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The Chuvash Postposition *valli* and the Mari Postposition *verč*:

Focusing on the Case Marking of Complements

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1. Introduction

Chuvash (Oghur branch, Turkic) and Mari[1] (Finno-Ugric, Uralic) are distributed in the Middle Volga region of Russia (Fig. 1). Both languages are core members of the Volga-Kama Sprachbund[2], along with Tatar-Bashkir (Kipchak branch, Turkic) and Udmurt (Permic, Uralic) (Helimski 2003: 159). Chuvash and Mari have been in extremely close contact, leading to a profound symbiosis[3] (Johanson 2000: 172). This study focuses on postpositions that express purpose or the benefactive in both languages (Chuvash: *valli*, Mari: *verč*[4]).

[1] Mari has two literary standards: the Meadow-Eastern literary language and the western Mari literary language (Saarinen 2022: 432). This study deals only with Meadow-Eastern Mari.

[2] According to Helimski (2003: 160), it seems that the Sprachbund came into existence more than 1000 years ago. Johanson (2000: 166) states that the so-called reduced vowels are claimed to be a shared feature of typological importance in the area.

[3] The Turkic impact on Mari is considerable due to widespread bilingualism of Mari groups in the contact areas (Johanson 2000: 168). There has been a massive Chuvash influence on Mari: numerous lexical elements, word-formation suffixes, and syntactic patterns have been copied (Johanson 2000: 168). On the other hand, the Finno-Ugric influence on Chuvash is essentially a substratum influence (Johanson 2000: 172). Mari has been of eminent importance for the development of Chuvash, with around 300 Mari loanwords identified (Johanson 2000: 168).

[4] In Mari, a number of postpositions ending in *-č* have alternative long forms in which the ending *-ən* is attached to the short forms. These long forms are functionally equivalent to the short forms. (Riese, Bradley, Yakimova, and Krylova 2017: 399)

Fig. 1. Distribution of the languages of the Volga-Kama Sprachbund

Note. Modified by the author based on https://www.freemap.jp/itemDownload/europe/russia/2.png

Despite the difference that the Chuvash *valli* only expresses purpose or the benefactive ("for"), while Mari *verč* also expresses reason ("because of") in addition to the two above ("for"), they are similar in that their nominal complements can be marked either by nominative, dative (dative-accusative in Chuvash), or genitive case (e.g., Chuvash: *xalăx/xalăx-a valli* [people.NOM/people-DAT.ACC *valli*] "for people," *un*/*ăna valli* [that.GEN/that.DAT.ACC *valli*] "for that"; Mari: *kalək*/*kalək-lan verč* [people.NOM/ people-DAT *verč*] "for/because of people," *tudən/tudlan verč* [that.GEN/that.DAT *verč*] "for/because of that").

This similarity may have resulted from language contact between Chuvash and Mari, because this type of three-way case marking of complements is not found in neighboring and major cognate languages, and a corpus-based quantitative survey revealed some similarities in the frequency of each case form. This study proposes the hypothesis that the dative/dative-accusative marking is an innovation, although clarifying the language in which the innovation occurred first requires further research.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 summarizes previous research on the case systems and postpositions in both languages. Section 3 presents the methods and results of a survey on the synchronic distribution of the three case forms. Finally, Section 4 presents the conclusions and discusses the diachronic development of the postpositional constructions. The transliteration[5], English translation, and glossing of the example sentences were carried out by me.

2. Previous research

Section 2.1 presents the case systems of Chuvash and Mari. Section 2.2 presents the

[5] The Latin transcription of relatively new Russian loanwords, which are pronounced according to the Russian phonological system, follows the linguistic method in Timberlake (2004: 25).

functions of the Chuvash *valli* and the Mari *verč*. Section 2.3 summarizes the descriptions of the case marking of complements. Section 2.4 delineates the problems.

2.1. Case systems of Chuvash and Mari

Chuvash has six core cases: nominative, genitive, dative-accusative, locative, ablative, and instrumental-comitative (Clark 1998: 438; Agyagási 2022: 463). According to the local grammar tradition, two more cases are included: caritive *-sĂr* ("without") and causal-final *-šĂn* ("for") (Savelyev 2020: 452). In Table 1, the nominative, genitive, and dative-accusative are shown in bold. Note that capital letters in grammatical markers indicate alternation by vowel harmony or consonant assimilation/dissimilation. Parentheses indicate that the sound may not appear in the suffixes depending on the word-final sound.

Table 1. Chuvash cases

Case	Marker	"foot"	"udder"	"name"	"field"
nominative	***-Ø***	*ura*	*śilĕ*	*yat*	*xir*
genitive	***-(Ă)n***	*ura-n*	*śill-ĕn*	*yat-ăn*	*xir-ĕn*
dative-accusative	***-(n)A***	*ura-na*	*śill-e*	*yat-a*	*xir-e*
locative	*-RA*	*ura-ra*	*śilĕ-re*	*yat-ra*	*xir-te*
ablative	*-RAn*	*ura-ran*	*śilĕ-ren*	*yat-ran*	*xir-ten*
instrumental-comitative	*-pA*	*ura-pa*	*śilĕ-pe*	*yat-pa*	*xir-pe*

Note. Summarized from Savelyev (2020: 452).

Mari has nine cases: nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, lative, illative, inessive, modal, and comitative (Saarinen 2022: 437). In Table 2, nominative, genitive, and dative are shown in bold. Note that *kE* is optional in the Mari illative.

Table 2. Mari cases

Case	Marker	"apple"	"egg"	"water"
nominative	***-Ø***	*olma*	*muno*	*vüd*
genitive	***-(ə)n***	*olma-n*	*munə-n*	*vüd-ən*
dative	***-lan***	*olma-lan*	*munə-lan*	*vüd-lan*
accusative	*-(ə)m*	*olma-m*	*munə-m*	*vüd-əm*
lative	*-(e)š*	*olma-š*	*mun-eš*	*vüd-eš*
illative	*-š(kE)*	*olma-š(ke)*	*munə-š(ko)*	*vüd-əš(kö)*
inessive	*-štE*	*olma-šte*	*munə-što*	*vüd-əštö*
modal	*-la*	*olma-la*	*munə-la*	*vüd-la*
comitative	*-ge*	*olma-ge*	*munə-ge*	*vüd-ge*

Note. Summarized from Saarinen (2022: 437).

Descriptions of previous studies (Clark 1998: 432 and Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev 2012: 281-287 on Chuvash, Saarinen 2022: 438-440 on Mari) indicate that the basic functions of the nominative, genitive, and dative/dative-accusative are similar in both languages: The nominative typically expresses a subject, the genitive expresses possession, and the dative/dative-accusative expresses an indirect object (the dative-accusative in Chuvash can also express a direct object). Each of these three cases can occur in the complements of postpositions.

Notably, the Mari dative can express some kinds of purpose and cause (e.g., *kində-lan kay-aš* [bread-DAT go-INF] "to go for bread," *osal mut-šə-lan sər-aš* [bad word-3SG.POSS-DAT be.angry-INF] "to be angry because of his/her bad words") (Riese, Bradley, and Yefremova 2022: 76-77), and the Chuvash dative-accusative can express some kinds of purpose (e.g., *pull-a śüre-* [fish-DAT.ACC walk-] "to go fishing," *učitel-e věren-* [teacher-DAT.ACC study-] "to study to be a teacher") (Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev 2012: 287)[6]. Thus, it can be said that the Mari dative has functions similar to those of *verč*, and the Chuvash dative-accusative has functions similar to those of *valli*.

2.2. Functions of the Chuvash *valli* and Mari *verč*

Table 3 summarizes the functions of the two postpositions based on the Chuvash-Russian dictionary (Andreev, Gorškov, Ivanov et al. 1985) and the Mari-Russian dictionary (Marijskij naučno-issledovatel'skij institut jazyka, literatury i istorii 1990–2005). For reference, the Chuvash causal-final suffix *-šĂn*, which functionally resembles the two postpositions, is added.

Table 3. Functions of the postpositions and the Chuvash *-šĂn*

	Chuvash		Mari
	valli	*-šĂn*	*verč*
purpose "for"	+	+	+
benefactive "for"	+	+	+
reason "because of"	−	+	+

Note. Summarized from Andreev, Gorškov, Ivanov et al. (1985) and Marijskij naučno-issledovatel'skij institut jazyka, literatury i istorii (1990–2005).

The Chuvash postposition *valli* only expresses purpose or the benefactive (e.g., *mašina valli ukśa pux-* [car *valli* money gather-] "to save money for a car," *san valli parne ku* [2SG.GEN *valli* present this] "This is a present for you."), the Chuvash suffix *-šĂn* and the Mari postposition *verč* express both purpose or the benefactive and the reason (e.g.,

[6] It is a future task to clarify the conditions under which the Mari dative is used to express purpose and cause, and the Chuvash dative-accusative is used to express purpose.

Chuvash *ukśa-šăn* "for money," *śĭlăx-šăn* "because of the guilt," Mari *tazalək verč* "for health," *čer verč* "because of an illness"). Other peripheral meanings include "until" for the Chuvash *valli*, and "instead of" for the Mari *verč*.

Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev (2012: 413) describe that the Chuvash *valli* expresses "for whom the action was performed." Regarding the Mari *verč*, Riese, Bradley, Yakimova, and Krylova (2017: 477) state that "this postposition can indicate either the purpose of an action – i.e., the future aim motivating it – or the reason of an occurrence – i.e., the past circumstance that caused it to happen." Riese, Bradley, and Yefremova (2022: 162) state that "this postposition can express both finality (i.e., the purpose of something) and causality (i.e., the reason for something)."

Thus, in terms of the function, the Chuvash suffix *-šĂn* is more similar to the Mari postposition *verč* than the Chuvash postposition *valli*. However, in terms of the case marking of complements, which is discussed in the next section, this is not true.

2.3. Case marking of complements

Table 4 summarizes the case marking of the elements preceding the Chuvash *valli* and Mari *verč* based on the descriptions of Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev (2012) and Pavlov (2014) (both on Chuvash), and Riese, Bradley, Yakimova, and Krylova (2017) and Riese, Bradley, and Yefremova (2022) (both on Mari). For reference, the Chuvash suffix *-šĂn* is added here too.

Table 4. Case marking of complements

	Chuvash		Mari
	valli	*-šĂn*	*verč*
NOM/bare stem	+	+	+
GEN	+	+	+
DAT/DAT.ACC	+	−	+

Note. Summarized from Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev (2012), Pavlov (2014), Riese, Bradley, Yakimova, and Krylova (2017), and Riese, Bradley, and Yefremova (2022).

The Chuvash postposition *valli* and Mari postposition *verč* are similar in that their complements can be marked not only in the nominative and genitive but also in the dative (the dative-accusative in Chuvash) (e.g., *sire valli* [2PL.DAT.ACC *valli*] "for you," *məlam verč* [1SG.DAT *verč*] "for/because of me")[7]. On the other hand, the host of the Chuvash *-šĂn* is the bare stem, or it can be marked by the genitive in some pronouns (e.g., *śĭlăx-*

[7] Both languages have some other postpositions whose complement is marked in the same three cases. Most of them express spatial relationships (e.g., Chuvash *urlă* "across, through"; Mari *vaštareš* "opposite, against").

šăn “because of the guilt,” *man-šăn* [1SG.GEN-*šĂn*] “for me”).

Regarding Chuvash, Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev (2012: 413) state that “preceding nouns are marked in the nominative, and pronouns are in the genitive or the dative-accusative.” However, Andreev, Gorškov, Ivanov, et al. (1985) provide an example of a noun marked in the dative-accusative (e.g., *yultaš-a valli* [comrade-DAT.ACC *valli*] “for comrade”). Regarding Mari, Riese, Bradley, Yakimova, and Krylova (2017: 477) state that “it occurs with both the nominative (genitive in the case of pronouns) and dative forms of nominals.” Riese, Bradley, and Yefremova (2022: 162) state that “it can co-occur with the nominative and the dative, with the nominative preferentially used when expressing an aim, and the dative preferentially used when expressing a cause.”[8]

The three-way case marking of complements may be a similarity that emerged owing to language contact, because this is not found in neighboring and major cognate languages (Table 5).

Table 5. Case marking of complements in cognate languages

	Turkish (Turkic) *için*	Tatar (Turkic) *öčen*	Finnish (Uralic) *varten*	Udmurt (Uralic) *ponna*
NOM	+	+	−	+
GEN	+	+	−	−
DAT	−	−	−	−

Note. Summarized from Csató and Johanson (1998: 222), Berta (1998: 296), Karlsson (2008: 319), and Perevoščikov (1962: 319).

The nouns preceding the postpositions of other Turkic languages including neighboring Tatar-Bashkir (e.g., Turkish *için*, Tatar *öčen*, cognates of the Chuvash -*šĂn*) are marked only in the nominative, and some pronouns only in the genitive, like the Chuvash -*šĂn* (e.g., Tatar: *aqča öçen* [money.NOM *öçen*] “for money,” *anïŋ öçen* [that.GEN *öçen*] “for that”). The elements preceding the postpositions of Uralic languages are marked in different cases depending on the language. The elements preceding the Finnish *varten* are marked only in the partitive, and those preceding the Udmurt *ponna* are marked only in the nominative (e.g., Udmurt: *mon ponna* [1SG.NOM ponna] “for me,” *pinal-jos ponna* [child-PL.NOM *ponna*] “for children”).

[8] Although this tendency was confirmed to some extent in the corpus survey I conducted in 2023, it is not that clear-cut. I extracted 20 examples of each case form and examined their functions. The number of examples expressing reason (“because of”) was slightly higher in those that included the dative marked elements: nominative nouns 5/20 (25%), dative nouns 10/20 (50%); genitive pronouns 11/20 (55%), nominative pronouns 13/20 (65%), dative pronouns 15/20 (75%).

2.4. Delineating the problems

Although previous studies have described the conditions of the occurrence of each case form, the description is considered insufficient. This is because the distribution of each case form has not been clarified due to the lack of quantitative data. In addition, there has been no research on the similarity between Chuvash and Mari (three-way case marking in the complements of postpositions expressing purpose or the benefactive).

The fact that this type of three-way case marking is not found in cognate or neighboring languages suggests that this similarity resulted from contact between the two languages. Then, how similar are the postpositions in terms of the synchronic distribution of the three complement case forms? What diachronic developments led to this similarity? This study aims to clarify the frequency of case markings the complements take and consider their diachronic development, taking into account the survey results.

3. Survey: Synchronic distribution

3.1. Methods

A corpus-based quantitative survey was conducted in 2021 using the following steps (the fourth step for Mari was conducted in 2023). Nouns and pronouns were investigated separately, because according to previous studies, they have different case-marking patterns. The corpora used are the corpus of the Chuvash language (size: 9.4 million words as of June 2021) and the main corpus of Meadow Mari Corpora (size: 2.6 million words as of June 2021). The former mainly comprises newspaper and magazine articles, prose collections, and religious texts. The latter mainly comprises articles from the contemporary press and Wikipedia.

1) Search by entering *valli* in Cyrillic characters in the search window, and paste the search results into the spreadsheet. (Chuvash)
   Enter the tag N, which denotes a noun, or the tag PRO, which denotes a pronoun, into search window 1. Set the distance to the next element as 1-1, enter *verč*[9] in Cyrillic characters in search window 2 to search, and paste the search results into the spreadsheet. (Mari)
2) Extract 100 examples that include nouns and 100 examples that include pronouns while removing search noise.
3) Count the nouns and pronouns (reflexive, demonstrative, personal, and others)[10] by case form (nominative, dative-accusative, and genitive).

[9] Only the short form *verč* was searched because the long form *verčən* is functionally identical to the short form and is less frequent (only 129 hits in the corpus).

[10] Although the Chuvash and Mari demonstrative pronouns (Chuvash: *văl* "it, that" and *vĕsem* "those"; Mari: *tudo* "it, that" and *nuno* "those") are also used as personal pronouns which mean "he, she" and "they" respectively, they were treated as demonstrative pronouns in the survey.

4) Perform an exact match search on the corpus or Google for the combinations that result in zero examples in the above steps[11].

3.2. Results

The survey revealed the following similarities in the frequency of each case form: 1) nouns appear mostly in the nominative form, with only a few dative/dative-accusative forms, and 2) pronouns appear far more frequently in the genitive or dative/dative-accusative forms than nouns. The significant difference is that Mari pronouns are mostly in the genitive, while Chuvash pronouns are in the dative-accusative. Section 3.2.1 shows the results for nouns and Section 3.2.2 for pronouns.

3.2.1. Nouns

Table 6 presents the results of the quantitative survey.

Table 6. Case marking of nouns

	NOM	DAT/DAT.ACC	GEN	Total
Chuvash	96	4	0	100
Mari	97	3	0	100

Note. Summarized from Hishiyama (2021: 5, 8).

Some types of noun may be more likely to be marked with the dative/dative-accusative case, but the lack of examples makes this difficult to verify. Although all four dative-accusative nouns in Chuvash were plural nouns representing humans (e.g., *śïn-sene valli* [person-PL.DAT/ACC *valli*] "for people") and all three dative nouns in Mari were singular nouns referring to non-humans (e.g., *oksa-lan verč* [money-DAT *verč*] "for/because of money"), Google search found singular dative-accusative nouns referring to non-humans in Chuvash (e.g., *yal-a valli* [village-DAT/ACC *valli*] "for village") and plural dative nouns referring to humans in Mari (e.g., *čəgan=vlak-lan verč* [Rom=PL-DAT *verč*] "for/because of Roma").

No genitive nouns were extracted from the quantitative survey with an upper limit of 100 examples in either language. Therefore, the distribution of the genitive form is limited to pronouns. Nevertheless, the genitive form is considered to occur at a lower rate than the dative/dative-accusative form, as Google search found a few genitive forms in both languages (e.g., Chuvash: *ača-sen valli* [child-PL.GEN *valli*] "for children"; Mari: *marij=vlak-ən verč* [Mari=PL-GEN *verč*] "for/because of Mari people", *kalək-ən verč* [people-GEN *verč*] "for/because of people").

[11] Examples extracted from Google search in section 3.2 are from sources such as the websites of public institutions, mass media articles, and literary works, which I have judged to be reliable.

3.2.2. Pronouns

Although the frequency of case marking differs depending on the type of pronoun, the overall tendency is that pronouns appear far more frequently in genitive or dative/dative-accusative forms than nouns do. The results of the quantitative survey are presented in Tables 7 and 8. Note that the totals in the tables cannot be compared because of the different proportions of each pronoun type.

Table 7. Case marking of pronouns (Chuvash)

	NOM	DAT	GEN	Total
Reflexive	15	23	0	38
Demonstrative	4	21	7	32
Personal	0	15	10	25
Others	2	1	2	3
Total	21	60	19	100

Note. Summarized from Hishiyama (2021: 5).

Table 8. Case marking of pronouns (Mari)

	NOM	DAT	GEN	Total
Reflexive	6	0	0	6
Demonstrative	1	3	48	52
Personal	0	8	16	24
Others	16	0	2	18
Total	23	11	66	100

Note. Summarized from Hishiyama (2021: 8).

The survey results for each type of pronoun are detailed as follows.

3.2.2.1. Reflexive pronouns

Although no genitive forms (and no dative forms in Mari) were extracted in the quantitative survey, they were still considered to occur at a lower rate than other case forms. Additional corpus survey conducted on Mari in 2024 extracted a total of 31 cases of reflexive pronouns with *verč*, 28 of which were nominative forms and 3 genitive forms[12]. A Google search found some genitive forms in both languages (e.g., Chuvash: *xăy-ĕn valli* [self.3-GEN *valli*] "for him/her/itself"; Mari: *škenžən verč* [self.3SG.GEN *verč*] "for/because of him/her/itself"). The Google search also found some examples of the Mari

[12] Additional corpus survey was conducted using the following steps: 1) Enter the tag "PRO, refl," which denotes a reflexive pronoun, into search window 1; 2) Set the distance to the next element as 1-1; and 3) enter *verč* in Cyrillic characters in search window 2 to search.

reflexive pronouns in the dative form (e.g., *ška(la)nže verč* [self.DAT.3SG.POSS *verč*] "for/because of him/her/itself").

3.2.2.2. Demonstrative pronouns

Nominative forms were the least common in both languages. All four examples of Chuvash were *věsem valli* [that.PL.NOM *valli*] "for those/them," which include the plural marker *-sem*. In addition, the Google search found one example of *śakă valli* [this.NOM *valli*] "for this." Most of the Mari ones were in the genitive, one was in the nominative (e.g., *tudo verč* [that.NOM *verč*] "for/because of that," and three were in the dative (e.g., *tidlan verč* [this.DAT *verč*] "for/because of this").

3.2.2.3. Personal pronouns

No nominative forms were extracted from either of the language corpora. The Google search found only one reliable example of the nominative personal pronoun in Mari (e.g., *təj verč* [2SG.NOM *verč*] "for/because of you"). As for Chuvash, no nominative forms were found in the Google search either.

3.2.2.4. Others

Other pronouns include interrogative and indefinite pronouns. As examples of each pronoun are limited, the overall tendency is unclear. In Chuvash, two examples of *měn* "what" (both were in the nominative: *měn valli* [what.NOM *valli*] "for what") and three of *pur* "all" (one was in the dative-accusative *purne valli* [all.DAT/ACC *valli*] "for all," two were in the genitive: *purin valli* [all.GEN *valli*] "for all") were extracted. In Mari, nine examples of *mo* "what," four of *vese* "other," three of *kažne* "every," and one each of *nimo* "nothing" and *kö* "who" were extracted. Except for two genitive forms (*vesə-n verč* [other-GEN *verč*] "for/because of others," *kö-n verč* [who-GEN *verč*] "for whom/because of who"), all were in the nominative.

4. Conclusion: Diachronic development

The similarities in the synchronic distribution (nouns appearing mostly in the nominative form, with only a few dative/dative-accusative forms, and pronouns appearing far more frequently in the genitive or dative/dative-accusative form than nouns) reinforce, to some extent, the possibility that the three-way case marking of complements is a similarity that emerged as a result of language contact. However, diachronic development must be considered to confirm this hypothesis. This study proposes the hypothesis that the dative/dative-accusative marking is an innovation, although clarifying the language in which the innovation occurred first requires further research.

The reasons for regarding the dative/dative-accusative marking as an innovation are as follows: 1) It is not found in the neighboring and major cognate languages (see Section

2.3); and 2) It is thought to be a type of "double-marking" that has emerged after the postpositional construction was established.

Johanson (1998: 112-113) describes the development of postpositions in Turkic languages as follows: 1) In the first stage, two lexical items combine in a genitive construction (e.g., Turkish: *ev-in ön-ün-de* [house-GEN front-3.POSS-LOC] "on the front side of the house"); 2) by way of reanalysis, the second item develops into a grammatical relator with more general content, and it may then become possible to drop the genitive suffix (e.g., *ev(-in) önünde*), or impossible to use it, except in pronouns.

According to Egorov (1964), the Chuvash *valli* consists of the noun *valĕ* "part" and the 3rd person possessive suffix *-i*. This suggests that the genitive marking of complements is a remnant lingering in the pronoun and that the nominative form is the result of the genitive suffix of complements dropping as the *valli* developed into a postposition[13]. According to Gordeev (1983: 91), the Mari *verč* goes back to a Finno-Ugric noun that means "purpose" with a grammatical element[14]. Therefore, a similar process may have occurred in Mari, which has the genitive construction similar to that in Turkic languages.

The dative/dative-accusative have functions similar to those of the two postpositions (see Section 2.1). Thus, the dative/dative-accusative marking of complements can be regarded as a type of "double-marking." This must have occurred after the above process, that is, the formation of a postpositional construction, because grammatically, no dative/dative-accusative relationship can be assumed between the noun before grammaticalization ("part" in Chuvash and "purpose" in Mari) and its preceding noun.

If the hypothesis that the dative/dative-accusative marking is an innovation is true, the innovation may have happened in one of the two languages, and contact caused the same thing to happen in the other language. However, as Johanson (2000: 172) points out, identifying shared features as copies from Mari in Chuvash or from Chuvash in Mari is generally difficult. This is also the case for this issue.

The Mari *verč* is considered to be older than the Chuvash *valli*, because 1) whereas the form of *verč* is irregular and unanalyzable, the form of *valli* is regular and analyzable; 2) whereas postpositions similar in form to *verč* are found in other Uralic languages such as the Finnish *varten*, the Veps *varoin* (Gordeev 1983: 91), those to *valli* are not found in other Turkic languages. This supports the possibility that the dative marking occurred first in Mari. However, the survey result that the frequency of the dative-accusative form in Chuvash is higher than that of the dative form in Mari supports the opposite possibility.

[13] The development of the postposition *valli* is probably related to 1) the development of the old postposition to the suffix *-sĂn*, and 2) the need for a form that expresses only purpose or benefactive.
[14] Gordeev (1983: 91) does not provide the noun form, and notes that it is cognate with Mari *vir* < Old Mari *ver* "reason."

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Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	PN	person name
ACC	accusative	POSS	possessive
DAT	dative	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	-	suffix boundary
NOM	nominative	=	clitic boundary
PL	plural		

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Summary

Chuvash (Oghur branch, Turkic) and Mari (Finno-Ugric, Uralic) are distributed in the Middle Volga region of Russia. Both languages have been in extremely close contact, leading to a profound symbiosis. This study focuses on postpositions that express purpose or the benefactive in both languages (Chuvash: *valli*, Mari: *verč*).

Despite the difference that the Chuvash *valli* only expresses purpose or the benefactive ("for"), while Mari *verč* also expresses reason ("because of") in addition to the two above ("for"), they are similar in that their nominal complements can be marked either by nominative, dative (dative-accusative in Chuvash), or genitive case (e.g., Chuvash: *xalăx/xalăx-a valli* [people.NOM/people-DAT.ACC *valli*] "for people," *un*/*ăna valli* [that.GEN/that.DAT.ACC *valli*] "for that"; Mari: *kalək*/*kalək-lan verč* [people.NOM/people-DAT *verč*] "for/because of people," *tudən/tudlan verč* [that.GEN/that.DAT *verč*] "for/because of that").

This similarity may have resulted from language contact between Chuvash and Mari, because this type of three-way case marking of complements is not found in neighboring and major cognate languages, and a corpus-based quantitative survey revealed some similarities in the frequency of each case form. This study proposes the hypothesis that the dative/dative-accusative marking is an innovation, although clarifying the language in which the innovation occurred first requires further research.

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