Slavic Origins. A Linguistic-Historical Workshop

Wolfson College, Oxford, 10 December 2012
organized by Ilya Yakubovich and Marek Jankowiak
Research Fellows at Wolfson College

Slavic origins remain a highly contentious topic. Within their respective fields, scientists produced widely diverging visions of the emergence of the Slavic language and identity. From the picture the gradual emergence of common Slavic from Balto-Slavic inherent in the methodology of traditional historical linguistics, to a historian’s vision of the making of the Slavs in the shadow of Justinianic limes on the Danube in the 6th century AD, the divide seems impossible to bridge. Are these perspectives irreconcilable? What are the premises of the respective positions? What do we mean by “Slavic origins”?

We consider it worthwhile to convene a study day, where linguists, archaeologists and historians would have a rare opportunity to directly engage with each other. We would like to address, in particular, the following questions:

- the current perspective on the linguistic history of the Balto-Slavic family
- the interaction of the Slavic and neighbouring linguistic families (Iranian, Germanic)
- is Slavic a partially restructured vernacular?
- archaeology of the Slavic origins
- the expansion of the Slavs in the historical and archaeological record

Even though no consensus seems at reach in the near future, we hope that an exchange of views may contribute to making the future research more sensitive to interdisciplinary perspectives.

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9.00 Preliminary remarks

9.10-10.20 The Emergence of the Slavs

Ilya Yakubovich (Oxford), “Continuity and Discontinuity in the Development of Slavic Languages”

Speaker to be confirmed, “The Kiev Culture” (in Russian, with parallel English translation)

10.20-10.40 Coffee break

10.40-11.50 Slavs between the Balts and the Steppe

Philip Minlos (Moscow), “The Balto-Slavic”

Adam Ziółkowski (Warsaw), “The Slavic ethnogenesis: when?”

11.50-13.00 Dating the First Slavs

Anna Dybo (Moscow), “Linguistic Contacts Between Slavic and Turkic”

Florin Curta (Gainesville, FL), “The early Slavs in East Central Europe: Poland, Slovakia, western Ukraine, and north-western Romania (6th-7th century)”

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.10 The Slavic Drang nach Westen

Ivo Stefan (Prague), “The Prague Culture”

Catherine Mary MacRobert (Oxford), “Linguistic Contacts Between Slavic and Germanic”

15.10-15.30 Tea break

15.30-17.00 The Differentiation of Slavs

Marek Jankowiak (Oxford), “Written sources on the Slavic migrations”


Mate Kapovic (Zagreb), “Dialectal Differentiation of the Slavic Languages: Accentological Approach”

17.00 Drinks

20-minute papers will be followed by a 30-minute discussion at the end of each session. Everyone is welcome, but places are limited. Please register by emailing ilya.yakubovich@wolfson.ox.ac.uk or marek.jankowiak@orinst.ox.ac.uk A sandwich lunch will be offered.