

Ethnic Cultures of China

THE CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY LITERATURE

By Zhao Wuxing

CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS



THE CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY LITERATURE

By Zhao Wuxing

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国少数民族文学: 英文/赵五星著; 许华锋等译.
北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2008.9
(中国民族多元文化丛书)
ISBN 978-7-5085-1458-1

I. 中… II. ①赵…②许… III. 少数民族文学—中国—
英文 IV. I207.9

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2008) 第154783号

THE CHINESE ETHNIC MINORITY LITERATURE

撰 稿: 赵五星

图片提供: 邓启耀, 黄江涛, 陈俊东, 覃江英, 梁汉昌,
胡小平, 林 青, 李 勇, 刘君凤, 乔启明 等

责任编辑: 许冬梅

英文翻译: 许华锋 等

装帧设计: 孙思宇

出版发行: 五洲传播出版社

地 址: 北京市海淀区莲花池东路北小马厂6号华天大厦

邮政编码: 100038

电话/传真: 010-58891281

印 刷: 北京嘉彩印刷有限公司

开 本: 787×1092毫米 1/16

印 张: 9.75

印 数: 1-3000

版 次: 2008年9月第1版 2008年9月第1次印刷

定 价: 88.00元

CONTENTS

Preface/5

Chapter I

The Chinese Minority Myths /11

- I. The Genesis Myth /12
- II. The Solar Myth /22
- III. The Totem Myth /25
- IV. The Flood Myth /31

Chapter II

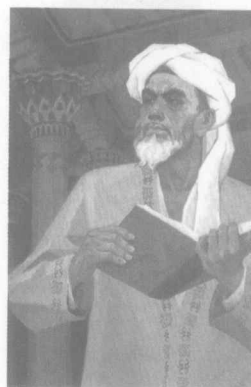
The Poems of Chinese Ethnic Minority /35

- I. Epics /36
- II. Folk Long Poems /60
- III. Poets and Their Works /68

Chapter III

Chinese Minority Novels /77

- I. Manchu Novels /78
- II. Mongolian Novels /84
- III. Korean Novels /90
- IV. Tibetan Novels /92



Chapter IV

Chinese Ethnic Minority Drama /99

- I. Maitrisimit /100
- II. The Tibetan Opera /101
- III. Zaju /106
- IV. The Manchu Dramatist Wang Xiaonong /112
- V. The Exorcising Opera /113
- VI. The Blowing Tune of Bai Nationality /115
- VII. Tujia Opera /117
- VIII. Dai Opera /120
- IX. Dong Opera /121
- X. Zhuang Opera /124
- XI. Puyi Opera /126

Chapter V

**The Talking and Singing Literature of
China's Ethnic Minority /129**

- I. Haolaibao of the Mongolian Nationality /131
- II. Zidishu of the Man Nationality /132
- III. Twelve Muqam of the Uyghur Nationality /135
- IV. Talking and Singing of the Bai Nationality /137
- V. Talking and Singing of the Zhuang and Dong Nationalities /140
- VI. Talking and Singing of the Miao and Yao Nationalities /144
- VII. Wuqin of the Daur Nationality /148
- VIII. Talking and Singing of the Tujia Nationality /150



CONTENTS



Preface

Chinese literature is jointly created by 56 nationalities. Apart from Han nationality, the minorities also have their long and glorious history. The literature created by Chinese minorities can compare with Han nationality in quantity and quality. The Chinese ethnic minority literature is a general term for the literature of all the minorities except Han nationality within China. It concludes the following aspects: (1) The Chinese ethnic minority literature exists in comparison with Chinese Han nationality literature. (2) The Chinese ethnic minority literature is created by generations of all the minorities. It consists of oral and written literature. (3) The Chinese ethnic minority literature is part of the Chinese literature. In terms of the history of Chinese literature, Han literature constitutes its main part, but the minority literature also plays a significant role which reflects the richness of Chinese literature.

The Chinese ethnic minority literature enjoys a long and wide-spread history. *The Songs of Yue People* and *The White Wolf Song* recorded by the minority language first appeared around A.D. era, and the translation *Chile Song* is still popular with its lines "It is vast and hazy, open space is boundless, groundless blow grass seeing the cattle sheep low." As for the creation myth circulated among the southern nationalities, it recorded the ancient human history from the separation of heaven and earth to the anthropogeny, which was not later than the Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns in Han nationality legend. Later on, the



Tangkha painting on the story of Gesar.

three major epics of minorities appeared: *Gesar* of the Tibetans, *Jangar* of the Mongolians and *Manas* of the Kirgiz, which are included in the world heroic epics, attracting worldwide attention. These full-length masterpieces, regardless of scope or content of the works, cannot be found out in the literature of Han nationality, and they have enriched the Chinese literature.

The Chinese ethnic minority literature has a variety of literary works, whose artistic achievements are beyond praise.

Work such as myth, legend, story, ballad, idyll, novel, drama, constitute the literary treasure of minorities, and demonstrates the peculiar artistic charm with its unique national style and qualities. Many of the literary works appeared in the literature of Chinese and minorities through the collection and collation of ancient writers, and show us the social life of minorities, as well as their spiritual and cultural ideals through their vivid images of the artistic scene.

The Chinese ethnic minority literature has its own national characteristics, and differentiates itself from other nationality's literature with its own language, genre, style and national state of mind, thus manifests the multiplicity of national characteristics. On the whole, the Chinese ethnic minority literature has the following characteristics:

(1) In the Chinese ethnic minority literature, oral literature plays the dominant role. The national form of literature mainly embodies itself on language, and oral literature can better reflect the ethnic characteristics and represent the traditional style of national literature. Among the 55 Chinese minorities, only over 20 nationalities recorded their own languages in the 1950s. As for the nationalities without their own language, their literature is all in oral form. For the nationalities who have their languages, they are used in very limited areas because of the imperfection of the language.

Even if some nationalities have the improved languages, they do not function widely due to the lack of education. As a result, oral literature has been dominant in the minority literature in general. The national literature created, circulated and preserved orally. The oral literature mainly takes the form of dialect or national language rap, therefore often has a strong local and national tastes. Different from the standardized written literature, the oral literature is easy to understand, easy to remember; both clear



Stone tablets with inscriptions in six different scripts have been found in Dunhuang Grottoes. These six scripts are Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Phagspa, Uyghur and Jurchen.

and profound. Excellent oral literature has become the national essence of language of all the people.

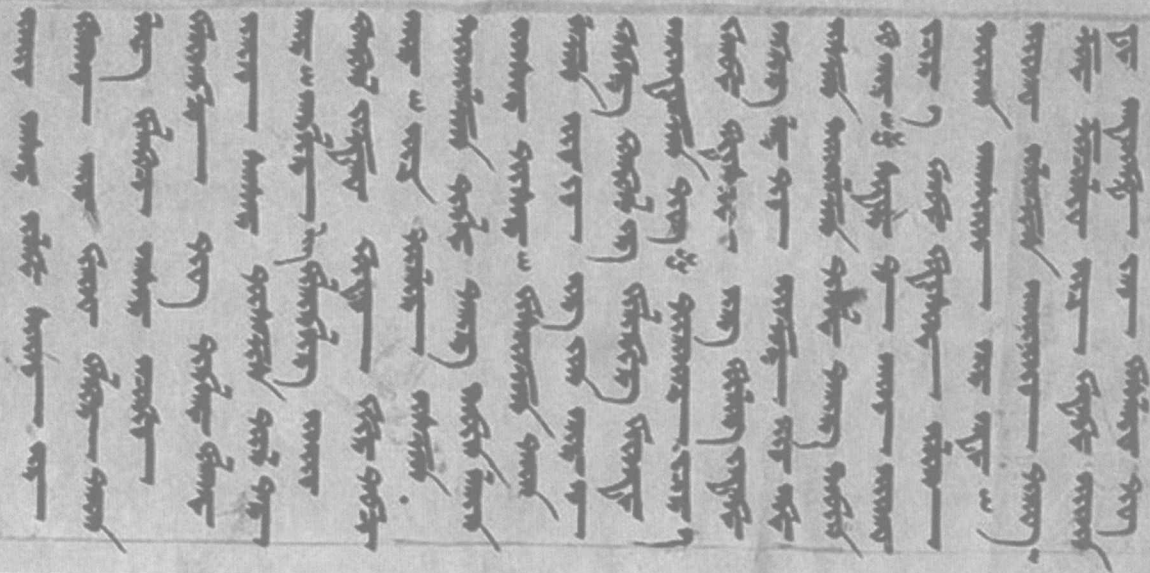
(2) As far as the genre is concerned, although various genres can be found in the minority literature, a great number of myths, epics and full-length narrative poems were created because minority literature was orally circulated. The minority myths include a large variety of types, and they have been orally passed on from generation to generation, thus have become a national carrier of history and tradition and cohesion of the nation's creativity and collective wisdom. The three major heroic epics have long been a spectacle, and the number and size of the nation's long narrative poems are also rare in the world literature.

(3) The minority literature generally has a fresh and energetic style, and is rich in local and national taste. Due to the natural environment and the dominant mode of production, the minority literature has its own local characteristics. The northern minorities produced more heroic poems and the southern minorities

more delicate and subtle poems. However, the minority literature expresses optimistic spirits and reflects their pure and simple characters. In the artistic representation, it is clear and simple. In the nation's outstanding literary works, the ideal and reality was combined harmoniously as well as the rational and emotional elements, and thus demonstrates the integration of realism and romanticism and the combination of bold imagination and subtle



Yelü Chucai (1190–1244), an accomplished Khitan in the Confucianism. He played a significant role in the fact that Yuan Dynasty attached importance to the traditional system and culture of the central plains.



Fragment of Uyghur scripts of Tang Dynasty.

description. This is often not consciously artistic creation but totally natural, having high achievements.

(4) The minority literature made its debut later than Han literature, but also has a long history. The Tibetan literature came into being about the 7th century AD. Dunhuang document *Zan Pu Zhuan Lue* showed its marvelous literary talent during the 8th and 9th century AD. Huihe (Uyghur) is an ancient nation in north-west China, who created the ancient Uyghur script, and Toquz-Oghuz Khan monument was engraved in ancient Uyghur script, the Turkic and Chinese characters. The Uyghur literature has developed rapidly and achieved splendid results from the second half of the 10th century to the 12th century. After the Mongolians created their own language, lots of writers and their works came out. The history of Chinese literature has recorded a number of ancient minority writers who used Chinese in their literary creation and obtained great achievements, such as the Yuan Dynasty poet YelvChucai and Sadula, Sanqu writer Guan Yunshi (Uyghur), drama writer Li Zhifu(Nuzhen), the literary critic of Ming dynasty Li Zhi, the Qing Dynasty poet Nalanxingde, their achievements and status are widely recog-

nized in the history of Chinese literature.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China Central People's Government and the local people's governments at all levels paid great attention to the protection and development of ethnic culture, the nationalities outstanding traditional culture have been successfully carried forward and timely collection, collation and protection. Literature of all ethnic groups is no exception, as the three major heroic epic *Gesar*", *Jangar* and *Manas*, have also been translated into a variety of foreign languages and published to many counties of the world. All the works let these cultural treasures to be preserved for a long time. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government paid great efforts to support national education in the country so that people of all ethnic groups have been got modern education. Many minority writers together with Han authors create a large number of rich, diversified, clear-cut nationality characteristics, well-known literary works, prosper China's contemporary literature. Due to limited space, the scope of this book is mainly from ancient times to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The myth is about the god story, and it is human literature's earliest artistic form in the primitive society. It reflects the understanding of ancient people to nature, the relations of human and nature as well as human social life by the unconscious artistic creation and the subjective fantasy.

The Chinese 55 minorities all have their own myths, compared with the Han myths in Chinese written literature, many minority myths are plainer and still spread in the folk from mouth to mouth, maintaining the primitive appearance. It was the comprehensive entity of primitive society ideology, which contained more primitive social and natural science information and had the more reliable primitive cultural value.

The myths spread orally in minorities are various, from the astronomical geography to the customs in people's life, all aspects of twists and turns are reflected in the myths and legends. The minority of myths are large in quantity, plain in content, multitudinous in image, with rich local color and thick history accumulation. In addition, the majority of myths aim to conquer and understand nature through the unusual imagination, therefore formed the illusion environment beyond the real life.

The Genesis myth, the solar myth, the totem myth and the flood myth are more representative in the minority myths.

I. The Genesis Myth

The Genesis myth, also known as the opening myth, is the reflection about the creation of heaven and earth, the origin of human beings and the ancestor who worked hard to create the world.

Judging from the collected or spreading myths, it can be seen that the majority of minorities (especially the southern minorities) retained more completely the system for the Genesis myth. Most of the myths made unique historical narrations of the development of national culture through the rich imagination, reflected the understanding and interpretation of the ancient minorities to the creation of universe, the origin of human beings, the generation of natural world and the start of nations, which contained a simple materialism and dialectics and manifested the world outlook of the ancient minorities.

1. The Genesis Myth

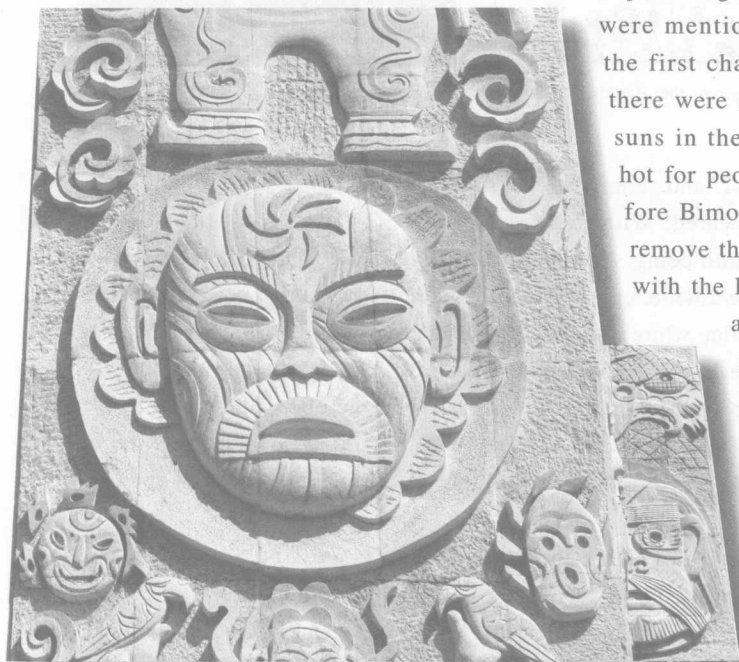
The well-known classic *Southwest Yi Zhi* of Yi nationality is the opening myth. *Southwest Yi Zhi* is the most comprehensive book which recorded the ancient history and culture of the Yi, covering more than 370,000 Yi words. Three major changes in the ancient times

were mentioned in the Genesis: the first change happened when there were six moons and seven suns in the sky, and it was too hot for people to endure, therefore Bimo was sent to earth to remove the evil of the universe with the horse mulberry twigs and the hard stem

grass. The second time was that Bimo saved the world where storm attack people. The third came that when people suffered from flood, three Bimos, who carried the religious book, were sent to earth to defended people's peace once

more. The ancient Yi nationality maintained pantheism which primarily worshiped their ancestors, and Bimo was their sorcerer, for they once played the vital role in the preservation and the dissemination of religion and national culture, thus is deified.

Naxi nationality's *The Creation* is a well-known opening myth. *The Creation* recorded that where there was chaos in the universe, landslides and shaken tress were everywhere, and then things began to multiply. The things has "true" and



Khitan totem column in the Nanshan Ecological Park, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia. The totems of an ethnic group are usually a manifestation of the worship of their ancestors and heroes.



Dongba hieroglyphics record the legends, tales and poems of Naxi nationality.



The Creation, a music and dance drama of Naxi nationality.

“false” as well as “real” and “empty”. With the coordination of “true” and “real”, the luminous sun appeared; With the coordination of “false” and “empty”, the desolate moon came into being. Afterwards the Kindness god Yi Luo Wo Ge was born, who has become a white egg and then hatched Enyu and Enman. Enyu and Enman gave birth to nine white eggs, and these eggs turned into the God of heaven and the God of the Earth, namely the seven brothers who opened the heaven and seven sisters who opened the earth. This is first time opens the world. This is the first opening of heaven and earth. The myth is odd and mysterious, and it reflects the ancient Naxi’s simple understanding of the universe change and the earth origins.

The Bai nationality and Han Pan Gu myth have some similarities. In *The Creation*, it said there was only Pan Gu and Pan Sheng brothers at first, Pan Gu became the heaven and Pan Sheng the earth. During the formation of heaven and earth, clouds made up the space when the heaven did not fill in the southwest; waster made up the space when the earth did not fill in the northeast, therefore the heaven and the earth came into being. They conjured the wooden giant Mu Shi Wei, his head faced east and feet west and he was one point eight zhang tall. Mu Shi Wei changed into numerous things again, for example, his right eye changed into the moon, his left eye changed into the sun, his eyebrows changed into the bamboos, and his hair changed into the trees and so on.

Lisu nationality’s myth *Mu Bu Bo Pinches the Earth* believes that it was the Heaven god who pinched the Earth to hold up the sky. In Liang Mountain Yi nationality’s myth *Le Er Te Yi*, the heaven and earth were created like this: Nine goddesses swept up the sky and swept down the earth with the iron broom place; Nine gods plant shaped the earth with the iron axe, the mountain for sheep to

graze on, the plain for planting seedlings, the hillside for planting trees, the pass for war, the trench for water, and the lap for houses.

Mu Pa Mi Pa is Lahu nationality's myth. It said in the ancient times there was no heaven and earth, no moon and stars, no division of day and night, only vast and boundless space. The Heaven god sent his assistant Zha Luo to make the heaven and Na to make the earth, and seven days later the heaven and the earth were created.

Jinuo nationality's epoch-making myth *A Mo Xiao Bai* said that, in the ancient time there was no heaven and earth, just water. The water gradually cemented the ice, the ice later bombed into 2 pieces where Mo Xiao Bai came from the middle. The heavy piece of ice sank and turned into the earth while the light one rose and became the heaven. A Mo Xiao Bai mended the heaven and earth and that was the beginning of the universe.

Manchu's opening myth *Tian Gong war* eulogized Duokuo goddess's difficult creation of universe which was a unique work. In the myth, Duokuo goddess became the god of the life which nurtured everything in the world; in the meanwhile, the myth also related the creation of things to the stone and fire, which manifested the worship of ancient people to the fire and stone.

Zhuang nationality's myth *Mu Liu Jia* said, when there was no division of heaven and earth, the atmosphere revolved in the universe, and the revolving became quicker and quicker and eventually it became egg-looking shape which contained three egg-yolks. Afterwards the egg exploded into three pieces. One piece flew and became the heaven, one piece sank and became the water, and the one in the middle became the earth.

The Buyi nationality's *Weng Jie Creates Heaven and Earth* is a myth similar to Pangu myth "Yang Qing Wei Tian, Yin Zhuo Wei Di". In the myth it said, Wengjie who made blew to the and then immediately the gale began to blow, the light rose and became the cloud while the heavy went down and became the earth.

The Kazak nationality's *Jia sagan Creates the World* is a famous opening myth. In the myth it said that a human-like creator Jia Sagan made the heaven and earth. He divided the heaven and earth into 3 layers: underground, earth and heaven. Afterwards, Jia Sagan grew into seven layers respectively and increased gradually. In order to change the darkness and severe cold, Jia Sagan created the sun and the moon with his own light and heat. Henceforth, the universe became



The granite statue of Mu Liu Jia, the creator mother and goddess of birth for Zhuang nationality, at the holiday resort of Jiuquwan in Nanning of Guangxi.