

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

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### Etymologies of Mari kinship terms

#### Uralic/Finno-Ugric etymologies

##### Convincing etymologies

**MM *čüčü*, HM *čəčə* ‘(maternal) uncle, mother’s brother (usually younger); mother’s cousin’ < PMari \**čüčə* < PU \**čečü*, cf. Fi *setü* ‘paternal uncle’, SaN *čeahči* ‘uncle’, MdE *čiče* ‘der Mann der Schwester, der älter ist als ich’, Ko *čoz* ‘maternal uncle’, Ud *čuž* ‘relative from mother’s side’, Ms (E) *šäš* ‘uncle’, TN *t’id’e* ‘uncle; mother’s younger brother’**

(Sammallahti 1988: 536; UEW; SSA; Aikio 2014: 152)

**MM *čüčünö* ‘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 \**näyi* ‘woman’; this is also the view of Sammallahti 1988 and Veršinin 2018 s.v.

(Sammallahti 1988; UEW; Bereczki 2013; Veršinin 2018)

**MM *nudo* ~ HM *nudə* ‘(younger) sister-in-law’ < PMari \**nudə* < PU \**natiw* ~ \**nataw*, cf. Fi *nato* ‘sister-in-law’, SaS *näate* ‘wife’s sister’, TN *nādū* ‘younger brother of wife or husband’**

(Sammallahti 1988; UEW; Zhivlov 2014: 129; Aikio 2015: 55)

**HM *oβə*, dial. *oβo* ‘father-in-law’ < PU \**ippi*, cf. Fi *appi* id., SaN *vuohppa* id., Kh (E) *up* ‘father-in-law; wife’s older brother’, Ms (E) *up* ‘father-in-law’ Hu (obsolete) *ipa* id.**

(Sammallahti 1988; UEW; Zhivlov 2014: 134; Aikio 2015: 57)

Sammallahti connects the Mari word to the Uralic set with a question mark, but the comparison is totally regular.

**HM *pü-* in *pü-eryə* ‘son’ < PU ? \**pojka*, cf. Fi *poika* id., Ko, Ud *pi* id., Kh (E) *pəγ* ‘boy, son’, Ms *püw* ‘boy, son’, Hu *fi, fiú* id.**

(Sammallahti 1988:547; UEW; Bereczki 2013)

The Uralic vowel-reconstruction is uncertain and the Mari word is sometimes omitted from the comparison (Aikio 2013: 15), but in our view the etymology of the Mari word is tenable.

**MM *weje*, HM *wije* ‘son-in-law; younger sister’s husband’ < PMari \**wijə* < PU \**wäjiw*, cf. Fi *vävy* ‘son-in-law’, MdE *ov*, Kh E *won* id., Hu *vó* id., TN *jĵ* ‘Schwiegersohn (so sagen die Verwandten der Frau, die älter als diese sind)’**

(Sammallahti 1988; UEW; Aikio 2014: 155)

## Dubious and uncertain etymologies

**MM *erʸe* ~ HM *erʸə* ‘son’**

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

**MM *iza*, HM *əzä*, dial. *izä* ‘older brother; father’s younger brother’ < PMari *\*iča* < ? PU *\*ičä* or *\*ejčä*, cf. Fi *isä* ‘father’, *iso* (der.) ‘big’**

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 *īś-* M ‘lord’) (Tunkelo 1913; Koivulehto 2001) should probably be rejected; at best the Uralic words can be parallel loans.

**MM *rβeze*, HM *əβeze* ‘young, new; young boy, child’ < ? PU *\*orpa*, cf. Fi *orpo* ‘orphan’**

← PII *\*(H)ərbha-* > OI *ərbha-* ‘small, weak’

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 borrowing from Indo-Iranian *\*(H)ərbha-* (cf. Sanskrit *ərbha-* ‘small, weak’).

## Turkic loans

### Chuvash

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

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 30; Moisio et al. 2008: 1)

**MM *ača(j)* ‘father; paternal uncle’, dial. *üt’ü* ← ? Chuvash *att’e* ‘father’**

(Moisio et al. 2008: 2)

Also the opposite direction of borrowing has been assumed (Räsänen 1920: 239).

**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, ältere Freundin od. Frau, Verwandte, älter als ich’ ← Chuvash *akka* ‘older sister, aunt’**

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 23–24; Moisio et al. 2008: 7)

**MM *joltaš* ~ HM *jaltaš* ~ dial. *joldaš*, *d’oltaš* ‘friend, comrade, colleague, fellow’ ← Chuvash *yuldaš*, V *yoldaš* ‘fellow’ ← Tatar *yuldaš***

(Egorov 1964: 348; Róna-Tas 1988)

**MM *kurska* ~ HM *kârskâ* ~ dial. *kurska* 'elder sister's husband' ← Chuvash *kěrü* 'groom, brother-in-law' < OT *küädägü***

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 190; Clauson 1972: 703)

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

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 304; Moisio et al. 2008: 462)

**MM *oňaka*, HM *oňäkä* 'older bother-in-law (husband's site); mother-in-law' ← Chuvash *xoňakam* 'older sister of my wife'**

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 304; Moisio et al. 2008: 461)

**MM *oňo*, HM *oňô* 'father-in-law' ← Chuvash *xoňam* 'my father-in-law', V *xoňëm* ← Tatar *qayın* ← OT \**qadın***

(Róna-Tas 1988; Egorov 1964: 304; Róna-Tas 1988; Moisio et al. 2008: 461)

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

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 168; Moisio et al. 2008: 534)

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

(Räsänen 1920; Egorov 1964: 333)

The Chuvash word, that serves as a source for the Mari etymon, is most probably cognate with the OT *siḡil*, Uzbek *singil*, Tatar *seḡel* etc. 'younger sister', however, note the difference in the meaning that separates the Chuvash word together with Mari word.

**MM *užo*, HM *užə*, dial. *ozə* 'male relative' ← ? Chuvash \**ošă*, \**ušă***

This is a dubious etymology; 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***

(Räsänen 1923; Clauson 1972: 950; Moisio et al. 2008: 177)

Late loan after the split-up of Proto-Mari (Aikio 2014: 136).

**MM *kajnaŋa* 'wife's elder brother' ← Tatar *qayınaya id.***

(Clauson 1972: 602; Räsänen 1923: 32)

### Possible Indo-European loans

**MM šüžar, HM šďžar ‘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 marê(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 uncertain origin

**MM üdâr ~ HM ədar < PMari \*üďar (Aikio 2014: 153) ‘girl; daughter; bride’**

**MM üdâr ~ HM ədar ‘girl; daughter; bride’:** Thomsen (1890) assumed that the Mari word was borrowed from Baltic \*dukte- (like Fi *tytär* and SaS *daktere* and Md *t’ejt’er’, št’ir’*) but this idea is not supported by more recent sources such as SSA.

**MM pörăž ~ HM pörăž ‘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’**

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UEW = Károly Rédei et al. 1988. *Uralisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

**Abbreviations**

**Fi = Finnish**

**HM = Hill Mari**

**Kh (E) = Eastern Khanty**

**Ko = Komi**

**MdE = Erzya Mordvin**

**MM = Meadow Mari**

**Ms (E) = Eastern Mansi**

**OT = Old Turkic**

**PII = Proto-Indo-Iranian**

**PU = Proto-Uralic**

**SaN = North Saami**

**SaS = South Saami**

**TN = Tundra Nenets**

**Ud = Udmurt**

**V = Viryal Chuvash**