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LATIN PLANT NAMES AS SUPERSTRUCTURE ON INDIGENOUS PROTOSLAVIC SUBSTRATE

Povzetek

LATINSKA IMENA RASTLIN KOT NADGRANJA LJUDSKIH PRASLOVANSKIH IMEN

Pri poimenovanju rastlinskih in živalskih vrst znanstveniki najpogosteje posegajo po ljudskih imenih, ki so zgodovinski predhodnik večine znanstvenih poimenovanj, saj posamezna vrsta ni nastala šele z znanstvenim poimenovanjem. Članek naj pokaže da so številna latinska imena podobna poimenovanjem srbskih in drugih slovanskih ljudi, ki so še v pristnem stiku z naravo. Nesmiselna je predpostavka, da so poimenovanja Karla G. Linea in drugih botanikov, od Srednjega veka dalje, vplivali na nastanek teh ljudskih imen. Če lahko pokažemo, da so ljudska imena pomensko blizu širšemu kulturnemu slovanskemu okolju in v mnogih primerih kažejo, da latinska imena nimajo ustrezne etimologije, je to še en dokaz za samobitni kulturni razvoj Slovanov, tako v Srbiji kot v širšem Srednjeevropskem prostoru. Če znanstveniki jemljejo svoja poimenovanja rastlin iz ljudskih imen, ki zgodovinsko spadajo k Rimskemu imperiju bi pričakovali, da bo poimenovanje latinsko tudi z ustrezno etimologijo. To se v mnogih poimenovanjih ne izkaže, kar bom poskušal pokazati.

Introduction

Assigning a scientific name to a species of plants or animals is not as easy task as one without experience would imagine. Sometimes it is nothing short of re-creating the world, particularly so if there are no names to be found in the past or in the memory of the populace of the area that serves as the habitat of the given species. This is a well-known dilemma of any researcher who has had the luck to discover a new species or subspecies of plants or animals. In such cases he/she will most likely mark the species with the stamp of the locale, such as *Homo heilderbergiensis* (found at or near Heidelberg, Germany) or *Homo pekinensis* (near Peking, China), to list the notorious examples from anthropology. The famous Serbian botanist, Josif Pančić, had a less difficult problem when among other new species he discovered a novel subspecies of spruces, which he immediately labeled *Picea omorika*, the latter term being the traditional name he borrowed from the peasants of the little mountain village of Zaovine, the *locus classicus* of the gracious spruce soon to become the favourite of many parks all over the world.

Basing my investigation on former premises, I am trying to demonstrate that numerous species of plants naturally growing in Serbia and broader area of the ex-Yugoslavia must have had their original names given to them in times that had by far preceded their scientific nomenclature. Moreover, as their new scientific names often bear striking resemblance to the indigenous Slavic names, I shall have enough ground to conclude that such scientific nomenclature was often nothing else but Latinized version of the peasants' terms, which in all these cases are proposed to be of Slavic origin. Now, as these plant species are not restricted botanically to this presumably limited linguistic area, the question arises - why do they have Slavic (or Venetic) names if they grow in non-Slavic settings? Another question of importance is, why were they not given the names of Latin origin and etymology, if Latin was (and still is) the language of science? It is natural that the deeper we go into the past, the more walks of life Latin language is bound to cover. As a conclusive statement, if the proposed species names are accepted as Slavic substratum, then the Slavic populations must be allowed a broader geographical presence in Europe and their timeline must be shifted to a more ancient past than traditionally proposed.

Study

I propose as the most convenient way of laying down the evidence for the above thesis, an alphabetical list of studied plant names in a table form, given by their Latin name, indigenous Slavic names, and English name and etymologies as are given in the main literature [1-10], that will follow the table.

All the necessary linguistic and culture-logical comments, where applicable, will follow afterwards with literature named in text. Reader is invited to consider the fact that it is not only the species that bear resemblance to the Slavic terms, but general as well, which lends more credibility to the main concept of the paper.

Comparative list of plants

Latin name	Serbian	Russian	Slovenian	Polish	Czech	Bulgarian	English
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	jahor (old)	klen	javor	klon	javor	javor	maple
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	kesten	kaštan	divji kostanj	kasztan- owiec	jirovec	kesten	horse chestnut
<i>Agropyrum repens</i>	pirevina	pirej	pirika	perz	žitňák	pirevina	quack grass
<i>Avena sativa</i>	ovas	oves	oves	owies	oves	oves	oat
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	grab	grab	gaber	habr	gabr	grab	hornbeam
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	kesten	kaštan	kostanj	kasztan	kaštan	kesten	chestnut
<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	trešnja	čerešnja	češnja	czereśnia	třešeň	čereša	cherry
<i>Cuscuta epythimum</i>	kosica	povilka	drobnocvetna predenica	kianianka	kokotice	koskuda	lesser dodder
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	gdunja	aiva	kutina	pigwa	kdoule	djulja	quince

Latin name	Serbian	Russian	Slovenian	Polish	Czech	Bulgarian	English
<i>Fagus sylvestris</i>	bukva	buk	bukev	buk	buk	buk	beech
<i>Gentiana lutea</i>	lincura	gorečavka	encijan	goryczka	hořec	tintjava	gentian
<i>Humulus lupulus</i>	hmelj	hmelj	hmelj	chmiel	chmel	hmel	hops
<i>Impatiens noli-tangere</i>	netik	nedotroga	nedotika	netik	netykavka	pukalec	touch-me-not
<i>Iris germanica</i>	perunika	kasatik	perunika	irys	iris	perunika	iris
<i>Larix europeus</i>	ariš	listvennica	macesen	modrzew	modřín	listvenica	larch
<i>Lens esculenta</i>	leće	čečevici	leča	soczewicy	čočka	lešta	lentil
<i>Linum ussitatissimum</i>	lan	len	lan	len	len	len	flax
<i>Lilium candidum</i>	ljiljan	lilija	lilija	lilia	lilie	lilija	lily
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	ljulj	plevel	ljuljka	žycica	jílek	buren	rye –grass
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	marulja	marulja	črna meta	marulja	jablečnik	marulja	black horehound
<i>Mentha piperita</i>	nana	myata	meta	mięta	máta	menta	peppermint
<i>Morus nigra</i>	murva	šerkovica	murva	morwa	moruše	černica	mulberry
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	bosiljak	vasiljka	bazilika	bazylija	bazalka	bosilek, basil	basilica
<i>Olea europea</i>	uljika, maslina	maslina	oljka	oliwka	oliva	maslina	olive
<i>Oryza sativa</i>	riža	ris	riž	ryż	rýže	oriz	rice
<i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i>	ostrija	hmelegrab	črni gaber	szczawik	habrovec	ostrija	hop-hornbeam
<i>Oxalis acetosa</i>	kiselica	kislica	kislica	szczawik	šfavel	kiselica	sorrel
<i>Paeonia officinalis</i>	božur	pion	potonika	piwonia	pivoňka	božur	peony
<i>Populus tremula</i>	trepetljika	trembilng topolja	trepetlika	trembilng topoli	trembilng topol	trepetlika	trembling poplar
<i>Quercus cerris</i>	cer	cer	cer	cer	cerový	cer	turkish oak
<i>Rhus cotinus</i>	ruj	sumah	ruj	sumak	sumac	sumak	sumach
<i>Ribes nigrum</i>	ribizla	sajt	ribez	porzeczka	rybíz	stafida	currant
<i>Ruta graveolens</i>	ruta, rutvica	ruta	ruta, rutica	ruta	ruta	sedefče	rue
<i>Rosa gallica</i>	ruža	roza	roža	roža	ruže	roza	rose
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	žalfija	šalfej	žajbelj	szałwia	šalvej	salvija	sage
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	zova	buzina	bezeg	bez czarny	bez černý	bz	elder
<i>Sedum acre</i>	žednjak	sedum	grobeljnik	rozchodnik	rozchodnik	žednjak	stonecrop
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	tisa	tis	tisa	cis	tis	tis	yew
<i>Triticum durum</i>	pšenica, dura	pšenica	pšenica	pšenica	pšenice	pšenica	wheat
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	divizma	ogony trava	lučnik	dziewanna	divizna	lopen	mullein
<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	vrbenja	verbena	verbena	werbena	sporýš	vrbinka	vervain

Etymological considerations

Acer platanoides: jahor, javor - maple

From a Latin word meaning 'sharp', in reference to the hardness of maple wood which was used for spears by Roman soldiers, v.

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/botanary/go/34/> Jan, 2010. This name was first applied to the genus by the French botanist Joseph Pitton de Tournefort in 1700 acc. to

<http://maple.askdefine.com/> (Jan, 2010)

The existence of an older Slavic form (*jahor, as in Montenegro) is provided by Petar Skok [1, 763]. It is also found in the name of a mountain in Bosnia that must bear its name after the maple trees, the Jahorina and most likely in the name of the *Juhor* mountain in Serbia. There are more cases for this duality/replaceability of *v* and *h* sounds in Serbian: both *strava* and *strah* (fear) are used in common parlance, the same with *buva* and *buha* (flea), *muva/muha* (fly) etc. Since the German form is *ahorn*, it is possible to propose a proto-Slavic form *jahor* as more ancient than *javor* and suggest a root which must have had a neutral vocal at the outset, *jbh-r*. This root, reduced to *jh* and *jk* as its harder variant, has given some important words in Slavic languages, such as *jahati* (to ride), *jak* (strong), *jeklo* (glass) and *joha/jova*, another hard tree species growing by the rivers (*Alnus* sp., alder). The absence of *j* (or other) sound in the Latin form *acer* gives me grounds enough to establish a Slavic origin of the species, on the basis of which *acer* along with its etymology may only be an *interpretatio Romana*. (See more comments on *Acer* below).

Aesculus hippocastanum: kesten, kostanj – chestnut

Chestnut, 1570, from cheshten nut (1519), from M.E. chasteine, from O.Fr. chastaigne, from L. castanea, from Gk. kastaneia, which the Greeks thought meant either »nut from Castanea« in Pontus, or »nut from Castana« in Thessaly, but probably both places are named for the trees, not the other way around, and the word is probably borrowed from a language of Asia Minor. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=chestnut&searchmode=nl> [2]. It is evident that no clear etymology can be seen from this quote. The Latin prefix in the species name hippo- denotes 'horse's chestnut', most likely one of food items for horses and other domestic animals, to differentiate it from the chestnut edible for humans, which belongs to another genus and family altogether, *Castanea sativa* (fam. Fagaceae). Both terms, castanum and castanea must undeniably come from the Slavic root, »kost« (bone), which perfectly depicts the hardness of both plants' nuts. Please consider also the Slovenian words 'kost', pertaining to the bone and 'kostanj', chestnut. (V. *Castanea sativa*)

Agropyrum/Agropyron repens: pirevina, pirika - quackgrass

Beauv., presumably from Greek roots agro 'field' and pyron 'wheat', meaning 'field or wild wheat'. The fact that even the scientific names of similar species vary from pyrum to pyron reveals that the etymology is not clear. However, the root 'pyrum' goes down to the Sanskrit word pura-h (meal), whereas in Serbian even today peasants in some regions use the word pura for 'porridge' (again the same root) made of cooked milled grains of many species of food plants. It is well-known that the u sound in Greek is pronounced like

French *u* in 'pure', whence this form in Greek. Another word in Serbian and Macedonian, *pirinač* (rice) points to this connection of food plants and fire/cooking. This word, although found in Persian and hypothetically brought to the Haemus (The Balkans) by the Ottoman Turks, must be much older and it must have been around in these areas long before the Ottomans invaded them. I propose a common root for *pirevina*, *pirinač* or *piriti* (to blow, to incinerate fire, also the Greek base *pyr-*, *pyro-* 'fire') to be the Slavic root *pir*. Reduced to the root *pir*, this word means 'feast, festivity' in all Slavic languages, which is not possible without fire and cooking and must have had ritual and religious importance in ancient times. *Pura* is an ablaut (gradation) form of the same lexical minimum, *pr*.

Avena sativa: *ovas*, *oves* – oat

Latin for oats (ref. genus *Avena*) (<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageAN-AZ.html> Jan, 2010) was all I could find on the internet after exhaustive research. *Ovas* reminds of »*ovan*« and »*ovce*« (ram, sheep), the well known staple food of cattle and horses. Another possibility, which sounds even more acceptable, was put forward by the Slovenian researcher Lucian Vuga. He posited that »*oves* (Slovenian form of the same) < *ovesen*, which depicts the ear of oats hanging down see: L. Vuga, *Davnina govori, založba Jutro, Ljubljana 2003*, p. 72. As there is no thorough etymology available on the net, as far as I could find, the Slavic one fits in both semantically and phonetically.

Carpinus betulus: *grab*, *gaber* – hornbeam

Ancient Latin for hornbeam was all I could find on

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/botanary/go/1187/> (Jan 2010). Metathesis as well as a more ancient phonetic value in the initial *g* and final *b* in the Slavic root *grab* is evident compared to Lat. *carp-inus*. Charms based on this tree are fully documented in the rich Serbian ethnography. On the popular pre-Christian feast of *Đurđevdan*, girls bathe or ride on a hornbeam so that boys would »grab for them«, which is based on magical similarity of the verb *grabiti* ('to grab') and the tree's name. Even the English verb to grab conveys the very same idea, though it has either lost this magical connotation or has been without it from the beginning. *Grab* has a very hard wood, while a gradational adjective *grub* means 'rough, rude, hard'. *Carpinus* could be related to Blg. dial. *karpa* – rock, and *кѣрпел* – goad (made of oak) and the common meaning could be – hard.

Castanea sativa: *kesten*, *kostanj* – chestnut

See explanation under *Aesculus h*.

Prunus cerasus: *trešnja*, *črešnja*, *češnja*, *čerešnja* - cherry-tree

Cherry-tree, for which the English speaker is not aware, that its name comes from the Slavic root, »*čer*« »*ker*«, meaning stone, although he/she uses the word »stone« for the hard inedible kernel.

Čer-ješnja, according to Petr Jandaček, literally means 'edible kernel', see: P. Jandaček, L. Arko, Linguistic connections between Basques and Slavs (Veneti) in Antiquity, Zbornik 1. Mednarodne konference, Veneti v etnogenezi srednjeevropskega prebivalstva, Jutro, Ljubljana 2002, p. 154.

Alternatively, there are other roots in all Slavic languages, that may clarify the origin of the word, 'kres', meaning fire, lighting up the fire and 'kras-an', for rudy, reddish, nice, pleasant, evidently reaching back to IE. origins (cf. ie. *ker-, to burn).

The official etymology states that the species comes from Keras (according to Georgiev the suffix UNT is related to Old Slavic EN, which we can find in oslen, kozlen, žreben) in Asia Minor. However, this only may add to the evidence of the presence of Venetic or Proto-Slavic populations in this part of the world in antiquity, for this marvellous fruit most likely must have given the name to the town, and not the other way around. For it is not easily imaginable that a place-name can be abbreviated into something that is a root in many languages (cf. Lit.'krosas', colour and 'krasis', furnace).

Cuscuta epithymum: kosica, vilina kosica - lesser dodder

This plant name, though proposed to come from Greek, has no meaning in this language. This is explicitly stated in a very interesting study on this plant *Cuscuta* (convulvulaceae) - the strength of weakness: a history of its name, uses and parasitism concept during ancient and medieval times by Mihai Costea and François J. Tardif, http://www.wlu.ca/documents/7481/PDF_paper.pdf (Jan, 2010).

Allow me to quote the appropriate passage:

Several authors mentioned that the name has Greek origin (e.g. Dawson et al. 1994). But "kasytas" does not have any meaning in Greek and it would be more logical to assume that the name was introduced. Although Austin (1979) initially suggested that the name comes from Aramaic, he mentioned later that the name has an Arabic origin (Austin 1980). However, apparently "kushkuut," "kashuut" or "koshou't" as Arabic names of *Cuscuta* are early Aramaic neologisms (Fraenkel 1886, Nakhle Al-Yassu'i 1986). Many ancient Arabic words, especially related to agriculture were introduced from Aramaic (Nakhle Al-Yassu'i 1986). Based on the new root "k-sh-w-th," the word "kushsha" meaning in Arabic "a lock of hair" was probably derived (David Mehall, pers.comm): (op. cit., p. 3).

»Kosa« in Slavic languages means hair, an exact representation of this strange hairy-like plant, which grows as a parasite on other plants (»epithymum«). Even the whole family is Cuscitaceae. I am obliged to the reviewers of this text for informing me that in Bulgarian this plant has an even more similar form to the scientific name, *koskot* and *kuskuda*! However, after going through the afore-mentioned paper, I inferred that there has been a Semitic influx on Bulgarian at some point of time, possibly via Arabic movements towards Europe in the 10th century A.D. But it could be inversely that Arabian assumed such words from Proto-Slavs when occupied their territory between 6000 and 100 BC. Still, two puzzling points have to be clarified: Is the similarity both in form and meaning between the Semitic and Slavic bases just a coincidence? On the other hand, is there a deeper level from which the origin of the word can be scrutinized? On the former inquiry it is possible to presume the influence of form of Semitic on Bulgarian because of the geographical proximity. As stated in the paper, ancient authors such as Dioscorides, Pliny and Theophrastus took up the Semitic base and it was officially endorsed by Linnaeus (1753), (op. cit., p.5). However, that the meaning is also almost identical in both families of languages stands out as more

than a curiosity. Perhaps nostraticists would have much more to say on this parallelism. After all, there are marginalized historians, like the Serbian Miloje Milojević (19th c.), who wrote of Serbian states in India and Mesopotamia in the Old Era. Instead of ridiculing such writers, true historical science should better take a systematic and unbiased approach to their work if the truth is to be obtained.

As for a deeper stratum of meaning, I find it in the Serbian notion of *vilina kosica*, ‘villa’s hair’, which is the full name of the plant. *Vilas* or ‘fairies’ are well-known Slavic mythological creatures in the form of beautiful young women of somewhat ambivalent nature. I have been delving into the distant past of our Slavic forefathers in many walks of life for a considerable time now, so the shortest argument I can provide here is that customs, myths, rites and certain linguistic features are able to provide otherwise hidden insights into the riddles of our past. It is becoming increasingly evident now that Slavs under many of their numerous names have been roaming on a much wider spatio-temporal scale than it had been imagined (or normatively defined) earlier. *Custuta* was a mystery for the ancients, and down to quite recent times its epiphytic nature (as growing on other plants, at least part of the time in this case) has boggled the minds of its observers. *Vilina kosica* is therefore a perfect primitive and ancient depiction of its growing habits that may have influenced some of its subsequent names.

Cydonia oblonga: gdunja, kutina, dunja – quince

The Online etymology dictionary (OED) states: ‘quince - c.1325, pl. of quoyne, from O. Fr. cooin, from L. cotoneum malum »quince fruit,« probably a variant of cydonium malum, from Gk. kydonion malon »apple of Kydonia« (modern Khania), ancient seaport city in Crete. The plant is native to Persia, Anatolia, and Greece; the Greeks imported grafts for their native plants from a superior strain in Crete, hence the name. Kodu- was also the Lydian name for the fruit.’ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php> (Nov 2009).

I think that ‘kodu’ smacks of Slavic verb *goditi* ‘bring pleasure, suit well’. It should come as no surprise to relate this Lydian word to a Slavic one if we remember that Homer and Herodotus mention the Veneti and Panons, now known as undoubtedly of Slavic stock, as far back in time as the Trojan war (12th c. B.C.). Svetislav Bilbija, the first to thoroughly read through the Etruscan scripts, has also decoded a Lydian obelisk, by applying the cyrillic alphabet.

A hypothetical Proto-Slavic word would be ‘godonje and go-dunje’, meaning those that bring pleasure, that are palatable. The traces of these forms are found in folk names that feature above. The same root for *ja-goda*, strawberry, is based on Serbian verb *goditi* which translates as ‘feel good’ (sic!), be pleasant or convenient etc.

The case of *Cydonia* is identical in my opinion to that of *Kerasunt* (see *Cerasus sp.*).

Fagus sylvestris: bukva, bukev – beech

According to <http://beech.askdefine.com/> (Jan, 2010): ‘Old English *bēce*, from Germanic **bōkjōn*, a derivative of **bōkō*, from Indo-European **bhagos*. Cognate with Dutch *beuk*, German *Buche*, Swedish *bok*; and with Greek *φηγός* ‘oak’, Latin *fagus* ‘beech’, Russian *бузина* ‘elder (tree)’.

Even according to Werner's consonantal shift it comes out clear that the Pan-Slavic and Germanic terms for beech precede the Latin one. Other words derived from this root deserve a separate study as the roots of literacy are fossilized in them. Take just the Serbian term for the very first book any child comes into contact with in the first grade, »bukvar« (alphabet book). English or German words *book* and *buch* come from the same root, though the words for the tree species are slightly altered. 'Bukva' in Serbian or Russian means letter as well and it is logical to presume that the tree name had been known before the ascent of literacy.

»Bukvalno« means literally and »bukvica« is booklet. Beech bark is smooth and light-coloured, which makes it handy for writing purposes. That trees were used in the prehistory of letter-writing is even clearer from the Serbian term »zapis« (inscription), which refers to holy trees (predominantly oak) which were central in pre-Christian rituals and rites.

Gentiana lutea: lincura, gorečavka, encijan - gentian

Gentian is according to one of the greatest German authorities for medicinal plants, Richard Willfort, a name derived from the name of the Illyrian king Gentis, who was the expert in the field at the time. As more evidence is pouring in that Illyrian stands just for one of the Proto-Slavic peoples, the name of their king must have been Latinized from the outset. We cannot reconstruct it now with precision, but the folk name for the plant widespread even today highly smacks of the scientific one. We shall see more »free interpretations« of the original names later in the text.

In OED we find under 'gentian' the following explanation: 'gentian - O.E., from L. *gentiana* said by Pliny to be named for Gentius, ancient king of Illyria who discovered its properties. *This is likely folk-etymology*, but the word may be Illyrian, since the suffix - AN frequently occurs in Illyrian words.'

Truly, some other folk names as quoted by Jovan Tucakov in 'Healing by Plants' (3) bear even closer resemblance to the scientific name: *gencijan*, *encijan*, *licijan*, *lecijan*. If we recover the nasal in the latter term, still present in the most widespread folk name today (lin-cura), we will obtain 'lencijan', which is very close to the official name. This brings us to another root, *lečiti*<*len-čiti*, 'to heal'. Indeed, gentian is still regarded as the most potent plant in folk medicine, especially in mountainous regions.

According to The American Heritage, Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, Copyright 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Company, the etymology isn't much more certain: 'Gentian - (Middle English *gencian*, from Old French *genciane*, from Latin *gentiāna*, perhaps after *Gentius*, second-century B.C. king of Illyria.'

As a conclusion, this name most likely entered Latin through the nasalized Slavic root *leciti*, 'to heal', but was subsequently modified by association with the last Illyrian king Gentius, reputed to have had a grasp of medicinal plants. A similar shift is suggested under *Iris* below.

Humulus lupulus: hmelj - hops

According to <http://hops.askdefine.com/> (Jan, 2010), 'Hops were first mentioned by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia*. The first documented instance of hop cultivation

was in 736, in the Hallertau region of present-day Germany, although the first mention of the use of hops in brewing in that country was 1079.’

The very root-like contraction of sounds »hmel« does not need any comment.

Possible cognates are found in Serbian verbs ‘*meljati, muljati*’, to stir or mix the activity inseparable from any home-brewing chore.

Impatiens noli-tangere: netik, nedotika - touch-me-not

This queer plant lends itself to a bit different interpretation in the light of the main thesis. The name in Serbian is highly contracted and translates as »don't touch« or »not-touch«. It must have played certain role in times gone by as a charm or divination plant, reminding as it is of other plants' names, such as *despik* and *strašnik*, as well as many Slovenian plant names along the same pattern, such as *jetičnik, lučnik, mlečnik, pljučnik* etc.

The scientific name seems to be the calques on the autochthonous one, while the indirect source is the biblical Latin phrase *Noli me tangere*, which appears in John 20:17 and is translated as »Touch me not«.

Iris germanica: perunika, - iris

This plant name will not be viewed from a strictly etymological point of view, but rather from a cultural and historical aspect.

Genus *Iris* comes from the Greek source where it goes back to mythological past denoting the goddess of the rainbow bearing the same name. The denominator of the species *I. germanica*, however, must be explained in the light of the age-old processes of suppression of Venetic, Illyrian, Thracian or other Slavic peoples by all invaders that have appeared on the European historical scene. It is symptomatic that this *iris* bears two different national or geographic labels – *germanica* and/or *florentina*. Why is it labelled either of the two ways? Could not the botanists determine its true locale of origin? Actually, it is not typical of either Florence or Germany. The solution is in the scientific, linguistic and other imperialistic motives that were imposed on less prominent or less power-thirsty nations, to which Slavs have always belonged.

This type of iris was and to some extent still is a cult-plant in Serbia. The folk name comes from Perun, the Zeus of mainly all Slavs and Slavic god of thunder in very ancient times. *Perunika* is still planted in the villages as apotropaic plant against the lightning and thunder. German centric philology has appropriated the original word and adapted it to its purposes. Notwithstanding, it has left the elegant rhythm of the urwort at least.

Larix europæus: ariš, macesen - larch

In OED there follows this explanation: ‘larch - 1548, from Ger. Lärche, from M.H.G. larche, from O.H.G. *larihha, from L. larix (gen. laricis), probably a *loan-word from an Alpine Gaulish language* (my italics), corresponding phonetically to O. Celt. *darik- »oak«.’

Firstly, ‘ariš’ sounds much closer to the Latin word where the š sound is replaced by *x*.

Secondly, larch truly has no similarity to the oak as it is the only deciduous *conifer* in Europe.

Another source suggests a German origin: 'Latin *larix* 'larch tree', loanword is from an Indo Germanic Alpine language, Indo Germanic **derik-s*, is conceivable because of heavy l'

<http://us.share.geocities.com/agimzeneli/etymology2.html>, this link is now dead, unfortunately. The trouble here is that *derik-s*, as we can see, is a hypothetical root in this case and is limited, as far as known to me, only to a masculine name.

Ariš may be related to the root *jar, jari*, pertaining to summer season, which is also found in English 'year'. In Slavic languages *let* (summer) also means 'godina' (year), so this should not be confusing. *Jari usevi* means summer-sown crop plants, while *Jarovit / Jarilo* was the god of spring, agriculture and abundance in the ancient Slavic pantheon. Larch truly marks the summer season in a showy way by putting on its needle-like leaves, being the only leaf-shedding conifer in Europe. Apart from this, in most Slavic languages there are few words that begin with the vowel *a*, which allows for the existence of *j* (or perhaps another) consonant in antiquity. There is a town in Serbia by the name of *Arilje*, whose etymology is most likely based on the same root, *jar, jari*. After all, *j* like *h* in Slavic languages is fairly volatile and unstable (exx.: *hleb/leb*, 'bread', 'hoću/oću', 'I will/I'll', *jest/es*, 'is', *Jelena/Elena*, female name etc).

Lens esculenta: leće, leča, - lentil

According to OED, 'lentil mid-13c., from O. Fr. *lenticille*, from V.L. **lenticula*, dim. of L. *lens* (gen. *lentis*) »lentil,« cognate with Gk. *lathyros*, O.C.S. *lesta*.'

Lentils, tiny seeds botanically related to the beans that have the shape of lens. Both terms in Serbian mean lens in optical context as well and both suffixes *-će (-je)* and *-vo* denote plural or quantity in all Slavic languages, which is appropriate for either a pair of eyes' lens or for a pile of tiny seeds. The old Slavic root must have had a nasal, so *lent-je* gave *lenće* and later denasalized into modern form. This process has been attested for in Slavic languages in many examples. The root may be found in the pan-Slavic *let* < *len-to*, summer. Apart from beans, lentils make the second most important staple food of the summer season.

Lilium candidum: ljiljan, lilija - lily

O.E. *lilie*, from L. *lilia*, pl. of *lilium* »a lily,« cognate with Gk. *leirion*, both perhaps borrowed from a corrupted pronunciation of an Egyptian word. (OED) Evidently, this is quite far off the mark.

Another Serbian term is *beli krin* (white lily) and it was picked on a particular pagan date, *Biljani petak* (Plant Friday). Vestiges of homophonous magic "ljiljan" and "biljan" speak for themselves. In Serbian *Ljiljana* is a common age-old name which is very widespread even today. Masculine equivalent has survived only in the rites of spring in names of male divinities of the most beautiful season, when lilies bloom. It is *Ljelj* (also *Poljelj* or *Lado*). This name certainly belongs to the deepest mythological layers of Slavic past, which predate all written history.

Linum ussitatissimum: lan, len – flax

In OED we can find under *linen* that it is a »cloth from woven flax,« 1362, from O.E. *linin* (adj.) »made of flax,« from *lin* »flax, linen thread, cloth,« from W.Gmc. **linam* (cf. O.N., O.H.G. *lin* »flax, linen,« Ger. *Leinen* »linen,« Goth. *lein* »linen cloth«), probably an early borrowing from L. *linum* »flax, linen,« which, along with Gk. *linon* is *from a non-IE language*".

Flax is a well-known Serbian magical plant and it would take pages of a separate study, just like for most of the plants mentioned in this paper. Suffice it to quote the charms uttered by unmarried girls while they were sowing the flax seeds: " Ja sijem LAN na Badnji DAN..." Badnji (pron. 'bud-nyee') "dan" is the day devoted to the pre-Christian rites of rejuvenation of nature later adopted by the Church in Christmas celebrations. The charm reads 'I am planting flax on Badnji day.' The still extant charm provides a continuum from the times immemorial in Slavic tradition. There is no need to darken the origin of words as long as they can be found close at hand. All it takes, however, is to change the perspective and abolish the bans established by official forces.

Lolium perenne: ljuj, ljujka, rye-grass

All I could find about the origin of *lolium* comes down to the statement that it is an old Latin term for this kind of grass. The origin of it, therefore, is unknown. The dizzying effects of consuming too much of this grass were recorded even in antiquity. Pliny, as quoted by Thomas B. Roberts, Ph.D. and Paula Jo Hruby, Ed.D. in *Religion and Psychoactive Sacraments: An Entheogen Chrestomathy*, (http://csp.org/chrestomathi/road_to3.html, Jan 2010), 'records that bread made from flour contaminated with lolium caused vertigo'. In this interesting study the authors maintain that this tiny grass was one of entheogenic plants connected to the Eleusinian mysteries, because it 'is commonly infested with a parasitic fungous growth, ergot, the sclerotium of *Claviceps purpurea* or 'rust' named *erysibe* in Greek'.

The name in Serbian undoubtedly comes from the verb *ljuljati*, which denotes 'to shake, tremble, feel dizzy' etc. Even today one can hear people complaining: *Ljulja mi se u glavi* (I feel spinning in my head), especially after a drinking spree. The name *ljulj* shows, like a fossilized concept, that our Slavic forefathers were acquainted not only with this plant, but its psychedelic effects as well.

Marrubium vulgare: marulja, črna meta – black horehound

'Latin: based on ancient Hebrew word for bitter juice'. http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/get_JM_treatment.pl?4745,4775,4776 (Jan, 2010)

It is not stated what word it is. The Hebrew name, though, is quoted as *marrob* on a rather all-inclusive site that furnishes a lot of data on herbs,

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g2603/is_0004/ai_2603000432/ (Jan, 2010). Penetration of a Hebrew word into Latin would be quite natural in the light of history of Judea as part of the Roman Empire.

However, let me suggest a geographically closer possibility, an influence of the Slavic substratum again. I see here a possible contraction of *maru-bilje*, widespread suffix in plant names itself meaning 'plants'. *Velebilje* (*Atropa belladonna*) was formed along this pattern as well.

Marulja alone would translate as one that cares / worries. To confirm the previous statement, let me list another popular name for this plant: *očajnica*, which would translate as 'one that despairs'. Horehound is a popular plant in folk medicine that was used as poisoning antidote, cough relief (recorded in Egypt) or as magic herb for protection against the spells attributed to witches. These Serbian folk names reflect a magical consciousness that was prevailing at the time when they were given.

Mentha piperita: metva, metvica, meta, metica, nana - peppermint

'The Latin name mentha itself was borrowed from Greek minthe (μίνθη), whose origin is, however, unknown. It is already found in Mycenaean, the earliest recorded version of Greek, as mintha.' http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/engl/Ment_pip.html (Jan, 2010).

The OED states this: 'mint - »aromatic herb«, O.E. minte, from W. Gmc. *minta (cf. O.H.G. minze, Ger. Münze), from L. menta, mentha »mint,« from Gk. minthe, personified as a nymph transformed into a herb by Proserpine, probably a *loan-word from a lost Mediterranean language*'. (It is quite possible that the mint is related to Slavic verb *miti* – to wash. Other plant with nice smell – the lavender was used for washing cloths and thus got its name – from Latin verb lavare-to wash. *menta* could be nasalized form of *mita* – washed)

A question for the inquisitive ones is, if the lost word from a Mediterranean language can still be found over a huge area of the ancient lands of Moesia, Illyria, Dacia and Venetia, which language is that? As for the etymology, one most likely possibility comes with the root 'mneti', to think, known to all Slavs. But more natural is the name "meta" from verb *meti* – to rub, while after rubbing between fingers the plant gets true smell. If one remembers that the same root is found in Lat. *mens*, *mentio*, Gr. *mimnesko* or Snsk. *manyate*, all of which have to do with the thinking process, then this word can stand as an example of very old contacts between the Proto-Slavic and the languages of antiquity spoken in the mentioned area. Mint tea does affect the awareness and alertness of human *mind*.

In Serbia *nana* has numerous connotations. Apart from this name for probably the most popular medicinal and tea plant of the nation, it also means granny and mommy, the archetypal family doctors who were most familiar with healing properties of plants, especially in the times of matriarchate. The root is found in the verbs *nanati*, *nenati*, *ninati* or *nunati*, which have to do with attending to and bringing the babies to sleep.

Slovenian word 'meta' gives even a closer variant to the Latin name, and if nasal is added where it used to be found, it would match the scientific term exactly. This is confirmed in Serbian Church-Slavonic *mentva*. Even the Basque word *menda* testifies to a very old history of this name. (See http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/engl/Ment_pip.html , Jan, 2010.)

Morus nigra: murva, murgaš, - mulberry

It should be noted that the whole family to which mulberry and even the fig tree belongs bears the name *Moraceae*. If in this case it is proven that the origin of the root is Slavic, then it shows the influence of Slavic languages on three levels of scientific nomenclature. Moreover, this is not the only case of such deep rootedness of languages of slaves within their masters' educated tongue.

Mulberry tree belongs to chthonic plants in the rich Serbian mythology and magic, which means that the prevailing spirits that gather around and in it are of the underground and the realm of darkness. It is grown as a popular fruit tree even nowadays. *Murgast* means the peculiar ink-like colour of a species that bears dark-coloured fruits. The root is found in highly contracted *mrg* which gives numerous words in Serbian, all having to do with dark, darkness, morose mood or 'murky' quality: *na-mrgo-diti*, *mrgodan*, *mrak* etc. The Czech form *maruše* as well as the Upper Sorbian *marušnja* bear even more resemblance to the scientific term. In that case, the root of the name *morus* is again the Slavic *mor* 'black, dark', which most likely comprises both the mythological connotations and the peculiar ink-like appearance of the berries and juice thereof. Dialectal Slovene is *mura* which could also mean *črn* – black.

Ocimum basilicum: bosiljak, bazilika – basil

The Greek word *basileus* (βασιλεύς) “king” means essentially “people’s leader”. The first element derives from *bainein* (βαίνειν) “go”, which quite surprisingly is cognate to English *come* and the synonymous Latin *venire*, the common Proto-Indo-European verbal root being *G^wEM. The connection is made more obvious if we consider the Mycenaean Greek form of *gwasileus* “lord”. The second element is *laos* (λαός) “people”, which has no cognates in Modern English, for Old English *leod* has been abandoned in favour of Romance “people”; related are German *Leute*, Old French *liode*, Lithuanian *liaudis* “people” and Latin *liber* “free man” (Proto-Indo-European root *LEUD^h “grow upwards”).

http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzer/engl/Ocim_bas.html#etym (Jan, 2010).

I must make some comments on these statements. First, the Mycenaean word *gwasileus* (or more precisely *quasireus*, as read by Arthur Evans, the man who is credited for decoding the Mycenaean Linear-B script) is not a Greek word. After Genadiy Grinevich’s interpretations and re-readings of the script, Greek connection to this culture and people cannot be supported anymore. Grinevich has shown that the Mycenaean language and script are Proto-Slavic and the origin of Linear-B is in the Vincha script. By adopting the Greek connection from the outset, Evans has made many wrong interpretations. There is a more acceptable interpretation of the word *basileus* based on Slavic, in this case Russian, vocabulary, which is very close to the Old Slavic. It is a compound of two words, *va siley* ‘in or of the power’, which through the known process of betacism and typically Greek suffix-addition has been changed into the international *basileus*. Although the second (wrongly divided) element *laos* is without importance for this passage, it may serve as evidence how Slavic languages are still avoided whenever possible, which is a perfect example of a taboo. If science is still governed by taboos, we are still dealing with magic, not scientific reasoning. The French word *liode* sounds almost identical to the Slovenian word, while Latin *liber* is lumped in this group, although most likely it comes from an altogether different root.

There are numerous folk names for basil, but let me quote just a few: *blazuljak*, *bosilje*, *vasledjen*. *Bosiljka* is a common Serbian female name, while *Vasilissa the Beautiful* from Russian fairy tales must by far precede the Greek term. It would be interesting to list the

Basque form of this name *brasilla*, to show that its second part could originally have been the Slavic concept *sila* ‘power’.

Olea europea: maslina, uljika, oljka – olive tree

OED states: ‘olive c.1200, »olive tree,« from O. Fr. olive, from L. oliva »olive, olive tree,« from Gk. elaia »olive tree, olive,« probably from the same Aegean language (perhaps Cretan) as Armenian ewi »oil.«

The most informative page I found on the net, neatly laying down the botanical features, basic etymologies and names in many languages, <http://olive.askdefine.com/>, states this:

‘From Latin *ōlīva*, from Ancient Greek *ελαία* (*elaia*) ‘olive, olive tree’, from a pre-Indo-European Mediterranean language **elaiwa* ‘oil.’

Both Serbian terms listed above for olive tree have to do with fat stuff. The term “uljika” as well as words in most IE languages denoting oil come from the verbs *liti*, *uliti*, *levati*, *ulijevati*, with slight variations throughout Slavic languages, which all mean ‘to pour, to pour into, to cause to flow’.

Oryza sativa: riža, riž, pirinač – rice

Old French ris ← Italian riso ← Latin oriza ← Greek ὄρυζα (*rice*), from an eastern root (probably Indo-Iranian).’ <http://rice.askdefine.com/> ‘rice 1234, from O. Fr. ris, from It. riso, from L. oriza (cf. It. riso), from Gk. oryza »rice,« via an Indo-Iranian language (cf. Pashto vrize, O.Pers. brizi), ult. from Skt. vrihi-s »rice.« The Gk. word is the ult. source of all European words (cf. Welsh reis, Ger. reis, Lith. rysai, Serbo-Cr. riza, Pol. ryz).

Another staple cereal that is adapted to mountainous regions undoubtedly shares the same root, *raž* (‘rye’). To make a more balanced picture, I will quote suggestions of my reviewers, who have suggested that this word “comes from Archaic Slavic-Thracian *briza* – rice. It is connected to common Slavic *raz*, *roz* – rye, O. Ch. Sl. *broš* - dark red and Blg. *riž* – red haired. The husks of both plants rye and rice have red-brown colour.”

(OED, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=rice&searchmode=nl> Jan, 2010).

Ostrya carpinifolia: crni grab, črni gaber, ostrija – hornbeam

In *CRC world dictionary of plant names: common names, scientific names*, Vol. 3, by Umberto Quattrocchi, which is found on:

http://books.google.com/books?id=kaN-hLL-3qEC&pg=PA1912&lpg=PA1912&dq=Ostrya+/+etymology&source=bl&ots=52dsK1bT7n&sig=hZKN8Y5qmJcthMgtM7pQKF4amdY&hl=sr&ei=ld9PS5y6D6CYmAPRi7meCg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=&f=false (Jan, 2010);

there are following data of interest: ‘Latin *ostrya*, *ae* and *ostrys*, *yo*s for a tree with hard wood, perhaps the common hornbeam (Plinius). Greek *ostrys*, *ostrya*, *ostrye*, *ostrys*, hop hornbeam, *Ostrya carpinifolia*. Scop., Theophrastus (HP. 3. 10. 3) and Plinius, presumably referring to the hardwood.’ To sum up: etymology unknown.

This hornbeam has no botanical relatedness to true hornbeams, but it reminds of them. The leaves are more acute and the pericarp of the fruits is so sharp that if picked by naked hand, it may cause skin rashes. The Slavic folk name has ideally captured this feature of the tree as *oštra* means ‘sharp/acute’, while *oštrija* means ‘sharpe/more acute’.

Oxalis acetosa: kiselica, kislica – sorrel

‘Oxa’lis: from the Greek oxys for »sharp, sour,« referring to the pleasantly sour taste of the leaves and stem (ref. genus *Oxalis*)’, <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageO.html> (Jan, 2010).

It is interesting to note the flexion of the root (presumably Greek) *oxis* in Latin *oxalis*. I propose the lexical minimum to be the Slavic *kbs* which gives the Greek *oxis* with initial vowel *o*, while the Latin adjective *oxalis* parallels the Slavic adjective *kisel*. Thus the two forms in both Greek and Latin have a common origin in the Slavic root. This development can be demonstrated on many more examples.

Sorrel encapsulates the quality of being sour, exactly as *kiselo* means sour. The roots *kis-iti* and *kvas-it* fossilize an immemorial observation of the natural processes of fermentation and turning sour, which is impossible without humidity or water. Slavic word *kiša* ‘rain’ comes from the same root. I have discovered that Serbian (and other Slavic languages) has retained not only the roots that ramify into various related or less similar meanings, but the whole processes as results of age-old observation of nature. In this case the process encompasses the following components/stages: *kiša* – *kvasiti* – *kisnuti* – *kiselo* (‘rain-’. Such linguistic process conservation is either absent or rare in other IE languages.

Kvas is the traditional Russian drink from fermented rye malt of a sweetish-sourly taste. *Kvasac* in Serbian means baking yeast. The very English term must come from the same root.

Paeonia officinalis: božur, potonka, pivonka – paeony

‘Paeo’nia: honors Paeon, the physician of the gods in Homer’s Iliad who used the plant to heal the wound that Hercules inflicted on Pluto (ref. genus *Paeonia*)’

<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pagePA-PH.html> (Jan, 2010).

‘in ancient Greece, a hymn of thanksgiving to the gods, esp. to Apollo a song of joy, triumph, praise, etc. Etymology: L < Gr. paian, hymn < Paian, the healing one, epithet of Apollo < paiein, to strike, touch < ? IE base *pēu- > pave’, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/paeon> (Jan, 2010).

‘Paeon (ttcu^cov, Trcuav, 7rcuo>i>), a hymn or song which was originally sung in honour of Apollo, and seems to be as old as the worship of this deity. The etymology of the word is doubtful. Some suppose that it obtained its name from Paeon, the god of healing; but in the Homeric poems Paeon is always spoken of as a separate divinity, distinct from Apollo.’

<http://www.ancientlibrary.com/smith-dgra/0853.html> (Jan, 2010).

Evidently, both the term and its origin are shrouded in the mist of speculation. Even if Paeon as god of unknown attributes (but possibly medicine as associated with Apollo - originally Slavic-Etruscan Apulu) has to do with the term, *božur* covers the divine role. I suggest that *paeon* ‘hymn’ must be coming from the Slavic verb *pevati*. In Old Church Slavonic *peanije* also means ‘hymn, singing’. Apollo according to the best Greek authorities is a Hyperborean divinity, which places him closer to the Slavic speaking people.

Paeon can be traced down to *piti* 'drink', as peony is another plant abundantly used in magic, charms or folk medicine. In most written sources on the plant, drinking the potion and other preparations is widespread wherever it grows. One of the Serbian or Polish names comes exactly from the root "piti", meaning to drink. 'Beer' in most Slavic languages is *pivo*. It is interesting to note that the French term *pivoine* is very close to the Slavic ones and supports the etymology I propose. The importance of this plant is seen in another Serbian and Bulgarian name, *božur*, which would translate as *God's bloom*.

***Populus tremula*:** trepetljika, trepetlika – quaking aspen

'Pop'ulus: Latin for »people« because the many moving leaves in a breeze resemble a moving populace: (ref. genus *Populus*)' <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pagePI-PY.html> (Jan, 2010), 'poplar 1356, from Anglo-Norm. popler, from O.Fr. poplier (13c., Fr. peuplier), from L. *populus* »poplar« (with a long »o;« not the same word that produced popular). Perhaps related to Gk. *pelea* »elm«. It. *pioppo*, Sp. *chopo*, Ger. *pappel*, O.C.S. *topoli* all are from L.' (Acc. to OED, my italics).

Here we can learn that *topola* comes from Latin *populus*. Let us sum it up: *Populus*, which means 'people', gives Slavic *topola*, which means *warmth* (loving tree)! How incredibly strange!... I suggest the reverse story, as 'people' truly sounds hard to believe, with hundreds of other equally or more important species that show the same propensity in a breeze. Scientific name is a simply calques closest in sound to the original Slavic name. Quaking aspen in both of its Latin names saved the Slavic roots for "topola" ('*poplar*') and "trep(e)tati" ('*wink*', '*quake*' and '*tremble*'). *Topola* certainly suggests the heat of summer season as *topal* means warm. Russian and Chech terms for poplar have a slightly altered form from this root, *topol*.

Toplik is a spring breeze that causes the plants to bud after winter dormancy, while *toplica/toplice* throughout the Slavic world means 'tepid springs' or simply 'springs, wells'. It is notorious that poplars grow best in damp, marshy ground and they are sun and warmth-loving trees. Therefore this Slavic name is thoroughly based in the habitat and the basic requirements of the species.

***Quercus cerris*:** hrast, cer – turkish oak

'*Quercus*: the classical Latin name for the oak, possibly derived from the Celtic *quer*, "fine", and *cues*, "tree", <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageQ.html> (Jan, 2010).

While Latin etymology may be obscure, every Slav will recognize in *hrast* the root *rasti* (to grow). See also Russian *rostliny*, meaning plants.

This type of oak is a species of the oak genus that predominates in the widest span of Serbian territory and much further in the Balkan Peninsula. *Quercus cerris* is the species of oak that has one of the crucial functions in pre-Christian rites of Badni dan and Božić, later to develop into Christmas celebrations. Badniak, a branch of this particular oak, is cut in the wild off the trees by every householder even today, to be brought into the home the day before Božić (Christmas) and treated like a living being, as it represented the spirit of the ancestors and the symbol of rejuvenation of life in nature. Only this type of oak

retains, though thoroughly dried out, its leaves on the branches, which symbolize the repetition of budding and renewal of life.

Toponyms from the root "cer" abound and so do even family names like Cerović, Cerovac, Cerić. No wonder it plays a prominent role in Serbian old religion. It was often used for *zapis* (sacred inscription), which even in pagan times had the shape of a cross. The root *cer* most likely bears this connotation of inscribing, as another verb *čertati, crtati* means to draw and, originally, to write. Bulgarian monk Hrabar has left the testimony of ancient Slavic literacy when he says that 'in the beginning Slavs wrote and performed charms using the 'lines and signs'. *Lines and signs* is an approximate rendering, in the original represented by words *čertami i rezami*. Here *čertami* comes from the same root as *cer*, whence the Latin *cerris*.

Rhus cotinus: ruj, rujevina – sumach

'Rhus: derived from rhous, an ancient Greek name for Sumac'

(<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageR.html> Jan, 2010).

'The botanic genus name Rhus is a latinization of the plant's Greek name, rhous (ῥοῦς), whose origin is not known to me.' (http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzner/engl/Rhus_cor.html Jan, 2010).

Anyone who has seen this plant in autumn will know how appropriate a name the Serbian peasant has given to this sumptuous pygmy tree! It changes all colours of its fronds leaves from green through yellowish to orange and many shades of red. The old Serbian name still preserved in Croatian for September is *rujan*. Red wine is *rujno vino* and dawn is *rujna zora* in Serbian epic poetry. The base *ruj* has other variants, such as *roz* 'pink', *riđ* 'reddish' and *rđ-av* 'rusty, bad'.

Ribes nigrum: ribizla, ribez – currants

The name for currants can hardly come from an Arabic root "ribas", according to Petar Skok, as this plant is typical of colder and mountainous habitats. In Arabic it actually means rhubarb, which has no similarity to currants whatsoever. Skok finds it in Czech and Slovakian as well, so a logical conclusion is that it is pan-Slavic. I should point out that the Arabic origin is accepted by other etymologists as well.

Even though the origin of another edible item, "riba" (fish) is not quite clear, it is possible that these two biologically unrelated words did have a common root in the past. More study is required on this and many other mentioned plant names, but I hope this may serve as a starting point. The tiny fruits may have archetypal associations with shoals of fish.

Let me quote the suggestions of my reviewers that broadly move along similar lines of thinking.

Ribes could come from Latin *ruber*- *red*, but its fruits are rather small and are abundant on the branch, the meaning could be "*pieces, particles*" derived from Thracian (Archaic Slavic) word *rupia* – sword (instrument cutting objects in pieces, compare *del* – piece and *dleto* – chisel). *Rupia* is related to Russ. verb *rubit* – to cut, Blg. *rfəam* – I tear, Serbian *rupa* – hole (to cut the ground).

The common Slavic word *riba* – fish has also primal meaning piece (cut piece). Old Thracian, or Old Scythian word *capa* – fish, corresponds to Blg. word *čop* – piece and the Blg. verb *cepja* – to tear, to cut.

Please mind the Slovenian form, which is identical to the Latin one! It is then more logical to presume that this name entered Latin from the Venetic background.

Ruta graveolens: ruta, rutvica – rue

‘Most Western European languages have similar names for rue: English and French rue, Dutch ruit and German Raute all go back to Latin ruta, which itself was borrowed from Greek rhyte (ῥυτή). The ultimate origin of the word is not known.’

http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzner/engl/Ruta_gra.htm (Jan, 2010).

Ruta, another apotropaion in Serbian magic, gave a completely intact folk name to botany. In Serbian it depicts quite properly the odd appearance of its numerous tiny leaves that look shredded and crispy or *rutav*. Another word from the same root is *rita* – *ritav*, ‘rag-raggy’. That this name has come from this root, *rutav*, is evident from another widespread folk name for this plant, *rutvica*, which is a contraction from *rutav-ica* > *rutvica*.

Rosa gallica: ruža, roža, ružica – rose

‘Rose O.E. rose, from L. rosa (cf. It., Sp. rosa, Fr. rose; also source of Du. roos, Ger. Rose, Swed. ros, etc.), probably via It. and Gk. dialects from Gk. rhodon »rose« (Aeolic wrodon), ult. from Pers. *vrda-. But cf. Tucker: »The rose was a special growth of Macedonia & the Thracian region as well as of Persia, & the Lat. & Gk. names prob. came from a Thraco-Phrygian source.« (OED).

‘The name rose can be traced back, via Latin rosa, only to Greek rhodon (ῥόδον) (cf. the name of the common ornamental rhododendron (ῥοδοδένδρον) “rose tree”), but not further; the plant must have been known in bronze-age Greece as it appears in the *Odysseia* (Ὀδυσσεΐα) (see poppy on the Homeric epics). We do not know, however, which rose variety inspired the poet to his famous comparison of the goddess of dawn and rose flowers: rhododaktylos (ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως) “rosy-fingered Eos”.

The source of Greek rhodon is probably a tongue of Western Asia now lost. There are, however, related words that are no Greek loans, but derived from the unknown predecessor language by an independent route: Armenian vart “rose” (վարդ), Georgian vardi (ვარდი), Arabic al-ward (درول) and Hebrew vered (רעד). From Arabic, the word spread to a number of languages in Islamic countries of Africa and Asia. Compare also Slovenian vrtnica “rose” (besides roža) and the female name Warda popular in the Eastern Mediterranean.

(http://www.uni-graz.at/~katzner/engl/Rosa_dam.html?spicenames=it+la+ml+si+es, Jan, 2010).

Said to be the queen of gardens, of Persian descent when it comes to geographic origin. Numerous connotations of the root overlap in both Latin and Slavic languages, so it is not easy to state with certainty who gave and who took the word. It deserves more space and time than can here be assigned to it, but my impression is that in Proto-Slavic and modern Slavic languages it has a wider spectrum of meanings. Let me mention some of the kindred forms, all having to do with the idea of *red*.

Ruj, *rujno* and *rujan* have already been covered under *Rhus sp.* *Ružičast* is anything of pink colour, predominant colour of the roses, both wild and cultivated, while *bros/riz* have been dealt with under *Oryza sp.* *Ruse kose* in old Serbian song means *red hair*, while another famous medicinal plant, *Chelidonium majus*, known for its orange-coloured milky sap, bears the Serbian name *rusomača*. Vuk Karadžić quotes another less known form from a folk saying in his *Srpski rječnik* [4, 657], to denote ruddy cheeks, normally described as *rumeni*:

“Ko panadu često kusa
obraz mu je kao *rusa*”
(Beef soup if you often dine
cheeks will be like *red wine*)

It is worth mentioning, too, that in Serbian there is a verb *rudeti*, with a specific use ‘become red, turns reddish’. I think that the English word *red* comes from the same base, the lexical minimum of which is ultimately *rvd*. This deep root has given the Greek *rodo*, Latin *rosa* or Slavic *rudeti* with all other derivatives, *rose* and *ruža* inclusive. In addition to this, *Ruža*, *Ružica* is still one of the most popular female names in Serbia.

As for the Slovenian term *vrtnica*, it serves as a key to understanding the terms present in above-mentioned Eastern languages, no matter how strange this may sound. Let me close the circle:

‘Vered is a post-biblical word, to which Klein gives the following etymology: Aramaic 𐤅𐤓𐤃, borrowed from Iranian *wrda, whence Greek *rodon*, whence Latin *rosa* (=rose)’ <http://www.balashon.com/2009/03/shoshana.html> (Jan, 2010).

Let me note that this is not the only source I have checked to find the meaning of the Hebrew term for the rose, *vered*. Neither the Persian, nor the Hebrew or Armenian words can be traced down to a clear origin. Yet, the root of the roots in all these languages is the Slavic *vrt*, which has given numerous words and concepts in Slavic and many other languages. Only when blinkers on the eyes, imposed by a politically motivated European linguistics are removed, reasoning such as prevailing in this paper will become natural (with all limitations of one man's mind taken for granted). If continuity of Vincha civilization is viewed in its ramifications in Etruria, Alpine Venetic states, Macedonia, Dardania, Trybalia, Illyria, Thrace, all the way down to Minor Asian states of Lydia or Lycia, all indubitably marked by Slavic stamp and predominance, then the impact of Slavic language comes out as a natural concomitants of historical processes.

To bring this longish story about the rose/veered to an end, Slavic *vrt* with its archetypal concept of turning or having a round shape has given the following words (the list is much longer): Serbian *vrteti* ‘to turn’, *vrat* ‘neck’ (as base on which the head turns), *vrt* ‘garden’ (the original concept based on the households surrounding the home, which is still the case in Serbian villages), *vrteška* ‘merry-go-round’, *vrtača* ‘dish-shaped hole in the karst regions’ etc. *Vrt* is the source of the given terms for the rose, which is the queen of all gardens, though the connotations must certainly go down to magical and protective faculties of the plant.

Salvia officinalis: žalfija, žajbelj, salvija - sage

'Sage (n.) kind of herb (*Salvia officinalis*): c.1310, from O.Fr. sauge (13c.), from L. salvia, from salvus »healthy« (see safe). So called for its healing or preserving qualities (it was used to keep teeth clean and relieve sore gums, and boiled in water to make a drink to alleviate arthritis).' (OED)

'Sal'via: comes from the Latin salveo, »I am well,« and an herb, Salvia, used for healing (ref. genus Salvia)' <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageSA-SH.html> (Jan, 2010).

I must admit that the above etymology stands firmly on the ground. Still, I will suggest a Slavic route to this word for two reasons. Firstly, after delving into this involved network of roads and paths that words have travelled through the ages, I have become thoroughly convinced that the Slavic influence is nothing short of crucial in determining the etymologies. Why the official voices are mute on this point is an altogether different issue. Secondly, Latin and Greek are taken as the ultimate sources of all words most of the time, so it takes a bit of an effort to make a change and offer another perspective.

Sage has numerous medicinal properties in both folk and scientific medicine. An overall impression is that it is one of the best tonics and blood purifiers, among other uses. As such it brings relief to many depressive states and complaints and uplifts the spirit. With another reading of the ancient name, it comes much closer to the point: *žal-vija*, which translates as "chases the melancholy"!

Alternatively, another name of this important plant, *slavulja*, has a different root, *slava* 'glory'. It is also known as a charm against evil spirits and witches in ancient Serbian magic, which has survived in many customs.

Sambucus nigra: zova, buzova, bezeg – elder

'Sambu'cus: from the Greek word sambuke for a musical instrument made from elder wood, and a name used by Pliny for a tree possibly related to the elder tree'

<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageSA-SH.html> (Jan, 2010).

Let me quote another piece of etymologizing interesting for this study, where the author states that word puns are often possible in the field of word history research:

'Sambucus: Its currently-accepted etymology involves Latin sambuca and Greek sambuke, "harp; some type of stringed instrument" because the instrument was believed to be made of elder wood. Pliny the Elder... is quoted as the official source for all this.

I did, however, come up with this better etymological solution, made of two Sanskrit words:

– shambhu, "beneficial" – khaH/kheH, both "a hollow".

The reason for any etymological misinterpretation regarding this error can be found in this Sanskrit "shambhu-kha/khe" wordplay:

– sama, "same", – bukk, "to sound", – buka, "laughter".

<http://venetiaansell.wordpress.com/2009/01/20/wordplay-and-monier-williams/> (Jan, 2010).

We can learn here that the name of this plant comes from the instrument made of the plant that gave the instrument its name. This is a good example of a viciously circular

statement. The author rightfully plays upon this. Another lecture we can salvage out of this report is that *sambuca* not only may come from Sanskrit, but that both elements of that language have the same meaning in Slavic languages. *Sama buka* translates as 'the very noise'. The origin is, then, Indo-Slavic.

Elder requires another longer study in most IE traditions. Let me only suggest the Serbian name *zova* comes from the Slavic root *zov* which gave *zvati*, to call. Semantically this is related to the Latin term, if Sanskrit or Slavic languages are considered. Serbian shepherds have for millennia made flutes from the branches of this bush and among numerous calls and whispers; the mellow tones of elder flutes were certainly used to summon the shepherds' beloved ones.

***Sedum acre*:** žednjak, grobeljnik, rozhodnik - stonecrops

'Se'dum: from the Latin sedo, »to sit,« in reference to the manner in which some species attach themselves to stones or walls'

<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageSA-SH.html> (Jan, 2010).

With thousands of species 'sitting' on the ground, I see no reason why just stonecrops should be marked by this name as a peculiarity. Frankly, this sounds like folk explanation. Stonecrops crop up on stone, in almost impossible conditions. They survive due to their succulent leaves, being among the *Crassulaceae* family. Serbian and pan-Slavic root is found in the word *žed*, 'thirst'. Having no equivalent for *ž* (as *zh* in "measure"), the botanist has replaced it by *s* and *đ* by *d*. *Žednjak* is truly a name that conveys the peculiar capacity of this plant to withstand drought or thirst for very long.

***Taxus baccata*:** tisa, tis - yew

'New Latin (Tournefort, 1700), from Latin *taxus* = Greek τάξος, a yew-tree.'

<http://www.wordnik.com/words/Taxus> (Jan, 2010).

According to a short passage available on the page <http://www.jstor.org/pss/311323> (Jan, 2010, Yew and Bow: Vergil Georgics 2.448, by S. J. Harrison) the author Harrison, going through Virgil's and Pliny's work, suggests the *toxic* – *taxus* relation.

Yew is a holy tree for most IE and other peoples. It is very long-lasting, extremely hard and often planted near churches. This view point out to a pagan cult of this tree. In Serbian magic it is the second most important apotropaic plant after hawthorn. In Montenegro there is a mountain by the name Tisovac and Vuk Karadžić also mentions another mountain by the name Tisa. As there is a river by the same name in the north of Serbia, there is a parallel here between the names Tisa and Tara. Both are used for both river and mountain names. Tara in Ireland is a holy mountain, the seat of the gods and it is devoted to forefathers. This all takes us into the times that predate any written records, so it is possible to state that the name *Tisa* is also Slavic. The root may be found in the verb *tiskati* 'jam together, make a crowd' and the adjective *tesan* 'tight, tense', all from the minimum *tvs*, with the initial meaning of something hard, tightly packed and numerous. *Tisuća* and Old Church Slavonic *tisonšta* 'thousand' most likely come from the same root. Strange as it may sound, yew trees can live for thousands of years.

Triticum durum: dura, pšenica – hard-eared wheat

‘(Latin *trīticum*, wheat (from *trītus*, past participle of *terere*, to rub, thresh; see *trite*) + *sēcale*, rye.)’

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/tritcale> (Jan, 2010).

‘Intricate c.1470, from L. *intricatus* »entangled,« pp. of *intricare* »to entangle, perplex, embarrass,« from in- »in« + *tricae* (pl.) »perplexities, hindrances, toys, tricks,« of uncertain origin (cf. *extricate*).’ (OED)

A type of wheat that now belongs to heirloom plants, it is characterized by hardness of the husk and due to its resistance to threshing, it unfortunately fell out of favour. *Dura pšenica* is also very hardy. *Dura* in Serbian means hard, *duriti se* means to refuse to cooperate, be angry, while *durak* means madman in Russian. As aptly noticed by my reviewers, there is the same word in Latin, *durus*, suggesting similar properties. On a deeper level, Slavic root *der* (lexical minimum *dbr*) has given the verb *deržati/ držati* ‘to take hold of’ which is similar in meaning to *duriti*. *Izdržati* ‘endure’ belongs to the same source.

According to the OED, ‘endure late 14c.; from O. Fr. *endurer*, from L. *indurare* »make hard,« in L.L. »harden (the heart) against,« from in- »in« + *durare* »to harden,« from *durus* »hard,« from PIE **deru-* »be firm, solid«. It is evident that all the concepts involved in the three languages, ‘hold, harden, be firm’ etc. can be reduced to the Slavic root *der*.

My reviewers also pointed out that “Latin word *tritrus* means rubbing, *tritrus* means grinding. *Triticum* is related to Slovenian verb *trkati* – to hit (to grind) also to Blg. *trici* – bran (obtained by grinding) and *trija* – I rub.”

Truly, in Serbian word *trice* <*tritice*< *tritice* means primarily chafe and bran as leftovers after grinding the wheat. Latin word *tricae* has the same form and meaning as the Serbian word in the expression ‘*To su sve trice i kućine*’ (‘that’s all nonsense, trifle’). Serbian verbs *trti*, *trėti*, *trljati* or *trliti* are derived from the lexical minimum *tr* which has given all these words.

Verbascum thapsus: divizma, lučnik - mullein

Although mullein in Serbian comes from an entirely different root, it is convenient for the purpose of showing how one of the indigenous names may serve as basis for scientific nomenclature. The original Serbian root is *div*, *diva*, *divizma* - *ti*, all words having to do with pagan ideas for godhead, magical incantations, charms and divination. *Deus* and *divine/divination* come from the same root. The Latin name is only an apt translation, as *verba* means ‘words’. There is an opinion that the Latin word may come from an older form *barbascum*, which would be in consent with the hairy appearance of the plant. In that case, a normal scientific name would be *barbatus*, ‘beardy’, not *barbascum*. I stick to the initial statement that this is only a construct on the Slavic concept.

Verbena officinalis: verbena, vrbena - vervain

‘Verbe’na: an ancient Latin name of the common European vervain (ref. genus *Verbena*)’

‘*Verbena*’cea: since -acea is a Latin adjectival suffix indicating resemblance, this would then seem to mean »resembling *Verbena*«’ <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageV.html> (Jan, 2010).

From the above considerations it is not evident where the root is to be found. In Serbian and other Slavic languages, though, there are quite a few plants that bear similar names, mainly based on the shape and arrangement of the leaves. *Vrba* covers the *Salix* species (willow trees), powerful apotropaions and magic plants in Serbian folklore and their long lance late leaves tend to twirl and twist. Their overall aspect is reminiscent of *vrbená* ‘vervain’, which truly looks like a small willow tree. There are also *vrbolika* (*Isatis tinctoria*) and *vrbica/vrbičica* (*Lythrum salicaria*), which both have willow-like leaves. I think this proves the proposed etymology from the Slavic root *ver* ‘to turn’, extended by suffix *-ba* to form a noun (like the root *ber* + *ba* > ‘harvest’, etc.), otherwise identical to the Indo-European one, as seen on the page that follows below:

<http://www.ask.com/bar?q=wer+IE+roots&page=1&qsrc=2891&dm=all&ab=9&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.smo.uhi.ac.uk%2Fgaelge%2Fdonncha%2Ffocal%2Fieroots.html&sg=uFGsMkxP9HfkgkFH8NccMWP4g%2FDJ6eoj3XEtdR1uEzI%3D&tsp=1263827594899,Jan2010>.

Vicia faba: bob – faba beans

Bean O.E. bean »bean, pea, legume,« from P. Gmc. *bauno (cf. O.N. baun, Ger. bohne), perhaps from a PIE reduplicated base *bha-bha- and related to L. faba »bean.« (OED).

Another plant used in magic and more specifically in foretelling the future. Even today there is a saying in Serbian, ‘*Gledati u bob*’, meaning now humorously to guess one’s thoughts or intentions. I will quote the reviewers again: “The meaning of *bob* is swollen, round, that is the form of the fruit. It is archaic Slavic (Thracian) word *pupa, buba* – beans and it is related to Blg. verb. *bōbna* – I swell, *pōp* – navel (round) and *babunka* – swelling.”

In Serbian *na-bobati se* means to eat to an excess, *bubreg* means “kidney” and *buba* means “bug”. All these words suggest plump, round shape and that is what this largest of all bean species really brings to mind.

Vinca major: vinka, zimzelen - periwinkle

‘Vin’ca: from the Latin name *Vinca pervinca* from *vincio*, »to bind,« referring to the shoots’ <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageV.html> (Jan, 2010).

Periwinkle is up to this day planted on graveyards and a thick growth of these climbers in a forest may also serve as indicator of an old graveyard turned into dust and soil. Vinka is a common Serbian female name, slowly going out of use. For more thorough etymology please see the next item.

Vitis vinifera: vino, vinska trta, vinjaga, grožde – wine grapes

‘Vi’tis: the Latin name for the grapevine (ref. genus *Vitis*)’

<http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/pageV.html> (Jan, 2010).

‘Vine c.1300, from O. Fr. *vigne*, from L. *vinea* »vine, vineyard,« from *vinum* »wine,« from PIE *win-o-, from an Italic noun related to words for »wine« in Gk., Armenian, Hittite, and non-I.E. Georgian and West Semitic (cf. Heb. *yayin*, Ethiopian *wayn*); probably ult. from a lost Mediterranean language word *w(o)in- »wine.« (OED)

The word even in its Classical Greek form *oinos* has no etymology. The proposed root *w(o)in- may presumably be of Mycenaean origin. However, the root is in the Serbian

(or other Slavic tongues) verb *viti*, *viti se*, meaning "to climb around, to coil, to sprawl". Hair locks are *vitice* and a fairy is *vila*, literally "one who have hovered or flown". Wine again deserves a broader study. Suffice it to say in passing that it combines the cult both of rejuvenation of life and the spirits and conjunction with the predecessors. It has combined both chthonic and solar qualities through time. Most peasant houses in Serbian villages still have a *vinjaga* (vine planted just to the house wall, the older – the better), which represents the keeper of the hearth and home. *Vinca* mentioned above, the chthonic plant of similar climbing habit, comes from the same root. I must also point out that according to Čajkanović, the greatest authority on Serbian magic and ancient beliefs, *vine* is among the most prominent chthonic plants that are planted on the graves. This places it in close proximity to *vinca* in both cultic and linguistic context. (5)

Other comments

Acer platanoides: javor – maple

Maple is one of the holy trees in Serbian magic. According to the principles of sympathetic magic as expounded by J. G. Frazer in »*Golden Bough*«, the very name may impart its powers to an object or being. Objects whose names start with *ja-* were made of *javor* (maple wood), e.g. *jasle* (cradle), *jaram* (yoke), *japija* (roof beams), because it was believed that such objects (evidently extremely important for the community) would enjoy the protective power of the anima that is hidden in the tree.

Of course, this has nothing to do with etymology, directly at least. I just want to underline the apotropaic and magic value of the maple tree and the fact that if this type of consciousness coincided with the origin of these words, then they must be really very ancient.

Parallels with other IE languages exist and the fact that Trojan horse was made of maple wood may point to this magical aspect of the species. (A quote from Illiad: 'Acer in tutela stuporis est, et viso equo stupuere Troiani'). However, with Ennetoi (Veneti) and their connection to the Trojans a larger scope of Proto-Slavic history can be visualized.

Agropyrum repens: pirevina, pirika – quackgrass

This plant is similar to wheat as it belongs to the same family, Gramineae. The names of some of the plants in this genus often overlap with the wheat, *Triticum* genus.

Avena sativa: ovas, oves, zob - oat

»Zobena kaša« refers to porridge made of oats, which must have been the staple food of our ancestors.

Humulus lupulus: hmelj – hops

Hops was used in prehistory for brewing beer, most likely another Slavic gift to the world, as the term »pivo« (beer) has its direct origin in the verb »piti«, to drink. That Slavs were masters of this trade can be traced even in the German word for beer, *biere*, which comes from one of the centres of beer- brewing, Pilsner, the Czech town of Plzen.

Linum ussitatissimum: lan – flax

Lan is without a doubt related to ‘vuna<vlna’, wool. The very word ‘vlna’ may be interpreted as ‘(clad) in flax’. Linen is truly plant wool, which apart from sheep fleece, is the main source for making all sorts of apparel.

Mentha piperita: metva, meta, metvica, metica, nana – peppermint

The name of this plant in Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya and some other languages is identical to the Serbian one, *nana*. Macedonian form *nane* confirms the etymology I have proposed above, for *nane* is even in Southern Serbian dialect a word for ‘grand mom’. These queer liaisons evidently need more effort and research. Though this word sounds *nane* in Turkish as well, I have stopped ascribing many words to Turkish origin (another stereotype imposed on us Slavs) after discovering the Slavic proximity to Arian and Vedic cultures and traditions, whose words were often only carried down to us via the Turkish influence.

Conclusions

This material will hopefully serve only as a starting point in further research of our past in other domains of life that may furnish a consistent and wholesome picture of our Slavic forefathers, their resourcefulness in many walks of life and their prominent contribution to European heritage. If numerous plant names introduced as scientific denominations from a broad spatio-temporal background do not have Latin origin and if by this paper I have shown their Slavic origin and existence in modern Slavic tongues, then it follows that presence of Slavs within this background is corroborated as well.

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Summary

When faced with the problem of giving names to plant or animal species scientists find recourse in a dozen of devices, the commonest being the folk nomenclature that is always there and historically precedes the scientific one. It is logical that a species is not launched into existence by assigning it a scientific name. I endeavour to show in this paper that numerous botanical names attributed to common plants bear striking resemblances to the names used even today by Serbian and Slavic speaking people, mostly those who live in the country and have a tighter contact with the natural world. It would be absurd to infer that the nomenclature of Karl G. Linnaeus or other botanists influenced the creation of such names. However, if I succeeded in demonstrating that folk names are consistent with a broader semantic and cultural context and in many cases show that Latin nomenclature lacks appropriate etymology, I have sufficient reason to state that this will supply more evidence for the autonomous growth hypothesis of the Slavs both within the borders of modern Serbia as well as within the broader boundaries of Central Europe and many fringe areas. If educated botanists drew from a vernacular, which historically belonged for centuries to Roman Empire, one would expect to find a nomenclature which is thoroughly Latin, all the way down to the etymologies of the names. However, it is often not the case, as I endeavour to show.