

**Hua-Miao Archive  
Songs and Stories**

**Narratives**

Narratives which were or are Songs, part 1

The Kha-woman and the Rang-man

About Tigers

Songs M471 to M486

Introduction and Translation

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**M471**

**Miao lads go to fetch their brides.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

**Introduction.**

The Miao have a number of songs about creatures called “kha”. These were human beings in form, both male and female, though the latter seemed to predominate. In addition to possessing magical powers, they also ate human flesh and drank human blood. They appear to be the Miao equivalent of the witches of western fairy tales.

The beginning of this story is not told quite clearly. The two young men went to fetch their brides from a distant village. On arrival they discovered that their prospective brides were the only two people who remained alive in the village, all the rest having been devoured by the kha woman.

Many Miao households possessed a mortar for pounding grain. It was a block of solid stone in which a hemispherical hole some six inches in diameter had been cut. The pestle was a heavy iron rod about a foot in length. The distinctive thud of pounding could be heard a considerable distance away.

**Miao lads go to fetch their brides.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They say that once upon a time there were two bridegrooms who went to fetch their brides. They reached a place where there had been a village of Miao but they had all been eaten by the kha. Only the two young women were left. The two Miao lads said to the two brides, "What do you do that causes the kha to come?" They said, "It is when we pound the corn that the kha comes". The two bridegrooms said to them, "In that case you girls start pounding corn". So it was that the kha woman arrived.

The kha woman said, "My two nephews, will you strike first, or shall I strike first?" The two Miao lads said, "Auntie, you strike first!" The kha woman thrust with her sword, but the two bridegrooms dodged to either side. Then the two bridegrooms thrust with their swords and cut the kha woman all to pieces. However, the bits of flesh came and adhered together and formed the kha again. The two Miao lads then treated their swords by smearing them with chicken droppings. They attacked again and attacked successfully.

After this they went to find the kha's house. They went and saw two little khas in the house. They enquired, "What is your mother doing?" The two little khas replied, "Our mother has gone to bring meat in a basket and fetch blood in a gourd". The two bridegrooms went and saw a great cavern full of human bones. They went and said to the little khas, "When you are hungry what do you eat?" The two little khas said, "We take these human bones, fit them together and blow at them so they turn into people. Then we eat them". They replied, "In that case put all these bones together, and then you can eat plenty". The two little khas followed this instruction, put them together and blew at them, and they all came to life. The two Miao lads took the little khas and killed them. They then sent the people back each to his own home.

**M472**  
**The foolish Kha woman.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

**Introduction.**

The first section of this rather bizarre story appears to be a contest between the men and the kha woman. The latter won the first round by solving the problem of the leaking pot, while the men won the final round by disappearing into the sky clinging to the tails of their flying buffalo and bullock. Presumably these were the animals with which they had been ploughing. It is possible that in the original song version there were other rounds besides these two.

The conditions in which the Miao lived meant that lice abounded, and it was not uncommon for people to loosen their garments and shake them vigorously without actually taking them off, in order to relieve the irritation. Some of the offending creatures might even be shaken out in the process. This is what the kha woman ordered the two girls to do, and assumed that the black seeds of millet, which dropped out of the younger girl's clothes, were lice.

The pounder was a heavy wooden contrivance in the form of a cross, used for pounding grain or oil seed.

The episode with the ploughshare is hard to understand, and Yang Xiu-gong could not explain why the kha woman was foolish enough to give the girl in the tree a red-hot ploughshare, or how, indeed, they managed to handle it and pass it one to the other. The girl told the kha woman that she was trapped in the tree, and that the red-hot ploughshare was required somehow to make it possible for the kha woman to climb up the tree and get her down, but just how is not explained. Again in the original song version these matters may well have been made clear.

The final point of the story refers to a particularly virulent variety of stinging nettle which grows under trees. These are said to have sprung from the remains of the kha woman, who though dead, still continues to sting people. These nettles are always called "kha woman". A similar derivation of the name is found in song M116.

**M472**  
**The foolish kha woman.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. Father and son went out ploughing, and when mother had got the morning meal ready she took it out to them. As she was going along the road she met a kha woman who took her and ate her. The kha woman then took the morning meal and carried it for the father and son to eat. Before she arrived, father and son realized that she was not mother but a kha woman. So when they had eaten their food, father took a pot with a cracked bottom, and gave it to the kha woman to take and dip up water for a drink. The kha woman went to dip up the water, but though she dipped assiduously she got nothing. There was a crow on the branch of a tree which called and said, "A, a, a, pick some lily leaves and seal it". So the kha woman realized and picked lily leaves and sealed it. Having dipped the water, she was about to hunt down the father and son, but the father and son took hold of the tail of the buffalo and the tail of the bullock and climbed away up into the sky.

The kha woman returned to the home of the man and his son. At home there were still two members of the family, two daughters, left. In the evening the kha woman said, "You two sisters, whichever one has no lice, that one shall sleep with me!" The kha woman made them shake out the lice to see which one had any. The older sister was dull-witted but the younger was intelligent. The younger sister had hidden a handful of millet in her clothes, which came pattering out, but the older sister had nothing at all. So the kha woman slept with the elder sister. They slept until midnight when the kha woman took the elder sister and ate her. The younger sister heard and said, "Auntie, I want to go outside". The kha woman said, "I will not let you go". She said, "Auntie, if you are afraid that I shall go away, then take a length of rope and tie it on to me, so I can go out". The kha woman took a rope and tied it, and the Miao girl went out. She untied the rope and tied it to the fixing of the pounder, and climbed to the top of a tree.

The next day the kha woman brought out her sister's intestines to wash them. When she saw this she began to cry in the top of the tree, and her tears fell down on to the kha woman's hand. The kha woman looked up and called to her to come down, but she said,

"Having reached the rock it has caught me,  
Having reached the tree it holds me.  
So I cannot come".

The kha woman said, "In that case I will climb up". The orphan girl said, "If you want to climb up, well in our loft there is a small jar of fat, you bring it and smear on the bowl of the tree then you will be able to climb up". The kha woman went and brought the fat and smeared it on, and of course she could not climb up. The orphan girl said, "Below our house is a ploughshare, you get it and heat it until it is very red, then bring it to me. If you open your mouth and look up you will be able to climb up". The kha woman went and took the ploughshare, heated it until it was very red and took it to the orphan girl. Then she stretched back her head and looked up. The orphan girl said, "Now open your mouth". The kha woman opened her mouth and the orphan girl let the ploughshare fall down and burnt the kha woman to death there at the foot of the tree. Then the Miao girl called to her father and her brother to hold out the big basket and catch her up in the sky.

Nowadays in speaking of nettles, people call them "kha woman" still.

**M473**  
**The orphan who went fishing.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

**Introduction.**

Early in his collection of stories Yang Xiu-gong included this one. Some months later he wrote what was obviously the same story in a much more elaborate form. He explained that the form he had first recorded was what he remembered hearing as a boy at home. The second form was as he had recently heard it from a friend who had come to stay with him in Weining. Subsequently I received the same story, this time in the form of a song, from Wang Ming-ji at Shi-men-kan.

Taken together these three versions, M473, M474 and M475 offer an interesting illustration of the manner in which oral tradition can be changed. In this shortened form the original opening has been replaced by one taken from the Ndlie-jia story, M451, and Yeu-rang and his family, who figure so prominently in the longer forms, are not even mentioned by name, although the young woman and her parents are clearly no ordinary people. Again there is the anomaly of the certificate which the orphan gave to his wife. A destitute Miao orphan would never have been able to write Chinese, and there was no written form of Miao. In the fuller forms of the story the piece of writing was in fact a legal form of exchange drawn up by the Mandarin's secretary.

Miao houses were usually oblong in shape with solid walls of pounded earth, and a roof properly thatched. The orphan's hut had no walls, It was a booth of sloping poles fixed together at the top and roughly thatched. It was little more than one of the temporary shelters erected at harvest time for guarding the crops.

The young woman is initially called ngao-kha, which means literally "girl guest", but is the regular term for a bride.

## The orphan who went fishing.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was an orphan who lived in a little thatched hut. Every day he went fishing, but only to pass the time. One day he caught a small eel. He reached home and then went in search of firewood to burn. When he returned he saw a bride in his house. He did not like to go in but the bride called him in to sit down and she prepared food, which she served for him to eat.

She said to him, "Tonight my mother and my father will come to build a house for us to live in. If you hear the noise of rain and thunder, and of rain and wind, then you just sleep quietly". The orphan slept until the middle of the night when there came the rushing and roaring of rain and thunder, and of rain and wind. The orphan dared not move at all. When morning came, the orphan went outside to have a look, and all he could see was a house with a tiled roof and a timber frame, all bright and new.

Not long afterwards, his wife said to him, "A mandarin will be passing along this road, you take this flask of wine and give it to him". Later, on another occasion the mandarin was again passing along the road. His wife said to him, "This time you go and persuade the mandarin to come and have a meal". So the Miao lad persuaded the mandarin to come for a meal. The mandarin saw what a fine wife he had and wanted him to exchange her. He went and said to his wife, "The mandarin wants me to exchange you". His wife said, "You exchange with him. My reason for coming was to advance you. Now first you write a note for me to take, and if in the future I have a son, I will come and look for you, but if I have a daughter I shall not come to look for you". So it was that he exchanged with the mandarin. The mandarin remained in the orphan's house while the Miao lad left with the mandarin's soldiers. Now the orphan's homestead, which his wife's mother and father had come and built, disappeared. The orphan's wife went too. All that could be seen here was the orphan's thatched hut, and the mandarin died there.

The orphan went and became a mandarin. Later the Miao lad's wife gave birth to two sons. She brought her two sons to look for their father and arrived at the city where he was. While the mandarin was in his residence, he heard, outside the city, the sound of three gunshots and then three more. The mandarin, who was formerly the woman's husband, ordered his retainers to go and look. The retainers looked and then returned and told him, "We saw nobody except a beggar woman and her two sons at the lower end of the city". After the retainers had looked and returned, then again there was the sound of gunfire. So the mandarin came out to look for himself. He came and reached this woman and her two sons. They were just like Chinese beggars. He did not know that she was his erstwhile wife, for he assumed them to be beggars. The "beggar" woman said to him, "Great mandarin, would you eat this pot of porridge meal of ours?" But the mandarin was unwilling to eat it. The "beggar" woman said, "Though the great mandarin does not eat it, let him turn it out to the bottom and look". The mandarin turned it out to the bottom to look, and saw there the note which he had originally written for his wife to take. Then he understood, and so it was that presently he brought them into the city. Now all the family lived together until they were old.

**M474**  
**Yeu-rang-zi-lao and the orphan.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

**Introduction.**

In this version of the story, Yeu-rang plays a major role. He is given the added title “zi-lao”, meaning “the old one”, and is depicted as a fearsome individual, and his daughters and grandson take after him.

At the beginning of the story the orphan, having collected his sticks of firewood, had bundled them together, and crouching down in front of them, had tied the bundle on to his back. To stand up, lifting the heavy load, required all his strength, and as he was struggling to get to his feet, he exclaimed aloud, “Ai-zho, help me up”. Once on his feet he could carry the load. On the way back from the Chinese village Yeu-rang, having drunk well, suggested to his daughters that they should go and “help him up” and make a mandarin of him. The two elder daughters rejected the suggestion with expressions of disgust equivalent to expletives in English. The youngest daughter, in accepting the challenge declared that she would not simply make a mandarin of him but make him a “gi-my”. For this term the usual translation is “king”. All we are told about him is that he possessed seven cities and seven wives. A mandarin was the official in charge of one city and the country around about, like an English county. The person in charge of seven cities would have been a Provincial governor, and the term used for the king’s chief city, “a-nie-lao”, is the Miao name given to Kunming, the Provincial Capital of Yunnan.

The set of buildings provided by Yeu-rang was exactly like the residence of some powerful Chinese of Yi landlord. It was this resemblance that made the orphan want to run away, afraid of being caught where he had no business to be.

The two pigeons were intended to be eaten as snacks during the drinking bout. Like the flask of wine, they proved to be inexhaustible.

The expression “Heavenly Father” in line 181 of the Miao text has slipped into the story from Yang Xiu-gong’s Christian upbringing. In their pre-Christian days the Miao had no such conception. Possibly, in the original song the expression was “the sky people”.

The point of the request of his friends for some of the grandson’s “papers” was that he was so good at his compositions that his less able classmates wanted some of his manuscripts to help them in their own work.

The Miao did not normally use animal milk. The milk the child had to drink was his mother’s. By all normal standards he should have still been an unweaned baby. His mother’s milk was apparently very potent, imparting both the strength and the desire to go on the rampage. The high place that he trampled was a stretch of rough ground, uncultivated because it contained graves or sacred rocks or trees. To trample down the vegetation in such a place was to risk incurring the wrath of the spirits.

When Yeu-rang had discovered who the trouble maker was, he required him to undertake a test, to produce a written essay in the manner of the old Chinese civil service examinations. The essay had to equal that which Yeu-rang could write, and thereby prove that the boy was



indeed the old man's grandson. The text of the story does not actually say so, but it was explained orally that by spitting on them, the blank sheets were magically filled with writing which the boy did not now have time to complete. The name Ndrao-mi-hlu means "Youth of the exchange".

We are told that, having been informed by his classmates, the boy ran after his mother and clung to her skirt. Presumably she was returning at the time with her elder sister and father from one of their regular visits to the wine vendor in the Chinese village. In the earlier paragraphs of the story this does not appear to have been in any way a long or arduous journey. Later, however, when Yeu-rang dispatched his daughter and grandson back to earth to find the child's father, even by the shorter route, the sky road, it was going to take seven months, with formidable obstacles to be encountered along the way. Nowhere is any explanation of this anomaly offered.

**Yeu-rang-zi-lao and the orphan.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time, Yeu-rang-zi-lao was going to seek wine to drink in a Chinese village. When he reached oak tree valley, Yeu-rang-zi-lao heard an orphan in oak tree valley gathering firewood. The orphan said, "Ai-zho! Help me up! Ai-zho! Help me up!" When Yeu-rang had drunk his wine and was returning, he said to his eldest daughter, "Big sister you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The eldest said, "I won't go and help him up!" Then he said to his middle daughter, "Middle sister, you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The middle one said, "I won't go and help him up!" After that he said to the youngest, "Little sister, you go and help the orphan up and make him a mandarin". The youngest one said, "If I go and help him up, I will raise him to become a king!"

Later her father and two sisters took her to drink wine at the Chinese village. When they reached the place where the orphan was living, the youngest went to live with the orphan. In the evening, Yeu-rang's daughter said to the orphan, "Get the evening meal for us to eat". The orphan replied, "There is no evening meal", and they continued sitting there. Yeu-rang-zi-lao's youngest daughter again said, "Orphan, find some evening meal for us two to eat". So the orphan went and took out a small pot of porridge millet. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter took it and poured it out to feed the chicken, and when the orphan saw it he wept. At this Yeu-rang's youngest daughter took off and threw a bracelet into the fire. It changed into a cooking pot. Then she slipped off a ring and threw it into the fire. It changed into a rice steamer. Now Yeu-rang's youngest daughter prepared a small pot of meat and a steamer full of meal and served it for the orphan to eat. The orphan ate and ate, he could not leave it, until Yeu-rang's youngest daughter said, "Orphan, you really must eat less!"

After this Yeu-rang's daughter said to the orphan, "Tonight you must sleep quietly though the rain will be very heavy". In the evening, when Yeu-rang had finished drinking, he returned to the place where the orphan lived, and erected a set of buildings for the orphan and Yeu-rang's youngest daughter to live in. He took the orphan's little hut and tied it up under the eaves of the house. Early the next day the orphan rose and looked. He saw that it was not his house and he wanted to get up and run away. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter rose and reasoned with him, but he was unwilling to remain, he wanted to get up and run. So Yeu-rang's youngest daughter got up, came to him and said, "Orphan, if you do not believe me, you look up there, up under the eaves". The orphan lifted his head and looked upwards and saw his little hut which Yeu-rang-zi-lao had taken and lifted up there under the eaves. So gradually he was convinced and sat still.

In the year that the king was coming, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter remained indoors every day making wine. On the day that the king was due to come, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter collected the wine and poured it into a tiny flask. She gave it to the orphan to take out to the road along which the king would come and give it to the king. When the king arrived, the orphan rose and bowed three times, and gave his tiny flask of wine to the king to drink. The king said to the orphan, "Your little flask of wine there, is not enough for me to drink". The orphan said to the king, "If it were given to a common person to drink it would be but two mouthfuls, but the king may keep drinking, and it will still not be finished, and if he also divides it for his soldiers to drink, still it will not be finished.

After this the king gave a pair of pigeons to two of his retainers to go and roast at the orphan's house and bring them back to eat as a relish with the wine. At that time the orphan's wife made as though she was very busy, going out and coming in. The two retainers kept watching her, because the orphan's wife was beautiful, and the two pigeons got roasted to a cinder. There was nothing that the king's two retainers could do and both began to cry. The orphan's wife enquired, "What are you two crying about?" The king's two retainers said, "We are not crying about anything!" The orphan's wife returning enquired again. Eventually they said, "The king gave us two pigeons to bring and roast to be eaten as relish with his wine, but we have roasted them to a cinder, that is why we are crying". The orphan's wife said to them, "Do not cry, you two, I will roast two small ones for you to take to the king to eat as relish with his wine". The orphan's wife took some meal and made it into two little pats, which changed into two pigeons. These she gave to the two retainers to take to the king to eat as relish with his wine. The king kept eating but could not finish it. He divided it for his soldiers but still they could not finish it.

He remained there until the evening, and the king wanted to come and sleep at the orphan's house. The orphan said to the king, "My house is too narrow, there is no room for you to sleep". The king said to the orphan, "Though there is no room in your house, I am certainly coming to sleep at your house". The orphan came back and asked his wife. His wife said, "Orphan, let him come and sleep". So the orphan returned and said to the king, "My wife invites you to come and sleep". Then the orphan led the king back to sleep at his house.

The king's two retainers said to the king, "The orphan's wife is very beautiful". The king said, "In that case let her come out for me to see". But the first time the orphan made one of the house-sweepers come out for the king to see. The king said, "This one is certainly beautiful". The two retainers said, "This is not the one, this is only a house-sweeper". The next time he made the cook go out for him to see. The two retainers said, "Neither is it this one, this is only the cook". The king said, "If it is neither of these then make the orphan's wife come out for me to see". The third time the orphan's wife burst out suddenly, shining bright as she went, and dazzling the king and the king's retainers, causing them all to fall down, so that they did not see her clearly. The king said to them, "You take some of the orphan's rope of wild creepers and tie me up". They brought the wild creeper rope and tied the king to the central pillar of the orphan's house. Then the orphan's wife burst out suddenly again. Each one of the king's soldiers fell down, but the king, tied with the rope of wild creeper, did not fall, and saw clearly. Now the king said, "Come, orphan, let us exchange wives and exchange estates". The king said to the orphan, "I have seven cities and seven wives". But the orphan was not willing and said, "In this case I must first go and ask my wife and see". The orphan returned and told his wife. His wife said, "Orphan, you exchange, that will be very well". So the orphan and the king now drew up a document, exchanging wives and land and positions.

After this, the orphan's wife said, "Orphan if you are not convinced, then go as far as the grey earth gap yonder, then you return and see". The orphan went with the king's retainers until they reached the grey earth gap yonder. The orphan said to his retainers, "I have left something behind, I must go back and get it". The retainers said to him, "Your Majesty, stay here, we will go and fetch it for you". The orphan said to his retainers, "I have put that thing of mine where you could not get it". So the king's soldiers carried the orphan back. Now thy came and saw that the orphan's house, which he had exchanged with the king, was all in ruins, and the king was sitting inside smoking. The orphan's wife, whom he had exchanged with the king, now said to the orphan, "If you are still not convinced, go to the halfway place, and then return and see". The orphan went to the halfway place and said to his retainers, "I have left something else behind, I shall have to go back and get it". The

retainers said to him, "Your Majesty, stay here, we will go and fetch it for you". The orphan said, "I have put that thing of mine where you could not get it". So the retainers carried him back. When they had reached the place, Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had taken the king and beaten him nearly to death, and Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had got up and followed her father and the others to the sky. The orphan took the king's pipe, filled it with tobacco and put it into the king's mouth. Now the orphan was very happy. He jumped into the sedan chair and took his seat and went off to the royal city.

Afterwards, when Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had returned, one night she gave birth to a son. She took a piece of cloth and wrapped him up and threw him into the world of men. She threw him down and he fell into the gutter around the house of an old man and an old woman. In the night the couple heard the boy crying. The man said to the woman, "Woman, get up, let us light a lamp and see, perhaps the Heavenly Father has given us a child. If it is a girl we will bring her up to mind the pigs. If it is a boy we will bring him up to be a student". The two of them went and brought it in and it was a boy. They looked after him until midnight, and the boy was just able to smile, but by the following day he could run. So the two old folk made him study. He studied and became learned, he wrote and excelled as a writer.

His friends said to him, "Friend, give us some of your papers, and we will tell you who your mother and father are". So he gave his friends some of his papers and his friends said to him, "Your grandfather is the one who goes ahead, your aunt is the one who comes in the middle, your mother is the one who comes behind". Now when Yeu-rang's youngest daughter's son saw them he tucked up his clothes, and ran and caught hold of his mother's skirt. His mother scolded him and said, "What is this red-bellied thing?" His aunt said, "Think carefully what you did while you were on earth". So Yeu-rang's youngest daughter embraced him. The son had milk to drink and went stamping with his feet. He trampled all over his grandfather's high place. His grandfather said, "What creature has such strength? Catch it; I will roast it as relish with my wine!" Afterwards the son did the same again and Yeu-rang said the same, but now his neighbours told him that it was Yeu-rang's youngest daughter's son. So Yeu-rang knew that it was his grandson.

Yeu-rang said, "If you are indeed my grandson then your writing will be equal to mine, you must write as I do. Yeu-rang-zi-lao worked very hard at his writing. He wrote day after day, but his grandson simply went out to play every day. Yeu-rang-zi-lao wrote until only three sheets were left. Yeu-rang's youngest daughter was very worried and went and called her son. Her son said to her, "Mother, heat some water for me to wash my hands". His mother heated water for him to wash his hands and he began writing. He wrote out the document by which his father had exchanged wives and estates with the king. He took these papers on which he had written, together with those he had not yet written, placed them on the table, and he spat on the papers on the table. He then gathered and straightened them, and took and gave the to his grandfather to look at. As his grandfather looked at them he saw there was the document whereby his father had exchanged wives and estates. He also saw that the calligraphy was better than his own. His grandfather now said, "This is indeed my grandson, but I do not know what name to give him. I shall simply give him the name Ndrao-mi-hlu.

His grandfather said to his mother, to them both, "Now then, the time has come for me to send you two to seek your father, don't you think? But if you go by earthly roads, they are very long, it will take seven years. To go by the sky roads will take only seven months, but if you go by the sky roads there is fear that the sky blackness may come and block the road, and there is also fear that sky maidens may come and block the road". Now his grandfather gave him a bamboo fan to carry, and the two departed, travelling along the road. The son

enquired of his mother, "Mother, where is the sky blackness?" His mother said, "The sky blackness is over there on the mountain ridge yonder". The two went on and came to the place where the sky blackness had come to block the road. The son took out his fan and fanned three times toward the North and fanned three times toward the South. The sky cleared, so he said to his mother, "Come quickly, mother, do not be afraid". So they went onward. Then the son asked his mother, "Mother, they say that the sky maidens will come and block the road, well, where are they?" His mother said, "They are over there, on the mountain ridge yonder". They went on together until they reached the place where the sky maidens had come to block the road. The son then took out the fan. He fanned three times toward the North and fanned three times toward the South, and the sky cleared. The son said, "Mother, come quickly"

Now he and his mother, the two of them, reached a city, and he said to his mother, "Let us call our father and see if he is here". He fired a gun, "crack", but none of the pagodas in that city fell. He said, "Our father is not here". So the two of them, mother and son, went forward together and arrived at another city. He said again, "Come, let us call our father and see whether he is here". So he fired the gun, "crack", but none of the pagodas in that city fell. So he said, "Our father is not here". So they went on together until they saw the king's capital city. The son said, "Let us call our father and see if he is here". So he took his gun and fired it, "crack", and the king's pagodas fell down flat. When the king saw it he was sick at heart. So he sent people to search below the city walls, but they saw nothing but a beggar woman and her son outside the city walls. These people who were sent went back and told the king. Then the lad fired the gun again, "crack", and the king's pagodas stood upright. The king said, "Who is the person who is as strong as this? Go and search outside the city once more and see". They went and searched but they met with nothing at all. All they saw was a couple of beggars, mother and son.

The king was troubled at heart, so he himself rose and went to search. He went and saw only the couple of beggars, mother and son, there, making porridge to eat. The two beggars ladled out a basin full for the king and said, "Your Majesty, come and have lunch with us". They added, if you do not wish to, take it and stir it up and see". The king stirred it up to see and stirred out the document by which he had exchanged lands and wives. The king said, "My wife and son have arrived, but unfortunately I have seven wives". The son said, "Don't worry, Father". He took them, mother and son, and when they arrived his seven wives had died and disappeared.

**M475**  
**The orphan's song**

***A woman from Hmao-zu-mu.***

Introduction.

This song is rather less full than the previous prose version of the story (M474) and, at a number of points, the listener is left to guess the relationship between different sections and also the reason for a number of the happenings. Thus, for instance, it is not explained why, when he saw the new house, the orphan immediately ran away. There is, however, some interesting new material.

The statement that the old king's son became head of a leading family of Nosu (Yi) landowners is noteworthy. Many Nosu families embraced Chinese education, and quite a number of Nosu attained qualifications making them eligible for appointment to high office. In fact a member of the powerful Lung family became the Provincial Governor of Yunnan. The king in this story, though surrounded by all the trappings of a high ranking Chinese official, was evidently a Nosu by race, and his son succeeded him as head of the family.

No explanation is offered for Yeu-rang's youngest daughter rejecting her twin sons at birth. It might possibly have been that, because they did not belong to Yeu-rang's clan but to that of their natural father, she knew that if Yeu-rang discovered the parentage of his two stable lads, he would immediately send them back, mother and sons, to where they belonged, in the orphan's palace on earth, and maybe she was loath to go. This will also explain why, having somehow been alerted to the situation, Yeu-rang was so keen to establish the two boys' true identity. Throughout the song the twins are described as "du dlang li du si" a name used for any person having supernatural powers.

The suggestion that the sound of thunder was caused by Thunder's two daughters rolling their drums is found only in this song. Elsewhere, in stories, songs and in common speech, it is ascribed to Thunder, himself roaring like a great beast. Thunder's swords and spears are, of course lightning, which by the magic fan was made to strike upward instead of downward, with fatal results for the two daughters.

The idea that peace was established by bringing together sky and earth under a unified government, so that when trouble broke out in either realm, the other came to the rescue, is also peculiar to this song.

**M475**  
**The orphan's song.**

***A woman from Hmao-zu-mu***

- .This year we may know,  
Know that the orphan was gathering firewood,  
And Yeu-rang pitied,  
Pitied the orphan greatly.
- 5     This year we may know,  
Know that Yeu-rang's youngest daughter was passing by,  
Passing on the far side of Ndu-nzhi and Ndu-sao,  
And met the orphan sitting by the road.
- 10    The orphan had been gathering firewood,  
.When Yeu-rang's youngest daughter met  
Met the orphan sitting by the road.
- Yeu-rang's youngest daughter went back with the orphan to sleep,  
To sleep at the orphan's house.  
Though the orphan's house, thatched with wormwood and full of holes, was quite  
inadequate to sleep in,
- 15    Yet Yeu-rang's youngest daughter went with the orphan to sleep,  
To sleep at the orphan's house.
- Yeu-rang's youngest daughter put her copper bracelet into the pot.'  
And the pot filled with white pork.  
She put her copper bracelet into the steamer,  
20    And the steamer filled with white rice.  
This she prepared for the orphan, for both of them to eat.
- "Orphan, oh orphan,  
Orphan, oh orphan,  
Oh orphan have you got,  
25    Have you not got even a bundle of pine needles or millet straw for us to spread?
- Orphan, oh orphan,  
Orphan, oh orphan!"  
And Yeu-rang's youngest daughter wept.  
Then her relatives built,  
30    Built for Yeu-rang's youngest daughter a house with timber frame and tiled roof.
- When the next day came,  
The orphan quickly ran away,  
And Yeu-rang's youngest daughter went quickly to reassure him.
- 35    "Orphan, oh orphan,  
You do not believe my word!"  
So she persuaded him to return and look,  
Return and look inside his house.

- This year we may know,  
 Know that Yeu-rang's youngest daughter caused,  
 40 Caused the orphan to go and gather firewood,  
 For this year the king will be travelling along the road.
- Yeu-rang's youngest daughter had been making wine,  
 And she sent the orphan to go and wait,  
 Wait for the king in the pass.
- 45 So the orphan presented,  
 Presented clear wine  
 For the king to drink,  
 And the king became completely drunk,  
 Though the orphan's wine was not used up.
- 50 Then the king wanted to accompany,  
 To accompany the orphan and return to sleep,  
 To sleep at the orphan's house.  
 Whereat the orphan came back and asked,  
 Asked Yeu-rang's youngest daughter.
- 55 Yeu-rang's youngest daughter made the orphan go and escort,  
 Escort the king to come and sleep,  
 Sleep at Yeu-rang's youngest daughter's house.
- This year we may know,  
 Know that the king would change wives with the orphan.,  
 60 So the orphan went and asked Yeu-rang's youngest daughter.
- "Yeu-rang's youngest daughter is raising the orphan to become a king".  
 So the soldiers, the king's soldiers, carried,  
 Carried the orphan, now king, away along the road,  
 But the orphan pretended he had forgotten the agreement for exchange of wives.
- 65 So the orphan returned and reached,  
 Reached Yeu-rang's youngest daughter,  
 "Yeu-rang's youngest daughter has raised the orphan to become a king".
- Now the king's eldest son became,  
 Became the head of a family of powerful Yi landlords,  
 70 But the king's soldiers took,  
 Took the orphan away,  
 Took the orphan and reached the king's country.
- This year we may know,  
 Know that Yeu-rang's youngest daughter has this year given birth,  
 75 Given birth to two wonder workers,  
 But she abandoned them in the gutter of Yeu-rang's house.
- When the next day came,  
 They became stable lads to Yeu-rang.  
 Then Yeu-rang caused,



- 80      Caused the wonder workers together with,  
            With Yeu-rang to do some writing.
- The wonder workers drew clear water and held it in their mouths,  
            Held it in their mouths then spewed it on the paper pile.  
            This they handed to Yeu-rang to inspect,  
85      And it was exactly like Yeu-rang's own writing.
- Yeu-rang therefore caused,  
            Caused the wonder workers to take,  
            To take Yeu-rang's youngest daughter and follow,  
            Follow after the orphan.
- 90      To go by the earthly road was far,  
            To go by the sky road was near.  
            To go by the earthly road would take seven years,  
            To go by the sky road would take but seven months.
- But going on the sky road one would fear,  
95      Fear the sky darkness on the further side,  
            And the sisters, Thunder's two daughters,  
            Rolling their drums behind.
- The wonder workers took,  
            Took the fan, the mottled fan,  
100     They fanned toward the front,  
            And all grew bright like sunrise.
- They fanned towards the rear,  
            And the sisters, Thunder's two daughters,  
            Their swords and spears stood erect,  
105     Killing outright the sisters, Thunder's two daughters.
- The wonder workers took,  
            Took Yeu-rang's youngest daughter, to go and seek their father.  
            They went and they reached,  
            Reached Ndu-nzhi and the Bw-bw country.
- 110     Yeu-rang's youngest daughter caused,  
            Caused the wonder workers to go and call their father.  
            So the wonder workers set off,  
            Set off exploding firecrackers.  
            All the kings stone monuments fell down,  
115     But the orphan's stone monuments did not move.
- Yeu-rang's youngest daughter took,  
            Took the wonder workers and they went and reached,  
            Reached Ndu-nzhi and Bw-bw city approach.
- Yeu-rang's youngest daughter caused,  
120     Caused the wonder workers to go and call their father.  
            The wonder workers set off exploding firecrackers.

The Ruling Race's stone monuments stood erect,  
But the orphan's stone monuments fell down.

125 The orphan was heavy hearted,  
So the orphan sent,  
Sent his soldiers and retainers to look.  
They saw the three, like Chinese lepers,  
Preparing midday meal outside the city gate.

130 The orphan was heavy hearted,  
But Yeu-rang's youngest daughter dipped up.  
Dipped up a bowl of porridge and pressed it upon,  
Pressed it upon the orphan, it being time for midday meal.

135 The orphan could not refuse it,  
But in taking it, he spilt it over the skirt of his gown,  
And discovered the agreement by which, when a young man,  
The orphan had exchanged wives with the king.

The orphan pitied,  
Pitied Yeu-rang's youngest daughter and the two wonder workers greatly.

140 The orphan sent,  
Sent his soldiers to escort,  
To escort Yeu-rang's youngest daughter and the wonder workers,  
To escort them to the king's house.

145 The king caused the wonder workers to govern earth,  
While the orphan governed the sky,  
And their government brought peace in the sky and tranquillity to earth.

So in the day when the sky was disturbed earth supported it.  
And when earth was disturbed the sky clung to it.  
And peace came to the sky and tranquillity on earth.

Thus it is ended.

**M476**

**Two Miao lads who went to choose brides, together with matters concerning Yeu-rang.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

**Introduction.**

Yeu-rang's magic fan, which received a passing reference in the previous tale, M474 and M475, becomes, in this one and the second half of the succeeding story, M477, a central feature and a useful means of getting rid of unwanted suitors for his daughters. As in the case of the magic bowl, M431, the magic power appears to have resided in the fan itself, combined with the use of the magic formula, and not in the person who was using it.

"You have arrived early" was a conventional greeting to guests, implying that they must have been travelling fast and hard to have arrived at this time. "Yellow moor" refers to a patch of ground from which the topsoil had been eroded, exposing the yellow clay subsoil in which nothing would grow. The cliff was red or brown by reason of minerals in the rock. The young men were blown on to an inaccessible ledge on the rock face. The "gnomes" were described as being like human beings in every respect except that they were only two feet high and also possessed magical powers. They normally lived in caves under ground.

## Two Miao lads who went to choose brides, together with matters concerning Yeu-rang.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there were two Miao lads who went to choose brides. They reached Yeu-rang's family home, but Yeu-rang was not there, only his two daughters were at home. In the evening Yeu-rang arrived. Yeu-rang said to them, "You two, my sons-in-law, have arrived early!" Then he said to his two daughters, "My two sons-in-law are very tired, bring me my fan for me to fan my two sons-in-law". The two daughters brought Yeu-rang's fan to him. Yeu-rang took the fan into his hand and said,

"Fan once, and pitch upon my yellow moor,  
Fan again, and pitch upon my red cliff".

So it happened as Yeu-rang had spoken. The two Miao lads were fanned away on to the red cliff. On that red cliff there was a large number of human bones. These human bones were all the people who had gone to seek brides, had reached Yeu-rang's house, and Yeu-rang had fanned them there where they died.

The two Miao lads took those human bones and made pipes and played on them. There were some gnomes living on that cliff who came to watch them playing their instruments. They asked them what they were doing there, and the lads told them all the things that Yeu-rang had done, and then said to them, "How did you come here, will you please show us the way?" The gnomes said, "We came by swarming the creeper which drops down over the cliff there". So the two of them swarmed up the creeper, climbed out at the top of the cliff, and returned to their homes.

When they reached home, following the pattern of Yeu-rang's, they made a fan. When it was made they went back again to Yeu-rang's home. They reached there, and again Yeu-rang was not at home. The two Miao lads said to Yeu-rang's daughters, "Will you bring Father-in-law's fan for us to fan ourselves? We are very tired". Yeu-rang's two daughters brought Yeu-rang's fan to the two Miao lads. The two lads took it and exchanged it for the one which they had made, giving the one which they had made to Yeu-rang's two daughters to put back. In the evening Yeu-rang returned. Yeu-rang said, "My two sons-in-law have arrived early. My two sons-in-law are very tired, bring my fan for me to fan my two sons-in-law". Yeu-rang's two daughters brought him the fan. Yeu-rang said,

"Fan once, and pitch upon my yellow moor,  
Fan again, and pitch upon my red cliff".

But now Yeu-rang could not fan them away. Then the two Miao lads took out their fan and said,

"Fan once, and fan father-in-law on to the yellow moor,  
Fan again, and fan father-in-law on to the red cliff".

So now Yeu-rang was fanned away by the Miao lads on to the red cliff, and the two Miao lads took Yeu-rang's two daughters as their brides.

**M477**

**A poor man kills his son, but the son leads him to riches.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

**Introduction.**

Some of the old Miao songs run for hundreds of lines, episode following episode but with very little connection between them. However, in this narrative, the link between the two parts is so slender as to suggest that originally these were separate stories. The ending of the second part is clearly a repetition of the previous narrative, M476, but when the point was put to Yang Xiu-gong he insisted that this was the form in which he had always known it. Nevertheless the impression remains that, if we had the original song version, we might well find that it had an entirely different ending.

The first section of this story illustrates how near to starvation many of the Miao lived. The onset of old age, a bad harvest, sickness or some similar adversity could drive a family to the desperate extremity here described. To save their son from the suffering which was the lot of all orphans, they would contrive to kill him, and after a final meal the old people would commit suicide.

The pounder in the story was a heavy wooden cross having a peg of hard wood, which fitted down into a stone mortar, driven through the head. The grain etc. which was to be pounded was placed in the mortar, which was set into the ground. The two arms of the cross were supported on pegs, which raised them some nine inches off the ground. A heavy weight was fixed to the head of the cross which could be raised out of the mortar by treading on the foot of the cross. When it was released the peg in the head would strike down into the mortar with considerable force. The whole contraption would normally require two or three men to carry it.

Yeu-rang, in this story lived not in the sky but in a cliff, which could only be opened if struck exactly at its middle point. There appears to have been a rule in the contest between the Miao lad and Yeu-rang that either might change form at will, but if caught they would lose the power to change back. So Yeu-rang in the form of a sparrow hawk caught in the basket could not resume his original shape until he was released.

## A poor man kills his son but the son leads him to riches.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family to which was born a son. This son, the longer he lived the bigger he grew, and the bigger he grew the more he ate, until his family simply could feed him no longer. His family became very poor, and the time came when the man said to the woman, "This son of ours eats so much. We have grown old and what is more we can no longer work. What is the good of us rearing him? Come let us find a way of killing him!" The woman said, "All right. Now we still have one small chicken and one sow. You take him along and kill him, while I remain at home and kill the little hen in readiness for you".

On the first occasion the man took his son to fell a tree with the intention of the tree killing him. So the man chopped the tree until it was about to fall, and said to his son, "Come over on the lower side and wait to carry it on you back, it is about to fall". The son came on the lower side waiting till the tree fell. It killed him, crushing him there. The man returned home and said to the woman, "All right, this time he has been killed. Have you killed the chicken? Bring it and let us eat. When we have eaten let us die and that will be the end of it". The man had scarcely finished speaking to the woman, when the son, carrying the tree over his shoulder, arrived and said, "Father, where shall I put it?" The father said, "Carry it there below the house". Then the son said, "Has mother got the food ready?" His father said, "It is ready, over there, go and help yourself". The son went and looked in the steamer, where there was a small quantity of meal. Then he looked in the pot where there was some meat. With the spoon the son dipped up two spoonfuls of maize, and with the chopsticks dipped twice into the meat and ate it, and there was none left. So his mother and father had nothing to eat.

His father then said to his mother, "In the valley below there is a pounder. I will take him to carry it, and cause the pounder to crush him. Now all we have left is a sow. You take the sow and kill it in readiness for me". The woman said, "All right, you take him along". The man took the son along and reached the pounder. The father said, "You come and be ready to carry it while I raise it up". But the father could not raise it up and had to get the son to help him raise it on end, and then to go and carry it. When the son came to the lower side, the father gave it a push. It knocked the son down and crushed him to death. The man returned home and said to the woman, "Have you killed and finished cooking the sow? This time certainly our son is dead". The woman said, "That is good. The meat and meal are all ready, go and help yourself". The words were scarcely spoken when the son reached home carrying the pounder. He said, "Father, where shall I set the pounder down?" The father said, "Put it down below the house". When the son had put the pounder down he came and said, "Mother, is there any food?" His mother said the meal and vegetables are there, go and help yourself. The son went and took and ate two or three mouthfuls of meal and two or three mouthfuls of vegetables, and all was eaten up.

Now he said to his father, "Father, go and have made for me a hoe of two or three catties of iron, I am going to dig the land and grow crops". His father went collecting iron everywhere, and found a smith to come and work it. When the hoe was made the Miao lad took it and went digging. The Miao lad dug for only one day, but he dug over several valleys and several plains. The Miao lad worked hard at his farming and got very great returns. His home, the whole place, became very wealthy.

The Miao lad said to his mother and father, "Now we have everything in our home, I want to go hunting". So he left. He went on and on and saw a man who was clearing ditches. The man who was clearing ditches said to him, "What are you doing?" He replied, "I am going hunting". The man said, "I will go with you". The two of them went on and on and they saw a maker of drums. The drum maker said, "What are you two doing?" They replied, "We are going hunting". The drum maker said, "I will go with you". The three of them went on and came to a very large wooded valley. In this place were many wild animals, so here the three remained to snare the game.

The three first went and bought food. The first day the cleaner of ditches stayed home to prepare food while the other two went out snaring game. When the cleaner of ditches had got the food ready he went and called, "I have got breakfast ready, you two come and eat!" Yeu-rang who lived in a cliff in that forest, heard him and said, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. On the back of his neck Yeu-rang had a line of hair growing, and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all. The next day the drum maker stayed home to prepare food while the other two went out to snare game. When the drum maker had got the food ready he went and called, "I have got the breakfast cooked, you two come and eat". Yeu-rang who lived in a cliff in that forest, heard him and said, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. On his neck Yeu-rang had a line of hair growing, and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all.

On the third day the Miao lad with the big appetite stayed home to prepare food. While he was preparing it he went and cut some bamboo and wove a basket at the same time. When the food was cooked the basket was also finished, and he went to call the other two to come and eat. When he called Yeu-rang replied, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". and on his head he had two horns like a water buffalo. He came, took the food and ate it all.

On the third day the Miao lad with the big appetite stayed home to prepare food. While he was preparing it he went and cut some bamboo and wove a basket at the same time. When the food was cooked the basket was also finished, and he went to call the other two to come and eat. When he called Yeu-rang replied, "Coming, I will be there in a minute". Yeu-rang came. His head was like a water buffalo, and on his neck he had a mane. He came where the Miao lad was. Now the Miao lad waited for him to arrive, then he fought with Yeu-rang. Yeu-rang then changed into a centipede. The Miao lad changed into a cockerel to go and peck it up. Yeu-rang then changed into an eagle flying down to take the cockerel. The Miao lad then turned back into a man to kill the eagle. Yeu-rang then changed into a sparrow hawk and flew up into the sky. As the Miao lad was looking up, the sparrow hawk flew down to peck him. The Miao lad waited until he flew down near the ground, then he took the basket he had woven and caught the sparrow hawk under it.

When the cleaner of ditches and the drum maker arrived the Miao lad said to them, "You two go and buy some wine from the Chinese to go with the sparrow hawk when we have roasted it". Yeu-rang inside the basket heard this. Yeu-rang said, "You three do not roast me to eat with your wine. If you will let me go I have three daughters whom I will give to you". The three said, "Where is your home, and what assurance will you give?" Yeu-rang said, "My home is in the cliff yonder, in the middle of the forest over there. When you come all you have to do is to strike the middle of the cliff and my door will be opened". The three then said, "When may we come to your house?" Yeu-rang said, "Whenever you come will be all right". Having finished talking the three released Yeu-rang.

After this the three went to look. All they could see was a perfectly smooth cliff. Unable to do anything they want and felled a tree to make crossbows. They produced three crossbows and three quivers of arrows. When these were completed they went together and reached the foot of the cliff. The Miao lad made the clearer of ditches shoot first. The clearer of ditches released one shot, but the arrow hit the cliff and fell down. Then he made the drum maker shoot. The drum maker shot, but with the same result as the clearer of ditches. Now the Miao lad released a shot. It hit the cliff and a slab of cliff fell away and made an opening. The three entered. The clearer of ditches led the way, the drum maker followed while the Miao lad came at the rear to beat off the dogs. Yeu-rang's dogs were very fierce, and the Miao lad coming at the end had a dog at every step.

When they arrived and went indoors, Yeu-rang was not at home. Only Yeu-rang's three daughters were in. They went and sat down to wait. They had not waited long when Yeu-rang arrived. Yeu-rang said, "My three sons-in-law are very tired. Bring my fan let me fan my three sons-in-law". Yeu-rang's three daughters brought his fan to him and Yeu-rang fanned three times and fanned the three right outside. The cliff became perfectly smooth again.

So the three returned to the place where they were staying. They made a fan exactly like Yeu-rang's fan, and again went to Yeu-rang's house. When they reached the cliff it was just the same as on the previous occasion. There was no way in. The lad who was so strong made the clearer of ditches shoot first. But when the clearer of ditches shot, his arrow simply fell away. Then he made the drum maker shoot, but when the drum maker shot it was the same as the clearer of ditches. Then the Miao lad went and shot. He released one shot and hit the cliff and a slab fell away. The Miao lad made the clearer of ditches go first, followed by the drum maker, while he came behind. When they arrived, Yeu-rang's daughters brought Yeu-rang's fan for them to fan themselves. Having got it, they exchanged it for the one they had made. Yeu-rang returned and said, "My three sons-in-law have arrived early, my three sons in law are very tired. Bring my fan, let me fan my three sons in law!" His three daughters brought the fan to Yeu-rang, and he took it and fanned the three lads but could not fan them away. Then the three said, "Our father-in-law is very tired, let us three fan our father-in-law. The three took Yeu-rang's fan which they had exchanged and fanned Yeu-rang right outside. So it was that now everything of Yeu-rang's counted as theirs, and they got Yeu-rang's three daughters as well.



## Concerning Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and Ndrao-ntlai.

*Told ny Yang Xiu-gong.*

### Introduction.

Though a wide variety of animals and birds figure in the Miao songs and stories, there is a particular fascination with tigers. Alone among all the wild creatures, tigers were credited with the ability of enticing young women away and then carrying them off to be their wives. Once under the influence of the tiger the victim was torn between wanting to stay and wanting to escape, but she could never just run away. Someone had to kill the tiger and so break the spell and rescue her. The present story is a classical example, but at a number of points further comment and clarification are required.

We are told that it was the coloured designs of the Miao tribal costume which first attracted the tiger's attention. The suggestion seems to be that the tiger claimed tribal kinship, and therefore the right to take and marry a Miao woman because of the similarities between the patterns on her gown and those of the tiger's coat. It should be noted that though this idea occurs occasionally in the songs, far more often the costume patterns are regarded as a representation, and therefore as a perpetual reminder, of the ancient homeland which had been lost. Another tradition connects them with the legendary Miao writing which had also been lost.

Like every Miao bride leaving home, Hmao-chi's youngest daughter carried with her all the garments she had been making for her marriage. The parting gifts, which she gave to her mother, were taken from her "bottom drawer". They were new and the result of months of work, in making the yarn, weaving the cloth, making dying and embroidering the garments. They were her most valued possessions.

Certain leaves held tightly between the thumbs can function as reeds, and emit a loud piercing sound when blown correctly. It is possible to play tunes, but Miao youths and girls use leaf blowing as a means of communication when they are out on the hillsides. This is done by reproducing the speech rhythms and tone patterns of simple sentences. Such messages can be heard over very considerable distances, but the uninitiated, for instance the tiger in this story, would not understand.

In common with the Chinese the Miao used the sequence of twelve animals for reckoning years, months and days. "Tiger day" occurred every twelve days, but Yang Xiu-gong explained that it was only on Tiger day in Tiger month that the tigers all slept, so Ndrao-ntlai had some time to wait before returning. It is possible that the couplet about oxen lying prostrate and tigers sleeping is part of a twelve line verse covering all the animals in the cycle, but enquiries brought no further information.

The average Miao house was a single storey building erected on a small flat area cut out of the hillside. This meant that the ground behind rose sharply up, and that in front fell away. For the testing of the sword, the ox is pictured as galloping down the slope and jumping clean over the house. Killing the ox and cutting the skirt in half, in addition to being a test of the sword and of the young man's swordsmanship, may also have been a sacrifice made by the family to ensure the success of his dangerous mission.

There were four tigers in the family, “grandfather” and his three sons, the eldest of which had abducted Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter. It is strange that no mention is made here, or in the other tiger stories, of any female tigers.

The process of giving birth to the two tiger cubs involved Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter in burial and decay before final return to life. This may have been necessary, on the one hand to break the spell of infatuation that the tiger had cast, and on the other to expiate the contamination resulting from consorting with the tiger, a process only completed when the cubs also had been killed. While all this was happening Ndrao-ntlai remained waiting in the valley and living on the “a-va” which grew there. This was described as a plant, the root of which was edible and resembled potatoes.

Miao singers and story-tellers seem to have an insatiable appetite for aetiological explanations of natural phenomenon and traditional practices. They continue to be included even when, as in the last few sentences of this story which concern the dental arrangements of cattle, sheep and goats, they are not only quite incredible and utterly irrelevant, but come as a complete anticlimax to the narrative.

## Concerning Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and Ndrao-ntlai.

*Told by Yang-Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that once upon a time, Ndrao-ntlai went and borrowed his cousin's embroidered gown to wear and attend a festival. He went to the top of a rock on a hill and spoke as follows,

"I am wearing the embroidered gown which belongs to  
Hmao-chi's youngest daughter,  
But oh, I do not know what Hmao-chi's youngest daughter  
may be doing!"

As he said this a tiger, which was under the rock where he was standing, heard him. The tiger lifted his head to look, and saw that the gown, which Ndrao-ntlai was wearing, was made like a tiger's skin. So the tiger waited until Ndrao-ntlai had gone, then he got up and went to carry off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter. The tiger took his front paw and changed it into a fruit placing it beside the water pool. When Hmao-chi's youngest daughter went to carry water, she saw it and took and ate it, with the result that her heart burned to follow the tiger.

She carried the water back home, and she said to her mother, "I must go and follow the tiger". Her mother followed after her. She gave her pair of leg-bands to her mother and said,

"Mother, you have cared for me until you were weary,  
Take these in payment for your effort!"

Her mother went on following after her, so she gave a skirt to her mother and said,

"Mother, you gave me milk to drink until I grew big,  
Take this in payment for the cost of your milk!"

Still her mother followed after her, so she gave a gown to her and said,

"Mother, you have given me food to eat until I have grown up,  
So I give you my gown, in payment for the cost of the food!"

Her mother still followed after her, but she lost sight of her, so her mother returned home again.

Ndrao-ntlai, having returned home after attending the festival, heard that the tiger had carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter. So he set out and followed. He went over a mountain where the tiger and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had lit a fire and rested. Now the fire was not yet out, so Ndrao-ntlai plucked a leaf and blew it, "Where has the tiger which carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter gone?" Hmao-chi's youngest daughter also plucked a leaf and blowing it replied, "The tiger has carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and gone to the mountain of black thorns". So Ndrao-ntlai followed after. He reached the mountain of black thorns and here too the tiger and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had rested, for Hmao-chi's youngest daughter's leaves placed there were still good. Ndrao-ntlai again plucked a leaf and blew it, "Where has the tiger which carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter gone?" Hmao-chi's youngest daughter also plucked a leaf and blew

it in reply. "The tiger has carried off Hmao-chi's youngest daughter to the mountain of green thorns". So Ndrao-ntlai arose and followed. He went on until he came to the top of a cliff. This was the place where the tiger had taken Hmao-chi's youngest daughter to live. Ndrao-ntlai remained at the top of the cliff for a smoke, and he brushed the leaves over to fall to the bottom of the cliff. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "With the weather so fine, how is it that the birds are brushing out the leaves?" She lifted her head and looked up and saw Ndrao-ntlai there. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "Ndrao-ntlai, so you have come! This family of brothers is very fierce indeed. You must go away until

'Ox day when the ox is prostrate,  
And tiger day when the tiger sleeps',

and on that date come back, please". So Ndrao-ntlai came away.

For seven days and seven nights Ndrao-ntlai was sharpening his sword. When the sharpening was finished he said to his father, "Father, drive up your ox for me to test my sword!" His father said, "I have only one son, why, yes, of course, I will give him my ox to test his sword!" His father drove the ox up behind the house and whipped it, making it jump right over the house down to the front. With a single sword stroke Ndrao-ntlai cut it into two pieces. Then he said to his mother, "Mother, give me your skirt to test my sword and see if it is all right!" His mother said, "I have only one son, why, yes, of course, I will give him my skirt to test his sword!" His mother brought her skirt up behind the house, and threw it down to the front. As it fell, Ndrao-ntlai, with a single sword stroke, cut it into two pieces.

The day when the tigers sleep was approaching, so Ndrao-ntlai set out. When he arrived the tigers were away from home. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter took Ndrao-ntlai and hid him in a small cave. In the evening the tigers returned, they smelt the fresh scent, and the little tiger said, "There is a funny smell, there is a funny smell, sister-in-law!" Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "Today I put my clothes out to sun them, that is what it is". Grandfather tiger arrived and said, "There is a funny smell, there is a funny smell, daughter-in-law!" Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "Today I put my clothes out to sun them, that is what it is". Grandfather tiger went inside the cave, but the little tiger came out to play. He saw Ndrao-ntlai and was going to climb up and eat him. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "That is my brother, don't you touch him!" When the tigers understood this, they made Hmao-chi's youngest daughter bring him in to stay with them.

After two days the tigers all went to sleep and Ndrao-ntlai was going to kill them. Ndrao-ntlai first killed the little tiger, then he killed grandfather tiger. But Hmao-chi's youngest daughter saw it, so Ndrao-ntlai went outside. Ndrao-ntlai said, "The butterflies flying in this valley are very pretty!" Hmao-chi's youngest daughter ran out after him, but Ndrao-ntlai doubled back and took the middle tiger with a single sword stroke. There remained the big tiger. Ndrao-ntlai was about to strike him, but Hmao-chi's youngest daughter went and covered him with the hem of her skirt so that Ndrao-ntlai could not very well strike him. Ndrao-ntlai said, "If you do that I shall kill you as well!" Then Hmao-chi's youngest daughter got out of the way, and with a single stroke Ndrao-ntlai cut the tiger in two. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said, "You have taken a great and virile family, and you have made a complete end".

Now Ndrao-ntlai brought Hmao-chi's youngest daughter away, and reached a valley where a-va grew. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter was pregnant and the time of resting drew near. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter said to Ndrao-ntlai, "You dig a hole and bury me. You eat this a-va, and stay and wait for me. If you hear my mouth-harp sounding, come, open the

hole and have a look". Ndrao-ntlai stayed there and ate all the a-va in the valley. Ndrao-ntlai went and opened Hmao-ch'i youngest daughter's hole there, to look. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had decayed away to a frothing liquid. Ndrao-ntlai now had no hope and wanted to leave. He went as far as the big pass and was about to cross over, but his heart was not at rest, so he came back for one more look. As he was about to leave again he heard Hmao-chi's youngest daughter's mouth-harp sounding. He went and opened up to see. Hmao-chi's youngest daughter came out, and she had two small tigers which she brought out as well. Ndrao-ntlai wanted to kill them but Hmao-chi's youngest daughter would not allow it, so they took them along.

When they reached home, Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father were "escorting the spirit" for Ndrao-ntlai. Because he had been gone a long time and they thought he had been eaten by the tigers. Thus it was that there was a lot of people at Ndrao-ntlai's home. When they arrived their mother and father did not know it, so the people who were there said, "Today it is busy with lots of people. There is nowhere for you to sleep here!" But Ndrao-ntlai was persistent in asking, so that presently they allowed the couple to stay. Now Ndrao-ntlai took his pipes and played,

"Ndrao-ntlai went to the tigers' country,  
Ndrao-ntlai has got a fine bride!"

Ndrao-ntlai's father was up in the loft and heard it. Wanting to hurry down quickly to congratulate him, he fell from the loft and broke his leg.

Now afterwards Ndrao-ntlai's father and others took the two small tigers when they went out with the cattle to pasture, but the tigers began catching and eating the cattle. So Ndrao-ntlai's father and the others took the two little tigers and killed them to roast and eat. When they were killing them there the cattle and the sheep and the goats saw that they were killing tigers and they rolled on the ground with laughing and knocked out their top teeth. The horses and pigs were in a hollow, so they did not see. Now cattle and sheep and goats lack of upper teeth originates from this.

**Song of Ndrao-ntlai and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.*****Collected by Wang Ming-ji.***

## Introduction.

This version of the Ndrao-ntlai story, with the exception of a few differences of detail, follows the prose narrative, M481, fairly closely. There are, however some noteworthy differences. The enigmatic episode of the young woman's incarceration, decay and rejuvenation is recounted but with no mention of pregnancy or the birth of tiger cubs. This makes it the more difficult to understand, and no explanation is offered as to its significance either in the text or by way of notes.

The Miao believed that each person possessed his own spirit called his "a dli". In the songs this is often expanded to a four-syllable expression, "a dli a dlo". A fright, a shock, in fact almost any eventuality, might cause his "a dli" to become separated from the person, and when this happened there were rituals to be performed by which it could be recalled. When a person died there were other rituals by which his "a dli" was escorted to its resting-place. These beliefs lie behind the final section of the song, and may also explain the surprising fact that neither Ndrao-ntlai nor Hmao-chi's youngest daughter could remember where they had come from, and had to find employment with a Chinese maker of wooden spoons. Their encounter with the tigers had caused a separation of the "a dli" which manifested itself in a loss of memory. In the course of his sales rounds Ndrao happened to visit his own village which revived his memory. To complete the cure, the necessary rituals were carried out to recall the "a dli" for both him and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.

# Song of Ndrao-ntlai and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.

*Collected by Wang Ming-ji.*

- This year we may know,  
 Know that Ndrao-ntlai has made pipes and gone down to Nzhi-di.  
 But the striped tiger did no good,  
 For the striped tiger came and abducted,  
 5 Abducted Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and was gone,  
 For Ndrao-ntlai was away for nearly a year.
- The pink blossom had burst on the peach trees,  
 And on the peach trees the leaves were bright green,  
 When Ndrao-ntlai came and plucked,  
 10 Plucked a leaf from the peach tree and pressed it to his mouth,  
 Plucked a bright green leaf and blew a message,  
 "Is Hmao-chi's youngest daughter still at home?"
- Ndrao-ntlai's mother replied,  
 "Ndrao-ntlai, oh Ndrao-ntlai!  
 15 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter is not here.  
 The striped tiger abducted Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and is gone!"
- When Ndrao-ntlai came and reached his home,  
 Ndrao-ntlai sharpened his spear every night,  
 And sharpened his sword every day.
- 20 Then Ndrao-ntlai asked his mother  
 To give her old skirt to test his sword.  
 Ndrao-ntlai's mother's old skirt fell in two pieces.
- Next Ndrao-ntlai requested,  
 Ndrao-ntlai's mother's new skirt on purpose,  
 25 For Ndrao-ntlai to test his sword.  
 Ndrao-ntlai's mother's new skirt fell in three pieces.
- Then Ndrao-ntlai requested,  
 Requested his mother to kill the pig for him to eat,  
 And to cook white rice for Ndrao-ntlai to eat with it.
- 30 Ndrao-ntlai dipped up one spoonful to put in his mouth,  
 And dipped up the next, putting it into a bag.  
 He took one piece of meat to put in his mouth,  
 And took the next, putting it into the bag.
- Carrying the bag on his back,  
 35 Ndrao-ntlai followed,  
 Followed after Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.

He went and reached a place on the road.  
 Where the striped tiger had lit,  
 Lit a fire for them to warm themselves.  
 40 There was the mark where Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had been standing,  
 And a mark where the striped tiger had been sitting,  
 But the fire had gone out and was dead.

Again Ndrao-ntlai followad,  
 Followed after Hmao-chi' youngest daughter,  
 45 And reached the cliff top at Ndu-nzhi.

There too, the striped tiger had lit,  
 Lit a fire for them to warm themselves.  
 There was a mark where Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had been sitting,  
 And a mark where the striped tiger had been lying.

50 The fire had gone out and was dead,  
 Except for a tiny ember as big as a rat's eye.  
 This Ndrao-ntlai took,  
 Took the fire to have a smoke.

Sitting at the Ndu-nzhi cliff top.  
 55 Ndrao-ntlai looked all around.  
 He looked down at the dry foot of the Ndu-nzhi cliff,  
 Where Hmao-chi's youngest daughter was weaving,  
 Weaving there at the dry foot of the Ndu-nzhi cliff.

So Ndrao-ntlai cut,  
 60 Cut buds and open leaves and dropped them down to land,  
 To land upon the Miao loom of Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.

Hmao-chi's youngest daughter exclaimed,  
 "Why are the thrushes sweeping leaves,  
 Why are they sweeping buds and open leaves to land,  
 65 To land on the Miao loom of Hmao-chi's youngest daughter?"

As Ndrao-ntlai smoked he spat and it landed,  
 Landed on the Miao loom of Hmao-chi's youngest daughter.  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter looked all around and about,  
 Then glanced at the top of the Miao country cliff.  
 70 Where Ndrao-ntlai was seated, seated there at the top of the Miao country cliff.

Ndrao-ntlai asked Hmao-chi's youngest daughter,  
 "How does one get down, Hmao-chi's youngest daughter?"  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter replied,  
 "Oh, do not come, Ndrao-ntlai!"  
 75 But Ndrao-ntlai would not agree.



So Hmao-chi's youngest daughter answered.  
 "If you are going to come, go and wait,  
 Wait for tiger day when the tigers slumber,  
 And for ox day when the oxen sleep,  
 80 Then you may come Ndrao-ntlai!"

So Ndrao-ntlai returned, went back and waited,  
 Waited for tiger day when the tigers slumber,  
 And for ox day when the oxen sleep.  
 Then Ndrao-ntlai went,  
 85 Went and reached the cliff top at Ndu-nzhi.

Ndrao-ntlai looked all around and about,  
 Looked at the dry foot of the Ndu-nzhi cliff.  
 He looked and saw Hmao-chi's youngest daughter there,  
 There at the dry foot of the Ndu-nzhi cliff.

90 Then Ndrao-ntlai enquired,  
 "How does one get down, Hmao-chi's youngest daughter?"  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter showed Ndrao-ntlai the way to climb down,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai reached the foot of the Ndu-nzhi cliff.

Hmao chi's youngest daughter took,  
 95 Took Ndrao-ntlai and made him a shallow shelf to lie on,  
 Placed there in the cave where Hmao-chi's youngest daughter lived.  
 In the evening before midnight,  
 The striped tigers arrived.

The bigger of the striped tigers asked,  
 100 Asked Hmao-chi's youngest daughter,  
 "The sunshine has been bright,  
 But what creature's scent is it I can smell?"

Hmao-chi's youngest daughter replied,  
 "The sunshine has been bright,  
 105 And it made Hmao-chi's youngest daughter restless,  
 So Hmao-chi's youngest daughter took,  
 Took her skirts and aprons and spread them in the sun".

The other striped tiger arrived and asked,  
 "What creature's scent is it I can smell?"  
 110 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter replied,  
 "The sunshine has been bright,  
 And it made Hmao-chi's youngest daughter restless,  
 So Hmao-chi's youngest daughter has been gathering firewood".

The striped tigers came in and went to sleep.  
 115 In the evening, as midnight approached,  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter took a needle and pricked,  
 Pricked the striped tigers' bottoms,  
 But the striped tigers slept on quietly.

- Then Ndrao-ntlai took,  
 120 Took white pork together with,  
 With white rice and shared it,  
 Shared it for Hmao-chi's youngest daughter to eat.
- Ndrao-ntlai also drew his shining sword to strike,  
 To strike the striped tigers and make an end.  
 125 But Hmao-chi's youngest daughter would not agree.  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter took her skirt and apron and covered,  
 Covered the striped tigers.
- Ndrao-ntlai went quickly outside.  
 "Hmao-chi's youngest daughter come out quickly and look!  
 130 The pheasants have closed their wings and settled over there,  
 Just like they used to come stealing our barley.  
 A whole flock of pheasants flying to and fro have settled over there."
- Hmao-chi's youngest daughter got up to go and look,  
 But Ndrao-ntlai returned, went back and struck,  
 135 Struck the striped tigers dead.  
 Then Hmao-chi's youngest daughter returned, came back and looked.  
 "Ndrao-ntlai, oh Ndrao-ntlai,  
 Why have you done this Ndrao-ntlai?"
- Hmao-chi's youngest daughter could not remember,  
 140 Where she had come from,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai could not remember,  
 Where he had come from.
- Ndrao-ntlai and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter took,  
 Took white rice and white pork and shared it together,  
 145 Then Ndrao-ntlai brought Hmao-chi's youngest daughter and they reached,  
 Reached the valley of wild beans and edible roots.
- Hmao-chi's youngest daughter bade Ndrao-ntlai eat,  
 Eat the wild beans and the edible roots in the valley,  
 And Hmao-chi's youngest daughter bade Ndrao-ntlai take,  
 150 Take the sheltering black rock and shut her in,  
 Shut Hmao-chi's youngest daughter in,  
 That Hmao-chi's youngest daughter might sleep.
- So Ndrao-ntlai ate,  
 Ate the wild beans and the edible roots in the valley.  
 155 Then Ndrao-ntlai went and looked,  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter had decayed right away.
- While Ndrao-ntlai returned and ate,  
 Ate the wild beans and the edible roots in the valley,  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter rose to her feet,  
 160 Calling Ndrao-ntlai to go and open,  
 Open the black sheltering rock,  
 That Hmao-chi's youngest daughter might come out.

Ndrao-ntlai and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter came,  
 Came and reached a Chinese spoon maker.  
 165 Here Ndrao-ntlai became,  
 Became a spoon-salesman for the Chinese.  
 Hmao-chi's youngest daughter became,  
 Became a woman spoon-maker for the Chinese.

So Ndrao-ntlai reached,  
 170 Reached his mother and father's home.  
 Now Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father were convinced,  
 That the striped tiger had actually eaten Ndrao-ntlai,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father were performing,  
 Performing the rituals for his spirit.

175 Raising his voice Ndrao-ntlai sang with all his might,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father commented,  
 "That is exactly like Ndrao-ntlai!"  
 Raising his pipes Ndrao-ntlai played with all his might,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father commented,  
 180 "That is exactly like Ndrao-ntlai!"

Could this indeed be Ndrao-ntlai?  
 Then Ndrao-ntlai came quickly into the house,  
 And Ndrao-ntlai's mother and father were overjoyed.  
 Ndrao-ntlai's mother and Ndrao-ntlai's father sent,  
 185 Sent people to go and to bring,  
 Bring Hmao-chi's youngest daughter home.

Ndrao-ntlai's mother and Ndrao-ntlai's father provided,  
 Provided a spotted pig to be killed,  
 Killed to recall the spirits of Ndrao-ntlai and Hmao-chi's youngest daughter,  
 190 To recall their spirits and bring them home.

Thus it is ended.

**M483**  
**Ndrao-dyu and the Miao girls.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

Fantasy is not required to conform to the constraints of normal life, but the opening paragraph of this story requires a comment. It was not unusual, in a bad year, for a Miao family to be without sufficient food, but it would have been most unlikely, in those circumstances, for them to add to their difficulties by undertaking a marriage. The idea that a bride and her young bridesmaid should arrive at her husband's home and find nothing to eat is very odd, but that she should simply walk out and proceed to marry someone else is even harder to believe. Possibly, if we had the original song, we might find a more probable opening.

There is also confusion in the story as it stands. It concerns the identity of the woman who received the younger sister's appeals for help. In the messages brought by the bee, the crow and the magpie, and in the woman's response, it is clear that she was the mother of the girl, and the mother-in-law of the man whom the tiger devoured. It follows that she was also the mother of the younger sister, and not her mother-in-law as the Miao text suggests. In recording the text no correction has been made, but the error has been rectified in the English translation.

The girdle, which was worn by both men and women, was made from a full length of cloth. That would be a piece of material fifteen to eighteen inches wide and six or seven feet long. The sides were joined to make it into a tube, but not by simply folding along the middle line. A corner would be attached some nine inches along the opposite side, and the seam joining the edges would proceed from there. The resulting girdle, being on the cross of the material, did not slip when wound tightly around the body. A bride's trousseau would include several such girdles. In this story the girls unpicked the seam, and from the resultant lengths of cloth made a simple gown and trousers which they presented to Ndrao-dyu on a stick, the Miao equivalent of a clothes hanger. The trouble was that, in their hurry, their stitching was not secure, and the garments fell apart when Ndrao-dyu tried to put them on.

One of the daily tasks in a Miao home, which normally fell to the lot of the women and girls, though not exclusively so, was to carry water from a stream or a spring. This was usually done using a wooden tub carried on the back. The spring might be some distance away, but when building houses the availability of a reliable water supply was of paramount importance. The idea of a spring of water under the bed inside the house is, however, fanciful.

The implication in the second half of the story, although it does not actually say so, is that the tiger changed its form to impersonate the young man whom he had just eaten, and only the sharp eyes of the younger sister penetrated the disguise. During the night, presumably, he resumed his tiger mode while devouring the older sister. Now the next day when the relations arrived the tiger must have been away. In and around Miao homes and villages there were often small gardens for growing vegetables. These had to be fenced with stakes and interlaced brushwood to keep cattle and sheep out. It was this fencing that the visitors

moved, to make the path between so narrow that the tiger could only just get by and could not throw the water tub aside when it suddenly became too heavy for him. This happened when extra water and a stone were added surreptitiously to his load, by persons concealed behind the fencing on either side. All the preparations required for this complicated scheme to work, the repositioning of the stakes, the remaking of the fences and so forth, would have required considerable time and could not possibly have been done had the tiger been about. When he returned he no doubt resumed his human disguise in the presence of the visitors, but how he was persuaded to go and fetch water when there was a spring under the bed in the house, is not explained. We are not told either how the tiger was inveigled into setting out to fetch water, not with a clean, empty tub, but with one already so full of mud that he could hardly lift it. Moreover, the elaborate trap set to kill him could only work if, having left the house and before passing between the fences, he reverted to his tiger mode again. How did the relatives insure that this would happen? Fantasy provides no answers.

## Ndrao-dyu and the Miao girls.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao man bringing his bride home along the road. The bride and bridesmaid came and saw Ndrao-dyu working in a rice-field beside the road. So the Miao girls said to one another, "Look at that great Ndrao-dyu there, how disgusting he is!" and they laughed at him.

After this the two Miao girls went on with the bridegroom until they reached the bridegroom's house, but the bridegroom's people had no food to eat. They became so very hungry that the bride and the bridesmaid could not remain there, so they got up and came away. They arrived at the place where Ndrao-dyu was working in the rice-field. When they saw Ndrao-dyu working in the rice-field they said to him, "Where does Ndrao-dyu live, and have you any food to eat?" Ndrao-dyu said,

"I have no food to eat,  
For I work with mud and eat mud  
I work with mire and eat mire!"

The bride and bridesmaid said, "Ndrao-dyu do not tease us!" Ndrao-dyu replied, "My house is over there where the gi-zhi birds are flocking. You may go on together, but in my house there is a little mouse so when you go be careful. I also have a small clump of wormwood propping my door.

When the bride and bridesmaid arrived at Ndrao-dyu's house there was an ingot of silver propping the door, and there was a fat pig inside. They found some food to eat and then considered together and said, "Let us make trousers and a gown for Ndrao-dyu to wear. One took a girdle and made a gown, and the other made trousers from another girdle. When Ndrao-dyu came in they hung the gown and trousers on a stick for Ndrao-dyu to put on. Ndrao-dyu went and washed himself and took the trousers and gown, but as soon as he had put them on they fell to pieces. Ndrao-dyu went into the other room and took out his silk clothes, put them on, and came out. Then the two girls were too ashamed for words.

The next day Ndrao-dyu said, "Whichever one of you finds my water supply, that one shall be my wife". Now the younger sister was industrious and went out in search of water. Her older sister was lazy and remained in the house. The younger sister searched in vain, and had to dip water from the footprints of cows in the road and carry that home. The elder sister saw the chicken go and drink under Ndrao-dyu's bed, so the elder sister went and dipped water and prepared food in readiness for the other two. Thus the older sister became Ndrao-dyu's wife.

After a considerable time Ndrao-dyu was going in search of game for the younger sister to eat, so that he might send her away. The younger sister said to Ndrao-dyu, "Brother-in-law, when you are on your way, should you shoot anything on the higher side of the road, then go and fetch it, but if you shoot anything on the lower side of the road, then you won't go and fetch it, will you?" Ndrao-dyu shot a deer on the lower side of the road, and he went to fetch it, but a tiger was there and he caught Ndrao-dyu and ate him. The tiger took the deer and carried it back. When the younger sister saw him she said, "That is not our brother-in-law". The tiger arrived with his load. He cut off one piece and put it in the pot and cut off the next

piece and put it in his mouth. The younger sister said, "Our brother-in-law does not do that!" The tiger said, "I forgot, little bridesmaid". When night came, the tiger took her sister and ate her. Her sister's child began to cry. The tiger slapped his own thigh and said, "Mother, get up and nurse the baby!" The younger sister heard the tiger crunching her sister's bones, so she asked, "Brother-in-law, what is the dog crunching?" The tiger said, "The dog is crunching some hemp stalks". Then she heard the tiger drinking her sister's blood, so she asked, "Brother-in-law, what is the dog drinking?" The tiger replied, "The dog is drinking his vegetable water".

By now the younger sister was certain that the tiger had eaten her brother-in-law and her sister, so she got the bee to go with a message to tell her relatives. The bee flew off and reached her mother who was weaving at the time. The bee went and said,

"Vyu, vyu, vyu,  
The tiger has eaten your maid and her man,  
And only the little bridesmaid is left!"

But the mother said,

"My maid and her man are quite well.  
With my thread I will tie you around  
Until into sections you are all split up!"

The younger sister then got the crow to take a message and say,

"A, a, a,  
The tiger has eaten your maid and her man,  
And only the little bridesmaid is left!"

The mother was making dye at the time, and she said,

"My maid and her man are both well.  
A plague on your mouth! I will take you  
And plunge in this dye tub of mine!"

The younger sister then got the magpie to go with the message. The magpie reached the mother and father and called

"Zha, zha, zha  
The tiger has eaten your maid and her man,  
And only the little bridesmaid is left!"

The mother said,

"To test that you are telling the truth,  
Into the dye tub I'll plunge you, and if  
You emerge from it pied, we shall know!"

So mother took the magpie and dipped him in the dye and he came out pied. Then the mother told the brothers and uncles.

The brothers and uncles, intending to kill the tiger, arrived where the younger sister

was, and made all their preparations. They were going to get the tiger to carry water, but first they fixed the garden fences so there was only just room for the tiger to pass, When this was completed they got the tiger to go for water, giving him a great tub full of mud to carry. Then they threw in a basin of water and a stone. In this way, with the extra water and the stone, the tiger was crushed and died. With the tiger dead the relatives, the brothers and uncles, then brought the younger sister away.

Now the waist of the bee, the blackness of the crow and the pied plumage of the magpie trace their origin from here.



**M484**

## **The orphan who went ploughing.**

***Told by Yang Xiu-gong.***

### Introduction.

This is another story of a young woman being abducted by a tiger, but we are not told whether she was enticed away or whether she had been kidnapped. Quite clearly she was not an ordinary girl, for throughout the story she is called “ngao-kha” which means a bride, and she was carrying a dowry of gold and silver with her.

The leggings mentioned in the narrative were pieces of thick felt wide enough to reach from the ankle to just below the knee, and long enough to wrap once around the leg with a small overlap. They were held in place with a length of cord. They corresponded to the leg bands worn by the women, and the same word “a ntrao” was used for both.

It is possible that the passage about the elder brother being eaten by the tiger as he went to collect the deer he had shot, does not really belong to this story. It is identical with the fate of Ndrao-dyu in the previous tale, and it is not to be found in the alternative account (M485).

The money, which the bride was carrying, was contained in the girdle around her waist. To get it out, it would be necessary to hold the girdle up by one end so that the money would drop out into the basket, helped with a little shaking.

## The orphan who went ploughing.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. Mother and father were both dead, leaving two brothers. The elder had a wife, but the younger had not yet married. His sister-in-law and elder brother did not treat the younger brother at all well. They gave him buckwheat husks to eat, and made him go out ploughing every day.

One day as he ploughed, on reaching the edge where he had to turn the ox, the orphan said,

“The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry”.

At the foot of the cliff on the far side of the valley a bride sang in reply to him,

“O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty”.

The orphan loosed the ox and went home. His brother said, “How far have you got with your ploughing?” He replied, “I have ploughed to the foot of the black rock, but my head was so cold that I loosed the ox”. So his brother gave him a hat to wear.

The following day he went out ploughing again. Having ploughed to the edge where he had to turn the ox, he said again,

“The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry”.

Again the bride sang in reply to him,

“O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty”.

The orphan loosed the ox and came home. His brother said, “How far have you reached with your ploughing?” He replied, “I have ploughed to the foot of the black rock, but my body was so cold that I loosed the ox”. So his brother went and bought him a gown to wear.

Again the third day he went ploughing. He ploughed to the edge where the ox was turned, and did as he had done before. The bride again sang in reply to him, so he loosed the ox and came home. When his brother enquired he said, “My legs were so cold that I loosed the ox”. So his brother went and bought him a pair of leggings to wear.

Again the fourth day, this day too he went out ploughing. He ploughed to the edge where the ox was turned, and did exactly as he had done before. The bride again sang in reply to him, so again he loosed the ox and returned home. When his brother enquired he said, "My feet were smarting so, that I loosed the ox". His brother bought a pair of sandals for him to wear.

The day which was the fifth day, he went ploughing again, and when he reached the edge where the ox had to be turned he said,

"The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry".

Again the bride sang in reply to him,

"O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty".

The orphan loosed the ox and came home and said to his brother, "Brother, I have seen a bride over on the other side at the foot of the cliff, who sings in reply to me. Let us go and investigate". His brother said, "I will go with you and see". Then he said, "How did you come to see her?" He replied, "It was as I was ploughing and as I turned the ox that she sang in reply to me". His brother harnessed the ox and ploughed out to the edge, turned the ox and came back, but saw no bride. His brother said, "How was it that I saw no one?" The orphan said, "Let me plough". The orphan ploughed to the edge, turned the ox and said,

"The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry".

The bride sang,

"O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty".

His brother said, "Let us get ready, and go and fetch her for you". The orphan and his brother went away and reached the valley where they had to go. There was a deer there and his brother shot it with his crossbow. As he went to pick it up there was a tiger, which came out, caught and ate him. So the orphan went on alone and reached the place where the bride was. He waited until the tiger came and killed it. Then bringing the bride away he reached home. This day the bride said, "The gold and silver money is chafing me badly". So the orphan brought a large flat basket into which to shake it, but it filled two baskets. Henceforward the orphan and the bride became man and wife.

**M485**  
**The orphan marries the bride.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

In Yang Xiu-gong's manuscript this form of the orphan and the bride story did not follow immediately after the earlier account. He explained simply that he knew this story with two different endings. Probably having written M484, he showed it to a friend who suggested that he had not got it quite right. He therefore wrote it again, summarising the rather tedious first section and introducing a new character in the person of the orphan's brother-in-law. The shooting of the deer, somewhat pointless in the first telling, now falls into its proper place as the nemesis due to the hard-hearted sister-in-law. However her demise raises further questions. The orphan's brother, clearly a successful farmer, could not simply go away and abandon his house, his land and his livestock. Moreover, a Miao family was a unit in which the wife had essential duties to perform. The proper functioning of the farm depended as much on her as on her husband. Without his wife how did the elder brother manage? Did the orphan bring back his new bride to take over the responsibilities of the home? We are not told.

## The orphan marries the bride.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was an orphan. His mother and father caught typhoid fever and died. His sisters were married so he went to live with his sister-in-law and elder brother. His brother was kind hearted, but his sister-in-law did not like him at all. She made him wear clothes which were all rags and tatters and gave him buckwheat and husks to eat.

One day as he went out ploughing, he had ploughed to the edge where the ox had to be turned, the orphan sang,

“The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry”.

There was a bride at the foot of the cliff on the further side, who sang in reply,

“O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty”.

When the orphan heard it he said, “I should like to go and fetch the bride, but with no clothes to wear I am ashamed”. So he loosed the ox and went home. He said to his brother, “My body and my head are so very cold I cannot plough, and my legs and feet are stinging so I cannot walk”. His brother went and found a gown for him to wear and a hat to put on. Then he gave him a pair of leggings and sandals to wear. His brother said to him, “Please do not tell your sister-in-law that I have given you these things”.

The orphan having got sufficient of everything from his brother, went and said to his brother-in-law, “Brother-in-law, I have seen that there is a Miao girl yonder at the foot of the cliff over there. Every day she comes and sings to me”. His brother-in-law said, “In that case let us go and see and bring her back for you”. The two of them went and reached the plot of land where the orphan had been ploughing. The orphan’s brother-in-law said, “What were you doing when the bride sang in reply to you?” The orphan said, “It is when I was ploughing and turned the ox, that the bride sang in reply to me”. The orphan’s brother-in-law harnessed the ox and began to plough. He turned the ox and came back, but there was no one who sang. He said, “There is no one singing. You are joking with me!” The orphan said, “Let me plough”. The orphan began to plough and ploughed to the other side. As he turned the ox he said, “Around you go!”

“The ox can eat dry grass as relish with fresh grass,  
But the orphan must eat buckwheat and husks,  
Till his heart is all parched up and dry”.

The bride yonder at the foot of the cliff replied to the orphan and sang,

“O orphan!  
Orphan fetch the shining sword and come,  
Kill the striped tiger on the far side,  
Then bring the maid, the young woman away,  
And rice you shall eat in plenty”.

When the orphan’s brother-in-law heard it he said to the orphan, “Loose the ox. Let us go and prepare and then go and bring her back for you”.

The orphan and his brother-in-law departed. For three days and nights they were grinding their swords, and got the elder sister to prepare food. When the swords were properly ground and the food was ready, the orphan and his brother-in-law left, and reached the cliff where the Miao girl and the tiger were. It was not yet night, so the tiger had not come. The tiger was sitting on a ledge on the opposite side where he could be seen. The orphan’s brother-in-law stretched his crossbow. He took one shot and hit the tiger, which came rolling down. The bride said, “Thank you my brothers for coming and rescuing me. Here I could not go but dared not stay. See now, I see my brothers, my brothers indeed!” The orphan and his brother-in-law brought the bride away for the orphan. The Miao girl carried silver and gold and bought everything they needed.

Now the orphan and his brother-in-law had become rich men. They bought a horse each and rode to the orphan’s brother’s place. When they arrived there, his sister-in-law and brother did not recognise them at all. They said, “We two are on business and have reached you here, but now it is evening, and we would like to find a place to sleep here with you”. His sister-in-law said to them, “We have no place to sleep, our house is so very narrow that however you squeeze in, there will still be no room for you to sleep”. The orphan’s brother-in-law said, “Whether it is sufficient or not, we shall sleep here!” The orphan’s brother said, “In that case, we have a little house over there, go and have a look. If you can manage to stay there, then stay”. So the orphan and his brother-in-law went and stayed in the little house. They bought from the orphan’s brother all kinds of food which they prepared for eating, then they invited the orphan’s brother to come and eat with them.

The next day the orphan and his brother-in-law prepared food, ate it and left. When they had gone half way the orphan said, “I still want to return and fetch my brother. You stay here and wait for me”. The orphan’s brother-in-law said, “Very well, you go, and come back quickly”. The orphan returned and said to his sister-in-law, “Now I am going to take my brother along, you turn into a wild animal and go and eat grass!” The orphan’s sister-in-law turned into a doe. The orphan lifted his brother on to the horse’s back and left. When they reached the place where his brother-in-law was, they saw a doe on the edge of the wood. The orphan’s brother-in-law took one shot and hit the doe. The three of them went and picked it up to look at, and the orphan’s brother saw that on the doe’s fore foot there was a thimble-ring which he knew belonged to his wife. So they took the doe and buried it and went on their way.

## Grandfather tiger finds a wife for his grandson.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

### Introduction.

Yang Xiu-gong was not able to say exactly in what sense the orphan lad was the tiger's grandson, beyond affirming that he was the tiger's "real" grandson. In Miao society, however, an adopted child would be described as a "real" son, just as a natural child would be, so that the relationship in the story remains open to speculation, with a number of possibilities. The tiger might merely have adopted the boy, enticing him away from his family without permission, as he later took the girl away by force. It could be that the tiger was indeed the boy's natural grandfather, who, for some reason, had turned into a tiger. There are many examples of such transformations in the songs and stories, but they are normally only temporary and the person usually changes back to human form fairly soon. That does not happen in this story. Possibly the boy's father was the child of a union between the tiger and a woman whom the tiger had abducted to be his consort. However, this would require the tiger to be a good bit older than he apparently was, and in the other example we have of such a union, the offspring were tigers not humans. (See M481) Could the tiger have been a reincarnation of the boy's dead grandfather? Perhaps, but transmigration does not figure in any of the songs, and it is not found in any of the accounts which deal with the worship of the ancestors. Of all the possibilities, the first, adoption, seems the most likely.

In the course of the negotiations which took place to fix a marriage settlement, or the reparation to be paid in the case of divorce, the middlemen used conventional code words and avoided actually naming cattle, sheep, goats, etc. The reference to the dog in this story as "a little white wine" is a further example of this kind of circumlocution.

The girl whom the tiger seized was already married, and Hmao-nji-ve was her husband's home. When she turned up again in her own home, married to someone else, the family from Hmao-nji-ve came, ostensibly to take her back, but actually to claim repayment of the marriage settlement together with reparation for the broken marriage. In the case of a divorce such matters would be talked over by the middlemen and an agreement reached. This would be ratified by the exchange of ploughshares by the parties concerned. This explains why, in this story, the signal to the tiger that there was trouble over the previous marriage, was a ploughshare hoisted to the gable of the house.

## Grandfather tiger finds a wife for his grandson.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was an orphan boy who lived with his sister-in-law and elder brother. Each day his sister-in-law and elder brother gave him buckwheat to eat, and every day made him go out digging. One day while he was digging, a tiger roared, "A-nbeu, a-nbeu!" The orphan lad said, "Mother! Father! I am afraid of that tiger!" Grandfather tiger said, "You need not be afraid, for I am your grandfather". Grandfather tiger took the orphan lad and carried him off to the foot of a great cliff on Gable Mountain. Every day he went and took the food of the traders and brought it back for his grandson to eat.

After a long time grandfather tiger said to his grandson, "To do this every day is not good. Now you tie a piece of tinder moss to my tail and I will go and fetch fire, so that you can prepare food to eat". His grandson tied a piece of tinder moss to his tail and he went to the place where people were living and roared two or three times. When everybody had gone, he took his tail with the tinder moss, put it in the fire until it was alight, then he brought it back to his grandson.

In time his grandson grew up. He said that he was going to take him to choose a wife at Hmao-nji-ve. He took his grandson and reached Hmao-nji-ve and brought him to the top of the village. He roared once and the girls all came out to see. Grandfather tiger asked the grandson, "Any good?" His grandson said, "No good!" He then said to his grandson, "Down at the bottom of the village is a good one, but she is already married.". The two of them came to the bottom of the village. Grandfather tiger roared again, and the girls came out to see. Grandfather tiger again asked his grandson, "Any good?" His grandson replied, "yes, all right, but you said she was already married". Grandfather tiger said, "Do not worry, we will take her along". So grandfather tiger took the girl and returned to Gable Mountain. When they arrived, the girl was scarcely breathing but the orphan kindled a fire to warm her so that presently she opened her eyes and looked at him. The girl said, "Are you human or supernatural?" The orphan replied, "I am human but my grandfather is supernatural!" While they stayed there their grandfather found food for them to eat, but when they had the food they could not prepare it. Their grandfather said, "If you cannot prepare it, I will prepare it for you, but when I prepare it, it will be unpleasant to look at". They replied, "Since we cannot prepare it, if you do it, it will be all right".

They lived like this for a long time, but day by day grandfather tiger was growing older. Grandfather tiger said to the couple, "Now I have grown old, I will take you two and find the house of your mother-in-law and father-in-law. Grandfather tiger helped his grandchildren to gather up everything for him to carry. The couple went by road while grandfather tiger kept to the undergrowth. Then grandfather said, "While you are travelling, if anyone molests you, you call me, won't you". As they were travelling some people did molest them, so they called to their grandfather who roared twice, and the people all ran away.

The day that they reached the home of their mother and father-in-law they were "escorting the spirits", so there were many people there. Their mother and father-in-law said, "Our place is too small for you to sleep here tonight". The couple said, "Small or not, we shall sleep here!" Their mother and father-in-law had no option but to say, "We have a small lean-to, you may go and stay there".



The pair had removed with a lot of things. Their mother and father-in-law enquired, “Your things are so many, who helped you bring them?” They replied, our grandfather helped us bring them”. Their mother and father-in-law said, “Why did you not bring your grandfather in to stay?” They said, “It would not be suitable for you to see our grandfather”. “What would your grandfather like to eat?” they asked. The couple replied, “Our grandfather only wants a little white wine”. (White wine means dog). So their mother and father-in-law gave them a dog for them to give to grandfather tiger to eat.

Later the wife said to her younger sister, “Up there, where I used to sleep I had a mouth harp, is it still there?” When she mentioned this, their mother and father-in-law knew that she was their daughter, and presently they brought their grandfather into the house.

When their grandfather was going to leave he said, “In future, if any matter arises, take a ploughshare, hang it up on the gable of the house, and take an iron pan and beat it until it rings”. Now not long afterwards, the people from whom grandfather tiger had seized the bride, came seeking her. The family did as grandfather tiger had taught them to do, and from every side came the roaring of tigers. Each one of those people who had come said, “Have it your way, grandfather tiger, we have nothing more to say”.

