

*How can a stranger know what a squirrel eats?*  
**Possibilities for examination  
of North Saami proverbs with zoonyms**

**Ivett KELEMEN**

University of Debrecen  
kelemenivett5@gmail.com

*"The proverb lives, so it endures, it renews,  
and connects the past and the present,  
pointing the way forward, while reminding us  
where we came from"<sup>1</sup>  
Harald Gaski – Aage Solbakk*

**Introduction**

The timelessness of the motto characterises a language's collection of proverbs and sayings. The observations and experiences of our ancestors, the typical phrases of literary works, or even the pithy sayings of ordinary people are passed down from generation to generation and become a people's linguistic and folklore treasures.

Animals have always played a significant role in people's lives. The close relationship between man and animals has been the basis of many sayings and proverbs. From the earliest times, people have observed the behaviour, habits and individual or group characteristics of both wild and domesticated animals. Man has compared himself with the animal world around him to describe his feelings, appearance, characteristics, behaviour, traits, needs, etc. It is therefore no accident that many animal names appear in the phrases of different languages.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sátnevájas eallá, dan dihtii, dat bissu – ođasmuvvá ja čatná oktii ovdeža ja dáláža ču-juhettiin ovddosgvlui seammás go muittuha midjiide gos mii boahtit (Gaski – Solbakk 2003)



These animals are the semantic centre of sayings and proverbs, as they carry the metaphorical meaning (Yusupova – Kuzmina 2017: 17). Animals of the same species and their characteristic habits appear in the same form in the culture and language of many nations (e.g. the image of the *cowardly rabbit* or the *cunning fox*). Thus there may be a lot of overlap in the animal-derived phrases of some languages. However, as proverbs and sayings are closely linked to the culture, history, customs and traditions of a given people, they may also contain realities that make the phraseological unit 'unique' and have no equivalent in other languages.

In my study, I will present the proverbs containing animal names in the North Saami. I am looking for answers to the question of which animal-name-based proverbs/sayings reflect the nature-oriented, wandering way of life, which ones may be adopted (i.e. which ones are also found in other languages in more or less similar forms), and which ones are unique to the (North) Saami people.

### 1. Researching of the North Saami proverbs

The proverbs (North Saami *sátnevájas*)<sup>2</sup> of the Saami language were first written down in the course of the collection of Saami folklore texts, and later they were included in the grammatical descriptions of the Numic language as authentic texts and linguistic examples. The first transcribers of the Sumerian customs were Christian missionary priests (Högström 1747; Fellman 1844, 1906; Grundström 1946–54; Læstadius 1959).

The Norwegian linguist Jens Andreas Friis's 1856 *Lappiske Sprogprøver: en Samling af lappiske Eventyr, Ordsprog og Gaader: med Ordbog* [Lappish Language Studies: A collection of folk tales, proverbs and riddles with a dictionary] by Josef Calasanz Poestion, followed by *Lappländische Märchen, Volksagen, Räthsel und Sprichwörter* [Lappish fairy tales, folk tales, riddles and proverbs] (1886) and then by Just Knud Qvigstad in his collection *Lappische Sprichtwörter und Rätsel* [Lappish proverbs and riddles] (1922).

Nowadays we only rarely come across writings on the subject of Saami phraseology.

Anna Idström and Hans Morottaja are the editors of the fifth edition of the Inari Saami idiom dictionary (*Inarinsaamen idiomisanakirja*), available since

---

<sup>2</sup> In the compounds of SaaN *sátne|vájas* 'proverb, saying', the verbs *sátne* 'word' and *vájas* 'to wander' (not available in modern dictionaries, probably related to *vájuldit* 'to wander') can be found. (The other form used is *sátnelásku*, although this is a clear Finnish (*sananlasku*) adoption.)

its publication in 2006. However, the volume, which contains 600 idioms, only publishes material that is specific to the Inari Saami language, i.e. it cannot be used for contrastive analysis. Anna Idström has also published several smaller studies on phraseology (Idström 2008; 2010; 2012).

Their aforementioned fear of being forgotten inspired the North Saami language collection *Jodi lea buoret go oru: sámi sátnevádjasiid vejolaš mearkkašupmi otne* [Better to wander than to stay: possible meanings of Saami proverbs today], published by Harald Gaski and Aage Solbakk in 2003. The volume was published in Norwegian in 2004, and then in English in 2006 by Gaski. Gaski has thus exported the linguistic material, which is closely linked to the Saami folklore, from Scandinavia and has made it effectively internationally accessible by translating it into other languages: German (2015), Dutch (2018), Spanish (2020), French (2021) and Japanese (2016).

The most recent selection is Máret Sára's *Sámi sátnjeváđjasat* [Saami proverbs], published in 2009, which works with a much larger collection than the Gaski's collection of 140 items, presenting 1750 Saami proverbs with explanations.

There is an extremely rich corpus of descriptions of phrases in different languages and from various aspects. The study of phraseological units in Finno-Ugric languages is a popular topic from different points of view and is also a rich field for linguistic theses. The phrasemes of Saami (North Saami), on the other hand, have been less included in the international stream of paremiology<sup>3</sup>. All work on this subject has been preserved, primarily for the benefit of enthusiastic readers and researchers interested in the Saami culture of the mother countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland) and the Saami themselves.

Apart from the collections presented here, I am not aware of any specific linguistic studies on North Saami phraseology. My study aims to partially fill this gap in the light of the material available to me.

## **2. About the corpus**

For my study, I used the above-mentioned 2003 North Saami volume (= GS) by Harald Gaski and Aage Solbakk, as well as the English version (= G) of this volume published in 2006 by Gaski. This was necessary because the translated volumes only present the original North Saami phrases in the

---

<sup>3</sup> Paremiology: a discipline dealing with proverbs (< Greek *paroimion* 'proverb').

language (i.e. in translation),<sup>4</sup> so both books are necessary for their study. Unfortunately, it is obvious that the primary purpose of these works is educational and not scientific since the explanations often do not explain the phraseological meaning of the phrase or the context in which it may occur, but only provide information about its origin.

### **3. North Saami proverbs containing animal names**

The proverbs containing animal names are undoubtedly universal and well-known because of their dynamic use in speech. Such proverbs have a distinctive cultural component. According to the Saami worldview, man and nature were an organic unity. For the Saami, nature was home, a way of life, past and future.

The close relationship of the Saami with animals is demonstrated by the fact that, according to the traditional Saami worldview, people could become animals (and not only shamans, but also ordinary people), and many animals and their behaviour were particularly watched as they were seen as 'omens', which were omens of the future (most often death was predicted) (Kulonen et al. 2005: 12). Thus, the visual background of the proverbs of the North Saami can be found in the traditional way of life, in the world of beliefs, in nature and its phenomena.

### **4. Lexical-semantic analysis**

The 18 North Saami phrasemes contain nine animal names. These can be divided into two major groups: 1. domestic animals: *beana* 'dog', *bussá* 'cat', *heasta* 'horse', *spiidni* 'pig'; 2. wild animals, including 2.1. mammals: *boazu* 'reindeer', *návdi* 'wolf', *njállá* 'fox', *oarri* 'squirrel'; 2.2. birds: *garjá* 'crow', *gáranas* 'raven', *giehka* 'cuckoo', *loddi* 'bird', *njukča* 'swan'.

---

<sup>4</sup> Since I do not have any data on the definition of a proverb from the North Saami, and since the international literature does not have a single, uniform definition, I will refrain from presenting a broad literature on possible definitions and from giving a precise definition of the Saami proverbs in this paper. Although the Gaski consistently uses the term proverb, it is clear that some of the examples listed are 'out of the ordinary'. Therefore, in my writing, I will refer to the example given as a phraseme.

## 1. Domestic animals

### 1.1. *beana* 'dog'

<i>Ii</i>	<i>boares</i>	<i>beana</i>	<i>ciela</i>	<i>duššiid.</i>
NegSg3	old	dog	bark-ConNeg	in vain

Literal meaning: 'The old dog does not bark in vain' (GS 91, G 88).  
 Phraseological meaning: it is worth listening to the opinions and advice of the old, experienced ones. It is also a well-known international proverb, but its structure varies from one country to another. The meaning of 'not barking in vain/accidental' in the phraseme in the Saami can be observed, e.g. in the following Eng. *An old dog barks not in vain*; It. *Vecchio cane non abbaia invano* 'The old dog barks not in vain'; Fr. *Jamais bon chien n'abbaye à faute*. In several languages, the form 'to look out of the window when the dog barks' appears: Hun. *Jó a vén eb ugatására kitekinteni* 'It's good to look out at the old dog barking' (O. Nagy 2019: 160), *Kétfelé tekints, mikor az agg komondor ugat* 'Look both ways when the old komondor<sup>5</sup> barks' (Paczolay 2015: 41–42), Germ. *Wenn der alte Hund bellt, muss man hinaussehen* 'When the old dog barks, look out (the window)'; Sw. *När en gammal hund skäller, ska man titta ut genom fönstret* 'When an old dog barks, look out the window'; Norw. *Ein skal sjå ut når gammel-hunden gjøyr* 'Look out when the old dog barks' (Forgács 2005: 164–165).

<i>Beatnaga</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>galgga</i>	<i>gulgii</i>	<i>geahččat.</i>
dog-GenAcc	NegSg3	should-ConNeg	hair-III	look-Inf

Literal meaning: 'You should not look at the hair/fur of the dog' (GS 92).  
 Phraseological meaning: you should not judge a person by his appearance and assume bad things about him. The Norwegian equivalent of the Saami phraseme can be given in the following form: *Man skal ikke skue hunden på hårene* 'Don't judge a dog by its hair'; Sw. *Man ska inte döma hunden efter håren* 'You should not judge a dog by its hair'; Fi. *Ei ole koiraa karvoihin katsominen* 'You must not look at the dog's fur.' The same phraseological meaning is realised in German, but now in reference to the hair of human: *Man soll das Kind nicht nach dem Haar beurteilen* 'One should not judge a child by her/his hair'; while in English the appearance of an object is the initial imagery: *Don't judge a book by its cover*. The North Saami structure is thus similar to the phrasal structures of the mother tongues (especially

<sup>5</sup> Hungarian sheepdog.

Finnish) and is probably modelled on them. Interestingly, the element of the North Saami imagery (dog, fur) is also found in Hungarian phrasemes, but they carry the opposite meaning: people judge each other by their appearance, eg. *Szőréről ismerni az ebet* [Knowing a dog by its fur], *Ebet szőréről, madarat tolláról, embert barátjáról ismerni* [To know a dog by its fur, a bird by its feathers, a man by his friend] 'people are judged by the way they look, the way they look says a lot about their personality' (Forgács 2005: 164–165); *Könnyen megismerni ebet a szőréről* [It is easy to know a dog by its fur] 'you find out quickly, who the bad person is' (O. Nagy 2019: 160).

<i>Beatnaga</i>	<i>njunis</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>bistte</i>	<i>vuodja.</i>
dog-GenAcc	nose-Loc	NegSg3	keep-ConNeg	butter

Literal meaning: 'Butter does not stay on the dog's muzzle' (GS 109; G 107). Phraseological meaning: to run out quickly. According to Gaski's description, the Norwegian *Gå som varmt hvetebrød* 'It goes like hot wheat bread' is the equivalent of the phraseme in Saami. The structure 'runs out/goes like bread/cake/sugar etc.', which is also found in Norwegian, gives the same phraseological meaning in the few other languages I have examined: Eng. *Sell like hotcakes*; Port. *vender como/que nem água* (to sell like water); Est. *Lähevad (kaubaks) nagu soojad saiad* (they go (for sale) like warm rolls); Sp. *Se vende como pan caliente* (hot bread); Germ. *weggehen/sich verkaufen wie warme Semmeln or geschnitten Brot* (sell like hot cakes or sliced bread); Hun. *úgy visznek/vesznek/kapkodnak vmit, mint a cukrot* (they take/buy/grab something like sugar) (Forgács 2013: 52).

## 1.2. *bussá* 'cat'

<i>Maiddá</i>	<i>bussá</i>	<i>dáhttu</i>	<i>guoli</i>	<i>borrat</i>
also	cat	want-Sg3Prs	fish-GenAcc	eat-Inf
<i>muhto</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>dáhto</i>	<i>gaccaidis</i>	<i>njuoskadit.</i>
but	NegSg3	want-Sg3Prs	claw-PlGenAcc PxSg3	get wet-Inf

Literal meaning: 'The cat also wants to eat fish, but does not want to get his claws wet' (GS 91; G 88). Phraseological meaning: some people want to enjoy the pleasures of life without having to take the risk of getting them (O. Nagy 2019: 454). Although it can be found in some collections,<sup>6</sup> the form

<sup>6</sup> *A macska is szereti a halat, de kerüli a vizet* 'The cat also likes fish, but avoids water'. See Paczolay 2015: 123–124, O. Nagy 2019: 454.

presented here is less known in Hungary today, but it is a very popular proverb internationally, with equivalents in many languages: Eng. *The cat would eat fish, but would not wet her feet*; Germ. *Die Katze frisst gern Fische, sie will aber nicht ins Wasser*; Czech *Ráda kočka ryby jí, ale do vody se jí nechce* 'The cat likes to eat fish, but doesn't want to go in the water'; Fr. *Le chat aime le poisson, mais n'aime pas à mouiller les pattes*; It. *La gatta vorrebbe mangiar pesci, ma non pescare* 'Cat likes fish but doesn't like to get its paws wet'; Fi. *Söisi kissakin kaloja, vaan ei kastaisi kynsiään* 'The cat would eat fish but not get its claws wet'; Norw. *Katten vil gjerne fisken eta, men han vil ikkje labben veta* 'The cat would like to eat the fish, but doesn't want its paws to get wet'; Sw. *Katten hade väl gärna fisken, men vill inte vata sina fötter* 'The cat really wants the fish, but doesn't want to get its feet wet'.

Comparing these with the North Saami phraseme, we can see that the Finnish version is the closest to the Saami form, in both languages the cat does not want to wet its claws (SaaN *gazza* ~ Fi. *kynsi*), while in the other languages, it wants to wet its feet/paws.

### 1.3. *heasta* 'horse'

<i>Heasta</i>	<i>baikkii</i>	<i>čáhcaí.</i>
horse	shit-Sg3Prt	water-III

Literal meaning: 'There the horse shat into the water' (GS 117; G 115).  
Phraseological meaning: a phrase used to describe a person who praises himself, in English, *self-bragging reeks* best reflects its meaning.

### 1.4. *spiidni* 'pig'

<i>Ovdal</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>spiidni</i>	<i>buske.</i>
befor	when	pig	fart-Sg3Prs

Literal meaning: 'Before the pig farts' (GS 82; G77).  
Phraseological meaning: early in the morning. In the North Saami phraseme, the activity of the natural bodily process of an animal with an essentially negative connotation (e.g. *drunken pig*, *lazy pig*) in the morning, which is initiated in the morning, gives the meaning back in vulgar form. The phraseological meaning takes a similar form in Finnish (*sianpierua* 'before the pigfarting'), but the morning activity of other animals can also appear in phrases with similar meanings: Norw. *opp for fuglene fiser* 'before the birds' fart', Eng. *sparrow's fart* 'sparrowfart' (= early). The same phraseological meaning is given

in Hungarian by *mielőtt a kakas kukorékol* 'before the rooster crows'.<sup>7</sup> In the early morning meaning, other languages use a similar rooster crowing: cf. Germ. *ehe der Hahn kräht* 'before the rooster crows'; Sp. *al canto del gallo* 'at crowing, at dawn' (Forgács 2005: 121–122).

## 2. Wild animals

### 2.1. Mammals

#### 2.1.1. *boazu* 'reindeer'

<i>Oarjin</i>	<i>lea</i>	<i>boazu</i>	<i>boahtán,</i>	<i>ja</i>
west-LocPl	be-Sg3Prs	reindeer	come-PrfPrc	and
<i>oarjjás</i>	<i>galgá</i>	<i>dat</i>	<i>luohpat.</i>	
west-Loc	have to-Sg3Prs	PronDet	go away-Inf	

Its literal meaning is: 'From the West the reindeer has come, and into the West it has to go away.' (GS 138; G 135). Its phraseological meaning is not clear. All we know from Gaski's description is that, according to old myths, the reindeer was a gift from the Sun to the Saami. And the west is such a mysterious area that determines the survival of the reindeer herding Saami.

#### 2.1.2. *návdi* 'wolf'

<i>Návdi</i>	<i>ruohtta</i>	<i>ovtta</i>	<i>veaiggis</i>	<i>ovcci</i>	<i>vuomi</i>	<i>rastá.</i>
wolf	canter-Sg3Prs	one-GenAcc	dusk-Loc	nine-GenAcc	valley-GenAcc	through

Literal meaning: 'The wolf canters through nine valleys at one dusk' (GS 87; G 83–84). Inferred phraseological meaning: You have to work hard for the result.<sup>8</sup> The wolf as a symbol represents courage and strength, while the nine valleys refer to the challenging path. This saying can remind you that if someone is determined, he/she can succeed even in the most difficult circumstances and be able to overcome difficulties. So it is about perseverance, overcoming difficulties and achieving goals. Gaski writes about the circumstances of the development of the proverb: when Jesus visited Saamiland, he

<sup>7</sup> The early morning crowing of roosters also caught the attention of scientists. It was found that roosters have a very special internal clock, with which they always know exactly when it will be light, regardless of the light conditions, which were deliberately manipulated during the experiments.

<sup>8</sup> I couldn't find any clear data on usage.



should have been carried across a flooded river. The wolf was chosen for this task, but the wolf said he couldn't do it because he had to go look for food. As punishment, since the wolf did not help Jesus, from that day on he must cross nine valleys before finding food. Since the bear helped Jesus across the river without any objection, his reward is to sleep in his den all winter. According to the saying, the Saami respect the wolf for its swift movement, and perhaps even regret the punishment. – A special Saami phraseme of mythological origin.

### 2.1.3. *njállá* 'fox'

<i>Dál</i>	<i>gal</i>	<i>veaját</i>	<i>njálaid</i>	<i>guossái</i>	<i>mannat.</i>
now	sure	feel-Sg2Prs	fox-PlGenAcc	guest-III	go-Inf

Literal meaning: 'It looks like you are going to visit the (mountain) foxes'. (GS 85; G 81). Phraseological meaning: according to Gaski, an euphemistic or indirect way of expressing that one should not go up into the mountains because of bad weather or other imminent danger; if you do, you risk becoming food for the fox.

### 2.1.4. *oarri* 'squirrel'

<i>Mas</i>	<i>amas</i>	<i>diehtá</i>	<i>maid</i>	<i>oarri</i>	<i>borrá.</i>
what-Loc	stranger	know-Sg3Pres	what-Acc	squirrel	eat-Sg3Prs

Its literal meaning is: 'How can a stranger know what a squirrel eats?' (GS 13; G 16). Phraseological meaning: how can we form an opinion about the thoughts and actions of others, if we don't even know them? The Saami also use this phraseme to reflect when non-Saami (e.g. Norwegians) want to say what is good/useful for the Saami.

## 2.2. Birds

### 2.2.1. *garjá* 'crow'

<i>Don</i>	<i>leat</i>	<i>dego</i>	<i>garjá,</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>árrat</i>	<i>badjin.</i>
you	be-Sg2Prs	as	crow	so	early	up

Literal meaning: 'You are up as early as a crow' (GS 80; G 76). Phraseological meaning: someone will have an advantage if he does something immediately or before others do. Those who rise early can find good opportunities, while those who are lazy can miss them.

In other languages, the pictorial background is similarly realized in the form of a bird, e.g. Eng. *The early bird gets the worm*; Czech *Ramní ptáče dál doskáče* 'The early bird gets further jump'. The Hungarian equivalent is *Ki korán kel, aranyat lel* 'Who rises early finds gold.'

### 2.2.2. *giehka* 'cuckoo'

<i>Don</i>	<i>leat</i>	<i>oalle</i>	<i>giega</i>	<i>čotta.</i>
you	be-Sg2Prs	really	cuckoo-GenAcc	throat

Literal meaning: 'You are a real cuckoo-throat' (GS 82; G 78). Phraseological meaning: It is used for a person who likes to overindulge.

### 2.2.3. *loddi* 'bird'

<i>Juohkke</i>	<i>loddi</i>	<i>soajáidisguin</i>	<i>girdá.</i>
every	bird	wing-PlComPxSg3	fly-Sg3Prs

Literal meaning: 'Each bird flies with its (own) wings' (GS 119; G 117). Phraseological meaning: Don't chase goals that we can't achieve (because we don't have the talent). This seems to go against the nowadays fashionable principle 'everything is possible, you just have to want it, you have to try everything'.

<i>Juohkke</i>	<i>loddi</i>	<i>gielainis</i>	<i>lávlu.</i>
every	bird	language-ComPxSg3	sing-Sg3Prs

Literal meaning: 'Each bird sings in its own language' (GS 120; G 118). Phraseological meaning: on the one hand, it can be used in the same situations as the saying presented above (everyone should choose a goal according to their own knowledge and talent). But according to the descriptions, nowadays, e.g. a phrase also appears in political life, which is used when a politician repeats the same speeches and arguments. The phraseme can also be found in Norw. *Hver fugl synger med sitt nebb*; Sw. *Var fågel sjunger efter sin egen näbb*, whose phraseological meaning: 'everyone sings in their own way (how they can), and everyone does things in their own way'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://ordbokene.no/nob/bm,nn/enhver%20fugl%20synger%20med%20sitt%20nebb>

<i>Girdi</i>	<i>loddi</i>	<i>juoidá</i>	<i>gávdná,</i>	<i>muhto</i>	<i>dat</i>
fly-PrsPrs	bird	something-Acc	find-Sg3Prs	but	who
<i>guhte</i>	<i>orru,</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>gávnná</i>	<i>maidige.</i>	
which	stay-Sg3Prs	NegSg3	find-ConNeg	nothing	

Literal meaning: 'The flying bird finds something, but the one that dwells there finds nothing' (GS 157). Phraseological meaning: it is easier for outsiders or those who look at things from a distance (like a bird in flight) to appreciate or discover something than for those who live there. Locals, because they experience their environment every day, may be used to it and thus not notice hidden values or opportunities.

#### 2.2.4. *njukča* 'swan'; *gáranas* 'raven'

<i>Eai</i>	<i>heive</i>	<i>njuvvččat,</i>	<i>ja</i>
NegPl3	be appropriate-ConNeg	swan-NomPl	and
<i>gáranasat</i>	<i>seaivut</i>	<i>ovtta</i>	<i>sadjái.</i>
raven-NomPl	settles down-Inf	one-GenAcc	place-III

Literal meaning: 'Swans and ravens<sup>10</sup> do not settle down on the same place' (GS 71; G 68). Phraseological meaning: Based on Gaski's description, the phraseme can be interpreted in several ways. Its origin is probably that the Saami observed that swans and ravens do not land in the same place. At the same time, the phraseme may be an ironic commentary on the Norwegian saying *folk og finn*<sup>11</sup> 'folk and Saami' that there is a difference between „the Norwegian people and the Saami” (the alliteration is lost in the English translation, and so is the negative connotation of *finn*).

According to Gaski as the Saami in the phraseme liken themselves to the graceful swan, the North Norwegian is wont to cry like a raven that they are more refined than the Saami.

For the Saami encounters with strangers and other ethnic groups have been filled with a negative connotation (see oppression, exploitation, etc.) (Tamás 2017: 107), which also appears at the language level. In Saami (as in other languages) there are words in which the bearer of the negative phenomenon is the name of another ethnic group or foreign element. For example the *ruošša* 'Russian' in reindeer names *ruoššajielva* 'dirty-coloured reindeer'. Another

<sup>10</sup> Gaski translated the word as *crow* when giving the meaning.

<sup>11</sup> Former exonym for Saami as well as Lapp.

example is the goat – a domestic animal of the Swedes and Norwegians, but looked down upon by the Saami –, which also occurs with a negative connotation: anyone who can not yoik, 'sings like a goat' (Tamás 2017: 120–121).

### 2.2.5. *skirri* 'magpie'

<i>De</i>	<i>dál</i>	<i>gal</i>	<i>leat</i>	<i>skiremoni</i>	<i>borran.</i>
so	now	sure	be-Sg2Prs	magppie egg-GenAcc	eat-PrfPrs

Literal meaning: 'It's sure you have eaten a magpie's egg' (GS 146; G 142). Phraseological meaning: You were made fun of, you were beaten. According to Saami tradition, the magpie is easily fooled.

## 3. Connotation of animals appearing in phrasemes

### 3.1. Dog

The dog is man's oldest domesticated animal, so it is no coincidence that the dog appears in the largest number of sayings and proverbs related to animals. In addition to its typically positive connotations (loyalty, faithfulness, vigilance, obedience), its negative qualities can also come to the fore (flattery, biting, belligerence) (Forgács 2005: 160–172). The dog element can also be observed in different connotations in the phrases I have examined. The old dog (*boares beana*) possesses positive, significant knowledge acquired with age and is worthy of attention. The judgment of the dog is neutral, as long as it is about its hair. The third proverb, which contains a dog element, on the other hand, already refers to the dog's gluttony, since the dog licks off the butter on its nose with lightning speed.

### 3.2. Cat

Among the domestic animals, the cat appears quite often in phrases containing the zoonym, and the overwhelming majority of them have negative symbolism: they are not straightforward, they bring bad luck, and they are a constant „accessory” of witches. The proverb examined here refers to the caution of the cat (Forgács 2005: 246).

### 3.3. Horse

The horse is typically a symbol of positive qualities such as strength, work ethic, tenacity, endurance or speed. In well-known proverbs, the horse's appearance (big head, high back, four legs, etc.) also plays an important role (Forgács 2005: 216–230). That is why the image of a Saami horse defecating

is particularly strange. The horse does its work anytime and anywhere, even in the water, which becomes cloudy and not clean, just like self-praise. In this form, the horse carries a slightly negative meaning.

### **3.4. Pig**

Few animals in Europe have such negative symbolism as the pig. It is primarily a symbol of impurity, gluttony, laziness and ignorance (Forgács 2005: 30). In the Saami phraseme I have examined, it is also not surprising that the abdominal processes of the symbol of impurity indicate the early morning time.

### **3.5. Reindeer**

Although we do not know the figurative meaning of the phrase containing reindeer, reindeer carries a positive connotation in Saami culture. They were revered as sacred animals by the Saami and featured in many rituals and celebrations related to fertility, renewal and respect for nature. In Saami culture, reindeer can also form the border of the spiritual world, as they are believed to be able to connect people and spirits, as well as the earthly and transcendent worlds.

### **3.6. Wolf**

Although the wolf has a rather negative connotation (robbery, savagery) (Forgács 2015: 65), here one can feel much more compassion and respect, which his vigilance, caution, and physical strength elicited from people. In the expression published here, regret and pity for the wolf can be caused by the knowledge that during the winter period, while the wild animals hibernate, the wolf finds it very difficult to get food.

### **3.7. Fox**

Its most characteristic feature is its cunning, so in European culture, the insidiously cunning and deceitful fox has a mostly negative connotation. In the phrase presented above, the nature of the wild animal dominates, with which one must be careful because it can attack a person.

### **3.8. Squirrel**

Squirrel occurs less often in phrases containing animal names. It has a fundamentally positive connotation: in addition to its cute appearance, it is also a rodent that diligently collects and prepares for winter. (For its role in the Saami phraseme, see below.)

### 3.9. Birds

Birds typically play a positive role in symbolism. In addition to the general symbols of freedom and carelessness, each species has its own symbolism and unique perception. The dark color and carrion-eating nature of the raven, the crow, the magpie that tends to steal, and the cuckoo that invades the nests of other birds clearly carry a negative connotation. In the presented Saami phrases, birds are (are) judged negatively and positively according to the flying-standing opposition. Here, too, the crow and the cuckoo are known for their negative side, although the cuckoo is probably included in the phraseme here because of its hurtful voice, as a judgment on speaking too much. The magpie is also seen in a negative way, but not on the basis of its usual, characteristic feature, but rather the observation of the Saami that the magpie is easy to deceive appears in the phrase. The graceful, snow-white swan is a positive symbol in Saami phraseme, and it is interesting that the crow also appears as a positive symbol of early awakening.

## 4. Grouping of phrasemes containing North Saami zoonyms according to origin

### 4.1. Proverbs based on observation

These include phrases that could have been created by observing the typical activities and properties of animals, e.g. *Ii boares beana ciela duššiid* 'The old dog does not bark in vain'; *De dál gal leat skiremoni borran* 'It's sure you have eaten a magpie's egg'; *Don leat dego garjá, nu árrat badjin* 'You're up as early as a crow.'

### 4.2. Phrases of religious/mythological origin

*Oarjin lea boazu boahtán, ja oarjjás galgá dat luohpat* 'From the West the reindeer has come, and into the West it has to go away'; *Návdi ruohtá ovttá veaiggis ovcci vuomi rastá* 'The wolf canters through nine valleys at one dusk.'

## 5. Groups of phrasemes based on their meaning

### 5.1. General truths, life wisdom, warnings, moral teaching

*Juohkke loddi soajáidiguin girdá* 'Each bird flies with its own wings'; *Girdi loddi juoidá gávdná, muhto dat guhte orru, ii gávnná maidige* 'A bird that flies finds something, but a bird that stays finds nothing'; *Máiddá bussá dáhttu guoli borrat muhto ii dáhto gaccaidis njuoskadit* 'The cat also wants

to eat fish, but does not want to get his claws wet' *Beatnaga ii galgga gulgii geahččat* 'You should not look at the hair/fur of the dog'; *Dál gal veaját njálaid guossái mannat* 'It looks like you are going to visit the (mountain) foxes'.

### 5.2. Social relations

The Saami–non-Saami opposition can be observed in phrases containing several animal names, which is also closely related to the connotations of animals: animals symbolizing the Saami typically have positive connotations, while animals representing non-Saami carry a negative connotation. As Gaski put it: the phrases show how the Saami viewed the colonizing Scandinavians, pl. *Mas amas diehtá maid oarri borra* 'How can a stranger know what a squirrel eats?'; *Eai heive njuvvččat, ja gáranasat seaivut ovttá sadjái* 'Swans and ravens do not settle down on the same place.'

### Summary

In my study, I wanted to draw attention to the hitherto unexploited area of Saami phrasemes for future linguistic studies. With the processing of the more modest material at my disposal, I have only flashed a few possible research directions and approaches, which, supplemented by additional (contrastive, cognitive, historical, sociolinguistic, etc.) studies, can serve as an interesting addition for professionals dealing with Saami languages.

### Literature

- BÁRDOSI, VILMOS 2018: Itt van a kutya elásva! Állatneves magyar szólások, közmondások szótára. Tinta Könyvkiadó, Budapest.
- CALASANZ, JOSEF 1886: Poestion Lappländische Märchen, Volkssagen, Räthsel und Sprichwörter. Druck und Verlag von Carl Berold's Sohn, Wien.
- FELLMAN, JACOB 1844: Anteckningar under min vistelse i lappmarken: första och andra året. Widerholm, Borgå.
- FELLMAN, JACOB 1906: Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken 1–4. Finska Litteratursällskapets Tryckeri, Helsingfors.
- FORGÁCS, TAMÁS 2005: „Állati” szólások és közmondások. A felfuvalkodott békától a szomszéd tehenéig. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.
- FORGÁCS, TAMÁS 2012: Bevezetés a frazeológiába. A szólás- és közmondáskutatás alapjai. Tinta Könyvkiadó, Budapest.

- FORGÁCS, TAMÁS 2013: Magyar szólások és közmondások szótára. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.
- FRIIS, JENS ANDREAS 1856: Lappiske Sprogprøver: en Samling af lappiske Eventyr, Ordsprog og Gaader: med Ordbog. Cappelen, Christiania.
- GASKI, HARALD (ed.) 2006: Time is a ship that never casts anchor. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok. = G
- GASKI, HARALD – SOLBAKK AAGE (doaim.) 2003: Jodi lea buoret go oru. Sámi sátnevádjasiid vejolaš mearkkšupmi otne. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok. = GS
- GASKI, HARALD 2015: Die Zeit ist ein Schiff, das nie vor Anker geht. Saamische Sprichwörter. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok.
- GASKI, HARALD 2018: Tijd is een schip dat nooit he tanker wert. Sami spreekwoorden. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok.
- GASKI, HARALD 2020: Mejor en marcha que quieto. Rafranes y proverbios samis. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok.
- GASKI, HARALD 2021: Mieux vaut passer que demeruer. Proverbes et dictons sámis. ČálliidLágádus, Karasjok.
- GRUNDSTRÖM, HARALD 1946–54: Lulelapsk ordbok I–IV. C1: Landsmåls- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala. Lundequist bokhandeln, Uppsala.
- HÖGSTRÖM, PEHR 1747: Beskrifning öfwer de til Sweriges Krona lydande Lapmarker: innehollande kort underrättelse så wäl om Landets belägenhet och beskaffenhet i gemen, Som Des Inwånares tilstånd och Husholdning, deras seder, maner och lefnadsart, samt laster och widskepelse, m.m. Stockholm.
- HUUSKONEN, MARJUT 2011: Näkökulmia saamelaiseen folkloreen. In: Seurujärvi-Kari, Irja – Halinen, Petri – Pulkkinen, Risto (toim.), Saamentutkimus tänään. SKS, Helsinki. 271–297.
- IDSTRÖM, ANNA 2008: Challenges of documenting the idioms of an endangered language: The case of Inari Saami. In: Korhonen, Jarmo – Mieder, Wolfgang – Piirainen, Elisabeth – Piñel, Rosa (Hrsg.), Phraseologie. global – areal – regional. Akten der Konferenz EUROPHRAS 2008 vom 13.–16. 8. 2008. in Helsinki. Narr Verlag, Langewiesen. 221–227.
- IDSTRÖM, ANNA 2010: What Inari Saami idioms reveal about the time concept of the indigenous people of Inari. Yearbook of Phraseology 1/1: 159–178.
- IDSTRÖM, ANNA – PIIRAINEN, ELISABETH 2012: The wolf – an evil and ever-hungry beast or a nasty thief? Conventional Inari Saami metaphors and widespread idioms in contrast. Metaphor and the Social World 2/1: 87–113.
- IDSTRÖM, ANNA – MOROTTAJA, HANS 2006: Inarinsaamen idiomisanakirja. Sämitigge, Inari.
- KOSKIMIES, AUGUST V. – ITKONEN, TOIVO I. 2018: Inari Sámi Folklore. Stories from Aanaar. The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin.



- KRIKMANN, ARVO 2001: Proverbs on animal identity: typological memoirs. *Folklore* 17: 7–84. <http://haldjas.folklore.ee/folklore>
- KULONEN, ULLA-MAIJA – SEURUJÄRVI-KARI, IRJA – PULKKINEN, RISTO 2005: *The Saami. A cultural encyclopedia.* Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura 925. Helsinki.
- LAESTADIUS, L. L. 1959: *Fragmenter i lappska mytologien.* Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm.
- O. NAGY, GÁBOR 2019: *Magyar szólások és közmondások.* Akkord, Budapest.
- PACZOLAY, GYULA 2015: *Többnyelvű szólás- és közmondásgyűjtemény. 340 közmondás magyar, angol, észt, francia, német, olasz, lengyel, portugál, spanyol és latin nyelven.* Tinta Könyvkiadó. Budapest.
- QVIGSTAD, JUST KNUD 1922: *Lappische Sprichtwörter und Rätsel.* A. W. Brøgers Boktrykkeri, Kristiania.
- SÁRÁ, MÁRET 2009: *Sámi sátnevádjasat.* Davvi Girji, Karasjok.
- TAMÁS ILDIKÓ 2017: *Egy folklórműfaj megítélése és formálódása a találkozások kontextusaiban.* In: Szász Antónia – Povedák István – Régi Tamás (szerk.), *The Anthropology of Encounters. A találkozások antropológiája.* Magyar Kulturális Antropológiai Társaság, Budapest. 106–124.
- YUSUPOVA, LIYA GAYAZOVNA – KUZMINA, OLGA DMITRIEVNA 2017: *Quantitative analysis of proverbs and sayings with wild animal component in the Russian, German and Tatar languages.* *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods* 7. Issue 9/1: 17–29. [https://kpfu.ru/staff\\_files/F2129493707/modern\\_journal\\_of\\_language\\_teaching\\_methods\\_.pdf#page=17](https://kpfu.ru/staff_files/F2129493707/modern_journal_of_language_teaching_methods_.pdf#page=17)

#### Internet sources

- [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Swedish\\_proverbs#V](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Swedish_proverbs#V)
- [https://no.wikiquote.org/wiki/Norske\\_ordtak](https://no.wikiquote.org/wiki/Norske_ordtak)
- <https://terebess.hu/english/proverbeng.html>
- <https://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:141498/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- <https://ordbokene.no/nob/bm,nn/enhver%20fugl%20synger%20med%20sitt%20nebb>

***Honnan tudja egy idegen, mit eszik a mókus?***  
**Az állatneveket tartalmazó északi számi közmondások**  
**vizsgálati lehetőségei**

Tanulmányomban az északi számi állatneveket tartalmazó frazémák bemutatására vállalkoztam. A vizsgálat korpuszát a *Jodi lea buoret go oru: sámí sátnevádjasiid vejolaš mearkkašupmi otne* [Jobb vándorolni, mint maradni: számi közmondások lehetséges jelentése manapság] című, Harald Gaski és Aage Solbakk által 2003-ban közreadott frazéma-gyűjtemény biztosította. Az itt található, kb. 140 frazéma közül 18 tartalmazott valamilyen állatnevet, melyek a következők: *beana* 'kutya', *boazu* 'rénszarvas', *bussá* 'macska', *gáranas* 'holló', *garjá* 'varjú', *giehka* 'kakukk', *heasta* 'ló', *loddi* 'madár', *návdi* 'farkas', *njálla* 'róka', *njukča* 'hattyú', *oarri* 'mókus', *spiidni* 'disznó'.

A frazémák szerkezetének, frazeológiai jelentéseinek vizsgálata révén arra kerestem a választ, hogy a természetközeli, vándorló életforma tetten érhető-e ezekben a kifejezésekben, illetve eredetüket tekintve melyek lehetnek átvételek, és melyek azok, melyek csakis az (északi) számi nép sajátjai.

*Kulcsszavak: északi számi, közmondások, állatnevek*

*Keywords: North Saami, proverbs, zoonyms*

KELEMEN IVETT