

# Evidentiality in Deedmongol

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## 1. Geographic and sociolinguistic background

The Deedmongol dialect of Oirat is spoken in different parts of Khökhnuur (Qīnghǎi) and Gansu. 30,000 speakers live in the highland pastures of the counties Dulaan and Ulaan and in the county-level cities Delkhii (Délǐnghā) and Golmod (Gé'ěrmù) of Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province. All of these areas are also home to Tibetan herders, but their pastures seem to be allocated in a way that they don't overlap much. Administrative centers like Dulaan<sup>1</sup> have a population of Han, Hui, Tibetans and Mongolians. Another 6000 Deedmongol speakers live in Subei Mongol Autonomous County, Jiǔquán, Gansu (Oyunceceg 2009: 2-3).

There are also about 55,000 people classified as ethnic Mongolians in the counties Hǎiyàn, Qílián and Ményuán of Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the county Hénán of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the county Dàtōng of Xining and the county-level district Píng'ān of Hǎidōng in Qinghai Province (Oyunceceg 2009: 2-3), and possibly also in Themchen

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<sup>1</sup> In China, it is quite common that a county center has the same name as the county.

(Tiānjùn) County of Haixi (Limusishiden et al. *forthcoming*). If this distribution reflects actual ethnic history, Deedmongol would once have been spoken in wider parts of Khökhnuur. At least in Hǎiyàn (Oyunceceg 2009: 2-3, Limusishiden et al. *forthcoming*) and Hénán (Balogh 2017a), there seem to be a few remaining elderly speakers of Deedmongol.

In terms of language contact, it appears that Tibetan and local variants of Mandarin Chinese are spoken in all relevant regions. In addition, the area consisting of Hǎiyàn, Qílián, Ményuán, Dàtōng and Píng'ān borders Huzhu Tu Autonomous County with its Mongghul speakers in the south-east and Sunan Yugur Autonomous County with its Eastern (and Western) Yugur speakers in the north. If one crosses Sunan and the Heixi corridor, one would arrive in the Oirat-speaking Alasha banner of Inner Mongolia.

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, there seem to have been more intensive contacts between Deedmongols and Mongghuls. According to Hgalazang Danzhu and Gindin Danzhu, Mongghuls born in the generations of 1907 and 1931 traveled to areas including Ulaan, Dulaan and Themchen to meet kinspeople who had migrated there from the Red Springs (*fulaan bulog*) and Round Hills (*moluu ula*) areas of Huzhu due to overpopulation. Mongolians in these areas would recognize the Mongghul place names and consider their inhabitants as belonging to the same people. Direct communication between Deedmongols and Mongghuls would still have been possible at this time, as indicated by the account of Duranzin (~1906-1982, told approximately in 1979) who mentioned that Mongghul people “in the past” used to travel to Alasha and were able to communicate with the Alasha there.<sup>2</sup> According to Luobujia, a Mongolian speaker from Hǎiyàn, the term

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<sup>2</sup> For Southern Mongolic Kangjia, Secencoǵtu (p.c.) similarly opined that it would be straightforward for anyone with a full command of Mongolian and Chinese to learn it. It is conceivable that some Mongghuls would have had sufficient exposition to Alasha Oirat that they could convert it into their own variety, or that the matters of communication were very simple. Even hundred years ago, those two varieties must have

“White Mongols” [*ts<sup>h</sup>vkəm mɔŋkəl*] would be used by the Mongolians of Haixi for the sinicized Deedmongols of Hǎiyàn [etc.] and for the Mongghuls alike (Limusishiden et al. *forthcoming*).

## 2. Geographic and sociolinguistic background

There are in principle a multitude of sources on Deedmongol, including local media, sources on oral literature, texts prepared for the needs of linguists, and historical primary sources. The problem with public media such as radio, TV and dubbed movies is their strong leaning towards Standard Southern Mongolian (*barimjiya abiya*). Books on oral literature are usually in Mongolian script and even within these confines not faithful enough to their sources to provide reliable linguistic information, unless accompanied by voice recordings (though this is sometimes the case).<sup>3</sup> Below, I will limit my discussion to linguistic materials (1.1) and historical documents (1.2).

### 2.1 Linguistic materials

The oldest publication of Deedmongol text materials in a phonemic or phonetic transcription seems to be the master thesis of Oyunnasun [2009], a text collection in IPA and Mongolian script, but without accompanying voice recordings (though some of these still exist [p.c., 2015]).

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been sufficiently different to create significant obstacles for spontaneous conversation between Mongghul and Alasha speakers without previous contact.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Secenmǎngke at the North-West University of Nationalities was preparing a corpus of *yabuġan üliġer* of Mongolian dialects, including oral recordings if available, that later was extended to Mongolic languages at large. Since this work had made good progress by April 2015, it would be conceivable that the original plans for online publication of these materials might have been changed.

Secondly, Mátyás Balogh collected materials from the moribund Henan dialect in 2013-2014 (made accessible as recordings in Rákos 2015), featuring mostly conversation between himself and a local speaker, since its domain of use had already shrunk below an observable level. For these, Mátyás Balogh, Ágnes Birtalan, Rottár Máté and Attila Rákos started working on transcriptions, but this work only progressed to a certain point and is currently dormant (Attila Rákos, p.c., 2021-6-21).

Thirdly, I recorded 51 hours of Deedmongol materials in Haixi in 2015-2016, including free conversation (32 hours), interviews and other types of directed conversation (5 hours), autobiographical narration and related conversation of old people (5 hours), excerpts from three school lessons (1.5 hours), two instantiations of the family problems picture task (San Roque et al. 2012) (2 hours) and other task-related conversation, mostly autobiographic narrating and retelling (5 hours). Of these, 9 hours were selected for transcription, but only three of nine transcribers handed in transcriptions (in IPA and Mongolian script). Several of these were subsequently corrected and are used in my ongoing research. Unfortunately, while I would have given preference to the speech of old and rural people, the larger part of the existing transcriptions is from the family problems picture task.

Finally, there is a text collection edited by D. Baġatur (2016) for materials from several Central Mongolic dialects. It includes non-machine-readable IPA and Mongolian-script renderings of 3.5 hours of Deedmongol materials (pp. 1243-1341) from 9 male and 2 female speakers, with one exception born between 1939 and 1968, along with sound files (mp3, 48000 Hz, 192 kbps, stereo). All materials are basically monologues, and a large part is folktales and legends. The phonemic transcription is quite usable despite a good number of mistakes, but since interpunctuation in the Mongolian-script rendering is unreliable, pauses are not annotated, and fillers are often not distinguishable from interjections, it is hard to make syntactic sense of it. Brosig & Zoljargal (2021) tried to tackle some of these issues by OCR-ing

and subsequently rectifying the IPA, aligning IPA and text in PRAAT using WebMAUS (Kisler et al. 2017), correcting the transcriptions to the best of our non-native abilities, marking some transcriptions as doubtful, inserting marks for pauses and hesitations, and annotating all finite predicates. It is these materials, cited as “BBZ”, that will be used in Section 4 of this presentation.

## 2.2 Historical sources

In principle, it is also possible to study historical documents for different Mongolian dialects by resorting to facsimile editions of several imperial Manchu archives that contain handcopies of the letters sent to the Manchu court by Mongolian nobles along with the answers given to those letters by the Manchus. Such documents are of greater potential value for understanding a given dialect than highly edited sources intended for tradition such as chronicles or legal codes. Since the archival materials are not ordered by areal provenience, identifying nobles from certain dialectal areas requires historical knowledge.

For Deedmongol, relevant documents include the letters of the Oirat nobles from Dsungaria, mostly of the Ööld tribe, that conquered Khökhnuur (Cimeddorji et al. 2003), and the language of their descendants (Buyandelger & Oyunbilig 2005), spanning the time before the Manchus were able to establish direct rule over Khökhnuur. Overall, these include 90 individual sources from approximately 29 authors, namely, Aci bağatur, Bağatur Erke jinong (Qoruli), Bağatur taiji, Bara Šis Lhubuwa, Cagan Aquı, Cewang Dorji, Dalai bağatur ~ Dalai taiji, Dalai qağan, Dugar Rabdan, Dugar taiji, Erdeni bağatur taiji, Erdeni Tan, Galdan Dorji, Güüši qağan, Güüši-yin qatun (Gushi's queen), Jasi bağatur, Kökenagur-un noyud (the lords of Khökhnuur), Kümüng blama, Lazang qağan, Lubsang-gömbu-Arabdan taiji, Lubsangrincin,

Lubsangümbü, Qorumsi taiji, Rabdan, Rabjam Corji, Rasi wang and Ülegen.<sup>4</sup> Full transcriptions of the texts edited by Buyandelger & Oyunbilig (2005) are provided by Canžid et al. (2010) for volume 1-11 volumes and by Čojmaa et al. (2017) for volume 12-22, but unfortunately, the people in charge at the Mongolian State University decided to publish them only on paper. To create an electronically searchable corpus for historical Deedmongol, I had to OCR and manually correct the relevant materials from Choimaa et al. (2017). The Deedmongol materials from Cimeddorji et al. (2003) were transcribed by Tsogtbadrakhyn Gantulga. I then subdivided the texts into 90 small text files. Paired with the original facsimile for reference and confirmation, these could function as a corpus for the exploration of early Deedmongol into which any other Deedmongol source of that time could easily be integrated. I used these materials for one presentation so far (Brosig 2018), and I hope to use them for a publication in the future.

### **3. Previous accounts on Deedmongol evidentiality**

Currently, there are two accounts of Deedmongol, by Balogh (2017b) for Henan Oirat and by Oyunceceg (2009) for Haixi Oirat.

#### **3.1 Evidentiality in Henan Oirat according to Balogh**

Balogh's (2017b: 51-53) account concerns of the moribund dialect of Henan. Here, an Amdo-Tibetan-style evidentiality system (cf. Sun 1993) has arisen that distinguishes between the speaker's own actions (1) and actions conducted by somebody else, which are further divided into those that the speaker witnessed (2) and those that she inferred (3). The full three-way

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful for the support of Cenggeltei (the historian from Beijing) and M. Bayar-saikhan in identifying most of the historical Deedmongol sources listed here.

distinction is made in the past tense. Etymologically, the past tense suffixes all seem to contain the so-called “completive” *-jiγ-* ~ Haixi *-tʃʰikʰ-*, with unclear function. The suffixes *-laa* and *-cəə* correspond to Middle Mongol direct and indirect past *-lUGA* and *-jiGi* (Street 2009), and even *-jiku* might derive from the factual past in *-bA*, via *-tʃʰikʰ-pa:* > *-tʃʰikʰ-pu* > *-tʃʰikʰ-u* (though this ad-hoc proposal doesn't account for the loss of aspiration in a next step).

- (1) *kiilik-εεn υγaa-jιγlaa*. ‘I washed my shirt’ (speaker’s own action)
- (2) *woroo or-jiku*. ‘It rained / It was raining.’ (directly witnessed)
- (3) *woroo or-jιγcəə*. ‘It has rained / It has been raining’ (not witnessed)

At the present progressive level, there is only the distinction between the speaker’s own actions (4) and the actions of a different actor (5), regardless of how the latter were perceived. For habitual events, the evidentially neutral forms *-x* (future) or *-n* (generic-potential) can be used. But for “acts that take place automatically or naturally, without any will or intent of the actor”, there is a particular suffix *-jip* ~ *-jiw* (6). Given this definition, it is not clear whether this form is also supposed to be used for unintended, uncontrolled but less than automatic mishaps like stumbling, forgetting etc.

- (4) *wə kiilik-εεn υγaa-jii*. ‘I am washing my shirt’ (speaker’s own action)
- (5) *ter kiilik-εεn υγaa-jεεn*. ‘He is washing his shirt.’ (non-speaker actor)
- (6) *nar ʃιγaa-jip*. ‘The sun is setting.’ (uncontrolled action)

Etymologically, Oyunceceg (2009: 163-164) renders the suffixes *-jii* and *-jεεn* as Written Mongolian *-ju bu-i* and *-ju bayi-na*, which suggests a parallel development to “subjective” / egophoric *-i* (< *bu-i*, cf. *bu-* possibly ‘cease’) and “objective” / endophoric *-a* (< *a-yu*, cf. *a-* ‘dwell’) in Mongghul, as suggested by Cenggeltei (e.g. 1989: esp. 259-260), though it would involve the post-Middle Mongol copula *bayi-* (< ‘stop & stand’) instead of *a-*. There

seems to be no relation between the original meaning of the copula stems and their suggested later evidential uses. For *-jip*, I don't recognize a cognate in the Haixi dialect. Formally, it could be compared to *-jU bu-i*, but it seems implausible that one construct acquired two widely different meanings in parallel developments.

### 3.2 Evidentiality in Haixi Oirat according to Oyunceceg: past

Secondly, there is a mid-sized reference grammar on the Deedmongol spoken in Haixi by Oyunceceg (2009). Her book is structured according to morphological categories, with semantic subdivisions such as “past”, “future” and “present” for finite indicative suffixes, but with very unambitious semantic descriptions, as is common in Inner Mongolian dialect grammars. But since she doesn't undertake any contrastive analysis, she does not propose a concrete analysis of the Deedmongol tense-aspect-evidentiality system, and its possible structure can only be inferred from her description with some guessing. Which is what I will try to undertake in this section.

Among morphologically simple past tense forms, *-la(:) ~ -læ(:)* (p. 155-156) is described as referring to past and future events, or used to ask in a pressing way (*tulğan asaǵuqu*). Examples only concern past events. The speaker always seems to be eye-witness (7) or participant (8). Questions anticipate the evidence expected from the interlocutor (9). Consequently, *-la:* seems to be a direct evidential that, like in Kalmyk Oirat, is also used for actions in which the speaker participated herself.

- (7) *mal tɔː tʰøll-æː par-laː*.<sup>5</sup>  
 cattle now give\_birth-PRF.CVB finish-DIR.PST  
 ‘The cattle have now finished given birth.’<sup>6</sup>
- (8) *en tʃil man-ǎ aŋg telikæː-t tsʰuɡlǎ-la*.  
 this year 1PL-GEN class PLACE-DAT assemble-DIR.PST  
 ‘This year our class met up in Delkhii.’
- (9) *tʃʰiː tsʰyɣylter ɣaː jɔwu-la?*  
 2SG yesterday where go-DIR.PST  
 ‘Where did you go yesterday?’

The suffix *-tʃʰeː* (p. 156-158) is described as infrequent, but if it occurs, it expresses past tense as the predicate of constituent clauses. This is imprecise since *-tʃeː* shows up as the predicate of short independent sentences in her examples, even though these are semantically closely connected to a subsequent sentence. In addition, Oyunceceg also discusses the suffixes *-ttʃʰ*, *-ttʃʰaː*, *-ttʃʰeː* and *-tʃitʃʰ ~ -tʃʰitʃ* which she derives from *ɣt-* ‘go there’, preceded by a converb that is either fully elided or takes the form *-tʃʰ*, plus the past tense suffix *-tʃʰeː*. These forms seem to have replaced simple *-tʃʰeː*. In Oyunceceg’s description, these suffixes differ a lot (if somewhat diffusely) among each other. For instance, *-ttʃʰ* is used when the speaker suddenly found out about a completed event in the past, which in case of *-ttʃʰeː* happened recently. *-ttʃʰaː*, by contrast, merely is used to mention events already completed in the past, and this also seems to hold for simple *-tʃʰeː*. Finally, *-tʃitʃʰ* functionally corresponds to the standard form *-čiqā-* and expresses that the event is already fully completed.

<sup>5</sup> Oyunceceg describes stops and affricates as aspirated vs. unaspirated, but prefers to render them by the IPA symbols for voiced and voiceless. To fit with the examples in Bağatur (2016), I cite these stops and affricates with their actual IPA value.

<sup>6</sup> Oyunceceg’s grammar is in Mongolian, so it only contains a Mongolian-script rendering, but no translations. Consequently, the English translations are all mine and tentative in nature.

However, judging from examples like (10)-(13), all of these forms seem to instantiate inferential past. The recency that Oyunceceg mentions for *-ttʰe:* might also obtain for *-ttʰ*, or conversely it might just hold for a subset of contexts. Neither [e:] nor [ɑ:] as part of this suffix are used vowel-harmonically, but [e:] could still go back to a historical *-jai*, while [ɑ:] could not. The [e:] might thus still fulfill some sort of discourse-structuring function, while [ɑ:] might be a sentence-final particle of its own right.

- (10) *mɔrin jɔwu-tʃe:, tɔ: ɔl-ta-χ=ʊ: gɔ?*  
 horse go-INDIR.PST now find-PASS-FUT.PTCP = PLR.Q EX.NEG  
 ‘The horse has left, now will it be found or not?’
- (11) *sɔnum mal-aŋ ʊsʊl-χ-aŋ jɔwu-tʃ.*  
 NAME cattle-RPOSS water-FUT.PTCP-INS go-INDIR.PST  
 ‘Sonum went to water his cattle.’
- (12) *eně æ:l kʰety:næ: ny:k-æ: jɔwu-tʃʰa.*  
 this family already move-PRF.CVB go-INDIR.PST  
 ‘This family has already moved.’
- (13) *χʊj! χaltʰär nɔχa: alt-ʊ:l-tʃitʰ, ʊj-ij!*  
 INTERJ dark.brown dog lose-CAUS-INDIR.PST bind-VOL  
 ‘Hey! SUBJECT allowed the brown dog to get loose, I shall tie it!’

There are also a couple of examples that seem less prototypically inferential and will require work with native speakers for further clarification. (14) with *-tʃitʰ* might indicate a lack of control on the part of the speaker plus sudden realization. Inference is conceivable here, since the speaker sees the cattle already at a certain place, but didn’t observe when they actually reached it. (15) is quite clearly firsthand, but the speaker is not in full control of the overall situation (though probably she is in control of the action itself). Control tends to be an important factor in languages of the Tibetosphere, so it might play a role with these two sentences.

- (14) *mal æ:l-in χøry:l-ly: k<sup>h</sup>yry-tʃ<sup>h</sup>i-ttʃ<sup>h</sup>e:*  
 cattle yurt.group-GEN enclosure-ALL reach-COMPL-INDIR.PST  
*ʃamtu:n gar-ga-tʃ ir-Ø.*  
 quickly exit-CAUS-CVB come-IMP  
 ‘The cattle has reached the enclosure of another family, drive it back quickly!’
- (15) *pi: eně k<sup>h</sup>erex-æ:r axǎ\_tyr\_yrtʃa:t<sup>h</sup>æ: tsanɡits<sup>h</sup>-tʃe:*  
 1SG this issue-INS siblings?-COM talk-INDIR.PST  
*parag pɔl-χ=gyæ: jaŋts-t<sup>h</sup>æ:.*  
 almost become-FUT.PTCP=NEG manner-COM  
 ‘I spoke about this issue with my siblings, it appears that it’s almost impossible.’

The suffix *-wa:* ~ *-pa:* is treated as distinct from *-w* ~ *p* (pp. 158-159). The latter is again described as used in constituent sentences. This description might be reinterpreted as referring to a form that is used on the narrative level or when stringing sentences in other contexts, cf. (16). For *-wa:*, it supposedly expresses that somebody (Ø) is pleased (*sedkil qanumjitai*) with some completed event. Judging from examples like (17), the satisfied party is the current speaker. All relevant examples also feature overt lexemes that express positive evaluation. But *-wa:* in (18) is unlikely to express the speaker’s satisfaction, but might still correlate with emotional assessment more in general. It is conceivable that a subjective evaluation is not easily expressable through the above-mentioned evidentials, so that speakers resort to *-wa:* instead. Overall, examples for this form seem to show the speaker’s subjective perspective, be it an internal perspective or actions undertaken by the speaker.

(16) *setʰenæ: ge-ly:-xæn jɔp-p, pi: pe:tfiŋ-ly: ir-iw.*

NAME home-ALL-RPOSS go-PST 1SG Beijing-ALL? come-PST

‘Sechnee went home, and I came to Beijing.’

(17) *na:tām tʰɔŋ sæ:xæn pɔl-wa:*

celebration completely beautiful become-PST

‘The naadam was absolutely amazing.’

(18) *gagtsʰ kʰy:kʰen æ:l-in peri-t jɔp-p,*

only girl family-GEN daughter\_in\_law-DAT go-PST

*tɔ: man-ǎ xuj-ul-xan ylty-wæ:*

now 1PL-GEN two-COLL-DIM remain-PST

‘Our only girl went away as the daughter-in-law of a family, now only the two of us remain.’

The participial suffix *-san* ~ *-sen* (p. 151) is also described as referring to the past or, in combination with a negator, to a negated past, but overall it doesn’t seem to show up without negators or subjective or interactive modal particles such as *pitsa:* in (19), which probably makes a guess and tries to confirm it with the addressee. So *-san* would not contrast with the simple past forms in a basic, morphologically defined past tense system, but if suffix-particle-combinations are taken into consideration, it might account for a non-evidential part of the extended Tense-Aspect-Modality-Evidentiality system.

(19) *nantʰǎn kʰywy-xæn tʰɔs-x-aŋ jɔwɔ-sen pitsa:*

NAME son-RPOSS fetch-FUT.PTCP-INS go-PST.PTCP MP

‘Nantan (has) left to fetch her son, I guess.’

Overall, it seems that we are dealing with a past tense evidentiality system in which direct and indirect evidentials contrast. It is unclear whether indirect forms cover hearsay. No further details of this system can be inferred

with certainty, though it is conceivable that e.g. *-tfitʰ* differs somewhat from the rest of the indirect past forms (which in turn must differ from one other, but probably not in terms of Tense-Aspect-Evidentiality). The role of *-w* in this system doesn't become clear at all. It is not particularly frequent in example sentences throughout the grammar, and if this corresponds to its actual text frequency, it might not partake in a system of obligatory evidential contrasts. The same problem arises for *-san* which exhibits the additional problem that modality is more peripheral in Mongolic grammar than TAE and thus is basically never described systematically in grammars.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.3 Evidentiality in Haixi Oirat according to Oyunceceg: present

There do not seem to be any evidential contrasts for future-referring forms. For the present tense, Oyunceceg distinguishes *-na:*, *-tʃi:* and *-tʃæ:n*, to which the participial suffix *-tak* must be added. Habitual *-tak* (p. 152) and *-na:* ~ *-næ:* (p. 163-164) are not described or exemplified in any detail, but judging from other Mongolic dialects, they would differ from the progressive forms in terms of aspect rather than evidentiality. This leaves us with the apparent progressives *-tʃi:* and *-tʃæ:n* and the corresponding copula forms.

The suffix *-tʃ(h)i:* (p. 163) is described as a simple present progressive, but also as a future with overtones of certainty (p. 161). The first use is mostly illustrated by examples like (20) to which the speaker is likely a direct witness, but it also occurs with (21) where the speaker probably has good knowledge, but is not directly witnessing the event. There are no examples with first person subjects. The future certainty use is shown in (22), supported by *møn* as an attributive modifier also signaling certainty.

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<sup>7</sup> This is a problem even for standard grammar. While Mönkh-Amgalan (1998) and Jingan (2010) have made important contributions to our understanding of Khalkha-Chakhar modality, it is still unclear how the marking of modality interacts with other domains of grammar. For many other dialects such as Khorchin, we even seem to lack the most minimal systematic description of modality as a category.

- (20) *mal-t jɔwɔ-sen k<sup>h</sup>y:k<sup>h</sup>e-s-y:s ʃɔgf-a: ɪr-tʃi:.*  
 cattle-DAT go-PRF.PTCP child-PL-PL joke-PRF.CVB come-PRS.PROG  
 ‘The children who went to the cattle are coming (returning) jokingly.’
- (21) *satʃ<sup>h</sup>ira: mɒn t<sup>h</sup>erě sorba:l-t-a:n sʊ:tʃi:.*  
 NAME same that school-DAT-RPOSS learn-PROG.PRES  
 ‘Sachraa is learning at precisely that school of hers.’
- (22) *man-ǎ sʊ:pi:-n t<sup>h</sup>oryl-y:s k<sup>h</sup>ety: ɣɔnʊʊ-a:s ɪr-tʃi:.*  
 1PL-GEN PLACE-GEN kind-PL how.many day-ABL come-PROG.PRES  
 ‘Our relatives from Subei will come in a few days.’

The [two-]suffix[-construct] *-tʃæ:-n ~ -tʃ<sup>h</sup>æ:-n* (p. 164), in turn, is only described as a present, without any further information. Still, it is unlikely that this form, used as a progressive in other dialects and contrasting with habitual forms, differs from progressive *-tʃ<sup>h</sup>i:* in its basic aspectual function, and the examples seem to confirm this. But how do these two forms differ? (23) has a first-person subject, and (24)-(25) are most plausibly interpreted as directly witnessed. In addition, there are two present copula forms, *wi:* and *wæ:-n*, both of which can still be used to form progressives if a limitative focus clitic is inserted, as in (26)-(27).

- (23) *pi: ent yk<sup>h</sup>yr sa:tʃæ:n.*  
 1SG here cow milk-PROG.PRES  
 ‘I am milking the cows here.’
- (24) *tʃa: pæ:tʃæ:-Ø, ts<sup>h</sup>æ: tʃ<sup>h</sup>in-tʃæ:n.*  
 little be-PROG-IMP tea cook-PROG.PRES  
 ‘Wait a little, [I] am cooking the tea.’
- (25) *mal ɣɔt<sup>h</sup>un-t-a:n k<sup>h</sup>yr-æ:d=r-tʃæ:n.*  
 cattle enclosure-DAT-RPOSS reach-PRF.CVB = come-PROG.PRES  
 ‘The cattle is reaching its enclosure.’

(26) *mal t<sup>h</sup>ølle-tʃ lǎ wi:*

cattle give.birth-IPFV.CVB LIM.FOC AUX

‘The cattle are still giving birth.’

(27) *χɔt øwyt-tʃ<sup>h</sup> lě wæ:-n.*

stomach hurt-IPFV.CVB LIM.FOC AUX-POT

‘The [= My] stomach is still hurting.’

Overall, it is difficult to make anything of this contrast based on these examples. If both forms were aspectually equivalent, they might once have formed an evidential contrast somewhat akin to Henan Oirat (direct *-tʃi:* vs. indirect *-tʃæ:-n*), which is being replaced as younger speakers adapt *-tʃæ:-n* as their only present progressive form. But currently, this is only speculation that would require work with native speakers to resolve.

#### 4. Some preliminary evidence on evidentiality in Haixi from BBZ

One thing severely missing from Oyunceceg’s analysis was any information on how common individual forms are. Table 1 shows the frequency of the basic past tense forms found in BBZ alongside with the frequency of a few forms that in their phoneme structure closely resemble the indirect past tense marker *-tʃe:*. It also shows whether these suffixes attached to a “plain regular stem”, to the stem of the quotative verb *kə-*, to a verb that contains the completive suffix *-tʃ<sup>h</sup>ik<sup>h</sup>-*, or even to the completive form of the quotative verb. While the completive forms are relevant for future research, the discussion below will only consider the difference between regular verb stems and the stem of the quotative verb.

Table 1: Past tense suffixes and related markers in BBZ

		plain reg- ular stem	quota- tive verb	com- pletive	quot.v. & compl.
			<i>kə-</i>	<i>-tʃʰikʰ-</i>	<i>kə-tʃʰikʰ-</i>
direct past	<i>-la:</i>	119	15	12	
indirect past	<i>-tʃ ~ -tʃe:</i>	241	235	51	13
past	<i>-san + PCL</i>	41	6	4	
	<i>-san</i>	184	16	51	
	<i>-w</i>	25		2	
	<i>-tʃæ:</i>	105	15	1	
	<i>-tʃi:</i>	11	5		
	<i>-tʃæ: ~ -tʃi:</i>	5	1		
present pro- gressive	<i>-tʃæ:-n</i>	163	34	3	

To begin with, the relatively high frequency of quotative verb forms indicates that the hearsay status of the storyline of all the legends and folktales that account for a large part of the corpus is indexed by the presence of the quotative verb *kə-* rather than by finite verb forms. In such contexts, the quotative verb mostly takes the shapes *kəʈʃ* (n = 241) of the inferential past and *kənə:* ~ *kənæ:* (n = 116) of a generic present, among a total of 552 finite predicates that feature *kə-*. Of course, next to impersonal uses, a good number of these tokens also ascribe concrete utterances to heroes of the storyline rather than to the narrator's source of information.

If we restrict our attention to plain regular verb stems, this data still indicates that the suffix *-tʃ* to some extent retains the possibility of hearsay uses, since inferential uses alone could not account for 241 tokens of the indirect past suffix in monologic narratives, and several instances of *-tʃ* are indeed part of the storyline. The total frequency of indirect past forms is actually even higher than 241, since the form *-tʃæ:* (n = 121) is ambiguous

between indirect past uses (cf. *-tʃe:*) and present progressive uses (cf. *-tʃæ:-n*). On the other hand, a form *-ttʃa:* that contradicts vowel harmony doesn't seem to play a role in BBZ, and the same holds for any purported contractions based on *ɔt-* 'go there', to begin with.

Its contrasting form, the direct past *-la:*, is mostly found with first person participants, usually subjects. Of the sentences that don't conform to this rule, several contain the copula verb *wæ:-læ:*, e.g. (28). Other non-conforming examples are harder to systematize, but include (29), a case in which the authors of the books summarized by the speaker neither participated in or witnessed the event (suggesting that at least some genres allow for the reinterpretation of evidentiality into other categories). Still, given the low frequency of non-participatory witnessed uses of this suffix on regular verb stems as in (7), it should be checked in other materials whether such uses are indeed within the normal range of uses of contemporary *-la:*.

(28) *uj + tʰər tʰim piʃ wæ:-læ:*. (BBZ33)

INTERJ that such NEG.ID AUX-DIR.PST

'Uy, s/he was not like that.'

(29) *nɔm teptʰər-əs ɔtɔ: yts-xət (...) ky:ʃ xɔ:n + miŋk tsurkɔ:n tsu:n + kutʃʰɜn tsurkɔ:n ɔn-t + ɔtɔ: + nek kʰəsək xɔʃɔ:t mɔŋkɜl-i: tɔxu:l-v:t + kʰokʰnu:r-t iŋ-læ: kə-tʃ xəl-tʃæ:-n-v:*. (BBZ30)

'If you check from the literature, it is saying that Gushi Khan in the year 1636, now, leading one group of Khoshut Mongols, **came** to Khökhnuur.'

Since *-w* only occurs 27 times in BBZ (including 11 *-wa:* and 5 interrogative *-wu:*), it becomes clear that this past tense suffix, in contrast to *-tʃ* and different from the uses of its cognates e.g. in Middle Mongol (Street 2009, Brosig 2014) or Kalmyk (Goto 2009), is not used as a narrative past. It does not immediately become clear why it is used in the first place, and for simple

-w, I was not yet able to discern common patterns. For -wæ:, both the „emphatic“ pattern of (17) and *ir-* as the main verb are attested multiple times. However, this leaves -san as a possible narration-propelling form, which, very much in contrast to Oyunceceg’s examples, is quite common in BBZ without modal particles. This might turn out to be a recent development due to contact with Standard Southern Mongolian. One could test this by correlating its usage frequency with factors such as age, school education and media consumption, but for BBZ (in contrast to my own unpublished corpus) these are not known (except age, and most speakers are close in age).

Regarding present tense forms, the form -tʃi: does not seem to play a major role in BBZ, being ten times less frequent than the “regular” present progressive -tʃæ:-n and its allomorphs. Among its uses (all of which still require closer scrutiny in the future), both past uses as potentially in (30) and future uses might have a certain standing, which would further reduce its role as a potential present progressive form.

- (30) *tʰek-ə: ɔtɔ: tʰər kʰu:kʰən-i: tɔxu:l-v:t ɔtɔ: + pɔru:n tsu:-t xur-tʃʰi: pɔru:n tsu:-t kʰur-xət ɔtɔ: + tʰyry:l-ə: kʰur-ə:t=ʃʰ, tsʰək xɔ:n-t xur-tʃʰ.* (BBZ33)  
 ‘Then, taking that girl along, now, he **reached** / **is reaching** (?) Baruun Zuu. Upon reaching Baruun Zuu, now, even after reaching it first, he directly reached the Khan.’

Finally, there is even a postpredicative form *wæ:* that functions as some sort of modal particle. Such a form could be rather reminiscent of the semantically unclear particle uses of a phonetically similar and probably cognate copula form in Mongghul. However, in BBZ, most relevant tokens were produced by one single recorded speaker, Heng Dūngbing, and thus might not be representative of the linguistic knowledge of the other speakers. Semantically, they might possibly be related to an irrealis meaning, as in my preliminary translations of (31)(32), which in turn might only have been

needed for the specific historical legal contexts that Heng was concerned with. This would remove them from the evidential domain proper.

- (31) *tsu:n xuw-i:n ɔtɔ: tɔl-i-n + ɔtɔ: tʃʰi nikəntʰə: ɔtɔ: + tʰər kʰun-t-ən uk-lə: wæ:.* ɔtɔ: *tsu:n xuw-i:n ɔtɔ: kutʃʰi:n + ɔtɔ: tʰər sə:t , ɔtɔ: tʰər ɔtʃil kʰi-sən æmtʰən ɔtɔ: + xuwɔ:-kɔ:t ɔw-ən.* (BBZ26)

‘Of 100 percent, [you] **would** now **already have given** that person [the victim] 70. Now, 30 of 100 percent, now that official, now that person who has done the work, will take as a share.’

- (32) *pi ɔtɔ: nək ɔtɔ: + ukʰər ɔtɔ: xulkæ:l-v: ɔp-tʃʰik-i:n pɔltʃum + ɔtɔ: pi \*\*\* nɔmɔ: ɔrl-ɔ:t tʰɔrkɔ-xət ɔtɔ: kurwən ukʰər ɔtɔ: + v: tʰɔrk-ən wæ:.* (BBZ26)

‘Now if I have stolen one cow, one would now fine me three cows as a replacement.’

## 5. Conclusions

Between the three sources discussed, the evidential system of contemporary Deedmongol is not easily located. The data from Henan, if indeed representative of the language usage of its last speakers, differs notably from the Haixi data in that it mainly distinguishes between the participant of an action and a non-participant, only making a subdivision between direct and indirect access for the latter. But it is unclear whether this is due to rapid recent changes under language obsolescence or to gradual divergence after areal separation (which is not implausible, given that Henan is areally separated both from the areas where Deedmongol is currently spoken and from the other local areas with non-Mongolian-speaking ethnic Mongols).

Oyunceceg’s description of Haixi Oirat seems to point to a twofold division in the present-tense progressive system, but its semantic imprecision makes it difficult to identify the type of distinction at work here. It seems to

point to a twofold division in the past tense as well, with the main distinction between a direct past *-la:* and an indirect past *-tʃ(e:*, while *-w(a:* and *-san* might play more specialized roles for the implementation of certain modal and intersubjective functions. Again, this is just a possible interpretation of her data, which seems difficult to prove without independent supporting evidence.

However, the data of Baġatur (2016) in BBZ might already be too far from the variety that Oyunceceg described to actually prove or refute any of the claims that can be induced from her analysis. *-tʃ* is not attested, and *-tʃi:*, which seems to be a major form in Oyunceceg's data, is quite infrequent. Instead, Standard Southern Mongolian forms such as *-san* and *-tʃæ:-n* seem to be gaining ground. On the other hand, Kalmyk Oirat and Western Mongolian Oirat both only feature a single progressive, which might suggest that *-tʃi:* in Haixi Oirat was marginal to begin with. The range of uses of the direct and indirect past also seem to resemble other Oirat varieties, rather than Standard Southern Mongolian or Amdo Tibetan / Henan Oirat, though the role of the other two past forms seems subject to ongoing change.

To extent the current analysis, I hope to work with informants once this becomes possible again. In the meantime, a more careful analysis of the data from BBZ that was only briefly discussed here along with including the data that I collected myself might improve the current analysis. Similarly, getting additional transcriptions for conversations that include the most conversative speakers from the data I collected might greatly help the analysis, since my current data is, if anything, more progressive than Baġatur's data.

In the meantime, I would greatly appreciate input and comments, especially from Oiratists. There has not been any sustained research on tense, aspect and evidentiality in Xinjiang, Alasha and Western Mongolia, or I am ignorant of it. After the untimely demise of Yu. Tsendee in 2019, there's no longer any chance to collaborate with her on Western Mongolian Oirat or historical Oirat. And with the decrease of Mongolian-language schooling and

its conditioning factors in China, fieldwork there will be harder to carry out today than it would have been back in 2011 or even 2015. There are reasonably good collections of speech material, e.g. Baġatur (2016: 1345-1429) for Xinjiang Oirat or Tsendee (2014) for Western Mongolian Oirat that with sufficient pre-processing AND the input of a sufficiently large number of informants could yield great insights into these varieties.

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## ABSTRACT

# Evidentiality in Deedmongol

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Evidentiality in Deedmongol is spoken in different parts of Qinghai (Haixi, Henan) and Gansu (Subei). In the moribund dialect of Henan as described by Balogh (2017a: 52), an Amdo-Tibetan-style evidentiality system (cf. Sun 1993) has arisen that distinguishes between the speaker's own actions and events committed by somebody else, which in the past are further divided into those that the speaker witnessed and those that she inferred (cf. (1)-(5)).

For Haixi as described by Oyunceceg (2009: 155-160, 163-164), there are the past tense forms *-w* & *-adw* (< *-gad oduba*) [“speaker satisfied”], *-la:* & *-adla:* [with witnessed or participatory examples] and *-dtfa:* (no simple *-dza:*) [“sudden realization of recent events”] which resemble the basic tripartite factual-direct-indirect opposition of other Oirat varieties (Goto 2009, Skribnik & Seesing 2014) and Middle Mongol (Brosig 2014) with the interference of the auxiliary *od-* ‘go there’ resembling Amdo Tibetan *-t<sup>h</sup>æ* (cf. Zemp 2017: 622). The present progressive has *-dzi:* (< *-ju bu-i*) [including non-participatory examples, cf. (6)] and *-dzæ:n* (< *-ju bayi-na*).

The role of factors like speaker control/certainty in Henan Oirat remains unclear, but due to its rapid decline (Balogh 2017b), a thorough investigation is no longer feasible. For Haixi Oirat, it's unclear whether it features a bipartite past-tense evidentiality system (direct-indirect regardless of participation) with an evidentially neutral *-w* or a tripartite evidentiality system (participatory-direct-indirect). This presentation investigates this question using published materials (Oyunnasun n.d., Bagatur 2016: 1242-

1341) and own data (all of which are closer to Southern Standard Mongolian than Oyunceceg's examples).

- (1) *Kiilik-εεn υγαα-jiγlaa*. 'I washed my shirt' (speaker's own action)
- (2) *Woroo or-jiku*. 'It rained /It was raining.' (directly witnessed)
- (3) *Woroo or-jiγčəə*. 'It has rained /It has been raining' (not witnessed)
- (4) *Wə kiilik-εεn υγαα-jii*. 'I am washing my shirt' (speaker's own action)
- (5) *Ter kiilik-εεn υγαα-jεεn*. 'He is washing his shirt.' (non-speaker actor)
- (6) *finiη-d jɔwω-sen æmite-s dɔː lǎ kyr-tʃiː*. (Oyunceceg 2009: 163)

'The people who went to Xining are returning only now.'