

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Miao History

Subsequent incidents and recent migrations

Songs M261 to M274

Introduction and Translation

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M261
Song of the inspired maid from Hmao-ni-geu.

Sung by Yang Wang-shi.

Introduction.

A note in Chinese at the head of this song says that it is "a song of recent history". In the course of the Miao text of Document A there are a number of editorial explanations, one of which says that this, and the following song, refer to fighting with the "Black Chinese". This is the Miao name for Mohammedans, but nowhere in the songs themselves are they mentioned. However, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the comment, since this group had a reputation for violence and brigandage, and, from time to time, the Miao did suffer at their hands. In the normal way, not being a particularly war-like people, the Miao would be more likely to flee than to fight. The background to these songs appears to have been some incident, which so incensed a certain young Miao woman, that she actually succeeded in marshalling a few rather reluctant Miao "soldiers", and led them, ill equipped as they were, over swollen rivers and steep mountain ranges, to attack the robber band. It was an heroic, but utterly futile operation, which could have but one result. Her pathetic little army was completely wiped out.

The young woman's name was "Bang-ndli" which means "Rice-flower", but this name is extended into an elaborate descriptive title which, in the text is written as a double compound name of eight syllables in each part which in English translation becomes,

The kinswoman, Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister.
The hasting wonder maid in blue.

The word "inspired" is used to translate the Miao expression, "li-su". This probably means "one who divines", and arises from the practice of divination using three arrows, the Miao name for which is "su".

In Document M this song and the one which follows are attributed to the same singer, but though there are similarities, and a few lines are common to both, the two songs seem to have come from separate traditions. The young woman's name, "Rice-flower" is the same in each, but the descriptive titles are different. In this song her home village is named Hmao-ni-geu, while in the next song she hailed from Hmao-dleu-lao. This song says that all her followers were wiped out, in the next we are told that half of them survived. The two songs could have been sung by the same person, but their style and construction suggest that he derived them from different sources.

M261
Song of the inspired maid from Hmao-ni-geu.

Sung by Yang Wang-shi.

The kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister,
The hasting wonder maid in blue, sought,
Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.

5 Over a period she fattened a spotted pig and killed it,
Killed it to entertain the common soldiers on the plain,
Killed it to entertain the officers in the house,
Killed it to entertain the young men of Hmao-ni-geu.

10 The kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister, ordered,
Ordered the common soldiers to march up and down,
Including a number on horse back,
And with thirty Miao on foot.

She ordered the common soldiers to march up and down,
So the common soldiers went forward and then turned about.

15 When they reached the river Gi-jjai it was just in spate,
Foaming in spate, boiling and foaming,
Foaming in spate, boiling and twisting.

20 The common soldiers could not cross,
So the common soldiers sought a way to go back,
But the kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister would not allow it,
The hasting wonder maid in blue was unwilling.

The kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister, ordered,
Ordered the common soldiers to march up and down.

25 They came on until they reached,
Reached the river Gi-trao.
Now the river Gi-trao was just in spate,
In spate and brimming its banks.

30 The common soldiers could not cross,
So the common soldiers sought a way to go back,
But the kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister, would not allow it,
The hasting wonder maid in blue was unwilling.

The kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister, ordered,
Ordered the common soldiers to march up and down,
And the common soldiers went forward and then turned about.

35 They went on till they reached,
Reached Hmao-trao-bw.
Hmao-trao-bw brought them breakfast,

40 But the Chinese robbers brought them lunch!
For the Kinswoman Rice-flower, the inspired elder sister,
Her common soldiers were armed only with pruning hooks,
And her officers were armed only with sickles.

They fought until lunch time.
Friends received no word,
Mothers, fathers and relatives heard no news.

Thus it is ended.

M262

Song of the inspired maid from Hmao-dleu-lao.

Sung by Yang Wang-shi.

Introduction

This song, like the previous one, describes the activities of the young woman Rice-flower, but the course of events is rather different. On her journey to recruit her soldiers, the young woman met with some Yi robbers who, though at first they seemed friendly, waited until she had collected her food supplies, then ambushed, robbed and killed her and half her followers. These Yi robbers are called, “Yi slaves who were robbers”. They were only seven in number, and the maid, Rice-flower, first met them at the landlord’s “stacks of timber”. They were probably White Yi, and slaves of the landlord. Their work was to fell trees and cut them into planks, which then had to be stacked in such a manner as to allow the air to circulate and dry the timber. They carried arms for their own protection, but when opportunity offered were not adverse to a little freebooting on the side. A note at the end of the song says that the maid Rice-flower intended to attack the “Black Chinese” but was killed before she could do so, while the remains of her little “army” went home.

In this song the descriptive title of the young woman is considerably less elaborate, only six syllables, which translate into English as,

The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower.

Here the word rendered “inspired” is the Miao word “si”. This can mean “mad” or “insane”, but “du-si” is also used as parallel to, or in combination with, “du-dlang” to mean “one who has supernatural powers”, and hence “sorcerer” or “witch”. The woman in this song, however, was not mad, nor did she practise any of the black arts, but was a young person with strong determination and drive, who had the ability to galvanize into action an easily demoralized “army”, and to extract considerable contributions of grain from anything but wealthy villagers, in fact a kind of Miao Joan of Arc. So, therefore, “si” is best translated by “inspired”.

Song of the inspired maid from Hmao-dleu-lao.

Sung by Yang Wang-shi.

- This year we may know,
 May know that the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sought,
 Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.
 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, took,
 5 Took a white felt cape to carry her baby on her back,
 While high in the sky the patchy cloud horses were feeding.
- When the next day came,
 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sought,
 Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.
 10 She went on and reached the landlord's timber stacks,
 And met with seven Yi slaves who were robbers.
 The Yi slaves who were robbers did no good,
 They poured cups of clear wine and offered it,
 Offered it to the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower to drink.
- 15 When the next day came,
 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sought,
 Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.
 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, took
 Took a white felt cape to carry her baby on her back.
 20 She went on and reached the mountain ridges of Gi-la,
 Where among the Miao she found a place to rest.
- When the next day came,
 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sought,
 Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.
 25 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice flower, took,
 Took a white felt cape to carry her baby on her back.
 She went on till she reached,
 Reached the mountain ridges of Fao-tlyu.
- It is said of the mountains of Kao, that the mountains are hard to climb,
 30 But the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, climbed them grasping her hip.
 The mountains of Kao, the mountains are long to climb,
 But the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, climbed them grasping her knee.
- The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sought,
 Sought and found a way, a way of making soldiers.
 35 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, went on till she reached,
 Reached Hmao-nie, but there ran short of rations.
 Hmao-nie contributed seven "dou",
 But Hmao-zhu contributed seven "dan",
 Enough for young cousin Rice-flower's Miao to eat to the end of the year.
- 40 The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, went on till she reached,

Reached the far side of windy pass.
There she met the slaves who were robbers and they did no good.
The slaves who were robbers drew their swords,
And the slaves who were robbers killed,
45 Killed the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, on the spot.

So the inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, led half her company away,
Away to the spirit world, there to make marriages.
The inspired maid, young cousin Rice-flower, sent half her company back,
Back to earth's people there to make families.

M263
Song of an inspired Miao.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

Introduction

This is a third, and very different, account of the events described in the previous two songs. The singer does not mention the young woman's personal name, "Rice-flower", but he did know that there were two conflicting traditions about her home village, and in addition that there were two traditions concerning the clan to which she belonged. He solved the problem, not by choosing one or the other, but by giving both, so that his song begins twice. In lines 1 to 6 he used one set of names, then started afresh in an identical manner, using the second set of names.

Unlike the other two, this song specifically states that the enemies were Chinese Mohammedans. After listing three successful surprise attacks, the song states that the young woman's ultimate goal was to force the Mohammedans "to go back". This presupposes that the cause of the confrontation was an incursion by these "Black Chinese" into land held by the Miao. Her effort failed because of the treachery of her younger brother. By instigating the killing of the guard dogs, he rendered the young woman and her followers vulnerable to a surprise attack, but no detail is given of when or how this took place.

At a number of points the singer introduced lines taken verbatim from older conflict songs, as, for instance lines 14 to 18, lines 21 & 22, and lines 26 & 27. However, the descriptions of major battles involving large numbers of well-trained soldiers are not always entirely apposite when applied to a relatively small local incident. The stratagem of killing the guard dogs is also drawn from an earlier song and is introduced here as a rather awkward parenthesis. It is just possible that the singer, aware that the young woman's campaign failed because she was betrayed by a member of her own family, but not knowing exactly how, recorded it using an established conventional formula from the past.

M263
Song of an inspired Miao.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

This year we may know,
Know that, from Hmao-dleu-lao, the man Gi-jiai,
His daughter, the young woman, carried on her back,
Carried her baby, as she went to recruit soldiers.

5 The young woman, the daughter, ordered,
Ordered the soldiers to advance.

This year we may know.
Know that, from Hmao-ni-geu, the man Gi-dlu,
His daughter, the young woman, carried on her back,
10 Carried her baby, as she went to recruit soldiers.

The young woman, the daughter, led out,
Led out Miao soldiers, bearing pruning hooks in their hands,
Bearing them to go and fight the Chinese Mohammedan soldiers.

15 The land was black with on-coming Chinese Mohammedan soldiers.
They stamped hard with their feet,
And yelled in a terrifying manner,
In order to strike fear into the young woman, the daughter.
But the young woman, the daughter, was not in the least afraid.

20 The young woman, the daughter, led her soldiers and made,
Made surprise attacks on the enemy group three times over,
And the Chinese Mohammedan soldiers fell in all directions.
While many Chinese Mohammedan soldiers were killed and despatched to the spirit
world.

25 When the next day came,
In the morning early, at daybreak just as it was getting light,
The young woman, the daughter, ordered the soldiers to rise.

In their military exercises all were proficient,
In their military training all understood.
The object was to engage the Mohammedan soldiers and force them to withdraw.

30 But by reason of her younger brother's evil action,
(Because he was too lazy to join in the fighting,
He taught the Chinese Mohammedans how they could take,
Take and kill the guard dogs leaving none,)
The young woman, the daughter, the inspired maid, lost the fight.

35 The young woman, the daughter, the inspired maid led,
Led her companies of soldiers and, retreating, reached,
Reached the valley of Li-kheu at the plain of Gi-tai,

In the shadow at the foot of the mountain.
The Chinese Mohammedans pursued,
Pursued the young woman, the daughter's companies of soldiers and struck,
40 Struck down the young woman, the daughter's soldiers killing them as they went.

All this was because a young Miao lad bore,
Bore an evil heart, the heart of a thief, and betrayed,
Betrayed the young woman, the daughter, the Miao maid and her people to death.

So in the end the young woman, the daughter, led,
45 Led the inspired young Miao women and young Miao men to destruction.

Thus it is ended

M264
A-yeu Hai, A-yeu Hxe and A-yeu Dao.

Narrated by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction

This narrative was copied from a notebook written by Wang Ming-ji. He had set out, in normal spoken Miao, two stories contained in a song commemorating certain incidents which had taken place locally. It is possible, since three names are mentioned, that in the song there was a third story, one about A-yeu Hxe.

The movements outlined in the fourth paragraph were over limited distances, and seem to have involved individual families rather than whole clans. Tu-na-yi, Li-na, Hi-cu and Gi-zeu-tai are all places in the Weining prefecture. The first two and last one are all Yi names and the third is Miao and means, "to stop up". Li-nu and Li-zyu, also Yi names, are places some thirty Chinese li (ten miles) from Shi-men-kan, and are situated on either side of a large river. In Chinese they are called Wang-jia-ping and Xyu-shang respectively.

The ferry across the river was owned and run by a Chinese family called Xyu. It was a flat bottomed craft attached by a pulley to a thick bamboo rope which spanned the river, and was hauled across by hand.

The "fierce" individual was a Miao who had been able to get some education, and, having mixed with Chinese, had learned how to stand up for himself and his rights, as witnessed by his attitude towards the ferry owners and his willingness to pursue his litigation with the petty official at Xyu-shang right through to the County Court at Zhaotung.

A-yeu Hai, A-yeu Hxe and A-yeu Dao.*Narrated by Wang Ming-ji.*

Of old, when sky and earth had come into being, A-yeu Hai (Hmao-ndlw A-yeu), A-yeu Hxe (Hmao-chi A-yeu) and A-yeu Dao (Hmao-dang A-yeu), three kinsmen left A-nzhi-di, and, following the game, came to Na-lu by the River A-na. A-yeu Hai and A-yeu Hxe could both handle the crossbow. A-yeu Dao could not handle the crossbow but was a man of great strength.

At this time the Chinese came from the Chinese land and attacked A-yeu Hai, carrying off the women and children, gathering up and carrying away all the goods. A-yeu Hai returned from hunting to find that the Chinese had even gathered up the sour cabbage, tied it into a bundle with his crossbow strings and carried it off. A-yeu Hai ran after the Chinese and said, "Please yourselves what you take of the things, but give me back my bundle of sour cabbage so that I can boil it this evening for my evening meal". The Chinese said, "What can we do with this bundle of sour cabbage if we take it on? Give it to him." So the Chinese threw the bundle of sour cabbage to A-yeu Hai.

A-yeu Hai took the bundle of sour cabbage along, pulled it to pieces and recovered his crossbow strings. Then he went out and shot the Chinese. So the Chinese let the group of women and children go, and presently he took them all back.

Because of this A-yeu Dao's descendants brought the clan to Tu-na-yi and Li-na, then leaving Tu-na-yi and Li-na came to Hi-cu. (There was a snake hole at Hi-cu which they stopped up, hence the name Hi-cu.) A-yeu Dao's clan then left Hi-cu and came to Gi-zeu-tai. Leaving Gi-zeu-tai they reached Li-nu and Li-zyu.

At this time there was a man who was very fierce. If relatives came to see him and the Xyu-jia family would not let them cross in the boat, he would run and, standing upon the cliff, would curse the Chinese on the other side of the river. A short time afterwards he had a law suit with an official at Xyu-shang, which was heard first at Kuei-Xiang, then at Zheng-xiong and finally at Zhaotung.

He was a very firm person and they wanted to give him an official position. First they sent thirty men to come and conduct him, but he would not go with them. After that they sent forty to come and take him, his wife and all his household and escort them to Zhaotung City. (In those days the old folk did not understand about escorting. They said that the Chinese had come and "taken" him away.)

When a full year had passed, returning from Zheng-xiong he came to Li-nu, to his brothers' place, leaving his soldiers at Li-zyu. At night when it was about time to sleep his brothers said, "It is very good that the official has come to sleep here, but the bed is not good". However, the man who had become an official said, "All that is needed is some millet straw, that will do well". In the night he took two silver ingots and hid them in the straw. Early in the morning he was up and away across the river. Presently, when the head of the house gathered up the millet straw and the brothers saw the two silver ingots, they picked them up and ran in pursuit. In front of the Hmao-yang homestead they caught up, calling after the official as they went. The

official's soldiers wished to come and ask what they wanted, but the official would not permit them, coming himself to enquire what was the matter. They said, "The official has left behind these things, so we have chased after you with them". Then he said, "These are what I have brought for you". So presently they returned home again. (We have not heard where this official went afterwards).

M265
A-yeu Hai, A-yeu Hxe, A-yeu Dao.

Written by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

In Document N there is a short piece which is a version of the first section of the narrative written by Wang Ming-ji, the story of the recovery of the stolen crossbow strings. Here it has been set out in lines as though it were a song, when, in fact, it is a piece of contemporary prose. Why it should have been printed in this way is not at all clear, for no one would ever mistake it for Miao verse. For the most part the text follows Wang Ming-ji sentence by sentence, but there are several significant alterations.

Firstly, the story has been detached from the rest of Wang Ming-ji's manuscript, so that none of the references to local places in the Zhaotung - Weining area remain.

Secondly, the reference at the beginning of the story to A-nzhi-di, a region in northern Yunnan and Guizhou, has been replaced by "lines" 7 to 9, setting the story in an entirely different context, namely that of the ancient Miao Homeland.

Thirdly, "lines" 17 and 18, which are to be found in a number of the old songs describing the annexation of the ancient Homeland by the Chinese, have been inserted into the text, although the passage which immediately follows them makes it perfectly clear that this was in no sense a concerted attack by Chinese military forces, but a local raid by a small band of Chinese robbers.

The story stands perfectly well in its original context, and it is hard to see what has been achieved by uprooting it and replanting it in an entirely incongruous setting.

M265
A-yeu Hai, A-yeu Hxe, A-yeu Dao.

Written by Wang Jian-guo.

They say, concerning the old folk, that,
in times past, when sky and earth came into being,
there were three men.

5 One was A-yeu Hai, who was Hmao-ndlw A-yeu,
then A-yeu Hxe, who was Hmao-chi A-yeu,
and A-yeu Dao, who was Hmao-dang A-yeu. (His son was called "za dao", "the able
one").

At that time
the Miao all lived in the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo,
but had not yet reached Lao-gu and Lao-u.
10 Though their fathers had died, these were three closely related kinsmen.
Together they followed the game to the River A-na and the River Na-lu.
Hmao-ndlw, A-yeu Hai and A-yeu Hxe
could both handle the crossbow,
A-yeu Dao could not handle the crossbow,
15 but carried a club, made of copper and very heavy,
for he was a man of great strength.

At that time the Race came from the Race's land, so the Race came,
The Rulers came from the Rulers' land, so the Rulers came,
the Chinese robbers came to to A-yeu Hai's, and carried off
the whole group of women and children.
20 All the things,
including strings for the crossbows were carried away.

When A-yeu Hai and the others returned from hunting,
the Chinese had collected the crossbow strings with a
basket of sour cabbage, and carried them off.
A-yeu Hai followed after the Chinese and shouted to them,
25 "Take what you will of the things and the people,
but this evening we have not yet had our evening meal.
I wonder whether you will agree?
If so, then throw us the basket of sour cabbage
to carry back and cook for our evening meal".
30 So the Chinese gave the bundle of sour cabbage in the basket to A-yeu Hai.

Having carried it away, they took the bundle of sour cabbage and spread it out.
Taking it to pieces they retrieved the strings for their crossbows.
Now with their crossbows properly re-strung,
they went to shoot and kill the Chinese, in fact to wipe them out.
35 At this the Chinese let the group of women and children go, left the things, and fled,
so at last they brought the group of women and children back again.

M266
The song of Tiger Valley.

The singer is not recorded.

Introduction.

This song is in the classical form of the songs of conflict with the Chinese. It begins with aggravation caused by the Chinese, followed by a successful retaliation from the Miao and a short respite of Miao ascendancy. This, however, is ended by determined Chinese action and the final defeat of the Miao. The singer frequently incorporated conventional lines, even when these were superfluous to the narrative. So lines 1 and 2 introduce a famine year which did not materialise, line 3 correctly heralds trouble with the Chinese, but difficulties with the Yi foreshadowed in lines 4 and 21, may satisfy the parallelism required by Miao poetic form, but are entirely irrelevant to this story.

Nowhere is the exact nature of this local dispute between the Miao and the Chinese stated. All that we are told is that for a period of three years the Miao were able to cut the road to the Chinese city where it passed through a gorge in Tiger Valley. Despite conventional lines about swords and spears, there were no pitched battles, but rather the occasional ambush in which the Miao crossbows proved devastatingly effective. The story indicates that the Miao leaders were eventually caught in a "snare between two trees" but just what this may have been is not explained. They were held prisoner until Chinese New Year and then put to death.

The two names Bang-huei and Gang-shuei are unusual in that the second element of each is not a Miao word. There are Chinese words that are pronounced in this way, but the vowel sound "uei" does not occur in Miao. It may be that, in fact, these are Chinese names, but document M does not say so, nor does it give any Chinese characters, even in a footnote.

M266
The song of Tiger Valley.

The singer is not recorded.

This was a bad time, a bad year.
The crops did not ripen and the fruit did not set.
There was commotion within the borders of the Ruling Race,
And disturbances on the estates of the Yi overlords.

5 Who was it who raised sons?
The Zhangs and the Wangs raised sons.
The Zhangs' small boy was named Bang-huei,
While the Wangs' small boy was named Gang-shuei.

10 The day came when Bang-huei and Gang-shuei became full-grown youths.
Bang-huei and Gang-shuei wore embroidered gowns patterned with spots,
Or wore gowns which appeared entirely blue.

They pursued the striped tiger away to the black forests,
Intent on catching a tiger to secure its skin,
Intent on catching a tiger to secure it well.

15 Bang-huei and Gang-shuei saw,
Saw solid stone ideal for honing swords,
And saw hard stone ideal for honing spears,
Sharp swords, swords as they ought to be,
And sharp spears ready for thrusting.

20 What with commotions within the Chinese borders,
And disturbances within the borders of the Yi,
Bang-huei and Gang-shuei could not bear the thought,
Bang-huei and Gang-shuei could not continue to dwell there.

25 The sons Bang-huei and Gang-shuei took,
Took their black, curved crossbows, carried on their backs,
And took their shining swords, girded at the waist,
To contest the strength of the Ruling Race,
To contest the might of the Ruling Race.

30 The contest took place by the river in Tiger Valley, that long river,
The contest took place by the river in Tiger Valley, that wide river,
And they defeated the Ruling Race by the river where Tiger Valley narrows to a
gorge,
For the Ruling Race could not capture it.

35 Bang-huei and Gang-shuei stretched,
Stretched their cross-bows well with their feet,
And set their arrows well with their hands,
Pressing them into the groove along the stock of the bows so they could not be
shaken.

The arrows, following a curving, path flew and struck,
Struck down the Ruling Race completely,
And Bang-huei and Gang-shuei laughed aloud.

40 The pity was that though the conflict might continue for forty years, it could not be
concluded.

The people, the Miao community, had no way of ending it,
So they got Bang-huei and Gang-shuei to return a second time and block the way.
They blocked it completely for three years, sparing no one.

How should the Ruling Race respond?

45 The Ruling Race could come that way no longer,
The Ruling Race could not pass,
And the Ruling Race was heavy-hearted.

So the Ruling Race sought,

50 Sought Bang-huei and Gang-shuei every day,
Sought Bang-huei and Gang-shuei everywhere,
Sought the dwelling and the hiding place of Bang-huei and Gang-shuei.

Now Bang-huei and Gang-shuei were sleeping,
Were sleeping inside a tree, fixed up like a tiny house.

55 A tiger may have nine lairs,
But Bang-huei and Gang-shuei's accomodation for sitting and sleeping was inside a
tree.
Inside a tree was their place of living and hiding.

Because the Ruling Race was heavy hearted,
The Ruling Race was also black at heart.

60 Taking swords and spears, swords and knives, they came to seek and to snare,
Setting their snare between two trees.

So it was that the Ruling Race was able to catch,
To catch Bang-huei and Gang-shuei and take them away.

65 They fettered Bang-huei and Gang-shuei's hands with iron chains,
And led Bang-huei and Gang-shuei away to the Ruling Race's city,
Led them to the Chinese city in Tiger Valley.

A full year passed,

Then, as they reached the end of the Ruling Race's year,
The Ruling Race took Bang-huei and Gang-shuei and killed them.

70 With the sunshine bright on the Ruling Race's city centre,
The Ruling Race enjoyed a good New Year festival,
Many of the Ruling Race's guests and companions gathered unhindered,
So the Ruling Race saw the old year out reassured.

Thinking about all this pained our hearts,
Thinking of all this broke our spirit.

75 Thus it is ended.

How Gi-dleu oppressed the Miao community.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction.

This song raises a number of problems. The first is a discrepancy between the title and the text regarding the central character in the story. In the former he is called Gi-dleu and in the latter Shi-tru, to which is added the style, "the Elder". The song comes from the extensive repertoire of Tao Zi-gai, but it is by no means certain that he also supplied the title. In modern spoken Miao the name Gi-dleu would probably be Hmao-dleu, the clan name which is identified with the Chinese surname Han. Presumably, for at no point is any explanation offered, Shi-tru is an archaic form of the same name.

This personage was a Miao, as witnessed by the fact that when he died, he was buried and mourned by the Miao community, but otherwise he is scarcely recognisable as such. The song portrays an individual who possessed considerable wealth in silver which he decided to spend on land, concubines and a grandiose building scheme. From his fellow Miao, who were, no doubt, tenants on his estates, he exacted unpaid labour in exactly the same way as did the hated Yi landlords.

Nowhere is the origin of the Elder Shi-tru's great wealth explained. There are indeed branches of the Miao race which do, in fact, possess considerable wealth in the silver ornaments worn by the women, but this silver is not normally negotiable. It has to be passed on to the next generation. Generally speaking, the A-hmao were among the poorest of the poor, and such limited wealth as they might possess would have been reckoned in flocks and herds, not in silver.

Having acquired an estate and built himself a fine house, the Elder Shi-tru took steps to establish a family. Again the song does not explain, but it may be assumed that he already had a legitimate Miao wife, but no children, and it may be that to have married another Miao woman would have raised inter-clan trouble, so he opted to secure, first an Yi, and then a Chinese slave girl, in the hope of raising a family. In this, however, he was disappointed, and when he died, his servants, not his family, had to see to the funeral arrangements. This they did, but apparently with the minimum of expense, since the animals slaughtered for the occasion are described as "da ngga", that is "small" or "tiny".

Some of the place names mentioned in the song are identified in the footnotes as being on the Yunnan - Guizhou border just to the east of the city of Zhaotung. Indeed the quarry which supplied the stone for the building scheme was located at "ndrang Mu-di", that is the Zhaotung plain.

There is no clear description of the building which the Elder Shi-tru erected. Although it had a room big enough to house a small elephant, it was not a dwelling. He had already built a fine house to live in. This structure needed considerable quantities of both stone and timber, so that it must have comprised more than stone monumental obelisks, although these are definitely mentioned in the text. Putting together all the information that can be gleaned, the central structure seems to have been a pagoda, nine storeys high, set on a large stone platform, raised nine steps above ground level. Obelisks, constructed of shafts of dressed stone, also stood on the platform, perhaps one at each corner, although this is not specified in the song. From the points of the turret roofs of the pagoda hung wind bells in the manner of

Chinese temples. To build all this the Elder Shi-tru employed Chinese craftsmen, while the Miao had to supply the labour required. When completed, the "Chinese king" was so impressed that he ordered the Elder Shi-tru's name to be engraved on memorial tablets of wood and stone. However, it is by no means clear in the song who the "Chinese king" might have been, and there is no explanatory note to help. The Emperor in Beijing was a thousand miles away.

It is possible that this unlikely story is the folk memory of some inter-clan rivalry, and that Gi-dleu was not an individual but a Miao group which, for a time, and with Chinese backing, exercised dominance over their fellow Miao clans. Document M which preserves the song, was intended as an outline of Miao history, so that clearly, its compilers regarded this song as more than just a piece of fiction.

There remain a number of minor points, which require explanation. Lines 20 to 24 say that, when completed, the Elder Shi-tru's house had beehives tied under the eaves. Miao beehives were sections of tree trunk some four feet long and eighteen inches in diameter, which had been hollowed out and blocked up at the ends with circular boards, leaving a small hole at the bottom of one end for the bees to enter and leave. These hives were sometimes placed in a garden plot near the house, but often, to prevent them from being stolen and to keep them dry, they were hung under the eaves of the house.

Lines 87 to 91 describe the use of flails for threshing rice. The flails were two stout sticks four or five feet long, linked together at one end in a special way with leather thongs. One stick was held firmly with both hands, while the second was swung around behind the worker's head and allowed to fall flat on the grain to be threshed, the whole length hitting the ground at the same time. With rhythmic swaying of the body and arms, the flail rose and fell continuously. This work was often undertaken by young women.

Lines 106 to 112, together with a number of lines later in the song, tell how, as the men carried the balks of timber along, they were chanting as they went. Each tree trunk was very heavy and needed eight or more men to carry it, in much the same way as Chinese coolies carrying sedan chairs. The chanting was to ensure that the carriers kept in step as they went.

M267
How Gi-dleu oppressed the Miao community.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

The Elder Shi-tru went to survey the land.
He surveyed the Hxu-zho plain, that wide plain,
He surveyed the Hxu-zho plain, that flat plain,
Where the ground indeed was flat and the land level .

5 The Elder Shi-tru then returned, went back to his home.
The Elder Shi-tru thought,
Thought for nine days and devised nine plans,
Thought for nine whole nights and devised nine schemes.

10 He thought through nine plans, nine schemes and combined them,
He thought through nine plans, nine schemes and linked them.
Then the Elder Shi-tru said,
"My shining silver is achieving nothing whatever!"

15 So the Elder Shi-tru paid out,
Paid out gold and shining silver in order to establish,
To establish a place on the Hxu-zho plain, that wide plain,
To establish a place on the Hxu-zho plain, that level plain.

The Elder Shi-tru built,
Built a house with a timber frame and a tiled roof in the midst of the flat land,
Built an excellent house with a tiled roof in the midst of the plain.

20 There were beehives fixed under the eaves,
With hired servants engaged to tend them,
There were beehives tied under the rafters,
With hired servants engaged to secure them.

25 The Elder Shi-tru ordered,
Ordered the herdsmen to excavate and flatten,
To flatten the Elder Shi-tru's rice fields,
To flatten them on the Hxu-zho plain, that wide plain,
To flatten the Elder Shi-tru's paddy fields,
To flatten them on the Hxu-zho plain, that level plain.

30 The Elder Shi-tru ordered,
Ordered his herdsmen to go and channel,
Channel the river Hxu-zho to flow foaming and irrigate,
Irrigate the Elder Shi-tru's paddy fields in the midst of the flat land,
To irrigate his ricefields in the midst of the plain.

35 The Elder Shi-tru ordered,
Ordered his herdsmen to plant and tend the fields,
Until the rice was fully ripe,
And the swaying millet ripened.

40 Now the Elder Shi-tru could not bear his thoughts,
 The Elder Shi-tru was sad at heart.
 So the Elder Shi-tru paid out,

 Paid out shining silver to obtain,
 To obtain an Yi girl from Lord Cai-sie to raise offspring.
 But Lord Cai-sie's Yi girl raised no offspring,
 45 For Lord Cai-sie's Yi girl had no son,
 So the Elder Shi-tru got no offspring.

 Then the Elder Shi-tru paid out,
 Paid out shining silver and gold to obtain,
 To obtain a Chinese girl to come and raise offspring,
 50 But the Chinese girl also had no son.

 While the sky remained constant,
 The Elder Shi-tru thought again,
 And the Elder Shi-tru said,
 "The shining silver and gold is achieving nothing whatever!"

 55 So the Elder Shi-tru paid out,
 Paid out shining silver and gold to hire,
 To hire Chinese to come from Chinese country,
 To hire that Race to come from that Race's place.

 When the Chinese arrived the Chinese quarried stone,
 60 When that Race came that Race quarried rock.
 Where did they go to quarry stone and quarry rock?
 They quarried the stone and quarried the rock on the plain of Mu-di.

 They chiselled the stone and chiselled the rock and broke it free.
 They split the stone and split the rock and broke it clear.

 65 The Elder Shi-tru ordered,
 Ordered the buffaloes to drag.
 Where were they to drag the slabs of stone and slabs of rock?
 They were to drag them from the plain of Mu-di.

 But the water buffaloes fell and could not stand.
 70 So the herdsmen whipped,
 Whipped the water buffaloes on their backs,
 Whipped the water buffaloes on their curving backs.

 The water buffaloes dragged,
 Dragged the Elder Shi-tru's stone pillars and pillar slabs, but dragging, they could
 not stand.
 75 And the water buffaloes' tears flowed,
 The water buffaloes' tears dripped down.

 But they dragged the slabs of stone and slabs of rock on,
 On to the plain in the Hxu-zho country, that flat plain.

80 They set upright the Elder Shi-tru's pillars of rock,
They set upright the Elder Shi-tru's pillars of stone,
They set upright the Elder Shi-tru's pillars of stone and rock upon,
Upon the plain in Hxu-zho country, that wide plain.

The Miao community had cut the paddy rice and spread it to dry in the midst of the
flat land,
They had cut the rice harvest and spread it to dry in the midst of the plain.
85 But the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen swept up,
Swept up the new rice, the rice in the midst of the fields.

Then the girl, the Chinese girl threshed,
Threshed, with her flail whirling round,
Threshed the fresh rice with her whirling flail.
90 She threshed, with her flail swirling round,
Threshed the paddy rice with her swirling flail.

She then husked the paddy rice, the fresh rice ready,
Ready for the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen to eat.

Having eaten, what did the herdsmen do?
95 Having eaten, the herdsmen went,
Went to the deep Ndi-na valley.
Then through the Ndi-na valley to the river and beyond,
To the middle of the village of Hmao-bao-di.

Thence the herdsmen carried,
100 Carried the Elder Shi-tru's barks of pine,
Carried the Elder Shi-tru's barks of timber.

Carrying the barks of pine, the barks of timber, they forced a way through the river.
They carried the barks of pine, the barks of timber, across,
Across the river Gi-jiai lower down, but then,
105 Carrying, they had to climb the Ndi-na range where it was most difficult.

The Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen raised their voices in a chant,
In a high pitched chant, along the river banks.
The Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen raised their voices in a chant,
In a high pitched chant, around the mountain side.

110 Their high pitched chanting sounded through the valley,
Their high pitched chanting sounded over the mountain range,
Their high pitched chanting sounded along the river.

The Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen carried,
Carried the barks of pine, the barks of timber, and climbed,
115 Climbed from the level banks of Ndi-na,
Climbed the Ndi-na range, following around,
Following around the long Gi-bai ridge.

So having reached the pass of Gi-dre, the rock-piled pass,

120 The herdsmen set down the balks of pine, the balks of timber,
 And the herdsmen lit a fire and slept,
 Slept in the pass of Gi-dre, the rock-piled pass at the top of the ridge

When the next day came,
 The herdsmen carried,
 125 Carried the balks of pine, the balks of timber, across,
 Across the valley of Zi-to, that wide valley.

The herdsmen's loud chanting shook the river,
 The herdsmen's loud chanting resounded round the mountains,
 Till, pressing forward, they reached the river Gi-trao in the middle of the valley.
 Then they carried the balks of pine, the balks of timber, and reached,
 130 Reached Hmao-di-ze at the top of the ridge.

At night they had no supper,
 The herdsmen just lit a fire and slept,
 Slept at Hmao-di-ze at the top of the ridge.

When the next day came
 135 The herdsmen carried,
 Carried the balks of pine, the balks of timber, chanting,
 And their high pitched chant sounded along the mountain ridge,
 As they reached the narrows in the pass of Ndrang-kaao.

In the brightly shining sunlight,
 140 Where was there standing a grove of pine and fir trees?
 There by the road in the narrows in the pass of Ndrang-kaao.
 The grove would have covered nine market squares,
 And the trees must have numbered nine hundred.

The grove provided,
 145 Provided eagles with a place to build their eyries,
 While the trees provided,
 Provided the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen with a place of shelter in the shade.

The grove provided,
 Provided eagles with a place to raise their young,
 150 And the trees provided,
 Provided the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen with a place to eat their lunch.

The Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen carried,
 Carried the balks of pine, the balks of timber, and reached,
 Reached the plain in the Hxu-zho country, that wide plain.

155 The Chinese took,
 Took the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen to erect,
 To erect the Elder Shi-tru's pillars of wood,
 And to erect the Elder Shi-tru's pillars of stone.

The stone pillars, the monuments, stood up firmly, rising skywards,
 160 The wooden pillars stood up firmly pointing toward the sky.

The precinct had nine steps,
 And the pagoda nine storeys.

The wooden pillars stood up firmly to become,
 To become for the people a place to remember,
 165 While the precinct and the wooden pillars were sufficient,
 Sufficient for Moon-youth's phases to be observed plainly,
 For the pagoda had nine storeys.

The whole site provided,
 Provided a place for people to forgather,
 170 And provided kings and governors with a place to visit.

The stone steps, the steps of rock were sufficient,
 Sufficient for the people's old folk to sit in lines,
 And sufficient to muster a whole squad of soldiers.

The stone steps, the steps of rock were sufficient,
 175 Sufficient to gather a whole herd of deer,
 Sufficient to gather a whole drove of roebuck.

The pagoda had space sufficient,
 Sufficient to house a small dragon,
 Sufficient to house a small elephant!

180 But the people took a different view,
 For all the people recalled,
 Recalled how hard was the compulsory labour.

The people all remembered,
 Remembered how the water buffaloes wept as they dragged,
 185 Remembered the people carrying who could not even undress to sleep.

There were bells of iron hanging on the pagoda,
 There were bells of copper hanging in the precinct,
 In the brightly shining sunlight.

As the wind came blowing,
 190 It blew on the bells of copper and the bells of iron until they sounded,
 And the sound, rising and falling, carried to the Chinese king's land.

When the Chinese king came to hear it,
 The Chinese king paid a visit to see for himself.
 Then the Chinese king praised,
 195 Praised the Elder Shi-tru as a man of ability.

So the Chinese king engraved,
 Engraved the Elder Shi-tru's name and style on the wooden pillars,
 Engraved the Elder Shi-tru's name and style on the middle of the rock,
 In order that the Elder Shi-tru's name might never be lost.

200 In time the Elder Shi-tru died,

And the Elder Shi-tru's herdsmen carried,
Carried the Elder Shi-tru out for burial.

205 They buried him at Shi-bw, at the sheep path beyond the tiger path,
Buried him face towards the sun's rising,
Buried him feet towards the moon's setting.

The Elder Shi-tru's Miao community killed,
Killed a number of young pigs,
And for the funeral rites slaughtered a number of young sheep.
210 The mourning for the Elder Shi-tru lasted seven days,
The mourning for the Elder Shi-tru lasted seven nights.

Thus it is ended.

The song of Du-bw, the dull one.

Sung by Wang Shi-cong.

Introduction.

The title preferred for this song is that found in Document M. Document N has the heading, "How the Miao fled to Zhaotung", which is an entirely incorrect representation of the song. The migration described in the first half was the movement of a small group of Yi families, not Miao, and the couple who occupy the stage in the second half were not Miao either, they too were Yi.

Lord Gi-myū was one of the major Yi landlords, and it would appear that certain families belonging to his clan were discontented with the land they had inherited. The word used to describe these families is "ndrang", which means "middle", and it is used regularly for the second son in the family. Thus the expression translated "second ranking families", means families not in the direct line of descent, families of younger sons in the clan. Led by a "relative" of the Landlord, this group began a search for a better place to live. They investigated several localities, all described as "flat plains and wide". The word translated "plain" is used regularly for any piece of relatively level ground. The size varied enormously from many miles across, like the Zhaotung plain, to a few hundred yards of flood plain in the bottom of a narrow valley. For reasons not explained in the song these "plains" were rejected, and on at least one occasion there seems to have been some altercation with the local Chinese. Eventually they managed to secure land on the Zhaotung plain and settled there, not very far from the walled City itself.

The second half of the song concerns a young woman and her companion. The former is identified by a relationship only, "the cousin". She is given no other name. This implies that she was the cousin of someone important, perhaps that relative who led the group of Yi families to their new home in Zhaotung. Having just arrived, she was fascinated by all she saw and heard, the harvesting of the cotton, together with festivities connected with ancestor worship, and, hanging up for sale, the gold and silver nuggets made of paper to be burnt for the enrichment of the departed.

The young cousin's companion was called "Du bw du shi dao". "Du" means "the person", and "bw" is one of the old Miao names for the Yi, particularly those now living on the other side of the Golden Sands River, but who used, long ago, to control the whole of the Zhaotung area. "Shi dao" means "not able". It can be just physically weak, but more generally means, "not very clever", or "slow in the up-take", hence the translation "Du-bw, the dull one". It was important that the newly arrived Yi families should not cause offence to their Chinese neighbours, and young men flaunting cross-bows had to be discouraged. So, despite the tears of his companion, Du-bw, the dull one, was quickly spirited away after shooting a wild goose on the plain, even though the bird was actually eating the crops.

Some points of detail require comment. In lines 85 and following, the young cousin expressed surprise that the Chinese women left their babies at home when they went to pick cotton. Normally a young mother would not leave her baby, but carry it on her back when she was working in the fields. However it was not possible to do this and carry the large basket for the cotton at the same time, so babies had to be left wrapped up at home.

Lines 99 and 100, although identically recorded in both Document M and Document N, are, quite simply, wrong. Every Miao knew perfectly well that silk was not derived from cotton. In fact in some localities the Miao actually bred silk worms, and sold the cocoons to the Chinese for processing. There are two possible explanations for the error. The first, that these lines being spoken by Du-bw, the dull one, are merely a glaring example of his ignorance. The second, that it is possible that there has been a misunderstanding of the original text. The Chinese used cotton for making cloth, but also for padding, particularly the padded quilts, used as bedding, and called "pu-gai". The Miao for "pu-gai" is "a hlyu ba", and it could be that some copyist misread this as "a nzhu nba", meaning "silk". Written in Miao script the expressions are not dissimilar, or taken down in dictation, they sound alike. What is surprising is that later editors, knowing the error, have made no comment. Explanatory footnotes abound in both documents, but there is nothing on this point.

M268
The song of Du-bw, the dull one.

Sung by Wang Shi-cong.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges.

- It is said that this year the ruling Yi did no good.
A relative of Lord Gi-myu arose, and together with,
5 With several middle ranking Yi families sought a dwelling.
Where did they seek to settle?
They sought to settle on the plain of Fao-hniao.
Now it is said that the plain of Fao-hniao
Was a country both flat and wide.
- 10 Both the Yi and the Chinese were of evil intent,
Pursuing and attacking, they fled to the lower side of the plain of Bu-yi.
Now it is said that the plain of Bu-yi
Was a plain both flat and wide,
And on the plain of Bu-yi sumach trees thrived.
- 15 The ruling Yi did no good.
A relative of Lord Gi-myu arose together with,
With several middle ranking Yi families.
Where did they seek to settle?
They sought to settle on the plain of Fao-xieu.
20 Now it is said that the plain of Fao-xieu
Was a plain both flat and wide.
- The ruling Yi did no good.
A relative of Lord Gi-myu arose together with,
With several middle ranking Yi families.
25 In what place did they seek to settle?
They sought to settle on the plain of Cho-zho.
Now it is said that the plain of Cho-zho
Was a plain both flat and wide,
But behind the mountain was a region of range piled on range,
30 While in front of the mountain and facing it was a region hemmed in by ranges.
- Now the ruling Yi did no good.
A relative of Lord Gi-myu arose and together with,
With several middle ranking Yi families sought a dwelling.
Where did they seek to settle?
35 They sought to settle on the plain of Zhaotung.
It is said that the Zhaotung plain is good land.
It is said that rice will ripen on Zhaotung plain,
Indeed upon the plain all kinds of crops will ripen.
- 40 Lord Gi-myu's relative together with,
With several middle ranking Yi families

Deliberately went to found a settlement.
 They got Chinese to drive,
 To drive animals from the Elder Lord Shi-tru,
 His water buffalo, to go and haul,
 45 Haul softwood timber from the Bw country,
 Haul pine and fir trees from the surrounding countryside.

Inside the City the Ruling Race,
 Every day and every night beat drums,
 Beat stick drums with an echoing sound.
 50 Outside the City the Ruling Race,
 Every day and every night beat drums,
 Beat hand drums with a throbbing sound.

Inside the City the Ruling Race,
 Every day and every night blew,
 55 Blew bamboo horns with a reverberating sound.
 Outside the City the Ruling Race,
 Every day and every night blew,
 Blew cow and buffalo horns with a resounding sound.

In front of the City hung the "silver ingots",
 60 Glistening and bright like burnished silver.
 Inside the City hung the "gold ingots",
 Glistening and bright like burnished gold.

Lord Gi-myu's relative together with,
 With several middle ranking Yi families,
 65 Went and built houses, to live in their families,
 Built timber-framed houses, to dwell in their families.
 They built tile-roofed houses shining bright,
 Shining bright as the blue sky,
 They built timber-framed houses shining bright,
 70 Shining bright as the clear sky.

Now a young woman, a cousin, together with,
 With Du-bw the dull one, came to observe,
 To observe the Zhaotung plain with its good land,
 For the Zhaotung plain was both flat and wide.

75 The young woman, the cousin, opened her mouth, opened her lips and asked,
 "Is it not said that Zhaotung plain is good land,
 And on Zhaotung plain frosts do not last,
 Nor, when it snows, does the snow settle long?"

Then Du-bw, the dull one, considered and said,
 80 "It is said that Zhaotung plain is good land,
 For the cotton plants on Zhaotung plain bear,
 Bear heads as large as eggs,
 Bear heads as large as basins".

The young woman, the cousin, opened her mouth, opened her lips and asked,

85 "The young Chinese women leave,
 Leave their babies on the bed every day,
 And taking round baskets carry them out of the City.
 The young Chinese women carry,
 Carry their round baskets for what purpose?"

90 Then Du-bw, the dull one, considered and said,
 "The young Chinese women carry,
 Carry their round baskets back to pick,
 They go to pick cotton every day,
 They go to pick cotton every month".

95 The young woman, the cousin, opened her mouth, opened her lips and asked,
 "For what purpose do the young Chinese women pick cotton?"

Then Du-bw, the dull one, considered and said,
 "The young Chinese women pick cotton for weaving into cloth,
 They pick cotton for making silk thread,
 100 They pick cotton for making silk fabric".

Then the young woman the cousin together with,
 With Du-bw, the dull one, came to consider and observe,
 To observe how the migrating birds, the cranes, bent,
 Bent their necks around into a curve and took,
 105 Took from the Yi women and Chinese women's fields,
 The ripening rice standing in the fields.

Those migrating birds, the cranes, bent
 Bent their necks around into a curve and took,
 Took from the Yi women and Chinese women's fields,
 110 The ripening beans standing in the valley.

Then Du-bw, the dull one, stretched,
 Sat and stretched his curved crossbow with his feet.
 But the young woman, the cousin, raised,
 Raised her hand to restrain him.

115 And the young woman, the cousin, opened her mouth, opened her lips and said,
 "Are you really going to stretch,
 To sit and stretch your curved crossbow with your feet?"
 Nevertheless Du-bw, the dull one, shot,
 Shot a crane in the midst of the fields,
 120 Shot a crane in the midst of the valley.

Now the ruling Yi did no good,
 They took Du-bw, the dull one, away.

Then the young woman, the cousin,
 With her tears dripping down,
 125 Every day, every night, the young woman, the cousin, was like,
 Like a crane which had lost its way.

The young woman, the cousin,
With her tears falling fast,
Every day, every night, as the young woman, the cousin, moved,
130 They dripped and dripped at each step.

Thus it is ended.

M269
The Master's able daughter.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

Introduction.

This song is another story of a woman taking command of a military operation, see M261, M262 and M263. As in the previous songs, she is characterised by a long descriptive title which is treated throughout as a proper name. The two operative words in the title are “dao”, which means “able” or “strong”, and “zhyu”, which is regularly used for “lord” or “landlord”. Applied here to a woman, it has been translated as “Lady”.

The overlord in the song is called “Du-no-vang”. “Du” is the definite article, “no” is the title of a small group of the most powerful Yi landlords, while “vang” which means “yellow”, is possibly a translation of the Chinese surname “Huang” which also means “yellow”. This individual sent an order to the Miao Elder requiring him to raise a militia to pacify the border along the Yangtse River, called in the song the “Ndu-na-yi-mo”, where bandits were causing trouble. The probability is that the Elder being himself illiterate, required a “person carrying business”, a kind of secretary, to read the instruction to him.

The Elder had a daughter whose first reaction was to weave rolls of material with elaborate designs, to send as a present to the overlord, presumably along with a request that the Elder Shi-byu might be excused from this duty. On second thoughts she decided to fulfil the task herself on her father's behalf. The song says that the campaign extended over “zhu” years, that is a cycle of twelve years. In English one might say “a decade”.

The Miao word “ngha” is much used throughout this song. It means, “to drive” when applied to animals, but it is also regularly used of soldiers, where its meaning is “to raise” a troop, or “to lead” or “to command” a detachment.

When the Miao lived in the Yellow River basin of north China, they were no doubt familiar with camels from the desert regions further north, and a number of the songs preserve the old name “niu nca”. When they were driven from their ancient home into the mountains of south west China, the camel was forgotten, and the name fell out of use. Thus, in the early twentieth century, the missionaries translating the Gospels into Miao, faced with the word “camel”, had to borrow the Chinese name “lo to”. It is not impossible that, as a curiosity, the paramount Yi landlord had a camel, but to get it from north, to south west China would have been a journey considerably in excess of a thousand Chinese li.

M269
The Master's able daughter.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For Gha-sao's youngest daughter to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Elder Shi-byu to make a family and dwell.

5 While the sky remained constant,
The Elder Shi-byu and Gha-sao's youngest daughter had,
Had a daughter late in life.

Having no way to give a name,
Let the daughter be called,
10 "The Master's able daughter,
The Lady who led and cared".
For she led in weaving rolls of cloth,
And she led in weaving the cotton.

While the sky remained constant,
15 Du-no-vang wrote,
Wrote in large characters on the outside of the paper,
And in small characters on the inside of the paper,
Wrote to the Elder Shi-byu's secretary,
Requiring the Elder Shi-byu to lead out the soldiers.

20 The Master's able daughter,
The Lady who led, devised,
Devised patterns to weave silk cloth for king Du-no-vang,
Devised patterns to weave silk material for king Du-no-vang.

When the time for midday meal approached,
25 The Master's able daughter,
The lady who led, with her shuttle spool rattling away,
The Master's able daughter
The Lady who led, pondered.

30 "Alas, that Master's able daughter,
The lady who led, has no brother-in-law!
Alas that Gha-sao's youngest daughter and the Elder Shi-byu had no son!
The Master's able daughter,
The lady who led, is no longer willing to weave,
She will take command of the soldiers for the Elder Shi-byu".

35 The Master's able daughter,
The lady who led, opened her mouth, opened her lips and requested,
Requested the black stallion with white feet,
For she would ride the black stallion to recruit soldiers.
So she went to the southern market and bought a bridle,

40 And she went to the northern market and bought a saddle.
 When the next day came,
 In the early morning at daybreak,
 The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, sprang into the saddle,
 45 Sitting upon the black stallion's back.

 From Gha-sao's youngest daughter and the Elder Shi-byu the tears fell fast,
 But the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, was smiling,
 As she comforted the Elder Shi-byu and Gha-sao's youngest daughter.

 50 The companies of soldiers she commanded were like,
 Like skeins of cranes in flight,
 But the time was passing and the sun sinking,
 The sun was sinking slowly down,
 Sinking with sloping rays, for it was growing late,

 55 But, commanding the companies of soldiers, she reached,
 Reached the banks of the great river Ndu-na-yi-mo,
 And the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, was not disheartened.

 The Master's able daughter,
 60 The Lady who led, paid no heed,
 No heed to the voices of the Elder Shi-byu and Gha-sao's youngest daughter calling,
 She heeded only the muttered grumbling of the Miao people by the great river Ndu-
 na-yi-mo.

 When other people commanded soldiers, they would return,
 But when the Master's able daughter,
 65 The lady who led, commanded soldiers, she could not return.

 When the next day came,
 In the morning early, at daybreak,
 The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, commanded
 70 Commanded the companies of soldiers as they reached,
 Reached the clear river of Black otters.

 The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, paid no heed,
 No heed to the voices of the Elder Shi-byu and Gha-sao's youngest daughter calling,
 75 She heeded only the disputing of the Yi robbers.

 The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, commanded,
 Commanded the companies of soldiers for a cycle of twelve years.

 She established peace in the people's neighbourhood,
 80 Then commanding the companies of soldiers she returned and reached,
 Reached the borders of Du-no-vang's estates.

- Du-no-vang brought out gold and shining silver,
 For the Master's able daughter,
 The lady who led, to take home,
- 85 But the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, did not want it,
 Did not want Du-no-vang's silver.
- The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, did not want it,
 90 Did not want Du-no-vang's gold.
- The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, wanted only,
 Wanted only Du-no-vang's camel that travelled a thousand li,
 To drive back and show,
 95 Show the Elder Shi-byu and Gha-sao's youngest daughter there at home.
- So Du-no-vang took,
 Took the camel that travelled a thousand li, and gave it,
 Gave it to the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, to return home.
- 100 The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, driving,
 Driving the camel that travelled a thousand li, returned and reached,
 Reached the Elder Shi-byu's borders.
- The sisters of the Master's able daughter,
 105 The lady who led, were all smiles,
 The sisters of the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, clapped their hands.
- "Today, the Master's able daughter.
 The Lady who led, has come again!"
- 110 The sisters of the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady, who led, drove,
 Drove the spotted pig out of doors,
 To be killed that the soldiers of the Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, could be entertained
 115 Then the companies of soldiers might return home.
- The Master's able daughter,
 The Lady who led, spoke,
 Spoke words to all and each,
 Spoke words for all to hear.
- 120 "When you take off your uniform, do not discard it,
 When you take off your tunics, do not lay them aside.
 When you go to the people, within the community act uprightly,

When you go to the people, within the community act wisely.

125 If a day for conscription and fighting should come,
The Master's able daughter,
The Lady who led, will return,
Will return word clearly to tell you, so it will be".

130 When the next day came,
The Master's able daughter,
The Lady who led, commanded,
Commanded the companies of soldiers to go outside,
And bade the companies of soldiers disperse.

M270
Thoughts of a foolish one.

Sung by a young woman from Hmao-fao-tu.

Introduction.

A note at the beginning of this song explains that, “It was sung by a young woman from Hmao-fao-tu at the time when the Miao first believed the Christian teaching”. It affords a glimpse into the mind of an ordinary young Miao woman at the time of the movement towards Christianity in 1904. Detailed accounts of what happened were written by the missionaries, but, of necessity, there is no contemporary Miao record. Having no writing, the only way of transmitting stories and traditions was in the form of folk songs, but the coming of Christianity itself brought the beginnings of education, and other songs to sing, so that the popularity of the folk songs declined. It is remarkable that these fragments have survived, selected and edited by a later generation of Miao teachers, who looking back regarded the singer as a rather silly young woman, and entitled her song accordingly.

The song comprises six short sections only very loosely connected.

Lines 1 to 9 reflect the excitement that the coming of the missionary, Samuel Pollard, aroused, as he travelled around the Miao villages. The title accorded to him, “our mother, our father”, was not uncommon. It was regularly applied to any benefactor, and was spontaneously used by Christians in their prayers, in the form, “Our Mother, our Father in heaven...”. The order was always, “our mother, our father”, never the other way around.

Lines 10 to 13 seem to be the memory of a sermon about “The water of life”, based on John 4, v. 14, Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never again be thirsty. John 7, v. 38, Whoever believes on me, as scripture says, “Streams of living water shall flow from within him”. Psalm 51 v. 7, Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lines 14 to 23 have nothing to do with the coming of the missionary. The date given, is 1903, the year before the movement toward Christianity began. The arrival of telegraph wires near by caused both curiosity and fear. When the latter had been overcome by the good omen of the proliferating ant hills, the whole village went out to touch the wire.

Lines 24 to 28 look like another, half understood, missionary talk based on Matthew 6, verse 26, about God’s concern even for the birds.

Lines 29 to 35 reflect some of the popular hopes and expectations that the coming of the missionary raised, the provision of adequate land for the people to till, and of cotton cloth to replace their own laboriously produced hemp material.

Lines 36 to 43 concern a landslide that destroyed part of the homestead of an Yi landlord with considerable loss of life. Shortly before, the landlord had been visited by the missionary, and the singer knew very well that, normally, in order to gain a hearing, a substantial gift would be required and a number of officials would also have to be bribed. A Miao, seeking a hearing would therefore have to sell livestock in order to raise the necessary cash, and it was assumed that the missionary would have had to do the same.

M270
Thoughts of a foolish one.

Sung by a young woman from Hmao-fao-tu.

Our mother, our father will surely come,
Our mother, our father will come choosing people,
Choosing down river and receiving down river,
Choosing up river and receiving up river.

5 Our mother, our father will surely come,
Will come with pity for the land and the place,
With pity for the rocks and trees, and pity for the people.
But unbelievers and those who drink wine
Will give up their breath and go to their own place.

10 The great river flows in three streams.
From the first people may drink and never thirst.
From the second people may drink and water will flow from them.
In the third people may be washed white and clean.

15 The copper wire of our lord king, our lord ruler, came,
Came in the twenty-eighth year.
Among the people the ants were plentiful,
And if ants are making fine soil, there is no need to fear,
So the people came and each took hold of the wire.

20 Yet before they could swing it back and forth,
The wire sounded loudly
Away in the king's land,
Though it would take three days for people to travel
And reach the king's city.

25 The little chicken had no food,
When it went scratching between the ridges of corn.
So the little chicken prayed,
Prayed to the God of our Lord Jesus.
Then presently the little chicken could eat.

30 Our mother, our father will surely come,
Seeking out land and seeking out a place,
For our sons and our daughters to work.

The hemp that we sow now is fit but for chicken feed,
But this spring our mother, our father will give,
Give cotton for us to make up and wear,
35 So that getting clothes to wear will be easy.

The landlord had tiled houses for his people,
And for his cattle as well.

Our mother, our father took fine cattle and horses to sell,
To sell for silver money to go,
40 To go to the landlord's tiled house to eat.

There came a day when the soil on the mountain overturned,
Overturned the landlord's tiled house,
And all his family was carried away to their death.

M271
**The time when the Independent Yi and the Mohammedans both
attacked.**

Written by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction.

This narrative is concerned with the same events as those described in the three songs, M261, M262 and M263, but the account is very different. Though slave raiding conducted by the Independent Yi from the other side of the Golden Sands River is mentioned briefly, the writer is chiefly concerned with the conflict with the “Black Chinese” as the Mohammedans were called. These people, said to be the descendants of mercenary soldiers employed in the campaigns of the early Mongol Emperors, were fierce and often lawless, with a reputation for brigandage. Other races round about, including the Chinese, often suffered at their hands, so that when the Miao took effective action against them, even within the Chinese city itself, the authorities turned a blind eye.

The dating given at the beginning is not quite clear. The Miao followed the Chinese in the cycle of years so that “Cockerel Year” came around once in every twelve. In the songs this cycle is regularly mentioned, but here we are told that Cockerel Year to 1858 was fully a hundred years. Cockerel year, in this context, must therefore have some other meaning, possibly a reference to the Chinese Sexagenary Cycle, which counted time, not in centuries but in cycles of sixty years.

The treatment meted out to the Mohammedans, the slaughter of young and old, not sparing even the children, and the carrying off of the younger women and girls, appears to have been barbaric in the extreme, but probably was no different from the treatment the Miao had themselves experienced on more than one occasion.

The time when the Independent Yi and the Mohammedans both attacked.

Written by Tao-zi-gai.

That year, the year of the Cockerel, the Independent Yi passed by Zhaotung in parties to the country around Weining, taking Miao, Yi and Chinese people back to sell as slaves in Independent Yi country. The attacks went on for five years but the authorities took no action at all. At that time the Independent Yi came seizing people and silver and gold money only. When the Mohammedans came they collected crops and grain as well as money, but the Yi and the Chinese would come and seize everything. From the year of the Cockerel to 1858 was still above one hundred years.

When the Independent Yi attacked, The Miao simply went into hiding. They put up no resistance at all. The attacks of the Mohammedans, however, were very sharp indeed. They came seizing cattle and horses, household goods, crops and corn. The seizures reached the family of Hmao-dang at Hmao-ci-niao. The daughter-in-law's wedding clothes, household goods, sheep, goats and pigs, crops and grain, cattle and horses, and even the hive of bees which supplied honey for her son were all seized. Therefore the daughter-in-law was mad with anger, to the point where she became spirit-possessed.

So it was that this Miao girl, though she had a son to feed, took her son, and carrying him on her back, led out the Miao girls and young men to fight with the Mohammedans in the Mohammedan country. Fighting, they reached midway on the main road, but the Yi, mistrusting them, blocked the way on the lower side. During the time of the fighting, no one tilled any crops, and the grass grew very long. The Mohammedans sent people out who knotted the grass into bunches. Then as they drove the Miao back over the area of rank grass they stumbled and fell and it was easy for the Mohammedans to kill them. So all the Miao soldiers were killed and cut down, leaving only a few smaller ones who had been covered by the corpses which has fallen upon them so that their lives were saved.

The Mohammedans made a very sharp raid on the Miao and reached the pine tree hill at Hmao-ndu-lu. However the Miao drove the Mohammedans back into the rough country as far as the foot of a hill called Xiao-lung-dung [Small dragon cave], but the Mohammedans returned and ambushed the Miao. In a sharp encounter in a gully many died, only a few making good their escape. The crows, magpies and hawks were eating the flesh of the Miao dead for several months, and the droppings of these birds turned the banks of the gully white. So the Chinese called it Miao-zi-gou [The Miao drain].

On the foremost occasion when the Mohammedans fought with the Miao at Miao-zi-gou, we Miao had more than five hundred soldiers killed. A few at the rear were alerted and made their escape. On the previous occasion the Mohammedans killed above three hundred Miao girls and young men on the lower side of the paved road.

The Miao were despondent, but Zhang Lao-wu from Hmao-lo, Wang Ji-gan from Hmao-gao, "Old Impatient" from Hmao-su-vw, the Man Qiu-so from Hmao-drang-fa-gv and Wang Shang-zhi's grandfather from Hmao-ndu-lu, these five led forty or fifty Miao youths, and waiting until the Mohammedans again came out to attack the Miao, they rose up and drove the Mohammedans back in a sharp encounter which left many of the Mohammedan robbers dead, while the Mohammedan youths were wiped out entirely. Of the old folk, women,

mothers and children many also were killed. Mohammedan girls and older women who were good looking were offered the opportunity to continue living provided they came as wives for the Miao. Those who did not consent were all quickly killed. Such of the Mohammedan robbers as escaped entered the City of Zhaotung. The Miao followed them into the City and killed a considerable number, but the authorities took no notice.

M272
Concerning the man Lang-dai of Hmao-trao-bw.

Written by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction.

This is another episode in the story of the fighting with the Mohammedans. Keeping the peace in this mountainous area was always difficult because it lay along the border between the provinces of Yunnan and Guizhou. It was easy for a robber band to cross the border beyond the reach of any militia sent out to catch them. Then again the robbers were not “professionals”. A person might be a member of a marauding band one day, and be home, apparently a law-abiding farmer, the next. Moreover, soldiers sent out to suppress them often behaved in a manner indistinguishable from the robbers, in their treatment of the ordinary people. Robbers and soldiers are regularly classed together in the songs.

The narrative reads almost as though the man Lang-dai attacked and routed the Mohammedan robbers single handed. What in fact he did was to take command of the dispirited Miao, restore their morale and then out-manoeuvre the robbers. The Magistrate, recognising his ability as a leader, offered him a command in the local militia. This he declined.

M272

Concerning the man Lang-dai of Hmao-trao-bw.

Written by Tao Zi-gai.

The man Lang-dai was certainly not tall, only four feet and a span, but his chest was two feet broad and his legs strongly developed. The middle family, the leading family was fighting the Mohammedans with two hundred soldiers in the district midway along the road, but the Mohammedans drove the soldiers of the middle family, the leading family right back to the Gi-trao river.

The man Lang-dai heard this, and taking his iron hoe in his hand, went and attacked the Mohammedan soldiers on the paved road. He drove the Mohammedans back and in a sharp attack killed many. More than seventy were taken prisoner, and commanding the retainers of the middle family, the leading family, he brought the prisoners in bonds to Zhaotung city. The magistrate took the robbers and shut them up in prison. The magistrate wanted to give the command of his troops to the man Lang-dai, but he was not willing. Rather he requested one hundred dollars to buy wine for the soldiers of the middle family, the leading family, to drink and so return home. As a result of all this the Mohammedan robbers no longer dared to come out molesting people since all the mature men and youths, all who had the ability had been killed. There remained only the women and children who had escaped. After this with the coming of Pan Tai, robbers and soldiers everywhere were suppressed, and the neighbourhood had peace

M273
Concerning the Miao flight to Wu-ding in Yunnan.

Written by Yang Jing-de.

Introduction.

The use of the word “slave” in this piece, is somewhat misleading. There is no doubt that the treatment that the Miao received at the hands of their landlords was oppressive and often harsh and cruel. Now the landlords and yeoman farmers, the “Black Yi”, as they were called, did possess slaves, for the most part people of their own race who were called “White Yi”. The Miao, however, were not in quite this category. They were serfs, tenants on the landlord’s estates. For the poor land they had to cultivate they paid an annual rent in kind, often a quite exorbitant rent, and also they were required to give the landlord a certain amount of unpaid labour, which could be, and often was, both excessive and unreasonable

A report, even just a rumour, that conditions were more favourable in some other locality, could cause a family to pack up and move without notice. Once this happened it could easily become a general exodus.

Many years earlier such a migration took place from the estates of Byu-no to those of Sao-no (See songs M251 to M257). This was apparently prompted by the marriage of daughter of Byu-no to a son of Sao-no. It is referred to in the opening passage of the present piece, and the writer goes on to say in effect that history was now repeating itself. The demand that this young woman made was no trivial matter. To her father the removal of forty Miao families would mean the loss of rent on forty small holdings and very many hours of compulsory labour. On the other hand it was in the interest of both families that a marriage should be arranged, but the bride’s consent was essential. Within the relatively small group of top ranking landlords the number of eligible brides and bridegrooms was limited, and though the bride insisted in taking a number of her father’s Miao tenants, he in turn received a considerable marriage settlement from the bridegroom’s family.

The Miao who went with the bride would have been given land in their new home, possibly at a lower rent to make the move attractive. The glowing reports which came back, were doubtless exaggerated. The maize cob story remains a considerable overstatement even if the classifier used in the text refers to a whole maize plant and not just to a single cob.

In the early years of the twentieth century the movement of the Miao into Christianity spread to the Wu-ding area where the China Inland Mission was in charge. The two teachers named in the footnote were doubtless teacher-preachers belonging to that or to the Methodist Mission.

M273

Concerning the Miao flight to Wu-ding in Yunnan.

Written by Yang Jing-de.

During the Manchu, that is the Ching, Dynasty, at that time, we Miao were slaves of the landlords. Every kind of compulsory labour came upon the Miao, so that we could neither rest nor sleep. On one occasion when the Nuo lord was betrothing his daughter, she wanted to take our Miao girls and youths with her as slaves to her new home.

In the eighteenth year of Dao-guang (1849), there was an Yi landlord called Li living at Huan-zhou, Wu-ding in Yunnan Province, who came seeking the daughter of the Sao-no family as bride. To begin with the Sao-no daughter was unwilling to go, but afterwards she said, "If you want me to go you must allow me to take the Miao as slaves". Accordingly she took more than forty families of Miao. There were more than one hundred and twenty people who went. Later some of these who had accompanied the landlord's daughter returned as guests to their original country, and talking about their move to Huan-zhou, said that the country was very good. "Pick a cob of maize, eat one side, and the other side, the side that is left, will be enough for a meal for a Miao family!" So it was that two years later, by 1851, there were one hundred and twenty families from the Weining area who had left. The Miao just packed up and moved to the country around Huan-zhou. In 1855 there was another contingent from Weining who moved there. Afterwards as they scattered, on a hunting expedition some came to the Nbu-zhu country. Yet another group came to live in the Ma-lung, Xuin-dien, Fu-ming, Ning-liang and Song-ming districts.

Explanation. Information about the original removal of the Miao to the Wu-ding area has been gathered from the writing of teachers Pan Xio-de and Zhang Cong-ying which describe the original movements that we have here made clear.

M274

How the Miao from Sao-no country dispersed everywhere.

Written by Yang Jing-de.

Introduction.

This is an interesting short study into a complex process. The migrations of the Miao people were not simple movements of the whole tribe from one place to another. The ancient traditions need to be evaluated in order to establish the historical facts around which legends crystallised, and to discover the reason or reasons behind the migration of each individual group. In modern times the movements were prompted by the kind of factors which Yang Jing-de enumerates, but generally it was a case of one family moving first and then others following in the hope that the new situation would be better than the old. There was no organisation and no acknowledged leader. Many of the movements described in the first paragraph are over relatively short distances. Some of the place names are in Chinese, some in Miao. It is a pity that the writer did not also provide a sketch map, however rough.

The magistrate's decorated hat referred to, was probably the black silk cap with a red bauble on the top worn by scholars and teachers as well as by officials.

How the Miao from Sao-no country dispersed everywhere.

Written by Yang Jing-de.

We Miao, driven from our neighbourhood, arrived in the Sao-no country. Afterwards there was a group, drawn from both the river Bi-trao and the river A-na districts, which set out, following the bends of the river Li-gi, where they spread out and settled down. There were very many who, following up the Gi-jiai river came to dwell in two locations by that river. There were also those from three areas by the river Bi-trao, who removed to Hmao-a-yi-di. One group from there followed the Yi Lady as slaves removing to Drao-nbu-zhu, Xuin-dien in Yunnan Province. Then there was a group that moved from the river Bi-trao area to the plain of A-dyu. Of these people there were some who rose and went on to Hmao-a-dyu (Yang-shan). When the Miao had dispersed and were living all over the Weining area, a famine year caused one group to move back to the Lang-dai side of Zhi-jing.

When the Miao arrived in Sao-no country we were all slaves, with no strength for military action and without leadership. This being the case we dispersed and no leader arose. This dispersion was due to:

Firstly, disturbance in the neighbourhood. Such a disturbance was especially great when Wu Sa-guei came fighting against Byu-no and Sao-no in the reign of the Emperor Kang Xi. At that time we Miao were dependent on the Nuo landlords for our living. When the Nuo landlords were driven out and scattered by the Governor's troops, at that time many Miao fled to the Yi-liang country. That is now more than three hundred years ago.

Secondly, going as Nuo slaves. They went as slaves with the Nuo lady-daughter. We Miao moved to the Wu-ding country went in the first place as slaves with the lady-daughter of the Nuo lord, but then, hearing that the country was good, a great number simply followed.

Thirdly, While out hunting they saw that an area was good, and simply packed up, and moved there.

Fourthly, because of famine, heavy compulsory labour, and being pressed as soldiers, people moved. Then when staying might result in over-close intermarriage, there were many who moved for this reason, like those who removed to Ngha-ndu and the Kunming countryside.

When we Miao dispersed in every direction from the Weining area we had no wise person to lead us. However, when our old folk came here to live in the Weining country, we had an able individual, a commander to lead the soldiers in combat with the Manchu (Ching Dynasty) troops. This old person commanding the soldiers was called the man Hai. He was a Weining, Zhu-wen person, and on the eighteenth of the twelfth month in 1870, he led the soldiers, together with Miao soldiers from Shuen-qiai, in an attack upon Weining city. He did capture the city, but because the number of troops under the magistrate's command was so great, our Miao soldiers were scattered in the fighting. The old person commanding the soldiers led his group to the river Bi-trao, to that area, and afterwards to Yi-liang, Hmao-lao and Ying-shan.

Then there was a man among the Miao old folk who was very wise. He was an elder of the old people's ruling family. This ruling elder was in dispute with those who wanted to seize his land and carried his case all the way to Beijing, and won. The emperor presented him with a magistrate's decorated hat to wear, and appointed him as magistrate in Shuen-chai.

We Miao, driven from our neighbourhood, arrived in the Weining area with a rising generation, alive and virile. We had among those old folk any number of able and wise people, but now we are very weak, very conscious of how much we fall short of the past. We must work hard, learning in all fields so that we may establish our standing and dwelling place along with other Miao tribes. Only so shall we be worthy descendants of our forebears.

