

การเปรียบเทียบสุภาษิตลาว และสุภาษิตจีนที่แสดงออกทางวัฒนธรรม An Internal Cultural Comparison of Chinese and Laotian Proverbs

ทองใบ สิวไล

นักศึกษาปริญญาเอกมหาวิทยาลัยยูนนานนอร์มอล สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน

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บทคัดย่อ

การพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์และร่วมมือระหว่างสาธารณรัฐประชาชนลาวกับสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีนภายใต้ยุทธศาสตร์หนึ่งแถบหนึ่งเส้นทาง โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งความร่วมมือในการก่อสร้างทางรถไฟลาวจีน แสดงให้เห็นว่าความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองประเทศลาว-จีนได้จับมือแน่นแฟ้นยิ่งขึ้น ดังนั้น การทำความเข้าใจสุภาษิตที่มีเนื้อหาที่แสดงออกทางวัฒนธรรมอันหลากหลายไปด้วยวัฒนธรรมชนเผ่า และแสดงออกทางวิถีชีวิตทางสังคม ซึ่งมีเนื้อหาในการเปรียบเทียบและการนำใช้ที่กว้างขวางแต่ในด้านการแปลสุภาษิตลาวเป็นภาษาจีนหรือการแปลภาษาสุภาษิตจีนมาเป็นภาษาลาวยังเป็นการยากสำหรับนักศึกษาที่จะเรียนรู้และเข้าใจความหมายอย่างแท้จริง บทความนี้ ดำเนินการวิเคราะห์และจำแนกประเภทสุภาษิตจีนและลาวในรูปแบบของภาพรวมโดยทั่วไป จากนั้นนำภาพรวมไปสู่ตัวอย่างเฉพาะเจาะจงและวิเคราะห์เชิงลึกผลการวิเคราะห์ได้ข้อสรุปเกี่ยวกับความคล้ายคลึงกันและความแตกต่างของสุภาษิตจีนและลาว รวมทั้งการค้นพบแนวโน้มการหาจุดร่วมทางวัฒนธรรมระหว่างสุภาษิตของทั้งสองประเทศบนพื้นฐานในการปกป้องลักษณะพื้นฐานของสุภาษิตทั้งสองประเทศ เพื่อช่วยให้เกิดการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมเป็นไปอย่างสะดวกยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: คำสุภาษิตลาว คำสุภาษิตจีน การแสดงออกทางวัฒนธรรม การเปรียบเทียบ

Abstract

The development of a strategic partnership between China and Laos, and the “One Belt One Road” initiative, especially the Chinese Laotian plan for the development of railroad construction in Laos, is confirmed the close collaboration of the two countries. Understanding of proverbs which inherently have a deep cultural connotation and rich ethnic context, some proverbs related to ways of life of the society, expression of comparison, and wide use; but the translation of Laotian proverbs into Chinese and the translation of Chinese proverbs into Laotian is difficult for the learning of students to really know its meaning. This paper worked on analysis and differentiation of Chinese and Laotian proverbs in the general overview to specific examples and in-depth analysis. The results showed the similarities and differences of Chinese and Laotian proverbs, and also discovery of common culture between the two country's proverbs based on the protection of fundamental characteristics of proverbs for facilitation of cross cultural communication.

Key Words: Laotian Proverbs, Chinese Proverbs, Cultural Connotation, Comparisons

Introduction

1. The Definition and Categorization of Chinese Proverbs

1.1 A Definition of Proverbs

Proverbs developed early in China's history and have at least been used for 2000 years. Du Wenlan in his "Editorial Guide to Ancient Proverbs" says that: "The Ballad of Xing was transmitted with the spoken word before the event of written language." This passage tells us that in ancient times after people developed speech but before they began recording that speech with writing, proverbs were already in use. In some of the ancient Chinese classics like *The Book of Changes*, *Mencius (Chinese Philosopher)*, *Zuozhuan (Zuo's Commentaries)*, *Guoyu (The Chinese's national language used by people at Large)*, *Warring States Annals*, there is mention of Xia proverbs, Zhou proverbs, undomesticated proverbs, and common sayings. In addition there are also actual proverbs is recorded from these works. Proverbs are a kind of simplified or rhymed phrase which thoroughly and popularly conveys a pithy, succinct meaning in a vivid and active way. In form proverbs, Chinese four character idioms, two part allegorical sayings, and maxims all have some common features, but also they have their differences. The Cihai dictionary ("Committee for Modern Chinese" editorial committee, Page:1) gives proverbs the following definition: "Proverbs are a kind of succinct, popular, and rich in meaning saying which are spread amongst the people; many of them reflect the common lives of people and the struggles they face;" the Practical dictionary of words (*Shiyong Mingyan Dacidian: QINMU*, Guangxi People's Publishing House, May, 1990 : 105) defines proverbs as, "beautiful, truthful, and set sayings which were developed by the working masses in ancient times, and were widely spread amongst the people. They use simple words to communicate deep meaning; In Chinese proverbs Encyclopedia (*Zhonghua Yanyu Daquan: YANGYAN*, China Encyclopedia Publishing House, January, 2007 : 3) the definition of proverbs is given as, "Proverbs are a kind of simplified or rhymed phrase which thoroughly and popularly conveys a pithy, succinct meaning in a vivid and active way, they are often passed on and used amongst the masses in very oral ways."

1.2 Categories of Proverbs

According to the topic Chinese Language Encyclopedia (*Zhonghua Yanyu Daquan: YANGYAN*, China Encyclopedia Publishing House, January.2017, Page:3) separates proverbs into proverbs of reason, life proverbs, moral proverbs, knowledge proverbs, daily life proverbs, career proverbs; the 1500 proverbs found in the Chinese and foreign language selection (*Zhongwai Yanyuxuan: BENDU*, Shanghai people's Publishing House, January, 2007), are classified according to content into twelve categories which include ideal and set proverbs, know your enemy proverbs, proverbs of struggling and suffering, cultivation of will proverbs, proverbs of prudence and modesty, truth and practice proverbs, seeking truth proverbs, proverbs of hard work and study, proverbs of friendship and teamwork, proverbs of moral cultivation, proverbs of exercise and physical training, love and marriage proverbs; In the Chinese and foreign language selection (*Zhongwai Yanyuxuan: BENDU*, Shanghai people's Publishing House, January.2007) proverbs are separated into the five following categories: social, wisdom, moral cultivation, studies, and life proverbs. Baidu's Baike separates proverbs into meteorological proverbs, cleanliness proverbs, agricultural proverbs, and societal proverbs.

2. The Definition of Proverbs and their Categorization in Laotian

2.1 Definition of Proverbs

As there are very few written records regarding proverbs this section is quite short. Laos National University's Khamphui PHOTHISAN in his *Analysis of Proverbs* explained proverbs in this way: proverbs are a kind of short, efficient, and far reaching type of speech which sum up human experience derived from physical labor. The use of brief and connected language in proverbs is to allow for people to understand them clearly and remember them clearly.

2.2 The Classification of Proverbs

In *Discussions on the Social Value of Laotian Proverbs* (VANNABOUPPHA DUANGCHAN, 2009, Page:4) the following categories of proverbs emerge: moral cultivation, proper living proverbs, physical labor proverbs, animal proverbs, religious proverbs, and proverbs reflecting societal regulations.

3. The Origin of Chinese and Laotian Proverbs

3.1 Daily Life

Most of the proverbs were created by the working masses and are based on the eternal truths of human existence which people developed an understanding of through rich experience in both life and society. These proverbs were oral creations and not only represent a kind of linguistic phenomena, but also represent a cultural wealth. Although proverbs were developed orally, they are fundamentally different from most other kinds of oral language. This difference is characterized how, over time and wide use, proverbs have developed into a very succinct way to communicate something profound. **For example:**

3.1.1 Chinese: “飞蛾扑火 Fēi é pū huǒ: The meaning is: A flying moth darts into the fire”,
corresponding Laotian and English Proverbs include:

Lao: mɛːŋ³ □ mau³³ bin³³ khau □ ³ kɔːŋ³³ fai³ □
(moth) (fly) (enter) (bonfire)

English: A flying moth darts into the fire

3.1.2 Chinese: “靠山无柴烧，背江无水喝 Kàoshān wú chái shāo, bèi jiāng wú shuǐ hē: The Meaning is: No firewood, no water on the back”.

The corresponding Laotian proverb is:

Lao: kai²¹ □ bɔ □ □ wɛt □ □ kɛa³³ pai³³ thaːŋ³ □ nɛa³³ bɔ³³ wɛt □ □ nam³ □
(close)(no)(lack)(salt)(arrive)(north)(no)(lack)(drink)

English: No firewood, no water on the back

These two proverbs are the peoples' summarization of lessons and life experience gained through real life.

3.2 Different histories

Every ethnic group has its own history. Different histories are unique and they can be used to distinguish between the cultural differences between different ethnic groups. China's history is long and for over 2000 years of that history China used a feudal system and was under the autocratic rule of the emperor. This was a very hierarchical society where men stood at the top of society and women at the bottom, and the influence of the three obediences and four virtues ran deep (Meaning

is: three obediences (in ancient China a woman was required to obey her father before marriage, and her husband during married life and her sons in widowhood) and four virtues (fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech and efficiency in needle work) -- wifely submission and virtue). In the feudal society women had no status to speak of. Chinese proverbs reflect this cultural history. For example: when the prince calls for the execution of the minister, the minister must die; only the minister of Zhou could light the fire, the common people were not even allowed to light a lamp; Mediocrity is the virtue of women; Behind the vermilion gates of the rich, meat and wine go to waste, but along the road are bones of the poor who have frozen to death. Before the foundation of the People's Republic of Laos, Laos also went through a period of history where the feudal system was dominant. In addition, Laos had also been a colony of France for a time, and for a while it was also a divided area with different powers controlling different geographical areas. For a long period Laos was not a united Kingdom. With this kind of societal context, people faced oppression from the power holders in the feudal society. The masses harbored rebellion in their hearts and created proverbs to express their discontent. For example:

Lao: phu³kin³³ kin³³ph³ xa³k³

(some.eaters) (eat) (will.vomit)

phu³ja³k³¹ja³k³¹ph³ ta³i³³

(the hungry) (hunger) (will.die)

Chinese: (富家一席酒，穷汉半年粮 Fùjiā yí xī jiǔ, qióng hàn bànnián liáng: The meaning is:

A rich wine, a half grain)

English: Some will vomit because of excess eating, some will die from hunger.

3.3 Religious Proverbs

The influence of religion upon society, economics, culture, and the means of production is quite significant.

Religion embodies the different arrangement of ideas and categories in culture. China is a country with many religions; however, religious influence on society in China primarily comes from Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. So, the explanations in this section of the paper emphasizes these three religions. Buddhism has a belief in receiving either the good or the harm one has caused in their own life and has proverbs which match its own particular outlook on life, like the frequently heard: "There is greater merit in saving one life than in building a seven tier pagoda (救人一命，胜造七级浮图 Jiùrényīmìng, shèngzào qījífútú)," this advocates for one to be kind and accumulate merit. Also, there is the proverb, "drop one's cleaver and come a Buddha (放下屠刀，立地成佛 Fàngxiàtúdāo, lìdìchéngfó), which is an admonishment urging a wrongdoer to courageously turn away from their misdeeds. The most unique feature of Taoism is the call for "natural non-action," and in its development up to today, it has the most references to caring for one's life. The proverbs originating from Taoism include, "things turn to their opposites when they reach an extreme, out of the depth of misfortune comes bliss (物极必反，否极泰来 Wùjībǐfǎn, pǐjítàilái)" and "a big heart increases troubles, and autumn brings old age (心宽增寿，愁能催老 Xīnkuān zēngshòu, chóunéngcuīlǎo)." Both reflect a kind of health-mindedness and way of living. Confucianism was appreciated by many rulers of China and related proverbs include: "To be strict with oneself, to be lenient with others, righteousness moves the gentlemen, profit moves the villain (严于律己 Yányúlǐ, 宽以待人 Kuānyǐdàirén, 义动君子 Yìdòng jūnzǐ, 利动小人 Lìdòngxiǎorén)" and "Weak but unyielding, although weak, but also strong. Poor but not inferior, although poor but indomitable (弱而不屈，虽弱也强 Ruòér bùqū, suīruòyěqiáng; 穷而不卑，虽贫犹刚 Qióngérbùbēi, suīpínyóugāng)." Most Laotians citizens, especially those who are Laotian ethnically,

believe in Buddhism, and in addition Buddhism is the official religion of Laos. Buddhist thought can also be found in Laotian proverbs. For Example:

Lao: sa⁷ □ □ van³³ju □ □ nai³ □ ok □ □

(heaven) (in)(chest)

na³ □ xok³³ju □ □ nai³ □ tsai³³

(hell) (in)(heart)

Chinese: (胸中的天堂, 怀中的地狱 Xiōngzhōngdetiāntáng, huáizhōngdìdìyù: Meaning

is: The heaven in the chest, the hell in the arms)

English: (Heaven and hell are found in our hearts)

The above proverbs reflect the “cause and effect” system of Buddhism where one always “reaps what they sow.”.

4. An Analysis of the Cultural Intention of Chinese and Laotian Societal Proverbs

Different countries and different ethnicities have different cultures. Proverbs, as they capture the beautiful essence of ethnic cultures, cover a huge area, and include rich meaning. They also relate to every aspect of life. Because of this, a comparison of the cultural intention of Chinese and Laotian proverbs has great importance in preserving cultural characteristics.

4.1 Proverbs Reflecting Moral Cultivation

The interaction which takes place between people must include moral cultivation. A good moral cultivation has always been a respected behavioral norm, and a fine traditional pursuit. In a society which lacks the full development of a legal system, or a society which lacks a consciousness of its legal system, moral values provide the essential function of restraint. This kind of society uses societal norms, behavioral standards, and public opinion to restrain human behavior and protect societal order.

4.1.1 An Analysis of Chinese Proverbs Which Reflect Moral Cultivation

In the Chinese language, which reflects the ethos and analysis of moral cultivation, we can analyze the details from different perspectives, as follows:

4.1.1.1 Honesty

There are many proverbs of moral cultivation in Chinese. They are philosophical and can be used to teach people how to do good. They urge people to be good, upright, honest, modest, prudent, lenient, and friendly. Chinese has many proverbs which praise people for being honest. For example: “An honest failure is better than a contemptible victory (诚实的失败比卑鄙的胜利好 Chéngshíde shībài bǐ bēibǐ de shènglì hǎo);” “Sincerity is more important than physical appearance (诚于中，形于外 Chéngyúzhōng, xíngyúwài);” “Promise someone something, a thousand pieces of gold are inalienable (许人一物，千金不移 Xǔrén yī wù, qiān jīn bù yí);” “When dealing with friends, words are to be trusted (与朋友交，言而有信 Yǔ péng yǒu jiāo, yán ér yǒu xìn).” These proverbs all say that when people are conducting themselves in society, especially if dealing with friends, people must conduct themselves with honesty and be sincere to each other. They should not lie, or use friends or family for their own gain. Only by acting honestly with friends, family, and colleagues can people maintain good, long lasting relationships. Of these proverbs the proverb, “Sincerity is more important than physical appearance, which in Chinese is read, “诚于中，形于外 Chéngyúzhōng, xíngyúwài” has a structure worthy of further comment. In Chinese this proverb

has six characters. They can be divided into two verses of three characters each. The first set of three characters and the last set of three characters all share the same parts of speech which are all rendered in the same order. This structure is slightly different than the structure of “Promise someone something, a thousand pieces of gold are inalienable” and “When dealing with friends, words are to be trusted.” Although the grammar of these two proverbs is not as neatly structured as the first proverb mentioned here, however, the vernacular use and meaning of these two proverbs is still clear and strong.

4.1.1.2 Hard Work

Hard work is a precondition for human survival and it is the way in which wealth is accumulated. It is also a way to guarantee and protects one's efforts. Most Chinese proverbs which talk about hard work do so by praising this virtue and by encouraging people to use hard work as a means for gaining desired results. For example: “The early bird gets the worm (早起的鸟儿有虫吃 zǎoqǐdēniǎoeryǒuchóngchī);” “A bird's beauty is found in its feathers, a human's beauty is found in his or her hard work (鸟美在羽毛，人美在勤劳 Niǎoměizàiyǔmáo, rénměizàiqínáo);” “An ignorant bird must learn to fly early in order to be able to enter the forest; the ignorant man must begin to learn how to work hard early in order to be able to enter the door (笨鸟先飞早入林，笨人勤学早入门 Bènniǎoxiānfēizǎorùlín, bènrénqínxué zǎorùmén);” “By working hard for one day one can enjoy a good sleep; by working hard for a lifetime one can enjoy old age (勤劳一日 Qínláoyīrì, 可得一夜安眠 Kědéyīyèānmíán, 勤劳一生 Qínláoyīshēng, 可得幸福晚年 Kědéxìngfúwǎnnián).” These proverbs all are admonishing people to work hard and not be lazy. There are many Chinese proverbs which talk about birds. This is because birds are flying to and fro in all sorts of weather in order to find food and build their nests. In this way birds provide a powerful image of the virtue of hard work. Some of the above proverbs consist of a single phrase, some several phrases. In Chinese, only the “Early bird gets the worm” is a single phrase proverb. All the others in Chinese, are made up of two phrases. Proverbs regarding hard work also include a class which emphasizes the results of hard work in order to encourage people to work hard in creating their happiness. This kind of proverb includes the following examples: “If people don't work they don't get rich, if a cow does not have grass it cannot get fat (人不劳动不得富，牛无夜草不得肥 Rénbùláodòngbùdéfù, niúwúyècǎobùdéféi);” “As long as you are willing to work, you will not be poor all your life (只要肯劳动，一生一世不会穷 Zhǐyàokěnláodòng, yīshēngyīshìbùhuìqióng);” “The hardworking will eat in times of famine, but the lazy will only reap a hungry belly (勤人荒年打粮食，懒汉丰收饿肚皮 Qínrénhuāngniándǎliángshí, lǎnhànēngshōuèdùpí).” These proverbs mean that one should work hard with his or her two hands in order to be happy and have wealth. If one doesn't work hard, then happiness will not be realized. In the minds of the Chinese hard work and frugality go hand in hand, when one speaks of hard work they will likely also speak of frugality. These ideas are expressed in the following two proverbs: “If one wants to get happy days, then one must be thrifty and work hard (要得日子好，克俭和勤劳 Yàoderìzihǎo, kèjiǎnhéqínáo);” “Hard work without frugality is like a having needle with no thread (只有勤来没有俭，好比有针没有线 Zhǐyǒu qín lái méiyǒu jiǎn, hǎobǐyǒuzhēnméiyǒuxiàn).”

4.1.1.3 Leniency

Leniency is also part of moral cultivation. An example of a specific proverb is “Bear with one's heart, and live in harmony (忍一忍，和气生 Rěnyīrěn, héqìshēng).” No matter whether it is family or another kind of collective unit, when misfortune is met with, mutual forbearance is needed. Only by this way can a harmonious environment be built. “In the wide world, all rivers run into sea (天宽地阔，海纳百川 Tiānkuāndekuo, hǎinàibǎichuān).” We can understand the truth taught by this proverb. No matter whether it is water from rivers or lakes, in the end, all water will enter the sea. So, in this way a sea is very “lenient” as it receive water from everywhere. Thus, this proverb encourages us to be like the sea and be broad minded. Another proverb is, “When hitting someone, don’t hit there face; when scolding someone don’t do it in public (打人不打脸，骂人休揭短 Dǎrénbùdǎliǎn, màrénxiūjiēduǎn).” The meaning here is that when hitting someone you should not hit their face and when scolding someone you should not use others faults as an excuse for your own. The moral which this proverb teaches is to accept others faults as no person is perfect.

4.1.1.4 Modesty and Prudence

Chinese has many proverbs admonishing people to be modest and prudent. One should not parade their abilities in front of others. For example: “A full paddy will slide down, a dry paddy will climb up (饱谷朝下垂，瘪谷往上溜 Bǎogǔcháoxiàchuí, biěgǔwǎngshàngliū).” This proverb uses the word “paddy” as an analogy for the idea of modesty. A full paddy, because it is too full, will sink down because of the weight; however, a paddy that does not look good is healthy. “A moon at its full will only get smaller, water to the brink will only leak out (月满了要亏，水满了要溢 Yuèmǎnleyàokuī, shuǐmǎnleyàoyì),” has the meaning that a moon when full might experience a solar eclipse, and a container, when filled to the brink with water, can only let the water leak out. This means that the potential development of any person or thing is limited. So it is not healthy to be too close to the edge which marks something’s full potential. Thus, it is necessary to become modest. The proverb, “There is a noble steed behind the noble steed, and among able man there is surely an able man (骏马前头有骏马，能人当中有能人 Jùnmǎqiántouyǒujùnmǎ, néngréndāngzhōngyǒunéng rén),” means that a fast horse will always meet with a faster horse and a capable person will always meet with a more capable person. Only by preserving modesty is one able to continuously develop and become more capable. Proverbs dealing with produce include, “Beware of the ten thousand year boat (小心使得万年船 Xiǎoxīnshǐdewànniánchuán).” This proverb means that one must be careful when taking a boat that the boat is safe. The moral of this proverb is that one must conduct themselves carefully. In addition there is the proverb, “Before the flood comes the embankment should be built (山洪未来先筑堤 Shānhóngwèiláixiānzhùdī).” The meaning here is that the right time to build an embankment is before the flood has happened. This tells us that before something happens we should be prepared for it.

4.1.1.5 Justice and Humanity

In the traditional thought of the Chinese, people must place great importance on justice and humanity. They must help each other and value brotherly love, friendship. This was especially true in ancient China. Men tended to display these values quite clearly. For example, “A scholar will die for his close friend (士为知己者死 Shìwéizhǐzhěsǐ)” and “At home one relies on parents, when abroad one relies on their friends (在家靠父母，出门靠朋友 Zàijiākào fùmǔ, chūménkào péngyǒu)” both express the importance close friends play in one’s life. Another

example is “The compassionate do not change with life’s ups and downs; hearts of the righteous are not changed by life or death (仁者不以盛衰改节，义者不以存亡易心 Rénzhěbùyǐshèngshuāigǎijié, yìzhěbùyǐcúnwángyìxīn).” The meaning of this proverb is that a compassionate and righteous person will not change as they face the vicissitudes of life. Nor will the rise or fall of their country change their values. Basically, no matter what changes a compassionate and righteous person is faced with, they will not be swayed in their intention. Another example is, “Only when the year grows old do we see the qualities of the pine and cypress; only in adversity will one know their true friend (岁寒知松柏，患难见知交 SùihánzhīSōngbǎi, huànnànjiànzhījiāo).” In China pines and cypresses are used as images for compassion, justice, and strength. So the pine and cypress are often used as an analogy of the compassion and justice found between people. In the above proverb the last sentence suggests that only in adversity will one know their true friend. The last example here is, “Do not plea for birth in the same year and month and on the same day, rather plea for death on the same year and month and on the same day (不求同年同月同日生，但求同年同月同日死 Bùqiútóngniántóngyuètóngrìshēng, dànqiútóngniántóngyuètóngrìsǐ).” This proverb is often used to by friends when they pledge brotherhood to each other and in this way expresses the deep friendship held between friends and brothers.

4.1.2 An Analysis of Laotian Proverbs Which Reflect Moral Cultivation

In terms of moral cultivation, Laos and China have many similarities. Both countries value and promote hard work, teamwork, friendship, honesty, and kindness.

4.1.2.1 Hard Work

Most Laotian proverbs which admonish are related to Buddhist thought. For example:

Lao: khuam³ pha² n̄a³ n̄a³.m³ ju bɔ̌:n dai³³
phon³³sam³³let³¹ju bɔ̌:n³³nan³
(hard work) (at)(where) (success) (at)(where)

The meaning of this proverb is that wherever hard work is found there also will success be found. If you work you will repeat the benefits of your labor. This encourages us to courageously work so that we will meet with success and gain something through the process.

Lao: pai³³kɔ̌n ka³³
ma³ kɔ̌n kai
(go)(first)(crow) (return)(first)(chicken)
pai³³n̄iap³ ma³³ ma³ n̄iap³ khiat³¹
(go)(step on)(dog) (come back)(step on)(frog)

The first proverb says that a crow has not even woken at the time when one should leave for the fields, and that by the time one comes back the chicken is already in her nest. The second proverb the people that one leaves for the fields one might step on a dog and when returning one might step on a frog. Both of these proverbs speak of what one’s schedule should look like by advocating leaving early for work and coming back late.

4.1.2.2 Modesty

Laotians tend to be soft spoken and modest as they go about their work, this is especially true when

in front of a capable person. This kind of proverb admonishes people to be modest and prudent and has the following examples:

Lao: sɔn³³naŋ³³sɯ³³xai³³saŋ³³kha³³la:t³¹
(teach) (book)(give)(monk)

The direct translation is to teach Sangharaja to read (教僧王认字 Jiāosēngwángrènzì).

Lao: sɔn³³khɛ³³lɔi³³nam³³
(teach)(crocodiles)(swim)

The direct translation means to teach crocodiles how to swim (班门弄斧 Bānménòngfǔ)

Although the above proverbs use animals, plants, and professions to describe values, however, their meaning is to teach us not to believe our own abilities anything to boast about.

4.1.2.3 Honesty

There are many proverbs in Laotian which speak of honesty. For example:

Lao: ŋən³³kham³³pen³³khɔŋ³³xa³³dai³³
nam³³sai³³pen³³khɔŋ³³xa³³na:k³¹
(gold)(is) (thing)(look for)(get)(trust)(is) (thing)(look for)(hard)

The meaning of the first proverb is that money is easy to find but good intention is hard to find. The meaning of the second proverb is that even if one loses money one can still find it, however, if one loses trust it is very hard to gain back. This proverb uses money as an example because many times in life trust is lost because of matters relating to money. In truth, money is more important than trust in the eyes of some. So this proverb was created to warn people who are untrustworthy or of false moral reputation..

4.1.2.4 Team Work

In traditional Laos culture, people place a high value on unity. This relates to the fact that for many years of its history, Laos was a colonized country. The people of Laos view their country as a united whole. This can be seen from the titles used and from eating habits in Laos. Therefore there are many proverbs in Laotian which talk about unity and teamwork. For example:

Lao: fɯn³³don³³diau³³daŋ³³fai³³bɔ³³luk³³
(firewood)(measure word)(one) (light)(neg)(burn)

English: “One piece of firewood will not produce a blaze”

Lao: mai³³lam³³diau³³lɔm³³xua³³bɔ³³khuai³³
(wood) (measure word)(one) (enclose)(fence) (neg)(complete)

English: “One piece of wood does not make a fence

These words mean that no thing exists by itself, everything is interconnected and mutual dependence and restraint is the true state of life. Only by teamwork being united can something truly great be accomplished.

5. Same points and similarities and differences Between Proverbs

From the perspectives of society, culture, religion, etc., the Lao and Chinese proverbs have similarities, but also have similarities and differences. The details can be seen as follows:

5.1 Similarities

5.1.1 Similar Moral Views

We can see from the above Chinese and Laotian proverbs that there are many similarities between the two moral world views represented their in. For example both cultures praise hard work and honesty; both value modesty and value moral cultivation. Both seek to preserve these cultural virtues. In addition, there are some Chinese proverbs for which Laotian has an equivalent proverb and there are some Laotian proverbs for which Chinese has an equivalent. For example corresponding with the Chinese proverb, “A full paddy will slide down, a dry paddy will climb up (饱谷朝下垂, 瘪谷往上溜 Bǎogǔcháo xiàchuí, biěgǔwǎng shàngliú)” Laotian has:

xuaŋ³ khau³ n̄iŋ³ nak³ kɔ³ n̄iŋ³ koŋ³ (paddy)(again)(heavy)(also)(again)(bend) Both of these proverbs use paddies as a symbol for the moral value of modesty.

5.1.2 Similar Value Systems

Traditional moral beliefs reflect the traditional values of an ethnic group. Both Chinese and Laotian ethnic groups emphasize the existence of people and affirm the place of people in life. They also value the accumulation of life experience. The peoples of both countries value hard work and frugality in life. For Example: In Chinese their is the proverb, “Hard work is a money tree to be shaken, thrift is a plate on which to accumulate treasures (勤是摇钱树, 俭是聚宝盆 Qínshìyáoqiáنشù, jiǎnshìjùbǎoshù)” , and in Laotian:

5.1.2.1 Lao: saⁿ naⁿ thuk³³duai³ khuam³ ot³ thon³
(overcome) (difficulties)(with)(patience)

Chinese: 由忍耐克服困难 Yó rěnnàikèfúkùnnán : The meaning is :

Overcome difficulties by patience

English : Overcome difficulties with patience

5.1.2.2 Lao: saⁿ naⁿ tson³³duai³ khuam³ paⁿ jat³
(overcome)(lack)(with)(conservation)

Chinese: 由节约克服缺乏 Yóujiéyukèkèfùquēfǎ : The meaning is :

Overcoming the lack of economy.

English : Use conservation to overcome a lack of something

In addition to this, both countries value honesty and modesty, which in reality are examples of the importance of doing good in life.

5.2 Differences

5.2.1 Different Living Environments

Because the living environments and the history of these two countries is different, these two countries also have different cultural intentions represented in their proverbs. This can be seen in the Chinese proverb, “In the wide world, all rivers run into sea (天宽地阔, 海纳百川 Tiānkuāndekuo, hǎinàbǎichuān).” In Chinese the symbol of the ocean is often used to represent leniency, but in Laotian there are no proverbs relating to the ocean. The reason is simply that China has a large coast while Laos is a landlocked country; thus Laotian does not have any references to the sea.

5.2.2 Cultural Environment Differences

One can see from Laotian proverbs dealing with moral cultivation that they all relate to Buddhism. Laos of course is a Buddhist country. Here are some examples:

Lao: ja □ □ dai □³vaŋ³³suk □ □ nɔːn □³ bun³³khau³³ma³ □ phəŋ □ □
(do not)(look)(happiness) (the advantages in others)(come)(rely on)
suk □ □ kɔ □ □ suk □ □ phən □ □ phun³¹ bɔ □ □ ma³ kum □³xot³³xau³ □ dɔːk³ □ na □³
(happiness)(also)(happiness)(others)(there)(neg.)(come)(get)(arrive)(3pl)(particle)

This refers to happiness being decided by luck and in this way reflects Buddhist thought. This is because the word “bun³³” in Laotian is Buddhist word and means merits, good deeds, and good luck. The moral of this proverb, however, is to tell us to work hard so that we may have a happy life.

In conclusion, the proverbs relating to moral cultivation in these two countries have both similarities and differences. The similarities include the the traditional moral views of both countries promoting people to work hard, praise good work, value honesty, treasure virtue, prompt the lazy into action, exhort the proud to temper their ego.

6. Reflecting the Buddhist Faith

The Buddhism practiced in China and Laos originally came from India, and after a long time of spreading and developing in these two countries, two schools of Buddhism emerged: Mahayana Buddhism in China and Hinayana Buddhism in Laos. From this time forth, Buddhism played an important role in economics, politics, culture, and social life.

6.1 An Analysis of Chinese Proverbs Related to Buddhism

Buddhism entered China during the Tang In century. Buddhism’s particularly unique characteristic at the time was that it was a kind of “folk Buddhism.” Buddhist culture had great meaning for the economy, culture, politics, and social life of the time. Buddhism not only played an important role in religious culture but also in philosophical culture too. Buddhism promoted the spiritual and moral development of the people. The goal was to discover the truth of life and the universe by doing good which would allow someone to pass on into nirvana. Buddhist thought contains the Four Noble Truths and talks about the temporality of life. There is also the view of equality which is found in Buddhism. This view of equality is an important topic in Buddhism which is often promoted and advocated for. This view basically says that all things with life are equal. The “Six Degrees and Four Pictures,” of which the “six degrees” play the central role, are also important in Buddhist thought. The six degrees include donation, separation, forbearance, dedication, mediation, and intelligence. Buddhist proverbs are a wonderful part of the Buddhist classics. They do a great job of summarizing Buddhist thought neatly and efficiently and their connotation is rich in meaning and are easy to understand. For example: “Bitter sea, turn the head and look to the bank. Put down the butcher knife and become a Buddha. (苦海无边，回头是岸。放下屠刀，立地成佛 kǔhǎiwúbiān, huítóushì’àn. Fàngxiàtúdāo, lìdìchéngfó).” This proverb is used by Buddhists to exhort people to repent and do good. In Buddhist education in China, a “bitter sea” is used to refer to a difficult environment and incomparable suffering. On earth all living beings fall into deep difficulties and vexation, these difficulties are vast without end. In this way the use of the word sea is fitting, because it is as easy to escape from these troubles as it is to escape from the raging sea. The word “bitter” is added to describe what kind of sea it is. The phrase “turn the head and look to the bank” refers to those evildoers who realize the wrong they have done and want to repent. They will be saved. Today this proverb is used in daily life to tell people that if they give up their wrong

doing and do good deeds, they can get a new life. It also reflects the Four Nobles Truths of Buddhism. There is also the proverb, “All living beings, every kind change, every birth is as part of the circle of the wonderful heart (一切众生，种种幻化，皆生如来圆觉妙心 Yīqièzhòngshēng,zhǒngzhǒnghuànhuà, jīēshēng,rúláiyuánjuémìàoxīn).” This proverb explains that everything in every corner of the earth will become “all living beings.” “Every kind of change” refers to everything being fake and not real. “As part of the circle of the wonderful heart” doesn’t refer to the Buddha, but rather to our pure essence. To use Buddhist vocabulary, it refers to the “Buddha nature.” The whole proverb together means everything in the world is merely a creation of our heart and not actually existent. “All living beings are equal (众生一切平等 Zhòngshēngyīqiè píngděng)” clearly refers to the idea of equality present in Buddhist thought. Proverbs which express the “Six Degrees” include, “People drowned already drowned, people hungry already hungry (人溺已溺，人饥已饥 Rénnìyǐnì, rénjīyǐjī).” This proverb expresses a high level spirit and means that when other people have drowned in water or become hungry, you yourself can get a taste of what they are feeling. This proverb later came to mean the hardship one experiences when caring for others and having a empathetic heart. This embodies the idea of “donation” which is found in the “Six Degrees.” The proverb, “Goodness is repaid with goodness and evil is repaid with evil (善有善报，恶有恶报 Shànyǒushànbào, èyǒuèbào)” refers to, no matter whether one does good things or bad they will be repaid in kind. The proverb, “grow gourds reap gourds, grow beans reap beans (种瓜得瓜，种豆得豆 Zhǒngguādéguā, zhǒngdòudé dòu)” means that there is always a result which comes from our action. These two proverbs reflect the Buddhist idea of cause and effect.

6.2 An Analysis of Laotian Proverbs Related to Buddhism

Buddhism started to enter Laos in the seventh century. Usually when talking about Buddhism in Laos people will talk about Buddhism after Chao Fa Ngum the king of Lan Chang Kingdom. After this period, in order to centralize power, the king declared Buddhism to be the official religion of the land and Buddhism gradually spread through the country and even entered sectors like economics, politics, culture, and social life. In this process the Four Noble Truths, Buddhist doctrine, cause and effect thought, the concept of heaven and hell entered the hearts and minds of people, and with this, Proverbs began to make Buddhist references. This can be seen in the following proverbs:

tham³ □ di³³ dai □³ di³³

(do)(good)(get)(good)

tham³ □ suo³³ dai □³ suo³³

(do)(evil)(get) (evil)

This proverb means that those who do good will get good in return and those who do evil will get evil in return.

6.3 Differences and Similarities in Chinese and Laotian Proverbs Reflecting Buddhist Beliefs

6.3.1 Similarities

Both China and Laos have been influenced by Buddhism and their proverbs reflect Buddhist teachings like cause and effect, mercy, etc. Therefore, equivalents exist in both languages for this category of proverbs. Take for example the Laotian proverbs:

pu.k³¹thuo □ □ dai □³thuo □ □

(plant)(beans)(get)(beans)

puk³¹ŋa³ □ dai □³ŋa³ □

(plant)(sesame)(get)(sesame)

The meaning here is that when one plants beans they will reap beans and when they plant sesames they will reap sesames.

The Chinese equivalent to this proverb is “If you plant melons, you will reap melons; if you plant beans, you will reap beans (种瓜得瓜, 种豆得豆 Zhǒngguā déguā, zhǒngdòu dé dòu). Both the Chinese and Laotian proverbs here use the imagery of plants. They tell us that we will reap what we sow. In other words they reflect the theory of cause and effect which is found in Buddhism.

6.3.2 Differences

Although the cultures of both countries have been impacted by Buddhism, but there still remain some differences. This is because the Buddhist culture which developed in each country was built upon the pre-existing cultural and religious foundations. Laotian Buddhism belongs to the Hinayana sect and Chinese Buddhism belongs to the Mahayana sect. So, both countries have differences related to Buddhism. For example, in Mahayana Buddhism Sakyamuni Buddha is an all powerful Buddha, but, in Hinayana Buddhism, he is just considered a teacher who is able to give direction. In addition, another big difference is the concept of Bodhisattva which is found in Mahayana Buddhism but not in Hinayana Buddhism. For example there is the proverb in Chinese, “Think of demons as Bodhisattvas (把妖魔当成菩萨拜 Bǎ yāo mó dāng chéng pú sà bài).” This proverb refers to there being no division between good and evil. Laotian proverbs do not have any equivalent to this. In terms of subjective and objective knowledge, the Buddhism of both countries is different. For example, Mahayana Buddhism advocates the, “human law and two empties (人法两空 Rén fǎ liǎng kōng).” This basically means that there is a denial of the subjective spirit of humanity and also a denial of the subjective presence of physical matter. According to this belief all matter is imagined but not really existent. Laotian Buddhism on the other hand only denies the existence of the individual spirit of a human. In addition, Hinayana Buddhism doesn’t completely negate the presence of objective physical matter. In Chinese there is the proverb, “All living beings, every kind change, every birth is as part of the circle of the wonderful heart (一切众生, 种种幻化, 皆生如来圆觉妙心 Yī qiè zhòng shēng, zhǒng zhǒng huàn huà, jiē shēng rú lái yuán jué miào xīn).” This proverb reflects the Mahayana Buddhist denial of both the objective and the subjective.

From the above explanations, it is clear that the Buddhism of both China and Laos has both similarities and differences. This is owing to the fact that the politics, economy, and Buddhist culture of both countries are different. However, from a comprehensive perspective, the Buddhist proverbs of both countries promote doing good and encourage people to live kindly towards others.

7. Reflecting the Culture of Home

Everyone of us belongs to a family and family life is of fundamental importance in our lives. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze proverbs of the family.

7.1 An Analysis of Chinese Proverbs Reflect Family Life

Chinese style families are usually rather traditional. Two thousand years of feudalism has left its mark on traditional culture and influenced views on family in deep ways. Families are made up of parents, children, brothers and sisters, etc. The idea of family was also influenced by the patriarch clan system and Confucian ethical code of feudal China. The Chinese concept of ethics is strong and their view of filial piety developed. Women were also traditionally were listened to for advice. Marriage forms the centre of the Chinese family and traditionally great importance was given to a husband and wife’s affection

for each other. For example, “A husband’s value is found in his wife’s virtue (夫贵妻荣 Fūguìqīróng);” “if a husband is unrighteous, the wife will not be respectful (夫不义则妇不顺 Fūbùyìzéfùbù shùn);” “Gentle husband yielding wife (夫和妇顺 Fūhéfùshùn);” “A worthy wife, a husband with little trouble (妻贤夫祸少 Qīxiánfūhuòshǎo);” “Ring is good because husband is good, husband is good because a wife is virtuous “戒指好因丈夫好，丈夫好因妻子贤 Jièzhǐhǎo yīnzàngfūhǎo, zhàngfūhǎoyīnqīzǐxián).” All of these proverbs point out how there is a mutual dependence which exists between a husband and wife. They compliment each other. Only if a husband is good can a wife be good, and only if a wife is good can a husband be good.

7.2 An Analysis of Laotian Proverbs Reflect Family Life

Laos also had a period of feudal society. The culture of feudalism also greatly affected the home like it did in China. Because of the cultural similarities, Laotian proverbs also reflect the importance of harmonious spousal relations. For example:

Lao: khun³ pho³ thau³ phu³ kau³³ka³ khun³ mɛ³ thau³ fa³kap³ din³³
(grace)(father)(like)(mountain)(hard)(grace)(mother)(like)(heaven)(and)(earth)

Chinese: 父恩重如山, 母恩大如天 Fùēnzònggrúshān, mǔēndàrútiān: The meaning is: Father mother big days favours weighty as a mountain.

English: The love of a father is greater than the weight of mountains, The love of a mother is bigger than the size of the sky.

This proverbs tell us that we must feel grateful for the graceful, loving care we have received from our parents.

7.3 Similarities and Differences in Family Proverbs in Chinese and Laotian

7.3.1 Similarities

The two countries are neighbors and their cultures are similar. Regarding spousal relations, both countries emphasize the love that ought to exist between a husband and wife and the influence a husband and wife have on each other. For example:

Lao: puk³ xuan³ pit³ khit³³son³³tha³ la³i³
(build)(house)(mistake)(think)(to)(collapse)

Chinese: 盖错了房屋会后悔到房屋倒塌的时候 Gài cuòle fángwū huì hòuhuǐ dào fángwū dǎotā de shíhòu : The meaning is: When the house is wrong, the house will regret the collapse of the house

Englis: To build the wrong house is to have regret until the house collapses.

7.3.2 Differences

Chinese and Laos, however, do have differences in the way they see a women’s place in society. For example Chinese contains the following proverb “an unaccomplished woman is a virtuous woman (女子无才便是德 Nǚzǐwú cáibiànshì dé);” “A red faced woman is ill-fated (红颜女子多薄命 Hóngyán nǚzǐ duō bómíng).” Both these proverbs show discrimination towards women and reveal the inequality found between the sexes. The Chinese proverbs, “A chaste women is never married twice (烈女不更二夫 Liè nǚ bù gēng èr fū)” and “A virgin will never serve two husbands (贞女不侍二夫 Zhēn nǚ bù shì èr fū)” on the surface seem to be praising virtue in women, however, in reality

they represent inequality between men and women. But in Laos, the degree to which women are looked down upon is much less strong than in China. For example :

Lao: $\text{ni}^3 \text{xai}^3 \text{pen}^{33} \text{ni}^3 \text{th}^3 \text{n}^3 \text{leu}^3 \text{sin}^3 \text{kh}^3 \text{ni}^3$
(women)(want)(be)(genuine) (accurate)(particle)(then)(start)(hit)

This proverb basically teaches women to develop good virtue.

Conclusion

Proverbs are called the “beauty of language,” “the light of wisdom,” “the salt of language” which can “enlighten our actions” and “give inspiration to life.” They can give us systematic learning and power. Chinese and Laotian proverbs are also precious treasures of literary art. Through a comparison of the cultural intention of Chinese and Laotian social proverbs, we have seen the cultural characteristics of the Chinese and Laotian peoples. No matter if it is moral cultivation, Buddhist doctrine, or family life, proverbs give us a picture of the rich ethnic culture of these two diverse places. The proverbs of these two countries have similarities and they also have differences. Both countries proverbs exhort people to do good, pursue perfection, and created harmony. Most of these proverbs guide us to improve and strive vigorously.

between the proverbs of China and Laos relates to perspectives of women as capture in proverbs. Both country’s proverbs reflect the status of women in society. In China women have been seen as weak, while in Laos women have been seen as close to equals of men. This basically means that while a man can marry another wife, a wife cannot marry another husband. This is a serious kind of inequality which represents a harsh requirement for women. It does not match the reality of life too. So, only in the category of women is the difference between the proverbs of both countries so vivid.

Summarizing the above, proverbs have rich cultural intention and to compare them cross linguistically, one must first develop a thorough understanding of the politics, economics, culture, and society of both societies to be able to clearly understand their proverbs. By developing an understanding of proverbs, greater unity between different countries can be reached. And when the value of proverbs is discovered, than the unique aspects of proverbs can be preserved. In this way better communication can be achieved.

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