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Chronology of some Yakut phonetic changes in the context of 18th century Mongolian loanwords into Yakut

Abstract

A painful lack of old and reliable philological sources for the history of Yakut and Dolgan has made insights into the chronology of phonetic shifts almost impossible. However, the recent publication of Gerhard Friedrich Mueller's 18th century Siberian linguistic materials by Eugen Helimski and Hartmut Katz (†) has essentially altered the situation. In this paper Mueller's materials are compared with Dolgan linguistic data in an initial attempt to shed light on the chronology of the phonetic changes on the basis of Mongolian loanwords adopted by Yakut. A summary of some of the tangible results of the study is shown in a table at the end of the paper.

1. There exists no old literature in the Yak. language, and the first extensive Yak. text dates only from 1851. This fact makes philological investigations, as well as insights into Yak. linguistic chronology almost impossible. Until now, only Gy. Kara (1972) could suggest some direct chronological data on the basis of Nicolaes Witsen's Yak. material. However, its scarcity compelled Kara to concentrate particularly on the evolution of one consonant only, namely Yak. s which has had some PTKc. sources.

Fortunately, the recent publication of 18th century Siberian linguistic materials collected by Gerhard Friedrich Mueller in the years 1736–1742 (see NVS in the References) has essentially altered the situation. There is every hope that a thorough comparison of Mueller's materials with Dolg. linguistic data may shed some new light on the chronology of the Yak. historical phonology. The present study is the first attempt at reaching this goal.

In what follows, we are first of all going to present Mo. loanwords attested in Mueller's Yak. material. They will then be commented on and compared with some characteristic features of PTKc. chronological summings-up of the time.

Two words have been excluded: their Mo. origin is uncertain: *barča, e.g. Janhunen 1977 passim; S. porča].

araqas 1 'lumber-room, storehouse' || Great Bear || der Große Bär < Bur. Xlx. 


1 Headwords are modern Yak. words. Sharp parentheses <...> signal the origin and separated by || from the origin.
changes

The history of Yakut and its almost impossible. However, a century Siberian linguistic initially altered the situation. Linguistic data in an initial; this linguistic materials collected on the basis of Mongolian; all linguistic results of the study is the first extensive Yak. text; as well as insights into briefly Gy. Kara (1972) could be Witsen’s Yak. material.

A linguistic materials collected in NVS in the References; has a thorough comparison of new light on the chronology attempt at reaching this goal. Mo. loanwords attested in on and compared with some characteristic features of Dolg. Specific inferences will be shown in a table giving chronological summings-up of our study.

Two words have been excluded from the analysis. The reason is, in both cases, the same: their Mo. origin is uncertain. This concerns Yak. abįh ‘devil’ (see Stachowski 2001: 173-180) and barča, explained in NVS 222 as puorsa, i.e. ‘dried meat or fish’ (see Janhunen 1977 passim; Stachowski 1992: 110 sq.; 1995: 148 [s.v. čarba], 153 [s.v. porča]).

2.


Inferences: Both [1] the derivational process (*arąga + -(a)s) and [2] the PTKc. *-ač > Yak. -a alteration were completed no later than at the beginning of the 18th century.

ānä ‘dowry’ [NVS 223: ānä <Enne> id.] < *inä < MNT iņže, WMo. inž (lac. 94).

Inferences: [1] The assimilation process (-nä- > -nä-) was finished by the turn of the 18th century; [2] The vowel assimilation (*i > a > a- a) was complete at the same time but this tendency seems to have never achieved the status of a regular sound law, cf. two Yak. a – a examples versus six i – d words in GJV § 29.5, 29.2.

batas ‘great knife with a broad blade and a long handle’ [NVS 222: batas <Batas> id.] < *batās (+ -(a)s < PTKc. *-ač) < *bataga < Bur. madaga id. = WMo. madagan ‘dirk, dagger’ (lac. 245).

Inferences: Apart from [1] the *-ač > -s change, (observed also in arągas), the following findings, complete at the turn of the 18th century at the latest, can be noticed here: [2] Mo. m- > Yak. b-; [3] Mo. -agu > Yak. *-i. Besides: [4] *Cä - C > -CäC- was in the process in the 18th century; [5] The Mo. -d- > Yak. -i- change is noticeable. The most usual Yak. reflexes of the Mo. d are both d and t (lac. 71 sq.) but a closer examination of the word material makes it possible to suggest the following rule: Mo. -da- > Yak. -ata- (the vowel quantity can be ignored here). Etiymological groups with other vowel sequences (like adu, uda and so on) yielded reflexes with d in Yak. The only exception seems to be Yak. sattà- - sätz- ‘to can, be able’ < WMo. čida-, bur. šada- (lac. 72). This is, however, a misleading impression, since the Yak. y variant does not reflect WMo. i but, instead, results from an indigenous analogy (cf. a ~ y alternation in: PTKc. *kat- ‘to harden, become hard’ > Yak. xat- ‘to become dry’ ~ kyт-āt- ‘to become hard’ [GJV

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1 Headwords are modern Yak. words, whose phonetic variants, as attested in NVS, are given in brackets. Sharp parentheses <...> signal the original spelling. It is followed by the meaning of the word, given in English and separated by || from the original German meaning, as attested in NVS.
\$1.3\};\text{ dial. Russ. }\text{ drožalka} \text{ 'jelled meat'} > \text{ Yak. }\text{ darāhāŋka} \sim \text{ dyeřahŋka} \text{ id.}\text{ [GJV \$ 1.8];}\text{ Mo. }\hat{\text{čałbi}} \text{ 'to hew, whittle'} > \text{ Yak. }\hat{\text{čapęj}}- > \text{ Yak. }\hat{\text{čapęł}} \sim \text{ čępęł} \text{ 'sharp end, point'} \text{ [ibid.]). Thus, the voiceless consonant in Yak. }\text{ satá-} \sim \text{ syá-} \text{ unambiguously points to an etymon with the }\hat{\text{c}} \text{ group, i.e. to the Bur. word }\hat{\text{sada}}-. \text{ - Cf. }\text{ batyja.}

\textit{batyja, semantically }= \text{ batas} \text{ [NVS 222: batyja <Batija \text{ id.}] = Dolg. batyja 'hunting spear'. - Usually regarded together with batas as a loanword < Mo., which, however, creates phonetic problems. The suffix -yja is unproductive today, and it only occurs in a few derivatives, mostly those of not quite clear structure and etymology (GJA 123). One of them is Yak. kyntja 'wooden bowl, dish' < kytax 'great wooden dish' \text{"Ar. qadāh 'mug, cup' (GJV \$ 1.8), a word whose suffix }-\text{yja has apparently replaced the word-final syllable }-\text{ax (in the etymon kytxax), having been evidently (though falsely) identified with the indigenous nominal suffix }-\text{ax, as in Yak. bytax 'knife' < byς 'to cut' (GJA 120). The same process probably affected the Bur. loanword batas, with its suffix }-\text{yja, replaced here by }-\text{yja. This time, however, the suffix }-\text{yja} \text{ was correctly abstracted, and the change was probably facilitated by the association with the Yak. verbal stem }\hat{\text{b}} \text{ 'to plunge (into): or, maybe, the Evk. (< Old. Yak.) form of the 18th century.}

\text{macht'} < ? \text{ Kumyfl <K6gor> 'vessel for kumiss production || Gefäß, in welchem man Kummyß macht'] < ? WMo. \text{ capcdl ~ cypcdl capcyj- > Yak. }\text{ kapcyj- > 'sharp end, point'} \text{ Yak. sada-; \text{ cf. also the comments in DWB 52.}

\text{iššagaj 'cow's cheese, curd' [NVS 223: iššagaj <Edschegge \text{ id.}] < \text{ MMO. (14th–16th c.) *iššagaj (< WMo. egegegej)} > \text{ Bur. ýeggej id. (cf. Iac. 56).\text{ Inferences: [1] The contraction of WMo. }ege- > \text{ Yak. }i- \text{ was completed at the turn of the 18th century; [2] The diphthongization }*i- > \text{ Yak. }i- \text{ must have taken place no earlier than in the second half of the 18th century.}}

\text{káltiğaj 'curved, crooked' [NVS 223: káltiğaj tobuk <Keltegê-tobuk > 'curved knee || Krummknie'] = Dolg. kältiğaj '1. id.; 2. limping, lame' > ? WMo. keltegê '1. id.' (Iac. 108).\text{ Inferences: The }*-	ext{iğ}- \text{ group was retained unchanged (a form like Yak. }*\text{káltiğaj should be expected here, cf. Iac. 56 sq.) which can possibly point to another solution: WMo. keltegê- 'to be curved' (> Mo. -gaj > Mo. keltegê 'curved') > Yak. káltiğaj- id. (+ Yak. < Mo. ]-gaj > Yak. káltiğaj 'curved'). This version seems quite likely since the Mo. suffix }-\text{gaj is productive and very active in Yak. (Iac. 108).}}

\text{köyör 'great skin bag or churn for holding liquids' [NVS 224: köyör <Koğör > > <Koğör> 'vessel for kumiss production || Gefäß, in welchem man Kummyß macht'] < ? WMo. kökügür 'leather bag' (Anikin 2000: 315, s.v. kükur II).}
Inferences: [1] The phonetic shape of the etymon is not quite certain. It is true that the WMo. word has the vowels $\delta - \dot{\alpha} - \dot{u}$. However, its Yak. reflex should then have a form like *kőyőr (cf. Yak. súr - 'to run' < *fúgur-, whereas the attributed word kőyőr points to an etymon like Mo. kőkegur rather for Mo. egü - < Yak. -őö- see lac. 58 sq.), and this seems to be confirmed by Tel. kőkkőr 'skin churn', Tuv. kőgőr id. (Anikin, ibid.); [2] The long vowel $\delta$ was still not diphthongized in Yak. in the first half of the 18th century.

**moyoj 'snake' [NVS 225: moyolčok <Mogoltschok> 'round || round'] = Yak. moyolčok 'round block of wood' < Old Yak. *moyolčok < WMo. mogulčag, Kalm. Xix. mogoltsno 'round' (lac. 105 sq.).

Inferences: [1] The reduced vowels of the Kalm. and Xlx. forms seem to fit the modern Yak. variants better than the WMo. vowels which do not constitute a basis convenient for the labial attraction leading to the $o - o - o - o - o$ sequence; [2] The extremely rare $g > y$-change (see lac. 81) sporadically occurred also prior to the 18th century, as shown above. However, it has never become regular or at least popular.

**moyolčok 'round-headed; convex, vaulted' [NVS 225: moyolčok <Mogoltschok> 'round || round'] = Yak. moyolčok 'round block of wood' < Old Yak. *moyolčok < WMo. mogulčag, Kalm. Xix. mogoltsno 'round' (lac. 105 sq.).

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**sabaraj '1. wide (on eagle's paw or tail); 2. wide bowl made of birch bark' [NVS 225: sabaraj <Sarbári> '2. id. [Gefäß aus Birkenrinde] < Mo. sabaraj < WMo. sabar '1. claws, paws; 2. wooden fork for collecting dry dung' (lac. 317; Lessing 1960: 653. - On the WMo. suffix -aj [as in WMo. or+aj 'parting of the hair' vs. or+gil 'top, summit'] see Poppe 1923-27: 90, DWB 7).

Inferences: [1] The Yak. s- aphaeresis must have been completed prior to the period of Mo. lexical influence, i.e. before the 13th century; [2] The Mo. suffix -aj is not very productive in Yak. (it is lacking in Kaluzynski 1961 and GJa; nevertheless, cf. Yak. sikaj = WMo. hik 'moist, humid, wet' < Yak. sík = WMo. sik 'moisture, humidity, wetness' [DWB 7], if the basis word is Tkc. [lac. 61]). For this reason, a Mo. derivative *sabar+aj was suggested above. If this conjecture proves to be true in the future, the Yak. attestation will in a sense contribute to our knowledge of the Mo. lexical stock.

**tarayaj '1. bald spot; 2. bald' [NVS 226: tarayaj <Taragái> 'scab' || Grind'] < WMo. tarakaj 'bald' = MMO. tarakaj 'bald' (lac. 70; ĖSRS 533).

Inferences: Since the WMo. intervocalic -k- usually yields $g - y$ in Yak. (as in Yak. tabayaj 'palm; paw' < Mo. tabakaj 'sole of the foot; paw' [lac. 80]), no inference can be

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2 But cf. also Dolg. buláti ~ bolot 'sword' << Pers. püldü 'steel.'
drawn from the Yak. evidence as for the chronology of the borrowing process: Yak. < WMo. -k- or MMo. -y-.

törküt ‘1. a bride’s visit to her family; 2. wedding present’ [NVS 226: törküt < Törküt+1. the family of a married woman; 2. the home of a married woman before her marriage’ (Jac. 152; Lessing 1960: 835). For the PL -d formations see Godziński 1985: 75 (for *-t) and Poppe 1955: 179 (for *-n).]

Inferences: [1] The word probably is a loan from MMo.; [2] The semantic change (‘family’ > Visit to the family’) is surely due to depluralization of the Mo. word in Yak. (otherwise, the use of an added Tk. PL suffix would be expected here, i.e. *törküt+Tč > Yak. *törkültär).


Inferences: [1] The letter < U > was used by G.F. Mueller to note [y] (= [i]) or [ii], but never [u]. That is why we read this word with an initial y-, even if the modern in-variant seems to be phonetically closer to the Mo. etymon. The u- > y- change was probably due to dissimilation of the labial u- and the labial -m-. It must have occurred prior to the 18th century and was merely a tendency which was not able to eliminate the older u-variant entirely; [2] The -aga- > -a- contraction was complete prior to the 18th century.

3.

The following inferences referring to Yak. historical phonology can be drawn then:

Vowels:

1. *-aga(-) > *-d(-) (-18), as in batas, ymdän (cf. also GJV § 2.6).
2. Shortening of word-final long vowels in closed syllables resulting from a derivational process: *-d + -C > -C (-18), as in batas. – For a more detailed presentation of the problem see GJV § 5.9.

Consonants:

9. m- > b- (-18), as in batas (word which does not allow)
10. s- > ò- (-13), as in sabā
11. -(a)d(a)- > -(a)t(a)- (-18)
12. g- > ò- (-18), as in mō
13. *כ > ò- (-18), as in ara
14. *-k > ò- (-18), as in bālā
15. *נ > ò- (-18), as in ṭū
16. *כ > ò- (-18), as in ṭū

The Dolgans have adopted a central 16th century and then, abandoned their language is a modern o

A comparison of G.F. Mueller’s work to specify and/or to back values to us [1]: The words batas and c keytānak ‘hard, heavy’ < *kyt, -'(a)ga(-) > -a- change can
the borrowing process: Yak. < tm+rkt < T6rkut. [NVS 226: t'orkut < *t6rkun]d < WMo. *torkund. in; 2. the home of a married woman (Janhunen and Naumann 1994:25-63). For the PL -d formations (18) (for *.-(n)d) no; [2] The semantic change of the Mo. word in Yak. is usually retained. Adjoining -a- to. salay 'id.; dirty; unkempt' the Yak. word should be traced back to. *salay (18); (cf. also GJV § 2.6). The Dolgans have adopted an Old Yak. dialect probably in the second half of the 16th century and then, abandoned their homeland on the Vilyuy river and emigrated towards Taimyr, approximately in the first half of the 17th century (Stachowski 1996: 129). Thus, their language is a modern continuation of 17th century Yak. A comparison of G.F. Mueller's materials with Dolg. lexicon will presumably permit us to specify and/or to backdate some of the above-listed phonetic changes:

- ad [1]: The words batas and ymd'an are missing from Dolg. vocabularies. Nevertheless, the -(a)ga(-) > -a- change is well attested in Dolg., too, cf. Dolg. ul'dn 'polar fox bearing autumn fur' = Yak. ul'dn 'fawn, fallow (about fox fur)' < WMo. ulagan 'red'; Dolg. kytdnak 'hard, heavy' < *kytganak < *ktgyganak (GJV § 2.6). Thus, the -(a)ga(-) > -a- change can be backdated at least to the turn of the 17th century.

Consonants:

- m- > b- (18), as in batas (the example is important due to a lack of a nasal further in the word which does not allow for the explanation of the change by a simple dissimilation).
- s- > 0- (13), as in sabaraj.
- -(a)d(a)- > -(a)t(a)- (18), as in batas.
- -g- > -y- (18), as in moyoj > moyoj.
- *-c > -s (18), as in arayas, batas.
- *-fc > -x (18), as in balax.
- -rcj- > -nn- (18), as in annai.'a heavier, fuller note [y] (= [i]) or [a] is used. The original y, even if the modern u-y change was probably already occurring as early as 17th century at the latest; (18+) = of the 18th century at the earliest.
we do not have any cogent argument in support of this idea.

monophthongs), i.e. they are two different realizations of one and the same tendency. At the moment, however, we may have to reckon with a (probably marginal) dialect of Old Yak. in which the vowel shortening did not take place. This situation seems to have been first noted by G.F. Mueller; (4) At present, Yak. diphthongs dominate over monophthongs they sprang from - this situation seems to have been first established in the late 18th century or, at the latest, in the 19th century. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Therefore, we would like to suggest a somewhat different scenario: (1) Prior to the 17th century, a diphthongization tendency starts off in the borderland of the Yak. linguistic area; (2) The Dolgans emigrate in the first half of the 17th century and, consequently, they bring the diphthongization tendency to Taimyr; (3) In the first half of the 18th century, monophthongs are still more common in the Yak. area, whereas diphthongs are only limited to some border regions, and it was exactly this Central Yak. monophthong pronunciation which has been noted by G.F. Mueller; (4) At present, Yak. diphthongs dominate over monophthongs they sprang from - this situation seems to have been first established in the 1851 Yak. linguistic history. In view of the Dolg. data, one might postulate that the diphthongization and the retaining of word-final long vowels (as in Yak. xatys = Dolg. kati = 'sturgeon') were features typical of the same dialectal zone. This seems quite possible, since both processes counteract the loss of long vowels (no matter whether diphthongs or long monophthongs), i.e. they are two different realizations of one and the same tendency. At the moment, however, we do not have any cogent argument in support of this idea.

ad [2]: Shortening of word-final long vowels, too, is well attested in Dolg., cf. ad'ad 'to feed, nourish' < aham 'to eat' (DWB 79), artdak 'rain, foul weather' < *ardtak 'to go bad, spoil' (DWB 45). Consequently, the shortening process may be backdated at least to the beginning of the 17th century.  
ad [3], [4], [5]: The elision of intervocalic -g- and the following contraction of two short vowels into a long vowel preceded the subsequent diphthongization (see [5]). Since Dolg. principally has diphthongs or long vowels, the -g- elision must have been complete before the ancestors of the modern Dolgans had left their original homeland, i.e. before the beginning of the 17th century.

As to [5], the situation appears somewhat more complex. The Dolg. language has, to be sure, the same four diphthongs (ya, id, uo, ud) which we know from Yak. However, the labial ones have also, from time to time, their variants with long monophthongs, e.g. Dolg. niogu ~ nōgu ~ nōgu 'rein', sol ~ ol 'son', kūol ~ kōel 'lake', nōhā ~ lēhā 'upwards'. Now, if the diphthongization had begun before the Dolg. migration, it must have been in progress in the 17th century. What we could expect then in the 18th century is either that the diphthongization had already become complete or that it is at least still going on. Actually, in the 18th century materials which we have analysed above, there are no traces of diphthongs at all. In all the attested words, indigenous or borrowed, one can only find long monophthongs. Even if the diphthongization process would have been cut off (e.g. shortly after the Proto-Dolgans emigrated) one could expect some lexical traces of it. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Therefore, we would like to suggest a somewhat different scenario: (1) Prior to the 17th century, a diphthongization tendency starts off in the borderland of the Yak. linguistic area; (2) The Dolgans emigrate in the first half of the 17th century and, consequently, they bring the diphthongization tendency to Taimyr; (3) In the first half of the 18th century, monophthongs are still more common in the Yak. area, whereas diphthongs are only limited to some border regions, and it was exactly this Central Yak. monophthong pronunciation which has been noted by G.F. Mueller; (4) At present, Yak. diphthongs dominate over monophthongs they sprang from - this situation seems to have been first established in the 1851 Yak. linguistic history. In view of the Dolg. data, one might postulate that the diphthongization and the retaining of word-final long vowels (as in Yak. xatys = Dolg. kati = 'sturgeon') were features typical of the same dialectal zone. This seems quite possible, since both processes counteract the loss of long vowels (no matter whether diphthongs or long monophthongs), i.e. they are two different realizations of one and the same tendency. At the moment, however, we do not have any cogent argument in support of this idea.
fully attested in the 1851 Yak. grammar by O. Bohtlingk, so that the diphthongization process was presumably finished at the turn of the 19th century. Such is the situation in Dolg. too, but the Dolgans live dispersed over an immense territory and their migrating groups are often isolated from each other to such an extent that linguistic phenomena do not spread too quickly. The result of this situation is the existence of some archaic monophthong variants like kõl and so on.

ad [8]: Since Dolg., too, has o - o in lieu of *o - a (as in Dolg. bosko ‘not many, little’ = Yak. bossó ‘1. not tethered, free (-running); 2. free of charge’ < *boška, DW 63), the development of labial attraction which was the youngest phase in the evolution of the Yak. vowel harmony must have been complete already at the beginning of the 17th century.

ad [9]: The mutual relation between m- and b- in Yak. and the other Tkc. languages (cf. also words like Yak. mūs ‘ice’ = Dolg. mūs – būs id. in which there is no nasal consonant in the word-medial position either) create a problem which is much older than the purely Yak. linguistic history. In view of the PAlt. nature of the phenomenon it is not surprising that it is likewise attested in Dolg.

ad [12]: The Dolg. variant muroj shows that the -g- > -y- change was in progress already at the turn of the 17th century (or even earlier). The etymological -g- variants have, however, never been totally superseded.

ad [13]: The *-c > -s change is attested from Dolg., too, so it must have been complete no later than at the beginning of the 17th century. Kara’s (1972: 435) analysis of Witsen’s materials shows that this change was complete even earlier, in any case before the end of the 16th century.

ad [14]: The Dolg. language has k ~ kš which corresponds to Yak. x. Since -k is more archaic, the -k > -x change must have been made after the Dolg. emigration and prior to G.F. Mueller’s travelogue, i.e. approximately in the second half of the 17th century. The spirantized pronunciation of the modern k (i.e. kš) will, however, have had its source, in view of the Dolg. data, approximately at the turn of the 17th century.

ad [15]: The -njf- > -nn- change has also its reflexes in Dolg., e.g. anôñ (< *sançyj) ‘ice-pick’ (DW 34), so it must date from the turn of the 17th century at the latest.

Consequently, the following tentative attempt at dating some phonetic changes seems to be realistic:8

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8 A dot denotes the starting point of a process. A missing dot means that the starting point is unknown. An arrow only signals the phonetic development process, without indicating, however, the opposite limit point (which is unknown), unless the latter is marked by a vertical bar. The bar marks, thus, the terminus ante quern, and, in some cases, it can presumably be moved to the left side of the table – often probably a reasonable conjecture which, however, for the time being, still remains unproven.
Phenomenon

[1] \*\(-a\)- > \(-\alpha\)-
[2] Shortening of word-final long vowels
[3], [4] Elision of intervocalic -g-
[5] Diphthongization of long vowels
[8] Labial attraction
[12] \(-g\)- > \(-\gamma\)-
[13] \*\(-\xi\)- > \(-s\)-
[14] \(-k\)- > \(-\gamma\)-
[15] \(-ng\)- > \(-nn\)-

16th c.  17th c.  18th c.  19th c.

Abbreviations

Ar. = Arabic; Bur. = Buriat; Čul. = Chulysh; dial. = dialect(al); Dolg. = Dolgan; Evk. = Evenk; Kalm. = Kalmuk; Kirg. = Kirghiz; MMo. = Middle Mongolian; Mo. = Mongolian; PAlt. = Proto-Altaic; PTkc. = Proto-Turkic; Russ. = Russian; Sib. = Siberian; Tat. = Tatar; Tel. = Teleut; Tkc. = Turkic; Tuv. = Tuvinian; WMo. = Written Mongolian; Xlk. = Khalkha; Yak. = Yakut; YUig. = Yellow Uigur.

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