

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Miao Social Life

Hua Miao spirit worship and the songs of spirit worship

Songs M351 to M367

Introduction and Translation

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M351
Hua Miao spirit worship.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji

Introduction.

Wang Ming-ji's manuscript comprises some thirty pages of writing. For the purpose of the present transcription and translation it has been divided up, taking a few paragraphs at a time. This applies particularly to Section II, the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors.

The document begins with a list of the spirits worshipped. We are told that numbers ten and eleven did not really count as spirit worship. Spirits were, nevertheless, involved and rituals performed under the direction of the shaman-healer, so that it is not quite clear why they should not be included, and, in fact, Wang Ming-ji gives a full description of the procedures followed just as he did with all the rest.

M351
Hua Miao spirit worship.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji

(“Dlang” means “worship”. The Chinese word is “Zong jiao”.)

There were nine kinds of spirits worshipped by the Miao.

- 1 The Spirit Zu-gi-za. He was king of the spirits, and was also called Yeu-su-mu.
- 2 The spirits bi-jio-a-su. These were the shaman-healer’s spirits.
- 3 Bi-nzao. This was a kind of sky-power.
- 4 Water ki-zo. This was a water spirit.
- 5 A-she. This was a kind of sky power.
- 6 Zi-qiao-bao. This was a kind of vapour spirit.
- 7 Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu. This was a kind-hearted spirit.
- 8 Door a-nzhang. This was the spirit of the door.
- 9 The ti-shao-ma. This was a livestock spirit.
- 10 Sowing souls. This did not count as spirit worship.
- 11 Ndao-shu. This was when a daughter had polluted the house. It did not count as spirit worship.

Matters concerning spirit worship are explained below.

Hua Miao spirit worship.**1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 1.*****Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.*****Introduction.**

The significance of the name The Spirit Zu-gi-za is nowhere explained. Za means “worship”, and the word “zu” is joined to it by the conjunction “gi” to form an alliterative phrase which might mean “the Spirit to be worshipped”. The alternative title, that by which he had to be addressed, Yeu-su-mu, means “Grandfather ancestor”. It is not made clear exactly who he was, beyond saying that he was above all other spirits, and was present everywhere. In addressing him, people called themselves his “children”. Yet, he is clearly distinguished from “grandmother and grandfather”, that is the immediate ancestors of the family, whose spirits were thought of as still living in their “fir-wood houses”, their coffins in the graves. From these they could be called to attend the feasting, to receive their offerings at the time of sacrifice, and, afterwards, be escorted back again.

Nevertheless the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors were closely associated. Although he might be worshipped without sacrifice being offered to the ancestors, they could only be worshipped after sacrifice had first been made to him. Moreover, the incantations used for both seem to have been identical. Thus it would appear that, though the spirits of the immediate forebears were thought of as remaining in the graves, as the years went by and new generations arose, the location of the graves could be forgotten, particularly when the family removed to some distant place, and in any case the Miao could not afford headstones to serve as reminders. In these circumstances the ancestors concerned seem to have been taken up into the Great Spirit, a kind of corporate ancestor of the race, the Spirit Zu-gi-za, who, being everywhere, could be worshipped in any place where the family happened to be living. This enabled a semi-migrant people to maintain their ancestral worship without constant recourse to family tombs.

In his introductory paragraph Wang Ming-ji, in underlining the supremacy of the Spirit Zu-gi-za, has slipped into making some general statements which are not only unsubstantiated by subsequent descriptions of the actual rituals, but are, in fact, contradicted by them. Thus there is no evidence that either the ancestors or the shaman-healer were ever requested to intercede with the Spirit Zu-gi-za on behalf of the people. In case of sickness the shaman-healer was indeed called to identify the source, and he might decide that this spirit was responsible, and direct that a sacrifice was required. However, at this point his responsibilities ceased, for the actual worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za had to be carried out by the zu-mu, a member of the family duly authorised and trained, and by nobody else. He was the person who alone knew the incantations and could offer prayers acceptably on the people's behalf.

The Miao used the same sequence of names for the months and days as did the Chinese.

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

The cycle of days ran independently of the cycle of months.

Hua Miao spirit worship.**1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 1.***Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.*

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

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

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

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

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

Thus if they were going to kill a large pig in sacrifice, it would be because in this family, mother, father, son or daughter, whoever it might have been, was sick. They would go and

call the shaman-healer to investigate. If the shaman-healer said, “This visitation is a visitation of the Great Spirit”, they would know that they must kill a large pig to worship the Spirit Zu-gi-za. So it was that they would quickly devote a large pig for the Spirit Zu-gi-za, wait for the Ox, Tiger or Rabbit month, whichever month it might be, and look to the day, whether Tiger-day, Ox-day or Horse-day, whichever day it might be. Having looked for the right time and season, they had to call the brothers to come and kill the large pig to worship the Spirit Zu-gi-za. The time for the sacrifice had to be a high day. The ritual of wolf-catching had to be carried out on a Tiger-day. (Other days, such as an Ox-day or a Horse-day were all right as well.) These days counted as high days.

Hua Miao spirit worship

1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 2.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

This passage illustrates the close connection between the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. The shaman-healer's initial pronouncement that "a spirit had arrived" was ambiguous and the family had to press for further information as to which spirit was responsible for the sickness. The shaman-healer's second response indicated that it was in fact the ancestors who were causing trouble this time. However, they could not be propitiated without an offering to the Spirit Zu-gi-za, so the first step was to devote a large pig to him.

Presumably, had the patient a clearer recollection of what he had done on the day when he was taken ill, the sickness might have been attributed to some other local spirit encountered in the course of his travels.

"Thirteen years" is an example of the use of a kind of ritual code language. The shaman-healer might say "next year" quite plainly, but the family avoided speaking directly, saying rather "in thirteen years time", and this was repeated in the incantation which followed and was spoken by the zu-mu, who, of course, was also a member of the family. Though Wang Ming-ji's note gives the meaning of the expression, no reason is offered for its use.

The large flat basket, was one which was normally used for storing grain. It was made from bamboo and would have been seven feet or more in diameter and some six or eight inches deep. The idea seems to have been that it was safer to entertain the spirits in this little "pretend" house than actually to bring them indoors.

In the context of the life of the ordinary Miao people, under-nourished, scantily clothed and badly housed, colds and coughs were very often the forerunners of pneumonia, pleurisy and even tuberculosis, though the latter was less common than among the Chinese in the crowded cities. The common cold was therefore to be feared as a harbinger of death. This explains why it figures in the incantation for protection offered to the ancestors.

Hua Miao spirit worship**1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 2.***Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.*

Calling the shaman-healer in a case of sickness. When a member of a family became sick, they called the shaman-healer. The shaman-healer would enquire, “Which day did this person become sick? In which direction did he travel that day? What places did he reach?” If the patient could not recall which direction he went that day or what places he reached, the shaman-healer would say, “Oh, it is because a spirit has arrived!” Then the family would say, “Old man, you look carefully for us!” and the shaman-healer would reply, “Grandmother’s and grandfather’s house is leaking!” The head of the house would say, “Must it be a full thirteen years?” (“A full thirteen years” means one year only.) The shaman-healer would answer, “It must be within the next full year”. (So the family, whether it were children or parents, sons or daughters, old or young, whoever it was who was sick, had to devote a large pig and quickly prepare for the time when it would be killed to worship the Spirit Zu-gi-za.)

Words chanted by the zu-mu when worshipping the spirits.

Yeu-su-mu look after the children
 Plant them firmly as trees,
 Plant them firmly as rocks,
 Set them firmly as cliffs.

5 If Yi or Chinese swords
 Threaten tumult from the south,
 Then parry them on the south,
 Or threaten tumult from the north,
 Then parry them on the north.

10 If they threaten tumult from the east or from the west,
 Then parry them on the east or on the west.
 In full thirteen years we will bring you food and drink.

When the zu-mu has finished chanting, the head of the house himself would seek his own time, in the year of the sickness, in Ox, Tiger or Rabbit month, on Ox, Tiger or Rabbit day to offer livestock to the ancestors.

Offering livestock to the ancestors. During the day rituals for Yeu-su-mu were performed. In the evening livestock was offered to the ancestors. First they drove the ancestors to the place where they had to come, (“drove” meant that they called, and caused the souls to come) in order that they might receive the livestock to be offered in worship. The words that were chanted,

May the children live to fill the land and fill the place!
 May the children’s food fill the baskets to overflowing!
 Come take your wine to drink,
 One cup one bowl.

(At this point a large, flat basket was held overhead like a little house.)

5 Do not be critical, do not be sullen,
 From colds and coughs,
 Grandmother, Grandfather protect them.

(At this point the zu-mu said,)

 Let the slashing knife slash the chicken,
 Let the slashing knife slash the pig!

(That meant to kill the chicken and the pig for the ancestors. A cup of wine was “i-zu-i-za”.
Two cups of wine were “a-zu-a-za”. Three cups of wine were “zi-zu-zi-za”.)

The old folk had a saying,

 By obeying the shaman-healer you cannot live,
 By obeying the zu-mu, though you do nothing, yet you will eat.

Hua Miao spirit worship.**1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 3.***Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.***Introduction.**

With the somewhat cynical proverb contrasting the relative merits of the advice given by the shaman-healer and the zu-mu, set out in M353, Wang Ming-ji's account of the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors apparently closed. However, three and a half pages further on, it was reopened with further descriptions, explanations and incantations which must now be considered .

The rituals known as zi were very seldom performed because they concerned only the extreme situation in which the whole of the extended family was in danger of dying out, and also because they were very costly. The climax of zi was reached in the sacrifice of the “niu lao”. Translated literally this means “old bull/cow/ox”, but in this context “old” means best, not ancient or decrepit. The creature was, in fact, the one trained for ploughing, and was probably the family's most valuable asset. Without it, all the work on the land would have to be done manually, in which case it might not be possible to grow enough to feed everybody. To offer the “niu-lao” was a sacrifice indeed. However that was not all. A large pig had to be offered first to the Spirit Zu-gi-za. After that there were offerings to the ancestors, one animal for each of the surviving brothers, then finally the ploughing ox was sacrificed. Many guests came, and all had to be lavishly entertained, so that large quantities of grain and of wine, made from grain, were also consumed. A comparatively wealthy family could be reduced to poverty in a few short days by undertaking the zi rituals.

The Miao placed their dead in simple boxes and buried them in shallow graves with mounds of earth on top. When the wood of the coffins rotted, the graves would collapse with holes appearing in the mounds. Also, unprotected burials on the hill sides were often subject to the attention of wolves, and it was not unusual to see a new burial which had been dug out by them. Sometimes the people would fill in the holes, but frequently fear prevented them from doing anything. Might not the wolves themselves be the agents of some powerful spirit? So the pig was sacrificed to do what the people were afraid to undertake.

In the translation of the incantation the word “tomb” has been used merely as another word for “grave” since there are two words in the Miao. It does not signify a different or more elaborate burial. Also in the incantation the use of the word “ndlai” which means “tongue”, is a little obscure. Probably it is a ritual code word used instead of the word “sword”. In the incantation in an earlier paragraph in M353, where the same expression is found, the word is “sword”.

In the ancestral worship the first sacrifice had always to be offered to the Spirit Zu-gi-za. After that offerings to the ancestors might be made. To ascertain if indeed this was necessary, the zu-mu used divining sticks and the appropriate incantation. Wang Jian-guo, son of Wang Ming-ji, supplied the following explanation. “Two pieces of bamboo about as thick as your finger and some seven inches long, were required. One piece, uncut, was laid on the ground. The other piece was cut down the middle. The two pieces so formed were held face to face and dropped from no great height, about nine inches, on to the uncut stick.

A positive answer was given by the cut bamboo falling, one piece face up one piece face down. If they fell both face up or both face down, the answer was ‘no’.

The forms of words to be used in sacrificing to the ancestors were apparently identical to those used in the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za. When the incantations had been completed the meat of the sacrifice was consumed in a ceremonial meal. Wang Jian-guo’s explanation of this practice was that, though the family ate the animals which had been slaughtered, the spirits of the creatures had been released for the ancestors to take back to their abode.

In the translation of the incantations the word “escort” refers to the common practice of travelling out a little distance with a departing guest to see him safely on his way.

At the zi sacrifice, after the zu-mu had recited the prayers which were always used at the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors, there followed two special incantations. In the first the ancestors were assured of the great change in their circumstances that the zi would bring about. Before they had been so poverty stricken and ashamed that they hid themselves under the bed and in the cattle pen, but now, they were the proud possessors of “the great horned one”, a creature capable of ploughing both earth and sky. The second incantation was a prayer that the people and their flocks and herds might multiply greatly.

At the end of a festival Miao people would travel home in their ordinary, every-day clothes, carrying their best gowns and skirts, which had been worn during the festival, in bundles on their backs. The ritual incantations assumed that the spirits of the ancestors would do the same.

Hua Miao spirit worship.**1. The Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors. 3.*****Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.***

The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za was divided into three stages.

1. The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za.
2. The offering of livestock to the ancestors.
3. Zi.

Explanation. The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za, the offering of livestock to the ancestors and zi were all on account of people being sick and afraid of dying, therefore they worshipped. If, having performed the rituals and the worship, death did occur, then it was said that the rituals had been wrongly performed and that was why death had come. However, zi was concerned with the fear that the family, from the greatest to the least, all might be “swept away”. (“Swept away” meant to die off until no seed remained.) Then they worshipped the Spirit Zu-gi-za, but they would worship with the ox.

One. Explanation of the days for the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za.

- 1 On Pig-day those officiating at the rites gathered
- 2 On Rat-day the zu-mu and the brothers gathered.
- 3 On Ox-day, at the time of the morning meal, the pig was killed for the worship of Yeu-su-mu, and in the evening livestock was offered to the ancestors.
- 4 On Tiger-day “ox falls”.
- 5 On Rabbit-day guests departed.

Further explanation. The day when the zu-mu and the brothers arrive was called “guests arrive”. (“guests arrive” meant that the guests gathered.) On Ox-day they “washed the ancestors feet”. On Tiger-day the “ox fell”. (That is they killed the ploughing ox.) On Rabbit-day the “guests departed”. (“Departed” meant they dispersed.)

Two. Offering livestock to the ancestors. See what has been written above.

Three. Zi. When it was feared that the family might die out then the rites called zi were performed.

Before any worship was performed, when a person was sick they would go and call the shaman-healer to see him. The shaman-healer might say,

1. “The jet-black one is required”. (The jet-black one was the great pig.)
2. Or, “Something is required for the place of arriving”. (The place of arriving was the door.)
3. Or, perhaps the ancestors felt themselves slighted, well then, “The ancestors want something to eat and drink, hence the sickness”.
4. “The ancestors’ ox-rope is tangled”. (Tangled means the line would die out.)

Now explanations for these four sub-sections.

1 **Performing the ritual of the "jet-black one".** (That is killing the large pig.)
Explanation. The shaman-healer having been called, and having concluded that the ancestors required the "jet-black one", and the sickness being better, then they performed the rituals. When they wanted to kill and eat the pig they would call the zu-mu to come. "Gather on Pig-day, worship on Ox-day". As they were about to worship they would lead the pig out of doors, and the zu-mu would chant, (at the same time the zu-mu's assistant would pour wine for the ancestors.

A-yeu-su-mu be pleased,
Arise, turn back your countenance,
Turn your face,
Smiling come and take from your children.
 One cup, one bowl,
 Two cups, two bowls,
 Three cups, three bowls,
Of this wine to drink, and
Smiling stretch out your hand,
To take and hold your livestock, your pig.

Then he would chant,

When we had food to eat, we did not care to eat,
But gave it to the large pig to eat.
When we had water to drink, we did not care to drink,
But gave it to the large pig to drink.

If there are deep holes in the tombs to be filled,
Let the large pig be struck down to block them.
If there are deep holes in the graves to be covered,
Let the large pig be struck down to stop them.

When, in the south, Chinese tongues draw near,
Let the pig be struck down to block them.
When, in the north Yi tongues grow long,
Let the pig be struck down to stop them.

When the children go out of doors,
From colds and coughs,
Let the pig be struck down to protect them.

When the children go farming,
If they work the flat land,
May good crops fill the flat land.
If they work the level land,
May good crops fill the level land.

If the children are working the high ground,
May the good low ground come jumping,
Jumping to the children's high ground.
If the children are working the low ground,
May the good high ground come jumping,

Jumping to the children's low ground.
So shall the fertile land and place,
Come to the midst of the children's land,
And the children will gather crops and harvest,
To fill the houses and fill the place.

May the children's women-folk live to fill the houses,
May their men-folk live to fill the place.
May fine offspring fill the terraces of the fields,
With cattle and pigs like water flowing.

Let the Nji-vang-bi-lao strike down,
Strike down the large pig to the ground!

When he had finished speaking, they would take the large pig and kill it. (Nji-vang-bi-lao. A stick of rhus, from which the skin had been scraped to make it white, was used to kill the large pig when worshipping the spirits. It was called "nji-vang-bi-lao".)

2 See section 8. (Door a-nzhang)

3 Offering livestock to the ancestors. (See also above) The zu-mu would cut three pieces of bamboo to make divining sticks, for the zu-mu to divine whether to offer pigs and chicken. (The words chanted were the same as in 1 above.)

Divining sticks. He split the bamboo with a knife and spoke the ritual words.

This year is a famine season, a famine year,
The blossom opened but did not set,
The fruit formed but did not mature,
A famine season and the crops have not ripened,
A famine year and the fruit has failed.

If the ancestors are wanting to eat and to drink, then
One strip face down and one strip face up.

Whose father are you,
So full of impatience for a live pig?
Whose mother are you,
So full of impatience for a live chicken?

The words with which to escort the spirits. The zu-mu would escort them saying,

Let grandmother take grandmother's chicken, carrying it in her arms,
And take her pig, leading it with her hand.
Let her draw them to her place of sitting, her place of sleeping,
Her fir-wood house of jointed planks.

Let grandfather take his pig, leading it with his arm,
And take his chicken holding it within his hand.
Let him draw them to his place of sitting, his place of sleeping,
His fir-wood house of planks of pine.

(“Fir-wood house” was a name for the coffin.)

4 Zi, which was the striking down of the old ox.

(The incantation for the offering of the ox was the same as the incantation for the offering of a pig.) Then there were the Miao words of offering that the person who “bound the spirits”, that is the zu-mu, spoke.

Grandmother had so little that she crept under the bed,
But grandmother has received the “great horned one” to plough the earth, Great, and
fat as a bear!

Grandfather had so little that he crept through a gap in the partition,
But grandfather has received the “trained horned one” to plough the sky, Trained,
and fat as a tiger!

The zu-mu also chanted,

Whether they remain within,
Whether they travel without, enfold them.
Let their offspring spread abroad,
With herds of cattle grazing back and forth in an unbroken stream.
It is ready! It is ready!

Let their flocks of sheep and goats
Be like the roebuck,
Eating leaves and bamboo shoots,
Aye! Going yonder in unbroken stream.
It is ready! It is ready!

Let their fine cattle and horses
Be like the deer,
Coming from the forest in unbroken stream.
It is ready! It is ready!

The zu-mu then escorted the spirits and said,

Take, O ancestral spirits,
The skirts and gowns you wore at the festival,
And depart below.

At this time they would beat the drum and make it sound, “Ndyu - - - “ like this.

M355
Hua Miao spirit worship.
2. The spirits bi-jio-a-su.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

In his list of Miao spirits (M371), Yang Yung-xin said that the spirits bi-jio-a-su were kin to the ki-zo that lived in caves, and that they assumed human form, when they were harmless, or the form of animals, when they could cause sickness. However, Yang Yung-xin offered no suggestion as to how such sickness might be treated, and, in fact, did not return to the subject again.

Wang Ming-ji's account of these spirits is quite different. It comes between the two halves of his treatment of the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the ancestors, and, indeed, he sought to make a connection with what went before, by saying that the bi-jio-a-su were privy to the thoughts of the Great Spirit and could pacify him. The expression used means "to comfort", as one might comfort a bereaved person, but how this operated is neither explained nor illustrated.

The further statement that the bi-jio-a-su had to dwell in the bodies of human beings because the Spirit Zu-gi-za filled all other space and there was no room for them, is hard to understand. Other spirits, described in Sections X, XI and XII, seem to have encountered no such difficulty. Moreover, the bi-jio-a-su were at the command of the shaman-healer, and assumed animal forms when sent out at his behest. The statement comes at the close of a rather florid passage in the Miao and it may be that Wang Ming-ji allowed his rhetoric to run away with him a little.

Again there is no suggestion as to how sickness caused by such spirits might be treated. Possibly, because they were subject to the shaman-healer, a payment to him in cash or kind, or, alternatively, an attack upon his person or his property, might have been considered a more certain cure than sacrifices, libations or exorcisms.

M355
Hua Miao spirit worship.
2. The spirits bi-jio-a-su.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji

Bi-jio-a-su was the name given to the Shaman-healer's spirits. The bi-jio-a-su knew very well the thoughts of the Spirit Zu-gi-za, and they were well able to pacify him, but they had to have a human being's body as their house to live in, only then could they function. This kind of spirit had no house, no home, whether in caves or caverns, on mountains or in scrub land, in streams or in ponds; nowhere had it a place to live, because all places were occupied by the Spirit Zu-gi-za. (Explanation. These bi-jio-a-su spirits were of two kinds. The ones that took the form of birds or snakes, these were the ones which cured people's sickness. The ones which took the form of tigers and wolves, these were the ones which ill-wished people.) These spirits, in whatever family they were living, through all generations remained in that family only. They did not go to other Miao clans.

M356
Hua Miao spirit worship.
3. Bi-nzao.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

The account of the bi-nzao given by Wang Ming-ji begins with the statement that they were “dla ndu”, that is spirits found in the air, and that explains why they were sensitive to sounds borne on the air, whistling, sighing and leaf-blowing. The last refers to a practice of Miao children and young people on the hills looking after the cattle and sheep, sometimes to amuse themselves by holding certain kinds of leaves between their thumbs and blowing across them making them vibrate like a reed. The shrill sound produced carried a long way, and by varying the pitch and rhythms, messages could be conveyed over quite considerable distances.

It is a pity that Wang Ming-ji did not enlarge on the procedures necessary actually to cure bi-nzao possession.

M356
Hua Miao spirit worship.
3. Bi-nzao.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

This spirit is a sky power, a spirit which is able to make people very restless. It is lower than the Spirit Zu-gi-za, but it is present everywhere and in every place. (Whether it be old people, young men or young women, whoever whistles, blows leaves or sighs, as soon as anyone started doing this, the spirit comes and enters that person's body making him so restless that he might hang himself.) This spirit, from that time onwards, takes the soul of that person who has hanged himself and makes him into a horse to ride. It would ride him until this soul found and caused another person to hang himself. His soul then came and replaced the soul of the first person setting him free to go and join the souls of his parents. In this way the soul of a person who had hanged himself had to be the spirit's slave until one was caught to replace him. Only then could he escape and go to live with the souls of his mother and father.

Explanation. The shaman-healers' spirits and the bi-nzao, these two kinds of spirits, are both below the Spirit Zu-gi-za, but the shaman-healers' spirits bi-jio-a-su cannot overcome the bi-nzao. When, and if, he wanted to cure a person caught by a bi-nzao, the shaman-healer had first to trick the bi-nzao and then perform the ritual to cure the bi-nzao possession.

M357
Hua Miao spirit worship.
Worship of the venerable and the old.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

Wang Ming-ji's opening sentence makes the assertion that the worship of sacred rocks and trees was also the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za, but nowhere does he explain how, and the Spirit Zu-gi-za is not mentioned again either in the description of the ritual or in the incantation. Yang Yung-xin's account of the sacrifice breaks off after the incantation without saying that any of the food or wine was actually scattered as an offering to the sacred rock or sacred tree. Instead he says that a libation was made to the Spirit Zu-gi-za. Some confusion has apparently arisen, for, when all the information had been collated, the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za and the worship of sacred rocks and trees are clearly quite distinct, and for the following reasons.

- a. The Spirit Zu-gi-za was only worshipped when there was sickness and the shaman-healer had determined that it was necessary. The worship of sacred rocks and trees took place annually.
- b. The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za was a family undertaking. Rocks and trees were worshipped by the whole village community together.
- c. The officiant at the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za was the zu-mu and no one else. Rocks and trees might be worshipped by anyone in the community who was familiar with the ritual.
- d. The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za always took place in the autumn. Rocks and trees were worshipped in early spring.
- e. The worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za always came first, never as an addendum at the end of some other rituals.

What appears to have happened is that Wang Ming-ji has taken up a couplet of the incantation used in the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za, (M353)

“Plant them firmly as trees,
Plant them firmly as rocks,”

and assumed that this implied an identification of the sacred rocks and trees with the Spirit Zu-gi-za. Hence his statements in the first paragraph of M352, and the first sentence of the present section. Following this lead Yang Yung-xin substituted a libation to the Spirit Zu-gi-za for the scattering of food and wine for the sacred rock or tree.

This ceremony seems to have been an annual outing for the whole village. Each family took a wooden steamer full of maize meal and a chicken. The latter was killed at the foot of the rock or the tree and was cooked immediately. Hence the lifting of the taboo on gathering kindling on the sacred hill. Preparing food for so many people would have required a number of fires. When the food was ready the leader recited the incantation, then a small spoonful of meal and a little cooked chicken with wine poured on the top was scattered over the rock or at the foot of the tree, a spoonful from each family. As it was scattered the spirit was alerted by the cry, “It is ready”. With these solemnities completed, the people settled down to eat the meal they had prepared.

M357
Hua Miao spirit worship.
Worship of the venerable and the old,

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

The business of worshipping at the mountain was the worship of the Spirit Zu-gi-za. This mountain was called, "The venerable mountain". The person who officiated was someone in the village who knew the manner of the worship. Each year in Horse-month on Horse-day, on this high day, all the village brought chicken and flasks of wine. One person went from each family. One person took a basin of maize meal and they went to the venerable mountain. (Among the rocks and trees on this venerable mountain, no generation either felled the trees or cut the grass. On the day of worship only it was permissible to fell trees and to cut grass.) When they were worshipping, the person officiating said,

Grandfather rock, Grandfather tree,
You live on high, you can see clearly.

Take care of the children
As they walk the rocky, the precipitous paths,
And when they walk through the waters.

From thieves and soldiers, tigers and wolves
Do you defend them
And give them protection.

Next year on this day,
The children will bring,
Bring wine for you to drink,
Bring chicken for you to eat.

Explanation. When the chicken had been boiled and the maize meal was cooked, the person who was officiating first dipped up some maize meal in a spoon, and broke off some fragments of chicken on to the spoon. Having poured some wine on to the maize meal and the meat, he declared, "It is ready! It is ready!" and so poured out the offering. Then everyone dipped up maize meal, and when they had eaten they returned. (When worshipping a rock, the offering was scattered on the rock, when worshipping a tree it was scattered on the tree.)

M358
Hua Miao spirit worship.
The worship of Drao-bo.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

Only Wang Ming-ji recorded this particular form of worship. Yang Yung-xin ignored it, possibly because it applies to only one clan and two sub-clans of the Miao and not to all groups. The name “drao-po” presumably means “seeing mountain”, and it was given to a hill on which grew a sacred ash tree.

Having completed his narrative Wang Ming-ji evidently felt that more clarification was needed, and added the passage in brackets. Even so the narrative remains a little confused. The sequence of events seems to have been that while the two men were out hunting, one was taken ill on a hill covered in ash trees. Concluding that some local spirit had been offended, and having nothing else, they devoted their dog in turn to all the trees and rocks on the hill, but the sickness continued. Finally, they devoted it to an ash tree near the sick man’s home, whereat he promptly recovered. So when they got home they sacrificed the dog to that tree. This story was told to explain why some Miao clans had the rather unusual custom of offering a dog in sacrifice. Only in times of extreme famine would dog flesh normally be eaten.

The dog sacrifice was practised chiefly by the Hmao-dla clan, but also by two sub-groups of the Hmao-dlu and Hmao-ndlw clans. Wang Ming-ji’s second paragraph explains how this came about. A young woman, having married into the Hmao-dlu family, lost her husband, and remarried into the Hmao-dla family taking her infant son with her. When he was of age the child returned to the Hmao-dlu “to enquire” about the clan worship. This was presumably a request for some form of initiation, but was refused. Accordingly, despite his name, he was initiated into the dog sacrifices of the Hmao-dla, and a sub-group called “Hmao-dlu-dog” came into being. At a later date the story was repeated when a young widow named Hmao-ndlw remarried into the Hmao-dlu-dog clan. The child of her first marriage was initiated into the dog-rites of her second husband and so was formed a second sub-clan called “Hmao-ndlw-dog”.

The Chinese equivalent of the Miao surname Hmao-dla is Zhu, of Hmao-dlu is Tao, of Hmao-ndlw is Zhang, and of Hmao-dang is Wang.

M358

**Hua Miao spirit worship.
The worship of Drao-bo.**

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

The worship of drao-bo was the worship of the Hmao-dla, Hmao-ndlw and Hmao-dlu clans only. This originated at the time of the Elder Gi-chi. Hmao-dla was Hmao-dang's wife's brother. The two brothers-in-law took a dog and went hunting in the great forest of Ndu-zhi-di, when the wife's brother was taken ill on a hill covered in ash trees. Having no way of devoting anything to the spirits they took the dog and devoted that to every rock and tree on the mountain but to no avail. So they came and devoted it to the ash tree in the vicinity of their home, and the illness got better. Whereupon they took the dog and killed it in sacrifice to that tree. (When they devoted it to every rock and tree it was no good. Afterwards they devoted it to this particular ash tree and all was well.) When they reached the hill where the tree was, there they worshipped.

Hmao-dlu's father died early, so his mother married again into the Hmao-dla family. When her son was grown he came to enquire concerning the worship of the spirits at the Hmao-dlu family, but they were unwilling to teach him. He therefore learned the Hmao-dla worship instead. The mother of the Hmao-ndlw-dog clan had married into the Hmao-dlu-dog clan and so her son used the Hmao-dla worship. The names Hmao-dlu-dog and Hmao-ndlw-dog came about in this way. (The worship of the drao-bo is the worship of the drao-bo of these three clans only. It is not the drao-bo of any other Miao whatsoever.)

M359
Hua Miao spirit worship.

4. Water ki-zo.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

The washing of clothes in Miao households was commonly carried out in a mountain stream, and normally the task fell to women and girls. Garments were beaten on a smooth, flat rock in the running water, squeezed up and down with the feet, and sometimes pounded with a wooden washing dolly. Afterwards they were laid out to dry in the hot sunshine which also served to bleach the hemp cloth from which they were made.

Separating the ki-zo is a further example of exorcism by shock treatment. The hole that had been dug was in a bank of earth. It was big enough for a person to crawl in at the bottom and wriggle up through, emerging at the top. Its purpose was to protect the patient from being seriously burnt by the sudden sheet of flame ignited immediately over her head by the shaman-healer spewing a mouthful of fat in a spray of fine droplets upon a lighted torch. Thus was the water ki-zo frightened away.

The spinning cross was made from two pieces of wood joined together at right angles, with four arms of equal length, in the ends of which bamboo pegs were fixed so that yarn could be wound around them into skeins. The cross revolved on a wooden peg which passed through a hole in the centre and was fixed to a stool. The purpose of unwinding yards upon yards of make-believe yarn is not explained. It may be that this was deemed to become real yarn in the spirit world and was intended to entangle the ki-zo if, having been frightened out of the victim's body, it tried to follow her back to her home.

The point of the music is likewise unexplained. No doubt it was directed at the spirit, but whether to soothe, excite or distract it before the flame flash is not clear. The water in the "drum" was possibly a trap. Being a water spirit, when it had suddenly been driven out of its lodging by fire, there was a bowl full of water conveniently placed near at hand in which it could take refuge, only to find itself unceremoniously tossed out and forced to find its way back to the stream whence it had originally come.

M359
Hua Miao spirit worship.
4. Water ki-zo.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

If a woman went washing clothes and got a pain in her head resulting in dizziness which would not get better, it was said that she had encountered a water ki-zo. When a person was sick in this way they would go and call the shaman-healer. (In the case of this sickness they would boil red beans, kill a chicken and buy wine in preparation for the shaman-healer's coming.) When the shaman-healer arrived, he first sent his assistant to dig a hole in the top of a bank. The shaman-healer gave a spinning cross to a person who acted as though he was unwinding yarn all the time. The shaman-healer's assistant dipped up a wooden bowl of water, covering it by turning another bowl upside down upon it. He took a length of string, tied it round the bowls three times and hung them up. The hole that had been dug was on the left. The spinning cross was on the right but on the lower side, with someone unwinding yarn. Someone else played a reed pipe, while another beat upon the bowls of water. (The bowls of water represented a drum.) The shaman-healer played a mouth harp, while one of his assistants lit a torch and another assistant brought a basin of pork fat. Then they made the person that was sick enter the hole which had been dug, entering at the bottom of the hole and coming out at the top. When the person who was sick, having entered the hole, was about to emerge, the shaman-healer took a mouthful of liquid fat and spewed it out through the torch where it caught fire and singed the head of the person who was sick, scorching the ki-zo and causing it to go back, while the person who was sick came away. Then, quickly, everyone threw everything aside, and came away together. When coming away, no one might look back. In this way water ki-zo sickness was cured. The ki-zo was a kind of spirit which lived only in water, for this was a water spirit. There was no need to worship these spirits, rather it was necessary to frighten them away.

M360
Hua Miao spirit worship.
5. A-she.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

In a community where infant mortality was high the a-she was greatly feared. The dreams of parents and children were still a source of terror long after the coming of Christianity. It is surprising that Yang Yung-xin had nothing to say about these spirits beyond a brief mention in his initial list. (M371). The “bite” of the a-she could cause a baby to be still born or born defective, and in young children might result in sickness or in death.

Some points are not fully explained. Having confined the a-she in an earthenware flask the shaman-healer “threw it away”, but we are not told where or how. Was it broken in the process, for how else might the a-she have escaped? Why was the shaman-healer likely to have trouble if he met no one else on the road that day? Was it, perhaps, that the a-she, having got out of the flask, like a dog following a trail, was able to track the shaman-healer down, provided that the scent had not been crossed and confused by other people? What form of retribution might the shaman healer expect if the a-she did in fact catch up with him?

M360
Hua Miao spirit worship.
5. A-she.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

This kind of spirit borrowed the form of cats, snakes, or chicken, and came into the bodies of parents. This kind of spirit wanted only to take children of one or two years of age. When a child was still within its mother's body, not having yet been born, the a-she changed into a snake, a cat or a chicken and went to bite the child. This spirit wanted children only. It was the child still in its mother's womb and the child up to four or five months of age for whom there was the greatest fear of being bitten by an a-she. Children who were able to walk would still see the a-she, but only dimly. Infants could see these a-she but could not describe their appearance to adults. All they could do was to scream and kick. This being so, how was it that their appearance was known? It was because the parents saw them in dreams. If a parent dreamed that he had seen a snake, a cat or a chicken, then he had seen the appearance of an a-she.

These a-she, like the bi-nzao, were sky powers, but they out-stripped the bi-nzao. The shaman-healer could not control them, he could only trick them. The shaman-healer could not destroy these a-she.

Curing the a-she. When the shaman-healer went to gather the a-she, he would gather it and put it into a flask. When it was to be put in there, it was necessary for the parents and children each to scrape up a handful of dust and put it into the flask. Then they took blood from the inside of a cock's comb and put that in. This counted as putting in the a-she. When the shaman-healer took the flask to throw it away, if on that day he met with nobody on the road, the shaman healer would himself have trouble from the a-she.

M361
Hua Miao spirit worship.
6. Zi-qiao-bao.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

It is seldom possible to connect a particular Miao spirit with a specific form of sickness, though there may be some loose correlation. Thus the troubles attributed to the bi-nzao may have been forms of mental or psychological disturbance, while the sickness brought about by the water ki-zo could have been sunstroke. There can be no doubt, however, that the zi-qiao-bao was responsible for epilepsy.

Presumably the shaman-healer would have had some incantation to accompany the “treatment”, but why, or how, riding a goat or trundling a spinning wheel around the patient should drive away the zi-qiao-bao is not made clear.

M361
Hua Miao spirit worship.
6. Zi-qiao-bao.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Of this kind of spirit the old folk would not say that they had been fanned by the zi-qiao-bao, they would merely say that they had encountered smoke. In this sickness, a person simply fell suddenly to the ground. His eyes rolled from side to side, and were wide open. He could not speak and his ears could not hear. A person suffering like this was said to have been fanned by the zi-qiao-bao. In such cases the shaman-healer had to be called to cure it. When the shaman-healer arrived, first, he made one of his assistants ride a male goat around the person who was ill, three times to the left and three times to the right. If this was not effective, then he took a spinning wheel and rolled it around, three times to the right and three times to the left. This would cure the person who was ill and make him well again.

M362
Hua Miao spirit worship.
7. Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

It could be argued that Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu has no place in an account of Miao spirit worship since “nobody worshipped him or regarded him”. Yang Yung-xin included him only in the list of spirits in M371, noting that he was reputed to have created heaven and earth. All that Wang Ming-ji has to say has been gathered from the Song of Creation and the Song of the Flood. If there were other traditions or information about Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu the impression is that neither writer was aware of them.

M362
Hua Miao spirit worship.
7. Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

This spirit was one who was very kind hearted. He did not cause people to become sick, and wanted nothing whatever from people. If people had any catastrophe pending he would reveal it. He was a spirit who did only good to people. They reckoned him a good spirit and people called him Yeu-jio-dlang-hnu. Though this spirit was very good, nobody worshipped him or regarded him.

M363
Hua Miao spirit worship.

8. Worship of the door a-nzhang.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

When called to a case of sickness, one course of action that the shaman-healer might prescribe was to perform a sacrifice for the “place of arriving”, that is, the door. The animal to be sacrificed was a young pig, but the shaman-healer took no further part in the rituals involved. These all had to be conducted by the head of the family and took place indoors, including, despite the obnoxious smell in a house without a chimney, the burning of the bristles, the cleansing of the carcass and the disposal of the waste, all of which would normally have been done outside.

A young female pig was valuable for the progeny that it might be expected to produce. It may therefore be that this animal was chosen for sacrifice in the belief that, in the spirit world, the spirit of the gilt would give birth to spirit piglets for the use of the spirit of the door. The four trotters alone figured in the sacrificial meal, clearly a symbolic reference to the comings and goings through the door. The rest of the meat was eaten in the normal way, a feast for the whole family.

No one could explain why the door had to be worshipped when there was no thunder about.

This being a private, family occasion, the exclusion of outsiders was understandable. Nevertheless it would have been no easy matter, especially for the men who, in general, had some knowledge of the language and constantly used it in the market place, to go a whole evening and night without uttering a single word of Chinese.

M363
Hua Miao Spirit Worship.
8. Worship of the door a-nzhang.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

If, because of sickness, people wanted to worship the door a-nzhang on no account should there be any thunder. If there were thunder, they would have to devote the sacrifice until Dragon or Rabbit Month, and then it might be offered. However, the door a-nzhang could only be worshipped on an Ox-day or a Horse-day. Other days might not be used.

When the door a-nzhang was to be worshipped, it was necessary to kill a gilt which had no blemish at all. It had to be killed at the foot of the door, and then taken to the fire to remove the bristles. First the bristles were singed off, then a pit was dug under the door. When the meat and the intestines had been washed, all the water was poured into the pit. The meat was then boiled in a pot.

On the night when the door was worshipped, no Chinese person at all might be allowed to enter the house, and no word of Chinese might be spoken. If it should happen that a Chinese word was spoken it would invalidate the sacrifice.

When the meat was cooked the four trotters were cut off. Early in the morning, as it was getting light, the father rose and took the brothers to eat meat before going outside. This meat was called “zi”. Sons might eat it, daughters did not eat it. When they had eaten the meat, the father went and opened the door and said,

Open that prosperity may come in,
Close that calamity may be shut out.
When the family, all its many members,
Keep going and coming, do not be angry.

M364
Hua Miao spirit worship.
9. The ti-shao-ma.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

“Ti-shao-ma” is probably the name given to this spirit in the Yi language. Yang Yung-xin preferred the Miao name Yi gi-lao-jiw. The “dlang”, the magical objects, which were used to bring disease and death to cattle, took a variety of forms. That described by Wang Ming-ji was a small bunch of pieces of yarn, a few inches long, tied together into a knot. He does not say whether its lethal power had to be introduced into it by some ritual act, or whether, once it was made, the malignant spirit would come of its own accord and occupy it. However this may have been, the object could not be handled safely, or disposed of, except by the shaman-healer.

M364
Hua Miao spirit worship.
9. The ti-shao-ma.

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

This kind of spirit caused sickness in livestock only, it did not cause people to become sick. However, if the cattle of any particular family met with this kind of spirit, the best cattle simply fell down suddenly and died. This kind of spirit was similar to the Yi gi-lao-jiw. (The Yi gi-lao. When an Yi person came to a house and was not treated well, then the Yi person would make a "dlang" which he brought and threw into the cattle shed. Then the best cattle would die.) A knot of blue yarn, which was brought and thrown into the cattle shed, was called the Yi gi-lao.

M365
Hua Miao spirit worship.
10. Be-a-dli. (Sowing souls.)

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

As Wang Ming-ji noted in his index, (M351), the ritual of be-a-dli, literally “sowing souls”, was strictly speaking not worship. It was rather a fertility rite of imitative magic. There seem to be considerable gaps in the information provided. Either the writer did not know the detail of all that took place, or he chose not to write it down.

No sacrifice was offered. Apart from the “horse food”, as the fee due to the shaman-healer was called, all the elaborate laying out of grain in the loft, and the setting of cooked maize meal and bowls of meat below in the living room, were dramatic representations of the lavish prosperity for which the family was looking, and which the ritual was intended to induce. In particular, the basket of meal filled with spoons betokened the desire for a large family, each having his own spoon, with plenty of food for all to eat.

In all probability there were incantations which the shaman-healer or even the head of the family had to chant, but these have not been recorded. The ritual concluded with an action which was called the “sowing”. When Miao planted wheat or barley, the seed was sown broadcast, a handful at a time. Wang Ming-ji does not explain exactly what was done, but since members of the family had to hold up the hem of their skirt or gown in order to catch something, it seems that someone, possibly the shaman-healer, was throwing handfuls of seed, or something similar, into the air, hence the word “sowing”. The more that the family was able to catch the better, for this “seed” represented the “a-dli” or “ki-lao”. These two words appear to have had, if not identical, very similar meanings, since they are used interchangeably. They refer to the spirit-element in people, cattle or crops. These seed-spirits were then scattered on the bed, in the loft, where the Miao always kept their store of grain, or in the cattle shed, according to whether it was increase in the family, crops or livestock which was being sought.

M365
Hua Miao Spirit Worship.
10. Be-a-dli. (Sowing souls.)

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

There are three forms of sowing souls.

- 1 Sowing souls of people. Because of weakness, they performed the ritual with chicken and pigs.
- 2 Sowing souls for livestock. Because the livestock was not prolific, they performed the ritual.
- 3 Sowing souls for crops. Because the crops were not good, they performed the ritual.

In these three cases when sowing souls, it was necessary to kill a pig for the master of the house and to kill a pig for the shaman-healer; to prepare a steamer full of maize meal for the master of the house and to prepare a steamer full of maize meal for the shaman-healer; to fill a flask of wine for the master of the house and to fill a flask of wine for the shaman-healer. It was necessary, in sowing souls, to set in the loft on behalf of the family of the master of the house seven baskets of maize, and each basket of maize had also to contain an egg. It was necessary to set for the shaman-healer as well, seven baskets of “horse food” in the loft. Below, a basket of maize meal was set out. Into this basket of meal spoons were pushed until it was quite full of them. A basin full of meat was also set in place.

When the sowing of souls was finished, the man, the woman and the children all held up the hem of their skirts or the hem of their gowns in order to catch the spirits of the cattle or the spirits of the crops. When all had been caught, everyone carried them in and poured them out on the bottom of the bed where they slept.

- 1 They were poured on the bed in the case of sowing spirits for children and descendants.
- 2 They were poured out in the loft in the case of sowing spirits for crops and corn.
- 3 They were poured out in the cattle house in the case of sowing spirits for flocks and herds.

Hua Miao spirit worship.**11. Ndao-shu. (A daughter had polluted the house.)*****Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.*****Introduction.**

When a young woman married, there was a tradition that she did not visit her parents until after the first child was born. Some Miao stories indicate that during this period, or for part of it, her younger sister might stay with her as company. The reason for this was that, if homesickness caused her to return, and her child was born in her parents' house, her husband's family would then be faced with performing the ritual of ndao-shu, "striking the blood", by which the pollution, which the birth was deemed to have caused, was cleansed, and also the "ki-zao", the spirit of the child, was brought back to the home where it belonged. This ritual was very expensive in "horse food" which had to be paid to the shaman-healer.

When the hemp skin, from which cloth was made, had been stripped away, the remaining stalks were very white and very brittle. They were also hollow, an ideal hiding place for a frightened spirit. Seven or nine short pieces of stalk were bundled together and laid on a table set in the middle of the room where the baby had been born. The alternative numbers are not explained, but it may have been nine for a boy and seven for a girl, or possibly nine for the first born child and seven for subsequent arrivals. All the sweepings from a thorough cleansing of the mud floor were piled under the table and the cleansing was completed by leading a dog and carrying a chicken three times in each direction round the room and round the fire-place, which in a Miao house was always in the middle of the floor. Dogs and chicken were scavengers in Miao homes, picking up any food that may have been dropped, and also any mess (excreta) made by babies or young children. When this had been done the energetic beating of the ground with a washing dolly, a kind of wooden club, caused the baby's ki-zao to take refuge in the hemp stalks. Whereupon the paternal grandfather wrapped up the child, collected the hemp stalks and the packet of dust, and followed the shaman-healer leading the dog and carrying the chicken out of the house. The party departed immediately without looking back. What was ultimately done with the hemp stalks and the bundle of dust when they arrived at the husband's home is not explained..

M366
Hua Miao spirit worship.
11. Ndao-shu.

(A daughter had polluted the house.)

Compiled by Wang Ming-ji.

This ritual did not count as spirit worship, but was used when a daughter, who had gone to her mother and father-in-law's home, returned and had her child in the home of her parents and relatives. This was reckoned to have polluted the house making it unclean. It was therefore necessary to come and cleanse the house.

First the shaman-healer had to be called. A dog and a chicken were required. Having prepared everything they came from the home of the in-laws. When they arrived they had to set out nine baskets or seven baskets of "horse food". They then had to cut nine lengths or seven lengths of hemp stalk. These had to be tied with nine bands of red yarn. If they had cut seven lengths of hemp stalk these had to be tied with seven bands of red yarn around the hemp stalks. They also had to provide a length of cloth for a pair of trousers, together with one thousand two hundred cash and a chicken, all to be placed in the baskets of "horse food". (Explanation. The "horse food", cloth, cash and chicken all had to be given to the shaman-healer.)

Next they set up a table in the middle of the house and put the nine lengths of hemp stalk on the table. There was one person who swept up the dust in the room both front and back, putting it under the table. The shaman-healer took a hi-zhi (a hi-zhi was a bamboo stick which the shaman-healer had split into four) and poked out anything from under the bed and from under the shelf, putting it also under the table. While stirring a basin of water the shaman-healer recited at length an incantation. One of his helpers leading the dog went ahead, and another carrying the chicken followed, going round the floor of the room and the fire place, three times to the right and three times to the left. Then another helper using a washing dolly struck nine times or seven times. (According to the number of baskets of "horse food" he struck that number of times.) The washing dolly with which he was striking, was struck in the place where they had put the hemp stalks. The yeu-hi-se (the yeu-hi-se was what the master of the house was called) spoke no word, but with his foot indicated the place where the child had been born. At this time the father-in-law who had come to cleanse the house, wrapped up the child in a felt cape, and spreading the skirt of his gown, gathered up the spirit of the child and the spirits of his descendants. He also gathered up the blood (that is, wrapped up the dust). The shaman-healer went ahead leading the dog and carrying the chicken, and they all went outside together. Without looking behind they went straight back home. However, if the in-laws had come by one road, they had to return by another. In this way the blood was removed and the house was cleansed.

M367

**Hua Miao spirit worship.
Diagnosis of sickness using an egg.**

Information from Han Zhen-ming.

Introduction.

Wang Ming-ji's manuscript concerning spirit worship was brought to me in Weining by a Miao teacher called Han Zhen-ming. He remained some days assisting me with my preliminary reading of the text. In the course of conversation he told me of a method of diagnosis which was used if the shaman healer could not attend in person. Subsequently, at my request he wrote it down.

M367
Hua Miao spirit worship.
Diagnosis of sickness using an egg.

Information from Han Zhen-ming.

In days gone by when a person became sick it was necessary to go and call the shaman-healer to come and investigate, but if the shaman-healer had very urgent business and could not come quickly, he would give them a chicken's egg to take back. When they arrived at the house of the person who was sick, they would take the egg and roll it over his body and then carry it back and give it to the shaman-healer. He would pour the liquid from the egg into a basin and then examine it for a long time. Presently he would know what the sickness was and what to do to cure it.

