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Introduction to the Mongolian Kinship Terminology in Inner Mongolia On the Example of Qarčın-Tümed Dialect

Introduction to the Mongolian Kinship System

Kinship is one of the main organizing principles of a society,¹ and is one of the most basic social institutions, one which establishes relationships between individuals and groups. People in all societies are bound together by various bonds. The most basic bonds are those based on marriage and reproduction. Kinship refers to these bonds, as well as all relationships resulting from them. Thus, the institution of kinship refers to a set of relationships and relatives formed thereof, based on either the consanguineal or affinal.² Consanguineal kinship refers to the relationships based on blood, for example, relationships between parents and children and those between siblings, which are the most basic and universal kinship. Affinal kinship refers to the relationships formed on the basis of marriage.

Detailed research on the Mongolian kinship system in western countries started with the epochal works of B. Ya. Vladimirtsov. According to him, the Mongolian kin: *oboy* was “the typical union of relatives by blood, based on the principle of agnate and exogamy, the patriarchal unit, with a few features of the former cognate relationships, the union tied by the institute of revenge and a special cult.”³ Later on, L. Karder investigated the topic through anthropological studies in his work *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads*.⁴

Research on Mongolian kinship terms started in the late 20th century in China. The research during this period includes amongst others ĵaran-nige’s *Mongolian*

¹ Farber 1981: 250.

² Dousset: 2011.

³ Владимирцов Б.Я. 2002: 354.

⁴ Karder 1963.

Kinship Terms written in 1981,⁵ Temürbayan's *Mongolian Kinship Terminology* (1984),⁶ Namsirai's *Research on Mongolian Kinship terms* (1987).⁷ However, only the terms of Mongolian kinship are briefly described and introduced in these articles.

Since the 1990s, there has been more research on Mongolian kinship terms, which has expanded on these descriptions of Mongolian kinship terms and their standardization. It has extended the discussion to the etymology of kinship terms, such as in Qasbayatur's (1994) "The Origin of Mongolian kinship terms 'Son-in-law', 'Daughter-in-law', 'Sister-in-law'"⁸ and "The Origin of Mongolian kinship terms 'Mother', 'Sister', 'Wife' and 'Daughter.'"⁹ The relationship between kinship terms and national culture, and the regional differences of kinship terms was researched by Fan Lijun *A Study of Features of Kinship Terminology in Mongolian Dialect in Inner Mongolia*, written in 2004. Wenying explored Mongolian cultural relics by the analysis of contemporary Mongolian kinship terms.¹⁰ Furthermore, there is research that mainly discusses the Mongolian marriage system, such as Tana's work, "Research on the Mongolian Marriage Form in *The Secret History of the Mongols*",¹¹ which retrieves and researches the kinship terms of Middle Mongolian. Qasungerel analyzed the contemporary Mongolian kinship terminology from the perspective of semantics in 2011.

Compared to the kinship terminology of some other languages, as for example Hungarian or English (vernacular terms in today use),¹² contemporary Mongolian kinship terminology is more complex and detailed. The Mongolian terminology has a corresponding term for almost every family member, differentiating between the maternal and paternal family relationships. For example, the grandfather on the maternal side has a different name from the grandfather on the paternal side; *Ebüge* means grandfather on the paternal side in the contemporary Mongolian, and *nayaču ebüge* means grandfather on the maternal side in the contemporary Mongolian. This contrasts with Hungarian or English (vernacular terms in today use) where the same term is used for both, e. g. *nagyapa* refers to both the maternal and paternal grandfather in Hungarian (vernacular terms in today use) as does *grandfather* in English (vernacular terms in use today). Like any other society, the Mongolian kinship system is classified

⁵ Jaran-nige 1981.

⁶ Temürbayan 1984.

⁷ Namsirai 1987.

⁸ Qasbayatur 1994.

⁹ Qasbayatur 1995.

¹⁰ Wenying 2003.

¹¹ Tana 1992.

¹² Hidasi 2014: 43–48.

as consanguineal and affinal. However, consanguineal kinship is further divided into collateral consanguinity and lineal consanguinity. Lineal consanguinity is the relation in a direct line – such as between parent, child, and grandparent. Furthermore, it is also determined either upwardly – as in the case of son, father, grandfather – or downwardly – as in son, grandson, great-grandson. Collateral consanguinity is a more remote relationship describing people who are related by a common ancestor but do not descend from each other – such as cousins who have the same grandparents.

Comparison of the Kinship Terminology of Middle Mongolian and Contemporary Mongolian

By the 13th century, Mongolian kinship terminology had already formed. *The Secret History of The Mongols*, the earliest and most important literary monument of the Mongol-speaking people, is the native account of the life and deeds of Chinggis Khan and his successors. Linguistically, it is the richest source of pre-classical Mongolian and Middle Mongolian.¹³

Indeed, *The Secret History of The Mongols* is regarded internationally a work of classic literature. It describes the formation, development, and growth of the Mongol empire, and the earliest existing historical literature of the Mongols. Both the marriage system and the kinship terminology have been recorded in this source. *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* is a work of literature and history, produced in the Mongol Ilkhanate in three volumes, written by Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlullāh Hamadānī at the beginning of the 14th century. It describes many cultures and major events in world history from China to Europe. Mongolian history, the life of the Mongols, wars, family and marriages were also recorded. The *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* consists of four main sections in which *Ta'rīkh-i Ghazānī* is the most extensive part, and which includes the history, genealogies and legends of Mongolian and Turkish tribes.¹⁴

According to these records, the Mongolian marriage system was polygamous.¹⁵ Men could have multiple wives. For example, the father of Chinggis Khan had many wives from different tribes.¹⁶ Chinggis Khan himself and his brothers also

¹³ As a spoken medium, the language of the historical Mongols is known as Middle Mongol, or Middle Mongolian. Middle Mongol is documented in a variety of written sources using several different systems of script (Janhunen 2012: 4). Written Mongol has ever since remained in use as the principal literary language of the Mongols. Evolving successively through stages termed Pre-Classical (13th to 15th centuries), Classical (17th to 19th centuries) and Post-Classical (20th century).

¹⁴ Cf. Aigle 2014.

¹⁵ Yu Dajun – Zhou Jianqi 1997: 6.

¹⁶ Yu Dajun – Zhou Jianqi 1997: 64.

had more than one wife.¹⁷ Additionally, there was also the takeover-marriage: if the father died then his son could marry his wife, providing she was not his biological mother.¹⁸ If a man had brothers and one of the brothers died, then he could marry his wife as well.¹⁹ Due to these circumstances it was difficult to form a consistent kinship terminology.

Through historical developments, the marriage system has changed from being polygamous to being monogamous and has led to changes in kinship terminology over time. Regarding the study of the system of kinship in the Middle Mongolian period, Pavel Rykin's (2011) work is of the utmost importance.

Pavel examined thoroughly the use of kinship and affinity terms in Middle Mongolian, basing his research on all Middle Mongolian monumental works which were accessible to him, such as *Beilu kao*, *Huayi Yiyu* and so on, as the sources of linguistic material. Hence, the kinship and affinity terms appearing in the monumental works were selected and categorised according to their morphological structures: 'elementary' (independent words not dissolved into meaningful components), 'complex' (kinship or affinity terms modified by other kinship or affinity terms in the form of a stem), 'composite' (stems in combination with any determinative which it is not by itself a kinship or affinity term) and 'descriptive' (formed by the combination of several elementary or composite terms where the modifying element is expressed by the genitive). Simultaneously, he indicated the most extensive category is composed by the elementary terms, which is consistent with the following research conclusions.

In order to compare the historical changes of the Mongolian kinship terminology, twenty words for kinship terminology that are found in *The Secret History of The Mongols* and *Huayi Yiyu*,²⁰ are compared with the contemporary Mongolian (20th century) kinship terminology. I prepared tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the basis of the sources mentioned above. In the table 1, letters F, M, B, Z, S, D represent father, mother, brother, sister, son, and daughter. Symbols (+) and (–) represents elder and younger. The letter L represents *Lineal consanguinity kinship*. As shown in table 1, 2, 3, 4.

¹⁷ Yu Dajun – Zhou Jianqi 1997: 64, 67, 70, 71, 73, 85.

¹⁸ Yu Dajun – Zhou Jianqi 1997: 268–269.

¹⁹ Sárközi 2006.

²⁰ *Huayi yiyu* (1407) is a general term from the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911) period as a designation of multi-language dictionaries for officials confronted with one or more languages of the multi-ethnic empire and with foreign languages.

F father	Z sister	(+) elder
M mother	S son	(-) younger
B brother	D daughter	L Lineal consanguinity

Table 1. Explanation of abbreviations

Consanguineal Kinship		
English Kinship Terminology	Contemporary Mongolian Kinship Terminology	Middle Mongolian Kinship Terminology
Great great grandfather (FL)	ᠠᠭᠤᠯᠠᠨᠠ ᠭᠤᠯᠠᠨᠠ ᠪᠦᠭᠡ qulunča ebüge	ᠪᠣᠷᠠᠢ borqai
Great great grandmother (FL)	ᠠᠭᠤᠯᠠᠨᠠ ᠭᠤᠯᠠᠨᠠ ᠡᠮᠡᠭᠡ emege	-
Great grandfather (FL)	ᠡᠯᠦᠨᠴᠡ ᠪᠦᠭᠡ elünče ebüge	ᠡᠯᠦᠨᠴᠡ elünče
Great grandmother (FL)	ᠡᠯᠦᠨᠴᠡ ᠡᠮᠡᠭᠡ emege	-
Grandfather (FL)	ᠪᠦᠭᠡ ebüge	ᠪᠦᠭᠡ ebüge
Grandmother (FL)	ᠡᠮᠡᠭᠡ emege	ᠡᠮᠡᠭᠡ emege
Father (L)	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ / ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ečige/ abu	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ečige
Uncle (F) (+)	(ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ (ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ) ih) abay-a	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ebin
Uncle (F) (-)	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ abay-a	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ abay-a
Aunt (F) (+)	(ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ᠡᠭᠢ) abay-a ejī	-
Aunt (F) (-)	ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ ᠡᠭᠢᠭᠡ abay-a ejī	-
Grandfather (ML)	ᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠠ ᠪᠦᠭᠡ nayaču ebüge	-
Grandmother (ML)	ᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠠ ᠡᠮᠡᠭᠡ nayaču emege	-
Mother (L)	ᠡᠭᠢ ejī	ᠡᠭᠢ eke
Uncle (M) (+, -)	ᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠠ nayaču	ᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠠ nayaču
Aunt (M) (+, -)	ᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠠ ᠡᠭᠢ nayaču ejī	-

Table 2. Comparison of Consanguineal Kinship Terminology

Mongolian kinship terminology has changed considerably not only in number but also concerning the word structure over time. It can be seen from the tables that all of the kinship terms in the Middle Mongolian consist of one single word, and some of these words are still maintained in contemporary Mongolian, while some have changed their meanings or are used for the opposite gender and some are no longer used. For instance:

1. Terms existing both in Middle Mongolian and contemporary Mongolian with the same meanings are *elünče* ‘great grandfather’, *ebüge* ‘grandfather’, *emege* ‘grandmother’, *ečige* ‘father’, *abay-a* ‘uncle’, *nayaču* ‘maternal kinship term’, *aq-a* ‘elder brother’, *degüü* ‘younger brother’, *egeči* ‘elder sister’, *ökin* ‘daughter’, and *jige* ‘nephew’.

Consanguineal Kinship		
English Kinship Terminology	Contemporary Mongolian Kinship Terminology	Middle Mongolian Kinship Terminology
Brother (+)	ᠠᠶᠢ aq-a	ᠠᠶᠢ aq-a
Brother (-)	ᠠᠳᠢ degüü	ᠠᠳᠢ degüü
Sister (+)	ᠡᠭᠡᠴᠢ egeči	ᠡᠭᠡᠴᠢ egeči
Sister (-)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠥᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ökin degüü	ᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ dūi
Cousin (FBS)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠠᠶᠢ/ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ üyelün aq-a/degüü	-
Cousin (FBD)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠠᠶᠢ/ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ üyelün egeči/ökin degüü	-
Cousin (FZS) (M(B/Z) S)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠠᠶᠢ/ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ бүлᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ bülü aq-a/degüü	-
Cousin (M(B/Z) D)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠠᠶᠢ/ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ бүлᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ egeči/ökin degüü	-
Son (L)	ᠬᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ kүү	ᠬᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ kübegün ᠠᠶᠢᠨᠠᠭᠤᠨ nuγun ᠠᠶᠢᠨ keöken
Daughter (L)	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ökin	ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ökin
Nephew (BS)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ači kүү	-
Niece (BD)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ači ökin	-
Nephew (ZS)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ jige kүү	ᠠᠶᠢ jige
Niece (ZD)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ jige ökin	-
Grandson (SSL)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ombol kүү	ᠠᠶᠢ ači
Granddaughter (SDL)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ ombol ökin	-
Grandson (DSL)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ jige ombol kүү	-
Granddaughter (DDL)	ᠠᠶᠢ ᠡᠭᠡᠳᠡ jige ombol ökin	-

Table 3. Comparison of Consanguineal Kinship Terminology

2. Terms existing in Middle Mongolian, but replaced in contemporary Mongolian are, for example, the word *köken* used to refer to son in the Middle Mongolian, but in contemporary Mongolian the term is used to refer to a girl or a daughter. The word *düi* once used to refer to a younger sister is today replaced by *ökin degüü*. *Ači* used to refer to grandchildren but today refers to children of brothers and the term referring to the son changed from *köbegün* and *nuγun* to the *kүү*.

3. Terms that exist in both Middle Mongolian and contemporary Mongolian but have different meanings. For example, there were different terms to differentiate elder uncle and younger uncle in Middle Mongolian, but term *ebin* which refers to elder uncle has not been passed down, only *abay-a* remains in contemporary Mongolian, which refers to both elder and younger uncle now.

Affinal Kinship		
English Kinship Terminology	Contemporary Mongolian Kinship Terminology	Middle Mongolian Kinship Terminology
Wife of uncle (F)	ᠠᠪᠠᠭ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ abay-a bergen ehe	-
Husband of aunt (F)	ᠠᠪᠠᠭ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ abay-a kürgen abu	-
Wife of uncle (M)	ᠠᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠤ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ nayaču bergen ehe	-
Husband of aunt (M)	ᠠᠨᠠᠶᠠᠴᠤ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ nayaču kürgen abu	-
Wife of brother (+)	ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ bergen	-
Wife of brother (-)	ᠠᠳᠦᠭᠦᠳᠤ ᠪᠦᠷᠢ degüü beri	-
Husband of sister (+)	ᠠᠬᠤ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ aq-a	-
Husband of sister (-)	ᠠᠳᠦᠭᠦᠳᠤ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ degüü kürgen	-
Father-in-law	ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ qadam abu	-
Mother-in-law	ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠡᠵᠢ qadam eji	-
Brother (+) in law	ᠠᠬᠤ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ qadam aq-a	-
Brother (-) in law	ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ qadam degüü	-
Sister (+) in law	ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠡᠭᠡᠴᠢ qadam egeči	-
Sister (-) in law	ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠤᠨ ᠠᠳᠠᠮ ᠤᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ qadam ökin degüü	-
Son-in-law	ᠠᠨ ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ kürgen	-
Daughter-in-law	ᠪᠦᠷᠢᠭᠡᠬᠡ beri	-

Table 4. Comparison of Affinal Kinship Terminology

Kinship Terminology in a Contemporary Mongolian Dialect – Qarčīn-Tümed Case Study

The Inner Mongolian dialect²¹ is composed of multiple sub-dialects and there are great phonetic differences between these dialects.²² Some are mixed with Chinese loanwords due to their geographical location and historical background. This article focuses on the *Qarčīn-Tümed* dialect as an example to reveal the differences of kinship terminology in Mongolian dialects.

The *Qarčīn-Tümed* dialect belongs to the eastern dialects of Inner Mongolia.²³ The eastern dialects include *Qorčīn* and *Qarčīn-Tümed* dialects.²⁴ The characteristic feature of the *Qarčīn-Tümed* dialect is the vowel **u* of the initial syllable, which has become in certain positions a diphthong *ua* or *wa*, and the

²¹ Mongolian in China can be divided into three dialects: Inner Mongolian dialect, Baryu Buryat dialect, Oirat dialect. Cf. Činggeltei. 1991: 1

²² Poppe 1965: 23.

²³ Тодаева В. Х. 1985.

²⁴ Sečinbayatur 2005: 354

Paternal side	FF	FM	F	FB+	F(B+) W	FB-	FB (-) W	FZ (+) (-)	FZ (+) (-) H
Standard (Colloquialism)	öböḡ	emeg	ečig/aab	abay	abay bergen ek	abay	abay bergen ek	abay eji	abay kürgen aab
Dialect	yeye	nænæ	abaa	daya	damöm	šü šü	sinse	gügü	guya aab
Chi. pinyin	ye ye	nai nai	ba ba	da ye	da ma	shu shu	shen zi	gu gu	gu fu
Chi. hanzi	爷爷	奶奶	爸爸	大爷	大妈	叔叔	婶子	姑姑	姑父
Maternal side	MF	MM	M	MB (+) (-)	MB (+) (-) W	MZ+	MZ (+) H	MZ (-)	MZ (-) H
Standard (Colloquialism)	nayač öböḡ	nayač emeg	ek	nayač	nayač bergen ek	nayač eji	nayač kürgen aab	nayač eji	nayač kürgen aab
Dialect	naya yeye	naya nænæ	mömö	jüjü	jümü	naya eeyi	naya aab	naya jej	naya aab
Chi. pinyin	wai gong	wai po	ma ma	jiu jiu	jiu ma	yi ma	yi fu	xiao yi	xiao yi fu
Chi. hanzi	外公	外婆	妈妈	舅舅	舅妈	姨妈	姨夫	小姨	小姨夫
Ego	B+	B (+) W	B-	B (-) W	Z+	Z (+) H	Z-	Z (-) H	-
Standard (Colloquialism)	ah	bergen	düü	düü ber	egeč	kürgen ah	ökin düü	düü kürgen	-
Dialect	göög/aja/aje	bergen	anggaa/ düü	düü ber	jeje	kürgen ah	ikin düü	düü kürgen	-
Chi. pinyin	ge ge	sao zi	di di	di xi	jie jie	jie fu	mei mei	mei fu	-
Chi. hanzi	哥哥	嫂子	弟弟	弟媳	姐姐	姐夫	妹妹	妹夫	-
Affinal kin	S	SW	D	DH	SS	SD	DS	DD	-
Standard (Colloquialism)	küü	küü ber	ökin	ökin kürgen	ombol küü	ombol ökin	jee ombol küü	jee ombol ökin	-
Dialect	küü	ber	ikin	kürgen	ombol küü	ombol ikin	jee ombol küü	jee ombol ikin	-
Chi. pinyin	er zi	er xi	nv er	nv xu	sun zi	sun nv	wai sun	wai sun nv	-
Chi. hanzi	儿子	儿媳	女儿	女婿	孙子	孙女	外孙	外孙女	-

Table 5. Comparison of Contemporary Written Mongolian and Kūriy-e Sub-dialect (Wuyingga 2020)

group *ayu, which is pronounced ö, while *uyu has become ü.²⁵ It is also representative of a dialect most affected by Chinese. In the early studies, some scholars divided the *Qarčın-Tümed* dialect into *Qarčın* sub-dialect and *Tümed* sub-dialect. Later, some scholars divided it into *Qarčın* sub-dialect, *Mongγoljin*

²⁵ Poppe 1965: 21.

sub-dialect and *Küriy-e* sub-dialect.²⁶ In order to show the differences between kinship terminology in Mongolian dialect and contemporary written Mongolian, the following comparison was made. *Küriy-e* sub-dialect is selected for comparison. As shown in Table 5.

As mentioned above, letter F refers to father, here FF refers to the father of father, FM refers to the mother of father (which are the paternal grandparents), H refers to Husband, W refers to wife, SW means wife of son, DH means husband of daughter. Due to the geographical location and historical background, the Mongolians living in this area have always had linguistic and cultural contact with the Han populations and Manchus. As such, the appearance of Chinese loanwords in their dialects is an inevitable result.

As we can see from the table, some Chinese loanwords appeared in the kinship terminology of *Küriy-e* sub-dialect; these terms were borrowed and used in their dialect after Mongolization, such terms as *yeye* (vernacular terms) 爷爷 ‘grandfather on paternal side’, *nainai* (vernacular terms) 奶奶 ‘grandmother on paternal side’, *daya* (vernacular terms) 大爷 ‘elder brother of father’, *gügü* (vernacular terms) 姑姑 ‘elder sister of father’, *göög* (vernacular terms) 哥哥 ‘elder brother’ and so on. Some kinship terminologies are the combinations of Chinese and Mongolian words, such as *damöm* (vernacular terms) ‘wife of elder uncle’, *yuya abu* (vernacular terms) ‘husband of aunt’, *naγ-a nainai* (vernacular terms) ‘grandmother on maternal side’, *naγ-a yeye* (vernacular terms) ‘grandfather on maternal side’ and so on. The Chinese word *Da* 大 means big and elder; the *da* being borrowed from the Chinese and Mongolian word *mömö* (vernacular terms) ‘mother’ has been added to refer to wife of elder uncle. Similarly, *guye* 姑爷 borrowed from Chinese and pronounced as *yuya* and then Mongolian word *abu* ‘father’ has been added to refer to husband of aunt. It is the same with *naγ-a nainai* and *naγ-a yeye*.

The combination of Chinese loanwords and Mongolian words as kinship terminology distinguishes the *Küriy-e* subdialect from other dialects. This phenomenon not only appears in the kinship terms, but also in their daily life. Through field investigations I have found that, since people speaking in *Küriy-e* sub-dialect have in the majority of cases been neighbours with the Han populations, they have been in contact with Han cultures earlier, and the impact of Han cultures has often led to the phenomenon of mixed language in daily conversations. They borrowed Chinese words and used them after mongolization.²⁷

²⁶ Sodubayatur 1999: 99

²⁷ E. g. *dianhua da-y-a* (*dian hua* 电话 is telephone in Chinese, *da* 打 means call in Chinese, *y-a* is a Mongolian suffix refers to future time) means “I will call you”.

Conclusion

Language is not only a communication tool, but also a carrier of culture. Local characteristics in culture are largely reflected and inherited by language. Kinship terminology is a language carrier that reflects human relation and is a primitive vocabulary of humans and belongs to basic terminology. By comparing the terminology of Mongolian kinship of the Middle Mongolian with contemporary Mongolian, most of the terms are still used now and they are all composed of one single word. With the development of society, intercultural interactions are becoming more and more influential, therefore, some terms with a compound-word structure appeared. Mongols living in Eastern Inner Mongolia are neighbours with the Han populations since the establishment of the Qing dynasty (1636–1912) and the fact that some Chinese loanwords appear in their dialects is inevitable.

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Fieldwork

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