

The Notion Interconnections of “Os-Drihten” Within One Conceptual Meaning

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Abstract: This study is devoted to the problem of the conceptual meaning, the definition of key-concepts. For this definition, we use the symbolic meaning of ancient runic inscriptions and analyze the meaning of the key-concept Os according to the Old English texts. The attention is drawn to the interconnection of two notions: “Os Drihten” and the transformation of the key-concept Os nuclear meaning at the edge of two epochs the Paganism and the Christianity. We can suppose that as a key concept, the concept Os has such important features as flexibility and stability. Despite the lack of practical material for a full conceptual analysis and at the same time the lopsidedness of this material, a runic script in our opinion, contains the basic elements of the key concepts of the ancient Germans. This allows to analyze not only in a synchronic timecut but also to trace the development of concepts qualities and features in a diachronic timecut especially during the transformation from an all-German Koine to individual national language systems.

Key words: Concept, runic inscriptions, symbolic value, Old English, koy-concept

INTRODUCTION

Symbolic value of runes in runic inscriptions certainly manifests itself sooner or later if you are studying Old Germanic inscriptions. Faced with such phenomenon we can assume the formation of key concepts of the ancient Germans. Indeed, the Old Germans used the runes for ritual purposes and could provide an answer to any routine, everyday question. We do not consider here the problems of the origin of runic letters and leave this problem for others. You can read Krause (1966) and Hofler (1970) and examine their theories.

Researchers did not come to one conclusion on the issue of symbolic runes because of lack of the materials and a lot of inconsistencies and inaccuracies (Duwel, 1970).

We have already considered some theoretical aspects of this question in the article: “The Anglo-Saxon runic song as a reflection of the key concepts of Old English Sphere of concepts.”, “Evolution of the concept Os in Old English sphere of concepts” and “Old English concept Os from Paganism to Christianity”.

In this study, we continue to study the inherent values of the concept Os and subsequent later changes of the concept in interconnections of two notions: “Os Drihten”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to Anna Wierzbicka, we can say that there is no finite set of such key words in any language and there is no any “objective procedures of a scientific

discovery” that could identify them. To demonstrate that a particular word has a special meaning for a particular culture, it is necessary to consider the arguments for this. It would be ridiculous to criticize Ruth Benedict for the special attention she paid to Japanese words *gin* and *on* or Michelle Rozaldo for her special attention to the word *liget* in *ilongo* language on the grounds that neither the one nor the other explain what was the reason which led them to the conclusion that these words were significant enough to focus on them and did not justify the choice of the basis of these opening procedures. The most important thing is the result was it full of essential ideas that other researchers may evaluate in correlation to other cultures (Wierzbicka, 1997).

Actually, the symbolic meaning of runes allows partially neutralize an ambiguity that constantly occurs in the definition of “keywords”.

Makaev (1996) expressed and justified the assumption of the existence of runic Koine a supradialectal language used by the creators of runic inscriptions. The language of older runic inscriptions or runic Koine can be regarded as an intermediate substance between the General Germanic, knowable only through the reconstruction and ancient literary languages of the various Germanic peoples. That allows to talk about an all-German sphere of concepts and hence an all-German key concepts presented by runic inscriptions.

Considering the key concepts of the Old Germanic preliterate period, we can only assume, basing on the first written records not related to the Christianity. And it is appropriate to recall the common Germanic runic script.

Runic inscriptions were used by the Germans from 2-3 BC. Each Rune took a stand in a runic script and together they formed a rune row, the sequence of its first six characters, usually called “futhark”.

In the above mentioned researchers we represented the criticisms of Askeberg (1944) about symbolic runes and our findings on this issue and explained the decision to revisit this issue at the present stage of the development of linguistic science. According to Askeberg (1944) the communicative function is the main one, since runic inscriptions can be used as a set of magic spells and can be regarded as a message.

“Nevertheless, the idea of runes magic essence was rejected. Literal magic, rune names and the order of runes are phenomena of secondary importance” (Askeberg, 1944).

However, within the cognitive approach as it seems to us, the area of runes application became quite important. The runes represent a cultural reflection of the key concepts of Ancient Germans sphere of concepts (Neumann, 2008).

In our previous research, we considered the Old English word of the Christian paradigm *Drihten*. So, we shall see the correlation between the Old Germanic “*Oss*” and the Old English “*Drihten*”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Old English linguistic world-image a concept *Os* existed and meant some “super entity”, i.e., God. “*Rune Poem*” gives a definition of the concept. Any thing bear *Ordf ruma*. *Acre spruce*. *Wisdomes wrapu*. *Ond witen* *frofor*, *ond eorla gehwam*. *Eadnes on tohiht*. It means, the “lord of wisdom and any that was said” and “lord of hope and happiness to everyone”.

It is easy to build the value chain: *Os*→*Oss*→*Ass*. These are invariants of Old Norse concept “God”. In turn, the Old Norse *Ass* comes from Old Scandinavian *ansuz*, usually translated as “spirit”, “breath” (Mugglestone, 2007).

Under the influence of powerful extra linguistic factors of Christianization, the concept of “super entity” as it existed before should disappear. However as a key concept it takes an inherent flexibility and stability.

Take for example, Old English *carm*: “Charm for a sudden stitch”. There are the following lines there: *Hal westu, helpe oin drihten!* “Be healthy and the lord/Lord help you”.

What is meant by a neutral word *drihten*? Clearly, this is God. Given in the context of such words as “elves” and “witches”, we can assume something pagan. And the Charm of the sudden pain indicates its origin from the

“arrow of elves”. In this context, it would be appropriate to find here one of the Germanic gods, such as Odin. And here we see *drihten*.

That’s what gives an example in his dictionary Joseph Bosworth: “*Çce Drihten wið Ahrahame spræc the Lord eternal spake with Abraham*, Cd. 106; Th. 139, 1; Gen. 2303. *Ic eom Drihten oin God ego sum Dominus Deus tuus*, Ex, 20, 2. *Ðurh ðrne Drihten Crist through our Lord Christ*” (Joseph Bosworth. Toller, 1989).

However, more specific references to the old Germanic gods were absent. Now, we turn to another piece of Old English literature “*Lacnunga*”. We draw attention to the following points and absolutely valuable strings: *þa wyrte gesceop witig drihten, halig on heofonum, þa he hongode*; “There were created by wise Lord Holy in heaven, when he hung”.

The same *drihten* but definitely not in a pagan environment. Here “*Lord*” points clearly to Odin, regarded as holy, living in heaven. And the most important thing he is “*hanging*”. It is an analogy points to Odin and Christ as in searching of wisdom Odin hung on a tree, pierced with a spear.

Now turn to the epic ancient legend “*Beowulf*”. Here we also have some examples with the word “*drihten*” and its derivatives. Text normalization is given by Slade (2014). *Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten, mære mearcstapa, se þe moras heold, fen ond fæsten; fifelecnnes eard wonsaeli wer weardode hwile, siþoan him scyppend forscifen hæfde in Caines cynne. Ðone cwealm gewræc ece drihten, þæs þe he Abel slog; ne gefeah he þære fæhðe, ac he hine feor forwræc, metod for þy mane, mancynne fram*.

“This ghastly demon was named Grendel, infamous stalker in the marches, he who held the moors, fen and desolate strong-hold; the land of marsh-monsters, the wretched creature ruled for a time, since him the Creator had condemned with the kin of Cain that killing avenged the eternal Lord in which he slew Abel; this feud he did not enjoy for He drove him far away, the Ruler for this crime, from mankind”.

Here, we can see the combination “*ece drihten*” as an “eternal Lord” and looking through the text we find several these word combinations in different interconnections but with the same meaning. And we can find a similar transformation in this very passage as it was in the previous one. Grendel is represented here as a “kin of Cain” and he was the ancestor of giants and beasts existed before the biblical Flood. But in Old Scandinavian culture giants were also the antagonists of the gods (*Os*). Giants had also their own symbolic meaning among the runes (so as gods). Let’s see the Old Icelandic rune poem: *urs er kvenna kvöl ok kletta bui ok varorunar verr. Saturnus þengill torture of women and cliff-dweller and husband of a giantess*.”

In Old Scandinavian culture Odin defeated giants, descendants of Loki who killed his “brother” Baldur and in the Bible the God destroyed giants, “kin of Cain” who in turn killed his brother Abel. These interactions helped to transform some elements of Old Scandinavian culture into Christian ones rather mild. Lines 178-182: Swylc wæs þeaw hyra, hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon in modsefan, metod hie ne cuþon, dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god, ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon, wuldres waldend.

“Such was their habit: the hope of heathens; on hell they pondered in the depths of their hearts; the Creator they did not know, the Judge of deeds, they were not aware of the Lord God, nor yet they the Helm of the Heavens were able to honour, Glory's Wielder”.

And this passage is very interesting. Here, we can see the element of the Old Scandinavian poetry, so called “kennings”. Though, Old English kennings are all of the simple type, possessing just two elements. Look at the Line 456: Hrōðgār maþelode helm Scyldinga. Hrothgar spoke, the helm of the Scyldings”.

This kenning means the “lord-protector”. But helm is the element of the worrier’s armour. So, we have found an interesting parallel: Hrothgar is a worrier if the kenning is the same, so God is also a worrier. In Christian traditions God has a lot of epithets but not “a worrier”, it is the deal of Archangel Michael the Taxiarch. Now, take the word drihten not as “God” but as “Odin (Wotan)”. We shall see no any conceptual errors and misunderstandings.

CONCLUSION

There are two suggestions here: the first one Beowulf as a work of literature was formed long before the Christianity, based on the pagan myths and later was merged into the Christian traditions and the second one Beowulf was created just at the crucial point of an equilibrium of two sides (the paganism and the Christianity) and elements of both sides were merged simultaneously. It was said by G. Knowles: “From the beginning, written English reflects the power of the church. Missionaries from Rome were first sent to Kent in 597 and in 634 Pope Gregory established two archiepiscopal sees at London and York. After some initial rivalry with Irish Christianity, the Roman model survived, although in the event the southern see was set up not in London but in Canterbury, the Kentish Capital. As early as 667, the kings of Northumbria and Kent collaborated over the appointment of the archbishop of Canterbury.

Bede’s concept of the gens Anglorum (“the English people”) or its equivalent angelcynn (“Angle-kin”), represents a church view much broader than that of any of the political institutions of the time” (Knowles, 1997). In any of these cases, the concept Oss as a linguistic and cultural unit transformed its contents to be suitable for a new reality, retaining its place in the linguistic world-image as we see, it in the interactions of the notions of the Old Germanic “Oss” and the Old English “Drihten”.

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