

Sayan Turkic reindeer terminology

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1. Sayan Turkic languages and peoples

Sayan Turkic is the technical term used in Turcology to refer to the South-Siberian branch of the Turkic language family, which includes standard Tuvan, Tofan and various related languages spoken by small communities in neighbouring Mongolia, China and Buryatia. Sayan Turkic can be further divided into two groups: Steppe Sayan Turkic and Taiga Sayan Turkic. To the former belong Standard Tuvan and its dialects together with Altay-Sayan varieties spoken in China and western Mongolia, and Uyghur-Uriankhay (Tuhan) of East Khövsgöl. The traditional lifestyle of Taiga Sayan Turkic peoples used to be based on low-land i.e. steppe pastoralism, characterized by herding of sheep, goats, cattle (cows and yaks), horses and camels.

The Taiga Sayan Turkic branch includes Tofan, the Toju variety of Tuvan and some varieties of the Tere-Khöl area as well as Soyot of Buryatia and Dukhan of Mongolia's northern Khövsgöl Aimag. Reindeer breeding and hunting has characterized the lifestyle of these groups until recently.¹ During the last decades reindeer herding has dramatically decreased in the Taiga-Sayan area - see, for instance, Donahoe and Plumley (2003). Presently, reindeer herding is best maintained among the Dukhan people.

2. The Dukhan people

Secluded in the northernmost regions of Mongolia's Khövsgöl region – bordering in the northeast with Buryatia and in the west with the Tuvan republic – the Dukhan people total approximately 500 people and are divided into two main groups: those of the “West Taiga” (*bariïn dayga*) originate from Tere Khöl, whereas those of the “East Taiga” (*jüün dayga*) came from Toju, both of them regions in Tuva. Presently,

¹ For more on the taiga vs. steppe division, though with slight differences from the view presented here, see Žukovskaja et al. (2002).

around 32 Dukhan families are reindeer herders in the surrounding taiga areas, on the southern slopes of the Sayan mountains. They follow what has been called the Sayan-type of reindeer breeding, characterized by small-size herds of reindeer used as pack and riding animals and as a source of dairy products. (For more on the Sayan-type of reindeer herding, see Vainshtein 1980). Hunting used to be an important part of the Dukhan economy. However, the Mongolian government has recently banned hunting and fishing and, in order to balance the impact of these proscriptions, the Dukhan families were granted dwelling in the taiga and a state pension for tending to reindeer, calculated on the basis of the number of family members. The remaining Dukhan families have settled down in the village of Tsagaan Nuur and in the neighbouring riverside areas, abandoning reindeer breeding. Some families, however, regularly return to the taiga in the summer months and tend to reindeer. Although the Dukhan people identify themselves as *du^hha*, in Mongolia they are generally called *Tsaatan*, a rather derogatory term meaning ‘those who have reindeer’, stressing in this way the fact that they are not like Mongolian herders. Recently the more neutral Mongolian term *tsaačín* ‘reindeer herders’ has been introduced to refer to them.²

Nowadays, Dukhan is actively spoken by the older generation, that is, by speakers older than 40. Younger Dukhans communicate in Darkhat-Mongolian,³ although they possess a passive knowledge of Dukhan. Furthermore, language shift is more acute in Tsagaan Nuur and riverside areas, where most of the households have already completely switched to Darkhat-Mongolian. For a linguistic description of Dukhan, see Ragagnin (2011).

² In the available published materials, Dukhans have been designated by several other names such as “Urianxay”, “Taiga Urianxay”, “Taigín Irged” ‘peoples of the taiga’, “Oin Irged” ‘peoples of the forest’ and “Soiot” (Badamxatan 1962: 3). Dukhans do not call themselves Uyghur, as claimed in some publications.

³ The general view among scholars is that the Darkhat people are of Turkic origin and that their language and customs have become Mongol in the past few centuries. For a short survey of Darkhat grammatical features, see Sanžeev (1931) and Gáspár (2006). On Darkhat Mongolian’s substrate of Turkic features, see Ragagnin (2012b).

Below I shall alphabetically list and comment on Dukhan reindeer terminology,⁴ a very unique part of Dukhan lexicon.⁵ The data is supported with materials from the other neighbouring Taiga Sayan Turkic varieties:

(1) *anhay* ‘new-born reindeer calf’; cf. Toju-Tuvan *aʹniy* ‘reindeer calf’ (Čadamba 1974: 63), Tofan *anhay* ‘new-born reindeer calf’ (Rassadin 2014: 52) and Soyot *aʹnay ~ aʹnhay* ‘reindeer calf up to year of age’ (Rassadin 2006: 22). Steppe Sayan Turkic displays cognates referring to the young of other animals, e.g. Tuvan *aʹnay* ‘young offspring of a goat or mountain goat’ (Monguš 2003: 130b). Etymologically, *anhay* is rather obscure. It could be traced back to Turkic *ana* ‘mother’ augmented with the hypocoristic suffix *-KAy*, thus meaning ‘mommy’. Similar expressions are used, for instance, in Turkish (see Ragagnin 2012a: 135–136 for details). For other views, see Rassadin (2014: 54).

(2) *bogana ~ mogana* ‘male reindeer castrated at an advanced age’; cf. Tere-Khöl Tuvan *boxana* ‘gelded reindeer’ (Kuular and Suvandi 2011a: 165); in Toju-Tuvan a cognate of this term occurs in the compound *bogana čari* denoting an older breeding reindeer. Etymologically, *bogana ~ mogana* may represent a nominal formation built with the Mongolic suffix *-gAnA*, used for names of plants and animals (Poppe 1954: 41), or a deverbal formation involving the Mongolic suffix *-gAn* (Poppe 1954: 45) or the corresponding denominal suffix *-gAn* deriving zoological and botanical names in Old Turkic (Erdal 1991: 87). Moreover, *bogana ~ mogana* may be related to Gagauz *bobana* ‘seven/eight-year-old sheep’ (Ščerbak 1961: 153). This claim, however, needs further scrutiny.

(3) *döñhur* ‘young reindeer buck’; cf. Toju Tuvan *döʹnggür* ‘without antlers, with dropped antlers, one of the terms in use for a breeding reindeer’ (Čadamba 1974: 64), Tofan *dönggür* ‘male domesticated uncastrated rideable reindeer in its third year and first mating season but not ready for mating’ (Harrison 2010: 57) and Soyot *döñkir* ‘reindeer buck’ (Rassadin 2006: 46). In Tuvan, the primary meaning of *döñgür* is ‘antlerless, bold’ (Tenišev 1968: 178a); also cf. Altay Turkic *toñkur* ‘komolyj, bezxvostyj, obrezannyj, kucyj; derevo bez veršiny i vetvej’ (Verbickij 2005: 364). Also, see Tatarincev (2002: 235–236) and Monguš (2003: 495b) in this

⁴ Some Dukhan reindeer terms are listed in Badamxatan (1962: 9), Somfai-Kara (1998: 18–19), Kuular and Suvandi (2011b) and Ragagnin (2010 and 2012a).

⁵ This scarcely documented special lexicon is rapidly getting lost. In my fieldwork sojourns, I could personally see how fuzzy it is among many Dukhans.

respect. It is a moot question whether this term may have originally been applied to a young reindeer buck after its first (autumnal) antlers fell.

(4) *e^hsirik* ‘new-born reindeer calf’; cf. Toju-Tuvan *e^zsirik* ‘affectionate name for reindeer calf’ (Čadamba 1974: 63) and Soyot *e^ssirik* ‘new-born reindeer calf’ (Rassadin 2006: 85, 204). Steppe Sayan Turkic, on the other hand, displays corresponding items referring to the young of other animals, cf. *ezirik* (*e^zsirik*) ‘goatling, (kid), fawn’ (Tenišev 1968: 608b, Dorlig and Dadar-ool 1994: 242a). Etymologically, *e^hsirik* is a transparent Turkic agent formed from the verbal stem *ehsir-* ‘to get drunk’ (cf. ED 251: *esür-* ‘to be, or become, drunk, intoxicated’) and literally means ‘drunkard’. This denomination is most probably based on the fact that the new-born baby reindeer tumbles like a drunkard. Moreover, it likely belongs to the set of taboo names applied to the young of both humans and animals in order to protect them from evil spirits. It is quite unlikely that evil spirits would take away a drunkard. In addition, from *e^hsirik* the verbal stem *e^hsirikte-* ‘to calf/to fowl’ is formed.

(5) *e^hter* ‘breeding reindeer’; cf. Toju Tuvan *e^zder* (Čadamba 1974: 63-64) and Soyot *e^zter* ~ *e^ztər* (Rassadin 2006: 205) ‘reindeer buck’. Cognate forms are documented in neighbouring Buryat Sayan dialects as well: *eteer* ‘breeding reindeer’ (Rassadin 1996: 149). Etymologically, *e^hter* literally ‘screamer in rut’, is a Turkic participial form derived from *e^ht-* ‘to scream in rut’ (cf. ED 39-40 and Röhrborn 2010: 200). Evidently, ‘screaming in rut’ is the most important characteristics of a male reindeer on heat. Dukhan *e^hter* also occurs in the expression *uliy e^hter*, literally ‘big *e^hter*’ with reference to an “experienced” reindeer buck.

(6) *guuday* ‘castrated reindeer buck’; cf. Soyot *quuday* ‘domesticated three-year-old reindeer buck’, Tere-Khöl Tuvan *kuuday* ‘small/young male reindeer (general term)’ (Seren 2006: 82) and Tofan *kuuday* ‘reindeer buck of about 2-3 years of age’ (Rassadin 1995: 33a). Ščerbak (1961: 91-92) and Tatarincev (2004: 327), derived the term *kuuday* from Turkic *kuu* ‘grey’ and *day* ‘foal, young horse’.

(7) *hokkaš* ‘young reindeer up to one year of age’; cf. Tere-Khöl Tuvan *xokkaš* ‘reindeer calf below one year of age’ (Seren 2006: 81), Tofan *hokkaš* ‘one-year-old reindeer calf’ (Rassadin 1971: 190) and Soyot *hoqaš* ~ *hokkaš* ‘one-year-old reindeer calf (in its second year)’ (Rassadin 2006: 85). Etymologically, *hokkaš* is rather obscure. Arguably it goes back to the diminutive formation *kuškaš* ‘small bird’ from *kuš* ‘bird’ through phonological distortion, not uncommon in taboo

names. Note in this respect that a structurally similar lexeme is documented in Sarig Yugur *go^hqaš* ‘small bird’ (Nugteren and Roos 2006: 110).

(8) *hospayak* ‘new-born reindeer fawn rejected by its own mother’; no cognates are documented so far in the rest of Taiga Sayan Turkic. Morphologically, *hospayak* is a nominal form derived from the verbal stem *hos-* ‘to refuse animal’s babies’. Standard Tuvan employs the form *xosturgan* (*xos-* ‘to refuse animal babies’ + causative + part) to characterize a young animal refused by its own mother, e.g. *xosturgan xuragan* ‘rejected lamb’⁶.

(9) *ĵari* ‘“calm” riding and packing reindeer older than four years of age’; cf. Tofan *ĵarə*, Soyot *čari* ‘riding and packing reindeer’ (Rassadin 1971: 194; 2006: 153), Tere-Khöl and Toju Tuvan *čari* ‘castrated reindeer’ (Seren 2006: 82). Interestingly, Steppe Sayan Turkic varieties show a rather different picture. The standard Tuvan cognate *čari* refers to a breeding male reindeer (Tenišev 1968: 520a) and in the Uyghur Uriankhay Sayan-Turkic variety of Eastern Khövsgöl *ĵari* is the only existing term meaning ‘reindeer’ (Ragagnin 2010: 142). Note, in this respect, that Sayan western Buryat dialects, which show several Turkic features, displays the cognate *zari* denoting both a gelded reindeer (older than 4 years of age) and a (breeding) reindeer (Čeremisov 1973: 251b). Cognates of this term are quite widespread in Siberia. Yeniseian terms such as for instance Yugh ⁴*se^h:r* ‘reindeer’ and Ket *s’el’* ‘reindeer’ may be related items (Werner 2002: 183); also see Khabtagaeva (2015: 116). Historically, a cognate of *ĵari* is documented in Rašīd-ud-Dīn’s *Jāmi’ al-tawārikh* (Compendium of Chronicles). In section 107 dealing with the “forest” Uriangqat tribe, the Ilkhanid Persian historian wrote: “They had no cattle or sheep but raised and caught instead mountain oxen, mountain rams, and *ĵür* (antelope), which is like a mountain sheep, which they milked and drank” (Thackston 2012: 42, §107). Also see the information supplied by Marco Polo’s 13th century travelogue concerning reindeer herding nomads in the neighbouring Bargu area (cf. Ragagnin 2015). Furthermore, Dukhan *ĵari* occurs in the nominal compound *e^hter-ĵari* which designates a breeding reindeer. Formal and semantic cognates are well documented in other Taiga Sayan Turkic varieties, e.g. Tofan *e^hter ĵari* (Rassadin 1996: 149-150) and Soyot *e^hter čari* (Rassadin 2006: 153). In these

⁶ I wish to thank my colleague Choduraa Tumat for providing me with this example.

forms, *ĵari* is clearly used as a species collective denomination.⁷ The compound noun can thus be interpreted as ‘the category of rutting reindeer’.

(10) *iβi* general term referring to ‘reindeer’ (*rangifer tarandus sibiricus*); close formal and semantic cognates are documented throughout Sayan Turkic, cf. Tofan *ibi* ‘reindeer’ (Rassadin 1995: 24), Soyot *ivi* ‘id.’ (Rassadin 2006: 50), Tuvan *ivi* ‘id.’ (Tenišev 1968: 200). Etymologically, *iβi* is possibly related with *iwiq* ‘a she-antelope which frequents stony tracks and deserts’, recorded in Maḥmūd Al-Kāšġarī’s encyclopaedic work *Dīwānu l-Luġat al-Turk* (Compendium of the languages of the Turks) and glossed with Arabic *zabya* (Dankoff and Kelly 1982: 108; also cf. Hauenschild 2003: 100).

(11) *mīndi* ‘fertile reindeer doe’; cf. Toju Tuvan *mīndi* ‘reindeer doe’ (Čadamba 1974: 63) and Soyot *mīndi* ‘adult reindeer doe; camel cow’ (Rassadin 2006: 93).⁸ Beyond Sayan Turkic, cognates of *mīndi* are widespread across north Asian languages whose speakers are reindeer herders, see Tatár (1985) for examples. Etymologically, *mīndi* most likely represents a loanword from Samoyedic; cf. Mator *méinde* ‘*rangifer ferus*’. According to Helimski (1997: 301-302), Mator *méinde* may be traced back to Proto-Samoyedic **mājan-ceġ* (*mājan* ‘ground [gen]’ + *ceġ* ‘[tamed] reindeer’). In Dukhan, the term *mīndi* also occurs in the following expressions: *haš* (‘hairless’) *mīndi* ‘older reindeer doe with little fur’ *ġisir* (‘barren’) *mīndi* ‘dry doe’ and *uliy mīndi* ‘big/mature reindeer doe’.

(12) *mīndiġak* ‘reindeer doe that has fowled once’; cf. Tofan *mīndiġaq* ‘two-year-old reindeer doe’ (Rassadin 1995: 47b), Soyot *mīndiġaq* ‘three-year-old reindeer doe’ (Rassadin 2006: 93) and Toju Tuvan *mīndičak* ‘važenka dvux let’ (Čadamba 1974: 63). Etymologically, *mīndiġak* is a diminutive form of *mīndi*.

(13) *öskusek* ‘motherless fawn’; cognates of this Dukhan lexeme are not documented in the rest of Taiga Sayan Turkic. Morphologically, *öskusek* represents a diminutive formation from *öskus* ‘orphan’ (cf. ED 116–117: Old Turkic *öġsüz* ‘motherless’).

(14) *bir düktəy ġuuday*⁹ ‘three-year-old castrated reindeer’ (one hair-der *ġuuday*). Based on the same syntactic structure, i.e. cardinal number + *dük* ‘hair’ augmented

⁷ In this regard, also see Hauenschild (2003: 105–106).

⁸ Tofan, on the other hand, employs the term *iġgen* (cf. ED 184: Old Turkic *iġġen* ‘female camel’) with reference to a reindeer doe. On the term *iġġen*, see also Hauenschild (2003: 94).

⁹ According to several Dukhan informants, *bir düktəy ġuuday* is a synonym for *düktəy mīs*.

by the adjectivalizing suffix *-LXY + guuday*, *ih̄xi tüktəy guuday* and *üš tüktəy guuday* refer, respectively, to ‘two-haired guuday’ and ‘three-haired guuday’, i.e. ‘four-year vs. five-year old gelded reindeer’. Cognates are documented in the other Taiga Sayan Turkic varieties: Tere-Khöl Tuvan *iyi tüktüg kuuday* ‘three-year-old male reindeer’, *üš tüktüg kuuday* ‘four-year-old male reindeer’ and Toju Tuvan *bir düktüg miyis* ‘male reindeer of about 3 years of age’, *iyi düktüg miyis* ‘male reindeer of about four years of age’, *üš düktüg miyis* ‘male reindeer of about five years of age’ (Seren 2006: 82).

(15) *säärsək mīs* ‘reindeer with one dropped antler’ (*säärsək* ‘one of two’ and *mīs* ‘antler’).

(16) *dasfanəŋ* ‘wild, i.e. not tamed reindeer’. Among Taiga Sayan Turkic varieties merely Soyot displays the formally and semantically close cognate *daspanəŋ* ‘wild reindeer’ (Rassadin 2006: 43). The term *dasfanəŋ* possibly goes back to *taspan* (see below) and *aŋ* ‘wild animal’.

(17) *daspan* ‘one-year-old young reindeer’; cf. Toju Tuvan *daspan* ‘one-year-old reindeer’ (Sat 1987: 77), Tofan *daspan* ‘two-year-old young wild reindeer’ (Rassadin 1995: 21a). The etymology of *daspan* is obscure; for some proposals, see Tatarincev (2002: 105–106).

(18) *doŋgur* ‘approximately 18-month-old male reindeer’; cf. Tere-Khöl Tuvan *toŋgur/tuŋxur* ‘approximately two-year-old male reindeer’ (Kuular and Suvandi 2011a: 165), Toju Tuvan *doŋgur* ‘approximately one-year-old young reindeer’ and Soyot *doŋgur* ~ *doŋyir* ‘two-year-old reindeer buck’ (Rassadin 2006: 45). Etymologically, *doŋgur* might be traced back to a rhotacised form of Turkic *toŋuz* ‘pig’. This assumption, however, needs further investigation. In this respect, it should be kept in mind that names of strong and dangerous animals, such as the boar, belong to the set of taboo names in use across Siberia and neighbouring areas.

(19) *doŋguy* ‘approximately 18-month-old reindeer doe’; cf. Tere-Khöl Tuvan *tuŋxuy* ~ *tunguy* ‘approximately two-year-old reindeer doe’ (Kuular and Suvandi 2011a: 165). Further formal cognates of *doŋguy* are Mator *toŋoi* ‘pig’ (Helimski 1997: 365, §1060), Toju Tuvan *doŋay* ‘two-year-old wild reindeer’ and Tuvan *doŋay* (Monguš 2003: 474a) ‘bear cub’. Etymologically, *doŋguy* may also ultimately go back to a rhotacised form of Turkic *toŋuz*. Note that in this regard that Helimski (1997: 365, §1060) traced Mator *toŋoi* ‘pig’ back to Proto-Turkic **doŋur*. Further Dukhan expressions including the term *doŋguy* are *jaš doŋguy*, literally ‘young

doŋɣuɣy’, referring to a young doe about to foal, and *hur doŋɣuɣy*, literally ‘last year’s *doŋɣuɣy*’ employed for a reindeer doe that has foaled twice.

(20) *düktäy mĩs* ‘three-year-old castrated reindeer’; cf. Soyot *düktiŋ miis* ‘domesticated young reindeer buck in its third year of age’ (Rassadin 2006: 47). The expression *düktäy mĩs* literary means ‘hairy antler’.

(21) *uzän but* literally ‘long leg’; this term specifically refers to a reindeer buck that will be castrated in the autumn, at least according to some informants; cf. Soyot *uzin-but* ‘young reindeer buck in its third year of age’ (Rassadin 2006: 139).

3. Transcription and abbreviations

The transcription employed here follows general principles employed in Turcology, with the following additions: the symbols *i* and *u* represent the high central vowels occurring beyond first syllables, and the super-script ^h designates preaspiration of fortis consonants, corresponding to Tuvan and Tofan glottalization/pharyngealization, marked here with the symbol ^ʔ. Abbreviations occurring in the grammatical glosses are: CAUS: causative, DER: derivation, and PART: participle.

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