

## The etymology of Mari \*jümə ‘sky; god’<sup>1</sup>

This paper seeks to establish a new etymology for the Mari word meaning ‘god’ and ‘sky’: Eastern Mari *jumo* and Western Mari *jämä*, reconstructed as Proto-Mari \*jümə. This noun has traditionally been connected to the Finnic word for ‘god’ (Finnish *jumala*, Estonian *jumal*, etc.) within a well-established Uralic etymological framework. However, this study challenges the conventional view, arguing instead that Proto-Mari \*jümə originated from Proto-Uralic \*jilma ‘sky’. If correct, this would align the Mari noun with cognates such as Finnish *ilma* ‘air’, North Saami *albmi* ‘sky’, and Komi *jen* ‘god’. The paper critically evaluates the arguments supporting the traditional etymology, identifying a previously overlooked morphological issue. Subsequently, it presents detailed evidence in favor of the proposed alternative etymology, aiming to establish a more robust connection between the Mari word and its hypothesized Proto-Uralic origins.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper seeks to establish a new etymology for the Mari word meaning ‘sky’ and ‘god’, reconstructed as Proto-Mari \*jümə based on forms attested in the Mari dialects: Eastern Mari *jumo*, Northwestern Mari *jömö*, and Western Mari *jämä*. While the predominant meaning in modern usage is ‘god’, the meaning ‘sky’ remains widely attested across the Mari dialects. At first glance, this might seem an unlikely candidate for reanalysis, given its established status as part of a Uralic etymology.

The study begins by critically examining the traditional etymology, which links Mari \*jümə to Finnish *jumala* ‘god’. It then introduces and elaborates on an alternative hypothesis, recently suggested by Savelyev (2023), that instead connects Mari \*jümə to Finnish *ilma* ‘air’ (< Proto-Uralic \*jilma ‘sky’). Furthermore, the etymologies of Mari \*jüt ‘night’ and \*űzed-a- ‘hate’ are discussed, as they offer previously overlooked parallels for the vowel developments proposed for Mari \*jümə. These cases provide crucial evidence supporting the new interpretation of the word’s origins.

## 2. The established etymology: Mari \*jümə ~ Finnic \*jumala

The prevailing etymological consensus is that Mari \*jümə ‘sky; god’ derives from (post-)Proto-Uralic \*juma and is related to the Finnic word for ‘god’: PFi \*jumala > Fi *jumala*, Est *jumal*, etc. (UEW: 638; SSA s.v. *jumala*; Bereczki 2013 s.v. *jumo*). According to SSA, the comparison between the Finnic and Mari forms was first proposed as early as the eighteenth century.

Additionally, Mordvin cognates have been suggested. First, it has been proposed that MdE *jondol*, M *jondəl* ‘lightning’ (< PMd \*jondəl) may be an obscured compound reflecting Pre-PMd \*juma-tuli ‘god-fire’ (cf. PU \*tuli ‘fire’ > MdE M *tol*). Second, the obsolete Mordvin deity name “*Jumishipas*” has been tentatively analyzed as containing a reflex of \*juma. However, the inclusion of both Mordvin words in this etymology has been regarded as uncertain.

The established etymology of PMari \*jümə is plausible but not without weaknesses. The comparison hinges on just two forms: PMari \*jümə ‘sky; god’ and PFi \*jumala ‘god’. The alleged Mordvin cognates offer no independent evidence for the earlier existence of a noun \*juma ‘god’; in fact, the derivation of PMd \*jondəl from the alleged Pre-PMd compound

\*juma-tuli is plausible only if a noun \*juma can be independently reconstructed. Nothing intrinsic to the structure of the Mordvin form suggests that it was originally a compound noun. As for Mordvin “*Jumishipas*”, this obscure hapax legomenon, recorded by Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg (1730: 402), remains speculative and offers no concrete support for the reconstruction of \*juma. While the ending *-pas* can be identified as Mde *pas* ~ *paz* ‘god’, the rest of the word is opaque, leaving its overall structure and origin unclear.

Thus, the reconstruction of the noun \*juma depends entirely on the assumption that PMari \*jümə and the element \*juma- in PFi \*jumala derive from the same root. Phonologically and semantically, this comparison is straightforward. However, the etymology encounters challenges regarding the suffix \*-IA in \*jumala. Nothing in the Finnic evidence suggests that \*jumala is a derived form, and there is scant evidence for the existence of a denominal noun suffix \*-IA in Proto-Uralic. Indeed, a critical issue is that the modern Uralic languages do not preserve productive or clearly identifiable denominal noun suffixes that could plausibly be linked to this hypothetical \*-IA. This lack of evidence fundamentally weakens the case for reconstructing such a suffix in Proto-Uralic and leaves the morphological composition of \*jumala unresolved.

One potential parallel for this alleged suffix is the cognate set for ‘hare’: SaaN *njoammil*, Mde *numolo*, Komi (dial.) *ńimal*, Hu *nyúl* (< PU \*ńomala) ~ NenT *ńawa*, Ngan *ńomu*, SlkTa *ńoma* (< PU \*ńoma). In this case, the basic form attested in the Samoyed languages appears to have been augmented with a suffix \*-IA elsewhere in the language family, though the identity and function of the suffix remain unclear; both forms share the same meaning, so the alleged process of derivation was not accompanied by any semantic change. Such an isolated and opaque case does not provide strong evidence for deriving \*jumala ‘god’ through a similar process. Furthermore, from a semantic perspective, it would be speculative to assume that words for ‘god’ and ‘hare’ shared the same suffix, given their completely unrelated meanings.

In Finnic, \*-IA functions as a productive oikonym suffix commonly used in names of houses, villages, and towns. Additionally, it appears in a handful of common nouns, such as Fi *pappila* ‘parsonage’ (← *pappi* ‘pastor, priest’), *appela* ‘father-in-law’s house’ (← *appi* ‘father-in-law’), *kanala* ‘chicken coop’ (← *kana* ‘chicken’), and *etelä* ‘south’ (← *esi* : *ete-* ‘front’;

originally referring to an ‘area in front of a house’ or similar). For semantic reasons, however, this suffix does not provide a plausible parallel for the opaque endings in PFi \*jumala ‘god’ and PU \*ńomala ‘hare’.

There is also an infrequent and unproductive adjective suffix \*-IA in Finnic, seen in forms such as Fi *vetelä* ‘watery, limp’ (← *vesi* : *vete-* ‘water’) and *hankala* ‘difficult, cumbersome’ (← *hanka* ‘oarlock; fork (of a tree and its branch)’). Frog (2012: 215) has suggested that \*jumala might originally have been a derived adjective or a diminutive noun meaning ‘divine one, one of the sky’. However, this hypothesis remains speculative, as \*jumala is nowhere attested as an adjective, and adjectival formations with \*-IA are rare in Finnic. Furthermore, there is minimal evidence to support the notion that \*-IA functioned as a diminutive suffix in Proto-Finnic. Hakulinen (1979: 129) lists a few alleged diminutives with this suffix, but the examples are largely unconvincing. Some lack any discernible morpheme boundary (e.g. Fi *atula(t)* ‘pincers’, *jumala* ‘god’, *jäkälä* ‘lichen’), while others exhibit derivational patterns that are semantically opaque or phonologically irregular (e.g. *kampela* ‘flounder’ ? ← *kampi* ‘crank’; *nappula* ‘push-button’ ? ← *nappi* ‘button’).

Motivated by the enigmatic nature of the so-called “suffix” in PFi \*jumala, Saarikivi (2014: 207) has proposed an alternative analysis, suggesting that the noun might originate from an obscured compound \*juma-ülä. This compound would include the relational noun stem \*ülä- ‘place on, above, up, or high’, which has well-attested Uralic cognates (UEW: 573–574; SSA s.v. *ylä-*). While it is true that terms related to height or elevation often serve as epithets for supreme deities, Saarikivi’s explanation is unconvincing. Typically, such epithets function as modifiers in compound structures, not as heads: cf., e.g. Fi *yli-jumala* ‘supreme deity’, where *yli-* ‘upper, higher’ (< \*ülä-j-) modifies the noun *jumala* ‘god’. A compound where the relational noun \*ülä serves as the head would be expected to denote a concrete locality, not an abstract concept like ‘god’. Furthermore, no examples of Finnic compound nouns with \*ülä as the head, nor Saami compounds featuring its cognate \*elē, can be identified. This absence strongly undermines the plausibility of \*jumala deriving from such a compound.

Evaluating the etymology linking PMari \*jümə and PFi \*jumala on its own merits, the presence of an opaque suffix in the latter form is not necessarily a significant obstacle to the comparison. However, an alternative etymology for the Mari word warrants consideration.

### 3. The new etymology: Mari \*jümə < PU \*jilma

Savelyev (2023) recently proposed a new etymology for Mari \*jümə, suggesting it as a reflex of PU \*jilma ‘sky’. This hypothesis draws on a well-established and widespread set of cognates:<sup>2</sup>

Saami: S *elmie* ‘sky, heaven; air; storm’, U *albmie* ‘sky, heaven’, P *albme*, L *almme*, N *albmi*, A *alme* ‘sky, heaven; storm’, Sk *â’lmm*, K *â’llm*, T *â’llme* ‘sky, heaven; storm; world’ (< PSaa \**el̥mē*)

Finnic: Fi *ilma* ‘air; weather’, Ol *ilmu* ‘air; weather; world’, Veps *il’m* ‘air’, Vote *ilma* ‘air; weather; world’, Est Võro *ilm* ‘weather; world’, Liv *ilma* ‘world’ (< PFi \**ilma*)

Permic: Komi *jen* (*jenm-*) ‘god’, KomiY *jen* ‘sky, heaven; god’, Udm *in* (*inm-*) ‘sky, heaven’ (< PPerm \**jen* : \**jenm-*)

Khanty: Irt *itəm*, Kaz *jeləm*, O *iləm* ‘world, weather’ (< PKh \**eləm*)

Mansi: W *jələm*, *jeləm*, *eləm*, N *eləm* ‘weather; time; life’ (< PMs \**elmə*)

While Savelyev offers no arguments supporting this etymology, the hypothesis warrants closer examination.

The proposed loss of the lateral \*l in Mari seems to be entirely regular in the environment PMari \**ŭ\_m*. Parallel cases include MariE *kum*, Nw *köm*, W *kâm* ‘three’ < PMari \**küm* < PU \**kulmi*/\**kolmi* (UEW: 174) and MariE *kuməž*, Nw *kömöž*, W *kâməž* ‘birchbark’ < PMari \**küməž* < PU \**kolmiš* (Aikio 2013: 168–169).<sup>3</sup>

However, the vowel correspondences pose more significant challenges. Both UEW (81–82) and Sammallahti (1988: 541) reconstruct PU \**ilma*, supported by the Saami and Finnic forms, which point to an original

2. As a sidenote, there is another cognate set with very similar semantics whose reflexes are, interestingly, in complementary distribution with those of \**jilma*: Mde *meñel*, M *meñal* ‘sky, heaven’, Hu *menny* ‘heaven’ (< PU \**miñil*). How the original semantic distinction between \**jilma* and \**miñil* should be reconstructed remains unclear. With regard to the latter etymology, it is worth noting that earlier references (Sammallahti 1988: 545–546; UEW 276) have overlooked the fact that the Hungarian geminate nasal *ny* reflects the earlier sequence \**-ñl-* < \**-ñil-*, as in the identical case of *könnny* ‘tear’ < PU \**küñil*.
3. On the other hand, the cluster \**lm* has been preserved unchanged in MariE *jälme*, Nw *jilmə*, W *jəlmə* ‘tongue; language’ (< PMari \**jilmə* < PU \**ñälmä*; UEW: 313–314) and MariE *kälme*, Nw W *kəlmə* ‘frozen’ (< PMari \**kilmə* < PU \**külmä*; UEW: 663). Apparently, the dual development of the cluster was conditioned by the backness value of the preceding vowel in Proto-Mari.

disharmonic stem with the vowel combination \*i–a. The Permic forms, such as Komi *jen*, align with this reconstruction, as Komi *e* (< PPerm \*e) regularly reflects PU \*i–a and \*i–ä. The Udmurt form *in*, however, complicates this picture, as the vowel correspondence Komi *e* ~ Udm *i* is very rare.

A comparable case is Komi *vem* ~ Udm *vim* ‘marrow, brain’, derived from PU \*wVδim.<sup>4</sup> The Udmurt dialectal forms (e.g. *vijim*, *vijm*) suggest an original bisyllabic structure, reconstructable as PPerm \*vej̥jm or \*ve̥j̥m. The development of \*e > i in Udmurt could have been influenced by the following palatal glide \*j̥, which must have originated as a hiatus-filling consonant; PU \*δ was regularly lost in Permic in intervocalic position. However, this explanation does not apply to Komi *jen* ~ Udm *in*, as no palatalization or contraction is evident in that case.

The Ob-Ugric reflexes introduce further complications. These forms exhibit a front vowel (PKh \*ē ~ PMs \*ē), which is inconsistent with the expected back-harmonic reflexes of PU \*i in \*i–a stems. Sammallahti (1988: 503–504) and Zhivlov (2023: 147, 149) argue that PU back-harmonic \*i typically develops into PKh \*a (or its high ablaut grade \*i) and PMs \*a.<sup>5</sup> The same vowels also appear to be the default reflexes of PU \*u in \*a-stems. The following etymologies support this interpretation:

PU \*kira ‘anger’ > PKh \*karəm- (> V Vy *korəm-*, Sur *körəm-* ‘be unmanageable, refuse to eat’, Irt *xurəm-* ‘be angry’), \*kiřäm- (> V Vy *kāram-* ‘get angry’), PMs \*k<sup>w</sup>ar- (> LK *xɔr-*, UK *k<sup>w</sup>ār-*, W *k<sup>w</sup>ɔr-* ‘quarrel’). The

4. The first-syllable vowel is difficult to reconstruct because the correspondences are irregular. In Ugric we find PKh \*wāləm (> VVy *weləm*, Sur *wāləm*, Irt Ni *wetəm*, Kaz *weləm*, O *weləm*), PMs \*wālmə (> T *wāləm*, LK *wöäləm*, UK *wöäləm*, W *waləm*, N *wāləm*), and Hu *velő* ‘marrow’. The correspondence PKh \*ä ~ PMs \*ä ~ Hu *e* quite unambiguously points to PU \*ä, which would also account for MariE *wem* ~ W *wim* ‘marrow’ (< PMari \*wim). On the other hand, the forms in Saami and Finnic (SaaN *ada* : *ađđam-*, Fi *ydin* : *ytime-* ‘marrow’, etc.) go regularly back to \*üδim, and the development \*wä- > \*ü- would be completely irregular in these branches. Moreover, the back rounded vowel in MdE *udeme* ~ M *udəm* ‘marrow, brain’ seems even more difficult to account for.

5. Note that Sammallahti (1988) uses Honti’s (1982) reconstruction of Proto-Khanty, whereas the present paper follows Zhivlov (2006; 2023), who presents a reconstruction of Proto-Khanty vocalism which is slightly modified from that by Helimski (2001) and very different from that proposed by Honti. In this instance, however, the differences are merely notational: Honti’s \*ō and Sammallahti’s \*oo correspond to Zhivlov and Helimski’s \*a, and Honti’s \*ä and Sammallahti’s \*a correspond to Zhivlov and Helimski’s \*j̥.

- Ob-Ugric forms are cognate with SaaN *garru*, Fi *kiro* ‘curse’, MdE *kor* ‘annoyance, anger’, and Hu *harag* ‘anger, wrath, rage’; however, no single source includes all these forms in the same cognate set. Sammallahti (1988: 543) does not mention the Mordvin and Hungarian forms, while UEW (220) dismisses the Finnic and Saami forms and reconstructs the Uralic protoform as \*kurV. Nevertheless, deriving all these forms from PU \*kira- presents no phonological issues. The semantic correspondence is also straightforward in light of parallels such as MariE *jatlem* ‘abuse, revile; reprimand, reproach; curse, damn’ and Spanish *maldecir* ‘damn, curse’, derived from Latin *maledicere* ‘slander, speak ill of; curse’ (< *male* ‘badly, wrongly, wickedly’ + *dicere* ‘speak’).
- PU \*ñila ‘phloem, cambium’ > PKh \*ñil(ī) (> V *näl-töntəy*, Sur *ñälj*, *ñälj-töntəy*, Ni *ñöt-töntə*, Kaz *ñöl-tönti* ‘loose birch-bark’) (*töntəy*, etc. ‘birchbark’), PMs \*ñal- (> N *ñol-* ‘come loose (e.g. birchbark)’). Cognates include SaaA *njale*, Fi *nila*, MdE *nola* ‘phloem, cambium’ (Zhivlov 2023: 168; cf. Sammallahti 1988: 546; UEW: 318, 329).
- PU \*wiča- ‘scrape’ > PKh \*wač- (> V Vy *woč-* ‘smooth, stroke (with the hand); clean nettles’), \*wačəy- (> Sur *wöčəy-*, *wäčəy-*, Kaz *wəš-*, O *osi-* ‘scrape with a knife’), PMs \*ašyə- (> T *ašk-*, LK *āšy-*, UK *āsy-*, W *əšš-*, *ašš-*, N *osy-* ‘rake; scrape, clean by scraping’). Cognates include SaaSk *vâccad* ‘scrape with a knife’ and Fi *vitoa* ‘scutch (flax or hemp), beat with scutching knife’ (Sammallahti 1988: 551). The element \*-əy-, \*-yə- in the Ob-Ugric verbs is opaque.
- PU \*wiša ‘green, yellow’ > PKh \*wįstī (> Sur *wästə* ‘green; unripe’, Irt *wästə* ‘green, yellow; unripe’, Kaz *wösti* ‘green, blue’). Cognates include Fi *vihanta* ‘green (of plants), lush’, MdE *ožo* ‘yellow(ish), pale’, MariE *užar* ‘green’, Komi *vež* ‘green; yellow’. The inclusion of the Khanty word in this cognate set has been argued by Holopainen & Aikio (2023). It contains a derivational suffix \*-tī; a similar formation is PKh \*wirtī ‘red’ (> V Vy Sur Irt *wěrtə*, Ni *würtə*, Kaz *würti*) ← PKh \*wir ‘blood’ (> V Vy Sur Irt *wěr*, Ni *wür*, O *wur*) < PU \*weri. Although the default reflex of PU \*š in non-initial position is PKh \*l, it is reflected as PKh \*s both after PU \*i (cf. the next etymology) and before PU \*t; either of these conditions accounts for the sibilant in PKh \*wįstī.
- PU \*iša ‘skin’ > PKh \*as (> V Vy *os* ‘skin, surface, outer layer of birch-bark’, Sur *ös* ‘inner side of hide or birch-bark’, Ni *us* ‘hairless spot, inside of fur clothing’), PMs \*aš (> T *aš*, LK UK *ās*, W *əš*, N *os* ‘surface, face, appearance’). Cognates include SaaN *assi* ‘inner side of hide; skin (under

the hair'), Fi *iho* 'outer skin (of human beings)', MdE *jožo* '(outer) skin, surface; sense', Komi *ež* 'surface, cover, upper or outer side'. The inclusion of the Khanty and Mansi forms, as well as the proposed exceptional development of PU \*š following the vowel \*i, have been discussed by Holopainen & Aikio (2023).

The Ob-Ugric reflexes of \*jilma deviate from this pattern, requiring further investigation to reconcile the vocalism.

In addition to the anomalous vowel correspondences, another significant phonological feature is the word-initial *j-* in Komi *jen*. The exceptional vowel correspondence between Komi *e* and Udmurt *i* can be reasonably explained by reconstructing the Proto-Permic form as \*jen : \*jenm-, with the word-initial palatal glide \*j- inhibiting the otherwise regular development of Proto-Permic \*e to Udmurt *e, o*. This raises the question of the origin of the word-initial \*j-. The UEW (82) posits that it is secondary but does not provide evidence for this claim. The challenge lies in the fact that a secondary, prothetic *j-* would not align with regular sound changes outside Yazva Komi. For instance, the correspondence Komi *jen* ~ KomiY *jen* ~ Udm *in* differs from that in Komi *eskj-* ~ KomiY *jeski-* ~ Udm *oskj-* 'believe'. The latter stem is clearly to be reconstructed as PPerm \*eskj-: the correspondence Komi *e* ~ Udm *o* reflects PPerm \*e when not adjacent to alveopalatal and palatal consonants, and moreover, PPerm \*eskj- regularly goes back to PU \*iskä-, as will be discussed below. To account for the different correspondence in the former item, we can reconstruct Proto-Permic \*jen : \*jenm- 'sky; god' with an original \*j-.

It is important to note that this issue is unrelated to the word-initial *j-* in some Ob-Ugric forms. The initial consonant in KhKaz *jeləm* and MsW *jələm* ~ *jeləm* can be regarded as secondary, as the UEW (82) maintains. The addition of a prothetic *j-* before word-initial \*ē- or \*ī- follows regular phonological developments in these Khanty and Mansi varieties.

The traditional Proto-Uralic reconstruction \*ilma must be revised, as it fails to account for the sound correspondences in this cognate set. Crucially, this is not an isolated irregularity: the correspondence of Finno-Saamic \*i- (> PFi \*i-, PSaa \*e-) to PKh \*ā-/ \*ē-<sup>6</sup> and PMs \*ē- is regular.

6. In the Khanty system of ablaut, PKh \*ē represents the mid grade of underlying \*ā (Zhivlov 2023: 148), and the two vowels therefore reflect the same Pre-Proto-Khanty vowel.

Pystynen (2013; 2015) notes that this correspondence is also evident in the following cognate set:

Finnic: Fi *ien* (: *ikene-*), Ol *igen* (: *igene-*), Veps *igin*, Vote *ičemet* (PL), Est *ige* (: *igeme*), Liv *i'gmōd* (PL) ‘gum(s)’ (< PFi \*iken : \*ikene- ~ \*ikeme-)

Khanty: V Vy *äγəŋ*, Sur *əγəŋ*, Irt *əŋəŋ*, Ni *əŋəŋ*, Kaz *əŋəŋ*, O *əŋəŋ* ‘chin, lower jaw’ (< PKh \*äγəŋ)

Mansi: T *jīn*, LK *əγəŋ*, UK *ēn*, W *jēn*, N *ēŋəŋ* ‘chin, lower jaw’ (< PMs \*əγəŋə)

Hungarian: *íny* ‘gum’

A third example of this correspondence is found in Aikio (2015: 8–10):

Saami: L *amás*, N *amas*, A *oomâs*, Sk *õõmâs*, K *ââmâs* ‘unfamiliar, strange, odd’ (< PSaa \*eṃeš)<sup>7</sup>

Finnic: Fi *ihme*, Vote *ime* ‘wonder, miracle; strange’, Est *ime*, Võro *imeh*, *ime?*, Liv *i'm* ‘wonder, miracle’ (< PFi \*imeh)

Khanty: V Vy *jim*, Ni *jem*, Kaz *jem*, O *jem* ‘taboo’ (< PKh \*jēm); V Vy *jiməŋ*, Irt Ni *jeməŋ*, Kaz *jeməŋ*, O *jeməŋ* ‘sacred’ (< PKh \*jēməŋ)

A fourth example of a Proto-Uralic stem beginning with \*ji- may be proposed in the following verbs, which might be traced back to PU \*jičV-, although no Finnic or Saami cognates are known:

Mordvin: ? E *ičems*, M *ičəms* (PAST.3SG *ičš*) ‘knead’ (< PMd \*ičə- : \*ič-)

Mari: ? E *jáčem*, Nw *jəcem*, W *jáčem* ‘ache, smart, hurt’ (< PMari \*jič-(e-))

Khanty: ? Irt *ič-* ‘push; press; shove’, Ni Kaz *iš-*, O *is-* (PASS) ‘get damaged by pressure’ (< PKh \*ič-)

Mansi: ? T *jīš-*, LK *ješ-*, UK *jes-*, W *jēš-*, *ješ-*, N *jēs-* ‘rub; chafe’ (< PMs \*jēš-)

7. My earlier treatment of this etymology (Aikio 2015: 8–10) included SaaS *ipmie* ‘subconscious, premonition, intuition’ and *ipmies* ‘causing wonder, difficult to understand’ in the cognate set. Moreover, an erroneous meaning ‘uncertainty, something to be wondered about’ was assigned to *ipmie* in that work. Upon reevaluation, this inclusion is incorrect: these words do not regularly reflect PSaa \*eṃē and \*eṃē-s, which would instead have predictably resulted in the nonexistent South Saami forms \**jipmie* and \**jipmies*. Instead, *ipmie* and *ipmies* are evidently connected to SaaS *ipmierdidh* ‘wonder, marvel at’ ~ SaaU *ibmierdidh* ‘have an idea, have a clue about something’. This verb is a borrowing of Fi *ymmärtää* ‘understand’ either directly or through more northern Saami languages (cf. SaaN *ipmirdit* ‘understand’). Consequently, the most plausible interpretation is that SaaS *ipmie* and *ipmies* are backformations derived from the borrowed verb *ipmierdidh*.

The UEW (8o) offers a different version of this etymology, omitting the Mansi verb and instead proposing a different Mari cognate: MariE *išem*, M *išem*, U *jāšem* ‘press, squeeze, grasp, clasp, clench’ (< PMari \*is-(e-) ~ \*jīs-(e-)). However, this proposal is erroneous. Bereczki (2013 s.v. *išem*) demonstrates that the Mari verb was instead borrowed from Early Middle Chuvash *xis-* (> Chuvash *xēs-* ‘press, squeeze, grasp, clasp, clench’). Furthermore, the Mari sibilant \*s cannot reflect PU \*č, invalidating the proposed Uralic etymological link.

Even when the etymology is revised to exclude the erroneous Mari cognate, it remains somewhat problematic. First, the Mansi verb evidently had a word-initial \*j- already in Proto-Mansi, distinguishing it from both PMs \*ēlmə (< PU \*jilma) and PMs \*ēɣnə (< PU \*jikin). Second, the Khanty vowel in PKh \*ič̄- likely represents the I-grade of an underlying \*ā̄, presumably influenced by an umlaut trigger in the second syllable that was later lost. Third, we need to assume that PU \*ji- developed into PMd \*i- in this instance, diverging from the regular general change of PU \*i into PMd \*e. However, no other convincing examples of PU \*ji- undergoing this development in Mordvin are known, although there are no counter-examples either. Despite these minor issues, this etymology offers a more coherent explanation of the sound correspondences than the reconstruction \*ič̄V- proposed by the UEW (8o), which fails entirely to account for the attested forms.

Given that there are three independent examples of the sound correspondence Finno-Saamic \*i- ~ PKh \*ā̄-/\*ē- ~ PMs \*ē-, it seems clear that this reflects a regular phonological development of some sort. The question, then, is what specific development produced this correspondence. Although it only occurs in words beginning with a vowel, the possibility that it reflects PU \*i- in word-initial position can be ruled out immediately. The default reflexes of PU \*i are PKh and PMs \*ā̄, and this development is also attested word-initially:

PU \*imi- ‘suck’ > PKh \*ām- (> V Vy *em-*, Sur *ām-*, Irt *em-*) (Sammallahti 1988: 536; UEW 82–83).

PU \*ipsi ‘smell (noun)’ > PKh \*āpəl (> V Vy *ewəl*, Sur *āpəl*, Irt Ni *epət*, Kaz *epəl*, O *epəl*), PMs \*ātə (> T *ät*, LK UK W *āt*, N *at*) (Sammallahti 1988: 536; UEW: 83–84).<sup>8</sup>

8. Note that UEW also cites another Mansi cognate, PMs \*(j)ēp ‘steam, vapor’

PU \*iskä- ‘believe’ > PKh \*äχəl- (> V Vy öγəl-, Sur äγ<sup>w</sup>əl-, Irt ewət-, Kaz ewəl-, O ewəl-), PMs \*äyt- (> LK UK äyt-, N ayt-). The only cognates found are in Permic (Komi *eskj-*, Udm *oskj-*). Interestingly, the UEW (76) reconstructs the verb as \*eskV- and Sammallahti (1988: 543) as \*äski-, although the vowel correspondences clearly point to PU \*i-ä.

PU \*itä- ‘appear, come out’ > PKh \*ät- (> V Vy et- ‘wax (of the moon)’, Sur ät- ‘dawn; come out, grow’, Irt Ni et- ‘arise, stand up; dawn; come out, grow’, Kaz et-, O et- ‘arise, stand up; rise (of the sun)’ (Helimski 1993; cf. UEW: 85). The Khanty verb has cognates in Finnic (e.g. Fi *itää* ‘sprout, germinate’) and Samoyed (e.g. Ngan *ηätäda* ‘see’, *ηädušj* ‘be visible; seem’). The meaning of the Finnic verb is a secondary development. The original meaning is indirectly attested in SaaN *ihitit* ‘come out, appear’ (< PSaa \*itē-), which due to its first-syllable vowel *i* must have been borrowed from (Proto-)Finnic. It is also implied by the related Fi *itä* ‘east’ (‘the direction of sunrise’; cf. Latin *oriēns* ‘east’ ← *orior* ‘rise, appear, become visible’).

These etymologies suggest that the correspondence pattern seen in the Ob-Ugric cognates of Fi *ilma*, *ien*, and *ihme* cannot be explained by reconstructing PU forms with word-initial \*i-, and thus another explanation is required. A clue is provided by the word-initial *j-* in Komi *jen* ‘god’. Pystynen (2013; 2015) proposed that the word-initial sequence \*je- should be reconstructed for the Proto-Uralic forms of Fi *ilma* and *ien*, with a regular development of PU \*je- > \*ji- > \*i- occurring in Pre-Proto-Finnic (and likely Pre-Proto-Saami as well). In Ob-Ugric, the Proto-Uralic sequence

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(> T *jīp*, LK UK *ep*, W *jep*, N *ēp*), and reconstructs the word as PU \*ipV ~ \*ipV-sV ~ \*ipV-ćV (rendered in present notation). This unusual reconstruction, along with the ad hoc morphological segmentation, seems to be motivated by the aforementioned Mansi noun and by the Moksha Mordvin word *opəs* ‘smell, scent’. However, both of these words are so phonologically anomalous that there is no compelling reason to assume they are etymologically related to PU \*ipsi ‘smell’ at all. The intervocalic *-p-* in Mordvin would suggest a Proto-Uralic geminate \**-pp-*, and Mordvin *o* as a reflex of PU \**i* would imply a disharmonic Proto-Uralic stem with the vowel combination \**i-a*, a pattern not supported by any other forms in the cognate set. Regarding the Mansi word, there is no basis for positing an etymological connection between PMs \*(j)ēp ‘steam, vapor’ and PMs \*ätə ‘smell’; the two words are phonologically unrelated, and no known sound changes or derivational processes could bridge the gap between them.

\*je- would thus be reflected as PMs \*ē- and PKh \*ā-/ \*ē-. Although I had previously (Aikio 2015: 8–10) supported Pystynen’s suggestion, it presents a problem: if PU \*e is posited as the original first-syllable vowel, the disharmonic vowel combination in PFi \*ilma ‘air, weather’ remains unexplained. The vowel \*e was not neutral in Proto-Uralic vowel harmony, and no vowel combination \*e–a can be reconstructed. Consequently, Pystynen (2015) posits the front-harmonic protoform \*jelmä and an irregular change \*ilmä > \*ilma in Proto-Finnic. This contrasts with Fi *silmä* ‘eye’ (< PFi \*silmä < PU \*ćilmä), which shows no such vowel change in its second syllable.

Zhivlov (2023: 168–169) reconstructs PU \*jilma ‘sky’ and \*jikin ‘gums’, modifying both Pystynen’s proposal and his own earlier reconstruction \*ikin (Zhivlov 2016: 297, 299), which could not explain the vowel development in Ob-Ugric. This modification likely addresses the issue, though Zhivlov does not explicitly mention it. Reconstructing the sequence \*ji- is a more plausible alternative, as it allows for the regular inheritance of the disharmonic vowel combination in PFi \*ilma from Proto-Uralic. To explain the Ob-Ugric reflexes, Zhivlov (2023: 147) makes two assumptions: 1) the word-initial palatal glide prevented the default development of PU \*i(–a) into a back vowel, and 2) the Ob-Ugric reflex of PU \*ji- differs from the default reflex of PU \*i. The second assumption is unproblematic, as it is already supported by two parallels, the cognates of Fi *ien* and *ihme* discussed above. We will address the first assumption below.

#### 4. A phonological parallel: Mari \*jüt ‘night’ < PU \*jita

At this stage, we can examine the etymology of PMari \*jüt ‘night’, which offers a compelling phonological parallel to the newly proposed Uralic etymology for Mari \*jümə ‘sky, god’. UEW (99) suggests a cognate relationship between the Mari forms and Ob-Ugric and Samoyed items:

Mari: E *jüt*, V *jüt*, Nw *jöt*, W *jät* ‘night’; E *jüðəm*, V *jüðj̄m*, *jüðüm*, Nw *jöðöm*, W *jəðəm* ‘at night’ (< PMari \*jüt : \*jüdə-)

Khanty: Sur Irt *ät*, Ni Kaz *at*, O *ät* ‘night’ (< PKh \*āt); V Vy Sur Irt *itən*, Ni Kaz *jetən* ‘evening; in the evening’ (< PKh \*ētən)

Mansi: T *jīt*, LK UK *īť*, W *ēť*, *īť*, N *ēt*, *ēťi* ‘evening, night’ (< PMs \*ēt ~ \*ēť)

Samoyed: SlkTa *ūtj̄*, Ty *ūdä* (< PSlk \*ūtə), Kamas *nūdī*, Mator *nūdV*, *nūdV* ‘evening’ (< PSam ? \*üətV ~ \*ñüətV)

The Mari noun exhibits irregular dialectal variation between front-vocalic and back-vocalic forms. The forms found in Hill Mari, as well as in the Northwest and Volga dialects, are back-vocalic, supporting the reconstruction of PMari \*jüt : \*jüdə-. This appears to be the most archaic form, with the front-vowel reflexes observed in most Meadow and Eastern Mari varieties resulting from an irregular shift of \*u > ü, likely influenced by the preceding *j*-. This irregular fronting is attested in a few other Mari words, too, such as:

MariE *jük*, Nw W *juk* ‘sound, voice’ (< PMari \*juk)

MariE *jür*, V Nw W *jur* ‘rain’ (< PMari \*jur)

MariE *jülem*, V *jülem*, Nw *jölem*, W *jâlem* ‘burn’ (< PMari \*jül-e-)

As evident, this irregular change affects reflexes of both PMari \*ü and \*u, which merged as \*u in most Meadow and Eastern Mari varieties.

The UEW (99) reconstructs the Proto-Uralic form as \*jitV/\*jütV. However, this etymology cannot be accepted in the form presented in the UEW, because the dictionary overlooks the necessity of reconstructing a back-vocalic form within Mari. Bereczki (2013 s.v. *jüt*) highlights this issue, ultimately rejecting the Uralic etymology for this reason. Nevertheless, if we reconstruct a disharmonic stem \*jita for Proto-Uralic, the Proto-Mari back vowel \*ü can be understood as a regular secondary development. This interpretation appears correct, as the sound correspondence PMari \*jü- ~ PKh \*ä-/\*ē- ~ PMs \*ē- directly parallels the reflexes of PU \*jilma ‘sky’.

Thus, Proto-Mari \*jüt ‘night’ turns out to have a regular Uralic etymology with cognates in the Ob-Ugric languages.<sup>9</sup> The original meaning

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9. Another etymological possibility should be acknowledged for completeness: it has been suggested that PMari \*jüt : \*jüdə- may correspond to Chuvash *šēr* ‘night’ (? < West Old Turkic \*züð or \*züür). Adamović (1985: 74–75) considers the latter word a borrowing from Mari, whereas Agyagási (1991: 439–445) rejects this due to phonological and chronological issues, and instead suggests borrowing from Samoyed to Turkic. Both proposals are highly problematic, but the question remains whether the Mari word could be of Turkic origin. Even this theory is dubious due to the original back vowel \*ü in Mari. The initial consonant mismatch presents further challenges, although another word discussed by Adamović (1985) and Agyagási (1991) offers a potential parallel: MariE *jeŋ*, W *jäng* ‘person, soul’ < PMari \*jeŋ ? < West Old Turkic \*zεŋə (> Chuvash *šjn* ‘person’). Despite this, the Uralic etymology of PMari \*jüt is more convincing, and the similarity to West Old Turkic \*züür/\*züð, the putative ancestral form of Chuvash *šēr*, is probably coincidental.

of Proto-Uralic \*jita is best reconstructed as ‘evening’ rather than ‘night’, as the latter concept was expressed by a different Proto-Uralic word, variably reconstructed as \*üji or \*eji (cf. Sammallahti 1988: 542; UEW: 72). This noun, although lost in Mari, survives in all other Uralic branches except Samoyed, cf. SaaN *idja*, Fi *yö*, MdE *ve*, Komi *voj*, KhSur *jěj*, MsUK *ja*, and archaic Hu *éj* ‘night’.

However, the proposed Samoyed cognates do not align with the Proto-Uralic reconstruction \*jita and must therefore be excluded from this cognate set. These forms point to Proto-Samoyed \*ü, and the long vowel in Selkup and Mator indicates an original complex sound sequence rather than a simple vowel, likely PSam \*-üä-. While it is theoretically possible for PSlk \*ü to reflect Proto-Samoyed sequences such as \*-üj-, \*-uj-, \*-oj-, \*-äj-, or \*-äj-, this interpretation is ruled out because PSam \*-jt- consistently yields *-st-* in Mator (Helimski 1997: 89). Furthermore, the alternation between vocalic initial forms in Selkup and *ń-* in Kamas and Mator is anomalous.

## 5. Further parallels for the vowel development

The etymologies of PMari \*jümə ‘sky; god’ and \*jüt ‘night’ suggest that PMari \*ü regularly reflects PU \*i in disharmonic stems, i.e. stems containing the vowel combination \*i–a. I have previously proposed two etymologies that display the same development (Aikio 2014: 7):

PU \*kička- ‘tear’ > PMari \*küšk-ed-ä- (> MariE *kuškeđam*, W *käškeđäm* ‘tear off, tear in two’). The Mari verb is cognate with SaaN *gaikut* ‘tear, rip; pull hard, tug’, Fi *kiskoa* ‘pull hard, tug’, Komi *koś-*, (Upper Sysola) *koś-*, Udm *keśj-* ‘tear, rip, peel’.<sup>10</sup> While Sammallahti (1988: 552) accepts the Permic cognates, SSA (s.v. *kiskoa*) considers them uncertain and

10. The inclusion of Khanty V Vy *kös-*, Sur *kös-* ‘tear, tear down, break up’ (< PKh \*käs-) in this etymology also appears plausible (cf. SSA s.v. *kiskoa*; UEW: 515). Although the expected vowel development in disharmonic stems is PU \*i > PKh \*a (see §3), this verb exhibits the default shift PU \*i > PKh \*ä that occurs in other stem types. In the case of PU \*kička-, the presence of the following alveopalatal affricate may have inhibited vowel backing. Another potential cognate is Hungarian *has-* in *hasad* ‘burst, crack, tear, rip (INTR)’ and *hasít* ‘cleave, split, rift, rip, tear (TR)’. The development PU \*i > Hungarian *a* in disharmonic stems finds a plausible parallel in *harag* ‘anger, wrath, rage’ < PU \*kira- (see §3). However, alternative etymologies have also been proposed for these Hungarian verbs (cf. UEW: 854; Metsäranta 2017: 220).

the UEW (162) rejects them. The vowel correspondence Komi *o*, (Upper Sysola)  $\varrho \sim$  Udm *e* is unusual and not explained by any current theory of Proto-Permic vocalism. However, this correspondence likely reflects an as-yet unexplained regular sound change, as the same pattern occurs in Komi *moń*, (Upper Sysola) *mõń* ‘daughter-in-law, sister-in-law’  $\sim$  Udm *ıcı-meń* ‘sister-in-law’ (< PU \*mińä ‘daughter-in-law’; UEW: 276). The phonological environments in both cases are strikingly similar: each word features the vowel combination \*i-A and an alveolo-palatal consonant following the first-syllable vowel.<sup>11</sup>

PU \*wiša ‘green’ > PMari \*ũž-ar (> MariE *užar*, W *žžar*  $\sim$  *žar* ‘green’). The Mari word is cognate with Fi *vihanta* ‘lush, green (of plants)’, *viherä* (obsolete)  $\sim$  *vihreä* ‘green’, MdE *ožo* ‘yellow, pale’, Komi *vež* ‘green, yellow’, Udm *vož* ‘green’ (UEW: 823), and KhSur *wäštä* ‘green; unripe’ (on the Khanty cognate, see Holopainen & Aikio 2023).

A further possible example can be added: MariE *užedam* ‘hate’. Its Proto-Mari form could be reconstructed as \*ũžed-a-, although the verb is not attested in dialects that preserve the distinction between PMari \*ž and \*z or between \*u and \*ũ, and consequently, alternative reconstructions cannot be ruled out. This verb appears marginal, as it is recorded in Üpämarij’s (1928) dictionary and in the ten-volume MYM but absent from the dialectological dictionaries TschWb and MNySz. Despite its very limited attestation, the verb may be inherited,<sup>12</sup> as it corresponds regularly to Fi *vihata* ‘hate’ (< PFi \*vihata- < \*wiša-ta-), a verb derived from the noun \*wiša (> Fi *viha* ‘hatred, wrath; (dial.) venom’, Komi *vež* ‘envy, anger, malice’, Udm *vož* ‘hatred, anger’). The phonological development \*wiš(a-) > MariE *už-* in *užedam* would mirror that seen in the homonymous stem \*wiša- ‘green’ > MariE *užar*.

The Uralic etymology of *užedam* remains uncertain, however, despite its regularity. Mari usually expresses the meaning ‘hate’ by analytical

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11. A third word of Uralic origin that exhibits the same vowel correspondence is Komi *toj*, (Upper Sysola) *tõj*  $\sim$  Udmurt *tej* ‘louse’. In this case, however, the Proto-Uralic origin of the correspondence is more complex and less straightforward. The word is typically reconstructed as \*täji (Sammallahti 1988: 550; UEW: 515), with reflexes such as PFi \*täi (> Fi, Ol, Veps, Vote, Est *täi*, Liv *tei*), PMs \*täkmə (> T *täxəm*, LK *tõäxəm*, UK *töäxəm*, W *taxəm*, N *täkəm*), and Hu *tetü* ‘louse’ clearly pointing to PU \*ä.
  12. Curiously, Ivanov & Moisio (1998: 133) mention the Mari verb in a list of neologisms formed through derivation in the 1990s, but they do not explain the reasoning behind this.

constructions containing the verb *užam* ‘see’ and a negator, e.g. MariE *už-ən kerta-š og-al* [see-CVB be.able.to-INF NEG.3SG-be.CNG] ‘to hate’ (“be unable to see”) and *už-m-em ok šu* [see-PTCP.PASS-1SG NEG.3SG come.CNG] ‘I hate him/her’ (“I do not want to see him/her”).<sup>13</sup> This looks like a contact-induced pattern, as Chuvash, too, expresses the meaning ‘hate’ in the same way: *kur* ‘see, watch’ : *kur-aj-ma-* [see.POT.NEG] ‘hate’ (“be unable to see”). If the sparsely attested MariE *užedam* ‘hate’ indeed goes back to PU \*wiša-ta-, its striking phonological similarity to *už-* ‘see’ in the aforementioned constructions would be a strange coincidence. On the other hand, *užedam* contains no morpheme expressing negation, which makes the semantic connection to *už-* ‘see’ very difficult to establish.

Regarding PU \*wiša ‘hatred; venom’, a related point concerns its ultimate origin and possible connection with the homonymous stem \*wiša ‘green’. The former is widely regarded as an Indo-Iranian loanword. Although the meaning ‘venom’ is only attested in Finnic, it must reflect an archaic sense, as the noun clearly derives from Proto-Indo-Iranian \*wiša- (> Sanskrit *viśám*, Avestan *vīša-* ‘venom’). The Indo-Iranian word is further cognate with Ancient Greek *ῥόξ* ‘poison’, Latin *vīrus* ‘venom, poison’, Old Irish *fí* ‘poison’, and Tocharian A *wās* ‘venom, poison’. The meaning ‘hatred’ has often been interpreted as a secondary development of ‘venom’. However, Parpola (1999: 201–202) proposes that only Finnic \*viha in the sense of ‘venom’ derives from Indo-Iranian \*wiša-, while \*viha meaning ‘hatred’ – along with the corresponding Permic nouns – represents a separate borrowing from Proto-Indo-Iranian \*dviš- (cf. Sanskrit *dvīṣ-* : ACC *dvīṣam* ‘hatred; enemy’). According to this view, there may originally have been three homonymous stems of the form \*wiša.

While this interpretation is plausible, the semantic progression from ‘venom’ to ‘envy’, ‘anger’, and ultimately ‘hatred’ is straightforward and has well-documented parallels in other languages. Compare Hungarian *méreg* ‘venom, poison; anger, wrath’, Bulgarian *jad* ‘poison; anger’, Serbo-Croatian *ijed, jêd* ‘gall; poison; anger’, Czech *jed* ‘poison; (dial.) malice’, alongside Russian *яд* and Old Church Slavonic *jadъ* ‘poison’ (< Proto-Slavic \*ǣdъ; Derksen 2008: 150). Holopainen (2019: 309–310) observes that it may ultimately be impossible to determine which of the two etymologies

13. Note that Mari does not have a verb meaning ‘want to’. In this sense, a construction containing a passive participle suffixed for person and the verb *šu* ‘come, arrive’ is used instead (Saarinen 2022: 457).

is correct. Regardless, even if \*wiša ‘hatred’ and \*wiša ‘venom’ originated as two distinct Indo-Iranian loanwords, their phonological identity would likely have led to folk-etymological conflation. This is reflected in the synchronic data from Finnic languages, where both meanings (‘hatred’ and ‘venom’) coexist.

As for the color adjective \*wiša ‘green’, it is often argued that this is derived from the noun \*wiša ‘hatred; venom’. However, this semantic connection is far from self-evident. SSA (s.v. *vihanta*, *vihreä*) simply cites this etymology without offering any explanation or argumentation for the proposed semantic development. By contrast, UEW (823–824) suggests a shift from ‘venom’ to ‘venom-colored’ and then to ‘green’, though this trajectory remains unconvincing in the absence of clear parallels. Given the obscurity of the traditional etymology, a more plausible comparison may be found in Latin *vireō* ‘be green’ and its derivative *viridis* ‘green’. The Latin word may be related to Lithuanian *veĩsti* ‘breed, rear; bear fruit’, *vĩsti* ‘multiply, breed’, *vaĩsius* ‘fruit’, and Old Norse *vísir* ‘sprout’, though this etymology is not firmly established (de Vaan 2008 s.v. *vireō*). If correct, these words might trace back to Proto-Indo-European \*wis-. One could hypothesize that PU \*wiša ‘green’ reflects a loan from an unattested Indo-Iranian form that had undergone the RUKI rule (\*wis- > \*wiš-). However, this hypothesis remains speculative in the absence of further evidence.

## 6. Comparing the two etymologies

Now that two competing etymologies have been presented for Mari \*jũmə ‘sky; god’, it is important to assess which is more convincing. The newly proposed comparison between Mari \*jũmə and PU \*jilma ‘sky’ stands on firm phonological ground. As demonstrated earlier, the reflex of PU \*i as Proto-Mari \*ũ in disharmonic stems is supported by at least five etymologies. Furthermore, the initial \*j- in PMari \*jũmə aligns with the revised Proto-Uralic reconstruction \*jilma, strengthening the argument. The Mari word \*jüt ‘night’ (< PU \*jita) also serves as a direct parallel for the unusual vowel correspondence found between Mari and Ob-Ugric, a pattern observable only in reflexes of PU stems of the type \*ji(C)Ca. Additionally, the loss of \*l in the context \*/ũ\_m/ in Proto-Mari is confirmed by two other independent examples, reinforcing its regularity.

The two possibilities are that PMari \*jũmə either reflects PU \*jilma ‘sky’ or derives from a separate noun \*juma, which is assumed to be the source

of Proto-Finnic \*jumala ‘god’. While both etymologies fit the phonological and semantic criteria, the comparison with \*jilma appears more convincing for two reasons. First, the proposed connection between PMari \*jümə and PFi \*jumala introduces morphological complications, as it necessitates the presence of an obscure denominal suffix \*-IA in Finnic, for which no clear parallels exist. This contrasts with the more straightforward development from PU \*jilma, which raises no morphological difficulties.

The second issue concerns the principle of economy in reconstruction. PU \*jilma ‘sky’ must be reconstructed independently to account for cognates in other Uralic languages, regardless of the etymology of the Mari word. In contrast, the existence of \*juma as a separate noun in Proto-Uralic depends entirely on the hypothesis that PMari \*jümə and PFi \*jumala are related. If PMari \*jümə can be derived directly from \*jilma, there is no need to assume that \*juma ever existed as an independent etymon. This eliminates the necessity for positing an otherwise unattested Proto-Uralic word and simplifies the overall reconstruction.

The etymology argued for here therefore offers a more economical and plausible explanation for the origin of Mari \*jümə. The resemblance between Mari \*jümə and Finnic \*jumala can be regarded as a case of accidental similarity, or a “chance correspondence”, a phenomenon that I have addressed in detail elsewhere (Aikio 2024).

With this analysis, the question of the origin of PFi \*jumala ‘god’ remains open but can now be reconsidered from a different angle, as there is no longer a need to interpret the part \*-la as a derivational suffix. A long-standing hypothesis, first proposed by Paasonen (1907) and later supported by Koivulehto (1999: 228), suggests that \*jumala was borrowed from Proto-Indo-Iranian \*djumán : \*djumánt- (> Sanskrit *dyumán* : *dyumánt*- ‘heavenly, bright, glorious’) or \*djumná- (> Sanskrit *dyumná*- ‘splendor, glory’). This etymology has recently been endorsed by Holopainen (2019: 107–108). Although the substitution of \*dju- with \*ju- in Uralic lacks direct parallels, the possibility cannot be dismissed outright. However, the primary challenge lies in accounting for the final \*-la in the Finnic form.

The earlier reconstruction \*juma suggested that the stem ending \*-n : \*-nt- was lost during the borrowing process, but an alternative hypothesis could be that PFi \*jumala arose through dissimilation from an earlier form \*jumana. While speculative, this scenario offers a potential explanation for the ending \*-la without requiring additional morphological

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assumptions. In any case, the superficial similarity between PFi \*jumala and PMari \*jümə remains insufficient to justify positing a common origin. Although the precise origin of PFi \*jumala ‘god’ remains uncertain, the available evidence strongly suggests that its resemblance to PMari \*jümə is coincidental rather than indicative of a shared etymological source.

### Abbreviations

Est	Estonian	NenT	Tundra Nenets
Fi	Finnish	Ngan	Nganasan
Hu	Hungarian	Ol	Olonetsian
Kh	Khanty	PFi	Proto-Finnic
	Irt Irtysh	PKh	Proto-Khanty
	Kaz Kazym	PMari	Proto-Mari
	Ni Nizyam	PMd	Proto-Mordvin
	O Obdorsk	PMs	Proto-Mansi
	Sur Surgut	PPerm	Proto-Permian
	V Vakh	PSaa	Proto-Saami
	Vy Vasyugan	PSam	Proto-Samoyed
KomiY	Yazva Komi	PSlk	Proto-Selkup
Liv	Livonian	PU	Proto-Uralic
Mari	E Eastern (and Meadow)	Saa	Saami
	M Malmyzh	A	Aanaar (Inari)
	Nw Northwestern	K	Kildin
	U Upsha	L	Lule
	V Volga	N	Northern
	W Western (Hill)	P	Pite
Md	E Erzya Mordvin	S	Southern
	M Moksha Mordvin	Sk	Skolt
Ms	Mansi	T	Ter
	LK Lower Konda	U	Ume
	N Northern	Slk	Selkup
	T Tavda	Ta	Taz
	UK Upper Konda	Ty	Tym
	W Western	Udm	Udmurt
1	first person	PASS	passive
3	third person	PAST	past tense
ACC	accusative	PL	plural
CNG	connegative	POT	potential
CVB	general converb	PTCP	participle
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
INTR	intransitive	TR	transitive
NEG	negation element		

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