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THE SYMBOLISM OF *RĒAD* AND ITS SHIFT
INTO EPISTEMICITY IN THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the concept of *rēad* (PDE red) in the Anglo-Saxon period. The analysis is based on *the Toronto Corpus* compiled by Antonette di Paolo Healey (1986). The analysis will be cognitively oriented. It will attempt to investigate the relationship between the etymology of OE *rēad*, namely blood, and the development of root senses of *rēad* in Old English. The paper will also explore metaphorical and literal senses of the colour as well as account for grammaticalisation tendencies that accompanied *rēad* in the emergence of its abstract sense.

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper explores the symbolic nature of the colour *rēad* (PDE red) and its gradual shift into epistemicity in the Anglo-Saxon period. An attempt is also made to explore the relation between the etymology of Old English *rēad* 'red' and the development of root senses of the colour in Old English. Cognitive analyses of colours have been the subject of thorough investigation for many researchers (Barley 1974; Biggam 1997; MacLaury 1992 etc). It should, however, be emphasised that scarcely any publications have been devoted to the issue of the underlying close link between the roots of *rēad* and the synchronic senses of *rēad* in the Anglo-Saxon period. The aims of the paper are the following:

To begin with, the present study will be cognitively oriented and will analyse the concept of *rēad* on the etymological, semantic and cultural planes as they are closely intertwined and should, by no means, be viewed as separate criteria. The semantics of *rēad* will be approached holistically and will not be separated from its cultural and etymological contexts. The suggested conceptualisation of *rēad* will thus not reflect objective reality but rather a mental reality, hence the set of norms and conventions imposed by society and acquired by the individual in the course of his/her existence. In other words, the proposed analysis of *rēad* will be carried out in the spirit of Idealised Cognitive Models (Lakoff 1982). According to Lakoff, ICMs are partial models combining knowledge and myth. Moreover, they constitute idealised, conventional schema heavily laden with the cultural

stereotypes of a particular society and do not fit external world directly. Therefore, ICMs are cognitive but also idealised.

Secondly, the analysis will suggest that *rēad* initially evoked root senses, which were directly related to the etymological background of the lexeme. Gradually, *rēad* started to take on a more abstract meaning, thereby cutting off the link with the original concept, which is in agreement with the tendency of unidirectionality of semantic change (Traugott 1989; Sweetser 1990). Accordingly, change always proceeds from the objective to the subjective proposition, or as Traugott (1989) puts it, from propositional, through textual, to expressive content. The initial, root meaning from the real-world domain becomes the basis for the emergence of the epistemic, abstract, logical sense, which focuses on the internal world of speaker's belief state.

Moreover, the study will explore the associations evoked by the root and epistemic senses of *rēad*. It will also attempt to explain the notion of the root and the epistemic when applied to the analysed colour. It seems that objectivity or epistemicity, per se, is conceived differently when related to colours than when associated with other aspects of a language.

Finally, the paper will argue that the metaphorical meaning in *rēad* was the primary one and acted as the basis for the development of the latter literal sense. In other words, *rēad* exemplifies a concept whose semantic path proceeded from the metaphorical to the literal meaning.

The present analysis of *rēad* is based on *the Toronto Corpus* compiled by Antonette di Paolo Healey (1986), which is an online database consisting of about three million words of Old English. The paper also takes data from the Bosworth and Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (1898), as well as on Etymological Dictionary of the English language (1882), edited by Walter W. Skeat.

2. THE ETYMOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF *RĒAD*

According to the Anglo-Saxon Dictionary (BT, sv. *rēad*), *rēad* could be a descriptive element of the following entities:
– plants
– blood
– fire
– gold

The list shows that the range of entities *rēad* could be linked with was quite limited. It seems that the juxtaposition of the above entities with the origins of *rēad* can cast light onto two supreme issues, such as:
– the nature of the concept of 'red' in the Anglo-Saxon period
– the relation between entities, OE *rēad* could describe, and the etymological background of *rēad*.

Following the Etymological Dictionary of English (CEDEL, sv. *red*), the etymology of *rēad*, can be traced to many sources.

To begin with, Old English *rēad* is etymologically related to Sanskrit *rudhira* (CEDEL, sv. *red*), which denoted 'blood'. This clearly accounts for those senses of *rēad* connected with blood, and consequently, through the process of analogy, with pain, cruelty, severity and death.

Moreover, the Old English lexeme *blōd* also symbolised the blooming or flourishing life (CEDEL, sv. *blood*), which accounts for the verb *blōwan* (to bloom). This can explain why the lexemes related to the process of flourishing started to be embraced with *rēad*, thereby extending the possible range of meanings. In other words, the juxtaposition of *read* with *blōd* explains the way *rēad* gave rise to a number of plant names in the Anglo-Saxon period.

However, apart from the sense of blowing, the Old English lexeme *blōd* acted as an etymological base for the verb *bletsian*, which originally meant – 'to consecrate by sprinkling of blood' (CEDEL, sv. blood). Therefore, it is not accidental that *rēad* was also applied for religious purposes. The juxtaposition of two verbs, namely *blōwan* and *bletsian*, shows that *blōd* could have more secular undertones when related with plants, but it also evoked religious connotations associated with Christ, life and death. In other words, *blōd*, when put in a sacral context, symblised ever-lasting dualities, such as life and death, happiness and pain, peace and torture.

Furthermore, according to the Etymological Dictionary of English Language, the relation between *rēad* and *fyr* can be found in Greek, where *Πuppis* denoted 'red', and the constituent part of the lexeme, namely, *Πup*, meant fire.

Thus, by looking at the etymology, it becomes possible to explain why *rēad* was a descriptive element of blood, plants/flowers and fire.

3. *RĒAD* AS A DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENT OF BLOOD

As already mentioned, *rēad* was recorded as a descriptive element of blood, which can be exemplified by the following contexts:

(1). *Đurh rēadum blōd he wolde him ablugan* (Invention of the Cross: Godden 1979: 174-6).
(He wanted to redeem them through the red blood).
(2). *His fet syndon blōdrēade begen twegen* (Kluge 1885: 474).
(His two feet are red from blood).
(3). *Rēadnysse martyrdom* (Assumption of the Virgin: Text from Clemoes 1955-6: 444-59).
(The martyrdom marked with blood).

(4). *Đære rēadan wunde* (Palm Sunday: Godden 1979: 137-149).
(His red, bleeding wounds)
(5). *To rēadum* blōd (Mid-Lent: Godden 1979: 110-20).
(To the red blood).

The associations of *rēad* with blood occurs only in religious contexts, which can also be explained through the etymological background of *blōd*, as it acted as the etymological base for the verb *bletsian* – (originally to consecrate by sprinkling of blood) (CEDEL, sv. blood). Hence, its link with *blōd* is very vivid. Similarly, Biggam (1997: 22) maintains that *red* probably descended from the Indo-European word for blood. Therefore, it has its origin in the name of an object or substance.

Furthermore, when juxtaposed with *blōd*, *rēad* seems to carry implications of pain, severity or death, and as such it never occurs in neutral contexts. Moreover, given such contexts, *rēad* does not perform the function of a pure, descriptive element, but is a symbolic element, representing pain and suffering, but also implying hope and a new life. According to Biggam, colour symbolism can be so culturally important that real colour may constitute a secondary consideration in certain contexts. Consequently, the element related to the colour of blood performs a secondary, if any, role in the above contexts, as the emphasis is put on implications resulting from the juxtaposition of the two elements, namely *blōd* and *rēad*. The analysed colour thus has positive and also negative symbolism, which does not lie in the visual perception of the colour itself, but rather in its conceptualisation, which binds intra- and extra-linguistic reality. Biggam explains that *red* can symbolise life due to the vivid associations of blood with the life-force, but it can also stand for violence and pain following the connotation of blood-letting. All in all, *rēad,* when juxtaposed with *blōd*, is not an element describing the colour of blood, but it is a highly symbolic and culturally laden item. The collocation *rēad blōd* reinforces the implicit meaning of *blōd*.

4. *RĒAD* AS A DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENT OF PLANTS

Apart from the implied meaning of consecration, *blōd* in Old English also symbolises blooming, flourishing life (CEDEL, sv. blood), which accounts for the verb *blōwan* 'to bloom'. The juxtaposition of *rēad* with *blōd* gives rise to an etymological explanation for why *rēad* gave rise to a number of plants in the Anglo-Saxon period.

The Toronto Corpus records the following contexts where *rēad* is used with reference to plants:

(6) *Wiþ heafod ece genim sealh on dele, do ahsan, gewyrc þonne to slypan, do to hymlican ond þa rēadan netlan, beþe mid.* (Bald's Leechbook: Cockayne 1864-6, II: 18-156)

(In case of headache, take sallow and oil, make ashes, produce a viscous substance, put hemlock into it and the red nettle, and smear it).

(7) *Wiþ þa eagna ece, genim þa rēadan hofan.* (Bald's Leechbook: Cockayne 1864-6, II: 18- 156)

(In case of eye ache, take the red plants).

(8) *Nim endleafan rēades secges, smire mid.* (Bald's Leechbook: Cockayne 1864-6, II: 174- 298)

(Take the remainder of red grass, smear with it).

The contexts illustrated above are neutral and medical. Moreover, the symbolism of *blōd*, having evolved around the flourishing of life, is reflected literally in the sense of *rēad*, which highlights herbal, recuperative properties. These healing properties supersede the associations of *rēad* with a *colour*. In other words, herbs are referred to as *rēad* not by tint of the colour, but due to the metaphorical implications connected with treatment. Consequently, these expressions can be conceived of as metaphorical. Furthermore, *rēad* appears to be associated with treatment and healing properties, but also with pain itself. When juxtaposed with plants or herbs, *rēad* applies to a property that has a restorative effect. Linked, however, with blood or a wound, *rēad* evokes associations of pain. This change in meaning is possible, as both pain and treatment belong to the same cognitive domain, that is disease. Such a domain, when broadly conceived, encompasses illnesses, health, as well as methods of treatment. Moreover, such shifts in meaning in *rēad* are by all means possible as the analysed lexeme does not have an independent meaning. Its symbolism is similar to the symbolism of *blōd* and therefore changes with a shift of contexts. As already emphasised, *blōd* performed a dual role. It stood for life, but also for pain and suffering. Similarly, *rēad*, by being etymologically linked with *blōd*, reflects not only healing properties but also a variety of afflictions.

5. *RĒAD* AS A DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENT OF FIRE

The investigation into etymological roots of *rēad* has revealed that 'red' and 'fire' are also related, which can be found in Greek, where *Πuppis* denotes 'red', while its constituent part *Πup* stood for fire (CEDEL, sv. blood). As for the recorded contexts of *rēad* with reference to fire, *the Toronto Corpus* lists the following senses:

(9) *Ðonne frætwe sculon byrnan on bæle, rēada leg*. (Genesis: Krapp 1931: 1-87).

(The ornament shall burn in the fire, the red flame).

(10) *Sunne on bæle, rēad reþe glēd*. (The Fortunes of Men: Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 154-6).

(The Sun in the fire, red fierce embers).

(11) *On þam bradan fyr, hi sculon forbærnan on þam rēadan lige*. (The Paris Psalter: Krapp 1932: 3-150).

(They will burn in that broad fire, in the red flame).

(12) *And on butan helle syndon ysene weallas þa synd eall byrnende on rēadum fyre*. (Napier 1883, no. 29: Napier 134-43).

(In that eternal hell there were walls of iron which are all burning in that red fire).

(13) *On rēade ligum þes fyres byrnende*. (The Paris Psalter: Krapp 1932b: 3- 150).

(On the red flame of the burning fire).

From the above contexts, one can clearly see that *rēad* could also collocate with lexemes in the category of fire.

To recapitulate, *rēad* was recorded in collocation with such categories as *blood, plants* and *fire*. It seems that these categories are also united by some common attributes, hence they are not random entities, which synchronically could be juxtaposed with *red*. To begin with, both *blood* and *fire* perform a dual role. In other words, by being associated with life and death (or at least pain), they evoke positive as well as negative connotations. The symbolism of *blōd* has already been reflected on. As for fire, it performed a crucial role in the system of beliefs of the Anglo-Saxons. Firstly, fire, due to its cultural connotations, can be considered as a force that creates life:

> *Ogień jest prasubstancją, pra-elementem, z którego rozwinęła się przyroda, która staje się morzem, powietrzem, ziemią I z powroetm ogniem* (Kopaliński 1990: 266).
> *(Fire is a pre-substance, a pre-element out of which nature evolves, which becomes sea, air, Earth and again fire) [translation of mine, AW].*

Nevertheless, fire should not only be conceived as a force that creates life, but is also a highly destructive force associated with annihilation and torture. Thus, both fire and blood were associated with positive and negative symbolism centralising the beginning as well as the end. As for plants, they evoke mostly connotations of life. In other words, the symbolic nature of these categories reveals common areas where *blood, fire* and *plants* overlap. Consequently, the entities *rēad* could be linked with reflect a certain degree of overlapping. They are not random entities but create one big category (united by common attributes) of entities *rēad* could be associated with. It should be emphasised that for the category

of *rēad*, two types of overlapping can be observed. One link is on the etymological plane, thus between the roots of *rēad* and the synchronic senses of *rēad* in the Anglo-Saxon period. The other link is on the level of the lexeme, as the entities juxtaposed with *rēad* reveal common attributes.

6. *RĒAD* AS A DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENT OF GOLD

Apart from the senses traceable back to the etymology of *rēad*, the conceptual category of *rēad* developed yet another sense, this time initiated by the law of similarity. Thus, the Anglo- Saxons saw a correspondence between the colour *rēad* and the attributes of gold.

Accordingly, *the Toronto Corpus* lists the following contexts where *rēad* is related to gold:

(14). *Ic eom rices æht, rēada beæfed, stiþ and steap wang*. (The Exaltation of the Holy Cross: Skeat 1881-1900, II: 144- 58).
(I am in the possession of the treasure, share the wealth, the land of power and brightness).
(15). *Ǽþele gimmas wæron white and rēad*. (The Meters of Boethius: Krap 1932b: 153-203).(The noble gems were white and red).
(16). *Hrægl is min hyrste beorhte rēade and scire*. (Riddles 11: Krapp and Dobbie 1936: 186)
(My armour is bright and red).

The above contexts show that *rēad* starts to perform the function of a pure, descriptive element. Moreover, *rēad* does not reflect the symbolic values it was imbued with in the analysis of the former contexts. *Rēad* can thus be conceived as an independent concept, whose meanings are no longer linked with the etymological roots of *rēad*, hence with blood. Therefore, *rēad*, when applied to gold, is not a symbolic item laden with cultural values but a descriptive one focusing on a hue of gold.

Moreover, according to Barley (1974), there is no shared agreement related to the perception of basic colour terms between the Anglo-Saxons and Present Day English speakers. Therefore, it might have been possible to describe gold as *rēad*. Barley claims that Old English *rēad* covered part of the domain of Present Day English yellow. The idea of a different application of *rēad* when compared with Present Day English is also postulated by Biggam (1997). Yet, she maintains that *rēad* might have covered orange rather than any part of yellow, since orange contains a red element. Biggam argues that Old English had no separate lexeme for orange. Consequently, *rēad* could have retained that coverage from

its IE predecessor, which had probably once been a macro-colour term for all the warm colours.

Consequently, *rēad* can be conceived as an abstract, independent term and a colour name separated from its original concept, which would be in agreement with the unidirectionality of semantic change from a root, concrete to the abstract, logical elements.

7. GRAMMATICALISATION TENDENCIES

The aim of this section is to provide theoretical background of grammaticalisation tendencies in order to show where and why *rēad* should be classified.

Traugott (1989) shows that a lexical item is subject to three tendencies on its way to full grammaticalisation. Consequently, various linguistic categories – nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs exhibit a natural propensity to develop an abstract and subjective dimension. Hence, concrete elements have a tendency to develop into abstract, subjective ones. It seems that epistemic meanings are already present in the language even before they emerge. They only need to be unfolded. The idea of epistemic meanings being present as latent structures is voiced by Ziegler:

> *The strengthening of implicatures in this way suggests that the grammaticalisation of epistemic meanings from root modal meaning can be seen as a gradual progress, in which epistemic meanings are already present as latent- pragmatic inferences in the earlier root meanings* (Ziegler 1984: 51).

Traugott (1989) lists three tendencies that lexical items are subject to before they become grammaticalised.

Tendency I:
Meaning based on the external described situation > meaning based on the internal situation

The shift reflects the change from concrete, easily identifiable elements into more abstract, cognitive ones. The direction is cognitively oriented and proceeds along the subjective axis, e.g., OE *boor* 'farmer' > crude person (Traugott 1989: 34)

Tendency II
Meaning based on the external or internal situation > meaning based on the textual situation

For Traugott (1989: 35), the expressive component bears on the resources a language has in order to express personal attitudes to what is being talked about,

to the text itself, and to others in the speech situation. These include elements which show not only cohesion, but also attitudes toward, or even evaluation. Tendency II can be exemplified by the following lexical change:

OE *þa hwile þe* 'at the time that' >   ME *while* 'during'
(coding an external described situation)   (coding the textual situation)
                                                (Traugott 1987: 35).

According to Traugott, *while* in the sense of 'during' signals a cohesive time relation not only between two events in the world but also between two clauses, and therefore has a textual as well as a temporal function.

Tendency III
Meanings tend to be increasingly situated in the speakers' subjective belief state and attitude toward a proposition.

Tendency III can be exemplified by the development of the action verb *go* into a marker of the immediate, planned future (Traugott 1989: 35), as well as by the development of epistemic meanings in English modal verbs (Traugott 1989: 37).

Approaching the grammatical tendencies in the development of *rēad*, the following conclusions can be drawn.
To begin with, *rēad*, when applied to gold, becomes an abstract, independent concept. It is not imbued with symbolism related to its etymology and cultural beliefs, but is a colour term totally separated from the original concept, namely *blōd*. Consequently, it was subject to Tendency I, which states:

Meaning based on the external described situation > meaning based on the internal situation.

Rēad shifted from concrete, symbolic, easily identifiable elements into a more abstract, cognitive one. Yet, the analysed lexeme is not subjective in the sense that it does not express subjective attitudes nor is it an evaluative element. The process of mapping an object with a particular colour is linked with the system of norms accepted by a society and in a way imposed by that society. From this perspective, *rēad* is not a subjective element, as it is assigned on the same basis by any member of the society. On the other hand, when put in a new context, *rēad* becomes separated from its earlier cultural connotations and therefore becomes abstract, independent and, for this reason, an epistemic concept.

Furthermore, the shift observed in *rēad* did not proceed from the central to the metaphorical, but through an opposite. *Rēad* exemplifies a concept whose initial meaning was metaphorical, as it was related to symbolism and was not a colour

term. The latter sense, describing gold, was literal and devoid of metaphorical status. Therefore, the semantic path proceeded from the initial, metaphorical to the literal sense assigned on the basis of the properties of an object. In other words, the metaphorical meaning was the primary one and acted as the basis for the development of the literal sense.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the aim of the present paper has been to illustrate the symbolic nature of the colour *rēad* (PDE red) and its gradual shift to epistemicity in the Anglo-Saxon period.

To begin with, the present study has been cognitively oriented. The paper approached the semantics of *rēad* on the etymological and cultural planes with regard to the Idealised Cognitive model.

The study also explored the relation between the etymology of *rēad* and the development of the root senses of *rēad*. It turned out that the metaphorical senses were highly symbolic and related directly to the etymological roots of the lexeme (blood). In such contexts, colour constituted a secondary consideration and was superseded by the associations connected with blood.

Finally, the paper attempted to show that metaphorical senses, which reflected the origin of *rēad,* emerged before the independent, literal ones. In other words, rēad initially evoked metaphorical senses. The development of literal and abstract senses took place later, after the metaphorical senses had been fully developed. The apparent shift in meaning underlying the change from the concrete to the abstract corresponds to Traugott's Tendency I, whereby a meaning based on an external situation turns into a meaning based on the internal situation. The process is cognitively oriented and proceeds along the subjective axis.

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