Language Log

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Slavs and slaves

January 17, 2019 @ 7:06 pm · Filed by [Victor Mair](#) under [Etymology](#), [Language and history](#)

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I am in the Czech Republic for lectures and meetings with colleagues. This morning I climbed up to the gigantic oppidum at the top of a steep hill outside Prague near the little town of Zbraslav.

> *Oppidum* is a [Latin](#) word meaning the main settlement in any administrative area of [ancient Rome](#), and applied more generally in Latin to smaller urban settlements than cities, equating to "town" in English (bearing in mind that ancient "cities" could be very small by modern standards). The word is derived from the earlier Latin *ob-pedum*, "enclosed space", possibly from the [Proto-Indo-European](#) **pedóm-*, "occupied space" or "footprint".
>
> [Wikipedia](#)

After agonizing over the pronunciation of the consonant cluster at the beginning of Zbraslav, I speculated over the meaning of the second part of the name (I surmised that the name as a whole means "glory / fame / renown of weapons"). This led to a discussion with my host, Jakub Maršálek, who is well informed about the archeology and history of the region, about the connection between "slave" and "Slav".

I was surprised to learn that the volume of trade in slaves from among the Slavic tribes to purchasers in North Africa and the Middle East was so great that it led to the making of many fortunes for the wealthy of Prague around a thousand years ago. The trade was described in the travel account of [Ibrahim ibn Yaqub](#) (fl. 961–62; Jakub's namesake!), a Hispano-Arabic, Sephardi Jewish merchant (?) who is famous for being the first person to mention Prague and its Jewish community in writing.

So let us ponder the etymology of "slave" and its complex relationship with "Slav".

English "slave":

> From [Middle English](#), from [Old French](#) *sclave*, from [Medieval Latin](#) *sclāvus* ("slave"), from [Late Latin](#) *Sclāvus* ("Slav"), because [Slavs](#) were often forced into slavery in the Middle Ages. The Latin word is from [Byzantine Greek](#) *Σκλάβος* (Sklábos), see that entry and *[Slav](#)* for more.
>
> [Wiktionary](#)

The derivation of the word *slave* encapsulates a bit of European history and explains why the two words *slave* and *Slav* are so similar; they are, in fact, historically identical. The word *slave* first appears in English around 1290, spelled *sclave.* The spelling is based on Old French *esclave* from Medieval Latin *sclavus,* "Slav, slave," first recorded around 800. *Sclavus* comes from Byzantine Greek *sklabos* (pronounced sklä′vōs) "Slav," which appears around 580. *Sklavos* approximates the Slavs' own name for themselves, the *Slověnci,* surviving in English *Slovene* and *Slovenian.* The spelling of English *slave,* closer to its original Slavic form, first appears in English in the 1500s. Slavs became slaves around the beginning of the ninth century when the Holy Roman Empire tried to stabilize a German-Slav frontier. By the 1100s, stabilization had given way to wars of expansion and extermination that did not end until 1410, when the Poles crushed the knights of the Teutonic Order at Grunwald in north-central Poland. · As far as the Slavs' own self-designation goes, its meaning is, understandably, better than "slave"; it comes from the Indo-European root **kleu-,* whose basic meaning is "to hear" and occurs in many

derivatives meaning "renown, fame." The Slavs are thus "the famous people." Slavic names ending in -*slav* incorporate the same word, such as Czech *Bohu-slav,* "God's fame," Russian *Msti-slav,* "vengeful fame," and Polish *Stani-slaw,* "famous for withstanding (enemies)."

American Heritage Dictionary, 5th ed.

Ancient Greek "Σκλάβος":

Probably from earlier *Σλαβῆνος* (Slabênos) (perhaps from a plural *Σλαβῆνοι* (Slabênoi)), of unclear (disputed) origin.

It may derive from the Greek verb *σκυλάω* (skuláō), a variant of *σκυλεύω* (skuleúō, "to get the spoils of war") because Slavs were often enslaved.

Alternatively, it may derive from Proto-Slavic **slověne* ("Slavs", or perhaps "those who speak meaningfully") (plural; with the singular form **slověninъ* derived from that), perhaps via Old Church Slavonic словенинъ (sloveninŭ); compare Old Church Slavonic *словѣни, словѣне* (slověni, slověne, "Thessalonian Slavs"), Old East Slavic *словѣне* (slověne, "Slavs near Novgorod"). See **slověninъ* for more.

Wiktionary

Proto-Slavic "slověninъ":

Roman Jakobson insists on this etymology: from **slovo* ("word"); with link to Old East Slavic *кличане* (kličane, "hunters, who raise game by shout") : *кличь* (klič′), and also on the opposition **slověne* vs. **němьci*.

- Trubachev (Трубачёв): Jakobson's etymology is promising, with the verb **slovǫ*, **sluti* ("to speak (understandably)").

- Vasmer: it has nothing to do with **slava* ("glory, fame") which influenced it in terms of folk etymology later. **slověne* can't be formed from **slovo* because **-ěninъ*, **-aninъ* only occurs in derivations from place names, however local name **Slovy* is not attested. Most likely it's derived from a hydronym.

  Compare Old East Slavic *Словутичь* (Slovutičĭ) — *Dnepr* epithet, Russian *Слуя* (Sluja) — affluent of *Вазуза* (Vazuza), Polish river names *Sława*, *Sławica*, Serbo-Croatian *Славница* and others which brings together with Ancient Greek *κλύζω* (klúzō, "I lave"), *κλύζωει* (klúzōei) · *πλημμυρεῖ* (plēmmureî), *ῥέει* (rhéei), *βρύει* (brúei), *κλύδων* (klúdōn, "surf"), Latin *cluō* ("I clean"), *cloāca* ("sewer pipe"). Other etymologies are less likely.

- Otrębski brings up an interesting parallel — the Lithuanian village name *Šlavénai* on river *Šlavė̃* which is identical to Proto-Slavic *slověne*.

- Бернштейн repeats this etymology: from Proto-Indo-European **slawos* ("people, nation, folk").

- Maher agrees with Trubachev's connection of it to **sluti* ("to be known"),[1] on the grounds that **slovo* ("word") is an s-stem, **sloves-*, which would have led to an expected form **slovesěni* (compare Russian *словéсность* (slovésnost′)

  Wiktionary

I often close letters with "ciao", which means both "hello; hi" and "bye; goodbye". When I do this, I am essentially saying "I am your slave".

Borrowed from Italian *ciao* ("hello, goodbye"), from Venetian *ciao* ("hello, goodbye, your (humble) servant"), from Venetian *s-ciao* / *s-ciavo* ("servant, slave"), from Medieval Latin *sclavus* ("Slav, slave"),

related also to [Italian *schiavo*](), [English *Slav*](), *[slave]()* and Old Venetian *S-ciavón* ("Slav"), from [Latin *Sclavonia*]() ("Slavonia"). Not related to [Vietnamese *chào*]() ("hello, goodbye").

[Wiktionary]()

The Italian salutation *ciao,* which is now popular in many parts of the world outside Italy, originated in the dialects of northern Italy. In the dialect of Venice, *ciau* literally means "servant, slave," and is also used as a casual greeting, "I am your servant." Dialectal *ciau* corresponds to standard Italian *schiavo,* "slave," and both words come from Medieval Latin *sclāvus.* Declaring yourself someone's slave might seem like an extravagant gesture today, but expressions such as *Your obedient servant* or *Your servant, madam* were once commonplace in English. Similarly, the Classical Latin word *servus* meaning "slave" is still used as an informal greeting in southern Germany and in Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and other parts of central Europe that were formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the opposite end of the world, in Southeast and East Asia, one even finds words that originally meant "slave" or "your slave" but have developed into pronouns of the first person through their use in showing respect and humility. In Japanese, for example, the word *boku* is used to mean "I, me," especially by boys and young men, and it comes from a Middle Chinese word meaning "slave" or "servant" and now pronounced *pú* in Mandarin.

American Heritage Dictionary, 5th ed.

Ciao,

Victor

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45 Comments

1. **Peter B. Golden said,**

   January 17, 2019 @ [8:58 pm]()

   Excellent summation of what has been a long argued issue. By the way, in the 17th century, the Eastern Slavic lands (esp. Ukraine and S. Russia) and Galicia (Ukrainian: Halychyna) in (then) Poland , today largely western Ukraine, was the second greatest source of slaves after West Africa.

2. **PeterL said,**

   January 17, 2019 @ [9:26 pm]()

   re: "ciao" … one word for male first-person singular ("I", "me") in Japanese is 僕 ("boku"), which literally means "manservant" or even "slave". From wwwjdic:

   僕 【ぼく】 (pn) (1) (male) I; me; (2) (used addressing young children) you; (3) (See しもべ) manservant; (P)

   僕 【やつがれ】 (pn) (arch) (hum) I; me [Links]
   臣; 奴; 僕 【やつこ(臣,奴); つぶね(奴); やつこらま】 (n) (1) (やつこ only) (arch) slave; (2) retainer; servant; (3) (やつこ only) captive; (4) (やつこ only) (derog) varlet; (5) (やつこ only) (hum) I; me

しもべ 《僕; 下部》 (n) (uk) servant; manservant; menial

3. **Philip Spaelti said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [2:49 am](#)

   Among German speakers: the Swiss use "Ciao", (but generally prefer to spell it "Tschau"), while Austrians use "Servus" which presumably comes from Latin meaning "slave".

4. **Steve Jones said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [2:55 am](#)

   Surely you want to mention 臣 too?!
   I wrote this trifle https://stephenjones.blog/2017/08/25/venetian-greetings/ , moving from Venetian "Fatalità!" to Ciao and "O-i!". Your humble servant, Steve

5. **Serena said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [3:05 am](#)

   @PeterL – how odd, Croatians use "bok" to say "ciao"! :D

6. **Tom Dawkes said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [3:47 am](#)

   szervusz is Hungarian for "Hello". (in Hungarian 'sz' indicates 's' and 's' indicates 'sh', no doubt because of Medieval German phonology)

7. **[cliff arroyo](#) said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [3:54 am](#)

   IINM (and I don't think I am) first person 'pronouns' in a number of SEAsian languages are derived from words meaning slave or servant including Thai phom (not sure about dichan) Vietnamese tôi, Khmer khnjom.
   A common word for "I" in Sundanese in Indonesia is abdi (transparently related to Arabic عبد 'slave'

8. **David Marjanović said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [5:10 am](#)

   > Austrians use "Servus"

   That's a specifically Viennese thing, and not exactly universal there either.

9. **[cliff arroyo](#) said,**

   January 18, 2019 @ [5:32 am](#)

   I've also never heard serwus used in modern Polish (I do reacall seeing it a textbook or two from the 1960s and maybe hearing it in older movies).
   I don't think I've heard in Romania either (though I haven't spent much time there)

10. **[Yuval](#) said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 8:47 am

In Hebrew, one could still refer to oneself as עבדך הנאמן "your loyal slave", albeit in a formal or tongue-in-cheek register. I definitely do so on occasion.
Oddly enough, עבד is gendered, with female-slave being the totally different שפחה, and the equivalent idiomatic form sounds much, much clunkier.

11. **Ralph Hickok said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 8:58 am

It's not the same as "slave," but 200 or so years ago it was quite common to close a leader with "Your most humble and obedient servant" or variations thereof.

12. **Ralph Hickok said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 8:58 am

Oops…obviously, I meant "letter," not "leader."

13. **Philip Taylor said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 9:25 am

Polish "cześć", Vietnamese "chào" — neither would seem to be etymologically related to the languages discussed above, but the similarity does make it easy to remember these two greetings/farewells …

14. **a_m said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 9:36 am

Great summation indeed, but the initial question in the OP appears to be unresolved: is -slav in the town names (and many Slavic male names) coming from the *slav ("slave/servant/voice/call") root, or from *slava ("glory, fame") which, per Vasmer, is unrelated?

15. **Jerry Friedman said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 10:13 am

I've seen Spaniards use "servidor" to refer to themselves. Back in the good old days of alt.usage.spanish, there was a meet-up in Spain and one participant reported on it in the group, always calling himself "un servidor". And when someone asked who was interested in an exchange of postcards, at least one response was "servidor" (or "servidol", in a mock-Andalusian accent). I don't remember any of the participants from Spanish America using the term. I can't help seeing it as jocular, but I don't know.

I beg to remain, etc.

16. **Lugubert said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 10:29 am

Ralph Hickok, an etymologically unrelated but semantically identical phrase was used in Swedish in the 17th and 18th centuries 'Jag förbliver Eder ödmjukaste tjänare' (I remain your most humble servant). In the early 1900's, it had been abbreviated to the quite casual greeting 'Tjänare!' which at least until very recently occurred as 'Tjäna!' or even 'Tja'.

17. **J.W. Brewer said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 10:37 am

To Ralph Hickok's point, English at least in the last several centuries has felt a fairly sharp lexical/semantic distinction between "servant" and "slave," with the occasional use of the former to describe the latter sounding rather markedly euphemistic. But my sense is that plenty of other languages (I think including Latin, with "servus") have sometimes used the same lexeme for both. And another complicating bit of context is that in earlier centuries there were plenty of social/legal conditions somewhere intermediate between what we think of as chattel slavery and what we think of as freedom, e.g. serfdom, indentured servitude, indentured apprenticeship etc etc. Even more broadly, sign-offs of the styles "I have the honour to remain yr Lordship's ob't servant" only make sense within a social context that is frankly and overtly hierarchical – even if someone who is actually understood to be a social equal is using a deferential inferior-to-superior form as a mark of politeness, it is the lack of any even nominal cultural commitment to the rhetoric of egalitarianism that makes the rhetoric work, at least until it becomes a frozen idiom that no longer needs to be parsed to see if it makes any sense in compositional terms.

18. **Chris Button said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 10:37 am

> … the Swiss use "Ciao", (but generally prefer to spell it "Tschau"

Its "tchau" with a "t" in Portuguese too since "ch" is /ʃ/ so the "t" is added to make /tʃ/

> In Japanese, for example, the word boku is used to mean "I, me," especially by boys and young men, and it comes from a Middle Chinese word meaning "slave" or "servant" and now pronounced pú in Mandarin.

Burmese *tʃ̃ʌ˦* "slave" is used as "I (male)" and "I (female)"

> Surely you want to mention 臣 too?!

宦 (which is undoubtedly related to 官) is compared by Luce (1981) with *tʃ̃ʌ˦* from Written Burmese *kjwɛn* "slave" above. If phonologically related (which they might not be), the palatal coda of 臣 is problematic as is the lack of labialisation. However, there is a Burmese word *tʃwɛɪ˦* "minister to" which is possibly related to and has the unique spelling in Inscriptional Burmese of *klwɛɲ* which violates the phonotactic constraint preventing a medial -w- before a palatal coda (as we saw in the case of "dog" where the nasal coda of OC 犬 *kʰʷə́ɲʔ is not present in Burmese: http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=36996).

19. **Jake said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 10:56 am

I don't speak Czech but would naively have thought that 'Zbr' would just be the voiced version of 'Spr' which is a perfectly cromulent English cluster.

20. **Robert Coren said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 11:08 am

@J.W. Brewer: Then there are the various interpretations (depending on period and context) of the German *Knecht*, which can be interpreted as "servant", "slave", or "(vassal) knight" (it is, of course, cognate to English *knight*).

21. **Bloix said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 11:28 am

"The word slave first appears in English around 1290,"
English must have had a word for "slave" before 1290 – I know nothing about Old English, but the "Old English Translator" https://www.oldenglishtranslator.co.uk
gives a dozen or more words for slave -cypecniht, góp,hæft,inbyrdling, lýtle, nídþeów, oépeeniht, rihtjjeów, wiel, wilincel, þéowling, and many more –
leading me to conclude that slavery to the Anglo-Saxons was as common as snow to the Eskimos (Joke!)
So what happened? Why did English jettison all its finely distinguished words for all possible varieties of human bondage in favor of a foreign word with no connection to life in the British Isles?

22. **J.W. Brewer said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 11:44 am

Bloix, taking wikipedia at face value (meaning, caveat lector …): "Slavery in Great Britain existed and was recognized from before the Roman occupation until the 12th century, when chattel slavery disappeared, at least for a time, after the Norman Conquest. Former slaves merged into the larger body of serfs in Britain and no longer were recognized separately in law nor custom." So by 1290 the older words might have fallen into desuetude because their referent had become locally obsolete, all at a time when there was a lot of lexical turnover going on anyway.

23. **Bloix said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 12:19 pm

JW Brewer – now that is an interesting solution to the problem. So William the Conqueror freed the slaves? A little more googling says maybe so:
Yet in their attitudes towards slavery the Normans appear to have improved the lives of the most wretched people in Anglo-Saxon society:… By the time William of Malmesbury was writing in the 1120s slavery was gone…'After England began to have Norman lords', wrote the monk Lawrence of Durham, 'the English no longer suffered from outsiders that which they had suffered at their own hands. In this respect they found that foreigners treated them better than they had treated themselves.'"
https://www.historytoday.com/marc-morris/normans-and-slavery-breaking-bonds

24. **Jerry Friedman said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 1:28 pm

Bloix:

Actually, English saved one of its words, "þrǽl", which became "thrall" (now mostly figurative), but according to the OED, the Old English was borrowed from Old Norse. The first citation is from c. 950.

25. **Trogluddite said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 2:56 pm

As I understand it, the etymology of 'Welsh/Wales' is somewhat similar to 'Slav' (I'd be keen to hear what those better educated than I am have to say about this – I only had time for a little light revision on http://www.etymologyonline and http://www.old-engli.sh, from which the following is compiled.)

Deriving from a proto-Germanic word 'walha' meaning 'foreigner/other' (itself derived from the name of a rival Celtic people), it was applied to the native Britons during the Saxon conquest of Britain, and

later came to have the meaning 'underclass', and even 'slave'; presumably because of Saxon enslavement of native Britons (the 'wiel' from Bloix's list possibly?) The weregild of even free 'wealas' was less than for other freemen in at least some jurisdications, and once serfdom became more usual than slavery, the term persisted for some time as a slur imputing inferiority. Besides 'Wales/Welsh', the word persists in others such as 'Cornwall' (land of the Cornish Britons) and 'walnut' (nut imported from a foreign land), and family names such as 'Walsh' and 'Wallace' (and on the European continent in 'Walloon', 'Wallachia'.)

26. **Chris Button said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 2:59 pm

Adding the OC reconstructions to my earlier post:

臣 *gə̀ɲ
宦 *gʷráns
官/倌 *kʷán (with latter having a variant *kʷráns)

27. **Christian Weisgerber said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 5:36 pm

@Trogluddite
Derivatives of this old Germanic name for foreigners can be found all along the continental Germanic/Romance language border, e.g. the Swiss canton of *Wallis* (Valais) and *Welschschweiz* for the French-speaking part of Switzerland. It was even transferred into Slavic, where it is the source of Polish *Włochy*, Italy.

28. **David Marjanović said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 7:24 pm

> I don't speak Czech but would naively have thought that 'Zbr' would just be the voiced version of 'Spr' which is a perfectly cromulent English cluster.

Why "would"? That's exactly what it is.

> the German *Knecht*, which can be interpreted as "servant", "slave", or "(vassal) knight"

Today "farmhand". But in earlier times it was used for all sorts of servitude.

29. **David Marjanović said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 7:27 pm

> as we saw in the case of "dog" where the nasal coda of OC 犬 *kʰʷə́ɲʔ is not present in Burmese:

According to a conference presentation by Sagart, it wasn't present in OC either; instead, the coda was *-r… and instead of Indo-European, the word suddenly looks onomatopoetic, though that could depend on the vowel, which remains difficult to reconstruct.

30. **Scott P. said,**

January 18, 2019 @ 7:55 pm

Trogluddite:

To that I presume we can add "Vlach," bring it back to the idea of "Slav"?

31. **Chris Button said,**

January 18, 2019 @ <u>9:40 pm</u>

@ David Marjanović

You made that very same point on a separate thread where I explained to you what the issue is from a Burmese perspective:

<u>http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=40459#comment-1556511</u>

I believe I actually attended that presentation by Sagart in Jena during one of my brief forays back into the academic world. I don't want to speculate about the other languages in question, but my guess would be that something similar was going on.

Speaking of PIE/OC connections discussed previously on LLog, the above reminds me of suggestions that Written/Inscriptional Burmese *ŋɛn* "goose" (modern /ŋã˩/) does not have the medial -r- that a reconstruction like Old Chinese *ŋráns for 雁 "goose" would suggest. This ignores the fact (as noted by Rudolf Yanson) that there were no native /ŋr-/ clusters in Old Burmese and that any such cases in Inscriptional/Written Burmese were actually representing /ŋj-/ influenced by Sanskrit/Pali orthographic conventions in loanwords like Inscriptional Burmese *ŋrɛj* "hell" (Written Burmese *ŋə.rɛj:* now pronounced /ŋə.jɛ˩/). In fact, the OC word for 雁 most likely never did have a medial -r- (the later Middle Chinese "division 2" vocalism being conditioned by something else – possibly the loan process and a resultant long /aː/ as we discussed on the "tea" thread for 荼 *láɣ and 茶 *láːɣ < *láɣ) but there is nothing in Burmese to prove that.

32. **Chris Button said,**

January 18, 2019 @ <u>10:06 pm</u>

@Trogluddite, Christian Weisgerber & Scott P.

It seems we can add "Gaul" to that list as well.

33. **David Marjanović said,**

January 19, 2019 @ <u>5:50 am</u>

> You made that very same point on a separate thread where I explained to you what the issue is from a Burmese perspective:

Thanks, I had simply overlooked your comment! It confuses me, though. The hypothesis that this "dog" word had *-r is not (explicitly) for Proto-Sino-Tibetan, but for OC, but you simply state as a fact that the OC form had *-ɲ.

On the excessively common "medial" *-r- of Baxter & Sagart, however, <u>Guillaume Jacques suggests</u> that many of them may have been preinitial as indeed found in Tibetan and Rgyalrong cognates.

34. **Chris Button said,**

January 19, 2019 @ <u>7:21 am</u>

@ David Marjanović

The notion that -r- may actually have been a prefix r- is nothing new at all. Handel (2000) is a good read in this regard.

Sagart had already suggested the possibility of a liquid coda for 犬 back in 1999 (Baxter & Sagart write -[n] to show uncertainty). He is using -r to account for the lack of a nasal coda in some Tibeto-Burman comparanda for which Benedict had long ago suggested a "collective" suffixal -n. By the way, regardless of the phonological constraint in Burmese when combined with labialisation, the general loss of nasality of Old Burmese -ɲ in its evolution to modern Burmese is very instructive in this regard.

Regarding my reconstruction, where Baxter & Sagart have *-in and *-iŋ, I treat Pulleyblank's *-ən as resulting from a merger of original *-jən and *-əŋʲ < *-jəŋ.

35. **Chris Button said,**

January 19, 2019 @ 9:47 am

Separately, regarding *-ən, it could also under certain conditions derive from **-jəm as well as the other nasals in **-jəŋ and **-jən. For example, compare the xiesheng relationship of 祅 *ʰráɲʔ < **ʰrʲə́m (not to be confused, as is unfortunately nowadays often the case, with phonologically unrelated 天 *tʰə́n in which 丁 *táɲ is originally phonetic) to 忝 ɬʲám?.

36. **Chris Button said,**

January 19, 2019 @ 9:48 am

There was a glottal typo in 祅 *ʰráɲ < **ʰrʲə́m above.

37. **Peter Grubtal said,**

January 19, 2019 @ 12:40 pm

David Marjanović :
" Austrians use "Servus"
That's a specifically Viennese thing, and not exactly universal there either."

Servus is widespread in Oberbayern (Upper Bavaria), having just returned from the Loipe, where I must have heard it half-a-dozen times today.

38. **Tadeusz said,**

January 20, 2019 @ 8:06 am

Writing from Poland: today it is quite widely believed that the first rulers of Poland (from the Piast house) got their money from selling slaves to Byzantium and Arab lands in the 10th century. The slaves in the 17th century (and earlier) from today's Ukraine were those caught by Turks and their vassals. I believe that was also what happened in North Africa.
Cześć is an old Slavic word (cf. Czech čest, Russian честь, it can be translated as honour, a noun actually, used as an exclamation, often with a typical nominal syntax (Cześć N+Dative, e.g., wam: Hello to you).

39. **David Marjanović said,**

January 20, 2019 @ 9:17 am

OK, *servus* is (or has become) a specifically Viennese thing within Austria. In the late 80s/early 90s I lived in Linz, halfway between Vienna and Upper Bavaria, and did not encounter *servus* in the wild.

40. **Victor Mair** said,

January 20, 2019 @ 2:53 pm

My Czech friends tell me that they have heard servus used in the Czech-speaking areas, especially when they were younger.

41. **Jichang Lulu** said,

January 21, 2019 @ 9:27 pm

The place name Zbraslav is derived from a personal name with the addition of the *jь* suffix, common in Slavic toponymy. The personal name would also be Zbraslav: as a result of regular sound change, the suffix disappears after -*v* in modern Czech. Its presence can be seen in the declension of the word: while the anthroponym Zbraslav has, e.g., genitive Zbraslav*a*, the place name Zbraslav has genitive Zbraslav*i*. It thus means 'Zbraslav's [town]'. (In Russian, the suffix would survive after -*v* in the nominative (cf. *Yaroslavl'* from *Yaroslav*), but there are are similar cases: e.g., the city of Vladimir (< Volodiměrь) with the same nominative as the personal name Vladimir (< Volodiměrъ) but different in other cases.) There are other places called Zbraslav in the Czech Republic.

In the personal name Zbraslav (Polish Zbrosław), the second element is 'fame' as discussed in the OP. The first one has been analysed (p. 24) as related to the root of the Proto-Slavic verb _*borti_ 'fight', with the prefix _*jьz_.

The form *Izbraslav* is indeed attested in Czech, as it happens referring to the same location, in one version of what purports to be Vladislav I's letter establishing the Kladruby monastery in 1115 and bestowing various possessions on it, including Zbraslav:

> Dedi quoque Izbrazlau cum omnibus ad eam pertinentibus.

(The document was seen as a 13th-century falsification (possibly going back to a genuine source (p. 86ff.)) already by Dobrovský in 1786.)

A somewhat famous Zbraslav: the legendary son of Saint Wenceslaus, mentioned as *Izbręslavъ* Избрѧславъ in the Second Slavic Legend of St Wenceslas (text in Nikolsky, p. 44; Czech translation by Vašica).

Czech *servus* came via Bavarian according to Rejzek's etymological dictionary. More old-fashioned greetings meaning 'servant': *služebník* and its diminutive *služebníček*.

Music with the root *slav*- discussed in the OP: Liszt's *Slavimo slavno, Slaveni* (SW 33, 503, 658), a setting of a Croatian poem by Medo Pucič.

42. **Andreas Johansson said,**

January 22, 2019 @ 2:28 am

@Lugubert

Tjänare with variants are still alive and well in Swedish, though probably few speakers today are aware of the connection to the common noun *tjänare* "servant".

To help obscure the connection, many speakers (myself included) pronounce the common noun with [ɛ:] but the greeting with [e:] in the first syllable, apparently because the latter is borrowed from Stockholm dialect that turns all [ɛ:]'s to [e:]'s.

43. **Rodger C said,**

January 22, 2019 @ [8:16 am](#)

služebník

Somebody who listens up?

44. **Jorge said,**

January 23, 2019 @ [12:45 pm](#)

@Rodger C

Sluzhba (служба) "service" vs Slushatel' (слушатель) "listener."

Thanks for the research on this all. Very interesting.

Jorge (Retired USN Russian language professional)

45. **[Piotr Gąsiorowski](#) said,**

January 25, 2019 @ [8:11 pm](#)

Re: Jakobson's etymology.

First, ***slovo is an old s-stem (PIE *ḱlew-es-, nom.sg. *ḱlewos**), and one would expect to find the stem-forming ***-es-** in genuinely old derivatives. It does appear for example in Old Church Slavonic *slovesьnъ* 'pertaining to words or speech'. Secondly, ***-ěn-** is normally found in "habitative" ethnonyms ('X-dwellers') only, like the more frequent but synonymous suffix ***-jan-.**

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