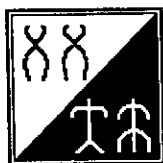

SIMPLE FORMS

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Adage

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The term *adage*, which is an adaptation from the Latin name *adagium*, has usually been used to connote a "maxim handed down from antiquity" (OED), and sometimes been regarded as a synonym for *proverbs and proverbial sayings in general.

The term *adage* came into use throughout Europe after the appearance of Desiderius Erasmus' (Erasmus of Rotterdam's) edition of the classical proverb treasury, entitled *Adagia* (1500). In English, the term *adage* was first documented in 1548. The term was in frequent use in the 16th and 17th century along with the variants *adagy* or *adagie*. The Latin term *adagium* which was first documented in the 2nd century A.D. (A. Gellius, †130), can be traced back to two major sources: first of all, it goes back to the Old Latin name for the proverb, *adagio*; secondly, it was grammatically adapted to the Latin form *proverbium* (proverb). By the times of Varro and Cicero, i.e. in the 1st century B.C., the Old Latin name *adagio* had already gone out of use, and, in fact, was no longer understood. It was replaced by the more recent name *proverbium* or even, occasionally, by the Greek term παροιμία.

Etymologically speaking, *adagio* is a compound of the prefix *ad-* and the form *agio*, thus meaning an addition, a supplement to some speech (German *Bei-/Zurede*). Thus, the Old Latin name for the proverb, *adagio*, comes semantically very close to the Old Greek name of the proverb, παροιμία, which in terms of its etymology, also designates an addition to a narrative. It is also very close to the Old and High German terms for the proverb: *biword* (*biwurti*, *biwort*), *bispruch* or *bispiel*, the latter term not being related to the word *Beispiel* (**exemplum*), as was often wrongly claimed, but to the root *spell/spel* ('narrative', 'story'). Only around 1200 did the term *Sprichwort*, which is common in German today, come into use; most probably, it is a tautological formation meaning 'much spoken word'.

At present, the term *adage* is more or less out of common use; it is found in scholarly investigations as, for example, Rodegem (1972) which try to separate closely related proverbial genres such as maxim, sententia, *apophthegm, slogan, and others.

8./9. Collections / Bibliography: APPELT 1942; BEBERMEYER 1928/29, 1984; BEYERMANN 1985; BIELER 1936; ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM 1500; PHILLIPS 1964; RODEGEM 1972; RUPPRECHT 1949.

P.G.