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Hua Miao spirit worship.

1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 1.

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The Spirit Zu-gi-za was also called Yeu-su-mu. (He was king of the spirits and there was no place where he was not. In incantations he had not to be addressed as the Spirit Zu-gi-za, he might only be addressed as Yeu-su-mu. If he were addressed wrongly he would cause people to become sick. This spirit was above all other spirits. When people worshipped rocks and trees, caves and caverns, cliffs and crags, it was because this spirit had caused sickness. Then they worshipped the ancestors who had died in order that they might go and pray to him not to send sickness. If the prayers of the ancestors were unavailing, then they would invite the shaman-healer in order that he might go and pray. Sons and daughters were dedicated to rocks or dedicated to trees in order that their lives might become strong as the rocks and strong as the trees. If the result was good they called the shaman-healer to slaughter livestock and pigs to worship this spirit.)

Worshipping the spirits. First it was necessary to worship the Great Spirit. (The Great Spirit was the Spirit Zu-gi-za.) He was worshipped first then the ancestors were worshipped. The person who officiated was the zu-mu. (The zu-mu was a brother in the family, other people might not officiate.) In the main branch of the family, if the eldest brother, being a young adult, became sick, they would call the shaman-healer to investigate. If the shaman-healer spoke in this manner,

“This lad must open the door of the ancestors,
He must lead children in the way”,

they would wait until the sickness was better, then they would take him to learn about the spirits from the brothers who knew the incantations, so that he might return and officiate as zu-mu. The person who officiated had to trace his descent in the main branch of the family. Middle or younger sons could not act as zu-mu.) So it was, whichever son, in the main branch of the family, the shaman-healer pointed out, that person officiated as zu-mu for that Miao family.

Livestock for the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za. First they devoted a large pig for the Spirit Zu-gi-za. Although the time had not yet arrived, the Spirit Zu-gi-za, being in a hurry to have it, caused the wolves to come and take the large pig away. So it was that, every time, whenever this ritual was performed, early in the morning they got one or two relatives to come and act as wolves. Taking the large pig they led it away and killed it. Using bracken they burnt it clean and prepared the meat. At the time when they had eaten their morning meal the head of the house led those brothers out as though to hunt those wolves, and take the pork which those relatives had prepared. (When the head of the house went out as though to hunt those wolves, the two relatives who had gone to prepare the meat had to run away into the undergrowth.) Two scraps of meat were cut off and they made as though they were throwing them to the two wolves. (The wolves represented the Spirit Zu-gi-za.) They then took the meat and carried it home. Slicing it up with a knife they boiled and ate it. This counted as the ritual for the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za.

Thus if they were going to kill a large pig in sacrifice, it would be because in this family, mother, father, son or daughter, whoever it might have been, was sick. They would go and call the shaman-healer to investigate. If the shaman-healer said, "This visitation is a visitation of the Great Spirit", they would know that they must kill a large pig to worship the Spirit Zu-gi-za. So it was that they would quickly devote a large pig for the Spirit Zu-gi-za, wait for the Ox, Tiger or Rabbit month, whichever month it might be, and look to the day, whether Tiger-day, Ox-day or Horse-day, whichever day it might be. Having looked for the right time and season, they had to call the brothers to come and kill the large pig to worship the Spirit Zu-gi-za. The time for the sacrifice had to be a high day. The ritual of wolf-catching had to be carried out on a Tiger-day. (Other days, such as an Ox-day or a Horse-day were all right as well.) These days counted as high days.