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DAYS OF THE WEEK

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The aim of this research is to investigate the origin of the names of the days of week in French, English, Swedish and Belarusian and find connections between them.

Everybody uses the days of week in speech. But few of us think about when and where they came from in the languages that we are studying. Why were the days of week given such names? Are there similarities and differences in their origin in English, French, Swedish and Belarusian?

First, let's consider the days of week in the French language.

In French, almost all days of the week are devoted to Roman gods. This connection is lost only for Saturday and Sunday (see Table1). Name Saturday (*Samedi*) goes back to the Hebrew Sabbath means "rest". Christian motifs appeared in the name Sunday (*Dimanche*). Translated from the French language, this day is called "the Lord's Day".

Table 1 – Days of the Week in French

French	Latin	Translation
Lundi	Lunae dies	День Луны
Mardi	Martis dies	День Марса
Mercredi	Mercoris dies	День Меркурия
Jeudi	Jovis dies	День Юпитера
Vendredi	Veneris dies	День Венеры
Samedi	Sambati dies	День Шаббат
Dimanche	Dies dominicus	День Господа

The ancestors of the Britons and Scandinavians worshiped numerous heathen gods. Therefore, the days of week were named in their honour. So, Sunday has been called *Sunday* in honour of the sun god. As well as in the Swedish *söndag*. The God of the Sun was portrayed as a man, who was holding a burning circle in his outstretched hands. As a sign of special reverence to him the first day of week was dedicated to him.

In English and Swedish *Monday* and *måndag* is the day of the Moon (the Moon, måne). The moon is a symbol of motherhood, instincts and emotions. The Moon god was depicted dressed in a short dress with a hood, which had long ears.

Tuesday is the day of the ancient German warlike god Tiu, who was considered the Earth's son. He was portrayed as a respectable sage with a scepter in his right hand, dressed in wild animal skins. The Saxons dedicated the third day of week to him. In Swedish *tisdag* is named in honour of the one-armed god of battle Tyr, who was one of Scandinavian's 12 supreme gods. The Scandinavians prayed to Tyr, the god of courage and battles, to give them victory.

Wednesday is the day of the god Woden. Woden is usually depicted as a tall, thin old man in a black cloak. This God is a warrior and hero. The fourth day of the week is called in honour of this deity. His name is also found in Swedish *onsdag* (Odin's day).

English *Thursday* and Swedish *torsdag* hide the name of the glorious god of thunder Thor in them. He was portrayed in as a man sitting on a throne with a scepter in his right hand, with a gold crown on his head, adorned with a ring of twelve shining stars. God Thor is an elder and the most courageous son of Odin and Frigg.

The sixth day of the week is Friday. English *Friday* and Swedish *fredag* received their names in honour of the goddess of Frigg, or Freya, Odin's wife, who wasesteemed greatly. She was considered the goddess of the Earth. Frigg was depicted with a sword in her right hand and a bow in her left.

The seventh day of the week *Saturday* was named in honour of the god of the harvest Saturn. God Saturn or Seater is the god of hunt, fertility and water. He was portrayed with the uncovered head, standing on the sharp spiny perch's back as the pedestal. In his left hand he held the wheel, and in his right a pail with water in which there were flowers and fruits. He was dressed in a long dress, belted with rope. But Swedish *lördag* comes from the Old Norse *laugardagr*, which means "the washing day" [1, 2].

The prominent Belarusian figure Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski worked with closed lexical groups in the Belarusian language, including the names of the days of week. Let's consider the name of each day.

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Taking into account that Monday is the day of the Moon, Lastoŭski called it “месіч”. In Indo-European mythology the goddess whom the Romans called Diana bears the symbol "Moon".

Lastoŭski called Tuesday “ярэц”, evidently in honour of the pagan god Yaryla, Slavic analogue of Tiu (Tyr).

In many languages the name of Wednesday has different meanings, in some it is the day in the middle of week or the day of the pagan god Radigost and his symbol, which is the planet Mercury. That is why Lastoŭski's variant is “радаўнік”.

For Thursday Lastoŭski suggested the name “пярунец” in honour of the pagan god Piarun, the Thunderer, the figure corresponding to the god Thor.

“Грамніца” (in honor of the goddess Hramavica) is a variant suggested by Lastoŭski for Friday.

Lastoŭski gave Saturday the name “ладзіч”, from the god Ladon. His symbol is the planet Saturn.

Sunday is a specific day because in different languages it's different in succession. Lastoŭski proposed the variant “соўнік” (from the word “sun”). It's very pleasant for the ears, short and accurate [3].

Table 2 – The Days of Week in English, Swedish and Belarussian

English	Swedish	Belarussian
Monday	måndag	месіч
Tuesday	tisdag	ярэц
Wednesday	onstag	радаўнік
Thursday	torsdag	пярунец
Friday	fredag	грамніца
Saturday	lördag	ладзіч
Sunday	söndag	соўнік

So, the days of week in French, English, Swedish and Belarussian (Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski's project) have something similar in their etymology as well as their own peculiarities. For example, English and Swedish names are practically the same in their origin. Pagan traditions are easily observed in the names of week (French – Roman gods, English – old Germanic gods, Swedish – Norse gods). Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski proposed his own system that has much in common with the West and North European traditions.

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