He Jinhua
Songs of the Naxi of Southwest China
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Naxi folk songs are full of references to snow-clad mountains, rushing rivers, spring flowers, and the profusion of local wildlife in the Naxi heartland of northwest Yunnan province. The songs also speak of daily life—of agricultural labor, or the sorrow of a bride’s mother at her daughter’s departure, but also of the joy of communal celebrations, and the fun that children can find in everyday activities. In this first CD of Naxi folk songs published outside China, He Jinhua (b.1971), one of the most renowned Naxi singers today, presents songs she has learned since childhood from relatives, farmers, colleagues, and field collectors all over the region.

THE NAXI

The Naxi number just over 320,000. A Tibeto-Burman ethnic group long resident in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan, they are mostly concentrated in Yulong (formerly Lijiang) county and adjacent areas, with smaller communities in Sichuan
province to the north and Tibet to the northwest. Many Naxi live close to other ethnic groups, such as Tibetans, Lisu, Yi, Bai, and Han Chinese (China’s ethnic majority), so that in some areas multi-lingualism is common and intermarriage with Tibetans or Han quite frequent. Even before the imposition in 1723 of direct Chinese control of this region, the Mu family that ruled Lijiang had welcomed skilled Han Chinese migrants and encouraged Chinese literacy among elite boys. They also allowed Chinese Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Tibetan Buddhism to flourish in their area. Such introduced ritual practices complemented the activities of indigenous Naxi religious practitioners, creating a complex cultural matrix that was further reinforced by Lijiang’s position as an important stop on the caravan routes between southwest China, Tibet, and India. Northwest Yunnan’s mountainous terrain and deep river gorges make for spectacular scenery, sudden changes in altitude, and, until the 1990s, difficult roads. Naxi villages lie between 4,000 and 10,000 feet above sea level, and most Naxi have traditionally engaged in agriculture and herding. Despite their small population
and remote location, the Naxi are better known outside
China than most other comparable groups, thanks to
interest in the indigenous *dobbaq* (Chinese: *dongba*
东巴) priests and their unique pictographic scriptures,
and to the publications of Austrian-American scholar
Joseph Rock and Russian émigré Peter Goullart, both of
whom lived in Lijiang before 1949. Since the late 1980s,
large-scale tourism has renewed outside interest in
Naxi culture.

**NAXI MUSIC**

Before the 1990s, roads in northwest Yunnan were
poor, average household incomes were low, and many
people seldom left their home area. As a result, there
is great diversity within the region in Naxi dialects,
traditional dress, and performing arts. Some folk songs
and dances are specific to particular areas, while
others are widespread but have local variants, as this
CD demonstrates. Similarly, the magnificent chants
of the indigenous *dobbaq* priests vary regionally.
Like many other Tibeto-Burman peoples, the Naxi
accompany group dances with singing, flute (*biliq*), or
gourd mouth organ (*huqlulsei*), and have traditionally
used different types of jaw harp for courtship or
personal amusement (tracks 15–17). In more sinicized
areas, Chinese-derived *dongjing* ensemble
music thrives. Where there is greater interaction with
Tibetan neighbors, Tibetan-language songs feature in
Naxi repertoires, as we find on this CD as well.

Several challenges to the maintenance of Naxi
performing arts have arisen since the mid-20th century.
Traditional culture was suppressed throughout China
during the extremist Cultural Revolution (1966–1976),
and despite a partial revival since then, the advent of
television, the internet, and modern popular culture
has led many young people to lose interest in local
heritage. In response, since the 1990s several projects
have been launched by culture-bearers, officials,
scholars, and schoolteachers to encourage continued
transmission of Naxi traditions, with some success.
Indeed, such efforts resonate with China’s national
embrace since 2000 of intangible cultural heritage
protection. Nevertheless, among the Naxi, as in most of
China, folk song remains an at-risk genre, something of
which He Jinhua is acutely aware.
The house in which He Jinhua was born in Tacheng, Yulong county.
He Jinhua with her parents at home in Tacheng, Yulong county. March 2019
HE JINHUA 和金花

He Jinhua’s home village is perched on a mountainside that rises steeply from the banks of the Jinsha River. It is located in Tacheng, a rural township at the northwest tip of Yulong county. There is frequent intermarriage with Tibetan communities nearby, and the farm at the top of the mountain belongs to a Lisu family. Traditional local dress and music-making both reflect the mixing of Naxi and Tibetan influence.

Jinhua was born in 1971 in a traditional wooden Naxi farmhouse. Her father, He Guoxiu 和国秀, and mother, Yang Ruxiu 杨汝秀, both of whom passed away in their 80s in 2020, were farmers, although her father also taught elementary school. Like other local children, Jinhua and her brothers participated in the agricultural cycle, but early on she showed a special talent for singing, easily picking up folk songs she heard around her. In November 1986 she was invited to the county seat to perform in the professional government-supported county song and dance troupe, where she has worked ever since. With her powerful voice and sure grasp of Naxi folk song style, Jinhua is a widely admired singer who has garnered multiple accolades. She has achieved the rare distinction of the title of Chinese National First-grade Performer; a silver medal in the 2008 Chinese Central Television Young Singers Competition; a gold medal at the 2010 China Arts Festival; a 2010 Star of the Masses award from the Chinese Ministry of Culture; a gold medal and title of Outstanding [Culture] Transmitter in the 2011 national Flower of the Mountains Awards for folk culture; the Outstanding Newcomer prize at the 2012 All-China Ethnic Minority Folk Culture and Arts performance; and the title of Young Performing Artist of Yunnan Province, awarded in 2014. Numerous foreign tours have taken Jinhua to over 20 countries in Europe, Asia, and North America, including the 2007 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

At the root of Jinhua’s career is an abiding love for Naxi folk song. She has made it a point to seek out singers from all over the Naxi heartland to learn their local songs; she has also learned from colleagues in the song and dance troupe, and from field recordings by local scholars. And she continues to share the Naxi and Tibetan songs of her Tacheng home with her audiences.
THIS CD PROJECT

Some years ago, He Jinhua decided to create a CD to document the folk songs she has dedicated her life to learning, performing, preserving, and passing on. Three of us (He Jinhua, Naxi scholar and former Deputy Director of the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences Yang Fuquan杨福泉, and ethnomusicologist Helen Rees) planned a format that goes beyond pure musical aesthetics, offering in-depth information to listeners and potential future learners of the songs. Yang Fuquan transcribed the Naxi-language songs on the CD into standard Naxi pinyin romanization, and he and He Jinhua translated the Naxi into Chinese. Helen Rees then translated the Chinese into English, and we all checked the texts to ensure accuracy. Jinhua and Helen also worked in Yulong in March 2019 on photography for the album, and the three of us collaborated on the liner notes.

TRACK NOTES

All townships and villages named below are located in Yulong (previously Lijiang) county, Yunnan province, unless otherwise stated. The place-name Tacheng refers to the township of Tacheng in Yulong county, unless the neighboring township of Tacheng in Weixi county is specified. Song titles are given in three languages: first in English translation, second in Naxi, and third in Chinese translation. Lyrics are given first in Naxi, second in English translation, and third in Chinese translation. For the two Tibetan-language songs (tracks 4 and 10), we provide a general translation rather than a word-by-word transliteration of the Tibetan. Many songs consist partially of vocables (syllables with no semantic meaning); these are indicated by parentheses in the Naxi lyrics, with most omitted from the English translation. Names of Chinese citizens are given in Chinese order: surname first, given name second.
This recording starts and ends with the dance-song “A ka bba la,” typical of the Malimasha subgroup of the Naxi from Weixi county. It is a threshing song from Tacheng townships of Yulong and Weixi counties that was sung in Jinhua’s home village when she was young; she heard it from sources including a field recording by local scholar Yang Zenglie 杨曾烈 of the late folk singer He Guilan 和桂兰 (b.1950s) from Tacheng township, Weixi county. The singers dance as they sing, coming up with the words as they go. He Jinhua sings this melody solo, and at 1:08, after the flourish “A hui hui,” transitions to the main body of the recording. Part of this she sings with herself, creating the sense of two or three young women singing together as they work. At 2:43 she returns to “A ka bba la,” overlapping with the end of the threshing song. The syllables “a ka bba la” are vocables, with no semantic meaning.

Opening. A ka bba la:
A, Naqxi ddiuq loq, (a ka bba la, meq ddaq hei), ssei weq zaq, (meq ddaq hei)
A, lil li hua huaq, (a ka bba la, meq ddaq hei), co lei ceeq, (meq ddaq hei)
(A hui hui!)

Ah, in Naxi areas, how happy [we are]!
Ah, everyone is joyful, come and dance!
A hui hui!
啊，纳西的地方，阿卡巴拉
默达嘿，
好快乐！默达嘿！
啊，好快乐，阿卡巴拉默达嘿，来跳舞，
默达嘿！

*Threshing song:*

Al la wei laf wei laq sheq bbi lei yi
Wei laq ye gge dvl la wei laq sheq bbi lei yi
Al wei laf wei laq wei laq sheq bbi lei yi
Wei laq ye gge dvl la wei laq sheq bbi lei yi
Wei laq weiq laq wei laq she bbiq lei yi, ueq la ye ggel dv la we la
sheq bbiq lei yi, el la yi bbiq dv la

[The song then repeats, with the last line repeated several times.]

Most syllables here are vocables, with *la* (“hit,” “thresh”) the main word with semantic meaning. The general sense is: “Everybody come and thresh! Come and thresh! Come and thresh together!”

啊，纳西的地方，阿卡巴拉
默达嘿，好快乐！默达嘿！

*Traditional Songs:*

He Jinhua 和金花: voice (all tracks)

*Coda, A la ka bba la:*

A, Naqxi dduq loq, (a ka bba la, meq ddaq hei), ssei weq zaq (meq ddaq hei)!

Ah, in Naxi areas, how happy [we are]!

啊，纳西的地方，阿卡巴拉
默达嘿，好快乐！默达嘿！
Transplanting songs have traditionally been widespread in Naxi areas that practice paddy agriculture. The singers improvise the words; the content often reflects young men and women competing with each other and finding enjoyment despite the hard work. He Jinhua learned this song during the annual May transplanting season in Tacheng when she was young. After opening with this song, at 1:24 she switches to another work song that she learned as a child, a flailing song (“Geel lee la beeq/连枷调”); the transplanting song returns at 2:12.

**Xiq dvq bee:**
The lyrics are mostly vocables; starting at 0:23 we hear the words lei hu (please wait) and ngeq lei hu (please wait for me). The implication is “please don’t keep me stuck here.”

请等我，等等我，
不要把我关在里面

Without enduring some hardship, how would we obtain happiness?

如果不吃过一些苦，
哪里会得到幸福

**Xiq dvq bee:**
The vocables and words are similar to the opening.

**Geel lee la bee:**
Following a beautiful line of vocables, the lexical content starts at 1:46:

Ddee jjeq me neiq nee (we), (a)
ddee zaq neiq me ddu we
This song is prevalent in He Jinhua's home area of Tacheng township and in neighboring Tacheng township in Weixi county. A Naxi bride typically leaves her natal village and moves into the groom's household. At such a bittersweet time, as she is leaving behind her parents, family, village, and friends, the bride's mother and friends sing to express their sorrow at parting with her, while the bride laments that she must leave them.

Spoken introduction:
Hai sheeq haiq bbal bba, bbal bba ko bbeq zeel, bba xiq we mei nee, bbaq lei ggo me ruaq, bba xiq wef mei nvl, nvl mei goq nee qil, mieq bbee liu nieq ggeeq, neiq nil sei me tal seiq.

A flower like gold, the flower will be plucked. As the mother who nurtured the flower, I cannot bear to be parted from the flower. As the mother who nurtured the flower, my heart is so sad! My tears fall on the ground, my sorrow is endless!

Wedding song:
(Sil lil lil so lo lo)
Kaf sso jil bbi ddeiq su, Li Zzeelbaf bbi ddeiq suq)
Ee lvl Ueshel mil
Bber zzeeq bbee tal seiq
Bber zzeeq bbee shel mei
(A) to kuaq me jju ye
(A) to kuaq me jju mvl
Tal loq ddee loq neiq
Ueshel, my daughter who took the cows out to pasture
Go to be a guest [in your husband’s house]
If you wish to go and be a guest
If you have no skirt
If you have no skirt
Go look in the chest

The last line here can be varied improvisatorily, for instance using words such as “If you don’t have a horse to ride, go look in the stable.” From 1:42, the words are primarily vocables.
This Tibetan-language song is found among Tibetan and Naxi communities in Xianggelila (formerly Zhongdian) and Deqin counties to the north of Lijiang, as well as in Tacheng townships of Yulong and Weixi counties. The genre is known in Naxi as *jjiq zzerl daiq co*, in Tibetan as *gzhas*, and in Chinese as 弦子舞. It is commonly performed as a group song and dance at festivals and on happy occasions. Here He Jinhua sings solo; in a group setting, men and women sing together, often dancing with accompaniment from a two-string fiddle. In this rendition, two melodies are strung together, the first ending at 1:31, the second starting at 1:33. Legend has it that the title, “Tsheli Tshemu” ("Ceeli Ceemu" in Naxi), is the name of a Tibetan queen.

Tsheli Tshemu, how could we imagine that we would meet again?
Tsheli Tshem, your silhouette is deeply engraved on my innermost heart
Let’s get together and bless this beautiful life
We’ll sing and dance, and sing the praises of Tsheli Tshemu

次哩次姆啊，怎么能幻想我们又再次相遇了？
次哩次姆啊，你的身影深深印刻在我的内心
我们欢聚一堂，
祝福美好生活
我们载歌载舞，
歌颂次哩次姆
This recording is a medley of two of the most famous and widespread Naxi folk songs, “Gguqqil” and “We muf ddaq.” Gguqqil means “song”; it has a free rhythm and is sung solo (or sometimes antiphonally between two singers). Traditionally the “Gguqqil” melody, found in different variants throughout the Naxi homeland, can be used to sing lyrics on many different topics, both happy and sad. The version of “Gguqqil” sung here is from the Lijiang plain, the area around the county seat. “We muf ddaq” is a group song-dance genre; as they sing, participants dance slow, repetitive steps, holding hands in a line or semi-circle. It is believed that the name of this genre originally meant “Pitiful hawk,” and that the words initially sung described the unhappy situation of a captured hawk. Thereafter, the song gradually became a communal song-dance, with changes to the rhythm, melody, and lyrics. It is present in many Naxi areas. He Jinhua picked up these songs by listening to other singers. The recording starts with “Gguqqil” with its very distinctive, slow vibrato; at 1:03 it transitions to the more rhythmic “We muf ddaq,” where He Jinhua imitates the typical call-and-response structure by doubling with herself for several phrases; at 3:34 “Gguqqil” comes back as a short coda. The words reference two revered Yulong landmarks: the majestic Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, which at over 18,000 feet towers over the central Lijiang plain, and the Jinsha (Golden Sand) River, whose deep gorge forms the northern boundary of Yulong county, ultimately meandering east to become the Yangtze River.

Gguqqil:
(E, me lv bu)
(He) Ngvlv bbei (me) jjuq bbvq (me), Haiqmal (e) Yibbiq ku
(E) Yiggv ddiuq, (e) la ler Yiggv diuq (me), ssei zaq (e) mei gge ddiuq
Under the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, on the banks of the Jinsha River
Vast Lijiang, such a joyful place

在玉龙雪山下，在金沙江边
广阔的丽江，多快乐的地方

*We muf ddaq:*
(E wei wei, e wei me wei, e ddaq me ddaq wei
E wei me wei, e ddaq me ddaq wei
E wei me wei ddaq wei wei)

The song proceeds with much repetition and many vocables, with the semantic content as follows:

Haiq yi la ceil huq, chee huq ko leel shel
Muf ddaq me zzer mei, ddee huq gol me loq
Muf ddaq me co mei, ddee huq gol me loq

A golden evening, this evening
We can hardly spend this night not singing “We muf ddaq”!
We can hardly spend this night not dancing “We muf ddaq”!

金子一样的夜晚，说起这个夜晚
如果不唱“默达”，今晚就难过了！

如果不跳“默达”，今晚就难过了！
默达阿默达！

*Gguqqil:*
(E) zzer yuaiq (e) hual gv nee,
Hual yuaiq (e) yel ga mo (meil)

Among the harmoniously singing group
Let everyone come happily and sing!

在快乐和谐地吟唱的群里
请大家快乐地来唱吧
The Jade Dragon Snow Mountain on the Lijiang plain, Yulong county.

The Jinsha River, Yulong county.
This track links two songs from Sanba township in Xianggelila (formerly Zhongdian) county. (Bberdder is the Naxi-language name for Sanba.) The first is the Sanba version of “Gguqqil”; the second, which starts at 2:51, is “Ya li la.” This localized version of “Gguqqil” He Jinhua learned from her aunt He Guofang 和国芳; “Ya li la” she picked up from an elderly Sanba singer when a group of Naxi singers went to Beijing to perform (“Ya li la” are vocables with no semantic meaning). The first song He Jinhua sings solo, as is usual for “Gguqqil,” while in the second she doubles with herself to give the sense of a small group.

**Bberdder gguqqil:**

(Aq al ei)

(Aq al) Naq mo ddiuq sso loq (aq waq ei), (ei) xi yuq lei ceeq seiq (waq ei)

(Aq al ei)

(Aq al) Mei neiq mil rhu rhu (aq waq ei), (ei) chee ddiuq tv lei ceeq (waq hei)

(Aq al ei)

(Aq al) Mee ggv hei tv heeq ggee ceeq (aq sei), (ei) lei nai gv mezzeq (al waq al ei)

(Aq al ei)

(Aq al) Nvl mei goq lei qil (waq ei), (ei) miuq bber tv lei ceeq (waq al ei)

In the place of the Naxi people, here we live

Mother and daughter have come to this place together

From the sky the wind is blowing and the rain is coming down, we have nowhere to shelter

I feel sad of heart, and tears are flowing

纳西人居住的地方, 我们在这里生活

母女两个做伴, 来到这块土地上

天上刮起风下起雨, 你我没有躲雨处

心里很悲伤, 眼泪流下来
There is white snow on the Snow Mountain, white snow on the Snow Mountain, white snow

There is gold in the Jinsha River, gold in the Jinsha River, gold

呀里拉里，呀阿里阿里拉，呀里拉，呀呀里拉里（衬词）
雪山上有白雪，呀阿里，阿里拉，雪山上有白雪
金沙江出黄金，呀阿里，阿里拉，金沙江出黄金
呀阿里，阿里拉，呀阿里，阿里拉……
This recording is a medley of three different songs from eastern Yulong county. The first, which returns at 3:44 as the coda, is a local version of “Gguqqil” from Baoshan township; Labeq is a Naxi place-name in this area. The second, which begins at 1:30, is a local version of “We mul ddaq” from Baoshan township. Here He Jinhua doubles with herself, to give the impression of a small group singing. An interpolation between 2:29 and 2:41 is the female line from Dadong’s famous polyphonic song “We sseiq sseiq.” He Jinhua learned versions of these songs from several Dadong singers, including her colleagues Li Ruishan 李瑞山 and He Ruixin 和瑞新.

**Labeq gguqqil:**
(Eq weq yi, eq weq yil, heq weq yil weq yil weq yil weq yil
Eq yil, e sseiq see weq ssei we yi
Sei sei, sei sei, yi saq aq saq, we yi ssei sseiq, eq weq yil, eq weq yil)

All the above syllables are vocables.

**Dadong we mul ddaq:**
We zzaiq lv mei kee, lv kee jjiq qil yi,
(Ei wef ei weq, ei wef ei weq, ei wef ei wef ei weq)

(Ha) chual co, (ha) chual co, Ngvlv (ha) chual co, (ha) chual co
Ddai lvq loq, dcai lvq loq, chual co
ddai lvq loq, dcai lvq loq
Hal sherq seiq, hal sherq seiq, me co hal sherq seiq, hal sherq seiq
Hua huaq lu, hua huaq lu, co lei hua huaq lu, hua huaq lu

In front of the stone village there is clear, fresh spring water
At the place on the Snow Mountain where the white deer bounds
For a long time we have not danced
Let's dance joyfully
石头寨子前，有清清的泉水
在雪山白鹿跳跃的地方
我们不跳舞好久了，让我们
快乐地跳起来

Dadong we sseiq sseiq:
(Ei, wef wef weq, ei weq ei weq ei weq ei)

All the above syllables are
vocables.

全衬词

Dadong we mul ddaq:
We zzaiq lv mei kee, lv kee jjiq qil yi

石头寨子前，有清清的泉水
在清泉流淌的水潭边，开遍了各种山花
在山花从中，牡丹花开得最美

Labeq gguqqil:
(E yil we yil weq, hei wei, hei wei yil we)

All the above syllables are
vocables.

全衬词

In front of the stone village there is
clear, fresh spring water

By the side of the flowing spring-
fed pool, all kinds of mountain
flowers bloom

Among the mountain flowers, the
peonies are the most beautiful
Jinhua’s younger brother He Jinlong and his wife Lamu with ox ploughing in Tacheng, Yulong county. March 2019
Traditionally Naxi farmers use oxen to plough the fields. This recording mixes two songs from He Jinhua’s home region of Tacheng: first we hear a children’s song about accompanying Grandpa to pasture the oxen; at 0:44 we hear the ploughing song; at 1:50 the children’s song comes back, with the singer doubling with herself to give the sense of two or three children singing together; and at 2:10 the ploughing song returns. He Jinhua picked up the ploughing song from her father and brothers, who still farm in this manner. She initially learned the children’s song from a field recording by Yang Zenglie of folk singer He Guilan; later she adapted it herself. The ploughing song addresses the ox, towards whom Naxi farmers feel gratitude for their back-breaking work.

I went with Grandpa to pasture the cattle
While doing this I struck the docynia tree [to shake out the fruit]
Three fruits fell into the ditch
One was carried off by a pig, another was carried off by a little dog
I couldn’t pluck the fruit

Children’s song:
E pv gguq nee ee lvl keel (ge)
Ee lvl gv nee seel bvq lal, lal
Seel bvq seel liu ke loq rhuq, rhuq
Ddee liu bbuq mee ddoq nee kai bel heq, heq, ddee liu kee ni sso ni lvq bel heq, heq
Kel loq lei seel kel kel, seel bvq seel me mai ye meil

我跟着爷爷去放牛
放牛时打斯补果子（多依果）吃
有三个野木瓜掉沟里了
一个被猪咬，一个被小狗叼去了
野木瓜也捡不到了
**Ploughing song:**

Eil lei lei, eil lei lei lei, lei juq!
Naq sso, (a) lei juq lu meil!
(We) lei juq, lei juq
A lei lei lei, a lei juq, lei juq, a lei juq!

Eil lei lei, eil lei lei lei [syllables calling out to the ox], make a turn!
Naqsso [the ox’s name], turn and come back!
Make a turn, make a turn!
A lei lei lei, turn, turn, turn!

This returns with the same syllables as before to call to the ox, interspersed with the command lei juq (make a turn).

**Children’s song:**

E pv me heeq e zzee lal
Ail zzee mei heeq eil zerq diu
Ail zerq me heeq bberq leel kvl
Bberq lerl me heeq ku toq qiel

Grandpa is in a bad mood and hits Grandma
The hen is out of sorts and pecks the chick
The chick is upset and pecks at the fly
The fly is annoyed and perches on the door

爷爷不愉快就打奶奶
母鸡不高兴就啄小鸡
小鸡不高兴就啄苍蝇
苍蝇不高兴就栖在门上

**Ploughing song:**

纳若 (对牛的昵称) 转回来吧!
Naxi drinking songs are often sung as people relax in the evening around the central cooking fire that is a feature of many traditional Naxi houses. This recording opens with a spoken introduction, followed at 0:18 by a drinking song from Tacheng, at 3:50 by the Tacheng version of “We mul ddal,” at 4:53 by joking patter, and at 5:09 by a return of the drinking song and a spoken coda. He Jinhua learned these songs in her native Tacheng, and later picked up more from the young Tacheng dobbaq He Xiudong 和秀东 at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in summer 2007.

Spoken introduction:
Chee hal mee kvl, ngel ggeeq ddee hual bbei, ri ddee bee zzer, ri ddee bee gguq, ddee hual bbei ggeq gvl lv nee, ri zzer yel ga mo, ri teeq yel ga mo mei.

This evening we have all come to sing drinking songs. Let’s all sing drinking songs and drink around the cooking fire.

Drinking song:
The words as sung here feature much internal repetition of phrases, using the following lines:

Haiq yi la ceil huq
Mee zzei ri qiq jel
Ri qiq jer loq keel
Ri qiq bber juq zhul
Ri teeq yel ga mo (yi wei)

On this golden evening
Spirits made from barley
We pour it into the cups
We toast our guests with fine spirits
Please drink!
在这金子一样的夜晚
我们把大麦酿的酒倒进杯里
我们向客人敬酒
请客人喝下这杯酒！

We mul ddaq (chorus):
Following the vocables, the words sung include much repetition of phrases, based on the semantic content given below.
(We mul lee ddaq, we mul ddaq we, we mul we ddaq
Mul ddaq we, we mul we ddaq
Haiq yi la ceel huq, chee huq ko leel shel

Evening gathering in He Jinhua’s parents’ house, Tacheng, Yulong county. March 2019
On this golden evening, we’ll talk about this evening’s matters

金子一样的晚上，我们要说今晚的事

Joking patter (chorus):
Bbv sseeq el niq gvl, ssaiq bbvq ssaiq dal ssaiq
Me ssaif me gee zheeq, ssaiq tal gee zheeq
Dde liu me weq lail, ni liuf me waq lail, seel liuq me waq lail

Brothers, the two of us, we are laughing happily

If we don’t laugh we won’t open our mouths, only if we laugh will we then speak
It’s only one [mouthful], it’s only two [mouthfuls], it’s only three [mouthfuls]

We are laughing
不笑不开口，笑了才说话
才是一个嘛，才是两个嘛，才是三个嘛 (行酒令)

Conclusion:
As He Jinhua sings phrases from the drinking song, she also speaks several lines to end the song, as follows:

Ddee ddeeq jil ji ddee hual bbei
Ri teeq yel ga mo
Ggu mu la laq yel hol
Ssee sherq hal yi yel hol

Old and young, all of us together
Please drink the spirits
I wish everyone good health
Longevity and health

白: 我们老老少少这一群
请大家喝一杯酒
祝愿大家身体好
长寿安康
10. Ggv zzeeq mil bvl bee (Tibetan Marriage Lament) - 出嫁以后想妈妈

This song, from the same genre as track 4, is widespread in Tacheng, and also in Weixi, Xianggelila (formerly Zhongdian), and Deqin counties. Tacheng township in Yulong county is located where these four counties meet, and where Naxi and Tibetan communities live interspersed with each other. The region sees much intermarriage between the two groups, so that often a Tibetan bride will marry into a Naxi village, or vice versa. In Tacheng, while the everyday language is Naxi, most people can sing Tibetan songs. This song, which illustrates the interethnic exchange typical of this area, speaks of a new bride longing for her home village and her mother. Young men and women of both ethnic groups also sing this song antiphonally while engaging in farm work, and may use it to convey affection for a prospective partner. He Jinhua learned it as a child in Tacheng, since “all of us in Tacheng could sing it.”

Where mountains and rivers meet, the languages are entirely different
As a married-out daughter, ah!, I have lost my native tongue
But what I have in my heart, I will use my native language to express
My longing for my father and mother, I will tell to the mountains, I will tell to the rivers

The mountains and rivers will convey my longing to you, my father and mother

山水相连的地方，语言却完全不同
出嫁的女儿啊，没有了家乡的口音
但是心里的话，我要用母语来表达
对爸爸妈妈的思念，我要对山说，我要对水讲
山水会将我的思念送给您，我的爸爸妈妈
11. Yuleiq bee, Ji zzoq zol (Songs from Yongning and Eya) - 永宁调、饿亚搭云桥调

This recording links two songs from the northeast of the Naxi homeland. The first is from Yongning township in Ninglang county; the second, which starts at 1:05, comes from Eya township in Muli county, Sichuan province. He Jinhua first heard the Yongning song on a field recording by local scholar Yang Zenglie of the late folk singer He Guilan; the Eya song she learned from He Xuedong and 学东, a young dobbaq priest from Judian who often travels to Eya. She subsequently adapted both songs to her own taste. The first song is sung solo; in the second, the singer doubles with herself to give the sense of a small group.

**Yuleiq bee:**

(A al ka du kaq bo, maq ni nil la maq ni ni la
ma dda hei la ma dda hei, yi shiq ya ka li lo la)

(Ya ji), ddee seeq me see chee ddiuq tv me bbi

Ddee sseeq soq sei le wu bbi (la)

(Me dda heiq la me ddal hei
Yi sheeq ya ka li lu la)

If I know nothing, I won't go
Only after learning a skill will I return

**Ji zzoq zol:**

Ji zzo zol (ya), jiq nee (welgge)
ji zzoq zol

(Ya ji), maf gge ji zzoq zol (ya) [sung twice]

Yiq bu ddaq (ya), mee mil (welgge) yi bu ddaq

(Ya ji), ma gge yiq bu dda (ya) [sung twice]

Mil nee ddaq (yaq) mee mil (welgge) mei nee ddaq,

(Ya ji), maf gge yiq bu ddaq (ya) [sung twice]
Haiq bba (nee) bbaq (ya), ni mei (welgge) haiq bbaq bbaq,
(Ya jif), maq gge haiq bbaq bbaq (ya) [sung twice]
Ngvq bbaq (nee) bbaq (ya), hei mei (welgge) ngv bbaq bbaq
(Ya jif), maq gge ngv bbaq bbaq (ya) [sung twice]
Yul bbaq (nee) bbaq (ya), geeq nee (welgge) yuq bbaq bbaq
(Ya jif), maf gge yul bbaq bbaq (ya) [sung three times]

The clouds create a bridge
They build my bridge of clouds [sung twice]
The heavenly maiden weaves silk
Weaving my silk [sung twice]
I come and weave, the heavenly maiden's mother comes to weave
Weaving my silk [sung twice]

Golden flowers bloom,
flowers of the sun
My golden flowers blossom [sung twice]
Silver flowers bloom,
flowers of the moon
My silver flowers blossom [sung twice]
Jade flowers bloom,
flowers of the stars
My jade flowers blossom [sung three times]

Coda (sung solo):
(Ya jif), maf gge yul bbaq bbaq (ya) [sung three times]
Yuq bbaq bba (ya)

My jade flowers blossom [sung three times]
Jade flowers blossom

女子（我）的玉花开，玉花开
云彩来搭桥
呀吉，搭起我（女子）的云桥
天女织绸缎
呀吉，织女子（我）的绸缎
女子来织，天女的妈妈来织，呀吉，织女子（我）的绸缎
女子（我）的玉花开，玉花开
A unique Naxi funeral custom, this folk song is sung while the coffin rests in the house. The singer is usually from the generation of the deceased’s children or grandchildren, and may be either female or male; the words here suggest a granddaughter lamenting her grandmother. People believe that before the coffin is taken out for burial, the living can use this lament each dawn when the cock crows to communicate with the soul of the deceased. The words may recall the person’s deeds during their lifetime, or speak of the mourner’s grief. They invite the soul to arise and take refreshment, and usher it along the road to the land of the ancestors. This lament used to be widespread throughout Naxi areas; it can still be found in regions such as Tacheng. Below, “(e e e)” indicates the primary sobbing sound, usually reiterated several times.

(Heel wo yil yil), A zzee (wo e e e)
Jji jjer kee naq xi (yil), kee leel lerf cee ye (e e e)
Bbei bbvq xi jjiq zzeeq,
xi jjiq aiq naq xi (yil),
aiq leel jjiuf cee ye (e e e)
A zi (yil), a zi (we e e e)
Dee gvl me gvl nee, (yil),
ggeq seil dee ga mu meil (e e e)
A zzee (e e e),
Ngvl gge lv mei nee (yil), jji jjerq jjiq ke lo nee (e e e), jjiq wuf cee sei (yil)
Jjiq zeiq pa seel zo nee, (e e e),
A zzee gge (e e e) jjiq zeiq yel bbeq (yil), jjif see zeq ga mu mei, (e e e)
Jjiq leel zeeq pil nvl, ngvl gge lv mei nee (e e e), ha sal teiq ji seiq (yi), . . . bbai mi teiq zhil seiq (yil), A zzee gai (e e e),
xiul dduiq la teiq zhil seiq
A zzee (we e e e), zzee gvl me gvl nee (yil), haf see zee ga mu meil (e e e),
A zzee (we e e e)
Shuaq gv la xiuq jjiuq, la xiuq jjiuq mei leel (e e e), la xiuq zzee zzee bbei (e e e), la la lol lei heq (e e e)
A zzee (we e e e), ngvl ge lv mei nee (yil), A zzee shv ddv sei me tal (e e e),
A zzee (we e e e), zzee gvl me gvl nee (yil), ha see zee ga mu meil (e e e)
A zzee (yil e e e), A zzee (meq, e e e)
Grandmother!
The black dog in front of the house, the black dog weeps too
This village family, this family has a black cock, the cock is also crowing
Grandmother, grandmother!
Can you get up? Please get up!
Grandmother!
Your granddaughter, as usual, has brought water from the well in front of the house for you to wash your face
I have prepared your washcloth, I will help you wash your face, please get up to take a wash!
After you have washed your face, your granddaughter has prepared food for you, and has lit the oil lamps and fragrant candles
Grandmother, even if you can’t eat, you must get up and eat a little, Grandmother!

There is a red tiger on the mountain, Grandmother, please go with the red tiger, return to the embrace of the ancestors
Grandmother, your granddaughter will always, endlessly, think of you! Grandmother, even if you cannot eat, please have something to eat first
Grandmother, grandmother!

奶奶！
房前拴着黑狗，黑狗也哭起来了。
村里的这家人，家里养着黑鸡，鸡也在打鸣了
奶奶啊，奶奶～
不知您能不能起来啊，请您起来吧
奶奶～

您的孙女啊，像往常一样，从房前的井中为您打来了洗脸水
准备好了洗脸帕，要服侍奶奶洗脸了，请您先起来洗脸吧！
洗过脸以后，您的孙女，已经为您放好了饭菜，油灯和香烛，也都为您点燃了
奶奶啊，无论您能吃不能吃，一定先起来吃一点，奶奶～
高山有红色的老虎，奶奶啊，请您与红虎相伴，回到祖先的怀抱
奶奶啊，您的孙女，会永远思念奶奶，无尽的思念！
奶奶啊，无论您能吃不能吃，都请您先吃饭吧
奶奶啊，奶奶！
13. Saiseeq jjiq / A lil lil jiq perq (Saiseeq jjiq / Beautiful White Clouds) - 三思吉、美丽的白云

These two songs come from the old Naxi funeral repertoire Bbesheeq xilli (Chinese: Baisha xiyue 白沙细乐). Saiseeq jjiq is a stream at the foot of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. Legend has it that the leaders of the Naxi and Bo ethnic groups arranged a marriage between their children, and that when disputes later led to war, the blood of those killed spilled into the stream at the township of Baisha (Naxi: Bbesheeq), turning the waters red. The second song, which starts at 2:02, is a well-known Naxi song with a melancholy affect, often sung to departing friends and relatives. The syllables A lil lil are vocables, but also have the sense of “beautiful and happy.” The phrase jiq perq means “white clouds.” In places He Jinhua doubles with herself, to give the sense of a small group. She learned these songs after joining the county song and dance troupe; they are widely sung in and around the county seat.

**Saiseeq jjiq:**
Sai me waq, jjiq me waq,
sai mel wa, jjiq me waq
Sail la leel yil weq, jji dal waq,
jjiq la leel, saiq dal waq
Sai la leel jjiq jjiq dal waq,
(a) jjiq dal waq
Saiseeq jjiq ddeeq hoq,
jjiq seeq sai ddee hoq

[The first four lines are sung twice, the second time as a duo.]
Saiseeq jjiq ddeeq hoq
[coda to second singing, sung solo]

It is not blood, it is not water,
it is not blood, it is not water
It looks like blood, but is water,
it looks like water, but is blood
It looks like blood, but is water,
it is water
This Saiseeq jjiq stream, with water and blood flowing together
This Saiseeq jjiq stream
[coda to second singing]
不是血，不是水，不是血，
不是水
看似血，又是水，看似水，
又是血
看似血，又是水，又是水
这条三思吉的水，水引血在流，血引水在流……

A lil lil jiq perq:
A lil lil (ge) jiq perq,
we lil lil (ge) ji naq
Ji perq ji nal gol
Gel gguq go, go gguq gel
Lol lei heq
Tee leel lei wul lei heq
Tee leel lei wul heq

Lei lee juq me lee
[This line is sung three times, and the entire song is sung twice, first solo, then as a duo; this line is sung a fourth time, solo, at the end of the recording, to form a coda.]

Beautiful white clouds,
beautiful black clouds
Between the white and black clouds
The eagles chase the cranes,
the cranes chase the eagles
Flying away
They have flown away
They have flown away
They will not return [repeated line]

美丽的白云，美丽的黑云
在白云黑云之间
鹰随鹤，鹤随鹰
飘然飞去，飞去
不会再飞回来了，不会再飞回来了……
This song comes from He Jinhua’s home region of Tacheng. Traditionally, when farmers stored the harvest in the granary, they called upon the spirit of the grain to protect the family’s grain supplies. He Jinhua heard this type of song when young, but she primarily adapted this version from Yang Zenglie’s recording of folk singer He Guilan. Chaqsa, the place mentioned in the song, is famous for fine tea. At the end, He Jinhua uses spoken Naxi to explain the song’s purpose.

Oq lei lu, lei lu!
Yibbiq cheq me waq, sheq bbv bbei lei lu, Of lei lu!
The spirit of the grain will come
We have raised a three-year-old fat swine, come quickly, spirit of the grain!
Come, spirit of the grain, come!
The spirit of the grain will come
We have brewed the fine spirits of the third lunar month, come quickly, spirit of the grain!
Come, spirit of the grain, come!
The spirit of the grain will come
We have brought in tea-leaves from Chaqsa, come quickly, spirit of the grain!
Come, spirit of the grain, come!
The spirit of the grain will come
At the granary we have lit cypress incense and oil lanterns, come quickly, spirit of the grain!
Come, spirit of the grain, come, come!

Spoken explanation:
In the past, when we were about to store the grain in the granary, we would summon the spirit of the grain to come, and would intone several lines welcoming him.

We have acquired innumerable containers of white rice and stored them in the granary
Come, spirit of the grain, come, come, come!

谷神来吧, 谷神要来了, 我们酿好了三月的好酒, 谷神快来吧!
谷神来吧, 谷神要来了, 我们驮来了茶萨的茶叶, 谷神快来吧!
谷神来吧, 谷神要来了, 我们点起了柏叶香和油灯, 谷神快来吧!
我们得到了千百柜白米我们把它放进粮仓里了
谷神来吧, 谷神快来吧!

白：从前, 在粮食要放进粮柜里收藏的时候, 我们要呼唤迎请谷神来家里, 我吟诵几句迎请谷神的歌调吧。

谷神来吧，谷神要来了
愿谷子如金沙江的金沙一样来
谷神来吧，谷神要来了
我们养好了三年的肥猪，谷神快来吧!
Jaw Harp Pieces

He Jinhua: jaw harp (all tracks)

Jaw harps of varying construction are found among many ethnic groups of southwest China and Southeast Asia. The Naxi have two main varieties. The first, heard in track 15 below, consists of three strips of bamboo, each with a tongue cut into it, which are held up to the mouth and plucked with the index and middle fingers of the right hand. While the absolute pitch of each instrument varies, the relative intervals heard here are standard. The second type of Naxi jaw harp, heard in track 16 below, consists of a single bamboo strip with a tongue cut into it. A loop of string protruding from one end is wound around the little finger of the left hand to help secure the instrument, while a string protruding from the other end is pulled by the right hand to cause the tongue to vibrate. For both types of jaw harp, the mouth acts as the resonating chamber, and altering the shape of the oral cavity creates different overtones. The instrument has been in decline for some decades now, but traditionally it was used as a speech surrogate, most famously in courtship. In particular, speech rhythm, vowels, and linguistic tones can be mimicked. It is said that there are 77 Naxi jaw harp tunes.
15. Kail guegueq (Plucked jaw harp) - 弹口弦

He Jinhua initially learned this instrument’s technique from Li Xiuxiang (李秀香) (b.1945), an excellent folk singer and jaw harp player from Lashi township and Jinhua’s colleague in the county song and dance troupe. Jinhua then studied it on her own, listening to older players. The instrument she uses here was made by He Shiqing (和世清) from Tai’an, one of the few remaining skilled makers. This piece is her own composition, titled “Joyful evening/Chee huq ssei hua huaq/快乐的夜.” A few seconds of the piece, starting at 1:02, adapt a phrase she learned from He Minda (和民达) (b.1945), a fine traditional instrumentalist and singer from Baihua village and a senior colleague in the county song and dance troupe.

16. Daiq guegueq (String-activated jaw harp) - 拉口弦

He Jinhua learned this instrument’s technique from Yang Xiuchun (杨秀春) (b.1949), another fine folk musician. Born in Sanba, Yang married into Wenbi village, not far from Baihua village, and joined the county song and dance troupe. The instrument used here was made by Yang Xiuchun. In this performance, He Jinhua strings together melodies of three popular Naxi folk songs. Since the instrument produces only one fundamental pitch, she relies on the overtones generated to reproduce the tunes with uncanny accuracy. The three folk songs in question are “Al li li/A li li (vocables)/阿丽里” (at the beginning, at 0:56, at 1:36), “Laoweige/Laowei (vocables) song/劳喂歌” (at 0:39), and “Sal’ua bba xiuq bbaq/Flowers bloom in the third month/三月百花开” (at 1:09).
17. Hei meil zeeq bbvq nee gua guaq  
(Meeting by Moonlight) - 月下相约

This composition by He Jinhua features both types of Naxi jaw harp and a carved wooden frog scraper toy, bought at a local market, to imitate frogs croaking. The words conveyed are as follows:

(Eil leil haiq yi we,) chee huq ko leel shel  
Mee gv hei mei la, sseiq weq bbu ye weq  
El ggeeq nil gvl la, heiq mei zeeq bbvq nee  
Gqoq ko lei shel neeq  
Ke loq ba sso leel, guegueq ko mi ceeq ye weq  
Zzerq piel zzerq baq la  
Guegueq lei mi ceeq

Ah, speaking of things tonight  
The moon in the sky is so bright  
The two of us, under the moon  
Talking about what's in our hearts  
The little frog from the ditch also comes to listen to the jaw harps  
The tree leaves and tree flowers  
Also come to listen to the jaw harps

哎嘞喂，说起今晚的事  
天上的月亮也多么明亮啊  
我们两个在月亮下面  
说说心里的话  
水沟里的小青蛙也来听口弦了
18. Xiq dvq bee (Transplanting Song) - Version 2 - 栽秧调

Daniel Ho, piano

During He Jinhua’s visit to Los Angeles in November 2018, she and composer Daniel Ho enjoyed an informal improvisation session at Daniel’s house. They liked the results, creating two new song arrangements (tracks 18 and 19). This is an arrangement of the song from track 2. Daniel Ho created the piano accompaniment.

19. Labeq gguqqil (Gguqqil song from Labeq) - Version 2 - 拉伯谷气

Daniel Ho, ‘ukulele; Helen Rees 李海伦, recorder

This is an arrangement of the song from track 7. Daniel Ho created the accompaniment for ‘ukulele and recorder.
20. Nge nee nируq shel
(Self-introduction) - 自述
(Spoken Naxi)

To give listeners a sense of the spoken Naxi language, He Jinhua introduces her musical life:

I am from Tacheng in Lijiang. My Naxi name is Geldalgv Elku; my Chinese name is He Jinhua. From childhood I liked singing and dancing. When young I would accompany the adults as they herded the cattle and pigs, and would learn folk songs from them. The folk songs I sing have been handed down through the generations, and were learned from the old people of my home area. Some of these older people have already left this world, others are already 70 or 80 years old. Now I’m presenting these folk songs I have learned to you; I’m very happy that you are listening to my songs, thank you!
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These recordings were made 9–16 November 2018 and 7 February 2019. Photographs were taken in March 2007, March 2009, November 2018, and March 2019.

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He Jinhua

Songs of the Naxi of Southwest China

和纳
金西
花族
民
唱歌

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HE JINHUA: SONGS OF THE NAXI OF SOUTHWEST CHINA

纳西族民歌——和金花演唱

Sung with grace and conviction, the renditions of Naxi folksongs by He Jinhua on Songs of the Naxi of Southwest China offer a glimpse at a tradition rarely heard outside its homeland. These songs are full of references to snow-clad mountains, rushing rivers, spring flowers, and the profusion of local wildlife in the Naxi heartland of northwest Yunnan province, tableaus that are reflected in the lilting verse in which they’re sung. On this first collection of Naxi folksongs released outside of China, He presents songs she has learned since childhood from relatives, farmers, colleagues, and field collectors all over the region, as well as pieces for jaw harp and two collaborations with Grammy-winning composer Daniel Ho.

1. Keel lee lal bee (Threshing Song) - 打谷调
2. Xiq dvq bee (Transplanting Song) - Version 1 - 栽秧调
3. Mil bvl bee (Wedding Song) - 嫁女调
4. Ceeli Ceemu (Tsheli Tshemu) - 次哩次姆
5. Gguqqil / We muf ddaq - 谷气和默达调
6. Bberddder gguqqil (Gguqqil song from Sanba) - 三坝谷气
7. Labeq gguqqil (Gguqqil song from Labeq) - Version 1 - 拉伯谷气
8. Ee leeq bee (Ploughing Song) - 犁牛调
9. Ree bee (Drinking Song) - 酒歌
10. Ggv zzeeq mil bvl bee (Tibetan Marriage Lament) - 出嫁以后想妈妈
11. Yuleiq bee, Ji zzoq zol (Songs from Yongning and Eya) - 永宁调、饿亚搭云桥调
12. Ail jiuq bbv ddaq pil (Dawn Lament) - 鸡鸣哭祭
13. Saiseeq jjiq / A lil lil jiq perq (Saiseeq jjiq / Beautiful White Clouds) - 三思吉、美丽的白云
14. Oq mei leeq bee (Song of the Spirit of the Grain) - 谷神调
15. Kail guegueq (Plucked jaw harp) - 弹口弦
16. Daiq guegueq (String-activated jaw harp) - 拉口弦
17. Hei meil zeeq bbvq nee gua guaq (Meeting by Moonlight) - 月下相约
18. Xiq dvq bee (Transplanting Song) - Version 2 - 栽秧调
19. Labeq gguqqil (Gguqqil song from Labeq) - Version 2 - 拉伯谷气
20. Nge nee niruq shel (Self-introduction) - 自述 (Spoken Naxi)