

Real and False Archaisms: The Peripheral Mongolic Languages and Reconstruction

[PRELIMINARY VERSION - NOT FOR QUOTATION]

Hans Nugteren (Leiden)

1. Introduction

Although several of the ‘peripheral’ Mongolic languages are now quite well-known, they are not often used to deepen our knowledge of Common Mongolic, the hypothetical language stage that is the ancestor of all known Mongolic languages. This paper will discuss some of the details of Mongolic historical phonology for which it may be useful to consult the peripheral languages.

In spite of the modest time depth of the reconstructed ancestral Mongolic language, it is of interest in its own right, as it helps to distinguish the original features of Mongolic from later innovations, and unites them in one hypothetical form. A correctly reconstructed Common Mongolic will also enable us to compare it with various neighbouring non-Mongolic language families, primarily Turkic and Tungusic.

The reconstruction of Common Mongolic is usually based on a limited set of languages. In the first place, Written Mongolian spellings have long been believed to accurately reflect an older stage of Mongolic. In the second place, the well-known (and politically important) ‘central’ Mongolic languages are generally used: Mongolian proper (including Khalkha and Inner-Mongolian), Oirat (including Kalmuck), and Buriat. Middle Mongolian sources in several scripts were consulted to add information on some specific details, such as the initial **h*- sound, and the degree of contraction of vowel sequences. Furthermore, non-Mongolic data were used in support of the resulting reconstructions.

Data from the ‘peripheral’ Mongolic languages, i.e., those that are not in the above-mentioned ‘central’ group, also found their way into comparative Mongolic studies. Poppe (1955) quoted forms from Dagur, Monguor, and Moghol where possible. In most contexts these languages merely served to illustrate their own ‘quirky’ developments, and to confirm details that were already suggested by Middle Mongolian, rather than being sources of new knowledge. Materials for Baoan, Dongxiang, and Eastern Yugur were published by Potanin as early as 1893, but the material was quite limited until relatively recently. Since Poppe’s time we gained a lot of extra data on Mongolic languages and dialects spoken in China, mainly thanks to Chinese and Soviet publications. It was discovered how different the smaller Mongolic languages are from the central languages, and from one another. The peripheral languages are not a single subgroup of related languages. There are at least three, but probably four independent groupings: Dagur in the Northeast, Moghol in the Southwest in Afghanistan, maybe all but extinct, and the Shirongol languages in Gānsù and Qīnghāi provinces (Shirongol is the collective name for the dialects gathered under the names ‘Monguor’, Baoan, Kangjia, Dongxiang). Eastern Yugur seems to form a fourth group genetically; similarities between it and the Shirongol languages may be largely due to areal convergence.

The peripheral Mongolic languages deservedly hold two contradictory reputations at the same time. On the one hand they are thought of as archaic languages, preserving several features from early Mongolic which are lost in central Mongolic. On the other hand it is well known that they are strongly influenced by neighbouring languages, which affects the phonology and diminishes the agglutinative character of the morphology, to a degree that makes them appear less Mongolic. The fact that the peripheral languages preserved some old features, while lacking many others that can still be found in the central languages, shows that it is incorrect to view the peripheral languages as generally archaic. However, we are interested in the archaic features of the peripheral languages to improve our understanding of some aspects of Common Mongolic.

When this author started studying the peripheral Mongolic languages, it was in the hope that these lesser known languages would enable us to delve deeper into the history of the Mongolic languages, at least in the field of phonology. All peripheral languages do indeed provide additional information about Common Mongolic not found in the well-known literary Mongolic languages. However, these data do not affect the reconstructed phonological system

as such. No additional Common Mongolic phonemes are necessary to accommodate the data from the peripheral languages. The main value of these peripheral Mongolic data lies in the improvement of the reconstruction of many individual lexemes, and in the confirmation of lexemes or variants that are rare elsewhere.

2. ‘Archaic’ Lexicon

In a few cases the peripheral languages preserved lexical items which were lost in the central Mongolic standard languages. However, these words are not actually archaic. They just happened to have been lost in all or most of the central languages. But as such words are typically attested in Middle Mongolian, they do not necessarily reveal anything about Common Mongolic that was not known before. Nonetheless they tend to provide a welcome confirmation of the phonetic shape.

Here follows a small selection of Common Mongolic (CM) words that appear to be absent in Mongolian proper and Kalmuck¹:

| CM | Dagur | E. Yugur | Mangghuer | Moghol | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| * <i>činaida</i> | --- | <i>fɪni:da</i> | <i>teɪnada</i> | <i>fɛnoʒde</i> | day after tomorrow |
| * <i>dangal</i> | <i>dangɑ:l</i> | --- | <i>daŋɣuar</i> | --- | clod/bump |
| * <i>düre-</i> | <i>dur-</i> | --- | <i>durə-</i> | <i>dura-</i> | to buy/sell |
| * <i>haul-</i> | <i>xaul-</i> | --- | <i>xor-</i> (Potanin) | <i>öulu-</i> | to run |
| * <i>hög-</i> | --- | <i>hog-</i> | --- | <i>uggu-</i> | to hit |
| * <i>hunin</i> | <i>xɔnʲ</i> | --- | <i>xuni</i> | --- | smoke |
| * <i>najir</i> | <i>naɟʒir</i> | --- | <i>naɟɪr</i> (Pot.) | --- | summer |
| * <i>ünügün</i> | <i>unuk</i> | <i>noyon</i> | <i>nuguər</i> | <i>nuku</i> | kid goat |

3. Conservative phonological features

For historical phonology we are interested in any old features the peripheral languages preserve. Below three of these features will be discussed in more detail.

The Shirongol languages provide information on such issues as **h-*, uncontracted diphthongs, preserved vowels of the last syllable, and some consonant clusters. They also contribute to the evidence for the vowel **i* (the back counterpart of **i*).

As a whole, these sounds should not be called archaic either; they are known from other sources. As can be seen below, it is not always the same languages which are the conservative ones. Another list could be drawn up for those features that are more accurately reflected in the central languages, such as vocalism (and general preservation) of the first syllable, vowel lengths from contraction, consonant strength in medial positions, final *-n*, etc.

| <i>*au</i> | preserved in: | contracted in: |
|------------|--------------------------------|---|
| | Dagur; Shirongol group; Moghol | Khalkha; Buriat; Khamnigan; Kalmuck; E. Yugur |

Examples: **haul-* ‘to run’, **bau-* ‘to descend’, **sibaun* ‘bird’

¹ Many of these words are also found in Baoan and Dongxiang. **najir* and **hunin* are even found in Buriat. For ease of comparison of the data the peripheral languages are quoted in a broad transcription using IPA characters.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| initial <i>*h-</i> | preserved in: Khamnigan; Dagur; E. Yugur; Shirongol | lost in: Khalkha; Buriat; Kalmuck; Moghol |
| Examples: <i>*harban</i> ‘ten’, <i>*helegen</i> ‘liver’, <i>*hodun</i> ‘star’ | | |
| precons. <i>*l</i> | preserved in: Buriat; Khamnigan; Dagur; Shirongol | lost in: Khalkha; Kalmuck; E. Yugur; Moghol |
| Examples: <i>*caalsun</i> (~ <i>*caarsun</i>) ‘paper’, <i>*mölsün</i> ‘ice’, <i>*sölsün</i> ‘gall bladder’ | | |
| <i>*qi-</i> sequence | (partly) preserved in: Moghol; E. Yugur; Baoan, Kangjia and Dongxiang | changed in: Khalkha; Buriat; Khamnigan; Kalmuck; Dagur; ‘Monguor’ |
| Examples: <i>*kimusun</i> ‘nail’, <i>*kitad</i> ‘Chinese’ | | |

Even in this small selection of features, focusing on what the peripheral languages contribute, we can see that one or more peripheral languages are in the ‘conservative’ column, but not always all of them. But even if none of the old features is uniquely preserved by the peripheral languages, these do often provide additional individual lexemes, such as the words with initial **h-* provided by Dagur and the languages in Qīnghāi and Gānsù.

Retrieving these and other features may be problematic, in that ancient-looking forms may be superficially indistinguishable from secondary developments. Every etymon should be assessed individually. Examples include the following.

Mongghul preserves the diphthong **au* in *bau-* (**bau-*) ‘to descend’ and **eü* in *səul* (**seül*) ‘tail’, but in Mongghul *nau-* (**no-?*) ‘to hit’ and *səuldə* (**sölsün*) ‘gall bladder’ the diphthong seems to lack an etymological basis. A similar case from Dagur is *saur* < **sur* ‘thong’. Furthermore there are exceptions to the established rules, e.g. **aula* ‘mountain’ (Written Mongolian *ayula*, Dagur *aul*) is contradicted by *ula* in Mongghul and Dongxiang.

In case of the so-called ‘breaking of **i*’ there are similar problems. Dagur *nid* (**nidün*) ‘eye’ and *fid* (**sidün*) ‘tooth’, *kirə:* (**kirüe*) ‘saw’, *xila:* (**hilua*) ‘fly’, *kidʒa:r* (**kijaar*) ‘edge’ are conservative forms which lack the breaking found elsewhere (compare Khalkha *nüd*, *süd*, etc.); on the other hand *fīya:n* (**čagaan*) ‘white’ and *dʒila:* (**jalaa*) ‘tassel’ are innovations which owe their *i* to the preceding palatal consonant (cf Khalkha *saga:n*, *dʒala:*). Apart from these two categories, Dagur has numerous ‘ordinary’ cases which did undergo breaking and thus agree with most other languages, such as *far* (**sira*) ‘yellow’, *kʰand* (**kimda*) ‘cheap’². Mongghul has similar cases of secondary *i* such as *təiga:n* ‘white’, which fact makes it impossible to determine whether the *-i-* in words such as Mongghul *čira* ‘yellow’ is original or the result of secondary palatalisation. Similar questions arise in other words with changed unstressed vowels, e.g. does Mangghuer *muqa* ‘meat’ stem directly from the original form with **i*, CM **mikan*, or from a derived form with broken **i*, i.e., **makan*?

In other cases the various languages disagree amongst each other, or with other evidence such as Middle Mongolian, or non-Mongolic cognates. Did Mongghul *funi-* ‘to ride’ add a **h-* to this word, or did Dagur *ɔnu-* lose it? The fact that Middle Mongolian does not have **h-* here does not automatically prove Dagur right. Since there are mechanisms for the development of *h* < \emptyset , and loss of **h-* is not unusual in languages that typically preserve it, every case has to be evaluated separately.

Another directionality problem is the following: Dagur *ave:* ‘load’ can hardly have developed from a form **aŋe:* (the form we would expect based on **ačian*), but it need not be an ‘archaism’ either; it may be a borrowing from a neighbouring Tungusic language. The same applies to *dilɔ:* ‘rein’ (CM **jilua*), *adrəγ* ‘stallion’ (**ajirga*).

² Dagur also has unique cases such as *jəul-* (**ibil-*) ‘for milk to flow’, *fəur* (**siberi*) ‘foot sweat’, which do not feature breaking in the central languages.

Here we will have a closer look at three conservative features, initial **h-*, preconsonantal liquids *-l-* and *-r-*, and preconsonantal plosives, and most importantly, at ways of distinguishing old features from secondary developments resulting in similar word shapes.

4. Primary and secondary initial **h-*

It has been established that the CM **h-*, which is known from Middle Mongolian sources in various scripts, is also present in Dagur, as well as in the Qīnghǎi-Gānsù area, both in Eastern Yugur and in all of the Shirongol languages. CM **h-* may appear as modern *h-* or *x-*, but also as *f-* or *ɣ-* or *ɛ-*, depending on the language and the phonetic environment. In many cases, the Middle Mongolian forms and the modern ones agree. In other cases, the word in question is not attested in Middle Mongolian. In yet others, the modern forms disagree with the Middle Mongolian forms. This usually means that there is a *h-*, *x-*, *f-*, *ɣ-*, or *ɛ-* where the Middle Mongolian form has Ø- (i.e., vocalic onset).

a) Classic cases of **h-*

There is a good set of unproblematic examples that have *h-* in Middle Mongolian, as well as in all modern languages that can preserve it. In these examples, *h-* could not have arisen secondarily. The only point scholars may disagree on is whether this *h-* necessarily goes back to an earlier **f-* or **p-*.

| CM | Dagur | E. Yugur | Mongghul | Dongxiang | |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>*harban</i> | <i>xarəb</i> | <i>harwan</i> | <i>haran</i> | <i>haroŋ</i> | ten |
| <i>*halagan</i> | <i>xaləγ</i> | <i>halawan</i> | <i>xalga</i> | <i>hayaŋa</i> | palm of the hand |
| <i>*hodun</i> | <i>xɔd</i> | <i>hɔdən</i> | <i>fo:di</i> | <i>hoduŋ</i> | star |
| <i>*hulaan</i> | <i>xula:n</i> | <i>la:n</i> | <i>fula:n</i> | <i>xulaŋ</i> | red |
| <i>*hüle-</i> | <i>xul-</i> | <i>hele-</i> | <i>fule:-</i> | <i>fəilie-</i> | to remain |

b) Secondary *h-* due to following strong consonant

As demonstrated by Svantesson (2005: 208) some of the *h*'s found in the Shirongol languages and Eastern Yugur (and sounds derived from it) are not indicative of the presence of CM **h-*, but rather secondary developments which are predictably triggered by certain phonetic environments. In words like those listed below, whose second syllable started with a strong consonant (one of the strong obstruents **k*, **č*, **t*, or the voiceless fricative **s*), word-initial *h-* may appear in one or more of the Qīnghǎi-Gānsù languages³. As Rybatzki (2003:373) notes, this is one of the features uniting Eastern Yugur with the Shirongol languages.

Since this phenomenon did not affect Dagur, the latter agrees with the Middle Mongolian forms without *h-*.

| CM | Dagur | E. Yugur | Mongghul | Dongxiang | |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------|
| <i>*eükün</i> | <i>əuɣ^w</i> | <i>ükün</i> | <i>fo:ge</i> | <i>fuguŋ</i> | fat |
| <i>*ükü-</i> | <i>uɣ^w-</i> | <i>hkü-</i> | <i>fgu-</i> | <i>fugu-</i> | to die |
| <i>*urtu</i> | <i>ɔrt</i> | <i>hurtu</i> | <i>ɣdur</i> | <i>fudu</i> | long |
| <i>*alku-</i> | <i>alku-</i> | <i>alqi-</i> | <i>halgu-</i> | <i>hanku-</i> | to step |

³ In most languages where this development took place, the strong obstruents that triggered the appearance of *h-* tend to change into their weak counterparts.

c) Ambiguous forms in Eastern Yugur and Shirongol

The realisation that some *h*'s are not ancient but triggered by the phonetic environment casts doubt on many cases of modern *h*- which were hitherto considered to be completely convincing evidence in support of Middle Mongolian and the resulting CM reconstruction. The following words do have initial *h*- in Middle Mongolian.

| CM | Dagur | E. Yugur | Mangghuer | Dongxiang | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| * <i>hiče-</i> | <i>xif-</i> | <i>hje-</i> | <i>ɕɕe-</i> | <i>ʃidzə-</i> | to be shy |
| * <i>hüker</i> | <i>xukur</i> | <i>hkor</i> | <i>xuguər</i> | <i>fugie</i> | ox |
| * <i>hüitan/</i> * <i>hütan</i> | <i>x'aut</i> | <i>ütan</i> | <i>xuitaŋ</i> | <i>uitaŋ</i> | narrow |
| * <i>hüsün</i> | <i>xus</i> | <i>hsün</i> | <i>sɕu ~ ʃɕu</i> | <i>usuŋ</i> | hair |

The first two examples seem to unanimously confirm the *h*- found in Middle Mongolian. As expected, the Dagur forms agree. However, the apparent reflexes of **h*- in the Qīnghǎi-Gānsù languages do not really support the CM **h*-, since these words have a second syllable starting with a strong consonant. This means that, if the original forms had been **iče-*, **üker*, etc., they could have resulted in exactly the same modern forms. That is, these modern forms are to be considered 'neutral' as to the presence of **h*-.

The fact that proven Middle Mongolian *h*- was lost in some modern languages is even more problematic.

d) Does Middle Mongolian outweigh modern evidence?

In some words peripheral languages feature an **h*- not found in Middle Mongolian, but as these words lack the word structure that is known to trigger the appearance of secondary *h*-, we cannot explain them like the cases mentioned under b) above. Some examples:

| CM | Dagur | E. Yugur | Mongghul | Dongxiang | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|
| ?* <i>humu-</i> | <i>ɕnu-</i> | <i>hɕnə-</i> | <i>funi-</i> | <i>unu-</i> | to ride |
| ?* <i>hinie-</i> | <i>xinə:-d</i> ⁴ | <i>hni:-</i> | <i>ɕine-</i> | <i>ɕiniə-</i> | to laugh |
| ?* <i>humba-</i> | <i>xumpa:-</i> | <i>mba-</i> | <i>xumba-</i> | <i>(f)unba-</i> | to swim |

Here the question is, are there further triggers for secondary *h*- waiting to be discovered, or can secondary *h*- appear for no reason at all? Cases such as the verb 'to laugh' raise the question how many modern languages must have *h*- before we start doubting the Middle Mongolian form⁵. The presence of **h*- in this word seems to be adequately supported by Dagur, Eastern Yugur and the Shirongol languages, even if the Middle Mongolian forms lack the *h*-.

Other cases of **h*- are based on Dagur only, but are nevertheless convincing, e.g. the reconstruction of **hönkeri-* 'to tumble' relies on the Dagur form *xunkir-*, as the initials of Mangghuer *xangərə-* and Dongxiang *hongjəri-* could be explained as secondary developments. Words with unstable Middle Mongolian forms may also find confirmation in Dagur. In case of Middle Mongolian *etke- ~ hetke-* 'to cut', the *h*-variant is supported by Dagur *xərke-* 'id' (Eastern Yugur *hətge-* could be secondary). Even if the word is not attested

⁴ This form of the Dagur verb seems to be due to the homophonous deverbal noun *xinə:d*.

⁵ Svantesson (2005:208) notices this set of words, but seems to trust Middle Mongolian rather than the modern languages, and reconstructs the ancestral forms without **h*-.

in Middle Mongolian at all, confirmation of the **h-* by both Dagur and the Qīnghāi-Gānsù languages suffices to establish its realness. However, when four Shirongol languages suggest **h-*, they should be counted as only one ‘vote’ in favour of a CM reconstruction with **h-*.

There is no simple method to obtain correct CM reconstruction forms. Every word has to be evaluated individually. Any language can yield unique information; there are no languages that are *a priori* reliable or unreliable. As to the Middle Mongolian sources, it is worth remembering they are neither uniform nor infallible. Loss of established *h-* is documented, as are etymological *h*’s, the latter notably in sources in Arabic script.

5. Primary and secondary preconsonantal liquids

In a small number of words some languages preserve a preconsonantal *-r-* or *-l-* which was lost in others, mostly preceding the suffix *-sUn*. In view of the small number of words displaying this correspondence, and the amount of similarly-structured words that do not, this phenomenon should be viewed as a bundle of isoglosses rather than a sound law with general validity. The preconsonantal liquids in these words were recorded in Middle Mongolian, and preserved today by Buriat, Khamnigan, and the Shirongol group.

The following should be kept in mind. Firstly, the group under discussion is far outnumbered by words that retain their preconsonantal liquids in all Mongolic subgroups. This applies to words like **alčai-* ‘to spread the legs’, **burčag* ‘pea’, etc., and even to most words with the ending *-sUn*. The following selection preserve their *-r-* before *-sUn* in all of central Mongolic: **čüirsün* ‘mat’ (Khalkha *fī:rs*), **kiürsun* ‘nit’ (Khalkha *xiurs*), **gaursun* ‘feather shaft’ (Dörbed *gø:rt*), **mö(g)ersün* ‘cartilage’⁶ (Dörbed *moxo:rt*), **nugursun* ‘spinal marrow’ (Khalkha *nugars ~ nugas*).

Secondly, there are also stems which appear with the ending *-l* in some dialects, and *-sUn* in others, such as **baital ~ *baïtasun* ‘mare’, **gutul ~ *gutusun* ‘boot’, and **hargal ~ *hargasun* ‘dung’. These apparently represent morphological alternations between the two endings. However, in view of the existence of words like Middle Mongolian *öre’elsün* ‘half of a pair’ and *sile’ülsün* ‘lynx’, which lost their *-l-* in modern languages, forms like **gutusun* ‘boot’ may actually go back to **gutulsun*, etc. (which is what Poppe (1955:32) reconstructs here).

a) Classic cases⁷

In the following words, *l/r* is documented in Middle Mongolian, and preserved in Buriat (including Bargu), Khamnigan, and the Shirongol languages. They are absent from central Mongolic and Eastern Yugur.

| CM | ‘Old’ Bargu | Dagur | Mangghuer | Baoan | Dongxiang | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>*čaalsun/ *čaarsun</i> | <i>sa:rø:</i> | <i>fā:s</i> | <i>tšarsi/-čzi</i> | --- | --- | paper |
| <i>*mölsün</i> | <i>mulu:</i> | <i>məis</i> | <i>mersi</i> | <i>melsoj</i> | <i>mansuj</i> | ice |
| <i>*sölsün/ *čölsün</i> | <i>xilu:</i> | <i>fūlf</i> | <i>euarsi</i> | <i>selsuj</i> | <i>eiənsuj</i> | gall bladder |

In **sölsün* ‘gall bladder’ the liquid is preserved in most languages. Dagur, however, did not preserve a liquid in ‘paper’ and ‘ice’. The same applies to Dörbed, which has *tult* ‘gall bladder’ but *fā:t* ‘paper’ and *myt* ‘ice’.

⁶ Several modern languages, e.g. Buriat, support the presence of the cluster *-rs-* in spite of LM spelling *mögeresün*.

⁷ A fourth example would be the less widespread **jilsun* ‘glue’, Middle Mongolian *jilsun*, Baoan *čzilsoj*, as opposed to Kalmuck *zusn*.

b) Secondary preconsonantal liquids in Qīnghāi-Gānsù languages?

In the Qīnghāi-Gānsù languages there are many words that contain unexpected (as viewed from central Mongolic) preconsonantal *r/l*. Some of these can be eliminated as secondary developments, but others may be relics from an earlier language stage.

1) Analogy

By definition, cases of analogy have an individual character, as they depend on the assumption that the speakers at one point associated or confused two already similar lexemes, thus enabling mutual phonetic influence. One such example is Āntoq Baoan *jirsoŋ* ‘nine’, showing an *-r-* not present in the usual CM reconstruction **yesün*, which is in agreement with all other languages⁸. If we assume that the Baoan form was influenced by **yeren* ‘ninety’, we do not need to correct the CM form. However, the fact that all Baoan dialects replaced **yeren* with an analytical form **yesün harban* ‘nine tens’, increases the likelihood that Baoan *jirsoŋ* is the only survival of an earlier form **yersün* rather than a case of analogy (cf Janhunen 2003:9, Rybatzki 2003:384).

The *-r-* in Mongghul *konordə* ‘sweat’ (cf CM **kölesün*) is perhaps due to the related verb *konorə-* (**köler-*) ‘to sweat’. A similar analogy may underlie Mongghul *ko:rɬə* ‘foam’, although Mongghul in this case lacks the related verb **köer-* (cf Khalkha *xööröx*). On the other hand, the Mongghul form is paralleled by Ordos *kö:rs*, Dörbed *xo:rt* (Khalkha *xööös*)⁹, which suggests that there existed early variants **köersün* ~ **köesün*.

Mongghul *xairɬə* ‘rib’, although suggestive of **kabisun*, may actually owe its *-r-* to **kabirga* ‘id’, which is apparently derived from the same root. Here as well, we may view the Mongghul form as evidence for the existence of an earlier form **kabirsun* which just accidentally lost its *-r-* elsewhere.

2) Metathesis

The consonants *-r-* and *-l-* are especially susceptible to metathesis in Mongolic. As a consequence, the liquids disappear from their preconsonantal position without actually being elided from the word. In these cases adaptation of the CM reconstruction is not required. Examples include Eastern Yugur *nurkusun* < **nugursun* ‘spinal marrow’, Donggou Mongghul *go:rɬə* < **örgeesün* ‘thorn’, Mangghuer *kuərməgə* < **kömerge* ‘trunk’, Mangghuer *merge* < **örmege* ‘coarse overcoat’, Mongghul *fudur* < **hutur* < **urtu* ‘short’. As can be seen from these examples, the *-r-* can move in either direction within the word.

3) ‘Echo’ consonants

Echo consonants may be considered as cases of distant assimilation. Examples are: **teberi-*, **kulagana*, **mö(n)gersün*, **suburga*.

| Mangghuer | Mongghul | E Yugur | Buriat | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| <i>tierber-</i> | <i>te:rə-</i> | <i>tewer-</i> | <i>teberi-</i> | to embrace |
| <i>qərgərna</i> | <i>xanagla</i> | <i>xunaglag</i> | <i>χulgana</i> | mouse |
| <i>merguərsi</i> | <i>mungərsə</i> | --- | <i>mengeerhen</i> | cartilage |
| <i>suərbuərga</i> | <i>suburga</i> | --- | <i>[subarga]</i> | tower |

⁸ The initial fricative in Mongghul *sɬən* ~ *ʃɬən* ‘nine’ may only be a result of vowel devoicing before *s*, rather than confirming the preconsonantal *r* here.

⁹ A similarly structured word, but with different distribution of the *-r-*, is **höesün* ‘pus’, which lacks the *-r-* in Baoan-Dongxiang *hosuŋ*, but has it in Khalkha *öörs*. Dagur *x^hə:s* ‘foam; pus’, also without *-r-*, may well represent both **köesün* and **höesün* (although Enkhbat 1984:135 connects both meanings with the former).

Historically unexpected *r*'s occur in many Mangghuer names of young animals. In *qoarg̃õar* 'lamb' and *burur* 'calf' the final *-r* was added, whereas the first was original, so that they may also belong in the echo consonant group. Mangghuer *dʒudʒugar* 'piglet' could be a metathesis of CM **juljaga*. However, none of these explanations apply to *nuguər* 'kid goat' and *dagər* 'foal'. Maybe we must also consider the possibility that the Chinese ending *er* (□) influenced this set of words.

4) Triggered by voiceless vowel and/or *h*?

In a number of words non-etymological liquids seem to be triggered by *h-*, (which may itself be secondary, as in the second and third examples)¹⁰. This phenomenon is found in Eastern Yugur as well as its Turkic neighbour Western Yugur.

| E Yugur | Mongghul | MMo. | Buriat | |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| <i>hərʃi:sən</i> | <i>ɛɬo:si</i> | <i>hičesün</i> | <i>üšööhen</i> | tree |
| <i>ldeye- ~ hətəye-</i> | --- | <i>itege-</i> | <i>etige-</i> | to believe |
| <i>hʃur ~ hʃur</i> | --- | <i>učir</i> | <i>ušar</i> | reason |

c) Additional words with original preconsonantal liquids?

When none of the above can be used to 'explain away' preconsonantal *-r-*, we must consider the possibility that it actually stems from early Mongolic. However, for want of non-Mongolic cognates, this cannot be confirmed for the Mangghuer words below.

| Mangghuer | Mongghul | Dagur | Buriat | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| <i>arsag-</i> | <i>sɬaga-</i> | <i>xasɔ:-</i> | <i>[asuu-]</i> | to ask |
| <i>ɣersi</i> | <i>ɛe:si</i> | <i>sə:s</i> | <i>šeehen</i> | pee |

Other cases occur in Baoan, but are not confirmed in Mangghuer or elsewhere:

| Ganhetan Baoan | Kangjia | Mongghul | Buriat | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| <i>barti</i> | --- | <i>padə</i> | <i>bata</i> | strong |
| <i>murtuŋ</i> | <i>murtun</i> | <i>mo:də</i> | <i>modon</i> | tree |

Although in the above cases the additional consonant is only supported by one or two languages, we cannot dismiss it as obviously secondary. Relics from older stages can in principle survive in any branch. It may be necessary to amend the subgroup form, or even the Common Mongolic reconstruction to include the *-r-*. **harsag-/*harsau-* 'to ask', etc.

In the following case the unexpected Mangghuer and Baoan forms may reflect an older **jagalsun* or **jalgasun*, in which case one of the modern forms is due to metathesis. Again the problem is the lack of confirmation elsewhere; the absence of *-l-/-r-* in Mongghul is especially unexpected.

| Mangghuer | Ñantoq Baoan | Dagur | Buriat | |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|------|
| <i>dʒacarsi</i> | <i>ɬalgason</i> | <i>dʒaus</i> | <i>zagahan</i> | fish |

¹⁰ Also the *h-* in the first E. Yugur example may be due to the following strong consonant, so it does not necessarily support Middle Mongolian *hičesün*.

In the following stem the veracity of the preconsonantal *-r-* is supported by its Turkic cognate **art-*. Mangghuer suggests that the CM reconstruction of the verb should be **arčī-*.

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| Mangghuer | Mongghul | E. Yugur | Dagur | Buriat | |
| <i>artei-</i> | <i>edza:-</i> (sic) ¹¹ | <i>aŋə-</i> | <i>aʎ-</i> | <i>aša-</i> | to load |
| <i>artea</i> | <i>edza:</i> | <i>hŋa:n</i> | <i>aʎe:</i> | <i>ašaan</i> | load |

The external confirmation makes this one of the more convincing cases. Moreover, none of the known origins of secondary *-r/-* as listed above applies here.

6. Primary and secondary preconsonantal plosives

Mangghuer, marginally supported by other dialects, seems to preserve a number of preconsonantal consonants that may be seen as evidence for an original preconsonantal **-b-* or **-g-*.

As to established cases of **-b-* in preconsonantal position, these are usually preserved in Mongghul (as *-b-* or assimilated to the following consonant) and in Baoan (also as *-b-*). In Mangghuer it tends to change into *-g-*¹², and merge with original **-g-*. In Dongxiang both **-b-* and **-g-* have been lost at the end of the syllable.

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| Mongghul | Mangghuer | Ñantoq Baoan | Dongxiang | CM | |
| <i>labčzi / laedzi</i> | <i>legčzi</i> | <i>labteŋ</i> | <i>latšəŋ</i> | <i>*nabčīn</i> | leaf |
| <i>tebčzi / teedzi</i> | <i>tegčzi</i> | <i>dobčzi</i> | <i>tədzi</i> | <i>*tobčī</i> | button |

Mangghuer features a preconsonantal *-g-* in several words that do not contain **-b-* or **-g-* elsewhere in Mongolic, including the following:

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Mongghul | Mangghuer | Ñantoq Baoan | Dongxiang | CM | |
| <i>teasə</i> | <i>tšagsi / tšagčzi</i> | <i>čabsoŋ</i> (Xiazhuang) | <i>dzaŋsuŋ / džasun</i> | <i>*časun</i> | snow |
| <i>jasə</i> | <i>jegčzi / jegsi</i> | <i>jasoŋ</i> | <i>jasun</i> | <i>*yasun</i> | bone |
| <i>xulučə</i> | <i>qulegsi</i> | <i>golsoŋ</i> | <i>gulasun</i> | <i>*kulusun</i> | bamboo |
| <i>sadčə-</i> | <i>segčzi-</i> | <i>[sar-]</i> | <i>sdzi-</i> | <i>*saču-</i> | to scatter |
| <i>xadoŋ</i> | <i>qəcdəŋ</i> | <i>hdoŋ</i> | <i>qidoŋ</i> | <i>*kataun</i> | hard |

The antiquity of these unexpected consonants is uncertain. In some words, e.g. *jegsi* ‘bone’, the preconsonantal consonant is documented by several authors, and already present in Potanin’s time. Other words are also documented without it in several sources, e.g. *qulegsi* is contradicted by most other Mangghuer sources, which have *qulusi* (these ‘normal’ variants have been omitted from the above lists).

In the case of *tšagsi* ‘snow’, there seems to be supportive evidence in Baoan and Dongxiang. A Shirongol form **čabsun*, as hinted at by one dialect of Baoan could also be the

¹¹ The Mongghul verb was influenced by the deverbal noun *edza:* < **a(r)čīan*.

¹² In Čenggeltei’s (1988) data this may appear with the voiced fricative pronunciation [ʒ]. Slater describes it as a weak stop. In many words Mangghuer *-g-* seems to be disappearing, e.g. *puda-* ‘to fit’, *no(c)to* ‘halter’, *so(c)do-* ‘to become drunk’, *no(-)čzi-* ‘to pass’ from **bagta-*, **nogta*, **sogta-*, **nögčzi-*.

origin of the Mangghuer form.¹³ However, all this does not allow us to reconstruct preconsonantal *b beyond Proto Shirongol. The early existence of this preconsonantal labial could only be established if it were confirmed elsewhere.

It is unclear whether the -g- in these words could be a byproduct of the devoicing caused by following *s or *č. Typically such byproducts come in the shape of vowel devoicing or secondary aspiration of unaspirated consonants. It may be relevant that in the Mangghuer words featuring -g-, the preceding consonant is either already aspirated, or can not be aspirated.

If it appears unlikely that only Mangghuer would preserve a number of preconsonantal consonants lost elsewhere, it has to be kept in mind that preconsonantal *-b- and *-g- are known to occasionally disappear. The loss of preconsonantal *-g- is found in some common suffixes, notably the directional -gsi (as in Mangghuer *meši* < **ölmegsi* ‘forward’) and the ‘nomen perfecti’ -gsAn, as well as in some stems, e.g. **ügtee*- ‘to weed’. Loss of preconsonantal *-b- has apparently occurred in **ačara*- < **abčira*- ‘to bring’, from a collocation **ab-ču ire*- ‘to take and come’.

7. In conclusion

At first sight it looks unlikely that the peripheral languages could make a substantial contribution to Common Mongolic. However, increased knowledge about internal developments in the peripheral languages will help us recognise secondary developments and separate them from actual old features. After secondary explanations have been carefully excluded, the unfamiliar word shapes in the peripheral languages will yield data that improve our understanding of the ancestral Mongolic language.

Bibliography

- Bökh, et al. 1983. *Düngsiyang kelen-ü üges / Dōngxiāngyǔ cíhuì* [Vocabulary of Dongxiang]. Hohhot.
- Bökh, & Chén Nǎixióng. 1981. *Tóngren Bǎo’ānhuà gǎiyào* [Outline of the vernacular of Tongren Bao’an]. *Minzú Yǔwén* [Language and literature of the nationalities] 2. 61-75. Peking.
- Bökh, & Liú Zhàoxióng. 1982. *Bǎo’ānyǔ jiǎnzhi* [Concise grammar of Bao’an]. Peking.
- Bolčuluu, et al. 1984 [1985]. *Jegün Yuyur kelen-ü üges / Dōngbù Yùgùyǔ cíhuì* [Vocabulary of Eastern Yugur]. Hohhot.
- Bolčuluu, & Jalcan. 1988. *Jegün Yuyur kelen-ü kešelge-yin matèriyal / Dōngbù Yùgùyǔ huàyǔ cáiliào* [Materials of Eastern Yugur spoken language]. Hohhot.
- Čenggeltei, et al. 1986 [1988]. *Mongyor kelen-ü kešelge-yin matèriyal / Tüzüyǔ huàyǔ cáiliào* [Materials of Monguor Spoken Language]. Hohhot.
- Čenggeltei, et al. 1988 [1991]. *Mongyor kele ba Mongyol kele / Tüzüyǔ hé Měnggǔyǔ* [Monguor and Mongolian]. Hohhot.
- Čeremisov, K. M. 1973. *Burjatsko-russkij slovar’*. Moscow.
- Chén Nǎixióng, et al. 1985 [1986]. *Boo An kelen-ü üges / Bǎo’ānyǔ cíhuì* [Vocabulary of Bao’an]. Hohhot.
- Chén Nǎixióng, et al. 1986 [1987]. *Boo An kele ba Mongyol kele / Bǎo’ānyǔ hé Měnggǔyǔ* [Bao’an and Mongolian]. Hohhot.
- Dob. 1983. *Měnggǔyǔ jiǎnzhi* [Concise grammar of Mongolian]. Peking.
- Dpal-ldan-bkra-shis, Stuart, K., et al. 1996. *Language Materials of China’s Monguor Minority: Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer*. (Sino-Platonic Papers 69). Philadelphia.
- Enkhbat. 1984. *Dayur kelen-ü üges / Dǎwò’èryǔ cíhuì* [Vocabulary of Dagur]. Hohhot.
- Enkhbat. 1988. *Dayur kele ba Mongyol kele / Dǎwò’èryǔ hé Měnggǔyǔ* [Dagur and Mongolian]. Hohhot.
- Haenisch, E. 1962. *Wörterbuch zu Manghol un Niuca Tobca’an (Yüan-ch’ao Pi-shi)*. Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen. Wiesbaden. (reprint 1939, Leipzig).
- Hangin, G. 1986. *A Modern Mongolian-English Dictionary*. Bloomington.
- Janhunen, J. 1990. *Material on Manchurian Khamnigan Mongol (Castrenianumin toimitteita 37)*. Helsinki.
- Janhunen, J. 1992. On the position of Khamnigan Mongol. *JSFOu* 84. 115-143.

¹³ Dongxiang *džansuŋ* ‘snow’ may stem from earlier **čamsuŋ* < **čabsuŋ*, comparable to Dongxiang *daisuŋ* ‘salt’, likely from an irregular **damsuŋ* < **dabsuŋ* (originally CM **dabusun*). Dongxiang -ŋ may stem from **ŋ*, **n*, but also **m* or **l*, e.g. Dongxiang *san* ‘comb’ < **sam*; *koŋ* ‘foot’ < **köl*.

- Janhunen, J. 2003. Proto-Mongolic. in *ML*. 1-29.
- Janhunen, J. (ed.) 2003. *The Mongolic Languages*. London/New York.
- Juunast. 1981. *Tüzüü jiānzhi* [Concise grammar of Monguor]. Peking.
- Juunast. 1981b. *Dōngbù Yùgiyǔ jiānzhi* [Concise grammar of Eastern Yugur]. Peking.
- Juunast, & Li Kèyù. 1982. *Tüzüü Mínhé fāngyán gǎishù* [General overview of the Mínhé dialect of Monguor]. *Minzú Yǔwén Yánjiū Wénjí*. Xīníng. 458-487.
- Khasbaatar, et al. 1985 [1986]. *Mongyor kelen-ü üges / Tüzüü cǐhuì* [Vocabulary of Monguor]. Hohhot.
- Kowalewski, J. E. 1941. *Dictionnaire mongol-russe-français I-III*. Tientsin. (reprint 1844 -1849, Kazan).
- Lessing, F. D. (ed.). 1995. *Mongolian-English Dictionary*. Bloomington. (reprint 1960, Berkeley/Los Angeles).
- Lǐ Kèyù. 1988. *Monghul Qidar merlong / Tǔ Hàn cǐdiǎn* [Monguor-Chinese dictionary]. Xīníng.
- Lǐ Zhàoxióng. 1981. *Dōngxiāngyǔ jiānzhi* [Concise grammar of Dongxiang]. Peking.
- Luvсандэндэв, А. 1957. *Mongol'sko-russkij slovar'*. Moscow.
- Mǎ Guózhōng, & Chén Yuánlóng (eds.). 2000. *Dunxian kielien khidei kielienni lugveqi / Dōngxiāngyǔ Hànyǔ cǐdiǎn* [Dongxiang-Chinese dictionary]. Lánzhōu.
- ML = Janhunen, J. (ed.). *Mongolic Languages*
- Mostaert, A. 1941-1944. *Dictionnaire ordos I-III*. Peking.
- Mostaert, A. (ed. I. de Rachewiltz). 1977. *Le matériel mongol du Houa i i iu de Houng-ou (1339) I*. Brussels.
- Muniev, B. D. (ed.). 1977. *Kalmycko-russkij slovar'*. Moscow.
- Norčin, C., & Čoyidandar. 1992. *Nutuy-u Ayalyun-u Üges-ü Quriyangyui (Sine Baryu, Ejene Torjyd kigede Dgedü Mongyol Aman Ayalyun-u Öbermiče Üges)* [Collection of dialect vocabularies (Special vocabulary of New Bargu, Ejen Torgut, and Deed Mongol dialects)]. Peking.
- Nugteren, H. 1997. On the Classification of the 'Peripheral' Mongolic Languages. Berta, Á. (ed.). *Historical and Linguistic Interaction Between Inner-Asia and Europe* [= PIAC 39] (*Studia uralo-altaica* 39). Szeged. 207-216.
- Poppe, N. N. 1930. *Dagurskoe narečie*. Leningrad.
- Poppe, N. 1955. *Introduction to Mongolian Comparative Studies (Mémoires de la Société finno-ougrienne 110)*. Helsinki.
- Poppe, N. 1957. *The Mongolian Monuments in hP'ags-pa Script*. Wiesbaden.
- Poppe, N. 1971. *Mongol'skij slovar' Mukaddimat al-Adab*. Moscow. [Reprint of 1938-1939].
- Potанин, G. N. 1893. *Tangutsko-tibetskaja okraina Kitaja i central'naja Mongolija*. Saint Petersburg.
- Ramstedt, G. J. 1905. Mogholica. Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Moghol-Sprache in Afghanistan. *Journal de la Société finno-ougrienne* 23:4.
- Ramstedt, G. J. 1976. *Kalmückisches Wörterbuch*. Helsinki. [Reprint of 1935]
- Rinčén. 1968. *Mongol Ard Ulsyn Xamnigan ayalguu* [Khamnigan dialect of the Mongolian People's Republic]. Ulaanbaatar.
- Rudnev, A. D. 1911. *Materialy po govoram vostočnoj Mongolii*. St. Petersburg.
- Rybatzki, V. 2003. Intra-Mongolic taxonomy. *ML*. 364-390.
- Sečenčogt. 1999. *Kāngjiāyǔ yánjiū* [Kangjia language research]. Shānghǎi.
- Slater, K. W. 2003. *A Grammar of Mangghuer: A Mongolic Language of China's Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund*. London & New York.
- Smedt, A. de, & Mostaert, A. 1933. Le dialecte Monguor parlé par les Mongols du Kansou occidental. IIIe partie: Dictionnaire monguor-français. Peip'ing.
- Sūn Zhú. 1985. *Měnggǔyǔ wénjí* [Collection of papers on Mongolian]. Xīníng.
- Sūn Zhú. 1990. *Měnggǔ yǔzú yǔyán cǐdiǎn* [Dictionary of the languages of the Mongolic language family]. Xīníng.
- Svantesson, J.-O., et al. 2005. *The Phonology of Mongolian*. Oxford.
- Todaeva, B. X. 1961. *Dunsjanskij jazyk*. Moscow.
- Todaeva, B. X. 1966. *Baoan'skij jazyk*. Moscow.
- Todaeva, B. X. 1973. *Mongorskij jazyk. Issledovanie, teksty, slovar'*. Moscow.
- Tsumagari, T. 2003. Dagur. *ML*. 129-153.
- Uuda. 1983 [1985]. *Baryu aman ayalyun-u üges / Bǎěrhǔ tǔyǔ cǐhuì* [Vocabulary of the Bargu dialect]. Hohhot.
- Weiers, M. 1972. *Die Sprache der Moghol der Provinz Herat in Afghanistan*. Opladen.
- Zhòng Sùchún. 1982. *Dǎwò 'ěryǔ jiānzhi* [Concise grammar of Dagur]. Peking.