

Zoran Siriški

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD CALENDAR

Povzetek

IZVOR BESEDE KOLEDAR

V jezikoslovju v splošnem velja, da ta važen pojem, lastnina celega planeta izhaja iz rimskega običaja, ko so se na začetku vsakega meseca, še posebej pa ob novem letu obračunavale obresti in poravnali računi. Avtor pa trdi, da je to sedanja oblika prastarega običaja praznovanja obnove moči starega umirajočega Sonca – Kola, prihod novega Sonca – Božiča, kot tudi obred klicanja prednikov, prastarega običaja, ki se je očeval v Slavi, edinstvenem obredu Srbov, ki ga ni pri drugih narodih.

I Introduction

In looking for the origin of words when the most authoritative dictionaries are consulted, and they mostly come from the Western countries, the happen-makers of history and what is called ‘modern civilization’, we are often puzzled by blanks, inconsistencies and very nebulous definitions and explanations. The answer to the true origin of words is often locked within such definitions as Paleo-Balkan substrate, Etruscan, Pre-Indo-European etc. When an objective and multi-disciplinary stance is taken in the approach to this issue, it becomes clear that Slavic languages not only have their contribution in the formation of a considerable part of lexical treasury of European languages, but that their role here is central and unavoidable. When this factor is taken into account, all inconsistencies, failures to come to the goal of an investigation and other hardships become eliminated immediately.

II Exposition

My intention here is to investigate the word *calendar*, also spelled *kalendar*, a very important concept which has become a part of the heritage of the entire world. Let us have a look at a fairly informative Online Etymological Dictionary (1).

calendar (n.)

c.1200, “system of division of the year;” mid-14c. as “table showing divisions of the year;” from Old French *calendrier* “list, register,” from Latin *calendarium* “account book,” from *calendae/kalendae* “calends” the first day of the Roman month -- when debts fell

due and accounts were reckoned -- from *calare* "to announce solemnly, call out," as the priests did in proclaiming the new moon that marked the calends, from PIE root *kele-* (2) "to call, shout" (see *claim* (v)).

claim (v.)

c.1300, from accented stem of Old French *clamer* "to call, claim, name, describe," from Latin *clamare* "to cry out, shout, proclaim," from PIE **kele-* (2) "to shout," onomatopoeic (cf. Sanskrit *usakala* "cock," lit. "dawn-calling;" Latin *calare* "to announce solemnly, call out;" Middle Irish *cailech* "cock;" Greek *kalein* "to call," *kelados* "noise," *kledon* "report, fame;" Old High German *halan* "to call;" Old English *hlowan* "to low, make a noise like a cow;" Lithuanian *kalba* "language"). Related: *Claimed*; *claiming*. *Claim* properly should not stray too far from its true meaning of "to demand recognition of a right." "

Under *claim* there is no mention of Serbian *klicati*, *kliktati* or Slovenian *klicati*, all with the meaning of 'to call, solemnly utter, victoriously shout' (Serbian) and 'to name, call by name' (Slovenian). This covers the specific syntactic nuances given under the entry. Even more convincing from phonological and less so from the syntactic point of view would be another Serbian verb, *galamiti* 'to shout, talk in a noisy, boisterous way'. However, this only illustrates my introductory statement.

Another rather authoritative source furnishes the following explanation:

"Calendae, the calends or first day of each month. Fr. calo, I call. "

An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language, Francis Edward Jackson Valpy (2)

To come closer to the point, the explanations under *calendar* are far from complete. Why are there two spellings, one including the initial letter *k*, very rare in Latin? Moreover, what is the etymology of the suffix *-dar*, even if the first part is accepted as valid? The *k*-spelling, however, points to the fact that this word had entered Latin from another language. Is that language Greek, as words given above do have the *k*-spelling? Is it possible that the idea of *calendar* came into Latin from the people for whom the very Romans had the saying

Ad Calendas Graecas:

Ad Kalendas Graecas or Ad Calendas Graecas [It shall be done] on the Greek Calends, i.e. never!

In the Roman calendar, the Calends meant the first day of the month. Since the Greeks did not have this term, the expression was used by the Romans to designate an event that would never occur.

Discussed in Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*: Augustus, chapter 87, section 1; in which Ad Calendas Graecas was explained to mean that the next day after never. Since the Greeks used no Kalends in their reckoning of time, the phrase was used about anything that could never take place. " (3)

According to a well-established practice of Western scholars, this 'another language' is always sought outside the Slavic languages, even if they are the closest neighbors to the language in question. I propose that this practice be abolished for the sake of truth, so

let us look at Serbian again. Anyone keen on delving deep into the maze of words and their origins must admit that the deepest concepts and connotations of a word cannot be easily discovered. It is also important to understand that Greek and Roman are not the Alpha and Omega of etymology, which is often taken for granted. In this attempt to shed more light on this important concept I propose the Serbian notions of *kolo* and *koledar*, an unavoidable part of ancient Serbian legacy, which is still living in end-of-the-year celebrations and rites performed in most Serbian-speaking parts of former Yugoslavia and broader. I must point out here that this is not my original idea. It has been tackled by a number of researchers, such as D. Jacanović (4) mentioned later on. It is also necessary to point out here that magical, mythological and primitive religious practices lie at the dawn of human culture and consciousness. So let us take it for granted that the rites at the end of the year must precede the civilized Roman practice of collecting debts and reckoning the accounts of citizens for innumerable lapses of time.

So, the thesis presented and defended here is that *koledo* and *koledari* anticipate the idea of calendar, which is locked within the words themselves phonologically, semantically and culturally. In that vein, calendar is the gift of the Sun-deity, KOLO – DAR, which some researchers have already elaborated on.

I will remind the readership that Serbia is situated in the heart of very ancient cultures. Research and disputes about dates are still under way, but a balanced dating seems to be the following in order of appearance:

- I The Mesolithic Lepenski Vir (first artifacts dated to 7000 B.C.), masterfully presented in the work of Serbian archaeologist Dragoslav Srejović (6)
- II Starčevo culture, the Neolithic culture of the central and eastern Balkans, dating from between c. 6000 and 5200 BC
- III Vinča, the Neolithic culture, which flourished from 5,500–3,500 BC.

It is very important to accentuate the primacy and/or idiosyncrasy of these cultures in a number of fields: the first metallurgy, first literacy, first applications of geometry in the homes of Lepenski Vir inhabitants, the cult of the ancestors buried at the hearth as focus of this life and afterlife, fish-shaped sculptures which anticipate the Eastern deity Dagon and, most importantly for this paper, first calendar. On the issue of calendar, much can be found in D. Jacanović (4).

Let me first explain the idea of *kolo*, which is one of central concepts in Serbian culture. *Kolo* represents the Sun in its apparent movement on the horizon. The Sun itself as well as its movement have a circular shape and many concepts derived in Serbian from the basis *kolo* have a round shape too: *kolač*, now ‘cookie, cake’, but originally and still present in the cult of ancestors and family patron saints; *slava*, unique in Serbian culture only and definitely related to Sanskrit *shrava*; *kola* ‘wheelcar’; *klobuk* ‘hat’, the same word and meaning in Slovenian; *koliba* or *koleba* ‘hut, primitive house’; *okolina* ‘surroundings’; *koleno* ‘knee; generation’ (cf. Latin genus), as well as the Russian *kolokol* ‘bell’.

Another important application of the word *kolo* is for the national dance of the same name, which originally represents, not difficult to guess, the movement of the Sun again, but also hoards a syncretism of other related concepts – unity of the tribal members, union

of the male and female principles, taking part in a common rite of initiation etc. Mind here the idea of *raskolnik*, originally ‘one outside the kolo, the sacred circle of those initiated in the secrets of ritual dance’.

I have already mentioned the hearth of Lepenski Vir as focal point of the primitive form of religious relatedness to the ancestors, which also is typically of a round shape and represents the doorway to the otherworld. Leading Serbian authority in the field of ethnography, Veselin Čajkanović, has collected and explained numerous traditions, customs and ritual activities, many of which are still practiced among the Serbs, especially in his monumental work *Myth and Religion of Serbs*. (6) On page 54 one can find his elaboration on the theme of burial of ancestors within the hearth, altered to its later substitution in the custom of burying the nails or tufts of hair of the deceased under the threshold of home. It is necessary to bear in mind the dizzying antiquity of this practice and visualize the fortunate fact that Čajkanović or people like him have recorded this for the posterity. By connecting all dots outlined in this paper, it is possible, without much doubt, to state that Serbs have preserved essential features of their Vinčan traditions intact until today.

A term crucial to understanding all that has been said above is the Serbian concept of the new Sun, *koledo*, and its concomitant ritual and magical personality of *koledar*. It must also be pointed out that both terms have their nasal variants in various territories of the Serbian-speaking people, namely, *kolendo* and *kolendar*, but there are also corruptions to the tune of *korindjaš* (Vojvodina). According to a very informative encyclopaedic source, Serbian Mythological Dictionary (7), “*koleda* comprises the time from Christmas to Epiphany when masked young men and younger married men visit every home in the place and sing special ritual songs (*koledarske pesme*), followed by magic activities aimed at imparting good health to dwellers, fertility of cattle around home and of plants in the fields. Persons involved in the ritual, *koledari*, get presents in return such as food items or even money somewhere. They wear fur coats and often have tails fixed to their apparel. One of the *koledari* is dressed like a bride and he spins wool on the distaff. Their leader, in Kosovo and Metohija called *dedica*, symbolically begins some household chores, like taking the bread out of the oven, stirring the broth on the hearth or starting the weaving and knitting work etc. According to Russian ethnographer S. P. Tolstoj (7), *kalanda* and *kalinda* belong to a wider Scytho-Sarmatian ethnographic area of the Caucasus (Abhasia, Georgia, Ossetia). In Dagestan youngsters put on fur coats and masks, like in Serbia, have bells sown to their sleeves and rods in their hands. Gasparini is of the opinion that Serbian customs are closer to the original ones and are more rustic than those on the Caucasus“ (7). In rural parts of Slovenia, there is also a tradition of *koledo* and *koledniki* reciting or singing songs of similar contents.

Most scholars agree that *koledari* represent the spirits of the ancestor, as well as the primordial cult of the animals as part of fertility rituals. However, when similarities with Božić (in Christian times replaced by Christmas) proper are considered, then the accent is certainly on the cult of the ancestors, which, according to Čajkanović (8), is the quintessence of the ancient Serbian religion.

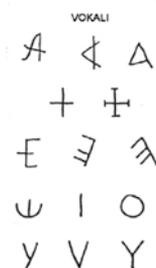
However, koledari fulfill yet another function which is of uttermost importance both for the Slavic traditions and this paper. In numerous ritual songs koledo represents the young solar deity, Božić, that is invoked to replace the old Sun, whose power had waned at the end of the year. The ritual takes place exactly at the time when the old Sun, primordially understood as living being, needs help and encouragement by the koledari and the young Sun, Božić, to rise up again on a new annual cycle. It does not take much effort to understand the entire ritual as the celebration of the Sun and the new calendar. The fact that terms similar to koledo and koledari are found as far as the Caucasus eliminates any thought of the Latin origin, and this can be found in any dictionary or encyclopaedia dealing with the entry of calendar.

The awareness and tradition of the longevity and continuity of the calendar from the Vinčan times has its manifestations on countless medieval Serbian monasteries, in particular those erected during the reign of the rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty. According to that counting we are now in the year 7522. Russians call this calendar Slavic or the Calendar of Koljada, which evidently is the same as koleda, koledo. (9)

The time gap between the ultimate breaths of the Danube cultures (approximately 2000 years B.C.) and the first Serbian states recognized by official historiography (Xth c. A.D.) may seem insurmountable, the survival of sacred traditions, where that of the calendar must certainly belong, is possible and would not sound as a miracle. On the other hand, according to suppressed historians, like Miloš S. Milojević (1840-1897), even the state of Svevlad (492. A.D.) was only one in a series of numerous previous states that had existed along a huge spatiotemporal line extended from Asia to Europe. This is mentioned in his suppressed, almost-forgotten work surviving in parts only. In it, Turkey stands for Hungary. (10)

After all, it is an undeniable truth that researchers and scholars with removed blinkers, no matter which Slavic nation they come from, get to the same results: great antiquity and immeasurably larger area of their settlement. This, simply, cannot be a coincidence.

Russian researchers are diligently revamping the parts of long-forgotten traditions and it would be naïve to consider them all the fabrications of nationalists. Then, the Etruscan (Rasena, according to Etruscans themselves) civilization with its alphabet identical to the Vinča script and its almost identical characters in the Cyrillic alphabet supplies a crucial link that connects the evolution of writing into an uninterrupted whole. (11)



Pešić's proposal for the system of Vinčan script (11)

Another convincing body of evidence corroborating the fact that the calendar tradition springing from the Vinčan-Proto-Serbian concept of kolo has had an unbroken line of development and preservation until modern times can be found in a very interesting ethnographic study by Paun Es Durlić (12). He goes on to explain the burial ritual of *pomana* which is an old Serbian and Slavic word literally meaning 'the mention', i.e. a burial service and a farewell ceremony in honor of the newly deceased member of the family and community. Here it is easy to find the overlapping points with the koledari ceremony in reference to its ancestor cult component. However, the deeper stratum is easily recognized in the Sun-shaped bread and astronomical lore of much of its symbolism. The Vlachian name is undoubtedly of Slavic origin (*kolokol*), even though Vlachian belongs to the Romance branch of the Indo-European tree of languages.



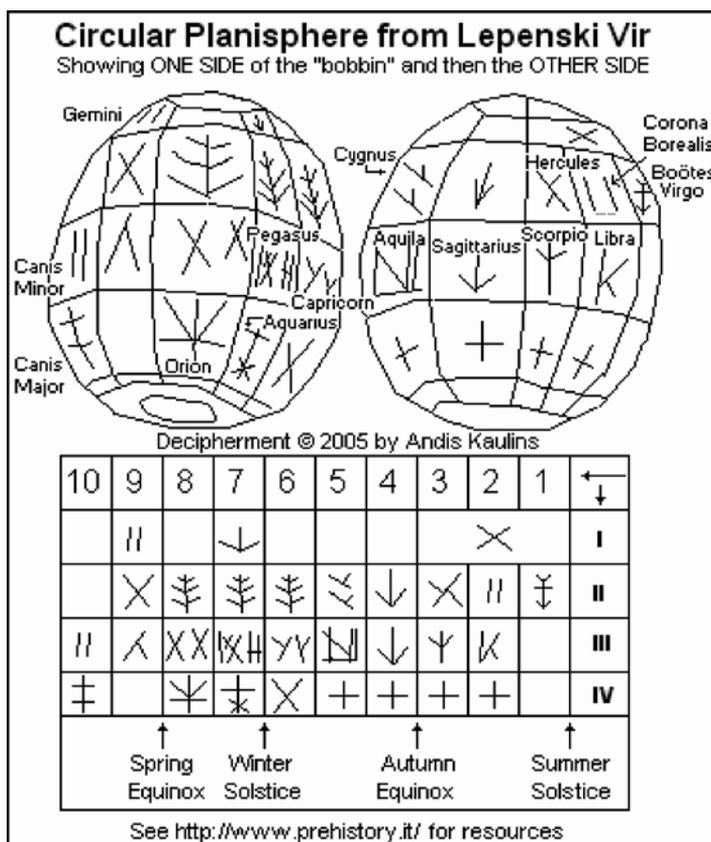
KOLAKO-L NUMARAT ("Counted" bread or „brojanica“ made of fermented wheat dough, mixed with water and salted, baked in a baking pan in the stove oven. Village of Osnic, Eastern Serbia, 2005 (13)

Durlić, an eager field worker and collector of the Vlachian lore, shows in his study (12) that some breads bear 365 notches along their border, which proves their ritual function of a calendar. An exact number of notches is found on a Neolithic model of bread found on one of the sites of the Vinča culture. This only gives more credulity to the above-mentioned

study of D. Jacanović on the astronomic lore of the Serbian people, which deserves a thorough study (4).

On the page with a heading *Origins of Writing : Danube Scripts led to Pharaonic Egyptian Hieroglyphs : Confirmation by Pottery Comparison* signed by Andis Kaulins, one can find plenty of neolithic sky maps that come from the Vinčan culture. Even without reading the text the knowledge of the constellations and astronomic phenomena strikes the reader with its precision, depth or antiquity. (13)

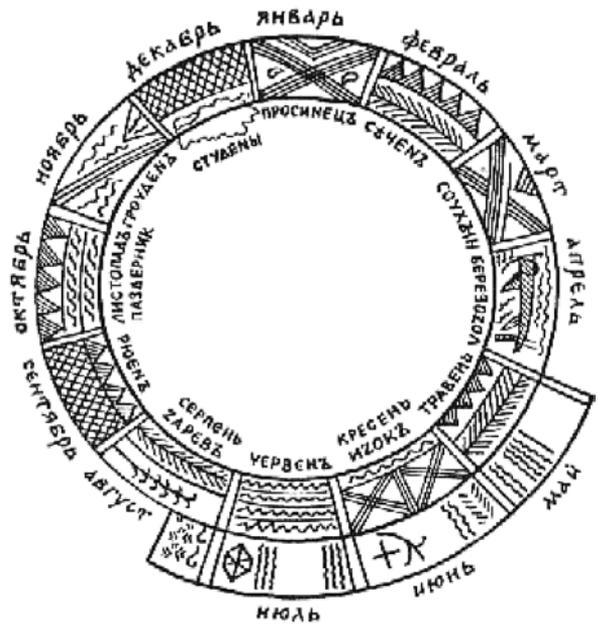
“I have been able to decipher several of the Balkan Danube Scripts (ca. 4000-3000 BC) from Transylvania (Romania), Karanovo (Bulgaria) and from Thracian Greece as astronomy. In addition, I have been able to decipher the Djer wooden and ivory tablets from Abydos and Saqqara (ca. 3000 BC) – also as astronomy. In my view, this resolves the question of the origin of Pharaonic writing – it derives from what are today called the Danube Scripts, whatever their provenance may be.”



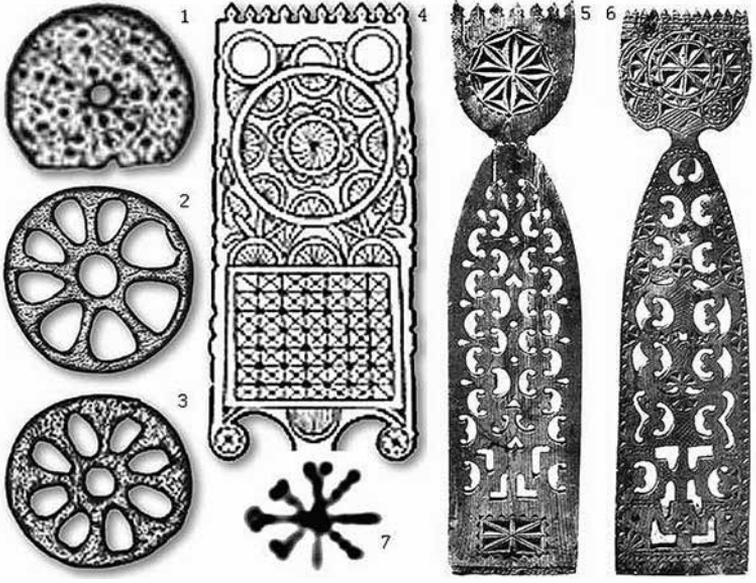
One of numerous prehistoric sky maps found on the site (13)

Russian scholars and researchers from many disciplines are coming up with a torrent of data, finds and artifacts corroborating a great antiquity of the Russian people. One of

them is A.A.Tunaev, academician of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and a lot of information can be obtained from his site on the Internet noted below.



Calendar, reconstructed after drawings on Slavic utensils (14)



Symbols of calendar-astronomic character:

1, 2, 3 – eight-ray light amulets from Sungir (30.000 years B.C., town of Vladimir, Russia); Russian distaffs with 8-ray symbols of the Sun (Slavic god Ra); 7 – eight-ray symbol of the Sumerian cuneiform ‘God’ (other names ‘Star’, goddess Ishtar, Astarta, Istra etc.) (Sumer, III mill. B.C.) (14)

III Conclusive points

Russian time counting is identical to the old Serbian calendar (4), which only proves that they spring from a common source. A most logical way of dissemination of this ancient knowledge would connect the Danube cultures of Lepenski Vir and Vinca with the Tripolye or Tripolye-Cucuteni culture on the territory of Ukraine, which bears Slavic features by most of its elements.

“Late Neolithic and early Copper Age culture of the west Ukrainian steppes and Carpathian mountains, dating from about 4200-3800 BC. It is characterized by large fortified villages, painted pottery, and copper and gold artifacts such as those deposited in the Varna cemetery. Tripolye-Cucuteni communities were among the first to domesticate horses.” (15)

The torch ignited on the banks of the Danube spread downstream towards the East, but its southern rays swept over the territory of future Greece towards Asia Minor. That is where literacy, metallurgy or the cult of Dagon were thought to originate by former scholars. However, much of current research and evidence that is emerging along the way points to the Danube and Slavs as its true bearers.

Sažetak

U radu se razmatra poreklo reči calendar za koje u jezikoznanju važi tumačenje po kome taj važan pojam, deo nasleđa cele planete, dolazi iz latinskog jezika i rimskog običaja, odnosno naziva *calendae dies*, početka svakog meseca i naročito dana oko Nove Godine kada su sakupljane kamate dužnika i sređivani računi. Tvrdnja autora je da je to samo civilizovani oblik prastarog običaja koledarskih praznovanja obnove snaga starog umirućeg Sunca (kola), dolaska novog Sunca (Božića), kao i obred prizivanja predaka, drevnog običaja koji se očuvao i u slavi, unikatnom ritualu Srba, koji ne postoji kod drugih naroda.

Literature and sources

1. Online Etymological Dictionary <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php>.
2. An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language, Francis Edward Jackson Valpy http://books.google.rs/books?id=m2QSAAAIAAJ&pg=PA62&lpg=PA62&dq=etymological+dictionary+of+Latin+calendar&source=bl&ots=HZS2TPZvzt&sig=4GfquGdhOBI5C-YdxCukEpQ9CNU&hl=en&sa=X&ei=_u4IUYLyG8j2sgbT4IHYBQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=etymological%20dictionary%20of%20Latin%20%2F%20calendar&f=false.

3. <http://wordinfo.info/results?searchString=ad+kalendas+graecas+or+ad+calendas+graecas>, Jan 2013.
4. Srpsko kalendarsko znanje, Dragan Jacanović http://www.svevlad.org.rs/narodni_zivot_files/jacanovic_kalendarskoznanje.html
5. Europe's First Monumental Sculpture: New Discoveries at Lepenski Vir, New Aspects of Antiquity, Dragoslav Srejšović, Thames and Hudson 1972.
6. Myth and Religion of Serbs / Mit i religija Srba, Veselin Čajkanović, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd 1973.
7. Serbian Mythological Dictionary / Srpski mitološki rečnik, S. Kulišić, P.Z. Petrović, N. Pantelić, Nolit, Beograd 1970.
8. Mit i religija u Srba, Veselin Čajkanović, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd 1973.
9. <http://pandoraopen.ru/2012-08-30/drevnij-slavyanskij-kalendar-kolyady-dar-let-7521>.
10. Fragments of the History of Serbs and Serbian – Yugoslav – lands in Turkey and Austria / Odlomci istorije Srba i srpskih – jugoslavenskih – zemalja u Turskoj i Austriji, Miloš S. Milojević, Državna štamparija, Beograd 1872.
11. Vinčan Script / Vinčansko Pismo, Radivoje Pešić, Pešić i sinovi, Beograd 1995.
12. Sacred Language of the Vlach Bread / Sveti jezik vlašskog hleba, Paun Es Durlić, <http://ia600804.us.archive.org/18/items/SvetiJezikVlaskogHleba/SvetiJezikVlaskogHleba.pdf> http://www.bread-culture.net/web/files/122/en/Sacred_Language_of_the_Vlach_Bread1.pdf (Feb, 2013).
13. Origins of Writing : Danube Scripts led to Pharaonic Egyptian Hieroglyphs : Confirmation by Pottery Comparison, Andis Kaulins, http://ancientworldblog.blogspot.com/2005_02_01_archive.html.
14. Russian holidays (Русские праздники, А.А. Тютчев, президент АФН, академик РАН, 2008, <http://www.dazzle.ru/spec/tr-holidays1.shtml>).
15. <http://www.historytoday.com/historical-dictionary/t/tripolye-cucuteni-culture>.

Summary

The author of the paper considers the origin of the word calendar. According to current linguistics, this important concept, a part of the planetary linguistic treasure, comes from the Latin language and the Roman custom of *calendae dies*, which involved the collecting of interest on money of indebted citizens and levelling of accounts at the beginning of each month and especially around the time of the New Year. The paper points out that it is only a civilized form of age-old rites of *koledari*, symbolizing the time of renewal of the powers of the old dying Sun (*kolo*), the arrival of the new Sun (*Bozic*), as well as the ritual of invocation of the forefathers, the ancient custom which has survived in *slava*, a unique ritual of Serbs not found in any other nation.