

RÆDAN

A Study of an Old English word

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Humanities)

in Medieval Studies at Massey University.

by

Norah D. Mosen.

1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Prof. Russell Poole, my supervisor. Prof. Poole has tremendous patience which he needed with this project. Without his help it could not have been achieved. The help of the cataloguers in the Library is gratefully appreciated. Without them this thesis would never have been printed

I also wish to acknowledge the support of my husband Lawrence Mosen. Lawrence bravely shouldered much of the domestic work in order to enable me to continue with this project. He also created a study/library for me. Thankyou.

A last thankyou to Kelly, who kept me company in the evenings. Thankyou all.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of an Old English word *rædan* in an attempt to discover the meaning of the word. An examination is made of some Old English dictionaries. A detailed report is made of the Dictionary of Old English Project. The reaction of the potential users of the Dictionary of Old English is examined. Using the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* a printout is made of all occurrences of *rædan*. A translation is made of all of the excerpts and an examination made to find the appropriate meanings. The conclusion reached is that *rædan* means: To read, interpret, learn; to advise, counsel, consult; to decide, resolve, judge, guess; to decree; to govern, rule; to take action against; to possess.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
AIMS, METHOD, AND BACKGROUND	6
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	6
LITERATURE REVIEW.	7
METHODOLOGY.	12
THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY.	13
MEANING OF RÆDAN	16
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED	37
APPENDICES	42
APPENDIX 1.	
A SAMPLE DICTIONARY ENTRY.	
.	43
APPENDIX 2	
ITEMS NOT PART OF THE VERB RÆDAN	
.	45
APPENDIX 3.	
ENTRIES FROM THE MICROFICHE CONCORDANCE TO	
OLD ENGLISH EXAMINED FOR THIS THESIS	
.	48

AIMS, METHOD, AND BACKGROUND

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

When I began this degree I wanted to do my thesis on an aspect of Anglo-Saxon England. It was suggested that a word study would be feasible and the word *rædan* would be a useful subject for study, especially for a librarian. I had noted that word studies I had found accidentally in the past tended to be short, although there were some exceptions, or examine more than one word. I wondered how an historian could produce a thesis length study of one word. At the time I knew nothing about the work of the Dictionary of Old English Project at the University of Toronto but as my work progressed I learnt about the vision of the late Alistair Campbell and others. The aim of the Dictionary of Old English Project is to produce an up-to-date, scholarly, comprehensive dictionary of the Old English language.

As far as I can ascertain there has been no study of the single word *rædan*, although there are studies which have included the word as part of a larger research project. *Rædan* has of course been included in dictionaries where a variety of meanings have been allocated in the entries. My curiosity was aroused as to how one word could have the variety of meanings that this one does. This means that this study has to include elements of etymology as well as semantics and syntax to achieve an understanding of this versatile word.

The primary purpose of this thesis is therefore to

ascertain the meaning of *rædan*. I will also prepare a sample dictionary entry. This thesis is therefore a lexicographical study of the Old English word *rædan*.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

Lexicography, as we understand it, has been in existence since the sixteenth century (Landau, 37). However lists of words were created as early as Anglo-Saxon times. As the English language developed new dictionaries were created. This pattern of development and change can also be seen in Old English lexicography. The earliest Old English dictionaries were compiled from the sixteenth century and the first was published in the seventeenth. In the nineteenth century the rise of Old English as a discipline in the universities made the widespread availability of a suitable dictionary essential. In 1868 Joseph Bosworth published *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon and English Dictionary*. This is a small book in which each page is divided in three columns. The headwords consist of the first three letters of the words in the column. Most definitions are brief. Some words do have much fuller entries. *Rædan* has a larger entry containing three definitions. In 1879 W. W. Skeat *An English - Anglo-Saxon dictionary* was published. The first major Old English dictionary for scholars was Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, commonly referred to as Bosworth-Toller. Bosworth-Toller uses the West Saxon dialect for the headwords, and the examples in the entries include variant spellings and dialects. At the time of publication the

source material available was "roughly one third of the available material" today (Frank-Cameron, 5). The increase in source material has resulted in two supplements being published. One by Toller was published in 1921, the other by Alistair Campbell in 1972. Campbell's supplement was welcomed as it included a large amount of new material (Page, 65-68). The treatment of *rædan* in the 1898 publication is the equivalent of one column in a two column page. There are seven definitions, two being subdivided. Subdivisions are used to clarify differences between synonyms. Most of the glosses are in Latin. The 1921 supplement adds further examples, and increases the number of subdivisions. The 1972 Campbell supplement I have not seen. Despite its age Bosworth-Toller is still a valuable tool for the Anglo-Saxon researcher.

In 1894 J. R. Clark Hall published *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. Revised editions of this work were published in 1916, 1931, and 1960. The fourth edition is still used as it is good for beginners and intermediary users. It does not include quotations or variant spellings, but there are cross references. The headwords are in the West Saxon dialect.

During the 1960's The Dictionary of Old English Project was conceived. The project created considerable interest when it was announced at a conference in 1970. The proceedings of the conference were published *A Plan for the Dictionary of Old English*. From the beginning the editors of the Dictionary of Old English Project have asked for and encouraged critical input which they are receiving. Most of the criticism I have seen has been concerning editorial policy, for example R.I.

Page (146-155), Dickens, Huismen and Rogers (102-104).

Editorial policy has been revised as a result of suggestions received, but on some points they have remained firm (Cameron-Amos, 289-294; Gneuss, 7-26).

The Dictionary of Old English has never been a purely lexicographical exercise. Contributions to the Dictionary are received by scholars world wide. In order to assist them with their work it was felt necessary that good quality editions of manuscripts needed to be obtained and entered into the database.

Tools needed to be made available for researchers to use.

The first publication of the Dictionary of Old English Project was *The Microfiche Concordance to Old English*. The Concordance is in three parts. The concordance itself is on microfiche and is accompanied by *The Microfiche Concordance to Old English: The List of Texts and Index of Editions*, and *The Microfiche Concordance to Old English: High Frequency Words*. The Concordance has been welcomed by scholars although concern has been expressed regarding variants (Stanley, 385-386; Robinson, 133-135). The second publication, in 1983, was the *Old English Word Studies* produced as a tool for the editors of the Dictionary of Old English Project. The publication consists of three indexes. The first index lists reference works. The second index is the largest and gives bibliographical details of the sources used. The third index is on microfiche and lists the words and their sources. The list is by no means complete as the authors readily admit in the Introduction (ix).

As the project continued a number of other lexicographical publications began to appear. *Problems of Old English Lexicography* edited by Alfred Bammesberger contains a number of papers on problems experienced by researcher and editors. Helmut Gneuss also wrote on problems lexicographers experience (Dick-Jankowsky, 153-158). Mattii Rissanen *Computers are Useful - For Aught I know* is a description of his experiences with the Dictionary of Old English corpus and the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (Colman, 155-168).

The Dictionary of Old English began to appear on microfiche in 1986. To date fascicles A, Æ, B, Beon, C, and D have been published. They have been received very well by scholars (for example Bately, 198, 510-512; Griffith 121-123). The review article by Joy Jenkyns *The Toronto Dictionary of Old English Resources: a Users View* not only reviews fascicules C and D but also reports on her experiences using them. She also compares results with Bosworth-Toller with results using the two fascicles.

There is no doubt that the Dictionary of Old English has been very welcome. From reviews and articles that have been written it will be a worthy successor to Bosworth-Toller. The great advantage the dictionary has had is computerisation. Changes can be easily made and revisions easily published.

The demand has often been expressed that studies of the Old English language should be based on all extant textual evidence, although few studies can, in practice, claim absolute representativeness in this respect. A computerized corpus not only makes the fulfilment of this demand possible; it also speeds up the searching and organisation of the data enormously. (Rissanen, 155).

I have found that little has been published which includes *rædan*. What has been published has, on the whole, been on groups of words which include *rædon*, and may, or may not, have similar meanings. All of the references I was able to locate were obtained from Cameron, Kingsmill, Amos as an intensive search of the Years Work in English Studies, the MLA International Bibliography, the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, and the annual bibliographies in Anglo Saxon England provided no further studies of use.

Of the items I found I have been able to obtain copies of six items and a resume of one item. One item was a collection of texts for student used in conjunction with a grammar. The other sixteen items I have found to be unobtainable and I could find no references to them. As, like MacGillivray (107), they appear to mention *rædon* on one page only I have not been too concerned at their absence in my research.

The earliest study I have been able to locate is by Gorrell whose thesis is concerned with the use of Old English verbs in indirect speech. He states

This study embraces all dependent constructions after verbs of saying; knowing and perceiving; thinking, seeming, and believing; teaching and learning; after expressions of petition and command, of permission and refusal, and of doubt and fear.
(p. 343)

Gorrell relates the meaning of *rædan* with its grammatical position in which it appears. There is no attempt at a linguistic approach, the work is purely syntactic in nature.

Sister Kranz is also concerned with semantics but her discussion on the connection between meaning and context draws

extensively on linguistics theory. Her thesis is a semantic study of verbs of speech from the Old English poem *Daniel*.

Michiko Ogura and D. Hofmann take an etymological approach to *rædan* although in different directions. Ogura is concerned with tracing the development of meaning of verbs of saying, specifically *cweðan*, *secgan*, *tellan*, from Old English to Middle English.

Hofmann is looking at the development of *rædan* from its older cognates. His thesis is primarily concerned with Old Norse loan words that became part of Old English as a result of the Viking presence in England. His deliberations regarding *rædan* are confined to the meaning of the word in the phrase "*woldon rædon on hi*" from the entry for 1048 in Manuscript E. of the Anglo Saxon Chronicle.

METHODOLOGY.

A search was made of the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* for *rædan* and its syntactic relatives, and a hard copy made of each selected frame. The resulting printed sheets were then examined by myself and Dr. Poole to ensure that all words for the study had been identified. I found that there was a problem for me when using the *Microfiche Concordance to Old English* in identifying all of the necessary words because of differences in dialect and spelling from the West Saxon dialect I was taught.

As I did not have access to a personal computer when this study began I have worked with a manual system. Each identified quotation was cut from the printed sheet and glued to a card. On each card was written the form of *rædan* being

investigated; e.g. 1st person present indicative, imperative, subjunctive. At the bottom of each card the bibliographical details of the primary source of the quotation were written and, in most cases the publication details of the secondary work from which the quotation came. A very small number of items were transcripts carried out by the Dictionary of Old English Project from manuscripts.

I then translated the quotation allocating to the study word the meaning I felt was appropriate. Where possible, a minority of cases, I consulted the secondary work to see what meaning had been given in the past. I also noted on the card any specific reasons for my interpretation which I felt would be useful for the final writing of the thesis. This occurred mainly when the meaning I allocated to *rædan* was outside the generally accepted ones. When each card was completed it was filed behind guide cards with the allocated meaning written on them.

Because of an interest in trying to ascertain how meanings for *rædan* developed I also tried to discover the approximate date of the original manuscripts where possible. As much of the extant manuscript material consists of copies of older manuscripts or forgeries this exercise was fraught with hazards although interesting. Once the initial translating was completed I then wrote my meanings and the justifications for my conclusions.

As this is a lexical study a sample dictionary entry was then compiled.

Unless otherwise stated quotations in this thesis are

from *The Microfiche Concordance to Old English*. They are identified by microfiche number, and frame number, e.g. R001, 167.

THE ACCIDENT OF HISTORY.

Old English was used as a written language, as far as we can ascertain, from the "fourth or early fifth century" (Page, 21) through to the twelfth century. However the written records that have survived are a very small minority of the total that was written. Much has been destroyed through accident, war, the dissolution of the monasteries, floral and fauna attacks, and generally the ravages of time.

The form in which Old English was written changed over the seven centuries the language was a living one. The earliest form of writing was the rune. Runes have a long history in Germanic countries and were introduced to England by the Anglo-Saxons. With the reintroduction of Christianity runes were slowly replaced by the Latin script which was brought by the missionaries. Evidence that Anglo-Saxon Christians used runes is still extant as inscriptions, in poems, and in the writing. Inscriptions are found on objects such as the Ruthwell Cross, St. Cuthbert's coffin, and the Franks casket. Written evidence of rune use can be found in the Rune Poem, Cynewulf's poems, and some riddles. Two runes were adopted into Latin script to represent sounds unknown in Latin. These were þ (thorn) and ƿ (wynn, usually typed w.).

The Church is mainly responsible for the material that has survived. Some runic inscriptions have been preserved in churches and churchyards. Others, not related to the religion

necessarily, have been found in archaeological digs. Written documents were preserved by the Church for a variety of reasons.

Churchmen wrote sermons and homilies that were to be read at services, or studied privately. The large number of these items that still survive indicate the popularity of this form of literature. The monasteries and convents needed rules by which the religious would live. There are three extant manuscripts of the Rule of St. Benedict in Old English which survive, one manuscript of the Rule of Chrodegang, and four of the Ancrene Wisse.

Monks and priests also needed to be educated and education meant in Latin not vernacular languages. Complaints about the lack of literacy among the religious at various periods of time during the "Dark Ages" resulted in translations of the Bible, the works of the Church Fathers, and of course the grammar book.

With the coming of Christianity and gifts of land being made to churches and monasteries came the necessity for charters and wills which described exactly what was given, and where applicable, what was expected in return. Because the Church kept permanent records, original and forgeries, to protect its claims these documents were kept as securely as possible.

The Church in England from the beginning tried to influence the leaders of the various courts that existed. Laws were written down and those that have survived clearly show the influence of the Church. The oldest law codes from England

that we still have survived because they were included in the law codes of other kings, e.g. Ine's laws are included in Alfred's law code.

It is interesting to note that of the 568 occurrences I have translated 86% are Church inspired, and 14% are definitely lay inspired. Of the 568 occurrences of *rædan* 234 are definitely from works which could not have been written before 950 A.D., twelve could not have been written later than the later part of the ninth century, and eight could not have been written before 790 A.D. We know this because of their attribution to persons about whom we know enough to be reasonably certain of the dates that they lived and flourished. It can clearly be seen that the accident of survival favours religious works, and those works from the latter half of the tenth century onwards when the West Saxon dialect predominated. All of this can affect what we believe to be the dominant meaning of *rædan*.