

Phonological and literary characteristics of some pieces of Khamnigan oral folklore*

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This paper discusses four specimens of Khamnigan folklore—an octet folksong, a witty saying, and a hunter's anecdote, collected in 2006 in Binder and Dadal county in northern Khentii province, and an additional saying collected in Binder in 2009. An analysis of the phonological and literary characteristics of the texts is given, including treatment of alliteration, assonance, head rhyme, end rhyme, and certain lexical characteristics, as well as explaining their value for the study of Mongolic linguistics and literature. Among the interesting literary devices used in Khamnigan literature, the witty saying attests the use of final-syllable head-rhyme, and the octet folksong attests the use of end-rhyme, a rarely used literary device in Mongolic literature, attested also by Antoine Mostaert in an Ordos hunter's rhyme. Also of note is that in all four texts, guttural

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alliteration is present, suggesting that this may be a common feature of Khamnigan oral literature.

As Khamnigan Mongol is an endangered language, and Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol is a moribund variety of that language with very few speakers remaining and is still only minimally studied, it is of the utmost urgency that the language be documented as fully as possible within the next few years, in order to preserve the richness of the Khamnigan Mongol language and Khamnigan folk knowledge for future generations of Khamnigans and scholars to enjoy and learn from. This brief paper may serve as a preliminary treatment of Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol folklore and oral literature, with data on the phonology of the language.

Keywords: Khamnigan, Mongolic, phonology, linguistic fieldwork, oral folklore

1. Introduction

Although considerable research and documentation has been undertaken on the folklore and literature of a number of Mongolic peoples, especially the Khalkha, Buryat, Ordos Mongols, and recently, the Monguor peoples (especially the Mangghuer), very little work at all has been done on the Khamnigan languages, let alone the oral literature of the Khamnigan, an ethnic group of Russian Siberia, northeastern Mongolia, and northeastern Inner Mongolia believed to be of mixed Tungusic and Mongolic origins.

In Mongolia, Khamnigan Mongol is a highly endangered Mongolic tongue spoken today by only a handful of elderly Khamnigans in the provinces of Khentii and Dornod. Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol has been largely neglected and only partially studied by researchers. Before Prof. Mönkh-Amgalan and my brief preliminary fieldwork on the language, undertaken in the summer of 2006, the last person to investigate Khamnigan as spoken in Mongolia was B. Rinchen, who completed a cursory study in the late 1960s. Before that, L. Mishig wrote a small article on Khentii Khamnigan and a brief note on Yöröö Khamnigan; the Hungarian scholar Káthe Kőhalmi also wrote an article on Dadal Khamnigan. Rinchen, Mishig, and Kőhalmi based their studies on fieldwork done in the late 1950s and 1960s.¹⁾

1) Although little work has been done on the varieties of Khamnigan spoken in independent Mongolia, Juha Janhunen has undertaken pioneering fieldwork on

The data presented in this paper was primarily collected in the summer of 2006, when Prof. Mönkh-Amgalan and I had the opportunity to meet some of the remaining elderly speakers of Khamnigan Mongol in northern Khentii province. In addition to undertaking preliminary documentation of Khamnigan speech, we also obtained data on their oral literature, including eliciting several songs, sayings, and riddles. I conducted additional fieldwork on Khamnigan in 2009, from which I present one short Khamnigan saying in this paper. Our fieldwork in 2006 and my 2009 fieldwork focused as much as possible on the eldest speakers of Khamnigan, in their late 70s on up, with the aim of documenting the least Khalkha-influenced Khamnigan speech.²⁾

2. The data

2.1 A folksong on the Kirkhon River

During our short visit among the Khamnigans of Dadal county in 2006, we had the great fortune of meeting one of the most knowledgeable remaining speakers of Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol—a then-80-year-old Khamnigan woman, Bazarsadīn Tsendjaw†, of the Sartuul clan. While our time with her was all too short, we were still able to document something of her speech before her untimely passing several months after our fieldwork. Among the materials she shared with us are the lyrics of a Khamnigan Mongol song about her birthplace, the Kirkhon River, on the border with Russia.

She recited for us from memory the lyrics of this eight-line (octet) love song. The song, composed of two quatrains, illustrates some interesting phonological characteristics and variation in the language, as well as serving as an important piece of Khamnigan oral literature, a still poorly-studied subfield in the literature of the Mongolic peoples. The song also exhibits some noteworthy literary devices, as I will point out.

The Khamnigan text is given below in phonetic and phonemic transcription with interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses.³⁾ The Cyrillic orthography

the Khamnigan Mongol and Khamnigan Ewenki dialects spoken in Inner Mongolia (Janhunen 1990, 1991, 2003, 2005).

2) Yu Wonsoo has recently published an important study of Khamnigan as remembered by several middle-aged Khamnigans (Yu 2011).

3) Here I am following the Leipzig Glossing Rules developed by the Department of Linguistics of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and by the Department of Linguistics of the University of Leipzig, including their list

is my systematic standardization of the practical Cyrillic orthographies devised by Tserendash, Senden, Doljinsüren, and other Khamnigans of northern Khentii:

- 1 Үрүгүн Кирхонээ буругаасу
[u.ru.ʏuŋ kʰir.χɔ.nɛ: βu.ru.ʁa:.su]⁴⁾
/urugun kirxɔŋ-ee burugaasu/
wide Kirkhon-GEN willow
- 2 Үхүрийн дарاماар набчитээ
[u.xu.ri:ŋ ta.ra.ma:r nap.tʃʰi.tʰɛ:]
/uxur-iin daram-AAr nabči-tee/
cattle-GEN path-INS leaf-ASC
- 3 Үрүгүн мүнгүн билжигэйи нь
[u.ru.ʏuŋ muŋ.guŋ bil.tʃʰi.ʏɛ.jin]
/urugun muŋgu-ŋ biljige-ji-n/⁵⁾
wide silver-OBL ring-ACC-3POSS
- 4 Үйөтээхөн хуруундум хайиралаарээ
[u.jʏ.tʰɛ:.xʏŋ χu.ru:n.dum χa.ji.ra.la:.rɛ:]
/ujʏte-xAŋ xuruu-ŋ-DU-m xajira-lA-Aree/
sinewy-DIM finger-OBL-DL-1s.POSS love-DNMV-IMP
- 5 Хотогор Кирхонээ буругаасу
[χɔ.tʰɔ.ʁɔr kʰir.χɔ.nɛ: βu.ru.ʁa:.su]
/xɔtɔgɔr kirxɔŋ-ee burugasu/
sunken Kirkhon-GEN willow

of standard abbreviations (http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/LGR09_02_23.pdf). Additional abbreviations used in this paper include the following: ASC = associative; DIM = diminutive; DL = dative-locative; DNMV = denominal verbalizer; MIM = mimetic; NZR = nominalizer; RFP = restrictive focus particle; s = singular; and VN = verbal noun.

- 4) Note the spirantization of /b/ to a bilabial fricative [β] across the word boundary. This spirantization was not observed in line 5 of the song.
- 5) The accusative case suffix /-ji/ is identical in form and function to Middle Mongol -yi 'accusative case suffix'. This phonologically conservative case allomorph has not been observed in the speech of younger Khamnigans.

- 6 Хонийн дараммаар набчитээ
[χɔ.ni:ŋ ta.ra.ma:r nap.tʰi.tʰɛ:]
/xɔni-iŋ daram-AAr nabči-tee/
sheep-GEN path-INS leaf-ASC
- 7 Холвоо мүнгүн билжигэйи нь
[χɔl.βɔ: muŋ.guŋ bɪl.tʃi.ʏɛ.jin]
/xɔlbɔɔ muŋgu-ŋ biljige-ji-n/
connected silver-OBL ring-ACC-3POSS
- 8 Хойирхон куругундум ~ хуруундум хайиралаарээ
[χɔ.jir.χɔŋ qʰu.ru.ʋon.dum ~ χu.ru:n.dum χa.ji.ra.la:re:]⁶⁾
/xɔjir-xAŋ kurugu-ŋ-DU-m ~ xuruu-ŋ-DU-m xajira-lA-Aree/
two-DIM finger-OBL-DL-1.POSS ~ finger-OBL-DL-1.POSS love-DNMV-IMP

English translation (approximate):

- 1 The willows of the wide Kirkhon—
- 2 Their leaves along the cattle paths.
- 3 The wide silver ring—
- 4 Put it on my sinewy finger.
- 5 The willows of the sunken Kirkhon—
- 6 Their leaves along the sheep paths.
- 7 The coupled silver rings—
- 8 Put them both on my fingers.

Literary features:

The song is composed of two nearly-identical quatrains differing lexically only in the first word of each parallel line:

- 1 *uruguj kirxɔnɛɛ bɔrɔgaasu*
- 2 *uxuriij daramaar nabčiteɛ*
- 3 *uruguj muŋguŋ biljigejin*
- 4 *uyɛtɛɛxəŋ xuruundum xayiralaareɛ*

6) When Tsendjaw recited this song for us, on line eight she first very naturally said [qʰu.ru.ʋon.dum] and then quickly revised this to [χu.ru:n.dum], as if correcting herself. It is highly likely that the first form represents genuine, older Khamnigan Mongol speech, whereas the second form is the result of recent convergence with Khalkha, the currently dominant community language. Note the Khalkha cognate **хуруу** [χu'ru] and Written Mongol *quruγu* 'finger, toe'.

- 5 *хэтэгэр kirxэнэе буругаасу*
 6 *хэнийг дарамар набчитэе*
 7 *хэлбэ мунгул билгегэйн*
 8 *хэйрхэң куругундум ~ хуруундум хайралааре*

Throughout the song we find that the literary devices of head rhyme (in Mongolian, толгой холбох) and alliteration, common features of Mongolic poetry, are important in this Khamnigan folksong as well.⁷⁾ Note the head-rhyme of /u/ in the first quatrain, where the first word of each parallel line in this stanza begins with the tense high back rounded vowel [u]:

urugul kirxэнэе буругаасу
uxuriᠡᠭ дарамар набчитэе
urugul муңгул билгегэйн
уягээхэң хуруундум хайралааре

The second quatrain is characterized by head rhyme of /xə/, with the guttural fricative /x/, phonetically realized as uvular [χ] in these [-ATR] class words:

хэтэгэр kirxэнэе буругаасу
хэнийг дарамар набчитэе
хэлбэ мунгул билгегэйн
хэйрхэң куругундум ~ хуруундум хайралааре

The last four lines of the song are likewise rich with guttural alliteration throughout, i.e. velar and uvular segments, including the voiceless uvular fricative [χ], the voiced uvular fricative [ʁ], the aspirated velar stop [k^h], voiced velar stop [g], voiced velar fricative [ɣ], and the aspirated uvular stop [q^h]:

хэтэгэр kirxэнэе буругаасу
хэнийг дарамар набчитэе
хэлбэ мунгул билгегэйн
хэйрхэң куругундум~хуруундум хайралааре

7) I use the term ‘head rhyme’ here as a translational equivalent to Mongolian толгой холбох (lit. ‘joining heads’), i.e. line-initial alliteration or line-initial assonance. Mongolian ‘head rhyme’ in this sense typically involves repetition of consonant + vowel sequences (CV) or a vowel (V). See Kara (2011) for a detailed account of Mongolian alliteration and assonance.

Assonance is likewise employed throughout the song.⁸⁾ Note the refrain of the tense high rounded vowel *u* [u] throughout:

- 1 *uruguy kirxonee burugaasu*
- 2 *uxuriij daramaar nabčitee*
- 3 *uruguy munğuy biljigeyin*
- 4 *uyäteexäh xuruundum xayiralaaree*

- 5 *xätögör kirxonee burugaasu*
- 6 *xöniiğ daramaar nabčitee*
- 7 *xälbaw munğuy biljigeyin*
- 8 *xäyirxäh kurugundum~xuruundum xayiralaaree*

Assonance of the lax high back vowel *u* [ʊ] is observed in the words *burugaasu* [bʊrʊʁa:sʊ] ~ [βʊrʊʁa:sʊ] ‘willow’ and *xuruundum* [χʊrʊ:ndʊm] ~ *kurugundum* [qʰʊrʊʁndʊm] ‘in my fingers’:

- uruguy kirxonee burugaasu*
uxuriij daramaar nabčitee
uruguy munğuy biljigeyin
uyäteexäh xuruundum xayiralaaree
- xätögör kirxonee burugaasu*
xöniiğ daramaar nabčitee
xälbaw munğuy biljigeyin
xäyirxäh kurugundum~xuruundum xayiralaaree

And assonance of the lax mid back vowel *ɔ* [ɔ] is rather abundant in the final quatrain of the song:

- xätögör kirxonee burugaasu*
xöniiğ daramaar nabčitee
xälbaw munğuy biljigeyin
xäyirxäh kurugundum~xuruundum xayiralaaree

Each quatrain also features end rhyme, a relatively uncommon feature of Mongolic poetry, not often encountered, but present in an Ordos hunter’s

8) In my usage here, ‘assonance’ denotes the repetition of vowels.

rhyme documented by Antoine Mostaert.⁹⁾ Note the end rhyme of *nabčitee* and *xayiralaaree* in each quatrain below:

uruguj kirxonee burugaasu
uxuriij daramaar nabčitee
uruguj munğuj biljigeyin
uyəteexəj xuruundum xayiralaaree

хэцэгэр кирхонее буругаасу
хэнийг дарамар набчитее
хэлбэв мунгуж билжигейн
хэвирхэж хуруундум~хуруундум хайралаарее

Moreover, of phonological interest, as exemplified by the last line of the poem, Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol as spoken by elderly speakers in Dadal county and Binder county, Khentii province, today has free variation between /k/ and /x/, especially in [-ATR] words and before the back high rounded vowel /u/, i.e. the free variation of [q^h] ~ [χ] is observed in the speech of many Khamnigans of Binder and Dadal in words conforming to the non-advanced tongue root vowel class (a, ɔ, u) and free variation of [k^h] ~ [x] is observed before /u/.¹⁰⁾

Of lexical importance, the song provides the Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol word for ‘ring’, *biljige* [bɪl.tʃi.ɣɛ], a unique form diverging phonologically from its cognates in Khalkha Mongolian *bögj* [pøkʈʃ] ‘ring’ (and its poetic variant *belzeg* [ˈpɛʂtsəʃk]) and Khori Buryat *behelig* ‘id.’¹¹⁾

9) The Ordos hunter’s rhyme is as follows (presented here in Kara’s modified transcription of Mostaert’s original transcription; the translation is from Kara (2011: 170), with slight modification). The end-rhyming syllables are in bold.

<i>Abbul baxatää</i>	<i>If you take it, you’ll have satisfaction.</i>
<i>Alawuli maxatää</i>	<i>If you kill it, you’ll have meat.</i>
<i>Idewüli amtatää</i>	<i>If you eat it, it is tasty.</i>
<i>Alawuli xawatää</i>	<i>If you kill it, you’ll have pleasure.</i>
<i>Aldawuli baxatää</i>	<i>If you miss it, you’ll still have satisfaction.</i>

Note that in addition to end-rhyme, this hunter’s rhyme is also characterized by head-rhyme: *Abbul baxatää* / *Alawuli maxatää* / *Idewüli amtatää* / *Alawuli xawatää* / *Aldawuli baxatää*.

10) In 2006 in Binder and Dadal we collected such forms as *kamniganj* ~ *xamniganj* ‘Khamnigan’, *kərxəi* ~ *xərxəi* ‘worm’, *kugšee* ~ *xugšee* ‘grandfather’, *kuugəj* ~ *xuugəj* ‘girl, daughter’, etc.

11) Yu Wonsoo (2011) gives a different Khamnigan form based on his fieldwork with

2.2 A witty saying about the inhabitants of the Ker River

Khamnigan speaker Choidogiin Bibish of the Khatagin clan, in Binder county, Khentii province, then 78 years old, and a native speaker of Kirkhon dialect, provided us with a witty saying about the Khamnigans who lived along the Ker River in Dadal county. The saying contains interesting lexical and phonological characteristics, as will be shown below.

The Khamnigan text in transcription with glosses:

- 1 Көрийнкинээ тамаки
[k^hʁ.ri:ŋ.k^hi.nɛ: t^ha.ma.k^hi]
- /kʁr-iin-kin-ee tamaki/
Ker-GEN-NZR-GEN tobacco

- 2 Күлдүү ногоон жилөөн
[k^hul.du: nɔ.ʁɔ:n tʃi.lɔ:n.q^hɔ]
- /kuld-uu nɔgɔɔŋ jilɔɔŋkɔ/
freeze-ADJ green green.tobacco

- 3 Көрийнкинээ коол
[k^hʁ.ri:ŋ.k^hi.nɛ: q^hɔ:l]
- /kʁr-iin-kin-ee kɔɔl/
Ker-GEN-NZR-GEN food

- 4 Күлдүү ногоон кортабка
[k^hul.du: nɔ.ʁɔ:n q^hɔr.t^hap.qa]
- /kuld-uu nɔgɔɔŋ kɔrtapka/
freeze-ADJ green potato

English translation:

- 1 *The tobacco of those of the Ker [River]*
- 2 *Is frozen green tobacco.*
- 3 *The food of those of the Ker [River]*
- 4 *Is frozen green potatoes.*

As with much Mongolic poetry, this saying is characterized by head rhyme. Note that all lines begin with the velar stop *k* [k^h]:

younger Khamnigans.

kəriŋkinɛ tamaki
kulduu nəɣɔŋ jilɔŋkɔ
kəriŋkinɛ kɔɔl
kulduu nəɣɔŋ kɔrtapka

The second and fourth lines are characterized by head-rhyme of similar last syllables, a very interesting phenomenon. Note the head-rhyme of *-kɔ* and *-ka* in the Russian loanwords *jilɔŋkɔ* [tʃi.lɔ:n.qʰɔ] ‘green tobacco’ (← R. *зелёнка*) and *kɔrtapka* [qʰɔr.tʰap.qʰa] ‘potatoes’ (← R. *картофель* ~ *картошка*) below:

kəriŋkinɛ tamaki
kulduu nəɣɔŋ jilɔŋkɔ
kəriŋkinɛ kɔɔl
kulduu nəɣɔŋ kɔrtapka

It is interesting to note that the original Russian donor forms of these words would be characterized by true end-rhyme, i.e. Russian *зелёнка* [zʲɪˈlʲɵnkə] and *картошка* [kərˈtoʂkə].

The text abounds with guttural alliteration. Note the velar and uvular obstruents throughout:

kəriŋkinɛ tamaki
kulduu nəɣɔŋ jilɔŋkɔ
kəriŋkinɛ kɔɔl
kulduu nəɣɔŋ kɔrtapka

A noteworthy lexical characteristic of this text is its use of Russian loanwords. Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol has a significant number of Russian loans, perhaps more than most rural varieties of Khalkha Mongolian.

2.3 A short Khamnigan saying

I elicited another interesting specimen of Khamnigan folklore from Bibish in Binder in October 2009.

- 1 Кара ла гөнөтө гү морийм
 [qʰa.ra.la ɣʰnɔtʰɣu mɔrʲi:m]
 /kara = lA ge-nA-tA = GU mɔri-i-m/
 black = FOC say-DUR-2PL.SUBJ = Q horse-ACC-1SG.POSS

- 2 Камниган гөнөтө гү намайг
 [qʰam.nʲi.ɣan ɡʲɯŋtʰɯ namæ:k]
 /kamnigaŋ ɡe-nA-tA = GU namaig/
 Khamnigan say-DUR-2PL.SUBJ = Q 1SG.ACC

English translation:

- 1 Are you calling my horses ‘just black’?
 2 Are you calling me a Khamnigan?

This saying also contains a good deal of guttural alliteration:

kara la ɡənətə ɡu məriim
kamnigan ɡənətə ɡu namaig

As well as head rhyme:

kara la ɡənətə ɡu məriim
kamnigan ɡənətə ɡu namaig

The verb phrase is morphosyntactically distinctively Khamnigan, following the template [VERB.ROOT]-[ASPECT]-[PERSON] = [Q]. Note that in Khori Buryat the interrogative morpheme comes before the person suffix, i.e. the Buryat equivalent of the Khamnigan interrogative construction about would be **ҮНЭ ҮҮТ** ‘do you say...?’ The Khamnigan morphosyntactic structure is probably the result of Ewenki influence, e.g. note the following Ewenki sentences:

taŋ-cha-s-ku	d’ep-che-s-ku
read-PST-2SG-Q	eat-PST-2SG-Q
‘did you read it?’	‘did you eat it?’
(Nedjalkov 1997: 6).	(Nedjalkov 1997: 136).

2.4 A Khamnigan hunter’s anecdote

In Binder county, Khentii province, Luwsangiin Erdenetsogt of the Baagšnar clan, a middle-aged hunter and son of the locally famous Khamnigan hunter Luwsan†, provided us with a hunter’s anecdote that his father had told

him.¹²⁾ While Erdenetsogt is no longer a fluent speaker of Khamnigan, or even a semi-speaker anymore, he is a rememberer of the Balji variety of the language, which he spoke natively as a child with his father, i.e. he can recite from memory short texts, sayings, and individual words in Khamnigan Mongol, although he no longer can produce novel sentences and utterances in the language or maintain conversation in it. As well as being a rememberer of the language, which is something rare for Khamnigan people his age, he is also a holder of other Khamnigan traditions, including shamanism, a religion which for many Khamnigans in Binder has been replaced by Mongolian Buddhism. It seems very likely that his being a hunter has allowed him to preserve this traditional linguistic and religious knowledge.

Although the anecdote Erdenetsogt recited for us contains significant phonological interference from Khalkha Mongolian and Khori Buryat,¹³⁾ the two languages which he reported regularly speaking as of 2006, it is still an important text from this genre of Khamnigan folklore, as very few people today, even fluent elderly speakers, hold knowledge of the traditional hunting sphere of Khamnigan folklife. The majority of fluent elderly speakers we met in Dadal and Binder in 2006 were women, and were not familiar with many terms and expressions in the hunters' register of Khamnigan Mongol speech, which seems to have largely been restricted to male members of Khamnigan society, the gender which hunted traditionally.

I present the anecdote below in phonetic and phonemic transcription with interlinear morpheme glosses:

[tʰɛ.rǎŋ.gǎn dɔ.tʰǎr kʰuk qʰal.tsǎŋ bɔ.tǎŋ kʰu.pʰǎ.rǎk.tʰɛxt.ŋ]
 /tɛrǎŋ-ŋ dɔtɛr kuk kaldzɔŋ bɔdɔŋ kupǎrǎgʃɛ-x-d = n/
 bush-OBL inside blue bald male.boar move.around-FUT-DL = 3.POSS

[tʰi.sǎl.tǎxt.ŋ pæ.rʲæt atʰ.ʰǎtʃ.ɭ ɛrkʰ.sǎŋ]
 /čisǎldɔg-d = n barʲ-Ad atg-ɭ ɭ ɛrkʰ-sǎŋ/
 jugular.notch-DL = 3.POSS catch-PFV.CVB grab-IPFV.CVB RFP leave.TR-PFV.
 VN

12) Luwsan held the prestigious title of Улсын Анчин, or 'National Hunter'.

13) Most notably, his Khamnigan Mongol speech is characterized by the phonological leveling of Khamnigan Mongol short vowels in non-initial syllables to reduced short vowels, in most cases a reduced schwa [ə], a phonological characteristic of both Buryat and Khalkha.

[kʰi.pəs.l bu:səŋ]

/kipəs l buu-səŋ/

MIM RFP descend-PFV.VN

English approximation:

There was a strange-looking male boar moving around in a bush; I lined up its jugular notch in my sight and let a bullet fly. It fell straight over.

In addition to providing a very specific anatomical term in Khamnigan, i.e. *čisəldəg* ‘jugular notch’, a verb for a specific animal movement, *kupərəkjεε-* ‘move around’, and *terəŋg-* ‘a type of bush’, the text also gives us a brief glimpse of the hunting genre of Khamnigan folklore.

As with the above-mentioned genres of Khamnigan folklore, this hunter’s anecdote contains a significant amount of guttural alliteration. Note the alliteration of the velar and uvular phones [g], [kʰ], [x], [qʰ], and [ʁ] below:

*terəŋgən dɔtɔr kuk kaldzan bɔdɔŋ kupərəkjεεxəd n čisəldəgt n bariad atgaj
l ɔrkisɔŋ. kipəs l buusan.*

3. Conclusion

From this brief evidence, we may tentatively conclude that alliteration in Khamnigan folklore is characterized by a predominance of guttural segments (velar and uvular consonants), and that head rhyme is a common literary device in Khamnigan verse. Of interest for the comparative study of Mongolic literature is that Khamnigan verse occasionally employs end rhyme as well. The texts presented here suggest that perhaps the most common feature of Mongolian Khamnigan oral literature may be guttural alliteration, appearing in such varied genres as folksongs, witty sayings, and hunters’ anecdotes. End rhyme may also be a generalized feature of Khamnigan folklore as well, and is observed in the folksong and witty saying; however, the collection of more texts from different genres is necessary to determine how generalized these phenomena are. As Mongolian Khamnigan Mongol remains only minimally documented at present, collecting such data is an urgent task, especially given the harsh reality that the language is very likely to disappear in the next several years. Important work has been done by Prof. Yu Wonsoo (2011)

with middle-aged Khamnigans, but much work still remains, and the oldest and most fluent speakers of the language must continue to be interviewed and documented.

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