

## Geser Boyda-yin Sang: A little-known Buryat-Mongolian sutra

Bayir Dugarov

One of the most esteemed epic heroes whose cult has assumed a religious character among the Mongolian people is Geser Khan. According to the epic, his main mission as the envoy of the sky-dwellers was to eradicate evil and establish good and justice on earth. Historically he was a divine being to the Mongolian tribes, and he protected warriors and the owners of the countless herds that were the source of pride and wealth among the nomadic steppe inhabitants. Moreover, the revering of Geser has a protective function. For instance, Buryat shamanists have a superstition that it is good to talk about Geser Boyda Khan in hard times when there is dangerous illness because it fights back the various evil spirits that send illness and misfortune to people. Furthermore, listening to the poem about Geser Khan before setting out on a journey is a good sign since it would grant a man safe travel and good luck in business.<sup>1</sup>

The first scholar to actually publish Mongolian texts related to the Geser cult was the academician B. Rintchen.<sup>2</sup> In the 1950s two manuscripts were published by him: *Geser Boyda qayan-u sang*, *Geser qayandur sang takil ergükü yosun ene bolai*, and the block-print *Geser-yin ubsang neretü sudur*, originally printed in Beijing.

The most important works about the Mongolian Geser cult belong to Walther Heissig. In his monumental *Mongolische volksreligiöse und folklorische Texte*<sup>3</sup> the German scholar made a comparative study and source description of the Mongolian written texts on Geser and published in transliteration four cult texts, *sang*, which have Chakhar, Oirat, and Khalkha origins, respectively, as well as a fragment of a Geser Khan prayer. Moreover, he published a facsimile of the three Mongolian texts and a table of the contents of six manuscripts.

As for the Buryat ritual texts dedicated to Geser, until recently they have remained unknown to scholars. However, a group of texts, twelve in number, of the type *Geser Boyda-yin sang* are kept in the Mongolian fund of the Buryat Institute of Social Sciences, now the Institute of Mongolian Studies, Buddhism and Tibetology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMBT). Ts. P. Vanchikova<sup>4</sup> investigated these texts in an article in which she gives the transliteration

and translation into Russian of the manuscript *Geser qayan-u sang orušiba*, as well as the transliteration of eight smaller ritual texts also dedicated to Geser.

The purpose of the above information is to stand as an introduction to another little-known copy of the Buryat-Mongolian sutra *Geser Boyda-yin sang* «Incense Burning Prayer for Holy Geser Khan». This has been found recently in the private collection of A. Zh. Dyrzhinov, who lives in the village of Orlik in the Oka region, Buryatia, and whose father was a connoisseur of ancient Mongolian texts.

The manuscript has a *pothi* format, fastened together with a yellow cotton band around the middle. The size of the manuscript is five pages. The paper is Russian, and has become yellow with age. The pagination is Mongolian, on the pages the title and the text itself are double-framed, the frame is red in color. The size of every sheet is 7 x 20.5 cm, the size of the text 5 x 16.4 cm. There are 16 lines per page. The text is written in black Indian ink, and the edges of the manuscript, the right one, in particular, has become dark from frequent usage. On the facial and last pages there are marks made with black Indian ink and pencil in Mongolian writing. We can read the word *Tsamdan*, which probably is the name of a rewriter or compiler.

When compared with the texts in the Mongolian fund in Ulan-Ude, there is some similarity between this manuscript and the *Geser Boyda-yin sang-un sudur orušibai* (N BM 605). This allows us to make some speculations about the interrelation and origin of these two ritual works.

The fact that this manuscript turned up in the Oka region is worth mentioning. In this connection I would like to recall that it was the Oka region where in 1929 the scholar G. D. Sanzheev discovered the epic novel *Khan Kharanggui* in Written Mongolian, an important discovery for Mongolian studies at that time. Furthermore, during the Oka expedition he also discovered a scattering of many other Mongolian manuscripts, copied by local literate people.<sup>5</sup>

The oral tradition of the Geser epic songs existed also in the Oka region side by side with the literary version of Geser, which gave rise to the Beijing xylograph edition of 1716. The co-existence of these two traditions, oral and written, may be explained by the special geographical position of the Oka region, which links Mongolia with western Buryatia, Priangaria, where Geser existed in the oral epic form only.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that there is a connection between the Geser epic and the Oka manuscript of the Geser cult. The material of the *Geser Boyda-yin sang* contributes to the understanding of the evolution and geographical dissemination of the Geser cult among Mongolian tribes, including the

Buryat Mongols. In this particular case we can say that the Oka region, located in the center of the Eastern Sayan Mountains, remained, despite its remote and inaccessible location, within the area of the pan-Mongol cultural-ethnic space. The complement of the Oka Buryats, who are mostly Khongodors, has a Mongolian origin.

### Bibliographical notes

- 1 Khangalov M. N. 1959. *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, Ulan-Ude, pp. 320–321.
- 2 Rintchen B. 1958. «En marge du culte de Guesser Khan en Mongolie», *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 60, Helsinki, pp. 1–51.
- 3 Heissig W. 1966. *Mongolische volksreligiöse und folklorische Texte*, Wiesbaden, pp. 23–29, 140–150.
- 4 Vanchikova Ts. P. 1998. «Mongoloyazychnye obryadovye teksty kul'ta Gesera», *Kultura Tsentral'noi Azii: Pis'mennyye istochniki*, vyp. 2, Ulan-Ude, 111–144.
- 5 Sanzheev G. D. 1937. «Mongolian story about Khan Kharangui», *Trudy Instituta vostokovedeniya AN SSSR*, vyp. 22, Moskva & Leningrad, pp. 6–7.
- 6 Dugarov B. S. 1983. «Bytovanie eposa “Geser” u Okinskikh Buryat», *Sovremennost' i traditsionnaya kul'tura narodov Buryatii*, Ulan-Ude, pp. 114–115.

### The text

The Roman transcription of the Oka manuscript *Geser Boyda-yin sang* as well as its English translation and a facsimile copy of the original text are presented below.

#### Geser Boyda-yin sang-un sudur orušibai

(1v) *Om-a-a-hum γurban-ta ögüle.*  
*Ulaγan-u ündüsü ulaγan qongγor čirai-tu*  
*altan šira üsnir-tü nigen niγur-tu qoyar mutur-tai,*  
*baraγun mutur-daγan garudi-yin šinji-tu sumu-ni bariγsan,*  
*jegün mutur-daγan baras-un šinji-tu numu-ni bariγsan,*  
*naran metü duulγ-a-yi terigün-degen asaγaγsan,*  
*saran metü banbai-yi mürün-degen aγuluγsan*  
*odun metü (2r) quyaγni beyen-degen emüsügsen,*  
*qurča iretü belge bilig-ün ildü-ni mutur-daγan dalaiγsan,*  
*vingduri-a erdeni-yin erbeljitü belig-ün keger morin kölge-tü,*



Geser Boyda qaγan-a,  
 ariγun oron-ača činu  
 nigen aγšin-a dotur urin jalamui.  
 Dongrab Širabuu neretü Geser Boyda qaγan-a,  
 γučin baγatur, γurban jaγun jiran qoštıγučı nükiüd  
 seltes-ün qamtubar-ni urin jalayad,  
 jaγun (2v) jiva toγ-a-tu amtan šim-e-ni büriddügsen,  
 ariγun sayıqan takil-bar ariγulan takimui.  
 Arča zandan gügül ba agi surgar dali-bar arban  
 jüg-ün ejen ačitu Geser qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Delekei dakin-ni ejelegsен,  
 degedü tngri-nar-un qubilγan  
 ačitu Geser Boyda qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Degedü beyen-dür inu qamuγburqad-un küčün tegüsügsen,  
 douradu beyen-dür inu naiman (3r) luus-un qad-un küčün-ud  
 tegüsügsen Geser qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Doγširaγsan šimnus-ni doroyitaγulun daruγči,  
 auγ-a küčün tegüsügsen,  
 ačitu Geser qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Šašin törü-yin üile-dü šingdaral ügei jidkügsen  
 Širabuu Dongrab neretü qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Törü šašin qoyar-ni tedgügči dayisun toγar-ni toγosun  
 toburaγ bolγan sünügegči Geser qaγan-a (3v) ariγulan takimui.  
 γal-un ayul-du usu metü,  
 salkin-u ayul-du aγula metü,  
 usun-u ayul-du onγyoča metü,  
 dayisun-u čaγ-tu ayungγ-a metü,  
 ayuqu metü Geser Boyda qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Nayadum-un čaγ-tu Kiy Morin-ni delgeregüllügči  
 Qarbuqu čaγ-tu mergen onol-ni ügegügči  
 barilduqu čaγ-tu auγ-a küčün-ni nemegüllügči  
 ačitu Geser Boyda qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Dour-a-du (4r) morin-dur minu qurdan güyidel nemegsen,  
 turaqan beyen-dür süilde boloγsan,  
 malaγai metü sakiγči  
 següder adali dayaγči sür jibqulang tegüsügsen  
 ačitu Geser Boyda qaγan-a ariγulan takimui.  
 Čon ulayan qadan-du čisun jegerde mori-tai,  
 čoqum jimsaran-yi-yin qubilγan  
 čimai-yi yuγan maγtan ariγulan takimui.  
 Emün-e eče šira noqai tegülgegči üjesküleng-tü-yin  
 qara šibaγu (4v) nisgegči yisün süilde Dalha Tngri-iyen ariγulan takimui.  
 Čaγan jüg-ni sakiγči čaγlaši ügei auγ-a küčütü,  
 boyda qangγai Dongjing Garbuu-dur-ıyan ariγulan takimui.  
 Tngri luus sabdaγ kiged bükün-ni qangγai  
 delekei-yin ejed-ni ariγulan takimui.  
 Tengsel ügei yeke küčütü ubaši Dayan Degeriki

*čimai-yi nüküd seltes-ün qamtubar-ni ariγulan takimui.*  
*Törü (5r) yin dayisun-ni tamtalan soyurq-a.*  
*Šašin-ni dayisun-ni šingetelen soyurq-a.*  
*Törü šašin-ni batudqan jokiy-a.*  
*Tübšin jiryal-ni edlegülün jokiy-a.*  
*Kiy Morin-ni delgeregülün jokiy-a.*  
*Kešig-ün küriyen-ni batudqan jokiy-a.*  
*Qudaldurγan-dur ašiytusatu šidi-yi ügegün soyurq-a*  
*Ayan-dur ali olja-yi ildum-bar učirayulun soyurq-a.*  
*Aba-dur ang görügesü erkebeši (5v) učirayulju*  
*qayan qaririlan yangjuγalaγulun soyurq-a.*  
*Sanayсан бүгүде-yi түрген бүтөгө*  
*Gi gi süü süü lha-a yi luu*  
*Gündü saravan duu duu hum.*  
*Bajar ayuki suuq-a.*  
*Manggalam.*

### Incense Burning Prayer for Holy Geser Khan

*Om-a-a-hum* (say three times)  
 [You] of the red descent  
 with the reddish brown face, golden topknot,  
 one face, and two fists,  
 with an arrow with the sign of the *garudi*<sup>1</sup>  
 in the right hand,  
 and a bow with the sign of the tiger  
 in the left hand,  
 with a helmet like the sun,  
 a shield like the moon on your shoulder,  
 and armor like the stars on your body,  
 with a sharp sword of knowledge in your hand,  
 with a saddle studded with lapis  
 on your bay horse Beligen,  
 Holy Geser Khan,  
 I invite you from your pure land at this moment.  
 Geser with the *Dongrab Širabuu*<sup>2</sup> name,  
 with your thirty heroes and 360 companions  
 of the vanguard I invoke you,  
 gathering the essence of a hundred billion beings  
 I offer a beautiful pure offering for cleansing.  
*Arsa, zandan, gügöl, agi, surgar, and dali*<sup>3</sup>  
 I offer to the lord of the ten directions  
 Benevolent Geser Khan.  
 In the upper body having the strength of all the gods,  
 and in the lower body the strength of  
 the eight master spirits of waters and the earth,  
 to Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.

He who crushed the ferocious demons,  
 to the Mighty Benevolent Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.  
 So that the deeds of religion and of the state are not confused.  
 I make a purifying offering to Geser of the *Širabuu Dongrab* name.  
 To him who exterminates and annihilates the enemies and demons  
 that trouble the state and religion,  
 to Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.  
 In danger from fire you are like water,  
 In danger from wind you are like a mountain,  
 In danger from water you are like a boat,  
 In the face of the enemy you are like a thunderbolt,  
 To you fearsome Holy Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.  
 In times of games the giver of *Kiy Morin*,<sup>4</sup>  
 In archery the giver of accuracy,  
 In wrestling the giver of extra strength,  
 to you Benevolent Holy Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.  
 You gave speed to my favorite horse,  
 You became the spirit of my weak body,  
 protecting me like a hat  
 you followed me like a shadow with dignity,  
 to you Benevolent Geser Khan I make a purifying offering.  
 Riding a blood red horse on the red cliff,  
 To pure Jamsaran's<sup>5</sup> incarnation I make a purifying offering.  
 With the yellow dog going before and a flying raven  
 I worship the nine *Dalha Tenggeri*,<sup>6</sup>  
 Guardian of limitless power of the white direction,  
 to the master of the forested *Dongjing Garbuu*<sup>7</sup> mountain  
 I make a purifying offering.  
 To the *tenggeri*, water spirits, and nature spirits of this mountainous world  
 I make a purifying offering.  
 To *Dayan Degeriki*<sup>4</sup> of unequalled power and your companions  
 I make a purifying offering.  
 Devastate the enemies of the state.  
 Annihilate the enemies of religion.  
 Strengthen the state and religion.  
 Grant us peace and happiness.  
 Make Windhorse spread.  
 Increase spiritual merit.  
 In business grant magic power to find profit.  
 In our travel grant opportunity for gain.  
 On the hunt may we find game  
 and may the saddle straps be full.  
 Please make these things happen quickly.  
*Gi gi süü süü lha-a yi luu*  
*Gündü saravan duu duu hum.*  
*Bajar ayuki suuq-a.*  
*Manggalam.*

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**Annotations to the translation**

- 1 *garudi*: garuda, a giant bird, the mythological king of the birds.
- 2 *Dongrab Širabuu*: a Tibetan divinity.
- 3 *arsa, zandan, gügül, agi, surgar, dali*: plants and aromatic substances used in rituals.
- 4 *Kiy Morin*: 'Windhorse', a ritual flag with the picture of a horse, the personification of spiritual power.
- 5 *Jamsaran*: a Tibetan divinity, a patron of warriors.
- 6 *Dalha Tenggeri*: Mongolian *Sülde Tenggeri*, divinity of happiness and blessing.
- 7 *Dongjing Garbuu*: a Tibetan divinity, also the master spirit of the Boyd Uul [Holy Mountain] just south of Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia.
- 8 *Dayan Degeriki*: one of the most powerful shamanist spirits of Northern Mongolia with relation to Buddhism.

**Facsimile of the original text**

Figs. 1 to 6 below.

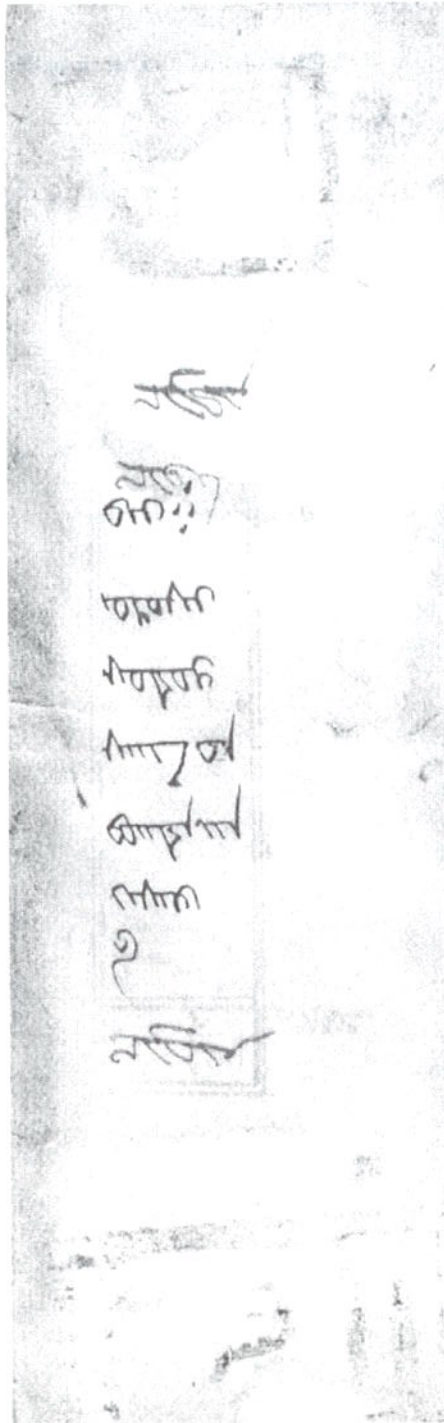


Fig. 1.

Titlepage















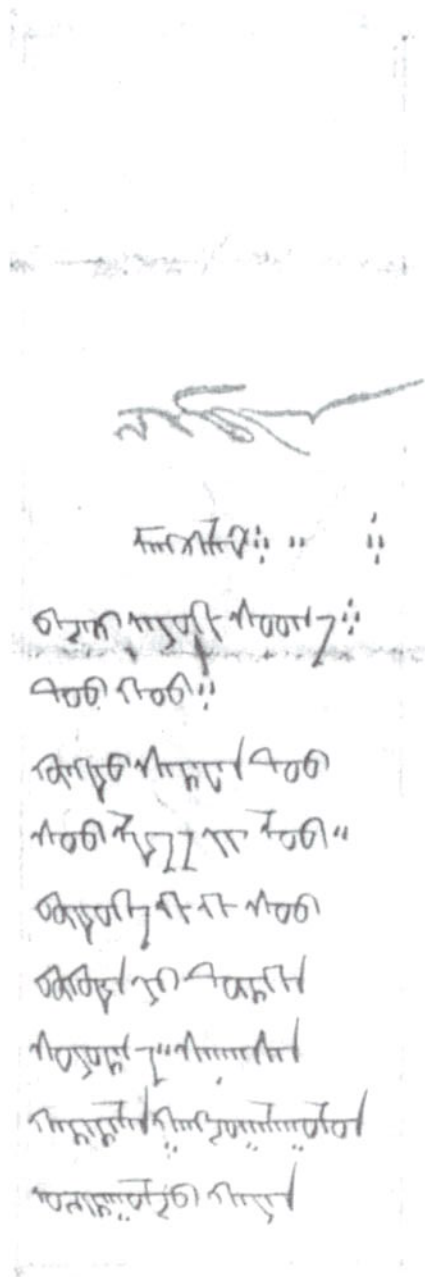


Fig. 6.

(5v)

