

M136
The Flood, Section three.

Sung by Zhu Zhi.

Notes

This song is found in Document N (no. 13, page 381).

Throughout this song there are a number of peculiarities:-

- (a) The name Ndrao-ya is occasionally written Ndrao-li-ya.
- (b) The title Nzyu-gi-niao, "the Master", frequently has the plural suffix "mi" added. In some songs the addition of "mi" to a proper name signifies that it is not just the individual himself, but his family or household as well which are under discussion. In this song, however, the forms "Nzyu-gi-niao" and "Nzyu-gi-niao mi" appear to be identical. The additional syllable, both here and in (a) above, may have something to do with maintaining the rhythm of the line, rather than contributing to its meaning.

Line 9. The inverted commas opened at the beginning of line 6 are not closed at all in the printed text. They should be closed at the end of the present line.

Line 17. The word "byut" is wrongly printed "byiut".

Line 21. The first occurrence of the word "nat" in this line is wrongly printed "hat".

Line 23. "zif" is the name of the ultimate ancestral sacrifice only offered when there was a danger of the family dying out. Here, and in the accompanying foot note, the word is wrongly written "nzif".

Line 25. "nangl ghas dlyus" meaning "mouse" is wrongly written "nangx ghas ndlyus".

Line 26. The word "kied", "as well", is printed with a capital "K" as though it were a proper name. There seems to be no good reason for this.

Line 27. The phrase "dut sieb" which is literally "to break the heart", means, in Miao, "to despair", "to be despondent", "to be disconsolate", and hence to be "hurt" or "grieved".

Line 31. The word "ghaot" is incorrectly printed "gaot".

Line 35. A note in Miao in the text explains that "ghangb taik niux" means "underneath the place where the cattle come out of the door". The Miao word "nies" and the phrase "ghad nies" (in spoken Miao "ad nies") both have the primary meaning "mother", and a derived meaning "large". Thus in this song "nies dlangb" and "ghad nies dlangb" can both mean either "the mother spirit" or "the large spirit". Which meaning is chosen must be determined by the context. In the Chinese version at the beginning of the book "mother spirit" has been chosen. But there is nothing at all in the narrative to suggest a maternal connotation, and the more natural reading is simply that two votive objects were stolen, one was large and the other small.

Line 48. In the printed text the phrase "ghad nies dlaox dlangb bit nyux" can only mean "large door garlic spirit", which makes no good sense. "dlangb bit nyux" appears to be a mistake for "vangx bit nyux" meaning "garlic garden", the regular designation for "herb garden". The whole phrase means "the large door by the herb garden". The final phrase in the line, "dlaox vangt" is explained in a footnote in Chinese as being the large outer gate in the perimeter wall.

Line 49. The first word "haot", "to drink" is wrongly printed "hat".

Line 55. The exclamation "yas", "oh", has the wrong tone letter "l".

Line 72. A note in Miao in the text explains that the final word "bak", "companion" means "bak ngeuf", "companion couple", that is a wife.

Lines 73 and 74. These lines are printed as a single long line.

Line 75. The name for Thunder is here printed "sab zaix ghal niangl". elsewhere throughout the song it appears as "sod zaix ghak niangl".

Lines 78 and 79. These lines are printed as a single long line.

Line 80. The word "max" has the wrong tone letter "s".

Lines 80 and 81. These lines are printed as a single long line.

Lines 85 and 86. The printer seems to have had difficulty in reading his manuscript copy of the phrase "tad nil ib vab" which means "laid a snare", and which occurs in both lines. The first time it is printed "tad nil ib vob" and the second time, "tad nyul ib veb". The repetition of the phrase is the standard Miao idiom for "one another", that is "he laid one snare on the road and another on the path."

Lines 89 and 90. are printed as a single long line.

Lines 91 and 92. These lines are printed as a single long line.

Line 93. The imperative "do not" is the word "khab" used at the beginning of the sentence. It can stand alone but it is normally reinforced by "dib" at the end of the sentence. In this line "khab" has been accidentally omitted in the printed text, although the "dib" is still in place.

Line 94. The last word in this line is printed "ndrob", and a footnote explains that it means "chest" or "breast". It further explains that Ndrao-ya forbade the children to be fed at the breast. This explanation comes from a misreading of the same word in Zhang Ming's version of the Flood story, and makes no sense at all. The word should be written "ndrod" and means "to make a noise".

Line 109. The word "cheuk" is printed without its tone.

Line 110. This line consists of three different exclamations. "ot" conveys the meaning, "yes, indeed, it is so!" "ud yil" expresses surprise and delight. It is mostly used by women, and spoken with great emphasis. "yas" is a much more general exclamation like the English "Oh!"

Line 113. In the text the date is given as "Ox-month or Sheep-month", that is, the third month or ninth month. This must be wrong, as the convention always names two adjacent months. Since the context is concerned with spring rain and the planting season, the months in question must be the second and third. So for "niux", "Ox", read "nwt", "Horse".

Lines 117 and 118. The context, and comparison with similar passages in Yang Zhi and Zhang Ming, make it clear that the arrival of the spring rain was the signal for people to get on with the planting of crops. The phrases in the middle of these two lines which should describe this activity are, however, incomprehensible in the text,

line 117. the people "at hnot ndlix hnot ndlaof" etc.
made murder rice murder paddy

line 118. the people "at naox ndlix naox ndlaof" etc.
made eat rice eat paddy

The difficulty lies with the words "hnot", "to kill" in the sense of murdering, and "naox", "to eat". The expressions one would have expected are "at laot", "to till" and "at ghaob", "to farm". What appears to have happened is that in line 117, "laot", in the written manuscript, has been misread as "hnot", and in line 118, the word "naox", "to eat", which occurs at the end of line 117, has been repeated instead of "ghaob".