Mari kinship terms from the typological, genealogical, and areal point of view

Sampsa Holopainen
sampsa.holopainen@Helsinki.fi
University of Helsinki

Veronika Milanova
veronika.Milanova@univie.ac.at
University of Vienna / Austrian Academy of Sciences

Jeremy Bradley
jeremy.moss.bradley@univie.ac.at
University of Vienna

András Czentnár
czandrish@freemail.hu
ELTE University, Budapest

The study of kinship terminology in Uralic linguistics is far from advanced. Despite the complicated kinship systems found in various Uralic languages (especially those of Volga-Kama Region and Siberia), there exist relatively few studies of kinship terms of the Uralic languages.

The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the etymology and development of kinship terms in Mari, a Uralic language spoken in the Volga-Kama Region. We aim to ascertain how the current Mari system and terminology of collateral relatives evolved: which terms are inherited from Proto-Uralic, what their semantic development is, and how areal influences have shaped the Mari kinship system. An equally important aim is the description of Mari collateral relative system from the point of view of typology of kinship terminologies.

The bulk of the Mari kinship terms has been inherited from Proto-Uralic (~ Proto-Finno-Ugric); some of these terms were borrowed into Proto-Uralic from Proto-Indo-Iranian or related Indo-European languages. As every aspect of Mari vocabulary, Turkic loanwords from various layers are abundant in kinship terminology as well. The most conspicuous feature of the Mari kinship terminology is relative age distinction for collateral relatives, i.e., specific terms for older and younger siblings (also older and younger parents' and spouses' siblings). It is not uncommon for the Volga-Kama Region

but is unusual in a contemporary European context, including Finnic. In our research we would like to argue that this peculiarity of Mari kinship terminology is most likely a contact phenomenon (influence from the neighboring Turkic languages) rather than an inherited Uralic feature. There have been attempts to reconstruct this phenomenon to Proto-Uralic, notably by Smirnov (1889), but already Setälä (1900) considered these assumptions incorrect and argued on Turkic influence on this system. Little systematic research on this topic has been carried out since then. For this purpose we take a bird's-eye view on it from a Eurasian and global perspective. Through a critical analysis of individual Mari etymologies and comparison to the terms in Udmurt and Mordvin we also aim to shed light on more precise dating of the genesis of the relative age distinction in those languages.

The study of Mari kinship terms is connected to larger problems of Mari etymology. The (Indo-)Iranian and Baltic influence in Mari is less-well known than that of many other branches of Uralic; various problems are involved in the kinship terms that have been traditionally derived from Indo-European. The borrowed kinship terms also touch the problem of dating of the earliest (Chuvash/Bulgar type) Turkic loans in Mari (for history of the problem, see Róna-Tas 1988: 769), as Agyagási (2019) has recently argued that contrary to some earlier views, the intensive contacts between Mari and

Bulgar-type Turkic started only in the 13th century after the Mongol conquest caused upheavals in the Volga-Kama region. This idea offers interesting prospects for the dating of the kinship borrowings and the borrowing of the Turkic-type kinship system into Mari and the other Uralic languages of the Volga-Kama region.

The topic is also of high relevance for Mari linguistics and etymology in general, as the study of Mari etymology is less advanced than the research on many other branches of Uralic, due to the lack of up-to-date etymological sources (Bereczki's recent [2013] etymological dictionary offers few new insights, is based mostly on the UEW's outdated views on Proto-Uralic historical phonology, and only covers words derived from Uralic/Finno-Ugric stems).

Research has also been hindered by complicated aspects of Mari historical vocalism (new light on some old problems of Mari vowel history has recently been shed by Aikio [2014]). The topic is also relevant for general research on kinship systems. A central problem in the study of any aspect of Mari linguistic prehistory is that the historical phonology of Mari is still not adequately known. Several competing theories of the vowel-developments in Mari exist, with Aikio (2014) supporting largely the earlier views of E. Itkonen, whereas Agyagási (2019) supports Bereczki, although without offering compelling arguments against Aikio's views.

Etymologies of Mari kinship terms

Inherited Uralic (Finno-Ugric) words

Convincing etymologies

MM *čüčü*, HM *čača* '(maternal) uncle, mother's brother (usually younger); mother's cousin' < PU *čečä*

MM *čüčüñö* 'wife of mother's brother or cousin' is analyzed by Bereczki (2013) as containing a derivational suffix that has ceased to be productive, but the word is rather a compound of *čüčü* and a reflex of the Uralic word *nӓyi* 'woman'; this is also the view of Sammallahti 1988 and Veršinin 2018 s.v.

MM *nuδo* ~ HM *nuδô* '(younger) sister-in-law' < PU *natiw* ~ *nataw* id.

HM *oβä*, dial. *oβo* 'father-in-law' < PU *jppi* id.

HM *pü*- in *pü-eryä* 'son' < PU ? *pojka* 'son, boy'

MM *weŋe*, HM *wiŋe* 'son-in-law' < PU *wäŋiw* id.

Dubious and uncertain etymologies

MM *erye* ~ HM *erya* 'son': Usually assumed to be derived from PU/PFU *irkä* or *ürkä* (with alleged cognates in Finnish *yrkä* 'husband' and Hu *-er* in old compounds such as *férj* 'man', *magyar* 'Hungarian'), but but the etymology is problematic due to the scarce attestation of the Finnic word and its relationship to *ylkä* and Lule Saami *al'hkē*. The Mari word might be borrowed from Turkic *er*, if *-ye* is a suffix.

MM *iza*, HM *əzä*, dial. *iža* 'older brother; father's younger brother' < ? PU *ičä* or *ejčä*: The Uralic etymology is problematic because of the uncertain vowel-developments, but the Mari forms could be regularly derived from PU *ičä*. The old idea of an Indo-Iranian loan into PU (← ? PII *(H)ič- > OI íś- M 'lord') (Tunkelo 1913; Koivulehto 2001a) should probably be rejected; at best the Uralic words can be parallel loans.

MM *rβeze*, HM *ərβeze* 'young, new; young boy, child' < ? PU *orpV*: The Mari word is considered as a possible reflex of PU *orpa* 'relative' (reflected by Fi *orpana* 'cousin', SaN (obsolete) *oar'ben* 'sister') by the UEW and Bereczki (2013), but the equation is missing from Sammallahti (1988) and Aikio (2015). The relationship of the latter words to PU *orpa* 'orphan', a well-known Indo-European (Indo-Iranian?) loanword, is not clear. Mari word could also be a separate from Indo-Iranian *(H)árbha-* (cf. Sanskrit *árbha-* 'small, weak').

Turkic loans

Chuvash

MM *aβa* ~ HM *äβä* 'mother' ← Chuvash *appa* 'older sister, older female relative' or *ava(y)* 'mother'

MM *aka* ~ HM *äkä* 'older sister, younger sister of mother or father, sister of father, older sister of the husband, the wife of older brother of the husband, older (female) friend or woman, relative' ← Chuvash *akka* 'older sister, aunt'

MM *joltaš* ~ HM *jaltaš* ~ dial. *jolδaš*, *δ'oltaš* 'friend, comrade, colleague, fellow' ← Chuvash *yoldaš*, *yuldaš* 'fellow' ← Tatar *yuldaš*

MM *kurska* ~ HM *kârska* ~ dial. *kurška* 'elder sister's husband' ← Chuvash *kӗrü* 'groom, brother-in-law' < OT *küdägü*

MM & HM *oñaska* ← Chuvash V *χoñäska* 'older brother-in-law (wife's side)'

MM *oñaka*, HM *oñäkä* 'older bother-in-law (husband's site); mother-in-law' ← Chuvash *χuñakam* 'older sister of my wife'

MM *oño*, HM *oñâ* 'father-in-law' ← Chuvash *χuñam* 'my father-in-law', V *χoñĕm* ← Tatar *qayin* ← OT *qadïn*

MM *pasaña*, HM *posana* 'brother-in-law, husband of the sister of one's wife' ← Chuvash *puśana*, V *pośana* 'husband of the sister of one's wife'

MM *šol'o* ~ HM *šol'a* 'younger brother' ← Chuvash *šälläm* 'my younger brother'

MM *uzo*, HM *ozô*, dial. *úžo*, *uža* 'male' ← ? Chuvash *ošă*, *uša*: This is a dubious etymology, as Räsänen (1920) derives the Mari word from hypothetical Chuvash forms corresponding to Chagatay *ača*. The Mari word's precise origin remains uncertain.

Tatar

MM *jeŋga*, HM *jeŋgä* 'bride; older brother's wife' ← Tatar *yeŋe*

MM *kajnaya* 'wife's elder brother' ← Tatar *qayïnaya* id.

Possible Indo-European loans

MM *šüžar*, HM *šäžar* 'jüngere Schwester' < ? Pre-Mari *sisar* ? ← Baltic *sesor-* < PIE *swesor-*: This has been considered as an Indo-Iranian loanword, but this is unlikely because of the vocalism. Mordvin E *sazor* 'younger sister'; Ud *suzer* id., Ko *sozor* 'knitting mistake' clearly reflect old borrowings from PII *swásar-*. The Mari word might have been borrowed also from Udmurt.

MM *marij* ~ HM *marâ(n)* 'man, husband; Mari' ← ? Iranian *mar(H)ya-*, cf. OI *márya-* 'young man': Because of Mari *a* (which cannot reflect Pre-Mari *a*) the etymology remains uncertain (Joki 1973: 280). The borrowing from Iranian should be very late (after the Proto-Mari period, so not earlier than ca. 1000 years ago) which is geographically problematic.

Etymologies of unclear origin

MM *üdôr* ~ HM *adər* 'girl; daughter; bride': Thomsen (1890) assumed that the Mari word was borrowed from Baltic *dukte-* (like Fi *tytär* and SaS *daktere* in old sources) but this idea is not supported by more recent sources such as SSA.

MM *pörôž* ~ HM *pöraž* 'wife's or husband's younger brother; Liebhaber (sowohl einer verheirateten als auch einer ledigen Frau)'

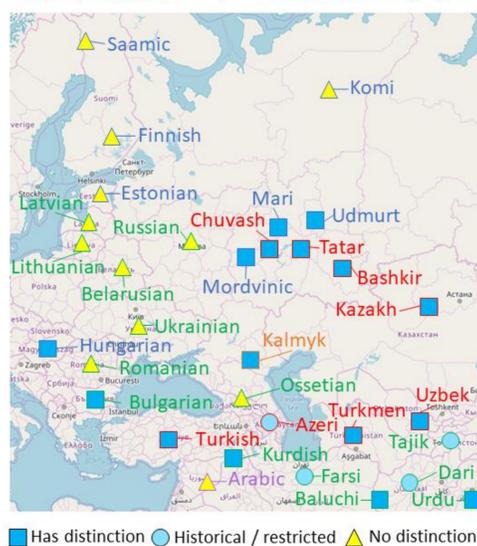MM *šeške* ~ HM *šeškə* 'son's, younger brother's wife; bride; wife of husband's younger brother'

Typology of kinship terms & areal factors

Since the middle of the 19th century there have been extensive debates on how kinship terminologies of the world can be classified (e.g., Morgan 1871, Lowie 1928, Murdock 1949, Allen 1986, Parkin 2012).

In the context of our work, the hypothesis put forward by Read (2007, 2013) has the biggest explanatory power. He assumes that kinship terminologies can be based on different principles but two of them are the most wide-spread: genealogy (Morgan's "descriptive" principle) and age-gender differences (Morgan's "classificatory" principle), which is especially relevant for sibling terms. The genealogical type usually has 1-2 sibling terms and the age-gender type up to 8 sibling terms (applying relative age and/or relative gender distinction). These two types show distinct geographical correlations. When viewing the geographical spread of different systems, the epicentre of the genealogical type is Southwest Asia (the Near East) and North-Eastern Africa and covers all of Europe from West to East, excluding the Volga-Kama Region. The age-gender type must have emerged in the eastern parts of Asia and spread further to the wide territories of modern South, Southeast, and East Asia, America, Australia and Oceania. Similar observations on the geographical distribution of sibling terminologies were made by Murdock (1968). Kinship terminologies in the (Uralic, Turkic, Iranian) languages spoken between these two macro-areas (in "Central Eurasia") share features of both types in different proportions.

Kinship terminologies of the Volga-Kama Region are characterised by a special subtype of Murdock (1968)'s type D (oB, yB, oSi, ySi), which is attested in many languages of Northeast Asia (first of all, Turkic and Mongolic), merging younger representatives of the older generation with older representatives of the younger generation (e.g., elder brother = father's younger brother). We assume this is a structural borrowing into Mari from Turkic.

Relative age distinction for siblings in some Semitic, Turkic, Mongolic, Uralic, and Indo-European languages

Has distinction ● Historical / restricted ▲ No distinction

Concluding remarks

It seems that Mari borrowed the relative age distinction from Chuvash during mediaeval times with the influx of Chuvash loans; the borrowing probably did not occur earlier, if Agyagási's (2019) dating of the Chuvash-type loanwords in Mari is correct. It is probable that the system spread to Udmurt during the same period (either from Chuvash or Tatar), as it is missing from the closely related Komi, which does have some early Old Bulgar loanwords but no later loans from Chuvash or Tatar.

Quite a few terms remain without etymology and some earlier Uralic comparisons have to be refuted.

Mari and other Uralic kinship terms contrasted with Turkic and New Persian

Turkic			Indo-European (New Persian)			Uralic		Other attestations
Turkish	Tatar	Chuvash	Farsi	Dari	Tajik	Mari	Udmurt	
aba 'elder sister; mother' (dial.)	*apa* 'elder sister; aunt'	*apay* 'mother' (dial.)	*âpa* 'mother' (dial.)	*âpa* 'elder sister' (col.)	*apa* (col.) 'elder sister' (← Uzbek)	*aβa(j)* 'mother' (← Chuvash)	*apa(y)* 'elder sister/aunt' (← Chuvash)	Mordvin *ava(y)* 'mother'
		akka 'elder sister; aunt'	*aka* 'elder sister; aunt' (in Medieval sources) (← Seljuk)		*aka* 'elder brother' (← Uzbek)	*aka(j)* 'elder sister; aunt (younger than parent)' (← Chuvash)	*aka* 'elder sister; aunt' (dial.) (← Chuvash)	Moksha *aka* 'elder sister; aunt'
ağa 'lord'; *ağabey* 'elder brother'	*aya(y)* 'uncle; elder brother' ('elder brother' in dialects)		*âğâ* 'lord; father' (col.) (← Mongolic)	*âğâ / âğâ* 'lord, father/elder brother (head of the family)'	*ogo* 'lord'	*kajnaya* 'wife's elder brother' (← Tatar)	*agay* 'elder brother/uncle'	
bacanak 'wife's sister's husband'	*bajanaq* 'wife's sister's husband' (dial.)	*puśana* 'wife's sister's husband'	*bâjenâq* 'wife's sister's husband'			*posana* 'wife's sister's husband' (← Chuvash)	*buśon(o)* 'wife's sister's husband'	Bulgarian *bajanak* 'wife's sister's husband'
kayın 'in-law', *kaynata* 'father-in-law', etc.	*qayïnata* 'husband's father'	*χuñ* 'wife's father'			*qainï* 'wife's brother' (← Uzbek)	*oño* 'father-in-law' (← Chuvash); *kajnaga* 'wife's elder brother' (← Tatar)		
yenge 'brother's wife; uncle's wife'	*yeŋe* 'elder brother's wife'	*inke* 'elder brother's wife'	*yanga* 'brother's wife' (in Medieval sources) (← Chagataytai)	*yanga* 'brother's wife'	*yanga* 'brother's wife' (← Chagatai)	*jeŋga* 'elder brother's wife' (← Tatar)	*eŋgey* 'aunt' (Beserman) (← Chuvash)	Mansi *iŋk* 'sister-in-law' (← ?Tatar)
anne 'mother'	*ana* 'mother'	*anne* 'mother'	*âna* 'mother' (in Medieval sources)		*ona* 'mother' (← Uzbek)		*anay* 'mother' (← Tatar)	Oss. *æna* 'mother'
ata 'father'	*ata* 'father'	*atte* 'father'	*atâ* 'father' (in Medieval sources)			*ača(j)* 'father' (← ?Chuvash)	*atay* 'father' (← Tatar)	Oss. *æda* 'father'
baba 'father'	*baba(y)* 'grandfather'		*bâbâ(i)* 'father; grandfather'	*bâbâ(i)* 'father; grandfather'	*bâbâ(i)* 'father; grandfather'		*babay* 'grandfather'	Kurdish, Ossetic *baba* 'father'

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