

The Slavic ‘guest’ and some of his Indo-European colleagues.

The Slavic word for ‘guest’ (PSl. **gost-ǵ*- m.) as well as its Germanic cognates (Goth. *gasts*, etc.) are usually connected to Lat. *hostis* (m., f.) meaning originally ‘stranger’, later ‘hostile stranger’, ‘enemy’ (Walde/Hofmann, 661-662), their semantics being treated in this context. There are no formal objections for that. However, the meaning ‘alien’/ ‘hostile’ – clearly secondary in Lat. – finds no support in the oldest Slavic attestations either. In the earliest sources CS, ORu *gostb* is basically a ‘trader on tour’, a ‘wholesales merchant’, never a ‘hostile person’, not even primarily a ‘visitor’, that appears only in Christian context (SJS I, 428), the latter meaning is secondary in Germ. as well (RGA 10, 462-463). All three cognates (Slav., Germ. and Lat.) have been furthermore connected to Ved. *ghas* ‘eat, devour’ (NIL. 173 Fn. 2), which is formally possible as well. Despite a rather attractive conception of ‘hospitality’ as a ‘shared meal’, that may arise out of a poeticized image cultivated in early Germanic epos, this should be seriously questioned. The intercultural context retrievable out of the earliest legal sources of Slavic, Germanic and Celtic (per DIL III, 61), forces to view the ‘guest’, together with a range of related words in the light of a reciprocal performance / attainment, of ‘exchange’ (as payment or warranty service) not reduceable to “eating”, that would rather hark back to the PIE root **G^hes-* ‘exchange’ (also found in a number of IE words for ‘Hand’, s. Eichner 2002). PIE **G^hes-* ‘exchange’ has been already brought to discussion with regard to Lat. *hostis* (de Vaan, EDL; Vine 2006, 143), leaving however the Slavic and the Germ. evidence unexplained. A further analysis of the morphological structure (provided several suffixal derivatives of the PIE root survived independently) could allow to adduce some scattered evidence in Greek: ξένοϛ ‘guest’, ‘host’, ‘mercenary’ and later ‘stranger’ with its derivatives (Chantraine 1980, 764-765) and Alb.: *i húaj* ‘stranger’ (Demiraj 1997, 204) which obviously not only share the inherited root, but also find realization in contexts identical to that, attested in Slavic, Lat. or Germ.

In my talk I will, thus, discuss all formally possible and plausible etymologies of the word, as well as the question of eventual borrowing. I will then scrutinize its earliest occurrences in Slavic and Germanic and set them against the sociocultural background with the help of the extralinguistic evidence (*inter alia* Arabic *Ibn-Khordadbeh. Le livre des routes et des provinces*) and borrowing some essential insights from social anthropology. The further development of ‘guests’ to a social stratum is traceable not only in the East Slavic (Ključevskij 1959, 161-163), but also much earlier in the Langobardian communities (textual evidence per Meyer 1877), comparable both in their designation, and their functions.

As specified above, I will show the advantage of the etymological connection of the whole word family around the ‘guest’ to PIE **G^hes-* ‘exchange’ and dwell on its phonologically accountable development in Slavic.

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