

**SCTMG 2020****International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the  
Context of Modern Globalism»****CHINESE BORROWINGS IN THE OIRAT-KALMYKIAN  
LANGUAGE CONTINUUM: ANIMALISTIC AND LEGAL  
VOCABULARY**

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***Abstract***

The paper deals with one of the most poorly studied layers of borrowed lexicon of the modern Kalmykian language – Chinese words. Modern Kalmyk language is one of the languages of Mongolian language group, one of the language successors of Oirat language. Two types of borrowed lexicon can be distinguished in it, depending on the path of its penetration: lexicon, borrowed directly, as a result of contacts of Kalmyks and their ancestors-oyrates with other peoples, as well as those lexical units that penetrated into the Kalmyk language through the recipient languages: Türkic, Ugrian, Tungus and others. Chinese borrowings penetrated into the Kalmyk language back in the period of the general history of Mongols and Kalmyks. Chinese words entered the Mongolian languages in different ways and at different times, but the main period of intensive borrowing of Chinese words can be considered the era of the Mongolian Yuan dynasty in China. Linguistic and cultural contacts between Chinese and Oirats ended when the latter migrated from Central Asia to the Northern Caspian. The list of Sino-Chinese of the Kalmykian language, previously numbering about two dozen words, has been considerably expanded. The article also attempts to determine the ways of borrowing Chinese words in the literary Kalmykian language for the first time. The comprehensive description of Sino-isms in Oirat and Kalmyk literary languages will allow to study more deeply the etymology of many lexemes of the Kalmyk language, features of phonetic adaptation of borrowings, the degree of their mastery in the recipient language.

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**Keywords:** Kalmykian, Chinese borrowings, phonetic adaptation, grammatical adaptation, intermediary languages.



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## **1. Introduction**

Lately, linguists' attention to the problem of lexical borrowings has increased significantly. Domestic orientalists have repeatedly paid attention to the need to study the interaction of the Chinese language with the languages of neighboring Asian peoples (Baskakov, 1987). Contacts between Mongols and Chinese, which took place in different areas of Central Asia during certain historical periods, can be clearly traced in the language of Mongolian oirats. Therefore, it seems expedient to study the Sino-Mongolian lexical interaction differentiated by areas and epochs.

Borrowing is a natural phenomenon in any language of the world, as well as a constant source of replenishing its vocabulary with new lexical units. As a rule, "the main reason for borrowing foreign language lexicon is considered to be the absence of a corresponding concept in the cognitive base of the language-receptor" (Badgaev, 2013, p. 16). The Kalmykian language is not an exception to this rule; in different periods of history borrowings from different languages penetrated into it (Omakaeva, 2010). The appearance of borrowed words in languages is explained by two reasons: external (non-linguistic and other links between peoples and countries) and internal (linguistic), when the borrowed language cannot do without foreign words to indicate new phenomena.

A number of works by scientists of Turkic studies are devoted to the study of interaction between Chinese and Turkic languages (Baskakov, 1987; Li-qin, 2005; Nabiullina & Yusupova, 2014; Vasiliev, 1872). There are studies of Chinese in English (Sheng-li, 2013; Yang, 2009), in Russian (Kasymova & Lei, 2017; Xuehua 2019), in Buryat and Mongolian (Borisova, 2013; Dondokova, 2004).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The main problem of identifying Chinese words in the Kalmyk and Oirat languages is their almost complete phonetic adaptation in the recipient language. In addition, many words that were distributed in China during the Yuan and subsequent periods are now outdated, and are often not mentioned in the currently published dictionaries of the Chinese language.

## **3. Research Questions**

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## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim is to identify words of Chinese origin in the Kalmykian language. The object of research – Chinese borrowings in the Kalmyk and Oirat languages as a natural consequence of linguistic, cultural, economic, political contacts between China and the peoples of Russia and Central Asia, when, together with new realities and notions, the words that denote them have penetrated into the languages in question.

## 5. Research Methods

The methodology of the present scientific research consists in a continuous sample of words of Chinese origin from dictionaries, in the system analysis of scientific works of sinologists and Mongolians. In the course of the research the following methods were used: descriptive, involving interpretation and classification of material, as well as inductive-deductive method, observation method, component analysis method, comparative method, etc.

## 6. Findings

The penetration of Chinese words began in the all-Mongolian period of Kalmyks' history: "Chinese words are found in the "Secret legend of Mongols" (1240). Approximately from this period begins a mass entry of Chinese words into Mongolian languages" (Bardaev, 1985). The lexicon borrowed by the oirats in that period is common for the Kalmyk, oirat and other Mongolian languages. However, in connection with the appearance of the state of Derben-oirats, and later of the Dzungarian Khanate, the process of borrowing of the Chinese went two ways different from the other Mongolian languages: through direct contacts of the oirats, the ancestors of the Kalmyks, with the Chinese (as a result of which some Chinese military terms, titles, names of objects got into the Kalmyk language and literature), and also through the Mongolian and other languages and their written sources.

Linguist Badgaev (2002) notes: "...over several centuries, the oirates had close contacts with the Chinese Empire. Naturally, this was reflected in the Oirat language, the vocabulary of which was enriched by borrowings from the Chinese language" (p. 16). Obviously, the borrowing of the Chinese vocabulary stopped in the period of the exodus of Oirat-Kalmyks from Central Asia to the territory of the Northern Caspian in the beginning of the 17th century, while in other Mongolian languages the process of borrowing continued due to a number of historical reasons. In this connection, it should be noted that in the Mongolian language of the Outer and Inner Mongolia there are much more Chinese borrowings than in the Kalmyk language.

Borrowings from the Eastern languages (Turkism, Sanskrit, Tibet, Sinai, Iranism, Arabism) in the Kalmykian language for many reasons have not been sufficiently investigated, although it is possible to note a number of works devoted to the study of various aspects of borrowed lexicon (Badgaev, 2006; Bardaev, 1983; Erdnieva, 2016; Kharkov, 1983; Poliaev, 1980; Purbeev, 1993).

In the Kalmykian language, no more than two dozen lexemes of Chinese origin have been identified. Religious and obsolete vocabulary was practically not considered, Chinese origin words of borrowed ones were not cited, their semantics in the donor and recipient languages was not considered.

One of the significant difficulties in identifying Chinese borrowed vocabulary in Kalmyk language is their almost complete phonetic and grammatical adaptation, which significantly complicates their identification: "The process of adaptation of borrowings involves many difficulties and is characterized by the degree of assimilation of the borrowed language. At the first stage, borrowings are recognized and perceived as foreign, foreign aggregates for a given language. Then there is a phonetic, grammatical, and lexical-semantic stabilization of words depending on regularities, rules of spelling and orthoepy of the recipient language" (Badgaev, 2013, p. 55).

Almost all the lexemes identified belong to the Kalmykia language's equivalent vocabulary. They can be divided into different lexical and semantic groups. Let us consider some of them, namely animalisms (names of the animal world) and legal terms. The legal vocabulary is related to the sphere of legislation and legal proceedings.

### Animal Names

*Lus* – Kalmykian loshak, mule; compare the Xinjiang *lusa* – mule; compare Ancient Turkic *la* – mule from Chinese traditional 騾(*luó*), Chinese simplified 骡(*luó*) – mule.

*Меҗж* – sow (YЭ: 121; KSSL: 46) compare Mongolian *magzh* – female boar, boar, sow, *magzh* – sow from four years and above from Chinese 母猪 (*mǔ-zhū*) – sow, pig.

### Legal terms

*Dangzh* – Kalmyk oral pledge, pledge compare Mongolian *danj* – loan from Chinese 当子 (*dàng-zi*) – pledge, mortgage.

*NAME* – trade (Bardaev, 1985, p. 91) compare Mongolian employment (n) – trade, commerce, trading; *Mayamaa* – trade, exchange trading from the whale. 买卖 (*mǎi-mai*) – trade.

*Caң* – 1) treasury 2) vault, treasure trove 3) fund; compare Mongolian San(d) 1) treasury 2) fund, vault, treasure trove 3) barn; *San* – 1) mouth. Hutukht personal household 2) state property, 3) treasury 4) treasure house; compare ancient Turkic *tsaŋ* – treasury, storehouse, treasury from Chinese 藏 (*cáng*) – treasure house, storehouse, storehouse, barn; treasury; depository.

*Teez* – Kalmyk seal, stamp, oral seal; compare Mongolian *teez* – 1) seal, stamp, stamp 2) oral money; *teez* – signature, seal, sealing with wax from Chinese 题字 (*tí-zi*) 1) autograph, inscription (on the book); 2) signature.

*Хонжж* – Kalmyk хонжвр – win; compare Mongolian *Honji* – make money, make money, speculate, speculate. Although only the verb хонжж has been preserved in the Kalmyk language, the noun from which it was formed dates back to the Mongolian *khonjo*, which has the meaning "profit, lady, speculate". In turn, the word *Honzhou* is borrowed from the Chinese 弘奖 (*hóng-jiāng*) – approval, encouragement, great praise.

*Huuli* – Kalmyk oral law; *xuuli* – law, code from Chinese 法律 (*fǎ-lǜ*) – law, legislation.

*Ц а л ь н* – Kalmyk oral salary, salary; *caling* – state salary, retribution, reward from Chinese 钱粮 (*qián-liang*) – remuneration; salary; maintenance (Qing era).

*Шаң* – remuneration, encouragement (cattle: 665); *šang* – 1) reward, mzda 2) treasury, monastery treasury; compare Mongolian *shan(d)* – 1) reward, award, remuneration; 2) fee; *shan* – incentive or reward; from whale. 赏 (*shǎng*) – 1) salary, reward, reward; 2) reward, gift, reward.

*Yam* – position, service, rank. Compare Mongolian *Yaam* – oral position, rank, title; *Yaam* – 1) in the olden days the name of the place where political decisions were made by Noions and ministers 2) title, position from Chinese 衙门 (*yaamen*) Old Yaamen, order, institution (military and civil).

## 7. Conclusion

The classification of Chinese borrowed vocabulary given in this article shows a wide range of its use in different spheres of life of Kalmyks and their ancestors-oyrates. We have identified more than one hundred lexemes, etymologically ascending to the Chinese language. First of all, we have borrowed lexemes related to sedentary life style. Almost all of these lexemes are equivalent, which proves the strong cultural influence of China on neighboring nations. In conclusion, we emphasize that the problem we have raised is extremely important for assessing the lexical specificity of the Oirat language in relation to other Mongolian languages in various linguistic continuums and language situations. Looking forward to further research on this topic, it is necessary to point out the need to create a complete list of Chinese words; to create an adequate lexical and semantic description of them, taking into account the thematic classification; to identify the so-called equivalent-free lexicon to better identify the role of language as a carrier and custodian of cultural-historical information, material and spiritual culture; to create a dictionary reflecting these important data. The prospect of further, more detailed development of the problems under consideration implies the implementation of a systematic semantic analysis of the Chinese loan fund, solving the issues related to the semantics of borrowed words on the material of other languages and dialects of the Mongolian group and, more broadly, Altai languages, which will make it possible to reveal a general picture of the formation and functioning of borrowed vocabulary in Mongolian languages.

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