

Zoomorphic Lexis as a Fragment of the Chinese Linguistic Worldview (Based on Chinese Phraseological Units)

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify the ethnocultural features of the functioning of Chinese phraseological units with zoomorphic components by describing their lingo cultural properties. The Chinese phraseological units with a zoomorphic component from the *liuchu* (六畜) group — six domestic animals, whose images occupy a special place in Chinese linguoculturology — were used as linguistic material.

Methodology: In order to describe the internal form of zoomorphisms, the authors used the following methods: semantic identification, providing the possibility to identify individual phraseological meaning with the lexical structure; cognitive interpretation, which is involved in the "decoding" of cultural codes enclosed in phraseological units; The etymological approach is used to determine the primary sources of zoomorphisms, which are figurative dominants of the studied phraseological units.

Main Findings: The authors found that zoonyms as animal names are anthropocentrically oriented and have connotative properties, acting as a means of secondary nomination, they represent an ethnospecific worldview. The authors determined that the ethno specific features of the considered phraseological units are due to the specificity of the linguistic system of the Chinese language, as well as the specifics of the influence of animals on the life of the Chinese ethnos.

Applications: The collected empirical material can be used in classes in linguoculturology and intercultural communication; it can be used while writing textbooks, methodological manuals; to create thesauri, phraseological dictionaries, as well as to clarify the national-cultural specificity and functioning of zoononyms in the linguistic worldview.

Novelty/Originality: The scientific novelty of the work is due to the insufficient study Chinese phraseological units with the zoonym component. The work makes a certain contribution to solving the problem of the functioning of zoononyms in phraseological units, in particular, the study made it possible to trace the influence of extralinguistic factors, such as geographical and biological, as well as globalization processes.

Keywords: *Linguistic Worldview, Zoomorphic Lexis, Phraseological Units, Cognitive Linguistics, Chinese Linguistic Worldview, Secondary Nomination.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of scientific thought at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century led to the formation of a new scientific paradigm focused on a person in all his/her manifestations. It is obvious that modern geopolitical realities dictate new "rules of the game" for linguistics: it should shift its research object from system centrism towards anthropocentrism. In this regard, the investigation of the zoomorphic code in any language is very relevant.

Wildlife has always been in the human eye. Being invariably present in human life, animals always served as a source of food, clothing, transport, etc. In addition, they generated a deeply emotional human response (numerous myths, legends, fairy tales, in which animals acted as protagonists), developed imagination and excitement (lycanthropy, etc.) and became subjects of further deliberation. Human observations resulted in the fact that both wild and domesticated animals were endowed with certain characteristics and values that further transformed into images. These images reflected human ideas regarding the world and man's place in the universe.

Zoomorphic images have always been present in the culture; they coded cultural features of different epochs, which not only reflected the reality but also in many ways formed a system of ideas about society and the role of the individual in it. Therefore, understanding the role of zoomorphic images, their use in interpreting certain cultural realities combined with the semantic analysis of their hidden meanings provide comprehensive understanding of interaction between human civilization and nature, make it possible to determine axiological orientations of culture that existed at different stages of its development and deepen human understanding of linguistic consciousness and its functioning.

Phraseological composition of any language is the most original phenomenon, not only in terms of a system- regular

autonomy but also in terms of the national identity of certain peoples – native speakers expressed through fixed expressions and comparisons (Telia, V. 1996). Fixed phrases, proverbs and sayings most vividly and figuratively show the linguistic worldview of peoples and ethnic groups reflecting specific features of their material and spiritual culture. These phrases show what phenomena are regarded as important and meaningful facts. Moreover, the zoomorphic culture code presents an extremely interesting and distinctive language layer that reveals the world view specificity of different people who are different language and culture bearers (Stoyanova, R. 2016).

The latter is determined by the fact that zoonyms are among the oldest vocabulary layers in different languages of the world. In order to characterize human behavior, feelings, appearance, all objects and phenomena of the external world, people resorted to comparison with what was close to them (within their eyesight). Through comparison with various surrounding animals, "homo sapiens" looked at reality and learned themselves and their roles in it.

Animalistic phraseology with its core components (zoonyms) constitutes a vast subsystem of the Chinese phraseological system. Phraseological units are of great interest not only in terms of the Chinese language but also in terms of material and spiritual culture since these units clearly and directly reflect the national identity of this language system through evaluation standards that represent the cultural and information foundation of any language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Presently, interest in dealing with biomorphic studies related to living things and divided into two research directions (phytomorphic (plant images) and zoomorphic (animal images) themes) has become characteristic for the current research paradigm (Beisembaeva, A. 2017). This research deals with zoomorphic images. At the same time, it is natural to do research in the context of discourse. The latter is correlated with the fact that social relations are expressed in any language in terms of anthropocentric traditional world view and through studying plant and zoonimic codes for the designation of social relations (biologism) (Ezaova, M. 2017). This orientation of modern studies can be explained through the existing trend aimed at expanding the problematic area of research and its interdisciplinarity. In addition, one can observe a renewed interest in the archaic and archetypal foundations of culture, as well as in the typological representation of ancient culture in modern discourse.

Thus, zoomorphism is not just a fact of culture (perceived as a highly specialized subject of culturological studies); it is an interdisciplinary phenomenon reflecting various problems of linguistics, sociology, history and other sciences. At the same time, the study of zoomorphism as such, and the contextual comprehension of animal images that correlates with the actual cultural knowledge have certain research boundaries. As a rule, such studies are devoted to the analysis of iconic (graphic) forms of culture. Alternatively, they refer to the "eteros ego" problem in the bestial context, that is, displacement of human society from the inhuman world. Besides, productivity of studies dealing with the zoomorphic code is explained by the fact that this code presents a component of the linguistic worldview being represented in linguoculturology: by means of vocabulary, phraseology, paremiology, it conceptualizes the external and internal world to a person revealing lacunas, universals, etc. like a litmus paper (Guketlova, F. 2009).

Studying the names of animals and phraseological units with a component-zoonym allows us to highlight important value orientations of each people. It is quite obvious that metaphorical and metonymic transfers in the composition of phraseological units arise on the basis of really existing objects and are heuristically significant since they most clearly reflect the mismatch of ideas about the world around different peoples (Bagana, J. 2014).

It should be noted that the names of animals in different languages contain different qualities and characteristics, cause different associations. This fact indicates the individuality of imaginative thinking of a particular nation, is a complex associative-psychological process and also shows the differences in the value worldview of various ethnic groups (Kurazhova, I. 2007). From this point of view, zoonyms act, on the one hand, as elements of a culture, and on the other hand, they act as elements of a language. Therefore, zoonyms can be the subject of linguocultural research.

Based on the phraseological foundation of the language, specifically on phraseological units with a zoonym component, it becomes possible to study the national-cultural specificity of animal names and identify theoretically general and national-specific cultural connotations of these nominative units. Due to the ramified nature of the semantic structure, the high phrase-building potential, and the complexity of associative features, zoonyms are of particular interest for research in the field of linguoculturology.

Thus, the scientific fact that the lexical-semantic group, including the names of animals, is the most important fragment of the conceptual space, acting as a linguocultural representative, a kind of prism, national worldview and mentality, is indisputable. The names of animals, as nominative units of the language, "directly or indirectly, through their cultural connotations, are connected with the spiritual and material culture of the people" (Telia, V. 1996).

Zoonym components are one of the most nationally labeled; they are characterized by universality, on the one hand, and figurative personality and locality, on the other (Mokienko, V. 2007).

The duality of zoonyms as signs of a language for a person who knows the language is obvious, because at the same time he has knowledge in culture, respectively, the language signs that he uses reflect the culture, serve as the main

tool for representing national-cultural specificity, conceptualizing the worldview.

Thus, in zoonyms, cultural meanings understandable in a particular linguistic community are encoded in a certain way. This is a manifestation of the national-cultural specificity of human perception of reality, which every nation has fixed in its linguistic worldview since ancient times ([Yakovleva, E. 2018](#)).

Close attention to the study of the lexical-semantic group of animals, their importance in the human community, has led to the emergence of various terms used to nominate this linguistic phenomenon. For example, in the Russian scientific literature the terms 'zoonym', 'zoologism', 'zoomorphism', 'animalistic component', 'animalism', 'zoomorphic image', 'zoonym-containing lexeme', 'zoomorphic elements' and others are known. In this study, we use the word 'zoonym', because it seems to us that it is the most term, capacious for a given lexical field. From this point of view, Kurazhova's thought is close to us, which claims that zoonyms — as separate lexical units and as components of stable expressions — are widely represented in all languages of the world and are among the most ancient and widespread ([Kurazhova, I. Ibid](#)). We also agree with Bagana, who notes that the above terms are used interchangeably, synonymously, but their unification is necessary for the future ([Bagana, J., Galiaskarova, V. 2010](#)).

In our work, by zoonym we mean the lexical-semantic version of the word, acting as the generic name of the animal and metaphorical naming in the analysis of vocabulary from the point of view of human characteristics.

The purpose of the undertaken research is to comprehensively study the phraseological units of the Chinese language containing following zoonyms: 狗, 马, 牛, 猪, 羊, 鸡, as well as to establish their substantial diversity and axiological value for native Chinese speakers.

In accordance with the goal, during the study it is supposed to solve the following specific tasks:

1. To consider the theoretical issues of modern linguoculturology and phraseology;
2. To formulate provisions for a selection of phraseological units with a component-zoonym;
3. To consider vocabulary definitions as a component of the linguistic worldview, taking into account the semantic features of the reflection of the metaphorical image of animals in Chinese;
4. To conduct linguocultural and linguocognitive analysis of phraseological units with a component-zoonym and identify their ethnocultural specifics.

The object of this study is Chinese phraseological units, including the following zoonyms: 狗, 马, 牛, 猪, 羊, 鸡.

The subject of the work is the linguocultural and linguocognitive features of phraseological units with components from the above-mentioned group of zoonyms.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological and theoretical basis of the study was the fundamental provisions in the field of linguoculturology, linguistic studies, phraseology, ethnic semantics, and cognitive linguistics.

To describe the internal form of phraseological units (onwards-PU) with zoomorphic components the following methods were used: 1) a descriptive method, the components of which are: a continuous selection of zoomorphic PU, a semantic definition, a classification and linguistic interpretation of the analyzed material; the method of semantic identification, which allows to identify the encoded value with the lexical structure of the language; 3) the method of cognitive interpretation involves the study of the meanings of the secondary nomination, expressed zoomorphic PU; 4) the etymological method is used to identify sources of origin of zoonyms, which are the figurative dominant of the studied PU.

Research material was taken from the personal file of the author containing more than 2,000 language units, which is a purposeful selection of these units with zoomorphic components from following lexicographical and phraseological sources: *Zhonghua chengyu dacidian* (中华成语大辞典) - The Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Idioms and Phraseological Units ([ZCDC, 1992](#)); *Hanyu chengyu dacidian* (汉语成语大辞典) - The Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Phraseological Units ([HCDC, 1995](#)); *Xiandai hanyu dacidian* (现代汉语大词典) - Modern Chinese Dictionary ([XHDC, 2018](#)); *Hanyu dacidian* (汉语大词典) - The Comprehensive Chinese Dictionary ([HDC, 1986-1993](#)); *Shuowen jiezi* (说文解字) – Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters; *Cihai* (辞海) - A large-scale dictionary and encyclopedia of Standard Mandarin Chinese ([CH, 1997](#)).

Linguocultural analysis of Chinese PU with zoomorphic components was carried out in four stages:

1. At the first stage, PU with zoomorphic components was identified and selected from the phraseological collection.

2. In the second stage, the thematic classification of PU was carried out.
3. At the third stage, the etymological analysis of zoomorphic components was carried out;
4. At the fourth stage, the authors defined ways of conceptualization as a secondary reinterpretation of zoomorphic PU components and explored the conceptual metaphor and metonymy in these units.

RESULTS

It was noted above, that national-cultural specificity and qualitative assessment of a human being due to the metaphorical nature of words that are literally animal names ([Bagana, J. 2014](#)). Therefore, zoonyms in phraseological units are culturally marked words, that serve as the figurative basis of phraseological units on which their semantics are built.

In this research, we will consider zoomorphic images involving the so-called 六畜 [liùchù] – “Six domesticated livestock and animal species”, represented by 狗 – a dog, 牛 – a cow, 马 – a horse, 羊 – as heep, 猪 – a pig and 鸡 – a chicken, which for many centuries occupied an important role in both the material and spiritual life of the Chinese people. The importance of *liuchu* for Chinese ethnic culture is also confirmed by ancient Chinese written sources ([Zuozhuan; Huainanzi; Zhouli – Resource documents](#)).

The main goal of our study is to identify the national-cultural features of the functioning of zoonyms, to build a schedule of phraseological productivity of zoonyms in each thematic group and subgroup, as well as to explore their connotative and semantic features. The collected card index of phraseological units is reliable material and a sufficient basis for drawing conclusions about the national-cultural specifics of the functioning of zoonyms in Chinese phraseological units.

A DOG (狗/犬)

There are two characters in the Chinese language indicating “a dog”. These are: 狗 [gǒu] (widely used) and 犬 [quǎn] (a bookish and emotionally neutral word).

Chinese people love dogs and their everyday life has been closely associated with this animal since ancient times ([Yang, D.1999](#)). Therefore, the first Chinese dictionary *Shuowenjiezi* (说文解字) presented this animal in the following way: “Confucius said: the dog barks. Thus, it protects the dwelling of his master” ([SWJZ, 2015](#)).

There existed the Dog State in ancient China, in the area of today’s Gansu Province. The dog there was a totemic animal; it was regarded as the progenitor of the tribe ([Lu, B. 1999, p. 153](#)). Similarly, there are yui people in modern Guangdong Province who regard the dog as their ancestor ([Song, Zh. 2004](#)).

A dog in the Chinese linguistic worldview appears as a symbol of devotion, fidelity and at the same time, it personifies a negative moral character, treachery, and insidiousness, ingratitude and uncleanness (moral and physical).

A positive characteristic, obviously, is connected with the role that was assigned to the dog at the dawn of human history: during hunting, safeguarding the property in dwellings and livestock. Getting food from human hands, dogs faithfully served their masters and forgot about their wildlife based on hunting for food.

Negative features of the dog were most likely associated with the development of human society and changes that occurred in the human worldview, human nature, religion, and relations: 他就是官府的狗 [tā jiù shì guān fǔ de gǒu] – he is a dog of those in power. With the passage of time, however, they became a symbol of treachery, insidiousness, sycophancy: 小李又抢在我前头给领导倒水了,那样子真恶心,像狗一样 [xiǎo lǐ yòu qiǎng zài wǒ qiántou gěi lǐng dǎo dào shuǐ le, nà yàng zi zhēn ěxīn, xiàng gǒu yī yàng] – Xiao Li again beat me and began to pour water to the bosses. It looked so disgusting, he was helpful, like a dog ([XHDC, Ibid](#)).

The image-perceptive characteristics of the dog's zoomorphic code present an associative refinement of its conceptual features. Typically, in order to identify figurative signs of PU with the zoomorphic code, one should consider the compatibility characteristics of these linguistic units. Taking a closer look at the Chinese phraseological data, one can notice certain PU, where the character 狗 [gǒu] characterizes not only figurative but also conceptual and axiological signs of this zoomorphic code.

Thus, the systematization and analysis of vocabulary data demonstrate that the associative sign ‘home defender’ and the associative sign ‘dog/person’ seem to be the most important for native Chinese speakers.

Thus, the dog's image is used to express the following axiological strategies:

1. *Toadying and servility, helpfulness*: 跼狗吠尧 [zhí gǒu fèi yáo] – *The robber's dog barks even at Yao* (Yao was a mythical Chinese emperor). This unit has a figurative meaning: “to serve one’s master servilely”; the same refers to the expression “to vilify diligent people in envy of them”; 狗吠非主 [gǒu fèi fēi zhǔ] – *the dog does not bark at its master*; 打狗看主 [dǎ gǒu kàn zhǔ] – *before you hit the dog, check who its master is*; getting involved in bad people’s affairs, one should not forget about those who can stand behind them; 狗仗人势 [gǒu zhàng rén shì] – *the dog enjoys human protection*. The figurative meaning of this unit: throw aside all restraint under the protection of a strong patron.
2. *Severe life conditions*: 打落水狗 [dǎ luò shuǐ gǒu] – “beating a dog that has fallen into the water”. The figurative meaning of this unit: “to kill someone”; cf. *to hit a man when he’s down* (a Russian saying); 狗恶酒酸 [gǒu è jiǔ suān] – *dogs are evil and wine is sour*. The figurative meaning of this unit: bad living conditions; 狗急跳墙 [gǒu jí tiào qiáng] – *in extreme conditions even a dog attacks the wall*. The figurative meaning of this unit: one can do just anything in despair and will not stop; desperation makes a person risk; cf. *backed into a corner* (a Russian saying).
3. *Low quality*: 挂羊头卖狗肉 [guà yáng tóu mài gǒu ròu] – *there is a ram’s head on the sign and canine meat in the shop*. The figurative meaning of this unit: deal with swindling, selling one instead of another; false ads; 狗尾续貂 [gǒu wěi xù diāo] – *to hook a dog’s tail to the sable*. The figurative meaning of this unit: to attach something bad or unsuccessful to something good; to promote unworthy people; 狗屁文章 [gǒu pì wén zhāng] – *this article is like a smelly air from the dog’s intestine* (in a literal sense).
4. *Negative moral character*: 狗彘不食 [gǒu zhì bù shí] – *even dogs and pigs do not eat its meat*; scum; scoundrel; 狗血喷头 [gǒu xuè pēn tóu] – *to sprinkle one’s head with canine blood*; cf. *swear like a fishwife*; *slush somebody* (a Russian saying); 贼头狗脑 [zéi tóu gǒu nǎo] – *thieving like a dog*; 狗眼看人低 [gǒu yǎn kàn rén dī] – *look at people through the dog’s eyes*. The figurative meaning of this unit: to determine one’s attitude to people depending on their power and wealth (that is, to be guided by one’s own benefit).
5. *Perfidy and insidiousness*: 人面狗心 [rén miàn gǒu xīn] – *a man’s face and a dog’s heart*. The figurative meaning of this unit: a human formed beast; 引狗入寨 [yǐn gǒu rù zhài] – *allow the dog to enter the village*. The figurative meaning of this unit: to let a bad person in the house.
6. *Ungratefulness*: 狗咬吕洞宾，不识好人心 [gǒu yǎo lǚ dòngbīn, bùshí hǎorén xīn] – *the dog has bitten Liu Dongbin - not to understand good intentions of the other person* (there is a parable about Liu Dongbin who was a good man and saved the dog, but was bitten by it).
7. *Aggressiveness*: 那群疯狗又发疯了 [nà qún fēng gǒu yòu fā fēng le] – *疯狗噬人* [jī gǒu shì rén] – *biting like a rabid dog*; 瘦狗无不噬 [jì gǒu wú bù shì] – *all rabid dogs bite*; 狂犬吠日 [kuáng quǎn fèi rì] – *a rabid dog barks at the sun*. The figurative meaning of this unit: a bad person encroaches on the sacred, despite his low social status.
8. *Bad habits*: 狗改不了吃屎 [gǒu gǎi bù liǎo chī shǐ] – *a dog will not stop eating excrement* (in a literal sense). The figurative meaning of this unit: it is difficult to improve a bad person; cf. *the wolf may lose his teeth, but never his nature* (a Russian saying).
9. *Relaxed sexual attitudes*: 老母狗 [lǎo mǔ gǒu] – *old bitch*. The figurative meaning of this unit: a woman of easy virtue; 狗崽子 [gǒu zǎi zi] – *a young dog*.

A COW (牛)

Ancient Chinese domesticated cattle 7000 years ago, at the time of the Early Neolithic (Liu, Sh. 2002). It is also known that the ancient Chinese pictographic script (jiaguwen, c. 18th–12th century BC) was recorded on turtle carapaces and ox scapulae (He J. et al, 1995).

Shennong was a deity in Chinese religion, a mythical sage ruler of prehistoric China, the patron of agriculture and medicine with a human face and a bull’s head (Zhong, J. 1997).

Conceptual analysis of PU with the component 牛 [niú] (a cow) revealed a number of figurative characteristics

currently being actualized in the Chinese linguistic worldview. The Chinese linguistic consciousness refers to the image of a cow to indicate the following concepts:

1. *Inexperience*: 初生牛犊不怕虎 [chū shēng niú dú bú pà hǔ] – *a newborn cub is not afraid of tigers*. The figurative meaning of this unit: young people who do irrational and audacious things without thinking about their consequences.
2. *Stupidity*: 对牛弹琴 [duì niú tán qín] – *to play the zither before the bull*; cf. cast pearls before swine (a Russian saying).
3. *Slowness*: 对牛弹琴 [duì niú tán qín] – *to play the zither before the bull*; cf. cast pearls before swine (a Russian saying).
4. *Strength, force and might*: 九牛二虎之力 [jiǔ niú èr hǔ zhī lì] – *the strength of nine bulls and two tigers*. The figurative meaning of this unit: superhuman force, great efforts; incredible work; 扛鼎扑牛 [káng dǐng pū niú] – *raise the tripod and pull apart the locked oxen/bulls by hands*.
5. *Stubbornness*: 九牛拉不转 [jiǔ niú lā bù zhuàn] – *even nine bulls cannot budge him*. The figurative meaning of this unit: you will never convince a stubborn person; cf. he ran head against a wall (a Russian saying).
6. *Sacrifice and reckless parental love*: 老牛舐犊 [lǎo niú shì dú] – *an old cow licks her calf*. The figurative meaning of this unit: spoil one's children; 当牛马 [dāng niú mǎ] – *to be like a horse and a cow* (in a literal sense) – to be in the position of working cattle; be slaves; to sacrifice for the benefit of others.
7. *Difficult living conditions*: 牛马生活 [niú mǎ shēng huó] – *a horse's life, a cow's life*. The figurative meaning of this unit: bondage, servitude.
8. *Low quality*: 牛头不对马嘴 [niú tóu bù duì mǎ zuǐ] – *a cow's head does not fit a horse's mouth*. The figurative meaning of this unit: at inappropriate times; cf. *a horse of another color; neither here nor there* (a Russian saying).

The image of a cow / an ox is often used for grotesque: 吹牛皮 [chuī niú pí] – *to blow up a cow's skin*. Figurative meaning of this unit: to show off; cf. *swathe through* (a Russian saying); 牛刀割鸡 [niú dāo gē jī] – *cut a chicken with a knife for the slaughter of bulls*; cf. *crack a nut with a steam hammer* (a Russian saying); 鲸吸牛饮 [jīng xī niú yǐn] – *inhale like a whale, sip like a cow*; 多如牛毛 [duō rú niú máo] – *as much as hair in a bull*. The figurative meaning of this unit: the great multitude, innumerable.

A HORSE (马)

The Chinese people attached great importance to horses from ancient times. It is believed that the Chinese tamed horses about 5 thousand years ago in the northeast of China. Since then, horses have been most helpful in creating the Chinese civilization and subsequent fight for its survival. The colossal significance of horses in the life of Chinese people is confirmed by a number of facts. Thus, from the reign of the Shang dynasty (c.1600-1046 BCE) horses were buried together with their deceased masters, so that they could help them even after death. During the reign of the Western Zhou dynasty (1045 BCE - 771 BCE), military power was measured solely by the number of military chariots and directly depended on the number of horses harnessed to these chariots.

马神 [mǎ shén] – the deity of a horse was among supreme deities in ancient China. The ancient Chinese regularly offered sacrifices to this deity (Yu, Sh, 2013).

There is a number of PU in modern Chinese associated with 马 [mǎ] (a horse). Conceptual analysis of these units shows the following characteristics:

1. *High speed, swiftness*: 一言既出, 驷马难追 [yī yán jì chū, sì mǎ nán zhuī] – *one can't catch a spoken word even with four horses at hand*. The figurative meaning of this unit: not to deviate from one's words, keep one's word; cf. *words are not birds - out you let them, and back you never get them!* (a Russian saying); 窗间过马 [chuāng jiān

guò mǎ] – a horse passed between the windows. Figurative meaning of this unit: time passes rapidly; 快马加鞭 [kuài mǎ jiā biān] – to steer a trotter using the whip. The figurative meaning of this unit: at full speed, accelerated pace, quickly, swiftly.

2. *Force and might*: 兵强马壮 [bīng qiáng mǎ zhuàng] – strong warriors and mighty horses. The figurative meaning of this unit: strong army; great military power; 短衣匹马 [duǎn yī pǐ mǎ] – sit on a quick horse dressed in war clothes.
3. *Diligence, success, and prosperity*: 汗马功劳 [hàn mǎ gōng láo] – merits received by galloping a horse into the foam. Figurative meaning of this unit: combat merit; great achievements; 宝马香车 [bǎo mǎ xiāng chē] – a beautiful cart and a nice horse; luxury for show off; 马到成功 [mǎ dào chéng gōng] – I wish you speedy success!; 鲜车健马 [xiān chē jiàn mǎ] – a beautiful cart and a healthy horse. The figurative meaning of this unit: wealth; 好马不吃回头草 [hǎo mǎ bù chī huí tóu cǎo] – a good horse does not eat grass, which is left behind. The figurative meaning of this unit: prosperous, aspiring people do not look back; they keep going forward.
4. *Wealth and luxury*: 宝马香车 [bǎo mǎ xiāng chē] – a beautiful cart and a nice horse; luxury for show off.
5. *Exhaustion, fatigue, tiredness (caused by overwork or old age)*: 马瘦毛长 [mǎ shòu máo cháng] – a thin horse has long hair (in a literal sense). The figurative meaning of this unit: aspirations of a poor person are limited; a poor man cannot think about pride; 鞍马劳倦 [ān mǎ láo juàn] – a saddled horse is tired. The figurative meaning of this unit: tiredness; 车殆马烦 [chē dài mǎ fán] – carts hardly keep going and the horses are exhausted. The figurative meaning of this unit: get tired of the difficulties of traveling; be worn out while traveling.
6. *Tirelessness*: 马不停蹄 [mǎ bù tíng tí] – like a horse that gallops without stopping. The figurative meaning of this unit: without a break, tirelessly, without fatigue.
7. *Fussiness*: 马捉老鼠 [mǎ zhuō lǎo shǔ] – a horse that catches mice – to futz around.
8. *Capriciousness*: 害群之马 [hài qún zhī mǎ] – a horse that spoils the whole herd.

In addition, horse images are used to indicate the following: *expression of negative human qualities*: 拍马屁 [pāi mǎ pì] – slam the croup of a horse - to fawn, “to lick somebody's boots”; 马屁精 [mǎ pì jīng] – a person who slams the croup of a horse. Figurative meaning of this unit: flatterer, sycophant; 马上看花 [mǎ shàng kàn huā] – to ride a horse and looking at flowers - doing business carelessly; doing something improperly; 露马脚 [lòu mǎ jiǎo] – horse hooves were exposed - be betrayed a slip; divulge a secret; give oneself away around.

A SHEEP/HE SHEEP (羊)

Of all the "six domestic animals", a sheep / he-sheep was extremely important for the ancient Chinese. For example, the ancient Chinese dictionary "Shuowen Jiezi" contains the following observation: “羊在六畜主给膳” – “a sheep is the main food among other domestic animals” (He, J. et al. *Ibid*). Chinese characters containing the grapheme 羊 usually have positive meaning: 美 – beauty, beautiful; 养 – feed; 善 – kindness, kind; 祥 – a happy sign; 洋 – outlandish, rich, abundant, etc.

Paremiological system of the Chinese language has many examples where sheep images are generally presented in a positive sense. For example: 要想吃肉先养羊; 要想吃饭先种田 – If you want to eat meat - get a sheep, if you want to eat – have a garden; 懒羊总觉得自己身上的毛太重 – a lazy sheep always believes that it has heavy wool; 养上一群羊, 不怕有灾荒 – if you have a flock of sheep, do not worry that you will be hungry; 不要看公羊叫得厉害, 要看他过河的本领 – do not reckon on the loud sheep bleat, shepherd them when they cross the river.

Sheep images are used in Chinese PU to standardize certain qualities inherent in human beings. As a rule, it actualizes the following meanings:

1. *Harmlessness, passivity, patience*: 肉袒牵羊 [ròu tǎn qiān yáng] – “uncover the shoulder and lead a sheep” – surrender to the

mercy of the winner; *Simplicity, compliance.*

2. *Innocence, softness, tenderness:* 素丝羔羊 [sù sī gāo yáng] – “like unpainted silk, like a sheep” – about an honest official;
3. *Sacrifice (scarification):* 代罪羔羊 [dài zuì gāo yáng] – sacrifice; cf. *a sacrificial goat (a Russian saying)*, 虎荡羊群 [hǔ dàng yáng qún] – “The tiger broke into a herd of sheep” – do whatever you want using force.
4. *Cowardice:* 羊质虎皮 [yáng zhì hǔ pí] – “Lamb in a tiger's skin” – about a cowardly person who outwardly seems menacing;
5. *Stupidity:* 哑羊僧 [yǎ yáng sēng] – “A monk, looking like a dumb sheep” – a stupid person.
6. *Substitution:* 挂羊头卖狗肉 [guà yáng tóu mài gǒu ròu] – “there is a ram's head on the sign and canine meat in the shop” – selling one instead of another; false ads; 羊毛出在羊身上 [yáng máo chū zài yáng shēn shàng] – “sheep's wool is taken from a sheep” – a discount or a gift is already included in the bill; 驱羊战狼 [qū yáng zhàn láng] – “to beat a wolf with a sheep” – use the weak to beat the strong.
6. *The transience of time:* 羊腩熟 [yáng jiǎ shú] – “while a scrag end is cooked” (the night has already passed) – about the imperceptibly current time – about time that unfolds inconspicuously.

A PIG/BOAR (猪)

It is noteworthy that the character 家 [jiā] (a family) consists of two graphemes – “a roof” – 宀 and “a pig” – 豕. The Chinese tantalizing inscriptions Jiaguwen recorded on turtle carapaces and ox scapulae (14th - 11th centuries BCE) depict a house in the form of a fence and a pot-bellied pig within this fence (Yu, Sh. 2013). This means the key role of pigs in the life of ancient Chinese people: pigs were a source of food and served as vehicles. In the same way, pigskin was used to make clothes. Therefore, in the eyes of the ancient Chinese, pigs symbolized fertility and well-being. Pig images are represented in the paremiological system of the Chinese language as follows: 猪是家中宝，致富离不了 [zhū shì jiā zhōng bǎo, zhì fù lì bù liǎo] – *Pigs mean wealth; breed pigs if you want to get rich*; 养猪栽桐茶，十年大发家 [yǎng zhū zāi tóng chá, shí nián dà fā jiā] – *plant tea, breed a pig and you will get rich within a decade*; 猪为家中宝，粪是地里金 [zhū wéi jiā zhōng bǎo, fèn shì dì lǐ jīn] – *A pig is a real treasure in the house, its manure is gold*; 有油擦在车轴上，有钱用在养猪上。 [yǒu yóu cā zài chēzhóu shàng, yǒu qián yòng zài yǎng zhū shàng] – *Use oil to lubricate the axle of your cart, and use money to keep pigs*; 有儿读书，有地养猪 [yǒu er dú shū, yǒu de yǎng zhū] – *if you have a son - let him get education, if you have land - keep a pig.*

Nevertheless, pig images in Chinese PU (as a rule) express moral and corporal uncleanness and impure motives. Obviously, this is determined by people's perception of a pig as an animal, which is not very clean and eats garbage.

Thus, pigs in Chinese PU represent the following characteristics:

1. *Meanness and cunning:* 猪卑狗险 [zhū bēi gǒu xiǎn] – “mean as a pig, cunning as a dog”. The figurative meaning of this unit: a mean and cunning person; 猪狗不如 [zhū gǒu bù rú] – “worse than a dog and a pig” – worse than ever, bastard.
2. *Low intelligence:* 猪头三 [zhū tóu sān] – “pig head”. The figurative meaning of this unit: idiot, fool; 猪头猪脑 [zhū tóu zhū nǎo] – pig head, pig brain.
3. *Untidiness and dirtiness:* 猪婆子 [zhū pó zi] – an untidy woman.
4. *Bad company:* 猪朋狗友 [zhū péng gǒu yǒu] – “be friends with a pig and a dog”; 牧猪奴戏 [mù zhū nú xì] – “swineherd”. The figurative meaning of this unit: gamblers.
5. *Greed and lasciviousness:* 猪八戒 [zhū bā jiè] – Zhu Bajie, a major character of the novel *Journey to the West*, the embodiment of greed and lasciviousness.

A CHICKEN/COCK (鸡)

In most traditions, a cock is associated with deities of the morning dawn and the sun, (heavenly fire). As a rule, a cock announces the beginning of the day (getting up early in the Russian language means getting up with cocks, as

well as in French - *se lever au chant du coq*).

In the ancient Chinese cultural tradition, the image of 鸡 (a chicken/cock) acts as a symbol of fertility and vitality (生殖力和生命力的象征), protector spirit and thaumaturgic power (保护神和神力的象征), a symbol of sun and sunlight (光明和太阳神的象征), a symbol of well-being (吉祥的象征) (Tang, M. 2006).

In ancient China, the post of an official who shouted loudly at dawn before the sacrifice was called 鸡人 jī rén - "cock/chicken-man". The analysis of relevant linguistic material demonstrates that the symbolic image of a chicken/cock in the Chinese worldview contributes to the coding of the following meanings:

1. *Sun, dawn, early time*: 鸡鸣而起 [jī míng ér qǐ] – "rise at cock-crow"; *Fame, supremacy*: 金鸡独立 [jīn jī dú lì] – "Stand like a cock standing on one leg" – be above other people, be distinguished, surpass.
2. *Good or bad news*: 金鸡 [jīn jī] – "golden cock" - a symbol of amnesty; 金鸡消息 [jīn jī xiāo xī] – "news from the golden cock" – decree of amnesty, decree of pardon; 雄鸡夜鸣 [xióng jī yè míng] – "cockcrow at night" – bad news; news about war.
3. *Fight, battle, call for battle*: 像公鸡般好斗 [xiàng gōng jī bān hào dòu] "pugnacious like a cock".
4. *Pride, arrogance*: 鸡烂嘴巴硬 [jī làn zuǐ bā yìng] – "The chicken is digested, but the mouth is firm" – not to admit one's mistakes; 公鸡在其粪堆上称雄 [gōng jī zài qí fèn duī shàng chēng xióng] – a cock on its dung heap is considered a hero.
5. *A woman/man of loose morals*: 做鸡 [zuò jī] – engage in prostitution; 这条街晚上鸡很多 [zhè tiáo jiē wǎn shàng jī hěn duō] – there are a lot of prostitutes on this street in the evening.
6. *Stinginess*: 铁公鸡 [tiě gōng jī] – "an iron cock" – a very stingy man; 你太鸡! [Nǐ tài jī le] – What an old screw you are!
7. *Old age, infirmity, powerlessness*: 鸡肤 [jī fū] / 鸡皮 [jī pí] – "chicken skin" – wrinkled skin in humans; 鹤发鸡皮 [hè fà jī pí] – "chicken skin and crane (white) hair – an older adult; 手无缚鸡之力 [shǒu wú fù jī zhī lì] – "There is no power to tie even a chicken" – a weak and powerless person.
8. *Unworthy, insignificant, insignificant*: 鸡头鱼刺 [jī tóu yú cì] – "chicken head and fish bones" – a weak and insignificant person or a minor matter; 鸡豚之息 [jī tún zhī xī] – "Breath of a chicken and a pig" – low profit (cf. *as scarce as hen's teeth*).
9. *Sacrifice and self-sacrifice*: 杀鸡儆猴 [shā jī jǐng hóu] – "kill the chicken in order to warn the monkey" – punish someone for edification, 杀鸡取卵 [shā jī qǔ luǎn] – "to kill a chicken in order to get an egg" – sacrificing important things for the sake of momentary gain; 嫁鸡逐鸡 [jià jī zhú jī] – "marry a cock – obey the cock" – to put up with a woman's burden.

Chinese phraseological units reflect a number of examples where chicken/cock images are presented in parallel with dog images: 鸡鸣狗盗 [jī míng gǒu dào] – "he sings like a cock but steals like a dog" - a clever trick, a subtle fraud; 鸡犬升天 [jī quǎn shēng tiān] – "cocks and dogs ascend to heaven" – get promoted, get profitable work; 鸡犬不宁 [jī quǎn bù níng] – "there is no peace for chickens and dogs" – to live in eternal anxiety; 鸡犬不惊 [jī quǎn bù jīng] – "even chickens and dogs are not frightened" - silence and calmness, peacetime; 鸡犬不留 [jī quǎn bù liú] – "not a single chicken or a dog" (figurative meaning of this unit: to destroy all living things, not to leave anyone alive); 鸡飞蛋打 [jī fēi dàn dǎ] – "the chicken has flown away and the eggs have broken" - to be left with nothing; cf. end up with nothing (A Russian saying); 陶犬瓦鸡 [táo quǎn wǎ jī] – "a clay dog and a tile cock" - about something useless (because a dog made of clay does not bark, and a cock made of tile does not crow in the morning).

In folk sayings, the image of a chicken/cock takes the lead among other bird species. This may be determined by the

significance of this image for the traditional Chinese culture. For example, in a five-membered cosmological model of the world, the chicken/cock corresponds to the southern spatial zone, it is related to the summer period (compared to other time zones), of five colors it is associated with red color, of the five primary elements - with fire. Thus, a chicken/cock is a solar symbol in Chinese culture ([Reshetneva, U. 2006](#)).

DISCUSSION

M.L. Kovshova believes that the ratio of phraseological words-components and cultural codes is "the key link in cultural interpretation", because "it is this procedure that determines to decode of cultural meanings of phraseological units that serve as interpreters of phraseological sign, reconstruct the cultural connotation of phraseology, shape its role as a culture sign" ([Kovshova, M. 2013](#)).

This research was focused on a zoomorphic code. This code is understood as "the totality of culture-related stereotypes about properties, characteristics or behavioral features of animals that act as a source of human comprehension of the world and contain functionally meaningful cultural aspects, in addition to their natural properties" ([Krasnykh, A. 2001](#)).

The animal world for many ancient cultures is a symbolic paradigm and a kind of symbolic code of the universe. "Representations of the real abilities of animals in combination with their use in classifications, which represent a way of self-cognition and learning the surrounding nature, create the opportunity for ... the mythological personification of man in nature, for emphasizing one's own unity ..." ([Toporov, V. 1982](#)).

In this study, the authors focus on animal images, primarily because "China almost takes the lead in the world as regards the number of animal species" ([Ganshin, G., Ushakov, I. 2004](#)). In addition, the importance of zoomorphic for traditional Chinese culture is considered as well. This is confirmed by the following facts: 1) Starting with the cosmological model of the world, much attention has been paid to the "five beings" - patrons of different parts of the world: the qilin, the dragon, the phoenix, the white tiger, and the divine turtle; 2) The Chinese chronology and calendar (which also include images of animals) are associated with the natural philosophy ([Reshetneva, U. Ibid](#)); 3) Zoomorphic symbolism is a universal and for fine arts and crafts ([Malyavin, V. 2000](#)); 4) Various dishes of traditional Chinese cuisine have unique names, which go back to animal images: 蚂蚁上树 [mǎ yǐ shàng shù] – "ants climb a tree", a Beijing dish of spicy ground beef sauce poured over deep-fried tofu skin; 猫耳朵馄饨 [māo ěr duǒ hún tún] – "Cat ears ravioli", 驴打滚 [lǘ dǎ gǔn] – "The donkey rolled on the ground", soft layered sweet roll; 贵妃鸡 [Guì fēi jī] – "Royal Chicken", 孙悟空乱棍打死猪八戒 [Sūn wù kōng luàn gùn dǎ sǐ zhū bā jiè] – "Sun Wukong (monkey) scored to death Jubatse (pig),

fried pork with bean sprouts ([Daulet, F. 2018a](#)). Traditional Chinese costumes are associated with images of animals and their symbols; birds also served as rank marks for Chinese civil officials, and images of predatory animals were signs of differences between military officials ([Daulet, F. 2018b](#));

The abundance and diversity of China's fauna combined with the significance of animal images in the spiritual and material culture of the ancient Chinese predetermined abundance of animal species in zoomorphic images. Active use of zoomorphic images by ancient Chinese people can also be associated with "the dominance of the cattle-breeding and agricultural production" ([Adygeic proverbs and sayings, 1997](#)).

Thus, the analyzed linguistic material clearly demonstrates that the transition of an image to a symbol gives it semantic depth and perspective ([Bakhtin, M. 1986](#)). Consequently, it can be argued that a symbol is an image "taken in the aspect of its sign and that it is a sign endowed with an organic and inexhaustible multivalued character" ([Averintsev, S. 1971](#)).

N.D. Arutyunova points out that the image serves as the development basis for the symbol and the sign" ([Arutyunova, N. 2007](#)).

An analysis of the results of this study confirms that the main way to identify the national-cultural specificity of phraseological units is to interpret and evaluate the images underlying them. It is the national-cultural marking of phraseological units that allows them to be included in the fund of language-specific elements of an ethnic group. Despite the fact that in the scientific literature there are a lot of works devoted to the study of phraseological units, interest in the questions that arise in the process of studying such a complex and multidimensional phenomenon not only does not wane but intensifies, since in the modern world of the "global village" the problem of conservation cultural diversity and national identity as relevant as ever.

Thus, it can be argued that phraseological units are of particular value in the study of the national-cultural characteristics of any linguistic culture. According to the generally accepted opinion, it is in phraseologisms that the historical experience of the people, ideas about life, culture, work, animal and plant life are captured: they are one of the most striking components that create a linguistic picture of the peoples of the world.

Language verbalizes the national worldview, stores it and broadcasts it not only for future generations but also for speakers of other languages. Therefore, it is so important in theoretical studies of languages to consider the relationship between language and culture, since the correct interpretation of linguistic phenomena is possible only with a scientific analysis of the linguistic features of culture.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained during the study allow us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The value-semantic aspect of people's mentality presented a set of systematized knowledge and concepts related to the environment and the world that were viewed through the prism of their social and emotional experience.
2. In Chinese, there is a significant number of zoometaphors inherent exclusively in the Chinese language consciousness. This is determined by the exceptional extralinguistic factors, such as rich fauna and household features, as well as by the originally developed cultural and linguistic traditions. An analysis of phraseological units with a zoonym component according to the structural-semantic principle showed that the most active zoonyms are those that are part of the liuchu (六畜) group, which is due to their proximity and active participation in human life. Phraseological units with the components 狗, 牛, 猪, 马, 羊, 鸡 affect all aspects of human life: spiritual, material, social, negative, positive, moral, practical, everyday, cultural and etc.
3. The researches aimed at "deciphering" the zoomorphic culture code "inside" the language makes it possible to identify certain standards and stereotypes of linguistic consciousness and the value priorities of the Chinese people.
4. The national specifics of phraseology most often retain the phraseological image, which serves as a convincing representation, a kind of "picture", against which people perceive the integral generalized and figurative meaning of PU. The phraseological image very often relies on realities known only to certain people, representatives of a certain nation. The national specificity of these phraseological images quite clearly reflects the way of life and character of certain people, their history, spiritual life, peculiar traditions, customs and ethnic life through specially selected lexical components of certain PU.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

The practical significance of the work is due to the possibility of using its results in the process of teaching the Chinese language, university lecture courses and seminars on cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, translation theory and practice, ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and regional studies. The results of the study can also be used in the preparation of textbooks, teaching aids on Chinese language, dictionaries, as well as on comparative and typological studies of two or more languages.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHES

The authors of the article believe that it seems promising to further study the zoomorphic code and ways of its verbalization in both related and genetically distant languages, in various types of discourse. In addition, the authors of this research consider it very promising and relevant that the comparative study and identification of ethnocultural symbols, images, stereotypes, and standards be carried out using linguistic materials of different languages with zoomorphic components. Further development of linguocultural comments is necessary to overcome not only language barriers but also the barrier of a fundamentally different mentality in the framework of linguoculturology and cognitive linguistics. It is also important to consider the paremiological embodiment of the zoomorphic culture code and its connection with anatomical, natural, phytomorphic, somatic, anthropomorphic, and theomorphic and other cultural codes. One should also note the important practical significance of studying translation aspects related to the linguistic manifestation of the zoomorphic cultural code.

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