

**Liisa Granbom-Herranen**

University of Turku  
Finland

## **Proverbial expressions and cultural context in archive materials**

**Abstract.** This article focuses on questions to be considered when using research data for paremiology, especially when the aim is to make conclusions about proverbs and culture (in other words, the way in which people live and express values). Context creates the frame for expressions, but often it is not available. Proverbs, phrases and proverbial expressions in vernacular use can be found on the Internet and in various archive materials, proverb dictionaries, published collections of proverbs, newspapers, and assorted other sources. On one hand, these kinds of existing materials may provide answers about context when researching proverbs and other linguistic meaningful units. On the other hand, the use of earlier collected materials or materials collected for some other purpose than paremiology may only increase source criticism. The main subject of the article is the use of material in paremiology and paremiography in the past, present and future from a folkloristic viewpoint. Proverbs are viewed as an essential part of colloquial language, which occurs both in oral and written form. The article focuses on filed data. Archives are full of already collected material waiting to be accessed. When it is not obvious who has collected proverbial material, for what reason the material was collected, or when or where it was collected, the need for source criticism and the ability to overcome new challenges become apparent. Although the focus here is on Finnish proverbs and the article uses Finnish examples, the processes and challenges are the same, no matter which language or culture is being examined. Many of the observations can be generalized in terms of the larger field of paremiology.

**Key words:** *archive, data, paremiography, paremiology, proverb, proverbial utterances, vernacular language*

### **1. Introduction**

Paremiography focuses on the collecting and classifying of proverbs. It can be understood as a related but independent aspect of paremiology, which is the study of proverbs and proverbial expressions. In paremiologic research, most of the focus is on the definition, form, structure, style, content,

function, meaning or value of proverbs (Mieder 2004: xii). Collecting proverbs – or any kind of cultural unit – usually means participating in an ongoing discourse in the culture in which they are used, as well as a broader context. It also relates to three dimensions of time: past, present and future. In order to understand proverb material that exists either in proverb collections or archives, it is necessary to remain aware how the material has ended up there. Fundamental questions include who collected the material, when and where it was collected, and for which purpose it was collected and filed. The answers to these questions help future researchers to evaluate the possibilities of studying the material.

In my studies on proverbs, I have noticed that a lot of Finnish paremiographic work has been done during critical periods in Finnish history. In this way I came to think about published materials as well as archiving systems. Therefore, even if this article specifically speaks about Finnish examples, there are many things in common with paremiography on the whole. Proverbs may be collected in different eras, and political and social contexts may differ from those in Finland, but the action of collecting proverbs itself is always influenced by what is happening in the spheres of politics, the economy and society.

## 2. Originators of Finnish paremiography

Mikael Agricola (c. 1510–1557) was the first person to collect and write down Finnish proverbs (Agricola 1554). In this, he followed the work of Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1466–1536), who was his ideal in many ways (Hautala 1954: 26–27, 34). A bishop of the Lutheran church, Agricola is known today as “the father of literary Finnish”. The 16<sup>th</sup> century in Sweden<sup>1</sup> was the era of the Reformation. The Swedish King Gustav Vasa established the Lutheran Church as the national church of all Sweden, and since that time it has been predominant in Finland. The idea of proverbs as belonging to the “words of God” came from Martin Luther, and it was established in Agricola’s work as “*der Teuffel ist den Sprichwortten feindt*” (Hautala 1954: 27; Kuusi 1990: 452). In Finnish areas, the language used in sermons was mostly Finnish, and all of the quotations and proverbs from the Bible were heard in Finnish. The Finnish language came into its own for political reasons as well. Both the Reformation and political ideologies provided reasons for Finnish, as well

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<sup>1</sup> Finland was incorporated into Sweden during the Crusades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it was part of the Kingdom of Sweden until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

as old Finnish proverbs, to be made a visible part of an especially Finnish culture (Andersson 2009: 18–20). In 1630, King Gustav II Adolf even made an official decree to collect folk poetry (and thus also proverbs) (Siikala 1985: 16).

The next collection of Finnish proverbs was also edited by a clergyman, Henrik Florinius (1633–1705). Proverbs were collected during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the book was published in 1702 with the name *Wanhain Suomalaisen Tawaliset ja Suloiset Sananlascut* (*Customary and Beautiful Proverbs of the Old Finns*) (Florinius 1987), including 1500 Finnish proverbs. This was the time in which the position of Finland was entrenched as part of the Swedish kingdom, between the borders of Sweden and Russia. It was a matter of different churches (Lutheran vs. Orthodox), as well as of language. The idea of a folk education in the vernacular (although this would remain just an idea for some centuries) followed the ideas of the Enlightenment, and proverbs were important as a crystallization of folk wisdom. After this collection, in 1729 the chapter of Turku sent a circular with a request for clergy to collect folk tales, poems and other folklore, especially expressions in eloquent ways of speaking figurative expressions, to which proverbs belong (Laasonen 1991: 308). For the first three centuries after the birth of literary Finnish in Finland, the collectors were primarily clergymen.

### 3. A time of National Romanticism

Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia for the years 1809–1917.<sup>2</sup> The gentility and other estates were aware of the possibility that Finland's territory could be completely joined with that of Russia. Across 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, the age of Romanticism<sup>3</sup> began to replace realism and naturalism. As Romanticism idealized the language and culture of the “folk”, it led to the idea of a genuine Finnish folk culture and the move toward independence. However, the Great Fire of Turku in 1827 considerably changed things. After some years, the capital was moved from Turku to Helsinki. As the fire destroyed a large portion of the town and also burned the library and archives of the Academy, the university was also transferred to Helsinki. All notes and manuscripts, including the collections of Finnish proverbs, were destroyed. Copies stored elsewhere were spared the destruction, but not much was left.

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<sup>2</sup> Finland had a special position in terms of the rules and regulations of the State, the Lutheran church, popular education, the question of language, its own money and so on.

<sup>3</sup> In Finland, the movement was called “Finnish Romanticism” or “National Romanticism”.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, politics and the economy were in flux. Nascent industrialization led to the development of railways, roads and waterways. The militarily strategic position of Finland remained important, even if there was no war in that part of Russia. All of this had an effect on paremiography, as folklore collectors had the possibility of traveling quite freely throughout the Grand Duchy, and indeed they were encouraged to do so to assert the unity of Russia. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was not only clergymen who were interested in proverbs. The inspirer of proverb collections in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic. In 1842, his collection of proverbs called *Suomen kansan sananlaskut* (*Proverbs of Finnish Folk*) was published. It was considered as the authentic voice of the “folk”, but actually it was not, as the content was quite assorted. Lönnrot (1981: 8) wrote, “I will leave all that has to do with dividing proverbs into all kinds of subclasses like proverbs, sayings, phrases, comparisons, and so on to those who don’t have anything better to do.”<sup>4</sup> This was the period when the Finnish Literature Society was established with its proverb collections.

Another reason for this interest in proverbs was the growing nationalistic movement, which was exciting the sense of Finnish identity and would later create the conceptual foundation for Finnish independence from Russia. As Henni Ilomäki (1998: 148) writes, the collectors of folklore in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finland were mostly young men, often children of the Swedish-speaking gentility, looking for authentic and old Finnish folk poetry. Young academic nationalists formed an active core group of collectors. As was the case elsewhere across Europe, collecting folklore was part of the process of nationalization for countries that needed to legitimize their own history and culture (Bendix 1997: 67; Apo & Nenola & Stark-Arola 1998: 18).

In Finland, representatives of the “folk” contributed collections of proverbs and other folklore texts, jotting down notes concerning oral traditions over the years or collecting material from their home parishes. The Finnish Literature Society encouraged collectors at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by providing them with paper and instruction manuals (Stark-Arola 1998: 54; Stark 2013: 119).

The collectors of folklore (and proverbs) were mainly men, as the worldview was invariably androcentric. Even as late as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both collectors of folklore material and their informants were men.<sup>5</sup> This meant that as collectors encountered the every-

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<sup>4</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>5</sup> From 1916 until the 1970s, women participated in fieldwork in Finland as assistants for men.

day life of the people, women and children (more than 50% of folk) were not included.<sup>6</sup> However, this trend was not unique to Finland (Obelkevich 1994: 222).

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Finland was officially – and even after that, unofficially – a collection of classes that created a legally constituted division of society. There were four estates: two higher ones, consisting of the nobility and the clergy, and two lower ones, made up of burghers and land-owning peasants (Stark 20013: 126). However, the upper classes were a minority. Even the language that they used differed from the language of the underprivileged Finnish-speaking majority,<sup>7</sup> the workers and peasants in the countryside who did not own their land, from among whom proverbs were collected. Clergymen were expected to deliver their sermons in Finnish, but most of them were not born outside the estates, among the “folk”.

#### 4. Past and present

After Finland’s independence (in 1917) and the civil war (in 1918), proverbs again became a subject of interest in the 1930s. The situation in Finland was still quite dynamic, as the Fennoman political movement continued (Lassila 2003: 10). University students carried out proverb collecting across the country, while the Sanakirjasäätiö<sup>8</sup> (Dictionary Society) organized these collections and published proverbs for individual counties<sup>9</sup> (Posti 1936: 5). Also in the 1930s, the Finnish Literature Society ratified collections, and in-

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On the whole, female collectors have been exceptions (Apo, Nenola & Stark-Arola 1998: 17, 22).

<sup>6</sup> Approximately 95% of those collectors who came from the folk population were men (Stark-Arola 1998: 54).

<sup>7</sup> The language of proverbs used by ordinary people was Finnish, but the languages of the power elite were Swedish and Russian, as well as German and French (Katajala 2005: 43–51; Granbom-Herranen 2008: 116–117). For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Finnish-speaking majority comprised about 85% of the population in Finland, even though there were also ordinary people who spoke Swedish (about 5–10%). In Finland (and also in Sweden, Norway and Russia), there has also always been a Sami-speaking minority (Niemi 1969: 55; Talve 1990: 323).

<sup>8</sup> Today amalgamated with Society for the Study of Finnish (*Kotikielen Seura*) that is tied to the linguistic situation in Finland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finnish was officially granted equal status with Swedish in 1863, so at the time the Society was established, Finnish was indeed the ‘home language’ of the majority of people living in Finland and was just beginning to establish itself as a language of administration, education etc. <http://www.kotikielenseura.fi/english/index.html> [access 20.8.2014].

<sup>9</sup> Varsinais-Suomi published 1936 (collected 1931); Etelä-Pohjanmaa published 1938; Satakunta published 1939 (collected 1933); Etelä-Karjala published 1941; Häme published 1941; Uusimaa published 1945 (collected 1932).

vitations to participate were published in newspapers. During the same era, Finnish paremiographers were active outside Finland as well.

People from various professions and occupations took time aside from their primary responsibilities to collect proverbs. For example, apart from cultural items connected with everyday life, scouts in the Russian army collected proverbs, especially from the Finno-Ugric area (Vesterinen 2003). The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters sponsored Emil Liljeblad's collecting in Ovamboland (a part of Namibia and Angola), as he continued work that his predecessor Martti Rautanen had started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Collecting was also done by missionaries alongside their normal mission work (Kusi 1970: 6–7, 11). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social anthropologist Edward Westermarck collected a large number of proverbs on his expedition to Morocco (Stroup 1982). While these materials are not Finnish, they have been used extensively as comparison material for Finnish proverbs. They may also tell us something about the motivations and factors related to Finnish paremiography.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, collectors were often academics, students and researchers. They were young men with the dream to unify the Finno-Ugric language family and establish "the natural borders" for an independent Finland (Wilson 1978: 63). The motivation extended from the upper classes downwards: the idea was that they would rescue folk knowledge and traditions, including proverbs, for the future generations (Korkiakangas 1996: 23). Among the collectors, however, were some representatives of the populace (even if their number in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was quite small, compared to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

The World War II era was a turning point in many ways for Finland. Finnish proverbs had primarily only been oral, whereas proverbs in many Central European language areas were first and foremost connected with literature (Hauser 2012; Schmale 2012). As the ever-growing literate segment of the Finnish nation got more and more opportunities to lay their hands on Finnish books, newspapers and magazines, the oral tradition was no longer as meaningful and powerful as it had been previously. This changed the position of proverbs in the Finnish language, and oral and written communication by and large became more and more similar in many ways. Vernacular proverbs ceased to only belong to oral tradition (Granbom-Herranen 2014: 546–547; 2011: 289).

By the 1950s, everything had been collected. As Lauri Honko (1979: 149) put it, "a State Committee on Folk Tradition declared that the collection of folklore, which had been continuing for more than 125 years, was now completed with great success: Finland possessed the largest folklore archives

in the world, with excellent materials which were intensively collected before the authentic tradition began to decline, as is the case today.” Even if this was not the case, the next paremiographic movement occurred at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Finnish paremiologists began researching proverbs in new contexts, such as the Internet and other media. Today the Folklore Archive of the Finnish Literature Society organizes questionnaires on folklore to the public via various media: in newspapers, in magazines and even on Facebook. The present is a time of a unified Europe. However, small nations and language groups are once again looking for something of their own, like their own history and culture. Proverbs are a part of this movement.

**Table 1. Finnish paremiography in various eras, turning points and political movements** (Granbom-Herranen 2012: 179)

Sweden 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup>	Russia 19 <sup>th</sup>	Finland 20 <sup>th</sup>	Finland as a member of EU 21 <sup>st</sup> century
society of estates		parliamentarism	europarlamentarism
Finnish is a language of the underprivileged majority	-----	Finnish is also the language of power, the economy, politics, etc.	status of Finnish?
literary Finnish, Bible in stable	change: transportation, economy, beginnings of industrialization and urbanization		literacy, penmanship continuous change
Sweden 16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup>	Russia 19 <sup>th</sup>	Finland 20 <sup>th</sup>	Finland as a member of EU 21 <sup>st</sup> century

**MOVEMENTS**

Reformation, Lutheranism	Humanism, Enlightenment	Theory of evolution, realism, naturalism	Romanticism, national romanticism	independence, civil war, patriotic movements	WW II, reconstruction	radicalism	Europeanization
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**PAREMIOGRAPHY**

clergy, Agricola, Florinius	academic collectors, Lönnrot	collectors coming from the “folk” SKS: calls for collectors, thematic questionnaires	Internet societies
		missions, expeditions	

## 5. Nationalism

Nationalism is a movement that for one reason or another makes the existence and visibility of a nation important. Its background is connected with global circumstances or changes in neighbouring areas. While the comparative approach stresses the unities and common themes of proverbs in many places, the nationalistic approach concentrates on the distinctive qualities of proverbs found within one country. Small nations, like Finland and Ireland, have asserted their cultural independence through their languages and by collecting proverbs, for example, which were part of the spoken vernacular (Dorson 1963: 96). Actually it is not possible to think that paremiography could be free of the values of a society or group inside a society. The question is if the collectors have been aware of the valuations they have made (Pöysä 1997: 15). Depending on what is valued, people see or do not see certain aspects of the context.

Folklore studies, as well as paremiography, have always been connected with the nationalistic task as a part of cultural and political independence (Wilson 1978: 51). The motivation for proverb collecting has not arisen only from national or romantic dreams. Nor was the reason to collect proverbs merely based on admiration of the peasant way of life or the inherent beauty of folk poetry. Paremiography has played an important role in the process of nation-building (Honko 1979: 142).

## 6. What about the material?

In many cases, the use of earlier collected materials may lead to increased likelihood of source criticism, especially in those cases when it is not obvious who collected the proverbs, as well as when, where and for what reason they were collected. In every case, processes and challenges are the same, no matter in which language or culture the study is conducted. With existing material, it is especially important to ask the following questions: Why and for which purpose was the data collected? Who collected it? How? When? Where? When it comes to selecting proverbs from already existing material, provenance can be dubious. When using material collected by someone else, the presumption is generally that the collector's task was to find material that was as comprehensive as possible. The difficulty comes in relation to time and place: every time has its own understanding about what "comprehensive" means, and this likewise applies to proverbs.



The older material in the archives was collected by directly interviewing users of proverbs. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Finland, this meant first writing by hand, then using a typewriter. Later collectors began using tape recorders, computers, videos, etc. (Siikala 1984: 9; Harris-Lopez 2003: 112). However, it is a pity that the increased ease of saving information with technological equipment has led to a greater focus on the subject than on the context of use. As vernacular communication has increasingly shifted to written form in newspapers and on the Internet, collecting involves reading text much more than conducting interviews. Each step of the process has its own influence on the collected material. The idea of storing proverb collections in archives is to make them available for future generations. Proverb users, collectors, archivists and researchers are a part of this process, and all of them have some impact on what will be stored.

As noted above, the important things to determine in proverb collections have not been the proverb users or their socio-economic milieu or worldview. Most proverb collectors have noted when and where they found the proverb. Thanks to Finland's strong historical-geographical tradition, its archives include large numbers of proverbs with information on where (geographical location) and when (year) they were collected. In most cases, it is also known who has written down this information. However, it is not always clear who used the proverb or why it may have been used in some special case. The context of proverb performances has not been the main interest of Finnish paremiologists. The information about the context, the situation the proverb was used in, in which sense it was used, and how it was understood have not in general been documented. This means that the connection between the archive collections and the social reality of the living folk tradition is quite thin (Honko 1979: 143; Granbom-Herranen 2008: 53). Without contextual information, it is impossible to actually determine the use of a proverb, how to interpret it and how it functioned. Most paremiological (proverb) studies have been text-oriented (consisting of simple collections of texts without analysis), discussions of group characteristics based on proverb texts, historical and comparative analyses of variants, structural analysis, or focused on texts found in literature (Prahlađ 1996: 5). Proverbs and proverbial expressions in vernacular use can also be found in materials collected for some other purpose, like life stories. These kinds of existing materials may provide answers when there is a need to know about the context in which a proverb was used.

Archives are warehouses of information, but indexing systems – no matter if they are manual registers or databases – make some research methods easier than others. The way in which an archive is organized guides the research (Granbom-Herranen 2008: 80). Systematic source criticism of proverb

material can be quite challenging, seeing that files are generally collected in various ways, in many places and at different times, with numerous collectors using all kinds of methods. Yet, in spite of such variation, proverb collections are explored as if commensurable (Silverman-Weinreich 1994: 66).

It is not uncommon for researchers in the field of paremiology to target special groups, like minorities or reclusive folks. This surely a welcome point of view, but it is important to remember that these kinds of archival collections are organized for a special purpose. If collectors come from a different social position than that of the user of the proverbs, juxtaposition is almost certainly present. This may have been the case at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a collection of slang expressions was started by the police (Tender 1996). This also may have occurred in Finland when the first clergymen and then upper-class students went to meet the “folk”.

## 7. Published collections

Proverb collections have been published in Finnish since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when literary Finnish was invented. However, the effect that they had on the vernacular of Finnish people was minimal, as literacy among Finnish speakers was not a common thing. The Bible is a publication, but for Finnish people it tended to be transmitted orally, as priests read it aloud to parishioners during their sermons. Collections also included proverbs that had a significant role in homilies (Heikkinen 1989: 61, 92). It is worth remembering that every collection is based on the collector’s (or publisher’s) choice of what should be incorporated in the publication. The summary of later users of the collection may include information about what was left out, but often these comments are ignored when drawing conclusions and future researchers never know about such lacunae.

In many cases, especially in published collection, it is obvious that the collector’s morals and didactic grip are imposed on the text (Kuusi 1988: 10). The influence of earlier publications is also sometimes visible. Published collections often include selected material from other publications or collections, as seen, for example, in locality-based collections (Hukka 1989) or comparative collections dealing with languages and places that are unknown to the writer (Kuusi 1979). A collector’s personal interest also has an impact on what is collected and how it is interpreted. This is unavoidable, and in many instances it happens subconsciously (Apo 1995: 12). The same might happen in the case of nostalgic feelings on the part of the proverb user or the collector. Proverbs are special because often they first belong to a person and

only after that are they seen as the common property of society. This applies equally to the user and the collector. For example, Sw. Anand Prahlaḍ tells (1996: 201), “Clara Abrams was this researcher’s great-grandmother. ... She was a community pillar, storyteller, and chronicler, who used proverbs abundantly. She learned many of her proverbs from her mother, and also collected poetic, wise expressions from forms of popular media such as greetings cards and calendars. I grew up with her and collected proverbs from her most of my life.”

## 8. Future

The terms “new proverb” and “modern proverb” are two of many used in the discussions of paremiographers and paremiologists to describe contemporary expressions (see Granbom-Herranen 2011: 286). While it may be possible to delineate a point after which proverbs should be classified like this (see Mieder 2014: 14–15), it is clear that they should not be excluded on the basis of such a timeline. In the same way as the past is a combination of social, economic, geographical and other cultural factors, the present is a unique creation of those tracks of the past.

Most of the known Finnish proverbs contain agrarian terms, which surely has to do with the fact that even as late as the 1970s agriculture was the main source of livelihood for Finnish people (Waris 1974: 45, 53). Nowadays proverbs are often used in a new context and with a new meaning (Granbom-Herranen 2014: 545), and it can be supposed that the language will further adopt more and more urban concepts over the course of time. The living context of Finnish proverbs has changed from spoken vernacular to written vernacular, as today the native Finnish-speaking population can read and write. This change in literacy has altered the position of proverbs in the Finnish language, and surely it is one of the explanations for the similarities between the use of proverbs in spoken language and in written colloquial form. Overall, oral and written Finnish communication has become more and more similar in many ways (Granbom-Herranen 2011: 289).

As rhetorical changes have become more and more pronounced, traditional proverbs are adapting into new forms. They are combined with other proverbs or phrases, sometimes creating a new fixed form of two utterances. In some cases, they occur in quite extraordinary combinations, if one looks at the basic meaning. New proverbs are created from old proverbs, and old ones are transformed. Nevertheless, despite many changes in life and everyday practices, it is clear beyond any doubt that Finnish proverbs continue

to exist in contemporary Finnish language and have their place as a part of Finnish communication today (Granbom-Herranen 2014: 557).

As Wolfgang Mieder (2014: 16) writes, the reason for paucity “in the collection and registration of modern proverbs is not due to a lack of awareness of such texts”, but the difficulties in finding them. In this light, one can speak of the paradox of proverbs. Many definitions of proverb say that it is an “old expression”. Yet it is difficult to know which contemporary expressions will still be around after some decades. It is first a challenge to define a new or future proverb, or to recognize potential proverbs before they actually are proverbs. The difficulty is that when collecting contemporary proverbial expressions, we cannot know which ones will last. It also means that there ought to exist a clear and handy understanding of proverbs, including old and traditional ones, contemporary and modern ones, and future ones. By not allowing for the inclusion of potential proverbs, the existing definition does not support research of proverbs in present-day contexts (Grzybek 1987: 40). The paradox is that old proverbs are recognizable, but contemporary or future ones are not. One can easily come to the conclusion that there are no new proverbs, as no one can tell which expressions will become established in that way. Indeed, how is it possible to look for expressions that cannot be defined or determined if they even exist?

## 9. Conclusion

Collections and collectors of proverbs, as well as material stored in archives, have always been connected with changes in society and larger political movements. As collectors participate in the discourse of which aspects of tradition will be saved for posterity, source criticism is needed when using already existing material in one’s research. It is necessary to ask who collected the proverbs, as well as when and where and for what reason. As discussed at the beginning of article, although the focus here is on Finnish paremiography, most of the observations can be generalized in regard to paremiology.

In Finland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship between the church and the state, or cross and crown, provided the incentive to start proverb collections, and for centuries it continued to have an effect on collecting. Surely some proverbs were left out due to perceived inappropriate uses of language or ideas that conflicted with the dominant principles of the time. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, further economic, societal and ideological changes influenced the level of interest that people had in paremiology and folklore. After the integration movement in Europe,

leading to the European Union, there has been an increased need for people to connect again with their national heritage. The importance of national cultural elements can be seen today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its rise of international networks and polyglot communication. Together these have had an impact on the research of national heritage in the form of proverbs. The fact that critical periods like this are linked to interest in paremiography and proverbs does not tell anything about the use of proverbs, however. Proverbs are not used more at such times, regardless if they are more in the limelight than before. It could be said that during times of crises, proverbs spark the interest of researchers as well as the public.

Source criticism can be seen as an integral part of establishing a realistic picture of the material that is used. The aim of the criticism is to highlight possible incorrect conclusions in research findings. The proverbs found in many archives date back centuries, meaning that they are vestiges of speech from ancient times. They have been collected with the preconditions and limitations of previous eras. While it is the case that most paremiographers have followed the given instructions and good habits of their time, the greatest problem with proverbs themselves remains that in most cases the context of their use is unknown and their actual interpretation is even more of a mystery. The challenge comes with studies that try to explain something that is happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for example, by using expressions that were current and collected in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and maybe interpreted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Deductions made from archive materials are possible as long as the limitations are at somewhat discussed in the conclusions.

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## Wyrażenia przysłowiowe i kontekst kulturowy w materiałach archiwalnych

### Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto kwestię wykorzystania materiału badawczego, zwłaszcza kiedy celem jest wysnuwanie wniosków dotyczących przysłów i kultury, czyli sposobu, w jaki ludzie żyją i wyrażają wartości. Kontekst stwarza ramy dla wyrażenia, ale często nie jest on dostępny. Przysłowia, frazeologizmy i wyrażenia przysłowiowe w potocznym użyciu wyekscerpowane z tekstów internetowych i rozmaitych materiałów archiwalnych, słowników przysłów, opublikowanych zbiorów przysłów, gazet i innych źródeł. Z jednej strony w badaniach przysłów i innych jednostek materiały te mogą dostarczać informacji o kontekście, z drugiej zaś – wykorzystanie zebranego uprzednio materiału lub materiałów zgromadzonych w jakimś innym celu niż na potrzeby badań paremiologicznych może zwiększyć krytyczne nastawienie do źródeł. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest wykorzystaniu materiału w paremiologii i paremiografii w przeszłości, teraźniejszości i przyszłości w perspektywie folklorystycznej. Przysłowia stanowią ważną część języka potocznego, zarówno w formie mówionej, jak i pisanej. Artykuł poświęcony jest wykorzystaniu zbiorów skatalogowanych. Archiwa zawierają dużą ilość zebranego materiału, który oczekuje na udostępnienie. Jeśli nie wiadomo, kto zebrał materiał, w jakim celu dokonano tego, oraz gdzie i kiedy, potrzeba krytycyzmu wobec źródeł staje się oczywista. Choć w artykule opisano fińskie przysłowia i zanalizowano przykłady pochodzące z języka fińskiego, procesy i wyzwania są takie same dla wszystkich języków i kultur. Wiele poczynionych obserwacji może być podstawą generalizacji w dziedzinie paremiologii.