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Comparative Analysis of Animal Phraseological Units with Religious Component in Russian and Chinese

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Abstract. The phraseological units analyzed in a comparative aspect reflect the peculiarities of the national worldview. The purpose of the study is to identify and compare the semantics and linguocultural properties of animal phraseological units with religious component in Russian and Chinese languages. The relevance of the topic is due to the insufficient study of idioms with the name of an animal component in the aspect of religious beliefs and traditions. The linguistic focus of this study is the phraseological units of the Russian language, reflecting the Christian and pagan ideas of the Russian people. The selection of the analyzed Chinese language material is due to the significant influence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism on Chinese culture. In the work, using a set of methods and techniques, such as linguocultural analysis, comparative analysis, and classification, the phraseological units of the Russian and Chinese languages with names of marine animals components birds, and terrestrial animals are studied. Similar and different figurative and symbolic meanings of animals are revealed in the two linguocultures. Discrepancies in the national and cultural connotations of animal images among speakers of Russian and Chinese languages against the background of religious and confessional differences have been established: the image of the same animal in different linguistic cultures generates different meanings. In addition to the discrepancies, Russian and Chinese idioms reveal semantic similarities due to the commonality of moral and ethical doctrines of Russian and Chinese speakers.

Keywords: animal phraseology, comparative analysis, language and culture, religious component, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism

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Сопоставительный анализ зоонимосодержащих фразеологизмов с религиозным компонентом в русском и китайском языках

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Аннотация. Фразеологический состав, изучаемый в сопоставительном аспекте, отражает особенности национального мировоззрения. Цель исследования — выявить и сопоставить образно-семантические и лингвокультурологические свойства зоонимосодержащих фразеологизмов с религиозным компонентом в русском и китайском языках. Актуальность темы обусловлена не достаточной изученностью фразеологизмов с компонентом-наименованием животного в аспекте религиозных верований и традиций. Лингвистическим фокусом исследования в русском языке являются фразеологизмы, отражающие христианские и языческие представления русского народа, в китайском языке — языковой материал, обусловленный влиянием конфуцианства, даосизма, буддизма. В работе с применением комплекса методов и методик, таких как лингвокультурный анализ, сопоставительный анализ, классификация, исследованы фразеологизмы русского и китайского языков с компонентами-названиями морских животных, птиц, наземных животных. Вскрыты сходные и различные образно-символические значения животных в двух лингвокультурах. Установлены расхождения в национально-культурных коннотациях образов животных у носителей русского и китайского языков на фоне религиозных и конфессиональных различий: образ одного и того же животного в разных лингвокультурах порождает различные смыслы. Помимо различий, русские и китайские фразеологизмы обнаруживают семантическую близость, обусловленную общностью морально-этических доктрин носителей русского и китайского языков.

Ключевые слова: зоонимосодержащий фразеологизм, сопоставительный анализ, язык и культура, религиозный компонент, христианство, конфуцианство, даосизм, буддизм

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Introduction

“A man lives not just in the physical environment, he lives in a symbolic Universe” [1. P. 95]. Symbols do not emerge by themselves but represent products of human conscience. Nationally specific symbols allow analyze peculiarities of national worldview, world perception. Multidimensional studies of a symbol caused an academic interest of a large number of scholars, such as A.F. Losev [2], A.A. Potebnya [3], V.V. Kolesov [4], Yu.M. Lotman [5]. A.A. Potebnya stated that

“it’s only from the point of view of language that one can arrange symbols, put them in order, correlating with the people’s worldview, but not with the arbitrariness of a writer [3. P. 6]. In the linguocultural aspect, a symbol might be treated as a stereotyped phenomenon of the context characteristic for any culture due to which “a symbol is encoded into the context of various cultures possesses different meanings in them” [6. P. 178]. For instance, in the conscience of the Russian people the image of a fish is associated with freedom, which is reflected in the idiom *как рыба в воде* (lit.: ‘like a duck to water’). In the Chinese linguoculture, a fish means ‘welfare’, ‘prosperity’ because the hieroglyph 鱼 ([yú] ‘a fish’) has a homonym 余 ([yú] ‘plenty of’), meaning ‘abundance’, ‘reserve’.

A symbol is close to an image which allows speaking about symbolic images. From the start, a man and animals existed on the Earth; animals accompany people in their everyday life in business activity which is why in the zoonymic lexis and phraseology with a zoonymic component which are passed from generation to generation, there is reflected a cognitive process of the world around. Images of phraseological units with an animal name component are motivated by the folk living, legends, mythology, history, custom, etc. But “the imagery should be based on the objective linguistic criteria which would primarily take into account the factors, influencing the appearance of the images given” [7. P. 137]. One group of those factors makes up religious and confessional beliefs and traditions.

The relevance of the topic under consideration is determined by the insufficiency of studying the phraseological units with animal names containing a religious meaningful component. The present study treats Russian and Chinese phraseological units involving animal names and religious imagery-semantic component on the basis of comparative analysis. The study is based on the complex of methods: the method of continuous sampling, descriptive method, component analysis, contextual analysis and statistical analysis. The aim of the study is to reveal general and specific linguocultural peculiarities of the mentioned above phraseological units among the bearers of Russian and Chinese.

The research material makes up 35 Russian phraseological units retrieved from “The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Biblical Phraseology” by K.N. Dubrovina (2010) [8] and “The Dictionary of Russian Phraseology, Historical-and-Etymological References Book” [9] by applying the method of continuous sampling, and 153 Chinese phraseological units retrieved from two dictionaries: “The Buddhist Phraseology”¹ and “The Large Etymological Dictionary of Chinese Phraseology”². Translation into Russian

¹ Zhu, Ruiwen (2006). *Buddhist phraseology*. Shanghai: Gezhi Publ.

² Zhu, Ruiwen (2010). *A Large Etymological Dictionary of Chinese Phraseological Units*. Peking: Chinese Emigrant Publ.

of the Chinese linguistic materials is retrieved from the resources of the site “Large Chinese-Russian Dictionary”³. In modern Russia, the predominating confession is the Orthodox Christianity; in before-Christian ancient Russian society the sufficient influence on the Slavonic life and culture was rendered by pagan beliefs. And accordingly, for the goals of the given study, there were chosen phraseological units reflecting both Christian and pagan ideas of the Russian people. A significant influence on the Chinese culture was made by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, which determined the sampling of the Chinese phraseological materials.

The carried out study has shown that in the Chinese phraseological units with a religious component the animal world is represented more vastly than in the Russian ones. Thus, In Russian, different from Chinese, there are lacking phraseological units with the names of such animals as *tiger, deer, hare, duck, ant, mouse, mantis, monkey, swan, silkworm, bear, fox, scorpion, wolf, crane, dragon, kylin, night moth, eagle owl, parrot, fly, quail, owl, phoenix, magpie, turtle dove, crow, bee, sparrow, turtle, lobster, frog, whale*.

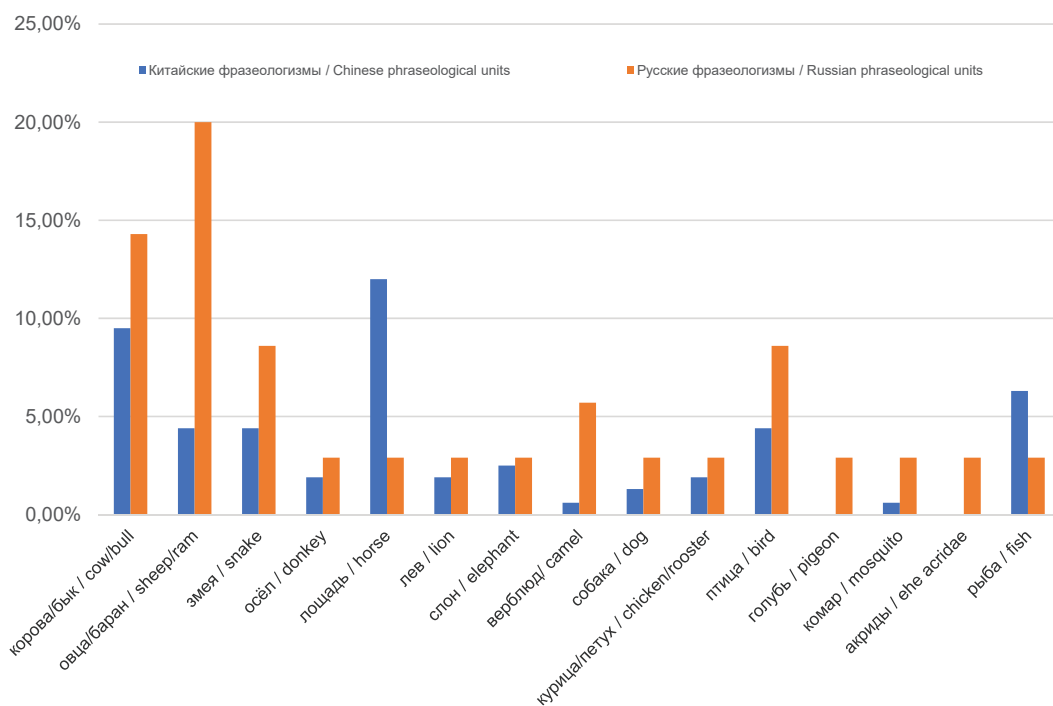


Fig. 1. Animal names in Russian and Chinese phraseological units with a religious component
Source: compiled by the authors.

³ The CKRS — A Large Chinese-Russian dictionary [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://bkrs.info> (accessed: 11.03.2024).

The Book of Genesis reads that on the fifth day, the God created the first living creatures which live in the water and fly in the air. On the sixth day, the God created a rather higher form of life — cattle and animals living on the dry land which possess higher type of conscience to compare with fish and birds⁴.

Let's analyze the phraseological units with similar zoonymic components in both languages (in order of the God's creation of those animals).

Sea animals

Fish

Among Russian phraseological units, the component *fish* is of a high frequency and often nominates negative human qualities, e.g. in Russian: *нем как рыба* (about a taciturn, quiet person); *как рыба об лёд биться* (about useless efforts of no result); *рыба с головы гниёт* (about dishonest administrators), etc. The Russian expression *из порося в карася; порося превратить в карася* is motivated by a peculiarity of the Russian religious ritual to refrain from eating, or eating restrictions on the religious observance like a fast. In course of a fast it's forbidden to eat meat, but an evil cunning monk impudently neglected the strictest Church prohibition – he tasted pork, and at that he said, “Well, a piglet, turn into a fish, into a crucial carp!”. This phraseological unit is used when some circumstances make believe something real for a wish, make a deal with someone's conscience.

In the Chinese culture, *fish* symbolizes not only wealth, but also love and happiness. The symbolism of love is connected with fish's dependence on the water, and, on the other hand, the fertility of fish itself renders positive attitude: the more children — the happier the family is. The component *fish* while symbolizing a wish and something positive take place in such Chinese phraseological units, like *缘木求鱼* (lit.: ‘climb a tree to seek a fish’; fig.: ‘make something useless known beforehand’, ‘waste time’); *鱼网鸿离* (lit.: ‘in fish nets swans are never found’; fig.: ‘to get something you didn't want or strived to’, ‘misfortune took the innocent’); *得鱼忘筌* (lit.: ‘catching a fish to forget about a bow net’, fig.: ‘be thankless’); *为渊驱鱼* (t'o move fish into a whirlpool'. According to Man-Tzu, an otter does so, and so do similar to it evil rulers from whom the people runs away to good tsars'. Fig.: ‘push into embrace of one's enemy’). In Taoism, the black fish (dallia) is a symbol of the son's fidelity: in the eating habits of big black fish species, the essential part makes the younger species. But there exists the folk belief: having pity for the parents, the small fry sacrifice themselves not to leave the parents hungry [10. P. 9].

⁴ Witness, Lee (1998). *The Bible (restorative translation)*. Ed. by the Living Stream Ministry Department. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry.

The Russian proverb *рыба ищет, где глубже, а человек — где лучше* translates the strife of a man to change his life for the better. Fish habitation in water reserves is reflected in the Chinese phraseological unit rethought in the Taoism philosophy: 渊鱼之察 (lit.: ‘if to look attentively, you would see a fish even in the whirlpool’; fig.: ‘learn about someone’s secret’). People thought that to see a fish in the whirlpool is a bad omen bringing misfortune. One shouldn’t follow a life principle: ‘more means better’. In the book “Yi Jing” (易经) [11. P. 9] there’s a wise maxim: everything reaching its maximum is inevitably to change into its contrast.

Birds

A bird

In Biblical storylines, fairy-tales, mythology there are existing images of birds symbolizing freedom, force, divinity, human soul, etc. The Russian phraseological units: *Как птица небесная (Божия); Птицы небесные (Божьи) не сеют, не жнут, а сыты бывают; Птичка Божия не знает ни заботы, ни труда* originate from the Gospel of St. Mathew 6:26: «Взгляните на небесных птиц. Они не сеют, и не жнут, и не собирают в амбары, однако ваш небесный Отец кормит их. Разве вы не дороже их?» (In Russian) [10. P. 46]. The image of a bird primarily symbolizes a careless, easy-going life, and besides, it contains a negative evaluation of a man being a vagabond, an idle person who lives at the expense of the others. The second meaning which in the Russian language appeared later, became rather widespread.

Confucianism as a moral-and-aesthetic trend influenced the worldview which was formed in the Chinese culture. In the book “Lun yu” — Analects of Confucius [12. P. 1] tells that 孝 – ‘son’s respect’ and 弟 — ‘respect of the elderly’ is the root of mercy. In the phraseological unit 鹑鷃在原 (lit.: ‘a wagtail in the plain’. Fig.: ‘about brothers in trouble’) there’s a reflection of an idea: 弟. 鹑鷃 — ‘a kind of a bird with a sharp beak, long wings and tail’, and after disappearing from the flock the others chitter and look for the disappeared one. The metaphorical use of the name of this bird also means ‘a talented capable worker’. Thus meaning is manifested in the expressions like 良禽择木 (lit.: ‘a good bird can differentiate trees’. Fig.: ‘a good person can evaluate people, which he serves to’), and 鹤鸣之士 (‘a great scholar but without a job position’ (according to Shijin); a crane chitters at the far away marshes, and chitter spreads over the fields’).

The background of the Taoism teaching is simplicity, the strife for the origins and natural approach — it is the rejection of the luxury way of life and active work, the lessening of extreme wishes towards a person himself. The morals and ideals of Taoism are fixed in such set expressions as: 鷓鴣一枝 (lit.: ‘a jenny wren nests just on a single branch. Fig.: ‘have just one accommodation or one job); 鹑居鷃食 (lit.: ‘live like a quail and feed like a small bird. Fig.: ‘live without a permanent accommodation

and the possibility to choose food; have a humble way of life and modest eating habits). It's worth to remark that Taoists consider useless the moves that disregard natural rules of life. The phraseological unit of the Taoism origins 断鹤续凫 (lit.: 'sever the crane's legs and attach those to a ducko. Fig.: 'about something unnatural) state that the unnatural causes only harm, seems funny and absurd.

A rooster / a cock

Since the old times a rooster is close to people. Men know the habits of this animal very well and transfer the rooster's behavior peculiarities onto people, who resemble this domestic bird by their actions. In Russian songs, fairy-tales, proverbs and sayings the rooster's image is associated with a man who demonstrates importance and bullying, e.g., *важный как петух; ходить петухом*, etc. In legends and superstitions of both nations a rooster has got a magic force: "his singing drives away evil spirits, night demons and ghosts" [13. P. 422]. In the Russian linguoculture a rooster also allots special features depending on the color of its feathers: "red is opposed to black. A red rooster is considered to bring good portent, while a black one used to bring a bad one and be a devil's procreation" [13. P. 423]. As to the Chinese, such color symbolization doesn't exist. The Russian phraseological unit *пустить красного петуха* is connected with the mythological symbolization of a rooster. Among the Slavonic people, according to the old Slavonic myth, the red rooster embodied the God of fire as it was sacrificed to Svarog — the God of the Sun and Light, personifying the Heaven.

Chinese phraseological units with a *rooster* component to a greater extent render a negative evaluation, although in China, the rooster's image is positive as it denotes light, hope, diligence, etc. As is known, a rooster is a kind of 'singing clock' because it's a rooster but not a hen, who crows during the day-and night cycle. The Chinese treat a 'singing hen' to be an evil token. In the phraseological unit of 牝鸡司晨 (lit.: 'a hen instead of a cock announces a sunrise'; fig.: 'a wife handles a husband and his business', 'a mistress governs the state') which forms one of the five rules of great interrelations of the Confucius teachings: a divine attitude of a husband towards his wife and the wife's subordination to her husband. Consequently, the wife's management means the family destruction. The phraseological unit with the given component 鸡犬升天 (lit.: 'one of the members of a family became divine, his cocks and dogs went to live in heaven'; fig.: 'a man has got an upper position in the hierarchy of the Civil Service, and his relatives go up after him') reflects the most serious Taoism idea of learning the essence of the matter, to reach immortality and turn into a divinity.

Field and land animals

Fig. 1. "The animal names in the Russian and Chinese phraseological units with a religious component shows that by the frequency to use, the first three positions are occupied by such animal names (In Russian): овца/баран/агнец, корова/бык/

телец and змея. The Russian phraseological units on religious topics with the given components overtake in number the similar Chinese ones: “To denote a kind of an animal in Russian it’s possible to use in some aspects masculine gender nouns (*крот, як*), and in the others — feminine gender nouns (*пантера, мышь*). In the Chinese language, the words signifying a kind of an animal have no gender parameter’ [14. P. 60]. Thus, in Russian there are distinguished the animal names of male and female sexes: *баран/овца, козёл/коза, бык/корова*; while in Chinese there is more often used a general name of an animal without indicating a sex parameter, e.g., 羊 (yáng) и 牛 (niú).

A ewe / mutton; a she-goat / he-goat

In the Russian worldview the images of *ewe/mutton; she-goat/he-goat* symbolize weakness and are associated with a sacrifice, and render a negative evaluation. But in the Christianity, a lamb/agnus is a symbol of Christ the Savior, a symbol of purity, innocence and an innocent victim. *Agnus Dei* is one of the names of Jesus Christ, known from the Gospel of John 1:29. In the figurative meaning *agnus* denotes ‘a humble obedient man’. The Biblical phrase of *Agnus Dei*, Jesus Christ is likened to an innocent lamb/agnus to be an animal sacrifice which abolish human sins. In modern Russian the given phraseological unit primarily denotes an innocent, open-hearted, obedient man. With time, the phrase *Агнец Божий (непорочный) / Agnus Dei (innocent)* “changed its semantics for the opposite; thus rather often people call a hypocrite, who pretends to be an innocent unprotected victim” [8. P. 19]. Similar meaning characterizes the Russian phraseological unit *прикидываться/прикинуться агнцем <Божьим>*.

In the Biblical phrase *заблудшая овца [овечка] (душа)* meaning ‘a lost sheep (soul)’ God believers are compared with sheep, and Christ — with a shepherd. Symbolizing good and evil Jesus counter-opposed sheep and goats which was reflected in the Russian phrases: *отделять/отделить овец [овнов] от козлиц* (lit.: divide the sheep from the goats; rel. (Latin): ‘ab haedis segregate oves’). *Козёл отпущения* (‘scapegoat’) is a rather widely used phraseological unit belonging to different languages including Chinese; it signifies a person who had to be responsible for the actions and failure of other people so that to hide its real reason and a real culprit. In Christian theology Scapegoat is often interpreted as a prototype of a self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In Chinese, the most frequently used are the phraseological units with the component 羊 to signify ‘happiness’, ‘well-being’. In “The Explanatory Dictionary if Chinese Hieroglyphs” the word 羊 bears the meaning of “an omen, a token; the good, happiness” [15. P. 114]. The outdated phrase 吉羊 was changed for the modern phrase 吉祥. The left element of the hieroglyph 禘 means ‘spirits’, ‘divinities’, ‘gods’. According to the Taoism doctrine, during the sacrificial offering the ancient Chinese people while putting a mutton near the tablet with the names

of ancestors or gods, wished to obtain the fortune given by spirits and happiness. In the phraseological unit 三阳开泰 *words* 羊 (yáng) and 阳 (yáng) there are used homophones signifying the arrival of spring, the active bright beginning, complete well-being.

The political ideal of Confucius consisted in humanistic government over the state, in creating a harmonic society, in governor's caring of his subjects, in love for the neighbors. The Confucius teachings served as a source of the phraseological unit 素丝羔羊 ('white silk and lamb's skin'), while white silk symbolizes the innocence and honesty, and lamb's skin means transparency).

In both – Russian and Chinese linguocultures — there is seen analogical perception of a lamb/agnus as an animal-sacrifice, e.g.: 屠所牛羊 (lit.: 'a cow and a sheep at the slaughter house'; fig.: 'a man at the edge of death (coffin); 爱礼存羊 (the phrase is retrieved from the Avot : 41 of the Book "Talk and Judgement". A disciple of Confucius Tzu Gun wanted to forbid the sacrifice offering of a mutton in the New Moon period. The wise man said, "Tzu, it's a mutton which is dear to you, but for me the observance of a rite is dear" (fig.: 'preserve a rite with the aim not to forget the important radical idea') [12. P. 16].

The phraseological unit with the component 歧路亡羊 dates back to the Taoism classical treatise "Le-Tzu" [16. P. 235], and it tells that people couldn't find a mutton because they didn't know which road it took to go away. The figurative meaning of the following is: 'in a difficult situation it's not easy to find a proper decision'. Le-Tzu gave a piece of advice to his disciples: 'in search of the truth a man is in a difficult situation, and if he wouldn't follow the right way, he would get lost, lose the true direction'.

A cow/a bull/an ox/a calf

Many nations have an idea of 牛 ('cow') as a symbol of wealth and well-being. In religious assumptions the Chinese, the Buddhist component 牛 means a name of a sacred animal, a symbol of strength and a wealthy life, the embodiment of Buddha himself. In the Bible both — a bull and an ox — are the sacrificial animals (Exodus 24:5; Leviticus 1:1, 7, 8).

The golden calf is an idol, the cult object of those who refused the God of Israel. In the Bible the golden calf means a hand-made cult-figure, an idol which is forbidden to worship in Ten Commandments. In the new European culture *the golden calf* is the symbol of profit, power, money, wealth, greed. In Russian, *поклоняться золотому тельцу / to worship the golden calf* means 'to see the main life value in wealth, money' [8. P. 229].

There's quite a big number of the phraseological units of the Biblical origin based on the well-known stories and legends, and in modern Russian they've got a new interpretation, e.g., *фараонова тощая корова* and *семь тощих коров и семь коров тучных*. The phrase *фараонова тощая корова* (lit. 'Pharaoh's thin cow') in the singular is used to denote a man primarily thin, emaciated and

also to characterize the people, “who can’t do anything useful, decent but use the fruit of the labor of the other active and talented people (In despise)” [17. P. 665]. “The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Biblical Phraseology” by K.N. Dubrovina (2010) contains the following interpretation of the given phrase: “People, groups, communities which through their outdated ideas and fruitless activity spoil, ruin everything new and progressive” [8. P. 681].

In the Chinese culture the image of 牛 is closely connected with Lao-Tzu, the Taoism founder who is usually portrayed with a long beard riding on the green ox to the West. The ox’s character is calm, soft, patient and together with the green color symbolizing life, nature and harmony embodies a Taoism assumption of “reaching immortality” [18. P. 93]. With time, the green ox becomes the symbol of Tao and even Taoism, e.g., 青牛道士 (‘Tao riding the green ox’).

The phraseological unit 呼牛呼马 (lit.: ‘name it as you like — either a cow or a horse’; fig.: ‘be indifferent to any evaluation’) emphasizes the essence of the Lao-Tzu teaching which is considered as the Tao embodiment. The image of 牛 (‘a cow/an ox’) making the base of the given phrase is associated with a man of the low social position. According to some teachings, and not only those by Lao-Tzu, but another Taoism founder — Zhong-Tzu, to reach peace and spiritual well-being one has to escape overabundance and return to the primitive community life, to respect objective rules and forms of life existing in nature. Proverbial expressions 庖丁解牛 (lit.: ‘a cook cuts a cow’s body’) and 目无全牛 (lit.: ‘to look at a bull’s body not like at the integral whole’; fig.: ‘be a foremost worker’, ‘to know a trade in the smallest details’) prove that learning the natural regulations leads to reaching perfectness.

It’s worth to remark that phraseological units of the Buddhist origin with a component 牛 (niú), e.g., 牛头阿旁 (lit.: Epan is a monster with the bull’s head, which in the Hell tortures sinners’; fig.: ‘a hypocrite’, ‘a cruel person’); 牛头马面 (lit.: ‘a bull’s head and ‘horse-like face’. In the Chinese traditional culture, in the afterworld there’re two servants: one with a bull’s head, and another — with a horse-like face. Fig.: abominable and evil angry person, dark forces); 牛鬼蛇神 (lit.: ‘a bull’s demon and shake’s spirit’; fig.: ‘an abominable monster’) — all of those possess negative shades of meaning, and the image of 牛 symbolizes an abominable personality because “a bull’s head (the most important part as it keeps the living principle) symbolizes a victim and death” [19].

A serpent / a snake

In the assumptions of the bearers of the Russian and Chinese languages a *snake* is primarily allotted with a vivid negative features, it’s an embodiment of the evil, thanklessness, cunningness. On the one hand, the component *snake* is contained in the biblical phrases signifying the Satan, the Devil, e.g., *змий* [змеи] *искуситель* (‘a serpent’). On the other hand, the image of a snake is accompanied with an attribute *мудрая* (‘wise’) fixed in the phraseological unit *Будьте мудры, как змии, и просты, как голуби* (‘Be wise as a snake and simple as a dove’).

This is a Jesus's addressing to his disciples with a call to be prudent and cunning as snakes. Wisdom is understood as "safety and smartness of those animals in case of danger, when they can protect themselves and reveal a surprising inventiveness and skills" [8. P. 60].

In Chinese like in Russian, the word *snake* has a connotative meaning 'a cunning person' actualized in the phraseological expressions of the Buddhist origin: 佛口蛇心 (lit.: 'Buddha's lips and snake's heart'. Fig.: 'sweet talk, but angry heart'), 龙蛇混杂 (lit.: a mix of dragons and snakes' Fig.: 'disheveled, mixed society'). The expression 一朝被蛇咬, 十年怕井绳 (lit.: be once bitten by a snake and for ten years be afraid of a well-water rope') means 'as a result of hard trials a person becomes a coward and very careful'. The exterior of a snake, its skills, the ability to bite mean a threat and the evil, fixed in the phraseological unit: 封豕长蛇 (lit.: 'big wild boar and long boa'. Fig.: 'greedy and cruel aggressor'). Phraseological units of Confucian origin contain Chinese wisdom: 龙蛇之蟄 (lit.: 'dragons and snakes hide underground to stay alive'. Fig.: 'in order to reach further success it's reasonable to feel offends and injustice for some time); 打蛇打七寸 (lit.: 'beat a snake on its sore spots'; fig.: 'beat the heel of Achilles, hit the target').

Let's observe the Russian and Chinese phraseological units which don't comply in meaning and components.

In Russian

A pig

The group of the Russian phraseological units chosen by means of the continuous sampling method contains three idioms with an animal component *pig*, and the two of those have a biblical origin while the last one is Islamic. In the Russian tradition, the imagery-connotative idea of a *pig* presents it to be a dirty rude and unthankful animal. In Christianity the dominant image of a *pig* used to correlate with a person who doesn't strive for spiritual values, the truth and the God's words. The given figurative meaning is realized in such biblical phrases like: *метать (рассыпать) бисер <перед свиньями>* (lit.: 'spray out beads <before pigs>') and *свинья грязи найдёт* (lit.: 'a pig will always find mud'). In Christian and Muslim traditions a *pig* belongs to impure animals and serves as a symbol of a sin. For Muslims, the Koran prohibits eating pork, and due to this an intended blind serving pork to a Muslim will cause his anger, lead to misfortune: *подложить свинью* (lit.: 'play a dirty trick on someone').

A dove

In Russian phraseological units a *dove* is primarily associated with light, peace and peace-making which is reflected the expression *голубь мира* (lit.: 'a dove of peace'); and also with the obedience and leniency of Christians, e.g.: *Будьте мудры, как змии, и просты, как голуби* (lit.: 'Be wise as snakes and simple as doves'). In the Bible dove is a symbol of St. Spirit (John 1:32) [9].

In Confucian theory

In the Chinese mythology, 凤凰 ('Phoenix') is understood as a tsar-bird. In the world perception of the Chinese peoples this bird along with a dragon, kylin and turtle, is an embodiment of such Confucian ideas as enterprising skills, noble behavior, happiness, humanism and justice. The bird looks like that: "on its head there is an ornamentation of the hieroglyph 'virtue' 德 (de), "co-humanity" on its back — 仁 (ren), on the shoulder "justice" — 义 (yi), "honesty" on the chest — 信 (xin). "The Catalogue of Mountains and Seas" speaks of details: 'justice' (义) marks dove's wings; 'honesty' (信) is on the belly, 'perfectness' (仁) is on the chest, and 'good behavior' (礼) is on its back" [20. P. 289]. According to the ancient Chinese legends, when Phoenix appeared on the Earth, peace and calmness and happiness descended on China: 凤凰来仪 (lit.: 'appearance of a couple of Phoenixes'; fig.: 'a happy omen').

The Chinese work *fenghuang* is formed of two hieroglyphs: the first one 凤 means 'a male bird' symbolizing 'the God of Winds — the envoy of the Heavens Master' [17. P. 402], the second hieroglyph 凰 denote 'a female bird' which associates with the word 皇, a symbol of power and force, supernatural entities. 凤 is although to be a bird announcing good news and able to bring happiness, 凤鸣朝阳 (lit.: 'Phoenix sings for the morning sun'. Fig.: 'everything promises happiness'). Besides, 凤 became a synonym of love, and in China it is principally a symbol of a married couple: 鸾凤和鸣 (lit.: 'harmonic singing of luan and Phoenix. Fig.: 'a happy marriage, to live in perfect harmony').

In the Russian worldview there exist another idea of Phoenix — it's a mysterious bird with a woman's head. It's a mythological bird which burns itself and again it resurrects, comes out of the ashes being still young and reborn. Thus in the Russian linguoculture Phoenix is a symbol of eternal renewal, immortality, and it signifies rebirth and resurrection.

In Taoism

It's worth mentioning that in the Western culture, sleazy appearance, strange habits inherent to such animals like bats, toads, crows are often meaning death, bad tokens, but in the Chinese linguoculture especially in the Taoism, they were connected with the ideas of happiness, life longevity and other good awaited events.

In Chinese, a bat is expressed in 蝙蝠. Symbolism of this animal is based on the homonymy of 蝠 and 福 ('happiness', 'well-being') coincide in pronunciation. Due to it, on the gate of ancient Chinese there were depicted five bats signifying 五福临门 ('let the happy five knock on the doors ('life longevity', 'wealth', 'tranquility', 'virtue' and 'death in declining years')). There's a belief among the people that "Tyan-Guan bestows happiness. Di-Guan absolves sins, and Shu-Guan remits misfortunes" [21. P. 22]. The God Tyan-Guan surrounded with beautiful clouds and five bats stepped on the perch symbolizing life longevity. This is the background of the phraseological unit 多福多寿 ('much happiness', 'long life').

A frog is a useful animal but in phraseological units the imagery component of a *frog* renders negative features of a person of contracted views, or narrow worldview — 井底之蛙 (‘a frog in the bottom of a water-well’); 井蛙之见 (‘a worldview of a frog in the bottom of a water-well’. Fig.: ‘a person with a narrow worldview’). In the Chinese mythology a toad is one of the totems worshiped from the ancient times. There are many tokens and beliefs connected with a toad. In the legend well-known to every Chinese :Chang-E arises to the Moon, and gods to punish him turned a beauty Chang E into a three-legged toad which is why the Moon Palace is also called The Palace of a Moon Toad. According to the traditional ideas, 登蟾宫 (‘enter the Moon Palace’); 蟾宫折桂 (‘slip off a branch of a cinnamon tree in the Moon Palace’) as a great honor, getting an academic degree was compared to visiting the Moon Palace. In the Chinese linguoculture a toad means not only life longevity, but also wealth, so it’s not at random that a statuette of a money toad with a small coin in its mouth is possible to see in Chinese homes, offices, and restaurants: it’s considered to be the God of wealth, the symbol of material well-being.

In Taoism, except the mentioned above animals, there are many other ones symbolizing life longevity, e.g., a turtle, a dragon, a deer, a crane. As a symbol of life longevity, a deer image is depicted in the treatise “Baotou-Tzu”, created by a well-known Taoist philosopher Ga-Hu: “A deer who lived 500 years has turned white” [22. P. 63]. On the homonymy basis the component *deer* 鹿 is equal to the word 禄 (‘prominent, successful career’). According to the national assumptions, the God Fu 福 is thw patron of happiness; the God Lu 禄 is the protector of wealth and the God Shu 寿 is the patron of life longevity: in the Chinese New Year picture all the three gods are depicted as images of wise old men accompanied by a deer. The symbolic meaning of a *deer* fixed in the phraseological unit 高官厚禄 (‘high position’, ‘lavish salary’) reflects the Chinese dream of happy life.

Taoists worship the sacred crane. In Taoism its images is met everywhere to symbolize immortality, life longevity, experience, virtue. In national mythology Celestial Fathers travel on the crane among the clouds, and the Taoists who reached Tao pass away from life on the crane. See the phraseological unit 松鹤延年 (‘a pine tree and a crane are the symbols of wishing long life’). At this, in Buddhism the imafe of a crane is often used to describe free monk’s way of life: 孤云野鹤 (lit.: ‘a single raincloud and a wild crane’; fig.: a hermit scholar or a monk who escape the society’).

In Buddhism

In the traditional Chinese culture according to the Feng-Shui teaching, an elephant is considered to be a nice animal symbolizing wealth, stability, health and tolerance. In ancient China, during the development of Buddhism, the Chinese people got to know the elephant image, in particular, the white elephant, and they felt more and more sympathy to this animal. In Buddhism an elephant is the Buddha’s reincarnation; as the legend speaks, Buddha was born as an elephant of the white

color symbolizing purity and innocence. It's just due to the fact, the Buddhists worship the white elephant. Elephant also embodies the ideas of spiritual evolution and spiritual stability: 香象渡河 (lit.: 'like an elephant crossing the river'; fig.: 'a man who knows the truth'); 盲人摸象 (摸象众盲) (lit.: 'blind people are touching the elephant (a parabola about the blind people who touching the elephant gave very different opinions on what that could be). Fig.: 'one can't see a forest behind the trees', 'narrow-minded people').

In both languages under the comparison there are phraseological units with the component *ivory* 象牙 and the equivalent expressions to *the Ivory Tower* — 象牙之塔. As is known, elephants were hunted to get the ivory, a precious material to create luxury goods. Consequently, in the Chinese language there is a phraseological unit: 象齿焚身 (lit.: 'an elephant is destroyed by its tusks'; fig.: 'wealth').

Conclusions

The comparative study of the phraseological units with animal names and a religious component in the Russian and Chinese languages allows determine semantics and interpret significant pieces of the phraseological worldview of the two nations. The carried out analysis establishes the background to conclude that the similarity of the component sets and semantics of the phraseological units under the study is primarily based on the coincidence and unification of the universal panhuman doctrines. The differences of the national and cultural connotations of the animals' images incorporated in the phraseological units concerning one and the same animal in different cultures, are determined by the cultural-and-historical reasons, by linguocultural peculiarities, traditional beliefs, religious and confessional assumptions.

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