

**The descendants of the Elder Gi-myu.**

*Told by Wang Tien-chun.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Chinese woman was aggrieved, and said to the Elder Gi-myu, "You deceived my relatives and humiliated them. When they cut out, fried and ate the liver of that officer of yours in charge of the soldiers, he remained alive just the same!" The Elder Gi-myu said, "What do your relatives know? They attack our bodies only, and so are unable to kill us. When they attack they should observe where the shadow is, and attack the place where the shadow falls, then they will kill their man. They must aim their attack at the shadow, not at the body!" Having been told this the Chinese woman was very happy.

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

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

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

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

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

Afterwards the Elder Gi-myu concluded that the Chinese woman had had a change of heart and become truly a member of the family. He thought that from now on the Chinese race could not touch the Miao, that there had been sufficient, more than enough, fighting, so he deliberately spoke thus to Chinese woman: "These two communities of ours lived together, and originally were very good friends. Now

because, in the boiling, the pig's heart stuck to the bottom of the pot and we failed to dip it up for the worship of the spirits, you took our elder's son, cut open his stomach, and killed him. So you transgressed in the worship of the spirits, and it was necessary for you to give life in exchange for our son's life. Therefore we arose, and deployed our soldiers to take revenge. But now, having killed so many of you Chinese, reparation for life has been made, and I am contented, it is fully sufficient. Now if anyone wants to harm me, they have only to collect and carry off this small dog of mine, then if they come and fight, they will fight and kill me". Ever after this, if the Chinese came fighting against us, they would first carry off the dogs, so that they could harm us Miao, fighting until we feared for our lives.

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

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