

# IVA SVOBODOVÁ // JUSTICE IN THE PROVERBS

MASARYK UNIVERSITY

CZECH REPUBLIC

Your Excellency, Ambassador

Distinguished members of the *paremiologic* family.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Slide 1

Allow me, with some of my reflections on proverbs, to open the scientific part of the XIV Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, organized by the International Paremiology Association and I would like to add here, taking place in Portugal, but this year, we can only limit ourselves to ***Here at Zoom.***

Slide 2

After all, it is from here or from there that we saw, through this virtual path, sharing our work, seeing us connected by a special bridge of intersection, by Tavira, the meeting point of our research, of our ideas, which makes us feel more close to each other even though we all turn on the computers on the cork stoppers. But anyway. What the distance drives away, the heart approaches.

Slide 3

My name is Iva Svobodová, and today I come this way to represent, for the third time in a row, my alma mater, the University of Masaryk, the second largest in my country, which is the Czech Republic, which is in the city of Brno (distanced 120 km north of Vienna) and where I work as a professor of Portuguese philology and as a researcher at the Institute of Romance Languages and Literatures. And as such, I would like to talk about part of my research thematically oriented towards the presence of justice in proverbs.

Slide 4

Before that, however, I would also like to leave a big thanks to the Presidency of the Association for the invitation to inaugurate the scientific part of this Colloquium, which I accepted with great pleasure and which means for me not only a great privilege but also a great responsibility. A good start is valid for life 😊.

## Slide 5

To leave the space, too, for others who fill the program of the Colloquium today and on other days, I will now start talking about the central theme of my research, namely the presence of justice in Czech and Portuguese proverbs. Before that, I would like to explain that my central area of study is the relationship between the law (especially criminal) and language. In fact, this year I managed to prepare a monograph (which is in press) about the legislative-linguistic contrastive analysis and I would like to take this opportunity to thank, once again, Professor Rui Soares for accepting the invitation to be the author of the afterword, thus indicating to me one more path through which my future research could be developed.

## Slide 6

In this sense, in addition to Professor Rui Soares, one of the most inspiring works for me was the master's thesis entitled *Legisprertiging of paremiology: the foundation in popular law of legal principles used in jurisprudence and laws* (written and defended by Filipe Vasques do Nascimento Neto Lopes in 2017, at the University of Lisbon) in which the author sought to analyze the occurrence of proverbs in court decisions in Portugal. Your work was very important because it contributed to the completion of the corpus I analyzed.

## Slide 7

Coincidentally, this thematic choice fits into the pandemic situation that we are all experiencing, and that offers us less than ideal living conditions, precisely lacking the component of justice and that in many spheres of daily life. Destiny, the God or and the health or tax authorities fail to speak up in justice, and that is true in practically the whole world. precisely the sayings that can help us to envision it not only with balanced reasoning but also, with a certain dose of humor. And God put the virtues on them.

## Slide 8

Returning to my research, I must say that, at the beginning, it had a broader scientific scope. I thought that I would be able to compare the presence of **Justice** in Portuguese, Czech and English proverbs and thus create a model of a paremiological and monotopic trilingual glossary. However, as it is a very broad theme, I decided to limit myself to just a bilingual study. But the grain fills the crop from grain to grain. And the conversation, if you associate with my idea, dear colleagues, could lead to more complex works that, if we think about it, we could do in common in the future. Well, it is also because I launch this challenge to you that I feel a great privilege to present this idea of mine at the beginning of the Colloquium.

## Slide 9

As for the methodological part of the contrastive analysis. it was necessary, in the first place, to define and create a *corpus*, a step we carried out from the paremiological dictionary *Základní slovník českých přísloví* (Basic dictionary of Czech proverbs) (František Čermák, 2013), from the Dictionary of Proverbs, adages, sayings, maxims, aphorisms and phrases made (Maria Alice Moreira dos Santos, et. al., 2000) and the Dictionary of Current Expressions (Orlando Neves, 2000), inspiring me, also in the already mentioned master's dissertation.

## Slide 10

After a brief survey, it was immediately clear that the lexical and semantic fields that the proverbs about justice cover, go far beyond *justice* itself, with the lexical and semantic components associated with it subject to geographical origin. Furthermore, the situation is complicated for one more reason: obviously, as expected, the said components are present in the proverbs either directly (that is, they are expressed explicitly or lexically) or indirectly (that is, they are components that understood and found in the metalinguistic description).

## Slide 11

So the proverbs *Justice does not sleep.* or *Justice is blind* is a good example of the first group, while *Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth* illustrates the second type of proverbs mentioned, that is, its meaning is determined by the extralinguistic context (historical and cultural one). In the process of creating the corpus to be analyzed, this second grouping was more difficult to profile and this also in terms of time, because it was necessary to go through all the descriptions and accessible paremiological explanations and, seeing ourselves limited by the existing resources, unfortunately, we are unable to guarantee an absolute exploration of the theme, always leaving the windows open to the identification of other alternatives

## Slide 12

After a more detailed analysis, we came to discover that the two languages have common and non-common lexical fields. In the first group, paremiological equivalences are typical, which we could consider **as universals**. Within the unusual themes, on the contrary, we come across proverbs that do not always find their equipollent counterparts in other languages, and that we propose to call as **paremiological idiosyncrasies**.




## Slide 13

Let us start with the common components in which I include those that find their formal and semantic equivalents in more languages. Among others, we can mention that of Caesar and

God (in the context of each having their obligations and rights), Eyes and Teeth (in the context of counterparts of a penalty, punishment or revenge), Judge or Counselor (associates time), unethical means (way to achieve profitable purposes) and lie that is always detected.

#### Slide 14

We found ten equivalent proverbs in both languages, some also identified in English and that could serve as a sample for a multilingual multilingual thematic glossary

			FIN	HG PL RS FR ES...
<b>A César o que é de César e a Deus o que é de Deus.</b>	<b>Dávej/dej císařovi, co je císařovo (a co božího, bohu).</b>	<b>to Caesar the things that are Caesar's</b>		
<b>A mentira tem pernas curtas.</b>  <b>A corda da mentira é muito curta</b>	<b>Lež má krátké/krátký nohy (a daleko neujde).</b>	<b>a lie has short legs but it runs faster than the truth.</b>		
<b>A exceção confirma a regra.</b>	<b>Výjimka potvrzuje pravidlo.</b>	<b>exception that proves the rule</b>		
<b>A justiça não dorme.</b>	<b>Spravedlnost je slepá</b>	<b>Justice is blind</b>		
<b>Olho por olho, dente por dente</b>	<b>Oko za oko. Oko za oko, zub za zub</b>	<b>eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,</b>		
<b>Os fins justificam os meios.</b>	<b>Účel světlí prostředky.</b>	<b>the end justifies the means</b>		
<b>A ocasião faz o ladrão.</b>	<b>Příležitost dělá zloděje.</b>	<b>Opportunity makes the thief.</b>		
<b>Não há melhor juiz que o tempo.</b>	<b>Čas je nejlepší rádce</b>			
<b>Cada qual julga os outros por si.</b>	<b>Podle sebe soudím tebe.</b>			
<b>E estupidez paga impostos</b>	<b>Za blbost se platí.</b>			

#### Slide 15

The proverbs that are equivalent both semantically and formally, for example, are the following ones:

***To Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God, to Owner what belongs to the Owner.***

It is a proverb found in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: Tell us, therefore, what it seems to you; Is it lawful to pay the tribute to Caesar or not? But Jesus, knowing his malice, said: Why do you try me, hypocrites; Show me the tribute coin. They presented him with money: And he said to them, whose image and inscription belong to it; They said to him, Of Caesar. Then he said to them, give therefore to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Here, in both languages, the phrase is often used in its first part, meaning that each thing must be attributed to its rightful owner or author.

#### **Slide 16**

##### ***The exception confirms the rule***

Proverb that is perfectly applicable to legislation, which contains in its provisions a number of exceptions (for example, in the Penal Codes there are two dozen exceptions expressed by "save", which well exemplify the validity of the proverb). What is interesting is that this proverb was adopted from Latin in a very confusing way in the compared languages. Instead of reflecting the meaning of its Latin etyma: ***exceptio regulum probat***, that is, that all rules have an exception, the proverb finds itself uninterpreted and takes on the form: ***The exception confirms the rule***. It should be noted that in English the meaning of the proverb remained as we can see in: ***Every rule has an exception (exception that proves the rule)***. It does not mean that the rule can be violated.

#### **Slide 17**

##### **An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth -**

And we entered the law of talion that consists of the strict reciprocity of the crime and the penalty - called retaliation. The perspective of the talion law is that a person who has injured another person should be penalized to a similar degree, and the person who inflicts such punishment should be the injured party. In milder interpretations, it means that the victim receives the estimated value of the injury in compensation. The intention behind the principle was to "restrict" compensation to the amount of the loss. Talion law is found in many ancient law codes. But it originally appears in the Babylonian code of Hammurabi (dated 1770 BC), which predates Jewish law books by hundreds of years.

#### **Slide 18**

##### **The lie has short legs**

Or their equivalents: ***The rope of the lie is too short. The lie will not get far***. Any mistake is detected sooner or later. It is, therefore, safer to be honest, to tell the truth.

#### **Slide 19**

##### ***The ends justify the means.***

In the Czech language, we intensify the contrast between what is honest, and the opposite value of the verb *sanctify*: ***The ends sanctify the means***. Either in one version or another, this phrase was uttered by the Roman poet Ovid in his work *Heroides* despite being attributed to Machiavellian origin. It means that rulers must be above the dominant ethics to maintain or increase their power. Popularly, the phrase is also used as a justification for the use of dishonest or violent means to obtain a certain purpose, supposedly legitimate.

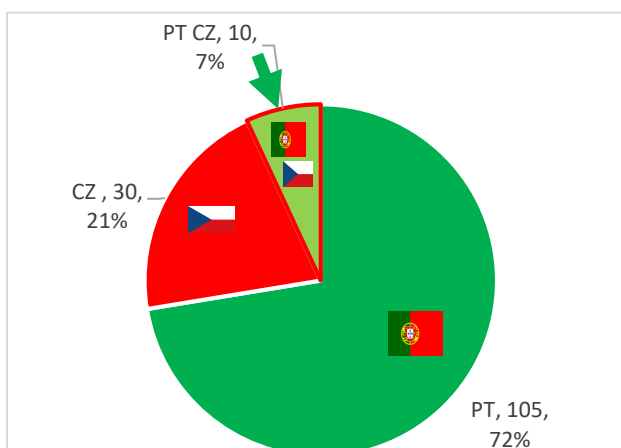
## Slide 20

### ***Justice is blind.***

While, in the versions known in other languages, justice is blind, in Portuguese we also say that ***Justice does not sleep***. True justice must judge everyone equally without distinguishing. Let us just remember that justice is represented by the statue of a woman, blindfolded, holding the scale in one hand and the sword in the other. While the balance weighs the law that belongs to the parties, and the sword is a sign of strength to express that the judicial decision must be fulfilled, the blindfold is the symbol of impartiality. It means that the court must base its decisions without considering, for example, the social status factor of the participants, or the judge's personal relationship with them.

## Slide 21

It is noteworthy that in the analyzed corpus, the universities constitute only a very small percentage. In Portuguese, in the area of Law and Law, we found 105 thematically associated proverbs (72% of the proverbs analyzed), while in the Czech language, after searching the Dictionary of Basic Proverbs, we identified (directly or indirectly) only 30 (21%). We therefore witness a considerable disproportion. We emphasize that the proverbs that belong to the 7% of the analyzed corpus and that belong to the paremiological universities, predictably, will also occur in other languages, as they belong to the world of general knowledge of historical and cultural references.

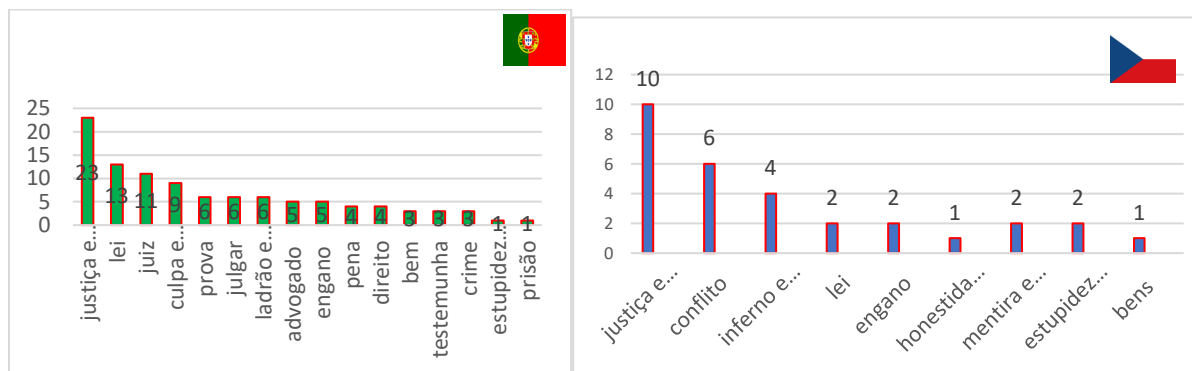


## Slide 22

The numerical difference between the proverbs of justice is reflected, obviously, in the sub-thematic decomposition of the said area in the compared languages. Each, in fact, presents, in addition to a common set, a particular repertoire, and, defined by its paremiological tradition, as shown in these graphs that show, on the one hand, the common components, such as justice and injustice that it presents, on top, the highest number of occurrences in both languages, but, on the other hand, they prove that the extension of the idiosyncratic components is greater, although they are not represented by such a large number of proverbs.

## Slide 23

The lexical and semantic components identified were, therefore, as follows: Lawyer Property, Crime, Guilt, Law, Deception, Stupidity, Judge, Judging, Justice and Injustice, Thief and Lie, Law, Penalty, Prison, Evidence and Witness



## Slide 24

As we can see in the scheme, the universal fields belong to justice, the thief and lies, property, stupidity (in the context of being penalized) and law.

The thematic idiosyncrasies of Portugal include the lawyer, guilt, law, judge, penalty, imprisonment, and evidence. To Czech idiosyncrasies, conflict, honesty, but also, hell and sin. As there is no time to exemplify each of the cases, I add, in the part of the annex of my presentation in word that I made available to you, the mini-glossary elaborated, being the part of the Czech proverbs, whose equivalents I did not find, freely translated into Portuguese. I will limit myself to showing just a part of this glossary.

## Slide 25

On this slide we see that stupidity is one of the common themes, finding the equivalents not very close in Czech and Portuguese\_ Stupidity does not pay taxes. While in Czech Stupidity is expensive.

Goods - and money - in Portuguese either speak or don't speak. In Czech, it stinks. The theme, therefore, is universal, but the proverbs are idiosyncratic.

## **Slide 26**

Among the Portuguese themes, we can count the crime and the judge. In the case of the proverb There is no better judge than time we find equivalents in the Czech language (time is the best advisor). The others, however, do not show similar equivalence.

## **Slide 27**

Justice is a universal theme, but we do not always find equivalences. It can be present explicitly (Where justice prevails, no weapons are needed) or indirectly (Whoever grace makes grace deserves. Here they make themselves, here they pay). In Czech we only find the second type.

## **Slide 28 - 29**

The conflict, a typical Czech component, to take place between two people, who take revenge on each other, while a third person can take advantage of it.

Hell, and sin, usually, in the sense that the Devil is the one who pays his accomplices and always gives more to the rich. ....

## ***And so On***

## **Slide 30**

### **Conclusion**

As we proved in our brief presentation, the language can be studied not only as a system of rules existing at different levels, but also as a living organism, an organism in perpetual movement that, according to the studied context, allows us to use the most diverse means of expression, among others, for example those belonging to our area, that of paremiology. It offers us a series of aspects worthy of being developed. In the case of justice, research flows into the division of its repertoire into two sub-areas: the universal and the idiosyncratic.

Universities in the very sense of the word, in our opinion, are represented by those proverbs that have the same semantic and formal content in several languages, with common, global, universal cultures and traditions being reflected in them. However, as we have just proved, the prevalent value belongs to what is, idiosyncratic, the value that different cultures and languages have of theirs. These specificities should, on the one hand, be kept as a treasure, but on the other hand, let us say that they could be "alienated" in the sense of serving us as a lesson, of teaching us new attitudes and transmitting new perspectives.



My contribution, therefore, I see it in the challenge related to the creation of a new resource that we could all do together and that offer us two possibilities: either to address the universal paremias existing in all our languages or, the private ones with the objective to bring the paremiological culture of each one of you abroad, inspiring, motivating and opening borders to those who are interested.

Thank you very much for your attention.