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THE TUBA PEOPLE AND THEIR LANGUAGE

TUBA HALKI VE DİLLERİ



Self-name: An obsolete self-name is *T'ysh/Iysh kizhi* 'man of taiga, mob'. Modern Tubalar native speakers call themselves *Tuva/Tuba-kizhi* ('Tuba man'), rarely *Tadar*. The ethnonym Tuba which became widely spread in the beginning of the 20th century was given to them by neighboring Altai people [Potapov 1935]. An obsolete Russian name is *Chernevye Tatars*, modern–*Tubalars*. The names *Tubintsy*, *Tubalary* are used in scientific literature.

Religion and culture: Traditional beliefs of Tubalars are shamanism. Religious and mythological views are based on animistic concepts, according to which, environment is inhabited by various spirits-lords. Lords of taiga (*tay/tau ääzi*) and rivers (*suy/su ääzi*) are standing out among them. Every tribe has a mountain they worship. Nowadays Christianity is widely spread. However, much of pagan views are still preserved though in a reduced form [Belgibaev 2009: 304].

Tuba girl in national dress

Choya district, Altai Republic. Photo: ©Tair Bodroshev

Tubalars have rich folklore traditions (fairy-tales, songs, proverbs, etc.). Song poetry *qoʒoŋ* (a set of traditional melody-formulas used for singing text of various content) is the most developed. These melodies are divided into the original Tubalar and borrowed—close to both southern Altai and Chalkan and Kumandy melodies [Sarbasheva 2006: 506]. Tubalar epos became well-known and was researched owing to the works of the storytellers N.U. Ulagashev (1861-1946) and N.P. Chernoeva (1919-1978). At the present time there are no storytellers among Tubalars who know the bogatyr epical legends.

Continuing language and cultural assimilation is a prevailing tendency of the modern ethnic processes among Tubalars.



Tuba girls in national dress.
Choya district, Altai Republic. Photo: ©Tair Bodroshev

Residence and population. Tubalars live in Turachak (Artybash, Iogach, Biyka, Chuika, Novotroitsk, Tuloi, Tondoshka, Kebezen, Staryi Kebezen, Ust-Pyzha, Yailu, Turachak), Choya (Paspaul, Salgandu, Karakoksha, Tunzha, Krasnoselskoe, Uskuch, Uimen, Choya) and Maima (Karasuk) regions of Altai Republic along the Biya river, its tributaries Tula, Sary-Koksha, Kara-Koksha, Uimen, Pyzha, in the basin of the Bolshaya and Malaya Isha rivers. Small amount of Tubalars live in the town of Gorno-Altai.

Exact population of Tubalars before 2002 is unknown as they were reckoned among Altai people in the official population censuses. In 1993 Tubalars, along with Chalkans and Kumandy, were included in the Register of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation [Osnovy zakonodatelstva... 1993]. The language of Tubalars was considered one of the dialects of the Altai language. According to N. A. Baskakov, the number of Tubalars was 7 000 in 1965 [Baskakov 1965: 8]. In 1993 Tuba dialect, as well as the other dialects of the Altai language, except Altai-kizhi, was granted a status of independent languages and included in the Red Book of the languages of Russia [1994].

Unfortunately, this has not changed the situation with the language and culture of Tubalars: the native language is not taught at schools, there are no any text-books on the language or newspapers and books published in Tubalar; the social prestige of proficiency in the language is worthless. The language of interethnic and official communication is Russian and to a small degree—literary Altai created on the basis of the southern dialects.

The latest population census of 2002 let Tubalars make themselves ‘statistically’ known. According to the 2002 census data, 1 565 people considered themselves Tuba and 1 533 of them live on the territory of Altai Republic. Almost all Tubalars—1 562 people are fluent in Russian. Tuba people use the Russian language in all spheres of language functioning. Only elderly people use the Tuba language in daily life. Overwhelming majority of Tubalars do not speak their native language. Thus, only 408 people out of 1 533 Tubalars living on the territory of Altai Republic speak their native language (<http://www.perepis2002.ru>).

History: Researchers consider the ethnogenesis of Tuba mainly in relation with Samoyed and Old Turkic ethnic tribes. It is possible that Ket (Yenisei) and even Ugrian groups were involved in the process. Late medieval tribes which at that time were part of the neighboring Teleut and Teless people played an important role in the ethnic history of Tubalars as well [Belgibaev 2009: 304].

Writing system: The language of Tubalars is unwritten. The Tuba dialect’s phonetics researcher S.B. Sarbasheva has offered an alphabet on a phonic-phonematic basis. The phonematic principle is strictly observed (except phoneme ϵ) when writing vowel phonemes. Consonants denote both

phonemes and freestanding phoneme allophones. Violation of the phonematic principle, as the researcher thinks, is justified by necessity of preserving specific Tuba pronunciation.

The Tuba alphabet is based on the Altai alphabet developed on the basis of Cyrillic alphabet in its Russian variant. It preserves all Altai letters with additional 5 graphemes: Ff, Жж, Ққ, Ү, Ңң.

Altogether there are 42 letters in the alphabet, 35 of them are used in original Tubalar words, 7 letters ((Ёё, Юю, Яя, Фф, Цц, Ъ, Ы) are used in borrowed words only.

Tubalar alphabet

Аа, Бб, Вв, Гг, Ff, Ү, Дд, Jj, Ee, Ёё, Жж, Жж, Зз, Ии, Йй, Кк, Ққ, Лл, Мм, Нн, Нн, Ңң, Ңң, Оо, Öö, Пп, Рр, Сс, Тт, Уу, Ўў, Фф, Хх, Цц, Чч, Шш, Щщ, Ъ, Ыы, Ы, Ээ, Юю, Яя [Sarbasheva 2005: 388–400].

Place in the system of Turkic languages. Tubalar, along with the Chalkan and Kumandy languages belongs to the northern group of the dialects of the Altai language unlike the southern group which Altai-kizhi, Telengit and Teleut belong to. The northern dialects have some differences inside the group and are significantly different from the southern group dialects displaying many similar features with Shor and Khakas.

The Tubalar language having similarities with Kumandy and Chalkan, which make northern dialects different from the southern, is characterized by some features marking it out among the northern dialects of the Altai language. The most remarkable characteristic feature is initial *j* (optional *t'/d'*) instead of initial *č* which Kumandy and Chalkan are characterized by. Tubalar language is assimilated by the Russian and Altai literary languages to greater extent than Kumandy or Chalkan.

There is no one opinion among Turcologists on the place of the Tubalar language in linguistic classifications. According to N. A. Baskakov's classification, based on ethnogenetic principle, Tubalar along with other northern Altai dialects (Kumandy, Chalkan), Shor and Khakas languages and their dialects belong to Khakas sub-group of Uygur-Oguz group of east-Hun branch of Turkic languages, while the southern Altai dialects along with Kirgiz belong to Kirgiz-Kypchak group [1969]. In the classification of A.M. Scherbak the Tuba dialect along with Kumandy, Chalkan, Khakas, Shor, Saryg-Uygur, NizhneChulymsky and SredneChulymsky are part of a mixed group comprising Turkic languages which are difficult to classify. The southern dialects of the Altai language are included by him in the Kypchak group [1994: 39-40].

Linguistic characteristics. Phonetics. N. A. Baskakov distinguished 16 vowel phonemes in Tubalar: 8 vowels with normal duration: a, ä, o, ö, i, i, u, ü and 8 corresponding long phonemes: aa, ää, oo, öö, ii, ii, uu, üü. In his opinion, all long vowels in the language are of secondary origin, i.e. the result of contraction of vowel combinations with consonants: *tojñмаан* (< *tojñмаған*) 'did not satiate oneself', *piin/püün* (< *pügün*) 'today'.

Table 1: Vowel system of Tubalar according to N. A. Baskakov

Row	Front		Back	
	Non-labial	Labial	Non-labial	Labial
High	i	Ü	ĩ	u
	ii	üü	ĩĩ	uu
Low	e	ö	a	o
	ee	öö	aa	uo

S.B. Sarbasheva, the researcher of the modern Tuba language, marks out 19 vowel phonemes: 16 monophthongs—*a, aa, e, ee, o, oo, ö, öö, ĩ, ĩĩ, i, ii, u, uu, ü, üü* and 3 diphthongs: *ao, au, ou avom/aom* ‘my father’, *pavir/paur* ‘liver’, *sajruv/sajrou* ‘melted butter’. Vocalic phoneme-diphthongs determine the peculiarity of Tuba vocalism against the other south-Siberian Turkic languages making it close to one of the north-Siberian Turkic languages—Yakut. Besides, in her opinion, vocalism of Alta-kizhi differs from the other Altai dialects by pharyngalized pronunciation of long vowels [Sarbasheva 2004: 36-93].

In Tubalar language there is vowel row harmony: *savar=lar=i* ‘his fingers’, *t’er=ni* ‘earth’. Labial harmony is not successive: *öl=ön/öñ=en* ‘(he) died’, *ot=qo/ot=qa* ‘fire’.

N. A. Baskakov distinguished 14 consonant phonemes in Tubalar: *v, g, j, k, l, m, n, ŋ, p, r, s, t, č, š*.

A slightly different consonant system for the modern Tubalar language is presented by S. B. Sarbasheva [2004] who distinguishes 18 consonant phonemes.

The characteristic features of Tuba consonantism are:

- a) palatalized variants of consonants *š/š’, ž/ž’*: *piž’aq* ‘knife’;
- b) great number of variants of consonants *j/d’/t’/n’*: *jan/d’an/t’an/n’an* ‘come back’ in the initial position interchange;
- c) several variants of hushing consonants *č/č’/ž/ž’/š/š’/ž’*: *qačan/qažan/qač’an/qaž’an/qašan/qažan/qaš’an/qaž’an* ‘when’ in the same position, which means instability of this phoneme’s variants;
- d) instability of finite *γ*: *tay ~ taw* ‘mountain’;
- e) different types of contraction of vowels and consonants in compound words: *körüpıt (< körüp t’at)* ‘he sees’, *urijgen (< urıp ijgen)* ‘(he/she) spilt’.

Morphology. Noun.

N. A. Baskakov marked out 6 cases: Nominative (NOM), Accusative (ACC), Genitive (GEN), Dative (DAT), Locative (LOC) and Ablative (ABL).

Table 2: Case affixes in Tubalar (Baskakov 1966)

Case	Stems ending in vowel	Stems ending in nasal consonant	Stems ending in non-nasal sonorous consonant	Stems ending in breath consonant
Nominativ	–	–	–	–
Genitiv	-niŋ/-niŋ, -diŋ/-diŋ	-niŋ/-niŋ, -diŋ/-diŋ	-diŋ/-diŋ	-tiŋ/-tiŋ
Akkusativ	ni/-ni, -di/-di	-di/-di	-di/-di	-ti/-ti
Direktiv-Dativ	-ya/-ge, -ja/-je, -a/-e	-ya/-ge, -na/-ne	-ya/-ge	-qa/-ke
Lokativ	-da/-de	-da/-de	-da/-de	-ta/-te
Ablativ	-dan/-den, -daŋ/-deŋ, diŋ/-din, -diŋ/-diŋ	-nan/-nen, -naŋ/-neŋ, nin/-nin, -niŋ/-niŋ	-dan/-den, -daŋ/-deŋ, diŋ/-din, -diŋ/-diŋ	-tan/-ten, -taŋ/-teŋ, -tin/-tin, -tiŋ/-tiŋ

According to our data, the modern Tubalar case system includes Instrumental case ending in *-la/-le*, apart from the cases distinguished by N. A. Baskakov. Also we have revealed variants of Ablative case with nasal consonants for the stems ending in vowel and non-nasal sonorous consonant which are not presented by N. A. Baskakov.

The Plural number marker is affix *-lar/-ler, -lor/-lör*, which has variants with initial *d, t, n*: *köl=nör/köl=ner/köl=der/köl=dör* ‘lakes’, *qam=nar* ‘shamans’, *tay=lar* ‘mountains’, *savar=lar* ‘fingers’, *pultiq=tar* ‘guns’, *t’il=lar/ t’il=nar* ‘years’, *pala=lar/pal=nar/pal=dar* ‘children’.

N. A. Baskakov specified the following possessive affixes: 1 Sg.: *-(i)m*, 2nd person Sg.: *-(i)ŋ*, 3 Sg.: *-(i), -zi*; 1 Pl.: *-(i)bis/-(i)vis, -is*, 2 Pl.: *-(i)yar/-(i)ger, -aar/-äär, -ar/-är*, 3 Pl.: *-(i)lari/-dari/-tari/-nari*.

We have not revealed possessive forms for 2 Pl with *-(i)yar/-(i)ger, -aar/äär, -ar/-är* specified by N. A. Baskakov. Other affixes are used in the modern Tubalar language: *-(i)lariŋ/-dariŋ/-tariŋ/-nariŋ*. This is supported by the data of Moscow researchers [Tatevosov 2009: 200].

Sg	Pl
1. <i>pala=m</i> ‘my child’	1. <i>pala=vis</i> ‘our child’
2. <i>pala=ŋ</i> ‘your child’	2. <i>pala=lariŋ</i> ‘your child’
3. <i>pala=zi</i> ‘his child’	3. <i>pala=lari</i> ‘their child’.

Pronouns. Personal: *men* ‘i’, *sen* ‘you’, *ol/ul/o/y* ‘he, she, it’, *pis/bis* ‘we’, *sler* ‘you’, *olor/ular/lar* ‘they’. Demonstrative: *po/poo* ‘this’, *ol* ‘that’.

The pronoun paradigm shows fewer variants of case markers for the same form. The Table below demonstrates the paradigm of personal pronouns according to N. A. Baskakov and data of the modern Tubalar language.

The forms of objective cases for the 3 Sg. pronoun derived from the stem *o-* and marked out by N. A. Baskakov are not used in the speech of modern Tubalar-speakers. Besides, all Ablative forms have endings with occlusive *d*; we found Genitive markers with nasal *n* for the 2 and 3 Pl. pronouns in Genitive.

Table 3: Paradigms of personal pronouns according to present-day data and N. A. Baskakov (B: Baskakov, M: Modern)

Cases	Sour -ce	men 'i'	sen 'you'	ol/ul/o/y 'he, she, it'	pis/bis 'we'	sler 'you'	olor/ular/ ilar 'they'
Nominativ	B	men	sen	ol/ul/o/y	pis/bis	sler	olor/ular
	M	men	sen	ol/o	pis	sler	lar/ilar
Genitiv	B	meniņ	seniņ	oniņ/aniņ/u niņ	pistiņ/ bistiņ	sleriņ	olordiņ/ ulardiņ
	M	meniņ/ meeņ	seniņ /seeņ	aniņ/aaņ	pistiņ	sleriņ/ sleriņ	lariņ/ lardiņ
Akkusativ	B	meni	seni	oni/ani/unī	pisti/bisti	slerdi/slerni	olorni/ ularni
	M	meni	seni	anī	pisti	slerdi/slerni	larni/ lardī
Direktiv- Dativ	B	mee/ mege/maa	see/sege/ saa	oyo/aa	piske/ biske	slerge	oloryo/ ularya
	M	mayā/maa	saya/saa	aya/aa	piske	slerge/slere	larya/lara
Instrument	B	–	–	–	–	–	–
	M	menle	senle	aniła	pisle	slerle	larla
Locativ	B	mende	sende	onda/anda	piste/biste	slerde	olordo/ ularda
	M	mende	sende	anda	piste	slerde	larda
Ablativ	B	menneņ	senneņ	onnoņ/ anaņ/andaņ	pisteņ/ bisteņ	slerdeņ	olordoņ/ ulardan
	M	menden/ mendin	senden/ sendin	andin	pisten/ pistin	slerden/ slerdin	lardin

Verb. N. A. Baskakov distinguished 7 tenses in Tubalar language: Present of the moment: $-(i)p + d'it$ and contracted forms $-(i)bit/-(i)bit$; Present-Future: $-a/-e/-j + -di/-di$; Future Indefinite: $-(a)r/-(e)r$; Future of necessity: $-(a)tan/-(e)ten$, Past 1: $-di/-di$, Past 2: $-yan/-gen$, Past 3: $-(i)ptir$.

Table 4 presents the paradigm of the Present of the moment with $-(i)p + d'it$ according to N. A. Baskakov and present-day language data. The modern Tubalar language is characterized by usage of contracted rather than complete forms.

Table 4: Paradigm of the Present of the moment with $-(i)p + d'it$

Person	Paradigm according to N. A. Baskakov	Paradigm of the modern language
Singular		
1	körüp d'itim/körüpitim 'I see'	köriptim/körtim
2	körüp d'itsiņ/körüpitsiņ 'you see'	köripsin
3	körüp d'it/körüpit 'he sees'	köribit/körbit
Plural		
1	körüp d'itis/körüpitis 'we see'	köriptivis/köriptis/körtivis/körtis
2	körüp d'itsler/körüpitsler 'you see'	köripser
3	körüp d'it/körüpitler 'they see'	köripler/köribitlar/körbitlar

The category of mood is presented by forms of Indicative, Optative ($-yaj/-gej$, $-qaj/-kej$), Imperative (1 Sg.: $-ajin/-ejin$, 2 Sg.: \emptyset , 3 Sg.: $-zin/-zin$, $-sin/-sin$; 1 Pl.: $-ali/-eli$, 2 Pl.: $-(i)yar/-(i)ger$, $-lar /-ler$, 3 Pl.: $-zin/-zin$, $-sin/-sin$) and Conditional ($-za /-ze$, $-sa/-se$) moods.

The modern Tubalar language only uses *-lar/-ler* for the 2 Pl. It is possible to use variant *-tar/-ter* as well.

Table 5: Paradigm of Imperative mood

Person	Paradigm according to N. A. Baskakov	Paradigm of the modern language
Singular		
1	kör=ejin 'I see'	kör=ejin
2	kör 'you see'	Kör
3	kör=zın 'he sees'	kör=zın
Plural		
1	kör=ö=li /kör=ö=ök 'we see'	kör=eli/kör=ök
2	kör=iger/kör=ö=ör/kör=git/kör=lör 'you see'	kör=ler
3	kör=zın 'they see'	kör=zın

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Sample Text : About the origin of the Tubalar *Komnosh* tribe

Informant : E. S. Bakasheva. Year of birth-1938. Lives in Kebezen village of Turachak region. Language: Tuba, tribe–Komnosh. Record of 2002.

(1) Meeñ adamniñ avazı ajtqan: «Pis taudan tavılyan kiži.	(1) The father of my father said: “We are people (who) came out from taiga”.
(2) Pistin uq-tözivis tauda» tep.	(2) Our roots are in the mountains”.
(3) Anda taunıñ ääziniñ qızı pistin söökkö, qomnoşqa, qomnoş kiže paryan tep, ol qomnoş kiže parala, pisti törötkön tep.	(3) There the daughter of the lord of the mountain got married in our <i>Komnosh</i> tribe, a man from the <i>Komnosh</i> tribe; having married a <i>Komnosh</i> man, she gave birth to us.
(4) Vot pistin ääzi, ääzivis, taunıñ kozajkazı poon tijt, ämen kiži.	(4) So, they say, our ancestor was a woman—the mistress of the mountain.
(5) Ajttılar: «T’e, seen qatın kižiniñ qızı äves, ol taunıñ ääziniñ qızı.	(5) (They) said: “Your wife is daughter of the lord of the mountain, not of a man”
(6) Ol čamčanı t’eni uzun kijbit tep.	(6) She wears a shirt with long sleeves.
(7) Aañ tırvaqtarı uzun tep.	(7) Her nails are long.
(8) Aaštı t’uu senle qožo oş’up t’ivijit, ol түnde pažına aš salbit tep».	(8) Why doesn’t she eat with you, but puts the food on her head at night”.
(9) Meeñ tetuşqam, adamniñ avazı ajda quuş’ındap t’it.	(9) My grandfather, the father of my father told so.
(10) Andan äri ketep, anı körör polza, ş’in, tırvağı uzun.	(10) Then her husband waylaid her (and) saw: her nails are indeed long.
(11) «Ol seni qaş’an pir öltür salar»–tep ajtti.	(11) “She will kill you one day”, - they say.
(12) «A anı qanş’anan sürten»–tep ajtti–o jerden».	(12) “And how to banish her from that place?”–he asked.
(13) Taqşın ärte turala, qijir: «Adam la anamnıñ turazı küj pert’it» tep.	(13) “Get up early and cry out in the street: “Your parents’ house has started burning”.
(14) Aya aj ajdala, parzan, sene qajra kelves.	(14) If you tell her that and go, she will not come back to you.
(15) Aandan ajttır: «Adañ-ananıñ turazı anda poş küj pert’it».	(15) Then, it turned out, he said: “You parents’ house has started burning!”
(16) Ajlan keende, t’ikpezine peri qıstıjele, üş’ele ver tijt.	(16) When he turned around, they say, she held her skirt between her legs and flew away.
(17) Ol andan kelen t’oq tijt.	(17) They say, she never came back from there.
(18) Palazı artqalan tijt.	(18) Her child remained, they say.
(19) Ol paladıñ pistin keve, üje anartına öskön tijt.	(19) Our tribe spread from this child.

(20) Vot qomnoštor, ol tauniņ ääziniņ palarī tep.

(20) So, the *Komnosh* are the children of that mistress of the mountain, they say. (21) This is what my grandfather told us.

(21) Vot ajdī piske meeņ tetušqam ajdīp peren.

(21) We don't say "grandfather", we say "my *karnok*" regarding the father of your father and "my *taida*" regarding the father of your mother

(22) Pistiņ «tetušqa» tep ajtpijt, a «qarņoyīm» dep ajtt'it adaziniņ avazina, a änamniņ avazī, «tajdam» teptis.

(22) "*Taina*" and "*taida*" are the parents of the mother, and the parents of the father are "*karnaok*" and "*karnak*".

(23) Tajnam la tajdam–anaziniņ, a avaziniņ–qarņaoq la qarņaq.



Tubalars on holiday of the northern Altai «T'ürük bayram» («Cedar holiday»). Choya district, Altai Republic. Photo: ©Tair Bodroshev



Tubalars on holiday of the northern Altai «T'ürük bayram» («Cedar holiday»). Choya district, Altai Republic. Photo: ©Tair Bodroshev



Tubin national food.
Choya district, Altai Republic. ©Tair Bodroshev



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