

Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki: Toward a revised analysis of Rinchen's notes on a Tungusic language of Mongolia*

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This paper discusses my efforts in analyzing the important linguistic data on Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki, a probably now extinct Tungusic language of Mongolia documented by the Mongolian scholar Academician B. Rinchen in the 1960s and published in his book, *Mongol Ard Ulsîn Xamnigan Ayalguu* [*The Tungusic Dialects of the Mongolian People's Republic*]. Rinchen's book is essentially the only source of linguistic data on Khamnigan Ewenki as once spoken in the provinces of Khentii and Dornod in northeastern

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Mongolia; however, the data in Rinchen's book is largely unanalyzed and much progress has been made in the field of language description since the publication of Rinchen's book.

In this paper, I present some findings of my work toward a revised analysis of Rinchen's notes, including an interpretation of the phonological inventory, morphological analyses, notes on the lexicon, and my efforts toward a sketch grammar of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki based on Rinchen's data. My reanalyses of Rinchen's data currently consist of an interpretation of the phonological values intended by Rinchen's practical Cyrillic transcriptions of Khamnigan Ewenki data, reanalyses of morphemes and lexical items transcribed by Rinchen but not fully analyzed, a revised analysis of several short Khamnigan Ewenki texts documented by Rinchen, sentential data, and notes on the lexicon.

Keywords: language documentation and description, Tungusic, Khamnigan, Ewenki, Khentii, Dornod, Mongolia, morphology, phonology, lexicon

1. Introduction

This paper discusses my efforts in analyzing the important linguistic data on Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki, a probably now extinct Tungusic language of Mongolia documented by the Mongolian scholar Academician B. Rinchen in the 1960s and published in his book, *Mongol Ard Ulsîn Xamnigan Ayalguu* [*The Tungusic Dialects of the Mongolian People's Republic*]. Aside from a very brief wordlist by L. Mishig (1960: 188-189), Rinchen's book is essentially the only source of linguistic data on Khamnigan Ewenki as once spoken in the provinces of Khentii and Dornod in northeastern Mongolia; however, the data in Rinchen's book is largely unanalyzed and much progress has been made in the field of language description since the publication of Rinchen's book. There are also many typographical errors in Rinchen's book, the vast majority of which were undoubtedly committed not by Rinchen himself, but by his typist or typists.

In this paper, I present some findings of my work toward a revised analysis of Rinchen's notes, including an interpretation of the phonological inventory, morphological analyses, notes on the lexicon, and my efforts toward a sketch grammar of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki based on Rinchen's data. My reanalyses of Rinchen's data currently consist of an interpretation of the phonological values intended by Rinchen's practical Cyrillic transcriptions

of Khamnigan Ewenki data, reanalyses of morphemes and lexical items transcribed by Rinchen but not fully analyzed, and a revised analysis of the several short Khamnigan Ewenki texts documented by Rinchen, sentential data, and notes on the lexicon.

2. My reanalyses of Rinchen’s data

2.1 The phonology of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki

2.1.1 Phonological inventory

2.1.1.1 Consonants

	<i>Labial</i>	<i>Alveolar</i>	<i>Palatal</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Glottal</i>
<i>Stop</i>	p b	t d		k g	
<i>Affricate</i>		ts ɕ	tʃ ɕʃ		
<i>Fricative</i>	f	s	ʃ	[x]	h
<i>Rhotic</i>		r			
<i>Lateral</i>		l			
<i>Nasal</i>	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
<i>Approximant</i>	w		y		

Table 1. Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki consonants (my reanalysis)

In some varieties, /h/ is realized as a velar fricative [x].

2.1.1.2 Vowels and diphthongs

Rinchen’s description of Khamnigan Ewenki vowels suggests that the vowel system is similar to Oluguya Ewenki and Khamnigan Ewenki as spoken in China, as documented by Tsumagari (1992). I present my interpretation of Rinchen’s Cyrillic transcriptions below:

i		u
[ɛ]	ə	ɔ
		a

Table 2. Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki vowels (my reanalysis)

uy	uo
ɔy	ɔu (?)
ay	au ~ aɔ

Table 3. Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki diphthongs (my reanalysis)

2.1.3 Dialectal variation in phonology

As Rinchen notes several times in his book, the Khamnigan Ewenki of Mongolia spoke not a single uniform dialect, but numerous dialects of Ewenki. This dialectal diversity among the Tungusic-speaking Mongolian Khamnigans is evident from statements such as the following (given here in my English translation of Rinchen’s Mongolian original, and with my phonological interpretations of his Cyrillic-based practical transcriptions):

“...зарим монгол хамниганы аман аялгуунаа хүнэджи гэдэг үгийг хүнэд гэдэг” [In some Mongolian Khamnigan dialects, the word *hunaadʒi* is *hunaad*...] (p.55).

“Зарим монгол хамниган аялгуунаа...” [In some dialects of Mongolian Khamnigan...] (p.55).

“монгол хамниганы зарим аман аялгуунаа...” [In some dialects of Mongolian Khamnigan...] (p.56).

There are many statements like these throughout Rinchen’s book, but the precise linguistic characteristics of these dialects and their geographic distribution are not discussed by Rinchen. It is thus highly likely that Mongolian Khamnigan Ewenki, like Manchurian Khamnigan Ewenki as described by Janhunen (1991), consisted of different varieties of Mongolic-influenced Ewenki. This dialectal diversity is also implied in the title of Rinchen’s book, *Mongol Ard Ulsîn Xamnigan Ayalguu* [*The Tungusic Dialects of the Mongolian People’s Republic*], where *ayalguu* denotes ‘dialects’ (unspecified for number), referring to the many dialects of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki and dialects of the Mongolic language Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol which he observed during the course of his fieldwork.¹⁾

1) Note that Rinchen’s usage of the word *xamnigan* often denotes the older meaning of this word as ‘Tungusic’ in general. I am grateful to Professor M. Bayarsaikhan (National University of Mongolia) for reminding me of this fact at SIAC 2016. In modern usage in Mongolia today, the word *xamnigan* usually denotes a specific ethnic group—the Khamnigan ethnic group. This meaning is also present in Rinchen’s book in his description of the Mongolic language Khamnigan Mongol. These two semantic senses of the word are attested in Mongolian as early as Žamcarano’s early 20th century book *Darqad, Kōbsögöl naγur-un uriyangqai, dörbed, qotong, bayad, ögeled, mingγad, jaqačın, torγud, qošud, čaqar, dariγangγa,*

In my revised analyses of Rinchen's data, I have identified the following, apparently dialectal, variation between different phonemes:

ts ~ tʃ ~ ʃ

In some varieties of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki, the possessive-attributive suffix denoting 'having X' is *-tʃi* (e.g. *gərbi-tʃi* 'having a name', p. 76), but in certain other varieties it is *-tsə* (e.g. *dəl-tsə* 'having a mane', p. 80). In post-nasal environments, a *-tʃi* variant is attested (e.g. *ninakin-tʃi* 'having a dog' and *noyɔn-tʃi* 'having a noble person', p.78).

The **ts ~ tʃ** variation is also evident in verbal forms, e.g. the past tense morpheme analyzed by Rinchen is */-tsA-/* (e.g. p.75), but in certain dialectal forms documented by Rinchen, the corresponding morpheme is */-tʃAA-/*, where */A/* indicates an unspecified vowel archiphoneme realized phonetically according to the vowel harmony of the verb stem (e.g. *ukurgala-tʃɔɔ-w* 'I caught it with a lasso-pole', p.78).

Note also the dialectal variation between *aatsən* ~ *aʃin* 'negative existential copula', often translatable as 'none' (e.g., p.76).

s ~ ʃ

Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki dialects as documented by Rinchen also exhibit dialectal variation between unpalatalized *s(i)* and palatalized *ʃ(i)*. For example, progressive forms like *ifindi* (arrive.2S.PRES) (p.77) in certain varieties, but conservative forms like *bisindi* (exist.2S.PRES) (p.74) in other varieties. Note also KDKE *ugʊʃgi* 'back' (pp.79, 114) and its Siberian Ewenki cognate *ugiski* 'upward' (SE form quoted from Nedjalkov 1997: 44, 91, 306).

ɬ ~ ɕ ~ dy

Variation between these phones appears to have been free in certain dialects,

altai-yin uriyangqai, qasaɣ, qamniɣan nar-un ɣarul ündüsü bayidal-un ögülel. As for the ultimate origin of the word *xamnigan*, it most likely comes from Ewenki *kamniiga* 'narrowing of a river; narrow spot between a river and a steep slope', a term attested in Shirokogorov's notes on Tungusic dialects (Doerfer & Knüppel 2004: 451.5794).

e.g. the word **ḏuɔg*²⁾ ~ *ḏɔɔg*³⁾ ~ *ḏɔɔg*⁴⁾ ‘yurt, home’ (pp. 58, 79, 105) and *ḏigəə*⁵⁾ ~ *ḏyəə*⁶⁾ ~ *dyigəə*⁷⁾ ~ *ḏəə*⁸⁾ ‘grandchild (child of one’s daughter)’ (p. 54). Note also the apparently free variation within the following single sentence: *ḏulələ ḏəərgən-i wa-ŋki-w* (R: **waa-ŋki-w*) ‘In the south, I kill gazelles’ (from §4.5 below). Rinchen also gives the forms *ḏərgən* and *ḏəgəran* ‘gazelle’ (p. 62).

The above-mentioned variation is merely from my cursory study of Rinchen’s data. An in-depth, comprehensive study of Rinchen’s data will likely reveal even more variation and diversity.

3. Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki morphology

3.1 Noun affixal morphology

3.1.1 Case affixal morphology

Rinchen gives partial case paradigms for several Khamnigan Ewenki nouns, identifying eight cases, i.e. nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, instrumental, comitative, and ‘prosecutive’ (pp.72-73).

Despite this analysis, however, it is clear from his data that there are actually at least *nine* different case forms, i.e. nominative, genitive, dative,

2) This word is transcribed “дзоук” in Rinchen’s transcription (pp.58, 105), i.e. *ḏɔuk*. The diphthong transcribed by Rinchen in Cyrillic as “oy”, which I interpret as *ɔu*, does not seem to be attested elsewhere in Rinchen’s data. The diphthong he transcribed in Cyrillic as “yo” (i.e. *uɔ*), however, is attested in many words, e.g. *lɔta* ‘Russia, Russian’ ~ *lɔtʃasal* ‘Russians’ (pp.53, 110), *xurguɔn* ‘finger, toe’ (pp.57, 114), *xuɔ* ‘gun’ (pp.59, 114), *suɔl* ‘tail’ (pp.65, 66, 113), and sometimes appears to be in free or dialectal variation with short *ɔ* or long *ɔɔ*, e.g. *bɔnɔ* ~ *buɔnɔ* ‘hail’ (pp.60, 101) and *nɔɔr* ~ *nuɔr* ‘lake’ (pp.61, 111). Considering this variation, and the fact that there is no phonemic difference between *g* and *k* in coda position, I reanalyse Rinchen’s transcription “дзоук” (i.e. *ḏɔuk*) as an error for **ḏyɔɔr* (i.e. **ḏyɔɔg*).

3) I.e. “дзór” in Rinchen’s transcription (p.79).

4) I.e. “джór” ~ “джór” in Rinchen’s transcription (pp.79, 105).

5) I.e. “джигé” in Rinchen’s transcription.

6) I.e. “джьé” in Rinchen’s transcription. It is possible that Rinchen’s transcription “джь” is an attempt to render not a palato-alveolar *ḑ* but an alveo-palatal *ḏ*. It is impossible to verify this, however, as no audio recordings exist. As such, I conservatively interpret Rinchen’s transcription as *ḏyəə*.

7) I.e. “дыигé” in Rinchen’s transcription.

8) I.e. “дзé” in Rinchen’s transcription.

definite accusative, *indefinite* accusative, ablative, instrumental-*comitative*, *comitative*, and *prolative*. Below I present my revised analysis of the attested Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki case affixes (my revisions to Rinchen’s analyses are given in bold):

Nominative	-Ø
Genitive	-ŋi ~ -ni ~ -gin
Dative	-du ~ -də
Definite Accusative	-wA ~ -bA ~ -bAA
Indefinite Accusative	-yi ~ -i ~ -Ø
Ablative	-duk ~ -duuki ~ -dukə ~ EMPH -duukəə ~ -dɔəkəə
Instrumental- Comitative	-ɕji ~ -ɕji
Comitative	-nun
Prolative	-duli ~ -li

Table 4. Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki case affixes (my analysis)

The case which Rinchen identifies as “Acc.” (i.e. accusative, pp.72-73) is actually *definite* accusative. Note the following examples of this case in Rinchen’s data:

mɔɔ-wa
tree-**ACC.DEF**
‘the tree’ (p.72)

əri-wə
this-**ACC.DEF**
‘this’ (p.73)

sələ-**bə** əɕzi saa-rəə kuurəə
iron-**ACC.DEF** NEG know-ACT file
‘a file which does not know **the** iron’ (p.78)

Note also the following example of the definite accusative case in a Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki folksong in poetic style:

aduun-dɔɔkəə-n sələ-tsa, alda dəl-tʂə kəyər-**baa**-n
 horses-ABL-3 choose-PST3, fathom mane-POSS chestnut-ACC.DEF-3
 ‘He chose the best of his horses—the dark chestnut horse with the fathom-long
 mane’ (p.80).

Rinchen’s data, although not his *analysis* of it, also provides clear examples of the *indefinite accusative* case, indicated with *-yi* (after vowels) ~ *-i* (after consonants), a suffix cognate to Siberian Ewenki /-yA/ ‘indefinite accusative case suffix’. For example, note the following examples (the morphological analyses are my own):

damga-**yi** ta-kal
 tobacco-ACC.INDEF pull-IMP.2S
 ‘Smoke some tobacco!’ ~ ‘Have a cigarette / some cigarettes!’ (p.76).

mɔ-**yi** aldi-ŋki-w.
 wood-ACC.INDEF chop-HAB-1S
 ‘I chop wood.’ (from §4.3 below).

bi tarbaka-**yi** waa-ŋki-w.
 1S.NOM marmot-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S
 ‘I kill marmots.’ (from §4.5 below).

ɕʊlələ ɕəərgən-i wa-ŋki-w (R: *waa-ŋki-w).
 south gazelle-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S
 ‘In the south, I kill gazelles.’ (from §4.5 below).

The indefinite accusative case was apparently not used by certain speakers, or was falling into disuse, since Rinchen’s data also provides examples of zero-marked indefinite accusative case, probably under the influence of Khalkha Mongolian or Khamnigan Mongol, in which indefinite accusative and nominative are both zero-marked. Note the following examples from Rinchen’s data with unmarked indefinite accusative case in Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki:

uldə ɕap-kal
 meat eat-IMP.2S
 ‘Eat some meat.’ (p.77).

uldə ʧəp-kəl
 meat eat-IMP.2S
 ‘Eat some meat’. (p.77).

Rinchen’s data also provides the following example of a less common Khamnigan Ewenki genitive suffix /-gin/, probably borrowed from Khalkha Mongolian:

nurjan-daki bəə-**gin** ɔrin-du min-ʧji əmə-tɕəə
 six-ORD month-**GEN** twenty-DAT 1S-COM come-PST.3S
 ‘He/she/it came with me on the 20th of June’ (p.77).

Rinchen analyzes the ablative case suffix as /-duk/ (e.g. pp.72-73). The unanalyzed data he gives provides evidence of at least four additional variants of this suffix, i.e. /-**duuki**/ ~ /-**dukə**/ and the emphatic sung variants /-**duukəə**/ ~ /-**ɖɔkəə**/ as in the following examples:

mərin-**duuki**
 horse-**ABL**
 ‘from/off the horse’ (p.77)

ulaanbaatur-**dukə**
 Ulaanbaatar-**ABL**
 ‘from Ulaanbaatar’ (p.76)

ayl-**duukəə**
 household-**ABL**
 ‘from the households’ (p.80)

aduun-**ɖɔkəə-n**
 horse-**ABL-3.POSS**
 ‘from the horses’ (p.80)

3.1.2 Other noun affixes not analyzed by Rinchen but evident from his data

Rinchen’s data, although not his analyses of it, provides evidence of the subject-possessive (reflexive) suffix *-bi* ~ *-mi* (< Ewk.). Note the following examples (from text §4.3 and §4.6 below):

dʒɔɔg-duu-bi muu-yi əmuu-ŋki-w.
 home-DAT-REFL water-ACC.INDEF bring-HAB-1S
 ‘I bring water back to **my** yurt.’

mɔrin-mi ɕawa-ŋki-w.
 horse-REFL get-HAB-1S
 ‘I get **my** horse.’

tərəl-bi əɕi saa-rii ninakin
 kind-REFL NEG know-ACT dog
 ‘a dog which does not know **its** kind’

3.2 Verb affixal morphology

3.2.1 Tense, mood, and aspect (TMA) affixes

Rinchen provides partial paradigms for the verb *bi-* ‘exist, be’, *tuksa-* ‘run’, and *ukurgala-* ‘catch with a lasso-pole’ (pp. 74-76). I have reorganized these verbal paradigms and have added all other verbal forms attested in his data, to provide the most complete paradigms of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki verbs as attested by Rinchen:

	<i>bi-</i> ‘exist’	<i>tuksa-</i> ‘run’	<i>umə-</i> ‘come’	<i>gɔɔɔ-</i> ‘bark’	<i>iji-</i> ‘arrive’
1S	<i>bisin</i>	<i>tuksam</i>	<i>umən</i>		
2S	<i>bisindi</i>	<i>tuksandə</i> (Q form?)	<i>uməndə</i> (Q form?)		<i>ijindi</i>
3S	<i>bisin</i>	<i>tuksaran</i>		<i>gɔɔɔrən</i>	
1P	<i>bisif</i>	<i>tuksam</i>			
2P/V	<i>bisis ~ bisifɪ</i> (?)	<i>tuksaran</i>			
3P	<i>bisi</i>	<i>tuksara</i>			
	<i>dɔmə-</i> ‘come’	<i>saa-</i> ‘know’	<i>tuksi-</i> ‘be cloudy’	<i>kaŋkinaa-</i> ‘clang’	<i>turəə-</i> ‘scold’
1S		<i>saam</i>			
2S	<i>dɔməndi</i>	<i>saandi</i>			
3S		<i>saaran</i>	<i>tuksirən</i>	<i>kaŋkinaaran</i>	<i>turəərən</i>
1P					
2P/V					
3P					

Table 5. Present tense verbal paradigm (revised and expanded from Rinchen’s data)

	<i>bi-</i> ‘exist’	<i>tuksa-</i> ‘run’	<i>ənə-</i> ‘go’	<i>əmə-</i> ‘come’	<i>suruu-</i> ‘go’
1S	<i>bitsəw</i>	<i>tuksatsɔw</i>			
2S	<i>bitsəs</i>	<i>tuksatsas</i>			
3S	<i>bitsə</i>	<i>tuksatsa</i>	<i>ənətsə</i>	<i>əmətsə</i>	<i>suruutsaa</i>
1P	<i>bitsəwun</i>	<i>tuksatsɔw</i>			
2P/V	<i>bitsəsun</i>	<i>tuksatsawun</i>			
3P	<i>bitsəl</i>	<i>tuksatuksaran</i>			
	<i>kəkə-</i> ‘enter(?)’	<i>urgu</i> ‘grow’	<i>ukurgalaa-</i> ‘catch with a lasso-pole’	<i>bu-</i> ‘die’	<i>sələ-</i> ‘choose’
1S			<i>ukurgalaatɕɔw</i>		
2S					
3S	<i>kəkətsə</i>	<i>urgutsaa</i>		<i>butsə</i>	<i>sələtsə</i>
1P					
2P/V					
3P					

Table 6. Past tense verbal paradigm (revised and expanded from Rinchen’s data)

	<i>bi-</i> ‘exist’	<i>tuksa-</i> ‘run’	<i>sə-</i> ‘arrive’	<i>məyuu-</i> ‘climb a mountain’	<i>sura-</i> ‘study’ (← Mgl)	<i>undun-</i> ‘rain’
1S	<i>bidzigəf</i>	<i>tuksadɕw</i>		<i>məyuuɕw</i>		
2S	<i>bidzigəs</i>	<i>tuksadɕas</i>	<i>səɕas</i>			
3S	<i>bidzigən</i>	<i>tuksadɕan</i>			<i>suraɕaan</i>	<i>undunɕaan</i>
1P	<i>bidzigəwun</i>	<i>tuksadɕawun</i>				
2P/V	<i>bidzigəsun</i>	<i>tuksadɕasun</i>				
3P	<i>bidzigəl</i>	<i>tuksadɕan</i>				

Table 7. Future tense verbal paradigm (revised and expanded from Rinchen’s data)

	<i>ukurgala-</i> ‘catch with a lasso-pole’	<i>əmə-</i> ‘come’	<i>nənə-</i> ‘go (off)’ ~ ‘ride (off)’	<i>waa-</i> ‘kill’	<i>bii-</i> ‘exist, be’
1S	<i>ukurgalaŋkiw</i>	<i>əməŋkiw</i>	<i>nənəŋkiw</i>	<i>waəŋkiw</i>	<i>biiŋkəw</i>
2S	<i>ukurgalaŋkis</i>				
3S	<i>ukurgalaŋki</i>				
1P	<i>ukurgalaŋkiw</i>				
2P/V	<i>ukurgalaŋki</i>				
3P	<i>ukurgalaŋki</i>				
	<i>kəsü-</i> ‘go around’	<i>əmuu-</i> ‘bring’	<i>aldi-</i> ‘chop’	<i>aasi-</i> ‘take’	<i>ǰawa-</i> ‘get’
1S	<i>kəsüŋkiw</i>	<i>əmuuŋkiw</i>	<i>aldiŋkiw</i>	<i>aasiŋkiw</i>	<i>ǰawaŋkiw</i>
2S					
3S					
1P					
2P/V					
3P					
	<i>əminna-</i> ‘give water’ (to animals)	<i>puli-</i> ‘go’	<i>yuu-</i> ‘go out’ ~ ‘dismount’ (?)	<i>təku-</i> ‘put a saddle on a horse’	<i>i-</i> ‘enter’
1S	<i>əminnaŋkiw</i>	<i>puliŋkiw</i>	<i>yuuŋkiw</i>	<i>təküŋkiw</i>	<i>iŋkiw</i>
2S					
3S					
1P					
2P/V					
3P					

Table 8. Habitual aspect verbal paradigm (revised and expanded from Rinchen’s data)

	<i>bi-</i> ‘be, exist’	<i>tuksa-</i> ‘run’	<i>əmə-</i> ‘come’	<i>ǰap-</i> ‘eat’ (?)	<i>ǰəp-</i> ‘eat’	<i>ilə-</i> ‘rise, get up’
2S	<i>bikəl</i>	<i>tuksakəl</i>	<i>əməkəəl</i>	<i>ǰapkal</i>	<i>ǰəpkəl</i>	<i>iləkəl</i>
3S		<i>tuksak</i>				
2P/V		<i>tuksakalduy</i>				
	<i>gərku-</i> ‘go’	<i>sukə-</i> ‘hit’	<i>nənə-</i> ‘go’	<i>nə-</i> ‘put’	<i>buu-</i> ‘give’	
2S	<i>gərkukəl</i>	<i>sukəkəl</i>	<i>nənəkəl</i>	<i>nəkəl</i>	<i>buukəl</i>	
3S						
2P/V						

Table 9. Imperative paradigm (revised and expanded from Rinchen’s data)

3.3 Question marking

3.3.1 Interrogative particle for yes/no questions

For yes/no questions, the interrogative particle is /-gu/, similar to Khamnigan Mongol and Buryat. For example, Rinchen gives the following attestation of this interrogative marker in Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki:

sujni nituk-du bəyuni bisin-gu?
 2V.GEN land-DAT gazelle exist.3S-Q
 ‘Are there any gazelle in your land?’ (p. 76).

3.3.2 Optional interrogative particle for WH questions

For WH questions, an optional interrogative particle attested in Rinchen’s data is /-bə/, probably a borrowing from Khamnigan Mongol [-bɛɛ] ~ [-βɛɛ] or its Khalkha cognate ᠪᠠ ~ ᠪᠡ ‘interrogative marker for WH questions’.

Note the following example from Rinchen’s data:

sujni gərbi ni-bə?
 2V.GEN name who-Q
 ‘What is your name?’ (76).

3.3.3 Fusional interrogative verbs

The verbal form *bisində* seems to be a fusion of *bisindi* ‘exist.2S.PRES’ with *-bə* ‘interrogative particle for WH questions’ (see §5 below for examples).

4. Analyses of texts given by Rinchen

The following consist of my morphological reanalyses of, and text-critical notes on, several Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki texts transcribed and glossed by Rinchen (pp. 77-80). Rinchen does not provide morphemic analyses for these texts, although he provides rough translational equivalents for most, though not all, of these sentences.

4.1 Reminiscing on shamanism among the Khamnigans

urda-du əwəŋki bəyə-l-du samaa-səl həgdii bi-tsəə.
 before-DAT Ewenki person-P-DAT shaman-P many exist-PST.3

*tari samaa-səl-ni dulin-du-n aya samaan *bi-tsəə.*⁹⁾
 DIST.DEM shaman-P-GEN inside-DAT-3POSS good shaman exist-PST3

ədii samaan bi-tsəə.
 man shaman exist-PST3

atirkaan samaan bi-tsəə.
 woman shaman exist-PST3

kuŋa samaan aatsən.
 child shaman NEG.EXST.COP

‘Previously, among the Ewenki people, there were many shamans. Among those shamans, there were good shamans. There were men shamans. There were female shamans. There were no child shamans.’

4.2 Religion and education among the Khamnigans

urda-du əwəŋki bəyə-l-du bunəŋkə bi-tsəə.
 before-DAT Ewenki person-P-DAT evil.spirit exist-PST3

səbəkə bi-tsəə.
 good.spirit exist-PST3

lama bi-tsəə.
 Buddhist.monk exist-PST3

burkan bi-tsəə.
 Buddha exist-PST3

ərdəmu-ŋə bəyə aatsən.
 education-POSS.ADJ person NEG.EXST.COP

‘Previously among the Ewenki people there were evil spirits. There were good spirits. There were Buddhist monks. There was the Buddha.’¹⁰⁾ There were no

9) Rinchen’s “litsəə” is clearly a typographical error for **bitsəə**. It is unlikely that Rinchen typed his own book manuscript. At that time period in Mongolia’s history, it was common for secretaries to type professors’ book manuscripts. Many of the errors in Rinchen’s book are undoubtedly due to the typist not understanding the professor’s notes. It is hoped that in the future the original handwritten manuscript of Rinchen’s book will appear, as this would potentially help to clear up some of the errors in the printed book.

10) Due to its semantic extension in Khalkha, the Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki

educated people.¹¹⁾ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, pp.78-79).

4.3 Oral autobiography of an elderly man of the Dolood clan

bi dɔlɔɔd ɔmɔk-tʃi bisim.

1S.NOM Dolood clan-POSS exist.PRES.1S

ɔmun ɔmɔlgi-tʃi bisim.

one son-POSS exist.PRES.1S

ɔmun hunaaɖʒi-tʃi bisim.

one daughter-POSS exist.PRES.1S

atirka-tʃi bisim.

wife-POSS exist.PRES.1S

nadaŋɲə ɖʒul-tʃi bisim.

seventy two-POSS exist.PRES.1S

abdu-du puli-ŋki-w.

livestock-DAT go-HAB-1S

nimər-du kəsü-ŋki-w.

household-DAT go.around-HAB-1S

mɔrin-mi ɔminna-mki-w.¹²⁾

horse-REFL water-HAB-1S

word *burkan* is ambiguous, and can be translated as any of the following: ‘the Buddha’ ~ ‘Buddhas’ ~ ‘Bodhisattvas’ ~ ‘gods/deities’.

- 11) Literally, ‘There did not exist person possessing knowledge/education’. The suffix */-ŋə/* here indicates an adjectival form denoting ‘having NOUN’. As shown by Rinchen (p.88), this is the same suffix as in the old Tungusic toponym **/sələ-ŋə/* ‘having iron’, the name of the Selengge River. This early Tungusic toponym is attested as early as the 8th century Old Turkic runiform inscriptions, e.g. in the Bilge Qaγan inscription as ᠰᠯᠠᠨᠵᠠ *sälänjä* (GORkT 367) or *seleŋe*, transcribing early Tungusic **sələ-ŋə* or **sələ-ŋgə* (cf. LASM.AC).
- 12) The morpheme */-mki-/* in this sentence differs from the */-ŋki-/* attested elsewhere. Another possibility is that this */-mki-/* could be a typist’s error. Cursive Cyrillic *m* and *n* sometimes look similar, especially in personal notes.

ḏʷʷg-duu-bi muu-yi əmuu-ŋki-w.
yurt-DAT-REFL water-ACC.INDEF bring-HAB-1S

mɔ-yi aldi-ŋki-w.
wood-ACC.INDEF chop-HAB-1S

ḏʷʷg-duu-bi aasi-ŋki-w.
yurt-DAT-REFL take-HAB-1S

kəməən yuu-ŋki-w.
morning go.out-HAB-1S

mɔrin-mi ɕawa-ŋki-w.
horse-REFL get-HAB-1S

əməgəl-bi tɔku-ŋki-w.
saddle-REFL put.on-HAB-1S

*mɔrda-ha nənə-ŋki-w.*¹³⁾
ride-CVB go-HAB-1S

ugufki-bi əmə-ŋki-w.
back-REFL come-HAB-1S

ḏʷʷg-duu i-ŋki-w.
yurt-DAT come-HAB-1S

‘I am of the Dolood clan. I have one son. I have one daughter. I have a wife. I am 72 years old. I go to [my] livestock. I go around from household to household. I water my horse. I bring water back to my yurt. I chop wood. I take it home. I go out in the morning.¹⁴⁾ I get my horse. I put my saddle on [my horse]. I ride off on my horse. I come back. I enter my yurt.’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.79).

13) This *-ha* is a converb suffix probably cognate to Siberian Ewenki */-ksA/*, for which Vasilevič gives dialectal variants, including */-hAA/* (Vasilevič 1958, Table XXVI).

14) Rinchen translates this sentence as ‘I get up in the morning’ but it is clear from other examples given by Rinchen, and from Siberian Ewenki comparanda, that KDKE *yuu-* denotes ‘go out’ and not ‘get up’ (e.g. SE *yuu-* “выйти”, Vasilevič 1958: 572a). Rinchen gives *ilə-* as a verb for ‘get up’.

4.4 Excerpt from an Khamnigan Ewenki oral folksong

aduun-dʷəkə-n sələ-tsa

horse-ABL-3POSS choose-PST3

alda dəl-tsə kəyər-baa-n!

fathom mane-POSS chestnut.horse-ACC.DEF-3

ayl-duukə sələ-tsa

household-ABL choose-PST3

abagay¹⁵⁾ ləpəstiŋka tʷymɔg-əə!¹⁶⁾

miss PERS shaved.head-EMPH(?)

əməgəl kadal kaŋkinaa-ra-n.

saddle bridle clang-PST-3

ənəən amyəən turə-rə-n!

mother father scold-PST-3

‘He chose the best of his horses—the dark chestnut horse with the fathom-long mane;

He chose the best of the households—Miss Lepestinka with the shaved head;

The saddle and bridle clanged;

Her parents scolded him.’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.80).

4.5 Hunting in Tsagaan-Owoo county, Dornod province

bi tʃagaanɔwɔɔ-du bii-ŋkə-w.

1S.NOM PLACE.NAME-DL exist-HAB-1S

15) This *abagay* is a loanword from Mongolian, used in its older usage as a ‘respectful word for a woman’ (MXITT). Here it could be translated as ‘miss’.

16) The *tʷymɔg* element here is a loanword from Mongolian. In modern Khalkha Mongolian (albeit now somewhat older usage), *toimog* denotes ‘shaved head’ or ‘a person with a shaved head’ (MXITT). Its usage in this folksong probably emphasizes that the Russian lady in this song had short hair, apparently shorter than usual for Ewenki women. It is not clear what the /-əə/ element denotes—perhaps it is an emphatic suffix, or an added syllable for metric purposes—since this is only a short excerpt from a folksong, we do not know the full metric structure of the song.

*bi *bāyu-tsə-w* (?)¹⁷⁾
1S.NOM hunt-PST-1S (?)

bi tarbaka-yi waa-ηki-w.
1S.NOM marmot-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S

gipsə-yi waa-ηki-w.
roe.deer-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S

guskə-yi waa-ηki-w.
wolf-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S

ǰulələ ǰəərgən-i wa-ηki-w (R: **waa-ηki-w*).
south gazelle-ACC.INDEF kill-HAB-1S

‘I live in Tsagaan-Owoo [county, Dornod province]. I hunted (?).¹⁸⁾ I kill marmots. I kill roe deer. I kill wolves. In the south, I kill gazelles’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.77).

4.6 Selected Khentii-Dornod Ewenki proverbs and phrases

bəyə aki-tsəə,
person elder.brother-POSS,
sun ǰaka-tsəə
robe collar-POSS
‘People have elder brothers, [just as] robes have collars’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.78).

təṛəl-bi ədzi saa-rii ninakin,
kind-REFL NEG know-ACT dog,
sələ-bə ədzi saa-rəə kuurəə
iron-ACC.DEF NEG know-ACT file
‘A dog which does not know its kind [is like] a file which does not know the iron’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.78).

17) The original text has *bi bəyusəl* (unglossed by Rinchen), which could be a typographical error for *bi *bəyusəw* ‘I have hunted’. A less likely possibility is that it could be a grammatical error in the speaker’s speech, in which the subject and verb do not agree in number: *bi* is first-person singular nominative, but the suffix *-l* is a plural suffix. This seems very unlikely since this agreement is a basic grammatical feature of Ewenki.

18) Unglossed – see footnote above for discussion.

kulagaytʃi bəyā-ni utʃi əmərə.
 thief person-GEN knife sharp
 ‘A thief’s knife is sharp.’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p.78).

*ninakin-čʃi ugəmi kərbəə yaatsən,*¹⁹⁾
 dog-POSS bad skirt NEG.COP

nəyən-čʃi ugəmi səgdəŋkə yaatsən.
 noble.person-POSS bad backbone NEG.COP
 ‘A bad [person] with a dog has no skirt on their robe; a bad [person] with a nobleman has no backbone.’ (reanalyzed from Rinchen, p 78).

ətsə-sə mərɪn-du pəkʰə gərɔ,
 become.emaciated-PST horse-DL place far

*bu-tsə (R: *bu-tsəə) bəyā-də ʃibən gərɔ,*
 die-PST person-DL sun far
*ɖugaa *yaatsən bəyā-də gərki gərɔ.*²⁰⁾
 free.time NEG.COP person-DL friend far
 ‘For an emaciated horse, places are far;
 For a dead person, the sun is far;
 For a person with no free-time, friends are far.’ (reanalyzed from p.78)

5. Reanalysis of sentential data given by Rinchen

Below I provide my analyses of some Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki phrases and daily expressions documented by Rinchen:

məndə!
 healthy

-
- 19) This *yaatsən* is an optional, phonologically conditioned variant of *aatsən* ‘negative copula’. When preceded by words ending in consonants, the variant *aatsən* surfaces, as in *kunja samaan aatsən* ‘There were no child shamans’ (see §4.1 above) whereas the *yaatsən* variant optionally surfaces after words ending in vowels, as in the example above. I term this an optional variant since there is at least one counterexample in the sentence *ərdəmu-ŋə bəyā aatsən* ‘There were no educated people’ (from §4.2).
- 20) **yaatsən* is my interpretation of Rinchen’s original, which is “ЙЛСЕН” (p.78), clearly a typographical error for *ЙАЦЕН, i.e. **yaatsən* in my reanalysis.

'Hello' (p.76).

su mändə!

2V/2P healthy

'Hello' (respectful) (pp.76, 77).

ǰa, aya bisindi?

INTERJ good exist.1S.PRES.Q

'Well, how are you?' (p.76).

aya, aya!

good good

'I am well' (lit. 'good, good') (p.76).

ǰa, ɛma sɔnin bisin-bə?

INTERJ what.kind news exist.3S.PRES=Q

'What is new? How's it going?' (p.76).

ɛma sɔnin aʃin

what.kind news NEG.EXST.COP

'Nothing new'. (p.76).

ni ǰərbi-ʃi bisində?

who name-POSS exist.2S.PRES.Q

'What is your name?' (p.76).

suʃni ǰərbi ni-bə?

2V.GEN name who = Q

'What is your name?' (respectful) (p.76).

ilə-bə nituk?

where-Q land

'Where is your land?'²¹⁾ (p.76).

suʃni nituk ila-bə?

2V.POSS land where-Q

'Where is your land?' (respectful) (p.76).

21) Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki *nituk* 'land' is a loanword from Khamnigan Mongol *nitug* [nʲitʰʊk] 'land, territory, homeland, birthplace, locality' etc.

adifī bisində?

until.when exist.2S.PRES.Q

‘Until when will you be there?’ (p.76).

su adifī bisində?

2V until.when exist.2S.PRES.Q

‘Until when will you be there?’ (respectful)²²⁾ (p.76).

suḡni nituk-du bəyuni bisin-gu?

2V.GEN land-DAT game.animal exist.3S.PRES-Q

‘Are there game animals in your land?’ (p.76).

bisin, kətə bəyuni bisin!

exist.3S.PRES many game.animal exist.3S.PRES

‘Yes, there are many game animals!’ (p.76).

su iləkə umə-ndə?

2V where.from come.2S.PRES

‘Where did you come from?’ ~ ‘Where are you from?’ (respectful) (p.76).

ulaanbaatur-dukə umə-n

Ulaanbaatar-ABL come-1S

‘I am from Ulaanbaatar’. (p.76).

adu adira aḡa-ḏəw?

here how.many.days spend.night-1S.FUT

‘How many nights will I spend here?’ (p.76).

damga-yi ta-kal!

tobacco-ACC.INDEF pull-IMP.2S

22) This sentence is noteworthy because the subject, *su* ‘you’ (second person *vous*-form or second-person plural), does not agree with the second-person singular predicate (see Table 5). It is not clear if this is due to language erosion—Rinchen notes that at the time of his fieldwork the Khamnigan Ewenki language of Mongolia was already highly endangered—or if this was a regular feature of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki, whereby the honorific nuance was indicated with a 2V/2P subject and the singular number was indicated with a 2S verbal predicate. Future work on the limited data in Rinchen’s book, or on other related Ewenki dialects, may help answer this question.

‘Smoke some tobacco!’ ~ ‘Have a cigarette / some cigarettes!’²³⁾ (p.76).

məndə bisifʲi?

Healthy exist.2V/2P (?)²⁴⁾

‘How are you?’ (p.77).

niŋə ɔmɔlgi bisindi?

who.GEN son exist.2S.PRES

‘Whose son are you?’ (p.77).

adii ɔmɔlgi-tʲi bisində?

how.many son-POSS exist.2S.PRES.Q

‘How many sons do you have?’ (p.77).

adii hunaa-tʲi bisində?

how.many daughter-POSS exist.2S.PRES.Q

‘How many daughters do you have?’ (p.77).

idaa dɔlbɔ ɔnə-tsə-bə?

why night go-3S.PST-Q

‘Why did he/she/it go at night?’ (p.77).

irgi dɔmən-di?

from.where come-2S.PRES

‘Where are you from?’ (p.77).

irgi sə-ɖas-bə?

from.where arrive-2S.FUT-Q

‘Where will you arrive?’ (p.77).

adi-bii ifindi-bə?

how.many-Q.EMPH arrive.2S.PRES-Q

‘How old are you?’ (p.77).

23) The expression ‘pull tobacco’ for ‘smoke tobacco/cigarettes’ is a calque from Khannigan Mongol [tʰamakʰi tʰatʰa-] or Khalkha Mongolian **тамхи тат-** [tʰæmx tʰatʰ- ~ tʰæmx tʰatʰ-] ‘smoke tobacco/cigarettes’ (literally ‘pull tobacco’).

24) The verbal form *bisifʲi* is possibly a variant of *bisis* (e.g. p.74), the present tense second-person plural or 2V form of ‘be, exist’. Alternatively, *bisifʲi* could be the interrogative equivalent of *bisis*. These possibilities require careful consideration.

ulda ǰap-kal ~ ulda ǰap-kəl

meat eat-IMP.2S

‘Eat some meat.’ (p.77).

ilə-kəl!

rise-IMP.2S

‘Get up!’ (p.77).

nujuun-daki bəə-gin ɔrin-du min-ǰi əmə-tsəə.

six-ORD month-GEN twenty-DAT 1S.OBL-INSTR arrive-FUT

‘He/she/it will come with me on June 20th.’ (p.77).

mərin-ǰi gərku-kal

horse-INSTR go-IMP.2S

‘Go by horse.’ (p.77).

mə-ǰi sukə-kal

wood-INSTR strike-IMP.2S

‘Hit it with wood.’ (p.77).

min-duuki əmə-kəl

1S.OBL-ABL come-IMP.2S

‘Come here.’ (p.77).

mərin-duuki yuu-tʃaa!

horse-ABL dismount-PST(?)²⁵

‘Get off the horse!’ (p.77).

6. On the lexicon of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki

Rinchen’s data provides attestations of words with no obvious cognates in Vasilevič’s 1958 compendious dictionary of Siberian Ewenki dialects. For example:

25) The /-tʃaa/ morpheme here is very similar in form to the third-person past tense suffix (see Table 6 for examples). It is possible that this past tense form denoted a strong imperative. The fact that it appears without the usual second-person suffix /-s/ is noteworthy. An alternative possibility is that this /-tʃaa/ could be the result of interference from the phonologically similar Khalkha Mongolian completive aspect suffix -чих /-tʃʰx/, or its emphatic variant, /-tʃʰx-A/. In Khalkha, a similar construction would be *буучих аа* /pʊʊ-tʃʰx-A/ [ˈpʊ:ʃʰxɑ] ‘get off (the horse)’.

kəkə- ‘enter’ (?)
məyuu- ‘climb a mountain’
pəktə ‘place, land’ (?)
sə- ‘arrive’
sələ- ‘choose’²⁶⁾

At least one Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki word resembles not Siberian Ewenki, but the Southern Tungusic language Ulcha:

puli- ‘go’ (cf. Ulcha *pul*- ~ *puli*- ‘go’, *SSTM*, p. 364a).

Future work on the divergent lexical elements of Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki as documented by Rinchen should carefully consult Doerfer and Knüppel’s monumental lexicographical study *Etymologisch- ethnologisches Wörterbuch tungusischer Dialekte*, which includes Shirokogorov’s precious notes on Tungusic dialects and many otherwise unattested words. At the time of writing this paper, I did not have access to this important work.²⁷⁾

7. Concluding Remarks

Much more work can and should be done on the precious trove of linguistic data in Rinchen’s book, as it adds to our slowly increasing knowledge of the highly endangered Tungusic language family. Specifically, Rinchen’s book and Mishig’s invaluable notes on Yöröö Khamnigan Ewenki (cf. Shimunek 2016) are integral sources of linguistic data on the minimally documented and possibly now extinct Tungusic languages once spoken in Mongolia.

Symbols, Abbreviations, and Sigla

- * reconstruction based on historical-comparative linguistic methods
- morpheme boundary
- // phonemic form
- < language-internal change

26) This word resembles WMgl *sili*- ‘choose the best of something’, and is probably a loanword from Mongolic.

27) With the exception of one note I had taken years ago when I did have access to this important study.

←	loanword or borrowing across languages
1	first-person
2	second-person
2V	second-person <i>vous/вы</i> form (respectful)
3	third-person
ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
ACT	<i>nomen actoris vel actionis</i> (Kara 2006)
ADJ	adjective
COM	comitative
COP	copula
CVB	converb
DAT	dative
DEF	definite
è	Cyrillic е (in romanization of Mongolian in Cyrillic script)
EMPH	emphatic
EXST	existential
FUT	future tense
GEN	genitive
<i>GOrkT</i>	Tekin, <i>Grammar of Orkhon Turkic</i> (1968)
HAB	habitual
î	Cyrillic ы (in romanization of Mongolian in Cyrillic script)
IMP	imperative
INDEF	indefinite
INSTR	instrumental
INTERJ	interjection
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
KDKE	Khentii-Dornod Khamnigan Ewenki
<i>LASM</i>	Shimunek (2017)
<i>LASM.AC</i>	Shimunek. <i>Addenda et Corrigenda to LASM</i> (2018)
MMgl	Middle Mongol
<i>MXITT</i>	<i>Mongol Xelnii Ix Tailbar Tol'</i> (2015 mobile edition)
NEG	negative
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
ORD	ordinal numeral
P	plural

PERS	personal name
POSS	possessive
PRES	present tense
PST	past
Q	interrogative
REFL	reflexive
S	singular
SE	Siberian Ewenki (Vasilevič 1958)
SSTM	Cincius (1975-1977)
TMA	tense, mood, and aspect
WMgl	Written Mongol

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