

**Hua-Miao Archive  
Songs and Stories**

**Narratives**

Good rewarded, Narratives with a Chinese Setting and  
Narratives which were or are Songs  
Animals which became people, and people who turned into animals  
Songs M431 to M463  
Introduction and Translation

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The Hua-Miao Archive  
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**M431**  
**The witch and the Miao lad.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

This is a fairy tale. The “witch” in the story is called “a-bo bi-dlang” which means “spirit woman”. She must be distinguished from the shaman-healers, once common in Miao society. These people might be male or female and were known as “a-yeu nw” and “a-bo nw” respectively. In missionary writing they were sometimes referred to as “witch-doctors”, “wizards” or “witches”. Again she is not the same as the “a-bo kha” who figure in some songs and stories and fed on human flesh. This “witch” appears to have been a kindly old lady, who can hardly be blamed for retaliating when she was being robbed.

In the translation the object which the witch used to perform her magic, is called a “bowl”, but the Miao text is not so specific. The expression used is “dlang-nw” which simply means “thing”. The only description is the classifier used, which indicates that it was a small one of its kind. When pressed for more detail Mr. Yang said he did not know, but thought that it was some small bowl or basket into which the rice and the meat materialised.

**M431**  
**The Witch and the Miao lad.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, a Miao lad went digging and planted millet. When the millet was ripe many birds came eating it, so every day he had to go and drive them off. One day when he was on guard, the witch's chicken came eating his millet. He chased after them until he reached the witch's house. He said, "Old lady, you must look after your chicken carefully, for every day they come eating my millet!" The witch replied, "My boy, come in and sit down and I will find you something to eat". The Miao lad went in and sat down, and the witch went and took out a bowl and said,

"Deu, deu, deu, come forth rice!  
Deu, deu, deu, come forth meat!"

At once rice and meat appeared and the witch prepared food and served it for the Miao lad to eat. At night when the witch was asleep the Miao lad went and took the witch's bowl. Having got the witch's bowl, now, what ever he wanted he could get, and whatever he wished to eat he could have.

This Miao lad with the witch's bowl had a friend who one day was going to collect firewood. He called for him and said, "Friend, come and let the two of us collect firewood together". He replied, "Come in and sit down for a smoke, then we will go". His friend said, "You there, so poor, what tobacco have you got?" He said, "I may not have any, but come in and be sociable!" His friend came in and sat down. Then he went and took that bowl he had got and said,

"Deu, deu, deu, come forth rice!  
Deu, deu, deu, come forth meat!"

He took the rice and meat, prepared and served food for his friend to eat. His friend said, "How did you get it?" He replied, "I planted some millet and when it was ripe the birds came eating it, so I went to guard it. One day the witch's chicken came to eat. I chased them off and went and told the witch to look after her chicken properly. The witch pressed me to go in, and then took out her bowl, prepared food, and served it for me to eat. I waited until she was asleep and then I took the bowl away.

Hearing this his friend went to copy him. He, too, planted millet and guarded it against the birds. One day the witch's chicken came eating it. He chased them off and reached the witch's house. The witch made food for him to eat. When night came and the witch had gone to bed, he waited until midnight, and was then going to take the witch's bowl. But the witch was not asleep, so when he went to take it, she got up and caught him. She took the bowl and said,

"Deu, deu, deu, nose grow long!"

The Miao lad's nose grew until it was trailing on the ground! He returned home, and he had to speak to his friend and get him to bring his bowl to cure his nose and put it right.

**M432**  
**The orphan who gathered firewood.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

Coming home each day with nearly a hundred weight of firewood on his back, the orphan regularly stopped to rest the load on a great rock which was just a convenient height to take the weight without him having to remove the load from his back. This explains the rock's complaint about being constantly "pressed upon".

Dragon month is the last month of the lunar year.

M432

## The orphan who gathered firefood.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a Miao lad whose mother and father had both died. Every day he gathered firewood to go and sell. From the first day of the first month until Dragon month, every day he went gathering firewood. Every day, carrying the firewood on his back, he rested on the same great rock. Two days before New Year the rock said, "Orphan lad, you carry firewood every day and press on me. Now people are about to celebrate New Year, I will open my mouth and you can stretch in your hand and scoop up silver, to go and buy food to eat, so that you will not need to go gathering firewood". The orphan stretched his hand and scooped up silver from inside the rock. This he took home and went and bought all kinds of things and all kinds of food.

His friend in the village who was quite well off, called for him one day and said, "Come, let us two go and gather firewood". He replied, "Come in and sit down for a smoke, then we will go". His friend said, "You, so poor, what tobacco have you got?" The orphan said, "Though I may not have any, come in and wait for me, we two will go in company". The rich lad went in and sat down, and the orphan went and found food for him to eat. The rich lad said, "Orphan, how is that you are rich?" The Orphan lad said, "I went to gather firewood, and every day I carried it back and rested it on a great rock. One day the rock said, 'Orphan lad, you carry firewood every day and press upon me. Now stretch out your hand and take some silver from my inside and go and buy food to eat. Do not come pressing upon me any more'. This is how I have food to eat".

The rich lad listened, and went off to do the same. One day the rich lad carried firewood and rested on the rock. The rock said, "You come every day pressing upon me. I will open my mouth and you can stretch out your hand and scoop up some silver". He had made up his mind that he would scoop up a great deal, and so it was that he could not pull his hand out, and the rock closed its mouth and caught his hand. His wife brought him food every day, but after a long time the lad's wife became very ragged. One day when she brought the food, her breast was showing. The rock, seeing it, laughed, and so the rich lad got free, but because of his greed, in the end he got not a single piece of silver.

M433

**The Miao lad who went to carry an idol from Sichuan.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

It is not made clear in this story why a Miao lad should want to carry off a Chinese idol. The Miao did not make or worship idols, and would not normally have anything to do with them. Presumably, the intention was to steal a small idol from a local shrine and sell it in some distant place where it was unlikely to be recognised. However, it would be unusual to find any Miao who had the temerity to undertake such an exploit, and equally surprising to find someone who was prepared actually to sleep in a temple full of idols. Be this as it may the story is full of improbable happenings, and since many smaller shrines were completely unattended, it would be easy enough to carry off a small idol if one dared.

The eligible daughter of a wealthy family would normally be betrothed to the son of another wealthy family, which would pay well for an attractive bride. Such payment the Miao lad was in no position to make, which explains, but in no way condones, the wealthy man's churlish behaviour.

M433

## The Miao lad who went to carry an idol from Sichuan.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a Miao lad who was going to carry an idol from Sichuan. When he arrived he went to sleep in the temple. He slept until midnight when a small idol brought a copper coin to him. The idol said, "Don't go carrying me away. You take this coin and go and cure people's diseases". The next day the lad got up, and having the coin, he came away.

As he was coming he saw an ant, dead in the road. He took his coin, waved it over the ant and said, "I call on you to get up", and the ant got up. He went on and saw a snake which someone had killed. He took his coin and waved it and the snake got up. He came on and saw a man whom the Chinese had killed beside the road. He took the coin and waved it and the man got up. So the Miao lad arrived home.

On one occasion, where the Miao lad lived, there was a wealthy family with a fine daughter who had been taken ill and died. Someone went and told the wealthy man, who came and said, "Miao lad, if you will arrange to bring my daughter who has died, back to life, I will give her to you to be your wife". The Miao lad went with him, took his coin and waved it, and the girl got up and walked. But the wealthy family, not only did not give the girl to him, but took him, and beat him until he was very nearly dead, and went and buried him.

After this the ant which was dead and had been called back to life, brought his friends and scooped out a hole to carry rice for him to eat. The snake, which he had cured and revived, went and bit the daughter of the rich family, and she became ill to the point of death. So the wealthy man went and got people to dig out the Miao lad whom he had beaten nearly to death and had buried, wanting him to come and cure her again. He said, "If you will come and cure her this time, I will give her to you, and the house and the place shall all be reckoned yours". So the Miao lad went and cured her, and this time the wealthy man had no heart to beat him. Because he acted as he did, everything came to the Miao lad.

M441

## The king who sought a son-in-law and found a beggar.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

This story is about Chinese, in a Chinese setting, with very few references to the Miao. It is clearly related to the traditional Chinese “opera”, translated into English under the title “Lady Precious Stream”. That some stories, which have a Chinese origin, should be found in Miao is to be expected, but when and how they were introduced is impossible to determine. The subject may be Chinese, but the telling of the story is thoroughly Miao.

The beggar did not try to catch the silver piece with his hands as one might catch a ball, but allowed it to drop into the lap of his gown which he held out in front of him. When it had been caught, presumably, the king turned the silver back into his daughter, though the story does not say so.

The mandarin’s question, “How much do you want to eat each time?” means, what wages do you require for each period?” The Miao word used simply means “time” or “occasion” and does not make it clear on what terms the workmen were hired. Most probably it was on a daily basis, in which case the question means, “What wages do you want per day?” The wages were fixed in measures of grain, presumably rice, and not in money. The beggar’s request for three “dyu” was extremely high for one individual, but very reasonable from the mandarin’s point of view, since he could dismiss the rest of the work force, and the job would be completed in two days. The measures for grain were not standardised, and varied widely from locality to locality. The word “dyu” is used in the Miao New Testament as equivalent to the English “bushel”, which translation is also adopted in the present story.

**The king who sought a son-in-law and found a beggar.**

*Told By Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a royal family which had seven sons but only one daughter. Thus her mother and father were especially fond of her. When she was grown up, her parents and uncles wanted to choose for her a very good husband. Having no better method, when the time for choosing came, they first said to the mandarins from all around, "We wish to choose a husband for this our daughter. You who are seeking a bride, wait until the day of choosing, then let everyone come". Now that the king's letter had been received, on the day that the king had specified, people from every place and every district arrived, together with many common folk who came to watch. The king took his daughter and changed her into a piece of silver which he threw into the sky for the suitors to catch. The king said, "Whichever one of you catches it, to him will I give my daughter". From that day, and for three days, the king kept on throwing, but no one made a catch.

On the last day there was a beggar watching. He wanted to go and join those who were trying to catch the silver piece, but people would not let him go, because he had no high position, no good name, and was poorly clothed. Accordingly he went, and, taking a straw mat that people sleep on, wrapped it around his body, and jumped into someone's cesspit, so that his body was plastered with excrement and stank terribly. This time when he went, folk got out of his way, and he ran over with the important people to catch the silver piece. As soon as he ran up, the silver piece fell into the skirt of his gown. But the king did not give her to him. The king said, "That time does not count, give it back to me and I will throw it once more. If you catch it again I will give her to you". So once more the king threw it up into the sky for everyone to catch, but the silver piece dropped again from the sky into the skirt of the beggar's gown. The king said, "This time she reckons as yours". But the beggar, having no house, took the king's daughter to live under a cliff. Every day he went to work for people in the city using the money which they paid him as wages, to buy food for his wife to eat.

On one occasion as he went, he saw that the mandarin was about to build a house, and there were many people busy carrying timber. He also noticed a lot of folk together carrying a single piece. He said, "Why does this timber need such a crowd to carry it?" The people who were carrying the timber said, "Why do you disparage people? You come and carry it and show us how it should be done!" The beggar went, and on each occasion carried two pieces at a time. When people saw it they were all astonished. They went and told the mandarin, who said to him, "Being so strong, how much do you want to eat each time?" The beggar said, "I want three bushels of grain a time". The mandarin said, "This is not over much. From now on I want you only to carry the timber for my house". So the beggar carried timber for the mandarin. He carried for only two days and there was no room left in the city to stack it.

The mandarin then said to him, "Now there is one district where there are a lot of robbers. I want you to go and fight them. When you have subdued that district, I will give you the position of a mandarin". The beggar said, "That is fine, but I have still got my wife at home. I must go back to see her because there is no food to eat in our house". The mandarin said to him, "Where is your house?" The beggar said, "I have no house to live in. I brought my wife to live under a cliff". The mandarin said, "You need not worry. You go and fight the robbers, and we will send her food to eat". Then the mandarin said, "How can one send

a letter?" He said, "You may give it to the swallows to take". Since the beggar had been away a long time, his wife had nothing to eat, so that she wanted to go and die. As she was going out she saw a swallow carrying a letter. She took it and read it, and learned that her husband had gone to fight the robbers. She also received a letter saying that the mandarin was sending food for her to eat. Not many days passed, and she received her husband's letter saying that he had subdued the robbers, that the mandarin had given him a district to govern, and that he was coming to escort her there.

M442

## Three cowherds and the teacher.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

This is a story of honesty receiving its due reward. There is no feature which is specifically Miao, except possibly the description with which the narrative opens, of three lads, minding the cattle and enjoying themselves climbing over a great rock by the side of an ancient caravan route.

Miao has no word for taking an examination. “Kao” is borrowed from the Chinese.

The present name for Beijing in Miao is “Gi-myu lao”, meaning “the Emperor’s city”. The traditional name, however, was “Ghai-dleu lao”, “White chicken city”. In Miao the sound “ing” does not occur, so that both in speech, and in writing Chinese words it is regularly shortened to a simple “i”. Thus the name “Beijing”, becomes “Beiji”, which, if the right characters are chosen, can mean “white chicken” in Chinese, and so it was translated into Miao.

The Miao word for “slave” means not only a person who is the property of his master and may be bought and sold, but anyone engaged in servile work. So in this story the Miao lad was employed in hard labour, but remained free to move on when he wished.

**Three cowherds and the teacher.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there were three Miao lads who went minding the cattle by a main road. The three lads were playing on a rock, and while they were there a teacher, who was going to Beijing for examination to become a mandarin, came to the place where they were and rested there. Having rested sufficiently the teacher departed, but left behind the bag in which he was carrying his silver. He had gone part way on the road when he recalled that he had left his bag of silver, so he returned. When he got back there, he saw that there was only one small lad still there. He said to him, "While you were here did you see that I had left a bag behind?" The Miao lad said, "We found it, and we three opened it and had a look. We saw that there were three pieces of silver, so we took them and shared them, one piece each. The other two have taken their pieces away, but my piece is still here. Let the teacher take his own". The teacher said, "This was to pay for my food and drink on the journey to Beijing, but since you are so good hearted, I will give half to you". The Miao lad said, "The teacher has a long way to go, I do not want it. Let the teacher take it". The teacher said, "Well then, I have here a ring. I will now break it into two parts, I will give you one part. When I have gone, if the day comes when you have any matter to be transacted, come and find me". When he had finished speaking they parted.

The Miao lad returned home and told the folk at home what he had done. The folk at home said, "You fool! When you have food to eat you cannot preserve it. If you are going to act like this you shall no longer live with us!" So the Miao lad's mother and father drove him away, to go where he could. The Miao lad went and did servile work for people, every day moving further from home, and every day moving nearer to Beijing.

On one occasion the Miao lad was living with a very wealthy family. This wealthy family wanted the daughter of the mandarin whose silver the Miao lad had earlier found, for their son. However, the son was not at all engaging and the mandarin wanted someone very engaging indeed. So the wealthy family took their servant along for the mandarin to see, saying this was their son for whom they wanted the mandarin's daughter. The mandarin saw that the Miao lad was very engaging and so gave the family a favourable reply. They waited for the time to fetch the bride and then brought their son. The mandarin saw that it was not the person who had come before, so he said, "This is not the person who came before to see the bride. You must bring me the person who came to see the bride". When they saw how angry the mandarin was, they told him every detail of what they had done. The mandarin therefore made them go and fetch the Miao servant and questioned him about every thing. The mandarin said to the Miao lad, "Why did you come to deceive me?" The Miao lad said, "I am only these people's servant, so I have to do what they tell me". The mandarin said, "Well, where do you come from?" The Miao lad said, "In the past I did have parents. On one occasion I was herding cattle by a main road with two lads from our village, and as we were playing there, a teacher came and rested, and left behind his bag of silver, which we shared out one piece each. The other two, having got the silver, took it to their parents, but I, when I got it, stayed waiting for the teacher. When the teacher returned I gave him back his silver. So the teacher said, 'since you are so good hearted, now I will break my ring into two parts. I will give you one part and I will keep one part. If one day you seek me out I will be able to help you'". When the Miao lad had finished speaking he brought out the ring. So the mandarin, remembering what had happened long ago, gave his daughter to the Miao lad.

M443

**The wealthy family that chose a beggar for a daughter-in-law.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

The Chinese, Yi and Miao lived together in the same areas of Yunnan and Guizhou, but, though they constantly met in markets and elsewhere, and were interdependent to some degree, they lived in their separate communities, retaining their own customs and traditions. This is a Miao story, told by a Miao for Miao listeners, but the main characters are all Chinese and are, accordingly, portrayed behaving as Chinese. Under the domination of the Chinese mistress of the household, such Miao as appear in the story, themselves become virtually Chinese. In this connection the following points are note-worthy.

The consultation with the soothsayer, doubtless a Taoist priest, in selecting a suitable wife for their son would have been quite normal in a Chinese family, but not among the Miao.

Beggars figure largely in this story, but always with the prefix “Chinese”. The reason for this was that, though among the Miao there was much abject poverty and even destitution, professional mendicancy just did not exist, whereas it was widespread in Chinese society. There were no Miao beggars.

A Chinese family might very well own its own land, and therefore be in a position to sell an outcrop of rock to prospectors. Miao families did not own their land and so could not have made such a sale.

In the story the woman’s first husband took to gambling, an activity extremely common in the Chinese community, but not among the Miao, if only because few Miao had sufficient money to engage in it.

The costly celebration of the birthday of the ageing head of a well-to-do Chinese family was not unusual, but it was not practised among the Miao.

Ostentatious distribution of largess to an assemblage of beggars was entirely in character for a wealthy Chinese family, as an exercise for accumulating merit for the hereafter, but it did not fit into the very different pattern of Miao religious belief.

## The wealthy family that chose a beggar for a daughter-in-law.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a wealthy family which had an only son. The family, therefore, wanted to choose a very fine daughter-in-law, and they wanted to choose from a wealthy family. First they had to consult their horoscope to determine with whom it would be favourable to intermarry. This being the case the father went everywhere seeking people to consult. The people whom he consulted all said, "You must go and get the Chinese beggar girl who lives in your village". When they said this he was not at all happy, but on returning home the father had no alternative but to go and say to the beggar family, "We want to intermarry with you. We want your daughter as a wife for our son". The Chinese family said, "We will not give her to you. You are very rich and we have nothing. How can we give her to you?" The wealthy family said, "We do not want anything from you, only your daughter, and whatever happens we must have her". So presently the Chinese family gave her, and this wealthy family received the Chinese girl.

Not long afterwards a group of Chinese came to this family and saw that, at the back of the family house, there was a large rock. The group of Chinese offered a great deal of silver to buy the rock from the family. The family was not aware that there was anything valuable in the rock, so they thought, "They will give a lot of silver to buy the rock, better sell it to them". Having bought the rock the group of Chinese took fire to burn it. They burnt it for seven days and seven nights until everyone in the group of Chinese grew very drowsy, and all went off to sleep. The Chinese family's daughter-in-law who had recently been brought home was not yet asleep. She saw that everyone of the group of Chinese was sleeping. She also saw a red cockerel come out of the rock which the Chinese was burning. So the Chinese family's daughter-in-law ran and caught it, brought it back, and cooped it. When the Chinese men awoke the rock they had been burning had split open and there was nothing to be seen, so they had no alternative but to return home. The Chinese family looked after the cockerel, and wherever it left droppings they were all of silver, so the family became even wealthier than before.

By and by the father died and the husband said, "We are so wealthy but do nothing with it. It would be a good idea to take some of it for gambling". So every day the husband did nothing but gamble. However, there was never a day when he won anything. Thus with going and coming his father's silver store had none left. So he said to his wife, "It is because I married you that my household is getting poorer every day. From now on I do not want you". His wife said to him, "Very well, neither do I want anything of yours except only the white horse". His wife, having got the white horse, saddled it and left sitting on the horse's back. She said to the horse, "Horse! You are a stupid creature so you shall take me along. Whatever place we reach tonight that place shall be my home". So the horse started away. They went on all day until evening when they came to a very deep forest. They reached the middle of the forest where there was a Miao family living. This family was very poor indeed; they had on food at all. So, the next day the Miao folk said to the woman, "You must go now for we have nothing for you to eat. We are very poor". The woman said, "I am not going for I have come to be your daughter-in-law". The family said, "We cannot have you for you are the daughter of wealthy people!" The woman said, I will give you silver, so that you may go and buy corn for us to eat". The woman took out some silver and the poor family's son, whose wife she was to become said, "At the foot of our cliff there is a great deal of that stuff! I used to play at building houses with it every day!" The woman said,

“Then take me along to look”. The Miao lad took the woman to look, and everywhere she saw silver. The lad and the woman returned and arranged everything. They brought in builders to build a house.

After a long time the lad wanted to celebrate his father’s birthday, so people from all directions came to the family, and the family had to prepare a great deal of food. Many Chinese beggars came as well. They came wanting food from the family. Her husband, who of old did not want her, had now become a beggar, eating what he could get day by day. He came with the other beggars to the family. When it was time to distribute the food, they made the beggars sit down in a line. On the opening day, the former husband of the mistress of the house, now a beggar, sat at the end of the line. The servants who distributed the food began from the family’s front door, distributing until they reached the man in front of the former husband of the mistress of the house, and then had none left. The servants said, “There is none left for today, come again tomorrow”. The next day those who wanted food went again. The beggar who yesterday got none, went and sat down first of all, at the front door. Then the servants came again to distribute the food to them. They went to the far end of the line distributing as they came back. When they reached the person who yesterday got none, again they had none left, so he went away disappointed. Now it was the final day for those who came wanting food. Again that beggar came. He ran and sat down in the middle. The wealthy family again sent servants to distribute food to the beggars. When the servants arrived they said, “Both yesterday and the day before we distributed from one end only, but today we will distribute from both ends”. So the servants distributed from both ends until they reached the Chinese man, and again there was none left. So the Chinese man could do nothing but weep bitterly because for three days he had got nothing to eat.

When the servants came and told the mistress of the house, she realised that it was her previous husband who before had not wanted her. So she bade the servants prepare a very good meal for him to eat, and made him rest there several days before sending him away. When he was going to leave, she sent the servants for five measures of corn to make food for the journey for the beggar to carry. She said, when you have got the corn ready let me have it to make up”. So the servants prepared it and gave it to the mistress of the house to make up. She wrapped a piece of silver in every cake, and made a large number, which she gave to the beggar for food on his way. Before he left the mistress of the house said to him, “The cakes which I have made for you to take for your lunch, you must only eat in some place where there are no people about”. The Chinese man left. He went on until he reached a river where the water was very high. Travellers could only get to the other side by boat. The beggar, having no money, gave a cake to the boatmen who realised at once that there was silver inside it. Accordingly, they gave him, in exchange for the cakes he was carrying, an even greater number of cakes, and so got all his silver.

## **Ndlie-jia is tricked into divorcing Nggura-jio-ni-bang.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

### Introduction.

There is a bird in South West China which the Miao call the “ndlie-jia bird”. It is described as being of medium size, brownish in colour, having a distinctive white cap on its head. Its habitat is along the courses of swiftly flowing streams, where it is constantly seen flying back and forth across the water. This bird is the subject of one of the best known Miao stories, which is told to explain the white cap upon its head and its characteristic flitting over the surface of the streams. The Ndlie-jia bird is, in all probability, the white capped river chat, which is also called the white capped river start. It is found widely in mountain valleys from Nepal to Indo China.

There are a number of points in this story which need some explanation. The expression “ngao kha”, used to describe the young woman Ndlie-jia discovered in his house when he returned with a torch to re-light his fire, means literally, “a young female guest”, but it is the name regularly given to a bride as she arrives at her new home.

Chinese thimbles could be purchased in any of the markets. They were not cup shaped, but took the form of a ring made from a flat strip of brass bent around so the ends overlapped. This ring could be adjusted to fit any size of finger. From the end of the strip it was not difficult to break off a small piece of the soft brass.

The pot and the steamer. The former was a black earthenware basin, about fifteen inches in diameter, which could be heated on the fire. The latter was made of wood with a bamboo basketwork bottom fitted some two or three inches up on the inside. The steamer stood in the boiling water in the pot and was used for cooking rice or maize meal. In Yunnan these were always cooked by steaming and not by boiling.

The well dressed Miao girl used to wear strips of coloured cloth some six inches wide bound like bandages around the legs from the ankle to the knee. When removed these left ring-like marks on the skin of the legs for a short time. Ndlie-jia’s cousins suggested to him that these marks were a sign of leprosy.

White being the colour of mourning, the cloth he was given to wear was the sign of perpetual mourning, as the Ndlie-jia bird skims for ever over the surface of the streams in his vain search for Nggura-jio-ni-bang.

## **Ndlie-jia is tricked into divorcing Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once when Ndlie-jia went fishing he caught a small fish. He no longer had any parents, so that when he reached home and his fire had gone out, he just put the fish down on the pillow of his bed while he went to get fire. When he returned home he saw a bride sitting on his bed. He did not like to go and look on the pillow so he went back and forth but could not see the fish. Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang said, "What are you looking for?" Ndlie-jia replied, "I am not looking for anything!" Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang said, "You are looking for your small fish. It is I, and if you do not believe me look under my arms!" He looked and saw under Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang's arms there were the fins of a fish. So he stopped looking.

When evening came Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang said, "Ndlie-jia, prepare the supper". Ndlie-jia said, "I have nothing for supper". Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang took her thimble, broke off one piece and made a pot, broke off another piece and made a steamer, and broke off a third piece and made food, which she served for Ndlie-jia to eat. From that time, for Ndlie-jia, each day was better than the last, and his livestock more numerous each day than the last.

On one occasion Ndlie-jia's two cousins tricked him saying, "Ndlie-jia, your wife has leprosy, and if you don't believe it, you make her take off her leg-bands, and you look. She has got leprosy all right. You divorce her and come and marry us!" Ndlie-jia did as they said. He made his wife take off her leg-bands for him to look. He saw the rings on his wife's legs and concluded that she had leprosy, so he decided to divorce her.

He took his wife to the river where he used to go fishing and arrived at the same pool. His wife said, "Is it true, Ndlie-jia?" Ndlie-jia said, "It is". So his wife waded in several steps and said, "Is it true, Ndlie-jia?" Ndlie-jia said, "A man can speak but one word only!" His wife waded in waist deep and said, "Is it true, Ndlie-jia?" Ndlie-jia replied, "A man can speak but one word only!" Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in neck deep and said, "Is it true?" Ndlie-jia said "It is". So Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang disappeared down into the water pool. Ndlie-jia's livestock from the coombs and valleys came jumping to follow Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang into the water pool. Ndlie-jia tore down creepers and tied up the sheep and tied up the goats, but the sheep and the goats jumped around three times, the creepers snapped and they jumped away to follow Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. Now the twisting of the horns of sheep and goats is the result of this.

Ndlie-jia returned with the intention of marrying his two cousins, but his two cousins said, "We were only joking with you!" Now there was nothing he could do. Every day he went searching along the bank of the river. He met a toad who asked him, "What are you doing?" Ndlie-jia said, "I brought Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang to this river and divorced her, now I have come back to look for her". The toad said, "Do not worry, I will go with you and drink the water of the pool, then you may go and bring her back". The toad went and drank the water of the pool and revealed Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. Ndlie-jia was delighted and Ndlie-jia smiled, but the toad's stomach burst and the pool filled up again. Ndlie-jia took the toad home and healed him, and then took him back to drink the water. This time the toad drank up the water in the pool and Ndlie-jia went and said to Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang, "I have come to take you back". Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang replied, "I cannot go with you, but now I will cut off some wide,

white cloth for you to wear on your head as a sign, and from now on you will search for me all along the river course from its mouth to its source”.

So now when we see the ndlie-jia bird flying along the river, this is the reason.

**M452**  
**Ndlie-jia and Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. (1)**

*Collected by Wang Ming-ji.*

Introduction.

Wang Ming-ji's song version of the Ndlie-jia story exhibits a certain economy of wording and expression. This sometimes gives the impression that descriptive material has actually been left out, and is particularly true of the conversation near the beginning of the story about the erection of a grain store and a building to house cattle. It is again evident in the exchanges between Ndlie-jia and Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang as she waded deeper into the pool.

No attempt has been made to translate the names into English, but it should be remembered that they do have meanings of which a Miao listener would be immediately aware. Ndlie-jia is, of course, the name of a bird with a white cap on its head, which is constantly seen flitting back and forth across rivers and streams. Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang means "Young woman plum blossom", while Ngggu-gu is "Young woman gold".

The passage describing how, instructed by Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang, Ndlie-jia approached her father, is a little obscure. In the second song version of this story it is quite clear that Ndlie-jia went and requested that Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang be given him for his wife. Presumably that is also the meaning in this song. Here, however, he was not permitted to say so directly, but rather had to ask for her father's "silk rat, his silken rat" (There are two different Miao words for silk in this name.) This was apparently a code word meaning "his daughter". The use of such code words was not uncommon particularly in making marriage arrangements. However, in the Miao text Wang Ming-ji has added an explanatory note which says that the "silk rat" was the old gentleman's beard, and the song goes on to say that in fact Ndlie-jia was actually given the "silk rat" and carried it home. It would appear then that "silk rat" was a code name for the beard, which was in turn a symbol representing Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang, and with the beard came a rich dowry of livestock and corn.

**Ndlie-jia and Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. (1)***Collected by Wang Ming-ji.*

Ndlie-jia took copper and beat it into a hook  
 And Ndlie-jia went fishing.  
 Ndlie-jia caught a small silver fish,  
 Which he carried home and placed upon the bed.

5 The silver snake-fish changed,  
 Changed into a wife for Ndlie-jia,  
 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. She spoke,

“Make a store, Ndlie-jia!”

“If I make a store, there is no grain”.

10 “Build a house, Ndlie-jia!”

“If I build a house, there are no cattle”.

This year we may know,  
 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang has brought,  
 Brought Ndlie-jia to ask for breeding stock,  
 15 To ask for breeding stock from Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang’s father.

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
 Spoke to Ndlie-jia and said,  
 “When you go do not ask for breeding cattle.  
 Even if my father offers you breeding horses,  
 20 You must not ask for breeding horses.

Let Ndlie-jia ask for my father’s ‘silken-rat, his rat of silk’”  
 So Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang’s father gave,  
 Gave his ‘silken rat, his rat of silk’ to Ndlie-jia.  
 Ndlie-jia having received it returned and reached,  
 25 Reached the end of the road.

Though Ndlie-jia had built no house,  
 There were cattle and pigs of all colours to fill a house.  
 Though Ndlie-jia had made no store,  
 There was grain enough to fill a store.

30 This year we may know,  
 Know that the Master is worshipping the spirits.  
 So Ndlie-jia rode,  
 Rode his stallion and went to watch.

The Master’s daughter Ngggu-gu did no good,  
 35 Telling Ndlie-jia, as though it were true and believable,  
 And saying that Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang had leprosy.

Then Ndlie-jia returned and reached,

Reached Ndlie-jia's house.  
 Urgently Ndlie-jia reproached Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang  
 40 Urgently he led her out to divorce her.

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in up to the knees.  
 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke, "Is it true, Ndlie-jia?"  
 Ndlie-jia replied, "A man has but one word!"

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in up to the waist.  
 45 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke, "Is it true, Ndlie-jia?"  
 Ndlie-jia replied, "A man may curse!"

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in up to the neck.  
 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke, "Is it true, Nddlie-jia?"  
 Ndlie-jia replied, "A man has but one word!"  
 50 So Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in and disappeared.

As Ndlie-jia returned he met,  
 Met Ndlie-jia's stallion.  
 Ndlie-jia jumped to catch it,  
 To catch Ndlie-jia's stallion,  
 55 But the stallion changed into a dragonfly.

Then Ndlie-jia met,  
 Met Ndlie-jia's sheep and goats following,  
 Following after Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang.

So Ndlie-jia jumped to catch,  
 60 To catch Ndlie-jia's goats by the horns,  
 And the goats' horns twisted three times.

Ndlie-jia came and reached his house.  
 Ndlie-jia would go and marry the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu,  
 But the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu just spat,  
 65 Spat white spittle on Ndlie-jia's mouth.

So Ndlie-jia returned and remained,  
 Ndlie-jia would go and marry the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu to form a family and  
 dwell .  
 But the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu just spat,  
 Spat white spittle on Ndlie-jia's head.

70 "Ndlie-jia is not good enough to gather firing for the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu!"  
 So Ndlie-jia returned and remained.

Ndlie-jia went in search,  
 Seeking for Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang each day,  
 And Ndlie-jia met,  
 75 Met the toad out along the road.

The toad was kith,  
 And Ndlie-jia kin,

And the toad came and drank,  
Gradually drank the water from the pool,  
80 Until the hem of Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang's skirt was revealed.

Ndlie-jia smiled and laughed in his heart,  
But the toad's belly burst,  
And the silver water of the pool came bubbling back.

Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang wove a piece of new cloth,  
85 And put it on the top of a rock,  
For Ndlie-jia to wear on his head and become,  
Become a wild bird flying to and fro in search,  
Seeking Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang every day.

Thus it is ended.

**M453**  
**Ndlie-jia and Nggü-ra-jio-ni-bang. (2)**

*Sung by Tao Zi-gai.*

Introduction.

The version of the Ndlie-jia story sung by Tao Zi-gai is twice as long as that recorded by Wang Ming-ji. In part this is due to the differences in style between the two singers and to the inclusion of additional material, but there is also a certain amount of repetition. This may have been caused by the singer losing the thread of the song as he had to pause for each line to be written down. The repetition has in turn led to a certain disruption in the sequence of events.

Ndlie-jia's repeated, and slightly enigmatic, reference to a walnut means that, when a man has spoken, his word stands as invariable as a walnut kernel which always has four sections. Nggü-ra-jio-ni-bang uses a similar metaphor when Ndlie-jia asks her to return with him. She says that the water flowing over the rock has worn it smooth and slippery, that is, it can no longer be crossed. Time has moved on and the situation has changed, there can be no coming back. The reason was of course that she was now married to a dragon.

**M453**  
**Ndlie-jia and Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang. (2)**

*Sung by Tao Zi-gai*

- There was a time when Ndlie-jia fashioned a hook,  
Fashioned a shining ring of copper.  
Ndlie-jia stood motionless in order to draw up gold,  
And with his face shaded he fished,  
5 Fished and caught a little golden fish.
- There was a time when Ndlie-jia fashioned a line,  
Fashioned a shining ring of lead.  
Ndlie-jia stood motionless in order to draw up silver.  
Ndlie fished and caught a little silver fish.
- 10 Carrying it, Ndlie-jia returned, came back and reached,  
Reached Ndlie-jia's home.  
Ndlie-jia took his gold and silver fish and laid it on the bed,  
While Ndlie-jia went to light the fire.
- 15 Then Ndlie-jia returned, came back to put,  
To put the gold and silver fish upon the fire.  
But the gold and silver fish changed,  
Changed into a person, Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang.
- 20 Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang laughed heartily,  
"Oh Ndlie-jia, you're your gold and silver fish, it is I!"  
So the silver and gold fish became Ndlia-jia's wife,  
The silver and gold fish became Ndlie-jia's good companion.
- Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
"Build a house, Ndkie-jia!"  
Ndlie-jia replied,  
25 "If I build a house, there is no livestock".
- Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
"Make a store, Ndlie-jia!"  
Ndlie-jia answered,  
"If I make a store, there is no grain".
- 30 But Ndlie-jia arose and began to build,  
To build a dwelling house with timber frame and tiled roof,  
And he arose and began to build a store as well.
- 35 So Nggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
"Let Ndlie-jia go for breeding stock,  
Go far over yonder to Yeu-jio-dlang-rang.
- But if Yeu-jio-dlang-rang should offer,  
Offer breeding cattle and horses to Ndlie-jia,

Ndlie-jia must not want cattle,  
 And Ndlie-jia must not want horses.  
 40 Ndlie-jia must open his mouth, open his lips and request,  
 Request a family for Ndlie-jia.

If Yeu-jio-dlang-rang should offer,  
 Offer breeding sheep and goats to Ndlie-jia,  
 Ndlie-jia must not want sheep,  
 45 Ndlie-jia must not want goats.  
 Ndlie-jia must open his mouth, open his lips and request  
 Request a household for Ndlie-jia”.

So Yeu-jio-dlang-rang gave  
 Gave Nggura-jio-ni-bang to Ndlie-jia to make a family and live.  
 50 Yeu-jio-dlang-rang gave,  
 Gave Nggura-jio-ni-bang to Ndlie-jia to make a family and dwell.

Ndlie-jia returned, came back and reached,  
 Reached Ndlie-jia’s home.  
 There was livestock for Ndlie-jia flowing like water into his house,  
 55 And there was grain for Ndlie-jia falling in a shower to fill his store.

While the sky remained constant,  
 Who was it that twisted,  
 Twisted Ndlie-jia shaking his heart with slander?  
 It was the Master’s daughter Nggugu,  
 60 Who twisted Ndlie-jia and shook his heart with slander.

What was it that she said,  
 Said to Ndlie-jia, shaking his heart and making him believe?

While Ndlie-jia sat chatting on the bed,  
 Sat chatting on the pallet,  
 65 The Master’s youngest daughter,  
 The Master’s daughter Nggugu  
 Said that Nggura-jio-ni-bang had leprosy.

Ndlie-jia did not believe it.  
 So the Master’s youngest daughter spoke,  
 70 “If Ndlie-jia does not believe it,  
 When Nggura-jio-ni-bang takes off her leg-bands,  
 Let Ndlie-jia observe carefully  
 How the skin of Nggura-jio-ni-pang’s legs is ringed!”

Ndlie-jia was taking Nggura-jio-ni-bang back to divorce her.  
 75 Nggura-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
 “Is it true, Ndlie-jia?”  
 Ndlie-jia replied, “A man speaks but one way,  
 As a walnut always breaks into four pieces!”

Nggura-jio-ni-bang spoke,

80 “Is it true, Ndlie-jia?”

Ndlie-jia replied, “A man says but one word,  
As a walnut always breaks into four sections!”

Ndlie-jia was taking Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang back to divorce her,  
When they came to a certain stretch of the road,  
85 When they came to a certain stretch of the way,  
Ndlie-jia’s sheep and goats were changing,  
Changing to deer and jumping away into the forest.  
So Ndlie-jia tore off creeper to lead them with his arm.

Ndlie-jia took Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang and they went,  
90 Went and reached a river pool, very deep in the middle.

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in,  
Waded into the river pool up to her knees,  
And Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang said,  
“Is it true, Ndlie-jia?”

95 But Ndlie-jia said,  
“A man speaks but one way,  
As a walnut always breaks into four sections!”

Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in,  
Waded into the river pool up to her waist,  
100 And Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
“Is it true, Ndlie-jia?”

But Ndlie-jia answered,  
“A man says but one word,  
As a walnut always breaks into four divisions!”

105 Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang waded in.  
Waded into the river pool up to her head, so she did,  
And Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang spoke,  
“Is it true, Ndlie-jia?”

But Ndlie-jia answered,  
110 “A man says but one word!”

Then Ndlie-jia returned, came back and reached,  
Reached Ndlie-jia’s house.  
But Ndlie-jia’s place was no longer there,  
His live-stock and pigs had disappeared,  
115 And Ndlie-jia’s grain store was quite empty.

Then Ndlie-jia returned to marry,  
To marry the Master’s daughter Ngggu-gu and live as a family,

But the Master’s daughter Ngggu-gu spoke,  
“You are not fit to be a cattle herd for the Master’s daughter Ngggu-gu!”

- 120 And the Master's daughter Ngggu-gu spat.  
Spat white spittle on Ndlie-jia's head.
- Yet Ndlie-jia returned to marry,  
To marry the Master's youngest daughter and dwell as a family.
- But the Master's youngest daughter spoke,  
125 "You are not fit to be my pig man!"  
And the Master's youngest daughter spat,  
Spat white spittle at Ndlie-jia's mouth.
- As Ndlie-jia returned, coming back along the way,  
He met with the toad.
- 130 The toad was kith,  
And Ndlie-jia kin.
- Ndlie-jia took the toad back and it drank,  
Drank the river pool into his stomach,  
Revealing Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang to the hem of her skirt and her apron.
- 135 Ndlie-jia smiled and laughed as he watched intently.
- But the toad's belly burst,  
And they had to return and sew up the toad's skin,  
Before he could go back and drink,  
Drink the river pool into his stomach.
- 140 Again Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang was revealed to the hem of her skirt and apron,  
And Ndlie-jia, watching intently,  
Saw Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang there in the bottom of the water.  
So Ndlie-jia said,  
"Come, let us go in company together".
- 145 But Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang replied,  
"Now the water crossing the rock slab has made it truly slippery,  
It will not be possible for me to go with you,  
It will not be fitting for me to go with you.
- I will lift up my arms for you to see".
- 150 Ndlie-jia raised his head and looked,  
And saw a pair of baby dragons there.  
Then Ngggu-ra-jio-ni-bang said,
- "Truly it will not be possible for me to go with you.  
I can but give this white cotton cloth for you to wear,  
155 To wear on your forehead and return and show,  
Show to the people that each may regard it,  
Show to the people that each may look at it".
- While Ndlie-jia was watching intently,  
The toad's belly burst,
- 160 And the silver water flooded back to fill the pool,  
Filling it level with the banks.

Ndlie-jia wept bitterly as he sought,  
Sought Nggura-jio-ni-bang far down to the river's mouth,  
Sought Nggura-jio-ni-bang far up to the river's source.  
165 Sought Nggura-jio-ni-bang but could not find her,  
Sought Nggura-jio-ni-bang but could not see her.

Ndlie-jia then returned, came back and reached,  
Reached Ndlie-jia's house,  
Reached Ndlie-jia's place,  
170 But Ndlie-jia's house and place were not there,  
His live stock and grain store had all disappeared.

While the sky remained constant,  
Ndlie-jia lived,  
Lived in holes in the rocks to rear his little ones,  
175 Lived in holes in the cliffs to bring up his young.

Thus it is ended.

M454

**The Miao man's good scheme for marrying a sky-maiden.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

The subject of this song-story is not an animal which changed into a girl who eventually became the young man's wife, but a visitant from that other world up in the sky, who could not fly back because the man had stolen her wings.

Two kinds of bamboo baskets appear in the narrative. The first was large and conical in shape for carrying on the back. When inverted and stood on the ground it was possible for a man to crouch underneath it unseen. It was, however sufficiently loosely woven for him to prise open a small spy hole. The second was a round, shallow basket used for storing corn and often covered by another similar basket.

The story assumes, without actually saying so, that the two feathers which their mother gave them, developed into wings as the children grew up.

The tests imposed by their grandfather were intended to establish that the two lads were indeed his kin. In the second test the old man sent them into the forest, in the very path of the fire to see whether they could survive the flames.

**The Miao man's good scheme for marrying a sky-maiden.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a Miao man who went out farming. A bevy of sky-maidens flew down to bathe in the water pool in the middle of his land, and he wanted to find some way of taking one of them to be his wife. So, the next day he brought a large carrying basket and hid himself under it there beside the water. He watched until the sky-maidens came to bathe and then looked to see which one was the prettiest. When he had looked well he went quietly and took the wings of the one that was very good and hid them. Then he rushed out and surprised the sky-maidens. Each took her own wings and flew away into the sky. Having no wings, only that one who was very good could not fly away, so she had no option but to come with the Miao man and be his wife.

After a long time the sky-maiden and the Miao man had two fine big sons. Every day the Miao man made her work out of doors while he remained at home, but one day, the Miao man had to go out to work and leave his wife to look after the children at home. This day the boys wanted their mother to let them have the things to play with that they had every day, but she did not know what it was they wanted. They could not yet talk but only raised their hands upwards. Their mother looked up and saw that on the shelf there was a covered, flat basket. She took it down and looked and saw her wings inside. Their mother took the wings and gave the boys each a wing feather, and told them, "When you two have grown up come and seek me in the sky". Having said this their mother flew away.

Time passed and when the two had grown up, they took the wings their mother had given them, put them on their arms and flew up to the sky in search of her. When they arrived at their grandfather's household, their grandfather sought all manner of ways to put them to the test. On the first occasion their grandfather took them out and scattered millet for them to pick up. They went and told their mother, who said, "Do not worry, I can find a way to help you pick it up". She released the pigeons to go and pick it up. They pecked until not a single grain remained. Their grandfather said, "Indeed, you are truly my grandsons".

On the next occasion their grandfather wanted to test them by taking them out to burn the scrub. So the two of them went and said to their mother, "Grandfather wants to take us out to burn the scrub, what ought we to do?" Their mother said, "You go and find a hole in the rocks. If you go and stay inside, there is nothing to fear". Their grandfather took them out and made them go into the middle of the forest while he began to burn off the scrub from the lower side. When it was all burnt off their grandfather called to them and they answered him. Their grandfather said, "So you are truly my grandsons".

On the last occasion, their grandfather wanted to take them out for hide and seek. They went and told their mother. Their mother said, "When you go with your grandfather, and he goes and hides, if, on the way, you see a water buffalo, go and stroke it and say, "Our grandfather is here, our grandfather is here!" The two of them went off with their grandfather. Their grandfather went and turned into a water buffalo in the marsh. When they saw him they said, "Our grandfather is here, our grandfather is here!" Then their grandfather said, "You are truly my kin, you are truly my grandsons".

M455

**The youth who married a sky maiden.**

*Collected by Wang Ming-ji.*

Introduction.

“The continuing adventures of Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv”, would be a more appropriate title for this song, which, after a dozen episodes and nearly 340 lines still reaches no satisfactory conclusion. Retribution still has to be visited on Ndrao-ghu for his cruelty and subterfuge. Was the sole surviving cousin of the monkey family to be its agent? In addition Ndrao-ghv had to find a new mother for his orphaned children, but who and where we still are not told.

The meaning of the names given to the Miao man and the sky maiden is not known, but “Ndrao-ghu” and “Ndrao-ghv” are possibly conventional names for twins.

A note in the text suggests that mule, piebald and grey horses were pseudonyms for a dragon, an elephant and a cloud. Why the actual names could not be used, and how the listener was expected to know, is not explained. Neither is there any explanation why Ndrao-ghv was so upset by the calling of the gi-zhw birds. Was there some superstition, or did he imagine that they were mocking him at the death of his brother?

Another explanatory note in the text says that “the man Dlang-ndu” was “the new father’s name”, implying that this person was the sky-maiden’s second husband, and therefore stepfather to the two young men. In other versions of the story he is their grandfather, and this explained why he was anxious to put them to the test, namely to establish that they were truly his kin. In this version his sole object was to kill them. However, by their own agility they avoided being crushed by the falling tree, and with a circle of magic water supplied by their mother they escaped being burnt alive.

The name “Nggü-yi-nzeu” is reminiscent of Hmao-chi’s youngest daughter who, in another song, was abducted by a tiger. Although the text does not say so, it is implied that this person also consorted with tigers, and her offspring, though human in form were tigers by nature. So the girl whom Ndrao-ghu married soon made an excuse to go off up over the mountain to call her tiger relations together for a kill.

The reason why the stag made Ndrao-ghu “tie himself up” was to fasten his loose fitting clothes tightly around him in order that they might not get caught up when he was tossed into the tree. This particular tree, unknown to Ndrao-ghu, was hollow, so that when he was shown the hole by the bluebottle grub, he was able to climb down on the inside of the trunk, when he had been unable to get down on the outside.

Why Ndrao-ghu shot the monkey maiden is not clear, but it appears that he took offence at the light-hearted, teasing answer he received to his initial question and to his threat to shoot her.

**M455**  
**The youth who married a sky-maiden.**

*Collected by Wang Ming-ji.*

- The sun was shining brightly,  
And the sunshine was good,  
Good for the Miao man to go and channel water.  
But sky-maidens flew whistling from the sky,  
5     And made the Miao man's stream muddy.
- The children went out minding the pigs,  
And while minding them crossed the edge of the Miao man's water.  
So the Miao man came and scolded,  
The Miao man scolded the children.
- 10    The children spoke together,  
"Who will go and talk to him?  
Let the children tell the Miao man".  
So the children told the Miao man and said,
- "When the sun is shining brightly,  
15    Who is it, at breakfast time,  
Who is it that flies whistling from the sky,  
And stirs the Miao man's stream to make it muddy?"
- The Miao man went and built a booth,  
Built a hide, built a booth near the water pool.  
20    The Miao man went and stayed there,  
Went to keep watch at his stream of water.
- When breakfast time came,  
The sky-maidens flew whistling from the sky.  
The sky-maidens took off their wings,  
25    Their mottled, dappled wings at the water's edge.
- While the sky-maidens were stirring the water,  
The Miao man ran and took,  
Took a sky-maiden's mottled, dappled wings,  
Took them away under his arm.
- 30    The Miao man shouted at the sky-maidens,  
Who flew whistling back into the sky,  
But one sky-maiden could not go.  
The Miao man went and brought,  
Brought the sky-maiden, returned and reached,  
35    Reached the Miao man's home.
- The sky-maiden having no name,  
Call the sky-maiden Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu.  
The Miao man having no name,

Call the Miao man Di-ya-shi-njiang.

40 This year we may know,  
Know that this year Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu has given birth,  
Given birth to two brothers.

The elder brother having no name,  
Call the elder brother Ndrao-ghu.

45 The younger brother having no name,  
Call the younger brother Ndrao-ghv.

Bo-tyu-nyu-yyu went farming,  
Went farming every day.  
But farming and tilling tax the strength,

50 And it taxed Bo-tyu-nyu-yyu's strength.  
So Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu sent Di-ya-shi-njiang out to farm.

Then Di-ya-shi-njiang spoke out,  
"You two, do not go troubling your mother!"

55 But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv cried incessantly and troubled,  
Troubled Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu greatly.

Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu spoke,  
Spoke to Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and said,  
"When your father is staying with you,  
What does he give you to eat, Ndrao-ghu, Ndrao-ghv?"

60 Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv replied,  
"Father gives us the sky-maiden's mottled dappled wings,  
Gives them to us to play with.

Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu asked, "Ndrao-ghu, Ndrao-ghv,  
Where did you put them away?"

65 "We put them away in the covered basket".  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu ran to take it and look.  
"But where did you put that away?"  
"We put it up there in the loft".

Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu went, went and took it and looked.

70 She took out the sky-maiden's mottled, dappled wings  
And measured them against the sky maiden's arms.  
They fitted the sky-maiden's arms exactly.

The sky-maiden took them and flew over there,  
And Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv, all smiles, went to look.

75 The sky-maiden flew back over here,  
And Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv, laughing aloud, went to look.

Then the sky-maiden spoke,

"When the day comes that you two have finished caring for your father,  
Then you may follow the sky-maiden".

As the sky-maiden flew whistling back into the sky,  
Her shadow fell across the Miao man.  
The Miao man, turning round, looked into the sky above,  
But the sky-maiden disappeared into the clouds up in the sky.

The Miao man returned home,  
85 And the Miao man spoke,  
Spoke to Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and said,  
“This time indeed you two have eaten your mother!”

There came a day when Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were grown up,  
And having looked after the Miao man until he died,  
90 Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv followed Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu.

They went and reached an Yi household.  
“Today a couple of honourable guests have come,  
And we have nothing to kill to entertain them.  
To entertain them we must catch and kill a goose”.

95 At midnight that night, while Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were asleep on the wooden  
floor upstairs,  
The pair of geese were lamenting,  
“O that Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv would not eat goose flesh!  
Kill the mother goose then the little goose would be motherless,  
Kill the little goose then pity the mother goose!”

100 Ndrao-ghu roused Ndrao-ghv to listen quietly  
To what the pair of geese were saying. The pair of geese continued,  
“O that Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv would not eat goose flesh,  
Then would the pair of geese show Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv their road.  
O that Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv would not drink gosling broth,  
105 Then would the pair of geese show Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv their home”.

Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv replied, “We will not eat goose flesh,  
If the pair of geese will show Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv their home.  
Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv will not drink gosling broth,  
If the little goose will show Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv their way”.

110 “Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv, go and stay up there in the pass,  
For Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu, the three sisters,  
Will arrive up in the pass.

Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv, go and stay up there in the pass.  
Your eldest aunt, riding a mule, will go first,  
115 Your Middle aunt, riding a piebald horse, will arrive in the middle,  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu, riding a grey horse, will arrive behind.  
Let Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv run and cling to the grey horse”.  
Ndrao-ghv ran to cling to the grey horse,  
But Ndrao-ghu did not listen.  
120 Ndrao-ghu ran and clung,  
Clung to the eldest aunt,

But her mule turned back and bit him and Ndrao-ghu died.

The gi-zhw birds were calling,  
And vexed Ndrao-ghv's heart.  
125 So Ndrao-ghv went and sought  
The gi-zhw birds' roost among the bushes,  
And Ndrao-ghv took and strangled the gi-zhw birds' young.

But the gi-zhw birds, still calling, plucked,  
Plucked green leaves and went and fanned,  
130 Fanned the heads of the gi-zhw birds' young.

This Ndrao-ghv copied.  
Ndrao-ghv ran and plucked,  
Plucked green leaves and went and fanned him,  
And Ndrao-ghu revived.

135 Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu took,  
Took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and they went and reached,  
Reached Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu's home.  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu was overjoyed,  
But the man Dlang-ndu hated,  
140 Hated Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv greatly.

When the next day came,  
Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were about to leave.  
But the man Dlang-ndu was evil hearted.  
The man Dlang-ndu took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to cut the forest.  
145 The man Dlang-ndu made Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv cut on the lower side,  
While the man Dlang-ndu cut on the higher side

The man Dlang-ndu cut, but was not first to make the tree fall,  
Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv cut and were first to make the tree fall.  
The man Dlang-ndu called,  
150 Called to Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to come home,  
But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv kept quiet.

The man Dlang-ndu spoke,  
"Surely Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv are dead!"  
Then Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv came quickly out,  
155 And the man Dlang-du took,  
Took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv back home.

Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were about to leave,  
But the man Ndlang-ndu was evil hearted.  
The man Dlang-ndu would take Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to burn the scrub.  
160 He made Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv stand on the higher side,  
While the man Dlang-ndu burnt from the lower side.  
But Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu drew clear water,  
For Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to carry,  
And Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv poured out,  
165 Poured out clear water on the earth below to make a refuge.

The man Dlang-ndu burnt,  
Burnt and scorched the scrub till it was burnt black,  
Until the scrub was scorched completely.  
Then the man Dlang-ndu called Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to come out.

170 But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv kept quiet.  
“This time, surely, Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv are dead!”  
Then Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv came quickly out,  
And the man Dlang-ndu took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv back home.

Next day Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were about to leave,  
175 When the man Dlang-ndu took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv out for a game.  
The man Dlang-ndu wanted Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to go first,  
But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv made the man Dlang-ndu go first.

So the man Dlang-ndu went and became,  
Became the Ruling Race’s water buffalo grazing yonder.  
180 Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu bade Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv raise,  
Raise their hands and point to the buffalo,  
And the man Dlang-ndu with Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv came home.

Then the man Dlang-ndu made Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv go and hide.  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and turned,  
185 Turned them into two spoons placed in a covered basket.  
The man Dlang-ndu came and called.

But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv remained quiet.  
The man Dlang-ndu was evil hearted,  
“Surely Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv are dead!”  
190 Then Ndao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv came quickly from the covered basket.

Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv made the man Dlang-ndu go and hide.  
The man Dlang-ndu became the Ruling Race’s capsicum pod,  
Which attached itself at once to the Ruling Race’s bunch of capsicum.

Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu made Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv raise,  
195 Raise their hands to point, and to call out,  
Call out that the man Dlang-ndu had gone,  
Gone to the Ruling Race’s bunch of capsicum.

Then the man Dlang-ndu came out,  
Returned with Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and reached,  
200 Reached the man Dlang-ndu’s house.

The man Dlang-ndu made Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv go and hide,  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu took Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv and turned them,

Turned them into Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu’s ball of hemp in her hip basket.  
The man Dlang-ndu came and called.

205 But Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv remained quiet.

The man Dlang-ndu said,  
“Surely Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv are dead!”  
Then Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv jumped quickly from the hip basket.

210 Next day Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv were about to leave,  
And Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu ladled white rice  
For Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv to carry for lunch.  
Bo-dyu-nyu-yyu bade Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv go,  
Go by way of the people’s country of bamboo.

215 “You two go by the clear water of the river Li-yiu,  
And marry the monkey maidens of Li-yiu.  
Do not go by the rough roads of Li-hmao,  
Do not go by the people’s rough roads.

220 Should you go and marry by the muddy water of the river Li-hmao,  
You two will get in marriage Nggü-yi-nzeu’s tiger maidens.  
As you go, should you hear the rustle of a snake you two must not touch it”.

225 When a snake did rustle on the higher side of the road,  
Ndrao-ghv said, “Our mother told us  
That we two were not to touch the snake”.  
But Ndrao-ghu would not agree.  
Ndrao-ghu beat the black snake and killed it,  
And thereby he actually beat his own mother.

230 Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv came and reached a stage on the way,  
And Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao took out their lunch to share and eat,  
Ndrao-ghu and Ndrao-ghv took out the white rice to share and eat.  
But as Ndrao-ghv served out the rice for Ndrao-ghu to eat,  
Ndrao-ghu’s white rice turned to sand.

235 Ndrao-ghv said, “Our mother bade us go,  
Go by the people’s country of bamboo,  
And forbade us to go by by the rough roads of Li-hmao”.  
So Ndrao-ghv arrived in the people’s country of bamboo,  
And married a Monkey maiden of Li-yiu.

240 Ndrao-ghu arrived by the rough roads of Li-hmao.  
He went to marry by the muddy water of the river Li-hmao,  
And married Nggü-yi-nzeu’s tiger maiden.  
The tiger maid wore a patterned apron,  
An apron with a pattern of spots.

245 Nggü-yi-nzeu’s tiger maiden schemed,  
Schemed well and schemed with care.  
“The Chuan Miao deer are grazing yonder on the mountain,  
Let us return and wait for some to eat”.  
She made Ndrao-ghu remain by the water,  
While Nggü-yi-nzeu’s tiger maiden went yonder to the mountain.

A partridge came along first,

And Ndrao-ghu was about to shoot,  
 250 To shoot the partridge,  
 But the partridge would not agree.  
 “Do not shoot the partridge,  
 There is another, better than I, coming behind”.

A pheasant came behind,  
 255 And Ndrao-ghu would shoot the pheasant,  
 But the pheasant would not agree for Ndrao-ghu to shoot it.  
 “There is another, better than I coming behind”.

A stag came behind,  
 And Ndrao-ghu would shoot the stag,  
 260 But the stag would not agree for Ndrao-ghu to shoot it.  
 It turned around and looked intently yonder at the mountain,  
 So Ndrao-ghu turned around and looked intently yonder at the mountain.  
 The striped tigers were coming in a group from yonder mountain.

The stag spoke to Ndrao-ghu and said,  
 265 “Take off your belt and sleeve bands and bind yourself up”.  
 So Ndrao-ghu took off his belt and sleeve bands and bound himself up.  
 Then Ndrao-ghu jumped quickly and clung to the stag’s antlers,  
 And the stag tossed Ndrao-ghu,  
 Tossed him into the tree above.

270 The striped tigers arrived running,  
 And the striped tigers sought,  
 Sought and sought for Ndrao-ghu.  
 A big gust of wind blew,  
 And moved Ndrao-ghu’s shadow as he remained,  
 275 Remained in the tree above

Then the striped tigers looked up into,  
 Up into the tree above,  
 And there was Ndrao-ghu,  
 Up there in the tree above.  
 280 So the striped tigers called,  
 Called to Ndrao-ghu up above.

But Ndrao-ghu could not come down.  
 Then Ndrao-ghu said,  
 “I cannot come down.  
 285 Having reached the tree, the tree holds me,  
 Having reached the rock, the rock holds me.  
 I cannot come down”.

As the striped tigers went leaping up,  
 Ndrao-ghu drew his shining sword and slashed,  
 290 Slashed the striped tigers and killed them.  
 But Ndrao-ghu remained,  
 Remained in the tree above.

Ndrao-ghu grew hungry, very hungry,  
 But right at the bottom of Ndrao-ghu's pouch,  
 295 He had one grain of rice which he just licked.  
 The bluebottles were buzzing noisily around,  
 And he shared a little bit,  
 Shared it for the bluebottles to lick.

The bluebottles were going in at the bottom and coming out at the top,  
 300 Going in at the top and coming out at the bottom,  
 And they brought one of their grubs to show Ndrao-ghu the way,  
 And so Ndrao-ghu came down.

Ndrao-ghu then followed,  
 Followed Ndrao-ghv and went,  
 305 Following after Ndrao-ghv.  
 Now the monkey maiden was fetching water,  
 And Ndrao-ghu did evil.

He said, "Monkey maiden what are you fetching water for?"  
 The Monkey maiden replied, "I am fetching water to make,  
 310 To make a skin rash for my brother-in-law!"  
 Ndrao-ghu replied, "Monkey mother if you do not answer me,  
 I will shoot you , monkey mother!"

The monkey mother replied, "If you shoot,  
 I shall hide inside my gourd!"  
 315 Then Ndrao-ghu shot,  
 Shot the monkey maiden,  
 Shot and killed the monkey maiden.

Ndrao-ghu went on and reached Ndrao-ghv's house.  
 Ndrao-ghv's little ones were crying,  
 320 They were crying loudly,  
 So Ndrao-ghu asked, "Ndrao-ghv,  
 Where has their mother gone?"  
 Ndrao-ghv replied, "Our mother has gone to fetch water".

Ndrao-ghu said, "I shot and killed the monkey maiden".  
 325 Ndrao-ghv replied, "Then be afraid of the many brothers in the Gi-chi monkey  
 family".

But Ndrao-ghu made Ndrao-ghv go and gather firewood,  
 Gather firewood for the monkey maiden to carry,  
 And make as though the monkey maiden had carried it yonder by the horners' nest.  
 Then Ndrao-ghu made Ndrao-ghv go and call,  
 330 Go and tell the monkey family  
 That the hornets had stung her to death.

So the monkey family came to kill,  
 Came to kill the hornets.  
 But when the monkey family came to kill the hornets,  
 335 The hornets stung the Gi-chi monkey family and killed them all.

Except for one cousin only,  
They were wiped out completely.

**M456**  
**The sky maiden.**

*Told by Yang Ya-go.*

Introduction.

In 1911 Sanuel Pollard wrote this version of the sky maiden story in his diary. Although originally a song, it was told to him in prose and he took it down at the dictation of an informant who is not named, but was most probably Yang Ya-go.

At this early date the Miao script was still in the process of development, but in the present transcription the final form of 1934 has been used. Occasionally in the writing odd words have been accidentally omitted. These have been supplied to make the text readable, and are listed in the Notes. At other places the story has obviously run on faster than it could be taken down. No attempt has been made to fill such breaks in continuity, but they are indicated by three dots in the course of the translation. At two or three points, particularly where the narrative was merely a repetition of what had just been said, Pollard did not write it out again but indicated an omission by half a line of dots. The same has been done in this transcription and translation. The last sentence is clearly the beginning of a further episode. The fact that the rest of the page is left blank suggests that Pollard intended taking down more at some later date, but never managed to do so.

Millet seed had to be sown by hand, and the quantity in this story was immense. There were ten “dyu” in one “lu”. These Miao words correspond to the Chinese “dou” and “dan” respectively, but the actual capacity of these measures varied a great deal from area to area. That used at the market in Shi-men-kan was considerably larger than that used at Zhaotung only 20 miles away. When large quantities of grain had to be measured a wooden container was used. This was the largest amount that could be conveniently handled at a time. At Shi-men-kan this was a box approximately two feet square at the top with sides sloping to a one and a half feet square bottom. It was about eight inches deep and contained half a “dyu”. The amount of millet to be sown and collected again in this story was such a container filled twenty-two times.

M456

## The sky maiden.

*Told by Yang Ya-go.*

Once there was a Miao man who went and scooped out a pool for water, and every day he drove his cattle there to drink. One day his water pool was all muddy and he said, "What has been stirring my water pool and making it all muddy?" There was a child who told him that something flew from the sky and stirred it, so one day he hid and watched. ... He looked for the pretty one, and took away her wings. Then he came out and surprised them. They all flew off except the pretty one who could not find her wings. The Miao man said, "What are you looking for?" The pretty one said, "I am not looking for anything". The Miao man said, "If you are willing to become my wife, I will tell you". So the pretty one went home with the Miao man and became his wife.

In time they had two small sons. Every day the mother went out farming while the father remained at home, but one day, the mother remained at home while the father went out farming. The two sons were crying, and at the same time raising their hands toward the shelf. Their mother gave them all kinds of things, but they wanted none of them. Then she went and opened the covered basket and saw her wings. She took her wings, pulled them on to her body and flew away. She said to her two sons, "The day will come when you will grow big, then you may come and follow me". The mother flew over where the father was, and her shadow passed by. The father said, "May the spear take those two sons, for they have eaten their mother".

The two sons lived on until they had grown up. They then wanted to go in search of their mother. They went to spend the night with a very wealthy Yi family. When they had gone to bed the Yi family were discussing, "We have two fine guests staying with us here today, what should we kill to entertain them?" Now the Yi family had raised three geese. ... The geese said, "Kill the mother goose, then pity the little goose. Kill the father goose, then pity the mother goose". ... The two sons said, "We will not eat you but we want you to show us the way". The geese told them, "When you arrive yonder at the pass, if you see a troop of horses coming, with the leading one rippling with fat, do not ride it. Coming after there will be one which is plastered all over with manure, you two ride the one that comes after. Having reached the pass the bigger brother, not heeding the instructions, saw the very good horse and deliberately rode it, but that good horse bit his forehead and crushed it. ... The younger brother killed the gi-zhw birds. The heads of the little ones were crushed, but the mother bird picked lily leaves and placed them on the little birds' heads and they came back to life. The younger brother then copied the mother bird. He went and picked lily leaves and placed them on his elder brother's forehead, and his elder brother came back to life. The two of them went once again to the pass and waited, and once again the troop of horses came. They jumped up and rode the horse which was all plastered with manure. ... The two called "Mother, Mother". Their mother said, "I do not remember having any sons like these". But their aunt said, "Since you went and married on earth, I am afraid you have!" Their mother looked at them again and knew that they were indeed her sons, and took them home.

When they arrived at their grandfather's house, their grandfather said, "If you are indeed my grandsons I shall hide and you may seek. If you find me then you are truly my grandsons". Their grandfather went and changed into a pig thrusting with its snout. They said to their mother, "If grandfather hides for us to seek, what shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't

worry! If you see a pig thrusting with its snout, you call out, 'Grandfather is there. Grandfather is there!'" ... Their grandfather said, "You are truly my grandsons, but I will hide once more". He then changed into a buffalo. The two said to their mother, -----  
----- Their mother said, "Don't worry! If you see a buffalo lying down chewing the cud, you say, 'Grandfather is there! Grandfather is there!'" So they went and found him.

Their grandfather then made the two go and hide. They went and told their mother, "Grandfather wants us two to go and hide, what shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't worry!" She took and changed them, one into a spoon and the other into a block. Their grandfather searched thoroughly but could not find them. He searched until he was hungry and took the spoon to dip up food to eat. The spoon said, "Ha, ha!" like this, "I am here, Grandfather". Their grandfather said, "Thanks to some crafty bounder!" Their grandfather then wanted to take the block to sit on. The block laughed, "Ha, ha! I am here, Grandfather!" Their grandfather said, "Thanks to some crafty bounder!"

Their grandfather wanted to take them clearing the undergrowth. They said, "Grandfather wants to take us clearing the undergrowth. What shall we do, Mother?" Their mother said, "Don't worry! When each of you has made several axe strokes then go and sleep quietly". The two slept and woke up, and all the undergrowth was completely cleared. Their grandfather then wanted to take them to burn off the undergrowth. They said to their mother, "Grandfather wants to take us to burn off the undergrowth. What shall we do?" Their mother said, "Don't worry! When grandfather takes you there, in the middle of the brushwood is a water hole. You two go down inside". Their grandfather burned off the undergrowth completely, and then called them, and the two grandsons came out.

Their grandfather wanted to take them to sow millet. He wanted one "lu" one "dyu" of millet sown, so the two said to their mother, ----- . "Don't worry!" Their mother said, "You need sow only three handfuls each, then have a quiet sleep". When they got up to look the sowing was completely finished. Having got back to the house their grandfather wanted them to collect up again the whole one "lu" one "dyu" of millet seed. The two said to their mother, ----- . "Don't worry!" Their mother said, "When you have gone out collect a few grains from the four corners of the land and put them into the container. Then," she said, "you two whistle". As they whistled the wild pigeons arrived and collected up all the millet until it filled the container completely. They carried it home and arrived even before people had had their morning meal. Their grandfather took the bushel to measure it, and there was a little missing in one corner. Their grandfather said, "It is not enough". They went to their mother and asked her, "What ought we to do, there is a little missing?" Their mother said, "Take the crossbow, go and shoot the pigeon in the tree outside the door". Having shot the pigeon they cut open its crop and took the seed and it filled the bushel. Their grandfather said, "You are indeed my grandsons, you are indeed my grandsons".

The two said, "Grandfather, we want to take our mother and go ..."

**M457**  
**Concerning the orphan and the deer.**

*Told by by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

Some of the song-stories of metamorphic changes are quite long and elaborate. This one is in the simplest, basic form. A young man catches an animal, which changes into a girl whom he marries.

The final paragraph reflects the Miao social custom of inviting the wife's mother to visit when the first baby had been born, and of giving her a gift of food on her departure. The whistle used to call mother-in-law was a piece of bamboo, cut in such a way that one end was open and the other closed. When it was held vertically against the lower lip in the manner of Pan-pipes, blowing across the open end produced a soft whistling sound, the pitch and quality of the sound depending on the length and width of the tube, and the force and direction of the blowing. The young women suggested "a clump" of green grass as food for mother-in-law during her stay. The husband actually gathered "a load", that is as much as a man could carry on his back, and provided an equal quantity again as a parting gift.

M457

## Concerning the orphan and the deer.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time an orphan went and tilled a patch of millet in the middle of a forest. In this forest there were many deer living, so that his patch of millet was all eaten up by the deer. The Miao lad was very angry. He went and set snares around the edges of the patch. One day when he went to look, he had caught a doe. He was about to kill the doe when she said, "Miao lad, do not kill me and I will go with you". When the Miao lad realised that the doe could speak, he took her, led her home, and tethered her behind the door.

Every day when the orphan had gone out farming, the deer changed into a fine Miao girl and prepared his food in readiness for him, but he did not know. He said to his neighbours, "Thank you! Every day you prepare my food in readiness for me". The neighbours said, "No family among us has been preparing food for you. You must be joking!" So one day the Miao lad pretended that he was going out to work. He ate his food, pulled the door shut, but when he got outside he went and hid in the wood and watched to see who came to prepare food for him. While he was hiding there no one at all came to his house, only he saw that little deer, which he had snared, change into a Miao girl preparing the food for him. Having seen this the Miao lad suddenly rushed out. The doe could not change back because she had been surprised by the Miao lad. So the Miao lad married her.

After a long time the couple had a son. The orphan's wife urged him to go and fetch his mother-in-law to see their son. He said to his wife, "With the forest so large I have no way of fetching her". His wife said, "You make a whistle of bamboo and go and blow it at the top of the cliff, then my mother will come". So the Miao lad made a whistle of bamboo, went and blew it on the top of the cliff, and a doe came. When the Miao lad had brought the doe home he said to his wife, "What shall we prepare for mother-in-law to eat?" His wife said, "Go and find and dig a clump of green grass for mother-in-law to eat, that will be all right". The Miao lad went and found a load of green grass for mother-in-law to eat. After some days mother-in-law was going to leave, so he went and found another load of green grass, which he carried and escorted mother-in-law back to the place from which he fetched her.

**M458**  
**The Miao lad and the bat.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

The first two paragraphs of this song story follow the usual pattern. In the third paragraph no explanation is given why the young man's mother was so determined to burn the bat skin. She could still have found it revolting, but on the other hand it may have been in order to insure that the young woman could never put it on and fly away again. No reason is given either for the fact that the destruction of the skin resulted in the girl's death. When questioned on this point, Yang Xiu-gong answered that he did not know because the story does not say.

M458

## The Miao lad and the bat.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. The father had died, and there remained only the mother and a grown-up son. Every day the son went out minding the cattle. One day he saw a bat hanging in a tree. He went and took it and brought it home. Every day at meal times the lad took food for it to eat in the dog's feeding bowl. On one occasion the lad said, "I am going to give this bat of mine a food bowl from which to eat". His mother said, "That bat is most revolting, you must not give it a food bowl". But from then on the lad gave the bat food to eat in a food bowl.

Every day he took the bat with him minding the cattle. On one occasion the people who were with him minding cattle said to him, "Lad, what a pretty girl you have brought with you minding the cattle!" The lad said, "You are joking! There is only a bat minding cattle with me". Those folk said, "If you do not believe us, you hide away quietly and see". So the time came when the lad hid and watched. He saw the bat there change into a very pretty girl. In the evening he reached home, had his evening meal and went to bed. The lad made as though he was heavily asleep. The bat took off its bat skin and lay down with the lad. The lad waited until the bat was asleep, then he took the bat skin and hid it. When the next day came the girl could not find her bat skin, and so could not change back into a bat. She was ashamed to come out. The lad's mother went to fetch her, and presently she came out and became the lad's wife.

Not long afterwards the lad and his wife went out farming, while the lad's mother remained at home. The lad's mother went and found his wife's bat skin which she used to wear. The lad's mother took it to burn on the fire. The lad's wife knew that someone was burning her skin, and she ran home. It was not yet fully burnt so she came and took the skin, and smoothed and smoothed it, and eventually smoothed it out completely so that now it was as good as before. Another day the lad and his wife went out farming. This day they were a long way from home. The lad's mother again took the wife's bat skin to burn it. This time when the wife ran home the skin was burnt right up, and so the lad's wife died.

**M459**  
**An orphan goes fishing.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

Although Yang Xiu-gong insisted that the happenings described in the first paragraph had always belonged to this story, the fact that they are identical to the opening of the Ndlie-jia story provokes the speculation that originally this one had a different beginning.

The Miao name for dragon is “rang”. Yeu-rang, which could be translated “dragon man”, appears in many of the stories. He is not a dragon in outward form, though he often possesses magical powers, and he and his family are usually fierce and formidable. This story is no exception. There appears to be no reason for the repeated attempts on the Miao man’s life, unless it were that his in-laws resented the intrusion of an outsider into their family.

**M459**  
**An orphan goes fishing.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

People tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao lad. His parents were dead and he lived by himself. He spent his time fishing, and one day he caught a small flat fish. He brought it back and put it down in his thatched hut while he went to gather firewood. By the time he had gathered the firewood, the little fish in his thatched hut had changed into a girl. He came and lit the fire and searched for his little fish to roast and eat. The girl said, "Orphan, what are you searching for?" The orphan said, "I am not searching!" The Miao girl said, "I know you are searching for a little fish. I am your little fish, and if you do not believe me, look here under my arms". The Miao lad looked and saw that the Miao girl had fins under her arms, so he knew that the Miao girl was indeed his little fish, and he stopped searching. While the Miao girl lived with the orphan, he no longer needed to go fishing but had plenty to eat. He no longer needed to work but had plenty to wear.

So it continued for a long time. The Miao girl said to the orphan, "I have been away a long time, I want to return to my parents and relatives". The orphan said, "I will go with you". The Miao girl said, "My parents and relatives are very fierce, you had better not go with me". The Miao lad said, "Whatever they are like I shall go with you". The Miao girl said, "In that case if you will go with me, wherever I tread you must tread, wherever I sit you must sit, and whatever I eat that only you must eat". The Miao lad said, "That will be all right". So the Miao lad went with the Miao girl, and reached the house of the Miao girl's parents. Her family was the family of Yeu-rang. In the place where her family lived everywhere there were flames, and the food which they ate was all put into an iron pan and roasted. So the Miao lad could neither have eaten nor remained there, were it not that in his father-in-law's home, his wife helped him to do everything. Thus his in-laws could find no way of harming him, because beforehand his wife explained everything to him.

On one occasion Yeu-rang was going to make poison to kill him. The orphan's wife knew about it and said to him, "I wanted you not to come with me but you insisted on coming. Now my father will prepare food for you to eat. You take some cloth and block your mouth and nose. Then pretend that you are going to eat it". The orphan followed the instructions of his wife. His brothers-in-law and father-in-law brought food with the poison for him to eat. He only went and smelt it, he did not eat any, but there were some chicken and pigs which came and ate it and they all dropped down, poisoned to death. This was only the first time. The next time his brothers-in-law and father-in-law mixed the poison with porridge and brought it for him to eat. His wife said to him, "This time also do as you did previously. Block your mouth and nose up. Let your mouth only touch it. Do not eat it". The orphan did as his wife told him to do. So this time also they did not poison him, but the dogs came and ate it and the dogs all died. This was only the second time. Then came the third time. This time the orphan's wife said to him, "Orphan, this time I have no way. I did not want you to come with me, but you insisted on coming. However, do not be troubled; you are going to die, but afterwards I will find a way to release you". This time the orphan's brothers-in-law and father-in-law put poison in the water for him to drink. As soon as he had only smelt it he died.

His brothers-in-law and father-in-law took him and put him in a coffin, which they brought and threw into a large lake. His coffin floated on the surface of the lake, and his wife came to see him every day bringing medicine for him to eat. In this way a number of days went

by, and the orphan came back to life. The orphan's brothers-in-law and father-in-law saw it and said to the orphan's wife, "What did you do that you caused brother-in-law to get better?" She said, "When your brother-in-law was on the lake, I went and cut down a tree into the lake. I stood up on top of it and shook it hard, and so he stood up". Hearing this his brothers-in-law set poison for his father-in-law to eat, and his father-in-law died. Then his brothers-in-law took a coffin and put his father-in-law inside and carrying it down put it in the lake. Then they cut down a tree and put that also into the lake. They all got on top of the tree and shook it with all their strength. But doing so they all tipped over into the water and died. Thus the family property all came to the orphan and his wife.

**M460**  
**Two Miao lads who caught flat fish.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

This story begins with a variation on the theme of fish which turn into girls, but it is mainly concerned with another theme common in Miao songs, namely that of the rivalry between, in this case, the two friends. The younger is good, industrious and clever, the older, foolish, lazy and crafty.

The malicious treatment of the innocent, if not very bright, Chinese pig-drover, is hardly excusable, but remembering the ill-treatment the Miao constantly received at the hands of unscrupulous Chinese in the markets, it is at least understandable. The man down the pothole, could not have seen the pig man coming, but was alerted by his cries as he drove the animals along. Moreover, he would have known at once that these were pigs, and not cattle or sheep, because a different cry was used for each kind of animal.

## Two Miao lads who caught flat fish.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

People tell a story that once upon a time there were two Miao lads who went fishing. As they went they saw a log of firewood by the riverbank in a pool of water. They said, "Let us go and lift up that log of firewood, let it dry and carry it home to burn". Having said this they set to and lifted the log of firewood from the pool and stood it on end on the bank. The log of firewood said to them, "My two brothers, do not carry me away to burn, but you take these two flat fish which you have caught today. Do not roast and eat them, but put them in your water butt and look after them". They listened to the words of the log of firewood, and when they returned home the smaller lad did as the log of firewood told them to do. He took his fish home and looked after it in the water butt, but the bigger lad took his fish home and threw it on the fire to roast and eat it, but the fish jumped out of the fire. So the lad said, "My friend is looking after his, I also will take mine and look after it". Not long afterwards the two fish changed into two Miao girls. One was very pretty, but the other had scars on her face. Now the bigger lad wanted the one who was very good looking, but the smaller lad said to him, "How is it that you want the good looking one? When you brought yours home you threw her into the fire and burnt her and caused the scars. You should take the one with the scars and go along". The bigger lad could do nothing about it so he took the one with the scars.

Now the smaller lad worked very hard indeed and had food to eat, but the bigger lad had no thought but to go hunting every day, and so he became very poor. Accordingly he grew angry with the smaller one, because he was well off and had a good-looking wife. On one occasion he said to the younger lad, "I saw in the valley yonder a number of porcupines. I will take you to hunt them". The smaller lad said to him, "Good, I will go with you to hunt them". The bigger lad said, "You go up over the hill and keep watch, while I come and drive them up from the valley". The younger lad came up over the hill while the bigger lad came round the bottom of the valley, setting fire to the brushwood so that it burned, climbing upwards. The younger lad seeing the fire climbing up the hill, ran away, and was not burned, so that he reached home first. Later the bigger lad returned. He came and asked, "Has my friend come back?" The younger lad's wife replied, "Yes, and has had time to have his meal".

Some days later the bigger lad went and saw that there was a very deep pothole in a valley. He intended to trick the younger lad into falling into the hole. Accordingly he gathered leaves and covered it carefully. When he returned home he went and said to his younger friend, "I have seen in the valley yonder there is a herd of wild pigs. Let me take you to hunt them today". His younger friend said, "Let's do so", and the bigger lad took the smaller to the place where he had carefully covered the pot hole with leaves. "The wild pigs are there, you go and drive them out, while I stay here and kill them". The smaller lad ran over and trod on the mouth of the hole as the bigger lad had arranged, and fell in. He fell down but he was not killed.

One day while he was in the hole a pig drover drove a herd of pigs past the mouth of the hole. He called to the Chinese man and said, "My friend the pig drover, business is very good indeed here, it is easy to make money. You break off some of the creeper there, knot it together, and come and pull me out, then you come here and do business". When the pig drover heard this he went and did as the lad had told him. He broke off a lot of creeper, tied it

together properly, let it down and pulled the lad who was in the hole out. When the lad who had been in the hole got out he let the pig drover down into the hole, then he took the drover's pigs, drove them away and sold them and carried the money home.

The lad who had previously deceived him came and saw that he had a great deal of silver, so he said to the smaller lad, "How did you get such a lot of silver?" He replied, "That place I went to is very rich. Now I have come back I should like to take you all there, but I want to rest for a few days yet". The bigger lad, when he heard these words, set his heart on going to search for silver. So he made proper preparations. First he made sure which hole it was that originally he had caused that lad to fall into, then he ran and dropped into the hole. After this every thing was counted as belonging to the younger lad.

**M461**  
**Nggu-no's mother and father.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

The title of this story is a little misleading since the main theme concerns not Nggu-no's parents, but the rivalry between Nggu-no and her step sister, Nggu-ntrw, aided and abetted by their respective mothers. Although the story moves in the realm of fantasy, with people changing into animals, birds and the like, the setting is that of a typical Miao village, which requires some explanation.

First there were the constant tasks of gathering firewood, normally, though not always, undertaken by the men folk, and that of carrying water from the stream, which usually fell to the women and girls. Then there were the regular duties performed by the older children of taking the sheep and cattle out daily to graze on the hillsides. Both men and women shared the work of planting, tending and harvesting the crops. Then for the women and girls there was, in addition, the endless task of joining hemp for making clothes. When the hemp had been stripped from the stalks it was tied up into bundles. The strands were pulled out one by one, and joined together with a special twist, not a knot, and as each length was attached it was wound around the left hand to form a ball. These balls were then made into skeins by winding on to a frame consisting of a cross made of two pieces of flat wood, each about two feet long and joined together at right angles. At the end of each arm was a peg, and the whole was pivoted in the centre so that it would revolve horizontally. The skeins of hemp were made into yarn ready for weaving, by steeping in water with wood ashes. Several skeins would be required to thread up the handloom. Before weaving, some also had to be wound on the bobbin in the shuttle. To do this a skein of yarn was replaced on the pegs of the winding frame, and the bobbin was wound by hand. The frame rotated slowly on its pivot as the yarn was pulled off, and often made a characteristic squeaking noise.

The story assumes familiarity with the layout of a Miao house. It was rectangular in shape with a single door in the middle of the long side by which both people and cattle entered. The latter were penned in a compartment at one end of the house, with no access from outside. Thus "the door of the cow house" was in fact in the main living room where the people were assembled. Under the thatched roof was a loft, reached by a rough ladder. The floor of the loft was usually plaited bamboo. This space was used for the storage of grain, and also might be used for sleeping.

From time to time the Miao held festivals at which gathered the young people from surrounding villages. These were not religious occasions but were more like carnivals with singing, pipe playing and dancing, accompanied by the drinking of much wine made from maize or millet.

It was not uncommon, when a girl got married for a younger sister to go with her as a companion, but she usually returned before or as soon as the first baby was born. After the birth of a child, a Miao mother had soon to be back at work in the home and on the farm, but her baby had to go with her, strapped on her back. It gave the mother some respite if some one else would take the baby for a time. The business of pinching the child and making it cry was a ruse by the younger sister to get the older sister to change clothes with her.

## Nggu-no's mother and father.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong*

They tell a story that when Nggu-no's mother and father went out gathering firewood they saw a large clump of tall grass. Ngu-no's mother said, "What a pity I am not a cow to go and eat that clump of grass!" Nggu-no's father said, "Very well, suppose I strike you with this peach branch and make you turn into a cow to go and eat it!" Nggu-no's mother said, "All right". Nggu-no's father struck Nggu-no's mother with the peach branch and Nggu-no's mother changed into a cow and went and ate it.

Some time after this Nggu-no's father married another wife. The new wife already had a daughter who was called Nggu-ntrw. Nggu-no was the daughter of the old wife, Nggu-ntrw was the daughter of the new wife. Every day Nggu-no took the cow, which was her mother, out to graze, and every day her mother took off her cape of cow hide, spread it out to sit on, and helped Nggu-no to join hemp. So it was that Nggu-no joined a great deal of hemp. When Nggu-ntrw saw it Nggu-ntrw said to her, "Sister, how is that you have joined so much hemp?" Her sister said, "When I take the cow to graze, I spread out my hemp, one bunch on a clump of high grass, and another bunch on a clump of wormwood. Then the cow collects and eats it. When the cow passes it out I simply go and wind it up. That is why I join so much". The next day the stepsister said to her elder sister, "Today I will take the cow out to graze and join some hemp". So Nggu-ntrw took the cow out to graze and did as Nggu-no said. She spread one bunch on a clump of high grass and another bunch on a clump of wormwood. The cow gathered, and ate it all, but when the cow passed it out and Nggu-ntrw went to collect it and wind it up, the hemp was just all rotten. Then the cow dragged Nggu-ntrw along and her legs and thighs were all scratched. In the evening when Nggu-ntrw drove the cow home she said, "This cow, let us take and kill it for an ancestral sacrifice".

Some time later Nggu-ntrw's parents took the cow and slaughtered it for sacrifice. When the boiled meat was cooked, and her father was dipping up the meat for his friends to eat, he gave Nggu-no a bowl full to carry around. She went as far as the door of the cow house when she spilt it. Another bowl full was dipped up for her to take around, but it happened just as before. A third bowl full was dipped up to take around but the same thing happened.

About this time people were going to hold a festival. Nggu-ntrw's mother went and picked leaves which she sewed together and made clothes for Nggu-ntrw to wear. Nggu-ntrw's mother then took her along. Nggu-no had no clothes to wear so she sat at home weeping aloud. Nggu-no heard a crow calling from the branch of a tree,

"A, a, a, your gowns are in the cupboard in the cow house!

A, a, a, your gowns are in the cupboard in the cow house!"

Nggu-no ran and opened the cupboard in the cow house and looked. There together in the cupboard in the cow house were gowns of silk, folded together and rolled up.

Nggu-no took one gown to wear and another to carry and set off after Nggu-ntrw's mother and Nggu-ntrw. She arrived at the festival ground. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang had come to choose a bride at this festival. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang played on his pipes,

"Dro, dro, dro, my bride is on the higher side!"

This was because Nggu-no was on the higher side. Nggu-ntrw's mother heard it and led Nggu-ntrw over to the higher side. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang played on his pipes again,

"Dro, dro, dro, my bride is on the lower side!"

So Nggu-ntrw's mother led Nggu-ntrw over to the lower side.

In the evening Ngggu-ntw's mother brought Ndrao-jio-shi-niang back home. When the time came to sleep, Ngggu-ntw's mother made Ngggu-ntw sleep next to Ndrao-jio-shi-niang, and Ngggu-no to sleep at Ngggu-ntw's back. When Ngggu-ntw was asleep Ndrao-jio-shi-niang lifted Ngggu-ntw into the place where Ngggu-no was sleeping and lifted Ngggu-no into the place where Ngggu-ntw was sleeping. In the middle of the night Ngggu-ntw's mother took some wax intending to smear it on Ngggu-no's eyes so that Ngggu-no would not be able to see. As it was Ngggu-ntw's mother smeared it on Ngggu-ntw's eyes. Before it was light Ngggu-ntw's mother prepared a nice meal and called Ndrao-jio-shi-niang and Ngggu-ntw to come and eat, before sending them on their way. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang knew that it was Ngggu-no, so he would not let her speak but eat quickly and go. Ngggu-no and Ndrao-jio-shi-niang had gone but Ngggu-ntw was still asleep upstairs. Ngggu-ntw's mother was winding yarn when her winding frame squeaked, "ki-li, ki-li" and she said, my daughter and son-in-law must have reached half way by now". Ngggu-ntw replied to her mother from up stairs, "Mother, I am still here". Her mother said, "I am talking about my daughter and son-in-law, who mentioned you?" Ngggu-ntw said, "Mother, truly I am still here". At this her mother went up and saw that she had smeared wax into Ngggu-ntw's eyes. Then her mother went and washed Ngggu-ntw's face, found some food for her to eat, and made her follow after the others. So Ngggu-ntw arrived at her sister and brother-in-law's home.

Her sister and brother-in-law had a baby son, and the sister gave her the baby son to carry on her back. She pinched the bottom of her sister's baby son and he cried. Ngggu-ntw said, "It is because he wants your jacket". Her sister took off her jacket for him. Ngggu-ntw pinched the baby son's bottom again and the child cried again. Ngggu-ntw said, "It is because he wants your skirt". Her sister took off her skirt for him. Ngggu-ntw pinched the baby son's bottom and again the child cried. Ngggu-ntw said, "It is because he wants your leg bands". Her sister took off her leg bands for him. Ngggu-ntw pinched the child again and he cried. Ngggu-ntw said, "Over there, above the pothole, is a clump of flowers, it is because he wants a flower. You go and pick one for him". Her sister went to pick a flower and Ngggu-ntw pushed her into the hole. Ngggu-ntw carried the son back to the house. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang said, "Ngggu-ntw, where is your sister?" Ngggu-ntw scolded Ndrao-jio-shi-niang and said, "Don't you know me then, you old fat legs!" In the evening, at bed time, Ndrao-jio-shi-niang took Ngggu-ntw's hair to spread as a pillow, but it was not enough. Then Ndrao-jio-shi-niang said, "Your sister's hair is very long, but your hair is not long at all".

A long time afterwards when Ndrao-jio-shi-niang went ploughing, a bird at the mouth of the pothole sang,

"Is the child's father at home,  
And is the child crying?"

Ndrao-jio-shi-niang said, "Are you spirit or are you human?" Then he spat on his hand and said, "If you are human, fly over and perch on my hand". The small bird flew over and perched on Ndrao-jio-shi-niang's hand. Ndrao-jio-shi-niang brought it home. Ngggu-ntw took it to kill and eat, but it changed into a round stone. Now there was a neighbour who came in to get a light for her fire from the family. Seeing how good that stone was, she said, "Give me this little round stone of yours for me to take home for making oil cakes to eat". Ngggu-ntw said, "If you want it, take it". The neighbour took it along and put it inside a large jar.

When the neighbour shut her door every day and went out to work, this stone came out and changed into a very good looking Miao woman. She came and combed her hair, prepared food in readiness for the neighbour's return, then changed into a stone and went back into the large jar. After this the woman said to her neighbours, "You come every day and prepare

food for me in readiness for my return, thank you so much”. The neighbours said, “It isn’t us! There is a stranger woman in your large jar. Every day when you have gone she comes out, washes her face, combs her hair, and prepares food for you”. So she understood. One day she made as though she was going farming. She went outside, shut the door and watched quietly. She saw this stranger woman come out, and she ran and caught her. Thereafter the two of them lived together.

The neighbour went out farming every day, but the stranger woman remained indoors. Her son, whom Nggw-ntw had taken, came every day to be with her. She washed him until he was clean all over. Her son went and told his father. He said, “Father, there is a stranger woman, living down there, who behaves like a mother to me. Every day I go to be with her and she treats me very well indeed”. His father said to him, “You go and get her to prepare a steamer of food, and pull a hair and wind it round so you can carry it back. We will wind it round our house. If it is long enough to go around three times, then it is your mother”. Her son went and talked to her and got his mother to prepare a steamer of food, and to take a hair and wind around the steamer so he could carry the hair back to his father. His father took the hair and wound it round the house. It did go around three times so his father went and fetched his mother home.

When Nggw-no arrived Nggw-ntw asked her, “Sister, how is it that your head grows such long hair?” Her sister said, “I went and heated water until it was boiling hard, next I poured it out and filled the tub to the brim. Then I dipped it up and washed . It was when I dipped it up and washed that my hair grew so long”. Nggw-ntw went to copy, but the water scalded Nggw-ntw to death.

**M462**  
**The clever younger brother.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

The main point of this story is that a young man who has only just discovered that he has the ability to change into various animals, succeeds in outwitting Yeu-rang who is a seasoned exponent of the art.

The stable into which Yeu-rang shut his horse was inside the house itself, separated from human living quarters by a partition of wooden planks. The horse sent the two girls to the spring to fetch water, in order to give him time to kick down the planks and get out before the alarm could be raised.

The ant crawled into the cat's ear to give the impression that it was just an ordinary ant behaving normally. Unsuspecting the cat brushed it away and the ant made good its escape. Ground popcorn was the food that a Miao would carry on a journey. It was mixed up with water and eaten as a paste. While the cat was busy eating the popcorn, he did not notice that he was about to be attacked. The weapon used, the washing dolly, was about the size and shape of an Indian club.

**M462**  
**The clever younger brother,**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

They tell a story that once upon a time there was a Miao family. Mother and father had both died, and there remained only two brothers. These two farmed together. On one occasion, he, the younger brother, together with his elder brother, the two of them, went digging, but he was not putting his heart into digging. So the elder brother said, "You must put your heart into your digging. If you do not put your heart into your work, I fear we shall have no food to eat." The younger brother stood up and changed into a pheasant and flew away behind the hill. The elder brother could do nothing about it, so he sat down and wept. The younger brother flew back and said to his elder brother, "Now I am going to change into a horse for you to lead away and sell, but when you are talking price, you must only ask for seven and a half taels. You must not ask for more. If you do ask for more I shall not be able to change back again". The elder brother followed his instructions. He led him away for sale and sold him to a Chinese. One day this Chinese led the horse to a lake for a drink. The horse, as he drank, went further and further towards the middle of the lake. He went on until he disappeared altogether. There was nothing that the Chinese could do but to go home again.

One day the younger brother said to the elder brother, "Yeu-rang wants to buy a horse. I will turn into a good horse for you to lead and sell to him, but this time you must ask nine and a half taels". The elder brother led the horse for Yeu-rang to look at and Yeu-rang made him ride it for him to see. The elder brother jumped up and sat on its back and it galloped very smoothly. Yeu-rang said, "Good indeed, but how much silver do you want?" He replied, "Only nine and a half taels". So Yeu-rang gave him nine and a half taels.

Yeu-rang led it away and shut it in a stable with a wall made of planks. One day Yeu-rang was not in the house. Now Yeu-rang had two daughters, and they only were at home. The horse said, "You two dip up some water for me to drink". Yeu-rang's two daughters said, "This horse of father's can talk! Let us dip some water for him to drink". While they were away dipping water for their father's horse to drink, the horse kicked out the planks of the stable and was gone. The two daughters called Yeu-rang to run after it and he went in pursuit. The horse changed into a rat and ran down into a rat hole, so Yeu-rang changed into a cat and sat down to watch the mouth of the hole. The rat changed into an ant and climbed up into the cat's ear. The cat brushed it away with its paw, so the ant crawled away. He crawled on until he could no longer see the cat and then changed back into a person. He went to Yeu-rang's two daughters and said, "Cousins, have you any ground popcorn?" They replied, "We have", and gave him some. He made it into a ball and took it to feed the cat. He gave the popcorn to the cat to eat and then, with the washing dolly, killed the cat. Then he took Yeu-rang's two daughters as wives for his brother and himself.

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**The man who went digging and found a fine son-in-law.**

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

Introduction.

This story is a variation on the “Beauty and the Beast” theme. Normally the Miao house consisted of a main living room with the cattle penned into a section at one end. Occasionally, in a larger house, there was a second partition forming another room at the opposite end, usually small, and having no window, very dark. It was to this room that the youngest daughter retired with the snake.

According to Miao custom when the bridegroom came to fetch his bride, he was expected to stay a few days before taking her away. Tradition required that the bride’s parents would do everything to delay the departure of their daughter, while the bridegroom, for his part, without being rude, did his best to get away. In this story the snake proposes that the matter be settled by a singing competition. The revelation that the snake knew about his in-laws’ intention to kill him on the night of his arrival, left his father-in-law too ashamed to raise any further objection to the departure of the couple.

The “walling ram” was a heavy wooden implement used for compacting the earth when building mud walls.

## The man who went digging and found a fine son-in-law.

*Told by Yang Xiu-gong.*

There is a story that, once upon a time, there was Miao man who went out digging. He dug to the middle of the plot and there was a very large rock that the Miao man could not roll away. The Miao man said, "I have three daughters, and I will give one of them to whoever will come and roll away the rock from the middle of the plot for me". A snake came out and said, "Old man, if I roll it away for you, will you give me one?" The Miao man said, "If you roll it away I will give you one". The snake encircled the rock and rolled it away. The Miao man said, "I was only joking". So the snake went and rolled it back again into its place. Then the Miao man said, "I am telling the truth, You roll it away, and this time I will certainly give one to you". So the snake rolled the rock away.

In the evening the Miao man brought the snake and arrived home. The Miao man said, "Big sister, bring a stool for son-in-law to sit on". The eldest said, "That snake! Who is going to bring a stool for him to sit on?" The Miao man then said, "Second sister, bring a stool for son-in-law to sit on. The second one said, "That snake! Who is going to bring a stool for him to sit on?" The Miao man then said, "Youngest sister, bring a stool for son-in-law to sit on". The youngest said, "My mother and my father have cared for me so much. Why yes! I will bring one for him to sit on". The youngest sister brought a stool for the snake to sit on. The snake climbed up and coiled himself on the top. When it was time to sleep, the Miao man said, "Big sister, take son-in-law to sleep". The eldest said, "That snake! Who is going to take him to sleep?" The Miao man said, "Second sister, take son-in-law to sleep, now!" The second sister said, "That snake! Who is going to take him to sleep?" The Miao man then said, "Youngest sister, take son-in-law to sleep, now!" The youngest said, "My mother and my father have cared for me so much. Why yes! I will take him to sleep". The youngest sister and the snake went to sleep in the other room of the house.

In the middle of the night his mother and father-in-law were going to kill the snake. When they were ready, mother-in-law lit the torch while father-in-law shouldered the walling ram. They went and saw that the snake had changed into a fine young man who was sleeping with the youngest sister. So the pair went back again. After a number of days the snake wanted to take his bride and leave. The snake said to his father-in-law, "Father-in-law, let us compete in singing". His father-in-law replied, "Son-in-law you sing first". The snake sang,

"The woman, she lit a torch,  
The man he shouldered a walling ram,  
Together they went to kill the snake in the other room of the house".

His father-in-law was so ashamed that he was unable to say anything. So the snake took his bride away.

As they were going, the couple carried some cabbage seed and scattered it along the road they were travelling, so that later their parents would be able to follow them. They went on and came to a pool of water. The snake said to his wife, "You stay here while I go up yonder, but if the water runs cloudy, do not touch it". The snake went and washed himself and changed into a man a little way up stream. Now as the water grew cloudy his wife went and touched the cloudy water and snake skin wrapped all round her hand. When her

husband returned and saw that his wife was keeping her hand bent, he asked her, "What is the matter with your hand?" She said, "There is nothing the matter". But her husband wanted to have a look and saw the snake skin wrapped all round it. He had to come and lick it and then it got right again.

After the couple had left, the cabbage grew well. Their mother longed for them, so she followed the road where the cabbages were growing, in order to go to her daughter and son-in-law. She followed to the end of the road where it just disappeared into a hole in the rock. There was nothing their mother could do, so she sat down there and cried. As she was crying she let her head bump against a hole in the rock. The hole in the rock broke open and their mother saw that there was an entrance there. She followed the cabbages until she reached a set of fine houses, timber framed and tiled. So she stayed with her daughter and son-in-law. Having stayed as long as she wanted, mother-in-law returned home and told the other two daughters everything. As a result these two wanted to copy their younger sister. They went and brought snakes back to sleep, but the snakes bit them and they died.

