

*En quête de sens. Études dédiées à Marcela Świątkowska. W poszukiwaniu znaczeń. Studia dedykowane Marceli Świątkowskiej*, J. Górnikiewicz, H. Grzmil-Tylutki & I. Piechnik (éds), Kraków, Wyd. UJ, 2010

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## FRIENDLY BARTER IN THE GULF OF FINLAND, AND WANDERING MEANINGS

Let our deliberations start by bringing back the history of friendship. In the Gulf of Finland, from around XIII<sup>th</sup>–XIV<sup>th</sup> c. right up until the first half of the XX<sup>th</sup> c., there was a specific barter (in Finnish *seprakauppa*, in Estonian *sõbrakaubandus* ‘friendly trade’) between Finns and Estonians, based on the principle of mutuality and friendly relationships, which lasted from generation to generation, as very often the clients on both sides remained in the same family circles for tens and hundreds of years.<sup>1</sup> The exchange was held on the Estonian coast, where the Finns (from the Gulf islands and the Finnish coast) were arriving by ships bringing fish (mainly Baltic herring) and sealskins; in return they were guests in the regular clients’ families and received cereal as well as things useful in household.

Fishing was easier and more abundant for the inhabitants of the islands in the Gulf of Finland, as they could fish in deeper waters. However, they couldn’t cultivate enough cereal to feed themselves because of the smaller agricultural areas and the short summer. They were also missing a lot of things necessary to life (e.g. clothes and farming equipment, even eggs), which were more easily available ashore. Exactly, such goods and cereal were at the Estonians’ disposal and that they could share it with the Finns.<sup>2</sup> Also, they often exchanged other little gifts.

The visits took place on average twice a year and lasted about a week: in the springtime at St John’s feast (Midsummer), and in autumn – at St Michael’s feast; and from Tytärsaari island, which is in the closest proximity of the Estonian coast, occasionally they arrived even three times (Niemelä 2008: 4).

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<sup>1</sup> It is very likely that this exchange started even earlier – contacts could have already existed in 3.000–2.000 BC in the Corded ware culture (battle-axe culture) (cf. Grünthal 1998: 120 who quotes a few archaeological studies), but written sources mention it from the XIII<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest (Jäppinen 2009: 28). Kari Niemelä (2008: 5) even puts forward a hypothesis that the exchange of goods could have started at the time of the settlement of the islands as well as the Finnish coast by people coming from Estonia (on the eastern coast of Finland there is even a district and a gulf called *Virolahti* ‘Gulf of Estonia’).

<sup>2</sup> On average for 1 ton of fish the Finns received about 2 tons of cereal in spring and 3 tons in autumn. Alternatively, apart from cereal, they were given 3–4 tons of potatoes. Such standard proportions resulted from the fact, that in spring even the Estonians didn’t yet have enough cereal for themselves, while in autumn, after the harvest time, there was a lot of it; also fish brought by the Finns was more fatty than the one in spring (Niemelä 2008: 4).

This phenomenon concerned mainly Finns from the centrally located islands of the Gulf of Finland (Tytärsaari, Suursaari, Lavansaari, Seiskari, Haapasaari), but also from small islands close to the eastern coast of Finland (Pitkäpaasi, Paatio, Martinsaari, Kuorsalo, Tammio, Mussalo, Kuutsalo, Kaunissaari), while the Estonians participating in this barter came from inshore villages between Narva and Tallinn (Niemelä 2008: 5).<sup>3</sup>

This strong tradition of the friendly exchanges increased even more during the XIX<sup>th</sup> c. and in principle lasted until the First World War, because when Finland proclaimed its independence in 1917, it started to dynamically develop commerce, which replaced the barter of goods (Niemelä 2008: 6). The barter with the Tytärsaari island lasted the longest, but finally the ties were severed during the Second World War (Jäppinen 2009: 29), after which Estonia and four biggest islands of the Gulf of Finland (Tytärsaari, Suursaari, Lavansaari, Seiskari) found themselves under the yoke of the Soviet Union. Different reasons for the extinction of this form of the friendly barter of goods are explained more widely e.g. by Päiviö (2009).

When Estonia regained its independence in 1991, a desire to revive the tradition of the *seprakauppa* (Fin.) / *sõbrakaubandus* (Est.) was born, and since 2000 *Sepramarkkinat* (Fin.), or in Estonian *Sõbralaat* – fairs and festivities have been organized in every two years once on the Estonian coast, and once on the Finnish coast.

#### THE RANGE OF THE WORD

Let's take a closer look at the name of this friendly barter: in Finnish *seprakauppa*, and in Estonian *sõbrakaubandus*. This word is composed of two elements borrowed from other languages. Whereas the Finnish *kauppa* or Estonian *kaubandus* (in both cases: 'trade, commerce; shop') are the evident loanwords from Germanic,<sup>4</sup> yet the first element – Finnish *sepra* and Estonian *sõber* 'friend' – open an intricate and interesting history of wandering of these word meanings.

In contemporary Estonian, apart from the form *sõber*, this word has many derivatives words: *sõbrake(ne)* 'good friend, comrade', *sõbralik* 'friendly', *sõprus* 'friendship', *sõbralikkus* 'friendly way, friendliness', *sõbralikult* 'friendly; in a friendly way', *sõbranna/sõbratar* '(girl) friend', *sõbrunema* 'to make friends', *sõbrustama/ sõbrutsema* 'to be friends', *sõbramehe-kriitika* 'friend's criticism', *sõbramehe-suhted* 'friendly relationships', *sõbrakamp* 'warm room (iron.)'. Older dictionaries note also forms: *sõbr* 'friend', *sõberina / sõbrana* '(girl) friend', *sõbris*

<sup>3</sup> Presumably, however, the scope of this „friendly barter” reached as far as the Karelia Isthmus, as there are many words of Estonian origin in the local dialects that can be remnants of the inhabitants' visits on the Estonian coast or it relates to the migration of the Estonians. R. Grünthal (1998) suspects these are the vestiges of the *seprakauppa* on a larger scale.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gothic *kaupōn* or Old Norse *kaupa* and Swedish *köpa* 'to buy'; while in Germanic this word came from Latin: *caupō* 'publican, landlord, innkeeper' (cf. SSA I: 330).

‘cicisbeo, “friend” of a housewife’, *sõbrama* ‘to be friends’, *sõbrus/sõbrustus* ‘friendship’, *sõbrusline/sõbrute* ‘friendly’ (Wiedemann 1923: 1070), *sõpradeta* ‘without friends, lonely’. With this root the word *seirama* ‘to follow, to tail’ (Mägiste 1982–1983: 2745) is also related, as well as *seira* ‘monitor’, *seire* ‘monitoring, surveillance’. On the northeastern coast of Estonia, Finnish loanwords are also present in the local dialects: *seur(a)* ‘crew’; company, fellowship’, *seuraline* ‘fellow’, *seuramies* ‘comrade’ (Söderman 1996: 113).

In Finnish the word *sepra* appears only dialectally in the meaning of ‘friend’, but it is better known as the first element of the word *seprakauppa*. However it has a second etymological relative, word *seura* ‘company, society, association’ (SSA III: 172). SKES: 1006 adds dialectal meanings (inter alia those from the Finnish islands in the Gulf of Finland): ‘group of fishermen who are fishing together; member(s) of a company; assembly; concentration; party, dances’. This word has many derivatives, e.g.: *seurata* ‘to accompany’, *seuraus* ‘result, outcome, consequence’, *seuraava* ‘following, next’, *seurue* ‘group’, *seurustella* ‘to accompany, to keep company; to talk; to go out with sb’, *seurakunta* ‘parish, congregation’, *seurallinen* ‘sociable’, etc.<sup>5</sup>

In other Baltic Finnic languages this word appears too, in possible dialectal variants, e.g.:

- Karelian *sepra/šebra/seura* ‘company, society’, *siepra* ‘common work’, *seprautuo/sepriytyö* ‘to accompany, to keep company, to meet, to go out with sb’, *sepruija* ‘to be with someone (secretly); to talk with sb in a whisper’ (KKS: 338–339, 344, 361);
- Ladic *šiebr/šebru/šebre/sebre/šiebr* ‘company, society’ (LS: 384);
- Veps *sebr* ‘work company; common work’ (cf. SSA III: 172), *sebranik* ‘friend’;
- Ingrian *sebra* ‘friend’ or *sebroï* ‘acquaintance, relative; friend, companion, comrade’ (Nirvi 1971: 515);
- Votic *sebra* ‘friend, acquaintance’ (Setälä 1964: 81) or *sebro* ‘friend’ (VKK: 458);
- Livonian *sebrà/sü’br* ‘friend, relative’ (Kettunen 1938: 359–360).

This word also exists in Sami languages related to Finnic:

- it takes there different forms, sometimes with metathesis: Southern Sami *sēprē*, Ume *seäb’ree*, Lule *sieb’rē*, Northern Sami *sær’ve*, Inari *servi*, Skolt *seär’vv*, Kildin *sie’br* (Lehtiranta 1989: § 1127, 122–123).

– P. Sammallahti, in his general Sami (based mostly on the written standard of Northern Sami) dictionary (1993: 180), also gives forms such as: *searvi* ‘company, society, association; club; company, partnership’, *searvvuš* ‘community’, *searvvušdovddaldat* ‘community’s logo/symbol’, *searvegoddi/searvigoddi* ‘parish, congregation’, *searvålaga(id)/searvål(a)* ‘together, jointly’, *searvat* ‘to join the company, to become a member; to be reunited’, *searvanalmmuhus* ‘accession application’.

<sup>5</sup> The transition  $p > *β >$  diphthong with *u* appears also in other Baltic and Germanic loanwords, e.g.: *hauras*, *kauris*, *teuras*, *vauras* (cf. Hakulinen 2000: 40, Koivulehto 1979: 284).

– in Nielsen’s older dictionary (1938),<sup>6</sup> mainly in the Northern Sami, we can find general forms: *sær've/særve* ‘company, community, association, society’, *sær'vadâd'dât* ‘usually to be in company with, to participate, to share with someone (com.), in something (in work, in using provisions)’, *særvâdit* ‘to agree, to join forces to, to arrange to’, *sær'valâgâ(i)/sær'val(â)* ‘together’, *sær'vât* 1. (with comitative) ‘to make an agreement with, to join forces with someone to do something, to arrange with someone to do something’, 2. (with illative) ‘to participate, to share in something, to join someone, to take up with someone’, 3. (with ill., especially of pers. pron. of 2. pers.) in threatening expressions and the similar ones: ‘to fall one’s lot, to go in such-and-such a way with’, 4. = *særvâdit*; *sær'vedit* ‘to be in company with, to participate, to share with someone (com.) in something’, *sær'vegq'de* ‘congregation’, *sær'vevuottâ* ‘association (with someone), partnership, participation, sharing’ (Nielsen 1938: 625–626), *særvi* ‘together in the same (working-) gang, jointly’, *særvulâš* ‘concerned, partner, party (in/to something: ill.)’, *særvuštâd'dât* ‘to be partner, to be together with someone (com.; in hunting, fishing, etc.)’; P, Kr also ‘to associate (with: com.)’ (Nielsen 1938: 394). As we can see, Nielsen also gives the case government of verbs (cases: illative and comi-tative), which sometimes changes the nuances of the meaning of a word.

– in the dictionary of Inari Sami (Itkonen 1989), we find the forms: *servi* ‘company’, *seervij/seärváluuvaj* ‘together, jointly’, *særvađ* ‘to create a hunting or fishing company, to join a cooking group; to follow a young reindeer by his mother; to have a relationship (a girl with a boy)’, *servidiđ* ‘to follow’, *seärvâdallađ* ‘to succeed; to keep in closeness of someone’, *særvuustiđ* ‘to cultivate a relationship’, *særvuustallad* ‘to have relationship (a girl with a boy)’ (Itkonen 1989: 104–105).

– in Schlachter’s dictionary (1958) from around the area of Malå in northern Sweden, where two Sami languages – Pite and Ume – meet, we can find words: *seäb'ra/sjēb'ra* ‘tracker dog; to cooperate’, *seäb'rat/sjēb'ró*<sup>w</sup> ‘to cooperate’, *seäb'ree/sjēb'rē*<sup>e</sup> ‘common property, joint ownership; pasturage company and its district’ (Schlachter 1958: 115–116).

Similar words can also be found in other Finno-Ugrian languages:

– in Moksha-Mordvin: *шабра* ‘neighbour’ and perhaps related with it *шабрань* ‘nearby’;<sup>7</sup>

– (?) in Eastern Mari (Cheremis) also called Meadow Mari, there is a word *šemer* ‘nation’ – maybe it is cognate with our word; similarly we suppose with reference to the word *šaprem* ‘to chat, to natter’ (Paasonen 1948: 119–120);

– (?) in Udmurt (votyak): *sapral-* ‘to be in group, in crowd; in abundance’ (Wichmann 1987: 218);

<sup>6</sup> Nielsen studied dialects in the district of Finnmark (in the northeastern part of Norway), where the Northern Sami is in use. His dictionary (1938) concerned particularly the region of Polmak, Karasjok and Kautokeino (in Northern Sami: *Buolbmát, Kárášjohka* and *Guovdageaidnu*), therefore, he gives many local variants; here I quote only main ones.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mokshan Language Online Vocabulary ([www.torama.ru/index.php3?pg=vocfind](http://www.torama.ru/index.php3?pg=vocfind)).

– (?) in Khanty (Ostyak) from the Ob-Ugric branch of languages: *ṣəpəɾətá* ‘to fold up, to join, to scoop up, to gather’ (KOW: 957).

A family of those words also exists in Hungarian, see below (p. 406).

It’s curious that in neighbouring Baltic and Slavic languages this word exists too. In Lithuanian: *sėbras* ‘partner, companion; comrade, mate’, *sėbra/sėbre/sėbrija* ‘gang; commercial company; friendship’, *sėbrauti* ‘to have commercial company with sb; to be friends with sb’, *sėbravimas* ‘commercial cooperative; company, society’, *sėbrybė* ‘community; cooperative; association; friendship’, *sėbrinas* ‘common, shared’, *sėbrinai* ‘together, jointly’, *sėbrinis* ‘common, belonging to both partners’, *sėbrystė* ‘being a companion/partner; company, society’, *sėbriškas* ‘common, collective’, *susėbrinimas* ‘association’ (cf. Kurschat 1972: 2143 and Smoczyński 2007: 538). In Latvian: *sābris* ‘neighbour’, *sabrāloties* ‘to fraternize’.

In many neighbouring Slavic languages this word was in use, but it remained only in some of them. The oldest written mentions in Ruthenian chronicles date back to the XII<sup>th</sup> c. (e.g. in Kliment Smoliatich’s appeal, a Kiev metropolitan, cf. Ljapunov 1928: 261). The Dal’s dictionary of the Russian language from the XIX<sup>th</sup> c. recorded: *сябёрь/сябрь/сяборь/сябрукь/сябра* ‘neighbour; companion; farmer in copartnership; co-participant; acquaintance, friend; serf with the right to vote in a meeting’, *сябренья* ‘common estates’, *сябровицина* ‘community of one settlement’ (Dal’ IV: 704), *себёрь/себрь* ‘shareholder, partner in trade; neighbour’, *себра* ‘common work’, *себриться* ‘to live next door, to be crowded; to toady to sb’, *себровицина* ‘meeting; peasants’ community’ (Dal’ IV: 114), *шабёрь/шебёрь/шабрь/шабрёнок/шабрёнокь/шебречокь* ‘neighbour’, *шабёрка/шебёрка/шабровка/шабрёнка/шабриха* ‘neighbour (woman)’, *шабёркинъ/шабрихинъ* ‘this what belongs to the neighbour (woman)’, *шабрёнок* ‘neighbour’, *шабровскій/шабрычій* ‘what concerns neighbours’, *шабровъ* ‘this what belongs to the neighbour’, *шабреникъ* ‘vain/idle man’, *шабровать* ‘to lay/bond bricks’, *шаброванье/шабровка* ‘laying/bonding of bricks’<sup>8</sup> (Dal’ IV: 1386–1387, 1414), *присебрить* ‘to appropriate, to grab’, *присебриться/присябриться* ‘to toady to sb, to show friendship insincerely; to appropriate’ (Dal’ III: 1153), *пошабровски* ‘like among (good) neighbours’ (Dal’ III: 974). The dictionary of the Russian language from 1940 recorded only two forms: *шабёр/сябёр* ‘neighbour’ (TSRJ: 1310), and the dictionary from 1961 gives only one: *шабёр* ‘neighbour’ (SRJ: 950).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> We can only ponder over whether those two last meanings referring to the laying of bricks come from the word *шабёрь*, but perhaps their meaning comes from the laying of bricks side by side, in other words “neighbourly”.

<sup>9</sup> In both dictionaries (1940 and 1961) we can also find a very similar word *шабер* ‘scraper’, which doesn’t exist in the Dal’s dictionary, so perhaps it entered the Russian language universally in the XX<sup>th</sup> c., and at present it has a lot of derivative forms: *шабрёный* ‘hewn with the use of a scraper’, *шабрить* ‘to hew with a scraper’, *шабриться* ‘to get to hew with a scraper’, *шабрение* ‘hewing with a scraper’, but also there are meanings connected with the laying of bricks side by side: *шабровать* ‘1. to hew with a scraper, 2. to lay bricks side by side’, *шабровка/шабрование* ‘laying of bricks side by side’, *шабровочный*

The Byelorussian language, just like neighbouring Estonian from the northern side, uses a similar word: *сябар/сябра* in the sense of ‘friend; follower, defender’, and in dictionaries of Byelorussian one can also find many current derivative forms, e.g.: *сябраваць* ‘to be friends’, *посябраваць* ‘to make friends’, *сяброўка* ‘(girl) friend’, *сяброўскі* ‘friendly’, *сяброўства* ‘friendship; comradeship’, *сябрук* ‘good friend, comrade’, *сябрына* ‘community; friends’ gathering with a snack’ (cf. e.g. TSBLM: 646, BRS: 910).<sup>10</sup> Therefore in this common continuation and the immediate vicinity of those countries, we can find a confirmation that there were contacts of languages earlier too. We can ponder over whether the direction of this loan was from Byelorussian to Estonian, or on the contrary.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the Ukrainian language, neighbouring with Byelorussian from the southern side, is concerned, a contemporary dictionary gives only the form *сябр*, and explains that it refers to the word used by the Byelorussians to describe ‘people, who are bonded with sb in a friendship, confidence; companions, friends’, but also in Ukrainian this word serves as a synonym of the word “Byelorussian” (SUM 1978: 909).

In the Polish language this word appears at the earliest in texts from the XV<sup>th</sup> and XVI<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>12</sup> *Słownik staropolski* [Dictionary of the Old Polish] (VIII: 159) records forms: *siabr/siebr* ‘copartner, socius’ and *siabrzyć* ‘to act together, to participate’, and explains that this is a loanword from Byelorussian. Still the dictionary from 1915 recorded this word and its derivated forms: *siaber/siabr* ‘countryman, relative, mate, brother; friend, companion, colleague, copartner; person who constantly trades with an other; the one who at his place has someone else’s bees to keep, as a copartner owning half of the honey and swarms; crowbar’, *siaberka* ‘woman *siaber*, woman who constantly buys from the same person’,

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‘concerning the laying of bricks’, *шабровщик* ‘a worker who lays bricks’ (BTSRJ: 1488, cf. also earlier, more limited meanings in: TSRJ: 1311 i SRJ: 951).

The word *шабер* itself doesn’t refer to the word *шабёр*, neither semantically nor etymologically, because it comes from the German *Schaber* ‘scraper’ < *schaben* ‘to scrape, to rub’ (cf. BTSRJ: 1488 and SIS 1964: 724), and then this verb derives from the Old High German/Gothic *skaban*, related to the Old Norse *skafa* and Eng. *shave* (Mitzka 1960: 629), and, in turn, it comes from PIE *\*skabh-/\*(s)kep-* ‘to cut, to scrape, to hack’ (cf. entry *shave* in “Online Etymology Dictionary”, [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)).

<sup>10</sup> In both Russian and Byelorussian, a group of “technical” derivatives from the Germanic word “scraper” also exists: Brus. *шабраваць* = Rus. *шабровать*; Brus. *шабранне* = Rus. *шабрение*, Brus. *шабраны* = Rus. *шабранный*, Brus. *шаброўка* = Rus. *шабровка*, Brus. *шабрыць* = Rus. *шабрить* (BRS: 1019).

<sup>11</sup> The Byelorussian etymological dictionary ESBM has been published so far until the vol. 11 (2006), which ends with the words on the radical *саян*. So still we have to wait for the word *сябар*.

<sup>12</sup> In the apocryphal work *Rozmyślanie Przemyskie* from the XV<sup>th</sup> c. (copy from the XVI<sup>th</sup> c.): “ye / gozesch zvolenykyem y zyebrem vczynyl” = “jegożeś zwołennikiem i siebrem uczynił” (RP: 511). In the Polish translation of the Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the XVI<sup>th</sup> c. (originally written in Old Byelorussian): “*Siabrow* albo Uczestnikow jako pozywać” (chap. 4, art. 66), “*Siabrow* kilka, jedno tylko pamiętne płacić maia” (chap. 4, art. 5. § 3), “*Siabrowie*, jako, i o co się do Sądu, przypozywaią” (chap. 4, art. 70. § 1) (cf. Register on the page 51 of the SWKL).

*siaberstwo* ‘the role of a *siaber* or *siabers* towards each other; mutual relations of bee-keepers’, *siabrostwo* ‘a form of ancestral possession of land (in Dnieper Rus’: an ancient form of ancestral possession of land, based on the primeval commonality of blood and brotherhood as well as acceptance to the family, giving its members a right to unequal divisions of the family property and to rule them with the *siabers*’ consent)’, *siabrować* ‘to be *siaber* with sb, to constantly buy from each other’, *siabrowanie* (*się*) ‘being *siaber* with sb, constantly buying from each other’, *siabrowka* ‘woman who constantly trades with sb’ (SJP VI: 85). In the contemporary Polish language, the word *siabr/siebr/siaber* no longer exists.<sup>13</sup>

This word can even be found in far-distant Slavic languages<sup>14</sup>, e.g.:

<sup>13</sup> In Polish, just like in Russian, there is also a similar word *szaber* (< Germ. *Schaber*), which doesn’t refer either etymologically or semantically to the word *siabr*. It means: ‘1. robbery of things abandoned by their owner, usually during a war or a natural disaster, 2. objects from such a robbery, 3. breakstone, aggregate from finely crushed stone or a brick, 4. scraper, a kind of a steel knife to hew surfaces or to draw in stone’. It has derivative forms too: *szaberka* ‘diminutive of *szaber*’, *szabrować* ‘1. to rob things abandoned by their owner, 2. to fill in gaps in a wall with a breakstone’, *szabrownictwo* ‘robbery of a property abandoned by its owner’, *szabrowniczy* ‘concerning this kind of a robbery’, *szabrownik* ‘a man who robs property abandoned by its owner’, *szabrowniczka* ‘feminine form of *szabrownik*’ (cf. USJP III: 1482–1483 and Dunaj 2007: 1758). About the semantic evolution of this word in Polish see Milik 1947.

<sup>14</sup> But not in all of them: I didn’t find it in. e.g. Czech, Slovak, Macedonian or Bulgarian.

One can also note that in order to mean a partner and a fellow worker in the southern Slavic languages the word *ortak* is preferably used at present – a Turkish word of a very vast array of meaning: ‘partner, associate, accomplice’ etc. (cf. Skok 1972: 566–567). This word has spread over the whole Balkan area, e.g. in:

– Macedonian: *оптак* ‘partner; fellow worker, workmate; accomplice’ (RMED: 344), ‘partner in trading or in any work, companion’, (see: [www.idividi.com.mk/recnik](http://www.idividi.com.mk/recnik)); *заортачу* ‘1. to take (s.o.) as one’s associate, make (s.o.) one’s partner. 2. to unite, pool (one’s resources)’, *заортачу се* ‘to unite; to become partners (associates)’ (RMED: 150);

– Bulgarian: *оптак* ‘partner, companion, participant, helper’;

– Serbo-Croatian: *ortak* ‘partner, associate, consort, mate, partowner; accessory’, *ortakluk* ‘partnership’ and many derivatives (cf. Skok 1972).

Perhaps, this Turkish word replaced the earlier used word. For the tradition of common work is also very old in southern Europe. As Branko Daković (1997) observes: „*Sprega, suvez, ortakluk* are the most widespread terms for specific traditional forms of joining up in working teams, common at farms in the South-Slavic countries. In the past such teams were mainly formed in the context of agricultural work, when there was a need for mutual cooperation, in which one or more members of a family became involved. The crucial factor in the process was the insufficient economic strength of the households which agreed to make a cooperation deal, to put it more precisely, a shortage of cattle (oxen or horses) and of tools (plough, harrow, cart and so on). The duration of the cooperation was mostly limited to one year, but, by agreement, it could extend over a period of several years, even decades. As a rule, deals were concluded by word of mouth, but were considered binding, in compliance with common law and with generally accepted rules of behaviour. (...) Those relationships were regulated according to the norms of common law, while certain customs and rituals occurring within or on the basis of such cooperations additionally stressed their significance. (...). Numerous terms (the majority of which originates from the general Slavonic linguistic corpus) basically refer to the same or similar contents, while certain

– in Serbo-Croatian: *cebar* ‘free peasant or shepherd in medieval Serbia, deprived of political laws; farmer’, *ceбарску* ‘concerning *cebar*’, *ceбарство* ‘the villagers’ (RSKJ: 708); *ceбрь* appears in the Serbian translation of *Syntagma Canonum* (1335), a canonical collection written by a Greek monk Matthew Blastares (cf. Novaković 1886: 521–522), and similarly we can also find *ceбp* (*ceбар*) in the *Code*<sup>15</sup> (1349) by Stephen Dušan (king of Serbia); as well as in a few other old texts (cf. Jireček 1900: 211–213),

– in Slovene *sreber/srebrič* ‘(small) peasant, farmer’ (Bezljaj 1995: 305),

– in many names and toponyms: Slovene (*Srebrnik*, *Srebrnič*), Montenegro (*Srebrič*, *Srebrnik*, *Srebrnjak*, *Sebenik*, *Sebernikar*, *Šeber*, *Šebernik*, *Šeberle*) and Serbo-Croatian (*Seber*, *Sreber*, *Srebrič*, *Srebrnjak*) (Bezljaj 1995: 305), and also *Semberija* (*Семберија*) – a geographical region between the Serb Republic and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as many places like: *Seberovo* and *Seberovac* in Serb Republic, or *Šeberov* near to Czech Prague.

In Miklosich’s *Lexicon Palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum* we can also find two Old Slavic forms: *ceспъ* ‘rusticus’ i *ceспогъ* ‘plebei’ (1862–1865: 834).

And even a similar words can be found in:

– Albanian: *sëmbër* ‘ally, partner, accomplice’<sup>16</sup>. This word is also well known in Albanian shepherds’ terminology: *sembër* ‘shepherds’ association for the common pasturage; member of a shepherds’ association or encampment’ (Domosileckaja 2002: 1).<sup>17</sup>

– Modern Greek: *σέμπρος* ‘a man living with a woman; each of two peasants who have one horned animal, and they unite in the common work on the land; neighbour; copartner in ploughing’ (Budziszewska 1991: 49), and more widely: ‘equal partner, associate, kind of partner a small farmer becomes upon entering a partnership with another small farmer based on sharing equally arable land; *métayer*, holder of land on *métayage* system in which the farmer pays half of the

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particularities in realization are mere expressions of specific circumstances, and are more of local than of regional character” (Daković 1997, a passage from abstract).

As we can see, the idea of the friendly barter in the Gulf of Finland was not the only one of its kind.

<sup>15</sup> See the text of the Code: [www.dusanov-zakonik.com](http://www.dusanov-zakonik.com); N.B. the Serbian translation of the mentioned work by Blastares was made at the behest of Dušan.

<sup>16</sup> This meaning according to Mann (1948: 449), although Cimochofski (2001: 108) explains more accurately: ‘peasant who has only 1 ox and who takes on another partner owner of another ox in order to help in ploughing’. Çabej (1982: 240) gives a similar explanation, although providing the form *sembër*: ‘associé à un autre dans la charrue : associé en élevage’, and another word secondarily related with the first: *shemër* ‘la deuxième femme qu’on épouse étant vivante et dans le foyer la première’. About the common etymology of these two words *sembër* and *shemër* cf. Çabej 1965; however Moutsos claims that their similarity is only accidental and he argues two different etymologies, cf. *infra*).

<sup>17</sup> Domosileckaja (*ibidem*) also gives in these meanings forms which can be related with the word mentioned above: *shmriaki* ‘shepherds’ association for the common pasturage’, (*i*) *shmriak* ‘member of a shepherd’s association or encampment’.

produce as rent to the owner who furnishes seed and stock, or the shepherd who rents a flock of sheep or goats and pays half of the proceeds to the owner' (Moutsos 1983: 165)'.<sup>18</sup>

– Romanian, where the family of this word is exceptionally numerous: *sîmbră/simbră/simbrie* 'association; company, farming association; company in ploughing and summer works', *a sîmbra/a sîmbrăli/a sîmbrălui* 'to associate, to form a union', *sîmbrare* 'association, formation of a union', *sîmbrar* 'companion in ploughing and summer works', *sîmbrăş/simbriaş/sămbriaş/ţimbriaş* 'member of an association, companion; sheep owner', *sîmbrăşie* 'company in ploughing', *simbriaş/simbriaş* 'hired worker; workhorse; hired hand, mercenary', *simbrie/simbrie* 'payment; pay; rent', *sîmbrioară/simbrioară* 'small salary', *a însîmbra* 'to accompany, to join' (DLR: 917–918, 1008–1009). The DAR gives, as archaisms and regionalisms, other forms too: *a sâmbra* 'to be friends', *sâmbrar* 'copartner', *sâmbrare* 'friendship', *sâmbriaş* 'companion, copartner', *sâmbără* 'association, company, society', *a sâmbărăli(u)* 'to be friends', *sâmbărăşie* 'companion in ploughing' (DAR II: 220), *ţimboraş* 'friend, companion' (DAR II: 421). In a few cases, the DAR also repeats the same forms than the DLR: *simbriaş* 'hired hand, mercenary', *simbrie* 'association, company, rent, payment, remuneration, salary, pay', *simbrioară* 'small salary' (DAR II: 266), *a însîmbra* 'to accompany, to join' (DAR I: 248). The abundance of the family of those words in Romanian is even bigger, because in the Romanian shepherds' terminology there are such dialectal variants: *simbrie/simbrie/simbrie/sîmbră/ţimbră* 'shepherds' association for the common pasturage', *a sîmbra/a însîmbra/a se sîmbrăli/a se sîmbrălui* 'to unite for the common pasturage', *sîmbriaş/sămbriaş/simbriaş/sîmbrar/ţimbriaş/simbriaşi* 'a member of a shepherds' association or encampment', *simbrie/simbrie* 'payment for a hired shepherd', *a se însîmbra* 'to form a shepherds' encampment in the mountains in spring', *a însîmbra* 'to milk' (Domosileckaja 2002: 1, 2, 193, 371).

– Aromanian dialects: *simbru* 'homme dont la femme s'est remariée' and *simbră/şămbără/şembără* 'femme dont le mari s'est remarié' (Papahagi 1974: 1085 and 1149, quoted after Moutsos 1983: 178). In an earlier edition of his dictionary, Papahagi (1963: 947) gives also the form *sămbără*.

– Moldavian: *симбрие/сымбрэ* 'salary, payment; common cultivation of land', *симбрият* 'hired', *симбрияц* 'hired hand, mercenary; joining in the common cultivation of a land' (MRS: 573, 629).

– Hungarian, through the Romanian<sup>18</sup> (particularly from *sîmbră*) (TESz I: 436–437<sup>19</sup>): *cimbora* 'mate, comrade, pal' and derivated forms: *cimborál* 'to fraternize; to plot, to be in a secret association', *cimborálás* 'fraternization; plotting, being in a secret association', *cimboráló* 'the one who fraternizes; plots, is in a secret association', *cimboraság* 'comradeship, camaraderie', *cimboráskodik* 'to

<sup>18</sup> Yet, I did not find those words in the dialect dictionary of the Hungarian Csángós living in Romania (Wichmann 1936).

<sup>19</sup> However TESz I: 436–437 and ESz: 103, explaining the origins of the word *cimbora* from Rom. *sîmbră*, erroneously trace the Rom. etymon from the Slavonic (e.g. Serbo-Croat.) word *suprug*, which in fact doesn't refer to it, because it has a completely different etymology (cf. e.g. Vasmer 1971 III: 805).

hang about with sb; to be in a treacherous union; to plot', *cimboráskodás* 'hanging about with sb; being in a treacherous union; plotting', *cimboráskodó* 'person who hangs about with sb; is in a treacherous union; plotter' (MNYÉSz I: 793–794).<sup>20</sup>

#### IN QUEST OF ORIGINS

So where does *sōbr-/sepr-/seur-* and other variants come from?

The Finnish etymological dictionaries (SSA III: 172, SKES: 1006) state that into the Finnish language the word *seura* and its dialectal relative word *sepra* came probably from the Baltic languages, into which, as it is often believed, this word came from the Slavic languages.<sup>21</sup> However, the authors do not rule out the possibility it came from the opposite direction. We can also assume that all other Finnic and Sami languages mentioned above borrowed this word from the same source, although, most probably into the Sami languages this word came through Finnish (among others SSA and SKES confirm that fact). However Pekka Sammallahti (1999: 84) says that this word existed already in the common Finnic-Sami protolanguage: he gives its reconstructed form *\*seaBrē*, as a loanword from Baltic.

J. Mägiste explains that the Estonian *sōber* 'friend' is a direct loanword from the Old Slavic *\*sębrъ* 'friend', continued in Old East Slavic *сябрь*, although he also quotes Eino Kalima who shows that this word is a borrowing from the Baltic languages (Mägiste 1962–1963: 57). Yet 20 years later, in his dictionary Mägiste writes already openly that the word *sōber* and its Finnic cognates are of Baltic origin (1982–1983: 2946–2947).

The Latvian etymological dictionary (Karulis 1992: 141) states that the word *sābris* is a High Latvian form from *sēbris* [ē] < *sēbr* [ē], and in turn it comes from Old East Slavic *сябрь* (> later Russian *сябрь*). The Lithuanian etymological dictionary (Fraenkel 1965: 768–769) states that the Lithuanian *sebras* and its Latvian cognate are Byelorussian loanwords. The Byelorussian origin is confirmed by Smoczyński too (2007: 538). Both Karulis and Fraenkel give conjectures regarding the Ruthenian and earlier sources of this word.

Since the current paths of our deliberations lead to the Old Slavic or Ruthenian roots of this word, let's examine more closely its history in Russian, where, as we could see, this word has 3 main forms: 1. *сябрь(ъ)/сябрь*, 2. *себрь/себрь*, 3. *шабрь(ъ)/шебрь/шабрь*.

<sup>20</sup> Other forms given by different dictionaries as "Hungarian" (e.g. *szimbra* in Ciorănescu 2002: 715 or *czimbora* in Miklosich 1886: 297) are not attested by Hungarian dictionaries, so we can take them for erroneous or outdated and dialectal.

<sup>21</sup> Kalima divides the etymology into two ways of wandering. He maintains that the Fin. *seura* < *\*sepra* < Old Lit. *sebras* ~ Lat. *sebrs* < Baltic *\*sebras*; whereas Lit. *sēbras* ~ Lat. *sēbrs* (convergent in terms of the form) derive from Baltic *\*sēbra-* < Byelor. *sjabr* < Slavonic *\*sębrъ*. For both of these ways a common source would be IE *\*s(u)e-bho* (> also Got. *sibja*) (Kalima 1941, cf. also Kalima 1936 and 1952).

- form *себѣр* derives from the form *сябѣр* (Vasmer 1955 II: 599 and 1971 III: 587).

- form *себра* is probably a borrowing from the Veps language *šebra* ‘common work’ (Vasmer 1955 II: 599 and 1971 III: 587), so it would be like a return of the word to its source, considering the fact that in Baltic Finnic this word is a Russian borrowing.

- form *шабѣр* is probably etymologically identical to *сябѣр*, with a secondary change of *ša-* for *ša-* (Vasmer 1955 III: 362–363).

The Russian etymological dictionary by Max Vasmer (1955 and 1971) confirms that they are etymologically related,<sup>22</sup> and he explains their origin:

The form *сябѣр* comes from the Old East Slavic *сѣбръ* ‘neighbour, member of a one community’ < Old Slavic *\*sębrъ* (Vasmer 1955 III: 61–62 and 1971 III: 824).

However the Proto-Slavic form and its origin are disputable.

### Hypothesis I

One of the strongest hypotheses refers to the IE group of cognates meaning a family, native place, homeland, village, e.g.: Goth. *haims* ‘village’, Lith. *šeimà* ‘family’, Rus. *семья* ‘family’, O.H.Germ. *hīwo* ‘spouse’, Lat. *civis* ‘citizen’, and even Germanic ethnonym *Κίμβροι* ~ *Cimbri*, written by Ptolemy and Pliny (cf. Vasmer 1955 II: 609 and 1971 III: 825; Ljapunov<sup>23</sup> 1928: 261–263; Rozwadowski 1928: 361; Vaillant 1932: 39).

And this, in turn, derives from the PIE root word *\*kei-* ‘to lie, settle down’ (Pokorny 1956: 539–540), from which still, among others: Greek *κώμη*,<sup>24</sup> Lith. *kaimas* ‘village’,<sup>25</sup> O.C.S. *semija* ‘domestic servants’, and P.Gmc. *\*khaim-* > O.N. *heimr* ‘residence, world’, *heima* ‘home’, O.Fris. *hem* ‘home, village’, O.E. *ham* ‘dwelling, house, estate, village’, Ger. *heim* ‘home’.<sup>26</sup>

An accurate description of the Slavic word is shown by Trubačev (2006: 166): *\*sębrъ* < *\*sēm-ro* < *\*sēm-*. The consonant *b* strenghtens here the group *m-r*. Trubačev also defines a primal meaning of the Slavic *\*sębrъ* as ‘territorial community, union at work’, which retained a broader meaning than Rus. *семья* (Trubačev 2006: 165). Besides, we can still actually see the traces of the primal meaning in the meanings of this word mainly in Russian, but also in other languages:

<sup>22</sup> Even though Miklosich (1886: 289) wrote that the form *sebrŭ* ‘plebejus; rusticus’ doesn’t relate to the form *sjabrŭ* ‘Nachbar’.

<sup>23</sup> Ljapunov (1928) referred to earlier works by Aleksei I. Sobolevski (article from 1922 “Семца, сябр, шабѣр” in *Ученые записки Высшей Школы г. Одессы*, II, pp. 61–62), modifying only the protoform of the word *\*sębrъ* (Sobolevski: *\*sēm-b-rъ*; Ljapunov: *\*sīm-b-rъ* with the vocalic alternation, cf. Ljapunov 1928: 262).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also *κείμαι* ‘to lie’ i *κοινός* ‘common’ (e.g. Boisacq 1950: 426, 482 and 544).

<sup>25</sup> This form, on account of *k*, can be in Lithuanian secondarily borrowed from the Germanic form (cf. Fraenkel 1965).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. entry *home* in “Online Etymology Dictionary”, www.etymonline.com.

N.B. from Germanic even O. Frankish *°haim* > French *hameau* ‘settlement, hamlet’ (cf. PR).

‘participant’, ‘partner’, ‘co-owner’, ‘neighbour’, ‘friend’ (cf. supra). Vaillant, who presents a similar etymology, even claims that it’s the Russian language which retained the most primal meaning of this word as ‘a member of the same village, i.e. co-owner of the common goods of the family or rural community’, hence this contributed to the development of other meanings: ‘relative’, ‘partner’ and ‘neighbour’ (Vaillant 1932: 39).<sup>27</sup> Vaillant explains the evolution of the meaning of this word: “Le *sębrŭ* était le membre d’un groupement de caractère familial, dont le nom apparaît dans l’aire de civilisation du germanique et du balto-slave : got. *haims* « village », etc. lette *sàime* « famille » (*familia*), lit. *šeimà*. Le terme désignait proprement la famille avec tous ses membres et ses serviteurs, tandis que l’agglomération qu’elle constituait, le « village » portait un autre nom : sl. *vīsī* (lat. *uīcus*, etc.); mais le second mot est en voie de disparition en germanique” (Vaillant 1932: 39).<sup>28</sup> While Sławski observes in this word “ancient reminiscence of the eternal form of the ancestral possession of land, on the principle of the primeval commonality of blood and brotherhood” (Sławski 1948: 50).

## Hypothesis II

The second strong hypothesis results from observations made by Vasmer (1955 II: 599 i 1971 III: 587), Sreznevskij (1903: 908), Fraenkel (1965: 768–769) or Karulis (1992: 141). They notice a similarity to non-nasal forms of words: Sanskr. *sabhā* ‘meeting, assembly’, Goth. *sibja* ‘family, tribe, clan’. And this, in turn, derives from PIE *\*s(w)e-bh(o)-* “‘one’s own’, blood relation, relative’ < PIE *s(w)e-* ‘pronoun of the third person and reflexive (referring back to the subject of the sentence); further appearing in various forms referring to the social group as an entity, “(we our-)selves” (AHDIER: 67).

This could also correspond to Preobraženski’s research (1959: 266–267) who binds this word with IE. *\*se-/\*so-*, from which Slavic, e.g. Pol. *siebie*, *swój*, *osoba* (‘oneself, one’s, person’), etc.

A similar supposition is put forward by J. Otrębski (1947) who writes that Pol. *siabr* as well as Lith. *sębras* and Latv. *sębrs* (with variant *suobris*) derive from the Ruthenian area, from the Slavic word *\*sębrŭ*, and this one links with the pronoun *\*sembho-* ~ *\*semba* ‘one’s’ < *\*sebh-* (Otrębski 1947: 179–180 and 120).

Otrębski, following Kazimieras Būg’s hypothesis, maintains that this pronoun also occurs in the name of Sembs, Prussian tribe which lived on the land of Sambia (named also Semland).<sup>29</sup> Yet V. Mažiulis (1997) casts doubt on this hypothesis.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Vaillant (*ibidem*) also observes a very similar development of the French *vilain* ‘free peasant in the Middle Ages’ < Lat. *villanus* ‘villager’.

<sup>28</sup> Vaillant (1932: 40) and Doroszewski (1931: 276) also notice a similarity of the morphological structure of *sębrŭ* to other words with the suffix *-r(o)-* defining the affinity and family relationships, e.g. Lat. *gener* ‘son/brother-in-law’, Slav. *svek(ŭ)rŭ* ‘mother-in-law’, Lit. *bendras* ‘common, general; pal, mate’.

<sup>29</sup> A historical land in former Prussia where the main city became Germ. Königsberg, in Pol. Królewiec (at present Rus. Kaliningrad).

<sup>30</sup> Mažiulis derives the Prussian name *\*Sembā* ‘Sambia’ from the way of naming that area by its neighbours as land surrounded by water, that is flooded all around by water. So

Otrębski also links the word *siabr* with, as he says, the pronoun present in the Pol. word *pasierb* ‘stepson’, and even with the name *Serb*.<sup>31</sup>

However Pokorny (1956: 883) thinks that a relationship between *s(u)e-bho-/syo-bho* and the names *Serben/Sorben* as well as *\*sębrъ* is very uncertain.

There is still unresolved matter of the emergence of the nasal infix in the Slavic form.

### Hypothesis III

The third hypothesis assumes a borrowing from Greek. D. Moutsos (1983) maintains that the Slavic *\*sębrъ* was borrowed from Gr. *σέμπρος* [sémbros] < *\*σέμρος* < *\*σέμμ(ε)ρος* < *\*σύμμερος* < *σύμμοιρος* ‘sharer, partner; lover’.<sup>32</sup> The stem *μοῖρα* survived in present-day Greek not only as ‘fate’, but also in the original sense ‘portion, share’, which we can see e.g. in: *μοιράζω* ‘share out, distribute’ (Moutsos 1983: 173). The author doesn’t give the accurate circumstances of the borrowing of this word to Slavic languages and neither the ways of its adaptation, but he claims: “Although *σέμπρος* is not attested in Middle Greek, the borrowing of it into Slavic must have taken place at a time prior to the nasalization of the vowel *ε* of *\*sębrъ*, that is, prior to the tenth century” (Moutsos 1983: 1978). He pays more attention to the borrowing of the Greek term into Albanian language (*sembër/sëmbër*), whereas Rom. *sîmbără* (> Hung. *cimbora*) derives from Gr. *ζέμπρα* [sémbra] ‘Teilbauerschaft’, and Rom. *sîmbrie* from Gr. *ζεμπρία* (also > Gr. *ζεμπριά* ‘partnership in farming’ (ibidem).

Quite the contrary, Jireček (1900) and Meyer (1892) think that the word *\*sębrъ* is Slavic, and entered the Greek language. Jireček even states that the initial common Slavic form of this word was *сѣбрь* (1900: 212).

Ciorănescu (2002: 715) too puts together the Romanian and Greek forms, but he only shows their similarity, without deciding about their origins.

However Papahagi (1963) clearly distinguishes that:

- Aromanian *simbru/sămbără* < Alb. *sëmbër* ‘partner’ (1963: 947), and
- Arom. *simbru/şembără/şămbără* < = Alb. *shëmërë* ‘concubina in amore’ + *shembër* ‘rivale in amore’ (1963: 1005).

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Mažiulis derives this name from the Lith. verb *sėmti* ‘to flood; to draw’ < Baltic *\*sem-* ‘to submerge, to flood’, and that’s why the Prus. noun *\*sembā* ‘this what is beeing flooded’ (Mažiulis 1997: 57–58).

<sup>31</sup> Although Otrębski links the word *\*sębrъ* with the name of Serbs (1947: 179), he still gives many other hypotheses regarding this ethnic name (cf. Otrębski 1947: 90–97). Even Skok (1973: 315–316) who, among different explanations also mentions the supposition on the origins of this ethnonym from *\*sębrъ*, doesn’t give unequivocal answer.

Otrębski also links the words *Serb* and *\*sębrъ* with the Pol. word *pasierb* ‘stepson’ (1947: 179 and 93). However Pokorny (1956: 88) and Boryś doubt it. According to Boryś the noun *pasierb* is linked with the verb *siorbać* ‘to slurp’, and this one derives from P.Slavonic *\*srbati* ‘to drink, to eat; to gulp down, to slurp’ < PIE *\*srb<sup>h</sup>-/\*serb<sup>h</sup>-/\*sreb<sup>h</sup>-* ‘to gulp down, to slurp, to drink’ (Boryś 2005: 415 and 548–549).

<sup>32</sup> For phonetic changes in separate phases the author gives many examples from Late, Middle and Modern Greek (Moutsos 1983: 173–177).

While, Domosileckaja (2002: 449) generally confirms that this Aromanian word came from Albanian, but she also gives an original Old Slavic *czmzpz* form which continues in Serbian, Slovenian and Russian. So we can conclude that Domosileckaja assumes the transition of this word from Slavic into Albanian, and then into Romanian and Aromanian. A similar opinion is shared by Cimochoowski who places Alb. *sëmbër* in an older group of Slavic loanwords, and he maintains this word derives from a Slavic form with the nasal vowel, which is indicated by the form vowel + nasal consonant in Albanian (Cimochoowski 2001: 108).

### Marginal hypotheses

They appear in publications of different authors, but are highly questionable:

- connection with the tribal names of Huns: Sabirs (*Σάβειροι*)<sup>33</sup> (according to Šafařík § 15.6; Miklosich 1886: 289 for the form *sebrŭ*);
- Finnish origins (according to Miklosich 1886: 297 for the form *sjabrŭ*) – but this is not very logical;
- Slavic *\*sēmbъrbъ* ‘giving half of revenue’ as a loanword from East Germanic *sēm-bur* < *\*sēm-* ‘half’ + *-bur* < *goc. gabaur* ‘collection; tax’ (Jokl 1933: 131);
- relationship with *\*sъrbъ* ‘Serb’ (Solmsen 1904 as well as Otrębski 1947: 179) – but Mikkola 1902: 275 and Vasmer (cf. 1971 III: 603–604) doubt it; cf. also Skok 1973 III: 315–316;
- finally a handful of hypotheses referring to the name of the Serbian region *Semberija*,<sup>34</sup> where, apart from mentions of options of the origins of this word from Albanian *semer*, there are also listed:
  - Turkish “zenberedži”, that is *zemberekçi* ‘janissary’ (Steuerwald 1972: 1048) ~ *zembûrekçi* ‘cannoneer’ (Zenker 1866 II: 482);
  - Hungarian *szembe* ‘straight’ (< *szem* ‘eye’, TESz III: 712–713).
 This also seems not to be very probable.

### Oštir’s hypothesis

Karel Oštir, a Slovene linguist, proposed in 1930 a daring and very interesting hypothesis of the origins of this word, by reaching very far into the past as well as linking it with many languages. This hypothesis is almost unknown, but it’s worth a closer examination.

Its diagram looks like this:

<sup>33</sup> From which probably derives the name of Siberia (cf. Vasmer 1971 III: 616).

<sup>34</sup> On the webpage: [www.avramovici.dzaba.com/catalog.html](http://www.avramovici.dzaba.com/catalog.html).

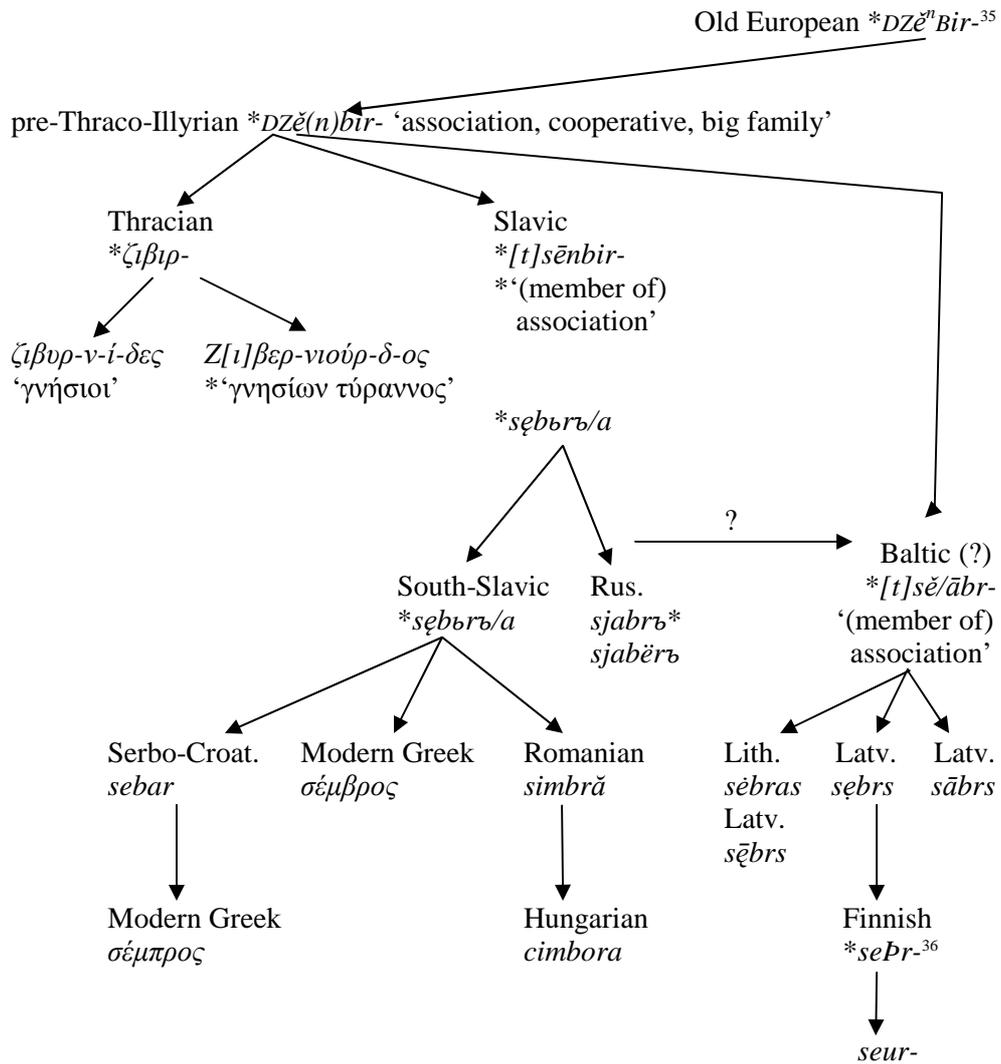
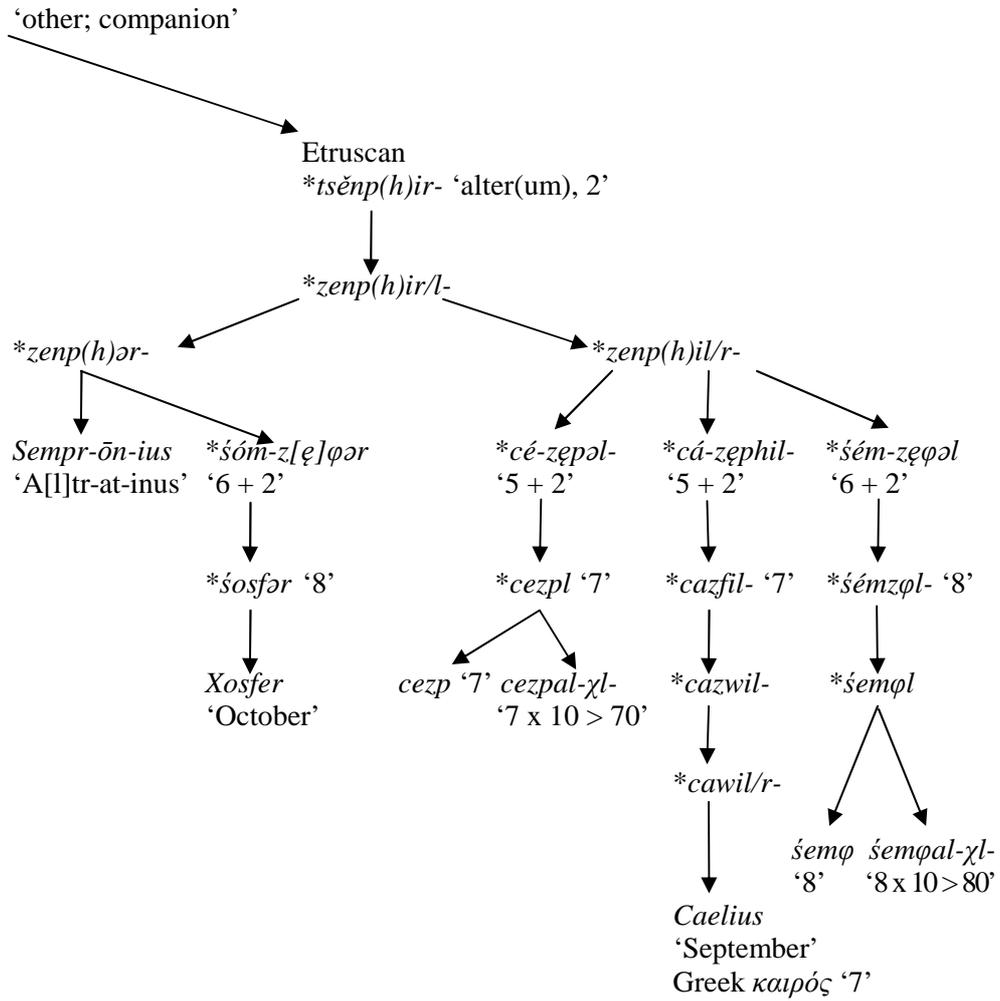


Diagram according to Oštir (1930–1931: 28–29).

<sup>35</sup> The majuscules express alternations: voiced ∞ voiceless; <sup>n</sup> = conditionally disappearance of nasal.

<sup>36</sup> Fin. \*sebr- > \*sePr- may be directly from Thraco-Illyrian.



We can note that Oštir’s large diagram confirms partially different hypotheses, but also contradicts others (especially the third one). However, many questions still remain unanswered.

## POSSIBLE INFLUENCES OF MEANING OF OTHER WORDS

We could see that in Russian some derivative words didn't always have friendly meaning, e.g. *присебрить* 'to appropriate, to grab', *присебриться/присябриться* 'to toady to sb, to show friendship insincerely; to grab' (Dal' III: 1153). Perhaps an influence of other similar words took place here. Let's observe that in O.C.S. there was a very similar word which sounded *сѡрѣрь* 'adversary'. And indeed we can find it in the work of Miklosich: *сѡпрѣрь*, with many derivated forms: *сѡпрѣрникъ/сѡпрѡтивникъ* 'adversary', *сѡпрѣра* 'dispute', etc. (Miklosich 1862–1865: 979). This word is continued e.g. in Slavic languages, among others in Russian: *спор* 'dispute, quarrel, argument', *спорить* 'to discuss, to dispute', *спорный* 'disputable', *соперник* 'rival', *супрун* 'gloomy man' (originally 'rival', cf. Vasmer 1955 III: 46 and 1971 III: 805); in Bulgarian: *съпер* 'dispute' and *съперник* 'rival' (and also in a few derivative forms) or in Polish: *spór* 'dispute', *sporny* 'disputable', *spierać się* 'to discuss, to dispute', etc. Boryś states that the P.Slavic form was: *\*сѡрорь* 'clash, argument, feud' < P.Slavic *\*сѡ-пѣрти сѣ* 'to start a feud' < *\*пѣрти*, *\*рѣро* 'to put pressure, to press; to oppose' (Boryś 2005: 570–571, 568, 489).

Apart from that, among Russian derivatives of a similar form and less friendly meaning there is also *шабреникъ* 'vain/idle man' (Dal' IV: 1387). Perhaps, a meaning influence of the Russian word *супырь* 'sulky, stand-offish man' occurred here? We have to admit that this impact is rather less probable, but worth mentioning. This word is composed of the prefix *\*сѡ-* and the root *\*пур-* present in the word *пырить* 'to fluff, to ruffle' (Vasmer 1955 III: 46 and 1971 III: 805). Let's add that there is also another similar word: *шавѣра* '(regionally and dismissively) vile, nasty people' (TSRJ: 1311).

Finally, we can refer to a possible positive influence: the word *сѡпрѣрь* mentioned above is very similar to another old Slavic word – rather positive and friendly – *сѡпрѣръ* 'spouse' (Miklosich 1862–1865: 979) which in O.East Slavic took the form *супрузь* and three meanings: 1. 'spouse', 2. 'married couple', 3. 'harness' (*sic!*) and few derivated words (cf. Vasmer 1955 III: 46 and 1971 III: 805). In Modern Russian and e.g. in Serbian this word is continued in *супруг* 'spouse', and in Bulgarian: *съпруг* 'pair of harnessed oxen' and *съпруг* 'spouse'. Vasmer explains that the root of this word derives from *\*прѣго* (*прѣгу*) 'to stretch', and the construction *сѡпрѣръ* is analogous to Lat. *coniux* (1955 III: 46 and 1971 III: 805). Indeed Lat. *coni(u)x* 'spouse, companion, partner (also at work)' is a combination of *con* 'with' + *iungere* 'to harness; to join; to make together', just like Slavic *\*сѡ-* 'with' + *\*прѣго* 'to harness; to join; to make together'. Those meanings are important in the context of our deliberations.

At last, it is worth observing that the Slavic word *brat* (*\*bratъ* < *\*bratrъ*) 'brother' in the form with P.Slavic prefix *сѡ-* 'co-' is e.g. Rus. *собрат*, Byelor. *сабрат*, Bulg. *събрат* 'colleague; fellow member'. This sounds very similar to *\*сѣбрь* and has a similar meaning 'mate, comrade'. Maybe a fusion of these two words occurred here?

Let's also observe how similar these words are to Rus. *собрать* or Bulg. *събратъ* 'to meet; to assemble; to gather'. To the same family also belongs phonetically very similar O.East Slavic word *съборъ* (which sounds identically in O.C.S.) 'meeting, assembly, bunch, community' which in Russian became *собор* 'meeting, collection', and in Byelorussian *сабор* 'meeting (of officials/clergy); temple; pile, recruitment, meeting' (cf. ESBM: 283–284), while in Polish *zbór* 'Protestant church, congregation' and *sobór* 'council' (Boryś 2005: 733–734).<sup>37</sup> This word also occurs in other derivatives, e.g. Rus. *собрание, собрание, собиравать(ся)*, Pol. *zebranie, zebrac, zbierac (sie)*, it is to say that it is from O.Slavic prefix \*sъ- + O.Slavic \*bъrati < O.C.S. *bъrati* < PIE \*b<sup>h</sup>er- 'to bear' (Boryś 2005: 37), related with Lat. *ferre* or eng. *to bear*, etc.

Perhaps the forms and meanings merged together. If we assume that a group of friends is, after all, a company as well as a bunch, we can better understand the formation of the meanings of the word \**sębrъ* 'friend'. We have seen that particularly in Baltic Finnic this range is big: from 'friend' to 'company, association', etc.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite everything, we cannot establish the original source of O.East Slavic word \**sębrъ* for certain. An earlier form is lost in the mists of time.

Many authors (e.g. Doroszewski 1931: 276, and finally even Vasmer) prefer not to support any of the hypotheses. It is even possible that at a certain moment a fusion of meanings from different sources occurred, because the common possession of land was related with a community of relatives, that is to say "one's".

Logically we can only say that such a form which is today reconstructed – that is \**sębrъ* – came into existence in East Slavic, precisely in O.East Slavic, where it was continued in Russian in three forms whose diversity can be explained.

From Ruthenian sources we also have these families of words in Byelorussian and Ukrainian.

From there it also spread to Baltic and Finnic and in Polish too.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> According to Vasmer, the O.East Slavic form initially meant 'meeting' and this word was a calque from Greek *συναγωγή* 'assembly, meeting' (Vasmer 1971 III: 704). Besides Pol. *zbór* since XIV<sup>th</sup> c. generally meant 'bunch, crowd, community, meeting, assembly' etc., and since XVI<sup>th</sup> c. 'religious Protestant community; Protestant temple'; while *sobór* 'official meeting; meeting of clergy; cathedral' (Boryś 2005: 733–734).

<sup>38</sup> Into the Polish language it could indeed come from Byelorussian, which is confirmed by *Słownik staropolski* (VIII: 159), and the lack of the original nasal *ę* shows that Polish, which preserves nasal vowels, borrowed this word in the form already non-nasal (Sławski 1948: 50). The dictionary by Linde (V: 249) also speaks about the Ruthenian origins of this word and use of it by the Ruthenians. A. Brückner too confirms a Ruthenian source of this word in Polish (2000: 487).

The traces of Greek in South-Slavic<sup>39</sup> and in Romanian<sup>40</sup> (from there to Hungarian) and in Albanian<sup>41</sup> remains disputable, but possible.

So with a bigger plausibility, supported often by the tradition of writing, we observe a migration of this word in other languages where sometimes it takes interesting nuances of meaning, like we have seen above.

Generally speaking, the word “friend” develops very interesting meanings which sometimes wander far away among different nations and populations. In other languages semantically related words also have their interesting history, e.g. in Polish the evolution and a range of the meaning of the word *przyjaciół* ‘friend’ studied by Jadwiga Puzynina (1993) who reminds us that this Polish word has not only common roots with the English word *friend*, or Germ. *Freund*, but also with the adjective *free*, or *frei* – the meaning probably developed from the fact that the one who is liked and respected belongs to a tribe, and not to slaves<sup>42</sup>.

So let this history of friendship<sup>43</sup> among the common people, and generally between nations together with their languages open to the world, be a homage to Mrs. Professor Marcela Świątkowska, always friendly and well-meaning.

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<sup>39</sup> The etymological dictionaries of Serbian and Slovenian do not support any of the hypotheses, but only refer to arguments included in hypotheses I and II as well as in few others (marginal).

<sup>40</sup> The etymological dictionary of Romanian states, as a source of the word *sîmbră*, a Slavic form *sûmbrŭ* ‘companion’, but also mentions the similarity of the form and meaning to Greek *σεμπριά* and *σέμπρος* (Ciorănescu 2002: 715).

<sup>41</sup> Moutsos disagrees that *sembër* and *shemër* are etymological variants, although he admits that those words are distant relatives whose convergent forms secondarily merged into a similar meaning. He gives such an etymology: *sembër* < *σέμπρος*, and *shemër* < *\*σέμμερος* < *σύμμοιρος* (Moutsos 1983: 179).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. also entry *free* in “Online Etymology Dictionary”, [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com): “The primary sense seems to have been ‘loved, friend, to love;’ which in some languages (notably Gmc. and Celtic) developed also a sense of ‘free,’ perhaps from the terms ‘beloved’ or ‘friend’ being applied to the free members of one’s clan (...)”. With this word is also related the German *Friede* ‘peace’.

<sup>43</sup> I would like to thank my friends (*sębrs!*) who helped me in this project: Marta Szkuta-Włoch, Przemysław Dębowiak, Tomasz Majtczak, Michał Németh, and my sister Lucyna.

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### Abstract

#### *Friendly barter in the Gulf of Finland, and wandering meanings*

A point of departure for this study is the name of barter in the Gulf of Finland, well known in the history of Finnish-Estonian relations. The name of this barter contains the word which is used to describe a friend or a good acquaintance in Finnic, several Slavic and a few other languages in Europe.

The article shows possibilities of survey of the origins of this word. It can originate from Old East Slavic or Greek or even it belongs to the oldest layer of European vocabulary. This word is so old and has been so largely used, that its etymology is still open, but the evolution of its meanings is very interesting.

### Streszczenie

#### *Przyjacielski handel wymienny w Zatoce Fińskiej a wędrujące znaczenia*

Punktem wyjścia tego studium jest nazwa handlu wymiennego w Zatoce Fińskiej, dobrze znanego w historii relacji fińsko-estońskich. Nazwa tego handlu zawiera słowo, którym określa się przyjaciela lub znajomego w językach bałtycko-fińskich, kilku słowiańskich i jeszcze paru innych w Europie.

Artykuł pokazuje możliwości poszukiwania źródeł słowa. Może ono pochodzić z języka staroruskiego lub greckiego albo nawet należeć do najstarszej warstwy słownictwa europejskiego. Słowo to jest tak stare i było tak szeroko używane, że sprawa jego etymologii pozostaje otwarta, ale bardzo ciekawe jest jego ewoluowanie znaczeniowe.