The paper will deal with the domain of basic topological relations in older and recent stages of languages of
the northeastern area of distribution of Turkic, i.e. Siberia and Mongolia. It will discuss topographical rela-
tors that describe physical scenarios, expressing different kinds of contiguity and coincidence, i.e. spatial
notions such as inclusion ('in', 'inside'), superposition ('on', 'over'), subposition ('under'), circumposition
('around'), exteriority ('outside'), contraposition ('against'), prosecution ('along'), intermediacy ('between'),
laterality ('beside'), proximity ('near'), etc. Another relevant variable is the difference between static ('es-

tive') functions ('in', 'on', etc.) and dynamic functions expressing direction ('into', 'onto', 'from inside',
'from outside', etc.).

It will be argued that the northeastern Turkic languages exhibit several layers of topological relators
representing different stages of grammaticalization. The oldest layer consists of rather general, undifferenti-
ated locative relators, residual categories that cover several potential basic notions in the topological domain.
Thus the simple East Old Turkic “locative-ablative” case marker is used for static and dynamic spatial situa-
tions encompassing adherence, attachment, inclusion, superposition, etc. ('at', 'in', 'on', 'from', 'out of').

There is a second layer of relators, which is partly found in East Old Turkic already, a small set of old
adpositions representing less advanced stages of grammaticalization and conveying more specific relations
('over', 'up to', 'towards', 'between', 'beyond', 'through', 'across').

There is finally a third layer of relators which develop later and differentiate the systems further, spa-
tial adpositions with still more specific meanings. They are typically locative nouns ('interior', 'back', 'side',
'top', 'bottom', etc.) assuming locative case markers.

The relators of each successive layer convey more fine-grained meaning differences, the more specific
terms functioning as hyponyms of the more general ones. The development is thus pyramid-like, departing
from an undifferentiated “apex”, proceeding over regularly sloping sides, and ending in a polygonal base of
clearly differentiated relators.

Relics of the older less differentiated systems are found in the argument structure of a small set of ba-
ic positional verbs, ‘sit’, ‘settle’, ‘go’, etc., with which spatial nouns are used as direct objects, e.g. East Old
Turkic yazï qon- ‘to settle (down on the) plain’.

The paper will also address questions of possible contact influences between the Turkic languages of
the area and varieties of Mongolic, Tungus, and Paleosiberian. In this connection it will also discuss special
language-specific topographical notions depending on geographical positions or cultural conditions, such as
‘downstream’, ‘upstream’, etc.