

# Variance, Variability and Equivalence as Characteristic Features of Chinese and Slovak Popular Phraseology

Henrieta Hatalová

The aim of this paper is to present some considerations and partial conclusions on the topic of variance, variability, equivalence and synonymy of various small popular verbal art genres with animal motifs based on my extensive research on the topic of *Animals as a Cultural Phenomenon* (in China mostly referred to as *dongwu wenhua* 動物文化 or ‘animal culture’). In the first phases of research, I was particularly interested in Chinese and Slovak popular phraseology with the motif of six tamed and domesticated animals,<sup>1</sup> known as the ‘six domestic animals’ *liu chu* 六畜 in the Chinese cultural context, with a comparable or similar importance in the Chinese and Slovak economies and sociohistorical and

- 1 The research project concentrates on several problems like the evaluation of the anonymous creator’s powers of observation as expressed in the literary meaning of pameias, which means the visualisation of the ways of how animal motifs metaphorise on the basis of a categorisation according to the metaphorical meaning of pameias: the characteristics of the shift of animal metaphors into a symbol or various types of symbols, the relationship between phraseological and cultural symbolic usages, and seeking the most suitable functional equivalents in both languages—Chinese and Slovak.

cultural contexts.<sup>2</sup> Great similarities can be observed also by the sources of motivation for phraseological genres with animal motifs dominated by empirical experience derived from coexistence with these animals and their use.

In terms of the needs of a semantic and contrastive analysis, the Chinese material under analysis focuses on the popular phraseology *suyu* 俗語 or *subua* 俗話,<sup>3</sup> formed mainly by the categories *yanyu* 諺語 ('proverbs', hereafter abbreviated as YY), *suyu* (sayings and popular phrases, expressions or colloquial expressions, hereafter SY), *xiehouyu* 歇後語 ('sayings', or alternatively 'gnomic proverbs' or 'proverbs containing a riddle', 'enigmatic folk similes' or 'truncated witticisms', hereafter XHY), and parts of *chengyu* 成語 (hereafter CY), which have become popular or widely understandable, also named *suchengyu* 俗成語 ('popular sayings' or 'phrases')—hereafter referred to as paremias. The Slovak phraseological material is limited to *príslovie* ('proverbs'), *porekadlá* ('sayings') and *úslovie* ('idioms')—i.e. the smallest paremiological categories. The YY, SY, the parts of CY mentioned above and the XHY perfectly correspond to Slovak proverbs, sayings and popular phrases or expressions.

In my previous research on the basis of a rather limited essential corpus (formed by 923 Chinese and 922 Slovak paremias altogether, all containing 'six domestic animals' motifs),<sup>4</sup> I have drawn some conclusions concerning the ways

2 i.e. the 'sheep' (or 'goat') *yang* 羊, the 'ox' (or 'cow', 'water buffalo') *niu* 牛, 'horse' *ma* 馬, 'pig' *zhu* 豬, 'hen, rooster' (or 'cock') *ji* 雞, and the 'dog' *gou* 狗. They were probably for the first time mentioned at the turn of the 5th and 6th century BC in 左傳—Zuo Qiuming's 左丘明 commentary to the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals).

3 With regard to some ambiguities in defining individual categories of the Chinese popular phraseology in my research, I am following the theoretical works of PRC origin—above all the collective monograph by Wu Zhankun 武占坤 and Ma Guofan 馬國凡, *Yanyu* 諺語 [Proverbs] (Huhehaote: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 1997), and the monograph by Wu Zhankun, *Zhonghua yanyao yanjiu* 中華諺語研究 [Research on Chinese Proverbs and Popular Rhymes] (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2000). These are considered the best founded and most comprehensive in the field of paremiological research in the PRC, and their contribution primarily consists in the clear and understandable definition of basic paremiological categories.

4 The basic corpus of paremias was selected from the following collections: *Zhongguo suyü* 中國俗語 [Chinese Popular Proverbs and Sayings], ed. by Jin Lu 金路 (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanzhongxin 1998); *Zhongguo suyü da cidian* 中國俗語大辭典 [Great Dictionary of Chinese Popular Proverbs and Sayings], ed. by Wen Duanzheng 溫端政 (Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1991); Štefan Hanigovský, *Slovenské príslovie* [Slovak Proverbs] (Košice: Private Publication, 1938); Andrej Melicherčík, *Slovenské ľudové príslovie* [Slovak Folk Proverbs] (Bratislava: SPN, 1958); Adolf Peter Zátarecký, *Slovenské príslovie, porekadlá a úslovie* [Slovak Proverbs, Sayings and

of metaphorisation in animal motifs. The comparison showed that in order to find values emphasised by using animal motifs, some values can be particularly stressed by outlining the metaphorical meanings of proverbs in a broader context—i.e. focusing on those groups identified as ‘nests’ of variant and synonymous proverbs. In addition to the ‘six domestic animals’ motifs, we can also find other various animal motifs under the heading of the same metaphorical meaning, which I denoted as a »type of metaphorical meaning«. The most frequent types of metaphorical meaning (hereafter MM) suggest that a schematic way in the creating process of animal proverbs or proverbs with animal motifs has to be assumed, and solving this problem is actually one of the ultimate goals of my research. A characteristic feature of the ‘nests’ of the variant or synonymous proverbs mentioned is that they often comprise Chinese and Slovak proverbs as well, which in their overwhelming majority refer to animals. This fact is closely connected with the same or very similar empirical experience—observation of and acquaintance with animals—prevailing in the societies both of China and Slovakia, both of which until recently were predominantly agrarian and thus became a motivational source for the rise and accomplishment for a majority of animal proverbs. Concurrently, we may see quite frequent usage of double or even triple psychological parallelisms participating in the creation process as a reflection of searching harmony between humans and nature, characterised by A. N. Veselovskij (1838–1906) as a »confrontation of the subject and object in the category of motion, action, and events as symptoms of the volitional activity of life...« and »...the devolution of symptoms attributed to one member of the parallel onto another member.«<sup>5</sup>

Most of the animal proverbs make general use of an *anthropopetal* metaphor, i.e. of the retroactive application of zoomorphic metaphors to the human world.<sup>6</sup> Differences in articulating the same or similar practical wisdoms in proverbs are often displayed just in the variation of the animal motif depending on the appearance, exploitation or significance of the animal in two distinct sociohistorical and cultural areas, sometimes combined with traditional cultural symbolics. This fact can be seen as proved by the frequent equivalence of

Idioms] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1975); Pavol Dobšinský, *Slovenské obyčaje, poverý a čary* [Slovak Customs, Folk Superstitions and Sorcery] (Bratislava: Pictus, 1993); Daniel Sinapius-Horčíčka sen., *Neo-Forum Latino-Slavonicum* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1988).

5 Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovskij, *Historická poetika* [Historical Poetics; *Istoricheskaya poetika*, 1905], tr. by Ján Komorovský (Bratislava: Tatran 1992), 52–53.

6 Viktor Krupa, »Pojmová vzdialenosť a účinnosť metafory« [The Conceptual Distance and Efficiency of Metaphor], *Jazykovedný časopis* 40,1 (1989), 8.

Chinese and Slovak paremias.<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of a contrastive analysis, I considered it most appropriate to focus mainly on the categories of ‘literal meaning’ (*non-metaphoric*, hereafter LM)<sup>8</sup> and ‘figurative (metaphoric) meaning’ (*metaphoric*, hereafter MM) based on the »two-level contents construction« typical for proverbs and sayings, which enable their meaningful interpretation on both levels—the ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’.<sup>9</sup> This appears to be the most effective way of linking formulations gained by the observation of the world of animals to their application to the human world, and as a consequence may lead to a better understanding of attitudes towards animals in the two cultures, i.e. the potential of observation, imagination, creativity, the ability of abstraction and the level of interest of the anonymous originators of paremias, etc. In the words of W. Mieder, the fact that

many ancient myths, folk tales, fables, and other literary works include animals, is clearly indicating that they occupy a major position in our social and psychological world view. While it is possible to understand such writings as literal accounts of animal behaviour, it is also clear that animal stories are symbolic narratives.

- 7 In the abovementioned basic corpus alone, the groups of ‘dog’ and ‘horse’ paremias (the two largest groups among the ‘six domestic animals’ paremias) provide 61 Slovak equivalents of decisive correspondence to Chinese ‘dog’ paremias, 22 Chinese equivalents of decisive correspondence to Slovak ‘dog’ paremias, 53 Slovak decisive equivalents of Chinese ‘horse’ paremias, and 12 Chinese equivalents of decisive Slovak ‘horse’ paremias. For their identification, I always consider the paremia with the motif of the animal forming the group under research, also sometimes the Chinese paremia and sometimes the Slovak paremia.
- 8 The Slovak linguist and phraseologist F. Miko also labelled the LM in phraseology in general as a »statement about reality«. See František Miko, *Frazeológia v škole* [Phraseology in School] (Bratislava: SPN 1984), 66.
- 9 The *literal meaning* of LM as a ‘word-for-word understanding’ of the meaning based on the translation combined with a following *metaphoric meaning* MM of the paremia is often used not only in Sinological literature (see for example John S. Rohsenow, *ABC Dictionary of Chinese Proverbs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press 2002), but also in general research about animal proverbs, such as Arvo Krikman, »Proverbs on Animal Identity: Typological Memoirs«, *Folklore—Electronic Journal of Folklore* 7 (2001), 1–84 <haldjas.folklore.ee/folklore>. Krikman’s paper is the result of many years of research on animal proverbs and proverbial expressions and is still the only systematic scholarly paper explicitly concentrating on proverbs with animal motifs.

Mieder considers animal proverbs as »literary statements, commenting on the behaviour of the animals themselves while at the same time expressing similar behavioural traits in a symbolic or metaphorical fashion.«<sup>10</sup>

Against this background the initial phases of my research also showed the need to consider the kinds of metaphorisation. Based on the relationship between the LM (empirical basis or source) and the MM, I decided to distinguish between four kinds of metaphorisation: (a) objective, (b) shifting, (c) opposite, and sometimes even (d) ambivalent,<sup>11</sup> depending on the way knowledge about the animal world has been applied to the world of humans. In the case of some animals, their features, abilities, needs, behaviour, and position on the traditional cultural value scale after being metaphorised does not necessarily comply with the agrarian population's relationship with them or with their economic significance in the given sociohistorical and cultural context. However, they are metaphorised more or less under the influence of traditional cultural symbolism. It is likely that this fact will also contribute to identifying regularities or patterns regarding variance, variability, equivalence, etc. of paremias, often in disharmony with the empirical human experience.

The present paper is an attempt to introduce some considerations concerning the creation process of animal paremias, mainly with regard to some peculiarities and regularities of variance, variability, equivalence and synonymy of Chinese and Slovak paremias, as will be demonstrated in the examples of two quite numerous 'nests' of metaphoric meaning types. Based on the information resulting from the examination of two of the MM-type 'nests', I would like to

10 Wolfgang Mieder, *Howl Like a Wolf. Animal Proverbs* (Shelbourne, VT: New England Press, 1993), 7–8.

11 An 'objective metaphorisation' is to treat metaphorisation in accordance with the empirical experience gained from observation of the relationship with the animal or of animals among themselves, which means for example that bad features or behaviour of an animal are metaphorised as bad, and good ones as good, etc., and in the same manner they are figuratively applied to humans.

I call 'shifting metaphorisation' those cases in which common (for an animal) or indifferent (neither good nor bad) features, abilities, behaviour, etc., are treated negatively.

An 'opposite metaphorisation' is present when common (for an animal) indifferent or positive features, abilities, behaviour and so on of an animal serve as metaphors for the negative features, abilities or behaviour of humans. Exceptionally, we can also find a certain kind of positive metaphorisation of negative features and abilities of an animal.

'Ambivalent (or equivocal) metaphorisation' can be found only occasionally, mainly in polysemic animal paremias.

point out some of the conclusions that might be reached in the future, for example regarding the relationship of the kind of metaphorisation (objective, shifted, negative or ambivalent) to the variability of paremias, the semantic and symbolic activity of the animal motif in both sociohistorical and cultural contexts, the potential reasons for substitution of animal motifs in variations and variants, differences, similarities and (functional) equivalence, the universality of certain motifs, etc.

On the basis of my previous research on the ‘dog’ and ‘horse’ paremias as being the most active, the following MM types appeared in ‘nests’:

- 1 Humans cannot change their identity<sup>12</sup>—appearance, qualities, abilities, behaviour or character, etc., and cannot be substituted by other humans (total of 71: 48 Chinese, 23 Slovak);
- 2 Humans can change their identity—appearance, qualities, abilities, behaviour or character, etc., and can be substituted by other people (59: 40 Chinese, 19 Slovak);
- 3 People are often punished or rewarded—fairly or unfairly (57: 32 Chinese, 25 Slovak);
- 4 Between humans, there are good and bad relationships (51: 34 Chinese, 17 Slovak);
- 5 Humans act incorrectly, have an incorrect approach to solving a problem or set the wrong priorities (49: 29 Chinese, 20 Slovak);
- 6 For humans, there are valid restrictions and rules (ethical standards), but there are also exceptions to the rules (37: 25 Chinese, 12 Slovak);
- 7 Humans have faults and weaknesses (33: 14 Chinese, 18 Slovak, 1 Czech);
- 8 Grouping and the mutual help of good or evil people (30: 7 Chinese, 23 Slovak);
- 9 Humans display active or passive approaches to problems and their solutions, or to overcoming obstacles (29: 16 Chinese, 13 Slovak);
- 10 A dishonest or immoral person has or may have a bad influence on his surroundings (27: 15 Chinese, 12 Slovak);
- 11 Humans and their property (19: 4 Chinese, 15 Slovak);
- 12 Humans and their social positions (12: 9 Chinese, 3 Slovak);
- 13 Everyone has his preferences, dreams, desires, and habits (11: 3 Chinese, 8 Slovak);
- 14 Animals are better than humans and may serve as an example to humans (9: 8 Chinese, 1 Slovak);
- 15 In life, there are certain criteria for evaluation (9: 6 Chinese, 3 Slovak);
- 16 In life, there are some absolute or unchangeable certainties and patterns (7: 4 Chinese, 3 Slovak).

Paremias with both ‘dog’ and ‘horse’ motifs were present in the ‘nests’ of MM types 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13; paremias with ‘dog’ motifs were in the ‘nests’

12 Namely »what makes a certain kind of man a certain kind of man«, and distinguishes him from other people.

of MM types 8, 14, 16, 17; and finally paremias with ‘horse’ motifs were in ‘nests’ of MM types 11, 12, and 15.

The sequence of MM types provides and supplements an image of the sequence of values or moral lessons that the given culture needs to stress by means of an animal paremia, but I am far from drawing any far-reaching conclusions, bearing in mind what has been stressed by Mieder: »Care must be taken when looking at proverbs as expressing aspects of a certain worldview or mentality of a people that no stereotypical about a so-called national character are drawn« because »many popular proverbs from classical, biblical, and medieval times current in various cultures«, and »it would be foolish to think of them as reflecting some imagined national character«, too. Nonetheless, he concedes that the »frequent use of certain proverbs in a particular could be used together with other social and cultural indicators to formulate valid generalisations«.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, for example, when examining the basic Chinese corpus, the impact of Confucian ethical standards and of Confucian philosophy is especially noticeable in paremias of the sixth MM type. (For humans, there are valid restrictions and rules [ethical standards], but also exceptions to the rules.) The impact of religion (and of Buddhism in particular) can only be considered (e.g. with paremias of the first MM type, humans cannot change their identity—appearance, qualities, abilities, behaviour or character, etc., or be substituted by another person). Similarly, the concurrent influence of Buddhism and Taoism certainly contributed to grant animals and nature, and zoomorphic motifs in particular, attention on a broad scale in all areas of cultural expressions, not only in popular culture (as in the Slovak context), but also in ‘high culture’. Within the basic corpus of Slovak paremias, the largest nest in the third MM type (people are often punished or rewarded—fairly or unfairly) is most likely affected by the influence of Christianity and its principles, but the value scale is substantially based on praising universal human values and on pilloring universal human faults and weaknesses (i.e. two basic types of proverbs may be identified—praise and pilloring), which results in an emphasis on generally applicable ethical standards. Unlike Chinese paremias, Slovak paremias of praise and pilloring use both ‘dog’ and ‘horse’ motifs almost equally often.<sup>14</sup>

13 Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs: A Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2004), 137.

14 In formulating conclusions, it is always necessary to treat an animal as a cultural phenomenon in all its aspects (historical background, its connection to various spheres of material and intellectual life, especially to those of oral and written folklore genres such as myths, legends and animal narratives, religious symbolism—e.g., worshipping traditions, habits, customs and beliefs or folk performing arts, etc.).

With the stress laid on one or another animal from among the »six domestic animals«, only the sequence of MM types overarching the nests with the most numerous representation of that animal in reference to its semantic and sometimes also symbolic activity will change. The sequence of nests will vary depending on several factors: biodiversity and the field of human–animal contact, the position of an animal on the traditional value scale of both cultures, traditional symbolics, etc.

By enlarging the corpora of paremias<sup>15</sup> in the future and going beyond *liu chu* motivated paremias (e.g. paremias collected according to local distribution in separate volumes of the Collections of Chinese Proverbs,<sup>16</sup> or of the paremias of the Paremiological Archive of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, etc.), the ‘nests’ will be enriched by more variant and synonymic paremias from both cultural contexts using additional motifs of animals (domesticated, wild or even mythological), and also by paremias without any animal motif but with the same, a similar or different figurativeness. Presumably, the number of MM types will increase as well.

Before introducing some examples for the MM-type ‘nests’, let me mention a certain kind of analogy to the phraseological ‘nests’ which has been defined by Slovak phraseological terminology as »categories of phraseologisms belonging to a common concept—to an archiseme« by mentioning phraseological nests with a narrow meaning—including synonymous phrasemes, for example

expressing roughly the same essential meaning, and in terms of their categorical meaning belonging to the same type (according to the part-of-speech classification) but created in a specific way of phraseologisation (images included are based on different internal nests with a broad meaning, including phrasemes belonging to a superior concept, but not always in synonymous relation to each other).<sup>17</sup>

Essentially, we could mark by analogy the MM-type nests as ‘paremiological nests’ (and in most cases as nests with a narrow meaning).

15 The corpus of paremias under research was enlarged by the following collections: *Zhongguo suyü yanyü ku* 中國俗語諺語語庫 [Treasury of Chinese *suyü* and *yanyü*], 2 vols., ed. by Zhang Yindong 張印棟 (Zhengzhou: Zhengzhou guji chubanshe, 1991); *Yan bai* 諺海 [The Sea of Proverbs], ed. by Wen Duanzheng 溫端政, Shen Huiyun 沈惠雲 and Wang Shushan 王樹山 (Beijing: Yuwen chubanshe, 1999).

16 *Zhongguo yanyü jicheng* 中國諺語集成 [Collections of Chinese Proverbs], ed. by Ma Xueliang 馬學良 (Beijing: Zhongguo ISBN zhongxin, 1984ff). Between 1984 and 2008, 30 volumes were published.

17 Peter Ďurčo & al., »Frazeologická terminológia« [Phraseological Terminology] (Bratislava: Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1995) <[www.juls.savba.sk/ediela/frazeologicka\\_terminologia](http://www.juls.savba.sk/ediela/frazeologicka_terminologia)>.



Chinese linguists and phraseologists studying the topics of ‘variability’ (*yibianxing* 異變性) or ‘variants’ (*bianti* 變體) underline mainly the figurativeness and expressiveness of variants<sup>18</sup> and their impact on the usability of proverbs. When discussing the grammatical structure or semantic aspects of the various proverbial genres, they list a few examples of specific variants with the emphasis laid mainly on historical changes. There are no systematic studies on the topic of variability as a whole.<sup>19</sup> As far as variance, variability, synonymy and crosscultural equivalence are concerned, and in consideration of views like those of Mlacek<sup>20</sup> and Kapchits,<sup>21</sup> I decided to classify the proverbs as follows:

- a) variations—if expressing exactly the same MM by the use of the same or a similar figurativeness (only with a minimum of lexical changes);
- b) variants—if the proverbs have the same or a very similar MM (slightly modified overarching MM type) and the same or a similar figurativeness, and their relation to the superior MM type is synonymous.

In terms of variation and variability, modifications and changes are reflected in the fundamental language levels—lexical, syntactical, and stylistic.<sup>22</sup> As we shall

18 Regarding the variability of proverbs, Li Yaozong, for example, just vaguely mentions the fact that despite numerous variant (written) forms and variants »it does not affect the proverbs’ ability to express themselves. On the contrary, in addition it significantly enhances their artistic attraction and charm, strengthens the field of their usability and their inspirational ability« (Li Yaozong 李耀宗, *Minjian yanyu miyu* 民間諺語謎語 [Popular Proverbs and Their Riddles] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe, 2006), 26.

19 See for example Wu Zhankun and Ma Guofan, *Yanyu*, 57–59.

20 As for variability and variants of phrasemes in general, J. Mlacek refers to the topic as »the existence of multiple forms of the same phrases maintaining the same meaning. Variability affects only the expressive and formal aspect of phrasemes or certain subtleties semantic between the different forms of a phraseme while the semantic identity is preserved, and the changes relate only to the formal side« (see Ďurčo et al., »Frazéologická terminológia«).

21 Georgi Kapchits defines ‘variations’ as »deviations from a standard proverbial form which do not semantically affect a proverb’s general meaning«, and ‘variants’ as those »which modify the general meaning.« (see Georgi Kapchits, »Variants and Variations of Somali Proverbs«, in *Proverbium. Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* 25 (2008), 2; quoted from <kapchits.narod.ru/main\_en.htm>).

22 The present study deliberately does not pay any attention to historical variability, although specialised dictionaries frequently list proverbs in relation to their age or origin by the first-known record in classical literature, i.e. the *locus classicus*—in the high literary tradition—or they are attributed to an individual authority. In animal proverbs, the empirical source is often already visible in the literal meaning, and it can be reasonably assumed that the proverb has an

see below by further analysing the examples, we can find different types of variations and variants in the ‘nests’: lexical, syntactic, stylistic, and formal—i.e. reductions and extensions, but mostly composite variations and variants.

As for comparing the Chinese and Slovak paremiological material by an evaluation of the functional equivalence of paremias, I decided to use the division of equivalents as follows:

- 1) the same meaning and the same figurativeness;
- 2) the same meaning and a similar figurativeness;
- 3) the same meaning and a different figurativeness;
- 4) a similar meaning and the same figurativeness;
- 5) a similar meaning and a similar figurativeness;
- 6) a similar meaning and a different figurativeness;
- 7) the same meaning and the same figurativeness—nearly identical.

Identical variants are very rare, and in fact are only ‘nearly’ identical; therefore, I mention them the least. Regarding the question of functional equivalence, Paczolay operates with the concept of a ‘universal proverb’. A universal proverb must comply with the following criteria: » (1) it is known at least in one language across all of Europe—that means in southern, northern, eastern, central or western Europe; (2) some of its variants (not including synonyms) occur in at least 28 languages—i.e. in more than half of the 55 languages of the examined corpus of proverbs.«<sup>23</sup> According to Paczolay, nearly all of the 106 proverbs marked as ‘universal European proverbs’ have an equivalent in eastern languages. They usually express the same idea in a different form. In such cases, Paczolay does not call them ‘equivalents’, but rather ‘synonyms’.<sup>24</sup> One of the Chinese paremias used by Paczolay and referred to as an equivalent of ‘universal European proverbs’ is also present in my analysis. As for other Chinese proverbs mentioned in his book, I am not always convinced of their equivalence or synonymy to the given European proverb (or proverbs).

eminently popular origin and hence was created by means of an objective metaphorisation in time and space in accordance with the primary empirical contact or experience with certain animals (except for paremias where I explicitly state the assumption that they were created only or particularly for the reason to express a certain MM and they originally had no real motivation derived from empirical experience). Records in classical literature by their breadth represent material that deserves separate extensive and to some extent speculative research, which is not the primary purpose of my own research.

23 Gyula Paczolay, *European Proverbs in 55 Languages with Equivalents in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese* (Veszprém: Veszprémi Nyomda RT, 1997), 23.

24 Paczolay, *European Proverbs...*, 27.

Let us take a closer look at the characteristics of paremia grouped in the MM types of 'nests' (hereafter just »nests«). The nests are specific not only because they encounter paremias from both cultural contexts, but especially for Chinese paremias also because of the permeability of borders,<sup>25</sup> so that they appear in variations and variants and shift from one paremiologic genre to another. To a lesser degree, this holds also true for Slovak paremias where there are shifts from proverbs into sayings and *vice versa*. I shall devote particular attention to the nuances of overarching MM-type modifications and the resulting variations and variants, and also their functional equivalents arranged in a sequence mainly with regard to their figurativeness. The nests chosen as examples are marked as Type A and Type B.<sup>26</sup> The 'nest' of the MM-type A comprises variations and variants of a specific Chinese paremia also with some Slovak equivalents of various types, and the 'nest' of the MM-type B also provides variations and variants of a proverb mentioned by Paczolay as »universal« with a relatively large number of Slovak equivalents.

#### Type A

*Humans display an active or passive approach to problems and their solutions  
or to overcoming obstacles.*

Within this nest there are paremias with a few lexical changes (of one or more constituents, mainly those of the agent) with syntactic changes, stylistic changes in modality, and extensions or derivations; the MM and the figurativeness remain unchanged—the paremias use the same argument or they differ (only) in modality.

In the nest, there are the following moderate modifications of the superior overarching MM:

25 On this problem, see Wu Zhankun and Ma Guofan, *Yanyu*, 281–284.

26 The Types A and B correspond to MM types (9) and (2) elaborated above.—*Ed.*

I A human in need can overcome even great (the greatest) obstacles

*Chinese pemeias—variations with different animals as subjects (only)*

- 狗急跳牆 [D]<sup>27</sup>  
‘A dog in need will leap [over] a wall.’ (CHY)

*A variant with two constituents added, change in modality*

- 狗急了也會跳牆 [D]  
‘A dog in need can even leap [over] a wall.’

*A lexical variation with a similar figurativeness*

- 狗急咬豹子 [D]  
‘A dog in need bites [even] a leopard.’

*Variations with lexical changes—other animals as subject and objects, and similar figurativeness*

- 羊急了也咬狼 [A]  
‘A sheep in need bites even a wolf.’
- 兔子急了也咬人 [B, D]  
‘A hare in need bites even a human.’
- 兔子急了還踹鷹 [B, C, D]  
‘A hare in need kicks even an eagle.’

*A quantitative extended variant—two-clause structure with developed figurativeness*

- 狗急跳牆，亂咬一下子 [C]  
‘A dog in need leaps over the wall, [and] suddenly bites.’

1.a Two different people have the same active approach to overcoming obstacles.

*Extended compound variations connecting two existing proverbs with the same MM*

Many Chinese animal proverbs (and not only those with animals) are compound sentences in their construction, mostly composed of two parts using animal motifs. In the Chinese context even triple-layer proverbs occur quite frequently, comparing two different animals (mostly of unequal qualities) with humans or with an object or with the outside world in general. Their creation often includes a double or even triple parallelism,

27 Sources of pemeias are indicated in square brackets as follows (full bibliography above):

- [A] Jin Lu, *Zhongguo suyu*.
- [B] Wen Duanzheng & al., *Zhongguo suyu da cidian*.
- [C] Zhang Yindong, *Zhongguo suyu yanyu ku*.
- [D] Wen Duanzheng & al., *Yanbai*.
- [E] Hanigovský, *Slovenské príslovia*.
- [F] Zátarecký, *Slovenské príslovia...*
- [G] Melicherčík & al., *Slovenské ľudové príslovia*.

as mentioned by A. N. Veselovskij in his *Historical Poetics*.<sup>28</sup> It is directed not only towards expanding the figurativeness but also the achievement of the substantially stronger efficiency of proverbs.

- 狗急跳牆，雞急起飛 [A]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] a wall, the chicken in need takes off.'
- 狗急了跳牆，雞急了上房 [A]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] a wall, the chicken in need flies to [the top of] the house.'

*An inverted and abbreviated syntactic variant of the paremia with a shift into another phraseological genre—chengyu (a fused literary expression, without context the MM is not understandable)*

- 雞飛狗跳牆 [C]  
'A chicken flies [and] the dog leaps [over] a wall.' CHY

*Modal variation*

- 狗急了，會跳牆，雞急了，會上梁 [D]  
'A dog in need can leap [over a] wall, the chicken in need can fly to the beam.'

*Lexical variants (another animal as the subject in the second sentence) with a similar figurativeness*

- 狗逼急了跳牆，馬逼急了躑躅 [D]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] a wall, the horse in need jumps.'
- 狗急跳牆，兔急咬人 [C]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] a wall, the hare in need bites a human.'

*Additional change in modality*

- 狗急要跳牆，俄狼最瘋狂 [C]  
'A dog in need will leap [over] a wall, a wolf [if] hungry is the most ferocious.'
- 狗急了跳牆，貓急了上房 [D]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] a wall, the cat in need climbs the roof.'

*An inverted lexical variation with a slightly modified figurativeness*

- 貓急上樹，狗急跳牆 [A-D]  
'A cat in need climbs a tree, the dog in need leaps [over] a wall.'

*A lexical variant (another animal as the subject in the second clause) with a similar figurativeness*

- 貓急上樹，蛇急鑽洞 [A]  
'A cat in need climbs a tree, a snake in need drills a hole.'
- 豬急了蹲圈，狗急了跳牆 [D]  
'A pig in need leaps up the pen, the dog in need leaps [over] a wall.'

28 See Veselovskij, *Historická poetika*, 59–65.

*Variants with other animal motifs and a different figurativeness with an unchanged MM*

- 雞寒上樹，鴨寒下水 [B, C, D]  
'[When] the chicken is cold, it climbs a tree; [when] the duck is cold, it enters the water.'
- 雞寒上距，鴨寒下嘴 [B, C, D]  
'[When] the chicken is cold, it retreats [a step]; [when] the duck is cold, it dips its beak.'

1.1 An animal and a human have the same active approach to solving a problem.

*Compound variants with a second part about a human with a modified MM*

In compound variants of Chinese pemiias with the explicit comparison of a dog's and a human's approach to overcoming obstacles (solving problems), the likeness in a positive active approach towards a solution is manifest—the first sentence can be understood both metaphorically and literally.

- 狗急了要跳牆，人窮了要造反 [C]  
'A dog in need leaps [over a] wall, the human who becomes poor will rebel.'

*An inverted variation*

- 人逼造反，狗逼跳牆 [B, C, D]  
'A human in need rebels, the dog in need leaps [over] the wall.'

1.2 An animal and an evil person have the same active but incorrect approach (evil intentions)

As the agent in the second clause is an evil person, it is likely that the dog also functions as a metaphor of an evil person. (This is a premise that is also based on the logic of the previously examined corpus of dog proverbs.)

- 狗急跳牆，賊急殺人 [A, C]  
'A dog in need leaps [over] the wall, a thief in need kills the human.'

2 Humans and animals have different approaches to solving problems; animals have an active approach in contrast to humans.

In Chinese pemiias, quite frequently an additive MM is indicated: 'In several respects, animals are better than humans.'

*A modal variant with a modified MM (the meaning of the first sentence is positive, of the second sentence it is negative), i.e. in LM 'If] an animal is in need..., [but] the human is in need...'*

- 人急懸梁，狗急緣牆 [B, C]  
'A human in need hangs himself, a dog in need climbs the wall.'

*An inverted extended variant with a developed (intensified in third sentence) figurativeness*

- 狗急跳牆，人急懸梁，富急出洋 [C]  
‘A dog in need leaps [over] the wall, the human in need hangs himself, and the wealthy [human] goes abroad.’

*An inverted variation with a change in figurativeness and modality*

- 人急燒香，狗急跳牆 [B, C, D]  
‘A human in need burns incense, a dog in need leaps [over] the wall.’

2.1 Humans have a passive approach to solving problems—they will resign or despair.

Slovak functional equivalents also make use of animal motifs, e.g. ‘horse’, ‘cow/ox’, ‘buffalo’, etc., yet the ‘cow’ appears in the position of an object. As well as being a metaphor of property or possession (position), the MM is still unchanged: humans’ attitudes towards disaster are specified (metaphorically) as the loss of property. Between the Chinese and Slovak paremias there are quite a few interfaces (equivalence, nearly identical).

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a different figurativeness (only with the motif of a human) with differences in modality*  
‘resignation’

- »Ked’ si vzal kone, vezmi si i uzdu.« [E]  
‘If you took the horse, take the reins too.’
- »Ked’ si vzal kone, vezmi si aj bič.« [E]  
‘If you took the horse, take the whip too.’
- »Ked’ zdochla krava, nech zdochne aj tel’a.« [E]  
‘If a cow died, let the calf die too.’
- »Ked’ čert vzal kravu, nech bere i tel’a.« [E]  
‘If the devil took the cow, let him take the calf too.’
- »Nech čert vezme pašu, keď kone podochnú.« [F]  
‘Let the devil take the pasture if the horses died.’

*‘Pessimism’ or simply a statement on reality (very common in sayings)*

- »Kobyľa zdochla i viera zdochla.« [F]  
‘The mare died and faith died too.’

- 3 A human's active (positive) approach to solving problems  
(Everything in life can be solved or replaced if one reduces his demands or adapts to the worsened situation.)

*A Chinese variant with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

- 馬背上跌跤，牛背上翻梢 [A]  
'[What] you lost on horseback, you'll win back on oxback.'

*A Slovak equivalent with the same meaning and a similar figurativeness*

- »Kone pohádzali, voly vyt'ahali.« [F]  
'Horses thrown away, oxes drawn back.' [initially used in regard to the sale of animals]

*A Chinese variant with the same meaning and a similar figurativeness (as in the 2nd MM modification)*

- 馬死落地行 [A-C]  
'If your horse dies, descend to earth [and] walk.'

*A Slovak equivalent with the same meaning and the same figurativeness (nearly identical)*

- »Ked' nemáš koní, chod' pešky.« [F]<sup>29</sup>  
'If you have no horses—walk!'

*A Chinese variant with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

- 騎馬也到，騎驢也到 [A, C]  
'When riding a horse, you arrive [at your destination]; riding a donkey, you arrive as well.'

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a similar figurativeness*

- »Ked' nemáš koňa, i somár je dobrý.« [E, F]  
'If you do not have a horse, a donkey is also good enough.' [The paremia can be also applied to the choice of partners or clothing.]
- »Ked' nemáš koňa, zapriahni somára!« [G]  
'If you do not have a horse, harness a donkey!'

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a different figurativeness (with or without an animal motif)*

- »Kto nemá kravu, nech kozu dojí.« [E]  
'He who does not have a cow, let him milk the goat.'

29 This variant is already mentioned by Sinapius-Horčíčka in the following form: 'If you are missing a horse, let a leg become your horse' («Deficiente Te eqvo, pes tibi fiat eqvus»). See Sinapius-Horčíčka, *Neo-Forum...*, 168.



- »Kto čižiem nemá, nech krpce nosí; a kto ani tých nemá, nech chodí bosý.« [E]  
‘He who does not have boots, let him wear *krpce*,<sup>30</sup> and he who does not have even those, let him walk barefoot.’

*A Slovak equivalent with a similar meaning and similar figurativeness*

*A statement on reality*

- »Keď kôň zdochne, I somár ku cti príjde.« [G]  
‘When a horse dies, the donkey comes to honour him too.’

*A Chinese variant with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

*‘Optimism’ or simply a statement on reality*

- 一雞死後一雞鳴 [A-D]  
‘If one hen dies, the other [will] cackle.’

#### Type B

*Humans can change their identity—appearance, qualities, abilities, behaviour or character and can be substituted by another person.*

The modifications of the superior MM in the nest are as follows:

i.a. A truly dangerous human does not reveal his methods, and may do harm to others.

*Or an evil and malicious human dissembles—a really dangerous human does not reveal his methods or his true face.*

- 不出聲的狗才咬人 [B, D]  
‘A silent dog [*literally* which does not emit any sound] will bite humans.’

*An extended lexical variation with a modified figurativeness*

- 不叫的狗咬人最利害 [A]  
‘A non-barking dog [*literally* one that does not bark] bites most ferociously.’ (Uyghur minority in Chinese, mentioned already by Kashagari, *Dīwānu luğati Türk* [Compendium of the Languages of the Turks]).

*A shorter variation with an intensified figurativeness*

- 暗狗咬死人 [A]  
‘A silent dog bites a human to death.’

30 A kind of ‘turned’ peasants’ shoe made of leather.

*An extended compound variant comparing two types of dogs*

- 不聲不響的狗，比張牙舞爪的狗更危險 [A]  
‘A silent dog [*literally* one which does not emit any sound] is more dangerous than a dog grinding his teeth and pushing out claws.’ (Uyghur minority)

*Modal variants with a similar figurativeness—with stress on the motif of a dog which bites people, change in argumentation*

- 咬人狗兒不露齒 [B, D]  
‘A [*literally* biting people] dog that bites does not show its teeth.’

*A lexical variant with the same figurativeness*

- 咬人的虎兒不露齒 [A, B, D]  
‘A [*literally* biting people] tiger that bites does not show its teeth.’

*A variation with a modified figurativeness*

- 咬人的狗暗下口 [B, D]  
‘A [*literally* biting people] dog that bites opens its mouth silently.’

*An abbreviated variation with the same figurativeness*

- 悶頭狗，突下口 [A, C]  
‘A stuffy dog begins to bite unexpectedly.’

*A variant with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

- 毒蛇口中吐蓮花 [A–D]  
‘A venomous snake spits lotus flowers out of its mouth.’

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a similar figurativeness, with changes only in stylistics (modality, argumentation)*

- »Pes, ktorý breše, nehryzie.« [G]  
‘A barking dog does not bite.’
- »Pes, ktorý najviac breše, najmenej kúše.«<sup>31</sup> [E, F]  
‘A dog that barks most bites least.’

Note: As for the empirical basis, ‘non-biting’ was originally presumably perceived as a *negativum* (failure) of a dog that had to guard, and therefore we can mark the MM as shifted. The proverb is already mentioned by Sinapius-Horčička in the form: ‘The dog which barks the most, bites only a little,’ and as a semantic equivalent he provides a sentence by Curtius: *Canes timidi vehementiūs latrans* (‘Fearful dogs bark mightier’), and as equivalent in meaning to a sentence by

31 Paczoly lists the paremia among the 106 labelled as ‘universal European proverbs’ under Number 3 (according to the number of equivalents) as a paremia that has 51 equivalents in European languages, and he quotes some Oriental equivalents: Arabic, Persian, Burmese, Japanese and Chinese (see Paczoly, *European Proverbs*, 44–48).

Cato (only with the motif of a human): *Exigua estis danda fides, qui multa loquuntur* ('Never trust those who are talking a lot').<sup>32</sup>

- »Horší je pes, čo nebreše, ale kúše.« [E]  
'The dog which does not bark but bites is the worst.'
- »Nekúše každý pes, ktorý breše.« [E, F]  
'Not every dog that barks bites.'
- »Zlý pes, čo vrčí,—horší, čo mlčí.« [E, F]  
'A dog is bad if it growls—worse if it remains silent.' [the MM is intensified]

*A Slovak equivalent with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

- »Lepší zjavný nepriateľ ako falošný priateľ.« [F]  
'Better an apparent enemy than a false friend.'
- »Tajný nepriateľ horší ako zjavný.« [F]  
'A hidden enemy is worse than the apparent one.'

2 A man who manifests himself outwardly at most is not useful or capable and *vice versa*.

- 愛叫的貓捕鼠少 [A]  
'A cat who likes to meow [only] catches a few mice.'

*An extended variation with a change in modality and also with an extended figurativeness*

- 能貓不叫，叫貓不能 [A, C]  
'A capable cat does not meow, a meowing cat is not capable.'

*A lexical variation with the same modality and the same logic in argumentation*

- 猛犬不吠，吠犬不猛 [A–D]  
'A ferocious (dangerous) dog does not bark; a barking dog is not ferocious (dangerous).' [on the MM see the note referred to above]

*A variant with the same meaning, a similar figurativeness and different modality*

- 公貓母貓，拿著耗子就叫貓 [A, C]  
'A cat [or] a tomcat—if it catches a mouse (rat), [only] then it is [should be] called a cat.'

*Lexical variants with the same meaning and a different figurativeness*

- 愛叫的麻雀不長肉 [A, B, D]  
'A sparrow<sup>33</sup> which likes to chirp gains no weight [i.e. does not have too much meat].'
- 愛叫喚的麻雀沒有二兩肉 [A, C]  
'A sparrow which likes to boast does not have [even] two *liang* [ca 50 g] of meat.'

<sup>32</sup> See *Neo-Forum...*, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Note: 'sparrow' in the sense of food; presumably, the variant was created by analogy mainly to express a certain MM.

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a similar figurativeness*

- »Ktorá kura mnoho kvočí, málo znesie.« [G]  
'The hen that clucks a lot lays only a few eggs.'
- »Dobrá ovca veľa nebečí, ale dobre dojí.« [G]  
'A good sheep does not bleat but gives milk well.'
- »Ktorá ovca mnoho bečí, málo vlny dáva.« [E, F]  
'The sheep that bleats a lot gives the least wool.'
- »Ktorá krava najviac bučí, najmenej mlieka dáva.« [F, G]  
'The cow that lows the most gives the least milk.'
- »Ktorý kocúr najviac mravčí, najmenej myši chytí.« [E, F]  
'The tomcat that meows the most catches the least mice.'

*Slovak equivalents with the same meaning and a different figurativeness (without an animal motif)*

- »Veľké hromobitie—málo dažďa.« [E]  
'Big thunder—little rain.'
- »Čím viac rečí, tým menej pravdy.« [E]<sup>34</sup>  
'The more talk, the less truth.'

*Conclusions*

These few examples of MM-type nests already demonstrate that for the purposes of my research, the most important categories are those of 'metaphoric meaning' and of 'figurativeness'—i.e. the animal in literary connotations. The logic of argumentation in paremias is a manifestation that in close contact with an animal the agrarian populations of China and Slovakia, despite two different sociohistorical and cultural contexts, have evidently processed the same or very similar experiences in the same or a very similar manner, as is the case mainly in the praise of universal human values and the despisal of universal human faults and weaknesses as well as in the declaration or underlining of generally applicable ethical standards.

The simple (one-sentence structure) or compound lexical variations and variants of animal proverbs occur quite often, but for the overwhelming majority

34 The paremia has also a modified MM: (b) 'He who talks a lot has no time to think what he's talking about.'

we should rather speak of comprehensive or composite variants (with lexical and syntactic or/and stylistic changes—very often with changes in modality, etc.).

Ultimately, it appears that variance, variability, equivalence and synonymy are often manifested in paremias created on the basis of an objective metaphorsation, which as the result of universal empirical experience was transformed into the form of paremia. On the other hand, the shifted or opposite metaphorsation is largely influenced by traditional cultural symbols, value systems, etc. and used mainly in paremias created particularly because of a figurative expression. Animals have similar or the same behavioural patterns and it is reasonable to assume that these nests will also comprise paremias marked as ‘universal’. The interchangeability of animals in lexical and stylistic variations or in composite variants, despite their position within a traditional value scale, in traditional cultural symbolism, or simply their economic significance, can also be attributed to this fact.

If the same animals may or may not act in Chinese and Slovak proverbs with analogies in meaning, this is due to factors which are still more different—mainly those of biodiversity, economy or traditional symbolism, etc. This fact needs to be discussed separately.

As to the semantic and symbolic activity, it is also reasonable to suppose that no animal is an exclusively negative or positive phraseological symbol. Also, animals with a relatively low status may become a positive phraseological symbol, even a symbol *par excellence* of a certain positive feature, value or concept, as may be seen, for example, in dog paremias.

There are many variations of paremias expanding the figurativeness within one sentence or in compound sentences, or differing in modality. The shift in modality serves the purpose of emphasising the expressiveness for the achievement of a substantially stronger efficiency of a statement.

It is curious or maybe quite logical that in some of the Chinese and Slovak equivalent or synonymous paremias, a specific phenomenon is appearing—a kind of ‘interference’ of metaphoric meanings, i.e. one paremia appears as if it were ‘completed’ by a slightly modified meaning using the change in modality or some other arguments in an explanatory variation or variant. ‘Explanatory’ variations or variants supplementing an extra dimension to the paremia in their original form can be observed not only on a cross-cultural level but already within the same cultural context.

In the light of basic characteristics of the animal paremias’ creation process already mentioned in the introduction—the anthropopetal metaphor and psychological parallelism—the supposition of a schematic way of production

appears as a logical outcome, and the paremiological material examined so far supports that assumption.

The existence of schemes or patterns can be demonstrated only through a sufficient number of examples by investigating substantially larger corpora of popular phraseology genres. These few considerations on the phenomenon of variance, variability, synonymy or equivalence present just preliminary suggestions on the way to further evaluation.

*Slovak Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, Bratislava*