

**Hua-Miao Archive
Songs and Stories**

Miao History

Early Leaders and The conflict with the Chinese and the loss of the homeland
Songs M201 to M223
Introduction and Translation

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M201
Three leaders.

Narrated by Wang Da-lu.

Introduction

This story comes from an old song which has been recounted in modern prose. However, the snatches of verse in which the conversations have been recorded may belong to the original.

It is likely that the three elders in the story represent three Miao clans, two of which were closely allied. Although the song does not say so specifically, inter-clan rivalry, together with pressure from the Chinese, were making life difficult for the whole community. A determined effort on the part of the third clan succeeded in recalling the two related clans from other preoccupations to join in settling outstanding questions and securing the threatened territories, to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

The couplet,

"The game returns again,
The game comes back",

which occurs several times, is not entirely clear, though possibly in the original song the lines were more specific. The meaning may be that, in the ordinary way, a hunted animal will try to circle back to its home territory, but in this case, that did not seem to be happening. The two hunters were travelling further and further afield. The reason was that their quarry was a tiger, and tigers range over very wide areas. The hunters eventually realized that the tiger was heading for the shelter of a cavern in the Na-lyu valley, so, while one pursued it, the other lay in wait and shot the tiger as it leapt across the river.

M201
Three leaders.

Narrated by Wang Da-lu.

The old folk say that in ancient times, very long ago, Elder Gi-yo was living on Mount Gi-yo. The mountain where he lived resembled a ladle, hence its name. Elder Gi-yo heard it said that Elder Gi-chi was living on Mount Gi-no, he also heard that Gi-vu-gi-ndlw was living on Mount Gi-vu. Now of these three elders, Elder Gi-yo lived on Mount Gi-yo, so he was called Elder Gi-yo. Gi-vu-gi-ndlw, living on Mount Gi-vu was called Elder Gi-vu, as well as Gi-vu-gi-ndlw. Elder Gi-no, who lived on Mount Gi-no, was also called Gi-chi-gi-no.

All three Elders ran estates. Gi-chi-gi-no was an archer and a warrior, Elder Gi-yo was a swordsman and also a warrior, while Gi-vu-gi-ndlw was a horseman and a warrior. Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw were brothers-in-law. The pair were famous in battle for their archery. People all knew about these two.

Elder Gi-yo living on the north side of Mount Gi-yo heard that earth had produced sorcerers and enchanters who had seized the very clouds in the sky. The seizing of the clouds in the sky foreshadowed the emergence of evil people on earth whose evil and cunning were like the clouds in the sky, extremely dark. There was so much fighting in the community at that time that it was hard to live, hard to rest, and hard to raise a family.

Elder Gi-yo decided to go in search of Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw. When they reached an uncultivated plain and saw there a group of children herding pigs, Elder Gi-yo said to his retainers, "Come, let us ask those children who are herding pigs and see whether they know where Elder Gi-no and Elder Gi-vu may be". So Elder Gi-yo sang a song of enquiry, as follows:

"Children, herding your pigs that fill the plain,
It is said that Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw
Are somewhere about, but where? Do you know?"

The pig-herds replied,

"Elder Gi-chi is on Mount Gi-no,
And Elder Gi-vu is on Mount Gi-vu".

Elder Gi-yo led his retainers to Mount Gi-no where he sang as follows:

"Where are Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu?
Are Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu at home?"

Gi-chi-gi-no's retainers sang in reply,

"Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw are not at home.
They are followed a striped tiger,
And have gone to the Hmao-dao-li-hxw country".

Elder Gi-yo led his retainers to Hmao-dao-li-hxw and, having searched the mountain before and behind and not found them, he sang,

"The game returns again,
The game comes back.
Why, then, for Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu,
Has the game not come?
For Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu I wonder,
Where has the game gone?"

Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu heard, and sang in reply,

"Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu,
They are following a striped tiger,
And have gone to the Fao-nzhi country".

Elder Gi-yo led his retainers and reached Fao-nzhi. Having searched the mountain before and behind he found no one, so he sang as follows:

"The game returns again,
The game comes back.
For Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu I wonder,
Where has the game gone?"

Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu heard, and sang in reply,

"Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu,
They are following a striped tiger,
And have gone to the Na-lyu country".

While Elder Gi-chi rested on the river bank at a place where there was a cave, Gi-vu-gi-ndlw pursued the tiger until he caught up with Elder Gi-chi at Na-lyu. Now when the tiger came to the river bank, as it was in the act of leaping across to the other side, deliberately Elder Gi-chi stretched his cross-bow and loosed one shot, striking the tiger in the upper part of its chest, killing it on the spot.

As Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw were returning together they heard Elder Gi-yo singing,

"The game comes back again,
But for Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu
The game did not return.
For Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu I wonder,
Where has the game gone?"

Elder Gi-chi and Elder Gi-vu replied,

"Are you a relative or a stranger?
If you are a relative, we are here at Na-lyu."

Elder Gi-yo went and found Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi-ndlw, and the three left Na-lyu and reached the heights of Na-lyu. Then from the heights of Na-lyu they reached the heights of Fao-nzhi and Hmao-dao-hxw. Thence from Hmao-dao-hxw they arrived here at Gi-no and

Gi-vu. Then Gi-chi-gi-no and Gi-vu-gi- ndlw accompanied Elder Gi-yo, and they went and secured their territories everywhere.

How the ancients passed their time.

Narrated by Wang Jian-guo.

Introduction

This short piece is placed by the compiler of Document N between the story about people changing their skins in order to renew their youth and that of the dog fetching seed from the sky for mankind, though it bears little resemblance to either.

The Miao loved to tell stories to explain the origin of common customs and words, and these could be as amusing as they were fanciful. The present piece is a case in point, purporting to explain the etymology of the Miao words for "mother" and "father" as plays upon the verbs "to cry" and "to hide".

Wang Jian-guo derived this story from Yang Ya-go. It is the first in a group of a number of stories and songs which Yang called "A bundle of Miao traditions", and which is reproduced in Document D at a later stage, where of course the present story is repeated. Wang Jian-guo's two versions are not identical, and both vary a little from Yang Ya-go's original manuscript which Wang obviously had before him as he wrote.

In the English translation an attempt has been made, by employing square brackets, to explain the play on the Miao words, which, in the nature of things, it is not possible to translate, and which is further complicated by the changes in the tones.

Wang Jian-guo chose, in the first line, to use an archaic phrase, borrowed from another song-story, which means, "It was a time of adversity/trouble/evil/difficulty", and which simply does not fit the context. Yang Ya-go's "long ago" was perfectly adequate. There is also a reference to "blowing leaves". Miao children and young people would pick certain kinds of leaf which, held in a special way and blown upon, functioned as reeds. The pitch of the sound could be varied together with the rhythm of the notes in such a way as to convey messages. The piercing sound was loud enough to be heard over considerable distances.

M202

How the ancients passed their time.

Narrated by Wang Jian-guo.

They say that during a time of adversity, our old folk did not build houses to live in, but simply lived at the foot of rocks and trees and in the hollow of trees. In those days the forests were very great, and they feared the wild animals very much. So it was that the old people passed their time cutting herbs, gathering fruit and hunting game.

If they went hunting in the forest, at the time when they were returning, they would blow instruments and blow on leaves, so that those who had stayed home would hear and know that their own people were arriving, and they would ask, "Are you human or are you spirits?" When they heard that these were really the voices of their own home folk, presently they would return to the place where the young women were.

Because at that time one group would seize the dwelling place of another group, they were afraid that other people might have come and seized their dwelling place. Since those who had gone out into the forest did not in fact know what was happening at home, they blew instruments and called out so that both those in the forest and those at home would be able to distinguish their own people clearly, and presently come home.

It was also said that at that time, when the men had gone out into the forest and the women and children were left at home, whatever the pretext, good or ill, the women would be constantly crying. However, on one occasion, the men had been out in the forest and were returning. As they neared home, they heard the women who had remained at home singing songs which were very good to listen to. Because of this they said, "Be matters good or ill, we want no crying, only singing, because crying is not good to listen to".

Since, come good or ill, these women would cry, they were called "nie" [pronounced with the tone value 45 it means "crying"]. As time went by, in common use this became "nie" [pronounced with the tone value 55 it means "mother"]. Moreover if one of these women had a man [i.e. a lover], she would take and hide him, not willing that other people should see or know. She wanted him for herself only. Because she hid ["vai" pronounced with the tone value 11] him for herself only, they call a man father ["vai" pronounced with the tone value 21].

M203
A bundle of Miao traditions.

Written by Yang Ya-go.

Introduction

This piece differs from most of the other Miao material, not only because it includes both prose writing and songs, but also because it is an attempt to trace the history of the people from the earliest times, before they had learned to build houses or cultivate the land, through to the present day. It is based on traditions and old songs and was compiled by Yang Ya-go, the most outstanding of the early Christian preachers. The prose passages are presumably his composition, and the verse, songs that he had learned as a boy.

An aetiological interest, common in the Miao songs, is a major factor in Yang Ya-go's choice of material. Though the fanciful derivation of the Miao words for "mother" and "father" could not have been intended to be taken seriously, the origin of the use of millet, the discovery of rice, of cotton and of hemp, and the growing of buckwheat were matters of utmost importance to the Miao. It is strange, however, that no mention is made of maize which, when Yang Ya-go was writing, was the staple food.

The Miao custom of burying the dead with the least possible delay is noted because of its contrast with the tradition of the Chinese who used to postpone burial for weeks, months or even years, waiting for a propitious day.

Yang Ya-go's narrative falls into nine stages which may be summarized:

- Stage 1** In prose. People dwelling in caves and living by hunting and food-gathering.
- Stage 2** In prose. Led by the Elder Gi-zi, the people reached "Millet Plain" and discovered the use of millet.
- Stage 3** In verse. Driven by famine and led by the Elder Gi-zi, the people reached the Great Eastern River, living on wild bamboo seed and herbs until the discovery of rice.
- Stage 4** In prose. The death of the Elder Gi-zi and the establishment of Miao burial customs.
- Stage 5** In verse. Chinese pressure successfully resisted by the Elder Gi-myu until he was eventually captured.
- Stage 6** In verse. Under renewed Chinese attack, and led by the Man Jio-bi-khao, the people crossed the Red Mud River and, settled by the Ndu-na-yi-mo, discovered the use of cotton, and here built fine houses.
- Stage 7** In verse. Under further Chinese pressure, led by the Man Jio-bi-khao, the people fled across the Ndu-na-yi-mo and settled in Di-njiang-na, living on rice and growing cotton and hemp.

Stage 8 In verse. Forced by Chinese pressure and led by the Man Jio-bi-khao, the people fled and settled for a time on the plain of Be-yi. This being high, cold country, the people had to live on buckwheat.

Stage 9 In verse. The people left the plain of Be-yi seeking a better living, and led by the Man Jio-bi-khao reached the forests in Yi (Mang-li-no) country. Here they remained but were reduced to serfdom by the Yi.

Putting songs together in this way has its pitfalls. Three great rivers are mentioned, the Great Eastern River, the Red Mud River and the Ndu-na-yi-mo, but it is possible, even likely, that these are names for the same river coming from different songs. Twice the people are described as fording rivers by clinging to water buffaloes, but again these may well be two accounts of the same incident. The most obvious problem lies in the double name "the Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao". At stage 4 we learn that this individual grew old, died, and was accorded burial in the manner he had requested. His place was taken by the Elder Gi-myu who was eventually tricked and captured by the Chinese, and then the leadership passed to the Man Jio-bi-khao, but he, being the same person as the Elder Gi-zi, was already dead and buried. Yang Ya-go solved the difficulty by saying that the Elder Gi-zi and the Man Jio-bi-khao were two different people. In editing Yang's manuscript for inclusion in Document N, Wang Jian-guo, quite rightly, corrected this suggestion, and he eased, but could not remove the difficulty, by leaving the short paragraph describing the Elder Gi-zi's death to an explanatory note at the end of the piece.

It seems likely that while "the Elder Gi-zi" and "the Elder Gi-myu" are proper names of individual leaders, "the Man Jio-bi-khao" is a descriptive title which was given in succession to a number of different leaders who, over the generations, arose and conducted the people on the next stage of their migration.

The suggestion made in Document N that "the Man Jio-bi-khao" means "the man using iron shod military boots" must be rejected. (See note on line 45 of the Miao text.) "Jio" means "to carry", and by extension "to use". "Bi khao" is the name given to a certain kind of tree, the bark of which is used as a dye stuff. It is just conceivable that the name of a tree might appear in the title given to leaders of the migratory movements of the Miao people, but there seems to be no cogent reason for so doing. The word "khao", pronounced in the high tone in which it appears in Document F, is also the word used for food intended to be eaten on a journey. If this were the meaning of the word "khao" in the song, then "the Man Jio-bi-khao" would mean, "the man bearing rations for the journey". Such a title would not be inappropriate for the one who, in the course of their travels, discovered millet for the use of the people, led them, in time of necessity, to eat wild bamboo seed and herbs, who recognized the food value of rice, and in more austere circumstances, of buckwheat, and who finally led the folk in clearing the forest for cultivation.

There is another song which tells of the activities of the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Gi-myu, and describes them, not as Yang Ya-go does in the present piece as "father and son" (line 95), but as "comrades and friends" and as "good companions". This tradition from the old song is preferable to Yang Ya-go's suggestion which is based simply on the fact that, on the death of the Elder Gi-zi, the Elder Gi-myu took over the leadership. "Gi-zi" and "Gi-myu" represent different clans, not different generations in the same clan.

M203
A bundle of Miao traditions.

Written by Yang Ya-go.

Stage 1

They tell a story that in the olden times our old folk did not build houses to live in, but simply lived at the foot of rocks and cliffs or in the hollow of trees. In those days the forests were very great, and full of wild animals. So it was that the old folk simply lived on wild fruit, and spent their time hunting. If they went out hunting they had to go as a group, and they hunted together. When they were returning home, they would play on flutes or other instruments as a signal, so that those who had remained at home would know. Thus when the folk at home heard that the others had come, they would go out and call, "Are you human or spirits?" On hearing the voices of the home folk the others would reply, "We are human!" and so would come home to the place where the young women were staying. They did this in order to give reassurance, because, at that time, the seizure by one group of another group's living place was common, and they were afraid that it might be some other people coming whom they did not know.

At that time, while the men were away, the young women remained at home, and, whatever the pretext, good or ill, the women would cry. However, on one occasion the men, who had been away, were returning, and, as they neared home, they heard the women who had stayed behind, singing songs, which were very good to listen to. So they said, "From now on, be matters good or ill, we want no more crying, only singing, because crying is not good to listen to!" Because, come good or ill, these women would cry, the children all called them "nie". [Pronounced with the tone value 45 it means, "crying".] As time went by, in common use this became "nie". [Pronounced with the tone value 55 it means "mother".] This is the origin of the word "mother" used for women.

A young woman, if she had a man, [i.e. a lover] she would "hide" ["vai", pronounced with the tone value 11] him. Now, everyone calls a man "father" ["vai", pronounced with the tone value 21] and this is how it began.

Stage 2

The ancestors later left that place and removed elsewhere. There was an old man called the Elder Gi-zi or the Man Jio-bi-khao who led them till they arrived on a very wide plain, of which they did not know the name. However, they saw an old man there planting millet, so they simply called it "Millet Plain". Here they remained and planted only millet for food. The seed for the present day millet was derived from here.

Stage 3

Afterwards there came a year which was a time of calamity. Robbers and soldiers abounded, and the world was full of fighting. So it was they sang a song which said,

This year we may know,
Know that wizards and enchanter's of the under-world were training their troops,
For this was an evil time and an evil year.

The millet was planted but did not ripen,
The millet was planted but the crop was ruined,
And people in the world rose up to fight each other.

The Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao
Could not dwell there.
So the Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao took,
Took the children and fled,
Fled to the great river in the east.

The Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao took,
Took the children and went that they might pick,
Pick the bamboo seed on the hills for food.

But the Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao
Could not eat it.
So the Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao took,
Took the children and went,
Went to cut wild herbs on the river bank.

Upon the river bank there stood,
Stood the hill rice ripening or fully ripe,
With the swamp rice ripening in the sunshine,
And the glutinous rice ripening in the breeze.

The Elder Gi-zi, the Man Jio-bi-khao
Had no name to give it,
So they called the hill rice "river bank grain",
The swamp rice they simply called "rice",
And the glutinous rice they called "glutinous".

That which we now call hill rice together with ordinary rice and glutinous rice all originated from this source.

Stage 4

Not long after they came to live on the banks of this river, fighting broke out again all over the world, with one group attacking another. At the time the Elder Gi-zi was very old. He said to the children, "Throughout my life I have always done things without delay. When I die you will bury me in the same manner, won't you?" When he died, the children followed his instructions and buried him in this way. This is the origin of our Miao custom of burying in the grave in this manner.

Stage 5

After the Elder Gi-zi died, the Miao living there were led by his son whose name was the Elder Gi-myu. Now there were other people who wanted to attack them so they had a song which said,

While the sky remained constant,
The Elder Gi-zi having died,
The Ruling Race came,
Came from the Ruling Race's land,
Came to seize the children and carry them off.

The Elder Gi-myu was heavy hearted,
The Elder Gi-myu was sad at heart.
The Elder Gi-myu led,

Led the children to go and seek,
Seek a crossbow tree together.

They sought, and they found one,
One mulberry tree still thriving.
The Elder Gi-myu felled,
Felled the mulberry tree to make crossbows.

He made crossbows to be carried on the back,
He took shining swords to carry in the hand,
He led the children back to block the way,
And fight the Ruling Race on the river bank.

Seven times they loosed their bows and struck down seven,
Seven arrows they shot and struck seven pairs.
They attacked the Ruling Race, destined to be an offering to the spirits,
They slashed the Ruling Race, destined to be an offering to the idols.

The Ruling Race were afraid,
So afraid, indeed, that they dared not come,
So afraid, in truth, that they did not come out.

The result was the Ruling Race's grand stratagem.
The Ruling Race suggested,
Suggested the making of an agreement just to deceive,
To deceive the Elder Gi-myu. They said,

"Come let us make an agreement fixing the boundaries,
"Come let us make an agreement fixing the roads,
"Come let us make an agreement making all well".

But the Elder Gi-myu was tricked,
Tricked by the Ruling Race's deceit.
So the Ruling Race took,
Took the Elder Gi-myu and made him prisoner.

Stage 6

The retainers of the Chinese,
The soldiers in columns came pursuing,
But the people could not cross the Red Mud River.

The Man Jio-bi-khao caused,
Caused the pig to go and test the water.
It tested the water until noon but could not go.
It could not cross and so returned.

The Man Jio-bi-khao looked all around,
And saw the water buffalo grazing,
Grazing, jet-black, upon the river bank.

The Man Jio-bi-khao caused,
Caused the water buffalo to go and test it,
And the water buffalo crossed right over.

The Man Jio-bi-khao led the children and followed,
Followed the water buffalo and crossed right over.
They crossed and came to the flat banks of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.

The banks of the Ndu-na-yi-mo were wide,
Seven days and seven nights travel could not traverse it.

The banks of the Ndu-na-yi-mo were flat,
There grew the cotton plants,
Bushes as big as water-butts,
With heads as big as eggs.

Here the children built,
Built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs to set up families and live,
Built houses with timber frames and tiled roofs to set up families and dwell.

Stage 7

While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race returned again, came back in pursuit,
So the Man Jio-bi-khao led,
Led the children and fled.

But the banks of the Ndu-na-yi-mo were wide,
So the children removed,
Removed their girdles and the braids of their skirts and knotted them together.
They chose the cattle path and were pulled across,
The water buffaloes pulling them with their horns.

The children followed,
Followed behind the water buffaloes and came,
Came and reached the people's Di-njiang-na.
Now this place Di-njiang-na was good land.

Here there grew cotton
On bushes as high as a room,
With seed heads as big as ducks eggs,
Here the swamp rice ripened in the breeze,
And it vexed the eyes of the Ruling Race.

Here there grew hemp,
Thick as an ankle,
Thick as a small arm,
Here the glutinous rice ripened to maturity,
And it pained the hearts of the Ruling Race.

Stage 8

While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race again came in pursuit.
So the Man Jio-bi-khao led,
Led the children and fled together.

They fled to the Plain of Be-yi, that level plain,
But it is said that the Plain of Be-yi was a high plain,
And here the children lived,
Lived on the Plain of Be-yi, planting buckwheat for food.

Stage 9

Now the Man Jio-bi-khao and the children could not dwell there,
So the Man Jio-bi-khao led,
Led the children and fled together,
Fled till together they reached,
Reached Hmao-de in the Hmao-li-no country.

The dark forest of Hmao-de, Hmao-li-no was black indeed,
The deer all lived there,
The stags all dwelt there,
Tigers and lions all dwelt there.

The Man Jio-bi-khao led the children to clear the forest,
And the old folk warned the children,
"In clearing the forest do not clear far and wide,
For fear of clearing on to Mang-li-no land".

But the children did not understand.
The children went clearing the forest,
And did indeed clear right on to Mang-li-no land.

While the sky remained constant,
The children had to work on Mang-li-no land,
And the resulting work for Mang-li-no, the work to pay rent, was heavy.
As for compulsory labour, the compulsory labour was hard.

We Miao children did,
Did compulsory labour for Mang-li-no which never finished,
Did compulsory labour which never stopped.
Thus it is ended

Concerning the Elder Gi-myu's search for the Elder Gi-zi.

Narrated by Wang Da-lu.

Introduction

The first section of this piece, as far as line 71, is set out as though it were a song. The passages of conversation between the parties are indeed in song form, however the narrative linking these exchanges is largely prose. In the English translation the lines in which the original is printed are retained, but the passages in verse are inset in order to mark the difference. The remainder of the piece is all prose and is printed as such.

There are here, in effect, four separate stories. The first is a tale of the Elder Gi-myu's search for the Elder Gi-zi. The key to this narrative is in the opening sentence, "It was a time of adversity", which means a famine year. The crops had failed, and in order to be able to get through until the next harvest the Elder Gi-zi, as a wise farmer, was fully occupied collecting supplies of various wild plants, fruits and seeds while they were still available to supplement his limited stock of grain. The original song probably finished with a statement that, having got together, the two leaders went off setting to rights the affairs of their whole neighbourhood. The elders in this story may well represent two clans, which, in a time of difficulty, pooled their efforts to their mutual advantage.

In the second episode any echoes of the old song from which it came have disappeared. This story is told in prose, and though linked to what has gone before, describes an entirely different situation. It concerns the family of the Elder Gi-zi only. The Elder Gi-myu plays no active role, and quietly disappears. The object of the narrative was to explain why it was forbidden in the Gi-zi clan to eat dog flesh. The Miao did not normally eat dog, though it might happen in a famine year, and there were some groups in which a dog figured in the worship of the local sacred tree, but in this clan dog flesh was strictly taboo.

The third narrative is introduced by the statement, "Later there were events which explain matters further". In fact the two sections that follow are unrelated both to that which precedes and also to one another. The third episode introduces a new leader with supernatural powers, the Elder Bi-zai. The setting is that of conflict with the Chinese, and the story is a variation of a common theme, namely that after initial success, the Miao lose in the end, outwitted by the more subtle Chinese.

The fourth section is also in a conflict setting, but here the Chinese are clearly the dominant race. The Miao are in the position of having to mount guerrilla attacks in which the identity of the leader, the composition of the band and its movement from place to place, were secrets which had to be closely guarded.

Concerning the Elder Gi-myu's search for the Elder Gi-zi.

Narrated by Wang Da-lu.

Episode 1.

It was at a time of adversity
that the Elder Gi-myu went in search of the Elder Gi-zi
at the Elder Gi-zi's house.

5 As he approached the place where the man Gi-zi lived,
the Elder Gi-myu sang a song of enquiry as follows,

"Where is the Elder Gi-zi?
Is the Elder Gi-zi at home?"

The Elder Gi-zi's retainers heard him and sang in reply,

10 "The Elder Gi-zi is on Mount Mi-lie,
That mountain so high,
The better to pasture the Elder Gi-zi's flocks and herds.
The Elder Gi-zi is not at home.

15 But on Ox-day when the ox lies prone,
Or Tiger-day when the tiger sleeps,
Then, please do come!"

The Elder Gi-myu returned, and, having come back, remained
until Ox-day and Tiger-day then he went and sang,

"Where is the Elder Gi-zi?
Is the Elder Gi-zi at home?"

20 The Elder Gi-zi's retainers heard him
and they sang in reply,

25 "The Elder Gi-myu has travelled far and long,
Alas that his time is not the time of coming together,
That his season is not the season of coming together,
For the Elder Gi-zi is not at home.

The Elder Gi-zi is gathering bamboo seed on yonder mountain range,
Gathering bamboo seed to feed the soldiers.
But on Ox-day when the ox lies prone,
Or Tiger-day when the tiger sleeps, please do come!"

30 The Elder Gi-myu returned, and remained until Ox-day and Tiger-day really came,
Then he went back and sang,

35 "Alas for the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Gi-myu,
Two comrades and friends well matched,
Good companions indeed!
Where is the Elder Gi-zi?
Is the Elder Gi-zi at home yet?"

The Elder Gi-zi's retainers and soldiers sang in reply,

40 "The Elder Gi-myu has travelled far and long,
Risking his life and taxing his strength,
But the Elder Gi-zi is not at home.

The Elder Gi-zi has gone cutting wild herbs along the valley slopes,
Cutting wild herbs to feed his wife.
But on Dog-day or Pig-day please do come!"

45 The Elder Gi-myu then returned and remained until Dog-day and Pig-day saying,
"This time it could be that we may meet!"
So with a purpose the Elder Gi-myu went, and singing, he said,

50 "Alas for the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Gi-myu,
Those two comrades and friends so well matched!
Where is the Elder Gi-zi?
Is the Elder Gi-zi at home?"

The Elder Gi-zi's retainers sang in reply,

55 "Alas that his time is not a time of coming together,
That his season is not a season of coming together.
The Elder Gi-zi is collecting hawthorn berries on the river bank,
Is collecting hawthorn berries to nourish the family.
Tomorrow certainly please do come".

60 The Elder Gi-myu returned and remained waiting.
Next day, to be certain, before it was light,
the Elder Gi-myu rose and, leading his retainers, went and reached that place,
then, singing, he said,

"Alas for the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Gi-myu,
Those two comrades and friends so well, so very well matched!
Where is the Elder Gi-zi?
Is the Elder Gi-zi at home?"

65 This the Elder Gi-zi heard,
heard the sound of the Elder Gi-myu's voice raised in song.
The Elder Gi-zi arose and hurried to come and open the door,
arose and hurried down.
So the Elder Gi-myu and the Elder Gi-zi
70 those two comrades and friends rejoiced,
those comrades and friends laughed together.

Episode 2.

As a result the Elder Gi-myu and the Elder Gi-zi, the two of them, wanted to go together to secure the whole territory every where, but the times were so bad that no one had the least little bit of anything. Robbers and soldiers were attacking one another, and when people wanted to sow or reap there was no peace. In the Elder Gi-zi's family there was but one small female dog remaining.

The mother said to the Elder Gi-zi, "Honestly we two have nothing to set before our guest. The only thing that is left is this small bitch. Let us take and kill it for you to share and eat, and so let us part". She wanted them to take and kill the bitch, and having eaten, go their several ways. But the Elder Gi-zi remonstrated with his wife saying, "Do not kill it! Keep this bitch, it will be your friend". Having spoken, the Elder Gi-myu and the Elder Gi-zi went to set right the whole neighbourhood. They were gone for "thirteen years", [that is upwards of a year] leaving in the spring and returning some considerable time later. When the Elder Gi-zi was still a long way away, the small bitch was wagging its little tail and went to welcome him, but his children had gone off with the herdsman and shepherds, and his wife, dressed in old ragged clothes was out in the shack outside.

The Elder Gi-zi said, "This dog must not be killed because a dog is very loyal to the person who treats it well". On account of this the Elder GI-zi issued an instruction to his descendants and to the children, "Do not kill a dog, keep it to guard the house. Let the young women, when the men are away in the forest, be at pains to guard the house, just as a dog guards his master's house. Never again kill a dog, let the women make such killing a matter of great concern".

Episode 3.

Later there were events which explained matters further.

At the time of the story songs there was so much fighting below and above that people became very short of food. Thieves and robbers abounded, and there was so much aggravation from robbers and soldiers that people could neither raise crops nor farm. If any one had just a little it would be seized and consumed by the robbers. Those who were strong were attacking one another, and everywhere through all the world there was much fighting. The Elder Bi-zai led out his retainers and soldiers to secure the territories. The Elder Bi-zai was famous. Whenever the Chinese sought to kill him he did not die. They might cut off his head but he would grow another! The Chinese might kill him but they could not overcome him. So the Chinese brought a very pretty young Chinese woman to be his wife and keep house for him.

The Chinese woman looked after our Miao elders very carefully, but with malicious intent she asked the Elder Bi-zai, "How is it that when your head is cut off, you still have another one?" To begin with the Elder Bi-zai was unwilling to say, and after that, he tricked the Chinese and killed so many of them that only a few remained. In fact he nearly exterminated them. But then presently, he did tell her and the Chinese woman went and taught a group of her relatives how they could come and harass him.

Episode 4.

At this time when speaking of their leader, the retainers were not permitted to call him the "Elder Gi-myu". When they met one another they simply called him "the old man", and also

they all spoke of one another as "the man", since they were not willing to let the Chinese know who the head person was, for fear that, if the Chinese could distinguish who was the head and leader of the retainers and soldiers, they would take his life. For this reason also they composed songs when visiting one another. So if they were going to their own folk, they would always sing a song enquiring whether there were any strangers present, and in this way our Miao retainers and soldiers were able with assurance to distinguish their own people.

The descendants of the Elder Gi-myu.

Told by Wang Tien-chun.

Introduction

This narrative, entirely in prose, covers some of the same ground as the two previous pieces by Yang Ya-go and Wang Da-lu. It concerns the Elder Bi-zai and his successor, the Elder Gi-myu, and it is explained that these correspond respectively to the modern Miao clan names Hmao-yeu and Hmao-chi. Yang Ya-go likewise mentions two elders, the Elder Gi-zi who was also succeeded by the Elder Gi-myu. Wang Da-lu began with the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Gi-myu, and then, using another source, continued with the Elder Bi-zai and the Elder Gi-myu. Now it may be that these stories represent the activities of three different Miao clans, but it appears more likely that there were only two, and that both the Elder Gi-zi and the Elder Bi-zai should be identified with the modern clan name Hmao-yeu. As would be expected, with material drawn from different sources, there are inconsistencies in detail between the different writers, but it is clear that the Hmao-yeu and Hmao-chi shared a tradition which prohibited the killing and eating of dogs, and also the eating of any animal heart, and the present story was told to explain the origin of this taboo.

Wang Tien-chun's piece began with a story to explain the age-old enmity between Miao and Chinese. It says that the Chinese wanted to perform ancestral rites, and the word used is "zi". Now this was the name of a specific Miao ritual, and not therefore strictly applicable to Chinese ceremonies. However, so far as the narrative is concerned, it does not matter. The point was that the ancestors had to be propitiated, and according to custom, this required the offering of the pig's heart. Failure to do so might result in vengeance being exacted by offended ancestors, and, more immediately, the family would lose face before the assembled guests. This explains the savage reaction resulting in the death of the child, when the pig's heart was not produced when required.

According to Wang Da-lu, the Elder Bi-zai possessed magical powers. The Chinese could not kill him, for whenever they struck his head off he promptly grew another. Wang Tien-chun says that there was a story circulating among the Chinese that the Miao had an enchanter who could graft the head back on a decapitated army commander or cause a new head to grow, and, to confuse the Chinese, the Elder Bi-zai issued an order that no personal names were henceforth to be used. Everyone, civilian, soldier or officer was simply to be called "A yeu", that is "Man". Thus the Chinese, having killed the Miao commander called "A-yeu", then discovered that commander "A yeu" was still there leading the fighters! Could it be that the severed head had indeed been replaced? Another result of the Elder Bi-zai's edict was that the whole clan became known as "Hmao-yeu".

The final revelation, by the Elder Gi-myu to the Chinese woman, that the removal of his dog would leave him vulnerable to attack, is of greater significance than might at first appear. On a practical level, if the dog were taken away, an enemy could approach undetected. On a psychological level, in the case of these two clans where the dog was held in special regard, its removal would have the same effect on morale as the loss of a lucky charm on the superstitious.

The descendants of the Elder Gi-myu.

Told by Wang Tien-chun.

The fathers recall that at a time long ago Chinese and Miao were still living together on the Plain of Cai-sie-mi-fu. The Chinese Man Jio-gha-lao and our Miao Elder Bi-zai were very good friends. Since the pair were such good companions, such good friends, when a year came that the Man Jio-gha-lao wished to perform ancestral rites, he invited the Elder Bi-zai and the Miao to come and prepare the food.

So it was that at the time of the spirit worship and the entertaining of guests, the Elder Bi-zai went to the Chinese family to prepare the meat and food. Now on that day as he was preparing dishes for the Chinese family, he was boiling meat in a large pot on the stove. At breakfast time his son, carrying a small basin of food he was eating, came and sat down with his father in front of the fire in the stove to eat it up. When he had finished he went home again.

The time for evening meal came, but the Chinese family wanted first to make the offering due to the spirits, and presently serve the evening meal. So they sent to the Elder Bi-zai and those preparing the dishes, to dip up the pig's heart to take and offer to the ancestors. However they failed to dip up the pig's heart for the Chinese man to take along. The Chinese family was very angry and said, "Don't you realize this heart is essential according to our custom for offerings to spirits of the ancestors? If they do not receive the heart as an offering, our family ancestors will become discontented. Go quickly and find it for us to offer to the spirits".

They turned over the meat in the pot, dipping it up from this side and that side to see, but for all their dipping they could not see it. They searched this way and that way, but failed to turn it over. At this point there was some one who had seen the child come at breakfast time, carrying a small bowl of food, and sit there for a time, and they thought that, may be, the pig's heart had been dipped up for the lad to have with his meal. So a group of the Chinese family's workmen and servants went to get the Elder Bi-zai's child at his house. They took the boy and cut open his stomach to see if in fact the heart had been given to him to eat. Immediately they saw only rice and egg there inside the stomach. There was no heart.

The Chinese having cut open and killed his son, the Elder Bi-zai stood up, he spat and said, "Just because I could not find the pig's heart the Chinese have cut open my son's stomach and killed him!" Angrily he went and took the pot and turned out all the contents. There was the pig's heart, stuck in the boiling to the bottom of the pot. Quickly he took it, went and handed it to the Chinese family, and said to them, "I boiled the pig's heart, but in spite of prolonged searching, could not find it because it was stuck to the bottom of the pot. Now you have taken my son and killed him by cutting open his stomach. Be sure you are going to pay for my son's life!" So it was, the Miao deployed soldiers, and the Chinese also deployed soldiers, below and above there were battles and fighting and attacks which never finished, never ended. As the fighting went back and forth, it seemed to the Chinese that our Miao soldiers must have some spirit- man, some enchanter, who, when one head was cut off caused another to grow, or when one was cut off and fell down, raised and joined it on again, for they could not win. So the Chinese reconsidered their fighting methods, seeking some stratagem.

The Miao Elder Bi-zai said, "Give an order to the soldiers and retainers, that, when they speak of the officer in charge, they should never refer to him as 'the officer'. An officer, or the one in charge of soldiers, should only be referred to as 'zi-yeu', 'the man'. Likewise, an officer, speaking of a retainer, should simply call him, 'the man'". Thus it was that everybody, each called the other "the man", so that the Chinese had no idea who was the officer in charge of the soldiers. Moreover, right down to the present time, you call me "the man", and I also call you "the man", and it goes back and forth, each calling the other "the man". So too, with regard to the family, "Hmao-yeu", it traces its source and beginning to this, the root and origin of the name "Hmao-yeu" came from here.

Later a conflict again arose between the Miao and the Chinese. The Elder Gi-myu led the soldiers fighting the Chinese. The Elder Gi-myu went in search of trees for making cross-bows, out on the precipitous cliffs, the echoing cliffs piled high, and fashioned good cross-bows for fighting. They took the cross-bows and shot the Chinese, nearly wiping them out, until the Chinese were afraid to venture outside. Then the Chinese devised a plan. They chose a very pretty young Chinese girl and pressed her as a gift upon the Elder Gi-myu to serve as a house maid. The Elder Gi-myu said to the Chinese, "You cannot harm me. You have made this plan with care, nevertheless I am not at all afraid of you, and you cannot deceive me".

So it was that the Chinese brought this Chinese woman to come and live in our Miao country. She learned our Miao customs and adopted our Miao habits. She took an interest in the Miao country all around, constantly observing how settlements and countryside were situated. She behaved as a very good friend to the Miao, and as time passed became very well acquainted with our Miao ways. She wanted to discover why, when never the Chinese captured and beheaded a leader in charge of the soldiers, he sprouted a new head. She asked the Elder Gi-myu, "How is it that when your head is chopped off and falls down, you can grow another and join it on?" The Elder Gi-myu said, "What do you want with these matters?" The Chinese woman said, "I have heard the group of my relatives say that these Miao have some spirit-man, some enchanter, who is very successful in fighting us Chinese, so that when one head is chopped off and falls down, they are able to grow another and join it on. If you are willing to tell me, I simply want to find out if it is true or false".

The Elder Gi-myu said, "Your relatives are not able to fight against us and win, and the reason is that when you Chinese were engaged in worshipping the spirits, you took our child and killed him by cutting open his stomach. Thus you transgressed while worshipping the spirits, and until you give a life in exchange, you will not be able to conquer us, and when you chop off one head another will grow. I will tell you, but not to tell your relatives, that when they capture a leader and only chop off his head, they cannot kill him. They must also cut out his liver, fry and eat it, only then will the leader be properly dead!"

Not long after this conversation, the Chinese woman sent a message to tell her relatives, and her relatives sent soldiers to fight the Miao. In the course of the fighting the Chinese captured the officer in charge of the soldiers. Instead of chopping off his head, they cut out his liver, fried and ate it. Nevertheless the officer continued to live just as before. He fought the Chinese retainers and soldiers till, with heads turned about they fled in retreat.

The Chinese woman was aggrieved, and said to the Elder Gi-myu, "You deceived my relatives and humiliated them. When they cut out, fried and ate the liver of that officer of yours in charge of the soldiers, he remained alive just the same!" The Elder Gi-myu said, "What do your relatives know? They attack our bodies only, and so are unable to kill us. When they attack they should observe where the shadow is, and attack the place where the

shadow falls, then they will kill their man. They must aim their attack at the shadow, not at the body!" Having been told this the Chinese woman was very happy.

The Chinese woman sent a message telling her relatives that if they came to fight, their soldiers and retainers must aim their attack at the shadow, only so would they overcome the Miao officer. Her relatives, having heard the message, prepared to lead trained and picked soldiers as a body in columns to fight with the Elder Gi-myu.

When the Chinese retainers and soldiers in a winding line arrived at a certain stretch of road, the Elder Gi-myu's retainers and soldiers were carefully hidden, waiting for the fight. The Chinese aimed their attack at the shadows of the retainers, but the Miao soldiers aimed their attack at the bodies of the Chinese soldiers. They pressed the attack until, of the Man Jio-gha-lao's retainers and soldiers, very few indeed remained. After the battle, as soon as the Chinese woman heard the news that the retainers and soldiers of her relatives had been utterly defeated, she was overcome with weeping, and secretly returned to her grandparents' home. She was no longer willing to serve as the Elder Gi-myu's house maid because the Elder Gi-myu had been unwilling to reveal anything to her, and not only so had deliberately deceived her relatives, bringing disaster upon them.

Since they were neither able to devise a method of getting at the spirit-man, the enchanter who, when a head was chopped off caused another to sprout, nor yet to work out how this could take place, the Chinese tried another stratagem; they would make an agreement with the Elder Gi-myu. "From now on let neither party touch the other. Come let us talk together and reach a clear understanding, so that neither side need deploy soldiers. Let us set things right by discussion".

Nevertheless the Chinese had no change of heart. As they thought it over, they dearly wanted to know where he was hidden, this head man who, when his head was cut off could still remain alive. However they had no scheme at all, other than for that young lass to go and win hearts. Presently, after making enquiries, they tracked her down, and coaxed the young Chinese woman to agree to return as the Elder Gi-myu's house-maid, just as before.

Not long after, the Chinese woman returned, back to the Elder Gi-myu's home, to live as his house maid. From now on the Chinese woman assiduously sought to become a true member of the Elder Gi-myu's family. In conversation, she avoided asking why it was that a head could be severed and yet be unbroken. Enough for her conscientiously to serve the whole family. She never made fun of anyone, and disliked accompanying those who just passed the time away. She cherished the Elder Gi-myu, that he might soften his attitude towards her.

Afterwards the Elder Gi-myu concluded that the Chinese woman had had a change of heart and become truly a member of the family. He thought that from now on the Chinese race could not touch the Miao, that there had been sufficient, more than enough, fighting, so he deliberately spoke thus to Chinese woman: "These two communities of ours lived together, and originally were very good friends. Now because, in the boiling, the pig's heart stuck to the bottom of the pot and we failed to dip it up for the worship of the spirits, you took our elder's son, cut open his stomach, and killed him. So you transgressed in the worship of the spirits, and it was necessary for you to give life in exchange for our son's life. Therefore we arose, and deployed our soldiers to take revenge. But now, having killed so many of you Chinese, reparation for life has been made, and I am contented, it is fully sufficient. Now if anyone wants to harm me, they have only to collect and carry off this small dog of mine, then if they come and fight, they will fight and kill me". Ever after this, if the Chinese came

fighting against us, they would first carry off the dogs, so that they could harm us Miao, fighting until we feared for our lives.

As a result the Hmao-yeu family together with the Hmao-chi family, through all the generations down to the present day, when they killed other livestock or a pig, would give the heart to some relative by marriage to eat, and for ever, they themselves will not eat it. In recollection of the troubles encountered by their forbears, the Hmao-chi and the Hmao-yeu families will not eat an animal's heart.

The old folk had this saying for the instruction of the younger brothers who were to follow, "A Chinese is not a friend, a stone is not a pillow". So ends the story of the Elder Bi-zai.

The descendants of Zie-gha-lao.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

Zie-gha-lao was the folk hero who brought the Miao Homeland under cultivation and taught the people the arts of agriculture, wine making and herbal medicine. In Yang Zhi's version two thirds of the song are devoted to these activities while the final third tells how he fled southwards, driven from the Homeland by the Chinese.

When considering the songs about Zhi-shi-lao, the clearer of the forests, it was noted that between the issue of Document E in 1949 and Document K in 1952 a theory seems to have been developed which placed Zhi-shi-lao in the far western province of Qing-hai. The evidence on which this theory was based was not given, but the text of the song by Yang Zhi was deliberately altered to accord with it, and these alterations were reproduced in the later Documents L (1981) and N (1988). Something similar appears to have happened to this song. A note written partly in Miao and partly in Chinese appears at the beginning of the song in Document K, and is reproduced, with slight alterations, in Document L. It reads:

- (In Miao) The time when they lived at Die-fao-tai.
- (In Chinese) Lived at the time of Shen Nong.
- (In Miao) Dwelt in Shen-xi and Shan-xi.
- (In Chinese) The upper regions of the Yellow River.

The name Die-fao-tai comprises three Miao words meaning "plain", "head" or "top", and "stone slab" or "stone steps" respectively. This may be the translation of a Chinese name, but no Chinese equivalent is given. Shen Nong was the legendary Chinese emperor, who taught the people husbandry in 2838 BC, and this note suggests that Zie-gha-lao was his Miao counterpart. The songs are unanimous in maintaining that the homeland was by a great river called Ndu-na-yi-mo. The theory which placed Zhi-shi-lao in Qing-hai Province seems also to have identified the homeland as lying in an area called Die-fao-tai, and the Ndu-na-yi-mo as the Yellow River. In order to make it conform to this theory, in Document K the text of line 4 has been altered to read:

"Reached Die-fao-tai, the Plains of Li-mo beside the waters of the Ndu-na-yi-mo."

In line 19 where Ndu-na-yi-mo occurs again a note in brackets written in Chinese says specifically that this was the Yellow River. Document L follows Document K, but Document N goes even further. In both line 4 and line 19 the original name Ndu-na-yi-mo is replaced by "Dlix lieb dlix ndlod" which means "River red river muddy" thus identifying it with the Yellow River. Whatever the merits of the Yellow River theory may be, although explanatory notes and comments are entirely in order, it is not legitimate to alter the text of a song to make it conform with this, or any other hypothesis.

In lines 26 to 29 an animal called niu-nci-niu-nca is mentioned as being a beast suitable for carrying loads but not used for pulling the plough. None of my helpers could identify this creature. However another Miao friend, with whom I was reading St. Mark's Gospel, when we came to the word "camel", volunteered the information that the "old people" had a word for this, it was "niu-nca", but now nobody knows it. (The New Testament simply uses the Chinese "lo-to".) If, in the course of their migrations, the Miao had lived at some time near

the Mongolian Desert they would certainly have had a word for camel. At the end of the song, the lands brought under cultivation by Zie-gha-lao were seized by the Chinese. The name employed for them both here and regularly in the songs is "Sha-ndrao-jio-di-vao". "Sha-ndrao" means a people or a race, "jio" means "to carry" or "to bear" and is here used as a conjunction, while "di-vao" means "ruling" or "governing". Thus the whole name means, "the governing race", "the people bearing rule", "the ruling race".

Ndrang-li-mo, meaning the Plains of Li-mo, mentioned in line 4 is regularly linked in the songs, though not here, with Nzhi-mi-li. "Nzhi" means a tract of land, so that this name is translated the "Tracts of Mi-li". It seems likely that these were the names given to the country on either side of the great river Ndu-na-yi-mo. Thus when Zie-gha-lao fled from the Chinese, leaving the Plains of Li-mo, he crossed the river, lines 83 and 84, and then travelled away south of "Ndu-nzhi", which is presumably another name for Nzhi-mi-li, the land on the other side of the river.

There is some question whether line 87 is original. (See notes on the Miao text.) If it is, then it represents a considerable leap both in time and distance, for it brings the Miao to "the borders of Bw-bw". Bw-bw is the name of the ancient Yi overlord of the area of N.E. Yunnan around Zhaotung before it was occupied by the Chinese. The other name Sao-nchang, may be related to Sao-no, another Yi overlord whose estates were located in eastern Guizhou around Weining.

M206
The descendants of Zie-gha-lao.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

When the sky began
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
The people's Zie-gha-lao reached,
Reached the Plains of Li-mo beside the waters of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.

5 Then ordinary people filled the earth,
And common folk had become a multitude.

The people's Zie-gha-lao was a great sage,
Indeed Zie-gha-lao was famous,
For Zie-gha-lao understood the methods,
10 And Zie-gha-lao would teach the ordinary people to farm,
Zie-gha-lao would teach the common folk to till.

There came a day when Zie-gha-lao drove out,
Drove out the water buffalo to level the fields,
He levelled rice fields, grouped along the banks of the river,
15 He levelled flat, long rice fields in the midst of the plain.

Zie-gha-lao brought clear water to irrigate the wet fields,
He brought streams of water to irrigate the dry fields.

Zie-gha-lao drove out the water buffalo to go and drain,
To drain the flat lands of the Ndu-na-yi-mo, the great river Hmao-shi.
20 Zie-gha-lao drove out the yellow oxen to plough the dry fields,
And drove out the water buffalo to plough the wet fields.

Zie-gha-lao drove out the yellow oxen to harrow the dry fields,
He harrowed the dry fields fine and flat,
Zie-gha-lao drove out the water buffalo to harrow the wet fields,
25 He harrowed them flat and smooth as the bottom of a large grain basket.

Zie-gha-lao drove out the camels across the water,
Zie-gha-lao drove out the camels to carry the seed corn.
The camels were not for ploughing the land,
Rather the camels were used for carrying loads.

30 Zie-gha-lao planted millet in the dry fields,
Zie-gha-lao planted rice in the wet fields,
Zie-gha-lao put wheat, put barley in the tilled fields.
Zie-gha-lao's corn sprang up and the land grew green,
Beautifully green like moss.

35 Now Zie-gha-lao's corn was good, it covered all parts,
And his crops were good as they covered each place.
Zie-gha-lao's millet grew high to the waist,

And his rice grew high to the girdle, even higher, to the arm pit.
 While the sky remained constant,
 40 Zie-gha-lao's corn ripened in all parts,
 His crops ripened in each place.
 When Zie-gha-lao gathered his corn, gathered his crops, it filled the estate.

Then Zie-gha-lao took,
 Took millet and made yeast,
 45 Took wild millet and made wine.

Zie-gha-lao carried his slender yellow staff,
 Zie-gha-lao pounded the extract of wild herbs,
 Zie-gha-lao gave it to those who were sick and they all grew well,
 Zie-gha-lao gave it to those who were ill and they all recovered.

50 While the sky remained constant,
 The ordinary folk among the people knew,
 For thus the common people used,
 Used many kinds of wild herbs for sickness,
 Knew many kinds of wild herbs for illness,
 55 And the origin of their tradition lies here.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
 Zie-gha-lao's corn stood bright green in the fields on his land,
 Zie-gha-lao's corn stood bright green in the fields in his place.

While the sky remained constant,
 60 Zie-gha-lao's corn, standing bright green, vexed,
 Vexed the Ruling Race day by day,
 Until the Ruling Race grew black at heart,
 Ready to gnaw, ready to crush Zie-gha-lao's bones.

So the Rulers arrived from the Rulers land, thus the Rulers arrived,
 65 The Race came from the Race's land, thus the Race came,
 The Ruling Race came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
 To drive Zie-gha-lao out and make him flee.

So Zie-gha-lao left,
 Left his corn standing bright green in the fields on his land,
 70 Left his corn standing bright green in the fields in his place.

So Zie-gha-Lao left,
 Left his corn. left his crops there on the estate,
 And, gathering all his family, Zie-gha-lao fled.

The banks of the Ndu-na-yi-mo were far apart,
 75 But the Ndu-na-yi was spanned by a rope of yarn,
 And the Na-yi-mo by a rope of bamboo.

The Ndu-na-yi was crossed by a ferry,
 And the Na-yi-mo by a boat.
 The ferry floated lightly on the water,

80 While the boat sank down deep in the water.
 The ferry went straight across,
 The boat by a devious course.

 So Zie-gha-lao with his descendants crossed,
 With all his posterity crossed over,
85 Crossed over and went forward,
 Went forward to the south of Ndu-zhi,
 Went forward to Sao-nchang and the borders of Bw-bw.

 Thus it is ended.

M207
The Song of Zie-gha-lao.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

Introduction

In this version of the song of Zie-gha-lao, collected in the Mi-er-gou area in 1947, Lu Xing-fu covers the same ground as Yang Zhi, but omits much of the descriptive detail. Thus Zie-gha-lao's agricultural activities are reduced to only two fifths of the total song. There is no sign in this version of the deliberate alterations to the text which are found in the later copies of Yang Zhi's version.

M207
The song of Zie-gha-lao.

Collected by Lu Xing-fu.

The people's Zie-gha-lao was a great sage,
The people's Zie-gha-lao was great and famous.

The day came when Zie-gha-lao went out to level the fields.
He levelled smooth, long rice fields in the midst of the plain,
5 He levelled rice fields grouped together along the banks of the river,
And the day came when Zie-gha-lao drove out the yellow oxen and buffalo to
harrow the fields.

He brought clear water to irrigate the wet fields,
He brought streams of water to irrigate the dry fields.
He planted rice in the wet fields,
10 And he put wheat and barley in the dry fields.

On reaching Snake-month or Horse-month,
Zie-gha-lao's corn stood bright green in the fields on his land,
His corn stood bright green in the fields in his place.

Zie-gha-lao's corn standing bright green vexed,
15 Vexed the Ruling Race day by day,
Until the Ruling Race grew black at heart.

The Ruling Race would cross over and seize,
Seize Zie-gha-lao's corn standing bright green in the fields on his land,
Seize Zie-gha-lao's corn standing bright green in the fields in his place
20 The Race came from the Race's land, so the Race came,
The Rulers arrived from the Ruler's place, so the Rulers arrived,
The Ruling Race arrived from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di.

Zie-gha-lao could not resist them,
So, taking his descendants, his posterity, he fled.
25 The ferry went straight across,
The boat by a devious course,

Thus Zie-gha-lao with his descendants crossed,
With all his posterity he crossed over.
They crossed directly and went forward,
30 Went to the south of Ndu-nzhi.

This is sung that all the descendants, the posterity of Zie-gha-lao may recall,
It is sung that all the descendants, the posterity of Zie-gha-lao may remember.

M211
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

Sung by Yang Zhi

Introduction.

This is the first of the two songs concerning the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no, and it is the longest and most elaborate of all the conflict songs. Two Chinese attacks, one over land and the other using boats, were heavily defeated before the Golden City was finally given up, and when the Chinese advanced south towards Rice City they were again beaten back twice. In the end, what turned the tables against the Miao was the use of gunpowder. “Fire-crackers” are mentioned quite regularly in the conflict songs. Together with shouting, foot-stamping and blasts on various kinds of horns, they were a means employed by the Chinese for striking fear into the enemy. The same word is used here, but, whatever they were, these “fire-crackers” were buried, and detonated when the Miao soldiers were passing, with devastating effect. Nowhere else is this particular device mentioned.

In this song and the next there are notes of criticism, not found in any subsequent piece, of the Miao soldiers and their leaders. Here they are rebuked for their lack of vigilance which allowed the Chinese to seize the Lion’s Throat pass, and led to the loss of Rice City and the fertile Plain of Li-vu.

M211
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no came into Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di,
To the Tracts of Mi-li, the Plains of Li-mo, and the Golden City.
- 5 The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were the people's great sages,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no, the famous ones,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were the people's great generals.
- Who were fierce soldiers?
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were fierce soldiers.
- 10 Who were terrifying soldiers?
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were terrifying soldiers.
- The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no trained soldiers without respect of day,
They made soldiers without respect of night.
They made soldiers who would slay to the end,
- 15 They trained soldiers who would slay as they went.
In rain the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no went training soldiers,
In sunshine the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no went exercising soldiers.
- The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no maintained,
Maintained a great host of cavalry,
- 20 Maintained a great host of retainers,
Maintained a great host of soldiers.
- Training soldiers, the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no filled the three plains of the
Tracts of Mi-li,
Exercising soldiers, they filled the seven river basins of the Plains of Li-mo.
- In training the soldiers practised swordsmanship,
- 25 Practising on the three plains of the Tracts of Mi-li.
On exercise the soldiers laid ambushes,
Laying them in the seven river basins of the Plains of Li-mo.
In training all understood,
In ambushing each one succeeded.
- 30 While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Diao-jiao and the Chinese Leader Gi-yie threatened menacingly,
Like a storm of rain, thunder and hail threatening and black,
Like a storm of rain, thunder and hail threatening to break.
- The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no whispered together,
- 35 "As rain, thunder and hail damage crops,
So the business of making soldiers damages posterity".

This, because the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao
 threatened to break out,
 To break out and come rushing from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
 To cross over and seize the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di,
 40 The Tracts of Mi-li, the Plains of Li-mo and the Golden City.

The Elder Gi-vu was heavy-hearted,
 The Elder Gi-no was sad at heart.
 Maidens and youths, and maidens betrothed were heavy-hearted.
 Married couples all were sad at heart.

45 When word came back to those seeking soldiers each one heard,
 Heard that it would be a life and death struggle with the Ruling Race.
 The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no went forth,
 With the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao to do battle, so
 they went.

50 Strapped on their backs the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no carried cross-bows,
 And they carried swords strapped to their belts.
 On the right, they carried carefully a quiver of arrows and a steel,
 On the left, they carried carefully that most useful article, a pouch.

That the retainers and soldiers might be distinguished by their officers,
 They all wore eagle plumes on their heads.
 55 That the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no would be recognized by the soldiers,
 The Elder Gi-vu rode a war-stallion, all red,
 And the Elder Gi-no rode a war-horse, all dappled.

For the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao they waited,
 Waited at the pass in the gorge of the Tracts of Mi-li,
 60 To fight at the meeting of the waters of the Plains of Li-mo.

The soldiers of the Ruling Race arrived in companies,
 Blowing echoing calls on their cow-horns,
 Blowing resounding calls on their bamboo horns,
 All to strike fear into the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

65 The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were unafraid.
 The soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no yelled from both sides.
 On horse-back and on foot they advanced from the far side,
 On horse-back and on foot they advanced from the near side.

They shot the companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers till everywhere was rotting
 flesh,
 70 They fought till everywhere was flowing blood.
 They crushed the Ruling Race down into the gorge,
 Fighting till the Ruling Race was floating down in the midst of the water.

.In a single day the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no encountered,
 Encountered the Ruling Race seventeen times,
 75 Until the Ruling Race could fight no more.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no crushed,
Crushed them at the pass in the gorge of the Tracts of Mi-li, sparing none that
breathed,
Crushed them at the meeting of the waters of the Plains of Li-mo, sparing no one's
life.

80 So the Ruling Race returned,
Returned to the West of Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
And the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no remained in the Tracts of Mi-li, the Plains
of Li-mo and the Golden City,
Having crushed the Ruling Race for seven years.

When the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no recalled the forced labour of training
soldiers,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no smiled,
85 But when they recalled the forced labour of the battle,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no laughed aloud.

For the reason that the Ruling Race coveted,
Coveted the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's meeting of streams on the Tracts of
Mi-li,
Coveted the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's broad plain of the Plains of Li-o,
90 To traverse it, journeying without rest, took half a month,
To cross it, journeying straight and without deviation, took six days,

For this reason, the meeting of the streams of the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-
mo,
Vexed the Ruling Race every day,
Until the Ruling Race grew black at heart,
95 Ready to crush the bones of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

Among the people the Elder Gi-vu's garments bore a design of spots,
And the Elder Gi-no's garments bore a checkered design.

Who maintained a great host of soldiers in their companies?
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no maintained,
100 Maintained a great host of soldiers in their companies.
So the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no remained in the Tracts of Mi-li and the
Plains of Li-mo.

In sunshine the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out the soldiers,
In cloud the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no deployed the soldiers,
Filling the three plains of the Tracts of Mi-li,
105 And filling the seven river basins of the Plains of Li-mo.

When the soldiers were led out they turned together,
When the soldiers were deployed they moved together,
When the soldiers were deployed they lay down together,
When the soldiers were led out they rose up together.
110 So they were taught to avoid the swords and spears of the Ruling Race.

While the sky remained constant,

The Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Diao-jiao threatened to fill the
land,
Like billowing clouds that fill the sky with blackness.
They would cross over and seize the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo,
crushing them flat.

115 The Elder Gi-vu was heavy hearted,
The Elder Gi-no was sad at heart.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out,
Led out the soldiers in companies and returned to block the way,
To block the way at the pass in the gorge of the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-
mo,
120 And to fight at the water pool of the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo.

When the companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race came,
They came aboard flat boats built of straight timbers,
They came aboard keeled boats built of curved timbers.

The officers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no just waited,
125 Waited for the companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race to arrive.
Then carefully they stretched their bending cross-bows with their feet,
And carefully drew out their arrows with their hands.

In a pattern of curves the arrows flew and hit,
Hit the flat boats which sank in mid-stream,
130 Hit the keeled boats making them sink too,
And hit those destined as food for the fish, more than could be counted.

The Ruling Race wept together,
But the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no laughed aloud.
The Ruling Race could fight no more,
135 So the Ruling Race returned home.

Nevertheless the Ruling Race did not lose heart,
But came again into the borders of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no,
Like tigers with much cunning,
And like lions with great cunning,
140 To savage the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no to death.

The companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race were like driving sand,
When the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no returned with their companies of soldiers
to block the way,
And with apprehension the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no conferred.

"It were better to abandon the Tracts of Mi-li with the Plains of Li-mo,
145 For the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo are filled,
Filled as a river in spate about to burst out".

So the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led,
Led the companies of soldiers back to crush,
To crush the Ruling Race in the deep valley,

150 So the little ones and the women might flee ahead,
Might flee to the Plain of Li-vu and the Rice City.

The Rice City stood,
Stood on the fertile banks of the southern river,
And the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no founded a settlement on the flat land there,
155 Building thatched houses in Rice City.

There the swaying millet ripened,
There a fine rice harvest matured.

While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Diao-jiao came threatening,
160 Like rain with thunder clouds flying, threatening to break,
To cross over and seize the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's Rice City.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out,
Led out the companies of soldiers and returned to block the way,
To block the way at "the lion's throat" in the Plain of Li-vu,
165 And to fight at "the lion's gullet".
They fought until all the officers of the Ruling Race fell.

The ancestors considered this great forest resembled,
Resembled the throat of a lion,
There they fought the Ruling Race,
170 And crushed the Ruling Race for half a year.

But the officers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no were not on the alert,
And the Ruling Race came to fight at "the lion's throat",
And they seized "the lion's gullet".

The Elder Gi-vu was heavy hearted,
175 The Elder Gi-no was sad at heart.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out,
Led out the companies of soldiers and returned and fought,
Fought the Ruling Race as far,
As far as the banks of the river Hmao-shi.

180 The companies of soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no rode,
Rode on stallions, on war-horses and pursued,
Pursued the Ruling Race right down to the great river Hmao-shi where they
perished.
So the Ruling Race could fight no more.
The Ruling Race was black at heart,
185 The Ruling Race made mines and came, burying them in place,
In place for the arrival of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's companies of
soldiers.
The Ruling Race detonated the mines blowing up the ground.
So they destroyed the soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no. Every man
fell.

190 The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no wept together,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no abandoned the place,
For the Ruling Race was like a great shining river flowing in full spate,
Flowing until it filled Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di to its four corners and to the very foot of
the plain.

195 So the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no fled together.
They fled to the high mountain range of Drao-li-na,
They stayed at Dli-na-lu, Drao-zi-go and Die-zi-gyu,
Finally reaching Hmao-lu-li-jieu in sight of the lord Gi-myu.

This is sung that all the descendants may recall it,
This is sung that posterity may all remember.

Thus it is finished.

M212
The soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This, the second song about the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no, recounts the same story as the first, but in this version the Miao won only one victory before the ancient homeland was lost, and nothing is said about the flight to Rice City and the continuing conflict there. Instead it is the plight of the folk who are left that is described, using conventional, but none the less vivid, metaphors, which compare the enslaved people to ploughing oxen and pack horses. Moreover the Miao leaders and soldiers are blamed for allowing themselves to be hoodwinked by the Chinese.

M212
The soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no came into Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di,
To the Tracts of Mi-li, the Plains of Li-mo and the Golden City.

5 To fight the Ruling Race on the North side of the plain,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no maintained,
Maintained a great host of horsemen,
Maintained three thousand six hundred swordsmen.

10 The horses were trained to keep in line,
The swordsmen were trained to wield their weapons.
The horses were trained until all understood,
The swordsmen were trained until all were proficient.

15 The companies of swordsmen wore elegant eagles' plumes,
So that retainers and soldiers might be distinguished.
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no knew the strategy,
And the companies of soldiers knew the plans.

The day would come when the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no would lead out,
Lead out the companies of soldiers to do battle,
To fight in the midst of the Tracts of Mi-li, the Plains of Li-mo and the river Ndu-na-
yi.

20 So the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out,
Led out the companies of soldiers repeatedly,
And dispatched the cavalry in waves.
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no led out,
Led out the companies of soldiers from the town,

25 There were three thousand six hundred on horseback,
There were seven thousand four hundred on foot.
The companies of soldiers were divided in good order,
With one thousand officers commanding them.
Thus there were ten thousand fighting soldiers.

30 The stallions, the cavalry, moving in due order,
Went clattering away to the fight,
With whirling hooves crossing the plain,
Snorting like the rushing, the thundering of a great river.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's companies of soldiers dispersed and took
cover,
35 Took cover in the rock-walled pass of the Tracts of Mi-li,
To fight at the river in the midst of the plains of Li-mo.

They waited for the companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race to arrive,
To arrive where the great host of horsemen waited,
The three thousand six hundred coming from yonder,
40 And the seven thousand four hundred men on foot.
The companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race set off,

Set off exploding fire-crackers
To strike fear into the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no,
45 But the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no simply laughed.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's officers gave the order,
The order for the three thousand six hundred horses to charge,
While the three thousand six hundred riders
Drew their shining swords like eagles,
50 Swinging them until the young men of the Ruling Race all fell.
The galloping of the stallions of the cavalry,
Was like the rushing, the thundering of a great river.

The seven thousand four hundred men on foot
Would slay the Ruling Race until all retreated.
55 The seven thousand four hundred men on foot
Drove back the companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers and, fighting, dispersed
them.

They crushed the Ruling Race down into the midst of the water.
They fought the Ruling Race in the rock-walled pass,
Until the blood of the Ruling Race ran knee deep,
60 And the Ruling race could fight no more.

All this was because the Ruling Race coveted,
Coveted the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's four-square land of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-
di,
Which could scarcely be crossed in three month's travel,
Or fully compassed in three years.

65 But the Ruling Race did not lose heart,
The Ruling Race sought some stratagem.

The Ruling Race took straw and made effigies,
Wrapping them in cotton cloth,
Made them like the companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers who should be food for
wild beasts,
70 And set them in flat boats of straight planks,
In keeled boats of twisted planks,
And brought them to the Ndu-na-yi-mo river.

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no stood guard for three days but there was no
movement.
While the sky remained constant,
75 The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no realized
That these were only effigies wrapped in cotton cloth.

Then were the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no not in the least afraid,
And for this reason the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no relaxed.

80 Then when the guards at the foot of the plain came running to report,
That the companies of soldiers of the Ruling Race were arriving
Aboard flat boats of straight planks,
And keeled boats of twisted planks,
The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no spoke thus,
"It is only the Ruling Race behaving like children,
85 Wrapping effigies in cotton cloth to deceive people".

The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's soldiers dragged,
Dragged a wine-storage jar and set it by the fire.
The wine-storage jar effervesced and filled with froth,
Making the companies of soldiers dead drunk upon their beds,
90 It scattered the burning-tasted froth,
Making the companies of soldiers dead drunk upon their pallets.

While the companies of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's soldiers argued,
The companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers, like blowing sand,
Flowed right in among the soldiers of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no.

95 They fought the companies of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's soldiers laying
them flat,
They fought the companies of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's soldiers till they
fell headlong,
And the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no could fight no more.

So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao seized,
Seized the whole of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no's four-square land of Ndlo-
hlang-dleu-di,
100 And the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no wept together.

While the sky remained constant,
The clans of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no became.
Became ploughing oxen and pack-horses to the limit of endurance,
Became ploughing oxen and pack-horses till they were exhausted.

105 This is sung that all the descendants of the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no may
recall,
This is sung that all the posterity may remember,
This is sung for future generations until the present.

Thus it is ended.

M213
The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This is the first song in a group of four. It tells the story of the Chinese conquest of the ancient Miao homeland from the point of view of the Elder Gi-yie, an alternative name for the Elder Gi-vu of the two previous songs. After one successful defence of the homeland the clan was forced to abandon it to the invaders. The Elder himself was captured and executed, and after a short sojourn at Rice City (Lao-ndli), his family was compelled to flee far away to the South. The story of that flight is recorded in the songs about the migration to Yi territory.

Though swords and spears figure in the list of arms used by the Miao, there can be no doubt that the cross-bow was their most formidable weapon. Just stretching the bow called for considerable strength. The archer sat on the ground with his feet placed on the bow, one on either side of the stock, and drew the bow string back along the stock using both hands, until the string was caught in a notch cut across the stock. The arrow was then laid in a groove cut along the flat upper surface of the stock. When aim had been taken the string was released from the notch by pulling a small trigger, and the arrow, metal tipped and fletched with feathers, was propelled at its target with very considerable force. It was rendered more lethal by the deadly poison applied to the arrow head. Handling the cross-bow required both skill and care, but much of its effectiveness depended on catching the enemy unawares, so grass capes were worn as camouflage over the brightly coloured tribal costume. If the wearer of such a cape rode his horse at a gallop, this garment billowed out behind like the wings of a great bird.

M213
The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
At what place did the Elder Gi-yie arrive?
The Elder GI-yie arrived at Lao-u.

5 Among the people the Elder Gi-yie was a great sage,
The Elder Gi-yie was famous,
The Elder Gi-yie was a man of great wisdom.

10 Among the people the Elder Gi-yie was a fierce soldier,
The Elder Gi-yie was a tenacious soldier,
For the Elder Gi-yie was a man of war.

They say of the Elder Gi-yie,
That among the people he was a great archer.
The Elder Gi-yie wore a grass cape about his shoulders,
And the Elder Gi-yie rode a mule, a steed ash-coloured.

15 With whirling hooves they crossed the flat land,
As though flying with spread wings against a blue sky.
With whirling hooves they crossed the plain,
As though flying with spread wings within a clear sky.

20 So the Elder Gi-yie lived at Lao-u,
Seventeen li from the Ndru-na-yi-mo.

25 While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
To cross into the midst of the land of the Na-yi-mo.
The Elder Gi-yie was heavy hearted,
Maidens and youths and maidens betrothed were sad at heart.

The Elder Gi-yie saw a whet-stone for honing swords,
Sharp swords, swords for thrusting.
The Elder Gi-yie saw a hard stone for honing spears,
Sharp spears, spears to be used.

30 The Elder Gi-yie led out the soldiers in companies to block the way.
The Elder Gi-yie took his cross-bow, black and curved, slung on his back,
He took his quiver of arrows girded at his waist,
And he drove the Chinese Leader Gi-yie, fighting as they went.

35 Carefully the Elder Gi-yie stretched his bending cross-bow with his feet,
And carefully he drew out his arrows with his hand.
In a pattern of curves the arrows flew and hit home,

Until the Chinese Leader Gi-yie sought a viable way, a way to return,
To return to the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's native land.

40 But the Chinese Leader Gi-yie could not bear the thought.
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's hands were able.
What were his hands able to do?
His hands were able to build boats.

He built flat boats which went straight across.
He built keeled boats which went by a devious course.
45 Now the Ndru-na-yi was spanned by a rope of yarn,
And the Na-ji-mo by a rope of bamboo.

The flat boats floated lightly on the surface,
The keeled boats sank down in the water,
And they ferried the companies of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers across.

50 The Elder Gi-yie was heavy hearted.
The Elder Gi-yie took the soldiers in companies back to block the way,
But the soldiers of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie were very numerous indeed,
Like swarming ants they arrived.

The Elder Gi-yie could not overcome.
55 The Elder Gi-yie's stallions were seized,
And the Chinese Leader Gi-yie drove the Elder Gi-yie fighting as they went.

The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers blew,
Blew echoing calls on their cow-horns,
Blew resounding calls on their bamboo horns.
60 They let off exploding fire crackers
Stamping hard with their feet.

So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie vanquished the Elder Gi-yie,
And pinned him down on the top of a rock,
Though the Elder Gi-yie struggled like a bull.
65 The companies of the Elder Gi-yie's soldiers all fled.

The Elder Gi-yie's family had lived at Lao-u,
But the Chinese Leader Gi-yie drove them on wherever they went,
So the Elder Gi-yie's family sought,
Sought a satisfactory way for them to go where?
70 Sought a satisfactory way for them to go to Rice City.

While the sky remained constant,
The family of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie came on and reached Rice City,
So the family of the Elder Gi-yie arose and fled.

To what place did they flee?
75 They fled to Gi-chi-na-lu, to Dli-gi-trao and Drao-zi-go, the high mountain range.
Here they multiplied until they filled twelve villages.

Thus it is ended.

M214
The descendants of the Elder Gi-chi.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This, the second of the group of four songs, concerns the Elder Gi-chi, which is another name for the Elder Gi-no of the earlier songs.

The story is the same as before, but there is no mention of crossbows. Having been driven back once, the Chinese army eventually captured the homeland by crossing the river in boats at the foot of the plain, instead of coming through the narrow gorge at the head.

The Elder Gi-chi escaped to Rice City, where, we are told, stood a large tree, no doubt a sacred tree. Why this particular tree is mentioned is not immediately obvious. Possibly it was simply to identify the area in which the Gi-chi clan settled.

M214

The descendants of the Elder Gi-chi.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
At what place did the Elder Gi-chi arrive?
The Elder Gi-chi arrived on the wide plain of the Yi-bang.

5 The plain of the Yi-bang was good land,
But where, is it said, was the plain of the Yi-bang situated?
It was situated in seven sweeping bends of the river Yi-bang.

It is said that the plain of the river Yi-bang was good land,
For there the swaying millet ripened,
10 There ripened the richly clothed rice,
And there, it is said, cotton ripened, blowing lightly in the breeze.

The folk built timber-framed houses to settle in their families and live,
They built tiled houses, row on row, to settle in their families and dwell.
So the clan of the Elder Gi-chi spread abroad.

15 The Elder Gi-chi lived on the great plain of the river Yi-bang
At a distance from the river Yi-bang which could be travelled in the time that it took
to prepare breakfast.

So it was, while the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came from the Chinese country,
To cross over to the Elder Gi-chi,
20 To the plain of the Yi-bang water, the land of seven sweeping bends.

The Elder Gi-chi was heavy-hearted,
Maidens and youths and maidens betrothed were sad at heart.

The Elder Gi-chi was the people's commander of soldiers,
So the Elder Gi-chi led out the soldiers in companies to block the way,
25 To block it at the pass of Ji-sha on the river Yi-bang at the edge of the plain.

While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers arrived in companies.
They let off exploding fire-crackers,
Stamping hard with their feet,
30 To strike fear into the Elder Gi-chi.

The Elder Gi-chi was unafraid,
The Elder Gi-chi arose and went, running, he attacked,
Attacked the companies of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers who fell in all
directions,
So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie could not overcome.

35 The Chinese Leader Gi-yie sought a viable way to return.
To return where?
To return in a direction mid-way between the setting sun and the North wind,
For there lay the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's native land.

While the sky remained constant,
40 The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came by a round about way,
By a round about way, he came to the foot of the plain of the river Yi-bang.
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie boarded flat boats which went straight across,
Boarded keeled boats which went by a devious course,
And ferried the companies of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers over.

45 The Elder Gi-chi could not bear the thought,
The Elder Gi-chi took the soldiers in companies to block the way,
To block it at the foot of the plain of the river Yi-bang.

The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers blew,
Blew echoing calls on their cow horns,
50 Blew resounding calls on their bamboo horns.
They beat the hand drums until they sounded aloud,
They beat the stick drums until they sounded true, sounded near and far.

The Elder Gi-chi could not overcome,
For when the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers arrived in a body,
55 The Elder Gi-chi's soldiers in a body fled.

The Elder Gi-chi sought,
Sought a viable way, a satisfactory way for them to go where?
Satisfactory to go to the people's Rice City.

The people say,
60 Say that in the middle of the Rice City plain
There stood a hmang-bi-da tree.

Its trunk was nine fathoms around,
And nine was the number of its branches.
The branches were a place for hawks to nest,
65 And the trunk, a resting place for the Elder Gi-chi.

The original family of the Elder Gi-chi lived at Lao-u.
While the sky remained constant,
The succeeding family of the Elder Gi-chi lived at Rice City.

70 This is sung that all the Elder Gi-chi's original family may recall,
This is sung that all the Elder Gi-chi's succeeding family may remember.

Thus it is ended.

M215
The descendants of Gha-sao-hmao-byu.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This, the third song in the set of four, concerns a Miao leader called Gha-sao-hmao-byu. He is not accorded the title “yeu-lao”, Elder, as were the Clan leaders in the two previous songs. “Sao” and “Byu” are the names of two powerful Yi families on whose estates the Miao lived during the period after the homeland was lost, but Wang Ming-ji, in his note at the beginning of the fourth song, does not mention it. What he does say is that Gha-sao-hmao-byu is an old form of the Clan name Hmao-jjai which is connected with the Chinese name Li.

According to this song two Chinese attacks were repelled before the homeland was finally lost, and this time the decisive factor was not the Chinese use of boats to ferry the troops across the river, but the ability to use gunpowder. It was fear of the exploding firecrackers which caused the Miao to flee.

There seems to be no particular reason for the inclusion, either of the description of Gha-sao-hmao-byu’s personal appearance, or of the name of a hill ridge on the Rice City plain.

M215
The descendants of Gha-sao-hmao-byu.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
At what place did Gha-sao-hmao-byu arrive?
They say Gha-sao-hmao-byu arrived in the midst of the Ndu-na-yi-mo plain.
- 5 They say that the plain of the Ndu-na-yi-mo was wide.
Straight across it was seven days travel,
And, they say, from the foot of the plain to the head, was half a month's journey.
- Of the great plain of the Ndu-na-yi-mo they say,
That the swaying millet ripened,
10 And there too ripened the richly clothed rice.
From millet folk made yeast,
And from wild millet they fermented wine.
- They say that on the great plain of the Ndu-na-yi-mo,
The cotton bore heads as large as ducks' eggs.
- 15 They say that the rice fields were arranged together in curves,
Like the patterns on the adult daughters' skirts.
The level rice fields were long and curved,
Like the patterns on the adult daughters' aprons.
- Gha-sao-hmao-byu lived in the midst of the Ndu-na-yi-mo plain,
20 Where folk built timber-framed houses to settle in their families and live,
And built tiled houses, row on row, to settle in their families and dwell.
- Gha-sao-hmao-byu's countenance
Was round, like the rising sun,
Was round, like the shining sun.
- 25 Gha-sao-hmao-byu lived at a distance from the edge of the Ndu-na-yi-mo water
Which could be covered in the time it takes to prepare a mid-day meal.
- While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao came from the Chinese city,
To cross over into the midst of Gha-sao-hmao-byu's land.
- 30 Gha-sao-hmao-byu was heavy-hearted,
Maidens and youths and maidens betrothed were heavy-hearted,
Married couples all were sad at heart.
- Gha-sao-hmao-byu led out the soldiers in companies to block the way.
They waited for the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao there,
35 At the pass of Li-byu by the edge of the waters of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.

Seven thousand hid on the right side,
Motionless on the right hand side.
Three hundred hid on the left side,
Kneeling on the left hand side.

40 All waited for the companies of the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao's soldiers to arrive,
Ready to drive the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao's soldiers down into the water.

The soldiers of the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao arrived in companies,
A detachment of cavalry,
And a thousand four hundred following,
45 A thousand four hundred on foot.

The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao's companies of soldiers blew,
Blew echoing calls on their cow-horns,
Blew resounding calls on their bamboo horns,
To strike fear into Gha-sao-hmao-byu.

50 Gha-sao-hmao-byu was unafraid.
Ghao-sao-hmao-byu sprang up astride,
Astride the back of his stallion,
While Gha-sao-hmao-byu's soldiers on both sides moved as a body,
Crushing the soldiers of the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao between them.

55 The troops of Gha-sao-hmao-byu stretched,
Carefully they stretched their curved cross-bows with their feet,
And carefully they drew out their arrows with their hands.

The arrows flew in a pattern of curves, their target the officers of the Chinese Leader
Dlao-jiao,
And they drove his companies of soldiers down into the water,
60 So the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao could not overcome,
And the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao retreated.

The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao could not bear the thought,
So the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao came by a round about way,
A round about way, bounded by the head waters of the Ndu-na-yi-mo,
65 To crush Gha-sao-hmao-byu in the middle.

Gha-sao-hmao-byu was unafraid.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu requisitioned war-horses, well-fed beasts,
And requisitioned stallions, fine animals and bold.

70 Then Gha-sao-hmao-byu sprang up astride,
Astride the back of his stallion.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu drew his shining sword and cut,
Cut to death the companies of the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao's soldiers.

Gha-sao-hmao-byu's stallions charged from one side,
His soldiers fought on the other side,
75 While the Ndu-na-yi-mo flowed full on the third side.
So the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao could not overcome,

And the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao went back.
The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao was heavy hearted,
The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao was sad at heart.

80 But the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao's hand was able.
What was his hand able to do?
His hand was able, his hand was skilful to make,
To make fire-crackers which would fly into the sky.

While the sky remained constant,
85 The Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao set off the fire-crackers which came flying,
Flying in clusters and arrived,
Arrived in the midst of Gha-sao-hmao-byu's soldiers.

The fire-crackers exploded in the sky,
And Gha-sao-hmao-byu trembled,
90 While his troops shook with fear.

Gha-sao-hmao-byu sought a viable, a satisfactory way for them to go where?
A satisfactory way for them to go to the great plain of Rice City,
Where the land was level and flat,
Where the swaying millet ripened,
95 And rice too ripened, blowing in the breeze.

Now at Rice City there were to be found,
A hill by the name of Hmao-gang,
And a hill-ridge which was called Hmao-ji.

Thus it is ended.

M216
The descendants of three elders.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This, the final song in the set of four, takes the form of a grand finale. The story is the same as before, but this time all the forces are marshalled together upon the stage. All three Miao clan leaders and both the Chinese commanders are involved. So far as the battle was concerned, the Chinese suffered one crushing defeat, but when they attacked again, it was the frightening effect of their exploding rockets which turned the tables and caused the Miao to flee. The constant repetition of five multisyllabic names makes this song rather heavy going, both in Miao and in the English translation. The exclamation added to the final “Thus it is ended” sounds very like a sigh of relief from the singer!

The description of the Golden City in a number of the conflict songs affirms that it was circular in shape, the houses were set in rows, and were constructed with timber frames and roofed with tiles, in fact, the lay out of a typical Chinese city. However, the sacred trees where sacrifices were offered and the sacred hill on which they stood, which are mentioned at the end of this song, are drawn entirely from the Miao tradition.

A unique feature of this song is the prophetic assertion that, though indeed the Miao had suffered defeat and had been driven from their homeland, nevertheless a day would come when their fortunes would be reversed, when the “destitute orphan” would become an “honoured guest”.

M216
The descendants of three Elders.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

The Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu.

When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,

Then Hmao-vu-gi-ndlw, the Elder Gi-yie, lived on Silver-plain,
And the Elder Gi-yie's clothing bore a pattern of spots.
5 Gi-chi-gi-no, the Elder Gi-chi, lived on Golden-plain,
And the Elder Gi-chi's clothing bore a checkered pattern.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu lived on Pewter-plain,
And Gha-sao-hmao-byu's clothing was also patterned.

The Elder Gi-yie was the people's Hmao-vu-gi-ndlw, A-yeu Hai.
10 The Elder Gi-chi was the people's Hmao-chi-gi-no, Yeu-ndro-ghai.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu was the people's Hmao-gi-jiai.
The Elder Gi-vu, the Elder Gi-no and Gha-sao-hmao-byu
Were thus the people's rulers, their high lords.

The Elder Gi-vu arrived at Golden City,
15 The Elder Gi-no arrived on the plain of the Yi-bang water, the land of seven
sweeping bends,
And Gha-sao-hmao-byu arrived on the great plain of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.

Among the people the Elder Gi-yie was a fierce soldier,
The Elder Gi-chi was a terrifying soldier,
And Gha-sao-hmao-byu was a tenacious soldier.

20 Among the people the Elder Gi-yie was a warrior, the one who handled the cross-
bow.
About his shoulders the Elder Gi-yie wore a grass cape.
Among the people the Elder Gi-chi was a fighter, the one who commanded soldiers.
The Elder Gi-chi's voice carried like the crowing of a cock.
Among the people Gha-sao-hmao-byu was a fighter, the one who trained horses.

25 While the sky remained constant,
The Rulers came from the Rulers' land, so the Rulers came,
The Race travelled from the Race's land, so the Race travelled,
The Chinese Leader Diao-jiao came from the Chinese land,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came from the Chinese city,
30 Thus the Ruling Race came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
Came to seize the heart of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-
byu's land.

The Elder Gi-yie was heavy-hearted,
The Elder Gi-chi was sad at heart,
And Gha-sao-hmao-byu was cast down in heart.

- 35 Maidens and youths and maidens betrothed were heavy hearted,
Married couples all were sad at heart,
But they arose and went forth together to join,
To join in battle with the Chinese Leader Gi-yie and the Chinese Leader Diao-jiao,
so they went,
Fighting by the Ndu-na-yi-mo, in the pass of Li-byu at the water's edge.
- 40 The companies of soldiers of the Chinese Leader Diao-jiao and the Chinese Leader
Gi-yie embarked,
Embarked in seventy flat boats,
And embarked in seventy pairs of keeled boats.
- Among the people the Elder Gi-yie was a warrior, the one who handled the cross-
bow.
- 45 The Elder Gi-yie stretched his cross-bow, black and curved,
His bow for waging war, carefully with his feet,
And carefully drew out his arrows with his hands.
In a pattern of curves the arrows flew and hit,
Hit the officers of the Ruling Race who fell in all directions.
- Among the people the Elder Gi-chi was a fighter, the one who commanded soldiers.
- 50 The Elder Gi-chi arose and went forth, running he attacked,
Attacked the companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers till they fell in heaps.
- Among the people Gha-sao-hmao-byu was a fighter, the one who trained horses.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu requisitioned war-horses to carry the soldiers,
Requisitioned horses, fine animals and bold.
- 55 Then Gha-sao-hmao-byu sprang up astride,
Astride the back of his stallion.
Gha-sao-hmao-byu drew his shining sword and struck down,
Struck down the Ruling Race's soldiers till all, to the youngest, dropped,
Struck down on to their backs the companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers.
- 60 The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi lifted up their voices, calling to the sky,
And the clouds arose exceedingly black in the sky above.
- The Ruling Race could not overcome,
So the Ruling Race retreated.
Nevertheless the Ruling Race could not bear the thought.
- 65 Now the Ruling Race's hands were able.
What were their hands able to do?
Their hands were skilful, were able to make,
Were able to make fire-crackers which would fly into the sky.
- 70 While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race set off the fire-crackers which came flying,
Flying in clusters and arrived,
Arrived in the midst of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu's
soldiers.

The fire-crackers exploded in the sky,
 And the Elder Gi-yie trembled,
 75 The Elder Gi-chi shook with fear,
 While Gha-sao-hmao-byu found a way to flee.

The Chinese Leader Gi-yie was like a black tiger,
 And the Chinese Leader Dlao-jiao was like a yellow lion,
 Determined to fight the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu and
 exterminate them.
 80 Thus the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu could dwell there no
 longer.

While the sky remained constant,
 The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu were
 like:

Like an orphan driven away,
 Because the orphan had no father;
 85 Like ragged corn all beaten out,
 Because the corn had been tilled amiss;
 Like an orphaned calf without a mother.
 Yet do not despair.

The day will come when the orphaned calf, grown into bull,
 90 Will low three times in its own room in the house.
 The day will come when the ragged corn will produce good seed,
 To be stored in the grain-loft, all unbeknown.
 The day will come when the orphan will be an honoured guest,
 While the wealthy and the strong and the clever,
 95 All unbeknown, will follow behind, ashamed.

Of old, when the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu lived at
 Golden City,
 There were at Golden City,
 A tree called "hi-tru" where they sacrificed chicken,
 And a tree called "go-mi-sie" where they sacrificed pigs,
 100 For at Golden City stood the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu's
 sacred hill.

This is sung that the descendants of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-
 hmao-byu may all remember,
 This is sung that the descendants of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-
 hmao-byu may all recall.

Thus it is ended, aye!

The belongings of the Miao old folk.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

This song divides into two parts. As far as line 47 it is concerned with the weapons and articles of clothing which the Chinese are said to have seized and put on public display. From line 48 the song describes the caged animals and birds which were also there on display in the Chinese Leader's "nga rang" or "nga ndeu rang". "Nga" means house, "ndeu" means books or papers, and "rang" is a pattern or a plan, a picture, a drawing or an illustration. "House of records" is a fair translation.

The description in the song goes round in a circle. First the decorations on the tribal costumes are likened to the markings on the fur and feathers of the wild creatures, and then the plumage and the coats of the birds and beasts are said to resemble the patterns of the Miao embroidery.

The Miao distinguished four different motifs in the design of the "cho-hlu", that is the upper garment of their tribal costume. These were in order, beginning with the most highly regarded, "hlu-nza-nzyu", "hlu-a-niang-sa", "hlu-dlang-nba", and "hlu-a-ji". The name of the first may be something to do with bamboo, the second means "bracken", the third means "pig", though the reference is probably to the pig's eye, while the fourth means "branches", probably crossing branches.

In this song lines 18 to 22 describe garments of the first pattern, while lines 28 to 32 concern garments of the third pattern. The intervening lines, which are strictly parallel to lines 28 to 32 are obviously describing another pattern of costume which, however, is called "dlang-li-yi". The meaning of this name is "hoopoe", but coming as it does between the first and third designs, this is very likely an alternative name for "hlu-a-niang-sa". Nothing is said about the fourth design.

Attached to the back of the tribal costume was a kind of collar, an oblong piece of material often bearing some embroidered decoration, and hanging from it were spindle-like tassels a foot long with tiny bells, beads or even old Chinese copper cash at the end, which tinkled as the wearer moved about. The sleeves were very full and much longer than the wearer's arms. They had to be held up above the hands by a length of hand-woven braid with a large loop at each end. One loop went around the sleeve which was rolled and bunched back on to the fore arm, then the braid was passed up over the shoulders, under the collar and down to hold the other sleeve similarly in the second loop.

In days gone by one of the requirements of a proper marriage settlement was that the bride had to demonstrate her skill and industry by presenting the bridegroom with a "cho-hlu" which she had made herself. This, in addition to the actual needlework required in making up and embroidering the garment, involved actually growing the hemp, making it into yarn and weaving it into cloth, and also spinning and dyeing the wool used in the decoration work. It was a daunting task which took many months. If it was not completed by the time of the wedding, the bride would have to return from time to time to her parents home to get it done. She might not bring it with her to finish in her new home. This "bride-groom's gown" was also called "cho-nbw-sie", "the garment of longing", mentioned in line 73 of this song.

The women's skirts were like kilts, very full around the bottom and tightly gathered for several inches down from the top. The hemp cloth was dyed with a geometric pattern in indigo, in some localities quite heavily, in others, only very lightly. However the characteristic feature of the decoration were the two-coloured strips of cotton material applied in an irregular pattern over the skirt. Again there were regional variations. Three continuous bands, near the top, the middle, and around the hem were occasionally seen, but normally there were separate strips eight to ten inches long and an inch to an inch and a half wide. These strips were traditionally red and blue, but might be blue and brown, red and brown, or even red and black, but they were always sewn on parallel to the bottom hem.

The Miao had a word for "unicorn", "nao-li-jiang". This creature must therefore have figured in various songs or stories, yet, strangely, no one was able to offer any kind of information except that, "it had a single horn upon its head which resembled a woman's hair cone". It was agreed, however, that the "nao-li-jiang" was the same thing as the Chinese "qi-lin", a mythical beast, a bizarre mixture of various animals, having, in particular, a single fleshy horn on its forehead.

M217

The belongings of the Miao old folk.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

- When the sky began,
And on earth the ranges were set in place,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came from the Chinese land,
The Ruling Race came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di.
5 Crossing over they seized the very heart of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and
Gha-sao-hmao-byu's land.
- The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came and took,
Came and took the names of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao- hmao-
byu and wrote them down,
Wrote them down in the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's book of records,
While their heads were drawn on painted boards.
- 10 The useful articles of all kinds belonging to the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and
Gha-sao-hmao-byu were there in profusion.
The cross-bow, black and curved, hung in the middle,
While the grass cape hung on the right
And the quiver hung on the left.
- The cross-bow, black and curved, the cross-bow for war, was painted,
15 And the quiver was bound with copper.
There was a good and useful article to the right of the quiver, a steel,
And a good and useful article to the left, a tobacco pouch.
- The costumes of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu, the hlu-
nza-nzyu, were there,
There in the middle room of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's house of books.
20 The garments, the hlu-nza-nzyu, had a pattern of stripes,
The hlu-nza-nzyu were gathered with nine threads,
And they were patterned like the backs of tigers.
- The ghang-li-yi had eight linen strands,
The ghang-li-yi bore a "three-room" motive,
25 The ghang-li-yi had bright applique on them,
But the ghang-li-yi had an even pattern,
For they were patterned like the backs of lions.
- The hlu-dlang-nba were drawn up with five strands,
The hlu-dlang-nba had a checkered pattern,
30 The hlu-dlang-nba had white applique cut and fastened,
But the hlu-dlang-nba had an even pattern,
For they were patterned like the backs of eagles.
- The tassels were bright,
The tiny bells of copper and pewter tinkled,

- 35 And, hanging lower than the girdle, were bobbing beads, bright and new.
The Elder Gi-yie's garment, his embroidered costume, hung down over his arms,
The Elder Gi-chi's garment, embroidered with crosses, hung down over his hands.
- The garments, the hlu-nza-nzyu were on the right,
The cotton materials the women left behind were on the left,
40 With the blue skirts gathered with nine threads,
The blue skirts bearing parallel strips of coloured cloth,
The blue skirts, the best skirts for going out.
- The useful articles of all kinds belonging to the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and
Gha-sao-hmao-byu were there all together.
The open display broke our hearts,
45 For we had become ploughing oxen and pack horses to the limit of endurance.
The open display broke our spirit,
For we had become ploughing oxen and pack horses till we were exhausted.
- There were all kinds of things in the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's house of records,
All kinds of things were there in profusion.
50 Every sort of deer was living there,
The stags all dwelt there.
- There was a pair of eagles seeking food,
Seeking food as they flew up and down in their aviary.
While tigers and lions prowled up and down in their cages.
- 55 The peacocks were marked and beautifully patterned,
Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's stitched applique work.
They had graceful crests on the top of their heads,
And their graceful tails bore many markings.
Their graceful tails were patterned with spots,
60 Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's bright applique work.
- The hoopoes were patterned with spots,
Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's braids with the "three-room"
motif.
Their graceful tails were patterned with stripes,
Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's braids with the "jumping"
motif.
- 65 The hoopoe was a bird with a horn,
A large single horn on its forehead,
Resembling the large horn of a unicorn.
What kind of creature was a unicorn?
A unicorn was a kind of wild animal.
- 70 The tigers were patterned with stripes,
Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's costumes,
The hlu-nza-nzyu gathered with nine threads.
- The lions had an even pattern,
A pattern like the daughters', the adult young women's ghang-li-yi,

75 The ghang-li-yi which was the garment of longing.

The tigers and lions were patterned with stripes on all four legs,
Patterned like the daughters', the adult young women's braids with the "thorn" motif.

The ears of all the people have heard of it,
But their eyes have not seen it,

80 So this is sung that all the original families of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and
Gha-sao-hmao-byu may recall.

And this is sung that all the succeeding families of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder
Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu may remember.

Thus it is ended.

M218
The old native land which was lost.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Introduction

The first section of this song suggests that some articles of the Miao tribal costume were worn as perpetual reminders of that ancient homeland which was taken by the Chinese. This cannot mean that the designs were actually invented for the purpose, since, in the preceding song of this group it is clear that the patterned costumes were in use long before, and that, in fact, the spoils of conquest which the Chinese put on display, included examples of them. It must mean that the existing tribal costumes were accorded this new significance, so that whenever people saw the aprons, capes and skirts, these were to become, for them, reminders of the good land now irrevocably lost.

It is noteworthy that the distinctive upper garment, the cho hlu, so much in evidence in the previous song, is not mentioned. The aprons were about two feet square and were embroidered. They were worn, one in the front and the other behind, over the skirt, and always with the diagonals vertical and horizontal. By 1950 these were less commonly seen, but photographs from earlier in the century show them as essential items of the well dressed young woman's outfit.

In cold weather the Miao used felt capes which also served as bedding at night. The material was very thick and the top edge was gathered by a cord threaded in and out. The garment had therefore the shape of a vertical cylinder which was wrinkled where it was drawn in at the top. It is this wrinkling which is here said to have resembled the undulating country around Lao-u and Rice City.

It was common practise for the Chinese to spread pine needles on the floor as an aromatic carpet at weddings or on festal occasions. The second half of the song purports to explain the origin of the custom

M218
The old native land that was lost.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

From out of scattered sky material there came the dome,
And at Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di, Lao-u and Rice City the great-grand-daughters came to
live.

Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,
And on the plain of the Yi-bang, the Ndu-na-yi-mo, the great-grand-sons came to
dwell.

5 Lao-u, Rice City and the plain of the Yi-bang were situated,
Situated on the fine great plain of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di.

Now Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di was four-square,
Lao-u was circular in plan, while Rice City spread wide.
The plain of the Yi-bang was like a large flat basket,
10 That of the Ndu-na-yi-mo like the largest flat basket.

At Lao-u and Rice City the swaying millet ripened,
And there ripened the richly clothed rice.
By the Ndu-na-yi-mo, on the plain of the Yi-bang
Cotton ripened blowing lightly in the breeze,
15 Cotton bearing heads as large as ducks' eggs.

While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di,
And crossing over seized Lao-u, Rice City and the plain of the Yi-bang,
The Ndu-na-yi-mo. So was the four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di
irrevocably lost.

20 While the sky remained constant,
The Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu grieved,
Grieved for the four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu di now beyond retrieve.

Then the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu took,
Took the four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di,
25 Took and designed gathered aprons patterned with spots,
And gave them to the daughters, the adult young women, to wear.

They wore them as clear signs before and behind,
They wore them that the old folk all might see,
They wore them that the children all might see,
30 For the daughters', the adult young women's aprons resembled,
Resembled the four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di.

Likewise the strips of coloured cloth were joined in a parallel pattern,
A pattern resembling the Ndu-na-yi-mo with parallel streams flowing in its current,
A pattern resembling the Ndu-na-yi-mo with interweaving streams flowing in its
current.

- 35 The Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu grieved,
Grieved for the countryside of Lao-u and Rice City with its land and its water.
Then the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao byu took,
Took the countryside and designed,
Designed felt capes, wrinkled and rounded, for the sons to wear.
- 40 They wore them that the old folk all might see,
They wore them that the children all might see,
For the sons' felt capes, wrinkled and ridged, crossed over and tied, resembled,
Resembled the countryside of Lao-u and Rice City with its land and its water.
- 45 The Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao hmao-byu grieved,
Grieved for the ricefields, the long, flat fields, of the Ndu-na-yi-mo.
Then the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu took,
Took the ricefields, the long, flat fields, and designed,
Designed cotton skirts for the daughters, the adult young women, to wear about the
waist.
- 50 They wore them that the old folk all might see,
They wore them that the children all might see,
For the daughters', the adult young women's, cotton skirts resembled,
Resembled the plain of the Yi-bang, the rice fields, the long, flat fields of the Ndu-
na-yi-mo,
And the braids of the daughters', the adult young women's, decorated skirts were
streams feeding the ricefields.
- 55 So the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu made,
Made useful articles and stored them,
Stored them that all the original families may recall,
Stored them that all the succeeding families may remember.
- 60 While the sky remained constant,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie took,
Took the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-byu's wise men and held
them,
Held them till the end of the Ruling Race's year.
- 65 Then the Chinese Leader Gi-yie took,
Took the wise men and killed them,
And the blood of the wise men splashed upon,
Upon the threshold of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's room.
- 70 So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie took,
Took pine needles in order to cover,
To cover the splashes of the wise men's blood and prevent them from being seen,
And they covered them until the fifteenth of the month.
- 70 They covered them until the sixteenth of the month,
Then the Chinese Leader Gi-yie swept,
Swept the splashes of the wise men's blood outside,
And swept the pine needles out of doors.

75 Still at the end of the Ruling Race's year,
The Ruling Race spreads pine needles at the head of the room.
Now this is the origin of the custom.

80 So the territories of old, the four-square country of Ndlo- hlang-dleu-di,
Lao-u and Rice City, the plain of the Yi-bang, the Ndu-na-yi-mo,
Together with valued articles of all kinds,
All that were belongings of the Elder Gi-yie, the Elder Gi-chi and Gha-sao-hmao-
byu,
While the sky remained constant,
Those valued articles of all kinds fell,
Fell into the power of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie.

Thus it is ended

M219

The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

Introduction

This is another version of "The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie" as sung by Yang Zhi. The sequence of events in the two songs, the execution of the Miao leader on the top of a great rock, the places through which the fleeing Miao passed and their eventual settlement in the people's twelve villages, are identical. The major difference is that this version by Zhang Ming concerns both the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi. On closer examination, however, it becomes obvious that the Elder Gi-chi is very much the "poor relation" who appears to have been dragged into the story without any specific role to play, and who can as easily be dropped out again, leaving scarcely a trace in the narrative. Thus lines 5 to 8 extol the wisdom of the Elder Gi-yie and praise his prowess with the cross-bow, but there is no corresponding stanza, in fact, not a single word, of appreciation of the Elder Gi-chi.

In Yang Zhi's sequence of conflict songs there are two traditions preserved, namely that the Elder Gi-vu lived at Lao-gu (Golden City), and the Elder Gi-yie lived at Lao-u. Now since the Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-yie were one and the same person, and Lao-gu and Lao-u were both half a day's journey from the great river, the Ndu-na-yi-mo, it is clear that Lao-gu and Lao-u are also identical. In the present version the Elder Gi-yie lived at Lao-o, which is presumably a variant spelling of Lao-u, but to accommodate the Elder Gi-chi, Lao-gu has been reintroduced but sited 120 li, 40 miles, away.

The description of the Miao leaders riding their steeds across the plain contains, in lines 12 and 15, a somewhat enigmatic reference to "wings spread in the blue sky". From Yang Zhi we know that the Elder Gi-yie wore a grass cape which billowed out and flapped like wings when his horse was at full gallop.

M219

The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi.

Sung by Zhang Ming.

This year we may know,
Know that the Elder Gi-yie arrived at Lao-o,
And know that the Elder Gi-chi arrived at Golden City.
It is said that Lao-o and Golden City were a hundred and twenty li apart.

5 It is said that the Elder Gi-yie was a man of great wisdom,
It is said that the Elder Gi-yie was a great sage,
It is said that the Elder Gi-yie was a great archer,
It is said that the Elder Gi-yie was a great man with the cross-bow.
Now the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi reared mules and horses for the army.

10 The mules and horses of the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi,
With hooves thundering, went over the plain,
As though flying with wings spread in the blue sky.

The mules and horses of the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi,
With hooves thundering, went through the flat land,
15 As though flying with wings spread in the blue sky.

This year we may know,
May know that the Chinese Leader Gi-yie has sought,
Sought for a propitious way to go where?
He has sought for a propitious way to go to Lao-o.
20 The Chinese Leader Gi-yie has sought for a propitious way to go to Golden City.

The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi arose and took,
Took their cross-bows, black and curved, priming them well with their feet.
They laid the arrows well upon the stock of the cross-bow,
And in a pattern of curves the arrows flew and hit,
25 Hit the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers in the head.

The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi arose and took,
Took their cross-bows, black and curved, stretching them well with their feet.
They laid the arrows well upon the stock of the cross-bow,
And in a pattern of curves the arrows flew and hit,
30 Hit the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers in the back.

The Chinese Leader Gi-yie could fight no longer,
So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie sought,
Sought for a suitable way to return,
To return to the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's native land.

35 The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's hands were able and skilful.
What were his hands able to do?
His hands were able to build boats,
And his hands were able to plait ropes.

40 He built seventy flat boats,
Flat boats that cross by a cable,
Flat boats that cross by a rope,
And ferried the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers across.

45 The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi spread the black horses' saddles out of doors,
Then they lifted the horses' saddles on to the horses' backs,
And astride the black horses saddles they went and hid,
Hid well there by the great black rock.

50 They awaited the arrival of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's soldiers,
And, astride the black horses' saddles, they pursued,
Pursued the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers killing them as they went,
Until the dead of the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers lay in heaps.

Because the Chinese Leader Gi-yie so coveted the Elder Gi-yie's Lao-o,
The Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers were like sand blowing,
And caught the Elder Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers in the middle of a trap.

55 So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers took,
Took the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi captive,
And pinned them down on the very top of the great black rock.

60 Though the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi struggled like bulls,
Panting and gasping for breath,
The Elder Gi-yie's black saddled horses were all seized,
And his retainers and soldiers fled and were gone.

Then the Chinese Leader Gi-yie's retainers and soldiers filled completely,
Filled Lao-o and Golden City to bursting,
Filled Lao-o and Golden City entirely.

65 What should the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family do for the best?
The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family sought,
Sought a viable way to flee.

70 They fled back, returned and reached,
Reached the plain of U-zho, that level plain,
But the plain of U-zho clearly was not,
Was not a place for the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family to settle.

The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family went on and reached,
Reached the country of Na-lu, that wide plain,
But the plain of Na-lu clearly was not,
Was not a place for the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family to settle.

75 The Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family came on and reached,
Reached the valley of Bi-trao, that long valley.
It is said that in the valley of Bi-trao stood Drao-zi-go,
The mountain stood on the level land in the valley of Bi-trao.

80 There came a day when the Elder Gi-yie and the Elder Gi-chi's family multiplied,
So multiplied as to fill the people's twelve villages.

Thus it is ended.

M220
The song of a woman and a man called Ndlw.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

This song belongs to the cycle of songs of conflict with the Chinese. Sung by Tao Zi-gai, its style and content are different from the songs by Yang Zhi, but its subject is the same. It concerns, in particular, the clan called Ndlw, which is the equivalent in modern Miao to the archaic name, Gi-yie. This song is therefore most closely related to "The descendants of the Elder Gi-yie" as sung by Yang Zhi. That song contains a description of the Chinese troops coming in boats to attack the Miao homeland. It then goes on:-

"So the Chinese Leader Gi-yie vanquished the Elder Gi-yie, And pinned him down on the top of a rock, Though the Elder Gi-yie struggled like a bull. The companies of the Elder Gi-yie's soldiers all fled".

All this may explain the strange behaviour described in lines three to eight of the present song, where the frustration and the anger of the Miao leaders is vented on the river which had facilitated the Chinese invasion. So violent was their attack on the water that the very fish in the river suffered too. After this dramatic outburst, however, the rest of the song propounds a somewhat fatalistic philosophy. As the river must pay its dues to the cliffs and rocks, that is to say that both its course and its rate of flow are determined by them, and as the wild geese and cranes must pay their due to "the sky people", that is to the succession of the seasons which determine their migrations, so the Miao must pay their dues to the invincible Chinese, who came flooding in like the monsoon rains.

M220
The song of a woman and a man called Ndlw.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

The villages of the woman Ndlw filled five regions,
And the hamlets of the man Ndlw filled five districts.

The woman and the man took staffs and went to the river bank,
Took staffs and beat the water,
5 Beat the water, hitting and striking the water.

The woman and the man took staffs and went to the river bank,
Took staffs and beat the water,
Beat the water, hitting and striking the fish.

To fly along the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, a crane would take half a day,
10 For the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, flowed through nine basins,
Flowed smoothly to the nine lakes of Gi-nzyu,
The nine lakes of Gi-nzyu on their nine flood plains.

Nine stretches of the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, flowed away through nine
localities,
Dividing the people's land.
15 Nine stretches of the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, flowed away through nine areas,
Dividing the people's territory.

The people's rocks and cliffs formed,
Formed curving cliffs all around,
A place where the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, was held back,
20 Causing the river Shi, the river Gi-bang, to flow smoothly,
And pay its dues to the rocks and cliffs.

Even the wild geese and the cranes had to pay.
The wild geese and the cranes were calling,
Calling on all their family to pay dues to the sky people,
25 When the sky season came round again,
And the earthly time returned once more.

For the people, too, there were dues to pay.
This year the Chinese king,
In all the domains is stirring trouble,
30 For the Chinese king has determined that the people,
The Miao nation in all its families should pay,
Should pay dues to the Chinese king.

As a strong wind blowing,
Blowing the clouds above which carry,
35 Carry rain and showers everywhere,
So the retainers and soldiers of the Chinese king advanced.

40 As the clouds which carry,
 Carry rain and showers all over the earth,
 So the retainers and soldiers of the Chinese king arrived,
 And the tears of the fathers fell fast.

 Thus it is ended.

M221
When the Miao lived on the Tracts of Mi-li
and the Plains of Li-mo.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

This song covers the same ground as the sequence of songs by Yang Zhi, namely the conflict between the Miao and the Chinese over the ancient homeland. The Miao groups involved here are simply called Chi and Ndlw, but these names equate with the more elaborate forms used by Yang Zhi thus:-

Chi = The Elder Gi-no = The Elder Gi-chi.

Ndlw = The Elder Gi-vu = The Elder Gi-yie.

The one difference is a reversal of the order. Yang Zhi always puts the Ndlw clan first, while Tao Zi-gai always leads with the Chi clan.

However, Chi and Ndlw do not appear in the song until line 58 when the conflict with the Chinese begins in earnest. The first actors are "The Woman, the Mother", and "The Man, the Father". These are the unnamed progenitors of the Miao Race, which, in turn, is designated "The Offspring". This expression, in the translation, has been rendered "The Children". After long years of wandering the Woman and the Man and their Children eventually settled in Nzhi-mi-li and Ndrang-li-mo, that is, on the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo, although in this song the double name is regularly combined and contracted into "Ndrang-nzhi-li", that is the Nzhi-li plain. On this fertile plain the Miao founded their "city", called, not Lao-gu or Lao-u, as in earlier songs, but Lao-gi-jiai, and the excellency of the City of Gi-jiai roused the jealousy of the Chinese.

The sending of a Chinese girl or girls as a wife or wives for the Miao leaders is reminiscent of earlier songs, but there the object was to introduce a spy into the camp. Here it was a deliberate ruse to pick a quarrel, it being certain that the "friendly gesture" would be rejected.

The use of dummy soldiers in boats by the Chinese is also found in Yang Zhi's version of the story, but there the Miao, having realized that these were only straw dummies, relaxed their guard, and the Chinese were able to mount a surprise attack. This time the dummies were a decoy to distract the Miao troops, and leave the City of Gi-jiai open to an attack by a roundabout route.

Eventually the Miao, tired of years of harassment, decided to abandon the homeland. In this version they were not actually driven out, and in the final lines we are told they withdrew and settled on the "wide plain of the Yi-bang". The problem here is that, from Yang Zhi's songs it is quite clear that the Yi-bang is simply another name for the Ndu- na-yi-mo, the great river which ran through the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo, so that the country to which they are said to have fled for asylum was none other than the one they had just left. In the other versions of the story, when they left the ancient homeland, the Miao first went to the Plain of Li-vu where they established a settlement called Rice City.

A point of detail in the translation of lines 35 and 36 requires some explanation. The "vang cu" in line 35 was a round, bamboo basket, some three feet in diameter, and four or five

inches deep. It was used, among other things, for winnowing grain, and had an inner surface of woven bamboo strips which was very smooth and flat. The "vang lao" in the next line was similar, but could be twice as large, and was used for storing grain. The insides of both these baskets are described as "die", which indeed means "smooth and flat". However, "die" has also the derived, metaphorical meaning of "peace" or "peaceful". In these lines the peaceful, "die", hearts of the people are likened to the two baskets which are also "die", very smooth and flat within.

M221

**When the Miao lived on the Tracts of Mi-li
and the Plains of Li-mo.**

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

The Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, sought a place, a land set within borders.

Seeking they travelled towards the south for long periods,
Seeking they travelled towards the north for years,
Thus the Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, sought a place to dwell.

5 They reached that wide plain, the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo.
It was said of the wide Tracts of Mi-li and of the Plains of Li-mo,
That one might cross them, and in nine days encounter no steep place,
Or travel in a straight line seven days without reaching the edge of the flat land.

So the Nzhi-li plain was sufficient for the Children of the Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, to dwell,

10 The Nzhi-li plain was sufficient for all generations of the Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, to live.

The Nzhi-li plain was sufficient for the Children to dwell,
To dwell for nine periods of time and through nine generations.

Then the Children of the Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, spread,
Spread to fill all the land of the Nzhi-li plain,

15 Thriving, they filled the wide plain of the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo.

The Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father, commanded,
Commanded the elders of their descendants to forgather.
The elders considered and discussed,
Discussed the building of a City.

20 They drove out water buffalo to drag in the stone,
And they drove out yellow oxen to haul the timber,
Until enough hard stone was dug and split,
And enough joined with the ringing of hammers.

Felled trees were brought to erect the houses,
25 And so was built the beautiful City of Gi-jiai.

It was said that the City of Gi-jiai shone bright as the sunrise,
And that it was circular like the sun's appearing.
Going and coming the young women, all friends, were like wild bees from a nest,
Departing from the City and returning again the young men, all friends, were like bees from a hive.

30 On the Nzhi-li plain the rice fields, long and flat, lay side by side,
And the streams brought clear water, bright as the sky.
In the fields the rice ripened fine and yellow,
While the swaying millet ripened in between the fields.

35 The Children of the Woman, the Mother, and the Man, the Father,
Were thus as peaceful at heart as a round basket is smooth and flat within,
Were thus as peaceful at heart as a large round basket is smooth and flat within.

While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race heard all about it,
And sent retainers and soldiers to come and look.

40 They looked at the Children's beautiful City of Gi-jiai,
They saw the Children's crops there in the fields,
And they saw the Children's rice,
Fully ripened and filling the plain.

45 The tiny city of the Ruling Race could not compare with the Children's city,
And the land, the place within their borders was in no way equal to the Children's
four-square land.
The difference was a cause of pain to the Ruling Race's eyes,
The difference was a cause of pain to the Ruling Race's heart.

The Ruling Race grew menacing,
Seeking some way of oppressing the Children every day,
50 Seeking a cause for complaint against the Children every year.
The Ruling Race became extremely menacing,
For, unable to take the City of Gi-jiai and the Nzhi-li plain, they were very sore at
heart.

Thus they deliberately presented young Chinese women to the Children as wives,
Sending the young Chinese women to become keepers of the Children's houses.
55 But should it transpire that the Children did not want the Chinese girls,
Then the Ruling Race had found a cause for complaint against the Children,
And for taking revenge and hostile action against them.

Chi and Ndlw led out the retainers and soldiers, and, in determined mood, returned
to wait,
To wait at the piles of boulders in the narrow valley of the river Gi-jiai.
60 They crushed the Ruling Race, defeating them completely,
So that the Ruling Race could fight no longer,
And the Ruling Race retreated and withdrew.

Since the Ruling Race so greatly coveted,
Coveted the Nzhi-li plain and the high, bright City of Gi-jiai,
65 The Ruling Race was heavy hearted,
The Ruling Race was sad at heart.

The Ruling Race sent out companies of retainers and soldiers each year.
In Winter the soldiers came out,
In Summer the soldiers came out,
70 Making the lives of Chi and Ndlw's Children a misery,
Making the existence of Chi and Ndlw's Children intolerable.

While the sky remained constant,
The Ruling Race twisted grass into dummies putting them in boats.

- They twisted grass into dummies, wrapped them in cotton cloth and set them in keeled boats like Chinese soldiers.
- 75 They twisted grass and made dummies to go out first leading the way,
They twisted grass and made dummies to go on ahead.
- Chi and Ndlw's retainers and soldiers remained at the river to keep watch,
Keep watch and shoot the retainers and soldiers of the Ruling Race as they clung,
Clung to flat boats and to keeled boats with curved timbers, boats arriving on the river.
- 80 Now when the dummies of bean-straw and the dummies of wormwood with their
cloth heads appeared on the river,
Chi and Ndlw with their companies of soldiers shot,
Shot arrows, flighted with duck feathers, in a pattern of curves and hit,
Shot and hit the dummies of wormwood and the dummies of grass in the head.
- 85 But the dummies of wormwood and the dummies of grass did not move.
The dummies of wormwood and the dummies of grass were like,
Like the shadows of spirits come to deceive,
To deceive Chi and Ndlw and lead them astray.
- Meanwhile the Ruling Race made a detour around to the other side and their
companies passed,
Passed the Nzhi-li plain and filled the City of Gi-jiai, filled it completely,
90 So when the companies of Chi and Ndlw's retainers and soldiers arrived back,
They saw the soldiers of the Ruling Race filling the City of Gi-jiai,
Like ants swarming everywhere.
- Chi and Ndlw caused the companies of soldiers to go in.
They attacked the Ruling Race's soldiers from all sides, killing them as they went.
95 They took and drove the Ruling Race's soldiers out of the City,
Killing the Ruling Race's soldiers and leaving them lying in heaps.
- Like waves splashing they slashed the Ruling Race filling the market place,
With blood splashing up to the knees.
So the Ruling Race could fight no longer,
100 And the Ruling Race fled in retreat.
- While the sky remained constant,
It was Monkey-year or Cockerel-year
That the Ruling Race came and gathered.
Thereafter Chi and Ndlw were fighting the Ruling Race for seventy years,
- 105 They could get no time of peace.
From Cockerel-year to Cockerel-year there was no end to the fighting.
- Chi and Ndlw considered and discussed,
"Come, let us relinquish the Nzhi-li plain, that wide plain,
For the Ruling Race to make their land their place.
110 We have guarded the City of Gi-jiai, but for not one day has all gone well,
We have lived in the City of Gi-jiai, but there has been no year when it has been
good to live there".

115 So Chi and Ndlw fled, and taking their women and children they went,
 Went to the foot of the plain of the Yi-bang, that wide plain, and lived there.
 On the plain of the Yi-bang one might gather fruit and cotton to fill the loft,
 While millet and rice stood filling the plain.

 It was good for the Children of Chi and Ndlw to live through all generations,
 And it was sufficient for all the Children of Chi and Ndlw to dwell.

M222
Concerning the Man Li-dao, section one.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Introduction

Recorded in Document F and reproduced in Documents K, L, M and N, this piece comprises more than 350 lines. In fact it is not a single song. Section one does indeed run straight on into section two without any formal division, but the subject matter is sufficiently distinct to make a break desirable. The first section is a detailed account of how the Miao established themselves in their ancient homeland, together with a less detailed account of their eventual eviction by the Chinese after one successful defence of their territory. Section two traces their flight from the homeland and ultimate settlement by the A-na river in an area ruled by powerful Yi over-lords. Section three concerns the use of drums in the worship of the ancestors. It appears to be a variant of a song recorded by Wang Ming-ji, and belongs with that and other songs to a group associated with the worship of the spirits. Section four, unrelated to any of the foregoing, has, in fact, nothing to do with the Miao at all. It is an account of the seizure, by the Chinese, of the Zhaotung plain and the surrounding country from the original Yi rulers. This song is much more nearly related to the concluding part of the song by Yang Zhi describing the draining of the lake, which at one time covered the Zhaotung plain, by the legendary folk-hero Nzyu-fa-lao.

In Document F, compiled by Yang Yong-xing in 1950, this song is prefaced by the following introduction written in Miao:

"The Miao, having fled from the plains of the Yi-bang country, continued their flight and reached Ngga-yi-shi-lw country. At that time the Elder Gi-no, Gha-sao-hmao-byu and the Elder Gi-chi were all dead, leaving only one elder, called the Man Li-dao, as leader living there. Afterwards the Ruling Race came and drove them out, so that the Miao fled thence and arrived in the Byu-no country".

When, in 1953 Yang Yong-xing included the song in Document K, this preface was replaced by a brief heading in Miao which read:

"The time when they were living in the Ngga-yi-shi-lw country, also called Ngga-yi-shi-lu country".

Underneath this is a note placed in brackets and written in Chinese:

"A place in West Hunan".

Document K was transcribed and re-issued by a group of Miao teachers in Weining in 1981. This is Document L, and here both the introduction from Document F and the heading from Document K are reproduced, but when this song was selected by the same group of teachers for a place in Document M, neither were retained, nor do they appear in Document N.

Why Documents M and N discarded Yang Yong-xing's comments is not explained, but it is possible that it was realized that they were in fact mistaken. The Man Li-dao, the Elder Gi-vu and the others were representatives of Miao clans rather than individual people. The modern name for the Li-dao clan is Hmao-dang, and its members are known by the Chinese surname Wang. With small variations in detail, the narrative is identical to that in the other

stories of the conflict with the Chinese, and the name Ngga-yi-shi-lw, far from being some indeterminate region in Western Hunan, is in fact a variant form of the name of the Ndu-na-yi-mo or Yi-bang, the great river that ran through the ancient homeland. Furthermore the circular city with its rows of fine houses bears the name Lao-gi-jiai which is the name found in other songs by Tao Zi-gai, and is equivalent to Lao-gu or Lao-u in Yang Zhi's songs.

One point of detail needs clarification. Lines 59 to 65, describing how the fields were irrigated, mention crops of rice and also of peas and broad beans. The former was the main crop planted in the spring in the flooded fields and harvested when the fields had been drained in the autumn. It was then possible to plant a winter crop of peas and broad beans which would be gathered before it was time to prepare the fields for planting the rice seedlings again.

Concerning the Man Li-dao, section one.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

- When the sky began,
 From the very first the Man Li-dao was there.
 When the earth began,
 The able hands of the Man Li-dao were there.
- 5 From the time that the sky came to be,
 The skilful hands of the man Li-dao were there.
- The Man Li-dao went through the lands that were there,
 The Man Li-dao went through the places that were there,
 And secured the country of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw,
 10 Secured the plains of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw,
 To make a place for the Man Li-dao to dwell,
 To make a place for the Man Li-dao to live.
- The Man Li-dao could not settle his mind.
 Though through nine nights the Man Li-dao had thought of nine ways,
 15 And through nine days he had thought of nine schemes,
 The Man Li-dao was sad at heart.
- So the Man Li-dao ordered,
 Ordered the Miao people to forgather,
 Ordered all the Miao people to gather,
 20 That the Man Li-dao together with,
 With the elders of the Miao people might discuss and reach a conclusion.
 With the elders of the Miao people might discuss and complete the matter.
- The Elder Li-dao would build houses with timber frames and tiled roofs where
 families might live,
 Would build houses with timber frames and tiled roofs where families might dwell.
- 25 The Man Li-dao took,
 Took the Miao people to lay out the city.
 Laying it out they went right across and completed the task,
 Laying it out they went right across and concluded the work.
- The Man Li-dao's circular city would be,
 30 Would be the place where the Man Li-dao would dwell.
 There the Man Li-dao would build a house with timber frame and tiled roof to be,
 To be the place from which the Man Li-dao would exercise control.
- The Man Li-dao called,
 Called the Miao people to drive out,
 35 To drive out water buffalo to haul,
 To haul great, black rocks to build,
 To build the Man Li-dao's circular city,
 On the plain of the Ngga-yi-shi-lw, that level plain.

40 The Man Li-dao ordered,
Ordered the Miao people to carry,
To carry pine trees to build,
To build the Man Li-dao's houses with timber frames and tiled roofs,
On the plain of the Nggga-yi-shi-lw, that flat country.

45 The Man Li-dao was sad at heart,
For the Man Li-dao could not settle his mind.
So the Man Li-dao called,
Called the Miao people to forgather,
Called all the Miao people to gather.

50 The Man Li-dao called,
Called the elders of the Miao people to discuss and reach a conclusion.
The Man Li-dao together with,
With the elders of the Miao people discussed and completed the matter.

55 The Man Li-dao then selected,
Selected Miao people to go and level the fields,
And led out Miao people to go and level the place.

Then the Man Li-dao channelled,
Channelled clear water to come flowing freely over the plain,
To come nourishing the Man Li-dao's fields.

60 Thus in the midst of the Man Li-dao's fields was water,
Water shining and fresh, water to nourish the rice,
And support the Man Li-dao's descendants through all the generations.

65 He also caused clear water, shining and fresh, to nourish,
To nourish the Man Li-dao's peas and broad beans on the plain,
Peas and broad beans to support,
Support the Man Li-dao's descendants through all the years.

70 The Man Li-dao was sad at heart,
For the Man Li-dao could not settle his mind.
So the Man Li-dao called,
Called the Miao people to forgather.
The Man Li-dao ordered,
Ordered all the Miao people to gather.

75 They discussed and reached a conclusion,
They discussed and completed the matter,
The Man Li-dao arranged for the Miao people to go,
To go to the plain of the Nggga-yi-shi-lw, that level plain
To go to the plain of the Nggga-yi-shi-lw, that flat plain.

80 He caused the Miao people, going together, to plant,
To plant cotton for spinning the warp,
To plant cotton for spinning the weft,
That the descendants of the Man Li-dao might have sufficient to wear.

- The Man Li-dao could not settle his mind,
 So the Man Li-dao was sad at heart.
 The Man Li-dao together with,
 With the elders of the Miao people discussed and reached a conclusion.
 85 The Man Li-dao together with,
 With the elders of the Miao people discussed and completed the matter.
- The Man Li-dao and the elders having considered it,
 The Man Li-dao and the elders gave,
 Gave to the Man Li-dao's circular city the name "City of Gi-jiai".
- 90 The Man Li-dao's ricefields gathered there on the plain,
 His ricefields grouped there on the flat land,
 Gave the Ruling Race cause to be sick at heart,
 While his cotton there on the plain,
 Gave the Ruling Race cause to be sick in mind.
- 95 The Ruling Race declared,
 Declared this to be the Ruling Race's opportunity for a show of strength.
 The Ruling Race declared,
 Declared this to be the Ruling Race's opportunity to take control,
 Yet the Ruling Race was heavy hearted.
- 100 When the rain fell, who was evil hearted?
 The Ruling Race was evil hearted.
 When the sun shone who was hard hearted?
 The Ruling Race was hard hearted.
- The Ruling Race ordered,
 105 Ordered their retainers and soldiers to advance from the north,
 Ordered their retainers and soldiers to advance from the south,
 To do battle with the Man Li-dao.
- The Man Li-dao could not settle his mind,
 For the Man Li-dao was sad at heart.
- 110 The Ruling Race declared,
 Declared this to be the Ruling Race's opportunity for a show of strength,
 But the Man Li-dao would not be frightened.
 The Man Li-dao declared,
 Declared this to be the Man Li-dao's opportunity to take control.
- 115 So the Man Li-dao ordered,
 Ordered the Man Li-dao's retainers and soldiers to mount a concerted attack,
 To attack the Ruling Race's retainers and soldiers who fled back whence they came.
 Thus the Ruling Race was heavy hearted.
- 120 The Ruling Race then went and ordered,
 Ordered their retainers and soldiers to advance from north and south,
 And the Man Li-dao's retainers and soldiers could not resist,
 So the Man Li-dao fled and was gone.

M223
Lao-gi-jiai and the Man Dao.

Narrated by Wang Ming-ji.

Introduction.

This is an interesting attempt to construct a single account of Miao history out of information gathered from the old songs. At the same time it seeks to link those stories with certain Chinese records, and hence to fix the location of the various events geographically and historically. This proved to be no simple task, as the following comments will indicate.

In the songs the narratives read as though they are stories about the exploits of great individual leaders, the elder Gi-vu, the elder Gi-no, Gha-sao-hmao-byu, the Man Li-dao, the Woman and the Man Cao, and so forth. In fact these are actually names of clans, not of individuals. Thus, for instance the Man Li-dao is the leader of the Hmao-dang clan, and represents the clan, but is a different individual in different generations and it is not always easy to be sure where a generation change has taken place.

The various Miao clans were called by different names in different strands of the tradition. Of this Wang Ming-ji was fully aware, and went to some trouble to sort them out. However, in this account he tends to jump about, sometimes using one name, sometimes another, for the same clan, so that the reader often has difficulty in keeping up.

At a number of points further explanations would be valuable but are not offered. Thus in several of the songs mention is made of “The Twelve Clans”, but nowhere are the names of the clans given. In one of his notes in Chinese, Wang Ming-ji mentions the number twelve, but again furnishes no details. In modern Miao usage there are eight clan names. Presumably the other four were subdivisions of the eight.

The songs are full of names, of regions and rivers, of cities and plains, but merely to assume that they are all different places is precarious. The songs come down through different lines of tradition and, as in the case of the clan names, different strands may use different names for the same place. Before geographical locations can be established therefore, a critical analysis of the song material needs to be undertaken. So, for example, there are good reasons for assuming that Lao-gu and Lao-u are not two cities, as Wang Ming-ji assumes, but two forms of the name of a single city. (See the note in the introduction to song M219). Lao-gi-jiai may well be yet another name for the same place. (See the introduction to song M221).

We are told that the man Hxai had a nickname “chicken breast man”. This requires a little further explanation. He was armed with a crossbow, with quivers of arrows, probably poisoned, and wore a grass cape. The latter was for concealment, because he had to lie in wait until the enemy came within range. The cape was made from long grass plaited together in such a manner that the loose ends on the outside all hung downwards like thatch on a roof. The cape was quite water proof and of a speckled greenish brown colour which blended well into the scrub and undergrowth, but which also resembled, more or less, the speckled feathers on a chicken’s breast.

M223
Lao-gi-jiai and the Man Dao.

Narrated by Wang Ming-ji.

He was a man of the Hmao-dang clan. In the songs he is given the name “Grandfather Dao”. That is because his son was called “The strong one”. [“Dao” means “strong” or “able”.] There are songs which call him by the name Zye-lao-no, the man Si-gyu-zi-lao. (He was one who reared cattle.)

He heard that a Chinese “enchanter” had arisen and that there would be fighting along the borders, so he went in search of Gi-vu and Gi-chi to discuss the situation. When he had found the elder Gi-chi and Gi-vu Gi-ndlw, the three of them went together to relieve the borders. Together they repelled the Zhung-jia and the Chinese, the Man Yellow who came from Cai-sie-mi-fu-di. These three were brothers in law, and whenever there was trouble on the borders they together repelled it. That was during the time of Tang-yao and Yu-shun. In the Chinese books, Shang shu and Yu gong dian it says “Shun defeated three tribes of Miao, pushed them to the north and split them into three groups”.

The elder Gi-yio lived on a mountain called Mount Gi-yio, so everyone called him the Man Gi-yio. Of great strength, he carried a large club to repel the Chinese. When in combat with the Chinese he swung the club round and round making a whirling sound like a flying beetle, so he was called the Man Shai as well, [“shai” means “to whirl” or “to buzz”.] But he could only use a sword or a club, being unable to handle the crossbow. This being the case, when the borders had to be protected, he had to go and seek the elder Gi-chi at Mount Gi-no, and seek the Man Hxai at Mount Gi-vu. Now Gi-vu Gi-ndlw could use the smooth crossbow, shooting down the Chinese at a considerable distance.

Gi-chi Gi-no, Gi-vu Gi-ndlw and the elder Gi-yio, while following game came to the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo in the four-square country of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di. Presently they brought all the Miao descendants, and came to live and to fill the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo, building houses with timber frames and tiled roofs, where they lived in their families, an ever spreading company. The elder Gi-vu organised the Miao community and built Lao-u, the elder Gi-no organised the building of Lao-gu, and the elder Gi-yio, the man Li-dao, organised the building of Lao-gi-jiai. These three at that time were the chief elders and the senior members of the Miao people. (“Chief elders” mean the paramount leaders, while the “senior members” were the governors of the cities and their lands.) These men were also both wise and famous. They secured and held firm the borders for us Miao, so that ensuing generations could continue their farming and enjoy good health. But wherever the Miao went they were pursued by the Chinese. They even pursued and took the Tracts of Mi-li and the Plains of Li-mo. In the Chinese book, “Shi jun lan pian, Lu shi chun qui” there is a passage which reads, “Yao conquered the uncivilised Miao, and occupied the Dan-han area and made his son Shu-dan the ruler”. So it was that there was fighting from the Year of the Cockerel to the Year of the Cockerel. [that is the complete cycle of twelve years] A large number of Chinese were killed, and, on this the Miao side, very many fell. This time must be explained clearly. By this time it was no longer those three old folk who came previously, Gi-no, Gi-vu and Gi-yio. When they were at Mount Mi-lie, this group who came and settled in the middle of the Die-fao-tai country, had gone. In his book, “Wei du” written by Han Fei-zi it says, “In Shun’s rule there were rebellious Miao. Yu Shun became ruler of Hua-shi. He continued to wage war on these three Miao groups and control them at Mi-li Mountain”. At that time Hmao-ndlw, the man Hxai, wore a grass cape, carried his crossbow

for war on his back, and three quivers of arrows at his waist. Now from the top, his chest he appeared speckled like the breast of a chicken, so that everyone called him, “chicken breast man”.

The elder Hmao-chi, also called the elder Hxe, was the commander of soldiers, who marshalled the troops.

Hmao-vu-gi-ndlw built a city in Honan on the banks of the river of yellow water at Ban-chuan. The city he built was Lao-gu. Hmao-dang’s city was Lao-gi-jiai by the bridge at the head of the plain. (It lay in the region to the north west of Ban-chuan.) They fought but could not hold the plain, so the family of the elder Hmao-ndlw Gi-yie fled from Lao-u and crossed to Lao-ndli. Lao-ndli was only a short distance from the Ndu-na-yi-mo river. The Hmao-chi family had crossed to the Di-yi-bang plain. Meanwhile the Hmao-dang family, loath to leave their own land and place, were still living in their native Lao-gi-jiai. After this there arose in the Hmao-jiai clan one who was an outstanding military leader. His name was Gha-sao-hmao-byu, and his family lived on “Pewter plain” at the foot of the plain.

Gha-sao-hmao-byu commanded soldiers mounted on horses trained for war. In fact all the songs sing of Gha-sao-hmao-byu as the foremost cavalry officer in charge of soldiers armed with knives and swords. Together with the elder Gi-chi and the elder Gi-vu he settled in one area of Ndlo-hlang-dleu-di, and became famous. Those three fought with Dlao-jiao-vaoyu-lao and Gi-yie-vaoyu-lao by the river, along the seven bends of the riverbank. Our three men fighting the Chinese resembled the felling of the forest. For all their fighting the Ruling Race could not take the land, and the two, Hmao-chi and Hmao-ndlw, laughed aloud.

The family homes of these two brothers-in-law were both not far from the river Ndu-na-yimo, and so were only one hundred and twenty li from each other. Meanwhile the Chinese returned, and having constructed flat and keeled boats, placed in them straw effigies covered with thin cloth in order to deceive the Miao into keeping watch and shooting at them. The two despatched their retainers and soldiers to go and defend on the river.

Having stood guard for three days and three nights and seeing no movement they realised that the Chinese had wrapped straw effigies in thin cloth, setting them in boats to deceive the retainers and soldiers into shooting their arrows into what were only straw effigies. So the elder Gi-chi and the elder Gi-vu laughed, “Ha! ha!” saying, “The Chinese, unable to overcome us fighting, are trying to deceive us by making straw effigies!” Accordingly they relaxed, and all came to drink wine, until the retainers were spread around like small wine jars beside the fire. Drinking wine, enjoying themselves and laughing they all became drunk as rabbits and rats. They collapsed on the bed, and around the walls of the room, lying scattered all about.

Meanwhile the Chinese retainers and soldiers came by a round about way to the foot of the plain, and the Hmao-dang family who lived there came quickly to say that Dlao-jiao-vaoyu-lao and Gi-yie-vaoyu-lao had come to the bottom of the plain by a round about way.

Unfortunately the elder Gi-chi was relaxed and said, “The Chinese are still acting like children and there is nothing on earth, or in the sky, to be afraid of”. He did not prepare the soldiers or set a watch, choosing to drink himself drunk, so that, stretched out on the bed, he was quite unaware of the great Chinese army, coming by a round about way, was arriving like sand blowing in the wind. The drunken Miao retainers and soldiers, given into their hand, suffered great loss.

The elder Gi-chi and the elder Gi-no were completely defeated. All they could do was to raise their voices and weep to the sky. The Chinese took the elder Gi-yie and the elder Gi-chi and bound them on the top of a rock on the mountain. Presently the Chinese returned to attack the family Hmao-jiai and the family Hmao-dang, the soldiers of the Man Li-dao. By that time the earlier Hmao-dang, the Man Li-dao, was no longer living. There remained only a Hmao-ndlw and a Man Li-dao with Zie-lao-no of Si-gyu-zi-lao. Zie-lao-no was one who pastured cattle. He was a descendant of Hmao-dang, the Man Li-dao. The Chinese chose the day when all the able-bodied were out celebrating the festival to come and set fire to Lao-gi-jiai, making a cloud of smoke which turned the sky black. The corn in flower became evil smelling and dropped because of the smell of the smoke. All over, Lao-gi-jiai was going up in flames, every place bright with fire. As the old people's proverb has it,

“To turn back on the road even to nurse a child,
is to die on the road despite the best of health”.

Unfortunately the Man Li-dao's 'ears were relaxed'. He allowed the old folk to spend their time pleasantly, every year concerned only with the supply of food and clothes, with worshipping the spirits and in convivial entertainment, and gave no thought to security. So then with the coming of Rabbit month in the year of the Monkey, when everybody was busy preparing for the Miao celebration, Gi-yie-va-zyu-lao and Diao-jiao-va-zyu-lao chose the day when the Miao, all the able-bodied, had gathered for celebrations, to come and set fire to Lao-gi-jiai. They attacked and pursued the people, cutting them down and killing them as they tried to flee. Our old folk, mothers and fathers simply took the children, took the women and the babies, and fled out of Lao-gi-jiai, away to the dark forest.

On their way to hide, as they fled, they snatched up some festival meat, and taking some partially cooked rice, carried it out to the forest, where they warmed up the meat for the children to eat, while the adults simply scooped up partially cooked rice to go with it. Because of this, their descendants, on the first day of the festival celebration, prepare the food, but snatch up some festival meat for the children going out to pasture the cattle. They also pack up meat for lunch, which, with meal cakes, they carry out into the fields to be warmed up and eaten. The root and origin of this custom is in remembrance of these events.

Presently they followed in the footsteps of those who had first fled before them. Coming, and coming on, they reached a place called Ngga-yi-shi-lw, and the plain of Ngga-yi-shi-lw. In this country there were Hmong who had first come and settled there. It was indeed Hmong country.

The Man Li-dao and the man Hmao-ndlw took their clans to live among the Hmong. When they came to settle in the Hmong country the offspring of the Man Li-dao erected a new city on the Ngga-yi-shi-lw plain. They led the people out to level paddy fields, farming to support their descendants. They planted cotton, which they spun into yarn to make clothes. Afterwards, as they began to spread, group after group migrated to Lao-dlu.

The Hmao-dang family, who fled later and came to live with the Hmong, built rough shelters on the far side of the Ndu-gi-njie river for rearing cattle. At that time the man Si-gyu-zi-lao came right at the end. Therefore they called him the man “Hmao-finish”. [A pun on the word “dang” which is both the clan name and also means “finished”.] The man Gi-dang came to live for a short time only and settled on the plain of Go-dleu, the plain of Gao and the plain of Zi-sie.

So it was that the Man Li-dao died here. Then Nza-lyu-lyu arose to resist along the Chinese borders, and a man of the Hmao-dang family, escorting the offspring, followed to the headwaters of the river Gi-nzhe, and then followed the river, and came to settle in Na-no country. At that time the woman Cao and the Man Cao were living on the far side of the river Gi-nzhe, not yet having come to Byu-no, but they had reached the limits of “Blossom open country”. Moreover the Hmao-ndlw family, which came to live in Ngga-yi-shi-lw country, because the borders were increasingly disturbed, with the Chinese killing many men of Hmao-ndlw, brought all their descendants to “Blossom open country”. (According to tradition “Blossom open country” in the song is Quiyang and Kaiyang. All twelve tribes were there.)

