

Origins of social constructs

Introduction

This was written primarily for personal reference. But then I considered that it may be of interest to my readers since many modern people have no clue about the origins, particularly pagan origins, of terms we use all the time. I make no significant comments on this but merely offer the data.

Names of the days of the week

Week [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *wice* and Saxon *wicu* (from *wice* meaning 'service', of Germanic (Teutonic) origin; related to Dutch *week* and German *Woche*, from a base probably meaning 'sequence, series'. Others say it derives from the Latin *vicem*, meaning 'change'.

Day [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *dæg*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *dag* and German *Tag*. It first meant the hours of sunlight rather than 24 hours. The entire 24 hour period was first termed 'night', based on a base Aryan word [see 'night'].

Night [Indo-European]

The origin of the word is the Old English [Saxon] *neaht*, *niht*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *nacht* and German *Nacht*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *nox* and Greek *nux*. Compare the Greek *nykt* and the Sanskrit *nakta*.

Sunday [Latin / Saxon paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Sunnandæg* or 'day of the sun', a translation of the Latin *dies solis*; compare with Dutch *zondag* and German *Sonntag*.

In Greek mythology Apollo was one of the most important of the Greek gods, the son of Zeus and twin brother of Artemis. He was primarily the god of the Sun and light, but he was also particularly associated with the forces of civilisation, notably music, poetry, and medicine. Yet Sunday was not named after him. In Greek mythology, the Sun was also personified as the god Helios.

Monday [Latin / Saxon paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Mōnandæg*, day of the moon; a translation of the Late Latin *lunae dies*; compare with Dutch *maandag* and German *Montag*.

Tuesday [Latin / Norse paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Tīwesdæg*, named after the Germanic god *Tīw* (associated with Mars); a translation of Latin *dies Marti* 'day of Mars'; compare with Swedish *tisdag*. The word *Tiw* is cognate¹ with the Latin *deus* and the Greek *Zeus*.

¹ In linguistics it means having the same linguistic derivation as another; representing the same original word or root (e.g. English *father*, German *Vater*, Latin *pater*).

‘Tiw’ is better known as ‘Tyr’ (‘Tiw’ is Anglo-Saxon). In Norse and Germanic mythology, Tyr is the war-god and deity of athletes. He is identified with the Latin Mars, ‘Tiw’s day’ became Tuesday, corresponding to the Roman *martis dies* (day of Mars).

Tyr is cited variously as the son of Frigg, Odin, and Hymir. Tyr chained Fenrir, the wolf-son of Loki, and his hand was bitten off. He is doomed to die at Ragnarök, slaying Garm, the watchdog at the entry to Hel, the world of the dead.

Wednesday [Latin / Norse paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Wōdnesdæg*, named after the Germanic god Odin; a translation of late Latin *Mercurii dies*; compare with Dutch *woensdag*.

Odin (or Woden) is the chief deity of Norse mythology, husband of Frigg and father of seven sons, including Balder and Thor. Odin was god of the wind, war, magic, and poetry, leader of souls and king of the Aesir.

Odin identified with the Anglo-Saxon Woden (hence Wednesday from Woden’s day) and the Germanic Wotan.

Thursday [Latin / Norse paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Thu(n)resdæg*, ‘day of thunder’, a translation of late Latin *Jovis dies* ‘day of Jupiter’ (god associated with thunder): compare with Dutch *donderdag* and German *Donnerstag*. ‘Thursday’ chiefly derives from the Norse god of thunder, Thor, hence ‘Thor’s day’.

Friday [Latin / Norse paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Frīgedæg*, named after the Germanic goddess Frigga; a translation of late Latin *Veneris dies* ‘day of the planet Venus’; compare with Dutch *vrijdag* and German *Freitag*.

Frigga (or Frigg, Friga) in Norse and Germanic mythology, was a fertility and domestic goddess, the wife of Odin, queen and mother of the gods, often confused with Freyja.

Saturday [Latin paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English *Sætern(es)dæg*; a translation of the Latin *Saturni dies* ‘day of Saturn’; compare with Dutch *zaterdag*.

In Roman mythology Saturn was the god of agricultural plenty, later identified with the Greek god Cronus. His festival was the Saturnalia, celebrated from 17 to 19 December, during which presents were given. This festival was Christianised by the Catholic Church

‘Yule’ is an Old English term, *gēol(a)*; compare with Old Norse *jól*, originally applied to a heathen festival lasting twelve days, and later to Christmas.

Names of the months of the year

January [Roman paganism]

The origin of the word is the Old English, from the Latin *Januarius (mensis)* ‘(month) of Janus’, the Roman god who presided over doors and beginnings.

Janus was the Roman god of gates, doorways, and bridges. He was represented with two heads facing opposite ways, suggesting vigilance – looking both fore and aft. He was regarded as the guardian of the Roman state during war, when the doors of his temple were left open; in times of peace they were closed.

February [Latin / French paganism]

The origin of the word is the Middle English *feverer*, from the Old French *fevier*, based on the Latin *februarius*, from *februa*, the name of a purification feast held in this month. The spelling change in the 15th century was due to association with the Latin word.

March [Roman paganism]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from an Old French dialect variant of *marz*, from the Latin *Martius (mensis)* '(month) of Mars'.

Mars is the Roman god of war. He was identified with the Greek Ares, but was a much more important figure in Roman mythology than Ares in Greek mythology, ranking second only to Jupiter among the gods.

May [Greek paganism]

The origin of the word is late Old English, from the Old French *mai*, from the Latin *Maius mensis* = 'month' of the goddess Maia'.

In Greek Mythology Maia was the daughter of Atlas and mother of Hermes.

In Roman Mythology Maia was a goddess associated with Vulcan and also (by confusion) with Mercury (Hermes). She was worshipped on 1 May and 15 May so that month is named after her.

June [Roman paganism]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *juin*, from Latin *Junius (mensis)* '(month) of June', variant of *Junonius* 'sacred to Juno'

Juno was the greatest of the Roman goddesses, sister and wife of Jupiter, identified with Hera in Greek mythology. She was particularly concerned with marriage and the well-being of women.

July [Roman history]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Latin *Julius (mensis)* '(month) of July', named after Julius Caesar.

August [Roman history]

The origin of the word is the Old English; from the Latin *augustus* 'consecrated, venerable'; named after Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor.

September [Roman tradition]

The origin of the word is the late Old English; from the Latin, from *septem* 'seven' (being originally the seventh month of the Roman year).

October [Roman tradition]

The origin of the word is the late Old English; from the Latin, from *octo* 'eight' (being originally the eighth month of the Roman year).

November [Roman tradition]

The origin of the word is the Old English; from the Latin, from *novem* 'nine' (being originally the ninth month of the Roman year).

December [Roman tradition]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Latin, from *decem* 'ten' (being originally the tenth month of the Roman year).

Seasons

Spring [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *spring* (noun), *springan* (verb), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German *springen*. Early use was the head of a well and rushing out in a stream which gave rise to the figurative use of 'originate'; hence the beginning of the year.

Summer [Sanskrit]

The origin of the word is the Old English *sumor*, of Germanic origin; related to the Dutch *zomer*, German *Sommer*, also to Sanskrit *samā* 'year'.

Autumn [Latin]

The origin of the word is the late Middle English; from the Old French *autompne*, or later directly from the Latin *autumnus*.

Winter [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English, of Germanic origin; related to the Dutch *winter* and German *Winter*, probably also to 'wet'.

Festivals

Christmas [Latin]

'The mass of Christ'. An annual Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. The date of Jesus' birth is unknown, but tradition celebrates Christmas Day on 25 December, a date first recorded in 336 AD. It is more likely that Christ was born in the Autumn, perhaps September.

Epiphany [Latin]

The manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matt 2:1-12).

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Greek *epiphainein* 'reveal'. The sense relating to the Christian festival is via Old French *epiphanie* and ecclesiastical Latin *epiphania*.

Easter [Germanic pagan]

The annual Christian festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus after the crucifixion, as recounted in the Gospels. Different methods of calculation result in Easter usually being celebrated on different dates in Western and Orthodox churches. Easter is the most important Christian festival. Easter customs include bright illuminations, sunrise services, and the exchange of eggs, symbolising new life.

The origin of the word is the Old English *ēastre*; of Germanic origin and related to German *Ostern* and east. According to Bede the word is derived from *Ēastre*, the name of a goddess associated with spring.

Harvest [Indo-European]

The process or period of gathering in crops.

The origin of the word is the Old English *hærfest* autumn, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *herfst* and German *Herbst*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *carpere* 'pluck' and Greek *karpos* 'fruit'.

Whit Sunday

Whitsuntide - the weekend or week including Whit Sunday. Late Middle English: apparently an alteration of obsolete *wight* 'small amount'. See 'Pentecost'.

Pentecost [Greek]

The Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after his Ascension, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The day of Pentecost on which this festival is held is also called Whit Sunday. This equates to the Jewish festival of Shavuoth.

The origin of the word is the Old English *pentecosten*, via ecclesiastical Latin from Greek *pentēkostē* (*hēmera*) 'fiftieth (day)' (because the Jewish festival is held on the fiftieth day after the second day of Passover).

Halloween [Celtic Irish]

The night of 31 October; the eve of All Saints' Day. Halloween is of pre-Christian origin, being associated with the Celtic festival *Samhain*, when ghosts and spirits were thought to be abroad. Adopted as a Christian festival, it gradually became a secular rather than a Christian observance, involving dressing up and the wearing of masks (in America, then Britain).

The origin of the word is the late 18th century contraction of *All Hallow Even*.

Samhain is the first day of November, celebrated by the ancient Celts as a festival marking the beginning of winter and the Celtic New Year. The origin of the word is the Irish, from Old Irish *samain*.

Social orders and rulers

Parliament [French]

The origin of the word is the Middle English: from Old French *parlement* 'speaking', from the verb *parler*.

The historic origins of parliament began in the Moot of the Saxons whereby chiefs would discuss matters of corporate importance. 'Moot' is from the Old English *mōt* 'assembly' or 'meeting' and *mōtian* 'to converse', of Germanic origin; related to 'meet'.

In the 13th century it was simply a formal meeting of the king and certain of his officials and principal lords. Parliament became partly representative, as in Simon de Montfort's Parliament (1265), which contained commoners (knights of the shire and burgesses of the boroughs) who were elected in their locality, and in Edward I's Model Parliament (1295).

Until the 16th century, both chambers (House of Commons, House of Lords) grew in importance *vis-à-vis* the crown, as it came to be accepted that their approval was needed for grants of taxation; Henry VIII effected the English Reformation through the long-lived Reformation Parliament (1529–36).

Kings such as Charles I tried to manage without summoning a parliament (1629–40), but by the 17th century the Commons had made themselves indispensable. Charles I had to call Parliament in 1640 in order to raise money, and Parliament, led by John Pym, led the opposition to him. The Parliamentary side won the English Civil War, and at the end of the Commonwealth period it was the members of the House of Commons who negotiated the Restoration of Charles II (1660) and the accession of William III and Mary (1688). The

legislation enacted in the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 and the Act of Settlement (1701) settled the relationship of crown, Lords, and Commons definitively and made clear the ultimate supremacy of the Commons.

Politics [Greek]

Words such as politics, political, metropolis, police derive from the Greek word for a city: *polis*.

Civil, city, citizen [Latin]

The origin of the words is the Middle English; from Old French *cite*, from Latin *civitas*, from *civis* ‘citizen’. Originally denoting a town, and often used as a Latin equivalent to Old English *burh* borough, the term was later applied to foreign and ancient cities and to the more important English boroughs. The connection between city and cathedral grew up under the Norman kings, as the episcopal sees (many had been established in villages) were removed to the chief borough of the diocese.

Civilian [French]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English (denoting a practitioner of civil law); from the Old French *civilien*, in the phrase *droit civilien* ‘civil law’. The current sense arose in the early 19th century.

Urban [Latin]

The origin of the word is the early 17th century, from the Latin *urbanus*, from *urbs*, *urb-* ‘city’.

Urbanity [Latin]

The origin of the word is the mid-16th century; from the French *urbanité* or Latin *urbanitas*, from *urbanus* ‘belonging to the city’.

Rural [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English; from Old French, or from the Late Latin *ruralis*, from *rus*, *rur-* ‘country’.

King [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *cyning*, *cyng*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *koning* and German *König*, also to ‘kin’.

Queen [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *cwēn*, of Germanic origin; related to *quean*.

Aristocracy [Greek]

The origin of the word is the late 15th century; from the Old French *aristocratie*, from Greek *aristokratia*, from *aristos* ‘best’ + *-kratia* ‘power’. The term originally denoted the government of a state by its best citizens, later by the rich and wellborn, hence the sense nobility, regardless of the form of government (mid 17th century).

Key aristocratic orders

- *Baron*: a member of the lowest order of the British nobility. Baron is not used as a form of address, barons usually being referred to as ‘Lord’. Historically, a person who held lands or property from the sovereign or a powerful overlord. Middle English; from Old French, from medieval Latin *baro*, *baron-* ‘man, warrior’, probably of Germanic origin.
- *Duke*: Old English (denoting the ruler of a duchy), from Old French *duc*, from Latin *dux*, *duc-* ‘leader’; related to *ducere* ‘to lead’.

- *Count* - a foreign nobleman whose rank corresponds to that of an earl. Late Middle English; from Old French *conte*, from Latin *comes*, *comit-* ‘companion, overseer, attendant’ (in late Latin ‘person holding a state office’), from *com-* ‘together with’ + *it-* ‘gone’ (from the verb *ire* ‘go’).
- *Earl* - Old English *eorl*, of Germanic origin. The word *earl* originally denoted a man of noble rank, as opposed to a *churl*, also specifically a hereditary nobleman directly above the rank of thane. It was later an equivalent of *jarl* and, under Canute and his successors, applied to the governor of divisions of England such as Wessex and Mercia. In the late Old English period, as the Saxon court came increasingly under Norman influence, the word was applied to any nobleman bearing the continental title of count.
- *Baronet* - a member of the lowest hereditary titled British order, with the status of a commoner but able to use the prefix ‘Sir’. Late Middle English; from Anglo-Latin *baronettus*, from Latin *baro*, *baron-* ‘man, warrior’. The term originally denoted a gentleman, not a nobleman, summoned by the king to attend parliament; the current order was instituted in the early 17th century.
- *Lord* - a peer of the realm; a man of noble rank or high office. Old English *hlāford*, from *hlāfweard* bread-keeper, from a Germanic base. Compare with ‘lady’ - Old English *hlæfdige* (denoting a woman to whom homage or obedience is due, such as the wife of a lord or the mistress of a household), from *hlāf* loaf + a Germanic base meaning ‘knead’, related to dough.
- *Knight* – **1:** in ancient Rome, a member of the class of *equites*. In ancient Greece, a citizen of the second class in Athens, called *hippeus* in Greek. In the Middle Ages, a man who served his sovereign or lord as a mounted soldier in armour or a man raised by a sovereign to honourable military rank after service as a page and squire. **2:** In the UK, a man awarded a non-hereditary title by the sovereign in recognition of merit or service and entitled to use the honorific ‘Sir’ in front of his name. **1:** Old English *cniht* boy, youth, servant, of West Germanic origin; related to Dutch *knecht* and German *Knecht*. **2:** Dates from the mid-16th century; the uses relating to Greek and Roman history derive from comparison with medieval knights.
- *Dame* - (in the UK) the title given to a woman with the rank of Knight Commander or holder of the Grand Cross in the Orders of Chivalry. Middle English (denoting a female ruler): via Old French from Latin *domina* ‘mistress’.

Posh [Modern English]

The origin of the word is from the early 20th century; perhaps from slang *posh*, denoting a dandy. There is no evidence to support the folk etymology that *posh* is formed from the initials of *port out starboard home* (referring to the practice of using the more comfortable accommodation, out of the heat of the sun, on ships between England and India).

Toff [Modern English]

The origin of the word is from the mid-19th century; perhaps an alteration of *tuft*, used to denote a gold tassel worn on the cap by titled undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge.

Pleb (short for plebeian) [Latin]

The origin of the word is from the mid-16th century; from the Latin *plebeius* (from *plebs*, *pleb-* ‘the common people’) + -an.

Society [Latin]

The origin of the word is from the mid-16th century (in the sense companionship, friendly association with others); from the French *société*, from Latin *societas*, from *socius* ‘companion’.

People [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Anglo-Norman French *poeples*, from Latin *populus* 'populace'.

Proletariat [Latin]

(Also archaic 'proletariate'.) Workers or working-class people, regarded collectively (often used with reference to Marxism). The title of the lowest class of citizens in ancient Rome.

The origin of the word is the mid-19th century; from the French *prolétariat*, from Latin *proletarius*.

Family

Family [Latin]

1: A group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit. 2: all the descendants of a common ancestor. The origin of the word is the late Middle English (in sense 2; also denoting the servants of a household or the retinue of a nobleman): from Latin *familia* 'household servants, household, family', from *famulus* 'servant'.

Husband [Norse]

The origin of the word is the late Old English (in the senses: male head of a household and manager, steward) from Old Norse *húsbóndi* 'master of a house', from *hús* 'house' + *bóndi* 'occupier and tiller of the soil'. The original sense of the verb was till, cultivate.

Wife [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *wīf* woman, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *wijf* and German *Weib*.

Children [Goth]

The origin of the word is the Old English *cild*, of Germanic origin, which originates from the Goth *kilpei*, 'womb'. The Middle English plural *childer* or *childre* became *childeren* or *children* by association with plurals ending in *-en*, such as *brethren*.

Brother [Indo-European]

The origin of the word is the Old English *brōthor*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *broeder* and German *Bruder*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *frater*.

Sister [Indo-European]

The origin of the word is the Old English, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *zuster* and German *Schwester*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *soror*.

Cousin [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *cosin*, from the Latin *consobrinus* 'mother's sister's child', from *con-* 'with' + *sobrinus* 'second cousin' (from *soror* 'sister').

Aunt [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *ante*, from Latin *amita*.

Uncle [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *oncle*, from the late Latin *aunculus*, alteration of Latin *avunculus* 'maternal uncle'.

Servant [French]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Old French, literally (person) serving, present participle (used as a noun) of *servir* 'to serve'.

Nanny [Victorian English]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century English (as a noun); pet form of the given name Ann. The verb dates from the 1950s.

Ecclesiastical

Ecclesiastic [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English; from the French *ecclésiastique*, or via the Late Latin from the Greek *ekklēsiastikos*, from *ekklēsiastēs* 'member of an assembly', from *ekklēsia* 'assembly, church', based on *ekkalein* to 'summon out'.

Church [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Old English *cir(i)ce*, *cyr(i)ce*, related to the Dutch *kerk* and the German *Kirche*, based on the medieval Greek *kurikon*, from the Greek *kuriakon* (*dōma*) 'Lord's (house)', from *kurios* 'master or lord'.

Priest [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Old English *prēost*, of Germanic origin; related to the Dutch *priester* and the German *Priester*; based on the ecclesiastical Latin *presbyter* 'elder'.

Laity [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English; from lay + -ity. 'Lay' is from the Middle English; from Old French *lai*, via late Latin from Greek *laikos*, from *laos* 'people'.

Congregation [Latin]

The origin of the word is the late Middle English from the Latin *congregatio(n-)*, from *congregare* 'collect (into a flock)'.

Diocese [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *diocise*, from the Late Latin *diocesis*, from the Latin *dioecesis* 'governor's jurisdiction, diocese', from the Greek *dioikēsis* 'administration, diocese', from *dioikein* 'keep house, administer'.

See [Latin]

The place in which a cathedral church stands, identified as the seat of authority of a bishop or archbishop. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Anglo-Norman French *sed*, from the Latin *sedes* 'seat', from *sedere* 'sit'.

Bull [Latin]

A papal edict. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *bulle*, from the Latin *bullā* 'bubble, rounded object' (in Medieval Latin 'seal or sealed document').

Edict [Latin]

An official order or proclamation issued by a person in authority. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Latin *edictum* 'something proclaimed', neuter past participle of *edicere*, from *e-* (variant of *ex-*) 'out' + *dicere* 'say, tell'.

Parish [Greek]

A small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest or pastor. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Anglo-Norman French and the Old French *paroche*, from the late Latin *parochia*, from the Greek *paroikia* 'sojourning', based on *para-* 'beside, subsidiary' + *oikos* 'dwelling'.

Pope [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Old English, via ecclesiastical Latin from ecclesiastical Greek *papas* 'bishop, patriarch', a variant of the Greek *pappas* 'father'.

Archbishop [Old English]

The origin of the word is the Old English; from arch- chief + *biscop*, replacing earlier *heah-biscop* (high-bishop).

Legate [Latin]

A member of the clergy, especially a cardinal, representing the Pope. The origin of the word is the Late Old English, from the Old French *legat*, from the Latin *legatus*, past participle of *legare* 'depute, delegate, bequeath'.

Bishop [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Old English *biscop*, *bisceop*; based on the Greek *episkopos* 'overseer', from *epi* 'above' + *-skopos* '-looking'.

Vicar [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; via the Anglo-Norman French from the Old French *vicaire*, from the Latin *vicarius* 'substitute', from *vic-* 'change, turn, place'

Deacon [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Old English *diacon*, via ecclesiastical Latin from the Greek *diakonos* 'servant' (in ecclesiastical Greek 'Christian minister').

Dean [Latin]

The head of the chapter of a cathedral or collegiate church. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *deien*, from the Late Latin *decanus* 'chief of a group of ten', from *decem* 'ten'.

Synod [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English; via the late Latin, from the Greek *sunodos* 'meeting', from *sun-* 'together' + *hodos* 'way'.

Classis [Greek]

In some US Presbyterian churches; a sub-division of a synod; a regional assembly of elders. If based upon 'class' it derives from the Latin *classicus*, from the Greek *klesis*, division, from the *Kalein*, to summon. The meaning of 'class' is thus 'division' or 'group'.

Altar [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Old English *altar*, *alter*, based on the late Latin *altar*, *altarium*, from the Latin *altus* 'high'.

Pulpit [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Latin *pulpitum* 'scaffold, platform', in Medieval Latin 'pulpit'.

Clerestory [Middle English]

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English; from *clear* + *storey*.

Nave [Latin]

The main part of the church building for the congregation. The origin of the word is the Late 17th century, from Latin *navis* 'ship'.

Chancel [Latin]

The part of a church near the altar, reserved for the clergy and choir, and typically separated from the nave by steps or a screen. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French, from the Latin *cancelli* 'crossbars'.

Rood screen [Old English]

A screen, typically of richly carved wood or stone, separating the nave from the chancel of a church. Rood screens are found throughout Western Europe and date chiefly from the 14th–16th centuries. 'Rood' is a crucifix, especially one positioned above the rood screen of a church or on a beam over the entrance to the chancel. The origin of the word is the Old English *rōd*; related to Dutch *roede* and German *Rute* 'rod'.

Arras [French]

A wall hanging made of a rich tapestry fabric, typically used to conceal an alcove. The origin of the word is the Late Middle English (originally denoting the fabric itself); named after the French town of Arras.

Geography & Topography

Earth [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *eorthe*; of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *aarde* and German *Erde*.

World [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *w(e)oruld*; from a Germanic compound meaning 'age of man'; related to Dutch *wereld* and German *Welt*.

Continent [Latin]

The origin of the word is the mid-16th century, (denoting a continuous tract of land); from Latin *terra continens* 'continuous land'.

Country [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *cuntree*, from the Medieval Latin *contrata (terra)* '(land) lying opposite', from the Latin *contra* 'against, opposite'.

County [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *conte*, from the Latin *comitatus*, from *comes*, *comit-*. The word seems earliest to have denoted a meeting held periodically to transact the business of a shire.

Shire [Germanic]

Historical: an administrative district in medieval times ruled jointly by an alderman and a sheriff. The origin of the word is the Old English *scīr* care, official charge, county, of Germanic origin.

District [Latin]

The origin of the word is the early 17th century (denoting the territory under the jurisdiction of a feudal lord); from the French, from the medieval Latin *districtus* '(territory of) jurisdiction', from Latin *distingere* 'draw apart'.

Council [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Old English (in the sense ecclesiastical assembly); from the Anglo-Norman French *cuncile*, from the Latin *concilium* 'convocation, assembly', from *con-* 'together' + *calare* 'summon'.

Region [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French, from the Latin *regio(n)* 'direction, district', from *regere* 'to rule, direct'.

Boundary

The origin of the word is the early 17th century variant of dialect *bounder*, from bound + -er, perhaps on the pattern of *limitary*.

Hill [Indo-European]

The origin of the word is the Old English *hyll*; of Germanic origin; from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *collis* and Greek *kolōnos* 'hill'.

Mountain [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *montaigne*, based on the Latin *mons*, *mont-* 'mountain'.

Valley [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Old French *valee*, based on Latin *vallis*, *valles*.

Cwm [Welsh]

A cirque, especially one in the mountains of Wales; mid-19th century Welsh; related to combe.

Cirque [Latin]

A half-open steep-sided hollow at the head of a valley or on a mountainside, formed by glacial erosion. Also called corrie or cwm. The origin of the word is the late 17th century, possibly from the French, from the Latin *circus*.

Corrie [Gaelic]

See above; used in Scotland. The origin of the word is the mid-16th century; from the Scottish Gaelic and Irish *coire* 'cauldron, hollow'.

Glacier [Latin]

The origin of the word is the mid-18th century; from the French, from *glace* 'ice', based on Latin *glacies*.

River [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Anglo-Norman French, based on the Latin *riparius*, from *ripa* 'bank of a river'.

Lake [Latin]

The origin of the word is the Late Old English (denoting a pond or pool), from the Old French *lac*, from the Latin *lacus* 'basin, pool, lake'

Sea [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *sæ*, of Germanic origin; related to the Dutch *zee* and German *See*.

Bore [Norse]

A steep-fronted wave caused by the meeting of two tides or by the constriction of a tide rushing up a narrow estuary. The origin of the word is the early 17th century; perhaps from Old Norse *bára* ‘wave’; the term was used in the general sense billow, wave in Middle English.

Tor [Celtic]

A hill or rocky peak. Old English *torr*, perhaps of Celtic origin and related to the Welsh *tor* ‘belly’ and Scottish Gaelic *tòrr* ‘bulging hill’.

Road [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *rād*, journey on horseback, foray; of Germanic origin; related to the verb ride.

Armed forces ranks

Lieutenant [French]

A deputy or substitute acting for a superior. A rank of officer in the British army, above second lieutenant and below captain. A rank of officer in the navy, above sub lieutenant and below lieutenant commander. (In the US) a police officer next in rank below captain. The origin of the word is the late Middle English: from Old French (i.e. lieu, tenant). In the normal British pronunciation of lieutenant the first syllable sounds like **lef-**. In the standard US pronunciation the first syllable, in contrast, rhymes with **do**. It is difficult to explain where the **f** in the British pronunciation comes from. Probably, at some point before the 19th century, the **u** at the end of Old French **lieu** was read and pronounced as a **v**, and the **v** later became an **f**.

Colonel [Latin]

A rank of officer in the army and in the US air force, above a lieutenant colonel and below a brigadier or brigadier general. The origin of the word is the mid-16th century, from the obsolete French *coronel* (earlier form of *colonel*), from Italian *colonnello* ‘column of soldiers’, from *colonna* ‘column’, from Latin *columna*. The form *coronel*, source of the modern pronunciation, was usual until the mid-17th century.

Brigadier [French]

A rank of officer in the British army, above colonel and below major general. The origin of the word is the late 17th century, from the French (i.e. brigade, -ier).

Brigade [Italian]

A subdivision of an army, typically consisting of a small number of infantry battalions and/or other units and typically forming part of a division. The origin of the word is the mid 17th century from the French, from Italian *brigata* ‘company’, from *brigare* ‘contend’, from *briga* ‘strife’.

General [Latin]

A commander of an army, or an army officer of very high rank. A high rank of officer in the army and in the US air force, above lieutenant general and below field marshal, general of the army, or general of the air force. The origin of the word is the Middle English, via Old French from the Latin *generalis*, from *genus*, *gener-* ‘class, race, kind’. The noun primarily

denotes a person having overall authority: the sense army commander is an abbreviation of *captain general*, from French *capitaine général* ‘commander-in-chief’.

Captain [Latin]

The person in command of a ship. The pilot in command of a civil aircraft. A rank of naval officer above commander and below commodore. A rank of officer in the army and in the US and Canadian air forces, above lieutenant and below major. (In the US) a police officer in charge of a precinct, ranking below a chief. The leader of a team, especially in sports.

The origin of the word is the Late Middle English (in the general sense chief or leader): from Old French *capitain* (superseding earlier *chevetaigne* ‘chieftain’), from late Latin *capitaneus* ‘chief’, from Latin *caput*, *capit-* ‘head’.

Major [Latin]

A rank of officer in the army and the US air force, above captain and below lieutenant colonel. Shortening of sergeant major, formerly a high rank. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Latin, comparative of *magnus* ‘great’; perhaps influenced by French *majeur*.

Commodore [French]

A naval rank above captain and below rear admiral, generally given temporarily to an officer commanding a squadron or division of a fleet. The origin of the word is the late 17th century; probably from Dutch *komandeur*, from French *commandeur* ‘commander’

Commander [Latin]

A person in authority, especially over a body of troops or a military operation. A rank of naval officer, above lieutenant commander and below captain. An officer in charge of a Metropolitan Police district in London. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Old French *comandeur*, from late Latin *commandare* ‘to command’

Sergeant [Latin]

A rank of non-commissioned officer in the army or air force, above corporal and below staff sergeant. The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Old French *sergent*, from Latin *servient-* ‘serving’, from the verb *servire*. Early use was as a general term meaning attendant, servant and common soldier; the term was later applied to specific official roles.

Corporal [Latin]

A rank of non-commissioned officer in the army, above lance corporal or private first class and below sergeant. The origin of the word is the Mid 16th century, from the French, obsolete variant of *caporal*, from Italian *caporale*, probably based on Latin *corpus*, *corpor-* ‘body (of troops)’, with a change of spelling in Italian due to association with *capo* ‘head’.

Soldier [Latin]

A person who serves in an army. The origin of the word is the Middle English, from Old the French *soldier*, from *soulde* ‘(soldier's) pay’, from Latin *solidus*. The verb dates from the early 17th century.

Cornet

Chiefly historical the fifth grade of commissioned officer in a cavalry troop, who carried the colours. It is still used in some British cavalry regiments for officers of the rank of second lieutenant.

The origin of the word is the mid-16th century from the French *cornette*, diminutive of *corne* (originally a collective term), based on Latin *cornua* 'horns'. The word originally denoted a kind of woman's head-dress, or a strip of lace hanging down from a head-dress against the cheeks; later the pennon of a cavalry troop, hence the officer who carried the colours.

Battalion [Latin]

A large body of troops ready for battle, especially an infantry unit forming part of a brigade. The origin of the word is the late 16th century from French *bataillon*, from Italian *battaglione*, from *battaglia* 'battle', from Latin.

Musical Instruments

Guitar [Greek]

The origin of the word is the early 17th century, from the Spanish *guitarra* (partly via French), from Greek *kithara*, denoting an instrument similar to the lyre.

Cello [Italian]

The origin of the word is the late 19th century shortening of violoncello.

Violoncello [Italian]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century Italian, diminutive of *violone*.

Violone [Italian]

An early form of double bass, especially a large bass viol. The origin of the word is the Italian, augmentative of *viola*.

Viola [Italian]

An instrument of the violin family, larger than the violin and tuned a fifth lower. The origin of the word is the early 18th century, from the Italian and Spanish.

Violin [Italian]

The origin of the word is the late 16th century, from the Italian *violino*, diminutive of *viola*.

Viol [French]

A musical instrument of the Renaissance and baroque periods, typically six-stringed, held vertically and played with a bow. The origin of the word is the late 15th century; (originally denoting a violin-like instrument): from Old French *viele*, from Provençal *viola*; probably related to fiddle.

Trumpet [French]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from Old French *trompette*, diminutive of *trompe*. The verb dates from the mid-16th century.

Horn [Indo-European]

The origin of the word is the Old English, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *hoorn* and German *Horn*, from an Indo-European root shared by Latin *cornu* and Greek *keras*.

Trombone [Italian]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century; from the French or Italian, from the Italian *tromba* 'trumpet'.

Cornet [Latin]

The origin of the word is the late Middle English (originally denoting a wind instrument made of a horn); from the Old French, diminutive of a variant of Latin *cornu* 'horn'.

Drum [Irish]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century; from the Scottish Gaelic and Irish *druim* 'ridge'.

Cymbal [Greek]

The origin of the word is the Old English, from Latin *cymbalum*, from Greek *kumbalon*, from *kumbē* 'cup'; readopted in Middle English from Old French *cymbale*.

Piano [Italian]

The origin of the word is the early 19th century; from the Italian, abbreviation of pianoforte.

Pianoforte [Italian]

The origin of the word is the mid-18th century; from the Italian; earlier *piano e forte* 'soft and loud', expressing the gradation in tone.

Clarinet [French]

The origin of the word is the mid-18th century; from the French *clarinette*, diminutive of *clarine*, denoting a kind of bell; related to *clarion*.

Oboe [Italian]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century; from the Italian, or from the French *hautbois*, from *haut* 'high' + *bois* 'wood'.

Bassoon [Latin]

The origin of the word is the early 18th century; from the French *basson*, from the Italian *bassone*, from *basso* 'low', from the Latin *bassus* 'short, low'.

Harp [Germanic]

The origin of the word is the Old English *hearpe*; of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *harp* and German *Harfe*.

Flute [French]

The origin of the word is the Middle English; from the Old French *flahute*, probably from Provençal *flaüt*, perhaps a blend of *flaujol* 'flageolet' + *laüt* 'lute'

Fife [German]

The origin of the word is the mid-16th century, from the German *Pfeife* 'pipe', or from French *fifre* from Swiss German *Pfifer* 'piper'.

Flageolet [French]

A very small flute-like instrument resembling a recorder but with four finger holes on top and two thumb holes below. The origin of the word is the mid-17th century; from the French, diminutive of Old French *flageol*, from Provençal *flaujol*, of unknown origin.

Explanations

Celtic

Of or relating to the Celts or their languages, which constitute a branch of the Indo-European family and include Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx, Cornish, and several extinct pre-Roman languages such as Gaulish.

Gaelic

Of or relating to the Goidelic group of Celtic languages, particularly the Celtic language of Scotland, and the culture associated with speakers of these languages and their descendants. Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language spoken in the highlands and islands of western Scotland. It was brought from Ireland in the 5th and 6th centuries AD and is now spoken by about 40,000 people. Irish Gaelic is another term for Irish, another Celtic language.

Germanic

In a wider sense, relating to, or denoting the branch of the Indo-European language family that includes English, German, Dutch, Frisian, and the Scandinavian languages. In a restricted sense, the Germanic languages collectively: East Germanic, North Germanic, West Germanic. Often termed Teutonic, denoting the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family.

Goth

A member of a Germanic people that invaded the Roman Empire from the east between the 3rd and 5th centuries. The eastern division, the Ostrogoths, founded a kingdom in Italy, while the Visigoths went on to found one in Spain. The word derives from the Old English *Gota*, superseded in Middle English by the adoption of late Latin *Gothi* (plural), from Greek *Gothoi*, from Gothic *Gutthiuda* 'the Gothic people'.

Greek

Relating to Greece, its people, or their language. Compare with Hellenic: relating to or denoting Iron Age and Classical Greek culture (between Helladic and Hellenistic). The branch of the Indo-European language family comprising Classical and Modern Greek.

Indo European

Of or relating to the family of languages spoken over the greater part of Europe and Asia as far as northern India. The Indo-European languages have a history of over 3,000 years. Their unattested, reconstructed ancestor, Proto-Indo-European, is believed to have been spoken well before 4000 BC in a region somewhere to the north or south of the Black Sea.²

The family comprises twelve branches: Indic (including Sanskrit and its descendants), Iranian, Anatolian (including Hittite and other extinct languages), Armenian, Hellenic (Greek), Albanian (or Illyrian), Italic (including Latin and the Romance languages), Celtic, Tocharian (an extinct group from central Asia), Germanic (including English, German, Dutch, and the Scandinavian languages), Baltic, and Slavic (including Russian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Serbo-Croat).³

Latin

The language of ancient Rome and its empire, widely used historically as a language of scholarship and administration. Latin is a member of the Italic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. After the decline of the Roman Empire it continued to be a medium of communication among educated people throughout the Middle Ages in Europe and elsewhere.

Middle English

The English language from c.1150 to c.1470.

² I.e. the explanation of the common language of men before the confusion of tongues at Babel.

³ I.e. the number of tongues created by God after Babel. 12 is the number of covenant or government. God divided human language into 12 types, creating an initial 12 tribes of man, which then splintered into multiple groups.

Norse

The Norwegian language, especially in an ancient or medieval form, or the Scandinavian language group.

Old English

The language of the Anglo-Saxons (up to about 1150), an inflected language with a Germanic vocabulary, very different from modern English; also called Anglo-Saxon. [However, there were no such people as the Anglo Saxons. There were Angles⁴ and there were Saxons.⁵]

Sanskrit

An ancient Indo-European language of India, in which the Hindu scriptures and classical Indian epic poems are written and from which many northern Indian (Indic) languages are derived.

Sources

The New Oxford Dictionary

The Oxford World Encyclopaedia

Personal knowledge

Joseph T Shipley; Dictionary of Word Origins (used slightly).

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⁴ A member of a Germanic people, originally inhabitants of what is now Schleswig-Holstein, who came to England in the 5th century AD. The Angles founded kingdoms in Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia and gave their name to England and the English.

⁵ Germanic tribes, possibly named from their single-edged *seax* ('sword'). Under pressure from the migrating Franks they spread from their homelands on the Danish peninsula into Italy and the Frisian lands and engaged in piracy on the North Sea and English Channel between the 3rd and 5th centuries. They appear to have entered Britain, together with Angles and Jutes as mercenaries in the late period of the Roman occupation.