

## Concerning Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and Ndrao-ntlai.

*Told by Yang-Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that once upon a time, Ndrao-ntlai went and borrowed his cousin's embroidered gown to wear and attend a festival. He went to the top of a rock on a hill and spoke as follows,

“I am wearing the embroidered gown which belongs to  
Hmao-chi's youngest daughter,  
But oh, I do not know what Hmao-chi's youngest daughter  
may be doing!”

As he said this a tiger, which was under the rock where he was standing, heard him. The tiger lifted his head to look, and saw that the gown, which Ndrao-ntlai was wearing, was made like a tiger's skin. So the tiger waited until Ndrao-ntlai had gone, then he got up and went to carry off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter. The tiger took his front paw and changed it into a fruit placing it beside the water pool. When Hmao-chi's youngest daughter went to carry water, she saw it and took and ate it, with the result that her heart burned to follow the tiger.

She carried the water back home, and she said to her mother, “I must go and follow the tiger”. Her mother followed after her. She gave her pair of leg-bands to her mother and said,

“Mother, you have cared for me until you were weary,  
Take these in payment for your effort!”

Her mother went on following after her, so she gave a skirt to her mother and said,

“Mother, you gave me milk to drink until I grew big,  
Take this in payment for the cost of your milk!”

Still her mother followed after her, so she gave a gown to her and said,

“Mother, you have given me food to eat until I have grown up,  
So I give you my gown, in payment for the cost of the food!”

Her mother still followed after her, but she lost sight of her, so her mother returned home again.

Ndrao-ntlai, having returned home after attending the festival, heard that the tiger had carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter. So he set out and followed. He went over a mountain where the tiger and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had lit a fire and rested. Now the fire was not yet out, so Ndrao-ntlai plucked a leaf and blew it, “Where has the tiger which carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter gone?” Hmao-chi's youngest daughter also plucked a leaf and blowing it replied, “The tiger has carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and gone to the mountain of black thorns”. So Ndrao-ntlai followed after. He reached the mountain of black thorns and here too the tiger and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had rested, for Hmao-chi's youngest daughter's leaves placed there were still good. Ndrao-ntlai again plucked a leaf and blew it, “Where has the tiger which carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter gone?” Hmao-chi's youngest

daughter also plucked a leaf and blew it in reply. “The tiger has carried off Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter to the mountain of green thorns”. So Ndrao-ntlai arose and followed. He went on until he came to the top of a cliff. This was the place where the tiger had taken Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter to live. Ndrao-ntlai remained at the top of the cliff for a smoke, and he brushed the leaves over to fall to the bottom of the cliff. Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “With the weather so fine, how is it that the birds are brushing out the leaves?” She lifted her head and looked up and saw Ndrao-ntlai there. Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “Ndrao-ntlai, so you have come! This family of brothers is very fierce indeed. You must go away until

‘Ox day when the ox is prostrate,  
And tiger day when the tiger sleeps’,

and on that date come back, please”. So Ndrao-ntlai came away.

For seven days and seven nights Ndrao-ntlai was sharpening his sword. When the sharpening was finished he said to his father, “Father, drive up your ox for me to test my sword!” His father said, “I have only one son, why, yes, of course, I will give him my ox to test his sword!” His father drove the ox up behind the house and whipped it, making it jump right over the house down to the front. With a single sword stroke Ndrao-ntlai cut it into two pieces. Then he said to his mother, “Mother, give me your skirt to test my sword and see if it is all right!” His mother said, “I have only one son, why, yes, of course, I will give him my skirt to test his sword!” His mother brought her skirt up behind the house, and threw it down to the front. As it fell, Ndrao-ntlai, with a single sword stroke, cut it into two pieces.

The day when the tigers sleep was approaching, so Ndrao-ntlai set out. When he arrived the tigers were away from home. Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter took Ndrao-ntlai and hid him in a small cave. In the evening the tigers returned, they smelt the fresh scent, and the little tiger said, “There is a funny smell, there is a funny smell, sister-in-law!” Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “Today I put my clothes out to sun them, that is what it is”. Grandfather tiger arrived and said, “There is a funny smell, there is a funny smell, daughter-in-law!” Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “Today I put my clothes out to sun them, that is what it is”. Grandfather tiger went inside the cave, but the little tiger came out to play. He saw Ndrao-ntlai and was going to climb up and eat him. Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “That is my brother, don’t you touch him!” When the tigers understood this, they made Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter bring him in to stay with them.

After two days the tigers all went to sleep and Ndrao-ntlai was going to kill them. Ndrao-ntlai first killed the little tiger, then he killed grandfather tiger. But Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter saw it, so Ndrao-ntlai went outside. Ndrao-ntlai said, “The butterflies flying in this valley are very pretty!” Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter ran out after him, but Ndrao-ntlai doubled back and took the middle tiger with a single sword stroke. There remained the big tiger. Ndrao-ntlai was about to strike him, but Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter went and covered him with the hem of her skirt so that Ndrao-ntlai could not very well strike him. Ndrao-ntlai said, “If you do that I shall kill you as well!” Then Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter got out of the way, and with a single stroke Ndrao-ntlai cut the tiger in two. Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter said, “You have taken a great and virile family, and you have made a complete end”.

Now Ndrao-ntlai brought Hmao-chi's youngest daughter away, and reached a valley where a-va grew. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter was pregnant and the time of resting drew near. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said to Ndrao-ntlai, "You dig a hole and bury me. You eat this a-va, and stay and wait for me. If you hear my mouth-harp sounding, come, open the hole and have a look". Ndrao-ntlai stayed there and ate all the a-va in the valley. Ndrao-ntlai went and opened Hmao-chi's youngest daughter's hole there, to look. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had decayed away to a frothing liquid. Ndrao-ntlai now had no hope and wanted to leave. He went as far as the big pass and was about to cross over, but his heart was not at rest, so he came back for one more look. As he was about to leave again he heard Hmao-chi's youngest daughter's mouth-harp sounding. He went and opened up to see. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter came out, and she had two small tigers which she brought out as well. Ndrao-ntlai wanted to kill them but Hmao-chi's youngest daughter would not allow it, so they took them along.

When they reached home, Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father were "escorting the spirit" for Ndrao-ntlai, because he had been gone a long time and they thought he had been eaten by the tigers. Thus it was that there was a lot of people at Ndrao-ntlai's home. When they arrived their mother and father did not know it, so the people who were there said, "Today it is busy with lots of people. There is nowhere for you to sleep here!" But Ndrao-ntlai was persistent in asking, so that presently they allowed the couple to stay. Now Ndrao-ntlai took his pipes and played,

"Ndrao-ntlai went to the tigers' country,  
Ndrao-ntlai has got a fine bride!"

Ndrao-ntlai's father was up in the loft and heard it. Wanting to hurry down quickly to congratulate him, he fell from the loft and broke his leg.

Now afterwards Ndrao-ntlai's father and others took the two small tigers when they went out with the cattle to pasture, but the tigers began catching and eating the cattle. So Ndrao-ntlai's father and the others took the two little tigers and killed them to roast and eat. When they were killing them there the cattle and the sheep and the goats saw that they were killing tigers and they rolled on the ground with laughing and knocked out their top teeth. The horses and pigs were in a hollow, so they did not see. Now cattle and sheep and goats lack of upper teeth originates from this.