

Brosig, Benjamin. 2013. Review of "Yu Wonsoo: A Study of Mongol Khamnigan spoken in Northeastern Mongolia". *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 66 (2), 239–241.

The running text below is the version of the review as it was first handed in to AOH. Changes that the editor of the journal suggested and that were adapted in the published version are provided in footnotes, as are the page breaks of the original publication. Meanwhile, citations (which were entirely done in footnotes in the original publication) are left in-text, with the bibliographical information given at the end of the review. The published text can be found at:

<http://www.akademai.com/content/07500j880468g122/?p=d5db08627de8419a819f9c7661cce333&pi=6>

¹Yu, Wonsoo. *A study of Mongol Khamnigan spoken in northeastern Mongolia*. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2011. - 254 p. *Altaic languages Series 04*.²

After Yu et al.'s study of the Tacheng dialect of Dagur (2008), this is the second book based on extensive field research by the Mongolic languages team of the "Researches of Endangered Altaic languages of the Altaic Society of Korea" that collected data on overall 29 varieties of Mongolic. Documentation was done using different versions of a unified questionnaire that for Khamnigan elicited over 2700 words and 731 short sentences. While a small amount of narrative data was also collected, it is not included. The book consists of a short introduction to the fieldwork and the informants (7-16), a grammar sketch covering phonology (17-34), morphology and syntax (together 35-91), a wordlist (95-190) and a list of elicited sentences that can be subdivided into conversational and grammar-oriented data (191-250).

Most data was elicited from a single informant, J. Tsetsegmaa, born 1957 in Tsagaan Nuur, Binder sum, Khentii. Next to Khamnigans, the area is also inhabited by numerous Buryat and some Khalkha. Moreover, she had lived in Ulaanbaatar for grade 7 and 8 and between the age of 24 and 41 as a manual worker, resulting in substantial Khalkha influence. Even so, she was the best informant available for a sufficient span of time. Moreover, one might think, her language skills are probably more representative of the state of Khamnigan in Mongolia than the speech of old people. Part of the questionnaire was also elicited from two informants born in 1945 and 1947.

In contrast to the previous publications on Khamnigan, the most notable advantage of this publication is that it provides most of the language material on which the analysis is based (at least in transcribed form). Previously, scholars had to be content with Janhunen 1990, a work on Manchurian Khamnigan that seldom goes beyond the morph level and that doesn't contain texts (which exist but are still unpublished). The reader will notice, though, that Khamnigan in Manchuria and Mongolia differ quite noticeably. I will continue by recapitulating Yu's linguistic description of Khamnigan and then briefly assess it.

The vowel system of Mongolian Khamnigan is described as consisting of six short vowels, seven long vowels and four diphthongs,³ contrasting with Manchurian Khamnigan that is analyzed as having 6 (/5) short vowels, 6 (/5) long vowels and 10 (/6) diphthongs (Janhunen 1990: 18-35/2005: 21-24). Like in Khalkha and in contrast to Janhunen's description (2005: 26), the difference between alveolar and alveo-palatal consonants is taken to be phonemic, while a Buryat-like phoneme /h/ is absent. Diachronically, the realization of a number of Written Mongol affricates and fricatives (e.g. *kubtas* 'garment' vs.⁴ *kubcas* 'clothes' vs. WM *qubcasu* 'clothes'; *ulad* 'state' vs. WM *ulus*) by dental plosives is notable.

As far as can be assessed from the data provided, the properties of nouns, adjectives and numerals differ from those of Khalkha in only very minor ways. For instance, apart from minor allomorphic variants, the

¹ page 239

² (Altaic Languages Series 04). 254 pages.

³ changed to numbers

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noun case system is the same as in Khalkha, including the presence of a directional case *-ruu* and a canonical Khalkha accusative *-iig*. Manchurian Khamnigan, in contrast, has no directional except for occasional forms such as *tan-taa-si* where *-si* is the directive morpheme from the spatial declination, and it uses the traditional accusative in *-ii* that would also fit into an Inner Mongolian contact scenario (Janhunen 1990: 62, 53-55).

Details about the exact semantic and distributional properties of the respective case suffixes are another issue, but by and large the documented uses are as expected. While data was not collected exhaustively, irregular stems in personal pronouns are documented quite extensively. Interesting forms for the first person plural exclusive are nominative *manuus*, genitive *manay*, *manaree*, *manuusee*, dative *manart*, accusative *manariig*, instrumental *manuusaar* and comitative *manuustai* based on the root *man-* and the two plural stems *man-nar* and *man-uus*. When comparing these forms to Khalkha, Yu doesn't provide any forms for Khalkha except the genitive *manai*, thereby following the normative standard variety, but as Poppe (1951: 71-72) still provided an almost complete paradigm (excluding the nominative) for the stem *man-* and as the stem *manuus* is not uncommon even in contemporary Ulaanbaatar, the overall dialectal situation is not clear at all.

Looking at verbal morphology, the mood system for the first and second person is quite distinct from surrounding⁵ dialects. There are simple markers such as *-suy* (decision, as in Khalkha legal documents), standard *-yi* (volition), standard *-∅* (immediate command), standard *-aaree* (prescription), *-gtii* (polite request, as in Buryat), but even such dialect-specific complex markers such as first person *-gt{ii}bi* and *-yā-gt{ii}bi* (polite notice) and second person *-yā-gtii* (persuasion), *-aara-gtii* (polite prescription) and *-aar{ee}-yā-gtii* (polite persuasion). The possibility of such complex forms is much less interesting, though, than their discourse-pragmatic usage which (as in other dialects) even includes combinations with focus clitics (it should be *gar buu kūrū-∅=l-či* 'don't touch it with your hand' on p. 78 with the zero imperative inserted), illocutionary particles as well as forms based on the future participle and (as suggested by app. 2: 211) the present suffix *-n*. The system is also much more complex than the corresponding system in Manchurian Khamnigan (Janhunen 1990: 70-71). But unless a certain stock of free conversational and interactional materials is recorded quite soon, no functioning interactional setting will be left in which this data could be meaningfully evaluated.

Converbs are entirely standard (compared with the reduced system in Manchurian Khamnigan, Janhunen 1990: 77-80), and so is the *inventory* of participles and finite verbal suffixes. However, how these forms are used to express tense and aspect is not clear at all. *-ku* is future (as in Middle Mongol) at least with activities, but seems to be habitual under negation, *-ba* seems to be a fairly neutral and highly frequent past marker (again as in MM), *-aa* also fulfills past-like functions in quite a lot of cases (as in Buryat), *-san* is not infrequently attested and doesn't resemble a simple perfect either (cf. 1), even *-laa* (firsthand past in Khalkha and MM) is used sometimes, and the habitual participles *-dag* and *-gči* are attested to alternate in question-answer pairs like 2. As the latter can even be used with adverbials,⁶ postpositional phrases (app. 3: 180), designating it as a deverbal noun (Janhunen 1990: 77) as in other modern Mongolian varieties seems to be questionable.⁷

1. I went to school yesterday.

<i>bi</i>	<i>üčügüdür</i>	<i>surguuli[-]d[-]jaa</i>	<i>yaba[-]san[=]bi</i> (app. 3: 197)
[1SG	yesterday	school-DAT-RPOSS	go-?PST=1SG]

2. What do you like to do when you have time? – I climb mountains.

<i>čүүлээ</i>	<i>cag[-]jaar[-]jaa</i>	<i>yuu</i>	<i>xii[-]dag[-]t</i>
free	time-ins-RPOSS	what	do-HAB.PTCP=2SG.HON
<i>uulan[-]d</i>	<i>gara[-]gči[=]bi</i> (app. 2: 337-338)		
mountain-DAT	go.up-HAB.PTCP=1SG		

⁵ major related

⁶ and

⁷ page 241

Negation is handled the Buryat way, without regard to whether the verb is finite or a participle. Giving⁸ that the causative marker *-gul-* acquired passive functions in most, but not all Central Mongolic dialects (Kurebito 2008), one would wish that a few sentences containing adversative passive meanings had been included into the questionnaire. As it is, only the existence of cognates of the MM Passive and Causative in their canonical meaning are shown in⁹ three items each. Similarly, basic negation types such as locational and possessive negation would have been easy to include.

While examples within the grammar sketch are glossed, this is not the case for appendix 2 and 3 that consists of the English rendering of Khalkha sentences used for elicitation and their Khamnigan translation. As the translations of Khalkha examples sometimes differ substantially from their actual Khamnigan renderings (e.g. perfective English verb forms rendered with Khamnigan Progressives), a reader with no knowledge of Mongolic might have felt happier with translations of the actual Khamnigan examples (the more so as the wordlist does NOT function as a lexicon to the sentences), while any Mongolist would surely have preferred the original Khalkha stimuli.

The English contains occasional mistakes, but they tend to be slight. Even in the rare cases where more serious mistakes occur, a basic familiarity with Mongolian studies should be enough to overcome them.

Overall, the timely fieldwork of Yu and his associates very substantially enhances our knowledge of Khamnigan Mongolian, both as it is spoken in Mongolia today and in general. Yu's book contains a grammar sketch accessible to anyone and language materials immediately accessible to any Mongolist and easy enough to figure out without too much confusion even for anyone who properly read the grammar part. It can, thus, be recommended both to the Mongolist and to a careful general linguist.

Judging from the still sketchy data that Yu's materials provide, Mongolian Khamnigan synchronically appears to be a dialect in-between Khalkha and Buryat, even though it exhibits a number of idiosyncratic features that set it apart somewhat. This seems to hold more for the verbal system than for the nominal system, though, for in spite of the usual, diffuse distribution of pronoun stems there are no actual innovations as could be found, for example, in Khorchin or Chakhar-Baarin. Possible diverging constructions that still show some peculiarities in case usage and that could provide the linguist with a better idea of possible grammatical idiosyncrasies of Khamnigan are difficult to find in a material like this, so conversational materials of erdely informants should be collected and processed before the near time when fruitful fieldwork will have become impossible altogether.

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⁸ Given

⁹ is shown with