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## METONYMIC OPERATIONS IN PROVERBS WITH PLACE NAMES

### METONIMICZNE OPERACJE W PRZYSŁOWIACH Z NAZWAMI MIEJSC

**Abstract:** As far as the motivation of proverbs in cognitive semantics is concerned, there emerge two contrastive perspectives. On the one hand, proverbs are viewed as metaphorically conditioned – due to the working of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor and on the other, on account of their conceptual nature proverbs might be interpreted as metonymic – visualising the general conceptual metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC. The article scrutinizes metonymic conceptualisations embodied in proverbs from various linguo-cultures which contain place names. In the analysed linguistic occurrences the following types of metonymy are identified: PLACE FOR INHABITANTS (e.g. *It takes a whole village to bring up a child*), PLACE FOR INSTITUTION (e.g. *The nearer the church, the farther from God*), PLACE FOR EVENT (e.g. *Every man meets his Waterloo at last*), PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE (e.g. *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas*), PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE (e.g. *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended*). Furthermore, the research material serves as a medium to expose the mechanism of both internal and external metonymy as well as other cognitive processes such as metonymic chain, metaphonymy and orientational metaphor.

**Keywords:** metaphonymy, metonymic chain, metonymy (internal, external), place names, proverbs

**Abstrakt:** W przypadku motywacji przysłów w semantyce kognitywnej pojawiają się dwie kontrastujące perspektywy. Z jednej strony, przysłowia są postrzegane jako metaforycznie uwarunkowane – ze względu na działanie metafory OGÓLNE TO KONKRETNE, a z drugiej, z uwagi na ich konceptualny charakter, mogą być interpretowane jako metonimiczne – wizualizując ogólną konceptualną metonimię KONKRETNE TO OGÓLNE. W artykule wzięto pod uwagę metonimiczne konceptualizacje zawarte w przysłowiaach pochodzących z różnych języko-kultur, które zawierają nazwy miejsc. W analizowanych przykładach zidentyfikowano następujące typy metonimii: MIEJSCE TO MIESZKAŃCY (np. *It takes a whole village to bring up a child* [dosł. Potrzeba całej wioski, żeby wychować dziecko]), MIEJSCE TO INSTYTUCJA (np. *The nearer the church, the farther from God* [dosł.

Im bliżej kościoła, tym dalej od Boga]), MIEJSCE TO WYDARZENIE (np. *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* [dosł. Każdy człowiek w końcu spotyka swoje Waterloo]), MIEJSCE TO AKTYWNOŚĆ WYKONYWANA W DANYM MIEJSCU (np. *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas* [dosł. Co się dzieje w Vegas, zostaje w Vegas]), MIEJSCE TO PRODUKT WYKONANY W DANYM MIEJSCU (np. *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended* [dosł. Chiny {Porcelana} i reputacja są do siebie podobne: łatwo je złamać, ale niełatwo je naprawić]). Materiał badawczy służy ponadto jako medium do ukazania mechanizmu zarówno wewnętrznej, jak i zewnętrznej metonimii, jak również innych procesów kognitywnych, takich jak łańcuch metonimiczny, metaftonimia i metafora orientacyjna.

**Słowa kluczowe:** metaftonimia, łańcuch metonimiczny, metonimia (wewnętrzna, zewnętrzna), nazwy miejsc, przysłowia

## 1. Introduction

Proverbs encapsulate and impart knowledge and wisdom anchored in a linguo-culture, representing in this manner a considerable resource to scrutinize the way people process experience and conceptualise the world. This being the case, proverbs constitute a conceptual universal phenomenon possessing high communicative and instructive value as well as an interesting and informative source of cultural lore.

The study of proverbs has been approached from many different viewpoints, among others, cognitive, linguo-cultural, pragmatic, didactic or socio-psychological. On the one hand, for example, a cognitive perspective advocates the universalist theories of proverb comprehension which enable access to the universal principles that underline the cognition of proverbs (see e.g. Temple, Honeck, 1999; Gibbs, Colston, Johnson, 1996a, 1996b; Moreno, 2005; Maalej, 2009; Sullivan, Sweetser, 2010; Bierwiazzonek, 2014; Szpila, 2020). On the other, for instance, a linguo-cultural view represented by folkloristic proverb scholars allows for the interpretation of proverbs in their cultural envelope (see e.g. Arewa, Dundes, 1964; Bauman, McCabe, 1970; Mieder, 1982). Importantly, “[...] the Cognitive Linguistics paradigm is able to show that the language we use mirrors patterns of thought and the mind’s conceptualization of the surrounding reality” (Kochman-Haładyj, Kiełtyka, 2023, p. 47). For that reason, the theoretical framework adopted in the present paper is that of Cognitive Linguistics, which for the study of proverbs offers the mechanisms of conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy as well as the interplay of these two, which is labelled by Goossens (1990) as metaphonymy.

In the study in question, proverbs featuring place names are accounted for primarily with the aid of the tool of conceptual metonymy, which is understood as “a cognitive process in which one conceptual element or entity (thing, event, property), the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity (thing, event, property), the target, within the same frame, domain or idealized cognitive model (ICM)” (Kövecses, 2006, p. 99). Metonymy is a ubiquitous phenomenon, therefore we may observe its existence and working on a daily basis. Given that we are unable

to include all facets of our intended meaning in language, we resort to metonymy in order to express everything that is crucial to its process of interpretation (Radden et al., 2007). As stressed by Littlemore (2015, p. 4-5), “we think ‘metonymically’ because it is physically impossible to consciously activate all the knowledge that we have of a particular concept at once”. As a result, we are inclined to concentrate on “a salient aspect of that concept, and use this as point of access to the whole concept” (Littlemore, 2015, p. 5). Take, for example, the way we think of certain places. We link a given country that we have visited either with a place we visited or with some iconic representation of that country. And so, the Eiffel Tower may metonymically stand for France and a shamrock metonymically represents Ireland.

The overall objective of the analytical part in the present study is to address metonymic conceptualisations encoded in paremias, deriving from various linguocultures, which contain place names. As asserted by Radden and Kövecses (2007, pp. 17–18), places go along with, among others, “people living there, well-known institutions located there, events which occur or occurred there [...] and activities performed there”. Therefore, the specific aim is to identify in the analysed linguistic occurrences the types of metonymic operations, including PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, PLACE FOR INSTITUTION, PLACE FOR EVENT, PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE, PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE. Such a holistic approach to proverbs, that is the combination of the potential of Cognitive Linguistics and paremiological studies, enables us to better understand sense-threads embedded in the figurative language of proverbs.

## **2. The theoretical underpinnings**

In the cognitive analysis of proverbs there are two perspectives which enable one to approach proverbial messages. Lakoff and Turner (1989) define proverbs as metaphoric in nature – due to the working of the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor (in which the content of the proverb stands for a specific level schema operating as a source, whereas the target represents a generic level schema). As pointed out by Kövecses (2015, p. ix), “conceptual metaphors consist of sets of systematic correspondences, or mappings between two domains of experience and [...] the meaning of a particular metaphorical expression realizing an underlying conceptual metaphor is based on such correspondences”. The significance of grasping metaphor in this context becomes apparent when considering its role in facilitating comprehension of intricate or intangible concepts, such as life or time. This perspective illuminates how conceptual metaphor serves as a mechanism for arranging and delineating the unfamiliar and mysterious by drawing parallels to the familiar and understood (Kochman-Haładaj, Kiełtyka, 2023, p. 47).

However, in recent years there have been studies (see e.g. Kövecses, Radden, 1999; Panther, Thornburg, 1999; Bierwiazzonek, 2014; Lemghari, 2019; Szpila, 2020;

Kochman-Haładyj, Kiełtyka, 2023) proving that on account of proverbs' conceptual nature, they might be interpreted as metonymic – visualising the general conceptual metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC. Ruiz de Mendoza (2001) suggests that the connection between the two Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs) found in proverbs – the specific and the generic – functions as a stand-for relationship. This implies that, rather than the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor identified by Lakoff and Turner (1989), we encounter a SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. Within metaphorical processes, a more complex domain, termed the target domain, is elucidated by drawing upon the reference of the source domain. In turn, conceptual metonymy engages with just one experiential domain. For that reason, since the levels of situational specification and generalisation belong to the same realm “the specific situation contained in a proverb instantiates the general meaning extracted from it” (Szpila, 2020, p. 403). By way of illustration, one proverb visualising the conceptual metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC is *A faithless wife is the shipwreck of a home* which uttered in a specific situation and with reference to a particular woman provides mental access to the group of ‘faithless women’ in general. This type of relationship existing in proverbs, classified by Radden and Kövecses (1999, pp. 30–36) as a *pars pro toto* relationship, applies by nature to a proverb as a whole and to its general meaning.

The cognitive study of discourse offers another phenomenon labelled as a metonymic chain and which refers to “direct or indirect series of conceptual metonymies guiding a series of pragmatic inferences” (Barcelona, 2005, p. 328). When Barcelona (2005) discusses two or more metonymies frequently appearing within the same utterance – or even the same sentence – at the same or varying analytical levels, the author envisions a more intricate system of interaction that encompasses both textual and conceptual dimensions. The chains can be relatively simple, connecting just two elements, or they can be more intricate, involving multiple linked items. Furthermore, they may overlap or intersect with one another (Brdar, 2015, p. 89). One of the operations of the metonymic chain is, for example, expansion with reduction illustrated by the use of the term *radio* in *The radio said it'd be warm today*. In a basic analysis, the term *radio* as a communication medium represents the person using it to convey messages. Nonetheless, the radio as a physical set is only one part of the broader communication system, which includes a broadcasting station with its equipment. Thus, *radio* (as the device) stands for the entire communication system, which in turn stands for the communicator. The first metonymy operates through domain expansion, while the second employs domain reduction: *radio set (medium) < radio communication system (broadcasting station and receivers) > communicator* (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2021, p. 221).

The intertwined dynamics of metaphor and metonymy, termed metaphonymy, were initially scrutinized by Goossens (1990). Various facets of metaphor-metonymy interplay have since then been explored by scholars such as Barcelona (2000), Ruiz de Mendoza and Diez (2002), Diez (2001–2002), Moreno (2005), Lai (2008),

Masegosa (2010), Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014), and Ruiz de Mendoza (2021). Barcelona (2000, pp. 10–12) delineates two forms of metaphonymy: one operating at the conceptual level and the other manifesting as a textual fusion of metaphor and metonymy within the same linguistic expression. Concerning metaphonymy at the conceptual level, let us consider the example *He's in high spirits today*, illustrating the metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP, propelled by the metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE. Here, a bodily posture serves as a conduit, granting mental access to the realm of emotions. Conversely, metaphonymy involving textual interaction occurs when both conceptual mechanisms operate sequentially. For instance, in the sentence *The violin couldn't stop horsing around*, the metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS coexists with the metonymy AN OBJECT USED FOR THE USER. Notably, these mechanisms can function independently.

### 3. Metonymy in proverbs

As mentioned in the preceding part, from the cognitive perspective, proverbs are 'mentally economical' because one particular situation contained in them enables us to comprehend many others. A case in point is a proverb *Blind blames the ditch* which describes a specific situation but conveys a general understanding, and which again might be applied to a specific situation at hand (Radden, Kövecses, 2007, p. 12). However, as underscored by Szpila (2020, pp. 403–404), in proverbs there are also individual constituents that serve as examples of the so-called internal metonymy. What is meant by this is that specific lexemes contained in the wording of a proverbial text might be interpreted as metonymic. The author gives an instance of a Polish proverb *Pijanemu Pan Bóg nogi stawia* [Lit. God puts a drunken man's legs right] in which the lexical units *noga/nogi* 'leg/legs', referring to a body part, are applied metonymically to denote an act of walking, hence the metonymy ORGAN FOR FUNCTION. The aforementioned can, therefore, be understood as symbolizing the behaviour typical of an intoxicated person in a broader sense (SPECIFIC ACT [SUB-EVENT] FOR WHOLE SITUATION). This certainly represents one among various conceivable methods by which a fundamental metonymic process – ORGAN FOR FUNCTION – may precede other potential metonymic processes in establishing the connection between a specific scenario encapsulated in a proverb and its broader interpretation. As underscored by the author (2020, pp. 403–404), the former process might be designated as first-order metonymy, which denotes the fundamental relationship between the source and the target, upon which subsequent mechanisms can build to generate second, third, and further orders of metonymy. These processes are thought to occur internally within the proverb, constituting its internal metonymy, while the metonymy that associates a proverb with its generalized meaning is external to the proverb itself, as it aligns the extracted meanings from the proverb with a generic schema. Importantly, the amalgamation

of these metonymic processes enhances the comprehensive grasp of a proverb in its entirety, as well as deepening the comprehension of the significances embedded within its individual linguistic components.

#### 4. Metonymic operations in proverbs featuring place names

The principal objective of the empirical part which follows is to demonstrate how names of places in proverbs and other phraseological units can be applied metonymically to stand for people living there, institutions located there, events which occur or occurred there, activities performed there and goods produced or shipped from there. More precisely, four selected proverbs and one quote, constituting examples of phraseological units coming from various linguo-cultures, are used as a medium to chiefly expose the mechanism of both internal and external metonymy, but also other cognitive processes such as metonymic chain, metaphonymy or orientational metaphor. In the ensuing paragraphs five types of metonymic operations in proverbs featuring place names are subject to analysis.

##### 4.1. Place for inhabitants

An example of a proverb in which the PLACE FOR INHABITANTS metonymy is found is *It takes a whole village to bring up a child*. According to *Oxford dictionary of proverbs*, this Nigerian proverb is used to indicate that ‘the whole community has a role in a child’s development’; the saying also exists in other African languages. In turn, *The free dictionary by Farlex* explains the proverb’s meaning by saying that ‘those who are raising a child need many people’s help and support’.<sup>1</sup>

In the proverb *It takes a whole village to bring up a child* the lexeme *village*, referring in its basic meaning to ‘a settlement usually larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town’ or ‘a territorial area having the status of a village especially as a unit of local government’ (*Merriam-Webster dictionary*),<sup>2</sup> is used metonymically to represent the people living in a village/the whole community of a village. This conceptual operation may be viewed as an instantiation of the conceptual metonymy PLACE FOR INHABITANTS. However, the inhabitants of a particular village being referred to by a specific person using the proverb seem to be in a metonymic relation with people in general, which gives rise to the metonymy SPECIFIC PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE IN GENERAL. Therefore, the metonymy PLACE FOR INHABITANTS is a metonymy of the first order and can be treated as primary. It takes place internally and it is proverb internal. However, the metonymy SPECIFIC PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE IN GENERAL is proverb external

<sup>1</sup> <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/it+takes+a+village+to+raise+a+child> (18.01.2024).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/village> (4.11.2024).

because it connects a proverb to the generalized meaning. Accordingly, the given proverb's general meaning is 'those who are raising a child need many people's help and support'. In other words, the proverb uttered in a specific context and in relation to a particular person can be interpreted metonymically in terms of the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy according to which the specific situation contained in a proverb, that is a whole village bringing up a child, provides mental access to the general group of people providing help and support in the child's development.

As noted by Littlemore (2015, pp. 33–34), the PLACE FOR INHABITANTS metonymy has a hyperbolic element attached to it. The place names (e.g. *town*, *village*) are usually preceded by such adjectives as *entire* or *whole*, although it is fairly obvious that not every inhabitant of a given town or village would match the description being made of them. Therefore, the metonymy functioning in the given proverb is no longer neutral as it takes on some hyperbolic overtones. Additionally, a strong emotive factor is included, because a whole group of people, specifically, a whole village, has to unite in order to bring up a child.

#### 4.2. Place for institution

A proverb that exemplifies the PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymy is *The nearer the church, the farther from God*. *The free dictionary by Farlex* gives two related meanings of the given Anglo-American proverb. It either means that 'the higher up someone is in the church hierarchy, the more likely they are to be corrupt, immoral, or sinful' or that 'church officials, or people who live near the church, are not truly pious'.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the proverb springs from the idea that true religion cannot be satisfactorily organized into a church. It suggests that those most closely involved in the organization of the church are least likely to be truly religious, as they tend to become more interested in the organization than in godly living (*Proverb hunter*).<sup>4</sup>

In the proverb *The nearer the church, the farther from God* the mechanisms of both internal and external metonymy are also observed. The lexical element *church*, in its basic meaning, is used with reference to 'a building in which Christians worship' (*Collins dictionary*).<sup>5</sup> When the given constituent is individually interpreted metonymically, it is applied to 'the clergy or officialdom of a religious body' (*Merriam-Webster dictionary*)<sup>6</sup> hence it represents the PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymy and, even more specifically, the INSTITUTION FOR ITS MEMBERS metonymy (note the metonymic chain: PLACE FOR INSTITUTION and INSTITUTION FOR ITS MEMBERS).

<sup>3</sup> <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/nearer+the+church%2C+the+farther+from+God> (18.01.2024).

<sup>4</sup> <https://proverbhunter.com/the-nearer-the-church-the-farther-from-god/> (18.01.2024).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/church> (4.11.2024).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/church> (4.11.2024).

This basic metonymic process, referred to as first-order metonymy, might come before other potential metonymic processes in establishing the connection between the particular situation described in a proverb and its broader interpretation. Therefore, the internal metonymy seems to provide mental access to other metonymic projections, such as SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC, for example SPECIFIC OPINION FOR OPINIONS IN GENERAL. This operation is external to the proverb, as it links it to a broader, generalized meaning. As a consequence, the ultimate meaning of the discussed proverb is the conviction that those most closely involved in the organization of the church are least likely to be truly religious, as they tend to become more interested in the organization than in godly living. The sense-thread might be extended even further so that, in some contexts, it becomes similar to the meaning of the idiom *can't see the wood for the trees* which indicates that people are unable to understand a situation clearly because they are too involved in it (*Cambridge dictionary*).<sup>7</sup>

The PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymy is an example of a metonymic projection that is connected to the previously discussed one, that is the PLACE FOR INHABITANTS metonymy (Littlemore, 2015, p. 34). *Church*, as a place name refers not only to the institution itself, but rather to people who are closely connected with its functioning. It is worth noting that the proverb focuses on the sinful nature of people who, at least in theory, should be pious. In fact, we are confronted with a dual nature of the church. On the one hand, religion itself is connected with positively-loaded values, such as piety and honesty. On the other hand, however, there are people (in this context, officials) who take advantage of their position and create a negatively-loaded picture of it. Thereby, the church is the metonymic epitome of duality. The figurative use of the proverb *The nearer the church, the farther from God* alludes to people who do not abide by Christian principles.

What also seems important to emphasise is that we are dealing here with the orientational metaphor discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who say that this type of metaphorical concept “organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” (p. 14). A distinctive feature of orientational metaphors is that they are spatially-oriented (e.g. up-down, front-back, deep-shallow). The orientations in question result from the fact that our bodies function in a given way in our physical environment. And so, in English we may formulate the HAPPY IS UP and SAD IS DOWN metaphors, which means that positively-loaded concepts are oriented UP, whereas the negatively-loaded ones – DOWN. These orientational metaphors are realised linguistically by the expressions: I'm *over* the moon, in *high* spirits, *down* in the dumps, *down* in the mouth.

As argued by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 14), orientational metaphors are connected with our physical and cultural experience, therefore they are not

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<sup>7</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/can-t-see-the-wood-for-the-trees> (18.01.2024).



arbitrary. The authors elucidate further that despite being physical in nature, the metaphors based on the antipodal oppositions are culturally-conditioned.

As far as the proverb *The nearer the Church, the farther from God* is concerned, we may put forward a claim that it realizes a conceptual metaphor that may be verbalized as ACCEPTING SOMETHING IS BEING PHYSICALLY CLOSE TO IT. If we believe in something and support it, we are close to it. If we are opposed to some idea, we are far from it; otherwise speaking, rejecting is being physically far/away. In Christian religion church represents God and Christian values. In the proverb in question, however, church is not equal to Christian values.

### 4.3. Place for event

Wendell Phillips' quote *Every man meets his Waterloo at last (Phrase finder)*<sup>8</sup> is an instance of the PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy. The statement is related to the idiom *Meet your Waterloo* which conveys the idea that 'if someone meets their Waterloo, they are defeated by someone who is stronger or by a problem that is very difficult to surmount'. The phrase *to meet one's Waterloo* refers to the Battle of Waterloo (in present-day Belgium) in 1815 where the French army under the command of Napoleon was defeated. The phrase entered the English language as a phrase signifying a great test with a final and decisive outcome – generally one resulting in failure and proving vincibility for something or someone who had seemed unbeatable (*Phrase finder*).<sup>9</sup>

The quote *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* is yet another instance of the internal and external metonymic processes. The lexeme *Waterloo* in its basic meaning stands for 'town in central Belgium, south of Brussels: a scene of Napoleon's final defeat (June 18, 1815) by the Allies under Wellington and Blücher' (*Collins dictionary*).<sup>10</sup> When it is analysed semantically and interpreted individually, the constituent is used metonymically to refer to 'the battle fought at Waterloo,' hence it realizes the PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy. This is the primary metonymic operation which is classified as first-order metonymy and it might come before other potential metonymic processes in creating the link between the specific case depicted in a proverb and its expanded understanding. Therefore, the meaning of the battle fought at Waterloo is modified by the context of the whole quote and, via other metonymic operations, the quote is used with reference to 'the act of being defeated by someone who is stronger or by a problem that is very difficult to surmount'. The latter, consequently, may be interpreted as providing mental access to any place where some important event happened and realizing the SPECIFIC EVENT FOR SIMILAR

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/245800.html> (22.02.2024).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/245800.html> (22.02.2024).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/waterloo> (18.01.2024).

EVENTS IN GENERAL. As a result, its general interpretation, that is ‘meeting one’s final and insurmountable challenge’ represents the external type of metonymy.

In order to understand the PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy, one needs to possess some external knowledge about the event in question. This makes it easier for a language user to interpret the meaning of the PLACE FOR INSTITUTION metonymy. A research project conducted by Frisson and Pickering (1999) revealed that it takes much more time to comprehend the PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy, because it requires language users to process a larger amount of information. As far as the quote *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* is concerned, the place name *Waterloo*, as mentioned above, is used with reference to a famous battle which marked the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In the aftermath of Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo, the emperor was exiled to Elba. The bloody battle put paid to the wars that had tormented Europe for a long time and the career of one of the greatest commanders in the history of Europe came to an end (Hofschröder, 1999). Accordingly, from the cognitive viewpoint *Waterloo* is employed with reference to ‘the act of being defeated by someone who is stronger’. However, if one is not familiar with the events that took place in Waterloo, they may not be able to decipher the meaning of the metonymy in a correct way. Additionally, it seems necessary to mention that, as pointed out by Arimitsu (2015, p. 475), the PLACE FOR EVENT metonymy employs politeness and euphemism to express mainly negative events. People avoid fully and concretely describing negative events so as not to hurt the other person’s feelings or the speaker’s own feelings.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the quote from the cognitive perspective, another potential mechanism observed in its content is a metonymic chain involving placename for event and event for person. Analysing the metonymic chain reveals the layered significance embedded in this saying, which is delineated as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Other examples of English expressions where a placename stands for a significant event, demonstrating the metonymic process, are, among others: *Crossing the Rubicon* (Placename: The Rubicon [a river in Italy]; Event: Julius Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon River, marking the point of no return and the start of a civil war. Meaning: Taking an irrevocable step that commits one to a specific course of action); *Remember the Alamo* (Placename: The Alamo [a mission in San Antonio, Texas]; Event: The Battle of the Alamo during the Texas Revolution; Meaning: A rallying cry to remember a significant, heroic, and often tragic event; used to inspire perseverance or courage); *Fall of Saigon* (Placename: Saigon [now Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam]; Event: The capture of Saigon by North Vietnamese forces in 1975, marking the end of the Vietnam War; Meaning: Symbolizes the end of an era or a significant defeat); *From Munich to Yalta* (Placename: Munich [Germany] and Yalta [Crimea]; Events: Munich Agreement [1938] and Yalta Conference [1945]; Meaning: Often used to describe a period of diplomatic negotiations with significant consequences, usually implying appeasement and the eventual division of influence [as during WWII and its aftermath]); *A Pearl Harbor moment* (Placename: Pearl Harbor [a naval base in Hawaii]; Event: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, leading to the U.S. entering World War II; Meaning: A sudden and devastating surprise attack, often leading to a significant change in policy or action).

- PLACENAME FOR EVENT: Waterloo (Placename) → Battle of Waterloo (Event)

The name *Waterloo* directly invokes the historical event of the Battle of Waterloo. Instead of explicitly mentioning the battle, the placename *Waterloo* suffices to bring the entire event to mind due to its historical prominence.

- EVENT FOR PERSON: Battle of Waterloo (Event) → Napoleon's Defeat (Personal Experience)

The Battle of Waterloo is synonymous with Napoleon's ultimate defeat. Referencing this event encapsulates the dramatic fall of Napoleon, a single individual, who was once a dominant force in Europe. Thus, the event stands for the personal downfall of Napoleon.

By linking these two steps, we see how the metonymic chain operates: Waterloo (Placename) → Battle of Waterloo (Event) → Napoleon's Defeat (Person). This chain condenses a complex historical narrative into a succinct, symbolic expression. However, it is important to add that the metonymic chain is observed only when we think about Napoleon and his defeat. In the proverb *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* we go a step further because we want to say that someone's defeat looks like Napoleon's defeat, and here we can see the working of the metaphor SOMEONE'S DEFEAT IS NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT. When someone *meets their Waterloo*, it implies they have encountered a significant, often final, defeat akin to Napoleon's experience at Waterloo (SOMEONE'S DEFEAT IS NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT metaphor). It suggests a moment of downfall that is decisive and transformative, emphasizing the personal impact of a critical event.

What is interesting to note is that the analysed quote may also be considered as an example of the process of metaphonymy. The metaphor-metonymy interrelation motivating the semantic development of the constituent element *Waterloo* is portrayed in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1. The metaphonymy motivating the meaning evolution of the lexical unit *Waterloo***

metaphorical source	metaphorical target
PLACENAME (metonymic source)	
↓	
EVENT (NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT) (metonymic target and source)	SOMEONE'S DEFEAT
↓	← metaphor
PERSON (NAPOLEON) (metonymic target)	

In the figure presented above, on the left side we have only metonymy, because everything happens in one domain. On the other hand, *SOMEONE'S DEFEAT IS NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT* is a metaphor. The whole thing functions as a metaphonymy because *NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT* acts both as a metonymic target and source for another metonymy (*EVENT FOR PERSON*) and metaphorical source for *SOMEONE'S DEFEAT*. This is a possible interpretation, but the previous reasoning, where we are dealing with an external metonymy *SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC* (*SPECIFIC DEFEAT [NAPOLEON'S DEFEAT] FOR DEFEAT IN GENERAL*), also seems logical.

#### 4.4. Place for activity performed at that place

An instance of the *PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE* metonymy can be seen in the proverb *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas*. As indicated by *Oxford dictionary of proverbs*, this American proverb is 'an implied promise of confidentiality about casual sex or wild behavior while away from home, a parallel to *What goes on tour stays on tour*'. The dictionary also points out that the American city of Las Vegas, Nevada, ran a tourist advertising campaign in the early 2000 with the slogan *What happens here stays here*, designed to attract sophisticated adults to its casinos and nightclubs. This has also spawned humorous variants substituting other place names.

The proverb *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas* is another case in point where both internal and external metonymy can be observed. The constituent *Vegas* in its very basic meaning refers to the name of the city in the US state of Nevada but by the modification of the context of the whole proverb, and via another metonymic operation, the lexeme stands for the activity performed in that city, that is 'having casual sex and experiencing wild behavior', hence the proverb realizes the conceptual metonymy *PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE*. The latter, consequently, may be interpreted as providing mental access to the scandalous behaviour of people in general in any other place (*BEHAVIOUR IN A SPECIFIC PLACE FOR BEHAVIOUR IN ANY PLACE*). In the proverb, a basic metonymic operation – *PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE* – may come before other potential metonymic processes, establishing the connection between the specific situation described in the proverb and its broader interpretation. As a result, its general interpretation is 'any scandalous activities that happen when one travels in a group are not to be discussed with other people afterward' (*The free dictionary by Farlex*).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the metonymy *PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE* is a metonymy of the first order, which refers to the basic relation that exists between the source and the target, and it takes place internally. However, the metonymy that connects a proverb to a generalized meaning is proverb external, as it links the meanings extracted from the proverb in question to the generic-schema.

<sup>12</sup> <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/what+happens+in+Vegas+stays+in+Vegas> (18.01.2024).

The type of metonymy PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE is applicable to places that are associated with events or activities which commonly happen there. Since special areas are particularly assigned to be applied as the setting for certain kinds of activities (e.g. hospitals are for ill people to be medically treated in), it comes as no surprise that the mention of a certain place suffices to indicate a special activity (Radden, 2002, p. 424). Therefore, the lexeme *Vegas* does not only evoke the gambling typically performed there but also, as implied by the proverb *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas*, invites the implicature of drunken men and women getting into all sort of liaisons.

#### 4.5. Place for product made there

The Anglo-American proverb *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended* illustrates the PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE metonymy. It originated as a quote from *Poor Richard's almanac* by Benjamin Franklin (*The Franklin institute*).<sup>13</sup> The lexical unit *china* refers to porcelain, a material crafted from specially selected porcelain clay or pottery stone through processes such as proportioning, moulding, drying, and firing. Porcelain is called *china* in English because it was originally produced in China, making this delicate porcelain a fitting symbol of the country (*UNESCO*).<sup>14</sup> The proverb indicates that some aspects of life, such as china and reputation, are delicate and easily harmed; once damaged it is difficult to completely fix or restore them. This underscores their fragility and the enduring impact of any inflicted damage, suggesting that maintaining their integrity requires careful attention and caution.

In the proverb *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended* the lexical element *China* in its primary meaning constituted internally stands for 'the country in Eastern Asia'. The lexeme can be individually interpreted as metonymic to apply for 'porcelain produced in China', hence the metonymy PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE.<sup>15</sup> This basic metonymic operation, called metonymy of the first order, may precede other possible metonymic operations in the process of constituting the link between the specific situation contained in a proverb and the general level interpretation of it. Therefore, the internal metonymy may be understood as providing mental access to products and opinions in general (SPECIFIC PRODUCT AND OPINION FOR PRODUCTS AND OPINIONS IN GENERAL), which is proverb external because it connects a proverb to the generalized meaning. As a consequence, the general meaning of

<sup>13</sup> <https://fi.edu/en/science-and-education/benjamin-franklin/famous-quotes> (6.05.2024).

<sup>14</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/chinese-porcelain> (6.05.2024).

<sup>15</sup> As underscored by Littlemore (2015, p. 32), PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE metonymies tend to be applied for prestige items, and are more typical of cultures which greatly appreciate regional produce, e.g. wine or cheese.

the analysed proverb is used with reference to the fact that some aspects of life are fragile and easily damaged; once cracked, they are difficult to fully repair or restore. Otherwise stated, when a proverb is spoken in a specific context about a particular individual, it can be understood metonymically through the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy. This means that the specific scenario depicted in the proverb, such as china and reputations being easily cracked but not easily mended, symbolically represents the broader idea of fragility and the enduring impact of any inflicted damage, suggesting that maintaining their integrity requires careful attention and caution.

Finally, let us mention in passing that the PLACE FOR PRODUCT metonymy illustrates a mechanism of commonisation, whereby nouns originally used as place names undergo semantic development and acquire the status of common nouns. As claimed by Kiełtyka (2020, p. 53), “commonisation may be interpreted as resulting from the working of panchronically motivated conceptual processes, such as conceptual metaphor, metonymy, or the joint-operation of the two mechanisms”. More precisely, as the author postulates, the meaning shifts that place names go through are complex changes motivated by, among others, sequences of metonymic projections (metonymic chains), single metonymic projections, metonymic projections leading to metaphorical extensions or metaphor leading to metonymy. In the analysed proverb *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended* the lexeme *china* shows a simple metonymic projection whereby the place name *China* is used figuratively in relation to a product, that is ‘porcelain’.

## 5. Conclusions

The overarching aim of this paper is to analyse metonymic conceptualizations encapsulated within proverbs, and other phraseological constructs incorporating place names, originating from diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. More specifically, the target of the analysis constitutes four proverbs and one quote pertaining to place names and their participation in the mapping process(es) of the metonymic type PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, PLACE FOR INSTITUTION, PLACE FOR EVENT, PLACE FOR ACTIVITY PERFORMED AT THAT PLACE, PLACE FOR PRODUCT MADE THERE.

The corpus of data subject to analysis in the study is not sufficiently representative to lead to extensive conclusions, nevertheless, some general points might be formulated. First and foremost, the selected linguistic utterances illustrate their conceptual nature by being motivated by the working of, among others, conceptual metonymy. Proverbs are metonymic in character and as such, they visualize the general conceptual metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC. Additionally, the findings obtained indicate that in all the discussed proverbial cases individual elements of proverbs referring to place names, such as *village*, *church*, *Waterloo*, *Vegas*, and *China* are motivated by the operations of internal metonymy and thereby invite the implicature of the inhabitants of a village, institution of a church, the

battle of Waterloo, activities performed in Vegas, and porcelain respectively. The constituents are in turn modified by the context of the whole proverb and yield the metonymy which is proverb external as it connects the proverb to the generalized meaning. Accordingly, the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy allows the proverbs' overall implications to be adaptable to the appropriate contexts.

Furthermore, as the analysis shows, apart from metonymic operations in proverbs with place names other cognitive processes such as metonymic chain and metaphonymy can be observed. A case in point is the quote *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* which exemplifies both a metonymic chain (Waterloo [Placename] → Battle of Waterloo [Event] → Napoleon's Defeat [Person]) as well as a metaphonymy interrelation (NAPOLÉON'S DEFEAT acts both as a metonymic target and source for another metonymy [EVENT FOR PERSON] and metaphorical source for SOMEONE'S DEFEAT). The research analysis also reveals an example of orientational metaphor in the proverb *The nearer the Church, the farther from God* which realizes the more specific conceptual metaphors ACCEPTING IS BEING PHYSICALLY CLOSE and REJECTING IS BEING PHYSICALLY MORE DISTANT. All the discussed cognitive mechanisms enhance deeper understanding of the intricacies encapsulated in the content of proverbs with place names as constitutive elements.

Importantly, for a thorough analysis of the cognitive mechanism in hand, both synchronic and diachronic approaches are required as only an integrated treatment of figurative developments taking place in proverbs featuring place names brings an in-depth interpretation. With a view to illustrating the mentioned point let us refer to such lexical units as, for example *china* or *Waterloo*, being part of proverbial utterances *China and reputations are alike: easily cracked but not easily mended* and *Every man meets his Waterloo at last* respectively. The examination of their historical context or historical perspective along with a panchronic approach (perceived as a combination of language change and cognition) greatly contribute to the proverbs' ultimate meaning.

All in all, cognitive linguistic inroads into the paremiologists' domain demonstrate that this combined agenda appears as a win-win situation for both sides and therefore provides potential for explaining the motives behind the use of proverbs. Further research in the metonymic use of place names in different languages would seem welcome, particularly from the perspective of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication.

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