

M133
Song of the Flood.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Notes

This song is found in Document K (no. 2/2, page 7). Document L (no. 5, page 14). Document N (no. 11, page 374). The entry in Document N contains lines 42 - 43 and 50 - 69 of Zhang Ming's song conflated with material from other versions of the Flood story.

Line 2. Document L has misread the name $\Lambda_{\epsilon} \dagger^{\bar{}} \dagger_r T_{\parallel}$ as $\Lambda_{\epsilon} \dagger^{\bar{}} \dagger_r L_{\parallel}$. In any case this name is a mistake. It belonged to the man who led the migration of the Miao into the Zhaotung area. The father of $C T_{\parallel} \Lambda^{\circ}$ and $C T_{\parallel} \Lambda^{\bar{}}$ was $\Delta^{\parallel} E_{\parallel} \dagger^{\bar{}} L_{\parallel}$ according to the other versions of the story.

Line 11. Here, and throughout the song, Document L has changed the form of the name, $C \Delta_{nc} C \Delta_{\parallel} L^{nc} \mathcal{J}^n \mathcal{D}^p$ to $L^{nc} C \Delta_{\parallel} J^r T^{ru} \mathcal{J}^n \mathcal{D}^p$ to bring it in line with Yang Zhi's version.

Line 14. Document K, followed by Document L, has a note at the end of the line explaining that $\dagger^{\circ} C \dagger^{\prime\prime}$ means $\dagger^{\circ} C \mathcal{J} - \overset{\circ}{\mathcal{Z}}$, that is "to build a guard booth".

Line 17. The expression "Today then today" indicates the passage of a few days: "After a day or two".

Line 19. In both documents this line reads, $\mathcal{D} - C \Delta_{\epsilon} E^p \mathcal{J}^p \mathcal{J}^{\bar{}} \mathcal{Z}^n \mathcal{J}^p E_{\parallel} E_{nc}$. This is clearly a mistake. A second \mathcal{J}^p has been written instead of \dagger_r . The phrase occurs in line 12 above, and also a number of times in other versions of the Flood story, and, without exception, \dagger_r is used.

Line 30. The pattern of strict parallelism has been restored by reading L_{\parallel} instead of $\mathcal{J}^{\bar{}}$ in this line.

Line 39. The iron boat is described in both Documents as $T^{\bar{}} \mathcal{J}_n \Lambda^{\circ}$ a phrase which does not make good sense, and is probably a mistake for $T_{\circ} \mathcal{J}^{\prime n} \Lambda_{\parallel}$ which is the reading in the other versions of the story. It means "to sink heavily", and is exactly parallel to "to float lightly" in line 41.

Line 43. In spoken Miao the word C^{\parallel} means "birds". In the old songs, however, it occurs regularly in the names of animals and snakes. This line being a modern interpolation, as explained in the introduction, C^{\parallel} has been translated "birds", rather than "creatures".

Line 55. Document K followed by Document L has inserted $\Lambda^{\bar{\sigma}}$ into the name of the magpie. There is an old Miao form of the name, $C^{\bar{\sigma}} \Lambda^{\bar{\sigma}} \Gamma^{\bar{\sigma}} C\bar{\sigma}$ of which $C^{\bar{\sigma}} \Lambda^{\bar{\sigma}} \Gamma^{\bar{\sigma}} C\bar{\sigma}$ may possibly be a variant, but since the shorter form is used in lines 54 and 58, the $\Lambda^{\bar{\sigma}}$ is probably a mistake.

Line 71. In Document K the two words here read as $\Delta^{\bar{\sigma}} J^{\bar{\sigma}}$ are difficult to decipher. The first element looks like Δ but with the left hand side of the triangle missing. Accordingly, in Document L it is read as $J^{\bar{\sigma}}$, but this can only be a guess. The second element looks like a badly formed J with two small circles, like a pair of spectacles, near the top. Document L suggests that it is $J^{\bar{\sigma}}$, but the compound $J^{\bar{\sigma}} J^{\bar{\sigma}}$ makes no sense. From the context the meaning of the phrase must be, "to call to" or "to shout to". That is, "Ndrao-ya spoke up and called into the sky". The reading, $\Delta^{\bar{\sigma}} J^{\bar{\sigma}}$ gives this meaning exactly.

Line 83. Both Documents have a note written in Chinese giving the meaning as, "Do not let the children take milk", presumably, "Do not feed the children at the breast". This cannot be correct since the Miao actually means, "Do not let the children cry for milk", and this line is parallel to line 85 which reads, "Do not let the children cry aloud". The children must be kept quiet so as not to attract Thunder's attention. In other versions of the song the instruction is to keep the children indoors when a storm is threatening.

Line 91. The final three words in this line in Document K look like, $\mathfrak{b}^{\bar{\sigma}} C^{\bar{\sigma}} \Gamma^{\bar{\sigma}}$, a reading copied in Document L. The first word, however, must be $\mathfrak{b}^{\bar{\sigma}}$, "to grow", as in line 93, and it seems likely that a similar misreading of the vowel accounts for the second and third words as well. The phrase means "to grow long and tall" and should read, $\mathfrak{b}^{\bar{\sigma}} C^{\bar{\sigma}} \Gamma^{\bar{\sigma}}$.

Line 96. Both Document K and Document L read $Y^{\bar{\sigma}} C^{\bar{\sigma}} S^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{D}^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{S}^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{T}^{\bar{\sigma}}$. The first two words mean, "make rain", and the last is the word, "for", which links this line to the one which follows. The three words, $S^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{D}^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{S}^{\bar{\sigma}}$ describe the kind of rain. $\mathfrak{D}^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{S}^{\bar{\sigma}}$ means "great" or "powerful", and is used regularly to describe sacred mountains, rocks or trees, so that, $C^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{D}^{\bar{\sigma}} \mathfrak{S}^{\bar{\sigma}}$ would mean, "the great rains" or "the mighty rains". $S^{\bar{\sigma}}$ is the verb "to return", "to go or come back", but it does not make good sense in the present context. In the lines that follow it says that this particular kind of rain "nurtures the crops" so that they ripen yellow, and "nurtures the leaves" until they grow old and fall. It would seem likely therefore that the word, $S^{\bar{\sigma}}$ has been written when it should have been, $J^{\bar{\sigma}}$. So amended the text would mean, "not the mighty rain", that is, the heavy rains had abated so that the harvest might ripen.