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## The Development of the Slavic Names of the Days of the Week from Christian and Pre-Christian Elements

### 1. *Introduction*

When it comes to naming the days of the week, particularly in European languages, there are two main conventions: an astronomical and a numerical one. The astronomical convention originated in ancient Mesopotamia, whence it spread to other civilizations. It draws the names for the days from the seven classical planets: the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, or the gods associated with these planets. This system was used in the Roman Empire and it is found to this day in most Romance and Germanic languages (Waniakowa 1998: 13-16; Zaroff 2016: 31-32). The numerical convention on the other hand is a simple way to organize the days of the week by numbers, with no relation to astronomy. And so, the names of the days can be translated as 'the first day', 'the second day' etc. This system gained popularity in Europe with the spread of Christianity and was based on a Jewish tradition of numbering days starting from Sunday. The days of religious relevance, namely Sunday, Saturday and in some languages Friday, were given special names referencing religious practices. This system is used e.g. in Modern Greek (introduced in Byzantine times) and Portuguese.

The Slavic names of the days of the week mostly follow the numerical pattern, though with a crucial difference: the days are numbered starting not from Sunday, but Monday (Enrietti 1994: 137). Confusingly, Wednesday is considered 'the middle of the week'. There is also a Judeo-Christian name for Saturday and an oddly non-religious name for Sunday. All of this creates controversy around the origins of the Slavic week, despite the etymology of the names of the days being quite obvious. It is unclear, whether these names arose in pre-Christian times or if they were introduced by Christian missionaries.

Some scholars believe that the Slavic names of the days of the week were invented and introduced by Saint Cyril; others suggest that it was Methodius or earlier Bavarian missionaries who organized disjointed day-names from different backgrounds into a coherent calendar; lastly, there are some who speculate that the Slavs had had a clear concept of a week with a different number of days than seven (Zaroff 2016: 33; Waniakowa 1998: 17; Enrietti 1994: 152; Moszyński 1985: 228). Most likely, the explanation is more complex, and the Slavic day naming pattern evolved over time from a simple numerical system, adopting Christian elements along the way. It will be discussed below how the Slavic names for the days of the week might have originated, using other languages that came into contact with pre-Christian or early Christian Slavs as a reference – most importantly Lithuanian, which

TABLE I. Days of the week in Old Church Slavonic and Greek

| Day of the week | Old Church Slavonic name                      | Meaning            | Greek name                        | Meaning       |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Monday          | ПОНЕДѢЛЬНИКЪ<br>( <i>poneděl'nikŭ</i> )       | 'day after Sunday' | Δευτέρα<br>( <i>deuterē</i> )     | 'second'      |
| Tuesday         | ВѢТОРНИКЪ<br>( <i>vŭtor'nikŭ</i> )            | 'second'           | Τρίτη<br>( <i>tritē</i> )         | 'third'       |
| Wednesday       | СРѢДА<br>( <i>srěda</i> )                     | 'middle'           | Τετάρτη<br>( <i>tetartē</i> )     | 'fourth'      |
| Thursday        | ЧЕТВРТЬКЪ<br>( <i>četvrit'kŭ</i> )            | 'fourth'           | Πέμπτη<br>( <i>pemptē</i> )       | 'fifth'       |
| Friday          | ПАТЬКЪ<br>( <i>pet'kŭ</i> )                   | 'fifth'            | Παρασκευή<br>( <i>paraskeuē</i> ) | 'preparation' |
| Saturday        | сѣбота / sobota<br>( <i>sobota / sobota</i> ) | 'sabbath'          | Σάββατον<br>( <i>sabbaton</i> )   | 'sabbath'     |
| Sunday          | НЕДѢЛЯ<br>( <i>neděl'ja</i> )                 | 'not working'      | Κυριακή<br>( <i>kyriakē</i> )     | 'Lord's day'  |

uses a numerical system not entirely dissimilar from the Slavic one, and Hungarian, whose week was modelled under the Slavic influence. It will also be shown why the creation by an individual – in this case, Cyril – is rather improbable.

## 2. Evidence against the creation by Cyril

While it has been proposed that the Slavic names of the days of the week (or at least some of them) were created and introduced by Cyril (Zaroff 2016: 33), some evidence suggests otherwise. Had he indeed created these names himself, the obvious thing to do would be to simply translate the Greek names into Slavic. This, however, is not the case. In the Greek calendar, the days are numbered starting from Sunday. Friday, Saturday and Sunday are given specific names with religious connotations, of which only the name for Saturday (Σάββατον) corresponds to its Slavic equivalents. TABLE I. shows the Old Church Slavonic and Greek days of the week with their etymological meaning.

The Greek names are exemplary of the Christian tradition where Sunday is considered the first day of the week. Saturday, Sunday, and even Friday are associated with religious practice. The same pattern is present in other European languages, such as Portuguese<sup>1</sup>. In Slavic languages, however, Tuesday is 'the second day', as if Monday was the start of the

<sup>1</sup> Notably in Portuguese Friday does not have religious connotations, being simply called *sexta-feira*, 'the sixth day'.

week, which implies that this custom predates the Christianization of the Slavs. Furthermore, apart from Saturday, any religious associations are noticeably absent from the Slavic convention. Even Sunday is associated with rest rather than religious practice.

Another piece of evidence is the variety of suffixes in the names of the days of the week in various Slavic languages. As will be discussed later, all of the names of masculine grammatical gender have at least two possible suffixes and even some South Slavic peoples, who were among the first to be exposed to Christianity, differ from the Church Slavonic ‘norm’. This may imply that the roots of these names were in use in pre-Christian times and different Slavic peoples attached different suffixes to them. In some cases it is possible that the suffixes changed overtime to form a more coherent, unified paradigm; while in other cases, for example in Eastern Slavic, these presumably new suffixes would have been an odd addition.

Finally, one of the two possible names for Saturday – *sobota*, is clearly derived from a vulgar Balkan form *\*sambat-*, as will also be discussed later. If the Slavic names of the days of the week had been created by Cyril, it would have been odd to use a vulgar name as a base, unless it had already been in use among Balkan Slavs.

This evidence suggests that Cyril did not create the Slavic names of the days of the week, nor did he introduce them to pagan Slavic peoples, since they had had a similar system in use.

### 3. *\*nedělja* – *Sunday*

The etymology of the name *nedělja* is evident: it comes from *ne dělati*, ‘to not work’. This name has survived in all Slavic languages, taking into account phonological changes, with the only exception being Russian. The Russian word for Sunday is *воскресенье* (*voskresen'e*) – ‘resurrection’, an obviously Christian name. The word *неделя* (*nedelja*) came to denote the week<sup>2</sup>, but there is evidence that it was used in its original meaning before the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Trubačev 1997, XXIV: *s.v. neděl'a*).

It is probably impossible to know whether pre-Christian Slavs were familiar with the concept of a rest-day. The name implies, however, that the Slavic concept of Sunday was more strongly associated with leisure rather than religious practice. In other European languages, Sunday is often called ‘the day of the Lord’ (Greek Κυριακή, Latin *dies Domini-ca*). It has been suggested that the word *nedělja* is a calque from the Greek term *ἄπρακτος ἡμέρα* (*apraktos hēmera*) meaning ‘the day of inactivity’ (Králík 2015: *s.v. nedela*; Machek 2010: *s.v. neděle*; Trubačev 1997, XXIV: *s.v. neděl'a*). This term was used in plural, *ἄπρακτοι ἡμέραι* (*apraktoi hēmerai*), to denote ‘holidays’ (Liddel, Scott 1996: *s.v. ἄπρακτος*), but it is possible that its meaning was narrowed to ‘Sunday’ at some point. Certainly though, the lack of religious connotations proves that this name could not have been created by Cyril,

<sup>2</sup> In Serbian *nedelja* is both the word for Sunday and a synonym for *sedmica*, ‘the week’. Similarly, in Georgian the word *kvira*, derived from Greek Κυριακή denotes both ‘Sunday’ and ‘the week’, whereas in Armenian *kiraki* keeps its original meaning as ‘Sunday’, but the week gets its name after Saturday: *šabat*.

TABLE 2. Suffixes attached to the stem *poneděl-* in various Slavic languages

| Suffix    | -*mikŭ  | -*ŭkŭ  | -*ije                | -*a           |
|-----------|---|--|----------------------|---------------|
| Languages | Old Church Slavonic, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Russian | Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Polish, Slovak, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Rusyn | Czech, Lower Sorbian | Upper Sorbian |

who would have likely referenced Christianity in some form<sup>3</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the term *aparakos* coming from the Greek ἀπαρακτος was used to refer to Slavic lectionaries containing Gospel readings for Saturday and Sunday. However, given that the term was not used in Greek (Hannick 1988: 163), it is safe to assume that it originated from the word *nedělja*, and not the other way around.

Sunday is considered the last day of the week in the Slavic system, as evidenced by the name of Tuesday and other numbered days which we will discuss later. This, paired with the fact that its name bears no reference to religious practice, may not necessarily prove its pre-Christian origins, but it strongly suggests that Slavs had some kind of numbering system for the days of the week in place before the Christianization. This system could be quite old, dating back to the hypothetical Balto-Slavic language. In Lithuanian, which is considered to be a highly conservative language, the days of the week are numbered starting from Monday. The only exception from the numbering system is Sunday, called *sekmadienis*, ‘the lucky day’. The reference to good luck indicates some pagan belief related to Sunday (Falk 2004: 25), which could have also been a holiday of some sort for the Ancient Baltic and Slavic peoples. This does not exclude that the name *nedělja* could have been a Christian invention and the Slavs could have referred to Sunday with just the number seven before.

#### 4. \*poneděl- – Monday

The Slavic stem for Monday, *poneděl-*, meaning ‘after Sunday’, can be conjoined with various suffixes in different languages. TABLE 2. shows the distribution of possible suffixes in Slavic languages.

<sup>3</sup> It is often argued that the Glagolitic script, presumably created by Cyril, is based around Christian symbols, with the letter A being an explicit cross (Lukić 2020: 89). It is hard to believe that Cyril would not reference Christianity if the Slavic name for Sunday were his invention, since it is called ‘the Lord’s day’ in his native language, Greek.

The suffix *-\*īnikŭ* is present only in Eastern South Slavic (Old Church Slavonic, Bulgarian and Macedonian), with the exception of Russian, where it was likely borrowed from the Church Slavonic language<sup>4</sup>. Most Slavic languages use the suffix *-\*ūkŭ*, which suggests that the stem *poneděl-* was in use long before Cyril. The Eastern South Slavic form was simply introduced into Old Church Slavonic as it was used in the area of Solun.

The suffix *-\*ūkŭ* is prevalent, occurring in South, West, and East Slavic. It is worth noting that the word for Monday underwent a minor change in Croatian, Serbian, and Rusyn where alveolar *l* was changed to palatal, most likely by analogy to *nedělja*: Croatian *ponedjeljak*, Serbian *ponedeljak*, Rusyn *noneđilěk* (*ponedjilěk*).

The suffix *-\*īje* formed a neuter noun. The so-created noun, *\*ponedělje*, underwent some phonological changes in Czech resulting in the form *pondělí*, having lost the vowel *e* due to word-initial stress (Rejzek 2012: s.v. *pondělí*; Machek 2010: s.v. *pondělí*).

The Upper Sorbian language has developed another suffix: *-a* (*póndžela*), perhaps a cognate of Polabian *pénidelä*. It may be a simple compound of the words *po* ‘after’ and *njedžela* ‘Sunday’, but it could also have been formed as an analogy with the feminine names of the other days of the week.

The Slavic name for Monday could have been introduced by some early adopters of Christianity among the Slavic peoples to reinforce the significance of Sunday as a special day of the week and diminish the role of Monday as the first day. Monday was surely the start of the week for pre-Christian Slavs, as evidenced not only by the names for Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, but also by neighboring languages. In Lithuanian it is called *pirma-dienis*, ‘the first day’, and in Hungarian, which borrowed the Slavic names or modelled its own names after them, it is *hétfő*, ‘the head of the week’. If Monday had been literally called ‘the first day’, it would have collided with the Judeo-Christian tradition<sup>5</sup>, perhaps creating some confusion. It is also possible that the supposed rest-day, if they indeed had one, held a strong significance for pre-Christian Slavs and it was referenced in the name of the first day of work. The stem *poneděl-* seems to have existed before Cyril, as implied by the variety of suffixes in Slavic languages. Cyril codified the form with the distinctly Eastern South Slavic suffix *-\*īnikŭ*, later borrowed into Russian.

## 5. *\*vŭtor-* – *Tuesday*

The Slavic name for Tuesday comes from the word *\*vŭtorŭjŭ*, meaning ‘the second’ (Derksen 2008: s.v. *\*vŭtorŭnikŭ*). This is a clear indication that the Slavs considered it the second day of the week, as did their closest neighbors: in Lithuanian it is called *antradienis*, ‘the second day’, and the Hungarian name *kedd*, etymologically related to *két* ‘two’, seems to be a calque from Slavic (Falk 2004: 28-29).

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that Russian kept the original stem for Monday (‘after Sunday’), even though the name for Sunday was replaced with a religious one.

<sup>5</sup> In Hebrew Sunday is called יום ראשון (*yóm r’šón*), ‘the first day’.

TABLE 3. Suffixes attached to the stem *vŭtor-* in various Slavic languages

| Suffix    | -* <i>inikŭ</i>                                     | -* <i>ŭkŭ</i>  | -* <i>ŭjŭ</i> | -* <i>a</i>                  |
|-----------|---|--|---------------|------------------------------|
| Languages | Old Church Slavonic, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Russian | Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Polish, Slovak, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Rusyn | Czech         | Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian |

As was the case with Monday, the word for Tuesday also comes with a variety of suffixes in different Slavic languages. TABLE 3. shows the distribution of these suffixes.

Again, the suffix -\**inikŭ* is characteristic of Eastern South Slavic and was later borrowed into Russian. The prevalent suffix is once again -\**ŭkŭ*. The Czech word for Tuesday, *úterý*, seems to be an adjective form. The Sorbian languages have the feminine suffix -*a* (Upper Sorbian *wutora*, Lower Sorbian *waltora*), perhaps by analogy with other feminine names of the days of the week.

#### 6. \**serda* – *Wednesday*

The Slavic name for Wednesday is a confusing one. It comes from Proto-Slavic \**serda* meaning ‘middle’ (Derksen 2008: *s.v.* \**serda*), clearly implying that it is considered the middle of the week, which should logically fall on Thursday if we start the count from Monday. Furthermore, as is the case with the other feminine days of the week, it does not come with any suffixes other than -*a*. These two pieces of evidence suggest that the name for Wednesday may be a foreign influence.

The concept of Wednesday as the middle of the week counting from Sunday was introduced through Ecclesiastical Latin (*media hebdomas*) and later adopted into other languages, such as Old High German (*mittaweoha*, modern German *Mittwoch*), Italian (archaic *mezzedima*) and Dalmatian (*missedma*) (Waniakowa 1998: 81-84). Most likely, the Slavic name for Wednesday is the result of the contact with one of these languages (Králík 2015: *s.v.* *streda*; Machek 2010: *s.v.* *střed*). It could not have been, however, created by Cyril, as it had appeared before the law of open syllables. According to this law, which was in place in Late Common Slavic, every syllable must end in a vowel (Greenberg *et al.*: *s.v.* *Law of Open Syllables* [*Rising Sonority*]). Different Slavic dialects achieved this result in different ways, and so the word \**serda* became \**srěda* in South and West Slavic, and \**sereda* in East Slavic. When Cyril codified the Old Church Slavonic language, this change had already taken place. But the word was already in use, as evidenced by the East Slavic forms as well as the Hungarian loanword *szerda*, ‘Wednesday’, which must have been borrowed even before the law of open syllables.



The Slavic word for Wednesday is most likely of Christian origin, but it predates Cyril by quite some time. It may have been introduced by early Slavic Christians to further reinforce the position of Sunday as the first day of the week, or it could have been just a borrowing from a neighboring Christian people of Germanic or Romance descent.

7. \*četr̥vīr(t)- – *Thursday*

The Slavic name for Thursday comes from the word \*četr̥vrtŭjĭ meaning ‘the fourth’, implying that it was considered the fourth day of the week. The South and West Slavic languages use the name with the suffix \*-ŭkŭ, whereas East Slavic has developed a somewhat bizarre form \*četr̥virgŭ. This may have been created by some phonological change of the original \*četr̥vrtŭkŭ which is not yet understood (Trubačev 1977, IV: s.v. \*četr̥virgŭ; \*četr̥vrtŭkŭ). Both forms are evidenced in East Slavic as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Waniakowa 1998: 102).

It is worth noting that the extinct Polabian language had a different word for Thursday, *perēndan* meaning ‘the day of Perēn/Perun’, the Slavic god of thunder, which is most likely a calque of German *Donnerstag* (Zaroff 2016: 32), and so far the only occurrence of an astronomical name of a day of the week in Slavic languages.

8. \*pęt- – *Friday*

The name for Friday in Slavic languages means ‘the fifth day’ and comes from the ordinal numeral \*pętŭjĭ. Similarly to the name of Thursday, the South and West Slavic languages use words originating from the same form \*pętŭkŭ, while East Slavic uses the feminine suffix \*-ŭnica. There is, however, evidence that forms derived from \*pętŭkŭ were also used in the past, and both forms are attested since the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Waniakowa 1998: 114-115).

The Polabian language innovates on this name as well: its word for Friday is *skopě*, derived from the adjective \*skopŭ, ‘thrifty, greedy’, most likely as a reference to the Christian religious practice of fasting on Friday (Zaroff 2016: 33).

9. \*sębota/\*sobota – *Saturday*

There is no attestation of any etymologically Slavic name for Saturday. All the Slavic languages use words ultimately derived from Hebrew שַׁבָּת (*sabbat*) through Greek Σάββατον (*sabbaton*) or Latin *sabbatum/sabbata*. Curiously, every Slavic language uses the feminine suffix *-a*, but the difference lies in the first vowel of the word.

The “normative” form of this word in Old Church Slavonic is *sębota* with a nasal vowel. There are some attestations of the form *sobota*, likely influenced by the writer’s native language, and the exceedingly rare form *sębotŭ* (Waniakowa 1998: 139-140).

The form with the nasal vowel most probably comes from \**sambat-*, a stem which originated in Balkan vulgar Latin<sup>6</sup>. It can be found in Romanian, which typically uses the

<sup>6</sup> The change *-bb-* > *-mb-* probably occurred independently in multiple areas, as it is often regarded as the basis for German *Samstag* and French *samedi* (Waniakowa 1998: 133; 138; Falk 2004: 23).

Latin astronomical names for the days of the week, as *sāmbāta*. Unsurprisingly, all the South Slavic languages have forms derived from *\*sobota*<sup>7</sup>. So do the East Slavic languages, though this may be a borrowing from Church Slavonic, as there is scarce evidence of the form *sobota* being used in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Waniakowa 1998: 142). The West Slavic languages only have forms without the nasal vowel, which suggests that they were borrowed directly from Latin.

Despite the obvious Christian origin, the Slavic name for Saturday is unlikely to have been introduced by Cyril. Firstly, if that were the case, the name would have probably been taken from Greek, and since in Byzantine Greek the word Σάββατον was pronounced *savvaton*, a *v* sound would be expected instead of a *b* sound. This, however, is not sufficient evidence. The form *\*sambaton* might have very well existed, as suggested by modern Greek dialectal forms (Waniakowa 1998: 132). A more convincing piece of evidence is the fact that the Proto-Slavic change *a > o* had already occurred in the word when Cyril codified it. If the word had been first coined by Cyril, it would probably include the vowel *a*, more closely resembling the original. The Hungarian language, which has its names for the days of the week modelled after Slavic, partly supports this with its word for Saturday, *szombat*. This could be a borrowing of the rarest Slavic form, *sobotŭ*. Lastly, the form invented by Cyril probably would not include a nasal vowel. While it is not entirely unlikely that he would include a vulgar form in a language for teaching the Slavic masses, it seems less believable when it comes to words with religious connotations. Thus, all three of the discussed forms were probably used by Slavic Christians in various regions well before Cyril's mission.

One may also draw other conclusions from the fact that pre-Christian Slavs seemingly did not have a word for Saturday. One could theorize that the Slavic week was not seven-day-long, but perhaps shorter or longer, as a day could have been added later to conform to the Christian calendar, or two days could have been merged into one, hence a new name was needed. Of these two hard to prove conclusions, the first one seems more likely. A six-day-long week would provide more sense to Wednesday being called 'the middle of the week', if viewed outside the Christian context. Assuming that Sunday was already a rest day in pre-Christian times, Wednesday would be in the middle of a five-day-long workweek.

## 10. Conclusion

The evidence shows that the Slavic names of the days of the week were not created by Cyril or any other single person. Rather, it was a system that developed overtime, most likely originating in pre-Christian times and introducing Christian elements along the way.

The variety of suffixes attached to the names of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday suggests that their stems are quite old and various dialects of the still Common Slavic language developed different suffixes for them. Amongst these, the most prominent one is by far *-\*ŭkŭ*, whereas the forms for Monday and Tuesday codified by Cyril use the distinctly

<sup>7</sup> Slovene *sobota* can be confusing, but it more likely comes from *\*sobota*, since *o* is the normal Slovene continuation of Proto-Slavic *o* (Toporišič 1971: 45).



Eastern South Slavic suffix *-\*inikŭ*. Other languages, such as Czech, Sorbian and East Slavic also have their own suffixes.

The names for Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday are derived from ordinal numerals. A numeral-based system is also in place in Lithuanian, which may imply that this pattern originated in Balto-Slavic times. Contrary to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the days are counted starting from Monday and not Sunday. Some scholars believe that the numbers are meant to denote days after Sunday, e.g. *vŭtorinikŭ* would be ‘the second day after Sunday’, making it actually the third day of the week (Waniakowa 1998: 16-17). This argument makes sense given that Monday’s name means ‘the (first) day after Sunday’, but it is contradicted by Hungarian which, with its days of the week being calques and loanwords from Slavic, calls Monday ‘the head of the week’. It is more likely then that the known Slavic stem *\*poneděl-* was introduced by Christians to give more significance to Sunday, while the original system did indeed start the count from Monday.

The name for Sunday is more mysterious as to its origins. While its etymology is clear, it is hard to tell whether it is of Christian or pagan origin. On the one hand, we cannot tell if pre-Christian Slavs were familiar with the concept of a rest-day. On the other hand, its name emphasizes leisure and does not actually reference any religious practice as is the case with many European languages. In fact, the Slavic name is more akin to Lithuanian *sekmdienis*, ‘the lucky day’, which probably originated from some pagan belief.

The name for Wednesday seems to be a calque from some other language, most probably Old High German, where it replaced the original astronomical name through the influence of Ecclesiastical Latin. Thus, it is likely of Christian origin and perhaps also replaced an older Slavic name based on a numeral. The need to rename Wednesday to ‘the middle of the week’ would suggest that Christians tried to push the new idea of Sunday as the first day. The word itself, *\*serda* in its original form, predates Cyril by some time, as it was in use before the law of open syllables in Late Common Slavic period.

Finally, the word for Saturday was clearly introduced by Christianity, since it references sabbath. This introduction was not, however, a work of one person, as various regional forms of the name exist, some derived from vulgar Balkan *\*sambat-*, and some probably taken directly from Latin *sabbata*. It is the only day of the week with a non-Slavic name, which may lead to believe that the pre-Christian Slavic week consisted of six days instead of seven. The idea of a non-seven-day-long Slavic week has been proposed before, but it is impossible to prove without further evidence. Nevertheless, we can still theorize how a supposed six-day-long week would have looked like. The days could have been originally numbered from one to five, with *\*nedělja* being the sixth day. With the advent of Christianity, Saturday could have been introduced, and the third day could have been renamed to *\*serda*. This naming pattern would have been adopted by the Hungarians, and some time later the original numeric name of the first day was replaced with a form derived from the stem *\*poneděl-*.

One more thing that we need to address is the theory that the Slavic names of the days of the week developed overtime, but they were not necessarily common among all the

Slavic peoples, and it was Methodius who organized them into the system we know today and spread them throughout Slavdom. It is entirely possible, but it seems more likely that the development of the Slavic week was a longer and more natural process, as implied by the evidence discussed above.

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*Abstract*

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*The Development of the Slavic Names of the Days of the Week from Christian and Pre-Christian Elements*

This paper is an attempt at tracing the origins of the Slavic names of the days of the week. Although these names have a clear etymology from a purely linguistic point of view, it is unknown whether they are of Christian or pagan origin, and if they were created by an individual – presumably Saint Cyril or Methodius – or arose more naturally. The paper examines the Slavic day-names in relation to other European languages and attempts to recreate the development process of the Slavic week from its supposedly pre-Christian beginnings to its final form that we know from written Slavic languages. The evidence shows that the Slavic names of the days of the week developed over a longer period, starting in pre-Christian times and introducing Christian elements through contact with neighboring cultures along the way. It also excludes the possibility of their creation by an individual, while leaving room to speculate about the original form of the Slavic week.

*Keywords*

Days of the Week; Slavic Languages; Pre-Christian Slavs; Saint Cyril.