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A rediscovered lowland Tofan variety in northern Mongolia

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The eastern territories of Kubsugul province in northern Mongolia, i.e. east of Lake Kubsugul, are home to a small group of Sayan Turkic speakers. Their self-designation is *tuha*, a phonetic variant of *tuva/tuba*. In the available literature they are referred to as Uyghur-Uriankhay. The present paper will present a first overview of this remarkable Sayan variety, focusing on its lexical, phonetic and morphological features. It will be shown that, on the one hand, Tuhan shows peculiarities that distinguish it from the rest of Sayan Turkic and that, on the other hand, it shares some salient isoglosses with Tofan. It will be argued that Tuhan represents a lowland or steppe variety as opposed to the taiga or highland variety of Tofan.

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Introduction

Besides the Altai Tuvans of Bayan Ölgii and Khovd provinces in western Mongolia, and the Dukhan people of the northwestern Kubsugul region, yet another group of speakers of Sayan Turkic resides in Mongolia. The eastern territories of Kubsugul province in northern Mongolia, i.e. east of Lake Kubsugul, are home to a small group of Sayan Turkic speakers. Their lifestyle is based predominantly on the herding of cows, *hös* in their variety. Their self-designation is *tuha*, a phonetic variant of *tuva/tuba*. In the available literature they are referred to as Uyghur-Uriankhay.

My first encounter with Tuhan speakers dates back to October 2008 when, on the way back from my fieldwork trip in the Darkhat depression in the northwestern areas of the Kubsugul region, I had the good fortune to meet in the city of Mörön, the capital of Kubsugul province, two elderly Tuhan speakers, Dayanjalba, 72, and Marks, 68 years old. Thanks to them I could experience some of the unique features of their language not present in the other documented Sayan varieties. Back home, I presented a preliminary overview of some of these features in two talks at the universities of Szeged and Frankfurt, respectively. The uniqueness of these data was decisive for my plan to return to Mongolia as soon as possible. The following April, Dayanjalba was my guide and invaluable helper during my fieldwork experience in the eastern areas of Kubsugul Aimag. Besides learning much about the material culture of the Tuhan people, I recorded several hours of spontaneous conversations,

and I collected a corpus of texts including biographies, songs, cooking recipes and narratives.¹

Below I present a first overview of this remarkable Sayan variety, focusing on its lexical, phonetic and morphological features. I will show that, on the one hand, Tuhān shows peculiarities that distinguish it from the rest of Sayan Turkic and that, on the other hand, it shares some salient isoglosses with Tofan. I will argue that Tuhān represents a lowland or steppe variety as opposed to the taiga or highland variety of Tofan, as described by Rassadin (1971, 1978, 1995, 1997, etc.). Tuhān linguistic and cultural data are surely of importance both for the synchronic classification of Sayan Turkic and for a better understanding of the evolution of Sayan Turkic with special reference to the Sayan-Lena Turkic connection.

The speakers of Tuhān

Tuhān people are scattered over a territory encompassing the area between the counties of Tsagaan Üür and Khankh, lying, respectively, to the east and to the north of Lake Kubsugul in the Mongolian province of the same name. This area stretches from the eastern shores of Lake Kubsugul to the border with Buriatia. The village of Tsagaan Üür is situated 185 km north of Mörön. This area abounds in forests and river basins and is rich in lowland pastures that promote the raising of cattle, especially bovines.

The highest concentration of Tuhān families is found in the *sum* of Tsagaan Üür (personal information of my consultants). Officially, there are 2,400 inhabitants of this county, divided into three groups: 600 Uriankhay, 650 Buriat, and the remainder Khalkha.

As for the term Uriankhay, an old designation of this area,² it is applied to four different groups. The Övör Širkheten Uriankhay, literally the Uriankhay of the southern flea (Mongolian *övör* ‘south’ + *širxe* ‘kind of flea’ + the collective suffix *-tan*),³ the Arig Uriankhay, from the name of the adjacent river Arig, and the Göröččin Uriankhay, literally the hunting Uriankhay (Mongolian *göröččin* ‘hunter’)

¹ The data which will be discussed in this article belong to the cultural heritage of the Tuhān people and were collected with the permission of the Tuhān community.

² The first occurrence of the term Uriankhay in eastern sources is in the dynastic history of the Liao dynasty. As for western sources, a population with the name Orengai is mentioned in the travel account of de Rubroek. Uriankhay also occurs in the Secret History several times without bearing any clear ethnic or linguistic connotation, but merely denoting people living north of the Mongols. Uriankhay is also one of the names in use to designate both Tuvans and other groups; see Schönig (2006: 234). According to Diószegi (1961: 197-199) the name Uriankhay is used in Mongolia to designate all the Turkic populations of the Mongolian territory who are animist, to distinguish them from the Kazakhs, who are Muslims. On the possible identification of Uriankhay with the Tungusic Jürčed, further see Wilhelm (1957: 174).

³ This group is also mentioned in Sanders (1993: 182).

are speakers of western Mongol varieties. On our way from Mörön to Tsagaan Üür we stopped several times to visit Arig Uriankhay families, whose speech displays a noteworthy melody, reminiscent of that of the Darkhat of the western Kubsugul area. The designation Uyghur (or Uygur) Uriankhay refers to people who are or were speakers of Turkic. Besides Uyghur Uriankhay they are also called Soyit Uriankhay, Üürin Uriankhay, Ĵinkhene Uriankhay and Tuha Uriankhay. The term *Soyit* is a Mongolian plural form of the clan name Soyán, the most widespread among the Tuvan clan names. *Üür* is the name of the river that flows through the area and is part of the name of the village of Tsagaan *Üür*, named after it, and the term *Ĵinkhene* is a Khalkha Mongolian word meaning ‘real, full, genuine, true’. However, they identify themselves and their language as *tuha*. They say, for instance, *men tuha kiši men* ‘I am Tuhan’ and *men tuhaliir men* ‘I speak Tuhan’. The term *tuha* is a phonetic variant of *tuva/tuba*, an ancient name found in this area that is common across Sayan Turkic speakers and also various groups in the neighboring areas; for details, see Schönig (2006: 225-227).

Finally, it should also be noted that this same territory bears a special meaning for Mongols, since it is here, precisely at the river Arig that Činggis Khan’s ancestress Alan Goa ‘Alan the Fair’, was born. She belonged to the Qori Tumat tribe, who lived in northern Mongolia in the forest area stretching from the southwestern shore of Lake Baikal to Lake Kubsugul (de Rachewiltz 2006: 244-248, 857-858). Recently a three-meter statue dedicated to the worship of Alan Goa was erected near the small village of Chandaman Öndör, at a distance of approximately 40 km from Tsagaan Üür.

Language status and use

All Tuhan speakers are bilingual in Tuhan and Mongolian. Tuhan is both a non-dominant and a non-written variety and is only used as the in-group language. The status of Tuhan is rather low. It happened that I was able to meet some young Khalkha Mongolian inhabitants of the village who did not even know about the existence of the Tuhan people. The number of speakers with native competence of Tuhan does not exceed 50 individuals, all aged above 45. The number of passive and/or semi-speakers is difficult to estimate, and more research is needed to establish this. During my stay in the village of Tsagaan Üür, some 15 people came regularly to visit me, showing a vivid interest in Tuhan and asking me several questions concerning both language and history and expressing their wish to reactivate the language. A similar situation arose when I visited families in the countryside.

Tuhan has never been taught in the local boarding school nor are there presently any plans to do so. The situation is thus quite different than in the other Sayan Turkic-speaking areas of Mongolia, where some level of literacy in Tuvan, albeit in its standard form, i.e. the language of the Tuvan republic, has been achieved in recent decades. In the village of Tsengel, in the Bayan Ölgii region, Tuvan is currently taught in the local Tuvan boarding school as a result of a Mongolian-Tuvan educa-

tional project. Similarly, in the village of Tsagaan Nuur, in northwestern Kubsugul Aimag, some hours per week of Tuvan teaching are provided, even though not on a continuous basis. The teachers are locals who were trained in the Pedagogical Institute of Kyzyl.

Previous research on Tuhan

The available scholarly material on Tuhan consists exclusively of the publications of the Mongolian scholar L. Bold dating back to the 1970s and 1980s (see references). Bold's scholarly work deals predominantly with topics related to the sound system such as pharyngealization, long vowels and the phonetic structure of Mongol loans; that research, however, was not supported by instrumental acoustic investigations. Bold also dealt with more general aspects of Mongol borrowings. In his work, Bold does not mention the name *tuha* but labels the variety under discussion "Uygar-Uriankhay". Except for these works, all in Mongolian and rather difficult to find in the libraries of Ulaan Baator, Tuhan—referred to as Uygar-Uriankhay, following Bold's designation—is merely mentioned in some publications dealing with Sayan varieties of Mongolia (e.g. Sugahara 1999). Sanders (1993: 181-182) does not mention this group among the varieties listed under "Urianhai or Tuva". Furthermore, information on this Sayan variety from the *Ethnologue online encyclopedia* is rather incorrect and misleading. The *Ethnologue* attaches the label "Khöwsögöl Uigur" to a group consisting of 1000 individuals in Northern Mongolia in Kubsugul Aimag. The same group is also linked both to Tuvan and to Uyghur. In the latter case they are also reported to be Muslim, maybe being confused with the Hotons.

Thus, Tuhan remains under-investigated and is poorly documented in terms of modern standards of language documentation, as outlined for instance in *Essentials of language documentation* (Gippert & Himmelmann & Mosel 2006).

Unique linguistic features of Tuhan

Tuhan belongs to the Sayan branch of Northeastern or Siberian Turkic. It thus displays those features that characterize Sayan Turkic as a whole. Some of them are listed below:

- the sound changes CT $*-\delta-$, $*-\delta > -d-$, $-t$, e.g. *bedik* 'tall' < $*be\delta\ddot{u}k$, *bot* 'self' < $*bo\delta$ 'body'
- long vowels resulting from contractions in the sequence VCV, e.g. *ool* 'son' < $*o\ddot{y}ul$
- reflexes of original vowel length on the following consonant, e.g. $a^h t$ 'horse' < $*at$ vs. at < $*aat$ 'name'
- preservation of final $-*g$ in both stems and suffixes, e.g. *bay* 'tie' < $*ba\gamma$, *ĵaraĵliĵ* 'nice' < $*yara\ddot{y}li\ddot{y}$ 'useful, suitable'
- occurrence of the sound alternation $a \sim i$, e.g. *giriin* 'stomach' < $*karin$
- substitution of the privative suffix $*siz$ with the analytical construction [noun-*ĵok*], e.g. $a^h t\check{c}ok$ 'horseless'

- preservation of the assertive verbal marker *-ČIk* < **yUk*, e.g. *barǰk* '(s)he has indeed gone'

At the same time, Tuhān has its own specific features. It exhibits, on the one hand, certain features which distinguish it from the rest of Sayan Turkic, while it shares, on the other hand, some specific isoglosses with Tofan. As will be shown in the following, some features represent archaic retentions, whereas others should be considered as innovations.

Lexical features

Tuhān shows several lexical items that do not have formal correspondences in the other Sayan varieties or that display a different meaning. I will first comment on the following items: *toos* 'pig', *hös* 'cow', *gaška* 'white', *ǰirik* 'lip', *ingir* 'saddle', *mees* 'forest', *ǰilyǰ* 'very', *turaaǰer* 'tomorrow', *övökkey* 'bear', *bökčünə* 'wolf', *aldī* 'lynx'.

The lexeme *toos* 'wild boar' can be traced back to CT **toŋuz*. Correspondences of CT **toŋuz* are otherwise absent in the whole of Sayan Turkic. This term was generally substituted by a copy of the Mongolian item *qaban* (cf. Räsänen 1969: 216a and Hauenschild 2003: 221). On the other hand, to refer to the sow and to the suckling pig, Tuhāns employ the terms *megeǰe* and *toroy*, respectively. They both are copied from Mongolic; cf. Buryat *megeže* 'dikaja svin'ja (samka)' and *toroy* 'porosjonok (dikoj svin'i)' (Čeremisov 1973: 309b, 431a).

With regard to *bökčünə* 'wolf', a conceivable etymological hypothesis could put it in relationship with Mongolic *börte činua* 'blue-grey, or bluish wolf'. The fact that between the vowel and the plosive consonant of the first syllable there is some degree of disturbance in the airflow (which still requires instrumental verification) may lead to the assumption that this is the result of a dropped consonant (-r-?).

For 'cow', Tuhāns use the lexeme *hös*, which can be traced back to CT *(h)öküz 'ox'. All other Sayan varieties, on the other hand, display cognates of CT **ingek*. Among Turkic languages, Yellow Uyghur displays a form close to Tuhān: *kus* 'bovine, ox' (M. Roos, personal communication).

Gaška is the term generally used for 'white', e.g. *gaška dit* 'white larch', *gaška don* 'white dress'. Close cognates of this lexeme are documented already in Old Turkic with reference to an animal 'with a white head and a darker body' or 'with a white blaze on the forehead' (Clauson 1972: 671b). In several modern Turkic languages close correspondents of *gaška* are similarly used in describing animals. Kirghiz, however, shows close semantic correspondences to Tuhān, displaying *gaška* in the meaning of 'white, light' (Laude-Cirtautas 1961: 112-113). The rest of Sayan Turkic, on the other hand, displays *aq*. Traces of *aq* are, however, found in Tuhān as well. I was told that the river *Gaška Gem*, literally 'White River', is also referred to as *Ak Gem*.

The word *ǰirik* refers to 'lip' and can be traced back to CT **yaruk* 'a split, crack, breach; cracked, split' (Clauson 1972: 962b). Tuvan, on the other hand, displays *erin*

(< CT **erin* ‘lip’), whereas Tofan shows the compound noun *aas qidīl* (mouth border-POSS3).

The item *ingir*, probably of Mongolic origin (cf. Räsänen 1969: 166a), is used to refer to the saddle and, within Sayan Turkic, is exclusively found in Tuhān. On the other hand, the word *ezer* ‘saddle’ < CT **eđer*, common to all the other Sayan varieties, does not exist in Tuhān. Note, however, that the item *ezer* shows the development CT **δ* → *z* which is typical of Yenisey Turkic and not of Sayan Turkic (CT **δ* → *d*); cf. Khakas *izer*. Lena Turkic, on the other hand, is close to Tuhān in this respect, cf. Yakut *ijir* ~ *ijīr* ‘sedlo’, Dolgan *ijīr* ‘Rentierlastsattel’ (Stachowski 1993: 261). Common to all the Sayan varieties, including also Tuhān, is the occurrence of *ingiršak* ‘packsaddle’, a diminutive form of *ingir*.

The lexeme *mees* refers to ‘forest’ and shows close semantic correspondences and some formal similarities with Lena Turkic, e.g. Yakut *mas* and Dolgan *maas* ‘tree, wood’ (Stachowski 1993: 176). On the other hand, in Tuvan *mees* refers to ‘sunny side (of a mountain)’ and corresponding items in form and meaning are found in Altai and Teleut (Räsänen 1969: 336a). Tofan *mäs* refers to ‘grassy clearing on the southern slope of a mountain; the southern slope of a mountain without forest’.

As for the degree adverb *ǰylīy* ‘very’, e.g. *ǰylīy amdannīy* ‘very tasty’, its evolutionary trajectory might be viewed as follows: *ǰylīy* < **ǰylīy* < CT **yīy*- ‘to heap, to collect’ plus the deverbal nominal formant *-(X)gIXg*. On the Old Turkic form *yīyīyīy*, see Erdal (1991: 345).

The lexeme *turaaǰer* ‘tomorrow’ might be viewed as consisting of *turaa* (cf. Tofan *tura* ~ *turay* ‘tomorrow’), a nominal formation from the verb *tur-* ‘to stand up, to stand’, plus *ǰer*. This last element might be related to a CT nominal stem **yar* which, although not documented, can be assumed to be the nominal base from which both the Turkish adverb *yarın* ‘tomorrow’ and the Old Turkic verbal stem *yaro-/yaru-* ‘to be, or to become bright’ derive (M. Erdal, personal communication).

To designate the bear, Tuhāns use the term *övökkey*, which likely goes back to the Mongolian form *övög* ‘ancestor, grandfather’ (WM *ebüge*, Lessing 1995: 290a) plus the Mongolian caritative suffix *-Kay*. Thus, this term belongs to the category of euphemisms, a category of lexemes particularly rich throughout Sayan Turkic. Unlike the rest of Sayan Turkic, traces of CT **adiy* are not found in Tuhān.⁴

The term *aldī*, which means ‘lynx’ in Tuhān, differs from other Sayan varieties, like Tofan,⁵ Dukhan and Toju Tuvan, where the same item *aldī* is used with reference to ‘sable’. This item evidently also belongs to the category of euphemisms in

⁴ In this context, it is also worth noting that the lexeme *xayrexan*, a lexical copy from Mongolic (WM *qayiraqan* ‘merciful, gracious, beautiful’), which is a euphemism for ‘bear’ in many other Sayan varieties, occurs in Tuhān together with the adjective *uzun* ‘long’ as a euphemistic term for ‘snake’. This term also may be viewed as a mixed copy from Mongolic; cf. Khalkha Mongolian *urt xayrexan* ‘snake’ literally ‘long *xayrexan*’.

⁵ Rassadin (1971: 153) derives this lexeme from *al-* ‘to take’.

Tuhan. To designate the sable, Tuhan people use a copy from Mongolic, namely *bulayan*; cf. WM *bulayan*. In standard Tuvan the Turkic term *kiš* is used to refer to this precious little animal, besides *aldī*.

Yet another set of lexemes displays in Tuhan a phonetic shape quite divergent from the other Sayan varieties. The items *pī šīlaq* ‘cheese’, *tengere* ‘sky’, *eše* ‘father’, *he* ‘mother’, *gen* ‘bride’, *xi* ‘two’, *xion* ‘twenty’, *miha-* ‘to do like this’, *iha-* ‘to do like that’, *kaha-* ‘to do how’, and *haš* ‘cast iron cup’ are analyzed below.

As for the item *pī šīlaq* ‘cheese’, it rather departs from the rest of Sayan Turkic, which displays bisyllabic correspondents, e.g. Tuvan and Tofan *bī šītaq*, Dukhan *bī^h šītaq*. Structurally, all these forms go back to **biš-* ‘to come to maturity, to ripen’, plus *-I* (deverbal nominal formant) plus *-LA* (denominal verbal formant) and plus *-(X)k* (deverbal nominal formant). In this respect the Tuhan trisyllabic form is more archaic than the other Sayan varieties since it shows clear traces of the deverbal nominal formant *-I*; on the ergative deverbal nominal formant *-I*, see Erdal (1991: 340).

Tuhan people refer to the sky using the word *tengere*, which likely represents a copy of Buryat *tengeri* ‘sky’ (Cydendambaev 1954: 310b); also cf. Yakut *taŋara*. The rest of Sayan Turkic, on the other hand, displays forms going back to CT **teŋri*, e.g. Tuvan *deer*, Tofan and Dukhan *deeri*.

The Tuhan lexeme *eše* ‘father’ is phonetically rather close to Lena Turkic *ähä* ‘grandfather, bear’ (Stachowski 1993: 43). Whether Tuhan *eše* is etymologically related to Mongolian *ečiŋe* ‘father’ (Lessing 1995: 292a) and/or CT **äčü* ‘ancestor’ or CT **eči* ‘junior paternal uncle, elder brother’ (Clouston 1972: 20) remains an open question. The rest of Sayan Turkic, on the other hand, has back vocalic lexemes displaying an intervocalic affricate sound, e.g. Tuvan *ača*, Tofan and Dukhan *aĵa*. This shape is common to other Turkic languages of Siberia and China; for details see Nugteren & Roos (2006: 125).

The formal shape of *xi* ‘two’ differs from the rest of Sayan Turkic by dropping of word-initial *i-*; cf. Tofan *i ħi*, Dukhan *ixī*, Tuvan *iyi*. Similarly, deletion of the initial short vowel *i-* is seen in the lexeme *he* ‘mother’; cf. Tofan *i ħe*, Dukhan *ixē* and Tuvan *ive*, all going back to the form **ike*.

An interesting case of reduction to one syllable is the lexeme *gen* ‘bride’ < CT **gelin*; cf. Tuvan *xelin*, Tofan *helin*. Traces of *-l-* surface when the POSS3 suffix is added: *genni* ‘his bride’ vs. *genim* ‘my bride’, *geniŋ* ‘your bride’.

The pronominal verbs⁶ *miha-* ‘to do like this’, *iha-* ‘to do like that’ and *kaha-* ‘to do how’ depart considerably from the rest of Sayan Turkic: cf. Tofan *mīħja-*, *iħja-*, and *qaħja-*, Tuvan *mīnča-*, *iŋča-* and *kaħja-*, Dukhan *mīnĵa-*, *iŋĵa-* and *ganĵa-*. In Tuhan, apparently, the cluster *-nĵ-* occurs as *-h-*, which might have developed from **š*, i.e. *nĵ* → *š* → *h*. This topic is surely interesting from an Altaistic point of view.

⁶ Sayan Turkic pronominal verbs are verbal stems directly formed from the oblique stems of the demonstratives *bo*, *ol* and the interrogative pronoun *kay-* ‘which (one)’ with the addition of the suffix *-ča*; see Menges (1963: 134-136).

The lexeme *haš* ‘cast-iron cup’ displays a word-initial glottal fricative, whereas the rest of Sayan Turkic features an aspirated bilabial stop, e.g. Dukhan *p^haš*.

Finally, worth noticing are some forms with adverbial function which display in Tuhana a lower level of lexicalization in comparison with corresponding items in other Sayan varieties. The Tuhana adverb *ga^httap*, for instance, bears the meaning ‘in layers’ (layer-V.DER-CB), which is thus close to its morphological structure. On the other hand, its formal correspondents in other Sayan varieties, e.g. Tuvana *katap* and Dukhan *ga^httap*, bear the meaning ‘again’, thus indicating the following lexicalization process: ‘in layers’ → manner adverb ‘again’. Similarly, the Tuhana adverb *dikka* ‘firmly’, going back to *dik* ‘firm’ + the adverbializing suffix *-GA*, differs semantically from the corresponding forms in Tuvana and Dukhan, *dika* and *dikka* respectively, bearing the meaning ‘very’. As in the preceding case, the Tuhana term is more archaic. Tofana stands between Tuhana and the other Sayan varieties displaying *qa^httap* meaning both ‘again’ and ‘in layers’, and *dik:a* referring both to ‘very’ and ‘firmly’. To express the manner adverb ‘again’, Tuhana employs *daxin*, a copy from Mongolic (cf. WM *dakin*); also see below.

Copying from Mongolic varieties

Besides showing unique lexemes of Turkic origin which are not present in the rest of the documented Sayan Turkic varieties, Tuhana also displays many lexemes copied from Mongolic due to long-lasting contact with Mongolic varieties. Many of these items are not present in the other documented Sayan varieties, e.g. *boron* ‘rain’ (cf. WM *boru^hyan*, Buryat *boroo*) and *bula^hyan* ‘sable’ (cf. WM *bula^hyan*, Buryat *bulgan*). To refer to bread, Tuhans use the global copy of Khalkha Mongolian *talxi*, which occurs alongside *hileeme*, an older copy from Russian, common in this phonetic shape with Buryat (*xileeme*) and Tofana (*hilääme* ~ *hlääme*).

Copying also affects morphological structures. An example is the replacement of the suffix *-KsA* ‘to desire to X’ by the Mongolic desiderative suffix *-maar*, e.g. *am nanmaar men* ‘I want to go back home now’ instead of, for instance, Dukhan *am yan^hksaar men*.

A thorough investigation of the types of Mongolic borrowings and their stratification will surely bring important results especially in relation to the Lena-Sayan connection.

The palatal nasal sound *ɲ*

In many words, the palatal nasal sound *ɲ* occurs in word-initial position, whereas other Sayan varieties display a media lenis affricate. Some examples are listed below and contrasted with Tofana, Dukhan, Tuvana and Old Turkic.

Tuhan	Tofan	Dukhan	Tuvan	Old Turkic	Gloss
<i>nīmšak</i>	<i>nimjaq</i>	<i>ǰimǰak</i>	<i>čimčak</i>	<i>yumšak</i>	‘soft’
<i>nonak</i>	<i>nonaq</i>	<i>ǰonak</i>	<i>čonak</i>	<i>yonak</i>	‘saddle-pad’
<i>niŋge</i>	<i>niŋge</i>	<i>ǰiŋge</i>	<i>čiŋge</i>	<i>yinčge</i>	‘thin’
<i>naŋis</i>	<i>nunjus ~ nūūs</i>	<i>ǰangis</i>	<i>čangis</i>	<i>yaljus</i>	‘alone’
<i>naak</i> ‘lower jaw’	<i>naaq</i> ‘lower jaw’	<i>ǰaak</i> ‘lower jaw’	<i>čaak</i> ‘cheek’	<i>yaŋak</i>	‘cheekbone’
<i>naš</i>	<i>neš</i>	<i>neš</i>	<i>iyaš</i>	<i>iyač</i>	‘wood, tree’
<i>nan-</i>	<i>nan-</i>	<i>ǰan-</i>	<i>čan-</i>	<i>yan-</i> ‘to turn back’	‘to return home’
<i>noon</i> ‘thick, pregnant’	<i>noon</i> ‘thick’	<i>ǰoon</i> ‘thick, pregnant’	<i>čoon</i> ‘thick’	<i>yoŋun</i>	‘thick’
<i>non-</i>	<i>non-</i>	<i>ǰon-</i>	<i>čon-</i>	<i>yon-</i>	‘to whet’
<i>naa</i>	<i>nāā</i>	<i>ǰāā</i>	<i>čaa</i>	<i>yaŋi</i>	‘new’

Among these examples word-initial *n-* in the word for ‘tree’ represents a special case, since its evolutionary path can be reconstructed as follows: *naš* < **nāš* < **iyaš* < **iyaš* < **iyač*. Note that in this respect the Tofan and Dukhan cognates represent a more progressive degree of evolution than Tuhan, since the palatal nasal initial consonant has triggered fronting of the stem vowel.

The segment *n* is also found in initial position in lexemes copied from Mongolian, e.g. *numahay* ‘wild carrot’ (WM *yamaxay*). The change **ɣ-* > *n-* is also documented in the Alar Buryat dialect (Buraev 1968: 135), e.g. WM *yamar* ‘what, which’, Alar Buryat *namar*.

As for the Tuhan word *namaa* ‘goat’,⁷ it goes back to WM *nimaŋan*, whereas its Khalkha and standard Buryat correspondents *yamaa(n)* and *yamaan*, respectively, go back to *imaŋan*, the other form of ‘goat’ present in written Mongolian. Initial *n-* in the word for ‘goat’ is also found in Kachug Buryat (Mitroškina 1968: 53), in Tunka Buryat (Rassadin 1999: 125) and in the Baikal-Kudara subdialect (Budaev 2002: 155).

The palatal nasal sound *n* also occurs in Tuhan in word-medial and word-final position, e.g. *aškiŋak* ‘old man, husband’, *gurhiŋak*⁸ ‘old woman, wife’, *aŋak* ‘cup’

⁷ The rest of Sayan Turkic displays cognates of CT **ečkü*; e.g. Tofan *oškü*, Tuvan, Altai Tuvan, Dukhan *oškü*.

⁸ The terms *ašqiŋak* and *gurhiŋak* go back to CT **avičya* ‘old man’ and *kurtya*, respectively, plus the diminutive suffix *-čAk*. Cognates of these two terms occur throughout Sayan Turkic, e.g. Tofan *ašnaq*, Dukhan *aššak* and Tuvan *ašak*. Räsänen (1969: 304a) lists Soyot *kurɣayak* and Karagass *kuruǰak*, *kurud’ak*, *kuruyak*.

miriñak ‘snake weed’, *goñ* ‘sheep’, *tuñuγ* ‘hoof’. The last two examples are of particular interest since they show continuation of Old Turkic *-ñ-*, cf. *tuñoγ* and *koñ*.

Otherwise, Tuvan displays the lenis affricate *ʃ* where Old Turkic displays *ɣ-*, e.g. *ʃer* ‘place’ vs. Old Turkic *yer*, and *ʃaraγliγ* ‘nice’ vs. Old Turkic *yaraγliγ*.

Interestingly, whereas in Dukhan, Tofan and Toju Tuvan, the occurrence of *ʃ-* ~ *ñ-* in word-initial position—conditioned by the occurrence of a nasal sound later in the word—is a very aggressive feature that leads to the nasalization of the entire word, and sometimes (at least in Dukhan), of the entire sentence, in Tuvan there is no spreading of nasality.

Absence of word-initial spirantization

Sayan Turkic displays word-initial spirantization of initial velar stops, though not systematically. Tuvan, unlike all the other Sayan varieties, has not been affected by this phenomenon. Some examples are contrastively listed in the table below:

Tuvan	Tofan	Dukhan	Tuvan	Gloss
<i>gem</i>	<i>hem</i>	<i>hem</i>	<i>xem</i>	‘river’
<i>gin</i>	<i>hin</i>	<i>hin</i>	<i>xin</i>	‘navel’
<i>göl</i>	<i>höl</i>	<i>höl</i>	<i>xöl</i>	‘lake’
<i>gün</i>	<i>hün</i>	<i>hün</i>	<i>xün</i>	‘day’
<i>gat</i>	<i>qat</i>	<i>hat</i>	<i>xat</i>	‘wind’
<i>goñ</i>	<i>hoy</i>	<i>hoÿ</i>	<i>koy</i>	‘sheep’
<i>gara</i>	<i>qara</i>	<i>kara</i>	<i>kara</i>	‘black’
<i>gilin</i>	<i>hilin</i>	<i>hilin</i>	<i>xilin</i>	‘thick’
<i>gen</i>	<i>helin</i>	<i>helin</i>	<i>xelin</i>	‘bride’
<i>gül</i>	<i>hül</i>	<i>hül</i>	<i>xül</i>	‘ashes’
<i>gar</i>	<i>qar</i>	<i>gar</i>	<i>xar</i>	‘snow’
<i>gam</i>	<i>ham</i>	<i>ham</i>	<i>xam</i>	‘shaman’

The converb -GAs

The converb suffix *-GAs* differs from the rest of Sayan Turkic, which displays *-GAs̃*, e.g. Tuvan *gelges* vs. Tofan *kelgeš*, from *gel-* ‘to come’, Tuvan *ševerlees* vs. Dukhan *ševerleeš*, from *ševerle-* ‘to clean’, Tuvan *hi hongas gelir* ‘(s)he will come in two days’ vs. Tuvan *iyi xongaš geer*. Otherwise final *-š* did not develop into *-s* in Tuvan. This development might be fairly recent.

Aorist participle -iir

The aorist participle of polysyllabic vowel-final verbal stems has the form *-iir* which is neutral with respect to synharmonism. It thus diverges considerably from the rest of Sayan Turkic, which is quite monolithic in this respect, showing a regular aorist participle formation from stems with vowel outset by prolonging the stem vowel, e.g. Tuvan *baliktaar*, from *balikta-* ‘to fish’; for details on Tuvan and Tofan aorist forms see Johanson (1976) and Schönig (1989). A contrastive picture of aorist formation with vowel final verbal stems within Sayan Turkic is presented in the table below:

Tuhan	Tofan	Dukhan	Tuvan	Gloss
<i>aṅniir</i>	<i>aṅnaar</i>	<i>aṅnaar</i>	<i>aṅnaar</i>	<i>aṅna-</i> ‘to hunt’
<i>adayliir</i>	<i>adaylaar</i> ⁹	-	-	<i>adayla-</i> ‘to speak Mongolian’
<i>daariir</i>	<i>daaraar</i>	<i>daaraar</i>	<i>daaraar</i>	<i>daara-</i> ‘to sew’
<i>īyliir</i>	<i>īylaar</i>	<i>īylaar</i>	<i>īylaar</i>	<i>īyla-</i> ‘to cry’
<i>udiir</i>	<i>uduur</i>	<i>uduur</i>	<i>uduur</i>	<i>udu-</i> ‘to sleep’
<i>okšiir</i>	<i>oqšaar</i>	<i>oqšaar</i>	<i>oškaar</i>	<i>okša-</i> ~ <i>oška-</i> ¹⁰ ‘to kiss’
<i>uliir</i>	<i>uluur</i>	<i>uluur</i>	<i>uluur</i>	<i>ulu-</i> ‘to howl’
<i>īrliir</i>	<i>īrlaar</i>	<i>īrlaar</i>	<i>īrlaar</i>	<i>īrla-</i> ‘to sing’
<i>(ot) odiir</i>	<i>(ot) odaar</i>	<i>(ot) odaar</i>	<i>(ot) odaar</i>	<i>(ot) oda-</i> ‘to make fire’

Both the Tuhan aorist formation and that of the rest of Sayan Turkic can be traced back to Old Turkic *-(y)Ur*, used with stems ending in vowel; cf. Erdal (2004: 240). However, the Tuhan formation is more archaic; on the “standardization” of aorist forms in Sayan Turkic, see Schönig (1989). Noteworthy is also that Tuhan additionally shows some similarities with Khakas and Yakut in this respect. In Khakas the two verbs *par-* ‘to go’ and *kil-* ‘to come’ display the aorist suffix *-ir* (Baskakov 1975: 206), and in Yakut intraterminal aorist participle stem-final vowels merge with the initial suffix vowel into a long vowel *I* (Stachowski & Menz 1998: 425).

The aorist formation of stems with a final liquid also differs from the other Sayan varieties. Other than in the other Sayan varieties, the liquid consonants *r* and *l* do not drop, yielding a long contraction vowel. See the examples in the contrastive table below:

⁹ This stem is not documented in the Tofan-Russian dictionary of Rassadin (1995). However, since in Tofan the lexeme *aday* ‘Mongolian’ exists, in analogy to the verbal forms *tofala-* ‘to speak in Tofan’ and *orošta-* ‘to speak in Russian’, the stem *adayla-* may in all likelihood exist.

¹⁰ Metatheses are common throughout Sayan Turkic.

Tuhan	Tofan	Dukhan	Tuvan	Gloss
<i>gelir</i>	<i>geer</i>	<i>geer</i>	<i>keer</i>	<i>kel-</i> ‘to come’
<i>alir</i>	<i>aar</i>	<i>aar</i>	<i>aar</i>	<i>al-</i> ‘to take’
<i>beri</i>	<i>beer</i>	<i>beer</i>	<i>beer</i>	<i>ber-</i> ‘to give’
<i>bari</i>	<i>baar</i>	<i>baar</i>	<i>baar</i>	<i>bar-</i> ‘to go’

As seen in the last two examples, suffix final *r* drops in the presence of *r* in the stem.

The particle *gey* ~ *giy* ~ *gəy*

Unique in Tuhan is the occurrence of the particle *gey* ~ *giy* ~ *gəy*, which occurs sentence-finally and functionally corresponds to the element ‘thing’ common to all Sayan Turkic varieties, e.g. Tuvan *čüve*, Tofan and Dukhan *čime* ~ *čüme*. The element ‘thing’ occurs as the head of relative clauses literally meaning ‘the thing that X-es/will X’ or ‘X-ed’, whether it occurs with the verbal adjective *-Vr* or *-GAN*. See the Tuhan example below:

<i>Oozin</i>	<i>soonda</i>	<i>aǰidip</i>	<i>aǰidip</i>	<i>aǰıy</i>
that-POSS3	after	turn sour-V.DER-CB	turn sour-V.DER-CB	turn sour-ADJ.DER
<i>ǰıme</i>	<i>bile</i>	<i>hoıyup</i>	<i>eededer</i>	<i>gey.</i>
thing	with	to get thick-V.DER-CB	curdle-INTRA.VBN	PRTC

‘After that, letting it slowly turn sour with something sour, it gets thick and it curdles.’

Also cf. the Dukhan and Tofan examples below:

<i>A^hštap</i>	<i>suksap</i>	<i>ǰora:š</i>	<i>ol</i>	<i>i^hti</i>	<i>börü</i>
hungry-V.DER-CB	be thirsty-CB	move-CB	that	dog-POSS3	wolf
<i>bola</i>	<i>berıen</i>	<i>t^höyälıy</i>		<i>ǰıme.</i>	
become-CB	give-POST.VBN	history-ADJ.DER		PRTC	

‘It was constantly hungry and thirsty and that’s the story how it (the dog) began to turn into a wolf.’ (Dukhan: Ragagnin, field data)

<i>Unuun</i>	<i>bääri</i>	<i>kišiler</i>	<i>ol</i>	<i>oolni</i>	<i>ay</i>	<i>kišisi</i>
from there	after	person-PL	that	boy-ACC	moon	person-POSS3.SG
<i>dep</i>	<i>ülegärläär</i>		<i>ǰıme.</i>			
say-CB	story-V.DER-INTRA.VBN		PRTC			

‘The thing is that thereafter people named him moon boy’ (Tofan: Rassadin 1996: 10)

Mongolic languages show close functional and structural similarities in the use of the corresponding noun ‘thing’. Close are also the bonds between these uses of *gey* ~ *giy* ~ *gəy* and the uses of the demonstrative pronoun *ol* in sentence-final position in Old Turkic; see Erdal (2004: 323). As for the origin of *gey* ~ *giy* ~ *gəy*, a possibility is to trace it back to the interrogative pronoun **qañu*.

Isoglosses with Tofan

Tuhan shares some lexical and morphological isoglosses with Tofan which are not present in the rest of Sayan Turkic. Below I will comment on some cases.

Tuhan and Tofan display *andiy* ‘yes’ < CT **antay* ‘like that’, whereas the rest of Sayan Turkic shows the item *iyye*. Whereas Tuhan and Tofan display the items *jo yaš* ‘near’ and *čoo yaš*, respectively, meaning ‘near’, Tuvan, and Dukhan display *čook* and *žook*, respectively. As for the adjective *žara yliy* ‘nice’, analyzed previously, only Tofan displays a close cognate, *čara yliy*.

Some other lexemes also show correspondents in Tuvan; however, they display a phonetic shape that is closer to Tofan. The lexeme *uyh'u* < CT **uygu* is phonetically closer to Tofan *u žhyu* than to Tuvan *uygu*. As for *aňak* ‘cup’, Tofan displays a nasalized form, namely *aňaq*, whereas the corresponding Tuvan and Dukhan forms do not display any kind of nasalization.¹¹ The lexeme *miriňak* ~ *muruňak* refers to ‘snake weed’ and might be traced back to CT **burun* ‘nose’ plus a diminutive suffix (L. Clark, personal communication). Tofan displays *muruŋaq* ‘burnet, sanguisorba’ and Tuvan *mīrak* ‘korni živorodjaščež grečiški’ (Rassadin 1971: 208). Some Sayan varieties like Dukhan display the semantically but not formally corresponding term *mexer*, a borrowing from neighboring Darkhat Mongolian, whose speakers are well known *meker*-gatherers.¹²

Another interesting Tuhan-Tofan lexical correspondence concerns the word for ‘snow’. In both Tuhan and Tofan *gar* and *qar*, respectively, refer only to ‘snow’ but not to ‘age’. For my consultants it was very hilarious when I used the word *gar* meaning ‘age’ as in Dukhan. To refer to ‘age’ both Tuhan and Tofan display a copy of Mongolian *nasin* ‘age’.

An important sound feature shared by Tuhan and Tofan is the presence of traces of original Turkic long vowels, e.g. Tuhan *daaš* ‘stone’ < CT **taas̄*; cf. Karagas *tāš* (in Katanov’s material) and Karagas *tayš* (in Radloff’s material) (Menges 1959: 646). In other instances, Tuhan diphthongs represent a more recent development. For example *moit* ‘Manchurian trout, lenok’ corresponds to Karagas *māät* (Castrén 1857: 129a) and to Toju Tuvan and Dukhan *mīit*. Note that this lexeme is originally bisyllabic, cf. Jakut *biyit*.

With regard to morphology, an important isogloss connecting Tuhan with Tofan is the occurrence of the analytical expression of the numeral decade ‘two’ + *on* ‘ten’ for ‘twenty’: Tuhan *xi on* (*xi* ‘two’ + *on*) or *xion* (thus a diphthong) and Tofan

¹¹ See, e.g., Menges (1959: 652) for Tofan (Karagas) and Yakut nasalization.

¹² “As for what is called *meker*, Potanin and Dolbejev have remarked that in autumn, by poking (into the ground), (the Darhad) find where the rats have gathered the roots of a wild plant of the buckwheat family and stored them in their burrows. They get from some burrows up to 10 pounds of *meker*, which they make into bread to eat throughout the winter. It is not harmful to the health; on the contrary, it is nourishing.” (Žamcarano 1991: 68-69). In Tsagaan Üür both Mongols and Tuhans prepare foodstuff with snake weed, often mixing it with sugar and butter.

i *hyon*. This feature is also common to Western Yugur (Nugteren & Roos 2006: 119). The rest of Sayan Turkic displays forms going back to CT **yegirmi*, e.g. Tuvan *čeerbi*, Dukhan *jeervi*.

As for verbal morphology, Tuhan shares with Tofan the occurrence of the suffix *-V/ydlrI*, a low-focal intraterminal, structurally formed by the converbial suffix *-V/y* and a reduced form of **turur*; e.g. *tutadıri* ‘fetches/will fetch’ from *tut-* ‘fetch’, *jöriidiri* ‘goes/will go’, *bardıri* ‘goes, will go’, *gördürü* ‘sees, will see’. As in Tofan, in many instances the suffix-initial vowel is lost, especially with verbal stems displaying a final liquid. Rassadin labels this form as “nastojščee obyčnoe vremja” (1978: 201). Tuvan and Dukhan, on the other hand, display the formally close forms *-V/ydlr* and *-V/ydlrI*, respectively. According to Sat (1966: 395), the Tuvan form *-V/ydlr* expresses an action that occurs at the moment of speech and which is acknowledged by the speaker on subjective grounds through feelings and senses, most probably excluding sight. Dukhan *-V/ydlrI* is a non-focal intraterminal item which expresses facts that the speaker acknowledges on the basis of his/her perception; see the Dukhan example below:

Am bir kiši ejk so^hktaydıri.
 now one person door knock-ITER-INTRA.NF
 ‘Somebody (as I hear) is now knocking at the door’.

Tuhan and Tofan share the presence of the postposition/clitic ‘upwards’. See the example below:

Am mees šaari ünüp šidavas men, but ba^hk.
 now forest upwards exit-CB be able-INTRA.LF.NEG I leg bad
 ‘I can’t move up to the forest (to hunt), my legs are hurting.’ (Ragagnin, field data 2009)

Tuvan and Dukhan, on the other hand, display *örü* ‘upwards’. All Sayan varieties, however, display the antonym of *šaari*, namely *kodu* ‘downwards’ < CT **kodı*.

Tuhan/Tofan *šaari* might be traced back to a deverbal nominal form of CT **čik-* ‘to go out’ and the directive suffix *-GARU*. *Šaari* might also go back to an old directive form of CT **yok* ‘high ground’ (H. Nugteren, personal communication); in this case, however, the development **y* > *š* is problematic.

Besides, Tuhan shares with Dukhan and the Toju dialect of Tuvan (but not with Tofan) the directive suffix *-KIdI*. Standard Tuvan uses the suffix *-Že*, while its western dialects, including Altai Tuvan in China and Mongolia, show *-DİvA*, and Tofan exhibits *-šA*.

Finally, Tuhan shares with Tofan the occurrence of the conditional copula *erse*. The rest of Sayan Turkic differs in this respect; see the example below:

Ol bistin joojaš bolgan erse men gösküzer men.

that we-GEN near become-POST PRTC I show-INTRA I
 ‘If we were near, I would show it (to you).’ (Ragagnin, field data 2009)

Another isogloss connecting Tuhan exclusively with Tofan is the occurrence of the modal particle *jan* ~ *jon*. Rassadin (1995: 89b) explains Tofan *jon* as ‘modal’ *naja častica usilivajuščaja pros’bu*; note the following two examples:

Men siiŋ a ʔiŋin aleyŋ, jon? Če, al!
 I you-GEN horse-2POSS.SG-ACC take-VOL1.SG PRTC Yeah take-IMP2.SG
 ‘It is OK that I take your horse, isn’t it? Sure, take it!’ (Rassadin 1995: 89b)

Bilir men jon!
 know-INTRA.LF I PRTC
 ‘I know it of course!’ (Ragagnin, field data 2009)

Finally, Tuhan and Tofan share the absence of the so-called *participium nondum facti*, denoting events that have not yet taken place (Johanson 1998: 46).

Thoughts on historical background including some speculations on classification

The territory of present-day South Siberia has always been a melting-pot of peoples, cultures, and languages. Long-lasting contacts have formed isoglosses between Turkic varieties and other varieties, whether genealogically related or not. The South Siberian Turkic languages share many features, but at the same time have their own characteristics. The Siberian branch has emerged relatively recently. Its varieties have developed on the basis of heterogeneous substrates. Many grammatical features typical of this area can be explained as cases of imposition due to non-Turkic substrates or as cases of adoption of new features due to non-Turkic adstrates. The contact languages of this area are Russian, Mongolic, Tungusic, Samoyedic, Ob-Ugric, and Paleosiberian varieties. The linguistic history of the different nomadic groups of this area is largely unknown, but intermixing at various linguistic levels is obvious for all the varieties concerned. Sayan Turkic is not an exception in this respect.

With regard to Tuhan, the history of the Tuhan people before the twentieth century cannot be traced independently of that of other groups who identify themselves with the ethnonym *tuva/tuba*. According to the prevalent view of historians and Turcologists, the populations bearing the ethnonym *tuva/tuba*—or at least some of them—were originally Samoyeds, i.e. speakers of languages belonging to the easternmost branch of the Uralic family, and Yeniseians (i.e. Paleosiberians). They are thought to have assimilated to Turkic peoples in various historical periods. A people bearing the ethnonym Tu-po was first registered in the Chinese annals of the Sui-Shu dynasty (581-618) at the turn of the 7th century. In the annals of the Chinese T’ang-Shu dynasty (618-906), the same people is recorded as a component of the T’ieh-le

tribal confederation, of which the Uyghurs and other Oghuz peoples also formed part, indicating that some had already been Turkicized (Clark 1997: 3). According to these records, during the times of the Turkic first and second steppe empires (551-744) and the Uyghur steppe empire (744-840), the Tu-po lived south of the Kirghiz, south of the small sea (most probably Lake Baikal) and north of the Uyghurs; see Menges (1958-1959: 90). This geographical description corresponds to modern Tuva and its neighboring territories. It is assumed that some non-Turkic groups, possibly Samoyeds and Yeniseians (or maybe others) shifted to Turkic, i.e. started to be assimilated to Turkic, especially at the time this region became subject to the Uyghur steppe empire (744-840). Plenty of archeological remains, including monuments written in the runiform script of the standard language used by the Uyghurs, support this idea (Clark 1996: 20).

In the second half of the first millennium AD, a Turkic-speaking population documented in the Orkhon inscriptions as the *Üč Quriqan*, the three Kurykans, used to inhabit the areas surrounding Lake Baikal, and maybe also Kubsugul. Probably with the arrival of the Mongols, the linguistic unity of the *Üč Quriqan* started to dissolve. The first groups to split, presumably seeking refuge from the Mongol armies, were the forefathers of the Yakuts (Sakha), who moved north along the Lena river and reached their present locations. Evidence from Sakha epic tales and other folklore materials confirm this northern migration of the ancestors of the Sakha. In their new homeland they apparently mixed with local populations, mostly of Tungusic origin, and changed their original lifestyle, which was characterized by cattle and horse breeding, to reindeer breeding, a lifestyle otherwise not characteristic of Turkic peoples (Pakendorf 2001: 139). However, Schönig (1999: 86) dates the migration of the ancestors of the Yakuts from the vicinity of Lake Baikal to the Lena basin to the sixteenth century. Other groups originally belonging to the Kurykans had most likely mixed with the Mongol newcomers, thereby forming the Buryats, who still live in the areas surrounding Lake Baikal. In the Secret History of the Mongols (§ 239), *tuba* are listed among the *hoy-in irged*, the fur-hunting peoples of the forest, who were scattered over a wide area in the north at that time. No information on the language or languages spoken is provided in that source. It can be assumed that assimilation of some tribes to Mongol (and assimilation from Mongol to Turkic for others) started either just before or at this time.

Another group that is supposed to show some degree of continuity with the Kurykan Turks, due to their having been part of the Turkic unity mentioned above, are the Tofa. Linguistic evidence shows that among the varieties that form Sayan Turkic, it is Tofan which shows closer bonds with Lena Turkic; see Schönig (1999: 79-80) for details. In this context Tuhan surely gains importance. Departing from Tofan, which belongs to the Taiga Sayan group of Sayan Turkic, spoken by people engaged in reindeer breeding, representing most probably the Turkicized Samoyed mentioned above, Tuhan people might be the continuation of those Kurykans clans that did not move north, who were not assimilated by the Mongolic-speaking ancestors of the Buryat, and who do not represent Turkicized Samoyeds. A thorough

documentation of Tuhān will surely offer linguistic material for a better analysis of the Lena-Sayan Turkic subgroup within Northeast Turkic. Linguistic material from a “lowland” or steppe variety of Tofan will surely provide new insights for diachronic Turcological studies.

Based on these considerations, the entire Sayan language complex might be classified according to two axes: the steppe/taiga axis and the Tuvan/Tofan axis. To the steppe group belong standard Tuvan and its dialects (with the exception of the Toju dialect and probably some varieties of the Tere-Khöl area) as well as Altai-Sayan varieties in China and Mongolia, and Tuhān. On the other hand, the taiga group consists of Tofan, Dukhan, the Toju variety of Tuvan and some varieties of the Tere-Khöl area, as well as Soyot of Buriatia (Rassadin 2005); on this classification also see Žukovskaja et al. (2002: 165-166).¹³ The lifestyle of the components of the latter group was characterized by reindeer-breeding and hunting. Since reindeer breeding is not a characteristic type of animal husbandry among Turkic peoples, it can be safely assumed that many, if not all, groups forming Taiga Sayan Turkic might represent those clans of Samoyed origin that shifted to Turkic.

Summary

The lexical, phonetic, and morphological features discussed above have shown the unique position of this variety within Sayan Turkic. With respect to further research, the author of this report has conducted preliminary fieldwork and is working at the moment on processing the collected materials.

Even though Tuhān is highly endangered, there are still sufficient fluent speakers to allow a grammatical description. This fact combined with the community’s interest and support, is surely encouraging for the prospect of providing a full description whose outcomes will be important both for the Tuhān people and for linguistic Turcology.

Transcription and abbreviations

The Cyrillic hard sign *ъ*, used to denote glottalization/pharyngealization is transcribed as *ʕ*. The corresponding phenomenon of preaspiration in Dukhan and Tuhān is indicated with the superscript *ʰ*. The Cyrillic orthographical forms of Turkic and Mongolic languages have been transliterated into Latin characters according to standard practices. Common Turkic (CT) forms are quoted according to Clauson (1972), with minor transcriptional differences. Written Mongolian (WM) forms are quoted according to Lessing (1995).

¹³ On some isoglosses of taiga Sayan Turkic, see Ragagnin (2006).

Abbreviations

ABL	ablative	DIR	directive	NF	non-focal
ACC	accusative	GEN	genitive	OBL	oblique stem
ADJ.DER	adjectival derivation	INTRA	intraterminal	POSS	possessive
CAUS	causative	LF	low-focal	POST	postterminal
CB	converb	ITER	iterative	PRTC	particle
COND	conditional	LOC	locative	V.DER	verbal derivation
DAT	dative	N.DER	nominal derivation	VBN	verbal nominal
		NEG	negative	VOL	voluntative

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