

The assessment of the morphological features of the first Gospel in the Northwestern dialect of the Mari language

Normanskaja Ju.V. 

Doctor of Philology, Professor, Principal Researcher, Head of the Laboratory "Linguistic Platforms" of Ivannikov's Institute for System Programming RAS, Institute of Linguistic RAS Moscow, Russia.

*Corresponding Author Normanskaja Ju.V.

Doctor of Philology, Professor,
Principal Researcher, Head of
the Laboratory "Linguistic
Platforms" of Ivannikov's
Institute for System
Programming RAS, Institute of
Linguistic RAS Moscow,
Russia.

Article History

Received: 01.10.2024
Accepted: 25.10.2024
Published: 08.11.2024

Summary: The classification of the Northwestern dialect of the Mari language, spoken by communities in the Kirov and Nizhny Novgorod regions of the Russian Federation, as well as in the Kilemarsky and Medvedevsky districts of the Republic of Mari El, has long been a subject of academic debate. In this article we present the comparison of the first Gospel written in the Mari language with the Meadow and Hill Mari languages from a morphological perspective. As result we have one isogloss without doublets (PL) that aligns the Gospel with Meadow Mari, and two isoglosses with doublets (IMP.2PL, NEG.PRET), the quantity of which indicates a predominance of Meadow features. Therefore, the analysis of morphological characteristics confirms the data from the graphs and glottochronology, demonstrating that the Northwestern dialect was originally closer to Meadow Mari. However, over time, it acquired features of Hill Mari, thus belonging to the "western" Mari dialects according to G. Bereczki's terminology. This aligns completely with the results obtained from the analysis of the graphs of the first books. Interestingly, the changes in morphology occurred somewhat later. While the [Gospel 1821] already practically coincided with Hill Mari in terms of graphic representation, it was still closer to Meadow Mari in terms of morphology.

Keywords: Mari dialect, morphology, classification.

Cite this article:

Normanskaja Ju.V., (2024). The assessment of the morphological features of the first Gospel in the Northwestern dialect of the Mari language. *ISAR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(11), 12-19.

Introduction

The classification of the Northwestern dialect of the Mari language, spoken by communities in the Kirov and Nizhny Novgorod regions of the Russian Federation, as well as in the Kilemarsky and Medvedevsky districts of the Republic of Mari El, has long been a subject of academic debate. There are three main viewpoints:

1. "The Northwestern Mari language possesses features of both the Hill Mari and the Meadow-Eastern Mari languages" [Dialects of the Mari Language 2009: 337]. In a monograph dedicated to the description of the Northwestern dialect [Ivanov, Tuzharov 1970: 13], it is also stated that "the Northwestern dialect represents a dialectal variant of the Mari language, containing a number of characteristics typical of both the Meadow and Hill dialects." In a later monograph [Ivanov 1981: 89-97], a classification of Mari dialects is proposed, dividing them into two groups: Meadow and Eastern dialects vs. Hill and Northwestern dialects. The Northwestern dialect is seen as a "bridge" between the Meadow and Hill Mari dialects, in terms of phonetics and morphology, but

is closest to the Hill Yoshkar-Ola dialect. Ivanov identifies key dialect-differentiating features of the Northwestern dialect, such as pronunciation of *y* instead of *ɥ*, the presence of labial and palatal harmony, a plural affix *-vlak*, Proto-Mari **o > a*, the presence of the phoneme *ä* (< Proto-Mari *a*), and the reduced vowel *ɛ̃* [Ivanov 1981: 89].

2. G. Bereczki also believes that the Northwestern dialect belongs to the Hill Mari language, as detailed in [Bereczki 1994: 20-21].

3. However there is an alternative viewpoint that suggests that the Northwestern dialect should be classified as a part of the Meadow Mari literary norm. For example, "At the same time, four main dialects are distinguished in the Mari language: Meadow, Hill, Eastern, and Northwestern, from which two literary norms have developed — the Meadow and Hill Mari norms [Vasilyev, Savatkova, Uchaev 1991]. The Meadow literary norm includes Eastern, Meadow, and Northwestern Mari speakers, while the Hill literary norm applies to Hill Mari speakers" [Yuzukayn 2023].

Historically, the third viewpoint, had the fewest proponents among scholars studying contemporary dialects. The works [Normanskaja

2024a, b] delve into one of the earliest books written in the Northwestern dialect, a manuscript of the Mari Gospel of Matthew. This manuscript was prepared by Father Sergey Bobrovsky of the Vyatka Diocese and was discovered in the archives of the St. Petersburg Institute of Linguistics (SPb RAN) in the A.J.Sjögren collection. Sergey Fyodorovich Bobrovsky (1787–1831) was born in the Yaran district of the Kirov region. From 1795, he served as a sexton at a Church in the village of Pizhenskoye in the Yaran district of Vyatka province. In 1797, he was ordained as a priest of the same church.

The glossed manuscript of the Gospel has been uploaded to the Lingvo Doc platform by M.A. Klyucheva and is available at: <http://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/2110/5/perspective/2110/8/view>. The glossed corpus has been transformed into a concordance: <http://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/3527/5/perspective/3527/6/view>, which we have further etymologized and connected lexically with other Mari and Finno-Ugric dialects.

In the article [Normanskaja 2024a], through graphical analysis of the earliest texts in the Mari languages, we concluded that dialect-differentiating features in the early 19th century differed significantly from those found today. This is because many transitions characteristic of the modern Hill Mari language had not yet been described by in the grammar [Albinsky 1837]. The Meadow Mari dialect was analyzed by us using the book "Principles of Christian Doctrine..." (published in Kazan in 1841), which has now been integrated into Elan and glossed by M.A. Klyuchevaya. A concordance of this text is publicly accessible on LingvoDoc at: <http://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/418/3/perspective/418/4/view>.

As noted in the article by [Klyucheva 2021], which focuses on the analysis of verbal morphology in that text: "The verbal morphology in this document suggests dialectal proximity with the Volga and Yoshkar-Ola dialects, however morphology combined with phonetics (the correspondence of affricates) indicates proximity only with the Volga dialect (only *u* in the Yoshkar-Ola dialect ~ only *u* in the Volga dialect ~ only *u* in the document)."

Below, we briefly outline the transitions that distinguish books in Meadow and Hill Mari, written in the early 19th century and then characterize the Vyatka Gospel based on these features.

1) **Proto-Mari *č > Meadow u, Hill u**, The Gospel coincides with Hill Mari:

[Gospel 1821] <i>верце</i> 'for' — [Principles 1841] <i>вѣречень</i> — [Albinsky 1837] <i>вѣрець</i> ;
[Gospel 1821] <i>зець, гаць</i> 'from' — [Principles 1841] <i>-гычь</i> — [Albinsky 1837] <i>гыць</i> ;
[Gospel 1821] <i>цылä</i> '—' — [Principles 1841] <i>чилä</i> — [Albinsky 1837] <i>чилядэокъ</i> 'without anything' < Proto-Mari *čila 'all, whole'.

2) **Proto-Mari *ñč, *ñž, *ñʒ > Meadow nž, Hill nž**, The Gospel again coincides with Hill Mari:

[Gospel 1821] <i>анзална / анзълна / анзолна / анзълна</i> 'first, front' — [Albinsky 1837] <i>анзаць</i> 'in the front' — [Principles 1841] <i>онъжсокъ</i> < Proto-Mari *oñč;
[Gospel 1821] <i>шинзашъ</i> 'to sit' — [Principles 1841] <i>шиндžә</i> '(he/she) is sitting' — [Albinsky 1837] <i>шинзәмъ</i> '(I) am sitting' < Proto-Mari *šinižә-;

[Gospel 1821] *шинзä / шинзä* 'eye' — [Albinsky 1837] *шинзä* — [Principles 1841] *шиндзä-шäмычъ* 'eye' < Proto-Mari *šinižä 'eye'.

In the Gospel, unlike in the dictionary, we identified only one reflex of Proto-Mari *ñč, *ñž, *ñʒ, which aligns it with the Hill Mari language. This contrasts with A. Albinsky's grammar and the Meadow Mari monument "Principles of Christian Doctrine" [1841], where a double reflex is present.

3) **The Proto-Mari *o > Meadow Mari o, Hill Mari a**. This feature also brings the Gospel closer to Hill Mari.

[Gospel 1821] *яль, ял, ял* 'leg' — [Principles 1841] *йо^ль* — [Albinsky 1837] *яль* < Proto-Mari *jol;

[Gospel 1821] *кандашъ* 'to bring' — [Principles 1841] *кандэве* '(they) brought' — [Albinsky 1837] *кандэмъ* '(I) am bringing' < Proto-Mari *kondә-.

4) **The Proto-Mari *e > Meadow Mari e, Hill Mari я**. In the Gospel, *e* remains unchanged, which, in contrast, differentiates it from Hill Mari according to A. Albinsky's grammar and aligns it with Meadow Mari, cf.

[Gospel 1821] *кёнежъ* 'summer' — [Albinsky 1837] *кяньгыжамъ* 'during the summer' < Proto-Mari *keñž;

[Gospel 1821] *лекташъ* 'to walk out' — [Principles 1841] *лекташъ* — [Albinsky 1837] *лектәмъ* < Proto-Mari *lekt-.

5) Similar to A. Albinsky's Hill Mari grammar, the Gospel exhibits paradigmatic, **variable stress**, where the position of stress changes across paradigms. This can be observed in the online dictionary.

Out of the five examined features, four align the Gospel with the Hill Mari language of the first half of the 19th century, while one feature matches the "Principles" [1841], written in Meadow Mari. Based solely on this result, one could agree with the proponents of the first and second viewpoints mentioned earlier, who suggest that the Northwestern Mari dialect is closer to Hill Mari and occupies an intermediate position between the Hill and Meadow Mari dialects.

However, as illustrated in the article [Normanskaja 2024a], in the "Brief Cheremis Dictionary with Russian Translation," compiled by Vasily Kreknin and Ioann Platonov in 1785, based on the Yaran subdialect of the Northwestern dialect, the correlation of these features was different. Only one feature aligned with Hill Mari, while features 2–4 aligned with Meadow Mari. Notably, there is no information available regarding the fifth feature (the presence of variable paradigmatic stress). Consequently, we can observe how the balance of features characteristic of Hill and Meadow Mari shifted in the dialect over 36 years. As per A. Albinsky's grammar, the dialect acquired an intermediate nature and became closer to Hill Mari.

As a result of the comparative analysis of basic lexical lists from:

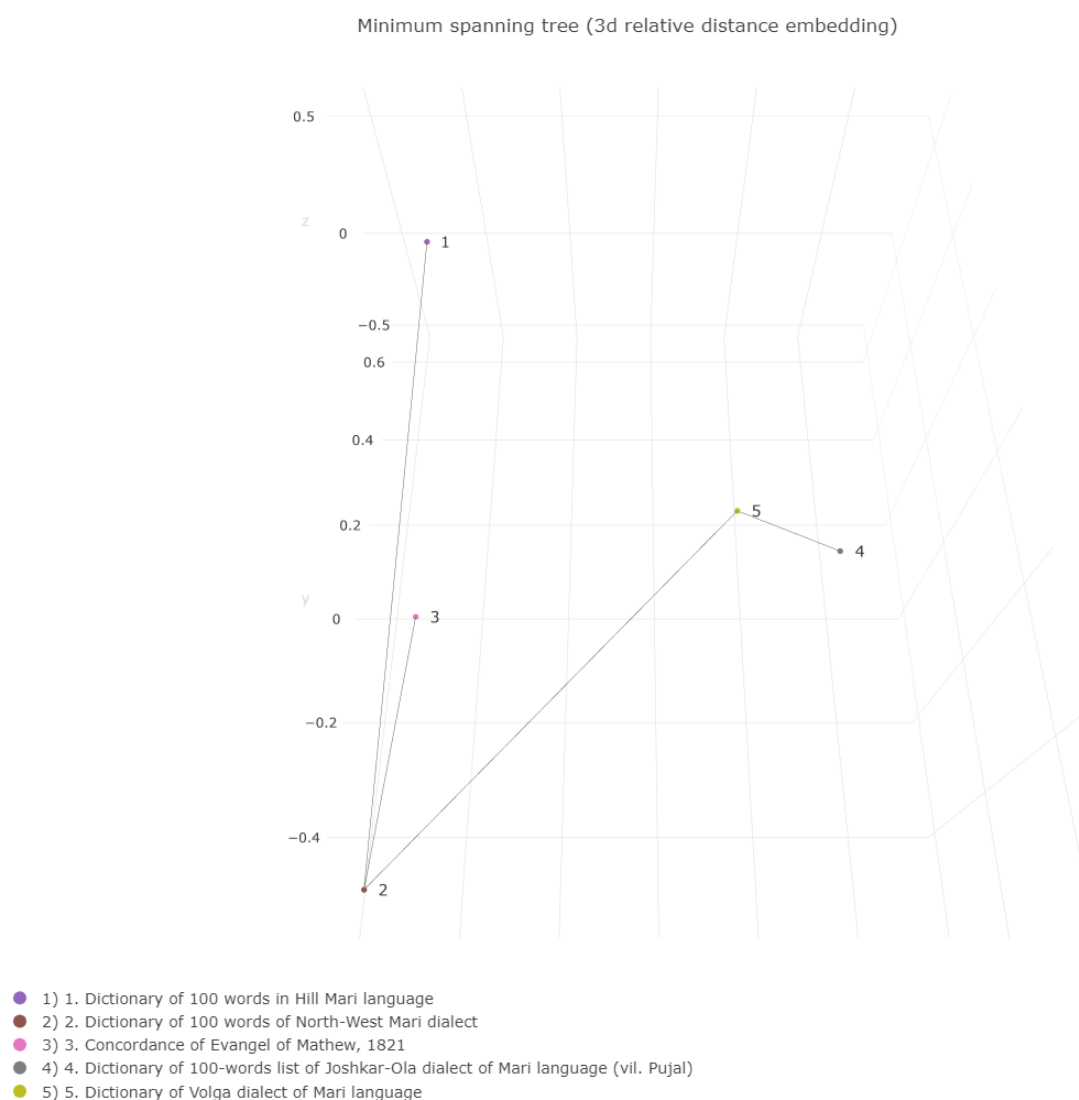
- 1) The Northwestern dialect of the 20th century, presented in the monograph [Ivanov, Tuzharov 1970],
- 2) The concordance of the Gospel translated into the Vyatka dialect by Father S. Bobrovsky in 1821,
- 3) The literary Meadow Mari language, recorded from language native speakers using the questionnaire from [Kassian et al. 2010],

4) The literary Hill Mari language, recorded from language native speakers using the questionnaire from [Kassian et al. 2010],

5) The Yoshkar-Ola dialect (village of Pujal), recorded from language native speakers using the questionnaire from [Kassian et al. 2010] the following results were obtained: It was established

that the first Gospel in the Vyatka dialect has the highest extent of similarity with the literary Mari language — 98%, and with the Northwestern dialect according to [Ivanov, Tuzharov 1970] — 96%. These results are presented on a graph that was created using the "Glottochronological Language Analysis" tool applied to the five Mari basic vocabulary lists (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Results of the glottochronological analysis of Mari languages and dialects on LingvoDoc



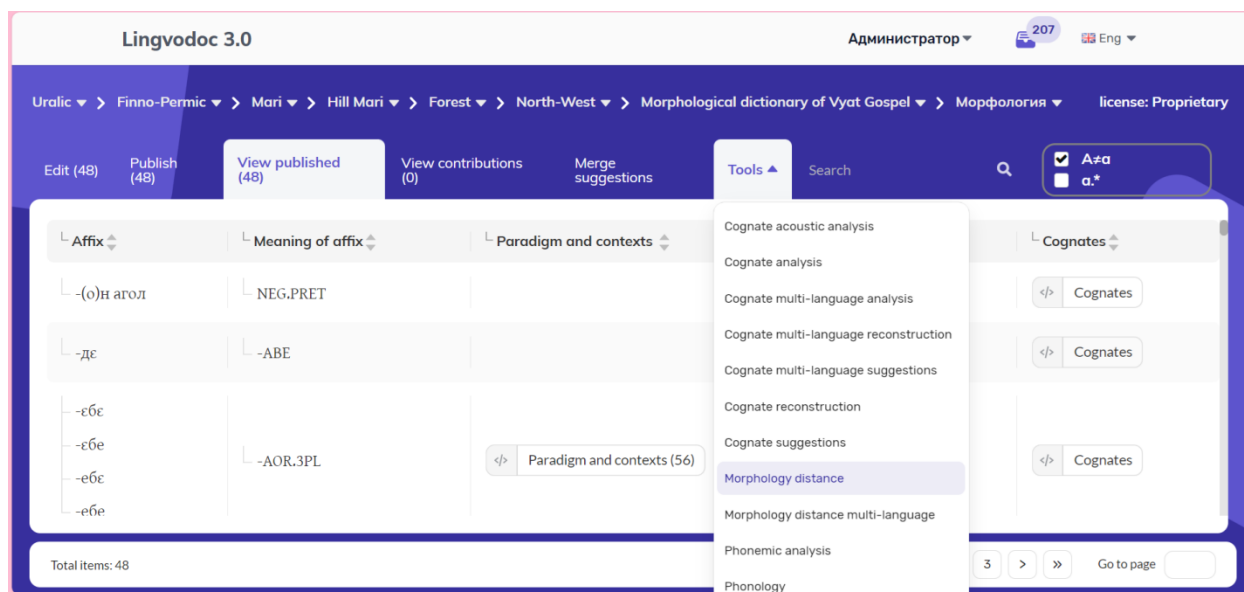
Materials and Methods

In this work we present the comparison of the first Gospel written in the Mari language with the Meadow and Hill Mari languages from a morphological perspective.

Currently, on LingvoDoc there is a tool for measuring the "Degree of Morphological Similarity between Languages/Dialects," which allows for a comparison of morphological similarities across different languages and dialects. The comparison occurs as follows: in the first stage, morphological dictionaries are created. These can be generated from glossed texts, such as the morphological dictionary of the Gospel <https://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/7344/2/perspective/7344/3/view>, or based on grammars, such as the morphological dictionaries of the Meadow Mari language created by E.V. Kashkin <https://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/9754/1/perspective/9754/2/view> and the Hill Mari language <https://lingvodoc.ispras.ru/dictionary/9755/1/perspective/9755/2/view>.

Next, these morphological dictionaries were linked to one another through etymological connections. These connections were created using software tools available on LingvoDoc, such as the "Cognate Search in Different Languages," and were subsequently checked and supplemented manually.

Fig. 2. Illustration of the interface for selection in the morphological dictionaries of the Cognate Search program.

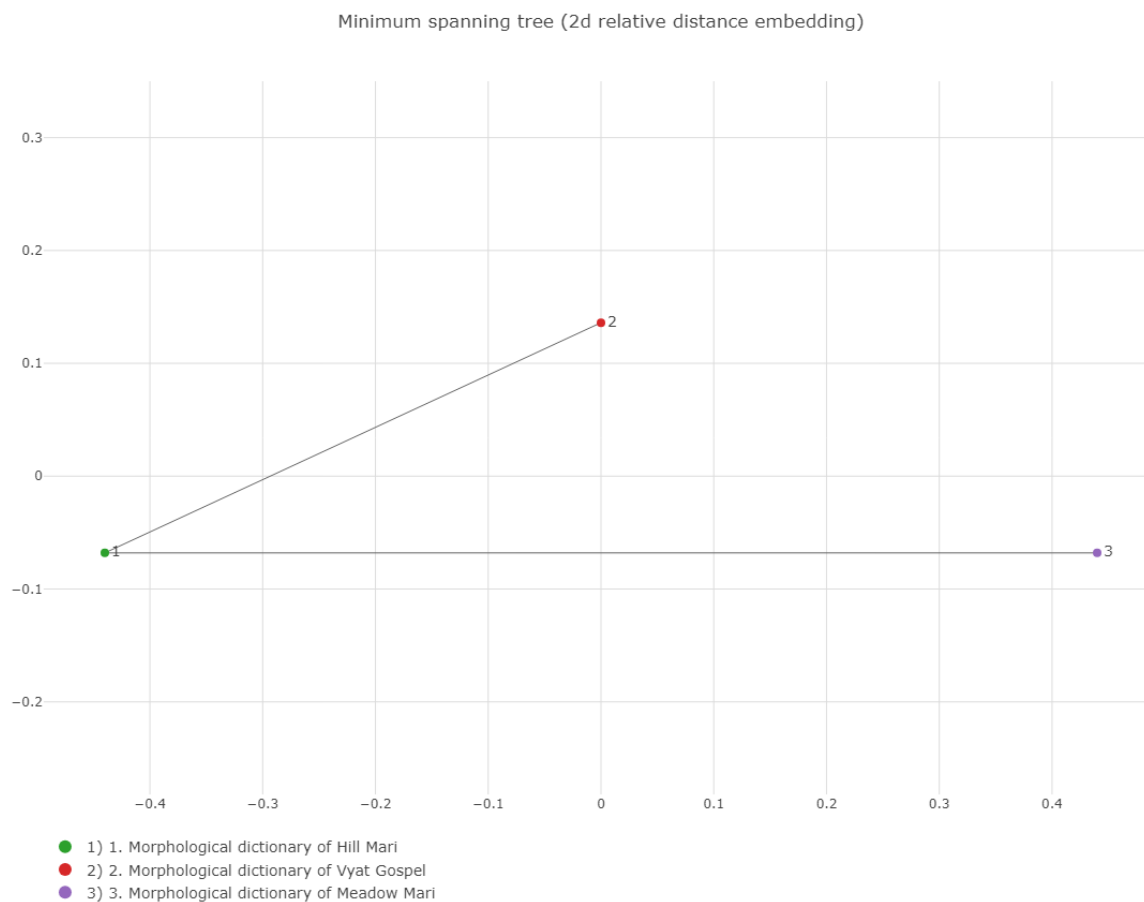


All morphemes in the Vyatka Gospel were linked through etymological connections to cognates in the Meadow and Hill Mari languages.

Results and findings

As a result of the analysis of the three aforementioned morphological dictionaries using the "Degree of Morphological Similarity between Languages/Dialects" program, the following graph was created in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. Degree of similarity between the morphological dictionaries of the Meadow Mari, Hill Mari, and the Vyatka Gospel of 1821



The degree of similarity among the three idioms in percentage terms is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage of related morphemes in the morphological dictionaries of the Northwestern, Meadow, and Hill Mari languages

	1. Morphological dictionary of the Hill Mari language	2. Morphological dictionary of the Vyatka Gospel	3. Morphological dictionary of the Meadow Mari language
1	n/a	97%	92%
2	97%	n/a	97%
3	92%	97%	n/a

As a result, it was found that the majority of inflectional morphemes in the Vyatka Gospel coincide with those in the Hill and Meadow Mari languages; see Table 2.

Table 2. Inflectional morphemes related in the Vyatka Gospel, Meadow Mari, and Hill Mari languages

1. Morphological dictionary of the Vyatka Gospel	2. Morphological dictionary of the Hill Mari language	3. Morphological dictionary of the Meadow Mari language
-ем; -ем; -ам; -ам; -ем; -ем; -ям; -юм; -ым; -ум; -ом; -м; -м; -им; -им; -им; -ем (ACC)	-ым, -ём, -м (ACC)	-ым, -м (ACC)
-лец; -лец; -лец (ABL)	-лец (ABL)	-леч (ABL)
-ла; -лам; -лам; -лан; -лан; -лян; -лан; -лан; -лян (DAT)	-лан, -лән (DAT)	-лан (DAT)
-н; -N; -ен; -ен; -ан; -ан; -ун; -ун; -н; -н; -н; -он; -ун (GEN)	-ын, -ён, -н (GEN)	-ын, -н (GEN)
-шка; -шке; -ушку; -ушко; -ышко; -ушка; -ошко; -ишке; -ошк; -ишка; -ашка; -еш; -ешке; -ешка; -ажка; -ачка; -юшке; -юшку; -ышка; -шко (ILL)	-ыш, -ёш, -ш, -ышкы, -ёшкы, -ышк, -ёшк, -шкы, -шкы, -шк (ILL)	-ыш, -ышке, -ышко, -ышкы, -ышк, -шке, -шко, -шкы, -шк, -ш (ILL)
-эш; -ш; -еш (LAT)	-еш (LAT)	-еш (LAT)
-шта; -шта; -ешта; -ешто; -ашта; -ишта; -ошта; -ошто; -ушт; -уште; -ушта; -ушто; -шта; -шт; -ште; -што; -ышта; -юшта (IN)	-ышты, -ёшты, -ышт, -ёшт, -шты, -шты, -шт (IN)	-ыште, -ышто, -ышт, -ышт, -ште, -што, -шт (IN)
-де (ABE)	-де, дегече (ABE)	-де (ABE) ^[1]
-ла (SIM)	-ла, -лә (SIM)	-ла (SIM)
-ге; -ге (COM)	-ге (COM)	-ге (COM)
-рак; -рак; -рак; -рак (CMPR)	-рак, -рәк (CMPR)	-рак (CMPR)
-ем; -м; -м; -ем; -ем; -ем (POSS.1SG)	-ем, -м (POSS.1SG)	-ем, -м (POSS.1SG)
-м; -м; -м (POSS.2SG)	-м, -т (POSS.2SG)	-м, -т, -ч (POSS.2SG)
-ж; -же; -ше; -ш; -ша; -ш; -ж; -же (POSS.3SG)	-жы, -жы, -ж, -жы, -жы, -жы, -жы, -жы, -шы, -шы, -ш (POSS.3SG)	-же, -жо, -жы, -жы, -жы, -жы, -жы, -жы, -ше, -шо, -ш, -ш (POSS.3SG)
-на (POSS.1PL)	-на, -нә (POSS.1PL)	-на (POSS.1PL)
-да; -еда; -ада; -еда; -ода; -эда; -яда (POSS.2PL)	-да, -дә, -ыда, -ёда (POSS.2PL)	-да (POSS.2PL)
-ешт (POSS.3PL)	-ышты, -ёшты, -шты, -шты (POSS.3PL)	-ышт, -шт (POSS.3PL)
-ем; -ам; -ам; -ям; -эм; -эм; -м; -ем; -ем (NPST.1SG)	-ам, -әм (NPST.1SG) -ем (NPST.1SG)	-ам (NPST.1SG) -ем (NPST.1SG)
-ем; -м; -эм; -эм; -ам	-ам, -әм (NPST.2SG)	-ам (NPST.2SG)

(NPST.2SG)	-em (NPST.2SG)	-em (NPST.2SG)
-я; -а (NPST.3SG)	-а, -ä (NPST.3SG)	-а (NPST.3SG)
-эна; -ена; -на; -ана (NPST.1PL)	-ына, -ёна, -на, -на (NPST.1PL) -енä (NPST.1PL)	-ына (NPST.1PL) -ена (NPST.1PL)
-да; -еда; -ада; -ода; -эда; -яда (NPST.2PL)	-ыда, -ёда, -да, -да (NPST.2PL) -еда (NPST.2PL)	-ыда (NPST.2PL) -еда (NPST.2PL)
-ат; -ад; -ет; -ят; -ут; -ет; - ат; -ат; -т; -от; -от (NPST.3PL)	-ат, -ät (NPST.3PL) -ыт, -ёт, -т (NPST.3PL)	-ат (NPST.3PL) -ыт (NPST.3PL)
-ен; -ен; -ен; -ен; -эн; -эн; - ен; -он; -он; -н; -он; -ун; -ан; - ан; -а; -эн (PRET)	-ын, -ён, -н (PRET) -ен (PRET)	-ын (PRET) -ен (PRET)
-уш; -еш; -иш; -ыш; -иш (AOR)	-иш (AOR)	-иш (AOR)
-е; -е (AOR.3SG) -я (AOR.3SG)	-ы, -ё (AOR.3SG)	-е, -о, -ö (AOR.3SG)
-же; -же (JUSS.SG)	-жы, -жы, -шы, -шы (JUSS.SG)	-же, -жо, -ше, -шо (JUSS.SG)
-ене; -не (DES)	-не (DES)	-не (DES)
-ша; -ша; -ша (OPT)	-ша, -ша (OPT)	-ша (OPT)
-ект (CAUS.DIST)	-ыкт, -ёкт, -ыкты, -ёкты, - кты, -кт (CAUS.DIST)	-ыкт, -ыкты, -кты, -кт (CAUS.DIST)
-ама; -ем; -ям; -ум; -ма; -ем (PTCP.PASS)	-мы, -мы, -м (PTCP.PASS)	-ме, -мо, -м, -м (PTCP.PASS)
-ша; -ше; -и; -иш; -ж; -аш; -иш (PTCP.ACT)	-шы, -шы (PTCP.ACT)	ше, -шо, -ш, -и (PTCP.ACT)
-ан; -эн; -эн; -ун; -он; -н; -ен; - ан; -а; -эн; -ен (CVB)	-ын, -ён, -н, -ен (CVB)	-ын, -ен (CVB)
-иш; -иш (CVB.SIM)	-иш, -иш (CVB.SIM)	-иш (CVB.SIM)
-меш; -маш; -меш (CVB.LIM)	-меш, -меш (CVB.LIM)	-меш, -меш, -меш (CVB.LIM)
-те; -те (NEG.CVB)	-де (NEG.CVB)	-де (NEG.CVB)
-иш; -иш; -аж; -иш; -иш; - иш; -иш (INF)	-иш, -иш (INF)	-иш (INF)

At the same time, there are three morphemes that are present only in the Vyatka Gospel and Meadow Mari, but are absent in Hill Mari; see Table 3.

Table 3. Inflectional morphemes in the Vyatka Gospel and Meadow Mari

1. Morphological dictionary of the Vyatka Gospel	2. Morphological dictionary of the Hill Mari language	3. Morphological dictionary of the Meadow Mari language
-иза; -яза; -уза; -оза; -эза; -за; -еза; -аза (IMP.2PL)		-за, -са (IMP.2PL)
-(о)н агол (NEG.PRET)		-ынат огыл, -енат огыл (NEG.PRET)
-шамец (PL)		-шамыч (PL)

Let's consider examples with these morphemes in the Vyatka Gospel: *ямм-аза* 'ask-IMP.2PL', *келес-эза* 'say-IMP.2PL', *ли-за* 'be-IMP.2PL', etc. There are sixty-six such examples in the Gospel, but there are also examples of the use of IMP.2PL forms with other suffixes like *-ма*, *-да*, *-еда*, although they are significantly fewer in number.

The form NEG.PRET *-(о)н агол* occurs twice; another version of the affix, which matches Hill Mari, appears only once, as noted below.

Examples for the PL marker include: *родо шамец* 'kin-PL', *Кузурак-шамец* 'large-CMP-PL', *ильми шамец* 'language-PL'. The book contains thirty-three examples of the use of this affix, and there are no examples of other markers. As noted in the monograph [Tuzharov 1970: 100-104], in the modern Northwestern dialect, the main marker for PL is *-wlä*, while *-šämec* is used rarely. Accordingly, it can be assumed that in the dialect the more archaic affix *-šämec* is gradually being replaced with the innovative *-wlä*.

At the same time, the Vyatka Gospel also shares three isoglosses with Hill Mari; see Table 4.

Table 4. Inflectional morphemes in the Vyatka Gospel and Hill Mari

1. Morphological dictionary of the Vyatka Gospel	2. Morphological dictionary of the Hill Mari language	3. Morphological dictionary of the Meadow Mari language
-eðe; -eðe; -eðe; -eðe (AOR.3PL)	-eðe, -eðe (AOR.3PL) -en (3PL)	
-ða, -ma, -eða (IMP.2PL)	-ða, -ðä (IMP.2PL)	
-me (NEG.PRET)	-ðe, -ðel (NEG.PRET)	

The AOR.3PL form occurs quite frequently in the corpus — 56 times: *нач-éðe* ‘open-AOR.3PL’, *кол-éðe* ‘hear-AOR.3PL’, *мол-éðe* ‘come-AOR.3PL’, etc. As noted in [Klyucheva 2021: 34], this marker is characteristic not only of the Hill Mari but also *-eðe* in Volga Mari, Yoshkar-Ola dialect, and *-eðe* in the Northwestern dialects. Thus, this affix should also be reconstructed for Proto-Mari. Accordingly, its presence in the Vyatka Gospel cannot be considered a dialectally differentiating isogloss but rather an archaism.

As mentioned earlier, the Vyatka Gospel employs both the IMP.2PL forms with the affix *-za*, similar to Meadow Mari (see above), and almost three times less frequently (24 times) the forms with *-ða*; *-ma* which are similar to Hill Mari. As noted in [Klyucheva 2021: 41], currently, only the form IMP.2PL *-ðä* is characteristic of Northwestern Mari. Thus, it can be assumed that the presence of doublet forms in the text, one of which has disappeared over time, indicates a gradual replacement of IMP.2PL *-za* with *-ðä*; *-ma*.

The affix *-mè* occurs in the text only once: *молБ-мè*; in two other cases, the meaning is expressed by the compound form *-(о)н агол*: *молонБ аголБ* ‘come-NEG.PRET’, *иунБ аголБ* ‘keep up-NEG.PRET’. This second form, as noted in [Klyucheva 2021: 38], is characteristic of all Mari dialects except Hill Mari. It is also used in the modern Northwestern dialect. Accordingly, in this situation, it can be assumed that the NEG.PRET form *-me* was initially characteristic of the Northwestern dialect, but was later replaced by the Meadow Mari form. However, it must be noted that this conclusion is not sufficiently reliable based on a single example.

Thus, we see that there is one isogloss that connects the Northwestern Mari dialect with Hill Mari and Meadow Mari without doublet forms. In the case of the AOR.3PL form, which connects Northwestern Mari with Hill Mari, we are dealing with the preservation of an archaism. Conversely, the PL marker in the text *-шамеуБ* serves as the primary morphological feature that distinguishes eastern (Meadow) dialects from western (Hill) ones, according to [Bereczki 1994: 20-28].

As mentioned above, the presence of doublet forms IMP.2PL *-za* vs. *-ðä*; *-ma*, with a numerical predominance of Meadow Mari forms, and the existence of only the Hill Mari variant *-ðä* in the modern Northwestern dialect again suggest that the Northwestern dialect was initially closer to Meadow Mari. But gradually, a shift began that brought it closer to Hill Mari.

The last isogloss the presence of NEG.PRET *-me* vs. *-(о)н агол* with a numerical predominance of Meadow forms also confirms the aforementioned pattern.

Conclusion

Thus, we have one isogloss without doublets (PL) that aligns the Gospel with Meadow Mari, and two isoglosses with doublets

(IMP.2PL, NEG.PRET), the quantity of which indicates a predominance of Meadow features. Therefore, the analysis of morphological characteristics confirms the data from the graphs and glottochronology, demonstrating that the Northwestern dialect was originally closer to Meadow Mari. However, over time, it acquired features of Hill Mari, thus belonging to the "western" Mari dialects according to G. Bereczki's terminology. This aligns completely with the results obtained from the analysis of the graphs of the first books. Interestingly, the changes in morphology occurred somewhat later. While the [Gospel 1821] already practically coincided with Hill Mari in terms of graphic representation, it was still closer to Meadow Mari in terms of morphology.

List of abbreviations

1 PST — 1 past tense

2PST — 2 past tense

ABE — abessive

ABL — ablative

ACC — accusative

AOR — aorist

CAUS.DIST — distant causative

CMPR — comparative degree suffix

COM — comitative

CVB.LIM — limiting adverbial participle

CVB.SIM — simultaneous adverbial participle

DAT — dative

DES — desiderative

GEN — genitive

ILL — illative

IMP — imperative mood

IN — inessive

INF — infinitive

JUSS — jussive

LAT — lative

NEG — negation

NPST — present tense

OPT — optative

PL — plural

POSS — possessive

PRET — preterite

PTCP.ACT — active participle

PTCP.PASS — passive past tense participle

SIM — similitive case

SG — singular

List of references

1. Albinsky 1837 — Albinsky A.D. Cheremis Grammar. Kazan, 1837. 248 pp.
2. Vasiliev, Savatkova, Uchaev 1991 — Vasiliev V.M., Savatkova A.A., Uchaev Z.V. Mari-Russian Dictionary. Yoshkar-Ola, 1991. 512 pp.
3. Dialects of the Mari Language 2009 — Dialects of the Mari Language // Encyclopedia of the Mari El Republic. Ed. by Saraeva N.I. Yoshkar-Ola, 2009. 872 pp.
4. Gospel 1821 — Manuscript of the Mari Gospel of Matthew, prepared by priest Sergey Bobrovsky of the Vyatka diocese, stored in the archive of the St. Petersburg RAN in the A.I. Sjögren fund.
5. Ivanov 1981 — Ivanov I.G. Mari Dialectology. Yoshkar-Ola, 1981.
6. Ivanov, Tuzharov 1970 — Ivanov I.G., Tuzharov G.M. Northwestern Dialect of the Mari Language. Dialects of the Mari Language. Issue 1. Yoshkar-Ola, 1970. 304 pp.
7. Klyucheva 2021 — Klyucheva M.A. Verbal Morphology in the Monument of Mari Literature "Beginnings of Christian Teaching..." (1839/1841) // Ural-Altaic Studies No. 1 (40), 2021, pp. 31-46.
8. Beginnings 1841 — Beginnings of Christian Teaching or Brief Sacred History and Brief Catechism, Translated into Cheremis in the Meadow Dialect in Kazan in 1839, Kazan, 1841.
9. Normanskaja 2024a — Normanskaja J.V. Is the Northwestern Dialect a Hill or Meadow Mari Language? // Ural-Altaic Studies. 2024, No. 1(52), pp. 86-97.
10. Normanskaja 2024b — Normanskaja J.V. Evaluation of the Classification Affiliation of the Northwestern Dialect of the Mari Language from the Perspective of Glottochronology // Finno-Ugric World. 2024. Volume 16, No. 3, pp. 8-19.
11. Pengitov, Nikolai Tikhonovich. Comparative Grammar of the Russian and Mari Languages — Yoshkar-Ola: Markknigoizdat, 1958. — 1 vol.
12. Yuzikain 2023 —
<http://www.suri.ee/r/mari/erik/infsr3112.html> (accessed on 09.05.2023)
13. Bereczki 1994 — Bereczki G. Basic Features of Mari Language History I (Studia Uralo-Altaica 35). Szeged, 1994.