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Blue Cloth and Pearl Deer: Yogur Folklore

by

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Blue Cloth and Pearl Deer

Yogur Folklore

Translated by

Zhang Juan *et al.*

Edited by

Kevin Stuart

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INTRODUCTION¹

The Yogur² numbered 12,000 in 1990 and lived primarily in Sunnan Yogur Autonomous County and Huangnibao district in Jiuquan County, Gansu Province. The 1982 Yogur population distribution is depicted in TABLE ONE.

TABLE ONE. Population Distribution of the Gansu Province Yogur (1982).³

<i>Location</i>	<i>Population</i>
Lanzhou City	28
Jiayu Pass City	42
Jingchang City	16
Jiuquan Region	1,916
Wuwei Region	13
Zhangyie Region	8,199
Sunan County ⁴ (in Zhangyie Region)	8,088
Dinxi Region	4
Tianshui Region	2
Wudu Region	2
Linxia Prefecture	1
Gannan Prefecture	4

¹The introduction is taken from Ma Yin (1989:129-135), Zhang and Zeng (1993:73-77), and Li and Stuart (1989).

²Yugu, Yugur, Yögur, Yaohuer, Saliweiwu, Shaliweiwuer, Shera-Yögur, Yellow Yogur, Eastern Yugu, and Western Yugu are among the terms that have been used in the literature to refer to Yogur groups at various times in history.

³This table, based on information from Ma Zhengliang (1986), was first published in English in Li and Stuart (1989:87).

⁴In 1982 the total population of Sunan County was 33,816. Of this population Yogur comprised 23.9%, Tibetans accounted for 22%, and Han Chinese made up 50.9%. Other residents included Hui, Mongols, and Monguor (Tu) (Li and Stuart 1989:87).

Most portions of Sunan County, which lies in the middle part of the Hexi Corridor and north of the Qilian Mountains, exceed 2,000-3,000 meters above sea level. More than ten rivers and glaciers are present in Sunan County. Total grassland amounts to 14,203 km², and comprises 70% of the county's total area. In 1982, animal husbandry, based on 122,000 head of livestock, was responsible for more than 70% of total agricultural/animal husbandry income.

History

The nationality traces its origins to nomads in the Erhun River valley during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Internal division, natural calamities, and attacks from the Turkic Kirgiz forced migration to the present Dunhuang, Zhangye, and Wuwei in the Hexi Corridor, which is the most fertile area in the central part of western Gansu. At this time they came under the control of the Tufan, a Tibetan people. The Yogur were then called Hexi Huihe and Hexi Ougurs. After their arrival they captured Ganzhou (Dunhuang) and set up a khanate, earning the name "Ganzhou Ougur." During the mid-eleventh century they were defeated by the Western Xia Kingdom and resettled in the pastoral areas outside Jiayu Pass. According to one source, the population of the Yogur exceeded 300,000 in 1075. Subsequent to the Mongols defeat of the Western Xia, the Hexi Ougurs came under their direct administration.

Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) officials divided the Yogurs into seven tribes. A headman was appointed for each tribe and a single powerful leader, designated as overall chieftain was known as the "Huangfan Superintendent of the Seven Tribes." After 1911 the Yogur were controlled by Ma Lin and Ma Bufang.⁵ In 1954, Sunan Yogur Autonomous County and Jiuquan Huangnibao Yogur Autonomous Township were established.

⁵For a review of materials related to Ma-family rule in Northwest China see Hu and Stuart (1991).

Language

Yogur use three languages: A Turkic branch of the Altaic language family (Raohul) used by Yogur in the western region of Sunan Yogur Autonomous County, a Mongol branch of the same language family by Yogur living in the eastern part of Sunan County,⁶ and Han Chinese is spoken by Yogur dwelling in Huangnibao.

Folktales⁷

The folktales in this collection were translated from Chinese written sources by the individuals listed in "Credits." I then retold the accounts. Where appropriate, notes have been added indicating similar Mongol, Monguor, Dagur, and Oroqen folk accounts. Cultural diffusion through interchange between adjacent areas, contact between Monguor, Mongol, and Yogur monks in Yellow Sect lamaseries, and shared ancient origins are possibilities for these similarities. The "Mula" stories and the accounts depicting origins of the Yogur wedding come the closest to being distinctly Yogur.

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⁶This language is also known as Jegün Yogur. Üjjiyedin Chuluu has published a recent (1994) study in English of Jegün Yogor.

⁷Bao (1985) gives a list of Eastern Yogur vocabulary items in IPA, language of origin (most usually Mongol, but occasionally Tibetan and Chinese), and Chinese equivalents. Bao and Jia (1990) discuss Eastern Yogur at considerable length. Fan (1986) provides several Yogur selections: "The Skilled Archer Shoots Geese" (74-78), marriage songs (43-55), and other folksongs (66-73). Bao and Jia (1988), in presenting a variety of Eastern Yogur language materials, provide samples of proverbs (269-278), legends (225-251), folktales (99-221), and riddles (255-266) in IPA, Mongol, and Chinese.

I am grateful to Dr. Chen Qiang for his help in preparing the above summary.

PRE-LIBERATION YOGUR WEDDING CUSTOMS⁸

Gao Qian

translated by Bao Hua and Li Xuewei

Introduction

THE YOGUR ARE A MINORITY GROUP among our great family of nationalities⁹ and have unique customs, especially wedding customs. Wedding customs before Liberation preserved older wedding forms.

According to Engles, extant wedding forms of a particular nationality are living social fossils. Investigating and studying these surviving wedding forms are of great significance to the study of history and social patterns.

This article only examines wedding forms remaining before Liberation according to my own conclusions from research and information from elders.

I

A notable characteristic of primitive wedding forms is marriage between maternal cousins. Weddings were arranged between two or more clan groups from one generation to another. Preference of marriage between maternal cousins became a fixed common rule. This phenomenon existed among certain Han, and in certain minority nationality regions, but was very pronounced among the Yogur.

⁸Gao's (1986) presentation follows a common formula in China for understanding folk culture. This translation should not be interpreted as an agreement on the part of the translators or editor with certain of its argument such as, for example, patriarchy/matriarchy.

⁹A common reference meaning "the People's Republic of China."

Eastern Yogur¹⁰ had a sash exchange wedding known as *lexiyao*.¹¹ When a girl reached the age of fifteen to seventeen and, if no young men had proposed marriage, this type of wedding was held with a ritual of becoming an adult. A small white tent was pitched beside the parents' tent and relatives, lamas, and the tribal chief were invited on an auspicious day. Two married women were requested to help the girl arrange her hair in a *toumian* and her twelve hair braids were changed into two braids and tied to the *toumian*. The *toumian* was called *cenpee* and consisted of pearls, agate, and silver. It was divided into three parts. Two parts were in front and the third was at the back. The *cenpee* indicated that the girl was now adult and could attend social activities.¹² Afterwards, *lexiyao* was held, which entailed taking the girl's sash to an unmarried son of her maternal aunts or uncles and returning with a boy's sash. During the ceremony someone shouted that X's daughter's sash had been give to Y, to make this public. The marriage disregarded the boy's age or whether he was a lama. He might, for example, have been a three year old child. If, among her cousins, none were unmarried, the sash was given to a married maternal cousin or brother. If her

¹⁰The Yogur are divided into the Eastern Yogur and the Western Yogur, according to differences in language and customs. The language of the former is a Tujue (Turkic) branch of the Altaic Language Family, while the language of the latter belongs to the Mongolian branch of the same family. According to recorded history and folklore, the Yogur came from Xinjiang during the late Yuan Dynasty. /author (hereafter "a")

¹¹Both male and female have a silk sash about four meters long and one-third meters wide. A major characteristic of the ceremony is exchanging sashes. /a

¹²Xu (1989:30-31) gives two depictions of Yogur female headdresses and the following related description:

A small tent is set up especially for the ceremony. In front of it some Tibetan lamas begin to chant prayers at dawn while the guests are entertained in a big tent nearby. When the scheduled time comes, two married women show the guests a 6-inch wide, 3-foot long cloth decorated with coral, agate, beads and shells, then bind it to the girl's hair. After serving each guest a cup of milk tea, the girl is escorted to the small tent by the responsible women and remains there until the banquet is over in the afternoon.

At her wedding ceremony, a girl makes her hair into three plaits, each consisting of many small ones. One of the big plaits hangs over the back while the other two are tucked into red silk tubes ornamented with colorful beads, silver plates and coral pieces, and hung over the breast. This hair style is a sign that distinguishes married women from the unmarried. However, they don't wear hair tubes on ordinary days. Instead, they link the two front plaits together with colorful knitting wool and hang big silver rings on them. Similar (*sic*) to the way some married Ewenki women adorn themselves.

uncles and aunts were childless, the sash was given to another man. On the second day of the changing sash rite, the girl moved back home from the small white tent to live with her parents. Afterwards, she was allowed to sleep with males and bear children whose surname was that of the man she had exchanged sashes with.

"Wife" in Eastern Yogur is *posicei*¹³ that means "one having no sash" because she had sent hers to a man and had thus lost it. The condition of being without a sash was used by a man to refer to his wife and vividly depicts the sash exchange marriage.

At first the preference for marriage between maternal cousins was taken as a rule. Exchanging sashes was nothing but the wedding ceremony. Time passed and there were exceptions to the old rule of marriage between maternal cousins. Girls married males who were not maternal cousins, thus, nothing remained of the preference for maternal cousin marriage but a framework.

Western Yogur had a "tent-pole" marriage similar to the above. On the day before the "reaching adulthood" ritual the girl, who had reached the age of fifteen to seventeen, had both her *cenpee* and sash hung from a tent pole. This signified the girl now could have intercourse with males. When this signal was observed, males slept with the girl. Children so conceived were not denigrated.

After putting up the *cenpee* the girl could live with males. Children they had were considered legitimate. If the relationship was harmonious between mother and father, or if the man lived for quite some time with the woman, the children called their father "papa." If the relationship was provisional and less intimate, the father was called "maternal uncle." Some tent-*cenpee* women lived all their lives with one man, while others separated and later lived with other males because their relationship could not endure. Sometimes a husband left. The male partner had to help the family he lived with labor in agricultural fields. Otherwise, he was not welcomed, especially by the bride's parents. If he were lazy, he was not allowed to continue to live with the girl. Generally, while "setting up a tent," the girl lived with males--one today, and another tomorrow, and it was possible that she might be living with several simultaneously. Some males came by appointment and sometimes, to stay a long period with the woman, they quarreled and fought

¹³*Pusyui* (Sun 1990:274). Literally: "sash without."

among themselves.¹⁴ Couples who married in such ways had sexual freedom and were not required to be faithful to one another. Parents asked nothing about the matter nor did society condemn them.¹⁵ A notable characteristic of this wedding was that the males lived with the woman in the bride's family. The marriage was also unstable, showing considerable similarity to the *azhu* wedding of the Naxi¹⁶ in Yongning, Yunnan Province.¹⁷

There were three results of the sash exchange. First, a woman stayed at home for a long period and lived with many males over a short time. During cohabitation the male was expected to help the bride's family. The girl continued living in her parents' home when she had children. When the children reached adulthood she either lived with her parents or lived with her children as an "old girl" (unmarried old woman) by receiving tents, animals, pasture, and cooking utensils. Secondly, among her sexual partners the one with whom she had the best affiliation was invited to live with her. If someone took care of her parents then, several years later, the "couple" left and lived by themselves. At this time the woman asked for property from her parents. Usually, in the past, elderly women spent their remaining years with their daughters. Presently, even if they have sons, most old women prefer to live with their daughters' families. This might be explained by the custom of the old wedding form dictating that the bride's side play the major role. Lastly, if the male whom she got along with well was willing to marry her, he was required to give a horse or a cow to the maternal cousin who had kept her sash to redeem it and then they could marry. The latter establishes that there were conditions related to relinquishing the privilege of marriage between maternal cousins. It also corroborates that these wedding conventions had the rudiments of a "buying and selling marriage" as related by Engles.

¹⁴See: "Yogur Report--Yogur Marriage," in Social and Historical Investigating Group of Gansu Minorities, Nationalities Institute of the China Social Science Academy. /a

¹⁵See: "Yogur Report--Yogur Marriage," in Social and Historical Investigating Group of Gansu Minorities, Nationalities Institute of the China Social Science Academy. /a

¹⁶In 1990 the Naxi numbered 278,000. Most lived in Yunnan in Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County, Ninglang, Zhongdian, Yongsheng, and Deqin counties. Other Naxi lived in Yanyuan and Muli counties in Sichuan Province and in Markam County, Tibet (Zhang and Zeng 1993:198-199).

¹⁷"*Azhu* marriage, a matrimonial relationship remaining from the matriarchal system, was formerly prevalent in Yongning district in Ninglang County, and in some Naxi villages in Yanyuan County" (Zhang and Zeng 1993:199).

Another Yogur wedding form known as the "formal marriage" was achieved with a matchmaker who called on the girl's family to make a marriage offer. Once permission was granted the groom presented many betrothal gifts. Among Eastern Yogur he was required to present the bride's father and uncle each with no less than a horse and her mother with a cow. Among Western Yogur far more gifts were requested. However, before Liberation this type of marriage accounted for only a small portion of unions. Most marriages were "informal," as exemplified by the "sash exchange marriages" and "setting up the tent pole marriages." The formal marriage was rare in Kangle Commune where we investigated. A fifty year old man confided that he had only witnessed the formal marriage once or twice. Before Liberation, formal marriage was thought to demand too much in the way of betrothal gifts. Its expense made it impossible for most people. The reason most Yogur could not formally marry was that they were short of money.¹⁸ In terms of wedding history the sash exchange and "setting up the tent pole" weddings were much older and typical of the more common wedding.

II

The high status accorded the maternal uncle has always been considered a reflection of matriarchy. To some extent, the maternal uncle's position was always higher, no matter whether the nationality was Han Chinese or a minority one. This was very pronounced among the Yogur.

The maternal uncle was known as *taca*¹⁹ in Eastern Yogur. This word derives from Tujue, meaning "a powerful and masterful man." The maternal uncle also played an important role in other matters because his status was higher than that of ordinary males illustrated by a saying: "The maternal uncle's cat is bigger than a tiger." At festivals and wedding feasts, the maternal uncle, lamas, and the tribal chief were arranged in the first row, and given sheep back, which was only offered to those who were most respected.

¹⁸See: "Yogur Report--Yogur Marriage," in Social and Historical Investigating Group of Gansu Minorities, Nationalities Institute of the China Social Science Academy. /a

¹⁹Compare: *naga* (Sun 1990:497).

A ceremony was held during a marriage to invite a man to recite "Sat."²⁰ When describing betrothal gifts, he recited:

*The girl has grown up because of her father's favor,
And the maternal uncle's kindness and her mother's nurturing,
The three need to be repaid: a black gelding for her father,
A left-maned red gelding for her uncle, and a cow for her mother.*

Shown here is that the maternal uncle had the right to receive gifts as did her parents, and what he was given was much more valuable than that required for the parents, for it is rare to see a red left-maned gelding. Additionally, during the hair-cutting ceremony performed when a child was three, it was the maternal uncle that made the first cut. Furthermore, a consultation was mandatory with the maternal uncle when a girl was betrothed. In other instances, such as funerals, or the division of a family in order for young couples to live apart, the maternal uncle played a major role.

A part of a Yogur wedding song sung by the bride as she leaves her home goes:

*The place where agalloch eaglewood trees grow was my hometown when I was young,
I passed the place where the tent had been reminding me of my maternal uncle,
On mountain tops I turn to gaze at my home place.*

In the song the first man the bride misses is her maternal uncle, followed by her brother and mother. Her father is not referred to. This might reflect old wedding customs and matriarchal privilege that resulted in one only knowing her mother, not her father.

It is not easy for patriarchy to subdue matriarchy. Among many minority nationalities in China, married females did not live with their husbands' families. This shows resistance to patriarchy giving way to matriarchy. Although Yogur

²⁰The Yogur epic "Sat" (History) describes the origin of the wedding ceremony and the Yogur moving east.

married women did live with their husbands' parents, we may find matriarchy's importance in the past from wedding customs.

When Eastern Yogur married, the groom did not fetch the bride. Instead she was escorted by her family members. A man approached offering liquor or tea to the group when they reached the front of the groom's tent. Two well-groomed and capable males were chosen. One hid while the other served tea to the group leader. When tea was served the leader purposely poked the tea bucket with his whip. At this moment the tea server kicked the tea bucket upside down in front of the horse and then rushed, along with the man in hiding, to grab the horse's bridle. They did their utmost not to let go, though severely beaten by the group leader, who was still mounted, and then they attempted to pull the horse near the tent to a blanket. Only then did the leader dismount as did the others in his entourage. If the groom's two representatives could not hold on to the bridle the leader fled with his entourage. If the bridegroom's side could not make them return, they had to make an apology in the form of offering the bride's family more *khadag*²¹ and liquor. Then together they decided the wedding day anew. On these grounds the bride's side demanded more gifts than before. If the matter deteriorated further, it was considered unlucky and the engagement was canceled. Moreover, in "Sat" there is a paragraph that, at the time the sun daughter married the earth son, goes:

The sun girl was not willing to live with her husband's family, therefore, people asked heaven for guidance. Heaven replied, "Wrap a dry bone of a white sheep with *khadag*, offer it with liquor, then apologize to the girl, and then she will agree."²² They did so and the sun girl afterwards lived with her husband's family.

This intimates that Yogur women did not have the convention of living with their husbands' families. Additionally, it suggests a matriarchal-patriarchal struggle.²³

²¹*Khadakh, xadag, hada, hadag, katagh*. A strip of silk presented as a token of respect.

²²Yogur divide the sheep into twelve parts, among which the sheep back is the most important. The "dry sheep bone" is one of these. /a

²³Engles. The Origin of the Family, Private Ownership, and the State. People's Press, p. 54 (Chinese edition published in 1972). /a

III

Yogur have additional customs related to primal marriage forms. One peculiarity of such marriages was marrying outside one's own tribe. This kind of marriage was an exchange between two tribes. Yogur of Yangge Village, Kangle Commune belonged to the Yangge Tribe. They maintained a strict policy of marrying outside their own tribe. Two people related paternally could not marry. This is further reflected in the form of address in Eastern Yogur. When the wife referred to her husband's family members, and when the husband referred to his wife's family members, *catn*²⁴ was added to the address, meaning "out" or "outside."

The phenomenon of the elder brother sharing a wife with his younger brother, or one man having more than one wife, survived from ancient marriage forms. The popular narrative poem, somewhat like "Gesar," known as "Olangasai,"²⁵ has a hero named Olangate. He has two maternal uncles living with one woman. Furthermore, during our investigation, we found examples of brothers sharing one wife. This was the only real marriage before Liberation. Commonly, the elder brother married and the younger brother also slept with his brother's wife. Finally, they shared the wife. The children called the man who had married the mother first *ajia*²⁶ and the second man *dai ajia*, meaning "younger father." This could be found in more than one family before Liberation. There was no censure from society. The practice was associated with pre-Liberation Yogur customs. Before Liberation a tent was retained as a home, since most Yogur were poor and could have owned only a tent and a blanket. Additionally, they were engaged in animal husbandry since ancient times. Moving east, they continued their nomadic life in the Qilian Mountains. They did not change their mode of production and dwelt in remote places. Objective conditions played an important role in retention of ancient wedding customs.

²⁴Compare: *gadan* (Sun 1990, 276).

²⁵Also known as "Lengsenqian," "Longgaisailijiao," and "Asusigai." It was the "Legend of King Gesar." /a

²⁶Compare: *adza* (Sun 1990, 90).

Folktales

Wedding Origins²⁷

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, Yogur wedding ritual began when Śākyamuni began creating the sky and forming the earth. At that time there was only sky but no earth.²⁸ Consequently, Śākyamuni invited Black Dragon from heaven, put a large piece of black silk on its back, and then asked Black Dragon to carry gold. White Elephant was invited from a forest to carry white soil and its back was covered with white silk. Śākyamuni spread the gold and the soil into the sea to form land every day. Nevertheless, after a long time, there was still boundless ocean without a hint of visible land. Śākyamuni then had no choice but to go to heaven to ask advice from Layangjia God, who said, "As soon as four pillars are erected at the sky's four corners, the God of Fire will make fire, females will bear children, and land will form naturally." Śākyamuni returned and did what he had been advised. The ocean really did become smaller. Furthermore, not only did land form, but also mountains rose and rivers appeared. From then on men created all things on the earth and smoke from the kitchen chimneys of man's world could be seen everywhere.

With such changes people began organizing families. At that time a king known as Zhenersi had a son who proposed marriage to King Baoerde's daughter and sent a man to present gifts. However, the gifts were refused and returned the next day. It seemed that the marriage was unlikely. Next, King Zhenersi went to ask Layangjia God for advice. Layangjia said, "Marriage joining two families will not be possible unless each of one hundred families has a surname of its own." Thousands of people subsequently came to have these names. "What's more," the king said, "*oboos* must be built on mountaintops. Additionally, wedding customs should be formed that people will follow." As King Zhenersi was leaving

²⁷Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

²⁸For a similar Minhe Monguor account see Ma Guangxing (1994). See Stuart (1995:10) for a similar Mongol account.

Layangjia added, "If there are no clouds, there is no rain. Marriages cannot succeed without matchmakers. Four matchmakers should be invited to help realize the marriage."

When King Zhenersi returned he bestowed full names to his four prime ministers. The first was named Kalakula, the second was named Yangnaidengzeng, the third was Suotaohaomalige, and the fourth was named Waskaolubulijia. King Zhenersi dispatched them with *khadag* to King Baoerde's home as matchmakers to propose marriage. This time King Baoerde graciously accepted their gifts.

Now that King Baoerde had tacitly approved the proposed wedding by accepting the gifts, King Zhenersi began planning a grand wedding for his son. He urged his prime ministers to invite Black Dragon and White Elephant, who had rendered such exceptional service in the creation of the earth. He also commanded them to collect all the pearls and treasures in the world. However, the prime ministers thought it was improper to be so extravagant. They decided instead to advise the king to hold a simple ceremony.

Kalakula said, "Your majesty, since our land was formed this is the first important event held. Although we should hold a grand ritual, conditions do not allow it." Yangnaidengzeng said, "If the standards we set are too excessive, it would take us a great deal of time to prepare the ceremony. Events might change while waiting for the ceremony to take place." Suotaohaomalige said, "Your majesty, from now on we should thoughtfully establish a wedding ritual that people will follow in the future." Kaolubulijia said, "Your majesty is in a position high above that of the common people. We should take all people, rich and poor alike, into account." King Zhenersi responded, "What you have said is reasonable. I'll discuss it with King Baoerde and then tell you our decision."

King Zhenersi summoned his prime ministers and said, "King Baoerde and I have decided that you four shall arrange the wedding as you think best. There is one stipulation, however, you must wrap black silk around Black Dragon and you must wrap white silk around White Elephant."

After visiting many people the four prime ministers visited King Zhenersi and said, "We have traveled the length and breadth of your realm. We found that there are three treasures that are of great value: sheep, horses, and cattle. Your majesty and our army ride on horses rather than walking both in times of peace

and war. Horses can also be harnessed to carts and used as plow animals by the common people. Cattle furnish beef, the best food, and also milk, which can be mixed with tea. Moreover, butter is used as the oil of lamps set before Buddhas and cheese is a main food of the common people. Cattle also furnish hair that is made into cloth. Sheep are raised by both rich and poor. Wool provides cloth. We think that, rather than inviting Black Dragon and White Elephant, we should have cattle, sheep, and horses at weddings." King Zhenersi agreed.

Considerable searching produced an exceedingly fat gray-wool sheep from a sheep flock herded by Borbaji. The sheep were carried by camel to the king's palace. King Zhenersi pointed at its head and said, "This is the best food for us to entertain our guests with." As he ran his hand down the sheep's back he said, "Here there are six bones connected by veins that can be compared to six blood brothers." Gazing at the sheep's breast, he added, "The mutton is so fat that it is the best gift for us to present to our relatives." Looking carefully at the ribs for some time he said, "These twelve ribs symbolize the twelve moons of a year." Gesturing at the four limbs he said, "The legs show that the marriage is perfect. See, the golden color of the large end of the leg is the mark of gold, the small end is black symbolizing silver, and thick mutton on the leg symbolizes the bridegroom wearing a long gown with a jacket over it, suggesting that he will have a bright future."

Afterwards, a dignified but simple wedding was held. Black silk was wrapped around a black horse and white silk was wrapped around a white horse. These horses substituted for Black Dragon and White Elephant. During the feast delicious fat mutton was served to relatives. All the guests sang and danced joyfully in celebration of the weddings. In time the bride took the leg bone of a sheep smeared with butter and to which a tuft of wool was fastened. Making her way between fires, she walked forward to meet the groom and handed him the leg bone.

Thus the son and daughter of the two kings were united and the custom of marriage was established and handed down to today. Nowadays, when Yogur marry, they hold a ritual known as *ashas* to inform people of the wedding ritual's origins.

White and Black Horses²⁹

LONG AGO THE YOGUR HAD LIVED IN XIZHOUHAZUO for generations. At that time there were two Yogur tribes. One was ruled by King Zhenersi and the other was administered by King Baoerde. Both men wished to rule all the Yogur, consequently, the two tribes often fought.

King Zhenersi had a handsome son while King Baoerde had a very beautiful and wise daughter. Because of the animosity between the two tribes. The two youths had never seen each other. One day King Zhenersi said to his son, "The great cause of unifying our nationality is now your responsibility, for I am old." The prince then amassed a great army and marched to declare war on King Baoerde. When King Baoerde heard that it was the prince and not his old enemy, he thought that King Zhenersi had done this to remind him that he had only a daughter and no sons. He was so tormented he nearly died of illness. King Baoerde's daughter rushed to her father's side and said, "Do not worry. Send me to battle King Zhenersi's forces." King Baoerde thought that this was reasonable and agreed.

When the princess led her troops into battle the prince dismounted, the two talked most amiably, and then they made their way to King Baoerde's bedroom where they beseeched the king to make peace with his old enemy. King Baoerde replied that he would not be a stumbling block to peace and then Prince Zhenersi left to talk to his father. But, when King Zhenersi learned that his son had not

²⁹Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

engaged King Baoerde's forces in battle, he furiously disinherited his son. Prince Zhenersi was then left to wander destitute among other nationalities. After five years of wandering he returned to his tribe.

Meanwhile, King Zhenersi had attacked King Baoerde. Thinking that Prince Zhenersi would soon come with news of a peace settlement, King Baoerde was unprepared and felt that the prince had devised a clever ploy of deception. Unexpectedly, Princess Baoerde rose to the challenge and, in short order, utterly defeated King Zhenersi. During King Zhenersi's interrogation, King Baoerde and his daughter learned that the king's son had been disowned by his father, convincing them of the prince's honesty. King Baoerde ordered the Yogur reunited and King Zhenersi imprisoned. King Baoerde decreed that King Zhenersi would be beheaded if Prince Zhenersi did not return in five years. Afterwards, Princess Baoerde searched high and low for Prince Zhenersi, but learned nothing about his whereabouts. The beheading proceeded on schedule. It was not until the last moment that Prince Zhenersi revealed himself, thus saving his father from the executioner's sword.

Happily reunited, the prince and princess stood gazing at each other. At this moment thunder boomed and lightning flashed. A white dragon and a black dragon descended from the sky. Each held a strip of silk in its mouth. The white dragon presented a strip of white silk to the princess and the black dragon presented a strip of black silk to the prince. The two dragons said, "Our father, the Dragon King, was so deeply moved by your reunion that he sent us to invite you to our palace." The crowd cheered as the princess mounted the white dragon and the prince mounted the black dragon. They soared into the sky together to receive the Dragon King's congratulations.

Afterwards, when Yogur marry, the bride rides a white horse and the groom rides a black horse, which are substitutes for the dragons.

Blue Cloth

LONG AGO, DESPITE HAVING only a few sheep, a Yogur couple lived happily together in a remote location, far from their nearest neighbors.

At that time there were no matches with which to easily start a fire. Instead, people kept animal dung fires smoldering. Because the couple was so far removed from any other homes, the husband warned his wife daily before going out to hunt that she should be careful and not let the fire die. One unfortunate day the wife fell ill and went to bed. She awakened hours later to a cold pile of ashes. The fire had gone out. Not knowing what else to do, she set out to find a home from which she could borrow some coals. As evening fell she slowly walked on and noticed a fire halfway up a mountainside. When she got near it she saw that it was burning in front of a cave guarded by a ferocious large white dog. When the dog began barking at the young wife an old woman emerged from the cave and said, "Don't mind the dog, he won't bite you." The young wife explained that her fire had gone out. The old granny put cold ashes on a piece of cloth, placed a layer of smoldering dung on top of this, and then covered this with another sprinkling of cold ash. After thanking the old woman profusely, the young wife trudged back to her home, not realizing that she was leaving a trail of traceable ash.

Meanwhile, her husband had returned home and, not finding his wife, he had set out in search of her. Thus, the two missed each other. After successfully kindling a fire, the wife decided her husband would not return that night and went to bed alone. When her husband returned the next day he was relieved to see that his wife was safe and listened with interest to her story of how she had obtained coals from the old woman.

Some days later the husband went out hunting again. After he had been gone for several hours the old woman came to her home in a whirlwind, riding her white dog and holding a dog trough. To the young woman's horror, the old lady now had three identical heads. After marching into her home the old woman sat and demanded that the young woman come kneel in front of her so that she could treat her illness. The frightened young woman complied, shutting her eyes tight. The old woman, who was really a monster, removed a sharp bone needle from her hair and jabbed the young wife in the forehead and in each arm. Then each of her mouths set to work sucking blood from the three wounds. The young wife immediately lost consciousness. After drinking her fill of blood the monster jabbed the young wife's feet with the needle and filled the dog's trough with blood. After the dog was satisfied with its ration of blood, the monster mounted the dog and rode off.

The husband found his wife near death when he returned. Some hours later she regained consciousness and related what had happened. Guessing that the monster would return, the hunter readied his bow and arrows. Soon a black wind blew up. The old woman seated on her white dog came again. The hunter fired an arrow, which found its mark in the monster's center head. Though the monster fled, it returned again, only to have another of its heads shot. But the monster was not dead and, drawing a sword, slew the young hunter, pounced on him, and proceeded to devour his flesh and drink his blood. The ill young wife saw what had happened. In a rage she quietly advanced to the monster preoccupied with its meal and killed the monster with her husband's sword. Next, she dispatched the white dog with the same sword.³⁰

Tearing a four-*chi* length of blue cloth from her clothing, she wrapped up several bones--all that remained of her husband. She walked a long distance to where her kinsmen were living. There, a grand funeral was held for the brave young hunter. To commemorate the dauntless young hunter, four *chi* of blue cloth has been used by succeeding generations of Yogur at funerals.

³⁰For a similar account of a fire tended by females going out, getting fire from a monster, and females sucked for their blood by a monster see the Huzhu Monguor account "Black Horse Zhang" in Stuart and Limusishiden (1994:80-83).

Foxes and Hats³¹

I

W

HENEVER WE WANT TO SAY "FOX" in Eastern Yogur we say *malagaiqi*, which means "hatted one." Some say this is because fox-fur is used to make hats. Others say it is because the word *hanigan*³² sounds unpleasant, so another word is used. At any rate, nobody can explain this very well. There is however, a story about this:

In ancient times there was a hunter of our tribe who rode out hunting one day with his hound. Not finding any game around some gullies he went into a forest. Just as he entered the forest he saw a red fox and urged his horse toward it. The fox ran for all it was worth. Spying a burrow, it raced inside. Thinking that the fox could not escape from the hole, the hunter casually dismounted and put his hat over the hole. Suddenly, the fox rushed out and the hat stuck firmly on its head. Terrified by the fox, the horse bolted, pulling the dog, which was tied to its saddle, with it.

The hunter heaved a sigh and set off after his horse and hound. When he encountered someone he asked, "Have you seen a white horse with a gun tied to its saddle and have you seen a hatted one?" He could not very well say that a fox was wearing a hat, so he said "hatted one." This story spread among the Yogur and, later, the fox became known as the "hatted one."

Anyway, a story is just a story. Who knows how this way of referring to "fox" really originated?

³¹Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

³²Compare *henven* (Sun 1990:694)

II

W

HEN YOGUR LIVED IN XIZHOUHAZUO there was a young man named Jierjiangbatu meaning "hero of the poor." He so excelled in marksmanship that he could shoot three arrows at once so accurately that all the arrows found their mark.

To marry his lover in as short a time as possible, Jierjiangbatu hunted day and night to accumulate game in sufficient quantity that would allow him to obtain the needed betrothal gifts. One day, while hunting, he came upon two lovely fox cubs. After killing them, he skinned them, went to his home, and hung the skins from his tent pole.

The next day he went out hunting as usual. After walking about fifty ^{li}³³ a black wind blew up. Jierjiangbatu became lost. Suddenly, a large red fox ran toward him. Determined to kill it, Jierjiangbatu gave chase until midnight but the fox was always far in front. Exhausted, he lay down and fell asleep. When he awoke the next morning he found the fox barking. Jierjiangbatu gave chase. All the arrows he shot at the fox missed. After chasing the fox for five days he was so exhausted he fell unconscious.

Meanwhile his lover burned with worry. On the fifth day of his absence she heard a strange sound, looked around, and noticed a red fox. After burning joss sticks to expel whatever evil this portended, she set out after the fox, who, in time, led her to the unconscious Jierjiangbatu. After reviving him the fox sang:

*Jierjiangbatu, Jierjiangbatu, shot my children dead,
Made me so sad,
Today I'll not take your life away,
Afterwards, please be a kindhearted lad.*

Jierjiangbatu was determined to shoot the fox, but the girl restrained him and sang in reply:

*Old fox, old fox, please trust us,
We'll never again hurt your children,
Please let us keep the little fox-furs as your gifts,
A hat will be made from them,
For me to wear at my wedding.*

The old fox mother yelped and ran away and the young couple safely returned home. Three days before her wedding the bride wore a fox-fur hat, which was known as *tulugepaierke*. Afterwards, Yogur brides wore fox fur hats three days before their weddings, regardless of the season of the year.

³³Twenty-five kilometers.

The "An" Surname³⁴

ONCE THE YOGUR WERE DIVIDED INTO TWO TRIBES, which were also two clans. Each tribe was administered by a chief. The ten families that comprised the clans were the families of the chiefs and nine other families: Dongbage, Luer, Sigema, Yange, Xibage, Wuge, Helonge, Yalage, and Mantai.

The chiefs were surnamed "An," thus the saying: 'All chiefs are surnamed "An.'" What explains this? There are various explanations and what I'm going to tell you is the explanation that is most widespread.

Tradition has it that Xizhuhazuo was the birthplace of our Yogur. One year this area was suddenly struck by a catastrophic gale that howled across the dunes, raising yellow dust darkening the sky and obscuring everything. The fierce wind blew hard for several consecutive days, covering homes, animals, and Yogur with dust. The saddest thing, which made people weep in grief, was that the golden temple built by all of our people was also buried in sand hills. What could be done then?

Because Yogur were Buddhists they were denigrated by nationalities of other religions. Additionally, they had now experienced a serious natural calamity. They felt that they could not live there any longer and, after a tribal discussion, they began moving eastward on a perilous journey in an enormous contingent of young and old.

While watching the stream of humanity moving sluggishly along the chief of the entire nationality decided that they could never reach their destination with such an unwieldy collection of people. Furthermore, other nationalities were attempting to check their advance, making their odyssey even more risky. The

³⁴Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

chief ordered that all the old people, married women, and young children be killed so that the young and strong would not be hindered in the flight.

One young man was unable to kill his father. He made a wooden box, put his father inside, and then put the box on the back of a yak.³⁵ The old man told the young man that they should settle only in a place that had forests, pastures, mountains, and springs. He also instructed his son to note the direction that they were headed and geographical features along their route and tell him each evening. Some days later the group found themselves in a desert lacking plants and animals. Many people and livestock died of thirst. The chief was at a loss. Panic grew as people began to feel that they would all perish. After consulting his father the young man told the people to turn loose their animals and follow them. When the yaks stopped, sniffed the soil, and began pawing the soil with their hooves, those following should begin digging for, underground there was surely water. This was done, water was found, and no more people died.

Afterwards, when the migrating group met difficulty, the young man was consulted. After secretly consulting his father, the young man relayed his advice. After a long journey they reached Lan³⁶-Malagaiqi. In Yogur this means "red-hatted person." This was truly a wondrous place of green hills, plentiful clear water, and vast pastures. The Yogur decided to settle here. They surrounded the young man and asked how he had been able to lead them to such a suitable place. The young man brought his father out of the box. He explained that the old man was responsible. Many people asked, "Grandfather, please tell us your name." But the old man only replied, "Our surname is An," which means "settle down." All agreed that the old man should be their new chief. Afterwards, "An" became the common surname of the nationality.

³⁵In the Dagur account "How Burial Rule Changed" (Stuart, Li, and Shelear 1994:80-81) a king commands that all people over the age of sixty must be killed. A young man hides his father, who later renders precious advice in a time of calamity that saves the people from death. The young man then brings his father out of hiding and the king suspends his rule.

³⁶Compare: *la:n* (Sun 1990:671).

The Pearl Deer³⁷

LONG AGO THE YOGUR LIVED IN XIZHOUHAZUO. One tribe that lived there consisted of only two families. One was poor, owning only a few sheep, while the other was wealthy and owned cattle, horses, and camels as well as sheep. The poor husband and wife got along well and, after some time of marriage, the wife delivered a healthy baby boy whom they named Saka who, before he was ten, hunted with his father and was adept at using a slingshot.

Though the rich couple had no worries about life's material needs, they quarrelled constantly. Certain squabbles were over the fact that the wife had given birth to a daughter, whom they named Marjian, rather than a son. The husband was humiliated at not having any male heirs.

Marjian grew into a beautiful young lady. She busied herself with housework, learned how to ride from Saka, and hunted with him everyday. Saka's parents admired Marjian for her many virtues and thought that life would be much easier for them if they could have such a good daughter-in-law. They prayed in their hearts that the two youths could marry.

Saka's mother prepared the required headdress for a bride and, when Marjian saw it, her joy knew no bounds for she was in love with Saka. Nevertheless, she pretended not to understand the headdress's significance.

Marjian's parents thought that Saka was a fine young man, however, they felt it would be shameful if, as a rich household, they allowed Saka to marry Marjian. Finally, they invited a matchmaker to arrange a marriage for Marjian. When she heard what her parents had done she wept for three days and nights. With eyes swollen shut, she vowed to drown herself.

³⁷Translated from the Chinese by Lin Ruimei.

It so happened that while Marjian was weeping, rain fell without ceasing. Animal shelters were flooded and many young animals were washed away. Beside himself with worry, Marjian's father hurried to a lama and asked him to chant scriptures to stop the rain. Ironically, the more the lama chanted, the harder it rained. At last the lama went outside to inspect the sky at dusk and heard Marjian weeping. Inspired, he returned to his room, seated himself, and said to Marjian's father, "It rains because a woman weeps. She must have been forced to accept something against her will. Nothing else could have so offended the gods. When you grant what she desires, it will stop raining and your livestock will be secure." Marjian's father accepted this without question, rushed to his daughter, and said, "My daughter, I beseech you to stop weeping. If you continue, all our livestock will surely drown. I beg you, stop!" Marjian grew even more angry. She thought, "My father is cruel and selfish to the point where he loves his livestock more than he loves me." She wept harder. Suddenly, thunder roared and rain fell in a renewed downpour. Terrified, her father promised, "You may marry Saka. The two of you must set off tomorrow and go somewhere far away. The farther the better. Don't ever return. If your betrothed comes for you, I will say that you and Saka have run away together. Don't ever let them find you." Marjian stopped wailing and, at that very moment, it stopped raining and the moon could be dimly seen.

The next morning the sun rose red between rosy dawn clouds and Marjian was as lovely as before. Accompanied by her parents, she rode her favorite horse to Saka's home. After hearing Marjian's parents' proposal, Saka's parents could think of nothing better and wished the two lovers a happy life together.

The couple journeyed for ninety-nine days. On the hundredth day they reached a tribe of people they knew nothing about. All the tribal members seemed wealthy, but there was not one among them who could make thread from wool and then weave it into cloth.

Marjian gathered much wool and, after weaving it into cloth, she made clothes. They traded this cloth for what they needed with local people. Meanwhile, Saka was busy hunting. When he did not hunt, he helped his wife make felt. In a

few moons' time they were quite well-off. Though their neighbors could not understand their language, they still got along with each other well and real friendship began to develop. Some neighbors gave them sheep and others gave them cattle. Marjian and Saka were grateful for such generosity. Not long after they had settled Marjian became pregnant.

Saka was worried when he noticed that his wife had little appetite and asked, "What would you like to have? Just tell me and I'll prepare it for you." Smiling, Marjian shook her head. Saka continued, "Today, I'm going to kill a Mongolian gazelle for you." Marjian said quickly, "We still have much meat. There's no need." But Saka insisted. After he had gone some distance Saka discovered several Mongolian gazelles. He raised his sling and let loose a stone. Though he squarely struck one gazelle with the stone, it ran away. Desperately wanting to bring back fresh game for his wife, Saka raced after it. He ran over several sand dunes with the crippled gazelle running ahead of him. When he finally got very near, it vanished. Looking into the distance, he found it was already on a distant dune.

Saka pursued the gazelle for three days and nights. On the fifth day a dark wind blew up, hurling sand and shrubs at him. Dazed by the wind, he began to feel hungry and thirsty, but he could not find the food and water he had brought. Struggling to peer into the distance, Saka could only discern a vast gobi. He realized that he was lost. Thinking of his wife and unborn child he mustered his courage. But where should he go? Later, the fierce wind stilled, but he remained disoriented. Suddenly came the faint quack of distant ducks. Immediately he became hopeful, guessing that there must be water where ducks were. Tortured by hunger and thirst, he walked throughout the night. At dawn, he realized he was walking east. He climbed a tall dune and spied a green lake in the distance. There he found not only water, but also livestock and households. But, no sooner had he drunk a few mouthfuls of water than he heard steps approaching. Just as he was about to turn, he was jerked about and flogged by two rough men. As he began to fully register the pain from the beating, he found himself in a wooden cage. The two men, with drawn swords, stood nearby.

A short time later a man dressed in red approached and asked Saka several questions. Saka could not understand and shook his head. Finally, the man waved his hand and said a few words. The two strong men opened the cage, let Saka out, and went away. From then on, Saka wandered about begging in this area.

Ten years passed. Saka learned the language of the local people. He knew he was far from his home. He missed his beloved wife and child. He resolved to search for his home. Guided by the sun, he set out and travelled for eight years. His hair grew so long that it touched his ankles, his clothes became as tattered as dry desert grass, and a beard covered his face. Blood-filled blisters covered his hands and feet as he trudged on, begging and searching for his home.

One day he reached a lake. Though it was winter, steam rose from the water surface. When he bent down to drink, he saw his reflection. Shocked, he could not restrain his tears and, weeping, he at last fell asleep by the lake. Dreaming, he saw green lotus leaves spring from the lake center and then a large lovely flower blossomed. Suddenly, his dear wife, Marjian, emerged from one of the petals, their child in her arms. He shouted to her in delight. When he awoke, he found his beard was wet with tears. He wondered why had he dreamed of a lotus in winter and of Marjian? He wondered, after eighteen years of separation, if Marjian was dead. He realized it was entirely possible. This so depressed him that he decided to end his life by drowning himself in the lake. Then he noticed a beautiful deer standing by a spring near the lake. He walked toward the deer, which continued to quietly drink from the spring, as though unaware of his presence. When Saka drew nearer, he noticed its antlers glittered with inlaid pearls.

Saka had never imagined that there could be such a beautiful pearl deer. He pursued it for two days and then decided to stop, remembering the misfortune that had befallen him when he had chased the Mongolian gazelle. To his surprise, once he stopped following the deer, the deer began following him. He then resumed walking after the deer. Day after day he followed the deer. When he felt hungry the deer led him to where millet grew. When he was thirsty the deer led him to

a lake. When he was tired and rested the deer also stopped and rested. When it was cold they went into bushes for warmth. They were never apart.

Meanwhile, as Marjian waited for her husband to return, she delivered a baby girl. She gave birth and then fainted. When she regained consciousness the baby was not breathing. After wrapping the baby in red cloth, she placed her on a dune by a lake and returned home. The next day a deer herd came to the lake at dawn. Hearing an infant's cries, a doe picked up the baby in her teeth, and raced away. At home, Marjian sorrowfully thought of her lost husband and baby. She thought of ending her life, but a premonition that Saka would return dissuaded her.

She worked hard day after day and gave her personal appearance little attention. She did not wash her face, hair, and clothes for years. Her neighbors thought she was mad and treated her compassionately.

Ten years later Marjian had earned herds of livestock through her hard work and owned a beautiful home. One afternoon she heard her dog barking. Outside she found a little girl of about ten years old begging for food. She led her into her house and gave her food and water. Later, just as the little girl was about to leave, Marjian began weeping. The little girl rushed into her arms and Marjian decided to adopt her. Afterwards, the affection between the two was that between a mother and daughter.

The girl grew up to be as beautiful as Marjian. When she became adult, Marjian at last washed herself and no longer left her home. She put the girl in charge of all of her affairs.

One night it snowed but the moon was still visible in the night sky. For some reason Marjian could not sleep. She realized her husband had been away for eighteen years. The misery of these years suddenly overcame her and she wept. Exhausted, she at last fell asleep and dreamed of a full moon hanging near her window. Awaking, she saw the new moon disappear. Thinking that this was a propitious omen, she rose and went to her daughter's room. After waking her she said, "Beginning today, we shall invite every passerby into our home and give

them food and drink. You must bring every man in his thirties to the backyard to eat."

Marjian took up residence in the backyard and, afterwards, the daughter did as her mother had instructed, but they failed to find Saka. Gradually, Marjian lost hope of seeing him again. But, one day at sunset, a poor shabbily clad beggar appeared. His clothing barely covered his nakedness and he carried a walking stick. His hair was full of thorns, there was dried blood on his heels, and his toes were bleeding. Half his beard was white and he seemed to be an "old" man of sixty. Shocked, Marjian's daughter invited him inside. Suddenly, the household dog rushed out wagging his tail and licked the blood on the feet of the beggar in a friendly way. The young woman continued to insist that the man come inside and the dog tugged at his clothing, also trying to pull him inside.

When Marjian approached, the old man noticed the richness of her clothing and bowed his head and said nothing, sure that he was about to be severely reproached. "Where do you come from?" Marjian asked. The "old" man trembled at the sound of a familiar voice. He looked at her and then lowered his head.

"Tell me your name," Marjian said kindly.

"My name is Poor Man," he answered.

"No, you... you... you are Saka!" gasped Marjian and reached out to him, only to faint and fall at his feet.

Saka asked in dismay, "Who is she? How does she know my name?"

"She is Marjian, my mother!" the young woman explained.

Saka shook his wife and found that, in the excitement of the moment, she had died. The young woman burst into tears. Saka held her hands and said, "My child, I am Saka your mother's beloved."

"I am her adopted daughter," the girl sobbed.

"Where is her own child?" Saka asked.

"She told me that it died just after it was born," she replied.

Saka buried his wife, picked up the stick that had been with him for eighteen years, and set out wandering again, for a still more miserable life lay before him.

Gongerjian and Yangkasa³⁸

OLD PEOPLE OFTEN TOLD US that Gongerjian was Yangkersa's younger sister. The sister was known for her cleverness and kindness and the brother for his honesty and willingness to work hard. They were orphaned when they were very young.

Yangkesa herded their livestock and gathered firewood during the day. Sometimes he hunted. Gongerjian stayed at home cooking and making and patching clothing. Sometimes she made thread from wool and wove it into cloth for other people. Though their life was difficult, they were never angry with each other.

The years passed and the sister became anxious that her brother should marry. Yangkasa never mentioned marriage. In fact, he said very little to his sister. Gongerjian was too embarrassed to talk to him directly about marriage.

One day when Yangkasa was herding the animals back home he found that his sister had prepared neither food nor tea for him. He thought that she was probably ill and prepared to kindle a fire. His sister said, "Brother, I am too busy with housework. Why don't you find a sister-in-law to help me?" Her brother sighed and said, "Is there anyone on the earth who would willingly let his daughter marry me?" Shaking his head, he dismissed the idea.

Yangkesa recognized that his sister's intentions were commendable and thought that he must try to find a wife otherwise, his sister would exhaust herself. He also knew that it was improper for his sister to stay in his home all her life. He said to her, "Beginning tomorrow, you herd and I'll go look for a wife."

³⁸Bai Shitan and He Xiyu told this story to Caireng-Danzen. Liu Ruiming translated the Chinese version into English.

Gongerjian delightedly agreed. That night she prepared clothing and cooked food for her brother to take with him.

The next morning Yangkesa rode off and eventually came to a home. After making his intentions clear, the master of the home asked how wealthy he was. Yangkesa answered truthfully. But, before he could finish, his host shook his head and said, "I do have a daughter, but she is not for you."

He journeyed to a second home where he was treated warmly. The father of the family thought that the hardworking Yangkesa would be a good son-in-law. He added that Yangkesa must come to live in his home. Yangkesa knew he could not leave his sister alone and left.

That night he slept outside. The next morning, when he was about to set off, he saw a beautiful girl standing near him. In surprise he asked, "Where did you come from?" "Aren't you looking for a wife? Here she is now," the woman replied smiling. Yangkesa then asked her to marry him and she agreed. When he asked her name, she replied she did not know. The last thing she could recall was roaming on the grasslands. She recollected nothing of her parents. Overcome with the misery she had experienced, she began weeping. Yangkesa proved sympathetic and took her to his home.

One year later the sister-in-law's true nature was exposed. She was lazy, very particular in what she would eat, and cruel. She left all the household chores to Gongerjian, gave Gongerjian only a little food, and demanded that Gongerjian wash her dirty clothing. In time, she insisted that Gongerjian leave the home.

Things were at such a pass that Gongerjian could no longer tolerate her sister-in-law's mistreatment. Her brother did not want her to leave, but when she explained that if she did not, she and Yangkesa would both suffer. "Once I leave, perhaps sister-in-law will treat you better and maybe we can be together again some day," she persuaded. Yangkesa could think of nothing better. Tearfully, he walked with her away from the home and urged her to live nearby.

The wife now treated Yangkesa worse than before. She did nothing all day and mercilessly scolded him. Her indolence was an additional burden to Yangkesa for, without Gongerjian's help, the number of sheep that they herded for the tribe decreased by half. When the tribal chief learned this he took away all the livestock

that Yangkesa herded and ordered him brutally lashed. By this time Yangkesa was in very poor health and the beating made him sicker. He lay in bed desperately ill. The hard-hearted wife secretly left when she saw her husband on the verge of death. With nothing to eat, Yangkesa struggled outside but, after a short distance, he collapsed on the lonely grassland, unable to stand.

At sunset an eagle swooped down and clawed out and ate his eyes. A moment later a leopard took away his head. A fox dragged away both of his arms. Two crows came and took away his intestines. Finally, his legs were dragged away by wolves, his torso was taken by a bear, and his blood seeped into the sand. Not long afterwards his home burned to ash.

The next year Gongerjian came to visit her brother. When she saw that the house was gone she knelt in the ashes and wept. Suddenly, a white-haired old woman appeared. "Granny, do you know where my brother is?" Gongerjian asked. The old woman wiped away her tears and replied, "Child, don't cry. Your brother died last year. If you want to see him, first make a clay figure of him."

Gongerjian did so and, when she completed the figure, the white-haired old woman said, "Dear child, your brother's body was torn apart and taken by an eagle, a leopard, a fox, two crows, a magpie, a bear, a wolf, and the sand. If you sincerely wish to bring your brother back to life, you must get your brother's body parts back from these animals."

Gongerjian set out in search of the eagle. After just a few steps the eagle flew off. She managed to find all the other animals too, but they either ignored or attacked her. She had a narrow escape in her encounter with the leopard.

She knelt and sadly wept. The old woman came again and said, "Your sincerity has deeply touched me. Without fighting skills, you will never get the best of those animals. Now I shall take you to a place where I can teach you the skills you need."

The old woman rose in the air, taking Gongerjian with her. At the old woman's command, Gongerjian opened her eyes and beheld a magnificent landscape with green hills dotted with flowers, evergreens, and blue rivers flowing between hills. Below her she saw white roiling clouds. As she breathed in fragrant air she wondered where she was. The old woman asked a fairy to teach her

fighting skills. A few days later she was adept at throwing stones, tossing sand, and controlling bees. She was also adept in the use of ropes, arrows, and spears. The old woman felt Gongerjian was ready to battle the animals, gave her a magic bead capable of producing violent gusts of winds, and returned her to the earth.

When Gongerjian approached her brother's clay figure upon her return, she found that it had nearly melted from the rain. She set to work to remold it and, just as she finished, the eagle flew near her. She hit it with a stone, sending it tumbling to the earth. Gongerjian raced forward, holding a sword. The eagle begged for mercy. Gongerjian demanded that the eagle return her brother's eyes and the eagle vomited out the eyes.

Next, she found the crows, who ignored her as before. She furiously let fly a handful of sand, sending them rolling across the ground. She demanded that they return her brother's intestines. In turn, she compelled all the animals to return her brother's body parts.

Her encounter with the magpie was different. The magpie flew to her voluntarily and said, "I have kept your brother's heart and lungs for ten years. His heart continues to beat. If I return them, you should make me a beautiful dress." Gongerjian agreed and made a lovely black and white silk dress for the magpie, who then returned the heart and lungs as promised.

By this time she had collected all her brother's body parts. In the blink of an eye they became a whole body again. But Yangkesa did not breath. She asked the sands to help. This enraged the sands and sandy clouds swirled about Gongerjian. Unafraid, Gongerjian threw the magic bead at the swirling sands. Suddenly, thunder boomed and a heavy rain fell, clearing the air. It continued to rain and, at last, Yangkesa's blood floated to the surface of the dune where he had died and into his body.

The rain ceased and the sun shone. "Gongerjian!" rang out and, when she turned, she found her brother standing before her, looking exactly as he had years before. They embraced and wept happy tears. When they returned to the site of their home they found that it was there again. Animal pens teemed with livestock.

Strangely, a dog had been added to their household. Old people said that the dog was Yangkesa's wife and, to punish her, the gods had turned her into a dog.

Clever Mula³⁹

MULA'S MOTHER DIED WHEN HE WAS SEVEN and, by the age of nine, his father had also died. A neighboring herdowner learned of his plight and took Mula to his home to work for him. Though Mula herded livestock everyday, he was given inadequate food and clothing. Still, this hard life strengthened him and, as he matured, he became increasingly wise in the ways of the world.

One day two gray wolves lunged into sheep flock he was herding and killed a fat sheep. Mula gave the meat of the dead sheep to several poor herdsman and took the skin, head, and hooves to the herdowner. Enraged, the herdowner cursed, "You'll either pay for this sheep or else you'll give me your life!" Mula calmly returned, "Kill the wolves and I promise not to let them kill any more of your sheep." The herdowner was stumped and prepared to hunt and kill the wolves.

The next day the herdowner went with Mula and brought along his bow and arrows. Mula knew that the herdowner was a poor hunter and, as soon as the herdowner left him and went looking for the wolves elsewhere, he killed two fat sheep and distributed the meat to those who had little to eat.

That afternoon the herdowner reappeared. Mula pretended to be distraught while showing him two sets of heads and hooves. "Master, just look. The wolves came again and killed two more sheep. What shall I do?" he wailed and even managed to weep a few tears.

Sighing, the herdowner said, "Herd the sheep back home. Tomorrow I'm sure I'll kill the wolves." Within the following four days, eight more sheep were killed, though the herdowner did not see so much as a single wolf's hair. On the fifth day he decided to stay with Mula as he herded. By afternoon no wolves had

³⁹Translated from the Chinese by Jiao Aimei. For a somewhat different account, see "Mola Kills the Snow Monster," (Stuart 1991:20-27).

come so he said suspiciously, "Didn't you say that wolves come here everyday and killed sheep? Why have no sheep come today?" Mula said, "Master, because you are stronger than the wolves, they are terrified of you and dare not come. If you come with me everyday, the sheep will surely be safe."

Afterwards, the herdowner herded with Mula. But, five days later, the owner impatiently said, "If a wolf comes, you come home and call me." Mula said in surprise, "If I come call you, what will happen to the flock? Left unguarded, won't more be devoured?" The owner was again perplexed. Finally he said, "Take my bow and, if wolves come, shoot them." "I never learned to hunt and I don't know how to use a bow and arrow," Mula answered.

The herdowner was even more bewildered. Finally he ordered, "Today I shall return ahead of you. I'll have a plan ready by this evening." Later that day Mula killed ten sheep and gave the flesh to poor families. He tore the skins into shreds and took the hooves and heads to the herdowner. Wailing loudly he said, "My good master, no matter what you say, I dare not herd your sheep any longer. As soon as you left today, five big wolves jumped out from where they had been hiding behind some knolls. Two guarded me while the others rushed into the flock. In just a moment they ate ten sheep. I was nearly killed." The more he talked the louder he wailed. He nearly choked on his sobs.

The herdowner could not punish Mula, but losing ten sheep in one day was a dreadful loss. His accumulated rage was such that he fell unconscious. Mula decided to kill ten sheep a few more times and then escape, for he knew that the herdowner would not tolerate such losses much longer.

After considering it the entire night the herdowner concluded that Mula must be killing the sheep and resolved to secretly follow him the next day. The following day Mula took the sheep flock out as usual. Later, just as he was about to kill a sheep, he heard someone shout "Stop!" The herdowner jumped out of where he had been hiding. Cursing Mula, he dragged the fourteen year old boy back to his home and shut him up in a small damp dark hut. The owner thought, "The nights are now so cold that Mula will surely die of cold. When he dies like this I won't be charged with murder."

At dawn the herdowner went out and looked through a crack in the hut hoping to find Mula dead. To his great surprise he found that Mula was not only alive, but profusely sweating. He opened the door and asked, "How could you be so hot on such a cold night?"

Mula pretended to have a great secret and remained silent. The herdowner angrily bellowed, "If you don't tell me, I'll have you beheaded!" Mula whispered, "I'm wearing a magic coat handed down by my ancestors. It wards off both cold and disease and protects against arrows and knives. In fact, it can grant any wish that I have." The herdowner was completely taken in and pleaded, "Sell me your coat and I'll forget the matter of the dead sheep." Mula hesitantly responded, "My father told me to never sell it."

"I'll give you my sheep flock. Is that enough?" the owner said.

Mula grudgingly said, "For you, master, I must agree. May the gods protect me." He talked in a very pious way and kowtowed three times to the gods. Abruptly he said in embarrassment, "What shall I wear if I give you my magic coat?" "That's easy. You may wear my coat," the herdowner said as he quickly removed his coat and handed it to Mula. Mula reluctantly handed over his outer coat to the herdowner, who happily put it on.

The sun was shining brightly when they came out of the small hut. Mula pretended to be cold, shivered, and said, "Your coat is so cold. Master, how do you feel?" It was a warm morning and the herdowner answered, "Good. This coat is warmer than mine." After having tea with the herdowner, Mula drove his newly acquired sheep flock into the distance as fast as he could.

The herdowner wanted to show everybody on the grassland his magic coat. He mounted his horse and started to a neighbor's home but, before he was even halfway there, the weather turned so cold that the herdowner died.

Mula distributed the sheep to poor families. Whenever he told the story of the magic coat and how he had fooled the herdowner his listeners were helpless with laughter. Mula had jumped about in the hut where he had been imprisoned and, in this way, had made himself sweat.⁴⁰

⁴⁰See "The Waters of Immortality" (Stuart 1993:63-65) for a similar Mongol account of an evil herdlord's death.

Mula Marries⁴¹

W

HEN MULA HAD PASSED THE AGE OF TWENTY he had helped many poor herdsmen, who much appreciated his help.

One day when Mula was out riding he saw a beautiful girl in the distance. When they passed each other, neither said a word. Mula did notice the girl's beauty and hoped to marry her. She also noted Mula's good looks and fell in love with him. As she rode away she turned back repeatedly to gaze after Mula. Guessing her thoughts, Mula raced after and accompanied her to her home to propose marriage.

To his surprise she had a rich and powerful family. As soon as her father saw Mula he assumed that he must be as poor as a beggar. When Mula proposed marriage to the girl, the father laughed and said, "Do you have gems? Do you have camels, horses, cattle, and sheep? Do you control a vast expanse of grassland? Leave before you anger me." Mula replied, "Only those who never saw grassland would say the grassland you control is vast. Only those who never saw jewels would covet yours. If you visit me you may view unimaginable quantities of jewels and vast grasslands covered with countless animals. I came here to propose marriage because I much respect you. I wear rags because I am afraid others might learn of my great wealth. If I were truly a beggar, how would I dare come to your home? And if your daughter had not been interested in me, how would I dare propose marriage?"

With this he got up as though to leave. The girl ran out from an inner room, held Mula, and said, "Father, I love him very much. Please consent." The girl's outburst and Mula's story shocked the father. Finally he said, "Well, I must

⁴¹Translated from the Chinese by Jiao Aimei.

go see if what he says is true." It was then agreed that Mula would return to his home first and, two days later, the girl's father would come.

Two days later Mula returned to an area where he had worked before for a rich herdowner owning thousands of animals. People there all knew Mula and liked him. When he told them his desire to marry they agreed to help him. Some led his horse, others brought him new clothing. When asked, they planned to say that the grassland and livestock were all Mula's.

Mula rode to the rich herdowner's home when everything was prepared. Members of his household said that the old herdowner was out hunting and only the young master was at home. Mula talked to the young master in a stammering, frightened way, "How terrible! Old master fell from his horse and was seriously injured. He said you must come quickly!"

The young master looked at him carefully and said, "So, it is Mula! Have you come to deceive us again?" "Oh no, no. I'll continue with my journey. I only met your father as I was passing by. Now, I'm leaving." Mula said this he got up to leave. The young master restrained him and demanded, "Where is my father?" "In the south pine forest about forty *li*⁴² from here," Mula answered.

The worried son more or less believed this and said, "Brother Mula, will you please find a doctor for father?" Mula agreed. The young master, accompanied by many servants, galloped away.

At the agreed upon time, the father of the girl Mula wished to marry reached a rich grassland. Noticing the huge number of animals he was filled with wonder. He stopped and asked a herdsman, "Whose livestock are these?" "My young master's," the herdsman said. "Where is your master?" the girl's father asked. "He went to propose marriage to a girl the day before yesterday. But people say her father was surly and scornful of my master. Now, if I were that girl's father, I'd marry ten of my daughters to him!" the herdsman said. The old man anxiously asked where Mula lived. The herdsman pointed to a rich-looking home in the distance.

⁴²Twenty kilometers.

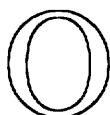
When Mula saw the girl's father approaching he sent servants out to welcome him and entertained him alone. Seeing Mula in new clothing and noticing the gold and silver household utensils, the older man became as meek as a mouse. "Master, please forget what I said earlier. I was just being foolish. I'll return home tonight. Tomorrow I promise that I shall send my daughter to you. Does this meet with your approval?" he begged. Mula smiled and said, "Don't worry. When I have things in readiness here, I shall come myself to take your daughter." The father said, "I'm honored that you think so highly of me, but I feel that I'm the one that is fortunate," and then he knelt and kowtowed to Mula. Doing his best to keep from laughing, Mula helped the old man up and offered him more drink and food.

Just before the father left, Mula said to the rich herdowner's steward, "Open the treasury. I need some gold to pay the doctor, otherwise he won't help." The steward dared not disobey, opened the treasury, and left. Mula brought the father inside and showed him a full treasury colorfully glittering. Just as he was about to leave, Mula gave him several gold ingots and then told the steward to lock the treasury. Weeping in gratitude, the father rode back to his home.

As soon as he was gone Mula went to the grassland and asked some friends to go with him to collect his bride. They readied all sorts of gifts and set off in great excitement. The girl's father had butchered cattle and sheep in anticipation of their arrival. When they arrived, the ritual of seeing the bride off from her parents' home was held. Mula explained that he was in a hurry to return home and it was not necessary for the bride's relatives to escort the bride back to her new home as was customary. This was agreed to and then Mula and his entourage left.

Two years later Mula and his wife and baby came to visit his father-in-law. The old man had learned moons before that his new son-in-law was the infamous Mula and had been nearly sick with anger. But, when he met Mula, he only said, "Money has no value when compared to intelligence. I hope you have a happy life."

Gesar's Birth and Marriage⁴³



ONCE TWO BROTHERS LIVED WITH THEIR SISTER. One brother was named Arckshoton and the other was named Archiregara. The brothers had evil hearts and treated their sister cruelly. They beat and cursed her and, worse still, forced her to do all the housework and carry water with a skin bag full of holes they had made with a needle. She was constantly busy and exhausted.

One day while she was herding she fell into an exhausted slumber and dreamed the sun and moon fell from the sky and entered her belly through her mouth. The next day when she went to a mountain spring to fetch water she found a glittering golden spindle in the spring's bottom. She took it out, put it in her bosom, and returned home. When she told her brothers what she had found they demanded to see the spindle. Reaching in her bosom, she found that the spindle was gone. The brothers said she was a liar and beat her ruthlessly. The same thing happened the next day and she was again beaten by her brothers.

The third day she put the spindle in her mouth. This way she felt she would not lose it. The moment she returned to her brothers they demanded to see the spindle. As she was about to answer she swallowed the spindle. After they beat her again they drove her from the home to a snow-covered mountain. They said that her constant lying was an ill omen. They gave her only an old mare, an old bitch dog, and three goats.

Arckshoton chanted incantations that brought heavy rains for seven days and nights. The brothers believed the rains would kill their sister. Sure that she was dead, they went up the mountain to view her corpse. When they reached the spot where they had left her they found, to their surprise, that all the snow had melted, the mare had given birth to a healthy colt, the dog had birthed a puppy, and the goats had all given birth as well. The brothers felt only anger at seeing this and left, thinking that their sister would eventually die.

Two days passed and they returned. They found to their astonishment that their sister had delivered a son--Gesar. "This girl has given birth to something

⁴³Translated from the Chinese by Jiao Aimei.

evil. We can't allow him to live," they said, resolving to murder the boy. A short time later they said to an evil black crow, "Fly to that evil boy and kill him!"

Gesar divined their plans and said, "Mother, before you go herd, put a pestle beside me. Uncle will send an evil crow to kill me today. I will kill this crow." When she returned that evening she found a dead crow. "Mother, take the crow to Evil Hill," Gesar said. His mother did so. A few days later Arckshoton went to Evil Hill and found it. He then angrily ordered an evil bitch dog to kill the boy. Again, the boy knew what his uncle planned and killed the dog with an arrow. Later, his mother took the dead dog to Evil Hill. When the two brothers found the dead dog they sent a demon to devour the boy. Gesar said, "Mother, don't herd today. A demon will come to devour me. I'll transform myself into an egg. Put it on a wooden dish and wait. When the demon comes say to him, 'You have so many things to eat. Why must you also eat my son? In fact, he is so small that he cannot even fill the spaces between your teeth. Please eat this egg first.'"

When the demon came the mother repeated this. The demon put the egg in his mouth. It lodged in his throat and, regardless of his efforts, he could not move it. In intense pain, the demon's eyes nearly popped out of his head. At this moment a goddess--Gesar's sister--spoke from heaven, "Ha, my brother is now in your throat. Though you feel the pain is unbearable, what will happen if he suddenly stands up?" Gesar stood up and, in so doing, ripped the demon's mouth open, killing him. The mother took the demon's corpse to Evil Hill.

Several days later when the demon did not return, the brothers decided they should kill the boy themselves. Gesar sensed what it was they intended to do and said, "Mother, my 'kind' uncles will visit me today. Put some ashes in my cradle."

Just as the mother finished doing this, one uncle entered their home. "Well," he said, "I've come with food and clothing for my nephew. Here are some fat meat, butter, and much clothing." As the mother took the gifts she found that there was not enough meat to fill the gap between two teeth, the amount of butter was so small that it would fit into the palm of one hand, and the clothing was barely enough to wind around a child's thumb!

The uncle said hurriedly, "Sister, today you must come to my home. Let's go now." The two left but, after going some distance, the brother said, "Oh, I've forgotten something in your home. I'll go get it. You go ahead." His sister asked suspiciously, "What do you plan to do to my son?" "Your children are the same as my children," he replied. "Why are you so worried?" and then he returned to

her home. He took Gesar's cradle and took it to Jiu River. He covered the boy's head with felt, drove wooden pegs through his hands and legs, and covered him with a huge boulder. Triumphant he returned to his sister. "Brother, what did you do to my son?" she asked and then she returned to her home. Finding the cradle gone, she recalled her son telling her to put ashes in the cradle. Noticing a trail of ash, she followed it to Jiu River where she found Gesar in great distress.

"Mother, push this boulder off me," Gesar said. Though she tried her best, she could not budge the huge stone. She also was unable to budge the wooden pegs holding her son to the ground. Afraid that her son would soon die and distraught over the fact that she unable to help him, she began weeping. "Mother, don't weep. The fact that I have been nailed to the ground signifies that I will control the earth. The felt about my head means that I will never forget common people. This gag means that I will always be mindful of those who are too poor to drink milk with their tea." Then he gave a great shout and the huge boulder flew into the distance, landing three and a half mountain ranges away. All the pegs also gave way. Gesar then stood and returned home with his mother.

The mother and her son later decided that they should not stay there any longer. As they traveled in search of a new home they found a broken slingshot and grindstone. Gesar told his mother to pick them up and keep them. In time they came to a river. Nearby lived a fierce wild yak that gored every passerby. Soon the huge and fierce yak charged. Gesar loaded the grindstone into his slingshot, let fly, and the yak fell dead.

After the two crossed the river, Gesar said, "Mother, let's live near Kingamin River. Edible roots are as big as horse heads there." When they reached that place they lived on edible roots, marmots, and by herding.

One day two daughters of a khan rode by Gesar's home. When they realized that this family lived on marmots, they laughed. Gesar invited them inside, but both daughters were afraid of entering such a home. When they returned to their own home they described what they had seen to their mother. She replied, "Go inside the next time you pass by his home. Since he lives in a grass hut, swing the front of your robes. This will make his straw hut collapse and you'll have a good laugh!"

When they passed by again they entered the hut and flapped their robes. The hut did not collapse. They saw some marmots inside the hut and, disgusted by this, they hurriedly started to leave. Gesar would not let them go. He accused

them of stealing some of his marmots. "We have fat sheep to eat! Who would want your marmots?" the princesses said angrily.

Gesar counted his marmots and found two were missing. He reached out and shook the girls' robes. Two marmots fell out. "Well, who said they had fat sheep to eat and didn't have any interest in marmots?" he said sarcastically. Angry and embarrassed, the two girls ran home weeping. On the way they heard the mountain pines murmuring, "The princesses stole someone's marmots. How funny!" When they reached the khan's palace and told what had happened to their mother she said, "What does it matter? Don't be embarrassed. He only wants to marry one of you."

At that time many men came to propose marriage to the older princess. The khan decided to hold a competition to decide who was the best man to marry his daughter. He sent a servant to spread news of the competition. When Gesar was notified he decided to join. The first item of the competition was a race to Sungbuer Mountain. All the contestants but Gesar rode horses. Gesar rode a yellow bull. When the race was finished Gesar had won.

The second item was to thread a thin string through a horn with nine curls and that was nine *chi* long. None of the contestants succeeded. When it came Gesar's turn, he tied one end of the string to the leg of an ant and waited. Not long afterwards the ant came out of the horn's end with the string.

The third event was to cover Sungbuer Mountain with white silk. The contestants busily gathered hundreds of thousands of horses loaded with silk but, even so, only a small part of the mountain was draped in silk. When it came Gesar's turn he took out a three *chi* length of silk. After he blew on it the silk completely covered the mountain.

At last the khan said that the last event would be the decisive one. "I will command that one hundred beauties ride out together," he proclaimed. "The man who recognizes one of my daughters from among them shall marry her."

At this moment Gesar looked up and saw a wild goose flying overhead. He called to the goose, "Please help me. How can I recognize the princess?" The wild goose told him to look for a yellow bee flying over the left shoulder of one beauty. This would be the princess. When this final event got underway, the other contestants all made wrong choices. Gesar waited and, when he at last saw a bee buzzing about the left shoulder of a girl, he indicated that this was the princess. In this way he won the competition and married her.

The Life of Gesar⁴⁴

G

UESTS AS HONORED AS THE SUN AND MOON
Please allow me to tell you a story
A story about the hero--Gesar
The hero praised generation after generation
He was as brave as a fierce mountain tiger
As a flood dragon living in the sea
We cannot adequately express our reverence for our hero
Even when we dip up mellow wine
As precious as lake water
When he slew Yogur White Khan
In our ancestor's heart was
Created animosity
It is said that in the past
Every Yogur descendant must stop and brandish
His sword before the temple of Gesar
When he passed by it
This was the former custom of Yogur⁴⁵

Long ago at a time no one knows exactly there lived a monk named Argechaodong. His sister had a daughter but we don't know her name. Her parents were poor herdsmen. They died soon after she was born and the property that became hers was nothing more than a white mare and a small black dog. The

⁴⁴Translated from the Chinese by Han Meizhu.

⁴⁵The animosity toward Gesar on the part of certain Yogur as the result of his defeat of ancestral Yogur has a corollary in Huzhu Monguor Autonomous County in Qinghai among some Monguor. They argue that Gesar "is Tibetan and Tibetans slew many of our ancestors in the past." When a television version of Gesar was broadcast by the Qinghai Television Station in the 1990s many Monguor turned off their television sets in anger until the program was finished. Furthermore, because Huzhu Monguor believe that Erlang and Gesar are the same entity, Erlang was not venerated among most Huzhu Monguor in the 1990s. (I am indebted to Dr. Limusishiden for this information.)

An example of Erlang-Gesar may be found in Stuart and Limusishiden (1994:148-152). This particular account, titled "Erlang Lord," shares several motifs with the two Yogur Gesar accounts, such as the hero's wife tossing peas under the feet of the monster her husband is fighting, which helps the hero defeat the monster.

girl dearly loved the two animals. She ate what they ate, slept where they slept, hunted with them, and went wherever they went. The only relative she had was her mother's brother, the monk, who was cold and cruel to her. Under his 'care' she was poorly dressed and fed.

One day something odd happened. In a spot where the grass was soaked with the mare's urine a small green pine tree sprouted. The moment it broke through the ground the girl felt something moving inside her body. The white mare neighed and the black dog ran about wildly.

As the pine grew taller, the girl's belly became large. Three years later the pine had become a tall tree and the girl's belly was huge. At first she thought that she must have contracted some strange disease, but later she realized she was pregnant. She kept to her tent in fear others would learn this. Nevertheless, word of her pregnancy swept across the land.

The old monk worried that his niece would give birth to a monster because of evil she had committed. After several nights of scheming he decided to send her into snow-covered mountains to die in a blizzard before she birthed whatever evil creature she carried.

The monk asked a man to take his niece to the mountains after he first cruelly scolded her. During the first three days and nights that she was gone the monk chanted incantations. Fierce winds howled and snow fell furiously during those three days and nights. Delighted, the old monk grinned hideously. Sure that his niece was now dead, he asked the man to look for her corpse. But no snow had fallen in the place where the girl had been deserted. What had been snow-covered hills and glaciers had become verdant green hills and flowing clear rivers. It was as warm as spring there, though it was winter.

The girl had given birth to a strong boy child. He had a rosy sharp-pointed nose and large ears. The man searching for the girl was dumbfounded when he beheld all this. He rushed back and reported to the old monk, who concluded it was yet another ill omen and resolved to kill both his niece and her son. After preparing red cloth three *chi* in length and three *jin*⁴⁶ of poisoned butter he went to 'congratulate' his niece.

The child grew rapidly. In no time at all he could speak and, a short time later, he seemed to be an adult. His mother was delighted with this and named him "Gesar." The day before the old monk came Gesar said, "Mother, uncle will visit. When he comes, don't say anything. Just smear some butter he will bring on the stove and give the remainder to me."

The next day the old monk arrived and kindly congratulated his niece, who said nothing. Gesar smiled broadly as he looked at the old monk. When the old

⁴⁶One and a half kilograms.

monk wrapped Gesar in the red cloth, he found it covered only half of his body. While the monk was thus occupied the mother smeared butter on the stove, which made the metal stove crack. She understood at once that the butter was poisonous and handed the remaining butter to Gesar, who prepared a pot of milk tea and, adding butter to the tea, respectfully offered it to the monk, who turned pale in fright. As he was refusing the tea, its steam hit him in the face, turning all his teeth black. The old monk then raced away.

The monk next found three men of unusual strength to kill Gesar. Before the three set out the monk lent them his eagle and his big black dog. Gesar said to his mother, "Today, my uncle will send someone to kill us. When they come, don't say a word. Then they will leave. My uncle's big black dog and eagle will also come to harm us. When you see them say, 'Oh, black dog, oh, eagle, devour my son quickly,' and I'll deal with them."

Gesar prepared a weapon and hid it. The three men soon appeared. One had a big knife, one had a spear, and the third carried a sword. They pointed their weapons at Gesar's mother's neck. She remained silent and the three men felt ashamed. They thought, "How can a brave tiger fight against a weak rabbit? Why do men of unusual strength bully a kind woman and child?" The three felt ashamed and regretted their crude behavior, which would only anger the gods. They turned and left.

A moment later the black dog came. Gesar's mother said, "My son is sleeping in the cave. Go devour him as quickly as you can." The big black dog ran to the cave. As soon as the dog entered, Gesar stepped out from where he had been hiding, swung his slingshot, and killed the dog with a rock as big as an ox.

Several moments later the eagle came. Gesar's mother said, "Eagle, quickly devour my son." The eagle opened its mouth and began searching for Gesar. Gesar swung his slingshot again and fired a rock as big as an ox into the eagle's mouth. The eagle fell to the ground and died without uttering a sound. The old monk was thus utterly defeated.

Gesar's strength was enormous. He could wrestle oxen to the ground and break large pine trees with a chop of his hand. When he shouted, tree leaves fell to the ground like falling snow. Unfortunately, with the passing of time, his mother died and he was left alone. He had no livestock and lived by hunting. As he grew up the only thing that bothered him was loneliness. When a man gets old enough he should marry and it was now time for Gesar to have a wife.

A nearby king had three beautiful daughters. Gesar favored the youngest because of her beauty and charm. Though Gesar wished to marry her he dared not propose directly because he was so poor. And, though he invited these girls to eat cooked game in his home several times, they consistently refused.

One morning a breeze blew under a crystal clear sky. The three sisters were picking flowers and catching butterflies. At noon a strong wind suddenly blew up and black clouds covered the sky. Hailstones as big as fists began falling. Unable to find any other shelter they ran into Gesar's home. Gesar said sarcastically, "I didn't invite the three of you here to my shabby home. To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" The eldest and second oldest sisters ignored him but the youngest smiled. A moment later the hail stopped. Laughing, the three left his home. As soon as they reached their home the eldest and second eldest suddenly found that their bodies were covered with open running sores, which caused them to writhe in pain. The king was puzzled. The youngest girl told him everything that had happened during their outing. The king guessed that Gesar knew the magic arts and told his youngest daughter to visit him and ask him to help the two ill sisters.

The youngest sister happily went to Gesar's home. Gesar smiled when he saw her and asked how he might help. She told him what had happened to her two sisters. When she finished he said, "This is a simple matter but first you must do the following three things. You must first frequently visit me. Secondly, you must marry me. Thirdly, you should love me all your life."

By this time the youngest sister believed Gesar to be honest and straightforward and was deeply in love with him. She agreed at once to the three conditions. Gesar added, "When you return home you will find that your two sisters will soon be cured." Only half-believing him the youngest sister left. When she reached her home she repeated what Gesar had said to her father. Very soon the two sisters recovered.

The next day the king prepared a grand feast and asked the youngest girl to invite Gesar. She did so but Gesar said, "I am poor and have only tattered clothing to wear. How can I attend such a feast? But when you return home tell the king that I thank him for the honor of his invitation." The king was understandably unhappy with Gesar's refusal, as was the youngest sister. The king then invited his ministers to the feast. During the feast the king noticed a poorly clad stranger. He was tall, muscular, and carried himself with great dignity. The king knew that this was an unusual man and wanted to have a closer look at him. Just then the youngest sister called out happily, "Gesar! Gesar!" Gesar left without even a backward glance. The king was delighted when he learned that this man was Gesar.

Several days later the king prepared another feast and asked his youngest daughter to invite Gesar. This time Gesar came without hesitating. Dressed in new clothing, he was exceedingly handsome. Both the eldest and second eldest sisters were ashamed when they saw him and regretted having made fun of him earlier. The youngest sister was as happy as a lark. After the feast she persuaded Gesar

to display his horsemanship, marksmanship, and fighting skills. Gesar agreed. His performances were magnificent and delighted the old king. He consented at once to the proposed marriage and sent for a Living Buddha to bless the couple.

There was an island in the country the king ruled that was home to a nine-headed man-eating monster. Though the king had sent many people to kill this monster they had all died in the attempt. After the king witnessed Gesar's performances he told him about the nine-headed monster. Gesar agreed to kill it. The king was pleased and ordered weapons be prepared and hosted a farewell banquet for Gesar.

After travelling several days by horseback Gesar at last came to a shore. In the distance in a vast lake he dimly discerned the island. Gesar rode about on the shore but he could not find any way to reach the island. Suddenly he heard someone weeping. As he went in the direction of this sound, he saw a large tree. Under the tree was a shepherdess. Gesar approached and asked her what was wrong. She replied, "You surely do not know that a nine-headed monster lives on that island. Wherever he goes he devours and injures people. Every year he kidnaps dozens of girls and forces them to be his wives. If they do not comply disaster befalls them and their families. I was forced to come here by the monster when I was still a child. During the daytime I tend sheep for him. At night I clean his body and lick his feet. I must tend him far into the night. I really cannot continue to live in this way."

"Why does he want his feet licked?" Gesar asked in surprise.

"When he goes to bed his feet must be licked until two snakes run out of his nose. This shows that he has fallen asleep. Sometimes his feet must be licked until midnight before he at last goes to sleep. The bones of those who have died of exhaustion licking his feet would form several mountains," said the girl.

"That island is so far away from here. How is it possible to go there?" Gesar asked.

"These sheep can swim across. If you ride one of them, you can reach the island," the shepherdess explained.

"You should escape!" exclaimed Gesar.

"No one can leave here. If you try to escape, you will only get lost on the shores and, sooner or later, die of starvation," replied the girl. Gesar then asked her to lend him a sheep so that he might cross the lake.

"Don't try to go there! This island is heavily guarded and you would be shot full of arrows as soon as you were detected. Even if you managed to enter the cave where the monster is you would not be able to get near him. Besides his main head he has eight other heads. They are the heads of a lion, tiger, leopard, serpent, cow, horse, sheep, and dog. When a stranger enters the cave these beasts thrust out their tongues, which are as hot as fire and so strong that they can smash

rocks into dust. They can also melt knives and swords at a touch. They would burn a man to death instantly," the girl warned.

Gesar insisted, "I'm not afraid. I must go. The king urged me to do this on behalf of all the people." The girl answered, "Well, if you must go, you may hide among the sheep. But remember, if someone asks you how you came to the island, you must answer that you came across on the sheep."

At sunset Gesar and the girl crossed the lake on the sheep. Many huge strange-shaped boulders dotted the island. Lions and tigers roared in valleys and from among trees. The monster's cave was situated on a dangerous over-hanging cliff and bright light streamed from it. At the foot of the mountain a winding path led to the cave entrance, as though it were the tongue of an enormous dragon.

When it was completely dark Gesar reached the cave along the winding path. The nine-headed monster lay stiffly on a bed as the shepherdess licked his soles. Before Gesar could approach, the monster's eight bestial heads sent out wildly darting poisonous tongues. The cave became hot as a stove. Gesar was afraid that the tongues would injure the girl and rushed over to pull her away. Just as he reached her she was killed by the flames. Gesar shouted, brandished his sword, and slashed at the monster, who immediately reared up. Eight of his tongues flew at Gesar. Knowing that the monster had monstrous strength, Gesar jumped out of the cave and raced down the path. The monster followed in hot pursuit. They fought for a long while, but neither side could defeat the other.

Finally the monster became as furious as a tiger and roared out in such anger that rocks vibrated. This so frightened the creatures on the island that they whimpered in fear. The monster's hair stood on end as he reached out to grab Gesar with his bestial paws. The monster was nearly twice as tall as Gesar who, seeking an escape, ran between the monster's legs. Gesar shot eight arrows into eight of the monster's throats, causing these eight heads to flop uselessly. With this turn of events the monster lost his will to fight and fled. Gesar followed him and cut off his main head with a mighty swing of his large fighting knife. At the death of the nine-headed monster a throng of smaller monsters jumped into the water.

Gesar returned to the opposite shore with the help of the sheep that could cross water and set out toward his home on his horse. Several days passed and he was still on the shore. He realized that he had only made a large circle. For days he was lost with no food or drink. He became so exhausted that he at last fell from his horse and slept for several moons.

Heaven has thirty-three levels and hell has eighteen. In hell's lowest eighteenth level there lived a monster with the head of a lion and a human body who ate people that were imprisoned there. One day he went to the shore near the island, walked toward a bright light in the distance, and found Gesar asleep. He went up to Gesar's horse and licked its rump with his fiery tongue, nearly burning

the horse to death. Just then the King of Heaven noticed Gesar and ordered the God of Wind and the God of Thunder to waken Gesar. The God of Rain sprinkled magic water on the horse, which allowed it to recover from its burns. Gesar awoke, but he was still unable to find a way to leave the shore. Suddenly two eagles cried overhead. One was white and the other was black. Gesar said, "Holy eagles, go to my home and find my wife!" As soon as he said this both eagles flew into the distance.

Several days later the eagles reappeared and said, "Gesar, follow us. White Khan has stolen your wife. You must rescue her without delay." Gesar worriedly followed the eagles. Several days later he paused beneath a tree where the eagles were roosting. Near the tree he noticed a tall building without steps or doors, though several windows were visible. When the eagles screeched several times, a window opened and something was thrown out. An eagle flew over, picked it up, and brought it to Gesar. Gesar realized it was his wife's bracelet and that she was imprisoned in the building.

He hacked a hole in the building with his sword and rescued his wife. Not long afterwards White Khan came with many troops and blocked their escape. White Khan was also adept in fighting and effectively arranged his troops to encircle and prevent Gesar's departure. Gesar attacked the troops for several days, but he still could not fight his way through their ranks. Gesar's wife realized the gravity of the situation and said, "White Khan, the two of you need not fight. Why not have a contest in fighting skills? I'll marry the winner." Gesar and White Khan then began an archery contest. Both shot one hundred arrows, but the result was so close that it was impossible to say who had won. This was followed by a swordfight but the outcome was also inconclusive. At this juncture, Gesar's wife surreptitiously threw a handful of peas on the ground where White Khan stood. Unable to maintain his balance, he slipped and fell. With a quick swing of his sword Gesar cut off his head. White Khan's troops instantly charged from all sides. Gesar counter-attacked with his sword and slashed ring after encircling ring of soldiers as though he was cutting watermelons. Finally, when dusk fell, the enemy troops began shrieking and howling in pain and fear. Gesar managed at last to break through their ranks and return home. The old king granted him the title of 'Brave Lion King' because of his valor. Not long thereafter the old king died but, just before expiring, he gave Gesar complete authority over his realm.

It is said that our Yogur nationality once believed in Islam. Later, Gesar led troops and conquered us. Our ancestors were then forced to accept Buddhism. This change in religion caused other Muslims to be resentful. Consequently, our ancestors had to leave their original richly endowed homeland and wander about until they reached the foot of the Qilian Mountains.

Geraos⁴⁷

LONG AGO a man and wife dearly loved each other and lived in harmony. The man was a brave and strong herdsman who not only herded sheep and cattle for others, but also tended his own livestock which constantly multiplied. His clever wife's beauty brought many compliments. Unfortunately, the tribal chief's eldest son also learned of her beauty. With the darkest of motives he schemed to take her from the herdsman. He planned to kill the herdsman and then snatch the wife. The chief's son sent his men to order the young herdsman to transport goods by camel to a distant place. Before setting off the husband broke a round mirror in two. He gave half to his wife and kept the other half. They vowed when they were reunited they would make the mirror round again. Then the husband set off with a hunting dog.

The following night, as several masked men jumped out from the roadside and choked him to death, the piece of mirror in his clothing fell to the ground. All the camels he had been leading were taken away by the bandits who were in the employ of the chief's son.

The young master immediately sent his henchman to steal the herdsman's wife once he learned of his death. When she was brought before him he gazed at her lustfully and ordered a feast prepared for her. Angrily, she ignored him and sat alone in a room thinking what she should do. The little hunting dog that had accompanied her husband suddenly ran up to her and placed her husband's half mirror at her feet. When she picked it up, she was sure that her husband had met misfortune. The dog pulled at her clothing and, following it, she rushed out of the room, but she was soon stopped by the young master. When he noticed the half-mirror in her hand he sneered, "I heard that your husband took a half-mirror with him. I suppose the broken mirror will now never be whole." The young wife realized that she and her husband had been tricked. Angry and worried she fainted.

When she regained consciousness she found herself lying on a bed in a luxurious room. The young master was sleeping beside her. Taking out the half-mirror she wept unceasingly. Finally, she gouged out her own eyes. Screaming in pain she fainted again. Awakened by her agonized shrieks, the young man found the previously beautiful woman lying in a pool of blood. Horrified, he rushed out of the room.

⁴⁷Translated from the Chinese by Li Dan.

At dawn he reentered the room and, when he realized she had gouged out her eyes, he wailed, "How I adored your lovely eyes!" and fell writhing to the ground. He said in confusion, "Terrible, terrible... I can't stand to see her again... drive her away, drive her away... I'm afraid to see her again." Afterwards the wife lived the life of a roaming beggar. She had thought of killing herself but, because she wished to give birth to her unborn baby, she did not.

Roaming about one day, she felt something tugging at her robe. She bent down and found it was the little hunting dog. The dog proved very helpful. When she was hungry the dog led her to people so that she could beg for food. Some days later they reached an old temple where they spent the night. The next morning when she awoke she could see again. Amazed, she felt with her hands and found that her eyes had returned. She rushed out of the temple looking for the little dog and found it lying under a tree. It was dead. Nothing remained of its eyes but bloody sockets. She wept, holding the dog in her arms. Shortly thereafter she gave birth to a baby boy whom she named "Geraos," meaning "eyes."⁴⁸

Seventeen years passed and the son had grown into a handsome young man. The two had managed to build their own home through hard work. As her son matured the mother told him of his father's death. The young man was unable to eat, drink, or sleep for a long time and vowed to avenge his parents. Some days later he said, "Mother, please consent to me leaving home so I may learn more and, in time, avenge you and father." His mother consented. As her son was leaving she took out one-half of the mirror and gave it to him in the hope that they would be soon reunited.

Geros scaled countless mountains and forded innumerable rivers. In time he reached a large tribe with numerous domestic animals. Rather unsure of himself, and thinking that he should learn something from someone, he traveled aimlessly on the grassland. He happened to pass by a rich household and was seen by a beautiful girl. She was attracted to him because of his youthful good looks and started toward him. Then she thought better of it, thinking that, as she was a girl, this would be improper. She dressed in her brother's clothing and, gripping a sword, dashed out on horseback after Geraos.

Geraos bowed when the young 'fellow' came near. The young 'man' asked him many questions, all of which Geraos answered. Then the young 'man' suggested that Geraos put his bag on 'his' horse. Geraos was reluctant, being somewhat suspicious. The young 'man' sensed his uncertainty, jumped off 'his' horse, and said, "Please put your bag on the horse and ride it as well." Though Geraos declined, he at last did so because the young 'man' was so insistent. The

⁴⁸Sun (1990:333) gives *GawaG* as Yogur for "look, glance, eyesight."

young 'man' was by now deeply in love with Geraos and, after hearing that he planned to avenge his parents, 'he' vowed to go with him and share weal and woe.

Once Geraos was in the saddle he was very excited because it was the first time for him to be on horseback. At dusk they approached a small house. The door of this house was opened by a strong-looking man, who invited them into his guest room with a smile and asked his daughter for a lamp. The daughter was beautiful, but there was a hint of apprehension in her face. After looking at the two good-looking guests, she left the room with a sigh. Geraos did not notice anything out of the ordinary, but his companion sensed something amiss. When the host left the room, 'he' carefully examined the room and found a dark hole beneath a wooden cover in a corner of the room. 'He' realized this was a bandits' lair where killing and robbing routinely occurred. 'He' now understood the reason for the host's daughter being upset--she obviously did not want to see the two guests killed.

'He' considered telling Geraos but decided this would only frighten him. Just then the host brought in mutton and tea. 'He' carefully looked at the host and thought he discerned murderous intention lurking in his smile.

After eating and drinking the host made their bed and urged them to rest. Just as the host was leaving the room the young 'fellow' said, "Here is money for our food and room. Please bring a basin of water and some wool that I can pad our saddle with."

The host bowed unctuously. He brought a basin of water immediately and, a short time later, brought some wool. When he left the room the final time he bolted the door from the outside.

When he no longer heard the host's footsteps the young 'man' told his suspicions to the surprised Geraos. The two decided to sleep in turn. Geraos first slept while the young 'man' kept watch after first putting the basin of water on the wooden cover.

At midnight the water in the basin sloshed. The young 'man' crept near the hole. When a bandit--the host's brother--came out 'he' cut off his head with 'his' sword. With a terrible shriek, he died. The host thought this shout signalled the death of one of his young guests and rushed into the room. Just as he entered the young 'man' chopped off one of his arms with 'his' sword. The host hastily escaped.

The two youths fled on the horse. But at dawn they found a mounted host pursuing them. The young 'man' urged Geraos to ride away while 'he' fought the pursuing bandits. After Geraos reluctantly left the young 'man' began battling the bandits. As 'he' fought 'his' bravery increased and "he" managed to defeat all the

bandits, who raced back to report their failure. The young 'man' then rushed to find Geraos.

The one-armed host came riding up with another group of bandits shortly after the two youths were reunited. Finding a large manor compound in front of them, the two youths raced inside and barred the gate. Unable to breach the compound, the bandits surrounded it.

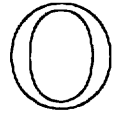
At midnight when the bandits were sleeping, the two companions climbed the wall and escaped on foot. When the bandits scaled the undefended walls the next morning they found the two had escaped and set out in pursuit. They soon caught up with them. Fortunately, a girl armed with a bow and arrows happened to pass by and, when she found the two youths hotly pursued by a host of bandits, she fired several arrows, killing several bandits. Suddenly, her bowstring snapped. Then the young 'fellow' took a length of silk he had wound about 'his' head, cut a length of 'his' long hair, and restrung her bow.

Geraos was puzzled when he saw the young "man's" very long hair, but there was no time for questions. Suddenly, the evil bandit leader threw a knife from behind them, piercing the young 'man's' heart. As 'he' died in a pool of blood, 'he' said weakly, "Geraos, follow this girl. Escape. I won't live. Did you know? I'm not a man." Dumbfounded, Geraos looked closely and found his companion was actually a girl. He picked up her sword and charged the bandits. Just as the bandit leader was about to kill Geraos, the girl with the bow loosed an arrow killing the bandit leader. The other bandits fled once they realized their leader was dead.

After burying the dead girl, Geraos and the other girl sadly left. Soon, they found someone on horseback running behind them. It was the bandit leader's daughter. The girl with the bow and arrows wanted to kill her, but Geraos restrained her. The bandit chief's daughter said tearfully, "Please let me come with you. My abominable father has done everything evil that could be done. He deserves the punishment he received today. I'm innocent." Geraos and his new companion were sympathetic and decided to let her accompany them.

After a long journey they found the tribal chief's son and chopped him and his fierce henchmen to pieces in revenge for what they had done to Geraos' parents. Geraos later married his two companions and returned to his home where they all lived happily with his mother.

Youngest Sister and Serpent Prince⁴⁹



ONCE AN OLD YOGUR WIDOWER lived with his three daughters. His wife had died of illness. With little money, he was forced to gather and sell firewood to support his family. As time passed the sisters became adult. They were noted for their beauty and resembled each other so strongly that only their father could tell them apart.

One day the old father spent many hours unsuccessfully hunting. At last he climbed up a large pine tree to cut some branches to take home. After climbing up and making several chops he dropped his ax. When he clambered down and was about to pick it up he found a thick white serpent coiled around it. Nearly frightened to death, he was about to flee when the white serpent said, "Uncle, you needn't be afraid. I am the white serpent prince of these mountains. I wish to marry one of your daughters. Return home and discuss this with them. If you promise to do so, I shall return your ax. If you do not promise, you will be sorry." The old man raced home and lay in bed. He refused food and drink. During the night he had terrible nightmares of a snake family wrapping themselves around his body and squeezing him to death.

When he awakened he was so ill that his three daughters scurried about decocting medicinal herbs and urging him to take what they had prepared. The father refused and, at last, told of his meeting with the serpent prince and his demands. Eldest Daughter and Second Daughter stoutly refused to consider such a marriage. But Youngest Daughter was so concerned about her father that she willingly agreed. A short time later she was on her way to meet the serpent prince.

After walking a few hours she rested and fell asleep. She dreamed of an old white-haired woman who said, "That you chose to marry the serpent prince is your great good fortune. I wish you joy. The serpent prince's family members were originally immortals living in heaven. Later, because they broke certain rules laid

⁴⁹Translated from the Chinese by Cheng Zhiqun and Liu Ruiming. Note the similarity of this story to the Huzhu Monguor account "Shilange" (Stuart 1994:110-114).

down by the gods, they were changed into serpents and expelled from heaven. Now they live in a cave far from here. I will give you a bee guide. When you reach an overhanging cliff covered with glossy ganodermas the bee will choose one and fly around it three times. Pluck that ganoderma and knock three times on the stone cliff with it. A stone gate will appear. The serpent family lives inside. The large serpent sitting near the kitchen stove is your mother-in-law. Your father-in-law will sit near a flat stone. The serpents that will crawl around are your sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. The one behind the door is your husband. Don't be afraid," and then she vanished.

When Youngest Daughter awakened she continued her journey. When she heard a buzzing sound she followed it across a grassland, over a tall mountain, and through several rivers. When she came to a dangerously steep cliff she saw a golden bee sitting on a glossy ganoderma. The bee flew around it three times. She picked it and knocked on the cliff three times. A stone door appeared and swung open. She entered and found splendid rooms decorated in greens and golds. There were gold basins, bowls, and stools everywhere. There were also two huge serpents. One was near the gold kitchen stove. The other one was near a gold table. Many smaller serpents slithered about and began crawling all over her. She calmly nodded to show respect to the two large serpents and knelt before the serpent behind the door. In a flash the serpent changed into a very handsome young man who seated her on a gold stool. The stone door closed by itself a moment later. All the serpents assumed human form. The girls of the home danced happily and the brothers sang enchanting songs to celebrate the marriage. Afterwards, Youngest Daughter lived happily with the family.

After some days Youngest Daughter was homesick, although she was happy with the serpent family. The serpent prince read her thoughts, gave her many golden vessels as gifts for her family, and suggested she visit her home. When she reached her home her father and two sisters were delighted and asked her many questions. Two days later Eldest Daughter nagged her unceasingly to take her back for a visit. Youngest Daughter insisted it was not the right time but, at last, she agreed.

When she returned to the cave with Eldest Daughter the serpent family had returned to their serpent forms. When Eldest Daughter beheld this sight she fainted

dead away. The serpent prince assumed his human form and said, "I neglected to tell you earlier that you should bring no strangers here. In a few days you may bring all your family here, for we shall soon burn our snakeskins and permanently assume human forms." Youngest Daughter dragged her sister out of the cave. She was hit by a blast of cold wind, regained consciousness, and raced weeping back home. Youngest Daughter remained with the serpent family.

A few days later the family burned their snakeskins and, consequently, permanently became humans. Youngest Daughter returned home but, try as she might, she could only persuade Second Daughter to visit her new home. When the two sisters entered the cave, Second Daughter was amazed at its richness and such attractive people. When she asked her sister which young man was the prince she was told that he was hunting. "Mother-in-law and father-in-law are resting," Youngest Daughter said. "Why don't we go to the river and bathe? When we return, we can formally greet them." Second Daughter thought, "Those young men I saw just now were quite handsome. The prince must be even more so. Oh, if only I could live with the prince! Why didn't I come here to marry him?" Then she pushed her sister, who was combing her hair by the river, into the water where she drowned.

A moment later the prince rode up. The sisters looked much alike and he assumed she was his wife. He asked if her father and sisters had come to visit. His 'wife' answered that they had not. Somewhat disappointed, the prince handed his horse's reins to Second Daughter, asked her to water the horse, and walked to the cave.

As she held the horse's reins while it drank, a greenfinch pecked the horse's mouth, which made it lunge back from the river. Second Daughter pulled the horse over to the water again. This time the greenfinch pecked the horse behind the ear. The terrified horse refused to try and drink again. Second Daughter returned to the cave and reported this to the prince, who told his 'wife' to rest and led the horse back to the river where the greenfinch lit on his shoulder and twittered. The prince was pleased and brought the bird back home. When Second Daughter went outside, the bird shat on her head and, whenever she was eating or drinking, the bird shat in her food and drink. Second Daughter was so enraged by this that she killed the bird when the prince was away and buried it by the door. Soon, a

hard-thorned shrub sprouted from that spot. When Second Daughter passed by, the shrub tore her clothing and pricked her hands. Infuriated, Second Daughter dug it up and burned it. A small stone spindle formed from the ashes and rolled out of the cave across the grassland. A poor old woman found it and took it home with her. Thinking it was a treasure, she put it in an old wooden box.

The next day she went out herding. Delicious milk tea and cooked mutton had been prepared when she returned in the afternoon. This happened again the next day. On the third day she took the sheep out and then secretly returned and peeked into the house through a door crack. She saw a beautiful girl cooking. The old lady rushed inside. The startled young woman explained that she was the prince's real wife. The two assumed a mother-daughter relationship. Youngest Daughter herded the sheep while the old lady stayed at home, cooking and doing housework.

One day Youngest Sister suggested that her adopted mother go to the serpent prince's home and invite him to their home. The old woman agreed but, when she reached his home and extended the invitation, the prince's 'wife' suddenly interrupted and said, "We will visit your home when pine trees are planted along the way. Each must be as thick as a pot and magpies must be perched throughout their branches."

The old woman thought, "It would take at least two hundred years for a tree to grow that thick, and it would require at least one million trees. That means it would take five hundred years for me and my daughter to plant them all, even if we could live that long." The old woman returned to her home and relayed this message to her adopted daughter. Youngest Daughter laughed and said, "Mother, don't worry. Please invite them again tomorrow."

Youngest Daughter collected pine seeds and, that night, she sowed the seeds from her home to the home of the serpent prince. As soon as the seeds were sown trees sprang up. Magpies flew to the trees and perched in the branches. When the old lady arose the next morning she found what had happened, embraced Youngest Daughter, and said, "My daughter, my fairy, don't be angry with me. I'll go at once and invite the prince to come again," and then she set off.

When she reached the prince's cave and informed the family that their demand had been met Second Daughter did not believe her. But after going outside

and seeing the trees she had to accept it. "She must be some sort of devil," she murmured. Then she said to the old lady, "If you can spread white and red rugs from our door to yours, we will surely go!" The old lady angrily returned home and reported what had happened. Youngest Daughter assured her that she could fulfill this request as well.

That evening Youngest Daughter made two bundles of white wool. She bit her fingers till they bled and dyed one bundle red. Next, she scattered the white and red wool between her home and the home of the serpent prince between the trees. The next morning red and white rugs stretched from their home to the prince's home. Again the old lady went to the prince and invited him to visit. Though Second Daughter was ready with another condition, the prince insisted that they must now visit.

Tears rolled down her cheeks when Youngest Daughter saw the prince coming. She rushed to the kitchen and prepared tea. After seating her guests, the old woman served tea. Youngest Daughter had put her wedding band in the bottom of the prince's tea cup. In Second Daughter's cup, she had put shit. After the prince drank his tea he saw the gold wedding band. Startled, he asked his 'wife,' "Where is the ring I gave you?" "When did you give me a ring?" Second Daughter asked, baffled. "Then, whose ring is this?" asked the prince.

"Who knows?" Second Daughter said, draining her tea cup, causing the shit at the bottom to roll into her mouth. When she realized what it was she nearly gagged.

Just then Youngest Daughter appeared, so startling Second Daughter that she fainted. Surprised, the prince stood. Unable to control herself, Youngest Daughter threw herself into his arms. The old lady then related all that happened. The prince felt as though he had awakened from a nightmare and, tightly embracing Youngest Daughter, he wept bitter tears. Next, he ran back to his home and returned with a snake skin. He threw it over Second Daughter, transforming her into a colored snake. From then on the serpent prince and Youngest Daughter lived happily together until they died.

The Archer and the Geese⁵⁰

JUST AS IN OTHER STORIES, there is also a king in my story. Of course he has a princess, a very beautiful princess and, when she grows up, the king asks her what kind of young man she would like to marry. "Father," said the princess. "Our weak country needs a hero. I'll marry a man who excels in fighting skills and horsemanship. I don't care if he is poor or rich, noble or common." The king then decreed that a hero excelling in the martial arts would be chosen to marry the princess. This news quickly spread through his realm and every young man was eager to marry the princess.

A herdowner's son was lazy and had no skills of any sort. The only thing he was adept at was sitting in his tent and drinking butter tea. When he heard this news he fantasized about his success and decided to participate. He chose the best horse from all his horses and bought an expensive carved bow. When he returned to his tent he engraved 'champion archer' on all his arrows. Dressing himself as a warrior he then went out to hunt. He thought, "If I'm lucky enough to kill a pheasant or hare I will qualify to marry the princess."

It's easy to proclaim yourself 'the best archer in the world,' but it's quite another matter to kill animals. Our 'crack archer' went along for a long while, but the arrows he fired did not so much as ruffle a pheasant's feathers. "I'm such a powerful man and yet it is impossible for me to hit anything with an arrow. The reason must be this a poor bow," he thought angrily.

Then he invited several of the best craftsmen to make a bow and arrows for him. The resulting bow was twined with gold string and the bowstring was made from tiger tendon. The arrowheads were fashioned from silver and the arrows were fitted with peacock feathers. Ecstatic, the young man took his new bow and arrows and went out hunting again. A short time later a line of geese flew overhead. He quickly shot an arrow heavenward and a goose fell from the sky. Overjoyed, he ran over to pick it up, "Ha, ha," he exulted. "Who said I'm not the best archer in the world? Am I not qualified to be the king's son-in-law?" When he carefully examined the goose he was amazed to see that it was not his arrow that had killed the goose. Depressed, he thought, "How difficult it seems for me to bag such a goose. Well, since I should have been the one to kill it, I'm not

⁵⁰Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

going to let anybody take it away from me." He pulled out the ordinary bamboo arrow that had killed the goose and stuck in one of his own magnificent arrows. Just as he was riding away a young hunter rode up and said, "Friend, why are you taking my game away?"

"What nonsense! I have no idea where your game is. Go and look wherever you shot your arrows," said the herdowner's son.

"I don't need to go anywhere. The goose I just shot is there in your hand," said the young hunter.

"What? Your goose? You are lying with your eyes closed. Look more carefully to see whose arrow is through this goose's neck," said the herdowner's son.

Glancing at the goose the young hunter replied, "You secretly replaced my arrow with yours."

The two began quarrelling. In the end they asked the king for his judgment. The king heard the two versions, but he hadn't a clue as to how and discern the truth. Then the princess said, "True gold fears no fire. If both of you are truly heroes, you can pass any test. When more geese fly overhead you two may compete to see who can bring one down."

"What a good idea," the king agreed. "I'll betroth my daughter to the winner." The people who had gathered all approved this. Just at that time a line of geese happened to fly overhead. "Who will shoot first?" asked the princess. "Let him," the hunter said. "No," said the herdowner's son. "You shoot first. I'll prove my unique skills to the honorable princess later." The hunter took out his bow, notched an arrow, aimed, and let fly. At once a goose fell from the sky.

"Excellent," cried all the people.

"Now it's your turn," the princess said to the flustered herdowner's son. He had no choice but to take out his bow, notch an arrow, and aimed a long time into the sky, but lacked the courage to loose the arrow. Impatient at his slowness the princess told him to fire his arrow quickly, and poked him with her elbow. Frightened by this sudden nudge, he loosed his arrow. It flew up into the sky and accidentally struck two geese that were flying abreast.

All were amazed by this unexpected wonder. The herdowner's son had never expected to kill a single goose but, now that he had shot two at the same time, he became bold and self-confident. "My princess," he assured, "you should not have nudged me just now. I was waiting for the geese to line up so that I could have brought down a dozen at once. It's a pity I was only able to kill two because of your nudge." Everyone was fooled by this, loudly praised him, and said he deserved the title 'the best archer in the world.'

The princess said to the hunter, "You are an excellent archer, but today you are defeated because you met a worthier opponent." The young hunter replied, "Princess, perhaps you may say that I have lost, but my worthy opponent won only through an accidental coincidence. He is not at all an expert archer," and left. "Ah!" the herdowner's son said. "Everyone witnessed his refusal to graciously admit defeat. What a fraud!"

The king was pleased with having chosen an archer that was so expert that he could kill two geese with one arrow and gladly betrothed him to the princess. He decided to hold the wedding ceremony three days later.

However, the next day the neighboring country's powerful army invaded and pressed on toward the capital. The king immediately called in his prospective son-in-law and told him to beat back the invaders. That very night the princess sewed a silk banner on which were embroidered seven golden words 'THE BEST EXPERT ARCHER IN THE WORLD.'

On the following day the king, the princess, and all the ministers went up to the city walls to watch the herdowner's son fight and to encourage him. Forcing himself to behave like a hero, the herdowner's son led the army into battle, though he trembled in fear. When the enemy saw the seven words on the silk banner they suggested that they hold a contest because they, too, happened to have an expert archer. Of course, to have a contest in battle is nothing like shooting a goose. The two archers were to shoot at each other. If one failed to kill the other, then he would be killed.

The king accepted this challenge and ordered the herdowner's son to compete. He shot three arrows that all missed the other archer. Just as he was about to turn his horse and flee, his opponent's bowstring twanged and he fell dead with an arrow through his heart.

Those watching this turn of events from the city walls paled in fear. But just at that precise moment the young hunter came running out and, notching an arrow, he killed the enemy archer with one shot. The king was beside himself with joy and beat a drum, signalling his soldiers to attack. In the resulting battle all the enemy soldiers were killed.

This is the end of our story. You can imagine after such a test that the princess chose a hero for a husband--the young hunter.

Gold Sister, Silver Sister, and Wood Girl⁵¹

LONG AGO THERE LIVED a Yogur couple who had two daughters. Pretty and kind-hearted by nature, Elder Daughter was called Gongbincao, meaning "as precious as gold." Her father gave her a gold bucket for fetching water, a gold bowl, and gold chopsticks. Younger Daughter was as attractive and virtuous as silver and, therefore, was called Hadamucao, which means "as precious as silver." Her father gave her a silver bucket to fetch water, a silver bowl, and silver chopsticks.

The father hunted each day while the mother either herded sheep or made wool into thread at home. As the two sisters matured they helped herd, milked the cows, gathered firewood, and cooked. The family was a harmonious one.

One day the father went hunting as usual but returned before noon with a bloody face. On his back he carried an unconscious girl. She had slipped, rolled down a slope, and was now on the verge of death from shock and starvation. The two sisters hurriedly placed her on their warm *kang*.⁵² The father took a bowl of tea and gently poured some down the unconscious girl's throat. She gradually revived and began eating. As she ate and drank she slowly smiled. She had large eyes and long black hair, but her face was sallow from want of food.

The father and his daughters were delighted that it seemed likely she would live. When they asked her what her name was and where she lived, she remained silent. The two sisters treated her well and called her "Elder Sister" because she was a bit taller than either of the sisters and seemed older. They urged her to live in their home just as though it was her own. The mother named her "Jiaohawas," which means "honest wood." The father gave her a wooden bucket to fetch water, a wooden bowl, and wooden chopsticks.

Five pleasant years later the father died from falling down a mountain. After the father's corpse was cremated and his ashes buried on a mountain, the family moved to a new location. The mother herded their sheep while the three daughters did the housework.

⁵¹Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan. Note the similarities between this story and the Dagur account "The Hunter and His Sister" (Stuart, Li, and Shelear 1994:136-138) and the Oroqen account "Three Hunters and Their Wives" (Stuart and Li 1994:46-48)

⁵²A heatable sitting and sleeping platform made of mud bricks.

One morning the mother asked the three girls to fetch water. The girls started cheerfully, laughing and teasing each other along the way. As they were about to return from the river Jiaohawas said, "It's still early. Let's enjoy ourselves for a while. Let's throw our buckets into the river and see whose will float." The three sisters did just that. The gold and silver buckets sank to the bottom while the wooden bucket floated. Jiaohawas brought her bucket to the riverside with a stick, filled it with water, and started home. The other two girls were terribly worried that their mother would be angry with them for losing the valuable buckets and did not return.

When Jiaohawas got home her mother asked why she had returned alone. "Those two girls didn't want to fetch water and threw their buckets in the river. Only I brought water home," she answered. "Well, if the buckets are lost, they are lost. Don't frighten your sisters. Go back and tell them to come home," the mother said. Jiaohawas returned and said, "How terrible to lose your buckets. Mother is looking for rope and says that she will hang the two of you." The two sisters fled into the forest in a terrified state of mind at this.

When Jiaohawas returned home her mother asked, "Where are your sisters?" Jiaohawas replied that she was unable to find them and she supposed that they were so worried over losing their buckets that they had run away. The mother was so concerned about her two daughters that she ran out at once, shouting their names. She searched for them until dark. Days and nights passed but the two sisters still did not return.

Finally, the two sisters were so famished that they secretly returned and hid near the home. When their mother left in the morning they went inside. Jiaohawas was eating parched barley flour with butter and drinking milk tea to her heart's content. The two sisters were about to eat when Jiaohawas sneered, "You have the gall to return." Gongbincao confidently replied, "This is our home. Why do you object to our eating and drinking here?" Jiaohawas replied, "How ridiculous. Why did you lose your buckets? This has made mother go blind from weeping. Meanwhile, the two of you have just been amusing yourselves during this time. Now you secretly return to eat something. Get out of here!"

Gongbincao realized that they had been tricked by Jiaohawas but, still, it was true that they had thrown the buckets into the river. She thought that it was truly horrible if their mother was now blind because of what they had done. Jiaohawas rolled out some barley-butter balls and said, "Open your mouths, you two starving ghosts." As soon as they did so, she forcefully tossed the balls down their throats. Gongbincao found that she could not speak for the barley ball had lodged in her throat. She was unable to either swallow or cough it up. When

Hadamucao began chewing she broke a tooth on a small cooper ball inside the barley ball. The hateful Jiaohawas ran out laughing loudly.

Suddenly Jiaohawas ran back inside and shouted, "Quick, run away. Mother is returning." Then she pressed a barley ball in each of their hands and urged them to flee. Hadamucao hid in the sheepfold. Gongbincao ran until she came to an unfamiliar river. She stopped and took a bite of the barley ball Jiaohawas had given her and found that it tasted terrible--Jiaohawas had mixed the barley with salt and vinegar. Gongbincao burst into tears and thought that if they had known how ungrateful and villainous Jiaohawas nature was, they would never have adopted her. The copper barley ball painfully stuck in her throat and she wanted to drink some water to dislodge it. Just as she was about to take a sip, a herdsman walked toward her so she ran away.

Mergewas, the herdsman, drove the sheep he was herding back home and told his master what he had seen. He reported that the girl was very beautiful, but in a very pitiful condition. The young master then mounted a horse and searched for her. At sunset, he noticed a distant moving figure and rode toward it. Gongbincao ran as he approached but she could not outrun the horse. The young master caught up with her and said, "You are so young. Why are you running about in the dark?" Gongbincao hung her head, took several steps back, and said nothing. Just as she was about to flee again the young man grabbed her by the arm and said, "I'm not a tiger. Why do you want to run away?" Gongbincao was still more frightened and wanted to scream but she could not utter a sound because of the barley ball stuck in her throat. The young man then took her to his home.

Mergewas was pleased to see his master bring Gongbincao back and quickly served tea and mutton. Still in much pain from the barley ball, Gongbincao could not eat or drink, nor could she answer any questions. The young master was, at last, sorely offended and angrily slapped her on the back and said, "Why do you take my good will for ill intent?" When he slapped her back, the barley ball dislodged and she immediately coughed it out where it clanked on the ground. A copper ball had also been placed inside this barley ball. Puzzled, the young master asked her to explain. Gongbincao related all that had happened to her and concluded by thanking him for helping her. The young master said then that he would take her home once she recovered.

This caused Gongbincao to burst into tears because, by this time, she had fallen in love with the young man and did not want to leave. Finally she said, "I don't want to go home." "Then where do you want to go?" the young master urgently asked. "If I'm to die, I'll die in your home," she replied. The young man had also fallen in love with her but, because she was in such a difficult situation,

he did not want to seem to take advantage of her. But now that she had made her feelings clear, he promised she might stay in his home.

Meanwhile, the mother had found Hadamucao in the sheepfold and the two were happily reunited. But she continued to miss Gongbincao and, thinking that Gongbincao might be dead, she often wept. Hadamucao never dared tell her mother the truth because Jiaohawas had threatened, "If you tell what I did, I'll strangle you."

One day a handsome young man visited their home. When he met the mother he dismounted, stepped forward, and knelt. The mother was amazed, helped him up, and invited him inside the home. When she learned that Gongbincao was still alive she expressed her deep appreciation to the young man and consented to the proposed marriage. Jiaohawas said in hatred and envy, "I'm the oldest sister. It's not fair to let a younger sister marry first." It was then decided that both Gongbincao and Jiaohawas would marry the young master and Mergewas would marry Hadamucao.

After the marriages the mother and the young couple lived together happily. But the young master's home was far from happy. Gongbincao was forced to herd the sheep, gather firewood, milk the cows, cook, and wash dirty clothes. Jiaohawas did nothing but hurl insults at her. Gongbincao had a gentle nature so bore all and never informed her husband. He was often out hunting and did not know what transpired in his absence.

A year later all three young women were pregnant. Gongbincao bore a boy and Hadamucao gave birth to a girl. Jiaohawas's baby was dead at birth. Jiaohawas was mad with envy. A short time later, while Gongbincao was cooking, Jiaohawas killed the infant boy and buried him in Gongbincao's room. When Gongbincao returned to her room she could not find her son. When she saw bloodstains on the ground knew what had happened and fainted from grief and indignation.

When the young master returned, Gongbincao was unconscious. He asked Jiaohawas for an explanation. She replied, "It's as clear as daylight. She gave birth to an evil spirit and dared not let you see it. She secretly killed it and threw it away." "Where's the baby you bore?" he then asked Jiaohawas. "It was born dead and it's all your fault. I've already buried it," she said.

The young husband more or less believed her and told her to take Gongbincao outside for some fresh air. Instead, Jiaohawas pulled her to a lake and threw her in. When Gongbincao fell into the lake the cold water revived her. She managed to crawl out and told her husband her side of the story. Unable to tell which version was true the young husband said that the two must stop arguing otherwise, others would learn of it and shame the family. Afterwards, Jiaohawas

became, seemingly, a completely different person and showered every kindness on Gongbincao. Being compassionate, Gongbincao began to forget her son's murder.

One day Jiaohawas offered to help Gongbincao bring water from the well. When they reached the well, Jiaohawas pushed Gongbincao into the well. Jiaohawas gleefully returned to her room, humming a happy tune. It so happened that Mergewas had come to visit the young master and, after reaching the home, he went to the well to water his horse. When he lowered the bucket into the well, he saw something moving at the bottom. Dropping the rope to the bottom, he climbed down and brought Gongbincao up.

Mergewas was enraged when she told him how she had come to be in the well and wanted to punish Jiaohawas. But Gongbincao entreated him not to do so but, instead, take her to her mother's home. Mergewas agreed and, as they set out, Gongbincao put her sash, which her husband had given her at marriage, by the well signalling that she had committed suicide.

When her husband returned Jiaohawas said, "Gongbincao jumped into the well and drowned. She didn't want to live any longer." Shocked, the young man ran to the well. When he saw the sash he wailed loudly. Upset by his obvious love for Gongbincao, Jiaohawas shouted, "Don't wail for her. She got exactly what she deserved. She often cursed you." The husband said nothing. He knew that Gongbincao had truly loved him. He wondered why Gongbincao had killed herself. He realized Jiaohawas would never tell the truth.

Not long after Gongbincao reached her mother's home she was overcome with regret that she had put her sash by the well. She first thought her husband and Jiaohawas would get along well without her, but now she realized that her husband would be overcome with grief. She decided to return to her husband when it was dark.

That evening Gongbincao rode back by horse. Hardly had she reached the home when Jiaohawas shrieked, "Ghost!" ran to her room, grabbed a knife, rushed at Gongbincao, and stabbed her. When the young master saw Jiaohawas trying to kill Gongbincao he drew his sword and rushed at Jiaohawas. Realizing that all was lost, she leapt on Gongbincao's horse and raced off. A short time later she was thrown off the horse and drowned in a water-filled ditch.

The young master carried Gongbincao into his room and tenderly cared for her knife wound. She soon recovered and was as lovely and kindhearted as before. A year later she gave birth to another son. She and her husband lived a happy life together.

Two Brothers⁵³

LONG AGO AN OLD WOMAN DIED leaving two sons who were nearly adult. The younger son was so saddened by his mother's death that he threw himself on his mother's remains and wept an entire day and a night. He wept so much that he became blind. Afterwards his older brother bullied him to the point no one would have known they were blood brothers. The younger brother had no alternative but to swallow insult after insult. Even so, he did not tell others about his tribulations.

One day the older brother put his brother on a donkey and led it to a remote grassland. When they reached their destination the older brother took the donkey's halter off and tied it to a bush--all unbeknownst to the blind brother. Then he handed the reins of this halter to his blind brother and said, "Hold these reins and let the donkey graze. When I've finished cutting grass we'll go home together." The older brother went quietly home, leading the donkey with another rope. After waiting an entire day the blind brother wondered why his brother did not return. He walked to the end of the reins he was holding and realized what had happened. He burst into angry tears and pitifully groped and crawled to an old dilapidated temple. Owing to his hunger and exhaustion he lay down behind the statue of a god and slept. At midnight he woke from the sound of voices outside.

"Brother Tiger, what did you eat today?"

⁵³Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan. Note the similarity between this story and the Oroqen account "Aiyibei and Erubei" (Stuart and Li 1994:52-53) and the Huzhu Monguor account "The Blind Doctor" (Stuart and Limusishiden 1994:101-104).

"What do you think I ate? Little Hare told me he saw a blind man in the fields but, when I went there, not a soul was there. Brother Leopard, did you find anything good to eat?" said the tiger.

"I did find a fat sheep, but then a doctor came and led it away. What about you, Sister Swan?" said the leopard.

"I ate several fish from the lake. Let me make a suggestion: Tomorrow I'll fly around. When I find that blind man I'll tell you where I saw him," said the swan from the roof-beam where she was roosting. "But I'm afraid that if the blind man happens to touch a glossy ganoderma, like the one growing near the back wall of this temple and regains his sight, he won't be easy to catch."

The tiger said, "We can deal with that easily. We'll just steal that sheep from the doctor."

"That's not a bad idea but, if he is not at home, the courtyard gate will be locked. He has five servants and, if we get inside, it won't be easy to get out. We may get the worst of it," said the swan.

The leopard said, "He won't be away from home. He went to treat the daughter of a rich man several times, but was unable to cure her. Now she is critically ill and he doesn't want to be there when she dies and thus be responsible. He'll be at home."

"That girl is possessed by a black spider spirit. She would recover if someone burnt that large stack of straw behind the home where the black spider lives," said the swan.

After talking the night away the three animals left. The blind brother had overheard everything they said. He walked to the back wall hoping to regain his sight from the ganoderma the swan had described. His hands brushed against something like a mushroom. He plucked it and rubbed it across his eyes. Instantly he could see again. He ecstatically kowtowed one hundred and eight times to the image of the temple god and hurriedly left.

After walking for half a day he reached a home where there was loud wailing. He realized this was probably the home of the ill girl. Younger Brother

went inside and found her on the verge of death. Some relatives burned incense sticks and others prayed to the gods. "Don't cry anymore!" Younger Brother shouted. "I can cure this poor girl." Everyone turned, looked, and beheld a handsome young man. They begged him to cure her. When he told them to burn the straw stack in the backyard some old men disagreed, seeing no relationship between the straw stack and the girl's illness. However, some younger men immediately went outside and set it ablaze. Black smoke rolled from the fire, giving off an offensive smell. A woman shouted, "She's waking up!" The girl, who had been critically ill a moment before, sat up smiling. When the fire had gone out altogether she stood, went to the young man who had cured her, and knelt to express thanks.

It was love at first sight. Each adored the other. The girl's parents readily consented to a marriage that was soon held. Several days later Younger Brother set off to visit his older brother. When he reached his former home, Older Brother was very surprised because he thought that his 'blind' brother was surely dead by now. When Younger Brother related how he had regained his sight and had married a beautiful young woman, Older Brother was beside himself with envy because he desperately wanted a wife. Just after Younger Brother left, Older Brother gouged out his own eyes, groped his way to the neglected temple, and hid behind the god image. He felt sure he would enjoy the same good fortune that had befallen Younger Brother.

At midnight the tiger, leopard, and the swan all assembled as Older Brother had hoped. After exchanging greetings the swan said, "Someone overheard what we said at our previous meeting. That blind man not only regained his sight but he also cured the girl of her illness and married her." Suddenly the leopard said, "I smell a stranger here." The tiger sniffed and agreed. The three began searching the temple. The tiger found the evil brother, dragged him out from behind the statue, and bit his head off. The head was then given to the swan. The torso was kept by the tiger and his arms and legs were eaten by the leopard. In this way the cruel-hearted brother lost his life.

Sarmark the Heroine⁵⁴

THEY SAY THAT XIZHOUZAHUO, the Yogor's ancestral homeland, had two mountains. One was known as White Mountain. Nearby lived White Khan and his subjects. The second mountain was known as Black Mountain and it was where another nationality lived led by Black Khan.

Among White Khan's subjects was an evil steward who constantly racked his brains about how to usurp his chief's power. A long while passed and he had no opportunity to execute his evil plans. As he grew older he impatiently devised a plan to provoke the lingering animosity between the two nationalities; murder White Khan with Black Khan's knife, and then seize White Khan's throne. Not long afterwards, thanks to the steward's provocations, the two tribes were fiercely at war. Corpses of men, horses, and camels were everywhere. White Khan bravely fought alongside his men while the steward, on the pretext of being old and infirm, stayed at home drinking wine, waiting for an opportunity.

After a long period of battle it seemed certain that White Khan and his forces would be defeated. The reason was that, before they went out to fight, the steward secretly reported their military plans to Black Khan. White Khan was thus defeated in every battle and his soldiers steadily diminished in number. At last they seemed utterly defeated. White Khan was severely wounded and unable to lead the men into battle. The tribe was faced with total annihilation.

At this critical moment White Khan's wife, Sarmark, donned a suit of armor. Gripping her husband's treasure sword, she organized a force of young tribal women. When she led them to battle the men who were still able were inspired, mounted their horses, and charged the enemy camp. It was exactly midnight when they attacked. Black Khan was dreaming happily of how he had utterly defeated White Khan. A moment later his camp was afire with bright flames licking the sky. His troops hardly had time to put on their clothes before they were assailed by the female warriors. Black Khan was nearly trampled in the headlong flight of his terrified soldiers.

When news of the victory was received by White Khan he came out to welcome his wife's triumphant return. Sarmark dismounted, bowed, returned his

⁵⁴Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

treasure sword, and said that he could put his mind at ease. Those watching were deeply moved, not only because she had proved her courage, but also because she had demonstrated her devotion to her husband and people. A beautiful young woman suggested, "For our beloved Sarmark let us make a tablet to record her heroism in saving our nationality." This was quickly agreed to by all present.

The steward hated Sarmark for thwarting his ambitions and concocted yet another evil notion. He said to White Khan, "Sarmark is greatly renowned." White Khan asked what he meant. "Women will control our people," the steward said. At this moment the distrustful and jealous White Khan became suspicious. Afterwards he ignored his beautiful wife. For a long time they lived separately, each with their own thoughts. Sarmark yearned for her husband. In ten years of marriage she had never been so lonely. She burned incense daily and prayed that he would recover from his battle wounds.

Time passed. One day Sarmark asked the steward if she could visit her husband, thinking that by this time he was probably well again. Feigning worry, the steward said, "His wound has not healed. I don't think you should see him. Actually, I'm more concerned about you than him." In fact, White Khan had regained his health and desperately missed his wife. When he expressed a desire to see her, however, the steward stopped him with, "Your majesty, I must advise you against it. Since she returned from battle she has been drinking and seeking pleasure. She seems to have utterly forgotten you. If you go there and become angry, you might become ill again. Besides, Sarmark excels in fighting skills. If she were pleased to have you visit, then everything would be fine. But if she were not pleased, well, how would I be able to explain to our descendants if something happened to you?" White Khan thus abandoned the idea of seeing his wife.

One day the steward noticed White Khan sighing with a frown on his face. "My khan, don't be sad. As Sarmark has no affection for you, you could marry another. Sarmark would have no reason to object," suggested the evil steward. These words were exactly an expression of what White Khan had secretly yearned for ever since seeing the young woman who had suggested building a tablet to Sarmark. On the one hand, he knew it was a Yogur custom to be loyal to a wife for a lifetime. If he violated this rule he might be cursed and even driven from the tribe. Therefore, he had dared not voice his desire for the young beautiful woman. Now that his steward had said this, however, he was willing to seriously consider it. "What about Sarmark?" he said to the steward. "That's simple. If you so decree she will be beheaded immediately," the steward suggested.

White Khan had lived with his faithful wife for a decade and could not bring himself to kill her, especially when he considered the way she had defeated Black Khan. He realized that if she had not led the women of the tribe against the

enemy, the entire tribe would have been exterminated. "Let's wait for a time. Don't say anything to anybody about this," he concluded.

Several days later Sarmark decided to visit her parents. The steward realized an opportunity was now at hand. He promised Sarmark to prepare horses and gifts for her parents. Meanwhile, he sent a man to catch some pigeons. Three days later the steward came with a horse he had chosen and two shoulder-bags filled with gifts. He said unctuously, "When you return, our khan will surely have recovered and then the two of you may be reunited. Please remember that these two bags of gifts signal his regard for your family. He asked me to tell you that only when you ride up the hill and see your parents' tent may you untie the bags."

Sarmark stopped and untied the bags when she reached the hill overlooking her parents' camp. Suddenly many pigeons flew out. Her frightened horse lunged madly down the hill. Unprepared, Sarmark slipped from her horse. One foot caught in a stirrup and she was dragged down the hill. When Sarmark's parents finally reined in the horse they found her head bleeding profusely, her breasts had been rubbed away, and her back had been scraped to the point where bones were visible. There was great sorrow when news of this reached the tribe.

Afterwards, Yogur girls wore head-ornaments with red pearls inlaid on the front during their weddings. White stones or white shells were set on the back part of the head-ornaments. The pearls, stones, and shells commemorated Sarmark's wounded breasts and back, and protected the wearer against injury. Hats were decorated with a red tassel symbolizing how Sarmark's head had bled. A red sash commemorated the fact that her blood was shed for her nation.

Inspired by the people's anger White Khan investigated his wife's tragic end. The servant sent to catch the pigeons told what had happened. White Khan understood what a treacherous wolf the steward was. He was then apprehended and taken to the hill where Sarmark had died. A wild unmanageable horse was brought out. One of the steward's feet was tied to a stirrup and then a knife was stuck deep into the horse's leg. Neighing in pain, the horse raced down the hill and into a boundless wasteland, dragging the steward to death.

White Khan constantly relived his wife's falling prey to the steward's plot. Several moons later he no longer wished to live. One night, however, he dreamed of his beautiful Sarmark. She urged him to travel eastward to a place known as Twin Lakes. She told him that in this place her eyes had become the two lakes and the Yogur would multiply there. The flourishing grass was her hair, the clear spring water was her blood, and the high mountains were her body. White Khan commanded his people to move eastward. They finally reached Twin Lakes at the feet of the Qilian Mountains where Yogur still live today and where people still sing about Sarmark.

The Swan Harp⁵⁵

IN ANCIENT TIMES THE YOGUR ENJOYED SINGING but they had no musical instruments. At this time an impoverished shepherd herded sheep for his tribe. His songs were so beautiful that swans came to listen. Once, after he finished singing, the swans flew away except for a white one. When the young man sang happy songs she flapped her wings and danced. When he sang sad songs that related his sufferings, she shed tears. As time passed, they became close friends.

One morning the shepherd went to the lake where the swan stayed at night. He was horrified to find only her skeleton and intestines. She had been killed by predatory birds. Holding her skeleton in his arms, he fell unconscious after weeping for a long time.

When he regained consciousness he found that the skeleton had become a beautiful swan-like six-stringed instrument. The instrument's top resembled the swan's head and the strings were made of the swan's intestines. When the youth plucked the first string the instrument gave forth a very pleasing sound. Just as the sound diminished it began thundering and rain fell, though the sun shone. The rain stopped when he plucked the second string. When he plucked the third string the sky became crystal-clear and a beautiful rainbow appeared. Next he touched the fourth string and heard in answer a beautiful song. When he touched the fifth string a steed raced toward him. He mounted it and galloped in the direction of the sun. After he plucked the sixth string a beautiful girl in a white robe floated down from the clouds. Smiling, she bowed in front of his horse. The young shepherd helped her up behind him on the horse and then, together, they travelled the length and breadth of Yogur territory.

The girl was a swan maiden. Sympathizing with the young man, she had descended to the world to marry him. Later, they went to heaven together.

This is how the Yogur came to have the swan harp.

⁵⁵Translated from the Chinese by Zhang Juan.

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