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On Whether Weather Proverbs Are Weather Proverbs

Towards a Fresh Look at Weather Lore and Meteo-Prognostic Paroemias

“Weather proverbs are a well-known and important paroemiological genre...”

The assumption that paroemiologists all over the world would, at least at first sight, put their signatures to this statement, would probably not be wrong – notwithstanding the fact that we all, at least since Alan Dundes’ (1980) witty article, should be generally warned not to use the term ‘weather proverb’ for that kind of paroemias, the dominant pragmatic function of which is prognosis, prediction, or forecasting (cf. Permjakov 1970), in this case specifically of weather and related phenomena. In fact, one might expect that discussions of the term ‘weather proverb’ would (or rather: should) be a matter of the past, and the term should not be in paroemiological use any more to denote prognostic weather paroemias as a genre: siding with Dundes’s, Permjakov’s and others’ arguments, the logical consequence would have been to principally jettison the term ‘weather proverb’ in paroemiological research, unless we are concerned with that kind of proverbs proper which in their texts make use of tropes (sic!) from the lexical field of weather, such proverbial texts de facto (i.e., in their function as proverbs) referring to something completely else than weather.

Weather Proverbs Are Proverbs – ‘Weather Proverbs’ Are Not!

Practice has been different, however, and it still is: in fact, due to paroemiological traditions which have not been distinctive and accurate enough for centuries, the term ‘weather proverb’ continues to be used for prognostic sayings, although ‘weather proverbs’ in the common use of this term are no proverbs at all (again in the strict, paroemiological sense of the word). As a consequence, not only laymen, but also many a paroemiologist until today continue to denote prognostic sayings about weather by this term, along with a handful of other terms, intended to denote the very same paroemiological genre.

To cut it short, the crucial difference may be illustrated by way of one introductory example: a text like *»When swallows fly high, the weather will be dry«*, as well as each of its lexical components, is (motivated) literally, the text is strictly monosemantic, and it allows for no extended interpretation or semantic generalization – it should therefore not be called a ‘proverb’, since it is none, but a prognostic paroemia. In contrast, *»One swallow does not make a summer«*, which also makes use of the swallow motive, which, in its essence as a proverb, and due to its polysemanticity, refers to something beyond what is literally denoted. Theoretically speaking, it may, of course, like many proverbs, as well be understood to refer directly to what is denoted by it (in this case: about some swallow

indicating the forthcoming arrival of a specific season of the year, and nothing else) – but, used as a proverb, the text would rather (be used or understood to) refer to the unreliability of some single and isolated index of some event to come, in a more general, extended sense. Likewise, paroemias like “*After rain comes sunshine*” or “*Where there is sunshine, there is also rain*” are (likely to be used as) proverbs, too; such items might indeed, if this is not an additionally confusing suggestion, eventually be called ‘weather proverbs’, due to the tropical (or figurative) use of words denoting weather phenomena – but it is one thing, to speak of weather phenomena in proverbs (i.e., as lexical components of proverb texts), and another thing, to wrongly denote prognostic paroemias by the term ‘weather proverb’.

It goes without saying that usually those naïve laymen and professional scholars, who use a specific term, tend to be content with their choice, seeing no need to change their terminology, driven by habit and limited by their internal perspectives. Looking at the state of the art from an external point of view (or, at least attempting to take such an external perspective by way of some temporarily constructed projection), one cannot but admit, however, that we are, in addition to the unlucky use of the term weather proverb, faced with a terminological mess in the field.

It is the major objective of this contribution to raise paroemiologists’ awareness and sensibility for terminology and the related confusion in this field, which is not acceptable for a scholarly discipline, the more since such a mess never is a mere terminological problem alone, but always goes hand in hand with problematic definitions, notions, and concepts: inconsistencies in terminology usually are accompanied by unclear conceptual distinctions. As a matter of fact, the question what we understand to be a ‘weather proverb’, is a matter of definition and terminology, based on everyday usage as well as on scholarly habits. But taking the external perspective mentioned above, we will have to ask ourselves: does paroemiology have an unambiguous idea what exactly is intended to be denoted by the term ‘weather proverb’? Or do we only think we have such knowledge? Is it possible that we have but some vague, intuitive, or even naïve knowledge of which we assume that it is, despite all fuzziness and blurriness, sufficient for scientific purposes, too? Doesn’t it, after all, hold true what holds true for most paroemiological genres (cf. Grzybek 2016), namely, that we do not have, at a closer look, a strict definition of our objects under study, and operate with preliminary common sense concepts?

Given this state of the art, the aim of this contribution can of course not be to simply replace one term by another; nor do we intend to offer a new, generally acceptable term instead of ‘weather proverb’, without necessarily delivering a corresponding definition for it and (some of) its possible sub-types, at the same time. Such definitions, including all necessary genre descriptions and distinctions, cannot be developed *en passant* here – any attempt in this direction would simply be too demanding to be fulfilled within the framework of this contribution, even if some steps in this direction have recently been made separately (cf. Grzybek 2015). We will therefore confine ourselves to hopefully achieve, at the end of this contribution, some consensus among paroemiologists that the present situation is (still) not

satisfying, and that some new, synthetic approach is needed, eventually paving the way for an unobstructed view on the phenomenon under study.

In any case, in demonstrating what has been termed a ‘mess’ above, in a possibly challenging way, and in attempting to create and maintain at least some basic order in our house of paroemiological terms and definitions, we need some operational working definition, which is able and suitable to cover not only ‘weather proverbs’¹, but related genres and their terms as well. In this respect, it is important to note that these related terms may be of different kinds (i.e., varying hierarchical order): (a) they may either serve as synonyms for what commonly is termed a ‘weather proverb’, they may (b) refer to other genres, which share some, but not all characteristics of these ‘weather proverbs’, or they may (c) serve as some kind of umbrella term for both, on a higher level. In fact, the term ‘weather proverb’ traditionally has served to denote both a specific genre and a group of genres. After all, this fact, namely, that not only have different (paroemiological) objects (i.e., genres) been subsumed under this term, but that also different terms have been in use for one and the same object, is one of the reasons for the resulting situation of terminological chaos, which may be of illustrative value in a postmodernist or deconstructivist framework, but which is useless for paroemiological research, even if the times of classical structuralist, classificatory and typological approaches are over.

‘Weather Proverbs’ – Are There Alternatives?

Searching for such a suitable umbrella term, one might, referring to traditional principles of definition, attempt to start with a sufficiently broad term – that is, to put it into more elegant Aristotelian words, some *genus proximum*, which, on a lower level, then allows for a study of those *differentia specifica* we are ultimately interested in. However, this procedure, rather adequate for classificatory purposes, presupposes that these other lower-order terms are well defined, or at least better defined than the term ‘weather proverb’ – and this does not, unfortunately, seem to be the case...

As a consequence, we cannot but neutrally look at all these terms and try to find out if it is possible to draw some valuable conclusions from their analysis. As a preliminary study of the field shows, there is a whole variety of terms, which are used as alternatives for ‘weather proverb’: primarily, we are concerned with names such as ‘weather belief’, ‘weather omen’, ‘weather portent’, ‘weather rule’, ‘weather sign’, ‘weather superstition’, or even ‘weather sign superstition’. They all intend to denote and cover the genre under study here; as a matter of fact, all these terms implicitly or explicitly accentuate different aspects of the genre under study, and it seems worthwhile looking at them in some detail in this respect.

¹ If the term ‘weather proverb’ will still be used in this text – for the sake of simplicity, and paying tribute to the habits of those who are still accustomed to use it – this will be done in inverted commas only, signaling a clear (and not necessarily ironic) distance from this usage.

'Weather saying', for example, in a similar way as 'weather proverb', primarily emphasizes that we are concerned with a verbal phenomenon, or, to be more precise, with an item from the realm of verbal folklore – what is emphasized by these terms thus are aspects like the texts' stereotypy and quotation character. Following the English WIKIPEDIA entry on "SAYING"², by way of a first approximation to this term, we learn that a saying is "any concisely written or spoken linguistic expression that is especially memorable because of its meaning or structure"; taking a closer look at this entry, we then find, however, that the term "saying" is far from being clearly defined, comprising, among other genres, too, like adages, aphorisms, bromides, apophthegms, clichés, epigrams, epitaphs, gnomes, idioms, maxims, mottos, platitudes, proverbs, saws, witticism, etc. It goes without saying that under these circumstances, the term 'saying' appears to be of little use for our purposes...

As compared to this, the term '**weather rule**' appears to be less captious; yet, it is ambiguous, too, and the relevant difference has hardly ever been made an explicit topic in the field of paroemiology. Generally speaking, a 'rule' (from Latin: *regula* = measure) is socially defined mandatory norm, derived from experience and/or knowledge; however, norms can be *descriptive* (statistical) or *prescriptive* (normative), and so can rules. This is to say that, on the one hand, a 'weather rule' can be understood as a prescriptive rule, in this case containing (or conveying) suggestions and concrete words of advice, recommending (or forbidding) to do or not to do particular things, given specific weather circumstances; as a consequence, it appears be reasonable (or even necessary) to distinguish between recommendations, or instructions, on the one side, and prohibitions, or taboos, on the other. On the other hand, a 'weather rule' might be conceived of as a descriptive rule, in this case implying that we are concerned with some kind of (verbalized) experience, be that one's own or not, based on (previous observations of) facts and assuming, by way of inductive generalization, regularities of objective reality, concerning weather in our specific case. It is well possible that those, who have suggested and used the term 'weather rule', have not been aware of this difference, or have implicitly based their ideas on one of its two interpretations, without taking into account the other option. The more one should pay attention to the different implications of both terms, and be aware of them. In this context, it is important to pay attention to the fact that only part of 'weather proverbs' contain explicit recommendations or practical instructions, whereas others do not. And the situation is even more difficult, if one takes into consideration that, from a pragmatic point of view, a descriptive rule (without explicit 'instruction markers') might as well be functionally interpreted as a recommendation, and the interpretative derivation of recommendations which are not given explicitly in the text, may be a matter of different boundary conditions, among them possibly individual and subjective factors. Additionally, many essential differences have not been paid attention to in the study of such 'rules', e.g., the difference between a deterministic vs. a probabilistic understanding rules, the problem of related and

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saying>

limiting boundary conditions and relevance claims³, and many others. In sum, the term ‘weather rule’ appears to be no good choice, too, being too undifferentiated in its hitherto use.

Terms like ‘**weather omen**’, ‘**weather portent**’, or ‘**weather presage**’ emphasize the function of prognosis, or rather: prediction. Generally speaking, ‘omens’ (from Latin: *ōmen*), ‘portents’ (from Latin: *portendere* ≅ foretell), and ‘presages’ (from Latin: *praesagus* ≅ *prophetic*) refer to phenomena which serve as an index of a future event, the given phenomenon thus serving to foretell the future, which in ancient times was the task of specialized diviners. More often than not, the underlying process has been interpreted to be an implicational one, i.e., some event *A* has been regarded to be an index of some other event *B*, resulting in the relation $A \rightarrow B$. Again, a number of important distinctions have often been neglected in this context. One of them is the distinction of causal relationships vs. constant conjunctions, the latter concerning future-oriented indexical relations, rather than simultaneous co-occurrences. This kind of prediction, however, concerns only part of all ‘weather proverbs’, ignoring those which are related to consequences (e.g., activities to be fulfilled or prevented), such as the above-mentioned recommendations.

In contrast to the labels discussed above, terms like ‘**weather superstition**’ or ‘**weather belief**’ primarily are based upon and refer to the belief and knowledge systems of a given society. In this context, it happens regularly that traditional ‘weather proverbs’ which are considered to be beliefs or superstitions, are submitted to “objective” or “scientific” attempts trying to “prove” their “truth” on a scientific basis, or their “scientific untenability”, respectively, with contemporary methods. Apart from the above-mentioned problem of boundary conditions – what is a belief or superstition in one society, may be knowledge in another society – the problem with such approaches (and, as a consequence, with these terms) is that, what is considered to be a superstition today may turn out to be knowledge today, depending on the development of science. In other words: not only are the boundaries and transitions between belief and superstition fluent, also are the boundaries between belief or superstition and knowledge – and there is almost no chance to decide on the material text basis alone, what kind of we are concerned with.

In sum, all these alternatives appear to be problematic, since they selectively accentuate specific features, none of them having the potential to cover a sufficiently broad scope of related terms and to replace the unlucky term ‘weather proverb’.

³ Considering those ‘weather proverbs’ which are regarded to be experience-based, as regular, rule-like and, by way of that, allegedly ‘objective’ observations, leads to questions about their geographical, cultural, or historical origin – in this respect, traditional paroemiography has largely failed, more often than not haven giving no sources, but simply copying, translating, at best quoting (from) other sources.

If at all, then of all terms mentioned the most general and most “harmless” seems to be ‘**weather sign**’. In fact, as simple⁴ GOOGLE and BING searches for frequency show, it is the most frequently occurring of all terms listed above; the following Table 1 summarizes the results:

Table 1: Frequencies

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Weather sign | 99300 |
| Weather rule | 21500 |
| Weather saying | 16100 |
| Weather omen | 14800 |
| Weather proverb | 5890 |
| Weather superstition | 1570 |
| Weather belief | 861 |
| Weather portent | 541 |
| Weather presage | 224 |
| Weather sign superstition | 1 |

This might be a strong argument in favor of a predilection of the term ‘weather sign’, and an argument in favor of postulating ‘weather sign’ as that *genus proximum* term we are in need of. Such a choice appears to be even more reasonable, if one takes into account that this term is not hyper-distinctive and covers omens, sayings, proverbs, etc., alike: they all are genuine signs, from a semiotic point of view, although possibly signs of different semiotic status, depending on the semiotic theory chosen.

Unfortunately, however, the broad meaning of the term ‘sign’ is also the reason why, at closer sight, the term ‘weather sign’ turns out to be problematic, too, and is of little help for our purposes: as a term, it is not distinctive enough, and its frequency can be explained by its general and all-embracing extension, as the following examples show.⁵

⁴ The query was conducted on January 23, 2016. Generally speaking, such browser-based internet searches are no good strategy for diversified academic search queries; the results presented in Table 1, as interesting as they may be, should therefore be taken with due caution and be interpreted in terms of some kind of orientation, at best.

⁵ The spelling with double quotation marks is used here to distinguish these non-paroemic “weather signs” from paroemic ‘weather signs’, used to denote ‘weather proverbs’ (in contrast to weather proverbs).

Table 2: Examples of "weather signs"



Summarizing thus far, we may thus conclude even from a more or less cursory glance at the above (not necessarily finite) list of terms that not only is the term 'weather proverb' unlucky, but also can we hardly expect any clarification from (the analysis of) its alternatives, which are not suitable to really improve our situation: none of these terms offers some, albeit approximate, satisfying solution, since with none of them a useful or at least generally accepted definition is related – as a result, making use of them, means to go from bad to worse, and to jump from the frying pan into the fire.

It therefore seems necessary to tackle the question from a different angle, and to start not from alternatives used for and instead of 'weather proverb', but to analyze what may necessary and sufficient compounds of a suitable general term serving as the *genus proximum* we are in need of. Once such a term is found and eventually accepted, it will be possible (and necessary) to re-start the discussion of genres to be sub-summarized under that umbrella term.

In Search of a an Umbrella for 'Weather Proverbs'

As should have become clear from the foregoing discussion, such an umbrella term must fulfill several needs: it must be suitable to cover the phenomena under study, i.e., both 'weather proverbs' and related genres, but it should not be too general, in order not to lose its specificity – it must offer, in other words, some kind of filter, which allows relevant paroemic terms and related objects to enter, and which includes irrelevant items. To be more exact, such a filter is likely to be a combination of different kinds of filters, that is, it may combine various filter elements (or different filters). A *thematic filter*, for example, would accept only items concerning a specific topic (e.g., in our case: weather); a *functional filter* would accept only items which serve a specific (pragmatic) purpose, or function (e.g., in our case: prognosis); a *media filter* would separate verbal from non-verbal phenomena; a

typological filter would accept only particular types, or. As a matter of fact, a basic principle of meta-language holds true here for all cases: the more general the filter elements are defined, the more phenomena will be covered, and the more unspecific our term will be. Moreover, it goes without saying that such filter elements can (or must) be combined with each other, eventually repeatedly, as a consequence again covering increasingly less phenomena, of course. Quite logically, there is no a priori given procedure which filter should be at the start of the selection processes, and this decision is relevant for all subsequent steps. The following considerations thus do not claim to represent a final solution, but an attempt to show, how such a mechanism might work for 'weather proverbs'.

In a first step, it might be reasonable to start with a *thematic* filter. This basic filter is, without a doubt, the most general one: generally assuming that we are concerned with a folklore phenomenon, and choosing 'weather' as the relevant concept, we would thus be faced with the general term and concept of 'weather lore'. Excluding non-verbal folk beliefs and superstitions on the basis of some *media* filter would reduce the field to 'verbal weather lore'. This would still allow, for example, for the inclusion of proverbs proper, as well as of fairy tales, fables, etc., but it would exclude, among others, the mere interpretation of specific animal behavior indicating some change of weather) However, such a decision would be problematic, since non-verbal observations are, in combination with specific belief and knowledge systems, an obligatory pre-condition for their verbalization and, as a consequence, for their interpretation. As to a typological component, one might, of course, accept only paroemias to pass through the filter. This presupposes, however, a generally accepted definition of 'paroemia' what, in turn, asks for a clear distinction of paroemias from phrasemes, idioms, etc., in one direction, and from one-scene anecdotes, etc., in the other, genres like wellerisms somehow being between them, or being part of both, alternatively. Moreover, such a typological filter might very much depend on functional criteria, since function is one of the factors possibly being relevant for typological differences. As to the introduction of a *functional* filter, one should be aware of the fact that we are concerned with pragmatic functions, concerning the relation between sign (or text) and sign user in a specific semiotic context. Although, as a rule, there is no one-to-one relationship between a given text and its possible function (or, to be more correctly: functions), a text usually has but one dominant function, in a concretely given situation. As a matter of fact, in case of 'weather proverbs', we are predominantly with a prognostic and/or instructive function; nevertheless, one and the same text may serve not only as a mere prognosis or prediction, but as some kind of recommendation, etc., as well, and it may serve one function in one context, and another function in another.

Summarizing, all filters except the thematic one are problematic in so far as they do not provide unambiguous criteria. As a consequence, the general term 'weather lore' appears to be the most adequate promising starting point, allowing for a sufficiently broad view on the field as a whole, as well as for further specifications. Characteristically enough, 'weather lore' as a term is shown by GOOGLE to occur even more often than all above-mentioned

names (with a frequency of 126.000). Moreover, it has long been considered to be suitable to cover many of the terms and their functions mentioned above, starting from the late 19th century, when 'weather lore' was established and petrified as a technical term in folkloristics (cf., e.g., Bergen/Newell 1889, Vance 1891, Hazen 1900), and serves as such until our days.

With regard to this term, one must be aware of the fact and bear in mind, of course, that in the foregoing ruminations of this contribution we have been primarily concerned with English terms, since English is the language of this publication; and not only is each language related to its culture, also has each culture its own traditions, including scholarly traditions. As a consequence, approaching the problem "from the English side", may be imply some kind of a "biased" approach, and one must be aware of possibly diverging trends and traditions in other languages.

As a consequence, it seems reasonable to provide some comparative basis. Such an interlingual comparison of weather-related paroemiological terms, however, has hardly ever been undertaken. In pursuing this idea, it seems tempting to do this research on the basis relevant WIKIPEDIA entries – a procedure which is of course, from a scholarly point of view, related with a number of advantages and disadvantages (or even dangers), waiting in the paroemiological jungle. A possible advantage can be seen in the fact that there are links and cross-references to what are considered to be analogical entries in other languages. A possible disadvantage is, however, that we are concerned with collaboratively written texts, not necessarily written by trained experts, but interested laymen, too: and although there is principally some kind of collective auto-correction, we can definitely not be sure in how far we are concerned with a professional reference base. Yet, in our context, this possible disadvantage may turn out to be an advantage, if we do not take the entries as mandatory research source, but as material which is suitable to open our eyes for possibly existing inconsistencies, the elimination of which would be the task of professionals, i.e., in our case, of the international paroemiological research community.

'Weather Lore' and its Relatives – A Sobering Look at WIKIPEDIA

In contrast to all other terms mentioned above, an entry in its own right is devoted to the term 'weather lore' in the English version of WIKIPEDIA; here, 'weather lore' it is defined as "the body of informal folklore related to the prediction of weather".⁶ As can easily be seen, two major criteria are used to define the term: first, a thematic restriction to weather, and second, a functional restriction to prognostic function.

In addition to references, notes, and eternal links, the entry contains basically three sections: a. "Where weather happens", b. "True lore, and why", and c. "False lore, and why". The content of each of these three sections is highly problematic, from a scholarly point of view, to say the least:

⁶ Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_lore (January 24, 2016)

- a. As to the location of weather, it is only said that “that a significant portion of ‘weather’ can be said to happen” in Earth’s middle latitudes, between roughly 30° to 60° North and South, that is, “where meteorological phenomena do not persist over the long term”; weather folklore, therefore, is seen to refer to this mid-latitude “region of daily variability”. However, as we know, weather lore refers not only to daily phenomena, but includes longer periods, too. Curiously enough, it is not mentioned that most weather phenomena occur in what is termed the troposphere – this term is only indirectly referred to by way of a link from the term ‘weather’ itself.
- b. More importantly, a juxtaposition of “true lore” and “false lore” is introduced, as well as the false promise to explain the difference between these two. In fact, no statement at all is made in the ‘true lore’ section, why the arbitrarily selected American, Danish, Dutch, French, Italian, and Norwegian examples should be ‘true’; only indirectly the reader may conclude from the ‘false lore’ section, what allegedly makes the difference (and thus the essence of ‘true lore’), namely, when “problems in testing the veracity of traditions about the weather” are seen, due to “the wide variety to be found in the details”, particularly to regional variations.– As to the distinction of ‘true’ from ‘false’ lore, we are thus face with two rather implicit assumptions: a first silent assumption is that weather lore is generally seen as a universal phenomenon, notwithstanding the fact that not all cultures necessarily have one and the same weather lore genres; and a second assumption is that individual texts – albeit from different regions, in different languages or in translation – are classified as ‘true’ of ‘false’, depending on whether their validity can be proven by empirical methods according to the knowledge of our days. Both assumptions may closely related, of course, and as a consequence, both are equally questionable: after all, weather differs across regions, and what is ‘true’ here may be false ‘there’, and what may fail to appear ‘true’ today, may turn out to be proven tomorrow...

Summarizing, we can say that although at first sight the term ‘weather lore’ might lend itself to be the suitable umbrella term we are looking for, its concrete definition in the English version of WIKIPEDIA, in addition to the problems outlined above, unnecessarily narrows the interpretation of this term which thus does not fully reflect the possible semantic spectrum. With these shortcomings in mind, we can now turn to the interlingual cross-references to other languages.

As a look at the English WIKIPEDIA entry ‘weather lore’ shows, links to 14 other languages are offered, if one leaves aside the additional references to the German Bavarian dialect and to the artificial language of Esperanto (where the corresponding entry is entitled ‘veterproverbo’, with ‘veterproгноza proverbo’ as an alternative name). Table 2 presents a list of these languages, the original language names given in the first column, their English names in the second column.

Table 3: Interlingual Wikipedia references and cross-references for ‘weather lore’

| | Language | | Entry |
|----|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Čeština | Czech | Pranostika |
| 2 | Dansk | Danisch | Vejrvarsel |
| 3 | Deutsch | German | Bauernregel |
| 4 | Føroyskt | Faroese | Veðurmerki |
| 5 | Français | French | Dictons météorologiques |
| 6 | Italiano | Italian | Meteorognostica |
| 7 | Nederlands | Dutch | Weerspreuk |
| 8 | 日本語 | Japanese | 観天望気 [kantenbuki] |
| 9 | Norsk bokmål | Norwegian | Værmerke |
| 10 | Polski | Polish | Przepowiednie pogodowe |
| 11 | Русский | Russian | Народные приметы о погоде |
| 12 | Slovenčina | Slovak | Pranostika |
| 13 | Svenska | Swedish | Vädermärke |
| 14 | 中文 | Chinese | 天氣諺語 [tian qi yan yu] |

As can easily be seen from even a cursory glance at the entry titles in the third column, the references appear to be highly heterogeneous, in so far as the entry titles hardly seem to refer to identical or equivalent phenomena. A closer look at these entries additionally shows that not only the titles of what is referred to differ, also do the definitions in these entries, as well as the examples given, indicating that even under identical terms with (more or less) identical definitions different genres may be understood or subsumed. In fact, very different aspects may be emphasized in the different languages. Irrespective of this fact, one can identify sets of languages, which seem to display more or less similar trends in their approaches.

Not surprisingly, Czech (1) and Slovak (13), for example, refer to one and the same term in both languages, namely, ‘pranostika’; yet, the content of both entries differs. Whereas the Slovak entry defines this term as “the prediction of future things, especially of weather, or a saying with such a prediction or life experience⁷”, the Czech entry emphasizes that we are concerned with “a genre of folk literature”, and speaks of “a saying which attempts to relate certain meteorological phenomena and times of the year, based on long-term human experience, or the prediction of such things, respectively.”⁸ The Polish (10) entry ‘przepowiednie pogodowe’ [weather prediction] too, emphasizes the “forecasting the weather”, these forecasts being “based on the long-term observation of the human body’s reactions, the behavior of domestic and wild animals, as well as phenomena in the surrounding natural environment.”⁹ The aspect of forecasting, based on observation, is also

⁷ <https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pranostika>

“Pranostika je predpoveď budúcich vecí, najmä počasia alebo porekadlo s takouto predpoveďou alebo životnou skúsenosťou.”

⁸ <https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pranostika>

„Pranostika je žánr lidové slovesnosti. Jde o rčení, které se snaží dávat do souvislosti určité meteorologické jevy a roční dobu, založená na dlouhodobé lidské zkušenosti, potažmo i předpověď těchto věcí.“

⁹ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Przepowiednie_pogodowe

emphasized in the Italian (7) term “Meteorognostica” and its definition, which refers back to the Ancient Greek roots of μετέωρος (metéōros) [lofty] and γνώσις (gnôsis) [knowledge]. ‘Meteorognostica’ is then declared to be a “somewhat ‘unscientific’ or ‘popular’ meteorology: it deals, in fact, with forecasting of atmospheric phenomena related to popular beliefs (especially farmers, for the needs of the harvest), based not only on ancient astrological observations but also on observations of various natural phenomena (not only atmospheric but also fauna and flora), and often associated to a specific period, month, date, etc. what expressed by way of so-called ‘meteorognostic rules’, that is to say proverbs”.¹⁰

Three other languages can be regarded to form a second group, making use of identical lexical components in their names: Faroese (4) ‘Veðurmerki’, Swedish (13) ‘Vädermärke’, and Norwegian (9) ‘Værmerke’. They all can be translated into English as ‘weather marks’ (‘mark’ here being used in the meaning of ‘sign’). Their definitions are similar, too: the Faroese entry refers to “a sign or mark which can be observed in nature, and which can serve as an index of weather forecast”¹¹; the Norwegian ‘værmerke’ is said to be “a herald of weather associated with more or less sure signs in nature”, the “statements about how the weather will” being “based on accumulated folk experience and on pure observation”¹²; likewise, the Swedish ‘vädermärke’ is defined as an “expression which indicates the relationship between certain conditions or observations and the weather expected to follow”; here, we find the additional remark that “among weather marks are such that have high credibility, while others may be seen as pure superstition”.¹³

In this respect, the entry ‘vejvarsel’ of the related Scandinavian Danish language differs a little bit: on the one hand, the term translates literally as ‘weather herald’, on the other hand, the direction of prediction is not understood to be uni-directional, as in all other definitions presented thus far, but possibly bi-directional: “A weather warning is an attempt to predict the weather, or it is an attempt to predict other events from weather”.¹⁴

„Prognozy powstawały na podstawie długotrwałych obserwacji reakcji organizmu ludzkiego, zachowania się domowych i dzikich zwierząt oraz zjawisk zachodzących w otaczającym środowisku naturalnym.”

¹⁰ <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteorognostica>

“[...] in un certo qual modo la versione “non scientifica” o “popolare” della meteorologia: si tratta, infatti, della previsione dei fenomeni atmosferici legata alle credenze popolari (soprattutto contadine, per le esigenze del raccolto), basate oltre che su antiche osservazioni di tipo astrologico anche sull'osservazione di vari fenomeni naturali (non solo atmosferici, ma anche della fauna e della flora), e associate spesso ad un determinato periodo, mese, data, ecc. e che si esprime attraverso le cosiddette “regole meteorognostiche”, vale a dire dei proverbi [...]”

¹¹ <https://fo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veðurmerki>

“Veðurmerki er tekin ella merki, ið kann eygleiðast í náttúruni, og sum var hildið at geva ábending um veðurlagið.”

¹² <https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Værmerke>

„Værmerke er varsel av været knyttet til mer eller mindre sikre tegn i naturen. Utsagnene om hvordan været vil bli er basert på akkumulert folkelig erfaring.”

¹³ <https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vädermärke>

„Ett vädermärke är ett uttryck som anger sambandet mellan vissa förhållanden eller iakttagelser och det väder som väntas följa.”

¹⁴ <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vejvarsel>

Yet another aspect is emphasized in the French entry ‘dictons météorologiques’, where the term ‘dicton’ refers back to Latin ‘dictum’ [“something said”], i.e., some kind of an authoritative or dogmatic statement: here we are told that this genre is “a series of metaphorical or figurative formulae which are drawn from empirical observations of climate and meteorological events”¹⁵. Such a definition is curious indeed, because metaphoricalness and/or figurativeness is definitely not considered to be a characteristic trait of ‘weather proverbs’ (only of the weather proverb, in the strict sense outlined at the beginning of this contribution). In fact, it is just the term ‘dicton’ which has been suggested in contrast to ‘proverbe’, e.g., by Greimas (1970), and here just the direct (literal) and non-figurative character of the *dicton* has been emphasized, in contrast to the figurative nature of the *proverbe*. The verbal aspect is also emphasized in the Dutch term ‘Weerspreuk’ [weather saying]; again, its definition as “a phrase or proverb about weather”¹⁶ is highly problematic: whereas a ‘gezegde’, by definition, never is represented by a complete sentence (but weather proverbs may be), a proverb about weather has traditionally and correctly been seen as being essentially different from what is denoted by a ‘weather proverb’ with its specific prognostic function, as has been pointed out in detail above.

Finally, there are two references to Asian language, Chinese and Japanese. The Chinese entry 天氣諺語 literally means ‘weather proverb’. The term is composed of the two lexical components for 天氣 [tiānqì ≅ weather] and 諺語 [yànyǔ ≅ proverb]; yet, although the term for proverb is used here, too, this genre is considered to have a prognostic function, which in the Chinese definition specifically emphasizes the prediction of weather changes¹⁷, rather than weather prediction as such.

The Japanese entry 観天望気 [kantenbouki] speaks of “the act of expectation of (a) weather and (b) the change of weather/climate, by judging natural phenomena or the behavior of animals”.¹⁸ Interestingly enough, terminology is explicitly reflected in this entry, which correctly mentions the English term ‘weather lore’, what in Japanese would cover not only ‘kantenbouki’, but also ‘kishou denshou’ [気象伝承], i.e., the oral tradition about weather in general; the latter would thus turn out to be exactly that kind of hyperonym for all kinds of texts dealing with any kind of weather phenomena, as does the English term ‘weather lore’.

„Et vejrvarsel er et forsøg på at forudsige vejret, eller det er et forsøg på at forudsige andre begivenheder ud fra vejret.“

¹⁵ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictons_météorologiques

“Les dictons météorologiques sont une série de formules métaphoriques ou figurées tirées d’observations empiriques du climat et d’événements météorologiques.”

¹⁶ <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weerspreuk>

“Een weerspreuk is een gezegde of spreekwoord over het weer.”

¹⁷ <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/天氣諺語>

天氣諺語是指民間流傳的關於預測天氣變化的詞語

¹⁸ <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/観天望気>

観天望気（かんてんぼうき）は、自然現象や生物の行動の様子などから天気の変化を予測すること。

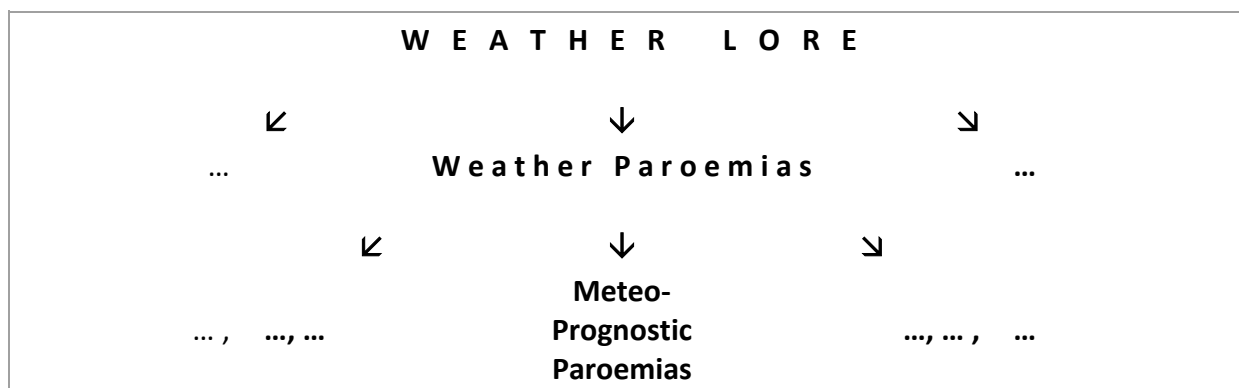
Summarizing, we can say that the references in Wikipedia from the English term ‘weather lore’ are far from being consistent, as to the level of equivalence: although ‘weather lore’ might serve as a suitable umbrella term, the way this term is used differs from what it seems to promise beforehand: whereas it might cover any kind of folklore genres dealing with weather phenomena in one way or another – including myths, riddles, charms, superstitions, etc., and all those genres, denoted by the terms discussed above – the term ‘weather lore’, as it is de facto used in practice, covers primarily those prognostic sayings which are commonly referred to by the unfortunate term ‘weather proverbs’.

In order to circumvent the problems related to this term, and in our need of some working terminological equipment, we must therefore make some at least preliminary, tentative and temporary decision. In this respect, a number of suggestions shall be offered here, referring to the filter system described above, resulting in a successive “bottle-neck procedure”.

From ‘Weather Proverbs’ to Meteo-Prognostic Paroemias

Starting from the assumption that we are generally concerned with folklore phenomena, the first step would be a thematic restriction to that part of folklore which, in one way or another, deals with weather phenomena. This realm shall be termed ***weather lore***, what presupposes that this term is not used in the narrowing manner as it is used in the corresponding English Wikipedia entry – and it should be folklorists’ task to correct that entry, introducing the term in a systematic manner.

The next step should be a concentration on paroemias: irrespective of the lack of conceptual and terminological consensus in this field, paroemias should at least be distinguished from sub-sentence categories like phrasemes, idioms, proverbial etc. (*any port in a storm calm before storm, to get wind of something, to be under a cloud*, etc.) in one direction, and from super-sentential categories, like short-scene anecdotes, fables, etc., in the other; this restriction will still allow for the inclusion not only of ‘weather proverbs’, but also of weather proverbs (like *Every cloud has a silver lining, After rain comes sunshine*, etc.), riddles, wellerisms, etc. Only when, in a third step, a dominant prognostic function narrows the broader field of paroemias to those texts, which traditionally have been termed ‘weather proverbs’ – it shall hereby be suggested to introduce and use the general term ***meteo-prognostic paroemia***’ for them – at least until at some consensus about a better one will be achieved. The following schema illustrates these steps synoptically:



The term ‘meteo-prognostic paroemia’ seems to be general enough for our purposes, including three of the aforementioned filtering features (i.e., thematic, functional, and a generic, the media filter not being necessary, in this case):

- a. The meteorological component of this term is the *thematic restriction*, which serves as a thematic filter for all relevant genres (and possible sub-genres) coming into play, and to implement and put into practice this component, obviously is the most simple of all three filter elements. There is no need to go into details here – running the risk to provoke meteorologists’ objections, suffice it to say here that weather generally takes place in the troposphere, the lowest portion of Earth’s atmosphere, and that its basic components are phenomena like air temperature, humidity, pressure, wind, any kind of precipitation, cloud coverage, etc. Yet, by tradition, the term ‘weather proverbs’ has not only served for the genres which aim at the mere prediction of weather: rather, paroemias traditionally denoted by this term may also deal with practical recommendations as to the consequences (such as, e.g., good or bad harvest) resulting from or to be drawn from particular weather conditions, including advice for farmers how to deal with a given (or rather: expected) situation.
- b. The term ‘paroemia’ is to be used as an umbrella term, not as a synonym for proverb, as was quite usual in the Middle Ages: it must cover other short genres of folklore, too, like proverbial sayings, omens, superstitions, riddles, wellerisms, maxims, adages, etc. Given such a variety of genres, most of which cannot be said to have a generally accepted definition, the term ‘paroemia’ serves to denote a terminological pool, a reservoir of terms, that is, the umbrella term we need for further distinctions.
- c. The prognostic component of the term implies a restriction to the pragmatic function of prognosis and, as a result, of prediction – after all, we can say that prediction is the basic function of all related paroemiological types. In this context it will be important to distinguish ‘meteo-prognostic paroemias’ not only from other paroemic genres in general, but from other prognostic paroemias, specifically. Moreover, without going into details here, it will also be important to distinguish different sub-types of meteo-prognostic paroemias, depending on various factors, such as the (not necessarily present) temporal or local factors, specific weather conditions at some other time or

place, conditions in flora and fauna, specific agents' behavior (be they animals or human beings) and, in case of the latter, intentionality or lack of intentionality in their behavior, etc. It will also be necessary to set apart those paroemia, in which a specific weather prognosis is made, from those, in which specific predictions are made on the basis of some weather condition, etc., etc.

As can be seen, there are quite a lot of open questions, unsolved problems and future tasks for paroemiology – as was said in the beginning, this contribution's major intent is to raise paroemiologists' awareness for these issues, rather than to offer final solutions. Nevertheless, the preceding ruminations might offer some help in tackling them.

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