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Donkey Metaphors in the Oral Culture of Cyprus

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Abstract: Within the framework of the ecological paradigm, stereotypes in collective folk consciousness focus on identifying human behaviors and beliefs toward animals. The gradual shift of anthropocentric data toward an eco-centric perspective over an extended course of time reflects the growing influence of zoo-folkloristic approaches. The domestication of donkeys six thousand years ago established a relationship primarily based on economy and transportation. However, the value attributed to them declined with the invention of motor vehicles. Despite this, donkeys are frequently encountered in various metaphorical uses within the oral culture. This study investigates the metaphorical representations of donkeys in oral traditions. The fact that donkeys still roam freely in Cyprus's Karpaz region and attract tourists from many parts of the world further underscores the significance of this research. Donkey metaphors, which appear with notable frequency in the local oral linguistic expressions, serve as examples of both traditional and complex metaphors within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory classifications.

It has been observed that representations of donkeys are shaped by their economic impact, their shared living practices with humans and their biological characteristics. In cognitive mappings, donkeys are predominantly associated with negative concepts; they are objectified and used to convey inferiority, expressions of anger, emotional mockery, othering and humiliation. Notable behaviors of the wild donkeys in Karpaz – such as opening water tanker valves with their mouths or digging into the ground to find water – suggest the need to question these negative attributions.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory, Cyprus, donkey, metonymy, oral culture

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where human–nature relationships continue to be examined across various disciplines, the shared coexistence of humans and animals is increasingly being questioned from diverse perspectives. Over the past millennium, the human-driven degradation of nature across different regions of the world has led to ecological disasters, prompting the emergence of a new ethical and political paradigm – the ecological paradigm. According to Descola (2013), this intellectual shift has introduced novel approaches and interpretations regarding the value of all living beings, fostering the redefinition and reevaluation of the concepts of "nature" and "culture" from different viewpoints.

It has been observed that critical evolutionary anthropologists are developing new types of natural-cultural critique directed at various animals within rapidly changing ecosystems. Eduardo Kohn argues that the goal of multi-species ethnography is to acknowledge the spiritual essence of animals, thereby granting them moral equality (Kohn 2013). Anthropologists in both ancient cultures and contemporary local communities view human and animal souls as "each other's infinite mimetic twin" (Kropej 2018: 238). As the ontological-anthropocentric perspective evolves into ecocriticism, animals – through zoofolkloristic approaches – are increasingly central figures, opening new horizons in literary, folkloric and cultural studies.

Miranda Levanat-Peričić conducted research on the historical cultural roles of horses and donkeys. Levanat-Peričić notes that while horses are celebrated and glorified in literature and mythology, donkeys are almost universally depicted as stupid and stubborn in later fables, tales, songs and literary works (Levanat-Peričić 2012: 995). The donkey, *Equus asinus* in Latin (along with the zebra), is a significant member of the horse family. The Mediterranean domestic donkey evolved from the African wild donkey (*Equus africanus*), which was domesticated around 4000 BCE. This species differs from the now-endangered Asiatic wild donkey. These species once thrived across a vast region stretching from Iran to India and Mongolia. Domestic donkeys have primarily been bred in Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean, where they continue to be most commonly found (Kropej 2018: 238).

The public's hostile attitude toward donkeys and a more favorable perception of horses are reflected in many major cultural milestones. This distinction between horses and donkeys has led, metaphorically, to an unbridgeable divide in language, religion and literature, representing privilege versus oppression (Levanat-Peričić 2012: 995). However, despite this widespread perception, donkeys are not always viewed negatively. In some cultures, particularly in the East, they are highly respected and treated similarly to cattle.

When appreciated, donkeys – creatures with a significant place in human life – are well fed and carefully looked after by their owners. Historical records show that certain societies, such as the Persians and Greeks, frequently used

donkeys to carry military loads in wars, arguing that they were more careful and durable than horses, even if slower (Kropej 2018: 239).

Throughout history, humans have classified animals into two categories – sacred and demonic – based on religious concepts and beliefs. This duality is particularly evident in the horse/donkey dichotomy. While horses are often endowed with divine and mediating qualities (Kropej 2015), donkeys are usually associated with negative, demonic characteristics. Due to numerous economic, cultural, political and social events across history, many religious beliefs and myths have symbolized the donkey in a predominantly negative light, portraying it as a personification of human weakness. Following the donkey's long history of suffering, the philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote: "So then I am that animal" in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Derrida 2008: 25). In another instance, George Orwell, when introducing the donkey in *Animal Farm*, wrote: "Benjamin [the donkey] was the oldest animal on the farm, and the worst tempered" (Orwell 2020: 10).

Globally, before the invention of motor vehicles, donkeys played a vital role in transportation and agriculture. The same holds true for donkeys in Cyprus. During times when donkey power was needed on the island, donkeys were imported from places such as Africa and Asia. However, with the advent of motorized vehicles, the use of animals for transportation was gradually abandoned. Particularly in the Karpaz region, these donkeys have lived independently in the wild since 1974. On the southern side of the island, farms have been established for donkey milk production. In general, the status of donkeys in Cyprus indicates that their value is tied to the extent of their economic contribution to society.

Due to the longstanding coexistence of donkeys and the people of Cyprus, representations of donkeys are frequently found in the island's oral cultural heritage. In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, whose Conceptual Metaphor Theory forms the basis of this study, argue that metaphors are not merely literary ornaments, but they are essential to human cognition. Since metaphors are cognitive functions of the human mind, they are also influenced by the society in which individuals live. Social structure, culture, beliefs, environment and political and economic conditions all directly shape the nature of these.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify and analyze donkey metaphors and metonymies in Cyprus's oral cultural products using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) within socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts. Focusing on idioms, proverbs, mani (folk rhymes) and folktales, the study explores the formation of metaphorical and metonymic structures by referencing the ecological life of donkeys on the island, their interactions with humans and their representations

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in Cypriot beliefs and traditions. Additionally, to reveal the relationship between Cypriot cognitive constructions and other cultures, information regarding the global presence of donkeys and their representations in religion and mythology is also included.

The linguistic structures derived from the data are categorized into different types. Traditional metaphors formed through the conceptualizations of HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL and ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT, and metonymies based on the concept of A PART OF THE WHOLE, are the primary focus of the study.

The central research questions guiding the study are:

1. What are the donkey metaphors and metonymies found in selected Cypriot oral cultural data?
2. What are the main factors shaping these metaphors and metonymies?
3. How are donkeys perceived and linguistically constructed by society in Cyprus, and what emotional values are attributed to them?

METHOD

This study focuses on the metaphorical conceptualizations of donkeys in the oral culture of Cyprus. In this context, oral cultural materials from Cyprus that have been compiled and transcribed were subjected to document analysis, a form of qualitative research method. The data were examined and analyzed using the approaches of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). In addition to this theoretical framework, the study draws on the Great Chain of Being (Lakoff & Turner 1989) to interpret human-animal conceptualizations and Wierzbicka's (1985) animal categorization system, which is based on criteria such as habitat, size,appearance, behavior and interaction with humans. Furthermore, donkey-related metonymic expressions in Cypriot oral narratives were analyzed within the framework of conceptual metonymy, using the terminology of frame and pragmatic function as developed by cognitive linguists. These theories enabled a categorical examination of metaphors.

The corpus of Cypriot oral culture was limited to idioms, proverbs, folk rhymes (mani) and folktales. These genres were analyzed under separate headings. The metaphorical and metonymic structures identified were interpreted in cultural and environmental contexts. The target and source domains forming the metaphors were categorized systematically in tables. Before evaluating the linguistic data, the ecological history of donkeys and their representations in religious texts and mythology are also presented. These contextual insights are crucial for the metaphor analysis, especially considering Cyprus's layered cultural landscape shaped by various civilizations.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY AND NEW APPROACHES

Metaphors form the basic structure through which humans interpret all entities in the world, including themselves – whether individually, socially, or universally. A metaphor, as a natural construct of the human mind, is a form of cognitive encoding that is constantly reproduced through a variety of influences such as daily experience, cultural structure and genetics.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) foundational Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) – later expanded by cognitive linguists – metaphors are not ornamental language devices but the result of the mind's natural functioning. They arise from mappings between conceptual domains in the mind. This mental mapping not only shapes a person's worldview and way of life but also determines their cognitive and behavioral boundaries. The integration of language, thought and action through metaphors confirms the mind's inherent tendency to generate metaphors. In this framework, a source domain (e.g., journey, money, games, war) derived from concrete, universally accessible experiences is used to structure a target domain (e.g., life, death, time, love), which is often more abstract.

For instance, when the abstract domain of TIME is linked to the source domains LIMITED RESOURCE or MOVING OBJECT, two distinct temporal experiences emerge. Since resources like "money" and "precious items" have traditionally been perceived as valuable and limited, the metaphor TIME IS MONEY has become dominant in today's economy-driven world. Expressions such as "I spent a lot of time on this", "time loss", "time gained", and "I'll take a bit of your time" reflect this metaphor. On the other hand, TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT appears in expressions like "time flew", "flowed like water", "let life flow", and "time is passing", evoking a different perception of time. As seen in these examples, the coherence between the target and source domains allows for shared understanding across different cognitive and cultural experiences.

In Metaphors We Live By (1980), Lakoff and Johnson classified conceptual metaphors as structural, orientational and ontological metaphors. After 1980, with advances in computational science and neural modeling, studies revealed that the synaptic connections of neurons in the brain play a role in meaning-making and metaphor generation (Feldman 2006: 47; Lakoff 2008: 18; Küçük 2016: 73). These findings highlighted that metaphors emerge within a cognitive domain structured by subconscious boundaries. Consequently, CMT was supplemented with frameworks like the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (Lakoff & Turner 1989; Krikmann 1996), Primary Metaphor Theory (Grady 1997), and later, with complex and novel metaphors.

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Types of metaphors used in academic studies based on CMT include:

a) Structural metaphors
These are structures formed through consistent mappings between abstract target domains and concrete source domains. Abstract concepts are framed through concrete ones (e.g., LIFE IS A GAME, SEPARATION IS DEATH).

b) Orientational metaphors
These are metaphors that arise from physical and bodily experiences, linking abstract concepts (e.g., good, bad) to spatial directions (e.g., up, down). They are shaped by how we interact with the physical world and are embedded in cultural cognition (e.g. HEALTH IS UP, SICKNESS IS DOWN).

c) Ontological metaphors
These are metaphors in which abstract concepts are understood as concrete entities or objects, based on our physical experiences with the world. Through this process, intangible ideas are given boundaries, substance, or form (e.g. THE MIND IS A MACHINE, INFLATION IS AN ENTITY).

d) Primary metaphors
These are metaphors that emerge from the combination of early sensory-motor and subjective experiences, as described in Grady's (1997: 247) theory of primary metaphors. According to him, these metaphors, formed through shared experiences in early childhood, are universal across cultures. Therefore, primary metaphors, which operate at an unconscious level, are the first conceptual metaphors produced by the mind (e.g., TIME IS MOTION, KNOWING IS SEEING).

e) Conventional metaphors
These are metaphors that are rooted in the collective memory of society, automatically and constantly used by members of society and active in everyday life (e.g., LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A GAME).

f) Complex metaphors
Layered structures formed by the blending of primary metaphors with cultural ones (e.g., PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A DANGEROUS GAME).

g) Novel metaphors
Novel metaphors created by creative minds by pairing different conceptual domains that did not previously exist in society; unlike traditional metaphors, they arise as a result of everyday experiences, just like other types of metaphors. As stated in conceptual metaphor theory, they are the natural

product of the embodied mind. They assign logical meanings to everyday experiences through the pairing of images and concepts. According to Lakoff and Johnson, this is not a miracle born out of nothing. They are novel metaphors acquired as a result of everyday experiences (Lakoff & Johnson 2015: 310). In his doctoral dissertation entitled "Metaphor in Turkish Poetry", Şahan states that the meaning maps present in all words of language are transferred to another concept through the original metaphors produced by the poet/writer (Şahan 2014: 101). (e.g., INFINITY IS TO TOUCH LOVE, LIFE IS CHAOS).

Despite its influence, CMT has been critiqued – most notably by Zoltán Kövecses, who argues that the source and target domains are not sufficiently explained and that the theory exhibits circular reasoning and methodological limitations (Kövecses 2020). These critiques led to the development of new metaphor theories such as Emotion Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2000), Embodied Cognition and Metaphor (Varela & Thompson & Rosch 1991; Gibbs & Macedo 2010), Cultural Cognition and Metaphor (Sharifian 2011) and Ecological Cognition and Metaphor (Jensen & Greve 2019).

Each theory offers a distinct approach to metaphor. For example, Kövecses's Emotion Metaphor Theory posits that metaphors arise from emotional, physical and behavioral effects.

Embodied Cognition (Varela & Thompson & Rosch 1991; Gibbs & Macedo 2010) is an important approach to explaining the mind, developed in the 1990s by Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991) based on the phenomenological perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The fundamental claim here is that cognition is not merely a set of activities occurring within mental processes but is shaped by the body's relationship with the external world. The data the body acquires through its sensory organs or actions influences how it perceives the environment, demonstrating a close connection between bodily action and perception. The mirror neuron system (Gallese 2000; Stamenov & Gallese 2002; cited in Gibbs & Macedo 2010: 682, 696) plays an important role in experiences such as imitation and empathy. According to this theory, metaphor involves the simulation and reenactment of sensory-motor data in different forms. Researchers who cite the metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE HEAVY BURDENS as an example note that the information about "heavy burdens" acquired through physical action is associated with abstract concepts such as emotional or psychological difficulties and that meanings are created according to the individual's subjective existence.

Cultural Cognition Theory (Sharifian 2011; Musolff 2017) states that the cultural structure of society influences individuals' thoughts, lifestyles and in short, many cognitive activities. Therefore, it is based on conceptualizations of "cultural schemas", "cultural categories", and "cultural metaphors". In his book *Metaphor in Cultures: Universality and Diversity* (2005: 11-13), Kövecses

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argues that primary metaphors are complex metaphors, drawing attention to the specificity of cultural metaphors. Using the concept of "meaning focus" specific to culture, the researcher argues that there is a limited resource field that matches the target field in a society due to cultural factors. Since societies today generally exist within the model of nation states, the metaphors THE BODY IS THE NATION and THE BODY IS POLITICAL are universal (Musolff 2010). The body, where experiences, emotions and thoughts are located, is defined as the resource field, while culture is defined as the filter that limits this field (Yu 2008: 249; Adıgüzel & Aksan 2023: 75). Cultural metaphors, due to their consensual structure, possess qualities that are not only cultural but also universal (Ansah 2010: 3). This argument is accepted by Kövecses (2000, 2005), Maalej (2007) and Yu (2008) in their theory of embodied cultural prototypes. For example, the metaphor for anger is formed with the source domain HOT LIQUID IN A POT in Turkish and English, while in Chinese, anger is structured with the concept of "GAS". The metaphors produced by the practices of the society in which a person lives, geographical conditions, history and cultural and social memory reflect the cognitive commonality and uniqueness of the individual and the culture.

Finally, according to the ecological cognition approach, metaphor (Jensen & Greve 2019: 1–5) is a cognitive phenomenon that occurs in the relationship between humans, who are living organisms and the environment-system. Actions carried out within the possibilities of doing things in the world give rise to metaphors. In this context, it is claimed that cognition is not only mental or physical but also based on action. The brain, body and environment are the result of distributed internal and external processes. Hollan, Hutchins and Kirsh (2000) argue that social relationships, material-environmental structures and the products of previous events are distributed over time in such a way that they can change the nature of subsequent events. The determination of the source and effect domain of metaphors results from complex cognitive processes and is composed of difficult dualistic structures. The sensory, experiential and understanding knowledge humans derive from metaphors stems from perceived constants in the environment rather than cognitive processes. Metaphors provide us with the pragmatic action and perception possibilities necessary for the present moment. This feature of metaphor, conveyed by Gibson's (1979) term "affordances," determines the boundaries of the field of experience and perception. Analyzing metaphors requires examining sensory inputs, the process of metaphor construction and the relationships between the speaker and the near and distant environments.

These metaphor theories, closely linked to subfields of neurolinguistics such as cognitive psychology and neuropsychology, contribute to research methodologies in literary studies as well. One such interdisciplinary framework is Cognitive Poetics, a theoretical approach developed since the 1970s for interpreting literary texts based on human cognitive processes (Aylanç 2023).

In addition to these theories, researchers have explored metaphors in fields such as economics (McCloskey 1995; Klamer & Leonard 1994) and contemporary global crises, as demonstrated by conferences under the theme "Crises We Live By" (American Folklore Society 2022). These developments illustrate the evolving nature of metaphor studies and their adaptation to different times, cultures, and perspectives.

ANIMAL METAPHORS AND ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL METAPHOR RESEARCH

Animals exhibit biological and cognitive traits that most closely parallel those of humans among non-human life forms. Human cognition has historically drawn upon observations of animal behavior to conceptualize the self, the world and other beings. This relationship between humans and animals has been an important field of research in the scientific world and in metaphor studies. While human-centered research has long dominated the field, the growing influence of eco-centric perspectives has led scholars to reexamine animal metaphors. These inquiries increasingly focus on how animals are represented and symbolized within cultural contexts. Considered in terms of their subjective, socio-cultural and archetypal layers, animal metaphors illuminate the cognitive structures through which modern human existence is imagined and articulated. The meaning and function of animal conceptualizations within a specific cultural context reveal how human and non-human entities are perceived and socially constructed. Scholarly research into animal conceptualizations has predominantly drawn upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Lakoff and Turner's (1989) Great Chain of Being metaphor and Wierzbicka's (1985) typology of animal categories. The Great Chain of Being metaphor, as formulated by Lakoff and Turner (1989) and rooted in ancient Greek philosophical thought, presents a hierarchical conceptual system that illustrates how the human-centered mind organizes both itself and the external world. It classifies entities in the world from top to bottom according to their qualities as follows.

At the top are God and supernatural beings, followed by Humans (highly qualified), Animals (instinctive), Plants (biological), Complex Physical Objects and Natural Objects.

In this system, metaphorical expressions are formed when one entity is paired with another to reflect a situation, judgment or evaluation. Entities located higher in the conceptual hierarchy are understood to encompass the attributes of those below. For instance, when human behavior is associated with traits from the animal domain, metaphors such as HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL and HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS AN ANIMAL BEHAVIOR (Kövecses 1988) emerge. These two metaphors have been widely identified in studies on animal representations and often serve as foundational conceptual frames.

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According to the Great Chain of Being, conceptual mapping can proceed both upward and downward. Using animals as an example, metaphors such as GOD IS AN ANIMAL, AN ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT or AN OBJECT IS AN ANIMAL illustrate how attributes from different ontological domains are transferred across levels of existence. Wierzbicka's (1985) categorization of animals – based on habitat, size, appearance, behavior, relationship with humans and the emotional value attributed to them – offers a flexible and widely applicable model for analyzing how metaphors are structured. Her examples of the tiger and the snake demonstrate how symbolic meaning is shaped by cultural and emotional associations.

As far as the literature reveals, master's theses (Erboğa 2024; Aygün 2017), doctoral dissertations (Pourhossein 2016) and journal articles have predominantly approached animal metaphors through comparative linguistic (Talebinejad & Dastjerdi 2005; Güneş 2017) and cultural (Aydoğan 2023; Bough 2011) perspectives. To collect metaphorical data, researchers have frequently selected literary genres such as proverbs (Rashid & Hajimaming & Muhammad 2012; Ho-Abdullah 2011), folktales (Ren 2019), poetry (Chatti 2023) and novels (Sun 2015) as their primary research domains. In addition, studies have examined animal metaphors expressed in surveys (Wang & Dowker 2007), websites (Ho 2022) and political discourse (Carter 2021).

The focus on animal metaphors has also been explored through lenses such as gender, eco-criticism, othering, hate speech and socio-cultural analysis. These approaches reveal the symbolic and cognitive functions animals perform within the human imagination, often serving as tools for expressing identity, hierarchy and exclusion.

METAPHOR, METONYMY AND CONCEPTUAL METONYMY

The conceptual boundary between metaphor and metonymy has long been a subject of scholarly debate, with various research studies proposing distinct frameworks to differentiate the two. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor enables us to understand one conceptual domain in terms of another, whereas metonymy primarily serves a referential function. Despite their differences, both are now widely recognized as fundamental cognitive tools that shape human thought and language (Kövecses & Radden 1998).

Antonio Barcelona offers a widely accepted definition of metonymy, describing it as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity (the vehicle) provides mental access to another (the target) within the same domain of experience" (2000: 3–4; 2010: 134). Building on this view, cognitive linguists have attempted to define metonymy through frame-based models (Barsalou 1999; Langacker 1987; Fillmore 1982) and pragmatic functions (Fauconnier 1997). These approaches emphasize that metonymy operates through asymmetrical mappings between source and target concepts, thereby expanding the

boundaries of conceptual frames and enabling the emergence of new metaphorical structures (Kövecses 2013: 76–77).

Grady's (1997) theory of primary metaphors has been particularly influential in this context. Many scholars (Kövecses 2000, 2013; Barcelona 2000; Radden 2002; Taylor 1989; Dirven & Pörings 2002) argue that primary metaphors are inherently metonymic, grounded in bodily experience and conceptual proximity. Dirven & Pörings (2002) and Aksan, Akkök & Aksan (2023: 10) further explain metaphorical and metonymic extensions in terms of levels of imagery and degrees of conceptual distance.

Yu (2008) offers a compelling formulation of this cognitive trajectory: "bodily experiences→metonymy→metaphor→abstract concepts" (2008: 249). Metaphors involving body parts (e.g., brain, heart, mouth), emotions (e.g., anger, fear, happiness) and animals (e.g., behavior or physical traits) are typically rooted in metonymic structures. The body is conceptualized as a vessel for emotions or animal characteristics. For instance, the expression "his face turned red with anger" illustrates the metaphor ANGER IS HEAT, realized metonymically through the face as A PART OF THE WHOLE. Similarly, "his blood ran cold with fear" reflects the metaphor FEAR IS COLD, with "blood" serving as the metonymic vehicle.

These examples demonstrate how bodily reactions serve as the basis for both metaphorical and metonymic expressions. Fass's (1997) claim that "metonymy moves within the field" and Rosch's (1978) observation that metonymy is "arranged horizontally" align with this view, emphasizing the intra-domain nature of metonymic mappings.

Animal metaphors follow a similar cognitive pattern, often structured around perceived similarities and conceptual closeness between humans and animals. Such metaphors are frequently used to concretize abstract emotions and social judgments. Given their proximity to humans in the biological hierarchy, animals have served as a rich source for conceptualizing human behavior, particularly in relation to the Great Chain of Being – a primary metaphor that informs cultural codes and moral evaluations.

Through everyday experience, animals have acquired symbolic meaning that reflects both physical traits and social values. For example, the metonymy PART REPRESENTS WHOLE has led to the horse's visual elegance being associated with wealth and status. In Turkish culture, the horse is conceptualized metonymically as representing nobility. The presence of the horse evokes the abstract concept of nobility, and conversely, a single trait of the animal (e.g., posture) may stand for the whole, as in "the horse has a noble posture". This reflects a WHOLE-FOR-PART metonymy. Because animal-related metonymies, like animal metaphors, mirror the cognitive processes of the human mind, our study includes both structures in the analysis of oral cultural data from Cyprus.

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DONKEY REPRESENTATIONS IN WORLD MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS TEXTS

Donkeys are generally represented negatively in sacred texts, beliefs, mythology and literature. The term mythology includes all the myths produced to explain the creation and nature of humanity and the universe in a particular culture and the reason for traditional beliefs and practices. These basic judgments determine our perspective on life and enter our lives by being transferred from the past to the present. We inherit these interpretations of animals through the transfers that have survived until today. Therefore, identifying donkey representations in mythology and religion helps us to understand the main reason for donkey representations available today.

Kropej pointed out that people in the past divided animals into two binaries according to religious concepts and beliefs as the divine and the demonic. The researcher mentions the dualism of animals, in which some animals are attributed a divine character and some a demonic character. According to Kropej, in the example of the horse and the donkey, the dualistic symbolism of the two animals is evident. The horse is often attributed with divine and mediating properties (Kropej 2015), while the donkey is often associated with negative and demonic ways. In narrative texts, the donkey takes on the role of mediator only when the victim is an animal.

Throughout history, numerous economic, social and cultural events have led donkeys to be symbolized negatively and to become an animal that personifies human weakness in religion, mythology and literature. In India, evil gods such as Nairrita and Kâlarâtrĩĩ, the protectors of the world of the dead, both ride donkeys. Asura-Dhenuka even takes the form of a donkey. In Egypt, the red donkey is perceived as one of the most dangerous creatures that the soul of the dead may encounter while travelling to the afterlife. The red donkey may correspond to the beast of the Apocalypse or the red beast from the Revelation of St. John in the New Testament. This image influenced the French saying "bad as a red donkey" (Kropej 2018: 240).

In the Quran, donkeys are mentioned as well; it depicts donkeys as having a good relationship with the devil. There are hadiths which report the angel was visible as the rooster was crowing: "*Ve eşek anırmasını işittiğinizde hemen şeytanın kötülüğünden Tanrı'ya sığının, çünkü o sırada şeytanı görmektedir*" (And when you hear the braying of a donkey, seek refuge in God from the evil of the devil since it sees the devil at that moment). It is understood here that there is a good relationship between the donkey and the devil, not between the donkey and the angel. Since the devil is there when the donkey brays, there is no other angel at that moment (Dursun 1994b: 139).

In ancient Egypt, Set was associated with the wild donkey and it was depicted as having a donkey's head. Plutarch, who believed that recklessness, stupidity, impiety and immorality were the qualities of a donkey, equated Seth with the

Greek Typhon. Like Typhon, who killed Dionysus, Seth killed Osiris. The Egyptians, who established a relationship between the colour of the donkey and Typhon's red fur, believed that the donkey was an impure animal possessed by an evil spirit due to these similarities (Levanat-Peričić 2012: 998).

In old Turkish culture, it was correspondingly emphasized that donkeys have a relationship with the devil. The devil, who wants to get on Noah's ship, becomes invisible and rides on the back of the donkey. When the donkey does not want to board the ship, Noah shouts and curses at the animal, the curses being a characteristic of Satan. Thus, the devil enters Noah's ark (Boratav 2012: 75–76).

The humiliation of the donkey is also featured in the image of the Greek myth of King Midas. According to the myth, Apollo punished King Midas by giving him donkey ears because he claimed that Pan's music was more pleasing to the ear than the music coming from the Temple of Delphi. This punishment shows us that being human is a higher level of being than a donkey's being (Kropej 2018: 240).

However, there are also examples of the positive perception of the donkey in mythology and religions. In the 259th verse of the Baqara Surah in the Quran, Uzair asks God how everything will be resurrected after the city is destroyed. God takes Uzair's life and resurrects him a century later. He shows Uzair's donkey as evidence to show that he remained dead for a century and has the power of resurrection:

> *Allah 'Hayır, sen yüz sene ölü kaldın (eğer şüphe ediyorsan) yiyeceğine içeceğine bak, (uzun zaman geçmesine rağmen) hiç bozulmamış bir de eşeğine bak, (onun kemikleri nasıl çürüyüp dağılmış). Biz seni insanlara bir ibret olsun diye böyle yaptık, (ey Üzeyir eşeğin) kemiklerine bak, onları nasıl bir araya getirip et giydiriyoruz. (Eşeği nasıl eski haline getiriyoruz)' dedi. Allah'ın kudreti ona (Üzeyir'e) apaçık belli olunca, 'Yakinen bildim ve gördüm ki Allah her şeye Kâdir'dir' dedi buyrulur* (Dursun 1994a: 181).

> [Allah said, 'No, you have been dead for a hundred years (if you have any doubt), look at your food and drink, and look at your donkey, which has not been spoiled (how its bones have rotted and scattered) at all (even after such a long time). We made an example of you for the people. Look at your bones (Hey Uzair donkey), look how we put them together and clothe them with flesh (look how we restore the donkey) Allah said. When the power of Allah became clear to him (Uzeyir), he said, 'I knew with certainty and saw that Allah is Powerful over all things.']

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The donkey also has an important role in the cults of Apollo in Greek mythology. It was used as a sacrificial animal at Delphi. The donkey was the animal that carried the chest to serve as a cradle for Dionysus. The positive connotations presented through the donkey's bond with Dionysus are attributed to the representation of the donkey. The environment, the task performed by the animal and the person guiding the donkey determined the characteristics of these animals. In the cult of Dionysus, the donkey was given characteristics such as humility and intelligence. Another similar representation of this information is found in Christianity. In Christian symbolism, in the scene where Abraham sacrifices his son Isaac, Jacob gifts ten donkeys and five hundred young chickens to appease his brother (Kropej 2018: 241).

The first creatures to recognize the newborn child, Jesus, as saviour were the donkey and the ox standing by the manger. In the New Testament, riding a horse symbolizes war and violence, while riding a donkey symbolizes humbleness. In the iconographic depictions of the escape from Egypt and the arrival of Christ to Jerusalem in the Bible, Jesus rode on the back of a donkey. Christianity has appreciated the humbleness and God-fearing character of the donkey. Jesus clearly states: "The ox knows his master, the ass his master's cradle" (Kropej 2018: 242).

THE ECOLOGY OF DONKEYS IN CYPRUS AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

To properly comprehend the meaning of donkey metaphors on the island, it is necessary to focus on the ecological environment of their habitat as well as the relationship they formed with the inhabitants. Cyprus donkeys have been living on the island for many years and they are considered the symbol of the island and specifically of Karpaz peninsula, Until the 1970s, these animals were an integral part of society, generally as domestic and working animals. In addition, Archimandrite Kyprianos (1788) recorded the presence of wild donkeys in Akamas and the mountainous regions of Karpaz in 1788.

The breeds of donkeys living on the island are descendants of different breeds of African, Asian and European wild donkeys imported from various countries to be used in a wide array of jobs by divergent civilizations that dominated Cyprus throughout history.

Donkeys in Cyprus have also been sold to other countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Greece (Hatay 2017). The fact that Cyprus donkeys are more durable and active than other donkey breeds in the world has made these animals valuable in terms of their labour force. Donkeys have the ability to cross narrow paths and mountainous places by taking diagonal steps. This ability enabled donkeys to work easily in the plains and hills of Cyprus. Donkeys have an important place in the history of the island, but they became viewed as worthless and harmful creatures in the course of time. This transformation started in the 1970s. After the events of 1974, population exchanges took place between

the north and the south parts of Cyprus. During the migration of people from the Karpaz region to the south, refugees could not take their donkeys with them. Since the duties carried out by donkeys were performed by technological machinery, the islanders did not take responsibility for these animals. For these reasons, the abandoned donkeys of Karpaz were forced to become feral. In countries such as Australia and America, there are feral animals such as horses, camels and donkeys. However, it is worth noting that donkeys do not have the characteristics to live independently of humans in nature. Since the donkey's skin is permeable, it quickly becomes ill and dies when exposed to rain, sun or wind. Therefore, these creatures have to live in shelters or farm areas (Cemal 2011: 2–3).

In addition, stray donkeys also harm nature and humans. A donkey's teeth are not sharp enough to cut an object (for example, a branch). For this reason, they pull the plant and uproot it. Thus, they damage vegetation. The force they apply to the soil with their hooves hardens the soil and makes it sterile for plants. Because they wander around the island, they damage many plants and farmers' crops (Cemal 2011: 2–3). In addition, they also cause traffic accidents (Oğuz, personal communication, July 26, 2024). Due to these negative events, the donkey is defined in the public's mind as *a species that harms the economy*. The slaughter of donkeys that damaged crops on the island by unknown people supports this judgment (Biler, personal communication, July 25, 2024).

In order to control their population, the authorities declared the area from Dipkarpaz to Zafer Burnu a National Park in 1978. The national park was fenced to control the donkey population. Officers were employed in the region by the state to feed and care for the donkeys. A house was built for the officers assigned to the National Park. Staff feed the donkeys with hay and provide them with water. A number of donkeys could not be gathered in this designated area (Çetinkaya, personal communication, July 24, 2024). Although the sale of Karpaz donkeys to farmers was brought to the agenda in the 2000s, the proposal was rejected due to public reaction (Sarpten 2017). In the study conducted on donkeys in Northern Cyprus in 2005 and limited to an area of 132.5 km, 800 donkeys were identified (Hamrick et al. 2005: 108–109). Today, it is thought that there are around 300 or 400 Karpaz donkeys in the Karpaz region. The exact donkey population has not been determined since there is no planning or veterinary control for the donkeys.

The status of donkeys in Southern Cyprus is slightly different. There is a farm called Golden Donkey Farm in the village of Skarinou on the Nicosia-Limassol road. Donkey milk is produced on the farm, thus generating economic profit from donkeys. Pieris Georgiadis, the manager of Golden Donkey Farm, stated in a newspaper interview that the number of donkeys in the South is around 1100 and that there are 200 on his farm. He explains that only 40 of 200 donkeys produce one and a half litres of milk per day (Düzgün 2017). Other donkey farms are found in the south, in the regions of Apesha, Achnas, Limassol,

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Paphos, Kelokedara and Skarinou. In addition to Cyprus, donkey milk is produced in donkey farms in countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Donkey milk is more popular today due to the vitamin values it contains. The reason for the increase in the demand for donkey milk globally is that it is acknowledged as healthy as breast milk. Scientific research shows that donkey milk is valuable for health. In addition to its use in food products such as cheese in various parts of the world, donkey milk is also used in the production of cosmetic products such as skin cream, shampoo and soap. Donkey milk soap production continues today in the south and north of Cyprus. This soap is also known as Cleopatra soap. It is rumored that the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra bathed with donkey milk soap or used soured donkey milk to stay young and beautiful. It would not be wrong to say that this information provides a basis for the use of donkey milk in cosmetic products. In the descriptions of these products sold online, it is explained that donkey milk has many benefits for the skin. It is said to contain proteins that are anti-ageing, good for dryness of the skin and that it restores the skin's brightness and vitality (Handy Spa Cyprus 2023).

The Great Inn located in Nicosia has significant historical importance for Cyprus. It is a place visited with interest by tourists visiting the island. Ayperi Gürdür, who sells her own handmade products in this inn, has been making soap from donkey milk for the past five years. She acquires milk obtained from the donkeys of her acquaintances in Dipkarpaz and uses approximately 15% donkey milk to make soap. According to her statement, he started producing and selling donkey milk soap because he received a lot of demand. Gürdür stated that it smelled bad because he could not keep the amount of donkey milk in the first phase of production. According to Gürdür, soap produced from donkey milk has a longer lifespan. He believes that these handmade soaps attract attention from tourists (Gürdür, personal communication, July 26, 2024).

In Cyprus, many local souvenirs and postcards contain donkey motifs and are available for purchase. The visual existence of this animal is not only limited to these products. Donkey statues are available in different parts of Cyprus. These objects, which can be interpreted as a symbol of the friendship between the people and the donkey from the past, are for touristic purposes.

In Northern Cyprus, the metaphor of the donkey as harmful is more prevalent since donkeys cause more economic harm than benefit. The prevailing view in the South that the *donkey is a valuable animal* is more prevalent because additional income is obtained through donkey milk. Animal rights advocates – including vegans and feminists – who oppose reducing the donkey to the status of an object or see it in a lower position than humans are against donkey farms. According to them, these farms objectify and exploit animals.

DONKEYS IN BELIEFS AND TRADITIONS OF THE CYPRIOT PUBLIC

Donkeys hold a more prominent place in the beliefs and traditions of Cyprus than other animal representations. In his article published in a local research journal, Hessenburg states that Cypriots learned to prune vines thanks to donkeys. The villagers see that the vine becomes more productive for a certain period after the donkey eats the vine branches. Grapes, which are widely grown in Cyprus, have perhaps become so valuable on the island thanks to donkeys (Hessenburg 1998: 51).

Both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots hold a belief in evil spirits. An evil spirit is a metaphysical creature that takes the form of a donkey or other animals and may harm children and women. Stories featuring these creatures are often told by adults to scare children. Belief in evil spirits is seen in different forms in many places around the world. In the Turkish Cypriot community, this being is called "goncoloz", in Turkey "albastı, alkarısı, albiz"; in Greek Cypriot culture "karigancalos" and "alavrostihiotes" (An 1989: 25); in Germany "kobalt"; in England it is named "goblin", "ogre" and "bogey". The form and naming of evil spirits varies depending on the language, religion and cultural structure of the society they are in.

In the Turkish Cypriot community, it is believed that the evil spirit, "goncoloz" can disguise itself as different animals such as donkeys. Fearing that it will harm women and children, people throw lokma (yeast fritters) on the roof to make the "goncoloz" leave their house (Ertuğ 1994: 14). This belief is a common feature of karigancalos and "goncoloz". The difference between the two evil spirits may have occurred due to the religious and linguistic differences between the societies. What "alavrostihiotes" and "goncoloz" have in common is that "those with light shadows" and women and children are afraid of these beings.

Greek Cypriots describe the karigancalos as "a donkey-like creature with dark black skin, thick bones, a beard on its face, a swollen chin, mouse eyes, long messy hair, big teeth, hairy and a hairy tail" (An 1989: 25). It is believed that the goncoloz, a spirit said to appear during the Christmas season, emerges from underground in boats made of precious metals or flies in on white donkeys (Alçıcıoğlu 2018: 96–97). This association of donkeys with evil spirits may pave the way for the creation of negative representations of these creatures in the subconscious of the public.

Inevitably, the attitude of the Cypriot people towards donkeys is not always negative. Like cats and dogs, donkeys are seen as humans' best friends. For example, on New Year's Eve, animals such as donkeys, oxen and sheep are rewarded with "golifa"[1] by their owners because they contribute to the economy (An 1989: 26). The donkey's loyalty level to humans is also high. When an owner takes his donkey to a distant place, the donkey can return to its owner (Biler, personal communication, July 25, 2024). If the donkey is injured by the

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belt or for any other reason, it cannot work at the desired level. That's why the spores of the plant called donkey mushroom are applied to the animal's wound like powder (Viney 2001: 84–88). Andreas Koçaka, who was born in Karpaz and makes his living as a shepherd there, says that donkeys can detect water under the ground and extract water with their hooves. He states that donkeys are defined as "devils" by Greek Cypriots because of this ability (Koçaka, personal communication, July 25, 2024). "Devil" is not used in a negative sense here. This word shows the donkey's intelligence and its natural ability expressed humorously.

Donkeys surprise the public by exhibiting unexpected movements or behaviors. These creatures open the water taps with their teeth and drink water, then close them in the same way (Koçaka, personal communication, July 25, 2024). These and similar daily events ensure that positive judgments about donkeys are established in society's subconscious.

The fact that a donkey was given as a dowry to a married couple by their parents is an indication of the importance placed on these animals to create a home. Before the 1970s, when the man went to ask for the girl and the other party did not give her, the man would harm the donkey of the house out of anger. This example shows how valuable the donkey is to the family (İslamoğlu & Öznur 2010: 16). Other similar evidence can also be found about donkeys. There is only one judgment supported by the data presented: Donkeys are valued for the economic impact they have on human life.

DONKEY METAPHORS IN CYPRIOT ORAL LITERATURE

To identify the structure and function of donkey metaphors in Cypriot oral literature, and to reveal the socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions from which they emerge, idioms, proverbs, mani (folk rhymes) and folktales have been analyzed under separate categories. This section presents findings on how positive and negative representations of donkeys appear in Cypriot oral texts, accompanied by examples of donkey metaphors from other cultural traditions.

Donkeys are frequently featured in idioms, proverbs, mani and folktales in Cyprus's oral cultural output. Furthermore, the number and nature of donkey references differ across these genres, making it necessary to evaluate donkey conceptualizations in relation to the specific literary type.

Based on document analysis, out of 4,592 idioms, 434 involve animals. Among these, donkeys appear in 81 idioms, making them the most frequently referenced animal in this category:

Table 1. Most Frequently Used Animals in Idioms

Animals	Frequency in Idioms	Percentage (%)
1. Donkey	81	18, 66
2. Chicken	25	5,76
3. Cat	18	4,14
4. Horse	17	3,91
5. Snake	17	3,91

For proverbs, a total of 1,470 proverbs were surveyed. Among these, 322 contain references to animals and 31 of them include donkeys. In Cypriot proverbs, donkeys are the second most frequently referenced animal:

Table 2. Most Frequently Used Animals in Proverbs

Animals	Frequency in Proverbs	Percentage (%)
1. Dog	41	12,73
2. Donkey	31	9.62
3. Horse	24	7,45
4. Bird	19	5,90
5. Snake	19	5,90

From the data collected, 390 out of 5,191 mani include animal references. Among these, 17 mani feature donkeys, making them the fifth most frequently used animal in this genre:

Table 3. Most Frequently Used Animals in Folk Rhymes (Mâni)

Animals	Frequency in Mâni	Percentage (%)
1. Nightingale	44	11, 28
2. Dove	35	8,97
3. Horse	33	8,46
4. Fish	28	7,17
5. Donkey	17	4,35

From the 184 folktales analyzed, animals appear 17,095 times in total. Donkeys were referenced 178 times across 36 tales, making them the most frequently mentioned animal in Cypriot folktales:

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Table 4. Most Frequently Used Animals in Folktales

Animals	Frequency in Tales	Percentage (%)
1. Donkey	178	1,04
2. Fox	162	0,94
3. Bird	139	0,81
4. Snake	105	0,61
5. Dog	87	0,50

These figures clearly show that donkeys appear more frequently in oral texts than other animals. The high rate of representation can be attributed to the long-standing cohabitation of donkeys and island inhabitants. In these literary genres, donkey metaphors are predominantly negative, though neutral and positive representations are also observed.

In light of the data presented, oral literature samples were analyzed and evaluated through selected examples that reflect the structure and function of donkey conceptualizations in the oral culture of Cyprus, particularly within the framework of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors.

DONKEY METAPHORS AND METONYMIES IN CYPRIOT IDIOMS

Idioms – formed from a community's traditions, way of life, language and culture – are unique to the society in which they emerge. As fixed expressions, idioms not only reflect cultural characteristics but also illustrate how humans symbolically represent nature.

As the most frequently used animal in idioms, the donkey holds a rich metaphorical and metonymic map. To provide a general overview of donkey metaphors and metonymies and demonstrate their socio-cultural and socio-economic implications, five idiomatic expressions have been selected as examples:

Table 5. Selected Idioms in the Context of Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic Functions

Idioms	English Equivalent	Meaning
1. *Eşek boku yapmak*	To do nothing useful	Not doing anything productive or positive.
2. *Burnu kara eşek*	A cranky mule	Referring to irritable, ill-tempered people.
3. *Eşek başı olmak*	Be a nobody (to be a donkey's head)	Lacking status or social status.
4. *Götüne kazık sokacak eşek aramak*	Look for a fool (donkey) to take advantage of	Looking for someone gullible to decieve.

Idioms	English Equivalent	Meaning
5. *Eşek suratlı*	Donkey-faced	Referring to someone as ugly.
6. *Eşek alıp eşek satmak*	Buy and sell donkeys	Engaging in an unprofitable business.
7. *Gebermiş eşek arar derisini yüzsün*	Look for a dead donkey to skin	Someone trying to earn money the easy way.
8. *Çık fırının üstüne bekle eşşeği gelsin da binesin*	Go stand on the oven and wait for the donkey to come so you can ride it	Said to people who wait for the impossible to happen.
9. *Eşeğini sağlam kazığa bağlamak*	Tie your donkey to a firm stake	Taking precautions to ensure things go smoothly.
10. *İyi eşek olmak*	Be a good donkey	Used for those who work hard and fulfill their tasks.

The donkey metaphors in the examples below can be analyzed through the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL as follows:

Table 6. Donkey Metaphors Based on the "Human is an Animal" Metaphor in Idioms

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. Incompetent (person)	Donkey	(Incompetent) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
2. Grumpy (person)	Donkey	(Grumpy) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
3. Stupid (person)	Donkey	(Stupid) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
4. Foolish (person	Donkey	(Foolish) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
5. Ugly (person)	Donkey	(Ugly) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor

As seen in the examples, individuals labeled as incompetent, grumpy, stupid, foolish and ugly are metaphorically associated with donkeys within the context of these negative traits. The donkey's appearance and disobedient or submissive behaviors contribute to its encoding in collective memory with such negative concepts. This also relates to the donkey's failure to provide the expected material benefit. These metaphors, situated in a socio-cultural context, are shaped by the donkey's material/spiritual impact and its social status: 1. Useless work, 2. Inability to complete a given task, 3. Lack of expected status, 4. Being easily deceived, 5.Ugliness / low social status.

Examples 6–10 show that the donkey is foregrounded as an object:

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Table 7. Donkey Metaphors Based on the "Animal is an Object" Metaphor in Idioms

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
6. Harmful task	Donkey	(Harmful) task is a donkey	Conventional metaphor
7. Valuable object	Donkey	(Valuable) object is a donkey	Conventional metaphor
8.(Impossible) task / tool	Donkey	(Impossible) task /tool is a donkey	Conventional metaphor
9.Valuable object / risky task	Donkey	(Valuable) object / (risky) task is a donkey	Conventional metaphor
10. Load carrier / person/ tool	Donkey	A load carrier/person/ tool is a donkey	Conventional metaphor

These examples show that the conventional metaphors HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL, ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT and ANIMAL IS A TASK dominate the perception of donkeys. Positioned as either a negative or risky task, or as a valuable or worthless object depending on its perceived utility, the donkey is metaphorically used to stigmatize and marginalize individuals with non-conforming behaviors or identities in society. The conceptual map of the donkey is shaped by the articulation of multiple compatible metaphors. Directional metaphors such as DONKEY IS BELOW, CONTROLLED IS BELOW; primary metaphors like COLOR IS CHARACTER, ACTION IS CHARACTER, LESS IS INSIGNIFICANT; and complex metaphors formed from various culturally shaped constructs such as DONKEY IS A RISKY TASK or DONKEY IS A VALUABLE/WORTHLESS OBJECT, all contribute to a narrowly defined ontological understanding of the donkey.

Excluded here for brevity, the use of the donkey in vulgar idioms (e.g., "May a donkey f*ck you") further demonstrates how derogatory and marginalizing animal metaphors can be formed in expressions of anger.

The prevalence of negative constructions involving donkeys is particularly striking. Most of the Cypriot idioms analyzed carry negative emotional value. Even seemingly neutral phrases referring to the animal's role in nature (e.g., "A donkey is a vehicle") are framed through the object-based source domain constructed from a human-centered perspective rather than the donkey's own natural existence. Positive metaphors are notably scarce. A few examples reference the donkey's beauty (e.g., eşek gözlü "donkey-eyed") and its childlike features (e.g., eşek sıpası "donkey foal").

Correspondingly, metonymies reflect similar negative structures parallel to the metaphors. The analysis of PART FOR WHOLE based metonymies from the examples above is as follows:

Table 8. Donkey Metonymies in Idioms

Metonymic Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Metonymy
1. Donkey dung	Negative task	Donkey (dung)	Donkey dung represents a useless or negative task
2. Black nose	Grumpiness	Donkey (black nose)	The black nose represents grumpiness
3. Donkey head	Foolishness	Donkey (head)	The head represents foolishness
4. Donkey's rear	Being deceived / harassed	Donkey (rear)	The rear represents being deceived or harassed
5. Donkey's face	Ugliness	Donkey (face)	The face represents ugliness
6. Donkey's skin	Easy profit	Donkey (skin)	The skin represents easy profit
7. Stake	Precaution	Stake	The stake represents taking precaution

The parts of the donkey's body reveal how negative concepts are conceptualized. For example, in expressions like "goes by the direction of its nose", the nose symbolizes grumpiness and stubbornness. Similar symbolic associations of other body parts with negative traits emerge in metonymic constructions and are preserved in collective memory. The donkey's appearance and behavioral traits also play a role in the formation of these conceptual mappings.

The only positively charged metonymic expression is eşek gözlü ("donkey-eyed"), which refers to someone with large and beautiful eyes. In Cyprus, this idiom is commonly used as a compliment.

Similar to Cypriot idioms, the donkey is metaphorically constructed with negative traits such as stupidity, ugliness and stubbornness in many other languages across the world. For instance, in English, "as stubborn as a donkey" is used to describe a person's obstinacy. In Spanish, "tener memoria de burro" (to have the memory of a donkey) highlights forgetfulness. Numerous expressions in various languages illustrate the objectification of the donkey. For example, in the English sentence "Quit packing so much stuff in these boxes. You're making them heavy as a dead donkey!", the metaphor "as a dead donkey" illustrates how even the donkey's corpse is objectified. The Spanish expression "No ver tres en un burro" (Not being able to see three on a donkey) refers to poor vision or foresight. It is often used to describe those who make poor investments, miss future profits, or lack business acumen.

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DONKEY METAPHORS AND METONYMIES IN CYPRIOT PROVERBS

A proverb is a fixed expression that conveys advice derived from long-term experiences and cultural observations. These expressions, which are rooted in the everyday life and traditions of a community, encapsulate core principles of life in Cypriot society and offer valuable insights from collective memory.

In Cypriot proverbs, the donkey is the second most frequently mentioned animal after the dog. To illustrate the conceptual map of donkey metaphors in proverbs, five examples have been selected:

Table 9. Selected Proverbs in the Context of Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic Functions

Proverb	English Equivalent	Meaning of the Proverb
1. *Tembel eşek her zaman yüklenir*	The lazy donkey is always loaded	Tasks not done on time become harder later.
2. *Eşeği bizleyen osuruğuna katlanır*	Whoever combs the donkey must bear its fart	One who deals with a rude person must be ready for the harm they may cause.
3. *Eşek bile eşeği ödünç kaşır*	Even a donkey scratches another donkey only if lent	Every deed comes at a cost.
4. *Yük altında eşekler kalır*	It is the donkeys that are burdened	A person with honor will eventually return every good deed or help received.
5. *Eşeğe altın semer vursan da eşek gene eşektir*	Even with a golden saddle, a donkey is still a donkey	One's character does not change with possessions.

The donkey metaphors in these sequential examples are structured around the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL, as shown below:

Table 10. Donkey Metaphors in Proverbs Based on the "Human is an Animal" Metaphor

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. Lazy person	Donkey	(Lazy) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
2. Rude person	Donkey	(Rude) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
3. Person who lends	Donkey	(Lending) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
4. Debtor	Donkey	(Debtor) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
5. Superficial person	Donkey	(Superficial) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor

These proverbs metaphorically map characteristics like laziness, rudeness, superficiality, indebtedness and lending onto the donkey. Compared to idioms, the proverbs use fewer expressions of anger and derogation. The metaphors constructed around the donkey's appearance, behaviors and social role are also closely tied to economic interpretations:

Table 11. Donkey Metaphors in Proverbs Based on the "Human is an Object" Metaphor

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. Waste of time	Donkey	Donkey is a waste of time	Conventional metaphor
2. Impulsive person	Donkey	Donkey is an impulsive person	Conventional metaphor
3. Lender	Donkey	Donkey is a lender	Conventional metaphor
4. Debtor/Tool	Donkey	Donkey is a debtor/tool	Conventional metaphor
5. Wealthy person	Donkey	Donkey is a wealthy person	Conventional metaphor

The examples show that the metaphors HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL and ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT are used to construct the donkey figure. These metaphorical structures are mostly based on associations with the donkey's appearance and temperament. For instance, the donkey symbolizes waste of time in the first example, low status in the second, transactional relationships in the third, a burden-bearing tool in the fourth and a superficial but wealthy figure in the fifth. These economic mappings also reflect the material conditions of people and the tangible/intangible dynamics of their relationships.

The donkey's economic characterization is supported by directional metaphors like THE LAZY IS BELOW, THE IMPULSIVE IS BELOW; primary metaphors like TIME IS A LIMITED RESOURCE, ACTION IS MONEY, DEBT IS A BURDEN, WHAT MATTERS IS INTERNAL; and complex metaphors such as DEBT OF KINDNESS IS A BURDEN, HELPING IS A TRANSACTION.

Aligned with these metaphors, donkey-related metonymies are constructed using the PART FOR WHOLE structure and similar concept mappings:

Table 12. Donkey Metonymies in Proverbs

Metonymic Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Metonymy
1. Lazy donkey	Waste of time or Money	Lazy donkey	The lazy donkey represents waste of time or Money.
2. Its fart	Harm or offense	Fart	The donkey's fart represents harm or offense.
3. Its scratching	Self-interest	Scratching	The donkey's scratching represents self-interest.
4. Its load	Debt of kindness	Load	The donkey's load represents debt of kindness.
5. Golden saddle	Material wealth	Golden saddle	The golden saddle represents material wealth without substance.

These metonymic expressions conceptualize meaning through the donkey's behaviors and the items it carries. For example, the donkey's laziness represents waste of time or money; its fart, harmful consequences; its scratching, self-interest; its burden, moral or social obligation; and the golden saddle, the wealth of a person perceived as lacking depth. The only example that could be considered a positive metaphor is the proverb: *"Eşeğin kuyruğuna bakmaz, rüzgâra karşı gider"* (He doesn't check the donkey's tail and goes against the wind). This expression, meaning "one should evaluate conditions wisely", conceptualizes the donkey's tail as a good sign and the donkey itself as a good guide.

Metaphors and metonymies where the donkey is presented neutrally (e.g., as a load-bearer or vehicle) still convey implicit negativity due to the cultural framing of the donkey as an object. Similar negative examples of donkey metaphors and metonymies can be found in various cultures. For instance, the Persian proverb: *"Beguyi va bad bāši behtarast ke naguyi va xar bāši"* (To say something and sound bad is better than saying nothing and seeming like a donkey) suggests that it is better to express oneself – even poorly – than to remain silent and be perceived as a fool. Likewise, the Greek proverb:*"Είπε ο γάιδαρος τον πετεινό κεφάλα"* (The donkey called the rooster big-headed) is used to describe someone who criticizes others for faults they themselves possess.

DONKEY METAPHORS AND METONYMIES IN CYPRIOT MÂNI VERSE

Mâni is a form of anonymous folk poetry, typically composed in quatrains, characterized by a unique rhythm created through syllabic meter and sound similarities. It can address a wide range of social and personal topics. Regarded as the folk equivalent of the Turkish classical poetic form *tuyuğ*, *mâni* generally employs 7- or 8-syllable meters. The rhyme schemes commonly found in *mâni* include *aaxa* or *xaxa*, where "x" denotes the free verse and "a" indicates the rhyme. In short, the third line of a *mâni* is usually free, while the other lines are connected by sound harmony. In another common pattern, the first and third lines are free, while the second and fourth lines rhyme to create rhythm. Riddles are also composed in *mâni* form and are generally structured with an *aaba* rhyme scheme (Boratav 1995: 25).

The tradition of *mâni* recitation exists in many Turkic communities. In Turkey and Cyprus, it is called *mâni*; among Iraqi Turks, *hoyrat/horyat*; among Azerbaijanis, *bayatı/mahnı*; Crimean Tatars, *mane*; Tatars, *çinik/çinig*; Kyrgyz, *ay tipa/kayım/öleng*; and Uzbeks, *koşuk/aşula* (Albayrak 2003: 571–573).

On the island, *mâni* are composed in Turkish, Greek, and mixed Turkish-Greek (bilingual) forms. No examples of *mâni* about donkeys in Greek were found, so the representations in this section are based solely on Turkish examples. In this genre, after the nightingale, dove, horse and fish, the most frequently referenced animal is the donkey. To identify donkey-related metaphors and metonymies in *mâni*, five examples were selected:

Table 13. Selected Mâni in the Context of Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic Functions

Mâni	English Equivalent
1. *Su gelir akmak ile* *Ne olur bakmak ile* *Eşşek adam olur mu* *Kravat dakmak ile*	Water flows by running / What good is just looking? / Can a donkey become a man / Just by wearing a tie?
2. *Masa altında ilan* *İlan masaya dolan* *İşaredden annamaz* *Eşşek kafalı ovlan*	A snake under the table / Coils onto the table / Doesn't understand signs / Boy with a donkey's head
3. *Gır atımı nalladım* *Lefgoşa'ya yolladım* *Senin gibi eşşeği* *Bir gazzığa bağladım*	I shoed my gray horse / Sent it to Nicosia / A donkey like you / I tied to a manger
4. *Çaydan aşşa koşturma* *Beni yoldan sapdırma* *Söylersan mani söyle* *Eşşeg gibi anırma*	Don't make me run downhill / Don't lead me astray / If you speak, recite a mâni / Don't bray like a donkey

Mâni	English Equivalent
5. *Bilmeceli Mani* *Dört taka taka* *İki dike dike* *İki baka baka* *Bir de salamura* *(Cevap: Eşek)*	Riddle answer: Donkey (Four stamping, two standing, two watching and one "pickled")

The donkey metaphors in these sequential examples are structured around the conceptual metaphor HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL, as shown in the following table:

Table 14. Donkey Metaphors Based on the "Human is an Animal" Metaphor in Mâni

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. Stupid man in a tie	Donkey	(Stupid) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
2. (Foolish) boy	Donkey	(Foolish) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
3. (Stupid) person	Donkey	(Stupid) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
4. (Instinct-driven) person	Donkey	(Instinctual) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
5. (Stupid) person	Donkey	(Stupid) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor

In *mâni*, the conceptual mapping between humans and donkeys is predominantly constructed through stupidity and impulsivity. These humorous critiques often portray donkeys through negative concepts. The donkey is conceptualized solely through the HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL metaphor. Supporting structures include: directional metaphors like THE INSTINCTUAL IS BELOW, THE DONKEY IS BELOW; primary metaphors like UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, VOICE IS CHARACTER; and complex metaphors such as RUNNING DOWNHILL IS DONKEY BEHAVIOR, LEADING ASTRAY IS DONKEY BEHAVIOR.

Aside from these negative examples, only two positive uses are present. In *"(...) I heard my beloved is coming / I hugged the donkey"*, the donkey is conceptualized as a friend (DONKEY IS A FRIEND); while in *"(...) stronger than a mule / are the donkeys of Karpaz"*, the donkeys of Karpaz are metaphorically associated with STRENGTH IS FREEDOM and THE STRONG ARE KARPAZ DONKEYS.

The donkey's metonymic conceptualizations correspond with the above examples. Based on the PART FOR WHOLE metonymic structure, the following examples were identified:

Table 15. Donkey Metonymies in Mâni

Metonymic Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Metonymy
1. Donkey with a tie	High status	Tie	The tie represents high status
2. Donkey-headed	Foolishness	Donkey's head	The donkey's head represents foolishness
3. Stake	Being tethered or controlled	Stake	The stake represents being tethered or controlled
4. Braying	Empty or bad sound	Donkey's sound	The bray represents a empty or bad sound
5. Footsteps	Foolishness and slowness	The sound of footsteps	The sound of footsteps represents foolishness and slowness

In both metaphors and metonymies, the donkey is perceived as a figure of low status, often constructed for the purpose of ridicule or marginalization, with anger being the underlying emotional motivation. The donkey is associated with stupidity, inferiority and unpleasant sound – a pattern that also exists in other Turkic cultures.

One illustrative example is a *mâni* from the Crimean Tatars:

> *"Anañ tat, babañ tat / Ne kerek sağa / Balaban at / Min eşegin corğalat"* [Your mother's Tatar, your father's Tatar / Why do you need a tall horse? / Just mount your donkey and go] (Ülküsal 1970: 18).

This proverb sharply contrasts the symbolic value attributed to horses and donkeys, underscoring the lower symbolic status of the donkey.

DONKEY METAPHORS AND METONYMIES IN CYPRIOT FOLKTALES

Folktales, transmitted both orally and in written form from the past to the present, are a type of anonymous narrative that draws on the life experiences and culture of a society and includes extraordinary events, heroes and settings. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, they are short, magical stories told to children, usually with happy endings. In *Kâmus-ı Osmânî*, a folktale is described as a didactic word or expression that narrates customs and

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experiences widespread in popular language (Gökçeoğlu 2005: 8–9). Turkish folklorist Boratav defines the boundaries of folktales as follows:

> *A short narrative, spoken in prose, entirely fictional and unrelated to reality, independent of magical beliefs or customs, and not intended to persuade the listener of its truth* (Boratav 1995: 75).

In Cyprus, folktales hold a significant place in collective memory. According to the data examined in this study, the most frequently mentioned animal in these tales – having become a symbol of the island – is the donkey. The following tales were selected to illustrate donkey-related metaphors and metonymies in this genre:

Table 16. Selected Folktales in the Context of Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic Functions

Folktale Title	Depiction of the Donkey in the Story
1. *İnsanoğlu Nankördür* (Humankind is Ungrateful)	The donkey's owner is cruel. To punish the owner who burned down the forest, the snake acts as a judge and demands the donkey's testimony. The donkey declares its owner cruel. He tells the snake that he puts a heavy load on its back, rides it, and beats it when it falls to the ground.
2. *Padişahın Oğlu* (The Sultan's Son)	A giant places a bone in front of the donkey and straw in front of the dog. The boy corrects this and earns the animals' help and loyalty.
3. *Hak Yerini Bulsu*n (Let Justice Be Done)	A man sentenced to death places a note in his donkey's saddlebag. After various adventures, the donkey returns home and delivers the note.
4. *Sarıl İpim Pırla Topuzum* (Spin the Cord, Swing the Club)	A fairy gives Ali a magical donkey that produces gold. A blacksmith swaps it with an ordinary one. When the new donkey cannot produce gold, Ali's attitude changes.
5. *Şahmaran* (Shahmaran)	A lame donkey appears in a daily life scene, depicted as a vehicle ridden by its owner to carry loads.

The donkey metaphors in these sequential examples are constructed through the conceptual metaphors HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL and ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT, as shown below:

Table 17. Donkey Metaphors Based on "Human is an Animal / Animal is an Object" in Folktales

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. (Complainant) human	Donkey	(Complainant) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
2. (Dissatisfied) human	Donkey	(Dissatisfied) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
3. (Messenger) human	Donkey	(Messenger) human is an animal	Conventional metaphor
4. a) (Valuable) object	(Magical) donkey	Animal is a (valuable) object	Conventional metaphor
4. b) (Worthless) object	(Fake) donkey	Animal is a (worthless) object	
5. (Tool/vehicle)	(Lame) donkey	Animal is a tool/object	Conventional metaphor

In the selected tales, the donkey is mapped onto human roles such as complainant, critic, or message-bearer. Its objectification occurs through roles such as a magical object producing gold, a worthless item that fails to do so, or a transport tool used in daily life. When evaluated from a socio-economic perspective, the conceptual range of these metaphors expands significantly.

Table 18. Donkey Metaphors Based on the "Animal is an Object" Metaphor in Folktales

Target Domain	Source Domain	Metaphor	Type of Metaphor
1. Waste of time	Donkey	The donkey is a waste of time and money	Complex metaphor
2. Test of trial	Donkey	The donkey is a test of trial	Complex metaphor
3. Useful object	Donkey	The donkey is a useful object	Complex metaphor
4. a) Magical object	Donkey	The donkey is a magical object	Complex metaphor
4. b) Fake object		The donkey is a fake object	
5. Functional tool	Donkey	The donkey is a functional tool	Complex metaphor

In the stories analyzed, the donkey falling down represents a waste of time; placing a bone before the donkey is a form of test; using it for transport and burdens positions it as a useful object; producing gold renders it magical, while its inability to do so following substitution marks it as a fake. Directional

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metaphors like THE DONKEY IS BELOW, WASTE OF TIME IS BELOW; primary metaphors such as USEFUL IS GOOD, USELESS IS BAD; and complex metaphors like MAGICAL DONKEY IS MONEY, FAKE DONKEY IS DECEPTION all shape the conceptual map of the donkey.

The metonymies in these tales, based on the PART FOR WHOLE structure, align with these metaphorical mappings:

Table 19. Donkey Metonymies in Folktales

Metonymic Expression	Target Domain	Source Domain	Metonymy
1. Donkey's back	A burden-carrying tool	Donkey's back	The back represents a burden-carrying tool
2. Straw	Correct answer	Donkey's food	The straw represents the correct answer
3. Donkey's assistance	Supporting person	Donkey's assistance	The donkey's assistance represents a supporting person
4. a) Gold-producing donkey	Magical object	Donkey (excretion)	a) The gold-producing donkey represents a magical object
4. b) Non-gold-producing donkey	Deception		b) The non-gold-producing donkey represents deception
5. Limping	Fatigue	Donkey's limping	The donkey's limping represents fatigue

According to these examples, the donkey's back symbolizes burden; its food (straw) represents the correct match in a moral test; its defecation symbolizes either magic or fraud; and limping symbolizes exhaustion. The folktales examined contain no neutral or positive donkey metaphors. These overwhelmingly negative portrayals are echoed in other cultural traditions.

For example, in the *Town Musicians of Bremen* (Grimm 1999: 25), the aging donkey is deemed useless by its owner, who stops feeding it and abandons it to die. This tale includes the metaphor OLD DONKEY IS A USELESS OBJECT. Yet, the story eventually offers a critique of human-centered perspectives by showing the donkey, dog and rooster establishing an independent life for themselves – challenging anthropocentric attitudes toward animals.

CONCLUSION

In animal studies, the long-dominant anthropocentric principles have increasingly been replaced by ecology-focused philosophy and metaphor research. The ecological examination of donkey metaphors and metonymies within oral literature and culture provides a new perspective and research domain for folkloristic, ethnographic, socio-cultural and socio-economic studies.

Donkeys – an integral part of Cyprus's ecological system and a symbol of the island – have played a significant role in the daily life, culture, tradition and literature of the local population. In the pre-automobile era, donkeys contributed economically by working in agriculture and transporting people and goods. Despite their contributions, they have been negatively represented in the collective memory not only in Cyprus but also in countries like Iran, Turkey, England and Greece. Today, however, attitudes toward animals are being re-evaluated through the lenses of cultural ecology and ethics, leading to a confrontation with human perception and cognitive processes.

This study was motivated by the question of why donkeys – animals that have long coexisted with humans in Cyprus – are mapped onto negative human traits and objectified. The research examines how donkeys are perceived in Cypriot society and culture and how they are conceptualized in oral literature across socio-cultural and socio-economic dimensions. Considering that both Turkish and Greek are spoken on the island, donkey metaphors in both languages were identified and compared to explore shared representations. Differences in representations between the two communities were also noted. Comparative examples from English, Spanish, Malay, Turkish and Persian were used to contextualize Cypriot representations across cultures.

Overall, the cognitive and linguistic constructions associated with donkeys appear to arise from a hierarchical relationship in which humans occupy a dominant status over animals. This hierarchy is rooted in the conflict between the donkey's actual characteristics (appearance, behavior, ability) and the human desire to transform the animal into a tool that is obedient, efficient and utilitarian.

Findings from idioms, proverbs, mâni and folktales indicate that the conceptual map of the donkey is built around three dominant metaphorical structures: HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL, ANIMAL IS AN OBJECT and ANIMAL IS A TASK. Donkeys are frequently associated with negative concepts such as stupidity, incompetence, grumpiness, gullibility, ugliness, laziness and rudeness. These associations are based on the presumed ontological deficiencies of the donkey – its appearance, behavior and cognitive or physical limitations – and are rooted in the desire for minimal labor and maximum profit or time savings.

The metaphorical networks that underpin these conceptualizations include directional metaphors such as THE DONKEY IS BELOW, THE CONTROLLED IS BELOW; primary metaphors like ACTION IS CHARACTER, APPEARANCE IS

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CHARACTER, SMELL IS CHARACTER and human-centered ones like KNOWING IS SEEING, WHAT IS USEFUL IS GOOD, WHAT IS USELESS IS BAD. These have transformed the donkey into an ingrained metaphorical reality in collective memory, supported by traditional metaphors like THE DONKEY IS A WASTE OF TIME and THE INSTINCTUAL IS A DONKEY.

Other metaphors highlight the donkey's economic role, such as TOOL / USEFUL AND VALUABLE OBJECT, VALUABLE / WORTHLESS OBJECT, SCRATCHING FOR GAIN IS TRANSACTION and THE DEBTOR IS A DONKEY. As a creature associated with the rural poor, the donkey is also framed as a suffering being – mistreated, impoverished and marginalized. Those with nonconforming behavior are also metaphorically "othered" through donkey references.

Across genres, metaphorical constructions are often rooted in anger, used for mockery, marginalization and denigration – particularly in idioms and mâni. Proverbs offer a more didactic tone, yet still rely on donkey metaphors to illustrate moral lessons. In folktales, the contrast between the imagined and real donkey reflects subconscious perceptions, rendered through complex metaphors. Correspondingly, donkey metonymies show how the animal's body parts are imbued with meaning based on their functions in daily life.

Ultimately, the study concludes that the negative metaphorical associations with donkeys stem from their perceived utility – or lack thereof – in human life. These associations are shaped by human hegemony, leading to the objectification of the animal. Yet, observable behaviors in natural contexts – such as opening a water tank valve with its mouth or digging for water – demonstrate donkeys' problem-solving abilities, challenging the validity of the negative attributes ascribed to them and suggesting the need to reconsider these entrenched views.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no competing interests.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was approved by the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Cyprus International University (CIU) on July 3, 2024, in accordance with the decision of the institutional ethics board (Approval No: -020-5789).

NOTE

1 A traditional Cypriot dish made with pomegranate, almonds, raisins and boiled wheat.

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