

## CHAPTER 11

# Endangered Turkic Languages from China

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The Caucasus is perhaps the foremost region in the world in terms of endangered languages. When we analyze the linguistic connection between Turkey and the Caucasus, among the first languages that stand out are the Laz language, and Hamshin Armenian. What I shall be focusing on in this study however, takes us farther east to the Altai Mountains; a region that bears striking similarities in its topography to Ardahan and the Caucasus. A number of Chinese sources name Jin Shan (金山 “Gold Mountains”) as the region Turkic peoples settled in.<sup>1</sup> On that note, let us mention the peoples that first appeared in this area and belong to the Turkic ethno-linguistic group. Those that remain to this day within the borders of China are:

1. Uyghur 维吾尔, 2. Kazakh 哈萨克, 3. Kirghiz 柯尔克孜, 4. Salir 撒拉, 5. Tatar 塔塔尔, 6. Tuvan 图瓦, 7. Yellow Uyghur 裕固, 8. Uzbek 乌孜别克, 9. Fuyu Kirghiz; Kirkis 柯尔克孜.

Only six group of peoples among those listed continue to effectively use their native language. Of these languages, the speakers of Uzbek have recently given up speaking their own language and started speaking Uyghur. Consequently, it is hard to consider Uzbek as one of the Turkic languages spoken in China. The same applies for Tatar and Fu-yü Kirghiz as well. Middle and Old generations speak Mongolian (“Ölöt Mongolian”) while the young generation speaks Chinese. The related details will be given below.

In China, more than one language belonging to the Turkic language group are spoken. And notably, we see isolated Turkic languages spoken in China. In 1970s, nine Turkic languages existed in China. Unlike the above mentioned classification, these languages can be listed based on population/speaker as follows: Uyghur, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Salir, Uzbek, Yellow Uyghur, Tatar, Tuvan and Fū-yu Kirghiz. Although not up-to-date, the demographics of China can be viewed on Chinese articles.<sup>2</sup> The list shows the languages and the number

<sup>1</sup> From 通典 *tong dian* (<http://ctext.org/tongdian/zhs?searchu=代居金山>).

<sup>2</sup> <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/97856583.html?si=7>. Bold numerals belongs to the website.

of people that speak them: 6. 维吾尔族 The Uyghurs 8.399.393; 17. 哈萨克族 The Kazakhs 1.250.458; 32. 柯尔克孜族 The Kirghiz 160.823; 36. 撒拉族 The Salirs 104.503; 48. 裕固族 The Yellow Uyghurs (speakers of both Mongolian and Turkic) 13.719; 49. 乌孜别克族 The Uzbeks 12.370; 53. 塔塔尔族 The Tatars 4.890, respectively, on the basis of population density. The Fuyu Kirghiz and the Tuvans are not included in official censuses since they are not known or recognized as a separate community during the minority identification works executed in China.

In this paper, Uyghur, Kazakh and Kirghiz which are spoken in Xinjiang and thus known closely by Turcologists; Uzbek, which has become almost Uyghur and Tatar, will not be dealt with in detail. Apart from that, another Turkic community whose language has not yet been studied sufficiently is the Tarbagatay Kirghiz living in Xinjiang. Their ethnology has been studied by M. Čertikov<sup>3</sup> and their language by Erkin Awgaly.<sup>4</sup>

The information I provided below is based on my previously published studies, related sources, and personal studies in the field, as well as the Tubitak project numbered 108K413 which is connected with this study. My library, which I use for a detailed study to be included in a book in the future, has not been fully explored as of yet and thus a part of the important sources regarding the subject has not been used in this paper.

Both the book of the project and separate books about various languages included in the project will be published soon. I would like to extend my thanks to Batubayr from Ürümqi Pedagogy University, Toolay from Bowuršin & Kanas, Arslan from Sunen / Gansu, Yunus from Xining / Qinghai, TÜBİTAK and Korea Research Institute for the help and support they provided me during my studies in the field.

Now let me say just a few words on already extinct or almost extinct Turkic languages from Xinjiang.

## Uzbek

The Uzbeks living in China do not have their own autonomous prefecture. Having been scattered to the north and south of Tian Shan 天山 (Uyg. *Tengri Tagh*; literally "God's Mountains") in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, most Uzbeks live in the cities. The Uzbek population is centered in İli, Kashgar, Yarkant, Urumchi, Aksu, Uchturpan, Chöchek and Karghilik. The population is

3 M. A. Čertikov, Tarbagataiskie Kirgizi.

4 According to private communication about topic with Erkin Awghaly after his field research.

about 20,000 (*Özbek Edebiyati Tarihi*, 2005, p. 9). In China, a written language or an alphabet peculiar to the Uzbeks do not exist. As mentioned above, the Uzbeks use Uyghur as a written language. Adalaiti Abdulla's study will give us more detailed information (Abdulla 2013).

### Tatar

According to the 2006 census, the Tatar population in China is around 5400. Most of the Tatars live in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, densely in Urumchi, Gulja and Chöchek. Like the Uzbeks, the Tatars do not have their own written language or alphabet. Ersin Teres' study will give us new information (Teres 2011).

Within the scope of my research, let us now analyze the four languages three of which are spoken outside of Xinjiang, and one in Xinjiang.

### Fuyu Kirghiz is also called "Tatar" or "Tatarized Kirghiz"

The Fuyu Kirghiz are a turkic community whose language and society we have the least information and material on. The earliest information we have about the subject relies on the collected works and studies of Hu Zhenhua, faculty member of Kirghiz/Kazakh Language and Literature Department in Zhongyang Minzu Daxue (Minzu University of China; formerly known as Central University for Nationalities). The information I will be providing here, however, is mainly from the field work that the faculty members of Philology Department in Seoul University, my colleagues from Korea Altay Research Institute and I did in September, 2003. The Fuyu Kirghiz live in the villages of Fuyu County, which is under the administration of Qiqihaer City in China's Heilongjiang (widely known as Manchuria) province. Named after the affluents of the Amur River (Heilongjiang "Black Dragon River"), Fuyu is a residential area of 30,000 people and 1 hour away from Qiqihaer. Although the Fuyu Kirghiz are scattered around a few villages, they mainly live in two villages. The research group I was a part of made a compilation in the villages of Wujiazi and Qijiazi in the September of 2003 (my studies on the Fuyu Kirghiz people and Fuyu Kirghiz was carried out within the frame of "Korea Research Institute" project numbered KRF-2003-072-AL2002).

Since Hu Zhenhua visited this region, the number of speakers of Fuyu Kirghiz have decreased and as of 2000s no native speakers remain. Today, the

Fuyu Kirghiz use Ölot Mongolian and Chinese in their daily lives. During the compilation work we did among the Fuyu Kirghiz, whose number reaches up to 1000, we could talk to only seven people. Two of them were over 50 and the others were over 70. Our best source who was over 70 stated that she used their native tongue when she was 18. The population of Wujiazi and Qijiazi villages consists of different communities and the Fuyu Kirghiz make up nearly half of it. Despite all our efforts, it was not possible to fill in the half of 3000 questionnaires. However, even the limited material compiled is enough to show that this language is a branch of Khakas and Shor. After all of the compilations are discussed and published, useful results will come up for South Siberian Turkic languages in particular and for all Turkic languages in general. The first studies related to the data we collected were published in 2007 and 2010/2011 (see. Li, Ölmez and Kim, 2007 and 2010/2011).

With respect to the importance of Fuyu Kirghiz, we can safely conclude from our work based on limited language material that Fuyu Kirghiz is a Turkic language that falls into the same category as South Siberian Turkic languages and basically modern Khakas written language. On the basis of the data related to that language, we can reach several results about the phonetic properties and vocabulary of South Siberian Turkic languages and modern Turkic languages. First of all, the general belief among the local people is that they came to that region after the second half of the 18th century. In fact, after the Manchus started to rule over China, the Manchus had several Mongol clans settle (mainly Dagur Mongols) in the region. Among those clans coming from Southern Siberia, there was the Fuyu Kirghiz who today call themselves Kirghiz and speak the same Turkic language with today's Khakas.

When Fuyu Kirghiz is compared with Old Turkic and modern Turkic languages in the light of previous studies, a few characteristic features can be listed as follows:

1. Old Turkic and Common Turkish sound *y*- becomes *c*:- OT *yap*- "to cover, close" = *ĵap*-; OT *yay* "summer" = *ĵay*; OT *yē*- "to eat" = *ĵe*-; OT *yürek* "heart" = *ĵürüh*;
2. Old Turkic and Common Turkish *d* sound becomes *z*: *uzi*- "to sleep", *gizin*- "to get dressed", *güzi* "groom";
3. Final *-g* of a word becomes *-h*: OT *tag* "mountain" = *tah*, OT *sariġ* "yellow" = *sarih*, OT *ulug* "great, big" = *uluh*.

In order to make a comparison with modern Turkic languages, I can give a few short sentences from our field research result:

<i>sın kaya tursın</i>	"where do you live?"
<i>sın mî tart!</i>	"(You) Smoke (a cigarette) too!"
<i>men mînda gülğîn uşgun boltır</i>	"it has been three days since I came here."
<i>aragî izirtir</i>	"(alcoholic) drinks make you drunk."
<i>min at mîlbat gülçik ~ mîn at mîl gülçik</i>	"I rode a horse and came here"
<i>min bozın aldir</i>	"I am taking (it) on my own"
<i>sın minîñ piçeñ buzih</i>	"you are a little older than me"
<i>bis sîñîñ olîh</i>	"we older than you"

What we see here as *tart-* (to smoke) corresponds to that of most Turkic languages.

Likewise, *aragî* "drink" has the same root as Turkish *rakî* (a kind of alcoholic beverage), now common in all Altaic languages as a borrowing from Arabic through Persian (?).

*izirt-* is related to Old and Middle Turkish *esür-*, *esürt-* "to become drunk" (cf. Anatolian dialects: *esirik*, *esirikli* "fractious; little bit crazy").

In the fifth sentence, *gülçik* is not anything else but Old Turkic < *kelyük* "has come" (for details see. Ölmez, 2007).

*boz* is another form of Old Turkic *bod* "himself".

*buzih* is Fuyu Kirghiz form of Old Turkic *bedük* "big".

*olîh* is the word *ulug* in Old Turkic.

Regarding these examples, you can see Ölmez, 2001; Ölmez 2006a, b and c. The first work on the Fuyu Kirghiz and their social life was prepared by Gundula Salk and Mambet Turdi. The last and detailed work belongs to Mixail Čertikov (Čertikov, 2008a and 2008b).

Below I provide the words "moon", "day" and some number names in order to show the phonetic similarities or differences between Fuyu Kirghiz and Turkic languages and Turkish.

### Salır

The first data on the Salırs are based on the works conducted in the West which are higher in number when compared to Turkish sources. At this point we need to mention Russian scholar Potapov's compilations based on the last decades of the 19th century (and based on that N. Poppe's work), the compilations and publications of E. R. Tenišev, text publications of Zsuzsa Kakuk, the works of anthropologist Kevin Stuart, the articles of R. Hahn and recently the works of Arienne M. Dwyer.

We owe the primary information about the Salırs to Kashgari, specifically the part where the Oghuz clans are mentioned and the words *Turkmen* and *boy* (clan) are explained. As we know, the Oghuz consist of twenty-four clans. One of them is the Salır. Sufficient information regarding the Salgurs/Salurs can be found in the sources that give information about the Oghuz and the Oghuz clans. For the historical resource entries about the name and the clan of Salur, Salur Atabegs and Salur settlements in Anatolia, see Sümer, 1980, pp. 336-344; 447-448.

When the Salırs are discussed in Turcological studies, their language and geography are almost always mentioned and covered with those of the Yellow Uyghurs. However, both the culture (religion, clothing, production styles) and geographies of these people are different. The two languages and peoples have been covered under the same entry in basic reference sources and handbooks published since 1959. Yet, it takes approximately 10 hours of a trip with the vehicles found in the region from Xining, the capital city of Xunhua where the Salırs live, to the Sunan region where the Yellow Uyghurs live (for similar information and opinions see Dwyer, 2007, p. 1, footnote 1). While the Salırs live together on the “Salır” plain surrounded by the Huizus (Muslim Chinese people) and Tibetan villages, nearly two hours away from Xining, the Yellow Uyghurs live on the tableland which is two hours away from the city of Zhangye of Gansu province.

There is no precise information about their population, either. According to the records, their population was 40,000 in 1960s, 56,000 in 1978 and 69,000 in 1982 (Schwarz, 1984, p. 39). According to the 1990 census, they had a population of nearly 65,000. The data belonging to the year 2000 suggests a population of about 100,000. A considerable portion of this population lives in Salır (Xunhua), in Salır Autonomous County (循化撒拉族自治县 *Xunhua Salazu Zizhixian*), the city of Xining, Huizu Autonomous County of Gansu and Ili prefecture of Xinjiang (for Ili Salırs see Bibliography, Yakup, 1988 and 2002).

The Muslim Salır people are very similar to the Huizus and the Muslim Han Chinese in terms of culture (religion, clothing, production styles). They give and take girls as wives; and share the same mosque (*mišit*, *mišt*). According to my colleague Ma Wei (Yunus), the most important difference is maybe the wedding traditions and ceremonies.

The Salır people are involved in commercial activities in the whole region (Qinghai / Tibet Autonomous Region and the capital of Tibet) and in many cities of the People's Republic of China. Mainly engaged in restaurant management, the Salır people run restaurants known as “Lanzhou Restaurant” which are in compliance with Islamic standards. Not all of these restaurant owners are Salır however; most of them are Muslim Chinese, the Huizus.

As to the origin of the Salır, we cannot find detailed information about their history in Chinese resources. Related to the subject, one-folio long data found and published by Teniřev is important and interesting (Teniřev, 1977); according to the story circulating among themselves, they came to the region from Samarkand at the end of the 14th century; they chose that place as their homeland since the soil and water was similar to those of their motherland and the accompanying camel, which was carrying a *Qur'an* on his neck, was found petrified exactly at that point (*Altiüli*) after getting lost: that event is the subject of the story named *döye yül ~ döye yuli* “camel spring” (Chin. 駱駝泉 *luo tuo quan*).

The altitude of the land they live is about 1800 meters. In a region where the Yellow River originates and reaches the inner parts of China, the Salır usually settle along the “river”. Since it is the sole and closest river, the Salır call the Yellow River *morun ~ morin* (< Mo.) for short; they never use the word “yellow”. They have very good relationships with the Tibetans, especially with those living on the mountainous parts. The Tibetan villagers usually shop from Salır shops. They speak Salır effectively among themselves and in their daily lives. They are engaged in agriculture relying on irrigation on vast plains. Apart from Qinghai, there are a few thousand Salır living in the city of Gulja, in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (I will deal with this issue in another paper; the details are in the book of Abdurishid Yakup, Yakup, 2002). Those living within the borders of Gansu (according to the information Yunus provided) have almost forgotten the Salır language.

Today, the Salır call Xunhua as “Salır” among themselves: *Men salırğa* (~ *Salı:ğa*) *vargur* (~ *va:gur*) “I will go to Xunhua”. They don not use the name Xunhua.

With intensive efforts to learn their history and language as of 1990s, the Salır started to publish a periodical, which includes Latin lettered texts, issued twice a year since 2008.

### *Distinctive Features of the Salır Language*

When compared with other Muslim Turkic language groups in Central Asia, Chaghatay and Kipchak groups, Salır language distinguishes itself in terms of both grammar and vocabulary. When we compare it with Turkmen and Turkish, however, it partially shows an archaic characteristic. On the other hand, it has lost many grammatical elements in comparison with Yellow Uyghur which has far less speakers (about 5000 people). For example, it is almost impossible to see the first person affix for present when conjugating verbs. Palatal and labial harmony may not be seen in case of vowels. When we consider the vocabulary, we see that local Tibetan and Chinese have enormously affected Salır and the words borrowed from these languages have replaced the words of

Turkic origin. Today, Tibetan *gača* ~ *geče* are used even for the words “word, utterance, language”:

*Yaxçux gačani hemme kiş yişar, yaxçux işni hemme kiş etmes* “anybody (can) say a good word, not everybody does a good job / not everybody can exhibit good behaviors.”

We separate the Salir language from Kipchak and Chaghatay and approximate it to the Oghuz family of languages since the Salir use the verb *et-* ~ *ét-*, and the word *el* “hand” (in Kipchak and Chaghatay *qol* is used instead). Certainly, common use of the sound *d-* (*dört* “four” etc.) at the beginning of a word plays an important role in this approximation. (Several important features along with this will be discussed in detail in another paper; this paper is a report of a short field work carried out in August, 2009).

The number systems do not go over “forty”. Especially the men, middle-aged people or the elderly do not know much about numbers. As to the women, I have heard the numbers forty, fifty, sixty, even from the young and middle-aged ones. We can relate this to the fact that the men are in more contact with other communities than women (the Chinese, the Tibetan). According to Musa Haji at the age of 64:

*Bir elli ma on dört* “fifty and plus fourteen, fifty-four” (Ol Turkic *\*bir elig yme on tört*)

Below are the words which I heard on the first day and noted in a hurry in order of subject and hearing. More information on the material I recorded and the resources I collected will be included in another paper.

*Atuh* (~*köp*) *işse kursagim agrir*. “if I eat a lot, I will become ill; if I eat a lot, I will have a stomachache”

*Saşa bala neçe* (~*neje?*) *var? segis, ol dört, ane dört; sunzi on segis vara*. “how many kids do you have? Eight, son four, daughter four, grandchildren eighteen”.

*sih* “right, right hand side; well, healthy”

*dal* “tree”

*ağaş* “wooden, timber; wood”

*ağaşli* “forested; the forested village”

*emih* “bread”

*hos* “walnut”

*jijek* “flower”

*ét-* “to do, to make”



<i>kinī</i>	"spouse, wife"
<i>gadin</i>	"woman"
<i>ame</i>	"mother" ( <i>ana</i> "man" is also known despite being an old word)
<i>ape</i>	"father" ( <i>ata</i> "forefather" is also known despite being an old word)
<i>kis</i>	"person, human, man"

Salir and Modern Uyghur can be compared in terms of similarities and differences with the following examples:

Salir	Uyghur
<i>sari</i>	<i>seriq</i> "yellow"
<i>sag'al</i>	<i>sag'al</i> "beard"
<i>satiñji</i>	<i>setiqçi</i> "seller, merchant"
<i>satiñli is</i>	<i>soda</i> "trade"
<i>sen-</i>	<i>öçmek</i> "go out"
<i>sender-</i>	<i>söndürmek</i> "extinguish"
<i>sinli</i>	<i>söyek</i> "bone"
<i>sih</i>	<i>oy</i> "healthily"
<i>soğan</i>	<i>pýaz</i> "onion"
<i>sor-</i>	<i>sort-/sora-</i> "to ask"
<i>sorma</i>	<i>harak</i> "drink, alcoholic beverage"
<i>suv-a-</i>	<i>ussı-</i> "to become thirsty"
<i>süt</i>	<i>süt</i> "milk"

For brief information on the Salir see Olmez, 2012.

Yellow Uyghur

The population of the Yellow Uyghur living in the Gansu province of China, in Sunan Uyghur Autonomous Region close to the city of Zhangye and on the surrounding tablelands is over 10,000. Originally called Yellow Uyghur, this community refer to themselves shortly as Yogur ~ Yugur (Chin. Yugur). Those who speak a Turkic language are called Sarih Yogur, while the others speaking Mongolian are called Shira Yogur. Their names are Western Uyghur (*Xibu Yugu* 西部裕固) and Eastern Uyghur (*Dung Yugu* 东部裕固), and their languages are Western Uyghur and Eastern Uyghur (*Xibu Yuguyu* and *Dongbu Yuguyu* 西部裕固语 and 东部裕固语), respectively.

The history and the language of the Yellow Uyghur belonging to old periods are known quite well compared to the other Turkic people in China. The

Yaglakar clan of the Uyghurs who established the khaganate and ruled for almost a hundred years (744-840) in Mongolia after the Uyghurs ended the Turkish rule (Tujue 突厥) live in the Mongolian-speaking region (see Ölmez 2012). We can look at Ariz, 2002, a work that gathers other works regarding the Yellow Uyghur.

Living on the tablelands around Sunen, today the Yellow Uyghurs move to the tablelands of 2000-2500 metres high. With the coming of Spring, they go up to 3000-3500 metres high tablelands and to 4000 metres high tablelands with the coming of Summer (personal information received from Arslan).

We need to mention G. N. Potanin as the first Western scholar doing research about the Yellow Uyghur. Having organized excursions to the Tangut region between the years 1884-1886, Potanin visited Yugur villages and residences; he collected data about the Mongolian-speaking Shira Yugurs and Turkic-speaking Kara Yugurs. According to Potanin, the Kara Yugurs are divided into two factions as *Yaglak* and *Hurungut*. These factions also are divided into smaller families (= *otok*). In the following years (1906-1908), C. G. Mannerheim arrived in the region and compiled texts both from the Yellow Uyghur and the Shira Yugurs. That was followed by Malov's excursions (1909-1913) and detailed studies. After Malov, E. Tenišev took part in the activities of the People's Republic of China about compiling Chinese minority languages; he made publications about text, dictionary and grammar studies. Afterwards, Lei Xuanchun and Chen Zongzhen made related publications in China. Today, Martti Roos, Erkin Ariz and Zhong Jingwen conduct studies in the field.

With regard to the language of the Yellow Uyghur, they generally have been assumed to be the descendants of the Old Uyghurs presumably due to their names and some secondary language properties. As we mentioned above, it would be more accurate to classify them as the relatives of the Uyghurs who migrated to the region from Mongolia rather than assuming them to be the direct relatives of the Turfan Uyghurs. They have, naturally, connection with the Turfan Uyghurs. We can compare that with the migration of some Buddhist Uyghurs to the east, Dunhuang due to expansion of Islam in the Turfan region and with the Old Uyghur *Altun Yaruk Sudur* found by S. Ye. Malov.

We should note that Yellow Uyghur shows similarities with Khakas language in terms of some phonetic evolution: OT *-d-*, *-d* becomes *-z-*, *-z* (OT *adak* "foot" > YUyg. *azak*, OT *adgır* "stallion" > YUyg. *azgır*, OT *id-* "to send" > YUyg. *iz-*). However, it differs from Khakas in some aspects, for example OT vowel *y-* regularly becomes *č-* in Khakas, while sometimes it retains itself in Yellow Uyghur: OT *yıl* "year", Khak. *čil*, YUyg. *yıl*; OT *yiltiz* "root", YUyg. *yiltis*; OT *yigit* "young; strong" Khak. *čit*, YUyg. *yigit*, *yigit*. OT consonant *b-* regularly becomes *p-* in

Khakas while it is seen both as *b*- and *p*- sound in Yellow Uyghur (see Ölmez, 1996 and 1998).

To put it precisely, in Yellow Uyghur the OT consonant *-g* seen at the end of the polysyllabic words is retained as *-k/-g* but the consonant *d* becomes *z* as in the above given examples.

Another old feature of Yellow Uyghur is seen in the number system. It shows similarities with Old Turkic: *yidigirma* “17” < *yèti yégirmi*; *sagıs yigirma* “18” < *sekiz yégirmi*, *per otut* “21” < *bir otuz* (see Clark, Geng & Clark).

In some words, glottalization occurs before the unvoiced consonants *k* and *t*. YUyg. *ahldi* “altı” < OT *altı*, YUyg. *tohcıs* “dokuz” < OT *tokuz*.

### Tuvan

Unlike the above mentioned Fuyu Kirghiz, Salır and Yellow Uyghur, Tuvan is not a Turkic language exclusively spoken in China. Most Tuvans live in the Tuva Republic within Russia (in fact an autonomous region), in several cities of Russian Federation and in some regions of Mongolia. The Tuvan language spoken in China does not differ much from the original Tuvan; therefore, I will not dwell on the language of the Tuvan people of China in this short paper. I will just touch upon the differences between the Chinese Tuvan and the Tuvan spoken in Tuva. For Tuvan, see Ölmez, 2007, p. 25 and other. For the Tuvans living in Mongolia see Erika Taube's works. The Tuvans of China became known better with the works of Geng Shimin, Talant Mawkanuli and Song Zengchun.

The Tuvans living in Mongolia, their folklore, population and traditions have long been known thanks to the studies of Erika Taube. However, the villages and the towns and the population of the Tuvans in China are not documented as much when compared to Mongolia. Therefore, Marina V. Monguș went to the region, conducted field work and gave information about the Tuvan villages and towns with pictures. According to that information, the Tuvan living in China belong to the Ak Soyan (White Soyan) and Kara Soyan (Black Soyan) clans (2002, p. 21). Marina Monguș touches on the current situation of the Tuvan language and adds an interview at the end of her book. The interview made with Daş Čömblov is given below. I would like to add that I interviewed the same source in Altay in 2004 (2002, p. 105):

– Башкы, силер каш дыл билир силер?

– Моолдуң дылын билир мен.

Казактың дылын билир мен. Мончак дыл билир мен. Кыдатча бичии-бичии билир мен.

- Teacher, how many languages do you speak?
  - I speak the language of the Mongols. I speak the language of the Kazakhs. I speak Tuvan. I speak very little Chinese.
- (Monguš, 2002)

As is understood from the answer, Daš Čömblov speaks three languages very well but speaks the fourth language poorly. The interview is from the year 1993. Yet, considering my personal observation I can safely state that the situation of the language in the Altay region of China has changed quite a lot since then; the Tuvan improved their Chinese; especially the Tuvan state officers speak Chinese very well. Those who receive education in Urumchi also speak Uyghur in addition to these four languages. To conclude, a well-educated “Monchak” speaks five languages including their mother tongue.

This interview was made in 1993 with Daš Čömblov who was born in 1962. The interview was written with present-day Tuvan alphabet but the punctuation reflects the punctuation of the Tuvans living in China. For example, in Tuva *xøøeŭ* is used with *x-*, however, only *køøeŭ* is used in the interview made with Daš Čömblov. Also, the word *гaзыp* which is derived from Kazakh *qazır* is used to mean “now, at the moment, today” (Kazakh < Arabic). Another noticeable usage is the use of *увяааш* instead of Tuvan *əvəəu*.

In the later parts of the interview, Daš Čömblov Oronbayv briefly tells how their grandfather migrated from Russia to Kanas and met other Tuvans there; according to him, that migration occurred in 1913. Two women whom I talked to in Kanas told me a similar story. They, however, moved from Mongolia.

As mentioned before, the Tuvan population concentrated in 3 villages: Kanas (Hanas), Akkaba and Kom. Kom is essentially a Tuvan village. Despite being mainly populated by the Tuvans, Kanas is also home to the Kazakhs and the Mongolians. Half of Akkaba's population is Kazak and the other is Tuvan. The Kazakhs call the Tuvan as “Kök Monchak”. The Tuvans, however, call themselves *dıva* or *monchak*. For population etc. see Mawkanuli, 1999, pp. 1-36; Ölmez, 2007, pp. 25-29; Yolboldi and Kasi, 1987, pp. 287-289. Among the places where the Tuvans live are the cities of Bowurjin and Altay, and the towns of Köktogay and Lamajao. Since it is difficult to distinguish the Tuvans from the Mongols regarding lifestyles and beliefs, the Tuvans were accepted as Mongols and were not included among the 56 minority groups in China's censuses.

Chinese Tuvan was first made known by Geng Shimin. Russian Mongolist B. H. Todayeva met people with a language resembling Mongolian but unfamiliar to him while he was identifying and recording Mongol languages in the Altay region. With the opinion that the people were speaking a Turkic language, he informs Geng Shimin, and thus the research of Geng Shimin begins (this is what I was told by Geng Shimin).

Unlike Tuvan, words do not start with an *h*- sound but always a *k*- sound: *kep*, *kerek*, *köl*, *kün*, *küreş* (Tuvan *hep* “shape, form”, *herek* “necessary”, *höl* “lake”, *hün* “day, sun”, *hüreş* “wrestling”) etc.

In Tuvan standard written language *č*- is systematically used instead of *o* or *y*-, but there are some words pronounced with *j*- sound. In Chinese Tuvan, however, only *c*- sound occurs: *jan*-, *jüt*-, *ji*- (Tuvan *čan*- “to turn”, *čit*- “to sleep”, *či*- “to eat”).

The Tuvan language spoken in Chinese Altay includes many Kazakh (<Arabic) words such as *mekeme*, *mekdep* etc. while Tuvan from Russia do not. We can compare some words used in both regions:

Chinese Tuvan *abiš*, Tuva *adiš* “palm”  
 Chinese Tuvan *töödö*, Tuva *tödü* “whole, all”  
 Chinese Tuvan *din*, Tuva *šažin* “religion”  
 Chinese Tuvan *ayür*, Tuva *ača* “fork”

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