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Hitori sumo o toru:

301 JAPANESE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

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I. Argument

The study of languages leads to the inner spiritual configuration which, throughout the human generations, is the carrier of the most profound conceptions, of the richest variety of ideas and of the noblest sentiments.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On the Cultural Diversity of Languages and its Influence on the Spiritual Development of the Human Species*

The present volume was born from the desire to emphasise the correlation between language and human experience, by using an illustrative material offered by the idiomatic expressions of the Japanese language and it is particularly addressed to those interested in the language and culture of the Land of the Rising Sun.

Defined as acts of linguistic creation that became tradition, the idiomatic expressions signal two types of connections between the lexical entities that combine: an inner connection, in which a concept is integrated in a lexical ensemble whose constituent elements cannot be separated without destroying the meaning of the whole, and an external connection in which the phenomenal reality of the empirical world and the inner structures of the conscience intertwine to different degrees and directions.

The contents of the volume, following this research premise, aim to justify its endeavour. In the theoretical framework of the integral linguistics founded by Eugenio Coşeriu (1921-2002), the study *Idiomatic Expressions as Cultural "Present"*, with which our research begins, analyses the idiom as a "repeated discourse" with a complex structure that comprises a network of lexical and grammatical relations, whose meaning is determined or completed by the cultural context. We thus wish to emphasise the way in which the idiomatic expression follows its own rules in constructing the meaning, rules that are different from the ones of the free technique, illustrating the means through which it probes (perhaps more than the lexemic word does) the conditioning of language through "things" and through the "knowledge of things".

The following chapter, *Idiomatic Expressions and Encyclopaedic Knowledge*, compiles an inventory of the most common Japanese idiomatic expressions, structured in two lists, of which one contains the idioms that focus on the natural universe (plants, animals, birds, seasons etc.) and the other contains the idioms with keywords focused on the human universe.

The latter, without being an exhaustive inventory, also traces, among others, the outlines of the human body, suggesting the large number of Japanese idiomatic expressions that contain key words such as “head”, “eye”, “mouth”, “hand”, “leg” etc. (With the exception of the idiomatic expressions that outline the human body, of those that exemplify the use of numbers and of those that, in time, became greetings, the rest of the idioms are listed in the alphabetical order of the Japanese language.)

The chapter *Idiomatic Expressions as Cultural Texts* treats the idiomatic expressions as vessels for cultural meaning, by grouping the chosen examples into several categories: traditional arts, numbers, and greetings. In the attempt to draw attention to the way in which language *lives* in the mouths of the people who speak it, we completed the list with three famous *haiku* poems (one-verse poems with 17 syllables) attributed to the *shogun* Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), verses that today are used to express certain character traits, such as violence, coercion, patience.

Finally, in the same sense of familiarizing the Romanian reader with the Japanese mentality and spirituality, mediated by language and culture, we considered it opportune to complete the introduction to the world of Japanese idiomatic expressions not only with a list of proverbs and old saying, but also with one that contains what the Japanese language regards as *yojijukugo*, or “maxims and reflections from four Chinese characters”. *Yojijukugo* emphasises, perhaps more than anything, the prominent particularities of the Japanese language, including the writing that, in this case, uses Chinese ideograms (*kanji*) exclusively, thus showing, through a very succinct expression, the linguistic concept of a community regarding the world. [Usually, the Japanese writing combines *kanji* with the *kana* syllables (*hiragana* and *katakana*)].

Since the two languages are geographically very far apart and have different sensibilities, any attempt to provide a Romanian translation naturally becomes a convention of approximate analogies. As much as possible, we tried to find a Romanian equivalent for each Japanese idiom or proverb and, if such equivalence was not possible, we resorted to explaining the meaning.

Furthermore, as an immediate practical application, if we were to initiate, based on the contents of this volume, a comparative / contrastive study on the Romanian and Japanese languages, one could easily observe not only the inherent differences, but also the surprising similarities between the two languages which, in a simple classification, could comprise: 1. (partially, or totally) similar idiomatic expressions, from the viewpoint of the expression and

the contents in the Romanian and Japanese languages: 雨が降ろうと、槍が降ろうと (*ame ga furō to, yari ga furō to*) “tună, fulgeră, mergem înainte”; 水に流す (*mizu ni nagasu*) “a lăsa lucrurile să curgă la vale”; 肩身が狭い (*katami ga semai*) “a se face mic în fața cuiva”; 2. Idiomatic expressions from the viewpoint of the content in the Japanese and Romanian languages: 根も葉もない、風の便り (*ne mo ha mo nai, kaze no tayori*) “gura satului”; 高嶺の花、雲をつかむよう (*takane no hana, kumo o tsukamu yō*) “pasărea mălai visează”; 竹を割ったよう (*take o watta yō*) “om cu coloană vertebrală”; 瓜二つ (*uri futatsu*) “(seamănă) ca două picături de ploaie”; すし詰め (*sushi zume*) “(înghesuit) ca sardelele”; 3. Japanese idiomatic expressions that do not have equivalent expressions in Romanian: 一人相撲を取る (*hitori sumō o toru*) = < a te strădui de unul singur > [lit. a face sumo de unul singur]; 鶴の一声 (*tsuru no koe*) = < vocea autorității > [lit. vocea/glasul cocorului]; 後ろ髪を引かれる思い (*ushiro kami o hikareru omoi*) = a umbla după potcoave de cai morți / < regret pentru ceva lăsat în urmă > [lit. gând tras de părul din spate]; 朝飯前 (*asaban mae*) = o nimica toată / < puțin > [lit. înainte de masa de dimineață]; 匙を投げる (*saji o nageru*) = < a ajunge la disperare > [lit. a arunca lingura]; 刺身のつま (*sashimi no tsuma*) = < lipsit de orice importanță, ne semnificativ > [lit. garnitura (bucățele de legume) de la sashimi]; 太鼓判を押す (*taikoban o osu*) = < a pleda cu entuziasm pentru cineva; a-și scoate toate armele la bătaie > [lit. a sigila cu o ștampilă mare]. One could easily observe that the complex forms used as examples for the latter category, which are representative for the *linguistic creativity* of a language, in the attempt to foster an adequate understanding by making appropriate expressive and code correspondences, inevitably appeal to the cultural *semiosphere*.

Having been neglected by the traditional linguistic investigations until now, perhaps due to the difficulty of a multi- and trans-disciplinary approach, the idiomatic expressions can, however, convincingly contribute to defining the “character” of a language. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), from a desire to configure the concept of the “spiritual individuality” of a language, asked himself where this could be found and how it takes root in a language. We believe that the idiomatic structures could represent a possible answer.

Naturally, the title of this introductory course in Japanese idiomatic expressions does not set a rigorous number of inventoried examples, but merely suggests that their number surpasses three hundred.

And, last but not least, we wish to mention that, through this volume, we celebrate the twenty-year anniversary of the *Japanese Language and Literature* specialisation at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University.

II. IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AS CULTURAL “PRESENT”

What is most valuable is gentleness of spirit...

Prince Shōtoku, *Constitution of Seventeen Articles* (604)

By revisiting Aristotle and Humboldt, Eugenio Coseriu (see 2001: 124) showed that language, without being the product of logical thinking, since the latter is necessarily based on language, represents the first particular manifestation of man as a human being. Through language, man can know the world and, at the same time, man can know himself, by concentrating and objectifying this knowledge beyond the immediate impressions or reactions.

Language manifests itself concretely as the particularly human activity of speaking to another through a language, but, conceptualizing language as *energeia*, this becomes an act of creation in all its forms. To speak means, within the integral linguistics propounded by Eugenio Coseriu, *to create* (cf. Coseriu 2001: 13), and language as a unit of intuition and expression becomes essential to defining man. As it is *logos* (“appréhension de l’être”) (Coseriu, 2001: 30), as well as intersubjective *logos* (“forme et expression de l’historicité de l’homme”) (Coseriu 2001: 30), language in general attains the dimension of man and being, while a language corresponds to the relationship of man with other human individuals, defining his “humanity” or his ability not only to ask himself questions in relation to *being* in an external world and in an internal one, but also of interpreting this *being*.

Defining language as a universal human activity, which is always achieved individually through the speakers of a language, in accordance to the norms of a historical linguistic community, Eugenio Coseriu (see 2000: 223-249) identifies three language levels: universal, historical and individual. At a universal level, language as an activity is speaking in general, at a historical level it means speaking a certain language, and at an individual level it corresponds to language performed by an individual in a determined historical situation, named “discourse” by Coseriu. The delimitation of the three planes of language is extremely important, as it directs to three levels of functionality in what concerns linguistic content: *designation*, *signified*, and *meaning*. The appearance of these within a text cannot be anything but simultaneous (cf. Coseriu 2000: 246). “Designation” would be, in integral linguistics, the relationship between a sign and the “thing” it names, or the reference to “reality”, while the “signified” would refer to the content of the linguistic sign given in a language. “Meaning”

refers to the specific “content” of an act of speech or respectively of a “discourse” (Coseriu, apud Saramandu 1996: 54). It thus becomes obvious that, for meaning, the combined signified and designation act as a material sign (signifier) in relation to what it signifies (signified) (cf. Coseriu 2001: 334).

Taking into account that meaning is the content of an act of speech or a discourse (see Coseriu, 2001: 355), it appears through the contest between designation and signified in a language, to which extralinguistic determinations of the considered discourse are added. This refers to, for example, “knowledge” of things designated, “knowledge” of the situation in which one speaks, or “knowledge” regarding the people who take part in the discourse (see Coseriu 2001: 165). The reality designated by a word / group of words cannot be eluded, seeing that reality is, in fact, a “point of reference” necessary for any semantic consideration of language (see Coseriu 2001: 101). The reproach sometimes brought to language, that it is insufficient because it cannot refer to the world in its utmost detail, is inadequate. It is true that language does not directly communicate contextual conditions, but this is so because it is not necessary to do this. However, it uses these very conditions, and real expression implies and contains them (cf. Whitehead, apud Coseriu 2001: 67), so that language not only analyses reality (see Coseriu, 2001: 101), but also relates to the real world. The idiomatic structure of a language, interpreted as the linguistic expression of human experience, seems to become, in turn, an obvious piece of evidence that language belongs to nature and spirit (cf. Coseriu, 2001: 131), to the exteriority of the world and to the interiority of conscience, simultaneously.

«All languages are different» – represents the assertion which Wilhelm von Humboldt debates in the chapter *Form of Languages* in his work *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction* (see Humboldt 1998: 302), in which he emphasises the fact that any language has a “character” and, particularly due to this aspect, each language reveals a personal worldview. The question that naturally arises after revealing the so-called “individuality” of a language regards the way in which each particular language attempts and manages to express it, the way in which this “spiritual individuality” takes root in the language and how it can be proven. By observing and accepting the “individuality” of each language, the German philosopher rightly asked himself which elements of the languages could anchor their characters. In the following, we shall try to argue that, in the case of the Japanese language, the idiomatic expressions can also convincingly define its “character”.

A brief description of the Japanese language would indicate that it draws attention through an unexpectedly simple morphological structure: the Japanese noun does not manifest differences in number, gender and case; not only does the verb not distinguish between

persons, but it also has weakly differentiated tenses, that of past or non-past (present or future); the category of pronoun is a relatively recent acquisition of the language, and the Japanese adjective does not suffer degrees of comparison. All these traits direct towards the “impersonal” character of the language. For example, the Japanese sentence: *Kodomo ga kuru*. could have two translations in an Indo-European language. A more functional one would be: “The child / the children is coming / are coming or will come.”, and another, within the letter and spirit of Japanese, could be approximated by: “In what concerns a certain number of the class of <child>, there is a <to come>.” (see Coseriu 2001: 168-169).

Acknowledging the character of peoples and the need to find the adequate sound expression given to the sentiments felt by the human soul (cf. Humboldt, 1998: 303), subjectivity plays an important role in the construction of languages. Language, defined as a “semantic structuring” of the external world (cf. Coseriu 2001: 173), subjectively structures the extra-linguistic reality, often by imposing a reality given by the subjective interpretation of man. “Subjectivity”, divided into a “subjectivity” that is incorporated in the lexical and grammatical system of a language, a “subjectivity” external to the grammatical and lexical system, and a sporadic, occasional one (cf. Coseriu 2001: 229), as an objective linguistic fact, is, thus, essential to language. The idiomatic structures of a language can be interpreted as a preeminent illustration of the first kind of subjectivity, manifested at the lexical and grammatical level of the language. As such, the Japanese idiom *chacha o ireru*, can be translated into Romanian with “a întrerupe tchinând” [to interrupt by teasing] and its literal conversion in the same language would be “a face ceai după ceai” [to make tea after tea].

Given that, normally, “a prepara ceai” [to make tea], in Japanese is phrased “(o)cha o ireru”, the repetition of the lexeme “cha”, meaning ‘tea’, seems to suggest haste and carelessness on the part of one of the participants in the conversation. Furthermore, in Japanese, the more frequently used lexeme for “tea” is “ocha” rather than “cha”. The “o” recalls a prefix of politeness that has fused with the word over time, so that today it is not recognized as such. Its omission from the lexeme that comes into the construction of the discussed idiom may suggest a certain lack of respect manifested between the speaker and the interlocutor.

According to Eugenio Coseriu, language defined as creative activity has as its main characteristic the fact that it is, at the same time, “expression with meaning” and “expression and meaning” (Coseriu 2001: 23). Or, alternatively phrased, it is a system of signs, where a sign is understood as “a conventional instrument and a cultural element that belongs to a community” (Coseriu 1995: 22). Continuing Plato, who specifies two “fundamental functions”

in the language, one of “naming” and another of “uttering” something that has already been named, a distinction present even today in what we called “lexicon” and “grammar”, Coseriu separates two types of signification: the lexical signification and the grammatical one. Without precisely coinciding, these two correspond to vocabulary and to grammar or grammatical structure.

Idiomatic expressions have been neglected until now by traditional linguistic investigation, therefore it would be interesting to try and place idioms into this classification, using an illustrative corpus offered by the Japanese language. The lexical function, the most important of the three functions of language, organizes primary experience with the help of words and it forgoes the functions necessary for combining words. Until the present time, however, the studies dedicated to the lexical function have focused their attention on the factual material offered only by word lexemes themselves, eliminating the research on the fused group of words that constitutes an idiomatic structure or “the repeated discourse”, as it was named by Eugenio Coseriu:

“Le « discours répété » comprend tout ce qui est traditionnellement figé comme « expression », « phrase » ou « locution » et dont les éléments constitutifs ne sont pas remplaçable ou re - combinables selon des règles actuelles de la langue.” (Coseriu 2001: 235)

Associated to the free technique, whose counterpoint is “the repeated discourse” (see Coseriu, 2001: 110), it shows the way in which one finds, in a discourse, that which can be combined with what has already been combined. Moreover, it is as in the case of lexemes like *geisha*, *samurai*, *kamikaze*. These are cultural terms for which, in order to understand their meaning, knowledge of the “extraverbal context” (see Coseriu 2001: 58) that they originate from is necessary. With the help of these forms of “repeated discourse”, like quotes, fixed phrases, proverbs, the study of objects can be recovered (“l’étude des ‘choses’ ”) (Coseriu 2001: 113), an investigation of this sort clarifying the contribution brought by knowledge of things and of “the world” to the activity of speech. Together with the idiomatic context (the language itself) and the verbal one (the discourse itself), cultural context contributes to the formation of context in the general sense of the activity of speech or of the reality that surrounds a sign, an act of speech or a discourse. By encapsulating all that belongs to the cultural tradition of a community, the cultural context becomes a particular form of historical context (see Coseriu 2001: 62). For instance, the Japanese idiom *abura o uru*, which can be translated into Romanian to “a pierde vremea” [wasting time], and whose literal meaning is “a vinde ulei” [selling oil] is connected to the Edo period (1600-1867) of the cultural history of Japan, when, in the absence of electricity, measuring the oil was carried out by the travelling

salesmen and it took a certain amount of time. While doing their jobs, they inevitably engaged in conversation with the hosts in whose house they were, which made the neighbours (whose wait was thus prolonged) believe that the delay was caused by their slacker-like characters. By way of the same interpretation, a Japanese idiomatic expression such as *atama o sageru*, with the Romanian equivalent “a ceda, a se supune” [to give in, to obey] and whose literal translation would be “a-și apleca capul” [to bow one’s head], undoubtedly points to the Japanese greeting in which respect, gratitude and consent are shown by bowing one’s head (*ojigi*). Similarly, an idiom like *bansaku o tsukuru*, translated into Romanian as “a epuiza toate posibilitățile” [exhausting all possibilities] and whose literal rendition would become “a se sfârși zece mii de posibilități” [exhausting ten thousand possibilities], for a correct understanding, would require, we believe, a knowledge of the fact that the Chinese ideogram 万, read as “man” or “ban”, that is part of the word “bansaku”, besides meaning “zece mii” [ten thousand], it also means “tot” [all].

The non-verbal context was often ignored by linguists, although, in the case of the idiomatic expressions, it offers the possibility to understand the language as the unity of intuition and expression (see Coseriu 2001: 28), as pure creation of signified and “signs”. Thus, the idiomatic expressions as periphrases of a key-word represent a category of cognitive synonyms, rather than a category of linguistic signs. The idiomatic structure *pin kara kiri made*, whose possible translation into Romanian is “unu, vârful, început” [one, peak, beginning], “de sus până jos” [from top to bottom], is, in Japanese, the periphrase that wishes to suggest the variety, the diversity of things. It is, however, interesting that this idiom contains two words with a neological etymon: “pin” is derived from the Portuguese “pinto”, signifying “unu” [one], and “kiri” is derived from “kuruso”, the phonetic adaptation to the Japanese language of the Portuguese lexeme “cruz”, signifying “cross”. But the horizontal and vertical lines that represent the iconic sign of the cross for the Christian faith constitute the features that make up the Chinese ideogram “十”, whose significance, in the Japanese language, is “zece” [ten]. Therefore, the literal translation of the idiom would be “de la 1 la 10” [from 1 to 10], in which, naturally, the count from one (=pin) to ten (=kiri), “pin” would constitute the lowest level, while “kiri” would express the highest level. The conditioning of the language through “things” and through “the knowledge of things” becomes, we believe, obvious, and the language-culture correlation becomes opportune:

“Regarding the relation between language and culture, one must note that it essentially presents three different meanings. On the one hand, language itself is a primary form of «culture», of objectifying human creativity (or, as they say – it also represents one and the

same thing-, of the «creative spirit»). On the other hand, language reflects the non-linguistic culture; it is the «actuality of culture» (Hegel), namely it expresses the «knowledge», the ideas and judgements on the known «reality» (and also on the «social» realities and on language itself as a segment of reality). Besides this, speaking is not only through language per se, through «the linguistic competence», but also through the «extra-linguistic competence», by «knowing the world», therefore through the knowledge, ideas and judgements on «things»; and «the knowledge of the world» influences the linguistic expression and it somewhat determines it.” (Coseriu 1994: 139)

In a manner similar to poetry, the idioms offer the objectification of an intuitive content of the conscience, beyond the distinction that can be made between true and false, between existence and non-existence. As a result of the act of creation, the architecture of the idioms presents a complex structure that constitutes a network of lexical and grammatical relations which can determine or complete the meaning. By presenting language as a creative act, the idiomatic expressions give way to countless possibilities of “speaking a language”:

“La variabilité des significations, en particulier les déplacements de sens nombreux et d’une grande portée ainsi qu’une aptitude illimitée pour les paraphrases multiples sont précisément les propriétés qui favorisent la créativité d’une langue naturelle et confèrent non seulement à l’activité poétique mais aussi à l’activité scientifique des possibilités d’invention continues.” (Jakobson 1973: 29)

Regarding the term “idiom” in Western languages, whose etymology directs to the Greek *idios*, meaning “private, particular”, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2008: 205) gives the following definitions in English: 1. “group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word; 2. (formal or technical) “a style of expression in writing, speech, or music that is typical of a particular group of people”. Alternatively, the *Longman English-Japanese Dictionary* (2006: 807) proposes the following equivalent terms in Japanese: 1. “idiomu, jukugo, kanyōku”; 2. “sakuhū, sutairu”. Since the present study is interested in the first meaning of the term, attention will be focused, as follows, on the Japanese equivalents “idiomu”, “jukugo”, “kanyōku”. While “idiomu” is a simple adaptation to Japanese of the English “idiom”, “jukugo” has a dictionary entry of three meanings: 1. “compound word, idiom”; 2. “Chinese word (*kango*)”; 3. “*kanyōku*, idiomatic phrase (s.n.)” (cf. *Nihongo daijiten* 1995: 1014). Conversely, “kanyōku” presents a single definition, namely “fixed reformulation, kanyō word, idiom, idiomatic expression (s.n.)” (cf. *Nihongo daijiten* 1995: 480). It is easy to note that in Japanese “jukugo” and “kanyōku” are terms that deal with metalanguage, defined approximately through each-other by the encyclopedic dictionary of Japanese. The lack of a clear dissociation between the two is expressed by the equivalents given in English.

Recognizing that what is expressed through words is always less than what has been said, idioms somehow transform into a “complementary” expressive activity, which redirects words to the sensations, feelings or states from which they arose (see Smith, apud Butaciu, 2009: 36). They attempt to reincorporate these not only in visual images or in dynamic sensations of the body, but also in other activities of knowing the “world”. The idiom particularly activates the cultural valence of the context that speaking in a language implies, and so presents a dynamic mechanism that appeals countless times to rhetorical figures in order to construct meaning. For example, the Japanese idiomatic expression *eimin suru*, with the Romanian equivalent “a se sfârși” [to end], whose literal rendition would be “a dormi somnul de veci” [to sleep the eternal slumber], is easily accessible for any non-native, due to a universal “knowledge” in which death is metaphorically interpreted as an “eternal slumber”. Contrarily, in order to access a certain level of depth in the case of the idiom *ocha o nigosu*, possibly translated into Romanian as “a ieși dintr-o situație neplăcută” [to exit an unpleasant situation], and whose literal rendition would become “a tulbura ceaiul” [to stir the tea], it is required to “know” green tea, so that one may make an analogy with the clear color of the “green potion”, which allows one to see the bottom of the cup in which it has been poured.

Likewise, there seems to be an indisputable connection between the idiomatic phrase *doro o kaburu*, meaning ‘a-ți asuma responsabilitatea altuia’ [to assume someone else’s responsibility], literally translated as ‘a turna noroi (pe cap)’ [to pour mud upon oneself], and the sixty-fourth Zen *koan* (parable) from the “Hekigan-roku” parable collection, commented by the Chinese priest Yuan-wu in 1225 and also mentioned by Yukio Mishima in his novel “The Temple of the Golden Pavilion”: “Chōshū wears a pair of shoes on his head”. The Zen *koan*, which is, in fact, an enigma with a significance difficult or even impossible to make out, tells of how during the T’ang Dynasty, a kitten that had entered the garden of a temple becomes a reason for dispute between the inhabitants of the west wing and of the east wing of the building. But master Nansen, who was following the quarrel, grabs the kitten by the nape, puts a knife against its neck and asks the monks who were fighting over it to say the right word in order to save the animal’s life. However, nobody is able to answer Nansen’s request and the cat is killed. At dusk, the great Chōshū returns to the temple, and learns of the incident. Chōshū listens silently and exits the room, placing his shoes on his head. (see Mishima 2000: 62) The *koan* tries to motivate the gesture of Nansen through the annihilation of the illusion of self, thus removing any contradiction between self and others, and shows Chōshū’s infinitely kind gesture as proof of Buddhist gentility. Its significance undoubtedly underlies understanding the previously mentioned idiom.

Called “repeated discourse” by Eugenio Coseriu, the idiom is situated beyond phonetics, vocabulary or grammar, it follows its own rules, different from that of free technique (see Coseriu 2001: 114), and has found different definitions for itself in recent specialized literature. The following shall be named: “ambiguous term” used in a controversial way, “combination of words” with a special sense, “special phrase”, “verbal anomaly”, “idiosyncrasy” of language (see Butaciu 2009: 13-14), “excuse” or “pretense” (see Egan 2008: 381-409) due to “inflexibility” and “lack of predictability”, and, not lastly, “obscure instance” (Wearing 2012: 500), in which the composing elements are connected by processes of a figurative type like similarity and analogy. Despite their multiple definitions, these semantically unstructured units called “idioms” are finally accepted in European specialized literature as “phrasemes” whose specific characteristics are given by: stability, idiomaticity, polylexicality. (cf. Burger, apud. Piirainen 2012: 33)

By differentiating themselves from proverbs, characterised by the universality of the expressed truth, through the illocutionary force and the discursive autonomy (see Piirainen 2012: 33), in the European phraseology, idioms are invested with the function of the morphological categories of the noun, verb, adjective or adverb. Recent studies are even dedicated to the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of idioms or to their analysis from the viewpoint of socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics. Although all of these approaches regard culture as a fundamental constant dominant in phraseology (see Piirainen 2012: 47), few studies treated the relation between idioms and culture in detail.

Among the numerous definitions given across time to (a) language, one may remark that suggested by cultural semiotics, for which it is a cultural artefact, thus reflecting characteristics of the culture in which it has occurred. At the center of this perspective stands, of course, man’s predisposition to create signs and endow them with meanings, culture then becoming a system of symbols or significant signs, in which it seems to be possible to treat the recognition of the relationship between idiomatic phrases and cultural knowledge as a common fact:

“ [...] le langage est au centre de tous les système sémiotiques humains et il est le plus important d’entre eux.” (Jakobson 1973: 28)

Culture, the sum of the whole nonhereditary information, together with the means of its organisation and conservation (see Lotman 1974: 12-19), contains all of the manifestation registers of human spirituality. We may speak of a European, African or Asian culture, just as

we may invoke a French, Russian, Romanian or Japanese culture, each of which propose a particular worldview whose details are sometimes surprisingly similar.

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1988: 40) used the metaphor of the circle drawn by a language around the people that speak it when he wanted to show that the attempt to leave this circle cannot be achieved except by entering “simultaneously” in the circle of another people. Because of this, it is believed that researching a linguistic fact belonging to a language, native or not, should start by presenting that which Coseriu (2001: 61), enumerating the extraverbal contexts of a language, calls a “cultural framework”. Always, what is said in a language is less than one expresses or understands, always the sense of a discourse passes beyond what is effectively said, and this can only happen due to the circumstances in which the act of speech is produced.

The features of the Japanese culture, for example, in the common opinion of several specialists, configure an altogether special model compared to that offered by Western culture. The Japanese cultural mentality is focused, as specialized studies show (see Ikegami 1998: 1909), on complementarity rather than contrast, on subject-object fusion rather than on their opposition, as it shows itself oriented preferentially towards the concrete and not the abstract, towards the small, and not the vast. It is then not accidental that all these characteristics are found in the functionality of the Japanese language, in which the high dependence of text on context makes the listener/reader actively involve himself in the discourse, participating diligently in the construction of meaning. A sentence like *Watashi wa unagi desu! Eu sunt țipar*, an example often invoked to illustrate the “illogicity” of Japanese, whose literal translation is ‘I am an eel.’, is an assertive sentence, grammatically correct in Japanese. But it also becomes pertinent from a logical point of view only if a context is actualized: spoken in a restaurant, the sentence can belong to a person from a group placing an order, who expresses his wish to have eel (a menu very appreciated by the Japanese during the summer) (see Ikegami 1989: 263). It’s true that any language is, to a certain degree, dependent on context, but Japanese is dependent in such a measure that the notion of “text” becomes more important than that of “sentence”. Which literally means that a sentence is a simple problem, but the real construction of sense in Japanese is for the context to specify. The high dependence of text on context reminds one of children’s language or poetic language, which emphasizes the imperfect control of language in one case, or the possibility of overcoming linguistic norms, in the other.

Moreover, in Japanese, assertive sentences are numerically overrun by interrogative, dubitative, conditional and imperative sentences, which are more affectively loaded, showing

that the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago are more inclined towards the concrete and art than towards the abstract and philosophy (see Suzuki 1988: 307). The idiomatic phrase *ichi go ichi e*, for example, which can be rephrased with ‘a once-in-a-lifetime meeting’, is heavily connected to the tea ceremony ideal of granting the highest importance to the moment. Tea ceremony is a spiritual discipline that treats every detail with utmost importance and has been established by master Sen no Rikyu (1521-1591). It is based on four essential principles: *wa* [和] (‘harmony’), *kei* [敬] (‘respect, reverence’), *sei* [清] (‘purity’), *jaku* [寂] (‘tranquility’), where the first two are considered social or ethical, the third is both of a physical and psychological nature, and the last one is spiritual or metaphysical (cf. Suzuki 1988: 304). Thus, tea ceremony teaches harmony between things, harmony between people, harmony between things and people or between people and nature, as well as respect for etiquette, ritual purification through cleanliness and order, and, not lastly, the way in which one can achieve inner tranquility. Helping its participants understand that everything in life is permanently changing and, consequently, that the transient moment deserves absolute attention, the ideal of the tea ceremony is heavily tied to the sense of the idiom *ichi go ichi e* (“o întâlnire ce are loc o singură dată în viață” [a once in a lifetime encounter]), whose literal conversion would be “un moment, o întâlnire” [one moment, one meeting].

At a closer look, however, in the concepts of *wa*, *kei*, *sei*, *jaku* one may recognize four Eastern schools of thought. To be exact, there is Confucianism in the first two (*wa* and *kei*), Taoism and Shintoism in the third (*sei*), and Buddhism and Taoism in *jaku*. Thus, the tea room (*chashitsu*) is transformed into the space that syncretizes these philosophies. By proposing a meditative frame of mind, tea ceremony meets Zen Buddhism, changing the given circumstances into an intimate relationship with the larger sphere of reality (see Suzuki 1988: 306). The space is transformed into a medium that raises the problem of time, as the moment acquires the value of eternity in the *chashitsu*:

“Who would then deny that when I am sipping tea in my tearoom I am swallowing the whole universe with it and that this very moment of my lifting the bowl to my lips is eternity itself transcending time and space?” (Suzuki 1988: 314)

Yet the morphology of culture no longer understands “space” in the Kantian spirit, like an absolute and constant *a priori* of human intuition, but as a “creative act of sensitivity” (cf. Bachelard, 2005: 66), valid according to cultural diversity. The intuition of space, as a creative act of conscious sensitivity, is now seen as a dominant factor, exclusively determined by the symbolic power of a culture or of a style. But, aside from a spatial purview, conscience also possesses a temporal purview, and, from the perspective of their relationship, European

culture considers space and time to be two equal parts of the same whole. However, in Japanese culture, a real phenomenon, a sound, for example, is considered limitless, and it is possible to interpret it from the perspective of the infinite (cf. Miyoshi 1985: 117). To rephrase, in Western culture space and time are considered to be in a structural relationship, like “intellectual objects”, while in the Far Eastern mentality time and space are linked in a *boundless continuum* to the realm of the emotional or the mental universe.

This “boundless continuum” is, however, the true nature of *ma* [間], an ideograph that is also read as *kan* in Japanese, meaning “interval”. The Chinese character is a component of both the noun *jikan* [時間] ‘time’, but also of *kūkan* [空間] ‘space’. *Ma* is, in fact, an aesthetic concept that can be found not only in various musical or theatric forms, but also in the Japanese’s way of thinking (cf. Miyoshi 1985: 117), and it proves continuity as a fundamental feature of Japanese traditional art, possibly exemplified by “chained poetry” (*renga*) or “picture scrolls” (*emaki*). *Ma*, literally translated, means ‘space’ or ‘interval’ but, as an aesthetic concept, it directs to the space between something and what comes next, referring to the interval either between one drum beat and the next, between the pose position of a dancer and his change into another, or between one line of an actor and the next, etc. Therefore, *ma* is the time interval in which nothing happens, it is the moment of *blanks* that the actors are called upon to give the highest importance:

“Nothing apparently happens in these periods, but they are by no means empty moments. On the contrary, they are conceived of as fully significant moments – as significant as those moments at which something is really taking place.” (Ikegami 1986: 398)

Thus, continuity is demonstrated by *ma* in two ways: on the one hand, by neutralising the distinction between “nothing” and “something” that it achieves, each moment being seen as significant to the other and, on the other hand, by destroying the clearly articulated performative structure to which it contributes, granting significant value to the period in which nothing happens. This *ma* imposes a rhythm rendered in the Japanese language through *ma o toru* (“a lua o bătaie tăcută” [to take a silent beat]), which we believe could also explain the idiomatic structures *ma ga yoi*, meaning “o bună potrivire temporală” [a good temporal match] (see Miyoshi 1985: 99), indicating a situation whose circumstances had been favourable, or *ma ga warui*, its approximate equivalent being “a fi stânjenit” [being embarrassed], although its literal translation would be “timp nepotrivit” [inappropriate time]. By having the same *ma* as a key concept, idioms such as *ma ga nukeru*, meaning “stupid” (although its literal rendition would be “cineva fără simțul timpului” [someone with no sense

of time]), or *ma ga motenai*, with the Romanian equivalent “a nu fi capabil să umpli tăcerea” [incapable of filling the silence] (whose literal translation would be “a nu fi capabil de a ține spațiul” [incapable of holding the space]), in turn, ultimately emphasise the importance of the “silent beat” in the Japanese spirituality.

Idioms are closely related to social life and civilization, to art and politics, to the development of thinking, and altogether to the entire life of man. Thus, as in the case of any other language, the Japanese mentality, the way in which the inhabitants of the archipelago treat life, man, nature, etc., can be known through the Japanese idiomatic structures, which complete the meaning of discourse colorfully, humorously and with a dash of irony.

The idiomatic expression *hanamichi o kazaru*, with the Romanian equivalent “a face o ieșire grațioasă, a se retrage” [to make a gracious exit, to step away] and whose literal translation would be “a decora o ieșire” [to decorate an exit], may be associated (we believe) with “the Path of the Flowers” from the Kabuki theatre. It is the suspended “bridge” that passes through the seats in the audience, connecting the stage and the back of the room, namely the “ramp” on which the actors of the play make their entrances and exits.

But the concept through which one can describe and analyze the cultural basis of idiomatic phrases is “motivation” (Pirainen 2012: 49), the path that establishes the connection between lexical structure and figurative sense. Semantically motivated, idiomatic phrases lead towards knowing “things” and “the world”. Yet, if the cultural context is, most often, implicit for a native speaker, it has to become explicit for the foreigner who tries to approach that particular language. As it was already shown, for Humboldt (apud Boboc 1988: 146), the language of a community is its spirit, and its spirit is the language that it speaks, but these, however, cannot be thought of as completely identical.

In Japanese, the concept of *kotodama* [言霊] ‘spirit word’, dates from the 8th and 9th centuries and may be explained through the power that a word has, that of triggering events, of entailing deeds. It shows that, in Japanese culture, the word is inseparable from its meaning and designation (cf. Ikegami 1998: 1901). According to the *Shinto* animist belief, the Japanese native faith, everything in this universe has a spirit that talks and, through the word uttered by the human being, the spirit of that word may, in turn, manifest itself in the world. Later, also endorsed by two other concepts introduced by Buddhism: *shingon* [真言] the ‘truth-word’ of Enlightenment and *mugon* [無言], the ‘illusion-word’ of immediate reality, *kotodama* will develop in the aesthetic concept of *mono no aware* [物の哀] “the movement of the soul towards things, the pathos of things”. The entire encompassing world, through its

very nature, can naturally awaken in a person certain states of being, feelings, natural sensations. It is not accidental that different derivatives from the root <nature> have been, maybe even excessively used. Their use precisely justifies the wish to amplify the natural and the naturalness of these emotions that nature stirs within a human being, fully contrasting “the rational” and “artificial”. Just like sliding paper doors (*shōji* and *fusuma*) do not completely stop natural light and air in the Japanese traditional household, thus creating continuity between the inside (cultural space) and outside (natural space) when they open, between man and things there also has to be coordination, synchronization of feelings and mutual shaping, expressed in Japanese culture through *mono no aware* or “the beauty of simple and transient, fleeting things”.

The Japanese range is unique, based on the alternation of minor seconds and major thirds, thus making possible the “transposition of spiritual movement”, which reminds one of the “extremely painful nature of things” (cf. Lévi-Strauss 2013: 14). An idiom that has recently emerged in the Japanese language, *keshigomu no kanashimi* (see Ikegami 1990: 62-65), whose literal translation would be ‘the eraser’s sadness’, tries to evoke the same feeling of transience, of the insecurity of things, of the inexorable passing of time, at the same time building and seemingly enforcing a new world, adapted to the contemporary reality.

We believe that the study of any linguistic fact through a scientific and cultural approach becomes a completely justified contribution to the description of a language. It proves that any language is a creative open system, every language being free to “operate and provoke” according to “its own intimate force” (Humboldt 1988: 164). Since both the Japanese culture and language are characterised by harmony and continuity (see Ikegami 1998: 1909) and they are attached to intuition, experience and practice (see Lévi-Strauss 2013: 58), a study of idioms could prove the way in which the Japanese culture conceptualises the language, not as a limited and stable object, as Western culture sometimes does, but rather as a limitless event (see Ikegami 1989: 268) in a continuous flow.

III. Idiomatic Expressions and Encyclopaedic Knowledge

III.1. Idiomatic expressions focused on the natural universe:

- ▶ 青田買い (*aota kai*) → *a cumpăra blana ursului din pădure/ a tocni vulpea din pădure;*
÷ (lit.) [a cumpăra câmpul verde, crud]

- ▶ 青菜に塩 (*ao nani ni shio*) → *a pune sare pe rană;*
÷ (lit.) [a pune sare pe verdețuri]

- ▶ 秋風が立つ (*aki kaze ga tatsu*) → *a se răci relațiile;*
÷ (lit.) [a se ridica un vânt de toamnă]

- ▶ 上げ潮に乗る (*ageshio ni noru*) → *a fi pe val;*
÷ (lit.) [a urca pe valul înălțat]

- ▶ 暑さを忘れて陰忘る (*atsusa o wasurete kage wasuru*) → *a întoarce spatele (din nerecunoștință);*
÷ (lit.) [a uita umbra uitând căldura]

- ▶ 後は野となれ山となれ (*ato wa no to nare yama to nare*) → *fie ce-o fi!* ;
÷ (lit.) [după aceea, poate deveni fie câmp, fie munte]

- ▶ 油を搾る (*abura o shiboru*) → *a strânge cu ușa;*
÷ (lit.) [a stoarce uleiul]

- ▶ 天下り (*ama kudari*) → *căzut din cer;*
÷ (lit.) [coborârea din ceruri]

- ▶ 網に掛かる (*ami ni kakaru*) → *a cădea în plasă;*
÷ (lit.) [a se prinde în plasă]

▶ 雨が降ろうと、槍が降ろうと (*ame ga furō to, yari ga furō to*) → tună, fulgeră, mergem înainte;

÷ (lit.) [dacă plouă, dacă ar cădea sulițe]

▶ 犬の遠吠え (*inu no tōbae*) → a vorbi pe la spate;

÷ (lit.) [lătratul îndepărtat al câinelui]

▶ 犬も食わない (*inu mo kuwanai*) → a nu avea ochi (pentru);

÷ (lit.) [nici câinele nu (o) mănâncă]

▶ 芋を洗うよう (*imo o arau yō*) → a nu avea unde să arunci un ac;

÷ (lit.) [ca și cum ai spăla cartofi]

▶ うどの大木 (*udo no taiboku*) → bun de nimic;

÷ (lit.) [marele copac de udo]

▶ 馬が合う (*uma ga au*) → petic după sac;

÷ (lit.) [a se potrivi caii]

▶ うりのつるになすびはならぬ (*uri no tsuru ni nasubi wa naranu*) → așchia nu sare departe de trunchi/ ce naște din pisică șoareci mănâncă;

÷ (lit.) [din viță de țărtăcuță nu se face vânăță]

▶ 瓜二つ (*uri futatsu*) → (seamănă) ca două picături de apă/ ploaie;

÷ (lit.) [două țărtăcuțe]

▶ 鬼の目にも涙 (*oni no me ni mo namida*) → muntele că-i munte și tot are doruri multe/ a găsi ac de jocul oricui; < și un om foarte dur poate fi înduioșat >;

÷ (lit.) [lacrimi până și în ochiul spiritelor rele]

▶ 蛙の面に水 (*kaeru no tsura ni mizu*) → a face urechea șută;

÷ (lit.) [apă pe fața broaștei]

▶ 木に竹をつぐ (*ki ni take tsugu*) → *ca nuca în perete*;

÷ (lit.) [a altoi bambus în copac]

▶ 狐につままれたよう (*kitsune ni tsumamareta yō*) → *a fi redus la tăcere* (fără să înțelege de ce) ;

÷ (lit.) [ca și cum ar fi ținut (captiv) de vulpe]

▶ 狐と狸の化かし合い (*kitsune to tanuki no bakashiai*) → *a (se) înjunghia pe la spate*;

÷ (lit.) [potrivirea înșelătoare între vulpe și bursuc]

▶ 釘を刺す (*kugi o sasu*) → *a pune punctul pe „i”* ;

÷ (lit.) [a înțepa cuiul]

▶ 犬猿の中 (*kenen no naka*) → *a se înțelege ca pisica cu câinele*;

÷ (lit.) [(relația) între câine și maimuță]

▶ 鯖を読む (*saba o yomu*) → *cine umblă cu miere își linge degetele*; < a înșela la numărătoare (pentru a obține profit) >;

÷ (lit.) [a număra macrourele]

▶ 猿芝居 (*saru shibai*) → *fără sare și piper*;

÷ (lit.) [piesa de teatru a maimuțelor]

▶ 雀の涙 (*suzume no namida*) → *cât negru sub unghie*;

÷ (lit.) [lacrima rândunicii]

▶ 高嶺の花 (*takane no hana*) → *a-și pune pofta în cui*;

÷ (lit.) [floare dintr-un pisc înalt]

▶ 高嶺の花、雲をつかむよう (*takane no hana, kumo o tsukamu yō*) → *pasărea mălai visează*;

÷ (lit.) [floarea de pe înălțimi - ca și cum ai prinde norii]

▶ 竹を割ったよう (*take o watta yō*) → *ce-i în gușă e și-n căpușă*;

÷ (lit.) [ca și cum ar fi despicat bambusul]

▶ 月とすっぽん (*tsuki to suppon*) → *seamănă, dar nu răsare*;

÷ (lit.) [luna și broasca țestoasă cu solzi]

▶ 虎の尾を踏む (*tora no o o fumu*) → *a se juca cu focul*;

÷ (lit.) [a călca pe coada unui tigru]

▶ 取り付く島もない (*toritsuku shima mo nai*) → *nicio mână de ajutor*;

÷ (lit.) [nu este o insulă de care să te prinzi]

▶ 飛んで火に入る夏の虫 (*tonde hi ni hairu natsu no mushi*) → *a o căuta cu lumânarea*;

÷ (lit.) [insectele verii care intră zburând în foc]

▶ 逃がした魚は大きい (*nigashita sakana wa ōkii*) → *după război, mulți viteji se arată*;

÷ (lit.) [peștele care a scăpat e mare]

▶ 根も葉もない、風の便り (*ne mo ha mo nai, kaze no tayori*) → *gura satului*;

÷ (lit.) [nu are nici rădăcină, nici frunză, [e] scrisoarea vântului]

▶ 根強い (*ne tsuyoi*) → *a nu se da în lături (de la)*;

÷ (lit.) [rădăcină puternică]

▶ 根にもつ (*ne ni motsu*) → *a avea un dinte împotriva cuiva*;

÷ (lit.) [a avea (ceva) la rădăcină]

▶ 根回し (*ne mawashi*) → *prietenia-i prietenie, dar brânza-i pe bani*;

÷ (lit.) [împrejmuirea/ înconjurul rădăcinii]

- ▶ 猫を被る (*neko o kaburu*) → a-și ascunde ghearele;
÷ (lit.) [a îmbrăca o pisică]

- ▶ 猫の手も借りたい (*neko no te mo karitai*) → a nu-și vedea capul de treabă;
÷ (lit.) [aș împrumuta până și laba pisicii]

- ▶ 猫の額 (*neko no hitai*) → cât negru sub unghie;
÷ (lit.) [fruntea pisicii]

- ▶ 猫の目 (*neko no me*) → (schimbător) ca vremea;
÷ (lit.) [ochiul pisicii]

- ▶ 蜂の巣をつつく (*hachi no su o tsutsuku*) → ca roiul în mușuroi; < a face zgomot mare, gălăgie >;
÷ (lit.) [a năvăli asupra stupului de albine]

- ▶ 花を添える (*hana o soeru*) → a pune pană la pălărie;
÷ (lit.) [a completa cu o floare]

- ▶ 花を持たせる (*hana o motaseru*) → a trage focul la spuza lui;
÷ (lit.) [a face să aibă floarea]

- ▶ 花も恥らう (*hana mo hajirau*) → a fi în floarea tinereții;
÷ (lit.) [până și florile s-ar rușina]

- ▶ 花も実もある (*hana mo mi mo aru*) → de preț;
÷ (lit.) [are și floare și fruct]

- ▶ 花多ければ実少なし (*hana ōkereba mi sukunashi*) → nu tot ce lucește e aur;
÷ (lit.) [multe flori, fructe puține]

- ▶ 羽を伸ばす (*hane o nobasu*) → a-și da drumul (la...);

÷ (lit.) [a-și întinde aripile]

▶ 火に油を注ぐ (*hi ni abura o sosogu*) → a pune paie pe foc;

÷ (lit.) [a turna ulei pe foc]

▶ 火花を散らす (*hibana o chirasu*) → a lupta pe viață și pe moarte;

÷ (lit.) [a împrăștia flori de foc]

▶ 袋の鼠 (*fukuro no nezumi*) → a fi încolțit din toate părțile;

÷ (lit.) [șoarecele de/ în pungă]

▶ 道草を食う (*michi kusa o kuu*) → a tăia frunză la câini;

÷ (lit.) [a mânca iarba de pe drum]

▶ 水いらず (*mizu irazu*) → în cerc închis;

÷ (lit.) [fără să fie apă]

▶ 水に流す (*mizu ni nagasu*) → a lăsa lucrurile să curgă la vale;

÷ (lit.) [a curge pe apă]

▶ 水をさす (*mizu o sasu*) → a turna apă rece (pe...);

÷ (lit.) [a turna apă]

▶ 水を離れた魚 (*mizu o hanareta sakana*) → ca peștele scos din apă;

÷ (lit.) [peștele care s-a depărtat de apă]

▶ 虫が知らせる (*mushi ga shiraseru*) → a spune inima (că...);

÷ (lit.) [muștele informează]

▶ 虫の息 (*mushi no iki*) → a da ortul popii;

÷ (lit.) [respirația muștei]

▶ 虫が好かない (mushi ga sukanai) → a nu avea inimă (pentru);
÷ (lit.) [a nu plăcea muștelor]

▶ 柳に風 (yanagi ni kaze) → capul plecat sabia nu-l taie;
÷ (lit.) [vântul printre trestii]

III. 2. Idiomatic expressions focused on the human universe

▶ 愛想を尽かす (*aisō o tsukasu*) → *a se spăla pe mâini* (de cineva);

÷ (lit.) [a se sfârși simpatia]

▶ 青すじを立てる (*ao suji o tateru*) → *a fi scos din sărite; a se înroși de mânie;*

÷ (lit.) [a ridica venele albastre]

▶ 朝飯前 (*asa meshi mae*) → *o nimica toată;*

÷ (lit.) [înainte de masa de dimineață]

▶ 味を占める (*aji o shimeru*) → *a încerca norocul;*

÷ (lit.) [a avea gust]

▶ 糞にこりて膾を吹く (*atsumono ni korite namasu o fuku*) → *a sufla și-n iaurt după ce te-ai fript cu supă;*

÷ (lit.) [a sufla în pește crud (fiindcă) ți-ai învățat lecția cu supa fierbinte]

▶ 後の祭り (*ato no matsuri*) → *mulți viteji după război;*

÷ (lit.) [sărbătoarea de după]

▶ 穴へも入りたい (*ana e mo hairitai*) → *a intra într-o gaură de șarpe* (de rușine);

÷ (lit.) [aș intra chiar și într-o gaură]

▶ 脂が乗る (*abura ga noru*) → *plin de viață;*

÷ (lit.) [a pune grăsime]

▶ 油が切れる (*abura ga kireru*) → *a-și pune pofta în cui*;

÷ (lit.) [a se sparge grăsimea]

▶ 油紙に火の付いたよう (*abura kami ni hi no tsuita yō*) → *a vorbi ca o moară stricată*;

÷ (lit.) [ca și cum ar fi atins focul o hârtie cu ulei]

▶ 泡を食う (*awa o kuu*) → *a-și pierde capul*;

÷ (lit.) [a mânca baloane de spumă]

▶ 錨を下ろす (*ikari o orosu*) → *a-și trage sufletul a-i veni inima la loc*;

÷ (lit.) [a lăsa ancora]

▶ 板につく (*ita ni tsuku*) → *a deveni a doua natură*;

÷ (lit.) [a pune pe tabla indicatoare]

▶ うつつを抜かす (*utsutsu o nukasu*) → *a fi cu capul în nori*;

÷ (lit.) [a trece prin realitate]

▶ 尾ひれをつける (*ohire o tsukeru*) → *a face din țânțar armăsar*;

÷ (lit.) [a adăuga coada și aripioare de pește]

▶ 恩を着せる (*on o kiseru*) → *a aștepta ca cineva să-și scoată pălăria în fața ta*;

÷ (lit.) [a face (pe cineva) să (te) îmbrace în recunoștință]

▶ 刺身のつま (*sashimi no tsuma*) → (valoare) *de doi bani*;

÷ (lit.) [garnitura pentru *sashimi*]

▶ 匙を投げる (*saji o nageru*) → *a ajunge la disperare*;

÷ (lit.) [a arunca lingura]

▶ 好きこそ物の上手になれ (*suki koso mono no jōzu ni nare*) → *a-l trage inima (să...); plăcerea e cel mai bun învățător*;

÷ (lit.) [tocmai plăcerea te poate face priceput]

▶ すし詰 (*sushi zume*) → (înghesuit) *ca sardelele*;

÷ (lit.) [plin de sardele]

▶ 袖を濡らす (*sode o nurasu*) → *a vărsa lacrimi*; (in poetry, the idiom has the connotation of a very strong emotion caused by a natural landscape, by contemplating the cherry blossom etc.)

÷ (lit.) [a umezi mâneca]

▶ 袖を絞る (*sode o shiboru*) → *a-i curge lacrimile șiroaie*;

÷ (lit.) [a stoarce mâneca]

▶ 袖を引く (*sode o hiku*) → *a trage pe cineva de mânecă*; < a invita >;

÷ (lit.) [a trage mâneca]

▶ 太鼓を叩く (*taiko o tataku*) → *a peria (măgulitor) (pe cineva)*;

÷ (lit.) [a bate toba]

▶ 玉に瑕 (*tama ni kizu*) → *la pomul lăudat să nu te duci cu carul*;

÷ (lit.) [defecțiune la minge]

▶ 二の舞 (*ni no mai*) → *din lac în puț*;

÷ (lit.) [al doilea dans]

▶ 濡れ衣を着せる (*nureginu o kiseru*) → *a scoate castanele din foc cu mâna altuia*;

÷ (lit.) [a face (pe cineva) să îmbrace haine ude]

▶ 寝ても覚めても (*netemo sametemo*) → *de cu ziuă până-n seară*;

÷ (lit.) [fie dormind, fie treaz]

▶ 万々と存じる (*ban ban to zonjiru*) → *a fi plin de sine/ a nu-și încăpea în piele*;

÷ (lit.) [a se (în)crede suficient]

▶ 一役買う (*hito yaku kau*) → *a juca un rol*;

÷ (lit.) [a cumpăra o funcție]

▶ 百も承知 (*hyaku mo shōchi*) → *în (deplină) cunoștință de cauză*;

÷ (lit.) [știu și o sută]

▶ 貧乏暇なし (*binbō hima nashi*) → *a nu-și vedea capul de treabă*;

÷ (lit.) [săracii fără timp liber]

▶ 槍玉に上げる (*yaridama ni ageru*) → *a scoate în față (pe cineva)*;

÷ (lit.) [a ridica la lance]

*** [The human body]

▶ 身が細る (*mi ga hosoru*) → *a i se îneca corăbiile*;

÷ (lit.) [a se micșora trupul]

▶ 身を粉にする (*mi o ko ni suru*) → *a trage ca un bou*;

÷ (lit.) [a face trupul pulbere]

▶ 頭が痛い (*atama ga itai*) → *bătăie de cap*;

÷ (lit.) [a durea capul]

▶ 頭が重い (*atama ga omoi*) → *a-și simți capul greu* ;

÷ (lit.) [cap greu]

▶ 頭が固い (*atama ga katai*) → *tare de cap*;

÷ (lit.) [cap tare]

▶ 頭が切れる (*atama ga kireru*) → *a-i sbârni capul (de idei)*;

÷ (lit.) [a se sparge capul]

▶ 頭に来る (*atama ni kuru*) → *a-și pierde mințile (de supărare)*;

÷ (lit.) [a-ți veni/ urca la/ în cap]

▶ 頭に血がのぼる (*atama ni chi ga noboru*) → *a (i) se urca sângele la cap*;

÷ (lit.) [a se urca sângele la cap]

▶ 頭を丸める (*atama o marumeru*) → *a îmbrăca haina preoției;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și rotunji capul]

▶ 頭を切り替える (*atama o kirikaeru*) → *a o lua de la capăt;*

÷ (lit.) [a schimba capul]

▶ 頭をひねる (*atama o hineru*) → *a-și stoarce creierii;*

÷ (lit.) [a răsuci capul]

▶ 顔が売れる (*kao ga ureru*) → *nume mare/ a fi vârf și creștet;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și vinde fața]

▶ 涼しい顔 (*suzushii kao*) → *inimă de piatră;*

÷ (lit.) [față răcorită/ rece]

▶ 額に汗する (*hitai ni ase suru*) → *a transpira pentru ceva;*

÷ (lit.) [a transpira pe frunte]

▶ 後ろ髪を引かれる思い (*ushiro kami o hikareru omoi*) → *a umbla după potcoave de cai morți;*

÷ (lit.) [gând tras de părul din spate]

▶ 目がない (*me ga nai*) → *a avea o slăbiciune (pentru...);*

÷ (lit.) [a nu avea ochi]

▶ 目に入れても痛くない (*me ni iretemo itakunai*) → *a pierde din ochi (de drag);*

÷ (lit.) [a nu durea chiar băgat în ochi]

▶ 長い目で見ると見る (*nagai me de miru*) → a privi pe termen lung;

÷ (lit.) [a privi cu ochi lungi]

▶ 目が肥える (*me ga koeru*) → a avea o privire ascuțită;

÷ (lit.) [a se îngrășa ochiul]

▶ 目を掛ける (*me o kakeru*) → a-și îndrepta atenția (spre);

÷ (lit.) [a pune un ochi]

▶ 目に余る (*me ni amaru*) → fără de îndurare;

÷ (lit.) [a trece de ochi]

▶ 目を奪う (*me o ubau*) → a fura privirea;

÷ (lit.) [a fura ochiul]

▶ 目を見張る (*me o miharu*) → a face ochii mari (de surpriză);

÷ (lit.) [a deschide ochii]

▶ 目を覆う (*me o ōu*) → a-și întoarce fața (de la);

÷ (lit.) [a acoperi ochii]

▶ 目の上のこぶ (*me no ue no kobu*) → a fi tot timpul în picioarele cuiva;

÷ (lit.) [cucui deasupra ochilor]

▶ 眉に唾をつける (*mayu ni tsuba o tsukeru*) → a vedea dincotro bate vântul;

÷ (lit.) [a se prinde scuiapat în sprânceană]

▶ 眉に火がつく (*mayu ni hi ga tsuku*) → *fără amânare*; < a fi urgent, presant >;

÷ (lit.) [a se aprinde focul în sprânceană]

▶ 眉一つ動かさず (*mayu hitotsu ugokasazu*) → *fără nicio tresărire*;

÷ (lit.) [a nu se mișca nicio sprânceană]

▶ 鼻が高い (*hana ga takai*) → *a fi cu nasul pe sus*;

÷ (lit.) [nas mare]

▶ 鼻であしらう (*hana de ashirau*) → *a trata de sus*;

÷ (lit.) [a trata pe cineva din nas]

▶ 鼻を折る (*hana o oru*) → *a prinde cu mâța în sac*;

÷ (lit.) [a-și îndoi nasul]

▶ 鼻にかける (*hana ni kakeru*) → *a i se urca la cap*;

÷ (lit.) [a pune la nas]

▶ 口が重い (*kuchi ga omoi*) → *a fi mut ca pământul*;

÷ (lit.) [gură grea]

▶ 口が堅い (*kuchi ga katai*) → *a nu sufla o vorbă*;

÷ (lit.) [gură tare]

▶ 口がこえる (*kuchi ga koeru*) → *fin la gust;*

÷ (lit.) [a se îngroșa gura]

▶ 口を利く (*kuchi o kiku*) → *vorba vorbă aduce;*

÷ (lit.) [a folosi gura]

▶ 口が滑る (*kuchi ga suberu*) → *a aluneca limba;*

÷ (lit.) [a aluneca gura]

▶ 口が腐っても (*kuchi ga kusattemo*) → *cu orice preț, orice s-ar întâmpla;*

÷ (lit.) [chiar dacă se alterează gura]

▶ 開いた口が塞がらぬ (*aita kuchi ga fusagaranu*) → *a rămâne cu gura căscată;*

÷ (lit.) [a nu se închide gura deschisă]

▶ 歯に衣着せぬ (*ha ni kinu kisenu*) → *a ridica vocea;*

÷ (lit.) [a nu îmbrăca dinții în haine]

▶ 奥歯にものがはさまる (*okuba ni mono ga hasamaru*) → *a bate apa în piuă;*

÷ (lit.) [a se prinde (ceva) între molari]

▶ 顎が落ちる (*ago ga ochiru*) → *a-ți lua ochii;*

÷ (lit.) [a cădea barba]

▶ 顎で使う (*ago de tsukau*) → *a manipula din priviri;*

÷ (lit.) [a folosi (pe cineva) din bărbie]

▶ 顎を出す (*ago o dasu*) → *a fi mort de oboseală*;

÷ (lit.) [a (pre)da/ înainta barba]

▶ 顎を撫でる (*ago o naderu*) → *a-și râde în barbă*;

÷ (lit.) [a mângâia barba]

▶ 顎を外す (*ago o hazusu*) → *a se strica de râs*;

÷ (lit.) [a îndepărta barba]

▶ 耳を揃える (*mimi o soroeru*) → *bogat e acela ce nu e dator*; < *a-și plăti datoria în întregime* >;

÷ (lit.) [a aduna/ strânge (la un loc) urechile]

▶ 耳を疑う (*mimi o utagau*) → *a nu-și putea crede urechilor*;

÷ (lit.) [a pune la îndoială urechile]

▶ 首を突っ込む (*kubi o tsukkomu*) → *a-și băga nasul în treburile altora*;

÷ (lit.) [a-și înghesui gâtul]

▶ 首を長くする (*kubi o nagaku suru*) → *a se lungi gâtul de atâta așteptare*;

÷ (lit.) [a-și lungi gâtul]

▶ 首が回らない (*kubi ga mawaranai*) → *înglodat în datorii*;

÷ (lit.) [a nu se învârti gâtul]

▶ のどから手が出る (*nodo kara te ga deru*) → *a-i lăsa gura apă*;

÷ (lit.) [a ieși/ a apărea o mână din gât]

▶ 胸が騒ぐ (*mune ga sawagu*) → a avea inima friptă;

÷ (lit.) [a face pieptul gălăgie]

▶ 胸をなでおろす (*mune o nadeorosu*) → a-și trage sufletul;

÷ (lit.) [a-și mângâia pieptul]

▶ 胸がつぶれる (*mune ga tsubureru*) → a avea ceva pe inimă;

÷ (lit.) [a se fărâmița pieptul]

▶ 腕によりをかける (*ude ni yori o kakeru*) → a-și pune carul în pietre;

÷ (lit.) [a-și face nod în braț]

▶ 腕を振るう (*ude o furuu*) → a avea mâini de aur;

÷ (lit.) [a folosi brațele]

▶ 肩身が狭い (*katami ga semai*) → a se face mic (în fața cuiva);

÷ (lit.) [umeri strâmți]

▶ 肩で風を切る (*kata de kaze o kiru*) → plin de încredere;

÷ (lit.) [a tăia vântul cu umerii]

▶ 肩を並べる (*kata o naraberu*) → a fi pe potriva;

÷ (lit.) [a alinia umerii]

▶ 手を貸す (*te o kasu*) → *a da o mână de ajutor;*

÷ (lit.) [a împrumuta o mână]

▶ 手を入れる (*te o ireru*) → *a intra în joc;*

÷ (lit.) [a băga mâna]

▶ 手を焼く (*te o yaku*) → *a fi cu inima îndoită;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și arde mâna]

▶ 手を切る (*te o kiru*) → *a întoarce spatele (cuiva);*

÷ (lit.) [a tăia (o) mână]

▶ 手を打つ (*te o utsu*) → *a bate palma;*

÷ (lit.) [a lovi mâna]

▶ 合いの手を入れる (*ai no te o ireru*) → *a se băga ca musca în lapte; a se pune cu gura pe cineva;*

÷ (lit.) [a introduce un interludiu]

▶ 赤子の手を捻る (*akago no te o nejiru*) → *floare la ureche;*

÷ (lit.) [a răsuci mâna unui bebeluș]

▶ 指をくわえる (*yubi o kuwaeru*) → *a sta cu mâinile în sân;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și ține degetele în gură]

▶ 爪に火をともし (*tsume ni hi o tomosu*) → *zgârâie-brânză; < foarte puțin >;*

÷ (lit.) [a aprinde focul la unghie]

▶ 足が付く (*ashi ga tsuku*) → *a da de urmele cuiva;*

÷ (lit.) [a rămâne (urme de) picior]

▶ 足が地に付く (*ashi ga ji ni tsuku*) → *a fi cu picioarele pe pământ;*

÷ (lit.) [a fi lipit piciorul de pământ]

▶ 足が出る (*ashi ga deru*) → *a se întinde mai mult decât îl ține plapuma;*

÷ (lit.) [a ieși (la iveală) picioarele]

▶ 足が早い (*ashi ga hayai*) → *a se duce pe Apa Sâmbetei;*

÷ (lit.) [picior rapid]

▶ 足をひっぱる (*ashi o hipparu*) → *a pune bețe în roate;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și trage piciorul]

▶ 足をすくう (*ashi o sukuu*) → *a profita de slăbiciunea cuiva;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și prinde piciorul]

▶ 足元から鳥が立つ (*ashimoto kara tori ga tatsu*) → *a nu gândi nici cu gândul;*

÷ (lit.) [a se ridica o pasăre de la vârful picioarelor]

▶ 足を棒にする (*ashi o bō ni suru*) → *a se înțepeni picioarele (de oboseală);*

÷ (lit.) [a-și face picioarele bețe]

▶ 足を洗う (*ashi o arau*) → *a o lua la sănătoasa;*

÷ (lit.) [a-și spăla picioarele]

▶ 後足で砂をかける (*ato ashi de suna o kakeru*) → a căuta nod în papură;

÷ (lit.) [a presăra nisip cu picioarele din spate]

▶ 腹が太い人 (*hara ga futoi hito*) → om cu inimă mare;

÷ (lit.) [om cu pântec mare]

▶ 腹が立つ (*hara ga tatsu*) → a se pune un nod în gât;

÷ (lit.) [a ți se ridica pânțelele]

▶ 腹をくくる (*hara o kukuru*) → a se pregăti pentru ce-i mai rău;

÷ (lit.) [a lega pânțelele]

▶ 腹をさぐる (*hara o saguru*) → ce-i în gură e și-n căpușă; < a dovedi adevăratele intenții ale cuiva >;

÷ (lit.) [a cerceta (minuțios) pânțelele]

▶ 腹を合わせる (*hara o awaseru*) → a pune țara la cale; < a complota >;

÷ (lit.) [a alătura pânțele/ burți]

▶ 朝腹の茶の子 (*asahara no cha no ko*) → floare la ureche;

÷ (lit.) [prăjiturile de ceai în burta de dimineață]

▶ 背に腹は替えられぬ (*se ni hara wa kaerarenu*) → legat de mâini și de picioare;

÷ (lit.) [a nu putea schimba pânțele/ burta pe spinare]

▶ 肝がすわる (*kimo ga suwaru*) → *nervi de oțel*;

÷ (lit.) [a sta nemișcat ficatul]

▶ へそが (で) 茶を沸かす (*heso ga/de cha o wakasu*) → *a fi cu capul în nori*;

÷ (lit.) [a fierbe (cu) buricul ceaiul]

▶ 腰を抜かす (*koshi o nukasu*) → *mort (de ...)*;

÷ (lit.) [a lăsa/ a pune la o parte spatele]

▶ 腰を据える (*koshi o sueru*) → *a-și trage sufletul*;

÷ (lit.) [a fixa spatele]

▶ 腰を折る (*koshi o oru*) → *a lua vorba din gură*;

÷ (lit.) [a îndoi (până la rupere) spatele]

▶ 尻に火がつく (*shiri ni hi ga tsuku*) → *a-i ajunge cuțitul la os*;

÷ (lit.) [a ajunge focul la coapse]

▶ 人が尻尾を巻く (*hito ga shippo o maku*) → *cu coada între picioare*;

÷ (lit.) [a-și răsuca omul coada]

▶ 骨を折る (*hone o oru*) → *a-ți da osteneala*;

÷ (lit.) [a-ți plia/ a-ți îndoi oasele]

▶ 心が動く (*kokoro ga ugoku*) → *a-i merge la inimă*;

÷ (lit.) [a se mișca inima]

▶ 心が通う (*kokoro ga kayou*) → gând la gând;

÷ (lit.) [a se frecventa inimile]

▶ 心が騒ぐ (*kokoro ga sawagu*) → a avea ceva pe suflet;

÷ (lit.) [a face gălăgie inima]

▶ 心に浮かぶ (*kokoro ni ukabu*) → a se perinda prin fața ochilor;

÷ (lit.) [a pluti prin inimă]

▶ 心に掛ける (*kokoro ni kakeru*) → a pune la suflet;

÷ (lit.) [a pune la inimă]

▶ 心に刻む (*kokoro ni kizamu*) → a fi încrustat în memorie;

÷ (lit.) [a fi tăiat în inimă]

▶ 心に留める (*kokoro ni tomeru*) → a păstra în minte;

÷ (lit.) [a se fixa în inimă]

▶ 心を奪われる (*kokoro o ubawareru*) → a-i fi luate mințile;

÷ (lit.) [a fi furată inima]

▶ 血も涙もない (*chi mo namida mo nai*) → cu sânge rece;

÷ (lit.) [a nu avea nici sânge, nici lacrimi]

▶ 息を殺す (*iki o korosu*) → a-și ține respirația;

÷ (lit.) [a ucide respirația]

▶ 間髪を入れず (*kanpatsu o irezu*) → într-o suflare;

÷ (lit.) [fără să introduci strălucire]

▶ 涙をのむ (*namida o nomu*) → a-și înghiți lacrimile;

÷ (lit.) [a-și bea lacrimile]

IV. Idiomatic Expressions as Cultural Texts

▶ 顎振り三年 (*ago furi san nen*) → < *repetiția este mama studiului; a exersa îndelung* >;

÷ (lit.) [a scutura bărbia trei ani]

* They say it is very important that the persons learning to play the traditional instrument *shakuhachi* practice daily for a long period of time. (*Shakuhachi* is a vertical bamboo flute with two holes in the front and one in the back.)

▶ 油を売る (*abura o uru*) → < *a pierde vremea* >;

÷ (lit.) [a vinde ulei]

* *Abura o uru* is an idiomatic expression connected to the Edo period (1600-1867) when, in the absence of electricity, the measuring of the oil carried out by the travelling salesmen took some time. While doing their job, they engaged in conversation with the hosts in whose house they were, which made the anxious neighbours, since their wait was thus prolonged, believe that the travelling salesmen were late due to their loafer like nature.

▶ 絵に描いた餅 (*e ni kaita mochi*) → < *bun la nimic, imposibil de a deveni realitate* >;

÷ (lit.) [*mochi* desenate în imagine]

* *Mochi* are sweet rice powder tots which, naturally, drawn on paper cannot be eaten.

▶ 襟を正す (*eri o tadasu*) → < *ochi și urechi; cu atenție, respect* >;

÷ (lit.) [a corecta gulerul]

* The idiomatic expression associates the correctly bound *kimono* (the traditional Japanese garment) collar with the correctness of the soul / character.

▶ 縁の下の力持ち (*en no shita no chikara mochi*) → < *sforile trase din culise; omul/puterea din umbră* >;

÷ (lit.) [purtătorul puterii de sub verandă]

* The idiomatic expression refers to *bugaku*, or the music that accompanies the traditional Japanese Court dances that could be heard not on the stage, but in the garden, in a private space, hidden from the eyes of the world. Initially, the idiom was *en no shita no mai* (“the

dance under the porch”) but, because of the fact that the meaning had become hard to understand, the expression spread in the form above.

▶ 大風呂敷を広げる (*ōburoshiki o hirogeru*) → < a vorbi vrute și nevrute >;

÷ (lit.) [a desface/ a întinde un mare *furoshiki*]

* *Furoshiki* is a piece of cloth used, in the Japanese tradition, in wrapping and transporting different objects.

▶ おじゃんになる (*ojan ni naru*) → < a pieri totul în cenușă și scrum >;

÷ (lit.) [a deveni *jan*]

* *Jan* is the sound made by the bell used in the Edo period (1600-1867) as a fire alarm and *o* is a courtesy prefix in the Japanese language.

▶ お茶を挽く (*ocha o hiku*) → < a tăia frunză la câini >;

÷ (lit.) [a tăia ceai]

* In the past, in the tea houses, the hosts, to keep busy, cut advertising flyers for the guests.

▶ お茶の子 (*ocha no ko*) → < floare la ureche >;

÷ (lit.) [prăjiturile servite la ceai]

* The cookies served with the tea were made by squeezing different assortments of flour in the shape of tots and baking them in the hearth ash. They are then taken out of the hearth and, as the ashes are removed with one hand, they can be held with the other and eaten.

▶ お茶を濁す (*ocha o nigosu*) → < a scăpa ca prin urechile acului; a ieși dintr-o situație neplăcută >;

÷ (lit.) [a tulbura ceaiul]

* The idiomatic expression refers to the clarity of green tea that makes the bottom of the cup in which it has been poured visible. The quality of the tea is undoubtedly greatly diminished if it has lost its clarity.

▶ 帯に短したすきに長し (*obi ni mijikashi tasuki ni nagashi*) → < bun de nimic >;

÷ (lit.) [prea scurt pentru *obi*, prea lung pentru *tasuki*]

* *Obi* is the broad sash tied over the *kimono* (the traditional garment), and *tasuki* is the sash that holds up the sleeves of the *kimono*.

▶ お百度を踏む (*ohyaku do o fumu*) → < a stăruî într-o rugămintea >;

÷ (lit.) [a păși de o sută de ori]

* Originally, the expression refers to the Japanese custom of walking back and forth one hundred times in front of a *shinto* altar in order to fulfill the prayer (for healing).

▶ 折り紙付き (*origami tsuki*) → < garantat, autentic >;

÷ (lit.) [atașat cu *origami*]

* Although the word *origami* is known as the name of the Japanese traditional art of making different figurines by folding paper, *origami* originally meant “a warranty written on a white piece of paper, folded in half”.

▶ 親方日の丸 (*oyakata hi no maru*) → < a-ți merge bine >;

÷ (lit.) [șeful- cercul soarelui (de pe drapel)]

* *Oyakata* or a superior person (a leader), interpreted as a substitute of the parents, refers to the state, the nation, the country, while *hi no maru* (the sun disk on the Japanese flag) refers to the symbol of the country; therefore, you need not worry. (The idiomatic expression can also be used ironically.)

▶ 気が・のない (*ki ga no nai*) → < a umbla de florile mărului >;

÷ (lit.) [fără *ki*]

* *Ki* is the vital energy that fills the universe and, consequently, the human being.

▶ 気が合う (*ki ga au*) → < a se potrivi ca două picături de apă >;

÷ (lit.) [a se potrivi *ki*-urile]

▶ 気が有る (*ki ga aru*) → a-i sta gândul (la ceva);

÷ (lit.) [a avea *ki* (pentru ceva)]

▶ 気が多い (*ki ga ōi*) → < a fi cu un ochi la slănină și cu altul la făină; a avea numeroase preocupări >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki numeros*]

▶ 気が置けない (*ki ga okenai*) → < într-un gând >;

÷ (lit.) [a nu putea fi pus *ki*-ul (într-un loc)]

▶ 気が利く (*ki ga kiku*) → < a fi iute de minte >;

÷ (lit.) [a lucra *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が気でない (*ki ga ki denai*) → < a pune la inimă >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki*-ul nu dă *ki*]

▶ 気が狂う (*ki ga kuruu*) → < a o lua razna >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki*-ul și-a pierdut mințile]

▶ 気が差す (*ki ga sasu*) → < a avea ceva pe suflet >;

÷ (lit.) [a se umple *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が進む (*ki ga susumu*) → < a-i sta gândul (la...) >;

÷ (lit.) [a avansa *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が済む (*ki ga sumu*) → < cu inima plină (de ...) >;

÷ (lit.) [a se termina *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が急ぐ (*ki ga seku*) → < a fi în mare grabă; a nu avea stare >;

÷ (lit.) [a se grăbi *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が立つ (*ki ga tatsu*) → < a-și face gânduri negre >;

÷ (lit.) [a se ridica *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が落ちる (*ki ga ochiru*) → < a fi cu gândul în altă parte >;

÷ (lit.) [a cădea *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が入る (*ki ga hairu*) → < a nu-și lua gândul (de la); a se concentra >;

÷ (lit.) [a intra *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が付く (*ki ga tsuku*) → < a-și da seama >;

÷ (lit.) [a atașa un *ki*]

▶ 気が遠くなる (*ki ga tōku naru*) → < a i se tăia picioarele; a simți leșin >;

÷ (lit.) [a se îndepărta *ki*-ul]

▶ 気が長い (*ki ga nagai*) → < a avea răbdare >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki* lung]

▶ 気が早い (*ki ga hayai*) → < fără stare >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki* rapid]

▶ 気に痛む (*ki ni itamu*) → < a-și face gânduri (pentru ...) >;

÷ (lit.) [a simți durere la/ pentru *ki*]

▶ 気に食わない (*ki ni kuwanai*) → < a călca pe nervi >;

÷ (lit.) [a nu mânca din *ki*]

▶ 木に餅がある (*ki ni mochi ga aru*) → < a purta pe cineva cu lumânarea aprinsă ziua în amiaza mare >;

÷ (lit.) [sunt *mochi* în copac]

* *Mochi* (sweet rice powder tots) are handmade, so they cannot grow on trees...

▶ 気の毒なほど (*ki no dokuna hodo*) → < demn de milă >;

÷ (lit.) [până la un *ki* otrăvit]

* The idiomatic expression can be interpreted as follows: a difficult situation in which you find yourself has poisoned the *ki*...

▶ 気は心 (*ki wa kokoro*) → < o nimica toată >;

÷ (lit.) [*ki-ul este inimă/ suflet*]

* The idiom associates the serene (at peace) *ki* with a motion of the heart / soul caused by a small act.

▶ 気を取り直す (*ki o torinaosu*) → < a-și băga mințile în cap >;

÷ (lit.) [*a-ți corecta ki-ul*]

▶ 狐の媛入り (*kitsune no yome (hai)iri*) → < ploaie (bruscă) cu soare >;

÷ (lit.) [*intrarea miresei vulpii*]

* The idiomatic structure refers to the connection between the sudden, successive occurrences of the fox in the dead of night, which seemed to be accompanied by its mate (that resembled phosphorescent lights), and the custom in which the brides turn on the light after nightfall. *Yomehairi* actually means “marriage”, in which the groom brings the bride to his house and the pair start their life as a couple.

▶ 清水の舞台 (*kiyomizu no butai*) → < a-și lua inima în dinți >;

÷ (lit.) [*scena Kiyomizu*]

* *Kiyomizu no butai kara tobioriru* is the continuation of this idiomatic expression whose meaning could be translated to “being very determined” (lit. “to jump off the Kiyomizu stage”), which undoubtedly refers to *Kiyomizu-dera* (The Kiyomizu Temple) in Kyoto, built on the edge of a cliff.

▶ 下駄と焼き味噌 (*geta to yaki miso*) → < seamănă, dar nu răsare >;

÷ (lit.) [*geta și miso prăjit*]

* *Geta* are the traditional Japanese sandals made of two straps. In order to fry *miso* (fermented soybean paste), one uses a board with legs similar to those of the *geta* but, despite a slight resemblance, there is still a significant difference.

▶ 濃い茶 目の毒 気の薬 (*koicha me no doku ki no kusuri*) → < a-i da inima ghes; plin de vigoare/ excitat/ agitat > ;

÷ (lit.) [*ceaiul tare - otravă pentru ochi, medicament pentru spirit*]

* A reference to the tea ceremony, in which the strong *matcha* green tea can keep the person who drank it awake all night.

▶ 弘法も筆の誤り (*Kōbō mo fude no ayamari*) → < *calul e cu patru picioare și tot se împiedică* >;

÷ (lit.) [și la Kōbō daishi- greșeli de scriere]

* The Buddhist monk Kūkai (774-835), posthumously known as Kōbō-Daishi, remained in the memory of the posterity not only as the founder of the “Shingon” (“True Words”) sect, but also as the most important Japanese calligrapher.

▶ 衣を返す (*koromo o kaesu*) → < a căpăta o nouă înfățișare >;

÷ (lit.) [a schimba îmbrăcămintea]

* The Japanese people have a custom of turning the *kimono* inside out in order to transform it into nightwear because of the superstition according to which, this way, your loved one will appear in your dream.

▶ 白黒をつける (*shiro kuro o tsukeru*) → < *ori e albă, ori e neagră* >;

÷ (lit.) [a pune alb sau negru]

* Originally, in the Japanese culture, white was associated with good and black with evil.

▶ 袖にする (*sode ni suru*) → < *a trata pe cineva cu răceală; a ignora* >;

÷ (lit.) [a pune în mânecă]

* The idiom refers to the hanging sleeve of the *kimono* worn during the Edo period (1600-1867). The sleeve hid the arm and it was seen as part of the body, so that you could pretend that the arm did not exist.

▶ 太鼓判を押す (*taikoban o osu*) → < *a-și scoate toate armele la bătaie (pentru cineva); a-și pune mâna în foc (pentru cineva)* >;

÷ (lit.) [a pune/ apăsa o ștampilă mare]

* The Japanese tradition requires that a person’s signature be authenticated by a seal.

▶ 畳みの上の水練 (*tatami no ue no suiren*) → < *chepeneag după ploaie; (în realitate) nefolositor* >;

÷ (lit.) [a înota pe *tatami*]

* *Tatami* is the rice straw mat used as a floor in the traditional Japanese houses. Considering the fact that one cannot swim on a *tatami*, the place thus becomes useless in this sense.

▶ 旅の恥はかきすて (*tabi no haji wa kakisute*) → < fără de rușine; fără rețineri >;

÷ (lit.) [aruncă rușinea călătoriei]

* In a society like the Japanese one, which is very strict regarding the verbal behaviour and the formal gesture behaviour, considering the anonymity in which it keeps you, the journey would be an opportune moment to disregard any inhibitions, restrictions, or reservations.

▶ 団子も餅の付き合い (*dango mo mochi no tsukiai*) → < un om plictisitor, (tolerat) ca o cunoștință a unuia deosebit >;

÷ (lit.) [și *dango* sunt cunoștințe cu *mochi*]

* Both *dango* and *mochi* are rice powder tots, but the *mochi* are sweet.

▶ 茶茶を入れる (*cha cha o ireru*) → < a lua cuiva vorba din gură (ca distracție) >;

÷ (lit.) [a face ceai după ceai]

* Since, usually, “making tea” has an equivalent expression in the Japanese language – “(o)cha ireru”, the repetition of the lexeme “cha”, meaning “tea”, seems to suggest haste and inattention on the part of one of the participants to the conversation.

▶ 茶にする (*cha ni suru*) → < a duce de nas (pe cineva); a răstălmăci >;

÷ (lit.) [a pune de-un ceai]

* The idiom refers to the significance of the tea and to the pleasant state it creates for the one who drinks it. But to dedicate your time to drinking tea or to rest?!

▶ 茶腹も一時 (*cha bara mo ittoki*) → < praf în ochi; chiar și ceva mic/ puțin poate deveni un expedient vremelnic >;

÷ (lit.) [și ceaiul e vremelnic pentru burtă]

* The idiomatic expression points out the fact that green tea can also satiate one’s hunger for a while.

▶ 束の間 (*tsuka no ma*) → < cât ai zice „pește” >;

÷ (lit.) [un interval de *tsuka*]

* *Tsuka* is a unit of measurement, signifying “mound, bundle, sheaf”.

▶ 鶴の一声 (*tsuru no hitokoe*) → < a tuna și a fulgera; vocea autorității >;

÷ (lit.) [o voce/ un glas de cocor]

* The Japanese crane is one of the most delicate and beautiful cranes, a bird that is highly appreciated in Japan, not only due to the beauty of its plumage, but also to the behaviour features it possesses (fidelity, loyalty), thus becoming a symbol of love, happiness and longevity.

▶ 手前味噌で塩が辛い (*temae miso de shio ga karai*) → < a nu-și încăpea în piele de sine; auto-adulare >;

÷ (lit.) [în supă *miso* din față sarea e sărată]

* *Miso* is the fermented soybean paste soup that does not require any particular culinary talent.

▶ 泥を被る (*doro o kaburu*) → < a-ți pune cenușă în cap; a-ți asuma responsabilitatea >;

÷ (lit.) [a pune noroi pe cap]

* There seems to be an indisputable connection between the idiomatic expression *doro o kaburu* and the Zen *koan* (parable) number 64, “Chōshū poartă o pereche de pantofi pe cap” [Chōshū put his shoes on his head], from the “Hekigan-roku” parable collection, commented by the Chinese poet Yüan-wu in 1225 (*koan* that is also mentioned by Yukio Mishima in the novel “The Temple of the Golden Pavilion”). The Zen *koan*, which is, in fact, a mystery with a very difficult, if not impossible to decipher message, tells the story of how, during the T’ang period, a cat that had entered the garden of a temple became the cause for a dispute between the west and the east wings of the building. Father Nansen, who observed the fight, grabs the cat by the back of its head, places a knife to its throat and asks the monks disputing it to say the correct word to save the animal’s life. However, nobody is capable of answering Nansen’s request and the cat is killed. That evening, the Great Chōshū returns to the temple and he is told about the event. Chōshū listens silently and exits the room with his shoes on his head (see Mishima 2000: 62). The lesson of the *koan* that tries to motivate Nansen’s gesture by annihilating the illusion of the self, by removing any contradiction between the self and the others, and that of Chōshū’s infinite magnanimity in placing dirty objects on his head as proof of Buddhist nobility is, undoubtedly, the basis of understanding the aforementioned idiom.

▶ 煮え湯を飲まされる (*nie yu o nomasareru*) → < a fi înjunghiat pe la spate >;

÷ (lit.) [a fi făcut să bei apă fierbinte fiartă]

* The word *yu* means “hot water”, and *nie yu* could be literally translated to “hot boiled water”.

▶ 花道を飾る (*hanamichi o kazaru*) → < a se retrage în glorie >;

÷ (lit.) [a împodobi/ a ornamenta *hanamichi*]

* *Hanamichi* (lit. “flower path”) is an overpass that connects the stage and the back of the auditorium, passing between the spectators in the *kabuki* theatre. *Hanamichi* is used for the actors’ stage entrances and exits.

▶ 腹を割る (*hara o waru*) → < cu inima deschisă >;

÷ (lit.) [a sparge pânțele/ burta]

* In Japanese *hara* also means “soul” (= *kokoro no naka*, “within the heart/soul”). Thus, the *harakiri* ritual death (“disembowelment”) could also be understood as a disembowelment to show that your soul is pure.

▶ 腹を見せる (*hara o miseru*) → < a-și da dinții din gură; a-și recunoaște intențiile >;

÷ (lit.) [a-și arăta pânțele/ burta]

▶ 檜舞台 (*hinoki butai*) → < a-și scoate capul în lume; a-și face un (re)nume într-un loc celebru >;

÷ (lit.) [scenă din *hinoki*]

* *Hinoki* is the Japanese cypress used in the construction of the *kabuki* theatre stages.

▶ 一人相撲を取る (*hitori sumō o toru*) → < a se strădui de unul singur >;

÷ (lit.) [a face *sumō* de unul singur]

* *Sumō* is the traditional Japanese sport which necessarily implies two partners.

▶ 筆が滑る (*fude ga suberu*) → < a-l lua mâna pe dinainte >;

÷ (lit.) [a aluneca pensula]

* Until the modern era, the common writing tool in Japan was the paintbrush.

▶ 筆が立つ (*fude ga tatsu*) → < a o duce bine din condei >;

÷ (lit.) [a se ridica pensula]

* A reference to the art of calligraphy, which requires that the brush be held straight, in a vertical position.

▶ 盆と正月が一緒に来たよう (*bon to shōgatsu ga issho ni kita yō*) → < a nu ști unde să-ți pui capul de treabă >;

÷ (lit.) [ca și cum *bon* și *oshōgatsu* ar fi venit împreună]

* *Bon* is the custom of honouring the spirits of one's ancestors and it takes place in the summer, and *oshōgatsu* is the Japanese New Year.

▶ ピンからキリまで (*pin kara kiri made*) → < de la început până la sfârșit >;

÷ (lit.) [de la unu la zece]

* The idiomatic expression *pin kara kiri made* is, in Japanese, the paraphrase that wishes to suggest the variety, the diversity of things. It is, however, interesting that this idiom contains two words with a neological etymon: “pin” is derived from the Portuguese “pinto”, signifying “unu” [one], and “kiri” is derived from “kurusu”, the phonetic adaptation to the Japanese language of the Portuguese lexeme “cruz”, signifying “cross”. But the horizontal and vertical lines that represent the iconic sign of the cross for the Christian faith constitute the features that make up the Chinese ideogram “十”, whose significance, in the Japanese language, is “zece” [ten].

▶ 間が抜ける (*ma ga nukeru*) → < stupid >;

÷ (lit.) [a cădea *ma*-ul]

* The literal rendition of *ma* is “space” or “interval” but, as an aesthetic concept, it indicates the space between something and what follows, referring either to the interval between one beat of the drum and the next, or to the interval between the posing position of a dancer and its modification into another, or to the interval between an actor’s line and the next, etc. *Ma* is therefore the time interval in which nothing happens...

▶ 間が悪い (*ma ga warui*) → < *sub stea ne norocoasă*; inconvenient, nepotrivit, fără noroc >;

÷ (lit.) [*ma* este rău, prost, nepotrivit]

▶ 間が良い (*ma ga yoi*) → < *sub stea cu noroc; norocos, potrivit* >;

÷ (lit.) [*ma este bun, potrivit*]

▶ 間を合わせる (*ma o awaseru*) → < *gând la gând* >;

÷ (lit.) [*a potrivi ma-ul*]

▶ 間を待たせる (*ma o mataseru*) → < *a trage de timp* >;

÷ (lit.) [*a face să fie așteptat ma*]

▶ 枕を高くする (*makura o takaku suru*) → < *a se lăsa în voia somnului* >;

÷ (lit.) [*a înălța pernele*]

* In the Heian period (794-1186), the pillows used were in the shape of cylinders, which was necessary so that the noble ladies did not touse their complicated hairdos during the night.

▶ 三日見ぬ間の桜 (*mikka minu ma no sakura*) → < *schimbările lumii sunt violente* >;

÷ (lit.) [*sakura dintr-un (interval) ma, (după ce fusese) de nevăzut trei zile*]

* In the Japanese mentality, the *Sakura*, or the cherry blossom that quickly loses its petals, is associated with beauty and the ephemeral.

▶ 水茎の跡 (*mizu kuki no ato*) → < *a așterne ceva pe hârtie; scrisoare* >;

÷ (lit.) [*urmele tulpinii de apă*]

* The idiomatic expression refers to the same art of calligraphy in which the brush can be made of a fresh and young reed stem (*mizumizushii*, in the Japanese language).

▶ 耳の正月 (*mimi no shōgatsu*) → < *demn de interes* >;

÷ (lit.) [*Anul Nou pentru urechi*]

* In Japan, *shōgatsu* (“The New Year”) is considered to be the most pleasant celebration of the year.

▶ 虫が良い (*mushi ga ii*) → < *egoist* >;

÷ (lit.) [*paraziți/ viermi buni*]

* In the Edo period (1600-1867) it was believed that the human body contained nine types of parasites that caused illnesses and emotions, thus influencing one’s thinking.

▶ 目の正月 (*me no shōgatsu*) → < sărbătoresc, regal >;

÷ (lit.) [Anul Nou pentru ochi]

* *Shōgatsu* (“The New Year”) is also the most treasured celebration of the year.

▶ 眼鏡に合う (*megane ni kanau*) → < a câștiga încrederea >;

÷ (lit.) [a se potrivi ochelarilor]

* In Japan, the glasses are seen as the objects that can distinguish good from evil, the possible from the impossible, thus conferring the power of judgement to their wearer.

▶ 眼鏡違い (*megane chigai*) → < la pomul lăudat să nu te duci cu carul >;

÷ (lit.) [diferența de ochelari]

▶ 餅は餅屋 (*mochi wa mochiya*) → < e bine ca orice lucru să fie lăsat pe seama specialistului >;

÷ (lit.) [pentru *mochi*, specialistul în *mochi*]

* Naturally, the best *mochi* are the ones made by a professional.

▶ 焼き餅を焼く (*yaku mochi o yaku*) → < verde de invidie; gelos, invidios >;

÷ (lit.) [a prăji *mochi* prăjit]

* When they are fried, the *mochi* inflate and, similarly, perhaps so does the soul that becomes envious or jealous.

▶ 破れても小袖 (*yaburetemo kosode*) → < popa-i popă și în șanț; chiar și o mică defecțiune nu știrbește din valoarea extraordinară a unui lucru >;

÷ (lit.) [chiar ruptă, e îmbrăcăminte din mătase]

* *Kosode* was the garment used by the nobility.

▶ 指折り (*yubi ori*) → < proeminent, de vârf >;

÷ (lit.) [îndoirea degetului]

* Traditionally, counting to ten is done with the fingers of one hand, bending them one after the other. The idiom suggests something that is so uncommon, that it can be counted on the fingers...

*** [Numbers]

▶ 一か八か (*ichi ka hachi ka*) → < tot sau nimic >;

÷ (lit.) [unu sau opt]

* In the Japanese culture, the number eight (*hachi*) is seen as an auspicious number. Through the similarity between the *kanji* 八 (the written form of this number) and the Fuji Mountain, considered to be sacred in Japanese mythology, the number eight becomes the symbol of perfection.

▶ 二つ返事 (*futatsu henji*) → < a accepta cu bucurie, pregătit pentru ... >;

÷ (lit.) [două răspunsuri]

▶ 三度目の正直 (*sandome no shōjiki*) → < a treia oară e cu noroc >;

÷ (lit.) [onestitatea de a treia oară]

▶ 四面楚歌 (*shimen soka*) → < încolțit din toate părțile >;

÷ (lit.) [cântăreți din patru părți]

▶ 五里霧中 (*go ri mu chū*) → < a fi (pierdut) într-un întuneric total >;

÷ (lit.) [cinci *ri*, mijlocul ceții]

* *Ri* is a unit of measurement, the equivalent of 3.9 km.

▶ 六十の手習い (*roku jū no tenarai*) → < nu e niciodată prea târziu pentru a învăța >;

÷ (lit.) [exercițiul caligrafiei la șaiszeci de ani]

▶ 親の七光 (*oya no nana hikari*) → < e de mare ajutor să ai un părinte celebru; influența părinților >;

÷ (lit.) [șapte lumini ale părinților]

* The seven lights undoubtedly refer to the colours of the rainbow.

▶ 八方美人 (*happō bijin*) → < inimă mare; persoană amabilă cu toată lumea >;

÷ (lit.) [o femeie frumoasă în toate direcțiile]

▶ 九死に一生を得る (*kyū shi ni isshō o eru*) → < a scăpa de la moarte ca prin urechile acului >;

÷ (lit.) [a dobândi o viață din nouă morți]

▶ 十年一昔 (*jūnen hitomukashi*) → < cât o veșnicie >;

÷ (lit.) [o perioadă de zece ani]

* *Mukashi*, besides meaning “ten years”, also means “the past, a long time”.

▶ 十八番 (*jū hachi ban*) → < excelența, superioritatea (în ceva), favorit >;

÷ (lit.) [numărul optsprezece]

* The idiomatic expression refers to the traditional *kabuki* theatre, namely the 18 successful theatre pieces played by the Ichikawa family. The *kanji* (= Chinese ideograms) that make up this idiom can also be read “ohako”, referring to the Ichikawa family’s favourite plays.

▶ 可愛さ余って憎さ百倍 (*kawaisa amatte nikusa hyaku bai*) → < cea mai mare ură se naște din cea mai mare dragoste >;

÷ (lit.) [drăgălășenie în surplus, ură de o sută de ori]

▶ 千載一遇 (*sen zai ichi gū*) → < șansa vieții >;

÷ (lit.) [o mie de apariții, o tratație]

▶ かぜは万病のもと (*kaze ha manbyō no moto*) → < a nu trata nimic cu indiferență >;

÷ (lit.) [răceala este sursa a zece mii de boli]

* In the Japanese mentality, it is believed that the cold is the beginning of all illnesses.

*** [Greetings]

▶ 今日 (*konnichi wa*) → < Bună ziua! >;

÷ (lit.) [cât despre ziua de azi ...]

* Today, the greeting is actually the shortened version of the one used by the elite warriors, that began with “today” and continued with “I am on duty, I am at your service”.

▶ さようなら (*sayōnara*) → < La revedere! >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă e așa]

* This farewell expression is the shortened version of the syntagm *sayōnaraba kaerimashō* (“dacă e așa, hai să ne întoarcem acasă” [if so, let us return home]), still used today in certain regions as “saraba”.

▶ お休みなさい (*oyasumi nasai*) → < Noapte bună! >;

÷ (lit.) [faceți o pauză]

* Initially, the verb *yasumu* (屋住む) meant “being home”, calming your state of mind, considering that you had to wake up early next morning.

▶ 有難う (*arigatō*) → < mulțumesc >;

÷ (lit.) [există dificultăți]

* *-Gatai* (“difficult, hard to...”) is, in fact, a grammatical structure that is also used in the contemporary language to express the difficulty of an action.

▶ すみません (*sumimasen*) → < Vă cer scuze. Mulțumiri. Vă rog. >;

÷ (lit.) [a nu te simți în largul tău]

* The expression through which you apologise or give thanks in the Japanese language is based on the expression *ki ga sumu*, meaning “being satisfied”. Since it is a negative form of the verb, the inference would be “I do not feel at ease with what I have done to you...” .

▶ いらっしゃい (*irasshai*) → < Bine ați venit! >;

÷ (lit.) [veniți aici!]

* *Irassharu* is the honorary courtesy form of address for the verbs *ikimasu* (“to go”), *kimasu* (“to come”) and *imasu* (“to be”).

▶ ただいま (*tadaima*) → < M-am întors (acasă)! >;

÷ (lit.) [tocmai acum]

* The greeting used when a family member returns home actually means *tatta ima* (“just now, right now”). There are regions in Japan in which instead of *ohayō* (“Hello!”) one uses *tadaima*, just like a farewell, and the meaning would be “it is too early to say: ‘only now...’ ”.

▶ 御馳走様 (*gochisōsama*) → < Mulțumesc pentru masă! >;

÷ (lit.) [persoana care m-a tratat cu masa]

* *Chisō* initially meant “to spin around running”. Since preparing a meal also implied a lot of running around, the meaning narrowed down to expressing gratitude for the hospitality.

▶ 御蔭様で (*okage sama de*) → < prin bunăvoința dumneavoastră >;

÷ (lit.) [în umbra dumneavoastră]

* In the Japanese language, *o* is a courtesy prefix, and *kage* (“shadow”) is the place that cannot be reached by sunlight or, by analogy, the human gaze; therefore the help of the gods and of Buddha is required. This idiomatic structure eventually became an expression of gratitude.

▶ 新年おめでとう (*shinnen omedetō*) → < La mulți ani cu ocazia Anului Nou! >;

÷ (lit.) [felicitări de Anul Nou]

* *Omedetō* is a word derived from *medetai*, from the verb *mederu*, meaning “being charmed by the beauty and the magnificence of the world”, which would trigger / provoke the need to praise them. Therefore, upon receiving a gift, it was lifted until it touched the forehead, while uttering *medetai* or *medetō gozaru*.

*** [Haiku]

▶ 鳴かぬなら殺してしまえ時鳥 (*nakanu nara koroshite shimae hototogisu*) → < violent >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă nu cântă, să omorâm cucul]

* This *haiku* (a one verse, 17 syllable poem) is attributed to Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), the general who unified a third of Japan after over 100 years of civil wars. He became part of the history of Japan as an extremely brutal feudal leader.

▶ 鳴かぬなら鳴かせてみせよう時鳥 (*nakanu nara nakasete miseyō hototogisu*) → < coercitiv, impunător >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă nu cântă, să facem cucul să cânte]

* This *haiku* is attributed to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), a *samurai* general who followed Oda Nobunaga in the mission to attempt to unify Japan. He went down in history as the master who, in 1591, ordered Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591), a great master of the *chanoyu* tea ceremony (“The Way of Tea”), to kill himself. The reason is unknown, but it is possible that Sen no Rikyu may have been an opponent of the regime set up by Hideyoshi.

▶ 鳴かぬなら鳴くまで待とう時鳥 (*nakanu nara naku made matō hototogisu*) → < răbdător >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă nu cântă, să așteptăm până va cânta cucul]

* This *haiku* is attributed to the *shogun* Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), the last of the three unifiers of Japan (together with Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi). He is known for having created the Tokugawa Shogunate, the last military regime of its kind in the history of Japan. The general was appreciated for the constancy of the peace, following a long period of civil wars, and for his patient and conciliatory nature.

V. Proverbs and Old Sayings [諺]

- ▶ 挨拶は時の氏神 (*aisatsu wa toki no ujigami*) → < *salutul încoronează omul* >;
÷ (lit.) [salutul este zeitatea tutelară a timpului]
- ▶ 秋の空は七度半変わる (*aki no sora wa nana do han kawaru*) → < *schimbător ca vremea; azi e albă, mâine-i neagră* >;
÷ (lit.) [cerul de toamnă se schimbă de șapte ori și jumătate]
- ▶ 朝起きは三文の徳 (*asa oki wa san mon no toku*) → < *cine se scoală de dimineață ajunge departe* >;
÷ (lit.) [sculatul de dimineață este o virtute la îndemână/ ieftină]
- ▶ 明日の百より今日の五十 (*asu no hyaku yori kyō no gojū*) → < *ce-i în mână nu-i minciună* >;
÷ (lit.) [decât o sută de mâine mai bine cincizeci de azi]
- ▶ 頭隠して尻隠さず (*atama kakushite shiri kakusazu*) → < *a se ascunde ca struțul în nisip* >;
÷ (lit.) [și-a ascuns capul și nu și-a ascuns spatele]
- ▶ 暑さ寒さも彼岸まで (*atsusa samusa mo higan made*) → < *toate minunile țin trei zile* >;
÷ (lit.) [și căldura, și frigul, până la echinox]
- ▶ 石の上にも三年 (*ishi no ue ni mo san nen*) → < *buba cap nu face până nu se coace* >;
÷ (lit.) [chiar și pe piatră – trei ani]
- ▶ 一を聞いて十を知る (*ichi o kiite jū o shiru*) → < *din bucățele cojocarul blană mare face* >;
÷ (lit.) [ai întrebat unu și-ai aflat zece]

▶ 一難去ってまた一難 (*ichi nan satte mata ichi nan*) → < o nenorocire nu vine niciodată singură >;

÷ (lit.) [se îndepărtează o situație dificilă, din nou o alta]

▶ 急がば回れ (*isogaba maware*) → < leneșul mai mult aleargă >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă te grăbești, înconjori]

▶ 犬も歩けば棒に当たる (*inu mo arukeba bō ni ataru*) → < a umbla ca bățul după câine >;

÷ (lit.) [și câinele dacă se plimbă, dă de băț]

▶ 牛は牛連れ (*ushi wa ushi zure*) → < dacă te bagi între lupi, urlă ca lupul >;

÷ (lit.) [vaca urmează vaca]

▶ 馬の耳に念仏 (*uma no mimi ni nenbutsu*) → < a strica orzul pe găște >;

÷ (lit.) [rugăciune pentru urechile calului]

▶ 売り言葉に買い言葉 (*uri kotoba ni kai kotoba*) → < măsură pentru măsură >;

÷ (lit.) [cuvântul de cumpărat pentru cuvântul de vânzare]

▶ 蝦で鯛を釣る (*ebi de tai o tsuru*) → < cine-mparte parte-și face >;

÷ (lit.) [a pescui plătică de mare cu un șarpe]

▶ 老いては子にしたがえ (*oite wa ko ni shitagae*) → < a da în mintea copiilor (la bătrânețe) >;

÷ (lit.) [bătrânețea acompaniază copilul]

▶ 起きて半畳、寝て一畳 (*okite han jō, nete ichi jō*) → < fă ce poți când n-ai alta de făcut >;

÷ (lit.) [te scoli pe jumătate de jō (unitate de măsură pentru rogojina de tatami), te culci pe un jō]

- ▶ 同じ穴の貉 (*onaji ana no mujina*) → < aceeași Mărie cu altă pălărie >;
 ÷ (lit.) [aceeași gaură pentru bursuci]

- ▶ 鬼の居ぬ間に洗濯 (*oni no inu ma ni sentaku*) → < când pisica nu-i acasă șoarecii joacă pe masă >;
 ÷ (lit.) [în timpul/ intervalul *ma* când nu e diavolul, spălatul/ curățirea (sufletului)]

- ▶ 蛙の子は蛙 (*kaeru no ko wa kaeru*) → < petic după sac; ce naște din pisică șoareci mănâncă >;
 ÷ (lit.) [copilul broaștei (este) broască]

- ▶ 火中の栗を拾う (*kachū no kuri o hirou*) → < a se arunca în foc (pentru cineva) >;
 ÷ (lit.) [a scoate castanele din mijlocul focului]

- ▶ 河童の川流れ (*kappa no kawa nagare*) → < calul e cu patru picioare și tot se împiedică >;
 ÷ (lit.) [*kappa* (= ființă mitologică ce trăiește în apă) luat de curgerea râului]

- ▶ 果報は寝て待て (*kahō wa nete mate*) → < cu răbdarea treci marea >;
 ÷ (lit.) [când fericirea doarme așteaptă!]

- ▶ かわいい子には旅させよう (*kawaii ko ni wa tabi saseyō*) → < copilul răzgâiat rămâne ne-nvățat >;
 ÷ (lit.) [să-i oferim/ cerem copilului drăgălaș o excursie]

- ▶ 腐っても鯛 (*kusattemo tai*) → < popa e popă și în șanț >;
 ÷ (lit.) [chiar stricată, e plătică de mare]

- ▶ 光陰矢の如し (*kōin ya no gotoshi*) → < a-ți părea ziua ceas și ceasul clipă >;
 ÷ (lit.) [timpul (zboară) ca o săgeată]

- ▶ 転ばぬ先の杖 (*korobanu saki no tsue*) → < e bună frica de omul sănătos >;

÷ (lit.) [bățul de dinainte pentru a nu se rostogoli]

▶ 猿も木から落ちる (*saru mo ki kara ochiru*) → < calul e cu patru picioare și tot se împiedică >;

÷ (lit.) [și maimuța cade din copac]

▶ 触らぬ神に祟りなし (*sawaranu kami ni tatari nashi*) → < unde nu faci foc nu iese fum >;

÷ (lit.) [fără blestem din partea zeului neatins]

▶ 親しき仲にも礼儀あり (*shitashiki naka ni mo reigi ari*) → < cu prieteni buni colaci mănânci >;

÷ (lit.) [există maniere și între prieteni apropiați]

▶ 七転び八起き (*shichi korobi ya oki*) → < din greșeli învață omul >;

÷ (lit.) [șapte împiedicări/ rostogoliri, opt ridicări]

▶ 捨てる神あれば拾う神あり (*suteru kami areba hirou kami ari*) → < când se închide o ușă, se deschide o fereastră >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă este un zeu care (te) aruncă, există un zeu care (te) culege]

▶ 住めば都 (*sumeba miyako*) → < fiecare pasăre își iubește cuibul >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă locuiești, e capitală]

▶ 千里の道も一歩より (*sen ri no michi mo ippo yori*) → < orice drum are un început >;

÷ (lit.) [și un drum de o mie de ri începe de la un pas]

▶ 船頭多くして船山に登る (*sendō ōkushite fune yama ni noboru*) → < cu mai multe moașe, buricul copilului rămâne netăiat >;

÷ (lit.) [cu mai mulți cârmaci, corabia va urca pe munte]

▶ 善は急げ (*zen wa isoge*) → < dar din dar se face rai >;

÷ (lit.) [grăbește ceea ce e bun!]

▶ ただより高いものはない (*tada yori takai mono wa nai*) → < *mai scumpă ața decât fața* >;

÷ (lit.) [nu e nimic mai scump decât pe gratis]

▶ 塵も積もれば山となる (*chiri mo tsumoreba yama to naru*) → < *picătură cu picătură se umple paharul* >;

÷ (lit.) [și praful, dacă se adună, se face munte]

▶ 鶴は千年亀は万年 (*tsuru wa sen nen kame wa man nen*) → < *viață lungă să-ți ajungă!*; La mulți ani! (urări de viață lungă) >;

÷ (lit.) [cocorul – o mie de ani, broasca țestoasă – zece mii de ani]

▶ 遠くの親類より近くの他人 (*tōku no shinrui yori chikaku no tanin*) → < *mai bine un prieten apropiat decât o rudă îndepărtată* >;

÷ (lit.) [decât rude la depărtare, mai bine alți oameni din apropiere]

▶ 虎の威を借る狐 (*tora no i o karu kitsune*) → < *omul beat se crede împărat* >;

÷ (lit.) [o vulpe ce-a împrumutat puterea unui tigr]

▶ 長いものには巻かれよ (*nagai mono ni wa makareyo*) → < *numai miere zicând gura nu se îndulcește; e fără șansă lupta împotriva celor mari* >;

÷ (lit.) [înfășoară (încercuind) obiecte lungi!]

▶ 泣き面に蜂 (*naki tsura ni hachi*) → < *o nenorocire nu vine niciodată singură* >;

÷ (lit.) [albină pe obrazul care plânge]

▶ 無くて七癖 (*nakute nana kuse*) → < *precum e firea și nărvirea; ce e frumos la toți place, dar nu știe în el ce zace* >;

÷ (lit.) [fără să fie, șapte ticuri]

▶ 二足のわらじを履く (*ni soku no waraji o haku*) → < *colac peste pupăză* >;

÷ (lit.) [a încălța două perechi de sandale din paie]

▶ 二度あることは三度ある (*ni do aru koto wa san do aru*) → < dacă minți o dată, trebuie să minți de mai multe ori >;

÷ (lit.) [un fapt întâmplat de două ori se va întâmpla și a treia oară]

▶ 猫に小判 (*neko ni koban*) → < a strica orzul pe găște >;

÷ (lit.) [bani de aur la pisici]

▶ 旗を揚げる (*hata o ageru*) → < a-și lua picioarele la spinare >;

÷ (lit.) [a flutura steagul]

▶ 花より団子 (*hana yori dango*) → < frumusețea trece prin stomac >;

÷ (lit.) [mai bine bulete de orez decât flori]

▶ 話上手は聞き上手 (*hanashi jōzu wa kiki jōzu*) → < ți s-au dat două urechi și o singură gură, pentru a asculta de două ori mai mult decât vorbești >;

÷ (lit.) [priceput la povestire, priceput la ascultare]

▶ 春の晩飯後三里 (*haru no ban meshi ato san ri*) → < cale lungă să-ți ajungă >;

÷ (lit.) [seară de primăvară, după mâncare, trei ri]

▶ 火に油を注ぐ (*hi ni abura o sosogu*) → < a turna paie pe foc >;

÷ (lit.) [a turna ulei pe foc]

▶ 人の噂陰 (*hito no uwasa kage*) → < vorbești de lup și lupul la ușă >;

÷ (lit.) [bârfa cuiva, umbra sa]

▶ 人を見たら泥棒と見え (*hito o mitara dorobō to mie*) → < ceapa are multe fuste, dar tot degeră la frig >;

÷ (lit.) [dacă te uiți la om, pare hoț]

▶ 人の噂も七十五日 (*hito no uwasa mo nanajūgonichi*) → < toate minunile țin trei zile >;

÷ (lit.) [și bârfa oamenilor (durează) 75 zile]

▶ 百聞は一見にしかず (*hyaku bun wa ikken ni shikazu*) → < până nu te lovești de pragul de sus nu-l vezi pe cel de jos >;

÷ (lit.) [100 de lucruri auzite nu fac cât un lucru văzut (cu propriii tăi ochi)]

▶ 武士に二言はない (*bushi ni ni gon wa nai*) → < vorba rostită e ca glonțul > ;

÷ (lit.) [nu există un al doilea cuvânt pentru războinicul *samurai*]

▶ 豚に真珠 (*buta ni shinju*) → < a arunca mărgăritare la porci >;

÷ (lit.) [perle la porci]

▶ 仏の顔も三度まで (*hotoke no kao mo san do made*) → < orice răbdare are o limită > ;

÷ (lit.) [și fața lui Buddha - până la a treia oară]

▶ 前門の虎、後門の狼 (*mae mon no tora, ato mon no ōkami*) → < un necaz nu vine niciodată singur >;

÷ (lit.) [tigrul din fața porții, lupul de după poartă]

▶ まかぬ種は生えぬ (*makanu tane wa haenu*) → < după faptă și răsplată; a semăna vânt și a culege furtună > ;

÷ (lit.) [semințele neșemănate nu vor crește]

▶ 馬子にも衣装 (*mago ni mo ishō*) → < bun ciocan te-a ciocănit, că frumos te-a potrivit >;

÷ (lit.) [costum și pentru călăreț]

▶ 身から出た錆 (*mi kara deta sabi*) → < cum îți așterni așa dormi >;

÷ (lit.) [rugina ieșită din trup]

▶ 桃栗三年柿八年 (*momo kuri san nen kaki hachi nen*) → < cu răbdarea treci marea >;

÷ (lit.) [piersicile, castanele – trei ani, *kaki* (curmal japonez) – opt ani]

▶ 類は友を呼ぶ (*ruī wa tomo o yobu*) → < cine se aseamăună se adună >;

÷ (lit.) [sortimentul își cheamă prietenul]

▶ 論より証拠 (*ron yori shōko*) → < mai bine fapte decât vorbe >;

÷ (lit.) [decât teorie, probe]

▶ 焼け石に水 (*yake ishi ni mizu*) → < cu o rândunică nu se face primăvară >;

÷ (lit.) [apă pe piatra încinsă]

▶ 雄弁は銀、沈黙は金 (*yūben wa gin, chinmoku wa kin*) → < tăcerea e de aur, iar vorba de argint >;

÷ (lit.) [elocvența – de argint, tăcerea – de aur]

▶ 禍を転じて福となす (*wazawai o tenjite fuku to nasu*) → < tot răul spre bine >;

÷ (lit.) [a schimba neșansa și a o face fericire]

▶ 割れ鍋に綴じ蓋 (*ware nabe ni toji buta*) → < petic după sac >;

÷ (lit.) [capac legat la oala spartă]

VI. Maxims and Reflections from Four Kanji [四字熟語]

▶ 以心伝心 (*ishin denshin*) → < gând la gând > ;

÷ (lit.) [suflet transmis prin suflet]

▶ 一石二鳥 (*isseki ni chō*) → < a împușca două vrăbii dintr-o lovitură > ;

÷ (lit.) [o piatră, două păsări]

▶ 異体同心 (*itai dōshin*) → < gând la gând cu bucurie > ;

÷ (lit.) [corpuri diferite, aceeași inimă]

▶ 一期一会 (*ichi go ichi e*) → < orice întâlnire este unică > ;

÷ (lit.) [un timp, o întâlnire]

▶ 一日千秋 (*ichi jitsu sen shū*) → < a sta ca pe ace > ;

÷ (lit.) [o zi (ca) o mie de toamne]

▶ 一長一短 (*icchō ittan*) → < (a fi) și puncte bune și puncte slabe > ;

÷ (lit.) [o lungime, o scurtime]

▶ 一朝一夕 (*icchō isseki*) → < cât ai zice „pește” > ;

÷ (lit.) [o dimineață, o seară]

▶ 一陽来復 (*ichi yō rai fuku*) → < a-și întoarce norocul fața înspre ... > ;

÷ (lit.) [cu fiecare rază de soare, venirea unui câștig]

▶ 四苦八苦 (*shi ku hakku*) → < o nenorocire nu vine niciodată singură > ;

÷ (lit.) [patru nenorociri, opt nenorociri]

▶ 自業自得 (*ji gō ji toku*) → < după faptă și răsplată > ;

÷ (lit.) [fapta proprie, dobânda proprie]

▶ 十人十色 (*jū nin to iro*) → < câte capete, atâtea păreri >;

÷ (lit.) [zece oameni, zece culori]

▶ 二人三脚 (*ni nin san kyaku*) → < două capete fac mai mult decât unul >;

÷ (lit.) [două persoane, trei picioare]

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