

JAPANESE PROVERBS BETWEEN EQUIVALENCE AND COMPARATIVE TRANSLATION FROM JAPANESE AND ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN. AN ANALYSIS FROM THE SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

The current paper takes a comparative look at a selection of Japanese proverbs and their translation into English to their Romanian equivalents. The English translation belongs to David Galeff, the author of the book 'Japanese Proverbs. Wit and Wisdom' from which stems the selection of proverbs which are the object of the current analysis. The Romanian translation applies two methods. It tries to find an equivalent in Romanian, both in terms of wit i.e. wording or sense and in terms of wisdom i.e. meaning or reference. As such the two perspectives of analysis are semantic and pragmatic. The aim is firstly to find an equivalent in meaning and reference to a relevant wisdom inspired by reality and life. If such an equivalent is not found, alternative translations are attempted using other translation procedures, such as modulation or even adaptation. The theoretical framework used is the one Vinay and Dalbarnet outlined in their 'Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation'. This is a translational attempt to look towards the East and towards the West and see how different and how similar they are in the way they understand life and express that understanding. The aim of the analysis is to see to what extent it can identify corresponding ways of wording or equivalent forms of expression in Romanian for the wit and the wisdom encapsulated in the Japanese proverbs, via the English language.

Keywords: proverb, phrase, equivalent, modulation, semantic, pragmatic

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1. Chapter 1 Introduction

This paper is an attempt to illustrate the meeting of the East and West. It faces a few simple questions right from the start. What is East? Is it Japan? What is West? Is it represented by the English version of the proverbs published in the US? If that is the starting point of the discussion, where does it situate the Romanian version as a partner in this dialogue? Is it the middle ground between the two? It would appear to be so. But Romania lies to the East of the US and to the West of the Japanese. Moreover the interesting thing about East and West is that they mean different things depending on one's point of view, on how one looks at them.

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An approach would be to regard East and West in terms of what they represent, what they mean, independent of the name of geographical position which proves to be so tricky. This dichotomy is dissolved by the very number of versions this paper purports to look at, which is three, not two: the original Japanese, the English translation, and finally the Romanian version. They are each in their own right the expression of the wit and wisdom which is the result and manifestation of human experience of life where and how it has been lived. If anything, then the table at which they sit is a round one with no geographical points, but rather looking at life from a personal, subjective and equal distance.

This approach tries to steer clear of the very real danger of attempting to become an exercise in translating the untranslatable, in the idiosyncratic way of the Japanese and the English ways, and even of the Romanian way of seeing life, respectively. If anything, it tries to stay true to the manner in which they express themselves, but when putting into words life experiences which are common to all. It is not so much the substance which is different, but the expression. Beyond the sense of the words, which varies across the three languages, and even beyond the reference to cultural and social elements, which vary as well, there is the same witty and wise look at life and the dialogue each human civilisation enters with it, is shaped by it and builds its own identity and culture, as a consequence.

The permanent references to the English version represent a close dialogue with the Western understanding of the Japanese proverbs and with the way in which they were situated in context. The raw translation of the Japanese, represented by the literal rendition of their form, as well as the explanation provided by David Galef for each of the proverbs and sayings, were an invaluable reference point which informed the Romanian equivalents and translations.

Romanian equivalent proverbs were sought for all of them and given whenever matches were found. But equally important, if not more relevant and certainly more challenging, were the attempts to come up with translations of our own – translations proper, as it were, which endeavoured to convey the what and the how, the content and the tone, i.e. the imagery, the poetry, the music of the language as well. This is along the lines of foreignisation of the Japanese proverbs, i.e. the domestication of the Romanian version. If these proverbs are to be regarded as entering a dialogue, the idea was to see what would a Romanian make of the Japanese wisdom and wit.

2. Chapter 2 Comparative Analysis of Proverbs and Phrases in Translation

Subchapter 2.1 A look at the proverbs and phrases

The proverbs and phrases selected in this paper are taken from the volume of Japanese and phrases collected by David Galef and they mirror the structure and number of entries almost entirely, with a few exceptions, which were not included in the present selection because they were opaque as to either sense or meaning. The entries in his book fall into two categories: injunctions and statements of observation, as pointed out by Charles Shiro Inoue, in his foreword to the volume *Even a Buddha Can Talk*, published in 2000 (Galef, D., 2012: 14). Those expressing injunctions operate on two planes: the semantic one, where an image is used to convey, by way of metaphor, another idea, or rather, a truth, which exists underneath, on a secondary plane, which is the pragmatic one. The words used to create the surface image are never really “it”, the point is that they lead to an understanding and prompt to a certain action or attitude on the part of the reader. Their mechanism is that they are meant to ‘do’ something beyond what they are meant to say. Without that level of action, the pragmatic plane, they have no meaning. In fact, beyond the image they conjure up with their words is precisely where they need to reach, *in order to* acquire their meaning. In other words, such proverbs are not merely supposed to make sense, but to mean something pragmatically, induce a certain action or attitude on the part of the reader. As such, the reader plays an important role, since they become the locus of pragmatic meaning, where meaning takes shape: beyond the words of the proverbs themselves and within the reality of the reader, who uncovers their meaning and thus completes or fulfils it. An example of such a proverb is *Teki ni shio o okuru*. Or *Send salt to your enemy*. meaning *Return good for evil*. or in Romanian, *a întoarce și obrazul celălalt*, translated with a biblical image. Anton Pann in his classical collection of folklore proverbs and sayings *Povestea vorbii* offers two versions in verse, one which is

closer to the meaning, more directly moralizing, *La cine te dușmănește/Tu cu bine-i răsplătește* (Pann, A., 1982: 158) and one which uses metaphorical imagery to convey the same idea *De te latră vreun câine/Astupă-i gura cu pâine* (Pann, A. 158), where the idea of evil is suggested by a typical metaphor for enemy in Romanian, which is the dog, whereas *salt*, which is a metaphor for generosity across civilisations, is rendered here by the image of *bread*, which conveys the same idea of a generous gift and a token of kindness.

The other category, the statements of observation, simply offer an image which does not lead to a secondary plane of meaning, but which is powerful and vivid, meant to stick in the mind of the reader. The beauty of this kind of proverbs and sayings is their evocative and suggestive power, which resonates like an ongoing echo and evokes the experience and emotion from which they have sprung. *Tsuki-yo ni kome no meshi*. or *A meal of rice under the evening moon*. – *O bucată/Un colț de pâine și o cană cu apă*. is a wonderful example of what the simple things in life and the joy they bring means to each and every one of us. This particular proverb, for example, lends itself to all sorts of translations, depending on the personal experience and emotions it evokes.

Subchapter 1.2 A comparative look at the translation

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Mago ni mo isho.</i> Even a packhorse driver looks fine in proper dress.	Clothes make the man.	Haina-l face pe om.
<i>Hiza tomo dango.</i> Consult anyone, even your knees.	Two heads are better than one.	Unde-s doi puterea crește. Sfătuiește-te cu cel mic și cu cel mare și pe urmă hotărăște tu însuți. (Pann, A., 1982: 422)
<i>Kon'ya no shiro-bakama.</i> Dyers wear undyed trousers	Shoemakers' children go barefoot.	Criotorul umblă cu haina descusută. (Pann, A., 1982: 125) Cizmarul umblă cu cizmele sparte. (Pann, A., 1982: 125)
<i>Kani wa kora ni nisete ana o horu.</i> Crabs dig holes according to the size of their shells.	Cut your coat according to your cloth.	Nu te întinde mai mult decât ți-e plapuma.
<i>Ja no michi wa hebi.</i> Snakes follow the eay of the serpents.	Set a thief to catch a thief. Monkey see, monkey do.	Cum e turcu' și pistolu'. Ce naște din pisică șoareci mănâncă.
<i>Itadaku mono wa natsu de mo kosode.</i> A padded jacket is an acceptable gift even in summer.	Take what you can get.	Calul de dar nu se caută la dinți.
<i>Dobyo-ai awaremu.</i> People with the same disease share sympathy.	Misery loves company. Birds of a feather (flock together).	S-au găsit tusea și junghiul. Și-a găsit sacul peticul. Și-a găsit hârbul capacul.
<i>Ware-nabe ni toji-buta.</i> A repaired lid on a broken pot.	Two of a kind.	Și-a găsit tigva dopul. Și-a găsit lelea bărbatul. Cin' se-aseamănă, se-adună.
<i>Hotoke no kao mo san-do.</i> A Buddha's face when asked three times.	Enough to try the patience of a saint.	A ajunge la capătul răbdării. A-și ieși din pepeni.
<i>Akuji sen-ri o hashiru.</i> An evil act runs a thousand miles.	Bad news travels fast.	Vestea rea se duce ca glonțul.

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Hatake kara hamaguri wa torenu.</i> You can't get clams from a field.	You can't get blood from a stone.	Babă frumoasă și copil cuminte n-ai să vezi.
<i>Sendo oku shite fune yama ni noboru.</i> Too many boatmen will bring a boat up the mountain.	Too many cooks will spoil the broth.	Copilul cu prea multe moașe rămâne cu buricul netăiat.
<i>Tagei wa mugei.</i> Too many accomplishments make no accomplishment.	Jack of all trades and master of none.	Celui cu meserii multe Casa-i este fără curte. (Pann, A., 1982: 125) Decât multe și tot rele, mai bine una și bună. (Pann, A., 1982: 125)
<i>Kuchi wa wazawai no moto.</i> The mouth is the cause of calamity.	The mouth is the gate of evil.	Gura bate c***1.
<i>Kakusu kotow a kuchi yori dasuna.</i> Do not let secrets leave your mouth.	Loose lips sink ships.	
<i>Toranu tanuki no kawa-zan'yo.</i> Don't estimate the value of a racoon dog skin before catching the racoon dog.	Don't count your chickens before they're hatched.	A (nu) vinde pielea vulpii din pădure. Nu zi hop până nu sari groapa.
<i>Inu mo arukeba bo ni ataru.</i> A dog that walks around will find a stick.	Don't go looking for trouble. Seek and ye shall find.	A o căuta cu lumânarea. Caută și vei găsi.
<i>Hana yori dango.</i> Dumplings are better than flowers.	Pudding before praise.	Dragostea trece prin stomac.
<i>Chiri mo tsumoreba yama to naru.</i> Even dust amassed will grow into a mountain.	Great oaks from little acorns grow. Slow and steady wins the race.	Bob cu bob se umple sacul.
<i>Nakittsura ni hachi.</i> A bee stinging a crying face.	Adding insult to injury.	Când vin, vin toate. Din lac în puț. Fuși de d****', dai de ta'su.
<i>Kusai mono ni futa.</i> Put a lid on what smells bad.	Don't wash your dirty linen in public.	Oala acoperită nu dă gunoai.
<i>Bimbo hima nashi.</i> Poor people have no leisure.	There is no rest for the weary.	Dacă n-ai să mănânci, muncești până dai în brânci. (Pann, A., 1982: 115) Săracul muncește de două ori ca să mănânce o dată.
<i>Ino no kenka ni kodomo ga de, kodomo no kenka ni oya ga deru.</i> Dogfights draw children; children's fights draw parents.	One thing leads to another.	A face din țăntar armăsar.
<i>Kaeru no ko wa kaeru.</i> The child of a frog is a frog.	Like father, like son.	Ce naște din pisică șoareci mănâncă. (Bantaș, A., 1994: 136) Așchia nu sare departe de trunchi.

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Makeru ga kachi.</i> To lose is to win.	The race is not to the swift.	Fuga e rușinoasă da' e sănătoasă.
<i>Sanjurokkei nigeru ni shikazu.</i> Thirty-six plans – fleeing I the best tactic.		
<i>Ju-nin, to-iro.</i> Ten men, ten tastes.	There is no accounting for tastes.	Câte bordeie atâtea obicei. Gusturile nu se discută. <i>De gustibus non disputandum est.</i>
<i>Saru mono wa hibi ni utoshi.</i> Those who depart are forgotten, day by day.	Out of sight, out of mind.	Ochii care nu se văd se uită.
<i>Tsume no aka o senjite nomu.</i> Boil and drink another's fingernail dirt.	To follow in someone's footsteps.	A-i călca pe urme cuiva.
<i>He no hitte shiri tsubome.</i> There is no use scrunching up your buttocks after the horse has bolted.	No use shutting the barn door after the horse has bolted.	Mortul de la groapă nu se mai întoarce. (Nicolescu et al, 1993: 115)
<i>Isogaba maware.</i> When in a hurry, take the roundabout route.	The more haste, the less speed.	Grăbește-te încet. <i>Festina lente.</i>
<i>Nen ni wa, nen o ireyo.</i> Add caution to caution.	Look before you leap.	Măsoară de două ori până tai o dată. Cine s-a fript cu ciorbă suflă și-n iaurt.
<i>Uma no mimi ni nembutsu.</i> A Sutra in a horse's ear.	Preaching to deaf ears.	A vorbi la pereți. A vorbi ca Moise'n pustiu. Popa nu toacă de două ori pentru o babă surdă.
<i>Shiwambo no kaki no tane.</i> A miser and his persimmon seeds.	A penny pincher will pick up anything.	Șade d****l cu c****l pe banii lui. (Pann, A., 1982: 353) A-și mânca de sub unghie.
<i>Zen wa isoge.</i> Do quickly what is good.	Strike the iron while it's hot.	Bate fierul cât e cald.
<i>Mi kara deta sabi.</i> Rust comes from within the body.	As you make your bed, so you must lie in it.	Cum îți așterni așa dormi. Cine sapă groapa altuia cade singur în ea.
<i>Taigyo wa shochi ni sumazu.</i> Big fish do not live in small ponds.	A great ship must have deep water.	Vulturul nu prinde muște. <i>Acvila non capit muscas.</i>
<i>Koi to seki to wa kakusarenu.</i> Love and cough cannot be hidden.	Love conquers all.	Dragostea e ca tusea un o poți ascunde.
<i>Kaho wa nete mate.</i> Sleep and wait for good luck.	Everything comes to him who waits.	Cu răbdarea treci marea.
<i>Chinkyaku mo choza ni sugireba itowareru.</i> Even a welcome guest becomes tiresome by overstaying.	Fish and visitors stink in three days.	Mai răuț că-i mai drăguț. Hai la casa cui ne are, Că se bucură mai tare.
<i>Hachiju no tenarai.</i> One may study calligraphy at eighty.	It's never to late to learn.	Cât trăiește omu' -nvață.

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Kusare-nawa mo yaku ni tatsu.</i> Even a rotting rope can be put to good use.	Necessity is the mother of invention.	Nevoia învață pe om.
<i>Happo bijin wa hakujo.</i> An eight-sided beauty is cold-hearted.	Fair and fickle.	Ce e frumos la toți place, Dar nu știe-n el ce zace. (Pann, A., 1982: 229) Din-afară măr frumos Și înăuntru găunos. (Pann, A., 1982: 229) De departe trandafir, De aproape borș cu știr. (Pann, A., 1982: 229)
<i>Mi o koroshite jin o nasu.</i> One becomes virtuous by subduing the body.	The world, the flesh, and the devil.	Cine se biruiește De orșice poștește Dobitoc se numește. (Pann, A., 1982: 344)
<i>Tanin no senki o zutsu ni yamu.</i> Don't get a headache over another's lumbago.	Don't meddle in other's affairs.	Nu te băga/amesteca unde nu-ți fierbe oala. Câinele moare de drum lung și prostul de grija altuia.
<i>Tori naki sato no komori.</i> Like a bat in a birdless village.	Like a one-eyed man in the kingdom of the blind.	Chior în țara orbilor.
<i>Benkei no naki-dokoro.</i> The spot that makes the warrior benkei cry.	Everyone has his Achilles' heel.	Călcâiul lui Ahile.
<i>Anzuru yori umu ga yasushi.</i> Childbirth is easier than the worrying beforehand.	It's always darkest before the dawn.	Mai rău se sperie cineva din auzit decât din văzut. (Pann, A., 1982: 330)
<i>Ko o nusurumu mono wa ko ni arawaru.</i> He who steals incense smells of it.	Guilt will out.	Nici usturoi n-a mâncat, nici gura nu îi miroase. Sulița orișunde Nu să poate ascunde. (Pann, A., 1982: 30)
<i>Heso o kamedomo oyobanu.</i> It's no good trying to bite your navel.	Don't cut off your nose to spite your face.	A-și tăia craca de sub picioare.
<i>Ten ni mukatt tsuba o haku.</i> The spit aimed at the sky comes back to one.	Don't spit in the wind.	A călca pe greblă.
<i>Kuni horobite sanga ari.</i> Destroy a country, but its mountains and rivers remain.	The land outlasts the king.	Apa trece, pietrele rămân. Nu mor caii când vor câinii. Câinii latră, ursul merge.
<i>Issun saki wa yami.</i> Darkness lies one inch ahead.	No man knows his own fortune.	N-duce anul ce-duce ceasul. Azi e azi, mâine e mâine.
<i>Ishibotoke mo mono o iu.</i> Even a Stone Buddha will say something.	Enough to try the patience of a saint.	A-și pierde răbdarea. A-și ieși din pepeni. "A explodat mămăliga."
<i>Shishi shinchu no mushi.</i> Worms in the middle of a lion's body.	Nourishing a snake in one's bosom.	A încălzi/crește șarpele la sân.
<i>Tsuki yuki hana wa ichido ni nagamerarenu.</i>	To everything there is a season.	Fiecare lucru la timpul lui și ouăle roșii de Paște.

Japanese	English	Romanian
The moon, snow, and flowers cannot all be viewed at the same time.		
<i>Nagakojo wa akubi no tane.</i> A long speech is the source of yawns.	Brevity is the soul of wit.	Vorba lungă sărăcia omului.
<i>Muyo no yo.</i> A use for the useless.	One man's trash is another man's treasure.	Ce-i e unuia leac, îi e altuia otravă.
<i>Shindako no toshi o kazoeru.</i> Counting a dead child's years.	A fruitless endeavour.	Sapă, frate, sapă, până dai de stele-n apă. Mortul de la groapă nu se mai întoarce. (Nicolescu et al, 1993: 115)
<i>Fuku sui bon ni kaerazu.</i> Spilled water does not return to the tray.	There's no use crying over spilled milk.	Cu plânsul nu se îniază morții. Lacrimile nu ajută. Ce-a fost a fost. (Nicolescu et al, 1993: 115)
<i>Neko ni koban.</i> A gold coin to a cat.	Pearls before swine.	(A arunca) mărgăritare în picioarele porcilor.
<i>Rei mo sugireba burei ni naru.</i> Exceeding courtesy becomes rudeness.	Killing with kindness.	Ce-i mult nu-i bun. Mai răuț că-i mai drăguț.
<i>Taikai wa akuta o erabazu.</i> The ocean does not choose its trash	A generous soul accepts everyone.	La o fată mare zbiară și-un măgar.
<i>Taiki bansei.</i> Genius matures late.	Last but not least.	Cine n-are bătrâni să-i cumpere.
<i>Nemimi ni mizu.</i> Water in a sleeping ear.	A shock to the system.	Ca măciuca-n moalele capului.
<i>Shini uma ni hari o sasu.</i> To stick needles into a dead horse.	Like flogging a dead horse.	Freție la picior de lemn.
<i>Nikkumarekko yo ni habakaru.</i> The hateful child does as he pleases in the world.	Evil men flourish like the green bay tree.	Copilul nepedepsit rămâne nepricopsit. (Pann, A., 1982: 147) Copilul răzgâiat rămâne neînvățat. (Pann, A., 1982: 147)
<i>Ruri mo hari mo teraseba hikaru.</i> Emeralds and crystals glitter when lit.	Encouragement bring out the best in people.	Cine are vecini răi se laudă singur. (Pann, A., 1982: 373)
<i>Nodomoto sugireba atsusa o wasureru.</i> Once past the throat, hot liquid is forgotten.	Out of sight, out of mind.	Timpul vindecă toate.
<i>Kiite gokuraku mite jigoku.</i> Hearing heaven, seeing hell.	Imagination goes a long way.	Afara-i vopsit gardul, înăuntrul leopardul. Din spate liceu, din față muzeu.
<i>Raku wa ku no tane, ku wa raku no tane.</i> Pleasure is the source of pain; pain is the source of pleasure.	You have to take the rough with the smooth.	Cine-ncalecă măgarul, Să-i suferă și năravul. (Pann, A., 1982: 232)
<i>Sjikaku na zashiki o mauku haku.</i>	To cut corners. To do things by halves.	A face treabă de mântuială.

Japanese	English	Romanian
To sweep a four-cornered room in a circle.		A face lucrurile cu jumătate de măsură. A face lucrurile fără tragere de inimă.
<i>Nusubito to chisha no so wa onaji.</i> Thieves and scholars look the same.	You can't judge a book by its cover.	Nu tot ce zboară se mănâncă.
<i>Tsuki-yo ni kome no meshi.</i> A meal of rice under the evening moon.	The simple things in life.	Cu cât de puțin poate fi omul fericit!
<i>Suigyo no majiwari.</i> The mingling of water and fish.	As a fish takes to water.	A se simți ca peștele în apă.
<i>Nusumi-gui wa umai.</i> Stolen food is tasty.	Stolen cherries are sweet.	Nici lupul flămând, nici oaia cu doi miei. (Pann, A., 1982: 353)
<i>Manaita no koi.</i> A carp on a cutting board.	A lamb to the slaughter.	Ca mielul la tăiere/abator.
<i>Suna o kamu.</i> To chew sand.	To chew the carpet.	A face spume la gură. A scrâșni din dinți.
<i>Nasake ni hamukau yaiba nashi.</i> No sword can oppose kindness.	You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.	Vorba dulce mult aduce.
<i>Ichijo no ya wa orubeku, jujo wa orubekarazu.</i> One arrow can easily break; ten arrows cannot easily break.	There is strength in numbers.	Unde-s doi puterea crește.
<i>Hanashi-jozu no hiki-beta.</i> Good at talking, bad at listening.	None so deaf as those who will not hear.	A vorbi mult si degeaba. A nu-i tăcea fleanca. A melița.
<i>Boro o kite mo kokoro wa nishiki.</i> Though he wears rags, his heart is brocade.	Though he wears rags, his heart is brocade.	A avea o inimă de aur. A fi pâinea lui Dumnezeu/bun ca pâinea caldă.
<i>Teki ni shio o okuru.</i> Send salt to your enemy.	Return good for evil.	A (răs)plăti răul cu bine. A întoarce și obrazul celălalt. La cine te dușmănește Tu cu bine-i răsplătește. (Pann, A., 1982: 158) De te latră vreun câine Astupă-i gura cu pâine. (Pann, A. 158)
<i>Aru ichi mon nai sen ryo.</i> To have one mon is better than not to have a thousand ryo.	A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.	A nu da cioara din mână pe vrabia din par.
<i>Shizoku no shoho.</i> A warrior's business practices.	A fish out of water.	(A fi/se simți) ca peștele pe uscat.
<i>Todai moto kurashi.</i> Darkness at the base of the lighthouse.	Sometimes you can't see the forest from the trees.	A avea orbul găinilor. A nu vedea de nas. A nu vedea pădurea de copaci.
<i>Ki ni mochi ga naru.</i> Rice cakes grow on trees.	Money doesn't grow on trees.	Ceva (nu) crește în copac.
<i>Noren ni ude-oshi.</i> Strong-arming a shop curtain.	Like boxing with a shadow.	A se lupta cu morile de vânt.

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Namari wa katawa to natsu-bekarazu.</i> Lead should not be made into a sword.	You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.	(Nu poți) să faci din r***t bici și să plesnească.
<i>Tori wa fusuru ni kaeru.</i> Birds return to old nests.	There's no place like home.	Nicăieri nu-i ca acasă.
<i>Waranbe ni hana motaseru gotoshi.</i> Like giving flowers to a child.	Like a bull in a china shop.	Ca un elefant într-un magazin de porțelanuri. (Bantaș, A., 1994: 136)
<i>Iki no kusaki wa nushi shirazu.</i> The possessor of bad breath does not notice the odor.	Before complaining of the mote in your brother's eye, first remove the beam from your own.	A vedea paiul din ochii altuia dar a nu vedea bârna din proprii ochi.
<i>Sode kara kaji.</i> A fire from a kimono sleeve.	For want of nail, a kingdom was lost.	A face din fânțar, armăsar. A da foc la casă.
<i>Abata mo ekubo.</i> Even pockmarks may look like dimples.	Love is blind.	Dragostea e oarbă. Dacă-ți pica dragostea pe un r***t, toată vara îl aperi de muște.
<i>Atsui mono wa same-yasui.</i> Hot things cool easily.	The hotter the flame, the quicker it dies.	E (doar) un foc de paie
<i>Minasoko no hari o sargasu.</i> To search for a needle at the bottom of the water.	To look for a needle in a haystack.	A căuta acul în carul cu fân.
<i>Setchin de yari o tsukau yo.</i> Like yielding a spear in a toilet.	No room to swing a cat.	A un avea unde să pui piciorul. (Bantaș, A., 1994: 161)
<i>Yokoguruma o osu.</i> To push a cart sideways.	To push a rock up a mountain.	A trage sania pe uscat.
<i>Tonari no hana wa akai.</i> The neighbour's flowers are red.	The grass is greener on the other side of the fence.	Bucatele de la masa altuia sunt mai cu gust. (Pann, A. 353) Găina vecinului e mai grasă. (Pann, A., 1982: 353).
<i>Sui wa mi o kuu.</i> Fashion eats up the body.	One must suffer to be beautiful.	Rabdă baba la frumusețe.
<i>Tera no tonari ni mo oni ga sumu.</i> Devils, too, live alongside the temple.	Good and evil live side by side.	La ușa cârciumei este un diavol, la poarta mănăstirii, o sută.
<i>Jibun no atama no hae o oe.</i> Brush the flies away from your own head.	Mind your own business.	Nu te băga/amesteca unde nu-ți fierbe oala. Stai în banca ta. Vezi-ți lungul nasului.
<i>Hisashi o kashite omoya o torareru.</i> Lend the eaves and the main building will be taken.	Give them an inch and they'll take a mile.	Îi dai un deget și îți ia mâna toată. Dăi nas lui Ivan și se suie pe divan.
<i>Suso tote kata e tsugu.</i> Taking from the hem to patch the shoulder.	Robbing Peter to pay Paul.	A da pe mere ce iei pe pere. Vrea să dezbrace un sfânt, să îmbrace pe altul. (Pann, A., 1982: 300)
<i>Hebini kamarete kuchi-nawa ni ojiru.</i> A person bitten by a snake will fear a rotted rope.	A burnt cat will avoid a cold stove.	Cine s-a fript cu ciorbă suflă și-n iaurt.

Japanese	English	Romanian
<i>Kane ga kane o yoku.</i> Money calls to money.	The rich get richer.	Ban la ban trage (și păduche la golan).
<i>Amadare ishi o ugatsu.</i> Raindrops will wear through stone.	Slow and steady wins the race.	Cu răbdarea treci marea. Bob cu bob se umple sacul.
<i>Mitai ga yamai.</i> Wanting to see is a weakness.	Curiosity killed the cat.	Crede și nu cerceta.
<i>Nakute nana kuse.</i> Nothing if not seven habits.	Everyone has a few peculiarities.	Fiecare cu țacăneala/stolul lui (de păsări).
<i>Oreru yori nabike.</i> Better to bow than to break.	Be like the willow, not like the oak.	Capul plecat sabia nu-l taie.

The two criteria employed in the interpretation and translation of the proverbs and phrases were semantic and pragmatic. Semantically, they were read as to the sense of the wording proper, and in this respect David Galef's attempt to translate them almost word for word was of particular relevance and help, because it facilitated an insight into the otherness of the Japanese form of expression. This was the first step which enabled the second one, which is the translation proper, the identification and rendition of their meaning, pragmatically speaking. Galef offered help in this respect as well, in the description and additional information he provided for all of them. The translation from Japanese into English is pragmatically motivated – it renders the meaning, and not the wording. The same is true of the Romanian versions, which attempted to capture the facets of wit and wisdom of their meaning in Romanian. Semantically the versions may vary greatly between languages, and even between the versions of the same language, since it is the idea which was reformulated in various ways.

The translation procedure which is employed therefore is equivalence, because it is the one which seeks to render the embodiment of the same idea in all three languages. In their work *Comparative Stylistics of French and English. A methodology for translation* Vinay and Dalbernet define equivalence as follows:

[...] the same situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural methods. [...] As a result, most equivalences are fixed, and belong to a phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, nominal or adjectival phrases, etc. In general proverbs are perfect examples of equivalences [...]. (Vinay, J.-P., 1995: 38)

This paper is an extensive exercise of equivalence, sometimes with vastly different versions in terms of style and structure between the Japanese, English and Romanian versions, but which seek to keep the same meaning and express it from the perspective of each of the respective languages. In other words, the forms which the wit and the wisdom take in each language are different, but they are expressions, embodiments of the same meaning, manifesting itself and mirroring reality and experience.

3. Conclusions

The matching sets of proverbs from different cultures make a treatise in comparative sociology, or cultural anthropology. But this is far from being this paper's intention. Its wish is to contribute to a dialogue in which the mere positioning seems illusive. East and West are relativized to such a degree, that a vertical escape into the timelessness of human experience, wisdom and wit presented itself as a ready way out and was taken with a sigh of relief. This is so much more justified by the fact that the intention of the paper is to compare ineffable things such as "what people are saying", what people deem to be important, common concerns, "values of culture" as Edward Seidensticker (Galef, 2012:

13) says in the preface to the first 1986 edition. Also part of the comparison which is the main object of interest are the way in which these are said: that “touch of poetry”, the “lively use of imagery”, the “[sensitivity] to the music of language” (Galef, 2012: 12) – they are all elements which informed the translation into Romanian. The idea of the proverbs and sometimes phrases is to say something important in a way that is easy to remember, that is how the English version regarded the Japanese original. This was reiterated again in the translation into Romanian. Galef’s translation, by his own admission, stayed close to the literal meaning rather than translate loosely, for the benefit of readers who want to know the original meaning. This was of great help for the translation into Romanian, because it tried to listen to the Japanese meaning beyond the English words and encode it into Romanian in such a way so as to be memorable and important, ‘wise and witty’ as the subtitle of the English book says.

Much like the book of collected Japanese proverbs translated into English was for its author, this paper is a labour of love for this author. The image which it is trying to suggest is a Japanese, an Englishman (or is an American, really, since David Galef is American, and such details matter in this case) and a Romanian enter a bar. What do they say when faced with various aspects of life? What do they see, how do they see it and how do they put it into words? How do they react? The position of the Romanian voice in this dialogue is similar to that of Anton Pann, “the son of Pepelea, who is witty like a proverb”² in Eminescu’s words, to whose work this paper has resorted time and again for versions that are at once timeless, and idiosyncratically Romanian.

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² “fiul Pepelei cel isteţ ca un proverb” where Pepelea is a character in the Romanian folklore who, under the guise of foolishness, makes witty remarks and wise observations about the world, life and people. It is similar to the court jester, but in Romanian folklore, he is ‘one of the people’, similar to Till Eulenspiegel, the German character of the Medieval chapbook which bears his name.