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## **DEATH ON A YELLOW HORSE: RENDERING OF THE COLOR TERM IN REVELATION 6:8 IN DANISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

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The article investigates a case of color usage in Revelation 6:8 and various ways it has been translated into Danish. The Greek *χλωρός* used to describe the horse under the fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse is polysemic and thus rather difficult to interpret, which resulted in numerous variations among translators. The image of Death on a pale horse has become part of the Western cultural heritage, although linguists have argued if this equivalent is indeed accurate in terms of color meaning comprised within the original lexeme. Fourteen translations, from medieval to modern, allowed to scrutinize some particular features of rendering this intricate color term in Danish, rising the main question of the study: why do so many Danish translations opt for the chromatic meaning of yellow in the given passage? In order to answer that, firstly, all of the translations were examined from the point of view of the time they were made, the primary source that the works were based upon and the special characteristics of chosen equivalents of *χλωρός*. Secondly, a few external sources were introduced in order to put the issue in a broader linguacultural context, such as the language, color symbolism and early Danish church art. This approach has helped to determine possible reasons for Death's horse turning yellow, like the influence of German, deadly connotations of the Danish color term *gul* 'yellow' when referring to paleness and the bad symbolic reputation of color yellow itself.

**Keywords:** Danish language, color terms, *χλωρός*, Bible translations, semantics, color symbolism, Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The problem of color lexis in biblical texts and its translation into other languages has been given some thought by the exegetes and linguists alike. Not only has the Bible had a profound influence on Western

culture by providing numerous expressive images, but also laid a cornerstone in an everlasting debate about translation principles. As a book that is being repeatedly retranslated, the Bible in its various versions reflects some features and tendencies specific to the target language. In case of the given article, it is Danish color vocabulary that is scrutinized from this point of view.

The book of Revelation concludes the Christian Bible with apocalyptic visions revealed to and written down by John of Patmos. Vivid imagery with prolific use of color adjectives distinguishing this book from other parts of the Scriptures stems from its nature and purpose: to preserve and communicate the divine message to the fullest extent by immersing the reader into the vision's reality [García Ureña, 2015, p.232–236]. Apart from denoting the color itself, those adjectives also possess a symbolic meaning due to the aural effect achieved through repetition in specific contexts [García Ureña, 2015, p.236–237].

While most color usages in Revelation seem rather motivated and clear, there is one somber figure whose color adjective is still a matter of discussion. It is the fourth Horseman named Death that appears at the opening of the fourth seal in Revelation 6:8, or, more precisely, his horse, that is referred to as *χλωρός*, which as a color term means 'greenish yellow, pale green' [Liddell, Scott, Jones Ancient Greek Lexicon]. This Greek adjective is not known to be applicable to horses [García Ureña, 2021], hence the numerous translators' interpretations, of which the one implying the sickly pallor of dead/dying creatures has become an inherent part of European cultural heritage, namely *the pale horse*. This very persistent tradition has begun with *pallidus* in the Vulgate and left its traces in some of the most conventional translations into English, German, French, Russian, etc. While Danish translators seem to have taken the notion of deadly paleness into account, the main focus appears to be shifted to the color yellow, *gul*, and its hues, whereas the lexeme *bleg* 'pale' is used on its own only in two versions out of fourteen (as opposed to *pale* / *fahl* / *pale* / *бледный* that has passed through various editions in other languages). The given article thus aims to find an explanation for this departure from the tradition.

To trace the main tendencies in reception of the color term, a wide range of Danish translations was considered. The history of Bible translations into Danish began in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century with two versions of the New Testament [Christian II.s Det Nye Testamente, 1524; Det Ny

Testamente, 1529] followed by the first full Danish Bible ever [Christian 3.s Bibel, 1550]; these translations had Latin and German Bibles as their basis. The first Danish version of the Bible translated from the original languages appeared already in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century [Biblia, paa Danske, 1607; 1647] starting the so-called Resen-Svaneian tradition (named after the translator H. P. Resen and the editor H. Svane) that lasted until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and went through numerous editions, of which this article considers two [Det Nye Testamente, 1814; Danske Bibel, 1871]. The breach with this translating tradition was marked by the release of the new authorized Bible translation [Bibel — autoriseret, 1931/1948]. Several independent translations made by theologians and scholars were taken into consideration [Bibelen oversat af J. C. Lindberg, 1866; Det Nye Testamente oversat af Th. Skat Rørdam, 1896; Det nye Testamente, oversat af Anna Sophie og Paul Seidelin, 1975; Det Nye Testamente oversat af O. Wierød, 1997], as well as the latest church translations [Bibelen på hverdagsdansk, 1985; Den autoriserede oversættelse, 1992; Ny-Verden Oversættelsen, 2017]. The main features of each version along with the translations of  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$  in Revelation 6:8 will be provided in part three of the given article.

## 2. $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ IN REVELATION 6:8: MEANING, INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION

Although the image imprinted in the culture is of a pale horse and, metonymically, a pale rider, specialists have argued whether or not this translation is accurate in the sense of color. It is not hard to identify the fourth Horseman as he is the only one of the four named directly in the text, and, since the color attributed to each horse characterizes the Horseman, the notion of paleness, i. e., the lack of color saturation, seems consistent with the image of Death. The color adjective, however, comprises several possibilities due to its polysemic nature. The problem itself arises from the fact that ancient and modern color systems divide the spectrum differently, so that in ancient Greek the term  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$  covers the part between blue and yellow, manifesting specific meanings through the context [García Ureña, 2021].

Within the texts of the New Testament the lexeme is used only to denote the color of vegetation along with the horse in question, although the rest of the ancient Greek texts provide a variety of uses, from descriptions of honey and egg yolk to water, yet the most relatable use is

“applied to the skin colour of someone who is afraid <...> or suffering from a serious illness” [García Ureña, 2021, p. 207]. The entity in which the color is embodied is crucial for ancient languages, where color is considered to be an inherent part of an object rather than an abstraction; thus, the chromatic meaning of *χλωρός* in Revelation 6:8 pertains to a living creature and acquires the meaning of “the colour of the skin of an animal when death is near; associated with death” [García Ureña, 2021, p. 218].

The interpretations of color symbolism in the passage may determine choices in translation, e. g., the visions of horses in the Revelation have often been paralleled with visions of horses and chariots in Zechariah 1:8 and 6:1–8, based on the assumption that the author of the Apocalypse was dependent on the pre-existing tradition [Charles, 1920, p. 160–163]. The horses in both passages from Zechariah are mentioned by their color and were interpreted as four winds sent to four quarters of the world as God’s messengers, which was thought to be partly applicable to the four Horsemen as well rendering the color of the fourth horse pale yellow in consistency with Zechariah’s *sorrel* ≈ *yellow* horses [Charles, 1920, p. 168–169]. Some exegetes also propose green as a loose translation of one of the colors mentioned in Zechariah 1:8 [García Ureña, 2021, p. 206]. In another reading of this parallelism *χλωρός* is explained as *dappled*, *vigorous/ardent* through a reference to Zechariah 6:3 thanks to the symbolic meaning of green [Vohohonsky, 1999, p. 168]. The subsequent research of the book of Zechariah, however, speaks against this interpretation, applying the Ancient Hebrew *רַחֲבֵל* ‘strong’ to all the chariots [Boda, 2017, p. 24].

The dubious meaning of the color term in Revelation 6:8 has resulted in various versions among translators as well. The visionary nature of both Zechariah’s and John’s horses was said to legitimize the use of straightforward *green* to describe Death’s horse, providing a realistic reason as well, as green can denote the color of rotting flesh [Peachey, 1999, p. 215–216]. Those who disagree with the absurdity of green horses turn to the notion of discrepancies between ancient and modern color terms, due to which the part of the spectrum covered by *χλωρός* is claimed to include *grey* in its modern English understanding [Clark, 2005, p. 69–70]. Not only is this variant closer to reality (it has been, for instance, chosen intuitively by Welsh, Khakas and Tuvin translators), but it also might help to strengthen the parallel with Zechariah’s visions

[Clark, 2005, p. 70]. However, it appears that the semantic complexity of the term *χλωρός* requires a more precise equivalent that could comprise both chromatic and symbolic meanings.

Some light on the semantic range of the lexeme in the given context is shed in Latin translations made by two of the Church Fathers. While the most well-known one is *pallidus* ‘pale’ introduced by Jerome of Stridon in the Vulgate (late 4<sup>th</sup> century), a different interpretation of *χλωρός* was registered even earlier on, namely in Tertullian’s treatise *De Pudicitia* “On Modesty” (ca. 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century), where the term is rendered as *viridis* ‘green’. It is, though, necessary to specify that Tertullian is drawing yet another parallel with the Old Testament, only now based solely on color symbolism: one’s body and soul are likened to a house from Leviticus 14:37, and one’s sins to the stains of mold on the walls: “when the Word of God has entered it, and has found “stains of *red* and *green*”, forthwith must the *deadly* and *sanguinary* passions “be extracted” and “cast away” out of doors — for the Apocalypse withal has set “death” upon a “*green* horse”, but a “warrior” upon a “*red*”...” [Roberts, Donaldson, 1870, p. 115] (Italics mine. — *M. O.*). Thereby the possibility of chromatic interpretation of *χλωρός* in Revelation 6:8, in a time historically close to the original, is highlighted, as opposed to Hieronym’s *pallidus*, manifesting rather a lack of color than the hue.

That is why the latest explanation of this color term proposed by L. García Ureña appears to be the most conclusive of all, as the specific methodology applied allows to combine contextual analysis with the tools used in color studies. As a result, the gloss of ‘death-green’ is developed [García Ureña, 2021, p. 219]. This specific shade conveys the chromatic meaning adequate to the context while leaving room to symbolism. Thus, the color in Revelation 6:8 can be described as *pale greyish-green*, similar to the skin color of someone suffering of an illness and near death [García Ureña, 2021].

### 3. DANISH TRANSLATIONS OF ΧΛΩΡΟΣ IN REVELATION 6:8

That being established, it is surprising to see, how this particular color usage has been rendered by Danish Bible translators. Ten out of fourteen translations considered opt for chromatic interpretation; only two use the lexeme *bleg* ‘pale’ just as it is, and, moreover, the color *gul* ‘yellow’ appears to be chromatically predominant. Tables 1–5 present

the equivalents in question separately and grouped by time periods for the reader's convenience.

It seems necessary to outline the main features of translations in question along with the color terms used in each. So, the oldest source considered is the first New Testament published in Danish [Christian II.s Det Nye Testamente, 1524], which was translated from the Latin text and came in the wake of Luther's New Testament as king Christian II in his exile had encountered Lutheranism. The translation is considered to have been made in a hurry, which explains rather poor quality of the language [Christian 2.s danske oversættelse af Det Nye Testamente, 1524]. This version contains one of the four cases of  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$  rendered in Danish without denoting the color, as the word *broget* 'piebald' pertains not to the hue, but the spots of a different color on a horse's coat.

Another medieval translation of the New Testament is the one made by a known theologian and scholar Chr. Pedersen [Det Ny Testamente, 1529], also based on the Vulgate [Christiern Pedersen. Dansk biografisk leksikon]. The lexeme chosen by the translator is *blacked* (*blakket* in modern orthography), denoting a faded, murky color or a blending of several colors into one uneven shade. It is noteworthy that this particular adjective, when applied to horses, acquires the meaning of falsity and/or misfortune, as it is indicated in Danish historical vocabularies [Kalkars Ordbog; Ordbog over Det Danske Sprog]; in modern Danish *blakket*, along with the blending of several colors, can also denote something mean, obscure and suspicious.

The oldest full Danish version is the Bible of Christian III [Christian 3.s Bibel, 1550] — the first complete translation of the Scriptures, including apocrypha (according to the Lutheran canon). The translation aims to convey the meaning of the original in the most natural way possible for the target language — a principle that M. Luther adhered to. The translation was based on the German text of Luther's Bible and notably influenced by the Vulgate in particular books [Molde, 1949]. Considering that, the first appearance of *gul* 'yellow' as an equivalent of  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$  in the Bible of Christian III is even more puzzling, since there is no obvious trace of yellow neither in Luther's Bible of 1545 nor in Vulgate, where *fahl/pallidus* 'pale' are found respectively.

The next step in the history of Danish Bible translations is the Resen-Svaneian tradition. In 1607, Bishop H. P. Resen published his own translation of all the sacred texts, and in 1647 a revised version edited

**Table 1. First translations of the Bible into Danish, based primarily on the Latin texts (here and in the following tables the translations are referred to by the year of publishing)**

1524	1529	1550
<i>broget hest</i> 'piebald horse'	<i>blacked hest</i> 'horse of a faded/uneven color'	<i>guel Hest</i> 'yellow horse'

by H. Svane was released. Its key principle to strictly abide by the original texts was based on the idea of divine inspiration within the Bible, although this approach made Danish text difficult to read. In the very beginning the Resen-Svaneian tradition has sat Death on the traditional *bleg* 'pale' horse, although a marginal note in both editions of 1607 [Biblia, paa Danske, 1607] and 1647 [Biblia, paa Danske, 1647] explains the word through the color term *graa* 'grey', giving it a chromatic interpretation. Up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Resen-Svaneian tradition went through several editions; the pale horse was spotted in the 1814 version [Det Nye Testamente, 1814], already without the marginal note. It is interesting to see a change in the 1871 text edited by the Danish Bible Society [Danske Bibel, 1871], where the color of Death's horse is rendered as *grøngul* 'greenish yellow', which seems quite accurate in terms of the general meaning of  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ , but avoids any direct references to deadly paleness.

**Table 2. The Resen-Svaneian tradition, based on the original texts of the Scriptures**

1607/1647	1814	1871
<i>bleeg (graa) Hest</i> 'pale (grey) horse'	<i>bleg hest</i> 'pale horse'	<i>grøngul Hest</i> 'greenish-yellow horse'

There are some independent translations that stand out. In 1856, the Old and New Testaments were published in the translation of a Grundtvigian<sup>1</sup> J. C. Lindberg [Bibelen oversat af Lindberg, 1866]. Another one is the New Testament translated by Bishop T. Sk. Rørdam [Det Nye Tes-

<sup>1</sup> A follower of a Danish historian and educator bishop N. F. S. Grundvig, who revitalized the Danish Lutheran church in the spirit of M. Luther and democratized the educational system.

tamente oversat af Skat Rørdam, 1896]; both translations aspire to keep the language comprehensible while remaining faithful to the ancient texts. Those are the only translations featuring *bleg* ‘pale’ as a first part of a compound adjective *bleggul* ‘pale yellow’, where, as in most Danish compound hue denominations, the rightmost element determines the semantic properties of the whole (the “right-hand head rule”). Hence, here it is *gul* ‘yellow’ that is the semantic kernel of the word, which is why this variant cannot be perceived as a part of the prevalent European tradition of the *pale horse*: it denotes the color yellow, albeit a less intensive one, as opposed to the lack of color conveyed by ‘pale’.

Table 3. Independent Bible translations, 19<sup>th</sup> century

1866	1896
<i>bleggul Hest</i> ‘pale yellow horse’	<i>bleggul Hest</i> ‘pale yellow horse’

A new phase in the Danish Bible translations began to unfold in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as biblical exegesis and new interpretations multiplied along with the historical and linguistic discoveries. This resulted in new translations of the Old (1931) and the New Testament (1948) [Bibel — autoriseret, 1931/1948] as well as the break with the ongoing Resen-Svaneian tradition. The translation of 1948 was the first to introduce the color term *gustengul* ‘deadly yellow’ in Revelation 6:8, which the subsequent translators tend to hold on to. A well-known independent 20<sup>th</sup> century translation of the New Testament made by P. and A. S. Seidelin [Det nye Testamente, oversat af Anna Sophie og Paul Seidelin, 1975] aimed to be accurate and understandable for the general public at the same time, yet used *gustengul* in Revelation 6:8 as well. The latest independent version of the New Testament made by O. Wierød [Det Nye Testamente oversat af Wierød, 1997] was undertaken as an objection to the officially approved translation of 1992 and, as the translator himself said in the preface, relied on the unconditional faith in the Church’s tradition and transmission [Wierød, 1997]. It is in Wierød’s translation that *gul* ‘yellow’ is used, just like in Christian III’s Bible from the Middle Ages. The color term *gul* can be used to describe horses, although it is not very frequent (in the Danish corpus [KorpusDK] *gul hest* ‘yellow horse’ is featured four times in contexts that have nothing supernatural to them).



Table 4. The authorized and two independent translations, 20<sup>th</sup> century

1948	1975	1997
<i>gustengul hest</i> 'deadly yellow horse'	<i>gustengul hest</i> 'deadly yellow horse'	<i>gul hest</i> 'yellow horse'

Two notable translations into modern Danish considered here are the Bible in everyday easy-to-read Danish [Bibelen på Hverdagsdansk, 1985], that was published in 1985–2015, and the officially authorized translation [Den autoriserede oversættelse, 1992], displayed on the main page of the Danish Bible Society. These versions also use *gustengul* 'deadly yellow' for Death's horse, making this color adjective the most frequent in Danish translations of Revelation 6:8. With the color yellow once more as semantic head of the word, this lexeme is particularly remarkable due to the first part, *gusten*, meaning 'sickly pale and yellowish', which appears to fit the original chromatic meaning rather well except for the shift from green to yellow. *Gusten* also has a second meaning 'cynical, malicious' [Ordbog over det danske Sprog], which apparently originates from Old Norse *gustr* 'blow' and the primary meaning of *gusten* in Danish, namely 'bloated, diseased by the elves having blown upon'. The etymology has also left its traces, for instance, in Norwegian *alvgust* 'the breath of elves' [Det Norske Akademis ordbok], denoting the kind of allergic rash that was believed to occur due to the elves blowing on someone [Ordbog over det danske Sprog]. Thus, in only one lexeme *gustengul* the chromatic meaning is combined with a grim and otherworldly connotation.

Table 5. The latest church translations into modern Danish

1985	1992	2017
<i>gustengul hest</i> 'deadly yellow horse'	<i>gustengul hest</i> 'deadly yellow horse'	<i>bleggrøn hest</i> 'pale green horse'

The latest rendering of  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$  was found in the Danish version of The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures conducted by Jehovah's Witnesses [Ny-Verden Oversættelsen, 2017 (first edition in Danish released in 1985)]. In the revised edition of 2017, which aimed to make the language contemporary and easy-to-understand, but was also

criticized for deviating from the most widespread Bible translations in significant details, the color term used in Revelation 6:8 is *bleggrøn* ‘pale green’. In the case of this particular passage, the chromatic meaning appears more consistent with the ongoing translating tradition than the focus on yellow prevalent in Danish translations (for instance, it is the ‘pale green’ that stands out as second most used equivalent featured by English translators — after, of course, ‘pale’, that still prevails [English concordance of Revelation 6:8]).

Having described the specific details, a number of general conclusions can be made.

Chromatically Danish renderings of *χλωρός* in Revelation 6:8 reside mainly in the yellow-green part of the spectrum with the emphasis on yellow and its lighter hues (nine out of fourteen translations feature *-gul*). The Resen-Svaneian *bleg* ‘pale’ explained in the marginal note as *graa* ‘grey’ appears to be the only relatively dark color used to interpret the meaning. Despite three versions not pertaining to any particular color (*broget* ‘piebald’, *blakket* ‘uneven/faded color’, *bleg* ‘pale’ in 1814), the predominance of yellow is striking.

In the attempt to find an explanation, this feature was examined from several points of view. First of all, it is notable how the language of the primary source affects translation: two of the oldest versions of the New Testament based upon the Latin text of Vulgate render its term *pallidus* as *broget* ‘piebald’ and *blakket* ‘uneven’, the two terms applicable to horses that do not, however, denote the color itself — but, strictly speaking, nor does the Latin *pallidus*. The Bible of Christian III, based on the German text of Luther’s Bible, is the first to mention the color as it is; and, since the main source is German, the key to the decision to translate *fahl* ‘pale’ as *gul* ‘yellow’ might be hidden within the word *fahl* itself. In modern German it means ‘pale’, but back in 16<sup>th</sup> century the word was closely related to *falb* ‘pale yellow’, especially used to describe animals and horses in particular (e. g., German noun *Falbe* denotes a dun-colored horse), both words going back to the Middle High German *val* with meanings of “pale” and “yellow” [Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache]. *Falb* and *fahl* are said to have had the same meaning in New High German, their meanings finally differentiating in the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century. That strengthens the hypothesis that the Danish 1550 translation *gul* ‘yellow’ in Revelation 6:8 was influenced by the closeness of those two German adjectives, one conveying the color meaning to the other.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century shift in tradition to Greek as the primal source was marked by an appearance of *bleg* ‘pale’, though explained as ‘grey’ in the marginal note. This chromatic interpretation might be an attempt to draw a parallel between the apocalyptic and Zechariah’s horses, as in both Zechariah 1:8 and Zechariah 6:3 *graa* ‘grey’ and *abildgraa* ‘dapple-grey’ are mentioned respectively in this translation [Biblia, paa Danske, 1607; 1647]. It is noteworthy, that this kind of color parallelism was not implemented in other full Bible translations considered in this article.

The color yellow makes a strong comeback in 1871 as a part of *grøn-gul* ‘greenish yellow’ and has been present through the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century right until today, as the official version available at the home page of The Danish Bible Society features *gustengul* ‘deadly yellow’ in Revelation 6:8. Both *bleggul* and *gustengul* render the adjective by adding the aspect of paleness, yet the chromatic meaning of yellow still remains present. Unlike the Bible of Christian III, the mentioned translations were based on the Greek text, yet also turned to yellow, so the question arises again: how can this be explained?

#### 4. LINGUOCULTURAL PORTRAIT OF GUL ‘YELLOW’

To find an answer, it seems necessary to look in two domains closely connected to the Bible translation as a whole, namely the language and the cultural background.

Yellow and green together form two expressions in Danish: *ærgre sig gul og grøn*, verbatim ‘to be irritated yellow and green’ and *gul og grøn af misundelse* ‘yellow and green with envy’. Both expressions trace back to the medieval medicine, when bile, colored greenish-yellow, was considered to cause bouts of melancholy and bad mood, and refer to the color of a sick person’s skin [Ordbog over det danske Sprog]. *Gul* ‘yellow’ also forms several compounds connected with death and decay, such as *dødsgul* ‘deathly yellow’, *liggul* ‘corpse-like yellow’, *vissengul* ‘withered yellow’, and it is that precise connotation of death that distinguishes yellow when denoting paleness: according to The Danish Concept Dictionary [Den Danske Begrebsordbog], paleness as the lack of saturation, not necessarily lethal, is expressed through *bleg* ‘pale’, *hvid* ‘white’ and their derivatives.

The original texts of the Bible do not mention yellow as it is (references to gold and precious stones not included). The number of occur-

rences of yellow in Danish translations is also way too scarce to build any symbolism based on the text. One other noteworthy usage of yellow comes from the book of Revelation as well, the passage 9:17, where the army bound to destroy the third of the mankind is described as having breastplates of different colors: *ildrøde* 'fiery red', *dytblå* 'deep blue' and *svovlgule* 'brimstone yellow'. The color term, however, appears already in the translation, since the Greek text mentions only brimstone.

The real symbolic life of yellow in European culture begins already in Middle Ages, when this color becomes first associated with bile — the feature reflected in the Danish expressions above. Then, through notions of medicine blaming the choleric, i. e., irascible, temperament in the excess of bile in the body, yellow gains connotations of many vices associated with the deadly sin of wrath. Those are falsity, envy, jealousy, deceit, heresy, hypocrisy and betrayal, the latter resulting in the fact that yellow has become one of Judas' regular attributes [Pastoureau, 2022]. All things considered, the negative meanings of yellow are way more conspicuous than those of, for instance, green, which makes it even more consistent with the image of Death.

Another witness to yellow applicable as the color of Death and his horse can be found amongst Danish medieval church frescos. There are two paintings that distinctly depict the fourth Horseman — the only one of the four that managed to make his way onto the church walls — riding the horse, holding a severed head on a spike. Those images can be found in Eskebjerg (Bregninge Church, the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century) and Kalundborg (Rørby Church, the first part of 15<sup>th</sup> century), both located in Zealand. In the former image Death and his horse are of a murky yellow color [Danmarks kirker: Bregninge kirke], and in the latter Death is a traditional white skeleton riding a pale yellow horse [Danmarks kirker: Rørby kirke].

Finally, the departure from the European tradition of the *pale horse* is perceptible in the lack of unanimity regarding the cultural reference and its translation into Danish. Although the variant *bleg* 'pale' left Danish Bibles in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a book on most severe European epidemics by K. Larsen came out in 2017 with the title *Den blege rytter* 'The Pale Rider' [Larsen, 2017], and the engraving by G. Doré is also rendered *Død på den Blege Hest* 'Death on a Pale Horse'. B. Savinkov's novel *The Pale Horse* was translated into Danish as *Den bleggule Hest* 'The pale yellow horse' [Savinkov, 1962], whereas the novel by A. Chris-

tie 'The Pale Horse' was entitled *Den gustne hest* 'The sickly pale horse' with a rendering of this reference again as *Den blege hest* in the summary of the same edition [Christie, 2021].

The Biblical imagery does lie in the very foundation of European culture, but the case of Death on his yellow horse in numerous Danish editions of the Bible shows how some local color can influence the translator's decisions.

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**СМЕРТЬ НА ЖЕЛТОМ КОНЕ: ПЕРЕДАЧА ЦВЕТООБОЗНАЧЕНИЯ  
В ОТКРОВЕНИИ 6:8 В ПЕРЕВОДАХ БИБЛИИ НА ДАТСКИЙ ЯЗЫК**

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В статье рассматривается употребление цветообозначения в Откровении 6:8 и различные способы его перевода на датский язык. Греческий колоратив  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ , используемый для описания лошади четвертого всадника Апокалипсиса, полисемичен и оказывается довольно трудным для интерпретации, что отражено в многочисленных вариантах его перевода. Хотя образ Смерти на бледном коне стал частью западного культурного наследия, лингвисты спорят, насколько этот эквивалент достоверен с точки зрения колоративного содержания исходной лексемы. При рассмотрении особенностей передачи этого непростого цветообозначения на датский язык в 14 переводах, от Средневековья до современности, возник главный вопрос исследования: почему в большинстве из рассмотренных версий хроматическое значение передается с помощью желтого цвета? В поисках объяснения, во-первых, все переводы были рассмотрены с точки зрения времени их выполнения, исходного текста, на котором основывались переводчики, и особенностей выбранных эквивалентов  $\chi\lambda\omega\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ . Во-вторых, были привлечены дополнительные источники, помогающие поместить проблему в более широкий лингвокультурный контекст, такие как особенности языка, символика цвета и датское церковное искусство позднего Средневековья. Такой подход помог определить возможные причины, по которым лошадь всадника Смерти в датских переводах стала желтой: это влияние немецкого языка, загробные коннотации датского колоративного термина *gul* ‘желтый’, проявляемые

в контексте бледности, а также дурная репутация самого желтого цвета с точки зрения символики.

**Ключевые слова:** датский язык, цветообозначения, χλωρός, переводы Библии, семантика, символика цвета, четвертый всадник Апокалипсиса.

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