

International Bibliography of Explanatory Essays on Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions Containing Names*

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A cursory glance at any of the standard proverb collections will reveal immediately the frequent use of names of all sorts in proverbs and proverbial expressions. There are even numerous special collections dealing solely with names, one of the finest for English geographical names being Vincent Stuckey Lean's *Proverbs Relating to the United Kingdom and to Localities Therein* (vol. I of *Lean's Collectanea*, Bristol, 1902). Other special collections are listed in the two major proverb bibliographies, those of Wilfrid Bonser, *Proverb Literature* (London, 1930) and Otto Moll, *Sprichworterbibliographie* (Frankfurt, 1958). The collections listed there attest to the awareness of generations of compilers of name proverbs. Once in a while such collections will present a short explanatory note as to the origin and meaning of these proverbs, but in general it must be stated that regrettably little is known about name proverbs as such.

An early investigation by Emil Terner, *Die Wortbildung im deutschen Sprichwort* (Gelsenkirchen, 1908) can be considered the scientific beginning of the study of names in proverbs. It took a good 40 years for another major and general work to appear on this subject, once again, however, treating of the names only in German proverbs: Paul Straubinger, *Given Names in German Proverbs* (Diss. University of California, 1949). With his subsequent shorter studies, "Names in Popular Sayings," *Names*, 3 (1955), 157-164 and "Name Clues in Proverbs," *Names*, 9 (1961), 112-116, Straubinger supplied basic introductions to this very challenging field of investigation. See also Friedrich Latendorf, "Über die sprichwörtliche Anwendung von Vornamen im Plattdeutschen," *Die deutschen Mundarten*, 3 (1856), 1-8, 370-374; J. E. Waldfreund, "Sprichwörtlich angewendete Vornamen und damit verbundene Kinderreime," *Die deutschen Mundarten*, 3 (1856), 314-317; Paul Yves Sébillot, "Les personnages dans les proverbes," *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, 18 (1903), 172-176; Archer Taylor, "The Use of Proper Names in Wellerisms and Folk Tales," *Western Folklore*, 18 (1959), 287-293; Sister Eleanor O'Kane, "What's in a Name?" *Proverbium*, 15 (1970), 508-510.

Despite Straubinger's efforts, it would seem that the study of names in proverbs remains a neglected field of research. Consultation of the two above-mentioned proverb bibliographies would lead one to the conclusion that literally

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no investigations of individual name proverbs are extant. This erroneous impression is due to the fact that these bibliographies list almost exclusively books, dissertations and articles whose contents are proverb collections or general studies. Rarely do these bibliographies include explanatory articles of various lengths (from a mere note to a substantial monograph) that investigate the origin, history and meaning of an individual proverb or proverbial expression. To this date, only Archer Taylor has attempted to give at least an indication of the vast bibliographical material not yet assembled in his short article "Investigations of English Proverbs, Proverbial and Conventional Phrases, Oaths and Clichés," *Journal of American Folklore*, 65 (1952), 255-266. For the past four years the present author has compiled over 12,000 explanatory notes and articles that deal with the explanation of proverbs and proverbial expressions. Most of these bibliographical items cannot be found in the large periodic bibliographies such as the *International Folklore Bibliography*, *PMLA*, and dozens more. Over 200 journals, some with more than 100 volumes, including the entire journal, *Notes and Queries* (abbreviated *N&Q*), as well as dozens of books and bibliographies, were consulted to find these often obscure articles. The sources stem from such fields of study as folklore, history, law, literature, medicine, philology, etc., and include the following languages: American, Dutch, English, French, German and Latin, and to a lesser extent also Spanish and Italian. These facts result in a truly international bibliographical survey.

The present bibliography contains approximately 1,500 individual investigations of proverbs and proverbial expressions that contain names. Each note or article explaining a proverb is listed alphabetically according to the appearing name. Under each name the various proverbs and proverbial expressions are ordered numerically. If for a particular expression more than one explanatory article has been found (which often is the case), the entries are arranged chronologically, thereby giving a historical view of the research on that particular proverb. For example, the nine investigations of the expression "Abraham's bosom" range from the year 1897-1972, the 15 studies of the proverb "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?" run from 1867-1974, and the 24 explanations of "All my eye and Betty Martin" are spread from 1860-1940. Other impressive research histories exist for "As drunk as David's sow," "Before you can say Jack Robinson," "Lazy Lawrence," "The devil looking over Lincoln," "To carry coals to Newcastle," "Robbing Peter to pay Paul," "Queen Anne is dead," "When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do," "Castles in Spain," "Setting the Thames on fire" and "Tom, Dick, and Harry," to name but a few. Be it for a proverb or expression with a personal name, the name of a saint, a town, a river, a mountain, a country, a month or a day, a considerable amount of scholarly investigation has in fact been undertaken. And yet, the surface has hardly been scratched and much remains to be done. This bibliography therefore represents only the first attempt to draw this rich material together in order to establish the basis for future work in this fascinating field of names and proverbs.

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