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Dukhan, a Turkic Variety of Northern Mongolia

Description and Analysis

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Contents

Acknowledgments 1

1 Introduction 3
1.0 The present research 3
1.1 Previous studies 3
1.2 Fieldwork and data base 3
1.3 Methodology and theoretical background 5
1.4 Transcriptions 6
1.5 Abbreviations and other conventions 9
1.6 Organization of the study 10

2 The speakers of Dukhan 13
2.0 Introduction 13
2.1 The Dukhan people 13
2.2 Historical background 17
2.3 Naming of the Dukhan people 20

3 The Dukhan language 23
3.0 Introduction 23
3.1 The position of Dukhan within the Turkic language family 23
3.2 The Sayan language complex 23
3.2.1 Standard Tuvan 24
3.2.2 Tuvan dialects 25
3.2.3 Tofan 25
3.2.4 The Soyot variety of Buriatia 26
3.2.5 Other Sayan varieties in Mongolia 26
3.2.6 Sayan Turkic varieties in China 27
3.2.7 Steppe Sayan Turkic vs. Taiga Sayan Turkic 28
3.3 Linguistic features of Dukhan 28
3.3.1 Typological profile 28
3.3.2 Dukhan classificatory features 29
3.4 Language status and use 31

4 The sound system: phonemes and allophones 33
4.0 Introduction 33
4.1 The vowel system 33
4.1.1 The low unrounded vowel phonemes 34
4.1.1.1 The phoneme /a/ 34
4.1.1.2 The phoneme /aa/ 34
4.1.1.3 The phoneme /e/ 35
4.1.1.4 The phoneme /ee/ 35

4.1.2 The low rounded vowel phonemes ... 36
4.1.2.1 The phoneme /o/ ... 36
4.1.2.2 The phoneme /oo/ ... 36
4.1.2.3 The phoneme /ö/ ... 36
4.1.2.4 The phoneme /öö/ ... 37
4.1.3 The high unrounded vowel phonemes ... 37
4.1.3.1 The phoneme /i/ ... 37
4.1.3.2 The phoneme /ii/ ... 38
4.1.3.3 The phoneme /ï/ ... 38
4.1.3.4 The phoneme /ïï/ ... 38
4.1.4 The high rounded vowel phonemes ... 38
4.1.4.1 The phoneme /u/ ... 38
4.1.4.2 The phoneme /uu/ ... 39
4.1.4.3 The phoneme /ü/ ... 39
4.1.4.4 The phoneme /üü/ ... 39
4.1.5 Diphthongs ... 39
4.1.6 Semi-long vowels ... 40
4.1.7 Vowel phonemic inventory ... 40
4.2 The consonant system ... 41
4.2.1 Labials ... 41
4.2.1.1 The phoneme /p/ ... 41
4.2.1.2 The phoneme /b/ ... 42
4.2.1.3 The phoneme /m/ ... 42
4.2.2 Dentals/alveolars ... 42
4.2.2.1 The phoneme /t/ ... 42
4.2.2.2 The phoneme /d/ ... 43
4.2.2.3 The phoneme /n/ ... 43
4.2.2.4 The phoneme /s/ ... 44
4.2.2.5 The phoneme /z/ ... 44
4.2.2.6 The phoneme /l/ ... 44
4.2.2.7 The phoneme /r/ ... 45
4.2.3 Postalveolar/palatals ... 45
4.2.3.1 The phoneme /ǰ/ ... 45
4.2.3.2 The phoneme /š/ ... 46
4.2.3.3 The phoneme /ž/ ... 46
4.2.3.4 The phoneme /y/ ... 46
4.2.3.5 The phoneme /č/ ... 47
4.2.4 Velar/postvelars ... 47
4.2.4.1 The phoneme /k/ ... 47
4.2.4.2 The phoneme /g/ ... 48
4.2.4.3 The phoneme /ŋ/ ... 49
4.2.5 Glottals ... 49
4.2.5.1 The phoneme /h/ ... 49
4.2.6 Consonant phoneme inventory ... 50
4.3 Principles of the broad transcription ... 51

5 Phonotactics and morphophonology 55
5.0 Introduction 55
5.1 Syllable types 55
5.2 Phonotactic rules 56
5.3 Morphophonological variations 56
5.3.1 Morphophonological variations in stems 56
5.3.1.1 Morphophonology of strong consonants 57
5.3.1.2 Morphophonology of weak consonants 58
5.3.2 Vowel loss 60
5.3.3 Distant assimilations 60
5.3.4 Morphophonological variations in suffixes 61
5.3.4.1 Consonantal assimilations 61
5.3.4.2 Suffix vocalization 65
5.4 Sandhi phenomena 66
5.5 Metathesis 67

6 Diachronic phonology 69
6.0 Introduction 69
6.1 Proto-Turkic 69
6.2 Vowels 70
6.2.1 Short vowels 70
6.2.1.1 The sound alternation *a* ~ *ï* 71
6.2.1.2 Fronting of /a/ 71
6.2.2 Long vowels and diphthongs 71
6.2.3 Nasalized vowels 72
6.3 Turkic consonantal segments 72
6.3.1 Fortis /p/ 73
6.3.2 Lenis /b/ 73
6.3.3 Nasal /m/ 73
6.3.4 Fortis /t/ 73
6.3.5 Lenis /d/ 74
6.3.6 Lenis /n/ 74
6.3.7 Fortis /s/ 74
6.3.8 Lenis /z/ 75
6.3.9 Liquids /r/ and /l/ 75
6.3.10 Lenis /j/ 75
6.3.11 Fortis /š/ 75
6.3.12 Lenis /ž/ 76
6.3.13 The glide /y/ 76
6.3.14 The nasalized palatal glide *ỹ* 76
6.3.15 The palatal nasal sound *ń* 78
6.3.16 Fortis /k/ 78
6.3.17 Lenis /g/ 79
6.3.18 The nasal velar /ŋ/ 79
6.3.19 The pharyngeal sound *ħ* 79

6.3.20 The glottal phoneme /h/ ... 80
6.3.21 Long consonants ... 80
6.4 The fortis vs. lenis opposition ... 82
6.5 Material copying ... 84

7 Word classes and derivation ... 89
7.0 Word classes ... 89
7.1 The word class ‘noun’ ... 89
7.1.1 Noun formation ... 90
7.1.1.1 Denominal nominal derivation ... 90
7.1.1.2 Deverbal nominal derivation ... 91
7.1.1.3 Nominal combination ... 92
7.1.2 Pronouns ... 93
7.2 The word class ‘adjective’ ... 94
7.2.1 Adjective formation ... 95
7.2.1.1 Denominal adjectival formation ... 95
7.2.1.2 Deverbal adjectival formation ... 96
7.2.1.3 Detensifying suffixes ... 97
7.2.1.4 Intensification ... 97
7.2.1.5 Privative adjectives ... 97
7.2.1.6 Quantifiers and determiners ... 98
7.3 The word class ‘verb’ ... 100
7.3.1 Denominal verbal suffixes ... 100
7.3.2 Pronominal verbs ... 101
7.3.3 Deadjectival verbal suffixes ... 102
7.3.4 Synthetic deverbal verbal derivation ... 102
7.3.4.1 Iteratives, similatives and desideratives ... 102
7.3.4.2 Voice suffixes ... 103
7.3.5 Deverbal analytical derivation ... 104
7.3.5.1 Actional modificators ... 105
7.3.5.2 Other auxiliary constructions ... 114

8 Inflectional morphology ... 121
8.0 Introduction ... 121
8.1 Nominal inflectional suffixes ... 121
8.1.1 Plural suffix ... 121
8.1.2 Possessive suffixes ... 121
8.1.3 Case suffixes ... 122
8.1.3.1 Inflection of pronouns ... 128
8.2 Verbal inflectional suffixes ... 133
8.2.1 Negation of verbal stems ... 133
8.2.2 Finite and non finite verbal inflectional suffixes ... 133
8.2.2.1 Inflectional suffixes with exclusively finite function ... 133
8.2.2.2 Inflectional suffixes with finite and non-finite function ... 133
8.2.2.3 Inflectional suffixes with exclusively non-finite function ... 139

9 Aspect, mood and tense ... 145
9.0 Introduction ... 145
9.1 Aspect and tense ... 145
9.1.1 Intraterminals ... 146
9.1.1.1 The marker *-Vr* ... 146
9.1.1.2 The marker *-Bəšaan* ... 149
9.1.1.3 The markers *-(Ĭ)p-durə*, *-(Ĭ)p-ǰoorə*, *-(Ĭ)p-ǰi^{h}tərə* and *-(Ĭ)p-olərə* ... 149
9.1.2 Postterminals ... 151
9.1.2.1 The marker *-GAn* ... 151
9.1.2.2 The marker *-GAndĬr(Ĭ)* ... 152
9.1.3 The past marker *-DĬ* ... 154
9.2 Mood ... 155
9.2.1 The marker *-ǰĬK* ... 155
9.2.2 The marker *-(Ĭ)ptĬr* ... 157
9.2.3 The marker *-V/y-dĬr(Ĭ)* ... 157
9.2.4 Imperative forms ... 158
9.2.5 Voluntative forms ... 159
9.2.6 The marker *-GAy* ... 160
9.2.7 The marker of epistemic possibility *-KĬdeγ* ... 161

10 Other word classes ... 163
10.0 Introduction ... 163
10.1 Adverbs ... 163
10.2 Postpositions ... 167
10.2.1 Primary postpositions ... 167
10.2.2 Secondary postpositions: spatial nouns ... 170
10.3 Conjunctions ... 172
10.4 Particles ... 174
10.4.1 Predicative copula particles ... 174
10.4.2 Stance particles ... 180
10.4.2.1 Epistemic particles ... 181
10.4.2.2 Evidential particles ... 184
10.4.2.3 Rhetorical markers ... 187
10.4.3 Topicalization and focus particles ... 188
10.5 Existential particles ... 192
10.6 The interrogative particle *BA* ... 193
10.7 Interjections ... 194

Appendix A: Texts ... 195
How to do things ... 195
Text 1: How to make the *höngen*-bread ... 195
Text 2: How to make the *hüyma*-sausage ... 197
Text 3: Hunting techniques ... 198
Text 4: Hunting ... 200
Text 5: The hanging cradle ... 206
Text 6: Tanning the animal skin ... 208

Text 7: Reindeer husbandry 209
Text 8: Seasonal falling of reindeer horns 214
Text 9: The hunting horn 215
Text 10: The trip-bow 217
Life stories 219
Text 11: Life story of Šanǰi Aššak 219
Text 12: Life story of Čuluu 224
Text 13: Life story of Gantuya 226
Fairy Tales 229
Text 14: The story of the wolf 229
Text 15: The useful skin of the mole rat 230
Text 16: The little fox and the blinded bear: version 1 231
Text 17: The little fox and the blinded bear: version 2 236
Text 18: The hunter and the bear 237
Legends 242
Text 19: Reindeer taming 242
Text 20: The legend of the river Höömey 259

Appendix B: Map 273

References 274

Index 287

List of Tables

Table 1 Chart of vowel phonemes 40
Table 2 Chart of consonant phonemes 50
Table 3 Principles of the broad transcription for vowels 51
Table 4 Principles of the broad transcription for consonants 52
Table 5 Morphophonological alternations of strong consonants in Sayan Turkic 58
Table 6 Morphophonological alternations of weak consonants in Sayan Turkic 59
Table 7 Morphophonemes in suffix-initial consonants 61
Table 8 Nasalized reflexes of PT *y-/d- in Sayan Turkic 76
Table 9 Sayanic traces of ə (ỹ/ń) 77
Table 10 Fortis lenis opposition 84
Table 11 Spirantization 85
Table 12 Inflectional paradigms of *-ZA*, *-KǏšA* and *-DǏ* 142

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Öördəm!

All inaccuracies and mistakes, of course, are mine.

1 Introduction

1.0 The present research

The present study is devoted to the description and analysis of Dukhan, an endangered Turkic variety spoken by approximately five hundred people in the Tsagaan-Nuur county of the Khövsgöl region of northern Mongolia (see map in Appendix A). Dukhan belongs to the Taiga subgroup of Sayan Turkic, itself a subgroup of the Siberian branch of the Turkic languages. This study is the first systematic linguistic investigation of Dukhan and is based exclusively on fieldwork materials.

The present work is a revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Mainz in February 2007.

1.1 Previous studies

The available scholarly material on Dukhan deals predominantly with ethnographical and anthropological questions; see Badamxatan (1960, 1962, 1987), Diószegi (1961, 1963), Farkas (1992), Wheeler (1999, 2000), Somfai Kara (1998), Pedersen (2003) and Plumey & Battulga (2003). These works also contain some lexical material. Dulam (1995) and Chagdarsürüng (1996) deal with matters related to Dukhan shamanism, whereas an insight in Dukhan traditional customs is given by Seren (2000).

Dukhan has not yet been the subject of any systematic linguistic investigation.

Seren published a brief survey on the Dukhan people and language (1993). The publications of Bold (1968, 1975, 1977a, 1977b, 1982) mostly dealt with the Sayan variety spoken in the Tsagaan-Üür county of the Khövsgöl region, referred to in Mongolian as "Uygar-Urianxay" (section 3.2.5). Finally, the previous publications of the author on Dukhan are listed in the references section.

1.2 Fieldwork and data base

The present work is based on language materials collected during five periods of intensive fieldwork: September 1999, July-October 2000, August-October 2001, August-September 2002 and September 2008. The recordings were made using a DAT Digital Audio Tape Walkman [TCD-D100].

The Dukhan people are a nomadic group inhabiting the northernmost part of Mongolia's Khövsgöl region. They nomadize in the forested area, or taiga, northwest of the Khövsgöl Lake, within the Tsagaan-Nuur district. This area borders the Republic of Tuva in the west and the Buryat Republic in the northeast. These areas are not easily reachable.

After flying from Ulaanbaatar to Mörön, the capital city of the Khövsgöl region, one must take a harsh one-or-two-day trip by jeep to reach the village of Tsagaan-Nuur. In very recent years, however, road conditions have improved, with the building of bridges in strategic points. Previously, getting stuck on the way occurred quite frequently. From Tsagaan-Nuur, the taiga areas are then reachable in a couple of days on horseback.

Before undertaking my fieldwork, I consulted the main publications on Sayan Turkic and collected all the historical, anthropological and ethnographical material I could find on the speakers of Dukhan. I prepared various lists of words and sentences both in Tuvan and in Mongolian for use in the initial investigation. The language I used for communicating during my first visit was Khalkha Mongolian.

In this first phase, elicitation was an important working tool that allowed me to get the "key words and sentences," i.e. basic vocabulary and some simple grammatical data that allowed me to construct a first linguistic base for my research. The Dukhans I met were very happy to have among them someone learning their language, a language which is usually regarded as a useless idiom by their Mongol neighbors.

As soon as I learned to communicate in Dukhan, I used it for almost all communication. I actively participated in the routine work of the Dukhan community. Hunting was the only activity from which I, like all other women, was excluded. To let a woman participate in hunting supposedly brings bad luck.

In the subsequent fieldwork sojourns, I already had knowledge of the language and used it for my everyday communication with the Dukhan people.

For long periods only Dukhan was spoken around me. This full immersion was a rich source of linguistic data. Often, for example, some specific grammatical forms that I had been hunting for for days suddenly popped up spontaneously in the course of a conversation. This extremely valuable material was written down in a notebook that was always in my pocket. In the present study, this source material is quoted as "fieldnotes".

Dukhans also invested a lot of time in what I could call my "Dukhan education". The topics included reindeer husbandry, religious beliefs, how to behave in certain circumstances, what to eat and what not to eat in the forest, how to prevent the assault of wild animals, how to prepare typical Dukhan dishes, how to castrate reindeer, how to mount and dismount a tent, how to pack reindeer for nomadizing, and others.

I visited various Dukhan encampments in both the East and the West Taiga, as well as in the river areas of Khogrok and Kharmay (see section 2.1). During these intensive visits, I managed to make many recordings. The recorded material was transcribed *in loco* and obscure sentences were checked with Dukhans.

Grammatical elicitation in order to check paradigms was carried out at various stages of the work. During my last period of fieldwork, my main goals were to fill various grammatical gaps, check hypotheses and clarify problematic parts of the texts.

The texts presented in this study were recorded with the following primary informants, aged between 30 and 80, all native speakers of Dukhan. Those informants are listed here alphabetically:

- J̌. Bat (male, born in 1952, East Taiga)
- U. Čuluu (female, born in 1955, West Taiga)
- G. Dalaybayir (female, born in 1977, East Taiga)

- G. Darimaa (female, born in 1956, East Taiga)
- Č. Erdenčimeg (female, born in 1968, West Taiga)
- G. Erdene (male, 1972-2009, East Taiga)
- Č. Gantuya (female, born in 1976, East Taiga)
- D. Gombo (male, born in 1947, East Taiga)
- J̌. Pürüvee (female, born in 1958, East Taiga)
- Šanǰi Aššak (male, born in 1933, East Taiga)

In addition, at various times, I intensively worked with the following Dukhans: J̌. Bayindalay (male, born in 1964, East Taiga), S. Bayintogtog (female, born in 1959, West Taiga), Č. Dagǰi (male, born in 1950, West Taiga), P. Erdenčimeg (female, born in 1958, West Taiga), S. Gambat (male, born in 1960, East Taiga), J̌. Ganzorig (male, born in 1959, West Taiga), Č. Gerel (female, born in 1968, West Taiga), R. Hürelgaldan (male, 1945, East Taiga), S. Narančuluu (female, born in 1960, West Taiga), D. Šarxüü [Sarəɣ] (female, 1952, East Taiga).

On the distinction East vs. West Taiga, see section 2.1.

1.3 Methodology and theoretical background

This study is a first systematic analysis of the sound system and the morphology of Dukhan.

The synchronic phonological description is taxonomic in the sense of that term developed by the Prague school. I have carried out instrumental analysis in order to check the most relevant features of the system.

The diachronic phonological dimension follows the model of Johanson (1998a: 88–106).

With regard to word classes, the main categories of nouns, adjectives and verbs are distinguished from the less clearly defined categories of adverbs, particles, postpositions and interjections.

As for the morphological structure, derivational and inflectional morphology will be dealt with.

Concerning the description of the verbal categories aspect, mood and tense, Johanson (1971, 2000c) is followed.

The impact of foreign languages on the lexicon, on the sound system and on the syntax of Dukhan is discussed in various sections of this study using the concepts and terms of the code-copying framework introduced by Johanson (1992, 2002). Thus, the lexicon is discussed in terms of global, selective and mixed copying. The first type refers to the process where a morpheme or morpheme sequence of a model code is copied into Dukhan in its entirety. Selective copying refers to the copying process where only selected properties of the donor language are copied into Dukhan, for instance, copying of sound properties (material) or structural properties (combinational). Mixed copies consist of a combinational copy which includes at least one global copy.

This study is not meant to be a complete grammar of the Dukhan language, particularly as syntactic problems are not discussed independently in separate chapters. It should rather be viewed as work in progress. Nevertheless, it provides a substantial starting point for the analysis of Dukhan and a sufficient basis for further research. At the same time, this work is intended to be a contribution to the study of Siberian Turkic languages.

1.4 Transcriptions

I have used three types of transcriptions in this description. The first type of transcription is a broad one and is similar to the one generally used in Turcological studies (see Deny et al. 1959: xiv–xv, and Johanson & Csató 1998: xviii–xxii).

Like Johanson & Csató (1998), this broad transcription replaces the signs *ä* and *ğ* used in Deny et al. (1959) with *e* and *ǰ*. It differs, however, from both in some respects.

The distinction between front and back *k*-, *g*- and *l*-sounds is not shown in this transcription inasmuch as the frontness or backness of the syllable is indicated by its vowel.

Another noticeable difference concerns the notation of vowels occurring in suffixes. This transcription uses the sign *ə* to represent the lax and reduced vowels occurring beyond the prominent syllable of a word.

The second type of transcription is a narrow one and is based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). By means of this transcription it is possible to show the various allophones of the Dukhan sound system, as well as its assimilation processes and sandhi phenomena. This transcription is placed in square brackets in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Details on the IPA symbols are found in standard phonetics textbooks and in those listed in the references section.

The third and last type of transcription is the phonemic one, which I have used only in chapter four. Thus, the reader should keep in mind that the broad transcription used elsewhere may contain different symbols than those found in the phonemic analysis of chapter four.

As for Dukhan morphophonemic units, they are written with capital letters, following Turcological practice. Morphophonemic units of other Turkic languages and Mongolic languages are also represented with capital letters according to the rules explained in their standard grammars.

The Cyrillic orthographical forms of Standard Tuvan, Tofan and Khalkha Mongolian have been transliterated into Latin characters, according to the standard practice of transliterating Cyrillic letters, but with the few changes outlined below.

As for Tuvan and Tofan, the Cyrillic letters ы and й are transliterated as *ï* and *y*, respectively. The sign [ˤ] is used to transcribe the Cyrillic symbol ъ which is used in both Tuvan and Tofan orthographies to symbolize glottalization/pharyngealization.

With respect to Khalkha Mongolian, the deviations from the standard practice concern the Cyrillic symbols ж, й, ы and ц which have been transliterated as *ǰ*, *y*, *ï* and *ts*, respectively.

Cyrillic х, occurring in Tuvan and Mongol geographical and ethnic names, is represented by kh, following the common practice found in English publications.

Reconstructed forms are based on the entries in Clauson (1972), as well as on forms provided in investigations on the topic.

Finally, the symbols used in the broad transcription applied in this study are listed below:

Vowels

Unrounded vowels
i represents the high front vowels [i] and [ɪ].
e represents the upper-mid front vowel [e] and the lower-mid front vowel [ɛ].
ï represents the high back vowel [ɯ] and the upper-mid back vowel [ɤ].
a represents the low central vowel [a] and the lower-mid central vowel [ɐ].

Rounded vowels
ü represents the near-high front vowel [ʏ] and high central vowel [ʉ].
ö represents the upper-mid front vowel [ø] and the lower-mid front vowel [œ].
u represents the high back vowel [u] and [ʊ].
o represents the upper-mid back vowel [o] and the lower-mid back vowel [ɔ].

Lax vowels
The symbol [ə], schwa, represents the broad range of lax vowels that occur beyond the prominent position of the word: [ɨ], [ʉ], [ɘ], [ɵ], and [ɚ].

Consonants

Labial consonants

p represents the voiceless bilabial stop [p] and the devoiced bilabial stop [b̥].
b represents the voiced bilabial stop [b].
β represents the voiced bilabial fricative [β].
m represents the voiced bilabial nasal [m].

Dental/alveolar consonants

t represents the voiceless alveolar stop [t] and the devoiced alveolar stop [d̥].
d represents the voiced [d].
s represents the voiceless fricative [s].
z represents the voiced fricative [z] and the voiced alveolar affricate [d͡z].
n represents the voiced nasal [n].
l represents the voiced lateral approximants [l] and [ɬ] (velarized).
r represents the trill [r].

Postalveolar/palatal consonants

š represents the voiceless alveolo-palatal fricative [ʃ].
č represents the voiceless alveolo-palatal affricate [ʧ].
ǰ represents the voiced alveopalatal affricate [ʤ] and the devoiced [ʤ̥].
ń represents the voiced palatal nasal [ɲ].
y represents the palatal glide [j].

Velar/postvelar consonants

k represents the voiceless stops [k] and [q].
g represents the voiced/partly voiced stops [ɡ], [g̊], [ɢ] and [ɢ̊].
x represents the voiceless fricatives [x] and [χ].
γ represents the voiced fricatives [ɣ] and [ʁ].
ŋ represents the voiced velar nasal [ŋ].

Glottal and pharyngeal consonants
h represents the voiceless glottal fricative [h] word-initially and word medially. When preceded by the superscript ^{ʰ}, h represents the pharyngeal glottal fricative [ħ].

Diacritics
A superscript ^{ʲ} designates palatalization, e.g. d^{ʲ}.
A superscript tilde $^{˜}$ designates nasalization, e.g. ỹ (nasalized palatal glide).
A right- or left-sided superscript ^{ʰ} designates strong aspiration, e.g. p^{ʰ}- and -^{ʰ}p.

1.5 Abbreviations and other conventions

Grammatical abbreviations occurring in the interlinear glosses are the following:

ABL	ablative	LIM	limitative converb
ACC	accusative	LOC	locative
ADJ.DER	adjectival derivation	MED	medial
ADV.DER	adverbial derivation	N.DER	nominal derivation
AGR	agreement	NEG	negative
AST	assertive	NF	non-focal
CAUS	causative	PASS	passive
CB	converb	PAST	past
COLL	collective	PL	plural
COMP	completive	POSS	possessive
COND	conditional converb	POST	postterminal
COOP	cooperative	POT	potential
COP	copula	PTC	particle
DAT	dative	Q	question particle
DES	desiderative	REC	reciprocal
DIR	directive	REFL	reflexive
ECH.DER	second participant of an echo-compound	RES	resultative
EMPH	emphatic	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	SIM	similative
HF	high-focal	V.DER	verbal derivation
IMP	imperative	VBN	verbal nominal
INT	intensification	VOL	voluntative
INTRA	intraterminal	1	first person
ITER	iterative	2	second person
ITJ	interjection	3	third person
LF	low-focal		

Further abbreviations are:

NAS: nasalization
PT: Proto-Turkic
wM.: Written Mongolian

Other signs used are:

* reconstructed forms
// normal pause
/ short pause
→ leads to
← copied from

~ alternates with
< has developed from
> has developed into
C consonant
T Text
V vowel
X nominal or verbal stem
Three dots ... refers to hesitations of the speakers.
The symbol [...] refers to an omission of text parts.
A right-sided superscript ^{f} designates a fortis consonant.
A right-sided superscript ^{l} designates a lenis consonant.

Two types of cross-references are used. The first type refers to chapter and section numbers, e.g. 5.2 is section 2 of chapter 5. The second type of reference preceded by the letter T refers to sentences from the texts included at the end of the work in Appendix A. For example, T3:2 means sentence 2 of text 3. Examples are numbered consecutively within each chapter.

In keeping with common Turcological practice, verbal bare stems are marked with a dash, e.g. *utə-* 'to sleep'. Denominal suffixes are marked with a + sign, e.g. *+LǏG*, whereas deverbal suffixes are marked with a - sign, e.g. *-GAn*. The enclitic particle *-(Ǐ)l* also is marked with a - sign.

As customary in grammatical glossing, stems and suffixes are separated by means of a small dash (-). However, where segmentation was not possible, the sign (:) has been employed.

1.6 Organization of the study

This study is structured in ten chapters followed by two Appendices, and references.

Chapter 1 briefly presents the subject of research, the methods applied and the conventions used.

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the Dukhan people of today and an overview of their ethnohistorical background.

Chapter 3 deals, in its first part, with the position of Dukhan within the Turkic language family, and gives an overview of the other varieties that constitute the Sayan group of Turkic. The second part outlines the typological profile of Dukhan and some of its distinctive features. Some sociolinguistic considerations conclude the chapter.

Chapter 4 describes the phonological system of Dukhan, and defines its vowel and consonant phonemes, as well as its allophonic variation.

Chapter 5 deals with phonotactic patterns and morphophonological variation.

Chapter 6 deals with diachronic phonology.

Chapter 7 discusses the derivational morphology of nouns, adjectives and verbs.

Chapter 8 treats the inflectional morphology of nouns and verbs.

Chapter 9 examines the verbal categories of aspect, mood and tense.

Chapter 10 deals with adverbs, postpositions, conjunctions, particles and interjections.

Appendix A contains a corpus of twenty interlinearized texts organized according to the topics “How to do things”, “Life stories”, “Fairy tales” and “Legends”. The first line represents the phonetic IPA-based transcription, the second line represents the broad transcription and the third and last line provides morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. The English translation is given separately at the end of each interlinear text.

Appendix B contains a map, showing the present location of speakers of Dukhan and their nomadizing areas.