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ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ О "СЕВЕРНЫХ ОГНЯХ" В ДРЕВНЕГЕРМАНСКИХ ТЕКСТАХ

Данное исследование, выполненное на материале древнегерманских текстов VIII-XIII вв., посвящено изучению феномена полярного сияния в языковой картине мира древних германцев, а также особенностям его лексико-семантической репрезентации. В результате исследования данного астрономического явления были выявлены основные типы метафорического переноса. В настоящей статье мы приводим описание двух преобладающих моделей метафоризации данного природного явления, служащих инструментом номинации полярного сияния при помощи имевшихся языковых средств и понятий древнегерманских языков. Метафорический перенос осуществляется на основании наделения явления полярного сияния анималистическими свойствами - зооморфная модель - и соотнесения с другими природными явлениями - натуроморфная модель. Последняя при этом преобладает.

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The article deals with the investigation of the phenomenon of the northern lights as a part of the language world image represented in the Old Germanic texts dated back to the VIII-XIII centuries. Its linguistic peculiarities have also been analyzed. As a result of the research of this astronomic and natural phenomenon the main ways of its metaphoric transferring have been elicited. We attempt to describe two prevailing models of metaphoric transferring, which are used to provide a familiar image of the northern lights by means the Old Germanic languages had at their disposal. According to the data there are two metaphoric models – based on the images of animals and natural phenomena, and the latter prevails.

Key words and phrases: metaphor; natural phenomena; northern lights; diachronic aspect; Old Germanic languages.

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REPRESENTATION OF “NORTHERN LIGHTS” IN THE OLD GERMANIC TEXTS

1. Introduction

Language is one of the instruments of cognition and verbalization of the acquired knowledge about the world, which allows accumulating the experience of several generations to form collective heritage of the people. The act of semiotizing of any information is partly universal, on the one hand, and it also conveys specific cultural colouring, on the other, so that it is implied that speakers of different languages can have different world views refracted through the lenses of their language. Having been verbalized, scientific knowledge reflects cultural peculiarities of the language speakers, the way they perceive the outward things.

A holistic view of the world is formed with the help of different forms of perception such as pre-scientific, non-scientific and scientific. However, one of the first forms of philosophical perception, on the basis of which the first integral picture of the world was formed, was the mythological consciousness [3, c. 25]. An ancient man sought to describe the phenomena, the nature of which was inaccessible to his understanding, by means of familiar terms. He mythicized them to fully satisfy his epistemological urge.

This article is devoted to the analysis of the linguistic features of the representation of the northern lights, or the Aurora Borealis, carried out on the basis of the Old Germanic texts, which contain a description of this phenomenon. The research is aimed at elicitation of primary knowledge about the aurora, the phenomenon of rare nature within the territory of the British isles, contained in the records of the first encounter with the northern lights and tracing down the development of the way the Germans apperceived the phenomenon throughout centuries (from the VIII to the XIII century). The originality and topicality of the research are conditioned by insufficiency of information about representation of the aurorae in the ancient Germanic culture. Absence of auroral myths albeit the fact that the natural phenomenon was quite observable within the territory arises interest in the object of investigation and as a result the author tends to find out records of the northern lights in the Old Germanic texts and determine their place in the Old Germanic model of the world.

The northern lights belong to the category of natural phenomena as a scientific concept and they are considered to be a part of the scientific picture of the world, therefore before analyzing the sources of factual material the author intends to provide the definition of this astronomical phenomenon from the point of view of modern science: “The Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australialis are electromagnetic phenomena that occur near polar regions of Earth. Auroras result from the interaction of Earth’s magnetic field with ionic gas particles, protons, and electrons streaming outward from the Sun” [5]. The achievements of modern science allow us to study the nature of this phenomenon thoroughly, including the aurorae on the other planets of the solar system. However, an ancient man didn’t reach the necessary level of scientific and technological progress to explain the reasons for the luminescence of the night sky from the scientific point of view.

The selection of the research material is conditioned by the possibility to compare the descriptions of the northern lights in the texts with the natural phenomenon existing in reality and characterized by a number of features, hence it allows us to trace down the primary semiotization of the knowledge on the Aurora Borealis, which reflects the cognitive experience of the ancient Germanic people. At this stage, according to O. V. Magirovskaya, a necessary cognitive base is formed for further understanding of the world or a specific phenomenon within the framework of the formation of primary knowledge [1], and the interpretation of reality depends on the lenses, through which the world is perceived [3, c. 179]. In this case, the key role of such lenses in the categorization of reality and knowledge is played by a metaphor, with the help of which unknown natural phenomena (too complex for the primary perception) are correlated with the objects, which are familiar to a man. On account of that a part of the research is based on the Old Norse text “Konungs-skuggsjá” (KS) [7], which has a distinct scientific orientation, and the “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle” (ASC) [5] written in Old English and Middle English. The author assumes that the usage of metaphor in a scientific text or chronicles contributes to the decoding (deciphering) of a new concept due

to the actualization of knowledge in a familiar, concrete and comprehensive form for the recipient. In this regard, one of the objectives of the research is to identify the main set of features characterized by perceptive marking, on the basis of which metaphorical modeling is carried out.

2. The northern lights in the Old Germanic texts

The phenomenon of the northern lights was first mentioned in the treatise “Konungs-skuggsjá” written in Old Norse in circa 1250. The first settlers of Greenland called this phenomenon *northr-ljos* (Old Norse “the northern lights”): *En sa hlutr er thu hefir opt eptir spurt, hvat vera mun that er graenlendingar kalla northrljos...* [9, p. 46]. / This must be what the Greenlanders call the northern lights (the author’s translation. – E. Ch.). In the “Anglo-Saxon Chronicles” the author has found six descriptions of the phenomenon, the nature of which was unknown to the inhabitants of the islands. Observation of such a rare natural phenomenon for their latitudes caused awe of the Anglo-Saxons. The above mentioned astronomical phenomenon was nothing more than a warning of evil fate to the Anglo-Saxons’ mind. Let us consider the first description of the aurora observed in 793: ASC (793) *Her waeron rethe forebecna cumene ofer Northhymbra land, þæt folc earmlic bregdon, þæt waeron ormete thodenas ligrescas, fyrenne dracan waeron gesewene on tham lifte fleogende. Tham tacnum sona fyligde mycel hunger, litel aefter tham, thaes ilcan geares on .vi. Idus Ianuarii, earmlice haethenra manna hergunc adilegode Godes cyrican in Lindisfarnaee thurh hreaflac mansliht. Siga forthferde on .viii. Kalendas Martius* [10]. / This year a terrible omen occurred in Northumbria, which caused fear and horror among the people: there were huge whirlwinds of light, flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were flying in the sky. The terrifying token were followed by a great famine and a bit later, six days before the first Idus of January, the pagans [vikings] invaded the house of God on the island of Lindisfarne, and caused mayhem in it, the church was destroyed, and people were killed. Eight days before the first Kalendas of March Siga died.

The whirlwinds and flashes of light that terrified the inhabitants of Northumbria, who first encountered this phenomenon, became a significant event in the life of the Anglo-Saxons characterized by a number of evaluative and axiological features. As you can see, the phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis was considered to be a bad omen – “*rethe forebecna / tacna*”. Based on the record dated 793 the metaphor NORTHERN LIGHTS → BAD OMEN allows us to identify this natural phenomenon as an omen of three types of events of pejorative nature: “epidemics / natural disasters” (ASC: AD 793 *mycel hunger* “great famine”; AD 1098 *forneah aelc tilth on mersclande forferde* “almost all vegetation in the marshes was perished”; AD 1131 *micel orfwalm* “murrain”); “invasion of a foe” (ASC: AD 793 *haethenra manna hergunc adilegode Godes cyrican* “the pagans [vikings] invaded and ruined the house of God”) and “death of a religious leader / politician” (AS: AD 793 *Siga forthferde* “Siga died”; AD 926 *Sihtric acwael* “Sitric [the king of Dublin and York] died”; AD 1122 *forthferde Raulf seo aercebiscop of Cantwarbyrig* “Ralph, archbishop of Canterbury, died”). Therewith in the records dated 926, 1098, 1122 and 1131, the properties of the auxiliary subject, which determined the metaphorical transfer by function, are expressed implicitly (based on the events that occurred before or after the observed phenomenon), in contrast to the record dated 793, where the phenomenon of the northern lights is called *rethe forebecna* and *tacna* explicitly in the text of the chronicle. According to F. Magnusson, “the northern light was mentioned in Edda by such metaphors as reflections from the shields of the Valkyrjes and the Gjallar bridge... Originally the Valkyrjes were certain meteors or phenomena in the air like fireballs, flaming northern lights etc. They were sent from Valhall, in other words the vault of heaven, by Odin, the upper deity. Still the plebeians in many countries believe that such phenomena signify coming wars and calamities. Here the death of Balder is announced by their departure” [7, p. 13]. Hence it is quite possible that the phenomenon was correlated with the mythological maiden-warriors who were considered to be a symbol of wars and hard times having acquired the function of a bad omen.

If one considers conceptual differentiation of the auxiliary subject in the process of metaphorical modeling, then two main types of models that are actualized within the framework of our research are elicited: a **zoomorphic model** and a **model of nature**, the latter being the most productive as far as it concerns the northern lights.

3. Zoomorphic model

The zoomorphic metaphorical model is represented by a single example in our study. The source of the formation of this metaphorical model was the image of a dragon or snake – ASC: *fyrenne dracan* “fiery dragons”. In this example, the replacing metaphor “dragons” allows us to recognize the object of the nomination due to the attributive component *fyrenne* “fiery”. This metaphorical transfer is realized on the basis of similar appearance including a large size: *ormet* “huge, colossal”; and function or abilities: dragons have the ability to shoot out flames – *ligraesc* “fiery shower, lightning”. According to M. M. Makovsky, in a number of cases the meaning of “fire” is correlated with the meaning of “snake”: compare Latvian *kaitet* “to burn”, but Czech *had*, Russian *zad*; IE **ater-* “to burn”, but English *adder* “snake”, Latin *ignis* “ignis”, but Old Indian *ahi* “snake”; Old English *lieg* “fire”, but Old High German *slango* “snake”; Gothic *waurms* “snake”, but English *warm*, German *warm* “warm”, IE **uēz-* “to burn” [2, c. 240]. Moreover, the image of the dragon in German-Scandinavian mythology and the heroic epic was directly related to treasure, on which a curse is often placed. Having seized such treasure, an epic hero condemns himself to death. This motive is recorded in two songs – “*Fafnismal*” and “*Sigrdrifumal*” – contained in the “Poetic Edda”. They center around a dragon-slaughter named Sigurd. Having killed Fafnir, Sigurd wants to take the treasure, but the dragon warns the hero: *It gjalla gull / ok it glothrauða fe, / ther vertha their baugar at bana* [8] / The sounding gold, / the glow-red wealth, / And the rings thy bane shall be. Sigurd takes his loot, and at the beginning of the next song “*Sigrdrifumal*” the following lines are presented: *A fjallinu [Hindarfjall] sa hann ljós*

mikit, sva sem eldr brynni, ok ljomathi af til himins [12] / On the mountain [Hindarfjall] he saw great light, as if fire was burning, and the glow reached up to heaven. The description of the atmospheric phenomenon that Sigurd observes is likely the northern lights, which is also indicated by the fact that Hindarfjall Mountain is the abode of the Sigrdriva Valkyrie, which was associated with the phenomenon of the northern lights. At the end of the song, the Valkyrie prophesies a quick death to the hero: *langt lif thykkjumk-a-k / lofthings vita; / romm eru rog of risin* [Ibidem] / Not long the leader's / life shall be, / For great are the foes he faces. We find a similar plot of a dragon-fighting hero in the Anglo-Saxon epic "Beowulf" (it literally means "bee-wolf", i.e. "bear"). In the second part of the epic, when the protagonist attempts to enter the den of Grendel's mother, he notices the light, which shines brightly, illuminating everything around like sun-rays: *fyrleoht geseah, // blacne leoman / beorhte scinan* [6] / he saw the fire, // glowing light / shining brightly. It was suggested that the radiance comes from the gold guarded by a monster in a sea lair; this hypothesis is strongly supported by the kenning *ognar ljoma* 'light of the sea', which was used to denote treasure in the skaldic language. According to O. A. Smirnitckaya, "in this part the association of the underwater world with the treasure beneath it was unambiguously present in the surface in the mind of the poet" [4, c. 83]. In the third part of the epic, Beowulf fights the fire-breathing dragon; he is driven by two goals. The first one is to free people from the yoke of the monster (moral) and to seize dragon's treasure (self-interested). By the end of the battle Beowulf gets mortally wounded, but he is still capable to defeat the dragon. As we can see, the images of the dragon (or snake) and gold (treasure) are tightly intertwined in the minds of the ancient Germans and the possession of this treasure entails misfortunes to its owner, up to his death. These representations formed the basis of the metaphor *fyrenne dracan* for the designation of the northern lights, which combines all the three aspects: *fyrenne* (treasure – light, radiance), *dracan* (dragons) and *rethe forebecna* (forewarning of death). In the later reinterpretation, this natural phenomenon acquired positive connotations and was conceptualized as a FISH or a school of fish due to the quick gleaming of the northern lights. A. Scanlon writes in her article "Tales of the Northern Lights" that the northern lights were perceived by the most of Scandinavians as "schools of herring swimming across the skies in the lights, and that this foretold that their fishermen would be fortunate and catch many fish" [11].

4. Model of nature

The image of FIRE provided the basis for a model of nature as a result of similarity in colour, temperature and functional characteristics. The core of this metaphorical model is made up of substantive constructions, for example, *ASC saegon on northeast fir micel brad with thone eorthe, weax on lengthe up on an to tham wolcne* [10] / they saw the fire spreading up to the sky in the north-west, lying low above the earth; *se heouene o the north half eall swilc hit waere baernende fir* [Ibidem] / in the north the sky looked as if it had been encircled by [burning] flames; *KS swa til synum saem maethr se mikkin loga langa leith af myclum aelde* [9] / they looked like huge flames visible even from a great distance; *Thaetta lios alt til synum swa saem swippande loge* [Ibidem] / The lights resemble burning fire. The adjectival metaphor is represented by the following example in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles": *fyrena leoman on northdaele thaere lyfte / fiery light* is in the northern part of the sky; and one example of a verbal construction formed with the help of the verb *byrnan* 'burn': *seo heofon swilce heo forneah ealle tha niht byrnende waere* [10] / the sky looked like as if it were burning all night. There is also an example of a metaphor represented by a unit, which contains knowledge of other natural phenomena of inanimate nature, for example, CLOUD: *ASC Thy ilcan gear waes gesewen blodig wolcen on ofstithas on fyres gelicnesse, thaet waes swythest on middeniht othywed, swa on mistlice beamas waes gehiwod, thonne hit dagian wolde, thonne toglad hit* [Ibidem] / In the same year a bloody cloud like fire was seen [in the sky]; it often appeared at midnight and it consisted of beams of light. At the crack of dawn it disappeared. It is of importance to note that Old English *wolcen* is a polysemantic lexical unit characterized by a number of meanings: 1. cloud; 2. sky; 3. thundercloud; at the further stage of development of the Old English language *wolcen* was used primarily in the sense of 'heaven', cf. *ASC fir weax up to pam wolcne, and se wolcne undide on fower healfe and faht thaer togeanes*. However, in the context of the chronicles, *blodig wolcen* functions as an agent in the sentence, while in other cases of using this unit in describing the phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis *wolcen* is an adverbial modifier of place – 'heaven'. From this perspective we can assume that in this case, the lexical unit is used in its first meaning of 'cloud'.

Interestingly, in all the six cases (with the exception of the latter 'bloody') the colour of the lights is not indicated, only their connection with the element of fire is emphasized. Due to thermal similarity of the aurora with the elements of fire, a transfer is carried out on the basement of the function to *burn things*. There was a tradition among inhabitants of the Faroe Islands, which first originated in Iceland, to tell their children to wear a hat or a cap since the heavenly lights could burn their hair. The basis for the emergence of such a tradition was the association of the aurora with the elements of fire and the primitive fear of the unknown, since the heavenly fire for ancient men was not different from its terrestrial equivalent, and accordingly had the same characteristics and functions [7, p. 11]. However, it is well-known that the aurora is an exclusively optical phenomenon, therefore, it cannot affect the temperature level or the indicators of the thermal state of the environment and objects, and hence there are no reasons why such a delusion managed to persist without being verified. It seems to us most probable that the fear of being scorched did not allow the inhabitants of the islands to remain with their heads uncovered under the northern lights for a long time; it has evolved into a tradition that has no scientific basis for a modern man. We can find an explanation of the phenomenon of the northern lights by means of units, which belong to the same lexical-semantic group 'natural phenomena' in the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles" – WHIRLWIND (*thoden*) and LIGHTNING (*ligraesc*): *thaet waeron ormete thodenas ligrescas* [10] / There were strong whirlwinds and lightning flashes.

It is also worth noticing that the metaphor NORTHERN LIGHTS → WHIRLWIND is based on the frequency of changing the glow of lights, which implies the dynamics of the movement of bands or rays of light or intensity of the glow.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the factual material analysis we can come to the conclusion that at various stages of development of the ancient German society the phenomenon of the northern lights was treated differently. The first Anglo-Saxon encounter with this phenomenon gave birth to the zoomorphic metaphor based on the image of a mythological fire-breathing creature, a dragon, and it was used to intensify emotional colouring. The model of nature is represented by the metaphorical expansion of the characteristics of the object, on the basis of which metaphoric transferring was carried out due to the external similarity of the aurora to the fire, which is based on the form, colour, dynamism (glowing), function and temperature characteristics. The metaphor reflects naive ideas about the surrounding reality, through which metaphorization and nomination of the natural phenomenon unknown to the inhabitants of the islands were produced. As the emergence of new knowledge, a gradual shift in the nature of this phenomenon towards the definition of it as “light” (Old English *leoma*, Old Norse *lios / ljós*) took place, which predetermines the preference of these lexical units for the nomination of the phenomenon of the aurora in later texts, but pre-scientific, primary knowledge continues to coexist alongside with the development of society, that is why in the scientific treatise “Konungs-skuggsjá” the description of this natural phenomenon is based on comparison with fire with the use of lexicon related to this thematic group.

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ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ О «СЕВЕРНЫХ ОГНЯХ» В ДРЕВНЕГЕРМАНСКИХ ТЕКСТАХ

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Данное исследование, выполненное на материале древнегерманских текстов VIII-XIII вв., посвящено изучению феномена полярного сияния в языковой картине мира древних германцев, а также особенностям его лексико-семантической репрезентации. В результате исследования данного астрономического явления были выявлены основные типы метафорического переноса. В настоящей статье мы приводим описание двух преобладающих моделей метафоризации данного природного явления, служащих инструментом номинации полярного сияния при помощи имевшихся языковых средств и понятий древнегерманских языков. Метафорический перенос осуществляется на основании наделения явления полярного сияния анималистическими свойствами – зооморфная модель – и соотнесения с другими природными явлениями – натуроморфная модель. Последняя при этом преобладает.

Ключевые слова и фразы: метафора; природные явления; полярное сияние; диахронический аспект; древнегерманские языки.