Naming Practices and Ethnic Identity in Tuva

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1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples of Siberia maintain a tenuous identity pummeled by forces of linguistic and cultural assimilation on the one hand, and empowered by a discourse of self-determination on the other. Language, even at the level of individual words, may serve as an arena where such opposing ideologies of identity and exclusion play themselves out (Bakhtin 1981). This paper is based on recent fieldwork by the author among the Tuvans (also Tyvans), an indigenous Turkic people of south central Siberia. We investigate two recent trends in Tuvan anthroponymic praxis (i.e. choice and use of given names, nicknames and kinship terms). First, we look at the rise and decline in the use of Russian (and other non-Tuvan) given names for Tuvan children after 1944. This trend reveals perceived values of native vs. non-native names in a community where two languages of unequal social value are spoken. Secondly, we explore how the Russian naming system imposed on Tuvans after 1944 fused with the existing Tuvan system, giving rise to a new symbiosis. The new system adds Russian elements, preserves key elements of Tuvan naming, and also introduces some innovations not found in either system. For comparative purposes, we cite recent studies of Xakas names (Butanayev, n.d.) and Lithuanian naming practices (Lawson and Butkus 1999).

We situate naming trends within a historical and sociolinguistic context of Tuvan as the majority language of a minority people of Russia. We also offer an interpretation of these two trends that addresses larger questions of the relation between naming and name use on the one hand and construction of ethno-linguistic identity on the other. We adopt the premise that naming practices are a type of minor, everyday linguistic behavior that may reflect the interaction of larger forces in the socio-cultural milieu. Such forces internal to a culture might include the unique aesthetic values, taboos, protocols, cultural practices and ethnic identity of a people. External forces might include political factors; influence of another language or culture; the relative prestige or status of a native language vis-a-vis a dominant language; and the production and control of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1994).

2 An overview of Tuvan personal names

We begin with a brief overview of the semantics and morphology of Tuvan names. Tuvan has a rich inventory of given names (Superanskoj 1970), many of which are quite colorful from a semantic point of view. Words for animals, colors, foods, birds, emotions, human qualities, stars, planets, sports, rivers, tools, metals and plants are but a few of the semantic categories recruited into a secondary use as proper names. The following are a sample of Tuvan names from our data: ²

(1)	o versuffice de access	Tuvan name	gloss	<u>gender</u>
	a. unsuffixed names			
		ad i yž i	'bear hunter'	m
		artiš	'juniper'	m
		aydɨŋ	'moonlight'	m
		belek	ʻgift'	m/f

	b i štak	'cheese'	m
	buyan	'joyful'	m
	čoduraa	'willow'	f
	čudur	'fist'	f
	kežik	'happiness, luck'	
			m f
	xoptak	'greedy'	
b. suffixed names	xündüs	'daytime'	m
o. suffixed fiames	ak-kɨs	'white girl'	f
	anay-ool	'goat boy'	m
	belek-maa	'little gift'	f
	borbak-k i s	'round girl'	f
	čoyyan-ool	'pine cone boy'	m
	kara-k i s	'black girl'	f
	kök-kɨs	'light blue girl'	f
	kuškaš-ool	'bird boy'	
	kuskas-001 k i zil-00l	'red boy'	m
			m
	sar i y-ool	'yellow boy'	m
	xirlig-ool	'dirty boy'	m
	xureš-ool	'wrestling boy'	m
	xüreŋ-ool	'brown boy'	m
1	anay-k i s	'goat girl'	f
c. complex names	1 1' V	(11 1)	
	ald i n-čaa	'golden-bow'	m
	ay-demir	'moon-iron'	m
	borbak-xüreŋ	'round brown'	m
	kara-kat	'blackberry'	f
	kövey maad i r	'many heroes'	m
	maŋnay-ool	'will run-boy'	m
	örgeleer	'one who hunts squirrels'	m
	öškü-saar	'one who milks goats'	f
	uyanmas	'will not grow weary'	m

The majority of Tuvan names have a clear morphological structure, semantics, and etymology. Most names have a precise cognate form in the normal lexicon of the language. A boy's name *belek* for example, has the cognate noun *belek* 'gift'. A girl's name *čeček* likewise has a cognate noun *čeček* 'flower'. Male names are often suffixed with *-ool* 'boy', while female names may be suffixed with *-kis* 'girl' or a diminutive *-maa*. These suffixes mark the words as being personal names, but do not obscure the etymology of the name. The common male name *kizil-ool*, for example, is quite clearly composed of *kizil* 'red' plus the suffix *-ool* 'boy' while *belek-maa* is recognizable as 'gift'-DIM.

We do not wish to imply that when people use proper names they necessarily access the basic-level meaning of the cognate word. But speakers of Tuvan, we would argue, often have this basic meaning available to them. The vast majority of Tuvan names, probably 75%, have a lexical cognate and a clear etymology. Tuvans sometimes make use of the available etymology when they are speaking Russian and feel the need to explain their unusual sounding (to a Russian ear) name. It is not unusual for a Tuvan to offer both his name and a translation when introducing himself in Russian: "My name is *kizil-ool*, that means 'red boy' in our language." Tuvan nicknames also often play with the semantics of the person's given name, for example a boy named *belek* 'gift' might have the Russian-derived nickname *padarak* 'gift'.

Xakas names provide a useful comparison. The Xakas are a Siberian Turkic people residing to the immediate north of Tuva. They were colonized by Russia much earlier, in the 19th century period of colonial expansion in Siberia, and have undergone far more pervasive assimilation to the Russian cultural and linguistic milieu. Most Xakas (probably over 90%) now have Russian names. Butanayev (n.d.) has published a collection of Xakas names culled from an 1858 census and from his field work. He notes that most Xakas names (now no longer in use) had a clear etymology and a descriptive character. Names for colors, qualities, food, clothing, places, times and peoples all doubled as personal names.

(2)	Xakas name	<u>gloss</u>	<u>gender</u>
	aydas	'healthy'	m
	mɨltɨx	'weapon'	m
	p i z i lax	'cheese'	f
	soyan	'Tuvan'	m
	tadar	'Tatar'	m
	torg i	'silk'	f
	turgun	'fast'	m
	xara-xɨs	'black girl'	f
	xɨzɨl-ool	'red boy'	m

Tuvan and Xakas names clearly reflect a certain aesthetic, not only in their semantics, but sometimes in their phonology as well. One example is the practice of giving rhyming (or mnemonic) names to siblings. According to anecdotal evidence we collected, this practice was once quite common in Tuva. Mnemonic naming of siblings is no longer widely practiced, but we found several cases in our data:

(3)		<u>name</u>	gloss	<u>gender</u>	<u>age</u>
	a.	marat	(none)	m	28
		murat	(none)	m	25
	b.	sɨldɨs	'star'	m	23
		šolban	'venus'	m	23 (twins)
	c.	oktyabr	'october'	m	17

orlan	(none)	m	15
oyu-maa	(none)	f	13
omak	'joyful'	m	11

Butanayev (n.d.) has documented rhyming sibling names in Xakas (no glosses given):

- (4) a. mannay, mannix, manan
 - b. tayis, tanča, tabil

We are unable to provide more than a small sample of the Tuvan names that we documented, which in turn represent only a portion of the Tuvan name inventory. Butanayev's (n.d.) collection of Xakas names numbers at about 1,500 names. The semantic, aesthetic, morphological, and mimetic qualities of Siberian Turkic names provide a wealth of material for further research.

3 Naming trends

The conventional wisdom among Tuvans is that Russian names have recently declined in use, while traditional Tuvan names have become more popular. Our research attempts to map this perceived trend by tracing Tuvan naming patterns since 1930 within a sample population. All individuals included in our survey (1) consider themselves ethnic Tuvans, (2) have a Tuvan surname, (3) speak Tuvan fluently and as the primary language in the home. We documented the names of over 2,000 Tuvans, along with information on the person's age and gender. The total number of name tokens (not counting duplicates) was about 1,200. Some names were collected in three generational sets consisting in names of a child, his/her parents and grandparents. This allowed us to trace naming patterns across at least four generations within individual families.

We also collected anecdotal data on people's attitudes toward names and stated motives for choosing a particular name. This material will not be presented in detail here, but may be divided into two general categories: (i) reasons for avoiding Tuvan names, and (ii) reasons for choosing Tuvan names. The first set includes statements that Tuvan names are hard to spell or pronounce, likely to be made fun of, sound funny in Russian, or may hinder a child's future success. The second set includes affirmations that name choice expresses ethnic identity (e.g. "my son is a *real* Tuvan"), desire to use ancestral names, and aesthetic considerations.

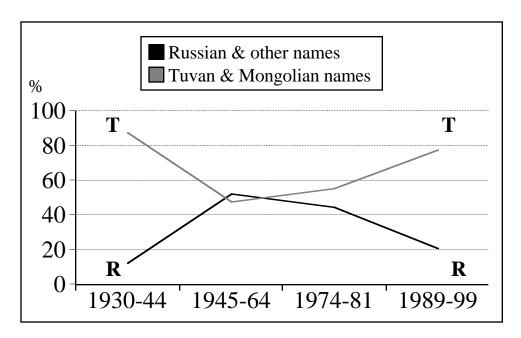
Prior to Tuva's 1944 annexation into the Soviet Union, Russian given names were quite rare among Tuvans. We found no Russian names among persons born prior to 1945. This conclusion is based on a small data set (fewer than 50 persons), but also relies on anecdotal evidence from many native language consultants. None of them could name a single relative born in the period 1919-1945 who had been given a Russian name at birth.

In the 1950's Russian socio-realist names like *traktor* 'tractor', or *brigada* 'brigade' became popular. About twenty such names turned up among our survey participants; they do not form a statistically significant percentage. We rely on anecdotal evidence that such names peaked in use in the late 1940's and 1950's. In the socio-realist Tuvan names listed below, Russian elements are underlined.

(5)	<u>name</u>	<u>gloss</u>	<u>gender</u>	<u>age</u>
	<u>brigada</u>	'brigade'	m	62
	taraa	'wheat'	f	60
	orus-ool	'Russian boy'	m	52
	xöveŋ-mey	'little cotton'	m	50
	bežen-ool	'50 boy'	m	49
	orus-pay	'little Russian'	m	48
	<u>brat</u> -ool	'brother boy'	m	48
	<u>qolxoz</u> -bay	'little collective farm'	m	47
	aldar	'glory'	m	47
	<u>šampan</u>	'champagne'	m	45
	tovar i š-tay	'little comrade'	m	45
	<u>učastak</u>	'garden plot'	f	45

Socio-realist names, outrageous as they may be, were only the first step towards a general abandonment of Tuvan names in favor of Russian ones. The real decline of Tuvan names began with a large wave of standard Russian names that appeared in the 1960's and 70's. Our survey indicates that this trend peaked in about 1970, when over 55% of Tuvan children received Russian names.

But in the early 1980's, several years before *perestroika*, the Russian naming trend began to reverse in a manner unprecedented among indigenous Siberian peoples. Standard Tuvan names grew greatly in frequency, archaic Tuvan names were revived, and new name calques and neologisms appeared. In the histogram below, we present a percentage-based overview of naming patterns in four age groups. We group Tuvan and Mongolian names under a single rubric, as these belong to Tuva's pre-Soviet cultural milieu. Russian names are grouped together with other foreign names that came to Tuva through the medium of Russian.



Our survey data show that after 1944 Russian (and other) names increased steadily from near zero to greater than 50% of the total population by about 1950. The trend peaked in 1955 at about 55%. It subsequently reversed, declining gradually through the late 1970's to the current low of about 20% in the 1990's.

A recent study by Lawson and Butkus (1999) of Lithuanian naming found a quite different pattern during the period 1919 to 1990 (percentages are approximate):

(7)	Name type	<u>1919-1940</u>	<u>1945-1990</u>
	Lithuanian patriotic names	20%	50%
	Other names (German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin or Slavic)	80%	30%

The Lithuanian data is instructive because it shows a sharp increase in names perceived as native vis-a-vis non-native ones. The Lithuanians were annexed to the USSR at about the same time as the Tuvans (1944), and enjoyed the same relative demographic advantage within their titular republic. Still, the study shows that Lithuanians did not switch over to Russian names at all. In fact, they increased their use of names considered to be patriotic or of clear Lithuanian etymology. Lawson and Butkus (1999) interpret this naming trend as a strategy of cultural affirmation, perhaps in response to perceived threats to Lithuanian culture. In Tuva, the period of greatest Russian name use coincided with Stalinist era repression in Tuva, while the resurgence of Tuvan names preceded the emergence of a nationalist movement and a period of sometimes violent inter-ethnic conflicts in Tuva in the mid 1980's. I will interpret the Tuvan naming trend as a strategy of resistance, albeit one that clearly used different tactics (see section 6).

4 Changes in naming systems

Forced modifications to naming systems were common in the Russian empire, and had been completed in Central Asia and the rest of Siberia long before the Tuvans became a part of the empire. All Soviet peoples were required to adopt standard Russian naming protocol consisting in a surname (usually with a gendered suffix), a given name, and a patronymic name (father's given name plus a gendered suffix). Among the Xakas, for example, the entire naming system was replaced by the Russian model by the early 1900's. In addition to the gradual disappearance of Xakas given names, the Xakas patronymic was abolished, and gendered Russian endings were added to Xakas family names (see 4.2).

Tuvans after 1944 willingly adopted Russian given names, but were compelled to adopt the Russian naming system. The second trend we investigate is the macro-level changes in Tuvan naming practices and protocol under Russian influence. This type of socio-linguistic behavior may be less subject to a quantitative approach, but is no less significant in the maintainance of ethno-linguistic identity.

4.1 Tuvan naming protocol

Prior to 1944, when Tuva was annexed to the Soviet Union, each Tuvan had at least two names, a given name and a kinship group (clan) name. In addition, many Tuvans had nicknames which could be bestowed and changed at various times during one's lifetime (see 4.3). A typical Tuvan male might have the given name *maadir-ool* 'hero boy' the nickname *bayay-ool* 'bad boy' and the surname (or clan name) *monguš*. A female could be named *belek-maa* 'little gift' nicknamed *kara-kis* 'black girl' and surnamed *monguš*.

The inventory of given names was quite large, numbering several thousand (Chadamba, p.c.). By contrast, the number of Tuvan clan (kinship group) names numbered only about thirty. In Tuva, as in Xakasia, the same Russian system was imposed, with the important exception that Tuvan surnames were not given gendered suffixes. Since Turkic languages lack grammatical gender, Russian gendered endings are particularly inappropriate for these naming systems, although they were widely adopted among most Soviet Turkic peoples. In Tuva, the Soviet system had the unintended effect of greatly increasing the inventory of Tuvan surnames, which now numbers at several hundred. Tuvans recount, for example, that many families who were targeted by repressive policies in the 1950's willingly gave up their surname and assumed a given name in its place. In other cases, Russian functionaries were reportedly unable or unwilling to distinguish between given names and surnames, and mixed up the two categories when distributing identity documents. Many Tuvans thus now bear surnames, e.g. *maadir-ool* 'hero boy', that were once clearly given names.

4.2 Patronymics

The Tuvans did not make use of a traditional, patronymic naming system. The Xakas did have a patronymic system which placed the father's name first, followed by the child's name with a third-person singular possessive suffix. Members of a hypothetical Xakas family might have been named as follows:

(8)		Xakas given name	patronymic+name+suffix	<u>surname</u>
fath	ner	abis		troyak
son	l	toxtan	ab i s toxtan-i	troyak
dau	ighter	irkes	abis irkez-i	troyak

The Xakas later adopted a Russian-style gendered patronymic and added gendered suffixes to surnames, yielding the following Russian-style names for the above persons.

(9)	Xakas given name	Russian-style patronymic	surname+suffix
son	toxtan	ab i s-evič	troyak-ov
daughter	irkes	ab i s-evna	troyak-ova

4.3 Kinship terms

In addition to proper names, Tuvans made use of a very complex system of kinship terms. In addressing people, the use of given names and nicknames was avoided almost entirely, as Tuvans preferred kinship terms for this purpose. According to our field data, Tuvan has more than sixty kinship terms. Examples include *ugbay* 'elder sister' or 'maternal aunt' *akiy* 'elder brother' or 'paternal uncle' *dinmay* 'younger sibling', etc. Many kinship terms refer to very specific relations by blood or marriage and lack exact equivalents in other languages: *kuuy* 'mother's brother's wife', *čeen* 'sister's child (male or female)'. Tuvans prefer to use these terms rather than given names, often extending their use to persons not related by blood or marriage. To this day, certain kinship terms are an accepted form of address for all persons, whether related, unrelated, known or even unknown to the speaker. When addressing a stranger, one need only estimate the person's age relative to one's own and the proper kinship term may be used. For example, a older female who is unknown to the speaker typically will be addressed as *ugbay* 'elder sister'. The complex system of Tuvan kinship terms is left for further research.

4.4 Nicknames

Nicknames (Tuvan *šola*) also figured prominently in traditional Tuvan naming protocol, and still paly an important role today. They were especially common for young children and elderly people. A person could be assigned different nicknames at various stages in his/her lifetime, or even posthumously. Nicknames may be attributed in part to naming taboos against using given names for young, old, or recently deceased persons. Most Tuvan nicknames tend to be slightly pejorative or humorous:

(10)	<u>Tuvan nicknames</u>	<u>gloss</u>	<u>gender</u>
	anay	'goat'	m
	ara yač i	'drunkard'	m
	baz-ool	'another boy'	m
	bayay-ool	'bad boy'	m
	kalbak-bašt i y	'flat headed'	m
	kara-k i s	'black girl'	f

öpey-ool	'baby boy'	m
samdar	'raggedy man'	f
šooča	'lock'	m
uynuŋ-maa	'little cuddle'	f
uzun-kaday	'tall woman'	f
xirlig-ool	'dirty boy'	m

Xakas nicknames (Butanayev n.d.) appear to have been less like given names and more like descriptive or pejorative labels:

(11)	Xakas nicknames	<u>gloss</u>	<u>gender</u>
	aday	'dog'	m
	art i k	'extra'	m
	koten	'ass'	m
	paga	'frog'	m/f

5 Symbiosis of Russian and Tuvan naming systems

As noted, Tuvans were required to adopt standard Russian naming protocol after 1944. This complex Russian system was superimposed onto the existing and equally complex Tuvan system for naming, referring to, and addressing people. Rather than one system supplanting the other, a unique symbiosis has now emerged. I will give several examples of this symbiosis.

Russian patronymics formed from the Tuvan name *maadir-ool* 'hero-boy' would have the form *maadir-oolovič* (masc.) and *maadir-oolovna* (fem.). The Russian use of patronymics inherently conflicted with the taboo on naming deceased persons, and was thus a part of the system not easily assimilated into Tuvan. In fact, Tuvans have introduced several innovations in the use of Russian patronymics. First, they adopted the bare patronymic form (e.g. *maadir-oolovna*) to refer to unrelated older persons, while retaining the use of a nickname or kinship term to refer to younger persons and peers. This tactic accepts the Russian patronymic, but uses it in a rather informal way, and only for non-relatives, while preserving the kinship distinctions that are so important within extended families.

Second, in more formal situations, the bare patronymic has become an accepted form of direct address by Tuvans while speaking Russian or Tuvan. In Russian, by contrast, the bare patronymic would be highly informal, and protocol usually demands the use of the given name plus the patronymic to directly address a person. Thirdly, in recent years, a Tuvan alternative to the Russian patronymic has emerged. Rather than the Russian suffix -ovič or -ovna, the Tuvan word oglu 'his son' or kizi 'his daughter' is appended to the father's first name: maadir-ool oglu, maadir-ool kizi. It is not yet clear whether this usage will achieve widespread acceptance; at present it remains a somewhat novel, hypocorristic form used in more urban areas. It is perhaps patterned on similar effort underway among Turkic speaking intelligentsia, for example, in Kazakstan, to adopt the use of the word son or daughter after the patronymic in place of the gendered Russian ending. Identity documents in Tuva, still make use solely of the Russian-style patronymic. Still, the attempt to curtail the use of the Russian patronymic represents yet another stage in the symbiosis of the two naming systems.

Another notable innovation is that Tuvans have borrowed the Russian feminine suffix -a; adding it to male Tuvan names to derive new female names. Our data include many examples of such names: sayan-a, orlan-a, aržaan-a, etc. This process of creating name neologisms effectively co-opts a foreign element and uses it to expand the inventory of native Tuvan names.

Finally, Tuvans continue to create name neologisms. Some of these represent novel combinations, either of Tuvan elements, or both Russian and Tuvan elements.

(12) Recent Tuvan name neologisms (Russian elements are underlined)

<u>name</u>	gloss	<u>gender</u>	<u>age</u>
aržaan <u>a</u>	'spring'-FEM	f	19
ay-daš	'moon.rock'	m	19
buyan <u>a</u>	'joyful'-FEM	f	16
daŋ-xayaa	'dawn.dusk'	f	20
daš- <u>mir</u>	'rock.world'	m	7
daš-demir	'stone.iron'	m	22
<u>mart</u> .aš	'March.hunger'	m	6
kaŋ-demir	'iron.iron'	m	6
sayan <u>a</u>	'Sayan.mountains'-FEM	f	24
su-xem	'(water).river'	m	27
tay- <u>mir</u>	'(peace).peace'	m	20
uran <u>a</u>	'world'-FEM	f	27
xaya <u>na</u>	'cliff'-FEM	f	21

6 Discussion

Naming practices provide an important window on the construction of ethnic and cultural identities. The observed Tuvan and Xakas naming trends may contribute to larger social discourses of ethnic and cultural identity, since name choice is often the subject of discussion among prospective parents and relatives. We hypothesize that these linguistic behaviors (e.g. name choice, and use of names, kinship terms and nicknames) may also serve as indicators of macro-forces in the socio-cultural market. Trends in naming praxis may thus chronologically precede and (in retrospect) even appear to presage or precipitate other changes in the socio-political arena. Socio-linguistic patterns such as naming should be taken seriously as indicators which point directly to the ebb and flow of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) and to the delicate balance of forces within a linguistic market.

We interpret dramatic shifts in naming patterns as representing a possible strategy employed by a culture under siege. The Lithuanian pattern cited herein bespeaks an attempt to resist assimilation and affirm national identity. This was done by accentuating names that belonged uniquely to Lithuanians and were not shared with other peoples. By contrast, the Tuvan naming pattern may appear to be a strategy primarily of accommodation to the dominant Russian culture. However, at closer glance, it may be interpreted as a strategy of resistance by syncretism. The Tuvan strategy effectively restored equilibrium by preserving the old system while accommodating the new one and even allowing it to dominate for a time. The Tuvans

perhaps appreciated the fact that the new naming protocols had to be absorbed, and that use of Russian language and names provided access to cultural capital and advancement. But the Tuvans did not allow the new system to bring about the demise of their old system, as did the Xakas. Rather, Tuvans began to create a new symbiosis that incorporated elements of both. This new system continues to evolve, making selective use of the Russian system to expand itself.

From the point of view of an endangered language community, name choice represents in the worst case a tenuous compromise among competing cultural domains. In the best case, name choice may be an affirmation of ethnic identity, as has been claimed for Lithuanian and Latvian naming practices (Lawson & Butkus 1999, Lawson & Balode 1996). The Tuvan facts suggest that in either case, name choice and everyday name use both influence and reflect the emerging ethnolinguistic identity of a people.

Notes

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- We use the symbols č, š, ž to represent IPA [tf] [f] [g] respectively. The symbol [i] represents a high, back unrounded vowel that has no equivalent in standard English. The symbols [ü] and [ö] denote front rounded vowels like those found in Scandinavian languages.

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