

The  'D'a 'Nv Funeral Ceremony with  
special reference to the origin of 'Na-'khi weapons

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1. Introduction

The 'D'a 'Nv funeral ceremony performed for a 'Na-'khi warrior is one of about sixteen enacted in former days, that is prior to their nationalization in 1723 A. D., when the *T'u-ssu* or ruling native chief was demoted and a transferable Chinese magistrate was established in his stead. From that time on most of the special funeral ceremonies were dispensed with except the general one called *Zhi 'mä* which was performed for everyone up to the time of 1949 when the Communists took over. None of the *ito-'mbas* I worked with translating their literature had seen the 'D'a 'Nv ceremony performed but they were conversant with the texts belonging to it.

Cremation, their former disposal of deceased persons, was abolished and burial took its place, except when a woman died in childbirth, or a hundred days prior to or after giving birth to a child, for she was considered *ch'ou* or unclean.

Each of the sixteen funeral ceremonies had its set of books which were chanted on the day of the funeral in connection with the *Zhi 'mä* books recently published by Anthropos in their memoir series (see Bibliography, a, 6).

The word *'d'a* denotes courage, courageous, a courageous person, or a warrior who had distinguished himself on the battlefield or had vanquished his personal enemy. When such a *'d'a* died the 'D'a 'Nv ceremony was performed, but only when the death took place at home. When away from home on the battlefield, his death having been unobserved, the *Id'er 'Nv* ceremony

took its place, for he was then considered a <sup>1</sup>*dīr* or headless demon, as his breath "had not been taken", which condition has been explained in RKMGMG, q. v.

The manuscripts pertaining to the <sup>1</sup>*D'a* <sup>2</sup>*Nv* funeral ceremony are of more than general interest. They tell us of their ancient past (vide <sup>1</sup>*Khū* <sup>1</sup>*d'a* <sup>2</sup>*Nv*), of the time when they lived in the far North, in the valleys and among the mountains of north-eastern Tibet south of the Mongolian border in yurts made of felt of the wool of white sheep. There they suffered no hunger, they milked their yak and had an abundance of butter and cheese. They dressed in *p'u-lu* garments such as the Tibetans still wear, and their women were adorned with carnelian, red-coral, turquoise, silver, and gold ornaments.

That they were neighbors of the Mongols their type of dwelling would indicate, yet they themselves were not Mongols. Their language is Tibeto-Burman, as is that of the Ch'iang of which the <sup>1</sup>*Na*-<sup>2</sup>*khi* are a branch. The Mongols had no yak, they milked their mares, which the <sup>1</sup>*Na*-<sup>2</sup>*khi* never did. Nowhere in their literature is there mention of milking mares.

The account of their life in yurts places them to the south of Mongolia in the region of the Kuku Nor, in the mountainous tracts to the south of the Richthofen Range, the Chinese Nan Shan, in the valleys of the ch'i-lien Shan and T'o-lai Shan<sup>1</sup> where once the Ch'iang held forth prior to their forced dispersal by the Chinese during the Han dynasty. It is there where the cranes lay their eggs that <sup>1</sup>*Na*-<sup>2</sup>*khi* escort the spirits of their dead to their ancestors whom they believe to dwell there. Once a year in the fourth moon they invite them to come south to their present home as related in the manuscripts of the <sup>2</sup>*T'a* <sup>1</sup>*bphō* ceremony where they are told to watch the young cranes when they test their wings for their flight south, for it was then they were to be ready to start their journey with them.

We are told that one of their earliest ancestors, <sup>3</sup>*Dta*-<sup>2</sup>*tsan*-<sup>2</sup>*ts'o*-<sup>1</sup>*zaw*<sup>2</sup>, and others lived in yurts and were rich in herds of yak and sheep. It was there where they performed their first primitive religious rite, the <sup>2</sup>*Miān* <sup>1</sup>*bphō* or Propitiation of Heaven, which has survived among them as well as among the Ch'iang in their present home in identical manner.

The <sup>1</sup>*Na*-<sup>2</sup>*khi* of today have never seen a yurt, and those members of the <sup>1</sup>*Na*-<sup>2</sup>*khi* tribe from the village of Nv-lv-k'ō at the foot of the Li-chiang snow range, who accompanied me for three years on my journey to the far north-west of China and north-eastern Tibet (1924-1927), when they saw yurts for the first time in the region north of the Kuku Nor, said that they must be the <sup>2</sup>*Ssu*-<sup>1</sup>*p'ēr* <sup>2</sup>*gkw*-<sup>1</sup>*gyi* of their <sup>2</sup>*dlo*-<sup>1</sup>*mba* books and that according to tradition their ancestors dwelt in such tents. Their descendants were

<sup>1</sup> In the valleys on the southern slopes of the Chinese Nan Shan, known to westerners as Richthofen Range, and especially in those of Ch'i-lien Shan and T'o-lai Shan as well as in the Ta-tung valley, I encountered both Mongol yurts and Tibetan black, yak-hair tents (encampments). I also found a yurt lamasery at the outskirts of a beautiful spruce forest (*Picea asperata*) on the slopes of Niu-hsin Shan.

<sup>2</sup> See: <sup>1</sup>*Khū* <sup>1</sup>*D'a* <sup>2</sup>*Nv*, also NNRC, p. 337; ibid. p. 145 no. 146.

forced to migrate south under pressure of the Chinese during the Han dynasty, for certain Chinese records<sup>3</sup> tell of the settling of the Mo-so <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi in their present home about 25 A. D.

The text of this same manuscript takes us south to their present home, we are told of the battles they fought with their enemies, and who their neighbors were or became as they gradually migrated south. They must have come directly from the north, for they still considered the wild <sup>2</sup>Ggō-<sup>3</sup>lo, the Tibetan mGo-log (Go-log) as their northern neighbors. The Go-log live to the south of and in the valleys of the great snow range known as Amnye Ma-chhen, or more correctly called Ma-chhen pom-ra (rMa-chhen spom-ra). The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi consider themselves now as occupying the central region, together with the <sup>1</sup>P'ér, <sup>2</sup>Boa and <sup>1</sup>O, with the Chinese (<sup>2</sup>Hái) and <sup>1</sup>Ho tribes to the East, the <sup>2</sup>Gv-<sup>1</sup>dzu or Tibetans to the West and the <sup>2</sup>Lā-<sup>2</sup>bbū or Minchia to the South<sup>4</sup>. Of these the <sup>1</sup>Ho tribe in the East and the <sup>1</sup>P'ér and <sup>1</sup>O who dwell with them in the central region have defied definite identification. The <sup>2</sup>Boa we know are the Hsi-fan of the Chinese, the aborigines who occupy Mu-li in southwest Hsi-k'ang. The <sup>1</sup>O the <sup>2</sup>dto-<sup>1</sup>mbas think may be the inhabitants of <sup>1</sup>O-<sup>2</sup>yü who dwell on the banks of the T'ich Ho or Iron River (see: ANKSWC) a branch of the Wu-liang Ho or Limitless River, a tributary of the Yangtze at the apex of the loop within which the greater part of the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi tribe lives.

In the <sup>1</sup>Khū <sup>1</sup>d'a <sup>2</sup>nv manuscript is also mentioned what might be termed their ancestral god <sup>2</sup>Mùay-<sup>2</sup>llū-<sup>1</sup>ddu-<sup>2</sup>ndzī<sup>5</sup> from whom the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi say they sprang. He is also strange to say the national god of the Mongols according to LAUFER and GRÜNWEDEL<sup>6</sup>. The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi as well as the Mongols figure him as the Chinese *Shou-hsing*, the Tibetans call him *Mi-tshe-ring*, the god of longevity and the Mongols, *Abughān* — the white old man. Many <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi manuscripts are devoted to him and I have given the salient features of his life story in NNCRC, q. v. In the <sup>1</sup>d'a <sup>2</sup>nv ms. we are told he lived in yurts with his wife and he is figured herding his yak and sheep on beautiful alpine meadows.

The manuscript <sup>2</sup>Ndżər-<sup>1</sup>ssu <sup>2</sup>t'u or the Origin of the Weapons takes us back to a less remote past, to the days of the Liu chao or six kingdoms into which Yün-nan province was divided from 649 to 740 A. D. The sixth of these kingdoms was the present home of the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi or Li-chiang territory, then known as the Yüeh-hsi chao or Mo-so chao of which Po-ch'ung was

<sup>3</sup> See: YPCLTC, in Bibliography; ch. 7, pp. 32b-34b; also ANKSWC, Vol. 1, pp. 358-359.

<sup>4</sup> See: notes 49 and 50.

<sup>5</sup> See: NNCRC, p. 79 no. 10. <sup>2</sup>Mùay-<sup>2</sup>llū-<sup>1</sup>ddu-<sup>2</sup>ndzī might be called the national god of the <sup>2</sup>Na-<sup>1</sup>khi, he is very much venerated by the <sup>2</sup>dto-<sup>1</sup>mbas although the common people know next to nothing about him. When the origin of the world, and that of the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi is mentioned then he is always referred to as the father of the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi. It was he who called the heavens into being and spread out the earth. He is also the national god of the Mongols; both figure him like the Chinese do their *Shou-hsing*. See: 1. c. Plates XVII and XVIII. He is also called *Iddu* for short.

<sup>6</sup> See: CCF (Bibliography), p. 123; GRÜNWEDEL BB, note, p. 26, p. 27.

the founder. He was murdered according to the Li-chiang Records in the 26th year of T'ang Kai-yüan (A. D. 738) (see : ANKSWC, p. 359 no. 2). These six *chao* or six kingdoms were united in 740 A. D. into the Nan chao or Southern kingdom with Ta-li as its capital. All the aborigines of the Liu chao and later of Nan chao made their own weapons and defensive armor. The THYHC, ch. 5, p. 5b states in regard to the armor in use at that time that the *Man chia* or armor of the savages of the Ta-li kuo — Nan chao, was made of elephant hide for the chest and back, each of one piece like the shell of a turtle, hard, thick and durable like iron ; to it were joined small pieces of hide. It was lacquered red outside and black inside. This type of armor is very much like the armor used by the Lo-lo tribes and of which specimens can be found in Museums of Europe and America<sup>7</sup>.

In the *Nan-chao yeh-shih* ch., p. 4a<sup>8</sup> we read that the captains in the army of Nan chao used cuirasses made of **Rhinoceros** hide ; it seems that three types of hide armor had been in use, **Rhinoceros** hide or *hsu-p'i*, buffalo hide or *niu-p'i*, and elephant hide or *hsiang p'i*. In the Liao Shih<sup>9</sup> it speaks of **Rhinoceros** hide armor as having been presented to them by the Nan T'ang in 952 A. D., indicating that that type of armor must have been in common use in those days.

There has been a good deal of speculation as to the term used for **Rhinoceros**, with which the Chinese had been acquainted from antiquity. It has often been confused with the fabulous unicorn. **Rhinoceros** was fairly common and in fact still is south of Yün-nan and perhaps even in the south-western-most part of that province, in what is now termed Ch'e-li, the Shan or Tai Hsip-song-pa-na or the twelve states, directly north of Keng-tung, the south-eastern Shan State of Burma. It is also known as Chiu-lung-chiang or the Nine-dragon River after the Mekong, which bears that name in the region. On my way overland from Chieng-mai in northern Siam to Yün-nan in 1921-1922, I passed through swampy areas covered with tall grass where **Rhinoceros** were said to be abundant. I camped with my entourage in a savannah-type of forest near a village called Pang-ki-hat or the place of the

<sup>7</sup> See : BA, III, 1. Plate III, pp. 58-59, also F. STARR, Lolo Objects in the Public Museum of Milwaukee ; T. BULL, P. W. MILW., 1911, 8 Plates, 12 pp.

<sup>8</sup> See : NCVS, chapt. shang p. 4a. It states there that "they wore red buskins, **Rhinoceros** hide armor, copper shields and went barefoot".

<sup>9</sup> See : LC, chapt. 6, p. 1b ; in the Ch'ien-lung edition of 1739, we are told that in the second year of Ying-li, in the spring in the first day of the first moon — January 30, 952 A. D., the Nan T'ang sent tribute to the court of the Liao dynasty of *hsu-ssu* **Rhinoceros** hide armor. The Nan T'ang reigned in Nan-ching. In the third moon of 937 A. D. the princes of Wu changed their name to T'ang and called their dynasty Nan T'ang, or southern T'ang. 952 A. D. was equal to the second year of T'ai-tsu of the Hou Chou and the seventh year of Chih-chih of the Nan chao (kingdom). 952 was also the tenth year of Pao-ta or Yüan-tsung li-ching of Nan T'ang.

In K. A. WITFOGEL's HCSL, p. 352, the passage occurring in the Liao Shih is translated as follows : "On the first day mou-wu of the first month in the spring of the second year (of Ying-li) Nan T'ang sent envoys to present a document incased in wax and to offer ten thousand sets of **Rhinoceros** [hide] armor."

**rhinoceros** dung, only 20 miles south of the Yün-nan border. It was in all probability from these regions of Burma whence the Nan chao (kingdom) received its **rhinoceros** hides for its armors.

The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi name for unicorn is <sup>1</sup>ssi-<sup>2</sup>mä-<sup>2</sup>k'o-<sup>1</sup>t'khi or the great <sup>1</sup>ssi with the horn like a spine. The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi do not know of a **rhinoceros**, but there is little doubt that the word <sup>1</sup>ssi is a loan word from the Chinese as is the Tibetan *se* (*bse*, *bse-ru*), the Tibetan name for **rhinoceros**.

The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi or Mo-so armor is however quite different from that described as having been in use in Nan chao. It is possible that the Min-chia, the original inhabitants of Nan chao, and whom the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi call <sup>2</sup>Lä-<sup>2</sup>bbü, had a type of armor like the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi, of which specimens have survived. The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi, when they pray to the gods for abundant offspring, they always mention in their religious books that the posterity of the <sup>2</sup>Lä-<sup>2</sup>bbü be as numerous as the <sup>2</sup>is'a = leaves (laminae) in an armor. For themselves they beseech the deities for offspring as numerous as the blades of grass on the land and the stars in the milky way. It would thus appear that the armor came to the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi possibly from the Min-chia.

That the armor is an indigenous product and not an importation from China or Mongolia is evident from the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi ms., which relates of the origin of the weapons. It is curious however to note that while it mentions the material of which the bows, arrows, swords, shields, etc., were made, the ms., is strangely silent as to the source of hide of which the armor was made. It simply states that through a magic of the *Garuda* the thousands of armor came into being. The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi always tell in their books of what their utensils, etc., are made, vide the ms., <sup>1</sup>Yü <sup>2</sup>ndzé <sup>3</sup>mi, <sup>2</sup>shaw <sup>1</sup>shi of the <sup>2</sup>Zhi <sup>3</sup>mä funeral ceremony. This would suggest that it might have been a product of the much more cultured <sup>2</sup>Lä-<sup>2</sup>bbü or Min-chia of Nan chao than of the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi and that the armor was adopted by the latter. It is strange that the type of armor of which specimens (only three) have survived among the Mo-so of Yung-ning and from whom I obtained the one here figured complete with helmet and weapons, is not mentioned in the *Nan-chao yeh-shih* or other Chinese books dealing with the tribes of south-west China. To me it would indicate that they existed in Nan chao prior to these records and that Chinese travellers did not venture into the wilderness occupied by the much less civilized <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi or Mo-so of Yung-ning where they had survived. The <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi armor does not consist of large pieces of leather covering the chest and back as was in use during the Nan chao kingdom, but of hundreds of laminae laced together with leather thongs; the armor is a sleeveless coat but has pauldrons which protect the shoulders and upper arm. It is a perfect replica of those figured in the <sup>1</sup>Na-<sup>2</sup>khi ms., <sup>2</sup>Ndzér-<sup>1</sup>ssu <sup>2</sup>t'u as are the weapons which can easily be identified from the drawings. Unfortunately no shields have survived, these having been made of bamboo, perished. For descriptions of armor and weapons see appendix.

The few armors which have survived the ravages of time have of late been used for ceremonial purposes as at the funerals of chiefs, when those so dressed danced with sword and flag before the funeral cortège opening