

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Beginnings

Creation, the ordering of heavenly bodies, and early man

Songs M101 to M122

Introduction and Translation

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Song of the creation of heaven and earth.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

Although the Miao had a number of ancient songs about the fashioning of earth and sky, they never attempted to harmonise these into a consistent cosmology or scheme of creation. This song, which is of considerable literary merit, is principally a description of earth and sky, of sun, moon and stars, of valleys and mountains, of rivers and lakes and forests, and of the birds and beasts who lived there. Except for the oft-repeated assertion that "Lie-ndlao-shi-tru gi-myu Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu, he made them", the singer was apparently not interested in the actual process of creation. There is no hint at all as to how it was all brought into being.

Long names are a feature of Miao songs. No doubt originally they all had obvious meanings, but it is not now always easy to determine what those meanings were. Very often, to the central name itself, consisting of two or three syllables, titles or descriptive phrases have been added and the whole used as a single name. A Miao reader or hearer would recognize it as such, but would also appreciate the meaning of the constituent elements. For the reader who does not understand Miao the best thing to do is to transliterate the central name and, where possible, to translate the titles and descriptive phrases, but to write them with capital initials to show that they are still, in fact, part of the name.

The long name, Lie-ndlao-shi-tru gi-myu Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu, used throughout this song, divides into two parts containing six and four syllables respectively, and forming two separate names used in apposition to each other. The phrase "gi-myu" in the middle means "king", "lie" is possibly the word for "red", and "ndlao" is widely used to describe the coloured patterns of the tribal costume or the markings of animals and birds. It is also used in "ndlao-ji" which is the word for "glory". The expression "lie-ndlao" may therefore mean "glorious". In one song describing the ancient homeland, it says that at the Golden City there was a tree called "hi-tru" where they sacrificed chicken. Now "hi-tru" and "shi-tru" are alternative forms of the same expression, so that "shi-tru" is probably the name of a sacred tree, used here as a personal name. "Yeu-jio" is widely used in names, and simply means "the man", while "dlang-hnu" is "the sun", but again used as a personal name. In the interlinear text this compound name is left untranslated except for the title "gi-myu", "king", since this is the way it was written in the Miao. For the English translation, application of the method outlined above yields, "The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu".

In the two names "Gi-niao-ndlie-za" and "Gi-niao-ndlie-bang", "Gi-niao" is a title which can be translated, "the Master". According to a song sung by Tao Zi-gai, these two individuals were folk-heroes who, early in the history of the race, had been leaders, and teachers of the people. Sadly both died young, but their spirits went to dwell, each in an inaccessible cave or cavern. However, before his death, the Master Ndlie-bang had left directions that, if need arose, the shaman-healer would be able, both to locate the departed spirits and to bring them back into the sacred rock or sacred tree associated with each village. Thus the power and wisdom of the Masters remained available to the people of the village as they made their annual pilgrimage to the sacred rock or the sacred tree with their offerings of food and drink.

"Earth's people" is a literal translation of the Miao phrase "ndlie-di dw-nw". In the context of the story of creation it is an appropriate rendering, but elsewhere it is clear that the

expression does not mean "the human race" but "we Miao people", and it is more correct to translate it as simply, "the people". "Golden stones" are the stars, and "sifted stones" are the milky way. The great river, which flowed through the ancient homeland of the Miao, emptied into the nine lakes of Gi-nzyu, beyond the mountain ranges.

M101
Song of the creation of heaven and earth.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- When the sky began,
The sky above, who made it?
The sky above, the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu, he made it.
When the earth began,
5 Earth's people, who made them?
Earth's people, the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man
Dlang-hnu, he made them.
- The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made the sky above extremely smooth, even as the bottom of a great round basket;
Made the sky above extremely smooth where Sun-maid and Moon-youth might play
together.
- 10 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made the sky above extremely smooth and fastened there the golden stones;
Made the sky above extremely smooth and fastened there the sifted stone.
- The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made the sky above extremely smooth where the clouds might gracefully float;
15 Made the sky above extremely smooth where the rushing winds might blow.
Made the sky above extremely smooth where eagles might fly to and fro.
- The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made valleys for earth's people where great shining rivers might smoothly flow;
Made valleys for earth's people set with black rocks;
20 Made valleys for earth's people lined with cliffs.
- The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made mountain ranges for earth's people gathering the shining waters of the nine
lakes of Gi-nzyu;
Made mountain ranges for earth's people with swaying forests sighing;
Made mountain ranges for earth's people with swaying forests so very dark
- 25 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made valleys for earth's people where wild deer all might live;
Made mountain ranges for earth's people where tigers and lions all might dwell.
- The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
Made the sky above extremely smooth where birds might fly;
30 Made valleys for earth's people where water might flow;
Made mountains with rocks and cliffs for earth's people, rising upward out of sight.
- He made the sky above for clouds to play together.
He made the sky above for Sun-maid and Moon-youth to circle round.
He made the sky above for stars and starlets to live in due order.

35 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu
 Made valleys for earth's people, for ordinary folk to live in their families;
 Made valleys for earth's people, for common folk to dwell in their families.
 In the world, though the common folk, the ordinary folk discussed it together,
 They did not know who had made earth and heaven.

40 Among earth's people who knew?
 Among earth's people the Master Ndlie-za knew.
 The Master Ndlie-za said that the Glorious King Shi-tru sat at the foot of the rock,
 The Glorious King Shi-tru simply spoke the word and the Master Ndlie-za was
 instructed.

Among earth's people who knew?
 45 Among earth's people the Master Ndlie-bang knew.
 The Master Ndlie-bang said that the Man Dlang-hnu sat at the foot of the tree,
 The Man Dlang-hnu simply spoke the word and the Master Ndlie-bang was assured.

The Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang surely said,
 Said that earth and sky, it was the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu who
 made them,
 50 Made the sky above extremely smooth
 As a place for the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu to arise,
 Made the valleys for earth's people
 As a place for the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu to stand firm.

Among earth's people, the common folk, the ordinary folk copied,
 55 Copied the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang and sought,
 Sought the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu going out to the foot of the
 rock,
 Sought the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu in their trouble.

Among earth's people, the common folk, the ordinary folk sought,
 Sought the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu going out to the foot of the
 tree,
 60 Sought the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Dlang-hnu bearing their chicken for
 sacrifice.
 Now the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang said that
 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Ndlang-hnu was not at the foot of the rock.
 The Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang said that
 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Ndlang-hnu was not at the foot of the tree.

65 But the common folk, the ordinary folk were not wise,
 They did not understand the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang.
 The common folk, the ordinary folk went out to the foot of the rock and offered
 wine,
 They went out to the foot of the tree and sacrificed chicken.
 So the Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Ndlang-hnu hid himself,
 70 And the common folk, the ordinary folk sought him in vain.

Earth's people sacrificing to rocks and sacrificing to trees
 Has its root and origin here,
 But the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang said that

75 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Ndlang-hnu dwelt in the midst of the sky,
 They said that
 The Glorious King Shi-tru, the Man Ndlang-hnu dwelt at a place in the sky.

Thus it is ended.

M102
The Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

The ancient spirit worship of the Miao people took many forms. A major factor was the worship of the ancestors, and particularly the supreme spirit who had to be addressed as, "Yeu-su-mu", "First Ancestor". This worship took place only occasionally, and always at the family home. It was not conducted by the shaman-healer, but by certain, especially chosen members of the family, who, from their youth, had been trained in the appropriate rituals and incantations.

Another aspect of the spirit worship was the annual offering made by each village to "The Venerable and the Old", the title given to the local sacred rock or sacred tree. In the accounts of this worship and incantations that have survived, it seems clear that, in popular belief, the spirits addressed were actually those of the rocks or trees themselves, and no mention is made of the spirits of the Master Ndlie-za or the Master Ndlie-bang. This song, however, suggests that the spirits invoked were those of these two legendary figures, which had been called back from their "homes" to the sacred rock or the sacred tree respectively, by the power of the shaman-healer.

The song nowhere explains the meaning of the names of these two ancient folk heroes. The first two of the four syllables are titles, used in the songs for influential members of the community, such as heads of leading families, hence the translation, "Master". In the present song it is stated that they died young, but their spirits made their homes in a "kho za" and a "kho bang" respectively. Both these expressions mean "cave" or "cavern". The Miao word for "to hide" is, "ndlai", and it is just possible that the word "ndlie" which occurs in both names should be "ndlai". If so, then the names would mean, "the Master hidden in the cave" and "the Master hidden in the cavern". It was generally believed that spirits could dwell in short pieces of bamboo, and, if frightened, would take refuge there. In this song the shaman-healer prepared two pieces of bamboo, one shorter and one longer, and persuaded or enticed the spirits of the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang to enter them so that they might be "drawn out" from their inaccessible caves to the sacred rock and the sacred tree respectively, where their power and wisdom would be available to those who offered the annual sacrifice. The same result was achieved by use of the "curving stick" mentioned at a later point in the song.

The reference to "Next year, thirteen years", is an example of a practice, common in the conduct of marriage negotiations and similar discussions, and in the arranging of the rituals of spirit worship, whereby "code words" were used instead of the actual names of the objects concerned. Thus when the shaman-healer had determined that the ancestors were growing restless and demanding that sacrifices should be offered, the family concerned would ask, "Must it be in thirteen years time?" to which the shaman-healer would reply, "Yes, next year." For some unexplained reason, though the shaman-healer might speak directly, the family were at pains to avoid doing so.

What exactly was intended by, "Chinese mouths and tongues" is not clear. A similar expression is found in the incantations used in the worship of the spirits, where in one place the word "tongue" is used, while in another, identical passage, the word is "sword". It is

possible, therefore, that "Chinese tongues" is a "code word" for "Chinese swords", in which case "mouths" would be a "code word" for "scabbards". However this may be, the general meaning of the passage is not in doubt. It is an invocation to the spirits that, should the Chinese approach with hostile intent, they should be turned back at the sacred tree, or deflected to one side, that is away from the village.

M102
The Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

When the sky began,
The Master Ndlie-za came at first,
When the earth began,
The Master Ndlie-bang came later.

5 The Master Ndlie-za, his ability, his skill, his sagacity,
His strength, his cleverness, his wisdom, was more than sufficient for the world to
receive,
More than sufficient for the people's needs.
Of his strength, the community of people, even the foolish ones, all received.

10 While the Master Ndlie-za lived, people spoke without anxiety.
He taught them how to fill their time
So that all might be used and none wasted.
But by reason of the Master Ndlie-za's early passing,
The people all lamented.

15 While the sky remained constant,
Later the Master Ndlie-bang died,
Though the people were unaware.

The people lived,
Lived and multiplied all over the earth,
But everywhere, among the people, there were the foolish and the lazy,
20 People able to eat but unable to act,
So that everywhere people were trapped by hunger and by thirst.

Everywhere calamities occurred,
And though the people fled they did not escape.
As sickness among the people increased,
25 There was only the Master Ndlie-bang,
Who had taught the people to perform the shaman-healer's arts.

The shaman-healer, exercising his art, declared,
Declared the location of the Master Ndlie-bang's strong place,
Declared the location of the Master Ndlie-bang's standing place.

30 The shaman-healer, exercising his art, declared,
Declared, "Where is the Master Ndlie-bang?
The Master Ndlie-bang is in a cave";
Declared, "Where is the Master Ndlie-za?
The Master Ndlie-za is in a cavern".

35 The shaman-healer, exercising his art, made spirit traps long and short,
To draw out the Master Ndlie-za, his knowledge and uprightiness to the foot of the
rock,
To draw out the Master Ndlie-bang, his strength and firmness to the foot of the tree.

That the people might slaughter chicken and slaughter pigs and sacrifice,
Sacrifice to the Master Ndlie-za at the foot of the rock,
40 That the people might slaughter chicken and slaughter pigs and sacrifice,
Sacrifice to the Master Ndlie-bang at the foot of the tree.

When ill fortune befell the people,
The people went to perform the shaman-healer's arts,
They performed the shaman-healer's rituals, they performed the shaman-healer's arts
and received word
45 Which caused the people to prepare,
To prepare sacrifices to Yeu-su-mu,
To sacrifice at the people's homesteads.

So the people reared cattle and reared pigs,
And when the next year came, "the thirteenth year",
50 They killed the cattle and killed the pigs and gave,
Gave Yeu-su-mu food,
Gave Yeu-su-mu water,
Gave Yeu-su-mu wine.

Thus they ensured that Yeu-su-mu would watch over the people,
55 Would give to the children length of life,
Would watch over them, causing their descendants to fill the world,
Causing their descendants to fill the earth.

The people exercising the shaman-healer's art called,
Called the Master Ndlie-za to what place?
60 They called the Master Ndlie-za to the hill top.

Performing thus, the shaman-healer exercised his art and declared,
Declared that the Master Ndlie-za was in what place?
He declared that the Master Ndlie-za was in a cavern.

So the people went and decided upon a way.
65 The people broke off a curving stick and brought out,
Brought out the Master Ndlie-za to the rock face,
Brought out the Master Ndlie-za to the stone pillar.

On reaching Snake month or Horse month,
The shaman-healer, exercising his art, caused the people to sacrifice to the
Venerable,
70 Caused the people to sacrifice to the Old.
So the Master Ndlie-za and the Master Ndlie-bang would provide,
Provide for the people, the children, protection,
Making the Ruling Race's "mouths and tongues" turn back,
Turn back at the foot of the Master Ndlie-za's tree,
75 While the Master Ndlie-bang would divert,
Divert the Ruling Race away to one side,
And not let calamity overtake the children.

Thus it is ended.

M103
Song of the creation of the world.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

This song, together with one version of the Ya-ya story, begins with the activities of companies of cosmic smiths. In the latter story, however, they did not arrive until after the sky and earth were established, and, though the ringing of their hammers told that they were very busy, it is not explained precisely what they were doing. In this song they were engaged in fashioning the great copper dome which is the sky, and from iron and copper shaping the mountains and valleys on earth. In particular they created the physical features of the ancient Miao homeland whence the winding River Shi, the River Gi-bang flowed away through the gorges in the Gi-njio mountains to empty its waters into the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu.

In the second half of the song the long days and short nights of Summer are explained by the sun and moon pursuing, respectively, longer and shorter daily journeys during that season, and vice versa for the Winter months. The change over when their "paths divide" falls in Snake-month or Horse-month (the first or second month of the lunar calendar) that is at the Spring equinox, and in Ox-month or Rat-month (the ninth or eighth month) that is, the Autumn equinox. The closing section of the song explains the changing phases of the moon in contrast with the unchanging motion of the sun.

M103
Song of the creation of the world.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Four companies of copper smiths came from four localities,
Four companies of copper smiths, four beaters of copper.
They beat the copper and shaped the copper till they had shaped the sky,
The rounded sky above.

5 They made the sky polished above,
They made the sky extremely smooth,
For Sun-maid and Moon-youth to circle through its midst.

Four companies of copper smiths came from four places,
Four companies of copper smiths, four beaters of iron.
10 They beat the copper and shaped the iron till they had shaped the earth,
The earth spread out into all the world.

They made the rocks and cliffs of the world's mountains,
The mountains of Gi-njio in ranges rising upward,
And the world's valleys sinking downward.
15 They made the world's deep valleys clear away into the distance,
Deep enough for the winding River Shi, the River Gi-bang to flow.

Where the River Shi, the River Gi-bang flowed on its way,
Its valley through the people's Njio mountains
Became a deep valley, a cliff lined gorge,
20 And the winding River Shi, the River Gi-bang was held back,
So that the River Shi, the River Gi-bang flowed smoothly where it divided,
Divided the people's land.

The Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu,
Nine, set in nine localities,
25 Nine, set in nine places,
This was where the River Shi, the River Gi-bang was gathered at last.

The sky above was exceedingly smooth,
Where Sun-maid and Moon-youth found paths for their travels.
While Sun-maid went circling through the midst of the sky,
30 Moon-youth went in circles through the clear, clear sky.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth's roads divide.
While Sun-maid goes by the far road,
Moon youth goes by the near road.

35 Having reached Ox-month or Rat-month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth's paths divide.
While Moon-youth goes by the far road,
Sun-maid goes by the near road.

40 Sun-maid said her road was purposeful,
So with confidence Sun-maid travels each day.
Each day Sun-maid plants her feet firmly,
And each year her size is the same.

45 Moon-youth said his road was lazy,
So Moon-youth one day goes on tip-toe,
And this is what is called "New Moon".
Moon-youth on another day plants his feet firmly,
And this is what is called "Full Moon".

Thus it is ended.

M104

How Yeu-dlang-ndu separated the sky from the earth.

Narrated by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

There can be little doubt that the original text of this story was in the form of a song. There are quite a number of expressions used which belong to the vocabulary of the songs, but the Miao text in Document N is in prose, a transcript, possibly a precis, of the original song. The Chinese version is clearly not a direct translation of the present Miao text, but a paraphrase in Chinese verse form.

In other cosmology songs the activities of coppersmiths and blacksmiths are described, but these were engaged in actually forming the sky and the earth. Here they were faced with repairing the sky and fixing it back into position above the earth. This task they completed successfully, but their carelessness in supervising the smelting of the gold and silver, resulted in the formation of twelve suns and twelve moons. In the Ya-ya song the excessive numbers of suns and moons was reduced to a single pair, but Ya-ya had to deal with only seven of each. If, originally, there were twelve, what became of the other five? It is just possible that at some earlier stage in the transmission of this story the exploding crucible of molten gold and silver produced, not twelve pairs of suns and moons, but the twelve constellations of the zodiac.

The Miao word rendered, "crucible", normally means, "hearth", or "furnace". However, the context indicates that it was a container for molten metal which could be plugged with rock and earth and then thrown away.

It is from the Chinese text that we learn that this story was contributed by Wang Jian-guo. A record of this fact, together with the notes normally printed at the end of the piece are missing in the Miao text.

M104

How Yeu-dlang-ndu separated the sky from the earth.

Narrated by Wang Jian-guo.

They say that in olden times when sky and earth still clung closely together, there was a certain Yeu-dlang-ndu. He was very strong, and had three heads and six shoulders, but with his hands and feet spread out he was wrapped and held tightly between sky and earth for long ages, for thousands of years. As Yeu-dlang-ndu grew to full manhood he began stretching his hands and feet upward, pressing out the sky into a dome above, and pushing sky and earth completely apart. For earth's people this brought comfortable living and good health.

The result, however, was that sky and earth were no longer at peace, in fact a conflict arose between them, and Yeu-dlang-ndu, unable to put up with it, dropped them, throwing them aside. At this the sky had to spend all the time searching for earth's knee and thigh. In the course of the search, holes were made in the earth like a net, and this so angered the earth that it began to rock the sky all day long by rocking its knees and thighs. It rocked them to the point that the sky broke into pieces. For earth's people this was a grave situation. Crops could not be raised, markets could not be run, and no one dared to enter into negotiations for marriage.

With rising concern and alarm earth's people sought a remedy. They summoned earth's smiths to come and discuss it. Earth's smiths said, "Go away to the South and fetch gold, copper and iron ore, together with coal and charcoal in large quantities for us to forge pillars of copper and pillars of iron. First of all we will take the polished sky and the earth and secure them firmly in order that life may be protected. Then, presently, we will construct a crucible to smelt the gold and silver ore and fashion the sun and moon to go circling around the sky".

Earth's people dug the copper ore and the iron ore, they likewise dug sufficient coal. Then the smiths forged pillars of copper and pillars of iron. It took them ninety-nine years, but eventually they forged four pillars which supported the sky. At the same time as they were forging the copper pillars and the iron pillars, they shovelled up gold ore and silver ore to smelt in the crucible. The fire glowed fiercely with curling flames, and the liquid gold and the liquid silver boiled and bubbled to the point that the smiths could not handle it. When the pillars of copper and the pillars of iron had been completed and they returned to look, the liquid gold and the liquid silver was boiling and bubbling, and none of the smiths had any way of dealing with it. It could not be poured out, so, quickly, they took rocks and earth and, having stopped up the crucible, they flung it away into the sky. The liquid gold and the liquid silver became twelve couples of sun-maids and moon-youths which went circling around the sky. So it is.

M105
The work of setting sky and earth in order.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

The understanding of this song depends on the interpretation of the word "nzha". Its basic meaning is "to measure", but its significance is rather wider. "Nzha" can also be used, for example, of a carpenter or a tailor "setting, or laying out" his work, before actually cutting into the timber or the cloth, and that is the meaning of the word in this song. So in translation "nzha" is best rendered, not as "measured", but as "set in order". The legendary brother and sister were not embarked on a fact-finding mission, simply measuring up what already existed, but were engaged in setting out and regulating the whole course of nature including the movements of the heavenly bodies. Thus the book that they produced, was not the record of a survey, written up at the end of their travelling, but a scheme and a plan prepared before they started, a scheme which they put into effect as they journeyed.

Despite legends to the contrary, the Miao had no written language until the introduction of the Pollard script in the early years of the Twentieth Century. Other peoples among whom they lived, notably the Chinese and the Yi, had writing which, in Miao eyes, resembled the patterns embroidered or dyed on their tribal costumes. In this song the writing is described using exactly the same metaphors as those employed for the decorations on clothing. When it was completed the book was rolled, and wrapped in a cloth, ready for the journeys ahead.

The names of the brother and sister in this song mean respectively, "sky set-in-order earth water" and "earth young-woman wheat bunch". These are, however, always used as proper nouns in the Miao text. For the English version a partial translation has been adopted, "Heaven's Nzha-di-ao" and "Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao". ("Nzai-shao" means a bundle, consisting of a double handful, of wheat stalks. Ten such bundles make a sheaf.)

Miao folk-tradition held that the variations in the length of day, as between summer and winter, were directly related to the distance that Sun-maid had to travel each day. In summer her road was long, so the days were long, in winter it was short, and so were the days. It was also explained that when Sun-maid's journeys were long, Moon-youth's journeys were short and vice-versa, thus summer nights were short and winter nights long. At six-monthly intervals, in Snake-month or Horse-month, and again in Ox-month or Rat-month, Sun-maid and Moon-youth were said to "separate their roads". That is, the one who had been on the longer route now took the shorter, and the other whose journey had been shorter had now to go the longer way. The dates for "separating their roads" correspond to the spring and autumn equinoxes. This song explains how these ordered itineraries came into being.

Having established the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu, sister and brother travelled to the dwelling (the place of arriving) of Sun-maid and Moon-youth, to the extreme limit of earth and sky, and established there a fine town. Sun-maid, probably out of curiosity, and possibly accompanied by Moon-youth, though it does not say so, rose up to see what was going on, and came near to destroying the town with her burning heat as she hung motionless in the sky. To remedy the situation Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao despatched the heavenly bodies on their daily journeys through the sky, and at the same time inaugurated the sequence of the seasons.

In lines 74 and 75 there are two adjectives used to describe the flow of the great River Hmao-shi. They are translated "interweaving" and "side by side" or "parallel". The first reference is to the appearance of the surface of the water in a river as it flows along, resembling the criss-crossing of strands in the pattern of some woven fabric. The second is to the effect produced when a tributary of clear water joins the main river where the water is muddy. The two do not mix together at once, but for some little distance flow along together with a clear line of demarcation between the fresh green strips of clear water and the red-brown of the muddy water. This was said to resemble the parallel strips of different coloured cloth sewn as decoration on the skirts worn by Miao women.

Like the Chinese, the Miao used the lunar calendar. The months were known by the same sequence of animal names:

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Snake | 2. Horse | 3. Sheep | 4. Monkey | 5. Cockerel | 6. Dog |
| 7. Pig | 8. Rat | 9. Ox | 10. Tiger | 11. Rabbit | 12. Dragon |

Twelve lunar months are approximately ten days shorter than one solar year, so that, if the two are to be kept in step, every fourth year it is necessary to add an intercalary month. Thus dates fixed in the solar calendar move from one month to the next in the lunar calendar and then jump back again. So, for instance, mid-summer's day may fall in Dog-month for a year or two, then it will pass into Pig month until the addition of the extra month brings it back again into Dog month. The same is true of all the seasons which, of course, are governed by the solar year. This explains why, in Miao songs, seasons are always dated by reference to two adjacent months. These are usually named in the order of the calendar, but, for no obvious reason, sometimes the later month is mentioned first.

The expression, "yiu vang di ndu", which occurs several times in this song from line 71 onwards, is difficult to translate. "Yiu" means "to give birth" or "to rear", as a child or an animal; "to tend" or "to pasture", as cattle or sheep; "to maintain", as an army; "to germinate" or "to spring up", as crops. In the present context, it is used of an area of land, and means, "actively to promote the well-being of the country and the welfare of its people". The rest of the expression, "vang di ndu" means "environs". It is the land around a village, which comes under the general control of that village. It is the country around and about, over which a city exercises its authority. Although it does not say so specifically, the reference here is to the area around the town of Hmao-shi. This country was called, "Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di", and in the songs is depicted as the ancient home-land of the Miao people. In order to make good sense, what is implicit in the Miao text has had to be made explicit in the English translation, so that the whole expression becomes, "to promote the well-being of the homeland".

M105
The work of setting sky and earth in order.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

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

5 The Miao maid, the bride, was chaste,
 The Miao maid, the bride, was pure.
 The Miao maid, the bride, had given birth to no son,
 The Miao maid, the bride, had given birth to no seed.

10 When the Miao maid, the bride, gave birth, she bore two children only.
 The elder having no name,
 Let the elder be called, Heaven's Nzha-di-ao.
 The younger having no name,
 Let the younger be called, Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao.

15 Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao wore a gathered apron,
 A gathered apron with a pattern of spots.
 Heaven's Nzha-di-ao simply wore a striped gown,
 A striped gown with a dyed pattern right round it.

20 Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao, Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
 Their hands were able, their hands were skilful.
 What were their hands able, what were their hands skilful to do?
 Their hands were able, their hands were skilful to write,
 To write a volume recorded in patterns like spots.
 They wrote the front of the book in patterns like spots,
 They wrote the back of the book recorded in patterns like squares.

25 Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao, Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
 Their hands were able, their hands rolled the book,
 Rolled the volume recorded in patterns like spots,
 Waiting to be carried onward through earth and sky,
 Waiting for Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao to arise and accompany,
30 Accompany Heaven's Nzha-di-ao. So they went,
 Went setting sky and earth in order, and they reached,
 Reached the wide shores of the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu.

35 Where, do they say, that the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu were located?
 They say that the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu were located in nine places.
 The Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu were deep and clear as the sunrise,
 The Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu were deep and clear as the sunset.
 There was the place where the crane reared its young,
 There was the place where the crane brooded its eggs.

Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao arose and accompanied,

- 40 Accompanied Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and they went, setting the sky in order.
Setting Sky and Earth in order, so they reached,
Reached the dwelling of Sun-maid and Moon-youth.
- Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
Urgently sent back word,
- 45 Back to the town of Hmao-shi, "Come and build a town!"
So they built for Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao a town of solid rock,
They built for Heaven's Nzha-di-ao a Miao town of cut rock,
Built it deliberately at the dwelling of Sun-maid and Moon-youth.
- The sun came and the sun shone,
50 The sun came burning,
Burning the town of Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao till it grew fiery red,
Burning the town of Heaven's Nzha-di-ao till it glowed red hot.
- Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
Urgently sent back word
- 55 To the town of Hmao-shi, their native land, bidding them come to divide the
country,
Separating Sun-maid and Moon-youth and setting them on separate roads.
- On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth separate their roads.
Sun-maid travels the far road,
60 While Moon-youth travels the near road.
- On reaching Ox-month or Rat-month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth separate their roads.
Moon-youth travels the far road,
While Sun-maid travels the near road.
- 65 So Sun-maid travels in circles, measuring out the sky,
And Moon-youth travels in circles, measuring out the plains.
- Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
Setting sky and earth in order, travelled all around,
Setting sky and earth in order, they went everywhere.
- 70 Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
Promoting the well-being of the homeland, setting sky and earth in order, travelled
all around,
Encompassing the boundaries of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di,
The four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di.
- 75 There was the great shining river with interweaving streams flowing in its current,
There was the great Hmao-shi river with parallel streams flowing in its current,
Spreading as it flowed smoothly away into the distance,
- Flowing away to the pools along the shores of the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu,
Flowing through the rapids of the Di-njio mountains.
- All the people have heard of it with their ears,

80 But their eyes have never seen it.

Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
 Counted the days and counted the times and their results agreed.
 To the spring of each year they added the fall,
 And to three full years an intercalary month.

85 Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
 Counted the days and counted the times and their results tallied.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
 All kinds of birds of the bright skies follow their mating customs,

On reaching Sheep-month or Monkey-month,
 90 Cuckoos call to one another,
 And swallows fill the earth.

On reaching Cockerel-month or Dog-month,
 All kinds of birds of the bright skies are living in families,
 All kinds of birds of the bright skies are rearing their growing young.

95 On reaching Pig-month or Rat-month,
 All kinds of birds of the bright skies leave their mating customs,
 All kinds separate from their partners.

On reaching Ox-month or Tiger-month,
 The frost arrives and the frost cuts the plants,
 100 Cuts down the wild plants and lays them flat.

On reaching Dragon-month or Rabbit-month,
 The people have a covering of snow, freezing and glistening.

Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
 Setting sky and earth in order, promoting the well being of the homeland, returned
 and reached,

105 Reached the town of Hmao-shi, their native land.

Where do they say that the town of Hmao-shi was sited?
 It was sited on a fine plain of small rice fields, a plain of sumach trees, with roads of
 stone paving,
 So that ahead the road shone bright into the face,
 And also shone bright upon the feet.

110 The town of Hmao-shi was a fine town.
 Within, it shone bright as satin braid,
 While without, it shone bright as silk braid.

Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
 Established securely the people's homeland,
 115 And governed the people's homeland in peace.

Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
 Were the people's great prophets.

They promoted the well-being of the homeland, set sky and earth in order, and counted days and counted times for posterity.

120 Earth's Ngguzhai-shao and Heaven's Nzha-di-ao
Counted all the seasons of earth and sky.
They counted all things for the people, the common folk, the ordinary folk, to copy.

Thus it is ended.

M106
A song of setting sky and earth in order.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction

This song is another version of that sung by Yang Zhi. It follows the same general outline: the birth of the brother and sister, Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao, their preparation of a book containing a scheme for setting sky and earth in order, their visit to the Nine Lakes of Gi-nzyu, and thence to the edge of the world, their building of a fine town and their regulation of the movements of the sun and moon. What is not made clear in this version of the song is how these various episodes were related to each other. Thus the town which they built was not at the dwelling of Sun-maid and Moon-youth, but back in their own home country. It was indeed glowing and shining, but we are not told why, and the colour was yellow, not red hot with the scorching rays of the sun. Sun and moon were sent off on their journeys but no reason is given. The two points in the year when sun and moon exchange their courses do indeed fall in spring and autumn but the months actually named are one month later than in other songs.

This version is chiefly valuable as an example of the way in which oral tradition, while recording faithfully the events which happened, can easily lose the logic of cause and effect which give coherence and meaning to the whole.

At the end of this song, on page 12 of Document K, there is a note in Miao which reads,

The Miao letters which were written at the time of Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao:

of old were written like this	-	-	-	-	-
now are written like this	-	-	-	-	-

There follow three lines of symbols which, for the most part, use small, elongated triangles, rather like cuniform writing, to replace the straight lines of the Miao script, and under each such symbol the corresponding script character is written. Miao schoolboys often experimented with fancy forms of the script, or tried to evolve a cursive form for writing it. This particular note, presumably devised by Zhang Ming, belongs to the same realm of fantasy, and is omitted entirely in Document L. The myth that once upon a time the Miao did have a form of writing was a well-known and valued tradition, but no one was likely to take this piece of fiction very seriously.

M106

A song of setting sky and earth in order.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

This year we may know,
May be assured and know that the Miao maid, the bride has this year given birth.
The Miao maid, the bride has given birth to two children.

5 There being no way of choosing them names,
Take the elder and call him Heaven's Nzha-di-ao,
Then you may take the younger and give,
Give the name, Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao.

10 Whose hands were able and skilful?
What was the hand of Heaven's Nzha-di-ao able to do?
His hand was able to write a book,
And he wrote a volume, a record book to be carried on the back.
What was the hand of Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao able to do?
Her hand was able to roll the book,
And she rolled the volume, the record book to be carried on the back.

15 Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao,
Where did they go to set lands and territories in order?
They went and set in order the districts of Gi-nzyu.

20 They say that in the districts of Gi-nzyu were water pools deep and clear as the
sunrise.
There were nine lakes, a place, fine for cranes to live,
A place, fine for wild geese to dwell.

In the districts of Gi-nzyu were water pools deep and clear as the sunset.
The pools were nine lakes,
Nine lakes which formed nine pools,
A place, fine for cranes and wild geese to dwell.

25 Having gained the edge of the world you would come back,
But Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao,
Having gained the edge of the world would not come back.
Having gained the edge of the world, you would return,
But Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao,
30 Having gained the edge of the world, would not return,
And the Miao maid, the bride grew impatient with waiting.

35 A year or two had passed by,
When Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao,
Returned, came back and reached,
Reached the homestead of the Miao maid, the bride.

Whose hands were able and skilful?
Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Ngggu-nzai-shao,

- Their hands were able and skilful.
What were their hands able to do?
- 40 Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao
Their hands were able, their hands built a town,
Their hands were able, their hands founded a town,
- Built a town of shining yellow,
Founded a town of bright yellow.
- 45 When they reached Sheep-month or Monkey-month,
Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao
Caused Sun-maid to travel the far road,
Caused Moon-youth to travel the near road.
- 50 When they reached Ox-month or Tiger-month,
Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao
Caused Moon-youth to travel the far road,
Caused Sun-maid to travel the near road.

M107
The song of Ndu-nzha-byu

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

In all three documents in which this song is recorded it is placed immediately after Tao Zi-gai's song about the creation of sky and earth by four companies of copper smiths and black smiths. Yang Yung-xin who compiled Document K, clearly regarded the song as a creation story by giving it the title, "Ndu-nzha-byu, a song of the creation of sky and earth and all things". The first few lines do indeed support this assessment, but the name "Ndu-nzha-byu" which means "the one who set the sky in order at the beginning", together with the remainder of the song, suggests that it is more closely related to Yang Zhi's song about Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and his sister who set all things in order. However it does not appear to be simply another version of the same song, but rather, a different song, though on the same theme.

M107
The song of Ndu-nzha-byu

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

- This year we may know,
Know that at the time when the sky came to be,
It came to be, for Ndu-nzha-byu's hand was able;
At the time when the earth came to be,
5 It came to be, for Ndu-nzha-byu's hand was skilful.
- Ndu-nzha-byu's hand was able, his hand raised the sky,
Raised the sky above, smooth and rounded to cover the world.
Ndu-nzha-byu's hand was skilful.
- Ndu-nzha-byu went to set the earth in order,
10 To set the world in order, spreading it outward from the middle,
For the wandering people to live.
- Ndu-nzha-byu set the sky in order, making the sky above rounded within,
Causing the sky to become polished, its ridges smoothed,
For Sun-maid and Moon-youth, a road to travel.
15 So Sun-maid went circling within the sky,
And Moon-youth went in circles in the midst of the sky.
- Ndu-nzha-byu set the people in order, spread out below.
He established mountain tops in the sky, standing firm on the ascending ridges.
He established a level valley floor deep and clear away into the distance,
20 For the river Shi, the river Gi-bang to flow smoothly away into the distance,
Causing the river Shi, the river Gi-bang to flow smoothly away to the Nine Lakes of
Gi-nzyu.
- Ndu-nzha-byu arranged for the people to dwell on the plains,
So the people built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs to live in the world.
Ndu-nzha-byu caused the clever and wise among the people to rule the world.
- 25 Ndu-nzha-byu arranged for Thunder to rule the great waters and the pouring out of
the rain.
Ndu-nzha-byu assigned,
Assigned to the great winds and the clouds above, their separate paths.
- On reaching Snake month or Horse month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth's roads divide.
30 While Sun-maid goes by the far road,
Moon-youth goes by the near road.
- On reaching Ox month or Rat month,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth's paths divide.
While Sun-maid goes by the near road,
35 Moon-youth goes by the far road.

Thus it is ended.

M108
Ya-ya shoots the suns and moons.

Narrated by Yang Xiu-gong.

Introduction.

This is one of the most popular of Miao stories, widely known and often retold. In this short, prose version it is reduced to its simplest form. No explanation is offered of how Ya-ya contrived to shoot the suns, and the tiger's effort to recall the sun is omitted. Its final conclusion, however, that the cock crows early each morning to reassure the sun that it is safe to rise, is perfectly satisfactory.

There is some diversity of opinion as to the number of suns and moons involved. In the story of the separation of earth and sky, M104, it says that there were twelve of each, a number which, in his introduction to Document N, and also in his Chinese paraphrase of the Ya-ya song, Wang jian-guo repeated. However, Yang Xiu-gong says explicitly that there were only seven suns and seven moons, and both the song versions imply the same without saying so directly.

M108

Ya-ya shoots the suns and moons.

Narrated by Yang Xiu-gong

They tell a story that once upon a time there were, in the sky, seven suns and seven moons. The earth was sunned until it was all parched up. The heat was unbearable. So it was that Ya-ya went and cut down a mulberry tree and made a crossbow which he took to shoot the suns and moons. He shot them until only one was left, and this one was so frightened that it would not come out.

Now people were engulfed in darkness. They could not see, and the only way to do the farming was by torch-light. Eventually the people began seeking some way of calling the sun back. First they got the bull to call, but his voice was so loud that the sun did not come. Then they got the cockerel to call, and when the cockerel crowed, presently the sun came out. Thus, from of old until now, it is necessary that the cockerel should crow before the sun will rise. So it is.

M109

How Ya-ya shot the suns and moons.

Sung by a grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu.

Introduction.

This song does not mention that the cock crowing each morning is a daily reassurance to the sun that it is safe to rise, but it does suggest that here can be found the origin of the cock's red comb.

Miao combs used to be carved from pieces of wood four or five inches long and two or three inches wide. One or more were often worn, teeth downwards, in the hair at the back of the head by young women. The comb presented to the cockerel by the grateful sun was rather special being finished in red lacquer. We are told that the cockerel could use it but could not wear it properly. That is, when preening himself the cockerel appeared to be combing his feathers, but he wore his comb with the teeth pointing upwards instead of down, and also upon the top of his head.

In this version of the story, Ya-ya, armed with his new crossbow and arrows had to travel far before he could shoot the surplus suns and moons. Unable to shoot them directly, for they were far out of range up in the sky, he chose to shoot at their reflections in the water of a shallow lake, since these could not possibly be further away than the mud at the bottom of the lake. Presumably that chosen was one of legendary nine lakes of Gi-nzyu, though the song does not mention the name. What we are not told is why or how on each occasion, the shooting of a sun resulted in the elimination of a moon as well.

The opening lines of this song go back to another old tradition enshrined in several songs, that the fashioning of the wrinkled surface of the earth and the smooth sky above was the handy work of a group of cosmic smiths. In this song there were seven of them and each carried in his belt a dagger, emblazoned with a golden sun and a golden moon. Now Ya-ya's arrow, aimed at a particular sun, was bound to hit the wearer of the dagger bearing that sun. When the owner of the dagger was laid low, the dagger bearing both the sun and the moon would also fall with him

The difficulty of this explanation of the problem is that the cosmic smiths are not mentioned at all in the main part of the story. In fact lines 1 to 14 could be removed altogether, and the song would still appear complete in itself. Moreover at line 15 the imagery changes. Suns and moons are no longer golden inlay work, but the familiar young couple Sun-maid and Moon-youth, found in many other songs.

M109

How Ya-ya shot the suns and moons.

Sung by a grandmother from Hmao-zu-mu.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When he shot the suns and moons he reached the limits of the sky before returning.
Ya-ya stood in the mud,
He shot down towards the water,
35 He shot the pairs of Sun-maids and Moon-youths, the whole family, and they
dropped behind the mountains.

When Ya-ya shot the suns and moons he reached the limits of the sky before
returning.
But what were they like, those limits of the sky?
The limits of the sky were like eyelids tightly closed.
Now, having shot the suns and moons, Ya-ya returned and reached,
40 Reached Ya-ya's home.

It was dark, black darkness.
It was dark extreme darkness.
The people could not see to plough,
Except by lighting flaming torches to be fixed to the oxen's horns.
45 The people could not see to farm,
Except by lighting flaming torches to fix to the oxen's horns.

The people discussed and debated,
"What has the strongest voice?"
"The bull has the strongest voice."
50 "Then let the bull go and call the sun!"
But Sun-maid was so frightened she would not come,
And Sun-maid went back into her house.

The people discussed and considered,
"What has the most resounding voice?"
55 "The tiger has the most resounding voice."
"Then let the tiger go and call the moon!"
But Moon-youth was so frightened he would not appear,
And Moon-youth went back into his place.

The people discussed and debated,
60 "What has the most reassuring voice?"
"The cockerel has the most reassuring voice."
"Then let the cockerel go and call the sun!"

Young Ya-ya wrapped his felt cape together,
On which the cockerel might perch.
65 Ya-ya slept a little, just a little, and roused,
He slept a little, just a little and rose.

Three times the cockerel flapped its wings,
Three times the cockerel crowed.
Then Sun-maid's coming brightened all the sky,
70 And Moon-youth's arrival brightened the sky all round,
And the people could see to do their farming.

For the cockerel, Sun-maid had nothing
But a lacquered comb to give
As a gift to the cockerel.
75 Now the cockerel could use it, but had no idea how to wear it.
He put it on with the teeth pointing up to the sky!

Thus it is ended.

M110
How Ya-ya shot the suns and moons.

Sung by a grandfather from Hmao-a-bw.

Introduction.

The aetiological interest in this version of the Ya-ya story is once again the origin of the cockerel's red comb, worn on the top of the head and pointing upwards. However, in this song, it was not presented by the grateful Sun-maid, but as a thank-offering from the people, after their experience of continuous night.

The description of the sun and moon as a maid and a youth is common, in fact one song actually calls them wife and husband. Moreover the couple are always portrayed as being close together, that is, until the day that Heaven's Nzha-di-ao and Earth's Nggü-nzai-shao separated them and sent them off on different courses around the sky. (See "The work of setting sky and earth in order", sung by Yang Zhi, M105) This being the case, it is at least conceivable that they might both have been hit by a single arrow, as the emended text of line 24 says, "And with every shot he could hit a pair".

There is no doubt that Ya-ya is regarded as a benefactor of the human race, but this version indicates how narrowly he avoided bringing disaster. Having obliterated six suns and their attendant moons, Ya-ya aimed his seventh arrow at the remaining pair. Fortunately, as he released the arrow, his bow string broke, and, spinning like a whip cord, it turned the final sun and moon around in their tracks, driving them, frightened but unharmed, back below the horizon whence they had come. Had the cord held, and the arrow followed its intended path, suns and moons would have been no more, and the world doomed to eternal darkness!

M110
How Ya-ya shot the suns and moons.

Sung by a grandfather from Hmao-a-bw.

The suns came over the horizon,
The suns came, shining as they came.
They shone on Ya-ya's soft-wood trees till they were altogether parched and dry.
Except for Ya-ya's great, green mulberry tree standing by the river.

5 Ya-ya shouldered,
Shouldered his axe and returned to fell it.
He felled it and the trunk fell across the river,
He felled it and the branches fell across the valley.
He felled it and from the trunk fashioned a crossbow,
10 He felled it and from the branches made arrows.

Ya-ya fashioned an excellent crossbow.
Ya-ya fashioned it, but who was to bear it?
He had fashioned it for the people to bear,
But the people could not shoot with it,
15 So Ya-ya having fashioned it, Ya-ya had to bear it.
Where did he bear it to shoot?
He bore it to shoot at the wide shores of Gi-nzyu.

Sun-maids and Moon-youths abounded,
And the people could not endure their shining.
20 But standing in the water,
Ya-ya could shoot at seven suns and hit seven,
Standing in the sticky mud,
He could shoot towards the dark shores of Gi-nzyu,
And with every shot he could hit a pair.

25 But then the bow-string snapped, and it whipped,
Whipped and turned back the moon and the sun with its burning heat.

It was dark, black darkness.
In the dark Ya-ya went out ploughing,
But he could not see to plough,
30 So Ya-ya lit a flaming torch to fix to the oxen's horns.

It was extremely dark, complete darkness.
In the dark Ya-ya went out riding,
But he could not see to ride,
So Ya-ya lit a flaming torch to fix to the horse's bridle.

35 What, of the people's possessions, had the strongest voice?
The bull's voice was strongest,
Then let the bull go and call the sun.
But the sun was so frightened it would not come out.

What had the most resounding voice?
40 The tiger's voice was most resounding,
Then let the tiger go and call the moon.
But the moon was so frightened it would not come out.

What, of the people's possessions, had the most reassuring voice?
45 The cockerel's voice was most reassuring,
Then let the cockerel go and call the sun.

Thus Sun-maid appeared,
So people could see sky and earth clearly,
And when the sky became quite dark,
Moon-youth appeared,
50 Shining upon the people's sky and land and water.

The people had nothing,
Had nothing to give,
To give to the cockerel, that would serve,
Would serve the cockerel as a head-dress.

55 So the people took,
Took a lacquered comb they had brought and gave that,
Gave that to the cockerel as a head-dress.

Now the cockerel could use it but did not know how to wear it,
For he put the lacquered comb upon his forehead
60 With the toothed edge turned upward.

Thus it is ended.

M111
Concerning Sun-maid and Moon-youth.

Sung by a man from Hmao-a-gw-gw.

Introduction

The object of this song is to explain why the sun and moon move round the sky rather than over the surface of the ground. The idea of the sun and the moon as a maid and a youth, common in Miao songs, is here taken a step further. It says that Sun-maid and Moon-youth "made a family to live", that is that they became man and wife. The song then goes on to imagine them, like any young Miao couple, moving house, she, carrying her new baby wrapped up on her back, and he, burdened with the essential household articles, including his crossbow.

It is not explained to what astronomical phenomena Sun-maid's baby boy and Moon-youth's cross-bow correspond, nor are we told of the cosmic significance of the delay involved while the couple returned to make a sash and a rope for carrying their respective loads.

Their journey took them, eventually, to the point where the dome of the sky fitted down on the ground. Here, unable to go further, they had to turn back, but elected not to travel the way they had come, but rather to go circling around the sky.

In the final lines of the song the sky is described as "black and coloured". The second adjective is, in fact, the word "dyed". The Miao used a variety of dye stuffs, but by far the most common was indigo, so that this expression is a reference to the colour of the sky at night and in the day.

M111
Concerning Sun-maid and Moon-youth.

Sung by a man from Hmao-a-bw-bw.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For Sun-maid to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For Moon-youth to come and dwell.

5 Sun-maid was beautiful,
As Moon-youth soon came to know.
Sun-maid accompanied,
Accompanied Moon-youth to live together as a family.
Sun-maid and Moon-youth were ready to leave,
10 But Sun-maid and Moon-youth could not go because,

Sun-maid did not have her sash for carrying her child.
So Sun-maid turned back, returning to collect,
To collect drawn silk and drawn yarn to weave,
To weave into a sash for Sun-maid to carry her child.

15 Moon-youth did not have the rope for carrying his crossbow.
So Moon-youth turned back, returning to collect,
To collect drawn hemp and drawn yarn to twist,
To twist into a rope for Moon-youth to carry his crossbow.

20 With Sun-maid carrying her child wrapped up on her back,
And Moon-youth carrying a full pack upon his back,
Sun-maid and Moon-youth went on together,
Went on and reached the limits of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Where Sun-maid sought a way to return,
And Moon-youth sought a way to turn round.

25 How did they appear to Sun-maid, those limits of the sky?
The limits of the sky resembled,
Resembled an eye that was weeping.
How did they appear to Moon-youth, those ends of the earth?
The ends of the earth resembled,
30 Resembled an eye that was closed.

What limit did Moon-youth see as a proper limit for the moon?
He saw the moon's limit reach the smooth cover of the sky, black and coloured.
What limit did Sun-maid see as a proper limit for the sun?
She saw the sun's limit reach the even cover of the sky, black and coloured.

35 So then this year we may know,
Know that, for this reason, Sun-maid and Moon-youth go,
Go well, circling the blue sky.
Thus Sun-maid and Moon-youth go,
Go well, circling the clear sky.

Thus it is ended.

M112
The building of sky and earth.

Recorded by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction

Miao songs of creation often contrast the smooth surface of the sky with the rough surface of the earth. In this song earth and sky are pictured as a building undergoing its final plastering. The contrast in the surface of the finished work was the result of the tools employed.

It is not uncommon in two versions of the same song for names to appear in full in one and in an abbreviated form in the other. Here there are two very similar names, but while that of the young woman is shortened from Nggü-zü Nggü-li-zv to Nggü-zü-li-zv, that of the young man is given in full, Ndao-zü Ndao-li-zv. The word "zü" means "build", and "zv" means "constantly" or "continually". "zü-li-zv" would therefore describe something which was built to last, a permanent building. In this case the reference is to the sky and the earth, and the names mean, "The young woman or young man whose building continued".

This may be a complete song, but it reads rather like a fragment from a longer piece.

M112
The building of sky and earth.

Recorded by Wang Ming-ji.

Nggü-zyu-li-zv built the sky,
Ndao-zyu Ndao-li-zv built the earth.

Nggü-zyu-li-zv built the sky and used an iron trowel.
Ndao-zyu Ndao-li-zv built the earth and used a wooden trowel.

5 Nggü-zyu-li-zv built the sky all smooth,
Ndao-zyu Ndao-li-zv built the earth all furrowed.

M113
Earth's Ndrao-bang.

Singer not recorded.

Introduction

This song was recorded by Samuel Pollard in his diary in the summer of 1911. He did not say who the singer was, nor did he undertake an English translation. There are, however, a number of English notes in the text which seem to indicate that, though the Miao was faithfully written, he did not at the time fully understand the meaning.

The name Ndrao-bang means either "youth flower" or "youth breath" depending on the tone in which "bang" is read. It is not clear in the manuscript. This individual is credited with the creation of earth and sky, but his main achievement was to make the Miao a race of singers.

Toward the end of the song it is asserted that book study wearied (literally "melted") the voice. The picture here is not the western one of students poring quietly over their books, but of Chinese school boys declaiming their lessons at the top of their voices, the measure of effort being proportional to the volume of clamour. Singing songs was a far more congenial occupation, and much less strain on the voice!

M113
Earth's Ndrao-bang.

Singer not recorded.

Who made the earth?
Earth's Ndrao-bang made it,
He made the people to sing songs.

5 Who made the earth?
Earth's Ndrao-bang made it,
He made the people to study books.

The people sang,
Sang songs and could not cease.

10 They sang of everything away above,
Sang of the sun and the moon in the sky.
They sang of everything away below,
Sang of the water depths on the earth.

15 They sang of everything away above,
Sang of the clouds up in the sky.
They sang of everything away below,
Sang of the rocks and the cliffs on the earth.

Earth's Ndrao-bang made,
Made the sky above,
Nine thousand fathoms high.

20 Earth's Ndrao-bang made,
Made the soil on earth,
Ninety thousand fathoms deep.

25 Earth's Ndrao-bang made,
Made the people to sing songs,
And the people sang without ceasing.

Earth's Ndrao-bang made,
Made the people to study books,
But book-study wearied their voices.

30 So the people did not study much,
They sang songs and could not cease,
They sang songs away through the seven vaults of the sky,
For the people sang without ceasing

M114

The wild goose and the crane distinguish Winter and Summer.

Sung by a man from Hmao-go-ndlao, in the congregation at Hmao-a-dyu.

Introduction

Cai-sie-mi-fu-di is the name given in many of the songs to the country, far away to the north, from which the Chinese came to invade the legendary Miao homeland. The other name in this song, Nbw-sie-mi-fu-ndrang, which is given to the country from which the birds migrated in the Spring and to which they returned in the Autumn, is unique. It has the appearance of having been coined as a parallel to Cai-sie-mi-fu-di. In place of the first two syllables we have "Nbw-sie" which means "to be restless", the description of the birds in line 2, and as a parallel to the final "di" which means "land", we have "ndrang" meaning "plain".

Following line 15, in the text there are six lines which ask, and provide the conventional answer, to the question, "What is it like at the edge of the earth and the sky?" These two stanzas are found in a number of songs and appear to have been picked up and used by a singer wherever he considered it to be appropriate. In the present context they are obviously an intrusion, breaking the continuity of the song, and having no relevance to the theme. They have therefore been placed as a postscript at the end of the song.

Lines 10 to 15, which are a description of Cai-sie-mi-fu-di, are repeated in the Miao text following line 20. There seems to be no reason for the repetition since the birds had already left that area and returned southward. Moreover, the repetition breaks the continuity between lines 20 and 21. Accordingly they have been omitted.

Pig-month and Rat-month are the seventh and eighth months of the lunar calendar, that is Autumn.

M114

The wild goose and the crane distinguish Winter and Summer.

Sung by a man from Hmao-go-ndlao, in the congregation at Hmao-a-dyu.

When the scent of Spring was in the air,
The wild goose and the crane grew restless at heart.
The wild goose and the crane looked round and about,
Looked at Cai-sie-mi-fu-di.

5 At Cai-sie-mi-fu-di there stood,
Stood together, sprouting like bristles on a pig,
Sprouting fir-trees, fir-trees everywhere.
An excellent place for the wild goose to build its nest,
An ideal place for the crane to lay its eggs.

10 The wild goose looked round and about,
Looked at the water with its nine river bends,
Far enough for the wild goose to come in half a night.
The crane looked round and about,
Looked at the water with its nine river curves,
15 Far enough for the crane to go in half a day.

On reaching Pig-month or Rat-month,
Fearing the great snows,
The wild goose and the crane could stay no longer.
The wild goose sought a way to return,
20 The crane sought a way to come back.

The wild goose and the crane looked round and about,
Looked at Nbw-sie-mi-fu-ndrang,
And at the sun shining brightly.
The wild goose and the crane crossed over and around to this side,
25 Collecting the rich young woman's rice gleanings beyond the pass,
Collecting the rich young woman's rice gleanings in the midst of the plain.

Thus it is ended.

The insertion in the text following line 15.

What sort of a limit do they say is the limit of the sky?
They say that the limit of the sky resembles,
Resembles an eye that is weeping.

5 What sort of an end do they say is the end of the earth?
They say that the end of the earth resembles,
Resembles an eye that is closed.

M115
First-woman and First-man.

Told by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

There can be little doubt that this story was originally a song. If Wang Jian-guo, who recorded it, had a copy of the song version, he chose to transcribe it into prose. It may be, however, that the song version has been lost and only the narrative remembered.

The story concerns the origin of the sun and the moon, and also of the myriad of stars. It explains too why the former are regularly thought of as a young woman and a young man, though the common names, Sun-maid and Moon-youth, are not actually used. The questions that the story provokes are mostly left unanswered. We are not told how First-woman and First-man came to be, or who attended to their needs during their daily cycles of infancy, childhood and old age. Details about the man from the sky are not given, nor how he and the rest of the sky people reacted to the sudden invasion of their domain by the hoards from earth, or had they, perhaps, arranged for it all to happen?

The Miao day began with early rising at daybreak or soon after. There were two main meals, breakfast at about 10 a.m. and evening meal at dusk. Between these two, at noon or there about, they ate a light mid-day snack which is somewhat over dignified by the English word lunch.

M115
First-woman and First-man.

Told by Wang Jian-guo.

There used to be a story which told how, at that time when sky and earth came into being, there lived two ancestors, a woman and a man, called First-woman and First- man.

At early-rising time, First-woman and First-man were babies, very pretty indeed. They did cry while still on the bed, but it was only, "wu-ngga! wu-ngga!" that was all. By breakfast time they were growing steadily, playing with stones and earth and bits of bamboo, agreeing together, the best of friends. Between breakfast and lunch, they matured into a truly beautiful young woman and handsome young man. From lunch time to mid-afternoon they grew steadily older, so that by sunset and twilight, they had become aged, their hair completely white.

Then, their hair completely white, they would rest their heads upon their knees and go off to sleep. They slept all night, and by early rising the following day, they were tiny children again lying on the bed. By breakfast time the children were growing steadily, and by lunch time they were a fine young woman and a fine young man. Unfortunately, by mid-afternoon they were steadily growing old, and by evening they were aged with their hair completely white. Why was it that they grew old so fast?

A day came when Sky-man came down to see. First- woman and First-man were at play in the road. Sky-man fell in love with the couple and said, "What are you two doing?" First-woman and First-man replied, "We are having a very good game, but why is it that we two grow up so fast, and grow old so fast? Would it, or would it not be possible for us two to remain as beautiful and as handsome as we are at noon? Would that we did not have to grow old!" Sky-man said, "All right, but you two will have so many children that you will fill the earth and sky completely! However, from now onward, I grant you long life so that you will never grow old". So saying Sky-man went away up into the sky.

The two grew truly beautiful and handsome. They lived and lived, engendering a race which so filled the earth that the whole earth was insufficient to support them. Thus it was ordained that the people should change into stars to go and live in the sky above, for, gathered together, they filled the earth completely. Accordingly those two led them away to live in the sky. First-woman became the sun, shining brightly upon the earth, and First-man became the moon, which shone at night. So all the descendants, in the sky and on the earth, have been able to see clearly through a thousand ages and ten- thousand years.

M116
How the Kha-woman plucked the hair from mankind.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction

A number of the Miao songs and stories tell of two realms of beings, the sky-people and the earth-people. In general, the former was the dominant race, the latter, very much the poor relations.

There are also many stories concerning individuals called "kha". These were nearly always female, and, though outwardly, normal people, they had a predilection for human flesh and human blood. It was to satisfy her cannibalistic desire that the Kha-woman came down from the sky, and by her initial attacks on the human race she left people without any hair except upon their heads. Now at this point the elders of the sky intervened, and by way of reparation, required the Kha-woman to provide mankind with hemp seed which they could grow to make clothes to cover their nakedness, with seed corn to grow for food, and with fire to warm themselves. This done the Kha-woman was ordered back into the sky.

The common name for a particularly vicious stinging nettle is "kha-woman", and this song explains the origin of the name. There was, however, a very good reason for turning the Kha-woman into a clump of nettles. That she was dead, having killed herself, was not, in fact, the end of the story. Her spirit was still at large on earth and capable of inflicting, no one knew what further disasters on the human race. The action of the elders of the sky was to confine her future malevolence to an occasional sting for any one foolish enough to touch the nettle, or a cut finger for the careless handling bracken.

M116

How the Kha-woman plucked the hair from mankind.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

- When the sky had begun,
In the world where the elders first came,
When the elders of the people arrived, they found deep, dark woods and dense, black
forests.
The people had no crops,
5 They simply lived with the deer.
- The people were like deer by the edge of the forest,
Their elders like squeaking pheasants by the edge of the forest.
But there was a Kha-woman in the sky above who saw them,
And the Kha-woman came down to the people on earth.
- 10 The people had no clothes to wear,
For the people were covered with hair like the wild beasts.
Then the Kha-woman hunted,
Hunted the elders with their covering of hair.
- 15 What could the people do for the best,
For there was no way that the people could flee?
The people covered their heads in holes in the rocks.
Then the Kha-woman plucked,
Plucked the people's bodies, plucked them completely bare,
Except the elders' heads which alone escaped the plucking.
- 20 So the people had to go,
Go with their bodies naked, having no clothes to wear.
But all the elders of the sky above had pity,
Had pity for the elders on earth.
- 25 The elders of the sky showed their pity for the elders and the people on earth,
By ordering the Kha-woman to give hemp seed, hemp which could be stranded,
So that the elders of the earth might make clothes to wear.
Thus the Kha-woman gave,
Gave hemp seed from the sky
To earth's people to sow and make clothes to wear.
- 30 The elders of the sky caused,
Caused the Kha-woman to give seed-grain from above,
For the people to till that they might eat.
So the people, the elders received,
Received seed from the Kha-woman that they might eat.
- 35 The elders of the sky caused
The Kha-woman to give fire for the people to light.
So the people received fire embers to light up and warm themselves.
Then the elders of the sky said,

"The Kha-woman must be called back to the sky."

40 So the Kha-woman climbed up to the sky,

But when she thought of the people on earth,
Their flesh so good to eat and their blood so good to drink,
The Kha-woman grew increasingly hungry,
And the Kha-woman longed for human flesh to eat.

45 So the Kha-woman stood in the sky
And jumped, to land among earth's people,
But it was to her death, for the Kha-woman was killed.

When the people of the sky realised the Kha-woman was dead,
The elders of the people of the sky promised,
50 Promised that the Kha-woman should be changed,
Changed into a clump of the people's stinging nettles,
While the Kha-woman's hands were changed,
Changed into a clump of bracken.

The elders of the sky grew alarmed.
55 They rounded up the earth people and the sky people,
And having rounded them up, made earth people and sky people separate their
dwelling places,
So it was no longer possible to climb up to the sky,
And no longer possible to go down to the earth.

M117
How people used to cast their skins.

Told by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

There is no internal evidence that this story is the transcription of a song into prose. The vocabulary and style are those of contemporary Miao speech, with no hint of the expressions and phraseology characteristic of the songs.

The story explains why human life is now so short. It was probably derived from observation of snakes casting their skins, though it does not actually say so. It is not recorded how frequently people cast their skins, though "at the third year" may mean that it took place once every three years. Of the actual process there is no word except that, like child-birth, it could be very painful.

In this song the sky-people appear as a group with one of their number acting as spokesman.

M117

How people used to cast their skins.

Told by Wang Jian-guo.

They tell a story that in ancient times people used to cast their skins and so renew their youth many times over. There was a Miao woman who, casting her skin at the third year, suffered a great deal. She said, "Oh! people casting their skins may suffer, but, while casting my skin, I have suffered beyond endurance. Casting one's skin is extremely difficult".

There was a day when the sky-people came, and she said to them, "Casting one's skin so that one's youth may return should be easy, but, in truth, I find casting my skin so hard, the suffering is beyond endurance. I tell you that it makes life so dreadful, I would rather die quickly!"

A man of the sky-people said, "Right, from now on, earth-people shall die. It will no longer be necessary to cast their skins". He spoke and they were gone. Thereafter, unable to cast their skins, people just died. They could not live for long. This is the reason why people have to die.

M118
A song of choosing a bride.

Singer not recorded.

Introduction

This short song is full of obscurities. It may be that a middle section has been lost which would explain the relationship between the first and last sections, but even so difficulties remain.

The woman in the song is called "bo mang", which, in spoken Miao would simply mean "an Yi woman", but this can scarcely be the meaning here. The word "mang" has a basic meaning of "people". In the present song "bo mang" seems to have a very general meaning, "a female person", and has therefore been translated, "the woman".

It says that the woman decided to "sai chao", that is, "choose marriage". This means, quite specifically, that she was going in search of a suitable bride for a son of the family. Who he may have been we are not told. The expression "sai chao" cannot mean that she was seeking a partner for herself. Of the possible candidates she considered, Sun, Cloud and Wind, the sun is always considered to be female in the songs and regularly called "Sun-maid". Presumably Cloud and Wind were also female, though this is not obvious from the names used. In her search, having rejected Sun, Cloud and Wind, the woman reached Gha-nzhi-fa-na, and we hear no more of her search or of its outcome.

The second half of the song introduces a pair of "wild animals" which had an offspring who could talk. This creature is called "Dli-zeu-bi-gyu". "Dli" normally means "dog", but here, as occasionally in other songs, it signifies "a living creature". "Zeu" means "able", and "bi gyu" means "craftsman". Hence the translation, "craftsman-creature". Whatever his parentage, he was obviously human, and built a fine city just as the Miao patriarchs were said to have done.

For nearly sixteen years the woman went and "lived with" the craftsman-creature. What exactly their relationship was we are not told, and a question arises whether "nearly sixteen years" is to be taken literally. In the incantations used during spirit worship a very similar expression, "a full thirteen years", is a "code" meaning "within one year". This might be a similar coded phrase, but if so, there is no clue as to its meaning.

The actual meaning of the song is a matter for conjecture. It is just possible that it is about the origin of the human race. The woman concerned may have been one of the "sky-people". Her search for a daughter-in-law brought her down to the earth where she encountered the craftsman creature, with mankind the result of the union. References to "the people's" sun, cloud or wind, do not necessarily preclude this interpretation by implying that people already existed. "The people's" sun, land, forest, etc. are conventional expressions widely used in the songs, and mean no more than the sun, land, or forest. If, however, the song is about human origins, it is surprising that there is no mention of any offspring of the woman and the craftsman-creature.

M118
A song of choosing a bride.

Singer not recorded.

This year we may know,
Know that the woman has decided to choose a bride.

Who was beautiful?
Sun-maid was beautiful.
5 So in making her choice she followed Sun-maid,
But she could not even look at Sun-maid!

The people's Sun-maid was beautiful,
Beautiful indeed, but Cloud was beautiful too.
So the woman, in making her choice followed,
10 Followed after Cloud,
But Cloud grew so big!

The people's Cloud was beautiful,
Beautiful indeed, but Wind also was good.
But Wind would blow,
15 Blow the people till they were shaken!

Now the river Gha-nzhi-fa-na was not shaken,
And there was at Gha-nzhi-fa-na,
There was a pair of wild creatures
Living on the mountains of Fa-na and Cai-u.

20 The pair of wild creatures grew big
And gave birth to a craftsman-creature who could speak.
The woman went and lived with the craftsman-creature,
Lived there for nearly sixteen years.

The craftsman-creature was vigilant,
25 And built the craftsman-creature's city, round like the rising sun.
It stood, a place for the people to remember.

Thus it is ended.

M119
The song of Nzhai-jio-shi-du.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction

Behind this song lies the conception of two parallel races, "earth-people" and "sky-people". The latter were more powerful and sophisticated than the former, but both communities ran on similar lines. Normally there was no intercommunication between them, though, at the very edge of the earth where the vault of the sky rested upon it, there was a "pass" by which it was possible to climb up into the sky.

The expression translated "the Master" is common in the songs. It is a title accorded to a person of importance in the local community. In this song, being also a sky person, the Master is even more elevated, and is portrayed as living in a castle with fine buildings and a walled garden, in the manner of the wealthy Yi landlords. Like his earthly counterparts, he had, from time to time, to engage in worship of the spirits. For this a good performer on the pipes was required, and the Master chose Nzhai-jio-shi-du, an earth-man, for the office. When his services were required he lay on the bed in a trance while his "a-dli", his soul or spirit, ascended to perform in the sky.

Just inside the door of a Miao house stood a wooden butt containing water for the use of the household. The supply had to be replenished daily, and carrying water from the spring was a task that usually fell to the women.

During Nzhai-jio-shi-du's absence in the sky, the house had to be kept spotlessly clean and the water butt full. No intruder might be allowed in. On the day when his spirit was due to return, at mid-day there would be a warning sound of pipes from the sky, at which his wife had to remove her set of pipes which had been in the room where Nzhai-jio-shi-du's body lay in a trance, and place them on the water butt by the door. When the spirit arrived back these pipes would sound, and immediately his wife had to return them to the room where Nzhai-jio-shi-du was lying. At this he would come out of his trance and back to life.

Neither in the text of the song nor in the footnotes that follow is there any explanation why this elaborate procedure was necessary. The intrusion of the young sister-in-law somehow broke the sequence. The body now "lay still", presumably having died, so the spirit could not return, and the pipes on the water butt remained silent.

At several other points in the narrative some further explanation is needed.

1. Traditionally marriages among the Miao were arranged between families through middlemen, but occasionally young people might flout the conventions and run away together. A young man or a young woman who behaved in this manner was called "ndrao fang" or "ngao fang" respectively. The fact that the young wife in this song is constantly so designated, indicates that her marriage to Nzhai-jio-shi-du was of her own choosing and not her family's, and may explain why she went to such lengths to try and win him back. In the translation "ngao fang" has been rendered "the run-away".
2. In the stanza beginning at line 102, we are told that Nzhai-jio-shi-du released something called the "sheu ndu" and let it hang down until it rested at Ngao-rang's toes. By this

means she was able to climb up into the sky. "Sheu" means "to stand up" or "to rise up" and "ndu" is "the sky". The expression therefore means "rise up into the sky". A footnote says that it was the name of a track or a path up through the snow by which one could climb into the sky. However, there is nothing in the song about snow, and it is not easy to see how a path could be "released" or allowed "to hang down". Rather the "sheu ndu" would appear to have been something more like a rope or a rope ladder which could be unrolled to mark the way by which to climb from the earth to the sky. Since the precise nature of the object is unclear, it is not possible to translate the expression. Accordingly it has been simply transliterated, "sheu-ndu".

3. In the section beginning at line 108, we hear of the young sister-in-law of the Master's two swine-herds who was missing and eventually turned out to be the coloured butterfly which Ngao-rang had caught on her journey. Why the girl was missing, how she had turned into a butterfly, and how, presumably, she was turned back again into a person, these are all unanswered questions raised by the text and un-addressed in the footnotes. It is also not clear by what sign the swine-herds recognised this particular butterfly as their young sister-in-law. The impression is given that Ngao-rang had no idea that her captive was other than an ordinary butterfly, though if that were indeed the case, why did she bother to catch it in the first place? However all this may be, the fact that she had been able to bring home the missing young sister-in-law meant that she got a direct and positive answer to her question about Nzhai-jio-shi-du, and so knew where next to pursue her search.
4. In line 125 and at several points later in the song, Ngao-rang refers to Nzhai-jio-shi-du as my "gha yeu su fe". Although in the copious footnotes that follow this song the couple are regularly called "niang" and "vao", that is "wife" and "husband", in common speech these two words are avoided as a rule. A man will not speak of "my wife", but of "the child's mother". Likewise a woman will not say, "my husband", but "the child's father". My "gha yeu su fe" appears to be a similar kind of circumlocution. "Gha-yeu" simply means "the man", "su" is "first", and "fe" means "to leave", and hence "to proceed from", and the word is used in expressions meaning "progeny" or "descendants". Thus my "gha yeu su fe" seems to mean, "my man the begetter of the offspring". "The Father of the children" is a fair paraphrase.

M119
The song of Nzhai-jio-shi-du.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

From the beginning of the sky to its end there was none but
Nzhai-jio-shi-du, a fine young man.
From South to North was found none but Ngao-rang the run-away, a fine young
woman.

The hands of Nzhai-jio-shi-du were skilful.
Nzhai-jio-shi-du was the performer on pipes, the performer of songs,

- 5 This year we may know,
Know that this year the Master is engaging in spirit-worship
And the Master has appointed,
Has appointed a performer on pipes, and chosen,
Chosen none but Nzhai-jio-shi-du.
- 10 Nzhai-jio-shi-du has practised,
Has practised the pipes every day,
Has practised the pipes every night.
Nzhai-jio-shi-du has practised the people's pipes on earth,
Nzhai-jio-shi-du has practised the spirit pipes in the Master's land.
- 15 Nzhai-jio-shi-du caused,
Caused Ngao-rang the run-away to sweep the house, to sweep the place and make it
clean,
To scour the house and scour the place and make it spotless.
For Nzhai-jio-shi-du's physical body would lie on the bed,
While Nzhai-jio-shi-du's spirit would become,
- 20 Become performer on pipes away in the Master's land.
- Nzhai-jio-shi-du spoke,
"At the end of a week,
When the sun is shining brightly,
In the sunshine, and on reaching the time of eating the midday meal,
- 25 Nzhai-jio-shi-du's musical pipes will sound,
Sound loudly from away in the sky.
- The musical pipes of Ngao-rang the run-away there in the room,
Ngao-rang the run-away must take and place upon the water butt,
When Nzhai-jio-shi-du's musical pipes sound just outside,
- 30 Then replace the musical pipes of Ngao-rang the run-away in the room
Where Nzhai-jio-shi-du is lying on the bed.
Then Nzhai-jio-shi-du will arise and come away,
To remain for six or seven years".
- This year we may know,
- 35 Know that the Master is engaging in spirit-worship,
And the Master has appointed,
Has appointed a performer on pipes and chosen none but Nzhai-jio-shi-du.

Nzhai-jio-shi-du has practised,
 Practised the people's pipes on earth,
 40 And practised the Master's pipes in the Master's land.

Nzhai-jio-shi-du caused,
 Caused Ngao-rang the run-away to sweep the house,
 To sweep the house, sweep up the dust and sweep it clean.
 He caused Ngao-rang the run-away to carry water,
 45 To carry clear water and fill the butt.

Nzhai-jio-shi-du lay upon the bed.
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du engaged in the Master's spirit-worship.
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du was gone for a week.

When the sun was shining brightly,
 50 In the sunshine, and on reaching the time of eating the mid-day meal,
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du's musical pipes sounded,
 Sounded loudly away in the sky.
 Then the musical pipes of Ngao-rang the run-away were placed upon the water butt.

When Nzhai-jio-shi-du's musical pipes sounded,
 55 Sounded loudly away in the sky,
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du's young sister-in-law did what was not right.
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du's young sister-in-law came in to look,
 And opened wide Nzhai-jio-shi-du's room.

Nzhai-jio-shi-du was covered in sweat,
 60 And his young sister-in-law felt sorry for him.
 His young sister-in-law spread out the edge of her gathered skirt and used it to wipe,
 To wipe Nzhai-jio-shi-du's brow,
 And Nzhai-jio-shi-du lay quite still.

Then when Nzhai-jio-shi-du's musical pipes sounded,
 65 Sounded loudly away in the sky,
 Ngao-rang the run-away's musical pipes made no sound,
 And Ngao-rang the run-away's tears ran down.

This year we may know,
 Know that this year Ngao-rang the run-away has given birth to sons,
 70 Has given birth to two brothers.
 For the elder there was no way of giving a name,
 So let the elder be called Ndrao-ghu,
 And let the second be called Ndrao-ghe.

Ngao-rang the run-away has left,
 75 Left Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghe at home,
 While Ngao-rang the run-away sought,
 Sought Nzhai-jio-shi-du through all the earth,
 Sought Nzhai-jio-shi-du, but sought in vain.
 She sought Nzhai-jio-shi-du through all the world,
 80 Sought Nzhai-jio-shi-du, sought but found no sign.

Ngao-rang the run-away has left,
 Left Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghe at home,
 While Ngao-rang the run-away travelled.
 Ngao-rang the run-away travelled the far road,
 85 Ngao-rang the run-away travelled the long road.
 On the far road, the long road she was sad,
 Sad for her little sons at home.

Weeping bitterly as she travelled to the sky.
 Ngao-rang the run-away has travelled,
 90 Travelled through earth-people's great land, sighing and forlorn,
 Travelled through earth-people's land, with longing, away to the pass.

In a single day she traversed ninety-nine mountains,
 In a single day she traversed ninety-nine valleys,
 In a single day she traversed ninety-nine ridges,
 95 In a single day she crossed ninety-nine rivers.

Ngao-rang the run-away travelled earth people's far road,
 She travelled earth-people's long road for seven whole years.
 Grieving she reached the pass to the sky-people's land.
 The sunshine made Ngao-rang the run-away restless at heart.
 100 Ngao-rang the run-away longed for the earth,
 Weeping bitterly as she travelled to the sky

Nzhai-jio-shi-du heard the sound,
 And Nzhai-jioi-shi-du released the "sheu-ndu", letting it hang down,
 Hang down until it rested,
 105 Rested at Ngao-rang the run-away's toes.
 So Ngao-rang the run-away was able to travel,
 Travel and reach the sky-people's pass.

When the sun was shining brightly,
 In the sunshine moths and butterflies swarm in groups,
 110 In the sunshine moths and butterflies swarm in lines.
 Ngao-rang the run-away saw one coloured butterfly,
 And Ngao-rang the run-away caught the butterfly, carrying it in her hand.

Ngao-rang the run-away went onward till she reached,
 Reached the doors of the Master's garden,
 115 Where the Master's two swine-herds met with her.

"Ngao-rang the run-away, you have come a far road of long stages,
 Did you not meet with our young sister-in-law?
 Ngao-rang the run-away, you have come a wide road with far stages,
 Did you not see our young sister-in-law?"

120 Ngao-rang the run-away spoke,
 "You say, 'Your young sister-in-law', I do not know her.
 You say, 'Your young sister-in-law', I have not seen her".
 Then the Master's swine-herds spoke,

- 125 "What concerns have brought you here?"
 "Concern for the Father of the children has brought me here."
- Ngao-rang the run-away spoke,
 "You say, 'Your young sister-in-law', I do not know her,
 But I came by earth's far road
 And arrived by sky's near road,
 130 And when I reached the pass of earth-people's land,
 I saw one coloured butterfly.
 I caught that coloured butterfly, carrying it in my hand".
- Then Ngao-rang the run-away, opening her hand and spreading it wide, released,
 Released the coloured butterfly and let it go free.
 135 The Master's swine-herds smiled and laughed with pleasure.
 "This is indeed our young sister-in-law!"
- "You came by earth-people's far road.
 Earth-people's far road, travelled with sighing, takes seven years,
 While sky people take but seven months".
- 140 Ngao-rang the run-away spoke,
 "I said, 'the Father of the children', and you did not know,
 If I say, 'Nzhai-jio-shi-du', would you know?"
 "You say, 'Nzhai-jio-shi-du', then we do know.
 Nzai-jio-shi-du is the Master's chief guest".
- 145 Ngao-rang the run-away went onward till she reached,
 Reached the Master's doors of silver
 And saw the Master's doors of gold.
 Ngao-rang the run-away looked round about and saw,
 Saw the Master's High Place.
- 150 Nzhai-jio-shi-du was there at the very top playing his musical pipes.
 Nzhai-jio-shi-du played his musical pipes, and moving gracefully reached,
 Reached a point right in front of Ngao-rang the run-away.
 Ngao-rang the run-away stretching out her hand took hold,
 Took hold of the hem of Nzhai-jio-shi-du's gown.
- 155 Nzhai-jio-shi-du turned round to see.
 "What is the purpose of your coming here?"
 "My purpose for coming here is to see my family".
- Nzhai-jio-shi-du spoke,
 "Are you then not concerned for Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghe?"
 160 Ngao-rang the run-away spoke,
 "It is the Father of the children who has left them orphaned!"
- Nzhai-jio-shi-du spoke,
 "Rather it was Ngao-rang the run-away who did not obey!
 Ngao-rang the run-away you failed to restrain,
 165 You failed to restrain your young sister-in-law or send her away,
 And so your husband was unable to come back,

Your husband had no way of coming again".

170 Then Nzhai-jio-shi-du led,
Led Ngao-rang the run-away by the hand,
Led Ngao-rang the run-away by the arm,
Until they arrived at the Master's doors of silver.

175 Nzhai-jio-shi-du then opened,
Opened the Master's entrance,
So that Ngao-rang the run-away might look.
Nzhai-jio-shi-du displayed the vista,
So that Ngao-rang the run-away might see.

180 Ngao-rang the run-away gazed down at the earth,
And saw Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghe naked there on earth,
Their dwelling, their resting place a gutter behind the house,
Their dwelling, their resting place an alley beside the house.

Then Nzhai-jio-shi-du spoke,
"You return again, go back and care,
Care for Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghe at home.

185 Then after a week,
When the sun is shining brightly,
Scour the house and scour the place and make it clean,
And the musical pipes of the Father of the children will sound,
Will sound loudly away in the sky".

190 But the musical pipes of Ngao-rang the run-away remained silent,
The musical pipes of Ngao-rang the run-away made no sound.
So Ngao-rang the run-away had to be contented to care for Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-
ghe,
And live, an honoured maiden, upon the earth.

Thus it is ended.

M120
A hunting song. (1)

Collected by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

The Miao songs contain a number of stories about legendary heroes whose exploits benefited the race in one way or another. There was Zhyu-shi-lao, who cleared the forests, Zie-gha-lao who introduced agriculture, Ndlie-di Ndrao-bang who taught the people to sing, and Nzyu-fa-lao the great shaman-healer. In this song Du-gha-njia is the legendary master huntsman. The narrative tells how he hunted and killed a prodigious beast, which no one recognised, the pelt of which, he alone, of all the inhabitants of earth and sky could wear as a cape.

In the background of the story is the “great Master” who owned the forest where the beast was found, and whose homestead provided a suitable location for preserving the meat and curing the skin. This individual had a daughter called “Nggug”, which means “Golden Maid”, who on the morning of the hunt rose and put on her sandals at the same time as did the great Du-gha-njia himself. The implication, although it is not stated, is that she was his wife.

The line in the song that says that the loud crowing of the cockerel “cheered the people’s heart”, may be a reference to the Ya-ya storey, (M108, M109 and M110) where it is explained that the cock’s crowing is the daily insurance that the sun will rise again.

M120
A hunting song. (1)

Collected by Wang Ming-ji

- Who was it reared a black dog?
The great Du-gha-njia reared a black dog.
The great Du-gha-njia ate,
Ate from a well filled table,
5 Feeding the spotted dog well with his hand.
- At the time when the people's cock crowed,
Crowed loudly to cheer earth people's heart,
The great Du-gha-njia rose promptly and bound on his sandals,
And the Master's daughter Nggu-gu rose promptly and put on her sandals.
- 10 The great Du-gha-njia sought a way, a way to find game.
Where then did he find the game?
At the gathering place in the great Master's green forest.
- Where the game was, the dog knew,
And where the game lay, the dog saw.
15 The game, it fled from the dog,
And the dog, it chased the game.
- So, chasing and fleeing, the great Du-gha-njia dropped down,
Dropped right down on to the Zhaotung plain, that wide plain.
- 20 The great Du-gha-njia caught,
Caught a beast he did not recognise.
It had hind and fore hooves rounded like an ox,
And its black ears were as big as fans.
- The great Du-gha-njia called,
Called the earth people to come and look,
25 But it was no domestic animal of the earth people.
He called the sky people to come and look,
But it was no domestic animal of the travelling sky people.
- Whom did he call to remove the skin?
He called the earth people to remove the skin.
- 30 Whom did he call to cut up the meat?
He called a big man to cut up the meat.
It made ninety-nine portions of meat,
And it made ninety-nine flasks of blood.
- Whom did he call to divide the meat?
He called the old folk to divide the meat.
They divided it so that none went short,
They divided it so that none had too much.

Where did they take the meat to be sun-dried?
They sun-dried it on the fence of the great Master's garden.
40 Where did they take the skin to be sun-dried ?
They sun-dried it on the fence of the great Master's plot.

In nine days the meat was dry,
And in nine nights the skin had dried out,
Dried out, until it was like,
45 Like the great-Master's tiger skin.

They called the earth people to come and wear it,
And the people gathered and arrived,
But the earth people could not wear it.

They called the sky-people to come and wear it ,
50 And the sky people all came and gathered,
But the sky people could not stand up in it.

When the great Du-gha-njia came and arrived,
They gave it to the great Du-gha-njia to wear,
And it fitted the great Du-gha-njia exactly.

55 When he was wearing it, what did they call him?
They called him "The man in the striped skin".

M121
A hunting song. (2)

Sung by a man from Hmao-a-gw-gw.

Introduction.

This is another version of the previous song, M120. The differences in content are clear in the translation, while the Miao text, despite occasional identical lines, shows considerable divergences of language, reflecting the personal styles of two very different singers.

In this version the name of the huntsman appears as “the great Drao-gha-njia” instead of “the great Du-gha-njia”. However, after the second line its place is taken by ”Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw”. This is almost certainly a descriptive title. The key words are “ngao” and “nw”, but each can have a number of different meanings, and since there is no clue in the text as to which is intended, the title has not be translated into English.

Notwithstanding the final line, this version of the song is incomplete. Whether due to a lapse of memory on the part of the singer, or of concentration on the part of his amanuensis, the final crucial stanza is missing. We are told that no one on earth or in the sky was able to wear the skin of the prodigious animal which had been caught, and the matter is simply left there. However, the whole point of the story is the fact that, although others could not wear it, the skin fitted the huntsman himself exactly, and it became the insignia of his pre-eminence, as Wang Ming-ji’s version is at pains to explain.

M121
A hunting song. (2)

Sung by a man from Hmao-a-gw-gw.

The sun rose and the sun shone,
Shone above the gable of the great Drao-gha-njia's house.
Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw sought for a way,
A way to find game.

5 Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw took from the well-filled table,
And fed the spotted dog well with his hand.
Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw ate well from the basket,
And fed the spotted dog well from the dish.

10 Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw took,
Took the spotted dog to go and find game.
Where the game was, the dog knew,
And where the game lay, the dog saw.

The game fled from the dog.
It fled because the dog had roused and driven it out.
15 The deer fled and dropped down,
Dropped right down until it reached,
Reached that section of the garden where the hide was built.

So Drao-ngao-drao-gi-nw caught,
A kind of animal he did not recognise.
20 Its body was as large as the body of an ox,
And both its ears as big as fans.

Having seen it he blew the long horn,
Fearing it was the earth people's domestic animal.
So he called the earth people to gather and come,
25 But it was not a domestic animal of the earth people.

Fearing that it was the sky people's farm animal,
He called the sky people to come and see,
But it was not a farm animal of the sky people

30 Who did he call to cut up the meat?
He called the younger brother to cut up the meat.
How many portions of meat did he get?
He got ninety portions of meat in the tubs.
How many portions of blood did he get?
He got ninety portions of blood in the basins.

35 Who did he call to divide the meat?
He called the old folk to divide the meat.
How many portions of meat did they divide?
They divided ninety portions in the tubs.

40 How many portions of blood did they divide?
 They divided ninety portions of blood in the basins.

 Yet, for whom was the skin?
 It was for the earth people to wear,
 But the earth people could not wear it.
 Then it was for the sky people to wear,
 But the sky people could nor stand up in it.

 Thus it is ended.

M122
A hunting song. (3)

Sung by Zhang Wei-ching.

Introduction.

This song is a straightforward story of a young man who, taking his dog, went hunting in the forest. Throughout, it employs the conventional language of the songs to describe the action. Practically every line can be found in other similar songs, and these conventional lines are pressed into service, even when strictly speaking, the terminology is scarcely appropriate. Thus the perfectly normal stag which was killed is described using precisely the same words and metaphors as were applied to the prodigious, unnamed creature caught by the legendary huntsman, the great Du-gha-njia in the story of long ago. (See M120 and M121).

Since the carcass of a large animal would be difficult to bring home whole over mountainous terrain, it was convenient to cut it up into pieces there where it had been killed. The interesting thing is that the first portion was carried home and used as an offering to the spirit of the great Du-gha-njia. (The name appears in this song as “the great Drao-gha-nzhang”). This appears to have been by way of a thank-offering for success in the hunting expedition.

M122
A hunting song. (3)

Sung by Zhang Wei-ching.

This year we may know,
Know that the woman, the mother, has given birth,
Given birth to an eldest son.

5 The eldest son rose up,
Arose to go from home,
Arose to go from his place.
For the eldest son had grown,
Grown well and strong in his surroundings.

10 The sun rose shining brightly
And the eldest son fed,
Fed the black dog well.

15 The sunshine was very fine,
And the sunshine was good,
Good for the eldest son to go and find game.
He found it in the people's black forest,
He found it in the people's dark forest.

20 Where the game was, all the time the dog knew,
Where the game was, all the time the dog saw.
He saw that the stag was there,
There in the black forest at the foot of the cliff.

25 Its body was the size of an ox,
Its black ears were the size of fans,
And its fiery eyes as big as cups.
The people had heard of such with their ears,
But their eyes had never seen it.

30 The eldest son's black dog,
The black dog ran till it reached,
Reached the place where the stag was.
The stag jumped up
Jumped up and bounded away into the forest.

35 The eldest son's black dog,
The black dog followed the game as it ran.
The dog, it chased the game,
The game, it fled from the dog.
It fled till it reached the edge of the people's forest,
Here the dog brought it to bay.
It fastened on to the stag,
As it crossed the edge of the people's forest.

40 The eldest son called,
Called the old folk from the village,
Called the old folk to go and cut up the meat,
And divide one portion for the great Drao-gha-nzhang.

Bringing it, he returned, came back and reached home.
For the great Drao-gha-nzhang he boiled,
45 Boiled and offered it to the great Drao-gha-nzhang.
For they had been and found game.

Thus it is ended.

