

**Formation of the concept of beauty in the words
with the Proto-Slavic root *lěp-
(based on the material of ancient Russian written records)**

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Etymological nest with the root *lěp- in Proto-Slavic

The reconstruction of the etymological nest with the root *lěp- included four word-formation nests with the following tops:

1. *lěpiti ‘smear, stick’;
2. *lěpiti ‘make something from a plastic material’;
3. *lěpiti ‘climb, ramp’ (the nest includes plant names);
4. *lěpъjь ‘beautiful’.

The words of the word-formation nest with the top *lěpъjь ‘beautiful, good’ in Proto-Slavic

The words of the word-formation nest with the top *lěpъjь ‘beautiful, good’ directly define the concept of «beauty». By our count, this nest contains 27 units reconstructed by means of reflexes in Slavic languages, including:

1. Prefixal verbs: *oblěpeti ‘grow more beautiful’, *polěpъšati ‘improve, get better’;
2. Abstract nouns (nomina abstracta) with the meaning ‘beauty, beautiful appearance’: *lěpina ‘beauty’, *lěpostъ ‘beauty’, *lěpota ‘beauty’, *lěpotina ‘beauty’, *lěpotъ ‘beauty’, *nelěpostъ ‘badness, inappropriateness’, etc.;
3. Diminutive nouns (nomina diminutiva): *lěpava ‘beautiful child’, *lěpotica ‘beautiful child’, *nelěpъka ‘prematurely born calf’;
4. Adjectives: *lěpotъnъjь ‘beautiful’, *lěrovъjь ‘beautiful’, *lěpъkъjь ‘beautiful’, *lěpъnъjь ‘proper’, *lěpъskъjь ‘good, beautiful’, *lěpъšъjь ‘best’, *nelěpъjь ‘ugly, bad’ etc.

Lexeme *lěpъ and semantic syncretism

1. Lexeme *lěpъ in Slavic languages shows that it is the primary means of expressing the meaning 'beautiful' in Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian. Slavic material also points to the existence of semantic syncretism, combining both a positive assessment of some object and aesthetic pleasure for its observation. The aesthetic beginning is inextricably linked to the ethical one: beauty ennobles the heart of man.
2. The term «syncretism» implies the existence of many signifieds in one form.
3. Semantic syncretism is understood as an ancient meaning indivisibility; the unity of meanings of an ancient polysemantic word; or a word, presented as an image and embodied in a symbol (linguistic sign).
4. Ancient words include syncretism of a qualitative «complex» meaning. In addition, new meanings develop, and they are all interwoven in original, ancient or translated texts and obscure the understanding of texts.

Semantic extension

1. The Old Russian translated literature included the oldest structure and semantics of words related to Proto-Slavic. Therefore, one of the problems of lexical and semantic analysis of words in the translated texts is the semantic «branchiness» of their roots since the vocabulary practice of distinguishing individual meanings of a polysemant is opposed to the idea of the ancient meaning syncretism.
2. Semantic extension of words with the root *lěp- came against the background of the translations of Greek texts due to the presence of an ancient meaning syncretism.
3. According to Buck, «in the majority cases ‘beautiful’ is specialised from expressions of approval or admiration of the most diverse character <...> Many of the words are again extended to apply to anything that gives pleasure (not merely to the visual sense)» (Buck 1949: 1191).

Semantic extension of words with the root *lǝp-

1. The Chronicle (John Malalas): Поподоклиа (Брисеида) же бѣ висока, чиста, добросоца, лѣпа» ~ ἡ Βρισηίς ἦν μακρὴ, λευκὴ, καλλίμασθος, εὖστολος / Hippodameia Briseis was tall, fair-skinned, with beautiful breasts, a good figure. Εὖστολος ‘well-equipped; convenient λιμένα; compactly build; of a human frame (Lampe 1961: 576). It must be noted that Lampe gives this special meaning ‘*compactly built; of a human frame*’ for the Chronicle of John Malalas.
2. The Chronicle (John Malalas): Антиноръ... многосвѣдьи, лѣпъ ~ Αντήνωρ... πολυίστωρ, ἐλλόγιμος / Antenor was an eloquent historian. Ἐλλόγιμος ‘special; elect, chosen by God; skilled in use of words, learned ἐλλόγιμος ἄνδρες opp. ἰδιῶται’ (Lampe 1961: 452). Cf. description of Julian the Apostate in the XIII book of the Chronicle, where the adjective лѣпыѣ also corresponds to ἐλλόγιμος: Оули□нъ Паравать ... бѣ лѣпъ ~ Ἰουλιανὸς, ὁ Παραβάτης ... ἦν δὲ ἐλλόγιμος.

Semantic extension of words with the root *lěp-

1. The Old Russian «Pchela» (book of aphorisms): И ражагаєть оума лѣпотоу, яко трость вгнь ~ <...> καὶ ἱναφλέγει τὴν διάνοιαν ἢ θέα, καθάπερ ὕλη πυρί γενομένη ὑπέκκαυμα (Семенов 1893: 39) / passion ignites the mind like a fire. This fragment is a unique case, where the noun *лѣпота* ‘beauty’ corresponds to *θέα* ‘sight, spectacle, performance, in a theatre or elsewhere’ (Liddell-Scott-Jones: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=49276>). This is an example of a metonymic transfer under the influence of the meaning of the Greek word «θέα».
2. The Life of Savva the Consecrated: Съведе и къ лаврѣ. и помоли старьца прияти его. с лѣпнымъ епитиемъ ~ κατήγαγεν εἰς τὴν λαύραν, κα ἱπαρεκάλεσε τὸν γέροντα δέξασθαι αὐτὸν μετ ἀτῆς προσηκούσης ἐπιτιμίας (Жит. Сав. Осв. 1890: 221;16–18) / he came to the Lavra and asked the elder (starets) to take him after proper punishment. *Лѣпнѣи* corresponds to *προσήκων* freq. in Part. as Adj. ‘befitting, proper’ (Liddell-Scott-Jones: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=91928>).

Conclusion

1. We can see the concept of «beauty» in words with the root *lěp- in the Proto-Slavic period based on the reconstruction of its etymological nest by means of reflexes in the Slavic languages and confirmed by historical and cultural research.
2. In Old Russian, the concept of «beauty» was transformed under the influence of Greek and the Christian culture, perceived by the Slavic society. This resulted in fact that words with the root *lěp-, expressing the concept of «beauty» and having, as a rule, polysemy due to the ancient meaning syncretism of the root, acquired the semantic extension.
3. The research results expand our knowledge about the semantics of words with the root *lěp-, denoting the concept of «beauty» in the Slavic languages.