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MONGOLIAN STUDIES

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LOUIS LIGETI



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ON THE LANGUAGE OF THE MONGOL AND BURIAT VERSIONS OF THE GESER EPIC

BY

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In this article the following versions of the *Geser* epic will be treated as sources:

1. *Arban жүг-үн ежен Geser qayan-u toyuşi orusiba, degedü debter* «The Story of Geser-khan, Lord of ten countries, first book», published in 1955 by the Publishing House of Inner Mongolia which is a reedition of the Peking xylographic edition dating from 1716; referred to as *Gq*;

2. *Geser bayatur*, told by the tale-teller Pajai, recorded by Čimiddorji and published by the Publishing House of Inner Mongolia in 1959; referred to as *Gb*;

3. *Abaj Geser*, told by Pjochon Petrov and recorded by I. N. Madason in 1940—1941, translated into Russian by A. I. Ulanov and published in Ulan-Ude in 1960; referred to as *AG*;

4. *Abaj Geser-xübün*, told by Manšut Imegenov and recorded by C. Ž. Žamcarano in 1906, translated into Russian by M. P. Chomonov and published in Ulan-Ude in 1961; referred to as *Gx*.

The study of the Mongolian epical work *Geser* as a document of oral folk poetry has advanced well thanks to the works of several scholars including S. A. Kozin and C. Damdinsuren in particular. But this is not the case with the linguistic features of the versions of *Geser*, because we only have available superficial observations of a general character put forward by single researchers of the epic of the Mongolian peoples. Bearing in mind this problem I have set myself the task of contributing to the collection of material that would provide a solid basis for us in the future in a deeper and more concrete linguistic analysis of the different versions of the Mongolian *Geser* as a linguistic document. Thus in this paper of mine I have tried to put forward some preliminary data referring to the comparative study of certain characteristics of the language of the Mongolian and Buriat *Geser* versions.

It will be firmly established from the list of my sources that there is a great gap in time between *Geser qayan* (1716) and *Geser bayatur* (1959), while the gap between *Geser xübün* (1906) and *Abaj Geser* (1940—1941) on the one hand and between the Inner Mongolian *Geser bayatur* and its

Buriat versions, on the other can be neglected in such a short article as mine. In connection with this it is worth while remembering the remark of Damdinsuren who said: «The language of the Peking version differs to a great extent from the classical language of the Mongols, and, as it seems to me, it stands very near to the spoken language of the Oirats of Kuku-nor».¹ To put it in other words, we must above all take into consideration a number of concrete deviations in the language of the Mongolian versions themselves, conditioned firstly by the chronological gap among the publications of the documents, and secondly, by the different degrees of influence exerted by the spoken dialect on them.

B. Ja. Vladimircov who laid down the third period of the development of the Mongolian language as taking place from the 17th—20th centuries maintained: «At the very beginning of this period the Mongolian written language undergoes significant changes: old words and forms that became unintelligible drop out of use and a broad way is opened for the folk dialectal elements which are artificially archaized . . . ».² But this process of revival went even further in the Mongolian written language. Thus, by comparing the language of *Geser qayan* with the language of *Geser bayatur* we are able to indicate several conspicuous archaic forms that have gone out and are continuing to go out of literary use, and then some neologisms found to be typical of that age were preserved and accepted later on in the literary language. Let us look at the examples:

1) In *Geser qayan* the nouns in the locative are seldom used with the archaic suffix *-a*: *yurban sar-a-yin yaŋar-a qaraqū kümün* (Gq 259) «A man seeing to a distance of a three months' travel»; *sünesün-i tamu-yin iruyar-a orki* (Gq 263) «Leave his soul at the bottom of hell». But the same nouns were most often formed by another affix though also a literary one *-dur* or *-tur*: *erte nigen čay-tur* (Gq 1) «Once in olden times»; *Qormusta tngri burqan-dur mörgüy-e geŋü ečibe* (Gq 1) «Qormusta tngri went away to pray to God»; *arban dörben nasun-dur* (Gq 90) «At the age of fourteen»; *qamtū yabuquī-dur* (Gq 90) «When they travelled together». Nevertheless, in *Geser qayan* the most frequently applied suffix of the locative case of nouns was *-du* or *-tu* taken from the spoken language: *qotonīyan ebderegsen jūg-tū ečibe* (Gq 2) «they went in the direction of their ruined castles»; *degū-tūni ečibe* (Gq 3) «He started off to his younger brother»; *qan oron-tu sayuqu kesig nada bui j-e* (Gq 6) «It is clear that I was fated to sit enthroned in the country of the

kingdom»; *yirtinčü-tū inggiŋü qubilŋu törökū buyu* (Gq 8—9) «He has to be born anew on earth».

In Paŋai's *Geser bayatur* nouns in the locative case are used nearly always with the ending *-du* (or *-tu*), while the suffix *-dur* (or *-tur*) and, moreover, *-a* occur only in stereotype expressions.

2) In the text of *Geser qayan* nouns in the commitative with the obsolete affix *-luy-a* are very seldom come across: *eŋen Geser qan-luy-a* (Gq 253) «Together with the lord Geser qayan»; this suffix of the case, however, may be written in a form assimilated with the stem and fused with the government: *-layan* or *-legen*, or sometimes spelled *-lā* under the influence of the living pronunciation: *aq-a-layan sedkil-tei bolusa morin-u deltei metü keüken törömüi j-e degülegen sedkil-tei bolusa morin-u segül-tei metü keüken törömüi-j-e* (Gq 51) «If [a girl] enters into an intimate relationship with her elder brother, she will bear a child with a horse's mane; and if she enters into an intimate relationship with her younger brother, she will bear a child with a horse's tail»; *noqai-la kelečikü bolusa či sayin kümün bayinam* (Gq 78—79) «If you talk with a dog you are a brave man». It must be taken into account, however, that in *Geser qayan* the nouns in the locative occur most frequently with the ending *-taj* and in the *Geser bayatur* the same suffix *-taj* is applied almost without exception.

3) In *Geser qayan* the archaic compound ablative suffix *-deče* (or *-teče*) occurs in only a few instances: *erketü tngri-deče jayayatai törögsen* (Gq 189) «He was born according to the predestination of heaven»; *üde-yin čay-tu barayun-tača nigen keriy-e ayisui* (Gq 229) «At noon there flew a certain raven from the West». But in the *Geser bayatur* of Paŋai this affix is completely absent.

4) Though it does not often happen there are still obsolete verbs of the present-future tense with the suffix *-mu* (or *-mü*) that can be found in the Mongolian version of Geser, called temporarily *Geser-khan*: *demile tngri-yin köbegün bile kemeged ečimü bi* (Gq 4) «Whether I leave only because I am the son of heaven»; *bida eyimü olan mal qarayulŋu yabuŋi ödüi qoyosun yabumui* (Gq 23) «We tend such a great number of cattle and still we must remain hungry»; *ene Čotong noyan yaŋayuraŋamu yakičam* (Gq 49) «This master Čotong has gone mad»; *bi medemü ta medenem j-e* (Gq 67) «It is not me who has to know it, you were allowed to know it». In this sources, however, the present-future verb forms with the suffix *-nam* (or rarely *-m*) are applied with the greatest predilection. This suffix must have served as the verb-forming model of the spoken language at that time, i. e. at the end of the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century. These verbs occur in the

¹ C. Damdinsuren, *Istoričeskie korni Geseriady*, Moskva 1957, p. 56.

² B. Ja. Vladimircov, *Sravnitel'naja grammatika mongol'skogo pis'mennogo jazyka i čalchaskogo narečija*, Leningrad 1929, p. 24.

book under discussion in such a great number that one can meet them on almost each page or at least each folio. For this reason we can present here only two or three examples to demonstrate its type: *doluyān jāyūn jil sayužu bayinam bi* (Gq 2) «I live (literally: I sit) 700 years»; *ede bügüde-yin ügen-i ene bayinam* (Gq 5) «Such are their words»; *činu dergede bi sayūn geküle oyoton-a ken alam* «If I am sitting with you, who will get the field-mice (literally «to kill the field-mice»).

Even in 19th century literature we have verbs ending in *-nam* and sometimes *-mui*, *-mu* before us, but they do not appear any more in 20th century literature. Their place is taken by verbs of other suffix variants *-n-a* (rarely *-n*) of the spoken language. It is characteristic of the *Geser bayatur* that verbs in the present-future tense have only got this suffix: *abuyad kelebel eyimü bayin-a* (Gq 2) «If we undertake to enumerate them, they are the following»; *čimeg bolun miraljan-a* (Gq 3) «It sparkles as a jewel».

5) In the Peking edition of *Geser* there are archaic adverbial finalia with the suffix *-r-a*: *göröge-lür-e ečibe* (Gq 39) «They left for hunting»; *suburjan unažu dörben tabun anggi bolqur-a ečibe* (Gq 45) «Falling down, the stupa began to split up into four-five parts», whereas in the *Geser-bayatur* of Pažai this adverb is not present at all.

6) In the text of *Geser qayan* there occur some obsolete adverbial praeparativa with the suffix *-r-un*: *em-e qarabtur sibayun ögüler-ün* (Gq 109–110) «The black she-bird said . . .»; *Geser qayan jarliy bolor-un* (Gq 110) «Geser qayan was so kind as to declare . . .»; *Jasa-siker asayur-un* (Gq 184–185) «Jasa-siker asked . . .». But this adverb is not applied in the *Geser-bayatur*.

The facts listed above demonstrate that the archaic literary elements of the classical Mongolian language did not disappear from grammar all of a sudden but were gradually dropped. On the contrary, the obsolete words — as can be established on the basis of the evidence of the *Geser qayan* text, were put aside from literature in a quicker process and with greater consistency. We cannot say the same, however, about the archaic auxiliary words, postpositions and particles. Like the grammatical forms they do not often have synonymic equivalents, thus their disappearance is only possible when in the living speech equivalents of similar functions arise and penetrate into the literary language. This might serve as an explanation for the survival up to the present of such obsolete words as e. g. *bülüge* (Cf. contemporary *-bile*); *-bui* (cf. contemporary *yum*) — affirmative-predicative particle: *böged* (it is used even to-day); *ba* (widely occurring in contemporary literature).

Attention should now be drawn to the elements of the spoken language, the penetration of the commonest words of which in literary products of

the initial period of the classical Mongolian language has been dealt with in the already mentioned famous comparative grammar of B. Ja. Vladimircov. In our analysis of the substitution of the archaic grammatical forms of the written language for forms of the same meaning of the spoken language, it was maintained that: 1) Together with the verbs ending in *-mu* or *-mui* the verbs with the suffix *-nam* were applied as well, and later on verbs with the suffix *-na* were applied almost exclusively; 2) Instead of the nouns in the locative terminating in *-a* and *-dur* or *-tur*, the nouns ending in *-du* (or *-tu*) were used most widely; 3) The nouns in the comitative with the affix *-luga* were dropped and the nouns ending in *-taj* took their place.

Beside the grammatical forms of the popular spoken language that gradually superseded their literary equivalents that has been already dealt with some other elements of the spoken language should be mentioned here, too. These elements were present in the classical Mongolian language in its initial stage but did not survive later. E. g. in the *Geser qayan* we can see that: 1) the nouns ending in the consonant *n* take the affix *-i* in the genitive: *bayan-i ökin* (Gq 8) «The daughter of a rich man»; *ökin-i köl* (Gq 9) «The foot of the girl»; *qan-i qatun* (Gq 101) «Wife of the khan»; the same nouns occur sometimes with the ending *-nai*: *olan čerig kenei bile* (Gq 283) «Who possessed this great army»; 2) Nouns ending in consonants have the affix *-yin* in the genitive similar to the nouns ending in vowels: *ger-ün močun* (Gq 23) «Timber for the house»; *tuyul-yin tustu* (Gq 24) «On account of the calves»; *mangyus-yin keüked-yin toluyai* (Gq 147) «The heads of the monster's children»; *Tümen-jiryalang-yin orkiysan* (Gq 238) «Left by Tümen-Jirgalang»; 3) Between the stem of the noun ending in a long vowel in the genitive and the affix *-yin* sometimes a joining consonant *-g-*, or the syllable *-gi-* appear: *tere mayu-gin arγ-a sübeyin-ni jiyaji ača* (Gq 154) «Show me how is it possible to get near to this rascal»; *keriy-e-gi-yin kelegsən* (Gq 179) «The thing said by the raven». 4) Some genitive particles are represented in the spoken form *-te* (pronounced *-tél*) instead of the usual *-tegen* and there is *-yan* (pronounced *-yaan*) instead of *-ben*: *ger-de oroba* (Gq 24) «They returned home»; *aqai-yan* (Gq 202) «His elder brother»; 5) Another time we can observe an inversion of the parts of speech in the sentence; the subject is to be found after the predicate, the attribute stands after the word which is qualified by it, the adverb or complement follows the predicate: *qarižu irebe Geser* (Gq 42) «Geser returned»; *ken-i bidan-i üge jöb* (Gq 117) «Whose words are right among us»; *čima-du següder-iyen üjegüljü yabunam buyu tere* (Gq 121) «He shows to you only his shadow». These variants of writing did not really become implanted into the literary language as is revealed to

us by the evidences of the *Geser bayatur* in which nouns ending in *n* take the vowel *-u* in the genitive (*Geser qayan-u abay-a* (Gb 5) «Geser qayan's uncle» (but nouns ending in any other consonant get an *-un*) *ayil-un keüked* (Gb 3) «The children of the neighbours»; the genitive particles have their traditional representation (*čegešin-degen* (Gb 17) «On his bosom»); but a connecting syllable and inversion occur only rarely (*Arulu-you-a qatun-u-kini ariyum gegen jisü* (Gb 3) «The holy radiant face of the beauteous gentlewoman Arulu-you-a»; *kürčü irel-e Čotong ebügen* (Gb 18) «The old man Čotong has arrived»).

The data presented above reveal by all means definite changes that had taken place during the so called classical period of the Mongolian language. It seems that these alternations were conditioned by the widening function of the language itself. The written Mongolian language had in its earlier stage an organic ideological function. But at the end of the 17th and especially at the beginning of the 18th century in connection with the xylographic printing of preponderantly progressive books of revised works of the oral folk-poetry this language began to bear the great burden of spreading clerical and didactical literature among the people. Subsequently the lexical and grammatical elements of the spoken language were allowed to find their way into the language in order to make the written language accessible to the people and to make the literary products written in this language more popular. The elements of living speech appearing now in literature through writing were, however, not of such a wide-ranging, all-embracing character, as to be able to bring about a fundamental change in the language that still was and has remained the written language, containing and preserving the obsolete elements in its lexical-grammatical structure. This can safely be supported on the evidence of the *Geser qayan* and partly the *Geser bayatur* which are works of a popular character. The academician S. A. Kozin correctly maintains that «though the Mongolian *Geseriad* came down to us in a written form, nevertheless it is so densely full of fragments of oral folk poetry that it seems safer to regard this monument not as a purely literary but rather as a semi-literary appearance».³ It appears from the above facts that in some other less popular but rather special genre of classical Mongolian literature the popular spoken phenomena present themselves in a much smaller degree, because the obsolete literary phenomena survived in them deeper and longer. But we have set ourselves the task of examining the folklore-epic genre and we have utilized the method of

excluding everything from the comparison with the versions of the Buriat *Geser* that seems obsolete in a linguistic respect in the Peking edition of *The Mongolian Geser*.

The above treated Buriat versions of the *Geser* have been recorded from Cis-Baikalian (or so called Western) Buriats: Manšut Imegenov the teller of the *Geser xubün* came from the clan of Ašibagat and lived in the territory of the Ekhirit-Bulagats. Piochon Petrov, who related the *Abai-Geser* came from the clan Khangin living near the Angara and belonging to the Bokhan-Bulagat group of the Cis-Baikalian Buriats as regards their language. To put it briefly these versions of the Buriat *Geser* preserve the dialect of those Western Buriats that spread from the riverside of Angara as far as the Upper Lena.

Beginning the comparison of the Mongolian and Buriat versions of the *Geser* first we shall analyse the data referring to their lexical structure. 1) As was to be expected, most of the lexical deviations in the language of the Mongolian and Buriat versions of *Geser* are taken up by the vocabulary of every-day life. E. g. if the Mongolian versions have words of every-day use like *ger* (Gq 1) «house, yurt», *ayay-a* (Gb 37) «glass», *čonggo* (Gq 23) «window», *šatu* (Gq 106) «ladder», *jočilaqu* (Gb 8) «to entertain sy in one's house», *quragu* (Gq 64) «to assemble, come together», *üjekü* (Gq 95) «to see», *asayagu* or *asayugu* (Gq 10) «to ask», then the Buriat versions have the corresponding words, besides *ger* also *hüri* (Gx 24) and *sool* (AG 21), *tagsa* (AG 30), *sagaabar* (Gx 18), *duguj* (Gx 21), *ajšalcha* (Gx 14), *suglacha* (Gx 15), *guljdacha* (AG 33), *characha* (Gx 18), *huracha* (Gx 17). 2) It is a well-known fact that the expressions of relationship and quality, the names of heavenly bodies and phenomena belong to the strata of vocabulary which change relatively very slowly. And in fact, if we leave out of consideration the fact that the representatives of the Western-Buriat dialect ceased to be in contact with the representatives of the actual Mongolian language several hundred years ago in the treated version of *Geser* we may come across a number of fundamental words denoting relationship and cosmic phenomenon having the same form: LM *eke* ~ Bur. *êché* «mother», LM *ečige* ~ Bur. *êšégé* «father», LM *aq-a* ~ Bur. *acha* «elder brother», LM *degüü* ~ Bur. *düü* «Younger brother (or sister)»; LM *naran* ~ Bur. *naran* «sun», LM *sara* ~ Bur. *hara* «moon, month», LM *tngrî* ~ Bur. *têngêri* «sky», LM *yařar* ~ Bur. *gazar* «earth» and others. But it is not the general expressions that deserve our greatest attention, but the different words denoting one and the same notion in our sources: *eji* (Gx 14; Gb 4) *êži* and *ibii* or *iibii* (Gx 20; AG 70) «mummy», *emege* (Gq 20) *êmêgé* and *tóódêj* or *ütóódêj* (Gx 12;

³ S. A. Kozin, *Epos mongoljskich narodov*, Moskva--Leningrad 1948, p. 186.

AG 16) «grandmother», *abu*⁴ and *baabaj* (Gx 16; AG 19) «daddy», *gergei* (Gq 101; Gb 10) *gêrgêj* and *hamgan* (Gx 20) «wife»; *delekei* (Gq 3, Gb 1) *dêlêkêj* and *dajda* (Gx 15) «earth, world», *jun* (Gq 46) and *nažir* (Gx 19) «summer» and some others. 3) There are strata of a language which are extremely conservative to changes and almost inaccessible, such as the designations for the members of the body, pronouns, numerals, the most frequent verbs and nouns of quality. In fact, the majority of such words are common both for the Mongolian and for the Western Buriat dialects: a) LM *yar* ~ Bur. *gar* «hand», LM *köl* ~ Bur. *chül* «foot», LM *kelen* ~ Spoken Bur. *chêlin* «tongue», LM *nidün* ~ WBur. *nidên* «eye», LM *toluyai* ~ WBur. *tolgoj* «head», LM *aman* ~ Bur. *aman* «mouth», LM *čikin* ~ Bur. *šêchên* «ear» etc.; b) LM *bi* ~ Bur. *bi* «I», LM *bida* ~ Spoken Bur. *bidi* «we», LM *či* ~ Bur. *ši* «thou», LM *ta* ~ Bur. *ta* or *taanar* «you», LM *ene* ~ Bur. *ênê* «this», LM *tere* ~ Bur. *têrê* «that», LM *ken* ~ Bur. *chên* «who» etc.; c) LM *nigen* ~ Spoken Bur. *nêgê* «one», LM *goyar* ~ Bur. *chojor* «two», LM *γurban* ~ Spoken Bur. *gurba* «three», LM *dörben* ~ Spoken Bur. *durbê* «four», LM *tabun* ~ Spoken Bur. *taba* «five» etc.; d) LM *idekü* ~ Bur. *êdichê* «to eat», LM *abqu* ~ Bur. *abacha* «to take», LM *ögkü* ~ Bur. *ügêchê* «to give», LM *bayiqu* ~ Bur. *bajcha* «to stand, to be found», LM *sayuqu* ~ Bur. *huucha* «to sit», LM *irekü* ~ Bur. *jerêchê* «to arrive», LM *yabuqu* ~ Bur. *jabacha* «to go, travel», etc.; e) LM *qara* ~ Bur. *chara* «black», LM *čayan* ~ Bur. *sagaan* «white», LM *ulayan* ~ Bur. *ulaan* «red», LM *yeke* ~ Bur. *jeché* «big», LM *sayin* ~ Bur. *hajn* «good, well», LM *mayu* ~ Bur. *muu* «bad, badly», etc. Apart from such a wide-ranging generality on the same fields of the vocabulary there are also certain differences: LM *uruyul* (Gq 55; Gb 7) but Bur. *ural* «lip»; LM *mörö* (Gb 45) but WBur. *êém* (Gx 34; AG 28) «shoulder»; LM *öbesüben* (Gq 2) but WBur. *óöhêróón* (AG 25) «himself»; LM *bultu* (Gq 4) but WBur. *baran* (AG 20) «all»; LM *doluduyar* but WBur. *doloodjcho* (Gx 14) «seventh» LM *kelekü* (Gq 2) but WBur. *zugaalcha* (Gx 34) and *chêlêche* «to speak», etc.

Thus even this rough and hasty compilation of some strata of the vocabulary of the Mongolian and Buriat Geser versions leads us to infer that the deviations occurring in these sources embrace not only the superficial strata of lexicology but to some extent its depths as well. Subsequently we have every reason to believe that certain deviations of the vocabulary (above all phonetical, word-forming and lexical synonyms coming into being at an earlier stage of the language) were brought forth by a process of differentiation

in the language of Mongols that once used to possess a more or less common character. Other, more serious deviations were conditioned by the contact of the Mongols and Western Buriats with peoples of other languages. Our examples revealed to us that the lexicology of the Western-Buriats, often even the deeper strata of their vocabulary made way for Turkisms like *ibii* (or *iibii*) «mummy», *baabaj* «daddy», *tóódêj* (or *ütóódêj*) «grandmother», *baran* «all», *sool* «yurt», and Evenkisisms like *tagsa* «small glass» and others. This serves as a convincing evidence for the fact that the Buriat dialect developed independently of the Mongolian linguistic basis, all the more as there are many Tibetisms and Sinisms in the Mongolian language even in the superficial strata of its vocabulary while the Western Buriat dialects display mainly Turkic, Evenki and Russian elements. The differentiation of the Western Buriat dialect from the former Mongolian basis can be nicely demonstrated from their phonetic and grammatical divergences as well. But we must maintain that the phonetical comparison of the language of our sources bears a conditional character, as the Mongolian Geser versions, unlike the Buriat ones, represent literary documents. Nevertheless, their comparison from the point of view of phonetics is completely justifiable, because it is well-known in general, which sounds of the Mongolian spoken language are represented by certain letters. The most striking phonetic features of the Mongolian versions, as in Buriat in general, are the following: 1) The presence of the pharyngeal consonant *h* instead of the sibilant *s*: Bur. *hajn* (AG 20) but Mong. *sayin* (Gq 5; Gb 45) «good, well»; Bur. *juhün* (Gx 14) but Mong. *yisün* (Gq 13) «nine»; 2) lack of affricates: Bur. *bulžumuur* (AG 18) but Mong. *bolžumur* (Gq 43) «skylark»; Bur. *zúb* (Gx 16; AG 21) but Mong. *jöb* (Gq 1) «right, rightly»; Bur. *ši* (Gx 17) but Mong. *či* (Gq 1) «thou»; Bur. *sag* (AG 16) but Mong. *čay* (Gq 1) «time» etc.

The deviations of the grammatical forms in the Mongolian and Buriat Geser versions can be well illustrated by the following examples:

1) There is a certain difference in the use of the plural suffixes: while in the literary Mongolian the nouns ending in the firm consonant *n* take the plural suffix *-nuyud* (or *-nügüd*): *tuyulčîn-nuyud* (Gb 35) «the calf-keepers», in the Western Buriat dialects as in Buriat itself the same nouns take the plural suffix *-uud* (or *-üüd*): *hajchanuud* «the beautiful», *chüünüüd* «people», etc.;

2) There are relatively greater differences in the use of the case-endings: a) The nouns of the Mongolian Geser version ending in the consonant *-n* take the affix *-u* or *-ü* in the genitive and the nouns ending in all other

⁴ Literary *abu* or spoken *ab(a)*, a well-known Mongolian word.

consonants have the affix *-un* (or *-ü*): *burqan-u* (Gq 1) «God's», *qatun-u* (Gb 13) «princess», *luus-un* (Gq 4) «of dragons», *qad-un* (Gq 4) «the khats'», *mal-un* (Gb 20) «of the cattle», *edür-ün* (Gb 13) «of the day», while the nouns of the Buriat *Geser* version ending in any consonant have the genitive suffix *-i* and *-ai* (or *-ei*): *narani* (Gx 26) and *naranaj* (Gx 27) «of the sun», *tiüni* and *tiüněj* (Gx 23) «of that or him or her», *chübüüni* (Gx 25) and *chübüüněj* (Gx 27) «the boy's», *gazari* (AG 16) «of the earth», but *nažiraj* (Gx 17) «of the summer», etc. In the Mongolian *Geser* versions the nouns ending in any consonant take the formant *-yin*: *qada-yin* (Gq 11) «of the mountain», *tal-a-yin* (Gb 12) «of the steppe», *dalay-yin* (Gb 15) «of the sea», *čay-yin* (Gb 12) «of the tea», *Aruluyou-a-yin öngge žisü* (Gb 13) «the appearance of Aruluyoo-a», while the nouns of the Buriat *Geser* version ending in short vowels take the genitive suffix *-jn* (or *-in*), the nouns ending in diphthongs take the genitive suffix *-n*, the nouns ending in long vowels take the suffix *-in*: *échěj* (Gx 20) «the mother's», *harajn* (Gx 20) «of the month», *uulajn* (AG 16) «of the mountain», *téngériin* (AG 17) «of the heaven dwellers», *ogtorgojn* (Gx 20) heavenly, celestial», *abachajn* (AG 18) «of the virgin»; b) The nouns ending in consonants take the accusative affix *-i* in the Mongolian *Geser* version and the nouns ending in vowels the affix *-yi*: *žarliy-i* (Gq 1) order», *erdem-i* (Gq 4) «art, skill», *Čotong-i* (Gb 13), «Čotong», *abay-a-yi* «uncle», *miq-a-yi* (Gq 24; Gb 36) «meal», while the same nouns of the Buriat versions do not take any suffix in the accusative or take the suffix *-i*, rarely *-aje* (or *-ėje*) after consonants, *-je* (or *-ie*) — after short vowels and *-je* — after diphthongs or long vowels: *hamgani* (Gx 20) «woman», *saarhaje* (Gx 13) «paper», *égěšiie* (Gx 19) «elder sister», *abchaje* (AG 18) «virgin», *širėje* (Gx 19) «table», etc.; c) The Mongolian *Geser* versions use the nouns in the ablative with the formant *-eče* (or *-ača*): *eke-eče* (Gq 8) «from the mother», *nada-ača* (Gq 3) «from me», *külüg-eče* (Gb 30) «form argamak», while the nouns in the same cases take the suffix *-haa* in the Buriat versions (and further according to the vowel harmony): *zachahaa* (Gx 17) «from the country», *gazarhaa* (Gx 25) «from a distance», *baabajhaan* (AG 18) «from his father», etc.; d) The nouns of the Mongolian versions ending in a consonant take the suffix *-iyer* (or *-iyar*), and the nouns ending in vowels the suffix *-ber* (or *-bar*): *žarliy-iyar* (Gq 3) «according to the order», *žam-iyar* (Gb 12) «on the way», *čilayubar* (Gx 15) «with stone», etc., while the Buriat versions have the ending *-aar* (further according to the vowel harmony) both in the case of nouns ending in a consonant and short vowels, the nouns ending in diphthongs or long vowels take the ending *-jaar* (and further according to the vowel harmony): *doljoobornuudaar* (Gx 25) «with

forefingers», *ééméérénj* (AG 27) «at his shoulder», *úbér bėjээр* (AG 20) «with external side»; *dugužjaar* (Gx 21) «on a ladder», *dalažjaar* (AG 74) «on sea, by sea», etc.;

3) Both in the Mongolian and the Buriat versions of the *Geser* there are single data that do not have any equivalents in either of the sources treated here. However, they can serve as an evidence for the difference in the usage of the verbal forms. On account of the small number of the selected examples we can refer here only to the past-tense verbs. In the Mongolian versions of the *Geser* verbs in the past tense take the suffix *-ba* (or *-be*) and rarely *-bai* (or *-bei*), *-jai* (or *-jei*) and sometimes *-ži*, *-la* (or *-le*) and rarely *-luya* (or *-lüge*): *ečibe* (Gq 1) «he departed, left», *amur mendü-ber sayuba* (Gb 2) «he lived in peace», *odbai* (Gq 14) «he left», *irejei* (Gq 19) «he arrived», *törüžei* (Gb 4) «he was born», *eyimü yayum-a ese üjele bi* (Gq 18) «I did not see such a thing», *uytul-a* (Gb 7) «he met», *ese žegüdülelüge bi* (Gq 108) «I did not dream». In the Buriat versions, on the other hand, we can find verbs terminating in *-ba* (or *-be*) and *-lai* (or *-lej*), adverbs ending in *-aa* or *-gaa* (further according to the vowel harmony): *uuba* (Gx 12) «he drank», *abba* (AG 21) «he took», *orchjoloj* (Gx 13) «he left», *dylee* (AG 21) «they defeated», etc.

The Buriat versions of the *Geser* have been directly recorded from the story-tellers, consequently they reveal remarkable differences in comparison with the Mongolian versions, which underwent a literary adaption. The greatest difference seems that in the latter works the auxiliary words often merge into the independent ones and such colloquial contractions mean a handicap in understanding the story for those who do not speak the Western-Buriat dialect. Thus e. g. The Western Buriats say: *Ibii malgajaa abachašn-jaab?* (Gx 21) (from *abachašni* + *jaagaab*) «Mummy, would you take off your hat?», *habašjood* (Gx 29) (from *habaža* + *orchjood*) «flapping, beating», *gašir!* (Gx 54) (from *garaža* + *jerě*) «go out!», *děššě gapchyma* (AG 4) (from *gapacha* + *juma*) «it arises», *gargaadjchoo* (AG 21) (from *gargaad* + *orchjoo*) «put out», *abšarbo* (AG 99) (from *abaža* + *orobo*) «he took there», *örlégěēnüdlimē* (AG 118) (from *örlégěēni* + *adli* + *jumē*) «something worse than a morning illusion», *charachymahaamda* (AG 204) (from *characha* + *juumē* + *han* + *bide*) «we ought to have seen it», etc.

Considering the above mentioned facts and those revealing a similar character, we must take note of the significance of the deviations present in the language of the analysed sources. These differences are so intricate that even those who speak Mongolian do not always understand even the most general theme of the Buriat version of the *Geser* without a preliminary

study of its language, just as those speaking the Western-Buriat dialect will not be able to understand certain expressions of the Mongolian *Geser* version either.

In the general background of the linguistic deviations between the Buriat and Mongolian *Geser* versions the Mongolisms that have been pointed out first are of great interest. In order to make the problem clear we may point out that by the term Mongolism we refer here to such linguistical elements that are characteristic of the Mongolian language but are not characteristic, or even unfamiliar with the Buriat language.

Mongolisms are to be found in the *Abaj-Geser* of Piochon Petrov. In this work we have quite a large number of Mongolian words before us: *ênché* (AG 16) (cf. Bur. *êldin*, *chongor*, *amgalan*) «peaceful, calm», *gagar* (AG 16) (cf. Bur. *hürchêj*, *chüjchêr*) «outstanding, famous», *abchaj* (AG 16) (cf. Bur. dial. *gaagaj*, *abgaj*, *êgêšê*) «elder sister», *üröö* (AG 20) (cf. Bur. dial. *gooronso*) «tariff», *dordo* (AG 24) (cf. Bur. *doodo*) «lower», *ordon* (AG 35) (cf. Bur. *tura* dial., *başšan*) «palace, building», *habacha* (AG 40) (cf. Bur. *sochicho*) «to beat, strike», *düchêché* (AG 50) (cf. Bur. *dütêlché*, *ojrtocho*) «to approach», *êljšê* (AG 50) (cf. Bur. *zorjunta*, *naarašna*) «messenger, herald», *dêrgêdê* (AG 74) (cf. Bur. *čažuuda*) «at, beside», *čaa* (AG 97), (cf. Bur. *čaana*) «where to», *ehe* (AG 111) (cf. Bur. *-güj*, *-güê* or *-büê* dial.) «no», etc. In the *Abaj Geser* on the other hand phonetical Mongolisms occur but in a single case, e. g. the verb *suracha* «to ask» given both in its Mongolian form and with its Buriat equivalent in the canonized compound verb *huran suran baina* (AG 53) «to ask, inform». Grammatical Mongolisms, however, occur in the *Geser* variant in a somewhat greater number: the nouns ending in consonants take the dialectal Mongolian genitive suffix *-i* instead of the Buriat affix *-aj* (further according to the vowel harmony): *gazari* (AG 16) (cf. *gazaraj*) *têndê* «in the centre of the earth», *nêgê hajni* (AG 36) (cf. *hajnaj*) *hüldê* «the soul of a young man», *adahani* (AG 62) (cf. *inalaj*) *mjachan* «beef(meal)», *goli* (AG 75) (cf. *goloi*) *uzuurta* «at the sources of the river», *boldogi* (AG 102) (cf. *boldogoj*) *šênêên* «in the size of a hill», etc.

The presence of Mongolian elements in the text of the *Abaj Geser* is in perfect accordance with the statements of the researcher of the Buriat epic, A. I. Ulanov, who said that the bases of the Mongolian *Geseriad* «were born near the Angara and penetrated into the basis of the epic of the Buriats».⁵ A. I. Ulanov sets out this conclusion relying on the fact that

firstly, numerous details and chapters of the Mongolian *Geser* and the so-called Ungin variant of the Buriat *Geser*, including Petrov's *Abaj Geser* overlap — as to their subject-matters; secondly, among the Buriats near the Angara there live emigrants from Mongolia, thus we may assume that «they brought the epic of *Geser* with themselves in the 14th—16th century».⁶

A. I. Ulanov, however, suggests that the Ekhirit-Bulagat version of the *Geser* (above all the *Geser-chübün* of Manšut Imegenov) is «wholly independent and original, it has nothing to do with the Mongolian *Geseriad* and the Tibetan, Kalmuk stories of *Geser* either».⁷ Nevertheless, we are led to infer that the Mongolian *Geser* has some elements in common with the *Geser-chübün*, even if not in such a great number as is the case when compared with the *Abaj Geser*: «The fight with the Mangadchajs, the hero turned into a horse by the Lobsogoldoi and several other motives of mythical character — A. I. Ulanov remarks — refer to the relationship of Mongolian and Buriat myths».⁸ As is assumed by the same author, «this relationship should be dated to the first thousand years»,⁹ i. e. to the period when (if we understand the author correctly) the ethnical differentiation among the Protomongols did not take place yet. This seems to be the reason why A. I. Ulanov stresses the common mythological basis that survived later in the epic pictures and he refers at the same time to their independence. Be this as it may, the fact is that in the Peking edition of the Mongolian *Geser* and in the Ekhirit-Bulagat variant of the Buriat *Geser* there are not only common elements of general character such as the fight of the hero with the monster mangus or mangadchais or the turning of the hero into horse or donkey, antilamaistic motives, but motives like the terrestrial birth of the hero into the family of aged parents and his having three celestial sisters. Even if one cannot establish the coincidence of certain proper names of the *Geser-chübün* of the Ekhirit-Bulagats with those of the Mongolian *Geser* with perfect confidence, because their resemblance is not too close: *Dasin Šööchör* — *Ĵasa Šiker*, *Lobsogoldoj* or *Jobsogoldoj* — *Lobsaga*, still the identity of the hero's name in the Mongolian and Buriat versions

⁵ A. I. Ulanov, *Vstupitel'naja stat'ja, Abaj-Geser*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷ A. I. Ulanov, *Predislovie, Geser-Chübün*, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

cannot be regarded as accidental.¹⁰ The same is true for the evidently Mongolian address of kind attention *abaj*, meaning «dear».

In connection with this we should like to point out that the text of the *Geser-chübün* of the Ekhirit-Bulagats reveals Mongolisms that belong mainly to the fields of phonetics and morphology. Thus, e. g. in the *Geser-chübün* we can find the following words recorded according to Mongolian pronunciation: *mêter gêsên* (instead of Bur. *gêhên*) *bêjeêrêê* (Gx 12) «immediately, at once», *mêdêên sajndaa* (instead of Bur. *hajndaa*) *mêdêbê* (Gx 13) «he learned it on account of his shrewdness», *huran suran* (instead of Bur. *huran*) *bajba* (Gx 14) «he asked, informed», *jalacha* (Gx 16) (instead of Bur. *ilacha*) «to overcome, defeat», *sajchan* (Gx 37) (instead of Bur. *hajchan*) «beautiful», *suurilchaža* (instead of Bur. *huurilchaža/ababa* (Gx 83) «he settled down», etc. In the *Geser-chübün* we find: a) nouns ending in a consonant with the genitive affix *-i*: *ûbuli* (together with *ûbêlêj*) *chûjtên* (Gx 16 and 19) «winter frost», *basagani* (cf. *basagana*) *êchê* (Gx 24) «the mother of the girl», *tere chojori* (cf. *chojoroj*) *jêrchêdê* (Gx 24) «At the arrival of those two», *narani* (cf. *narana*) *ûrôôlê* (Gx 25) «half of the sun», *chûbüüni* (together with *chûbüünêj*) *duun* (Gx 25 and 28) «the cry of the boy», etc.; b) Verbs in the 3rd person imperative with the suffix *-tagaj* (further according to the vowel harmony): *jêrêlêgêj* (Gx 15 and 71) (instead of Bur. *jêrûûžê*) «let him arrive», *abtagajg* (Gx 147) (instead of Bur. *abuūža*) «let him catch», *orchitogoj* (Gx 147 and 148) (instead of Bur. *orchjuūža*) «let him leave» etc. Among the Mongolisms of the *Geser-chübün* there are some lexical loans, too: *ogtorgoj* (Gx 18) (cf. *têngêri*) «sky, firmament», *têlêbêrlêchê* (Gx 94) (cf. *ašacha*) «to put in, deliver» and some others.

The evidences of the Ekhirit-Bulagat version of the *Geser* treated here can be linked with the suggestion that the Ekhirit-Bulagat Buriats got their name from a small Mongolian group consisting of the Ikires-Chonkirats,¹¹ who — in my opinion — took refuge in the scarcely accessible Cis-Baikalia after the defeat of Jamuka's anti-Činggis plot and who lead part of the Protoburiat clans in the beginning of the 13th century. It is reasonable to assume that these Ikires brought the weekly developed basis of the story of *Abaj Geser*, the brave hero fighting for the benefit of his people. If we accept this possibility, it seems quite natural that comparing the fully developed versions of the *Geser* becoming famous after five centuries with the Mongols and after seven centuries with the Ekhirit-Bulagat Buriats

¹⁰ The *Geseriad* has naturally spread over a much wider region, but it is quite another thing.

¹¹ Cf. G. N. Rumjancev, *Proischoždenie chorinskich burjat*. Ulan-Ude 1962, p. 53.

we find only a few common traits like the name of the hero only and some elements of the subject-matter and language.

Finally there is no doubt that there are Mongolisms present in the Buriat versions of the *Geser* and some overlaps in the subject-matter of the Mongolian and Buriat versions. In our opinion these connecting motives reveal the fact that the Buriat versions take their origin from earlier Mongolian versions and there is not much prospect of assuming a separate origin of a special Buriat *Geser*.

To provide a solid basis for suggesting the independence of the Buriat *Geser* scholars sometimes refer to the fact that the Buriat versions are always told in verse, while the Mongolian versions are rendered in prose. The question of the artistic-poetical side of the language of the epical works — including the *Geser* — is a wide-ranging problem and we regard it as being outside our present task in this short article. We should like to point out that investigating the two basical Buriat versions of the *Geser* it seems rather difficult to consider the form of their language to be verse, especially since alliteration, a compulsory element of the Buriat verse is applied only sporadically. It would be more correct to maintain that the *Geser-xübün* of Manšut Imegenov and the *Abaj Geser* of Piochon Petrov are told in rhythmic prose that is easily understandable, because the *Uligers* (epical works) are told in a recitative way by the Buriats, and all the other Mongolian tale-tellers. Consequently the Buriat *Geser* versions cannot be separated from the other Mongolian versions in this respect either.

The national and local feature of the contents of the *Geser* versions is quite another problem. There is no doubt that the *Geser-xübün* of the Ekhirit-Bulagats, the *Abaj Geser* of Angara or other variants have long been transformed into Buriat stories both as far as their subject-matter and language are concerned. The Mongolian Academician Damdinsuren is right when he states: «the *Geseriad* spread widely through oral transmission why it is not permissible to study the Buriat-Mongolian versions without Buriat-Mongolia, the Mongolian variants without Mongolia, the Tibetan variants without Tibet. At the same time their mutual interrelations must not be neglected either. As is well-known all the peoples of Central Asia the different groups of Mongolian, Turkish and Tibetan population through the long process of their historical development entered into the closest connection with one another both in the field of economics and in the creation of their cultural values».¹²

¹² C. Damdinsuren, *op. cit.*, p. 164—165.