

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Beginnings

The Flood and related stories, Songs of Zhyu-shi-lao who cleared the forests, and
Legends of Nzyu-fa-lao, the first shaman healer
Songs M131 to M160
Introduction and Translation

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The Hua-Miao Archive
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M131
The Song of the Flood.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction.

In his book of Miao songs issued in 1952 (Document K), Yang Yong-xin included three versions of the Flood story, by Yang Zhi, Zhang Ming and the Grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu. Conscious of the differences in the stories he added a note in Miao, which was also reproduced in Document L, the Weining collection of 1981, and reads:

"Regarding the foregoing songs that concern the Creation and the Flood, because we Miao had no means of writing, memories did not always correspond. They simply made songs to sing about our forefathers, the ones who were wise and the ones who were clever, so that we, their descendants after them, may have a way of recounting, remembering and recalling their story. Internal details may not correspond, but each version has its own value. We trust that those who read these songs will make everything clear. This is the hope of all us Miao people."

The final sentence is not reproduced in Document L. In transmitting the songs exactly as they found them, Yang Yong-xin and his successors in Weining were very wise, but the volume of songs printed in Miao and in Chinese in 1988 (Document N), takes another line. There, under the title of "The Flood, Section one", Yang Zhi's version was chosen as a basis, but some sections were deleted and the order was rearranged. Then, the obvious differences in style notwithstanding, passages from Zhang Ming and the Grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu were inserted together with a little redaction, to create a single, continuous narrative. Finally the stanzas about the sequence of the seasons and the activity of Thunder were discarded, and the story simply stopped short at the point where Ndrao-ya struck the rock and made fire. Perhaps the editor of Document N believed that, in conflating the different versions in this way, he was in fact fulfilling Yang Yong-xin's hope that those who read these songs would make everything clear.

Inconsistencies between different versions of a song were rightly attributed by Yang Yong-xin to the oral tradition which lies behind them. That tradition also accounts for inconsistencies within the songs themselves. Thus, in the present song, after the Flood, Ndrao-ya stepped out of his boat to see the wild creatures pursuing their normal activities, still quite well and all very much alive, though the human race had been wiped out, but there is no explanation as to how the animals survived. Then again, though the Flood had destroyed all the people except Ndrao-ya, toward the end of the song he is told not to allow the children to go out during a thunder storm. What children were these? Where did they come from? There is no attempt in this song to explain the continuation of the human race. Attempts to resolve such inconsistencies are usually misguided. They are as much a part of the oral tradition as the stylized vocabulary itself.

According to Yang Zhi's Song of the Creation, it was Lie-ndlao-shi-tru gi-myu Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu who made earth and sky, and in the introduction to that song reasons were given for rendering this lengthy appellation, "The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu" in the English translation. This personage appears again with his full title in this version of the Flood story. Concerning him, Wang Ming-ji wrote in his account of Miao spirit worship,

"This one is very kind hearted. He will not cause people to become sick, and wants nothing what ever from people. If people have any catastrophe coming, he will reveal it to them. He is a spirit who does good to people, but there is nobody who regards him or worships him."

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu appears to have been a mythical person who figures in these cosmological songs, but who played no part at all in Miao religion or worship.

Many of the Miao songs contain sections which are more or less complete in themselves, and only very loosely linked to that which comes before or that which follows. Associated with the Flood stories is a cycle which concerns the activities of Thunder, thought of as a large living creature. The Song of Ndu-nzha-byu, sung by Tao Zi-gai, says that "Ndu-nzha-byu arranged for Thunder to rule the great waters and the pouring out of the rain". The cycle at the end of the Flood songs describes how Thunder fulfilled this role, beginning with the spectacular storms which mark the onset of the summer rains.

1. During Dog-month or Pig-month, months 6 or 7 in the lunar calendar, Thunder roars from south to north. Then, beware of Thunder's flashing sword.
2. During Rat-month or Ox-month, months 8 or 9, water from Thunder's mouth and nose, the great summer rain, abates, so that the crops ripen to yellow and the leaves on the trees grow old and fall.
3. During Rabbit-month or Dragon-month, months 11 or 12, Thunder folds his arms and legs and goes to sleep, and water from his nose and mouth fall as snow or glistening ice.
4. During Snake-month or Horse-month, months 1 or 2, Thunder awakes and stretches his arms and legs. Water from his mouth and nose fall as mist and spring rain, causing the leaves to burst on the trees, bringing fresh green growth to the pines, and bidding the people press ahead with their tilling and planting.

M131
The song of the Flood.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Woman Nca-so to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Forefather Dlao-jiao to come and dwell.

5 The Woman Nca-so was beautiful,
The Forefather Dlao-jiao soon came to know.
The Woman Nca-so together with,
With the Forefather Dlao-jiao made a family and dwelt.

The Woman Nca-so and the Forefather Dlao-jiao begot,
10 Begot two brothers only.
Having no special name for the elder,
The elder was called Ndrao-yiu,
Having no special name for the younger,
Let the younger be called Ndrao-ya.
15 So these two only were the brothers, Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya.

One day when Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya set out to dig their land,
The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu went to reveal himself.
The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu,
Carrying his slender staff, persistently trampled down,
20 And re-set the sods Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya had dug, not letting them be raised.
Ndrao-yiu was heavy hearted,
Ndrao-ya was sad at heart.

Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya returned to dig their land,
The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu went to show himself.
25 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Carrying his slender staff, persistently turned over,
And re-set the sods Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya had dug, not letting them be dug out.
Ndrao-yiu was heavy hearted,
Ndrao-ya was sad at heart.

30 Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya went and built a booth,
Built a hide, built a green booth and waited,
Waited for the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
At the edge of Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya's land.

Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya laid,
35 Laid hold of the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu.
Ndrao-yiu spoke out,
"Hold the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu, let us beat him!"
But Ndrao-ya spoke out,
"Do not beat the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu!
40 Hold the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu for me to question".

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Told Ndrao-yiu things of many kinds,
Told Ndrao-ya things of many kinds.

45 "Let not the people waste their strength farming,
Let not the people waste their strength tilling!
Ndrao-yiu, Ndrao-ya, do not expend your strength digging the land,
For this year the water will rise to a flood".

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Taught Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya to go and build boats.
50 Ndrao-ya built a boat of planks which floated lightly,
But Ndrao-yiu built an iron boat which would sink heavily.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Caused Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya to go aboard their boats.
55 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Placed Ndrao-ya in the boat of wooden planks,
And placed Ndrao-yiu in the iron boat.

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu gave,
Gave Ndrao-ya a white, hen's egg to carry in his arm-pit,
60 And he gave an iron claw-bar to Ndrao-ya to carry in his hand.

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke:
"One day the white, hen's egg will chirp, 'zi-zi',
Then take the wrought iron claw-bar,
Prise a peep-hole in the boat and have a look.
65 You will see the water all level covering the people,
But the sky above will be azure blue".

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke:
"One day the cockerel will crow 'sang-sang',
Then take the wrought iron claw-bar,
70 Open the door and have a look,
The people are destroyed, all laid flat by the water".

When Ndrao-ya came outside,
Then Ndrao-ya spoke:

75 "This year the water has risen to a flood,
The water has risen and the water has drowned,
Has drowned the people and they are dead.
This year the water has risen to a flood,
The water has risen and the water has taken,
Has taken the people and they are lifeless".

80 Then Ndrao-ya saw,
Saw the people's deer jumping about,
Saw tigers and lions bounding away,

And in the sky above eagles flying to and fro.
 Then Ndrao-ya spoke,
 85 "In the future will there ever be so great a flood?"
 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke:
 Telling Ndrao-ya things of many kinds.

"In the future there will never be so great a flood,
 But one day I will cause the enchanter to come to earth
 90 And it will be exactly the same as the flood is now.
 The people's solid rocks will be reduced to dust,
 And the green forests to snow white ash."
 Ndrao-ya listened, nodding his head.

On reaching Rat-month or Horse-month,
 95 The calling of martins tell of fine, warm weather.
 Now the martins were calling "zi-zi",
 But cold was Ndrao-ya by day
 And cold was Ndrao-ya by night.
 So Ndrao-ya took the wrought iron claw-bar and struck at the martins.

100 The martins were not hit,
 For the martins hopped away into the cliff,
 But sparks flew out and set fire,
 Set fire as they caught on the tinder moss.
 Thus Ndrao-ya kindled a fire with smoke and sat beside it,
 105 Kindled a fire with flames and warmed himself by it.

The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
 Telling Ndrao-ya things of many kinds.

"On reaching Dog-month or Pig-month,
 From south to north, Thunder will roar, 'go-go'!
 110 Do not let your children stay out when it is overcast,
 For fear that Thunder, drawing his shining sword, lightning, should strike them.
 Do not let your children stay out when it is dull,
 For fear that Thunder, drawing his shining sword, lightning, should slash them.

On reaching Dragon-month or Rabbit month,
 115 Thunder, folding his arms and legs into a ball, will sleep,
 And water from Thunder's mouth and nose will change to snow, frozen and
 glistening.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
 Water from Thunder's mouth and nose will change to rain, water to nourish the
 growing leaves,
 It will change to rain at the season to nourish the springing leaves.

120 When the leaves grow big, a shade from the heat,
 And needles on the pines grow big and cast shadows,
 People will know it is the season to raise yarn,
 People will know it is the season to raise crops".

Thus it is ended.

M132
The Flood

Collected by Lu Xing-fu

Introduction.

Although there are some differences, this version of the Flood story clearly stems from the same line of oral tradition as that sung by Yang Zhi.

The most obvious difference is in the name used for the super-human individual who warned the two brothers of the impending disaster. Here only the second half of his title, “Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu”, the ” Man Dlang-hnu”, is used.

Many lines in this, and in Yang Zhi’s text, are identical, but line 31 is found only in this version. It describes the effort put into digging and re-digging their land, but which was frustrated by the intervention of the Man Dlang-hnu, as “nu li ngeu”. This is the term regularly used for the compulsory, but unpaid, labour demanded by Yi landlords from their Miao tenants.

M132
The Flood.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Woman Nca-so to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
Provided for the Forefather Dlao-jiao to make a family and dwell.

5 In the course of time,
The Forefather Dlao-jiao and the Woman Nca-so begot,
Begot two brothers only.
Having no special name for the elder,
Let the elder be called Ndrao-yiu.
10 Having no special name for the younger,
Let the younger be called Ndrao-ya.

One day Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya went to dig their land,
And the Man Dlang-hnu did no good.
The Man Dlang-hnu, carrying his slender staff, persistently turned over,
15 And re-set the sods Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya had dug, not letting them be dug out.
Ndrao-yiu was heavy hearted.

Ndrao-ya returned to dig.
The Man Dlang-hnu went to reveal himself.
The Man Dlang-hnu, carrying his slender staff, persistently trampled down,
20 And re-set the sods Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya had dug, not letting them be raised.
Ndrao-yiu was heavy hearted,
Ndrao-ya was sad at heart.

Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya went and built a booth.
Built a hide, built a green booth and waited,
25 Waited to catch the Man Dlang-hnu.
Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya laid,
Laid hold of the Man Dlang-hnu.

Ndrao-yiu spoke,
"Hold the Man Dlang-hnu, let us beat him!"
30 But Ndrao-ya spoke,
"After all our fruitless labour,
Do not beat the Man Dlang-hnu!
Hold the Man Dlang-hnu for me to question".

The Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
35 Telling Ndrao-yiu things of many kinds,
Telling Ndrao-ya things of many kinds.

Let not the people expend their strength farming,
Let not the people expend their strength tilling!
Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya, do not expend your strength digging the land.

40 For this year the water will rise to a flood.
The Man Dlang-hnu made Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya go and build boats.
Ndrao-ya built a boat of planks that floated lightly,
Ndrao-yiu built an iron boat which would sink heavily.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
45 The Man Dlang-hnu caused Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya to go aboard their boats,
Placing Ndrao-yiu in the iron boat,
And placing Ndrao-ya in the boat of wooden planks.

The Man Dlang-hnu gave,
Gave Ndrao-ya a white, hen's egg to enfold in his armpit,
50 And gave a wrought iron claw-bar to Ndrao-ya to carry in his hand.

The Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
"One day the white, hen's egg will chirp, 'zi-zi',
Then pick up the iron claw-bar,
Prize open the top of the boat and have a look.
55 You will see that the sky is azure blue,
And the water all level covering the people.

One day the cockerel will crow, 'sang-sang',
Then take the iron claw bar,
Open the window and have a look,
60 The people are destroyed, all laid flat by the water".

When Ndrao-ya came outside,
Tigers and lions were bounding away,
Deer were jumping about,
Kestrels were flying back and forth,
65 And eagles were flying to and fro.

Then Ndrao-ya spoke,
"This year the water has risen and the water has taken,
Taken the people and they are all gone.
This year the water has risen and the water has drowned,
70 Drowned the people and they are all gone".

The martins were hopping in and out of the cliff.
Ndrao-ya picked up,
Picked up the wrought iron claw bar to strike,
To strike at the martins.

75 The martins were not hit,
But the wrought iron claw bar brought forth sparks which fell on the tinder-moss.
Thus Ndrao-ya got,
Got smoke and kindled a fire to sit beside,
Got smoke and kindled a fire to warm himself.

80 Then Ndrao-ya framed,
Framed words on purpose to ask,
To ask the Man Dlang-hnu in his place in the sky,

"In the future will there ever be so great a flood?"
"In the future I will cause the enchanter to come to earth,
85 Then the people's forests will be reduced to dust,
And the woods to snow white ash.
It will be exactly the same as the flood is now".
Ndrao-ya listened nodding his head.

90 The Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
Telling Ndrao-ya things of many kinds.

"On reaching Dog-month or Pig-month,
Do not let the children stay out when it is overcast,
Do not let the children stay out when it is dull,
For fear that Thunder, drawing his shining sword, lightning, should strike them.

95 On reaching Dragon-month or Rabbit-month,
Water from Thunder's mouth and nose will change to snow, filling everything with
whiteness.
On reaching Snake-month or Horse month,
Water from Thunder's mouth and nose will change to rain, water to nourish the
growing leaves.

100 Then the needles on the pine trees will grow big and cast a shadow,
Causing the people to know,
Know that it is the season to start farming,
Know that it is the season to raise crops".

Thus it is ended.

M133
Song of the Flood.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction.

This song of the flood belongs to the same oral tradition as the version sung by Yang Zhi, but, as well as the distinctive style of the singer, it has one interesting additional feature. In the previous songs, the sign by which the flood was known to have abated, was the crowing of the cockerel that had hatched and grown from the egg given to Ndrao-ya when he first went aboard his boat. Zhang Ming has replaced that sequence with a longer episode, quite obviously adapted from the Flood story in the Book of Genesis, whereby Ndrao-ya, having sent out other birds which did not return, realised that the water had gone when a dove flew back to him carrying some dry grass in its beak. This passage is in exactly the same style as the rest of the song, and must be by the same singer, but why he made this change to the traditional Miao text is nowhere explained.

Zhang Ming's version of the song continues to use the double name for the personage who warned the two brothers of the coming deluge, except that the first element is shortened from "The Glorious King Shi-tru" to "The Glorious King".

The sequence which describes how Ndrao-ya obtained fire, by striking sparks from the rock with his iron claw-bar, is not included, but in the section about Thunder and the seasons, Zhang Ming describes all four, whereas Yang Zhi mentions only three, omitting Autumn. However, the four appear in a very curious order, namely, Summer, Spring, Autumn and Winter.

M133
Song of the Flood.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

This year we may know,
May know that the Woman Nca-so and the Man Zie-zi-dao have this year given birth
to children,
Have given birth to two sons.
Having no special names to give,
5 Let the elder be called Ndrao-yiu,
And let the younger be called Ndrao-ya.

There came a day, when Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya were grown up,
That Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya arose, set out and took,
Took their curved, iron hoes and carried them out to dig,
10 To dig out sods of earth in great clods.

The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu,
Carrying his thin staff, persistently dug over,
Turning back Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya's sods, leaving no trace.

Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya went and built a booth,
15 Built it on the edge of Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya's land,
And kept watch for the Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu each day.

After several days,
The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu,
Carrying his slender staff, persistently dug over,
20 Turning back Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya's sods, leaving nothing to be seen.

Ndrao-yiu spoke up and said,
"Let us take the Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu and beat him!"
Ndrao-ya would not agree.
"Let us take the Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu and I will question him!"

25 The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
Telling Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya things of many kinds that concerned the people.

"This year do not waste your strength farming,
Do not expend your strength tilling.
You may farm, but get nothing to eat,
30 You may till, but get no harvest,
For this year in truth the water will rise to a flood".

Ndrao-ya spoke up and asked,
"At what time will the deluge come?"

The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
35 Saying that Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya must go and build boats.
He made Ndrao-yiu build a boat of iron planks,

- He made Ndrao-ya build a boat of wooden planks.
So Ndrao-yiu built,
Built an iron boat which sank heavily,
40 But Ndrao-ya built,
Built a wooden boat which floated lightly.
- The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu arranged to catch,
To catch the people's birds, of many kinds,
Of every kind to catch a pair.
- 45 The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu also gave,
Gave a strong pair of wrought iron pinchers, putting them upon,
Upon the top of Ndrao-ya's boat.
The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu also gave,
Gave a white, hen's egg for Ndrao-ya to carry as a sign.
- 50 "One day the white, hen's egg will chirp, 'zi-zi',
Then take the wrought iron pinchers,
Drag open the top of the boat,
And you will see the light and the stars".
- Ndrao-ya released the pair of magpies to fly into the world.
55 The pair of magpies flew round about the people and would not come back.
Ndrao-ya then despatched the pair of crows sending them forth.
The pair of crows flew round about the people and would not return.
For the pair of magpies and the pair of crows ate,
Ate the flesh of the people every day.
- 60 Ndrao-ya then despatched the pair of doves sending them forth.
The pair of doves flew round about the people everywhere.
The pair of doves carried,
Carried a bunch of dry grass.
- 65 Flying back around they perched,
Perched on the top of Ndrao-ya's boat.
Ndrao-ya came out quickly and looked,
Looked for the people's flood water, but it had dried up completely.
- The weather was very fine,
Swallows were flying to and fro,
70 Hawks were flying back and forth,
Ndrao-ya spoke up and called toward the sky,
Asking the Glorious King the Man Dlang-hnu,
"Will ever a day come when there will be so great a flood?"
- 75 The Glorious King, the Man Dlang-hnu spoke,
"A day will not come when I shall cause a flood to drown the earth,
But one day I will cause the enchanter to come to earth.
Then let Ndrao-ya gaze around about,
Gaze at the rocks and cliffs in the mountains as they change to dust,
Gaze and see the solid bed-rock itself burst into fire.
- 80 It will be exactly the same as the flood".

"On reaching Dog-month or Pig-month,
From south to north, Thunder will roar, 'go-go!'
Do not let the children cry for milk,
For fear that Thunder, drawing his shining sword, lightning, should slash them.
85 Do not let the children cry aloud,
For fear that Thunder drawing his shining sword, lightning, should strike them.

On reaching Sheep-month or Horse-month,
From south to north, Thunder will rise and stretch his hands and feet,
And the water from Thunder's mouth and nose will become,
90 Become Spring rain, the mist and drizzle,
Nurturing the people's green crops until they grow tall,
Nurturing the trees of the forest until they burst into leaf,
Nurturing the people's pine trees until the needles grow big and fine.

On reaching Rat-month or Ox-month,
95 The water from Thunder's mouth and nose will become,
Become rain, but no longer heavy,
Nurturing the people's green crops until they ripen to yellow,
Nurturing the leaves on the people's trees until they grow large and old,
Nurturing the leaves on the people's trees until, stripped off, they fall.

100 On reaching Rabbit-month or Dragon-month,
The water from Thunder's mouth and nose will become,
Become an enfolding covering of snow,
Become a freezing covering of snow".

Thus it is ended.

M134
The song of the Flood.

Sung by a grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu.

Introduction.

This version of the Flood story comes from a line of tradition different from the foregoing versions. With detail of the deluge itself quite brief, the distinctive feature is the provision for the continuation of the human race after the Flood, by a union between Ndrao-ya and his young sister.

In this song the personage who informed the two brothers of the imminent danger of the Flood is not given a name or title, but is simply called “the Old-one”, but having delivered his warning he just disappears until the end of the song.

Considerable sections of the story seem to be missing. There is no word about the building of boats, or the fate of the elder brother Ndrao-yiu. The hatching of an egg prompted Ndrao-ya to look out and observe that the waters were still in full flood, but their abatement, signalled by the crowing of the cockerel, now fully grown, is not mentioned. Similarly the whole sequence about Thunder and the cycle of the seasons has been omitted.

When the smoke from Ndrao-ya’s fire alerted the “sky people” that someone must still be alive on earth, they despatched the Old-one to go and investigate, and Ndrao-ya took the opportunity to express his concern about finding a wife. Among the Miao, marriage between near kindred was always inadmissible, so that, though the rest of the human race had been wiped out by the Flood, the idea that Ndrao-ya and his young sister should “make a family and live”, was abhorrent to both of them. It was only when the Old-one presented them with the powerful and incontrovertible sign of the rolling stone, that their scruples were overcome and they were prepared to accept this as the right thing to do.

M134
The song of the Flood.

Sung by a grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu.

This year we may know,
May know that Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya have gone to dig their land,
For Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya were digging their land every day.

5 The Old-one did no good,
The Old-one, carrying his slender staff, came,
Came and turned back Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya's sods, closing the ground.

Ndrao-yiu was impatient.
"Hold the Old-one, let us beat him!"
But Ndrao-ya was simply good-hearted.
10 "Hold the Old-one for me to question!"

When Ndrao-ya went and questioned the Old-one,
The Old-one said,
"Do not waste your strength, Ndrao-yiu and Ndrao-ya, digging the land,
For this year the water will rise to a flood".

15 Out of simple pity, Ndrao-ya brought his small sister,
And Ndrao-ya took a white, chicken's egg,
For Ndrao-ya to carry,
To carry as a measure of time.

20 Ndrao-ya "brooded" it into nearly the third zhu¹,
But on Ox-day or Tiger-day,
The baby chick hatched.

Then Ndrao-ya opened,
Opened the peep-hole in Ndrao-ya's "drum",
The water had risen to a flood.
25 The water had risen, the water had taken,
Had taken the people away completely.

It was bright sunshine.
Ndrao-ya went out and lay down in the sun.
A gha-njiw bird came stalking on the top of a rock,
30 And Ndrao-ya picked up a wrought iron bar to hit it.
The wrought iron came down sharply, but hit the rock,
Striking from it sparks which caught on some tinder-moss.
So Ndrao-ya got fire, to kindle and warm himself,
And made smoke which rose into the sky.

35 The sky people above then said,
"The water has risen to a flood,

¹ A zhu is a period of twelve days.

The water has risen, and the water has drowned,
Has drowned earth's people and they are all dead.
What now? Who of earth's people is lighting a fire?"

40 So the sky-people caused,
Caused the Old-one to come and look.
It was Ndrao-ya who had kindled a fire to warm himself.
Then Ndrao-ya asked the Old-one.

45 "This time the water has risen to a flood,
And has taken the people away completely,
So that Ndrao-ya alone is left.
what is the right thing for Ndrao ya to do?"

The Old-one caused Ndrao-ya to carry a stone from the river,
To carry it and climb through ninety-nine valleys.
50 When Ndrao-ya dropped the stone from the river,
It fell from the mountain top, fell on its way, a single stone,
But leaving the mountain range, it emerged a pair,
So the Old-one caused Ndrao-ya and his small sister to form a family and live.

M135
The Flood, Section two.

Sung by Zhu Zhi.

Introduction

Despite its title, this song says nothing about the Flood. The compiler of Document N, having produced an account of the Flood by conflating songs by Yang Zhi, Zhang Ming and the grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu, decided to pick up the story in this song at the point where smoke from Ndrao-ya's fire reached the sky and surprised an individual called "the Master", who sent his servants to investigate.

Presumably the missing beginning of the present song told the Flood story in a manner similar to that found in other versions. Like the Flood song from Hmao-zu-mu, this version is particularly concerned about the continuation of the human race when the catastrophe had past, and the solution offered is the same, namely by the union of Ndrao-ya and his young sister. Perhaps we are intended to understand, although the song does not say so, that the solution to Ndrao-ya's marital problem was suggested by the Master, who also set up the sign of the rolling stones. This time Ndrao-ya and his sister rolled the upper and nether grind stones of a small hand mill separately from the top of the hill, and discovered, when they emerged at the bottom, that they were firmly pegged together, ready for use.

Strictly speaking, the Flood story should end at that point, but here we have a further narrative linked to it. Ndrao-ya and his sister begot three sons who became the ancestors of the Miao, the Yi and the Chinese respectively.

The rest of the song is an adaptation from another, quite unrelated piece entitled, "The foolish Miao man who twisted up cones of grass for his boundary marks", and sung by Wang Jian-chuai. In its original form it was the story of a dispute between a Miao and a Chinese, both tenants of a powerful Yi landlord. The purpose of this adaptation was to explain that the Miao no longer owned their own land because the grass-rope boundary marks of the eldest brother, the "foolish" Miao man, had been destroyed. It does not adequately explain, however, the significance of the "lazy" Yi man's boundary marks. Being of iron, they would not have been burnt, but did they ultimately survive, or did they simply rust away, leaving the Chinese man in possession of all the land?

M135
The Flood, Section two.

Sung by Zhu Zhi.

Ndrao-ya got fire, to kindle and warm himself,
And made smoke which rose into the sky above
Then the Master said,
"This year the water has risen to a flood.

5 The water was so great that it has stripped,
Stripped earth's people and they were caught.
The water was so great that it has stripped,
Stripped the sky above of everything".

The Master sent retainers and soldiers to look.
10 The only people left were Ndrao-ya and his young sister,
Just these two relatives only.
So that Ndrao-ya had no one with whom to make a family and live.

"Let Ndrao-ya make a family and live with his young sister".
But Ndrao-ya was not willing.
15 "Let his young sister make a family and dwell with Ndrao-ya".
But Ndrao-ya's young sister would not agree.

Ndrao-ya and his young sister took,
Took two stones for grinding corn.
They carried them pick-a-back, held by their hands, and then
20 Released them and let them roll.
When the grind stones came to rest they were joined together.

So Ndrao-ya's young sister relented,
She would make a family and dwell with Ndrao-ya.
And Ndrao-ya too relented,
25 He would make a family and live with his young sister.

This year we may know,
May know that Ndrao-ya's young sister has given birth,
Has given birth to three brothers.

The eldest was the Miao,
30 The middle one was the Yi,
The youngest was the Chinese.

This year we may know,
Know that the three brothers are dividing the land.

The eldest was the foolish one,
35 For the Miao man twisted clumps of reeds and wormwood to make his boundary
marks.

The middle one was the lazy one,
For the Yi man drove in bits of iron to make his boundary marks.

40 The youngest was the wise one,
For the Chinese man chiselled,
Chiselled stone and rock to make his boundary marks.

Then came the sunshine shining brightly,
And in the good sunshine came the children pasturing their flocks and herds.
Unfortunately the children did wrong,
The children went and started a brushwood fire.

45 The brushwood fire burned and spread,
Spread, destroying the Miao man's clumps of reeds and wormwood,
And the Miao man's boundary marks of land and place completely disappeared.
All that remained standing were the stone and rock marks of the youngest brother.

Thus it is ended.

M136
The Flood, Section three.

Sung by Zhu Zhi.

Introduction

The story recorded in this song is made up of three loosely linked parts. Presumably it began with the Flood narrative, but this was discarded by the compiler of Document N. We may assume that that narrative was substantially the same as in the other accounts. However, we are left to guess who it was that warned of the deluge to come and directed the boat-building exercise. We do not know either what the relationship may have been between that individual and the "Master". It is clear that there was no mention of Ndrao-ya's young sister, since in this song Ndrao-ya chose a wife from among the "sky people". The present text begins with the second part of the song, the story of Ndrao-ya and the Master, followed, at line 80, by the story of Ndrao-ya and Thunder. The first part was set on the earth, the second in the sky, and the third, apparently, back on earth. The real link between parts one and two was Ndrao-ya's need to find a wife, and between parts two and three it was Thunder's search for his betrothed, who was now married to Ndrao-ya. Beyond this the parts of the song are virtually independent stories.

The Master, who figures only in part two, is portrayed as a powerful landlord, with soldiers and retainers, a fine castle and gardens, and large estates. He was capable of meting out harsh treatment to anyone who offended him, and was powerful enough to break off his daughter's betrothal to Thunder in favour of Ndrao-ya. He had in his entourage a piper who, as in another song by Zhang Ming, held a position of some influence. See The song of Nzhai-jio-shi-du, sung by Zhzng Ming (M119). The Master, nevertheless, was in duty bound to offer propitiatory sacrifices to his ancestors, especially as he had no son and heir.

In part two, certain votive objects belonging to the Master had been stolen and secreted in holes made by the mouse under the steps at the entrance to the cattle enclosure and the main entrance gate. These objects were not idols or images for which the Miao word would have been "bvy", but are called "dlang", a word meaning "spirit", but widely used for all kinds of spirit manifestations, in connection with the craft of the shaman healer and in ancestor worship. To carry out the ancestral rites was "to make dlang", and the Master referred to the missing objects as "my family dlang". That is to say, whatever they were, they were considered to be inhabited by, or at least to represent, the ancestors, and were therefore the focus for ancestral worship. The Miao, indeed, used to worship the ancestors but possessed no such votive objects. If the Master was thought of as a Chinese landlord, then his "dlang" would have been the ancestral tablets which used to occupy a place of honour in the main living room of Chinese homes. If, as seems more likely, the Master was thought of as an Yi landlord, then his "family dlang" would have been the "lo-lo", small baskets containing short sections of bamboo cane into which small pieces of cloth or paper had been inserted. These dwelling places of the spirits were fixed to the rafters of the ceiling of the living room of the house. Since it is not possible to be sure whether "family dlang" were Chinese ancestral tablets or Yi spirit baskets, throughout the translation they are referred to as "ancestral tokens".

The theft of the ancestral tokens was a very serious loss for the Master. Without them, the ancestral rites were, as he put it, "only pretence". It was always essential to keep the ancestors happy and contented by performing the recognised rituals, and even more so when

there was a danger of the line dying out because there was no son and heir. The vindictive mouse had chosen the hiding place for the ancestral tokens with care. It was degrading for the ancestors to be placed under the feet of the cattle or to be trampled on by all passers by, and there was every prospect that they would wreak vengeance on the animals or any one who happened to tread on the stone step of the gate. For the same reason it was necessary for Ndrao-ya to protect himself and the servant who did the digging by spraying the area with wine first. This was either to appease the ire of the spirits or to stupefy them while the work was in progress.

In response to the question asked by the mouse, Ndrao-ya explained that he was going to the sky to attend a special ancestral sacrifice called a "zi", which was being arranged by the Master. This word is used of a series of rites only undertaken when, through lack of male offspring, there was a danger that the family might die out. The cost of the ceremonies and the lavish hospitality involved, was very great, so that this was always a last resort. The ideal solution to the problem was, of course, to have sons born into the family, but if age or other circumstances made this unlikely, it was possible to adopt an heir. If adoption were contemplated, the approval of the ancestors would still have to be secured. With the help of the mouse, possibly at the suggestion of the mouse, though the song does not say so specifically, Ndrao-ya not only succeeded in ingratiating himself with the Master, but could legitimately claim that he knew all about the ancestors, having rescued the missing ancestral tokens. Nor were the actions of the mouse entirely altruistic. By helping Ndrao-ya to become the Master's heir, the mouse could look forward to favours to come. Ndrao-ya further secured his position by choosing the Master's daughter for his wife.

In the third part of the song, the Master and his menage have disappeared from the story altogether, and the scene reverts to a typical Miao setting on earth. Thunder is no longer portrayed as a personage, an eligible suitor for the Master's daughter, but is more like a great beast which could be snared and tethered as he appears in other songs and stories.

Having caught Thunder and tied him securely to the beams which supported the loft, Ndrao-ya ordered the children out of doors, bade them be quiet, and not to come dashing back into the house for drinks of water. The reason for this appears to be that Thunder would remain quiet and docile only provided he was not frightened by sudden movement or noise. In every Miao house there was a large tub which was daily replenished with water carried from a spring or stream. Anyone who was thirsty might dip up a little water and drink from the wooden dipper supplied.

The "gi-za" plant, mentioned in line 100 is a creeper like ivy, growing on the ground and over banks and rocks. Its leaves are oval and pointed and it produces a flat, round fruit, sweet to the taste and whitish in colour, but not easy to find under the thick carpet of leaves. The suggestion in the song is that this plant once was a tree until it was laid flat by Thunder landing upon it. The nature of the "shi-lu" tree is not known. It is just possible that the name should be "shi-lyu", in which case it was a willow. Whatever it was, when it was pressed down by Thunder landing on its top branch, it sprang back, catapulting Thunder up into the sky, where he has been ever since.

M136
The Flood, Section three.

Sung by Zhu Zhi.

Ndrao-ya got fire to kindle,
Ndrao-ya kindled a fire and made smoke,
Smoke which soared into the sky above.
So that the Master spoke,
5 And the Master said,

"This year the water has risen to a flood,
The water was so great that the water has stripped,
Stripped earth's people and they are caught,
Stripped the sky above of everything".

10 The Master sent retainers and soldiers to look.
The only one left was Ndrao-ya alone.

This year we may know,
May know that the Master has arranged a betrothal,
But the Master had no heir.
15 So the Master's household piper
Singled out Ndrao-ya, him alone.

Ndrao-ya climbed until he reached piled stone pass to the sky,
There he met a tiny mouse, very thin indeed.
Weeping bitterly the tiny mouse said,
20 "Ho! Ndrao-ya, where have you come from and where are you going?"

Ndrao-ya made response,
"In a few days time,
The Master will be performing the ancestral sacrifice,
And I am going to the sky as a guest".

25 The mouse, weeping bitterly, said,
"Ndrao-ya, oh Ndrao-ya,
I have been driven to despair; not you as well!

When I was the Master's sickle maker,
I was hungry to the point of starvation,
30 And the Master gave me nothing to eat,
So I made a hole in the bottom of the Master's grain bin,
I made a hole indeed.

Then the Master beat me most severely,
In very truth he drove me to despair!
35 So I took his large ancestral token, the big one,
And hid it under the cattle shed step,
And I took the little ancestral token,
And pushed it under the stone at the door of the great enclosure.

40 If you want to become the Master's heir,
First you will need clear wine to drink and then spew out,
Spew piff, spew puff, when you go in search.

Take a slave to follow and to dig,
Dig for the big ancestral token under the cattle shed step.
So you will recover the Master's large ancestral token.

45 You will then need to carry the clear wine in your hand,
Clear wine to drink and then spew piff, spew puff, as you go in search.
Return, come back until you reach,
Reach the outer door, the Master's large door by the herb garden.

50 Drink the clear wine and spew it under the stone step,
Then let the slave dig,
Dig out the Master's small ancestral token from under the stone step".

Having found the large ancestral token and the small, he returned, he came back,
Came back and showed the large one to the Master.
And the Master offered him high praise.

55 "Ndrao-ya! Oh Ndrao-ya,
You are the world's great spirit worker!
We will establish you as my heir.

When we had lost my family's ancestral tokens,
You came and found them.

60 The large ancestral token and the small, you found them both.

In the past we have celebrated in pretence,
This time we will celebrate anew,
And this time we will celebrate in truth.
With the company of my family spirit guests fully complete,

65 We will perform the ancestral celebration and bring contentment".

Ndrao-ya responded,
"Your ancestral tokens I know,
Your guests I have seen.
I have come to the sky as your heir,
70 And bring you good health and well being."

The Master had nothing for Ndrao-ya,
But since Ndrao-ya had no partner,
The Master caused Ndrao-ya to go,
To go to where the Master's guests were gathered and there to choose a bride.

75 Ndrao-ya chose, singling out the bride betrothed to Thunder,
Chose, in fact, the Master's youngest daughter.
What could the Master do for the best?
He let the Master's youngest daughter
Make a family and live with Ndrao-ya.

80 As a result Thunder was not pleased,
And, on reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
Thunder, hiding within the clouds, came to look.

In the daytime Ndrao-ya made rope of twisted hemp,
At night Ndrao-ya forged chains of copper and iron.
85 So Ndrao-ya laid a snare for Thunder on the road,

And Ndrao-ya laid another snare for Thunder on the path.
Thunder went to attend a festival,
And also to seek his bride.

The result was that Ndrao-ya snared,
90 Snared Thunder by the hands, neck and arms.
Then Ndrao-ya brought Thunder along,
And tethered him well to the underside of the loft.

Ndrao-ya warned the children not to stay inside,
And Ndrao-ya warned the children not to make a noise.
95 Ndrao-ya also warned the children,
"Do not come in stamping your feet to dip up water".

But the children paid no heed,
In they came, stamping their feet, to dip up water.

Thunder suddenly sprang up and landed,
100 Landed on the branch of a gi-za plant,
And the next day the gi-za plant could not rise again.

Then Thunder suddenly sprang up and safely landed,
Landed on the topmost branch of a high shi-lu tree,
The next day the high shi-lu tree, springing back again,
105 Catapulted Thunder away into the sky above.

On reaching Rabbit-month or Dragon-month,
Thunder, folding his arms and legs into a ball, will sleep.
Thunder's heavy breathing will make the strong winds blow,
And water, dripping from Thunder's mouth and nose,
110 Will become a frozen covering of snow.

Ay! Just fancy! Oh!
Then, approaching, though not yet having reached,
Reached Horse-month or Sheep-month,
Thunder, folding his arms and legs, will sleep.
115 Thunder's heavy breathing will make the gentle winds blow,
And water, dripping from Thunder's mouth and nose, will become rain.

Then people will till the rice and till the paddy that they may have food to share,
And people will farm the rice and farm the paddy that they may have drink to share.

Thus it is ended.

M137
**The foolish Miao man who twisted up cones of grass for his
boundary marks.**

Sung by Wang Jian-chuai.

Introduction

This song has been included with those concerning the Flood, not because it is directly related to that event, but because the final episode in “The Flood, Section Two” is clearly an adaptation of this story. See “The Flood, Section Two” sung by Zhu Zhi (M135).

There were few, if any, stone masons among the Miao, so if they wanted cut-stone boundary marks they would have to go to a Chinese mason and pay whatever he charged. The coils of tightly twisted grass rope the Miao man could make himself. Although less permanent than stone, they would last for a considerable time, but were not, of course, proof against fire.

Both the Chinese man and the Miao man were tenants of the Yi landlord, so that if a boundary dispute arose, it was to him that they would have to apply for adjudication. The song says that the Miao man was "frustrated". The reason is implied, though not actually stated. The Chinese man had apparently taken advantage of the boundary marks being burned to encroach on the Miao man's land. But when the Miao man complained to the landlord, he lost his case since the only surviving marks were the Chinese man's black stones. The result was that the Miao man had to go on paying the same rent as before, but for less land.

M137

**The foolish Miao man who twisted up cones of grass for his
boundary marks.**

Sung by Wang Jian-chuai.

This year we may know,
Know that a foolish Miao man has taken,
Taken strands of grass and made boundary marks for his land.

Who was the crafty one?
5 The man of the Ruling Race was the crafty one,
For the man of the Ruling Race chiselled out,
Chiselled out jet-black stones as boundary marks for his land.

The sunshine shone brightly,
And the sunshine was good.
10 In the sunshine the old man led,
Led the children out to pasture the cattle.

The old man would not allow,
Allow the children to make fires,
For fear of burning the foolish Miao man's
15 Boundary marks of land and place and destroying them.

But the children did not believe it,
The children gave it no thought,
The children went and made fires,
Hot fires to warm themselves,
20 And burnt the foolish Miao man's
Boundary marks of land and place and destroyed them.

The foolish Miao man was sad at heart,
The foolish Miao man was dispirited.
The foolish Miao man took,
25 Took the man of the Ruling Race and sued him,
Sued him before the paramount Yi lord.

The paramount Yi lord called,
Called the foolish Miao man to speak,
To speak about the boundary marks of land and place, and tell,
30 Tell the paramount Yi lord.
But the foolish Miao man had no way of speaking,
The foolish Miao man had no way of answering.

So the paramount Yi lord bade,
Bade the foolish Miao man show,
35 Show where the foolish Miao man's
Boundary marks of land and place were located,
But the foolish Miao man had no way of answering.

40 The paramount Yi lord bade,
Bade the man of the Ruling Race show,
Show where the man of the Ruling Race, his
Boundary marks of land and place were located.
The man of the Ruling Race could say,
That the man of the Ruling Race, his boundary marks of land and place,
The jet-black stones were there in position.

45 How could the paramount Yi lord establish the right?
The paramount Yi lord bade,
Bade the man of the Ruling Race return,
And bade the foolish Miao man go back.

50 "You go and look into the matter,
Observe the un-burnt black pillars, and be there peace between you,
Pay your agreed rent, and let there be peace between you".

Thus it is ended.

M141
Zhyu-shi-lao.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

There is a group of Miao songs about the folk-heroes who, in the beginning, initiated the people into the skills of raising crops, the arts of the shaman-healer, the pleasures of singing songs, and so forth. First among these was Zhyu-shi-lao. With creation completed, and the sequence of the seasons properly ordered, it was he who led the way in clearing the forests and swamps, and driving away the wild animals so that agriculture might begin. He is also credited with making the first roads to facilitate the spread and migration of the people.

The English form of the name "Zhyu-shi-lao" is not strictly correct. In Miao there are two quite distinct final sounds, the first of which is represented in the Miao script by a symbol resembling the letter "r", and the second by "r" written backwards. The pronunciation of the latter is similar to the former, except that the lips are rounded. When the Pinyin was adapted for writing Miao the former sound was written "i", but no spelling was allocated for the latter sound. Wherever it occurred, it was written "yu", but this is an entirely different final which in the Miao script is written using a symbol like the letter "c", but facing backwards. Now the first word in the name of the subject of this song uses the sound represented by the backward-facing "r", and the second word uses the sound written with a forward-facing "r". Lacking a proper spelling for the former in Pinyin we have no option but to use the usual convention, "yu", although it is incorrect.

M141
Zhyu-shi-lao.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
When the people's Zhyu-shi-lao first arrived,
The people's forests were extremely black,
5 The forests were exceedingly dark,
The people's forests whispered and sighed.

The deer all lived there,
The stags all dwelt there,
Tigers and lions stalked their prey among the cliffs,
10 And kestrels lived in the gorges.

Zhyu-shi-lao turned all around and saw,
Saw how black the people's forests were,
How the stags all dwelt there,
And tigers and lions all lived there.

15 To Zhyu-shi-lao the thought was unbearable,
Zhyu-shi-lao was heavy hearted,
Zhyu-shi-lao was sad at heart,
Zhi-shi-lao would clear the people's forests and lay them flat.

20 So Zhyui-shi-lao devised a scheme,
For Zhyu-shi-lao was the people's clearer of woods,
Zhi-shi-lao was the people's cutter of forests,
Zhyu-shi-lao was the people's cutter of woods.

While the sky remained constant,
These tools enabled Zhyu-shi-lao to cut down the forest.
25 Zhyu-shi-lao whetted an axe to carry in his hand,
Zhyu-shi-lao whetted a hook to carry at his back,
Till the day came for Zhyu-shi-lao to go out to the cutting.

The cutting strokes rang out from Zhyu-shi-lao away in the dense swamps,
The cutting strokes rang out as Zhyu-shi-lao cut down the forest,
30 The cutting strokes rang out from Zhyu-shi-lao away in the rushes,
The cutting strokes rang out as Zhyu-shi-lao cut down the woods.

Zhyu-shi-lao threw down the people's forests until they lay flat,
Zhyu-shi-lao threw down the people's forests until they fell prone.
Zhyu-shi-lao's cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of descendants,
35 Zhyu-shi-lao's cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of posterity.

Zhyu-shi-lao's brushwood grew dry, grew truly dry,
And the day came for Zhyu-shi-lao to burn it off.

Zhyu-shi-lao fired the brushwood, burned the brushwood all day long.
He burned it for a whole month,
40 He burned it blotting out the sun's bright shining from the sky,
Zhyu-shi-lao fired the brushwood, burned the brushwood far into the night.

It licked the tigers and singed their coats,
It licked the lions and scorched their coats,
It licked the snakes and burnt their skins.

45 Tigers departed and left,
And lions departed and were gone.
Tigers fled away,
And lions quit the place,
For tigers could not live there,
50 Nor lions continue to dwell there.

So the tigers went to the forests,
And the lions went to the woods,
The stags went to the black forests,
And the deer went to the foot of the cliffs.

55 While the sky remained constant,
Zhyu-shi-lao's descendants were fruitful and spread abroad,
Zhyu-shi-lao's posterity grew into a multitude.
Zhyu-shi-lao cut smooth roads in the world,
Cut them for descendants, for posterity to spread abroad.

60 Zhyu-shi-lao was the original ancestor of the people's descendants,
Zhyu-shi-lao was the original forefather of the people's posterity.
The descendants, the posterity of Zhyu-shi-lao, multiplied and filled the earth.

Thus it is finished.

M142
The song of Zhyu-shi-lao.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

Introduction.

This version of the Zhyu-shi-lao song is derived from the same line of tradition as that sung by Yang Zhi, (M141). It follows the same pattern of events, but is only one third of the length, much of the descriptive detail having been omitted, and with it much of the poetic imagery.

The constantly recurring expression “world people” in the songs normally means, not “the human race”, but simply, “the Miao people”, and there is a tradition, often repeated, that the “world people” spread to fill “the twelve villages” which presumably means twelve major clans.

M142
The song of Zhyu-shi-lao.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

Zhyu-shi-lao was the people's great sage,
Zhyu-shi-lao was the people's great giver of names.

The people's forests were extremely black,
The people's forests were exceedingly dark.
5 Tigers and lions stalked their prey among the cliffs,
Kestrels lived in the gorges,
And stags jumped hither and thither.

While the sky remained constant,
Zhyu-shi-lao went to cut down the forest.
10 Zhyu-shi-lao whetted his hook to carry on his back,
He whetted his axe to carry in his hand.

The day came when Zhyu-shi-lao went out to the cutting.
The cutting strokes rang out as he cut down the forest,
The cutting strokes rang out as he cut down the woods.

15 The day came when Zhyu-shi-lao's brushwood was thoroughly dry,
And Zhyu-shi-lao went to burn it off.

Zhyu-shi-lao's brushwood burnt and scorched,
It burnt the skins of the snakes.
Tigers and lions fled and were gone,
20 And stags all quit the place.

While the sky remained constant,
Descendants of Zhyu-shi-lao multiplied and spread,
Multiplied and filled the people's twelve villages.

M143
The song of Zhyu-shi-lang.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction.

This song covers the same ground as the previous two versions, but with a number of differences of style and vocabulary. Throughout, Zhang Ming uses the name “Zhyu-shi-lang” rather than “Zhyu-shi-lao”, but far more significant is his reference to Mount Ve-nzhao, a name which means “broken stone mountain”.

Many of the old songs open with the conventional lines,

“When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,”

In the Miao this is a couplet in which each line comprises five syllables. However, in the present song Zhang Ming has expanded the second line to read,

“And on earth Mount Ve-nzhao was set in its high place”.

If, now, we turn back to Yang Zhi’s version of this song, (M141), as it is recorded in the earlier documents A, E’ and E, it contains no reference at all to this mountain. However, in Document K, followed by Documents L and N, Mount Ve-nzhao has been introduced into lines 3, 4, 5 and 6 which accordingly read,

When the people’s Zhyu-shi-lao first arrived *at Mount Ve-nzhao*,
The people’s forests *on Mount Ve-nzhao* were exceedingly black,
The forests *on Mount Ve-nzhao* were extremely dark,
The people’s forests *on Mount Ve-nzhao* whispered and sighed.

Furthermore at the beginning of Yang Zhi’s song as it appears in Documents K and L there is the following introductory note, written partly on Miao and partly in Chinese.

(In Miao) “It is said that at this time they were at Mount Ve-nzhao”.

(In Chinese) “This was Shi-ji mountain, also called A-ni-ma-qing mountain, part of the Kun-lun range of Qinghai Province”.

(In Miao) “Zhyu-shi-lao was our Miao Grandfather, who, at the beginning, at Mount Ve-nzhao, cleared the forests and drove out the wild animals so that people had a way to find food and drink. Accordingly the old folk made a song to sing as follows”. (Here follows the Miao text of the song).

It should be noted that the Miao name of this mountain is actually a translation of the Chinese name. In general Miao place names are quite unrelated to the Chinese. In cases where there is no Miao name, the Chinese is used, written with Miao letters. It is not normal to translate it.

Although there had always been debate about the place of origin of the Miao people, there had never been any general consensus of opinion. It would seem, however, that between 1949, when Yang Yong-xin published Document E, and 1952, when he issued Document K, a theory was evolved which located the ancestral home in the mountains of Qinghai

Province. Yang Yong-xin obviously embraced the theory, and on the strength of it not only wrote the introductory note in Document K quoted above, but went as far as altering the text of Yang Zhi's song.

As a detailed study of his work reveals, Yang Yong-xin was quite ready, when need arose, to insert into the text in parenthesis, explanatory notes written either in Miao or Chinese, but it is entirely out of character for him to alter the text itself. He must have been fully convinced that Mount Ve-nzhao was indeed an authentic part of the tradition preserved in the songs to add the name of the mountain to Yang Zhi's version in this manner.

Now there are no songs by Zhang Ming in Document E, but six in Document K, suggesting the Yang Yong-xin was only introduced to Zhang Ming's work after 1949. It seems very likely, therefore, that it was the specific mention of this mountain in Zhang Ming's song that prompted Yang Yong-xin to add the name to Yang Zhi's version, and then to adduce it as evidence that the Miao originated from Qinghai Province.

These considerations pose a further question which concerns the authenticity of Mount Ve-nzhao in Zhang Ming's version itself. Was it really there in the original tradition, or was it also added to lend support to the Qinghai theory? Since, in the circumstances, there can be no final verification either way, it has been allowed to stand in the text and translation that follow, nevertheless internal evidence casts grave doubts upon it, and for the following reasons:

1. Zhang Ming's version stands alone. Neither Yang Zhi, Lu Xing-fu nor Pan Xie make any mention of Mount Ve-nzhao.
2. Although not unknown, it is most unusual for a Miao name to be derived by translation from a Chinese name, especially in a traditional song.
3. The introduction of this name disrupts the conventional opening gambit, two parallel lines of five syllables each. It gives the strong impression of being an intrusion into the text.
4. In the introduction to Zhang Ming's version of the Flood story, (M133), it has already been noted that a small section of that Miao song had been replaced with lines in the same Miao style as the rest of the song, but based upon the Flood narrative in the book of Genesis. Mount Ve-nzhao could be a similar addition to the original text of this song.

M143
The song of Zhyu-shi-lang.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

- When the sky began,
And on earth Mount Ve-nzhao was set in its high place,
When the people's Zhyu-shi-lang first arrived,
He arrived, and the people's forests were black,
5 The forests whispered and sighed,
The forests were extremely black.
- Zhyu-shi-lang turned all around and saw,
Saw how black the people's forests were,
How the deer all lived there,
10 And how the stags all dwelt there.
Zhyu-shi-lang was heavy hearted.
- Zhyu-shi-lang turned all around and saw,
Saw how black the forests were,
How the tigers all lived there,
15 And the lions all dwelt there,
So that Zhyu-shi-lang had to build him a hide.
Zhyu-shi-lang was heavy hearted.
- Zhyu-shi-lang devised a plan,
Zhyu-shi-lang returned to prepare,
20 To prepare Zhyu-shi-lang's useful tools.
All kinds he thoroughly prepared.
Zhyu-shi-lang took a hook and fastened on his back,
Took the enchanted axe to carry in his hand.
- When Zhyu-shi-lang went out to the cutting,
25 His cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of posterity,
His cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of descendants.
When Zhyu-shi-lang undertook the cutting,
He cut away for three whole days,
Then he cut back and forth for three months.
- 30 The day came when Zhyu-shi-lang's cutting was dry,
His cutting, the trimmings and undergrowth grew yellow.
The day came when Zhyu-shi-lang went to burn it off,
Zhyu-shi-lang's cutting burnt, even what was green,
He burnt away for three whole days,
35 Then he burnt systematically back and forth for three months.
- The deer fled,
Fled to the woods,
And the stags fled to the black forests.
Tigers fled to the woodlands,
40 And lions fled to the black forests.

This was Zhyu-shi-lang's memorial, for remembering,
Remembering his days and his times.
The day came when Zhyu-shi-lang's descendants multiplied,
Multiplied and filled the people's twelve villages.

45 Thus it is ended.

M144
The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao, a farming song.

Sung by Pan Xie.

Introduction

In this version of the story of Zhyu-shi-lao, the clearer of the forests, we have a further variant of his name. Pan Xie calls him “Zhyu-zi-lao”, and confers the title “yeu si”, which implies a person of some standing in the local community, and has been translated “Leader” in English. At the beginning of the song in Documents K and L there is a note in Miao which reads, “Zhyu-shi-lao, Zhyu-zi-lao and Zhyu-shi-lang, these three are one person only, it is just that in the singing the names are not the same”.

Associated with this Zhyu-zi-lao narrative is a tiger story, but the only connection between them is a common name. Pan Xie has reduced the forest-clearing episode to a mere ten lines, which now stand as an introduction to the story that follows.

There is a somewhat different version of the tiger story sung by Zhang Ming, (M145), but in both versions Zhyu-zi-lao's or Zhi-shi-lang's youngest daughter was taken by a tiger while she was filching cucumbers. Pan Xie says that the tiger "waited for" her at the edge of the crops, Zhang Ming says that the tiger "took her right away". This, at first sight, might be taken to mean that the girl was simply killed and devoured by the tiger, but that is not quite what it says. "Waited for" and "took away" could mean "abducted". There is a group of songs and stories about young women being lured away by tigers to become their wives, and it is just possible that that is the meaning here.

According to Pan Xie's version, at the loss of his daughter, Zhyu-zi-lao decided to carry out a ritual of imitative magic designed to destroy the tiger. In line 31 it says that "he made the striped tiger's shi-njiao". The significance of "shi-njiao" is not entirely clear, but possibly its meaning is "arrival", that is, something that represented the presence of the tiger. Whatever their exact connotation, the words are a name given to the carcass of a domestic animal which had been ritually killed with a sword. It then had to be dressed up to represent the tiger, before being finally cut up and the meat distributed among the leading households. An invitation to the neighbours to share in the dressing up ceremonies having been treated with ridicule, Zhyu-zi-lao summoned an individual called Lyu-jio. The song does not explain who he was, but his main contribution to the proceedings appears to have been the donation of his long plait of white hair suitably daubed with brown and black dye to represent the tiger's tail.

Between lines 19 and 20 in this version of the song in all three Documents, there are inserted 24 lines which clearly belong to some other song. In them the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao does not figure, and there is no reference to any previous, or to any subsequent events in the story. The lines disrupt the continuity of the song, for line 20 cannot be separated from line 19. Moreover, they contribute nothing to the narrative, in fact they distract from it. A youth, the son of the Hmao-dlu family, together with a village called Hmao-gi-zhi are mentioned here, but nowhere else in the rest of the song. For these reasons, and also because there is no sign of them in Zhang Ming's version, these lines have been removed and placed at the end of the song. They comprise two equal sections, each of which divides into three four-line stanzas. The two sections are identical except for one single word in lines 6 and 18, and a further single word in lines 12 and 24.

M144

The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao, a farming song.

Sung by Pan Xie.

The weather was sunny and fine,
Fine and good for the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao to clear the forest.
He cleared it for nine days right to the pond,
He cleared it truly for nine days right to the pool.

5 For twelve or thirteen days it lay in the sun,
It lay in the sun, the soft wood and the hard, till it was fully dry.

The weather was sunny and fine,
Fine and good for the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao to burn the cutting.
He burnt it off for nine days right to the pond,
10 He burnt it off truly for nine days right to the pool.

Who first produced crops?
The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao first produced crops.
The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao devoted a terrace to sowing millet,
And there the millet, the yellow millet grew up.

15 The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao devoted a terrace to planting cucumbers.
How does the cucumber grow?
The cucumber is rounded as it grows.
What is the fruit of the cucumber like?
The fruit of the cucumber resembles a small human arm.

20 The youngest daughter of the Master, the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao,
Picked cucumbers, without telling her father,
Picked cucumbers, without telling her mother.
But the striped tiger was waiting,
Waiting for the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's youngest daughter,
25 At the edge of the crops of the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao.

Who was black at heart?
The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao was black at heart.
Who was vengeful at heart?
The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao was vengeful at heart.
30 The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao took his shining sword
And made an effigy of the striped tiger.

The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao called the folk living below,
But the folk living below simply laughed.
The folk living below carried,
35 Carried the tail of a porcupine,
And laid it on the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass",
Unbefitting the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass"

The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao called the folk living above,

40 But the folk living above simply laughed.
The folk living above carried,
Carried the tail of a dog,
And laid it on the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass",
Unbefitting the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass".

45 The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao called Lyu-jio,
Lyu-jio with a head like snow.
Now Lyu-jio took,

50 Took red fruit and black and smeared,
Smeared them on his long, flowing plait.
Then Lyu-jio carried,
Carried the long, flowing plait, a tiger's tail,
And laid it on the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass",
Befitting the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao's "tiger carcass".

55 It had ears as big as fans,
Great horns standing like pillars,
And flaming eyes as big as rice bowls.
So the Leader Zhyu-zi-lao called,
Called the elders of the people to come and look,
This was no domestic animal of theirs.

60 The Leader Zhyu-zi-lao called,
Called the elders of the people to come and joint the meat.
So the elders of the people sharpened,
Sharpened their flaying knives and came to joint the meat.

65 They came and flayed it, ripping the skin,
They came and flayed it, slashing away the skin.
They made nine separate portions,
They made nine separate parts,
Enough for the elders of the people to have for breakfast.

Thus it is ended.

The inserted lines. (See introduction).

Came the Spring, and the weather grew warm,
Came the Spring and the terraced fields grew lush.
Birds returned and the birds called,
Insects returned and the insects called.

5 Meanwhile the larks were flying,
Flying round and round, encompassing the sky,
Encompassing the women's fields of buckwheat,
And encompassing the men's fields of crops.

10 Then the young man, the son of Hmao-dlu, drove
The yellow cattle, the oxen, and ploughed upward,

Upward to the very front of the houses of Hmao-gi-zhi,
Showering with dust the women of Hmao-gi-zhi.

15 Came the Spring and the weather grew warm,
Came the Spring and the terraced fields grew lush,
Birds returned and the birds called,
Insects returned and the insects called.

20 Meanwhile the larks were flying,
Flying round and round, encompassing the plains,
Encompassing the women's fields of buckwheat,
And encompassing the men's fields of crops.

Then the young man, the son of Hmao-dlu, drove
The yellow cattle, the oxen, and ploughed upward,
Upward to the very front of the houses of Hmao-gi-zhi,
Showering with dust the elders of Hmao-gi-zhi.

M145
Zhyu-shi-lang's song.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction

It does not actually say who the singer of this song was, but following, as it does, immediately after Zhang Ming's version of the forest-clearing song, and using the same form of the name "Zhyu-shi-lang", it is virtually certain that this is one of Zhang Ming's songs.

As in Pan Xie's version, when the daughter of Zhyu-shi-lang was carried off by the tiger, he called upon his neighbours for help, but this time it was to kill the tiger. The neighbours are here referred to as "Hmao-byu" and "Hmao-sao" which mean "first people" and "last people", that is "the first-comers" and "the last-comers" corresponding to Pan Xie's "folk living below" and "folk living above". The first-comers having taken the better, lower land, the last-comers had to be content with the poorer, higher land. At the end of the song there is an explanation written in Miao in Documents K and L. This uses the more common form of the name, Zhyu-shi-lao, rather than that favoured by Zhang Ming, and reads as follows,

"Of old, in the times of Zhyu-shi-lao, when the crops were ripe, we Miao had first to sacrifice to the spirits before eating the new crops. If this were not done there was fear of the spirits being offended. So it was that, at the time when the cucumbers had matured, because the daughter did not first tell her parents, but simply went and picked the cucumbers, the spirits were offended, and the tiger came and took her. Zhyu-shi-lao was infuriated and sent messengers to the first-comers and the last-comers urging them to hunt the tiger, kill it, and bring the skin to Zhyu-shi-lao. The last-comers received the message and went to hunt, but caught only a bat, killed it and brought the skin. Zhyu-shi-lao was not pleased. The first comers killed a leopard and brought the skin, still Zhyu-shi-lao was not satisfied. But there was a relation of Zhyu-shi-lao called Byu-jio. He caught and killed the tiger, bringing the skin back. So Zhyu-shi-lao gave his second daughter to Byu-jio as his wife."

It may well be that at some period the Miao had a custom of sacrifice to the spirits before eating any of the new crops, and that failure to do so might bring retribution. This explanation is, however, very general and vague. Miao religion was concerned with many different spirits. Which spirits in particular were involved here and what form did the worship take? There is nothing at all in the song itself to suggest that the tiger had been prompted by, or was the embodiment of an offended spirit. Moreover in the two accounts of Miao spirit-worship written by Wang Ming-ji and Yang Yong-xin there is no mention of any such ritual. However, the coming of Christianity brought Harvest Festivals, and a knowledge of Old Testament Biblical usage. It could be that the explanation quoted above owes as much to the ancient Hebrew "offerings of the first fruits" as to any old Miao custom.

M145
Zhyu-shi-lang's song.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

This year we may know,
May know that this year Zhyu-shi-lang is clearing the forest.
Zhyu-shi-lang's cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of posterity,
His cutting strokes rang out for the benefit of descendants.

5 When Zhyu-shi-lang's cutting was dry,
 His cutting, the trimmings and undergrowth grew yellow.
 The weather was sunny and fine,
 Fine and good for Zhyu-shi-lang to burn off the cutting.

10 Zhyu-shi-lang went and divided the land.
 He devoted the lowest terrace to sowing hemp,
 He devoted the middle terrace to planting cucumbers,
 He devoted the top-most terrace to sowing millet.

15 The hemp was good, the hemp for stranding,
 The cucumbers were good on the cucumber vines,
 The millet grain was good in the ears of millet.

As the cucumber tendrils spread, the fruit formed,
And grew to the size of a small human arm.
Ngu-gu-ngu-ga went stealthily to see them every day,
And every day Ngu-gu-ngu-ga stroked and fondled them.

20 Zhyu-shi-lang forbade her to pick the cucumbers,
 But Ngu-gu-ngu-ga did not obey.
 One day she picked a cucumber,
 Picked a cucumber and wrapped it away.

25 The striped tiger did no good.
 Zhyu-shi-lang said, "There is danger, the striped tiger may come stealthily look".
 Now when Ngu-gu-ngu-ga heard that,
 Ngu-gu-ngu-ga trembled with fear,
 And one day the striped tiger did take her,
 Took Ngu-gu-ngu-ga right away.

30 Zhi-shi-lang arose and sent,
 Sent a message calling,
 Calling the last-comers to come and look,
 Calling the first-comers to come and regard.

35 The last-comers carried,
 Carried a bat-skin, arriving early.
 Zhyu-shi-lang told them to put it in his basket for stranded hemp,
 But it did not fill Zhyu-shi-lang's basket for stranded hemp.

The first-comers killed,
Killed a leopard for its skin, and they came, arriving early.
40 Zhyu-shi-lang told them to put it in his basket for skeined hemp,
But it did not fill Zhyu-shi-lang's basket for skeined hemp.

Now Lyu-jio killed,
Killed a tiger for its skin, and he came, arriving late.
45 Zhyu-shi-lang told him to put it in his basket for skeined hemp,
But Zhyu-shi-lang's basket for skeined hemp could not contain it.

The first-comers and last-comers had cause to be ashamed,
But Zhyu-shi-lang gave,
Gave his second daughter to Lyu-jio to take as wife.

Thus it is ended.

M151
The Legends of Nzyu-fa-lao.

Stories concerning the great shaman-healer Nzyu-fa-lao abound, and it is likely that this group of eight songs, represents only part of the tradition. There are minor inconsistencies, but in general, Nzyu-fa-lao is portrayed as a philanthropic magician who always travelled on a horse of clouds, and who, after a series of spectacular exploits undertaken for the benefit of mankind, rode away up into the sky. As his cloud-horse took off on this final journey, it left a hoof-print embedded in the rock, which still remains, a perpetual reminder of the great shaman-healer and his wonderful steed. The round hoof-print was, presumably, some natural phenomenon, possibly an ammonite.

In the earlier documents, which are all written in the Miao script, the name is, without exception, Nzyu-fa-lao, but, for some unexplained reason, Document N has changed it to Nzyu-fao-lao, and consistently writes it in this form. In the present texts, translations and notes, where the song is recorded only in Document N, the form Nzyu-fao-lao has been retained, but where it has been recorded in an earlier document, Nzyu-fa-lao has been preferred.

Nzyu-fao-lao, his birth on earth.

Sung by Yang Xiu.

Introduction.

The mother of Nzyu-fao-lao in this song is called, "bangx ngaox shat". The first word, which was often used in girls' names, means "blossom" or "flower". Here it occurs only once, and is probably intended as a personal name. It has accordingly been written with a capital initial, "Flower", in the translation. The second word simply means "girl", in the sense of a young woman, not a child. The third word is "people". It is sometimes used in the compound "hmao shat", "the people", in a general sense, or "yeuf shat", "the man", meaning any male individual of the human race. In this song "ngaox shat" similarly means just "a girl", no one in particular. The Chinese paraphrase says specifically that she was not married. The Miao text implies this, but does not state it.

The final section from line 58, describes Nzyu-fao-lao leading a military expedition to Hmao-a-dlang. It does not explain why this was done, or anything about the place, beyond the fact that there were pine forests there as dense as hemp that is always planted in tight clumps. The place name means "the village make spirit", and this may have some significance, since "to make spirit" means "to practise the art of a shaman-healer". After a successful battle, Nzyu-fao-lao led his troops to Hmao-dlang-hnw, "village spirit crossbow", where they rested in a narrow pass overnight. The two lines 60 and 61 about the cockerel appear to be an elaborate way of saying "at dawn", and this was probably the moment of Nzyu-fao-lao's departure into the sky, leaving a hoof-print in the rock as his memorial.

M151
Nzyu-fao-lao, his birth on earth.

Sung by Yang Xiu.

This year we may know,
Know that this year the girl Flower has had a son,
And so has brought shame on herself.
What should the girl do for the best?

5 The girl took,
Took her son and threw,
Threw him out on the higher side of the black forest.
Then the girl returned, came back and remained,
Remained for twelve or thirteen days.

10 But the girl's yearning grew so strong she could remain no longer.
She returned. Going back she searched,
Searched on the higher side of the black forest.

As she went she met,
Met her eldest son on the sheep track.
15 "Where are you going?" he asked.
The girl replied,
"I am seeking my eldest son on the higher side of the black forest".

"I am your eldest son!" he said,
But the girl could scarcely believe it.
20 "What have you been eating to make you grow?"
"I have been eating the sap of the mulberry trees".

The girl brought her small son,
And returned. Coming back they reached,
Reached the girl's home.

25 The girl's small son said,
"Will you go and buy me a horse?"
So the girl took gold and shining silver in her hand.

She went on until she met,
Met with a small horse,
30 Which, reared for three years, was unable to stand,
Which, reared for three years, still could not stand.

Then the girl returned. Coming back she reached,
Reached the girl's home.
The girl said,

35 "As I went I met,
Met with a small horse,
Which, reared for three years, was unable to stand".

The girl's small son said,
"That one is my enchanted horse".

40 So the girl returned. Going back she led,
Led the small horse
And arrived at the girl's house.

Nzyu-fao-lao dipped up,
Dipped up clear water which he brought and washed,
45 Washed the enchanted horse's back,
And the enchanted horse leapt as high as the middle of the cliff.

He dipped another basin full and washed,
Washed the enchanted horse's back,
And the enchanted horse leapt as high as the top of the cliff.

50 Nzyu-fao-lao said,
"Take up the padded quilt and spread it as a saddle".

Nzyu-fao-lao took,
Took one thousand six hundred retainers and went,
Went to fight in the neighbourhood of Hmao-a-dlang.
55 In the neighbourhood of Hmao-a-dlang the pines grow as dense as hemp plants,
There he routed the troops completely.

Nzyu-fao-lao took the one thousand six hundred retainers and soldiers,
And they went till they reached,
Reached Hmao-dlang-hnw, waiting in the narrow pass.

60 Three times the cockerel flapped its wings,
Three times the cockerel crowed,
Then Nzyu-fao-lao's enchanted horse trod,
Trod a hoof mark into the surface of the rock.

This was done that the people might recall,
65 This was done for the people to see.

Ended.

M152
Nzyu-fa-lao qualifies as a shaman-healer.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

The first six lines of this song are identical with the opening passage of "The work of setting sky and earth in order", M105, which was also sung by Yang Zhi. The use of this stylised passage, which asserts that Nzyu-fa-lao's mother was "chaste" and "pure", seems to conflict with the previous song, which suggests that her child was illegitimate and for that reason she tried to throw it away.

After line 17, there is a break in the text in Document N. Introduced by the Chinese character meaning "note", appear four lines of Miao, set in inverted commas, and printed as though they are a continuation of the poem. In fact they are an explanation in prose which reads:

"Before a healer of sickness becomes a shaman-healer, he must first have suffered severe illness himself which had to be cured by calling the zu-mu. Only then can he become a shaman-healer who cures sickness".

The zu-mu was the person who had to be called to officiate whenever ancestral rites were performed. These rites could not be carried out by the shaman-healer or anyone else. In his account of Miao spirit worship Wang Ming-ji explained that:

"In the main branch of the family, if the eldest brother, being a young adult, became sick, they would call the shaman-healer to investigate. If the shaman-healer spoke in this manner,

'This lad must open the door of the ancestors,

He must lead the children in the way',

they would wait until the sickness was better, then they would have to take him to learn about the spirits from those brothers who knew the incantations, so that he might return to officiate as zu-mu. So it was, whichever son, in the main branch of the family, the shaman-healer pointed out to officiate, that person officiated as zu-mu for that Miao family".

There is nothing in the account to suggest that to become a shaman-healer one must first be cured of sickness by the zu-mu. This note in Document N appears to be an inaccurate recollection of the procedure for appointing a zu-mu. There is no sign of it in Document C, and nothing in the text suggests that during his three years of probation Nzyu-fa-lao suffered any serious illness, or that he consulted a zu-mu.

In line 23 "the great village of Hmao-li-mo" is mentioned. This is, presumably, a reference to the ancient Miao homeland, which comprised "the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-

mo". It is not explained why the troops were given locusts to eat. Perhaps, since locusts destroy all in their path, so the troops, having eaten them, would likewise destroy their foes, but who these were, the song does not say.

M152
Nzyu-fa-lao qualifies as a shaman-healer.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Miao maid, the bride, to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Miao maid, the bride, to come and dwell.

5 The Miao maid, the bride, was chaste,
 The Miao maid, the bride, was pure.

 Who gave birth to a spirit binder?
 The Miao maid, the bride, gave birth to a spirit binder.
 Who gave birth to an enchanter?
10 The Miao maid, the bride, gave birth to an enchanter.
 She gave birth to Nzyu-fa-lao, her only child.

 Who qualified as a shaman-healer?
 Nzyu-fa-lao qualified as a shaman-healer.

15 It took three years to qualify,
 To become a real shaman-healer.
 It took three years to qualify,
 To become a real shaman-practitioner.

20 This year we may know,
 Know that this year Nzyu-fa-lao has become a shaman-healer.
 Nzyu-fa-lao was the people's spirit binder and enchanter,
 Was the people's great healer of sickness.

 Nzyu-fa-lao became shaman-healer and shaman-practitioner in,
 In the great village of Hmao-li-mo.

25 Nzyu-fa-lao cured the living, each one of his sicknesses,
 He cured the sick and suffering and each recovered,
 He raised up the dead and each stood erect,
 He caused the living among the people each to rejoice,
 He caused the living each to laugh.

30 Nzyu-fa-lao took large locusts and served them to the troops,
 Served them that the living among the people might recall it.

 Nzyu-fa-lao-rode,
 Rode a stallion, a grey horse of clouds.
 With whirling hooves it returned in the midst of the plain,
 With wings spread wide it flew up into the blue sky.

35 Nzyu-fa-lao's stallion made,
 Made a hoof print on the smooth cliff,

Made a round print on the great rock ,
And, for the living, Nzyu-fa-lao set it,
Set it as a testimony and said,

40 "Whenever you see the round print on the great rock,
Remember the spirit-binder, the enchanter,
Nzyu-fa-lao's spirit horse".

While the sky continued,
Nzyu-fa-lao took,
45 Took clouds of blue
With clouds of yellow, and made,
Made Nzyu-fa-lao a stallion to ride into the sky.

So Nzyu-fa-lao left,
Left the living on earth.

50 When the living on earth spoke of Nzyu-fa-lao,
His free service in curing the sick,
The people's tears dripped down.

When the people recalled Nzyu-fa-lao,
His free service in the sky,
55 The people were all smiles.

When the people recalled Nzyu-fa-lao,
His free service on the earth,
The people whispered together.

When the people recalled Nzyu-fa-lao,
60 His free service as shaman-healer, as spirit binder to the living,
The people's eyes opened wide,
And their ears listened attentively.

But, while the sky continued,
The eyes looked in vain
65 And the ears heard nothing.

Thus it is ended.

M153
Nzyu-fao-lao, outwitting the Kha-woman.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction.

This song is a story which explains the origin of the many forms of disease suffered by mankind. Nzyu-fao-lao had successfully confined the family of Khas, supernatural creatures, human in form, but which preyed upon the human race for food, in a gourd, and all would have been well had not "the man" removed the stopper and released them. This individual is called, "bib lwb laos ghat shat" which means simply "the old person". This is not a personal name, but signifies a representative member of the human race. The pig, the horse and the cow are also regarded in the story as representatives of all their kind.

Nzyu-fao-lao managed to get the Kha family back into their gourd, but his attempt to destroy it in the fire resulted in an explosion which showered mankind with all manner of diseases. The connection between the exploding gourd and human sickness is assumed, but not stated, in this version of the story, but is quite explicit in the second version (M 154), where the great shaman-healer is credited with providing many kinds of remedy to deal with the disaster. In this song, however, Nzyu-fao-lao seems to have been chiefly interested in measles and smallpox, and arranged that these diseases should leave the patient's body by emerging through the skin in the form of a rash which would slowly disappear, leaving the sufferer immune to further infection. On the other hand, for typhoid, no such provision was made. Since it did not come out as a rash, but remained within the body, it was much more lethal.

This song actually finishes at line 137 together with the concluding line 141. The three lines, 138 to 140, though doubtless contributed by Yang Zhi himself, do not really belong to the song. The couplet, lines 139 and 140 is, in fact, a separate Miao proverb which, because it mentions a shaman-healer and typhoid fever, has been connected with this song where these also figure. The proverb,

"If the shaman-healer can die of typhoid,
A girl may die naked",

is asking, if a shaman-healer, with all his concoctions and incantations cannot ward off the typhoid, what chance is there for ordinary people? They are vulnerable as a young girl stripped naked.

M153
Nzyu-fao-lao, outwitting the Kha-woman.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

This year Nzyu-fao-lao has qualified as a shaman-healer.
For three years Nzyu-fao-lao was qualifying before practising as a shaman-healer
For three years he was qualifying before practising as a shaman-practitioner,
But this year Nzyu-fao-lao has gone to practise as a shaman-healer.

5 As Nzyu-fao-lao travelled he reached,
Reached the neighbourhood of Kha-woman and Kha-man.
Kha-woman and the Kha-man pressed,
Pressed Nzyu-fao-lao to come and stay the night.

Nzyu-fao-lao said,
10 "But where is your place of sitting, your place of sleeping?"
Kha-woman and Kha-man replied,
"Our place of sitting, our place of sleeping is the gourd".

So Nzyu-fao-lao said,
"You - the whole family - go into the gourd for me to see".
15 Kha-woman, Kha-man and the whole family changed,
Each actually changed into a wild bee
And flew straight into the gourd.

Nzyu-fao-lao took the gourd, put in the stopper and carried it away in his hand.
Nzyu-fao-lao travelled until he reached,
20 Reached a river, after thirteen days.

Then Nzyu-fao-lao took,
Took the gourd and threw it into a pool.
There the gourd remained,
Remained for twelve or thirteen days.

25 Now an old person went fishing.
Standing patiently on the top of a rock
He fished, splashing in the pool,
But the only thing he caught and pulled out was the gourd.

The old person drew out the stopper that blocked it.
30 Kha-woman, Kha-man and the whole family were alive,
Were alive and escaped outside.

Kha-woman, Kha-man and the whole family came out and said,
"Hungry are we, more than hungry,
Let us eat the old person!"

35 What should the old person do?
The old person gazed all around,
And noticed away in the gap,

A mother pig,
Approaching slowly, her snout nuzzling the ground.

40 The old person said,
"Before you start eating,
Wait until mother pig comes quietly by,
And ask mother pig if it is right to eat me.
After that you may begin eating.

45 When mother pig came quietly by,
Kha-woman and Kha-man opened their mouths and asked at once,
"Hungry are we, and more than hungry,
Is it right for us to eat the old person?"

Mother pig said,
50 "To eat the old person is right.
For three times a year I give birth,
But he takes my little ones, kills them to eat and drinks their blood.
He takes my little ones to sell for silver and gold money".

What should the old person do?
55 The old person gazed all around
And noticed, away in the gap,
Noticed a mother horse up in the gap itself.

The old person said,
"Before you start eating,
60 Wait for mother horse to arrive,
Then ask mother horse if it is right to eat me or not".

When mother horse arrived,
Kha-woman and Kha-man opened their mouths, opened their lips and asked,
"Hungry are we, and getting more hungry,
65 Is it right for us to eat the old person?"

Mother horse said,
"Once in three years I give birth,
But he takes my little ones to sell for silver and gold money,
And he takes my little ones and makes them beasts of burden.
70 To eat the old person is right".

What should the old person do?
The old person gazed all around
And noticed, away in the gap,
There was a mother cow coming along.

75 "You ask mother cow if it is right or not,
After that you may begin eating".

When mother cow came quietly up,
Kha-woman and Kha-man opened their mouths and asked at once,
"Hungry are we, and more than hungry,

80 Is it right for us to eat the old person?"
 Mother cow made reply,
 "To eat him is right, for once in three years I give birth,
 But the old person takes my little ones to sell for silver and gold money,
 And he takes my little ones and makes them beasts of burden.

85 To eat the old person is right".

What should the old person do?
 The old person looked all around,
 And saw, away in the gap,

Nzyu-fao-lao travelling astride,
 90 Astride Nzyu-fao-lao's stallion, coming from the gap.

"You wait for Nzyu-fao-lao to appear, riding his horse,
 And ask Nzyu-fao-lao if it is right to eat me or not".

When Nzyu-fao-lao's white horse quietly arrived,
 Kha-woman and Kha-man opened their mouths and asked at once,
 95 "Hungry are we, and more than hungry,
 Hungry are we, and getting more hungry,
 Is it right for us to eat the old person?"

Nzyu-fao-lao's white horse parted its lips to speak,
 But Nzyu-fao-lao drew off his shoe as though to slap,
 100 To slap the milk-white horse's mouth.

Nzyu-fao-lao enquired,
 "For you to eat the old person is all right,
 But where is your place of sitting, your place of sleeping?"
 Kha-woman and Kha-man replied,
 105 "Our place of sitting, our place of sleeping is the gourd".

Nzyu-fao-lao said,
 "You, people as big as this,
 How can you get into a gourd?

Go in and show me,
 110 Then when you return,
 I will let you take,
 Take the old person and eat him".

Kha-woman, Kha-man and the whole family changed,
 Changed into wild bees,
 115 And flew straight into the gourd.

Nzyu-fao-lao took the stopper for blocking it,
 And blocked up well the neck of the gourd.

Then Nzyu-fao-lao gave the old person a pat,
 And Nzyu-fao-lao sent,
 120 Sent the old person to collect firewood,

To collect firewood and bring it to burn.
He burnt the gourd and it exploded.
So Nzyu-fao-lao made a promise,
Promised that when the people had measles it would come out as a rash.

125 He burnt the gourd and it blew up.
So Nzyu-fao-lao made a promise,
Promised that when the people had smallpox it would come out as a rash.

He burnt the gourd and it exploded.
But Nzyu-fao-lao rode,
130 Rode Nzyu-fao-lao's milk-white horse straight to the gap.

For when the people had typhoid,
Nzyu-fao-lao had made no promise,
So when the people had typhoid, death was sharp.

135 When the people recalled Nzyu-fao-lao's free service,
Their tears dripped down.
When the people spoke of Nzyu-fao-lao's free service,
Their tears flowed down.

So it is that the old folks say,
"If the shaman-healer dies of typhoid,
140 A girl may die naked".

Thus it is ended.

M154

Nzyu-fa-lao, song of the Kha-man and woman who ate people.

Singer not recorded.

Introduction.

This is an unrelated version of the story in the previous song (M153) by Yang Zhi. The individual who retrieved the gourd from the pool into which it had been thrown is here called simply "yeu sha", that is "the man", and, although the horse has been omitted, the creatures referred to as "mother pig" and "mother cow" by Yang Zhi appear again, but in a rather curious manner,

dli jio di nba and niu nw gha na
dog bring the pig cow horse the great

Both these are "four word expressions" which are similar to the "four character expressions" of Chinese. The former phrase occurs regularly in the songs when naming a month. Thus "dli jio di nba hli" would be "dog or pig month" that is the 6th or 7th month of the lunar calendar. The latter expression is also used in the songs and means "large herds and flocks", which is a way of describing the considerable wealth of a person like a landlord. It seems that the singer of this song, wishing to emphasise the fact that both the pig and the cow were not isolated individuals, but representatives, chose these two "four word expressions", using them as generic terms.

Lao-gi-jiai, mentioned in the second line is one of the names given in the songs to the main town in the ancient homeland.

M154

Nzyu-fa-lao, song of the Kha-man and woman who ate people.

Singer not recorded.

When the people lived,
Lived in the people's Lao-gi-jiai,
Kha-woman was living outside.

5 When the people lived,
Lived by the people's stretch of water,
Kha-man was living out in the open.

10 Kha woman and Kha man, they ate,
Ate the people and kept on doing it.
Kha-woman and Kha-man, they ate,
Ate the people till everyone was gone.

15 Nzyu-fa-lao rode,
Rode Nzyu-fa-lao's horse of clouds,
Going on till he met,
Met Kha-woman on the sheep path,
Met Kha-man on the sheep track.

Nzyu-fa-lao spoke,
Opened his mouth, opened his lips and asked,
Asked, "Where is Kha-woman's house?"
"Kha-woman's house is outside".

20 Nzyu-fa-lao opened his mouth, opened his lips and asked,
Asked, "Where is Kha-man's place of sitting, place of sleeping?"
"Kha-man's place of sitting, place of sleeping is out in the open".

25 Again Nzyu-fa-lao spoke,
"Where, outside, is Kha-woman's house?"
"Kha-woman's house, outside, is in a gourd".
"Where, outside, is Kha-man's house?"
"Kha-man's place of sitting, place of sleeping, outside, is within a pot".

30 Nzyu-fa-lao let Kha-woman and Kha-man
Enter quietly through the top of the gourd,
Then Nzyu-fa-lao firmly blocked the top of the gourd with a stopper.
Nzyu-fa-lao took the gourd-pot slinging it at his waist,
And Nzyu-fa-lao sprang up on to his horse.

35 Nzyu-fa-lao's horse of clouds,
Went on till it reached,
Reached the dragon pool of Ndu-nzhi,
Reached the fish pool of Ndu-nzhi.
There Nzyu-fa-lao took the gourd-pot and threw it,
Threw it into the fish pool of Ndu-nzhi.

40 This year we may know,
Know that this year the man has gone fishing.
The man has caught,
Has caught the gourd-pot,
And the man has opened it wide to have a look.

45 Kha-woman came outside,
And Kha-man came out into the open.
Kha-woman and Kha-man caught, intending to eat,
To eat the man and finish him off.

50 But the man saw,
Saw the pig coming on the far side.
"Let the pig come quietly and arrive.
The pig shall speak the truth.
After that Kha-woman and Kha-man may eat me".

55 When the pig, coming quietly reached them,
Kha-woman and Kha-man spoke.
"Is it fitting for Kha-woman and Kha-man to eat the man?
Let the pig speak the truth".

60 "It is right and fitting for the man to be eaten,
For the man has taken,
Has taken the pig's little ones and sold them for silver,
Has taken the pig's little ones and sold them for gold.

The man has taken the pig's flesh to eat,
And drunk the blood of the pig's little ones.
It is right and fitting for the man to be eaten".

65 Then the man saw,
Saw the cow coming on the near side.
"Let the cow come quietly and reach us.
The cow shall speak the truth.
After that Kha-woman and Kha-man may eat me".

70 So the cow came quietly and reached them.
"Let the cow speak the truth".

"It is right and fitting for the man to be eaten,
For the man has eaten,
Has eaten the flesh of the cow's little ones,
And has drunk her little one's blood.

75 The man has taken,
Has taken the cow's little ones and sold them for gold,
Has taken the cow's little ones and sold them for silver.

The man has taken the cow, forcing her to till the crops,
He has taken the cow, forcing her to gather the harvest.

80 The man has whipped,
Has whipped the cow's back
Until it is all twisted".

So the cow spoke.
"It is right and fitting for the man to be eaten".

85 Then the man saw,
Saw Nzyu-fa-lao riding his horse of clouds yonder in the gap.
"Let Nzyu-fa-lao come quietly and reach us.
Nzyu-fa-lao shall speak the truth".

So Nzyu-fa-lao riding his horse of clouds came quietly and reached them.
90 "Let Nzyu-fa-lao speak the truth".

"Where is Kha-woman's house?"
"Kha-woman's house is within the gourd".
"You go quietly inside for me to see".
Kha-woman and Kha-man entered quietly through the top of the gourd,
95 And Nzyu-fa-lao firmly blocked the top of the gourd with a stopper.

Nzyu-fa-lao sent,
Sent the man to collect firewood,
And Nzyu-fa-lao took,
Took the gourd and put it into the fire.

100 But the gourd-pot exploded,
And showered the people with a thousand and six hundred kinds of disease.
So Nzyu-fa-lao had to distribute,
Distribute to the people a thousand and six hundred kinds of potion.

The gourd-pot exploded,
105 And showered the people with measles and smallpox.
So Nzyu-fa-lao ordained that measles and smallpox should be eased by a rash.

Then Nzyu-fa-lao sprang quickly up on to his horse,
And rode his horse of clouds away yonder over the gap of Ndu-nzhi.

Thus it is ended.

M155
Nzyu-fao-lao, catching the robbers.

Sung by Zhang Xin-mi.

Introduction.

This is a straightforward tale of Nzyu-fao-lao's exploits against a small band of robbers who had been terrorising a local neighbourhood. The summary treatment meted out to them apparently had a salutary effect as a deterrent over a much wider area.

The description of the robbers in lines 27 to 30 reflects the kind of image portrayed on the paper gods, which used to be pasted on the doors of all Chinese houses. The robbers' arms and legs were "very black" and "bent", that is, they had been blackened with soot or charcoal, and were held in a threatening posture. The demand to hand over "silver" was, of course, a demand for money, but the demand for "iron objects" is not quite so obvious. Probably it means weapons, spears, swords and knives of various descriptions. The use of fire crackers to cause panic was a not uncommon tactic attributed to the Chinese in many Miao songs.

M155
Nzyu-fao-lao, catching the robbers.

Sung by Zhang Xin-mi.

This year we may know,
Know that this year Nzyu-fao-lao is healing sickness,
For Nzyu-fao-lao was the people's great healer of disease,
Their great healer of sickness.

5 Nzyu-fao-lao was the people's great destroyer of robbers,
For Nzyu-fao-lao had heard,
That the people were subject to sickness.
There were many who had thrown their lives away,
And many who were surrounded by troubles,
10 Their hearts torn by fear.

At that time,
The Miao community was without food or clothing,
And in pity Nzyu-fao-lao
Determined to go everywhere and see the Miao community.

15 Nzyu-fao-lao rode on his grey horse -
Grey as a cloud, but dark underneath -
And carried his slender staff.
A porter followed behind.
With a single purpose of helping the Miao community,
20 Smiling, and in haste, he pursued his way.

Nzyu-fao-lao and his companion
Had to pass through a valley and cross a mountain ridge
To reach their resting place for the night.
Exhausted by their climb over the mountain,
25 Thirsty and getting hungry,
They wanted to rest a while before going on.

But the Chinese robbers did no good.
Through a gap, from the wild country they came,
Seven or eight robbers with angry, threatening countenances,
30 Their great limbs very black and contorted,
They uttered obscenities and with threatening intent demanded,
"People who travel the road,
Must give up their silver and anything made of iron".

Nzyu-fao-lao decided what to do.
35 "So we have encountered an attack by robbers!
But for what does this band of robbers count?
There is no need to fear the robbers or to fear their attack".

Whipping up his horse he went forward quickly,
And the Chinese robbers shouted curses.

40 "Did you or did you not hear?
If you did not we will take and kill you!"

Several Chinese robbers approached Nzyu-fao-lao,
With crackers going off in all directions and exploding,
In a manner designed to startle people,
45 To make people afraid.
Nzyu-fao-lao's porter,
Standing at one side and watching was trembling with fear.

Nzyu-fao-lao used his slender staff to drive them back.
The staff flew around as though to slice them into pieces,
Thus they were driven back,
50 For the Chinese robbers were afraid of being killed.
A senior officer called out,
"Use your strength, beat him, beat him stone dead!"

Nzyu-fao-lao, exerting all the strength of his body,
Sent his staff flying around again,
55 And the Chinese robbers could not withstand it.
Some died, some ran.
But he rode his horse in pursuit.
At every stroke one perished, till all the Chinese robbers were dead.

Nzyu-fao-lao, riding his stallion, reached the village,
60 But the Miao community ran away and hid,
Asking why, he discovered they feared he was a Chinese robber.
But when he told them that the Chinese robbers were all dead,
Presently the Miao community returned home.

Nzyu-fao-lao entered the village,
65 And saw how thoroughly the Chinese robbers had looted it.
Useful articles and valuables had all been stolen,
People had been killed, and women abducted.

He told the villagers all they must do,
"The Chinese robbers have been entirely wiped out,
70 Now the useful articles, the valuables which were carried off,
Let each one go quickly and collect up his own".

As soon as the Miao community got back with their own things,
They thanked Nzyu-fao-lao for his good services.

Settlements of people in all directions
75 Heard how Nzyu-fao-lao had tackled the Chinese robbers,
So that all Chinese robbers were filled with dread,
And harmony returned to sky and earth.

Thus it is ended.

M156

Nzyu-fao-lao, channelling water and shooting the great snake.

Recorded by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

This song may be a description, cast into the form of a narrative, of the natural phenomena which might be found along some river course in the mountainous regions where the Miao live.

There are places where a river passes under a ridge of rock, forming a kind of bridge, or disappears into a cave, running underground for a considerable distance before emerging again, and there are places where, over periods of time, river courses have been blocked, forming lakes which have disappeared again when surface or underground channels have been reopened.

How the episodes concerning the great snake are to be interpreted is not so obvious. Perhaps there were formations, or markings on the cliff face, resembling a snake. The place names in the song are of little help in identification.

M156

Nzyu-fao-lao, channelling water and shooting the great snake.

Recorded by Wang Jian-guo.

Where does the river Gi-jai rise?
It rises in the Swallow Range, twisting beyond the Land of Silver.

Nzyu-fao-lao channelled,
Channelled the river Gi-jai until it reached,
5 Reached Walnut valley, that deep valley.
Here Nzyu-fao-lao constructed,
Constructed a bridge fitted together with a keystone like a ploughshare.

Nzyu-fao-lao channelled,
Channelled the river Gi-jai until it reached,
10 Reached a point there under the cliff at Hmao-ngga-nbe.

The great snake did no good,
The great snake took,
Took the big goat from Hmao-ngga-nbe and climbed,
Climbed up there below the cliff at Hmao-ngga-nbe.

15 What should Nzyu-fao-lao do?
Nzyu-fao-lao took,
Took his black, curved cross-bow and stretched it,
Stretched it, and Nzyu-fao-lao shot,
Shot, and the big goat got away,
20 Shot, and the great snake retired into the cliff.

This is set forth that earth-people may recall it,
This is set forth that sky-people may speak of it.

So Nzyu-fao-lao channelled,
Channelled the river Gi-jai until it reached,
25 Reached a point below the cliff at Hmao-ngga-che.

The great snake did no good,
The great snake took,
Took the Yi woman from Hmao-ngga-che away and climbed,
Climbed up there below the cliff at Hmao-ngga-che.

30 What should Nzyu-fao-lao do?
Nzyu-fao-lao shot,
Shot, and the Yi woman fell gently away,
Shot, and the great snake retired into the cliff.

35 He shot that earth-people may all recall it,
He shot that sky-people may all speak of it.

Nzyu-fao-lao fell into a trance,

He fell into a trance at Fao-tlyu,
Nzyu-fao-lao fell into a trance at Nghao-nkhang.

40 Nzyu-fao-lao slept on until mid-day,
He slept on until noon.
Nzyu-fao-lao awakened suddenly from his trance,
And saw the river Gi-jai had been flowing till it filled,
Filled the fertile level plain.

45 What should Nzyu-fao-lao do?
Nzyu-fao-lao arose, set out and took,
Took his slender staff and made a hole,
Made a hole in the bottom of the river Gi-jai freeing the obstruction at the gap.

The river Gi-jai and the river Gi-trao were not yet united like a bride and groom.
Where did the two watercourses join?
50 The two watercourses joined away at the high range of Gha-bi-ka.
The two watercourses joined and nurtured,
Nurtured the people's land so that the millet ripened a golden yellow,
Nurtured the people's land so that the variegated millet ripened to maturity.

Thus it is ended.

M157
Nzyu-fao-lao draining the lake for farming.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

The plain on which the city of Zhaotong stands was, at some time, covered by a lake. This song asserts that a stroke from the mighty sword of Nzyu-fao-lao opened a channel for the water to run away, and that the original Yi landlords took possession at his invitation, while, under his direction, the Miao were employed in levelling the fields and digging dykes for drainage and irrigation.

The modern Miao name for Zhaotong is "Mu-di-lao", that is, "Mu land city". The word "Mu" is the Miao name for the original Yi landlords of the area. In this song two forms of the name appear, "Mang-li-mu" and "Mu-zyu-lao". "Ndu-na-yi-mo" is the old Miao name for the Yangtze river which, at this point flows from south to north, some miles to the west of Zhaotong. The mountainous country to the west of the river used to be known as "Independent Lolo country". The powerful Yi landlords, in the security of their mountain fastnesses, were very much a law unto themselves. The Miao name for this area in the songs is the "Bw-bw" country. This probably reflects the Yi name "Ba-bu" country.

In lines 61 and 62 reference is made to the growing rice and broad beans. Both crops are produced from the same land. The former was the main summer crop, and the latter was planted in the dry fields after the rice had been harvested. The beans matured and were gathered in the spring, before the fields were flooded again and the new crop of rice, which had been raised in seedbeds, was planted out. Proper control of the water supply was essential for this annual agricultural sequence.

M157
Nzyu-fao-lao, draining the lake for farming.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- Who is qualifying as a shaman-healer?
Nzyu-fao-lao is qualifying as a shaman-healer.
Who is qualifying as a spirit-man?
Nzyu-fao lao is qualifying as a spirit-man.
5 Who is qualifying as a shaman-practitioner?
Nzyu-fao-lao is qualifying as a shaman-practitioner.
- When the time to qualify as a shaman-healer, a shaman-practitioner was fulfilled, he
went forth,
When the time to qualify as a shaman-healer, a shaman-practitioner was fulfilled, he
was gone.
- 10 Nzyu-fao-lao rode,
Rode on his horse of clouds,
Going on till he reached,
Reached the plain, the wide plain at the head of the lake.
- 15 The sun was shining brightly,
When Nzyu-fao-lao saw,
Saw a dull-witted Yi girl come to carry water.
- 20 Nzyu-fao-lao spoke,
And asked the dull-witted Yi girl to dip,
To dip up clear water for Nzyu-fao-lao's horse to drink.
But the dull-witted Yi girl refused,
So Nzyu-fao-lao lept smartly on to his horse.
- 25 Nzyu-fao-lao rode his horse of clouds and climbed,
Climbed the divided ridge of Shi-teu, crossing the foot of the hill,
Climbed the divided ridge of Shi-teu, but had not gone the whole way,
Climbed the divided ridge of Shi-teu, but had not reached the top.
- There Nzyu-fao-lao spoke out strongly calling to the sky,
And a thunder storm broke with heavy rain pouring down.
It drowned the dull-witted Yi girl and took her life,
It drowned the dull-witted Yi girl and made an end.
- 30 Nzyu-fao-lao stood on the ridge of Shi-dru, having climbed the high ridge,
He looked all around observing carefully.
He observed the plain, the wide plain of Li-mu,
He observed the plain, the level plain of Mu-di.
- 35 He observed how the plain of Li-mu contained,
Contained a bright blue lake covering the level land,
Contained a bright blue lake covering the flat land.

Nzyu-fao-lao rode his horse of clouds and reached,
Reached the plain of Li-mu, the edge of the plain.
Nzyu-fao-lao rode his horse of clouds and made his way,
Made his winding way the whole way around.

40 Nzyu-fao-lao stood on the plain of Li-mu,
Between the mountain ridges high on the edge.

Nzyu-fao-lao looked all around, observing carefully,
He observed the river Sa-yi flowing from the higher side,
Streaming down and flowing away on the lower side.

45 Nzyu-fao-lao drew his shining sword and slashed,
Slashed a channel through the mountain ridge.
Nzyu-fao-lao called upon the community of people to drain,
To drain the bright blue lake of Mu-di,
Its water flowing away down the Sa-yi river on the lower side.

50 Then Nzyu-fao-lao called,
Called the Yi people of Li-mu to erect,
To erect the round castle of the Yi of Li-mu,
To erect it on the flat, the level land,
To erect it on the edge of the plain, the plain of Li-mu.

55 Nzyu-fao-lao called the Miao folk to level,
To level the fruitful rice fields on the flat plain,
To level the fruitful rice fields on the level plain.

He supplied the clear water to nurture,
To nurture the fruitful rice fields in the midst of the level land,
60 To nurture the fruitful rice fields in the midst of the plain.
The water was fresh and shining to nurture the rice crop,
The water was fresh and shining to nurture the broad beans.

The fruitful rice fields were in the midst of the plain,
The millet ripened a golden yellow,
65 And the variegated millet ripened to maturity.

The Ruling Race came from the rulers' country,
The Ruling Race came from the rulers' place,
The Ruling Race came in stealth to look.
Everything pained the hearts of the Ruling Race,
70 Everything vexed the eyes of the Ruling Race.

So the Ruling Race called out,
Called out retainers and soldiers.
Under cover of darkness they advanced from the south,
Under cover of darkness they advanced from the north.

75 They drove the Yi of Li-mu away,
And the Yi of Li-mu fled,
Fled to the borders of the region of Bw-bw.

80 Then the Ruling Race despatched,
Despatched the spokesman of the Ruling Race,
Despatched the envoy of the Ruling Race.

It was established that the lands of Mu-zyu-lao
Should remain the lands of the Ruling Race,
But it was accepted that the Ndu-na-yi-mo was the boundary of Mu-zyu-lao's
dwelling,
That the Ndu-na-yi-mo was the boundary of his place,
85 And it was agreed that his lands should not be troubled,
And that the lands of the Ruling Race should not be attacked.

Thus it is ended.

M158
A song of Nzyu-fa-lao.

Singer not recorded.

Introduction

This song was noted down by Samuel Pollard in 1911. It is far from complete, either because the writer could not keep up, or the singer could not be held back. The material recorded comprises four fragments containing 22, 4, 5 and 8 lines respectively.

The introductory section of the song (lines 1 - 14) is virtually complete, but it does raise speculation about the identity of Nzyu-fa-lao's "children". The term used is "du-di-ji". In a marginal note in the manuscript the meaning is rightly given as "children", but it is not the normal word for "children" which, in the song form, would be "la-di-yao", while, if the meaning were specifically, "sons and daughters", it would be "du-ncai". "Du-di-ji" does mean "children", but in the sense of "descendants" or "progeny", and unfortunately there is insufficient information in the fragments to decide exactly who they were. They appear first, anxiously waiting for Nzyu-fa-lao's return after his training and the grand tour which followed. But at this time Nzyu-fa-lao was only an "a- hla", that is "a youth", so they could not be "descendants". The term might possibly mean his family in the broader sense of his relatives.

The song goes on to say that Nzyu-fa-lao took the "children" and went to perform some ritual acts as a shaman-healer, and the impression is given that quite a group of people was involved, hence the need to seek permission to use the local water supply. That both the Chinese and the Zhong-jia land-holders would refuse, was to be expected. The Miao were often accused of poisoning wells. Why, in both cases, the request had to be addressed to a woman is not explained. Unfortunately the narrative breaks off before the practical problems caused by this refusal were solved. In another song, refusal to give Nzyu-fa-lao water resulted in swift retribution, and that could be what happened here, on the other hand this story may simply reflect the hostile reception accorded to many migratory Miao families when they moved into a new locality.

The second fragment, lines 23 to 26, is too short to convey any clear meaning at all. Nzyu-fa-lao is not mentioned, and the subject matter is so different that it could belong to another song altogether.

At the beginning of the third fragment, lines 27 to 30, are a repetition of lines 8 and 9. This is probably right, since in some other similar songs a couplet in the form:

"Others did come back,
But so and so could not come back,"

is repeated several times like a chorus. The "children" of Nzyu-fa-lao in this fragment are differentiated from "the people", that is the Miao people as a whole. When the former died they were cremated by the latter. There must have been some special reason for this, since the Miao buried their dead, they did not cremate them. Were the people, in fact, fulfilling an instruction given by Nzyu-fa-lao himself before he rode his horse of clouds away into the sky?

The final fragment consists of two short stanzas, lines 32 to 39. It suggests that there was a time when Nzyu-fa-lao had been able to raise the dead, but that, for some reason, this power had ceased. It was, however, only "earth-people", and not "sky-people" who could be raised in this way. In some of the other songs "sky-people" regulated happenings on earth, so it may be that the cessation of the power to raise the dead was due to their intervention.

M158
A song of Nzyu-fa-lao.

Singer not recorded.

The people all say,
Say of the youth, Nzyu-fa-lao,
That Nzyu-fa-lao went to qualify as a shaman-healer.

5 Nzyu-fa-lao the great shaman-healer,
Went among the people, crossing everywhere.
Nzyu-fa-lao the great shaman-healer,
Went among the people reaching every place.

A great shaman-healer might stay awhile and come back,
The great shaman-healer, Nzyu-fa-lao, could not come back.
10 But then the great shaman-healer, Nzyu-fa-lao, did return and arrived.

Nzyu-fa-lao's children could not wait,
And though Nzyu-fa-lao's children went out constantly to look,
Nzyu-fa-lao's children could not see him coming.
But today the great shaman-healer, Nzyu-fa-lao, has returned and arrived.

15 Nzyu-fa-lao took the children and went to practise his art.
Nzyu-fa-lao's children were thirsty for water.

So Nzyu-fa-lao went requesting water,
Requesting it in the Zhong-jia woman's lands,
But the Zhong-jia woman was unwilling.

20 So Nzyu-fa-lao went requesting water,
Requesting it in the Chinese woman's lands,
But the Chinese woman was unwilling.

25 When tomorrow came,
A deer stealthily arrived,
The man, the fierce one, was not at home,
Only the woman, the fierce one, was at home.

A great shaman-healer might stay awhile and come back,
The great shaman-healer, Nzyu-fa-lao, could not come back.

30 When Nzyu-fa-lao's children died,
The people took Nzyu-fa-lao's children and lit a fire,
They took Nzyu-fa-lao's children and burned them.

When earth-people died,
Nzyu-fa-lao was unable to raise them.

35 When earth-people died,
Nzyu-fa-lao could not raise them.

When sky-people died,
They could not be raised,
But, of old, when earth-people died,
Nzyu-fa-lao did raise them.

M159
How the dog went to get seed.

Narrated by Yang Xiu-gong.

Introduction.

This narrative and the song that follows, (M160), are two somewhat different versions of the same story. There is a tradition which appears from time to time in the songs that people on earth originally received seed corn from the sky. In this story, the dog was sent to fetch it, but forgot his instructions.

In the prose narrative it was specifically maize seed which had to be collected from Nzyu-fa-lao. The message which the great shaman-healer gave to the dog was quite clear, just four Miao words, and, had he got it right, cobs of maize would have grown to a prodigious size on tiny plants. The word "dlang", which is translated "fathom", is, in fact, the distance from finger-tip to finger-tip, with the arms stretched wide.

For his mistake, the dog was punished by being made to wait for his meal until everyone else had finished eating. Among the poorer people in every ethnic group in South-West China dogs were scavengers. It was the dog, which was called to clear up messes on the mud floor made by infants or young children. The words of abuse addressed to the dog in this story are as coarse as they were factual.

M159
How the dog went to get seed.

Narrated by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that once upon a time the world had no maize, so the people sent the dog to bring seed from Nzyu-fa-lao. When he arrived he said, "I need maize seed, please." Nzyu-fa-lao said, "When you take this back be sure to tell the people and say,

'The cob a fathom, the plant a span'".

As the dog was returning with it, he came to a gully. Having jumped over the gully he could no longer remember clearly. Then he went on and encountered a hornet, and the moment the hornet struck against his head he forgot entirely.

When he arrived and the people enquired, he said, "Nzyu-fa-lao says that this will be,

'The cob a span, the plant a fathom' ".

Therefore the people scolded him saying, "You, dog, eater of filth! now you will always have to wait until people have finished eating before you may eat".

M160
How the spotted dog obtained seed.

Sung by Yang Xiu.

Introduction.

This song does not say to whom it was in the sky that the dog had to go for seed and the dog's fault, in this version of the story, is that he brought back only one kind of seed, namely, maize, instead of the wide variety which was available.

The full significance of the penultimate line of the song is impossible to translate as it depends upon a play upon the Miao words. The dog is told, "You can only eat maize (ghad ghwb) afterwards (ndruf ghad ghwb)".

M160
How the spotted dog obtained seed.

Sung by Yang Xiu.

The woman and the man took possession of the land,
Took possession of the low land and the steep land.
But the woman and the man had no seed,
What should the woman and the man do?

5 They would send the spotted dog to obtain,
 To obtain for the people all kinds of abundant seed corn,
 To obtain it from the sky, away above.

 The spotted dog went and reached,
 Reached a fine clear road for flying,
10 And the flying beetle did no good.
 The flying beetle flew round and round and struck,
 Struck the spotted dog on the nose.

 So the spotted dog forgot,
 That the spotted dog had gone to obtain,
15 To obtain for the people all kinds of abundant seed corn,
 To obtain it from the sky, away above.

 The spotted dog obtained,
 Obtained for the people all kinds of abundant seed corn.
 Then he returned, came back and reached,
20 Reached the house of the woman and the man.

 But what the spotted dog had obtained,
 Obtained and brought back when he arrived, was maize seed!
 He had obtained just maize seed, the cob a span long,
 And the plant a fathom high!

25 So the woman and the man declared,
 "You shall always eat your maize after everyone else!"

 Thus it is ended.

