SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH THE COMPONENT *SHEEP* IN THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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The term **phrasal unit**, which is used herein, encompasses both phrasemes in the strict sense of the word, as well as stable comparisons, i.e. any stable multi-word expression with constant syntactic structure and overall meaning differing in variable degrees from the sum of the meaning of the individual components (for details see German-Bulgarian Phrasal Dictionary 2012:5).

This **broader** understanding of phraseological units is imposed by the material which in different languages is diverse and not always easily comparable. In some languages a certain phraseological unit is registered only as a phrasal combination (in the narrow sense of the word a phraseme), in others – the same phraseological unit is an element of sustainable comparison, in the third – an epigram, etc., compare Bulg., *shugava ovtsa* or *vŭrtya se kato shugava ovtsa* with Russian *vygonyat' parshivuyu ovtsu (iz stada),* with English *a scabbed sheep will mar a whole flock,* and so on.

The figurative meaning of a phraseological unit reveals its immanent nature. It is connected not only with the particular way of life of every nation, but in most cases it has expressive, emotional character which exposes a specific attitude (positive or negative) to the various elements of life. When the figurative meaning is based on naive views and explanations about the nature of things, it is specified as symbolic.

Here, I will discuss the symbolic meanings of close semantic phrasal units built on expressions with the component *sheep* with its attributes: *black// marked// lost// stray// slaughtered// mangy// scabby,* etc. – all reflecting a common negative feature – the separation of a sheep from the herd and its isolation. The figurative (symbolic) meaning – mythological or religious – to a large extent is **common** to European nations that have similar mythology and Christian religion. This allows comparison between languages in Europe, which relate mainly to the Slavic, Romance and Germanic group, but also languages of another type.

This material was excerpted from 40 sources in Cyrillic and Latin (see the end) for Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian,

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Lusatian, Lithuanian, Latvian, French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, German, English, Greek, Albanian, etc.

These are mostly monolingual, bilingual and phraseological dictionaries in the relevant languages, as well as several special studies on set phrases, stable comparisons, sayings, proverbs and epigrams, containing a collocation of *sheep* with the above mentioned attributes. Here are some typical examples:

I. Black sheep. This is a phraseme with figurative mythological meaning arising from the negative symbolism of the black colour (common to the European continent, unlike some countries in Asia and Africa, where the negative symbolism is associated with the white colour).

In various locations in Bulgaria, there are even prophylactic holidays associated with the name of the black colour: (Баба Черна, Черни вериги, Църен ден, Черняй, Черен празник) Black Granny, Black chains, Black day, Chernyay, Black Holiday (a day or two days after the Day of St. Athanasius), when a black hen is slaughtered as a sacrifice to propitiate black diseases bringing death (for details see Bulgarian mythology. Encyclopedic Dictionary 1994: 313).

The *"Mora"* (from the root *mor* "death") is considered the female hypostasis (analog) of the male black god of the pantheon of the southern Slavs (Bulgarian mythology. Encyclopedic Dictionary 1994: 219). The soul of the sinner is black as sheep's wool; therefore people make a sacrifice with white sheep for appeasement of St. Michael the Tormentor. In heaven, St. Elias has white sheep ('clouds without rain') and black sheep ('hail clouds'). Thus, pagan beliefs overlap with Christian ones.

In Poland, the drowning man becomes a black ram. In Russia, they talk about the suicide as "odranyy baran chertu gotov" and also "Chertu baran davno obodran" (translated: 'Skinned ram is ready for the devil' and 'For the devil, the ram has long been skinned').

The mythological meaning associated with the black sheep exists in Western Europe too. According to Irish legends, (FSSI 2003: 79) priest Damghar's guards consisted of vicious and diabolical creepy black sheep. Three black sheep with iron spikes (thorns) are protagonists in the struggles between the Irish King Cormac and common people from suburban neighborhoods who refused to pay the imposed taxes.

In Bulgarian, according to Phrasal Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language (II) 1975: 504, the phraseme *black sheep* has two meanings: 1. A person, who has provoked general disapproval and therefore all his actions make an impression. Example: *At home I'm the black sheep* and 2. A person with bad behaviour who is different from his relatives or the people from his circle. Example: *In our family we have never had a black sheep and will not have one.* Synonymous to this phraseme with the same two meanings is the phrase *marked sheep.*

Equivalents of the phrasal unit in other European languages: Serbian and Croatian: *Tsrna òvtsa u poròditsu* 'The black sheep of the family'; Slovenian: *Črna ôvca* (together with *Garjava ovca*); *črn̄ kot ovca* contrary to *siv kot ovca* 'white as

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a sheep'. (Similar is the situation in Ukranian); Czech: *Byt černou ovci rodiny*; Slovak: *Čierna ovca* 'an unlucky person, kicked out from the group'; Spanish: *oveja negra*; Italian: *La pecora nera* in the example *Io sono la pecora nera* 'I am a scoundrel'; German: *Das schwarze Schaff (in der Familie) sein* 1.'I am the worst in the family', 2. 'Outsider, I am a failure'; English: *There is a black sheep in every flock* (literally, There is a black sheep in every herd); Greek: *αυτός ειναι το μαυρο πρόβατο* 'He is the black sheep'; Albanian: *Delja e zezë s' bëhet kurrë e bardhë* (literally, A black sheep can never become white) 'A bad person can never become good'.

II. The two phrasal units *I am wandering (roaming) as a sheep* and *Wandering (lost) sheep* have biblical origin. The shepherd (God) is taking care of his herd of sheep (lay brothers), but a sheep is going astray from Christian norms (it is deluded, lost).

а) Semantics of the sustainable comparison 'rove, go like a sheep aimlessly, along the wrong way'. According to Vatov 2002: 272 "the biblical texts use close prototypes with the same meaning": All of us *were wandering like sheep, we turned aside from our way*, and the Lord laid on him the sins of us all (**ѩ҃ко овца ꙁаблѫ́диχомъ**)… "they are wandering like sheep, suffering, because they have no shepherd (**изъıаша сѧ ѩ҃ко овца**)".

б) The semantics of the second phraseme according to Vatov 2002: 272 is connected "with one of the Gospel parables of Jesus ... If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not have 99 and will he not go to the mountains in search of the lost one" (Codex Marianus **и ꙁаблѫ́дитъ єдина отъ нихъ... и шєдъ иштєтъ ꙁаблѫ́ждьшѧѧ**… It reveals God's care for the sinner and Christ's joy of his transformation. Accurate prototypes of the expression are used elsewhere in the New Testament texts: ... "be pleased with me, because I found the lost sheep". Vatov goes even further in time, discovering the prototype even in the Old Testament: "I got deluded like a lost sheep". In the Phrasal Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language (I) the phraseme *deluded sheep* is interpreted as 'a person who does not behave properly, a profligate person'.

Equivalents of phrasal units in other European languages: Serbian and Croatian: *Zalutala//Izgubena//Zabludela ovtsa* 'a person who has turned away from his environment, society, family; someone who is going on the wrong way of life'; Slovenian: *izgubleña ovca//zabludela ovca* 'a person without a goal, without meaning in life'; Russian: *zabludshaya ovtsà; zablỳdna ovtsà;* Ukr. *zablukana vivtsya, zabludela vivtsya;* Czech: *zbloudenà//bludnà//ztracenà ovce*; Slovak: *zatul'ana ovca, stratenà ovca*; Polish: *zbłąkana ovca*; Lithuanian *paklydusi avicè*; French *brebisègarèc*; German: *verirrtes, verlorenes Schaff* (literary); English: *lost sheep*, see example *to lose the sheep for a ha' porth of tar* (saving one lost sheep you lose the whole herd); Albanian: *Delen e vetme (gë ndahet nga tufa e ha ujki)*

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(The lost, wandering sheep is eaten by the wolf) ‘Those who are going away from friends will suffer’; Greek: *απολωλός πρόβατο* ‘deluded sheep’.

III. A sheep sent to the slaughter// slaughtered sheep. According to Vatov 2002: 273 “the expression with meaning ‘without resistance, humble, silent’ has been used too frequently in biblical texts ... which has facilitated its transition into the literary language, e.g. “... Because of You they kill us every day, they think we are sheep doomed to be slaughtered” (Old Bulg. т. 3 ꙗко овца на ꙁаколенье “…like a sheep, he was taken to be slaughtered”. In the Bulgarian folk speeches, regardless of the prerequisite for existence, the expression is found very rarely. More often the idea of slaughter is expressed in another way: *I look like a slaughtered sheep* ‘I look indifferently’.

IV. A sick sheep (mangy ‘scabby’, rotten, staggered, etc.) Exact equivalents in biblical texts have not been registered. Combinations reflect household peculiarities associated with sheep breeding and hence figurative uses regarding the appearance or character of some people compared to sick sheep. Later, they were connected with church life (Serbian). They are found in all European languages: Bulgarian: *Kato shugava ovtsa ot stado (se delya)* ‘Stay aside from others’; *Kato shugava ovtsa (se v"rtya)* ‘Turn around restlessly, nervously’; *Kato v"rtoglava ovtsa (hodya)* ‘Waste my time’; *Kato metilyava ovtsa (se v"rtya)* ‘Toss and turn’; Serbian: *Shugava ovtsa* ‘A big sinner’; *Gỳbava ovtsa* (leprous sheep) ‘A big sinner’ – *Ti si shugava, gubava ovtsa u stadu svete matere tsrkve;* Slovenian: *Garjava ovca* (scabby sheep) ‘Restless person, staying aside from others’, Russian: *Parshivaya ovtsa* ‘Scabby shepp’ – *Parshivaya ovtsa vsë stado portit*; Belorussian – *Parshyvaya avèchka usyu charadỳ psuè;* Czech: *Prašlivá ovce*; Slovak: *Prašivá ovca* ‘Scabby sheep’ – *V každom stáde sa prašivá ovca najde* (There is carrion in every herd) ‘In every family (group), there is a freak’; Lithuanian: *Vienà nususélè avis visą banda výkrečia* ‘In every family (group), there is a freak’; Latvian: *Viena kraupjaina aita visu ganampulku maitā* ‘In every family (group), there is a freak’; French: *Brebis galeuse* (mangy sheep) ‘Unwanted person in a group’; Spanish: *Oveja sarnosa* ‘mangy sheep’; German: *Ein raudiges Schaf steckt die ganze Herde an* (A mangy sheep will make the whole herd scabby); English *A scabbed sheep will mar a whole flock*. Possibly, in English there is a literary combination – *as a sheep among the shearers*. Bulgarian *Gledam kato zaklana ovtsa* ‘Look dumb, stupid’ and Turkish *Koyun can derdinde, kasap yağ derdinde* (literally – The sheep is concerned about its life, the butcher – about the suet) ‘Every person is taking care of himself’ have only folk character and are not related to religious attitude.

V. Like sheep (lambs) among wolves. According to Vatov 2002: 273, “the expression has a figurative meaning ‘unprotected, helpless’. Its prototype was used in the Gospel texts (Luke 10:3), e.g. St. Matthew 10:16 : „*Behold, I send you as*

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sheep among wolves…(Codex Marianus: ѩако овцѧ посрѣдѣ влъкъ)". This completely corresponds to the English *a sheep among wolves* and the Russian *ovechka sredi volkov.*

The relation *sheep – wolves* has a **very wide spectrum** of various phrasemes and cannot always be assigned directly to the biblical texts. It is of everyday nature. However, it is always symbolically related to the associations **defenseless – bloodthirsty**.

In Bulgarian: *V"lk ovtse pase* 'A person saying the impossible'; *Zhenya ovtsata za v"lka* 'Trying to do something impossible'; *Kato v"lka za ovtsete (s"m se zagrizhil)* 'I am not taking care of anyone'; *(Mil mi ye) kato na ovtsete v"lka* 'I don't care about him'; *Kato ovtsa na v"lk (drag)* 'I don't like him'; *Pusnali v"ltsite da pasat ovtsete* 'Inappropriate entrusting the responsibility to an inappropriate person'; *Ovtsa, koyato se deli ot stadoto si, v"ltsite ya izyazhdat*; Serbian and Croatian: *Ko se ovtsom uchini kurjatsi ga pojedu* (Those who pretend to be sheep will be eaten by wolves) 'Someone who is too humble (reconciling) is treated badly'; *Poveriti ovtse vuku* (Entrust the sheep to the wolf) 'To entrust something to someone who will destroy it'; Russian: *V ovechey shkure* (A wolf in a sheep's skin) 'a covert enemy'; Ukrainian: *Khto stayet'sya vivtseyu, togo vovk zzist'* (literally – Those who become sheep are eaten by wolves) 'The weak one loses'; Latvian: *vilks paëdis un kaza dziva (vesela)* (lit. The wolves are full, the sheep are safe); Romanian: *Lup în piele de oaie* (A wolf in a sheep's skin) 'a covert enemy', *Nici lupul sătul, nici oaia cu doi miei* (The wolves are full, the sheep are safe) 'An agreement – both parties are satisfied'; French: *Il ne faut pas donner de brebis à garder du lup* (The wolf should not protect the sheep); German: *Schafe ohne Schäfer sind des Wolfes Geschenk* (sheep without a shepherd are a gift to the wolf), English *Wolf in sheep's clothing*, Albanian: *Nuk fle delja me rykun bashkë* (The sheep does not sleep with the wolf) 'There is no understanding between an honest and a dishonest person'; Greek: *λύκος με προβια απνον* (A wolf in a sheep's skin); *ο λόκος έγινε αρνάκι* (The wolf turned into a lamb) 'A hypocrite'.

In conclusion, I should point out that it is typical of attributive phrasal units with permanent component sheep *(cherna ovtsa, belyazana ovtsa, zabludena ovtsa, izgubena ovtsa, vŭrtoglava ovtsa, shugava//krastava ovtsa//pŭrshiva ovtsa, prokazhena ovtsa, metilyava ovtsa,* etc.), regardless of the fact whether they are used primarily in folk, mythological or religious (mainly Christian) context, to mutually replace each other without changing the essential meaning of the phraseme. They all become close variants of a **generic** sememe 'a sheep which for one reason or another is distinguished from the herd'. After a semantic transfer, the sememe is already associated with the concepts **man** and **society**, and generally means 'a person who is repudiated by society'. This new symbolic meaning unites the above mentioned phrasal units and creates conditions for their synonymous use in all European languages.

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ABSTRACT

The symbolic meanings of close semantic phrasal units built on expressions with the component *sheep* with its attributes: *black// marked// lost// stray// slaughtered// mangy// scabby,* etc. – all reflecting a common negative feature – the separation of a sheep from the herd and its isolation. These are mostly monolingual, bilingual and phraseological dictionaries in the relevant languages, as well as several special studies on set phrases, stable comparisons, sayings, proverbs and epigrams, containing a collocation of *sheep* with the above mentioned attributes. They all become close variants of a **generic** sememe ‘a sheep which for one reason or another is distinguished from the herd’. After a semantic transfer, the sememe is already associated with the concepts **man** and **society**, and generally means ‘a person who is repudiated by society’. This new symbolic meaning unites the above mentioned phrasal units and creates conditions for their synonymous use in all European languages.

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