

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Miao History

Migration to the Nuo territory and the saga of Byu-no and Sao-no
Songs M231 to M258

Introduction and Translation

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Twelve families of Miao, fleeing, reached Nuo country.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

Two songs in Document N are given this title. For the present song, which contains no reference to the people arriving in Nuo country, it is scarcely appropriate. It has, however, a sub-title, "Celebrating the fifth moon festival", which is considerably more to the point.

When the Miao decided finally to abandon their ancient homeland, it was not a simple matter of slipping away quietly and swiftly. Small children and the elderly had to be considered, and it would be necessary to carry as much food as possible with them. Moreover, since their wealth was chiefly in their livestock, the pace of their flight would be determined by the speed at which flocks and herds could be moved. In the initial stages, until they had got beyond the range of a Chinese raid, they would be particularly vulnerable. Had everything suddenly gone quiet in their villages, the alarm would surely have been raised, but they chose to depart at the Fifth Moon Festival when the celebrations included considerable commotion and the beating of drums. The noise made by the rams and the billy-goats dragging around small drums created the impression that all was proceeding normally in the Miao settlements, and gave time for the people to get away safely.

The Miao used the same cycle of twelve animals as the Chinese for counting time. This was applied to years, and we are here told that hostilities between the Miao and the Chinese continued over a full cycle of twelve years. It also applied to the lunar months of the year, which was kept in step with the solar year by the addition every few years of an intercalary month. The cycle of twelve animals was also applied to days, but this ran independently, and was not tied to the cycle of months. The flight of the Miao was in the year of the Cockerel, that is the fifth year of the cycle, in Cockerel-month, that is the fifth month, and on the fifth day of the month, which that year fell on Cockerel-day.

There is a convention in the old Miao songs that in giving the name of a year or a month it is prefixed with the name of the previous year or month. So here we have not simply "Cockerel-year" or "Cockerel-month", but "Monkey-year bringing Cockerel-year" and "Monkey-month bringing Cockerel-month".

According to the old songs, if one were to travel far enough, one would reach the limit of the sky and the end of the earth, the point where the dome of the sky rested down upon the earth. In lines 28 and 29, repeated in lines 67 and 68, the people longed to be able to flee to that place where there would be no more conflict. In these lines mention of striking with the hands and with the feet is a little obscure. It is possible that the reference is to the use of the Miao people's most formidable weapon, the crossbow. To stretch and to shoot with it required considerable strength and the use of both hands and feet.

Twelve families of Miao, fleeing, reached Nuo country.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- When twelve families of Miao dwelt on the Tracts of Mi-li,
 At the Golden City, Lao-u and Lao-gi-jiai on the great plain,
 It was pleasant as the sun's rising,
 It was propitious as the sun's appearing.
- 5 Hearts were peaceful as a basket is smooth within,
 Hearts were restful as a large basket is flat within.
- While the sky remained constant,
 In Monkey-month or Cockerel-month,
 When Chinese families and Miao families celebrated the Fifth-Moon Festival,
- 10 The Chinese families came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
 While the Miao families were living in the cities of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di.
- Which Chinese families were these?
 These were the families of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie who seized the land.
 Which Miao families were these?
- 15 These were the families of the Leader Gyu-myu-zhyu the guardian of the land.
- When the sky grows black, rain must follow,
 When hearts become evil, the training of soldiers begins.
 The Chinese families and the Miao families were like great black bulls
 about to interlock horns,
 For the Chinese families and the Miao families disputed the land,
- 20 The Chinese families and the Miao families disputed the place.
- They fought through practically a whole cycle of twelve years.
 The Miao families saw many of the young generation fall in battle,
 As the companies of Miao soldiers suffered heavy casualties.
 So it was also when one considered the Chinese leader Gi-yie on the other side.
- 25 The Miao families spoke together and said,
 "Fighting yields no shelter from the sun,
 Soldiering yields no shelter from the rain!
 Could we flee to the limits of the sky and the limits of the earth, none need strike
 with his hands,
 Could we flee to the ends of the sky and the ends of the earth, none need strike with
 his feet.
- 30 So let us leave the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo to the Chinese clans,
 Let us leave them for the Chinese Leader Gi-yie to make his own portion of land,
 Let us leave them for the Chinese Leader Gi-yie to make a portion for himself".
- Then the Miao families sought a time, sought an occasion for setting out,
 They sought a time, sought an occasion in Monkey-year or Cockerel-year,
- 35 And chose Monkey-month or Cockerel-month.

Then, on the fifth day of the fifth month, which was Cockerel day,
The Miao families gathered together all their members to flee in earnest,
Like a mother-hen brooding her little ones under her feathers that none might stray
away.

40 This time when the old folk fled,
They climbed right up to the high mountains above the river Nzhi-mi,
And the children, when they had climbed to the mountain top, jumped for joy.

For this time they had escaped from the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and crossed over the
pass,
And the old folk, having fled so far, killed chicken and killed pigs in celebration,
For today they had escaped from the power of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie.

45 Now the Miao families had devised a plan,
The Miao families had devised a scheme.
They caught rams and tied them to hand-drums,
They caught billy-goats and tied them to stick-drums.

50 As the rams ate grain and vegetables from the storage baskets,
And as the billy-goats ate grain and vegetables from the winnowing baskets,
They dragged the hand-drums and stick-drums, and banging them, made a great
noise.

When the Chinese Leader Gi-yie sent retainers in secret to come and spy,
They saw that the Miao families had gathered their members and every one had fled.
Fleeing, they had gone nearly half a month's journey.

55 When the Chinese Leader Gi-yie sent soldiers under cover to come and look,
They saw not a single person remaining of the twelve Miao clans.
They saw only rams and billy-goats dragging hand-drums and stick-drums and
making a great noise.

The Miao families had taken their members and were fled and gone.
The twelve Miao clans, fleeing, had reached a place where the land was well
drained.

60 But the old folk, great and small, were sad at heart,
The old folk, great and small, were heavy hearted,
As they lamented for the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo now beyond
reclaim.

They made ballads by which to return and look,
And as they looked back to the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo their tears
flowed down,
As they looked back to the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo they lifted their
voices and wept.

They made ballads by which they returned again,
Would they could flee to the limits of the sky and the limits of the earth where none
need strike with his hands!
Would they could flee to the ends of the sky and the ends of the earth where none

need strike with his feet!

Thus it was that the ballads of the twelve Miao clans began.

70 Now, when we Miao make sacrifice to the spirits entertaining them as guests,
We do not take rams or billy-goats for the offering,
Because rams and billy-goats protected,
Protected the lives of the twelve Miao clans.

Rams and the billy-goats protected,
75 Protected the twelve Miao clans climbing away from the Plain,
And this is sung that the twelve Miao clans,
When sacrificing to the spirits and entertaining them as guests, may remember
and follow the tradition.

Thus it is ended.

Customs devised by twelve Miao clans for their protection.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

The narrative in this song begins at the end of the story, with the time when the Miao left their ancient homeland, and works backwards to the point at which they first arrived and took their bearings. It starts with a brief reference to the fifth moon festivities under cover of which the Miao clans eventually fled from the homeland. It then refers to that battle with the Chinese which took place in the narrow river valley. Next comes an extended passage describing how the young people mounted a watch in preparation for the anticipated Chinese attack. Then there is a section about the hunting of game, followed by one about the making of roads, and, finally, a description of the Miao Elders surveying the borders of the homeland, to the south and the north, and to the east and the west.

Several of the songs which concern the flight of the Miao from their ancient homeland and their subsequent migrations, describe how the old people grieved for the lost land and recorded their grief in song. This piece may well belong in that category. It seems much more like the some-what disjointed reminiscences of an old man recalling what used to be when he was young, than an historical narrative of things as they actually happened. In fact the details in the passage about the "rock watch" and the "farm watch" read like the recollections of someone who still remembered how weary one could get, and what a struggle it was to keep awake.

From other songs we learn that the fleeing Miao tribes first encountered the Yi people at a place called Bang-deu-di. This name occurs at the very end of this song where it is called "this place", presumably the place where the singer found himself as he composed his song.

Customs devised by twelve Miao clans for their protection.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

In Monkey-month or Cockerel-month,
When Chinese families and Miao families had celebrated the fifth-moon festival,
The military commanders of the Miao families,
The Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no and Gha-sao-hmao-byu, forgathered.

5 Reports were rife of companies of soldiers ready to attack as they emerged from the
gorge,
To attack the Plains of Li-mo by the Ndu-na-yi-mo river,
At the lower border beside the water,
And to fight at the meeting of the waters on the Plains of Li-mo.

10 Now the older folk of the twelve Miao clans living in towns,
Gave instruction that their children who lived in the villages,
Must now appoint controllers to control the towns,
And craftsmen to oversee the villages.

If the day came when there was a call to arms,
The controller would cry out the words of calling,
15 Would cry out that brothers, parents, everyone would awaken.
Likewise the craftsmen would cry out like the cock crowing,
Would cry out that brothers, sisters, all would arise.

So the older folk lived in their families.
And married couples could choose to sleep,
20 But the daughters, the young women, all friends, mounted the "farm-watch",
And the sons, the young men, all friends, mounted the "rock-watch".

"Rock-watch" rations were food for those guarding the road,
"Farm-watch" rations were food for those guarding the lower border.

The daughters, the young women, all friends, guarded the surroundings of the
settlements,
25 The sons, the young men, all friends, guarded the high mountain ranges.
The daughters, the young women, all friends, prepared food in readiness,
For the sons, the young men, all friends, returning quietly to eat.

30 "You, who guard the lower border and guard the road, take care,
Fearing lest the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's companies of soldiers should come,
And evil, greedy people enter our towns,
And for fear lest the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's companies of soldiers should arrive,
And evil, greedy people enter our villages.

35 Daughters, young women, all friends, and sons, young men, all friends,
If on guard you grow weary, exchange, and let me go on guard.
I will guard while you sleep.
For if you grow drowsy there is danger,

And if you start dreaming you must be wakened quickly.
So, you will pinch me and I will nudge you!

40 Speak in whispers, make no noise,
Speak in whispers, do not raise your voice,
For fear lest the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's companies of soldiers should destroy us.

45 So, brothers and sisters, be of one purpose.
You, daughters, young women, behave with decorum,
And you, sons, young men, with decency,
So that should hostilities break out,
All will stand firm as a single body”.

50 The Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no and Gha-sao-hmao-byu sent,
Sent out a group of foresters,
Because there was no time for raising crops,
And no time to engage in farming.

55 It was necessary that their controller should lead them with discipline.
Standing high on the mountain range,
Without so much as a blink of the eyes,
He should make decisions with assurance ,
In all matters of importance.

60 The controller, raising his voice across the deep valley,
Cried out, and with a rustling sound the tiger was gone over the pass;
Cried out, and the roebuck sprang suddenly to their feet;
Cried out, and the deer ran to the middle of the plain.
So he took his stand and, crying out, directed clearly,
Where those on guard should lie in wait,
On all the hill slopes for the various wild creatures;
On the hill slopes for the roebuck and the deer;
On the hill slopes for the wild pigs, in the surroundings where they thrived.

65 So they hunted wild creatures of all kinds, the wild pigs, the deer,
And the roebuck, to enhance their strength,
But they only took them that the children might prepare well their morning and
evening meals.

70 They would hunt wild creatures of all kinds, the wild pigs, the deer,
And the roebuck, to establish their control,
But they only took them that the retainers and soldiers might prepare well their
midday meals.

The Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no and Gha-sao-hmao-byu sent,
Sent a group of road makers across the lower valley,
To clear a way through the green covering,
And to clear the dark forest laying it flat.

75 They cleared it that the children might have a smooth road to travel,
They cleared it that old people and children might not stumble.

The Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no and Gha-sao-hmao-byu
Would look back towards Nbw-sie-mi-fu-di,
For the south wind came from the Nbw-sie-mi-fu plains in the Nbw-sie-mi-fu
country,
80 Which was bounded on one side by the nine lakes of Gi-nzyu.

Then they would turn right about and look,
Look towards Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
For the north wind came from the Cai-sie-mi-fu plains in the Cai-sie-mi-fu country,
Which was bounded on one side by the blue lakes of Gi-nzyu.

85 Turning towards the far side of the land,
Were dark forests sighing in the wind,
For great forests were the boundary on that side.

But the twelve Miao clans had smooth roads,
Flat roads for their journey to reach this place,
90 To reach this wide plain, the plain of the river Deu-di.

Thus it is ended.

M233

Song of how twelve Miao clans, fleeing, reached Nuo country.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This, the third of Yang Zhi's songs about the flight of the Miao from the ancient homeland, describes how they eventually settled in Gi-chi-na-lu. The picture is of a well organized migration. Though forced to leave Nzhi-mi-li by Chinese pressure, they were by no means a defeated rabble, and when they arrived on the borders of Yi country they were still a force to be reckoned with. The Yi cousin is certainly depicted as having a sympathetic nature, but the friendly reception that the Miao were given was not prompted by philanthropy. They were, indeed, offered a place to live but it was not given to them as their own land. They would have to pay rent for their holdings, and when the Yi cousin spoke of "light burdens and heavy", she was referring to the extra service that the Miao would be required to render to Lord Byu-no for the privilege of living on his estates. Later songs describe how that, in time, the demands made upon them became so oppressive that the Miao decided to flee from Byu-no country.

This song is recorded in Documents M and N. The former, compiled by a group of teachers in Weining, is a selection of songs intended as an outline of Miao history. This probably accounts for the fact that in Document M the present song breaks off abruptly at line 113, when the Miao clans had been offered Gi-chi-na-lu as a locality in which to live. The passage that follows about sweetening the soil with tobacco smoke to counter the ill effects of "soil vapour" was probably regarded as inappropriate to the scheme of the Document and accordingly omitted.

M233

Song of how twelve Miao clans, fleeing, reached Nuo country.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

The eldest daughter of Byu-no,
The Yi cousin, the young woman who commanded and led the soldiers,
Heard that twelve clans of Miao had reached the border at the river Deu-di.

5 The Yi cousin was deeply concerned,
So the Yi cousin, riding her mule, an animal dappled and grey,
Commanded her companies of soldiers to run and investigate.

10 When they reached the border at the river Deu-di
The Yi cousin saw the twelve Miao clans,
With their companies of soldiers wearing,
Wearing flowing tail plumes of eagles,
Wearing tail plumes of eagles to serve as a sign.

15 They made everyone, great and small, even the old folk wear,
Wear smart head-ties, shining like new,
Wear smart head-ties, shining and bright,
Wear head-ties shining red against the hill slope,
Wear head-ties shining red against the hill side.
The head-ties they wore when repelling the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's swords
and spears.

20 The Yi cousin was surprised and alarmed
To see the twelve Miao clans' companies of soldiers waiting,
With shining spears and pointed swords in their hands.
The Yi cousin opened her mouth, opened her lips and asked,

25 "Are you the twelve Miao clans which fled,
Fled from the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo?"
The twelve Miao clans heard the Yi cousin's voice,
But the retainers and soldiers of the twelve Miao clans made no response.

So the Yi cousin raised her right hand and, beckoning, said,
"We are brothers and sisters, let there be no mischief!
We are brothers and sisters, let there be no onslaught!"

30 Then the twelve Miao clans' companies of soldiers laid down,
Laid down their weapons upon the ground.
And the Yi cousin dismounted from her mule.

35 The controllers and officers of the twelve Miao clans ran forward,
The controllers and officers spoke up,
"If there are questions, speak and make them plain,
If there are decisions, speak and let us know".

The Yi cousin, turning aside, made enquiry,

Speaking her words quietly she asked,
 "Are you the twelve Miao clans who fled,
 Fled from the Tracts of Mi-li and Golden City?

40 They speak of twelve Miao clans who fled from the Plains of Li-mo,
 Whom the Chinese Leader Gi-yie drove away. Are you they?"

The controllers, the officers and the old folk,
 Speaking their words quietly asked,
 "They speak of the Yi cousin, the young woman who commands soldiers. Are you
 she?"

45 The Yi cousin opened her mouth and replied,
 "I am just an ordinary young woman,
 But when they speak of the Yi cousin, the young woman, the fighter, it is I".

So the Yi cousin spoke truthfully to the controllers and officers,
 And the controllers and officers responded in good faith.

50 Then the Yi cousin raised her voice and laughed aloud,
 "There is no need to be anxious at all.

The sky is wide enough for the birds to fly,
 The earth is wide enough for twelve Miao clans to choose a place to live.
 There is work to be done, you have my word,

55 There are light burdens and heavy, you have my promise".

When the twelve Miao clans heard the Yi cousin speaking so plainly,
 And the twelve Miao clans knew that the Yi cousin was telling the truth,
 And that their controllers and officers had responded in good faith,
 The twelve Miao clans' companies of soldiers laughed aloud.

60 But the old folk, great and small, spoke about Nzhi-mi-li,
 About the calamity, the bitterness and the hardships,
 Raising their voices to the sky,
 While the tears streamed down.

The Yi cousin was sympathetic,
 65 And the Yi cousin was weeping with them,
 But the Yi cousin quietly wiped away her tears,
 Unwilling that any of the old folk, great or small, should see.

Then the Yi cousin said,
 "Wipe away your tears and dry your eyes,
 70 Wipe you mouths, and wipe your noses clean.
 The calamities and disasters, the bitterness and hardships,
 Take them, and cast them behind you along the way".

When the next day came,
 The Yi cousin brought the old folk great and small,
 75 And the companies of soldiers back, and reached,
 Reached the borders of the Yi cousin's grandfather, the Lord Byu-no's estates.

The Yi cousin announced,
 "Twelve Miao clans have arrived as a group".

80 When grandfather, the Lord Byu-no heard,
 Heard the Yi cousin say,
 That twelve Miao clans had come as a group,
 Grandfather, the Lord Byu-no came, and approaching,
 Grandfather, the Lord Byu-no, laughed aloud.

85 When grandfather, the Lord Byu-no had seen them,
 Speaking his words quietly, he asked,
 Asked the Yi cousin privately,
 "Are these indeed the twelve Miao clans?"

Then the Yi cousin replied,
 She said, "These are indeed the twelve Miao clans".

90 The Yi cousin again extended to the twelve Miao clans,
 To the old folk and the companies of soldiers, reassurance.
 Raising her voice and clapping her hands the Yi cousin said,

95 "There is no need to be anxious at all.
 There are light burdens and heavy, you have my promise,
 For matters great or small you have my presence,
 You twelve Miao clans set your hearts at rest.

Raise crops, do your farming, so pass your days and fill your time.
 The sky is wide enough for the birds to fly,
 And earth is wide enough for water to flow,
 100 And, so far as people are concerned,
 Wide enough for twelve Miao clans to choose places to dwell".

The old folk, everyone great and small,
 And the companies of soldiers laughed aloud.

105 Grandfather, the Lord Byu-no and the Yi cousin prepared,
 Prepared a dinner, prepared food and entertained,
 Entertained the twelve Miao clans as Lord Byu-no would entertain at a wedding.
 Prepared as when the Yi cousin entertained her guests.

When the next day came,
 The Yi cousin and Grandfather, Lord Byu-no came out and said,

110 "You may occupy the whole of the plain,
 Facing toward the sunrise,
 By the river A-na at Gi-chi-na-lu,
 Behind the mountain. There you may live as you please".

115 The old folk of the twelve Miao clans chose dwelling places,
 Chose them on the whole of the plain,
 Facing toward the sunrise.
 Yet still the old folk were anxious and declared,

- "If you dig holes, holes in the soil and do not smoke,
 Smoke tobacco and let the vapour go into the holes,
 120 Let the smoke get down to the subsoil,
 You will not fulfil the wishes of the old folk.
- In fact the old folk, every one will be most upset.
 For as black, brackish water cannot be carried for use,
 So vapour from the soil cannot promote friendship".
 125 Having spoken, the old folk withdrew.
- When the old folk had chosen dwelling places,
 Chosen them by the Na-lu river in Gi-chi-na-lu country,
 People dug holes in the soil, but first they went and lit up.
 They smoked their tobacco, puffing out smoke which penetrated to the subsoil.
- 130 First one puff reached the hole, then three puffs,
 And finally twelve puffs of tobacco smoke,
 Puffs of tobacco smoke which went spiralling,
 Spiralling along the ground till it penetrated to the subsoil.
- Then the old folk laughed aloud,
 135 "As black water has been left on the flats and clear water carried for use,
 So the vapour from the soil will now promote friendship".
- The twelve Miao clans dwelt in the Gi-chi-na-lu country,
 Including Do-zi-go together with Die-zi-nyu,
 Ndrang-shi-njia and Ndrang-go-nghw,
 140 Sufficient for the descendants of the twelve Miao clans
 To build houses and establishments for all generations.
- While the sky remained constant,
 The hills and levels of Ngyu were renamed, "The hills and levels of the twelve Miao
 clans",
 Were renamed, "The hills and dwellings of the twelve Miao clans".
- 145 When the twelve Miao clans settled by the river A-na in Gi-chi-na-lu country,
 Hearts were peaceful as a basket is smooth within,
 Hearts were restful as a large basket is flat within.
- They came to regard Nzhi-mi-li with its roads and villages under guard as but a
 temporary home,
 And, as a reminder, made "rock watch rations", taking and eating steamed eggs.
 150 So all the twelve Miao clans lived at Gi-chi-na-lu.
- While the sky remained constant,
 They multiplied through succeeding generations,
 This growth had its origin, its beginnings at Gi-chi-na-lu,
 And this is sung that all the children may remember.
- 155 Thus it is ended.

The song of the Man Cao. How the Miao arrived in Byu-no country.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

Introduction

In the sixth song of Yang Zhi's cycle describing the loss of the Miao homeland and their conflict with the Chinese, there is a summary of the names used for the ancient clan leaders. Thus for the modern Miao name Hmao-ndlw, the old "classical" form was Gi-yie-yeu-lao or Gi-no-yeu-lao, but there was also the form A-yeu-hai, which, though no longer in current use, appears to be less old than the other two. The name Yeu-cao, the Man Cao, used throughout this song, also belongs in this later category, while the vocabulary and language suggest a rather later style of composition than that of the Yang Zhi cycle. At the end of another version of this song, recorded by Wang Ming-ji, there is a footnote explaining that "this family belongs to the Hmao-njjiao branch of the Hmao-dang clan". That is the clan bearing the Chinese name Wang.

According to this song, the feud between the Miao and the Chinese began when the leader of the Cao clan, while on a journey, was set upon and robbed by some local Chinese. The Miao took revenge by attacking and killing the several Chinese leaders. The angry threats that this evoked were sufficient to frighten the Miao into fleeing from the region altogether. Unlike other forms of the tradition, this clan seems to have offered no resistance, and made no effort to defend their homeland.

At the end of the song we learn that the Miao eventually settled in the Na-lu valley, but no mention is made of their relationship with the Yi landlord Byu-no who owned the whole area. However in Wang Ming-ji's version the oppression and the virtual enslavement that the Miao suffered is vividly described, and the story is carried forward to the ultimate settlement far to the West in Sao-no country.

The song of the Man Cao. How the Miao arrived in Byu-no country.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Man Cao to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Woman Cao to come and dwell.

5 The Woman Cao was beautiful,
As the man Cao soon came to know.
The Woman Cao together with,
With the Man Cao made a family to live,
With the Man Cao made a family to dwell.

10 They dwelt on the great plain of the river Ndu-gi-nzhe.
Now there on the plain of the river Ndu-gi-nzhe
There was paddy land from which to harvest rice,
There were paddy fields, flat and long, planted and secure,
And resembling their daughters, the grown up young women's skirts,
15 Cotton skirts, the skirts decorated with strips of applique sewn side by side.

They built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs for living in families.
The houses with timber frames and tiled roofs resembled,
Resembled their sons' felt capes gathered in thirteen folds.
They arranged for their sons to come and live in the houses,
20 And the sons also worked,
Worked the paddy fields, flat and long, making them secure.

The Woman Cao and the Man Cao discussed together,
"This year the season has been good; a good year.
We have harvested white rice and filled the granary,
25 We have harvested millet and filled the store,
We have harvested cotton and filled the place".

One day the Woman Cao and the Man Cao rose,
Rose early, before dawn,
Rose and set out to go,
30 To go to their parents' home.

Having reached the edge of the plain of the river Ndu-gi-nzhe
They met with nine robbers of the Ruling Race,
Who appeared suddenly and robbed,
Robbed the Woman Cao and the Man Cao of everything.
35 As a result the Man Cao took,
Took and killed the robbers nine headmen.

While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race came to know,
And the Ruling Race, uttering dark threats, reacted with menace.

40 The Woman Cao shook with fear,
 The Man Cao trembled.

 So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao took,
 Took the children, the women with the young folk and fled,

 Fled to the plain in the Nang-she country.

45 There the Woman Cao and the man Cao turned back to look,
 To look at their homeland on the river Ndu-gi-nzhe.

 The Woman Cao and the Man Cao lamented,
 Lamented for the great plain of the river Ndu-gi-nzhe,
 For the paddy fields, flat and long, planted and secure,

50 For the houses with timber frames and tiled roofs set in rows.

 For the rice growing in the midst of the flat land,
 And the cotton in the midst of the plain.
 The Man Cao and the Woman Cao's tears dropped down.

 While the sky remained constant,

55 The Woman Cao and the Man Cao discussed together,
 "We are afraid that the Ruling Race
 Will, in these surroundings, stir up trouble in the future".

 So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao arose and fled,
 Fled to Gha-nzhi-do-sha-lao, safe country,

60 But country at high altitude.

 At Gha-nzhi-do-sha-lao one might plant maize but it would not ripen,
 One might plant millet but it would not mature.
 At Gha-nzhi-do-sha-lao all the roads were twisting,
 Having rounded ninety nine bends there was no end in sight,

65 Having rounded ninety nine bends one had still not finished.

 So the Woman Cao and the man Cao spoke out,
 Saying that Gha-nzhi-do-sha-lao
 Did not compare with the Woman Cao and the Man Cao's homeland,
 And the Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not dwell there.

70 So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao arose and fled,
 Fled away to the low-lying country of the Na-lu valley,
 To the dry country of the Na-lu valley,
 And secured it for their descendants,
 Through nine stretches of time and through nine generations.

75 Thus it is ended.

M235
Concerning the Man Li-dao, section two.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

Section one of this song describes the settlement of the Miao clan Li-dao in their ancient homeland, and also tells of the people's eventual eviction from that homeland by the Chinese. Section two, traces their subsequent migration until their settlement in the valley of the river A-na on the estates of the Yi over-lord Byu-no, who is called throughout this song "the Lord Shi-byu".

In Yang-zhi's version of the story, when the Miao arrived in Byu-no country, they were given a friendly welcome and at once assigned the valley of the river A-na as a place in which to live. This song states that, though the Lord Byu-no received them kindly, the Miao were still fearful that, in time to come, the Chinese might turn on them as they had done before. The Lord Byu-no was apparently unable to offer them reassurance, so, with his blessing, they travelled on to the domains of another Yi over-lord, Sao-no, called "the Lord Gha-sao" throughout this song. After enquiry and investigation and a journey to consult with the Lord Byu-no, Lord Sao-no proposed that Byu-no, Sao-no and the Man Li-dao should form a mutual defence pact to guard against future Chinese aggression. Given this assurance the Miao decided to remain in Byu-no territory to which they had apparently returned with Lord Sao-no, and they were granted leave to settle in the forests along the A-na river.

The following points of detail need some further explanation.

1. In the passage beginning at line 20 we are told that the women and children grieved in particular for the loss of the plentiful supply of running water which flowed past their houses and gardens. This reflects the fact that in a Miao household the task of carrying water for domestic use usually fell to the women and girls. A constant supply close at hand greatly lightened their work.

In lines 96 and 97 the Lord Gha-sao declared that his "hands were able" and his "hands were skilful". This is a conventional formula in the songs which usually takes the following form:

"So and so's hands were able, his hands were skilful. What were his hands able, his hands skilful to do? His hands were able, his hands were skilful to make ..."

2. Commonly the objects made were boats to cross a river or fire crackers to frighten the enemy. In this song the usage is slightly different. The Lord Gha-sao had just received a strongly worded appeal from a rival landlord requesting him to give the bearer of the message preferential treatment, but the Lord Gha-sao, apparently, took exception to being told what he should do. In observing that his "hands were able and skilful", he was saying, "I am perfectly capable of handling this matter myself, and I will make up my own mind what should be done".
3. The expression, "While the sky remained constant", is a convention used regularly in the songs to indicate the passage of time. Thus lines 107 and 108 which read,

"Unfortunately, while the sky remained constant,
The Man Li-dao could not dwell there".

simply mean,

"Later, unfortunately, there came a time
When the Man Li-dao could not dwell there"

M235
Concerning the Man Li-dao, section two.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

The Man Li-dao fled and was gone,
The Man Li-dao's women and children going ahead,
And the Man Li-dao's retainers and soldiers coming behind,
Until they reached the plain of Hmao-gha-nzhi.

5 Then the women and children turned round and gazed,
Gazed at the women and children's homeland,
And the women and children raised their voices and wept.

The Man Li-dao turned round and gazed,
Gazed at the Man Li-dao's circular city there,
10 There on the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw.

The retainers and soldiers of the Ruling Race
Had hoisted glowing red flags like flames of fire.
The retainers and soldiers of the Ruling Race
Had hoisted shining white flags like whirling snow.

15 The Man Li-dao grieved,
Grieved for the Man Li-dao's houses with timber frames and tiled roofs, now
irrecoverable,
The Man Li-dao grieved,
Grieved for the Man Li-dao's circular city, now beyond reclaim,
So the Man Li-dao's tears came welling up.

20 The Man Li-dao's women and children grieved,
Grieved for the Man Li-dao's streams of water flowing past,
Flowing strongly past the lower side of the gardens.

The women and children grieved,
Grieved for the Man Li-dao's streams of water flowing past,
25 Flowing strongly past the lower side of the dwellings,
So the women and children raised their voices, weeping aloud.

The Man Li-dao led the way ahead,
Making the women and children, in fact the whole community,
Press forward till they reached,
30 Reached the cliff top above the Hmao-gha-nzhi gorge.

The Man Li-dao turned round and gazed,
Gazed at the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw.

The Man Li-dao wept bitterly calling to the sky,
The women and children wept bitterly calling to the earth,
35 For the Man Li-dao's home and dwelling under the blue sky,
For the women and children's streams of water under the clear sky.

- The Man Li-dao turned round and gazed back
 At the country of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw with long, flat rice-fields side by side,
 With row upon row of houses, timber framed and tiled,
 40 And it wrenched at the Man Li-dao's heart.
- He gazed at the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw and in the midst of the deserted
 ricefields
 Was the cotton crop filling the plain,
 And it wrenched at the Man Li-dao's spirit,
 So the Man Li-dao wept bitterly calling to the sky.
- 45 When the Man Li-dao looked back,
 The Man Li-dao's way shone bright,
 But when the Man Li-dao looked forward,
 The Man Li-dao's way was dark.
- The Man Li-dao came on till he reached,
 50 Reached the region of the Lord Shi-byu,
 Reached the neighbourhood of the Lord Shi-byu.
- The Lord Shi-byu opened his mouth, opened his lips and asked,
 Asked the Man Li-dao everything.
 The Man Li-dao, raising his voice answered,
 55 Telling things of nine kinds, things of ten sorts as well,
 Telling things of every kind and every sort together.
- The Lord Shi-byu listened and followed the story,
 The Lord Shi-byu listened and took the point.
 The Lord Shi-byu pitied the Man Li-dao, truly pitied him.
- 60 The Man Li-dao grieved,
 As the Man Li-dao told the Lord Shi-byu the truth,
 Gave the Lord Shi-byu an accurate account.
- The Man Li-dao had founded a circular city,
 On the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw, there on the flat plain.
 65 The Man Li-dao had built houses, timber-framed and tiled,
 On the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw, there on the level land.
- But the recollection broke the Man Li-dao's heart,
 The recollection broke the Man Li-dao's spirit.
 The Man Li-dao's tears poured down unchecked,
 70 Unchecked, his tears fell,
 And the women and children's tears, likewise unchecked, dripped down.
- The Lord Shi-byu judged that the Man Li-dao spoke the truth,
 So the Lord Shi-byu treated,
 Treated the Man Li-dao as a member of the family.
- 75 The Lord Shi-byu judged that the Man Li-dao gave an accurate account,
 So the Lord Shi-byu treated,

- Treated the Man Li-dao as an equal.
 But the Man Li-dao could not settle his mind,
 The Man Li-dao was sad at heart.
- 80 For the Man Li-dao was afraid,
 Afraid that the Ruling Race
 Around and about would stir up trouble in the future.
 The Lord Shi-byu could give no reassurance,
 So the Man Li-dao fled.
- 85 The Lord Shi-byu showed the Man Li-dao the way,
 Bidding the Man Li-dao go,
 Go to the region of the Lord Gha-sao,
 Go on to reach the neighbourhood of the Lord Gha-sao.
- 90 The Lord Shi-byu judged that the Man Li-dao spoke the truth,
 So the Lord Shi-byu urged the Lord Gha-sao to treat,
 To treat the Man Li-dao as a member of the family.
- The Lord Shi-byu spoke,
 Requesting the Lord Gha-sao to treat,
 To treat the Man Li-dao as an equal.
- 95 However, the Lord Gha-sao insisted,
 Insisted that the Lord Gha-sao's hand was able,
 Insisted that the Lord Gha-sao's hand was skilful.
 So the Man Li-dao was heavy hearted,
 The Man Li-dao was sad at heart.
- 100 The Man Li-dao opened his mouth, opened his lips to reply,
 For the Lord Gha-sao questioned the Man Li-dao's identity,
 And the Lord Gha-sao asserted,
 Asserted the Lord Gha-sao's authority,
 So the Man Li-dao spoke.
- 105 "The Man Li-dao built nine large houses, nine buildings,
 Erecting nine on nine sites.
 Unfortunately, while the sky remained constant,
 The Man Li-dao could not dwell there.
- 110 Yet the Man Li-dao's circular city stands on the level ground,
 His houses, timber framed and with tiled roofs stand on the plain,
 And his cotton crop is there on the land.
- In the Man Li-dao's ricefields, long and flat,
 Are the leaves of the rice plants, the leaves growing long,
 As you see they grow long on the Lord Gha-sao's estates".
- 115 Then the Man Li-dao added,
 "As the Lord Gha-sao's buckwheat leaves grow large,
 If the Lord Gha-sao cared to pay a visit,
 He would see that so it is also on the Man Li-dao's land".

- 120 The Lord Gha-sao was heavy hearted,
So the Lord Gha-sao took,
Took the Lord Gha-sao's retainers and soldiers, travelling until he reached,
Reached the homestead of the Lord Shi-byu.
- 125 The Lord Gha-sao opened his mouth, opened his lips and asked,
Asked the Lord Shi-byu for the truth,
And the Lord Shi-byu told him the truth.
- The Lord Shi-byu spoke,
"The Lord Shi-byu will organize,
Organize an escort to take,
To take the Lord Gha-sao to go and look".
- 130 The Lord Gha-sao gazed,
Gazed at the Man Li-dao's circular city standing on the plain,
At his deserted ricefields on the level ground,
And at his crop of cotton there on the land.
- 135 When the Lord Gha-sao returned, came back and reached,
Reached the homestead of the Lord Shi-byu,
The Lord Shi-byu opened his mouth, opened his lips and asked,
Asked, "Was there any kind of deception?"
- 140 The Lord Gha-sao shook his head and replied,
"There are the Lord Shi-byu, the Lord Gha-sao
And the Man Li-dao of one mind.
- If the Ruling Race
Around and about cause disturbance in the future,
The Lord Shi-byu, the Lord Gha-sao and the Man Li-dao
Should muster their forces and, with common aim, go forth,
145 Should muster their forces and, with common aim, unite".
- The great forests of the A-na river
Were lairs for the tigers.
The extensive forests of the A-na river
Were haunts for the deer.
- 150 Then the Man Li-dao said,
"Let the Man Li-dao go and live in the forests".
So the Man Li-dao's descendants settled,
Settled in the woodlands of the A-na river.
- 155 The descendants of the Man Li-dao went and cleared the forests.
They sowed yellow millet, sowed millet for the Man Li-dao to eat,
They sowed glutinous millet to feed the Man Li-dao's children.
So the Man Li-dao remained there,
Remained there a full cycle of twelve, even for thirteen years.

M236
The Miao homeland of Nzhi-mi-li.

Sung by Zhu Zhai-ming.

Introduction

In most of the songs of conflict and migration the activities of various clans are personalized and described as the actions of the Elder or Leader of the clan. So we read of the doings of the Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no, the Man Li-dao and a number of others. This song does not mention any leader by name, but the group is represented in the persons of a senior couple who are called simply "Ni-bo" and "Ni-yeu", "the Woman" and "the Man".

Different Miao clans in describing their ancient homeland used different names for the same places. Thus the great river was called by some, "Yi-bang", by others, "Ndu-na-yi-mo", and by yet others, "Ngga-yi-shi-lw", while the circular capital city appears variously as "Lao-gu", "Lao-u", and "Lao-gi-jiai". These variations caused difficulties for later singers when transmitting the story. Thus the singer of the present song knew that the Miao had been driven away from Nzhi-mi-li by the Chinese, and knew also, from another source, that they had been driven away from the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw, but not realizing that these were simply two accounts of the same episode, recorded them as two separate events.

In line 53, without any explanation, we are told that, because of the harsh treatment they were receiving at the hands of the Lord Shi-byu, the Miao followed the Lady-bride to the estates of the Lord Gha-sao. This migration is described in detail in a whole series of songs. They tell how the Lord Gha-sao had made a successful application to the Lord Shi-byu for the hand of his daughter in marriage. When she was about to leave for her new home, with promises of more tolerable conditions and reduced rents, the Lady-bride succeeded in persuading the Miao living on her father's lands to abandon their homes and move with her to her new husband's estates. It was arranged that they should flee suddenly and by night, so that they were gone before the Lord Shi-byu was able to do anything to stop them.

M236
The Miao homeland of Nzhi-mi-li.

Sung by Zhu Zhai-ming.

Where, is it said, that, of old, the Woman and the Man lived?
It is said that, of old, the Woman and the Man lived in the land of Nzhi-mi-li.
The land of Nzhi-mi-li was level land, land for farming,
It was low-lying, land for tilling rice.

5 Where is it said that cotton grew?
It grew in the land of Nzhi-mi-li,
And the heads of the cotton were as large as ducks' eggs.

 The Woman and the Man sent out,
Sent out young women bearing,
10 Bearing large and small baskets to pick,
To pick the cotton for spinning into yarn,
For spinning into yarn in order to weave cloth.

 They wove cloth for the Woman and the Man to wear as protection through the
 seasons,
They wove cloth for the Woman and the Man to wear as protection from the old.

15 In the land of Nzhi-mi-li the plain was level, the plain was wide,
And the land of Nzhi-mi-li was good land,
For there the swaying millet ripened,
There ripened the richly clothed rice,
And there ripened cotton, blowing in the wind.

20 This so pained the heart of the Ruling Race,
That the Ruling Race led out companies of soldiers to fight,
To fight against the Woman and the Man year by year,
Until the Woman and the Man could live there no longer.

 The Woman and the Man sought a way to flee,
25 The Woman and the Man sought a way to go.
The Woman and the Man fled till they reached,
Reached the land of Hmao-gha-nzhi.

 Where, is it said, that the land of Gha-nzhi is located?
The land of Gha-nzhi is located on the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw,
30 And there the Woman and the Man founded,
Founded a circular City on the level land.

 From within, the City was like a circle,
From within, the City was like the rising sun.
From without, the City was like the setting sun,
35 With rice fields, long and flat, laid out side by side.

 This so pained the heart of the Ruling Race,

- That the Ruling Race led out companies of soldiers to come and fight,
To fight against the Woman and the Man year by year,
A contest that the Woman and the Man could not win.
- 40 So the Woman and the Man sought a way to flee,
The Woman and the Man sought a way to go.
The Woman and the Man fled till they came and reached,
Came and reached the estates of the Lord Shi-byu.
- 45 The Woman and the Man lived,
Lived on the estates of the Lord Shi-byu.
- Here they became the Lord Shi-byu's ploughing oxen and pack horses to the limit of
endurance,
They became the Lord Shi-byu's ploughing oxen and pack horses until they were
exhausted.
They performed the Lord Shi-byu's interminable forced labour,
And paid the Lord Shi-byu's unending demands for rent.
- 50 While the sky remained constant,
The Woman and the Man could dwell there no longer,
So the Woman and the Man followed,
Followed after the Lady-bride and reached,
Reached the estates of the Lord Gha-sao
- 55 They came and lived by the river Gi-lyu, by that wide river,
They lived by the river Gi-lyu, there in the deep valley.
- There came a day when the Woman and the Man told the Lady-bride the truth.
They told how the Woman and the Man's native land
Was located in the Gha-nzhi country,
60 And that there they had founded a circular City on the level land,
And had laid out long, flat rice fields side by side in that place.
- The Lady-bride sympathized,
Sympathized with the Woman and the Man day by day,
And the Lady-bride accompanied,
65 Accompanied the Woman and the Man to return and look,
Look at the Woman and the Man's City, there in the Hmao-Gha-nzhi country.
- So the Lady-bride was convinced.
The Lady-bride concluded that the Woman and the Man were really great people,
Concluded that the Woman and the Man were really competent people.
- 70 Thus it is ended.

M237

Concerning the Man Li-dao, section four.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

This short final section of Tao Zi-gai's extended song about the Li-dao clan has, in fact, nothing to do with the man Li-dao. It tells rather how the powerful Yi lords, who originally controlled the area around Zhaotung in North-east Yunnan, were driven away, and their land seized by the Chinese. The same story was recorded by Yang Zhi at the end of the legend of how Nzyu-fao-lao drained the lake which once covered the Zhaotung plain to make way for agriculture.

The two accounts differ in one particular. According to Yang Zhi, having annexed the Zhaotung region, the Chinese sent an envoy who dictated terms to the defeated Yi lords, confining them to the West side of the Ndu-na-yi-mo river. On the other hand Tao Zi-gai says that, having been driven from the Zhaotung plain, the Yi lords brought a case against the invaders before a superior authority called Lord Syu-gyu. It is not explained who he was, but he clearly had the authority to set a bound to the Chinese expansion to the West, leaving the Yi lords in control of the mountains on the far side of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.

In the old songs the name Ndu-na-yi-mo is used for the great river which ran through the ancient Miao Homeland. Here, however, and in general modern usage, it is the name given to that stretch of the Yangtsi river which, some miles to the West of Zhaotung, flows in a North-easterly direction, and is known locally as the "Golden Sands River". Beyond it lay a region which was known as "independent Lolo country" as late as the middle of the Twentieth Century.

M237
Concerning the Man Li-dao, section four.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

A day came when the Ruling Race,
Raising a tumult, arrived from the surrounding countryside.

The retainers, the soldiers of the Ruling Race,
Gathered in strength and came from the north.
5 The retainers, the soldiers of the Ruling Race,
Gathered in strength and arrived from the south.
They killed Lord Shi-byu on their way,
They killed Lord Gha-sao and all his folk.

What would Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw contrive?
10 What would Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw do for the best?
Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw fled.
Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw fled to the boundary of the region of Bw-bw.

The Ruling Race took possession,
Possession of the plain of Li-mu country, to settle in their families and live,
15 Possession of the plain of Li-mu city, to settle in their families and dwell.

So Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw sued,
Where did they sue the Ruling Race?
They went and sued the Ruling Race before Lord Syu-gyu.
Then Lord Syu-gyu gave his ruling.

20 "Let the Ndu-na-yi-mo be made the boundary of the lands of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-
bw,
Let the Ndu-na-yi-mo be made the boundary of the country of the Ruling Race.

For a thousand ages, for ten-thousand years,
The Ruling Race in the surrounding countryside shall raise no tumult.
For a thousand ages, for ten-thousand generations,
25 Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw in the surrounding countryside shall raise no riot".

Thus it is ended

Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu and Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

The first forty-four lines of this song repeat the story of the flight of the Miao from their homeland. In this case two clans were involved. The Li-dao (Wang) clan was said to have arrived first, being joined later by the Lao-no (Yang) clan. Thereafter they moved as one.

The conventional words of line 45, "While the sky remained constant", mark the passage of many years, possibly of many generations, of migration. The clans eventually arrived in west Guizhou. The two rivers named in the song are identified in a footnote in the text as located north of the city of Weining. Here the clans were obliged to remain when two applications for permission to migrate westward into Yunnan Province were rejected by the Yi overlords Mu and Bw-bw who used to control the Zhaotung plain and all the country around about, before it was seized by the Chinese.

In the Miao text the two clan-leaders are given long, compound names, "Gi-nzyu-zie-li-dao" and "Zie-lao-no-syu-gyu-zyu-lao". The actual clan names are "Li-dao" and "Lao-no". To each of these has been added the word "zie" which means one of a pair of people or animals moving side by side, as a yoke of oxen or two folk walking abreast. In this song it signifies that the two clan-leaders were acting in partnership. "Gi-nzyu", in the first title, is also the name of a place. The songs often mention "The nine lakes of Gi-nzyu" which lay beyond the mountains far away to the east of the ancient homeland. Thus the first name probably means, "The partner Li-dao of Gi-nzyu". The second name begins, "The partner Lao-no", and ends with "zyu-lao". This is a title which is used in the songs for both the Chinese and the Yi. It means "Leader", "Military commander", or "Feudal lord", an important and powerful individual with large estates under his control. The second half of the name can thus be translated, "Lord Syu-gyu", so that the whole name becomes, "The partner Lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu", that is from the lands of Lord Syu-gyu. For the sake of brevity, even though the names still remain cumbersome, "zie", "partner", in each case has been left untranslated, so that the names appear as "Zie-li- dao of Gi-nzyu" and "Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu". Who Lord Syu-gyu may have been is further discussed in the introduction to "Concerning the Man Li-dao, section four".

Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu and Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu.*Sung by Tao Zi-gai.*

- The people lived in the people's city of Gi-jiai.
 The earth at Gi-jiai, the earth was already in being,
 Was already in being when Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu was alone.
 The sky at Gi-jiai, the sky was already in being,
 5 Was already in being when Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu came later.
- Who pastured flocks of sheep?
 Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu pastured flocks of sheep.
 Who pastured herds of cattle?
 Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu pastured herds of cattle.
- 10 Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu's stockmen drove,
 Drove out the herds of cattle to pasture on the flat land.
 Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu's stockmen drove,
 Drove out the flocks of sheep to pasture on the plain
- Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu and Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu planted,
 15 Planted cotton in the midst of the flat land.
 Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu and Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu made,
 Made fruitful rice fields in the midst of the plain.
- This pained the heart of the Ruling Race,
 For the Ruling Race desired it.
 20 So the Ruling Race led out retainers and soldiers to come and fight.
- Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu could not dwell there,
 So Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu sought a way to flee.
 Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu could not remain there,
 So Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu sought a way to go.
- 25 Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu fled until he reached,
 Reached a certain place, a long plain, called the "Plain of Wild Peppers",
 There Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu turned round to gaze,
 Gaze at the city of Gi-jiai, that great city.
- Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu grieved,
 30 Grieved for Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu's home and hearth under the blue sky,
 And Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu's tears flowed down.
- Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu fled until he reached,
 Reached a certain place, a wide plain, called the "Plain of Walnuts",
 There Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu turned round to gaze,
 35 Gaze at the city of Gi-jiai, circular like the rising sun.
- Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu grieved,
 Grieved for Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu's house and home under the clear sky,

- And Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu's tears dripped down.
 Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu
 40 Came on until they reached,
 Reached the wide plain of Ndu-nzhi,
 And reached Ndu-nzhi's high mountain ranges.
- Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu
 Here accepted the situation and ceased to look back.
- 45 While the sky remained constant,
 Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu,
 Came on until they reached,
 Reached the river Gi-trao where it gushes foaming from a hole in the rock,
 Reached the river Mi-lie where it flows foaming from the west.
- 50 The two courses of the rivers Gi-trao and Mi-lie
 Join together behind the mountain as the river Gi-jiai.
- Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu with Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu
 Came on until they reached,
 Reached the region of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw.
- 55 Indeed Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu
 Came on until they reached,
 Reached the neighbourhood of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw.
- Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu
 Had driven their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and come a great distance,
 60 Had followed their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and come from far.
- Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu spoke,
 They parted their mouths, parted their lips and asked,
 They opened their mouths, opened their lips and said,
 "Are the hills of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw available for grazing the sheep and the
 cattle?"
- 65 Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw spoke out,
 Causing Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu,
 To withdraw their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle from grazing,
 From grazing back and forth on the hills of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw,
- Zie-la o-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu
 70 Parted their mouths, parted their lips and replied,
 "Let the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle come together,
 Come together and graze back and forth on the hills of Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw".
- But Lord Mu and Lord Bw-bw spoke out,
 They parted their mouths, parted their lips and insisted,
 75 Causing Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu with Zie-li-dao of Gi-nzyu to go together,
 To go together to the winding valleys of river Gi-trao and river Mi-lie.
- Thus it is ended.

M239
Song of the Man from Lord Gyu. (1)

Introduction

The name of the singer of this song is not recorded in Document A, but the vocabulary and the poetic construction strongly suggest that it was Yang Zhi.

The song is a lament for the loss of the ancient homeland, and the Miao clan leader concerned is called "Zi-gyu-zyu-lao". This is an abbreviation of the name "Zie-lao-no-syu-gyu-zyu-lao" in the previous song by Tao Zi-gai. The introduction to that song explained that the name could be transcribed into English as "Zie-lao-no from Lord Syu-gyu". Here the personal element of the name, "Zie-lao-no", has been replaced by "Zi" which means "the male person", that is, "the Man", and "Lord Syu-gyu" has been shortened to "Lord Gyu", resulting in the title "The Man from Lord Gyu". This, however, does not imply any personal relationship with Lord Syu-gyu, but merely that its bearer originated from, or had lived in a region controlled by Lord Syu-gyu.

This song concentrates on the hardships and deprivations experienced after the homeland had been lost. These are depicted in two metaphors. The first describes the shortage and inadequacies of the food available, in fact, insufficient to keep even the clan-leader's stallion strong and virile. The second compares their arduous travelling to the long journeys of migrating swallows on earth, or of courses of the stars across the sky.

M239
Song of the Man from Lord Gyu. (1)

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Man from Lord Gyu to come and live.

Who reared a stallion, frost-coloured and dappled?
The Man from Lord Gyu reared,
5 Reared a stallion, frost-coloured and dappled.
Who reared a horse of great strength, a piebald?
The Man from Lord Gyu reared,
Reared a horse of great strength, a piebald.

Formerly it was fed full grain,
10 But afterwards only waste grain.
Formerly it neighed nineteen times,
But afterwards it neighed only ten.
The rice fields of the valleys were just not enough,
So the dappled stallion could neigh but ten times.

Who maintained thousands of soldiers like eagles?
The Man from Lord Gyu maintained,
Maintained thousands of soldiers like eagles.
Who maintained thousands of soldiers like ants?
The Man from Lord Gyu maintained,
20 Maintained thousands of soldiers like ants.

The Man from Lord Gyu set,
Set a saddle on the horse's back,
With a bridle of hemp, he set the bit in the horse's mouth.

The Man from Lord Gyu led out the companies of soldiers to climb,
25 To climb through the earth people's swaying forests to thirty camps,
To climb the earth people's path of the swallows.
The Man from Lord Gyu led out the companies of soldiers to climb,
To climb through the sky people's swaying forests to thirty lands,
To climb the sky people's path of the stars.

M240
Song of the Man from Lord Gyu. (2)

Introduction.

In this song, as with the previous one, the name of the singer is not recorded, but, again, internal evidence suggests that it was Yang Zhi.

The Miao clan leader is the same as before, and this song too is a lament for the loss of the ancient homeland. Unlike the previous song, however, it has a specific setting. Twin Miao villages are mentioned by name, Hmao-lu and Hmao-gha. A note in the manuscript identifies these as Hmao-bu-gha, which is located to the north and west of Weining. The local Yi landlord was called So-gha. He lived in his ancestral home, which resembled a fortified manor house. The whole suite of buildings and the high wall, which surrounded large ornamental gardens, were whitewashed, and were visible from far and near.

Though generations had passed, and the ancient homeland was far away, the sight of the landlord's residence and walled gardens was a constant reminder to the Miao people of the kind of building they believed their clan leader had once occupied. They pictured ornamental gardens with circular "moon" doors through which the rays of the sun and moon would shine at their respective rising in the east.

M240
Song of the Man from Lord Gyu. (2)

From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Man from Lord Gyu to come and live.
Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Man from Lord Gyu to come and dwell.

5 The Man from Lord Gyu placed a saddle on the horse's back,
And the Man from Lord Gyu led out the companies of soldiers to climb,
To climb straight out of the Hmao-lu valley.
The Man from Lord Gyu led out the companies of soldiers to climb,
To climb directly out of the Hmao-lu, Hmao-gha valley.

10 The Man from Lord Gyu turned round and gazed,
Gazed at Gi-myu's gardens away to the south,
And the Man from Lord Gyu asked,

"Is the house of the Man from Lord Gyu, with its timber frame and tiled roof, still
there?"

But the people said,

15 "The house of the Man from Lord Gyu, with its timber frame and tiled roof, is there
no longer".

So the Man from Lord Gyu grieved,
Grieved for the Man from Lord Gyu's house, with its timber frame, its tiled roof and
copper studded doors.
The Man from Lord Gyu grieved for the Man from Lord Gyu's iron studded doors.

For the house of the Man from Lord Gyu, with its timber frame and tiled roof,
faced,

20 Faced, with its circular doors, toward Gi-nzyu and the rising of the sun,
And the Man from Lord Gyu grieved for those circular doors set toward Gi-nzyu and
the moon at its appearing.

But the people said,

"The house of the Man from Lord Gyu, with its timber frame and its tiled roof is
there no longer.

25 The house, with its timber frame and tiled roof, has become,
Has become just a heap of stones".

The people said,

"The house, with its timber frame and tiled roof, has become,
Has become just a heap of rocks".

M241
The times of the Man Li-byu.

Sung by Zhang Shu-wei.

Introduction

Although it has a number of unique details, in general this song covers familiar ground, and conforms to well established patterns, tracing the expulsion of the Miao by the Chinese from their ancient homeland, called here the plain of Yi-bang, to their eventual settlement on the estates of a powerful Yi Landlord, who is not named. The Yi were divided into two social groups, the Black Yi who were landowners and yeoman farmers, and the White Yi who were slaves. Hence the title, "Black Yi Landlord" used in this narrative.

For each phase of the story a particular leader was responsible, shaping the course of events. First came the Man Li-byu who founded the race by establishing distinctive Miao customs of marriage and family relationships. The expressions translated "marriage-bond" and "marriage-union" in the opening lines of the song, are the Miao words "za-chao" and "za-go". They are virtually identical in meaning, except that the former refers to the bride's family and the latter to the bridegroom's family.

Next came the Man Li-dao who taught the people farming, and in particular, the cultivation of cotton which they harvested and sold to the Chinese. With the proceeds the man Li-dao established an unnamed town or settlement, and built there a square pool for storing water. Why such a pool was required is not explained. This is one feature peculiar to this song.

Attacks by the Chinese brought to the fore the Man Li-hxai, a military leader who, for a period was able to hold the Chinese at bay. However, his army was eventually tricked, and then wiped out by the Chinese, and the Man Li-hxai was himself captured and executed.

Finally the Miao fled from the homeland led by two individuals called "gha nji zhu Ya-shyu" and "gha nji zhu Fa-na". Ya-shyu and Fa-na are both place names, and "gha nji zhu" means "builder of pillars". This may simply be the name of the men's occupation, as in English one might say, "builder and carpenter", but it could be an honorific title. There is a Miao legend that at one point at the dawn of history the dome of the sky was thrown to one side and smashed. It was rebuilt and fixed back in place by a team of smiths who forged great pillars of copper and iron to support it, thereby saving the world for human occupation. Thus "pillar-builder" might well be a title for some benefactor of the people.

This song repeats the tradition that the distinctive patterns embroidered on the Miao tribal costume were designed as memorials of the homeland that was lost. In this connection lines 160 to 163 refer to articles of clothing called "eu", a word which has been rendered "aprons" in translation, for want of a better term. These were pieces of embroidered cloth about two and a half feet square. Photographs taken earlier in the Twentieth Century show that they were worn in pairs by young women, one in front and one behind, with the diagonals of the squares horizontal and the upper corners caught under the girdle which held the upper garment and the skirt in position. The present context says that they were also used for carrying a baby on the back. There are no pictures of these squares being worn by older women, and by the middle of the Century their use had disappeared altogether. It would seem likely that the eu was embroidered and worn only by young women expecting their first baby, to protect the unborn child from attacks of evil spirits both from before and

behind. When the child had been born the eu continued to protect it as its mother carried it around on her back.

The end of the song reflects the tradition that the Miao managed to live for some time in the remote forests on the Yi Landlord's estates without being discovered, and that, even when their presence became known the reception they were accorded was not unfriendly.

According to Miao legends about the Flood, of all the human race, only Ndrao-ya and his young sister survived. Having been given super-natural signs that this was the right thing to do, they were eventually persuaded to live as man and wife. They had three sons, the eldest was Miao, the second, Yi, and the youngest, Chinese, who contrived to gain ascendancy over his brothers by a combination of his cunning and their stupidity. In this song the Yi Landlord recognized these strange newcomers as descendants of that remote elder brother, and allowed them, for a time, to go on living there free of rent.

We are not told at what figure the rent was finally fixed, but the Landlord's somewhat cryptic remark is recorded.

"In a good year the Landlord will be good,
In a bad year the Landlord will not be good".

This presumably meant that the rent fixed, in normal times, would not seem excessive, but when the harvest was not so good there would be no special concessions. This was bad news for people already living at subsistence level, and the final line of the song foreshadows worse to follow.

M241
The times of the Man Li-byu.

Sung by Zhang Shu-wei.

When the sky began,
The sky began really to continue.

As it came about, who instituted marriage bonds?
As it came about, who instituted marriage unions?
5 The Man Li-byu instituted marriage bonds.

The Man Li-byu having nothing to use as a name,
The Man Li-byu took their situation as a name,
Calling them the "Miao marriage bond tribe",
Calling them the "Miao marriage union tribe".

10 The Man Li-byu gathered,
Gathered in-laws and cousins to celebrate marriage.
Gathered cousins, young women and young men, to dwell as families.

The cousins, young women and young men, came together,
Came together making places to live on the plain of Yi-bang,
15 Came together making places to rest on the plain of Yi-bang.

The cousins, young women and young men, raised,
Raised nine sons, nine alike in stature,
Raised nine sons, nine alike in appearance.

20 So the cousins, young women and young men,
Their descendants spread to fill the land,
Their descendants spread to fill the plain,
Their descendants spread so as to fill the district,
Their descendants spread so as to fill the country.

As it came about, who was it took,
25 Took the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, to till crops?
As it came about, the Man Li-dao took,
Took the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children to till crops.

30 The Man Li-dao took,
Took the children to plant crops,
To come every day and plant cotton on the plain,
To come every month and plant cotton on the plain,
And, year by year, at the right time, to gather the crops,
35 Year by year, at the right time, to gather the harvest.

The cotton on the Yi-bang plain,
The cotton came into bloom,

And as the flowers came out they brightened the land,
As the flowers came out they brightened the plain.

40 Then the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children carried on their backs,
Carried big baskets, carried large baskets to go and pick,
To pick the cotton on the plain each day,
To pick the cotton on the plain each month,
45 And sell it to the Ruling Race.

The young women, both Yi and Chinese spun,
Spun skeins of yarn for the whole wide world,
Spun skeins of thread for the whole wide world.
They wove rolls of cloth for the whole wide world,
50 And provided the whole wide world with clothes to wear.

The cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, by selling cotton,
By selling cotton, obtained from the Ruling Race a store of silver,
By selling cotton, obtained from the Ruling Race a store of treasure.

55 The Man Li-dao brought out,
Brought out the Man Li-dao's store of silver,
And built for the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, a town with a water pool,
A town with a water pool, a pool four-square.

60 Then the Man Li-dao brought out,
Brought out the Man Li-dao's store of silver,
And built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs adjoining one another,
Built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs standing together.

The houses, timber framed and tiled, stood in a curve like a chicken's claw,
65 The houses, timber framed and tiled, stood in a curve like a pig's hoof,
Where the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, might live.

As it came about, who was it did no good?
The Ruling Race did no good, and in this manner.

70 The Ruling Race dispatched,
Dispatched from the Ruling Race,
Retainers and troops each day to attack,
To attack the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, in the middle of the plain.

75 So the cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, could not continue to rest there,
The cousins, young women and young men,
And their children, could live there no longer.

As it came about, who was it came making crossbows?

- 80 As it came about, who was it came making swords?
 As it came about, who was it came making soldiers?
 As it came about, the Man Li-dao made crossbows.
 As it came about, the Man Li-dao made swords.
 As it came about the Man Li-dao made soldiers.
- 85 The Man Li-dao came and made,
 Made ninety nine smart soldiers.
 They exercised with crossbows over thirty mountain ranges,
 And they exercised with swords through thirty valleys.
- 90 So they repelled the Ruling Race,
 Repelled the retainers and soldiers upon the sheep paths,
 Repelled the retainers and troops along the sheep tracks,
 Protecting the cousins, young women and young men,
 And their children, in the middle of the plain.
- 95 Thus the cousins, young women and young men,
 And their children, could continue to rest,
 The cousins, young women and young men,
 And their children, could rest secure.
- The Ruling Race was flustered, impatient and frustrated,
 As the Ruling Race sought for a solution.
- 100 So the Ruling Race offered,
 Offered to young women of the Ruling Race,
 To their pretty young daughters, bangles of silver,
 To their pretty young daughters, bangles of gold,
- 105 For coming to deceive the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops,
 Deceive them upon the sheep paths,
 For coming to deceive the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops,
 Deceive them along the sheep tracks,
 To deceive the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops into making families to live,
 To deceive the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops into making families to dwell.
- 110 The king of the Ruling Race enquired,
 "What do you need for the marriages?
 What do you need for the weddings?"
 The Ruling Race's daughters said,
 "We need bowls of clear wine for the marriages".
- 115 Then the Ruling Race devised a plan.
 The Ruling Race took out,
 Took out bowls of clear wine to make them drunk.
- 120 They made the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops drunk,
 Made them drunk upon the sheep paths,
 Made the retainers and troops drunk along the sheep tracks.
- Then they killed the Man Li-hxai's retainers and troops,

- Killed them upon the sheep paths,
Killed the retainers and troops along the sheep tracks.
- When the cousins, young women and young men,
125 And their children's daughters heard it, they covered their faces and wept.
They raised their voices, calling all the family together,
"Is it true that the youths all together are no longer alive?"
- The Chinese retainers and troops came and arrested,
Arrested the Man Li-hxai there,
130 There at the town with a water pool, in the middle of the town.
They tied the Man Li-hxai's wrists together,
They tied the Man Li-hxai's ankles together,
And carried him on a pole to the City of the Ruling Race's king.
- The Ruling Race killed the Man Li-hxai there,
135 There in the City of the Ruling Race's king,
Killed him on the fifth day of the fifth moon.
Then the Ruling Race came to destroy,
To destroy the children at the town with a water pool.
- As it came about who was it led,
140 Led the children in flight?
As it came about the pillar-builder from Ya-shyu,
Together with the pillar-builder from Fa-na led,
Led the children in flight out of the town.
- They fled from the red river, the river like blood,
145 But having climbed from the fertile country of the valleys,
In what land would they want to rebuild and settle,
In what country would they care to rebuild and settle?
- The cousins, young women and young men,
And the young folk, daughters and sons of their children,
150 Called to the youths in songs and in words for answers.
"Having climbed the mountain range of Fa-na, that high mountain range,
And having reached Fa-na, will the children still be alive?
Having reached Fa-na, will the old folk still be alive?"
- When they fled from the plains to the mountains,
155 The young women, the daughters lamented and grieved,
Grieved for the town with the water pool each day.
The young women, the daughters lamented and grieved,
Grieved for the plain of Yi-bang each month,
They grieved, but could not regain them.
- 160 The young women, the daughters took,
Took silk thread and satin thread to embroider,
Embroider a pattern of the town with a water pool, a pool four-square,
Embroidering gathered squares for aprons, squares of cloth for carrying a child.
- The young women, the daughters took,

165 Took silk thread, and satin thread to embroider,
 To embroider the plain of Yi-bang, making clothes to wear,
 Making the costumes with the nza-nzyu pattern which they wore.

Fleeing from the valley of the elderberry river, the valley of the river of reeds,
 The young women, the daughters, picked elderberries and fed the children.

170 Having fled the domain of the black-hearted Ruling Race,
 They fled to the lands of the Black Yi Landlord.

They fled there and farmed their crops,
 And, for a twelve year period, approaching thirteen years,
 The Black Yi Landlord knew nothing about it.

175 Then some of the Black Yi Landlord's slaves came and saw
 The young Miao women, the daughters' hair cones resembling sprouting horns.

When the Black Yi slaves returned,
 They said, "We went and we saw
 People who grow horns! Whoever can they be?"

180 The Black Yi Landlord replied,
 "You go and call them for me to see".

So the Black Yi Landlord's slaves came to call them.
 A call in the Yi language, and they ran away.
 A call in Chinese, and they stood and looked.

185 A further call in Chinese persuaded them to go and see the Landlord.
 All the Miao sons and daughters went,
 Went together for the interview with the Landlord.

When the Landlord saw them he was moved with pity and said,
 "These are from long, long ago,
 190 When the Deluge had at last abated,
 The survivor's eldest son was a Miao, these are his descendants".

Then the Black Yi Landlord said,
 "You return to your farming,
 Raise corn and raise crops to live on.

195 Later we will come and talk about the rent".

So the Miao sons and daughters came and worked,
 Worked through a twelve year period, approaching thirteen years.
 Then indeed the Landlord came and said,

"In a good season, a good year, the Landlord will be good,
 200 In a bad season, a bad year, the Landlord will not be good!"
 For slaves of the Yi the compulsory labour is never easy.

Thus it is ended

M251
Matters concerning Byu-no and Sao-no.

Related by Yang Sa-gai.

Introduction

This story was collected by Yang Han-xien for an article he wrote in the mid-1940s about Miao migration. (Document G.) Yang Yung-xin included it in Document F in 1950, taking the original text and largely rewriting it to improve the style of the Miao, but adding virtually nothing to the narrative itself. The compilers of Document M, whose brief was to produce a history of the Miao, also edited the text, shortening it, and making it a little more formal, and, in particular, omitting the whole of the section suggesting that Lord Sao-no had engineered the sudden departure of the Miao from Byu-no.

Three different classes of Yi are mentioned. The feudal lords belonged to the relatively small group of Tu-mu, and since marriage normally took place within the group, it was often necessary to travel some distance to find a suitable bride. Also mentioned is a small group of Yi called Meng-go, all the members of which were engaged in the craft of weaving bamboo into many kinds of baskets and mats. Thirdly, reference is made to "those slaves". Associated with the land owning class, the "Black Yi", was a class called "White Yi" who were virtually slaves, and were treated as such. The Miao, although they often received harsh treatment at the hands of the Yi landlords, were tenants and not slaves.

The spoons which figure in the story were carved in wood. The bowl of each spoon was some two inches across and one inch deep. The handle was jointed into it at an angle to facilitate dipping up hot gravy from a bowl. On enquiry it was explained that, before they copied the Chinese and began using chopsticks and earthenware bowls, the people used bowls made of wood for serving meat and vegetables, which were set on the table for all to help themselves, while each person had a small, individual basket for his rice, and a spoon for eating.

The Miao always preferred to use expressions which indicated family relationships rather than proper names. So in this narrative, from the moment that the betrothal had been ratified the proper names Byu-no and Sao-no are replaced by Zi-mu Zhyu and Lw-ma Zhyu, "the Lord of the bride's family" and "the Lord of the bridegroom's family" respectively.

In general Miao clothing was made from white cloth. The highly coloured tribal costumes were not normally worn when travelling. If then a large group of Miao were moving together along the road, to an observer at a distance, they would look like a river of white flowing along.

"A-nzhi country" is the Miao name for a region in North-West Guizhou and North-East Yunnan along the border with Sichuan.

M251
Matters concerning Byu-no and Sao-no.

Related by Yang Sa-gai.

They tell a story that of old our ancestors arrived in a country covered by great dark forests. They spent their time clearing the forest and hunting, but, though the jungle that could be cleared for cultivation was extensive, they were very much afraid of the Yi. So it was that they said to one another, "We must be cautious lest, in clearing the forest we happen to trespass on to Yi land, and the Yi come and take us. Let everyone be most careful for fear that the Yi may come and see us here".

Later, while people continued to live there and spread further afield as their numbers increased, a day came when a certain Miao man went tree felling, and in so doing, happened to trespass on to Yi land. He returned home very frightened, and soon after, sure enough, the Yi arrived. To begin with these Yi were very good. They did not scold the Miao man, and they permitted him to cultivate that land, but they did require some help in the form of compulsory service. However, the longer they lived there, the more arduous the compulsory service became. As compulsory service this Byu-no family took our ancestors with them when they went visiting. They could be away for more than half a year before returning, and, on these visits, the compulsory service meant very long journeys. So the people made up a song which said,

"Who required hard compulsory work?
It was the 'good' Yi Lord who required hard compulsory work!
When you do compulsory work you should get your food,
When we Miao folk did compulsory work we got no food.
When you do compulsory work you should get some free time,
When we Miao folk did compulsory work for the 'good' Yi Lord, we got no free
time".

Even on New Year's Day our ancestors still had to do hard compulsory service. So they said to one another, "It is not even enough that we Miao folk have to do the Lord's compulsory service on New Year's Day!" and they agreed together, "It is hard being slaves. The truth is we cannot go on living here".

One year the family of Lord Sao-no wished to take a wife from the Byu-no family. Because these Yi families were few in number, if one group wished to intermarry with another group it was necessary to travel considerable distances. The Byu-no family took our ancestors on a visit to Sao-no which lasted between six months and a year before they could return. When Sao-no visited Byu-no it was just the same.

The Sao-no family having agreed with the family of Byu-no for their daughter in marriage, it was necessary to pay the marriage settlement in cattle, according to old Yi custom in arranging marriages. The number of cattle that Sao-no had to deliver to Byu-no was considerable, as many as might graze over two or three hillsides, so that when herded together they made the whole hillside look red.

When the time for escorting the bride approached, Byu-no ordered the Miao foremen to find people to make spoons for eating, and ordered the Meng-go to weave baskets to serve the food. The people were to prepare a large number of spoons and food baskets for fear there

might not be enough for the many guests to use. Accordingly the foremen had the people fashioning spoons every day in order to be ready.

When the day for escorting the bride arrived many guests came. Those seated filled the house, while those standing filled the precinct. The Lord of the bride's family ordered the slaves to bring out the spoons for eating, but, for some unknown reason, they had all disappeared. Very many guests were arriving, but there were no spoons for them to use, so the Lord of the bride's family, in anger, took the pair of foremen and beat them, at which they were most distressed. Also, as a result, the Lord of the bridegroom's family was unhappy and grew angry, and a quarrel ensued between the Lord of the bridegroom's family and the Lord of the bride's family.

In the evening the Lord of the bridegroom's family sent for the pair of foremen and talked with them. "Are you willing to go with me back to Sao-no?" In the circumstances the pair of foremen replied, "We are willing to go". So the Lord of the bridegroom's family said, "You go back quickly, prepare plenty of rations for your journey, go on ahead and wait for me". So the pair of foremen returned and told their neighbours. All who heard wanted to accompany the Lord of the bridegroom's family. They were highly elated. Quickly they prepared rations for the journey and were ready to leave during the night. Neither house nor home nor belongings were wanted any longer, and by midnight all had departed, going on ahead of the Lord of the bridegroom's family.

Now people say that the Lord of the bridegroom's family had planned all this much earlier. He wanted to take the Miao to Sao-no, but fearing that the Lord of the bride's family would object, at the time when the foremen delivered the spoons, the Lord of the bridegroom's family deliberately took and hid them, in order that the pair of foremen might get a severe beating and therefore be willing to come away with him.

When the Miao had gone, the Lord of the bride-groom's family arose immediately, preparing to leave for Sao-no well before the accustomed time, and, because of all that had happened, the Lord of the bride's family could not dissuade him. Then the Lord of the bride's family discovered that the Miao had all gone and his quarrel with the Lord of the bridegroom's family sharpened dramatically. First the Lord of the bridegroom's family had incited the Miao to go on ahead, and then he was hastening after them. For three days had scarcely passed, and the Lord of the bridegroom's family was up and on his way.

Now these Miao had all left in a body, so many, that the very roads appeared white as they went. One group, however, having reached half way, could not continue, and simply settled where they were. Another group separated and travelled off to A-nzhi country. Those who were able, remained with the Lord of the bridegroom's family. They came on to Shui-cheng where later they built a settlement, and the longer they remained there the more people fled to the area. So it came about that the groups were separated by considerable distances. Those who had gone to live in A-nzhi country called to those who lived up here to go down to A-nzhi so that ultimately they might all live together in one place.

M252
Song of our Miao ancestors living in Byu-no country.

Sung by Yang Sa-gai.

Introduction

Although there is some variation in detail between the different singers, the old Miao songs are unanimous that when the people had been driven from their ancient homeland by the Chinese, they eventually settled in a heavily forested area in the domains of the Yi feudal Lord of Byu-no. Throughout this song this name is translated into Miao as Lord Hmao-byu.

To begin with there was a friendly relationship between the landlord and his new tenants, which the present song describes. The latter duly paid their rent, and at New Year brought presents to, and received hospitality from Lord Byu-no. However, after a considerable time, perhaps several generations, the relationship became strained, as successive Lords of Byu-no demanded increasing amounts of compulsory unpaid labour from the Miao. Ultimately, when they could bear it no longer, they fled westwards, to the estates of Lord Sao-no.

M252
Song of our Miao ancestors living in Byu-no country.

Sung by Yang Sa-gai.

When the sky began
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
In earlier times our Miao ancestors
Came to the estates of Lord Hmao-byu.

5 Lord Hmao-byu lived,
Lived in a country of swaying forests exceedingly black,
Of swaying forests extremely dark,
The people's forests sighing in the wind.

10 The deer all lived there,
The stags all dwelt there,
Large animals and strong, all dwelt there.

So the old folk went to clear it.
They cleared the people's swaying forest and levelled it,
They cleared the people's swaying forest and laid it flat.
15 They sunned the soft and hard wood trees till they were very dry.

The sunshine, shining brightly,
The sunshine was good,
Good for the old people to burn off the cutting,
So they burned off the black forest and cleared it.

20 Then the old folk sowed,
Sowed millet in the clearing,
And the millet grew to full grain.

On reaching Ox-month or Rat-month,
The harvest of millet had fully ripened,
25 The millet had ripened a golden yellow,
Then the old folk reaped,
Reaped the millet and gathered it home.

The swaying forests were exceedingly black,
The swaying forests were extremely dark,
30 The deer all lived there,
The stags all dwelt there,
Large animals and strong, all dwelt there,

But the old folk, the whole community hunted,
Hunted the animals of forest and cliff wherever they went,
35 Until the animals of forest and cliff had all been caught.

The old folk would bring millet to pay the landlord's rent,
And as a gift to the landlord at New Year, they hunted deer.

40 Then Lord Hmao-byu would fill,
Fill cups with new wine for the old folk to share and drink,
Spreading tables for the old folk, all smiling, to eat.

Thus it is ended.

How the Miao arrived in Sao-no land.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

Introduction

Although this is substantially the same story as that narrated by Yang Sa-gai, it suggests a rather different sequence of events. Here, the bridegroom, Lord Sao-no, does not figure at all in the circumstances which led up to the flight of the Miao people from the domains of Lord Byu-no. The episode which brought to a head the discontent of the Miao with the treatment they were receiving was, as before, the matter of wooden spoons which the Miao were required to prepare for the marriage festivities, but the foremen were humiliated and beaten, not because the spoons had disappeared, but because they could not manage to deliver the stipulated number on time. The bridegroom was not involved, rather it was the bride, Lord Byu-no's daughter, who encouraged the Miao to leave, and who frustrated the attempt of her father to force them to return.

Despite Lord Byu-no's displeasure, custom required that, as leading tenants on his estates, the Miao foremen should be present among the guests at the great marriage feast, and their failure to come meant that, to some extent, Lord Byu-no "lost face" before the large assembled company. This is why the stewards were sent to ensure their presence at the ceremonial "sending-off" breakfast the next morning.

Over a period of years the rent required by Lord Byu-no from the Miao had steadily increased. Originally it was measured in "shen", now in "dou", and there are ten "shen" in one "dou". These were measures of capacity used for grain. Although their actual size varied considerably from place to place, in any one locality they were constant.

The three hundred young women and young men who were required to escort the bride as she left for Sao-no were not originally expected to go all the way. They were conscripted to swell the size of the caravan departing from Byu-no, to make it look as large and imposing as possible. They would normally have returned after travelling a day or two out along the road. In the event they were an excellent cover for the Miao evacuation.

Having arrived at Sao-no the Miao needed to find a suitable district in which to settle. They eventually chose the valley of the river Gi-trao. The final section of the song suggests that this location was discovered by a hunting dog bringing back the shoot of a certain variety of bamboo entangled in its coat. This was a kind of bamboo which needed dryer and more fertile conditions than those found on the high uplands around Weining. When consulted, Lord Sao-no confirmed that such conditions were, in fact, to be found in the Gi-trao valley.

M253
How the Miao arrived in Sao-no land.

Sung by Yang Nggai-xing.

This year we may know,
May know that Lord Sao-no has opened marriage negotiations with Lord Byu-no.

Accordingly Lord Sao-no dispatched,
Dispatched the middleman who went and reached,
5 Reached Lord Byu-no's homestead.

The middleman opened his mouth, opened his lips and requested,
Requested Lord Byu-no's eldest daughter.
When Lord Byu-no heard it,
Lord Byu-no made the Miao people bring oats in preparation for the marriage.

10 For Lord Byu-no was black at heart,
Where formerly rent was measured by the "shen",
Latterly the measure was a "dou".

He made the foremen carve rounded spoons in preparation for the marriage.
They carved three hundred and thirty bundles of ten,
15 Thirty bundles of ten short, which they could not get carved.

Lord Byu-no was so impatient,
That he took rounded spoons already carved,
And stamped upon them, breaking them in pieces.
Then he gave the foremen a severe beating.

20 The foremen were most distressed,
So distressed they would not attend the marriage,
So distressed they would not attend the supper,
And when the foremen returned and got back home,
They alerted the whole village from the bottom to the top.

25 The young Yi Lady intended to take,
To take three hundred of our Miao young women and men
To escort her away from Lord Byu-no's house.

But now their parents and relations, the Miao people, would remain no longer,
And the foremen went and alerted,
30 Alerted the young Yi Lady saying they would accompany her too.

The young Yi Lady spoke,
"You go, take the fattened chicken, kill and eat them,
Leaving only hens and chicks in the house".

Then the young Yi Lady continued,
35 "Take your women and children and go on ahead,

The young Yi Lady will bring your three hundred young women and men and
 follow after".
 So when Lord Byu-no's stewards went to fetch,
 To fetch the foremen to attend breakfast,
 The fattened chicken had disappeared, only hens and chicks remained in the
 houses,
 40 And the Miao people had all gone.

The stewards returned, came back and said,
 Said that the Miao people had all disappeared.

When Lord Hmao-byu heard it,
 Lord Hmao-byu dispatched,
 45 Dispatched retainers and soldiers in pursuit,
 To block the way and turn the Miao people back.

The young Yi Lady asked them,
 "What matter brings you following after us?"
 The stewards replied,
 50 "We want to compel the Miao people to return".

The young Yi Lady declared,
 "Lord Byu-no is black at heart!

The Miao people have paid their rent,
 But where formerly the measure was a 'shen',
 55 Latterly the measure was a 'dou',
 Making the Miao people work like locusts just to pay the rent.

Work in lieu of rent was heavy,
 And compulsory, unpaid service, hard.
 The Miao people are not going to return.

60 So the Miao people accompanied the young Yi Lady until they reached,
 Reached the Weining plain, that high plain,
 And stayed in the highlands of the Na-lyu mountain range.

But though the sky remained constant,
 The Miao people could not dwell there.

65 Now one day the Miao people went hunting game,
 Hunting through forests dark and wide-spread.
 They set the spotted dogs to drive the game,
 And they drove away yonder into a deep valley.

The Miao people did not know its name,
 70 So the Miao people spoke together,
 "Does the boundary of Lord Sao-no's estates reach that far?"

Then the Miao people's spotted dog came back dragging,
 Dragging a shoot of clean black bamboo.
 This they took for Lord Hmao-sao to inspect.

75 Lord Hmao-sao remarked,
"There is low-lying, dry land to be found,
To be found in the deep valley of the river Gi-trao".

So the Miao people removed,
Removed to "Cattle-drink" in the valley of the Gi-trao,
80 And settled along both sides of the Gi-trao valley.

Our Miao descendants spread,
Spread to fill the people's lands everywhere,
Spread to fill the people's places everywhere.

Thus it is ended.

M254

Song of the marriage arranged between Sao-no and Byu-no.

Sung by Yang Jie-chuan.

Introduction

This is yet another version of the story of the flight of the Miao from Byu-no to Sao-no. The basic cause of the migration was the longstanding desire of the Miao to escape from the harsh conditions of their tenancy at Byu-no, but there is no mention of the matter of the wooden spoons which, in the other versions, prompted their precipitant departure. Here the removal took place simply because the bride requested it, making it a condition for her agreement to the marriage deal. Presumably, though the song does not actually say so, it was with her father, the Lord Byu-no's knowledge and approval that she approached the Miao leaders. The latter, it appears, did not require much persuasion. In this version of the story the whole matter was arranged and carried through without any hint of ill feeling.

M254

Song of the marriage arranged between Sao-no and Byu-no.

Sung by Yang Jie-chuan.

This year we may know,
May know that Lord Hmao-sao together with,
With Lord Hmao-byu is arranging a marriage.

5 So Lord Hmao-sao dispatched,
Dispatched the middleman who came and reached,
Reached the home of Lord Hmao-byu.

The middleman opened his mouth, opened his lips and requested,
Requested Lord Hmao-byu's eldest daughter
To go as Lord Hmao-sao's wife.

10 Lord Hmao-byu's eldest daughter spoke,
"Your girl will go, your girl is willing,
But will you allow me to take,
To take the Miao, great and small, to accompany me?"

15 Then the young Yi Lady together with,
With the foremen of our Miao old folk conferred,
And the two foremen of our Miao old folk spoke,

20 "If we remain here with Lord Hmao-byu,
There is much work in lieu of rent,
And the compulsory, unpaid service is hard.
It were better to accompany the Lady bride and go yonder".

So it was that our old folk together with,
With the young Yi Lady rose,
Rose, went forth and came and reached,
Reached the estates of Lord Hmao-sao.

25 Where then did Lord Hmao-sao live?
He lived in the people's country of Na-lyu and the river Gi-trao.

30 Originally, in earlier times, our Miao old folk lived,
Lived on the estates of Lord Hmao-byu,
But later generations lived in Lord Hmao-sao's country,
Lived at Na-lyu and the river Gi-trao.

This is sung that our Miao descendants may recall,
It is sung that later generations may remember.

Thus it is ended.

M255
Song of how the Miao living at Byu-no fled.

Sung by Li Nggai-guang.

Introduction

This version of the story of their migration from Byu-no to Sao-no makes no mention of the longstanding discontent of the Miao with their harsh treatment by Lord Byu-no, which, in other versions, is the main reason for their move. Neither, in this account, was it a general exodus of the whole community, but only of a small group of young women and young men who accompanied the bride to Sao-no at her request. Here they remained as her personal retainers for some time before moving away to set up their own farms in the valley of the "great river".

Sticks, from which the bark had been peeled leaving them white, figure occasionally in the accounts of Miao spirit worship. Here the middleman was either given such a white stick by Lord Byu-no, or instructed to get one, and use it to determine whether this was a propitious time for a marriage. The middleman, having no idea what to do with the stick, consulted an old Miao woman who apparently explained that it had to be placed in a pool of water, and if it floated in a vertical position a positive answer was indicated. In theory the vertical is a possible position of unstable equilibrium, but it could only be achieved if the water in the pool were quite still and there was absolutely no wind. It was to such a pool that the middleman was directed.

M255
Song of how the Miao living at Byu-no fled.

Sung by Li Nggai-guang.

This year we may know,
Know that Lord Hmao-byu together with,
With Lord Hmao-sao is arranging a marriage.

5 So Lord Hmao-sao sent,
Sent the middleman travelling on the road.
The middleman went until he reached,
Reached Lord Hmao-byu's home.

10 Then the middleman opened his mouth and requested,
Requested that Lord Hmao-byu's eldest daughter
Should come as wife to Lord Hmao-sao.

15 Lord Hmao-byu spoke,
"This year the marriage omens are not known,
And this year the wedding omens may not be favourable,
So on behalf of Lord Hmao-byu take,
Take the white divining rod and test them".

20 What was the middleman to do?
He came to see a Miao woman, an old person, living yonder.
The middleman took,
Took the white divining rod and enquired.
Then the Miao woman, the old person spoke,

25 "Take the white rod and place it,
Place it in the bright blue reflecting pool.
If one end sinks down in the water,
Then Lord Hmao-byu and Lord Hmao-sao,
May have a family marriage, a family wedding".

Lord Hmao-byu's young Yi Lady spoke,
"The girl will go, the girl is willing, but I want,
Want the young Miao women and young men to go with me".

30 So the young Miao women and young men conducted,
Conducted the young Yi lady and came,
Came and reached the home of Lord Hmao-sao.

35 The young Miao women and young men remained,
Remained for a full cycle of twelve, indeed for thirteen years.
Then the young Miao women and young men fled,
Fled to the land of black forests.

Thus it is ended.

M256
Song of the Woman Cao and the Man Cao.

Recorded by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction

At the end of this song in Document N there is a footnote explaining that the Cao family belonged to the Hmao-njiao branch of the Hmao-dang clan. That is the clan which took the Chinese name Wang.

Internal evidence makes it clear that Wang Ming-ji had collected two songs about the Cao family. One traces their flight from their original home, their arrival on the estates of Lord Byu-no, and the subsequent oppression they suffered at his hands. The second song begins with a graphic description of the increasingly heavy demands made upon the family by Lord Byu-no, even in a year when all the crops failed. It then tells how the family fled to Sao-no when Lord Byu-no was killed and his estates seized by the Chinese.

Whether these two songs were collected from the same singer is not clear. The first is a different version of the story, also narrated in a song by Yang Nggai-xing, and the second presents yet another angle on the Miao migration from Byu-no to Sao-no. The interesting thing is the unique manner in which Wang Ming-ji combined the two songs. He began with the second song, but having reached the point where the family was fleeing after the Chinese attack on Byu-no, he inserted the first song as a "flash back" to the last occasion when the Cao family had had to flee before Chinese aggression. After this he took up the second song again, completing the story of the flight to Sao-no. In this way the songs were not simply strung together, nor was there any conflation. The integrity of each was preserved, and it is quite obvious where each began and ended, though it is just possible that the linking stanza, lines 43 to 47, together with line 91 were added by Wang Ming-ji. For the sake of greater clarity the inserted song has been printed in italics in the English translation.

Document N presents the piece much as Wang Ming-ji had edited it, but the compilers of Document M, had already included Yang Nggai-xing's song and did not wish to cover the ground again. Having therefore quoted the first four lines of Wang Ming-ji's version, that is as far as line 51, they omitted the rest and passed straight on to the arrival at Sao-no, which is line 92.

The following detached notes will assist in understanding the song.

1. Rent had to be paid in kind and not in cash, hence the measures of capacity mentioned in lines 16 to 18. The Miao text uses Miao words. In the translation the Chinese equivalents have been employed. The table runs as follows,

| | | |
|---------|-----------------|----------------|
| Miao | 10 shi = 1 dyu | 10 dyu = 1 lu |
| Chinese | 10 shen = 1 dou | 10 dou = 1 dan |

The actual size of these measures varied from place to place.

2. Lines 61 and 104 both read, "When the morrow came". This is a conventional expression marking a change of subject. It does not signify literally "the next day".

3. This song, and several others, reflect the fact that, in earlier times, small individual bamboo baskets and wooden spoons were used for eating. The use of pottery bowls and chopsticks was copied at a later date from the Chinese. See line 114.
4. The Miao word "tai" means a slab of stone. It is used for the large pieces used for building flights of steps and for the stone pillars over which the wooden decking of a bridge was laid. It is also the name given to up-standing natural outcrops of rock. "Rock pinnacle" is probably a fair translation in the present context.

M256
Song of the Woman Cao and the Man Cao.

Recorded by Wang Ming-ji.

This was a bad time, a bad year,
The crops did not ripen and the fruit did not set.

Only the wild bamboo put forth blossom,
Only the wild bamboo bore seed.
5 The wild bamboo bore seed in bunches,
The wild bamboo bore seed in clusters.

The Woman Cao and the Man Cao left,
Left the young woman Cao's little daughter at home
While the Woman Cao and the Man Cao gathered seed.

10 They gathered the wild bamboo seed behind the mountain,
Gathered the wild bamboo seed to serve for breakfast.
They gathered the wild bamboo seed behind the ranges,
Gathered the wild bamboo seed to serve for supper.

15 They gathered the wild bamboo seed to pay the rent,
To pay Lord Shi-byu's rent of one "dan".

Where formerly the measure was a "shen",
Latterly the measure was a "dou",
But when the measure reached a "dan" they could not pay it.

20 The Woman Cao and the Man Cao's labour in lieu of rent was heavy too,
And the Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not manage it.
So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao sought a way to flee.

Fighting broke out between the Ruling Race and Lord Shi-byu,
And the Ruling Race was busy training soldiers.
When all in the lower ranks were fully trained,
25 And all in the higher ranks were quite proficient,
They went to fight with Lord Shi-byu.

The land was black with the thousands of the Ruling Race's soldiers,
When the Ruling Race's soldiers arrived from the south and from the north.

30 The companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers struck down,
Struck down Lord Shi-byu and he died.
The young Yi woman, Lord Shi-byu's daughter, alone was left.

The Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not stay,
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao took sandals and bound them on.

35 With the young folk following behind,
The old folk went on ahead,

So both fled on their way.
The men fled, so the men were gone,
The women fled, so the women went.

40 As the women fled the women grieved,
Grieved for the women's gardens.
As the men fled the men grieved,
Grieved for the men's houses.

Of old the Ruling Race,
Their companies of retainers and soldiers had pursued,
45 Pursued the Woman Cao and the Man Cao across,
Across to the higher side of the river Gi-nzhe.
Then the Woman Cao and the Man Cao sang this song of lamentation.

*From out of scattered sky material came the dome,
For the Woman Cao to come and live.
50 Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
For the Man Cao to come and dwell.*

*The Woman Cao was beautiful,
As the Man Cao soon came to know.
So the Woman Cao came and together with,
55 With the Man Cao made a couple as a family to dwell,
To dwell on the opposite side of the river Gi-nzhe.*

*When they harvested the crops they filled the store,
When they gathered the cotton it filled the loft.
From their farming they gained,
60 Gained both food and clothing year by year.*

*When the morrow came,
They were on the road early in the morning, at break of day,
For they were going as guests, but their memory of the road was confused,
So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao had to select their route.
65 Unconcerned, they selected a route to their aunt's.*

*They travelled until breakfast time,
When they encountered nine Chinese robbers,
Hiding by the river Gi-nzhe,
Who robbed the Woman Cao and the Man Cao of everything.*

70 *How should the Woman Cao and the Man Cao react?
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not bear the thought,
So the Man Cao took and killed the nine Chinese robbers.*

*Afterwards the nine Chinese robbers' families accused,
Accused the Man Cao before the magistrate,
75 And the Man Cao had a court case with the nine Chinese robbers.
The Chinese robbers wanted a way to bring pressure,
To bring pressure on the Man Cao and make him afraid.*

- 80 *The Man Cao was indeed afraid of future trouble from the Chinese robbers,
So the Man Cao and the Woman Cao sought a way to flee,
And they fled to the presence of Lord Shi-byu.*
- Lord Shi-byu spoke,
Requiring the Woman Cao and the Man Cao to provide young girls to become,
To become the young Yi Lady's handmaids.*
- 85 *So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao took,
Took Cao girls to pay the people's rent, for,
For Lord Shi-byu to make into slaves.*
- 90 *Thus the Woman Cao and the Man Cao had become,
Become Lord Byu-no's slaves.
The young Yi Lady took Cao girls with her when she went as bride to Sao-no,
And having gone, there was no word for eighteen years.*
- After the attack of the Ruling Race,
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao came on until they met,
Met Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, together with,
With young Cao women along the sheep path.*
- 95 *Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, asked,
Asked the Woman Cao and the Man Cao who they were.
Then Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, spoke,
Spoke with sincerity to the Woman Cao and the Man Cao.*
- 100 *Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, took,
Took the Woman Cao on behalf,
On behalf of Lord Gha-sao, to serve as cook,
And she arranged for the Man Cao, on behalf,
On behalf of Lord Gha-sao, to go and pasture cattle.*
- 105 *When the morrow came,
The Woman Cao went to get breakfast,
While the Man Cao went to pasture cattle.*
- The sun was shining brightly,
Shining so that the weather was good,
Good for the Man Cao to pasture the cattle on the far side of the mountain.*
- 110 *The Man Cao heard the deer calling up there on the ridge,
The stags calling clearly behind the mountain.
So the Man Cao came back from pasturing cattle, he returned and reached,
Reached Lord Sao-no's house.*
- 115 *The Man Cao ate well from the basket,
And fed the spotted dog well from the trough.
The Man Cao ate well from his hand,
And fed the spotted dog well from the dish.*
- The Man Cao took the black, the curved crossbow carrying it on his back,*

And led out the black, the spotted dog to go hunting.
 120 Where the game was the dog knew,
 And startled, the game raced away from the dog,
 While the dog chased after the game.

It chased a stag to the rock pinnacle at Ngga-yi-gi-zai,
 Where the stag ran for shelter,
 125 For shelter beside the rock pinnacle at Ngga-yi-gi-zai.

The Man Cao took his crossbow, stretched it well with his feet
 And lifted an arrow with care to the stock of the bow.
 Then quickly he went out under the open sky,
 Where, under the blue sky, there was light to see that the arrow lay straight,
 130 And light to keep the stock from tilting as he turned.

The arrow flew on its curving flight,
 Flew on its way and hit,
 Hit the stag right in the heart.

The stag jumped round three times,
 135 Then fell to the ground,
 Fell there beside the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai.

So the Man Cao had meat to prepare.
 Then the Man Cao spoke,
 "The land by the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai is low-lying,
 140 And on low-lying land rice will ripen".

So the Man Cao came and built,
 Built a home beside the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai,
 And he brought the Woman Cao to make a family and live,
 He brought the Woman Cao to make a family and dwell.

145 Thus it is ended.

Song of the surroundings of the Sao-no family.

Sung by Li Xing-zhen.

Introduction

There can be no doubt that behind the stories which make up the Byu-no and Sao-no saga, there are substantial historical facts. However, in this song the scene moves into the realm of fantasy. It is, moreover, interesting to observe how an Yi landlord has here become something of a folk-hero.

The song is long and repetitive, and it is possible that the episode about the building of the bridge over the river Li-zhu is an independent fragment, which has been added to the story. There is scarcely anything in this section which connects with the rest of the narrative, while the drums and the activities of the spirit-possessed which are the chief themes of the main story, do not appear at all. The removal of the passage, lines 65 to 83, far from upsetting the continuity of the narrative, would in fact enhance it. These considerations explain why, in the English translation, this section is printed in italics.

The Miao text does not say how many drums were made. It could be taken to mean one large drum and one small drum only, but if this were the case it would hardly have required "several yoke of oxen" to make them. Moreover, if there were only two drums, the constantly repeated statement that the large drum sounded over seven days' journey away to the east, and the small drum sounded over seven months' journey to the west, would have to mean that it was by some magic that the sound was made to carry over these vast distances. It seems more likely that, in fact, many drums were made, both large and small. The former were distributed toward the east, whence the main Chinese threat was expected, and the latter, being easier to transport over the much greater distances, were sent out to the west. Thus, when an emergency arose, the drums at Lord Sao-no's headquarters would begin beating out a three pulse rhythm which was immediately taken up by the drums in the adjacent villages, so that in a relatively short time the message had passed from village to village over a wide area, and the whole countryside was throbbing to the drum beat. This immediate, widespread response, at least initially, made the Chinese have second thoughts about the wisdom of invading.

The Miao words "dlang" and "si" both mean "spirit", and the expression "du dlang du si" is used of any person who is thought to possess, or to be possessed by, a spirit and so to have magical or supernatural powers. "Magician", "wizard", "sorcerer", "enchanter", are all possible translations depending on the actual context. In this song the name is given to two infants who, from the moment of their birth, are able to crawl and to talk. For such, the usual translations scarcely seem appropriate, and so the literal, albeit somewhat clumsy, expression, "spirit-possessed" has been chosen.

That Lord Sao-no was the father of the two spirit-possessed is stated over and over again. Presumably their mothers were those two women who were left behind when Lord Sao-no went to war. How their offspring should have become spirit-possessed we are not told. The spirit-possessed themselves, do not seem to have known their mothers' identity, for three times over they complain,

"But still we do not know the taste of our mothers' milk!"

The reason for this ignorance may be that, immediately it was realized that there was something unusual about the babies they were rejected and thrown out by their mothers, and it was curiosity, rather than affection, that brought them home again.

To begin with the spirit-possessed were unable to walk, and crawled from place to place. When, somewhat later, they found their father, he called them "you two soldiers", so presumably by that time they were grown up. After their long sleep they were strong enough to pull up a pine tree by the roots and to wield it as a club to wipe out the Chinese army.

The spirit-possessed seem to have been fascinated by drums. On two occasions, once before setting out to find their father, and again before they began the journey back to their cavern, they beat out the warning signal on both the large and the small drums, but why, we are not told. Seeing their interest in the drums, Lord Sao-no offered to give them the small one to carry home. They accepted, but took the large one instead, because it made a bigger noise! The point of all this is unexplained. In any case they already had a very special drum of their own made of copper and iron and set up at the entrance of the cave. When people approached, this drum sounded automatically, either to warn intruders to keep out, or to inform the inmates that they had visitors. However, the spirit-possessed had obviously no intention of receiving guests.

There are a number of points of detail, which need some further elucidation.

- (1) The Miao word rendered "roasted corn" in line 29 is "hmao". This was pop-corn ground to a powder, and used as rations on a journey or during a short stay away from home. A basinful mixed with a little water made a sustaining, if extremely uninteresting porridge.
- (2) Twice, at line 139 and at line 224, the spirit-possessed were required to produce their credentials. The proof that was demanded was their ability to eat "food of divination", translated "magic food". This food was identified as "root of copper" and "root of iron" that is copper and iron ore, but was in fact molten copper and molten iron.
- (3) The saddles described in the section beginning at line 172 were made of wood, not of leather. They rested on felt blankets laid over the horses' backs, and the riders' comfort was provided by some padded quilting laid over the top. Saddles were often highly decorated with paint or lacquer. Those selected by the spirit-possessed, having been damaged were simply hung on the wall where, over a period of time, they became encrusted with soot from the open wood fire in a room without a chimney.
- (4) Over and again throughout this song the expression, "for practically fourteen years", occurs. There is nothing in the text to explain it, but where it is found in other songs there are footnotes which say that this is a convention which really means, "for practically a year", but nowhere is it actually explained why the convention is used. On several occasions toward the end of the song, a similar expression is used. In translation it reads, "half a period of twelve or thirteen years". For counting time, the Miao used the twelve year cycle as used by the Chinese. A complete cycle they called one "zhu". The expression "half a zhu or thirteen years" is probably also a convention which actually means, "six months".
- (5) At line 250 the spirit-possessed gave instructions that, before the gong was struck to awaken them from their heavy sleep, their heads, and particularly their noses, were to be supported. The reason, presumably was to prevent them from damaging themselves against the wooden bed, as they suddenly started up, having been so deeply asleep. In

the event, (line 269) this was not done, and the shock of awakening did in fact result in them striking their heads, and causing profuse nose bleeding.

Song of the surroundings of the Sao-no family.

Sung by Li Xing-zhen.

This year we may know,
Know who it was went to survey his land,
Know that Lord Sao-bang-no went to survey his land.

5 Surveying he went to the banks of the river Na-zhu.
His survey took him south for seven days.
His survey took him north for seven months.
He surveyed the whole of the Miao community.

10 This year we may know,
Know who it was who had a disturbing dream.
Gha-sao Lord Bang-no had a disturbing dream.

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no called,
Called the Miao people to come and confer,
For on the Chinese border there was much military activity.

15 Who had many mouths?
The people on the border had many mouths,
But the ordinary Miao people's mouths were few.

20 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no summoned,
Summoned the elders of the ordinary Miao people,
So the elders of the ordinary Miao people arrived,
Arrived at Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's house.

"Do the communities of Miao people live far away?
For with so much military activity on the Chinese border,
There is fear that the community of Miao people may suffer".

25 When the elders of the ordinary Miao people made answer,
What did the elders say?

The elders bade Gha-sao Lord Bang-no call,
Call the people, the ordinary people to come,
To come and bring several yoke of cattle, coloured cattle, to be slaughtered.

30 The flesh of the cattle would be eaten with roasted corn,
But the hides would be stretched to make drums.
Stretched for large drums to be used toward the sun's rising,
Stretched for small drums to be used toward the sun's setting.

35 The bones would be burned and harrowed in,
Burned and harrowed in when the rice was tilled,
Tilled, that white rice might fill the store,
Tilled, that white rice might fill the house.

- This year we may know,
 Know that Gha-sao Lord Bang-no has had a disturbing dream.
 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no rose forthwith to tell,
 40 To tell the two elders, so he opened his mouth.
- What did Gha-sao Lord Bang-no say?
 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no dreamt that he saw,
 Saw flying cranes which completely filled the people's land.
- How did the two elders make answer?
 45 "There is fear that the people may be caught up in fighting,
 There is fear that the Ruling Race's great army may fill the land".
- Who was it that was first to rise?
 The elders said that Gha-sao Lord Bang-no was first to rise.
 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no even before,
 50 Before midnight was up and planning.
- "We must go and rouse,
 Rouse the large drums away to the sun's rising,
 For the Chinese soldiers are coming,
 The Chinese soldiers are coming and will fill the people's land completely".
- 55 What was the right action for the two elders to take?
 How should the two elders arrange things?
 "We will beat three strokes, the large drums will sound three times,
 And the sound will spread out over seven day's journey".
- The two elders could not bear the thought,
 60 So they drew out the sticks and beat,
 Beat the small drums away to the sun's setting as well,
 And the sound of the small drums spread out over seven month's journey.
- When the Ruling Race heard it,
 The Ruling Race returned and withdrew.
- 65 *When Gha-sao Lord Bang-no returned,
 He called the people, the ordinary Miao, who came and arrived.
 What did Gha-sao Lord Bang-no intend to do?
 "Come let us go to the river Li-zhu and build!"*
- He took the ordinary Miao and went to the river Li-zhu to build,
 70 To build a bridge with a single arch which spanned,
 Spanned the main stream of the river Li-zhu.
 So he built a bridge with an arch, and on the left side set a plantation of pine trees.*
- The ordinary Miao went and dragged,
 Dragged the stone and dragged the rock to build,
 75 To build the arch which spanned,
 Spanned the main stream of the river Li-zhu.*

*So he built an arch to stand,
To stand, rounded, over the main stream of water.
He built a bridge with an arch, and on the right side set a plantation of fir trees.*

80 The plantation of pine trees grew and became big,
Sufficient for Gha-sao Lord Bang-no to shelter in the shade.
The plantation of fir trees grew and became big,
Sufficient for Gha-sao Lord Bang-no to shelter from the rain.

85 When Gha-sao Lord Bang-no returned home,
There was fear that the people's land might be filled with fighting soldiers.
Gha-sao Lord Bang-no by midnight was first to rise.
How did Gha-sao Lord Bang-no react?
He reacted by fetching the two elders to his house.

90 They struck the large drums, which sounded,
Sounded three times away to the sun's rising,
Then the two elders struck,
Struck the small drums, which sounded,
Sounded their noise away to the sun's setting.

95 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no was going to battle,
So he struck the large drums which sounded all over the land.

The Ruling Race took horns of copper and iron to blow,
And summon their retainers and soldiers.
When the retainers and soldiers arrived,
They seized Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's border country.

100 Then Gha-sao Lord Bang-no led out his soldiers and drove,
Drove the Ruling Race's great army,
Drove it back across the banks of the Great River,
And there destroyed the Chinese king's soldiers and retainers.

105 When Gha-sao Lord Bang-no departed,
He departed and left,
Left the women and children there,
There in the great valley of the river Li-zhu.

110 The women and children bewailed.
How did they bewail and lament?
"Why has Gha-sao Lord Bang-no not slain the foe and returned?"

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children put,
Put two babies in a place of hiding for they said,
"These two babies are already crawling and even talking!"

115 When they spoke what did they say?
"We wonder when the time will come for us to follow,
To follow our Father and our Sire!"

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children said,

"These two babies are possessed!"
 120 So they called retainers and soldiers to come and to carry,
 To carry the two babies, to go and to throw,
 To throw them away on the ground by the great sheet of rock.

Twelve days, perhaps thirteen, after having thrown them out,
 The women and children could no longer bear the thought.
 125 So the two women and children relented and called,
 Called the retainers and soldiers to go and look,
 To look and see what had become of the two babies.

The retainers and soldiers looked,
 Looked and saw that the two babies had crawled,
 130 Crawled on all fours and climbed,
 Climbed up the rock face on all fours, up to the mountain of fir trees,
 And the two babies had eaten completely all the foliage on the fir trees.

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children told,
 Told the two retainers and soldiers to return, to go back and carry,
 135 Carry the two babies back.
 So the two retainers and soldiers went and carried,
 Carried the two babies home.

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children asked,
 Asked the two spirit-possessed, "What magic food do you eat?"
 140 "Our food is copper ore,
 And our drink is iron ore".

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children took,
 Took horns of copper and iron and heated them,
 Heated the liquid copper and liquid iron until it boiled,
 145 Heated it for the two spirit-possessed to drink.

The two spirit-possessed drank it,
 Drank the liquid copper and liquid iron, drank it straight down.
 Then the two spirit-possessed spoke,
 What were the words they spoke?
 150 "Still we do not know the taste of our mothers' milk".

"You two spirit-possessed, what do you eat to live on?"
 "We two spirit-possessed eat,
 Eat the foliage of the fir trees to live".

The two babies crawled out,
 155 Crawled out and requested horses,
 Requested Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's black and grey horses to ride.

So Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children led out,
 Led out two horses, black, grey and mottled ready,
 Ready for the two spirit-possessed to ride.

160 But the two spirit-possessed said,

"These two are not the horses for us to ride".
 The two spirit-possessed then continued,
 "Please provide us with horses of our own size".

165 The people came all together to provide them,
 And the two spirit-possessed crawled out,
 Crawled out and led,
 Led away two small colts to ride.

They took the colts and led them outside,
 Where the spirit-possessed dipped,
 170 Dipped up three basins of clear water and washed,
 Washed the small colts and they became fine horses.

The two spirit-possessed requested,
 Requested saddles to ride.
 So Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's women and children brought out,
 175 Brought out Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's saddles, fine decorated saddles.

But the two spirit-possessed said,
 "On our Father's, our Sire's saddles we will not ride".
 Instead the two babies crawled,
 Crawled away and took,
 180 Took two saddles, broken and soot encrusted.

The two spirit-possessed then dipped up,
 Dipped up clear water and washed,
 Washed the saddles which emerged,
 Emerged as two fine saddles.

185 The two spirit-possessed put,
 Put bits into the horses' mouths,
 And set the saddles on the horses' backs.

Then the two spirit-possessed rode,
 Rode three times to the mouth of the river,
 190 And the fine horses neighed,
 Neighed three times having travelled seven days' journey.

The two spirit-possessed rode,
 Rode nine times to the head of the river,
 And the fine horses neighed,
 195 Neighed nine times having travelled seven months' journey.

The two spirit-possessed returned,
 And struck three times on the large drums,
 Which sounded three times over seven days' journey.

They struck nine times on the small drums,
 200 And the small drums sounded nine times,
 Sounded some nine times over seven months' journey.

Then the two spirit-possessed followed,
 Followed their Father, their Sire.
 They went and they reached,
 205 Reached the banks of the great river,
 Reached the place where their Father had been fighting.

What did Gha-sao Lord Bang-no say?
 "Concerning what matter have you two soldiers come?"
 The two spirit-possessed replied,
 210 "We two spirit-possessed concerning,
 Concerning our Father, our Sire have come.

Our Father, our Sire went to do battle,
 To do battle throughout the land,
 And he has been gone for nearly fourteen years".

215 Then Gha-sao Lord Bang-no said,
 "What is your Father's, your Sire's name?"
 "Our Father's, our Sire's name is Gha-sao Lord Bang-no".

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no therefore prepared,
 Prepared white pork and white rice to serve,
 220 To serve for the two spirit-possessed to eat.
 But the two spirit-possessed refused.

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no asked,
 "You two spirit-possessed, what magic food do you eat?"
 "Our magic food is copper ore,
 225 And our magic drink is iron ore".

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no took,
 Took horns of copper and horns of iron and heated them,
 Headed the liquid copper and the liquid iron until it boiled,
 Heated it for the two spirit-possessed to drink.

230 The two spirit-possessed drank it,
 Drank the liquid copper and liquid iron, drank it straight down.
 Then the two spirit-possessed spoke.
 What were the words which they spoke?
 "Still we do not know the taste of our mothers' milk!"

235 "You two spirit-possessed, what do you eat to live on?"
 "We two spirit-possessed eat,
 Eat the foliage of fir trees to live".

In what manner did the two spirit-possessed then speak?
 "Since coming out among the people we have become very drowsy,
 240 But we have not managed to sleep.

The distance we have travelled is great and the stages long,
 We have come but we are tired,
 We two have become very drowsy,

- We two spirit-possessed must sleep.
- 245 Should there be a day when the Ruling Race's retainers and soldiers come,
We fear that if the two elders call,
That call we two spirit-possessed might not hear.
- If the day comes you two elders must take,
Take a small gong and come and support,
250 Support for us two spirit-possessed our heads and our noses.
Then strike the gong thrice and call three times,
And we two spirit-possessed will hear".
- So the two spirit-possessed slept,
Slept drowsily away.
255 Slept away for practically fourteen years.
- Gha-sao Lord Bang-no remained,
Remained until midnight when he heard,
Heard the sound of the Ruling Race's harness bells of copper and of iron,
And the Chinese king's retainers and soldiers coming to fill,
260 To fill the people's land completely.
- Gha-sao Lord Bang-no looked all around,
Looked up at the sky where swallows and cuckoos were flying,
Flying and darkening the sky.
Gha-sao Lord Bang-no went to halt,
265 To halt the great army, but in vain.
- Gha-sao Lord Bang-no could not bear the thought.
He drew out the gong and went back and struck,
Struck the gong thrice and called three times.
- The spirit-possessed awoke,
270 Jumping so suddenly up in the bed,
That blood streamed from their noses as from a sword thrust.
- The spirit-possessed came out,
Came quickly out to observe,
To observe the people's land,
275 Black with retainers and soldiers.
- They looked all around,
And saw the sky above darkened with swallows and cuckoos.
- The spirit-possessed pulled up.
Pulled up a great pine tree,
280 Its trunk was thirteen fathoms,
And its branches spread over a small hill.
- The spirit-possessed then took,
Took the pine tree and beat,
Beat the Ruling Race's retainers and soldiers to death,

285 Until the ground was black with the dead.

Three times they beat them right through to the head of the valley,
Which grew black with the dead of the Ruling Race's retainers and soldiers.

The two spirit-possessed then said,
"This is not our land or our place,
290 Our home and our place is not here.
Our home and our place is located,
Located in the great valley of the river Li-zhu".

The two spirit-possessed escorted,
Escorted Gha-sao Lord Bang-no to go back, to return
295 And the spirit-possessed led out,
Led out a fine horse just for,
Just for Gha-sao Lord Bang-no to ride until they came,
Came to the great mountain ridge above the river Li-zhu.

They came on and reached,
300 Reached Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's homestead.
Then the spirit-possessed said,
"Our home and our place is not here!"

They had only just arrived at Gha-sao Lord Bang-no's home,
So Gha-sao Lord Bang-no asked,
305 "Where then is your home and your place?"

The spirit possessed said,
"Our home and our place is located,
Located on the Plain of Walnuts, that flat plain,
Located in the cave on the Plain of Walnuts.

310 Our home and our place is located,
Located on the Plain of Walnuts, that wide plain,
Located in the cavern on the Plain of Walnuts.
When we have gone for nearly fourteen years, come and look".

The two spirit-possessed struck,
315 Struck the large drum and it sounded,
Sounded three times towards the sun's rising.
They beat three strokes on the small drum,
Which sounded three times away towards the sun's setting.

"We will give the small drum for you two to carry away".
320 So Gha-sao Lord Bang-no offered.
But the small drum could not boom,
As the large drum was able to boom.

"We will take the large drum and carry it away,
Carry it to the Plain of Walnuts, that wide plain,
325 Away to the cavern on the Plain of Walnuts".

- The spirit-possessed added,
 "When the day comes that you come to look,
 A copper, an iron drum will sound".
 And the spirit-possessed said,
 330 "Still we do not know the taste of our mothers' milk!"
- Then the spirit-possessed placed,
 Placed saddles on the horses' backs,
 And mounted at a single leap.
- Taking the large drum which they carried on their backs,
 335 The spirit-possessed travelled until they reached,
 Reached the cave on the Plain of Walnuts.
- When the spirit-possessed had gone for half a period of twelve or thirteen years,
 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no followed and went to see,
 To see the spirit-possessed at the cave on the Plain of Walnuts.
- 340 Then the drum of copper, the drum of iron sounded,
 Standing there at the entrance of the cave,
 Yet the spirit-possessed did not speak.
 Gha-sao Lord Bang-no was disappointed,
 But the spirit-possessed said nothing.
- 345 Disappointed, Gha-sao Lord Bang-no remained,
 Remained for half a period of twelve or thirteen years,
 Then he returned and went back to look.
- The drum of copper, the drum of iron had changed,
 Had changed into rock and had fallen down and blocked,
 350 Blocked the cave, the cavern entrance, fine and smooth.
- Their two fine little horses had also changed,
 Had changed into stone statues and blocked,
 Blocked the cave, the cavern entrance standing guarding it.
- There still might be a day when the large drum sounded again,
 355 But meanwhile the people's borders were at peace.
- Gha-sao Lord Bang-no returned, went back and remained,
 Remained for half a period of twelve or thirteen years,
 Then Gha-sao Lord Bang-no returned, and came back to see,
 To see the spirit-possessed at the cave on the Plain of Walnuts.
- 360 That large drum of the spirit-possessed had changed,
 Had changed into rock and fallen down and blocked,
 Blocked the cave, the cavern entrance completely.
- The two fine horses had changed,
 Had changed into stone statues and blocked
- 365 Blocked the cave, the cavern entrance standing firmly.

Now Gha-sao Lord Bang-no accepted the situation.
He returned, came back to control,
To control the people on all sides,
Standing firmly as a rock.

- 370 The people, the Miao community lived well,
The Miao community lived, their land at peace and their place at rest, so they did!

Gha-sao Lord Bang-no controlled,
Controlled the people, standing firmly as a hardwood tree,
Standing firmly as pine trees and fir trees on the plain.

- 375 For the people, with heaven at peace and earth at rest,
Hearts were peaceful as a basket is smooth within,
Hearts were restful as a large basket is flat inside.

Thus it is ended.

Song of the landlord's hard compulsory labour.

Recorded by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

In Document N it says that this song was written by Wang Jian-guo, but it does not indicate from whose singing it was transcribed. Most likely it was originally collected by Mr. Wang's father, Wang Ming-ji.

In style and in presentation this piece is unique. A young man has been conscripted by the landlord to work on a building project some distance away near the town of Shui- cheng. His betrothed, left at home, expresses her feelings in song. She sings of her fears and her anxiety, describing graphically her depression at his long absence and her elation when at last he comes home. She voices her anger, culminating in a full-blooded curse on the landlord, because her beloved has returned ragged, emaciated and scorched by the sun.

Every line of this song is uttered by the young woman herself speaking in the first person. The result is that, though her mother and her betrothed must both have had much to say, their side of the conversation is not recorded, and the young woman gives the impression of being an incessant talker. Despite this, the deep emotions expressed in the Miao poetry are strong enough to be moving even in translation.

The Miao were obliged to go and work on the landlord's house in "Sheep-month or Monkey-month", that is the third and fourth months of the lunar calendar, right in the middle of the spring planting season when they were urgently needed on their own farms. The work required of them was to fell the timber on the mountain-sides, to float it down the river as rafts, and then to carry it overland to the building site, where they had to assist in the actual erection of the building. It was heavy, laborious, dangerous work for which they received no payment.

M258
Song of the landlord's hard compulsory labour.

Recorded by Wang Jian-guo.

On reaching Sheep month or Monkey month,
Lord Sao-no went to build a house,
To build on a plain in Gi-lyu country,
And Lord Sao-no conscripted the Miao folk to haul timber,
5 To haul it to the plain in Gi-lyu country.

The rice had been planted in the curved paddy fields,
And the hemp had been cut ready for spinning,
But, returning home, I could not bother to wash my feet,
I hurried to the door and stood there looking out.

10 My heart distraught with waiting, I gazed,
Gazed disconsolately over nine rivers, nine regions,
For my betrothed had gone hauling timber for Lord Sao-no,
He had been hauling it for a month and not arrived back.

They say that the rapids on the river Gi-lyu pour down in an alarming manner,
15 Just like the rapid pouring down at Hmao-li-jyu.
Could it be that my betrothed's boat has been overturned by the flowing water?
Could it be that my betrothed has been drowned?

I was planting rice, planting it in the paddy field,
And thinking about the Youth in my heart,
20 When I slipped and fell there on the paddy field bank,
And I actually talked to the mountain ranges!

"You mountain ranges, you live on high.
Do look and see how my betrothed is faring".

One day when I was trimming hemp by the stream I stretched up,
25 And my clothing caught and tripped me,
So I cut my hand and the blood gushed out.
The flowing blood ran down and dripped,
Dripped into the clear water and drifted away.
But there came a silver fish gliding by to drink it,
30 And I actually spoke to the silver fish!

"Silver fish, oh silver fish,
Glide gracefully to Shui-cheng,
Do go and see how my betrothed is faring".

One day while embroidering a tribal gown,
35 As I was thinking of my betrothed in my heart,
The needle pricked my hand, and the blood dripped down.
A small swallow flying around came to take some,
And I addressed words to the swallow!

40 "When you fly on beating wings and reach Shui-cheng,
 Do look and see how my betrothed is faring".

Days came and days went, the days kept slipping by,
 The mountain ranges stood unmoved,
 The silver, snake-like fish glided through the water,
 And the swallow flew strongly above the hills,
 45 But they knew not the maid's heart-break, as time dragged on.

Youth, oh my Youth,
 What day, what night will you arrive?
 Was your raft really overturned by the water?
 Is it true that you fell into the rapids on the river Gi-lyu?
 50 But I am sure that you excel as a builder of boats,
 Your raft would have been as strong as a boat of iron,
 For you were always an expert!

"Silver fish gliding in the water,
 Oh, do not delay going down to the river Gi-lyu".

55 When people used to do compulsory work they would return,
 But when you had to do compulsory work you could not come.
 Is it true that in Shui-cheng there are many dishonest girls,
 Who might deceive my handsome youth and turn his heart?
 Could you have forgotten your betrothed waiting here at home?

60 Oh!..no!..My betrothed is not a person like that!
 He wears the belt I braided, girt about his waist,
 And looped around my arms are these, his gold and silver bracelets.
 When we two stood by the water's edge face to face,
 We two declared,

65 "Though the mountain ranges are gathered up,
 And the river Gi-lyu runs dry,
 We cousins, maid and youth, will remain like Sun-maid and Moon-youth, but
 will never set!"

Oh dear! Mother, you only think about breakfast and supper, and you are for ever
 calling me!
 Mother, oh Mother!

70 Do you really want to make your daughter happy?
 Even if you cooked dragon meat, it would have no flavour!
 You offer me honey, but it is not sweet!
 The peach blossom is fully open, but I cannot smell the scent!
 Mother! do not pester your daughter, you are breaking your daughter's heart!

75 Just let me keep gazing toward the country beyond the river Gi-lyu, please!

One evening we may hear
 How the spotted dogs keep barking,
 At the bottom of the Miao village.
 The dogs are barking, barking, barking,

- 80 Could it be that my betrothed has returned?
 Is not that a well built person coming?
 The dogs are barking, and your daughter is happy!
 Here comes my betrothed,
 And the spotted dogs will wag their tails for joy...!
 85 But it does not happen!
- Oh! But who is that person coming yonder?
 It looks like my betrothed by his build,
 But his face is so thin, just skin and bone,
 And his unsteady walk so unsightly!
- 90 My betrothed's body was lithe like a fish,
 The suppleness of his body none could match!
 Now here is coming a ragged gown all creased and wet,
 Whereas my betrothed wore a handsome new gown!
 Why is this person, whoever he is, coming directly here?
- 95 Yes! It is my betrothed, truly arriving!
 In great haste I leave the loft room.
 Hurrying down from the loft,
 I just run with pounding footsteps to meet him,
 And with hands outstretched I grasp my Youth.
- 100 "Whatever place have you come from to arrive so late?
 Oh! It almost seemed that we had lost you!
 Now we are so happy we cannot find words to tell our Youth!"
 Taking his hand I lead him and he comes in,
 Comes in and sits down to rest in the bamboo loft room.
- 105 I will get Mother to boil more rice,
 And boil white, fat pork in the pot,
 To dip up clear water and heat till it is hot,
 And add extra honey to the honeyed wine,
 But I want to stay here with my betrothed in the loft room.
- 110 Why are you so sun burnt and so weak?
 Why has your new gown become so ragged?
 Even the spotted dogs did not recognize you,
 And I imagined you had been gone so long we might never see you again!
- Because of Lord Sao-no's evil intent,
 115 You had to manoeuvre the raft till it reached Shui-cheng.
 Then did you have to carry the timber from the water's edge,
 And did you have to go and build Lord Sao-no's house?
- Oh, I could die! You are so sun burnt and so weak!
 By day and by night you were carrying their timber,
 120 And they did not care that your new gown was wearing out!
 I could die! You are indeed so sun burned and so weak!
 Did you not by day and by night do their work?
 And all you got was some peach juice to drink!

- Oh, what can anyone say?
125 Mother! Do not be in too much hurry to call us two,
We have not yet finished talking things through.
- Lord Sao-no is like a brood of poisonous snakes!
Lord Sao-no is heartless as a wolf!
In future refuse to carry timber for Lord Sao-no's family.
- 130 You must hide here in my house for some time to come,
Till your body is again as lithe as a fish.
Youth, oh my Youth,
We, Hua Miao, seem destined for evil!
Never haul timber for an Yi landlord.
- 135 May all Lord Sao-no's fir trees rot!
May Lord Sao-no himself be slashed!
May Lord Sao-no's belly be ripped wide open!
May Lord Sao-no's guts gush out!
- Mother! I shall be coming down soon for a meal.
140 We two are talking, but it is not now urgent.
- The Youth, the young man there, in fact
We two, will soon be building a shelter yonder on the mountain range,
And we two, as friends and companions, will go and clear the forest.
We two will plant corn in the midst of the clearing,
145 And one day the amber grains of maize will ripen like yellow gold.
- I shall use every spare moment weaving cloth,
Making embroidered gowns, clothes sufficient for you to wear,
So that both maid and young man will always be well dressed.
With our hearts at peace like honey in a pot!
- 150 Oh! That is Mother calling us to go down together for a meal,
And there is the tempting sweet smell of white rice.
We two have talked and talked so much,
Now as a couple, young woman and young man, let us eat.
- Thus it is ended.

