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## China's Monguor Minority: Ethnography and Folktales

by  
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**China's**  
**MONGUOR**  
**Minority:**  
**Ethnography**  
**&**  
**Folktales**

*Edited by*

*Kevin Stuart & Limusishiden*

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# Preface

The Monguor<sup>1</sup> numbered more than 191,000 in 1990 (Zhang and Zeng 1993: 62). They lived in five enclaves--four in eastern Qinghai Province (Koko Nor) and one in western Gansu Province. Significant cultural and linguistic differences separate these groups. Monguor from different areas speak Chinese or Tibetan as a common language when they meet. Within individual enclaves, substantial variations in both language and cultural activities are evident.

There are three parts to this material. Part One is a study of the Monguor begun in the 1950s as part of a larger effort to study all minority nationalities in China. Part Two presents a number of cultural materials, mostly written by Monguor, and Part Three is devoted to folktales.

In the "References" section I have listed the materials cited in this manuscript and other materials related to the Monguor. Interested readers may pursue more detailed information by consulting these materials.

## Folktale Sources

All tales translated by Zhou Lijun, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Anonymous (1985). The two Huzhu tales translated by Tang Yanping are taken from Guo (1984).

The Minhe tales translated by Hu Jun are from Sanchuan. Tales noted with "Monguor/English" translator are tales collected orally by Hu Jun in Monguor and then translated into English. Tales listing Hu Jun as translator refer to tales collected by Monguor students of Mr. Wang Sueling, Guanting Middle School. Minhe Monguor recognize no written Monguor language and these tales were recorded in Chinese. The few Minhe tales reading "Chinese/English Translator" were taken from Ma (1985).

## Translation Note

We have used the Monguor written system in use in Qinghai since the 1980s to write the Monguor (e.g., Li 1988). Chinese is romanized using *pinyin*. In the cases where the Chinese transliterations of the Tibetan were understandable, the romanized Tibetan has been added. For some of the Tibetan, we thank Living Buddha Saishidangsang, a Monguor from Huzhu Monguor Autonomous County, and a senior professor at the Traditional Tibetan Medicine Hospital in Xining, for writing the Tibetan in Tibetan script. We also thank Renchinjashe for converting this to a Roman form. I also consulted Schram (1954, 1957, 1961) and have used certain of his Tibetan romanizations in this translation. All comments in square brackets [] are by the editors.

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1994

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<sup>1</sup>[Monguor were classified as "Tu" by the PRC government in the 1950s.]

# Part I: Social and Historical Investigation of the Qinghai Monguor

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This translation has been prepared by Gu Maolin and Li Xuewei. It is of Qinghai Province Compiling Group (1985). The sections on Monguor economic conditions in Minhe County prior to 1949, the historical investigation of Sizaizi (Wutun) in Tongren, and the language section comparing a dialect of Huzhu Monguor with the "Kalaxin" Mongol dialect have not been translated.

## Translation

## To Our Readers

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Shortly after Liberation, in keeping with the policy towards the national minorities, the National Affairs Committee of the State Council and concerned regions organized scholars and research workers specializing in nationality social and historical investigations in the minority regions. In 1956, a number of investigative groups were organized and, led by the National Committee of the People's Congress and the National Affairs Committee of the State Council, further studied the community and history of each national minority. Under the leadership of the National Affairs Committee of the State Council, the Philosophy and Sociology Department of the Chinese Social Sciences Academy, the National Research Institute of the Chinese Social Sciences Academy, the Central Nationalities Institute, and concerned regions, supplementary investigations were made to complete the following three book series which are in the process of being edited: Short History of the National Minorities, The Annals of the National Minorities, and A Survey of National Autonomous Regions.

*The Social and Historical Investigation Materials Series Group Editorial Board of the Five Types of Books Series of the Nationality Phenomena of the Chinese National Committee. 1985*

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## Political Development

The political situation in the Monguor region before the Ming Dynasty [1368-1614] is not clear today. When Zhu Yuanzhang became Ming emperor he retained all Monguor officials who had held office during the Yuan Dynasty [1271-1368]. These officials acted as Ming functionaries to control Monguor regions. These positions were hereditary and persisted until establishment of the county and province system in 1929. At the end of the Ming Dynasty local authorities of Tibet established Youning Temple in the Monguor region with the cooperation of the 13 Monguor tribes. The headmen of these tribes were appointed by the Dalai Lama and were in charge of areas in the temple vicinity. These positions were hereditary, not appointed by Ming officials, and, therefore, they were not dominated by Monguor. It was not until 1929 that the hereditary headmen system was abolished.

After establishment of the Republic of China, Ma Family warlords gradually gained control of Qinghai and feudal separation rule emerged. Ma family warlords implemented the *baojia* system in the Monguor region.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>[This was an administrative system organized on the basis of households. Each *jia* was made of ten households and each *bao* was composed of ten *jia*. It was used to enforce rule at the primary level.]

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## Economic Background

The Monguor economy was primarily agricultural with a poorly developed sideline handicraft industry. Few engaged in trade except some lamas from certain temples. For example, in Minhe County there was only one shop and in the countryside, there were only peddlers.

Population concentration varied. The Monguor were more widely distributed over Huzhu County, where most villages had Monguor inhabitants. Monguor originally lived on the plains, but national oppression practiced by the ruling class gradually drove them into mountainous areas. At the time of this study, most Monguor lived in mountain areas characterized by cold weather, poor natural conditions, and an inconvenient transportation system. Only the Monguor of Guanghu, Baiya (Whitecliff), and Tangeba lived on the plains. Unlike Huzhu County, Minhe County Monguor were mostly concentrated in Guanting and in the middle plains. Collectively, this region is called Sanchuan (Three Plains). It is near the Yellow River in the south of Minhe County. Geographically, this area is a loess plateau with agreeable weather for agriculture. Transportation is inconvenient.

### 2.1 Agriculture

It is much colder in Huzhu County than in Minhe County. Frost begins in the eighth month when crops have not yet been harvested and snow falls in the last ten-day period of the ninth month. Higher mountain areas experience freezing weather until the third month of the next year. Thus the crop growing period is short with only one harvest per year. It is much warmer in Minhe with frost coming early in the tenth month. By this time crops have been gathered and there is no frost damage. The soil begins to freeze only after the 22nd day of the 11th month and thaws in the beginning of the next year's spring. The snow period begins around the middle of the tenth to the beginning of the 11th months. The growing period is much longer than that in Huzhu and some irrigated fields yield two harvests per year. Crops mainly included highland barley, barley, wheat, buckwheat, oats, peas, and potatoes. Minhe crop yields were higher than those of Huzhu. Farming methods were generally the same. Yield disparities were due to differing climatic and soil conditions. In Huzhu, vegetables were mostly chinese cabbage and radishes whereas in Sanchuan, vegetables included chinese cabbage, chives, eggplants, hot peppers, snake melons, and garlic. Prickly ash<sup>3</sup> was also raised. In both areas, vegetables were cultivated only for family consumption.

Farming tools included plows, metal hoes, metal spades, hatchets, sickles, sacks, and wooden carts. Cattle, donkeys, and mules were used in planting, cultivating, and harvesting. Stone rollers, wooden forks, wooden spades, brooms, sickles, sacks, wooden carts, cows, donkeys, and horses were used in harvesting and threshing grain. Tools for processing grain included water mills, hand mills, and oil mills. The level nature of the Sanchuan area permitted use of horse and cattle carts for transporting crops after harvest.

The most common sideline production was domestic livestock production. Better-off families kept one or two milk cows. Donkeys and mules were used not only in farming, but they also provided fertilizer. Many families raised sheep for wool and manure. Almost every family had a few chickens, which were traded in markets or killed for family meals. Before Liberation, cotton cloth was expensive and not durable, so sheep wool was used for knitting clothing. Swine were raised for meat and sold for profit when in surplus. Another sideline activity related to domestic livestock was transporting goods. Families owning many horses and cattle earned money by transporting goods for others during times of little farming work. Certain Monguor earned money by selling firewood cut in mountains.

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<sup>3</sup>[*Zanthoxylum americanum*.]

## 2.2 Handicrafts

Very few Monguor families lived by handicraft production, such as tailoring, and shoe- and felt-making. Most Monguor lived on farms. Handicrafts fell into three categories. Family handicrafts were made utilizing family labor and raw materials. Such products included felt blankets, woolen bags, and woolen sacks. The latter were indispensable to farmers for transporting grain and manure. Handicrafts of this sort were closely related to everyday life. Family handicrafts were common throughout the countryside. A second type of handicraft was characterized by raw materials and labor not being totally supplied by the owner. Such handicrafts included water and oil mills. Production was in workshops which led to discrimination between the owners of production tools and employed workers. Water and oil mill owners were always wealthy. One water mill cost about 1,000 *yuan* which only landlords, wealthy farmers, and temples could afford. There were also tailors, carpenters, stonemasons, plasterers, and cobblers. Everyday clothing was made at home. Blacksmiths worked in their own shops and purchased raw materials. They possessed certain tools and sold metal hoes, knives, sickles, and hatchets.

## 2.3 Trade

Many Han and Hui managed stores and shops in Sanchuan. The Monguor usually did not engage in business, except for two or three families engaged in trading cloth and groceries. There were also a very few Monguor peddlers who carried butter, pepper, woolen blankets, and prickly ash to Lanzhou to trade for chinaware and used clothing. With little capital, peddlers made small profits and inevitably led poor lives. They were insignificant in the Monguor economy. There were no shopowners among the Huzhu Monguor. They explained this by saying that they had no knack for business for which a good mastery of numbers was required. No one liked to risk taking up trade. However, a goodly number of Monguor lamas at Taer Temple [Kumbum; Sku-vbum-dgon-pa] were skilled traders. They pooled money and ran businesses for Living Buddhas. Some even travelled to Tibet and Beijing to trade. They often returned with good profits. Sanchuan lamas were expert traders.

The Monguor had no market that they could control. Tradesmen were predominantly Han and Hui. The self-sufficient agricultural economy was an additional obstacle to economic interchange among the Monguor. Agriculture and sideline products were traded for industrial products in a market controlled by people of other ethnic groups. Being the providers of agricultural products, they were long exploited by capitalists, yet, they could not do without that market. Under such conditions, the Monguor farming economy was wrapped inside a market predominantly controlled by the Han. This hindered Monguor economic development.

It was different for the temples. Before Liberation, the politically powerful Ma family monopolized Qinghai's business world. They sold at high prices, bought at low ones, and no ordinary tradesman could compete with them. Possessing workforce and capital, temples were often manipulated by the ruling class to exploit Monguor peasants. Taking advantage of religious belief and dependency on temple land, the temples, supported by the ruling class, monopolized trade. Under control of the Ma family capitalists and temples, the ordinary Monguor did not enjoy trade opportunities, rather they were oppressed and exploited.

Before Liberation, economic relations in the Monguor community mainly involved land relations. Lamaseries possessed much land and were supported by a reactionary government. They controlled not only the Monguor economy by means of land exploitation and trade, but also ideology through religious belief. The Monguor were completely vulnerable to the impact of religion and the lamaseries.

## 2.4 Possession of Land and Other Means of Production

A clear class structure in Huzhu is revealed by examining land control. The biggest land owners were the temples. For example, Youning Temple had more than 30,000 *mu* (1 *mu* = 0.067 hectares). In second place were the landlords, some of whom had 500 *mu*. Wealthy peasants were in third place, with approximately 70 *mu* each. Middle peasants had 30 *mu* each. Poor peasants had little or no land. Irrigated fields accounted for a very small proportion of all land. They were primarily owned by landlords and wealthy peasants. Some poor peasants had a little mountain land yielding one harvest per year. In Sanchuan, temples had less land than Huzhu temples. Land was mostly owned by individual lamas, which might be related to lamas being skilled traders.

Sanchuan temples were small in comparison to Youning Temple, and were economically insignificant. There were also 20 landlord families in Sanchuan. The wealthiest had 300 *mu* of land. Middle peasants had about 100 *mu* each. Common peasants had only a piece of land of a few to 10 *mu* which produced just enough for subsistence. Consequently, there were few tenant peasants in Sanchuan. Differences in land ownership in both Huzhu and Sanchuan demonstrate the temples' economic impact. Sanchuan temples were relatively new, economically weak, and controlled little land. Youning Temple was much older, had a strong economy, and easily monopolized a great amount of land. This fact led to further class separation in rural areas.

## 2.5 Tenancy Relationships

Forms of land rent in Sanchuan and Huzhu were generally in kind and corvee. Before Liberation, the corvee demanded by Ma family warlords was substantial. In order to avoid it, landlords with minimal ties to the Ma family leased land to peasants. In return, the peasants were responsible for a portion of the landlords' corvee. The landlord might also have leased 2 *mu* of land and, in return, the peasant was at the landlord's beck and call without pay. Such peasants worked on their own land only in their spare time. These two tenancy relationships, based on labor rent, accounted for only a small part of the land owned by landlords. The main form of rent was "co-farming" in which the landlord provided the peasant with land, two head of cattle, and a certain amount of seed--usually one-third of what was required. Labor and other tools were the peasants' responsibility. The peasant was responsible for processing and transporting milled grains and flour to the landlord's house. Landlord and peasant shared the harvest on a half-half basis. The peasant was also responsible for grains delivered to the State, horse fees, and corvee on the land. Non-economic exploitation was severe. During festivals, peasants were expected to invite landlords to dinner and offer them expensive gifts.

In a second type of "co-farming" the peasant worked on the landlord's land, provided labor, farming tools, and half of the required seed. The harvest was shared on a 40-60 or 30-70 basis. The landlord got the larger share, but he shared responsibility for half of the public grain, horse fees, and corvee. At festivals, presents to the landlord were not obligatory. A landlord had the right to force peasants to work for him even during the busiest period of farm work without pay, regardless of the rent relationship.

Temple tenancy was based upon labor rent, rent in kind, and corvee. Temples also exploited hired peasants, for whom they provided no housing, by requiring peasants to build houses on temple land at personal expense. When the tenancy relation was terminated, temples confiscated the house without compensation. Some with good relations with temple leaders often rented a great amount of land in their own name and then made a profit by re-renting the land to peasants at a higher grain rent.

## 2.6 Employment Relationships

The landlords possessed much land, yet they faced a labor shortage. Aside from renting out land, they also hired workers for short and long periods. Many longterm laborers lived on earned wages before Liberation. Some worked to pay off debts and some were simply poor and trying to earn a living. The work term was not fixed, but usually was for at least 1 year. Huzhu landlords not only paid hired



laborers 10 silver coins a year, but they also provided food and drink. Laborers were responsible for their own medical care. In Sanchuan, hired laborers earned 20 silver coins a year and their meals. Part-time laborers worked in their spare time to earn money to support their families and to pay off debts. Peasants were also victims of usurious loaning practices by the Business Establishment of Dexinghai<sup>4</sup> which acted on the temples' behalf, landlords, wealthy farmers, and warlords. Supported by the ruling class, it oppressed and exploited peasants by every nefarious trick conceivable, often forcing peasants deeply into debt. This inevitably led to family ruin.

## **2.7 The Life of the Monguor**

Before Liberation, the Mas' bloody rule and the brutal exploitation of feudal landlords meant that the Monguor led a miserable life. Each peasant was burdened with all sorts of corvee and taxes unreasonably contrived by the Mas. These demands could be reduced or eliminated for landlords and wealthy farmers on good terms with the warlords, but the part that was reduced or eliminated unjustifiably fell on poor Monguor peasants' shoulders. All corvee and taxes peasants had to bear might have been more than 20 per year. It was common for many poor peasants to be tormented to death by such unjust demands.

Monguor everyday life was greatly affected by the temples, especially in Huzhu. Ordinary Monguor were deeply religious and willingly made temple contributions. On average, each peasant annually contributed ten silver coins to the temples. This was despite the fact that many peasants were deeply in debt. Better-off people contributed to the temples in order to avoid military service. Poor peasants did so in order to enjoy the possibility of borrowing money from the temples in times of real need. Pressed by these heavy burdens, most Huzhu and Sanchuan peasants faced grain shortages and lived in debt. Life could be even harder when the new crop was still in the blade and the old one consumed. As a last resort, peasants stuffed their bellies with edible wild herbs. Not being able to afford cloth clothing, an ordinary peasant wore a sheepskin coat all year. Some had no trousers. Women wore self-knitted sweaters all year. It was worse for children, many of whom were naked.

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<sup>4</sup>[Ma-family establishment controlling business.]

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## Language

Before Liberation, the Monguor language was studied by GN Potanin, WW Rockhill, and D'Olone. Volpert recorded and studied the language also. De Smedt and Mostaert compiled a Monguor language dictionary and a book about Monguor phonology and grammar. The latter two considered the Monguor language to be a Mongol dialect of the 13th-14th centuries. Luo Changpei and Fu Maoji concurred with this point of view. It has been estimated that 70% of Monguor is Mongol. Specific investigations in Huzhu and Minhe counties between October and November of 1953 found that among 341 daily words, 165 were Mongol (48%). Monguor word order was virtually the same as that of Mongol. Tibetan and Chinese words were also present, and certain compound words combined Mongol and Tibetan elements. Tibetan influenced the Monguor language through Monguor living in the same areas as Tibetans and through religion. Terms for addressing relatives were mostly Chinese terms. Many nouns were similar to Tibetan ones. Through the adsorption of Chinese and Tibetan elements, Monguor gradually developed into an independent language.

There were also similarities with Dongxiang [Saerte, Tung-hsiang, Sana, Suonapa] and Baoan [Bonan; Paoan]. From an investigation among the Dongxiang living in Linxia, Gansu we noted that among 341 Monguor words, 131 were the same, or nearly the same, as with Dongxiang and Baoan. Of these 131, 84 were quite similar to Dongxiang. Also, of the 341 words, 106 were similar to Dagur [Dahur, Daguer, Daur, Dauer, Dahaner, Dahuer, Dawuer]. We noted relatively few words and made only a rough comparison. Nevertheless, we believe that there is a close relation between these languages which is indicative of the historical relations between these nationalities.

21,000 people lived in Huzhu mountainous areas and 14,000 people lived in Minhe speaking their respective Monguor dialects. Though the distance separating these two places is 100 kilometers, there were striking differences between the two dialects. Of the 341 words we studied, we found that some had the same pronunciation, but not the same meaning, and some had the same meaning, but different pronunciation. Monguor people from these two places could communicate with difficulty. The Han language had greatly affected the Minhe dialect and Tibetan the Huzhu dialect. Only those in Minhe more than 50 years of age could count in Monguor. Huzhu also had different dialects. In short, dialects did exist and were very complicated. Also, from a number of examples we studied, it was clear that many words missing in modern written and oral modern Mongol remained in Monguor.

Monguor cherished their mother tongue. During the KMT regime, Monguor were deprived of the right to speak Monguor and the right to wear their hair and clothing in the distinctive Monguor style. They were forced to speak Chinese and, as a result, many cannot speak their native language.

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## Folk Beliefs

### 4.1 Huzhu

Huzhu Monguor followed the Red Sect of Lamaism. When ordinary people had problems they turned to lamas [*bebezi*; *hguandii*] who were considered divine. Such lamas were numerous in Huzhu. They had no temples and dressed and married as did ordinary Monguor. When the Monguor held weddings and funerals and wanted to build new houses, a Red lama was invited to choose a proper date. Lamas were also invited to chant to cure illness and were paid. Nevertheless, Red lamas depended primarily on agricultural work for their livelihood.

Every densely-populated village had a small lamasery. Inside were images of Tsong-kha-pa, the Dalai and Panchen lamas, and various Buddhas such as Desongsangji [Dus-gsum-sangs-rgyas; Three Treasure God], Nidakesang [Gnas-bdag-vod-ldan; Three Platform God], Chailianbusang [Khra-leb; Mountain God], Danmujiansang [Dam-can-rdor-legs; Sheephead God], Luyijiale (Old Father), Lemu [Glu-mo; Heaven Mule Riding King], Qierjia [Dam-can-chos-rgyal; Cow-Head God], Danmuchen [Rta-mgrin; Horse King Father], Zhudema [Sgrol-lzang-ma; Green-Faced Buddha], and Zhuolekaer [Sgrol-dkar; White-Faced Buddha]. In times of illness, trouble, fire, and when puzzling questions needing answers arose, a *shdanzin* was asked to pray to these Buddha images, which might have been moved to homes to vanquish the evil. Countryside Monguor consecrated the Kitchen Goddess<sup>5</sup> and Nidakesang to maintain a peaceful household.

#### 4.1a Keeping the Land in Peace

##### *Mani mounds*

*Mani* mounds were often on hillsides and hilltops. They were pillars built of yellow earth. On their tops were inserted a few tree branches with several pieces of attached cloth. These pillars were treated as mountain gods. Believing *mani* mounds capable of keeping their land free from calamity, villagers kowtowed to and circled them.

##### *Benkang*

*Benkang* symbolized Monguor habitation. They were built near roads, on hillsides, between villages, and near temples. They were square pavilions surrounded by many pillars. Inside each pavilion there was a room of earth without doors or windows containing 3,000 clay Buddha images called *shasha*. *Benkang* not only prevented hailstorms and other natural disasters, but they also kept nearby areas in peace. On the first and 15th day of every month, villagers walked around them, prayed, and chanted.

##### *Sukedou*

A *sukedou* was an earthen post 2 meters high and about 4 meters in diameter in a field. It also was made into a platform 3.5 meters high and 2.5 meters in diameter. *Sukedou* means "platform to prevent hail." Its construction was directed by a Living Buddha. All villagers believed that the Living Buddha's direction in *sukedou* construction inevitably led to disasters befalling nearby villages, leading them to invite another Living Buddha to build one in their own village to counter it. This gave rise

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<sup>5</sup>[Monguor: Zaya.]

to conflicts between villages and Living Buddhas.

### *Gods to End Illness*

There were two such gods. One type was clay statues of such gods as Lemu and Luyijiale. Such statues were carried by four men. Another type was gods invited by a *shdanzin*. Such gods included Nidakesang, Chailianbusang, and Danmujiansang.

### *Lemu and Luyijiale*

These gods were clay statues with a white face, consecrated in small countryside temples and lamaseries. When asking them to cure illness, the patient's family sent four men to carry either of these two statues back into the family's home. (Parents of the four men were living and no woman was confined in the home because of birth-giving in any of the homes of the four men.) When the four men arrived at the temple, they first lit lamps and kowtowed to the god statues. A statue was placed in a sedan chair and carried back to the patient's home. After the family lit lamps and kowtowed to the statue, it was moved out of the house and into the courtyard. The family kowtowed again and asked questions, such as when the patient would be well, what the trouble was, if it was necessary to call a Red lama to pray for the patient and to plead for medicine, what charitable and pious deeds the patient should do to be healthy, and what should be sacrificed to which god. If the four men bent the statue forward, the answer was affirmative. If the statue bent backward, the answer was negative. If the god granted medicine, it was asked how many packages were needed and when to get them. Empty packages were put inside the pleats of the image's clothing at night. When they returned, the packages were filled with red, yellow, white, black, or green powders. Medicines so bestowed by the gods were considered consecrated. They were prepared secretly by Red lamas.

### *Nidakesang, Chailianbusang, and Danmujiansang*

These three gods were consecrated inside temples and households. They were spears with pieces of cloth at the tops. When invited to households, these gods required the *shdanzin*. After the gods came to the house, the *shdanzin* first carried the spear symbolizing the god in both arms. He kowtowed and lit lamps. Questions similar to those mentioned previously were asked. The spear answered affirmatively by swaying in all directions. A still spear was a negative. After receiving answers the family set to work accordingly. The *shdanzin* was given a good meal and later, when the patient was completely recovered, gifts were sent in gratitude.

### **4.1b Gods for Sending and Ending Rain**

Gods of this type may be placed in two groups: (1) Lemu and Luyijiale and (2) Nidakesang, Chailianbusang, and Danmujiansang. The former were carried by four men to the middle of a river or near a spring. People kowtowed to the gods and then asked how long the god would like to stay there. Questions were answered as described before. Then the four men stopped near the water and filled bottles with water in front of the gods. Afterwards, the gods remained by the water and people frequently kowtowed to them. Rain was expected in three days and a shelter, such as a straw mat, was put up to keep out the rain. Lemu and Luyijiale were also carried around hills to maintain seedling growth and to prevent hailstorms. The same was true for Nidakesang, Chailianbusang, and Danmujiansang, who were carried by the *shdanzin*. Before carrying them around hills, the gods were asked what they needed, such as black bowls, vats, pots, wooden posts, the head of a fox, snake, and so forth. Every family sent a male member. If the family had no male member, a man was found outside the family. The procession circled nearby hills at least once and 108 volumes of Ganzhuer [Bkav-vgyur] Buddhist scriptures were carried--one volume being carried by one man.

#### 4.1c Praying to the Gods to Insure Peace and Solve Difficulties

Buddhas in village temples and in the lamasery, and Shasha Buddha in the *benkang*, insured peace and security and bestowed blessings. It was necessary to kowtow and pray to these gods. When weddings, funerals, and house building and repair required a propitious day, Red lamas were invited. Lemu, Luyijiale, Nidakesang, Chailianbusang, and Danmujiansang were occasionally invited and prayed to with the hope of solving problems. They were beseeched in the same manner as asking for a cure to illness and asking for rain.

#### 4.1d Influence of Han Beliefs

Han Chinese kept a picture of the Kitchen Goddess on a kitchen wall. White spots were added. Lamps and sacred bread were placed on a board under the yellow clay. The Kitchen Goddess was sent off to heaven on the 24th day of the 12th month. On that evening the family ate flat round cakes for dinner. The Kitchen Goddess was offered one to three cakes, which were eaten by the family the next day. The ceremony sending her off was directed by the mistress of the family. Young women destined to marry out of the household and, therefore, become members of other families were not permitted to eat cakes once they were placed on the board. The ritual involved putting another layer of yellow clay on the old one. Before plastering, the hostess besought the Kitchen Goddess to intervene on their behalf before the Jade Emperor in heaven and bring blessings to their family. Afterwards, the hostess kowtowed to the Kitchen Goddess, burnt cypress needles inside the stove, and sometimes added butter and parched flour to the fire. On the 30th day of the same month, the Kitchen Goddess was greeted upon her return. The greeting ceremony entailed making white spots with white flour on the patch of yellow clay. The pattern of white spots was always the same--a triangle with the sharp angle pointing up. The housewife again kowtowed, lit lamps, burned cypress needles inside the stove, and placed three small pieces of bread on the board.

The Monguor customarily greeted gods as did the Han. Ceremonies included burning cypress needles and lighting oil lamps in the yard and kowtowing. There were many gods to greet including Caishen (God of Wealth), Xishen (God of Happiness), and Guishen (Noble God). On New Year's Eve, lamps were lit and cakes were sacrificed before the Kitchen Goddess. Although there was no picture of the Door God, lamps were lit, and cakes were sacrificed behind doors for the Door God was thought to dwell there.

### 4.2 Minhe

Lamaism was strong. From the 5th-15th of the fifth month of each year, villagers walked around the hills with the 108 volumes of Ganzhuer Scriptures of Wenjia Temple or with their village god. This insured a good harvest. In every village those more than 50 chanted Mani Scriptures. On the 1st and 15th of each month, they went to the temple to chant. Some villages also chanted scripture on the eighth day of every month. Elderly people often spun a hand *mani* prayer wheel. Elders commonly chanted scriptures alone at home. They invited others to their home to chant only on special occasions. At such times, the hosts provided a meal for the guests.

In every village there was at least one small temple consecrating one to four Taoist gods. One of the gods belonged to the village such as Grandpa Dragon King, Grandpa Black Pool, Grandpa Master, Grandpa Great King, Erlang, Niangniang Goddess, and Legless Dragon King. Erlang was the most common. His image was consecrated in temples of all the villages, as well as the ancestral temples.

Every village also had one or more *falas* (trance mediums). There were 30-40 *falas* living in No. 5 District, which had about 20 villages. There were more than 30 *fashi*<sup>6</sup> and about 25 *yinyang*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>[In Minhe Monguor areas, *fashis* were trance mediums that dressed as women. They appeased temple and family gods. They did not impale themselves with spikes as did the *falas*.]

#### 4.2a Erlang

Erlang God was especially venerated. Every word spoken by Erlang through the *fala* was accepted as absolute. The clay statue of Erlang was consecrated in the Ancestral Temple in Village No. 2, No. 5 District. He went out twice a year. The first outing was from the first day of the fourth month to the 14th day of the fifth month. This was called "Visiting All Temples." The second time was from the first of the seventh month to the end of the eighth month. On the occasion of temple fairs held by each village, men carried Erlang in a sedan from temple to temple. Villagers knelt to greet him, lit incense and paper horses, and kowtowed. When the *fala* danced in a trance, villagers questioned Erlang about such things as the next year's harvest. After the ceremony, Erlang was placed in front of his memorial tablet in the temple for the night. The next day he was moved to another temple. On the middle of this tablet was written "Chuanshu Great Emperor, defending the state and keeping the peace of clear source and wondrous path, displaying his great power before all respected heavenly saints." On the right side was written "Golden Boy" and on the left was written "Great General Guo."

The temple fair in No. 5 District illustrates a typical one. On noon of the seventh day of the ninth month, villagers went to the village that had just finished its own temple fair. They brought Erlang to level ground outside their village temple and placed him under a special tent. The procession, including the eight men carrying the sedan, had gongs, drums, and flags, including two large flags from the Ancestral Temple. When Erlang approached the village edge, all villagers knelt. Some brought sheep and chickens they had promised to him. As he passed, liquor was poured on the heads of sheep and chickens. If they shook their heads, they were accepted, if not, new animals were found. Other village gods were brought out to show respect for Erlang, who was placed in the guest's position, while other gods maintained the host positions. After Erlang was seated, worshippers knelt and kowtowed three times as firecrackers, gongs, and drums sounded. Incense and candles were lit and yellow papers were burned. Steamed bread from each village family was placed on an altar. Women presented silk and small bags that they had made in fulfillment of promises that they had made to Erlang. Elderly people chanted *mani* scriptures. The offering chickens and sheep were taken home, killed, and cooked. Supplicants placed chopped cooked entrails on two large platters. One was presented to Erlang, along with yellow paper and scented candles, and the other was distributed to the crowd. At dusk Erlang was put in the temple. The next morning he was moved outside to a tent. After the second day's ceremony he stayed in the temple a second night and was taken to the next village on the following day.

#### 4.2b Family Gods

Monguor families each had a protective household god. These were Zushiye (Ancestral God), Baimatianjiang (Heavenly White Horse General), Yangtoughufa (Defending Goat Head God), Niutoughufa (Defending Cow Head God), Danjiantamu God, and Tamu God. The latter two were lamaistic. Their portraits were unfolded only from New Year's Eve until the 15th of the first month. There had to be a lama among the family members consecrating this god or it might cause problems. Every family lit incense and candles on the first and 15th of each moon, sacrificed to the family god on festivals, and held a large paper-burning ceremony once every 3 years. During such occasions, people asked the *fashi* to dance to invite the god, while candles and yellow paper burned. As he danced, the family god could be asked questions about the harvest of that year and health of family members. The family god replied through the *fashi*.

The ceremony and time of burning paper for the family god by Zhaomuchuan residents living in District No. 5, Fourth Xiang was unique. It was held once a year. When the *fashi* tired in the course of inviting the gods three women danced, including the hostess of the family. The other two were from outside the family. When the dance reached a fever-pitch of excitement, the three women had unusual expressions or made gestures suggesting that they were having sexual intercourse with the

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<sup>7</sup>[*Yinyang* is a local term for Taoist priests.]

family god. This ceremony was held on the first day of the tenth lunar month. Relatives of the family who invited the *fashi* sent food called *maxi*<sup>8</sup> to him.

#### 4.2c *Benba*<sup>9</sup>

Every Minhe Monguor family had this powerful object. It was an unglazed pottery pot. Inside were frogs, centipedes, *areca*, *pangolin*, and *shiyan*;<sup>10</sup> wheat, beans, highland barley--altogether 12 kinds of grain; 12 herbs; and ten tonics and herbs. When this powerful object was readied, Monguor chose a propitious date, incense was lit, candles were prepared, and paper was burned. Lamas and *yinyang* were invited to chant. The powerful object was buried in the courtyard. Generally, *benba* were buried in courtyards, but some families buried them in front of their doors or under walls. Standing over a buried *benba* was taboo. Nearly every family built a clay platform over them where flowers were grown. When families moved to a new location, they invited lamas or *yinyang* to bury a new one. The *benba* protected the household and repelled evil spirits. A mature *benba* was reputed to become a pot of clear oil.

#### 4.2d *Dalaga*

Many Minhe Monguor families had *dalaga*, a wooden spear-shaped stick with feathers on the spear-head. It was pointed downwards in a wooden grain container holding grain, money, cotton, and tea. They were placed near Buddha images symbolic of good harvest and grain, money, and fortune flying into the household. Some families with sheep placed the *dalaga* inside the sheepfold to safeguard livestock.

#### 4.2e Praying for a Good Harvest and Keeping Fields in Peace

##### *Planting a Board*

Mountain Monguor believed in mountain gods. Hail-preventing mounds were built on mountain tops surrounding villages. In constructing these mounds, villagers invited a *yinyang* to write incantations on a pine board which prevented famines, floods, storms, and hail devils. A picture of a dog's head was also drawn. This board was buried in the earth along with a bowl with incantations, bricks, wool, the five metals,<sup>11</sup> grains, various flowers, tea, and cotton. A mound was built above into which was planted a straw cross. On the cross was hung a piece of wood inscribed with: "Mountain God and Earth God are requested to defend this area's boundary."

##### *Thunder Platforms*

At village entrances and household gates, small earthen platforms repelled devils and ghosts, keeping the household and village in peace. The way of constructing a thunder platform resembled planting a board.

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<sup>8</sup>[Meaning unknown.]

<sup>9</sup>[A Tibetan word widely used by Qinghai natives of various ethnicities meaning "bottle."]

<sup>10</sup>[It is likely that these three substances are transliterations of the Tibetan. We could not identify them.]

<sup>11</sup>[Gold, silver, copper, iron, and tin.]

The function of the *obo* was the same as that of planting a board. It could be seen at crossroads and valley entrances. *Obos* repelled evil spirits. They were built in places where evil spirits might easily enter. Chinese trees of heaven, bowls, dog heads, bricks, wool, hardware, grains, various flowers, tea, and cotton were buried and then rocks were piled on top. Among the rocks, willow branches, spears, arrows, and cloth strips inscribed with scriptures were planted.

#### *Farmer God*

Every spring a tilling ceremony was held on a propitious date. Cattle were driven in the direction of the God of Happiness, grass was taken home to burn, paper and incense were burned, and the Farmer God was kowtowed to. Two pieces of fried bread were taken to the fields which people and cattle ate. Afterwards, the cattle were made to plow a circle in the field, inside of which was plowed a cross. Three people went to the field. One led the cattle while another guided the plow. A woman followed behind, spreading seeds. Tilling began after the conclusion of the ceremony.

#### 4.2f Religious Practitioners

##### *Fala*

A *fala* was a medium between man and the gods. He became a *fala* not out of personal will, but was chosen by a particular god. Once chosen he could not escape from the office, though he might dislike it. The young *fala* of Bao Village may serve as an example. During the temple fair of September 6, 1953 he was at home looking after his baby. Suddenly he felt captured by Erlang and ran, unknowingly, to the temple. There an old *fala* stuck a *qianzi* (slender piece of bamboo or wood) through his cheek and he began dancing. After this incident, he recalled nothing. Though he had lost much blood and the *qianzi* left a mark, he felt no pain. For these reasons, the Monguor respected and believed in him. Those satisfied by the results of praying for rain presented *falas* with presents to show gratitude. They led a comfortable life without farming. Incense, yellow paper, and candles were lit before Erlang and other gods to ask for rain. Each family sent a male member to attend the ceremony. If the family had no male members, they hired one. All knelt before the god while incense, yellow paper, and candles burned. Then 20 gongs and 16 drums were beaten. The *fala* washed his face and hands, scented himself with pine incense, kowtowed, and then sat before the god statue. Soon he jumped up with the deafening sounds of gongs and drums and began dancing up to Erlang, waving fingers asking for spikes. A templekeeper handed him the spikes, which the *fala* was expected to stick into his body. The number of spikes kept by villages varied from one to 12. Bodily areas for penetration were the cheeks (in opposite directions), the ears, tongue, adam's apple area, armpits, and breasts. While he danced, the *fala* wore no hat, a sleeveless jacket, and a yellow sash. He held an axe in one hand and a steel lash in the other. The lower parts of his trousers were bound to his ankles. When he hacked on the altar with his ax it indicated that he was about to speak. The gongs and drums ceased sounding. The temple representative asked if, when, and how much it would rain. The *fala* removed the spike in his tongue and danced. This was repeated three or four times until all questions had been asked. The temple representative said, "We have no more questions. Please go back to where you are from." The *fala*, surrounded by beating gongs and drums, removed all the

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<sup>12</sup>[*Obos* are mounds of stones built in places of greater elevation where rituals are held and where sacrifices are offered to the deities—particularly mountain gods, and to heaven. As is the case with *benba*, the term *obo* is widely employed by Qinghai natives of various nationalities. There are a number of dialectical variants. Some Minhe Monguor refer to it as *wobo*. Certain other Minhe Monguor do not recognize this term, but instead, use the Tibetan term *labzi* to refer to it.]



spikes from his body, kowtowed to the god statue, and was helped to his feet. He was an ordinary man once more. The *fala*'s dancing style depended on the god that possessed him. Different gods had different dancing styles.

### *Fashi*

When inviting gods to take possession of him, the *fashi*<sup>13</sup> dressed in women's clothing and did not impale himself with spikes. He invited only Heimazhusiye (Black Horse Master God) and Jiashen (Family God) to take possession. Reasons for a *fashi*'s possession included illness, the burning of papers in worship of family gods, and showing gratitude to village gods on every ninth of the ninth month after harvest. His inability to impale himself meant he was weaker than the *fala*. Not all villages had *fashi* while some had two or three. The *fashi* was not respected by many. It was commonly said that educated people would not sit at the same table with a *fashi*.

### *Yinyang*

Those in Minhe were similar to those in Huzhu. They enjoyed great respect. Their founder was known as Zhenwu Ancestral Master. They chose dates for weddings and performed various divinations.

## **4.2g Beliefs Affected by the Han**

In each Minhe village many families shared the same surname and family temple, where a lama burned incense morning and night. In the family temple a particularly renowned ancestor and Buddhist and Taoist gods were consecrated. At times, families of the same surname invited lamas to chant and the *yinyang* to hold rituals. Such rituals combined Buddhism and Taoism. All families stemming from the same root met to hold ceremonies during festivals. In addition to praying to the ancestral tablets in family temples, the Monguor also wrote on the same ancestor tablets on New Year's Eve and burned incense on the third day of the New Year. During festivals, sacrifices of pork, turnips, potatoes, and liquor were made to the ancestors. When the day of Pure Brightness [fifth solar term] came, all families of the same root went to the ancestral graves to pray. A butchered pig and a cooking pot were taken and incense and candles were lit. The pig was sacrificed to the ancestors and a meal was eaten before the ancestors' graves. Beef and mutton were not sacrificed on this occasion. When old people died, the Monguor also sacrificed food, lit incense, and burned yellow paper before the coffin. Seven small pieces of bread were placed in the corpse's sleeves to deal with savage hell dogs. This was obviously an influence of Han Chinese Taoism.

### *The Kitchen Goddess*

The image of the Kitchen Goddess was paper. Some held the ceremony of seeing her off to heaven on the 24th of the 12th month. Others held it on the 23rd. Some said that it had been customary to hold this ceremony on the 23rd, but some families were poor and could not afford it, and the date was changed to the 24th. The ceremony was usually led by a male family member. A woman officiated if there was no man in the family. Prior to the ceremony a bowl of water, grass, beans (the feet of her horse), a piece of cake, a lamp, yellow paper, scented candles, and sweets were prepared. The speech of the ceremony was the same as that of Huzhu. Those who performed the ceremony on the 24th apologized to the Kitchen Goddess, explaining that their families were too poor to send her off on the 23rd.

Ceremonies involving the Door and Treasure Gods were the same as for Huzhu County. Every family had three treasure gods--the gods of happiness, emoluments, and longevity. Their celestial

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<sup>13</sup>[Always male.]

positions were written on yellow paper. Near these gods there was a Buddha image. On the first and 15th of the first month incense and candles were lit and yellow paper was burned. When festivals came, one to three pieces of bread were consecrated. The Door God had an image and, on the first and 15th of the first month, it was placed behind the door when incense and candles were lit.

## Younging Temple

Lamas were a special class for they did no farm work. Ordinary Monguor families customarily sent sons to be lamas. Generally, seven or eight out of every ten families that had two or three sons sent one to the lamasery. In Huzhu, five or six homes out of every ten had a room where Buddhas were worshipped. In Minhe the number was eight or nine. Many people in Huzhu also carried a small Buddha image which protected the person. Only lamas did this in Minhe. The Monguor generally followed the Yellow Sect, although there were also Red Sect followers. The Yellow Sect was centered in Younging Temple. This temple originally belonged to Sajia (Flower Lamaism). Younging Temple was the largest Monguor lamasery, as well as the largest in north Qinghai. It had 20 subordinate lamaseries accounting for 70% of all Monguor lamaseries.

### 5.1 Historical Development of Younging Temple

Suonanjiasu [Bsod-nams-rgya-mtsho], the Third Dalai Lama, was travelling to Mongolia and passed by a place called Zegejia. He was caught in thunder and heavy rain. A rainbow appeared in the sky above a place known as Guolong. Dalai considered this a good omen and decided that a lamasery should be established there. When Yudanjiacuo [Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho; Yon tan], the Fourth Dalai Lama, who had been born in Mongolia, returned to Tibet from Mongolia, he passed by the same place. Lamas living with local Monguor begged him to establish a lamasery in compliance with the wishes of Bsod-nams. But the Fourth Dalai felt it too early to do so, and continued on to Tibet. Once there, Xilaimuze [Shes-rab-grags] Headman from Zhade [Bra-sti-nang-so] Tribe and Suonanjian [Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan], Headman from Langjia [Cang-kya] Tribe, again suggested establishing a lamasery in the area. At this time, headmen from Ajia [A-kya], Huori [Hovi], Huaren [Dpav-rin], Juecha [Cog-tsha], Dala [Vdav-ra], and Saicha [Se-tsha] Tribes met and decided to establish a lamasery. In 1602, they sent the headmen of the 13 tribes to Tibet to see the Dalai Lama. They requested that he direct establishment of the lamasery. Dalai responded that he was not able to go, but suggested finding another Living Buddha in Lhasa. One of the 13 headmen met Jiaseduanyuequjiacuo [Rgyal-sras-don-yod-chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho; hereafter Jiase] Living Buddha on his way to Zhebang [Vbras-spung] Temple and explained their interest. Jiase agreed. Another headman, Dala [Vdav-ra], also conveyed their idea to Semuhua [Sens-dpav-sprul-sku] Living Buddha. Thus the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, Jiase, and other Living Buddhas met and decided that Jiase should be sent to oversee establishment of the Qinghai lamasery. Before leaving, Jiase asked who should be the chief of the lamasery and acting protector. Caihua Living Buddha suggested that Nanmusedanmaer [Rnam-sras-mdung-dmar; Mountain God With A Red Face] would be fit for Chief and Mehaselama [Lha-mo; Heaven Master Riding On a Mule] would be Acting Protector. Dalai the Fourth agreed. When Jiase arrived in Qinghai, he chose Guolong as the lamasery site. Construction work began in 1604. A Cannizhacang [Mtshan-nyid-gra-tshang; Xianzong] Scripture course was opened and later, a course in Jubazhacang [Rgyud-pa-gra-tshang; Mizong] Scripture was added. However, the lamasery did not enroll lamas until a *dancuojiacuo* [sum-pa-dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan; scripture chanting master] became the first *fataidasongba* [mkhan-po]. Afterwards, the temple gradually developed. Between the end of the Ming and early Qing Dynasties, there were as many as 6,000 lamas. It was the largest lamasery in Qinghai. In 1723 certain Living Buddhas took part in an anti-Qing rebellion led by Lubsangdanjin [Blo-bzan bstan-dsin] which resulted in the Qing army burning the main hall, scripture chanting room, and 13 volumes of Danzhuer [Bstan-vgyur] Scripture. Many lamas and three Living Buddhas were executed. The lamasery was in ruins until 1732 (the tenth year of the Yongzheng Reign) when the Qing Emperor had it rebuilt. The temple was afterwards known as Younging Temple and the number of lamas reached 3,000.

During the reigns of Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors of the Qing Dynasty, it was standard practice

to make pilgrimages to Tibet. During the reign of Kangxi, Dalai Lama the Fifth established a system whereby the *laranbagexi* [*lha-ram-pa-dge-bshes*] degree was bestowed by the three most important lamaseries in Lhasa. Among the five *laranba* who first passed this examination, three were from Youning Temple, enhancing the temple's reputation.

Conflicts between Hui and Han resulted in Hui burning the lamasery in 1874. Only about 70 lamas remained. Later troops subdued the Hui, killing a great many. Fifteen years afterwards, Tuguan [T'u-kuan; Tughuan] Hutukhtu rebuilt Peace Temple under the auspices of the Qing. Although there was an increase in the number of lamas, the number never exceeded 600. Just prior to Liberation, Ma Bufang deliberately destroyed trees and plants on mountains near Youning Temple, and also demanded exorbitant taxes. Many found it difficult to live there and left in search of a better life. Six years before Liberation 300 lamas lived at the temple. Two years before Liberation there were 290.

## 5.2 Organization of Youning Temple

There were five large and nine small *angs*. Within each *ang*, a *xiangzuo* was responsible for all enterprises inside and outside the lamasery. A steward (*niriwa*) was in charge of *angs* which did not have a *xiangzuo*. The head of Youning Temple was the *dafatai*. Jiase Living Buddha was responsible for education and administration. Living Buddhas renowned for their knowledge of Buddhism were candidates for *dafatai*. Terms of office were 2-4 years. Usually, a *dafatai* was elected for a term of 3 years. Under the *dafatai* there were Living Buddhas of the five large *angs* and, under the Living Buddhas, there were the *xiangzuos* who represented all lamasery lamas. The *xiangzuo* was an assistant to the *dafatai*. He dealt with routine lamasery matters. He resigned from his position when the *dafatai* did. Under the *xiangzuo* there were two *sengguan*. They were able elderly lamas. Known as iron stick lamas, they enforced rules and regulations. Their term was for 1 year. There were also two *senggang* and six *laomin*. The *senggang* were responsible for lamasery diplomacy and served 3 year terms. *Laomin* represented all lamas. They were selected from among those who were once *sengguan* or *senggang*. Their terms were 3-5 years. Eleven officials, including *xiangzuo* and *senggang*, met to decide issues. If unable to reach a decision the 11 handed the matter over to the stewards of the five large *angs*. If still no solution emerged, the decision went to the *dafatai*. On occasion, when an issue was too difficult for him to deal with, a lamasery-wide meeting was held in which every lama voiced his opinion before the *dafatai* made a final decision.

## 5.3 Rules and Regulations

Only boys more than 7 were permitted to enroll, and a few men aged 50-60 joined the lamasery. After arriving, a high-ranking lama or a Living Buddha was taken as master. The head was shaved and a kasaya was donned. A promise was made before a Sakyamuni statue that Buddhism would be believed in forever. The person was then part of the lama community. Resumption of secular life was easy. The two *sengguan* were bowed to two or three times and the person paid a small fee. If the person left secretly without doing this, he was merely considered to have violated lamasery rules and not overly criticized.

## 5.4 Scripture Courses and Promotion

There were seven terms for learning scripture per year. During each, lamas went to the Great Sutra Hall two or three times daily. At daybreak they had tea and chanted two hours before retiring to the front of the hall to review scriptures. Two lamas formed one group. Alternatively, one asked questions and the other answered. After an hour it was time for tea and rest and then lamas went to their master to learn scriptures for about two hours. Then it was time to return to the Great Hall of

the Sutra.<sup>14</sup> At three in the afternoon, the third chanting began in the corridor of the Great Hall of the Sutra.<sup>15</sup> Rules required that all lamas chant, but, in fact, only half did.

Annual examinations were held during the seventh month from the first to the 15th. Each lama could take this exam and those who failed repeated it the following year. From the 25th-30th of the seventh month a special exam chose two *gabugqi*, who were lamas who had passed the Xianzong Scripture course. The two candidates were questioned by all lamasery lamas three times daily. Between the 25th-26th days, the two candidates provided a meal for all the lamas. The required course for a *gabugqi* included 14 levels of lessons and few passed.

## 5.5 Classes

The Living Buddhas of the five large *angs* had their own property and homes. Those who rented their property or borrowed their property were their subjects. They were taxed, had to send presents, and worked for them. They were in awe of the Living Buddha and presented most of their yearly production to the lamasery, keeping little for themselves. Consequently, Living Buddhas led a comfortable life. Lamas of the lowest class devoted themselves completely to them and received only clothing and food. At the time of this study, the five large *angs* were Tuguan, Zhangjia [Chang-chia], Songbu [Sum-pa], Quezang [Chu-bzang], and Wang. Jiase dwelt in Tibet, and after the founding of Youning Temple, had visited only twice. The most respected Living Buddha was Songbu. The richest was Tuguan. The nine Living Buddhas of the five small *angs* owned their own homes. There were also 154 small residences for ordinary lamas.

## 5.6 Festivals and Rites

Youning Temple held its most important ceremonies twice yearly on the 2nd-15th days of the first month. All lamas chanted scriptures in the Great Sutra Hall thrice daily. The *dafatai* expounded the scriptures twice daily. On the eighth and 14th days there was trance dancing. The second meeting was between the second and ninth days of the sixth month. Many brought tea and food to the lamasery at this time. The second ritual included trading activities and occasional horseraces. In addition to trance dancing, on the 29th day of the 12th month, and the 14th day of the first month, the Shishi Ceremony was held which vanquished all evil. On the 25th of the 12th month, a triangular *shishi* was made out of parched flour about 0.66 meters tall. A burning candle was placed in front of it, and then a 6.66 centimeter long parched flour man was molded. The latter was known as *zhaguo* and symbolized evil harmful to man. It was placed in the Great Sutra Hall four times daily. During this period, 21 lamas in the hall, and those who cooked for them, were not permitted to exit or speak. Others were forbidden to see them. The lama in charge of this group was known as the *duoze bu* lama who served a term of 3 years. He was selected by a Living Buddha on the basis of his scriptural knowledge. On the morning of the 29th of the 12th month, 17 lamas danced in a trance after chanting scriptures. Duoze bu Lama cut the flour man into several pieces with a knife and carried them to an earthen pit in front of the Defending Buddha Hall situated in the west of the lamasery. Firewood was piled on the pit. Twenty-four lamas carrying flags led the procession. They were followed by people blowing trumpets and conches. Then came eight men carrying the *shishi* followed by the Duoze bu Lama, the 17 lamas, men beating drums, more lamas from the lamasery, and onlookers. The procession might have included more than 2,000 people. Once the pit was reached, Duoze bu Lama threw the *shishi* at the *zhaguo* then the firewood was burned with the *zhaguo* inside the pit, concluding the ceremony.

On the eighth and 14th days of the first month and on the 24th day of the 12th month, 80 lamas

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<sup>14</sup>This was only true for the first four terms.

<sup>15</sup>A third chanting was not done in the third term.

danced in a group. The 15th of the first month was time for sunning huge portraits of Buddha. One end of a portrait of Xiangba Buddha was hung from the eaves of the Great Sutra Hall and the other end was unrolled to the stairs in the front of the hall. More than 10,000 spectators attended this day to venerate Buddha. The fourth month was known as Buddha Month for it was on the 15th of the fourth month that Sakyamuni became a Buddha. Many people came to the lamasery to kowtow, present gifts, light lamps, and spin prayer wheels. One good deed done on that day was worth hundreds of thousands of good deeds done on other days.

## 5.7 Economy

At the time of this study 400 lamas lived at Youning Temple. They mainly lived by renting land to farmers. *Ang* lamas with much land led a good life. Those living in small *angs* with little land had to depend on their families outside the lamasery for support, or else they earned money by chanting scriptures for Monguor outside the lamasery. One period of chanting earned 5 kilograms of wheat, or 1.5 kilograms of steamed bread. Lamas also earned money by tailoring, inscribing scriptures, printing scriptures, drawing and painting Buddhas, and making sculptures. The temple also loaned money and rented buildings.

## 5.8 Relations With Other Lamaseries

Youning Temple had close relations with Zhebang Lamasery, one of the three largest lamaseries in Tibet. It also had connections with Taer Lamasery. The following are biographical sketches of well known Living Buddhas of Youning Temple.

1. Sumpa Hutukhtu. Born in 1621, he was one of the most powerful Living Buddhas. He was twice elected to the position of *dafatai*. The third incarnation, Zeyeshebanzhuer [Sum-pa-ye-dpal-vbyor], was born in 1704. In 1723, he travelled to Tibet to study scriptures and returned to Qinghai in 1731. In 1733 he was elected to the position of *dafatai*. In 1748, he wrote the *History of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia*.<sup>16</sup> Sections dealing with Indian and Tibetan Buddhism were translated into English in India in 1908. He was also the author of *The Life of Sumpakhanpo*. At the time of this study, Sumpa Living Buddha was the sixth incarnation and was a People's Congress representative.

2. Zhangjia was one of seven *hutukhtu* in Qinghai and, later, was granted the title "state master" (meaning "most knowledgeable man"). He often stayed in Dolonnor Lamasery in Inner Mongolia, Songzhu Lamasery in Beijing, and Wutai Mountain in Shanxi. He was the highest ranking Buddhist leader in Inner Mongolia and, during the Qing Dynasty, he was one of four famous Living Buddhas.<sup>17</sup> The first Zhangjia Living Buddha was Zhabaeseer. He was of the Huzhu Zhang family. Greatly venerated by the Monguor, he was elected as *dafatai* of Youning Temple in 1630 and died in 1641. The Second Zhangjia Living Buddha was Erwangqudan who was born in Qinghai. He entered the lamasery at the age of 12 and studied scripture in Tibet at the age of 45. In 1688 he returned to Qinghai to be elected *dafatai* of Youning Temple. He was also granted the title of state master. He wrote seven well-known books published in Beijing supplementing the Danzhuer Scriptures before dying in 1714.

The third incarnation of Zhangjia was named Ruoweiduoerji [Rolpa dorje]. He was born in Liangzhou in 1717. In 1727 the Qing emperor permitted him to establish a college of scripture in Huizong Lamasery in Dolonnor. In 1735 Emperor Yongzheng ordered him to begin the Biqu Ceremonies. In Qianlong's first year of reign (1736) he was ordered to translate Ganzhuer Scripture [in Tibetan] into Mongol. Afterwards, all Mongol nobility were converted to Buddhism. He was highly respected by Emperor Qianlong. He read extensively, had encyclopedic knowledge, and a good

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<sup>16</sup>[The History of the Rise and Downfall of Buddhism in India and Tibet??]

<sup>17</sup>The other three were the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama, and Zhebuzundanba.

command of Chinese, Mongol, and Tibetan. Zhangjia Living Buddhas IV, V, VI, and VII were, respectively, Zhangjiayeshedanpijiacuo [Cang-kya-ye-shes-bstan-pavi-rgya-mtsho], Zhangjiayeshedanpinima [Cang-kya-ye-shes-bstan-pavi-nyi-ma], Zhangjialuozyangyeshedanpijiacuo [Cang-kya-blo-bzang-ye-shes-bstan-pavi-rgya-mtsho], and Zhangjialuozyangbadanpijingmai. Zhangjia VII was born in 1891 and, when the KMT controlled China, he received numerous important titles. He was also a member of the KMT committee. With the support of Ma Bufang, he mercilessly exploited the Monguor people. He fled to Taiwan shortly before Liberation.

3. Tuguan Hutukhtu. When Zhangjia Living Buddha was promoted to State Master, Tuguan was promoted to First Rank Hutukhtu. Tuguan Living Buddha I was named Luosanglabudan. He was born in Tuguan Village in Huzhu County, which explains his title. In 1672 he was elected the *dafatai* of Youning Temple. He died in 1679. The second incarnation was named Qujijiacuo<sup>18</sup> and went to Beijing with Zhangjia I to be made *hutukhtu*. He was elected *dafatai* of Peace Temple at the age of 25. In the 28th year of Qianlong's reign, he went to Beijing to teach. Emperor Qianlong bestowed the title of *jingwuchanshi* (honorific title). Afterwards he was often with Zhangjia Living Buddha II and translated scriptures. He visited Mongolia five times and every part of Qinghai. He founded many lamaseries. At the age of 52, he was selected chief *fatai* of Taer for 5 years. He composed five works. Tibetan versions were kept in Songzhu Lamasery in Beijing and in Youning Temple. They were mainly about religion in India and Tibet, and are of great reference value to researchers of the contemporary history of Buddhism. Some of his works were translated into English, German, and French. He was highly respected by Mongols, Tibetans, and especially by the Qinghai Monguor. At the time of this study, Tuguan Buddha was the seventh incarnation and the most powerful Living Buddha residing at Youning Temple. He was a man of vast knowledge and many of his works were kept in Yonghe Palace in Beijing. These works included *The History of Tuguan* and *The Origin and Development of Religions*. He escaped persecution by Ma Bufang by paying much money. Afterwards he stayed in the lamasery everyday, chanting, and ignoring the outside world. He owned much property and exploited the Monguor as much as Zhangjia Living Buddha did.

4. Wang Hutukhtu. The incarnation at the time of this study was the fifth. He was known as the most knowledgeable man at Youning Temple. He devoted most of his time to chanting scripture and writing.

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<sup>18</sup>[Nag dban C'osky rgyamts'o??]

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## Monguor Customs and Habits

### 6.1 Dress and Ornaments

Men's clothing was like that of the Han, except that Monguor men's clothing was baggier. Men wore home-knitted white and brown upper garments in spring, summer, and autumn. Some wore dyed nankeen gowns. Buttons were copper. Shirt collars were 10 centimeters wide and were edged with different colored threads. Lambskin was attached to the inside of the collar during cold weather. In winter, sheepskin coats were worn with the fur inside and the hide to the outside. Coat cuffs were bordered with lace about 10 centimeters wide. The ruling class wore silk gowns and sleeveless jackets. In spring, summer, and autumn, felt hats with turned up back edges and flat front edges were worn. In winter, pagoda-shaped fur hats made of dyed nankeen were worn. Lambskin was inside and part of the hat could be rolled up or down. A walnut-sized red and green thread ball was on the pointed top. Boots were the same as those of Mongols and Tibetans. Monguor men in Minhe wore gowns and top hats and the remainder of their dress was the same as that of Han men.

Women's clothing was more complex and varied from place to place. This was particularly true of Huzhu head ornaments. Women wore plain white cloth shirts in Huzhu, Datong, and Ledu. Fronts were trimmed with black cloth 6 centimeters wide. Wide collars were edged with colorful embroidery. Sleeves reached the end of the fingers and were sewn with red, yellow, and green cloth. A vest worn outside the shirt reached the hips. It was trimmed with colorful embroidery. Light-brown and dark-green belts were also worn. Lower clothing was baggy trousers. Women wore handmade cloth boots embroidered with flowers. Felt hats had turned-up edges. Elderly women wore loose cotton gowns or blackish brown shirts. On the outside, a blackish brown vest buttoned on the right side. In winter, women wore fur singlets over shirts or cotton gowns. Few wore cotton or fur coats.

In Datong, hair was divided into two braids placed in front of the breasts. The ends were tied together with false coral stones. Huzhu women wore their hair in complex and different arrangements. Minhe women wore their hair coiled up and adorned with pearls and jade. Around the head was a hoop of real and false coral. This hair pattern was described as being a phoenix with spread wings. Head ornaments were not worn unless visiting relatives or during festivals. Monguor women in Minhe also bound their feet.

### 6.2 Food and Drink

Stable foods were barley, noodles made from various bean flours, fried cakes, steamed bread, and potatoes. Wheat flour was considered best and consumed only on special occasions. Monguor were also fond of butter, milk tea, mutton, and beef.

### 6.3 Housing

Houses were made of earth, stones, and wood. They were square and surrounded by four high walls. Each corner was marked with a white stone and was higher than the rest of the wall. In the courtyard center there was a stone for tethering horses. A *mani* flag was placed in the middle of the stone. Blood-related families generally lived in the same area. When a family decided to separate and live apart, the house the family originally lived in went to the first son. Other sons had to find new homes. Most parents lived with their youngest son.



## 6.4 Marriage

From childhood until young people were in their 20s, both sexes herded animals, collected firewood, and worked in the fields together. Marriage was arranged by parents. Because of the importance of the bride's labor, brides were usually older than the men by 2-10 years. Marriage began with matchmaking. Parents of a boy asked two matchmakers to see a certain girl's parents and take *khadakh*,<sup>19</sup> liquor, and steamed stuffed buns made from naked oat flour. If the girl's family declined the marriage offer, the presents were returned to the boy's family a few days later.<sup>20</sup> If they accepted, only empty liquor bottles were returned. After securing agreement, the groom's family again sent *khadakh* and liquor to the girl's family, completing the engagement process. Matchmakers were then asked to discuss with the girl's family the amount of marriage gifts and how to send the gifts.

On the wedding eve, the bride's family saw her off. They filled her chest with bread, money, and cloth. Relatives were entertained with food and tea. In the afternoon, the groom's family sent four or five people with the groom to greet the bride at her home. The groom was dressed from head to toe and his clothing was decorated with colorful ornaments. When the groom was first seen, the bride's female relatives shut the door and poured cold water on them and did not open the door until the groom's entourage had sung the praises of the bride's family. After entering the house the groom first showed his respect to his parents-in-law by presenting *khadakh* and then showed his respect to the Buddha consecrated in the home. A feast followed entertaining guests from the groom's family. Women danced and sang. The next morning the bride and groom accompanied by people from both the groom and bride's families set off for the groom's home. While enroute the bride's family blackened the groom's face with soot. After reaching at the groom's home, the bride and groom stood on a felt carpet on the stairs leading to the principal room and kowtowed to Buddha, heaven, earth, and the groom's parents before being escorted into the bridal chamber. Relatives of the groom's family came on the morning of the wedding day to extend congratulations with 16 steamed rolls, a *khadakh*, and liquor. When the congratulator left, the host returned two steamed rolls. The congratulators generally stayed only a brief time before leaving. That afternoon, the groom's family entertained people from the bride's side, mostly in the courtyard. Some families entertained inside the home if space permitted. Tables were placed in a circle for the banquet. The banquet began with people drinking tea and eating sweet fried cakes. The master of ceremonies offered a toast and made a congratulatory speech, wishing prosperity to the bride, groom, and their families. Entertainers representing the groom's family presented toasts to all guests while singing. At the banquet's climax, women danced and sang and entertainers brought mutton and pork to the tables. Meat soup and long noodles symbolizing longevity were served last. The banquet lasted until dusk. The bride's entourage left the next morning after breakfast.

In Minhe, during the month prior to the marriage day, relatives of the bride brought her gifts. Each time relatives arrived, the bride wailed and complained that her parents and matchmakers were engaging her to another family and how much she hated leaving her parents. During this month, the bride pretended to be unwilling to marry. She also ate and drank less, so she would be in a listless state. If she did not do this, her relatives ridiculed her. On the day when the groom's entourage came to greet the bride, not only was the door shut, but bold women were selected to stand on the roof of the bride's home to scold and berate the groom. They brought up shameful things related to his ancestors and the more severe the teasing, the more amusing it seemed. Those with the groom had prepared two packages of money wrapped in red paper for the scolding women. At the end of the first round of abuse, the groom's side immediately offered a package of money. Though the women accepted it, they continued scolding and shouting. The second was offered and the women came down

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<sup>19</sup>[Strip of silk given as a token of respect.]

<sup>20</sup>Returned steamed stuffed buns were freshly cooked.

from the roof and opened the courtyard gate. Previously, there had been the custom of *daitiantou*, marriage to a mountain or huge rock. When a girl became 18, she was dressed and, on New Year's Eve, she married a mountain or boulder. Afterwards, she led the life of a married woman and could live with other men and have children. Some Huzhu women were also married to mountains and boulders.

## 6.5 Funerals

Adult corpses were cremated in Huzhu. The corpses of small children were left in the open. In Minhe, corpses of young children, pregnant women, and childless adults were cremated or buried. When an elder died, regardless of wealth, his family held a ritual prior to burial. On the evening of the day he died, village family heads were invited to the deceased's home to discuss funeral arrangements for the next three days and the procedure for informing the deceased's relatives. Three or four lamas were invited to chant scriptures which directed the spirit of the deceased. On the funeral day, every village family brought a dozen pieces of bread to the home of the deceased. Relatives brought a dozen pieces of bread, incense, tea, and presented *khadakh* to the corpse. A corpse was disrobed and placed in a squatting position with legs crossed, palms together, and the thumbs touching the chin. The corpse was wrapped in pieces of white cloth 5 *cun*<sup>21</sup> in width. At each bone joint, a ball made of silk strips was fastened. Relatives placed a yellow cloth (*burila*) on the head. The corpse was put into the cremation sedan which just accommodated the squatting corpse. Resembling a palace, it was exquisitely made with a carved surface of many designs. The sedan was placed in the principle room of the home. Lamas and respected elders were invited to chant scriptures. Meanwhile, a stove was built using 120 lumps of earth outside the village. After the chanting the sedan was carried to the stove and positioned so that the corpse faced west and the sedan was burned. It was believed that the less time cremation required the less worries for the spirit as it rose to West Heaven to gain Buddhahood. On the third day after cremation, relatives opened the cremation stove. The oldest son first collected ashes and was followed by other relatives. They were placed in a cinerary casket and buried on the Day of Pure Brightness of the next year. In Minhe, it was common to place the corpse in a coffin for ground burial. When a youth died, the funeral was simple. If the deceased had children, a more elaborate ceremony was required.

## 6.6 Festivals

Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Moon Festival, Winter Solstice, and the Eight Day of the 12th moon was identical to those of the Chinese. Lamaistic festivals celebrated were the same as Tibetan ones. Spring Festival was the largest. Within the last 15 days of the 12th month, Monguor stopped all farm work and busily prepared. Swine and sheep were killed and sufficient bread for supporting the family for about 20 days was prepared. At dusk on the 30th day of the 12th month, families pasted couplets on either side of their courtyard doors as well as yellow paper printed with money and horses. Later at night, after the New Year meal, elders told stories and songs were sung throughout the night. The ceremony to marry a boulder or mountain was also held. Shouting and quarreling were taboo in fear of bad luck. The next morning children kowtowed to buddhas and their parents. They took fried bread and paid Spring Festival calls to other clan families and neighbors. Later, youths played games. The next evening, men and women danced and sang. From the second to the 15th day of the first month, visits were made to relatives living some distance away.

In every Monguor village there were a few swings for children to play on. Monguor women were skillful in swinging.

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<sup>21</sup>[1 *cun* = .1 *chi*. 1 *chi* = 1/3rd meter.]

## 6.7 Wrestling

This was an intervillage activity held between Winter Solstice and the Eighth Day of the 12th moon. The champion was presented with the title *batir* (hero) and was much respected among young people.

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## Marriage and the Clan System

### 7.1 Marriage

#### 7.1a Marriage Types and Taboos

Society was patriarchal. Privileged in every aspect of life, men were masters, representatives of families, and participated in social activities. They lived in idleness. Only a few learned crafts and worked at such jobs as carpentry. Monguor women were responsible for all house and farm work. For this reason, Monguor men treated women well. They had considerable say in questions relating to property allocation and use.

Marriage was generally monogynous, but if the wife did not bear sons long after marriage, the husband might take a second wife. A man rarely had more than three wives. The first wife was the one of authority. The others were on the same level as servants. The only opportunity for a second wife to gain in position was to bear a son. If she did so, her position equalled that of the first wife.

Marriage between those with the same surnames was allowed because many Monguor surnames were Chinese. Many with the same surname were from different clans. Marriage between paternal cousins of the same surname was prohibited, but a marriage between a man and the daughter of his paternal aunt or maternal aunt were favored. Spouses were found in neighboring villages of the same tribe. Marriage outside the nationality was frowned upon for maintaining customs and blood lineage were valued. Marriage outside the same clan was encouraged. This later became prohibition against marriage between near neighbors. This might be explained by the fact that, though near neighbors were different families, sexual contact was possible and, therefore, marriage between children was considered a poor choice. Moreover, good relationships between neighbors was difficult if children intermarried.

Fifteen to 25 was considered an ideal age for males to first marry while 14-20 was considered best for females. Most Monguor wives were older than their husbands. It was common for a husband of 15-16 to have a wife of 18-19. There were no set rules for age in the case of remarriage and age disparities of more than 10 years were possible. A married rich man could take another wife of 20. If a man married his elder brother's wife, she could be more than 10 years older, but this was rare. For religious reasons, Monguor marriage to Islamic Hui was unthinkable as Hui customs and taboos were utterly unacceptable to the Lamaistic Monguor.

Marriage included marriage by mutual consent, by purchase, through service, and by capture. First however, it is helpful to understand social attitudes before discussing marriage forms. At the age of about eight, girls began farm labor and herding livestock and gradually became the most important laborers. Monguor women worked in the fields sang while working in groups. When males came near while herding, they teased them by singing. Then the males and females sang antiphonally. Sometimes girls first sang aloud to provoke boys passing by. It was considered good manners for the boys to sing along, regardless of their interest. Through singing, the boys and girls gradually came together and fell in love. Friends congratulated them for this love, rather than tease them. Other opportunities for love making included Spring Festival or at weddings when there was dancing, drinking, and singing far into the night. Monguor danced in a line with one man after one woman. And often, after tiring of dancing, people sang which was a good chance for a boy to show off before the girls. It was quite common for young men and women to have sexual contact after falling in love and before marriage. They were rarely criticized by their parents or by society.

If the husband divorced his wife, she was entitled to her dowry and her husband was required to give money in compensation. If the wife divorced her husband, she left her dowry. Her new husband was also required to give a sum of money to her ex-husband and to his parents. Divorce and remarriage were difficult and few women attempted it.

Marriages through matchmaking and purchase were common. After the match was agreed to by all sides parents consulted a fortune-teller as to the compatibility of the prospective bride and groom. If either side was unhappy with the match, the fortune-teller generally supported them on some pretext. If fortune-telling indicated that the couple was compatible, the chief of the boy's family went to the girl's home to formally propose. If the proposal was accepted, the mother of the boy visited the girl's family with gifts and to evaluate her. She was warmly welcomed, her gifts were accepted, and the daughter came out to meet her prospective mother-in-law, finalizing the marriage agreement. Next came a discussion of marriage gifts which usually included silver coins, cloth, sheep, and horses. The amount of marriage gifts depended on social status and financial conditions of the two families. If the groom was much older than the bride, his family was expected to offer more than usual, as was the case if the bride's family was very poor. This often led to disagreements which were adjusted by the matchmaker.

When a widow wished to remarry, the marriage took place in the form of purchase and the widow's parents-in-law realized considerable profit. It was believed that when a girl married for the first time, her family received betrothal gifts and, therefore, after her marriage she was her husband's family's property. If the husband died, her husband's family still considered her their property that they could profit from by selling. When a husband was too poor to support himself, or when a wife was unfaithful, the husband might sell his wife without interference from her family. Another marriage by purchase was that of the child daughter-in-law. Out of poverty, some families sold children to other families. These children, generally around 10-years-old, later became daughters-in-law after a simple wedding when they were more than 14.

Marriage through service happened when the boy's family was too poor to pay betrothal gifts or when his parents were dead, and he was unable to pay the betrothal gifts. He then worked for the girl's family in lieu of gifts. This also occurred if the girl's family was short of laborers and in better-off financially than the groom's family. Term of service was decided by the girl's parents and the matchmaker the young man invited. The longest period of service was about 10 years. The shortest was 3 years. If the groom worked after marriage, his wife accompanied him to this home after completion of service. Another case was for the groom to work both before and after marriage. Though he presented gifts to his future parents-in-law, he was treated as a common laborer. The unmarried couple at first avoided each other, but in time they became more intimate, though they were forbidden to speak freely before elder family members. Sometimes the wedding date for a couple of this type was advanced if they were too intimate or if the girl was pregnant. When the service term was completed or, if the couple had more than two children, the parents-in-law ended the term of service and sent their daughter and son-in-law to his home. If the girl's family was able, they might give them livestock or cloth as dowry.

Kidnapping marriages were common, but were more ceremony than anything else. They happened when a man fell in love with a widow and in order to save marriage expense, took the widow by force at a prearranged place and time with the help of his relatives. Another type of marriage was that of two families, each of which had a boy and girl. The boy of each family would marry the girl of the other family and in this way, neither of the two families paid betrothal gifts.

### **7.1b Marriage Ceremonies**

There were two general types of ceremonies. One was the grand ceremony held by the wealthy. The other was the simple ceremony held by the poor. Ceremonies for the grand ceremony began one day prior to the actual wedding. The first item was a farewell party for the bride to which only the bride's relatives and neighbors were invited. They were informed in advance. On the morning of the ceremony, they came one after another with gifts for the bride including green and red cloth, bread, and money. The bride's maternal uncle was the most important relative. If he disapproved by refusing to attend, the planned marriage was disrupted. Among female guests, the bride's paternal and maternal aunts were the most important. A feast was held with all guests seated on felt spread on the ground and at tables placed in a circle. Positions facing south and west were seats of honor. In the

yard center a sacred fire burned on an altar. Butter lamps burned on the altar in front of the statue on the other side. Food included milk tea, bread, and boiled mutton. Towards the feast's end, all were offered one bowl of soup.

The second item of the ceremony was the display of the dowry which included jewelry and gifts the bride presented to her parents-in-law. It was placed on red felt spread on the ground in front of the sacred fire. Dowry size depended on the financial situation of the bride's family. Its exhibition let the bride's family display their wealth. At the end of the display the bride's maternal uncle addressed the bride: "Your parents have done their best to prepare the dowry for you. You ought to feel satisfied and grateful. You are now leaving, but your uncle and all your family will support you forever." The bride then wailed. All guests were in tears. The bride was led back to her room by two women while other guests rested. Soon, two male representatives from the groom's family arrived on horseback to greet the bride. They were the groom's elder brothers-in-law or cousins. They dressed in coarse cloth robes and brought gifts and a horse for the bride. When they arrived at dusk at the bride's house, the bride's family had deliberately blocked the gate. The bride's sisters and sisters-in-law climbed to the roof, began loudly abusing them, and poured water on them. Other women barred the door. The two representatives, soaked with water, had to be bold and powerful to force open the door, or they had to bribe the women. After entering the room where the bride was, they met another group of women surrounding the bride. These women teasingly questioned and challenged the two men in song. The two from the groom's family had to be experienced in dealing with such situations. The two men eventually got control of the situation, but they were robbed of their hats, belts, and saddles by the women. They only got them back by offering something. Finally, they were allowed to see the family leader. They were entertained with food and drink along with relatives of the bride's family. The dinner, animated by singing and dancing, lasted far into the night. The next morning the bride's female relatives helped dress her. Other women surrounded her singing blessings as her hair was changed from the style of a maid to that of a married woman. At the same time, at the edge of the village where the bride lived, the bride's father waited for the groom with liquor on a felt carpet. When the groom accompanied by his best man arrived on horseback, he dismounted and presented his father-in-law with *khadakh* and liquor. They went to his home where he waited for the ritual of seeing the bride off.

Back at the bride's home the bride was carried out of her room to the gate by several female relatives and placed on a horse by one of her elderly relatives. Her head was covered with cloth which was later removed by the groom in the wedding chamber. The procession headed toward the groom's home with a bridesmaid and relatives accompanying the bride. They sang along the way. When the procession neared the groom's home, it circled the courtyard three times before stopping at the courtyard gate where it was entertained with liquor, bread, and given money. Next, women who had accompanied the bride returned to their villages, with the exception of the bride's close relatives.

As the procession arrived, the groom and two female relatives waited outside the gate. The groom came forward to help the bride dismount. Two women helped her stand on red felt carpet before the gate where a small table with two cups of tea, two plates filled with food and a red parcel with a pair of chopsticks waited. The bridesmaid accepted the parcel on behalf of the bride. The groom and bride entered the yard, shoulder to shoulder, through the gate. A sacred fire burned in the yard's center. Behind was an altar with sacrifices and butter oil lamps. A red carpet was spread in the yard, flanked by relatives of the groom and the bride. Directed by the master of ceremonies, the couple kowtowed to the sacred fire. The bride was helped into the kitchen to kowtow to the Kitchen Goddess while the groom waited outside. The couple was then led to the wedding chamber. As they walked by, relatives threw grain and coins at their heads. Once inside the wedding chamber lit by two butter lamps, the groom removed the bride's veil. The two then sat on the *kang* and exchanged gifts.

Guests from the bride's side were banqueted in the courtyard. There were animated songs and dances. That night, guests from the bride's side were invited to the groom's close relatives' homes for dinner. Dining and partying lasted until the following morning. After breakfast the leader of the guests from the bride's side was led into the wedding chamber. He gave the bride a white

handkerchief and made his final exhortation: "Now that you have become a member of this family, you must do your best to fulfill your duties and be discreet in behavior. Don't cause your parents to lose face." Then he led the guests back to their homes. Each guest, before walking out the gate, had to drink one bowl of liquor offered by the groom's relatives. The groom's family also sent people to accompany them some distance. The wedding ceremony was then completed. The next day, flour was sent to the bride's home.

Rarely, when an elder brother died, his wife remarried his brother or, conversely, the elder brother took his younger sister-in-law as a wife. The reason for the rarity of this custom was that a widow's husband's family liked to marry her off, and make a profit which covered the expenses of burying the deceased husband. It was believed marriage of two relatives of the same maternal clan was ideal.

## **7.2 Custom of Residence**

It was find a nuclear family. A household often included grandparents, parents, paternal aunts and uncles, brothers, and sisters, paternal cousins, paternal sisters-in-law, paternal nieces, nephews, and paternal grandchildren.

Houses were quadrangular and typical of northwest China. North rooms were occupied by family leaders or elders. East rooms included a kitchen and living chambers whose *kangs* were connected to the kitchen stove. Younger generations lived in these chambers. Rooms on the west were for storage. South rooms were stables. In the mid-part of the chief room, the gods of heaven and earth were consecrated. The Kitchen Goddess was consecrated in the kitchen.

Unmarried young men lived separately from married ones. Close physical contact between sisters and brothers was forbidden. Younger daughters-in-laws never appeared without head coverings before parents-in-law. Being solemn before older generations was good manners for a young daughter-in-law. The Monguor also took in sons-in-law to bear the bride's family name. However, the male offspring, once mature, generally took the father's name.

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## Art and Literature

### 8.1 Folksongs

Monguor folksongs fall into family and field categories. One type of field song was "flower songs" (*huaer*). They were short, refined, light, and love was the theme. Such songs were not sung publicly. Young people sang them only on mountains away from their relatives' home villages. Some *huaer* criticized oppression, exploitation, and evil. Others were songs of praise. These songs used the same tunes as love songs and were not sung at home. Family songs included wedding songs, banquet songs, folklore songs, entertainment songs, songs of praise, antiphonal songs, and dance songs.

Weddings were held in an atmosphere of music and singing. Songs sung at this time included greeting the bride at her home and songs sung at the groom's home. Tunes were simple and melodious. Banquet songs were sung at banquets to animate the atmosphere by praising certain people present. Folklore songs gave an account of a story in verse and music. Singers used many metaphors and flowery words to praise guests, hosts, and each other. Content of praise songs included reference to the stars, geography, the weather, labor, daily life, religion, historical characters, customs, and hats. Songs accompanying *anzhao* dances were concerned with longevity, happiness, well-being of the family, prosperity of livestock, and good harvests. Lullabies had a soft beat, were soothing to the ear, and were often sung by a mother rocking a baby to sleep in her arms.

### 8.2 Folktales

The Monguor had no written language, consequently, oral literature was well-developed. Most tales were told and sung. The most well-known ones were "Larinbuda and Jiminsu," "Qijayanxi," and "Taipinggoai."

At the time of this study, only a few people could tell and sing all of "Larinbuda and Jiminsu." Larinbuda was a poor honest young herdsman. Jiminsu was a young girl born into a rich family. Her older brother and his wife were dishonest and greedy. To get richer, they forced Jiminsu to herd sheep. While herding, she met Larinbuda and they quickly fell in love. They picked yellow flowers for an offering and held a wedding ceremony alone on the hills where they herded. When Jiminsu's brother and his wife learned this, they beat and cursed her, locked her in a room, and did not allow her to herd again. Her brother put a knife in his pocket, dressed in Jiminsu's clothing, and stole into the tent on the hill that Jiminsu and Larinbuda shared. At dusk when Larinbuda returned from herding, he entered the tent. As soon as he lay down, Jiminsu's brother stabbed him in the belly with the knife. Upon hearing of Larinbuda's stabbing, Jiminsu forced her way out of her brother's home. She rushed up to the hill to find her lover, Larinbuda, in great pain. She said, "The outer flesh must hurt terribly, but I hope the inner flesh does not." Larinbuda replied, "My body does not hurt much, but my heart does!" Seeing his beloved grieved over his pain, Larinbuda said, "Please leave and go home. Tomorrow if you see a wolf coming down the hill, you will know that I have died. If you see magpies in the tops of trees on the hillside, I'll still be alive." The next morning, Jiminsu climbed up onto the top of the roof and looked to the hill. A wolf descended the hill and she knew that her lover was dead. Later, when Larinbuda's body was to be cremated, the fire would not burn. Jiminsu said, "Darling, take anything you want from me." She removed her earrings, bracelets, and other ornaments, and flung them into the fire, but it would not burn. After she had thrown everything she had into the fire, it still refused to burn. Finally, she leapt into the fire. Immediately it burned vigorously. Thus the two lovers melted together in the fierce flames. In a moment, out of the fire came two birds, one closely following the other. They flew toward the hills where Larinbuda and Jiminsu had fallen in love.



## Social and Historical Investigation of Monguor Living in the Hongaizigou Area of Huzhu Monguor Autonomous County

### 9.1 Names

The Monguor living in Heerjun, Hongyazigou call themselves "Monghuer"; Tibetans call them "Kalang"; Han and Hui call them "Monguor." Monghuer is an altered pronunciation of Monguer; "Kalang" means Chenggou people who moved from the Chenggou area of Gansu. "Tu" means local people. Heerjun is a place name where Monguor live. The so-called Heer people may be traced to the Three Kingdoms. The Three Kingdoms, according to a historic book of Youning Temple, consisted of the Heerguosali (Yellow Mongol Yurt), Guogeli (White Mongol Yurt), Guolina (Black Mongol Yurt) Kingdoms. The name, when compared to Chahan Mongol (White Mongol) and Kala Mongol (Black Mongol), shows some similarities.

We found Monguor surnamed Lu in Wushi, Monguor surnamed Lujia in Halazhigou, and Monguor surnamed Luzitan in Shatangchuan who had come to live there because of a hard life in Yongdeng, Gansu. The Monguor of Yamenzhuang were from Shuimogou of Ledu and Yaomajia, Shijiawan, Halazhigou, Banyan, Nalonggou, Xijiashan, Shuangshuer, Dachaizigou, and Fengtai areas of Huzhu. They were a mix of Han and Monguor.

Han became Monguor because of a hard life. Single individuals with no means of support desiring to avoid taxes came to till the land of *tusi*<sup>22</sup> in Monguor areas.

Tibetans became Monguor primarily due to forces of production. When the Monguor population greatly increased, Tibetans were forced to change their mode of production from animal husbandry to agriculture or semi-agriculture, and, therefore, they became Monguor. This was also true for Mongols who came later. The difference between Hongaizigou Monguor and Monguor living in Halazhigou was that the former spoke Monguor mixed with the Han language whereas the latter spoke Monguor mixed with Tibetan.

Ancestral branches of the *tusi* were complicated. Qijia Tusi, and Najia Tusi were of Mongol stock whereas others were not. For example, Chen Tusi was Han, Li Tusi was Dangxiang (an ancient nationality), and Dongqi Tusi was Uygur.

### 9.2 Local Monguor History Accounts

A long time ago many areas in Hongyazigou were forests and wilderness, every mountain was covered with heavy and dense vegetation, and every plain area was grassland. At that time the ground was covered with a thick layer of fallen leaves and branches. Many places were occupied by wild animals. For example, Shidanghouna, northwest of Heerjun, was the haunt of tigers. Later, people gradually moved there and through struggling with nature, learned animal husbandry. Much earlier the people who came here were Tibetans from far away. Many places such as Majuanmachang (Horse Stable Horse Rearing Factory), Yangjuan (Sheep Open), were Tibetan herding places.

As population increased, animal husbandry could no longer support life. Thus people in Hongaizigou, which neighbors the Huangshui River drainage area, began learning plowing and agricultural techniques from local people living in the Huangzhong area. During the Yuan Dynasty the government installed a local administration with official posts and stationed troops there. According to *The Book of Youning Temple*: "The high official of Genghis Khan, Gerelite, because of fighting a battle, stationed in the northern area of Hongyazigou, not long afterwards, he died, but his troops and followers remained." The places where Monguor now dwell are the herding areas used

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<sup>22</sup>[Officials in minority areas.]

by troops at that time. During the time of Genghis Khan this was land without people and without crops. When the Yuan army troops entered this area, local Tibetans were forced to retreat to the feet of mountains. Mongol army troops occupied the land in the middle. This is the reason why today's Beishan (North Mountain), Songduo, Bahong, Baimasi (White Horse Temple) are inhabited mostly by Tibetans.

### 9.3 Mongol Soldier Accounts

1. Army troops of Mongol official Gerelite remained in Huzhu. Later they began animal husbandry and agricultural production. Gradually they became today's Monguor nationality. Youning Temple was established in the Ming Dynasty in the 1570s. During the temple's early years, in order to show respect to ancestors of the local place, Gerelite was taken as master of the land. Local people made a statue of him and prayed and kowtowed to it. The statue was dressed in Yuan clothes. In addition, Monguor consecrate celestial arrows in their homes. It is said that the arrows belonged to Gerelite, who used them in his battles and, later, gave each of his followers' villages one arrow. The arrows were consecrated to protect crops and cure illnesses.

2. According to legends of Youning Temple, the descendants of Genghis Khan--Kuoye and Kuoduan--on their mother's advice, came to Xuelatala (Yellow Sand Bank) north of Xining with troops. Later they were made kings who ruled the areas inside the Great Wall at Liangzhou. The troops of Kuoduan were divided into Qi, Ji, Li, Lu, and Yang Tusi.<sup>23</sup> The Qi, Ji, Li, and other family *tusi* formerly had been Yuan Dynasty officials. Most were Mongols whose ancestors had come to live here during the early Yuan Dynasty which concurs with the historical records.

3. Many reported: "Monguor were Mongols who lived in Northeast China and came here with soldiers." Additionally, because of Mongols being killed on the 15th of the eighth month, they were frightened by the thought that they were to be killed by Tibetans and dared not say that they were Mongols. Instead, they said that they were locals and, when the 15th of the eighth month arrived, half the Monguor did not greet the moon. They said, "We were Mongols from the Northeast and Qinghai and we came to fight Tibetans. There was a place called Lanjiasi in Majuan and people [Monguor] living there were from the Northeast. Some of them were called Lanfanzi." Before 1949, they annually boiled *luoguo* tea on three large stones. They chanted scriptures, said a few propitious words, and used ladles to fling tea to show that they remembered their ancestors. It was the same for the Monguor in Dajiazhuang. All this indicates a relationship with Mongols and, in addition to the personal ornaments and flowered boots Monguor women wore were decorated with Mongol patterns. They also spoke Mongol.

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<sup>23</sup>According to *The History of the Yuan Dynasty*, it is said that Kuoduan, who, during the Qing Dynasty, was called Kuiteng, was stationed in Liangzhou during the Yuan Dynasty and was called the Yongchang King.

## Social and Historical Investigation of the Monguor Living in the Donggoudazhuang Area of Huzhu Monguor Autonomous County

### 10.1 Origins of Monguor in Donggou

Donggou, Halazhigou, and Hongaizigou were areas of local Qiang [Chiang] and Tibetans long ago. Certain Tibetans who lived there were from Tibet, while others had lived there an indeterminate period of time. Donggou, Halazhigou, Hongyazigou, Songduo, Duowa, Wama, Wanma, and Zeling are Tibetan in origin. However, Monguor living here were perplexed about their origins. They offered only certain accounts which mesh with historical facts.

It was said that there are two origins of Donggou Monguor:

- (1) They are called Monguor, they have lived here a long time, and they are Mongol descendants.
- (2) Monguor surnamed He in Dazhuang were from Xiraoyugu [Yellow Yogor]; Monguor surnamed Diao were from Chongsha in Ledu County; Monguor surnamed Hu were from Stone Mountain City in Halazhigou. They are descendants of Yuan Dynasty Mongols. The Hu surname was from "Monghuer." Monguor surnamed Niu were from Heergegaili. Monguor surnamed Ma were called Mashijun, meaning the last noble family of the Yuan Dynasty. The above, although not detailed nor proof, acknowledge that they are Mongols. In Monguor, Monguor are called Menguerkong, Chahanmenguer, or Menghuer. Menguerkong means Mongol. Chahanmenguer means White Mongols.

These accounts suggest that Monguor originated from the Mongols, though it is difficult to determine if all did. As for other nationalities, such as Tibetans and Han, because of close relations in production, living, and politics, they became Monguor, accounting for some of the Monguor population. Tuyuhun of the early Xianbei nationality, the Dangxiang of the early Qiang nationality, and the Shatuo of the early Tujue nationality, more or less, account for some of today's Monguor.

Old people in Donggou said Monguor in Dazhuang were a mix of Mongols, Tibetans, Han, and Yugu nationalities. The ancestors of those surnamed Hu were Mongols. They were from Suobu Sandbank of Halazhigou, a station for Yuan Dynasty Mongols. It is possible that Hu ancestors were Mongols. Monguor surnamed Dong were Tibetans. In Monguor, *dong* is pronounced *duowa*. In Tibetan, *duowa* means "best." Monguor surnamed He and Dian were Yugu. They moved from Yugu areas of Gansu. When those surnamed He first arrived, they lived in Xiwan of Dazhuang Village. Xiwan is called Xireyuguwan. Monguor commonly call Yugu the Xiareyugu nationality. Monguor surnamed Diao came from Ledu. Those surnamed Niu, now living in the Ladong area, were once Monguor. In Monguor, those surnamed Niu are called Huoerlaxi. Huoer is what Tibetans call Monguor. Additionally, some Monguor originated from Han Chinese.

### 10.2 Monguor-Han Relations

During early Monguor development, Monguor actively accepted the advanced culture [of the Han] which promoted their development and production. They worked together and lived together. During development of Monguor production, culture, and education, Monguor were much helped and benefitted by Han culture. Donggou Monguor especially demonstrated this. Production and agricultural tools were those of Han Chinese. In production activities, in addition to agricultural production, many engaged in carpentry, stonemasonry, tailoring, cobbling, blacksmithing, and felt rug making. Donggou Monguor were more educated than those in other areas. On festival occasions and, in daily customs, there were many similarities with those of the Han. For instance, the God of Wealth and the Kitchen Goddess were the same as those of Han Chinese. During Spring Festival,

many Monguor posted Spring Festival couplets on gateposts and door panels. Long ago, the Monguor had surnames of two syllables, but now, surnames are single syllables. The surname He originated from Zangling, Diao originated from Qunsha, Deng originated from Duowa, and Niu originated from Laxi. The Monguor have used the Han Chinese language and borrowed Han words to enrich their own language. Many ancient legends and songs were sung and told in Han Chinese. For example, "Qijayanxi", "Taipinggoai", *huaer*, and *shaonian* (youth songs) were all sung and compiled in Chinese. This adequately demonstrates that Monguor culture was greatly affected by the Han. Monguor-Han marriage was common. They [Han Chinese] called themselves Monguor and spoke Monguor as though they were part of one Monguor family. Their relations [with Monguor] were intimate and friendly. They were closely linked in terms of funerals and festival activities. In production activities, they helped and supported each other.

### 10.3 Monguor-Tibetan Relations

Huzhu County Tibetans dwelt primarily in Beishan which is far from where Monguor live in Donggoudazhuang. Thus their relations were not as intimate as those between Han and Monguor. Nevertheless, their relations were close, especially in terms of trade and economic activities. Beishan Tibetans mainly engaged in animal husbandry and forestry, while Dazhuang Monguor were primarily agricultural. It was necessary for them to exchange goods to satisfy mutual need. Tibetans from Beishan carried products on animals and travelled to Monguor areas to exchange them for agricultural products. At times, Monguor took agricultural produce to Tibetan areas to exchange them for animal husbandry and forestry products. As a result of frequent contact, relations between the two were cordial.

### 10.4 Intermarriage and Tibetan-Monguor Assimilation

During the 1930s and 1940s, Monguor could not tolerate Ma Bufang's severe exploitation. Many fled to Beishan and Tianzhu of Gansu and married Tibetan women. Many became Tibetan and some Tibetans became Monguor. Generally speaking, Monguor-Tibetan marriages were much more common than Monguor-Han ones. In the past, Monguor and Tibetans were lamaistic. Many Monguor became lamas and learned Tibetan classics. In daily life they used Tibetan to communicate. Many Monguor knew Tibetan and accepted Tibetan influence. Because of the profound influence of Han culture on the Monguor, those who went to Tibetan areas naturally brought this influence to Tibetan areas. In fact, during bilateral contact between Monguor and Tibetans, only a few people used Monguor and Tibetan to communicate. Most used Chinese.

### 10.5 Etiquette and Festivals

Because of close relations between Monguor and Han Chinese, Monguor etiquette was similar to that of local Han. When a mounted young person met an old person walking on the road, the young person dismounted, greeted the elder, and asked him to mount the horse. When an elder visited, a young person stood and gave the old person his seat. Before eating, young people carried food to family elders and invited them to eat first. When the first day of the first lunar month came, people wore new clothing. In the morning, young people kowtowed to family elders and paid New Year calls, and took fried bread to visit families of the same surname. During the day, young people played shuttlecock in the open and played with *maodan* (wooden balls). In the evening they danced in the open. The six days from the third to the eighth of the first month were spent visiting distant relatives and exchanging New Year wishes. On the 15th, boys and girls went to Weiyuan Town to watch *shehuo*<sup>24</sup> during the daytime. In the evening, they assembled in the courtyard and lit 15 piles of fire

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<sup>24</sup>[Dancing, singing, parades on stilts, and lantern shows in one extended performance.]

and jumped over them three times, preventing illness and disease.

On the second of the second month, Monguor celebrated sorcerers' trance dancing. The Dragon King's image was carried to a meeting place. Seven or eight *fashi* holding goatskin drums danced in trance, while constantly beating their drums and excitedly chanting. When this day of each year arrived, all the Monguor living within 45 kilometers of the area donned new clothing and participated. Horseraces were held before the meeting began. Red, yellow, green, white, and blue satins were placed on the winning horse's head. The third of the third month was similar. The fifth of the fifth month was Dragon Boat Festival. In the morning, steamed bread, long noodles, and bean jelly were made. During the day, relatives exchanged bread with one another. They also picked flowers and put them on doors and in fields. The sixth of the sixth month was a time to climb mountains and pray to the Mountain God in Weiyuan Town. Also, at the same time, there was the Wuliangshenhui Meeting at Majia Temple in Yaomashe. Six *qinmiaotou*<sup>25</sup> asked people for grain in the tenth month every year and, when the sixth of the sixth month arrived, all people, old and young, went with bowls and chopsticks to the temple to have a meal. On this day, three or four *yinyang* were invited to chant in the temple. People living nearby attended.

Moon Festival fell on the 15th of the eighth month. Local Monguor made large mooncakes<sup>26</sup> 2 days in advance. White wheat flour and coloring were used, each layer was differently colored, and colored flowers were on top. Mooncakes, buns stuffed with cooked potatoes, and steamed rolls were exchanged with friends and relatives. Melons and fruit were also eaten. In the evening, the moon was greeted with a large moon cake. When the moon was overhead, all family members, young and old, lit candles and kowtowed. On the first of the tenth month, every family made boiled stuffed dumplings. The eighth of the 12th month was the Twelfth Month Festival. In early morning when cocks crowed, people arose and went to rivers for ice, which was placed on doors, eaves, cupboard tops, dung piles, and in the fields. This symbolized hope for a good harvest the following year. Breakfast was oily mush made from bean flour.

The 23rd of the 12th month was the Sending Kitchen Goddess Festival. Every household made several white wheat flour cakes and used grass stems to weave a grass horse upon which was placed a grass saddle. Six beans were also consecrated to the Kitchen Goddess and oil lamps were lit. The Kitchen Goddess and the grass horse were put at the door of the stove with cypress. They were burned, which sent the Kitchen Goddess to heaven. The 30th of the 12th month was Greeting the Kitchen Goddess Festival. Lime or white soil was put on the kitchen wall, which was the Kitchen Goddess' area. Incense and oil lamps were lit to greet her. *Daitiantou* for Monguor girls was also held this evening in front of the Kitchen Goddess. No one was allowed to go to bed that night. After dark, courtyard and room doors were pasted with antithetical couplets and *qianma* (paper horses). Old people told stories and family songs were sung. Quarrelling was not allowed during the night in fear of bad luck.

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<sup>25</sup>[Meaning unknown.]

<sup>26</sup>[In this case, the mooncakes were large steamed bread buns.]

## **Part III: Monguor Studies**

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## Monguor Origins Based on Customs and Oral Literature

*Ma Guangxing*

This translation has been prepared by Hu Jun. It is of Ma (1983).

### Translation

Monguor nationality origins are being explored. This article presents some comments regarding relationships between Monguor customs and oral literature and Monguor origins.

#### 1.1 Monguor Wedding Customs and Wedding Songs

Monguor wedding<sup>27</sup> customs and songs are rich as well as unusual and, regardless of whether [referring to] present wedding customs or many ancient legends, they all reflect vividly, if somewhat indirectly, the fact that forceful kidnapping marriages did occur in Monguor history. In the Guanting region of Minhe County, when Monguor hold weddings, the groom's family sends two *xike* (the men who come to take the bride), leading one horse to the bride's home in darkness to take the bride and, at this moment, the girls of the [bride's] village rush to the window and abuse:

*Like lawless savages,  
[Do you] come to rob people?  
Like conscienceless bandits,  
[Do you] come to steal?  
The custom of abusing,  
Has been left by eight families together,  
Left by Sakyamuni Buddha!  
Grab the wooden shovels and come,  
Quickly shovel [them] out;  
Grab the broom and come,  
Quickly sweep [them] out....*

Though this [abusing] has become a custom, the *xike* are very embarrassed and in an awkward position. Often, arguments occur because the *agus*' (women's) extravagant abuse enrages the two *xike*. In some remote mountain areas, some girls pierce a frozen [loaf of] bread on a stick of firewood in order to beat the *xike* or intentionally find other excuses to torture them and, in this situation, if it were not for the bride's family's male members protecting them, no one knows how much pain the *xike* would suffer. After abusing, the *agus* sing such songs as "The Song of Cutting Steamed Bread," "The Song of Gnawing Bones," and so on, [the latter which] compares the two *xike* to a dog and cat, which have run from the groom's family and come to gnaw bones [at the bride's home] and the *agus* intentionally mock and banter [with] the *xike*. When the girls sing "The Five Colored Bird Song" it is more interesting still, because several girls dress as five-colored birds--they are colored red, yellow, blue, white, and black, these five colors--and the song has five stanzas and is sung in an antiphonal style. The driving-bird people separately clutch narrow-leaved oleaster thorns, yellow willow [branches], blue *malian* whips, white cut [pieces of] firewood, and a black poker to drive the five-colored birds. But the five-colored birds "hang on" and don't leave, so the driving-bird people

<sup>27</sup>[See Hu and Stuart (1992) and Ma (1990) for two recent Monguor wedding studies.]

sing:

*Red bird,  
You'd better fly happily before it's too late!  
If you hang on and refuse to leave,  
I'll take the red willow to chase you...*

They are driving the five colored-bird, but clearly they are [really] driving the *xike*. This ingenious form is used only by the girls. In Huzhu the Monguor wedding process also has such episodes as *naxin siguo* which also depict women mocking the bride-taking *naxin*. In summary, these Monguor wedding songs embody strong resentment and a spirit of resistance toward the marriage system. Today, if we interpret this type of peculiar wedding only as custom, then of primary significance is that it was obviously produced not for bantering and joking without reason, but it has profound social and historical background. Very possibly this peculiar phenomenon in Monguor wedding custom reflects earlier forced kidnapping marriages. In such an event, did forceful kidnapping marriages take place in Monguor history? The following account remains extant among the Monguor masses.

At the moment of solar eclipses, engaged young men may run to the girl's home to kidnap [her]. A young man must ride a fast horse and take a new comb wrapped in red cloth. When he arrives at the gate of the girl's home, he first throws the comb on the roof and shouts: "Quickly send out the girl who is engaged to me!" He shouts this several times and, when there is a response from inside, he turns the horse and races away. The next day, the bride's family must escort the bride to the groom's home. People say that at the time of a solar eclipse, the sky and earth are in a ball of darkness, and that kidnapping girls at this moment does not violate any law. Generally those who were very poor depended on kidnapping marriages [because they had no money with which to pay the bride-price and other marriage expenses]. Before Liberation, Minhe Monguor did kidnap widows. About this there is a widespread folk adage: "Widow come in front of gate, still ask for buying-road money." [Which means:] When marrying a widow, one had to give money to the people who kidnapped her, or else the widow would be robbed at the halfway point.

Additionally, present Monguor wedding customs and related legends approach the marriage forms of the Tuyuhun, who were active historically in China's northwest. *Wei Book: Tuyuhun Biography* recorded: "As for marriage, too poor to prepare money, always go and steal girls." *New Tang Book: Tuyuhun Biography* reads: "Rich family's marriage offers more betrothal gifts, poor ones go and steal wife." The Monguor nationality's present wedding customs and kidnapping marriage legends at the time of solar eclipses and so forth also indicate traces of kidnapping marriages in Monguor history. Is "always go and steal girls," which was recorded in history books, the source of present Monguor wedding customs? In my opinion, it is necessary to make a comparative study of the Tuyuhun in history and present Monguor marriage forms.

## 1.2 Monguor Women's Clothing

Monguor wedding songs such as "Karikajigai", "The Appearance of Mother," and so on laud the beauty of Monguor women's clothing. In the song "Karikajigai," a woman describes how she cannot tolerate her mother-in-law's family's maltreatment and, as she escapes, she sees a magpie<sup>28</sup> and asks it to take a message to tell her former home's grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and sister to well preserve her headdress, short-gown, *banshi* (long gown), skirt, ornaments, and clothing. "The Appearance of Mother" praises Monguor mothers. The song relates that *ana's* (mother's) *shangtu* (hair worn in a bun or coil) is like a real pigeon; the headdress resembles a phoenix; *yange* resembles

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<sup>28</sup>Some say a swallow.



a golden pheasant; and the sleeve resembles a colorful rainbow. In the song "*Muji Bird*"<sup>29</sup>, Monguor girls analogize themselves as beautiful *muji* birds. Their hair is much blacker than the *muji* bird's. Their knitting wool is much redder than the *muji* bird's comb. Their short gowns are much yellower than the *muji* bird's shoulders. Their variegated coats are much greener than the *muji* bird's waist. And their skirts are much more beautiful than the *muji* bird's wings. Monguor women's clothing described in these wedding songs, compared to Monguor women's dress of an earlier time, indicates that Monguor women's dress is roughly the same as that of Tuyuhun women's dress as described in related history books.

*Wei Book: Tuyuhun Biography* records the following about Tuyuhun women: "The clothing was woven and green, draped brocade robes over the shoulders, the hair is plaited back, wear golden-flowered hats on heads... Women all wear pearl cowrie, the more hair tied, is considered noble." Up to and including the Tang Dynasty: "The emperor had hair worn in a bun or coil and black hat the wife brocade robe and woven skirt, golden flower decorated head... Women coiled hair back and embellished with pearl cowrie." (*New Tang Book: Tuyuhun Biography*). Let us now make a comparison, not only of the headgear, *banshi*, and skirt featured in Monguor wedding songs that are similar to Tuyuhun women's dress, but also Monguor women's *shangtu*.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, somehow as they sing in the song, "Mother's *shangtu* is like a pigeon," Tuyuhun women's "the hair is coiled back" is just the same as Monguor women's *shangtu* hair style! Therefore, Monguor women's dress is not insignificant in examining Monguor origins.

### 1.3 Folk Accounts

Among Monguor in the Guanting region of Minhe County, "Your father's big head," is frequently heard. In Monguor it is "*Qini abani shuguo tegai*." What does it mean? Behind it there is a legend: Long ago an old man had three children. The first learned the craft of carpentry. The second learned painting. The third learned how to sing and lived with his father. Before he died, he said to his third son, "After I die, tie my corpse with flaxen thread and walking, pull me, and when the flaxen thread breaks, bury me in that place. Cut off my head and tie it with flaxen thread and continue walking. If you do this, you will benefit." Accordingly, the third son buried the father, took the old man's head and a ball of flaxen thread, walked on, and successively met two people. One held a knife in his hand. The other had a handful of sand. They traded the knife and handful of sand for the head and flaxen thread. The third son walked to a plain area where many people were gathered. Some were laughing, others wept, and no one came to speak to him. The third son began singing an interesting and pleasant song. Ten people surrounded him and said, "In our place there is a woman. Every night three men must go and spend the night on watch. But when day breaks, the three men all have vanished. Everyday, just this happens." The third son decided that he would spend the night on watch by himself. The third son found the woman soundly sleeping, but, about midnight, he saw two snakes crawling out from her nostrils [with the intention of] biting the third son. He swung the knife, chopping right and left, but he could not kill the snake. He recalled the sand he had traded for and, throwing a handful of sand out, he was able to slash the snakes. Consequently, they were no longer able to stay linked together and he finally killed them. The day broke, the woman woke up and, in surprise, she looked and said, "How are you still alive? Formerly, those people who came to watch all night were gone by dawn!" The third son replied, "If it had not been for my father's head, I wouldn't be alive either." He pointed to the two snakes. She understood and suddenly embraced him and called him "husband." Thereafter, there was this folk adage, "Your father's big head!"

Though this legend is somewhat fantastic, it vividly, if somewhat indirectly, shows a trace [of the

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<sup>29</sup>The *muji* bird resembles a woodpecker.

<sup>30</sup>A sheaf of long hair which is held up in a twist on the back of the head and appears to be in the shape of a snail.

fact that] Monguor married other nationalities. In Guanting Monguor "Mongol *dada* (father), local *ana*" is often heard. This shows that Monguor have a blood relationship with Mongols. Then what does this legend offer? Among the Monguor in Guanting, if someone's head is rather large with a broad forehead, then [they would] say that this man looks like a Mongol and when analogizing a person's head there is this sentence: "*Manggu tegai*" [meaning Mongol's head]. Therefore, "Your father's big head," seems to be linked with physiological characteristics of the Mongol nationality. The third son slashed the snakes and married the woman, [which] might signify that when Mongol men were combining with local women, things were not all plain sailing, but, instead, there were sharp conflicts. Snakes crawling out of the woman's nostrils might symbolize local tribesmen. When Mongol men desired to take local women, local men wished to display their power in order to protect the women. When Mongol men killed local men, local women would only then entrust themselves to males of another nationality. To make a brave guess: Perhaps when Mongol men forcibly passed the night with local women, local males killed them secretly, taking advantage of darkness. Then this magical and enigmatic action was woven into stories later and covered with a mysterious outer coating.

In sum, Monguor origins are historically related to the Tuyuhun in history. When the Monguor developed to a certain period, there also was marriage with Mongols.

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## "Formation of the Living World"

*Ma Guangxing*

This translation is by Bao Hua and Hu Jun. It is taken from: Ma (1981).

### Translation

Monguor myths are numerous. Some are interesting and provide valuable materials for us to probe the nationality's origins, religious beliefs, and customs. This essay is intended to give a rough superficial introduction to the Monguor myth "Formation of the Living World" in order to seek advice from comrades studying folk literature.

The myth "Formation of the Living World" is prevalent mainly among the broad masses in the Guanting region of Minhe County in our province [Qinghai] and the general content is:

Originally, there was no land on earth, only an endless ocean. A god-man with supernatural inexhaustible power constantly sought to leave a piece of land in the living world, but he found nothing that could support land. One day he saw a golden frog drifting on the water surface. He grabbed a handful of soil from the air and put it on the back of the golden frog. The frog sank into the water and the soil was washed away without a trace. The god-man was angered, pulled out his bow and arrow and, when the frog surfaced again, he fired an arrow which penetrated the frog's body. Without delay, he took another handful of soil and put it down. The frog turned over and hugged the soil to its chest. It never sank again, thus forming the living world. Meanwhile, the five elements were also formed--metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. The god-man happened to be in the east,<sup>31</sup> and the wooden arrow shaft determined that the east was wood. The golden frog was facing south when it was shot and spurted fire from its mouth, thus fire is south. The arrowhead was metal, consequently, metal is west. When the frog was shot, it urinated, so north is water. The center of the earth, that is, the living world, was embraced by the golden frog.

The reason why such a legend was created is related to Monguor ancestors' primitive totem worship. Presently, we have much extant evidence from Monguor folk etiquette, customs, and folk legends, suggesting that Monguor ancestors worshipped frogs. From the above myth we infer that Monguor ancestors formed the simple idea of water supporting the earth when they explored nature's mysteries. But how could water support the land of the earth? The frog, the object of religious worship solved the problem. The idea of an amphibian embracing the living world meshed with their rich and innocent imaginations. However, because of curiosity concerning nature and a strong desire to know more about it, they raised a new question: How did the frog embrace the living world? To explain this, they needed a superhuman! Imagination became more and more peculiar and the contents more complex. And there is an indication that their way of thinking transcended the boundaries of primitive religious concepts. They not only stressed the mighty power of man, but also emphasized the bow and arrow, which played a very important role in their material life. Even now, we can find some traces of primitive religious worship in folk customs, legends, and documents extant in the district.

On the day of the annual Dragon Boat Festival, Monguor women will not take water from rivers and wells. This is the day that frogs bathe, and people are not allowed to fetch or drink water from rivers and wells. On this day people drive their livestock into streams. This taboo [against humans fetching water on this day] is related to totem worship. Because of early undeveloped labor forces, such primitive religious belief dominated social activities for a long period. Certain district elders

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<sup>31</sup>[When the god-man shot the arrow, the arrowhead pointed west and the shaft pointed east.]

recalled that, not long ago, pictures of a golden frog embracing the living world were on a nearby temple wall.<sup>32</sup> In Majia Beach, Zhongchuan, there was a spring under an old poplar. Because a large frog supposedly dwelt there, no one could so much as move a branch or a single leaf of the old poplar.

Early Monguor totem worship might also have included a patron saint in tribal wars. According to some scholars' textual research, present-day Monguor are Tuyuhun descendants. The latter were active in northeast China. Another history book records that during the Tang Dynasty, the Tufan (now Tibetans) and the Tuyuhun were frequently warring. At that time, the Tufan called the Tuyuhun Huoer. In the famous Tibetan epic, *Gesar*, there is a section entitled "Conquering the Huoer" describing conflicts between Tufan and Tuyuhun. Though important events in the epic are expressed in a lively artistic way rather than realistically, we cannot disparage their historical value. There is a section describing King Gesar's passing through nine junctions and killing eight devils. At the first junction, he was stopped by a terrible and fierce black frog with its huge mouth open, blocking the road. Here, we should particularly note that frog. In beseeching the totem's protection, many early people drew and carved its image when fighting on the front lines. Such cases existed in the early stages of many nations. If the Tuyuhun still retained traces and features of this kind of primitive religion when they battled the Tufan, then we can reasonably infer that the black frog mentioned in the historical epic might be a totem the Tuyuhun worshipped.

In general, if we want to understand the myth "Formation of the Living World," many vestiges of Monguor's primitive religion concerning descriptions of the frog were precisely the origin of the myth's formation and dissemination. When human history developed to the stage of advanced barbarism, man had invented the bow and arrow. Engles pointed out, "The bow and arrow of the barbaric period, just as swords for the slave period and firearms for the civilized period, are decisive weapons." Though "Formation of the Living World" deals with the frog's embracing the living world, what is more evident is that it emphasizes the power of man and the bow and arrow. It illustrates the great force and creative spirit of the Monguor conquering nature and also illustrates how paltry religion is!<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Now they are destroyed.

<sup>33</sup>Author's Note: Engles. *The Family, Private Ownership, and Origin of the Country*. p. 21. [Ma offers only this abbreviated reference.]

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## Monguor Epics

Li Youlou

This translation was done by Tie Yaoyong and Li Xuewei. It is taken from Li (1981). Though the title suggests that these accounts are recounted throughout Monguor Regions, some are not recognized in Minhe. Li does not indicate where the materials were collected, but it is likely that they represent Huzhu.

### Translation

Epics are a key part of Monguor culture. Examples include, "Larinbuda and Jiminsu," "Qijayanxi," "Dindirimaxiu," and "Taiping Brother," all of which are widely told in Monguor areas. Most consist of several hundred lines.

#### 3.1 Young Lovers Opposed to Arranged Marriages

"Dindirimaxiu"<sup>34</sup> depicts a young married woman living far from her parents. She was terribly mistreated by her mother-in-law, forced to work extremely hard, and she dressed in ragged clothing and shoes. Her mother-in-law would not permit her to visit her own parents and thus she could do nothing but turn to the small bird (*dindirimaxiu*) for support. She sings:

*Dindirimaxiu, go home,  
Tell my mother,  
My hat is worn out, nothing but a brim,  
My coat, nothing but a collar,  
My belt, nothing but a tassel,  
My skirt, nothing but pleats,  
My shoes, only heels,  
I can't live unless she visits.*

The *dindirimaxiu* gave the message to the girl's mother who prepared clothing, and walked a long way to see her poor daughter. But, by this time, her daughter, wearing her ragged clothing, had already hung herself from a *suoluoluo* tree in Moon Palace. In anger and deep despair, the old mother swore at evil feudalism which ruled women so harshly.<sup>35</sup>

"Larinbuda and Jiminsu" is a long tragic poem about a young couple fighting for freedom to make their own marriage, and, of all Monguor poems, is the most widespread. Today, some young lovers sing this, giving vent to their emotions when experiencing difficulties in love. In this tragedy, the

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<sup>34</sup>[*Dindirimaxiu* does not mean "small bird" in Huzhu Monguor. It means "tadpole." Another Huzhu variant for tadpole is *dilidimaxiu*. In Minhe Monguor, tadpole is *shengghakharghai*. The frog looms large in Monguor folklore, as illustrated by the long folktale "Bawo Morite," variants of which are told by Tibetans, Dongxiang, Baoan, Qinghai Han, and Salar, and the discussion by Ma just prior to this article. Li likely found it easier to present *dindirimaxiu* as a bird for a wider audience.]

<sup>35</sup>[See Anonymous (1985: 107-111) for "Dindirimaxiu." The end of the story as cited here and in the above is puzzling. The *suoluoluo* was planted by the Jade Emperor's wife in Moon Palace, but how was the girl able to reach the moon?]

beautiful Jiminsu loves the young herdsman Larinbuda, who herds for the girl's brother. Deeply in love, they herd together, hand in hand, and pray to the gods to bless their love and assist them in marrying. But the evil brother despised those who were poor, did not consent, and killed Larinbuda. Later, as Larinbuda was being cremated, his body refused to burn. Jiminsu, in the depths of sorrow, tossed her clothing into the fire and mourned her lover's death:

*I know why you will not burn,  
You desire to burn with me together.  
I give you my body,  
Burn till doomsday.*

She leapt into the conflagration, which quickly burned them both to ashes. The cruel-hearted brother, intent on separating them in death, if not in life, buried their ashes on opposite sides of a river. A green tree sprouted from each grave, and branches twined together above the river. The brother then cut and burned the trees. As the trees burn in the brother's stove, a pair of beautiful birds fly out at the brother, peck out his eyes and blind him, fly to wild fields, and sing songs of freedom and happiness.

### **3.2 Military Commanders Going to Battle**

"Qijayanxi" is an epic containing over 200 lines. It tells the story of Qijayanxi who, at the advanced age of 80, cannot ride a horse or step into saddle stirrups. He has no descendants. But, for the sake of his motherland and the safety of the people, he leads an army into battle, ignoring the hardships and entreaties of his wife and concubine. With cunning strategy, they engage the enemy and gain complete victory. Unfortunately, on the triumphant return, he is shot dead by an archer in ambush. The epic contains the following lines:

*Wolves kill sheep in the meadows,  
Wars break out in peaceful times,  
Rebellions happen everywhere,  
Yanxi leaves home to fight.*

*Though he was more than 70,  
Never was he too old to struggle,  
Tells the commanders to listen,  
Be quick to enlarge our army.*

*Chose the strongest men,  
Chose the strongest horses,  
Chose the best swords,  
Chose the most wondrous spears.*

*Chose the best bows,  
Many bows of horn,  
Chose the best arrows,  
Many quilled arrows.*

*Fought on a prairie in the morning,  
Got through dangerous passes at dusk,  
Day and night marched to Black River,  
The enemy took the bridge and all boats.*

*Yanxi had many good strategies,  
Neither attacked the bridge nor made boats,  
Gave orders to collect horse dung,  
Piled it in hills.*

*Pushed the dung in the river,  
Turned the water yellow,  
Guards saw the dung,  
Thought they had crossed the river.*

*Hurriedly reported this to officers,  
Spoke in confusion,  
Yanxi successfully crossed,  
Crossed the river smoothly.*

*Yanxi was old to 80,  
Fought bravely,  
Made little contribution before,  
A great one this time.*

"Brother Taiping" describes a young warrior about to embark on an expedition. He tells a neighbor about the pre-war preparations. In concern, she asks about military preparations. Brother Taiping answers:

*Taiping told his neighbor,  
She should go to town to buy a fine horse,  
For how could he fight without a horse?*

*Taiping told his neighbor,  
She should buy a wonderful sword,  
For how could he fight without a sword?*

Usually, one singer sings the questions in Monguor and another answers in Chinese.

### **3.2 Children's Songs Criticizing Dark Feudalism**

"Buruyiu"<sup>36</sup> describes the tragic experience of a cow who takes her newborn calf to eat grass. The calf thinks the grass and water of the mountains are rich and sweet and asks his mother to take him there. Buruyiu says:

*Marsh grass is short,  
Hard,  
Tastes bitter,  
And is not good to eat.  
The lake is muddy,  
The water is not fit to drink.*

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<sup>36</sup>[Li's article was published in 1981 when it was necessary to find class consciousness and criticism of "dark feudalism" in folklore. Like many tales, "Buruyiu" is a lesson in filiation.]

The mother, attempting to persuade her calf, says, "Though the grass is short, hard, and bitter here in the grasslands, grassland wolves are much less ferocious than mountain wolves. Though the mountain grass is rich and sweet, mountain wolves are very cruel." The calf ignores this, runs away from his mother to the mountain, and meets a wolf. The wolf attacks the calf. The mother arrives and battles the wolf. In the end, the mother is devoured in the course of saving the calf's life. The calf, who has run away, returns, looking for his mother, but only finds white bones, red blood, and the black skin of the cow. He sadly sings:

*What are these white things, mother?*

*What is this red, mother?*

*What is this black, mother?*

The cow's soul answers:

*The white things are my bones,*

*The red is my blood,*

*The black is my hair.*

The cow's spirit urges the calf down the mountain quickly. The calf buries his mother's blood, bones, and hair and wails as he descends the mountains. In the end, the calf ate the bitter grass and drank the muddy water, living a life of hunger and solitude. This epic is opposed to evil forces, gives sympathy to the small and weak, and teaches compassion for orphans and widows.



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## Monguor Omens

*Xi Yuanlin*

This summary of Xi (1992) has been prepared by Limusishiden.

### Summary

Xi analyzes Huzhu Monguor omens from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. In this brief summary, only a list of omens and their portents are provided.

### Omens and Their Portents

\*If your eyes itch, you will soon have something to weep about.

\*Wealth is portended if a snake comes directly toward you, your left eyelid twitches, or a pigeon roosts in a home.

\*You will soon be scolded if you sneeze.

\*You will soon go somewhere if your feet itch.

\*There will soon be an earthquake if crows continually call, flocks of birds fly about without roosting, chickens squawk and do not go to their coops, cats screech, pigs refuse to stay in the pigsty, livestock refuse to stay in their pen, rats come out of their holes, or dogs bark without ceasing.

\*Rain is portended when cattle sneeze, people feel drowsy, a wind blows from the south, there is a solar halo, there is a morning glow in the sky, there is sultry weather, or there are rainbows in the west sky.

\*A sparrow roosting in a home portends poverty.

\*Bad luck is portended if a snake crosses in front of you.

\*If a crow screeches from the courtyard, an owl roosts on the courtyard wall, a hen crows like a cock, or when a shooting star is seen a family member or livestock will die.

\*A guest will come if a magpie is heard chirping.

\*Rain will come when swallows fly lower than usual or when black clouds are seen at sunset.

\*It will rain repeatedly if it rains in August.

\*It will flood when falling raindrops make large bubbles.

\*The weather will be fine with rainbows are seen in the east sky and there is a glow in the west.

\*Warm weather suitable for plowing is portended when wild geese fly north.

\*It will soon turn cold when wild geese fly south.

\*It is the best time for plowing when the *jinjili xiu* (Chinese: *daishen*) bird is seen.

\*A strong wind is portended when *anjighai xiu* (Chinese: *hongzui*) birds fly together.

\*A bumper harvest three years in a row is portended if there is a bumper harvest in the same year that a family member dies.

## A Monguor Love Story Similar to "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai"

*Xi Yuanlin*

This translation has been prepared by Song Lili and Li Xuewei. It is taken from: Xi (1988).

### Translation

"Larinbuda and Jiminsu" is a very beautiful folk love story. It is told and sung among the Monguor. It is a Monguor favorite, especially for young women. Long ago in Huzhu and Datong of Qinghai and, in Tianzhu and Yongdeng Counties of Gansu, it spread widely among the Monguor, exerted much influence, and was sung by everyone. This folk literary work narrates a tragedy of two youths who fall deeply in love. This folktale is told and sung with lively description and solemn sentences. It strongly condemns dark feudalism and mercenary marriage, which shackled and ravaged all young people's love. It represents the desire for individual freedom in marriage.

During early Monguor social and historical development, they engaged in animal husbandry. Later, due to social development and a revolution in production relationships, Monguor life drastically changed. Economic and cultural exchanges between Monguor and other ethnic groups developed, resulting in alterations in Monguor social relationships. Sedentary animal husbandry developed from nomadic herding, and later became agricultural. Events in "Larinbuda and Jiminsu" are set during this transition. In this story, the Monguor are still much involved in animal husbandry, but have become sedentary. It was just between the late stage of animal husbandry and the early stage of agriculture. Ownership of means of production varied greatly between social classes. Class antagonism and class struggle were pronounced. Bullying and oppressing the poor, favoring the rich, and marriage based on equal social position were all strongly in force. Larinbuda and Jiminsu were from different classes and, especially the girl, Jiminsu, cast away common feudal norms by disregarding property [ownership] in paying court to an employee. This is indeed a love capable of moving ghosts and demons. In terms of dark feudalism, she represented the yearning to struggle against oppression and a desire for freedom and happiness. This is an inevitable outcome, the result of hand-to-hand class struggle. Because of a unique artistic style, a distinct subject, and the vivid color of country life, this folktale has exerted great influence. It has been told for a long period.

On the basis of historical data collected by the Chinese Department of Qinghai Teachers' University and the author, and materials collected by comrades Zuo Keguo, Xu Yingguo, Wang Dian, et. al., we offer succinct comments on this folk literature selection.

### 5.1 The Story Plot

"Larinbuda and Jiminsu" is related to a genre of popular entertainment consisting mainly of talking and singing. There is an explanation at the beginning of every chapter. Some chapters are told with no singing. Now we make individual comments as follows.

Chapter One. The subject is revealed. At the beginning of this chapter, setting, characters, and relationships between characters are concisely presented. The "meeting" is a main clue.

Chapter Two. A lively boy and girl fall in love in the course of productive labor. They notice sheep, oxen, magpies, pigeons, and other animals energetically and freely living in friendship. Thus metaphors are presented for both youths. Since they work tending livestock together, they fall in love gradually and naturally. Their faithful love is based firmly on cooperative labor. They sing in

dialogue, "Tall trees depend on their deep roots, Young Sister, you are deeply rooted in my heart." "Trees withstand rainstorms because of their deep roots and thick leaves." This song exemplifies their faithful hearts and sincere emotions.

Chapter Three. The first and second sentences show "obstacles" and hint at later tragedy. Around the subject occur complex and sharp conflicts. Jiminsu's brother and sister-in-law interfere, objecting to her love for Larinbuda. Jiminsu clashes with her family over breaking off the romance. She ignores her brother's dictates and expresses her true love for poor humble Larinbuda. Both her brother and sister-in-law favor the rich and curse the poor. They prevent Jiminsu from meeting Larinbuda and thus separate them. But the love between the two, just as the love of a ewe for its lamb, a cow for its calf, and a mare for its colt, cannot be broken. Even mountains, ravines, and dangerous shoals cannot separate them. Meanwhile, other conflicts intensify. Larinbuda and Jiminsu hate and struggle against the brother and sister-in-law who represent evil feudal ideological forces. This struggle also tests the youths' love. Through this struggle, their love further develops and deepens. No forces can break and destroy it. On the pastures, amid beautiful and vast Nature, they sing freely, "You come from the west and I welcome you in the east. Lonely cattle wish to live together again. Cattle in herds and sheep in flocks need a group. We need love with one heart and mind." "Brother meets sister, cattle and sheep sing and dance merrily." "Mountains can't prevent brother and sister, ravines can't divide sister and brother."<sup>37</sup>

Chapter Four. Picturesque scenery including green hills, clean water, tall pines, colorful flowers, and lively herds and flocks is presented. In such a beautiful natural setting, a pair of lovers are immersed in the bliss of passionate love. Each solemnly pledges to the other, "Facing Heaven we pledge never to separate until the end of life. We'll accompany each other whether we have life or not and be joined in our hearts. We will withstand severe trials and any misery." Their love develops more faithfully and deeply. They engage themselves and vow before heaven. Later, as the story develops, there are sharper and stronger contradictions. Their pure and honest love is confronted with a more severe test. A "life-and-death" struggle ensues.

Chapter Five. As Larinbuda and Jiminsu's love surges forward, conflict with Jiminsu's brother intensifies. Jiminsu's brother and sister-in-law break up and intervene in the romance. They viperously plot Larinbuda's murder who, deeply in love, now becomes sad and expresses indignation. The threads are linked together with a well-knit plot. There is such a vivid sense of reality that it seems to come into the listeners' view. No one fails to sigh and grieve for the lovers. The story exposes the brother's reactionary qualities and his diabolical nature. This chapter is key to the story and accentuates the tragedy.

Chapter Six. Jiminsu strongly and ruthlessly exposes her brother's and sister-in-law's evil nature. Nevertheless, their loyal love is finally destroyed. Larinbuda suffers persecution only because of his love. Jiminsu denounces and accuses her brother, defying feudal edict. She sings, "What crime has Larinbuda committed? He has only loved me! Thousands and thousands of words are in my heart, but I can't utter one. In this world, my life is only love and hate." In just a few words, Jiminsu hits the nail of feudalism on the head by exposing hypocritical feudal ethics. She bitterly detests atrocious feudal society and yearns for free and happy love.

Chapter Seven. This chapter is the climax. In a moving scene, Larinbuda and Jiminsu, bid farewell and pour out their desire for a spiritual reunion. Facing cruel feudal society, Jiminsu charges her brother with his monstrous crimes. She despises feudal ethics, throws off feudal shackles, and bravely demonstrates her loyal love by pitting her life against the mercenary marriage system. Jiminsu sings at the cremation ground with grieved and indignant emotion, "You die discontented because you could not love me. The fire can't burn you. Our love is deep as an ocean. Hot oil can't burn you. My body shall accompany you, shattering the evil designs of my brother and sister-in-law. I give my life to my lover. We'll burn together until the end of the world. I throw myself into the flames to accompany my love for all eternity." Singing sorrowfully, Jiminsu throws all her clothing, ornaments, and jewelry into the fire to commemorate her lover's death, and then resolutely leaps into the

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<sup>37</sup>["Sister" and "brother" are used as terms of endearment in this context, not as kinship terms.]

conflagration and dies as a heroine for her love. This is a miserable scene, shocking people's hearts and amazing heaven and earth. It is always remembered by the Monguor, encouraging struggle against evil feudalism.

Chapter Eight. The lovers become trees and birds to achieve their desire. Although the story's ending is tragic, it is optimistic about the future. Later, a pair of silk trees sprout and a pair of *xangniwa* (cuckoos) fly freely in vast heaven and punish the criminals, thus encouraging people to fight and strive for a happy life by never stopping their singing. This ending proves the maxim that kindness triumphs over evil. It urges people to struggle and strive for self-liberation and seek happiness.

Some aspects of "Jiminsu and Larinbuda" are similar to "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" which is also a tragic love story traditionally widespread among Han Chinese which expresses desire for freedom in love and denounces evil forces. This story has influenced, and is also loved by, minority nationalities. Among many minority nationalities there are folktales similar to "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai," e.g., the Monguor tale, "Larinbuda and Jiminsu." At present, we have no evidence to prove "Larinbuda and Jiminsu" was influenced by "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" or that it is a Monguor variation of "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai"--a nationality "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai." However, overall, there is much similarity between the two which is unquestionably not accidental, but rather a historical product of cultural exchange between various minority nationalities within the huge Chinese family [of nationalities]. We compare "Larinbuda and Jiminsu" with "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" as follows.

## 5.2 Characters and Plots

Most prominently, the leading characters in both are a young man and a girl. Both young men are from humble and poor families. One is a scholar, the other an employee. Both girls are daughters of rich and powerful families. The heroes and heroines are thus from different social circumstances and classes.

At the beginning of "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai," a series of plots show how Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai become acquainted. For example, Zhu Yingtai, "eludes marriage and escapes from home." While going to school, she meets Liang Shanbo. By "pledging to love each other at the thatched bridge," and "heart-to-heart talks in the classroom," they build a faithful friendship.

"Larinbuda and Jiminsu" begins with a description of how the two meet in a herdlord's home and herd together. This shows how Jiminsu gets to know Larinbuda and falls into a faithful love. Both folktales portray two courageous girls desiring freedom in love and objecting to feudal marriage rules. On the basis of their own love, both girls dare fight against arranged and mercenary marriage.

In "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai," at the scene of "escorting Zhu Yingtai through 18 stations," Liang Shanbo is depicted as a scholarly, sincere, and simple character and it also shows the relationship developing from friendship to love. Then the girl begins "thinking of her lover," "being advised to marry," and "blaming the matchmaker," which glorify Zhu Yingtai's resolute and steadfast character and her faithful love.

Larinbuda and Jiminsu are more courageous than Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. They admire each other from the time of herding together. But, due to feudal ideological restriction and marriage rule based on the same social class, Jiminsu's brother and sister-in-law intervene and create obstacles to their love. The conflict intensifies.

In "Larinbuda and Jiminsu," the conflict climaxes at "meeting at Zhu Yingtai's residence." All the conflict is concentrated at this juncture. Although Zhu Yingtai is steadfast, desires to be free in love, and has a spirit willing to struggle, she finally cannot defeat the oppression of feudal rule, must submit, and thus cannot realize her faithful love. But Larinbuda and Jiminsu overcome intervention of her brother and sister-in-law, the herdowners. They climb a mountain, face heaven, and express marriage vows, thus engaging themselves. Jiminsu accuses her brother and sister-in-law strongly through singing, "What crime has Larinbuda committed? He has only loved me. My life is only for love and hate." This is more solemn and serious than what occurs in "Liang Shanbo and Zhu

Yingtai." There are similarities and differences between the two youthful couples. Both girls are daughters of rich families, but Zhu Yingtai is born rich and is weak. In contrast, Jiminsu is a main laborer of her family, toiling daily in the fields. Both girls are rebels for desiring freedom and love, have firm characters, and struggling spirits. But under the oppression of feudal thought, Zhu Yingtai gives in whereas Jiminsu dares vow before heaven and engage herself.

Liang Shanbo and Larinbuda have distinctive dispositions. Liang Shanbo is frail and an impoverished scholar. He struggles with great difficulty in his career.<sup>38</sup> Larinbuda is a poor employee, but courts Jiminsu. He never retreats. Larinbuda and Jiminsu have more forthright characters reflecting their national and social spirit. When Jiminsu's brother and sister-in-law intervene in their love, murder Larinbuda, and imprison Jiminsu, she darts a fierce look of hatred, even breaks out of her prison, and runs to the cremation grounds, defying feudal mores. This terrifies Jiminsu's brother and sister-in-law, symbols of feudalism. In conflict, Jiminsu never yields one inch, revolts bravely and sharply condemns her brother and sister-in-law. The conflict runs white-hot.

"Learning the sad news of Liang Shanbo's death" and "expressing condolences upon the death of Liang Shanbo" further depict Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai's faithful love. On the one hand, the fact Zhu Yingtai sacrifices her life for Liang Shanbo is earth-shaking. On the other hand, that she breaks the constraints of feudal rule to console Liang Shanbo's spirit promotes justice.

Larinbuda and Jiminsu's spirit of struggle is more striking. When Jiminsu learned Larinbuda would be murdered, she went to him immediately. The two pour out their love to each other at the time of being separated by death. From this, we learn that feudal ideas and rules exerted some influence in Monguor upper class society. But among most Monguor, especially the lower classes, feudal ideas were regarded indifferently and the binding force of rules was weak.

Larinbuda's and Jiminsu's suffering demonstrates that feudal marriage rule was cold-blooded and cruel. Meanwhile, people respect and sympathize with them.

"Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" ends with Zhu Yingtai "being forced to marry," "offering condolences at Liang Shanbo's grave," and "becoming butterflies." This not only stresses the tale's complexity, but also "becoming butterflies" creates a sorrowful and touching scene. This expresses the idea that people are desirous of a happy life.

"Larinbuda and Jiminsu" ends with "cremating Larinbuda," "Jiminsu sacrificing herself for love," and "becoming trees and birds." At last, in revenge, Jiminsu's herdowning brother's eyes are pecked out by a bird, which is an incarnation of Jiminsu. The birds freely wheel in the blue sky. The end proves Jiminsu's loyal and faithful love. She struggles against feudal rule from start to finish, condemning feudal marriage evils.

Both conclusions brim with mythical color and romantic scenes because folklore is always linked with romantic tragedy.

Contrasting the two stories' characters and plots, we see the two have distinctive national and geographical features. There are also many similarities. Plots are complex. In common are objections to feudal rule, arranged and mercenary marriage, praise of faithful love, and an expression of youthful desire for freedom and happiness in feudal society. For this reason, "Larinbuda and Jiminsu" deserves to be called the "Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai" of the Monguor.

### **5.3 The Theme and Literary Features of "Larinbuda and Jiminsu"**

The structure is clear and the theme is striking. "Larinbuda and Jiminsu" begins with the prosaic pastoral life of a pair of youths. The plot develops reasonably, into a vivid and complicated love tragedy. Beginning in pleasant way, it turns to misery. At last it concludes in hatred. The entire story has a clear structure and the arrangement of ideas is distinctive. The plot develops as a chain, one link closely interlocking with the next, and turns to sharp conflict becoming a life-and-death struggle. Although the whole story is full of conflicts, the main thread is always the love between Larinbuda

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<sup>38</sup>He wants to become an official.

and Jiminsu. The theme is obvious. Nothing is disordered or unsystematic. In every scene, Larinbuda and Jiminsu, the brother and sister-in-law, and other characters are described realistically. The story shows the truth of life concerning one aspect of feudal reality. It arouses sympathy for the lovers' suffering and condemns feudalism.

Jiminsu's cruel-hearted brother and sister-in-law arouse public indignation against vicious feudal society. A distinct artistic style and social tendentiousness emerges, especially when the herdowner's daughter, Jiminsu, leaves her home to stand with the laboring people and poor Larinbuda. She challenges feudal ideas offering a profound lesson, a deep impression, and enlightenment. The story concentrates the rebel spirit of laboring people and urges struggle against vicious feudal rule. Encouraged by Larinbuda's and Jiminsu's rebel spirits, in the course of Monguor history, countless Monguor youths broke the fetters of feudal arranged and mercenary marriage, escaped from home resolutely, and bravely left their homeland to find individual paradise. Folklore such as "Escaping to Marry," "The Girl Dasalade," and so forth all demonstrate the same theme. As a matter of fact, before Liberation, in a Monguor area, there was a Lovers' Village built in an unfamiliar land by lovers who left their homes.

The language is vivid and the characters are open and forthright. Lyrical dialogue is employed rather than generally complicated and tedious dialogues. The words of songs are concise and implicit. Metaphors are well chosen and the narration is lively and vivid. There is much good poetic quality and colorful artistic conception in this folklore because its source is in the people and it is based on objective reality. Thus it has the rich flavor of life without contrived plots. There are symmetric words to the song, vivid conversation, and deep passion. The dialogues' musical words are mild and pleasant. The plot is reasonable and connected link by link. The thread of the hero and heroine runs through from beginning to end, showing a subject of pleasure turning to misery and is of an uncompromising nature.

A combination of realism and romanticism is also present, infused with an unchecked imagination and desire for a [better] future. It is a tragedy drawn from reality, but it does not end with sadness buried in cruel reality. In "becoming birds and trees" a mythological coloring appears--a combination of realism and romanticism. It not only shows the rich imagination of the Monguor, but more importantly, it shows the laboring people's strong-willed confidence in victory in their struggle against feudal oppression and feudal shackles.

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## Monguor Proverbs

Xi Yuanlin

This is a translation of Xi (1985). It has been prepared by Fan Qiqing and Hu Jun.

### Translation

Among the various types of Monguor folk literature, there is a literary form known as *jurugo*. *Jur* means pair, couple, in pairs, antithesis. *Ugo* has the meaning of language, spoken language, words. Taken as a whole, *jurugo* suggests antithetical words. It is related to *yanyu* [proverb] in Chinese. It is also known as *hghuilong*, meaning "words used as a metaphor." Both are common in Monguor. Employing the simplest and most popular antithetical verses, they summarize Monguor life experiences and attitudes over a long historical period. They mirror profound truths and thus have a very important guiding significance for people's social communication. With reference to the explanation of proverbs given in *Cihai*:<sup>39</sup> [proverbs are] "One kind of idiom. They are simple and popular, but significant sentences spread among the masses, most of which reflect the experience of people's life and struggles."

*Jurugo* are widely used by Monguor in daily life and social communication and, generally speaking, there is no one who cannot recite some *jurugo*. In every circumstance where proverbs are used that tally with reality, they have the effect of more than hundreds of sentences. In the past, Monguor had no written language, nevertheless, they created a great amount of rich and varied oral folk literature which still lives on side by side with its masters and has been continually improved, refined and serves, in practicality, as a way of passing on information from one person to another. *Jurugo*, as a folk literary form, is especially pregnant with meaning and rich philosophical theory. With refined language and vivid and appropriate metaphors, they have taken root among the masses in the form of antithetical verses. Additionally, as with other folk literature forms, they truthfully mirror most Monguor activities in terms of food, clothing, housing, transportation, and also social and productive struggle.

The content which Monguor proverbs reflect is very broad, but may be summarized as below.

### 6.1 Types of *Jurugo*

#### 6.1a Singing the praises of the [Communist] Party.

Under the leadership of the great, glorious, and correct Chinese Communist Party, reactionary rule was overthrown and new China was established. Monguor were also liberated from dark old society. They ended this existence, which may be compared to being burned over a raging fire, and took the bright, happy, and broad socialist road. They sincerely expressed heartfelt appreciation to the Party and the proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation. With the most sincere emotion, they not only sing using the most beautiful and enthusiastic language, but also sing high praises of the Party with keen and flexible proverbs, expressing heartfelt thanks.

*\*Follow the sun [you] won't suffer cold, follow the Party [you] won't be depressed.*

*\*Crops cannot leave the sunlight and happiness cannot leave the Communist Party.*

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<sup>39</sup>[An authoritative Chinese dictionary.]

*\*If there were no springs how could there be rivers, if there were no Communist Party, how could there be happiness?*

### **6.1b Advising people to diligently study.**

Monguor are brave and hardworking, adept at summarizing experiences and lessons, and continue to study diligently. Knowledge is regarded by Monguor as the most precious and beautiful ornament and indicative of morality. Hence, to advise people to learn diligently, Monguor have summarized many proverbs characterized by profound philosophical theory and various connotations through longterm practical social activities.

*\*Without walking on the road, [you] won't know the way, without learning [Chinese] characters [you] won't know characters.*

*\*The more you turn over soil, the looser, the more you study, the clearer.*

*\*Trees should be cultivated when young, people should be taught when young.*

*\*Respect the old and teach the young.*

*\*A wise man [needs] only one word, a thoroughbred horse [needs] only one lash.*

*\*Following good people [you] will trod a good road, following bad people [you] will trek an evil road.*

*\*The deer's beauty is in her antlers, man's beauty is in knowledge.*

*\*A flower's beauty lies on the surface, man's beauty lies in his heart.*

### **6.1c Believing in man's ability to triumph.**

In the struggle with nature, the Monguor have gradually recognized some natural phenomena and have striven to improve and control it. In struggling to improve nature, they have also gradually come to recognize their own power. They have realized the truth that solidarity is power and have firmed their resolve to improve upon nature and, with beautiful and various proverbs, express the idea of man being able to conquer nature.

*\*There are no mountains that can block the sun, there is no power that can oppress man.*

*\*No matter how wide a river, man can cross, no matter how high a mountain, man can scale it.*

*\*A single chopstick is easily broken, but a handful cannot be broken.*

*\*A man can't be separated from his villagers, a fish can't be separated from water.<sup>40</sup>*

*\*Depending on a mountain of gold is less desirable than depending on one's own two hands.*

*\*The more people, the more power, the more firewood, the higher the flames.*

### **6.1d Reflecting the miserable fate of working people.**

In evil old society, the broad masses of working people lived like cattle and horses that could not get enough to fill their bellies. They could not get enough cloth to cover their bodies. They suffered greatly the pain of oppression and exploitation. Families were broken and decreased in number. There was no place for them to tell the truth, nor was there any place to redress wrongs. They continually struggled and groaned. Examples follow of popular and simple proverbs with which the Monguor masses summarize their previous miserable situation.

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<sup>40</sup>[As water is essential for the fish's life, a man depends on his fellow villagers. Without their help and assistance he would perish.]



- \*After father died I had a good meal, after being covered by white snow, I had a warm sleep.<sup>41</sup>*  
*\*Beseech heaven and heaven becomes higher and higher, beseech the earth and the earth becomes deeper.<sup>42</sup>*  
*\*A thin horse has long hair, a poor man has a short tongue.<sup>43</sup>*

#### 6.1e Disclosing the evil innate character of reactionary rulers.

In old society, which was an abyss of darkness, corrupt officials and local tyrants, *tusis*, and *yamens* [government offices in feudal China] stopped at nothing in the course of doing evil and savagely oppressing the people. Their joy was based on the suffering of toil-worn people. They revealed their evil innate character with incisive language, ruthlessly lashing [corrupt officials, etc.]. Simultaneously, they advised people to sharpen their vigilance and be adept at distinguishing goodness from badness, truth from falsehood, and good from evil. They also advised people not to be misled by evil double-dealing men who are honey-mouthed, but murder-hearted.

- \*A dog cannot be a horse even though it can be saddled, a corrupt official cannot be warm-hearted even though he can be given money.*  
*\*He who chants Buddhist sutras to an evil wolf is asking the wolf to eat him.*  
*\*The fatness or thinness of a snake is inconsequential, evil men make no distinctions between old and young.<sup>44</sup>*  
*\*Evil ones hold power just like a saddled dog.<sup>45</sup>*  
*\*A goat skin drum sounds the same on either side.<sup>46</sup>*  
*\*The only red part of a crow is its mouth, its other parts are all black.*

#### 6.1f Persuading people to be skilled in dealing with people and receiving things.

All existent objective realities are closely related--the two sides of a contradiction both fight and unite and every contradictory reality changes toward its [is in a state of becoming like its] contrary side. Monguor have summarized many proverbs with philosophical theory in practice to persuade people not to be proud and slander others, and not only to see one's own weaknesses, but the goodness of others as well.

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<sup>41</sup>[There wasn't enough food to go around until after father died, and it was only after I died and was covered with snow that I had enough of a quilt to stay warm.]

<sup>42</sup>[Heaven to the Monguor is Tiangere. Earth means the Earth God. When beseeched, their help only seems more distant.]

<sup>43</sup>[A thin horse's hair is more visible than that of a fat horse, and a poor man is too despondent to say much of anything. A quiet man is a man with a short tongue.]

<sup>44</sup>[The fatness or thinness of a snake is inconsequential to whether or not the snake will bite you...]

<sup>45</sup>[This relies on a folktale which recounts how a dog was once saddled and then became arrogant, thinking he (the dog) was now a horse--much more than he actually was. This proverb suggests that evil men, once given power, will also become arrogant and think they are much more than they are.]

<sup>46</sup>[Used to liken one thing to another. For example, one of several brothers might be evil and, when asked about another of the brothers, this expression could be used to indicate that the other brother was also evil.]

- \*Good dreams can't be often dreamed, good [beautiful] flowers can't often blossom.*
- \*Even if a stone is thrown 10,000 zhang<sup>47</sup> high, it will still fall to the earth.*
- \*There is order to the succession of birth, but death knows no order.<sup>48</sup>*
- \*A flying horse can't escape its shadow and a sharp knife can't cut off running water.*
- \*Excessive happiness leads to sadness, a cough leads to hundreds of diseases.*
- \*Too much honey is not sweet, too much glue won't stick.*
- \*Those who compliment you may not be good, those who criticize your shortcomings may not be evil.*
- \*Those who talk about others before them have no evil heart, those who talk about others behind their backs have no good heart.*
- \*When the ox cuts the stone, the metal suffers.<sup>49</sup>*
- \*Seeing one's self as a flower, seeing others as ghosts.*

#### **6.1g Advising people not to gain things by fraud, but to be honest.**

Many proverbs satirize those who do not engage in honest work, seize every chance to gain through trickery, reap without sowing, and employ every means to seek fame and renown in society. Such proverbs advise that everything be done properly in the way that food is the first vital factor for human existence, but will prove fatal if eaten improperly.

- \*The quantity of his speech is more than the number of the hairs on his head, but his actions are of less value than the soft fine hairs on his neck.*
- \*The thunder is very loud, but there is no rain, the wailing is very loud, but no tears flow.*
- \*When the cuckoo finishes singing, the partridge comes to take the credit.<sup>50</sup>*
- \*Eating one mouthful more in the morning is good medicine, eating one mouthful more in the evening is a disease.*
- \*When full, one mouthful is hard to swallow, when hungry, one mouthful is hard to get.*

#### **6.1h Reflecting Monguor unique national customs.**

In human society, people have certain social status and depend on each other. People also live in a certain natural environment. Thus a complex relationship between people, society, and nature comes into being and continuously develops in unity and opposition. Monguor have summarized this complex phenomena with simple and popular language reflecting their national customs and traditions formed over a long period and educating young generations by illustrating the truth of how to live.

- \*A large sea can't be measured with a dipper, a man's thoughts can't be measured with a ruler.*
- \*Good flowers need the support of green leaves, strong people need grain's succor.*
- \*Don't forget clothing when it is hot, don't forget bread when you are full.*
- \*Desiring to ride a horse, ride a winged steed; if desiring to live then live in peaceful years.*
- \*Flowers don't blossom until summer, marriages cannot be made until the matchmaker comes.*

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<sup>47</sup>[1 zhang = 3.3 meters.]

<sup>48</sup>[There may be order to the succession of children born to a family, but they may not die in that order.]

<sup>49</sup>[When an ox-drawn plow strikes a stone, it is the plow that suffers.]

<sup>50</sup>[The song of the cuckoo is considered beautiful and that of the partridge is not. The one undeserving of credit is quick to claim a meritorious act as his own.]

### 6.1i Reflecting agricultural production and weather changes.

Monguor ancestors began a gradual transformation from animal husbandry to agriculture in about the 11th century. They often found themselves in a passive state because of backward productive forces and frequent natural disasters.<sup>51</sup> However, in productive practice, particularly in struggling with nature and repeated observations and probings, a set of proverbs related to production and weather were obtained related to agriculture production. This guided productive activities and helped overcome the blind and passive state in production.

*\*Early seeded crops are deep-rooted, late sown crops are shallow-rooted.*

*\*There is water under clod-busting mallets and, the more you pound, the more grain you will get.*

*\*Sow one more seed in the second month, one more sheng of grain in the tenth month.*

*\*Weeding once is like fertilizing once, leaving grass is like a ferocious wolf attacking a sheep flock.<sup>52</sup>*

*\*Dry in the fourth month, the plain suffers; dry in the fifth month, the mountains suffer.*

*\*Solar halo means rain, lunar halo means wind.*

*\*Sunrise glow means rain, sunset glow means no rain.<sup>53</sup>*

### 6.1j Reflecting the importance of afforestation and road and bridge building.

The Monguor have an incisive and penetrating vision which links tree planting and road building with emperors and saints. Tree planting and road building are measures of how well emperors and saints benefit the people. Monguor also consider tree planting and road building as symbolic of peaceful times.

*\*Among 1,000 sheep, one leader, among 10,000 people, one leader.*

*\*He who is the emperor should plant trees, he who is a saint should build roads.*

In summary, Monguor proverbs provide a wide representation of life characterized by a rather rich content and incisive and profound thoughts. They are a basic part of Monguor folk literature that can never be lacking. They are golden rules and precious precepts guiding people's social activities.

## 6.2 Ideological content of Monguor proverbs.

Monguor proverbs have a rich flavor of the times. Because of differences between the times and social background at the period of proverb formation, they are unavoidably characterized by the strong and fragrant flavor of the age. For example, such proverbs as "He who is the emperor should plant trees, he who is a saint should build roads," were produced during feudal society. But after the foundation of new China, when the broad masses were liberated, proverbs such as, "Crops can't be away from sunlight and happiness can't be separated from the Communist Party," and "There would be no rivers without springs, there would be no Monguor alphabet without the Party," emerged. Therefore, with the development and change of the times and the occurrence of important historical events, proverbs immediately reflected feelings of love and hate using vivid, lively, and terse language. They are constantly on the tip of the broad masses' tongue.

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<sup>51</sup>[E.g., earthquakes, droughts, torrential rains, devastating epidemic diseases.]

<sup>52</sup>[Weeding removes grass from the field which, if not removed, would take much fertility from the soil. "Ferocious wolf" refers to grass which will "attack" the grain.]

<sup>53</sup>[Literally, "sunrise glow is water, sunset glow is fire."]

Secondly, Monguor proverbs are the same as other nationalities'. They have a broad content in the area of natural and social struggle. Proverbs related to the struggle with nature, and the aspect of specific customs, prominently display certain scientific principles. Certain natural phenomena they generalize about accord with objective rules of natural development. Thus this type of proverb has much vitality, is widely spread, and is handed down from one generation to another. For example, "Trees should be cultivated when young, people should be trained when young," "Live at the mountain's foot, rely on the mountain's advantage, live by the river, rely on the water's advantage," "Early seeded crops have deep roots while late sown crops have shallow roots," and "Dry in the hottest days, dry grain; rain in the hottest days, no harvest," etc. incorporate significant scientific principles. They [summarize] valuable experiences and scientific conclusions accumulated over a long period of living and productive practice by the hardworking and wise Monguor.

With regards to proverbs concerning social struggles, they primarily reflect class-struggles and life's social experiences, and possess much philosophical theory. For example, "He who prays to Buddha for an evil wolf is asking the wolf to eat him," "A dog can't be a horse even though saddled, and a corrupt official can't be warmhearted even though he can be given money," "Those who compliment you may not be good, those who criticize your shortcomings may not be bad" contain profound, penetrating, restrained, and implied meaning and a quantity of intense philosophic theory. People are advised to be adept at distinguishing truth, kindness, and beauty from that which is shameful, evil, and ugly. They are advised not to be hoodwinked by surface phenomena. Thirdly, Monguor proverbs are an oral literature form created spontaneously when a certain situation strikes a responsive chord in the Monguor heart, bringing back memories. Undoubtedly they have distinctive class character. Generally speaking, proverbs are moral principles directly serving productive struggle, disclosing social and everyday-life phenomena, and advising people to be compliant so that every class in society will accept and use them--except for those who are on the opposite side in terms of the class concerned. They can only be used among people they serve and are unacceptable to those in an opposing class position. For example, such proverbs as "Even though a dog is saddled, it can't be a horse, even though money is given to a corrupt official, he can't be warm-hearted," and "The evil ones hold power just like a saddled dog," cannot be accepted by corrupt rulers. They can only spread among the working masses.

Artistically, Monguor proverbs are vivid and lively, apt metaphors, have profound meaning, have terse and lively language, and are easily said, heard, and understood. They may be interpreted as bringing the painted dragon to life by adding the pupils of its eyes--adding the touch that enlivens a work of art.

In terms of expression, proverbs mainly use analogy and, regardless of whether similes or metaphors are employed, all are characterized as explaining truth by using things<sup>54</sup> and aspects of implication are unconstrained. For example, "*Wadema*"<sup>55</sup> is the most beautiful among flowers, Chairman Mao is the most brilliant among Chinese." "The beauty of a flower is on the surface, the beauty of a man is in his heart," "Following the tiger [will lead you] wandering over the mountains, following the eagle [will lead you] flying across the sky." Additionally, employment of comparison is another feature of Monguor proverbs. Human beings, matter, birds and animals, grass, and trees, which are quite familiar to man, are compared [with the truth]. These comparisons lead people to understand profound truths. For example, "A steelyard can weigh light or heavy, a speech can measure a speaker's thoughts," "The more a farming tool is used, the sharper it becomes, the more knowledge is studied, the richer one becomes," "Seeing one's self as a flower, seeing others as ghosts," "Speaking one kind sentence warms the heart on the coldest winter day, speaking one evil sentence freezes the heart on the hottest day of summer," "Can't be rich as a thief, entertaining guests can't get poor," etc.

Antithetical verses are the basic structure of Monguor proverbs, but there are also verses with both

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<sup>54</sup>["Things" refers to flowers, trees, etc.]

<sup>55</sup>[We were unable to identify what flower this alludes to.]

matching sound and meaning which normally employ matching words in the same part of speech. For example, "The knowledge of one person is limited, the knowledge of the masses is inexhaustible," "Respect the old and train the young," etc.

In terms of meter, most Monguor proverbs are verses which often rhyme, exhibiting a poetical musical beauty. As do poems, Monguor proverbs rhyme at the end of verses, but there are exceptions. Sometimes they rhyme at the beginning and sometimes in the middle, but the rhymes are in good order.<sup>56</sup>

*\*Moornu lii yausa lii mudem, pujignu lii sursa lii mudem.*

*\*Bal ulon waisa datin gui, julsi ulon waisa suudal gui.*

*\*Ain uudinnu ulon juudilegunu gui, sain qijigdu lii huraagu rghang gui.*

*\*Qinu sainnu kilejin kun mauniisa tang, qinu hghuarnu kilejin kun sainiisa tang.<sup>57</sup>*

Additionally, the Monguor have had good relations with other nationalities for a long time. These nationalities have learned from each other, enriched each other, and thus the effect on language is also profound. In terms of proverbs, Monguor have many Han proverbs which have substantiated and enriched the Monguor language:

*\*A horse's strength is known only when the way is long, a person's true color is revealed only over the long run.*

*\*The more people, the more power, the more firewood, the higher the flames.*

*\*Trees are old, the roots are not; [some] people are old, their hearts are not.*

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<sup>56</sup>The rhyme as shown by the romanization is rather complex; there is an initial consonant rhyme, simple or compound vowel rhyme, and syllables and words can also rhyme. This example uses the Monguor alphabet and consonant letters and except for "gh[q]" other (letters) are basically the same as that of Han Chinese *pinyin*. The vowels are long and short, whereas Han Chinese short vowels are a bit shorter.

<sup>57</sup>*\*Without walking on the road [you] won't know the way, without learning [Chinese] characters [you] won't know characters.*

*\*Too much honey is not sweet, too much glue won't stick.*

*\*Good dreams can't be often dreamed, beautiful flowers can't always blossom.*

*\*Those who compliment you are evil people, those who criticize your shortcomings are good people.*

## The Chile Mountain Monguor Marriage

*Qian Zhongli*

This translation is of Qian (1988). It has been prepared by Wang Fajin and Li Xuewei.

### Translation

The marriage of Monguor living at the foot of the Chile Mountains in eastern Qinghai Province is distinctive. It is often called a "marathon marriage" because it lasts 3 days, and is characterized by singing day and night. It begins in the afternoon the day before the bride leaves for her fiancé's home. At this time, two *naxin* from the groom's side are sent to the bride's home. They are expected to be talented men who can dance and sing skillfully, be gifted at conversation, and adept at handling various matters on special occasions. Before they set off, the bridegroom's parents entertain them attentively. They have them drink three cups of liquor for luck and in the hope that they will bring the bride back safely. Then the two *naxin*, bridegroom, and groom's maternal uncle, laden with many gifts, go to the bride's home. The gifts are a riding gown for the bride, a red skirt, rings, bracelets, and a comb in a casket which the bride should wear as she rides a horse to the groom's home. Gifts for the bride's parents include a whole sheep, a white ewe, and several bottles of liquor. The gifts are put into a large bag after each has passed the *naxin*'s inspection, that is, the pleats of the skirt are counted, the number of comb teeth are counted, and even the length of braid-string is measured.

The espousing team, headed by the *naxin*, must arrive at the bride's home before evening. When they draw near the bride's home, young women from the bride's village dressed in brilliant clothing wait and welcome them. As the team comes within 100 meters of the gate, the women besiege them. They plunder the mutton carried by the ass and other gifts. As soon as they "win victory" and gain the booty, the women begin to dance and loudly sing. Some *zhike* (helping men) rush up to welcome them, greet them, and assist by tending the horse and sheep. This is all done very hospitably as the singing women retreat. The women bar the courtyard gate to prevent the *naxin* from entering, and sometimes pour water on them. In the yard, the women sing questions. The *naxin* answer in the same manner from outside the gate. The women are glib, but the *naxin* prove more experienced. They struggle using songs as weapons. Next, the women open the gate and the *naxin* are invited into the courtyard where they present gifts to the bride's home. An evening of dancing and singing ensues. The *naxin* are invited to sit on the *kang* for a meal accompanied by the *zhike*. Women outside the window tease the *naxin* with songs, creating a vivid entertainment atmosphere.

The most interesting program involves presenting food. The *naxin* receive it and salute the bride's marriage sponsor.

The sponsor is an old man who can dance and sing well, and who is familiar with local customs. He clears his throat to begin, smiles, takes a bowl of noodles, and says:

*First Sister washes her hands,  
Elder Sister fetches flour,  
Youngest Sister rolls dough with a rolling pin.  
Flour is rolled thick like a wooden plate and dough is cut into whips.  
When put into boiling water, turns a circle, then ladled into a bowl like twisted lumps.*

The sisters pretend to be annoyed, take a burning brand from the kitchen, and pretend to attack him. Lest he is hit, the sponsor chants to pacify:

*The rolled flour is white as snow, thin as thread, and sweet as candy.*

The sisters cheerfully take back the bowl from the sponsor, signalling the end of the *qingqizi* ritual. This is followed by *anzhao* dancing with men and women, old and young, all taking part. They are led by male singers who circle round the flower plot in the courtyard. They dance and sing without stopping:

*Fine sons and daughters of Mongol khan,  
Joyfully dance anzhao sululu.*<sup>58</sup>

*Anzhao* music is clear and sonorous and the dance gestures are graceful and lively. At the time of espousing, singers crowd together, sitting on straw mats in the courtyard. They drink wedding liquor and sing wedding songs. This rapturous activity continues to midnight under bright moonlight around a prayer flagstaff in the courtyard center. Next dawn at cockcrow is considered a good time to start the auspicious day. As opposed to the first lively and interesting day, the second is a solemn and serious one of altering the bride's hair style. Her braids are combed into the pattern of a bride, marking a new era in her life. When the cock crows the first time the bride's sister gives a jewel case, new clothes, and so on to the bride. The groom is invited into the bride's room to untie the red braid-strings fastening the finials on her braids, and to comb the hair three times. But first he combs his own hair three times. The bride's hair is changed to the style of a married woman by her sister, who also helps her don her wedding clothing and ornaments. Meanwhile, *naxin* waiting outside the maiden-room dance, waving their long robes up and down, sing, "Yuie":

*Golden pheasant cries in the dark-blue sky,  
Cries for dawn to clear away the darkness.  
The auspicious hour is coming for  
A maid to change her hair.*

The *naxin* next praise the bride's brilliant clothing. They say that the maid's room door is made of gold, silver, and mahogany. Later, the door is opened in response to the *naxins'* request. A pink skirt worn by the bride is brought out, signifying the rite of changing the hair-pattern is over. Meanwhile, the groom is busy with his father-in-law, who has given him a new suit and helps him dress. The groom is also praised, usually by the bride's sponsor: "This son-in-law wears his hat as a warrior with a silvery helmet. The right sleeve is like that of a flying eagle's wing, and the right arm resembles a lunging lion's limb." The creativity embodied in this effusive praise is rich in content and amusing. As the sun rises, the ritual of the bride mounting the horse begins outside the main room. This includes the rituals of *luomutuori*, *ayang*, and *xiimalu*.

The bride leaves her room for the main room and sits on a red and white striped carpet folded in layers. There is a red chest behind her. A sutra, a cypress branch, an oil lamp, red chopsticks, a bowl of milk, a piece of brick tea, a handful of white wool, and 5 kilograms of grain are on it. All are in a line. *Luomutuori* begins with the *naxin* dancing and singing "Song of Riding the Horse" at the north doorway:

*The sun shines brightly,  
The lucky time approaches.  
The girl will ride to leave correctly.*

This prologue is followed by someone taking the articles on the chest, one by one, walking to the bride, and circling the articles, one by one, around her head. The *naxin* sing according to what they see. For example, when they see the sutra taken they sing:

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<sup>58</sup>[*Sululu* is a sound word.]

*The first part of the sutra symbolizes luck,  
Holding the sutra in our hands to tell you,  
The first part of the hundred sutras will let you enjoy a return to your mother's home.*

When the eight articles are all circled and chants made for each, the bride leaves the main room to circle the courtyard flower plot. The flower plot must be circled clockwise three times and then counterclockwise thrice. This is called departure circling. While circling the *naxin* retreat, dancing and singing, which prevents the luck and happiness of the family from being taken away by the bride.

The first procedure of the rite before the bride actually mounts the horse is more *anzhao* dancing and singing "Xiimalu."

*The front mountain and back mountain sit still, they don't worry.  
The girl leaves and the mountains don't miss her.  
The square rooms and courtyard sit still, they don't worry.  
The girl leaves and they don't miss her.*

This is sad and full of emotion. It is directed at the grandparents, parents, brothers, and sisters. It makes people so heartbroken that they weep. This signals the end of the bride riding a horse. It also marks the end of the *naxin*'s task. Now a team consisting of 10-20 people, who guard the bride, begins escorting her to the groom's home. Each of the team has a task. The bride's brother is responsible for tending the horse, the bride's sister serves as a bridesmaid, the bride's brother-in-law watches the dowry, and her maternal uncle, representatives of the bride's family, and villagers act as *xike*. An old man is elected to sit at the first seat, representing the bride's side. He will deal with whatever may arise. Additionally, several skillful dancers and singers come to manage various things according to the occasion. As the escorting retinue nears the bridegroom's village, they loudly sing "Lalongluo" (Calling the Groom).

*Look at the steep mountains,  
Many horse herds are on golden hills.  
Cows are in the front of the herds,  
Betrothal gifts are on horseback.  
If I have betrothal gifts, I'll dismount,  
I will not dismount if I don't have betrothal gifts.*

The song is full of happiness. When the singing *xike* reach the gate, men of the groom's side are waiting. They present liquor and *khadakh*, inviting the *xike* to dismount. Also, in the container is a bottle of liquor wrapped with red cloth and a wooden arrow tied with a *khadakh*. As the *xike* dance and sing, the groom's side offers liquor to the *xike* to thank them. Sometimes, the groom's mother sings welcoming words and goes to the doorway to welcome her new daughter-in-law, who tightly holds a bottle of liquor against her chest. When the bride comes through the courtyard gate, the bottle of liquor is wrapped in red cloth and held fast under her left armpit. She walks slowly. She is helped on either side by the groom and the bridesmaid. In the courtyard, the couple salute heaven and earth. Four straw piles are lit at each yard corner, and a triangular wood pile is lit in the yard center. The *xike* directs the bride to salute her parents-in-law and other elders by raising a cup of liquor, loudly reciting a panegyric, and by pouring liquor three times on the wood in hopes that the family will be long-lived and happy. The bride then enters the kitchen, attended by the bridesmaid and the groom. She stays there for a short time before being escorted into the wedding-room.

When the ceremony of appreciation takes place in front of the matchmaker, butter, flour, bottles of liquor, cups, and wooden spoons are placed on a long table. The bottles and wooden spoons are tied with white wool. The *zhike* takes these items in their hands. The leading *zhike* toasts the matchmaker with the following: "A narrow winding trail, impassable to a goat was trodden by the matchmaker. It became a road. Your merits are numberless and your deeds deserve praise. The place



where a matchmaker walked, a sacred tower should be built. The place where a matchmaker sat, a sutra hall should be built." People crowd around the matchmaker, smearing butter on his face, push flour into his mouth, and offer cup after cup of liquor. This does not end until the matchmaker is covered with flour and his face is smeared with butter.

The bride's entourage is entertained in the yard where they sit on straw and eat from wooden trays. At the wedding feast's end, the leading *zhike* from the groom's side stands and toasts in Monguor, Tibetan, and Chinese, complimenting the happiness of the marriage between the two families' children and the happy life of the new couple. Women from the groom's side follow with the song and dance "Alima," which imitates gestures of labor and the way Monguor, Tibetans, and Hui walk. In the evening, neighbors of the groom invite guests from the bride's side to dance. This continues until midnight. Ceremonies continue the next morning. All guests are banqueted. When they finish and prepare to set off for their homes, the groom's side entertains them with long noodles. As soon as guests take the noodle bowls, people from outside the courtyard begin singing, holding cups of liquor. This is a warm send-off. After the noodles, the *xike* leave the groom's home, singing and dancing. At this time, the sun is setting and this marriage, which lasts for more than 50 hours, ends.

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## Monguor Folk Festivals and Gatherings

*Diao Wenqing and Cai Xiling*

This translation has been prepared by Li Huili and Li Xuewei. It is taken from Diao and Cai (1987).

### Translation

#### I

The Monguor nationality, one of the minority nationalities of our country, with a population of about 140,000 (1985) mainly live in the northeastern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and in south Gansu Province. For a long time, the hardworking, honest, brave, and wise Monguor have been opening up and managing these areas together with other fraternal nationalities.<sup>59</sup> They have created a colorful, special, and unique folk culture in productive practices and social activities. Monguor is a Mongol language within the Altaic system. They do not have their own written language.<sup>60</sup> In the past, generally speaking, higher ranking persons in the fields of religion and education were fluent in Tibetan and Chinese.<sup>61</sup>

There are numerous theories concerning Monguor origins in historical circles. A popular theory argues Monguor roots are to be found in the Tuyuhun.<sup>62</sup> The Tuyuhun were an original branch of the Murong Tribe of the Xianbei nationality living in the northwest of Jin and Yi counties, Liaoning Province. Xianbei and Shiwei nationalities (Mongol ancestors) belong to the system of ancient eastern Mongol nationalities. Early in the fourth century AD, the Tuyuhun came to south Gansu and southeast Qinghai and established a nation. In 663 AD it was conquered by the Tufan with whom the Tuyuhun gradually combined. A part of the eastern Tuyuhun gradually mixed with the Han nationality. The part of the Tuyuhun which remained in Liangzhou of the Qilian Mountains area along the Haomen and Yellow Rivers is one Monguor ancestral root. Main Monguor ancestors were the foregoing. They gradually combined with Tibetans, Han, and Mongols over time. Most Monguor areas are half-agricultural and half-animal husbandry.<sup>63</sup> The Monguor economy and living style have been determined by natural conditions. Before the Yuan Dynasty, the Monguor engaged in animal husbandry and later turned to half-agriculture and half-herding. In the Ming Dynasty, they were engaged in farming. At that time, the economy was basically self-sufficient, closed, and semi-closed.

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<sup>59</sup>[Such descriptions are standard in most introductions to minority-related articles regardless of nationality.]

<sup>60</sup>[The Monguor written language mentioned is based on a Huzhu dialect and has never interested Minhe Monguor.]

<sup>61</sup>[In Minhe, only some lamas learned Tibetan. Contact between Monguor and Tibetans is minimal.]

<sup>62</sup>[China's scholars who write about the Monguor seem unaware of European language Monguor-related materials. They base a part of their arguments for Monguor roots in the Tuyuhun nationality on sound similarity between "tu" and the first syllable of Tuyuhun.]

<sup>63</sup>[Minhe Monguor are dependent on agriculture.]

Although Monguor have no written language, they do have their own spoken language. Common psychology can be seen directly from the cultural outlook. On the other hand, common religion, customs, and habits naturally form a common psychology. The Monguor's ancestors, the Tuyuhun, were shamanistic in east Liaoning Province. After they moved into the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with the development of the Tufan Kingdom, Tibetan Buddhism became widespread along the Yellow River and in Monguor areas. Buddhism became the main and important religion. By vent of history, apart from the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, they also believe in many other gods including Dragon God, Goddess in Heaven, Black Tiger, Treasure God, and Ox and Horse God. The Monguor have their own traditional and temple gatherings in different areas. They have preserved a unique national folk literature. They excel at singing and dancing. Huzhu County is famous for being the "singing and dancing county on the plateau." Women wear beautiful clothing and are referred to as the "nationality wearing seven-color clothing."<sup>64</sup> Monguor men are brave, strong, and are skilled at riding and shooting.<sup>65</sup> During festivals and gathering, everybody holds hands in a circle and dances *anzhao* happily while singing. There have been no *shehuo* dramas nor musical instruments in Monguor history,<sup>66</sup> but, in terms of national and local characteristics, there are dances, folk songs, folk legends, sports, competitions, and embroidery. These are regarded as striking among all ethnic cultures.

Because of strong internal unity and a closed or semi-closed society for a long period, the Monguor are comparatively backward. They still retain some characteristics of nomadic nationalities. The Monguor have been deeply influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, animism, and piously worship gods. They also have received and combined with Tibetan and Han cultures over their long period of development. These are subjective and objective reasons why Monguor mass culture is primarily expressed in traditional festivals and temple gatherings.

## II

Research indicates that Monguor traditional festivals and gatherings in Monguor areas are uncountable. Excluding Spring Festival, Day of Pure Brightness (the fifth of the fifth moon), Dongzhi (Winter Solstice, the 22nd solar term), and Laba (eighth of the 12th month), which are the same as that of the Han, there are many Monguor traditional and temple gatherings in various places. Now, according to the lunar calendar, we list famous festivals and gatherings in Huzhu and Minhe Counties as in Table 8.1.

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<sup>64</sup>[Minhe Monguor wear clothing identical to that of nearby Han peasants. There is no Monguor national dress in Minhe.]

<sup>65</sup>[The Minhe Monguor have few horses and many men do not know how to ride. Mules are more commonly ridden. Shooting, either guns or bows and arrows, is unknown in Minhe. The only time local Minhe Monguor may see something resembling a bow and arrow is a small likeness placed on courtyard corners by a *yinyang* to keep evil ghosts and spirits away.]

<sup>66</sup>[*Anzhao* dancing is never seen in Minhe. Local opera, masked dances, and plays have been regularly performed in many plain area villages of Minhe as long as old people can remember, and are often accompanied by a variety of musical instruments.]

TABLE 8.1 Monguor Traditional Folk Festivals and Gatherings

<u>Lunar Month</u>	<u>Description</u>
First	Spring Festival is held in all Monguor areas. The gods and ancestors are venerated and there is <u>anzhao</u> dancing and <u>daqui</u> .
First	Lantern Festival is held on the fifth day in all Monguor areas. Colorful lanterns are made and there is <u>anzhao</u> and <u>mohuo</u> dancing.
First	Guanjinghui Gathering is held on the eighth Day at Youning Temple. Lamas dance in trace and there are various sorts of entertainment.
Second	Leitaihui Gathering is held on the second day in Weiyuan. There are singing competitions on <u>turentai</u> platforms, a trade fair, and recreational activities.
Second	Bangbanghui Gathering is held during this month in Dazhuang and Donggou. There are <u>fashi</u> dances and flower songs.
Third	Jidanhui Gathering (Egg Gathering) is held on the 18th day in Danmasuobuguo. Boiled eggs are beat about as a game.
Third	Dongyuehui Gathering is held on the 28th day in Maohobao. Flower songs are sung and there are Han operas.
Fourth	Bangbanghui Gathering is held in Danyangjuan and Dongshan on the eighth day. There are <u>fashi</u> dances and flower songs.
Fifth	Dragonboat Festival is observed in all Monguor areas. Willow branches are displayed and flower songs are sung.
Fifth	There are flower song gatherings on the fifth day in the Ladong Spring area, Dazhong, and Donggou.
Fifth	From the fourth through the six months, Qingmiaohui Gatherings are held. Mountains are climbed and there are picnics, singing, and dancing.
Sixth	On the sixth day Chaoshanhui Gathering is held in Wufen Temple. Mountains are climbed.
Sixth	On the eighth day Guangjing Gathering is held at Youning Temple. Lamas dance in trance.
Sixth	Danma Gathering is held on the 11th day at Danma Sandbank. There are flower songs, horseraces, martial arts, and Han operas.
Sixth	A flower song meeting with dances is held on the 13th day in Tuguan and Songfan.
Seventh	In the Songduo-Songhua area there are horse races and flower songs are sung. Monguor from other areas participate.
Seventh	Nadun is held in Sanchuan, Minhe from the 12th of the seventh month to the fifth of the ninth month. There are performances of singing, dancing, and martial arts.
Eighth	Mid-Autumn Festival is observed in all Monguor areas, other than the Suohuo and Dahuo Families. There are folksongs and dances and the moon is venerated.

Suohuo and Dahuo are two Huzhu Monguor family surnames. Those so named regard themselves as Mongol descendants and, for them, the Mid-Autumn Festival is taboo. On this festival they throw a handful of dust at the moon. This is related to the folk legend that says: "Killing *dazi*<sup>67</sup> on the 15th of the eighth month."

Monguor festivals and gatherings have the following features.

1. Festivals, gatherings, and fairs are mainly held during the best seasons on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Most Monguor live in mountainous areas. They are busy plowing from the second to the third moons. Guanjinghui in the first moon and Leitaihui on the second of the second moon are times for relaxation and preparation for coming busy times. According to usual practice, businessmen and tradesmen gather. The Monguor take agricultural, animal husbandry, and subsidiary products to trade, and buy necessary production and daily-use items. Other attractions include religious art and dances, and recreational activities. Qingmiaohui is held between busy work times. Bangbanghui and Nadun are held after autumn harvest in Sanchuan areas [Minhe County]. The above festivals play a role in regulating work-and-rest. In the sixth month, busy spring plowing and cultivating are finished. At that time, birds fly about, the grass is growing, and mountains and ravines are covered with green. Flower Song Gatherings (Huaerhui), horseraces, archery competitions, and climbing mountains to enjoy scenery are popular everywhere. The people's psychology of aesthetics, recreation, social intercourse, and seeking pleasure is enhanced. Recreational and sporting activities satisfy the people's urgent need for spiritual civilization. Therefore, these festivals and gatherings are proper regulators between work and rest, tenseness and relaxation. They are time-restricted centers of mass culture activities. A strong feature of Monguor folk festivals and gatherings is their seasonal and rhythmical nature.

2. Monguor festivals and gatherings have continued over a long period of historical evolution. They exist reasonably for and by themselves. These activities, formed by nature, have become an important part of Monguor social life. One flower song goes as follows:

*Red dust blows on Great East Mountain*  
*Driving five pairs of strong oxen*  
*Danma held once a year*  
*But I've dreamed of it five times*

This vividly depicts anticipation of coming festivals. When festival times do come, the Monguor wear beautiful clothing, new caps, and elaborately dress. They invite and accompany one another, aid the aged and young, and pour into the festival area from every village and area. Tens of thousands may attend festivals such as Leitaihui on the second of the second month in Weiyuan Town, Climbing Mountains on the sixth of the sixth month at Wufengsi, and Danmahui on the 11th of the sixth month. To some extent, Monguor traditional festivals and gatherings are grand displays of folk art and sports. They also feature exhibitions of clothing and embroidery. In a word, because of a long history, great attractivity, and remarkable recreation value, these activities constitute the fabric of Monguor social cultural life. These activities are also widely mass based.

3. Monguor folk festivals and gatherings may be divided into three categories. First, there are religious festivities such as Bangbanghui and Qingmiaohui. A second type express emotions and celebrations, such as Mountain Gathering (Cahoshan) on the sixth of the sixth month at Wufengsi, Flower Songs Gathering in the Danma area, and so on. Third, those that include the two above categories, such as Nadun in Sanchuan, Minhe County. Of course, classification usually involves several aspects. Regardless of what category they are in, each is related to legend and religion. In man's ignorant period, when social economy, cultural education, and even science were all backward, many natural phenomena could not be expressed scientifically. Totem worship and praying, which evolved from believing in gods which supposedly controlled nature, natural things in the living

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<sup>67</sup>[*Dazi* is a derogatory term for Mongols. The 13th of the eighth month is Mid-Autumn and, at this time, Han traditionally eat and exchange mooncakes. Folklore recounts that the Mongols were defeated in a decisive battle by the passing of a secret message hidden in a mooncake to enemy lines.]

environment, religious gods, and Buddhas, constituted spiritual aspirations. This shows the Monguor ancestors' desire for driving away evils and disasters and looking forward to good lives. In the Guanjinghui Gathering at Youning Temple, for example, lamas don masks and dress as gods, perform religious dances, and act out catching and subduing monsters and devils twice each year. They praise religious power. In Qingmiaohui and Bangbanghui, etc., while beating drums and dancing, they pray to the gods to protect human safety and health and bring abundant crops and flourishing livestock. But ordinary people and especially young people know nothing or little about the original meanings. They think it is all just a formula. What they are attracted to is the religious art, folk song-dance art, and the various attractive recreational activities. As to Nadun and Flower Songs, recreation is important and provides a change from a normally dull existence. From analyzing the content of festivals and gatherings, it is understood that religious ceremonies appeared first. Trading and recreational activities followed. However, in time the most interesting and, even in the leading role, were various colorful folk recreational activities such as *anzhao* circle dances, singing competitions (during Leitaihui Gathering), climbing mountains, horseracing, wrestling, archery, playing on swings, and pulling sticks. Those with considerable skill take advantage of these opportunities to demonstrate their ability. Outstanding persons awarded with ribbons and flowers are respected and given meat and liquor as reward. Although festivals and gatherings stem from different sources, they have religious content. They are the grand gatherings of national folk art and sports and are an important aspect of people's spiritual world.

In addition, folk festivals and gatherings also provide a place where people who work hard in remote areas can meet relatives and friends, express mutual feelings, and exchange information and products. They take these opportunities not only to improve their living standards and express their thoughts, but also to enhance cultural activities and objectively enlarge national culture.

In general, Monguor folk festivals and gatherings absorbed the cultural quintessences from every historical development. They are concentrated displays of mass culture activity, restricted by local seasons. They show the working people's wisdom and talent and also express their desire. They have a wide and strong mass base. Therefore, under the guidance of Marxism and following the policies of "making the past serve the present" and "weeding through the old to let the new grow" these forms are carried forward and used in a practical way. "Discarding the dross and selecting the essential and making reforms repeatedly" are important for Monguor mass culture to flourish and achieve the important goal of building up a multi-national, socialist mass cultural science with Chinese characteristics.

### III

Most Monguor live in remote backward areas. There are few cultural facilities, a low cultural base, and little money. The government cannot give much money in a short time to develop the cause of mass culture. Under such conditions, we should take full advantage of various traditional cultural activities. According to local conditions, we should hold mass cultural activities at different levels and in various ways. From this aspect, folk festivals and gatherings have special meaning. In the present historical period, how do we promote the role of folk festivals and gatherings in the context of mass cultural activities?

First we should correctly understand folk festivals and gatherings. These are historical products. It is unavoidable that the good and bad are mixed together. There is either the democratic mass essential or the feudal dross. That they have evolved until now is proof that the main current is good and healthy. With respect to the essential, we want to make every effort to carry out, continue, and develop it. Regarding the dross, we should distinguish the different cases and offer correct propaganda and education. We should try and wait until the masses improve their thoughts and then they will discard and reform it by themselves. Mao Zedong once pointed out: "Customs and habits in nationality areas can be changed, but it must be done by the nationality people themselves." From this aspect, we cannot do this, force, or order them to do so. During the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution [1966-1976], the Gang of Four carried out fascist cultural despotism. They forbade this

and criticized that. They wanted to eliminate flower songs which they regarded as feudal dross, but their efforts were in vain. The truth was in everyone's heart. People did as before and, on the sixth of the sixth month, people, as usual, poured onto Wufengsi Mountain. As for the rubbish, such as the little boy and girl who were buried with the dead in history, and other bad customs that harmed human life, as soon as people realized their harm, they abolished them by themselves. In a word, we should neither deny them all because there are some signs of old times and elements of backward feudalism, nor ignore them and let them go freely. Both are wrong. As long as we respect history, reality, and traditional nationality customs and habits, and guide and support them to the active aspect gradually, according to local customs, and "pour new wine into the old bottle," we can make the traditional mass cultural outlook of national folk festivals and gatherings exude youthful vigor and vitality.

After realizing the above, it is necessary to carry out a serious investigation of the local national folk festivals and gatherings. We should have a detailed understanding and exercise correct judgement about their source, evolution, main content, form, scale, range, time, place, and the future. We should persuade people to gradually discard feudal superstitious dross of the old times. Proper religious activities held by religious professionals and believers, if they do not break the law and do no harm to people's spiritual health, should be respected and protected. Some chosen activities could be learned, reformed, and taken advantage of. The people's and the democratic essential should be promulgated and carried on. An attempt should be made to manage, but not to restrict, to open, but not to confuse. In recent years, cultural departments in Huzhu and Minhe counties have purposely helped to organize flower song competitions in various areas. They have delved deep into the masses to elicit information. They discovered and commended outstanding singers. They spread this folk art treasure. Thus these activities, in various places, have been organized better and better, and they have been very much welcomed by the people.

Secondly, as time passes, Monguor folk festivals and gatherings have been renewed and moved forward with the development of two civilizations.<sup>68</sup> Culture departments should add new forms and content which are popular, active, and healthy. This will make people's lives colorful and serve the construction of a socialist spiritual civilization. There were never such activities as local operas and *dengying* in the history of Huzhu and certain other areas. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Communist Party's Conference, in Zhuozhaguo Valley, Huzhu, the Monguor broke with old customs and voluntarily organized national local opera teams. They transplanted traditional dances such as *anzhao* into local operas having national and local features. This improved the joyous atmosphere of festivals. They have been accepted by the Monguor, and, furthermore, they are becoming important programs in local Spring Festival cultural activities. Farmer Li Jia, Li Peiling, and others, who live at the foot of East Mountain, Huzhu County, ardently love *dengying* art. They make stage props and organize national *dengying* training courses. They perform *dengying* in Monguor language during festivals and gatherings. This is warmly welcomed by the people. Another example is the Monguor unique sport activity, *lunziqiao*, which originally was a folk game involving wheels of wagons.<sup>69</sup> The Department of Culture and Sports in Huzhu County helped change the original wheels to wheels with metal bearings, which proved more active and convenient. In October of 1982, athletes chosen in Donggou, Taizi, and other areas represented Qinghai Province in the First Nationality Traditional Sports Meeting held in Hohhot,<sup>70</sup> Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Their singing-dancing performances with plateau national characteristics, received the attention of other nationalities and foreigners who attended. *China Pictorial* and *National Pictorial* reported and praised

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<sup>68</sup>[Spiritual and material.]

<sup>69</sup>[These were large wheels which people grasped. The wheel was elevated to a point where the person was lifted off his feet, which made rotation of the wheel easier. This is never seen in Minhe Monguor areas.]

<sup>70</sup>[Huhehaote, Guihua.]

them as a bright pearl of Oriental ethnic traditional sports activity. Now, in Donggou and some other Monguor areas, *lunziqou* is an activity during Monguor festivals and gatherings.

Traditional festivals and gatherings are very useful. In recent years, Leitaihui on the second of the second month, and certain gatherings, apart from traditional activities, have opened a new market for science and technology. With real objects, pictures, broadcasts, and lantern slides of various forms, all concerned departments propagate knowledge of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, agricultural machinery, daily electrics, law, health, birth control, and budgeting. They provide high-quality seeds and good products, disseminate scientific materials, and offer advice about science and technology. These represent a new content of cultural activities which are much welcomed. Particularly worthy of mention is the special new Respecting the Old Meeting which has recently arisen in Dazhuang in Donggou and Tangla of Huzhu. Old villagers sit together, discuss their feelings and the history of local areas, and teach young people national and productive knowledge. Young people express respect with liquor according to traditional customs, and sing and dance. County leaders attend the meeting and share happiness with them to encourage them to continue. This new form of festivals and gatherings, which is in line with Monguor national psychology and traditional moral customs, will certainly be continued and handed down. It will evolve into new national festivals and gatherings.

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2. *A Brief History of the Monguor Nationality* by the Qinghai People's Press.
3. *Beautiful Monguor Hometown* by the Huzhu Cultural Bureau.
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<sup>71</sup>[Only title and author are given.]



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## The Seventh Moon Meeting of the Guanting Monguor

*Ma Guangxing*

This translation has been prepared by Li Xuewei. It is taken from Ma (1981).

### Translation

#### 9.1 Origins

The Minhe County Monguor mainly dwell in Guanting and Zhongchuan Communes. Other Monguor live in Gangou Commune near Guanting. Their total population is about 30,000. Guanting is located on the north bank of the Yellow River, more than 80 kilometers south of Minhe County Town.

The seventh moon meeting is a traditional Monguor activity and is called "Nadun."<sup>72</sup> It begins at the middle of the seventh moon every year and lasts until the middle of the ninth moon. No one can explain the time of the origin of the Nadun, but there is the following account: A *duban* (an official) established jurisdiction over the area and established temples. Duban Liu was Feng Yuxiang's subordinate officer. His full name was Liu Yufen. In 1926, Feng Yuxiang gave Liu the general command of Gansu and made him Inspector of the Gansu military. Previously, warlords from the Ma family had entrenched themselves in Qinghai and there was much widespread unrest. The Ma family mercilessly suppressed ethnic rebellion and created suffering. After Feng Yuxiang gained control of Qinghai, he established a provincial government in September of 1929, made changes in the regional administrative system, and established Minhe County out of Ledu County. Warlords were thus restrained and weakened. Afterwards, a peaceful situation emerged in Northwest China and traditional folk literature and arts experienced a revival.

"The General Who Killed Ten Tigers" is a traditional Nadun dance. This performance indicates that this recreational activity of mass participation began at least during the time when Monguor ancestors herded. When they began their present mode of production--agriculture--they created dances that represent this.

When the seventh lunar month arrives, and the crops have been harvested, peasants who have toiled and labored in agricultural production can rest for a time and, with hearts filled with joy for the harvest, they begin Nadun. They have steamed bread and hot liquor. They sing and dance jubilantly and visit relatives and friends. Nadun is the Monguor's grand entertaining mass meeting. Because Nadun has much religious color, it was banned for 31 years after 1949. It was not until 1981 that Monguor revived Nadun.

#### 9.2 Dates and Places

The Song Family Village begins Nadun on the 12th of the seventh lunar month (Meiyi Brigade, Zhongchuan Commune). The schedule for other villages is given in Table 9.1.

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<sup>72</sup>[For more on the Nadun see Hu and Stuart (1989, 1990, 1992b, 1993).]

TABLE 9.1 Nadun Schedule<sup>73</sup>

<u>Lunar Month/Day</u>	<u>Family/Location Village</u>
7/13	E Village, Meiyi Brigade
7/14	Sangbura, Meier Brigade, Zhongchuan Commune
7/16	Wen, Qi, and Yang Villages, Meiyi Brigade, Jingtian Brigade
7/18	Wang Village, Qingquan Brigade
7/20	Xing Village, Qingquan Brigade
7/21	Ma family, Guanting Commune, Zhaomuchuan Brigade
7/28	Zhao Village, Zhaomuchuan Brigade
8/1	Yu Village, Zhaomuchuan Brigade
8/3	An Village, Zhaomuchuan Brigade
8/6	Shan and Zhao Villages, Zhaomuchuan Brigade
8/12	Dazi Village, Minzhu Brigade, Zhongchuan Commune
8/15	Si Village, Tuanjie Brigade
8/16	Hangdao Qi Village, Hexi Brigade
9/1	Baojiawanzi, Bao Family Brigade, Guanting Commune
9/3	Zhu Village, Xianfeng Brigade
9/4	Bao Family, Guanting Brigade
9/6	La Village, La Family Brigade
9/12	Guanting, Guanting Brigade
9/15	Zhu Village, family, Zhongchuan Commune, Guangming Brigade

### 9.3 Organization

The Nadun organizer is the *zhongjia*. He is helped by two *paitou*. They are elected and they must be obeyed. During organization, strict discipline prevails and those who do not participate, get drunk, or create disturbances, are punished by these leaders.

#### 9.3a Preparation

Generally, the festival requires several days of preparation and lasts for 1 day. First, a tent is set up to the north or west of the meeting place where the local village god is enshrined. On the altar is a memorial tablet inscribed with the god's title. Opposite the tablet there is a flag pole hung with a long

<sup>73</sup>Some locations in remote areas are not included in the foregoing list.

narrow flag. During preparation, drums, gongs, masks, and clothing are readied.

### 9.3b Process

Every household is expected to bring two steamed bread buns, liquor, and cigarettes on the day of the Nadun to the meeting place and give them to the *xianggong* or the *pangong*. The Nadun begins with greetings from the *huishou* (village procession) of the host village to the *huishou* of visiting villages. The *huishou* is 20-50 people who dance. They are arranged in the order of elder, middle-aged, and young. Elders wear long gowns, hold flags, and fans of various colors, and walk in front. They are followed by gongs and drum players. Behind the players are young people holding flags and willow branches. They dance to the rhythm of gongs and drums. At regular intervals, they shout *dahao* (very good) and after drinking several cups of spirits, they dance excitedly.

On this day, the *huishou* from one village meets the *huishou* of another. For example, when Nadun is held by the Wen, Qi, and Yang Village, Wang Family Village organizes *huishou* and visits the Wen, Qi, and Yang Village. Usually Nadun is held by one village, but sometimes it is held by two or three villages. For example, when Bao Village from Bao Village Brigade decides to hold Nadun, two *huishou* parades (La and Guanting villages) travel to the Bao Village to meet their *huishou*. In return, on the day when La Village holds Nadun, Guanting and Bao Village organize *huishou* and meet the *huishou* from La Village. Generally, the *huishou* place is fixed for greeting *huishou* from other villages. When visiting *huishou* arrive, the host *huishou* goes several hundred meters to greet them. All dancers form a circle and the circle goes around three times. Then, several old people burn incense and offer toasts in front of the visiting *huishou*. After this, they come together, shake hands, and shout *dahao* in high spirits. Drums and gongs beat wildly. Then the *huishou* proceed to the meeting place where the performance begins.

## 9.4 Importance

Nadun is a Monguor recreational activity corresponding to autumn harvest. It is a traditional Monguor folk art and vividly records their historical development. Nadun has three features: 1. Nadun are held when crops are ripe and ready for reaping. Xiachuan (Lower Position) in Meitian Brigade is located on level land. Because the elevation is lower, harvest time comes earlier and thus Nadun is earlier. Zhongchuan (middle position) in Jingtian and Qingquan brigades holds Nadun later than Xiachuan because their harvest time is several days later. Shangchuan (Upper Position) in the Guangting region and including other mountainous areas holds Nadun last.

2. Nadun are held by villages not just by people who have the same surname, although each Nadun is named with a particular surname, e.g., Songjia [Song is the family surname and *jia* means family] Nadun and Majia Nadun. In every village most residents have the same surname. The practice of "one temple, one Nadun" is the most important reason for people who have different surnames to hold a Nadun together. And this in turn, is closely related to irrigation. Two villages, although the majority of the people may have different surnames, jointly hold Nadun because both use one irrigation works and one river. In the past, land lacked water, so quarrels broke out, or people came to peaceful and friendly agreement. For instance, Songjia fought and went to court against the Wen, Qi, and Yang clans over the spring in Wenjia Gully. The latter clans united, established a single common temple, offered sacrifices to the same local god, and in this way, arranged production together.

3. Nadun are held in years of excellent harvest. Nadun are not held when there are calamities. From the Nadun dances, we can see a close relationship with production. "Zhuangjiaqi" (Farmer) is the first Nadun dance and tells the story of a father teaching his son the importance of agriculture. Through this dance, agricultural life is represented and extolled. "The General Who Killed Ten Tigers" shows how Monguor ancestors struggled against natural disaster and engaged in animal husbandry. This dance is mythologic. The story is not very clear, perhaps because of its antiquity.

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## The Monguor Masked Dance

Ma Guangxing

This translation has been prepared by Shao Jiahui and Li Xuewei. It is taken from Ma (1986).

### Translation

During the traditional "Seventh Month Meeting"<sup>74</sup> in the Guanting region of Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, the masked dance "The Warrior Who Slew Tigers" is performed by the Monguor.<sup>75</sup> It retains features of earlier times and helps us in better understanding productive activities, historical development, and Monguor religious beliefs

The warrior who slays tigers in this dance is a protective deity for man and livestock. The first part of the dance depicts two tigers and two oxen fighting. The tigers throw the oxen, suggesting that the oxen are defeated. The second part has young men of the audience rising and fighting with the tigers with each side experiencing moments of both victory and defeat. In the final part, the warrior brandishes a sword. Behind him [in years past, but not performed this way today] are two female fighters.<sup>76</sup> They each hold a shield and stand to the left and right sides of the tigers in attack positions. After several rounds of fighting, the warrior kills the tigers, ridding the people of a scourge.

According to historical records, in very early times, the Monguor herded. *The Brief History of the Monguor* has this description of productive activities in Minhe: "Agriculture developed quite early in Minhe County. During the Ming Dynasty there were certain areas which were Monguor herding lands. For example, Alagushan Mountains and Xingergou (Apricot Valley) were pasture land of Dongli Tusi, Chief of Monguor Tribes." The Monguor herded near where they lived. The place where Monguor now dwell around Guanting was called Three Plains (Sanchuan) in the past. This area is surrounded by mountains, faces the Yellow River to the south, is strategically located, and access is difficult. Even now, when people are digging on mountains, bulky tree roots, pottery fragments, and human skeletal remains are discovered. This indicates that, in remote antiquity, the area was surrounded by forests inhabited by man. In the southeast of Sanchuan the landscape is level and named Salamawan. From this name we know it must have been a favorable place for herding horses. Under such natural conditions, tigers, wolves, leopards, and snakes emerged to endanger man and livestock at will.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>[The Seventh Month Meeting Ma refers to is Nadun which may be translated as "play" or "recreation" (*nada:m* in Mongol) and is a harvest festival. The Taoist warrior deity Erlang, is taken from his shrine and moved, seated in a sedan, from village to village in a prescribed order. The day Erlang is in residence is the day Nadun is held. It is a complex public ritual, featuring a number of dances and songs.]

<sup>75</sup>[Monguor of Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County live primarily in the south of the county in densely populated villages.]

<sup>76</sup>[All Nadun performers are male, but several roles are those of females.]

<sup>77</sup>[*Sala* is Monguor suggesting the herding of animals to a location and then letting them roam as they please. *Ma* is Chinese for "horse." *Wan* is also Chinese, and may be translated as "bay." Thus Salamawan may be described as a place where horses are taken to roam freely. Ma's point is that

The dance vividly expresses the Monguor determination and desire to overcome beasts and protect man and livestock. When the tigers throw the oxen, the audience becomes excited, drums beat wildly, and the audience shouts, "Come on, young men, defeat the tigers!" Following these shouts, young men who are somewhat intoxicated, get up and fight with the tigers. They lock together producing a scene that is profoundly affecting. The emotions of the audience and actors mingle. Then an old man rises and invites a warrior to struggle with the tigers on behalf of the people. The warrior accepts and immediately dashes out, waving his sword with the vigorous movements of a dancer and defeats the tigers. The hero who slew tigers for the people was worshipped as a god by the Monguor.

Folklore recounts that the warrior was actually a mountain god. One day a monkey lured two tigers down from the mountain who then devoured two oxen. Afterwards, people and livestock were often attacked by tigers. People were thus forced to ascend the mountains and ask Mountain God for help. He promised to help them and, seated in a sedan, and accompanied by two female fighters, descended the mountain. As the two tigers were attacking people, Mountain God jumped from his sedan, pulled out two swords, and struggled with the tigers. Two female fighters helped him and finally they killed the two tigers. Afterwards, people lit joss sticks and lamps in worship of Mountain God. As the saying goes, "If Mountain God does not open his mouth, then tigers will not eat people."<sup>78</sup>

An examination of the warrior's clothing reveals that he wears a fighting robe, holds a sword, and wears an ox-head mask. This explains why local people call him Ox Prince of the Devils. In fact, a human body with an animal head is the mark of a protective god for both people and livestock. While the warrior dances, he bends his knees and performs with jumping steps. This is explained in legend as Mountain God leaping from his sedan when he saw the tigers before the sedan stopped. Less believable, but suggested by some, is that the warrior thus imitates animal behavior.

Another detail to be noted is that [years ago] there were two female fighters in the dance. In legend they were supposedly adjutants of the Mountain God. However, based on the roles that they performed in the dance, they were the warrior's spouses. Judging from the dances performed in the Seventh Moon Meeting, every father and son who appear in the performances are followed by their spouses. The wives walk behind. In the plays "San Guan San Niang" (Three Officials and Three Women), and "Wu Guan Wu Niang" (Five Officials and Five Women), the actors are couples. The only differences between these plays and the dance "The Warrior Who Slew Tigers" was that the warrior was followed by two females.

It is not clear to us how Monguor marriage customs evolved. However, if it was acceptable for the warrior to have two wives, it does tell us something about Monguor marriage relations in early times. Monguor oral legends and tales have heroes married to several women. The warrior hero taking two wives to conquer the evil tigers is reasonable. The two female fighters, or wives, display unusual courage in holding shields and jointly attacking the tigers. This is inconceivable for women of a later feudal age. After the [Minhe] Monguor were influenced by Han culture and controlled by feudal dogma, the Guanting Monguor women began binding their feet. We cannot envision a woman with bound feet being able to fight beasts of prey. Doubtless, in the dance, the magnificent feats of the two females indicate that Monguor women played an important role in earlier productive activities. After Monguor marriage commonly came to be monogynous, people likely felt uneasy that the warrior, the strongest god, was followed by two females. Thus, when the dance is performed now, the two females have disappeared. We know the details of the dance as performed in the past from local aged people.

The dance embraces a number of complex religious phenomena, stemming from worship of the warrior hero. All dances, this one included, are performed in front of village temples during the

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today, the area known as Salamawan is densely populated with every bit of land farmed. The name thus indicates that in times past, the situation was much different. Another dialectical variant refers to this area as "Samawan."

<sup>78</sup>[Only if Mountain God orders, will tigers eat people.]

Seventh Month Meeting.<sup>79</sup> During this day of celebration, streamers are hung, local gods are consecrated, and sacrifices are offered to the deities. All the dances thank the gods and beseech them for peace. It is believed that if the people cannot defeat the tigers in the dance, they will not have the power to escape from beasts in life. Therefore, when the actors, wearing tiger masks, throw the oxen, all the audience give oral encouragement to the young men, who then rise and fight with the two tigers. The audience unconsciously feels that their own security and the outcome of the battle are closely linked. Additionally, the hero in the form of a golden powder-covered statue is worshipped by local people in village temples. Before Liberation in the Xin Family Village Temple in Qingquan Village, Sanchuan, there was a statue with a ferocious face. It held a double-bladed sword, and squatted in the mountains. Near his feet was a wooden post to which a clay tiger was tied with an iron chain.

It is commonly held in traditional opera circles that "Baiqinxi" ("Hundreds of Animals Play"), of the Han Dynasty [BC206-AD280], marked the beginning of traditional Chinese opera as an independent art form. The play "Dong Hai Huang Gong" was one of the earliest plays. In this play the lead, Huang Gong, is able to control tigers through magic, but after he grows old he is too weak and too much affected by liquor. He loses his magic and is eaten by tigers. However, in "The Warrior Who Slew Tigers," the warrior has divine attributes and supernatural power.

Another difference between "Dong Hai Huang Gong" and the "The Warrior Who Slew Tigers" is that, in the former, there is no record of wrestling. However, in the latter, there is wrestling between the oxen and the tigers. The stronger one gets the upper hand and there is no holding back or pretense in the wrestling. This wrestling continues until the hero comes.<sup>80</sup> The tigers are then unable to resist and are slain.

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<sup>79</sup>[Many Nadun are performed on large threshing grounds some distance from village temples.]

<sup>80</sup>[This is the only time Minhe Monguor publicly wrestle.]

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## Monguor Funerals<sup>81</sup>

Qu Qingshan

This translation has been done by Li Xuewei. It is taken from Qu (1985).

### Translation

Study of different nationalities' customs is vital and helpful in our efforts to find the historical locus of various nationalities. This article examines Monguor funerals with this in mind. The Monguor inhabit the northeast part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and mountainous areas of the southeast foot of the Qilian Mountains. Total population is 133,000 (1981). Monguor live in Huzhu, Minhe and Datong counties, and Huangnan Prefecture in Qinghai Province, and in Tianzhu County in Gansu Province. They have distinctive customs and language. Funerals are distinctive.

In Minhe County, cremation is only for people who died abnormally and for children.<sup>82</sup> Ground burial is for everyone else and should be completed within three or seven days. Lamas are invited to chant scriptures and old people chant *mani* for the dead. When the last day comes, friends and relatives of the deceased come to the *bier* to offer *khadakh*, steamed bread, and condolences to family members. At death, clothing is removed and the corpse is placed in a squatting position with palms together and the two thumbs propped against the chin. The thumbs are bound together with white cloth, 5 *cun* in length. A *burila* (coat much like a cape) and a cloth apron (yellow for the old; white for the young) are placed on the corpse. The corpse is encoffined in a wooden sedan *bier*. Generally, the *bier* sedan for the old is elaborately made. It just accommodates the squatting corpse and is shaped like a temple on which are delicately carved pictures, designs, and flowers. On the *bier* top, the sun and moon are carved and painted.

The *bier* is carried to the cremation site on the day of cremation and the corpse is positioned facing west. The corpse is placed in a stove with cypress needles, the needles are lit, and the sedan is broken. The broken pieces are put with the cypress to be burnt. Usually three days after cremation the ashes are placed in a 1 *chi* (0.33 meters) long wooden box or porcelain pot and buried temporarily in a chosen place to wait for the next Day of Pure Brightness. After this day, ashes may be buried in the ancestral grave.

From the above we know that the Monguor funeral includes cremation and ash burial. As to ground burial, I do not think it is original with the Monguor. The reason for ground burial is that the Monguor have lived with other nationalities for several generations and have been influenced by their funeral customs. Ma Xiyuan, magistrate of Huzhu County during the 1930s, noted in his *Investigation of the Huzhu County Monguor* that lamas were customarily invited to chant after a pauper died. If the person was rich, honored lamas were invited to chant. When chanting finished, the corpse was carried to remote fields and cremated. Now let us examine this custom and how it came into existence. Was this funeral custom influenced by other nationalities or was it handed down from earlier Monguor? The following are funeral customs of several ethnic groups that have lived with the Monguor.

1. Hui practice ground burial and do not use coffins.
2. Tibetans practice sky, water, and ground burials. The first is the main form. Lamas chant for the

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<sup>81</sup>[For more on the Monguor funeral see Stuart and Hu (1992a).]

<sup>82</sup>[Among the Minhe Monguor, highly ritualized cremation is reserved mostly for lamas. Those who have died "unnaturally," that is, young people, may be burned but in a hurried way.]

dead, the corpse is carried to a remote place, and butter, barley, and grass are burned to call "holy vultures." Family members and invited monks dismember the corpse, remove the five internal organs, pound them, and wait for "holy vultures" to eat the corpse. If the birds consume all the corpse, it is auspicious. If they do not, lamas chant repeatedly. Water disposal is conducted for beggars, widowers, widows, and abandoned orphans. In recent years, vultures have been increasingly caught and killed in some agricultural areas along the Yellow River. Consequently, many Tibetans no longer have sky funerals. They have replaced it with water disposal. Those dead from infectious diseases and criminals sentenced to death are buried in the ground, meaning that they can have no next life.

3. Mongols<sup>83</sup> practice ground and field burial. Remote field disposal begins with lamas chanting. After chanting, a horse takes the corpse to a distant place. The corpse holds a Tibetan scripture book in the left hand. Under the head is placed a small pillow. The corpse is covered with a white cloth and people leave. When the next day comes, people return to see if the corpse has been eaten by birds and animals. If it has, it is a propitious sign. If not, people worriedly begin chanting till the corpse is devoured or they may place the corpse on an old horse cart. The horse runs wildly on the vast grassland till the corpse is thrown off and the horse returns. Corpses left in the wild are eaten by animals. This sort of field burial is very similar to Tibetan celestial disposal.

Ground burial is conducted mainly in regions where Mongols live with Han Chinese. Tibetanized Mongols cremate and place the ashes in a pagoda, in addition to the disposals mentioned above. However, cremation and pagoda burial are only conducted for certain people. After a Living Buddha and lama die, spices are placed on their bodies and the corpses are burned. Ashes are collected in golden or silver vessels by their disciples to be enshrined and worshipped. But this is a limited practice, otherwise, the gods will be blasphemed and trouble will ensue.

After Tibetan kings, princes, and Living Buddhas die, Tibetans cremate them. Their ashes are returned to temples and mixed with wheat to make a wheat cake which is placed in a round-shaped pagoda. Mongols cremate those dead from illness and certain women, regardless of wealth. Tibetans never do, for it would break a taboo. For Mongols, the raging fires of cremation atone for crimes and they can obtain a new life. In addition, we know that Han Chinese began cremation in remote and small village regions during the Northern Song Dynasty [AD 960-1127]. Most cremations were the result of a lack of land and other objective factors. The Qinghai Han also cremate young people dead from sudden illnesses. Most Monguor prefer to be cremated. Their ashes are placed in a box, and then the box is buried in a grave.

If we examine Qinghai's history, we find that the Qiang [Chiang] nationality was the earliest living on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. They lived by animal husbandry and were one of the earliest nationalities to cremate their dead before the dissemination of Buddhism into China. In terms of the relationship between the Qiang and the Monguor, the Tuyuhun conquered and assimilated the Qiang and maintained a government for 350 years. Various histories indicate that the Tuyuhun practiced ground burial. It is likely that the Monguor owe part of their origins to the Tuyuhun. Thus it is not difficult to accept the two Monguor funeral processes. Questions about possible changes in Qiang funerals over several thousand years are legitimate. There have been changes, but the basic nature has not changed. Customs of the modern Qiang prove this. There are more than 80,000 Qiang living in Maowung, Lixian, and Wenchuan Counties along the upper reaches of the Ming River in Sichuan Province. They are not Buddhist. However, Qiang cremation is very similar to the Monguor's. Ashes are placed in small boxes and buried in cremation graves. Qiang ground burial is the same as the Monguor's, the consequence of Han influence during the Qing Dynasty.

Another indication of a relationship between the Monguor and Qiang is from the statue of the Huoer general in Youning Temple in Huzhu County. It is called Wandangaro and Niqiang (master of this place). The Huoer were the original inhabitants of Huzhu before Genghis Khan's senior general, Gerilite, stationed his army in Huzhu. Thus the statue in this Tibetan Buddhist temple must have

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<sup>83</sup>[What particular people does this refer to? Ledu Mongols have been sinicized as have large numbers of Tibetans. The most traditional Mongol-speaking Mongols in Qinghai live in Haixi Mongol and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, who do not practice the burial rituals described here.]



religious significance. It is very difficult for us to study and make this clear because the Monguor have not recorded their history. According to folktales and legends, we understand Niqiang refers to the Huor people and that the Niqiang are ancestors of the Monguor. Also, many Huzhu Monguor named Qiangsha and Maqiang live in Dazhuang Brigade and Donggou Commune. Clearly they are Qiang descendants. In short, when the Xianbei conquered the Qiang, there were some political, economic, and custom changes. After the Tuyuhun founded their country, although some of the upper class still conducted ground burial at certain times, yet most conquered Qiang did not accept and follow this custom.

These two types of funeral customs represent the process of combination during history. Cremation and ground burial customs have been inherited by Tuyuhun descendants. Qiang cremation is the origin of Monguor funeral customs.

## Part III: Folktales

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## Huzhu Monguor Folktales

### Black Horse Zhang

A couple in their 50s had neither sons nor daughters, only a black mare which they reared as carefully as a child. The mare became pregnant, but at the birth there was no foal, only a pack of flesh. Surprised and disappointed, they frowned and stared at it blankly, but were reluctant to dispose of it, so opened it. Ah! How very strange that a fair and chubby boy was inside. He woke up just then, gave a yawn, stretched, and opened round eyes. What a lovely child! Delighted, the old couple deliberated over what name to give and decided that, as the black mare had given birth to him, Black Horse would be suitable.

Time flies like an arrow and, with tender care, before the couple realized it, the boy was 10-years-old. Not only was he very clever, but he also lavished loving care on the old couple who considered him a pearl in their palm and never let him go far from home. Black Horse realized his parents were aging and knew in time he would be the pillar of the family. He decided to go out into the world and gain experiences and learn skills. He proposed this to his parents and, although they were rather apprehensive, they agreed.

His father gave him a precious sword, a bow, and three arrows and said, "These are family heirlooms, handed down from our ancestors. Use them to deal with evildoers and protect yourself, but never hurt a good person." The boy's mother gave him a bag with food and said, "Depend on parents when at home and rely on friends when you leave. My dear son, remember that he who praises you when you first meet may be evil and he who curses you may be good." Black Horse kept his parents' words in mind, swung the bag over his shoulder, took the sword, and said farewell. The proverb "Thousands of days are easy to spend when at home, but the first day away is difficult," is true. Black Horse experienced all the privations of being away from home. On his travels he ate hard food and parched flour when hungry and drank spring water when thirsty. But such hardships did not cause him to deviate from his intentions.

One day as Black Horse walked along a rugged mountain path he found a stone as large as a mill. Through a gap in the stone, he saw black smoke curling up. Drawing his bow, he took out an arrow and shot the stone. At once, out from under the stone, a young man cursed loudly, "If you want to go up or down the hill, do so, but why shoot at my home?" Black Horse remembered before leaving home that his mother had advised him a bad person was not necessarily the one who cursed at the first meeting. He went up to the young man and said, "Nevermind. I want to be your friend because I'm away from my home. If I did not shoot your home, you would never have come out. Beg pardon, but may I know your surname? How old are you? How many people are there in your family?" The young man replied, "I was orphaned while very young and live alone under this stone. I live by hunting with my bow. I don't know my surname. Because I live under the stone, you may call me Stone. I'm 18." Black Horse replied, "You are two years older than I, so I'll call you Elder Brother."

Black Horse and Stone stayed under the boulder overnight and the next morning travelled together with food, bows, and arrows. On the way, they noticed black smoke was curling out from an old tree. Black Horse shot the tree and out from under came a fellow cursing, "If you want to go up or down the hill do so. My home isn't in your way. It seems you having nothing to do." Black Horse and Stone approached, saluted him, and said, "We want to make friends because we are away from home. If we had not shot your house, you would not have come out. Excuse us, may we know your surname? How old are you? How many family members do you have?" The young man replied, "My parents died long ago and I now live alone under this tree. I live by cutting firewood with my ax. I don't know my surname, but because I live under a tree, you may call me Wood. I'm 17." The other two introduced themselves and they became sworn brothers. Stone was 18, the eldest, so they called him Elder Brother Stone. Wood, who was 17, was called Second Brother Wood. Black Horse was

the youngest and they called him Third Brother Black Horse Zhang.

The three brothers stayed the night at Wood's home. The following morning they gathered their baggage, money, and arms and set out. Their journey was both long and arduous. When they reached a green hill with clear water nearby. They decided to live there. Using large stones from the hill, they constructed courtyard walls and found local wood to build a cottage.

The three brothers hunted and cut firewood. Living conditions were somewhat difficult, but they had much leisure time and were carefree. They practiced archery and the use of their sword and ax and improved their martial skills.

One day the three went uphill to hunt and cut firewood as usual. It was very near the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the birthday of Jade Emperor's queen. Temples in man's world were full of burning incense, creating much smoke that ascended to South Heaven's gate, causing it to open. Just as it opened, three fairy maidens on their way to celebrate the Jade Emperor's queen's birthday passed by and looked down at earth. What green mountains, clear water, drooping old trees, hundreds of blooming flowers, dancing bees, and butterflies! The small yard of man's world seemed better than a jeweled palace. What could be better than three handsome young men who hunted and trained their martial skills? After gazing at them, the three fairy maidens truly felt man's world was superior to Paradise. For a short time, they couldn't help preventing the idea of descending to the world from entering their minds. But they also were mindful of the fact that the fairy maiden who did so violated heavenly mandate and would be punished. They looked at each other in speechless dismay and, for a short time, not one maid dared reveal her yearning heart's urges.

As the saying goes, "A distant marriage is joined by a thread. There is a happy marriage between man's world and Paradise." The three fairy maidens finally disregarded the yoke of heavenly rule, became three white doves, slowly descended to the world, and flew into the young men's yard among mountains and woods. They removed their dove plume coats, rolled up their sleeves, and washed their hands clean to prepare lunch. One boiled tea, one baked cakes, and one boiled meat. In a short time, lunch was ready and on the dining table. Then they put on their white dove plume coats and flew away.

The three brothers were very hungry and thirsty after hunting and cutting firewood. Returning home ready to prepare lunch, they were surprised to find lunch already on the table. A tantalizing aroma of delicious food assailed their nostrils. The three did not stop eating to ponder where the food had come from, they just ravenously ate it. After eating their fill, they wondered who had prepared the meal.

The next day the three brothers went uphill to hunt and cut firewood as usual. Returning home, lunch was again ready and on the table. After lunch, the three decided that they must solve this mystery. Who was cooking and where did they come from? They decided that two of them would go up the hill the next day while Stone, being the eldest, would stay behind to keep watch. The next morning Wood and Black Horse left and Stone stayed behind. He squatted at the courtyard entrance reasoning that anyone would have to pass through if they wished to enter. He never left this post. At noon, the other two brothers returned and asked if something had happened. Stone answered, "No one has been here." The three brothers entered and, as before, found tea and lunch prepared. The two younger brothers asked if Eldest Brother had been sleeping. Stone replied, "I watched the courtyard doorway vigilantly and didn't go anywhere. I didn't even close my eyes." After lunch they decided that Wood would stay behind the next day. The next day Wood repeatedly circled the house, but saw less than a person's shadow. Then he hid behind the courtyard door, but didn't see anything from there either. When the other two returned, lunch and tea were waiting as before. The two brothers asked Wood if he had left home. Wood answered, "When you left, I circled the house and hid behind the door. I didn't go anywhere, even for a moment. I didn't even sit to rest."

The third day brought Black Horse's turn to keep watch. He neither waited by the doorway nor circled the house. Instead, he lay on the bed and feigned sleep, keeping his eyes half open. Just past noon three white doves suddenly flew in and removed white dove plume coats and immediately became three lovely girls. Rolling up their sleeves, they washed their hands and began preparing lunch. Black Horse squinted to see better, but dared not make even the sound of breathing. He noted

that one baked cakes, one boiled tea, and one boiled meat. Their movements were so soft and deft that not a sound was made. When lunch was ready, they began putting on their plume coats. Black Horse suddenly jumped up and grabbed their coats. The three fairy maidens were surprised and didn't know what to do. Third Sister besought, "Please return our coats Third Brother!" Black Horse smiled broadly and said politely, "Excuse me, but where are you three sisters from? Why do you prepare lunch for us? If you explain I'll return your coats." Third Sister answered shyly, "We are fairy maidens from heaven. We watched you three brothers go uphill to hunt and cut firewood every day. Your lives are really difficult and we want to help you." Black Horse said, "It's said there are gleaming golden Buddha palaces, exotic flowers and grasses, and evergreen trees in paradise. You accept incense smoke from earth and don't need food. Why do you descend to the world?" His questions caused the eldest and next eldest sister to blush like lush peach blossoms. They hung their heads and said nothing. Third Sister spoke up, "It's true that paradise is not a bad place, but man's world is better!"

"Why?"

"There are no young men like you in paradise!"

"Thank you sisters! You have given up comfort in paradise for the three brothers, and have descended to the world to suffer a hard life with us. Thank you for helping us!"

Wood and Stone returned while Black Horse was chatting and laughing with the three maidens. Black Horse introduced them: "These are my two older brothers. This is Eldest Brother Stone, this is Next Eldest Brother Wood, and I am the youngest brother, Third Brother Black Horse Zhang." Stone and Wood were so delighted all they could do was speechlessly smile. From that time on, the three young couples led a happy life in the beautiful scenic mountains and woods. The three brothers went to the mountains hunting and cutting firewood daily while the three young wives prepared food and took care of the home. Their lives were sweeter than honey.

They had a cat and, before the brothers left each day, they reminded the sisters, "Never forget to give the cat some of the food you eat. If you don't, it will be angry and put out the fire." One day the sisters roasted wheat and forgot to give the cat some. The cat angrily dipped its tail in water, and sprinkled it on the fire in the cooking stove, putting it out. The young women had to go out and borrow coals. Eldest Sister looked everywhere nearby, but couldn't find any. Second Sister looked far from home, but also found nothing. Third Sister walked still further and glimpsed black smoke rising from a cavern. She entered and found an old white-haired woman lying on a bed. She begged for some coals. The old woman said, "I can give you some. I'll also give you a handful of rape seed which you may sow all the way to your doorway as you go home." Third Sister gathered some coals and sowed the seeds as she returned home. When she arrived she looked back and saw rape had grown up and was full of yellow blossoms. Not long afterwards, the old woman transformed herself into a nine-headed demon and followed the rape blossoms to the three fairy maidens' home.

One day Eldest Sister awoke sallow and emaciated and was unable to get out of bed. The three sisters realized this was due to her blood having been sucked by the demon. The three brothers decided that the following day Stone would remain and vanquish the demon. With his bow and arrows he steadfastly watched from the doorway the entire day, but did not see the nine-headed demon. In fact, the demon entered through a window and sucked the blood of Second Sister. She became thin and haggard, lay on the bed, and could not rise.

The next day, Wood stayed behind and watched by the window. The day passed, but he didn't see the nine-headed demon. In fact, she entered through a crack in the wall and sucked away Third Sister's blood. She became wan and emaciated, lay in bed, and was not able to rise.

Black Horse was left to keep guard and defeat the demon the next day. He neither stood at the doorway nor watched by the window, instead, he hid on top of the door, quietly holding his sword, patiently waiting. At noon there was a blast of strange air. He saw the nine-headed demon pop her head in and look about. She glanced at the doorway, the window, and the wall crack, but saw no one, so entered. Black Horse swung his sword, cutting off one head. With a blood-curdling screech she ran to the window. Black Horse, quick of eye and deft of hand, jumped outside the window. No sooner did she stick some heads out than he swung his sword and another head was gone. She turned,

attempting to escape through the crack in the wall, but scarcely had she thrust her remaining necks out than another head was severed. She gave two horrible yelps and fled. Black Horse did not pursue her.

When the other two brothers returned and saw that Third Brother had severed three of the demon's heads, they praised his valor and bravery. At this time, the three sisters had strengthened somewhat and were able to get up. Black Horse said, "Although I've cut off three of her heads, if we don't take advantage of her wounds and kill her, she'll surely take revenge after she heals." The elder brothers agreed.

The next day they rose early. Stone took his bow and arrows, Wood grasped his ax, and Black Horse held his sword. Together they set off to look for the demon's lair, following her blood trail, and came to a little shepherd herding livestock. They asked about the demon. He answered, "Yesterday she was out to do mischief. It's no wonder she lost three heads. After I finished herding, she ordered me to lick her cuts. I licked several times then she cursed me, saying my tongue was too rough. She ordered me to go to the kitchen to drink a bowl of milk. I drank some, licked her wounds for awhile, and she fell asleep."

Black Horse told the child he would take his place that night. He killed a cow and a dog and cut out their tongues. When the sun set and the stars came out, they followed the livestock and the little shepherd into the demon's cavern. Stone watched the front entrance while Wood guarded the rear. Black Horse and the child entered the demon's lair where she lay groaning on her bed. When she heard someone entering, she asked the child to come near and lick her cuts. Black Horse took out the cow's tongue and wiped her wounds several times. This was very painful and the demon ordered the child to quickly drink milk. A bit later, Black Horse wiped the demon's cuts with the dog's tongue. Feeling some comfort, she gradually fell sound asleep. Then Black Horse drew his sword and cut off three of her heads with one blow. She howled and ran out, only to lose another head to Stone's arrow. She turned and raced to the rear, but lost another head to Wood's ax. Dazed by the pain she dashed madly about. Black Horse sprang upon her and severed her only remaining head. The cruel demon lay on her back, thrashed about for a time, and then died.

The three brothers gave the demon's livestock to the little shepherd and merrily returned home among the mountains and woods. They collected their belongings, and with the three sisters, went to Black Horse's home. The old couple was so happy when the three brothers and their flowerish wives arrived that their mouths gaped open in wonder.<sup>84</sup>

### **A Peacock**

Long ago in a secluded Monguor village there lived a diligent and beautiful girl named Suojie. Her mother had died when she was three. She lived with her father, a venomous man constantly yearning for money. He treated his own blood daughter mercilessly.

When she was 17, Suojie was the most beautiful girl in the entire village. Her face resembled a blooming peony and her eyes were like dewdrops rolling down a flower. Her black hair flashed just like black china. All the village young men were attracted. Each hoped she would marry him. But no one dared make an offer of marriage. Everyone understood that she loved a young shepherd named Abu, who lived in the same small village. Abu was brave and kindhearted. He had grown up with Suojie and they had been fond of each other since childhood. When they matured, they secretly promised to marry. But the girl's father did not consent to the marriage, for he wanted his daughter to wed the richest and most impressive man possible. When meeting someone he said, "My daughter is the most beautiful in the world. I will only allow her to marry a wealthy and powerful man so she may enjoy glory all her life and I'll share in this good fortune." After this news spread, many came to make marriage offers--so many that the family's threshold was nearly worn away.

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<sup>84</sup>Teller [TE]: Li Songduo; Compiler [CMP]: Li Youlou; Chinese-English Translator [CET]: Zhou Lijun

Three sons of local wealthy families came--the village chief's son, the county magistrate's son, and the pasture chief's boy. The village chief's son resembled a tall thin tree. The county magistrate's son looked like a broom. And the pasture chief's son was so fat that he looked like a beer barrel. When the three stood together they were a very comical sight, made all the more so by their attempts to appear as polite and refined as scholars.

The village chief's son spoke first, "Prettiest girl in the world, please marry me. My family's fields are as vast as the blue sky. If you were to be my wife, you would enjoy endless happiness and glory all your life." Suojie did not so much as raise her head, causing him to awkwardly back away.

The county magistrate's broomish young master tried next. He respectfully saluted Suojie and said, "Most beautiful girl, please marry me. My father is a county leader and our money is piled as high as the Kunlun Mountains. My family's jewels are as many as the drops of water in Qinghai Lake.<sup>85</sup> If you marry me, you would not only enjoy good fortune, but be a powerful mistress. Only by doing this are you worthy of your beauty." Suojie sneered without looking at him. He backed away, blushing.

The pasture chief's boy stepped forward and seemed to be worshipping a buddha, kneeling before the girl. He said, "Most beautiful girl, most precious pearl in the world, please marry me. My father's grassland is as vast as the blue sky. If you marry me, I'm sure you'll never want for food and clothing. You can live anywhere you wish..." Before he could finish Suojie left the room. Dejectedly the three young men departed. The girl's father then angrily beat Suojie with a stick. Although beaten black and blue, she did not give in. In her heart of hearts the young shepherd Abu still remained.

At dusk, as sunset glow scattered across the sky, she leaned against a white poplar, gazed at the green mountains, and sang:

*Oh blow you winds,  
Dishevel my hair.  
My dear sweetheart,  
When do you come to me?"*

As Abu was grazing his sheep the winged winds brought the girl's song, nearly breaking his heart. Forgetting all else, he went to her. When she told him what had happened, he felt as though his heart was being slashed by a knife. His eyes filled with tears, but he was unwilling for Suojie to suffer. Holding her hand, he sadly said, "My dear sister, I can never repay your loving kindness. But if good fortune is within your grasp, please leave poor Abu." "A great river never flows backward, the sun never rises in the west, and Suojie's heart will always beat with her sweetheart's," Suojie answered.

Enraged over Suojie's rejection, the three unsuccessful suitors plotted how to get her. They decided to imprison Abu. Each also secretly made his own plan and wanted to be the first to arrest Abu. The county magistrate's servants acted the fastest. The young master greatly embellished the story of his making an offer of marriage and Suojie's subsequent refusal. The magistrate was enraged, thinking Suojie had been disrespectful to him and his office. That very night 1,000 soldiers were sent to arrest and imprison Abu.

The night was as dark as a pot bottom and Abu, in prison, sorely missed Suojie. He sang:

*Why is the night so dark?  
Isn't a storm brewing?  
My dear sister, please trust me!  
My heart is as lofty as the Qilian Mountains.  
No matter how heavy the storm,  
It can't move me.  
My love will flow thousands of years as*

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<sup>85</sup>[The Mongol for "Qinghai Lake" is Koko Nor.]

*The Datong River's water.  
Looking up at the sky's golden stars,  
I'm expecting dawn,  
Oh, I'm expecting dawn!*

Thunder rumbled engulfing Abu's song into the glossy night's storm. Knowing Abu was imprisoned, Suojie felt as if her heart was being pounded with a hammer. How long the night! Thunder rumbled, the girl's heart was crying. Rain poured and the girl's tears streamed down her cheeks as a river overflows its banks.

The next day the magistrate sent people to force Suojie to marry his son. Suojie's father knew she would refuse if she was forced. He persuaded with sweet words and, unexpectedly, she consented, but stipulated that Abu must be freed at once, she was to meet him three times daily, and after three days, other suitors might woo. The shepherd was released and the lovers met three times daily, talked of love, and secretly planned to run away on the third night when everyone was sleeping. Unfortunately, Suojie's father learned of this and cruelly beat Suojie once more, and confined her to a dark room. Afterwards, Abu could not see her. He was very sad. Every evening at dusk, he faced the setting sun and poured out this love song:

*Oh! The sun,  
We should say goodbye now,  
When will another dawn come?  
We will meet again.  
Oh my dear sister,  
We are apart.  
The sun rises,  
The sun sets,  
But when shall we meet again?*

He sang till the sunset glow lifted, the singing rising and falling like waves. When night came, he faced the moon and countless stars, singing. His song spread throughout the grassland, passing the thick woods, echoed by the mountains. He did not return home, just roamed about singing. He came to a lake whose water was vast and tempestuous. He wandered about the lake shore, his feelings as unsettled as the lake waves. At dusk the lake was beautiful and quiet. The crystalline moon's reflection shone from the lake, and silver moonlight lay sprinkled on the lake's surface like broken silver. He sang to the lake water:

*Oh, lake water,  
You pair the fish.  
Why don't you let me meet my lover?  
Oh! Moon,  
Your soft light illuminates the world,  
Why don't you let me sing with my lover?*

Abu sang with all his heart which proved so moving that as soon as he stopped, a lotus emerged from the water surface with a kind, white-haired man seated on top. He smiled and said, "Sincere young man, hurry to your girl. Her eyes are swollen from weeping for you and her heart is broken. She needs your comfort." He gave him a peacock plume and said, "Place this on your head and you will become a peacock. Fly wherever you wish. Please go, brave young man! I wish your meeting to be joyous." He nodded at the young shepherd and in a twinkling, he and the lotus vanished. Dazed, Abu suddenly understood, put the plume on his head, and was immediately transformed into a beautiful peacock. He flew merrily to Suojie.

Meanwhile, though the cruel-hearted father could lock his daughter in a dark room, he could not



lock her heart which was firmly bonded to the shepherd's. Every night as she fell asleep, she dreamed of herding and singing with Abu. But when she awoke she found herself alone and her heart broke anew. In time, she had no more tears to shed. Her body became so thin that she no longer resembled a young girl, but none sympathized with her plight.

The three suitors intrigued with her father, but though they conjured up many tricks, Suojie never relented. Finally, for want of anything else, they gathered outside the dark room's window and sang vulgar love songs, giving vent to all they knew. But it seemed Suojie never heard. After some time, and with nothing new to sing, they repeated songs that they felt were the best. Late at night, exhausted from singing, they fell into a piggish sleep. Then a peacock flew down and perched outside the dark room's window. After pulling the plume from his head, the peacock became a handsome young man. As Abu was about to speak to Suojie a sad song wafted from the room.

*Oh! The moon,  
Why is your light so dim?  
Oh! The night,  
Why is it so long?  
My sweetheart, where are you?  
In this dark room,  
Whom do I pour out my sufferings to?  
Whom do I pour them out to?*

As soon as Abu heard Suojie's song, he excitedly sang outside the window:

*No matter how dark the moon,  
It sends forth light!  
No matter how long the night,  
It's always true dawn will come!  
Oh! My dear sister,  
Your Abu comes to see you now!  
Sufferings filling your heart,  
You can pour out to me now.  
Please pour them out now!*

Afterwards, when the three suitors were tired from singing and fast asleep, the two lovers met at the window which seemed an uncrossable abyss. Many days passed and the girl's father learned of the meetings and informed the three suitors. Amazed, they did not believe it, for they kept watch nearly the entire day and night. They had never seen so much as a man's shadow. They accused the old man of making fun of them. That night however, they did not sleep. When the peacock flew down, they were so frightened that they huddled together, unable to utter a sound. The next day a cruel plan was devised to kill Abu. That night, when the peacock lit on the window's edge and became the shepherd, they suddenly jumped out from a dark place and rushed at him. Abu looked at Suojie and was unwilling to leave, but she urged him to go quickly, telling him not to think about her. Suojie said frantically, "Rush to Lake God. He'll think of a way to help." Prompted and encouraged he placed the plume on his head, spread his wings, and flew away. Not stopping to rest, he reached the lake shore and cried out to the lake water, "Lake God! I beg you to help us! Why do you let me see my lover? Why don't you free her? She suffers and my heart feels as if it were being slashed by a knife." The lotus with the seated old man appeared once more. The smiling old man said, "You, young man, are loyal and steadfast to your love, so I'll help. I'll give you another plume for your lover and also a handful of sleep-inducing animals<sup>86</sup> and three crow plumes for the three suitors." Abu jumped for joy, thanked the old man repeatedly, took the three treasures, and flew toward Suojie.

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<sup>86</sup>[Small creatures. When placed on someone, they cause deep sleep.]

As dawn was breaking, Abu landed before her window. He used the sleep-inducing animals on the three suitors, causing them to fall into a deep sleep, and then placed a crow plume on each. He handed the beautiful peacock plume to Suojie through the window. She placed it on her head and instantly became a beautiful peacock, spread her wings gracefully, and flew from the dark room. A pair of beautiful peacocks hovered freely in the blue sky and, as they happily flew away towards the rising sun, suddenly three old crows cawed from the ground--the three suitors.<sup>87</sup>

### Sister Zhuoma

Long ago Sister Zhuoma lived at the foot of the Dragon King Mountains. She was clever, beautiful, and a very good housekeeper. People called her "Clever Sister." Sister Zhuoma's name was known far and wide. Many either proposed marriage or offered to arrange a marriage for her. But she constantly rejected such suggestions. One day in the year that she was 20, her mother said with knitted brows, "You can't stay a maid all your life! We have a piece of black iron which has been a family heirloom for three generations. As your father lay on his deathbed, he told me that once you married to give this to your husband. But, year after year, the piece of black iron has stayed in my hands..." She brought out the piece of jet-black iron from the *kang*. Sister Zhuoma took it, gazed at it, and felt it with her hands. She said shyly, "Mom, I'll tie a rope around it and hang it from the doorway's arch. Those who offer marriage must sing to it. If I think one is a good singer, I'll marry him. Otherwise, I'll splash him with dirty water." Her mother agreed. Sister Zhuoma hung it up and sang:

*A piece of glossy iron,  
I hang it in the doorway.  
If you are a good singer,  
I'll marry you.*

One day a large firm-fleshed *tusi* rode up. He rocked his head, narrowed his piggish eyes, and formulated an evil plan. He sang hoarsely:

*A piece of glossy iron,  
A lock was made from it.  
Purchased many rich fields and homes,  
And rent filled the store.*

No sooner had he finished than a stone rolled down the top of the door and a basin of washwater splashed him. Frightened out of his wits, he hurriedly rode away.

Then came a merchant who stared at the black iron, patted his money bag, and sang in long syllables:

*A piece of glossy iron,  
A balance and a hook are made of it.  
I have a good trade,  
Making money constructing buildings.*

Before he finished another stone rolled down and a basin of dirty water doused him, causing him to flee.

Later a strong fellow came up and inspected the black iron. He made gestures of farm work, danced, and sang loudly:

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<sup>87</sup>[From: Wang Dian (1982).]

*A piece of glossy iron,  
A sickle and a pick are made of it.  
The sickle is used to harvest,  
The pick is used to reclaim wasteland.*

His singing was hearty and moving. No sooner had he finished than a song out from the doorway's arch was heard:

*A piece of glossy iron,  
I wish it to be used to make a sickle and a pick.  
Cultivating and harvesting together.  
We will be together till death.*

The soft and clear song had scarcely stopped than the black iron dropped to the ground and the door opened. Smiling, Sister Zhuoma led the fellow into her home. Two magpies nesting on the tree in front of the door merrily sang. From that time forth, when a man proposes marriage to a woman, he must go to her home, and water is sprinkled on him from the top of the door. People who go to meet the bride must sing. These songs are called *daola*. This custom has been handed down from that time.<sup>88</sup>

### Three Orphan Sisters

There once was a couple and the wife was pregnant. Both husband and wife hoped for a son, for they had strong feudal ideas regarding the superiority of men to women. The final month of pregnancy arrived. Screeching, a new life entered the world. Hastily the couple examined the infant. It was a girl. For a long time neither said anything. Eventually the wife managed, "It is said a flower blooms, then the seeds set. The first is a girl, but it's certain the second will be a boy." Before 2 years had passed, the wife was again pregnant and they were confident that this child would be a boy. The wife said, "The flower has bloomed. Can something which has just bloomed not set seeds?" The husband responded, "I find that your left leg is heavier than your right. Man--left. Women--right."<sup>89</sup> So this child will surely be a boy." But this baby was also a girl. They were very disappointed and each blamed the other. "You said a flower blooms first and then the seeds set. Why did the seeds not set after the flower bloomed?" the husband demanded. The wife retorted, "You said the left leg was heavier than the right, so we would have a son. Why is the baby a girl?" But nothing was to be gained in blaming each other. Two years passed and the wife became pregnant a third time. In order to insure that this child would be a boy, they went to Jade Queen's Temple to burn incense, to a shaman for dispelling misfortune, visited a lamasery and gave money, swore promises before their ancestors' graves, changed the open direction of their home from north to south, and replaced their earthen *kang* for a new plank one. After doing so many things to dispel misfortune, they felt a son was guaranteed. But the third child was also a girl.

The husband angrily accused his wife, "I think you are incapable of bearing a son." The wife countered, "The celestials, Buddha, a sorcerer, and the grandfathers were not successful, so what can I do? Why don't you bear a son?" They were not reconciled. A decade passed, but they never mentioned having a son, nor did the wife become pregnant again.

The couple's feudal idea of male superiority grew stronger. Every minute, even when dreaming, they desired a boy. Their dislike of the daughters grew ever stronger. Frequently they scolded and

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<sup>88</sup>[From: Lei (1983)]

<sup>89</sup>[A man's place is on the left and a woman's place is on the right.]

criticized them, treating them as mere objects that would eventually require much of their resources.

Time flies like an arrow and, in the twinkling of an eye, 10 years had passed and the girls were teenagers. As the saying goes, "There are 18 indications of a girl's maturity and, the more her body changes, the more attractive she becomes." The three sisters grew prettier, each seemed to outshine the other. Clever and industrious, they also were skillful at sewing, mending, and cooking. Still, their parents constantly mistreated them, berating them for eating too much, about their clothes, and always complained about preparing dowries for them. Now it so happened that the three sisters were very fond of flowers. The old couple noted this and concocted an evil plan. Summoning the three they said, "Do you like flowers?"

"Yes, very much."

"Good. Tomorrow your father will take you to the hills to pick flowers. Some are as big as bowls, some are as large as umbrellas, and some are as huge as wagon wheels. You may pick as many as you like and enjoy yourselves to your hearts' content."

The three sisters were so excited that they stayed awake the whole night. The following morning, the old man took them to the hills. After walking about for half a day, they entered a verdant forest with hundreds of blooming flowers covering large mountains. Hundreds of flowers were in bloom. The three sisters were so delighted with this spectacle that everything was forgotten in the rush to pick flowers. The old man snickered at the girls' emotion and said, "You may pick as you like. When it's time to leave, I'll wave my sleeve and then it'll be time to go." They agreed and began picking flowers with all their energy. After picking flowers as large as bowls and hoping to pick some as big as an umbrella, they went farther and farther away. Unwittingly, they made their way up a remote and thickly forested mountain. They didn't think of returning home until overcome with hunger and thirst. But, by this time, the sun had set. Anxiously, they hastily returned to where their father had said he would wait, but only found a ragged sleeve hanging from an old and withered tree, fluttering back and forth in the wind.

Though the moon rose, the land was still draped in a curtain of darkness. Mountains appeared queerly shaped and wind sighing through pines resembled wailing ghosts. Tigers roared, wolves howled, and blood-curdling hoots of owls sounded. Terrified, the three sisters huddled together, crying out to their parents for help. At this time three young homeward bound hunters happened to pass by. In amazement they asked, "Why do you three stay here so late? Do you want to be eaten by wolves?" The two elder sisters were too frightened and shy to reply. The brave and capable third sister approached the youngest hunter and said, "Hunting brothers, we came to gather flowers and forgot about returning home. Father put his sleeve on a tree and then went back home alone. We don't know the way home, night fell, and so we stayed here."

The next eldest hunter asked, "Where do you live? We'll see you home."

"We live over the mountains, very far from here, and we have had nothing to eat the whole day, so we don't have much strength to walk."

The eldest hunting brother said to his younger brother, "Stupid! You should realize that their father stole away. By hanging a ragged sleeve on a tree, he surely wanted them to be devoured by wolves. If we do escort them home, will their parents treat them well?" The three sisters sadly wept. Youngest Brother said, "These girls are so pitiful and we have no sisters. Why don't we take them home with us?" The three sisters gladly followed the three hunters to their home. The boys lived with their aged mother in a remote mountain cavern and subsisted solely by hunting and collecting medicinal herbs. But life was not difficult because the three brothers were hardworking and good hunters.

The old mother was delighted with the three sisters and quickly brought out some joints of meat to entertain them. Afterwards she treated them as her own daughters. From then on, the young men went to the mountains to hunt and gather medicinal herbs daily. The three sisters skinned game, dried meat, sewed and mended clothing, and cooked. The old mother realized the sisters were diligent and intelligent, and happily let them manage household affairs. When the three brothers and sisters matured, according to Monguor custom, they married. The life of the big family was perfect.

Now, let us return to the girls' old parents. Day by day they grew older and had no one to care for them. They were helpless. Villagers knew that they had cruelly abandoned their children in remote

mountains to be eaten by wolves and none would help such a heartless couple.

The old mother of the hunting brothers compassionately said that her daughters-in-law should always be concerned about their parents. She added that grandchildren needed a grandfather and grandmother. She prepared fur, meat, and clothing and sent the three young couples to see the old couple. Bearing these gifts, the three couples arrived at the old parents' doorway. They pushed at the door and found it tightly barred. They climbed on the roof and looked into the courtyard. How pitiful the old couple was! Blind and hungry, they were eating grass and ashes. The three sisters threw the clothes and meat into the courtyard. The old couple found the meat and ate ravenously, all the while babbling the Buddhist chant, "*Ani bani hong!* Please bestow your love, our god! Oh god, please grant a son to us!" Hearing this, the three sisters turned away thinking, "As they don't need daughters, let god give them a son!"

The story ends here, but there is a poem admonishing:

*The palm and back of the hand are of the same flesh,  
Giving birth to a son or daughter is the same;  
Regarding men as superior to women is wrong.*<sup>90</sup>

## Bawo Morite

### I: The Birth of Bawo

Twenty to 30 families lived in a remote mountain village. A poor couple there grew highland barley and rape on an impoverished mountain field. Their food and clothing depended on this and life was very difficult.

"Time is like a knife used to kill someone, and is cruel to all," goes a local maxim. Before they were conscious of it, the couple was in their 50s, but they had neither son nor daughter. They often anxiously discussed the day when they would be old and feeble. Who would plant the crops, go up hills to cut firewood, prepare food, and look after them when they fell ill? Neighbors persuaded, "It's no use talking about it again and again. Why don't you go to Goddess and Zhuoma Temples and pray for a son or daughter?" Piously they visited Zhuoma Temple and beseeched Zhuoma Buddha to give them a son or daughter. They also piously prayed at Goddess Temple. Afterwards, the old wife really did become pregnant. The delighted couple became even more pious and prayerful.

In the tenth month of pregnancy, the old woman gave birth, but not to a baby, but to a *bawo* (frog). This greatly depressed the old couple. "Oh, my dear wife! Are we destined not to have a child?" the old man sadly asked. The old woman replied, "I should have had a baby after 10 months of pregnancy. Why did I give birth to a *bawo*? Powerful Buddha, You allowed me to become pregnant, why did you not give us a baby? What do you mean by sending us a *bawo*?" And in great sorrow, she wept. "My dear wife, please don't feel sad. Also don't talk about this to anyone. We'll dispose of this *bawo* quietly," the old man said. "Although it is a *bawo*, we have given birth to it and I don't have the heart to throw it away. *Bawo* love to live in water, so why don't you put it in a pool and let it live there," the old woman said.

The old man thought this reasonable, scooped up the *bawo* in his hands, and went toward the pool. On the way, he carefully looked at the *bawo*. In his heart he was troubled. It was then that the *bawo* quietly said, "My dear father and mother, don't put me into the pool now that I've been born to you. After I grow up, I'll do something for all of us to make great changes in our desolate mountains. I'll transform our poor living conditions." Amazed, the old man shouted, "Oh, my dear wife! How strange! What a small *bawo*! But it can speak very sensibly. We can't put it into the pool!" "Yes, what he said is reasonable. It is what we poor people have yearned to hear for generations. Since he can speak so sensibly, I believe he is bound to be a remarkable *bawo*. We should rear him as

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<sup>90</sup>[CMP]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

carefully as a child," the old woman said.

Several years passed and the old couple became older. The young *bawo* became adult and grew in wisdom. One day Bawo said, "Mother, at sunrise father goes to plow the fields. You take food to him everyday. You two old people really work too much. You have cared for me for several years, but from now on, I'm going to share your toil. Today, I'll take food to father. Before long, I'll plow the fields."

The old woman was both happy and sad after hearing this. Patting Bawo's head she said kindly, "My dear, we have led a hard life all our lives. It doesn't matter if we work harder than before. You haven't left home once since you were born. How can you take bread and the tea kettle to the fields? It's even more difficult for you to plow the fields. It's better for me to take the food."

Bawo replied, "My dear mother, please don't fret! Hang the tea kettle and bread around my neck and I'll take them to the field." The old woman hesitated then carefully hung the bread around Bawo's neck, but she did not have the heart to add the tea kettle. Bawo bounced out of the home. The old woman was not very easy with this and went to the door to have a look, but Bawo was already out of sight. In fact, as soon as Bawo went out the door he became a young handsome man and ran to the mountain where his father was plowing. When he was near the field he became a *bawo* again and shouted, "Dad! Please eat some bread and rest. I'll plow for you."

The old man knew it was Bawo and, as he turned, he found him at the side of the field. The old man stopped the ox and went over. After eating some bread, he felt thirsty and told Bawo he would go home to have tea. He asked him to watch the ox. After he left, Bawo took off his frog skin coat, became a young man, and began plowing. In a moment, he finished plowing the fields, turned the ox loose from the plow, and let it graze. Then he ran into some shrubs to play. Unexpectedly, the ox went to a landlord's field and began eating the landlord's crops. When Bawo noticed this, he found the ox had been taken away by the landlord's men. Bawo ran into the landlord's ox pen and gave out two bursts of air which caused his ox to go crazy, rush out, and return to its home. The old man saw that Bawo and the ox had returned home and asked, "I must continue plowing. Why did you bring the ox back?" Bawo replied, "Well, I plowed the fields." The old man found this hard to accept and climbed to the top of their house to see. Sure enough, the field had really been tilled, giving the old man a strange feeling.

## II: Proposing Marriage in the Officer's Mansion

One night Bawo said, "Mom! Please bake a couple of loaves of bread for me tomorrow morning and put it into that colorful wool bag. I'll take it to the magistrate's mansion to propose marriage. It's said the magistrate has three daughters, all of whom are pretty and capable. I want one to be your daughter-in-law and help you do housework and lessen some of your burdens." The old woman thought a long time and then said, "My dear Bawo! Stop joking and talking nonsense. Ordinary peasants' daughters won't marry you, let alone the magistrate's daughters. Also, I'm afraid they'll speak nastily to you, bully you, and maybe even stomp on you."

"Mom! Please don't worry! Maybe someone will speak nastily, bully me, and even try to step on me. But I've ways to deal with them. As far as marriage is concerned, it must be according to fate. If it is destined for two to marry then they may meet even if they are far from each other. If it is not destined, then they can't become friends even if they are face to face. You can't say it's certain that this marriage attempt will fail. Anyway, if we don't propose marriage, others will not have their daughters come to marry me!" The old woman said anxiously, "What I'm afraid of is that they'll regard you as a monster and what will you do when ashes are sprinkled on your head?" "Please don't worry Mom! They will not dare spray ashes on me."

The following day, the old woman baked two large bread loaves and put them inside a woolen bag. Bawo put it over his shoulder and hopped towards the valley pass where an officer's mansion was located. Not far from his village, Bawo changed into a young man and strode onwards. Reaching the doorway of the officer's mansion, Bawo became a frog again and shouted, "Magistrate! Please come out! I've something important to say." "Servant! Ask someone to have a look at whoever is bellowing

in the doorway!" the magistrate ordered. The man dispatched to look soon returned with a surprised expression and said, "How odd! Shouting at the doorway is not a man, but a *bawo*. And not a big one either, but a quite small one." The servant approached the magistrate and said, "Lord Magistrate, a *bawo* capable of speech is certainly a monster, so we should quickly take ashes from the stove and spray them on its head. Let it suffer disaster!" The magistrate shook his head and said lazily, "Don't be in such a hurry! Don't spray ashes on it. A talking *bawo* may be a general, a soldier of a water god, or it may be sent by the Dragon King or a lake god. You first milk a cow and then you sprinkle fresh milk on it. Ask him what he wants, and if he still wishes to meet me, I will."

The servants did as their lord directed. They asked Bawo, "What important affairs do you have?" "It's no use telling you! Please ask the Lord Magistrate to see me in person," Bawo replied. The servants returned and asked their lord to talk to Bawo. The magistrate said, "Are you sent by the Dragon King or a lake god? What brings you here?" "I'm sent by neither the Dragon King nor by a lake god. I've come on my own because you have three daughters, all of whom are grown ready for marriage. I've come to propose. I implore you to marry me to one of your daughters," Bawo said. All were astounded and looked askance at each other. No one dared say anything and for a short moment, even the magistrate was speechless. Then, turning it over in his mind the magistrate gave a dry affected cough and managed, "You are joking."

"I'm not joking."

"Well, you should be realistic. One of the first steps in arranging a marriage is to make sure both partners are well-matched in terms of social and economic status. I'm the Lord Magistrate. But what are you? Next, each partner should compliment the other. Can you compliment my daughter? Many other magistrates are ready to propose marriage, so I won't allow marriage to you. How can my daughter marry a frog?"

"My Lord Magistrate, I implore you to grant my request. Otherwise, I'll laugh. I suggest you don't regret the decision you are now making."

"Your laughter is of no concern to me. Do as you please. Why should I regret your laughter? How utterly outrageous!" the magistrate said and, without a second glance at Bawo, he turned and entered his home. Bawo gazed at the officer's back and began laughing which was just like thunder. It spread over the mountains and rushed up to the clouds. In a twinkling a gale blew up, sand flew, and stones tumbled, darkening the sky and obscuring everything. Soon it was clear that the courtyard walls and houses would collapse. People were so frightened that they didn't know where to run. They shoved and crowded, creating great confusion in the yard. In time the magistrate was forced to come out and begged, "I implore you to stop laughing. If you don't we shall die. My eldest daughter will marry you."

"Can you keep your word?"

"Yes!"

"Really?"

"Yes! I never break my promises."

"Good! I'll stop laughing if you really will keep your word," Bawo said and ceased laughing. Immediately, the fierce wind quieted, and the weather became fine.

The magistrate could think of no way to renege on his promise, so he called his eldest daughter and said, "It must be fate. Follow him my daughter!" Then he ordered servants to bring out two horses; one for the dowry and the other for his daughter to ride. When the eldest daughter realized that her father had married her to a *bawo* she felt, in the depths of her heart, an unwillingness to comply in 101 ways. She pouted and said not a single word. When she mounted her horse she saw a small hand mill under the edge of the house. She grasped the upper part of the mill and secretly put it into her bosom. She planned to kill the *bawo* with it. Bawo went in front, leading the way to his home. His wife gnashed her teeth, flogged her horse violently, and hoped that the stamping horse might trample him. When this didn't happen she became even more impatient. When her horse was near Bawo, she took out the small mill hidden in her bosom and threw it at him. She thought he would certainly be killed by this, turned her horse, and galloped homewards. But she had only gone a short distance when Bawo caught up with her. He said, "Stop your horse. I've something to say." She turned and

saw Bawo right behind her.

Convulsed with fear, she stopped her horse. Bawo said calmly, "It's not destined for the two of us to marry! Since you are unwilling to marry me, I'm also unwilling to marry you, such a heartless woman. You may now return home," and, leading her horse, he escorted her home. When they arrived, Bawo said, "My Lord Magistrate, the two of us are not destined for marriage. I'll marry the one who is destined to marry me. Please choose another daughter for me!" "You really overrate yourself. It's excusable for you not to marry my eldest daughter, furthermore, it's really unthinkable for you to choose from my daughters willfully. What am I? I'm a magistrate!" he said, grinding his teeth in outrage.

"All right!" Bawo said, "This means you are unwilling to grant my request, so I'll weep." The magistrate thought that it didn't matter if Bawo wept. Could it be worse than laughing? "You may do as you please. No one fears your weeping," he said and left angrily. Bawo watched the receding figure of the magistrate and began weeping, which sounded like claps of thunder on a summer night. The earth shook and the mountains rocked. In a twinkling, rolling thick clouds obscured the sun and became as dark as a pot bottom. It thundered, lightning flashed, and rain pelted down. In a short while, the ground became an ocean. But Bawo kept on weeping and the floodwater kept rising. It was clear that, in a moment, the mansion would be submerged. People crowded on building tops were too terrified to move. In time, the magistrate came out and pleaded, "I implore you! Cease weeping! Our entire family will die if you continue! I'll give my next-eldest daughter to you."

"Can you keep your word?"

"Yes!"

"Really?"

"I never break my promises."

"Good! I'll stop crying if you keep your word." The storm ceased and the weather became fine once again.

Shaken, the magistrate could only tell his servants to bring two horses; one as a dowry and the other for his daughter to ride. When Next Eldest Daughter heard her father was marrying her to a frog she felt unwilling in a 101 ways. She pouted, wouldn't say a thing, and before she mounted the horse, she picked up the lower part of the mill and secretly put it in her bosom. On the way to Bawo's home she violently lashed her horse, hoping it would trample Bawo to death. But the horse did not step on Bawo, so she took out the mill and flung it at him. A moment later, she could not see Bawo and thought she had killed him. She turned her horse and raced towards home. But she had only gone several steps when Bawo caught up and shouted, "Don't run! Please stop you horse! I've something to say." Next Eldest Daughter could think of nothing else to do, so she reined in her horse. Bawo calmly said, "The two of us are not fated to be married! Because you are unwilling to marry me, I don't want to force you. Should personal enemies become lovers? You needn't run, I'll escort you home." Then leading her horse, he escorted her home. Bawo handed her over to the magistrate, and asked for Youngest Daughter.

The magistrate furiously said, "I let my eldest daughter marry you, but you disliked her and saw her home. And the same thing happened to my next-eldest daughter. Now you want to marry my third daughter. Is there another such powerless magistrate in the world? You... You defy human laws and...!" the magistrate was too infuriated to say more. He thought that this was the deepest insult he had ever experienced. Bawo serenely said, "My Lord Magistrate, why are you so distressed? You should judge the matter fairly. Your two elder daughters were unwilling to marry me, so I escorted them home. I'm reconciled to marrying none of your daughters if the third is also opposed to marrying me." The magistrate shook his head and said, "She is certainly unwilling! Is there a pretty girl who is willing to marry a *bawo*? Under no circumstance will I allow you to manipulate me as you please." "It seems that you won't allow this, so I'll hop," Bawo said. The magistrate thought, "Though this frog is small he does have sorcery sufficient to summon wind and rain. But he has summoned wind and rain, so perhaps he is unable to anything further." He said, "You may do what you will. Regardless of how you hop, I'm afraid you can't change yourself into a magistrate."

Bawo started hopping. In a twinkling the earth swayed, mountains shook, the sky seemed to



collapse, and the earth cracked. Mountains in every direction knocked against each other, sending out sparks. Sooner or later it was certain the mansion's walls and the mansion itself would collapse. People covered their heads and raced in all directions, bumped each other, trembled, and pleaded for deliverance. The magistrate crept out from a pile of earth, gloomily came forward, and gasped, "I'll give you my youngest daughter!"

"You must keep your word!"

"Yes!"

"Do you dare swear this in the name of God?"

"Yes!"

"Good! I'll stop!" Bawo said as the earth stopped trembling and the mountains in every direction became tranquil.

The magistrate could think of no way out of the situation and asked his third daughter to come. Facing Bawo he asked her, "Are you willing to marry him?" Third Daughter thought that the *bawo* could summon wind and rain, so she was sure he was no ordinary *bawo*. Also, her two elder sisters had tried to kill him with the mill. In turn he had not harmed them, but had escorted them home. So it seemed that he was kind-hearted, "Yes, I'm willing to marry him if he is serious," she replied. It had never occurred to the magistrate that his third daughter would agree. He glared at her angrily. Then he thought of a new trick and said, "Well, since Third Daughter is willing to marry you, we should have a marriage in accordance with our traditions. You must go home and send a matchmaker. When you formally propose marriage, I'll formally marry my daughter to you." Bawo took out the two bread loaves, handed them to the magistrate, and said, "Betrothal is understood when you accept the bread loaves. What do you think, my Lord Magistrate?"

"Yes! I agree!"

Bawo then took out two bottles of liquor corked with jujubes and said, "You can't change your mind after you drink a drop of the matchmaking liquor." The magistrate said cunningly, "Don't be in such a rush! After the matchmaker comes, I'll drink." Bawo knew the magistrate was up to a new trick, but thought that as Third Daughter was willing, there was no real problem. He returned home and told his father and mother the magistrate had promised to marry his third daughter to him. He asked his parents to invite a matchmaker. The old couple was in a state of half-belief and half-doubt, but they invited a matchmaker to arrange the marriage.

The matchmaker brought bread loaves, black tea, and towels as gifts. When he reached the doorway of the magistrate's mansion, he said distractedly, "I'm sent by Bawo to arrange his marriage. May I speak with the Lord Magistrate?" The magistrate came and said, "You may arrange the marriage for him. But, first of all, you must grant my conditions. The way between the doorway of Bawo's home and mine must be covered with red and white carpets in dimensions of four by six. My daughter will walk to Bawo's home on these carpets. If you can't do this, please put an end to your vain hopes now." The matchmaker listlessly returned and told Bawo. Bawo pondered and then said, "I have a solution. Please scatter a handful of white wool and a handful of red wool from my doorway to his." The matchmaker did so. The following morning, when the magistrate exited his doorway, he saw new red and white carpets extending to Bawo's doorway from his own. He was utterly at a loss, but when the matchmaker called he had another evil idea. The matchmaker said, "Your condition is met, please ask your daughter to come out."

The magistrate said, "You met the first condition, but I have a second. Please plant willows from my doorway to Bawo's. When all these willows mature, I'll give my daughter to you. If this is not possible, please stop thinking about marriage." In low spirits, the matchmaker returned and told Bawo the magistrate's second condition. Bawo meditated for a moment and said, "Please take willow branches and scatter them from my doorway to his." The matchmaker did so. On the third morning when the magistrate went outside, willows were not only growing, but they were also mature. The magistrate was greatly surprised, but denied defeat and thought of another evil idea. The matchmaker said, "You should be satisfied. Please send your daughter to Bawo." "There's a third condition. There should be one of every songbird perched in these trees. If you can accomplish this, I'll definitely send my daughter to Bawo," the magistrate said. Impatient, the matchmaker argued, "My Lord Magistrate!

How many conditions do you have?" Embarrassed, the magistrate replied, "This is the last."

The matchmaker returned and informed Bawo of the third condition. Bawo said confidently, "Take bird plumes and scatter them from my doorway to his." On the fourth morning when the matchmaker arrived, the magistrate went outside and found many birds singing in the big willows growing on either side of the red and white carpeted way. "A miracle!" the magistrate cried, and hurriedly asked his servants to prepare a horse to carry the dowry and he asked his wife to dress Third Daughter.

His wife said rather angrily, "My Lord! Are you becoming senile? Do you want to drive your daughter out of the family? You should choose a propitious day on which to marry your daughter." "You are right. How can one marry his daughter without choosing a propitious day?" the magistrate said. He turned to the matchmaker and continued, "Is there anyone who would marry his daughter without first choosing a lucky day?" "My Lord," the matchmaker replied, "you needn't pretend. Today is the eighth day of the fourth moon. It is the day when we should go to Jade Queen's Temple and Dumu Temple to worship. Is there any other day more propitious than today?" This response silenced the magistrate. So it was that on the propitious eighth day of the fourth moon that Third Daughter, with friends and relatives from both sides, singing and dancing, entered Bawo's home. It was a happy day. People sang, danced, drank, ate, and did not return home until late at night. In the wedding room only Bawo and his bride whispered together. A pair of thick and long-wicked eternal flame wicks cast the bridal chamber in a soft glow. The bride gazed at Bawo with a gloomy visage, her heart full of indescribable feelings. Bawo read her thoughts and, facing her, slowly removed his frog skin coat. Ah... What a handsome young man! He quietly drew near his bride, tenderly picked up one of her braids, loosened its red ribbon, picked up a comb, and gently combed her hair three times. She shyly stared at this handsome young man and smiled, but couldn't control tears that fell like a broken cluster of pearls onto the backs of Bawo's hands.

Each poured out their most intimate thoughts to the other, and neither realized it soon was midnight. Bawo felt discomfort and quickly donned his frog skin coat. Although his wife felt disappointed, she said nothing. As a line in a Monguor folk song goes, "Sunshine in winter and cool water in summer are no better than dew on droughty days, nor sweeter than crystal sugar and honey, and they are no better than the steadfast husband and wife." The affectionate couple had a life much sweeter than honey, because Third Daughter was mild and diligent and her parents-in-law loved her dearly.

### III: The Temple Fair Horse Race

Summer was nearly gone and fall was in the offing. Wheat ears were plump in the fields of the *obo* plain, forming thousands of lines of waving grain. Rape blossoms bloomed on mountain ranges giving out a brilliant light, tempting countless dancing bees and butterflies. It was at this time that the annual temple fair was held.

Pine and cypress boughs were burnt as a large sacrificial fire, cattle and sheep were consecrated to the *obo* and abundant harvests, flourishing livestock, and the safety and health of the people were prayed for. There were also athletic competitions, including horse races, archery, and wrestling. Young men and girls sang antiphonal love songs, pouring out love to each other. It was a very lively gathering indeed. As the date drew near, people brought pots, tents, fresh mutton, and barley liquor, and wore brilliant holiday costumes. Old and young attended and some travelled a great distance.

Bawo's parents decided that all the family would go to the annual meeting. They would join the *obo* ceremony so that their whole family might be safe and sound. Also, Bawo and his wife would have a chance to enjoy themselves. Bawo's mother said, "My dear son, you have never been to the temple meeting. This year you may go with your wife and your father and I will also go." Bawo said, "All of you please go, but I'll stay at home to keep watch. I was ill during the Dragon Boat Festival. I'm just now recovering. If I go I must climb mountains and knolls. I'll be unable to avoid the wind and rain. It's not good if I get sick again." The old couple thought this made sense and allowed him to stay at home. Then, with their daughter-in-law, they went to the meeting.

The *obo* ceremony was solemn. Large cypress branches bundles were brought by wagons and horses and made into a big pile. Fragrant smoke curled skyward, investing mountains and plains. A whole

cow and sheep were placed in the fire as sacrifices to the *obo* god as an expression of sincere piety. The parents and their daughter-in-law approached the *obo* and piously beseeched, "Matchless, efficacious, infinitely powerful, cloud-ascending, mist-riding, and goodness-and-evil insightful Obo God, we, black-headed common people, plea for blessings, safety, and happiness for all our family."

The horse-racing ground was in a big pasture at the foot of the *obo* mountain. A crowd congregated there, forming a human ocean. Bawo's three family members also descended the hill to watch the horse races. The first program was short distance horse racing. Winners were congratulated by relatives and friends, adorned with red and green cloth around their necks, and invited to eat fat and delicious mutton and drink fragrant barley liquor. If the winner was a young man, ardent girls swarmed about singing and dancing in his honor.

On the third day, when finalists were assembled for the long distance final, a young man mounted on a black horse came, wearing a white vest over a purple-red singlet tied with a green flower-embroidered cloth. His finely chiseled features made him very handsome. His outer clothes were made of precious brocade. On his chest was a four inch square pattern of curling threads which sent out a piercing specious light. His saddle was set with silver and precious stones. He wore a pair of scarlet deerskin boots and his horn bow was inlaid with copper, coral, and pine-tree stone. He readied his bow, led his horse, entered the race ground, and asked for permission to enter the final race. He was welcomed by the people. After the start, other riders strove to race ahead, but the young man leisurely straightened his saddle blanket and girth strap and was the last to start off.

Other riders hunched over their horses, brandished their whips, driving their horses ahead in an attempt to be first. But the young man rode on, shooting arrows at hovering eagles high in the sky. After firing three consecutive arrows, three eagles fell. People shouted, "*Saina! Saina!* (Good! Good!)." The sounds of praise rang out for a long time before they at last quieted. Other riders lashed their horses and, wide-eyed, raced ahead. Meanwhile the young man reached down and plucked some flowers which he tossed to the jubilant crowd. Each time he scattered a handful of flowers, a colorful rainbow with lines of flowers formed in the sky above the crowds. What a brilliant spectacle! After his horse was far from the crowd, its hooves became those of a celestial wind horse and it soared into the clouds. Astounded, the crowd watched as the young man passed the other riders and crossed the finish line first. Men and women, old and young alike, cheered him. Someone said, "Where's the young man from? What's his name?" Another said, "What archery! What horsemanship! I've never seen anything like it." Others praised, "This handsome young man matches his good dress; that excellent horse matches that exquisite saddle. What girl can match such a handsome young man?"

After dismounting, he smilingly nodded to the cheering crowd expressing his gratitude. Adoring girls swarmed about and sang songs of adulation. They danced and invited him to their tents to drink delectable barley liquor made with their own hands. But he said nothing, only nodded in thanks and went to no one's tent. At sunset he bid farewell to none, only hastily mounted and quickly rode away. In a trance, people gazed after the galloping black horse in the rising dust. No one knew from whence he had come and what his name was, but all felt sorrowful. Third Daughter also stood in the crowd and saw the young man's horsemanship, archery skill, and scattering of flowers. She tried to push to the front many times to look at him clearly, but she failed. "Who is he? Why, when the sun was setting, did he ride in the direction of our home?" Pondering these questions, the parents and daughter-in-law returned home.

When they reached their doorway, Bawo was waiting and asked, "Was this year's meeting delightful? Were there many riders in the horse race? Who came in first?" His parents answered, "This year's gathering was completely different from past years. So many attended the gathering--probably there were 60,000 to 70,000 there." His wife said, "Today, when it was time for the final horse race, a rider came who no one had seen the previous two days. Not only did his horse run very fast, but his archery was so superb that he shot down three eagles. He's an exceptional rider and archer." Bawo said, "Did he ride a black horse and scatter flowers to the crowd." "Yes! But how could you know? You didn't go?" his wife asked suspiciously. "I just guessed," Bawo replied.

Soon autumn came again and the temple fair was to be held at the same place as before. The parents and their daughter-in-law went together while Bawo stayed behind. Before the horse race, people were

discussing the young man who had attended the last year's race. Someone said, "If he comes again, we must solve the mystery of his name and home."

"If he comes again, we should decorate him with colored silk."

"I'll present a piece of colored silk to him."

"You regard him as a hero sent on some sort of expedition don't you?"

On the last day when the final was about to begin, the young man abruptly appeared, causing the people to believe that he had flown to the meeting place. This time he did not ride a black horse, but a claret one. When the final began he again displayed his archery skill and shot three hovering eagles and, while mounted, plucked numerous flowers and tossed them to the crowd in greeting. Finally, like a rolling fire ball across the grassland, his mount crossed the finish line first. Affectionate girls crowded about him, singing, dancing, and inviting him to their tents to eat and drink. But he only nodded, smiling in thanks, but went to no tent. When people asked his name and home, he only smiled in reply. This time, Third Daughter pushed into the crowd, eager to see the young man. But when she neared him, he turned away, unable to answer the question that nagged at her. At sunset, he hurriedly mounted and galloped away and, as the dust rolled up from four galloping hooves, the assembled crowd gazed after him, spellbound.

When she and her parents-in-law returned home and mentioned the young rider, Bawo said with a smile, "Today you got near him and wanted to see him clearly, but he turned away, didn't he?" His wife suspected more in her heart and thought, "If he didn't go to the horse racing grounds, how could he know that I pushed to get to the front? And how did he know the young man turned?"

In the twinkling of an eye, it was time for the temple fair again. Third Daughter and her parents-in-law again attended and after finishing sacrifices and prayer, went to the race grounds. The young man arrived, riding a silver white horse. From a distance, he strongly resembled Bawo. Suddenly an idea flashed through the young woman's mind, "Dad, Mom, I feel very ill and want to return home early." Her mother-in-law said in concern, "You may go home first."

Third Daughter rode home quickly, pushed the door open, and looked inside. Bawo was gone and, as she looked around more, she found a frog skin under a shelf. She concluded that the young man on the race grounds was Bawo. As she held the frog skin with mixed feelings of grief and joy she he suddenly thought, "If I burn this frog skin, how can he become a frog later?" Immediately she kindled a fire and burned it. At the same instant, Bawo felt his heart flutter and quickly rode home. But when he arrived, he found only a frog leg remaining of his frog skin.

#### IV: Asking Help From A Celestial

Bawo sighed heavily and fell onto a large stone under the eaves, panting and speechless. Terribly frightened, Third Daughter hastily helped him up, took him in her arms, and entered the home. She repeated, "My God! It's my fault! What can I do?" "You are no to blame. Originally, I wanted to test how much my ability had increased, so I went to the racing ground. I'm Zhuoma Buddha's son. I knew that when I was fully an adult I would have adequate fighting skills to outsmart and conquer all evil. At that time I could have lived without wearing a frog skin. I could have helped poor people by rooting out dishonesty and unfairness in man's world, and stopped the rich from bullying the poor and stopped officials from exploiting and oppressing the common people. But now this is impossible. Not only can I not uproot such evils, but I can't live through the night without my frog skin. I'll die when tomorrow comes."

In great distress, two lines of tears coursed down his wife's cheeks and dropped onto the backs of her husband's hands like beads falling from a broken thread. She embraced her weak husband and said in agony, "My beloved husband! You mustn't die!" Seeing her sadness Bawo felt great sorrow. He clasped her hands and said intimately, "My dear wife, don't be sad." He pointed to the west and said, "Ride my horse westward past three mountains and cross three big rivers. You will see a golden light illuminating a radiant immortal palace among colorful clouds. Stop the horse and enter. You'll find a silver-haired celestial woman. Beseech her to insure that, in the future, there is no difference between rich and poor and that exploitation and oppression are ended. If she grants these requests it

will become warm enough that I may live at night without a frog skin and I won't die."

Poor Third Daughter was anxious to aid her husband and quickly rode west. The horse ran so fast that the wind roared in her ears and colorful clouds receded quickly before her eyes. She crossed three large rivers and passed over three tall mountains, and then she saw a golden radiant celestial palace in a valley of blooming flowers emanating fragrant incense. Colorful clouds floated above it. She hurriedly entered the palace, and found the silver-haired celestial woman. She beseeched her to save her husband. The celestial woman was moved and said, "Sincere girl, I grant your requests. But you must inform every family that I have granted you these two things before dawn breaks. Only then will my promises come true, cold weather will end, and your husband will be able to live without his frog skin." Happily Third Daughter kowtowed her thanks and rode back. She was determined to inform everyone of these two things, door to door.

When she reached a valley pass, she saw her father standing in his doorway. He called out, "Dear Third Daughter, what's wrong? Why do you ride about so late at night?" "Father, I've a matter of great urgency concerning a promise made by a celestial. I must inform everyone door to door before dawn breaks." "What is so important? Tell me first, for I'm the local magistrate," he said, grasping the horse's reins. "The celestial woman promised two things. One is that there would be no more discrimination between rich and poor here..." Third Daughter said. The magistrate angrily interrupted her, "If there were no differences between the rich and the poor in the world, where would you and your sisters have gotten your dowries? Now what's the second?" "The second is that there would no longer be magistrates to oppress the common people," Third Daughter said. Shaking his head, the magistrate replied, "If a magistrate did not exploit the common people, who would be our servants? Who would run errands for us, herd our livestock, and plant our crops?" He said in anguish, "Sheer rubbish! This isn't the essence of the celestial woman's message. Do you believe this? I will not permit you to tell such nonsense to the common people."

Impatiently Third Daughter said, "Dad, you may say this later. Please let me go now!" She was about to urge her horse on, but her father grasped the reins. Then a cock crowed. The magistrate fumed, "You have the heart to cause your sisters to have no dowry and make your father not be a magistrate..." Extremely distraught, she flogged her horse which leapt into the air, knocking the magistrate aside. As she rushed into the valley a cock crowed the second time, and the east grew a little brighter and, as a result, only a few homes learned the celestial's message. Aware that it was too late, Third Daughter turned the horse and raced home.

Upon arrival, she found her parents-in-law weeping over her dead husband. She fell upon his body, weeping tormentedly. She blamed her father and herself for the delay. Relatives and friends buried the young man in a mountain basin and, daily at sundown, Third Daughter went to his grave, weeping in anguish. Over and over again she said that his death was her fault. Day after day, year after year, none knew when the sound of wailing was not heard. She eventually became a stone figure, standing before her husband's grave, looking east, hoping to realize the celestial woman's promise of the weather becoming warmer and hoping her dear husband would live again.<sup>91</sup>

### **Huairighasuu Outsmarts the Lame Lama**

Once a childless old couple of over 50 lived off a small plot of land and a flock of sheep. One day the man said to his wife, "I'll herd our big sheep on the hills and you stay at home and tend the lambs, and do the housework." The old wife shook her head in disagreement. "Then let the two of us cook pancakes. The one who finishes first shall herd the older sheep," the husband offered. "The loser stays at home to look after the lambs and do housework. What do you think?" The old wife nodded agreement. Each began cooking. Because the old wife was used to cooking pancakes, her's

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<sup>91</sup>[TEs]: Sixiansuo, 76; Xiaowancheng, 59; Zhang Maniang, 47; Collector [CLR]: Li Zhengquan; Monguor/Chinese Translator [MCT]: Li Zhangquan; [CMPs]: Li Youlou and Li Jiuyan; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

cooked very quickly. The old husband did not often do this, so his pancake cooked slowly. He anxiously said, "It seems someone is outside, please go see!" As soon as she was gone, her husband switched pancakes. At the doorway the wife saw no one outside, but asked twice, "Is someone here?" Receiving no reply, she returned to the kitchen and said, "There was no one at the door. Did you really hear something?" The old man replied, "It seemed to me someone made a sound outside. Anyway, don't worry. Now, let's look at our pancakes and see whose is done." The old wife found her's was still only half done while her husband's was cooked. The old man said, "Well, I should herd the big sheep." Smiling, he took the pancake from the pan, put it into a bag, and said, "It's not so early. I'll drive the big sheep out while you catch the lambs." When driving the adult sheep out, the old man purposely made a bleating sound, ostensibly to call the sheep. But it made the old sheep and the lambs bleat together and the lambs followed the big sheep, running towards the hills. The old wife tried hard to catch the lambs, holding one while another escaped. In this confusion she ended up with a broken lamb tail in her hand. After gazing at it unhappily for a time, she locked it in a case.

Afterwards, the old man went uphill to herd sheep and the old wife stayed at home to care for the lambs and do housework. Some time later she heard a child crying. She thought that this was very strange. Listening carefully, she decided the sound came from the case. She opened it and peered inside. The lamb tail had become a child. The child proved very clever, delighting the old couple. Because the child originated from a lamb tail, they named him Huairighasuu (Lamb Tail).

Henceforth, the old man continued herding sheep while the old woman worked the fields and Huairighasuu watched the home. One day the old woman went to the fields to weed. As noon approached, a crippled lama mounted on an earth-colored lame mule came limping to where the old woman was working. Shouting the mule to a halt and snapping his quirt, he asked fiercely, "Hey! How many trowelfuls of weeds have you turned today? How many times did your buttocks move?" The old woman was in a dither, stood up, and replied, "My good lama, I don't know." The lame lama widened his eyes and said in an annoyed tone, "How can you forget what you did? Well, today I'll forgive you, but if you don't remember it tomorrow, mm, I'll not be so lenient." The old lama shouted and blustered for a while and then limped away. The old woman felt dismayed, for it was impossible for her to remember how many times she had shoveled and moved her buttocks. Thinking of the old lama causing trouble the next day, she lost all interest in weeding. Putting a bag on her back, she returned home sighing.

Huairighasuu noticed her unhappiness and said, "Grannie, usually it's sunset when you return. Why are you back so early today? Usually you like to laugh and talk when you return. Why do you sigh and why are you so unhappy today? Tell me what's bothering you."

"I went to the field to weed this afternoon. Later a crippled lama came and asked how many times I had shoveled and how many times my buttocks moved. I couldn't answer. He said that tomorrow he would come again and ask. If I can't remember, he said he would not be easy on me." Huairighasuu laughed and said, "You needn't be unhappy. Tomorrow, take me with you. Don't worry! I know how to deal with him."

The following day the old woman rose early and cooked pancakes. After breakfast, she took Huairighasuu to the field. Before noon he hid by the back-basket and waited for the lame lama, who soon rode up on his crippled loess-colored mule. Swinging his quirt he arrogantly approached the field. He shouted ferociously, "How many times did you wield your shovel and move your buttocks? Answer quickly." Huairighasuu jumped out from the back-basket and said, "Badie,<sup>92</sup> first answer my question and then she'll answer your's." The lame lama glanced at Huairighasuu in surprise and said, "All right!" "Please tell me how many times your mule limped and the number of times you swung your quirt." These questions dumbfounded the lame lama, but, nevertheless, Huairighasuu urged him to answer.

Suddenly the crippled lama had an idea, laughed craftily, and said, "What a clever boy. You may commit him to my care. I'll teach him supernatural powers and how to recite scriptures. One day he

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<sup>92</sup>[A respectful term for lamas.]

will show great promise and then you need not cultivate this impoverished plot." In fact, he had an evil heart and wanted to kill Huairighasuu. The old woman implored the lame lama not to take the boy away, but he insisted. Huairighasuu consoled, "Don't worry! I'll return within several days." The lame lama set Huairighasuu on the back of his mule and took him away. The old woman sadly gazed after them until, a short while later, they passed out of her sight.

On the way, the crippled lama thought up some murderous tricks. As darkness fell, they reached a straw hut beside the way and stopped. The lama said with false concern, "You are a weak child and your clothes are thin. Go inside the warm hut to sleep. I'm old and my bones are old too, so I'm not afraid of cold. I'll sleep outside." Huairighasuu saw through the lame lama's ploy and agreed. After the crippled lama fell asleep, Huairighasuu quietly tied the lame lama's mule inside the hut and then stayed outside. A few hours later, the lame lama roused and set the hut on fire. As flames and smoke rose to the sky, the lame lama shouted in a pleased tone, "Anie's<sup>93</sup> glib Huairighasuu is now gone!"

Huairighasuu said from behind, "Anie's Huairighasuu is here, but Badie's loess-colored mule is roasting in the fire." Greatly concerned for his mule, the lama stamped at the fire and pulled at the burning straw, but his efforts were in vain. His mule turned to ashes and he nearly burned himself to death. Gathering his sutras and hand drum, and, with Huairighasuu in tow, he started off again. Full of anger and resentment, the lama wanted to kill Huairighasuu as soon as possible. When it night came they reached a broad river. The lame lama asked Huairighasuu to sleep near the bank, while he slept away from the bank. Huairighasuu perceived the lama's evil plot, put the lama's sutras and hand drum in the place where he was to sleep, and moved away. After a while, the lama kicked fiercely at the sutras and hand drum which rolled into the river. He bellowed in glee, "This time Anie's glib Huairighasuu is gone for good!" "Anie's Huairighasuu is here, but Badie's sutras and drum are floating in the river," Huairighasuu shouted in return. The lame lama tried to salvage them, but he had no success. In the end, the lame lama took Huairighasuu to his lamasery.

The following day, as the lama was about to leave to chant scriptures, he ordered Huairighasuu to watch his home: "After I leave, clean the yard. If it gets dirty with chicken droppings, you'll have to eat them, or else I'll beat you to death." After the lama left, Huairighasuu washed the cooking pot, cleaned the cook stove and courtyard, and made the inside and outside of the home spick and span. Then he went uphill to gather honeycomb and honey. He ate some and dropped some in the yard, on the chopping board, and on the stove. As soon as the lama returned, he found the yard very clean, but with yellow drops scattered everywhere. "Why did you let the chickens shit here?" he raged and picked up a stick. Huairighasuu said calmly, "Badie, please don't be angry. I'll lick it up and make everything clean again," and began licking. He licked once, took something in his mouth, and made a smacking sound as if it was very delicious. Bewildered, the lame lama asked, "Is it delicious?" "Yes," replied Huairighasuu. "Let me taste it then," said the lame lama and licked at the "droppings." The more he licked, the sweeter he felt they were. He asked Huairighasuu for an explanation. "First I cleaned the yard and then I made a big basin of bean flour paste which I fed to the chickens. Afterwards, I chased and beat them around the yard and they shat this," Huairighasuu said. "Well, tomorrow you go out and I'll watch the home," the lama said.

The next day, after Huairighasuu left, the lame lama cleaned the yard and mixed a big basin of flour paste. After the chickens were full, he chased and beat them around the yard and, after some time, the yard was covered with thin chicken droppings. The stupid lama was utterly convinced the droppings would be as sugary as those of the previous day and proudly waited for Huairighasuu's return. Later Huairighasuu returned and saw the yard covered with chicken droppings and inwardly felt delighted. Before Huairighasuu had a chance to speak, the lame lama rushed up and said, "You won't beat me. I'll lick them all up." Crawling on the ground, he began gobbling up the shit in great mouthfuls. The foul smell made the him nearly vomit. Hastily spitting out what was still in his mouth he asked, "Why are they not sweet? Why do they stink?" Huairighasuu replied, "That was honey yesterday. It's chicken droppings today. Is there sweet shit in the world?" The lame lama asked, "Where did you get honey?"

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<sup>93</sup>[Term for old women.]

"From the mountains."

"Is it easy to get?"

"Yes, but it is very uncomfortable to be stung by honeybees."

"But why did the honeybees not sting you?"

"I beat them with a hammer when I picked up the honeycomb."

"Then, let's go uphill to gather honey."

"OK! You take a hammer and I'll take a shovel. Let's go."

"Should I take a wooden or iron hammer?"

"Mm... both."

They went uphill and found a wasp nest. Huairighasuu said, "This is a honeybee comb. Take it while I drive the honeybees away." The lame lama fiercely swung his shovel several times, enraging the swarm of wasps which stung his bald pate. In much pain he cried out, "Beat them with the hammer!" At his side Huairighasuu laughingly asked, "Should I use the iron or wooden hammer?" "The iron one," replied the desperate lama. Huairighasuu fiercely struck the lama's ear, killing him. Huairighasuu knew he would be unable to justify beating someone to death and was very anxious. Then he noticed a pea field nearby. It was just the time when the pea pods were ripe. Huairighasuu dragged the dead lama into the field, filled his pockets, mouth, and hands with pea pods and hid nearby.

The pea field owner saw what looked like someone crawling in the field. He thought a thief was stealing his peas. But regardless of his shouts, the thief stayed in the field. He angrily dashed into the field and beat the lama several times with a stick. Realizing that the "thief" was silent he found that the old lama was dead. Afraid of having committed a crime, he started to run away, but Huairighasuu came up, held him, and said, "Do you want to escape after beating my master to death?" This terrified the owner of the pea field. Tongue-tied and wide-eyed at this turn of events, drops of sweat as large as peas rolled from his forehead. Huairighasuu said, "First you must cremate him, and then we'll discuss your crime." While the man was cremating the lama's corpse, Huairighasuu left the lamasery and quietly went home to the delight of the old couple who were longing for his return.<sup>94</sup>

## **The Blind Doctor**

Once a man named Saikong claimed that people should do good works. Another man named Mokong argued that people should do evil. One day the two met by a deep pond and began debating. While violently arguing, another man approached. Mokong said, "There is no conclusion to our debate. Let this man who is approaching judge. If he says it's better to do good, you may dig out my eyes and throw me into this deep pond. But if he says it's better to do evil, I'll dig out your eyes and throw you into the pool."

"OK! Ask him."

The approaching man was also an evildoer and, when Mokong asked him the question, he replied without thinking, "Calamities will befall you if you do good works. You can't get rich unless your conscience is bad. A drowning child should not be rescued, because you will have to give him dry clothing," and then he walked away. Mokong said proudly, "What a result! You lost!" dug out Saikong's eyes, kicked him into the pool, and proudly strode off. Saikong almost drowned, but, fortunately, a person who came to fetch water rescued him. "Why are your eyes bleeding and why did you fall into the pond?" the water-carrier asked. Saikong recounted what had happened. The water-carrier was sympathetic and took him to an old temple. "I've been hired to carry water for a rich landlord from the next village," he said. "It's about seven kilometers from here and everyday I fetch water two times. Don't worry! I'll bring you food." From then on, the water-carrier brought food to Saikong everyday.

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<sup>94</sup>[TEs]: Wang Zhangshi, 74; Zhang Wanming, 48; [CLR]: Li Youlou; [MCT]: Li Youlou; [AWT]: Huzhu; [CET]: Zhou Lijun



One fine night when the sky glittered with stars, a wolf, fox, and a rabbit ran into the old temple and began talking. The wolf said, "The next village doesn't have water. People must walk seven kilometers to fetch it. To do so they must pass through a long narrow valley which gives me many chances to eat people and donkeys. Life is perfect," he concluded and picked up a splinter and began picking his teeth.

The fox said, "The landlord's daughter of the next village is ill. Everyday her parents invite doctors to cure her and lamas to chant scripture. The lamas continuously toss out *duoma*<sup>95</sup> which I happily eat."

The rabbit said, "Big and fresh chinese cabbage grow in the same man's garden. That's enough for me to eat. But do you know why the cabbage grow so well? It's because nine jars of silver are buried there. That landlord is really an idiot. If he dug the silver up, he would become very rich." "Yes, the landlord is a fool!" the wolf agreed. "There is water under the old white poplar in the next village. If nine people of different ages dig there with shovels and pickaxes, and move a big stone slab, water will gush out. Not only is the water tasty, but it can cure diseases. If a blind man drinks it, he will see again. If a deaf man drinks it, he will hear again. If a dumb man drinks it, he will speak again. If a cripple drinks it, he'll be able to enter a foot race. But what does he do? He asks a hired hand to tote water everyday. Isn't he a fool?"

"Yes! I agree," said the fox. "The landlord has nine piles of straw and, every night, I stand on them and howl. This makes his daughter's illness becomes a little worse. He then asks lamas to chant scriptures and they toss out *duoma*. But if he asked nine people of different ages to kindle nine torches and burn the nine piles of straw, I wouldn't have a place from which to cry and his daughter's illness would just naturally go away!"

Saikong, concealed under the altar, heard everything. Just at daybreak, the water-carrier came with food and Saikong asked, "Is the landlord's daughter ill?"

"Yes, she's been ill now for a long time. She is the old couple's only child and they regard her as a jewel. Now that she is seriously ill, they are both very anxious. Everyday they ask many doctors to see her, and they also invite lamas to chant scriptures. But she doesn't improve. Instead, she seems to grow worse. Recently, the landlord put up notices announcing whoever could cure his daughter will be rewarded with half his property. Many responded, but all their efforts were in vain."

"I can cure her. Will you take me to talk with the landlord?"

"I will if you really have a way to cure her."

"But he may object because I'm blind."

"He probably won't care because he's afraid that she'll die."

The servant helped Saikong to the village and, at the landlord's home, Saikong hid behind a door. The water-carrier said to the landlord, "A blind man says he can cure your daughter so I invited him here. Do you wish him to treat her?" As the landlord hesitated, the girl's uncle said, "There are good doctors among the blind." "Where is he? Let him in then," the landlord said. "He is outside. I'll bring him in," said the water-carrier.

After Saikong was seated in a side room he said, "Tie one end of a long thread to the patient's wrist, and give me the other end. I'll make a diagnosis." The rich couple quickly tied one end of a thread to their daughter's wrist and handed the other end to Saikong. Saikong held the end and pretended to feel her pulse for a bit, and then he pronounced, "A fox has made your daughter ill. Medicines and scripture chanting are useless. Ask nine young men of different ages to kindle nine torches and burn your nine stacks of straw. Your daughter's illness will end at once. I guarantee this with my life." The landlord was skeptical, but because of his great anxiety, he at once asked nine young men of different ages to come and light nine torches and burn the nine stacks of straw. Consequently, the old cunning fox was nearly burned to death and had to flee for its life.

The sick girl revived at once, opened her eyes, and whispered, "I'm so famished I could die!" Her mother was so glad to hear this that hot tears coursed down her cheeks. Hastily she ordered servants

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<sup>95</sup>[Dough figures symbolizing evil and, by tossing them out, evil-causing illnesses are supposedly eradicated.]

to prepare food. When the landlord realized that his daughter was much better, he told his cooks to prepare a sumptuous feast to entertain the doctor. He praised Saikong's medical ability. He found that Saikong was young and intelligent, but that his eyes were as wide and vacant as liquor cups. He then regretted his promise to marry his daughter to the man who cured her. Finally, when mentioning his daughter's marriage, he said, "Concerning the marriage, concerning the marriage... My daughter's illness is just over, so the marriage should be postponed." Saikong guessed what the rich man was thinking and said, "Don't mention marriage now. First, I'll cure ill villagers. Ask nine young men of different ages to take shovels and pickaxes and go to the ancient white poplar in front of the village. Ask all the blind, lame, deaf, and the dumb to assemble there. I'll cure them all."

The rich man asked nine young men of different ages to take shovels and picks and go to the old poplar. When Saikong arrived, he told the young men to begin digging. Soon their shovels and picks struck flagstone. He said, "Move the flagstone and you'll see water." Those who are blind, crippled, deaf, or dumb, follow me. When the water jets out, all of you drink." When they moved the flagstone a stream of clear water was visible. When the blind drank it, they could see again. When the deaf tasted it, they could hear. When the lame tried it, they were no longer lame. Saikong regained both his sight and good looks. Those who had been healed thanked Saikong and praised his magical medical skills. The rich landlord realized that the blind doctor was now a complete, handsome young man and he was willing to give his daughter to him. But it made his heart ache to give half his property to the young man. Saikong surmised this and said, "Does your daughter wish to marry me? She may decide after she sees me. If she doesn't wish to marry me, I will not force her. And I don't want one penny of your property. But please give me the house with three small rooms." The landlord was delighted and invited him to see his daughter. The girl saw Saikong had eyes and was handsome, and wholeheartedly agreed to marry him. The rich couple selected a propitious day and held the wedding. Afterwards, their daughter and son-in-law lived in the small house in the vegetable plot. The young couple dug out the nine jars of silver and led a life of plenty. This miraculous news also became widely known.

Meanwhile, because of Mokong's many evil deeds, he began suffering from a disease of fear. As the saying goes, "He who does no evil during the day is not afraid of a midnight knock." Mokong was so terrified he could not sleep at night. Every time he closed his eyes he saw his victims reeking revenge on him. When he heard the news of a very good doctor in the next village he went to see him. He then realized that the doctor was none other than Saikong, the very man whose eyes he had gouged out and kicked into the deep pond.

Compassionate Saikong received Mokong warmly. Mokong asked, "I gouged out your eyes and kicked you into a deep pool. How were you able to become such a renowned doctor?" Saikong answered honestly. Mokong did not change his evil nature and, following Saikong's example, concealed himself that night in the old temple to hear what the wolf, fox, and rabbit might say. Stars glimmered and winked as though wishing to distinguish evil from good. Mokong hid up on the roof beam. After a while, the wolf, fox, and rabbit entered and began talking.

"Recently the next village dug a spring and now nobody goes through that valley to fetch water. I can't eat people and donkeys. My stomach rumbles from hunger. Who betrayed my secret? I think that it was you, the cunning fox, and I'm going to eat you," said the wolf.

"It was not me. You know the landlord burned the straw stacks. I nearly died. I think the devious rabbit gave away our secrets," said the fox.

"No, it wasn't me. The vegetable patch has become a home and the buried silver has been dug out. For 3-4 days, I've had nothing to eat, let alone delicious cabbage," said the rabbit.

The wolf then concluded, "I'm sure someone eavesdropped. Mokong, who was hiding on the roof beam, was so frightened with this that he pissed and shat. Piss mixed with shit dribbled down on the three wild animals. The wolf exclaimed, "Before we entered the temple, the weather was fine. Why is it raining now?" Then, in unison, they looked up and six brilliant eyes focused on Mokong perched on the roof beam. Too frightened to keep his balance, he fell. The wolf, fox, and rabbit, all with voracious appetites from not eating for a long period, sprang on him and ate their fill. Not even a bone was left.

After you hear this story, you should think carefully about which is better--namely to do good works or to do evil works.<sup>96</sup>

### Three Brothers Learn Through Worldly Experiences

An old couple had three sons who were clever and well liked. As the saying goes, "Only fear not being raised, never fear not growing." In the twinkling of an eye, 10 years passed and the three were of age. Oldest Brother was 20, Second Brother was 18, and Third Brother was 16. One day the old couple decided that the three should leave home to experience the world, learn skills, and thus be able to live a good future life. "Every parent in the world dotes on their youngest child," goes a proverb, and the old mother was very concerned about her youngest son being away from home. But the old father insisted, so she finally agreed. The next morning after breakfast the old couple called the three together and said, "You are of age, but you have not learned skills that would allow you to earn a livelihood. Here is 100 *liang* of silver for each of you. Leave home and learn something useful. Three years later, after you've learned something, you may marry and start your lives."

The old mother repeatedly reminded the two elder brothers to look after the third one. After 3 days of walking, they reached a three-pronged intersection. They decided to separate with each looking for his own fortune down one of the roads. At the intersection, the eldest brother planted a big tree, the second brother planted a middle-sized tree, and the youngest brother planted a small one. A date was agreed upon 3 years later, at which time they would meet again and return home together. They further agreed that, if one of them came early, he should wait for 3 days. If no one else came, he might cut down his tree, signalling to the others that he had returned home and, in this way, they would know not to wait.

After separating, each walked another 3 days. The eldest arrived at a town noted for its gold, silver, copper, and iron smithing. Elder Brother used his silver to apprentice himself to an excellent coppersmith. In 3 years he had not only mastered the art of coppersmithing, but had also earned much silver. He purchased a fine horse and, putting his silver on the horse's back, rode in the direction of his home.

Second Brother reached a flourishing downtown area with shops everywhere. Using his silver, he took a clever, literate tradesman as a teacher, and began to learn business. In 3 years, he not only knew how to do business, but also had made much money. He happily purchased a mule, put his silver on its back, and started for home.

After reaching the three-pronged intersection, Eldest Brother waited 1 day, and then happily met Second Brother. The two waited another day, but Young Brother did not come. Impatient, they cut down their trees and, proudly seated on their mounts, rode home.

Meanwhile, Third Brother had reached a bustling town full of music halls. He was particularly impressed by a white-haired man so gifted at a three-stringed plucked instrument that when he played, magpies flew down from tree branches and lit on the ground. Third Brother then bought a three-stringed plucked instrument and took the white-haired old man as his teacher. He learned quickly and, his teacher was so fond of him that he taught him all that he knew. Three years later Third Brother could play a melody so sweet that magpies settled on the ground round about. Having exhausted his 100 *liang* of silver he bid farewell to his teacher and started home on foot. When he reached the junction of the three roads, 3 days had passed from the appointed date. He noted that his two brothers' trees had been chopped down. Realizing that they had not waited for him made him sad.

When he reached his doorway, he saw a horse and a mule tied in front, and realized his two elder brothers had prospered. When he saw his parents in good health he felt very glad. But when his parents saw him carrying a musical instrument on his back, they thought he looked no different than

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<sup>96</sup>[TE]: Lishirenben, 52 (Baiyahe Brigade, East Mountain Commune); [CLR]: Li Jiulou; [CMP]/[MCT]: Li Jouyan; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

a blind beggar. His father shouted, "Beast! Don't try to put on fine airs! I told you to learn a skill and what did you do? You've learned how to be like a blind beggar playing a three-stringed instrument! Since you've mastered the skill of begging, why don't you follow a beggar and beg for food? Why do you come home?" His brothers gazed at him disdainfully. His mother looked tearful and said nothing. Poor Third Brother left home. Utterly despondent, he decided to commit suicide by jumping into a lake he found himself near that night. A gold-plated moon rose and, in the moonlight, the lake water seemed very blue.

Third Brother sat on a big stone and thought that, before he died, he would pour out his soul into the music he had learned. He picked up his instrument and began playing. Each melody was sadder than the preceding one. That night the wind subsided. The lake waves diminished. The moon rode high in the sky. Lake God and his wife and three daughters were enjoying the moon. Suddenly they heard Third Brother's music. The melody became sadder and sadder. "Who is playing?" Lake God asked. "Eldest Daughter, go see. Who is this musician? I'm sure there is sadness in his heart because of the melody's sadness." Eldest Daughter went ashore and beheld a beggar child playing. She nonchalantly returned and reported, "A beggar child is playing." "You only heard the instrument's sound, but you didn't learn the meaning of the melody! Second Daughter, you go look," Lake God said. Second Daughter went ashore and saw a beggar child playing. She returned and said, "It's really a beggar child!" "You also have not recognized the meaning of the melody. Third Daughter, you go see!" her father said.

Third Daughter went ashore and saw a handsome young man playing. The melody was so sad that mountain birds forgot to sing, and fish and shrimp forgot to swim. "Brother Musician, my parents wish to see you. You may present your grievances to them. They will help you," Third Daughter said sympathetically. Third Brother was surprised, because he didn't know where such a pretty girl had come from. He then forgot his resolve to kill himself and followed Third Daughter.

"Handsome young man, why does your instrument sound so sad? What is your trouble? Why do you look so forlorn?" Lake God and his wife asked. "My good-hearted lord and grandmother, I spent 3 years learning to play this instrument, and used up all my 100 *liang* of silver. But I still have no skill with which to earn a living. I only know how to beg. My father and brothers turned against me and drove me out of my home. I'm now in a very sorrowful plight. I wanted to kill myself by jumping into the lake." When he finished, tears rolled down his cheeks like a cluster of broken beads and fell on the backs on his hands and the front of his jacket.

Lake God and his wife entertained him with famous tea and delicious food. They asked him to play all the tunes he knew. For 3 days and nights he played. When the tune was happy and brisk, fish and shrimp danced in rhythm, and when the tune turned mournful, fish and shrimp shed tears. Lake God and his wife were spellbound by the young man's performance, but the two older daughters turned away after listening for only a short while. Third Daughter remained and, according to the melody, felt happy or sad. On the fourth day Third Daughter said to Third Brother, "Today my parents will entertain you. They will offer you gold, silver and gems. Don't accept them. My parents keep a precious colorful glazed vase which grants wishes. Ask them for this." Consequently, Third Brother did not ask to be given gold, silver, and gems, but asked for the precious vase. Lake God and his wife were surprised, but at last they agreed. Third Brother took the vase, his musical instrument, and left. He walked for half a day. He felt thirsty and hungry and then he recalled that Third Daughter had said, "The vase will give you whatever you desire." "Colored glazed vase! I want a wife to prepare food for me," he said. Immediately Third Daughter sprang out of the vase and prepared food. Just as she was about to return to the vase, Third Brother put the vase inside his robe. "Aren't you hungry and don't you want to eat?" Third Daughter asked, blushing. "Yes. I'm hungry and want to eat," Third Brother replied, laughing. "First, please give me the vase. After having eaten, you can return it to your robe. Tonight you must reach the large flat field your family owns." As she said this, she handed a bowl of food to Third Brother, who gave her the vase and then began eating.

Third Brother walked toward his home. At midnight, he reached his family's large field. Third Daughter appeared from the vase and said, "Rest well for I'm going to build a courtyard wall and a house. She walked about, sometimes to the east, and sometimes she looked to the west. She seemed

to be a child picturing a house on the ground. When cocks crowed the first time, the courtyard wall and the house were complete. Third Daughter then asked Third Brother to enter the house. Third Daughter said, "From now on, we'll live here, so we must meet our relatives. After it's bright, invite your elder brothers to have a meal." "Several days ago, they drove me out of my home. How will they be comfortable enough to visit us?" Third Brother asked. "You stayed at my home for 3 days and nights, which equals 3 years in the world. Your brothers have married and you now have two sisters-in-law. You needn't bear a grudge," Third Daughter persuaded. His anger then turned to happiness and he set out for the home he had left 3 years earlier.

After driving Third Brother away, the two elder brothers, using their wealth, quickly married. The two sisters-in-law were not ugly, but were unskilled at cooking and sewing. In addition, they were so lazy that their parents-in-law disliked them and raced out of the family home.

Third Brother invited his brothers to his home for dinner. They accepted and, after walking a short while, they came upon a new manor. They thought, "Yesterday it was a field. In one night, how can a new manor suddenly be built? This is fantastic." Entering the courtyard they beheld porches at both the front and rear, and they noted that the *kang* was covered with red and white carpet. In the middle of the *kang* there was a short square table which the two brothers sat at while a young beautiful woman served tea. As she cooked noodles, the young woman added firewood to the stove and, at the same time, deftly put noodles into the pot. Suddenly, a noodle dropped on her shoe. Lightly, but dexterously, she flicked it back into the pot. Seeing this magic-like movement, the two older brothers looked at each other in wonder.

After the meal, the two brothers ran quickly home and said to their wives, "The meal Third Brother's wife prepared was more delicious than a tribute to Buddha. What's more, when she cooked noodles, one landed on her foot. She deftly kicked it into the pot. What skill! You can't adequately describe it in any language." The two sisters-in-law replied in disbelief, "Tomorrow, invite them to dinner. We will cook and demonstrate our skill." The following day, Third Brother and his wife came. In order to show off their cooking skill, the two sisters-in-law each deliberately dropped a noodle on one foot. But rather than kicking the noodle into the pot as intended, their shoes flew into the pot. How disgraceful! They were so ashamed that they ran away without even retrieving their shoes.

Seeing their wives humiliated, the two elder brothers blushed crimson. In order to alleviate this difficult situation, the clever wife said, "Tomorrow, I'll invite my parents-in-law to have dinner in my home. Now I must leave to prepare." The old couple had heard of their third son's capable wife and hastily returned home. Just as they reached the doorway, the young couple was leaving. The aged mother gripped the hands of her third son and daughter-in-law and wept. The aged father couldn't say a word. "After brothers live apart, it is an age-old custom for parents to live with the youngest son. Please, brothers and sisters-in-law, don't mind! I'll take our parents to my home," Third Brother said. The young couple treated the parents well and led a happy life.<sup>97</sup>

### Shalan Gu and Dala

Long ago a young man named Dala lived in a large village. His parents had died when he was still a child and he had not married. He was very poor and had many debts. During the 20th day of the 12th moon, people demanded repayment, shuttling in and out of his house, finally forcing him to leave home. He thought that his financial situation was good, for his uncle had supported him in the past, giving him grain and clothing. He decided to ask him for money to pay off his debts. But he realized that his uncle would refuse. Thus, when he met his uncle he lied, "I'm to marry during Spring Festival. Please loan me some money!"

His uncle did not believe him because he was so poor that no one would marry him. "I may give

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<sup>97</sup>[TE]: Li Shengduo (Baigahe, East Mountain); [CLR]: Li Youlou; Area Where Told [AWT]: East Valley, East Mountain; [MCT]: Li Jiuyan; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

you money, but you can't use it to pay off your debts. I'll visit you in your home on the fourth day of the first moon. I'll not forgive you if you don't marry," his uncle said, thinking that Dala would not ask for the money again. But Dala staunchly replied, "Please dear uncle, do come to my home on the fourth day. And if I don't marry, I'll accept your punishment." More or less having promised to give him the money his uncle gave 30 *liang* of silver which Dala used to pay off his debts.

On New Year's Eve night, every home was decorated with lanterns, colored streamers, and Spring Festival couplets. People ate meat and drank liquor while celebrating festival. But Dala had nothing to eat and drink and stayed at home alone. To make things worse, he worried that his uncle would come to see his wife on the fourth day of the first month. He knew his uncle had a bad temper and hated being deceived. If his uncle came he was sure he would get a beating. The more he thought, the more his fear made him feel like he was sitting on nails. Finally, in a fit of depression, he walked out of his home.

The 30th of the 12th moon was a moonless night. It was so dark that nothing could be seen, only Jade Queen Temple's bell sounded in the distance. Dala rambled over to the temple and saw many people burning incense sticks and cypress needles, kowtowing, and praying for blessings. Losing himself in the crowd, Dala kowtowed and silently begged Queen Goddess to give him money, or, better yet, a wife. He kowtowed and looked at the face of the goddess and suddenly had an idea: When the third night of the first month came he would "invite" the image to his home and let his uncle see it on the fourth day. Then he would return it and so avert heavenly punishment. Quickly the third night arrived and no one was in the temple to burn sacrifices and kowtow. It was very quiet. Dala swept his *kang* clean and burned cypress incense to fill the house with smoke again and again. Taking advantage of the darkness, he slipped into Jade Queen's Temple, carried the goddess statue to his home, and placed it on his *kang*. He kowtowed and prayed, "Efficacious Goddess, I, a black-headed commoner have brought you to my home. Please don't be angry. I had to do this, not because I want to marry you, but to avoid a beating. Tomorrow morning my uncle will only have a look at you and then I'll send you back." After kowtowing he raised his head and found the statue smiling. It was no longer a statue, but a girl. She said, "I'm not a celestial. I'm really your wife. When your uncle comes tomorrow, don't worry, just receive him. I'll arrange everything." Dala was dumbfounded. After kowtowing repeatedly, he asked, "Are you a goddess or are you human?"

"I'm a woman, not a goddess. If you don't believe me, go to Goddess Temple and see if the goddess statue is there."

Dala hurried to the temple and found the goddess statue. He hastily returned home where the young woman was cooking in the kitchen. His thoughts were blank for a time, but the girl finished the meal, served him, and asked him to eat. "During the first 3 days of Spring Festival, you were anxious to find a wife and you didn't eat well even once. Now that your wife has prepared a meal, why don't you want to eat?" she asked. "I think nothing. I don't think at all," Dala replied taking up the chopsticks, but his heart was pounding and he still dared not eat.

"Don't be afraid. Let's eat together then!" she said and began eating. Dala had never tasted such delicious food before and wondered how she could prepare such savory food with nothing in his home to cook. Shalan Gu guessed what he was thinking and said, "I brought these things from my home, but I couldn't bring very much. My family is not concerned about food and clothing. But we are very concerned because my parents don't have a son. Thus they want my husband to move into my home after marriage. I have been searching for a good husband for years, but I've never found the right man. You have changed this worrisome concern into happiness."

"Let's go to your home then!" Dala said, for he was too poor to support a household.

"Don't worry! Tomorrow your uncle will come. We are not so pressed for time that we can't wait and explain things to him before we leave."

"Tomorrow my uncle will come and ask me to explain who you are, where you come from, whose daughter you are, what your name is, and who the matchmaker was. Don't these questions make the situation difficult?"

"Do you still not recognize me? Do you remember drinking water at Dragon Spring last year when you went to the temple fair?"

"Yes."

"A girl leading a claret horse came to drink while you were drinking. Do you remember?"

"Aha! Yes, I do. Are you that girl?"

"Several young friends of yours teased, 'She will fall for you,' right?"

"Yes, because they were teasing me, I was ashamed to look at you carefully."

"I'm a girl and not afraid or shy. I used watering the horse as an excuse to see you. Why did you, a young man, feel shy? That day we met more than once. You went to the horse-racing grounds first, and then to the drama site and, not long afterwards, to the woods by the river to sing."

"At that time, I did not notice you and couldn't dream a girl who wore brocade and rode a big horse might love me, a poor young man."

The night is too long when thinking of unrequited love, but when lovers meet, they hate the night for being too short. These two had not finished their soft lovers' cooing by the time cocks crowed several times. Shalan Gu said, "Even if we spent several days and nights together, we wouldn't finish what we want to say. Let's leave that for later. Now, let's clean our home and make a fire to boil tea for our uncle."

Dala's uncle, Duoduo, was famous among the Monguor of Duoluolangke Seven Districts. He was a prudent man, but sometimes prudent men are careless. After giving Dala money, he could not sleep for several days, thinking that his nephew had tricked him. But, remembering that unequivocal look on Dala's face, he thought Dala might actually marry. If Dala had, it would be rude to visit without gifts. Lying on the *kang*, Duoduo could not fall asleep, and finally decided that when he visited he would take gifts. The sun was up by the time Duoduo awakened the next morning. He felt it was time to leave and quickly got things ready, put on his full dress, and mounted a silver-white horse in celebration, he hoped, of his nephew's wedding. Meanwhile, Dala spread a blanket over his *kang*, built a fire, and waited for his uncle's arrival outside his courtyard. In the kitchen, Shalan Gu prepared pork and milk tea. Later in the morning, his uncle still hadn't arrived, so Dala went inside. Shalan Gu asked anxiously, "Where is your uncle's home? What's his name?"

"His home is in Tanglanaren and his name is Duoduo."

"That's who he is!" Shalan Gu said, her eyes widening in astonishment.

"Yes!" Dala replied in surprise. Shalan Gu shook her head and said, "I've never seen him, but my father often talks about how Duoduo of Tanglanaren is a gifted ode singer, and how pleasant his melodies are."

"Your father knows my uncle?"

"They sang together."

"Your father must also be a famous singer. Who is he actually?"

Just then two loud coughs came from outside. "Uncle has come! Uncle has come!" they said and rushed outside.

Reaching Dala's courtyard, Duoduo saw it was cheerless and desolate in front and quiet inside. It seemed as though Dala had not married and his heart sank. He unconsciously coughed. But suddenly he saw Dala and a girl run out of the home and greet him warmly. His anger turned to joy. Dala took his uncle's horse's reins and quirt, and untied the colored woven bag from the back of the horse and handed it to Shalan Gu. Smiling, Shalan Gu said, "Dear Uncle, it's chilly in the morning, so please come in! Dala built a fire inside and waited for you outside for a long time. He came in just now, and then you arrived." Duoduo decided that she had been properly reared, judging by her speech and deportment. Seeing her rainbow-like complexion and five-colored coat, he felt the whole affair was quite strange.

Immediately after Duoduo settled on the *kang*, Shalan Gu served him parched flour with butter, some freshly fried food, and poured fragrant milk tea into a small bowl with dragon designs. As soon as Duoduo finished the first course of the meal, Shalan Gu served chunks of pork. Then she poured three cups of barley liquor, put them on a tray woven from red willows, and said, "Dear uncle, I propose three cups to your health and happiness," and lifted the tray over her head. After he drank, she said, "Uncle, you are the brightest star of all the stars, the sandalwood of wood, the master of Dalabaigu (three lines from songs of praise). You bless our marriage as Buddha does." This

tongue-tied and left the famous uncle, known for his mastery of Monguor customs, wide-eyed. "Uncle, you are a famous man of Duoluolangke and Dala has no parents. So you must be the master of our wedding and bring him to my home. My father will be delighted," she concluded.

"Who is your father?" Duoduo asked.

"My father is Bagancairang. Uncle probably knows him."

"Bagancairang of Tangshabula?"

"He is, dear uncle."

"We are old friends. When we were young, we often sang in antiphonal style. I nearly lost in competing with him. He can immediately call to mind what others sang and in what style, and then sing in the same manner. We haven't met in 10 years. I've heard the old couple had no son, only a daughter, and they wanted the groom to move into their home after the marriage."

"Yes, my parents want a son from a famous family to be their son-in-law. They have been very careful with my marriage. But I don't like the men they like. However, now it is settled. Dala is the nephew of a famous man of Duoluolangke and, if you bring Dala to my home, my parents will be perfectly content."

"Excellent! I will certainly go."

"Let's go today," Shalan Gu said eagerly.

"Alas, it's impossible. I haven't seen your father for many years, so I can't go without presents. It would be rude. Dala, you ride my horse home and ask your aunt to pack a generous gift. Tell her I'm going to an old friend's home to be master of a wedding. Also, bring two more horses." Dala quickly rode to his uncle's home and said, "Aunt! My uncle asks that you prepare a generous gift. He's going to Bagancairang's home in Tangshabula to be the master of a wedding. He also asked me to bring two more horses. I and another will ride these horses." His aunt asked, "Why do you speak so hastily? Who is that other person you are going to ride with?" and laughed. Dala explained, which delighted his aunt who hurriedly packed a gift. Dala readied the horses and waited outside. "When are you going to pay a New Year call on your uncle and me?" his aunt demanded.

"I'm not sure."

"Come with your wife. It's not permissible for you to come alone."

"Certainly the two of us will come," Dala said and then mounted a horse and galloped off with the gifts and other horses. While returning, his uncle wanted to know how Shalan Gu had met Dala, what her parents thought, and so on. Duoduo was happy with this marriage for he thought Bagancairang's family was acceptable and the girl was beautiful and capable. But when he thought Dala would move to another family and his sister and brother-in-law's home would have no descendants, he gazed at the ceiling and unabashedly wept. Shalan Gu quickly said, "Dear uncle, my parents have no son, so they'll treat Dala as well as a blood-son. After Dala and I have a son, my parents will allow him to continue his family line." Duoduo was happy again and complimented the girl on her reasonableness. At this time, Dala reached the doorway and then the three rode on to Tangshabula.

Bagancairang of Tangshabula was over 50 and had no son, only a daughter, Shalan, noted for her beauty. Because of this, people added Gu to her name which means rainbow. Gradually, people forgot her real name and simply called her "Shalan Gu." Old Bagancairang and his wife had spent much money searching for a suitable son-in-law. They had invited matchmakers and commissioned relatives to search. But, despite these efforts, no suitable groom had been found. Anxious, they had taken their daughter to the temple fair. At the horse-racing grounds, Shalan Gu took a fancy to Dala and followed him to Dragon Spring where he had deeply impressed her, but she had failed to ask his name and where he was from. After returning home, Shalan Gu wanted to search for him, but no opportunity arose.

Quickly Spring Festival came and, in that region, Monguor girls married on the fourth day of the first month. Relatives and friends presented gifts in the bride's home on the third day. A cousin was to marry on the fourth day and Shalan Gu was planning to send gifts, which also presented a good chance to go outside her home. It was not easy for her to share her thoughts with her parents so, just at daybreak on the third day, Shalan Gu put the gifts intended for her cousin into a bag, and added pork and pancakes. Her aunt's home was 10-15 kilometers away from Shalan Gu's village. On the



way she closely observed all who passed and hoped by chance, to meet her young man. But although she met many people, she failed to meet Dala. She took so much time in covering this distance that it took her a whole day to reach her aunt's home. Before she had eaten her fill at her aunt's home, people shouted, "The *naxin* are coming!" People raced outside and, in the clamor of singing and dancing, the *naxin* entered the yard. Peering through a window, Shalan Gu caught sight of one of the mischievous young men who had teased Dala at Dragon Spring. Her heart pounded and she laughed in happiness. The *naxin* began singing songs of praise in voices more beautiful than that of a *suona*.<sup>98</sup> Shalan Gu then asked a girl beside her, "That one young *naxin*'s voice is very pleasant. But I don't know where he is from or his name."

"He is from an adjacent village and the groom's brother-in-law. I can't remember his name. But you haven't heard anything yet. If he and Dala, who lives in the same village, sing together it is truly splendid. The two of them are quite well-known for singing folk songs at last year's temple fair."

Shalan Gu had learned almost everything that she wanted, for she now knew that the young man she fancied was living in the next village. She asked, "Why aren't the *naxin* together?" The girl answered, "He's single. How can he be a *naxin*?"<sup>99</sup> Hearing this, Shalan Gu was all the more happy. The two *naxin* did not stop singing and dancing until cocks had crowed the first time, and then they happily escorted the bride to the groom's home. The following day, Shalan Gu said goodbye to her aunt and went to the next village to inquire about Dala. She learned where his home was, but she found no one outside nor inside and no smoke came from the chimney. She dared not rush in rashly, so waited outside but, when darkness fell, no one had left the house. She grew anxious as it became colder. Her hands and feet were numb with cold. Then she noticed a temple in front of the village and went inside to avoid the cold. It was then that Dala, taking advantage of the darkness, carried her home, mistaking her for the goddess.

The three rode to the front of Bagancairang's home where Shalan Gu jumped from her horse and ran into the yard. She announced, "Your old friend, Duoduo, has brought your son-in-law. Please offer him a toast of three cups." The old couple was confused, but quickly picked up a flagon of liquor to meet the honored guest. Duoduo said, "I haven't seen you for many years, but unexpectedly, I have become your guest today." Bagancairang understood at once that Duoduo had brought the young man with whom his daughter had fallen in love. He shouted to his wife, "Tell the servants to prepare a happy banquet. Although today is the fifth day, it is also a propitious day to hold a wedding!" Bagancairang's servants began preparing the banquet while Shalan Gu and Dala changed into wedding attire. After the marriage, they loved each other and treated her parents with respect. They led a happy life.<sup>100</sup>

## Shilange

Long ago a Monguor village was located at a mountain foot and near water, creating a very beautiful scene. At the front of the village was a cottage. Before this cottage murmured a stream and, behind the cottage, there was a cliff which formed a natural wall. On the "wall" grew a plant which blossomed resplendently every spring. A young man named Shilange lived in the cottage. His parents had died long before. He had neither brothers nor sisters. As a result of living alone for a long period of time he adopted the habit of indolence.

One spring, the cliff plant again blossomed. Not a single passerby failed to sing its praises. There was a certain Old Zhang in the village who had three daughters. They pestered their old father to

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<sup>98</sup>[A woodwind instrument, like a horn.]

<sup>99</sup>In Monguor custom, a *naxin* must be married and his wife living. If his wife is dead or he is divorced, he will be considered a half man and thus not qualify as a *naxin*.

<sup>100</sup>[TE]: Duoqinkuaer; [CMP]: Li Youlou; [MCT]: Li Youlou; [AWT]: Huzhu County; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

gather flowers for them. The old man's wife had died and, though the three daughters were now mature, he doted on them and did his best to satisfy their various whims.

One morning he took an ax and, taking a roundabout route to the flowering plant, squatted under the plant on the sloping cliff, and began chopping. Unexpectedly, he slipped, losing control of his hands, and the ax fell into Shilange's yard. The old man thought if he fetched it by his roundabout route, it would be rather far. But he could not climb down directly, consequently, he shouted, "Shilange!" "Who? I'm sleeping," Shilange managed to get out between yawns. "It's Old Zhang. My daughters like these flowers, so I was trying to cut several branches of blossoms for them, but I dropped my ax into your yard. Would you mind handing it back to me?" Shilange stood up slowly and said, "Uncle, I may return the ax to you, but how will you reward me?"

"Have you settled on any certain girl? I'd like to be your matchmaker," the old man joked. Shilange's replied blushing, "You are cutting blossoms for your daughters. Would you object to marrying one of your daughters to me?"

The old man looked at Shilange and thought the young man was honest and handsome. If he only would abandon his slothful way of life, he would be a nice young man. Finally he said, "If you give up laziness, I will." Scratching his head, Shilange said decisively, "I will surely change." "Then please hand the ax to me," the old man said smiling. Shilange quickly handed the ax to the old man and, from then on, he really did abandon his bad habits. Old Man Zhang was delighted and, one day, he called his three daughters together and said, "When I cut flowers for you, I carelessly dropped my ax into Shilange's yard. I asked him to hand it back to me. But he asked me to promise to marry one of you to him. I found he was honest and handsome and he resolved to abandon his lazy habits. Now, which one of you is willing to marry him?"

"Not I. He is poor and lazy. Let Second Sister!" Eldest Sister shouted. Second Sister quickly said, "I'm unwilling to part with my dear father and Elder Sister." The old man sighed, "I also don't want us to separate. But you are mature and can't stay here all your life. Shilange is poor, but as long as he isn't afraid of working hard, it's certain that his life will improve. Also, I'm an old man and can't break my promise." Eldest and Second sisters looked at each other, but said nothing. Third Sister said, blushing, "Dad, since you promised and have my two sisters to care for, I'm willing to marry him." The old man relayed this news to Shilange and invited a matchmaker to arrange the marriage. He also chose a wedding day.

The wedding day drew near. The old man's family was poor, and thus he could not prepare new clothing for his third daughter. But one day as he sat in his yard brooding anxiously about his daughter's clothing, he suddenly heard the sound of buzzing above his head. Looking up, he saw a swarm of bees circling above the yard, spinning colored silk which became a beautiful cap, shoes, and clothing and fell into the yard.

After marrying Shilange in her fine new clothing, the diligent, beautiful, and kindhearted Third Sister made their home clean and neat. The two loved and helped each other. They worked hard and gradually, their living condition improved. People in the village praised and envied them. As the saying goes, "There is an evil one in a herd of horses and there is an evildoer in every group of people." The eldest sister saw Third Sister's life was a happy one and grew jealous. Thinking for a long time, she finally came up with a malicious idea.

One day, taking advantage of Shilange's absence, Eldest Sister invited Third Sister to the river to wash clothes with her. "Sister, we share the same mother and were raised by the same father. Everyone says we are very similar in appearance. Why don't we go to the deeper part of the water to see our reflections?" she suggested.

Third Sister was thus drawn to the bank where the water was deep. The river showed the reflection of the two sisters. Eldest Sister's hair was yellow and short, and her eyes were small slits. Her face was pockmarked and her clothing was ragged. She was very ugly. Third sister was fair, had large eyes, and her hair was dense and black. She had a sharp beautiful nose, a small mouth, wore fine clothing and, on the whole, resembled a celestial maiden descended to earth. Elder Sister said, "Sister, you are beautiful because you dress well. The saying goes that beauty is due to clothing and a horse is beautiful because of its saddle. If we exchange clothing, I'm sure I will be more beautiful

than you. Why don't we try?"

Third Sister agreed and Eldest Sister put on her sister's beautiful clothing and, from the reflection in the river, she judged that she was the most beautiful lady in the world. Kindhearted Third Sister thought that when she got home she would make a set of clothes for her eldest sister. She never expected her sister to suddenly push her into the river. Eldest Sister carried the washed clothes to Shilange's home. As Shilange caught sight of her, he asked in surprise, "Why has your face become black?"

"I stayed outside too long and was burnt by the wind."

"Why is your face pockmarked?"

"When washing clothes in the river, I was hit by windblown sand."

"Why has your hair become yellow and short?"

"I stayed outside too long and it was burnt by the sun! Eldest Sister said impatiently.

The next day Shilange led his horse to the river to drink. As soon as the horse lowered its head, a colored bird flapped its wings about the horse's head and chirped, "Beating the horse's mouth, I won't let Shilange's horse drink." Shilange felt this was odd and led his horse to the upper part of the river. But, as soon as the horse stretched out its neck to drink, the colored bird flew at it again, flapped its wings about the horse's head, and chirped the same message. Shilange said, "Colored Bird, I don't know what you want. But if you are willing to come to my home, follow me!" The colored bird then perched on Shilange's shoulder and he took it home and put it on the arch above the courtyard gate.

From then on, whenever Shilange passed through, the colored bird flapped and chirped but, whenever Eldest Sister passed under, Colored Bird raised its tail and shat. One day, taking advantage of Shilange's absence, Eldest Sister throttled it and buried it behind the gate. After he returned, Shilange asked about the bird. She replied shrewishly "It's a winged animal. How do I know where it flew to?" Soon a thorny bush sprang up, blocking half the gateway. Whenever Shilange went in or out, it never scratched him. But whenever Eldest Sister passed, her body and clothing were scratched, causing her so much pain that she squealed like a stuck pig. This so enraged her that she chopped it down with an ax and threw it in the cooking stove.

By happenstance, an old pig-herding woman who lived near the river came by. She had no fire and, seeing black smoke curling out of Shilange's chimney, hurriedly brought a fire pan to Shilange's home. Eldest Sister was listlessly lying on the *kang* when the old woman entered. "Aunt, would you mind giving me some coals?" she asked. "It's in the cooking stove. Get it yourself!" Eldest Sister snapped. The old woman took what she wanted and returned to her home, where she found part of a spinning wheel among the coals. She put the spindle in her flour chest.

That night, after herding her pigs home, she found that the pig trough was full of feed. She entered her home and got ready to cook but, when she lifted the lid of the cooking pot, she found delicious food already inside. All the rooms were clean and neat. But, looking in the yard and inside and outside the house, the old woman was unable to find even so much as a shadow. She was very puzzled. The next day, the same thing happened again. The more she thought about it, the more mysterious it seemed. On the third morning, the old woman seemingly drove her pigs out to herd, and then returned and hid in her home. After a long time the flour chest lid opened and a young pretty girl came out as softly as a swallow. She quickly prepared a meal, mixed the pig feed, cleaned the yard and rooms, and then she returned to the flour chest and closed the lid. The old woman happily ran to the chest and opened it. But she saw not even the shadow of the girl, only the spinning wheel part which was glimmering on the snowy white flour.

The next day, the old woman concealed herself again and, when the girl finished everything and was just ready to return to the cabinet, she came out of her hiding place. She said, "Girl, are you human or a spirit? Why do you come to my home?" "Old lady, I'm human, not a ghost. I'm Third Sister. That day you brought coals here, you also brought me. Please don't beat or curse me! If you want a son, I may serve you as a son. If you want a girl, I will treat you as your daughter would," the girl pleaded. "I have no children and would like to adopt you as my daughter," the old woman said. From then on, the mother and daughter depended on each other and lived together.

Some days later, the daughter said, "We have no relatives with the same surname. When Spring Festival and other holidays come, we have no one to visit, and no one visits us. What if we have a nominal kinship with someone?" "That's not a bad idea, but we should choose a decent family," she said. "It's said Shilange is a good man. What about him?" Third Daughter asked.

"Shilange is a nice young man, and his wife is said to be virtuous and diligent. But he is richer than we are. I'm only a pig-herder, so he's likely to think we are poor and unclean," the old woman said. "Mom, if we are honest and sincere, he will be willing," the daughter insisted stubbornly. The mother agreed and, several days later, the daughter cooked while the mother went to Shilange's home to invite the couple to visit. Hearing what the old woman had to say, Eldest Sister retorted nastily. "If you want to be our nominal relatives, cover the way from our home to yours with red and white carpets."

The old woman returned home and grumbled, "You kept insisting it was possible, so just now I went to invite them. But the woman said they wouldn't come until the way from their home to ours is paved with red and white carpets. It's obvious that they abhor our poverty and dirtiness and are intentionally making things difficult."

"Please don't be annoyed! Take a handful of wool and spread it from our doorway to theirs. Red and white carpets will cover the path and then you may invite them again."

The mother did so and, when she arrived at the Shilange's doorway and turned around, she saw red and white carpets, resembling a colored-ribbon, linking the two families. The old woman gladly entered Shilange's yard and said, "Aunt, the way is now paved with red and white carpets and my daughter has prepared a meal. Please come to my home so we may be relatives." Eldest Sister skeptically walked to her doorway and was transfixed. Finally she said, "It's too hot to walk to your home. Plant large trees along both sides of the path, which will shade us from the direct sunlight, and then Shilange and I will go."

The old woman gave her an angry stare, returned home, and repeated what the evil woman had said. Third Daughter told the old woman to wrap up several handfuls of leaves in the front part of her jacket and, as she walked along the carpeted way, cast the leaves to either side. The old woman did so and, when she arrived at Shilange's doorway, large trees with big branches and dense foliage grew along either side. Sunlight filtered through the leaves and branches and splashed on the path resembling scattered pearls, creating a dazzling sight. The old woman joyfully entered Shilange's yard and said, "Aunt! Trees are planted and you won't be burnt by the sun. Please, let's set out!" Eldest Sister came out and found this was so, but said, "It is true that, as we walk along, we will feel cool, but it's quiet. If you have birds singing in the trees then we will certainly go to your home."

Again the old woman did as her daughter instructed her. She took feathers and scattered them in the trees on both sides of the path and, by the time she reached Shilange's home, many beautifully feathered birds were in the trees. Some perched on branches and others flitted back and forth. Their twittering was very pleasant. The old woman entered Shilange's yard and said, "Aunt, birds are singing in the trees. Please come to my home!" Eldest Sister thought, "What magic arts does the old woman have? There must be many treasures in her home because she is able to do what a celestial would be unable to do on such short notice." Eldest Sister went to her bedroom, dressed, and then, walking slowly with Shilange, they listened to the birds singing as they went to the old woman's home.

Mother and daughter invited the two guests to sit on the *kang* in the principal room and served them tea and food. When Shilange had nearly finished his bowl of food, he noticed a lock of glossy black hair and a gold ring in his bowl bottom. He stared at it for a while. He suddenly realized that it was his wife's. He gazed thoughtfully at the old woman's daughter.

"Damn! Bah... How disgusting!" Eldest Sister bellowed, for she had eaten pig shit in the bottom of her bowl. Spitting and cursing she said, "What a filthy old woman--pig herding beast! Pig shit in my food! I didn't want to come here, but you deceived me. I'm leaving!" She continued cursing, jumped down from the *kang*, ran out into the yard, vomited, and then walked home still ranting and raving, unconcerned about Shilange. Shilange looked at the girl and said, with his finger pointing to the gold ring and the lock of hair, "This ring is my wife's. Only my wife, Third Sister, had such

glossy black hair. Why are they here?" Weeping, the girl said, "They are mine. I was coaxed to go to the river and wash clothes by Eldest Sister. She put on my clothes, shoved me into the river, disguised herself as me, and then returned to our home to continue her life with you. I became a colored bird and you took me home. Eldest Sister strangled me and buried me behind the door. Then I became a thorn bush, but was burnt by Eldest Sister. When my nominal mother took coals from our home, I changed into a spinning wheel part and she put me into a flour chest. Later, I assumed my present appearance and secretly helped her. But she discovered me and adopted me. Under the pretext of adopting relatives, we invited you and Eldest Sister to come here. Because you had been deceived by Eldest Sister, I didn't know if you would recognize me, so I put these two things in your bowl."

The girl and Shilange embraced and wept. The old woman also wept over this emotional reunion. After he reached his own home, Shilange said to Eldest Sister, "I have something for you, but you must choose." "What are they?" Eldest Sister greedily demanded, for she thought Shilange had some wonderful things for her.

"A horse or a whip."

"What a fool you are! The whip can not be eaten nor worn. It's useless, so I want the horse."

"OK," Shilange said and, gripping Eldest Sister, tied her hands with a rope, and then tied the other end of the rope to the saddle. Eldest Sister shouted in a great panic, "What are you doing?!" "This horse will drag you to your death in payment for your murdering your blood-sister and separating an affectionate couple," Shilange said raising his whip. "My good Shilange, Third Sister is dead and cannot return. Anyway, we are now a couple. Please forgive me!" she begged.

"Crack!" Shilange slashed his whip and, over the horse's galloping hooves, could be heard several horrible cries. Shilange then brought Third Sister Zhang and the old woman to his home. The couple was thus reunited and treated their nominal mother with respect. From then on the family led a perfect life.<sup>101</sup>

## ***The Mangus***

A hard working old woman had four daughters. They were named, in order of age, Tayingsuo, Jiransuo, Dalansuo, and Nayingsuo.<sup>102</sup> This family of five led a miserable life. The old woman cared nothing for herself and, suffering all the ills the world can give, was eventually able to successfully rear her children.

Eldest Sister Tayingsuo married and soon gave birth to a son. Delighted, the old woman was anxious to visit her eldest daughter and cradle her infant grandson. Before leaving, she warned her three daughters, "After my departure, bolt the door and don't open it for anyone." She took a small basket and set out. As the sun was about to set, she came to a quiet valley amid desolate and remote mountains. Then approaching her, came a white-haired woman who, in fact, was not human at all, but a man-eating demon. Everyone abhorred her, but they were too afraid to do anything. On this day she saw the old woman walking alone. She came up to her and said, "Old lady, why are you alone? What good things are in your basket! Are you going to visit relatives?"

The old woman replied, "I'm 77-years-old and I have just had a grandson whose home is behind these mountains. I hope to reach there before the sun sets. If I may see my grandson I would be glad to even face death." The white-haired woman replied, "The mountains are high, the way is rugged, and your destination is far away. You are too old to walk any further. Tonight, stay at my home. Tomorrow, I will escort you to your grandson." "Before us are great mountains. Behind us are large valleys. There are no villages or people. I would like to spend this night at your home, but please tell

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<sup>101</sup>[TE]: Yang Fujie, 70; [AWT]: Datong County; [CLR]/[CMP]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>102</sup>The names for the girls in this story are the names for the numbers 50, 60, 70, and 80. *Suo* indicates a feminine name (respectively: Tayingsuo, Jiransuo, Dalansuo, and Nayingsuo). Such names are usually given after the age of an elder.

me, where is it?" the old mother said.

The white-haired woman grinned hideously and said, "High mountains, deep valleys, rocky canyons, and caverns are my home. I go either by the front or by the back of mountains. People all call me Mangus. I'm hungry because I haven't eaten for 3 days, but today I have the good fortune to have a good meal." Then the white-haired woman assumed her real appearance, opened her large bloody mouth, and fell upon the old woman who implored, "Please Mangus, have pity. Today let me go. If I can see my little grandson, I'll be reconciled to be eaten tomorrow." Deaf to all the old woman said, Mangus shoved her to the ground, bit her several times, and the old woman died. Then disguising herself as the old woman, she took the small basket and walked in the direction of the old woman's home.

Some time later, Mangus knocked at the door and summoned the next eldest sister, "Jiransuo! Open this door quickly. There are red jujubes in my basket." Jiransuo peeked through a crack. She noticed that the woman didn't resemble her mother in the least and said, "You are not my mother. My mother wears a red skirt, but yours is grey." Mangus rolled in red soil, dying the grey skirt red, and then knocked on the door again. She called to Third Sister, "Dalansuo! Open this door quickly! Your mother's red skirt is waving in the wind. I'll give you some walnuts." Dalansuo peeked out and found this woman did not look like her mother. She said, "You are not my mother. Mother wears a green skirt, but you have a red one." Mangus rolled in the grass, dying the skirt green. She knocked at the door again and summoned Fourth Sister, "Open the door quickly. Mother's skirt is green. I'll give you some apricots." Nayingsuo looked out and found the woman was not her mother. She said, "You are not my mother. Mother wears a mixed-color skirt, not a red and green one."

Mangus rolled in red soil and in grass several times, thus dying the green skirt several colors. She knocked again and called, "My dearie, Nayingsuo! Open the door for mother. I'm wearing a colored skirt. I'll give you sweet apricots." Nayingsuo believed that this was her real mother and reached to open the door. But her two elder sisters prevented her. The sly monster smiled and said, "My heart is aching for you, but you have no concern for me. I reared you and expect to depend upon you, but now it seems no one will even take care of my funeral when I die. It's become my lot to go to remote mountains to be eaten by wolves."

Nayingsuo wanted to open the door even more. Mangus continued persuading, "Nayingsuo, you are mother's darling. Your two elder sisters are hard-hearted. Quickly reach out your hand! I'll put a silver ring on your finger." Nayingsuo stuck out a finger through a crack and the monster quickly grabbed it. She proceeded to pinch and twist, so that Nayingsuo felt that she was going to die from the pain. The two elder sisters could think of nothing else to do and opened the door. Mangus rushed in and did not permit the sisters to light a lantern. She urged them to go to bed and coaxed Youngest Sister to sleep with her. At midnight, snapping sounds came from under Mangus's quilt. Jiransuo asked, "What are you eating? My stomach keeps rumbling in hunger. Give me something to eat." Mangus replied, "I'm nibbling sheep bones boiled last night. If a child eats this, she'll have diarrhea. Go to sleep." Not long after, Dalansuo asked, "What are you drinking? I'm thirsty. Please give me something." Mangus answered, "I'm drinking broth from last night's boiled mutton. But if a child drinks this, she'll wet the bed. Be a good girl and go to sleep!" Soon something round rolled off the *kang*. Jiransuo asked, "What rolled off the *kang*." "Your mother's ball of yarn. Now be quiet and go to sleep like a good girl should!" Mangus said.

In dim moonlight, Jiransuo and Dalansuo made out that this creature was not their mother at all, but rather a man-eating *mangus*. She had eaten Nayingsuo's flesh, sucked her blood, and then thrown her head down from the *kang*. Jiransuo realized that they must find a way to escape from being eaten and said, "Please light the lantern! I have to go pee." Dalansuo chimed in, "Please light the lantern! I want to go to the toilet." Mangus said, "You'll catch cold at midnight. Pee on the earthen *kang*." The two girls said together, "You'll scold us as being good-for-nothings if we do that, and our uncle will say that we were not reared properly. Don't worry, we'll return quickly."

Mangus was greedy for food, but very slothful so, in order to prevent the two girls from escaping, she tied a rope around them and then let them go outside. She lay on the *kang*, holding the other end of the rope, and continued eating. A long while passed and the two girls did not return. She jerked

the rope and heard water rumbling. She shouted, "What kind of water are you passing? Come back quickly and go to sleep!" A moment later the two girls still weren't back, she pulled the rope again. This time she heard chuckles. She shouted, "Why are you giggling? Come back and sleep!" She waited, the girls still did not return, so she pulled the rope again and, once more, she heard rumbling and chuckles. Enraged, she bounded outside where she found the rope tied to a kettle of water and a hen. The two girls had fled. Mangus madly pursued them, following their footprints. She ran over nine large mountains, across nine rivers, and finally came to a lofty chinese scholartree where the two girls were perched on a big bough near the tree's top.

Earlier, Jiransuo and Dalansuo had run to a big rocky black mountain which reached to the sky blocking their escape. Jiransuo sang sadly, "My God, open your eyes and behold these ill-fated girls. Ruthless Mangus ate our mother and younger sister. Before us is a big mountain and behind us is a deep valley. How are we to deal with this? I beseech you big mountain to become smaller, so that we may pass. Save us, two ill-fated children. We'll repay this debt by burning incense and cypress needles." As she sang the earth quaked, and the rock mountain touching the sky became a small mound. The two sisters ran over the mound. Dalansuo sang, "Small mound, quickly grow tall and don't let Mangus pass. Please save us, two ill-fated children. We'll repay this debt by burning incense and boughs of cypress needles." As she sang the earth quaked, and the small mountain towered to the sky. The two sisters ran on to a big river so wide that the other side could not be seen. River waves howled and galloped like wild horses, blocking their escape. Jiransuo sang, "My God! Please open your eyes and behold us. Cruel Mangus ate our mother and younger sister. Before us is a large river and behind us is a high mountain. How can we cross the river? I beg you big river to do a good deed and become a stream. Save the two of us who have fallen deep in trouble! We will repay you by burning incense and cypress needles."

As Jiransuo sang, the river's surface gave out an odd light and became a stream, which the two sisters crossed. Dalansuo sang, "Small stream, please become wide and don't let Mangus pass. Save us, who have fallen deep in trouble. We will repay you by burning incense and cypress needles." As she sang a glaring light lit the surface of the stream and it became a big river again, full of howling and galloping waves. In such fashion, the two sisters ran over nine big mountains and across nine big rivers and then came to the lofty towering chinese scholartree. Jiransuo sang to the tree, "My God, open your eyes and behold us. Cruel Mangus ate our mother and younger sister. We have crossed nine mountains and nine rivers. But now what are we to do? Big tree, I beg you to become short. Save us who have fallen into trouble. We will repay this kindness by burning incense and cypress needles." As Jiransuo sang, the big tree thundered and became a small one and the two sisters climbed to the top. Dalansuo sang, "Short tree, please grow tall. Don't let Mangus climb up. Save us who are in trouble. We will repay your kindness by burning incense and cypress needles."

As Dalansuo sang, there was a deafening rumble and the small tree became a lofty towering tree. It was at this time that Mangus reached the tree. She said, "My dear Jiransuo, tell me how to climb up this tall tree." Jiransuo replied, "Just eat pig shit and you'll be able to get up." Mangus ate some pig shit, and then climbed, but she could not make her way up. She asked, "My darling Dalansuo, tell me how to climb up the tree, it's no use eating pig shit." Dalansuo said, "Don't hurry, Mangus. I'll tell you the way. There's no need to use either a rope or a ladder. Just eat some human shit and you will be successful."

Mangus found some, ate it, and then climbed and climbed, but she could not move up. In this way the two sisters tricked the *mangus* into eating and drinking dog shit and urine. Finally the two sisters said, "We'll use a long rope and pull you up." The two sisters tossed down a long rope, held one end in their hands, and asked Mangus to tightly tie the other end around her neck. They tugged and, when Mangus was near the top, they suddenly let go. She received such a fall that she nearly died. A young strong woodcutter happened to be passing by. The two sisters called out, "Elder brother, please save us. Mangus is sitting under the tree. If you kill her, we will be your wives or sisters, whichever you prefer." The woodsman swung his big ax and chopped Mangus into bits, which he buried in a deep pit and suppressed by putting a big stone board on top. From then on there was no *mangus* there.

People led peaceful, safe, and happy lives.<sup>103</sup>

### An Old Woman Cries For Help

Long ago there was a very cruel, green-faced, long-toothed, dishevelled-hair monster who ate whomever she met, causing local people much distress. An old woman who lived in a local village had a young spotted ox which she doted on. During the day she led it up hills to graze and, at night, she tied it in her bedroom for companionship.

One night she had just tied the ox and gone to bed when the cruel monster rushed into her bedroom and said nothing, just opened her big mouth and fell on the young spotted ox, which mooed horribly. The savage and cruel *mangus* broke the ox's neck with one snap of her jaws, sucked its blood, and gobbled down its flesh in several mouthfuls. The old woman huddled in panic, daring not even to breathe. After devouring the ox, the monster made some smacking sounds and said to the old woman, "Old thing, I'm full tonight, so I'll leave your old flesh and bones for tomorrow."

"You've eaten my spotted ox. I beg you not to eat me. Spare me."

"I don't want to eat you tonight. Don't eat parched flour tomorrow, just drink much tea and then your belly will be clean. Make deep-fried dough cakes, boil tea, and await your death," said the monster, before strolling away. The old woman was so afraid that she couldn't sleep. At dawn, after cocks had crowed three times, the pitiful old woman set out with her walking stick to see if she could find help. She walked and lamented and suddenly ran across Egg who said, "Please don't wail so! I'll certainly help you." The old woman wiped her tears away and replied, "Oh Brother Egg, my young spotted ox was eaten by a monster last night who will come to eat me tonight. She ordered me not to eat parched flour, but to drink much tea in order to cleanse my intestines. She also told me to fry dough cakes, boil tea, and wait for my death. No one in the world deserves to wail if I don't. No one in the world deserves to be unhappy if I don't." Brother Egg said, "Don't be afraid! Go home, fry dough cakes, boil tea, put out your lantern, and wait for me to deal with the *mangus* this night."

The old woman continued walking ahead and met Rag, Frog, Awl, Scissors, Cow Shit, and Stone Roller. She told each her miserable plight and they all persuaded her to return home, fry dough cakes, and boil tea. They told her to not be concerned, put her lantern out, and then go to bed.

Egg said, "I'll explode, killing the monster." Rag said, "I'll slap her to death." Frog said, "I'll splash her to death." Awl said, "I'll stab her to death." Scissors said, "I'll pinch her to death." Cow Shit said, "I'll make her slip and fall to her death." Stone Roller said, "I'll beat her to death."

The old woman returned home, fried cakes, boiled tea, and went to her bedroom where she put out her lantern and lay down. At dusk the brothers, whom the old woman had met, came and chose places to hide. Late in the night the monster came strutting in. It was pitch dark and she couldn't see anything, so she went over to the cook stove to get a coal to light a lantern. It was then that Egg burst and ashes flew into her eyes. Quickly she groped about, looking for a rag to wipe her eyes. Then Rag slapped her face smartly. The monster hastily turned to the water vat to wash her face, but was splashed by Brother Frog. She felt something was very wrong, so she turned to run out. Scissors clamped her buttocks and Awl stabbed her in the heart. In great pain she struggled to the door, but slipped on Cow Shit and fell. Brother Stone Roller then fell from the top of the door and beat the heinous monster to the consistency of mud. Thus the monster was vanquished.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>[TE]: Li Wanshou; [CMP]: Li Keyu and Xi Yuanlin; [AWT]: East Mountain; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>104</sup>[TE]: Li Youhai; [CMP]: Li Youlou; [AWT]: East Valley and East Mountain areas; [CET]: Zhou Lijun



## A Toad Bestows a Treasure

A couple lived at the foot of a mountain and near a water source. They had a son named Danjiansirang and, although they were very poor, the couple was thrifty for they wished to save money in order to support their son's education. Danjiansirang studied very diligently.

One day as Danjiansirang returned home from school, he caught a toad, took it home, and concealed it in the hole of the large doorbolt. Everyday he divided half of his small ration of food with the toad. Consequently, Danjiansirang became thinner. His parents noted this, but didn't know the reason. One day his father found the toad and angrily said to his son, "Return that toad to where you caught it." Danjiansirang put the toad on a peony bush in the rear yard and secretly tended it. But, in a short time, his father found it again and cursed, "Quickly dispose of it!" Having no other options, Danjiansirang took the toad to some deep mountains. But, every 2-3 days, he went secretly to see the toad and gave it food.

Quickly the years passed and, during this time, Danjiansirang studied very hard. Later he prepared to go to the capital to be examined. The night before leaving, while he was still half asleep by the table, he suddenly beheld the toad. It told him to meet him in the deep mountains the next day. The frog said he would repay the boy's kindness in saving and rearing him. The next day Danjiansirang kept the appointment. The toad was waiting and said, "I wish to repay your kindness. Use a knife and cut my neck. There is a treasure bead there which can help you gain happiness. If you shine the light of this bead on dead animals, they will regain their lives. But you must never shine this on a dead person for, if you do, you will have misfortune." Danjiansirang said, "Brother toad, I cannot bear to cut your neck. If you want, please do so yourself." So the toad cut its own neck and a radiant bead rolled to Danjiansirang's foot. He gladly picked it up and, when he glanced up, he found the toad was gone.

Taking the precious bead, Danjiansirang said goodbye to his parents. Halfway to the capital, he saw a dead fly by the side of the way, took out the precious bead, and shone its light on the fly. Slowly the dead fly revived and flew away. Later, he found several dead mice and revived them as well. Still later, he saw a dead bee by the side of the path and brought it back to life. Still further on, he found a human corpse. "What should I do?" he wondered. "Brother Toad told me never to shine this light on a human corpse." Hesitating, he took out the precious bead and finally decided to bring the man back to life. When the man revived, he caught the boy by the collar and accused him of being the thief who had murdered him. Danjiansirang found it difficult to vindicate himself and finally had to take out the bead to explain. When the man learned Danjiansirang was his savior, he told him he also was going to be examined in the capital, and that he had been set upon by robbers. The man's name was Lamurenqian. They became sworn brothers and continued on together.

"You may see another's appearance, but you cannot know his nature," goes one proverb. Danjiansirang treated Lamurenqian like his older brother and told him everything that had happened. But, when Lamurenqian knew Danjiansirang's secret, he immediately formulated an evil plot. He persuaded, "Brother, please let me see your precious bead." Danjiansirang trustingly handed him the bead. Lamurenqian tried it on a dead worm which revived. He at once wanted the bead and said, "There is a well ahead. What if we go there to drink some water?" Once they reached the well, they tied their sashes together. Lamurenqian asked Danjiansirang to hold one end and climb down into the well to get some water. When half of the sash was in the well, Lamurenqian let go and Danjiansirang fell to the bottom. Lamurenqian immediately pocketed the precious bead. When he reached the capital, he dedicated the bead to the emperor who, in return, granted him the title of "Treasure Dedicating Hero."

Meanwhile, Danjiansirang had not died after his tumble, but had been saved by a passerby. He felt he was ill-fated, but still managed to reach the capital. As luck would have it, just as he entered the capital, he saw the "Treasure Dedicating Hero" parading through the streets, sitting on a sedan carried by eight men, surrounded by many attendants. Danjiansirang pointed to Lamurenqian and cursed loudly, "What a Treasure Dedicating Hero! He is an evildoer who tried to murder me to get my precious bead. He repaid kindness with enmity." At first Lamurenqian was in a state of shock, but

quickly regained his composure and ordered in an awe-inspiring tone, "Hold this man who dares attack me. Lash him 40 times, and then imprison him." Danjiansirang suffered untold miseries while in prison and he had no idea when he would be freed.

Some days later there was a hubbub of voices outside. Through questioning the prison guard, he learned that the emperor's third daughter had been bitten by a snake and was in a coma. None of the nation's famous doctors could cure her and no medicine had proven effective. Imperial notices had been posted throughout the land announcing that he who cured her could marry her and might choose any powerful office. Suddenly something buzzed in front of his eyes and he recognized the bee he had saved. It said, "My savior, tomorrow you may tear down the imperial notice. The princess will be healed in 10 days if you use petal dew water in the morning to wash her wound." Danjiansirang quickly asked the guard to take down an imperial notice on his behalf. The emperor at once called him in. He told the emperor he had a secret prescription handed down in his family for generations which was particularly useful in curing complicated illnesses. Imperial maids led him to Third Princess's bed. He saw her eyes were shut as though she were dead. She seemed only to exhale and not inhale. Her condition was indeed grave. The following morning he carefully gathered dew water from flower petals and gently washed Third Prince's wound. As soon as dew touched her, the pain subsided. The princess opened her eyes and beheld a handsome young man washing her wound. This filled her heart of hearts with joy. On the tenth day she was completely cured, and the two had fallen in love. Delighted, the emperor at once proposed holding a wedding feast.

When Lamurenqian learned this he advised the emperor, "Your son-in-law should be truly able and learned. You should examine him." The emperor considered this reasonable and commissioned Lamurenqian to devise a suitable test. Lamurenqian racked his brains and then mixed some millet with rice and ordered Danjiansirang to separate the two in a night. If he didn't, he would be accused of hoodwinking the emperor. Danjiansirang knew that Lamurenqian wanted to put him in a situation so that he would be executed. He was so worried that when late night came he had still not started separating millet from the rice. Suddenly, some mice ran into his cell and nodded in greeting. A short while later, they had separated the millet from the rice. The next morning, seeing the two piles of grain, Lamurenqian turned pale with fear. He said, "It's unexpected that you have such abilities, but you must pass another test. In preparation for the wedding, 32 sedans will be taken to the palace tomorrow. You must identify the princess's sedan from 300 paces. This will demonstrate you are destined for the princess. If you can't do this, mm..."

The next day, Danjiansirang was led near the throne room where 32 identical sedans stood in a row, each with its curtain pulled. It was impossible to identify the correct one. Lamurenqian proudly walked to Danjiansirang and asked him to stand 300 paces away from the sedans and then select one. Just then a fly flew near Danjiansirang and buzzed three times around his head. Then it flew directly to the 12th sedan and landed on the curtain. Danjiansirang knew that the fly was helping him, so he ran to the 12th and drew back the curtain revealing Third Princess inside.

In time, Danjiansirang and Third Princess married. One day they visited the emperor's treasury. Danjiansirang's heart was unmoved by the sight of many treasures. Only when he saw the precious bead which Brother Toad had given him, was a chord struck in his heart. Unable to control himself he wept. Third Princess asked why and Danjiansirang explained all that had happened to him. Later she told the emperor, who angrily sentenced Lamurenqian to death.

Danjiansirang brought his parents to the capital and, from then on, the young couple loved each other and led a perfectly happy life with their parents. Kindhearted Danjiansirang did not forget the hardship of the common people and later did many good things to help them.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>[TE]: Sirangsuo, 76; [CLR]/[MCT]: Liu Zhengquan; [AWT]: Danma: Wushi; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

## ***Dindirimaxiu* (A Story of Narration and Singing)**

A girl was married to a man who lived far from her home in a poverty-stricken area deep amid remote mountain ranges. For dozens of kilometers around there was not so much as a bit of plain land. Stepping outside a home in this area it was impossible to see anything but valleys, gullies, cliffs, and slopes. Donkeys were useless. The women carried everything, and were, in truth, tailless donkeys. "If a sheephair skin was pulled on the ground, not a straw would stay on it. If a bird flew over, it would die of exhaustion. If a snake passed by, it would roll down hills and valleys to its death," were comments local people made.

But this was of little consequence for, if others could live there, it was thought the bride could too. Her parents-in-law were a vicious lot and beat and cursed her as they pleased. Her husband was too young to understand anything. He only laughed when she was beaten. She was thus forced to endure the area's harsh conditions in addition to the tortures of her husband's heartless family. Just after cocks crowed in the morning she arose to collect dung, carry water, and remove ashes from under the *kang*. As soon as it was bright, she went to the fields to work till dusk, and then it was time to spread a layer of soil in the livestock pen and clean out the latrine pit. This was her work, day in and day out. She never rested for a single day the whole year.

Because of such severe work and harsh living conditions, her clothing, shoes, socks, and sash were worn out. She wanted to mend them, but lacked both cloth and time. In a short time, this young healthy woman looked old and ill. She went to her mother-in-law and begged for permission to visit her mother's home so that she might mend her clothing. Her mother-in-law answered, "You can't leave until you carry enough water to supply the family for a month, and you must bake enough pancakes to last two months." The young wife asked, "Where shall I store so much water?" The mother-in-law cursed her for being impudent from that night until the next morning.

The hapless bride yearned day and night for her parents to visit her, but they did not. One day she went uphill to cut firewood and saw birds known as *dindirimaxiu* chirping and flitting to and fro in the woods. The *dindirimaxiu* understood human speech and could take messages. The bride said, "*Dindirimaxiu*, please send a message to my mother! Tell her my scarf is so worn that only tassels are left. The tassels are worn to the point that only the ties remain. My coat is so tattered that only the collar remains. My sash is so worn that only tassels are left. My skirt is so worn out that only some cloth is left. My trousers are so worn that only the lower part remains. My shoes are so worn that only the tongues remain. My body has been squeezed dry and I've no more tears to weep. Days pass and nights come and I long for my parents. Stars go and the moon comes as I yearn for them. If they come soon, we may meet. But if they come late, we shall never see each other for all eternity." *Dindirimaxiu* sent this message to the mother, who hurriedly gathered clothes and went to see her daughter suffering afar. But when she reached her daughter, she found that she had hung herself on a *suoluoluo* tree. Seeing her clad in worn-out clothing, her mother wept and cursed a society in which women were treated as beasts of burden.

In old society, when their clothing was worn out, maltreated Monguor women often sang, "I'm now in such a state that I need *dindirimaxiu* to send a message for me." Today, 'letting *dindirimaxiu* send a message' is synonymous with the maltreatment and oppression of Monguor women.<sup>106</sup>

### **Insatiably Greedy Younger Brother**

Many years ago there lived two brothers. The elder, Saisigede, was diligent and honest while the younger, Mosigede, was greedy. On his death bed, their father summoned them and said, "I'm like a lamp whose fuel is gone. I'll die soon. Afterwards, don't divide the family. You should help each other to manage the property and then you may live a good life." He turned to the younger son and said, "Your elder brother is honest and hard working, but he is not intelligent. I'm afraid he will be

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<sup>106</sup>[MCT]/[CMP]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

taken advantage of. Look after him to the best of your ability." The younger brother promised he would do so. Not long after this the father passed away.

The two brothers remembered their father's parting words and rose when cocks began crowing and didn't sleep until midnight. They worked hard and gradually their condition improved. But after Younger Brother married, things changed. He gradually came to despise his brother. This was added to by his wife's insistence that the rooms and field should be divided with Elder Brother. Murmuring in their pillows, the couple concocted an evil scheme to drive Elder Brother out of the home. Before the first 3 days of Spring Festival ended Younger Brother set about enacting this plan. But Elder Brother said, "Father said we should not divide the family." Younger Brother said, "Last night I had a dream in which Father told us to divide the family. He said that you should go to remote mountains to farm while I should watch the home." Elder Brother believed this.

On the fourth day of the first month, just after the first 3 days of Spring Festival had ended, Younger Brother urged Elder Brother to leave. He gave him a gelding too old to be alive, a bull too thin to shit, several male sheep destined to die inside of two months, and several liters of grain. Elder Brother was thus forced to live in a hut amidst desolate mountains. Several days later, his horse, bull, and sheep died. When time came for spring plowing and planting, the grain was nearly gone. Only a liter of barley remained which he used as seed. After it sprouted, he weeded and loosened the soil and managed everything carefully. As the saying goes, "Nothing in the world is difficult if you set your mind to it." When late autumn came, one barley plant was as tall as a tree.

One day after a thunderstorm the weather turned fine. The flowers, grass, trees, and ripe crops were all fresh. A roc soaring in the sky noticed a barley tree growing in a peculiar piece of low lying land. As it attempted to land on the barley tree, the barley tree broke. Elder Brother held the broken barley tree and wept. The roc said, "Don't weep! I'll find a way for you to live on. Sit on my back, close your eyes, and come with me!" Elder Brother mounted the roc and flew into the sky over mountains and vast stretches of water. Finally, they landed in a place covered with gold. He asked Elder Brother to open his eyes. He did so and saw that everywhere there was a brilliant yellow light. The roc said, "Pick some quickly! You may take as much as you like!" Elder Brother filled his bosom and said, "I can't take more!" The roc then took him back to where he lived.

The next day Elder Brother took a piece of gold and bought a horse, several cattle, and a flock of sheep from a rich landlord. The third day he purchased grain and, on the fourth day, paid for three rooms to be built, and thus began a new life. He still herded up the mountains every morning and worked in his fields every afternoon. As a result, he became prosperous and, in due time, was rich. One morning he beheld a rainbow slowly descending into a field of wild flowers. It slowly became a delicate peony. He ran to this peony and saw beautiful crystal dew drops rolling about on the pistils. He softly plucked the peony, took it home, and put it in a vase, placed it on the front part of his *kang* and gazed at it. The next morning when he got up, the peony and the vase had vanished. He worriedly shouted, "Where did my peony go?" and then heard a woman's voice reply from the kitchen, "I'm here!" Astounded, he ran to the kitchen and saw a woman dressed in clothes of five colors, which were the same as the rainbow's colors of the previous day. With a complexion as pretty as the peony he had plucked the day before, her eyes were as wonderful as the crystal dew drops that had rolled on the pistils. He hastily inquired, "Whose wife are you?" Bashfully she responded, "I am Saisigede's wife," and served delicious pancakes and fresh milk tea. Confused, Elder Brother wondered aloud, "Is this a dream?"

"You are not asleep. How can you dream a dream?"

"What's your name?"

"Just now you shouted my name."

"No, I didn't."

"You shouted, 'Where has my peony gone,' and I said, 'I'm here.' And then you came."

He suddenly realized that she was the pretty peony he had brought home the day before. From then on the peony maid was Elder Brother's wife. They loved each other dearly and led a rich and sweet life.

News of the couple spread to Mosigede and his wife. Early one day the gluttonous and lazy

Mosigede loaded clothes and delicious food on a horse and rode to his brother's home in the remote mountains. As soon as he entered his brother's home he said, "Elder Brother, why didn't you tell me you had married such a pretty sister-in-law? Today I have come to congratulate you." Elder Brother was delighted and invited him into his home. Younger Brother asked the reason for his prosperity. Honest Elder Brother told the truth to greedy Younger Brother, who quickly returned home and told his wife what he had heard and seen. At once the two made a plan. The next day Younger Brother went to a remote mountain gully to sow barley. But, no matter how hard he worked, he could not raise a barley plant as tall as a tree. Finally, he cut down a tree and put it in his barley field. One day a big roc came and landed on the fake barley tree, breaking it. Younger Brother wept. The big roc said, "Please don't weep! I'll carry you to a place where you may gather gold." Younger Brother nearly dropped dead in delight, but managed to grab a large sack and a long rope and get on the roc's back. The roc took him to the place where gold was everywhere. Younger Brother did not feel he had enough, even when his big sack was full. He even tried to tie up a large bundle of gold with his rope. The roc asked, "Have you picked enough?" "No!" he answered. After a while, the roc asked again, "Have you picked enough?" "No!" he replied.

The blue east suddenly became red as the radiant sun soared up to the mountain tops. Piercing sunlight shone like a sword. The big roc flew away, leaving greedy Younger Brother to be burned to ashes by the scorching sun. Meanwhile, his greedy wife waited at home, expecting her greedy husband to return with much gold.<sup>107</sup>

### **Avaricious Elder Brother**

Long ago there lived two brothers. Elder Brother married and became head of the family. Younger Brother worked hard every day. Elder Brother was skilled in the arts of embezzlement and scheming against others and, in time, prospered and owned much property. He maltreated his younger brother in an effort to drive him away. Finally, Younger Brother could no longer endure this and moved out. When he did so, Elder Brother gave him only an ax and a rope. Afterwards, everyday Younger Brother went uphill to chop firewood and lived by selling wood.

Everyday, on the way home with his firewood, he passed by a big rock where he stopped, put down his firewood, and rested. One day the big rock suddenly said, "Why do you always mash me with your firewood bundle?" Younger Brother told the rock about his life, concluding with "So, I live by selling firewood." The big rock replied, "Since you have such difficulties, take a handful of gold from my mouth," and opened its mouth. Younger Brother gladly removed a handful of gold. Returning home, he bought farming tools, cattle, and good clothing. Elder Brother was terribly envious and asked where he had gotten so much money. Younger Brother told him everything. Elder Brother hastily returned home, took an ax and a rope, and went uphill to cut firewood. After cutting a bundle he returned, using the same route his brother used every day. When he reached the large rock, he sat on it. The rock said, "Alas, several days ago, you took a handful of gold. You should have taken enough. Why do you still cut firewood?" Elder Brother replied, "I'm not the one who cut firewood some days ago. But I am in identical circumstances. My elder brother also mistreats me." The big rock said, "Then take a handful of gold from my mouth also." Elder Brother desperately desired to take all the gold out of the rock's mouth. Rather than using one hand he stuck both into the rock's mouth. But the rock snapped its mouth closed and held his hands and, regardless of how hard he struggled, he could not get loose.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>[TE]: Grandmother Niu Lishi (Li Youlou's grandmother); [CMP]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>108</sup>[TE]: Sirensuo, 76; [CMP]: Liu Zhengquan; [AWT]: Danma; Wushi; East Valley; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

## **The Old Spotted Bull and Elder Brother**

Once there lived a very honest, diligent, and kindhearted elder brother. He lived with his younger brother, who was anything but kind. And his sister-in-law was even meaner and more deceitful. After Young Brother married, the young couple's treatment of Elder Brother became steadily worse. Every daybreak, Elder Brother hitched a spotted old bull to a rickety old cart and hauled manure and soil until night when everyone else in the village was in bed. Despite his hard work, his heartless sister-in-law did not give him enough to eat.

One day Sister-in-law said to her husband, "Elder Brother's belly is as big as a pot. He is never full, though he eats so much. If things go on this way, all our grain will soon be gone. In my opinion, it's better to divide our property and live apart." Younger Brother agreed.

The old bull overheard it all. He had lived with Elder Brother day and night and, when he was hungry, it was Elder Brother that gave him grass. When he was thirsty it was Elder Brother who led him to drink and, as time passed, the old bull became very fond of him. The old bull told Elder Brother, "Just now your brother and sister-in-law were conspiring. When they suggest that the family should separate, only ask for the old cart, the two apricots consecrated in the Buddha niche, and me. I'll pull the old cart and we will go to a far place." On the day of division, Elder Brother did as the bull had instructed. With the apricots in his robe, and seated in the old bull cart, he drove off for a far place.

They went on the whole day and came to a plain. The old bull said, "Eat the apricots and bury one pit here. Then walk forward three steps and bury the other. Later, when you suffer, they will aid you." After burying the pits, they went on and, one night they stayed in a cave. The old bull said, "Sit and don't move. I'm going to find a wife for you."

"Where are you going to find a wife? It's too dark and besides, we are in a mountain range. Also, we didn't bring so much as a penny when we left home."

"I'm going to look. Maybe I can find a wife for you."

Just then an official was taking part in his daughter's marriage. She was sitting in a bridal sedan, and was escorted by many people. Sizing up the situation, the old bull shook himself and became a frisky young spotted bull with golden horns and silver hooves, which glittered in the dim morning. The bridal entourage was amazed, for they had never before seen such a beautiful bull. The bride popped her head out of the sedan and delightedly exclaimed, "Dad, how wonderful if I could go to my marriage riding on that small bull." "It's very easy!" the official promised, and ordered the escorts to catch the small bull. Consequently, the small bull was quickly captured. But as soon as the bride was seated on the bull, he flew back to the cave. Seeing honest and diligent Elder Brother, she was very sympathetic, and married him that night. The next day they set off again. After many days of travelling, they found an old cottage and settled. As before, Elder Brother worked day and night and gradually their lives improved.

Some years passed in this fashion, and then one day the old bull said to Elder Brother, "I have grown old and will die soon. Afterwards bury my four legs and hooves at the four corners of the cottage. Bury my kidneys under the threshold of the big door. Crush my bones and put half of this bone dust in the cattle pen, and the other half in the sheep pen. Put my blood in a basin and consecrate it in front of the Buddha niche. Near this, place a basin of cool water. Watch the water carefully. If it spills into the basin of blood, it means you are well and without mishap. If blood spills into the water basin, it means disaster is soon to fall and you must dig out my kidneys from under the threshold in haste. This will help you overcome the difficulty." The old bull soon died and Elder Brother did as he had directed.

Not long after, from the cottage's four corners where the old bull's legs had been buried, four beautiful peonies sprouted. The crushed bones that had been scattered in the cattle pen changed into a large herd of cattle, and that dusted in the sheep pen became a flock of sheep. The couple's life thus greatly improved. They lived in this way for another 3-4 years. One day Elder Brother said to his wife, "I have been away from my home village for many years now, and I don't know how my younger brother and sister-in-law are. I want to see them. After I leave, watch the blood basin by the

Buddha niche. If cool water spills into the blood, it means I am well. But if blood spills into the water, it means I am in trouble and you must dig out the old bull's kidneys from under the threshold quickly."

When Elder Brother reached his brother's home he found, to his great surprise, that his sister-in-law's face was red as a beet. She had become a man-eating demon, and had eaten her husband and all the villagers. But, as soon as Elder Brother entered, she said, "Has Elder Brother come? Please quickly move to the *kang*! I shall boil tea." As she said this she put a basin of human blood into a pot to boil. The home and yard were both full of human bones and heads. It was enough to frighten anyone to death. Elder Brother turned and ran in terror. But the demon was not about to let a hunk of delicious flesh escape her jaws, and hotly pursued him. In a short while, the two reached the place where Elder Brother had buried the two apricot pits. By now the two trees were big and lofty with interlocking branches. At this crucial moment, Elder Brother grasped one branch and climbed up. The she-demon ran after him to the foot of the tree, but could not climb up, so began gnawing at the trunk. Sooner or later the trunk was bound to be gnawed through. Elder Brother caught the second tree's branches and crossed over to the second tree. Just as the trunk of the second tree snapped, Elder Brother's wife suddenly thought of what her husband had told her before leaving. She ran to the Buddha niche and saw half of the blood had spilled into the water basin. She hurriedly dug out the kidneys from under the threshold. They became two young tigers, and ran as quickly as flying to the trees. As they lunged at the she-demon's throat, they shouted to Elder Brother in the tree, "Come down, we've bitten the demon to death." Elder Brother said, "Please cover her face with soil, otherwise I'll be too frightened to come down!"

The two young tigers covered the female demon's face with soil, and then Elder Brother came down slowly and they returned home together. From then on, they lived and worked in peace and contentment.<sup>109</sup>

### **The Sweets Salesman, the Rabbit, and the Wolf**

One late autumn morning the sun shone on canyon rocks. A sly rabbit listlessly lay under a stone when a sweets seller came up the canyon. Suddenly refreshed, the rabbit's eyes moved quickly and his ears wiggled as evil brewed in his heart. When the sweets seller went under the cliff, he saw a rabbit seemingly lying dead from the cold. He picked it up and tossed it into his sweets box. In his heart arose a sense of gratitude to Mountain God for providing a good meal which he would enjoy after reaching home. Not long afterwards, he heard a rustling in his box. He thought that the rabbit had revived in the warm box, but he could not afford to let this delicious meal escape by opening the box.

Meanwhile the rabbit ate its fill of sesame candy and filled its ears with candy. When it began jumping, making a loud noise, and shitting and pissing, the candy seller hastily opened the box. The cunning rabbit jumped out and deftly loped away. When the seller saw his delicious meal, which he had nearly been able to taste scampering away, he was furious, but he was enraged to the point of death when he saw his sesame candy mixed with rabbit pellets and urine. A blast of fetid air made him want to vomit. He cursed and ran after the rabbit.

Meanwhile the rabbit ran over many hilltops and then decided it was time to find a place to rest and eat some candy. He squatted under a cliff and proudly ate some, working his powerful harelip up and down. At this time a large grey wolf came up, drooled, and said, "Excuse me, Brother Rabbit! I have fasted since yesterday. Please stretch out your neck and allow me to have a good meal!" The rabbit said in a calm, unhurried tone, "Don't be in such a rush! I'm now eating some delicious food." "What are you eating?" the wolf asked, hungrily moving closer. "I'm eating one of my eyeballs," the rabbit replied, shutting one of its eyes. "Is an eyeball really as tasty as that?" the wolf asked, amazed.

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<sup>109</sup>[TE]: Wang Qixi, 52, female, East Mountain; [CLR]: Li Youlou; [MCT]: Li Jiuyan; [CMP]: Li Jinyan; [AWT]: East Mountain; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

"Of course! If it didn't taste good, do you think I would be willing to part with an eyeball?" the rabbit answered earnestly. The wolf believed this and asked the rabbit to help him dig out one of his own eyeballs. The rabbit said, "I can help you, but while I'm gouging out your eyeball, you must not cry out in pain. If you do, your eyeball will taste terrible, and then you shouldn't blame me."

"Ok! Please dig out one of my eyeballs and I will most certainly not cry out."

The rabbit began digging and the wolf tolerated the great pain in silence. Then the sly rabbit put a piece of sesame candy into the wolf's mouth. The wolf swallowed it without chewing and thought it was tasty and sweet. He said, "It's very tasty and I want to eat another. But if I eat both eyeballs, how will I be able to walk later?" "Don't be afraid, I'll lead you," the rabbit said. The wolf then permitted the rabbit to dig out its remaining eyeball. This time the rabbit was very rough and the wolf, unable to endure such pain, cried out. The rabbit tossed the eyeball into its mouth, the wolf chewed for a long time, and then pronounced, "This one is far less tasty than the previous one." "You shouldn't blame me. You did cry out you know," the rabbit retorted. Thus the gluttonous wolf became blind and was no longer able to prey on sheep. In their relationship, the rabbit played the tyrant.

Autumn came in a rush. A whistling north wind blew, howling through pine trees, and heavy snowflakes fell. The wolf curled up, shivering from the cold, and begged, "Brother Rabbit, please help me. I'm nearly frozen to death." "Don't worry," the rabbit said. "I'll lead you to a shelter where you may warm yourself by a fire," and led the blind wolf over high mountains, down stiff slopes, and past thistles and thorns. The blind wolf staggered along and, in the process of the journey, much of his hair was pulled off. "Brother Rabbit, I can't walk any more," the wolf implored. "Come on! A good shelter from the wind is just ahead," the rabbit encouraged, and led the wolf to a cliff top. He said, "You rest here while I gathered firewood and grass. Let's warm ourselves by a fire." In a short while, the rabbit had built a big fire in front of the wolf. While the wolf was comfortably warming himself, Rabbit said, "Brother Wolf! Please move back just a little, otherwise your hair will be burnt." The wolf moved his buttocks back a bit, while the rabbit moved the fire a bit closer to the wolf and said, "Please move back a little more. Your hair is nearly singed." The wolf moved, lost his balance, and plunged down the cliff. After killing the cruel wolf, the rabbit walked away chortling.<sup>110</sup>

### **The Rabbit Shares the Booty**

A rabbit became pals with a wolf, an eagle, and a magpie. They decided they would join forces and steal. They preyed on people at a three-forked intersection. One time a lama carrying many things on his back staggered towards them. The cunning rabbit said to his friends, "Wait here and, when the time is ripe, we'll steal his things."

The sly rabbit ran to the lama, pretended to be very surprised, and said, "Lama, put your things down and run for your life. A cruel wolf is waiting to eat you." The lama looked where the rabbit pointed and saw a wolf there. Terrified, he abandoned his things, and took to his heels. The wolf, eagle, and magpie then raced to the rabbit to divide the loot. The cunning rabbit said, "It's I who first drove the lama away, so I shall determine who gets what." The rabbit continued, "This pair of boots should be given to Brother Wolf. When you wear them you need not fear your feet will be cut when you chase sheep across the stubble field." The rabbit next picked up the hand drum and said, "This belongs to Brother Eagle. Pound it to keep evil at bay, and also amuse as well as ensure your children's safety." The rabbit held up a copper bell and said, "This goes to Brother Magpie. As you ring it, recite longevity scriptures which will help your children gain longer lives." Only the lama's steamed buns remained. Rabbit said, "This is not much use, especially to you, my three carnivorous friends, but it'll make a good meal for me."

After dividing the booty, each returned home. The wolf put on the boots and chased sheep in the

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<sup>110</sup>[TE]: Zhang Jinhua; [CMP]: Li Yongju; [AWT]: East Mountain; [CET]: Zhou Lijun



fields, but he could not run very fast and was captured by a shepherd, who nearly beat him to death. The eagle returned to his nest, beat the hand drum and began chanting security scriptures, causing the eaglets to fly away in panic. The eagle couldn't find them anywhere. The magpie returned to his nest, rang the copper bell, and began reciting longevity scriptures, which caused the nestlings to fly away.

The three hoodwinked friends met. Each recited what had happened. They all desired to even the score with the rabbit. The sly rabbit was aware of what had transpired, stabbed a thorn through his lips, squatted under a cliff, and shivered when his three comrades approached. Before the wolf, eagle, or magpie could even open their mouths to say anything, the rabbit said, "My three brothers, the lama's magic arts are formidable. He stabbed this thorn through my lips by simply chanting an incantation." The wolf, eagle, and magpie were again taken in. Each told his own tale of woe, believing his misfortunes were due to the lama's incantation. The rabbit said, "Let's quickly return the lama's articles. If he recites another incantation, we will die."

The wolf, eagle, and magpie gathered the lama's things and put them before Rabbit who said, "You three wait here. Let me return these things to the lama. If we all go, he may become angry and recite incantations which would be disastrous." Rabbit took the lama's things to him. The lama was very glad and said, "Please come to the hill top 5 days from now! I'll give you steamed buns every 5 days."<sup>111</sup>

### **The Ox, Yak, and Tiger**

A tiger once met an ox and said, "Your horns are so long that they get in your way when you walk. Let me help by cutting some of your horns off?" The ox thought this was a kind offer of friendship and said, "All right, please do cut off some." The tiger did so, leaving very short and blunt horns. After he lost his two sword-like horns, the tiger killed and ate the ox.

Later the tiger met a yak and said, "Your horns are so long that they are surely inconvenient for you. Let me help you by cutting some of them off." The yak cursed and said, "Evildoer, I use these horns to deal with wild beasts which dare to try and eat me." The tiger's plot was thus foiled and desperately, he fled.<sup>112</sup>

### **Buruyiu the Calf**

Once a cow led her calf to graze. Afraid of meeting wolves, they stayed in a place where they ate wiry grass and drank dirty water from small pits. They dared not venture up slopes to eat tender grass, nor did they dare enter valleys to drink spring water. The calf felt this was too difficult a life and said, "Alas, mom, sand grass is short, stiff, and bitter. I can't get full on it. Sand water is turbid and tastes terrible. Mountain grass is tender, plump, and deliciously sweet. Valley spring water is clear and sweet."

The cow persuaded, "My dear Buruyiu, mountain grass is tall, tender, and delicious, but ruthless wolves are there. And though spring water is clear and sweet, very cruel tigers are there. Sand grass may be short, stiff, and bitter, but rarely do wolves come here. Water on the sand is muddy, but tigers don't often come here." But, as the saying goes, "The lamb has never seen a wolf, and a calf is not afraid of a tiger."

The calf didn't listen to his mother and snuck off to the slopes. But, instead of finding good grass and sweet spring water, he met a cruel wolf. The heinous wolf grinned, bulged its eyes, perked up its ears, raised its keen-nailed paws, and drew near the calf, step by step, "What good fortune! What

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<sup>111</sup>[TE]: Sirensuo, 76; Li Zhanxiang; [CLR]: Liu Zhengquan; [AWT]: Danma; Wushi; East Valley; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>112</sup>[TE]: Niangniangbao, at least 50; [CLR]: Liu Zhengquan; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

a foolish calf. I didn't have much time to go downhill to look for food, and now the calf has sent himself to me," the cruel wolf gleefully philosophized. Seeing the wolf's fierce face the calf felt certain that this was a livestock-eating big gray wolf and was scared out of his wits. Mooing in terror, the calf turned and ran. "Bang!" The fierce big gray wolf pounded its tail against the ground, giving out two clouds of sparks, sounding as loud and clear as a groom snapping his whip. In several jumps, the wolf caught up with and passed the calf, turned, and blocked his way.

The ruthless wolf crawled on the ground at an easy pace, opening its basin-sized bloody mouth, displaying sword-like teeth. With eyes wide open it fiercely said, "Now let me see where you will run! Obediently stretch out your neck to me, lest you struggle in vain." The pitiful calf knew death had come and in great sadness and despair mooded, "Mom, I could not eat grass in the mountains nor could I drink spring water in the valleys. If you come soon, I'll still be alive, but if you come late, I'll be eaten by the wolf. If I die, please don't grieve."

The cow, eating short, stiff, and bitter sand grass, looked up and realized the calf was gone. Searching, she mooded for her calf. Suddenly, she heard the desperate cry of the calf echoing from the mountains. Disregarding her own safety, she galloped uphill for a life-and-death struggle with the fierce wolf. As she battled the wolf, she shouted to the calf, "Run! Behind is the way." The calf turned and ran hard. Alarmed and bewildered, the calf ran up slopes, down gullies, and over mountains and hills. After a long time he came to a sandy area. Calming himself, he found his mother had not followed, so he returned to find her. But he only found her white bones, several blood stains, and a black hair hide. This miserable sight made the calf weep. "Mom, what are these white things? What are these red things? What's the black thing?" he asked. His mother's spirit heard his miserable wailing and replied, "The white things are your mother's bones. The red things are your mother's blood. The black things are your mother's hair." The calf buried his mother's bones and blood, put on the tattered hair-covered hide, and weeping, descended the mountains. From then on he ate bitter grass on the sand and drank dirty water. He led a lonely and hungry life.<sup>113</sup>

### A Frog and a Tiger

A tiger looked for small animals to eat, especially at night. But a frog croaked constantly at night from a pond. The tiger warned, "You croak as I'm looking for food, frightening my quarry away. I'll not be kind if you continue." "You do as you wish and I'll do as I wish," the frog replied. The tiger replied furiously, "I'm the king of the mountains. Big and small animals obey me. If you don't obey me, you will have to leave here at once."

"You are the king of mountain ranges, but I'm the king of the pond. You dominate mountain beasts while I preside over water animals."

"To be a king one must have a majestic air. Do you have such a majestic bearing?"

"I'm not as stately as you are on land, but if I jump into the pond, my bearing becomes more stately than yours. Let me show you!" said the frog and plunged into the pond.

There was only dim moonlight at this time. The tiger lowered his head, gazed into the pond, and was very surprised, as he foolishly mistook his own unclear reflection for the frog. He decided that this image was of one more stately than he. The frog inquired, "Did you discover what I looked like?"

"Yes!"

"Am I more majestic than you?"

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<sup>113</sup>This story is told in Dazhuang, East Valley (Donggou) and Baiyahe, East Mountain (Dongshan). The content of the singing and narration is nearly the same, but the part that is actually sung varies from very simple to quite complex. And in some places, there is only singing and in other places, only narration. Much of the version here is based on the Monguor singer's, Diao Yumei, version, but I also consulted my grandmother, Niu Shi, and my father, Duanzhu. (Li Youlou) [CMP]: Li Youlou; [MCT]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

"Yes!"

The frog leapt out of the pond and said, "From now on, don't interfere with what I do." Seeing just how small the frog was the tiger said, "I can cover 500 kilometers in one night. And I can leap across any large river. Can you?"

"I can do whatever you can. If you don't believe this, then just try me!"

"I'll run ahead. I'll believe you if you can catch me."

"Go ahead! I'll give chase," the frog said and the tiger started running with all his might. As soon as the tiger started, the frog grabbed his tail in his mouth. The tiger ran across a big river and thought the frog could not jump it. He turned, and croaked, "Can you cross?" The frog replied, right behind him, "I have already crossed it." The tiger was greatly surprised. He then said, "I'm the king of mountains and eat animal flesh every day. Can you do the same?" "No one really knows what you eat," the frog said. In order to prove what he ate, the tiger vomited out rabbit ears, goat hearts, and deer antler bases. The frog examined this carefully and said, "What I eat is tiger flesh. If you are skeptical, look at what I vomit." Because the frog had gripped the tiger's tail in his mouth for a long while, there were tiger hairs in his vomit. The tiger lowered his head to inspect the vomit and saw several tiger hairs. "I wanted to vomit a tiger head to show you, but my digestion has worked too quickly and there isn't a whole one left inside my belly," the frog said. Afterwards, though the tiger looked for food by the side of the pond the frog never cared about the tiger and croaked loudly and the tiger did nothing.<sup>114</sup>

### **The Frog Which Liked to Boast**

One day after a storm, a cow's hoofprint was full of water. A frog found this "pool," jumped in happily, and felt very proud. Two migrating birds flew over mountains and valleys, across big rivers, lakes, and oceans. The frog saw the birds and shouted, "Distant visitors, where are you from?" "We are from a distant lake and must fly over many more mountains and valleys," the two replied. Gesturing at the cow hoofprint, the frog said, "Is your lake larger than mine?" "The place where you stay is merely a cattle hoofprint and is not a lake. The real lake is thousands of times as big as yours," the birds said. "I don't believe you. I want to follow you to see for myself," the frog said. "You can't fly, so how will you travel?" asked the birds. "If I don't see the lake, how can I believe it is as large as you say?" the frog said. "We have a way to take you there," the birds said. They picked up a willow twig, told the frog to take the twig in its mouth, and then each bird took a twig end in their bills. But before they took off, they warned the frog not to say anything while in flight, otherwise he would fall.

Not long after they were in the air, they soared above a group of colorfully clad women going to weed with back-baskets and trowels. One young woman looked up, caught sight of this trio in the sky, and shouted, "Look! A pair of migrating birds are carrying a frog." Seeing such a marvelous sight another young woman shouted, "Who thought of that? What a clever idea!" Unable to restrain himself, the frog said, "This is my idea." But as soon as the frog spoke it fell to the ground and broke into several bits. The two migratory birds dropped the willow twig and flew on. Seeing this, the women laughed.

"He who likes to boast gets what he deserves."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>[TE]: Zhang Wanming; [CLR]/[CMP]: Li Youlou; [AWT]: East Mountain Commune; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>115</sup>[TE]: Li Gongxiang, Baiya Production Team, East Mountain Commune; [CLR]: Li Youlou; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

## **The Fox and the Frog**

A fox often went to a lake to drink and made friends with a frog. The two often played together on grass by the lake. One day, while happily playing with the fox the frog invited the fox to his home in the lake center. The fox was afraid of water and dared not go. The frog said, "Lie on my back, shut your eyes, and I'll carry you to my home." Out of curiosity, the fox did lie on the frog's back and so was brought to the frog's home.

The fox contentedly stayed at the frog's home for some days. One day the frog suddenly said, "My friend, my old mother is seriously ill. The doctor said that if she wears a fox coat she will recover. What do you think I should do?" The fox answered calmly, "You know that foxes keep their most precious furs at home. Come ashore with me. You may take my best fur for your mother."

The frog carried the fox to shore and together they went to the fox's den. The fox invited the frog inside, but the frog dared not. Then the fox went inside, took out a piece of pigskin, and said, "You may use this to make a fur coat for your mother." The frog took the pigskin and left. The fox laughed and said, "Frog! You don't have the happy lot to wear a fox fur coat. You'll wear a pigskin coat instead."<sup>116</sup>

## **The Turtledove that Wished to Eat the Sun**

In ancient times many things were different from those of today. The crow's plume was whiter than snow, the owl was active during the daytime, and the turtledove was the king of birds, not the phoenix. The turtledove was an overbearing ambitious fellow. One day he called in his two advisers, the crow and the owl. He opened his eyes widely and said resentfully, "Birds have a king, beasts have a king, and flowers have a king, and yet all things in the world respect the sun. Why? Though cocks are my subjects they don't worship me first every morning, but instead they sing the sun's praises. Flowers, grass, beasts, and trees do the same. This morning, just as the sun rose, yellow-flowered plants by the lake greeted the sun by blooming." The more the turtledove talked the angrier he became. The crow interrupted, "The sun is only as big as a plate, but it presides over the world. Rationally, you, my majesty, should preside over the sun." The owl flatteringly hooted, "You are broad-shouldered and solidly built. You fly and walk well. In water you can swim and govern aquatic animals. In the sky you can capture flying birds. In mountains you subdue beasts and on land you rule over flowers. Only you, my majesty, are qualified to govern the world." The turtledove was very proud after hearing this flattery and, in no time at all, he completely lost his head and wanted to be the supreme god of the world.

The crow gladly advised, "My king, why don't we sew thousands of walnut tree leaves together and block out the sun." The owl laughed and said, "The clouds filling the entire sky have never been able to block out the sun. What you suggest can't be of any use." The turtledove agreed and said, "Walnut leaves may cover your home, but not the world." "I have an idea," the owl announced in joy. "We'll eat the sun." "What? Eat the sun?" the other two exclaimed. "Yes! We'll eat it when it is the size of a mooncake at noon. We may swallow it in several mouthfuls." The turtledove felt this was a good idea and laughed, "Yes!" and continued arrogantly, "Let's eat the sun! Then the world will belong to me." He commanded, "We'll set out tomorrow!" The crow and the owl chorused, "We are glad to follow you!"

The following morning, they got up very early and started off for the sun's home. Because the owl had eaten during the night he had a bellyache and had to fly down to shit. The turtledove and the crow were eager to eat the sun and flew on. The turtledove flew the fastest and soon swooped into the sun's bedroom, where the sun was lying in bed. Throwing caution to the winds, the turtledove dived at the sun with his mouth wide open. Suddenly the sun awoke and opened his eyes. Thousands of powerful rays shot out, burning the turtledove to ashes in the twinkling of an eye. Meanwhile, the

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<sup>116</sup>[TE]: Sangjirang, 55; [CMP]: Liu Zhengquan; [AWT]: Danma; Wushi; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

crow had just reached the doorway of the sun's bedroom. Seeing the situation the crow hastily fled for his life, but not before his snow-white feathers were burnt black. He remained as black as he is today. Though the owl was only halfway to the sun's home, he realized that it was an impossible mission and hurriedly flew back. Frightened and ashamed, he hid in a dense forest. He was too embarrassed to face the sun and only ventured out at night. After the turtledove's death, the phoenix was elected the king of birds which has never changed.<sup>117</sup>

### The Greedy Bird King

Greedy Bird King married a much more avaricious crow. The two decided to forcibly possess everything in the world. One day the crow, who had been reared on man's flesh, could contain herself no longer and, motivated by greed, said to Bird King, "I find you, Bird King, unable to control anything. The common whom you rule live in houses more magnificent than your palace. Look at the chattering magpie who lives in a three-story affair. And what the common wear is more magnificent than your imperial robe. Just look at the talkative parrot who wears a green flowered coat. And what commoners eat is more delicious than your imperial food. Eagles, for example, eat meat every day. I think that they should give all their houses, delicious food, and good clothing to you. You are the one who should enjoy them."

"I have intended to do this, but how can I do it if they don't dedicate them to me?"

"Tomorrow proclaim that birds are to come here and then issue an imperial edict decreeing that they present their homes, food, and clothing to you the day after tomorrow."

Bird King informed all the birds in the world to come to his palace on the morning of the next day. The following morning eagles, sparrows, golden pheasants, parrots, and doves punctually flew to his palace. Only the magpies were absent. They waited a very long time, but the magpies still did not come. Furious, Bird King ordered eagles and sparrow hawks to arrest the magpies. As they were just about to obey this order, the magpies came in a rush. Bird King angrily demanded, "You fast-talking magpies, why did you not come on time? Did you intentionally violate my order?"

"We left very early today, but several difficulties on the way delayed us," one magpie said. "What troubles?" demanded the king. "We met people on the way and some said, 'Daytime is more than night.' Others said, 'Nighttime is more than daytime.' They argued, but reached no conclusion, so we were delayed," the magpie explained. "How did you solve this problem?" asked the king. "We agreed that it is daytime if the sun can be seen. If not, it's night. In times of rain and cloudiness the sun can't be seen and, therefore, they should be classified as night. Thus night is more than day," the magpie said. "Are you late just for this?" the king said. "No. Later we met another group. Some said that men outnumbered women, but others said that women were more numerous. They argued, but reached no conclusion. In order to solve this problem we were delayed," the magpie said. "How did you solve it?" asked the king. "The result of our argument was that the number of women was more than that of men," the magpie answered. "Where there is a man, there is a woman. This has been decided by God and the King of Hell. Is there any truth to the idea that women outnumber men?" the king demanded. "We all agreed that men who believe their wives' malicious talk should be regarded as women. This means women outnumber men," the magpie replied.

The dumbfounded Bird King flushed in shame. Finally, he did not issue the imperial edict he had intended.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>[CLR]/[CMP]: Qinghai Teachers' University; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

<sup>118</sup>[TE]: Grandma Niu Li and Li Zhanjin; [CMP]: Li Youlou; [MCT]: Li Youlou; [AWT]: East Mountain; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

## Mr. Magpie

Long ago Mr. Magpie was renowned for his excellent nest building skills. One day many birds flew to him to learn how to build nests. The magpie said, "You must concentrate your attention to build a good nest. Observe carefully while I show you how to build from beginning to end." He took mud in his bill from a river and made a round cake-like structure. A white-necked bird suddenly shouted, "Now I know how to make a nest. Just collect mud, pat it into a round shape, and then make a depression in the center. How simple." This bird flew away and made such a nest for himself and, even now, this white-necked bird's nest is an ugly small round cake-like structure.

The magpie next brought short twigs and covered the earthen plate with them. At this time the crow shouted, "I now know how to build a nest. Just prepare mud and surround it with short twigs. He flew back and made such a nest. Today the crow's nest is just a nest frame, and is far from beautiful.

The magpie then coated the twigs with mud and smoothed the outside with his deft bill. Then he brought long slender twigs which he bent and surrounded the nest frame. The sparrow announced, "Now I understand," and flew away to build a nest. Today his nest has bent grass hanging from it. It is very crude and uncomfortable with grass messily arranged inside. Next the magpie brought feathers and very thin and soft grass and placed them in the nest. It was now finished. Only the swallow watched carefully from beginning to end and, therefore, learned all Mr. Magpie's nest-building skills. Today his nest provides protection against winds and rains and is very comfortable, warm, and beautiful.

Two turtledoves also attended the nest-building session, but they were very lazy and did not want to learn. They just cooed in the distance not even wanting to watch. After having learned something, the flock of birds flew off, but the turtledoves still cooed there. The magpie wrongly thought that they wanted several sticks and collected several for them. And, until this day, the turtledove only knows how to use several small sticks in building nests.

Though the eagle watched the magpie from beginning to end, he was so lazy that he was unwilling to even try. He still doesn't know how to build a nest.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>[TE]: Niangniang Bao; [CMP]: Liu Zhengquan; [AWT]: Wushi; Danma; Halazhi Valley; [CET]: Zhou Lijun

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## Minhe Monguor Folktales

### The Origin of Rain

Long ago there were the sun, moon, earth, and people. But there was no rain or water for people, so they couldn't live. God worriedly noticed this and wondered what to do. Then he noticed a wriggling and writhing snake. God reasoned that this was very good, thinking that if water could move like this it would be very helpful to people. God said to the snake, "If you go to earth and take the water of the dragon with you, I will make you a buddha." Later, seven snakes went to earth with the water of the dragon, creating a spring of water. This explains why even today people don't wash their hands, feet, and faces in springs. Also, it doesn't matter if people kill snakes today, because that long ago snake became a buddha and, in some of the scripture chanting today, there is a sutra which mentions this snake.<sup>120</sup>

### The Light-Giving Tree

Long ago the earth was filled with wasteland. During the day the sun gave out heat and brightness, but at night the moon only occasionally came. Most of the time it was pitch black without even a hint of light. People had no clothing to wear, but because they worked under the sun during the day, they didn't greatly suffer. But at night the moon gave neither light nor heat and the people suffered terribly from darkness and coldness and often took firewood from the mountains to the caves in which they lived and burned it for heat and light.

After a long period many people became blind and died. One little boy named Xiao Hui lived with his sister, who was 2 years younger than he was. Their parents had died some time earlier, so they were cared for by neighbors. When Xiao Hui was 12 he realized the sort of life he would have to face and thought, "How wonderful it would be if the moon could come out every night giving all the people warmth and light." But he had no idea how to realize this. The next day he heard older villagers talking about an old white-haired man who lived on a distant mountain. They said that he had the power to put the moon in the sky. Many people had tried to reach him, but they had all failed and died because of the length of the journey and because of the many beasts along the route. Xiao Hui then announced that he would start out for that distant mountain the next morning. The villagers gave him bread and drink, and the next morning he started out. He crossed many very steep and tall mountains, numberless wide rivers, and managed to avoid countless wild animals. At last he found the mountain that he had been looking for and climbed it. On the top lived a white-haired old man. Xiao Hui explained why he had come and then asked the old man to send the bright shining moon every night. The old man answered that he did not have the power to make the moon shine every night. But he said that he did wish to help, and that he could give a potion. The person who drank the potion would become a tung oil tree and could give out light and heat every night. Xiao Hui said that he would take the potion and become a tung oil tree in order to help his people. When he returned home he swallowed the potion and immediately became a young green tung oil tree. Every night when there was no moon he smiled and gave out light and heat. Later, people made a statue of Xiao Hui and people went there to light lamps and kowtow to him.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>[TE]: Lama Jin Baoyan, aged about 50 years; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village Temple; [CLR]: Hu Jun; COLLECTION TIME [CT]: August 1988; Monguor-English Translator [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>121</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; Translator [T]: Hu Jun

## The Origin of Mengda Lake (I)

Long ago a Tibetan government official made a serious error and was banished to the north. He was a rich and happy man with a wife, children, many animals, and rich clothes. On his way north he met many poor people, so gradually gave away his family, clothes, and animals. Finally he had nothing left except for his eyes and a few ragged clothes. Then he met a blind man who asked him for his eyes, so the official gave him his eyes. Recalling his former happy life, he often wept and his falling tears, over time, created Mengda Lake. He then miserably wandered into the Guanting area which, at that time, had no people, only forests and wild animals. He hoped that lions, tigers, and snakes would eat him, thus delivering him from his misery, but they only gathered about him and did him no harm. At Mengda Lake he lived in a cave which is called "Cave of the Immortals." Time passed, the period of his punishment ended, and he started home. On the way his eyes, property, and family were all returned and he became a Buddha.<sup>122</sup>

## The Origin of Mengda Lake (II)

There was once an Emperor of India who had a new wife every 2 days. But even though he had many wives, he never had a son. Finally his 500th wife gave birth to a son. The other 499 wives were very jealous because they had not been able to have a son and plotted to kill the baby boy. Some suggested that they throw the boy into the river while others suggested that they bury him. Finally, a very compassionate wife stood and said, "None of us have been able to give our emperor a son, so it hasn't been easy for him to at last have one. We should not kill him, only send him away."

Every night, the wives pestered the emperor, and finally he agreed to banish his son and, choosing a wife for his son, he exiled the two of them with 500 carts loaded with food and liquor. The emperor told them to go a long way off and never return. The years passed and, in time, the wife gave birth to a daughter. They also met many poor people and gave everything they had away, including their daughter. Finally, only the husband and wife were left. In time they reached the site of the present Dandou and Xiangdou Communes. The wife said, "I'm too tired to go further. Let's stop and rest." In Tibetan *dandou* and *xiangdou* mean to rest, and this is why these places are so named. At that time, people built two temples for them and they were called Dandou and Xiangdou Temples. The couple continued and, after some time, the husband said, "Let's rest here because we have only 15 *li* [7.5 kilometers] left to go." And this place is the present Yangdou. Then they completed the remaining 15 *li* and arrived at the present Mengda Heavenly Pool and lived there for 3 years. Everyday the husband chanted while the wife went out gathering food. After 3 years of chanting, the husband attained enlightenment.

One day the wife was drinking from a spring when she suddenly heard her daughter calling, "Mother!" from the Yellow River. She quickly ran there, but couldn't see anything. She also forgot to cover the spring and raced back and told her husband what had happened. He asked, "Did you cover the spring?" She hurried back and found that the water had overflowed creating a large pool between three mountains, which is the present Mengda Heavenly Pool. The husband said, "Take my walking stick and punch down with it and then go near the Yellow River and you will find a spring running out between two trees." The wife did so and found the spring running out between these two trees. These two trees were still there until the Cultural Revolution when they were cut down, but the spring still remains.

The wife said to her husband, "We have stayed here such a long time and you have achieved enlightenment. Your tears have been an ocean and we have left so many mountains and valleys behind. We hope people can live here and live very well." Then they returned to India, but before they arrived, the Emperor of India had a dream in which a strong wind destroyed his buildings. He

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<sup>122</sup>[TE]: Hu Yinliang, 80; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun



awoke and thought, "This is a very evil omen," and called all his soldiers, generals, and officials by beating a large drum. When the officials heard the drum they rushed in, believing it to be a matter of great urgency. But when they heard it was only a dream that had worried the emperor they advised him it was inconsequential. But, the next afternoon at three o'clock, a very strong wind came and blew down all the buildings. Then the emperor's son arrived and all the soldiers gathered around him and he became the new emperor. This so enraged his father that he died.

After that an ancestor of the Hu family arrived from Shanxi. He was a Han Chinese and married a local Mongol woman. The second family to come was the Li family and the father was Mongol and the mother was Han Chinese. The Chigangkrun family also came from Shanxi and both the mother and father were Mongol. *Chigang* means white. Long ago *krun* meant village, but now is commonly used to mean wedding.<sup>123</sup>

### **The Black City of Guanting**

Long ago a minor Tibetan King gave a city to each of his three daughters. Danyang City was also known as the Black City because of black moss which grows on the city wall. It was also known as the White City because of the white soil used to make the old city walls. The other two were Shuangyang City, and Fanyang City. During the Song Dynasty government troops came to Danyang City and demanded grain as tax. Princess Danyang refused, for she did not wish to part with any of her tax revenue. Song troops then laid siege to Danyang City for 20 days, but were unable to subdue it. Because they had run out of grain for themselves and their horses they left. Later they returned with many more troops because the area around Danyang City was very beautiful with forested mountains, tall grass, fertile soil, and plentiful water. Once again they laid siege and stopped all the water sources the city might conceivably have access to. Still, to their dismay, the people in the walled city held fast and refused to surrender.

Actually there was a secret tunnel to a spring and the city residents used it to fetch water. Unfortunately, one day a cook went to get water and took his dog with him. At the spring, troops heard the dog barking and so this spring was also discovered and stopped up. With water no longer available, they were forced to surrender.<sup>124</sup>

### **How Guanting Got Its Name (I)**

In front of the present Tax Office in Guanting Town is a place which was used in the past to house visiting officials who had come on inspection visits, or to solve special problems such as criminal cases. This kind of place means *ting* (several houses). *Guan* refers to officials, so Guanting literally means "officials' houses."<sup>125</sup>

### **How Guanting Got Its Name (II)**

During the Three Kingdoms, three men became sworn brothers in the following way: One day, the government put up a poster on the city wall announcing an extremely high tax. One person noticing how high the tax was, became so angry that he couldn't control himself, and said that the people

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<sup>123</sup>[TE]: Lama Jin Baoyan, aged about 50 years; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village Temple; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>124</sup>[TE]: Wang Sueling, 38; [AWT]: Guanting; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>125</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 47; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: August 1988; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [MET]: Hu Jun

should revolt. Two other men were also very angry, so the three went to a small inn where they drank liquor, decided to become brothers, and swore: "We were not born on the same day, but we wish to die on the same day. We will share joy and sorrows, share weal and woe, and stick together through thick and thin." And later, together, they managed the Shu Kingdom for a long time.

In one military campaign the brothers were separated and one brother, Guan Yunzhang, who later became a very renowned and brave general of the Shu Kingdom, was taken before Cao Cao, the general who had defeated him and who was also prime minister of the Han Kingdom. Although he was treated and fed well by Cao Cao, he said he would only follow his sworn brothers. Later he heard about one of his brothers, so left to find this brother who later became Emperor of the Shu Kingdom. He had a very difficult time in this search because Cao Cao could not forgive Guan and sent many generals to bring him back. But Guan killed them.

In the course of his travels Guan rested in a place and, because he was very tired, he slept there. Afterwards this place was called Guanting. *Guan* was after Guan Yunzhang and *ting* means "to stay."<sup>126</sup>

### Phoenix Mountain Legend

There is a high mountain running in a north-south direction called Phoenix Mountain in Guanting. Local people have a story about this mountain's name. In Sanchuan long ago there was a lovely place of green trees where beautiful birds sang. Everywhere there was the scent of flowers. Spring water freely ran and our ancestors happily lived in this place for a long time. One day Jade Emperor was inspecting earth as he flew in the sky and noticed that this place was more beautiful than his. His jealousy turned to anger and he sneered that he would ruin this place. For several years disasters came. The four seasons disappeared. Storms, hailstorms, and snow all suddenly came. The earth lay in waste. Trees shriveled, birds flew away, people suffered from hunger and cold, and everything appeared lifeless. Just at this time Phoenix Fairy Maiden happened to pass by and saw that this previously scenic place had become such a wasteland that she could hardly recognize it. Though she was angry and sad she lacked power to change conditions on earth. All she could do was to lead people to fight the disasters.

Several years later, this almost-dead place began to come back to life. Trees turned green again, flowers bloomed, birds returned, and people began to once more lead a happy life. The Jade Emperor saw that this place was again beautiful and gnashed his teeth in anger. He sent generals to bring Phoenix Fairy Maiden to the sky, had her head cut off, and then threw her corpse to earth. More disasters came to Sanchuan and this is why most mountains are bare today. The Phoenix Fairy Maiden's corpse fell to earth and became a mountain. Her right wing extended westward and the other wing fell to the east. Her headless body lay in a north-south direction. Her neck pointed up in the north as though she was resisting heaven, or else as though she was trying to look at this place. You can still find red marks here and people say it is her blood. To the south, her beautiful tail spread. Her body extends through all the Monguor area as though preventing more disasters from the Jade Emperor. Looking down from above it is just like she is spreading her wings, like a bird getting ready to fly. Thus people call this mountain Phoenix Mountain<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>[TE]: Hu Yinliang, 80; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>127</sup>[TE]: Hu Yingliang, 80; [CLR]: Hu Ting; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## Origin of the *Nadun*

The Monguor of Guanting, Minhe County have an ancient festival held in summer called *Nadun* which is unique to Guanting Monguor. After crops are harvested and the wheat is threshed and stored, very large steamed bread buns with new flour are made and offered to *Tiangere*. Elderly and young men dress in ancient clothing, hold colored flags, and dance to the sound of cymbals and beating drums to thank *Tiangere* for providing a bumper harvest. The dancing lasts from the 12th of the seventh moon to the 15th of the ninth month, depending on the individual village. There are a number of stories commonly told in villages about how this ancient dance began and here is one of the most common.

Long ago lived a Monguor carpenter of universally acknowledged skill lived in Beidashou. This is now in Gansu Province, very near Guanting, just across the Yellow River. The emperor was planning a new palace for himself and gathered many famous carpenters. However, he was not satisfied with any of their designs and planned to kill them all in 3 months if they continued to displease him. By chance he heard about a superbly skilled Monguor carpenter and commanded him to design and build a new palace. In 3 months the new palace was finished. It was perfectly magnificent with a splendor never before seen. The emperor was so shocked that he froze in front of the new palace in surprise and happiness. But the more he gazed at the palace, the more uncomfortable he became, for he felt this carpenter was dangerously intelligent. "I could not have even imagined such a beautiful palace," he thought to himself. At last he suspected that the carpenter was actually a living god, for it was obvious the carpenter's ability overshadowed his. The emperor thought that he might step out of his place if he was not killed, so secretly ordered his death.

One kind poor servant of the emperor thought this was wrong and it would be a great pity to kill such a splendid carpenter, so secretly informed the carpenter of this plan. The carpenter escaped during the night and went back to Sanchuan and angrily declared: "I worked so hard for him, but look what I get for a reward," and leading the local people, plotted rebellion. The emperor heard about this and sent many soldiers to investigate. This was during the seventh moon. The carpenter and his people learned the army was coming, so the carpenter had the people hide their weapons and dress in different long gowns, hold colored flags, hold fans, and dance to the sound of cymbals and beating drums as is done in the present *Nadun*. The emperor's army was completely confused with people's yelling "*Da hao! Da hao!* (Good! Good!)," and dancing in a way they had never seen before. The official asked local people about this and were told that it was play [the meaning of *nadun*] in celebration of a bumper harvest. The officials were at a loss as to what to do, so they left and thus the carpenter saved many lives. Afterwards, during the seventh month, Sanchuan people hold *Nadun* to memorialize this intelligent carpenter.

Previously, the village *Naduns* were held in a very disorderly way. Several *Naduns* might have been held on the same day. This continued until Zhu Lama<sup>128</sup> carefully arranged different dates for each village.<sup>129</sup>

## The Second of the Second Month

The Second of the Second Month is one of the grandest festivals of the Guanting Monguor. But not many people know how it originated. Long ago this place was much richer with more grain crops growing than now. But the grain grew differently. The wheat stalks were very short and each stalk had many branching ears of wheat. Every year people harvested a bumper crop and the people's storehouses were full. No one had the slightest worry about food. As a result people were not careful and many wheat grains remained in the fields. Sky Emperor saw this, became very angry, and said

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<sup>128</sup>[A famous Monguor lama who lived in the early part of the 20th century.]

<sup>129</sup>[TE]: Lu Congbao; [AWT]: Lu Family Village; [CT]: Autumn, 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

such people should be punished. That summer, just before harvest, the emperor sent many generals to make strong winds and heavy rains laden with hailstones. The crops were completely destroyed. Shattered grain covered the earth, turning it yellow. People could not go out in such wind and rain and only dogs saw the crops in this condition. They barked bitterly in the fields becoming.

Sky Emperor heard them, felt a bit sympathetic, and so recalled the generals. But by that time there was just one ear of wheat left. It was planted and this was what saved people. Years passed, and the crops were all very bad, either due to flood or drought. People became poorer and poorer, didn't have enough to eat, and were even forced to sell their children. One very dry summer some died of starvation. Many then went to mountain tops, hoping for rain. Eventually clouds became heavier and heavier and it began to rain which saved all the people's lives. This rain fell not because of Sky Emperor, but because it had been made by White Dragon Horse God, who had seen the people in such misery and dying. Moved, he forgot all the laws of the Sky and sent rain to save people. Sky Emperor angrily put him in the 18th level of hell, which is the bottom-most level, and said, "He can never come out unless golden beans bloom with red blossoms."

People knew that White Dragon Horse God was imprisoned in the lowest depths of hell, felt sorry, and wanted to save him. But how could they make golden beans bloom with red flowers? One morning many people went to market. One hunchbacked old man carried a bag on his shoulders and crossed hurriedly through a crowd. Suddenly the bag opened and yellow soybeans spilled out. A man suddenly shouted, "Aren't those gold beans? If we took them home and roasted them, wouldn't they bloom into red flowers?" Immediately everyone rushed home and roasted yellow soybeans, "Pop...pop...pop..." the outer part of the soybeans broke and exposed the red inner part.

Sky Emperor heard this and sent his people to inspect and then realized people were trying to save White Dragon Horse. He remembered his promise and ordered White Dragon Horse set free. That day was the second of the second month. Afterwards every family roasts beans on this day to commemorate White Dragon Horse and one song has become widespread:

*On the Second of the Second Month,  
The dragon raises his head,  
Every family roasts beans...*<sup>130</sup>

### **The Eighteenth of the Eighth Month**

Very long ago ten suns hung in the sky cracking the earth and drying up water in every lake and river. Trees and grass died and it was impossible for people to continue living. At this time, one extremely strong hero appeared named Hou Yu. He was angry at the suns and, using his treasure bow and arrows, shot nine out of the sky and ordered the last to rise and set regularly. After this his name was universally known. Later, he married a very beautiful lady named Chang E. They respected and loved each other and lived happily together.

An old Taoist priest much admired Hou Yu's strength and kindheartedness, and gave him a potion which bestowed eternal youth. By taking it, the person would become an immortal and go to heaven. Hou Yu loved his wife very much and didn't want to part from her, so gave this medicine to her for safekeeping. That year on the 15th of the eighth month Hou Yu left home to visit some friends. A student who was learning Hou Yu's skills took advantage of his absence and ordered Chang E to take out the potion and give it to him. Chang E did not want to do this so, not knowing what else to do, she tossed the medicine into her mouth. She became very light, rose in the sky, and directly flew into Moon Palace. Hou Yu returned home and couldn't find her. He became despondent, and then suddenly saw her in the moon and crazily ran after it. But when he stepped forward three steps, the moon retreated three steps. When he stepped back three steps, the moon came forward three steps. Not being able to grasp the moon, Hou Yu dejectedly returned home, took out his Eight Immortal

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<sup>130</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

table, put it in the courtyard center, and put big bread pieces on the table for his wife who was far away on the moon. Other people heard this and did as Hou Yu had done every succeeding year and generation. Later people made large moon cakes instead of large bread pieces on the 15th of the eighth month.<sup>131</sup>

## Origin of the Torch Leaping Festival

Long ago people on earth were blessed with much wheat and grain and so they no longer took the trouble to glean the fields. The Jade Emperor saw this from the sky and asked, "What is yellow on the ground?" People answered, "It's wheat." Then he asked, "Why do people leave wheat on the ground?" The people answered that they didn't glean the wheat any more because they no longer had any interest in working hard.

The Jade Emperor was enraged and ordered a general to burn everything on earth. The general went to earth, but was a bit reluctant and, as he walked over the fields, he suddenly saw a particular little boy playing with other little boys. With his perceptive eyes he realized this little boy would become a very special person. He thought he would violate Tiangere's rule if he killed the little boy and didn't. Later this little boy became Guanyu, one of the most famous men of the Three Kingdoms.

The general told all the people, "On the 15th of Spring Festival night all of you will be saved if you make a fire in your courtyard, outside the courtyard, on the mountains, and everywhere." On the 15th of Spring Festival, people burned straw inside their house, outside their home, and sent all the young boys and men to burn torches on the mountains and everywhere. The Jade Emperor saw this and was very pleased. Then all the people's lives were saved and later they sent torches to the top of the mountains every year to commemorate this.<sup>132</sup>

## The Sending Treasure God Dance

In Zhaomuchuan Village on the 15th of Spring Festival (the 15th day of the lunar new year) a traditional dance program is held. It is called Laibao God Dance. Two barefoot men wear jackets fur-side out and masks. Another two men follow. One beats cymbals and the other collects bread and liquor. They start from the village Erlang God shrine, go to the Tibetan Buddhist temple, and then visit all village homes. All villagers put a table in front of their homes on which they place bread and liquor, burn incense, and light lamps. Firecrackers are set off in greeting. The two men are called *laibao*, and give such good wishes to the farmers as "Abundant harvest! No disease!" The man responsible for bread and liquor puts the bread and liquor on the tables into his basket and carries it all to the threshing ground. When the sun sets, the dancing concludes and villagers gather at the threshing ground where the liquor and bread are divided.

When darkness falls, a fire is first built at the shrine and then every family lights a torch which was made earlier in the afternoon. The two *laibao*, drummers, and cymbalists then escort the villagers outside the village. People say that this dates back to long ago when Mongols were attacking China. The Mongol king said, "I will not stop my attacks until the princess marries me." All the generals and officials of China discussed this and decided they would not send the princess to marry the king, but instead, they would send a maid. General Su was appointed to escort this maid. But when a certain Chinese official later told this to the Mongol king, he renewed his attacks. The emperor of China caught wind of the Chinese traitor and sent his generals and an army to arrest him. But the official had anticipated this and had prepared a secret tunnel under the earth. When the general and army surrounded his home he jumped into the secret tunnel and escaped. When he ran near the city gate he saw the heads of his family members hanging from the city wall so, to disguise himself, he

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<sup>131</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>132</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter, 1989

smeared his face with red mud and escaped to Mongolia.

Finally the Chinese had no idea as to what to do, so decided to send the real princess to the Mongol king in order to stop the war. Chinese officials escorted her into Mongolia and, when the Mongol king saw she was as beautiful as Sky Goddess, he desired to marry her at once. The princess thought and then said, "I will marry you, but you must grant two wishes." One was to kill the Chinese official who had betrayed the earlier secret. The second was to send the general back to China who had brought the maid to Mongolia. If the Mongol king did not do these two things she would refuse to marry him. The king wished to marry her immediately, so killed the informer, but the second requirement was difficult because 10 years before he had sent General Su into a forest to herd sheep. The Mongol king said probably he had been devoured by such wild animals as wolves and tigers. The princess wept and said that if he had really been eaten, then his bones should be returned. Numerous Chinese and Mongol officials and generals were then dispatched into the forest to search, but though they looked for his bones for 1 month, they found nothing.

Not long after the general had been exiled to the forest he was herding sheep one day when he suddenly saw heavy clouds filling the sky. Thunder and lightning boomed and flashed. It began raining in torrents, causing the general to slide down the mountainside into a gully where he lost consciousness. When he revived, a large female ape was by him. Terrified, he said, "If you want to eat me, please do so quickly. If you don't, please leave." But this ape was actually a goblin and neither ate nor left him, but instead, carried him to her cave and urged him to marry her. He had no other choice and did so. They lived like this for a long time. At first, the ape was afraid he would escape. Whenever she went out looking for food she rolled a boulder across the cave mouth. After 6-7 years had passed they had two children and the ape no longer put the stone in front of the cave opening. She left the man and children together and went out alone gathering food. One day the general took his two children outside the cave to bask in the sun and to teach them human speech. Suddenly, he heard the sound of spoken Chinese so ran over to look. Thus the Chinese and Mongols searchers found him, put him on a boat, and hurriedly left. At this moment the ape returned from gathering food. She didn't see General Su and asked her children where he was. The two children told her what had happened. The ape picked up a child under either arm and rushed to the river where she saw the men sitting in a boat in the middle of the river. She shouted to her husband, "These two babies belong to us," tore each of the two children into two pieces, and threw half of each child into the river by the boat. The dancing on the 15th of Spring Festival is in remembrance of these two babies.<sup>133</sup>

### **Slashing the Dragon King**

Long ago in East Ocean there lived an old dragon who was not only the Dragon King, but also managed rain. One day he was idly sitting in his palace when the idea of walking on earth came to him. In the twinkling of an eye, he swam to the ocean shore, got out, and transformed himself into a scholar. He examined himself from head to toe and thought he looked exactly like an ordinary human. Clasping his hands behind his back he walked to a market. As he walked through the streets he felt something unusual in the air because everybody in the street was quiet and visibly worried. Many were leaving their homes, leading the old and young. Surprised, he hastened to an old man and asked, "What's wrong? Why are so many people worried and why are many leaving?" The old man glared and said, "You must be a stranger to these parts not to know why. Heaven is behaving strangely. For 3 years now there hasn't been a drop of rain. Seeding time is here again and we hoped for rain, but the earth is still so dry it could smoke. Faced with such disaster, who has any thoughts of happiness?" and then he turned and walked away.

The Dragon King thought, "Yes, everything you've said is true, but for 3 years, I've received no imperial edict concerning rain from the Jade Emperor." He continued to a square where many were

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<sup>133</sup>[CLR]: Zhao Xiaofeng; [AWT]: Zhaomuchuan Village; [CT]: October 27, 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

gathered. Curious, he went over, squeezed inside the crowd, and found an old fortune-teller sitting with crossed legs and closed eyes. In one hand he held cards and, with the other, burned paper murmuring all the while. The crowd's attention was quietly fixed on the fortune-teller. After some time he opened his eyes and happily declared, "Good news! Just now the Jade Emperor has ordered that 3 days from now there will be 3 days of light and soft rains. Quickly go home and seed." All the crowd happily shouted and clapped their hands. Many raced home while others knelt and almost in tears began kowtowing to heaven.

The Dragon King chuckled and thought, "Even I don't know this, so how is it that all of you can know!" and then he approached the old man. "Are you sure about all of this?" he asked. Confidently, the old man replied, "Very sure. There is no mistake." The Dragon King sneered, "Do you dare wager with me?" The old man said that he did. Then the Dragon King said, "OK, if there really are soft breezes and light rains, I'll kill myself in front of you. But if breezes and light rains don't come, I'll chop off your head." The old man agreed. The Dragon King warned, "Be sure. Don't regret it later." The Dragon King returned home in great glee, but just as he was about to sit, in came an imperial edict. He knelt to receive it, read it, and was shocked. The edict read exactly as the old man had said. Dismayed, he thought, "I'm the illustrious Dragon King. How can I, the illustrious Dragon King, be defeated by an ordinary mortal?" He blinked his eyes several times and then a delightful idea flashed through his mind. He changed the imperial edict to read: "Send storm winds and rainstorms to earth." He did send this and destroyed fields and homes. This turn of events nearly ruined the old fortune-teller. Many went to scold and beat him because he had predicted soft breezes and light rains, so people had planted their last wheat. Now, nothing remained to seed and there was nothing to eat. Many wept and wailed loudly. The old man murmured to himself, "What is wrong with the Jade Emperor? He promised to send light breezes and soft rains, so why were there storm winds and rainstorms?" He wrote on a piece of paper, "People say that the emperor does not lie, but you, the Emperor of All the Universe, why do you lie and ruin the people? What kind of heart do you have?" He burned the paper, thus sending its message to Jade Emperor, closed his eyes, and waited.

That day Jade Emperor was very glad for he thought he had done a great favor for man and was holding a celebration feast. At this moment, he received the message and, after reading it, was in open-mouthed astonishment. "Obviously, I ordered soft breezes and light rains, so why were there wind storms and rainstorms?" he thought and sent a general to investigate. When the general returned he reported that there had been gale winds and rainstorms. The emperor was furious, smote the table with his hand, stood up, and said, "How dare that measly little official disobey me! Bring him here and behead him!" and dispatched Wei Zhen to carry out this order. The Dragon King heard about this and, in terror and anxiety, rushed to that time's emperor, Li Shimin, to ask for aid. Li Shimin thought for awhile and said, "I've an idea. When the time approaches for your beheading I'll urge Wei Zhen to come here to my home. I'll get him drunk. When the time passes for your beheading, won't you be saved?" The Dragon King was pleased and confidently returned home.

A quarter of an hour before the beheading time, Li Shimin urged Wei Zhen to his palace, and prepared a large feast. When the beheading time came, Wei Zhen said he needed to leave, but how could Li Shimin dare let him go? At last, Wei Zhen sat, but said he needed to sleep for awhile. Li Shimin was delighted and arranged for him to sleep on his dragon bed. He sat by the bed and personally looked after him. After some time Wei Zhen woke up with his head in a terrible sweat. "I have killed, I have killed," he muttered. Surprised, Li Shimin asked, "You just have rested for a bit. Why do you talk of killing?" "Just now I beheaded the Dragon King."

"You were in bed and didn't move at all, so how could you have killed him? Don't joke!"

"If you don't believe me, look at East Ocean. The water is blood red."

Li Shimin didn't believe this, but still went to East Ocean. The water was really red. He worriedly returned to his palace in low spirits. That night the Dragon King's spirit came and asked, "Why did you lie to me? If you hadn't tricked me, I would have gone to some other place to hide. You made me die. Return my life." Li Shimin was so terrified he curled up in a ball and trembled. The next night, he arranged the army to guard all the rooms of his home, but the Dragon King's spirit came as before. The next night, he called the two generals, Qin Qiong and Jing De, to guard his gate. But

the spirit of the Dragon King came in through the back door. "What can we do?" the two generals wondered and then decided to glue their pictures on the front door and guard the back door in person. Afterwards, the Dragon King's spirit couldn't get in because he was as frightened of the pictures as he was of the generals themselves. This explains why, on the 30th of the 12th moon, people glue Qin Qiong and Jing De's pictures on their front courtyard gates, hoping for peace and to avoid evil.<sup>134</sup>

### Origin of Wheat Liquor (*Mingliuzi*)

During Monguor festivals, a special wheat liquor is made called *mingliuzi*. But the *mingliuzi* are not all the same. Some are sour, others are sweet, and some have such a high degree of alcohol that just a few ounces will make you drunk. There is a story about this in Guanting.

Long ago in a village there lived an elderly man named Li, who made *mingliuzi*, which was considered the tastiest and best in the region. Many people came to his small inn and Old Li became more and more famous. One day an old man with a long white beard carrying a calabash on his shoulder and holding a fan imprinted with *yin* and *yang* appeared and inquired who made the best *mingliuzi*. People told him it was Old Li and, following the people, he went to Old Li's small liquor room and loudly demanded liquor. Old Li quickly brought a big bowl of *mingliuzi*. The old white-bearded man drank it, shook his head, and asked for more. Finally, after drinking one bowl after another, he had drunk seven times seven, or 49 bowls of liquor and still was not drunk. Astonished, Old Li said, "Commonly, just two bowls make people drunk, let alone 49 bowls. I wonder why you aren't drunk after 49 bowls?" The white-bearded old man replied, "Don't say anything now, but taste the liquor I made. Just half a bowl will make you drunk."

Old Li didn't believe this. The white-bearded old man then poured a half-bowl of liquor from his calabash and gave it to Old Li. No sooner had old man Li downed it than he was drunk and fell into a deep sleep. After regaining consciousness, the old white-bearded man had gone. Early the next morning, the white-bearded old man appeared again. He directly went to Old Li, who said, "Yesterday's liquor was very good, but I'm not sure if you made it. I'll believe it when I see you make it."

The old man smiled and told Old Li to lead him to his *mingliuzi*-making building. There, he put something into the liquor pot and waved his *yin yang* fan, causing fire to start under the pot. In just the time it takes to finish a smoke, the old man said it was OK and when Old Li tasted the liquor it was really good, much tastier than that of the previous day. It had a soft sweet-sour taste, unlike pure alcohol. Old Li was convinced, then asked the white-bearded old man to be his teacher because he wanted to learn how to make such liquor. The old man replied, "In several days it will be the seventh of the seventh moon. I'll come on that day and teach you how to make it. Call all the villagers to your home and prepare 49 jars with the best liquor villagers can make." Old Li agreed. The white-bearded old man left and Old Li and the villagers prepared everything.

On the morning of the seventh of the seventh moon, the white-bearded man reappeared. Everyone gladly welcomed him into Old Li's home. The white-bearded man said, "Let's drink the 49 jars of liquor today and tomorrow you may learn my method." All began drinking and at last, all were drunk except for the white-bearded man. In the deep of night people woke up and found the white-bearded man had disappeared. But someone did find a piece of paper on an Eight Immortal table with a recipe for making liquor using distiller's yeast. The paper was taken out under the moonlight, but it could not be read, so an oil lamp was lit. The paper went from hand to hand and in the confusion, someone burned half the paper. Later, people guessed at what the missing part said and added yeast accordingly. Thus *mingliuzi* became quite different. Some are sour, some are sweet, and some are like water.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>[TE]: Wang Chongmei, 80; [CLR]: Lu Yulian; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>135</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun



## *Daola*<sup>136</sup> (Wedding Songs)

During weddings, or when Monguor drink liquor, they sing *daola*. There is a account explaining this. Long ago poor Wangmang lived with his mother. Their livelihood depended on cutting and selling firewood. Days and years passed and one morning, when Wangmang went into the mountains, he had a special feeling. "Maybe today I will be able to get long and straight wood," he thought. He continued on and saw two tall trees. He walked around them and decided the tree on the left was the straightest. He began chopping with an ax and, after a short time, felled it. The next day he went to the same place again to cut firewood and found that the stump of the tree he had cut the day before had sprouted. Surprised, he decided to dig up the roots. After much digging he exposed the roots and found a bright pearl. He put it in his pocket, picked up his firewood, and started home. Halfway there he noticed that his pocket was becoming heavier, so took out the pearl and found his pocket full of coins. He thought, "This is strange. Yesterday I sold firewood for 20 coins, but today these coins have increased to hundreds." Excitedly, he raced home and put the pearl in with his stored wheat. A few days later, the wheat had multiplied. He realized that the pearl was a treasure. When something was lacking, the pearl provided it. After this, Wangmang became richer and richer.

A local lord heard about this and wanted the treasure. One day Wangmang left on business, leaving only his mother at home. By coincidence the lord happened to be passing by. Guessing that Wangmang was gone, he went inside and said, "I want to buy some wheat," then took the bag of wheat with the bright pearl and rushed away. A short time later Wangmang returned. His mother said, "Today, I sold a bag of wheat." Wangmang dashed into the storeroom and found the bag of wheat which had been sold was the one with the bright pearl. He raced after the lord and soon caught up with him. They began arguing. The lord said he was Wangmang, picked up the bright pearl, and swallowed it. The real Wangmang couldn't think how to respond and in low spirits, returned home.

After swallowing the pearl, the false Wangmang grew stronger and stronger and taller and taller. He resembled a pole thrusting into the sky. He went back to his local village and, because he was now much stronger, became ever more cruel to the local people. No one was willing to say anything, but all became increasingly worried. Finally after discussion they charged him before the emperor. The emperor knew Wangmang could not be directly killed because he was too powerful, so sent officials to tell Wangmang: "Your strength is so great that the emperor's daughter has fallen in love with you and wishes to marry you." Delighted, the false Wangmang followed them to the capital. The emperor and his generals dared not try to kill him immediately. Instead, they offered him liquor at the wedding. The false Wangmang was very strong and didn't often drink, so even after a long time, was not drunk. Then Monguor began to sing *daola*, "We insignificant men give you drink. Today is such a happy day." They had the emperor's daughter pretend to weep and ask Wangmang to drink more, and finally the false Wangmang got completely drunk, whereupon the generals killed him. The local people were very happy over his death and continued to sing *daola* at weddings to commemorate this.<sup>137</sup>

## Mongolian and Monguor Songs

Long long ago a boy named Wangmang lived alone on a big mountain near Minhe County Town. Everyday he ran around the mountains gathering firewood which he took back to his small hut. He also drank water from Gold Spring at the mountain foot. He grew older and, on the morning of his 18th birthday, he awakened as the sun rose above the mountains. As he stretched he realized that the mountains were shaking and rocking. He was confused and then realized that his strength had become immense with the help of the mountain and Gold Spring. Just then he noticed a group of traders

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<sup>136</sup>[Contrast with Mongol *du:lax* (Sun 1990: 335).]

<sup>137</sup>[TE]: Bai Cairang, 74; [CLR]: Qi Junshan; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

passing the mountain. Shouting, he raced down which so terrorized them that they ran away, leaving Wangmang with delicious food and beautiful clothing. Delighted, he then resolved not to work anymore, but continue to nab people as they passed by. Everyday he stood at the mountain top, waiting for people to appear which made local residents very anxious.

In the Guanting region there was a very beautiful intelligent Monguor girl named Lushitaitai.<sup>138</sup> She was 18 and, when she heard about Wangmang, she decided to try and control him and thus save innocent people from this outrage. The next morning she went to Wangmang on the mountain. Surprised, Wangmang asked, "Who are you? What do you want?" She replied, "I am Lushitaitai, I am 18 and have come to marry you." Wangmang had never before met a woman and was very excited. Lushitaitai continued, "I have one requirement: I will call many relatives and Mongol friends to drink for the whole day at our wedding." Wangmang agreed that this would be wonderful.

After a few days Lushitaitai realized Wangmang was too strong to control and that killing him was best. She told her relatives and Mongol friends to come and sing at her wedding and, after the first song, if Wangmang couldn't move, kill him, but if he could move, then sing a second song, and so on. During the wedding, all Lushitaitai's relatives and Mongol friends came and drank with Wangmang from morning until about midday. At this time they noticed Wangmang was tipsy, so they sang the first song. After finishing they offered Wangmang a drink, but he still could move after this drink. They sang the second and third songs and offered Wangmang a drink after each song. In time Wangmang was not able to move, so they tied him to a chair and cut his head off. A stream of blood shot out so powerfully from his body that it punctured the top of the big tent they were sitting in. After this, the place was in peace and Monguor had the custom of singing at weddings. It is also said that a line of local officials kept and preserved one of Wangmang's arms for a long time. The arm and hand were very big, long, and covered with much hair.<sup>139</sup>

## Kidnapped

Before Liberation, this area kept the custom that young engaged men could kidnap the woman they were engaged to during solar and lunar eclipses. A young man rode a fast horse, took a comb wrapped in red cloth, and raced to the gate of the girl's family's courtyard. He then threw the comb on the roof and shouted, "Quickly send my girl out!" He repeated this seven times. When a response came from the home the young man turned and raced away. The girl's family then realized that the young man had come to kidnap the girl and rode horses after him. If there were no horses, you had to run after the young man on foot, but surely could not catch him. The next day the young man asked a matchmaker and several old men of his village to accompany him to the girl's home and ask for the girl. The girl's father had to personally escort the girl out of the home. For kidnapped girls, no betrothal gifts were required. The groom's home also did not have to hold a wedding feast. Of course, there was also no need to choose some propitious date for the wedding. This was because, at the time of solar and lunar eclipses, the world had returned to an unsettled time and this process of kidnapping did not violate the law and there was no need for feasts or gifts.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>[Another local dialectical variant renders this as Wushitaitai.]

<sup>139</sup>[TE]: Monguor man, 84; [AWT]: Sanchuan; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>140</sup>[TE]: Ma Weixiao, 82; [CLR]: Ma Fuying; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## The First Persuasion

Long ago there lived an old father whose wife had died years before and had to work very hard to rear his sons and get them married. The old man became progressively weaker. Having worked hard all his life he thought, "It's time for me to rest," and, as a result, he no longer wished to work nor was he able to. The two sons cared for him in turn. One son invited the father to stay in his home for some time and then later, the other son came and invited the father to his home. As time passed, the two tired of this, because the old man could no longer work. The two sons argued over who would care for the father. The older brother said, "You take care of father, you are the younger brother." And the younger brother said, "No, you should take care of father because you are the older brother." Finally, when the father went to either of his sons' homes, he was chased away.

On the 30th of the 12th month the old man was begging in snow in front of a home. He fainted and when he regained consciousness, he found himself lying on a bed in a warm home. An old white-bearded man was sitting by him and offered him tea and bread. He asked, "Where is your home?" The old man didn't reply but, after some time, burst into tears and then described his wife's death, how he had worked so hard to rear his two sons, had seen that they both were married, how his two sons had pushed him back and forth between their two homes, and later how they finally kicked him out altogether forcing him to beg. The white-bearded old man sympathetically sighed.

The next morning, the white-bearded man took out new clothes and a beautiful small locked box made of wood, and told the old father what to do. The old man took the little box to the Yellow River, picked up some small round stones, put them inside the box, locked it, and said, "Concern for children fills parents' hearts. But children's hearts are turned to stone." Then he went to the older son's home, quite surprising him. He asked, "Father, where did you get new clothing and what's inside that box?" The old man replied, "I met a buddha and he helped me. He gave me a box of gold and silver and said that I should live my remaining life on its contents." Just then the younger son arrived and asked the same question which the old man answered in the same way. Finally the old man said, "Today is the first day of Spring Festival. I came here to kowtow to my family god and after that I'm leaving." The two sons blocked the doorway, not wanting him to leave. They said, "You are our only father. How can we let you go out and beg! Please stay with us," and urged him to sit on the *kang* and offered tea and bread. The father seemed to think for some time and then agreed to stay.

Afterwards, the sons competed for the father to stay at their homes, each trying to be more filial than the other. The old man was treated and respected very well. However, he never opened the box, only kept it by his bed. In time, the old man grew very old and death seemed certain. The two sons and two daughters-in-law stood by his bed for several days, but the father made no mention of the box. Just before he died he said, "Heaven, parents' concern for children fills their hearts, but children's hearts are turned to stone," and died. The four rushed and opened the box but, rather than gold and silver, they found only stones. People say that this is why in the wedding song "Six Persuasions,"<sup>141</sup> the first persuasion sung says parents hearts are filled with concern for the children whereas children's hearts are turned to stone.<sup>142</sup>

## Dandou Temple

Thirty kilometers north of the Yellow River in Xianger Commune is Dandou Temple. It is a large magnificent temple situated on a steep mountain in the border area of Xunhua, Minhe, and Hualong counties. It is also one of the six largest Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism temples. Many pious

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<sup>141</sup>[During some weddings "Ten Persuasions" is sung.]

<sup>142</sup>[TE]: Wang Huiling, 47; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [CT]: February 28, 1989; [AWT]: Guanting; [MET]: Hu Jun

Tibetan and Monguor go there. It is also a popular sightseeing attraction. A well-known story is commonly told in the local area concerning this temple: Long ago there was a kingdom that was neither very large nor had a large population, but it was very rich and powerful. The king was wise, administered well, and was much respected. The kingdom ever prospered and the life of the people continued to improve. The queen was the most beautiful woman in the world and also very intelligent. But there was one blemish in their lives, for they were childless, and as they grew older, they began to worry day and night. If they had no children to inherit the kingdom the country would disintegrate. Every day in the morning and at night the two kowtowed, lit lamps, and burned incense, beseeching the gods for a son. Finally their sincerity moved heaven and a son was born to them. They held a large feast in celebration and were so fond of the son that they never spanked or scolded him.

One day a distant relative of the king presented him with a large elephant. The king was exceedingly fond of it and paid great attention to its feeding. Time passed and the little prince matured. Although he was handsome and distinguished looking, he had a bad temperament and everyday did something he shouldn't. Even so, neither the king nor the queen dared advise him of his error. One day the king left home to deal with matters relating to governing the country. Taking advantage of this the prince gave the elephant to a businessman he favored. When the king returned to the palace, the businessman had already taken the elephant away. In great anger the king punished the prince and queen by banishing them far away to the present Dandou Temple location. The two lived in a quiet forest, built a home, and lit lamps and kowtowed to God. They helped local people and their home developed into the present Dandou Temple.<sup>143</sup>

### The Hu-Li Family Village Temple

About 1,700 years ago a lama named Hu from the Hu-Li Family Village built a temple here. But after some time, his relations with other people became strained, so he left leaving 80 lamas behind in the temple. He went to Chuankou, the present Minhe County Town, met a lama, and asked him to build a temple in Guangneng. The lama then built Guangneng Temple. Then the lama from the Hu-Li Family Village left, and went off to live in a mountain cave. At this time, which was during the Western Jin Dynasty [265-316 AD], Tibetans were creating much unrest in the region and the emperor heard of this from his capital in Changan [Xian] and desired to travel to the present Qinghai. While travelling he saw smoke coming from a cave, entered, and found the lama living in a neat and clean room, drinking tea. The emperor stayed for 3 days and was so impressed with the lama's knowledge that, on his return journey to Changan, he took the lama with him and gave him the title of *fengshen* (immortal).

This emperor had seven sons and one daughter. Temples were established in honor of each in the area. The one in honor of the daughter, the present Honghua Si (Red Flower Temple), was noted for the numerous beautiful girls who lived in the vicinity and the consequent lecherous nature of the lamas residing there.

Long ago, the location of the Hu-Li Family Village Temple was noted for its beauty and, even today, if you dig in the vicinity, you may find heads of stone and other materials resembling chickens and lions. Before Liberation, Hui mounted on horses went about pillaging and killing and destroyed the temple. Some villagers led by the village chief rebuilt the temple to the point where it was more beautiful than before. But, during the Cultural Revolution, it was destroyed again. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, in about 1978, the present adobe buildings and compound were built and now one lama is in residence.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>144</sup>[TE]: Lama Jin Baoyan, aged about 50 years; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village Temple; [CT]: August 1988; [MET]: Hu Jun

## Gadang Wuxi Naier

*Gadang* is a Monguor word meaning cliff. "Wuxi" is a valley name. And *naier* means cliff. Together they form the name of a famous local temple. Ten to 11 lamas live there now but, before 1958, there were more than 80. The temple master's name is Guerduodidi. Every year from the sixth of the second month the lamas begin to chant and every 13th and 14th of the second month they hold a lama festival. Before the sixth many people from Hualong, Gansu, and Gannan and many local Tibetans gather to kowtow and stay several days. During Nadun, many people also go.

Here is a story about this temple and the temple master: Long ago the two mountains behind the temple were one mountain. At that time sheep herding boys often went there to herd. One day from under the ground they heard a man shouting, "Is the sky open? Is the sky open?" Puzzled and curious, the sheep herding boys went home and said, "There is a man under the ground always shouting if the sky is open. What should we do?" Their grandfathers replied, "Answer it is open and see what happens." For the next several days the little shepherds continued to hear this question coming from under the ground, so answered, "It's open." The mountain suddenly separated into two mountains. The sheep herding boys went where the two mountains had formed and saw a tiny boy sitting on the ground. He was as long as from a man's elbow to the knuckles of the hand. The boys thought that it was cold and that there was no food for the little boy, so they took him back to one of their homes. Older people in this family thought that he was a deity, so put him on the Eight Immortal table and lit lamps and incense for him. But the next morning he had vanished. The little shepherds again found him where they had originally, and again brought him to a home. But the next morning he was gone. This continued for several days. Finally the people decided to build a temple for him in the place where he had been found.

The temple was finished in due time and was beautiful and magnificent. It was five stories high and just under a cliff. The people gave the little boy the name Guerduo which means "two mountains separating." Before 1958, this temple was still there. Many said that ordinary people could never see the temple master, only a very few lamas who took clothing to him could see him. He lived in a cave behind the main temple room which could only be reached through a tunnel. In 1958 when this temple was to be destroyed, lamas took him away and put him in a secret place. After the Cultural Revolution the temple was rebuilt and, it is said, lamas brought the temple master back to the temple. But no one can prove this.

This temple has three treasures. One is a treasure pot. Long ago a clock and a pot were drifting in the Yellow River. When they drifted by the Bao Family Village the clock and pot bumped together. The clock said, "Bilin Temple," and the pot said, "Naier Temple." The clock continued drifting down the Yellow River while the pot drifted over to the bank. Some people working nearby heard the clock and pot talking, saw the pot had stopped by the river bank, and then took it to Naer Temple. Regardless of how many people ate, if food was cooked in this pot, everyone would have enough to eat their fill. One hundred lamas regularly ate their fill from this pot. No matter how much food was taken out of the pot it was never empty. Some thieves heard this and went one night to steal it. They carried it up a mountain, but the farther they walked, the heavier it became. By daybreak they had not reached the mountain top and, in fear of being discovered, they rolled the pot down the mountain. As it rolled a fist-sized piece broke off and the pot lost its treasure power. Today temple lamas have put the pot on a table and light lamps and burn incense before it.

Another treasure is a huge stone without a single crack or break situated at a temple corner. Water continually drops from the stone. This is called Doingger Spring. The water is pure, clean, and comes directly from Lhasa underground. Drinking this water can cure any disease. But if you cook with it, after eating you will soon feel hungry, so you shouldn't cook with this water. Even today many people go to this temple to drink the water in order to cure their diseases, especially stomach illnesses.

Another treasure is a god. Every day, lamps and incense are lit to it. Its name is Zhuoma. In front of its room is a tall tree under which is a cave. Inside are many pairs of shoes. Those without children come to kowtow to Zhuoma and take out shoes inside the cave. At the next year's Lama

Nadun the family must return the shoes, make another pair, and tie the two pairs together. This is very effective, but recently, so many people have gone to take shoes that the strings tying the two pairs together are frequently broken.

Also, a long time ago there were no trees in this area of the temple, but one time the temple master, Guerduo, gambled with another temple master, the master of Hualong County's Gadong Temple. The latter lost and, as a result, Guerduo won all his trees which were pine trees.<sup>145</sup>

### **Moving the Hu Ancestral Graveyard**

About 200 years ago the graves of the Hu ancestors were about 100 meters higher than at present and located at the foot of a small hill. On either side of the gravesite was a ditch. At that time there were more than 80 Hu families who were prosperous and famous. In the Hu-Li Family Village Temple there lived a Li family lama. One day by accident one of his sheep was killed by a Hu. The lama very secretly buried an evil omen in the grave of the first Hu ancestor. Afterwards Hu family members continuously died. Finally only several Hu families remained. Fortunately a Taoist priest came from a distant place one day and said that he sensed some evil winds in this area. "Let me see what exactly this is," he said. He walked around and said that there was something in one of the ancestral graves. He told Hu family members to dig from both sides of either ditch toward each other. They finally dug out something resembling a watch with hands that had become very thin, seemed about to break, and were turning. At that time people cared very much about the place where the ancestors were buried. They thought if the burial place was very good, some of them would become officials, rich, scholars, and so on. A good place was one that was alive. If you beat the earth you could hear something if your ear was near the ground some distance away. The Taoist priest went up the mountain to beat the ground while Hu family members put their ears to the ground and listened. The villagers heard a sound, but they lied to the Taoist priest, saying that they heard nothing. The priest told them to move the ancestral graves, so it was moved to its present location. Then the priest settled in the Hu Family Village. The villagers in turn invited him to their homes to eat. When he died he was buried in the ancestral graveyard--to the left--at a position equal to that of the first ancestor. Today when Day of Pure Brightness comes every person first goes to this grave to burn *mani* paper.

It's likely that there were only a few surviving families at the time the Taoist priest arrived, because today there are only two Hu clans whose ancestors' origins are unknown. It is known where all the others came from. Probably most of the old families died and then other people moved here and married into the families. These people who came here from other places were mostly Monguor.

After that thing resembling a watch was dug out, the Hu family flourished again. At present (1989), there are 28 Hu families. Probably, this all happened about 200 years ago. And if that Taoist priest hadn't come along, probably all the Hu families would have died.<sup>146</sup>

### **Douyuanshan Saves His Father**

A long time ago there lived a man named Douyuanshan whose father was cruel to local people and cheated them by lending 1,000 measures of rice and wheat using a small measure. But when the grain was returned a large measure was used. He also used a small balance to lend grain but, when it was returned, he used a large balance. When he died his son burned sacred paper as high as a mountain and asked many lamas to come and chant for his father. The son was not happy that his father had cheated poor peasants. He prepared much rice and soup and then invited local poor peasants to come and eat. He broke his father's old balance beam and burned the measure. Afterwards he constantly

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<sup>145</sup>[TE]: He Zhongxiao, 69; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Xiang Feng Brigade; [CT]: February of 1989

<sup>146</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter 1989

tried to do everything he could to help local people. One night he dreamed of walking toward a city and, in the distance, he beheld a man hanging from a large balance. He went near and saw it was his father who, by this time, had fallen from the balance. His father stood and said, "Oh my son, you saved me. If you had not broken that balance and burned that measure, I would have probably never come down from here. I would have fallen when the balance and measure were worn out. And now my son, please return to do more good things for the people, so I can go to another life sooner. And this will also be very beneficial for you."<sup>147</sup>

## Erlang Lord

Long ago a nine-headed monster king lived in Jiuni Yang Family Village (the present Labrang, Gannan Prefecture, Gansu Province) and every 2-3 days he demanded cattle and sheep from local herdsmen. Year after year the herdsmen's lives worsened. They prayed, "Heaven, open your eyes and punish this monster king who devours men and spits out no bones. If you don't, when will such torment end?" Heaven was moved by such pleas and sent Erlang Lord to earth to vanquish the nine-headed demon.

People say Erlang Lord was Jade Emperor's nephew and the student of Zushi Lord. He was also known as Gesarjiauwu. In order to descend to man's world, it was necessary for Erlang to be reincarnated as a human child and as such he came to Jiuni Yang Family Village. However, his arrival in this village was divined by the nine-headed monster who thought, "This surely portends future disaster for me. He must be killed before he grows up!" Several times the evil monster sent his little demons to catch Erlang Lord, but local herdsmen understood the little demons' evil purpose and, when they were asked about Erlang's whereabouts, answered something like, "Anything you want we can give you, but there has never been such a one as Erlang." They did this for several years and, during this time, Erlang Lord matured. But as long as Erlang Lord had not been dealt with the monster worried. One day he sent his general, Xiajiaqiang, to devour Erlang Lord. When the herdsmen heard of this they were very concerned. Erlang's mother was even more worried, but clever Erlang said, "Mother, someone will come to our home to devour me today. Don't worry. Ask him not to bite me with his teeth as he swallows me. After he agrees, put me on a tray and offer me to him. I have some ideas." Then he rolled on the ground a few times and transformed himself into a new-born babe. Soon Xiajiaqiang arrived. At first, the mother begged him not to devour the child. Xiajiaqiang ignored this. Then the mother pleaded, "If you really must devour him, I can't stand the sight of blood, so please just swallow him whole." Xiajiaqiang agreed. The mother brought the infant on a tray and offered him to Xiajiaqiang, who opened his bloody basin of a mouth, and tossed the infant inside. Just as he was about to swallow, Erlang suddenly pushed against Xiajiaqiang's throat with his foot and began suddenly growing larger and larger and, at last, Xiajiaqiang died of suffocation.

Erlang's father had four brothers. One herded sheep. Another herded horses and also had three arrows that his ancestors had handed down. Another brother controlled beggars. The oldest brother was an official. After he killed the monster's general, Erlang went to his uncles and announced, "I am going to conquer the monster. What will you give me to help?" The sheep-herding uncle gave him all his sheep. The uncle that herded horses gave him all his horses and the three precious arrows. The uncle that controlled beggars gave him the beggars' walking sticks, which he piled up as high as a mountain altar. The official gave Erlang all his official power. After this, Erlang became the king of this local area and married.

Soon the monster resumed threatening and demanding cattle, sheep, and servants. Erlang told his wife she must go to be one of Erlang's servants. At first she wept and said she wouldn't go. "So many others have gone. You should also go. If you always think of me in your heart, we will surely meet again," Erlang said and then broke a bracelet in two and each of them took one half. They said

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<sup>147</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter 1989

goodbye and the wife went with others to become the monster's servants. Erlang then married again.

Time passed and the monster renewed his demands and Erlang desired to send his second wife to the monster. She also did not wish to go and wept. Erlang broke another bracelet and they each took a half. Erlang then married a third time. At this moment heaven urged him to conquer the monster at once. Erlang ordered, "Quickly find my horse and bring it here. If 1,000 horses are eating grass, my horse is the one that will be leaping. If you find 1,000 horses lying, mine is the one that is grazing. Make no sound, only bridle him, and he will follow you here." Soon such a horse was brought and Erlang was about to leave. But before leaving he filled a hole in a stone with water and said to his wife, "After I leave you should anticipate my return. If the water in this hole does not dry we will be reunited." That night Erlang's horse said, "Master, tomorrow as you leave your wife will be reluctant to let you go and she will serve you liquor. You must offer the first cup to heaven, the second to the three arrows, and the third to earth. When she offers you a fourth cup and urges you to drink it, crack your whip and I will carry you away."

The next morning Erlang was just about to set off when his wife brought liquor and offered one cup after another, not wanting him to leave. When the fourth cup came he cracked his whip and the horse quickly raced away. His wife angrily mounted another horse and followed. Erlang looked back and saw his wife chasing him. At once he shook himself, becoming a nine-headed monster. As he sat by the road his wife galloped up and, thinking that this was not her husband, begged, "Please tell me something. Just now a man passed by and I don't know where he went. Please tell me." The monster took out divination instruments, threw them on the ground, calculated on his fingers, and said, "No such man passed here." To show her appreciation the wife gave him a lined jacket. Then she said, "Please divine again. I saw my mounted husband pass by here. How could he possibly vanish so suddenly?" The monster cast the divination instruments again, counted on his fingers, and then said, "Just now there was a strong wind blowing along the sea coast. Perhaps he is inside it. But now it's already far away and it would be impossible to catch it." The wife showed her appreciation for this effort by giving another jacket and said, "Please divine just one more time. If you tell me the truth I can still catch him." The monster was now impatient and threatened, "Leave immediately or else I will eat you!" His wife was frightened, jerked her horse around, and raced back the way she had come. Erlang assumed his original appearance, took out the three arrows, and shot all three in the direction his wife had fled. The three arrows changed into three birds and flew in front her, leading the way. As the sun began to set the wife noticed the three birds and thought to herself, "Oh! These birds are leading the way for me." When night fell, she was tired and, coming to a stone in the middle of a river, lay down. She found to her surprise that it was soft and comfortable. She thought, "Every night I sleep on silk bedding, but it still seems hard. Why is it that tonight this rock is so soft?" and fell asleep. Then the three arrows dropped around her and changed themselves into three lined jackets which changed into bedding and a pillow. When she woke up, morning day had broken. Looking at her bedding she thought, "My husband has powerful magical abilities which I never knew." She continued on home which she reached 7 days later.

Meanwhile, Erlang went on and, after a few days, reached a juncture controlled by the nine-headed monster. He reined in his horse, inspected it, and found a woman guard. As soon as she saw him she rushed over and the two wrestled. Erlang proved very strong and in only one bout defeated her. She looked closely at his face and realized it was her husband who had defeated her. The two embraced and wept. Erlang's wife said, "As you proceed you will come to two rocky mountains which continually connect and separate. There is no way to pass through. Here is a ring. When you approach say, 'It's me, it's me, it's me...' and at the same time throw the ring at the mountains. Only if you do this will you be able to pass. After passing through the mountains you will come to a pool of water in which you will find a buffalo. You must kill it." Then she permitted Erlang to pass through the juncture she guarded. Erlang continued on and came to the two mountains. He shouted and did what his wife had advised, and also shot an arrow at the mountains. In this way he was able to pass through and soon came to the pool where a buffalo stood. Erlang took out an arrow, shot and killed the buffalo, and immediately the water dried. He continued on and, as night fell, he decided to spend the night where he was. Just before he fell asleep his arrows said, "Tomorrow as you leave



here don't take anything from this place." Erlang agreed that he wouldn't.

But the next morning Erlang secretly took bits of stone. The horse said, "We agreed you would not take anything. Why didn't you do as you promised?" Erlang angrily lashed the horse which began to run, but the stones Erlang had taken became increasingly heavy until it seemed the horse could no longer continue up the mountain. The horse shouted, "Slash! Now!" Erlang gave the mountain such a mighty slash that the mountain top fell away and where they then stood was the mountain's new summit. Bathed in sweat the horse angrily said, "Look behind and see what other disaster has befallen you as the result of taking the rocks." Erlang turned, looked, and immediately was saddened for he saw his home laid waste by the monster's younger brother, Kekejiawu. "Take me back home! We must delay everything else until Kekejiawu has been killed," Erlang said in grief and indignation to his horse. Erlang's three precious arrows then said, "What have you seen? We shall go back, investigate, and then return and tell you." The three arrows flew to the home and found Kekejiawu enjoying a hearty feast in Erlang's home. They also found Kekejiawu attempting to force Erlang's third wife to marry him. One arrow suddenly flew down, pinning Kekejiawu's leg to his chair. Kekejiawu nearly died from the pain. Those around him tried to pull the arrow out, but failed. Then they tried to dig it out, but this didn't work either. After everything had failed Erlang's wife said, "Stop," lit incense, kowtowed, and with a slight tug, removed the arrow. "All of you are so crude. Who should I give this arrow to? I have an idea. All of you go outside and I will toss the arrow and whoever catches it may keep it." After they all went outside she threw the arrow which flew to the top of a wall and said, "Listen, first I come and then Erlang, who is right behind me, shall also come." Then the three arrows flew back to Erlang and lied, "Things are now well at your home," for they knew that if they said otherwise Erlang would delay still more in dealing with the monster. Relieved, Erlang said, "Good. Now all birds and beasts march ahead. Together we shall conquer the demons." They all marched ahead and, a few days later, they reached the place where the nine-headed demon lived.

During the previous few days the nine-headed monster had been irritable and so anxious that he couldn't sit still. He said to his wife, "Bring buckets of water and pour them into this big pot. I feel Erlang will come within 2-3 days. Let's prepare well. When he comes we'll catch, cook, and eat him. I'll go to the mountain top and have a look." While he went to the mountain top his wife took buckets to the mountain's foot. As she was dipping water from a stream Erlang appeared. As he approached, he realized that she was his second wife. He knew that a perfect opportunity had presented itself for him to enter the monster's palace and said, "Would you please give me a little water to drink?" She replied, "It seems you are from man's world. Why do you come where demons are? Please drink and leave immediately. The nine-headed demon has just gone to the mountain and, if he returns and sees you, he will eat you." Erlang thanked her and, as she carried the buckets of water away, he shook himself, became the other half of the bracelet he had given her before, and fell into one of the buckets. The wife noticed that the buckets were getting heavier and, when she reached the home, she was bathed in sweat. As she was pouring out the water she heard clanking and suddenly Erlang appeared in front of her and said, "We swore when we parted we would never forget each other. Now you have forgotten me and I am going to kill you." "I have never forgotten you, I simply did not recognize you as I was dipping water. I'll help you kill the monster," she said.

Erlang and his wife then discussed how to kill the monster. His wife suggested, "You must first kill his mother, for she has formidable skill in using her fingers to divine. She is also blind in her left eye, so when you approach her be sure that you do so from the left side." Erlang assumed his wife's appearance, entered the room from the left where the monster's mother was, and killed her. Then he pushed her head down so she appeared to be catching lice, disguising the fact that she was dead. "Quickly dig a hole under the big pot and hide there. If you do not do this the monster will discover you when he returns," his wife said and the two quickly dug a hole. Erlang hid in the lowest part of the hole, with his horse above him. Above the horse his wife placed a goatskin. On this she put sheep and cow intestines and, at last, placed three stones upon which she settled the pot. The monster entered the room just as the wife finished all of this and said, "Some stranger has been here today," then went into his mother's room to ask her to divine the truth. But as he entered the room he saw

that she was catching lice, so quickly left. He did some divination himself using his fingers and said, "There is something right there under the pot." The wife replied, "Just look at you. You are almost mad these days! You move about so clumsily in the kitchen. If the Kitchen Goddess becomes angry, how can I manage?" The monster went over and drank water from the pot, ate the stomachs and intestines, and started to dig under the pot. At once water began flowing out of the hole and the monster began drinking, but the more he drank, the more water flowed out. Frightened, the monster shouted, "Come quickly! An ocean is coming!" His wife scolded, "Just now I warned you about your meddling in the kitchen, but you didn't listen. Now just look at what has happened! The Kitchen Goddess has lost her temper. You rest and I'll think of something." As soon as the monster left the water stopped flowing. The wife cleaned up the mess, and then took some liquor to the monster. After drinking a number of cups he was quite happy. The wife asked, "Everyday you have taken precautions against Erlang's arrival. Where shall I and the baby hide if Erlang really does come?" The demon replied, "Don't worry. I have such remarkable powers I can deal with him using these powers alone. When that time comes you may enter my stomach and I'll hold the baby gently in my mouth." The wife asked, "Can you really best him?" The monster assured, "First of all, he won't be able to put out the fire on my chest. Secondly, if I don't wear that pair of metal boots, he doesn't have a chance. Thirdly, if that rope I put under the cabinet is not used, he will not be able to bind me. If he actually does come here, open the cover of the casket which is on the table. Everything is sure to be all right then," and then he lay down and slept.

The wife went into the kitchen and repeated all this to Erlang. Erlang came out and shot one arrow at the fire on the monster's chest, which dimmed the fire, but didn't put it out. The monster was awakened by the arrow's sound and shouted, "What was that?" The wife replied, "I was washing the pot and dropped the pot scraper into the pot." Erlang shot another arrow, but still the fire burned. Again awakened, the demon shouted, "What was that sound?" The wife replied, "I was twisting yarn and dropped the yarn ball." The monster immediately went to sleep. The third arrow, which extinguished the last of the fire. The demon immediately awakened and yelled, "Wife, there is some strange sound here. What is it?" She frantically replied, "Something terrible has happened! Erlang has come!" Still lying on the *kang*, the monster said unhurriedly as he saw Erlang, "You have come just at the right time. I have been waiting a long time for you and, in the end, you send yourself to my door. I'll have a good meal today!" Then the two began wrestling and, in the first two bouts, Erlang was thrown. As they were about to wrestle a third time the wife suddenly said, "You two rest for a bit," and then brought wheat chaff and beans. She scattered chaff around Erlang's feet and beans about the monster's feet. The monster demanded, "What is your purpose in doing this?" She replied, "You are the master here, so what you stand on should be harder. Erlang is from far away, so what he stands on should be softer." Then they began wrestling again and Erlang quickly threw the monster. Then the wife slammed the open casket shut, took out the rope from under the cabinet, and bound the monster.

At this moment a mouse and sparrow crawled out from the casket. The wife said, "You cut off the monster's heads and I'll go fetch some water. But be sure you let nothing approach the monster." She left and Erlang began cutting off the monster's heads. But when he chopped one head another immediately appeared. The reason for this was that the every time a head was chopped, the mouse shat on the stump and a new head grew and then the sparrow poured molten metal into the new head's mouth. The wife returned with water and when she saw that the monster was still alive she worriedly shouted, "I told you not to let anything near the monster! Just look what that mouse and sparrow are doing! Quickly cut open his belly!" Then the nine-headed demon sighed in sorrow, "Oh, must you tell him everything?" and with tears streaming from his eyes, he died. If Erlang had delayed in slitting open his belly, his stomach would have filled with molten metal and it would have been impossible to kill him.

The couple had managed to kill the monster, but he still had two younger brothers. Erlang cut off one of the monster's legs and changed himself into a perfect image of the monster. With the leg under his arm he went to one brother's home. As soon as he passed through the doorway he happily announced, "Erlang came last night, we killed him, and had a good meal. There is only one leg left.

Please take it and cook it." The brother happily took it and asked his wife to cook it. As soon as she entered the kitchen, Erlang killed the brother with an arrow. Erlang then transformed himself into a perfect image of the brother, entered the kitchen, and slew the wife.

When Erlang got ready to kill the monster's son, his wife pleaded, "He is such a little boy, it is too cruel to kill him. Later if he thinks of me, his mother, he will come to see me. If he later thinks only of his father, you may kill him then." For this reason Erlang did not kill the boy. But, as Erlang and his wife walked away from the monster's home, Erlang turned and looked back. The monster's son was play-fighting with a stick five *chi* long. Erlang realized that this was no ordinary human and, when he matured, he would prove difficult to kill. "We left in such a hurry I forgot my whip. Wait here and I'll go get it and then return," Erlang said. But his wife suspected his true intentions and said, "You are going to kill the boy!" Erlang replied, "No. He is too little to be of any danger to me." But when Erlang reached the boy he quickly killed him. As the boy was dying he said, "After I die, I'll suck your blood," and it is said that after he died, he became the mosquito.

Erlang and his wife walked on and finally came to Kekejiawu's land where hundreds of cattle and sheep grazed on the mountain. The herder was Erlang's father. The two had been separated for many years and didn't recognize each other. The old man saw them coming and said, "Where are you from? Don't you know that you should leave here quickly, for this is the land of Kekejiawu. If he knows you're here he'll come and eat you." Erlang replied, "We are from another place and are just passing by. We will leave soon." When the old man heard that they were from another place he thought they might know something about his son and asked, "Did you ever see my son, Gesarjiawu?" Erlang said, "We didn't see him. Perhaps he was killed by the nine-headed monster." This made the old man weep in sorrow.

Erlang had only been testing the old man to see if he really was his father. Then he asked the old man if he would pick lice from his head. The old man looked in his hair and said, "You don't have any lice, but that third eye of yours is quite the same as with Erlang. It seems to be true that in the world there are people who are much alike." Then he wept again. Erlang was now completely convinced the old man was his father and said, "Father, I am your son, Gesarjiawu." The old man could not believe it and said, "If my son returned home he would be awe-inspiring." Erlang replied, "If you don't believe me please wash your hands and I'll drink the water they were washed in." The father was convinced and the two happily embraced and wept. At last Erlang said, "Father, for now, please don't tell anyone I have returned."

The next day was time for Kekejiawu to offer sacrifices to a local mountain altar. As Kekejiawu offered sacrifices and burned incense, the altar (*obo*) began shaking. Kekejiawu said, "The gods are displeased on this day. Let us come tomorrow." The next morning, Erlang changed himself into a little baby and sat on the mountain. As Kekejiawu led his family up the mountain to the altar he found the baby and said, "This child has been sent by heaven," and they carried the child to Kekejiawu's home where they consecrated him in the center of the room. Night came and, when Kekejiawu's whole family was fast asleep, Erlang killed the entire family, cut open their bellies, and pulled out their intestines which he twined about the pillars of the home.

Erlang had now conquered the demons and returned to his place of reincarnation; Jiuni Yang Family Village. After his departure his mother had wept so much that she was blind. Erlang licked her eyes and she could see once more. Afterwards, people in that area led a peaceful life. And Erlang said, "Three *dan*<sup>148</sup> of vegetable seeds are countable, but my people are countless."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> [1 *dan* = 50 kilograms.]

<sup>149</sup>[TE]: Ma Jinbao, 63; [AWT]: Zhongchuan; [CLR]: Ma Guangyao; [CET]: Hu Jun

## **Erlang's Wife**

Once Erlang God had a very powerful wife who ate the flesh and drank the blood of young women of kind families. She had a human body, but her nine heads were not at all human. The King of Hell became very angry with her because he thought it was unfair for her to eat young women of so many kind families and sent soldiers to bring her to hell. But the fiend was very powerful and the soldiers could not take her to hell. The King of Hell talked it over with his generals and they had the bright idea of luring her to hell by saying such polite and courteous words as, "Please come visit our kingdom." Thus they managed to shackle and bring her to hell. The King of Hell scolded, "You are monstrous! Eating the young women of kind-hearted families! And, for this reason, you have grown up with nine heads and should be punished."

The fiend replied cursing, "You are such a terrible king! In time you will have a human body, but a cow's head and horns and one day you will be punished." Filled with wrath, the king grabbed her by the feet and tossed her into the distance. She thus landed in the lowest level of hell—the 18th level—and can never come out. She was the only one in the 18th level of hell. If she had not scolded the King of Hell, she would not have been thrown into the lowest level, at most, she would have been put in the second or third level. She lived around the present Long Yang Gorge.<sup>150</sup>

## **Too Late To Repent**

Long ago a wolf roamed about some mountain villages looking for food. Finally he noticed a very quiet house, went to the gate, peeked in, and saw a little boy soundly sleeping on a small porch in front of the north room. He very much wished to eat the little boy, but noticed a man working in the courtyard, so he paced back and forth by the gate several times, reluctant to leave. At this time, the father of the family left the home, leaving a little monkey to tend the boy. The wolf stealthily entered. As he neared the little boy, the little monkey discovered him and began struggling with the wolf. At this moment, an old villager came to visit the home and saw this fighting. He picked up the little boy and rushed back to his own home. The wolf saw the little boy was being carried away and became furious, left the little monkey, and chased after the little boy in the old man's arms. But the little monkey was not so easily discouraged. He leapt on the wolf's back and bit him hard. In pain, the wolf turned his head, only to be bitten and scratched. The wolf then ran away.

Very soon the father returned and found the little boy was absent. Worried, he looked everywhere and finally found the little monkey in a daze, not moving, blood covering his hands and mouth. Convinced the little monkey had eaten his son the man beat the monkey to death with a stick. Just as he was putting the stick down the old man carried the little boy inside and said, "But for your little monkey, your son would have been eaten by a wolf," and described what had happened. The master of the home was shocked, felt very sorry, but it was too late.

In your daily life, you will often meet this situation, so you should be careful.<sup>151</sup>

## **Heaven's Justice**

Long ago there lived a family of three. The father had died much earlier leaving his wife, a son, and a daughter. Eventually, the mother fell ill and was forced to stay in bed day and night. The son and daughter were thus forced to work hard to sustain their lives. Later, the sister was chosen to be married to the emperor's son and lived happily. This left the ill mother and the son who now had to work even harder to care for his mother. In time, the son grew tired of constantly caring for her and

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<sup>150</sup>[TE]: Hu Yingliang, 80; [CLR]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Hu-Li Family Village; [CT]: January 26, 1989; [MET]: Hu Jun

<sup>151</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

entertained the evil idea of getting rid of her. He became increasingly rude to her.

One day the son feigned concern and said, "Mother, we live poorly with neither good food nor clothing. Everything is inferior to what my sister has. What about you going to her home where you can have good meals and live a happier life for some days?" His mother was delighted with this suggestion and said, "That would be good," not knowing he had dug a hole in the forest and was planning to bury her, so he could have a free life. The next morning he put her on a horse and showed her every kindness on the road, often asking her if she was comfortable and wanted to rest. The mother happily thought, "Ah, my son has learned well." After crossing several mountains she asked in surprise, "What's the matter my son? The road is not like before. Is it being repaired?" The son replied, "Yes, mother. You haven't been on the roads for a long while and you are so old that perhaps you have forgotten that things are changing. The road too is changing," and, leading the horse, he continued to the hole that he had dug. He then helped his mother dismount on the pretense of resting and tied the horse's reins around his leg.

When his mother wasn't paying any attention he suddenly pushed her into the hole and threw soil on top of her. But his shovel accidentally hit the horse's head which so frightened the horse that it began jumping, kicking, and running, dragging the son behind. Thus he met a terrible death. The mother was saved by a passerby. Well you see, heaven does have eyes of justice.<sup>152</sup>

### **The Son Who Learned to be Filial**

Long ago in a beautiful quiet mountain village there lived a poor family of a mother and her son. The mother was kindhearted and always busy, getting up early in the morning and not going to bed until late at night. She loved her son so much that she didn't let him do anything. Even after he had grown up and her hair was completely white she still carried meals to him and washed his clothes. She never realized that this was giving him a bad character, for when he was upset he beat her; the pitiful old woman who had given birth to and reared him.

One day he was sleeping under a tree near his home. His mother was afraid he was hungry, so holding a big china bowl of food, she looked for him. When she came near the tree he was sleeping under he was awakened by the sound of her steps. Because he had been awakened he flew into a rage, grabbed a tree branch, and jumped out to beat her. Terrified, she turned and was about to flee, but tripped over a stone, fell heavily to the ground, broke her head against a stone, and died. When the son saw this he began to repent. Feeling hungry he returned home, but no food was to be found for his mother had eaten the little that was left, having taken most of the food to him. He despondently went to where his mother lay dead. Suddenly he was spellbound by a mother bird feeding her baby birds near his dead mother. She put food into her small sons' mouths. The small and lovely birds called, *ji-ji-zhi-zhi* and were very grateful and full of love for their mother. Feeling light-headed he nearly fainted. Finally, he couldn't help himself any longer and began loudly crying. But what has been lost is lost forever. Afterwards he became a completely different person. He worked very hard and, also spent much time making an image of his mother's head. He consecrated it and every day knelt in front of it three times after he woke up. The villagers all respected him and moved by his example, gave presents to their elders.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>153</sup>[TE]: Hu Ping, 17 (as he remembered his grandmother, Bei Wu Yue Hua, of Shiguare Village, Zhongchuan, telling him); [MET]: Hu Ping; [CT]: August 1988

## The Two Daughters-in-Law

Long ago a mother over 80 lived with her two daughters-in-law in the Sanchuan region. Her two sons had gone out to do business. The older daughter-in-law was cruel and selfish, but the younger one was dutiful and kind to the old mother. One day a neighbor held a wedding feast and invited them. The older daughter-in-law was visiting her mother, so the younger daughter-in-law went to the feast.

Gazing at the extraordinary fragrant pork and chicken dishes covering the table, she thought of her mother-in-law: "Oh! While I'm enjoying myself here, my *ana* (mother or mother-in-law) can't even enjoy, so much as a whiff! I should eat less in order to take some back to *ana*." She noticed those near her were eating by the mouthful, unmindful of anything else. She then rolled up a sleeve with a piece of chicken inside. Guiltily she ate only a little more and then hurriedly left with the excuse that she needed to relieve herself. After she finished urinating under a big tree, she stood and the piece of chicken fell into the urine. Picking it up she thought, "What shall I do? If I don't give it to *ana* it's not good, but I've dirtied it, so how can I give it to her?" Finally when she returned home, she washed it several times till she thought it was clean, and then smoked it with sacred incense and gave it to her *ana*. Still she felt guilty of having done a terrible thing and was afraid of being found out by heaven.

Later as she worked in field at mid-day, heavy clouds mixed with thunder and lightning suddenly covered the sky. She thought, "It's finished. Heaven has learned what I've done. Well, it's what I deserve for being careless." She ran under a big tree and awaited Tiangere's punishment. With a thunderous boom a lightning bolt exploded a tree top. The daughter-in-law thought she would surely die but, when she opened her eyes, she saw that the tree was broken into two pieces, revealing a shiny yellow material inside the tree. She looked carefully and saw that it was gold!

Finally she concluded, "Maybe heaven has mercifully given me gold, so that I may treat my *ana* better." Happily she took all the gold back home and became much more dutiful and kinder to her *ana* who of course was very glad and all the more fond of her. Elder Daughter-in-law was amazed and finally persuaded Younger Daughter-in-law to tell her how she had found the gold. Once she had learned the secret she delightedly thought to herself, "Such an easy thing! Why can't I do it?" Then she asked around and finally found a neighbor soon to marry. As usual the family was invited to the wedding feast and this time Elder Daughter-in-law insisted she would attend. She went to the feast and hid a piece of chicken in her rolled-up sleeve, went outside, urinated, dropped the chicken in the urine, picked it up, returned home, washed it hurriedly, then had *ana* eat it. *Ana* happily commended her.

Later, during mid-day, she saw heavy clouds covering the sky followed by thunder and lightning. As Younger Daughter-in-law had done, she ran under a big tree hoping heaven would give her gold too. "*Hong...*" a lightning bolt exploded in the tree top, throwing her into the air and blowing her to bits.<sup>154</sup>

## The Filial Daughter-in-law

Long ago there lived a very poor family of a mother and son. They had neither sheep, cattle, nor land and were so poor that if they ate one meal, they would surely skip the next. But, even so, the mother did her best and, after much hard effort, managed to get her son married. Afterwards there was one more mouth to feed and life became harder and harder. With great difficulty the mother found a job for her daughter-in-law—cooking for a rich family. The daughter was kind-hearted and bright. Everyday she ate three meals with the rich family, but her mother-in-law never had enough to eat. This made her sad. After thinking she had an idea. Every time she finished working she did not wash her oily floured hands until she quietly made her way back home. Then she boiled soup for her mother-in-law from the water she used to wash the oil and flour from her hands.

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<sup>154</sup>[TE]: Jin Yonlan, 58; [CLR]: Qi Yuqing; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

Time passed and, the more the daughter-in-law did this, the more conscience-stricken she became. She felt she was stealing from the rich family. One dark cloudy evening after she returned home and was just going to wash her hands in a pot, a bolt of dazzling lightning blazed in the sky followed by a loud clap of thunder. It seemed as though the thunder and lightning were right on top of her head. She thought heaven was surely out to punish her. She covered her head with her hands and crawled under the cutting board, hiding in terror. After the thunder had passed she opened her eyes and realized everything was as usual. Just as she was going to crawl out she saw a large heap of yellow shining gold at her feet. Surprised, she didn't know what to do. She called her husband and mother-in-law to come, but they were also at a loss to explain what had happened and say what they should do. Finally, they arrived at an answer: Daughter-in-laws's filial piety had so moved heaven that gold had been sent, so that they might live better. They all were pleased and later the daughter-in-law gave some gold to the rich family so as to return the value of the flour.<sup>155</sup>

### **The Little Wooden Doll**

Long ago, a family lived in a small village. The son had gone away to earn money several years earlier leaving only his wife and old mother at home. The mother was very fond of her daughter-in-law and they got along well. The daughter-in-law greatly respected the mother and, before doing anything, asked for her consent. The mother always answered, "OK, my daughter, it's all right." One day, the mother fell seriously ill. Anxiously her daughter-in-law sat nearby and couldn't help weep. The mother said, "Don't worry my daughter, for my son will soon return and I'll be OK..." While talking she took out a little wooden figure from under her pillow and gave it to the daughter-in-law. She said, "If I die treat this as though it were me. It will bless you." Several days later she died. Sadly the daughter-in-law held the little wooden figure her mother-in-law had given her and looked at it. The more she looked at it, the more it resembled her mother-in-law. Afterwards she treated it as her dead mother-in-law and, whether important or not, before doing anything, asked the little wooden doll.

One dusk, she found no firewood in the home, so asked the little wooden figure, "Ana, shall I go to the forest and gather firewood?" The little doll answered, "OK, my daughter, it's all right." She entered the forest, but suddenly heavy clouds with thunder and lightning came and it began raining heavily. The daughter-in-law asked the little wooden figure, "Ana what shall I do? Shall I hide under a big tree?" The little figure answered, "OK, my daughter, it's all right." She then noticed a large tree and ran under it. It was not until darkness fell that the rain finally stopped. The daughter-in-law could not find the road, so said to the little wooden doll, "Ana, it's dark and I can't find the road, so I'll climb this tree to spend the night." The little figure replied, "OK, my daughter, it's all right." She climbed the tree and sat on the branches, telling herself, "Don't be afraid, ana is with me..."

At midnight she heard voices coming near. After a while they stopped and lit a fire under where she sat. Three men opened a big bag and poured something out--shiny gold and silver treasures! The three were bandits who had come to divide their booty, but they soon began quarrelling and fighting. Daughter-in-law observed all of this and almost fell out of the tree before grabbing some branches. Accidently the little wooden doll fell and hit a man on the head. With a terribly loud sound all three raced away thinking someone had found them.

The next morning the frightened daughter-in-law climbed down from the tree, looked for the little wooden figure, and found it on the treasures. She picked up the little wooden figure and asked, "Ana, what shall I do? Shall I take these treasures home?" The wooden doll said, "OK, my daughter, it's all right." She put all the treasures in the bag. Just after getting home there was knocking on the door. Frightened, she thought that the bandits had followed her and asked the little wooden doll, "Ana shall I open the door?" "OK, my daughter, it's all right," was the response. She opened the door and there stood her husband. Neither of them looked very well. The husband asked, "Why is it that you don't

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<sup>155</sup>[TE]: La Xinling, 57; [CLR]: Wang Qingxin; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

look well?" Then his wife showed him the treasures she had brought home. Her husband shouted, "Where are these from?" His wife told him what had happened the previous night. He was very pleased and explained that he had been bringing the treasures which he had earned through his work back home, but had been robbed by three thieves. "But now, thanks to heaven and mother, the treasures have come home!" he said.<sup>156</sup>

### Myna Bird

Long ago a very beautiful bird spoke elegantly and sang well. She lived with her mother on a high tree. In time her mother grew old and began to ail. The little myna bird stayed near her bed every day caring for her. One day there was nothing to eat, so she was forced to go search for food. She flew away and lit on a roof edge, looked around, and thought, "Let me find some food for mother and then take her to be treated," but, suddenly, she was caught in a rich man's bird net. Quite surprised at the little myna bird's beauty, the rich man's family put her in a cage. Everyday they fed and played with her and thus she was forced to stay there a long time. Increasingly worried and anxious as she thought about her mother with nothing to eat, she began singing day and night: "Mistress, open the cage, let me go, *plu lu lu*, and after I see my mother, *plu lu lu*, I'll return and dance and sing for you." Her song was so filled with sorrow all the other birds began to weep and the mistress was moved and unable to control herself, opened the cage door. The little bird, *plu lu lu*, flew home, but no matter where she looked she couldn't find even so much as her mother's shadow. She supposed her mother had gone out to look for her, so looked everywhere. At last she heard that her mother had grown very weak and crawled to the door of their home everyday and had stood, looking, hoping to see her daughter return. By accident she had fallen and been eaten by a dog. The little myna bird fell into a sorrowful depression and, everyday, stood where her mother had stood and sadly sang. Her song moved all earth's animals so much that they all wept. In time the little myna bird's falling tears dried and then slowly she died.<sup>157</sup>

### The Green and White Eagles

Long ago in a paradisiacal valley there was a forest crisscrossed with streams that had every kind of bird. It was a truly beautiful valley. On a valley cliff lived a green eagle and a white eagle--mother and son. The mother eagle had light green feathers and was industrious and kind-hearted. Her husband, a white eagle, had died much earlier and she had to work hard to raise the little eaglet. The young eagle was covered with snow-white feathers and was both handsome and filial. Everyday he went into the deep forest to gather food while his mother stayed at home resting her old tired body. At night the young eagle brought back food and shared it with his mother. They were so happy everyone admired them. But disaster suddenly fell from the sky. The green eagle fell ill and her condition steadily worsened. The young white eagle looked at his mother, so weak and pale, became sorrowful, and secretly wept. He carefully tended his mother and often comforted her by saying, "You'll get well soon."

Three days passed and the old mother eagle was so ill she no longer was able to eat. The young eagle asked, "What would you like to eat?" Very sadly the mother replied, "I don't want anything to eat, but west of here over eight mountains and 1,000 *li* [500 kilometers] away, there is an immortal peach orchard. In the orchard lives an ogress. Everyday she guards her orchard to prevent us from stealing fruit. Now I want to eat an immortal peach." The white eagle thought for a long time and very much wanted to bring a peach for his mother. But he worried that after he left, no one would care for her. The green eagle guessed what her son was thinking and comforted, "My son, I'm just

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<sup>156</sup>[CLR]: Qi Baihua; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>157</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun



talking idly. Don't take this seriously. The orchard is too far away and the journey is too dangerous. Don't even consider going."

But the white eagle decided he must find the immortal peaches for his mother despite the length of the dangerous trip. The next morning he asked a little myna bird to tend his mother and bid farewell with falling tears. He set out and crossed many mountains, rivers, and oceans. Three days and three nights passed and, at last, he crossed the eight mountains. In great anxiety, he flew directly into the immortal peach orchard and began picking peaches. As he was picking a third one, the ogress discovered him, threw out her net, and captured him. The white eagle explained his reasons for coming and asked her to release him so that he might return home and save his mother. The ogress's heart was as hard as metal and she cared not one whit. Instead she noticed he was beautiful and thought she could sell him for a lot of money. Laughing loudly she scolded, "Such a terrible eagle! You dare come to steal my immortal peaches and then ask that I release you! You are dreaming in the daytime!"

How anxious and worried the white eagle was! Inside his cage, he tried to escape, but could not. The next day, he was sold to a rich businessman for 500 grams of silver. The rich merchant had a daughter named Lanlan who was kind, beautiful, and clever. Lanlan loved the white eagle and didn't want to put the cage down for even a minute. But suddenly she heard the white eagle speaking, telling her his sad experiences, how his mother was dying, and how he wanted to go home to save her. Lanlan was greatly moved and wept. Finally, she let the white eagle fly away.

The white eagle rushed to the immortal peach orchard and quickly picked three peaches. When the ogress discovered this the white eagle was already high in the sky beyond her reach. On the way home he suffered raging thirst and hunger, but reminded himself, "Go quickly, mother is waiting. Mother is waiting!" He continued flying. When night fell he reached home. As he stepped inside, he called out, "Mother! I've brought immortal peaches for you!" But there was no response. The white eagle called out another three times, but couldn't find so much as his mother's shadow. At this time the little myna bird appeared and said that his mother had been dead for 3 days. This news was such a terrible blow to the white eagle that he lost consciousness. Finally he revived and castigated himself for leaving his mother to look for immortal peaches. He lamented to the sky, "Mother you are so cruel, leaving me all alone here! I can't even see your body. How can I not be sad? Mother, if you still remember me, let me see your body. Let me bury you! With all the love I have for you in my heart I will bury you." He wept and wept and his tears formed a running stream. Then the sky grew dark and the mountains began trembling.

The white eagle's heart-rending lamentations had reached the Jade Emperor up in the sky, who blew away the clouds and looked down. He saw the white eagle weeping for his mother and was moved by the white eagle's filial heart. He sent a soft wind which blew away leaves covering the dead mother eagle, and also blew her in front of the white eagle. After gazing at his mother he fainted. Many birds came and, together they buried her. The white eagle was now dying because he had not eaten or drunk anything for several days and because his tears had turned to blood. He told all the birds, "After I die bury me by my mother. I want to be with her forever." Two days later the white eagle closed his eyes, never to open them again. Weeping, all the birds buried him with his mother.<sup>158</sup>

### **The Death of the Wife and the Return of the Mother**

Wangfa was very young when his father died. Through great effort his mother reared him. They lived so poorly that even when Wangfa reached the age of 24 or 25 no one wanted to marry him. His mother worried constantly about this. At this time, there was an old single man about the age of Wangfa's mother. He was willing to have a wife to mend his clothes and cook. When Wangfa's

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<sup>158</sup>[TE]: Lu Yintao, 81; [CLR]: Lu Xiyang; [AWT]: Lu Family Village; [CT]: October 31, 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

mother learned this she asked other people to arrange a marriage. Everything went smoothly and a wedding was soon arranged. The old man gave some money to the mother and, by using it, she quickly engaged Wangfa. And before Wangfa knew what had happened he was married.

Wangfa was a filial son and, after learning what had really happened, he felt sad. He constantly reminded himself to earn money in order to redeem his mother, bring her back home, and make her life happy. His wife, Xiu Mei, saw her husband sighing and unhappy and asked the reason. He told her how his mother had made his marriage possible. Xiu Mei said, "Mother-in-law is kindhearted and should return home, be respected, and treated well. Tomorrow I'll return to my parents' home and borrow some money." The next dusk Xiu Mei brought money from her home. But that evening all the money was stolen. The two were astonished and Wangfa almost went crazy. Xiu Mei was unable to bear this torment and hung herself while Wangfa was out. The more Wangfa brooded, the more desperate he became. Taking the rope his wife had used to hang herself he walked toward his wife's grave. On the way, in front of a temple, he met an old man who persuaded him not to kill himself and helped him apprehend the thief. In the end, Wangfa got his money back. He then borrowed a donkey cart and set out to redeem his mother. But before going far he saw another donkey cart in the distance. It was his mother and they were happily reunited.

The old man was actually kind and good-hearted. After learning everything that had happened he sympathetically decided to send the mother back and live alone. Wangfa said, "If you don't mind our poverty, please stay with us. I'll treat you as I would my mother." The old man stayed and they lived very happily.<sup>159</sup>

### Back Basket

Long ago there lived a poor family of a grandfather, a mother, a father, and the couple's child. The grandfather had worked hard all his life, but now was too old to work. He depended on his son and daughter-in-law for support. But the son and daughter-in-law considered him to be nothing more than a heavy burden. Time passed and the two felt the grandfather become more burdensome. When the grandfather needed something the son and daughter-in-law did nothing and so he suffered cold and hunger. They fed him only leftovers. His clothing was nothing more than filthy and tattered cast-offs. Only the grandson was concerned and shared his food with him. But if the couple saw this, they cursed the grandfather and said, "You waste so much wheat!" The two continued to treat the grandfather in this way and the grandfather often complained that his lot in life was very bitter. Neither of the two would console the old man, but rather, would recite the maxim, "Old cows' feet are not stable and the complaining of old men is endless."

Family conditions worsened and the old man's remarks became more caustic which caused the couple to become increasingly impatient. At last the two could no longer bear it and began to discuss how to get rid of him. They decided to abandon him in a remote place. The husband said, "I'll go to market, buy a large basket, put him inside, and carry him so far away there will be no chance he'll come back." The wife asked, "But if the old man isn't here the neighbors will surely ask where he is, how shall we answer?" The husband replied, "It's very easy, we'll just say he wanted us to take him to a distant holy place where he can spend his old age smoothly and happily." The two didn't realize that everything was overheard by their son.

The next morning the father went to market to buy a basket. As soon as he left the son asked, "Mother, why do you want to drive grandfather away?" His mother quickly replied, "No! Who told you we were driving grandfather away? This is certainly not true! Your father and I must work very hard everyday and we have no time to care for him. Your father is going to take him to a holy place where he will get better care." The son asked, "Where is it?" The mother said, "You don't know this place. It's quite far away. Don't worry, because there are many kind people there who will care of

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<sup>159</sup>[TE]: Xiu Sanbei, 80; [CLR]: Wan Xiaolan; [AWT]: Hongnai Village, Zhongchuang; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

your grandfather."

Dusk fell and the husband returned with a large basket. He decided to wait until it was completely dark before starting out, so as to avoid the attention of neighbors. Once it was completely dark he put his father into the basket. Grandfather nervously asked, "What are you doing? Where are you going to take me?" The son answered, "Father, you know that neither I nor your daughter-in-law have time to care of you. We are sorry for this and now I'm going to take you to a holy place where you will be well-looked after." The old man was not deceived and said, "Ungrateful! You forget the years I spent raising you and now you treat me like this!" He loudly cursed his son and daughter-in-law. The son angrily picked up the basket with the grandfather inside, and rushed out. No one noticed the grandson quietly watching everything. He hurriedly followed his father. Standing at the courtyard gate, he watched his father slipping into the night's darkness and shouted, "Father, when you finish, don't forget to bring this basket back for me." The father at first ignored this but, after a few steps, stopped in confusion. He shouted back, "My son, why do you want this basket?" "Because when you get old, I'll need to use the basket as you are using it now," he said. These words shocked the father so much that his legs trembled and he was unable to move. After a long while he slowly carried his father back home. Afterwards, the couple were very filial to the grandfather and lived together happily.<sup>160</sup>

### **Father's Pillow**

Long ago there lived five people in one family. The mother had died earlier leaving the father with three small sons and a daughter. The father worked very hard and finally the four children married. By this time the father had grown old from relentless toil and was unable to work. The three sons knew he could no longer work and did not want to support him, so they chased him from the home. The daughter decided to visit her father, returned to her old home, and became very angry when she learned all that had happened. But she cleverly hid her resentment. She told her brothers that she had come to bring their father to her home to live. The three brothers and their wives were delighted. She found her father, brought him back to the home, went into his small, shabby dark room, and quietly explained her idea.

That night, after supper, the daughter asked loudly, "Father where did you bury the money?" He answered, "Just under the tree in the yard." The two pretended to dig money up from under a tree and then the daughter said, "I'll sew this into your pillow. Sleep on it in case someone tries to steal it." This was overheard by the three sons and their wives. The next morning as the daughter and father were preparing to leave, the three sons urged their father to stay, promising to take good care of him. The daughter said, "Father, wherever you are, never let the pillow leave you. Always take it with you."

Later, each of the three brothers strove to be the most filial. Even when the father went to the toilet, the three struggled to help him. The father lived happily until he died. After the busy time of the funeral had passed it was time for the three sons and wives to look inside the pillow. But when they opened it they were shocked. What did they find? Straw!<sup>161</sup>

### **Beggar Father**

Long ago a poor family of a father and seven daughters lived in a two-story building. The father had his daughters live upstairs while he lived downstairs. He told them that this arrangement made it easier for him to go in and out of the home, but the real reason was so that he could secretly eat eggs.

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<sup>160</sup>[TE]: Wu Baoer, 81; [CLR]: Wu Jiwing; [AWT]: He Xi Wu Family Village, Zhongchuan; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>161</sup>[TE]: Qin Guihua; [AWT]: Xian Feng Village; [CLR]: Lu Xinglan; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

One day as he secretly ate eggs the youngest daughter saw him, went upstairs, and told her older sisters. They didn't believe her, thinking that the family was too poor to have any eggs. Finally the oldest sister was chosen to go see. It was true, the father was eating eggs. After he finished eating he left. The sisters rushed into his room and quickly cooked and ate all the remaining eggs. After a while the father returned and wondered, "Who ate all my eggs? It must have been my daughters!" Then he decided to starve them to death. Finally he hit upon an idea and said, "Let's go together to the mountains. I'll cut firewood and you can see the flowers and animals and enjoy yourselves." The daughters were so excited that they bounced up and down and shouted, "Wonderful!"

The next day, they all set off for the forest together crossing many mountains, rivers, and valleys. The father said, "You play here and wait for me while I go over there to cut firewood." A long time passed and he didn't return. The daughters grew tired of playing. They listened and, from the forest, there came a beating sound which they thought was their father cutting firewood. As dusk fell they decided to look for their father and went toward the sound. Only his jacket remained, hanging from a branch, flapping against the tree. They realized that he had abandoned them. By this time it was completely dark. They walked in the darkness and, after some time, they saw a dim light and headed in that direction. They found a small one-room house where an old woman lived. She greeted them warmly. The young women told her all their experiences. She was full of sympathy and adopted them. They all lived together. The daughters worked hard and, after several years, they were well-off. Meanwhile their father sat at home eating all day long. Finally he ate all the stored wheat and was forced to beg. One day as he was begging he passed by the house where his daughters and the old woman lived. The daughters recognized him and chased him away. He got just what he deserved.<sup>162</sup>

### **Tieguaili the Immortal**

Long ago Tieguaili was so poor that he had no pot, no firewood, nothing at all in his home. He constantly lacked food and every night stole someone's pot filled with food, firewood, flour, and anything used for cooking. But, before daybreak, he returned the things he had not used up. In time he had a son born on the 30th of the 12th month. According to Monguor custom, every baby is given a square cloth bib. But Tieguaili was so poor he couldn't. So he went inside a shop when no one was there to look for such a cloth. He searched and searched, but couldn't find anything suitable. Day broke and the shopkeeper found him. Surprised, he asked, "What are you doing here?" Tieguaili answered, "My son was born last night, but our family is so poor we couldn't find even one square bib. I came here for one and looked the whole night and I'm still looking." "You're so kindhearted, why don't I just give you one?" the shopkeeper offered. He tore a piece off a large bolt of cloth and gave it to Tieguaili who took it home and gave it to his son. But they still didn't have enough to eat so Tieguaili was forced to continue stealing food.

He had a calabash he used to steal oil from oil presses. He made a hole in the wall of the press room then thrust his *shandao* (fighting tool) through the wall with the calabash tied to the end. He positioned the calabash under the tap where the oil ran out from being pressed between two large stones. After some time this was discovered and once, as he was going to steal again, some people were waiting by the hole. He stuck the calabash inside and those waiting assumed it was the thief's head, so slashed it with a cleaver. The upper half of the calabash was cut off. He was very embarrassed and no longer wanted to stay there, left, and became a religious devotee. After he left, his son grew older, studied very well, and was very clever. Finally he passed an imperial examination, became a scholar, and the government made him an important official.

Twenty years later Tieguaili had become an immortal and returned to his old home where he beheld flags snapping in the wind and many guards standing by the gate. He approached and said to the two guards, "I didn't come here to ask for food or money. I only want to see the old lady." The two

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<sup>162</sup>[TE]: E Youlin; [CLR]: E Fuhan; [CT]: November 30, 1988; [AWT]: Guanting; [T]: Hu Jun

guards laughed and said, "What? You want to see our mistress?" and chased him away with sticks. Tieguaili fled behind the *jobi*.<sup>163</sup> The guards ignored him. Later his son returned in a sedan from visiting a friend. The guards reported a stranger had come and had not asked for food or money, but had only wanted to see the old madam. The son asked where the old man was. "We chased him away," they said.

The son went in to see his mother, but the description of this incident lingered in his mind. The two discussed what had happened that day and the son asked, "Do you know who the stranger was the guards reported wanted to see you?" The mother said she didn't know, but had heard quarrelling and a familiar voice. She added she had been agitated, for no apparent reason the whole day. Suddenly the mother realized the voice was that of her son's father. The son raced out and the soldiers said he had gone behind the *jobi*. The son went there, but found only this poem scratched on the *jobi*:

*The night of the 30th  
Went to steal a cloth  
Cutting knife slashed the calabash's head  
Father has father's blessings  
Son has son's blessings*

At this moment, someone said the stranger had gone in a westerly direction. The son mounted a horse and raced away, wanting to bring him back. When he came near a local Yellow River crossing he saw his father walking ahead and reached out to grab him. But each time he reached he only caught some cloth of his father's garments, but was not able to actually touch him. At the crossing, his father put his *shandao* on the river, stepped on it and rapidly moved away and never returned. The words of the poem are still repeated in the Sanchuan area, "The father has father's blessings, and the son has son's blessings." When something good happens to a son, the father might say this.<sup>164</sup>

### Landlord Wang and His Three Wives

Long ago Landlord Wang lived in a village with his three wives and more than 20 tenant families. He was very rich at that time, but for 2-3 years there was continual drought. Their wheat was nearly exhausted and only three jars of oil and 100 kilograms of flour remained. Landlord Wang wanted to make the flour and oil last for an entire year, but this seemed impossible. He at last decided to let his three wives solve the problem. He called in his first wife and said, "I'm going to give this flour and oil to you. Find a way to make them last 1 year." First Wife thought about this and felt it was impossible and refused to accept this responsibility. Wang rejected her and sent her back to her parents' home. Then he called in the second wife and repeated what he had said earlier, but she also had no idea as to how and accomplish this task so she too was rejected and sent back to her former home. At last Third Wife was called in and was given this assignment. Immediately she agreed and promised to support the entire family for 1 year with the oil and flour. She said that if she couldn't do so, she would happily return to her parents' home. She was intelligent and every 7 days cooked oily mush. Now if you eat oily mush regularly, it makes you feel very full and you don't want to eat anything at all. By cooking this way the oil and flour not only lasted for 1 year, but the family was also able to help other relatives. Afterwards, beautiful Third Wife was much favored and respected by the family.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>[A large earthen wall section erected in front of courtyard entrances to keep away evil.]

<sup>164</sup>[TE]: Hu Chenxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter of 1989

<sup>165</sup>[CLR]: Li Jie; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## Fifty Pieces of Silver

Halfway up a big mountain stood two temples. The larger temple was called North Temple and the smaller one was called South Temple. At the foot of the mountain was a village. Dangwa married a very beautiful girl and a few days later one of his friends came to visit. After supper Dangwa and the friend happily drank together and the friend asked, "How about your new wife? I think she is wonderful!" "Oh, she's OK," Dangwa replied. "Don't kid me. I know things are very good because she is so beautiful. How much I wish I had a wife as beautiful as yours!" his friend exclaimed. Later the wife's mother brought more food and, when the friend saw her, he was even more surprised, because the wife's mother was also very beautiful. After she left the friend asked Dangwa, "Do you sleep with her?"

"Of course I sleep with my wife!"

"No, no. I mean your wife's mother."

"Who? Do you mean my wife's mother?"

"Yes. She is very beautiful. I can't imagine how beautiful she was when she was young."

"I can sleep with her as well. Don't you believe me?"

"No, you can't! How can a man sleep with his mother-in-law?"

"Do you dare bet with me?"

"Of course. I'm sure to win!"

"How much? Thirty pieces of silver?"

"That's too little. Fifty pieces!"

"OK!"

"OK!" and the two slapped hands sealing the bet.

The next morning Dangwa escorted his friend out of the village. When he returned home he was unable to sit or sleep in peace. What could he do? He wanted to forget what had happened the night before, but he couldn't, for the 50 pieces of silver was a large sum and the thought of this repeatedly entered his mind. In addition a strong lust had risen within him which he couldn't control. "How can I satisfy myself?" he wondered. He thought about it for a whole day then the next morning an idea finally came to him.

At noon, Dangwa lay on the bed and pretended to be ill. His wife and mother-in-law were greatly worried for their family had but one man and, if Dangwa died, what would the women do? Dangwa said, "Mother, I dreamed about North Temple. If you go there and pray for me I'll be well. Would you please do this?" After his mother-in-law left he told his wife that he had dreamed of South Temple, so of course she left for South Temple to pray. Just after they both left Dangwa jumped up, pulled on his clothes, and ran to North Temple. When he arrived he found his mother-in-law kneeling and praying in front of a Buddha image. Suddenly she heard a strange male voice coming from the image: "Return. Your son will be made well. But don't forget to satisfy one demand of a person you shall meet on your way home. If you fail to do this, your son will die." The mother-in-law left in wonder. Dangwa quickly came out from behind the god, took a shortcut, and quietly waited on the way from the temple to his home.

The wife's mother was walking home when suddenly, she saw a strange white-bearded man sitting on a stone beside the road wearing a straw hat and white sheepskin clothes. She grew a little nervous, but didn't stop. When she neared him he said, "Who are you? Where have you been and where are you going?" The woman answered, "I am Dangwa's wife's mother and I went to North Temple to pray for my son. He will be made well."

"Oh, well, then you should sleep with me and only then will your son be OK. Do you understand?"

"Y.....Yes."

"Come with me."

Dangwa then led her to a straw hut and satisfied his lustful desires and then said, "Your son is now

all right. You may go." Then Dangwa raced to his friend's home to get the money.<sup>166</sup>

### Whose Father Was That?

Long ago an elderly man had five sons, all of whom lived very poorly and in need of food and clothing. One day the father died and there was the problem of how to make a coffin for the father. The five decided that each son would provide boards for one side of the coffin. The youngest son was to provide wood for the smallest side, but even so, it was a burden for he was truly poor. The problem remained as to where to get wood for the sixth side. At last the eldest son suggested covering the remaining opening with paper. All the others happily agreed, thinking that Elder Brother was clever to have such a wonderful idea. That night the five sons put their father into the coffin and started up a mountain. Midway Youngest Son said, "Hey, father knows we're tired because the coffin has become very light now!" Third Son said casually, "Maybe that's because father loved you most."

They buried the coffin on the mountain. As they were coming down they saw a corpse lying on the road. Youngest Son said, "Though we are terribly poor and lacked wood for the coffin, Elder Brother's idea enabled us to bury father. There are rich as well as poor people in the world, but I can't imagine people who would leave their dead father lying on the road. What terrible people!" But who was the dead man on the road? It was their father who had broken through the paper side of the coffin.<sup>167</sup>

### The Powerful Living Buddha

Long ago there was a temple in Wushi Valley in Guanting's Sanchuan region where a very powerful Living Buddha resided. Quite near the temple was a forest in Yundong Valley where local people gathered firewood and building material. At this time the place was ruled by a *baihu* (ruler of 100 families) who was very cruel to local people. Though they hated him they were too afraid to say anything.

The *baihu* came to regard the forest as his own and prohibited local people from going there. And though the local people were very angry, what could they do? Finally they thought that perhaps the Living Buddha could help, so they went to see him. He said, "Don't worry. Three days from now everything will be well and you will have access to the forest again," and started walking toward his chanting platform, murmuring, cursing... But 3 days later when local people went to the forest they saw that the *baihu* was still very much alive, so they went to see the Living Buddha again and asked, "Great Buddha, what's the matter with your magic?" The Living Buddha gravely held his magic staff and, while chanting Buddhist sutras, asked, "Why have you not yet manifested?"

Just as the people were leaving, they heard a sound: "Caw-caw..!" and saw a big black crow perched on in a tree top in front of the temple. The crow dropped a steaming bloody thing on the ground. It was a man's heart! After this the *baihu* really did die and then the forest belonged to the people again.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>[AWT]: Sanchuan. Three conclusions are commonly told, depending on the teller. The first says that Dangwa could not get the money. The second says Dangwa got the money, but his life became very difficult. And the third says Dangwa did get the money and his life became very comfortable and easy.]

<sup>167</sup>[TE]: Chen Xiaolian, 62; [AWT]: Chen Family Village, Xiakou Commune; [CLR]: Hai Shulan, 17; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>168</sup>[CLR]: Hu Ping; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: October 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## The Ghost Donkey

Some time ago the Du Family Village had a very powerful *yinyang* but, in time, he became very poor and didn't have enough to eat. He had no money to buy anything. Finally he decided to go to market, took out a ghost he had previously caught, put it in a bottle, and chanted an incantation which changed the ghost into a donkey. By asking a very cheap price, he easily sold the donkey to a Hui man. When they had nearly concluded their transaction the *yinyang* said, "Don't ever spit when you are around this donkey." The Hui man promised he would not and led the donkey home, making sure he didn't spit the whole way. He tied the donkey to a pole, took out a knife, and, as he was sharpening the knife, spit on the whetstone. When he finished and prepared to kill the donkey, he found the donkey had vanished without a trace.<sup>169</sup>

## The Chicken Threshers

A very powerful *yinyang* lived some time ago in Zhaomuchuan Village. In summer everyone was doing threshing work, but the *yinyang* had no animals of his own to do his threshing work. Several rich families in the village owned many animals. He asked them if he could borrow an animal to thresh, but they all refused. He angrily returned home, began chanting incantations, caught two chickens, drove them to the threshing ground, tied a rope around their necks, waved his whip and, all the while, chanted incantations. The two chickens stretched their necks high and ran very quickly, not resembling chickens at all, but very strong creatures. People said this was because of the chanting which brought God's help. Very soon he finished his threshing work. Then he took out two black bowls he used for capturing ghosts and put one bowl in one corner of his threshing ground. He sat by it and began chanting, occasionally using the index finger of his right hand to draw a circle around the bowl. The first time when he drew a circle around the bowl a round cloud immediately appeared in the sky. The second time he drew a circle the cloud became dark and very heavy. The third time he drew a circle a downpour came on the heels of lightning and thunder.

Meanwhile, the rich people had many servants and many animals to do threshing work and so were very leisurely threshing. Rain came, just like pouring water out of a bucket and washed away all their wheat.<sup>170</sup>

## The Ghosts' Revenge

A very powerful *yinyang* lived in the Wang Family Village. At that time, the present Zhaomuchuan Village was known as Zhaomuchuan Kingdom. The kingdom's young prince came to see the *yinyang* and said, "My mother will die soon. I want to make her funeral magnificent, so please come to my home for the funeral whenever I send someone to call you." The *yinyang* agreed. Some time later as the *yinyang* slept late one night, someone knocked. He opened the door and found a young man standing in the darkness with a donkey. "The prince's mother has died and he has sent me here to escort you there. Six other *yinyang* have come and only you are absent. Please, let's go immediately," the young man said. The *yinyang* went, riding on the donkey, half asleep. They went on for a long while and then the young man said, "We have arrived," and stopped in front of a very large courtyard. The *yinyang* looked over the wall and saw many strips of paper used by *yinyang*. The other *yinyang* were sitting and chanting. The *yinyang* dismounted, the young man urging all the while, "Uncle, go inside quickly. Go inside quickly." But *yinyang* have a custom when they travel at night. Before they enter a house they use a board inscribed with incantations and strike the upper part of the courtyard gateway. As soon as he hit the upper part with his board all the quietness disappeared,

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<sup>169</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter 1989

<sup>170</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter 1989



along with the large courtyard and house. All that remained were the Yellow River's rumblings. If he had stepped inside the large courtyard just one more step he would have plunged down into the Yellow River. People said that this happened because he had caught many ghosts who wished to punish him.<sup>171</sup>

## **Yak Man**

Long ago around Mengda Lake lived Yak Man. He was strong, handsome, good at writing and fighting, and often helped local people. Later, he became the leader of the tribe living in this area. The people of the Mengda Lake area had always depended on the mountains for their food. This is true even now. At that time the mountains around Mengda Lake were covered with forests of ancient trees where all sorts of animals lived. People often went into the forest to cut firewood and to hunt and had no worries. About 10 kilometers away from this area several rich families lived in one village. They had much gold and many pearls in their homes, but when they heard that the Mengda mountains had many rich resources they formed a group and often went there to steal animals, farming tools, and firewood. Sometimes, they even set fire to the forest. Tribesmen around Mengda Lake became very angry and came to hate these robbers. One day Yak Man heard about this and led all his tribe to the mountains, and, by coincidence, met the bandits whom they severely beat and chased away. This was a terrible blow to the bandits and they dared not come again, but nursed a strong hatred for Yak Man. At last the rich men took much gold and silver to Lanzhou City and made charges against Yak Man.

Lanzhou officials sent two generals and an army to the Mengda area. They arrived just as the tribe was having a large meeting. Without saying a word the generals and soldiers bound Yak Man and took him to Lanzhou where he was put into an underground prison. This was during the coldest part of winter and when river ice had frozen to a depth of three *chi*. The people who had imprisoned Yak Man hoped he would die from the cold, but Yak Man had anticipated this turn of events, so after he was thrown into the underground prison he never stopped jumping and exercising. After 3 days and 3 nights the officials and rich men thought Yak Man was surely dead and ordered two officials to remove the corpse and throw it in the Yellow River. But, as the two officials opened the prison door, Yak Man came out, his entire body profusely sweating. "Oh please let me come out and have some cold air. I'm nearly dead from the heat," Yak Man said. The two officials were so terrified at this that they fell unconscious. Yak Man raced away and reached his home 3 days later. All the people were very happy at his return.

After a few days, Lanzhou sent more officials and soldiers to deal with this problem. When they arrived at Mengda an argument ensued as to what the truth of the matter was. Yak Man scolded them with the truth and the rich men and the officials could say nothing. Finally they were forced to announce that the mountains belonged to Yak Man's group. Later the rich men and their people never came again to Mengda and the tribe lived there happily, even now.<sup>172</sup>

## **Strong Man**

Long ago in Xiang Feng Village the Wang family was famous because one of the Wangs was an exceedingly powerful man. The Zhang Family Village in the Guanting Town area also had a very strong man, which the Xiangfeng Village's strong man heard about and wanted to compete with. Strong Wang went to town, found out where the Zhang Family Village was, and set out to look for Strong Zhang. At that time Strong Zhang was working at the threshing ground and, as Strong Wang came near, Strong Zhang had some problems with his stone roller (thresher). Strong Wang didn't

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<sup>171</sup>[TE]: Hu Chengxiong, 48; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: Winter, 1989

<sup>172</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

recognize him as being Strong Zhang and asked, "Where does Strong Zhang live?" Zhang picked up the roller with one hand, motioned in the distance, and said, "Over there." Wang left thinking, "If ordinary villagers are so strong, I can't imagine how powerful the strong man must be."

As he returned home Wang found that the Xiangfeng villagers had made a very large milling stone in Xinger Commune. They asked him to take the stone back to their village because he was very strong. He picked up the stone, put a rope through the hole in the center, and easily rolled it home over several mountains. This millstone is still in the village today.<sup>173</sup>

### **Lute's Miracles**

Long long ago along the Yellow River there lived a peasant who was afraid of his wife. She often drove him out of the home after he finished working and refused him food. He was forced to pace back and forth in front of his courtyard gate late at nights. One night as he tiredly paced back and forth he leaned against the courtyard wall and fell fast asleep. He didn't know when but, sometime later, he awoke with the wind whistling in his ears. He realized that he was being carried in a westerly direction in the arms of a green-faced long-toothed terrifying ogre at a speed comparable to flying. They skimmed over mountains, deserts, and broad oceans and at last came to a city. Green smoke could be seen billowing up in the distance from the city and it obviously was flourishing. The ogre put him down and said, "Here is your paradise," and vanished. Lute was surprised and unable to understand what was happening. He decided to enter the city and walked in that direction.

It was an imperial city of many tall and magnificent palaces, flourishing markets, and a vast network of roads. Lute thought, "I don't have any money, though my belly is empty. How can I get money to live here?" After roaming about for some time, he went inside a jewelry store and said to the shopkeeper, "I'm a businessman from China and have come ahead of my horse train which is bringing gold, silver, silks, treasures, and other valuables. I'm here to investigate selling prices." The shopkeeper joyfully thought that here was a chance to make a large profit, so took Lute into his home, prepared a feast, smiled, and asked, "How much are you asking for your goods?" Lute named a very low price. The shopkeeper hastily said that he wanted to buy some of Lute's goods and the two made a contract with the shopkeeper giving Lute some money as an advance payment to bind the contract. Lute then lived happily, drinking and feasting, travelling about the city, and giving money to beggars.

Very soon his money was gone, so he returned to the shopkeeper and said that he wanted more money and would later return twice the amount. Two months passed and the shopkeeper received no news about the goods, so went to see Lute and asked him to return his money. But Lute always made such excuses as, "Tomorrow I'll return your money," and "The day after tomorrow I'll return it." Finally the storekeeper was unable to get any money back. Several days more passed and then the storekeeper became suspicious and took the case to court. An imperial official ordered Lute to appear before the emperor who asked, "Why do you cheat others? Why do you cheat our citizens?" Lute responded, "We Chinese don't know how to cheat others." The emperor asked, "When will your goods arrive?" Lute answered, "It's very difficult for me to say. Maybe they will come right now, maybe tomorrow, maybe the day after tomorrow. Anyway, as soon as my goods do arrive I'll return double the value of money I borrowed from the storekeeper." The emperor asked, "What is the quantity of your goods?" Lute answered, "We have altogether 100 horses. Thirty horses are carrying gold, 30 are carrying silver, 20 are carrying jewels, and another 20 are carrying silk." The emperor was delighted and excited. He thought, "So much! This is equal to my country's income for about 10 years. How marvelous it would be if I could have so many valuables!" and ordered the princess to marry Lute. Thus, in a flash, the hen-pecked Lute became an emperor's son-in-law. Using money from the nation's treasury, Lute later returned the money he had borrowed from the merchant.

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<sup>173</sup>[TE]: He Zhangxiao, 69; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Xiang Feng Brigade; [CT]: February of 1989

Another 2 months passed and no one had seen any pack horses approaching. All began to suspect Lute. The emperor wondered, "Who on earth is this stranger? Is he really a businessman? What kind of person would dare to cheat the emperor?" Then he secretly said to Princess Ase, "The background of your husband is cloudy. I'm worried you may have married an evil man. Trick him and get him to tell you the truth and then tell me. If he's evil I'll chop him to bits." Ase agreed and returned to her rooms, took out the finest liquor, and said, "This is my father's, the emperor's, reward to you." She said more sweet words and got Lute completely drunk. "Everyday I see my husband frowning and worried. I wonder what worries you? Perhaps you can tell me then maybe I can help you," she coaxed. Lute loved Princess Ase for she was intelligent and modest, so he told her his past history, knelt, and asked for punishment. The princess laughed and asked, "Are there really women in China who can bully men?" But very soon she sobered, for she knew what would happen to Lute if the emperor learned the truth. "You must leave here as soon as possible," she warned and related what her father had said. She readied the fastest horse in the world for Lute, who thanked her for saving him and reluctantly they parted. Two days later the princess told her father that her husband had disappeared and added that she didn't know where he was.

Mounted on the horse, Lute travelled quickly for 2 days. But, as he was crossing a high mountain, bandits stole his horse and all his clothing. Because of his nakedness he chose the most remote route and continued on. As he passed a small village he saw an old man plowing and he asked him for something to eat. "My breakfast was porridge and I was going to eat what remained for my dinner but, as you've not eaten for such a long time, I'll get it for you. Rest here," the old man said and went home to fetch the food. Lute thought the old man was kind and that it was unfair to interrupt him, so got up and began plowing. Suddenly the ox stopped. Lute tried to lift the plow, but couldn't, so began digging with his hands. He found that the plow tip was caught in a metal ring. He managed to pull the plow out and tried to remove the metal ring, but found that it was the handle of a large flat stone board. He pulled the stone board away and saw a tunnel with a ladder inside. He descended and, at the bottom, he found a copper door which he pushed open. He was amazed for the room was full of gold, silver, silk, and jewels. In the room there was also a bed with a small gold box on top. He opened it and found a golden ring inside. He happily took out the ring and rubbed a bit of dirt away. At once a loud sound rang out. A strong man knelt in front of him and said, "Master, what do you wish me to do?" Even more surprised, Lute finally asked, "Who are you?"

"I am a god king and I must serve whoever has this golden ring. Now you are my master. I will appear immediately to obey your command whenever you rub the ring."

"Good. Please send all these treasures to Princess Ase's imperial city."

The god king stood, went outside, and made a cowhide shelter where he had Lute wait. Then he ordered his servants to take the treasures outside and place them on the ground. At this moment the old man brought a jar of food, but when he saw the cowhide room he thought, "Oh, he is the emperor. I should kill my sole chicken for him." He turned to go home, but Lute saw him and called him inside the room. Lute understood what the old man intended to do and said, "The only food I want to eat is your porridge," and quickly ate it and then rewarded the old man with a jar of gold. Immense treasure had materialized and started off for Princess Ase's city.<sup>174</sup>

## **An Evil Whirlwind**

Long ago a poor hunter named Zhangmu lived with his mother in a forest. One day as Zhangmu was hunting he saw a black evil whirlwind. Recognizing its evil nature he notched an arrow and fired into its center. It immediately vanished. He went near and found a shoe and a few drops of blood, which led to a deep cave that seemed to have no entrance. He then returned home with the shoe. The next day he heard that the emperor's daughter had disappeared and her pictures were posted everywhere. Looking at one, he realized that the shoe he had found was hers. Immediately he went to the palace

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<sup>174</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

to see the emperor. The emperor looked at the shoe in surprise and said, "That shoe is my daughter's. How did you get it?" Zhangmu recounted his encounter with the evil whirlwind. The emperor sent two of his prime ministers with Zhangmu to search for her. When they reached the cave the two prime ministers urged each other to enter first, but neither was willing. Finally they forced Zhangmu into the cave and said, "When you find something we will pull you up with a rope," and lowered Zhangmu into the cave. It was pitch black. After some time he found the princess bound with rope. He untied her and led her to the tunnel's end. Zhangmu said, "I'll go first." But the emperor's daughter said that she wanted to go up first. Zhangmu said, "If you go up first, please give me one of your things." She gave him a silver bracelet and then was pulled up. The two generals dropped the rope down into the hole again, but Zhangmu wondered if the two didn't have some evil intention, so tied a large stone to the rope's end. The two generals hauled the stone up halfway then suddenly let go. Thinking that Zhangmu was now dead they led the princess back to her father hoping for a reward.

Zhangmu walked about inside the cave and suddenly saw the son of the Dragon King tied up. He released him and said, "Though I've untied you neither of us can get out of here." The Dragon King's son said, "Don't worry. I have an idea. Get on my back, but don't open your eyes until I tell you to." In the blink of an eye they were out of the cave. The Dragon King's son invited Zhangmu to his home. Zhangmu didn't want to go because he had not been to his own home for several months and wanted to see his mother. The Dragon King's son urged him and finally, Zhangmu agreed. The Dragon King's son ordered, "Climb on my back and close your eyes. Don't open them until I say so." In the twinkling of an eye they arrived at his home. The parents were delighted to see their son who pointed to Zhangmu and said, "This is my savior!" They all urged Zhangmu to stay several days.

Later the Dragon King's son told Zhangmu, "When you are about to leave, my parents will offer you gifts. Don't take anything but the vase." Later when Zhangmu was about to go the parents wanted to give him many gifts, but Zhangmu asked only for the vase. The Dragon King said, "You can ask the vase for whatever you want and it will provide it." Then the Dragon King's son escorted Zhangmu back to his own home. After an absence of several months Zhangmu was saddened to see that his mother had aged and was pale and weak. She said, "Recently, the emperor's daughter has been found and a large feast is being held in celebration." The next day Zhangmu asked the vase for a suit of shabby, dirty clothes and observed the feasting room from afar. He also saw two prime ministers wearing large peonies (badges of honor) pinned to their chests.

The next day he asked the vase to give him better clothing and went to observe the feast, which was still continuing as before, at a closer distance. The following day, both the son and mother asked the vase for suits of new and beautiful clothing and joined the feast. Zhangmu rolled up his sleeve as if by accident and displayed the bracelet to the princess. She saw this and told her father, who then called Zhangmu and asked him how he came to have it. Zhangmu recounted everything that had happened. At this moment the two evil prime ministers were enjoying themselves. After hearing the whole story the emperor was grateful and ordered the two prime ministers beheaded immediately. Then he permitted Zhangmu to marry his daughter and gave him the very important position of prime minister. Later, Zhangmu brought his mother into the palace.<sup>175</sup>

### **The Stick of Revenge**

Long ago there lived a man named Yihehuchu who was honest and tolerant. He worked for a landlord. One day, after working hard in the fields for a long time, Yihehuchu felt tired and rested. Suddenly, a beautiful bird flew to him, nodded its head, and said, "Hardworking elder brother, I'll give you a happiness basket. When you say 'I want flour' to it, you will have much flour in your flour cabinet and you need never suffer hunger again." Then the beautiful bird flew away leaving the basket behind. Yihehuchu thought that this was very odd. When he finished working he returned

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<sup>175</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

home with the basket and told his wife everything. She repeated the bird's formula and, it was true, their cabinet filled with flour. In less than 2 days this news spread from mouth to mouth. When the cruel and evil landlord heard it he stole the happiness basket and shouted, "I want flour!" But afterwards there was no flour in his cabinet only several toads. Infuriated, he tossed the basket in with the firewood.

Yihehuchu sadly thought about the happiness basket and the beautiful bird. Several days later while he was working at the landlord's mill he felt dizzy because he was so tired. Suddenly the beautiful bird flew in under the mill's eaves, nodded, and said, "Kindhearted elder brother, I'll give you a happiness tree and when you shake it, you will get much gold and silver. You will not live another day in poverty." Then the bird flew away. Yihehuchu returned home with the tree which his wife shook. It was true. Much gold and silver did fall from the tree. After a couple of days the landlord learned of this and stole the tree. But when he shook the tree, countless beetles appeared. Furious, the landlord tossed the tree into the firewood shed.

Because Yihehuchu had lost two treasures he fell ill. One morning he opened the window and looked outside. Suddenly the beautiful bird flew inside, nodded, and said, "Honest elder brother, I'll give you a stick of revenge. If you shout, 'I want revenge!' it will seek revenge for you and you will not suffer injustice again." Afterwards, Yihehuchu fully recovered from his illness, took the stick, and went to the landlord's home where he shouted loudly, "Landlord, return my two treasures. If you don't, I'll be rude." The landlord laughed wildly, "Villain, you come here and dare be insane. Come, take this, you swindler!" But just then Yihehuchu shouted, "I want revenge!" and in a flash, the stick began beating the landlord who was struck to the ground with a blackened nose and swollen face. Luckily, servants saved him or else he would have died. Afterwards, Yihehuchu took the stick of revenge and went to the landlord's firewood pile and took the happiness basket and tree back to his home.<sup>176</sup>

### **The Serpent's Cure**

Long ago an old man lived on a mountain with two sons and a daughter. He was a skilled carpenter and spent most days away from home. One year he fell ill, became weaker and weaker, and was unable to work. He sighed to his two sons, "You are now adults, but the only thing I have is 40 coins. Each of you take 20 and go out and learn something and then return. But if you learn nothing, don't come back." The sister stayed home to take care of her father while the two brothers left.

Three years later, the elder son returned with much gold, silver, and other treasures. His father and sister greeted him delightedly. Later the young son came home empty-handed. The father saw him, but ignored him while the elder son grasped a big stick and wanted to chase him away. The sister led him into the kitchen, gave him food, and advised, "Brother, it's not good for you to stay here. Go out, earn some money, and then return. Everything will be fine." The younger son left and later came to an immense dark forest. An old white-bearded man suddenly appeared and said, "You are a fool, boy. It's dangerous here, how can you live? There are huge serpents here, aren't you afraid?" But the younger son didn't leave and stayed. At midnight, he heard some strange sounds, so got up and checked. He found the neck of a huge serpent caught under a stone. The serpent opened its mouth and something dropped down. The serpent said, "Take this and you'll be able to cure any disease with it," and then it died. The boy picked up the white round shiny thing and, the next morning, started out again. At mid-day he sat under a big tree to rest. In the distance came a little boy who also sat under the tree. Second Brother saw that the boy was very unhappy and asked why. He explained that his mother had been ill a long time, no treatment had helped, and he was looking for a doctor. Second Brother told him that he could treat his mother. The little boy led him to his family which was rich. The son put the serpent's treasure on the mother's forehead and she was immediately well. As

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<sup>176</sup>[TEs]: Renchen and Danzeng; [AWT]: Minhe County; [CLR]: Yang Shoulu; [CET]: Mao Huiqing

a reward the family gave him 1,000 *liang* of silver. The son happily started back to his home with the silver. When he got home he found that his brother had spent all the money he had earned and the whole family was living in very difficult circumstances. The younger son then offered all his money to the family and they lived together very happily.<sup>177</sup>

### Youngest Brother Returns Favors

Long ago a family of four brothers lived on a high mountain in Henan County (Qinghai). The parents had died earlier explaining why the four lived together. Later, Oldest Brother Li Jin and Second Brother Li Yin moved away leaving Third Brother Li Hai and Youngest Brother Li Shan at home. Li Jin raised chickens, Li Yin raised sheep, Li Hai had an orchard, and Youngest Brother went to school as his father's last dying words had directed. Third Brother treated Youngest Brother badly, often beating him and not giving him enough to eat because he studied and did little work. Even so Li Shan didn't change his mind about studying and went to school daily and studied well. He also went up mountains to chop firewood which he later sold so he could have some money to pay for school expenses.

Several years later the emperor had a notice posted which said that those who wished should gather at an examination site and take an exam. The one with the highest marks could then marry the emperor's daughter. When Li Shan knew of this he was first very excited, but quickly became depressed because he had no money for travelling expenses. Finally he decided to ask Oldest Brother to kill some chickens, sell them, and lend him the money. Oldest Brother coldly ignored him for a while then said, "It's none of my business, I won't kill chickens." Greatly embarrassed, Youngest Brother then went to Third Brother and asked that he sell some pears and lend him the money. Third Brother treated him very coldly also and finally said, "On cloudy days, don't pick pears." Li Shan was very shamed by this, so wanted to give up his idea. But he thought for a long time and finally decided to try at Second Brother's home. To his surprise, Second Brother and his wife warmly said, "It's very important for you to take the examination. Father told us while he was still living that we should support you." Second Brother then sold three of his sheep and gave the money to Youngest Brother for travel expenditures.

Li Shan went to the capital and took the exam. He got the highest marks and was given a very important official position and the emperor's daughter in marriage. Very soon thereafter, he inherited the emperor's position. This news quickly spread over the country. Li Jin and Li Hai heard it and happily mounted their horses and set off to see Li Shan. Li Shan had learned that they were coming, so he wrote on large pieces of white paper: "No business, one shouldn't kill chickens. Cloudy day, don't pick pears." Many squeezed in front of the paper to read it, but couldn't understand what it meant, so said, "Our new emperor's literary talent is really high." Among the crowd there were only two men who understood the real meaning and they quickly fled—the two brothers.

Later that year Henan County had a drought and many people starved. Life was very difficult. Li Shan ordered his soldiers to look for Second Brother and his sister-in-law. The soldiers found them and Li Shan then gave Second Brother a very important official position and the two lived happily together. But the other two brothers became poorer and finally died of starvation.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>[TE]: Ma Fuwen; [AWT]: Xiakou Brigade, Xiakou Commune; [CLR]: Ma Xinhua; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>178</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: December 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## Greedy Elder Brother

Long ago two brothers lived together. Elder Brother married and became master of the family. He was adept at doing business and cheating others and became wealthy in a short time. He accumulated so much property and wealth that it was impossible to spend it all on food. Meanwhile, Younger Brother worked very hard every day in the fields. Elder Brother mistreated his younger brother by saying nasty things to him and doing everything he could think of to make him leave their home. Finally, Younger Brother could no longer tolerate living with his older brother and agreed to leave and live alone. Elder Brother gave him nothing when he left except an ax and a rope. Younger Brother was then forced to go into the mountains to cut and sell firewood. Everyday as he returned from collecting firewood he stopped by a large stone and rested his firewood there.

One day as he was resting on the stone the stone suddenly said, "Young man! Why do you always squash me with your firewood? Why are you always unhappy?" Younger Brother told the stone his past, how Elder Brother had mistreated him, and how he had come to be a firewood cutter. The stone said, "Stick your hand into my mouth and take a handful of gold." The stone opened its mouth and Young Brother took a handful and happily returned home. Using the gold he built a new house and some furniture and bought wheat and a cow.

Older Brother saw Younger Brother's life suddenly improve and grew jealous. Pretending friendliness, he visited him and then using honeyed words, asked him how he had become rich. Younger Brother told Older Brother everything. Older Brother rushed back home, took an ax and a rope, and went into the mountains to cut firewood. After cutting a bundle, he followed the route his brother had taken every day and came to the large stone. He put the firewood on the large stone, sat on the stone, and then began sighing loudly. Suddenly the stone said, "Hey! Just a few days ago you took a handful of gold. This should be quite enough for you. Why do you come here and sigh?" Older Brother said, "I wasn't that man, but my experience was the same. My older brother treated me very badly," then he repeated what Younger Brother had earlier told the stone. The stone answered, "Since you are so poor too, stick your hand into my mouth and take a handful of gold." Older Brother was very excited and wanted to bring all the gold inside the stone back home. As soon as the stone opened its mouth, he thrust both his hands into the open stone. Immediately the stone closed and Older Brother was never able to remove his hands.<sup>179</sup>

## Three Pieces of Sincere Advice

Long ago, a hunter caught a little bird. As he was about to wring its neck the bird pleaded, "Oh, please wait a moment. I'm so tiny, how much flesh could I have? Free me and I'll reward you with three pieces of advice." Surprised, the hunter said, "Such a small bird wants to teach me?! OK little bird, give me your advice. So long as what you say has a little truth, I'll set you free." "Things in the past, whether good or bad, have all gone, so don't regret the past," the bird said. The hunter agreed, "Of course, one shouldn't." The little bird continued, "Things that you've done you can't erase and do again, so don't be filled with regret." The hunter agreed, "That's right." The little bird went on, "Whatever you've heard, consider carefully. Never believe in wonders." The hunter laughed, agreed, and thought that though the little bird's advice was very simple, it was profound and let the bird fly away. The little bird flew a short distance away then perched in a tall tree, turned, and laughed at the hunter: "Hunter, you are foolish. You could make much money with me! There is a pearl inside my stomach as big as an egg." Immediately remorseful, the hunter said, "Lovely little bird, please come to me. I'll make a golden home with my own hands for you. Whatever you want, I'll give you double. Just come back..." But the little bird smiled and flew away. The hunter always regretted his lost chance when he thought about the pearl. He never realized the little bird's stomach

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<sup>179</sup>[CLR]: Qin Zhimei; [CT]: 1988; [AWT]: Guanting; [T]: Hu Jun

could not hold an egg-sized pearl.<sup>180</sup>

### To Curse One's Self

Once a little girl wept, "Grandmother, my cornbread bun fell into the well." The old lady went to the well, looked inside, and found someone staring up at her from the bottom. She angrily cursed the old well woman, "Oh! you are damnable. I've not been impolite to you. Why did you snatch my granddaughter's steamed bun? For shame!" The old lady in the well bottom returned her scolding. The old lady was about to curse again, but her granddaughter said, "Grandma, you shouldn't curse yourself again. The old lady in the well is you!"<sup>181</sup>

### A Lama and an Old Lady

One day outside a village a lama sauntered by holding prayer beads. He gazed about and saw an old lady cleaning weeds in a field, went over, and paced along a ridge. The old lady ignored him. The lama walked over and said, "Old biddy, you've pulled weeds for half a day. God has commanded me to ask you how many weeds have you pulled up?" The old lady was very angry and said, "Lord lama, I'm very old and useless and I don't remember." Thinking she was easy prey he said, "Well, today I pardon you, but tomorrow, you must remember this number," then left triumphantly. The old lady worriedly returned home and was so distressed that she didn't eat. Her son noticed and asked, "Mother, what happened? Tell me and maybe I can share the worry." The old lady told him everything. The son said, "Mother, don't worry. I have a good way to deal with the lama."

The next day the old lady went to the field and, while weeding, the lama came again and said, "Old biddy, do you remember the number?" Just then the old lady's son, who had been hiding under a basket, appeared and said, "Hey, lama, I want to know how many steps it took you to come here from the temple?" The lama was dumbfounded, unable to answer, and went away in shame and anger. From that time on, the lama nursed a hatred for all the old lady's family. Several days later the lama sauntered by the old lady's home and noticed that no one was in the courtyard. Then a shitting pig came out from the pigsty. The lama contrived a crafty plot. Dizzy with assured success he left and, on his way, met the old lady and her son. "Today Bodhisattva Guanyin passed by our village and saw a lot of pig shit in your courtyard. She asked me to tell you to clean it up by tomorrow, otherwise disaster will befall you." The old lady was frightened and at a loss. But her son said with a smile, "Mother, don't worry. I have a good idea."

The next day at breakfast time the lama entered the old lady's courtyard, saw much more pig excrement, and was furious. Just at that moment, the old lady said, "Lama, don't be upset. The pig's shit is very sweet," and tasted the "shit" with her tongue. Seeing this, the lama salivated, but was not convinced enough to taste it. But finally, afraid of missing something good to eat, he tasted it and said, "It is very sweet. Really, it is very appetizing!" The "shit" was really what the old lady had made from honey, brown sugar, and fried noodles. The lama considered this "shit" genuine and, in short order, finished it all. "Old biddy, let the pig come out here because I want to eat more pig shit," he said and the old lady drove it out from the pigsty and beat it until it shit. The lama gobbled some up then spit what he hadn't swallowed out. "It has a bad smell, a very bad smell," he said angrily. "Oh my mother forgot to tell you that the pig's shit must be stung by a bee and then it will be very sweet," the son said, pointing to a honeycomb in a courtyard corner. "Just before, the shit you ate had been stung by a bee, so it was very sweet." Hearing this the lama walked to the honeycomb. The bees sensed he was a stranger, so flew out and stung him. The lama's bald pate was soon swollen and in great pain he shouted, "Beat! Beat! Quickly beat!" The old lady's son took a stick and beat the

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<sup>180</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>181</sup>[TE]: Lala Yuehua; [CLR]: Yang Shoulu; [AWT]: Minhe County; [CET]: Mao Huiqing



lama's head. But still more bees stung his head. Because the lama felt even more pain he was at a complete loss and shouted, "Beat! Quickly beat! Do whatever it takes! Beat it to death!" Thereupon the son took an iron rake and struck the lama. Though the lama was struck to the ground, he still hummed, "Beat it to death! Beat it to death!..."<sup>182</sup>

### The Broken Jar

Long ago a farmer plowed at a mountain foot. At lunchtime, his wife brought food in a clay jar. After eating he put the jar by the field and continued plowing. When the sun set he was about to return home, picked up the jar, and found to his surprise that the leftover food in the jar had disappeared. But thinking he had made some mistake he quickly forgot about it. However, after this happened several time he hid and watched the jar to see what would happen. After a while a fox came, looked around, didn't see anyone nearby, stuck his head into the jar, and began to eat. Stealthily, the farmer picked up his plow, carefully approached the jar, and struck the fox with the plow. Terrified, the fox raced away.

Much later in a village far from where the farmer lived, a rich man's daughter was grasped by a fox spirit. The *yinyang* and *fashi* came to chant incantations but, rather than helping, the illness steadily worsened. One day, the fox spirit said to the girl, "I'm not afraid of anything except something that happened some years ago. I was stealing food out of a jar when a farmer came and struck me with his plow. Even today, when I think about this I can't help but tremble in fear." The daughter told her father this and he then very much wanted to find this man whom the fox spirit feared. But no one knew the man's name or his village. A short time later, as one of the rich man's servants was returning home, he met a man and they began chatting. The servant told the man about the ill girl and what the fox spirit had said. "This is exactly what happened to me 3 years ago. Is this the same fox that I chased away from here?" the man wondered.

The servant was surprised, returned, and reported this to his master. Delighted, the rich man ordered the servant to immediately ready a horse, find, and courteously invite the farmer to come and help. The servant soon brought the farmer back. After hearing what the rich man had to say, the farmer laughed and said, "This really did happen in the past, but now that the fox has become a spirit he wouldn't be afraid of me, a simple peasant." But the rich man's family members all urged him to stay, so the farmer dressed exactly as at the time when he had struck the fox. Holding a plow, he entered the room where the girl was, slammed the plow to the floor, and shouted, "I have looked for you every day and now I've found you! Let's see where you'll go!" The fox was heard weeping and the farmer's voice became louder and more fierce. Then the sound of the fox's weeping seemed to weaken and disappear into the distance. Afterwards, this area became very secure.<sup>183</sup>

### The Trickster

A rich man hired a peasant to work for him for 1 month and promised to pay 200 coins. When the peasant finished this period of work he asked for his pay. The rich man said, "First you must go to the city and get two things for me otherwise I won't pay you anything." But the two things he asked for were impossible to find anywhere in the world and, in this way, the rich man cheated many people.

One time, a boy came looking for a job. The rich man said, as usual, that when the boy finished 1 month's work, he would pay him 200 coins. When the boy finished 1 month of work the rich man said, "You must first go to market and get two things for me. One is 'ah' and the other is 'wa.' If you don't, I won't pay you anything." The little boy pondered, went to market, and returned with

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<sup>182</sup>[TE]: Xinsi Yueyua; [CLR]: Li Xia; [AWT]: Minhe County; [CET]: Mao Huiqing

<sup>183</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

two jars. He said, "Now I've brought the two things you requested. The only thing you need to do is stick your hand into the jars and take them out." The rich man was surprised, but thrust a hand into one jar. Suddenly he jumped back with his hand hanging down and shouted, "Ah!" On the end of his hand was a stinging centipede. The little boy began to laugh and said, "The other jar is filled with 'wa.' Please take it, too." This jar was filled with scorpions, but the rich man didn't dare put his hand inside and finally was forced to pay the little boy who happily returned home.<sup>184</sup>

### The Ghost

Some time ago a scholar visited his friend who offered him good food and liquor. That night the friend wanted the scholar to stay at his home, but the scholar insisted he should return to his own home. The friend warned, "There is a ghost in the valley that attacks people at night. No one dares go there." The scholar refused to listen and left. When he reached the valley he saw a large black shadow coming towards him, blocking his path. Suddenly recovering from his drunkenness he screamed out, "Mother!" for it really was a ghost. The ghost lunged and caught him, cackling in the darkness as it beat him. Suddenly the scholar gave the ghost a hard bite on his left hand. The ghost screamed in pain and gave the scholar a terrible blow to the temple. The scholar lost consciousness and sank to the earth.

The next day his family found him and carried him home. They also discovered that the scholar's watch and 120 *yuan* the friend had returned had disappeared. News about the scholar meeting the ghost spread throughout the village. The scholar's wife and mother were terrified and ran to the village shrine where they lit lamps and burned incense the entire day. By coincidence, on their way home, they met an old Taoist priest who said he was travelling all over the world eliminating evil ghosts. The two invited him to the scholar's home where he spent the night. The next morning he sat on the *kang* and ate delicious food the wife and mother prepared. When he finished eating and drinking it was noon. He wiped his mouth and stood in the courtyard wearing his large-sleeved clothing and holding a drum. He began to beat the drum while shouting, murmuring, and pointing to the sky and earth. It seemed he was searching for the ghost. At this moment the scholar, who was lying unconscious in bed awoke, slowly got up, and observed the Taoist. Suddenly he became very happy, called his wife who was in the kitchen and told her to ask the brigade director to come. The director, bringing several policemen, came to their home. The policeman held up the Taoist's hand, unwrapped a bandage, inspected the wound, and found two deep teeth marks.

This so-called Taoist was a prison fugitive who had come to these remote areas because notices of his escape had filled all the cities and many people were searching for him. He dressed as a ghost at night and, during the day, dressed as a Taoist in order to cheat local people. The police also found the scholar's missing watch on the Taoist's wrist. In his pockets was the missing 120 *yuan*. They also found money, bicycles, clothing, good food, and good liquor in the Taoist's home. The police scolded him, handcuffed him, and took him to court to await punishment.<sup>185</sup>

### The Wolf, Rabbit, and Crow

One day a long time ago a wolf, rabbit, and crow met on the road. They were all looking for food, but could find nothing. They walked on and finally could barely move because of hunger. At this moment, a lama came slowly walking by with a large pack on his back. He seemed near exhaustion. The three animals guessed that he had something good inside his pack. Suddenly the rabbit had an idea and said, "I'll lure him away while you two snatch the pack and run in the opposite direction."

The rabbit limped in front of the lama, who thought the rabbit was easy prey and would make a

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<sup>184</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>185</sup>[CLR]: La Xuelian; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

delicious meal. He raced after the rabbit, who stayed within several steps of the lama. The lama finally put his pack down so he could run faster. The two ran on with the lama right behind the rabbit. After some time, the rabbit disappeared. The lama was very disappointed and went back to his pack, but it had also disappeared making the lama all the more despondent.

The rabbit, crow, and wolf quickly opened the pack in the place where they had taken it. A large piece of bread, some meat, a pair of shoes, and a rope were inside. The rabbit said to the wolf, "You take this pair of shoes. When you go to a sheepfold to steal sheep, your steps won't be heard and therefore, you will be safe." He said to the crow, "Take this rope, tie it around your neck, perch on the edge of a house, and caw. People will think that you are a god. They'll put sacrifices on a table for you to eat." Finally he took out the bread and meat and said to the other two, "The two most valuable things have gone to the two of you. These little things should now be mine." Although the wolf and crow were very hungry, they were quite satisfied with what they had received and said nothing.

Three days later the rabbit had finished all the bread and leisurely lay on a large flat stone. But things were not so comfortable for the wolf. Because of the shoes he was not able to move easily. Some men caught him and gave him a terrible beating. Things also had gone no better for the crow. He had put the rope around his neck and flown to a roof where he had cawed loudly. Thinking he was the vengeful ghost of a suicide because of the rope around his neck, they had chased him away. The two thus developed a terrible animosity toward the rabbit.

At this moment, they were looking for the rabbit to take revenge. The rabbit, relaxing on the flat stone, saw the two approaching and immediately understood their intentions. He rubbed his mouth against the stone, and when the crow and wolf saw the rabbit's bloody mouth, they forgot about taking revenge. Instead, they told him their own unfortunate experiences and asked the rabbit what had happened to him. The rabbit said these things had happened because the lama had chanted evil incantations. After this, the rabbit came to have three lips.<sup>186</sup>

## Story of the Wolf and Fox

Long ago a wolf made friends with a fox. Each tried to outdo the other in hatching cunning and clever ideas. The wolf saw that the fox's honeyed tongue could cheat animals by holding their attention. For his part, the fox recognized that the wolf was strong and evil-hearted. Other animals would not bully him if the wolf was his friend. In this frame of mind, the two often did things on their own and, if they met something good, would enjoy it alone. When faced with difficulties, each asked the other for help.

Once the wolf was unable to find food for several days. He said to the fox, "Can't you find some food for me? I'm so hungry and weak that I can't move." The fox replied, "I'll try. If I find some, I'll bring it to you." The fox went up and down the mountains and, in time, he found a dead rabbit. The fox thought, "How lucky I am today! I'm so hungry, where is there time to care for others? It serves the wolf right to die," and gobbled down the rabbit. Then he felt remorseful, thinking he should have at least left the tail for the wolf because, if the wolf smelled the rabbit on his breath, there might be some problem. He thought, "Well, it doesn't matter. Even though we've known each other a long time, he never really helped me." When the fox found the wolf he exhaled. The wolf sniffed and angrily said, "Aha, you have an evil heart! You found food and ate it by yourself, but you still say that you were looking for food for me! Wait and see...."

The fox smiled and said, "What's the reason to be so angry? I'll tell you how you can eat some big fish. Today I had an idea, so I went to the Yellow River, made a hole in the ice with a stone, stuck my tail into the water, and caught several big fish. I thought you could do this too, so I ate the fish." As soon as the famished wolf heard this he raced to the Yellow River, made a hole in the ice, and stuck his tail into the frigid water. After a while he removed his tail, looked at it, and saw that it was

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<sup>186</sup>[CLR]: Wang Shenlen; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

frozen and that he had not caught any fish with it. He thought, "This time I'll wait longer and maybe I'll catch some." He put his tail into the water again and waited from sunrise to sunset. Then he tried to pull his tail out. It felt very heavy which pleased him. He thought, "Ha, there must be many fish here. I'll leave it in longer and then there will be even more fish."

Darkness swiftly fell and it was time for people to fetch water. The wolf saw people in the distance. He was frightened and wanted to escape, but could hardly move his tail. The people saw a wolf scratching on the ice and picked up stones and sticks. The wolf tried his best to pull out his tail, but he could not. Seeing the people come nearer and nearer he realized that he had been tricked by the fox. Throwing caution to the winds, he exerted all his effort and just managed to pull his tail from the ice and fled to the mountains. Afterwards, the wolf's tail has always hung down.<sup>187</sup>

### **The Frog, Crow, and Magpie**

Long ago the frog, crow, and magpie were good friends. One day the three met and decided to become sworn brothers. But a problem arose in choosing the eldest, most respected brother. At last the magpie said, "Let's see who can count the fastest from one to ten. He will be Eldest Brother. What do you think?" The other two agreed. The crow counted, "Gua...gua..." as quickly as he could. The magpie counted next, "Cha...cha..." They were both very proud of themselves. Each thought, "I must be Eldest Brother because how can that clumsy frog count as quickly as I?!" But the frog only said, "Two times five equals ten."

Thus the frog became Eldest Brother, the magpie became Second Brother, and the crow was Third Brother. Eldest Brother Frog said, "We've become brothers, so we should celebrate." Magpie said, "Let's begin with Eldest Brother." Frog snapped, "How is it that the older brother should invite the younger brothers to eat?! Where is there such a rule?! Younger brothers should begin. Crow should first offer us a feast." The other two agreed.

The next morning the frog and magpie went to the crow's home which was in a tall tree. Of course the frog couldn't climb up and had to sit underneath. The crow prepared a very good breakfast. Before eating, the crow and magpie teased, "Eldest Brother, why don't you climb up?" The frog answered, "To sit here is much better than being where the two of you are." The other two laughed and said, "Sorry, we are beginning now." They hurriedly began eating, but in striving to get the best portions of the food, some dropped to the frog under the tree. The frog briskly jumped and caught this in his mouth and, in fact, the two birds were unable to reach much at all. In the end, the crow and magpie felt hungry, but the frog ate his fill. After finishing he said, "Thank you Magpie," and then went home and slept. The other two had to go out and look for food.

The next day the frog and crow went to the magpie's home in the top of a tall tree. The frog sat underneath, waiting for food to drop down. The other two in the tree strove to eat as much as possible in order to make up for the previous day's loss. But, just as the day before, the two birds had to go out and look for more to eat while the frog slept soundly.

The next day it was the frog's turn to host a banquet. The magpie and crow came very early to his home which was inside a pool. The two fixed their eyes on the water and waited the whole morning without eating or drinking. At midday they angrily shouted. After a while the frog appeared at the water surface and snapped, "Why are you shouting?! Don't you know I'm preparing a very wonderful meal?! Wait longer if you want to eat!" The two birds endured hunger and thirst and waited until dusk, but still the frog did not reappear and the two had to look for some food, having waited the entire day in vain. People say that this day was Dragon Boat Festival (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month) and every year on this day, people can't hear the sound of any frog. Also, after this incident, all the birds came to dislike the frog.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>[CLR]: Wang Shulan; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988 [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>188</sup>[TE]: Lu Laohan, 83; [AWT]: Guanting Town; [CLR]: Lu Chengbao; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

## Missing the Chance

In Hongnai Family Village there once lived a powerful *yinyang*. One day he divined with his fingers and predicted, "I'll die very soon. After I die, my coffin should not be taken out until a snake beats a drum. And don't bury my coffin until you see a donkey riding a man." Soon he did die. His relatives prepared his coffin and everything else and all gathered, waiting for a snake to beat a drum. Several days passed, but nothing like this happened. Finally one man said, "Oh, let's just go. How can a snake beat a drum? That *yinyang* was just telling some story." They took the coffin out, but just as they left the house, a few meters away, people found that a snake was beating a drum.

A *fashi*, who beats a drum during religious rituals, was sleeping by a neighbor's gate, his drum resting on the ground. An eagle with a snake in its beak was flying around the area and, by accident, the snake dropped from the eagle's mouth and fell to the earth near the drum. The snake was in pain and thrashed its tail, beating the drum. People regretted missing the exact time for taking the coffin out.

Time passed and they still trudged on with the coffin, but no one saw a donkey riding a person. After marching halfway up a mountain a man said, "This *yinyang* was lying, cheating us. How can a donkey ride a man? Let's bury him here." The others were somewhat tired, so they agreed. After the burial they were about to leave when a boy carrying a baby donkey on his back descended the high mountain. He was from Xiangyan Village. With some other boys he had been herding when a donkey gave birth. The baby donkey couldn't move, so they decided to carry it back home. The people felt sorrowful for missing the exact burial place.

For a long time a very powerful *yinyang* had lived in the Wang Family Village, but after this there were no more powerful *yinyang* there. This was because they missed the exact place of burial and the exact time for taking out the coffin.<sup>189</sup>

## Liu Wu Marries Red Flower

In the Zhang Family Village a man named Zhang Yuanwai lived with his three daughters. Eldest Daughter's name was Golden Flower, Second Daughter was Silver Flower, and Youngest Daughter was known as Red Flower. Zhang Yuanwai's wife had been dead for a long time. The three daughters were beautiful, kindhearted, and dutiful and their life was a happy one. Golden Flower and Silver Flower gradually matured and married, but Zhang Yuanwai thought that because he had no son, he ought to keep Red Flower in the family for the time being. Many matchmakers acted on behalf of Red Flower, but none were successful. Zhang Yuanwai was very determined to find a good son-in-law so that when he was old he could live a happy life.

A river flowed between Zhang and Li Villages. In Li Village there lived a lad named Liu Wu. He was an orphan and, although he was kind, honest, and brave, he was not intelligent. He was 25 and unmarried. One day Liu Wu happened to pass by Zhang Village, met Red Flower, and was suddenly smitten by her beauty. When he returned home, he suffered from lovesickness. After several days, this was discovered by a kind man known as Uncle Li, who asked, "What's wrong?" Liu Wu replied "If I had a beautiful wife like Red Flower, it would be wonderful! I want to marry her." Uncle Li sympathetically said, "Child, don't worry about marrying Red Flower. Tomorrow go with me to Zhang Yuanwai's home. I'll be your matchmaker." This delighted Liu Wu. All that night the two prepared gifts. The next day, with the gifts, they set off for Zhang Yuanwai's home. On the way they found many people cautiously crossing a single-plank bridge. Uncle Li said, "Single-plank bridge, single-plank bridge, passing is difficult!" Liu Wu thought that this remark was interesting and committed it to memory. Later they passed near a large elm and met several businessmen driving donkeys loaded with firewood. As they passed by the elm the firewood tumbled from the donkeys'

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<sup>189</sup>[TE]: He Zhongxiao, 69; [CLR]/[MET]: Hu Jun; [AWT]: Xiang Feng Brigade, Pari; [CT]: February of 1989

backs. The businessmen tried to tie up the firewood, failed, and bustled about. Uncle Li shouted, "To the east is a heap, to the west is a heap. Tie them up in a bundle and they won't come loose!" The businessmen followed Uncle Li's suggestion which worked well. Satisfied, they went on. Liu Wu also remembered these words. A bit later, Liu Wu and Uncle Li passed by a small village and met several persons who were very politely bidding a rich man farewell: "Goodbye! Goodbye! At the *yamen* (government office) we will meet again!" Liu Wu also remembered this. They soon reached Zhang Yuanwai's home and explained why they had come. Zhang Yuanwai warmly received them. His first impression of Liu Wu was favorable, but he decided to test him.

At the ensuing feast Zhang Yuanwai told a servant to give Liu Wu only one chopstick. Liu Wu said, "Single-plank bridge, single-plank bridge! Passing is difficult!" The master at once gave Liu Wu another chopstick. As they ate and chatted Liu Wu noticed several servants loitering to the east and west sides of the courtyard. Liu Wu looked at them and shouted, "To the east is a heap, to the west is a heap. Tie them in a bundle, then they won't get loose!" Zhang Yuanwai was delighted with this comment and praised Liu Wu for being witty and learned. The servants at once set about doing the work that they were responsible for. When Liu Wu and Uncle Li were about to return home, Liu Wu said, "Goodbye! Goodbye! At the *yamen* we will meet again!" Zhang Yuanwai felt Liu Wu was talented, learned, and would make a good son-in-law. He gave permission for him to marry his daughter.<sup>190</sup>

### Little Green Stone

Long ago a young hunter went into the mountains every day to hunt. One day he saw a huge eagle with a variegated snake in its beak flying in the sky. Feeling great pity for the snake he took out his bow and shot an arrow at the eagle. The arrow killed the great eagle which dropped the snake. As he walked near it, it became a beautiful girl who said, "I'm the daughter of the Dragon King and I'm very grateful to you. Every day I go into the water to play, but today, I came out and that enormous eagle picked me up in his beak. If you had not helped me I would have died. My father will surely reward you with many gifts, but don't take any treasures or pearls. Take only the little green stone in the palace. If you put this stone in your mouth, you will be able to understand the language of the birds and, knowing this, you will be able to avoid disaster and trouble. But never tell other people. If you do, you will become a large black stone." She turned once more into a beautiful variegated snake and slithered into the river.

The next day an old kind-looking man visited the young hunter. He said that he was the Dragon King and invited him to Dragon Palace to thank him for saving his daughter. The Dragon King led him to Ocean Palace where a delicious banquet was held in his honor. Afterwards, the Dragon King led the hunter throughout his palace and told him to choose whatever he wanted. There were many treasures he had never seen. Finally he chose the little green stone. The Dragon King laughed and said, "If you put this little green stone in your mouth, you will understand what birds say. You will avoid many troubles and disasters. But never tell others. If you do, you will become a big black stone," and then he escorted the young hunter out of the palace.

With this little green stone the hunter avoided many troubles and helped fellow villagers. One morning, as he was entering the forest to hunt, he heard some little birds outside his courtyard chattering. He put the little stone in his mouth and heard a bird say, "Let's go find food because it will hail this afternoon and then we won't find anything." The hunter then hunted near his home and, that afternoon, there was a fierce hailstorm followed by torrential rain. The next morning dawned clear and he went out and prepared to enter the forest to hunt, but noticed several birds by the road chattering. Once more he put the little stone in his mouth and heard the birds saying, "Inside the forest a man is dying from having fallen down the mountain. He will surely die unless someone goes to save him." The hunter returned to his village and with other villagers found the dying man and

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<sup>190</sup>[AWT]: Minhe County; [TE]: Yang Changmei; [CLR]: Wang Huaxian; [CET]: Mao Huiqing

saved him. This sort of thing happened repeatedly.

Some days later he went into the forest to hunt and saw several crows perched on a tall tree, cawing. They seemed agitated, so he quickly popped the stone into his mouth and listened. One crow said to another, "Let's leave immediately. The mountain will soon collapse and the earth will crack open. We will not be able to escape." This terribly worried the hunter who rushed back and warned all the villagers, "Leave here as soon as possible, otherwise disaster will strike at once and no one will be able to escape." But no one believed him. Some said, "This is our beautiful land which has our industry, sweat, and blood. Why do you say this? What proof do you have? Our ancestral graves are here!" Still others said, "He is lying. Let's beat this foolish man!" The young hunter became more and more agitated, but could not persuade the villagers, his parents, and relatives except by telling the story of how he saved the variegated snake, got the little green stone, could understand the language of the birds, and also told why he had been reluctant to tell them the truth about the stone. No sooner had he finished than he became a large black stone. People were filled with remorse. They now believed him and were very sorry that they had not listened to him. With tear-filled eyes old and young left the beautiful land. Just as they came out of the village they turned, but could see no sign of the village. Everything had been covered by the mountain's collapse. The only thing clearly visible was the large standing black stone.

Later, the people lived in another place and built new homes and cultivated new fields, but never forgot the young hunter. More and more people saved money to build a very large temple to commemorate him. After the temple was completed a large meeting was held and the large black stone was brought into the temple. People continually lit lamps, burnt incense, and kowtowed to the stone. Even now, people are still concerned about the young hunter.<sup>191</sup>

### **Birdman**

Long ago a man named Gong Zhizhang understood every bird language. One snowy day he had nothing to do, so was sleeping on his warm *kang*. A crow suddenly flew over, lit on his courtyard wall, and hurriedly cawed: "Gong Zhizhang, Gong Zhizhang! A dead sheep's behind the mountain. You eat the meat and I'll eat the intestines." Gong Zhizhang woke up, saw the crow, and said, "I understand." Then the crow flew away. The man put on a warm jacket, went behind the mountain and indeed, there was a sheep, dead from the cold. Gong carried it back home and began butchering. He skinned it, slit open its belly, and then thought it was a pity not to eat the intestines, so washed them carefully, cooked them with the meat, and ate them. After eating, he continued his interrupted sleep. At this moment the crow flew to his home hoping for a reward. He stood on the courtyard wall and saw Gong Zhizhang sleeping and the mutton and intestines all finished. The crow furiously thought, "I told him about the dead sheep. He shouldn't have forgotten me. He didn't leave me even a bit of intestines. Let me teach him a lesson."

The next day snow still fell and Gong Zhizhang continued sleeping. The crow came, stood on the wall, and cawed out, "Gong Zhizhang, Gong Zhizhang! Behind the mountain lies a dead sheep. You eat the meat and I'll eat the intestines." Gong Zhizhang put on his warm coat, went behind the mountain, and was shocked because there was no sheep, but a man frozen stiff. He rushed home and worried the whole day. The next day the crow flew to the county magistrate's office, beat the drum in front of the office used by supplicants to announce their arrival, and shouted, "Wrong! Injustice!" then accused Gong Zhizhang of having killed the man. The county magistrate ordered two men to fetch Gong Zhizhang. They soon returned with him and the magistrate asked, "Why do you kill people?" Gong answered, "I have never killed anyone." "If you didn't kill that man behind the mountain how do you explain your footprints there?" the magistrate asked. "The day before yesterday a crow came and said there was a dead sheep behind the mountain and I should eat the meat and he

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<sup>191</sup>[TE]: Bai Wu Yue Hua, 70; [AWT]: Guanting; [CLR]: Zhang Wonghua; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

would eat the intestines. But I thought it was a pity not to eat the intestines myself, so I cooked and ate them. Yesterday the crow came and called to me again and I went behind the mountain and found a dead person. I was frightened and ran back home. How could I kill a person? Maybe this is all because the crow was angry and wanted to wrongly implicate me in the death."

The county magistrate was surprised at hearing this story and asked, "Can you really understand the language of birds?" Gong Zhizhang replied that he could. "Good. Let's test you," the magistrate said and ordered his men to sprinkle salt water on grain and put it outside and wait for birds to come. After a while a flock of swallows swooped down by the grain and began to eat it, chattering. At this moment, the county magistrate asked Gong, "What are the birds saying?" "The swallows are saying the grain is good, but it's too salty to eat," said Gong. Convinced that Gong could understand the language of birds the magistrate let him go.<sup>192</sup>

### **The Lord Pays the Farmer After All**

Long ago a farmer agreed to work for a lord for 1 year, but as the 30th of the 12th month approached, the lord did not pay him. The farmer was very angry, but said nothing. Next spring came and the lord realized that the farmer was not going to come to work and became anxious. Finally, he went to his home, because, after all, time waits for no man. He asked the farmer, "Why have you not come to plow?" The farmer replied it was an easy matter to solve and guaranteed he would not miss the seeding season, but added, "I won't do anything unless I'm paid first and sign a contract." The lord thought, "The farmer does everything well. If we sign a contract, I can find some way to catch him, so why not go ahead?" So the farmer was paid and prepared to sign a contract with the lord. The farmer said, "I will not work outside for 3 days of my choosing in 1 year." The lord responded, "OK, 3 days don't matter." The farmer then said, "For work inside the house, I'll not do three sorts of things: One up and one down, one ahead and one back, one coming and one going. I won't do these three sorts of things." The lord thought then said, "Well, just three little things like that don't matter." These conditions were entered in the contract which both parties signed and the farmer went to work. The first day it rained, making the fields soft and perfect for plowing. The lord ordered the farmer to plow, but the farmer answered, "Our contract is definite, I don't have to work outside for 3 days of my choosing in 1 year. It's rainy today, so I won't work." The lord was unable to say a word.

The next day was cloudy and the lord told the farmer to level the fields. The farmer answered, "Our contract is white paper written with black words which say I don't have to work for 3 days. It's cloudy today, so I won't work." Again the lord could say nothing. The third day was bright and sunny and the lord told the farmer to cut firewood. The farmer replied as before saying that as it was a sunny day, he wouldn't work. On the fourth day, the lord told the farmer to husk rice with a mortar and pestle. But the farmer answered, "The contract says very clearly that I am not to work inside the house if it involves going up and down. I won't do it because husking rice is one up and one down." The lord could make no response and told the farmer to fetch water. The farmer said, "As our contract says, the work of fetching water is just one ahead and one back, so I won't do it." After thinking for some time, the lord came again and said, "You won't husk rice, nor carry water, then turn the millstone." The farmer replied, "No my lord, isn't our contract definite? Turning the millstone is just one coming and one going, I won't do it." The lord, shaking in rage, chased the farmer away. After some time, the lord remembered the farmer had drawn his pay, so raced after him. Panting, he shouted, "You..you...wait....money." A loud answering voice echoed out from the deep valley,

"My Lord, you needn't see me off. Please go back because what I'm taking is last year's pay...." The

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<sup>192</sup>[TE]: Lu Yingtao, 80; [CLR]: Lu Honglian; [CT]: November 1, 1988; [AWT]: Lu Family Village; [T]: Hu Jun



lord was shocked, but what could he do?<sup>193</sup>

## **The Frog Child**

Long ago there lived a poor old childless couple. Though they were aged, they yearned for a child and lit lamps every day, burned incense, and piously kowtowed to God, asking for a child. They hoped and waited day after day, year after year, until wrinkles lined their faces. One night a lump grew on the old lady's right thumb and grew larger and larger, but there was neither pain nor itch. The couple worried, thinking this was an evil omen, but couldn't find a doctor. The lump became increasingly large. The husband decided to cut it off with a cleaver. But, just as he was about to cut off the lump, the couple heard a low soft voice say, "Father, be careful." The two looked around, but could find nothing and wondered who would call "Father." But the voice called out again, "Father, mother, I'm in mother's right thumb. Be careful as you cut, for I will come out soon." The sound came from the right thumb. The two were happy with this and carefully cut off the lump which caused neither pain nor bleeding. The two looked inside the lump, but could find nothing. At this moment they heard the voice again, "Father, mother, here I am." It was a lovely little frog jumping on the ground.

The couple was astonished with the little frog's speech. They asked, "Little frog, where are your parents?" Sadly the frog replied, "I am your son and you are my parents. I grew in the lump on mother's right thumb. Father, mother, don't disown me. I can plow and carry food. I can do every kind of work." The couple saw the little frog was lovely and clever and, after all, the frog had grown out of the mother's thumb, so it was her own flesh and blood. The two gladly said, "You are our son."

The next morning the old man went to plow while the old lady prepared breakfast. Suddenly, she heard the little frog say, "Just hang the food jar from my neck and I'll send the meal to father." The old lady said, "My son, this is a large jar. If we put it around your neck, it will kill you." But the little frog insisted. At last the mother put the food jar around the little frog's neck just to see what would happen. The little frog hopped briskly to the field and shouted, "I have come bringing you food." The old man heard, rushed over, and said, "My son, I'm grateful for this, but you are too small. Rest here and when I finish eating, I'll continue plowing. The frog answered, "Father, you eat and I'll plow and then jumped on the cow's head and began plowing. The fields he plowed were done exactly the right way, not too deep and not too shallow. Then the father and son happily returned home together. The two old people realized they had a lovely and intelligent son who was not only a good worker, but also filial. The three lived happily together.<sup>194</sup>

## **The Frog Demands a Wife**

Long long ago there lived a family in Luwa Village on the banks of the Yellow River. The husband was named Tushidan and was true to his friends, honest, industrious, and never complained. The wife, Yinba, had a straight-forward personality, was helpful to others, and never selfish. The two were married for more than 10 years, but were childless. This was a great source of worry. They often gave wheat to the temple, helped neighbors, and daily lit lamps, burnt incense, and kowtowed to God.

There is a rule that on the fifth of the fifth month water cannot be taken from rivers, springs, or anywhere else because frogs are bathing which makes the water dirty. On the morning of the fifth of the fifth month, as Yinba was working in the fields, she got mud on her hands and went to wash. Afterwards her right thumb became swollen. It was painful and she and her husband were worried.

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<sup>193</sup>[TE]: Lu Jincai, 52; [CLR]: Lu Xuchuan; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

<sup>194</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

A year passed and then one morning Tushidan went to plow while Yinba cooked. By accident she cut off her swollen thumb and, miraculously, a frog jumped out of the thumb and croaked, "Mother!" Yinba was astounded, but happy. She was happy because they had a son and surprised because it was a frog. But despite Yinba's surprise and happiness the frog said that he wanted to take food to his father who was plowing. Yinba agreed and put the food inside a jar and placed it on the frog's back. The frog bounded away. Meanwhile, Tushidan was working in the fields when suddenly he heard a voice calling, "Father! He looked about, but found no one. Carefully looking at the ground he found a frog calling out. Delighted, he began eating and when he had finished the lunch, the two happily returned home.

Some time later the frog son said, "I want to find a wife." The couple laughed and asked, "Who would want to marry a frog?" But in the end they could no longer refuse and prepared a horse upon which the frog set out in the direction of the home of a girl he had in mind. When he put his demand to the girl's mother, she refused. The frog said that if she did not agree, he would weep until she consented. The mother replied that she didn't care how much he wept. The frog began weeping and immediately rain fell as though poured from a bucket. The girl's home shook and it seemed the roof was about to collapse. Finally the mother was forced to agree. As the girl and frog were about to set out the mother said to her daughter, "Take rocks with you and, on the way, kill him and return home."

On the way to his home the girl tried to hit the frog with the rocks, but the frog continued on as if nothing had happened. None of the rocks so much as touched him. Then they reached his home. The couple was delighted and treated the girl warmly. That night, the frog took off his skin and became a handsome young man. The next morning he donned the skin again and became a frog once more. One night the wife took advantage of the frog's sound sleep and burned the skin. Thus the frog lost his skin and felt regretful, but later they were happy.<sup>195</sup>

### **How Red Cliff Mountain Lost Its Forest**

There is a brigade located in the northeast corner of Sanchuan whose name literally translates as Red Cliff. To the rear of the brigade is a high mountain known as Red Cliff Mountain. In recent years, there have been only a few trees on this mountain, but many say that long ago this mountain was covered with a forest of ancient trees. Long ago in this forest there lived a fox. Everyday it looked after the forest, for it was the master of the forest. One day a merchant passed by and, in bright sunshine, noticed the fox's very beautiful fur. At that time fox furs were very valuable and extremely expensive. The merchant very much wanted to catch it and thus become rich. He returned home and prepared for several days. He readied a large net, a trap, much food, and then started out for the forest. He stayed in the forest the whole day, thinking and waiting. He thought, "Maybe the fox knows all of this," because the fox ate the bait the man put in the trap, but was never caught. The fox also never ventured near the net. Days and months passed and the food the merchant had brought with him was gone. Then he collected all his things and set off for home. Halfway home he met an old white-haired man who saw his things and asked for an explanation. The merchant told the old man everything. The old man saw him in this pitiful condition and said that he would like to support him and give him more food, so he could continue his effort. The old man said, "When you catch the fox, skin him, but don't cut any part of his body."

The man returned to the forest and once more tried to catch the fox. Just as the food the old man had given him was nearly gone he caught the fox. After he skinned it he suddenly remembered the old man's words and murmured, "Hm, the old man said not to cut him anywhere, but there might be treasures inside his body, so why don't I cut him open and see?" He then cut open the fox and looked inside but, except for some grass, he found nothing. As he flung the body to the ground and prepared to leave the earth suddenly cracked, mountains collapsed, and trees toppled, burying the

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<sup>195</sup>[AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: October 6, 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

merchant. The old man he had met earlier on the road was really a god and, if the merchant had listened, he would have gotten the fox skin and become rich, but more importantly, the fox would have had another life and continued to care for the forest. But the businessman didn't listen and thus, refusing to abide by heaven's judgement, he was punished. Afterwards, the mountain assumed its present form with no forests, just a few trees and green grass.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup>[TE]: Wen Jizhou, 80; [CLR]: Wen Yunxue; [AWT]: Guanting; [CT]: 1988; [T]: Hu Jun

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