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Tales From China's Forest Hunters: Oroqen Folktales

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Tales From
CHINA'S FOREST HUNTERS

Oroqen Folktales

Edited by *Kevin Stuart & Li Xuewei*

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Tales From China's Forest Hunters

Oroqen Folktales

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INTRODUCTION¹

The folk literature of China's minority populations has been little studied. One reason for this is a lack of folk literature collections available in English translation. Presented here is a body of folk accounts of the Oroqen², one of the least populous of China's officially recognized 55 minorities. In 1990 the Oroqen population of 6,900 was scattered in several locations: Oroqen Autonomous Banner, established October 1, 1951, and located in Hulunboir League of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; Morin Daawa Dagur Autonomous Banner, also in Inner Mongolia; and in Xunke, Aihui, and Jiayin Counties of Heilongjiang Province.

Oroqen speak a Tungusic language, which is part of the Altaic language family. Historically, they were hunters. However, with the deforestation of vast areas of land where they have traditionally lived, many no longer hunt. As with many minority groups in China, it is likely that, as time passes, the Oroqen will not only lose their language, but also their stock of folk literature.

There are many problems with folk literature anthologies in China. Especially in the years just after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), folk literature was often "rewritten and polished" to sanitize it and to give it a class "consciousness." Additionally, compilers and editors were often paid on a "per character basis," which led to the addition of much extraneous "filling." This is obvious in this collection with *Searching for the Sun*, which is a thinly disguised paean to the Communist Party. Nevertheless, we have included it to give some illustration of what is represented as folk literature in China. Though it is unlikely such selections will stand the test of time as authentic folk literature, they are important materials for analyzing the history of minority folklore study in China.

Translation Note

We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for helping make the Chinese transliterations more closely approximate the Oroqen. Folktales were translated from collections presented by Batubaoying (1984), Inner Mongolia People's Press (1981), and Zhang and Cai (1980).

¹Parts of the Introduction are taken from Zheng and Zeng (1993) and Ma (1989).

²Rendered variously as Eluochun, Elechun, Elunchun, Orcon, Olunchun, Orochen. We have chosen to use Oroqen, which is an official version used in China and close to what is said by the nationality.

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Origins and Bear Legends

Origin of Man and Fire¹

Long ago the Greater Hinggan Mountains were covered with immense forests vaster than the eye could see. Towering trees shut out the sky covering the earth and how wonderful it was! However, a blemish in this perfection was that the area was without people. The celestial Enduri, thought this wouldn't do, people being everywhere else, so he collected bird bones and flesh from which he began making 10 men and 10 women. While making the women, after having made the men, his supply of bird bones and flesh was exhausted. He then used some soil. The earth women were weak, so Enduri gave them strength through his magical powers and they were much stronger than men. How could this be! Enduri considered and then withdrew some of their strength by invoking his power.

At first, the 10 men and 10 women were hairy, knew nothing about clothing, and could run at lightning speed, because they had no patellae. Day and night they ran through forests with 10 deer, 20 moose, and 50 leopards which were also created by Enduri. Bows and arrows didn't exist then, but these people easily preyed on beasts because they could run at lightning speed. As a result, beasts created by Enduri were all soon slain and eaten. Irritated, the sound of Enduri's ire was thunder, which caused the startled men and women to run away. But Enduri caught up with them after taking only a few steps. It is said that the 10 men and 10 women were the original Oroqen.

To distinguish between men and beasts, Enduri scalded the people with boiling water to remove their hair. But hair under the arms and around their mouths survived the scalding. Seeing they were ugly without hair, Enduri put hair on their heads and taught them to sew and dress.

At that time they lived in caverns and used no fire, eating raw mushrooms when in hunger and sucking sap from birch bark when thirsty. To control the speed of their legs Enduri gave them salt to eat and their patellae then gradually grew and they were unable to run as fast as before. Relieved, Enduri sent other beasts to this place once more. But the people could not catch the beasts because of their slowness, so they learned to hunt using stones and cudgels. They also learned to make stone scrapers in order to strip skins from game...

It is not known how many thousands of years passed. One year, a volcano erupted and roaring flames leapt up, filling the air with smoke. The fire raged and could not be extinguished. Even Enduri, whose power was limitless, was impotent. The fire grew more fierce and scorched surrounding trees and beasts, burning many to death. Descendants of the original 10 men and 10 women found fire could warm people and that burned meat was more delicious than raw meat. Afterwards, they learned to use fire to cook meat and warm themselves. They invented many methods to use fire. For example, they heated stones, put them in a birch bark bucket, and added water and meat in order to cook the meat. Another example was filling the insides of large animal bones with meat and liquid and then heating them. When the liquid boiled the meat was cooked. They also learned to keep live cinders. A mushroom was dried in the sun and then kindled. In this way, fire could be kept.

The ancestors treasured fire, because it could be used for cooking, warmth, and light. It elicited an incomparable affection. One day a beautiful woman with her child sat by a fire deep in the forest warming themselves. The mother asked her innocent and artless child, "Child, your mother and the fire--which is more precious to you?" The child replied without the least hesitation, "The fire, because even a day without fire makes me feel more unwell than not eating and drinking!" The mother appreciated the fact that her son had spoken truly. You can thus understand the important position fire occupied in ancient people's minds.

The Flood²

A widow lived with her son, who began hunting at the age of nine. Once he caught an animal, but he didn't know what it was. His mother identified it and, in time, he learned about all the animals with his mother's help. He was clever and, as the years passed, he grew into a fine young man and a famous hunter.

When he was 17 he asked, "Mother, I've never seen my father. Did I ever have one?" Sadly his mother answered, "Yes, but he died before you were born."

As time passed his mother became older and feebler. Concernedly the son said, "Mother, when may I marry? If you had a daughter-in-law, you'll not need to work so hard and you can enjoy a happy life." His mother replied, "Well, after we save enough money." The son insisted that he marry immediately and his mother finally agreed and, for two horses, three buckets of liquor, and one bear, she managed to engage her son.

Less than 2 years later the mother died. One day after her death, when the son was hunting, he found an old woman sitting in the forest. He asked, "Grandma, why do you weep here?" "I outlived all the rest of my family," she said. "My mother just passed away so if you like, you may be my mother," said the young hunter. Then the old woman lived with the young man and his wife. The old woman was too old to care for herself. She often wet the bed and dirtied her clothes with excrement, which angered the wife. The young hunter then washed the old woman's clothes by himself.

One day the old woman said to him, "Sell your two horses." Surprised, he asked why. But she only said, "Don't ask, just sell them for some paper--not for money." He then went to market and exchanged the horses for paper. The next morning the paper was gone and the old woman asked him to exchange their pigs for paper. He did so and the next morning this paper was also gone. The next day she said to sell his hound and he did so and paper he got in the trade also vanished. The next morning, he arose early. The old woman was not in the home. He finally found her at the river, sitting by a paper boat. She smiled and said, "You are honest and kind-hearted. Only good men should live. A flood is coming. Get in this boat. Remember that you may rescue a rabbit, but not a woman," and then she vanished. The moment he stepped into the boat large waves flooded the land. After some days he saw someone struggling in the water. It was his wife. Forgetting the old woman's warning he pulled her into the boat. She shouted, "This boat can't carry the two of us, you jump in the water!" But when she tried to push her husband overboard, the boat rolled and she was pitched into the water.

The next morning the young man saw a rabbit drifting towards him and, recalling the old woman's last words, he rescued it. A few days passed and the water receded. He went ashore with the rabbit, built a hut, and then hunted. Strangely, when he returned he found delicious food cooked and waiting for him. He wondered who had done this and, the next day, he pretended to go out, but actually, he hid near the hut. Soon he saw a beautiful young woman busily preparing dinner. When she went to fetch water, he slipped into the hut and found a rabbit fur on the bed. He realized that the rabbit had changed into the beauty. He hid the fur. When the beauty returned she wept over the loss of the fur. He wiped away her tears and proposed marriage. Their children were the forefathers of the Orogen.

Learning To Hunt³

Long ago there were five kingdoms. In one small kingdom there lived a family of five brothers, who often quarrelled. One summer Fifth Brother and his wife left the extended family and went to the forest where they lived by eating wild fruit. Later, when the fruit was nearly gone, they worried about soon having nothing to eat. Then an old white-bearded man came and asked the reason for their worry. Fifth Brother told him under what conditions they had left the family and that now they had virtually nothing to eat. The old man asked what they intended to do and they said they expected to either starve or freeze to death. The old man told them not to worry, took out a knife, found some wood, and began carving a bow and arrow. He made an arrow from a strip of wood, a bow from a branch, and a bowstring from rolling grass into cord. Then he taught Fifth Brother archery by shooting dragonflies. Fifth Brother couldn't hit the target, so the old man fixed dragonfly wings to the end of the arrow shaft. Fifth Brother practiced hard every day and, before long, not a single arrow missed its target. Then they lived on the dragonflies and water birds he shot.

More time passed and the weather became cold. They realized winter would soon be upon them, which caused new worry, because they were without winter clothes. The old man returned

and taught Fifth Brother to shoot roe deer. How could an arrow meant for dragonflies kill a deer? The old man made a new bowstring from the sinews of the first roe deer's legs they shot, which proved more durable and powerful than the grass bowstring. The old man also taught the wife how to tan roe deer hide with an elm stick, make thread from roe deer sinew, make cloth and bedclothes with roe deer leather and fur, make high boots from roe deer lower-leg leather, and how to make hats from deer heads.

Wrapped in these bedclothes, they slept warmly and Fifth Brother went out to shoot deer everyday. At that time, there were more roe deer than now and he could shoot one everyday. They ate the meat, used its fur and, what they could not use, they sold. Fifth Brother was dissatisfied that they ate meat without salt, so he bought some. At market Fifth Brother also noticed pilose antlers selling for a high price and asked the old man how he might get some. The old man led him to a mountain and dug a pit, which they covered with sticks, grass, and mud. In this way, Fifth Brother caught deer. They no longer worried about food or clothing.

More time passed and it snowed and was colder. The old man came again and taught them how to drive marten with a stick. They followed the marten's trail and caught them. But some tricky marten went deeply into their holes and would not come out. The old man forced smoke into their dens, which made the marten come running out. In this way Fifth Brother caught many marten.

The old man said that marten fur was a treasure desired by the emperor, therefore, Fifth Brother asked a Dagur man to take some marten furs to the emperor. Delighted, the emperor asked who had caught the martens. The Dagur lied and said that he had. The emperor inquired as to how he had caught them. The Dagur could not answer and, when he later met Fifth Brother, he asked him how to catch martens. But the old man had anticipated such an eventuality and had warned Fifth Brother not to tell the real way, but to trick others and say that he had just picked them up. Because he had not obtained the true story the Dagur felt forced to demonstrate his friendship, consequently, he and Fifth Brother became sworn brothers and he lent his horse to Fifth Brother. From then on the custom of *anda*^a appeared. With the horse it was now much easier for Fifth Brother to get more marten and pilose antlers. He asked the Dagur to send more to the emperor. The emperor again asked how he caught marten and deer. The Dagur couldn't reply and was forced to truthfully say his *anda* got them. Then the emperor wanted to see this hunter in person. The Dagur man relayed this to Fifth Brother, who said he was afraid and didn't want to go. The Dagur urged him repeatedly and finally, he agreed.

The Dagur dressed in new deer leather clothing while Fifth Brother wore old tattered clothing. When they met the emperor, he asked how he caught the marten and got pilose antlers. The Dagur could not reply and fixed his eyes on Fifth Brother, who was so afraid that he was speechless. The emperor noticed this and his tattered clothes. He deduced that he had worn out his clothes while hunting. He further guessed that he was the one responsible for the fur and pilose antlers. Pleased, the emperor stuck up his thumb and said Fifth Brother was a hero. He ordered a servant to bring him many coins. When Fifth Brother held the coins in his hands, he didn't know their value and was unhappy because they were heavy. In the end, the emperor dismissed him and told him to bring more marten pelts.

After returning home, the Dagur sent grain, cloth, horses, and many other things to the Oroqen couple and their life improved still more. The Dagur told everyone that he and Fifth Brother had been invited by the emperor to his palace. People of the five kingdoms learned this and asked Fifth Brother to teach them to hunt. Also, his four brothers and their wives and children came and asked to hunt with him. At this time the old man reappeared. Learning that the other four were Fifth Brother's elder brothers, he permitted Fifth Brother to teach them all that he had learned. Then the five brothers hunted together and caught many deer and marten. These were the forefathers of the Oroqen.

^aBrothers or close friends.

Bear Legends

I⁴

A hunter was caught by a female bear and kept in a mountain cave. After living together for several years she gave birth to a baby bear. The mother bear thought that the hunter would not now leave, because they had lived together for several years and had a child, consequently she relaxed her guard. One day while she was out collecting food with the cub the hunter fled when the cave entrance was not completely closed.

When he reached a river bank a raft going downstream passed by and he hopped on. At dusk, the female bear returned with her cub, carrying food on her back. She found the cave entrance open and the hunter absent. With the cub, she followed the hunter's footprints and came to the river, where she spied the hunter sitting on the raft, drifting down the river. Unwilling to part with him, she reared up on her hindquarters, straightened her back like a person, and waved to him with her front paws, motioning for him to return. When the hunter ignored her, she was very sad and fell to the ground in a sorrowful swoon. When she regained consciousness, the raft had drifted far away. Again, she came even with it, and desperately wished to jump on, but the river was too broad. In desperation, she grabbed the cub and, using all her strength, ripped it in half, threw one half to the hunter, held the other half in her arms, and weeping, departed. Afterwards, the baby halves, born from the same mother, lived apart in two different places. The half living with the mother was a bear and the other half, living with its father, became the Oroqen people.

II⁵

A middle-aged Oroqen woman, wearing a red bracelet around her right wrist, went to a thickly forested mountain to collect edible herbs and fruits. It was dark when she was ready to return and she lost her way. In time she became a bear. Several years later, the woman's husband went to the mountain to hunt and saw a bear eating persimmons. He killed the bear and, while skinning it, found his hunting knife would not cut the bear's right foreleg. Parting the thick fur, he found a red bracelet exactly the same as his wife's. In surprise he thought, "Is it possible that this bear is my wife? So this is why we did not find her these several years!" From that time on, bears have been considered incarnations of the Oroqen.

III⁶

An old woman carved and polished a bear's thighbone into a ladle. Her craftsmanship was commended by her neighbors. But once while moving, the old lady walked in the rear. She was worried that the bear bone ladle might be lost and carefully watched it. Suddenly a bear sprang upon her and throttled her, dragged her into a wood, and pulled out her thighbones. The people walking ahead did not realize this because there was no time for her to cry out before she died. You may see how revengeful the bear is!

IV⁷

A hunter was angry because he had not been successful in hunting for a long time and said, "Why is it I can't find even a stupid bear?! If I bag a bear, I'll surely scalp it!" According to Oroqen custom, the bear's head should be left in the open and not buried. Scalping is taboo. What the man said violated this taboo. The next day he was unexpectedly attacked by a bear not far from his home. The bear knocked him down, scalped him, and then left. You may see how intelligent the bear is! It knows what people say.

An Oroqen woman lived along the upper reaches of the Kuerbin River. One evening, when returning from gathering in the forest, she lost her way. At last, cold and tired, she found a hole in a tree and crept inside. Many years passed and she continued to live alone among mountains and forests. Slowly she forgot her homeplace and her tribe and finally became a bear.

One day a hunter passed and noticed the bear's footprints on the grass. Suddenly the hunter noticed a 'man' wearing a long fur-lined jacket sitting on a tree stump. The 'man' nodded and the hunter thought perhaps 'he' was hunting here and not wishing to interfere, started away. But the 'man' suddenly stood and moved 'his' head to one side, exposing 'his' long black nose. Then 'he' opened 'his' big red mouth exposing sharp yellow teeth, yawned and stretched out a pair of furry paws. The hunter was convinced this was not a person, but a black she-bear. He took out his bow and shot an arrow, which struck a tree trunk near the bear. The bear heard the arrow and then noticed the hunter. The hunter then fired a second arrow which struck one of the bear's paws. The bear angrily pulled out the arrow and sprang at the hunter. He dodged swiftly to one side and hid behind a pine tree. The bear jumped on the pine tree, knocking it to the ground, pinning the hunter underneath. The bear circled the tree and, at last, pushed the tree trunk away, releasing the hunter. But his leg was injured and he couldn't walk. The bear put the hunter on her back, walked to her tree den, and laid him on a grass nest. She picked grass and grass roots, chewed them, and placed them on the injured leg. She also brought wild fruit and wild honey for him to eat. Slowly his wound improved. They lived together and the bear gave birth to a cub, similar to both humans and bears.

The hunter stayed in the hole and nursed his wound while the bear took the cub outside, searching for food. They lived as a family although, when the bear went out, she blocked up the mouth of the hole with a big stone to prevent other animals from hurting the man as well as preventing the man's escape.

The hunter never forgot his people and one day, when his leg had completely healed and the bear had gone out with the cub, he pushed away the stone blocking the den's mouth and crept out. Testing his leg, he found it was as strong as ever. He gathered his bow and arrows from the den and ran in the direction of the rising sun. He came to a river and saw a man drifting by on a raft. He shouted for him to stop, jumped on and drifted away.

Meanwhile, the bear and the cub returned. Finding the hunter and his bow and arrows gone, the bear pursued him with the cub to the river, where she saw him on the raft drifting down the middle of the river. She shouted furiously, but the hunter ignored her. Enraged, she caught the cub and tore it into two pieces. She threw half into the river to the hunter and embraced the other half. Then she sat on a stone by the riverside and wept. This story gradually spread and it is said that the ancestors of our Oroqen are related to bears.

Gods and Goddesses

Chang E⁹

Chang E married a mountain king and, after a year, she gave birth to a son. A fox goblin living on South Mountain was jealous of the king's happiness and hated Chang E's beauty. When Chang E went to visit her parents the fox goblin transformed herself into a beauty resembling Chang E, went to the palace, and told the king that she had returned. The king was skeptical that she was the real Chang E, but the goblin explained she had taken an elixir while at her parents' home and had then been transformed into a woman of unsurpassable beauty. The king was thus convinced.

A few days later the real Chang E returned. Before she stepped over the threshold the goblin said, "An evil spirit is entering. Don't be deceived." The king then angrily shouted, "Shameless ghost! How dare you enter my palace! Off with you!" Chang E walked out without argument. Longing for her son to give her comfort, she turned to him, but he repeated, "Ghost! Go away!" which was another stab in her heart. Suddenly she pulled out a dagger, slashed her neck, and fell, her body drenched in blood. Her spirit became a beautiful goddess and flew up into the moon.

After hounding Chang E to death the fox goblin was still not content, for she was bent on usurping the throne for her lover--a wolf goblin. Chang E's son divined her designs and thereafter treated her coldly, but dared not inform his father.

Chang E's son was a skilled hunter and known for his intelligence, which convinced the fox goblin that he posed some danger. She suggested to the king, "Our son is possessed by ghosts. We should kill and eat him." The king was undecided, for he loved his son, but he also feared the goblin's sharp tongue. In the end he yielded to the goblin's persuasions.

The next night, the fox goblin murdered him, minced his flesh, and stuffed dumplings with it. Though on the fire a long time, the dumplings refused to boil. The goblin angrily scooped some from the pot, determined to eat them with or without boiling. The king however, refused to eat any though the goblin ate many. Finally unable to resist the vixen's coquettish smiles, he reluctantly swallowed one, which just happened to contain a part of the young man's heart. Immediately the king vomited what he had eaten, and then the piece of heart became a small white rabbit and hopped out of the palace. The goblin quickly reverted to her true form and chased after the rabbit. Chang E saw this and shouted to the rabbit, "My dear son come quickly!" The white rabbit leapt up to his mother, who took him in her arms and flew back to the moon.

The fox goblin dared not return to the king's palace because she had betrayed herself and therefore, fled to South Mountain. "Why didn't I realize that woman was a fierce fox?" regretted the king and he ordered his archers to chase the fox goblin, who was soon killed. The king gazed at the moon every night and murmured, "I was wrong. Dear wife and son, my heart is broken. Please come back and live with me!" But despite his heartfelt pleas, Chang E and her son never returned.

Olun Goddess¹⁰

A couple lived in a forest deep within the Hinggan Mountains. Because the husband often maltreated his wife, his neighbors called him Demon. Finally driven beyond endurance, the wife mounted a horse and fled with her dog. When she passed by their *olun*, a storage compartment, she stepped up its attached ladder to get some food. Demon chased after her and, howling frenziedly, sprang at her. Knowing that he would beat her to death, she decided to leap off the ladder. As she leapt she slowly floated skyward along with the *olun*, horse, and dog. Thinking the *olun* was something evil, the husband shot arrow after arrow at it, but managed to hit only one of the *olun*'s supporting legs. It is said that before the *olun* rose up in the sky, there was no Big Dipper. Afterwards, the seven stars of the Big Dipper appeared. The four corners of the Big Dipper were the *olun*'s four legs and the other three comprised the *olun*'s ladder steps. One of the corners, the crooked one, was the leg hit by Demon's arrow.

From then on, Oroqen called the Big Dipper, Olun Goddess. They offered sacrifices to this

woman, who was known everywhere after she became a goddess. She was honored as the guardian of the storage compartment.

Fire Goddess¹¹

One morning a woman sat by a fire warming herself. Sparks suddenly flew out, burning her clothes and skin. Angry and cursing, she drew out her hunting knife and jabbed and pounded the fire, not stopping until it had gone out, and then she moved to a new place. That night she tried to kindle a fire, but she couldn't. She decided to ask neighbors for coals. On the way she found an old woman weeping under a tree. Tears flowed from one eye, blood from the other. The old woman angrily said, "You are the one who jabbed and pounded me this morning and blinded one of my eyes!" It suddenly dawned on the woman that she had offended the Fire Goddess and this explained why she could not kindle a fire. She knelt and piteously begged for forgiveness. The Fire Goddess sharply rebuked her and then exhorted, "Don't do it again! You are forgiven this time for I know you are hardworking. You rise early, retire late, and quietly busy yourself with hard work. You've done all sorts of work--catching and raising horses, tanning leather, starting fires, and cooking meat--all in perfect order. Now there is no need to ask for live coals. Return home and make a fire!" When she did return home she was able to easily start a fire.

Afterwards, Oroqen revered the Fire Goddess, who guards live coals. Before dining, food and liquor is put into the fire to show respect. Pouring water on fire, spitting in the fire, and poking fire with a knife are all strictly taboo.

Health Protection Goddess¹²

A brother and sister lived by hunting and fishing. One day the brother hunted but, finding no game, went fishing and caught an odd fish which wept. Kindheartedly he threw the fish back into the water. It so happened that this fish was the Dragon King's son and, to repay the young man, the Dragon King gave him a magical horse. Because of the horse the young man was consistently successful in hunting.

Later, during deer-mating season, he saw three stags fighting over a doe. He drew his bow and, with three arrows, he downed all three stags. As he approached to cut off their antlers a dying stag struggled and gored him in the chest. Seeing his master badly wounded and bleeding, the horse put the young man on his back and raced home.

When they reached home the young man's sister realized that her brother was dead. The horse said, "Little sister, your father died when you were eight and your mother died when you were nine. Now, your brother has met misfortune leaving you alone and helpless. But I have a way to bring your brother back to life. Stop weeping, dress in your brother's clothing, and follow me!" The young woman did as the horse instructed and, in short order, she became a more handsome version of her brother. Astride the horse, she came to Three Stars Pond--three limpid and bright pools, side by side in the forest. Three fairy maidens were bathing--one in each pool. Their round faces resembled red peonies and their slender figures were like white birch trees. Enhanced by the pools' glittering water, the maids appeared all the more bright and beautiful.

The horse said, "This is the way to save your brother. Steal the fairies' clothing which allow them to fly." The young woman secretly did so, and then called out, asking for directions. The embarrassed fairies lowered their heads at the young 'man's' approach. The young 'man' then said, "I've seen you nude and now, according to custom, you must marry me. Your treasure clothes are now in my hands. I'll return them only if you consent to marry me!" Admiring the stranger's good looks, the fairies nodded assent. "Nodding won't do! Promise by leaving your footprints on the ground and your fingerprints on paper." The fairy maids agreed and thus assured, the young woman returned their treasure clothes. After dressing, the fairies went ashore and danced around the young woman and left their footprints on the ground and their fingerprints on paper. After assuring her that they now truly wished to marry her, they flew skyward.

The young woman waited, gazing at the calm pools. Suddenly the fairies called from above, "Don't wait longer! Come! Make an offer of marriage to our King Father and Queen Mother!"

The young woman mounted the magical horse and went skyward, where she was entertained with a good meal and then led to the fairies' monarch parents.

The sister paid her respects and then displayed the paper with the fairies' fingerprints. Nevertheless, the parents were reluctant to approve marriage to a mortal. However, bound by the engagement evidence, they couldn't outright disapprove, so insisted on three harsh conditions. The first was that she must jump on the threshold with such force that it would break. The second was that she must hit an egg with an arrow from 30 paces. The third requirement was to hit the eye of a needle with an arrow from 100 paces. She nervously agreed. The fairies were distraught, pretended to be ill, and excused themselves. As they left they secretly signalled the young woman to be of stout heart.

Thus encouraged, she summoned her courage and hit the egg with an arrow at 30 paces, shot an arrow square into the eye of a needle from 100 paces, and then went to the threshold and leapt into the air. Suddenly, three bees as heavy as boulders landed on her shoulders and, when she crashed downward, the threshold shattered. The bees, which were actually the three fairies transformed, then flew away. The parents were now forced to consent to the marriage.

The young woman and the three fairies returned to Earth and started toward the young woman's home. Near the home, she asked the maids to proceed slowly while she went first to prepare a welcome. The fairies agreed. As soon as she reached her home, she took off her brother's clothing, redressed her brother, and donned her own clothes. A short while later, as the fairies were about to enter, a girl met them and wept, "Three kind fairy sisters! Please save my brother. Quickly! He died just as he came through the door!" The fairies rushed in and, with elixirs, brought the young man back to life. Afterwards the three fairies married the young man and lived happily together. The three fairies also brought many other dead hunters back to life with their elixirs.

After they died their souls became goddesses who cure human disease: The eldest was reincarnated as Egeduge Goddess, who controls smallpox; the second as Nichikun Goddess, who governs measles; and the youngest became Ehu Goddess, who oversees typhoid and other fevers.

Bainacha¹³

I

Several hunters killed much game, except for the youngest, who killed nothing. One night as they camped, a tiger roared. The hunters commented, "Terrible! Among us there is one with a score to settle with Great Grandfather Wutaqi."^b The hunters agreed that they would throw out their caps and the one whose cap was carried away by the tiger would be the one who obviously had a score to settle with the tiger.

After rising the next morning, they found only the youngest hunter's cap missing. Afraid of remaining with him any longer, they left him alone in the forest. As the young man walked back home he suddenly saw a tiger in front. He could not understand why the tiger was so intent on harming him. As the tiger slowly stalked forward, one paw at a time, the young hunter trembled with fear and tears streamed from his eyes. To his surprise, the tiger did not pounce but, instead, stretched out a front paw so that he could extract a large thorn. The young man fearfully jerked out the thorn and bound up the wound. The tiger motioned for him to sit under a tree and then raced into the forest. A while later the tiger returned with game for the young hunter. Motioning for the young hunter to mount him the tiger carried the young hunter to his home.

Actually, the tiger was an incarnation of Bainacha, who lives in the forest and has compassion for those who are small, weak, incapable, and bullied by others.

^bCalling a tiger 'tiger' is taboo, so instead they referred to a tiger as 'Great Grandfather Wutaqi.'

II¹⁴

Several hunters hunted together. All were successful except for a middle-aged hunter, who had taken no game. He failed, not because there was a lack of game, but because of poor eyesight. He moaned over his plight, which was noticed by Bainacha who was filled with compassion. He disguised himself as a 70 year old hunter and invited the middle-aged hunter to hunt with him. In short order, the old man had killed much game.

Several days later the old man said he would hunt alone but, before leaving, he repeatedly instructed the middle-aged hunter, "Collect only firewood that burns well. Don't collect wood that burns poorly." But the middle-aged hunter irresponsibly collected whatever wood he could find. That evening the old man returned and, when he saw sparks flying from the fire, he said angrily, "Why didn't you do as I told you? You are dishonest!" and then he vanished. Puzzled, the careless hunter turned and saw the large heap of game killed for him by the old man had likewise vanished. Bainacha is compassionate, but he is not easy on those who do not follow correct instructions.

III¹⁵

Deep in the forests of the Greater Hinggan Mountains, 15 kilometers north of Eerkeqi, towers cloud-shrouded Birch Mountain. The birch trees which cover the mountain originated from arrows. There is a story about this.

Long ago this mountain was covered with huge boulders, grass refused to grow, and wild deer never ventured there. Golden Tribe lived south of this mountain and to the north lived Silver Tribe. The two tribes often fought over hunting grounds.

One year, Haixinge was chosen head of Silver Tribe. Wanting to defeat Golden Tribe, he ordered his hunters to practice fighting and shooting everyday. Mukuzhan Khan, head of Golden Tribe, learned Silver Tribe would try to conquer him, so he instructed his people to make new bows and arrows.

One day a dust cloud rose in the north and shouting people rode toward South Tribe. Mukuzhan Khan gathered his fighters to meet the enemy. The two groups shot at each other--one shooting at the south side of the hill and the other shooting at the north side. As they fought, Bainacha passed by riding on a tiger. He stopped, stood on a huge stone, and saw the mountain covered with dust and flying arrows. He realized two tribes were battling and hurriedly asked Thunder God and Rain God to help halt the fighting. Thunder God sent thunder and Rain God caused heavy rains to fall, which put an end to the battle. Still, Haixinge and Mukuzhan Khan decided to continue the battle the next day and returned to their tribes.

The next day Haixinge and Mukuzhan Khan went to the mountain again with hunters and horses, but when they arrived were amazed to find birch trees growing everywhere and heard this song coming from the forest:

*North and south,
Belong to the same mountain,
You drink from the same river,
Hunt in the same mountain,
You are brothers.
Why do you kill each other?
I wish spring rain would come to the mountain,
I wish you brothers would stop the war.
Arrows have become birch trees,
You should shake hands and live together.*

Haixinge and Mukuzhan Khan realized that Bainacha had transformed the arrows into birches,

so they put down their weapons, embraced, held hands, and sang and danced. From then on these two tribes have been on good terms. Birch trees formed from those arrows continue to grow there today.

Thunder God¹⁶

A story about playing with Thunder God is widespread among the Guan Clan. Thunder God was famous for his hot temper and everyone was afraid of him--gods, ghosts, humans, and animals. The only exceptions were the osprey and flying squirrel who, not only were not afraid, but they liked playing with him.

One day rain fell in torrents. Braving lightning bolts, the osprey perched on a cliff and winked in time to the lightning and rumbling thunder. Enraged, Thunder God beat at him with his hammer, but the nimble osprey quickly moved into deep water. This caused Thunder God's beard to vibrate with anger, because he saw that he had wasted his energy and could do nothing.

One day the flying squirrel said to Thunder God, "Hey, Grandfather Thunder, you can never pound me with your hammer because I live in the hardest pine tree." Enraged by this challenge, Thunder God swung his hammer, pounding the pine tree. But he could never strike the flying squirrel, because the flying squirrel lived in a hole in the rotten core, which was as soft as cotton, unlike the hard outer part.

Hinggan Mountains and Gan River¹⁷

In ancient times, there was no such name as Hinggan Mountains, but every one knew this place was very beautiful with its evergreen trees, slender birches, and green meadows with colorful flowers. These wonderful scenes attracted hundreds of birds and animals, all of which enjoyed beautiful Nature.

All hunters living there were content. The forest supplied them with many things and the hunters loved these mountains and hoped that their descendants would lead a joyful life forever, so bestowed the name Hinggan on the mountains. The mountains blessed the tribe. Forests and mountains ever prospered and all was in peace. Springs and waterfalls converged at the base of the mountains to form a river which cut through the forests with its pure and sweet water. Those who drank the water were in good spirits. If beasts drank the water, they became strong and fat. Birds that drank the water sang loudly and clearly. Food cooked with the water had a pleasing odor. For these reasons, people named the river 'Gan.'

In time, a devil wanted to make this area his, along with every other beautiful place. He couldn't bear people being happy and wanted to drive every living creature from the Hinggan area. He decided to burn the Hinggan Mountains. It roared, smoke rose up, and the Hinggan Mountains were ablaze. People cried, trees fell, and creatures fled. The Hinggan Mountains were blackened. Hunters were enraged when they saw their homeland burnt by the devil. Were these brave hunters defeated by the devil? Did they want the devil to destroy the Hinggan Mountains? Did they allow the devil to destroy their happy life? No. The brave Oroqen could not tolerate this and intensely fought the devil. They demonstrated such bravery and strength that the devil at last fell in the fire and was burnt to death.

Though the hunters had now slain the devil, the Hinggan Mountains had lost both prosperity and beauty and Gan River was dry. Unable to live in such a place, the people got ready to leave, but suddenly the red sun rose from the east, driving away smoke and clouds and everything began to recover. Rain fell extinguishing the fire. Trees began to green and the Gan River was as before. White swans flew in the sky and hundreds of animals and birds returned. Afterwards, the Hinggan Mountains flourished and were in peace. The Gan River nourished the forests, green meadows, and the Oroqen.

Hunters sang below the mountains and near the river:

*Red sun lights up Hinggan Mountains and Gan River,
Oroqen happiness flows like spring water.*

Treasure Mountain and Treasure Deer¹⁸

Because of an evil official, an Oroqen tribe led a miserable life in the Hinggan Mountains. Game killed in the mountains had to be given to the official. Non-compliance meant severe punishment, even death. On the last midnight of a year, an old white-bearded man spoke to Kai Rongsan, a tribal leader, of a dream. He said, "There is a very high mountain which people can't climb and a very dense forest through which a horse cannot pass. There are many treasure deer there. Find this mountain and your life will be happy and carefree."

The next day Kai Rongsan told others his dream. All wished to search for the treasure mountain so they set out. One month passed and, though they had gone many places, they still hadn't seen the mountain. Still, they were not discouraged. Many days later Kai Rongsan led them to a mountain foot where they camped. That night Kai Rongsan left the camp and walked to a waterfall. While pondering what they should do next, he suddenly noticed a colorful glow coming out of the forest and wondered if it was Treasure Mountain.

The next morning he described what he had seen to the others. Encouraged, they found a waterfall which glowed with colorful rainbows, unlike anything they had ever seen. They hurried to the mountain from which the waterfall tumbled from and found that it was covered with beautiful flowers. They immediately forgot their anxiety and weariness and found many amber colored treasure deer with long antlers glittering like crowns. The deer placidly walked in the forest, males leading females, large ones leading small ones. The deer came to a spring, drank the sweet water, and examined their reflections. The hunters gazed at the enchanting treasure deer while listening to the rustling pine needles and flowing springs. Entranced, they didn't want to leave and said, "We should live here and defend Treasure Mountain."

They settled and built fences around the mountain. Afterwards they lived by hunting and collecting fallen treasure deer antlers. On the first morning of the new year, while Mo Zhuyan, the leader's daughter, played a harmonica, others sang praising Treasure Mountain:

*We climbed up Treasure Mountain the first time,
The spring waters our heart.
Although we see treasure deer for the first time,
Their shadows always remain within sight.
Flowers bloom on Treasure Mountain.
All deer enjoy themselves on Treasure Mountain.
Oroqen gather in this field.
Every person has a treasure in his mind.*

The song enticed hundreds of birds to sing and hundreds of animals to dance. The song was so loud that the official, who lived far away, heard it. Realizing there was such a beautiful place, he rushed to the mountain with his men. Drooling with envy he thought, "All of this should be mine." Kai Rongsan saw these fierce men approaching and angrily said to the hunters, "Wolves have come, what shall we do?" The hunters were resolved to defend their happy life and answered, "We will fight!" and battled the evil men. No match for the hunters, the intruders were soon defeated and the official fled on horseback, only to be killed by a young hunter, who shot him with an arrow. The hunters defended Treasure mountain and the treasure deer belonged to them forever.

Gaixian Cavern¹⁹

I

The huge crescent-moon-shaped stone on top of Hole Mountain originally was the gate of Gaixian Cavern, but how did it get to the top of Hole Mountain? A hunter named Gaixian lived there, which explains how the cavern got its name. One day a monster wanted to occupy the cavern. But Gaixian was very strong, having the strength of nine lions and two tigers, and suggested that they compete and the stronger could then live in the cavern. How did they compete? It was by seeing who could throw the crescent-shaped stone the furthest. The monster picked up the heavy stone and threw it, but it fell only a few steps away. Then it was Gaixian's turn. He threw it to the top of Hole Mountain--a billion steps away in just an instant. Terrified, the monster fled and afterwards, Gaixian never saw it again.

II²⁰

Seven and a half kilometers north of the Greater Hinggan Mountains, near Ali River, is Gaixian Cavern. Seventy-five kilometers to the south is Hole Mountain. A story is widespread among Oroqen living along the Ali River concerning these two locations.

Long ago this area was beautiful primeval forest. In summer, pine and birch were mixed with various wild flowers, grass, and numerous wild fruits. In winter the immense forest was covered with snow and river deer, roe deer, and elk. They were masters of this silvery world. What a beautiful place it was! And it was here that the Oroqen led a hunting life from generation to generation. Unexpectedly a man-eating monster suddenly appeared with ferocious features. He lived in a mountain cavern and spied on people and if a hunter entered the forest he stretched out his claws and cruelly murdered him. Many Oroqen were killed. Brave Oroqen organized strong hunters and went to the mountain and fought with the monster many times, trying to kill him, but because the monster had considerable sorcery, they were defeated each time. The Oroqen never lost courage and, each year, they chose excellent hunters to battle the monster. This was understandable, for in this place abundant wild herbs, fruits, and many beasts lived. This was the main area from which Oroqen gathered a living. How could they let the monster occupy it? Oroqen fought the monster for many years.

The Oroqen spirit of continual struggle moved Heaven's Gaixian and, one day, he descended on a cloud, went to the mouth of the cavern where the monster lived, and sharply shouted, "Don't depend on sorcery to cruelly plunge people into the depths of suffering. I advise you to give up evil and return to good, or you and I shall hold a contest."

This was a vicious monster who was not persuaded and, instead, thought that he had been sorely humiliated. He shook in rage, and said, "What despicable thing are you? How dare you utter such nonsense! Come, let us have this contest. If I defeat you, I shall eat you as I have eaten others! It is certain that I shall not lose! If I do, I shall dive into the sea!" "All right! First, you carry this immense stone in front of the cavern to that mountain 75 kilometers away and don't rest or stop," Gaixian said. The evil monster picked up the stone and started off. He easily shifted the stone from hand to under to show off his ability. He finished 55 kilometers and, if he finished the other 20, he would reach the mountain. Gaixian secretly chanted incantations and the stone suddenly became 10 times heavier. The monster could not move even one pace and the stone crashed to the ground. Smiling, Gaixian went to the stone and kicked it up into the air with the tip of his toe. The stone made several revolutions in the air and then fell into Gaixian's hand. He then effortlessly carried it to the mountain top.

"What do you think of this? Do you accept your defeat?" asked Gaixian, as he put the stone on the ground and glanced disdainfully at the monster. "This contest proves nothing. Let's have another. From the cavern let us shoot at this stone and see whose archery is the most accurate," the monster said. They returned to the cavern mouth and Gaixian said, "You begin." The monster opened his bloodshot eyes wide and, with all his strength, he shot an arrow which struck the stone in the upper right corner, and then roared madly, opened his mouth, wanting to devour

Gaixian. Gaixian glanced at him coldly and said, "Do not be premature! Although you hit the stone, your archery is not very good because your aim was off. You did not hit the center." Deliberately Gaixian notched an arrow and let fire. The center of the immense stone sent out a cloud of flying stone fragments. By gazing intently it was possible to make out a round hole in the center as big as a wheel. The stone chips fell to Wulikutie at the mountain foot. Realizing Gaixian's great ability the monster was sure that he would not be able to defeat him and dove into the sea with a screech of disappointment.

People knew the monster was very conniving and evil and feared his return, so they built a stone figure of Gaixian holding a bow and arrow and placed it in front of the cavern mouth where the monster had lived.

As expected, the monster crossed the sea three times to have a look. But every time when he saw 'Gaixian,' he was so terrified that he dared not return and dove back into the sea.

From that time on, Oroqen freely hunted in the primeval forests of the Greater Hinggan Mountains. In this area of beautiful forest there was first built a sirelji²¹ and people collected wild fruits and hunted. People named the cavern to commemorate Gaixian, who rid people of a scourge and named the mountain Hole Mountain.

III²¹

Northwest of Ali River, running through the capital of Oroqen Autonomous Banner, towers Gaixian Gaogede. Opposite this mountain and southeast of the Ali River is a tall peak called Hole Mountain. About half-way up Gaixian Gaogede is a huge cavern which can hold more than 1,000 people. It looks just like a small celestial's big open mouth, therefore, hunters call it Small Celestial Cavern. Also on top of Hole Mountain running horizontally, is a big crescent-moon-shaped opening that may be described as Hole Mountain's large eyes. There is a widespread story among Oroqen about these two odd phenomena.

Long ago, a nine-headed monster occupied Gaixian Cavern. Because of his nine heads he had many eyes and ears and could see the smallest things and hear the faintest sounds. Gaixian Gaogede was famous for wild boars which the hunters wanted to hunt, but who dared to offend the nine-headed monster? Mokodai Khan, an Oroqen hero, vowed to defeat the monster. After thinking it over for many days he at last had an idea about how to use his wits to defeat the monster. He carefully arranged every detail and decided that the monster's weak point was that, because of his nine heads, his thoughts and actions were uncoordinated. One day Mokodai Khan took a huge bow and a quiver of arrows and went to the mouth of Gaixian Cavern. The monster had detected his approach and cried out before the hunter could speak, "Where are you from? Why do you dare intrude into my territory?"

"I lead the Oroqen tribes and am master of the Hinggan Mountains--Mokodai Khan. I've come here to have a contest with you."

"Braggart! Do you have thousands of heads and dare to talk nonsense before me? I am the true master of the Hinggan Mountains."

"Let's see who's the true master. I'll pose two difficult problems. If you can answer correctly, you are the true master. If you can't, you are not. OK?"

"Go ahead. You don't frighten me."

"If you can't answer or make a mistake...?"

"You of course, are the true master!"

"How many straight peaks are there in the mountains and how many winding rivers are there in the plain?"

"Wait a minute! Let me figure it out!" The monster thought and calculated a long while and at last pronounced, "Nine hundred peaks and 450 rivers." Mokodai Khan laughingly exclaimed, "Wrong! How could there possibly be so many peaks and rivers? There are only 100 peaks and 50 rivers. These are such simple calculations even a 5 year old child could figure it correctly,

²¹Teepee-like structure.

but you missed it. Ha, ha!" Unwilling to admit error, the monster said, "Let me check," and calculated the number again and said, "I'm right so you must be wrong." Mokodai Khan replied, "You can ask any hunter, or even your youngest son, who is mistaken."

The monster thought his son would certainly help him and called out, "My son, come and prove I'm right." The little one-headed monster came out of the cavern. Monsters grew a new head every 5 years so the nine-headed father was 45. Mokodai Khan asked the little monster, "Do you know how many peaks and rivers there are in the Hinggan Mountains?"

"Two peaks hold one river. Altogether there are 100 peaks and 50 rivers," the son said. The father roared, "Why do you speak the same nonsense too? Aren't there 900 peaks and 450 rivers?" "Because you have nine heads, you count one as nine," the little monster replied. The monster father, both ashamed and annoyed, hung his heads and said nothing. Mokodai Khan asked, "Did you lose?" "All right, I admit it. Pose the second problem," the frustrated monster said.

"As Oroqen leader, you must be an excellent archer. Let us take the stone on top of Southeast Peak as our target. We will each shoot three times and he who hits the target three times will lead the Oroqen," said Mokodai Khan. "I am sure you'll lose this time," the monster said cockily but, in three attempts, he failed to hit the target. His son laughed because his father had so many heads that he couldn't focus his aim. Mokodai Khan then shot three arrows and each struck the target, making a hole in the stone. The monster had to admit his defeat and moved away from Gaixian Gaogede Mountains. Afterwards the Oroqen became master of Hinggan Mountains with Mokodai Khan as their leader.

Heroes

Mokodai Khan²²

I

Oroqen living in the Gankui area of Inner Mongolia originated from two clans. One was Keerteyier Clan, descended from Mokodai Khan, and the other was Acagechayier Clan, descended from Gentemur. Mokodai Khan and Gentemur were close friends and both had great strength, excelled in martial arts, and were brave, resourceful, and skilled hunters.

Once they held a contest to see who was the strongest. They chose three big stones at the foot of a hill and agreed to carry the stones on their backs to the hill top three times without stopping. They both easily did this. Then they decided to have an archery contest. One would shoot arrows from a door crack while the other raced a horse past three times. But both were struck by an arrow from the other so this also determined nothing.

One day Mokodai Khan and Gentemur went hunting together and saw an elk lying in the forest. Both wanted to show their skill. They agreed one would place a whetstone on the elk's back and the other would retrieve it without alarming the elk. The successful one would be the hero. Mokodai Khan first attempted to put the whetstone on the elk's back. Moving gently as a shadow, he softly placed the whetstone on the elk's back. Not in the least alarmed, the elk didn't move. Then it was Gentemur's turn to retrieve the whetstone. He also moved softly as a shadow and removed the stone, but the elk was startled and raced away. Actually Mokodai Khan had spit on the whetstone so that it would stick to the elk's hide. When Gentemur lifted the whetstone, the elk was startled.

II

Once Mokodai Khan's wife was carried away by the Tegecen Tribe chief, Niuniukuchun. Mokodai Khan disguised himself as a cripple, took a walking stick and limped off in search for his wife. When he arrived where the Tegecen lived, his wife recognized him and understood his aim. She said to the Tegecen, "This is our clan's cook, a poor honest man. Please let him cook." The Tegecen accepted this. Soon the Tegecen went out hunting and took Mokodai Khan with them to cook. When the Tegecen slept, he killed them with arrows, and returned home with his wife and the Tegecen's domesticated deer. Afterwards Mokodai Khan and the Tegecen were bitter enemies.

Though Mokodai Khan had recaptured his wife he had not tested his strength against Niuniukuchun. One day he took his bow and arrows and searched for him. He found him squatting behind a big stone. Mokodai Khan gently fired an arrow. Niuniukuchun jumped up, alerted by the sound of the flying arrow, and the arrow passed under his feet. He then spied his enemy--Mokodai Khan. Both hid behind large trees shooting at the other, but neither could hit his opponent. Later Mokodai Khan fired two arrows with one bow at the same time. One Niuniukuchun dodged, but he didn't expect the second, was hit, and died.

The Tegecen desired revenge even more now and, once when Mokodai Khan went out hunting, some Tegecen invaded, burned his home, and kidnapped his wife again. When Mokodai Khan returned he saw dense smoke and terrible flames in the distance. Feeling disaster must have fallen he picked up his pace so that three paces became one. When he arrived he found his home a heap of ashes and his wife gone. He realized Tegecen were responsible and hurriedly pursued them down a river, where he found a birch-bark boat in the river ahead of him full of people.

Taking a shortcut over a hill he hid in a grove of trees near the river. When his wife passed by in the boat, he imitated the cuckoo, signalling his wife to puncture the boat bottom. His wife did as he hinted and water poured into the boat, forcing the Tegecen to the shore. After turning the boat over, they went to a pine stand for resin to patch the hole. Finding his enemy rushed and disorganized, Mokodai Khan killed two guards, got back his wife, and escaped. Tegecen pursued, shooting as they ran, but soon it was clear Mokodai Khan was impossible to catch and

they gave up the chase.

Nevertheless, the Tegecen remained determined to kill Mokodai Khan and decided to go to his home and kill him. After much effort they reached his newly-built home, lay in ambush until midnight, and then burst inside. They bound him tightly from head to toe, and took him to their dwelling place. The Tegecen shaman and the Tegecen crowded into a large structure, surrounding Mokodai Khan, for the Aominanen ritual. Drawing bowstrings taut they prepared to fire, waiting for the shaman to shout "Ah" three times, but before the third "Ah," Mokodai Khan struggled, broke his bindings, clapped his hands to his knees, and bounded through a skylight. He squatted in a nearby grove, bent his head to his breast, disguising himself as a stump. The Tegecen searched high and low, noticed a black mound, and shot it with an arrow. The dark mound didn't move, so they assumed it really was a stump, and took no further notice of it. But the next day, they noticed the stump was gone and a bit of blood was on the ground. The Tegecen realized they had been tricked again by Mokodai Khan.

III

Bayier Clan originally was named Gentemur Clan. Mokodai Khan was Gentemur's brother-in-law and their fame spread throughout the Oroqen. Mokodai Khan noticed society in great turmoil, with people fighting and murdering each other. They then walked to Beijing to visit the Manchu emperor. From the mountains they passed through Wuerke, finally reaching Beijing. It is said the present Morindawa Banner Wuerke Road dates from that time. Arriving outside the Beijing palace, they were stopped by a guard. They truthfully said why they had come and the emperor received them. But when they came before the emperor, they neither kneeled nor kowtowed. This rudeness angered the emperor, who ordered them executed. Mokodai Khan shot some arrows, killing a few soldiers who raised their swords, and then clapped his hands to his knees, bounded into the air, pulled his bowstring taut, and drew a bead on the emperor. Attendant civil and military servants were horrified and asked Mokodai Khan to come down and be civil. Mokodai Khan agreed and then shot the arrow notched in his bowstring toward the sky. It is said that the arrow flew 20 kilometers away. The emperor then wanted to verify his ability and had him shoot at two large oxen standing side by side. Mokodai Khan shot one arrow completely through the two oxen. Amazed, the emperor issued an order that he be shown many official crowns and allowed to select one. In the course of choosing a sturdy one Mokodai Khan broke one after another--many of which were inlaid with precious gems and jadeite. Finally, he chose a copper one suitable for a minor official. The emperor designated Mokodai Khan as leader of his people and, from that time on, the highest Oroqen official was a *zuolin*.^d The emperor also gave him a big horsehide seal. Mokodai Khan used this for administering law. He was permitted to pass his title on to his descendants, who later carelessly burnt the seal.

IV: Mokodai Khan the Hero²³

Part One: True and Loyal Son of the Huntsmen

Mokodai Khan was an Oroqen hero. In his lifetime he said, "I'm not as tall as a mountain nor am I strong enough to hold a mountain in the palm of my hand. As the proverb goes, 'I'm nothing but a true son of the huntsmen.'" That was true, for he ate meat all year round, wore hunting clothes, lived in a *sirelji*, hunted, with hunters, and took all the comforts and hardships a hunting life offered.

One day the emperor ordered him to the capital. He put on a warm durable roe deer robe sewn by his mother, which also served as a quilt at night. To keep his feet warm, he lined his deerskin boots with sedge his father had cut. He shouldered a stout bow and sharp arrows handed down from his ancestors which he used to kill game and defend himself from bandits.

^dThe position bestowed upon Mokodai Khan, corresponding to the rank of the crown he had selected.

After he bid farewell to his tribe and family, he crossed Nuomin, Zuoer, and Yalu rivers and went nonstop to the capital. Mokodai Khan was renowned for his nimbleness and when he ran in the forest, no horse could match him. He quickly reached the capital, using his ability to run thousands of miles in a day and leap nearly four meters in a single bound. The guard standing at the capital gate asked him, "Where are you from and what brings you here?" Mokodai Khan answered, "I'm from the highest mountains, Hinggan, and I've come to see the supreme ruler--the emperor." The guard permitted him to enter. When he arrived at the magnificent palace gate, he noted a senior general standing guard. When the general noticed Mokodai Khan so oddly dressed he thought he must be an inconsequential pest and ordered soldiers to arrest him. Enraged, Mokodai Khan slew the senior general with an arrow which threw the imperial court into disarray. Cries to catch the culprit rang from every side. Taking advantage of this confusion, Mokodai Khan jumped out of the palace and fled to the Great Wall.

Though grieved to lose a senior general, the emperor did not want to insult the Oroqen by breaking relations. Every year the royal court received such valuables as pilose antlers, dogs, black fox, red fox, white lynx, sable, otter, and squirrel from the Oroqen, who excelled at horsemanship and archery. They were a useful and capable army which fought on many fronts in defense of the Homeland. The emperor thus decided to entertain Mokodai Khan hospitably as he had originally intended and sent an emissary to the foot of the Great Wall to invite Mokodai Khan to the palace.

When Mokodai Khan arrived, the emperor held a banquet in his honor. At the banquet's conclusion the emperor asked him to be an official, and added that he might choose any of many official crowns. Mokodai Khan tapped all the crowns with his horn ring and found that many made of precious stones, jade, pearls, and agate shattered. The brass crown however, proved resilient. Regardless of how he beat it, it didn't break. He choose this crown and showed it to the emperor, who shook his head and said, "What's the use of that crown? It signifies the lowest official position. Only village officials wear this. You should take another encrusted with gems. Leave your poor place, come here, and be a high official." Mokodai Khan replied, "I never thought about being or not being an official. You asked me to choose a crown and I have picked this one as carefully as though I were choosing a gift. I like the hard one, for only hard things are suitable for us mountain folk." Speechless, the emperor realized Mokodai Khan could not be moved by offer of an official position and then thought to make him his son-in-law in order to change his mind. He called Second Princess out and said, "This is Second Princess. She is unmarried. Are you satisfied? If so, I'll give her to you in marriage!"

"I'm afraid your princess will not be able to endure poverty or labor. If you ask me to leave my tribe to come here and become the princess's husband, that's impossible unless I'm not Mokodai Khan. Moreover, I am married to a virtuous, beautiful, and industrious wife and I shall never forsake her," Mokodai Khan replied. The emperor realized making Mokodai Khan husband of a princess couldn't move his heart and decided to win him over by offering treasures and splendid clothing. "Go to my treasury and general storehouse. Choose what you like best!" he said. Mokodai Khan went to the treasury and saw glittering treasures, but thought, "These things are useless in my mountains. The most useful things are bows and arrows, hunting horses, hunting dogs..."

Then he went to the emperor's general storehouse. There was much silk, python skin embroidered with dragons and phoenixes, and fur coats. It was a feast for the eyes. But he wasn't interested in any of it. Finally, he selected a bolt of cloth and took it back to the palace. Surprised, the emperor asked, "Why didn't you take the silk or python skin embroidered with dragons and phoenixes? Why did you choose such common cloth?" Mokodai Khan forthrightly replied, "Silk and satin aren't durable while cloth is suitable for us villagers." Taken with Mokodai Khan's forthrightness and character, he gave him many horses, clothes, caps, and silverware when he left. On his way home, Mokodai Khan helped those in need by giving away the emperor's gifts. Consequently, the poor loved him deeply. When he returned to his tribe and related his experiences, the people praised this fair warm-hearted young man and were even fonder of him.

Part Two: The Hero and His Enemy

There was a black cave near the tribe where bandits lived. While Mokodai Khan was in the capital they came to the tribe, stole many horses, and killed many huntsmen. Furious, Mokodai Khan was set on avenging his villagers. When she heard Mokodai Khan had returned his wife returned from her parents' home, escorted by her brother, Gentemur. Separated for such a long time, they talked a long while and the subject was how to avenge the villagers. While planning, suddenly they were told someone had come to visit. Mokodai Khan, his wife, and Gentemur respectfully received the guests.

After host and guests were seated, wine and meat were served. Mokodai Khan was pleased with having new friends, but the guests were displeased. The guests' leader, Niuniukuchun, suddenly stood and said, "We are not your friends. We came to abduct you!" Mokodai Khan and Gentemur immediately realized that these were enemies. But the 'guests' were ignorant of Mokodai Khan's ability. Before any could grab him, Mokodai Khan jumped out through the *sirelji* skylight. The bandits saw Mokodai Khan had fled, so prepared to catch Gentemur. But he fled as Mokodai Khan had and, because of his large size, the *sirelji* collapsed behind him. Support poles rolled in disorder and white birch bark strips struck the bandits.

After the confusion subsided the bandits found Mokodai Khan's wife also had vanished, so they went to Gentemur's home searching for her. As one archer was lifting a curtain to enter the *sirelji*, a sharp hunting sword struck his chest, killing him. A second archer tried to wrestle the sword from Mokodai Khan's wife, but both his hands were severed. A third archer ran over, wanting to throw Mokodai Khan's wife with a wrestling kick, but the sword cut off his right leg. Niuniukuchun's archers tired of this and dared not try again. They surrounded Gentemur's *sirelji* from a distance and shouted, "If you don't come out and go with us, we'll kill you with arrows. Don't say we have no mercy." Mokodai Khan's wife paid as much attention to this as to a fly's buzz. She thought, "I'd rather kill myself than be caught and insulted by you." She lifted her sword to end her life, but an archer beat her sword down as many archers encircled and bound her. She neither begged for mercy nor wept.

Niuniukuchun came near, spoke some flattery, and then ordered, "Please help this honored and peerless beauty up on this deer's back." Several archers ran over and politely helped her up on the back of a tame deer. Escorted on every side by the archers, she was taken into the dense forest.

Part Three: Saving Mokodai Khan's wife

Mokodai Khan and Gentemur hid nearby to watch the enemy's movements. By the next morning, they knew that they had gone. Gentemur found his *sirelji* destroyed and his sister kidnapped. His face reddened and his eyes sparked with anger. He bellowed furiously, making the earth and mountains quake. Gripping Mokodai Khan's hand he urged, "Hurry! Let's catch them and save my sister. I'll not rest until they're dead." Mokodai Khan replied, "We made a mistake in treating wolves as friends. We must save and avenge my wife and your sister. But we must wait. Our enemies are now fully alert and will carefully watch the rear. We are two. They are many. We can't blindly attack them on impulse nor can we defeat them through force. The only way to win is through careful planning."

"I can't wait longer!" Gentemur said impatiently. "We should wait 3 years," Mokodai Khan said. "Three years! Within 3 months my sister may die from her torment, say nothing of 3 years. Perhaps you can wait that long, but I cannot. Since you don't want to go immediately, I'll go alone," said Gentemur and strode off.

Gentemur walked a long while and, at sunset, came to the foot of a mountain, where he found a newly erected *sirelji*. By the *sirelji* was a man and, after looking him over carefully, Gentemur realized this was his brother-in-law--Mokodai Khan who, realizing it was impossible to stop Gentemur, had taken a shortcut through the dense forest to get in front of him.

Mokodai Khan ran to Gentemur and said angrily, "You can't act like this, my brother-in-law. The reason I said we should wait 3 years is that only in that time will the bandits give up their guard. If you follow too closely, they may kill your sister." Gentemur carefully considered,

decided Mokodai Khan was right, and forgot his anger.

The next day, they heard on the way that Niuniukuchun's invading tribe was going directly to the source of the Tuo River--Begadehan--by riding-deer. On the way, the bandits were forced to cut a path through the dense forest. Mokodai Khan and Gentemur slowly followed from a distance. They often found baskets of meat on rocks and near fallen trees. Mokodai Khan understood immediately that these were traces left by his wife and, as they ate the meat, their hatred for their enemy was mingled with longing for their sister and wife.

One day they came to the foot of Ben Mountain and found a *sirelji* housing an old couple and their three sons. They were dressed poorly and were without food. Gentemur said, "Kill them. They are a pack of Niuniukuchun's rogues." Gentemur knew they tamed and trained deer for Niuniukuchun's tribe and could not contain his bitter and deep-seated hatred for Niuniukuchun. "Our ancestors were laboring people. We have always been poor," the old couple said and their sons knelt and kowtowed. Mokodai Khan urged them up and said, "Not all tribes who train deer are evil nor are all evil people from these tribes. We cannot kill good people."

Part Four: An Ingenious Fight

Mokodai Khan and Gentemur pursued Niuniukuchun for nearly 3 years and then they reached Molileke River City. In the distance, they saw Niuniukuchun's cave. That night they stayed in a forest so near their enemies that they could see their campfire. Mokodai Khan said to Gentemur, "You rest and I'll go spy." Mokodai Khan went near and squatted on his heels. He resembled a stump. When he mimicked the sound of a cuckoo, his wife understood that Mokodai Khan and Gentemur were nearby.

"Where is that cuckoo?" Niuniukuchun asked his archers in amazement, never expecting it to be Mokodai Khan, because 3 years had passed, and he believed Mokodai Khan would not track them here. An archer went out and noticed a strange wooden stump in front of the cave. At once, he ran back inside and reported this to Niuniukuchun. Niuniukuchun came out to see and it was true--a strange stump was there. Immediately he suspected it to be Mokodai Khan, who could mysteriously appear and disappear, come to challenge him. He drew his bow and fired one arrow at the 'stump' which struck Mokodai Khan in the knee. Mokodai Khan endured the pain without the slightest movement. Niuniukuchun fired a second arrow which struck Mokodai Khan's thigh. Mokodai Khan still did not move, convincing Niuniukuchun that the 'stump' was not Mokodai Khan. After he returned to the cave, Mokodai Khan removed the two arrows and returned to where he and Gentemur were hiding.

During this 3 year period, when his archers were sleeping soundly, Niuniukuchun often moved near Mokodai Khan's wife and said, "You should sleep with me. Mokodai Khan has completely forgotten you." Though Niuniukuchun often pestered her in this way, she refused with many excuses. Several times, Niuniukuchun secretly unfastened her clothing. But after she awakened, she shouted to waken the archers and begged, "Oh, I'm already in your hand. Wait till you kill Mokodai Khan and Gentemur and then I'll go back and marry you formally. How good that will be!" These words had restrained Niuniukuchun.

On this night of Mokodai Khan's secret visit, she used the same tactic to send Niuniukuchun away. Waiting for Niuniukuchun and his archers to sleep soundly, she quietly got up and cut each bow so that when they were pulled they would break. Later the same night, Niuniukuchun awoke before dawn when Mokodai Khan's wife was soundly sleeping, drew his hunting knife and tried to cut through her sash. Mokodai Khan's wife immediately awakened, gave Niuniukuchun's face two hard slaps, and cursed, "You old pest!" Slapped out of his wits, he trembled and, visibly embarrassed at being scolded in front of his archers, gloomily retreated, hanging his head in shame. Not able to understand the situation he thought, "Three years have passed, but her heart hasn't changed. How strange! Did Mokodai Khan secretly follow us?" He thought this likely and, the more he thought about it, the more he felt something was wrong. He ordered loudly, "Shaman, put on your clothing and dance. It's time for you to invoke your magic and see if Mokodai Khan is pursuing us."

The men got up and surrounded the campfire in a large circle. The shaman donned his clothing and took up his drum. Inside the campfire circle, he jumped up and down frenziedly, but was

at a loss as to how and answer Niuniukuchun's question. If he said Mokodai Khan had not followed, what would he do if Mokodai Khan actually appeared? If he said Mokodai Khan had followed, what would he do if Mokodai Khan did not come? He anxiously looked around and his trance seemed slow in coming. Just as he was nearing his wits' end, he saw a stump so big it could not have been reached around by four people in a place not lit by the campfire. It seemed there were two men there, spying on the sorcerer's dance. In actuality, it was Mokodai Khan and Gentemur sitting cross-legged, watching the shaman's dance. The shaman lost his heavy load of worry, pretended to go into trance and, trembling and shaking, fell to the ground. He was helped up and then he sat and began wagging his head.

"Spirit, will Mokodai Khan come or not?"

"He is in front of you shadowlessly."

"Where is he?"

"Hiding in the shadow of the big stump."

Flustered, Niuniukuchun ordered them to shoot at the 'stump.' One famous archer came out with a bow weighing 50 kilograms and drew back the string to shoot an arrow. The bow snapped and, not only did the arrow not penetrate the stump, but it flew backwards 40 paces. Surprised, Niuniukuchun wondered, "Why did the arrow go backwards? If Mokodai Khan really came here, wouldn't he be too frightened to approach? Perhaps what the shaman said was nonsense, but the arrow going backward and the bow breaking are not good omens." Niuniukuchun couldn't sleep for this, nor did he permit others to sleep.

At daybreak, Niuniukuchun sent one of his men out, who returned and reported, "There is no stump, but your two arrows lie broken on the earth, alongside a blood trace leading south." All this was part of Mokodai Khan's ingenious plan. He had taken an animal abdomen, filled it with animal blood, and then made a small hole in the abdomen which he plugged. After the shaman finished dancing, he removed the plug and slowly walked south. At the end of the blood trace, Mokodai Khan and Gentemur stopped and jumped into some bushes.

After Niuniukuchun heard this report, he was sure Mokodai Khan was in the area. At once he and his followers, including his three sons and archers, went in the direction of the bushes, leaving only one guard to watch Mokodai Khan's wife. After tracing the blood for some time, Niuniukuchun ordered a halt and sent out a black dog to search. When the dog reached the end of the blood trace, it smelt something and jumped into the bushes. Mokodai Khan kicked it to the earth and then killed it. He put the dead dog outside the bushes and pushed a small bent tree limb through the dog from its mouth to its anus. From a distance, it seemed the dog was squatting. When the black dog did not return, Niuniukuchun sent a yellow dog named 'Tiger' out. It also jumped into the bushes and was killed by Mokodai Khan.

Tiger did not return so Niuniukuchun next sent his oldest son. When his son came to the end of the blood trail, he saw two dogs squatting in the bushes and thought, "Mokodai Khan, you can't escape my two dogs for they are making sure you don't move." The son felt a bit hot, removed his cap and fanned himself. Mokodai Khan then shot an arrow which went into one of his ears killing him instantly. Gentemur jumped out of the bushes and pulled him inside. Niuniukuchun's second and third sons were dispatched in similar fashion.

At last Niuniukuchun and all his archers were in a great rage and shouting bloodthirstily, went straight into the bushes. Mokodai Khan and Gentemur saw them clearly and fired at them from two directions. The magical and angry arrows of the two skilled archers seemed to have eyes, for none failed to strike an enemy. None of Niuniukuchun's archers or Niuniukuchun escaped alive. The bloody fight finished, Mokodai Khan and Gentemur went to the cave, singing a victory song.

After Mokodai Khan and his wife were reunited, their grief and joy intermingled. Gentemur drew his sword, beheaded the remaining archer, and then the three mounted one deer and, driving the horses stolen by Niuniukuchun, they went straight to their own tribe.

Part Five: Gentemur and Mokodai Khan Compete

After defeating Niuniukuchun's tribe, Mokodai Khan's tribesmen were happy, but Mokodai Khan was not. He said to Gentemur, "We should not be so happy. Though Niuniukuchun's tribe has been defeated, who knows if other bandits are about? We should continue to compete in the skills of hunting and shooting to make sure we are constantly on guard."

Mokodai Khan and Gentemur were well known for their archery and, if the two competed in martial arts, it was difficult to determine who was best. Gentemur admired Mokodai Khan for his carefulness. And though Gentemur had valor, but lacked strategy, and was given to being irritable and rushing in, Mokodai Khan appreciated his great strength and courage.

One day, Mokodai Khan and Gentemur were hunting together and came to the foot of a tall mountain where they saw an elk grazing. Because its head was pointing down and away from them, it didn't sense them. "Who--you or I--will kill it with an arrow?" Gentemur asked.

"In terms of archery, of course we both can kill it. This time, let's not compete in archery, but in some other skill."

"What?"

"Softness of step. If you can't walk softly, and just depend on archery skills, you won't do well."

"Yes, what can we do?"

"First, I'll go to the back of the elk and put a whetstone on its rump. Then I'll return here. We'll see if it is disturbed. Then you can do the same thing."

"OK!"

Mokodai Khan walked as softly as women sew embroidery. Suddenly, his feet were entangled by a vine. He slowly lifted the vine, continued, then met a horizontal branch, and passed over it as though he were stepping over a sleeping snake. At last he reached the elk and placed the heavy whetstone so softly on the elk's rump that it was just as though some ashes had fallen soundlessly. As he returned, he was more careful than before. The elk had still not detected him when he returned to his starting point.

"It's your turn. Be careful!" Mokodai Khan hissed to Gentemur. "Rest assured of that. Look how stupid it is," Gentemur replied and carefully and softly removed the whetstone. But when he started back he was careless, thinking that as the distance from the elk became greater, caution mattered less. But the elk sensed Gentemur after he had made three steps, leapt up, and began running. After Gentemur saw this he became angry, not at himself for being careless, but at the elk who had crossed him. So he drew his bow and shot it down.

Silteken²⁴

Long ago a mother and her son, Silteken, lived in an Oroqen tribe. While celebrating his tenth birthday he said, "Mother, you never told me how father died! If he was alive, how happy he would be to celebrate my tenth birthday." The mother did not want to tell him at first because she did not want to sadden him, but the son asked repeatedly so she told him what had happened.

Years before, Silteken's elder sister, Bolegeyuan, had caught the eye of an overlord living on Xirikele Mountain. This man wanted to kidnap her, but feared Silteken's father. He then asked a 100-eyed monster living on Zhabuzhali Highland for help. The monster agreed. The overlord then kidnapped Bolegeyuan while her father was out hunting. When he returned he swore he would get his daughter back and went at once to fight the monster. But misfortunes never come singly. In fierce fighting, attacked by both the monster and the overlord, he was slain.

After Silteken heard of his father's and sister's misfortune, deep hatred burned in him and, when he was 18, he asked his mother, "Where are my father's bow and arrows?" His mother pointed to North Mountain. He climbed the mountain and found a stone cavern resembling an open mouth. He entered and found it full of bows and arrows. He tried many, but was disappointed, for the bows broke before they were drawn and the arrows snapped before they were shot. After a long time he came to the last bow and three arrows. He thought, "Without father's bow and arrows, how can I take revenge on the monster and overlord? This is my last

chance." He pulled on the last bow and it truly was the best. Arrows fired by this bow sailed away and then flew back to the hands of their master. They were his father's precious treasure bow and treasure arrows! Silteken happily returned and told his mother this.

The next day he asked, "Where is father's horse?" His mother said, "Among the horses of Southeast Mountain Valley!" Silteken climbed to the top of Southeast Mountain and saw a horse herd grazing by a lake. He pulled up a pine tree just like pulling up a weed, chopped off the branches, tied a rope as thick as a bowl to a fork at the pole's top, and thus made a catch-pole. With the catch-pole over his shoulder, he ran after the horses. He caught many, but all died due to the power of his pull. He caught at least 300 before he found one that did not die. This horse had a long mane, bright body, nimble feet, and was extraordinarily strong. Delighted, Silteken gripped the pole tightly and struggled with the horse for a long time and at last tamed it.

On the third day he asked, "Where are the saddle and halters my father used?" His mother pointed to Northeast Mountain. Silteken then found a shed on Northeast Mountain full of saddles and halters. He chose one then another and at last settled on three halters and one saddle. After all was in readiness, Silteken knelt before his mother and asked for permission to fight the 100-eyed monster in order to avenge his father and sister, and to rid the people of a terrible scourge. Pleased, his mother said, "Have strength and guard against the enemy's wiles."

Silteken put on his father's armour and helmet, mounted his horse, shouldered the arrows, and then set out for the monster's town. On the way, the horse stopped suddenly and said, "Why don't you lash me with your whip to arouse my spirit?" Silteken remembered his mother saying, "A talking horse is a treasure horse." He did not lash the horse, only kindly urged it on. The treasure horse was so moved by this that it ran in high spirits. Two days later they crossed the mountain boundary between where mortals lived and the land of the monster. This place was at a high altitude and, in the distance, the blue-hued monster town was visible. The horse said, "Don't forget to use my dung and don't leave me when you are fighting." Silteken reached the town and shouted, "Hundred-eyed monster, come out!" The monster thought this call sounded like a bird and told one of his underlings, "Go and see who is squawking like a crow!" Just as the servant went out of the town gate, a horse dropping flew at him, breaking his leg. When he returned to the monster's hall and related what had happened, the monster did not believe him and sent another servant, who met the same fate.

The monster then left the hall. His body was big as a mountain, and from his 100 eyes shone blue starlight. He shouted carelessly, "How dare you enrage me! Where have you come from?!" "I'm your grandfather Silteken. I shall avenge my father and rid the people of a terrible scourge," Silteken said. "Good. If you want to die, bring your death with you when the sun rises tomorrow. We shall fight in that empty place among five pines growing east of town with bows and arrows!" the monster challenged. Silteken rode east, unsaddled his horse, tied him to a tree, and rested.

The next morning, just at sunrise the monster came, clad in heavy armor. When he saw Silteken waiting, he removed the armor, bared his chest and invited Silteken to be the first to shoot three arrows. The first arrow struck the monster's heart. The monster fell, but pasted mud over the wound and stood up again. Then Silteken shot his second and third arrows with the same result. Now it was the monster's turn to shoot. Silteken removed his armor and bared his chest. The monster shot his vital organs three times, but Silteken also recovered by using a mud poultice.

Silteken realized it was no use to shoot the monster with arrows and suggested wrestling. The monster agreed. Silteken prevailed at the beginning and nearly threw the monster. But later he weakened, the monster threw him, sat on his chest, seized his throat, and throttled him. The horse saw his master in danger, pulled at the tree to which he was tethered, pulled up the tree by the roots, and flung it suddenly at the monster's back. The monster was not prepared for this attack and turned to burn the tree, thinking that it was an embodiment of Silteken. Meanwhile the treasure horse picked up his dead master's corpse, slung him across his back, and galloped across mountains and valleys. At last he stopped on a round-top hill. When morning came, the horse shouted, "Mountain animals listen! Come! Receive your master's orders!" Tigers, bears, leopards, wolves, deer, elks, and deer all came. At that time however, they had no names. They crowded around the treasure horse and asked, "Who is our master? Can he name us?" The horse

pointed to his dead master and said, "He is your future master. But now he must sleep for 7 days. Guard him here, and after 7 days, I shall return and then you may receive wonderful names!" The animals agreed and the treasure horse left his master and raced away.

The treasure horse ran to the horse herd to see his uncle, a treasure horse named Baorile, who belonged to an Oroqen tribal leader. Baorile advised, "There is a way and the time you chose to come is a good one. The tribal head's daughter will soon marry and take many treasures with her as dowry. Among them is cinnabar, which can revive the dead. Her father promised to choose the best horse from our herd to insure a safe trip to the groom's home. Strive to be this horse. When the princess places a full cup of water on your back, keep your balance and don't let any water spill. Only if you do this, will they select you. But on the way, you should buck wildly which will anger her father. When he shoots, dodge the arrows. At that moment, I'll make him leave and return home. The princess will thus be left with you and your master will be saved!" At this moment they saw a group of people approaching and the treasure horse shook and transformed himself into a beautiful walking horse.

The girl approached, pointed at the treasure horse, and asked, "Why is that horse saddled?" A servant said, "Perhaps our ancestors rode it. There's never a need to unsaddle a good horse." Trustingly the princess said, "Catch it!" When the servant caught the horse, the girl mounted at once and the servant placed a cup of water on the horse's rear. When the horse ran, not only was no water spilt, but not even were ripples visible. The princess had never seen such a horse and rode it back with the servant following on Baorile.

A line of people set off to send the princess to her wedding. Relatives rode in front followed by the girl and the treasure horse. The tribal chief on Baorile brought up the rear. Baorile said, "Master, I think the princess's mount has evil intentions!" The tribal head said in surprise, "Why? I don't see this from its appearance. But, if it is disobedient, I shall shoot it!" Baorile said, "What if you can't hit it?" "If it wins, we will have to return!" the tribal head replied, which was just what Baorile wanted to hear.

As they were talking, the princess' horse began to buck wildly, shake his head, and whinny. Very frightened, the princess cried out for her father to save her. The father pursued, but the treasure horse ran fast as a deer while Baorile deliberately ran a bit slowly so they wouldn't catch up. Hearing the princess's loud cries, the tribal head took out a bow and arrow and prepared to shoot. "Be careful! Don't shoot the princess," Baorile advised. "Never mind!" his master answered. He fired the first arrow. The treasure horse saw the arrow was aimed at its stomach, so it flopped to the ground with its four legs spread apart. The arrow flew over, nearly hitting the girl's cap! The girl was so frightened that she couldn't keep her seat and fell heavily against the horse's neck! But the treasure horse managed so the girl caught his mane. The master of the tribe saw his first arrow fly away and notched a second. The horse saw it flying at its front legs so reared up on its hind legs and the arrow passed. The girl fell, but the horse managed to catch her with his tail. The third arrow flew at his ribs. The horse turned sharply to the right and this arrow also passed by. Everyone believed the tribal leader was angry for his three arrows had not found their mark. But, instead, he delightedly pointed at the horse and said, "You are the best horse in the world and your master must be the finest hero in the world. My daughter should marry such a man. The original marriage is canceled. You make take her to your master!"

The treasure horse had passed this first difficulty and, carrying the princess, ran day and night in the direction of the dead Silteken. Near the round-top hill, the horse explained his master's death. The girl smiled, happy in her heart, because the man she had secretly loved was Silteken! They reached the corpse, guarded by the animals. The horse suddenly was worried for he had forgotten to get names for the animals as he had promised. When the animals saw the horse, they asked for their names. The horse said, "You have been here for 7 days and must be hungry. Eat first and when my master recovers, he'll name you!" The animals believed this and left.

The princess dismounted and immediately set about saving him. She washed him with dew, put the cinnabar in his mouth, and blew air into his lungs. Silteken recovered and it was as though he had been dreaming. The girl shyly hid behind a tall tree. Silteken asked the horse, "What happened to me? Why have I slept here?" The treasure horse told him what had happened, and then said, "Who is behind that tree! You should thank your savior at once." Silteken turned and saw the beautiful woman. He knelt and passionately thanked her. She said, "To save you was my

desire and if you don't dislike me, I wish..." Her face reddened and Silteken shyly turned and faced the horse. The treasure horse said, "You are a couple. It is ordained that you should be wed here!" Silteken smiled and looked at the girl, who gladly took out her dowry and so they were married. They mounted the horse and went to his home.

The mother had yearned for her son day and night and, when she saw him returning with his wife, she was delighted. But when she heard how Silteken had narrowly escaped death, she said, "We should move. We can't stay here any longer!" The son said, "Wherever we move, we can't escape from the monster. If we want peace, we must kill him."

His mother replied, "I can't let you go. It is not that I don't want to see the monster dead, but I'm afraid you can't defeat him." Silteken's wife said, "It is not difficult to kill the monster. His three hearts are in the three pine trees planted south of that town. In the tallest tree there is a nest with three crows. These are his hearts. Silteken is a skilled archer and can easily shoot down the nest. But you must arrive before dawn, before the monster wakes in the morning!"

Silteken then set out and, 2 days later, he arrived in the night where the three trees grew south of the monster's town. He wanted to climb up the tree to take the crows, but he couldn't, for many sleeping venomous snakes were twined about the tree. Silteken took out his bow and shot an arrow into the nest. Three dark crows fell with the nest and, before they could fly away, he killed two and then wrapped the third in a yellow cloth. He walked to the monster's hall and called out his name. The monster was very surprised when he saw Silteken. As soon as he saw the heart in Silteken's hand he fearfully knelt and pleaded for his life. Silteken squeezed the crow and, at the same time, the 100-eyed monster fell, smashing half the buildings in town.

Silteken next rode to the mountain overlord's home to rescue his sister. He knew the overlord would be sleeping and climbed onto his roof. A moment later, the overlord came outside to urinate. Silteken shot an arrow, which struck the overlord in the heart, instantly killing him. He then rescued his sister and the two returned home where they were happily reunited with their mother.

A few days later, many animals gathered near Silteken's hunting hut and told him what had happened at the round-top mountain. They had come to ask for their names. Silteken asked his wife what answer he should give. She said that he should go to Heaven's palace and ask for a name sheet. Silteken went to South Mountain where a huge animal lived. It had a coat just like a plum blossom and its antlers reached Heaven's palace. Silteken asked the animal, "I must see the Sky Emperor. Please permit me to climb up your antlers." It answered, "If I can get a name, you may climb up." Silteken replied, "I will name you first!" Silteken climbed to Heaven, saw the Sky Emperor, and handed him a letter written by his wife. The Sky Emperor read it then gave him a name list. After Silteken returned he held a meeting of animals and gave every animal a name. The first on the list was the deer. From then on, the Oroqen became the master of animals.

Alatani²⁵

An old couple had a son named Alatani who, from his earliest years, was inordinately fond of playing with a dog's anklebone, so much so that at night he held it while sleeping. One night an old man appeared in the parents' dreams and said, "That anklebone is your son's lifebone and you should insure it's safety. If it is damaged, your child will die." From then on the mother kept the anklebone with her. Later, in search of more favorable hunting grounds, they moved and, when darkness fell, they camped by a small river. They noticed a *sirelji* on the other side of the river. The old man waded across to it where he was frightened to find a monster inside. He hurried back and said, "There is a monster sleeping inside! You two flee. I'll remain and stop it if it tries to find us. But, before you leave, set my horse's saddle well, lash the arrows to the front of the saddle, put a sack of dried meat at the back, and tie my horse to that tree."

After the wife did this, the old man saw her and his son off and went again to the *sirelji*, awakening the monster. The monster was three meters tall, had a flat nose, beady eyes, and howled like a wolf, frightening birds in every direction. "I have come to beseech you not to harm my wife and son," the old man said. Then the old man's horse neighed. The old man said,

"Perhaps they untied the mare, otherwise why is the colt crying so madly? Let me go tie the colt and then I'll come back. Tomorrow I'll accompany you hunting!"

The old man went out and the monster waited, but the old man did not return. Wondering why, he neared the door and peered out. "I have fallen into his trap! He is fleeing!" he exclaimed and sent two hounds after the old man. They ran fast as arrows and, in a moment, caught up with the old man. The old man threw dried meat to the hounds, who stopped and began eating it. The old man then shot them both dead. The monster thought his two hounds had surely seized the old man, so ate and drank happily inside his *sirelji*.

The old man continued searching for his wife and son, but it was not until dawn that he found them. They were now far from the monster, so they stopped running and built a fire. The old man said to his wife, "Did you bring our son's lifebone--the anklebone?" The old wife realized she had forgotten it in the rush of escape. The old husband wanted to return, but was stopped by Alatani, who said, "Father and mother, don't worry. Let me ride back and get it." The parents saw that their son was confident and agreed. Before he left his mother said, "You will find it where I spread the quilt." His father warned, "Be careful! The monster will seek revenge for the death of his two hounds!"

Alatani mounted and rode off. A short while later his horse said, "Master, it won't do to confront violence with violence. Catch a bird, remove its stomach, pour in some bitter gall-bladder liquid, tie the opening shut, and put it in your pocket. The monster is sleeping on his back with his mouth open. Your lifebone is in his mouth. If he swallows it, you will certainly die. Hold the bird's stomach tightly and, when I jump over the monster, cut the stomach open and let the gall drip into his mouth. He will then spit out the anklebone. At that time, grab it and we will escape."

Alatani did as the horse instructed and, when they reached the river, he found the monster was sleeping on the grassy ground on the opposite bank. He had the anklebone in his mouth. As he snored, the anklebone bounced up and down in its mouth. The horse jumped over the river and over the monster. Alatani squeezed the gall into the monster's mouth. The monster coughed and spat the anklebone high in the air. Alatani grabbed it and he and the horse raced away.

Enraged the monster shouted, "You whelp! You cannot escape!" and gave chase. Alatani turned and fired several arrows, but they missed the monster, who grabbed Alatani, pulled him from the horse, and raged, "Now I shall throttle you! Give me the anklebone, otherwise I shall kill you!" Alatani had no alternative and handed it over. The monster released him and said, "Only if you help me do something will I not destroy this anklebone. Afterwards, you may live out your dog's life. At the end of the world lives an extremely beautiful girl, whom I wish to marry. I have only 8 days left. You must find and bring her here, or else I shall smash this anklebone."

Alatani could only agree and left. That night he slept under a tree. When he awoke the next morning he found that his saddle had been stolen by squirrels. He mounted his horse and, before long, saw a squirrel running in front of him. Alatani recalled his saddle being stolen and angrily wanted to stomp the squirrel to death. But the squirrel hid under a birch root and pleaded, "Older brother, please don't kill me." "Why did you steal my saddle?" Alatani asked. "It was not I. Perhaps my mischievous children stole it. I'll return it," said the squirrel and, in a moment the squirrel had scampered away and returned with the saddle. It asked, "Are you going to a distant place?"

Alatani answered as he saddled the horse, "I am going to get a girl at the end of the world for a monster, who only gave me 8 days to accomplish this." "I'm sure you'll not return within 8 days, but if I went, it would only take 3 days," said the squirrel. Alatani found that the squirrel genuinely wanted to help him and made him his sworn brother. Like the wind the squirrel swiftly ran and disappeared. Soon thereafter a huge white bird flew up--the squirrel transformed. The huge bird flew for a day and a night and neared the end of the world. He heard a loud noise in the distance. The rich man at the end of the world was busily managing his daughter's marriage, which was planned for the next day. After the huge bird learned this, it transformed itself into a red horse with a saddle embroidered with gold and silver threads and ran to the side of two fairy horses belonging to Jiabegaitu--father of the beauty--and asked, "Do you know who the princess will marry?"

"We heard that she will marry a lazy and gluttonous man."

"In my place lives the greatest and most able man, Alatani Morigen. I have come to the end of the world because of him. If your family's princess married him, they would be the finest couple!"

As the horses conversed the princess came to select a fine steed. She immediately chose the red horse, which outshone all the others, and mounted it. She thought, "Father didn't even let me know how many horses he owns. There are actually three, but he told me there were only two white ones." She rode back home and tied the horse in the stable. As soon as she entered her home she wept. Her father asked, "What's the matter? Tomorrow you'll marry, but you behave like a child."

"There are three horses, but you told me that there were only two."

"There are only two."

"If you don't believe me, go see for yourself."

Her father went with her to the stable and, when he saw the three horses, he thought to himself, "Perhaps Heaven knows my daughter will marry and has rewarded me by sending this red horse." He said, "Heaven knows you are marrying and has given this fine horse to you." He urged his daughter to ride the horse a short distance, so that he could get some idea of its gait. The girl untied the horse, and mounted it. Suddenly it carried her into the sky. Jiabegaitu was amazed and hurriedly mounted a white fairy horse, grabbed three arrows, and raced after the red horse. But no matter how he urged his steed, he couldn't catch up with the red horse. Finally he returned in low spirits.

Meanwhile the red horse carried the girl as swiftly as the wind. The girl could hardly breathe and shouted, "Horse, never mind whether you are a god or a demon, and never mind where you are taking me, but please slow down. I can't breathe. I'm dying!" The horse slowed and asked, "Aren't you going to marry tomorrow? Why did you say it doesn't matter where I take you?"

"Your taking me away pleases me. I don't want to marry that lazy man," she answered.

The horse flew on and, in time, came to where Alatani was sitting under a tree. When Alatani saw the girl, he was pleased for she was tall, had a round charming face, beautiful eyes, and colorful clothes that made her more beautiful than a phoenix. Alatani hesitated giving such a girl to the monster. She turned and sat with her eyes fixed on distant mountains. The horse broke the silence, "Now that I've finished your task, why do you have such a long face?"

"Such a charming girl will be ravaged by the monster. It's just like sending flesh to a tiger."

"Cut some grass and bundle it into a strawman."

Alatani gathered grass and bound it into a strawman and handed it to the horse, which now had reverted to the form of a squirrel. "Brother Alatani, please turn your head," the squirrel said and blew into the strawman. In a flash it became a beautiful girl. "You can turn now and select one," the squirrel said. Alatani chose the real girl, who intimated she would gladly marry him. The squirrel suggested, "Give this straw-girl to the monster, but tell him to neither give food to her nor talk to her for 3 days!"

Alatani led the grass beauty to the monster, who laughed crudely and then returned the anklebone to Alatani. Alatani told the monster he should not talk to, or give food to the girl for 3 days and then returned to the squirrel, who warned, "You should leave with the beauty to a faraway place! The monster will find the grass beauty is not real and will assuredly try to find you." Alatani and his beauty mounted his father's horse and set off to find his parents. Meanwhile the monster discovered the true nature of the grass beauty on the second day and howled out of his *sirelji*. The squirrel then changed itself into a perfect image of Alatani and waited.

The monster came near 'Alatani' and screamed, "You cheated me by giving me grass! Return that anklebone!" 'Alatani' replied, "Aren't you ashamed to ask for the anklebone! Why didn't you do what I told you? You spoke to her before the 3 days were up. Let's go to Heaven and ask God who should be punished. If you win, I'll return the anklebone to you!" "Yes! You are a thief! Can a real beauty from the end of the world become grass?" said the monster.

When they arrived before God, the monster said, "Alatani is a thief and cheated me. He told me he would bring a beauty from the end of the world but, in reality, he brought me a false beauty of grass. He also cheated me out of my favorite toy--the anklebone." 'Alatani' said, "This monster is cruel and unreasonable. First he wanted to forcibly keep my lifebone--the anklebone."

Secondly, when I demanded my lifebone, not only did he not give it to me, but he forced me to take the beauty from the end of the world on the condition that he would return the anklebone. Thirdly, I went through much hardship to bring back the beauty. I told him not to speak to her nor give her food for 3 days. But he couldn't wait and poured liquor into her mouth on the second day. She was then so infuriated that she became grass. Now this evil monster threatens to kill me."

God pounded the table in anger and said, "Bind this unreasonable monster!" Guards did so and then 'Alatani' descended from Heaven, caught up with Alatani and his wife, and said excitedly, "Don't be afraid of the monster anymore! I have reported his evil deeds to God. He is tied and awaiting punishment." The couple was very glad and thanked the squirrel for his kind help. Alatani took his wife home and the family led a full and happy life, but one night a few years later, the wife suddenly woke Alatani and said, "Just now I had a nightmare. I think it portends misfortune." But Alatani only smiled and said, "I don't think so. Look! Our life is good!"

Three or 4 days later Alatani was hunting. Not far from his home a voice like thunder roared, "I have crossed 40 rivers and 40 mountains. My bow is made from a big root and my arrows are fashioned from huge tree trunks. I am stronger than Alatani. My arrows pierce his door as I burn his home to ashes!" It was Alatani's father-in-law and the man the wife was engaged to marry--Ayaletu. Alatani answered "I am stronger and my strength is much more than yours! Your arrows will not pierce my door but, on the contrary, will turn and pierce and burn you to ashes!" Suddenly Ayaletu fired several arrows, which Alatani caught with his hand, and said, "Arrows, return and pierce his arms!" The arrows flew back and shot Ayaletu in the right arm. At this time, Alatani's father-in-law, Jiabegaitu, said, "Don't fight! Let's talk for a bit!"

Alatani took the two to his home and treated them as honored guests. Jiabegaitu saw that Alatani was strong and sturdy and quietly said to Ayaletu, "Fighting is useless," and suggested that they compete in wrestling with the winner taking his daughter. Alatani subsequently wrestled Ayaletu to the ground the first and second times and, in the third round, broke his arm. Ayaletu was thus completely defeated and had to leave with Jiabegaitu in low spirits. Alatani once again resumed his happy life.

Some days later Alatani came back angrily from hunting. His wife hurriedly asked, "Why are you so angry? Did you quarrel with someone or have you not killed any game?" "There is a cruel king on the other side of the mountain, who has conquered many tribes. He is now killing people just for fun. The bones of the dead are heaped like a mountain and their blood flows like a river. I must eradicate this scourge," he said. Unable to dissuade him his wife said, "How many days will you be away?" Alatani replied, "At most, 30 years, at least 20 years," and rode off.

Many months went by, but he had only scaled one large mountain. As expected, white bones were heaped everywhere and many corpses were littered about. Darkness gradually fell so he built a fire on a slope. The cruel king sent many taloned and fanged creatures out to search for more people to kill. These creatures observed trees growing in front of them and a plateau above. They did not know that these trees were Alatani's arrows and the plateau was his back. They began cutting these trees, which awakened the sleeping Alatani. Angrily Alatani picked up some horse dung, and flung it at the beasts. Suddenly the horse dung became flying sand and rolling stones, which fell to the ground like rain. The beasts were terribly beaten and fled for their lives to the palace where they reported the confrontation to the cruel king. The cruel king shouted, "Foolish wasters!" and said to executioners standing nearby, "Tomorrow we shall kill whoever it is!"

The next day, the cruel king led 500 soldiers to Alatani. When they came face to face, their eyes blazed with hate and they began fighting. Arrows shot by the king flew like raindrops, but not a one hit Alatani. Alatani's arrows also were nearly used up, but there was still no clear winner. Just as Alatani was about to fire his last arrow, lightning accompanied by peals of thunder flashed and boomed and a storm blew up. His horse lowered its head, turned to run, and said, "You cannot defeat him this way. But if you get his life things, you can. His life things are a bird egg and a steel file. They are in a tree in front of us." The horse stopped under a camphor tree and Alatani noticed a bird nest among the tree leaves. He dismounted, uprooted the tree, took out the egg and file from the nest, and hurriedly returned.

The rain and wind then ceased, leaving the king as soaked as a drenched chicken. Alatani

shouted, "Today is time for you to die!" and waved the bird egg and file in his hands. As soon as the king beheld this, he rolled down the back of his horse, kowtowed, and pleaded, "Hero, please forgive me! Don't destroy my life things. I shall serve you all my life!"

Alatani smashed the egg with the file and the white and yolk fell to the ground. Alatani then shot out an arrow which went into the king's throat. And in this way, this cruel, evil thing finally died at Alatani's hands.

Alatani then rode straight to the palace where he heard somebody saying inside, "Small king, grow quickly! One day grow 1 *cun* and in 10 days grow 1 *chi*!"^e Grow up to revenge the death of your father and kill Alatani!" Alatani broke through the doorway and saw the queen rocking a cradle. The prince sleeping inside jumped out and mounted a horse to fight Alatani. After a long struggle, Alatani's horse suddenly said, "His soul is on one white hair of his horse's tail." Alatani immediately shot three arrows at the horse's tail, shooting off the part of the tail with the white hair. The prince then dropped from his horse and was trampled to death.

As Alatani was leaving, a red bird flew out from a crack in the door. Alatani raced after it but, just at this time, an old general emerged from the castle, stopped Alatani, and shouted, "You dared kill my sister's husband and my nephew. Come, accept your death!" but before he had finished, he was killed by Alatani's arrow. Alatani pursued the red bird, which flew into a wooden house and vanished. Alatani ran there, changed himself into a small beetle, and crept inside. There were two girls sitting on the *kang*,^f sewing. One had a red face while the other had a white face. The small beetle (Alatani) chewed through the white-faced girl's thread three times. She then remarked to the red-faced girl, "This is strange. What's the matter with my thread, sister? Why does it keep breaking?"

"Just now, didn't you say someone was running after you? Maybe he has come in," said the red-faced girl, and then the white-faced girl changed into a red bird once more and flew out of the house. Alatani switched back to his human form, jumped on his horse, and chased after her. At this time, the red-faced girl, fearing that her sister would be hurt by the man, caught up with Alatani and said, "Why are you so worried? I have a treasure and, when you throw it in the sky, it will stop the red bird from flying." Alatani took the treasure and threw it up in the sky. The treasure became an iron net and covered the red bird in a flash. The red bird again changed into the white girl. At this time, the red-faced girl said, "Although her father is evil, she is very kind, therefore, please don't hurt her." Alatani thought that this was correct--that he should not kill this good and innocent girl and freed her. He then rode back to his own home.

Cierbin Morigen²⁶

During the time of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty an Oroqen hunter skilled in riding and archery lived by the Cierbin River at the foot of the Hinggan Mountains. He was known as Cierbin Morigen. Previously Cierbin Morigen had been known as Yiqiougan-Jilaomulin, which means colt because, when he was born, there were two patches of hair on his legs. It was believed that when he grew older, he would run as fast as a colt. Later this proved true, for he could run as fast as a bird flies. When he was five he had enough strength to pull a bow and when he was six, he could ride a horse. When he was 10 he went out with other men, and once caught up with a running moose on foot and leapt on its back. The moose bucked and ran through trees along the river banks, but it couldn't shake the boy off.

One year he followed the tribal chief to the capital to deliver marten pelts to the emperor. He displayed his archery skills in the capital's military square for the Manchu emperor. He stood 100 paces from the target, and every arrow he shot hit the target. This delighted the emperor, who ordered him entertained and gave him much treasure, including beautiful carved bows covered with cattlehide and well-made painted saddles, silver tools, and satins of every color. But

^eOne *cun* = 3.33 centimeters. One *chi* = .33 meters.

^fHeatable brick bed.

he took only some cloth back to his tribe and distributed it. The old people said, "This is Enduri's gift," and afterwards, the name Yiqiougan-Jilaomulin was not spoken. People all called him Cierbin Morigen.

Many girls wished to marry him. This worried Morigen for, according to Oroqen tradition, a young man's marriage should be decided by his parents and his parents were dead. He then decided to choose a girl who could shoot and ride as skillfully as he. "Although silver and gold are beautiful, a good hunter likes a bow and arrow. If a girl can shoot six roe deer within a day and skillfully sew I'll marry her!" he announced.

Three years later Morigen was riding his fine horse through the snow along the Cierbin River banks, chasing after a moose he had wounded, when he suddenly found five dead roe deer on the snowy ground. He dismounted, and found all were shot in the same body area. Just at this moment he heard a song lofting gently from the other side of the mountain:

*No matter how tall the Hinggan Mountains are,
They can't block the wings of swans.
No matter how rapidly the Cierbin River water flows,
It can't block the love of a girl for her lover.
Mother, please don't begrudge me,
Your daughter is now adult.
Father don't keep me at home,
You will find a good son-in-law.*

A pretty girl wearing a red scarf appeared, riding fast down the mountain to the dead deer. As soon as she saw Cierbin Morigen she dismounted, bowed, pointed to a sixth roe deer slung across the horse's back and six arrows. She said, "People all say deer antlers are precious and beautiful, but I think a girl's pure heart is more precious. I've shot six roe deer all in one day!" Cierbin Morigen's face reddened, but the girl smiled and her voice, like tinkling silver bells, turned the boy's heart as sweet and happy as though he'd eaten honey.

Winter ended and the water in Cierbin River once again flowed merrily. In this best season, when the Hinggan Mountains were covered with red lilac blossoms, Cierbin Morigen married her. Not long after they married, Wunihua became pregnant. They were so happily married that others described them as being like a pair of swans flying in the sky, loving each other eternally.

When fruit by the rivers turned black and sweet, disaster struck. One day before the sun had set, Wunihua boiled meat gruel as usual outside their *sirelji* and waited for her husband. Suddenly she felt her eyes become warm and then the cap she was sewing became a fat baby boy. She asked lovingly, "Why have you been born so early? Cierbin Morigen has not returned to give you a name!" At that moment, a black bear jumped out from behind the home and grabbed the boy. The mother fought with it and cried out, "Cierbin Morigen! Save your child!" Then she awakened and found herself in her husband's arms. He asked, "Where is the child?" Wunihua realized it was only a dream. Embarrassed, she told her dream. Enraged, Cierbin Morigen stood, took his bow, stepped outside, and shot the black birch tree in front of the home. Black birch leaves waved and quaked and crows flew away. Then he said, "Do you know when Oroqen must kill black bears? If black bears don't attack humans, we never kill them! And if a guest comes, we entertain him, but if a foe comes, how can I let him go away? Nihua, the tribe leader, said Russians have come again. I'll go to Jingqilijiang River to search for them and take revenge myself!"

Why did he have such strong hatred? Cierbin Morigen's father had been a hunter along the Jingqilijiang on the north banks of the Heilongjiang River. There it was the same as in the Cierbin River area--mountains and forests teemed with game. It was said that his ancestor, Zhangde Khan, had a treasure bow and hunted every wild animal. What he killed was so much more than he could eat that some spoiled. After he died the treasure bow became a proud symbol of the tribe. Passed from generation to generation, it finally was given to Cierbin Morigen's father.

One evening, when Morigen's father returned from hunting, guests came. They had blue eyes, big noses, filthy hair, stubby beards, wore green robes, and carried rifles. They said they were

traders and wanted to be friends with the father. Cierbin Morigen's mother generously invited them into the home. She served venison and liquor according to Oroqen custom. The guests asked hurriedly about local products as they devoured meat. Morigen's father politely answered whatever they asked. After having drunk several cups of liquor the guests became rude, their blue eyes sending out greedy light as they leered at the mother, who worriedly exited the *sirelji*. But some followed her, their lustful eyes still on her. When the kind-hearted father heard his wife scream, he ran out and saw some 'guests' wrestling fur away from his wife. He contained his anger and said, "Honored guests, why do you do that? Do you want marten pelts? Those are valuable tribute!"

The guests said sinisterly, "The marten pelts, venison, hunting grounds and the women--we want them all. This is by order of the Tsarist government!" Then they grabbed marten pelts and pulled off the mother's robe. Fire gushed from the father's eyes but, just as he reached for his bow, there was a 'bang' as a 'guest' shot from the *sirelji* and the father fell in a bloody pool.

Later the father was awakened by Cierbin Morigen's wails. His wife had been kidnapped and, a few days later, he was told by a Dagur friend that the bandits had come to their tribe, taken people hostage, robbed marten pelts, killed the men, raped and kidnapped women, and even had eaten human flesh. Because of this the Dagur called them Luocho, which means 'man-eating monsters.' The father had to bear his anger and sadness, for there was Cierbin Morigen to care for, and he thought he would avenge himself and his wife later. Dragging his wounded body across the Heilongjiang River, he at last reached the banks of the Cierbin River. He wept and sadly called to his wife all day. At last, he had no more tears to weep and he became blind. His injury worsened and he was forced to ask relatives and friends to care for his son. He died not long afterwards.

Wunihua looked at her husband sympathetically after this account, for she then understood the pain in her husband's heart. She said, "I would not be your wife if I couldn't kill monsters. I'll go with you!" Cierbin Morigen disagreed. "For the sake of our child, I can't let you go with me," he said. Wunihua then turned, went into the *sirelji*, put dried meat into a bag, and said "Give a name to our unborn child." Cierbin thought for a moment then said with a sorrowful smile, "Call him Mohenbao!"

The next day before dawn, Cierbin Morigen set out, his attention focused on finding the foe that had kidnapped his mother and killed his father. Snowy ground is the hunter's friend, for it helps him track and a few days later, after a heavy snow, he passed by a deserted village and found an old white-haired Dagur man. He told him that Russians had come in the early morning, beaten him, and robbed him of his winter food. Cierbin Morigen gave him all the dried meat in his bag and set out after the Russians. The higher he and his horse went, the denser the forest became and, at last, his horse fell to the ground and died from exhaustion. Cierbin Morigen felt dizzy and, almost too hungry and cold to move, took snow and rubbed his face. Then he ran after the Russians on foot. Gradually the Russian tracks disappeared and he at last collapsed, unconscious in the snow.

Cierbin Morigen's attempt to avenge his parents moved Enduri. He summoned many birds and ordered them to send a message to Wunihua. He ordered other birds to Jingqilijiang River to help Cierbin Morigen kill the Russians. Birds soon landed beside Cierbin Morigen. They warmed him, gave him dried meat, and used their wings to sweep snow from a road leading to a small temple where the Russians were resting. Thus aided, Cierbin Morigen soon reached a deep valley and beheld a group of Russians fighting over a bag of meat. He quietly went to a cliff top, hid behind a tall tree, took out his bow, and shot arrows at them. One arrow struck a Russian in the throat and howling, he fell. Frightened, other Russians threw themselves to the ground. But when they saw only a lone Oroqen, they got up, picked up their rifles, and shot back. Cierbin Morigen hid behind the tree, unable to continue shooting. Confident, the Russians, decided to encircle Cierbin Morigen and kill him. Then they heard a noise in the sky and, suddenly, strong winds and snow came. The Russian huddled together, shivering from the cold. They fired their guns randomly and dared not move forward.

With the snow came an Oroqen huntress riding a white horse, a red scarf tied about her head. She descended in a cloud, and then a hail of arrows flew at the Russians, striking them in their backsides! Tossing down their guns, they scattered in every direction. Cierbin Morigen heard the

guns suddenly fall silent and looked about. He saw the Oroqen huntress and wondered if it was Wunihua.

Earlier, after Cierbin Morigen left his home, Wunihua constantly worried. One night she dreamed of Enduri descending in colored clouds. He told her that Cierbin Morigen faced danger, raised his hand, and a flock of birds landed about the *sirelji*. When Wunihua awoke, she found that the birds were still there. She prayed, "Enduri, if you really are a god, I beg you to help me." Then she prepared her horse and set off. While riding, she felt the wind rush by and found her white horse was flying, accompanied by the birds.

But Cierbin Morigen had little time to think about how Wunihua came to the Jingqilijiang River. He drew his bow and fired one arrow after another. Each found its target in a Russian throat. The Russians finally knelt, made the sign of the cross, and asked God to protect them. Only a few escaped on horseback. It ceased snowing and the hill fell silent. Cierbin Morigen's desire to avenge his parents had been realized. The couple embraced and then kowtowed before the colored clouds three times. They then made their way to the Heilongjiang River where they encountered the government army, which they joined, and went to Yaksa⁸ to drive the Russians out of the country.

Lunjishan and Ayijilun²⁷

Ayijilun lived in a remote forest with her father, her mother having died when she was a baby. From childhood, Ayijilun learned to hunt. Horses, dogs, surrounding mountains, deep valleys, clear rivers, and ancient birch trees were all her friends. There came a time when father and daughter were never able to kill game. Was this because their hunting skills were poor? No! They were both crack shots. Then, was it because there were few animals in the mountains? No! The mountains teemed with wild animals. Well, what was the matter? For this, there is a story.

In a neighboring mountain, there lived a savage hideous old demon, who claimed all the mountain animals as his own. He dispatched boars to guard adjoining territory, hundreds of miles in area, and didn't allow hunters to come near. He sent owls to guard from the sky and, as soon as intruders were spotted, messages were sent to the old demon, who sent his servants to slay the hunters. Though all the hunters hated the old demon, they were powerless to do anything.

In the same deep mountain where the girl lived, dwelt the brave young Lunjishan, respected by young and old alike. Ayijilun was the dear sweetheart of Lunjishan. Ayijilun loved the courageous disposition of Lunjishan, and Lunjishan loved Ayijilun's kind heart and beauty. The old hunter also wished to have the young man as his son-in-law. Not only did the old hunter have this idea, but also the surrounding birch trees, the young pine trees, the lively flying birds, the shining rivers, ... every friend hoped that someday they could marry.

The old demon desired Ayijilun and, one dreadful night, sent out servants, who went like thieves to Ayijilun's *sirelji*. The old hunter's dog sensed them and began barking. The kidnappers tossed poisoned cakes to the hunting dog which, after eating them, fell dead. Then they approached the *sirelji* and blew in sleeping powders, which made the father and daughter immediately lose consciousness. When Ayijilun regained consciousness she saw the demon king, long horns sprouting from his head, nearby. He opened his bloody basin-wide mouth, revealing sharp protruding fangs and leered, "I am king of this mountain and you are my heart. Without you, I shall die. My castle is made of iron and no one can rescue you. If such a man existed it means I would be defeated and he would be master of this mountain." Ayijilun could only weep.

The next morning, when the old hunter found his daughter gone, he rushed outside and met his dead hunting dog sprawled on the ground. Holding the dog he wailed, "Your mistress has been kidnapped by the demon and he also has murdered you. All is lost!" This sorrowful lament reached into the distance and found Lunjishan, who hurriedly dressed, mounted his horse, and flew like an arrow to the old hunter. On the way, he saw beautiful wild flowers on both sides of the road, the old birch trees, the lively birds... all their friends were in deep sorrow. Lunjishan did not ask why, he just rushed to the door. Entering, he found the old hunter lying

⁸Chinese: Yakeshi. Russian: Albikin.

unconscious, the result of his great grief. As Lunjishan wondered what had happened, the old hunter's horse came up and said that Ayijilun had been abducted by the old demon king. Lunjishan took up his gun and rushed out of the *sirelji*, but a nearby old birch tree stopped him and said, "Lunjishan! The old hunter and Ayijilun treated us like kinfolks. I have nothing except a green leaf to repay this debt. Take it. You will need it," and it threw down one green leaf from its branches, which Lunjishan pocketed. Then a white-edged morning glory appeared in the grass and said sorrowfully, "They treated me well also, not letting horses tramp my stem. Every summer I happily lived here. Today I only have a stem to repay this debt. It will be useful," and a long and bent stem stretched out towards Lunjishan, who added it to his pocket.

Lunjishan looked at the sun and realized that it was noon. The sorrowful flowers he had seen that morning gathered around and became a large mass of white fog. Lunjishan shouldered his gun, picked up a treasure knife bequeathed by his grandfather, and mounted his flying hunting horse. The fog lifted him and his horse to the sky, a wind blew them forward and, in the blink of an eye, they reached the demon's mountain lair. Lunjishan felt the leaf in his pocket bouncing. He took it out, his vision blurred, and he found himself transformed into a small worm, creeping on the leaf's surface. The leaf wrapped itself around him and floated down from the clouds and into the room where the demon king and Ayijilun were. At that moment, a servant was said, "Your majesty, the food is ready and all the guests have arrived for the wedding." "Let them wait a bit! I'll come soon," the demon said and the servant quickly retreated.

The old demon put on impressive clothing and then took out some beautiful clothes. He ordered Ayijilun to dress. Weeping, Ayijilun did not look at the clothes. At this moment the leaf flattened its surface and Lunjishan recovered his true form. He stood in front of the old demon and Ayijilun. Happily surprised, Ayijilun threw herself into Lunjishan's arms. The old demon king thought this man was a servant, widened his bloodshot eyes, and shouted, "Damn it! You dare take such liberties! Pest, get out of here!" Lunjishan glared at the old demon scornfully and said, "Old demon, don't be so proud! Today is your last!" The demon realized this was not a servant and shouted, "Somebody grab this man!" Then the leaf crept up and flew down his gullet. The old demon tried to cough it out, but he couldn't, and he also couldn't shout. As he reached for his sword, Lunjishan found the morning glory stem moving in his pocket. It quickly became a long thick rope, flew over to the old demon, and bound him. The old demon could then neither sit nor breathe. Wondering at the delay, servants came and quickly surrounded Lunjishan, but the enraged Lunjishan slew first the demon and then all the servants with several sword thrusts. The two lovers then set fire to the demon king's den which blazed so fiercely that it could be seen for a long way. White clouds quickly descended and the hunting horse stood in their midst. Lunjishan and Ayijilun mounted the horse, flew up in the sky, and the white clouds took them back. Together they sang:

*We have the right,
We won victory.
We defeated the evil old demon,
We are masters of the land.
Numerous days ahead greet us with a happy life.
Mountains, forests, valleys and rivers,
Belong to us,
Belong to the Oroqen!*

Huoqina Defeats the Monster²⁸

Three brothers lived between White Mountain and Black Mountain. The eldest was Pianzhushan and the second was Guoxiyan. Both were timid. It was only the youngest, Huoqina, who was bold and fearless, and thus much liked by the tribesmen. One day, when Pianzhushan was returning from hunting at sunset, he met a shaggy monster with long paws climbing towards an open coffin in a tree top. Seeing a ferocious wolf, the monster jumped from the tree and fled with the wolf in hot pursuit. His nerves shattered by this, Pianzhushan returned home, fell ill,

and didn't leave his bed.

Later, Guoxiyan went hunting. When it was dark, he tied his horse to a withered tree and lit a bonfire. After eating, he saw a black hairy monster with glimmering eyes squatting by the fire. He raised his firelock and shot. The monster ran away yelping. Afraid the monster would return and attack him, Guoxiyan intended to sit by the fire and wait for dawn. His horse snorted constantly and he felt this signalled the monster had come again. He saddled the horse and rode for home. As he reached his home, dawn broke and his tribesmen saw that he was pale. They asked, "Why are you trembling, and why is the saddle set backwards?"

A few days later Huoqina went hunting. He was so strong of limb that only a very large horse could carry him. As he returned at sunset, he saw a leopard and raced after it. Just as he caught up with it, it vanished. In its place was a pretty maid collecting firewood. Huoqina asked, "Why do you venture out alone to collect firewood?" "I am single and homeless," she replied. Huoqina noticed that the maid was concealing paws inside long sleeves. He realized that she was actually a monster. Unafraid, he decided to do his best to defeat it. Just then, he heard the 'maid' ask, "Would you let me spend the night at your home?" Pretending compassion he then tied her behind him with a rope. When he reached his tribe, dogs barked furiously, which so frightened the 'maid' that she hurriedly transformed 'herself' into a coffin lid. Amazed, Huoqina's family asked, "Why did you bring a coffin lid home?" Huoqina explained, "Just a moment before it was a beautiful maid." He took the coffin lid from his back, lit a bonfire, and threw it into the flames. After some time, the coffin lid had burned completely, except for a small piece of wood. Recognizing this as the monster's heart, Huoqina built the fire up again and burned it completely to ashes. Afterwards, that region was never haunted.

The Wolf Devils²⁹

Long ago a pack of black wolf devils lived in a cave in East Mountain, while a pack of red wolf devils lived in West Forest. Everyday they met once and then each went his own way.

One day some wolf devils found a horse herd in an Oroqen valley. The Oroqen didn't herd horses, just kept them in the valley and, when they needed a horse, went to the valley and caught one. The wolf devils were greedy to capture these horses, but were afraid of the Oroqen hunters. The two packs discussed this. A red wolf devil thought of a trick and suggested that a wolf devil disguise himself as a herdsman during the day and, at night, the other devils would come and eat the horses. "Excellent!" all cheered. They elected a big black wolf devil to do this. From that day on, the number of horses decreased daily. But the people found no wolves and paid no attention to this.

Tulundeyi was an orphaned young man and often went to the horse valley. Noticing that the number of horses was decreasing, he resolved to find out why. He went to a hilltop where he hid in some overgrowth and watched the 'herdsman's' activities. During daylight hours, he found nothing unusual but, that night, after a crescent moon rose in the sky, wolf howls rang throughout the valley. A wolf pack ran toward the horses and then the 'herdsman' became a big black wolf and began directing younger wolves to pounce on the horses. Tulundeyi angrily vowed to kill the wolves, returned home, told what he had seen, and offered a plan to kill the wolves. People reacted differently. Some thought heavenly sky dogs were eating the horses and, therefore they should feel blessed. Others thought that if they offended the wolves, this would only bring trouble. Some young people supported the idea of ridding the horses of the wolves, but they were afraid the old people would prevent them.

Tulundeyi bluntly said, "Since you don't believe the herdsman is a wolf, invite him here to drink and then you may see what he really is." "Good," the people agreed in one voice. The next morning Tulundeyi went to the valley and said to the 'herdsman,' "Today is one of our traditional festivals. Our tribal chief invites you to come to our camp and drink." The wolf devil, happy to have such a chance, followed Tulundeyi to the Oroqen camp.

During the feast, everyone proposed toasts to the wolf devil and got him so drunk that he passed out. Tulundeyi pulled him into the sun, where he soon turned into a big black wolf. Amidst universal dismay, Tulundeyi pulled out a bow and arrow and was taking aim. Suddenly

threw himself on the wolf and shouted, "You can't shoot!" At that moment, the wolf awoke, bit the old man on the neck, killing him, and ran off. Enraged, everyone shouted, "Shoot! Tulundeyi, shoot!" Tulundeyi fired a vengeful arrow at the wolf, which found its mark, sending the wolf plunging down a cliff. The next day Tulundeyi led skilled archers to the mountains and slew all the wolves. Afterwards, people led a peaceful life and the horses multiplied and grew fat and strong.

The Fairy and Yin Jishan³⁰

In ancient times a very beautiful fairy dwelt in Heaven. Every god hoped to marry her, but none appealed to her because they were all lazy and led a meaningless existence. The fairy resolved to marry an industrious and valiant mortal and, every day, she travelled through the sky, looking for an ideal husband. One morning, while combing her hair by Nuomin River, Yin Jishan chanced to see her. Her beauty made him fall head over heels in love with her. He sang heartily:

*I look out,
Continuously look for...
But haven't seen the brightest star.*

*I think of the brightest star,
Unceasingly yearn for...
Today she appears before my eyes.*

*Graceful beauty,
Come to the forest,
As if the sun was shining on me.*

*Lovely beauty,
Come to the water,
As if gold rays were glinting before my eyes.*

*Lovely beauty,
Come from Heaven,
As if my heart were soaring in the sky.*

*Narrow eyebrowed beauty,
Come to me,
As if my heart had grown wings.*

*Beauty with ruby lips,
Give me a smile,
I sing as well as a lark.*

*Beauty with white teeth,
Have fun at the spring,
Make my mind fly out of my body.*

The fairy nervously flew away when Yin Jishan stepped near her, but at last turned and nodded, filling him with joy. They each loved the other from the time of that first meeting.

Later, the fairy secretly observed Yin Jishan with a companion. The day passed and they killed many animals. Yin Jishan's companion suggested that they return, but Yin Jishan disagreed, because not enough animals had been killed to distribute among all the tribesmen. The other hunter said, "You do as you like, but I must leave." Yin Jishan calmly replied, "Well, you may rest for a while if you are tired. I'll hunt a bit more." This spirit of generosity impressed the

fairy. A few days later, the fairy found Yin Jishan again, about to set off hunting with a companion. As they crossed a swift river, Yin's companion lost his footing and fell. Yin courageously dived into the water and saved him, unknowingly impressing the fairy, who loved him all the more. As soon as she reached Heaven, she implored her mother to let her marry Yin Jishan. At first, her mother refused, but later, moved by her daughter's deep love, consented. Then the fairy, filled with joy, married her love.

Mowure³¹

In the Hinggan Mountains a large boulder jutted skyward and was a favorite site for a child named Mowure to play. One day, while playing there, he felt his feet leave the ground and he rose upward. He looked up and saw nothing strange. A moment later, he slowly returned to the ground. Later, every day, the same thing happened. The boy told his father about this and said, "There must be a huge snake on the stone, for his inhaling is so strong that it lifts me up in the air!"

His father said, "The snake is practicing on you and, when it has enough skill, it will eat you. It is better to kill it." The father and son took bows and arrows and, just as they arrived, Mowure was lifted up. He and his father looked at the top of the huge stone and saw a huge hole in the rock cliff in which there was an enormous open mouth. It was a monstrous serpent. The father pulled back his bow with all his strength and let fly an arrow which struck the snake in the eye. The enraged serpent lunged out. It was about 90 meters long and as thick as a water vat. The snake's tail lashed the stone. Fearless, father and son faced the animal shooting one arrow after the other, striking the snake's vital organs. Fatally wounded, the snake thrashed about for a moment, and then died.

Beerge³²

Clever Beerge followed his grandfather about, helped him with his work, and often asked many questions. One day he asked, "Grandfather, why do leaves grow, but then fall off every year? Why are there no evergreen trees in the forest?" Grandfather answered, "There are some evergreens in the forest, but they are very far away. Nobody can move them here."

"In what direction is that place?"

"In the direction of the rising sun."

Beerge decided to go there and, one day while his grandfather was gathering firewood, he set out. After many days, he came to a wide river and saw a water crane land. It cried out, "Little brother, save me! An eagle is after me!" Beerge shot an arrow, which buried itself in the eagle's chest, causing it to plunge into the river. The crane nodded thanks and flew away.

Beerge went on and arrived in a valley as dusk fell, and heard a cry from behind as two huge hook-like paws brushed him. He felt the wind rush by and, a moment later, he was taken into a dark mountain hole where a pair of bright eyes shone in the dark. He realized they were a tiger's. A few minutes later, another tiger arrived with a small deer in its mouth. The first tiger said, "Today I ate some good food and, as I was returning, I met this nice food in the valley. He gave himself to me. How lucky!" The other said, "The same thing happened to me. I ate two river deer, went to the river to drink, and then I met this deer. I'm also fortunate. When we awaken tomorrow, we can have more good food!" Then the two tigers slept.

At midnight, Beerge tapped the deer's antlers and said, "Tomorrow morning, we shall lose our lives if we don't escape." Then he and the deer quietly slipped out of the lair and blocked up the entrance with stones. After bidding the deer farewell, he continued searching for the evergreens. Suddenly a squirrel jumped in front of him and said, "Little brother, save me! A leopard wants to eat me!" Beerge saw a leopard loping after the squirrel and killed it with an arrow. With tears of gratitude the squirrel thanked him and left.

Later he found pine trees, dug up some seedlings, put them in his bag, and started back. But a few days later he found the trees in his bag had all withered! As he wept over this misfortune, he felt a small claw touch him. It was the squirrel which said, "My benefactor, why are you so

sad?" Beerge told what had happened and showed it the withered trees. The squirrel smiled and said, "It's easy! Follow me!" They returned to the forest where the squirrel collected many seeds for him and said, "Plant these and, when spring comes, they'll sprout." With a full bag of seeds, Beerge started home again.

When he tried to cross the river that he had forded when he came, he fell in the water and lost consciousness. Some time later, he heard a voice calling him. The water crane had saved him from the water and later, it helped him find the bag of seeds he had lost in the water. Beerge dried the seeds and then set off again.

At last he got home. Spring was coming and, when his tribesmen saw that he had brought evergreen seeds, they praised him. With his grandfather and the tribesmen, they sowed seeds on the hills and, a few years later, when the young trees became taller, the whole mountain became forever green. From that time on, Oroqen mountains have had evergreen trees.

Weijiageda Khan and Menshayala³³

Weijiageda Khan lived north of the Heilongjiang River. He wore a hat with two horns that resembled camphor trees. Menshayala lived over 5 kilometers from Station Number 18 West and had elk-like legs. Both men were tall, renowned for their strength, could run very fast, and were skilled archers. Weijiageda Khan wanted to have a contest with Menshayala so, one day, he took his bow and arrows, and crossed the Heilongjiang River to Huma River. From afar he saw smoke and realized that this was Menshayala's *ureleng*.^b He camped by the riverside a half-kilometer away. Four mornings later, Menshayala discovered him. When Weijiageda Khan told his name he sang:

*I have crossed 40 great rivers,
I have strode over 50 great mountains,
My bow is made from tree roots,
My bowstring has never broken!
Menshayala surpasses me,
I have come here specially to call and pay respect,
Jieya River is my native place,
I am Weijiageda Khan!*

Pleased, Menshayala at once agreed to a contest and invited Weijiageda Khan to his *sirelji*, where he gave him a good meal and then their competition began. First they held a race to see who was the fastest. One sat in the *sirelji*, while the other went outside and ran by. They agreed that if the inside man noticed the other running past, the runner would lose. Weijiageda Khan ran first but, when he crossed in front of the door, he was detected by Menshayala. Then it was Menshayala's turn. Though he ran past the door three times, Weijiageda Khan never noticed him and Menshayala won that round.

Weijiageda Khan suggested another match. They agreed to tie one end of a long rope around their necks and run and see who could make the unattached end fly highest in the air. Weijiageda Khan ran, but the free end of the rope merely dragged on the ground behind him. Then it was Menshayala's turn. When he ran, the rope end rose up 1 meter above the ground. Weijiageda Khan lost again. Finally they competed in archery. Menshayala stood 100 paces away and let Weijiageda Khan shoot at him three times. He managed to skillfully dodge all three arrows. They exchanged positions and Weijiageda Khan also skillfully dodged Menshayala's three arrows. After this round, Weijiageda Khan was particularly in admiration of Menshayala. In the beginning his main aim had been to measure Menshayala's strength and rob Menshayala's *ureleng*, but now that he knew his opponent's ability was greater than his own, he gave up any thought of invasion. Instead, he became sworn friends with Menshayala and lived in Menshayala's *ureleng*.

One night Menshayala was awakened by Weijiageda Khan, who said, "My horns twitch

^bSmall sub-tribal social unit.

continuously. There has surely been an accident in my family." They hurriedly started toward the Jieya River. Menshayala easily leapt over the Yishaqi River while Weijiageda Khan crossed by raft. In a short time, they came to Jieya River, where they found a crowd of Yakut, who had invaded, robbed, and killed many Oroqen. They had just fled. The two men took a shortcut, caught up with them and, one after another, killed them all, except for a tricky man named Sha Han. They spent all day, but finally caught and killed him too. Later, Weijiageda Khan moved his *ureleng* to the Ta River area, formed a relationship with Menshayala's *ureleng*, and each married his daughters to the other's sons.

Dragon Head Mount and the Boy Hunter³⁴

Years ago there was much game in the Huma River Basin. Oroqen hunters came from many places to hunt there. But later a monster came, which resembled neither beast nor man. He stood 3 meters tall and was hairy. His head was as ugly as a moose's and his eyes were as large as big bells and emitted green light. His sense of smell was so keen that he could detect a human from far away. His mouth resembled a big bloody basin and the ends of his paws were eagle-like talons. He had a walking stick made from a 'crow-eye tree' and, when crossing boggy marshlands, he could run quickly using the stick. If he sat on a boulder, the pressure of his body was such that he left a hole in the stone. This monster ate many people and frightened still more.

One day, two hunters met this monster while hunting. Terrified, they lashed their horses and ran quickly away, but the monster pursued. Hills and rivers could not stop him and, just as the two were nearly caught, they met a boy hunter, who curiously asked, "Why are you running?"

"A man-eating monster's coming."

"Don't you have bows and arrows?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you afraid? Shoot him!"

"We've never seen anyone who doesn't fear this monster," the two hunters said and hid behind a huge stone. The monster suddenly ran up and the child asked angrily, "What are you doing?" Startled, the monster replied, "Did you ask? I am chasing two men." "Why do you want to catch them?" the boy demanded. "Why?" the monster laughed nastily. "I want to eat them."

"Are people good food?"

"I've eaten people since I was born."

"How terrible! How dare you eat people!"

"Little boy, do you dare scold me?"

"Leave or else I shall beat you!"

The monster yelled, "I don't want to eat you, because you're so small that you wouldn't even fill the cracks between my teeth! Leave, otherwise I'll seize you by the throat and rip you apart!" and he reached out with his paws to catch the boy, but the boy was too nimble and jumped out of his reach. The monster said, "Let's compete and see who has the greater ability!" "You will never win!" the boy said. "Now say how we shall compete!"

"Wrestling."

"Wrestling? I'm small and quick while you are big and clumsy. You could never win!"

The monster suggested, "Let's pull up trees to see who can pull the fastest!"

"That's not a match to measure ability!"

"Then you make a suggestion!"

"Let's throw grass and see who can throw it the furthestest."

"All right!"

The monster pulled up grass from the ground and threw it with all his might, but it didn't go very far. Then the boy threw some grass much further. The monster saw that the boy was clever and thought, "If he is more able than I, how can I continue to stay here and eat people?" So to encourage himself he said, "Even if you have won, it is still impossible for you to defeat me."

"I can kill you with one arrow!"

The monster looked at the small boy and his small bow and arrows and laughed. "That little arrow is for a baby to play with. How can you kill me with such a small bow and such tiny

arrows?" he said.

"Let's see who shoots the best!"

"OK, tell me what the target is!"

"Let's shoot at that mountain. The one who shoots the dragon's head out from the top of the mountain will win," said the boy, pointing to the mountain standing against the Huma River. The monster shot first. His arrow flew to the foot of the mountain and knocked some stone down. "Look!" Boy Hunter cried and fired his arrow, which struck the top, cracking a rock, and a huge dragon thrust its head out through the crack! The monster was so afraid with this that he fled away, but the boy ran after him. As he was running, the monster turned his head and asked, "When can I return here?"

"Never."

"In 200 years, can I?"

"No, you can't! You can't return even after 200 times 200 years!"

Then the boy shot the monster as he ran, and the monster died from that one arrow! The two hunters hiding behind the rock came out. They thanked the boy, "It's you who saved us. If not, we would have lost our lives!" "Don't say thanks," the boy said. "Later, don't be afraid of monsters. You have bows and arrows and can kill them using your brains!" Ashamed, the two men's faces and necks went red, but they were happy in their hearts. Later, they often told the story of this boy hunter whenever they met someone. And those on boats on the Huma River can also still see Dragon Head Mountain, standing by the river which the boy shot at before he killed the monster.

Aoxingbe's Search for His Father³⁵

One day 18 year old Aoxingbe asked his mother, "Father has been gone for more than 10 years. Why has he not returned?" His mother replied, "I was told he was killed in a war 5,000 kilometers away. Someone else said that he was kept in service by Chief Ezhen. We still don't know." Aoxingbe resolved to search for his father and hunted continuously for 15 days, which allowed him to prepare dried meat sufficient to last his mother for 290 days. Then he set out on his journey.

After many days of travel, he was forced to walk because his horse died. One day he came upon a fat black man about 1 meter tall, who was carrying two packages. "Let me help you," said Aoxingbe and took one package. This was as nothing to him, for he was capable of carrying a live deer 40-50 kilometers! Aoxingbe learned his companion was named Yilanqihe and, disliking his former living place, was seeking his fortune elsewhere. Yilanqihe noticed Aoxingbe was young and strong and thought that if he could go with him things would be easier, so he asked Aoxingbe to become his sworn brother. "A tree does not dislike having many birds perch on it, and a person should not fear having many friends," he said and Aoxingbe agreed.

Eventually, they came to broad grassy marshlands and, at sunset, they saw a great tribe camped with many cooking-fires sending up rolling smoke and countless banners snapping in the wind. Suddenly they heard a hubbub of voices, barks, drumbeats, and the noise of wood being beaten coming from the camp. Seemingly something terrible had happened. "Look!" Aoxingbe shouted. A large bird had caught something pink and was flying towards them. It was a black vulture holding a girl in its beak. The girl sadly sang:

*Kind people,
Please save me!
I am only 17,
Is this the time for me to die?*

Aoxingbe dropped the package and followed the black vulture to a cave. When he tried to enter, a cold wind blew out, which seemed to freeze his muscles and bones. Some hours later, Yilanqihe arrived and said, "The girl captured by the black vulture is Ezhen's only daughter,

Xiyunjiao. Ezhen has decreed that whoever saves her shall marry her. He will also be made master of a 250 kilometer area." At this time, Ezhen's calvary arrived. Yilanqihe went up to the leader and said, "We found a cave and Xiyunjiao is inside!" "Humph! Finding the cave is nothing!" And then he added disappointedly, "Let's return and report to Ezhen that we have no way to save her!" An old soldier with a scarred head whispered to himself, "Ezhen's dear daughter is lost and old Gewayier is very unlucky." "Gewayier!" asked Aoxingbe quickly, recognizing his father's name. "From Pange River?" "Yes!" the old soldier said, "Because his archery is excellent, he was kept to guard the gate of the rear stockade village. After this disaster befell Xiyunjiao, he was imprisoned." "Is he 58 years old?" Aoxingbe asked anxiously. "That's right. Then you must be..." But before the old soldier could finish, Aoxingbe grasped the leader's horse's bridle and said, "Let me handle this business of saving Xiyunjiao! Cut and braid the manes of 100 horses into a thick rope."

The leader ordered his soldiers to do so. Aoxingbe caught three bats, put them into a make-shift cage, and said, "Brother Yilanqihe, when I reach the cave bottom I shall turn the first bat free. If I find Xiyunjiao, I shall release the second. When you see the third fly out, let down the rope and pull us up." Yilanqihe promised to do this. Aoxingbe was then lowered into the cave and noticed a dim light below. When he reached the bottom, he released one bat and then walked into the deepness of the cave. Before him was a valley. He was puzzled, for there were no suns or moons, but it was very bright--sometimes red and sometimes green. When he looked down he noticed that the white path he was standing on was made from human bones! He untied the ax from his belt and said, "Evil monster, how many people have you killed? This time, I shall pound you to bits!"

In front of the white bone road a river of red water flowed. Aoxingbe cut down a rotten tree, cut a long piece of wood into an oar, and crossed the river on the tree trunk. When he reached the bank, he saw a girl in pink clothing with a big wooden cangue about her feet skinning bark from a tree. Aoxingbe came up and asked, "Are you Xiyunjiao?" "Yes!" she joyfully replied "Who are you?" "I am Aoxingbe. I saw you had been caught by that vulture, so I came to rescue you," he said, and let another bat loose. As he prepared to cut the cangue binding Xiyunjiao's feet, she seized his hand and said, "Don't. The evil vulture will come out when he hears the noise!"

"I hope he comes out! A bow, arrows, and my ax are here. Why should I be afraid of him?"

"They won't be of any use. Only Mudelu Khan's big steel knife with saw teeth can help!"

"Where is it?"

"It is under evil Tabujian's pillow."

Aoxingbe approached Tabujian's tent, peered inside, and saw Tabujian on a bed covered with bear fur. He had scaly purplish skin. A big steel knife's bronze handle was visible beneath his pillow. Xiyunjiao put more bark on the fire. Tabujian wiggled his nose and said, "Why is there the smell of a stranger?" "It is me you smell!" answered Xiyunjiao. Under cover of the roaring fire, Xiyunjiao gently opened the curtain and let Aoxingbe enter. Now asleep, Tabujian opened his bloodshot eyes. Aoxingbe hesitated, but Xiyunjiao gently whispered, "He always opens his eyes while sleeping. Hurry, come in!" Aoxingbe tiptoed over and drew out the big steel knife from under the pillow and said,

*Mudelu Khan's steel knife,
Your master has come,
Please do a good thing...
Help me cut off the evil vulture's head!*

The treasure knife quivered like a green dragon. Aoxingbe aimed it at Tabujian's neck and slashed. Decapitated, Tabujian's head sailed around the tent once and said, "Aha! Surely there is a human here!" and then returned to its neck. After cutting three times, the head still sailed round the tent. Aoxingbe then took a green stone jar and put it over the head. Inside the jar, the evil head thrashed around madly while and hurled terrible curses at Aoxingbe. "Go ahead and curse!" said the enraged Aoxingbe as he pushed the bed over, pinning the corpse beneath it. He set fire to the monster's lair, and then the two crossed the red river and came to the end of the

white bone road. When they reached the place where Aoxingbe had come down, he set the third bat free. The rope attached to the basket descended and Aoxingbe urged Xiyunjiao to sit inside. "First you get in," Xiyunjiao explained. "Those officials all have black hearts. When they see me, they will not care about you." "Hurry, get in. My sworn brother is waiting at the cave mouth," Aoxingbe said and, reassured, Xiyunjiao got in and then removed a precious stone earring, pulled off an embroidered boot, and placed them in Aoxingbe's hands. "I shall wait for you!" she said.

When Xiyunjiao was pulled out of the cave, she urged Yilanqihe to pull Aoxingbe up. "I...I am none other than Aoxingbe!" Yilanqihe sweetly said. "I am standing right by you." "You...?" Xiyunjiao laughed scornfully. "You are a black fat man 1 meter tall, but Aoxingbe is...ha, ha!" "I have the ability to transform myself!" Yilanqihe said firmly. "I am your deliverer, the one who saved your life!" "But you are not a bit like him!" Xiyunjiao looked at him carefully and added, "Could you show me the big steel knife which killed the evil monster?"

"Xiyunjiao, hurry! Let's go see your father, Ezhen!" the official in charge of the soldiers interrupted. "No!" Xiyunjiao said firmly, "Only when I see Aoxingbe will I return!" Meanwhile, Yilanqihe had cut the rope nearly in two. When it was lowered and Aoxingbe was being pulled up, it broke, sending Aoxingbe plunging to the bottom of the cave. Hours later, Aoxingbe recovered consciousness and felt something running over his face. He forced open his eyes and found several mice scratching his nose. He slapped them away with his hand, throwing one small colored mouse against a cliff, bloodily injuring its foreleg. It limped to a purple flower, bit the root, and squeaking, ran away without a trace of a limp. "This must be some miracle flower!" Aoxingbe thought and ate some. Immediately, his head cleared, and his broken back and leg stopped hurting. He stoop up, supporting himself with the sword, looked up and saw that the cave opening was as distant and small as a wine cup.

"I shall not stay in this cold damp place and wait for someone to rescue me!" he thought and returned to the deepness of the cave. Tiredly he sat on a stone and noticed a stream dropping from the mountain to his back. Just before drinking some water he heard, "Brave hero! Help me!" He listened carefully and the voice became clearer. He looked up and saw a man stretching half of his body out from the middle of the cliff, waving his arms. The falling drops of water were his tears! Aoxingbe forgot all his bodily discomforts, cut stairsteps in the cliff with his big knife, climbed up, and asked, "Who put you under this cliff?"

"I am Black Dragon Mudelu Khan's son, Baheyang. Bainacha ordered me to guard Tabujian with my father's treasure knife, but I was negligent. Tabujian stole the treasure knife and escaped, causing disasters to befall every tribe. Bainacha furiously punished me by leaving me in the middle of this cliff. Only after 100 years will I be free." "Tabujian is dead now so there is no need for you to wait 100 years!" Aoxingbe said, and then raised the steel knife and prepared to cut the stone pressing Baheyang. "Brave brother, please listen!" Baheyang stopped him. "The more you cut this stone, the bigger it becomes! You must..."

In the course of saving someone, even if it meant losing his own life, Aoxingbe never so much as knit his brows in hesitation. At once he descended the mountain, skinned a birch tree, and made a bucket from the bark. He then carried red river water from 1.5 kilometers away and, step by step, went up the 9,999 steps he cut to the cliff top and watered several large decayed pine trees. It should be made clear that it was impossible with only two or three buckets of water to bring the pines, matted with spider webs, back to life. If the pines didn't sprout, the cliff would not release Baheyang. If the pines were to bud, 9,999 buckets of water were required!

A magpie finished building 99 nests and said to him, "It is time to rest." But Aoxingbe thought, "I still have the final 99 buckets of water to carry, so I mustn't rest!" ... The last bucket of water! The decayed trees budded! Aoxingbe was as delighted as a little bear cub that first tastes grass! "Move away!" Baheyang shouted. Aoxingbe swiftly ran down as the mountain collapsed with a roar as loud as nine thunderclaps. After a cloud of dust disappeared, Aoxingbe noticed Baheyang kneeling in front of him. He quickly helped him up and they tightly embraced.

There is no need to relate the details of how Baheyang, put Aoxingbe on his back and flew out of the cave and then how he dove to the bottom of the Heilongjiang River to let Aoxingbe hear the river water and the fish and shrimp conversing. And it is also not necessary to describe the details of how Aoxingbe knelt before a long-stemmed pipe and a pocket pipe made from fish

skin, which transformed themselves into Baheyng's parents. As do humans, dragons also love their children.

Seeing their long-absent son once again at home, the old couple entertained their honored guest in order to show their gratitude. Before he left, Mudelu Khan determined to give the majority of his wealth to Aoxingbe, but Aoxingbe, acting according to Baheyng's previous instructions, said, "I am a hunter. Gold, silver, and pearls are not useful. I shall travel far in search of my father. It's not convenient to carry such things. But if I ask for nothing, I think you will surely be unhappy. Please give me the white clam compact." The old couple were reluctant but, recalling how he had rescued their son, they consented.

Before Aoxingbe left, Baheyng exhorted repeatedly, "When you meet difficulty or suffering, this treasure compact will help you. But you must not show it to others." "I shall be careful!" Aoxingbe assured and then Baheyng carried him back to land. Exhausted from his many labors, Aoxingbe suddenly recalled the white clam compact and said, "Treasure compact, bring a fine horse." A horse fitted with a silver saddle and golden bells instantly appeared. Now the mountain road seemed not endless and the thorny bush seemed to have a new name--wild rose. The silver-maned horse was three times better than a good horse. It understood most of what Aoxingbe was thinking.

That night Aoxingbe stopped by the tent of an old man and asked to spend the night. The old man agreed and invited him inside for food and drink. "No, I like sleeping outside," Aoxingbe replied and kindled a fire, put some grass on the ground, and lay down. Meanwhile the old man stood by the silver-maned horse, gazing at it. Stars twinkled and the fire went out. Aoxingbe felt cold, hungry, and alone, so he took out the clam compact and said:

*Treasure compact, hurry and open,
Send your master a tent.
It would be even better if I could hear songs
Also, send food.*

Just as he finished, a tent sprang up around him and on the grass bed were hot foods and drinks. Just as he began to eat, eight boys and girls entered the tent and sang:

*Ehulan---Dehulan,
The best songs and dances we perform for the hero.
Don't stand.
Don't be upset.
We wholeheartedly love you!
Aoxingbe,
We hope your family is quickly reunited.
Ehulan....*

After the singing and dancing had ended, the eight boys and girls vanished. Aoxingbe asked the old man to drink and toasted him in all sincerity, but the old man harbored evil intentions. When Aoxingbe was drunk the old man picked up a sharp ax, aimed it at Aoxingbe's chest and swung. The ensuing blood dyed the grass red. The white clam compact dropped from Aoxingbe's garment to the ground. "Aha! The treasure is here!" the old man exclaimed and started to pick it up, but the treasure compact turned into a white mouse and ran into a crack in the earth. "Silver-maned horse! It's good that I can have one!" With this thought, the old man ran out of the tent and approached the horse. The silver-maned horse reared and breaking its tether, galloped off. At the Heilongjiang River, the horse dove into the water...

Meanwhile, nothing could comfort Xiyunjiao's distress. Forty-nine days passed. The term of waiting for Aoxingbe's return had come to an end! In 18 cauldrons red meat and bear fat simmered, amid a festive air punctuated with strains of music accompanied by drumbeats.

If a green poplar is moved to the dark side of a mountain it will die and in similar fashion, rather than marrying Yilanqihe, Xiyunjiao would rather have died. Xiyunjiao looked at the lined and unhappy face in her mirror and said, "Without him, have you any reason to dress

beautifully? Whom will you show yourself to? With no news about his father, even if you die, you'll still feel guilty." At that moment she saw a little white mouse with a precious stone earring on one ear holding an embroidered boot in its mouth. She jerked around and looked at it carefully--it was what she had given to Aoxingbe! At Xiyunjiao's approach, the mouse went out the door with Xiyunjiao close behind. It quickened its pace when Xiyunjiao nearly caught up and slowed when Xiyunjiao was tired. In the end, they arrived at the tent at the foot of a bare hill.

How much time elapsed after Xiyunjiao took Aoxingbe in her arms and wept, only the woodpecker resting on an old pine behind the tent could have calculated. Later, the woodpecker sang sorrowfully:

*Nahayie, heyinayao,
Aoxingbe will regain consciousness.
Weep no more!
Though Toulumalu God can cure varied illnesses,
But if he saw me, he would feel shamed!*

The song stopped. The tent disappeared and a young man riding a silver-maned horse and wearing a suit of silver armour appeared and said, "Let me bring him to life!" He gave the reins a jerk and the silver-maned horse jumped over Aoxingbe's corpse three times. Aoxingbe rubbed his eyes, sat up, looked at Baheyang and then looked at Xiyunjiao, not knowing what had happened. Suddenly, they heard the clatter of hoofbeats. The old soldier with a scarred head came up and breathlessly said, "Xiyunjiao, your father is dead." "Who killed him?" Aoxingbe asked. "The black fat man, Yilanqihe!" the old soldier answered and, putting the reins in Aoxingbe's hand, said, "Return at once!"

Eighteen cauldrons steamed. On 18 logs sat all the tribesmen. Yilanqihe was holding Ezhen's big seal, swaggering, and bellowing, "From now on, I am your great leader. I am Ezhen! The beautiful Xiyunjiao is my..." But before he could finish Aoxingbe grabbed him and raised him--this 1 meter high hunk of foul flesh--in the air. In the course of his obscene struggles, the whites of his eyes showed, he thrashed his legs, and tried to help himself with various gesturing. "Fry this wolf pup in bear fat and see if he'll do bad things again!" many suggested. As the people were hailing and cheering a girl shouted, "Look! Who is that coming in a birch bark boat?" Aoxingbe was the first to realize it was Baheyang with his mother! Then the old soldier with the scarred head came walking in their direction with Gewayier, who had been hidden for a long time by the old soldier. Aoxingbe quickly reached his father, with Xiyunjiao following close behind. They knelt before old Gewayier and cried, "Father!"

The red sun rose in the eastern sky and lit the mountains, rivers, forests, and grasslands. It also brightened Aoxingbe's ruddy face and brightened all who had experienced hardships and difficulties, but whose courageous spirit had not yielded, but instead, prevailed.

General

Zhulatula³⁶

An old man named Jinhushan had three sons, the youngest of which was Zhulatula. One year the old man fell seriously ill and decided to give the family treasure to the best son before dying. "Which one is the best?" he wondered. "It is very difficult to discover this while I'm living so let me pretend to die in order to find out." He called his three sons and said, "After I die the three of you come to my tomb to kowtow for 3 days," then he seemed to die. The three brothers wept sadly for a time, made a good coffin, and buried their father.

The next evening Zhulatula recalled his father's dying words and said, "Let's go to father's grave and kowtow." The two older brothers replied, "It was tiring enough when he was ill, and now that he is dead, we should have a good time. If you want to go, go alone!" When Zhulatula reached the tomb he filled his father's pipe with tobacco, presented a cup of liquor, and said, "Father, please smoke and drink this liquor." The old man pushed the cover away from the coffin, which had not yet been buried, stood, and said, "Don't be afraid my son! Keep this flint with you always and, when you are in trouble, ask it for aid. Now go home and tell your oldest brother to come tomorrow night." After Zhulatula returned home, his two brothers asked, "Did any good come from kowtowing?" "No," Zhulatula answered.

The next morning, the two brothers hurriedly saddled their horses. Zhulatula asked, "Where are you going?" "None of your business!" the two snapped and rode off. When evening came, the two returned and Zhulatula asked, "Where have you been?" "Why do you meddle?" the two brothers retorted angrily. "It's nearly dark. Don't you want to kowtow to father? Elder Brother, tonight, you must go!" Zhulatula said. The two brothers answered, "Go if you like!" laughing loudly.

When Zhulatula reached the coffin, his father pushed the lid away and said, "Why didn't your eldest brother come?" Zhulatula answered, "They said it wouldn't do any good for an old dead man." "Never mind. He won't receive any treasures. You can go now! Call your second brother to come tomorrow night! You needn't come again!" said the father. When Zhulatula reached home his brothers asked, "What did you get?" "Nothing," he replied.

The next morning, the two older brothers again anxiously saddled their horses and rode off without an explanation. When they returned that evening Zhulatula said, "Let's kowtow to father tonight! Second Brother, you must go tonight!" "Let filial son go! We won't do such a tiring thing for a corpse!" the two brothers snapped.

Zhulatula went alone to the graveyard and, after kowtowing, the old man opened the coffin and said, "Why does your brother not come?" "He said that he would not kowtow to you," Zhulatula replied. "If he doesn't want to come, don't bother. Now, I understand that you are my best son," he said, and took out a gold box with a surface carved with flowers. It shone with a bright light. The old man gave it to Zhulatula and said, "Keep this with you and, when you are in trouble, it will help." The old man closed his eyes and truly died.

The next morning Zhulatula's two brothers again rode off but, this time, Zhulatula secretly followed them to a crowded market bustling with noise and excitement. He followed the crowd to a tree to which a weeping girl was tied. Two copper coins hung from the tree. A man was shouting, "Shoot! He who can shoot the coins can have this girl!" Zhulatula realized that it was his two brothers who were trying to sell her. He wanted to rescue her, but had neither knife nor sword. Suddenly he recalled the treasures that his father had given him. He went to a quiet place and opened the gold box. At once a red steed stood before him. Delightedly Zhulatula mounted the treasure horse and rushed toward the tree. When the treasure horse neared the tree, Zhulatula grabbed the girl as the horse kicked the two brothers to death.

The girl asked, "Kindhearted brother, who are you?" Zhulatula answered, "My parents are dead and I have no family. I am alone." The girl said, "You saved me and I would like to be your wife. My mother died long ago and now I live with my father and six sisters and their husbands. Let's visit them."

The treasure horse flew over seven mountains and rivers before reaching the girl's home.

Zhulatula made dinner for everyone and filled their cups with liquor. While drinking and eating, all wondered why the dishes were so delicious and guessed secret treasures must be aiding Zhulatula. The six brothers-in-law said to their father-in-law, "Zhulatula must have a treasure." The old man agreed and wondered how it would be possible to obtain it. The brothers-in-law suggested that the old man feign illness and then ask for boar heart, liver, and tongue. In this way, they planned to kill Zhulatula when he returned from hunting. The old man called Zhulatula and said, "My daughter may marry you, but you must cure my illness. If I don't eat wild boar heart, liver, and tongue, I shall die."

Shortly afterwards the young woman asked Zhulatula, "Did father consent to our marriage?" Zhulatula shook his head and said, "Find a good horse for me!" The girl asked her father for the finest horse, but he replied, his face stiffening, "All the good horses were taken by your brothers-in-law. Only a lame horse remains in the stable." Sad and angry she gave the crippled horse to Zhulatula, who mounted it and set out. On the way he met the six brothers-in-law, who all laughed and said nastily, "The rider matches his horse. How can he hunt anything?" They urged their horses on and disappeared into the distance. A short time later Zhulatula came to a quiet place, tied the lame horse to a big tree, took out the gold box, and called the treasure horse and treasure arrows. Mounted on this horse, he flew upon clouds to Boar Mountain. He readied his bow and arrows, shot an arrow, and a boar fell to the ground. Putting the wild boar on the horse he returned to the tree where the crippled horse was tied. He sent the treasure horse away, slung the wild boar across the crippled horse's back, and started back to the girl's home. After a few minutes of riding he heard the sound of flying arrows whistling towards him, but it seemed as if no harm could befall Zhulatula. Golden rays emanated from his body, shielding him. When he returned to the girl's home, he gave the wild boar to the father and asked him to fulfill his promise. The old man replied, "A mere boar's heart and liver are inadequate. You must go to North Mountain and bring back a pair of roc eyes."

Zhulatula once again mounted the lame horse and set out. The six brothers-in-law, mounted on fast horses, passed and laughed, "Stupid man sitting on a lame horse. How can he hunt?" When Zhulatula reached North Mountain, he took the gold box from his pocket and opened it. Several gold arrows shot out followed by two golden birds. In a very short time the golden birds brought the eyes of a roc to Zhulatula. He took the eyes, mounted the lame horse, and happily returned but, just as he left North Mountain, he encountered the brothers-in-law. "Please dismount and rest," they invited. Zhulatula dismounted and the brothers-in-law said, "The ground is damp, sit on this roe deer skin!" As soon as he did so, they grabbed him and threw him over a precipice. At this critical moment he took out the gold box, which illuminated the darkness, and a flying carpet flew out from the box and brought him up from the abyss.

Zhulatula went to the girl's father, gave him the roc eyes, and asked for the girl. The father replied, "My illness will never be cured! Prepare a fine coffin. If you express your filial heart in this way, I shall make my daughter your wife."

Zhulatula chose the best camphor wood and, when the coffin was finished, gave it to the old man, who later called his six sons-in-law and Zhulatula. He said that the coffin was too small, because Zhulatula intentionally did not want him to stretch out his legs after he died. The father then asked Zhulatula to lie in the coffin to see if this was indeed true. Zhulatula stepped into the coffin, which was then closed and dropped down a cliff. The flying carpet flew out from the gold box and once more brought him to safety. The coffin emitted thousands of golden rays and the old man and his six sons-in-law madly scrambled to get inside. But, after they were all inside, the coffin dropped itself over the precipice and never came up again. Zhulatula then married the girl and they lived happily together.

Nameless Hunter³⁷

A young hunter lived in the verdant forests of Hinggan Mountains. He often hunted and returned with game but, if you asked his name, none knew. For this reason he was known as Nameless Hunter. He was good-looking and renowned for his archery. Many girls yearned to marry him. Three girls intent on capturing his attentions, decided to boldly express their feelings. One

beautiful spring day the three secretly went to the mountains like the sugar-hungry go hunting for honey and like the meat-hungry go hunting for the wild boar. They spent nearly the entire day searching for him and, because of a strong wind, hot sunshine, and much walking they were exhausted. Just as they settled in some soft grass, they heard singing. It was Nameless Hunter resting under a tree after a day of killing game.

The three girls were so excited that they immediately forgot their tiredness, stood, walked to him, and boldly expressed their love in song. Nameless Hunter was nervous but, at the same time, he was moved and agreed. On this summer evening wedding guests were small red and blue flowers about the campfire and a full moon was the chief witness. The three wives were as precious to the hunter as his eyes. He hugged one, kissed another, and treated them all just the same.

Time flew quickly and autumn returned to the Hinggan Mountains. Red, green, and yellow leaves sent out fresh fragrance and, against the background of blue sky, birch trunks appeared pure white. The hunter usually went away from home hunting during this season. Before he left, he asked his three lovely wives, "What will you greet me with upon my return?" The oldest noticed his shabby hat and said, "When you return I'll welcome you with a new hat." The second said, "I'll sew a new fur coat edged with lace." The youngest said, "When you return, you'll see our newborn son." Delighted, the hunter embraced her and said, "Third Wife, you are as pretty as a bright red rose," gave her a long kiss and then set off.

The two older wives made what they had promised and Third Wife sewed baby clothes. Jealous, the two older wives gnashed their teeth in hatred. The three had been on good terms before, but now things changed. Weeks passed and it came time for Third Wife to deliver her baby but, because she was very young, she did not know what to do. The two older wives told her to lie on a tall wooden platform, hoping that she and the baby would fall off and die. To their surprise the baby was delivered safely and the young wife, thinking how happy her husband would be, fell contentedly asleep. The two older wives approached, took the baby and threw him into a small lake. On their return the two evil women picked up a new-born puppy and put it beside the youngest wife.

Several days later the hunter returned and was greeted by the older wives and their gifts. Third Wife sat weeping, wondering what she could say. At that moment, the hunter escorted by the two older wives, came in, and anxiously asked her why she wept, which made her weep all the more sadly. The oldest wife quickly said, "She gave birth to a puppy and dares not face you." Like other hunters, he was warm-hearted but hot tempered. When he felt he had been insulted, he did not know forgiveness, regardless of the previous relationship. In a rage he beat Third Wife with a stick, locked her and the puppy in the home, and then moved away with the two older wives.

Third Wife wept so much that she became blind. In time she left the home and walked to the small lake where her son had been thrown. Suddenly she heard a boy crying. Kindhearted Water Mother had saved the boy as he was drowning and, when she noticed the boy's mother by the lake, reunited the two. The little boy rushed out of the water shouting, "Mother!" She said kindly, "If you are indeed my son, come, nurse me." The boy threw himself into his mother's arms and greedily nursed, as though he would nurse all the milk he had missed during the time that they had been parted.

The mother happily stroked him. Now that she was no longer worried, she stopped weeping and regained her sight. When the boy reached the age of 10, his mother told him how she had been mistreated by the two older wives. The boy then went searching for his father. At dusk, just as lamps were being lit, he reached his father's home. The hunter offered him supper and talked with him. When the father learned that Third Wife was still alive, and realized the venomous nature of the older wives, he was full of remorse. He raged at the two older wives, "You greatly wronged Third Wife and must be punished with death." Then he tied them behind a horse and lashed it. The horse ran, dragging the two evil women to their deaths. The hunter took his son to meet his third wife, knelt before her, and confessed his guilt. She ignored him, but then the son knelt too and pleaded, "Father is innocent. You should forget your anger," and burst into tears. Moved, the mother said, "Both of you rise. From now on, we'll live happily together."

Three Brothers and Their Wives³⁸

Wubuertie, Yabuertie, and Dongbuertie were brothers praised as the best of hunters. One spring, after preparing bullets and gunpowder for the best part of the hunting season, they got ready to leave on an extended hunting trip. Eldest Brother Wubuertie sang:

*Hunters hunting go up the mountain,
Bring deer antlers home.
Oh!
The day when I'm back,
My heart will be sweetened with gladness with what gift?*

His wife returned:

*Thread and needles go fast,
Sewing a coat with flower borders.
Oh, my darling,
The day you return,
A new fur-lined jacket will be my gift.*

Elder Brother Yabuertie sang:

*Hunters hunting go down the valley,
Bring game home.
Oh, my heart,
When you hear my galloping horse,
What gift will you give me?*

Yabuertie's wife sang:

*Take the basket and go along the river,
Collect wild fruit of all kinds.
Oh, my dear,
When I hear your horse running back,
Fruit wine will await you!*

Youngest Brother Dongbuertie then sang:

*Hunters hunting for thousands of miles,
It's difficult to return within half a year.
Oh, my dear,
When I come back singing a song,
What gift will you show me?*

His wife answered:

*Dearest people go hunting thousands of miles away,
Your shadow is my companion.
Oh, my heart,
When you sing mountain songs returning,
A lovely child will call you father!*

Satisfied, the brothers happily departed. The three sisters-in-law did as promised. Eldest Sister finished a fur-lined jacket and Second Sister readied her wine. Youngest Sister gave birth to a

lovely boy. When the two other wives saw the baby boy they thought, "Compared with this, our gifts are nothing." Jealously, they discussed what they should do while Younger Sister was sleeping. They then stole the child away, drowned him in a river, and put a puppy in the cradle. Third Sister found her son had changed to a dog and was so sad that all she could do was sit and weep.

Soon thereafter the brothers' horses' hooves sounded in the distance. When they heard the brothers singing, Eldest Sister took out her new jacket and Younger Sister out her new wine and presented them to their husbands. Youngest Brother sang:

*Third moon flowers bloomed welcoming spring.
Eighth moon fruit ripened and yellowed.
The distant hunter has returned.
Why can't I find my darling?*

His two sisters-in-law answered:

*Tigers bear tigers and leopards,
How can a wild pig bear a deer?
Youngest sister bore a monster,
She is ashamed to come out!*

When Dongbuertie saw a little dog in his child's cradle he was so angry that he beat his wife without letting her explain anything and kicked her out. Having nowhere to go, Third Brother's wife sat by the river and wept. Exhausted, she finally lay down and fell asleep. In her dream a white-haired old man came and sang:

*There are fish in the upper reaches,
There are fish in the lower reaches.
Your child lives in River God's home,
He is your and Dongbuertie's flesh and blood.
Poor woman,
Hear River God's message.
You will lose,
Your sadness and worry.*

Youngest Sister happily awoke and found her son asleep beside her. She held and kissed him with tears streaming. At the same time, the two older brothers also dreamed of the white-haired old man, who sang:

*Wubuertie, Yabueritie,
Sleeping with monsters.
Changed a mother's son for a puppy,
Dropped the child into the river.*

He sang to Youngest Brother:

*Dongbuertie, Dongbuertie,
You accused your wife wrongly,
You caused her suffering.
Find your son by the river at once,
Find your wife by the river at once!*

Eldest Sister and Elder Sister also heard River God sing:

*The monster shouts and cries,
The monster will put his claws into you.
Third Brother and his wife will live together,
You two will stand in your guilt.*

Before dawn, Third Brother rode out, searching for his wife. His brothers recalling their dreams, followed him. Terrified by their own dreams, one evil wife put on a she-bear fur and the other donned a she-wolf skin and in great haste they fled as soon as the brothers left.

Meanwhile Dongbuertie found his wife and son and returned with his brothers. Near their home, a bear and wolf approached. Eldest and Elder brothers took out guns, but before they fired the wolf and bear cried out: "Don't shoot us!" They were their wives! They hesitated which allowed the wolf and bear time to escape into the forest. Thus, their wives became wild beasts and never returned. Later, Eldest and Elder brothers married two honest women and, from then on, the three brothers, their wives, and children lived together harmoniously.

Snake King's Daughter³⁹

A mother, her elder son and his wife, and her younger son lived on a mountain. One day Younger Brother descended the mountain and suddenly heard a cry for help from the river below. He rushed over and found a young woman. "Why do you cry?" he asked. "I was collecting wild fruit in the mountain, but now I can't find my home. It's getting dark and I'm frightened," she said. "Where is your home?" Younger Brother inquired. "I live on Dahei Mountain. Can you take me home?" the girl said. Younger Brother had never heard of Dahei Mountain, so he invited her to his home and promised to help her find her home the following day.

Once at his home his mother and sister-in-law saw that she was beautiful, and happily served good food and drink while inquiring about her home. They also knew nothing about Dahei Mountain and thought, "Since this good girl has come to our home, she should become Younger Brother's wife!" They suggested this to the girl. Embarrassed she replied, "This is for my parents to decide." "But your parents are too far away and you are lost. The god Enduli has surely sent our son a wife. After you have a child, you can return home," they answered and she agreed.

After marriage, the two were much in love. The wife did all the housework, sometimes leaving nothing for the mother and the sister-in-law. Though the sister-in-law wanted to make breakfast when she got up, she found that the girl had already put it on the fire. The mother wanted to dry meat, but it had already been done by her son's wife. Mother and the sister-in-law wondered how the girl could do so much so quickly. One night, the sister-in-law didn't sleep, and discovered that Younger Wife did not get up very early but, in a flash she brushed her hair, washed her face, brought water from the river, collected dry wood from the forest, and put it in the stove. She blew on the fire to start it and the water in the pot boiled at once. The meat went in and out of the pot in only a minute, but was well-cooked. When the family got up, tea had been boiled and warm washing water was ready.

The sister-in-law secretly informed her mother-in-law about this, and then they told Elder Brother. They agreed the girl was not human, but a monster. Nevertheless, Younger Brother didn't believe them. One night however, Younger Brother awoke at midnight and found a big snake sleeping by his side. He was so frightened by this that he stood outside the home until morning. When his wife awoke she found him and asked, "Why are you standing outside?" "Did you sleep with me last night?" he asked. "I married you because I really wanted to live with you, but if you are afraid, I can leave," she said. "No, I'm not afraid. You truly desire to live with me, so I shall always love you," Younger Brother declared. Then the wife announced that she was pregnant and Younger Brother happily took her back inside.

What they had said had been overheard by the mother and the sister-in-law, who decided that, when Younger Brother was out hunting, they would take the girl to gather wild herbs in a valley where monsters often came, and then abandon her there. A few days later, Younger Brother went hunting. The mother and sister-in-law took the young woman to Ali Valley to collect wild vegetables and secretly returned home. The young wife waited until dark, but her mother- and

sister-in-law didn't come. She continued waiting and, at midnight, they still did not come. Suddenly, a big-headed monster appeared on the mountain top and threw itself at her. She blew air at it, which made it quickly retreat. Later, just before daybreak, another nine-headed monster came, but she also blew a breath of air and the monster fled.

When Younger Brother returned from hunting he asked where his wife was. His mother and the sister-in-law said they didn't know. He waited the whole night and, at last, morning came, but his wife still had not returned. He searched in the forest, but he couldn't find her. He then climbed to a mountain top and shouted:

*Snake King's daughter,
Where are you?
Younger Brother's wife,
Where are you?
Your husband is calling you.
Answer at once!*

Younger Brother's wife replied:

*Snake King's daughter,
I'm here.
Younger Brother's wife,
I'm here.
I stood here the whole night,
I stood here waiting and cold.
I'm waiting for you,
I'm expecting you!*

Just as Younger Brother prepared to go into the valley, his mother grabbed him and said, "It was difficult for us to abandon this monster in the valley. How can you wish to bring her back?" and ignoring what he said, pulled him back home. The next morning, before his family awoke, Younger Brother climbed to the mountain top and cried:

*Snake King's daughter,
Don't blame me!
Younger Brother's wife,
Don't hate me!
I tried to find you,
But my mother drew me back.
Snake King's daughter,
Did you leave and go far away?*

His wife wept and answered:

*Simple honest brother,
My dear husband,
Snake King's daughter never wanted to leave you,
It was your mother and sister-in-law who wanted her gone.
I've stood here for two nights,
Waiting for you,
Expecting you!*

When Younger Brother stepped off to go to her, Elder Brother pulled him back. The third morning, before his family awoke, he went to the mountain top and cried:

*Snake King's daughter,
Don't blame me!
Younger Brother's wife,
Don't hate me!
I can't leave you,
It was my brother who forced me back,
Snake King's daughter,
Come to me, run to my voice,
Let's leave together!*

Snake King's daughter sang:

*Simple honest brother,
My dear husband,
Snake King's daughter wants to live with you,
But never wants you to leave your family.
I have stood here for 3 days,
Exposed to the cold night, three times.
Waiting for you and your family,
Expecting you and your family.*

Snake King's daughter's sad and forlorn voice caused his sister-in-law, who was about to pull him back, to break into tears. Younger Brother ran to his wife and, when he reached her, he embraced her tightly and asked her to go home with him. She replied, "Your mother and sister-in-law fear me. I'd better stay in my home for some time and then next spring, you come and bring our child back here."

Next spring he went to mysterious Dahei Mountain, following directions his wife had given. He found a group of children playing and asked, "Do you know where Snake King's daughter is?" A boy said, "I know! She's my mother!" and then the children led Younger Brother to a large mountain cavern, which they entered and found trees and buildings. His wife came out, greeted him, and ordered the clever boy to call him father. She said, "This child is 8 months old, but he looks 8 years old." Then she led him to see Snake King and Snake Queen. Snake King said, "Son-in-law, whom do you want to take? Your son or your wife?" Younger Brother answered, "Both."

"Your mother and sister-in-law are afraid of my daughter."

"They yearn day and night to see her again. They blame themselves for their mistake."

Meanwhile a red cock flew into the cavern and flapped about. Snake King suddenly said, "Son-in-law, catch it!" Cocks are generally easy to catch, but the young man had to use all his strength to catch it. Snake King cut off its head, dropped its blood into liquor, and then asked his daughter to drink it. Snake King said, "My daughter wants to live with you. Once she drinks this cock's blood, she will remain human."

Younger Brother returned home with his wife and son. The mother, Elder Brother, and Sister-in-law greeted them outside the home. The mother embraced Younger Brother's wife and said sorrowfully, "It's my fault. I made you suffer." After hearing what Snake King had done she said, "Even if she is a snake daughter we will treat her well, because she has a good heart." Afterwards the family lived together happily.

Thumb Boy⁴⁰

An old hardworking childless couple desperately desired to have a child. They often said, "Even if we had a child as small as a thumb, it would be better than having no children at all." One day the old husband prepared to mow grass and, because this is exhausting work, he asked his old wife to make dumplings for his lunch. After he left the old wife began chopping meat but, out of carelessness, she chopped off a thumb. Strangely, the wound proved painless and didn't bleed.

She wrapped her severed thumb in cloth, laid it to one side, and continued her work. Soon, she heard a weak voice crying in the room, "Mother! Open the cover, I can't breath." The old lady realized that the voice was coming from the cloth, unbound it, and a thumb-sized boy jumped out.

"Where is my father?" the tiny boy asked?

"He is cutting grass."

"Let me take his meal to him."

"You can't move even one dumpling. How can you take his meal to him?"

"I can! Put it on my back!"

The old woman placed a dumpling on his back and cautioned him to be careful on the way. While the old man was cutting grass he suddenly heard a weak voice calling, "Father, help me! I've brought your meal!" The old man thought, "I shall never have the good fortune to have a child bring food to me. I must have heard wrongly!" and continued working. But the voice sharply sounded again. The little boy had stumbled over a grass root near where his father was working and couldn't stand, because of the dumpling's weight. Frightened, the old man ran home. His wife asked, "What happened?" "I was cutting grass and I heard a voice like that of a little boy calling 'father.' I thought it must be a monster so I ran home."

The old lady angrily stomped the ground and said, "It's the child changed from my thumb. He took your meal to you!" The old man raced back to the field and found Thumb Boy. He removed the dumpling from his back, took him in his hand, and kissed him. Thumb Boy said, "Father, you have worked hard and you must be tired and hungry. Mother made dumplings for you." The old man laughed happily and with tears streaming down his face said, "Oh--yes. My good boy, I shall eat." After the old parents had Thumb Boy, their home became happy and full of laughter and joy. One day the old man made a tiny bow and arrows for the little boy, who then shot a heap of birds everyday. Whenever the old couple saw neighbors they said, "Even though our boy is tiny, he's becoming the best hunter in the mountains."

This was overheard by seven robbers and, one day, while Thumb Boy was hunting, they kidnapped him and ordered him to go into a home and steal a sharp knife and ax, which they planned to use to kill a cow and then cut up the meat. After he stole the knife, he sat on the yard wall and shouted:

*Wei--yi--wei--yi
Seven heads listen:
I've stolen the sharp knife
A sharp knife to kill the cow!*

The thieves were afraid he would wake the master of the house so answered, "Never mind what it is, hand it over!" Then the boy picked up an ax and shouted:

*Wei--yi--wei--yi
Seven masters listen!
I've stolen the ax.
An ax to cleave the meat.*

The bandits said, "Hand it to us. Don't shout!" and killed the cow by the river using the knife and ax. They clove the meat and bones, divided it into seven parts, and asked the boy what he wanted. The boy only asked for the bladder, which he washed in the river and blew full of air. Then he shouted as he banged the bladder:

*Peng, Peng, Peng,
People listen!
Farmers listen!
Seven thieves killed the cow.
Seven bad men have stolen your cow!*

This time the villagers grabbed sticks and knives and rushed to the river. The seven bandits threw down their bags of meat and fled.

Meanwhile the old man, who was looking for Thumb Boy everywhere, happened to pass through the village. When he heard the sound, he ran to the river. He held his darling boy in his hand and asked, "My child, how could you make that kind of sound? Weren't you afraid the robbers would kill you?" "They stole others' things and are cowardly. I'm not afraid of them!" he answered. The villagers gathered around the old man and praised the boy, "Old Brother, although your child is tiny he is brave and we think he will be a very good hunter." The dead cow's owner gave the old man and his son a bag of meat in appreciation. But the old man was too tired and weak to carry it, so Thumb Boy banged the inflated bladder and shouted again:

*Peng, Peng, Peng,
My father was a thief.
My father stole the meat.*

His father was afraid to be seen carrying the meat bag and raced away, despite his tiredness, which made the villagers all laugh. Thumb Boy couldn't help himself and also laughed, then suddenly bent over, stood straight, and became a strong handsome young man. The old man ran a short distance with the meat bag on his shoulder then stopped, exhausted. The young handsome man caught up with him and said, "Father, you're tired. I'll carry it home!" Taking the bag, he briskly set out for home. The old man was amazed to see his son so much taller.

This is the story about the old couple and their son--Thumb Boy. I heard this story when I was still a little boy.

Aiyibei and Erubei⁴¹

Once there lived a good man named Aiyibei and a bad man named Erubei.¹ Their homes were near, but they had never seen each other, though each knew of the other. One day Aiyibei decided to see Erubei and set out. On the way he met a man who asked, "Where are you going?" "I was told of a man named Erubei nearby. I want to see him," replied Aiyibei. The man answered, "I'm Erubei! I heard of a man named Aiyibei and I want to see him." "I am Aiyibei," Aiyibei said, and then went to Erubei's home where he stayed 3 days. As he was leaving, Erubei said, "Close your eyes for a moment and I'll give you something!" After Aiyibei trustingly closed his eyes, Erubei grasped Aiyibei's head and cut out his eyes. Aiyibei asked Erubei why he had done this. "Just because you are good and I'm bad. Now, let you be a good man without eyes," Erubei said.

Aiyibei stumbled toward his home, and on the way, touched a fence and thought that there must be a home nearby. He felt his way to the gate and asked to stay the night. It was an official's home and when the official saw the man was blind thought, "He must have done something evil and been him in punishment." He told his servant to take Aiyibei by horse to a stable where ghosts often came.

At the stable Aiyibei found a heap of straw where he covered himself and fell asleep. At midnight he was awakened by animals talking. One said, "Brother fox, what did you do today?"

"I gnawed some bones near the river and saw seven or eight piglets there. But they were stolen by a man named Erubei. If I were human, I would tell the master and be rewarded."

"Brother wolf, how did you spend today?"

"When I crossed a pool of water, it first was warm, but then became colder and finally, it was so cold I couldn't bear it. Just as I started to move back, I slipped and fell into the water. As soon as my eyes touched the water, I felt I could see things more clearly. Blind people could regain their sight by washing in this pool."

Then the fox asked, "Brother leopard, what news do you have?"

"This noon, I was sleeping under a tree and a squirrel jumped on my chest. I caught it with my

¹In Oroqen, *aiyibei* means good man, and *erubei* means bad man.

paw and wanted to eat it in one gulp, but the squirrel cried, 'Don't eat me! I have good news! The official's daughter has been mad for many years. Whoever cures her may marry her.' When I asked how to cure her, the squirrel said that there was a well in the corner of the official's home and, in the bottom, there was a red fish with an incantation in its stomach. The squirrel said that if the fish was caught and the incantation read three times, the girl would recover. But I'm not human, so I can't marry her."

At that time, Aiyibei moved a little, and the straw rustled. The fox exclaimed, "Someone is listening!" Aiyibei was so frightened that he didn't dare breathe as the three animals searched about. Finding nothing, they silently left. At dawn, the official ordered his servant to go see Aiyibei. He found him sitting in the stable and brought him to the official. The official asked, "Who are you? Why have your eyes been cut out?"

"An evil man cut them out."

"Didn't you hear voices last night?"

"Yes," Aiyibei said and asked if there was a pool nearby. The official said there was and led him to it. Aiyibei walked into the water and, indeed, at first he felt warm, but the deeper he went, the colder the water became and, at last, unable to bear the cold, he recalled the wolf's words and rinsed his sockets. Immediately he regained his sight. "When you built this house, was there a well here?" Aiyibei asked. "Yes," the official said. "Empty it of water," Aiyibei directed. The official ordered the well located, opened, and dipped dry. When it was nearly dry a red fish jumped out. Aiyibei caught it, cut open its stomach, and an incantation dropped out. He read it three times. The official's daughter then ran to her father with a smile and said, "Father, my mind is clear. I am well." Delighted, the official decided his daughter should marry Aiyibei.

Later Aiyibei recalled Erubei and went to see him. He found he was blind and asked why. Erubei replied, "I stole eight piglets and suddenly, some days later, an angry old sow came and ate my eyes out in two bites."

"But where are the two eyes you cut out from my sockets?"

"I don't know why, but they flew away a few days earlier. I never believed that I too, would be blind."

"You never expected that my eyes would fly back into my sockets again!"

Erubei wept and begged Aiyibei to cure his blindness, but Aiyibei said, "You must cure this by yourself. I have no idea how to help you!"

The Knife-Maker and the Bird⁴²

A good hunter requires a good gun, a good horse, and a sharp knife. But one hunter was without a knife, so he began making himself one. He heated the iron from which he would make a knife, and sang as he hammered:

*Ding, ding, ding,
Dang, dang, dang,
A good knife I want.
Dang, dang, dang
Ding, ding, ding,
I shall become a good hunter.*

A bird flew down and said, "Oh, you are making a knife. Make one for me! I want to be a hunter too."

"If you want one, make it yourself!"

"But the iron burns red. Doesn't it burn your hand?"

"You can use gloves!"

"What if the gloves burn through?"

"Sew them with needle and thread!"

"What if the needle breaks and the thread is cut?" the bird asked endlessly. The man angrily said, "You never really wanted a hunting knife, you've just come here to pester me!" Then he

took a tree branch, struck the bird, roasted it over the fire, ate it, and sang:

*Ding, ding, ding,
Dang, dang, dang,
How could a bird want a knife?
Dang, dang, dang,
Ding, ding, ding,
Without a knife, never be a hunter!*

Killing a Monster⁴³

A hunting family lived in a forest and, one day when the father was out hunting, the mother and her two children built a campfire in front of their *sirelji*. As the mother worked she sang:

*Making a fire,
Making a fire,
Mother sings a happy song,
A happy song.*

Suddenly she saw a monster's reflection in the water of a pot she was putting over the fire. She turned and saw a monster descending the mountain, coming towards her. She said to her crying children, "Don't be afraid. Mother has an idea."

The monster arrived and laughed at the children: "You are fat and just what I want to eat," and opened his huge mouth to devour the children. Doing as their mother had told them, the two children took a bridle and bit in their hands. The monster immediately drew back, for it is said that monsters are in great fear of bridles and bits.

But the monster noticed the mother had nothing in her hands and went near her. Displaying no fear she placed a pot of water and pot of oil near the fire and began to pour the water on her chest. The monster saw this and thought, "You are bathing, so I'll do the same," and poured the oil on his chest. The mother knew monsters easily imitate human action and opened her arms to hug the fire. The monster followed suit and then the oil on his chest caught fire. In pain and aflame he cried out and began running. He used his hands to scratch his chest, which made his hands burn and, as he scratched his head with his burning hands, his head also caught fire. Thus he became a burning monster and died a moment later.

The Oroqen Hunting Knife⁴⁴

During the time of the Anti-Russian War the Oroqen formed a cavalry. An old hunter was part of the cavalry. What his name is we do not know, but people remember the story of his killing the enemy. It was said that among the invading Russian army there was a soldier named Gepidan. One day Gepidan caught the old hunter and ordered him to serve as a guide, for he wished to go into the forest and search for the Oroqen cavalry. The old man asked him what he planned to use in fighting. Gepidan waved his knife, patted his fat belly, and said, "I depend on my long knife first, secondly, my strong horse, and thirdly, tall men. These three things." The old man heard this, wiggled his nose, said nothing, and then guided the Russian soldiers into the forest.

Gepidan and his men rode proudly ahead, faces to the sky, and seemingly were unconcerned. Suddenly an arrow flew out and struck Gepidan in the shoulder. He endured the pain, pulled the arrow from his shoulder, and asked, "Who did this?" The old man said, "Being on horseback is worse than being on foot. A long knife is worse than a short sword! Hunters fix triggered ground arrows to kill wild cats and yellow weasels. After the hunter sets it, he goes home."

They went on and suddenly Gepidan fell from his horse, for the horse's legs had become entangled in rope. Gepidan asked, "Who did this?" "Oh! A big horse is weaker than a rope. Strong legs are no match for a thin rope! That's a special rope used for catching wolves and foxes. The hunter goes home after he sets this," the old man answered.

It grew dark and, after some time, Gepidan and his horse plunged into a pit. The old man said, "A tall man can drop into a deep hole. Long arms won't help him climb out. That's the Oroqen hunter's deer pitfall used to catch bears greedy for food. The hunters go home after they dig it."

By this time the Russian soldiers were hungry and their horses were tired. They were made more uncomfortable by swarming mosquitoes and flies. The old man however, had food to eat and something to drink. Seeing him eating and drinking the Russian soldiers asked, "What are you eating and drinking?" The old hunter answered, "Persimmons. And honeycomb is everywhere in the mountains. Collect some yourselves."

Gepidan and his soldiers looked for persimmons and honey everywhere, but when they touched a bee hive, bees flew out and stung them on their heads, which became as swollen as pots. They nearly fainted from pain and exhaustion. Then the old man took out fur sleeping bags and put them in a line on the ground. The cold and hungry Russian soldiers didn't care much about anything at this point, crawled into the sleeping bags, and fell asleep from exhaustion. The old man thought, "Now, I'll let you know the power of our Oroqen hunting knife." He took out his knife, killed all the Russian soldiers, whistled for his horse, mounted it, and galloped to the Oroqen cavalry to report this good news.

Searching for the Sun⁴⁵

In dark times, the Oroqen had not discovered the sun. Orphaned and forsaken by the earth, they suffered much at the hands of corrupt officers, the rich, and the powerful. Ordinarily, relying on archery, the Oroqen did not worry about clothing, food, and drink, but at that time, they led a miserable life of hunger with little clothing and suffered much torment. Suffering and discontinuity forced them to lead a vagrant life of struggle. In this world of ice and snow, the hunters breathed out vapor as thick as fog and tears of the hunters' wives were more than a river's water. How could they rid themselves of such abysmal misery? Noticing that year after year, more and more people suffered from starvation and freezing, the tribal leader became sadder and sadder.

One day, with an unhappy expression, he went to the banks of the Nuomin River. At first he planned to spear several fish, but when he saw the free flowing water and the lively fish, he was in no mood to spear, just dully stood in the grass and wailed. Suddenly, a beautiful little fish swam to the surface, stuck its head out of the water, swam near the bank, and kindly said, "Brave hunter, what worries you?" The tribal leader replied, "Kind fish immortal, please help me find a way to rid our tribe of its bitter life." The fish immortal wiggled its tail and shiny fins and said, "If you want to rid your life of bitterness, you must discover the sun. As long as you are determined, you will surely find it," and then disappeared.

The tribal leader told the hunters what the fish immortal had said, and they resolved to search for the sun. To express their determination, the tribal leader gave himself a name, Xiwenyigabu, which in Oroqen, means 'missing the sun.' They started out and climbed high mountains, traversed dense forests, passed bend after bend, and crossed one mountain after another. No one could calculate the time that had passed or the distance travelled. But still they had not found the sun. Exhausted, they sat among some dark cold bushes to rest. Trees had no leaves, flowers had no red color. Desolation was everywhere. Suddenly, noises came from the opposite mountain. Following the noise, many creatures unlike humans and, also unlike ghosts, came up, beating drums and waving flags. On the flags was embroidered the golden word *Ming* (bright). They shouted in noisy disorder, "Searchers of the sun, we come bringing the sun which is in our Ming Dynasty. Our Ming Dynasty does work that has a clear conclusion, our Ming Dynasty's sky is bright, and everything about our Ming Dynasty is done in the open. Quickly, come!"

Unfortunately, the Oroqen believed this. Xiwenyigabu and other hunters followed, but after living under them for several year, they saw through their fraud. What was the sun! They were a crowd of bloodsuckers. The Oroqen angrily beat them with fists and feet, shot them with arrows, slashed them with swords, made them roll, crawl, and cover their heads, and slink away like rats. Xiwenyigabu and other hunters renewed their journey in search of the sun.

They went on without resting and crossed 13 cliffs and 15 sheer precipices and overhanging

rocks. They did not know how many days had passed nor how far they had walked, but still the sun eluded them. The world was dark without a ray of light. Tired, they sat on a cold dark hillside to rest. The wind whistled, leaves rustled, and bloodcurdling terror filled their hearts. Suddenly, another crowd of creatures unlike humans and ghosts appeared from behind a hill. They waved flags on which the word *Qing* (clear) was embroidered and they shouted, waving their banners, "Hunters, please come. Here you should live and work in peace and contentment. What a nice place this is! Sky and water are clear. Every person is pure and everything is clear. Hunters, quickly come! Our pure dynasty is the sun and all things of the Qing Dynasty are of incomparable clearness!" Xiwenyigabu and the other hunters didn't believe this, ignored them, and continued their search.

Because of endless walking, their clothes were tattered and their skin was bloodily wounded by thistles and thorns. Still, the sun eluded them. One day they looked for a sand dune upon which to rest when they heard screams from a mountain to the west. Another crowd of creatures unlike humans and ghosts held flags on which the 'Republic of China' was embroidered. They approached and shouted, "Hunters, here is the sun you are searching for. Look at these words on the flag: Republic of China--the people's country! It proceeds in all instances on the basis of the peoples' interests and considers every case from the standpoint of the people."

Xiwenyigabu and other hunters ignored this lie and went on. Suddenly, on a mountain top to the east, appeared a crowd of Japanese. They waved flags on which a sun was embroidered and shouted: "Hello hunters! We bring the real sun. Look at the clear sky and red sun on these flags!" Xiwenyigabu and other hunters were tired of such clamor, ignored this, held up their heads, threw out their chests, and went on searching for the real sun. A lengthy river has many bends and a long journey entails many experiences. The ghosts who had encountered the hunters on the way were angry at being unable to rope them in. They grouped together, closed in on the hunters from all sides, stopped them, transformed themselves into snakes and hissing vipers, and lunged at the hunters. Xiwenyigabu and the other hunters were not in the least afraid and, at precisely the same time, raised bows and arrows and fired. The arrows, like drops of rain, punctured the vipers' throats. The vipers struggled several times and then lay dead on the ground.

The hunters walked on, but the further they walked, the harder and more dangerous the way became. One day they came to three mountains.^j Oh, what high mountains! The tops couldn't be seen and, just as they were worrying about how to climb over, suddenly the mountains gave out a loud rumble and collapsed, pinning the hunters beneath. The hunters were so mashed that they had difficulty in breathing. Some bled from the seven orifices of the head and died. The three mountains thought they had won, and, dizzy with success, loudly laughed. Suddenly a fierce red wind blew up and dead leaves and withered branches flew in the sky. Enormous boulders rolled down the mountainsides. This was closely followed by storms and thunder. The mountains shook and the river water was full of waves. A sudden clap of thunder shattered the three mountains to bits.

The hunters, about to gasp their last, recovered consciousness. They saw the sky was brilliant, and the devils had vanished. Xiwenyigabu and the hunters forced themselves to stand. Numerous golden rays shone and the red sun slowly arose above the top of Eastern Mountain,^k illuminating the world. The sunlight shone throughout the dense forests and throughout the deep river water. Every mountain was covered by forests like glittering precious gems and sparkling rivers resembled myriad shining silver bands.

Xiwenyigabu and the hunters had discovered the red sun and now beheld a new world. All were excited and had an unparalleled feeling of bodily comfort. They stood on the mountain top and hungrily watched this wide world and the brilliant sun, and excitedly shouted:

^jBefore liberation, there were three 'mountains'--imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism--which were 'as heavy as mountains, pressing on the backs of the Chinese people.'

^kThe rising sun of the Communist Party.

*We raise our arms and warmly embrace you, the sun!
You shine in the sky and brighten our heart, the sun!
You are father of earth and mother of mankind, the sun!*

Endnotes

1. Teller (T): De Xingde; Collection Area (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; Translator (TS): Fu Yiguang
2. (T): De Xingde; (TS): Tang Yanping
3. Collectors (CLS): Zhang Fenzhu and Cai Bowen; (TS): Yang Haikui
4. (T): Xin Jun; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
5. (T): Xin Jun; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
6. (T): Xin Jun; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
7. (T): Xin Jun; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
8. (CLS): Fen Zhu and Cai Bowen; (TS): Yang Haikui
9. (T): Tie Pingjia; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Tang Yanping
10. (T): Zhang Zhumei; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
11. (T): Wen Jishan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner
12. (T): Cai Zhushan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
13. (T): Meng Baoke; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
14. (T): Meng Baoke; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
15. (T): Bai Yan; (CL): Bao Xia; Collection Time: September 12, 1963; (CA): Qike; (TS): Wang Jing
16. (T): Zhang Zhumei; (CA): Northeast China; (TS): Tang Yanping
17. (T): Guan Changbao; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Zhang Yuhong
18. (T): De Xingde; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Zhang Yuhong
19. (T): Guan Changbao; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Shao Jiahui
20. (CL): Qi Hong; (TS): Yang Haikui; The Chinese version was first published in *Inner Mongolia Daily*, April 3, 1963.
21. (T): Guan Changbao; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Shao Jiahui
22. (CLS): Zhang Fenzhu and Cai Bowen; (TS): Yang Haikui
23. Tellers: Emukechen, Xin Jun, Xuzyanan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Huang Yali
24. (T): Gan Zhushan; Oroqen/Chinese (TS): Batubaoyin; (CA): Zhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; Chinese/English (TS): Wang Jing
25. (T): Gan Zhushan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Li Xuewei
26. (CL): Bai Wen; (TS): Wang Jing

27. (T): Zhang Zhumei; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Li Xuewei
28. (T): Gan Zhushan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Fu Yiguang
29. (T): Wen Jishan; (CA): Zhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner
30. (T): De Xingde; (CA): Nuomin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Tang Yanping
31. (T): Mo Jinlian; (CL): Wang Zhaoyang; (CA): Guli, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Wang Jing
32. (T): Ming Dulun; (CL): Bao Xia; (CA): Chaoyang, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Wang Jing
33. (CLS): Zhang Fenzhu and Cai Bowen; (TS): Yang Haikui
34. (T): Mo Gande; (CL): Sui Shujin; (TS): Wang Jing; The Chinese version was first published in vol. 1 of *Oroqen Literature and Arts*. 1980.
35. (CL): Guan Shouzhong; (TS): Yang Haikui; The Chinese version was first published in *Northern Chinese Literature*. 1962, 4th issue.
36. (T): Meng Kebao; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Li Xuewei
37. (T): Gan Zhushan; (CA): Tuozhamin Commune, Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Shao Jiahui
38. (T): Wu Jinde; (CL): Bao Xia; (TS): Wang Jing
39. (T): Meng Tinjie; (CA): Huma Station No. 18; (CL): Bai Shan; (TS): Wang Jing
40. (T): Meng Tinjie; (CA): Huma County, Station No. 18; Oroqen/Chinese (TS): Mo Guiwen; (CL): Bai Shan; Chinese/English (TS): Wang Jing
41. (T): Meng Tinjie; (CA): Ali River, Huma County, Station No. 18; (CL): Bai Shan; (TS): Wang Jing
42. (T): Meng Tinjie; (CL): Bai Shan; Oroqen/Chinese (TS): Mo Guiwen; (CA): Ali River; Chinese/English (TS): Wang Jing
43. (T): Mo Yuling; (CL): Wang Zhaoyang; (CA): Oroqen Autonomous Banner; (TS): Wang Jing
44. (CL): Ma Mingchao; (TS): Wang Jing
45. (T): Omukechen; (CL): Batubaoying; (TS): Yang Haikui

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