

M109

How Ya-ya shot the suns and moons.

Sung by a grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For two companies of smiths to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For two companies of smiths to come and dwell.

- 5 Of the two companies of smiths, seven members came from seven places,
Of the two companies of smiths, seven members stretching their hands were
able
To beat iron till it rang.
Of the two companies of smiths, seven members came from seven districts,
Of the two companies of smiths, seven members stretching their hands were
skilful
- 10 To beat iron till it sounded.

Each bore a shining knife in his belt,
Inlaid with a golden sun.
Each carried a shining knife at his back,
Inlaid with a golden moon.

- 15 The suns came and shone, bright and glowing,
The moons came and shone, softly and clear,
Shone on Ya-ya's soft-wood trees on the hill slopes till they were all parched
and dry,
Except for one green mulberry tree standing by the water.

- 20 So Ya-ya sharpened,
Sharpened his axe, returned and felled it.
Having felled it, he fashioned a crossbow from its trunk,
Having felled it, he made arrows from its branches,
These Ya-ya carried away to shoot the suns.

- 25 If anyone had to shoot the suns and moons they might turn back,
But when Ya-ya shot suns and moons he would not turn back.
Ya-ya stood in the water,
He shot down toward the mud.

- 30 If anyone had to shoot the suns and moons they might turn back,
But when Ya-ya shot the suns and moons he took,
Took nearly a whole year,
For when Ya-ya shot the suns and moons he would not turn back.

When he shot the suns and moons he reached the limits of the sky before
returning.
Ya-ya stood in the mud,
He shot down towards the water,

35 He shot the pairs of Sun-maids and Moon-youths, the whole family, and they
dropped behind the mountains.

When Ya-ya shot the suns and moons he reached the limits of the sky before
returning.

But what were they like, those limits of the sky?

The limits of the sky were like eyelids tightly closed.

40 Now, having shot the suns and moons, Ya-ya returned and reached,
Reached Ya-ya's home.

It was dark, black darkness.

It was dark extreme darkness.

The people could not see to plough,

Except by lighting flaming torches to be fixed to the oxen's horns.

45 The people could not see to farm,

Except by lighting flaming torches to fix to the oxen's horns.

The people discussed and debated,

"What has the strongest voice?"

"The bull has the strongest voice."

50 "Then let the bull go and call the sun!"

But Sun-maid was so frightened she would not come,

And Sun-maid went back into her house.

The people discussed and considered,

"What has the most resounding voice?"

55 "The tiger has the most resounding voice."

"Then let the tiger go and call the moon!"

But Moon-youth was so frightened he would not appear,

And Moon-youth went back into his place.

The people discussed and debated,

60 "What has the most reassuring voice?"

"The cockerel has the most reassuring voice."

"Then let the cockerel go and call the sun!"

Young Ya-ya wrapped his felt cape together,

On which the cockerel might perch.

65 Ya-ya slept a little, just a little, and roused,

He slept a little, just a little and rose.

Three times the cockerel flapped its wings,

Three times the cockerel crowed.

Then Sun-maid's coming brightened all the sky,

70 And Moon-youth's arrival brightened the sky all round,

And the people could see to do their farming.

For the cockerel, Sun-maid had nothing

But a lacquered comb to give

As a gift to the cockerel.

75 Now the cockerel could use it, but had no idea how to wear it.

He put it on with the teeth pointing up to the sky!

Thus it is ended.