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**CALENDAR TERMS FROM THE PROTOBULGARIAN CALENDAR –
ETYMOLOGIZATION AND INTERPRETATION CHALLENGES**

Abstract: The article examines the initial components of the calendar terms in the Protobulgarian calendar. According to the traditional interpretation, all of them are animal designations for particular years. They are related to the Turkic animal calendar and originated from Turkic languages. However, a lot of linguistic discrepancies at the phonetic level call the traditional etymologizations into question. The article explores all of these divergences and suggests new etymologizations, attributing the origin of most terms to Middle Persian and Syriac. In consonance with the main thesis of article, the terms in question appear to be astrological/astronomic designations of stars and constellations. The linguistic analysis of the introductory parts of the calendar terms indicates that the so called “Protobulgarian calendar” was formed or completed after the migration of Protobulgarians south of the Danube, and was based on astrological observations whose logic is not completely clear but is apparently connected to the Middle Eastern traditions in this field. The calendar clearly originated at court – all sources containing dates in accordance with this calendar have a formal character, and none of the informal inscriptions and manuscripts from the 9th -11th century use this calendar. This explains the lack of any remnants in the regions beyond the First Bulgarian Empire, as well as its complete disappearance after the first decades of the 10th century.

Keywords: calendar terms, Syriac, Middle Persian, Protobulgarian

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