The proverb is one of the most ancient and widespread forms of traditional oral literature. Along with other closely related or similar categories, the proverb belongs to the genre of the so-called *Einfache Formen* or *малые жанры*. Among others, the following categories can be distinguished, namely the aphorism, the maxim, winged words (*Gefügelte Worte*), as well as the peasant’s saying, the slogan, the riddle and, last but not least, the proverbial saying. The majority of the forms mentioned here are similar to each other in as much as their delimitations seem to be extremely fluid and overlapping. This fact may be one of the main reasons why we still do not have a final and generally accepted definition of what a proverb is, although there is no lack of proposed definitions from antiquity up to our days. Especially, the clear distinction of the proverb in a stricter sense from the saying remains hazy in many cases. Often one and the same unit is classified for one thing as a proverb but for another as a proverbial saying. Generally speaking, most of these categories tend to be lumped together, i.e. they are treated for the most part without explicit differentiation (cf. my notes in Bläsing 1994: 4-12).

But not only theoretical questions impede our work on the proverb. Frequently, not even usable selections or comprehensive anthologies in either the original language or in translation are available for study. Hence, anyone interested in studying this material is forced to excerpt data form diverse sources a toilsome and time-consuming labour. Scholars of Armenian, however, are

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1 "I dedicate this article to the memory of Academician Aram Tigrani Lanalanyan".

The prominent Armenian scholar Aram Lanalanyan (1909-1983) was born in the city of Axalc’xa (currently in Georgia). He studied at Yerevan State University where he graduated in 1931 from the Faculty of History. He was a specialist with a wide scope of interests in folklore studies, which is shown by his numerous publications (see Avakian 1994: 65-68). In 1970 he was appointed a member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences (see in detail HSH 7: 25; Harut’yunyan 1983: 98-99).
fortunate, as much of this drudgery gathering has already been done. Thanks to the tireless work of the Armenian scholar Aram Lanalanyan, we can now harvest from a voluminous and very detailed corpus of Armenian proverbs containing 6,478 entries, published in its latest version in 1960 under the title Ai-acani.² Lanalanyan may rightly be regarded as the founder of modern Armenian paremiology. Along with the proverbs themselves, he cites the sources from which they were taken and gives data on their regional or dialectal extraction and distribution. The material is arranged in a classical manner, according to a hierarchic system of thematic chapters, each of which is further sub-divided into smaller thematic sections, as for example: A. General Human Characteristics: a) necessary and valuable, b) modest and temperate, c) attentive and forward-looking, etc. Finally, at the end of the book the reader can find a word register, which allows the looking-up of proverbs by means of specific terms and words found in their wording. However, this in itself excellent work is due to its monolingual nature completely focused on an Armenian or Armenological circle of readers, which makes it nearly unusable for the paremiologist interested in general questions.

The small booklet Армянские пословицы и поговорки published in 1964 that presents a selection (832 units) out of the Armenian proverbial treasury in a Russian translation by G. O. Karapetian is probably more accessible to a wider audience. This unique selection, mainly based on Lanalanyan’s material, is the only primary source on the Armenian proverbs used by Permyakov in his famous monograph Избранные пословицы и поговорки народов Востока (Москва, 1968).

Mention must also be made of Germaner-Hayeren Ai-acani, a work compiled by Knarik Alayekyan et al. and published in 1988. Yet, this book is extremely difficult to find outside Armenia.

² A former version titled Haykakan Aracani appeared in 1951. Additionally, Otto Moll cites in his time-tested Sprichwörterbibliographie, along with some smaller studies, two major monographic works devoted to the Armenian proverbs dating from the nineteenth century. The first one is Arack' azgayink' from Simon Julartyan (Venice, 1880) containing 4,516 units mostly from Constantinopel area (also used by Lanalanyan). The second work, largely forgotten today, is George Bayan, Choix de Proverbes et Dictons Arméniens traduits en Français (Venice, 1888, reprinted in 1928), as well as its English version, Armenian Proverbs and Sayings, translated into English (Venice, 1889, reprinted in 1909). Another important bibliographical source is Armenian Folklore Bibliography, compiled by Anne Avakian and published in 1994. However, most of the literature cited there is from before 1960, and has mostly been used by Lanalanyan. Only nine entries are from after 1960.