Chapter 9

Historical language contact between Sibe and Khorchin

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The Sibe of Xinjiang have been recognized as speakers of a Manchu variety by linguists. However, for the Sibe speakers themselves, the situation is more complicated. For certain reasons, the Sibe often present themselves as a group whose historical origins are different from the Manchus. Several mentions occur in historical sources about Sibe being vassals to the Khorchin Mongols before "becoming Manchus". This has been used among the arguments for the non-Manchu identity of the Sibe.

In recent years, academic discussion has focused on the ethnic identity of the Manchus, and, to a lesser extent, also on the position of the Sibe in relation to the Manchus. In this paper I try to select out features of possible Khorchin, i.e. eastern Mongolian, origin, in Sibe which may have come from direct language contact. I discuss several morphological features of Mongolic origin which seem not to be shared by other Manchu varieties, and one remarkable Sibe feature of Khorchin origin (the emphatic prefix *me-*). In addition, I mention the existence of lexical evidence of direct contact which is found in more conservative layers of Sibe vocabulary. Another question concerns the significance of this evidence for imagining the Sibe history. The linguistic situation in central Manchuria during the period concerned (15th–16th centuries) suggests that if the shared features indeed come from this period, they may rather be remnants of an extinct linguistic environment characterized by intense Mongolic-Tungusic contacts than of bilateral contact between two distinct groups – Khorchins and Sibe.

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1 Overview

Central Manchuria has been the home of many Mongolic- and Jurchenic-speaking[1] communities and the site of multiple and multi-layer contacts between these groups for several centuries.[2] During the period of the Yuan and Ming rule, namely between the 14th and 16th centuries, many demographic shifts happened which were probably followed by important changes in the linguistic situation, such as the growth of Mongolic influence in the area. These shifts supposedly resulted in new, both massive and small-scale, Jurchenic-Mongolic language contacts (cf. Janhunen 1996: 97). Most of these contact events are little, if at all, documented. However, in 20th century China, one of these little documented events received particular attention and different interpretations. This was the historical fact of the (probably) Jurchenic-speaking Sibe being vassals of the Khorchin Mongols. The present article is concerned with this contact event, its contexts and interpretations.

Modern Sibe is a Jurchenic diaspora language which has often been classified as an oral variety of Manchu. It is related to the other oral Manchu varieties which have been discovered in Manchuria during the 20th century. Sibe is spoken by 10,000–20,000 individuals in several localities close to the north-western border of China, detached by some 4000 kilometers from their original homeland in Manchuria.[3] Khorchin, an eastern (Manchurian) variety of Mongolian, currently has about a million speakers who inhabit a large area of eastern Inner Mongolia, Jilin and Heilongjiang.

In the 16th and early 17th century (before the Qing administrative re-organization of Manchuria), most Jurchenic-speaking communities were grouped into several Jurchen tribal confederacies.[4] Historical sources relate that in the same

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[1]The term *Jurchenic* was coined by Janhunen (1996: 154) as a term comprising both the documented Jurchen varieties and other, undocumented southern Tungusic languages whose existence Janhunen thus suggests. It seems convenient to use this term to refer to the branch of Tungusic languages which includes the extinct Jurchen varieties and their successor languages – written Manchu and several spoken Manchu varieties. These have been known under the names of Alchuka, Bala, Lalin, Aihui, Sanjiazi, Yibuqi and Sibe. Another little documented language, the Manchu Kyakala, has recently been suggested as belonging to this branch (Hölzl & Hölzl 2019).

[2]Janhunen (1996: 96–110) describes the setting of Manchuria during the Ming and Qing rule with several case studies of migrations and contact events, which show the ethnic and linguistic complexity in the area and enable us to estimate analogous, insufficiently documented migrations and language contact events.

[3]For descriptions of spoken Sibe see, for example, Norman (1974), Jang (2008), Zikmundová (2013), Kogura (2018).

[4]For an overview of the pre-Qing organization of the Jurchen tribes see, for example, Janhunen (1996: 98–100).

period, the Sibe were subject to the Mongolic Khorchin tribe and only in the 1690s were united with the rest of Jurchenic speakers (see §3.1). Linguistically, modern Sibe and modern Khorchin share certain features which may have originated at the time of their mutual contact during the Ming dynasty.

This article is an attempt to examine these similarities in their socio-linguistic and historical contexts and suggest an interpretation of their significance for Sibe studies. Further, I take the narrative of the historical Sibe-Khorchin contact and the search for possible linguistic evidence about it as a starting point for an attempt to outline some important traits of the linguistic situation in Central Manchuria before the 18th century.

First, in §3, the historical context of the supposed Sibe-Khorchin language contact is summarized and the political and socio-linguistic background of modern Sibe historioghraphy is mentioned. I suggest that the period of historically documented pre-Qing contacts between the Sibe and the Khorchins has been assigned particular importance in the argumentation for ethnic origins distinct from those of the Manchus. In §4, the actual parallels in phonetics and morphology are listed. These are based, for the most part, on fieldwork data. Here I only mention features which Sibe shares with Khorchin and which are either not attested, or are marginal, in the other documented Manchu varieties. §5 gives examples of Mongolic loanwords in Sibe which are not documented in the other Manchu varietes. Some of them are Mongolic in general while others belong exclusively to the cultural sphere of the Manchurian Mongols. In the concluding part I discuss what these shared features can tell us about the linguistic situation in pre-Qing central Manchuria.

I suppose that the selected features may have resulted from a direct Mongolic influence on Sibe which was more intensive than the general Mongolic influence to which other Manchu varieties were exposed. However, concerning further interpretations of these shared features, they can be attributed both to pre-Manchu contact with Khorchin and to later contact with other Mongolic languages – Daur, Jungarian Chakhar and Öölöd. Independent internal developments cannot be ruled out either. Most importantly, in the light of historical data, it seems more plausible to interpret the shared features as remnants of a generally more Mongolic-influenced Jurchenic milieu which was otherwise lost due to language standardization, than as a proof of the historical Sibe-Khorchin contact.

2 Methodology

In search for the Sibe-Khorchin analogies, mainly corpora of Sibe and Khorchin fieldwork data were used. The Sibe part of these data, collected by myself in

the Xinjiang Sibe communities mainly with the purpose of grammar description, comes from the period between 1993 and 2009. The Khorchin part[5] was collected between 2004–2015 both by the local consultant Bai Xiaomei and by myself. The Khorchin data were not elicited with the purpose of grammar description and therefore do not cover the whole Khorchin grammar which leaves some room for as yet undiscovered shared grammatical features. Additionally, if not stated otherwise, I use Khalkha Mongolian and Sanjiazi Manchu[6] data from my own fieldwork collections.

Distinctions between Sibe and written Manchu have been described, above all, by Jang Taeho (2008). During my work on Sibe grammar description I tried to systematically note features which not only distinguished Sibe from written Manchu, but which seemed likely to be of Mongolic origin. I subsequently searched for these features in the materials of Khorchin on one hand, and in other spoken Manchu materials on the other. I selected those features which are shared with Khorchin and, at the same time, either not attested or – compared to Sibe – marginal in the oral Manchurian varieties of Manchu.

In order to draw a plausible interpretation of the selected shared features I attempted to systematize the available information about the linguistic history of the area concerned and align the historical mentions of pre-Qing Sibe and Khorchin with more general patterns of developments in Ming Central Manchuria. Further, it seemed to be important to assess the value of the official Sibe historiography and its accent on the non-Jurchen origins of the Sibe for the interpretation of the Sibe-Khorchin contact history. Fortunately, recently published works such as Zhuangsheng (2019) and Sárközi (2019) offer a much-needed insight into the motivation of the indigenous Sibe historiography.

3 The historical and socio-linguistic background of the Sibe-Khorchin language contact

Below I give basic data about the two languages involved in the supposed language contact episode, including some historical facts that pertain to the general linguistic situation in the area and time concerned. I also note the socio-historical contexts of the official self-presentation of the modern Sibe people as a group of non-Jurchen origin.

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[5]The Khorchin data comprise approximately 10 hours of lengthy interviews on historical and cultural topics.

[6]The village of Sanjiazi (Fuyu county) is one of the last locations in Heilongjiang where a form of Manchu is still spoken by several elderly individuals.

3.1 Sibe

At present, two groups of people in China at two different locations are officially recognized as members of the Sibe ethnic group. The larger of these groups inhabits certain areas in Northeastern China (Manchuria) and are speakers of Mandarin. The smaller group of Sibe[7], some 30,000 individuals, live in the most faraway corner of China – the Ili valley on the border with Kazakhstan. These Sibe are not only more-or-less fluent speakers of a Manchu variety, but also preservers of a specific Manchurian culture. This paper is concerned with the latter – Xinjiang or Jungarian – Sibe[8] group.

Comparative data from other living or recently extinct Manchu varieties (e.g. Wang 2005; Zhao 1989; Mu 1985, 1986a,b, 1987, 1988; Hölzl & Hölzl 2019) allow Sibe to be classified as one of the Bannermen Manchu[9] varieties together with Sanjiazi Manchu, Aihui Manchu, Yibuqi Manchu and Lalin/Jing Manchu. Historically, these varieties, in contrast to other modern Jurchenic languages, seem to have been forms of a standard spoken language used in Manchu military garrisons. Knowledge of written Manchu, which was widespread in the Manchurian garrisons as well as in the Xinjiang Sibe enclaves, is probably responsible for the relatively little diversity among all Bannermen Manchu varieties. Most of the differences between Sibe and written Manchu (cf. Jang 2008) are in fact shared by Sanjiazi, Aihui and Yibuqi and may therefore be interpreted in terms of differences between the spoken language on one hand and the written form on the other, rather similar to the difference between written (Classical) Mongolian and the modern spoken forms of Mongolian. Furthermore, similar to the situation in Mongolian, it may be assumed that, besides reflecting an earlier shape of the spoken language, some of the features in written Manchu may be orthographic conventions rather than of records of the actual pronunciation.[10]

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[7]The ancestors of this group were moved from Manchuria to Xinjiang in 1764 as soldiers of the Manchu army with the task of manning the frontier garrisons on the border with Russia. For detailed accounts of the history of the Xinjiang Sibe see, for example, Sárközi (2019) or Zhuangsheng (2019).

[8]The term *Jungarian Sibe* is employed by Janhunen (1996: 49).

[9]Cf. e.g. Zhao (1989). Chinese authors use the term *Qiren Manyu* 'Bannermen Manchu' to distinguish the standard Manchu language from the varieties used in communities of Manchu/Jurchen civilians whose language was not subject to so intensive standardization, such as Alchuka or Bala.

[10]An example of this – the difference between the notation and the actual pronunciation of the Manchu past tense forms – was analysed by Kubo Tomoyuki in his lecture (Charles University Oct 4 2019). It should also be noted that the Manchu writing system, similar to the Mongolian script, ignores most allophones of the spoken forms.

This homogeneity of the Bannermen Manchu varieties notwithstanding, several distinctions exist between Sibe on the one hand and the other Manchu varieties on the other. These distinctions comprise phonetic, morphosyntactic and lexical features. Some of these features are likely to have originated in contact with Mongolic languages.

3.1.1 The historical background of the Sibe

The Sibe are first found in Central Manchuria, in the areas of Qiqihar and historical Bedune (the modern Fuyu city). The first substantial evidence about them is a note about the inclusion of the Sibe into the Manchu military system in 1692, found in the Records of Girin (Zhuangsheng 2019: 51; Sárközi 2019: 8). In noting this event, the source gives the retrospective detail that Sibe and Gūwalca[11] had been Khorchin vassals. The transfer of Sibe and Gūwalca from the Khorchin under direct Manchu administration was mediated by the Second Neichi Toyin[12], in whose biography the description of the event is given (Ujeed 2013: 232–233). This is the historical base of the narrative about the Sibe vassalage to the Khorchin. Except for these accounts, other brief mentions confirm the relationship of the Sibe and Gūwalca to the Khorchin (Gorelova 2002: 35) – namely the account of the battle of Gure (1593) when Sibe and Gūwalca fought together with the Khorchins and the Hūlun Jurchens against Nurhaci, and a mention of the Sibe and Gūwalca as Khorchin vassals in the biography of the all-important Buddhist missionary to the Khorchin, the First Neichi Toyin (between 1636 and 1653, cf. Heissig 1980: 36).

Especially the account of the Battle of Gure places the Sibe into the context of the Hūlun Jurchens, about who Crossley (2006: 65) writes: "The majority of Hūluns were Jurchen in origin but by the late 1500s spoke a distinct dialect, with a much larger portion of Mongolian loan-words, and among them were found a very high incidence of Mongolian names, marriage into Mongolian-speaking lineages (either Khorchin or Kharachin), and extensive acculturation with the Khorchin or Kharachin populations generally." The Khorchin and Kharachin were, in their majority, descendants of the Ujiyed and Uriangkhan Mongols respectively (see below).

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[11]The Gūwalca (known as *Khuulchin* in Mongolian sources, cf. Ujeed 2013: 232–233) are mentioned together with the Sibe in the early Qing period. By the 19th century they have disappeared, possibly due to merger with the Sibe. Their language is not documented at all but they are generally considered to be linguistically related to the Sibe (Zhuangsheng, p.c. August 2019).

[12]For a detailed description of the activities of the Second Neichi Toyin (1671–1703), a successor and re-incarnation of the famous Buddhist missionary to the eastern Mongols, the First Neichi Toyin, see Ujeed (2013).

Consequently, the Sibe, together with the Gūwalca, were probably involved in the intensive contact processes on the borders between the Mongolic- and Tungusic-dominated parts of Manchuria (Janhunen 1996: 98–99). The historical accounts of the event of incorporation of the Sibe and the Gūwalca into the Manchu banners state that these two groups were related to the Jurchens. These people, whatever their political status was, can thus probably be taken as representatives of Jurchenic groups of the Mongolic-influenced area. They were acculturated by Mongols who, in their turn, were linguistically and culturally Tungusic-influenced, and themselves were, in part, Mongolized Tungusic speakers (see below). Interestingly, Crossley (2006: 65)[13] notes that "the Jurchens of Nurgaci's time used the word *Mongol* (*monggo*) for the Hūluns", which could have likewise influenced the traditional self-perception of the Sibe[14]. In 1636–1638, the Sibe, together with the Gūwalca, the Daur and possibly other originally Hūlun groups (cf. Crossley 2006: 69–70), were incorporated into the newly created Mongol Eight Banners, to be transferred to the Manchu Eight Banners in 1692.

While the abovementioned historical sources confirm the fact that the Sibe were Khorchin subjects, they do not give details about this relationship and its duration. It is, however, clear that Sibe lived in a Mongolic-influenced environment for two or three centuries before becoming Manchu bannermen. After becoming Manchu army soldiers, they were divided into several groups and relocated into several military garrisons in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia (Gorelova 2002: 36). There they were organized into the Sibe banners. Initially, the Gūwalca had their own banners but later were probably merged into the Sibe banners (Zhuangsheng, p.c. August 2019), in this way disappearing from history. In different garrisons the Sibe came into contact with different – Tungusic and Mongolic – speakers. As Manchu bannermen they probably participated in the processes described by Atwood (2005: 9–12), and others. These processes involved, on one hand, intensive merging which resulted in the common millieu of Manchu bannermen, also known as Qizu, literally 'Banner ethnic group', in the beginning of the 20th century, cf. Chengzhi (2021). High prestige of Standard Manchu was one of several important traits of this milieu. On the other hand, identification with particular banners created the notions of Sibe, Solon, Daur and other groups based on administrative affiliation rather than origin and language. Thus "Sibe"

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[13]Crossley (2006: 65) quotes the source *Huangqing kaiguo fanglüe* 3.3a. written by Agui et al. For a brief description of the ethnic setting of Central Manchuria in late Ming based on contemporary sources see Crossley (2006: 64–66).

[14]This tradition of viewing the Jurchenic groups of central Manchuria as Mongols may also stand behind the appellation "Sibege Mongols" for a sinicized group of Manchurian Sibe mentioned in Lattimore (1935: 225–227).

in the Qing period largely referred to people affiliated with the Sibe banners which could include people of different linguistic background. The thus constituted Sibe identity was distinct from that of the Manchus and rather close to that of the Daur, Solon and Butha (cf. Elliott 2001: 85). In 1764, 1000 individual soldiers were picked up from different Sibe banners (Sárközi 2019: 9) and with their families were transferred to their present location in Xinjiang. Closer study of these developments leads historians to question the continuity between the pre-Qing Sibe and the modern Sibe in Xinjiang (e.g. Chengzhi 2012: 257–268).

During the Qing period Sibe came into close contact with other Mongolic groups, such as the Daur, the Chakhar or the Öölöd. Nevertheless, Standard Manchu became their first language. Throughout the Qing rule and until modern times, Sibe have been known for their solid Manchu skills (Zhuangsheng 2019: 51).

3.1.2 The socio-linguistic background of the narrative about the non-Jurchenic origins of the Sibe and of the Sibe-Khorchin contacts

In the beginning of the 20th century, the fact that the Sibe people in the vicinity of *Ghulja* (Mongolian *Ili hot*, Chinese *Yining shi*) spoke Manchu had been widely recognized by the speakers themselves (e.g. Donjina 1989; Porter 2018: 10–12), as well as by foreign travelers and researchers (e.g. Kałużyński 1987). Historical sources confirm that Sibe spoke Manchu as at least one of their languages during the whole Qing era (Zhuangsheng 2019: 51). However, in 1990, when I visited the Xinjiang Sibe community for the first time, any relationship to Manchus was generally denied in the official discourse among Sibe intellectuals. The language of the Sibe was called *Sibe*. Moreover, several of my Sibe consultants were suggesting that Sibe originally spoke a Mongolic or Mongolic-related language. The remarkable difference between the written Manchu language (known by many in the older generation of Sibe) and spoken Sibe[15] was mentioned in support of this idea. Sibe was presented as a language on its own, distinct from Manchu. Publications influential in Sibe society described Sibe culture without the Manchu context and studies of Sibe history argued for an ethnic origin distinct from that of the Manchus.[16]

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[15] This difference involves not only features which seem to reflect diachronic processes such as vowel reduction or consonant weakening, but also features which call for other interpretations such as dialectal variation (namely in lexicon and morphology). In the 1990s the Sibe were generally not aware that many of these distinctions were shared by the oral varieties of Manchuria.

[16] The basic comprehensive description of Sibe folk culture is *Xibozu minsu – Sibe uksurai an tacin* (He & Tong 1989), the main description of Sibe ethnic history was *Xibozu jianshi/Sibe uksurai šolokon suduri* (Wu et al. 1985).

As Zhuangsheng (2019: 58–70) has shown, this narrative came into being at the beginning of the 20th century and became essential in the context of the creation of the 55 ethnic minorities during the 1970s. Evidence for a distinct origin and a history as an ethnic group of its own was required in order to be officially recognized as an ethnic minority and enjoy the advantages associated with this status. Another reason why the Sibe strongly denied common origins with the Manchus was the persecution of ethnic Manchus which started in Republican China and continued into the PRC period. Zhuangsheng (2019: 58–71) describes how the Sibe intellectuals worked on collecting historical evidence for writing a *Sibe history*. He concludes (2019: 71–72) that Sibe as a political or ethnic entity indeed occur in historical sources since early 17th century. However, the whole narrative about their relationship to the presumably Mongolic-related Xianbei and their early history since the 3rd century[17] was made up without any historical basis, and with very little background in oral tradition. This narrative has become part of the modern Sibe identity.

3.1.3 A story of a "different original language": The case of the *jivš* language

The story of the extinct *jivš* language is an example of a detail from Sibe oral tradition that became an important part of the Sibe "ethnic narrative" and (linguistic) self-consciousness as a non-Manchu group.[18]

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[17]The official Sibe history uses several unclear mentions found in oral tradition to argue that the ethnonym *Sibe* is related to the name of the Xianbei, a presumably nomadic group from western Manchuria which ruled over the Mongolian grasslands in the 2nd century. The Xianbei language has been most often interpreted as Mongolic (e.g. Janhunen 2010: 281). This hypothetical Xianbei connection of the Sibe has been used in support of the argumentation for a non-Jurchen origin of the Sibe.

[18]As for the possible identity of this enigmatic language, the Inner Mongolian linguist Otgonchecheg suggested a connection to the Chipchin (Bargu: *šivšin*), an exonym used for the Old Bargu (a Buryat-related Mongolic group) during the Qing. Otgonchecheg, who did fieldwork in Chabchal in order to collect data of the *jivš* language, did not publish her research due to the lack of evidence. From a historical point of view it is plausible that a group of Chipchin Bargu bannermen was incorporated into the Sibe banners. However, the Sibe scholar Su Deshan (1984), based on his fieldwork in the Fifth banner, maintains that the term *jivš gisun* referred merely to a layer of Khorchin loanwords which was thicker in some groups of Sibe than in others. Su Deshan, following a "folk" explanation, interprets the word *jivš* as 'double, additional' and the term *jivš gisun* as 'additional words, synonyms'. Small pieces of evidence from more recent fieldwork (Guo Junxiao, Chengzhi, p.c. September 2020) suggest that the notion of *jivš gisun* is still remembered in the Fifth banner, currently pointing to a mixture of Mongolian loanwords and Literary Manchu expressions which are marginal, though not entirely unknown, among the rest of the Chabchal speakers. Guo Junxiao, a Sibe speaker (p.c. 2020) describes *jivš gisun* as a group of "unfamiliar, Mongolian-sounding words" while the unpublished data collected by Chengzhi (2020) include lexical items such as *saxaxuri* 'whitish' (< written Manchu *sahahūri*) and *xurdun* 'quick' (< written Mongol *qurdun*, Khorchin *xurden*, vs. Sibe *xudun*, written Manchu *hūdun*).

The inhabitants of the Fifth banner, one of the eight administrative units of Chabchal, speak Sibe with a (for a native speaker) remarkably different pronunciation. The difference supposedly consists of lesser reduction and generally greater closeness to written Manchu. Sibe speakers from other banners often quote the example of the written Manchu word *aliyaha* 'waited' which is pronounced as *aliaxa* in the Fifth banner but *alixe* in the rest of Chabchal. Oral tradition explains this by saying that Sibe of the Fifth banner were originally speakers of a different language and therefore were taught Standard Manchu as a new language. This caused their pronunciation in the spoken language being closer to the literary language. Oral tradition calls their original language *jivš gisun* 'the *jivš* language' (written form *jibsi gisun*), and holds that it had disappeared by the end of the 19th century. Different 'folk' hypotheses exist about this language, such as that *jivš gisun* was a "Mongol language, perhaps something like Khorchin or Daur" or that it was a "secret language which consisted of repeating every word twice." (fieldwork data February 1995). Moreover, now and then a statement is heard or read that *jivš gisun* was the original language of the Sibe.

Whatever the historical roots of the *jivš* case, it has become part of the popular narrative of Sibe indentity. Even today the statement about *jivš* as the original language of the Sibe, attributed to a source called "minjian" (folk), is repeated on Sibe social media,[19] which testifies to its lasting popularity.

3.2 Khorchin

Khorchin Mongol, spoken by close to a million of speakers and thus being the largest and most influential Mongolian dialect after Khalkha, is less researched than Sibe. The Khorchin speech community differs from most other Mongolian speech communities in that it has a long tradition of sedentary or semi-sedentary life-style. Two important descriptions of Khorchin are Bayančogtu (2002) and Caidengduoerji (2014), the latter being an unpublished dissertation.[20]

At present, Khorchin is spoken over a large territory in Inner Mongolia and the neighboring provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang. The locations with the greatest concentration of speakers are the administrative unit of Tongliao City and the Hinggan League in Inner Mongolia. The varieties spoken in these two areas

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[19] *musei te gisuremaha gisun oci manju gisun inu, musei da gisun oci jibsi gisun, manju gisun waka* 'the language we speak now is Manchu, but our original language is the Jibsi language, not Manchu'. (E.g. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4aa943a1010008yv.html. Last access 28.10.2020.)

[20] Other studies and materials of Khorchin include, for example, Brosig (2014a,b) and Yamakoshi (2015).

slightly differ from each other. Khorchin is close to two other large eastern Mongolian varieties – Kharachin and Baarin – and the three, including a number of their sub-varieties, share some important differences from the rest of Mongolian. The Tongliao variety, in particular, is hardly intelligible to speakers of most other modern Mongolian languages.

However, the available descriptions of Khorchin present a picture of a rather regular variety of modern Mongolian and do not give sufficient explanation for the mutual unintelligibility with standard varieties such as Khalkha.

In my observation, two main factors may be responsible for the surface difference of Tongliao Khorchin from other modern Mongolian varieties. First, Khorchin retains, with certain exceptions such as the loss of the vowel *ö*, the general phonological structure that goes back to Proto-Mongolic (e.g. Janhunen 2003b: 4). However, extensive processes on the phonetic level such as consonant weakening, vowel shifts and vowel reduction fundamentally change its shape in speech. Second, Khorchin in most rural areas is profoundly influenced by Chinese with which it has been in close contact for several centuries. Chinese influence is mostly manifested in syntax (e.g. paratactic constructions instead of chains of clauses connected by non-finite verbal forms, which are typical for most other modern Mongolian languages) and vocabulary. Depending on the topic and circumstances, the speech of a Khorchin speaker may consist of about fifty percent of words of Chinese origin. These features are not readily seen in the descriptions but are important for shaping the performance of Khorchin speakers which then radically differs from the speech of, for example, a Khalkha speaker.

3.2.1 Historical background of the Khorchin

The Khorchin population seems to have initially been composed of two main elements. The first, the most important according to Khorchin historians, and the one which gave the group its name and proclaimed identity, is the Mongol noble lineage descended from Khasar and their subjects. In the 13th century Khasar, the younger brother of Genghis Khan, was granted the lands around Lake Hulun and the Ergune river as an appanage, hence approximately the area of the modern administrative unit of Hulunbuir.[21] During the Ming dynasty, probably in connection to the period of internal conflicts in Mongolia (Caidengduoerji 2014: 29), the main part of the Khorchins crossed the Khingan mountains to the east and

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[21]It is often difficult to establish the precise location of the lands of particular nomadic peoples in this period. In the case of the Khasar lineage, however, archaeologists have interpreted at least two important sites in the Ergune valley as towns built by Khasar's descendants (e.g. Kradin 2018: 227–227).

settled in the Nonni valley where they became the overlords of the local Mongol population. The local Mongols, the second important – and probably more numerous – element in the composition of Khorchins, were the Ujiyed of the Fuyu Guard[22] (Atwood 2004: 306). The Fuyu guard was one of the Three Guards – administrative units in Manchuria loosely controlled by the Chinese (Ming) court. The population of the Three Guards was referred to as either Mongol or Uriangkhan, but comprised, besides Mongols, groups of Tungusic origin.[23] Therefore, in imagining the linguistic situation during the Ming, it seems important that the population of the Three guards, which later[24] "became the ancestors of many eastern Inner Mongolian peoples" (Atwood 2004: 35), was probably largely homogenous in terms of language and culture[25] which contained elements of Tungusic origin (Crossley 2006: 82). In addition to this picture, the Three Guards were geographically close to the former Khitan territories, and their settlement in the area probably goes back to times when Khitans still existed as a distinct entity. Therefore a certain Khitan influence on Khorchin cannot be excluded.

Consequently, the remarkable features shared by the eastern Mongolian dialects – Khorchin, Kharachin and Baarin – may in fact have originated in the language of the Three Guard Mongols who have been continually exposed to local Manchurian influences since as early as the Yuan period.

Since the 15th century the Khorchins often intermarried with Jurchens (Crossley 2006: 65). Since their arrival they started migrating from the Nonni valley southwards, into their present territory in the Liao valley. According to a contemporary account of a Korean observer, they were "dressed in furs, with their felt yurts on wagons, moving their herds toward appropriate pastures. Many, he noted, were also agricultural and would sow fields in the spring to which they

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[22]The Fuyu guard, situated close to the present Qiqihar in the Nonni valley, was one of the three "loose rein" guards (the Fuyu guard of the Ujiyed people, the Taining guard of the Ongniuts and the Döyin guard of the Uriangkhan) established in Manchuria by the Ming. The "Guards" were groups of former subjects of the Yuan empire who were identified as Mongols and after the fall of the Yuan rule became tributaries of the new Ming dynasty (Atwood 2004: 536).

[23]Crossley (2006: 64) refers to the Ming authors Xiao Daheng and Ye Xianggao for a definition of "Mongols" in the Ming era, concluding that: "[…] some Mongolian-speaking communities were not nomadic but agricultural; many groups who migrated with "Mongols" were speakers of Turkic or Tungusic languages; many living among the Mongols were Han or the descendants of Han, who had been taken by the hundreds of thousands by eastern Mongol raiders in northern China."

[24]For the detailed descriptions of the migrations of the Three Guards and their mixing with other Mongols see Atwood (2004: 304, 410).

[25]The Three Guard Mongols were mostly sedentary and practiced agriculture (Atwood 2004: 535).

expected to return in the fall to reap a meager crop of wheat or millet." (Crossley 2006: 66). During the Qing period the Khorchins took over the Liao valley and thanks to their alliance with the Manchus politically dominated the area. At the same time groups of outsiders settled on this territory and were integrated and assimilated by the Khorchins (Caidengduoerji 2014: 37). These immigrants were both large groups of Manchus and Chinese and smaller groups or individuals of other ethnic origin such as Sibe, Ewenki, or Koreans. In the beginning of the 20th century the Khorchin area became one of the main targets of the Qing New Policies, which involved an unrestricted immigration of Han Chinese and further sedentarization of the local Mongols. Even during the 20th century, however, many immigrants kept adopting the Khorchin language and culture.

4 Evidence of Sibe-Khorchin contacts

In this section I list some shared features of modern Sibe and modern Khorchin, which may have resulted from mutual contacts between the ancestors of the two modern groups. These features, in my opinion, indeed point in the direction of direct contact of some kind. Historically and linguistically, these features remain open to different interpretations. When taking into consideration the available evidence about "ethnic" and "linguistic" mobility in Manchuria, especially within the Eight Banners,[26] it is rather clear that it is impossible to entirely separate the

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[26]In Qing-time Manchuria large-scale migrations and resettlements are documented, such as the abovementioned resettlement of Sibe, Khorchin migrations, or the massive Daur and Solon migration into the Qiqihar area in the 17th century. In addition, evidence of countless shifts of small groups and individuals among the Qing garrisons is scattered across historical sources. Another factor important for linguistic developments are frequent intermarriages among members of different banners which were supported by the strict rules of exogamy in Tungusic-speaking groups. Among these, intermarriages between Sibe and Manchu bannermen seem to have been common (He Rongwei, p.c. June 2020). Intermarriages between Khorchin and Manchu speakers are generally known to have been frequent (Shuangshan, p.c. August 2015). If we take the longest-surviving "banner society" – that of Hulun Buir – as a model for the linguistic situation in the Manchurian Banner communities, we may assume that not only many bilingual couples lived in the Banners but most of the bannermen were, to a certain degree, familiar with other languages. The supposed constant language contact between the Sibe and Manchu bannermen and the Khorchins rules out the possibility of independent developments of these languages and any clear-cut evidence for the earlier direct contacts between the Sibe and the Khorchin.

It also needs to be taken into account that the available data of spoken Manchurian Manchu represent tiny pieces of a once broad continuum of local varieties, and that much of the data available were collected from semi-speakers and rememberers, and thus cannot supply a complete picture of Manchurian Manchu.

linguistic developments in Sibe from the other Manchu varieties. However, the features listed below are central and massive in Sibe while, if attested, marginal in Manchurian Manchu.

4.1 Manchu influence on Khorchin?

For obvious reasons – namely the absence of any Sibe data before the 20th century – any specifically Sibe influence on Khorchin cannot be determined. In the context of the historical developments described above, strong influence of Manchurian Tungusic varieties might be expected. Quite surprisingly, however, little influence is seen on the lexical level. While Chinese loanwords form a significant part of the Khorchin vocabulary, Manchu loanwords do not seem to excess several tens. Words used in everyday life such as *lah* for the brick bed (Chin. *kang*) from Manchu *nahan* or kinship terms such as *eme* for mother (Manchu *eme*) have been noted by native linguists (Bayančoγtu 2002: 25). Some Manchu loanwords are connected to shamanic practices, such as *samaan* 'shaman' from Manchu *saman*, *sarg* 'home altar' from Manchu *sarha* or the verb *magsi-* 'to perform shamanic dance' from Manchu *maksi-* 'to dance.' On the level of morphology and morphosyntax, the general typological similarity of Manchu and Mongolian makes it difficult to single out instances of mutual influence.

The small number of Jurchenic loanwords in general may, at least partly, be attributed to the standardization forces during the Qing dynasty which affected Mongolian (proper)[27] speakers not less than Manchu speakers. In spite of the fact that the Mongolian script was invented before the Yuan times, it became widely used only since the 16th century with the spread of Buddhism, accompanied by translations of literary works into Classical Mongolian. At the same time, original compositions of didactic and other character were written and read in Mongolian-speaking societies. The influence of Classical Mongolian could have brought the vocabulary of the (politically) Mongol groups of Manchuria closer to other Mongolian varieties (Crossley 2006: 83).

In terms of contact features, research into phonetic peculiarities of Khorchin and their relationship to the language environment of Manchuria may prove more rewarding. It seems worthwhile to analyze Khorchin phonetic and phonological differences from other Mongolian varieties in the context of other eastern Mongolic idioms (Baarin, Buryat, Daur), in the context of Manchu varieties, Manchurian Mandarin and possibly even the of language of the Korean minority of China.

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[27]In contrast to Mongolian proper, the Mongolic Daur langauge was not affected by standardization, instead borrowing many Manchu words.

Below I just note two features which are similarly typical for Sibe among Manchu varieties as for Khorchin among Mongol dialects and may therefore be added among the candidates for results of direct Sibe-Khorchin language contact.

4.2 Shared phonetic developments in Khorchin and Sibe

Generally speaking, Sibe and Khorchin are phonetically strikingly similar, which seems to be caused for the most part by the Manchurian influence on Khorchin. For example, Khorchin is perhaps the only Mongolian variety where the intervocalic cluster *ŋg* is pronounced as syllable-initial [ŋ], as in [moŋol] 'Mongol'. Still, however, two of the shared features may be interpreted as results of phonetic processes that Manchurian Manchu has avoided.

4.2.1 Change of closing diphthongs into opening diphthongs

In Sibe, the equivalent of the written Manchu diphthong *ai* is often pronounced as *iä*, e.g. written Manchu *bayimbi*[28] [pajmbi] vs. Sibe *biäm* [pjɛm] 'to look for', etc. This is valid for approximately half of the reflections of the written Manchu *ai*. The rest either remains as *äi/ai* or is monophthongized. Some instances of retention of the closing diphthong are in the word-initial position (e.g. written Manchu *ai*, Sibe *ai* 'what'), others come after uvulars (e.g. written Manchu *kaicambi*, Sibe *qaicem/qacim* 'to shout'), or apparently belong to a more literary style (e.g. written Manchu *saikan*, Sibe *saiken* 'beautiful'). In other cases such as the written Manchu *baita*, Sibe *bäit* there is no immediately apparent reason. The "reversal" also took place in a few cases of the closing diphthong oi (e.g. written Manchu *boihon*, Sibe *bioxun* 'dust'). These changes fit into the context of the overall phonetic tendencies in Sibe (vowel raising and fronting, e.g. written Manchu *omimbi*, Sibe *eimim/iemim* 'to drink').

In contrast to Sibe, in the spoken Manchurian varieties of Sanjiazi, Aihui and Yibuqi monophthongization of the written Manchu diphthongs occurs (e.g. written Manchu *sain*, Sanjiazi *sän* 'good'), but there are no cases of "reversal" of the diphthongs.

Unlike Manchurian Manchu but quite similarly to Sibe, Khorchin has a strong tendency towards vowel fronting and raising (Janhunen 2012: 60–61). Closing diphthongs of written Mongol (which are either retained or monophthongized in the central Mongolian varieties such as Khalkha) are, at least in some Khorchin varieties, almost regularly reversed, e.g. written Khalkha *naim*, Khorchin

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[28]Unlike the pronunciation in spoken varieties, academic pronunciation of written Manchu unpacks the diphthong.

nie:m 'eight' or written Khalkha *meiren*, Khorchin *mie:rin* (title of an official). The reversal may involve change of vowel quality such as written Khalkha *xoit*, Khorchin *xie:t* 'north'.

Janhunen (2012: 45) notes that the tendency towards vowel fronting is seen in Mongolian in general but this process has been most complete in the eastern dialects including Khorchin. Similarly, reversal of diphthongs occasionally happens in other Mongolian varieties but has become regular in Khorchin. The described feature of Sibe may therefore be interpreted as a diachronic change that happened during the period of influence of the eastern Mongolian phonetic environment but was halted when the Sibe left this particular environment.

4.2.2 Dissimilation of the cluster *čx*

There is another phonetic development that occurs in Sibe and Khorchin but is found neither in other Manchu varieties, nor in any other Mongolian variety. In spoken Sibe the consonant clusters *čk* and *čx*, which result from vowel elision, often change into the sequence *šk*, e.g. written Manchu *tacikū*, Sibe *tačqu*/*tašqu* 'school' or written Manchu *tacihabi*, Sibe *tačxei*/*tašqei* 'studied'. The dissimilated forms are used in quick and less careful speech, while the careful pronunciation retains the original consonants. In Khorchin, the cluster *čx* in the Mongolian deverbal suffix *-čix-*/*-čx-* (quick or intensive action) in quick speech is sometimes dissimilated in a similar way. e.g. *yavšgen*/*yavčxen* cf. written Khalkha *yavčixna* 'will leave'. While this may be just a parallel development, it certainly contributes to the similarity of the two languages.

4.3 Potential Khorchin influence on Sibe grammar

In the next part I list those features of Sibe grammar which have analogies in Khorchin and are not shared by, or are marginal in, the other oral Manchu varieties.

4.3.1 The emphatic prefix *mV-* (used with deictics)

4.3.1.1 The prefix *mV-* in Sibe

Sibe has the element *me-*/*mu-* which is added to the beginning of some deictic expressions. Generally it adds emphasis to the deictics and is possibly best translated as 'just, exactly', sometimes 'the very'. Its use is often analogous to the Chinese particle *jiù* 'just, exactly', sometimes also 'the same'.

The prefix is at least partly productive. Below I list forms encountered in my fieldwork material with examples:

- *mere* 'exactly this', from *ere* 'this' (1).

  (1) *mere   jilgan mim-be eme diower amxe-we-xa-qv.*
       just.this sound 1SG-ACC one night   sleep-CAUS-PTCP.PFV-NEG
       'It was exactly this thing which did not let me sleep the whole night.'

- *metere* 'exactly that' from *tere* 'that' (2).

  (2) *metere   baite-we   giser-maie.*
       just.that matter-ACC speak-PROG
       'This is exactly what I am speaking about; I am speaking about the same thing.'

- *merange* 'exactly like this' from *erange* 'like this' (3).

  (3) *min-i   uwe=da merange.*
       1SG-GEN fate=FOC just.like.this
       'This is exactly what my fate is (I cannot change it).'

- *meterange* 'exactly like that' from *terange* 'like that' (4).

  (4) *meterange=da   are!*
       Just.like.that=FOC write.IMP
       'Write it exactly in that way!/ Just write it in that way!'

- *meske* 'just this much' from *eske* 'this much' (5).

  (5) *bilxa=ni   meske   ma.*
       neck=3SG.POSS just.this.much thick
       'His neck is just this thick. (This form is usually used when demonstrating the degree of something with a gesture.)'

- A lexicalized expression formed in the same way is *mujaqen* 'just now' from *jaqen* 'a while ago'.

The form *mere* 'exactly this' is further used as means of emphasis with different types of expressions, both with deictics (6) and with other words (7), (8). In this case it rather adds emphasis to the whole sentence than to its determinandum.

(6) *mere ewade=da yinde!*
     EMPH here=FOC stay.overnight.IMP
     'Just stay here overnight! (emphasis for the sake of expressing
     hospitality).'

(7) *mere xancide min-i   bo-de   ji-xei.*
     EMPH recently 1SG-GEN house-DAT.LOC come-PST
     'He came to my place during the very last couple of days.'

(8) *mere feksi-m.*
     EMPH run-NPST
     'He took a flight/ immediately started running.' (emphasis in storytelling)

This feature is very likely borrowed from Khorchin, where the element *m(V)-* has
an analogous function.

4.3.1.2 The prefix *mV-* in Khorchin

According to Bayančoɣtu (2002: 148–151), in Khorchin this prefix is fully produc-
tive with demostratives. In his description the author gives a list of more than
120 possible forms. Below I give examples from my fieldwork material:

- *men*/*mun* 'exactly this' from en 'this' (9).

    (9) *Tongliao-nii laajii-gii men   dotor avšir-č.baina.*
         Tongliao-GEN waste-ACC just.this inside bring-PRS.PROG
         'It is (exactly) inside this (fence) they are bringing the waste from
         Tongliao.'

- *meter* 'exactly that' from *ter* 'that' (10).

    (10) *meter   modon.eel šii.*
         just.that PN   EMPH
         'It was that very Modon eel.'

- *miim* 'just like this' from *iim* 'like this' (11).

    (11) *huu miim   miim   budun.*
         all   just.like.this just.like.this thick
         'They were all just this thick.' (showing)'

- *mitiim* 'just like that' from *tiim* 'like that' (12).

  (12) *mitiim   sanaa-tai ir-jee.*
        just.like.that idea-COM come-PST
        'I came exactly with this idea in mind (I came exactly for this
        purpose).'

- *mengeed* '(doing) in this very way'= 'just like this' from *engeed* '(doing) in
  this way' (13).

  (13) *mengeed   neg tangs mod ux-jee.*
        just.in.this.way one row   tree die-PST
        'And in this very way the whole row of trees died.'

- *metgej* '(doing) in that very way' from *tegej* '(doing) in that very way' (14).

  (14) *metgej   or-j   ir-sen   šdee.*
        just.in.this.way enter-CVB.IPFV come-PTCP.PFV EMPH
        'This is the very road we took on the way here.'

- *mudii* 'exactly this much' from *udii* 'this much' (15).

  (15) *mudii   gonjgoil-son.*
        just.this.much be.oblong-PTCP.PFV
        '(Its shape was) oblong, this long (showing).'

- *mendegu*/*mundugu* 'exactly from here' from *ende-gu* [here-NMLZR] 'com-
  ing from here, local' (16).

  (16) *nienie-nii   ug   suugaal ger   bol mende-gu   ii?*
        grandmother-GEN original seat   home TOP just.here-NMLZR Q
        'Grandmother, are you originally from this very place?'

The forms listed above are mostly found in eastern Mongolian dialects, even
though in recent years they started being occasionally used by speakers of other
Inner Mongolian varieties. The word *meter*, which is also used as a filler, is so
prominent that Mongols in some other parts of Inner Mongolia used to mock
Khorchin soldiers by calling them *Meteruud* 'the Meters'.

This element *mV-* has most probably evolved from the Mongolian emphatic pronoun *mön* (written Mongol 'the same, just this', Poppe (2006: 51), Proto-Mongolic 'the very, the same', Janhunen (2003b: 20). In modern Mongolian proper it has been mostly used as an (often emphatic) copula, e.g.

(17) *bi   Dorj mön.*
      1sg Dorj cop
      'I am (indeed) Dorj.'

and as an emphatic particle, e.g.

(18) *Ulaanbaatar utaa-güi   bol mön goyo.*
      Ulaanbaatar smog-priv top ptc nice
      'It would be really nice if Ulaanbaatar was without smog.'

While combining the particle *mön* with deictics is occasionally found in many of the modern Mongol varieties (e.g. Khalkha *mön ter xün* 'that very person'), its grammaticalization into a kind of prefix has only taken place in Khorchin and the adjacent eastern Mongolian varieties. In other spoken Manchu varieties mainly the form *meter* is attested (Wang 2005: 155) but seems to be marginal compared to its massive use in Sibe. Another interesting question is that of the Sibe word *menjang* 'indeed, truly' which is used in positions corresponding to the use of the word *mön* in Mongolian. This expression is attested in written Manchu in the form *mujangga*. No plausible Jurchen etymology for this word seems to be at hand, therefore a connection to the Mongolian form *mön* may be considered. In the whole, the above-mentioned Sibe set of emphatic deictic expressions is one of the candidates for a proof of direct and intensive contact between the ancestors of modern Khorchin and Sibe.

4.3.2 Replacement of personal pronouns with demostratives

Grammars of written Manchu give the 3rd person pronouns as *i* (3sg) and *ce* (3pl) which are regularly inflected for case. In Manchu texts, especially in the more "natural" ones such as historical narratives the demonstrative plural forms *ese* 'these' (singular *ere* 'this') and *tese* 'those' (singular *tere* 'that') are used more frequently than *ce*. As plural forms[29] they are generally reserved for human or human-like beings, thus being in fact personal pronouns. In the oral Manchu varieties (Sanjiazi, Aihui and Yibuqi) the 3rd person plural pronoun *ce* has been

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[29]In Manchu only nouns denoting people, deities or ghosts are marked for number.

completely replaced by an oral form of *tese* (Wang 2005: 52 *tetse*, Zhao 1989: 123 *ts'etse*, etc.). A form derived from the 3rd person singular pronoun *i* is, however, attested in all three varieties: Sanjiazi: *yin*, Aihui *i* (Wang 2005: 52), Yibuqi *ji* (Zhao 1989: 189). These forms are noted as used along with the demonstrative *tere/tele* 'that'.

In Mongolic, already in the Middle Mongol period the Proto-Mongolic 3rd person pronouns *i* (singular) and *a* (plural) have been generally replaced by the demonstratives *ene/tere* for singular and *ede/tede* for plural (Rybatzki 2003: 72).

In Sibe the 3rd person pronouns are not attested at all, even though knowledge of the literary language and thus also of the forms *i* and *ce* was widespread till the 20th century.

Hence, the tendency towards replacement of 3rd person pronouns by demonstratives exists not only in Mongolic, but also in Manchu. Systematic usage of personal pronouns in written Manchu may be regarded as a conservative feature and is being abandoned in less canonical Manchu writing. The process, however, is on half-way in Manchurian Manchu while it has been completed in Sibe.

Admittedly, this is a cross-linguistically common process and does not tell anything about the Khorchin-Sibe contacts. However, it is still possible that a direct influence of a Mongolic vernacular on Sibe has accelerated the change that was already underway in the spoken Manchu varieties – the complete loss of the Manchu pronominal form and its replacement with demonstratives which are, moreover, almost homophonous in Monglian and Manchu.

4.3.3 Possessive clitics and Sibe phrasal possession

Sibe has a system of possessive clitics which resemble the Mongolian possessive clitics and do not occur in any other Manchu variety. Their function is similar, specifically, to Khorchin. Much in the same way as in most modern Mongolian languages including Khorchin, the 3rd person possessive clitic functions as a definite marker or a topicalizer (cf. Hölzl 2017).

Furthermore, Sibe uses the 3rd person possessive clitic to express possession in a way which resembles the prototypical Tungusic head-marked possessive phrases (cf. Gorelova 2002: 45).

4.3.3.1 Phrasal possession and definite marking in Manchu

In written Manchu the principal way to express possession and association is marking on the dependent which then takes the genitive (or genitive-instrumental) suffix, e.g. *min-i bithe* [1SG-GEN book] 'my book'; *morin-i uju* [horse-GEN

head] 'horse's head' or 'horse head'; *tacikū-i sefu* [school-GEN teacher] 'teacher of the school/school teacher'. Written Manchu has no possessive clitics.

In the spoken Manchurian varieties possession may be dependent-marked, which is obligatory if the possessor is a pronoun. In other cases juxtaposition is common. However, while no possessive clitics are attested in the available materials, Sanjiazi uses the genitive marker *-ning* (< written Manchu marker of independent definite form *=ningge*) as a possessive and definite marker in the same way as Sibe uses the 3rd person possessive clitic *=ni*, e.g.

(19) *ame-ning*   *yawe-xei.*
      father-3SG.POSS go-PST
      'His father/the father left.'

4.3.3.2 Possessive markers in Mongolian

Most Mongolian varieties have a set of possessive markers which go back to reconstructed genitive forms of the Proto-Mongolic personal pronouns (Table 1).

Table 1: Proto-Mongolic personal pronouns (Janhunen 2003b: 18)

	Singular	Plural
1st person	*mi.n-U	*bida.n-u
2nd person	*ci.n-U	*ta.n-u
3rd person	*i.n-U	*a.n-u

While in some Mongol varieties such as Buryat and Oirat these pronouns have been grammaticalized into possessive suffixes, others, like Khalkha and Khorchin, use slightly modified forms of the 1st and 2nd person possessive pronouns as clitics. Since the 3rd person possessive pronouns have been replaced by demonstratives, the system of possessive clitics has been supplemented with a "neutralized reflex of the original pronominal genitives" (Janhunen 2003a: 92) – the form *ni*. Consequently, the Khalkha possessive clitics are the ones shown in Table 2.

In Khalkha, all the enclitics are alternatively used to express possession along with the basic dependent-marked noun phrases. The choice of a clitic instead of a pronoun in genitive form may have semantic, stylistic or modality reasons, e.g. *min-ii eej* [1SG-GEN mother] 'my mother (neutral)' vs. *eej=miny* [mother=2SG.POSS] 'my mother (expressing emotional attachment)'. The enclitics may be used instead of pronominal genitives in all functions of the latter, i.e.

Table 2: Khalkha possessive enclitics, possessive pronouns and personal pronouns (Svantesson 2003: 164)

	Possessive enclitic	Possessive pronoun	Personal pronoun
1SG	miny	minii	bi
2SG	ciny	cinii	ci
3SG	ny		- (*i)
1PL	maany	manai	bid
2PL	tany	tanai	ta
3PL	ny		- (*a)

possession, association, whole-part relationship (cf. Dixon 2010: 262). They also determine postpositions or indicate the agent in relative clauses. In Khorchin the frequency of clitics slightly differs from other Mongolian varieties: the 3rd person enclitic *=ni* [en] is frequent, closely followed by the 2nd person singular enclitic *šini* [ʃin]. In contrast, the rest, 1st person and 2nd person plural enclitics, are rare.

Examples of possessive enclitics in Khorchin:

(20)   *ger=ni   dalan   šagaan nohoi-tee.*
       house=3SG.POSS seventy white   dog-COM
       'In their house there were seventy white dogs.'

(21)   *ger=šini   bol bain   aa   šii?*
       house=2PL.POSS TOP wealthy EMPH Q
       'Was your house(hold) wealthy?'

In most modern Mongol varieties, possessive clitics are used in functions whose common denominator is probably best described as definiteness (Janhunen: "deictic determinants connected with the category of definiteness"). In some cases they "refer to the discourse situation" (Janhunen 2003a: 93). The 3rd person and 2nd person singular possessive clitics are the most common in this function. In Khorchin, only the latter two seem to be used as definite markers, e.g.:

(22)   3rd person possessive enclitic *=ni* (22)
       ter olson   yum=ni   ertnii, uldsen=ni   bol suulernii.
       that bamboo thing=DEF ancient, the.rest=DEF TOP later
       'The one made of bamboo is ancient, the rest of them is more recent.'

(23) 2nd person singular possessive clitic *=šini* (23)
　　ter uise-d=šini　　iim terg gue.
　　that times-DAT.LOC=DEF such cart NEG.EX
　　'In those times there were no such carts.'

4.3.3.3 Sibe possessive clitics

In Sibe a set of possessive clitics exists which for the 1st and 2nd persons are almost identical with possessive pronouns. In the 3rd person the form *ni* is used which can be interpreted either as having evolved from the Manchu 3rd person possessive pronoun *ini* or as a Mongolian borrowing. However, while the 3rd person clitic is frequent and the 2nd person singular clitic occurs sporadically, the rest of the forms is rather rare.

Table 3: Possessive enclitics in Sibe

	Singular	Plural
1	mini	moni
2	sini	soni
3	ni	ni

Examples of possessive clitics in Sibe:

(24) *bo=ni　　　ambu.*
　　house=3SG.POSS big
　　'His house is big.'

(25) *jaqe-we=sini　　bierxe!*
　　thing-ACC=2SG.POSS collect
　　'Take your belongings!'

In Sibe only the 3rd person possessive clitic is used as a DEFINITE MARKER, e.g.

(26) *nane=ni　　ji-xe　　　na?*
　　person=DEF come-PTCP.PFV Q
　　'Has the person arrived?'

Besides the function of definite marker the Sibe marker *ni* is also used as a kind of TOPIC MARKER, e.g.

(27) *Tana=ni   terang baite   icxia-qu.*
      Tana=TOP such   matter arrange-NEG
      'Tana would not do such things. (As for Tana, she would not do such things.)'

4.3.3.4 The case of 'head-marked' possession in Sibe

In Sibe, the Manchu-type marking on the dependent is obligatory when the possessor is referred to by a pronoun, e.g. *sin-i bo* [2SG-GEN house] 'your house'. In other cases it is used alternatively with simple juxtaposition (e.g. *tašqu sewe* [school teacher] 'teacher of the school/school teacher'), the latter being more frequent. However, the head of possessive phrases is very often (additionally) marked by the 3rd person possessive clitic *=ni*. In such cases the clitic may be interpreted either as a topic marker (28) or/and as emphasizing definiteness (29), the boundaries between the two meanings being rather vague.

(28) *min-i   age=ni   tese-maqe yavu-qu.*
      1SG-GEN brother=TOP 3PL-INS   go-NEG
      'As for my brother, he does not maintain contacts with them.'

(29) *honin uju=ni   yecin.*
      sheep head=DEF black
      'The head of the sheep is black.'

This type of constructions, which has no correspondence in any Manchu variety, is so frequent and remarkable in Sibe that it resembles the head-marked possessive phrases in the non-Jurchenic Tungusic languages. In contrast to the latter, however, the marker *=ni* is always optional in Sibe.

While such type of phrases occurs neither in written Manchu nor in the Manchurian oral varieties, in Mongolian we find structurally similar constructions. Possessive phrases often have additional marking on the head which at the same time implies greater definiteness, e.g.

(30) Khalkha
      Ganaa.g-iin eej=ni   emch.
      Ganaa-GEN mother=3SG.POSS doctor
      'Ganaa's mother is a doctor.'

In Mongolian, simple juxtaposition is marginal in expressing possession which makes 'head-marked' possessive constructions of the Sibe type rare. However, constructions with similar structure still occur:

(31) Khalkha

    eej   *bie=ni*   *muu baina.*

    mother body=3SG.POSS bad COP

    'Mother is sick (literally: Mother her body is bad).'

The existence of possessive clitics in Sibe constitutes a remarkable typological difference from written Manchu. The clitics are formed and used in a way that is almost identical with that of Khorchin. On the first sight, 'head-marked' possession does not exist in Mongolian. In fact, however, structurally similar possessive phrases occur in colloquial Mongolian. No such possessive phrases seem to have been attested in any other Manchu variety.

4.3.4 The limiting clitic *=li*

In Sibe, the main means for expressing limitation is the clitic *=li*.[30] It can follow any sentence member, e.g.

(32) *bi=li*   *gene-m.*

    1SG=LIM go-NPST

    'Only I will go.'

(33) *eme=li* *nane*   *ji-xei.*

    one=LIM person come-PST

    'Only one person arrived.'

(34) *eme nane*   *dudu-r=li*   *orun bi-xei.*

    one person lie-PTCP.IPFV=LIM place be-PST

    'There was space for only one person to lie.'

(35) *uculu-m*   *bana-qv,*   *qaici-m=li.*

    sing-CVB.IPFV be.able-NEG shout-NPST=LIM

    'They cannot sing, they only shout.'

In most modern Mongolic languages including Khalkha and Khorchin the clitic *lV* (< Classical Mongolian *la/le*) is used in much the same way, but typically does not determine the predicate, e.g.

(36) Khalkha

    bi=l   *yav-na.*

    1SG=LIM go-NPST

    'Only I will go.'

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[30]The Mongolic origin of the Sibe limitation marker was suggested by Norikazu Kogura (2020).

(37) *neg=l   xun   ir-sen.*
    one=LIM person come-PST
    'Only one person arrived.'

In written Manchu, postpositions such as *-i teile*, e.g. *emu niyalma-i teile* 'only one person', are used as means of postnominal[31] limitation, and no clitic with similar meaning seems to be attested. Likewise, any similar clitic does not seem to be attested in the Manchurian spoken Manchu varieties, wherefore the Sibe clitic *=li* is likely to be a borrowing from a Mongolic language.

4.4 Absence of the Manchu directional (itive and ventive) suffixes *-nV-* and *-nji-*

Written Manchu has a large set of deverbal suffixes, most of which have lost their productivity in the spoken varieties. However, in Sanjiazi, Aihui and Yibuqi two of the deverbal suffixes are highly productive – the suffix *-nji-* 'to come to do something' and *-nV-* 'to go to do something', e.g. written Manchu *ala-na-ha*, Sanjiazi *ale-na-xe* 'went to tell'.

In Sibe these suffixes have completely lost their productivity. Instead, multi-verb expressions are used to convey similar meanings, e.g. *ale-me gene-xei* [tell-CVB.IPFV go-PST] 'went to tell', or *gene-me ale-xei* [go-CVB.IPFV tell-PST] 'went and told.'

Mongolian has no directional deverbal suffixes and the meanings 'go to do' and 'come to do' are expressed by multiverb constructions, e.g. *hele-heer ir-sen* [tell-CVB.PURP come-PST].

Multiverb constructions are frequent and preferred in many languages in the area. A tendency towards replacing deverbal suffixes by multiverb chains in Sibe is not surprising. Perhaps more surprising is the retention of productivity of the deverbal suffix in Manchurian Manchu. Still, however, the different developments may have been prompted by the different language environment.

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[31]Besides postnominally used expressions, both Manchu varieties and Mongolian employ adverbs to express limitation. These adverbs (e.g. written Manchu *damu*, Sibe *dame*, Khalkha Mongolian *zövxön*) usually stand in the beginning of a sentence, and always come before the noun which they determine, e.g. written Manchu *damu emu niyalma* 'only one person', Mongolian *zövxön neg xün* 'only one person'. These adverbs are often used together with postnominal limitation as means of emphasis, e.g. written Manchu *damu emu niyalma-i teile* 'only one person', Khalkha *zövxön neg l xün* 'only one person'.

5 Lexical borrowings

In addition to the possibly contact-induced features in Sibe grammar, there is a small-scale but interesting evidence of direct contacts with Mongolic languages in the Sibe lexicon.

The vocabulary of modern spoken Sibe is almost identical with that of written Manchu, the main difference being a larger number of Chinese loanwords. In addition, several Russian, Uyghur and Kazakh loanwords are used. Although colloquial Sibe contains a large amount of Mongolian loanwords, most of them are also found in written Manchu and therefore do not testify to any specific Sibe-Mongolian contacts.[32]

Several lexical items such as *kurwo* for 'bridge' (written Manchu *doohan*) from Mongolian *xöörög* (written Mongol *kögerge*) 'bridge' seem to be restricted to Sibe.

While the modern colloquial language hardly yields any lexical evidence of Sibe-Mongolic contact, in more archaic layers of the lexicon there exist Mongolian loanwords related to Buddhism, shamanism and what may be called "folk religion" which are not found in other Manchu varieties. Some of these terms are still in use while others are only found in written sources.

5.1 Buddhist terminology and the language of Buddhist monks

Historical sources mention the adoption of Tibetan Buddhism by the Sibe during the period of their vassalage to the Khorchins. Until the 1930s a Buddhist monastery existed in Chabchal with approximately fourty monks. The language of recitation was Classical Mongolian. The language of the monks contained many Mongolian Buddhist terms for which nowadays Manchu words or Chinese loanwords are used. Examples of such pairs are *sumu* (< written Mongol *süme*) vs. *miao* (< Chinese *miao*) 'Buddhist temple, monastery', or *burkan baksi* (< written Mongol *burqan bagsi*) vs. *fišk* (Manchu *fucihi*[33]) 'Buddha'. However, judging,

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[32]In general, any search for lexical borrowings is complicated by the nature of Manchu-Mongolian language contacts which involved not only interactions of spoken varieties, but also the sphere of written translations between Manchu and Mongol, which were often done by native speakers of Mongolic varieties. There exist many bilingual texts written in the form of interlinear translations. The Manchu parts of these bilingual texts usually contain a greater portion of Mongol(ic) loanwords than other types of Manchu texts, which are mostly synonyms to original Manchu words or Chinese loanwords. Once used in written documents, these Mongolic loanwords also entered Manchu dictionaries, even though their actual use may have been limited.

[33]The Manchu word *fucihi* has been interpreted as a borrowing from Korean by Vovin (2006: 259).

among others, from the recording of recitation of a Buddhist text by a Sibe monk (Zhuangsheng 2018), the local Oirat Mongol tradition of Mongolian recitation preserved among the Öölöds of Ili should also be considered as a possible source of the use of Mongolian in Sibe Buddhist tradition.

5.2 Shamanic terminology

Modern Sibe in Xinjiang consider shamanic traditions to be their 'original' religion. In the construction of their ethnic culture, 'shamanism' is assigned key importance. Several influential publications give detailed and normative descriptions of the pantheon, system of rituals and main types of ritualists considered to belong to the concept of 'shamanism'.[34] The descriptions were accomplished based on fieldwork among family members of shamans, accounts of eyewitnesses and texts written by shamans since the 19th century. These texts, intended as handbooks for shaman disciples and containing mostly invocation texts with few comments and explanations, are the main source of Mongolic loanwords which seem to be found exclusively in Sibe (cf. Zikmundová 2013).

The so far indentified Mongolic loanwords in Sibe shamanic texts are the following:

elci, a ritualist specialized in healing children's diseases, in particular smallpox < Mongolian *elc(in)* 'messenger', in Khorchin ritual practice also a type of ritualist

deoci, a ritualist specialized in exorcist rituals connected to the 'ghost disease'[35] < Khorchin *duuci* a person assigned a role of 'singer' in healing the 'ghost disease'

deole-, to perform the exorcist ritual in healing the 'ghost disease' < Khorchin *duul-* 'to sing'; to assist the exorcist ritual by singing

kuri, a ritual implement in the shape of a building used during the exorcist ritual < Mongol *xüree* 'circle, temple, monastery'

altan kuri, refrain of a song used during the exorcist ritual in healing the 'ghost disease' < Khorchin *altan xüree* 'golden circle/golden temple', name of a ritual procedure used during the exorcist ritual in healing the 'ghost disease'.

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[34]For descriptions of Sibe shamanic traditions see e.g. Sárközi & Somfai-Kara (2013) or Harris (2005).

[35]'ghost disease', Sibe *yivaxen niungku*, Khorchin *ad uvšin*, is a term for a specific type of spirit possession occuring mainly in women (cf. Zikmundová 2013)

All but one of the above Mongolic loanwords pertain to a single type of shamanic ritual – healing a certain type of spirit possession. The ritual was apparently borrowed by Sibe from the eastern Mongols, most probably Khorchins, where it existed in several elaborated variants until the Cultural Revolution. The original Mongolian ritual, known as *andai*, is unique for Khorchins and their immediate neighbors. The Sibe version of the ritual is simplified and shortened.

6 Conclusions: The "reality" of Sibe-Khorchin contacts

For reasons that may be called political, the ethnic history of the Sibe – speakers of a Manchu (Tungusic-Jurchenic) variety – has been a much discussed topic in China. As part of the official narrative, the pre-Qing contacts of the Sibe with Khorchin Mongols are being mentioned – a fact recorded by a few brief notes in historical documents. The Sibe are said to have been vassals of the Khorchins before the 1690s. After 1764, when the ancestors of modern Sibe speakers were moved to Xinjiang, no more contacts between Sibe and Khorchin Mongols took place. The Sibe-Khorchin contact narrative has been used, together with popular views with some background in oral tradition, to argue for a non-Jurchen, possibly Mongol-related origin of the Sibe. It has gradually become part of the self-consciousness of modern Xinjiang Sibe. The question has also triggered academic discussion on this topic.

In this paper I tried to select shared features in Sibe and Khorchin which are not, or marginally, documented in other varieties of spoken Manchu and therefore may testify to a specific contact history. Since no diachronic data for either Sibe or Khorchin are available, modern spoken Sibe and modern Khorchin materials were used. Additionally, lexical data from a written source are mentioned that testify to certain cultural exchange between the Sibe and the Khorchins.

The collected features mostly apply to morphology and one of them, the emphatic prefix *me-* is typical for spoken Sibe and eastern Mongolian. The latter, together with the shared shamanic terminology, and possibly also the shared phonetic features, seem to testify to a direct and lively linguistic and cultural exchange between the Sibe and the ancestors of modern Khorchin. The rest of the mentioned analogies have less clear implications: Being more or less typical for all modern Mongolic languages, they may be features of a linguistic area where multiple Mongolic and Tungusic languages influenced each other.

A short overview of historical facts with connection to the linguistic situation in the Qiqihar region during the Ming is given as a broader context of the documented Sibe-Khorchin contacts. These facts show that the main contact language

of the Sibe was not the language of the Khorchins which arrived from the Mongolian plateau in the mid-16th century but rather the language of the Ujiyed. The Ujiyed were a Mongolized Tungusic group whose presence in the Qiqihar region dates back to early Ming, or even Yuan, times. Together with two other groups – the Uriangkhan and the Ongniud – these local Mongols may have already spoken a disctinct dialect with "eastern" features when the Khorchins arrived and merged with them. The described shared morphological features and lexical borrowings, however scanty, seem to point towards a Mongolic influence that was stronger and longer-lasting on the ancestor of modern Sibe than on the ancestors of the other spoken Manchu varieties. In this context, another important and rather early Mongolic contact language of the Sibe – the Daur – needs to be examined in the future.

Another question posed in this paper is the significance of the shared linguistic features in imagining Sibe history. The areas around modern Qiqihar and Fuyu, where the Sibe lived, were bordering the homeland of the Hūlun Jurchens who are thought to have spoken a Mongolic-influenced Jurchen variety during the Ming period. The whole area was controlled by the Mongolized Ujiyed and the Hūlun Jurchens were even referred to as Mongols by other Jurchens. This suggests an image of the Sibe as linguistic representatives of this broader Mongolic-influenced Jurchenic community.

The linguistic developments of Sibe during the Qing period fall out of the scope of this paper. It is, however, important to mention that the period of linguistic diversity during the Ming was effectively ended by the subsequent standardization processes, which, for the Sibe, begun with their incorporation into the Manchu Eight Banners in 1692. The latter affected both Mongolic and Jurchenic languages. Introduction of Buddhism to the Khorchin Mongols, accompanied by spread of literature in general, brought about literacy in Classical Mongolian. For the Jurchenic part, standardization efforts of the Manchu ruling strata is a generally acknowledged fact. Both Literary Mongolian and Classical Manchu enjoyed high prestige. Spread of Classical Mongolian may be one of the factors that brought Khorchin vocabulary and grammar closer to the central Mongolian varieties. The local Jurchenic varieties probably became extinct after the incorporation of the speakers, including Sibe, into the Manchu military units where their spoken varieties were gradually replaced by forms of Standard Manchu.

The question remains whether the described features of Mongolic origin in Sibe may be considered remains of traditional diglossia in a standard Manchu language and an older, Mongolic-influenced Jurchenic variety. Information received from Sibe speakers (e.g. Guo Qing, p.c. August 2009) suggests that in the colloquial language of some elderly speakers Mongolic synonyms to Manchu

lexemes are frequent and some of them seem not to be found in Manchu dictionaries, such as the verb *amere-* 'to rest, to sleep' (cf. written Manchu *erge-*, Sibe *erxe-*, Khorchin *amer-* 'to rest, to sleep'). It is worth mentioning that most of the studies of Sibe were conducted on the basis of material gathered from speakers with high level of literacy in Manchu. Any research of the reported non-standard features has not yet been conducted.

Abbreviations

1SG	1st person singular	LIM	limitation marker
1PL	1st person plural	NEG	negation
2SG	2nd person singular	NMLZ	nominalizer
2PL	2nd person plural	NPST	non-past tense
3SG	3rd person singular	POSS	possessive clitic
3PL	3rd person plural	PN	place name
COM	comitative	PFV	perfective
COP	copula	PRIV	privative
CVB	converb	PROG	progressive
DAT.LOC	dative-locative	PURP	purposive
DEF	definite marker	PST	past tense
EMPH	marker of emphasis	PTC	particle
FOC	focus marker	PTCP	participle
GEN	genitive	TOP	topic marker
IPFV	imperfective	Q	question marker

Acknowledgements

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