THE COLOURS IN THE PRIMITIVE HISPANO-ROMANCE FROM THE PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN TO THE ORIGINS OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The article presents the names of colours in the primitive Hispano-Romance, the language of Christians in the Iberian Peninsula in the early Middle Ages. This language is known from notarial acts whose vocabulary was collected in the glossary Léxico hispánico primtivo. The author analyses the colour names included in it against Latin and Indo-European backgrounds. Etymologically, the core of this part of the Ibero-Romance corpus has Latin origins. The influence of the Arabic and Visigoth language resulted less than could be expected.

Keywords: *Historical Linguistics, Proto-Indoeuropean, Latin, Ibero-Romance vocabulary, semantic changes*

"Plura" inquit "sunt" Favorinus "in sensibus oculorum
quam in verbis vocibusque oculorum discrimina",

Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae*

2,26

1. INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for writing this article were two scientific analyses of the researcher Ewa Stala: *Los nombres de los colores en el español de los siglos XVI-XVII* (The names of colours in Spanish in the XVI-XVII centuries) (2000) and 'Pole leksykalne barwy czarnej i białej w języku hiszpańskim – studium diachroniczne' (The Lexical field of the colours black and white in Spanish – a diachronic study) (2010). The linguist, based on a rich bibliography, adopted as a starting point for her investigations, focused on Spanish terms, the Latin colour lexicon. We decided to complement these studies with the analysis of the chromatonyms attested in the primitive Hispano-Romance, language prior to the Spanish medieval dialects, taking into account the names of the colours in Proto-Indo-European and obviously in Latin.

For this purpose, we will use the colour names included in the books: *Léxico hispánico primitivo, siglos VIII al XII)* (The lexicon of the primitive Hispano-Romance, 8th-12th centuries) (García, Lapesa and Seco, 2003), *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* (Mallory, Adams, 1997), *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World* (Mallory, Adams, 2006) which provide a lot of valuable insight into colour perception and its language expression in different Indo-European languages.

2. PERIODICITY OF THE HISPANO-ROMANCE

Based on historical events, Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Medina López, 1999, p. 40) distinguished several periods in the development of this peninsular Romance: the Visigothic period, from 414 to 711, the Asturian-Mozarabic period, from 711 to 920, the period of the hegemony of León, from 920 to 1067, and the period of Castile's fight for the hegemony between the Christian states, from 1067 to 1140. This language of the Christian kingdoms and counties is known thanks to notarial documents whose authors, although, as we have already mentioned, aspired to use the Latin of educated people, inserted for lack of attention, ignorance or need to be understood, elements of the colloquial language. The set

of words found in them was collected by Ramón Menendez Pidal, Rafael Lapesa and Constantino García in early Hispanic lexicon *Léxico hispánico primitivo (siglos VIII al XII)* that constitutes the basis of our investigations. Although the texts that forms its base are not literary, they surprisingly provide a dozen of the colour names.

3. THE THEORY OF BERLIN AND KAY AND THE PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN COLOUR SYSTEM

The benchmark most adopted by researchers dealing with chromatonyms is the universalist theory of the colours presented by Brent Berlin and Paul Kay in the book *Basic Colour Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (1969). According to this theory, the basic concepts of colours in the culture, such as black, white and other colours, would be predictable depending on the number of terms known in it. According to Berlin and Kay, all cultures would have terms for «white» and «black». If three colours are distinguished, the third term would be for «row [union of red and yellow]». Based on this assumption, the scientists proposed the existence of seven stages in the development of the colour system: in the first, black and white would be distinguished. Each subsequent stage would contain elements from the previous stage. The stage VII would have the terms for «white», «black», «red», «green», «yellow», «blue», «brown», «purple», «pink», «orange» and «grey».

Although is undeniable that, due to the wealth of linguistic material collected by researchers (108 languages), the colour theory contributes a lot to the development of the discourse on colour perception, its universalism was criticized (Wierzbicka 2006, p. 324). It is observed, for example, that neither black nor white are represented symmetrically in all of the world's languages and that the terms for «black» are more common (Wierzbicka, 2006, p. 341).

In the case of the Proto-Indo-European language, the data make possible to reconstruct the terms for «black», «white», «red», «grue [union of green and blue]», «yellow» and therefore assign them to the third or fourth of the colour system. We must also note the significant number of the 'greyish' terms and in the same time the lack of terms assigned to the stage VII, like orange, pink and purple (Mallory, Adams, 1997, p. 112).

The system of the Latin terms reached the stage V with six colour names: «white», «black», «red», «green», «yellow» «blue», «grey», the last one belonging to the stage VII, and the lack of the term for of «brown» which is assigned to the stage VI.

4. THE BLACK AND THE WHITE

4.1. The black and the white in Proto-Indo-European and Latin

The most basic polarization between white and black seems have its origin in the phenomenon of light and the contrast between day and night. Is it visible on the language level?

The analysis of the terms for «clarity», their number (20) and specialization demonstrates the importance it had in the life of our ancestors who distinguished the light of the sky and daylight (**dei*) from the light of the moon (**skand*-), stars (**sweid*-) and fire (**k'euk*-, **bh*$_1$*eg*-, **lap*-).

Etymologically, the following terms for «brightness» and «clarity» are related to «white»:

**leuk*- 'brightness, clarity': Lat *lux* 'light', *lumen* 'light', *lūna* 'moon' OPrus *lauxnos* 'stars', also Grk λευκός 'white';

* *(s)kand*- 'brightness, clarity' (in particular of the moon): Skt *candrá*- 'luna', OBret *cann* 'full moon', NWels *cann* 'white', Lat *candēre* 'brightness, clarity', and its derivative Lat *candĭdus* 'radiant white';

* *bherh*$_x$*ǵ*- 'brightness, radiance': ON *bjartr* 'light', Alb *bardo* 'white'

* *bheh*$_2$- 'shine': Grk. φῶς 'light, daylight' and OIrl *bān* 'white'.

Etymological studies also allow us to reconstruct the link between the terms for «white» and «clarity»: among the formations **h₂ŗǵ-u-/*h₂ŗǵ-es-*, **h₄elbhós*, **bhelh₁-*, **ḱweitos*/**ḱwitros*, the relation to light is attributed to **h₂ŗǵ-(u)-*: Skt *arjuna* 'light, day' and to **ḱweitos*/**ḱwitros* < **kwei-* 'shine' (Riecke, 2005: 920): OCS *svētu* 'light', Pol *światło* 'light' (< adj. PSl **světъlъ* 'which emanates light, bright, radiant' [Boryś, 2005, p. 621]). It is worth paying attention to the **bhelh₁-* formation associated with the base **bhel-* 'shine, flash' (< **bheh₂-* 'shine') also present in the PGmc. *blikan* 'shine, emanate light' (>PGmc. *blank* 'bright', 'white' > Span *blanco* 'white' [Riecke, 2014, p. 175; Corominas, 1998, p. 97]).

The terms related to the concept of dark, like those of the black colour, are less numerous (9). Deserve our attention, like upper, their connotations:

**h₁regw-es-* 'dark': Arm *erek* 'late', Skr *rajas* 'night';

**(hₐ)merhₓgw-* 'dark': Alb *murg* 'black';

**tomhₓ-es-* 'dark': Lat *tĕmĕre* 'blind';

**blendh-* 'be cloudy': NE *blind* 'blind';

**swer* 'darken': Lat *mugre* 'dirt', ON *swatr* 'black', OHG *swarz* 'black';

**dhwenhₐ-* 'darken': Grk θνήσκω 'I'm dying'.

Two terms are reconstructed for «black»: **mel-n-* 'dull black' and **kwr̥snós* 'the brilliant black'. Paradoxically, we can situated here the formation **bhleg-* 'shine with a radiant light' and its alternation **bhlogo-* 'burned/blackened with firelight'. The same order of ideas is reflected in the Latin word *āter* which supposedly derives from an Indo-European term for «fire» **h₂éhxt̥r*. Consequently, the literal meaning of *āter* would be 'blackened by fire' (Mallory, Adams, 2006, p.123, Ernout, Meillet, 2001, 1998, p. 97).

The Romans distinguished different nuances of black and white on a lexical level depending on their brightness and dullness. However, the opposition *albus* (< **h₄elbhós*) 'dull white': *candĭdus* 'brilliant white' and *āter* 'dull black': *nīger* 'brilliant black' did not last in vulgar Latin, which, as we will see, opted for *albus* and *nīger.*

4.2. The white and the black in the primitive Hispano-Romance

4.2.1. The white

In the texts mentioned in the *Glosario hispánico primitivo* for the «white» only the word *albo* (< Lat *album*) is attested: 938 *Tumbo del Monasterio de Celanova* (Galicia):"pallas VIII, una alba […] et alia de alvexi" –"pallas VIII, one white […] and others of brocade", 987 *Libro de la Regla o cartulario de la antigua abadía de Santillana del Mar* (Cantabria): "molione albo" – "white border stone", 1049 *Libro de la Regla o cartulario de la antigua abadía de Santillana del Mar* (Cantabria) "una vaca alba" – "a white cow". The adjective *candĭdus* supposedly was not preserved in the Hispanic Romance. In the *Glosas Emilianenses* (La Rioja) from the middle of the 10th century we find the following explanation: "in uestibus candidis [albis]". This disappearance of *candĭdus* would not be something strange since this word is not seen in other Romance languages. However, it should be mentioned that it is not excluded that *candĭdus* is preserved with the change of meaning in two peninsular words: Cast. *candeal*, Ast. *candial* specifying autumn wheat unless these are a Celtic loan (Meyer-Lübke, 1911, p.122). It is worth noting the absence of the adjective *blanco* (< PGmc.**blank*), probably incorporated in a later period.

4.2.2. The black

For the black colour the glossary attests only the adjective *negro* (*necero, necro, nigro*) < Lat *nigrum*. E.g. 827 *Cartulary of Santo Toribio de Liébana* (Cantabria): "boue colore nigro" – "ox of black color", 1001 León: "sagale per colore negro" – "black broadcloth", 1019 *Chartes de l'église de Valpuesta du IXe au XIe siècle* (León) "baza negra per collorem" – "heifer of black colour", 1015-1019 *Colección diplomática de Obarra* (Aragonia): "caballu de colore nigru" – "horse of black colour".

The linguistic material confirms that in the early Hispanic romance the opposition of the dull and brilliant nuances of black and white was eliminated. This disappearance was supposedly determined by the principle of linguistic economy.

5. THE RED

5.1. The red in Proto-Indo-European and Latin

The Proto-Indo-European term for red is one of the best documented. There were probably distinguished 'high-intensity red' and 'low-intensity red'. Based on the language data, we can reconstruct **h₁roud^{h}ós/*h₁rud^{h}rós* 'bright red': Skr *róhita* 'rojo', Av *raoidita* 'rojo', OIrl *rūad* 'rojo', Lat *rūfus* 'red-haired', Pol *rudy* 'red-haired', Lat *rūber* 'red', Grk ἐρυθρός 'red', Skr *rudhirá* 'red', and 'the pale red', expressed by **h₁elu-*: Skr *arusá* 'reddisch'.

In Latin there were a couple of terms to designate red colour: *rŭber*, *rūfus*, *rŭbens*, and its nuances depending on intensity: *russeus* 'scarlet red', *rŭbĭdus* 'dark red', *rŭtĭlus* 'reddish', *rŭbĭdus* 'reddish', *rŭbicundŭlus* 'reddened', *fulvus* 'red green', 'reddish' 'golden'. Despite this abundance in common speech new forms appeared: **rŭbĭcĭnus*, **rŭbĭcŭlus*, **rŭbellus*, **rubeolus* (Meyer-Lübke, 1911, p. 556).

5.2. The red in the primitive Hispano-Romance

The texts testify the adjective *vermelio* (*uermelio, uermello, uermiculo, uermilio*) < Lat *vermicŭlus* 'scarlet', originally 'worm'. The origin of this adjective reveals the use of some insects to produce a red tint, that is, the cochineal (Coromians, Pascual, 1984a, p. 567). E.g. 938 *Tumbo del Monasterio de Celanova* (Galicia): "frontales IIII^{or} […] uno vermiculo […] pallas VIII, una alba […] quarta tyrace uermelia" – "IV altar faces […] one red […], pallas VIII, one white, fourth red of silk", 960 *Tumbo de la Catedral de León* (León): "caballum mauricello cum sella uermella" – "black horse with a red saddle", 994 *Becerro gótico de Cardeña* (León): "saya uermella" – "red tunic", 996 Sahagún, *Documentos de A. H. N.* (León): "casulla erac uermelia" – "red silk chasuble", 1074 Sahagún, *Documentos de A. H. N.* (León): "kapa uermelia pro colore" – "red cover".

It is also testified the use of the adjective *antemano* (*anmano*) 'reddish, pink' based on the words *ante mane*, probably 'dawn'. It is attested since the 9th century: 853 *Cartulario de San Millán de Cogolia* (La Rioja): "octo tapetes antemano" – "eight reddish covers", 927 *Tumbo del Monasterio de Celanova* (Galicia): "lectos antemanos II" – "II reddish beds". In opposition to *antemano*, we can find an Arabic loan word *carmez* (*karmeze,karameze, karmele, karmeze*) 'crimson'. E. g. 914 *Becerro gótico de Cardeña* (León):"VI saiales carmezes" – "VI crimson textiles".

The texts of 11th century attest the derivative of Lat *rŭbeus*, the adjective *royo* (*rog, roio*) 'red, bright red'. E.g. 1092 *Colección diplomática de Pedro I de Aragón y de Navarra*: "vila roia" – "red village", 1101 *Colección diplomática de Pedro I de Aragón y de Navarra*: "monte roio" – "red mountain".

6. THE YELLOW

6.1. The yellow in Proto-Indo-European and Latin

Only one term for «yellow» is reconstructed,**ǵhel-*, and its non-palatalized variant **ghel-*: Lat *helvus* 'dull yellow', Av *zairi* 'yellow', Lith. *geltas* 'yellow', OCS. *žl̥'tъ* 'yellow'. The word for «yellow» formed the basis for the names for «green»: OCS *zelenĭ* 'green', Grk χλωρός 'green', Skt *héri* 'yellow, green'. The root **ǵhel-o*, probably 'shine' (Boryś 2005: 741), gave rise to the names for «gold»: OCS *zlato*, Lith *zèlts*, NE *gold*.

Another Latin word for «yellow», apart from already mentioned Lat *helvus* 'dull yellow', was *flāvus* whose etymology is not explained until today. Admitting that its base is the root **bhleh₃-uo-* (in Latin the variant with the non-labiovelar laryngeal consonant **bhₗeh₁/₂-uo*) it can be attributed as cognates of Irl *blá* 'yellow', OHG *blāo* 'blue', OE *blāw* 'blue' (De Vaan 2008, p. 237).

6.2. The yellow in the primitive Hispano-Romance

The glossary attests the adjective *amarello* (*amarel amarelo, amarialo, amariello*). Its most adopted etymology among researchers is Lat *amarellus* < *amārus* 'bitter'. The adjective *amārus* would have specified the gall/black bile, considered as 'bitter' (Lat *bilis amāra* 'bitter bile'/gr. χολή πικρά 'bitter bile' (as opposed to χολή ξανθή 'yellow gall'/Lat *bilis flava*). Consequently, it was this adjective that would have described patients with excess bile and bile reflux in the body (Corominas, Pascual, 1984a, p. 233-234).

The earliest examples of the use of *amarello* are from the early 10th century: 919 Sahagún, *Documentos de A. H. N.* (León): "lenteo de lana tinto amarello" – "woolen linen dyed yellow", 928 *Tumbo del Monasterio de Celanova* (Galicia): "mulum amarellum" – "yellow mule", 938 *Cartulario del Monasterio de Eslonza* (León): *albas de sinico III*^{es} *exageges, una amarella, alia suruz* – "three albs of silk of China, one yellow, others green (?)", 951 *Tumbo de la Catedral de León*: "[casulla] amarella" – "yellow [chasuble]".

7. THE GREEN AND THE BLUE

7.1. The green and the blue in Proto-Indo-European and Latin

It was impossible to reconstruct one term that designated strictly the green or the blue colour. The Indo-European adjectives oscillate in the meaning from green to blue what reflects the existing smooth transition between these two colours. It can be seen in **modheros* 'blue/green', Het. *antara* 'blue' or TochB *motartse* 'green', **ḱer*- which denotes a 'greyish blue/green': Lith. *širvas* 'blue gray', Alb *thermë* '(blue-)grey' and also in **ḱyeh*$_1$- whose derivatives denotes 'light/dark grey'(OPrus *sywan* 'grey', OCS *sivŭ* 'dark grey', Alb *thinjë* 'grey', Lith *šyvas* 'light grey), '(dark) brown, dark green' (Skr *śyāmá* 'dark brown, dark green') or 'blue, purple, green, azure, grey' (OE *hoewen*).

In Latin for the green colour we find the innovation *virĭdis*, the derivative of the verb *virēre* 'to be green' with the cognates in OPrus *wēisin* 'fruit', OHG *wīsa* 'meadow'. To designate the blue, the Romans used the adjectives *caeruleus* 'blue' (< *caelum* 'sky') and *līvĭdus* 'dull o greyish-blue' < pie.**(s)l(e/o)iH-uo*- 'plum blue' (de Vaan, 2008, p. 359).

7.2. The green and the blue in the primitive Hispano-Romance

In the glossary two terms are mentioned. The first, *uerde* (< Lat *uiridem*), and its derivative *uerdinoso* 'greenish'. E.g. 1019 (León): "adora uerde" – "green tunic", 1019 (León): "limites uerdes" – "green borders", 1023 *Becerro Gótico de Oviedo* (Asturia): "panno ovete uedre" – "green, silk textile". The fact that derivatives of *uiridem* are preserved in the Romance languages would have been determinated by their high frequency in the rustic language (Ernout, Meillet, 2001, p. 739). E.g. 1111 *Tumbo de la Catedral de León* (León): "per summas verdinosas" – "through greenish peaks'.

The second adjective, *suruz*, *hapax legomenon*, referred probably also to the green colour. Etymologically it has its origin in the Arabic word *sudūs* 'indigo', 'green' (Varela Sieiro, p. 279). E.g. 938 Celanova (Galicia): "albas de sirico III exageges una amarella alia suruz et tercia alba" – "three silk albs, one yellow, another green and the third white".

In the history of the name of the blue colour attested for Hispano-Romance *azul* we also find an Arabic loan word, with origin in the Arabic *lāzurd*, colloquial variant of the CA *lāzáward* 'lapis lázuli' (Corominas, Pascual, 1984a, p. 439). The etymology has to do with the colour of this rock and gem highly prized in ancient times in the Iberian Peninsula. The initial /*l*-/ was reinterpreted as the determinated article and consequently eliminated. Before disappearing, it supposedly influenced /r/ assimilating it. E.g. 944 *Becerro Gótico de Cardeña* (León): "manto azul" – "blue cloak".

The second term for «blue» *blauo* (< PGmc *blao* < Pie *bhelh*$_1$ 'white') surely arrived to Catalonia from France, where it had taken root with German conquests. E.g. 1068-1071 Ager (Cataluña): "uestimento [de] oved blauo […] uestimento I obtimo de actorino blauo" – "blue silk gown [...] I excellent gown of blue silk".

8. THE BROWN COLOUR

The Latin language lacked the expressions for the «brown» which was supplied in Hispano-Romance by the term *pardo* 'dark earthy colour' related to Lat *pardo* 'leopard' (< Grk πάρδος). Lat *pardo* was considered to significate in common speech 'dark spots' of leo called *leo pardus* (Corominas, 1998, pp. 440-441). E.g. 1002 *Tumbo de la Catedral de León* (León): "mula parda" – "brown mule", 1021 *Tumbo de la Catedral de León* (León): "boue per colore pardo" – "brown ox", XIth century: *Un arancel de aduanas del s. XI* Pamplona (Nawarra): "mantello et pellizon vario et pardo" – "cloak and fur in various colours and brown".

9. ANIMAL COLOURS

Some adjectives mentioned here determined the colour of the animals. In addition to them, we find others such as the adjective *morciello* (*mauricello, maurizello, morcello, morcillo, morzello, morziello, muricello*) < Lat *mauricellus* 'reddish black' used to determine horse color. Etymologically it was related to the nouns *Maurus* 'Moor' or *mirteus* 'myrtle' (Corominas, Pascual, 1984b, pp. 142-143). E.g. 928 *Notes et documents sur l'histoire du royaume de León. Chartes royaleses léonaises* (León): "Accepimus de te […] caballum mauricello" – "we received from you a black reddish horse".

It is worth mentioning the adjective *loro* 'dark brown < Lat *laurus* 'laurel' (from the colour of the bark?). E.g. *Tumbo del Monasterio de Celanova* (Galicia): "boue I colore lauro" < "I dark brown ox".

Perfectly attested is the adjective *bayo* (*bagio, bago, bajo, bayo, vadio, vagio, vaio, vayo*) de Lat *badius* 'chestnut': 927 *Cartulario de Santo Toribio de Liébana* (Cantabria): "mihi dedisti […] "caballum colore bagium" – "you gave me […] a chestnut horse", 939 *Becerro Gótico de Cardeña* (León) "pultrum […] per colore vagio" – "a chestnut colt".

Well testified is also the adjective *rubio* 'blond' < Lat *rubeus* 'rojo'. Ex. 1008 Obarra (Aragón) "unu caballu colore rubio balzano" – "a blond horse with white spots in the legs".

CONCLUSIONS

The corpus of the glossary provided us with interesting data that may constitute a point of reference in the further medieval studies.

The data permit to admit for the primitive Hispano-Romance period the colour terms for «white» *albo* (for this period we must emphasised no attestation for *blanco* or its cognates), «black» *negro*, «red» *vermelio*, »yellow» *amarello*, «green» *verde*, «blue» *azul* (the derivates of the Germanic *blauo* must have given way to the Arabic loan). We must note the presence of the adjective which supplied the lack of the Latin term for «brown» provided with the adjective *pardo*. At the same time it must be noted that the term for «grey» is missing. Thus, the Hispano-Romance terminology can be assigned to the stage VI of Berlin and Kay system with the traces of the stage VII (the presence of the terms for «pink and «crimson»). Besides of it, we must note the Arabic loans words and almost no traces of the Germanic influence. The Latin, in its spoken peninsular variant, proved to have been the basic ground and stem of the primitive Hispano-Romance colour names.

ABBREVIATIONS

Alb	Albanian
Arm	Armenian
CA	Classical Arabic
Grk	Greek
Lat	Latin

Lith	Lithuanian
NE	New English
NWels	New Welsh
OHG	Old Hig German
OBret	Old Breton
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English
OIrl	Old Irish
ON	Old Norse
OPrus	Old Prussian
PGmc	Proto-Germanic
PSl.	Proto-Slavic
Pie	Proto-Indo-European
Pol	Polish
Skr	Sanskrit
Span.	Spanish

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