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The Tsaatans borderline life (based on field research)

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to a small group of reindeer herders of Khubsugulaimak of Mongolia the Tsaatans that preserve in the memory their common origin and relative relations with Todzha-Tuvans living Todzha Basin of the republic of Tuva. Two people separated since the Russian-Mongolian border was formed into the mountains of Eastern Sayan. The border isolates two people not only physically, but also in terms of culture - language, religion, material culture. It leads to the increasing changes in lifestyle, distance between the two groups of people. The border passed through the ground, language and consciousness.

Keywords: Tsaatans, Tuvans, borderline, life, Mongolia.

La vida límite de Tsaatans (basada en investigación de campo)

Resumen

Este artículo se dedica a un pequeño grupo de pastores de renos de Khubsugulaimak de Mongolia, los Tsaatans, que conservan en la memoria su origen común y las relaciones relativas con Todzha-Tuvans que viven en la cuenca Todzha de la República de Tuva. Dos personas separadas desde que la frontera ruso-mongola se formó en las montañas del este de Sayan. La frontera aísla a dos personas no solo físicamente, sino también en términos de cultura: idioma, religión, cultura material. La distancia entre los dos grupos de personas, conduce a cambios crecientes en el estilo de vida. La frontera pasó por el suelo, el lenguaje y la conciencia.

Palabras clave: Tsaatans, Tuvans, límite, vida, Mongolia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tsaatans or dukha (as they call themselves) are small people in Mongolia characterized by a very archaic way of life. Mongolia is a country of steppe cattlemen, sheep breeding; cows and horses have been the most traditional and popular way of life in this country and it is still the same. However, the Tsaatans are so loyal to their original activity that is a reindeer herding. Life of Tsaatans is paradoxical: shamanists among Buddhist population, reindeer herders- they are isolated from civilization and willingly welcome tourists. The most important thing is that the Tsaatans live in the border of Tuva and

Mongolia. Domestic anthropology does not pay much attention to this group of people. During the Soviet period, studies of the Tsaatans were practically not carried out, ethnography of the first post-Soviet years apparently was limited to the only material in the magazine «Around the World» for the authorship of the authoritative specialist of Mongolian studies (Zhukovskaya, 1994). Russian science still leaves this group almost without attention - the domestic ethnography traditionally concentrates its efforts into studying the Sayan reindeer herders on this side of the border and as a result over the last quarter of a century some works appeared here about TodzhaTuvans, Soyots, and Tofalars. These include the works of Davaa (2011), Rassadin (2000), but they are not dedicated to the Tsaatans. Only short description materials can be found about Tsaatans (Suvandi, 2015a). Among these short topics works of Tuvan authors should be named firstly (Mongush, 2002; Mannai-ool, 2004; Suvandia, 2015a; 2015b). The works of these authors that are devoted to the Tuvans and the Tuvan diaspora in abroad containing a detailed bibliography of foreign literature, and it is more representative than the list of works published in Russian. The Tsaatans are being studied abroad, especially their religious traditions, language and culture. Scientific works both in Mongolian language Badamkhatan(1962) and in European languages are devoted to them(Carey, 2014). In the beginning of XXI century Tsaatans became more popular. Many audio-visual documents, reports, books, traveler's reports dedicated to the Tsaatansuch as Hamid Sardar's famous film "In Search of a White Deer" appear that time (Prokofieva, 1957).

The purpose of this article is to analyze the current state of the Tsaatans, Tuvan reindeer herders of the Khuvsgulaimak of Mongolia, identify the reasons for settlement and to conduct a comparative analysis with the Tuvan reindeer herders of the Todzha district of the Republic of Tuva. Moreover, the purpose is to investigate the role of the demarcation of the border between Tuva and Mongolia in the life of the Tsaatans and reindeer herders in Mongolia.

2. METHODOLOGY

Historical-comparative method has been used during writing the article. With the help of this method general and specific features were revealed in the etymology of certain ethanonyms and in the elements of the culture of the Tuvan reindeer herders of Russia and Mongolia. Historical-comparative method also made it possible to ensure the objectivity of the research, clarify a number of important issues in the analysis of the social relations of the Mongolian Tsaatans. There is also a structural-functional method that has been used in this research (A. Radcliffe-Brown, E. Evans-Pritchard, etc.). It allows us to describe society as a special reality and a system that help us to present the social structure of society in more details. Methods of specific ethnological and sociological researches had been used (conversation, questioning, interviewing) during the expedition works (Nanzatov and Sodnomilova, 2008).

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Tsaatans steadily attract attention to both scientists and tourists and there are lots of photos in the Internet as if they were made in Siberia of the XIX century. Moreover, there are popular contents of uniqueness of these people as if there aren't other taiga reindeer herders like Todzha Tuvans living near Dukha. Todzha Tuvans are also the same reindeer herders and their closest relatives. In our opinion, peculiar, borderline nature of Tsaatans existence is the main reason of such popularity. The contradictory of the image of this ethnic group, the archaic nature of material and spiritual culture with the openness to external influences (which allowed them to become a full-fledged part of the Mongolian nation) can be explained by the borderline position of the Tsaatans both in physical and cultural space. Transport reindeer herding, hunting, shamanistic spiritualism in combination with modern means of communication and transport, economy (increasingly oriented toward interaction with state and public structures) make us to think that the Tsaatans inhabit a space on the border of different times which has become an ethanographic preserve. However, they literally inhabit the border - the border of Mongolia and Russia and this region has always been a place where cultural influences, interests of large states and ethnic communities had collided. The borderline character of existence permeates all aspects of today's life of the Tsaatans: it is a material culture permeated by the influence of Mongolian steppe nomads, the conflict between the way of life of hunters and the emergence of national parks where hunting is prohibited. Borderline existence of borders and cultures causes the emergence of problems,

but at the same time it allows to preserve oneself, save identity and not to abandon historical way of life, ethical consciousness and those social cultural markers that define an ethnic group as a whole and form appearance of the people. The boundaries were also one of the reasons for the ethane genesis of the Tsaatans. All Sayan reindeer herders are divided into four more or less isolated groups. They have an idea of their ontogenetic unity, but also clearly understand that their ways have diverged. These four ethnic communities are Soyots, Tofalars, Todzha Tuvans and Dukha. All of them are Turkic-speaking reindeer herders that belong or belonged to the South Siberian ECT - the economic and cultural type the term of Weinstein (1957). Characteristic of ECT are riding a deer, hunting with a dog, absence of narts, small amount of deers, milking of she-deers. Among these four groups, Todzha Tuvans and Tsaatans have preserved reindeer herding. The Tsaatans are called the most isolated group among these four groups that preserved the most archaic features of material and spiritual culture (Johnsen et al., 2012; Keay, 2008). In modern times riding reindeers herding, hunting and picking have lost their importance of many peoples of Siberia. In this term, the Tsaatans are an expectation. Only hunting goes to the second place from listed phenomena of the cultural complex that determines the character of their life. We hold an opinion that borderline type of existence influenced life of Tsaatans. Let us try to list borders in space, time and culture that determine their life.

The border of Russia and Mongolia passing the mountain ridge of the Eastern Sayan forms ethane geographic axis of the region. In this place republic of Buryat and republic of Tuva adjoin the

Khubsugulaimak (administrative region) of Mongolia. The fact of the emergence of the state borders that passed the ridge of the Eastern Sayan started the mechanism of the ethane genesis of the Tsaatans as separate ethical group different from Todzha Tuvans. Inner boundaries of Mongolia are of an administrative and political nature. Nowadays, the range of Tsaatans is Tsaagan-Nuurof the Khubsugulaimak. The next boundary is of an ecological nature. Nature of the Khubsugulaimak is extremely different. There are mountain tundra, taiga, steppe and semi-desert. Altitude differences contributed to this. It is possible to see reindeers and camels just in one day of the trip – people will not be able to find such picture anywhere else in the world. Tsaatans' nomad territories are limited by the basin of the Shishkhedgol River that is a feeder of the Small Yenisei (Kaa-Khem). There is an Uulan-Uulsuma to the south of the watershed. The geographical barrier coincides with the administrative border in this area. The limit of nomad camping in the west and south-west is Lake Khubsugul and the famous younger brother of Lake Baikal or the Dalai Nuur (Ocean Lake) as it is called in Mongolia. The Khubsugulaimak (especially the Darkhat Basin) forms an endemic area for deer dissemination in Mongolia that distributes settling of the Tsaatans. There are no state borders to the west and south from their settlements. There is not any food for deer and the temperature is not suitable for breeding these animals. Todzha Tuvans that lives on the other side of the state border has the same way of life. Within the territory of the Republic of Tuva Todzha Tuvans living in Todzha region are about 1,000 people. They can do reindeers herding due to their residence in the zone of high-mountain taiga and tundra in the Todzha basin. In both cases natural condition

play is very important especially high-altitude climate change. High-altitude landscapes located above the forest boundary are heavy-going for cattle and transport. These landscapes are distinguished by a hard and long winter, short and cool summers and strong winds. These factors keep the Mongolian cattlemen from entering into the grounds of the Tsaatans turning the ecological border into a two-way barrier. The climate and landscape of the region favored the folding of such economic and cultural types that historically appeared among the peoples living in this area. Taiga reindeer herding has successfully become the part of Tsaatans life together with plain cattle breeding that is typical of Mongolians, Tuvans and Buryats. Climate restrictions also support existence of the Tsaatans. It is necessary to note cultural and language boundaries in continuation of the administrative and ecological boundaries of the range of the Tsaatans. In this point of view, the Tsaatans again play the role of limitrophe-people (Petri, 1927).

-What language do you speak?

-Old people speak in Tuvan and young people speak in Mongolian - Erdenechimeg, 2014

In case of language, they form a kind of transition zone between the Mongolian and Turkic-speaking areas. Most of the Tsaatans usually use Mongolian language and many of them do not know Tuvan language. However, the Todzha dialect of Tuvan language is still the native language for the older generation of the Tsaatans. They speak it with family members and Todzha people. The most important terms

that related to the professional activities of reindeer herders, hunting and material culture are (in many cases) used in Tuvan language. The material and spiritual culture of the Tsaatans got many things from limitrophic existence - elements of the traditional way of life of the taiga reindeer herders intersect with the elements taken from Mongolian cattlemen.

- Do you give Mongolian names or Tuvan? – Both of them. - Do you speak Mongolian or Tuvan language in your family? – It is different. I talk Tuvan to my wife and our children learn the language from us. - Zorigt, 2014

We have identified three types of boundaries, three vectors that show us the face of the whole community of the Tsaatans. We have to determine specific details of this image that will uncover our statement. However, firstly, we will have to turn to a historical perspective that can help to understand the reasons for the formation of this unique society. Many institutions and elements of the Tsaatans culture, many of their problems are rooted in their new history - the history of society that recently was formed into its modern form. Tsaatans exist as a political and administrative entity only during the last 50-60 years. Earlier, they were the part of Todzha Tuvans. We consider the use of the ethanonym «tsaatan» to be correct only for the period beginning of the second half of the 20th century. There were not any modern meaning for this term and separate group to which we could use it until that time.

Interesting fact is that the Tsaatans appearance as a separate ethnic group associated with the phenomenon of life on the border and the prerequisites for this appeared long time before the above-mentioned 1960s. First of all, we will try to single out the period when Todzha Tuvans, Soyots and Tofalars could start forming as separate ethnic groups. To all seeming, it happens to the Manchu rule in Mongolia. The significance of this time for the formation of Tuvan culture and an anthropological type is written by Weinstein (1957): «The long process of the formation of the Tuvan people ended in the late 18th - first half of the 19th century». At the same time «the ancient Turkic-speaking tribes of Central Asia and the Turkic and Mongolian groups is the basis of the ethane genesis of the steppe peoples making up majority of the Tuvan people», but the «Samoyed groups played an important role in the ethane genesis of the Todzhans along with the Turkic-speaking groups». Thus, Weinstein (1957) focuses on the differences between the Tuvans of the western steppe regions and the taiga TodzhaTuvans. The conclusion is confirmed in the dissertation «The origin and historical ethnography of the Petri (1927): «Important role played Samoyed group, Ket and Mongolian groups played less role along with the Turkic-speaking tribes. Earlier, Tungus components probably also played some role» (Weinstein, 1957). «...The people formed by the XIX century (that received the name «Tuva-kizhi») originally carries the remains of a different origin of two groups of the population. These groups both physically differ and have language and culture divisions» (Weinstein, 1961).

All these factors became the guarantee of a specific position of Todzhans among other population of Tuva. The history of emergence of Sayan reindeer herders' modern ethnic groups is generalized in the article of Mongush (2002) «The ancestors of Tofalars who were part of the Russian state since XVII century, in the XVIII century they were separated from the related tribes of Eastern Tuva who became a part of China during the reign of the Qin Empire ... The Russian-Chinese border, that was established in 1727, isolated the Soyots from their relatives the Todzha Tuvans and Tsaatans» (Mongush, 2002). This is how the Soyots and Tofalars became different nations while there were more than two hundred years before the Tsaatans separation. It should be noted a researcher thinks that establishment of a state border is the reason of new ethnic groups emergence. This opinion is probably not far from the truth – this is how the Tsaatans formed in XX century. Families of reindeer herders that roamed in the Todzhaand Darkhat Basin for many years don not have been divided and freely could move and exchange. New Revamping of borders has become the prerequisite for the formation of a new people. Revamping of borders became the result of new political upheavals: in November 1911 the Xinhai Revolution occurred in China that was a metropole in relation to Tuva. The Manchu dynasty had been overthrown; the old principles of government were rejected. It also affected the politics of the outlying areas including Tuva that has been quickly colonizing by colonists from Russia at that time. The revolution in China and Mongolia's independence announcement led to a further inflow of Russian colonists into the Uryangkhai region driven by the Stolypin's agrarian reform and the depletion of Siberia's land fund. All these events made

Russian Empire pay close attention to the Uryangkhai region. Many Tuvans especially eastern khoshuns was burdened with Chinese government Russia. Tuvan governors turned to Russia and newly formed Mongolia for help. At the end of 1912 a diplomatic representative in Urga announced about the transition of the Uryangkhai region under the auspices of Russia. The Imperial government has been preparing for the transfer of Tuva into Russian citizenship. In October 1914 Russian protectorate was established over the whole Tuva including the upper reaches of Yenisei River and Lake Khubsugul (the 100th anniversary of this date was widely celebrated in Russia and also in the Republic of Tuva). In 1915 the second Kyakhta treaty was concluded. The first one was concluded by Russia with the Chinese Empire, the present one was concluded from Mongolia and Tuva. According to the terms of the treaty, both countries received some autonomy. However, the normal development of relations was interrupted. New revolution has started- this time a civil war happened to Russia and power in the region began to pass from hand to hand. Chinese, whites, reds have been receiving it one by one. In 1921 the war ended and Bolsheviks won it. However, it is turning of Tuva and Mongolia to experience their own revolutions and as a result communist parties come to governance. In 1924 the Mongolian authorities submitted a request to the Russian-Mongolian commission on Tuva's further destiny. After that the western shore of Lake Khubsugul went to Mongolia. This is how Darkhat Basin became a part of Mongolia. We can state that 1924 is the first step for the Tsaatans on their way to be a separate ethnic group. Despite the absence of a determinate boundary, the freedom of move of nomad

reindeer herders and the weakness for Tuvan and Mongolian authorities, separation of Todzha Tuvans into two almost uncommunicative enclaves was practically predetermined. Reindeer herders have been roaming without any thought of the existence of borders. However, there were already a few decades left until final separation. Nevertheless, the ethnic unity of both groups was preserved until the second half of the 20th century. Therefore the ethnography of Tuva in the 60s continues to provide us with relevant sources of the Tsaatans. The group (that we were interested in) split from the eastern Tuvans composition in the middle of the 20th century and only from that moment it makes sense to consider its history and ethnography separately. There were further political events that led to the emergence of Tsaatans people. Communist Party of Mongolia established an administrative unit in the area of Lake Khubsugul that is a Delger-Uulaimak. In 1926 it became a khoshuun of the Tsetser legaimak and the center of it is Rinchen khumbe. At the same time in 1926 the People's Republic of Tannu-Tuva and the Mongolian People's Republic accepted each other's independence.

The aimakh had both a Mongolian population (darkhat, khalkha), Turkic-language population- the Tuvans. The question about belonging to the population (who were roaming through the territory of the new aimak of the Mongolian People's Republic) was solved not in favor of nomadic reindeer herders: the Tuvans began resettling to Tuva. Deportation was in 1927, 1934 and 1939. The border was not protected properly so many evicted Tuvans again roamed back to their familiar places, patrimonial grounds. Some of the Tuvans were evicted up to 5

times (Badamkhatan, 1962). Soon a cultural revolution was declared in the Mongolian People's Republic, collectivization and persecution of believers have started. From 1929 to 1933 collectivization (coupled with outtake of property and deer) affected three quarters of Tuva's population (Keay, 2008). Meanwhile in 1931 a separate large aimak was created around Lake Khubsugul and then villages, sum centers (sums of Rinchenkhumbé, Ulaan-Uul, Bayansurkh) were formed into this area.

All of these places were populated by the Darkhats. The Tuvans (the Dukha) continued to roam in the tundra and taiga of the Eastern Sayan and did not have received the tuvanethanonym "tsaatan" yet. In the middle of 1940's many Dukha-Tuvans was allowed to return to their native places. When Dukha-Tuvans returned to their places they found out that some things. Those who came from Todzha should have settled around Rinchen khumbé in the north, while others that returned from the south of Tuva were under the jurisdiction of the Ulaan-Uul and Bayansurkhsum. Native lands were mixed and cut again. Although it did not stop another few waves of settlers from Todzha to move in Mongolia: in 1944 Tuva became a part of the USSR, young men were drafted into the army for war and they didn't know anything about it. In the late 1940s a new wave of collectivization started in Tuva that led to a hunger for the whole population including Todzha Tuvans. All these events made the reindeer herders move to Mongolian territory. As we can see, the border of Tuva and Mongolia (that appeared in 1924) became the main factor in the life of the Todzha Tuvans and the future Tsaatans; became a symbol of forced expulsion and privation;

became a saving border where they could hide from political and economic shakeups. The last attempt to send Tuvans to Tuva was made in 1952, but it was unsuccessful and Mongolian authorities in 1955 began to register the Tuvans as citizens of Mongolia. Tuvans were registered for documents as the Uigurs and later as Uryankhays. Tuvans (Dukha) received citizenship, medicine, education, veteran help and job. However, at the same time new difficulties have appeared. Young men were taken into the army of three years and very few of them came back to the tundra - many of them stayed in the cities. Moreover, the legislation in the field of hunting even since the 1950s began to limit the possibilities of the Dukha (Wheeler, 2000).

In the middle of 1950s a new wave of collectivization has started and *negdel* (collective farms) were in sums of Rinchenkhumba and Ulaan-Uul. However, the *negdel* activity usually was related to the life of steppe cattlemen. According to Mongolian standards and consciousness of cattlemen, the deer does not belong to cattle- deer belonged to the wild nature. The Tuvans included deer in "seven species of cattle," while the Mongolians knew only a traditional list of five species- a horse, a sheep, a goat, a cow (yak also) and a camel. The Mongolian authority thought that The Tsaatan reindeer herders' activity was useless. Reindeer herders were not employed and their activities were not recognized. The authorities tried to move them to a settled way of life. Many of the Tsaatans joined the collective farms at that time and moved to the steppe to be cattlemen and do fishing on Lake Tsagaan-Nuur (Badamkhatan, 1962). In the 1960s the policy of the authorities changed and they helped the Dukha in their activities.

Especially the authorities helped to purchase deers from Tuva. As a result, the number of deers started increasing. According to Wheeler (1999) (with reference to Sukhbaatar) the Dukha owned 770 deers in 1963, 1000 deers - in 1970 and 2275 deers - in 1977 (Keay, 2008). In the 1960s the border finally became that impenetrable barrier that formed present Tsaatans as a separate ethnic group. The border position of the region has been passing from hand to hand and belonging to different parts and this situation caused formation of Todzhans. They lost their ancestral lands, but were tied to Mongolia. The Mongolians knew that this group of people did not belong neither to Mongolia because of different language and culture nor to Tuva because of their residence in Mongolian territory. We will try to find out the role of borders in the life of the Tsaatans.

A very close position of borders has a huge impact on the life of the Tsaatans. This is not only the state border, but also the administrative border inside of the country and borders of national parks.

The state border was established once and for a long time. It created a background in the life of the Tsaatans, became an artificial geographical obstacle to the Tsaatans and their relatives of the west and Russian territory. According to our informants, during 1963-1968ss the Tsaatans were not able to roam freely between Darkhat and Todzha Basins because it was very difficult to cross the border these times. The reason was that economic relations were broken up. There were not any exchange or trade activity between the Tsaatans and

Todzha-Tuvans. The only exception is that the Tsaatans buy deers in Todzha for their cattle only one time of some years. Marriage and other forms of social communication also have been stopped. During our research work (that was almost in all Tsaatans communities such as Barun-Taiga) we met families that consist of Tsaatan and Darkhat, Tsaatan and Khalkha-Mongolian, but I did not meet any family where one person could have been Todzhan. By the time of the formation of the border the system of patrimonial hunting grounds probably has not been functioning. The system was well known among eastern Tuvans according to the work of domestic ethnographers such as Weinstein:

A survival of the former economic community family in XIX century was the right of the clan member to hunt for sables in their ancestral territory, but in the end of the 19th century this custom wasn't actually observed. However, our informants still remember about patrimonial territories that were acclimated by members of the clan (1968: 25).

We were not able to find the information about so-called remnant. However, it is easy to understand because there so many forced and voluntary moves of the Tsaatans in the territory of Mongolia and outside of it in the XX century. There were three massive deportations of the Tsaatans from Mongolia to Tuva in 1927, 1934 and 1939. When the Tsaatans were recognized as useless nation, their evictions continued until the 1950s. As a result of these endless moves, deportations and returns, the memory of the patrimonial lands and sacred places has been expunged. Nowadays, there is not the Tsaatans first generation that became patriarchs of Mongolia's new

people. We did not meet informants that could tell about the toponymy of the area and indicate the generic affiliation of some places. This is already in the past - there are no places for regular hunting and there is no memory of them left (Haigh and Keay, 2002).

The border with Russia is a kind of folkloric element - a sacred barrier that separates the world of people from a different world. Wolves come from there and there is not any possibility to influence this fact. There are wild beasts that left the territory of Mongolia. It is the ancestral home of the Tsaatans, it is a land where innumerable herds of deer are grazed peacefully and hunters and reindeer herders live according to their own customs and take advantage of the gifts given by nature, spend their time for prosperity and happiness. In such colors our informants described the life of Todzha reindeer herders in the area of the Tsataans. These opinions (that spread folklore motives rather than facts of real life) are popular with the Tsaatans mostly because of the isolation and lack of information. The border here also works as a barrier that makes it possible to mythologize life on the other side of this barrier. When the chairman of the Todzha-Tuvans Association Svetlana Demkina visited Barun-Taiga for the first time of the Museum of nomadic culture expeditions in 2015, the Tsaatans were surprised when they heard her stories about life in Tuva- are there any problems in Tuva? Is it true that authorities do not care about reindeer herders, mines, quarries to take their land, and people do not have any prosperity?

The Russian-Mongolian border (having become the reason for the isolation of the Tsaatans) gave an impulse to the further ethnogenesis of this group and also to their language, cultural, administrative and political rapprochement with the Mongolian population of the region. Tuva and Todzha continue to play a role in the life of the Tsaatans, but contacts with former tribesmen are of a limited nature. Most of the Tsaatans claimed that they still considered themselves and Todzhans as one people, but they also admit that reunification is likely impossible. The border is still unbreakable. Nevertheless, we studied cases of violations both borders and established patterns of behavior associated with it. One of the informants that went to Kungurtug on skis said: «I looked at the lights from a distance and went back». Despite the risk of arrest, the frost and long distance, interest in the former homeland was strong: «I was young. I wanted to see everything». Another informant said that he went hunting on Russian territory rarely because it was forbidden in Mongolia. It would be strange if the idea of going hunting abroad did not come to mind to the representatives of professional hunters' people. Nature in state parks is protected well than the border where control is absent and it is possible to cross it somewhere just because of ignorance. The administrative borders inside of Mongolia - the boundaries of sums, aimak and nowadays they are the boundaries of national parks. The administrative borders have a significant impact on the life of the Tsaatans. With the help of history we can see that the moves of the Tsaatans through the Khubsugulaimak territory were not always voluntary because of the administration's attempts to simplify the process of nomadic rule, move them to a settled way of life or transfer them to a single center

that determines all the issues of their life. As a result, until the 1950s one community of the Tsaatans was attributed to the sum of Rinchenkhumbé where they gave deer to meat and received instructions in the place. The other part of the Tsaatans was attributed to the Ulaan-Uul sum where they grazed deer and settled near the village of Ulaan-Uul. The dramatic story happened at that time. There were attempts to move the Ulaan-Uul Tsaatans to stationary houses: people were not accustomed to live in such houses and (according to witnesses) they made fires in houses, broke windows, tried to sleep on the street near the house. After these situations attempts were canceled and the Tsaatans were allowed to go back to tents. In 1985 the Tsaatans of Ulaan-Uul and the Tsaatans of Rinchenkhumbé were classified as a single administrative unit for the convenience rule. However, the communities were separated by long distance and the authorities acted in a simple way: both of these communities were moved to Tsaagan-Nuur village, new sum of Tsaagan-Nuur was founded and it was formed as a new center for reporting and subordinating of the Tsaatans. The group of the Tsaatans (that was a part of Rinchenkhumbé) stayed in Zuun-Taiga, but deer and camp were moved from Ulaan-Uul to Barun-Taiga (Carey, 2014). Fortunately, such experiments did not happen anymore. Nevertheless, nowadays, the administrative boundaries of the region are continually reshaped. The Tsaatans do not move to new places, but the national parks cut off their territory that must be for living and grazing of deer. We can see that the phenomenon of boundary existence influences the life of the Tsaatans. Some years ago life on the border became the reason for the formation of the of Tsaatans' ethnic group.

The next boundary (that was already mentioned) forms the ecological area of the Tsaatans. This is the border of deer dissemination in Mongolia. The Tsaatans are not able to do farms mostly because of the altitude climatic zones of the tundra and the taiga. During the moving from the mountain valleys of the Darkhat Basin down to Lake Khubsugul altitude climatic changes starts to appear. There is not enough food for deer (reindeer moss) and it is too hot for cattle in the summer. A vertical seasonal move is the main basis of the annual farming period of the Tsaatans. However, the absence of a place for deers in the zone of their winter residence leads to the fact that the deers are not moved down to the winter roads, but stayed in the mountains. As we see can see, the Tsaatans are not able to keep their cattle always in the steppe zone of northern Mongolia. It will be impossible for them to move to different places insight of the country. Despite the willing of the Tsaatans, they will not be able to move to the southern part of Lake Khubsugul. The ecological border will remain about itself. We have already mentioned that the Mongolian population of the region the Darkhat and the Khalkhado not hurry to acclimate the climatic high-altitude zones of the taiga and tundra. These climatic zones are heavy-going for herds of cattle and there are not good cattle places. The Tsaatans' residence protects itself from external area. This division shows the fact for the historian or anthropologist of agriculture activity: it is natural that each type of farming matches with ecological conditions or these types are distributed rarely. Besides the theoretical facts, the existence of an ecological boundary (that is also a deer area) is also confirmed by comparative empirical facts. In the Republic of Tuva people living in of the steppe zone separate themselves from

Todzhan and rarely visit Todzha (as we are told during personal conversation), but the Todzhans (as well as the Tsaatans they breed deer in high taiga and tundra) are isolated from the steppes despite the geographical closeness. The third type of boundaries is cultural and linguistic type. The border zone (that goes through every community member's the material and spiritual life) accompanies the existence of the Tsaatans on the border of the forest and steppe zones, on the border of state formations. As some popular sources claim recent culture of the Tsaatans does not represent some ancient and miraculously preserved artifact. It is difficult to find such culture in recent Eurasia that is not affected by other people's influence. The Tsaatans' culture has been developing along with Mongolians, Tuvans and Russians and has taken many things from them. Nowadays, their culture is a complex compound where archaic and modern elements intertwine with each other, traditions of reindeer herding and hunting, Mongolian customs and elements of everyday life, memories of ancestors had Russian names and spoke Russian – all these things supplement each other.

The borderline nature of the Tsaatans' culture reveals itself in its interaction with the authorities and tourists, in a difficult complex identity that must be studied in case of multiple self-names (Tsaatans, Dukha, etc.) and, of course, in language. The Mongolian language (the official language of Mongolia) also appeared in the Darkhat Basin and became the main mean of communication between the Tsaatans. However, the borderline nature of the Tsaatans reveals itself. In families children continue to speak with their parents in Tuvan language. The older generation remembers Russian language, but

young people get to know it when they go to study to Kyzyl. The borderline situation had an impact on the life cycle of both Tsaatans communities. The Tsaatans' children are born in hospitals of Tsaagan-Nuur. In the same places of the villages they bury dead people. The Tsaatans started to use the usual method of burial and stopped the nomadic way (however, this way of burial is still being used in some places of Mongolia). Calendar holidays and traditions became Mongolian. When a boy turns 3-5 years old, they cut his hair, celebrate Tsaagan-sar and Naadym. When the Tsaatans celebrate Naadym (that is the main summer holiday of steppe cattlemen) they do not arrange archery, horse races are replaced by a race on deers. Many informants specifically note that the Tsaatans usually follow Mongolian traditions in entertainment and ritual activity.

4. DISCUSSION

It is very interesting that religion was not practically affected by the Mongolian culture influence. During the last century, shamanism of the Tsaatans was under pressure of the anti-religious communist rule of the Mongolian People's Republic. Our informants tell sparingly about poor relations of Buddhist Lamas, but shamanism in the Darkhat Basin is getting more popular. We should note that influence of shamanism is spreading quickly in Mongolia. «In Ulaan-Uul they built a monastery and the Lama lived there. The Lama did not get along with shamans and began to be sick. The Lama had to leave. There are ruins left, you can see them». We studied cases of syncretism

of the two religions. These situations can happen only because close connections between neighbor cultures. However, there is practically no influence of Buddhism in the region. In this case it was impossible to cross the border between the steppe and the taiga of this religion. The material culture of the Tsaatans is also filled by the influence of the nearest neighbors. We have already mentioned in our works that the Tsaatans used Mongolian yurts in cold period. These yurts are kept disassembled in villages during warm season. The summer tents not made from elk's skin or barque (as the Tsaatans tell us about their past) and as we know from historical sources Weinstein(1961) the tents are covered with a canvas of Russian or Chinese production (the Russian one is considered to be better, but there are problems with its acquisition). The Tsaatans' clothing is a model of cultural syncretism: as a summer clothes, a modern version of the Mongolian robe «deli» and boots «gutala» are dressed up in summer period. Leather boots are used for riding. All this clothes can be purchased in the settlements of the Mongolian traders. Traditional robes of reindeer suede, warm hats, waistcoats and sleeveless shirts were preserved as winter clothes. All this clothes are typical for Todzha-Tuvans of the middle of the XX century(Weinstein, 1961). A harness that is such an important aspect of material culture also adopted a similar syncretism nature. Recently, it differs from the analogues of other peoples practicing the reindeer herding. The harness itself is easier than the Evenkis' one and even easier than described by Weinstein (1972) for the Todzha-Tuvans: it is just a halter with a single reason. Due to the high level of deer training, it is enough for controlling. The saddle is more different from the historical samples: instead of traditional leather cushions on a wooden

basis, modern Tsaatans use ordinary Mongolian saddles for riding on horse and deer –the saddles are with high bows, narrow and made of leather and wood with metal ornaments. This saddle (where usually we can see Mongolian rider than a reindeer herder) is fixed with the help of three girths (under the deer's neck, on the chest and under the tail) and also the saddle is an example of a radical change in the element of material culture due to long coexistence with adopted practices of agriculture activity. A special saddle for children transportation did not change. The saddle is described in detail by S.I. Weinstein (1980) and it still continues to play its role (both practical and ritual) being used during the moves to transport a child in the cradle. In other cases, the saddle was places on anhonorable place on the sacred side of the tent. The custom of giving one of the deer to a child has come to our time (the Mongolian term «setertey» is used nowadays; for example seterteydzar means deer male). The «dedicated» deer is not for transportation; it is surrounded by special care and eats better. Therefore, the deer lives not 15-18 years, but can live up to 28-30. During the moves, this deer that carries a child saddle with a cradle on it. This custom continues to exist practically without changes that could take by the intervention of traditional Mongolian culture or urban outlook. Food(that is the most important element of culture) of the recent Tsaatans has asyncretic nature. It includes both elements of the traditional hunters and Mongolian food. However, Tsaatan food has already been exposed by urban culture: widespread use of flour, rice, oil, meat and wild plants. The Tsaatans use milk in rice porridge or spread fresh cream on baked bread just right there in the yurt just like the Mongolians. The only difference is using deer milk. The

border between of steppe and the taiga revealed itself in this case also: one of the main dishes of the Mongolians buzzes are often cooked not with meat, but with boiled blood that is a typical product of reindeer herders (Farkas, 1992).

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, summing up, we can say that this article reveals only the most common features of the modern ethnography of the Tsaatans that show the most complete impression of the borderline live nature. The aim of this article is not a full-fledged ethnographic essay, we explained the phenomenon of the existence of people that were brought to the crossroads and now they live in the border zone. We must say that with the growth of contacts with the world, decrease of isolation, and the Tsaatans approach modern civilization, the Tsaatans use the technical means produced in Russia or in China like steppe cattlemen-nomads. Motorcycles were added to the traditional vehicles such as deer and horses. The Tsaatans use motorcycles to get to the villages and get back. As for technical equipment, the Tsaatans tent reminds modern Mongolian yurt: solar batteries, a satellite dish, a TV set. There are also generators, batteries, lamps and lights, walkie-talkies and mobile phones. Recent life of the Tsaatans is not as archaic as we could think. This is a young people and it does not live in the past, but in the present, making balance on the border between its traditions and modern life.

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