

Dmitrii Nosov

## **Buryat Folklore Collector’s “Desktop”: MS Mong. E 289 from the Collection of the IOM, RAS**

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*Abstract:* The paper contains a brief description of Mong. E 289 unit from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This is a set of 373 folios of various formats recorded and compiled by Tatiana K. Alekseeva, a Buryat folklore scholar. Among them is the text of an epics, titled by the author as *Geser qayan-u nom yaraq-u-yin tuqai* (“Prehistory of Geser”). The text is presented in different phonetic transcription systems. 120 folios of text in Old Mongolian scripts were done in the field. The record took place on the territory of the modern Osinsky district of the Irkutsk region during the summer of 1946 from the storyteller Morkhonoï A. Shobonov. The complex of both field record and different “whitewashed” variants of the text can help to uncover the “desktop” of the collector.

*Key words:* Buryats, shamans, Geser epics, folklore textology, Old Mongolian script

According to the tradition of the Asiatic Museum the written monuments are divided into two categories: manuscripts written in classical writing systems of the Orient and archival materials — documents compiled in Russian and other European languages, as well as records of original texts made in phonetic transcriptions based on Cyrillic and Latin. But in the collection of the IOM, RAS there is a handwritten monument that belongs to both categories at the same time. This is the manuscript Mong. E 289<sup>1</sup> from the Mongolian collection of the IOM, RAS. This unit can be called a “desktop” of the collector and researcher of the Western Buryat folklore — Tatiana Kapitovna (Kapitovna?) Alekseeva.

Little information about Tatiana K. Alekseeva has been published. I do not exactly know the correct form of her middle name, since it is indicated

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<sup>1</sup> SAZYKIN 1988: 37–38.

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differently on different folios of the document. In one case — *Kapitonovna*, in the other — *Kapitovna*.<sup>2</sup> It is known for sure that she was born on the territory of the modern Osinsky district of the Irkutsk region, the Russian Federation. In 1937 she graduated from LIFLH,<sup>3</sup> from its Northern Department,<sup>4</sup> and from May 1, 1938 to June 21, 1940 and again from August 01, 1945 to July 01, 1947 she was a postgraduate student at the Institute of Oriental Studies<sup>5</sup>, specializing in the Mongolian language.<sup>6</sup> According to Ilya I. Iorish, Tatiana K. Alekseeva was engaged in the processing of folklore materials which she had collected during her field work in Buryatia (cult mythology, chants of the Mongolian peoples and shamanism).<sup>7</sup>

In 2021 the leading specialist in Buryat shamanic folklore Ludmila S. Dampilova paid attention to the legacy of Tatiana K. Alekseeva. She was searching for the origin of the materials on Buryat shamanism published by Byambain Rinchen<sup>8</sup> in Wiesbaden without any passport data,<sup>9</sup> since they were secretly taken out by him from the Soviet archives.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Dampilova proved that some of the notes were written by the outstanding Buryat philologist and educator Tseveen Zh. Zhamtsarano,<sup>11</sup> Their originals are kept at the IOM, RAS (St. Petersburg)<sup>12</sup> and in the collection of the IMBT SB RAS

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<sup>2</sup> The *Kapitovna* form is indicated on an additional folio of the first part of the unit Mong E 289. The form *Kapitonovna* is indicated on the first page of the fifth part of the unit Mong E 289, that contains the genealogical table of Geser.

<sup>3</sup> The Leningrad Institute of Philosophy, Linguistics and History was a humanitarian university separated from the Leningrad State University in 1931 and re-incorporated into the University in 1937.

<sup>4</sup> IORISH 1972: 228.

<sup>5</sup> From 1818 to 1930 — the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Nowadays — IOM, RAS.

<sup>6</sup> St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Fund 152, Inv. 3, Unit 3.

<sup>7</sup> IORISH 1972: 228.

<sup>8</sup> Byambiin Rintchen (russ.: *Ринчин Бимбаев*, mong.: *Бямбын Ринчен*. December 25, 1905 — March 4, 1977, Altanbulag, Selenge aimak, Mongolia) — Mongolian philologist and a writer of Buriat origin. The first academician of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

<sup>9</sup> RINTCHEN 1961.

<sup>10</sup> DAMPILOVA 2021: 58.

<sup>11</sup> Tseveen Zhamtsarano (russ.: *Цыбен Жамцаранович Жамцарано*, mong.: *Жамсрангийн Цэвээн*. 1881, Suduntui, Transbaikalian district, Russian Empire — May 14, 1942, Sol'-Ilets'k prison, Orenburg region, USSR) — Russian, Mongolian and soviet researcher in philology and history, politician of Buriat origin. Known as the most productive collector of Mongolian peoples' folklore.

<sup>12</sup> Archive of Orientalists of the IOM, RAS. Fund 62.

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(Ulan-Ude).<sup>13</sup> Another part of the shamanic texts, published by B. Rintchen was recorded in Western Buryatia, a region where Tseveen Zh. Zhamtsarano had not conducted field research. They were made by another collector — Tatiana K. Alekseeva<sup>14</sup> during the period of World War II. This fact was not mentioned by the editor of the texts.

Despite the absence of any context information in B. Rintchen's publication, Ludmila S. Dampilova convincingly proved that 15 shamanic chants from the book were recorded by Tatiana K. Alekseeva from the shaman Morhonoï A. Shobonov in Osinsky aimag of Irkutsk region. Tatiana K. Alekseeva's records, stored in Ulan-Ude, contain not only the texts in phonetic transcription itself, but also auxiliary ethnographic materials for it. These are descriptions of the ritual conditions under which the texts were recited and the biographies of the shamans who performed them.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to fund 753 in IMBT SB RAS, which contains recordings of 20 shamanic chants, Dr. Dampilova mentions another depository in which Tatiana K. Alekseeva's recording of the epic poem *Гесер богдо хан, его происхождение, жизнь и деятельность*<sup>16</sup> ("Geser Bogdo Khaan, his origin, life and activity")<sup>17</sup> is preserved.<sup>18</sup> The text is written in the Cyrillic alphabet and presented in two versions — handwritten and typewritten.

We assume, that the text, kept in Ulan-Ude, is a copy, while original field record of this epic poem is contained in the IOM, RAS manuscript Mong. E 289 *Geser qayan-u nom yaraqy-yin tuqai*<sup>19</sup> ("Prehistory of Geser", as interpreted by the author of the manuscript). This monument is an organized set of folios placed in a cardboard folder produced by the First Leningrad Regional Printing House. It is included into the set of manuscripts under the common title "1955 collection" (Russ.: *Коллекция 1955 г.*) under number 10.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Woodcuts of the Institute of Mongolian Studies, Buddhismology and Tibetology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Fund 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Fund 753.

<sup>15</sup> DAMPILOVA 2021: 60–61.

<sup>16</sup> The original names of fragments in Russian given by the author of the manuscript are in italics.

<sup>17</sup> Here and below, translations into English are made by the author of the paper.

<sup>18</sup> Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Woodcuts of the Institute of Mongolian Studies, Buddhismology and Tibetology of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Fund 1791. DAMPILOVA 2021: 58.

<sup>19</sup> Transliteration done by Alexey G. Sazykin.

<sup>20</sup> SAZYKIN 1988: 37.

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The description, prepared by Alexey G. Sazykin (1943–2005) for the catalog, divided the storage unit into three groups<sup>21</sup>. Actually, there are five parts within the unit.

The first part of the unit consists of 120 paginated folios of 21×30 cm standard size, the text is written in blue and purple ink in the Old Mongolian script. Sheets are paginated in Arabic numerals, the text is applied only on the recto side, with the exception of a few marks on the verso side of ff. 32 and 120.

There is also an additional non-paginated folio within the first part. It contains the sections' titles of the manuscript in Russian, Old Mongolian and Buryat languages, as well as passport data of the field material.<sup>22</sup> From this information we can find out, that the recording was made in the Ongoi-Kutanka ulus of the Osinsky aimag<sup>23</sup> of the Irkutsk region in June and July 1946. The informant was a 72-year-old storyteller-shaman Morkhonoï Alsa-garovich Shobonov.

The titles of the sections of the manuscript in Old Mongolian script are as follows:

1. *Geser qaqaṅ-u nom qaryui-yin tuqai*<sup>24</sup> (“About the origin of the Geser-khaan”, ff. 1–102).
2. *Abai Geser-ün qoyar-duyar gerlegsen-ü tuqai* (“About the second wedding of Abai Geser”). The title of the second section is given with mistake: at the beginning of the text inside the manuscript (ff. 103–112) we read *Geser-ün dürben-deki-ben gerlegsen-ü tuqai* (“About the fourth wedding of Abai Geser”).
3. *Loyir qara Lobčoyoldoi-luḡ-a Geser qaqaṅ-u temečegsen бүлүг* (“The chapter about the struggle between Geser-khaan and Disgusting Black Lobsogoldoi”, ff. 113–119).
4. *Abai Geser-ün kübegün-ü tuqai* (“About the son of Abai Geser”, f. 120).

The second part of the storage unit Mong. E 289 is titled by the collector as *Гэлхэр Богдойн ном харгуйн* and consists of 170 folios of 21×30 cm stan-

<sup>21</sup> SAZYKIN 1988: 37–38.

<sup>22</sup> English translation of the folio is given in Appendix 1.

<sup>23</sup> Nowadays — the territory of the Bilchirsky, Kakha-Ongoysky and Uleisky municipalities of the Osinsky district of Irkutsk region, the Russian Federation.

<sup>24</sup> Here and below, the transliteration of the Old Mongolian text is made by the author of the article.

dard size. The text is in Cyrillic. The text is in blue ink and occupies only the recto side of each folio, paginated in Arabic numerals. There is also an additional folio containing Russian text written in blue ink.<sup>25</sup> It also contains the entry's passport details, but is dated by May 24, 1948. At the same time, it indicates that 120 folios of text in the Old Mongolian script (the first part of the unit Mong. E 289 — *D.N.*) are field records. This suggests that May 24, 1948 is the date when the transcription of the epic text was completed. An additional confirmation that the text in Cyrillic is a “whitewashed” manuscript, and not a field one, can be the almost complete absence of blots. This distinguishes it from the text written in the old Mongolian script, where there are many corrections and different spellings of the same word.

The third part of the storage unit Mong. E 289 contains the same Buryat text *Гэхэр Богдойн ном харгуйн*, rendered in a phonetic transcription based on the Cyrillic alphabet. The writing is done in pencil on both recto and verso sides. 65 folios of 21×30 cm standard size are placed in a separate jacket. The number of blots is minimal.

The fourth part of the storage unit Mong. E 289 consists of 14 folios of 21×30 cm standard size. It is divided into two sections containing transcriptions based on the Latin alphabet:

1. *Abai geser boyda yin xūbegūin muxai*<sup>26</sup>
2. *Geser-un dörbe deki=iyer iyen gerlegesen=u tuxai*
3. *Loir xara Lobsoyoldui luyā Geser xayān u temcegse bulügē.*

The texts are written in blue ink only on the recto side, pagination, made in Arabic numerals, is not through — ff. from 1 to 9 and ff. from 1 to 5. The number of blots is minimal.

The fifth part of the storage unit Mong. E 289 includes three folios of additional ethnographic materials in Russian. The first sheet, 69×83.5 cm in size, contains a genealogical table *Происхождение Абай-Гэхэр-богдо и его роль в шаманизме* (“The origin of Abai Geser-bogdo and his role in shamanism”), written by Tatiana K. Alekseeva in blue ink. The second folio, 20×25.5 cm sizes contains a sketch of the area on its recto side. The sketch is applied in pencil. The verso side gives us a description of the sketch: *Следы Гесера в местности Улей, Осинский район Иркутской области* (“Tra-

<sup>25</sup> English translation of the folio is given in Appendix 2.

<sup>26</sup> The original form of transcription is given.

ces of Geser-khaan in the Uley area, Osinsky district of the Irkutsk region”). The third folio of the same size contains a more detailed explanation of the depicted area in Russian. The text is done in blue ink on the recto side.

Basing on the description, given above, it is possible to draw preliminary conclusions about the value of this handwritten monument.

The storage unit Mong. E 289 of the manuscript collection of the IOM, RAS represents the “desktop” of the Buryat folklore collector Tatiana K. Alekseeva. It reflects the process of “deciphering” of the text written in summer of 1946 in the Old Mongolian script. The process of “deciphering” was completed by May 24, 1948.

The unit contains both a field manuscript written in the classical Old Mongolian script and various versions of a “whitewashed” manuscript written by a native speaker of the dialect in which the epic text was performed.

The fact that the Old Mongolian script was used for field recording by Soviet Buryat scholar from the Academic Institution is quite remarkable. From the beginning of the 20th c., Russian and Soviet Mongolian scholars, including those of Buryat origin, tried to reduce the usage of the classical Old Mongolian writing for recording the works of oral folk art. This was done because of the peculiarities of this writing system, that does not reflect the features of the Mongolian dialects. For example, the above-mentioned Tseveen Zh. Zhamtsarano used the Old Mongolian script only at the very beginning of his activity in collecting the folklore of the Mongols and Buryats. Since the second decade of the 20th c. he used a specially developed transcription based on the Cyrillic alphabet.

The same process was observed among the users of the Oirat “clear” script, that fits the dialects of the Mongolian languages better. On the instructions of Boris Ya. Vladimirtsov (1884–1931) in 1924–1925 Don Kalmyk, Tseren-Dorji Nominkhanov,<sup>27</sup> collected the folklore of the Oirats of Western Mongolia,<sup>28</sup> in transcription based on the Latin alphabet.<sup>29</sup>

The use of the Old Mongolian script was not typical for researchers from Western Buryatia either. A student of the Leningrad Oriental Institute Andrei

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<sup>27</sup> Nominkhanov, Tseren-Dorji (September 8, 1898, stanitsa Grabbevsckaya, region of the Great Don Cossacks, Russian Empire – 1967, Elista, USSR) — the name, given in Mongolia to Buur Ochirovitch Yundzukov, during his stay there as a military instructor in 1921–1923. Under this name he became famous as the first D.Sc. (philology) of Kalmyk origin.

<sup>28</sup> More about this activity see NOSOV 2021.

<sup>29</sup> For published texts see GANTSOGT & SÜKHBAATAR 2016.

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K. Bogdanov<sup>30</sup> handed over to the Asiatic Museum several epics recorded by him. Like Tatiana K. Alekseeva, during the summer holidays of 1928, he went to his home region of Bokhan aimag,<sup>31</sup> where he discovered a 30-year-old expert in folklore Apollon A. Toroev.<sup>32</sup> The researcher recorded the stories using transcription based on the Cyrillic alphabet.<sup>33</sup> In his report, Bogdanov does not indicate whether Apollon A. Toroev was considered a shaman, but among the recorded material there are 2 shaman chants.<sup>34</sup>

It is doubtful that the professional philologist Tatiana K. Alekseeva was not familiar with various variants of phonetic academic transcriptions. It is reasonable to assume that the choice of the Old Mongolian script for writing down the text directly at the moment of performance was conscious. It could be due to both the ritual status of the storyteller-shaman and the sacred meaning of the performed text — the epic about Geser-khaan. Probably, the recording took place in the area described in the fifth part of this storage unit Mong. E 289 — Uley area, Osinsky district of the Irkutsk region, the Russian Federation.

After getting acquainted with this monument, another question arises: how did Tatiana K. Alekseeva write down shamanic chants from her informants? Are the texts published by B. Rinchen a field records or do they transmit “whitewashed” manuscripts? Can other Mongolian folklore manuscripts from the collection of the IOM, RAS in the Old Mongolian and Oirat “clear” script be field records?

The storage unit Mong. E 289 of the manuscript collection of the IOM, RAS raises much more questions for researchers than it answers, but we can definitely say that it is a valuable source on the shamanic folklore of the Western Buryats. It is important not only for the Mongolist — the “desktop” of Tatiana K. Alekseeva is a reliable basis for developing a methodology for the historical-folkloristic and historical-linguistic analysis of the folklore texts of the peoples of Russia.

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<sup>30</sup> Bogdanov, Andrei Kirillovitch (September 1, 1902, Ukyr ulus, Bokhan aimag, Irkutsk governate, Russian Empire — September 22, 1963, Leningrad, USSR) — soviet philologist of Western Buryat origin.

<sup>31</sup> Nowadays — the territory of Bokhansky and Osinsky districts of the Irkutsk region, the Russian Federation.

<sup>32</sup> Toroev, Apollon Andreevitch (December 14, 1893, Shunta ulus, Bokhan aimag, Irkutsk governate, Russian Empire — December 25, 1981, Usol'e-Sibirskoe, Irkutsk region, USSR) — Buryat epics performer and poet, member of the Union of Writers of the USSR (1939).

<sup>33</sup> Archive of Orientalists of the IOM, RAS. Category II, Inv. 1, Units 378–381.

<sup>34</sup> Central State Archive of St. Petersburg. Fund 7222, Inv. 9, Unit 49, P. 13.

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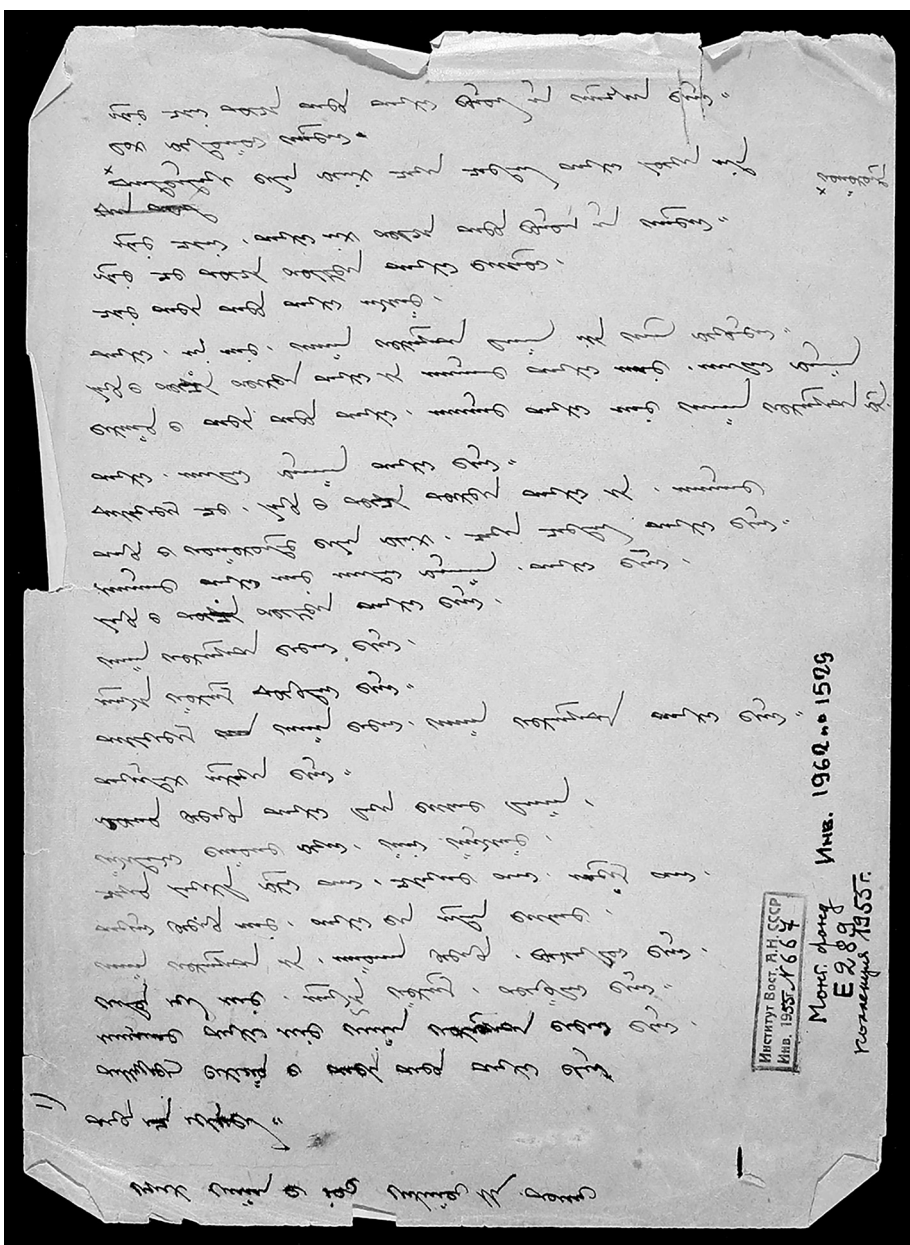


Plate 1.  
The first folio of the Old-Mongolian text of the Ms. Mong. E 289



-1- Итх. 1962 нo 1520

Энэр бөгдлийн ном хоргийн.

Түүнхэн захиалаад.

Тибел баруун тавин табан тэнгэр бэлэй,  
 Ахалла тэнгэрийн Хан Ширмае баабай бэлэй,  
 Агшан эхэн Манзан Гурмал төөдэй бэлэй,  
 Хан Ширмаеийн ууган хубуун Бүрхенитэй бэлэй,  
 Тэдэн хубуун тэнгэрээс мэдэн байла, Шунан  
 зээрдэ морийтэй, Шунхайтэй мээлтэй,  
 Завардаси дүүхедээ Ганитэ Санзуу бэлэй,  
 Ойхон хубуун, тэнгэртээ байладала,  
 Тэжэлтэр мэрэн бэлэй, тибэл. Хан баабай  
 Хан-Ширмае тэнгэр бэлэй, Манзан Гурмал төөдэй  
 бэлэй, Хан Ширмае баабай бэлэй, Зүүн дөшөн  
 дорбэн тэнгэр бэлэй, Ахалла тэнгэрийн, Агшан  
 улаан тэнгэр бэлэй, Түүн хорондо баадн үнэр  
 сэгэн ~~с~~ бөдгээ тэнгэр бэлэй, тибелтэ,  
 Зүүн дөшөн дорбэн тэнгэрийн ахалла тэнгэр  
 Агшан улаан тэнгэр бэлэй.

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Plate 2.

The first folio of the Cyrillic transcription of the Ms. Mong. E 289

Ms. 1962 no 1529

Doir xara Lobsogoldoi luja Geser xayan u temcegseen fülüge.

Lobsogoldoi yin uram=du burxan tura bodolai. Geser-un 3  
 eüener Lobsogoldoi yin oron=du odon Lobsogoldoi yin burxan tura  
 du niürgül xeki yosutai geju kelebei. Ködögin ügei niürgid=un  
 amu ködögin=tei bolju baina. Ügei=tei kümün amu bayan bolju  
 baina. Geser amu xiden jil=du üge=du amu oraju ese ügönö.  
 Namai=yi melekceye geju Lobsogoldoi oron=du orolai. 3 xara  
 joro utarilujad, Geser luge yadaja amu bairad nid bairu  
 daju yaraxu 1000 luja yin daju nigedkeju daju yarala, tūs  
 bairu daju yarala, tümen luja=yin daju nigedkeju daju yarala.  
 Teingexadu ilsiige feu kelebei. Či orujad činmajad bairu, či zell.  
 Lobsogoldoi bolhol tümer oron degere feu tūs geju čašijū unaku.  
 Burxan baibal sajuxu. Orujad šaynalai. Lobsogoldoi amu  
 Geser-un dajun yaraxa=du tümer oron=degere feu čöködxen  
 tūs geju unabai. Jls: amu Lobsogoldoi geju genem gele ču  
 kelen amu buraju ırgeldeju, burxan geju kelebei. 3 xatun amu  
 orolai taygor ürgeju bairu. Geser egiden=ü moji=yi tūsigeč  
 bairu azad bayasij doxidu jajuna, xara xeger morin bolon  
 xubilabai. tümer noyta fer ene ču mori=yi Lobsogoldoi  
 noytolobai, tümer xajajar iyer xajajarlan. 3 xatun amu  
 quilden yaralai. Popoxa dajan sajujad ger degen xatad amu  
 yabubai. Xara xeger morin iyer tümer čüder iyer čidurleju suxai ulajan  
 tašijur iyer baribai. dair degere ečč amu sazulaju, dair=yin mita=yi  
 samna sorju yadajaš: amu yabuju yarlai, tümer iyer xumud keju,  
 tümer iyer anzasu keju ~~at~~ oi=yin modo urbazulja=ber amu  
 xaxalbai, oi=yin modon nigüd amu ~~teqin~~ tarxi fer iyer unaju  
 baina. Següdxo dotor 40 destina xajalju baina, 3 künč egeči nigüd  
 amu medegün dotor dajan medebai, uxayan gülsju ~~at~~ oilaju yabubai +  
 Jegün doitu tuli=du jorin jorin orobod, Lobsogoldoi yin oron=du 1

Plate 3.

The first folio of the Latin transcription of "The chapter about the struggle between Geser-khaan and Disgusting Black Lobsogoldoi" at the Ms. Mong. E 289

## Appendix 1

*Translation from Russian into English of an explanatory non-paginated folio to the first part of the IOM, RAS storage unit Mong. E 289, containing a field record of the Western Buryat version of Geser epic in the Old Mongolian script.*

Alekseeva Tatiana Kapitovna

1. Origin of Geser.
2. Geser and his struggle with Loir Lobsogoldoy.
3. The 4th marriage of Geser.
4. About the son of Geser.

[Old Mongolian text]:

- 1) Geser qaqaᠨ-u nom qarγui-yin tuqai :
- 2) Loyir qara lobčoyoldoi-luγ-a Geser qaqaᠨ-u temečegsen бүлүг :
- 3) Abai Geser-ün kübegün-ü tuqai :
- 4) Abai Geser-ün qoyar-duγar gerlegsen-ü tuqai :

[Text in Cyrillic]:

1. Абай Гэхэри ном хоргуйн тухай.
2. Абай Гэхэри Лойр Хара Лобсолгодойтой дайлалдахани тухай.
3. Абай Гэхэри дурбэдугар гэрлэхэни тухай.
4. Абай Гэхэри хубегуни тухай

The material was recorded by me in 1946 in June and July from the famous storyteller-shaman Morkhonoï Alsagarovich Shobonov. In the Osinsky district of the Irkutsk region.

## Appendix 2

*Translation from Russian into English of an explanatory non-paginated folio of the second part of the IOM, RAS Mong. E 289 storage unit. This part contains transcription of the Buryat epic text in Cyrillic.*

Buryat Geser Bogdo and his life path. Prehistory of Geser (Geser in heaven), his birth on earth. Childhood, struggle with Sharablin khans (rulers — *D.N.*) and monsters of the Earth, how the name Abai Geser was given to him.

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Recorded from the 72-year old storyteller-shaman Morkhonoï Alsagarovich Shobonov in the Ongoi-Kutanka ulus of the Belchir bulsoviet<sup>35</sup> of Osinsky aimak, Irkutsk region, in the summer of 1946. Volume — 171 pages. Field record — 120 pages.

Except for Geser and his life path, there are the following sections in the manuscript:

About the son and second son of Geser,

About Geser's fourth marriage, About the battle with Loir Khara Lobso-goldoy. 14 pages

24/V 48 Alekseeva T.

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<sup>35</sup> Bulsoviet (Russ.: булсовет) — a local community council in Western Buriatia. I thank Dr. Zhargal Badagarov for the clarification of the term.