The Numerary Adjunct

This description of The Numerary Adjunct (NA) is based upon that appearing in R. H. Matthew's "Progressive Studies in the Chinese National Language" published by the China Inland Mission in 1938. The description has been adapted to describe the use of the NA in the Miao language which has a similar construction.

Before certain nouns in English, idiom demands the use of a special defining word, such as 'piece', 'plot', 'loaf', 'slice', 'lump', and 'head', in the following examples: A *piece* of music; a *plot* of ground; a *loaf* of bread; a *slice* of cake; two *lumps* of sugar; three *head* of cattle. In English, this use of a defining word is only necessary where definite quantities, numbers, sizes, or measurements, are referred to, but in Chinese, most nouns take some defining word corresponding to 'piece', 'plot', 'loaf', etc., in the above examples.

These defining nouns, both in English, Chinese and Miao, are employed with numerals. They represent the unit of the class, or of the article that is indicated by the noun, as in the above examples: *Two lumps* of sugar -- where *lump* is the unit of that particular form of sugar; *three head* of cattle -- where *head* is the unit of the group of cattle. In this connection, the indefinite articles 'a' or 'an' are reckoned as numerals, being equivalent to 'one'.

In the Glossary, these defining nouns are termed numerary adjuncts, (referred to as NA). In the Songs the term 'classifier' is used. The NA may refer to the nature of the object represented by the noun, for instance Ⱶ.ꝰ⁷ is the numerary adjunct used to indicate large animals, while Ⱶᵘ⁴ is the NA for insects and small animals and ʟᵇ² is the NA for people.

When the numerary adjuncts correspond to similar words in English, they have a definite translation, but generally speaking, they are untranslatable. For example we have Ɣⁿ² Δ.˜² ꞔᴛ̓¹ , "a sheet of paper". In this expression, the defining word is Δ.˜² which corresponds to the English word 'sheet', and thus it may be translated; but the same word Δ.˜², as used in Ɣⁿ² Δ.˜² Ɔᵘ² ꞔΔⁿᶜ³ , "an apron", does not correspond to anything in English, therefore it cannot be translated, though Miao idiom demands it in each case.

In the Glossary, when it has been identified, the numerary adjuncts are given with the nouns with which they are associated.

Note. In the Glossary entries any numerary adjunct (NA) is shown in the English

Ɔᵘ² ꞔΔⁿᶜ³	mu ndlie	Apron worn by Miao women. [NA Δ.˜²]

and the numerary adjunct itself Δ.˜² has its own entry with the description "classifier".

Δ.˜²	dla	Any thin, flat object. Classifier for flat objects:- Sheets of paper. Thin books. Chapters in books. Fans. Flat, wooden boats. Slabs of stone. [Also pronounced Δ.‿⁶]