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PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE PHONOLOGY OF MODERN BARGUT

The historical province of Bargu (WMo *Baryu*, Ru *Barga*, Chi *Baerhu*), today better known as Hulunbuir (WMo *Kölin Buyir*, Chi *Hulunbeier*), is one of the least investigated Mongolian-speaking regions. The present-day population in the region is extremely heterogeneous, but there is no doubt that the most ancient Mongolian-speaking local element is formed by the so-called Bargut (WMo *baryucud*), of which two principal varieties are distinguished: the Old Bargut (WMo *qayucin baryucud*) and the New Bargut (WMo *sine baryucud*). The more recent elements in the region include groups of the Dagur and Eastern Buryat, as well as representatives of various Eastern Mongolian tribes, of which the Khorchin are the most numerous.

Available information on the language of the Bargut is quite scarce, but it is known that the Old Bargut and the New Bargut speak two different dialects, both of which are basically closely related to Buryat. The similarity to Buryat is particularly conspicuous in the New Bargut dialect, while the Old Bargut dialect shows a number of peculiarities of its own. The New Bargut dialect has been preliminarily recorded by Poppe (1932), while scattered data on both the New Bargut and the Old Bargut dialect are to be found among the materials of Todayeva (1960). Only recently has more extensive information on the Old Bargut dialect been collected by a team of Inner Mongolian scholars, published under the editorship of Uuda (1984, 1985).

The present author had the opportunity of visiting briefly the Old Bargut Banner (Chi *Chenbaerhu qi*) of Hulunbuir League (Chi *Hulunbeier meng*) in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in late September, 1987. Owing to administrative restrictions, the visit had to be primarily concentrated on the tourist spot of Hohnur (WMo *Kökenayur*, Chi *Huhenuoer*), the only place in the banner officially open to foreigners at the time of the visit. The tourist site employed a dozen local workers, from whom it was possible to collect some information on the language of the contemporary younger generation in the region. The following remarks are for the most part based on this information and may, of course, require re-examination in the light of more extensive field material in the future.

The material derives mainly from two female informants (A and B) of about twenty years of age. Both had grown up within the Old Bargut Banner and regarded themselves as pure representatives of the local Bargut population. One of the informants (A) came from a locality called Ongon (WMo *Ongyon sumu*, Chi *Wangong*), while the other (B) came from a so-called Evenki commune (Chi *Ewenke gongshe*). Both had received primary and secondary education completely in the Mongolian language in local rural

schools and considered Mongolian as their native and best language. However, both were also fluent in spoken Chinese, and the informant coming from the Evenki commune (B) spoke Evenki (Solon) as a third language.

The data received from the two main informants were occasionally verified with the help of other local people at the tourist spot, notably another female worker (C) of the same age. The latter was, however, of the Evenki nationality and considered Evenki (Solon) as her native language, although she was fully fluent in Mongolian and Chinese as well. It may be noted that among the informants Chinese was only used for communication in the presence of monolingual Chinese staff members and guests, while otherwise Mongolian was preferred in the form of the subdialects and idiolects here collectively termed Modern Bargut.

For the additional confirmation of selected details, two more informants (D and E), also females, were interviewed later in Hailar (WMo *Qayilar qota*, *Chi Hailaer*). The latter were enrolled as students of the Hailar College of Mongolian Medicine, but were actually natives of Bayanhure (WMo *Bayanküriy-e*), the administrative centre of the Old Bargut Banner. At the medical college, Mongolian in various forms is the sole language of communication and instruction.

Since all of the informants were literate in Written Mongolian and had been exposed to the influence of the standardized oral language, as used in the Inner Mongolian educational system as well as in radio and television broadcasts, it is no surprise that their speech only partially reflected the features known to be peculiar to the Old Bargut dialect. On the other hand, the very use of the Written Mongolian standard, owing to the relative abstractness of the latter, may actually favour the preservation of dialectal features in oral usage all over Inner Mongolia. Thus, all the varieties of Modern Bargut recorded from the informants remain clearly distinct from the more southerly located Inner Mongolian dialects of the general Eastern Mongolian type.

Without attempting an exhaustive overall description of the phonology of Modern Bargut, it is preferred here to discuss a selection of important details in relation to the immediately neighbouring, and better known, Mongolian dialects and languages, i.e. Dagur, Buryat, and general Eastern Mongolian. Interestingly, certain details, especially in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune (B), also necessitate a comparison with (Mongolian) Khamnigan. Since the general comparative background information is well known and easily accessible in, for instance, the works by Poppe (1955) and Rassadin (1982), only the Written Mongolian cognates of the Modern Bargut examples are specified below. For more specialized information on Khamnigan, reference may be made to Damdinov (1968).

1. To start with a paradigmatic characteristic of the Buryat type, data from all of the informants suggest a system with six short vowels, as in Eastern Buryat. The basic phonetic qualities of the vowels are also close to those of Eastern Buryat, but reflect an even more perfectly completed process of rotation, as is most clearly evident from the phonetic representation of the series *ü > /u/ vs. *u > /o/ vs. *o > /å/, e.g. A (the letters denote the informants) *t'ür²gəŋ* /turegen/ 'swift' (WMo *türgen*), AB *qqr'ələ* /gotele/

'footwear' (WMo *γutul*), AB *Б ѡлэхэ* /bâlexe/ 'to become' (WMo *bolqu*). This series of developments is also reflected in the quality of the vowel *a > /a/ in that the latter is occasionally slightly palatalized, as if to emphasize its distinction from the rotated *o > /â/, e.g. AB *җарэ ≈ җарэ* /gare/ 'hand' (WMo *γar*). The most important paradigmatic detail is, of course, the merger of the original short *ö with *ü, which may be illustrated by pairs such as ABDE *үгэ* /uge/ 'give!' (WMo *ög*) vs. ABDE *үгэ* /uge/ 'word' (WMo *üge*). However, the phonetic gap left by the disappearance of *ö has actually been filled by the vowel *e > /e/, which has the rotated quality of a middle-high central vowel but is additionally labialized, as in Dagur, e.g. ABDE *эне ≈ өне* /ene/ 'this' (WMo *ene*). In examples of the type AB *үдэрэ* /udere/ 'day' (WMo *edür*) *e shows the normal Buryat development through *ö into *ü > /u/, but occasional exceptions from this development were recorded in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune, e.g. B *т'омэрэ* /temere/ vs. A *т'умэрэ* /tumere/ 'iron' (WMo *temür*). Such exceptions may well reflect the influence of a Khamnigan idiom with a preserved distinct *ö, but for the informants concerned it is apparently only a question of a sporadic variation between /u/ and /e/. Finally, the vowel *i > /i/ shows no special qualitative peculiarities, e.g. AB *Бидэ* /bide/ 'we' (WMo *bida/bide*).

2. Long vowels were recorded as more or less identical in quality with the corresponding short segments, and may probably, as far as the initial syllable is concerned, be analyzed phonologically as double vowels, e.g. AB *сү* /suu/ 'milk' (WMo *sü/sün*), AB *нөрэ* /noore/ 'lake' (WMo *naγur*), A *бэсэ* /jââse/ 'money' (WMo *joγos*), AB *бэжэхэ* /jaaxe/ 'to disjoint' (WMo *jayaqu*), AB *хээрэ ≈ хөрэ* /xeere/ 'steppe' (WMo *keger-e*), AB *хихэ* /xiixe/ 'to do' (WMo *kikü*). There is a problem, however, connected with the representation of the long *ȫ, which, unlike the situation with the corresponding short vowels, has not merged with *ǖ. Thus, it would seem that the paradigm of long vowels has not six but seven qualitatively different members, just as is the case in Buryat. A similar picture is also revealed, at least at the level of transcription, by the Old Bargut data of Uuda. However, as far as Modern Bargut is concerned, it is reasonable to assume that *ȫ is no longer represented by a single distinct member of the paradigm of long vowels, but, rather, by a diphthongoid sequence of two different vowels, most probably /uee/. This may appear an ad hoc solution, but in the actual pronunciation of all of the informants a diphthongoid sequence was really present, e.g. DE *үөрэ* /ueere/ 'other' (WMo *öger-e*), B *үөдэ* /ueede/ 'upwards' (WMo *ögede*), B *хүүсэ* /xueese/ 'foam' (WMo *kögesü*), DE *Б үө* /buee/ 'shaman' (WMo *böge*), AB *Б үөрэ* /bueere/ 'kidney' (WMo *böger-e*). If this interpretation is correct, Modern Bargut has six short or single and six long or double vowels (6+6), which makes the idiom distinct from Buryat (6+7) and places it exactly halfway between general Eastern Mongolian (7+7) and Dagur (5+5). Interestingly, the very restructuring of *ȫ into /uee/ may have taken place under the areal influence of Dagur, for the process of labial breaking in the latter has partially led to very similar results. Of course, the postulated special sequence /uee/ adds to the syntagmatic complexity of Modern Bargut. As a matter of fact, the phonetic difference between /uee/

and /ee/ is so small that a complete neutralization might be a reality in some idiolects, although no definitive evidence for this can be presented so far. In any case, the opposition is only attested in the initial syllable. In non-initial syllables /ee/ may be assumed even in the cases where Buryat and general Eastern Mongolian would show reflexes of a long **ö*, e.g. B *ᠮᠣᠳᠤᠰ᠎ᠠ* /udeese/ (/ude-ese/) 'noon [abl.]' (WMo *üde-ece*), B *ᠮᠣᠳᠦᠷᠦᠰ᠎ᠠ* /udereese/ (/udere-ese/) 'day [abl.]' (WMo *edür-ece*).

3. A very peculiar phonotactic feature of Modern Bargut, for some reason not observable in the Old Bargut material of Uuda, is the extensive presence of a phonetic vowel segment in word-final position. It is not just a question of the preservation of original word-final vowels, but also of the addition of a vowel segment after original word-final consonants. Such a vowel segment is almost invariably present in words pronounced slowly and in isolation, but shows a tendency to disappear in rapid and connected speech. A similar situation has been recorded for Dagur by Martin (1961:16) and Tsumagari (1985:232–3), and it is very likely that the Modern Bargut data reflect an areal connection with Dagur. The phonological interpretation suggested by Martin and Tsumagari is probably also valid for Modern Bargut. According to this interpretation any vowel that may potentially be manifest in concrete speech represents a true phonological segment. In the most simple case such a vowel can be paradigmatically identified with /e/, which is presumably the least marked member of the paradigm. In the actual pronunciation of the informants the segment was qualitatively realized as a more or less neutral reduced vowel with only an occasional tendency to adopt positional shades, e.g. AB *ᠮᠣᠵᠢ* ≈ *ᠮᠣᠵᠢᠨ* /jaxe/ 'brim' (WMo *jaq-a*), AB *ᠮᠣᠳᠦ* ≈ *ᠮᠣᠳᠦᠨ* /mode/ 'tree' (WMo *modu*). An important aspect of the phenomenon is the neutralization between original vowel stems and consonant stems, as exemplified by pairs of the type A *ᠲᠠᠯᠠ* /tale/ 'plain' (WMo *tal-a*) vs. A *ᠴᠠᠯᠠ* /gale/ 'fire' (WMo *ᠵal*).

4. The addition of a vowel segment after original word-final consonants implies a tendency towards open syllables in Modern Bargut. The same tendency can be observed in word-internal position, for a short vowel element is very often present between two consonants which originally represent a consonant cluster. Of course, any original word-internal vowels have also been segmentally preserved in similar positions. In the simplest case such vowel elements may again be assumed to represent the phoneme /e/, e.g. A *ᠠᠪᠬᠢ* /abexe/ 'to take' (WMo *abqu*), AB *ᠬᠢᠯᠪᠠᠷᠠ* /xilebere/ 'easy' (WMo *kilbar*), B *ᠬᠣᠭᠦᠷᠭᠡ* /xueerege/ 'bridge' (WMo *kögerge*). Like in word-final position, a vowel in word-internal position may also disappear in rapid speech and owing to prosodic factors. However, it is reasonable to assume that such a vowel is phonologically present even when it is not pronounced, e.g. A *ᠠᠶᠢᠷᠬᠡᠨ* /äirexen/ 'near' (WMo *oyiraqan*), B *ᠨᠢᠮᠭᠢᠨ* /nimegen/ 'thin' (WMo *nimgen/nimegen*). It goes without saying that this is a rather abstract analysis, which involves diachronic and synchronic problems not yet fully solved. In support of the suggested analysis it may be noted, for instance, that the original difference in syllable structure has been completely neutralized in pairs of the type B *ᠠᠷᠶᠠ* /arege/ 'means' (WMo *ary-a*) vs. B *ᠲᠠᠷᠶᠠ* /tarege/ 'sour milk' (WMo *taraᠵ*), a feature distinguishing Modern Bargut from both Buryat and most Eastern Mongolian dialects. On

the other hand, there is evidence that the distinction between original vowel stems and consonant stems may still be partially preserved at least at the level of morphology, as is evident from the different suffix allomorphs in pairs of the type A *jəβəbʒʒʑ* /iabeje/ 'to go [ger. imprf.]' (WMo *yabuju*) vs. A *aφʻiʒʑʑ* /abece/ 'to take [ger. imprf.]' (WMo *abcu*). Also, there are occasional indications suggesting that a secondary process of neutralizing assimilation has been active between two consonants in spite of the assumed presence of a phonological vowel segment between them, e.g. B *bʒəχs* /jaxese/ instead of */jagese/ 'fish' (WMo *jiyasu*). A more comprehensive evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the adopted analysis in relation to actual language material remains to be carried out in the future.

5. Another vowel which occurs in non-initial syllables is *i > /i/. Modern Bargut differs from most Eastern Mongolian dialects in that this vowel is largely preserved as an actual phonetic segment, although it may occasionally be reduced to the extent that its identity is mainly signalled by the palatalization of the preceding consonant. The preceding vowel may also show a slight metaphonic influence, especially in the case of /a/, but this influence has apparently no phonological significance. It may, consequently, be assumed that words with an original *i in non-initial syllables have preserved their phonological structure down to Modern Bargut, e.g. AB *mɔʻɪ* ≈ *mɔʻə* /mâri/ 'horse' (WMo *mori*), AB *χəβʻi* ≈ *χəβʻə* /xobi/ 'share' (WMo *qubi*), AB *bətʻiχə* /barixe/ 'to seize' (WMo *bariqu*). However, problems of interpretation arise if a stem ending in /i/ is followed by a grammatical suffix beginning with a vowel. The phonetic result is normally a clear palatalized consonant followed by a long vowel. Since the phonetically observable vowel length in such cases is never distinctive, while the palatalization of the consonant is, it is perhaps phonologically a question of sequences of /i/ and another single vowel, e.g. AB *mɔʻɪ ɔ̄rə* /mâriäre/ (/mâri-äre/) 'horse [instr.]' (WMo *mori-bar*), B *χəβʻi ɔ̄rə* /xobiare/ (/xobi-are/) 'share [instr.]' (WMo *qubi-bar*). This is, incidentally, the analysis adopted by the Khalkha Cyrillic orthography. Similar sequences are also attested within derived and non-derived stems, e.g. AB *tʻəχʻə* /taxia/ 'chicken' (WMo *takiy-a*), AB *χəʻə ɔ̄* /xario/ 'answer' (WMo *qariyu*). Importantly, the palatalness conveyed by /i/ in such cases may in Modern Bargut also occur in connection with original front vowels, a situation reminiscent of Buryat and Dagur but different from general Eastern Mongolian, e.g. AB *χülʻəχə* /xulixe/ 'to wait' (WMo *küliyekü*), A *səʻtʻüŋ* /seriun/ 'cool' (WMo *serigün*). The most crucial phonological detail in this connection is the question of how the behaviour of a stem-final /i/, as opposed to /e/, should be understood in the position preceding a suffixal /i/. Phonetically it is an opposition between a palatalized and an unpalatalized consonant, though there is also a slight difference in the quality of the vowel. It seems that in the suggested framework there is only one reasonable answer, viz. the assumption of an opposition between the sequences /ii/ vs. /ei/, e.g. A *mɔʻɪ ɪγə* /mâriige/ (/mâri-ige/) 'horse [acc.]' (WMo *mori-yi*) vs. A *garɪγə* ≈ *garɪiγə* /gareige/ (/gare-ige/) 'hand [acc.]' (WMo *γar-i*). It may be noted that the same problem of interpretation also exists for most other Mongolian languages and dialects, although it is possible that different idioms require different solutions. For Khalkha, Poppe (1970:56)

has suggested an analysis which, if adopted for Modern Bargut, would imply an opposition of /eii/ vs. /ii/, i.e. */gareiiige/ (*/gare-iige/) vs. /mâriige/ (/mâri-ige/). However, this analysis involves obvious morphophonological problems which make it difficult to accept even for Khalkha. Without doubt, the whole question would require a detailed treatment with full consideration of all the relevant phonological, morphological and dialectological aspects.

6. The analysis suggested above has a consequence for the interpretation of all phonetically observable long vowels in non-initial syllables, for, insofar as the latter are not preceded by a palatalized consonant, they must be assumed to represent sequences of /e/ and another vowel, e.g. A *бодā* /bodea/ 'grain' (WMo *buday-a*), A *хэлъβо* /xâlebeâ/ 'union' (WMo *qolbuy-a*). This conclusion is inevitable in view of all the stems ending in /e/ and taking suffixes beginning with a vowel, e.g. AB *тс'ггэ* /cage/ 'time' (WMo *cay*) : AB *тс'ггэсэ* /cagease/ (/cage-ase/) 'id. [instr.]' (WMo *cay-aca*). According to this interpretation, so far as it is correct, Modern Bargut only exhibits a minimal amount of morphophonology at the junction of a stem and a suffix, in any case less than most of the neighbouring Mongolian idioms. In fact, those morphophonological phenomena that are present in the idiom would, rather, seem to belong to the realm of morphology, as exemplified by the addition of connective elements to certain stem types before certain suffixes, e.g. AB *сүүгэрэ* /suugeere/ (/suu-ge-ere/) 'milk [instr.]' (WMo *sü-ber/sün-iyer*). It may be noted that the suggested interpretation does not involve any assumptions of phonological deep structures, but simply implies the presence in the idiom of a relatively abstract surface structure. Certainly, a less abstract approach to the facts would also be completely plausible, but any such approach would require the assumption of a more complicated morphophonology.

7. Phonetic palatalized consonants are also attested word-initially, reflecting the diachronic process of palatal breaking. In this respect, a considerable diversity could be observed among the informants, but the general impression was that breaking in Modern Bargut is less fully developed than in most Eastern Mongolian dialects. The result of breaking, whenever present, may in the framework adopted be phonologically analyzed in terms of a sequence involving a prevocalic /i/. Such an /i/ often exhibits a slight palatalizing effect on the following vowel, especially if the latter is /a/, e.g. A *миңгэ* /miange/ 'thousand' (WMo *mingγ-a*). A special highly palatal allophone of /a/ was observed in the combination /xia/, e.g. B *хет'эд* /xiatede/ 'Chinese' (WMo *kitad*), perhaps an indication of an ongoing change towards decreasing markedness, i.e. */xietede/. From the point of view of dialectology it is important to note that the Modern Bargut data often follow the Buryat pattern of breaking, rather than that of general Eastern Mongolian, e.g. A *нидэрэ* /nioderege/ 'fist' (WMo *nidury-a*), AB *нөрэ* /nioore/ 'face' (WMo *niγur*). Examples of the absence of breaking were especially frequent in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune, a feature which can most likely be explained as a trace of Khamnigan influence, e.g. B *михэ* /mixe/ 'meat' (WMo *miq-a*), B *сирэ* /sire/ 'yellow' (WMo *sir-a*), *нидэ* /nide/ 'eye' (WMo *nidü*).

8. It has been stated above that any palatalized consonant which may be present

phonetically in Modern Bargut reflects the influence of a following /i/. A very similar picture has been assumed for Dagur by Martin (1961.17), while Tsumagari (1985.230–1) postulates a separate palatal glide phoneme. Indeed, the behaviour of a prevocalic /i/ in both Dagur and Modern Bargut is reminiscent of a glide, and it may not be a bad idea for certain purposes to employ a special notation in order to distinguish the syllabic and asyllabic occurrences of /i/. However, from the point of view of phonemic contrasts, there is probably no need to postulate a palatal glide for Modern Bargut, for the syllabicity or asyllabicity of /i/ seems to be completely governed by positional factors. It may be noted that vowel sequences involving an asyllabic prevocalic /i/ occur not only post-consonantly, but also word-initially, in which position a concrete phonetic glide segment is really present. Such a glide is of dual origin in that it may either represent an original segment of the same type, or it may be the result of palatal breaking, e.g. A *jäyāŋ* /iagean/ 'pink' (WMo *yayan*), AB *jäləχə* /ialexe/ 'to win' (WMo *ilaqu*). There are probably no synchronic restrictions concerning the combination of an asyllabic /i/ with different vowel qualities, but diachronically certain preferences may be noted, as exemplified by the irregular, though not unique to Modern Bargut, development of the interrogative stem in B *jūnda* /iuunde/ instead of */ioonde/ 'why' (WMo *yayun-dur*). The only major synchronic problem in connection with the asyllabic /i/ concerns the sequence /ii/, which, in the framework presented so far, would appear to be potentially ambiguous in that it could be assumed to stand for either a long vowel or a sequence of a glide and a vowel. However, there is reason to assume that the latter realization is the rule in Modern Bargut, e.g. A *jixə* ≈ *jikχə* /iixe/ 'big' (WMo *yeke*), A *jirə* /iire/ 'ninety' (WMo *yere/yire*). An occasional irregular variation between /ii/ and /i/ was observed among the informants, notably in the word A *irəχə* /irexe/ vs. B *jirəχə* /iirexe/ 'to come' (WMo *irekü*), as also recorded by Uuda (1985.223). Incidentally, the latter shape has again parallels in Buryat, and also in certain varieties of Dagur, but the diachronic background of the variation remains somewhat obscure.

9. The status of the sequence /ii/ must also be examined in relation to the so-called diphthongs ending in /i/. In the initial syllable these were normally realized by all informants as clearly bisegmental sequences, as in Dagur. The mutual phonetic interaction of the components was generally minimal, e.g. AB *bəixə* /baixe/ 'to be' (WMo *baiqu*), B *χəinə* /xaine/ 'behind' (WMo *qoyin-a*), AB *oiləχə* /oilexe/ 'to cry' (WMo *uyilaqu*), B *güixə* /guixe/ 'to run' (WMo *güyikü/güyükü*). Only occasionally, probably in connection with complex combinatory and external factors, was a tendency towards monophthongization observed in the speech of some informants, e.g. A *səexəŋ* /saixen/ 'nice' (WMo *saiqan*), A *ɸʒülə* /juile/ 'sort' (WMo *jüil*). On the other hand, the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune showed random instances of the presence of an intervocalic glide within diphthongs, a feature known to be unambiguously diagnostic of Khamnigan, e.g. A *oi* ≈ B *ɸi* /ʔi/ 'forest' (WMo *oi*). Another feature reminiscent of Khamnigan, but also of Dagur, is the presence of the sequence /ei/ in the paradigm of diphthongs. The diphthong /ei/, as opposed to the sequence /ii/ described above, was recorded word-initially in the pronoun A *əimə* ≈ B *əimə* /eime/ 'like this' (WMo *eyimü*).

The pronoun A $t'im^{\partial} \approx B t'imə$ /teime/ (WMo *teyimü*) is more problematic, since it showed a more or less monophthongoid vowel, indicating that its synchronic phonological shape might, at least for some speakers, be */tiime/. However, it may be recalled that the principal realization of the sequence /ei/ in non-initial syllables is a long monophthong. For the other diphthongs, also, more or less monophthongoid realizations were frequently observed in non-initial syllables, e.g. A $dalē^i \approx B dalē$ /dalai/, AB $m\varphi^{\partial}t'ē$ /māritai/ (/māri-tai/) 'with a horse' (WMo *moritai*), although bisegmental realizations, possibly reflecting careful speech, were recorded as well, e.g. AB $qaxāi$ /gaxai/ 'pig' (WMo *qaxai*). Irregular variation between the informants was observed in the pronouns A $xēdi$ /xedei/ vs. B $xōdūi$ /xedui/ 'how much' (WMo *kedüi*), A $t'ēdi$ /tedei/ vs. B $t'ōdūi$ /tedui/ 'this much' (WMo *tedüi*).

10. An important consequence of the diachronic process of rotation is the reorientation of vowel harmony. From the point of view of the original patterns of palatal and labial harmony, the six vowel phonemes of Modern Bargut may be divided into four basic categories: the original front vowels /e u/, the original back vowels /a o/, the low round vowel /ā/, and the neutral vowel /i/. In this framework, the following harmonic combinations of vowels would be theoretically possible: /e u/ + /e u i/, /a o/ + /a o i/, /ā/ + /ā o i/, and /i/ + /a ā o e u i/. Indeed, these are the harmonic patterns that may still be observed in Modern Bargut. However, the scope of vowel harmony has greatly diminished in the idiom, for it is probably correct to assume that all short vowels and diphthongs of non-initial syllables are completely indifferent from the point of view of the harmonic patterns. In the loss of vowel harmony for the short vowels, a decisive role has been played by the neutralization of a number of vowel oppositions in non-initial syllables into the unmarked vowel /e/. As for the diphthongs, a somewhat more moderate neutralizing development has probably taken place between /ai/ and /āi/, on the one hand, and between /ui/ and /oi/, on the other, which means that the presumably less marked /ai/ and /ui/ may be assumed irrespective of the original harmonic patterns, e.g. AB $orēi$ /ārai/ 'late' (WMo *oroi*), AB $xan(t'sūi)$ /xancui/ 'sleeve' (WMo *qancui/qamcui*). In any case, there are no serious phonetic reasons to assume the presence of vowel harmony in these diphthongs. On the other hand, as has already been implied, a secondary opposition has arisen between /ei/ and /ai/ contrary to the rules of palatal harmony, e.g. A $malīn$ /malein/ (/male-in/) 'cattle [gen.]' (WMo *mal-un*), AB $sūt'ē$ /suutai/ (/suu-tai/) 'with milk' (WMo *sūtei*). It may be concluded that vowel harmony continues to be an active phenomenon in the long vowels only, i.e. in the phonetic entities analyzed phonologically as sequences of either /e/ or /i/ plus another vowel. Even in these sequences, it would, of course, be technically possible to postulate phonological shapes with no vowel harmony, e.g. */oleen/ or */ulean/ for A $qān$ /olean/ (WMo *ulaγan*), but it is probably appropriate to reject this approach for several reasons. It must, for instance, be noted that the neutral vowel /i/ may be combined with potentially contrasting long vowels of all qualities, including the original back vowels, e.g. B $xirō$ /xirio/ 'hoarfrost' (WMo *kiraγu*). Such examples, reminiscent of Khamnigan, are probably a reality for all speakers of Modern Bargut, though they are the more common, the less frequent palatal breaking is in any

given idiom or idiolect. As for labial harmony, an interesting marginal opposition between /ea/ and /eâ/ was observed in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune in that she occasionally applied labial harmony in suffixes on an optional basis, e.g. B *m᠋ᠣᠩᠭ᠋ᠠᠯᠠᠷ᠋ᠢ* /māngeleare/ (/māngele-are/) ≈ AB *m᠋ᠣᠩᠭ᠋ᠠᠯᠠᠷ᠋ᠢ* /māngeleāre/ (/māngele-āre/) ‘Mongolian [instr.]’ (WMo *mongγol-iyar*). Such optionality of labial harmony is again a characteristic shared by certain varieties of Khamnigan.

11. It has so far been assumed that the original short vowels in non-initial syllables are represented by only two distinct phonemes in Modern Bargut, viz. /e/ and /i/. There is, however, reason to consider the possibility that a third vowel, /u/, may also occur as a distinct segment, for a phonetically more or less clear labial vowel of a non-initial syllable was observed in many cases in which no completely predictable contextual factors were present. It is fairly likely that such a labial vowel is at least marginally phonemic for many speakers and may be identified with /u/. Although not fully predictable, the vowel certainly has rather clear positional preferences in that it mainly occurs in the second syllable of a polysyllabic word after one of the vowels /u o/ of the initial syllable, e.g. AB *n᠋ᠸᠦᠷ᠋ᠢ* /nuxure/ ‘friend’ (WMo *nökör*), AB *ᠦᠪᠦᠷ᠋ᠢ* /ubure/ ‘south’ (WMo *öbür/ebür*), AB *t᠋ᠦᠭᠦᠯ᠋ᠢ* /togule/ ‘calf’ (WMo *tuγul*). It is immediately evident from the examples that the vowel in question quite often represents an original labial vowel, which, as it seems, has been preserved down to Modern Bargut. The postulated phonological shapes also have close parallels in some of the neighbouring Mongolian idioms, notably Dagur and Khamnigan. The whole phenomenon is, however, by no means diachronically simple, for many irregularities of various types may be noted in both the synchronic and the comparative material, e.g. A *ᠦᠨᠦᠷ᠋ᠢ* /unere/ ‘fragrance’ (WMo *ünür*) vs. AB *ᠦᠬᠦᠷ᠋ᠢ* /uxure/ ‘ox’ (WMo *üker*). Cases of variation between the informants were also occasionally observed, e.g. A *ᠣᠯᠡᠰᠡ* /olese/ ≈ B *ᠣᠯᠤᠰᠢ* /oluse/ ‘state’ (Wmo *ulus*). The phonological interpretation of the phenomenon is further complicated by the fact that the basic realizations of /e/ and /u/ are actually bridged by a more or less full series of transitional allophones. In many cases it is, indeed, extremely difficult to decide which of the two phonemes is in question.

12. An important feature distinguishing Modern Bargut from Buryat is the preservation of the sibilant quality of the consonant *s > /s/ in all positions, e.g. ABDE *sar᠋ᠢ* /sare/ ‘month’ (WMo *sar-a*), A *ᠪᠣᠰᠠᠬᠠ* /bāsexe/ ‘to rise’ (WMo *bosqu*), AB *ᠣᠷᠦᠰᠡ* /ārese/ ‘Russian’ (WMo *oros*). As a matter of fact, it must be largely a question of the restoration of the original quality of *s owing to the influence of general Eastern Mongolian and Dagur, for the materials of both Todayeva and Uuda suggest that Old Bargut used to share most of the developments characterizing *s in Buryat. In particular, the relatively abundant materials of Uuda reveal a consistent merger of *s with *k > /x/ in word-initial position, while occasional examples of a syllable-final development into *d > /d/ as well as of an intervocalic development into zero are also present. In fact, all of the Modern Bargut informants were aware of alternative shapes of the type DE *ᠬᠠᠷ᠋ᠢ* /xare/ ‘month’, with a word-initial /x/, as allegedly used in the speech of the older generation. However, the situation in word-internal position is less clear, for here the preservation of

*s > /s/ is almost regular even in the idiom recorded by Uuda. This idiom may thus reflect an intermediate stage in the process of restoration of the quality of *s, but it is also possible that the actual diachronic and dialectological picture is more complicated than what can be gathered from the information currently available. In this connection, it may be noted that the positional neutralization of *s and *k in Old Bargut is not shared by New Bargut, as recorded by Poppe and Todayeva, for the latter distinguishes between a laryngeal (*s) and a velar (*k) fricative. Interestingly, the quality of the segment *k > /x/ in Modern Bargut varies freely from velar to laryngeal. Especially in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune the consonant was frequently realized as a weak laryngeal fricative, e.g. B *χarə* ≈ *harə* /xare/ 'black' (WMo *qar-a*).

13. In Old Bargut, as recorded by Todayeva and Uuda, the development of *s into /x/ is paralleled by the development of the original strong affricate *c into a fricative, identical in quality with the /s/ of Modern Bargut. In Modern Bargut, however, the restoration of the sibilant quality of the original *s has been generally accompanied by a similar restoration of the affricate quality of *c, which means that the idiom has an affricate phoneme /c/. Nevertheless, occasional examples of a variation between /c/ and /s/ were observed, e.g. ADE *ɪš'qγāŋ* /cagean/ ≈ DE *sayāŋ* /sagean/ 'white' (WMo *cayan*). Like most Inner Mongolian dialects, Modern Bargut makes no difference between a hissing and a hushing affricate sound, the normal realization being close to the hushing variety. The same seems to be true of the original weak affricate *j > /j/, e.g. A *óžúg* /juge/ 'towards' (WMo *jüg*). It is interesting to note that the Uuda data also reveal a weak affricate phoneme, although the corresponding strong affricate has only a marginal status in the idiom concerned. This may mean that the original weak affricate has never fully lost its occlusive character in Old Bargut, an understandable situation in view of the fact that no original weak fricative was ever present. Moreover, the idiom reflected in the Uuda material seems to have an opposition between a hissing and a hushing variety of the weak affricate. If a similar opposition were present in Modern Bargut, it should probably be described syntagmatically in terms of /j/ vs. /ji/.

14. Special attention must be paid to the representation of the original pair *s vs. *c in the position before the vowel *i, for here Modern Bargut still largely shares the characteristics of Old Bargut and Buryat. In this position, no development of *s into /x/ took place, but the development of *c into /s/ was nevertheless active. As a result, the original sequence *ci merged with *si > /si/, e.g. A *šireⁱ* /sirai/ ≈ DE *šäre^e* /siarai/ 'face' (WMo *cirai*), A *ɔúšⁱŋ* /dusin/ 'forty' (WMo *döcin*). In fact the Uuda material suggests that there may have once been a more general tendency to replace /c/ by /si/, irrespective of the original quality of the following vowel. Traces of this tendency were occasionally recorded from the informants, e.g. A *šā^{sə}* /siaase/ 'paper' (WMo *cayasu*). In the sequence /si/, the phoneme /s/, like all consonants before an /i/, is pronounced fairly palatally. However, unlike the situation in many other Mongolian idioms, such a palatal variety of /s/ does not constitute a separate phoneme in Modern Bargut, for its occurrence remains completely determined by contextual factors. This is partly due to the preservation of the diphthong /ei/, as distinct from /ii/, in the position after an initial /s/,

e.g. AC *šīdβər* /siidebere/ ‘decision’ (WMo *siidbūri*) vs. AC *sēiləβər* /seilebere/ ‘carving’ (WMo *seilbūri*). The sequence /si/, irrespective of whether it originally represents *si or *ci, may also be combined with the impact of palatal breaking, e.g. ADE *šoβ* /siobeo/ ‘bird’ (WMo *sibaγu*), ADE *šolō* /sioleo/ ‘stone’ (WMo *cilaγu*). The picture described so far is, however, complicated by the confusing influence on Modern Bargut of the neighbouring Mongolian idioms, in which *si and *ci continue to be distinguished. Thus, even from those informants who normally exhibited the regular Bargut type of representation, occasional examples were recorded of /ci/ for both *ci and *si. Such examples may also show palatal breaking in the initial syllable, in which case the segment /i/ can be assumed to have disappeared as irrelevant, e.g. A *tšoyui* /cogui/ ‘thicket’ (WMo *siγui*). In non-initial syllables a merging of /ci/ with the less marked /ce/ can be assumed, e.g. A *Bi,tšigə* /bicege/ ‘writing’ (WMo *bicig*). A particularly large number of examples of a preserved /c/ before *i were observed in the speech of the informant from the Evenki commune, e.g. B *tšidəχə* /cidexe/ vs. A *šədəχə* /siadexe/ ‘to be able’ (WMo *cidaqu*), B *tšinə* /câne/ vs. A *šinə* /siâne/ ‘wolf’ (WMo *cinu-a*). For the informant concerned it is, once more, a question of Khammigan, rather than general Eastern Mongolian, influence.

15. The concept of syllable has been applied above for Modern Bargut without any explanations. This is partly because the syntagmatic structure of the idiom is relatively simple in that any consonant segment is normally followed by a vowel. If it is assumed that long vowels and diphthongs belong to a single syllable, the typical syllable structures of Modern Bargut may be schematically presented as (C)V(V(V)) for the initial syllable and as CV(V) for all non-initial syllables. However, just as Martin (1961.18–9) and Tsumagari (1985.228) have assumed in the case of Dagur, Modern Bargut also seems to have one important exception from these typical syllable structures. This exception is caused by the fact that a nasal consonant may both end a word and stand before another consonant within the word. In word-internal position such a nasal is always homorganic with the following consonant, while in word-final position its quality was observed to vary among the informants from dental to velar. Because of the special syntagmatic position occupied by the nasal in these cases, it may perhaps be regarded as «syllabic» in a certain sense, as suggested by Martin for Dagur, but it may probably also be paradigmatically identified with the unmarked nasal consonant /n/, which thus has a syntagmatic distribution differing from all other consonants, e.g. AB *ündərə* /undere/ ‘high’ (WMo *öndür*), AB *əngirə* /angire/ [bird] (WMo *anggir*), A *χqr^əduη* ≈ B *χqr^ədun* /xoredun/ ‘fast’ (WMo *qurdun*). This interpretation is slightly disturbed by the possibility that /m/ might also be able to appear in similar positions, as suggested by Tsumagari for Dagur. Examples of the type A *χemdə* /xiamede/ ‘cheap’ (WMo *kimda*) would then have to be analyzed as */xiamde/. However, no similar examples of a word-final /m/, as opposed to the sequence /me/, seem to exist.

16. Although the nasal /n/ may be realized as a velar segment both word-finally and before a velar consonant, Modern Bargut also has an opposition between /n/ and a true velar nasal phoneme, denoted here as /h/. The latter represents a preserved original velar

nasal and occurs relatively infrequently, mainly at the end of a number of nominal stems. Somewhat paradoxically, it must be assumed that the segment has been phonologically replaced by the presumably less marked /n/ in word-final position, although phonetically a velar nasal is present, e.g. A *aŋ* /an/ 'game' (WMo *ang*). However, intervocalically the existence of a distinctive /h/ is an undeniable fact, e.g. AB *aŋi* /ahei/ (/ahe-i/) 'id. [acc.]' (WMo *ang-i*), AB *aŋāsə* /ahease/ (/ahe-ase/) 'id. [abl.]' (WMo *ang-aca*). Interestingly, such examples are reminiscent of Khamnigan, while in most other Mongolian idioms the intervocalic velar nasal is represented by a sequence of a velar nasal and a homorganic stop. A phonetically distinct velar nasal was also observed before dental consonants, but here the general framework adopted requires the assumption of a phonological vowel segment between the two consonants, e.g. ABDE *aŋdə* /ahede/ (/ahe-de/) instead of */ahde/ (*/ah-de/) 'id. [dat.]' (WMo *ang-dur*), AB *aŋt'ε* /ahetai/ (/ahe-tai/) instead of */ahtai/ (*/ah-tai/) 'with game' (WMo *angtai*). In the original combination of the velar nasal with a lateral, the informants showed a variation between /h/ and /g/, e.g. B *aŋnəχə* /ahenexe/ (/ahe-nexe/) vs. A *aŋnəχə* /agenexe/ (/age-nexe/) 'to hunt' (WMo *anglaqu/angnaqu*). As is evident from the examples, the morphological paradigm of the stems ending in an original velar nasal involves a morphophonological alternation of /n/ with /he/. As if to eliminate this alternation, a vowel seems to be optionally added after the stem-final nasal by certain speakers, e.g. B *aŋə* /ahe/. In this connection it may be noted that an analogous added vowel was occasionally observed even after a stem-final morphophonological /n/, e.g. ADE *onə* /âne/ 'year' (WMo *on*).

17. Probably no phonological oppositions are based on prosodic features in Modern Bargut, but the accentual and tonal patterns were audibly clear and fairly uniform for all informants. Moreover, prosody closely reflects the syntagmatic structure postulated for the idiom. Thus, in any word, pronounced clearly or in isolation, one prosodic peak may be observed, mainly distinguished by its relatively high pitch. This peak typically falls on the penultimate syllable, if the final syllable contains a short or single vowel, e.g. AB *χy·χə* /xuxe/ 'blue' (WMo *köke*), AB *idə·χə* /idexe/ 'to eat' (WMo *idekü*), A *aimə·γə* /aimege/ 'aimak' (WMo *aimag*), AB *oršə·rə* /äreseäre/ 'Russian [instr.]' (WMo *oros-iyar*), A *rš'əŋnə·χə* /cagenexe/ ≈ B *rš'əŋnə·χə* /cahenexe/ 'to listen' (WMo *cinglaqu/cingnaqu*). However, if the final syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong, the prosodic prominence falls on the latter, e.g. A *χy·βō* /xube/ 'shore' (WMo *köbege*), AB *nəχé·i* /nəχai/ 'dog' (WMo *noqai*). The whole situation may be conveniently described in terms of morae, as suggested by Tsumagari (1985:237–8) for Dagur. Thus, if each phonological vowel segment is assumed to represent one mora, the prosodic prominence in any word will lie on the penultimate mora. In the case of phonological sequences realized as phonetic long vowels, the actual prosodic peak is located on the syllabically dominant component of the sequence, e.g. B *barā* /barea/ 'view' (WMo *baray-a*), B *χqřq̄* /xaria/ 'relation' (WMo *qariy-a*). The whole system is a perfect parallel to Dagur, and may, in fact, derive from the latter as a structural borrowing. Most importantly, just as in Dagur, the nasal /n/, when occurring in word-final position, counts as one mora and requires the prosodic peak to be placed on the immediately preceding

vowel, e.g. *A dāisu·ŋ* /daisun/ 'enemy' (WMo *daisun*), *A biṣṣ!χə·ŋ* /bicexen/ 'tiny' (WMo *biciqan*). This situation provides, of course, a concrete argument in favour of the idea of a «syllabic» nasal.

The selected topics (1–17) examined above allow Modern Bargut to be viewed as a distinct Mongolian dialect with heterogeneous connections. In spite of the presence of considerable subdialectal variation concerning certain details, Modern Bargut also has a number of constant characteristics, which serve to distinguish it from other Mongolian dialects of both the Buryat and the general Eastern Mongolian type. There is no doubt that the historical foundation of Modern Bargut is formed by the Old Bargut dialect, as probably still spoken by some of the older generation in the Old Bargut Banner. In fact, Modern Bargut continues to exhibit several important Old Bargut features, which still form a dialectological link with Buryat. These features have, however, come under an increasing flow of secondary areal influence from other Mongolian dialects and languages in the neighbourhood. Thus, in its present state Modern Bargut should probably be considered as a dialect of Eastern Mongolian, rather than of Buryat.

Of particular interest are, without doubt, the features connecting Modern Bargut with Dagur and Khamnigan. Very little is known so far about the dialectological status and ethnohistorical background of these features, but they certainly point to some ethnic contacts in the past. The fact that most of the traces of Khamnigan influence were observed in the speech of one particular informant (B) is, of course, a specific clue to solving at least part of the problem. As a next step, it would be important to obtain more information on the variety of Mongolian spoken in the Evenki Commune of the Old Bargut Banner. It might well be that some speakers of Mongolian in the locality still retain an idiom with a complete set of Khamnigan features.

In conclusion, a general scheme of the consonant and vowel paradigms postulated for Modern Bargut is presented below. Marginal phonemes, mainly occurring in recent loanwords of the type *A p'orənt'ə* /pāreānte/ 'front' (Ru *front*), *A pṣṣū* /piijeu/ 'beer' (Chi *pjiu*) are placed in brackets.

(p)	t	c	(k)
b	d	j	g
	s		x
m	n		h
	l		
	r		

u	i
o	e
ā	a

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ABBREVIATIONS

Chi	Chinese
Ru	Russian
WMo	Written Mongolian