

CHRISTOPHER CULVER

CLUJ-NAPOCA

Notes on Mari etymology with reference to Chuvash and Permian

Among the Mari lexicon, borrowings from the neighbors of the Mari in the Volga–Kama region are myriad. Loans from Chuvash are treated by Räsänen (1920) and Fedotov (1990), and a large number of Permian > Mari loan etymologies have been proposed by Bereczki (1977; 1987; 1992–1994: II 97–129; 2003; 2004; 2005; see also Bereczki et al. 2013). However, these efforts have not exhausted the amount of Mari words still in need of an etymology, and the publication of newer lexical references has brought new items to scholars’ attention. This modest contribution to the Festschrift of a great scholar and teacher offers four new or updated etymologies of Mari vocabulary as loanwords from Chuvash or Permian.

1. MariE *šorâmbondo* ‘rake’ < Permian

The most frequently encountered form of the Mari word ‘rake’ in the Meadow Mari standard language and dialects is *šorbondó*. The UEW (783) compares this Mari word with Finnish *hara* ‘Schwendegge’ and Estonian *haro* etc. and derives all these from a Proto-Uralic word **šara* ‘Egge, Rechen, Harke’. This etymology was upheld by the editors of *Tscheremissisches Wörterbuch* (TschWb 710) who list the Mari dialectal forms of this word under an otherwise unattested headword *šor-*. An alternative approach was taken by the editors of the Mari–English Dictionary,¹ who view Mari *šorbondó* as a compound of *šor* ‘filth’ and *pondo* ‘stick, pole’, but this could only be a folk etymology, because the Mari generally use the designated tool in haymaking and not raking filth.

1. Accessed 5 December 2019. The Mari–English Dictionary is an online dictionary of literary Meadow Mari created at the University of Vienna and located at <<http://dict.mari-language.com>>.



VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

Ёмас сымың нэ́кве вёртур этност самың патум
— *Scripta miscellanea in honorem Ulla-Maija Forsberg.*
Suomalais-Ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia ~ Mémoires de la
Société Finno-Ougrienne 275. Helsinki 2020. Pp. 61–67.
<<https://doi.org/10.33341/sus.11.3>>

The UEW etymology is rejected by Bereczki et al. (2013: 247), who note that the initial *s* in the Malmyž dialect form speaks against the comparison with the Finnic forms. Fi. *hara* and Estonian *haro* reflect initial *š, but the array of Mari dialectal data appears to point instead to *s.

Of key importance in providing an etymology for this word are the forms where the initial member of the compound consists of two syllables, though none of these forms are shown in the TschWb entry. These are MariE *šorompondo* ‘грабли’ from the 1775 Mari grammar (Sebeok & Raun 1956: 61), MariE *sorompondo* ‘грабли’ in an unpublished 18th-century manuscript by Gerhard Friedrich Müller that represents the Malmyž dialect (Isanbaev 1973: 67), and MariNW Uržum *šorəmbondə* and Yarang *šarəm-pandə* ‘Rechen, Harke’ in Beke’s Mari dialectal dictionary. Taking these forms into account, we can assume syncope of a second-syllable reduced vowel. As this development led to an intolerable cluster *-rmp-*, the cluster underwent simplification to *-rβ-* (with voicing assimilation of the original consonant *p) in some dialects and to *-rm-* in the Malyj Kilmez form *šormondo* attested in TschWb.

Thus we are clearly dealing with a compound of which the second element is *pondo* ‘stick’, a commonly used noun in Mari (of Uralic origin, see Bereczki et al. 2013: 193) and the second member of other compounds as well. Yet the first element, which we are seemingly led to reconstruct as PMari *šarəm, requires explanation. No standalone lexical item *šorəm*, *šarəm* is known across the Meadow Mari and Northwestern Mari dialects. Furthermore, the phonetic shape of the word is unusual for Mari. There is no productive derivational suffix *-əm* in Mari, and nouns ending in *-əm* overwhelmingly represent loanwords.²

It was this that led Bereczki et al. to claim that the origin of this word must be sought in Volga Bulgarian or Chuvash. Were Chuvash the source, one would expect to find an original Chuvash V *sorəm* A *surəm*, as this would represent the regular source of our hypothetical MariE *šorəm* Malmyž *sorəm* NW *sarəm*, but no such material is attested in the Chuvash sources.

We might instead seek a source for the first element of Mari *šorβondo* in other languages with which Mari has been in contact, namely Permian and Russian – it must be noted that Mari *šorβondo* is attested in its various forms from Northwestern Mari, Meadow Mari and Eastern Mari dialects bordering on the Permian languages. Indeed, we find a candidate for the origin of the Mari word in Komi *šorəm* ‘скирд, скирда, долгая клад’ ~ Udmurt *šuri-* ‘скирдовать’. As Rédei & Róna-Tas (1982: 176–177) note, this word was borrowed into Chuvash as Cv. V *šorəm* A *šurəm* ‘bundle of flax or hemp’ via an assumed Udmurt derivation *šurem (the suffix *-Vm* in the Permian

2. A nearly complete list of Mari words ending in *-əm* can be obtained from the Mari–English Dictionary. By executing the wildcard search *ym, one finds that after discarding those dictionary headwords where *-əm* is the accusative case marker or first person singular possessive marker, or the numeral *šəəm* ‘7’, what remains are mainly borrowings from Turkic, e.g. *kurəm* ‘wheel rim’ < Tatar (Isanbaev 1994: 153) and *parəm* ‘debt’ < Chuvash (Fedotov 1990: 206).

languages denotes the perfect/passive participle of the verb). Furthermore, as these authors explain, the Udmurt word was borrowed also into local Russian dialects as *шором* ‘скирда хлеба’ and *шоромы* ‘составленные в козлы жерди для просушки в поле гороха в китинах’.

The Permian > Chuvash etymology serves to show that Permian speakers had agricultural techniques that would have motivated speakers of other languages to adopt their terminology. The Chuvash word, ‘bundle of flax or hemp’, is semantically very specific, however, while the first element of Mari *šorəmβondo* – if we interpret it as ‘haymaking’ – is rather more general. Also, Meadow Mari *š* ~ Malmyž Mari *s* would be an unexpected reflection of Chuvash *ś* (see Räsänen 1920: 26 for the general treatment of Chuvash sibilants in Mari).

Therefore, we might derive the Mari word from the Permian verb ‘to make hay’ directly, without Chuvash mediation. The correspondence Permian *ś* ~ Meadow Mari *š* ~ Malmyž Mari *s* is found also in the array of dialect forms underlying MariE lit. *šujem* ‘draufstellen, ausstrecken’ < Komi *šujni* ‘einstecken, hineinstecken’ (Bereczki 1992–1994: II 110). This requires us to adjust our reconstruction somewhat, as instead of a true PMari form **sărəm*, we must now reckon with a borrowing after the Proto-Mari stage where the word was borrowed into now separate dialects and the Permian consonant *ś* was reflected in most dialects as *š* but as *s* in Malmyž.

According to the most recent reconstruction of Permian vocalism by Zhiwlov (2014: 122–124), the correspondence Komi *o* ~ Udm. *u* goes back to Proto-Permian **ō*. Consequently we can reconstruct **šor-* ‘make hay’ for the Permian verb. As Proto-Mari and the subsequent Mari dialects have lacked a mid central labialized vowel, we can reckon with its replacement by **ā* sometime before the shift of PMari **ā* > *o* in the Meadow Mari dialects.³ Support for such a Mari adaptation of Proto-Permian **ō* is provided by the etymology MariE *ođar* NW *ađar* ‘dicht belaubt; Ast; Trieb’ < Komi *od* ~ Udm. *ud* id. (Bereczki 1992–1994: II 105).

With regard to the second-syllable *-əm* of Mari *šorəm* as a reflection of the Permian past participle suffix Komi *-em* Udm. *-em*, we find an analogue in MariE *maləm* ‘picky about food (animals)’, see below.

Consequently, the first element of Mari *šorβondo* ‘rake’ can acceptably be explained as a loan from Permian and the UEW etymology – or indeed any etymology at all by which the Mari word would have been inherited from Proto-Uralic – can be discarded.

3. On the reconstruction of **ā* in Proto-Mari, see Aikio (2014: 140).

2. MariW *ol'a* ‘meat’ < Chuvash

This word is found in various late 19th-century sources and early 20th-century sources for Hill Mari, e.g. in Zemljanitsky’s Hill Mari manuscript dictionary from the 1870s it appears as *оля* ‘мясо, говядина’ (Sergeev 2002: 53–55, 179). While it was included in the recent Hill Mari dictionary of Savatkova (2008), there it is already marked “устарое”, i.e. archaic.

Räsänen (1920: 160–161) assumed that MariW *ol'a* goes back to an unattested Chuvash word **xolya* on the basis of Turkic material such as Tatar *kalža* ‘ein Stück fleisch’, Bashkir *kal'ya* ‘ein Stück gekochtes fleisch’, Kirghiz *kalža* ‘кушанье роженицъ (свѣжее мясо или бульонъ)’, and Turkish *kalya* ‘eine speise aus mit butter gekochtem gemüse’, which all represent a borrowing of a Perso-Arabic word. Räsänen’s suggestion is simply reiterated by Veršinin (2017: 377) in his Mari etymological dictionary.

Though it has passed unnoticed so far, support for Räsänen’s hypothesis of a Chuvash–Mari borrowing ultimately appeared in the Chuvash dialectal dictionaries of Ašmarin (X 155) and Sergeev (1968: 82). In both of those references, Cv. *xulya* ‘вареный жидкий горох’ is documented from the Viryal dialect of Chuvash, namely the village of Šerbaši in the Morgauši district of Chuvashia in relative proximity to where Hill Mari is spoken. Axmet'janov (2015: I 351), in his etymological dictionary of Tatar that specifies that Persian *qalya* ‘meat dish’ is ultimately the source of this material across the Turkic languages, lists some additional meanings of Tatar *kalža*: ‘жирный кусок; творог из молозива; особенно питательная пища для больных и рожениц’. Consequently, by assuming a more general meaning of ‘food dish (e.g. for the ill and child-bearing women)’ for this word in the Volga–Kama region, we can still relate the Mari and Chuvash words in spite of the fact that the dictionary definitions of the former refer to meat and the latter to a vegetable dish. Chuvash *x-* is regularly reflected as Mari \emptyset - in loans (Räsänen 1920: 21ff; Fedotov 1990: 259–270), and therefore the direction of borrowing can be established as Chuvash > Hill Mari. Hill Mari *o* is a known reflection of Chuvash *u* in borrowings (see Räsänen 1920: 83).

In repeating Räsänen’s hypothesis that the Hill Mari word was borrowed from a lost Chuvash intermediary, Veršinin (2017: 377) suggests that that lost intermediary may have represented an inheritance from Volga Bulgarian. However, in the case of Chuvash *xulya* we cannot be dealing with an early loan of Perso-Arabic *qalya* into Volga Bulgarian, as the Volga Bulgarian shift of **-y-* to an affricate after a resonant was still operative in early loans, cf. Persian *dunyā* ‘world’ > Cv. *těñče* id., Old Russian *мурья* ‘chimney’ > Cv. *mārča* id. (Agyagási 2018: 188). Instead, Chuvash must have borrowed the word from a Tatar dialect in which **y* remained *y* (as in Bashkir), instead of shifting to *ž*, and then subsequently transmitted it to Hill Mari.

3. MariE *mal'əm* 'picky about food (used of animals)' < Permian

This Mari word is sparsely attested. It is found in the dictionary of Üpömarij (1926) as *mal'əm* 'разборчивая на пищу (корова)' and ascribed to Meadow Mari. It has entered the modern Meadow Mari literary language as *малъым* 'fastidious, picky about food (animals)'. Finally, it is attested in TschWb from the Volga dialect of Meadow Mari with a different initial consonant: *pal'əm* 'mäklig (die nur den besten Teil des Futters wählt und den Rest verschmäht)'.⁴

Gábor Bereczki has often noted (see e.g. Bereczki 2005: 195) that PU **l'* underwent depalatalization in word stems in Mari, and only in Eastern Mari dialects did *l'* reappear in the inherited lexicon in the position after *i*. Consequently, palatalized *l'* in other environments points to a borrowing from another language. As MariE *mal'əm* irregularly features *l'* in the position after *a*, we can compare it to Udm. *mil'ini* 'насытиться', namely its past participle *mil'em*. The semantic extension from 'sated' to 'unwilling to eat' is straightforward.

While it may seem unusual that Permian material where Udmurt shows a high vowel in the first syllable would be borrowed as a low *a* in Mari, such a case is known from MariE *panə* 'spoon' < Permian, cf. Udm. *puni* (Bereczki 1992–1994: II 106). The reflection of the Udm. past participle *-em* by Mari *-əm* has been discussed above in the etymology for Mari *šorəmβondo* 'rake'.

Finally, with regard to the vacillation between initial *m* and *p* in Mari, not only is this found elsewhere in the Mari lexicon, e.g. MariE *muńčalem* NW *pündzaltəm* 'to slide, to glide' (TschWb), but the same vacillation is sometimes found in Udmurt, cf. *mal'potini* ~ *pal'potini* 'to smile' in the dictionary of Vakhrušev (1983).

4. MariE *numal(a)* 'fish/animal slime' < Permian

In TschWb we find MariE *numula* 'Schleim (am Fisch)' from the Volga dialect and *numul* '(zur Brunstzeit aus dem Geschlechtsorgan eines weiblichen Tiers, einer Kuh, laufend)' from the Uṗša dialect. Additionally, the dictionary of Troitskij (1895) attests MariE <нумалә> 'слизистый' from an unspecified Meadow Mari source.

As Bereczki (1977: 59) notes, PU **n'*- underwent depalatalization in Mari, and therefore a Mari word with *n'* is indicative of borrowing from Permian. This Meadow Mari material can therefore be traced to Udm. *numiles* 'мягкий, ослизлый', *numil'-numil'* id. (see e.g. the Udmurt dictionary of Vakhrušev). The Udmurt word is in turn of Permian origin, cf. Komi *nimles* (KESK 199).

4. In spite of the initial *p*-, the editors of TschWb appear to assume that this represents a variant of the same word *mal'əm* known from literary Meadow Mari and consequently they list Volga *pal'əm* under a headword *mal'əm*.

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Cv. | Chuvash | PMari | Proto-Mari |
| A | Anatri dialect of Chuvash | PU | Proto-Uralic |
| V | Viryal dialect of Chuvash | Udm. | Udmurt |
| MariE | Meadow and Eastern Mari | | |
| W | Hill Mari | | |
| NW | Northwestern Mari | | |

References

- AGYAGÁSI, KLÁRA 2018: *Chuvash historical phonetics*. Turcologica 117. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- AIKIO, ANTE 2014: On the reconstruction of Proto-Mari vocalism. – *Journal of Language Relationship* 11: 125–157.
- AŠMARIN = АШМАРИН, Н. И. 1928–1950: *Словарь чувашского языка 1–17*. Казань & Чебоксары: Издание Народного комиссариата по Просвещению Чувашской Автономной Советской Социалистической Республики и Чувашского Государственного Университета.
- АХМЕТ'ЈАНОВ = АХМЕТЬЯНОВ, Р. Г. 2015: *Этимологический словарь татарского языка*. Казань: Магариф–Вакыт.
- БЕКЕ, ÖDÖN 1997–2001: *Mari nyelvjárás szótár (Tscheremissisches Dialektwörterbuch) 1–9*. Bibliotheca ceremissica 4. Szombathely.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR 1977: Permi-cseremisiz lexikális kölcsönések. – *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 79. 57–77.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR 1987: Пермско-марийские лексические связи. – *Сущность, развитие и функции языка*. Москва: Наука. 112–115.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR 1992–1994: *Grundzüge der tscheremissischen Sprachgeschichte I–II*. Debrecen.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR 2003: Adalékok a permi-cseremisiz nyelvi kapcsolatokhoz. – Zoltán Molnár & Gábor Zaicz (eds.), *Permistica et Uralica. Köszöntő könyv Csúcs Sándor tiszteletére*. Fenno-Ugrica Pázmániensia I. Piliscsaba. 39–41.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR 2004: Újabb adalékok a permi-cseremisiz lexikális kölcsönhatáshoz. – Eszter Várady & Márta Csepregi (eds.), *Permiék, finnek, magyarok. Írások Szűj Enikő 60. születésnapjára*. Budapest. 14–17.
- BERECZKI 2005 = Березки, Габор 2005: Пермско-марийские лексические совпадения – заимствования или общие субстратные элементы?. – *Linguistica Uralica* 41(3): 187–200.
- BERECZKI, GÁBOR ET AL. 2013: *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Tscheremissischen (Mari). Der einheimische Wortschatz*. Nach dem Tode des Verfassers herausgegeben von Klára Agyagási und Eberhard Winkler. Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altica 86. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- ФЕДОТОВ 1990 = Федотов, М. Р. 1990: *Чувашско-марийские языковые взаимосвязи*. Саранск: Издательство саратовского университета, саранский филиал.

- ISANBAEV 1973 = Исанбаев, Н. И. 1973: Непубликованные рукописи Г. Ф. Миллера по марийскому языку. – *Вопросы марийского языкознания* 3. Йошкар-Ола. 61–72.
- ISANBAEV 1994 = Исанбаев, Н. И. 1994: *Марийско-тюркские языковые контакты*. Часть вторая. Йошкар-Ола.
- KESK = Лыткин, В. И. & Гуляев, Е. С. 1970: *Краткий этимологический словарь коми языка*. Москва.
- RÄSÄNEN, MARTTI 1920: *Die tschuwassischen Lehnwörter im Tscheremissischen*. Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne 48. Helsinki: Société Finno-ougrienne.
- RÉDEI, K. & RÓNA-TAS, A. 1982: Proto-Permian and Votyak loan-words in Chuvash. – András Róna-Tas (ed.), *Studies in Chuvash etymology* I. Studia Uralo-Altica 17. Szeged. 158–179.
- САВАТКОВА = Саваткова, А. А. 2008: *Словарь горномарийского языка*. Йошкар-Ола: Марийское книжное издательство.
- СЕВЕОК, THOMAS A. & RAUN, ALO 1956: *The first Cheremis grammar (1775)*. Chicago: Newberry Library.
- SERGEEV 1968 = Сергеев, Л. П. 1968: *Диалектологический словарь чувашского языка*. Чебоксары: Чувашское книжное издательство.
- SERGEEV 2002 = Сергеев, О. А. 2002: *Истоки марийской письменности*. Йошкар-Ола: Марийское книжное издательство.
- ТРОИТСКИЙ = Троицкий, В. П. 1895: *Черемисско-русский словарь*. Казань.
- TSCHWB = MOISIO, ARTO & SAARINEN, SIRKKA (EDS.) 2008: *Tscheremissisches Wörterbuch*. Aufgezeichnet von Volmari Porkka, Arvid Genetz, Yrjö Wichmann, Martti Räsänen, T. E. Uotila und Erkki Itkonen. Lexica Societatis Fenno-Ugricae 32. Helsinki: Suomalais-ugrilainen Seura – Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus.
- UEW = RÉDEI, KÁROLY 1988–1991: *Uralisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- ЎРӨМАРИЙ = Ўпымарий (В. М. Васильев) 1926: *Марий мутэр*. Моско.
- ВАХРУШЕВ = Вахрушев, В. М. 1983: *Удмуртско-русский словарь*. Москва: Русский Язык.
- VERŠININ = Вершинин, В. И. 2017: *Марий мут-влакын кушеч лиймышт (этимологий мутер)*. Йошкар-Ола.
- ZHIVLOV, MIKHAIL 2014: Studies in Uralic vocalism III. – *Journal of Language Relationship* 12: 113–148.