

Oriental Studies:  
Global and Local Perspectives

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Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor in Chief

Professor Alfred F. Majewicz

Vol. XLV

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# **Oriental Studies: Global and Local Perspectives**

Edited by  
Agata Bareja-Starzyńska



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**Vladimir Uspensky**  
(St. Petersburg State University)

## **A Mongolian Text about the Discovery of a Reincarnated Lama\***

**ABSTRACT:** An untitled Mongolian manuscript kept at Saint Petersburg State University Library contains descriptions of prophetic dreams of the father and the mother of an unspecified “reincarnated lama” (Mong. *qubilyan*). This manuscript once belonged to Prince Yunli (1697–1738), a powerful Manchu statesman who himself was a Tibetan Buddhist and headed the Lifanyuan (the Ministry for the Tributary Territories.). Judging from the dates and people mentioned in the text it is possible to conclude that it refers to a candidate for recognition as the reincarnation of the deceased Changkya Qutuγtu Ngawang Choden (1642–1714).

**KEYWORDS:** Tibetan Buddhism, reincarnations, Qinghai, Mongolian manuscripts, Rolbi Dorje Rol pa'i rdo rje.

Saint Petersburg University Library possesses many unique Mongolian manuscripts which once belonged to Prince Yunli 允禮 (1697–1738) – the seventeenth son of the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor. Some of them bear imprints of his Tibetan seals while others do not, although their paper and design are easily recognizable as materials from his library. These books were purchased in the 1840s in Beijing by the Russian scholar Vasili Vasilyev (1818–1900) who was trying to find Mongolian books which had not been found by his teacher Józef Kowalewski (1801–1878) a decade earlier.

This article deals with a small Mongolian manuscript from the Yunli collection which I was unable to identify more than twenty years ago while working on the catalogue of Mongolian manuscripts kept at Saint Petersburg University

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\* I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Diana Cousens for correcting my English and contributing valuable remarks.

I styled it a “Description of Somebody’s Dreams” and placed it at the very end of the catalogue in the section, “Miscellaneous Books and Fragments” (Uspensky 2001: 526, No. 942). Its call number is Mong. C 328, and it consists of seven folios written on Chinese paper. The manuscript has no title and no author, although the text is complete and its handwriting is handsome. A question arises: is it an original Mongolian text or a translation from Tibetan? Though there occur phrases that bear a certain Tibetan influence, in general, the text does not produce an impression of being a translation.

The text mostly consists of descriptions of prophetic night dreams of the father and mother of a certain “reincarnation of a lama” (Mong. *qubilyan*; corresponding to Tib. *tulku/ trulku < sprul sku*). It is written that these dreams and some other miraculous events occurred in the Fire Monkey Year and the [Fire] Hen Year which correspond respectively to 1716/17 and 1717/18. Also, the three persons who were contemporaries of the reincarnation’s parents and appeared in their dreams are named by their titles, being Blam-a Nom-un qan (“Lama the King of Dharma”), Erdeni qung tayiji and Čubsang (Chu bzang) Qutuγtu. It is not possible to identify the first cleric who must have been very well known to their contemporaries. This could be the incarnation of the Čayan nom-un qan – the lama sent by the Fifth Dalai Lama to the Qošots in order to settle their territorial disputes (Ho-Chin Yang 1969: 42–43). Erdeni qung tayiji must have been a local Qošot Mongol ruler. However, Čubsang Qutuγtu Lobsang Tenbi Gyeltsen (Chu bzang Blo bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan; 1652–1723) was a famous lama. He twice occupied the position of the abbot of the Gonlung Jampa Ling (dGon lung Byams pa gling) Monastery and was a teacher of the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso (sKal bzang rgya mtsho; 1708–1757) during the latter’s stay in Qinghai. In 1723 Čubsang Qutuγtu was burnt alive by the order of the Chinese commander during the crushing of the rebellion which was initiated by Khoshut ruler Lobsang Danjin (on Khoshuts policy in Tibet see Uspensky 2014: 235).

This information allows us to establish the time and place of the events described in the Mongolian text: they took place in Qošot-ruled Qinghai (Kukunor) in 1716/17 and 1717/18. One of the most famous Tibetan lamas was born there at this time, being Changkya Rölpe Dorje / Rolbi Dorji (lCang skya Rol pa’i rdo rje; 1717–1786),<sup>1</sup> the State Preceptor (Chin. *guoshi* 國師) and a confidant of the Qianlong Emperor. While he was born on the tenth day of the first additional month of the Fire Hen Year (Smith 2001: 135), the “reincarnation”

<sup>1</sup> He was given this name as an adult after receiving a high-level Tantric initiation. It is under this name that this incarnation of Changkya Qutuγtus has become widely known both in traditional Buddhist literature and in Western scholarship. At birth, he received the name Dagpa Sodnam (Grags pa bSod nams) which was changed when he took monastic vows. In order to avoid misunderstanding in the present article he is always referred to as Rolbi Dorje.



of the text is said to have been born on the “first day of the twelfth additional month of the [Fire] Hen Year.” This means that a person other than Rolbi Dorje is referred to as the “reincarnation” in the text.

There exist several biographies of Changkya Rolbi Dorje, the most lengthy and detailed being the one written by his disciple Thuken Qutuytu Lobsang Chokyi Nyima (Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma; 1736–1802). It says that his discovery and recognition entailed a controversy that lasted for a few years. According to Thuken, the discovery of Rolbi Dorje was not reported to the emperor because an unspecified “rich and powerful Mongolian prince proclaimed his newly born son as being the incarnation of the Lord Changkya [Qutuytu]”.<sup>2</sup> The functionaries of the Ministry for the Tributary Territories (Chin. Lifanyuan) mostly supported the claim of this Mongolian prince (Chin. *wang* 王). Then the Chief Administrative Lama of Beijing (Mong. *tamayan-u blam-a*; Chin. *yin la ma* 印喇嘛) Thuken Qutuytu Ngawang Chokyi Nyima (Ngag dbang chos kyi nyi ma; 1680–1736) (the previous incarnation of the author of this biography) publicly vowed to personally report to the Emperor that the true reincarnation was the boy from Amdo (i.e. Rolbi Dorje). The functionaries of the Lifanyuan then reported to the Emperor about the boy from Amdo. The Emperor issued the decree of recognition and sent the delegation with investiture which met Rolbi Dorje at his birthplace in the fifth month of the Iron Mouse Year, i.e. 1720 (see B-TIB, f.41a:1–2). It should be noted that the above-mentioned Čubsang Qutuytu was instrumental in finding the reincarnation of the deceased Changkya Qutuytu. He composed a prayer for his “quick return” (*sprul sku myur ’byon gyi gsol ’debs*, B-TIB, f. 37a:4) and it was from him that Rolbi Dorje first took monastic vows.

The importance of finding a new incarnation lies in the personality of the previous Qutuytu. Since the number of incarnations in this lineage are often mentioned without explanation, it should be noted that Changkya Ngawang Lobsang Choden (Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan; 1642–1714) was:

- the second person who was called the Changkya Qutuytu;
- the first Changkya Qutuytu who resided in Beijing;
- the seventeenth Changkya Qutuytu in the incarnation lineage dating back to the days of Śākyamuni Buddha.

His biography is well-known, so it should be only mentioned here that he established good relations with the Kangxi Emperor and with his fourth son who later became the Yongzheng Emperor. Thus finding his new incarnation was a matter of state interest. The Changkya Qutuytus became the only lineage

<sup>2</sup> B-TIB, f.40a:6: Tib. *sog po’i wang stobs ’byor can zhig la bu chung zhig byung ba rje lcang skya pa’i sprul skur dril bsgrags shing/...*; Mong. *küčütei bayan mongyol-un nigen vang-tur nigen köbegün törögsen-i boyda jangjïy-a gegen-ü qubilyan kemen olan-dur dayurisqaysan böged:...*; B-MONG, f. 34a.

of incarnated lamas who had Beijing as their permanent residence. All other high-ranking reincarnated lamas who came to the capital of the Qing Empire only temporarily occupied high positions in the Beijing lama hierarchy.

Rolbi Dorje's early childhood took place during turbulent years which were crucial for Tibetan history. In 1717 the Dzungars invaded Tibet and killed its last Qošot ruler Lhabzang Khan. In 1720 the Dzungars were driven out of Tibet by the Manchu army. In 1723–1724 a Qošot ruler, Lobsang Danjin, started an anti-Qing rebellion in order to restore Qošot rule over Tibet. The rebellion was crushed with the greatest severity. The Gonlung monastery was burnt to the ground and many lamas were killed. Little Rolbi Dorje escaped and had to hide in the mountains. In 1724 a group of high-ranking lamas from Beijing submitted to the Yongzheng Emperor a memorial written in Manchu asking his permission to bring the Changkya Qutuγtu to Beijing. In his “vermillion endorsement” the Emperor expressed his aggrievement with the rebellion in Qinghai and his doubt over the authenticity of the Qutuγtu. He advised the lamas to contact “the proper ministry,” i.e. the Lifanyuan which was headed by his brother Yunli – the owner of the Mongolian manuscript in question (Weiers 1988 [1989]: 123–124). Nevertheless, in the same year, the Emperor ordered that Rolbi Dorje be brought to Beijing and even to add the collected works (Tib. *gsung 'bum*) of his previous incarnation in seven volumes to the Tibetan Tengyur (*bsTan 'gyur*), the printed blocks of which had just been engraved (Haenisch 1962: 128).

Yunli, who was one of the highest functionaries during the reign of his brother, the Yongzheng Emperor, was also a devout Tibetan Buddhist and multilingual. He was much inclined towards the esoteric teachings of the Nyingmapa School (the “Old School”) of Tibetan Buddhism, and this fact irritated high lamas originating from the Gonlung Monastery who could be characterised as “Gelugpa fundamentalists.” The already mentioned Thuken Qutuγtu tried to minimise the influence exercised on the young Rolbi Doje by Yunli and his lamas and supporters (Smith 2001: 136–138). Following an imperial order in 1734–1735 Yunli and Rolbi Dorje travelled to Eastern Tibet so as to give to the Seventh Dalai Lama an imperial decree permitting him to return to Lhasa.<sup>3</sup>

There was a considerable time gap between the death of the Changkya Qutuγtu (1714) and the authorisation of Rolbi Dorje as his new incarnation (1720). This reflects the fact that the discovery of this reincarnation did not go smoothly. Moreover, it took place against the background of the conflict about who was the true Dalai Lama. For this reason, the Mongolian text describing

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<sup>3</sup> When in 1727–1728 an internal struggle occurred in Tibet the Emperor, fearing that the Dalai Lama could be seized by the Dzungars, ordered him to move to Eastern Tibet which had already been made a part of Sichuan Province.

prophetic dreams was an important document for such a subtle and elusive task as finding a new incarnation. One should not forget that Yunli headed the Lifanyuan and in this capacity, he was responsible for finding new incarnations. This seems to be the only document of this kind among the books and papers which originate from his personal library.

Of course, it is now not possible to uncover the “hints and trails” contained in the prophetic dreams. The very first dream, which mentions “a Chinese man guarding the property which was left by a certain deceased lama or a nobleman”, may be hinting at the fact that the father of the previous Changkya Qutuγtu was a Chinese merchant from the Shanxi Province. He settled in Qinghai and there married two Tibetan women (Sagaster 1967: 90). His Chinese origin and possible knowledge of the Chinese language must have been helpful for this Changkya Qutuγtu to establish good relations with the Kangxi Emperor and to settle in Beijing.

It is also not possible to maintain that this and other prophecies refer to the above-mentioned son of a “rich and powerful Mongolian prince” though with a great degree of probability it refers to an unsuccessful candidate for the position of reincarnation of the Changkya Qutuγtu.

### Translation

Dreams, good omens and other things which appeared to the father and the mother of the reincarnation were written down on the day when stars and planets met in an auspicious way.

In the dream that occurred in the night of the fifteenth day of the twelfth month of the Fire-Monkey Year his father [saw this]. A Chinese man was guarding the property which was left by a certain deceased lama or a nobleman. I approached him and this old Chinese man said, ‘Hey, what do you need?’ I answered, ‘Could you give me some portion of this big property?’ He said, ‘Take what you need yourself.’ I looked around and saw a big drum made of gold. [I said,] ‘If you want to give me [something], give me this.’ With his right hand, the Chinese [man] gave me this golden drum together with a silver drumstick. I took them and struck [the drum] three times. It produced such a sound that could have been heard in all three worlds. I took the big drum and a covering made of something like golden silk. I wrapped the drum with it, put it into a coffer and took it for myself. [This is what I] dreamt.

Also in the night of the tenth day of the first month of the Hen Year, the lama Nom-un qan gave me a big banner and said, ‘Let’s go to your home.’ Together with him came two *dharmapālas* dressed in white clothes. [They] approached me and said in a high voice, ‘Follow the lama and multitudes of

his disciples.’ Then they fixed the banner on the right side of the gate and went away. [This is what] I dreamt.

Additionally, in the night of the fifteenth day of the third month of the Hen Year [I had this dream]. At the same time as the sun rose from the east, the moon rose from the west and met the sun and it seemed as if two cymbals were beating [together]. The pair of the sun and the moon merged and following them came two vultures and many crows who sat outside the house like the military. These two birds asked, ‘Is it true that in your house there are golden and silver tsatsas (Tib. *tsha tsha*) belonging to the lama?’ I said, ‘They are in my hands together with the written order given by Erdeni qung taiji.’ [This is what I] dreamt.

Also in the night of the eighth day of the eleventh month of the Hen Year the Čubsang Qutuγtu [appeared] with a noble person and said, ‘This is an arrow of the Lhamo [which has to be] venerated.’ Standing in front of me they fixed a big arrow into a cairn. I was sitting behind them. The lama said to me, ‘Take this arrow!’ Then I bowed and thought, ‘I shall take this arrow from the cairn stone pile.’ Suddenly from above my head a mirror with a rope and a white scarf following each other fell upon my forearm. Then I took into my hand the arrow and having brought it home put it on a wool-covered table as an object of veneration. [This is what I] dreamt.

Also in a dream of his mother, during the winter of the Monkey Year, a sparrow with red spots flew into my house from the eastern side. This sparrow said, ‘Lady, I came from a far place!’, and began to weep. Having looked at her I also started to weep. Then the sparrow said, ‘Do not weep! I will go to the south and then return.’ [This is what I] dreamt.

Also in the night of the second day of the fourth month of the Hen Year [I dreamt this]. A noble was pulling a mirror with a hook [adorned with] a golden vajra and he came into the house with this mirror. That noble pulled me with a golden hook so that I flew into the sky and reached the peak of Mount Sumeru. From there I looked at that noble and saw him holding on to a tree on the peak of Mount Sumeru and walking around it in the direction [from left] to right. Additionally, a conch shell and a trumpet appeared from the eastern side. They produced sound and were moving to and fro. I was afraid that the conch shell would fall on me! And I thought, ‘I shall fly to the sky and go.’ At that moment I took the conch shell into my hands and came home. [This is what I] dreamt.

In the middle autumn month of the Hen Year [I dreamt this]. From the northeast and from the south, [two] suns appeared, one after the other. A great lama was going to cover the sun which appeared from the south with his monastic robe. I told him, ‘Do not cover this sun! I want to see the wonder of two suns [which appear] in one day!’ When I looked [again], a sun came in my

direction. The sun which was at the northeast [emanated] much light. It came to my home and dissolved in my navel. [This is what I] dreamt.

Also in the night of the third day of the tenth month of the Hen Year [I dreamt this]. I was put on the top of a new cairn in a monastery, and many nobles worshipped this cairn. When I looked around I saw people of various kinds worshipping the cairn and I could see all the places with my own eyes. [This is what I] dreamt.

Also once in the night of the twenty-third day of the additional eleventh month [I dreamt this]. From the east came a bright sun. Under it, many monks were gathered on a big mountain and were blowing into conch shells and trumpets. I was told, 'From you, a Buddha will be born. Go here!' At this, I said, 'I am going!' [This is what I] dreamt.

On the twenty-sixth day of the winter middle month of the Hen Year when it was dawning a three-part rainbow appeared. One [part] appeared inside the house, the other was above the house and the third appeared on the eastern side.

On the evening of the first day of the twelfth additional month of the Hen Year when [his mother] went into labour [so as to give birth to] the reincarnation, the house was immediately and constantly illuminated inside, perhaps from a star or not, but during the whole labour, the house was full of light as if it was daytime.

Up to the eighth day after his birth, he did not suck his mother's breast despite all attempts. So, unexpectedly, he had to be fed with cow's milk.

Although there were [other] sunrises, moonrises, various night dreams and other good omens, since I did not know about them precisely, I [only] wrote [what I knew] with certainty.

### Transcription

[f. 1b] Ğray odun-u učiral qotala büridügsen edür qubilyan-u eçige eke qoyar-tur jегүdün iru-a terigüten boluysan-nuyud-i biçig-tür bicigsen anu:

ƒal beçin jil-ün arban qoyar sar-a-yin arban tabun-u söni: eçige-yin jегүden-dür: blam-a ba noyan qoyar-un alin-i ber ülü taniydaqu nigen nirvan boluysan-u üleksen yeke sang-i anu nigen kitad kümün sakiysan ajuyu: bi tegün-ü dergede kürbesü nigen kögsin kitad kümün ber ai çi yayun kereglemüi kemegsen-dür: bi edüi [f. 2a] çinegen yeke sang-aça nadur nigeke qubi ülü ögkü buyu kemegsen-e: çi öber-iyen yayun-i kereglebesü tegün-i abtuğai kemegsen-dür: bi üjebesü ele: altan-iyar kigsen nigen yeke kegürge ajuyu: ögkü bögesü tegüni öggügtün kemegsen-dür: tere kitad barayun yar-iyar-iyar altan kegürge mönggün çokiyur-tai nigen-i ögbei: bi abuyad yurban-da deledügsen-iyer tegün-eçe qotala yurban yirtinçü-dür dügürkü metü dayun dayurisbai: yeke kegürge böged altan

tory-a metü ebkečü [f. 2b] bolqu nigen boluysan-i bi ebkeged: qabtaryan-u dotor-a dürüjü öber-tegen kigsen-i jегүдүлөbei:

Basa takiy-a jil-ün čayan sar-a-yin arban sin-e-yin söni: blam-a nom-un qan ber nadur nigen yeke tuy-i ögčü: tan-u ger-tür ireküi bui kemeküi: tegün-lüge qamtu čayan qubčad-tu qoyar nom-un sakiyulsun: minü dergede ireged: blam-a ba olan sabinar qoyin-a-ača irekü bui kemen kög dayun-luy-a selte čayan tuy-i qayalyan-u barayun eteged qadquju talbiyad oduysan-i jегүдүлөbei: [f. 3a] Basa takiy-a jil-ün yurban sar-a-yin arban tabun-u söni doron-a jüg-eče nigen naran yarqui-luy-a sačayu: örün-e jüg-eče nigen saran yaryad: naran-i uyтуqu-yin yosuyar ireged čangkilčayur-i deledkü metü naran saran qoyayula qamtu nigen-e neyileldun ger-tür kürügsen tegün-ü qoyin-a-ača qačar sibayun kiged olan keriy-e ireged čerig-ün yosuyar ger-ün yadayur sayubai: tere qoyar sibayun ber nadača tan-u ger-tür blam-a-yin altan mönggün-ü qoyar sača bui kemekü ünen üü kemegsen-dür [f. 3b] Erdeni qung tayiji-yin öggügsen jarliy bičig-lüge selte minu yar-tur bui kemekü nigen-i jегүдүлөbei: Basa takiy-a jil-ün arban nigen sar-a-yin sin-e-yin naiman-u söni: Čubsang qutuy-tu-luy-a nigen noyan qoyayula: ene kemebesü ökin tngri-yin sitügen sumun bülüge kemen nigen yeke sumu-yi oboyan-du qadquysan-a: emün-e minu blam-a noyan qoyar amui: bi ber qoyitu eteged-tür sayun amui: blam-a ber nadur ene sumun-i ab kemen jarliy boluysan-dur: bi mörgüged oboyan-u deger-e-eče sumun-i absuyai kemen [f. 4a] sedkin atala: genedte terigün deger-e-eče doroyisi nigen kelkiy-e-tü toli čayan qaday qoyayula ber qoyar čarbayun-dur jalalduyasayar unabai: tendeče sumun-i abuyad yar-tayan bariju gertegen kürčü eldeb jüil önggetü čengme siregen-ü deger-e sitügen-u yosuyar talbiysan nigen-i jегүдүлөbei: Eke-yin jегүдүн-dür bečin jil-ün ebül-dür ulayan čoyoqur nigen biljumar sibayun dorona jüg-eče minu ger-tür nisčü ireged: biljumar sibayun ber egeči-e bi qola yačar-ača irebei kemeged ukilabai: tegün-i üjegend [f. 4b] bi ču basa ukilabai: tendeče biljumar čiber buu ukila: bi emün-e jüg-tür odoyad darui iremüi kemekü nigen-i jегүдүлөbei: Basa takiy-a jil-ün dörben sar-a-yin qoyar sin-e-yin söni: nigen noyan ber nigen tolin-a altan včir yoq-a-bar yoqadayasayar tolin-luy-a selte ger-tür ireged tere noyan altan yoq-a-bar namayi yoqadayasayan-a bi oytaryui-dur nisčü Sümbür ayula-yin orgil-dur kürbei: tendeče tere noyan-i üjebesü Sümbür ayula-yin orgil-dur nigen modon aysan-ača [f. 5a] bariju jöbsiyerkü ergiküi-yi üjebai: basa dorona jüg-eče nigen labai büriy-e ireged dayun dayurisqaqui-luy-a sačayu inayisi činayisi jüg ügei yabumui: tere labai minu deger-e bayumui: kemen ayuju oytaryui-dur nisün odsuyai kemen sanaqui-luy-a sačayu labai-yi yartayan bariyad ger-tür-iyen kürügsen nigen-i jегүдүлөbei: Takiy-a jil-ün namur-un dumdadu sar-a-dur jегүн qoyin-a-ača ba emüne jüg qoyar-ača ničeged ničeged naran garču iregsen-dür emüne-tü nara-yi nigen yeke blam-a [f. 5b] orkimji-bar-iyen qalyalamui: biber tegün-dür ta tere naran-i buu qalyala: nigen edür qoyar naran yarbasa yeke yayiqamsiy bi üjesügei kemeged üjebesü tere naran inayisi iremüi: jегүн

qoyitu-yi tere naran masi ülemji gereltey-e aysan tere inaysi ger-tür ireged minu küisün-e singgegsen nigen-i jégüdülebei: Basa takiy-a jil-ün arban sar-a-yin sin-e-yin yurban-u söni nigen keyid-ün nigen sin-e oboyan-u yool sang-dur namayi talbiju olan noyad [f. 6a] oboγ-a barin amui: biber üjebesü eldeb jüil-ün olan kümün oboyan-dur mörgüküi ba bi ču qamuγ orod-i nidüber ujejsen nigen-i jégüdülebei: Nigen basa mongyol-un arban nigen sara-yin qorin yurban-u söni: doron-a jüg-eče nigen gegegen naran yarču iremüi: tegün-ü door-a nigen yeke ayula-yin deger-e olan quvaray-ud čuylaǰu labai büriy-e tatamui: nadur čimača burqan bayumui ende iregtün kemegsen-e bi odsuyai kemekü nigen-i [f. 6b] jégüdülebei: Takiy-a jil-ün ebül-ün dumdadu sar-a-yin qorin jiryuyan-a ür čayiqui-yin üy-e-dür yurban üy-e-tü solongy-a jergeber tataju: nigen anu ger-ün dotor-a ba nöğüe inu ger-ün deger-e tatan: yutaγar anu dorona-du jüg tatabai: Takiy-a jil-ün mongyol-un arban qoyar sar-a-yin nigen sin-e-yin üdesi qubilyan nirayilan jabdaqui-dur odon yarqui ulu yarqui tedüi-dür qamuγ ger-ün dotor-a edür metü önide genel melmelün dügürügseger nirayilabai: Nirayilyad sača naiman edür boltala eldeb jüil ary-a-bar üiledbečü: eke-yin köke [standard spelling: kökü] ese kökebei [standard spelling: kökübei]: [f. 7a] tendeče oyči kökegüljü [standard spelling: kökügüljü] üniyen-ü sün-iyer teǰigebei: Basa busu naran saran yarqui terigüten eldeb jüil jégüdün ba eldeb jüil sayin iru-a belges bui bolbaču narin niyta-yi ülü medekü-yin tula irayubčilan bičijü bariba:

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