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**Widespread Idioms
in Europe
and Beyond**

*Toward a Lexicon of Common
Figurative Units*

ELISABETH PIIRAINEN



Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond

Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units

By Elisabeth Piirainen

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This groundbreaking book in theoretical and empirical phraseology research looks at Europe's linguistic situation as a whole, including 74 European and 17 non-European languages. The occurrence of idioms that actually share the same lexical and semantic structure across a large number of languages has never been demonstrated so clearly before *Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond*. This book answers significant questions regarding hitherto vague ideas about the phraseological similarities between European languages and their cultural foundation. Starting from the intertextual origins of the idioms, the question which texts from ancient to modern times actually contributed to the "Lexicon of Common Figurative Units" now can be answered. The fact that once widespread motifs of folk narratives are among them is only one of the most striking and surprising results. This inventory, which analyzes 190 out of a total of 380 widespread idioms and includes maps, is valuable for academic teaching and further research in the fields of phraseology and figurative language, areal and contact linguistics, folklore, and European cultural studies.

Elisabeth Piirainen received her Ph.D. in German studies, Dutch philology, and Indo-European and general linguistics from the University of Münster, Germany. She has been a lecturer at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and a leader of projects on dialect research in Westphalia, Germany. Her intensive examination of a Low German dialect culminated in *Phraseologie der westmünsterländischen Mundart* (2000, 2 volumes), the first study on dialectal phraseology within a linguistic framework and recipient of the Johannes Sass Prize. This resulted in many further studies on phraseology, among them *Figurative Language: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Perspectives* (2005, with Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij). Her publications have covered numerous different languages (including German, Dutch, English, Swedish, French, Russian, Greek, Finnish, Japanese) and a variety of fields, such as dialectal and areal phraseology, gender specifics, puns, the cultural foundation of conventional figurative language, and idioms in a European framework. Her knowledge of various languages, her familiarity with field research, as well as her long-standing expertise in phraseology research have allowed her to launch this large-scale project on widespread idioms.

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