

# SEVEN EAST MONGOLIAN NURSERY RHYMES<sup>1</sup>

by

Walther Heissig

The following seven nursery rhymes were noted down some time ago by a Mongol of the Naiman Banner. With the intermixture of Mongolian and Chinese terms, they are typical of the state of the Mongol language in these parts of East Mongolia, which, since many centuries, were infiltrated by Chinese settlers and thereby culturally influenced.<sup>2</sup> These nursery rhymes, apparently, are not indigenous to the Naiman Banner only, but are also used in those adjacent, as shown by the parallel (Rhyme 4) from the East Mongolian *Mongyoljin* Banner; and, furthermore, the reader will probably also find some affinities with poetry of the same category from other Mongol groups.

The transcription follows the handwritten notes, in which some words are spelled as the scribe heard them and not according to the rules of the written literary language. This manner of phonetical script is more or less recognizable in all Mongol handwriting of non-classical origin.

Most of these nursery rhymes are used for counting out in nursery games. Analogous to equivalent creations of other nations, they are, in their structure, determined primarily by rhythm and not by sense; thus, frequently, similar sounding words without meaning are employed, simply for the purpose of retaining rhythmical alliteration or onomatopoeia. It is therefore not always possible to give a correct translation or any translation at all.

Belonging to this category are rhymes 1 and 2. The usage of rhymes 3, 4 and 5 has not been determined. Rhyme 6 is employed for calming a crying infant, while rhyme 7, in its true meaning, seems to be a raillery.

---

1) These represent part of a larger collection of samples of East-Mongolian Folk-literature which the author is preparing.

2) Cf. the vivid description of the spreading of Chinese settlement some 100 years ago in these areas as given by Huc, *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie et le Thibet*, Peking 1924, I., pp. 31-36; for the more recent development cf. O. Lattimore, *Mongols of Manchuria*, London 1934, especially pp. 233-273. Cf. also *Folklore Studies* II/1943, pp. 175-184.

## 1.

*egür egür ömdege  
 ömdege bolʹan julʹiya  
 dai dai<sup>3</sup> dabusu  
 dalai lama-yin aʹjis  
 aliya aliya güsi  
 aliya aliya güsi.*

A nest, a nest, an egg,  
 The egg becomes a chick.  
 A sack, a sack, salt.  
 The Dalai Lama's blessing.  
 A naughty one, a naughty one, a savant,  
 A naughty one, a naughty one, a savant.

## 2.

*čayaʹjing<sup>4</sup> čayaʹjing  
 čayan noyʹya begeʹjing  
 begeʹjing-ün činatai<sup>5</sup>  
 berken youl-un nayatai  
 qongqa keriye qotoyčün  
 qoyar noyan jergečün  
 bai bai böketei  
 bayan küni<sup>6</sup> nom-tai  
 mani berke mese  
 mendü bökün-dür duratai.*

Porcelain cup, porcelain cup,  
 Peking, white and green.  
 Beyond Peking,  
 On this side of the *Berken youl*  
 A bell, a raven — chatterboxes,  
 Two dignitaries side by side.  
 ..... ?  
 ..... ?  
 My sharp knife,  
 Wishing to keep peace!

3) Loanword from the Chinese tai 袋 "bag, sack".

4) Lit. čayaʹjung "porcelain".

5) Dial. ts'a'tä, lit. činadu.

6) Dial. k'uni = kümün-i.

## 3.

*matang matang dang dang*<sup>7</sup>  
*mini qorulai*<sup>8</sup> *yang yang*<sup>9</sup>

Candy, candy, sugar candy,  
 My food to nourish me.

## 4.

*naran naran nasi*<sup>10</sup>  
*naran següder čisin*<sup>11</sup> *yabu.*<sup>12</sup>

Sunshine, sunshine come hither,  
 Shadow go thither.

## 5.

*gei gei duryura*  
*raqai-yi qorulai idegüliye*  
*süme süme duryura*  
*sütei qorulai idegüliye.*

Hey, hey, turn around,  
 Let's eat the pig for food.  
 Süme, süme, turn around,  
 Let's eat milk-food.

## 6.

*angya angya buu ugila*  
*abqai kiyekiye*<sup>13</sup> *čin sayatayuluya!*

7) Perhaps also onomatopoeia for the sound of the signal made by the seller of *matang* through striking a metal disc.

8) *Qorulai*, lit. "gorge, gutter" is often used in both Eastern Mongolian and Khalkha dialects for "food" also. Cf. for examp. A. V. Burdukov, *Russko-Mongol'skii slovar' razgovornogo yazika*, ILVI, Leningrad, 1925, p. 195, "Kool" - "food, nourishment".

9) Chin. 養 *yang* "to nourish".

10) Lit. *inaγsi*.

11) Lit. *teyisi-ben*.

12) These two lines are also reported to be used in the Mongγoljin Banner by children to chase away clouds which cover the sun. They sing:

*nara nara nāsa,*  
*nara suGDer tž'āsa.*

13) Loanword from chin. 姐姐 *chieh-chieh* "older sister".

Little one, little one don't weep,  
The honourable older sister will rock you in her arms.

7.

*boruyan oroju bayin*  
*burčay tariju bayin*  
*buqandai<sup>14</sup>-yin eme*  
*kiiü töröjü bayin-a.*

It is raining,  
The beans are planted,  
The wife of *Buqandai*  
Gives birth to a son.

---

14) Proper name.