousness, legend, fable, tradition, written literature and the spirit of Romanians have produced those "quintessential folk wisdom" with simple, stereotypical and crystallized shape, to impress upon the crowd. "People love the shape", said Coşbuc "the rhyme, the spirit, the joke, the enigmatic phrases, the paradoxical contrast".[15]

A long enough period of time, paremiological research was neglected, although there is a wealth of material for study. This idea is emphasized by the great paremiologist after The Second World War, IC Chimiția (1960). He noted: "Paremiology studies remained at a low level." [16] After that moment appears other studies, usually from philological and ethnological field, later on. The paremiology spectrum is expanded by the structuralist and semiotic analyzes signed by Sanda Golopenția-Eretescu (1965, 1972).

We have to mention the importance of George Muntean considerations, made first in the *Preface* to the collection of Romanian proverbs *Apa trece, pietrele rămân* (1966), (Water passes, the stones remain) subsequently developed in his second edition of his book in 1968. George Muntean continued his study in 1969 in *Cercetări literare* şi *Interpretări şi repere* (1982) as in 1984 to provide the most comprehensive study in the *Afterword* to the anthology of *Proverbe românești* (Romanian Proverbs).

Another outstanding contribution belongs to Pavel Ruxăndoiu, who examines the internal nature of proverbs and their expressive capacity (1972 – *Aspectul metaforic al proverbelor* [The metaphorical aspect of proverbs]), and then the other two studies about the functions of proverbs (1972, 1973) and social and educational function. In 2004 published a paper *Proverb şi context,* (Proverb and context) in which discusses the cultural significance of the proverb. Elena Slave studying *Organizarea sintagmatică şi semantică a proverbelor* (Syntagmatic and Semantic Organization of Proverbs) and establishes a set of principles underlying the structure of proverbs. Victoria Stroescu (1975) analyzes the proverb strictly grammatically and sees the proverb as a sentence or phrase that is subject to the rules of syntactic structure. Cezar Tabarcea (1982) introduces the idea of interdisciplinary in the paremiological study by referring to the mathematical aspects of proverbs. In history of Romanian paremiology we need to mention Maria Vulişci-Alexandrescu and Eugenia Dragoș (1977), who highlights the peculiarities of proverbs including virtual meaning and lack of parts of the sentence, in particular predicate. Ovidiu Bârlea (1979) considered the proverbs a species that "feeds from metaphor". For Nicolae Roșianu (1979), the fundamental characteristic of paremiology is the stereotyping aspect.

Paremiology was somehow the field of study largely assumed by linguists and ethnologists, but lately other fine arts sciences have focused on its history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. An example of this is the study about compliance behavior of Romanian people revealed by Romanian proverbs.[17]

Multidisciplinary character of Romanian proverbs analysis is illustrated by the specific approach of every domain of science that brings a unique contribution to the Paremiological Romanian heritage. I will illustrate this point of view by appealing to the example of the social sciences.

Sociology: the proverb is a social fact

[15] Ibidem, 209.

[16] I. C. Chimiția, „Paremiologie", *Studii şi cercetări de istorie literară şi folclor*, 9, pp. 461-484, (București, 1960), 474.

[17] Septimiu Chelcea, *Opinia publică. Gândesc masele despre ce şi cum vor elitele?* (București: Editura Economică, 2002), 147-149.

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Sociology can be defined as a social science that studies the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals but as members of associations, groups and institutions. "Sociology postulates that social facts are subject to order and intelligibility." [18] Sociology assumes the role of science that investigates social facts as specific and irreducible to other phenomena (Auguste Comte), consider social facts as objects (Émile Durkheim).

Thus, in relation to sociology we can make some statements about proverbs:

- The proverb is a social fact. The proverbs are a legacy that the individual assumes in relation to other people. The proverb is outside for the individual and exert a social constraint.
- The proverb is a knowable fact. A proverb (or a sum of proverbs) can be transformed into an analytical object. It can be studied individually by its inner relations (structure, concepts, and language) and in relation to society. Thus, based on sociological research methods it can be analyzed how Romanians proverbs are used in public speeches, media, newspapers, magazines, literature. What are the social issues prevailing Romanian paremiology? What are the most famous and used Romanian proverbs?
- The proverb is a composed social structure of several elements, such as judgments, emotions, reasoning, culture, traditions, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, social norms, and values.
- Romanian paremiology can be treated as a whole. Paremiological field can be circumscribed by specific methods of sociological research and analyze various factors that may affect Romanian paremiology, and which are themselves affected by our paremiological structure: psychological, historical and social factors.

Psychology: proverbs as self-expression

Psychology is "the science of mental facts"[19] and consider man as an individual, beginning from his behavior to determine mental functions and mental processes such as intelligence, memory, perception, and internal and subjective experiences, such as feelings, hopes and motivation, conscious and unconscious processes.

Thus, in relation to psychology, we can make some statements about proverbs:

- Proverbs are a representation of the self in relation to each other. How proverbs are selected and used in communication, the tone with which they are spoken, emotional load, spontaneity, creativity, and motivation may be revealed with Romanian paremiological study. Romanian Proverbs reveal Romanian nature with all customs and their flaws.
- Proverbs are an expression of emotional memory of the Romanians. Emotion is lived and expressed. And even if they lose intensity with the cancellation of its object, its memory remains. The proverbs are given positive and negative emotions, central or peripheral: fear, anger, love, ambition, frustration, guilt, hatred, helplessness, hostility, humility, good mood, loneliness, anxiety, tension, shame, contempt, jealousy, contempt. Examples: ***Iubirea*** *trece prin apă, nu i-e* ***frică*** *că se-neacă,* ***urâtul*** *trece pe sec şi strigă: „Mă-nec! Mă-nec!”* (*Love* goes through the water, *not afraid* that it drowns *ugly* goes dry and cries,

[18] Jean Caune, *Cultură şi comunicare.* (Bucureşti: Editura Cartea Românească, 2000), 46.
[19] Norbert Sillamy, *Dicţionar de psihologie.* (Bucureşti: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2000), 247.

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"I drown! I drown!") / *Fără **mânie** nu-i **iubire***. (Without *anger* the love is not possible.) / *Nu **frică**, ci **ruşine** să însufleţeşti la copil, că **ruşinea** cea mai mare dă orice pedeapsă.* (Not *fear*, but *shame* inspire to a child, because the *shame* is greater than any punishment.)

Social Psychology: proverb, element of national identity

The place of social psychology as autonomous science divided by psychology and sociology was quite recently, although the case for this science began several decades ago. Social psychology can be defined as "the scientific study of the real or imagined interaction of social actors (individuals, groups) within a social context, cultural and historically determined." [20]

The basic concepts of social psychology are social phenomenon, interaction, social influence, individual behavior and group behavior, attitude, opinion, public opinion, social identity, stereotypes, social memorial... Theories of social psychology can be applied depending on field of interest: mass communication, the organizational, legal, educational, or political domain.

Due to the above statements, we can apply the concepts and theories of social psychology in the study of Romanian paremiology.

Identity, self-image and personality of Romanians are illustrated in reading expressions of Romanian paremiology items.

- Proverbs gives us an identity construction of the Romanian.

For exemple:

Romanian	English
Dă-i, Doamne, mintea românului cea de pe urmă.	O Lord, Give to the Romanian the later mind.
Copiii numeroşi sunt bogăţia românului.	The multitude of children are the wealth of the Romanian.
„Scăpă-mă, Doamne! -Dă din mâini, Române!”	"Save me, O Lord! Save yourself, Romanian!"
Românul e tăcut, dar e de temut.	The Romanian is silent, but it is feared.
Românul nu piere.	The Romanian will not perish.
Românul ştie multe a suferi, dar nu a uita.	The Romanian knows how to suffer, but not to forget.
Românul tace şi face.	The Romanian is silent, and makes things happen.
Dumnezeu să te ferească de român ciocoit şi de ţigan boierit.	May God protect you from a slaved Romanian and an enriched Gypsy.
Ca bietul român, săracul, îndărăt tot ca racul.	Poor Romanian, backwards like the crayfish.
A fi român, nu glumă.	To be Romanian, not a joke.
Românul s-a născut poet.	The Romanian was born to be a poet.

[20] Septimiu Chelcea, *Experimentul în psihosociologie.* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1982) apud. Gavriliuc, Alin. *De la relațiile interpersonale la comunicarea socială.* (Iaşi: Editura Polirom, 2006), 11.

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Social identity is a complex concept and difficult to be circumscribed to a broad definition. However, we can trace some key elements of identity: [21]

- Identity is set out in a specific context, a context that determines a particular type of identity.
- Identity requires the presence of an active social subject that turns the principle of identity (A = A) in an expression report.
- Assertion of identity is mediated by a speech (speech which categorize) addressed to a proper target.

Collective identity is built all on the basis of this structure: specific social context, social subject, identity discourse, the target... The social subject, in our study, may be represented by the Romanians, seen as a nation, which, in a determined context, such family, build a paremiological discourse (which starts from the actual situation and we are moving towards what we want to leave to the future generations as a heritage) to a recipient who interprets this discourse on its defining elements. Paremiological identity discourse is not a conscious and planned product, but it states cardinal features of Romanian profile. Who uses this discourse is sometimes the recipient's. Otherwise, paremiological expressions have a reflexive role in our narrative identity.

If we analyze the proverbs above, we can share some identity data of the Romanians. I selected only that proverbs that include the term "Romanian" to restrict analysis and to illustrate what the Romanian says about himself. There are thousands of proverbs, but very few paremiological units use the word "Romanian".

Thus, these proverbs states:

- The resistance of Romanian to all kinds of vicissitudes and hardships.
- The trend of Romanian toward behavioral compliance.
- Tendency to decide in a later regretted way.
- The urge to take their fate into their own hands and overcome the condition of humiliation.
- The Romanian has a tendency to adapt himself depending on the social context.
- The Romanian tends toward sensitivity, beauty and poetry.

From this proverbs we can see the face of a Romanian which is sad, reconciled with the fate that doesn`t push him too hard, a Romanian who is thankful with what he has and enjoys his family. If he is left alone, he will not take the initiative, will not make revolution or war, shall be obedient and will look to have an acceptable living. The Romanian is not proud by nature, is quiet and reserved, resistant and hardened, waiting for perfect time to action and he will do it only when is necessary.

Conclusions

I wanted to illustrate the fact that the Romanian proverbs can be approached from various angles. I hope that this work will open up the appetite for researches in paremiological field. Personally I made a research about family life in Romanian proverbs with unexpected results for me. After that step I left with the desire to get back to the Romanian paremiological treasure to ask new questions and to find new answers. Is this treasure a kind of Pandora's Box for us? There is someone afraid about the discoveries that will make us to explore this heritage? Can we cope with the knowledge that it will be revealed to us? Or we can make a comparison between the Romanian paremiological profile and the Romanian identity analyzed with instruments of other scientific fields.

[21] Alin Gavriliuc, *De la relațiile interpersonale la comunicarea socială.* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2006), 207, 208.

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Regardless of the approach, Romanian proverbs are an ocean that contains psychological, sociological, historical, linguistic, and cultural information. This text is a plea for understanding and appreciating this treasure called "Romanian Proverbs", which can be valued not only from a poetic perspective, linguistics, folklore and literature, but also an open analytical multidisciplinary research.

Among other approaches, this paper says some things that are presented as hypotheses for other researches:

Romanian Proverbs are an actual (psycho-sociological) mirror of Romanian people.

The Proverbs can say about us more than we are prepared to hear at first glance.

Proverbs present an epistemological content that can be analyzed with scientific instruments.

Each Paremiological unit can be analyzed separately and grouped.

Paremiological units can be complex conceptual structures that can be the basis for testing scientific hypotheses or social theories.

I let this work open as an invitation to a new adventure that we can uphold together, a scientific adventure, in which the Romanian proverbs can be allowed to say how much of what they can say.

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