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Basic Color Terms in Old Norse-Icelandic: A Quantitative Study

1 Introduction

In 1969, Brent Berlin and Paul Kay published their analysis of color terms in close to one hundred of the world's languages, arguing that there was a universal inventory of eleven basic color terms, located in the color space where English speakers place the most typical examples of black, white, red, orange, yellow, brown, green, blue, purple, pink, and grey. Comparing the vocabularies of languages possessing fewer than these eleven color terms, they maintained that basic color terms do not appear haphazardly in the diachronic development of a language, but that a language adds basic color terms in a particular order, which is interpreted as an evolutionary sequence:

- Stage I: black, white
- Stage II: black, white, red
- Stage IIIa: black, white, red, green
- Stage IIIb: black white, red, yellow
- Stage IV: black, white, red, yellow, green
- Stage V: black, white, red, yellow, green, blue
- Stage VI: black, white, red, yellow, green, blue, brown
- Stage VII: black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, grey.

Since the publication of Berlin and Kay's study, there has been some elaboration and criticism of their conclusions, and in response to these, the two linguist-anthropologists have modified them. In 1975,

Brent Berlin and Elois Ann Berlin introduced a light-warm versus dark-cool stage instead of the earlier categorization based on brightness contrast. They also suggested that the dark-cool category would at stage IIIa divide, leading to the emergence of grue (blue or green), while the warm-light category would divide at stage IIIb, leading to the emergence of yellow. At stage IV, stage IIIa systems would then encode focal yellow, while stage IIIb would encode focal grue, which would find a focus in either blue or green. At stage V, undifferentiated grue would divide, and the new category would encode either blue or green. At stage VI, focal brown would emerge from the light-warm category. At stage VII, focal purple, pink, orange, and grey would become encoded, grey possibly early. In 1978, Paul Kay and Chad K. McDaniel argued that grey could occur at any stage from IIIa onward or potentially even earlier. In 1991, Paul Kay, Brent Berlin, and William Merrifield maintained that either brown or purple or both often appear before the green/blue composite is dissolved, and that there seems to be no fixed order in the temporal appearance of the two color terms. And in 2007, Terry Regier, Paul Kay, and Naveen Khetarpal argued against the view that color categories are organized around universal focal colors and in favor of K. A. Jamesson and R. G. D'Andrade's earlier proposal that "color naming is determined in part by general principles of categorization partitioning an irregularly shaped color solid" (1441).

Old Norse-Icelandic has eight basic color terms (*svarttr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr*, *grænn*, *gulr*, *blár*, *brúnn*, *grár*), making it an early stage VII language (Wolf 2006). Recent analyses have largely supported Berlin and Kay's evolutionary sequence, though it has been argued that grey (*grár*) should be assigned an early stage, either stage III or stage IV (Wolf 2009), that blue (*blár*) should be assigned a late stage (Wolf 2006), that green (*grænn*) should be assigned a stage earlier than yellow (*gulr*) (Wolf 2009), and that brown (*brúnn*) should be assigned a fairly late stage, probably as late as blue (Wolf [forthcoming]).

The purpose of this article is a quantitative analysis of basic color terms in Old Norse-Icelandic literature in order to explore, if there is a correlation between the amended version for Old Norse-Icelandic of Berlin and Kay's sequence and the frequencies of *svarttr*, *hvítr*, *rauðr*, *grænn*, *gulr*, *blár*, *brúnn*, and *grár*. It is, of course, recognized that there may not necessarily be a correlation between synchronic frequencies of usage and diachronic stage of introduction, and Berlin and Kay's original hypothesis does not predict such a correlation. After all, their

explanation is neuropsychological and not functional. What Berlin and Kay predict is that certain color differentiations are more readily perceived, but not that the environment of use necessarily provides more regular occasions for using the more salient terms. It should also be noted that near-synonyms, such as *dökk* and *myrkr* (for *svartr* and *blár*) and *ljóss* and *fagr* (for *hvítr*) have not been included, nor have the secondary color terms *blakkr*, *hárr*, *hǫss* (which occurs only in poetry), *jarpr*, *rjóðr*, and *bleikr*. The first five terms are collocationally restricted (Wolf 2006: 179–180), and *bleikr* should probably be regarded as a macrocolor covering, at least partly, the category of pale or light colors (Wolf 2005: 253 and 2006: 187).

The data are drawn from the following texts, which have all been excerpted (cf. *Íslenzk fornrit* 1933>): *Auðunar þátr vestfirzka* (VI), *Bandamanna saga* (VII), *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (XIII), *Bergbúa þátr* (XIII), *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa* (III), *Brandkrossa þátr* (XI), *Brands þátr ǫrva* (IV), *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar* (XI), *Droplaugarsona saga* (III), *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (II), *Egils þátr Síðu-Hallssonar* (XIII), *Eiríks saga rauða* (IV), *Eyrbyggja saga* (IV), *Finnboga saga ramma* (XIV), *Fljótsdæla saga* (XI), *Flóamanna saga* (XIII), *Fóstbræðra saga* (VI), *Gísla saga Súrssonar* (VI), *Gísls þátr Illugasonar* (III), *Grettis saga* (VII), *Grænlandinga saga* (IV), *Grænlandinga þátr* (IV), *Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þátr* (XI), *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* (XIV), *Gunnars þátr Þiðrandabana* (XI), *Gunnlaugs saga orms tungu* (III), *Halldórs þættir Snorrasonar* (V), *Hallfreðar saga* (VIII), *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* (XIII), *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (VI), *Heiðarvíga saga* (III), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* (XI), *Hrafnis þátr Guðrúnarsonar* (VIII), *Hreiðars þátr* (X), *Hrómundar þátr halta* (VIII), *Hænsa-Þóris saga* (III), *Jökuls þátr Búasonar* (XIV), *Kjalnesinga saga* (XIV), *Kormáks saga* (VIII), *Króka-Refs saga* (XIV), *Kumlbúa þátr* (XIII) *Laxdæla saga* (V), *Ljósvetninga saga* (X), *Njáls saga* (XII), *Odds þátr Ófeigssonar* (VII), *Ófeigs þátr* (X), *Orms þátr Stórolfssonar* (XIII), *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu* (X), *Sneglu-Halla þátr* (IX), *Stjörnu-Odda draumr* (XIII), *Stúfs þátr* (V), *Svarfdæla saga* (IX), *Sǫrla þátr* (X), *Þórarins þátr Neffjölfssonar* (XIII), *Þórðar saga hreðu* (XIV), *Þorgríms þátr Hallasonar* (IX), *Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds* (IX), *Þormóðar þátr* (VI), *Þorskfirðinga saga* (XIII), *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (IX), *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* (XI), *Þorsteins þátr Austfirðings* (XI), *Þorsteins þátr forvitna* (XIII), *Þorsteins þátr stangarhogg* (XI), *Þorsteins þátr sǫgufróða* (XI), *Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings* (XIII), *Þorsteins þátr uxafóts* (XIII), *Þorvalds þátr tasalda* (IX), *Þorvarðar þátr krákunefs* (VI), *Valla-Ljóts saga* (IX), *Vápnfirðinga saga* (XI), *Vatnsdæla saga* (VIII), *Víga-Glúms saga* (IX), *Víglundar saga* (XIV), *Ögmundar þátr dytts* (IX), and *Ölkofra þátr* (XI).

Section 2 examines the basic color terms in the order of their frequency in the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders. Section 3 summarizes the data in illustrations and tables. Considerations and conclusions are presented in section 4.

2 Quantitative study

In the following, the eight Old Norse-Icelandic basic color terms are examined in the order of their frequency in the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders,¹ which is as follows: *rauðr*, *hvítr*, *blár*, *svartr*, *grár*, *grænn*, *brúnn*, and *gulr*. Bynames (which are marked with an asterisk in Tables 1–8) and toponyms are counted only once (with more than one occurrence marked with an “f” following the reference), and reference is made to the earliest occurrence of the name in a given saga or *þáttur*. Personal and animal names are mentioned and referred to but excluded from the count, since naming traditions rather than color may have been a consideration, at least as far as personal names are concerned. Compounds such as *rauðbrúnn* or *gulgrænn* are listed under both *rauðr* and *brúnn* and *gulr* and *grænn*, respectively. Derived words, such as *hvítíngur* and *blána*, are included, as are etymologically related words, such as *sorti*.

2.1 Rauðr

Rauðr is by far the most frequently used color term. Altogether, there are 184 occurrences. This is excluding the personal names *Rauðr*, *Rauðfeldr*, *Rauða-björn*, and also *Rauðgrani* (which appears as a name for Odin in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* 163.5f) and *Heiðarauðr* (which appears as the name of a horse in *Fljótsdæla saga* 256.17). Of these 184 occurrences, 48 are compounds, 13 being toponyms.

1 References in the following are all to the *Íslenzk fornrit* editions. Some of the texts contain no color terms. These comprise *Bergbúa þáttur*, *Brands þáttur orva*, *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Egils þáttur Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Gull-Ásu-Þórðar þáttur*, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, *Stúfs þáttur*, *Þormóðar þáttur*, *Þorsteins þáttur Austfirðings*, *Þorsteins þáttur forvitna*, *Þorsteins þáttur sögufróða*, and *Qgmundar þáttur dytts*. References are to page and line numbers. In cases where two versions of a given text are presented synoptically, reference is given to both, e.g., *hvítaváðir* in *Víga-Glúms saga* 97.33/98.1.

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	2	117.18, 126.9	<i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (126.9)	Rauðfeldsgjá (117.18)
<i>Bjarnar saga Hítédalækappa</i>	4	148.17, 187.1, 193.12, 197.12	<i>barðrauðr</i> (193.12), <i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (197.12)	
<i>Brandkrossa þátr</i>	1	189.1		
<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>	1	*141.2		
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	9	41.24, *57.1, 64.16, 78.15, 98.9, *129.4f, 170.21 (<i>rauða</i>), 188.13, 243.30	<i>dreyrrauðr</i> (64.16), <i>rauðablástr</i> (78.15)	Rauðsgil (98.9)
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	5	195.10f, 224.19, 228.9, 13.25	<i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (224.19)	
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	8	*12.23f, 20.16f, 21.5, 26.22, 47.9, *59.11f, 99.11f, 120.21	<i>rauðbleikr</i> (21.5), <i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (26.22)	Rauðameln (20.16f), Rauðavíkrhófi (99.16f)
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	2	276.10, 282.10		
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	4	225.15, 227.10, 237.3-4, 256.17	<i>rauðlitaðr</i> (237.3-4)	
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	7	239.1, *245.10, 270.12/27, 278.5/18, 292.13, 300.16/31, *301.7	<i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (278.5/18)	Rauða (239.1f)
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	7	153.15, 154.8, 266.20, 271.9, 275.3, 276.11, 15		
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	3	*16.6, 103.8, 12	* <i>rauðfeldr</i> (16.6), <i>blóðrauðr</i> (103.12)	
<i>Gísls þátr Illugasonar</i>	1	334.14		
<i>Grettis saga</i>	8	27.27, 36.22, 86.15, *91.9, 96.29, *180.9f, 250.1, 265.24	<i>rauðhærðr</i> (36.22)	Rauðahaf (86.15)
<i>Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls</i>	2	350.19, 370.22		
<i>Gumlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	4	61.17f, 65.8, 70.1, 74.2		Rauðameln (61.17f)
<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>	2	171.22-172.1/172.6, 175.15 (<i>rauða</i>)	<i>rauðskeggjaðr</i> (171.22-172.1)	
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	1	59.6	<i>tandrauðr</i>	
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfríðings</i>	1	336.12f		Rauðasandr
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	5	237.8, 247.4, 278.4, 319.16, *326.19	<i>alrauðr</i> (237.8)	
<i>Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða</i>	1	111.4	<i>rauðlitaðr</i>	
<i>Hrómundar þátr halta</i>	2	310.15, 313.8		

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Hænsa-Þóris saga</i>	1	23.4		
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	2	29.29, 43.15		
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	5	214.8, 217.7, 249.16, 261.23 (rauða), 286.10	<i>mórauðr</i> (214.8), <i>hvarmrauðr</i> (217.7), <i>mosrauðr</i> (249.16)	
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i>	1	134.22		
<i>Kumlbúa þátr</i>	1	454.1		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	17	21.3, 55.16, 57.29, 79.14, 91.2-3, 118.7, 127.27, 134.31, 135.13, 139.19, 168.8, 187.12, 189.4, 20, 194.16, 225.11, 13	* <i>rauðnefr</i> (21.3), <i>deyrrauðr</i> (91.2-3), <i>alrauðr</i> (127.27), <i>rauðleitr</i> (189.20), <i>rauðbrúnn</i> (194.16)	
<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i>	3	14.9, 79.1, 85.21		
<i>Njáls saga</i>	25	39.20, 44.3, 64.20, 85.20, 92.13f, 114.15, 115.22, *146.7, 147.16, 150.17, 187.2, 228.27, 231.20x2, *292.2, 8, *309.22, *347.4f, 351.25, 352.1, 361.6, 409.15, 448.21f, 454.17, 467.11	<i>deyrrrauðr</i> (39.20), <i>rauðálfr</i> (115.22)	Rauðaskriða (92.13f)
<i>Orms þátr Ófeigssonar</i>	2	121.19, 373.21		
<i>Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>	4	153.1f, 177.5, 221.17, 222.4	<i>alrauðr</i> (222.4)	Rauðaskriða (153.1f)
<i>Sneglu-Halla þátr</i>	3	263.8/264.26, 271.27, 275.5		
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	6	136.15, 151.1-2f, 153.10f, 169.14, 174.13, 184.20	* <i>rauðfeldr</i> (153.10f)	
<i>Sǫrla þátr</i>	1	113.6		Rauðalækur
<i>Þórarins þátr Neffjölfssonar</i>	1	336.21		
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	4	168.9, 176.25, 192.4, 195.16		
<i>Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds</i>	1	219.4		
<i>Þorskfirðinga saga</i>	5	*175.6-7, *177.3, 8f, 184.12, 205.9		Rauðsdalr (177.8f)
<i>Þorsteins þátr stangarhöggs</i>	1	69.3	<i>rauðvíkingr</i>	
<i>Þorsteins þátr tjaldstæðings</i>	1	*430.9		
<i>Þorsteins þátr uxafóts</i>	2	352.9, 22	<i>rauðklæddr</i>	
<i>Þorvarðar þátr krákunefs</i>	1	372.1		

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	1	243.9		
<i>Vápnfirðinga saga</i>	8	*23.11, 48.22, 24, 25, 28, 49.2-3, 5, 51.17	<i>rauðfleckkótttr</i> (48.22, 25, 49.2-3)	
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	4	68.21, 111.3, 4, 7		
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	3	37.9, 51.11, 86.7	* <i>rauðkinnr</i> (37.9)	Rauða-hjalli (51.11)
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	1	108.5		

Table 1. Occurrences of *rauðr*

2.2 Hvítr

Hvítr is the second most commonly used color term. There are 150 occurrences. Of these, 33 are bynames, two being compound bynames. The adjective appears commonly in toponyms.

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bandamanna saga</i>	1	297.11		Hvítá
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	3	102.16, 17, 170.9	<i>hvítaváðir</i> (170.9)	
<i>Bjarnar saga Hítardælakappa</i>	10	122.17, 136.10x2, 140.4, 144.13, 187.1, 2, 189.19, 195.7f, 198.2	<i>alhvítr</i> (136.10, 187.1), <i>hvítmæl</i> (189.19)	Hvítá (122.17), Hvít-ingshjalli (195.7f)
<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>	1	*143.12f		
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	7	*16.9f, 74.9f, 99.8, 219.30, 274.3, *291.19, 299.9 (<i>hvítna</i>)	* <i>hvítbeinn</i> (219.30)	Hvítá (74.9f), Hvítárvellir (99.8)
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	6	*195.2, 206.21, 207.3, 227.13, 234.3, 234.5		Hvítar-mannaland (234.5)
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	8	*4.22f, 74.4 (<i>hvítigr</i>), 108.18, 120.24, 127.16, *133.7f, 143.25f, 178.2	<i>fannhvítr</i> (108.18)	Hvítá (143.25f)
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	1	*286.18f		
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	3	237.2, 261.13, 274.9-10		
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	2	*242.7, *258.5f		
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	15	*124.12, 128.25f, 176.6 (<i>hvítigr</i>), 178.3f, *181.16, 181.18, 195.1, 231.5, 233.16, 234.1, 12, 270.7 (<i>hvítigr</i>), 276.11, 13, 17		Hvítá (128.25f), Hvítstaðir (178.3f)

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	2	48.2, 117.13f		Hvítá (117.13f)
<i>Grettis saga</i>	5	27.24, 48.19-20, 21f, 54.18, *209.18f	<i>fránhvótingr</i> (27.24)	Hvítársíða (48.19-20), Hvítá (48.21f)
<i>Grænlandinga saga</i>	3	250.3, 255.4, 276.12		Hvítserkr (276.12)
<i>Grænlandinga þátr</i>	1	291.1	<i>hvítabjörn</i>	
<i>Gunlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	6	51.12, 57.22, 24, 58.13, 68.16, 90.5		Hvítársíða (58.13)
<i>Hallfredar saga</i>	5	150.14, 170.17, 171.12, 182.12, 198.1	*Hvítá-Kristr (170.17)	Hvítá (150.14)
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	5	26.4, 32.22, 50.10f, 77.12, 96.15	<i>hvítabjörn</i> (77.12)	Hvítársíða (26.4), Hvítá (50.10f), Hvítárvellir (96.15)
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfrídings</i>	1	343.8		
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	6	230.18f, 247.14f, 260.9, 272.16, 291.12, 294.18	<i>hvítavöndr</i> (291.12)	Hvítársíða
<i>Hænsa-Þóris saga</i>	1	36.16		Hvítá
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	1	31.17		
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	2	211.4, 265.1	<i>alhvóitr</i> (211.4)	
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i>	8	133.27, 134.10, 142.7, 143.1, 151.13, 157.7, 8, 158.7	<i>hvítabjörn</i> (133.27, 134.10, 142.7, 143.1, 157.7)	
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	10	*66.21f, 123.16, 131.12, 132.16f, 135.13, 148.5f, 158.16, 160.8, 188.11, 233.21	<i>hvítaváðir</i> (123.16, 158.16)	Hvítá (132.16f), Hvítadalr (148.5f)
<i>Njáls saga</i>	13	10.2f, *74.13-140, *120.13-14f, *181.17, *232.6f, *238.3, 246.16f, *256.6, *352.8, *424.10, *440.2, *451.7, 461.17-18		Hvítá (10.2f), Hvítanes (246.16f), Hvítborg (461.17-18)
<i>Odds þátr Ófeigssonar</i>	1	373.21		
<i>Orms þátr Ófeigssonar</i>	1	411.4	<i>svanhvóitr</i>	
<i>Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>	4	178.7, 181.16, 182.21, 233.3		
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	2	181.23, *211.25	<i>hvítabjörn</i> (181.23)	

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	4	*176.8, 178.28f, 180.15, 197.20		Hvítá (178.28f), Hvítárvellir (180.15)
<i>Þorskfirðinga saga</i>	3	*177.1, 197.20, 21		
<i>Þorsteins saga hvíta</i>	3	*3.2, *3.9-10f, *4.5f		
<i>Þorsteins þátr Síðu-Hallssonar</i>	1	314.15	<i>hvítabjörn</i>	
<i>Þorsteins þátr uxafóts</i>	2	*343.7, 350.14	<i>hvítabjarnarhúnn</i> (350.14)	
<i>Þorvarðar þátr tasalda</i>	1	126.28	<i>hvítaváðir</i>	
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	4	7.11, 15, 50.3f, 126.7	<i>hvítaváðir</i> (126.7)	Hvítá (50.3f)
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	4	15.19, 52.4/16, *57.10/29, 97.33/98.1	<i>hvítaváðir</i> (97.33/98.1)	
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	4	72.2, 99.9, 104.17, 110.12	<i>drífhvítir</i> (99.9), <i>mjallhvítir</i> (110.12)	

Table 2. Occurrences of *hvítir*

2.3 Blár

There are 138 occurrences of *blár*.² Almost half are compounds, five being bynames and 12 toponyms.

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bandamanna saga</i>	1	329.8		Bláskógaheiðr
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	3	118.17, 131.6, 163.6	* <i>blátannarskegg</i> (118.17), * <i>bláfellingr</i> (131.6), <i>bláflekkótr</i> (163.6)	
<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa</i>	4	136.19, 137.5, 154.18, 177.23		
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	5	41.24, 142.19, 187.20, 210.11, 284.1		
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	3	200.3f, 206.19, 229.2		Bláserkr (200.3f)
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	7	23.3, 53.12, 78.10, 93.13, 134.3, 146.22, 169.30	<i>kolblár</i> (93.13, 146.22)	
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	2	283.14, 20	<i>blámaðr</i>	
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	1	286.31		

² For a discussion of *blár*, see Wolf (2006).

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	3	246.22, 262.20, 275.5/20		
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	2	128.1 (<i>blána</i>), 239.16		
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	6	41.17, 52.26, 64.20, 65.22, 68.9, 82.8	<i>blákápuaðr</i> (65.22), <i>bláserkr</i> (68.9), <i>bláföld</i> (82.8)	
<i>Grettis saga</i>	5	112.9, 150.8, 213.4, 236.3, 252.7	<i>kolblár</i> (252.7)	
<i>Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls</i>	9	266.16/25, 26, 367.5, 7, 14/22, 23-4, 29, 368.4, 6	<i>blámaðr</i>	
<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	1	77.24		
<i>Halldórs þátr I</i>	1	257.2		
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	7	32.23-4, 35.18, 39.22, 46.7f, 62.23f, 64.9, 65.16f	<i>bláeygr</i> (32.23-4), <i>blárendr</i> (39.22), <i>*blásiða</i> (46.7f), <i>*bláskeggr</i> (62.23f)	Bláskeggs-áróss (64.9), Bláskeggsá (65.16f)
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfróðings</i>	2	292.2f, 327.11		Blámýri (292.2f)
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	1	289.18		
<i>Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða</i>	3	104.23, 109.11, 128.5		Bláfjöll (109.11)
<i>Hrómundar þátr halta</i>	1	310.24	<i>bláfjallaðr</i>	
<i>Jökuls þátr Búasonar</i>	2	49.21, 59.10f		Bláland (59.10f)
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	12	35.4, 26, 36.10, 24, 31, 37.2, 5, 8, 11, 12, 16, 42.25	<i>blámaðr</i>	
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	3	246.5, 260.13, 269.19	<i>bláfíðraðr</i> (260.13)	Bláland (269.19)
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i>	4	130.1 (<i>blána</i>), 151.11-2, 152.2, 154.8		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	12	82.11, 95.14, 168.14, 185.2, 187.7, 9, 16, 188.23, 198.14, 224.12, 237.3, 245.7	<i>kolblár</i> (82.11), <i>bláeygr</i> (187.16)	Bláskógaheiðr (95.14)
<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i>	1	88.11		
<i>Njáls saga</i>	16	35.16, 44.3, 53.10, 63.6f, 78.6, 146.4-5, 227.10, 231.15, 292.3, 296.12, 304.2x2, 314.11, 335.1 (<i>blánaðr</i>), 348.7, 421.14	<i>kolblár</i> (35.16, 78.6), <i>bláeygr</i> (53.10), <i>*blátannarskegg</i> (146.4-5), <i>blárendr</i> (304.2)	
<i>Ófeigs þátr</i>	1	119.13		
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	1	136.16		
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	1	176.25		
<i>Þorskröndinga saga</i>	2	183.11, 220.26		
<i>Þorsteins þátr uxafóts</i>	3	352.24, 354.2, 360.18	<i>bláklæddr</i> (352.24, 354.2)	

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Þorvalds þátr tasalda</i>	1	124.29	<i>blámaðr</i>	
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	3	235.29, 240.18, 245.1		
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	2	60.26, 101.6–7		Bláskógaheiðr (101.6–7)
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	4	16.21, 27.3/18, 86.14, 92.27	<i>alblár</i> (92.27)	
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	2	78.8, 17	<i>bláklæddr</i>	
<i>Ǫlkofra þátr</i>	1	83.1–2f		Bláskógar

Table 3. Occurrences of *blár*

2.4 Svarttr

There are 109 occurrences of *svarttr*. This is excluding the personal names Svarttr, Svarthöfði, Svertingr, Surtr, and also Svartfaxi, which appears as the name of a horse in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* (10.16f). Of these, 17 are compounds, one being a toponym.³

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bandamanna saga</i>	4	318.12/25, 315.17, 354.24/355.3, 363.16	<i>svartleggja</i> (354.24/355.3)	
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	5	105.24, *111.1, 148.6, 160.10, 162.21	<i>svartskeggjaðr</i> (160.10)	
<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa</i>	3	187.3, 200.18, 204.11		
<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>	2	162.1, *163.15	<i>svartaskáld</i> (163.15)	
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	7	5.7, *7.2f, 80.20, 96.24, 143.19, *151.19, 194.14	<i>svarteygr</i> (143.19), <i>svartbrúnn</i> (194.14)	
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	3	206.20, 222.2, 227.16		
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	6	*14.17f, 23.5x2, 139.9, 140.7, 184.5	<i>svartbrúnn</i> (139.9)	
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	1	327.4		
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	5	238.1, 248.18, 249.32, 279.9, 294.16 (<i>sorti</i>)		
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	1	291.5/19	<i>svartbaksegg</i>	
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	12	124.2, *150.9f, 160.9, 170.6, 231.5, 28, 235.4, 16, 236.1, 237.2, 250.20, 254.4 (<i>sorti</i>)		

3 In the example from *Svarfdæla saga*, the color reference in the phrase “[p]ar töldu þeir fimmtán skip hjá drekanum, ok var tjaldat yfir svörtu” could be an ellipsis for something like “svörtu klæði/tjaldi.”

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	1	15.18		
<i>Grettis saga</i>	5	148.11, 149.16, 150.11-2, 151.6, 217.11		
<i>Grænlandinga saga</i>	2	*258.5f, 262.23		
<i>Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls</i>	2	358.20, 360.25		
<i>Gunnars þátr Þiðrandabana</i>	1	196.6		
<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	5	54.11, 59.3, *62.11f, 69.17, 96.12	<i>svarteygr</i> (54.11, 59.3)	
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	2	46.4, 54.22		
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	2	260.10, 272.17		
<i>Hænsa-Þóris saga</i>	1	29.9		
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	1	9.19		
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	5	206.2, 210.11, 211.9, 11, 288.20		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	8	*66.22f, 101.8, *164.3f, 188.10, 18, 189.14, 20, 245.6	<i>svarteygr</i> (189.14), <i>svarþjarpr</i> (189.20)	
<i>Njáls saga</i>	10	*36.13, 38.8, 95.13, 133.11, *181.27f, *271.1, 304.3, 321.2, *437.18, 446.14	<i>alsvartr</i> (133.11)	
<i>Ófeigs þátr</i>	1	121.21	<i>alsvartr</i>	
<i>Orms þátr Stórolfssonar</i>	3	407.15, 409.17, 415.16	<i>kolsvartr</i>	
<i>Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>	1	233.3		
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	2	136.3 (<i>svarta</i>), 162.16		
<i>Þorsteins þátr uxafóts</i>	1	360.18		
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	2	247.11, 256.4	<i>svartklæddr</i> (247.11)	
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	3	73.4, 106.4, 120.22		Svartsfells- mýrar (106.4)
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	1	52.4/16		
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	1	84.10 (<i>sorti</i>)		

Table 4. Occurrences of *svartr*

2.5 Grár

Grár is less common than *svartr*. There are 69 occurrences of the color term in the texts examined. Almost half of these are compounds, two being toponyms. Examples of *grár* (cf. *gráleikr*, *gráligr*, *grálíga*, *grályndr*)

in the meaning “hostile” have not been included, nor have examples of *grár* as a byname, since the adjective may describe an individual’s unpleasant personal traits rather than aspects of his physical appearance.⁴

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	6	127.16, 129.9, 133.3, 135.2, 139.6, 145.21		
<i>Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa</i>	3	168.22, 169.4, 200.9f	<i>grámagi</i> (168.22, 169.4)	Grásteinn (200.9f)
<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>	1	176.5		
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	8	34.23, 42.2, 43.16, 70.10, 143.16, 219.14f, 233.4-5, 260.11	<i>grávara</i> (34.23, 42.2, 43.16, 233.4-5), <i>úlfggrár</i> (143.16, 260.11), * <i>gráfeldr</i> (219.14f)	
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	1	228.1	<i>algrár</i>	
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	3	158.5, 170.23, 171.17	<i>apalgrár</i> (170.23, 171.17)	
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	4	261.12, 256.16, 270.7, 286.31	<i>járngrár</i> (270.7)	
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	1	147.1		
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	5	5.5f, 90.9, 94.11, 21, 122.13	Grásiða (name of sword, 5.5f)	
<i>Gísls þátr Illugasonar</i>	1	334.14		
<i>Grettis saga</i>	3	110.3, 4, 187.2	<i>gráeygr</i> (110.3), <i>úlfggrár</i> (110.4)	
<i>Grænendinga saga</i>	1	261.3	<i>grávara</i>	
<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	3	63.6, 65.11, 68.16	<i>grásími</i> (63.6)	
<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>	1	182.15		
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>	1	76.2	<i>apalgrár</i>	
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i>	1	309.2		
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	4	217.7, 231.23, 232.2, 233.2	<i>gráfeldr</i> (217.7)	
<i>Hreiðars þátr</i>	1	250.29		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	6	79.14, 84.6, 104.3, 185.3, 188.19, 230.16	<i>gráfeldr</i> (79.14), <i>apalgrár</i> (84.6),	
<i>Njáls saga</i>	4	288.27, 320.23, 449.10, 454.14	<i>apalgrár</i> (449.10)	
<i>Orms þátr Stórolfssonar</i>	1	401.5		
<i>Reykdæla saga</i>	2	161.15, 221.25	<i>grábíldóttir</i> (161.15)	
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	2	132.4, 189.18	<i>gráskinn</i> (132.4)	
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	1	169.16	<i>gráskinn</i>	

4 For a discussion of *grár* and also *hárr*, a secondary color term, see Wolf (2009).

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Dorskrfröðinga saga</i>	2	205.2, 233.19	<i>grákollóttir</i>	Grásteinsdæld (233.19)
<i>Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts</i>	1	359.3	<i>grábjörn</i>	
<i>Þorvarðar þáttur krákunefs</i>	1	373.2	<i>algrár</i>	
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	1	71.15		

Table 5. Occurrences of *grár*

2.6 Grœnn

There are only 27 occurrences of *grœnn*, of which 17 are compounds, 15 being toponyms.⁵

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Auðunar þáttur</i>	1	361.14f		Grœnland
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>	2	114.21f, 140.18f		Grœnland (114.21f), Grœnamýrartunga (140.18f)
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	1	201.11f		Grœnland
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	1	60.11f		Grœnland
<i>Fimmboga saga ramma</i>	2	272.16f, 280.29		Grœnmór (272.16f)
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	1	227.2		
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	2	236.14, 258.11f		Grœnland (258.11f)
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	2	204.17f, 276.12		Grœnland (204.17f)
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>	1	118.2		Grœnland
<i>Grœnlendinga saga</i>	1	242.20f		Grœnland
<i>Grœnlendinga þáttur</i>	1	273.3f		Grœnland
<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>	1	153.6		
<i>Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða</i>	1	111.3	<i>laufgrœnn</i>	
<i>Hrafnis þáttur Guðrúnarsonar</i>	1	320.5		Grœnateigr
<i>Jökuls þáttur Búasonar</i>	1	95.13		Grœnland

5 For a discussion of *grœnn*, see Wolf (2009).

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i>	2	131.9f, 132.7		Grœnland (131.9f)
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	1	188.2	<i>gulgrœnn</i>	
<i>Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>	1	233.1		
<i>Þórarins þátr Nefjólssonar</i>	1	146.5		Grœnland
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	3	20.10, 52.2/14, 64.3		

Table 6. Occurrences of *grœnn*

2.7 Brúnn

Brúnn is also uncommon.⁶ There are only 18 occurrences, and of these, six are compounds, two being toponyms.

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Bandamanna saga</i>	1	325.16		
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	1	34.26	<i>móbrúnn</i>	
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i>	1	256.5	<i>brúngras</i>	
<i>Fljótisdæla saga</i>	1	227.2		
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	1	265.14		Brúnahaugr
<i>Gísls þátr Illugasonar</i>	1	334.14		
<i>Grettis saga</i>	3	99.6, 148.7, 13		
<i>Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða</i>	1	100.15	<i>brúnmóalóttir</i>	
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	1	291.12	<i>brúnleggir</i>	
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	1	194.16	<i>rauðbrúnn</i>	
<i>Njáls saga</i>	3	148.5, 276.22, 277.14		
<i>Þorgríms þátr Hallasonar</i>	1	299.3f		Brúnastaðir
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	1	240.21-2		
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	1	77.3		

Table 7. Occurrences of *brúnn*

In addition, *Brúnn* occurs as the name of a horse (*Víglundar saga* 79.6), and *Brúni* appears as a personal name (*Heiðarvíga saga* 288.22, *Ljósveitninga saga* 16.15f, *Njáls saga* 407.20, and *Vápnfirðinga saga* 59.1).

⁶ For a discussion of *brúnn* and also *jarpr*, a secondary color term, see Wolf [forthcoming]. Examples of *svartbrúnn* and *skolbrúnn* have not been included, since *brúnn* may be referring to eyebrows and not color.

2.8 Gulr

Gulr is rare.⁷ The texts examined yield only five occurrences of the color term.

Literary work	N	References	Compounds	Toponyms
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	1	78.9		
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	1	276.11		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	2	187.14, 188.2	<i>gulgrænn</i> (188.2)	
<i>Njáls saga</i>	1	53.11		

Table 8. Occurrences of *gulr*

3 Summary of data

The relative frequency of the eight basic color terms in the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders may be illustrated as follows (Figure 1):

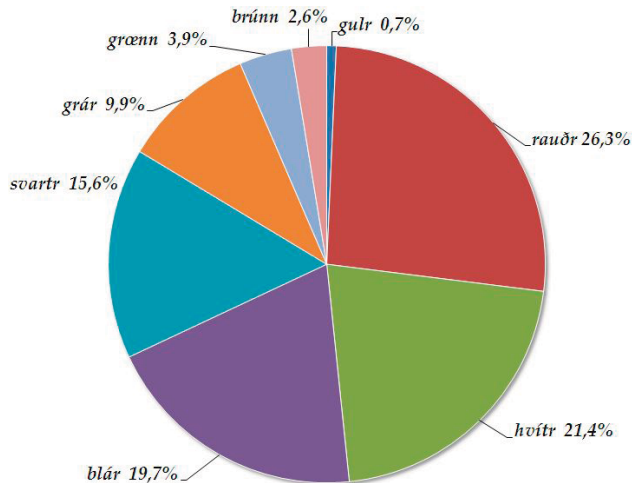


Figure 1. Relative frequency of basic color terms

If toponyms are excluded, *blár* is more common than *hvítr*, and *brúnn* is more common than *grænn*, and the sequence for the four color terms is then as follows: *blár* (20.1%) > *hvítr* (19.3%) > *brúnn* (2.6%) > *grænn* (1.9%). The sequence is the same, if both toponyms and bynames (including compound bynames) are excluded: *blár* (21.8%) > *hvítr* (17.4%) > *brúnn* (2.9%) > *grænn* (2.0%). If toponyms, bynames,

⁷ For a discussion of *gulr*, see Wolf (2009).

all compounds, and derivations of the color adjectives (that is, nouns and verbs) are excluded, the sequence also remains the same, except that *svartr* is more common than *blár* and *hvítr*. The sequence for all the eight basic color terms is then as follows: *rauðr* (28.9%) > *svartr* (18.6%) > *blár* (18.3%) > *hvítr* (18.0) > *grár* (9.8 %) > *brúnn* (2.8%), *grænn* (2.6%) > *gulr* (1.0%).

Njáls saga and *Laxdæla saga* have more than 50 occurrences of color terms and are followed by *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* and *Fóstbræðra saga* with 36–40 occurrences. They are also among the longest sagas. *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Grettis saga* have between 21 and 35 occurrences of color terms. *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Heiðarviga saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Porskfirðinga saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, and *Víga-Glúms saga* have between 11 and 20 occurrences of color terms. Sagas with 6–10 occurrences comprise *Bandamanna saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Grænendinga saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, and *Viglundar saga*. *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Ljósvefninga saga*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, and *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* have five or fewer occurrences; the four last-mentioned sagas are also the ones with the least variety of color terms.

Only *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga* have all the eight color terms, and this is if toponyms, bynames, all compounds, and derivations of the color adjectives are included. In *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, and *Njáls saga*, seven color terms are represented. In *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, and *Víga-Glúms saga*, six color terms are represented. Sagas with five different color terms comprise *Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa*, *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Heiðarviga saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Reykðæla saga ok Víga-Skútu*, *Svarfdæla saga*, and *Viglundar saga*. *Vápnfirðinga saga* has occurrences only of *rauðr*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta* and *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* have occurrences only of *hvítr*, *Ljósvefninga saga* has occurrences of *rauðr* and *hvítr*, and *Hænsa-Þóris saga* has occurrences of *rauðr*, *hvítr*, and *svartr*. With toponyms, bynames, all compounds, and derivations of the color adjectives excluded, the representation of the eight basic color terms in the individual Sagas of Icelanders is illustrated in Table 9.

Literary work	rauðr	hvítr	blár	svartr	grár	grænn	brúnn	gulr
<i>Bandamanna saga</i>				3			1	
<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i>		2		3	6			
<i>Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa</i>	2	5	4	3				
<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i>				1	1			
<i>Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar</i>	3	1	5	3	2			
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i>	4	4	2	3				
<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i>	2	3	4	4	1			1
<i>Fimboga saga ramma</i>	2			1		1		
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i>	3	3	1	4	3	1	1	
<i>Flóamanna saga</i>	3		3			1		
<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i>	7	9	1	9	1	1		1
<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i>		1	3	1	4			
<i>Grettis saga</i>	4	1	4	5	1		3	
<i>Grænlandinga saga</i>		2		1				
<i>Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls</i>	2			2				
<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i>	3	5	1	2	2			
<i>Hallfreðar saga</i>		3			1	1		
<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i>		1	1	2				
<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfríðings</i>		1	1		1			
<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i>	3	2	1	2	3			
<i>Hrafníkels saga Freysgoða</i>			2					
<i>Hænsa-Þóris saga</i>	1			1				
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i>	2	1		1				
<i>Kormáks saga</i>	1	1	1	5				
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i>	1	3	3			1		
<i>Laxdæla saga</i>	12	5	9	4	4			1
<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i>	3		1					
<i>Njáls saga</i>	19		9	5	3		3	1
<i>Reykdæla saga ok Víga-Skútu</i>	2	4		1	1	1		
<i>Svarfdæla saga</i>	5		1	1	1			
<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i>	4	1	1					
<i>Þorskfirðinga saga</i>	2	2						
<i>Þorsteins saga hvíta</i>								
<i>Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar</i>								
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i>	1		3	1			1	
<i>Vápnfirðinga saga</i>	4							
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i>	4	2	1	2				
<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i>	1	2	3	1	1	3		
<i>Víglundar saga</i>	1	2					1	

Table 9. Representation of color terms

4 Conclusion

The most striking difference between these sequences and the evolutionary order proposed by Berlin and Kay and modified for Old Norse-Icelandic by Wolf (2006, 2009, and forthcoming) is the prominence of *rauðr*. An explanation for the relative infrequent use of *svartr* and *hvítr* in comparison with *rauðr* may be that in the case of the two achromatic basic color terms there are near-synonyms, such as *dækkr* and *myrkr* (for *svartr*) and *ljóss*, *fagr*, and possibly *bleikr* (for *hvítr*), which have not been considered in this study, whereas *rjóðr* is the only near-synonym for *rauðr* and occurs only once (*Kormáks saga* 230.15).⁸

Blár, too, is very common, but, as argued by Wolf (2006: 74), it originally meant simply a dark color and did not attach firmly to the blue spectrum until the late fourteenth century. Considering the fact that the vast majority of the Sagas and *þættir* of Icelanders are believed to have been composed before the late fourteenth century, most of the occurrences of *blár* in these works should, therefore, probably be grouped with *svartr*, which would make *svartr* the most commonly used color term. Accordingly, the order of frequency for the first four (five) color terms is likely as follows: black (*svartr/blár*) > white (*hvítr*) > red (*rauðr*) > grey (*grár*), which is in line with the above proposed sequence for Old Norse-Icelandic.

With regard to the last three color terms, *brúnn*, *grænn*, and *gulr*, the frequency study supports the above proposed sequence in that *gulr* as a color term should be assigned a late stage and after *grænn* and *brúnn*. Indeed, as argued by Wolf (2010: 123), “while yellow (*gulr*) certainly existed, the color was expressed primarily by means of derivatives of *gull* prior to the thirteenth century.”

The dating of the Sagas of Icelanders is a controversial matter, but there seems to be general agreement to date the composition of, for example, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* to the first half of the thirteenth century, that of *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga* to around the middle of the thirteenth century, and that of *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* to the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Also, most scholars regard *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, and *Víglundar saga* as postclassical sagas.

⁸ This is discounting compounds and derivations of *rjóðr*.

The conclusions are that there seems to be no correlation between the (proposed) date of composition of the individual sagas and their frequency and variety of basic color terms, but that there seems to be a correlation between the frequency of basic color terms in Old Norse-Icelandic and the implicational ordering of those terms according to the Berlin and Kay hierarchy and the amended version for Old Norse-Icelandic.

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Keywords

basic colors, color terms, color categories, linguistics, quantitative

Lykilorð

grunnlitir, litaorð, litaflokkar, málvísindi, meginleg rannsókn

Útdráttur

Í ritinu *Basic Color Terms* (1969) halda Brent Berlin and Paul Kay því fram að orð um grunnliti komi inn í tungumál í tiltekinni röð: 1: svart, hvítt; 2: svart, hvítt, rautt; 3a: svart, hvítt, rautt, grænt; 3b: svart, hvítt, rautt, gult; 4: svart, hvítt, rautt, gult, grænt; 5: svart, hvítt, rautt, gult, grænt, blátt; 6: svart, hvítt, rautt, gult, grænt, blátt, brúnt; 7: svart, hvítt, rautt, gult, grænt, blátt, brúnt, fjólublátt, bleikt, appelsinugult, grátt. Síðar hafa hugmyndir þeirra verið þróaðar áfram og gagnrýndar nokkuð og til að bregðast við því hafa þessir tveir málvísindamenn og mannfræðingar breytt þeim.

Forníslenska hafði orð um átta grunnliti. Nýlegar rannsóknir á þeim styðja í aðalatriðum þróunarröð Berlin and Kay þótt því hafi verið haldið fram að gera þyrfti ráð fyrir því að *grár* komi snemma fram, að *blár* komi seint fram, að *grænn* tilheyrir fyrra stigi en *gulr* og að *brúnn* komi tiltölulega seint fram.

Í þessari grein er kynnt meginleg rannsókn á grunnlitaorðum í Íslendingssögum og Íslendingaþáttum. Markmið hennar var að kanna hvort vensl væru á milli tíðni hugtakanna og þeirrar þróunarraðar sem haldið hefur verið fram, þótt viðurkennt sé að ekki þurfi endilega að vera bein tengsl milli samtímalegrar notkunartíðni og sögulegrar stigskiptingar í tilkomu þeirra. Áberandi munur milli notkunartíðni og þeirrar þróunarraðar sem Berlin og Kay halda fram birtist í því hvað *rauðr* er algengur. Ástæða þess að *svartr* og *hvítr* eru tiltölulega fátíðir í samanburði við *rauðr* kynni að vera sú að þeir fyrrnefndu eiga sér ýmis nálæg samheiti en aftur á móti er *rjóðr* einn nálæga samheitið við *rauðr*. *Blár* er líka algengur en þar sem það orð vísaði upprunalega til dökks litar en tengdist ekki bláa litrófinu beint fyrr en seint á 14. öld er væntanlega rétt að flokka stærstan hluta dæmanna um *blár* með *svartr*. Könnun á tíðni *brúnn*, *grænn* og *gulr* styður þá röð sem stungið hefur verið upp á að því leyti að *gulr* tengist síðbúnu stigi og kemur á eftir *grænn* og *brúnn*. Niðurstaðan er sú að jafnvel þótt ekki virðist vera nein vensl á milli (áætlaðs) ritunartíma einstakra sagna og tíðni og fjölbreytileika grunnlitarorða í þeim, virðast vera vensl milli tíðni grunnlitarorða í forníslensku og þróunar þeirra samkvæmt þróunarstigveldi Berlin and Kay í þeirri útgáfu sem löguð hefur verið að forníslensku.

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