

M216
The descendants of three elders.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Notes

This song is recorded in Document A (no. 10, page 25), Document E (no. 10, page 25), Document K (no. 9, page 28), Document L (no. 17, page 60), Document M (no. 1, page 1), Document N (no. 26, page 466).

Line 3. Document K and later documents read $T_{11} T''$ instead of C° .

Lines 4, 6 and 8. A footnote in Document M suggests that the patterns on the clothing described in these lines distinguish the uniforms of the commanding officers. It is much more likely that they simply describe the regular Miao tribal costume.

Line 8. Document M has changed $C\Delta_{11} L^{\circ} C'^{\circ}$ to $C\Delta_{11} Y^{-} C'^{\circ}$ to make the line the same as lines 4 and 6. Document A adds the exclamation J° , "so it is!" to the end of this line.

Lines 12 and 13. In the Miao text these lines are joined together, with the conjunction C_n following $T^{\circ} C^{\circ}$.

Line 13. In Document E the expression $T^{\circ} C^{-}$, "those who rule", was misread $T^{\circ} T^{-}$, "those who choose", and the mistake appears in all subsequent documents.

Line 17. In all the documents the final word in this line is Δ° , "black". But there is no reason why this particular elder should be so described, and in a footnote the compiler of Document N says that in his opinion the word should be CE'° , "terrifying", as in the next line. However the same phrase occurs in "The Elder Gi-vu and the Elder Gi-no", lines 8 and 9, and there the word is $C\Delta^{\circ}$, "fierce", and that, almost certainly, is the correct reading in this song.

Line 20. Following this line Documents L and M have inserted in error lines 44 - 46 from later in the song.

Line 22. In Document E, C^{-} , "to rule" or "to command" has been mistakenly written, CE^{-} , and the mistake has been continued through all the later documents. Footnotes in Documents M and N try, unconvincingly, to make some sense of the corrupted text.

Lines 26 and 27. These two lines are exactly parallel. In Miao two verbs, L_{\circ} and T^{-} , both meaning, "to come", are used. In English translation preserving the parallelism is difficult since there is no exact synonym for "came". "Travelled" has been used, but it lays stress on the actual journeying which the Miao T^{-} does not have.

Line 36. The expression $S^{\circ} T'' S^{\circ} CE^{\circ}$, "married couples", is written incorrectly in the Miao text $S^{\circ} T'' J^{\circ} CE^{\circ}$.

Lines 44 and 45. In the Miao text this appears as a single long line.

Line 49. This line is identical to line 22 and the later documents have repeated the errors made in the earlier line.

Line 51. Document E and subsequent documents read T^u CT_n T^o, "warrior", instead of T^u CT_n C^r, "fighter".

Lines 53 and 54. In Document A these two lines are run together without any punctuation, while in Document E, followed by all subsequent documents, line 54 is attached to the beginning of line 55. Thus Document A reads,

T ^r S ^u 'D ^u J ₃	D ₈	C ^r _{nc}	CE _{nc}	C ^b J ⁿ C ^{no}	T ^u
Gha-sao-hmao-byu	did	take	pair	war-horses	the ones
CT _n	T ^o	C ⁸	C ^b	C _n J ⁿ C̄ ^u Δ̄.	T ^r S ^u
carry	soldiers	led	horse	fine and bold.	Gha-sao-
	'D ^u J ₃	l ⁸ Δ ^b	etc.		
	hmao-byu	sprang	etc.		

Document E reads,

T ^r S ^u 'D ^u J ₃	D ₈	C ^r _{nc}	C ^{nb}	C ^b J ⁿ C ^{no}	T ^u
Gha-sao-hmao-byu	did	take	rode	war-horses	the ones
CT _n	T ^o ,	C ⁿ	C ^b	C _n J ⁿ C̄ ^u	Δ ⁻
carry	soldiers,	catch	horse	fine and bold	go to
	T ^r S ^u 'D ^u J ₃	l ⁸ Δ ^b	etc.		
	Gha-sao-hmao-byu	sprang	etc.		

It will be observed that the divergencies in the text occur in Document A at CE_{nc}, "pair" and C⁸, "led", and in Document E at C^{nb}, "rode" and Cⁿ, "catch". It will also be observed that in Document A, the word Δ̄ is part of the expression C_n Jⁿ C̄^u Δ̄ which, used of horses, means "fearless, bold and brave". In Document E, Δ̄ has been detached from this expression and given a different tone, Δ⁻. The shortened form C_n Jⁿ C̄^u still has the same meaning as the longer form, but Δ⁻ now means "went to". Taken as it stands, it is difficult to make good sense of this passage in either document. However, comparison with lines 67 and 68 in the previous song, "The descendants of Gha-sao-hmao-byu", which are nearly identical, makes it clear that the four words C⁸, Cⁿ, CE_{nc} and C^{nb}, "led, catch, pair and rode" respectively, are all incorrect. Each should read CE_n, which means, "to requisition". In face of the threat of invasion, the Miao leader had to requisition for military use every suitable horse available. When CE_n is restored

at the four points, the Documents come together and the lines fall naturally into place making perfectly good sense.

Line 56. In Document E, followed by Documents K, L and M, but not N, the final element 𠄎 in the word for "stallion" is incorrectly written, 𠄎.

Line 58. This line is missing in Document A.

Line 60. Document A omits 𠄎' 𠄎, "the Elder Gi-chi".

Line 85. Document E and subsequent documents omit 𠄎, "have".

Line 88. 𠄎 is an exclamation placed after a prohibition to intensify its meaning.

Line 90. Document A says that the full grown bull will low three times 𠄎' 𠄎- 𠄎, "in a room in the house". That is, when full grown, the bull will require a special section of the cattle accommodation to be partitioned off for himself. For some reason unexplained, this manifestly original phrase was deliberately changed in Document E to read 𠄎' 𠄎' 𠄎, "bull seeking to fight". The new reading has passed into all the later documents.

Line 91. Document A reads 𠄎, "seed". Document E, followed all the subsequent documents, has 𠄎, "corn".

Line 94. The late documents, L, M and N have deleted 𠄎' 𠄎, "the wise" from this line.

Lines 98 and 99. The trees mentioned are varieties of poplar. A note in the text gives the local Chinese names as "huang yang mu", "yellow sprouting wood", and "zi yang mu", "purple sprouting wood".

Line 103. The final word 𠄎 is an exclamation, found only in Document A. It has the force of a sigh of relief on having reached the end of an arduous task.