Khamnigan language in Mongolia: preliminary field notes of 2019 expedition

Khamnigan language is an endangered language spoken in Mongolia, China and Russia. Mongol Khamnigans live mainly in the North-East of Mongolia in Khentii and Dornod provinces. Some settlements are located in Töv and Selenge provinces. Many Khamnigans moved to Mongolia from Russia in the 19th – early 20th century.

Our data was collected during the summer expedition in July-August 2019 to Dornod (Bayan-Uul, Tsagaan-Ovoo somons), Khentii (Dadal and Binder somons) and Töv (Khögshidiin Khotkhon somon) provinces of Mongolia. We also met some Khamnigan speakers in Ulaanbaatar (they moved to the capital from Khentii and Dornod provinces) and Choibalsan city.

The number of Khamnigans is rather small. Till 2000 they were officially considered as part of the Buriad nation and had no separate mention in the census results. In 2010, according to the National census data the number of Khamnigans was 537, while the actual number of speakers is much less, hardly more than a few dozens by our estimation. All Khamnigans in Mongolia are fluent in Khalkha Mongolian. During our expedition we met Khamnigans belonging to the following tribes: Ba: ɢaś (Khögshidiin Khotkhon), Ba ɢś (Sartu:l (Dadal), Ba ɢaśid (Bayan-Uul), Ba: ɢśinár (Khögshidiin Khotkhon), Bar ɢudžin (Binder, Dadal), Dulig:ad (Binder, Bayan-Uul), Dzaltu:d (Tsagaan-Ovoo), Dzamal (Dadal), Gurinkha (Khögshidiin Khotkhon), Khalzad (Binder), Khatagin (Dadal), Khasac (Bayan-Uul), Noyan Dulia:d (Binder), Sartu:1 Kharcana (Bayan-Uul), Śar ɢašadzar ɢa Sartu:l (Dadal), Talac (Bayan-Uul), Üdzö:n (Dadal), Khügdü:d (Bayan-Uul), Ca ɢa:dai (Dadal).

According to J. Baatartsogt (62, Bayan-Uul), who had a good command of Khamnigan, the Khamnigans call themselves Qalimig. It is surprising because it is definitely the same name as Xalima which is the usual name for Volga Kalmycks. Our other language consultants did not know this designation, with an exception of J. Damdin (70, Bayan-Uul, Tsongol Buriad), who confirmed that Xalima is also used as a general name for Khamnigans. Other native speakers only admitted Qamni ɢ an, Khamni ɢ an or Khamni ɢ an Buriad as a self-designation.

According to our data only elderly people, usually above 60, can speak Khamnigan to a certain extent and even they do not speak Khamnigan in everyday life, they use Khalkha Mongolian instead. Many Khamnigans preserve some phonetic peculiarities of their original language while speaking Khalkha. The main features of this “Khamnigan pronunciation” are those:

- /k/ instead of /x/ in both RTR and ATR words.
- absence of reduction in non-initial syllables
- palatal /ś/ instead of /š/
- labial /ö/ instead of /e/

Khamnigan language is known as the most phonologically archaic Mongolic language. As Janhunen puts it (Janhunen 2003: 85): “Khamnigan Mongol is characterized by a unique property, in that it is the single most conservative Mongolic language spoken today. Khamnigan Mongol simply lacks almost all the innovations that have affected its neighbours since Middle Mongol times”. In the phonological system of Khamnigan that we witnessed in Mongolia 2019 there are many innovations mainly, but not exclusively, due to heavy interaction with Khalkha and to less extent with Buriad, although many archaic features are definitely preserved. We would not present here a general description of Khamnigan phonetics and

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4 Our team consisted of Anna Tsendina, Olga Mazo and Ilya Gruntov.
phonology, referring the reader to Yu Wonsoo (2011: 17-34) and K. U.-Kõhalmi (1959: 165-171). However, several remarkable features should be pointed out:

1) Fricative /x/ vs. plosive velar /k/ and uvular /q/ are in free variation. Even one and the same person might pronounce e.g. Qamnigan and then Xamnigan in fricativized khalkhiced form.

2) Regressive assimilation of /i/ is generally absent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Xamnigan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>хүү</td>
<td>хор</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>хүү</td>
<td>хар</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Various speakers pronounce the reflex of Proto-Mong. *si- as /ší/ or /ší/.


5) One of the few separating Khamnigan innovations is the evolution of Proto-Mong. *e into /ő/. J. Janhunen (2003: 86) notes that “in the case of *e, velarization is accompanied by rounding”, but prefers to designate the corresponding phoneme as /e/.

6) However Proto-Mong *e in *eGü sequencs gives /üGü/. Proto-Mong. *ő also turns into /ő/ like in Buriai.

B. Rinchen (1968: 81-83) describing the archaic features of Khamnigan speech provides highly interesting data about the reflexes of Middle Mongolian initial fricative /h-/.


2) Moreover, they contain forms without initial /h-/ in some of the words listed above: e.g. ukuri ~ ukeri ‘cows’ (1968: 91,95), arban ‘ten’ (1968: 92,93,94). K. U.-Kõhalmi who had recorded Khamnigan speech in the same Dadal somon as Rinchen did, but several years before, in 1957, had not published any data confirming the existence of initial /h-/ in Khamnigan. Materials of Mishig (Mishig 1961) also lack the words with initial h-, those words that started with /h-/ in Middle Mongolian demonstrate vowel Anlaut in his Khamnigan data.

Thus, it remains unclear what was the source of Rinchen’s data. Hüker ‘cow’ might probably be a loan from Evenki (Barguzin Evenki hukur4), but this explanation does not suit other cases.

It is well known that the Khamnigans have deep linguistic and ethnic connections with Evenki (Janhunen 1990: 7-10; Shimunek, Mõnhk-Amgalan 2007:29; Khabtagaeva 2017: 48). Rinchen (1968: 61-80) described the Evenki-Khamnigan diglossia in Mongolia and published several texts in Evenki dialect of Khamnigans collected in Dadal somon of Khentii province. This diglossia to a certain extent is preserved in Khamnigan communities in Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia (China) (Janhunen 1990: 13, Gruntov, 1966: 792).

Thus, Khamnigan demonstrates here even more archaic form than Written Mongol. It is hardly a hypercorrection, but it might have another dialectal source than the Written Mongolian form.

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4 B. Rinchen did not give translations, only Written Mongolian parallels, so the translation here is our conjecture.
Mazo 2015b: 165), but in Mongolia it is now definitely lost. Mongol Khamnigans do not use Evenki any more. None of our consultants\footnote{After the acceptance of the paper for print we found in our data the testimony of our language consultant A. Bat (Bayan-Uul somon) who claimed that there had been elders capable to speak both Mongolian and Tungusic varieties.}, including the most elderly ones (D.Tseden-Ish (born 1926), D. Nergüi (born 1929), N. Dolgorsüreng (born 1929), Tsendgombo (born 1930) remember that Khamnigans were bilingual in Evenki and Khamnigan even when they were small children. However, Baatsartsogt (62 years old, Bayan-Uul, Khentii) underlines that there used to be Khamnigan language (xamnigan hel) and Khamnigan pronunciation (xamnigan ayalu). Khamnigan pronunciation is the way to pronounce Khalkha words with Khamnigan phonetics while Khamnigan language was absolutely different but no one speaks it now.

Not only Khamnigan Evenki dialect became extinct but even the sphere of usage of Khamnigan Mongol is rapidly decreasing. Our language consultants usually were able to remember some songs and separate phrases in Khamnigan, few of them were able to produce a simple conversation in Khamnigan or short texts, and none of them used to speak Khamnigan in spontaneous dialogues with their neighbors. The Khamnigan speech is typically affected by code-switching, when a speaker starts the sentence in Khamnigan and finishes it in Khalkha. Lot of them were born in mixed families where one of the parents was Khamnigan, while another was Buriad or Khalkha. Besides, there was a widespread custom of children adoption in the North-Eastern Mongolia. Childless families very often adopted children from families with many children. Thus, many Khamnigan children grew up in Buriad families. On the other hand, we also met several Buriad persons who were brought up in Khamnigan families and learnt Khamnigan language from their foster parents. Khamnigans quite often married Buriad or Khalkha and the main language in such mixed families as a rule was not Khamnigan.

Many Khamnigans told us that when they were kids other children humiliated them calling Khamnigans the worst nation and Khamnigan language the worst language, their classmates laughed at their pronunciation, so they tried to speak Khalkha or Buriad in order to be like the rest.

All these factors along with the absence of education in Khamnigan are leading to the shrinking of language proficiency.

In recent years, some attempts have been made to revive the national identity of Khamnigans. S. Mönkzhargal established The Khamnigan Study Center (Hamnigan Sudlalin töv) in Ulaanbaatar. In 2018 he organized in Dadal the first international festival of the Khamnigan nation with the participation of Khamnigans from Mongolia, China and Russia. The next event is planned to be held in Russia in 2021. The Khamnigan Study center created Khamnigan’s flag and hymn, and published some materials on Khamnigan history, customs and folklore. In order to stimulate language revival in August 2020 the Khamnigan Study Center started to publish the newspaper ‘Xamnigan sudlal’ in Khamnigan language.

First materials on Khamnigan (Onon Khamnigan) language and folklore were collected in 1911 by Ts. J. Jamtsarano in Russian Transbaikalia and were prepared for publishing by D.Damdinov only in 1982 (Jamtsarano, Damdinov 1982). First studies of the Khamnigan language appeared only in the second half of the 20th century.

Although Mongol Khamnigans do not use their mother tongue in everyday life, they used it actively when they were kids and learnt a lot from their grandparents. Thus, it is quite typical when you ask a language consultant to say something in Khamnigan to get sentences like this:

*Kü:gö:, qangil-a: a śira amna:-garaati:
Son-Voc bucket-Poss a-bit-later bring-Imv2Sg
My son, please, bring the bucket later.

These phrases are grounded in the early memory of speakers. Likewise, they remember very well Khamnigan words and traditions concerning children and childhood.

**Finger names**

Mongolic people (and some other ethnic groups living in contact, e.g. Tuvans and Kazakhs) have a peculiar tradition of double naming of fingers. They use one set of names as a neutral, “anatomical” set of finger names, while another one is used to play with little children. During this game a grown-up person names fingers and makes the child repeat it. In some versions of the game the fingers talk to each other.

This lexical stratum is in active use while the speakers are in their early ages. That is one of the reasons while these names are preserved relatively well even among those Khamnigans who later ceased to speak their language and shifted to Khalkha.

The first “neutral” set of finger names is quite stable in North Mongolic (see Table 1), while the second one demonstrates high variability among Mongolic peoples and even within the same language or dialect. Sometimes special names are used for left and right hands, sometimes toes get specific names e.g. Khalkha *badag xurias* ‘second toe’, *gidžen bömbi*: ‘little toe’.

However, we will provide both sets of names for the sake of completeness.

Table 1. “Standard” finger names in North Mongolic languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>thumb</th>
<th>index finger</th>
<th>middle finger</th>
<th>ring finger</th>
<th>little finger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khamnigan (Mongolia)</td>
<td>örököi kuru:</td>
<td>dolo:wor kuru:</td>
<td>dunda kuru:</td>
<td>yadam kuru:; nörögüi kuru:</td>
<td>öği: kuru:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khamnigan (Russia)⁹</td>
<td>ereki:, erekei (357)</td>
<td>doli:obor, dole:ber (124)</td>
<td>dunda (333) eke xuru: (Delyun subdialect) (138)</td>
<td>nereği xuru: (224) ba:xan xuru: (Delyun subdialect) (33)</td>
<td>öği: (342)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalkha¹⁰¹¹</td>
<td>erxiy xuru:</td>
<td>dolo:wor xuru:</td>
<td>dund xuru:</td>
<td>nereği xuru: / yadam xuru:; tomči xuru (Potanin 1881:122)</td>
<td>čičiy xuru:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in brackets refers to the pages of the source book indicated in the first column of the table.

⁹ Damdinov, Sundueva 2015

¹⁰ BAMRS, 2001-2002

¹¹ Certain fingers in Khalkha might also have other descriptive or dialect names, not connected to “playing” names. E.g. index finger is also called yörn xuru: (lit. ‘sinister finger’), *dzax xuru*: (lit. ‘index finger’), *dzanax xuru*: (lit. ‘finger used for threatening’, perhaps a loan-translation from Tibetan *sdigs mdzub* ‘index finger’, lit. ‘threatening finger’, *uran xuru*: (lit. ‘dexterous finger’), *xomxoi xuru*: (lit. ‘greedy finger’), Ring finger is also called *ari:n xuru*: (lit. ‘pure/saint finger’), *nančid örgödög xuru*: ‘vodka offering finger’, *domč xuru*: (lit. ‘healer finger’).
Standard set of finger names in North Mongolic languages is quite uniform. We would not here dwell on details as it is not the main purpose of our paper, it is sufficient to say the following. There is a single term for thumb going back to Proto-Mongolian *herekei’thumb’ (Nugteren 2011: 353). The names for index finger are based on two stems: *dola- + war ‘lickable’ from *dola- ‘to lick’ (Nugteren 2011: 317) as in Khalkha, Buriad and Khamnigan, and *qomuqai ‘greedy’ as in Ordos and Kalmyk (actually in some regional variants of Khalkha as well). Name for middle finger uniformly goes back to *dumda ‘middle’ (Nugteren 2011: 319), except for Onon Khamnigan dialectal variant eke xuru: (lit. ‘big finger’) (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 138). Ring finger has two names: nere-ügei (lit. ‘nameless’) and idam ← Tib. yi-dam ‘personal deity, patron’ (see Sukhebaatar 1997: 231). The designation of the 4th finger as ‘nameless’ is also found in Sanskrit, Chinese, Russian, Finnish, Old Uyghur etc., at least in over 50 Eurasian languages (Zalizniak A. et al. 2002-2020), thus implying a loan-translation pattern, although the exact pathways of spreading of this loan-translation are not clear. The immediate source of Mongolic calque is presumably the Tibetan ming med ‘ring finger’ (lit. ‘nameless’), which in turn is a loan-translation from Sanskrit anāmikā id. The little finger name goes back to the Common Mongolic *čigečij / *sigčij.

The second set of names, used in games, is much more variable even within one language and etymologies are often unclear.

Table 2. Finger names used in games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>thumb</th>
<th>index finger</th>
<th>middle finger</th>
<th>ring finger</th>
<th>little finger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Khamnigan  | barwa:dai | batan tu:la, bačin tu:la, badam tu:la, baćan tu:la | ündür noyon | ükin qatun | b’ackan b:we, džidžig b:we, či: b:we, bičxan či:či:dei, bićxan b:we, bićžkan b:we |16
| (Montgolia)|           |              |               |             |               |
| (Russia)   | (43)      |              | (49)          |             |               |16

12 Cheremisov 1951
13 Ramstedt 1935
14 Mostaert 1968
15 Figures in brackets refers to the pages of the source book indicated in the first column of the table. Forms with the same lower index belong to the same set of 5 fingers.
16 Cf. Urianxai name for little finger biči bobei, biči bōbik recorded by Potanin (1883: 144).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buriad</strong>&lt;sup&gt;18&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>barba: dai (92), barba:xai (92, Ehir), bad ba:lai (81), bad ba:xai, bad baranxai (81)</td>
<td>see full list in the footnote&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to:xon tobšo (443)</td>
<td>toli ba:tar (Western dial.) (439); toli balsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Khalkha</strong>&lt;sup&gt;21&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>erlx mergen&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;, erlx xuru:3, bat erlx&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>erdene şonxor&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;, emč domč&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19th century Khalkha dialects</strong>&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>erke mergen&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;, batma erik&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>dombu čimb&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;, batan xuru&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Khalkha regional</strong></td>
<td>bañdárae&lt;sup&gt;24&lt;/sup&gt; (13), badañ γurae&lt;sup&gt;21&lt;/sup&gt; (13)</td>
<td>dunda nojno&lt;sup&gt;37&lt;/sup&gt; (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>18</sup> Cheremisov 1951
<sup>19</sup> badan tu:lai (Cheremisov 1951:81), batan tu:lai; Bokhan, Nukut, Ehir, Selenga batan to:loi; Alar, Tunka batan tö:lei; Zakamensk batan tö:lei; Alar batan xö:len (Cheremisov 1951:98), balan tö:lei (Cheremisov 1951:88); Alar, Nukut, Ehir, badan to:loi; Bokhan badan to:oi, badan to:oi; Oka badan tö:lei; Alar badan tö:lei; Unga badan xo:loi, badan xo:loi (Cheremisov 1951:81); Ehir, bartan tu:lai (Cheremisov 1951:95); bašin tu:lai (Balagan Buriad (Khangalov 2004: 270 - field materials of the second half of the 19th century.).
<sup>21</sup> Khalkha forms with indexes 1,2 are reported by our language consultant B. Davaasüreng, those with index 3 are from BAM PS.
<sup>22</sup> Potanin 1881: 122. Forms with indexes 1,2 belong to two different sets of finger names.
<sup>24</sup> short and wide
<sup>31</sup> Badan, come
<sup>37</sup> middle lord
<sup>42</sup> chieftain Shagdar
<sup>51</sup> short scribe
variants from\textsuperscript{23} | badná\textsuperscript{erênby}\textsuperscript{25} (13), erki mergen\textsuperscript{26} (20), erki bélei\textsuperscript{27} (12), badda wárañ, bat a börön, bőső aldag\textsuperscript{28}, yodili orgǒdǒg\textsuperscript{29} (13), xúlîtși nojoń\textsuperscript{30} (12) | badam xỳren\textsuperscript{32} (13) emtšė domtšo\textsuperscript{33} (20), erdene šoñxor\textsuperscript{34} (12) xowodog nojon\textsuperscript{35} (12), börö varyadag\textsuperscript{36} (15) | táxæe talbu\textsuperscript{38} (12) öndörä\textsuperscript{39} (13) toe tošlog\textsuperscript{40} (13) tsoxtšo nojoń\textsuperscript{41} (12) | xurù\textsuperscript{43} serdžem orgǒdǒg, nantšid orgǒdǒg\textsuperscript{44}, tartšig nimbù\textsuperscript{45}, duyur džasañ\textsuperscript{46}, ötö bātār\textsuperscript{47}, bitšig nádag, dzasaktša nojoń\textsuperscript{48}, otkan tšigtše\textsuperscript{49} (sic!), tšigtši berge, xirgye tošlog | dzăxañ tšeñker\textsuperscript{52}, dzăxan nojon\textsuperscript{53} (12), namæe uxadag, tšigtši mergen, tšigtši býwei\textsuperscript{54} (14)

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{23} Damdin B, Lubsangdagva Ch. 1975. Forms are cited in the transcription used in this publication. These names include not only game names, but other periphrastic names as well. In the footnotes we also cited literal translations from this paper although some of them are obviously folk-etymology.

\textsuperscript{24} (erênbù = Rinpoche??)
\textsuperscript{25} good archer
\textsuperscript{26} thumb-mitten?
\textsuperscript{27} lice killer
\textsuperscript{28} arrow riser
\textsuperscript{29} legislator lord
\textsuperscript{30} lotus-brown
\textsuperscript{31} physician and sorcerer
\textsuperscript{32} gem-falcon
\textsuperscript{33} glutton-lord
\textsuperscript{34} kidney extractor
\textsuperscript{35} broad-
\textsuperscript{36} tall one
\textsuperscript{37} hard-ground round hole for marmot
\textsuperscript{38} forehead-filipper lord
\textsuperscript{39} pure/saint finger
\textsuperscript{40} vodka offering
\textsuperscript{41} indigent-Nyambù
\textsuperscript{42} chieftain Dugar
\textsuperscript{43} larva hero
\textsuperscript{44} the youngest little finger.
\textsuperscript{45} small pale-blue
\textsuperscript{46} little lord
\textsuperscript{47} small kid
\end{flushleft}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordos (field data)⁵⁵</th>
<th>batalai₁, badaŋ hūren₂, badmairan₃</th>
<th>badaŋ hūren₁,₃, badmairan₂</th>
<th>towtairan₁, uul temee₂, oyion dombo₂</th>
<th>xočigor baatar₁, usun hayirčig₂, orgi xudalči₃</th>
<th>sigčii mu₁, sigčii bū:we₁,₃</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We did not manage to find any terms of the second set in Kalmyk. All our Kalmyk language consultants claimed that there was no such double-naming of fingers in Kalmyk. The only trace we found was the term öndr ölê (Ramstedt 1935: 304) ‘der Mittelfinger (in der Kindersprache)’. Ramstedt’s word might indicate that the system of children finger names had been present in Kalmyk at an earlier stage but later was lost.

The Khamnigan names for thumb, index finger and small finger are similar to Buriai. However, the names of middle finger and ring finger ündür noyon ‘high lord’, ükin qatun ‘daughter-lady’ to the best of our knowledge have no exact cognates in other Mongolic languages.

The name of the index finger in Khamnigan presents an interesting etymological problem. The second component of Khamnigan name tu:lai is literally translated as ‘hare’. However, comparison with Buriai forms shows that there are plenty of variants, including tö:lei and tö:lei. Here we agree with A.Dybo (Dybo 1995: 25) who proposed the connection of this Buriai form with tö: ‘measure of length, distance between the ends of outstretched thumb and middle finger, span’. Later this form became folk-etymologically reanalysed as tu:lai ‘hare’. The first component have remarkable phonetic variation batan, bačan, bacan, bačin, badam, badaŋ, bartan, balan which could not been reconstructed to a single form. This diversity may indicate that the original root became the subject of later contaminations with such roots as bu: ‘firm strong’, bu:čim ‘emergent, in hurry’, badam ‘lotus’ etc. Definitely connected are Turkic names of the index finger: Şor pådiŋkol (< padiŋ-kol), Uzbek dial. badam barmaq, Turkish dial. badem barmaq, badam barmaq, bade parmak, badi parmak; Turkmen dial. bādām barmaq; Kyrgyz badalakei, badal jūrōk, and, perhaps, Tatar dial. balan barmaq (Dybo 1995: 24-25). A.Dybo (1995: 27) proposes that Mongolic forms can be borrowed from Turkic, while Turkic forms in their turn may have emerged from the Iranian source, e.g. *barţ-* ‘big, high’ > Persian baland, with various reflexives of -rţ- cluster in Iranian languages.

Khamnigan barwa: dai ‘thumb’ on the first sight looks like an onomatopoeic derivate from a certain depictive verb (Cf. e.g. Buriai depictive verb barbiy- ‘to hang loose, to hand down (of lips) or barbay- ‘to be shaggy’, which are quite far semantically). However, if we take into account such Buriai forms as Alar bad ba:rin, Bokhan bad baxai, Unga bad baranxai ‘thumb’ (Cheremisov 1951: 81), Khalkha bad bairag ‘big toe’, Khalkha badda wāraŋ (Damdin B, Lubsangdagva 1975: 13), Ordos badmairan etc., we may speculate that in case of Khamnigan barwa: dai and Mongolic forms mentioned above we have a distorted Turkic loanword, the source of which might be something like *badam barmaq* (see above under the index finger). Because the inner form of the Turkic source was not clear for the speakers of Mongolic languages and due to specific playing context of its usage it became the subject to various contaminations, reanalysis and metathesis. The same name for thumb and index finger can be used even within Mongolic: see Ordos situation where badaŋ hūren and badmairan can both express the meaning of thumb and index fingers in different idiolects.

Khamnigan names for the little finger consist of two components, where the first means ‘small, little’: biči:an, dżidźi:ig. The second component is either bū:we’i ‘child, kid’ (cf. Khalkha či:ći: ma:mu: lit. ‘little finger + kid’) or či:ći:wei:dei. In the latter case the root is the anatomical name for the little finger či:ći:, while the formant -dei is the typical antroponymic affix, thus making a human name from the name of a finger. Proper names are widely used in these playing designation of fingers, e.g. Khalkha names: duyur dżáesēon ‘chieftain Dugar’, šagdar dżáesēon ‘chieftain Šagdar’.

⁵⁵ hard-ground boot
⁵⁶ Ordos terms badmairan and badaŋ hūren can be used as names for both thumb and index finger in different sets.
Namesgiving practices
We asked our interlocutors how they choose the name for their own children or how their own names were chosen. We manage to identify the following patterns:

Parents or relatives choose the name:
- Parents give the name at their own discretion. E.g. one of our interlocutors was born on the bank of the river during the season migration, so the parents chose the name *Tunalaag* ‘transparent’.
- Parents and grandparents write the proposed names on pieces of paper and put them into a vessel with rice or wheat grains. Then one of them shakes the vessel until one of the names comes out.

Ritual specialists choose the name:
- Parents may ask lama for the name of the child. Usually the lamas give the names of Tibetan origin. Another option is to give the name themselves but later ask lama for approval.
- Parents may ask shaman for the name (only one case in our data).

Doctors give the name
- Quite often doctors or maternity nurses gave the name to a child. In many cases they were Russian and correspondingly the names were also of Russian origin. However, these names not necessarily were conventional Russian names. One of our interlocutors was named *Dźowron* ← Russian *žavoronok* ‘lark’ because he cried too much and loud at mornings (*žavoronok* is a Russian word, but by no means Russian name). Although his parents changed his name before school it is still used as a kind of a secret name. S. Ginema (born 1953) mentioned that a child can have two or three names, e.g. one of her friends was named *Sumya*; by a nurse because he was born on Monday, but at his registration the official declined this name and required a new one, so the child was registered as *Otgonbayar*. However, he is still *Otgonbayar* for official situations and *Sumya*: for friends and relatives.

Random passerby chooses the name:
- Parents may ask a random passerby for a name. One of our language consultants was named *Pavel* (typical Russian name), because the random passerby in his case was a Russian. At the time of entering school the parents changed his name to a Mongolian one.

Name is predicted before birth
- One of our interlocutors Tserendulam (80 years old) has seven children, whose names include component *Gombo*. When she was pregnant she by chance met a little boy who told her: “*Please, bring Gombo, I want to play with him*”.

Changing names
The practice of changing the name is wide-spread among Mongolic peoples. Khamnigans are no exception. The name can be changed in case of illness or ill-fate. (See e.g. Kalmyki 2010: 244-245, Mitroshkina 1987: 57-61 etc.). We recorded a case when a child named *Gandor dz* was seriously ill and his name was changed into *Altangerel*. After the recovery he again officially became *Gandordz* (although at home his relatives still used the short name *Gerel* for him).

In some cases a lama can recommend a person to change his or her name if it is too “heavy”. It means that the reason for a person’s misfortune in life is due to the wrong choice of name which is incompatible with the person. Heavy names are the names of famous historical leaders, khans, mountains or deities.

Our interlocutor’s name was *Oyunceceg* (given in hospital by a doctor). When her elder brother named *Altai* (name of the mountain and the deity of the mountain) died her parents went to lama. Lama told them that the name of a great mountain did not fit the boy. Besides, he said that *Oyunceceg* is not a good name either, because it contains component *ceceg* ‘flower’, and flowers blossom in spring and die in autumn. Thus, her parents changed her name to a euphemistic name *Mönbiš* (lit. ‘not this one’).

It was a regular practice in case of frequent infant death, that the parents give the newborn child a euphemistic name to protect it from the evil forces. It may be changed later to a more conventional name. One of our language consultants was born in a family where several children had died soon after birth. Her
mother passed her three times under the spotted dog’s belly and gave her the name Gülügü ‘puppy’. But the girl was afraid to be mocked by schoolmates, so before entering school they went to the monastery and the lama gave her a new name Badmagaraw ‘white lotus’ (a Tibetan name).

Namesakes

In certain speech acts some names became tabooed. E.g. you may not address your namesake (or a namesake of your parents/parents-in-law) by name. The taboo varies within the community, not every language consultant confirmed the existence of this taboo. However, we found the evidences of this taboo in various parts of Mongolia, not only among Khamnigans.

There are several terms used to designate namesakes and to address them.

1. amida: ‘namesake’ Cf. Onon Khamnigan amidai (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 21), Buriat amidai (Cheremisov 1951: 52), Ordos amidä: (Mostaert 1968: 20), Khalkha am’dai, amidina:, amidanai, Bargut amid}: This is the usual designation of a namesake in Mongolic languages.

2. xecü: nertei ‘with a hard name’. This is a general tabooistic name, used in various parts of Mongolia, not only for humans, but also for wolves or other animals, see, e.g. (Gruntov, Mazo, Solovyeva 2016: 47, 55).

3. nere negtei ‘with one name’.

4. andaɢdzai ‘namesake’ (cf. Evenki andak ‘friend’ (Vasilevich 1958: 31) + ǯa (Denominal affix (Vasilevich 1958: 755)).

5. ү:r ‘namesake’.

Besides we found also a jesting Buriad designation šix negtei ‘with a single ear’ used by Buriad and Khamnigans in Tsaga:n Owo: (Dornod province).

The names of parents, elder relatives or husband are also subject to tabooing, especially for women. This practice was widely spread in the Mongolic languages at earlier times (e.g. Aalto 1971, Rudnev 2011 etc.). Our Khamnigan interlocutors also recall some fragments of this practice which is mostly out of use now. E.g. it's a taboo to call your husband by name, you should use the word übegün ‘old man’ or kösö:n ‘old man’. If a name coincides with a usual object you can not name this object with a conventional name. E.g. if the name of your husband or elder relative contain Süxe ‘axe’, then you should call an axe čabčigč (Nomen Actoris from čabći- ‘to chop with an axe’).

If you are addressing a person whose name is the same as your elder relative’s then you should greet him periphrastically, e.g. a:win nert, sain u:? lit. ‘How are you, having my father’s name?’.

Euphemisms

In many languages the words connected with death are substituted with different euphemisms. In Khalkha, for example, the verb üxe- ‘to die’ in neutral speech is usually substituted with standard euphemistic expressions, such as nas bara- (lit. ‘lifetime is over’) or burxan bolo- (lit. ‘to become Buddha’). In Khamnigan we found the following euphemisms: bürle:z bolo- ‘to become destroyed’, bürle: / bür: ‘has died’ (lit. ‘destroyed’); burxan bolo- (lit. ‘to become Buddha’), burxanda: oči:- (lit. ‘to go to Buddha’); üngürö: (lit. ‘passed away’), biye bara- (lit. ‘body is over’); gō:gdō- (lit. ‘to get lost’; passive from gō:- ‘to lose’).

Hunting is another “natural” lexical domain prone to euphemistic changes. Dangerous animals and games, hunting equipment or process, meat of the game are subject to various euphemistic substitutions. The Mongolic data collected in our previous expeditions are summarized in (Gruntov, Mazo, Solovyeva 2016). Khamnigans also have rich material for euphemistic studies.

The very process of hunting might be tabooed. Instead of ‘I’m going for a hunt’ they say ‘I’m going to the forest for gathering firewood’. Instead of ala- ‘to kill’ the hunters may use the word suna:-. Instead of particular names of the animals the hunters may use the descriptive designation tom yum (lit. ‘big thing’) for larger game and basa yum (lit. ‘small thing’) for a smaller one. Tom yum suna:- ‘killed a wild boar’. The hunting prey and the objects of hunting are often called anjai xişiq (lit. ‘hunting blessing’): anj ki:x gaddzara:sa:
aŋai xišíg güidzii:na ‘the game is running from the place of hunting’. Instead of saying ‘I brought you marmots’ meat’ they say tarbaganai xišíg xurtii: ‘The blessing of marmots has reached’.

As in other Mongolic languages the wolf is the animal with the most variety of euphemistic terms. The neutral name čono is rarely used, instead we recorded the following names: danzan axai (lit. ‘elder brother Danzan’), kör:ei amitan (lit. ‘Steppe animal’), kör:ei noqoi (lit. ‘Steppe dog’), xecü: nert (lit. ‘with a hard name’), ulia: (lit. ‘howling’), bo:xoï (lit. ‘blocking’)? from bo: -‘to tie’, saral bo:xoï (lit. ‘grey blocking’), xüxe (lit. ‘blue’), küü bu:ral (lit. ‘blue and light-yellow’), kör:ei subqu: (lit. ‘Steppe thing walking unnoticed’), bu:ral xanγai (lit. ‘Grey-haired Xangai’), bulgan daxatai (lit. ‘with sable coat’). Bear is called ba:xaldai, oin amitan (lit. ‘forest animal’), xövči:n amitan (lit. ‘taiga animal’), xar ütügüs (lit. ‘black old man’); cf. Khalkha ōtōg ‘old man; bear’). However, some of our respondents claimed that the bears live nearby Khamnigans and do not present any danger for them, thus it is not necessary to use tabooed names for them. When a Khamnigan hunter comes to the bear’s log he should say the following formula:

Ütügüs, či ē?:6 an bol džiŋsa?: astavtei õm6? bol büsō?:59 taialgtei ‘Bear, if you are a man (lord), please take off your hat/crown (lit. ‘the button of rank worn on top of the hat’), if you are a woman (lady), please, take off your belt’. The speakers explain it as a warning to the bear in order not to kill a pregnant she-bear or a bear with cubs accidentally.

Snake is called urs amitan (lit. ‘long animal’); urs qorqoi (lit. ‘long worm’), lušin amitan (lit. ‘animal of Lus (the deity of the water source)’) or just qorqoi ‘worm’. Fox is called dzalitai šar (lit. ‘cunning yellow’). Marmot is called xulgar šar (lit. ‘short-eared yellow’).

**Hunting lexicon**

Another lexical domain where Khamnigans preserve a considerable amount of lexicon and customs is hunting. It has been a traditional activity for Khamnigans who were famous among locals as good hunters. Having killed carnivorous animal Khamnigan hunters used to make nine incisions in the muscles of the animal’s neck, so anyone passing by can easily learn that the prey was killed by a Khamnigan hunter.

Khamnigan hunters appealed to the spirit of nature Bayan Xanγai (lit. ‘rich Khangai’) saying:

“sö:xör, sø:xör, sö:xör”. Etymology of these words is not clear, but the native speakers explain them as an incantation to make spirit bring to the hunters more animals in future. Another variant of hunting incantation addressed to Bayan Xanγai or Bayan Delxiy (lit. ‘rich world’) sounds like “ba:r ba:r ba:r” or “ba:r ba:r ba:r” bayan delxiy mini xišíge: xayrlaragti: ‘Bar-Bar-Bar, oh Bayan Delxiy, send me your blessing’. Bayan Xanγai ba:r ba:r ex ecég elenceg xulangcagtaia: mini: gandzagand ire:ć ‘Bayan Xangai, bar bar, with your mother, father and grandgrandparents, come to my hunting bags’. The structure of this incantation, i.e. threefold repetition of a word is typical for Khamnigan formulas. See e.g. mōndō: mōndō: a form of traditional greetings (from Proto-Mongolian * mend₃ ‘health’)

60 or ga:raw ga:raw ga:raw dzaï also used as a greetings or shamanistic invocation.

Quite often Khamnigans hunt wild boars. There is a proverb:

gasai ala-xu-du maxa-tai,
Swine kill-PART-DatLoc meat-COM
alda-xu-da baxa-tai amitan
miss-PART-DatLoc joy-Com animal
If you kill a swine you’ll get meat, if you’ll miss you’ll get joy. (Because boar hunting is a highly stressful event).

There are special words for wild boars of different ages: mivi ‘a three-year old wild boar’, šašir (or cacai) ‘two year old wild boar (with tusks)’ (cf. Onon Khamnigan cacai (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 337)).

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56 variant: snoop/xa:n ‘lord / khan’
57 variant: titme: ‘crown’
58 variant: xatan ‘lady’
59 variant: udža: ‘long sleeveless garment worn by women over the dress’
60 Burlats and Kalmysk use just single mend as a greeting.
Wolverine is called dzantaki ← Evenk. dzantaki: (Vasilievich 1958: 150) (cf. Onon Khamnigan zantaki: (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 151), Buriad zantaxi id. (Cheremisov 1951: 266)).

Dog is not a subject to euphemistic change, however, in Khamnigan we recorded many alternative names for this animal:


Evenki lexical influence

Due to the aforementioned diglossic situation Khamnigans of Mongolia absorbed many Tungusic loanwords into their Mongolic language. However, there is not too much left in the contemporary usage. A. Shimunek and Y. Mönkh-Amgalan (2007: 34-41, 61) recorded following 17 words of presumably Evenki origin:

- bүгүтүнө ‘mosquito’
- гогор ‘to bark’
- дөрөгөө ‘mischievous, misbehaved, hyper (e.g. of children)’
- зүмүгеө ‘house’
- ичиг ‘summer boots’
- ичикөө ‘elder sister’
- йинакон ‘dog’
- каваргаа ‘musk deer’
- камниган ‘Khamnigan’
- көр ‘dried animal hide with hair intact (of gazelle?)’
- курайка ‘brother-in-law (elder sister’s husband)’
- күпөө ‘dried gazelle hide’
- пөрги- ‘to blow air through one’s closed lips like a horse snorting’
- сохоро- ‘to cry’
- түгөсөөл ‘tree trumpet’
- үпөр ‘son’
- үтөө ‘son’

During our fieldwork we managed to collect a number oflexical items of presumably Evenki origin, some of them are presented below.

1. andagdzai ‘namesake’ ← Evenki andak ‘friend’ (Vasilievich 1958: 31) + ža (Denominal affix (Vasilievich 1958: 755)).
3. dünküle ‘to clink glasses’ ← Evenki dung-mi ‘to beat’ (Vasilievich 1958: 125).
7. gogoroi ‘dog’ ← Evenki gogor ‘bark (n.)’.

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10. *kirikdö*: ‘bad (e.g. behaviour, words, clothes)’ (yamar *kirikdö*: yum ümsö:č? ‘what an awful thing do you wear?’). Cf. Evenki *kirikeg*! ‘fie! (interjection)’ (Vasilevich 1958: 605). In this case the Evenki origin is not certain.


20. *tūtū- ‘to walk slowly’ ← Evenki *tutu-mi:* ‘1. to crawl 2. to crawl away 3. to move away 4. to waddle, to walk, waddling from side to side’ (Vasilevich 1958: 405).


It is not clear whether the words *mönöki, inesai* and *inakun* are all borrowed from the various dialectal variants of Evenki *ńinakin* ‘dog’, but if it is the case, then the formation of Khamnigan language might be much more complicated and involve interaction with several Evenki adstrats.

**Russian lexical influence**

A considerable share of Khamnigans moved to Mongolia from Russia in the beginning of the 20th century. That is why Khamnigans use a lot of Russian borrowings in their speech. Most of them are shared also by Buriad living in Mongolia and other inhabitants of regions near Russian border.
1. **adiyal** ‘bed cover, coverlet’ ← Russ. _odeyálo_ ‘blanket’. It’s interesting that the blanket preserves it’s Mongolic name _kündžiõ_, while the Russian borrowing is used for the bed cover.


6. **balsan** ‘hut made of sticks and branches’ ← a back-loan from Russ. _balagán_. Cf. Manchurian Khamnigan _balsan_ ‘Russian wooden house ’ (Gruntov, Mazo 2015b: 169); Onon Khamnigan _balsan_ ‘hut of branches’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 39). In Russian this word is most probably of Mongolic origin.

7. **batiːnx** ‘boots’ ← Russ. _botínki_ id.


14. **culki** ‘stockings’ ← Russ. _čulki_ (Pl). Here Russian plural form is borrowed.


17. **duraːkd̥a-** ‘to play cards’, _küdzüri duraːkd̥a-‘to play cards’ ← Russ. _durák_ ‘name of a card game’. _küdzüri_ ‘playing cards’ is also a Russian loanword (← Russ. _kozyr_ ‘ruff, trump card’), but the latter might be originally borrowed into Khalkha _xødžóri_ and later entered Khamnigan from Khalkha.

20. džarxo: ‘pieces of meat fried in cream’ ← Russ. žarkóye ‘id.’
22. ɢə:lstu: ‘necktie’ ← Russ. галстук ‘id.’
23. ɢə:lstu: ‘necktie’ ← Russ. галстук ‘id.’
25. ierodrom ‘aerodrome’ ← Russ. аэродром ‘id.’
26. iri:ba ‘fish’ ← Russ. рыба ‘id.’
31. ma:slo ‘butter’ ← Russ. масло ‘id.’.
32. marmela:d ‘marmalade, jelly’ ← Russ. мармелад ‘id.’
34. maudzer ‘Mauser rifle’ ← Russ. маузер ‘id.’
35. mišo:g ‘sleeping bag’ ← Russ. спальный мешок ‘id.’
36. moršíg ‘a kind of shoes made of cow skin tightened at the ankle with a lace’ ← Russ. Amur dial. moršni ‘a kind of shoes made of one piece of skin tightened at the ankle with a lace’ (Starygina 2013: 125). Variant po:šíg (see below).
37. mompase: ‘montpensier candy’ ← Russ. монпенсьє ‘id.’
38. morxo:w ‘carrot’ ← Russ. морковь ‘id.’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan morxo:bxo (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 204) ← Russ. морковка ‘id.’.

40. owdi:- ‘to offend, to insult’ ← Russ. obídet’ ‘id.’ (One of the few borrowed Russian verbal roots in our data, in Manchurian Khamnigan speech there were more borrowings of verbal roots, see (Gruntov, Mazo 2015b: 176-177)).

41. pa:ika ‘stick’ ← Russ. pálka id.


43. palic ‘wheel rim’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan palica ‘wheel radius’ ← Russ.dial. pálec ‘wheel radius’ (SRNG 1990: 168). It is not clear whether there is a real shift of meaning or our language consultant just made a mistake.


45. paxla:ška ‘flask, vessel’ ← Russ. baklážka id.


47. piče:n ‘cookie’ ← Russ. pečén’e id.


51. polk ‘shelf’ ← Russ. pólka id.


57. qali:wr / xali:wer ‘small bore rifle’ ← Russ. melkokalíbernaya vintovka id.
58. qaminda: / xaminda: ‘commandant’ ← Russ. komendánt id.
63. saba:ka ‘dog’ ← Russ. sobáka id.
64. sama:lo’t ‘airplane’ ← Russ. samolóť id.
68. sati:n ‘sateen’ ← Russ. satín id.
70. síttec ‘chintz’ ← Russ. sítec id.
75. suxaː‘rusk’ ← Russ. suxâr id. Cf. Onon Khamnigan suxari ‘rusks’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 76, 188).
77. tróxlinėik ‘3-line rifle’ ← Russ. tryoxlinėika id.
78. tūes ‘a special vessel made of birch bark’ ← Russ. tūyes id.
80. ūrůːm ‘shot glass’ ← Russ. ryúmka id.
81. vaːlenx ‘felt boots’ ← Russ. válenki id. It is interesting that although here the plural form was borrowed (válenok is singular form), the final vowel has dropped in contrast to the other cases of borrowing the plural forms from Russian: see baːreški. Cf. Onon Khamnigan baːlinxa, baːlinxu id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 32).
82. vareːni ‘jam, confiture’ ← Russ. varéniye id.
85. xomuːt ‘collar, yoke’ ← Russ. xomút id. Cf. Onon Khamnigan xomuːs (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 324)
86. xormuːsl ‘carrying pole, rocker arm, yoke’ ← Russ. koromíslo id.
88. yapoːška / yapoːšk ‘flat round cake’ ← Russ. lepyôška id.

In the following glossary we tried to avoid including those Khamnigan words that regularly correspond to their cognates in both neighboring languages Khalkha and Buriad with trivial phonetic correspondences (/k/ instead of /x/ etc.), those words were consistently recorded in Yu Wonsoo’s work (Yu Wonsoo 2011: 95-189). Rather we tried to collect here those words that are absent or rare in Khalkha or Buriad, have peculiar semantic, morphologic or phonetic development, differ in the contexts of usage or are cognate with only one member of Buriad / Khalkha pair.

Glossary (not including words from previous two chapters)

1. aːšir, aːširxan ‘later, a bit later’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan aːšar ‘by evening, later’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 9).
2. adza: ‘(paternal) grandfather’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan adža: id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 15), Khalkha adzai bu:ral ‘grey haired (of old persons)’.


4. ana ɢ u ‘bad, ugly’

5. aqai ‘elder brother’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan axai id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 29), Buriad axai (Cheremisov 1951:71).


8. aс ra- ‘to bring’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan aс ra- (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 29), Buriad asar- (Cheremisov 1951: 69), Khalkha acra- ‘id.’

9. ba:r ‘a kind of hunter’s incantation (usually repeated twice or trice).’

10. baču:da- ‘to get angry’.


12. baila:na ‘the top of the milk; creams’. Noun derivative from the verb baila: ‘cause to be’. The Khamnigans put milk into the wooden vessel and leave for the night, it is called süne: baila: na- then take off the top layer, which is baila:mc.

13. bacagan ‘daughter’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan bacagan (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 49), Buriad basagan (Cheremisov 1951: 97)).

14. bōlo ‘to sing’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan bōle- ‘to perform a shamanistic ritual’ < bō: ‘shaman’. It’s interesting that Mongolian Khamnigans use this word in non-shamanistic context as a neutral verb for singing.

15. bōrkö ‘good, well; well done’. awu mini l ügüldür l aya:šinaga: bōrkö:r uga:ša:d l büdžigind yawadž bolku gej kölösön ‘Father told me yesterday: “you may go to the dances if you wash dishes well”’. Bōrköl baina ‘that’s great’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan berke, bōrkö id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 90).

16. boro- ‘to bark (of a dog)’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan boro- ‘to lash out barking; to bark’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 65).


19. bǔlуг dze: ‘a term of endearment to the relative’s children’

21. *bürle* -‘to die’. Cf. Khalkha *bürle* -‘to be destroyed; to die’. In Modern Khalkha it is a very rare word, in Khamnigan it is one of the main verbs for ‘to die’. Its absence in the dictionary of Onon Khamnigan (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015) is remarkable.


24. *čac* -‘muscles of the animal shin’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan *čica* ‘tibia, shin’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 345), Khalkha *čica* ‘extremities; legs and arms’.

25. *čirgo:la_:o* -‘long leather strap’.


27. *coqu* -‘forehead’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan *coxo* id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 338). Khalkha *co xu* has a more narrow meaning ‘the top of the forehead’, Buriad *soxo* ‘forehead’ is used only in several dialects (Cheremisov 1951: 407).


29. *doin* -‘part of food to be burnt as an offering to deities during hunting or funerals’. Cf. Dagur *doiγ* ‘offering’ (Poppe 1930: 76).

30. *dörgönö* -‘fidgeting, restless, energetic (of kids, especially boys)’, *dörgönö:- / dörgönö:tö-‘to fidget, to be always in motion (of kids)’. Shimunekand Mönkh-Amgalan (2007: 36) suggests Evenki *derū:gi*- ‘to tire (trans.)’, but this etymology faces both semantic and morphological issues.


32. *dza: laxan* -‘1. young (e.g. relative to the speaker, “younger than me”); 2. narrow (e.g. of a road)’, *dza: lad: a* -‘at my early age’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan *dza:la* -‘small, young; child; few’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 145-146), Khalkha *dža:l* ‘little, child’, Buriad *ža*: ‘little, a bit’ (Cheremisov 1951: 246), *za:l* ‘a bit’ (Cheremisov 1951: 255).


34. *dzutara:ncas* -‘loser, luckless man’

35. *ga:raw* -a kind of greeting or shamanistic invocation (usually repeated trice).

36. *g’alba* -‘Venus; star; lightning’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan *gilba* -‘to shine’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 101); Khalkha *g’alba* -‘flash, glitter, lightning’, Buriad *gilbama* ‘glittering, shining’ (Cheremisov 1951: 167).
37. gö:gd- ‘to die’ < passive from gö: ‘to loose’ < from Proto-Mong *geye- ‘to loose’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan ge:gede: ‘to fall behalf; be abandoned; to die’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 113), Khalkha ge: ‘to loose’.

38. göle- ‘to gather (e.g. cattle)’

39. gorgön ‘wife’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan gergen, gorgön id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 113); Buriad gergen id. (Cheremisov 1951: 189); Khalkha gergiy id.

40. göwicöldö- ‘to fight each other’. Cf. Khalkha göwšildö- id.

41. ičikö:, öčikö: ‘elder sister’. Schimunek and Mönkh-Amgalan (2007: 36) give one form ičikö: and suggest Evenki origin from eki:n ‘elder sister; aunt, mother’s or father’s younger sister’ which is dubious phonetically. This form might be related to Dagur aška:, ačaka: ‘mother’s elder sister’, ačxa: ‘elder brother’s wife; mother’s elder sister’ (Todaeva 1986: 132) and hardly connected to Onon Khamnigan egeči, ogöči ‘elder sister’. (Damdinov, Sundueva 354), Khalkha egč id, Buriad egeše (Cheremisov 1951: 722).


43. itxuncas ‘kind of stick with sharp end used in hunting’

44. kör:łö: ‘bay-brown (horse color)’.

45. köntöglö- ‘to be angry’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan kentegle- ‘to swear; to get angry’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 194), Khalkha xentegle- id.


50. kügsin ümbö: ‘father’s mother, paternal grandmother’


52. mə:nar, manu:s ‘we’

53. miviš ‘a three-year old wild boar’

54. muxur’u:la- ‘to ride (the car, motocycle)’ lit. ‘to roll, twirl’ qoyula: muxur’u:lya ‘let’s go for a ride’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan muxari- ‘to roll over’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 206), Buriad muxari- ‘to roll’ (Cheremisov 1951: 321), Khalkha muxri- ‘to roll, to turn over’.
55. **naacu kügsin** ‘mother’s father, maternal grandfather’.  
56. **naacu ümbö**: ‘mother’s mother, maternal grandmother’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **naaca** ‘maternal relatives’; Ulhun-Partiya Khamnigan **naacu ümbö**: ‘mother’s father’; **naacu übö**: ‘mother’s mother’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 212); Khalkha **naac** ‘maternal relatives’.  
57. **nilbusu** ‘1. tears 2. saliva’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **nilbusa(n), nilbusu(n)** ‘tears’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 217), **nisu(n)** ‘saliva’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 218); Khalkha **nulims** ‘tears’, Buriad **nyolboho(n)** ‘tears, saliva’ (Cheremisov 1951: 342).  
58. **nitu** ‘locality, native place’, **nitu la-** ‘to live somewhere’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **nitu, nitiy** (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 218), Khalkha **nuta** ‘locality, native place’.  
59. **ölpönö** ‘fidgeting, restless, frolic (of girls)’. See also **dörgönö**.  
60. **ömbö**: ‘grandmother’ cf. Onon Khamnigan **ümbö**, **ömbö** (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 302). B.Khabtagaeva (2017: 54) proposes the development from Literary Mongolic **emegen** ‘old woman, grandmother’ to Onon Khamnigan **emeg~ ömög~ ömb**, Mongolian and Manchurian Khamnigan **eme**.  
61. **önidkö** ‘eye-brow’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **nidke, ünidkü, enidkü, önitkö** (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 215). The form is most probably related to Buriad **nidxe** ‘eye-brow’ (Cheremisov 1951: 358). But the initial epenthetic vowel is irregular.  
63. **öwkö-** ‘to go all over, to travel all over’.  
64. **palći- / pilći-** ‘to swim’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **palći-** ‘to flounder in the water, to strike about in the water’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 237). ??Cf. Buriad **palšaɢ ana-** ‘to squelch through the mud’ (Cheremisov 1951: 383).  
65. **porći-** ‘to shrink’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **burći-** id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 75).  
67. **qumr** ‘the roof of dzümügjö:, traditional Khamnigan hut; mountain top’  
68. **samaŋ** ‘wife, especially elderly wife’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **samaŋ, hamagani** id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 246); Buriad **hamagani** id. (Cheremisov 1951: 644).  
69. **šaru:s** ‘barbecue, meat roasted on a sharpened stick’ (< **šar-** ‘to roast’). Cf. Onon Khamnigan **širu:šu** ‘meat of an animal slaughtered for guests’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 351).  
70. **šašir** (or **cacar**) ‘two year old wild boar (with tusks)’. Cf. Ulhun-Partiya Khamnigan **cacari** id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 337).  
71. **šidzigne-** ‘to get angry’ .  
72. **šines** ‘larix,larch-tree’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan **šnūsū(n), šinėse(n)** id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 350); Buriad **šenehe(n)** id. (Cheremisov 1951: 716).  
73. **šigi** ‘like, as, similar’ (postposition). Cf. Khalkha **šiğ, Buriad šeşi** (Cheremisov 1951:714) ‘id.’  
74. **širam** ‘pancake’ < **šira** ‘to fry’
sö:xör a kind of hunter’s incantation (usually repeated twice).


sun- ‘to kill (euphemism)’

ta:na ‘wild garlic’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan ta:na ‘wild garlic’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015:269); Khalkha ta:na ‘wild leek’.

talxa:rc ‘a kind of dish: soar milk curds boiled in meat soup’. A composite word including ar ‘curds’ as a second component. The first part talx coincides with talx ‘bread’, but bread is not contained in this dish.


taraki ‘head’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan taraki(n) id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015:272), Buriad tarxi id. (Cheremisov 1951:429), Khalkha tarxi ‘brains’. Only one language consultant used this word, others claimed that tolgoi is the only word for ‘head’.

tatu:r ᵇa ‘tongs’ < tata- ‘to pull’. In Onon Khamnigan, Buriad and Khalkha tatu:r is derived from the same verb and has a wide range of meanings (Damdinov and Sundueva 2015:274, Cheremisov 1951:431).

tawic ‘kind of creams’ < tawi- ‘to put’.

tö: tende ‘very far away’

tödö:d ‘they’ (Gen. tödö:si:n), ödö:d ‘they (near deixis)’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan tede:n, tedö:n, tödö:n ‘they’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015:286), Kurulga Khamnigan ede, edö:n ‘these; they’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015:354).

tögnö ‘meatballs’

tosgoru: xudas ‘sweep well’. Interesting case of semantic development. It might be originally a loan-translation from Russian: kolodec-zhuravl ‘crane well’ > tosgoru: ‘crane’ + xudas ‘well’, but later a contamination with the phonetically close verb tosgoro- ‘to turn upside down’ occurred.


tōgö:rō- ‘to go astray, to get lost’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan tō:ri- ‘to loose one’s way’ (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015:279), Khalkha tō:ri- ‘id.’ The rare case where Khamnigan preserved intervocalic -g- lost elsewhere.


ü:r ‘namesake’


uliasgar ‘1) pejorative name for a dog 2) bitch, female dog 3) wild homeless dog 4) wolf 5) a wolf and dog hybrid’.
95. үүрү- ‘to cry’. A. Shimunek and Y. Mönkh-Amgalan proposed a Tungusic etymology for this word (Evenki upuren ‘to purse one’s lips’ (Shimunek, Mönkh-Amgalan 2007: 40)), but this comparison looks semantically far-fetched.


97. ücügüldür ‘yesterday’. Cf. Onon Khamnigan ücügülder, ücügelder id. (Damdinov, Sundueva 2015: 307), Buriad ücügelder id. (Cheremisov 1951: 519), Khalkha үүгдүр id.

98. xapursa– ‘to chew’.

99. xarjta ‘the back side of cattle shin’ Cf. Onon Khamnigan xart ‘shinbone’ (Damdinov and Sundueva 2015: 319), Buriad xart ‘shinbone’ (Cheremisov 1951: 557), Khalkha xarj ‘humerus’.

100. xatle: ‘stitch, seam’. Breaking of vowel harmony in this word may imply a loanword, but the source is unknown.

101. xu:gi– ‘to ride (the horse)’.

Folklore sample
We collected many pieces of oral folklore. Here we’ll cite one riddle (3) told by D. Byambasüreng (Ulaanbaatar, originally from Dadal, Khtenii, 64).

(3) Ündür-ei bö:rindü ülen-ei xadžu:du
High-Gen kidney-DatLoc intestines next.to

Köke mantan uja: gö:če: gõsõ:mbi
Blue big rope loose loose-PST-1Sg

Törö:n-iijg olson kün-iijg
This-Acc find-PST person-Acc

mũngõ:r molixo-wi
money-Instr deceive-1Sg

torgo:r tolixo-wi
silk-Instr pay_back-1Sg

Tentative translation: ‘Near the kidneys in the height, next to intestines I’ve lost a blue big rope. I won’t pay money to the person who will find it, I will pay him with silk’.

The answer is dölü: ‘spleen’. The riddle refers to the custom of using cow’s spleen as a gluing material while sewing national clothes deeli.

CONCLUSION

In Mongolia, the Khamnigan language is on the verge of extinction. Young people prefer to speak Khalkha Mongolian, and for older and middle-aged speakers Khamnigan is not the language of everyday communication. Total number of speakers amounts to few dozens. Absence of education in Khamnigan and
the general derogatory attitude to the Khamnigan language and Khamnigan speakers from Buriad and
Khalkha population in the past (according to numerous Khamnigan testimonies) accelerated the process of
language shift. Only in recent years some attempts for national identity revival became visible.

The Mongolic-Evenki diglossia recorded by B. Rinchen in 60-s and preserved to a certain extent
among Khamnigans in China is now completely lost in Mongolia, and even the most elderly interlocutors do
not remember the parallel use of the Khamnigan Evenki and Khamnigan Mongol within community. Evenki
influence in the past manifests via a number of loanwords still in use.

Khamnigan language in Mongolia preserves a number of archaic phonetic features, however we
have not found any consonant reflexes of Middle Mongolian initial fricative /h-/ mentioned by Rinchen.

In this paper we presented a part of our lexical materials and folklore samples along with
description of some customs collected during our expedition to Mongolia in 2019. A considerable share of
collected data have not been attested in previous lexicographic and folklore works on Khamnigans of
Mongolia.

Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>acc</th>
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<td>com</td>
<td>comitative case</td>
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<td>dat.loc</td>
<td>dative-locative case</td>
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<td>imv</td>
<td>imperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>instr</td>
<td>instrumental case</td>
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n noun
pl plural
poss possessive
ptcp.imprf participle imperfective
ptcp.prf participle perfective
sg singular
voc vocative form

List of language consultants:

Khamnigan language:

– in Khögshidiin Khotkhon: D. Nergüi (90), D. Bat-Sükh (70), Tungalag (65).
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– in Ulaanbaatar: M. Tsetsegmaa, D. Byambasureng (64), L. Erdentsogt.

Ordos language: Naranzandan.

Kalmyck language: G. Ts. Pyurbeev, T. Basangova.

Buryat language: B. Badmaev, O. Bat-Tuya.

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