

BLESSING FEASTS AND ANCESTOR PROPITIATION AMONG THE LAHU NYI (RED LAHU)

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Lahu Nyi¹ or Red Lahu are one of the major divisions of the Lahu peoples. Known to the Thai as 'Mussur',² the Lahu are a Tibeto-Burman-speaking hill folk whose village communities are widely scattered through the mountainous tracts of southwestern Yunnan, the Burmese Shan State, the westernmost corner of Laos, and northern Thailand. The total Lahu population is about a quarter of a million.³ Of the approximately 15,000 Lahu in Thailand, more than 9,000 are Lahu Nyi (Young 1962: 85, United Nations 1967: 8).

Lahu villages are interspersed with those of other hill communities in all the national states in which they are found (Walker 1970b: 2-3). The Lahu possess no all-encompassing political structure above the level of the village or small cluster of neighbouring villages (Walker 1969:

- 1) Fieldwork among the Lahu Nyi was carried out in north Thailand (Phrao and Wiang Pa Pao districts) from 1966 to 1970, during which time I held the position of research officer at the Tribal Research Centre in Chiang Mai. My services to the Tribal Research Centre were sponsored by Her Britannic Majesty's Ministry of Overseas Development. I take this opportunity to thank the Director and permanent staff of the Tribal Research Centre and also the Ministry of Overseas Development in London for making possible this long period of research.
- 2) 'Mussur', written in a variety of ways, *e.g.*, Mussuh, Musur, Muso, Musso and others, means 'hunter' in the Shan, Wa, Palaung, Rumi and Riang languages (Johnston 1908: 279n).
- 3) People's Republic of China..... 180,000 (Moseley 1962: 162)
Burma 66,000 (LeBar *et al* 1964: 40)
Thailand 15,000 (Young 1962: 85, United Nations 1967: 8)
Laos 2,000 (LeBar *et al* 1964: 40)

The figures for Burma and Laos are largely impressionistic. That for Laos is certainly a severe underenumeration. For more detailed comments on all the above figures, see Walker 1970b: 40-2, 46, 49-61.

44).⁴ Each autonomous Lahu village community is governed by its own headman, although sometimes an influential headman is recognized as the senior among all headmen within a particular area (Walker 1969 : 44-5).

Like other hill peoples of northern South-East Asia, the Lahu are traditionally swidden agriculturalists.⁵ In Thailand, most Lahu communities are dependent upon the production of a staple crop (dry hill rice) and one or more cash crops (opium, chillies, etc.).

The present article, like my previous account of the Lahu New Year celebrations (Walker 1970a), is intended as a contribution to Lahu ethnography rather than as an exercise in sociological analysis. Furthermore, in presenting here the original texts of a number of Lahu Nyi prayers, I hope both to contribute to Lahu studies in general and also to allow future students of this language to check on the accuracy of my translations.*

Data for this article were assembled in two Lahu Nyi villages in northern Thailand over a period of more than three years. However, I cannot be sure that my findings in these two villages are representative of all Lahu Nyi villages either in Thailand or elsewhere.

The two ceremonies to be considered here are known in Lahu as *aw_v bo te ve⁶* (*aw_vbo* : blessings, *te ve* : to make) and *chaw suh aw_v ca_v ve* (*chaw*

4) An important exception is the Lahu autonomous county of Lan-ts'ang set up by the Chinese People's Government in 1953 in the P'uerh region of Yunnan (Ch'en Yin 1964 : 48, Kunstadter 1967 : 163).

5) 'Swidden' is an old English dialect word meaning 'a burned clearing'. The term is now widely used among anthropologists in particular to refer not only to the fields themselves but also to the type of agriculture commonly known as 'shifting' or 'slash-and-burn'.

* I am indebted to my friend and colleague in Lahu studies, Dr. James A. Matisoff, of the University of California (Berkeley) for carefully checking the Lahu texts which appear in this article.

6) The orthography used for Lahu words in this article was devised over the last sixty years by members of the American Baptist Mission in Burma. Many Christian Lahu (but few, if any, non-Christians) are literate in this writing system. One of the best modern examples of it is *G'ui_v sha_v xe Li_n Hpu Aw_v Sih_—*, the New Testament in Lahu published by the Bible Society of Burma in 1966.

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suh : dead men, *aw__ca__ve* : to feed). These two ceremonies are often, though not necessarily, associated. While no blessing feast may be performed without the inclusion of the ritual feeding of the ancestors, this latter ceremony may be performed either by itself or in association with other ceremonies, notably at the New Year time (Walker 1970a : 27-30).

RITUAL AND SICKNESS IN LAHU NYI SOCIETY—AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Since both blessing feasts and ancestor propitiation rites fall within the realm of Lahu Nyi medico-ritual, it is essential to make some introductory comments on the relationship between ritual and sickness in this society. Most Lahu Nyi ritual is associated with sickness and may be categorized as diagnostic, prophylactic or therapeutic in function. Such categorization is not absolute. One particular ceremony may have both prophylactic and therapeutic functions or may on one occasion be categorized as prophylactic and the other as therapeutic. The two ceremonies to be described below are cases in point : a household may

Lahu has seven tones, five open (long vowel) and two checked (short vowel, ending in a glottal stop). In this orthography the open mid-level tone is unmarked (*e.g.*, *ca*) and the other tones are indicated at the end of syllables by the following symbols :

- superscript straight line (*ca-*) — high-rising open tone
- superscript wedge (*ca[^]*) — high-falling open tone
- subscript wedge (*ca_v*) — low-falling open tone
- subscript straight line (*ca_*) — very-low open tone
- superscript circumflex (*ca[^]*) — high tone, checked
- subscript circumflex (*ca_^*) — low tone, checked

For further information on this writing system see Matisoff 1970.

In the present article, the only exception to this orthography is the name 'Lahu Nyi'. In formal transcription this would be 'La^{*} Hu__ Nyi[—]', but in ordinary usage the syllabification and tone marks are omitted. After consultations with colleagues I have adopted the more common usage, although in a previous article in this Journal I adhered to the formal missionary transcription.

offer a blessing feast not because it is at present suffering from any sickness, but to build up a store of blessing (*awvbo*) to prevent misfortune in the future. On the other hand, the same ceremonial feast may be offered in order to effect a cure for present sickness. Similarly, the ancestral spirits may be propitiated either to prevent them from working their wrath on the household in the future, or in order to allay their present displeasure which is causing sickness to a member or members of the household.

My observations over several years' residence among the Lahu Nyi point to the conclusion that when a villager falls sick his first objective is to secure medicine. If medicine is effective, the villager has no thoughts of ritual. However, the medicines —almost all of which are imported— which are available in a Lahu Nyi village are generally limited both in quantity and efficacy. If medicine is either unavailable or ineffective, the villager may turn to the traditional medico-ritual practices of his community. Whether or not he does so will depend on his or the community's opinions of the cause of his sickness. By no means all sickness is attributed to the supernatural. If a person suffers stomach pains after eating too many mangoes, he will not say that a spirit has attacked him. If an old person is sick, the ailment will probably be attributed to generally failing health rather than to any supernatural cause. On the other hand, sickness which strikes an otherwise healthy individual, and for which there is no apparent natural cause, is generally attributed to the supernatural. In such a case recourse must be made to ritual.

In the majority of Lahu Nyi villages there is a hierarchy of ritual officials (Walker 1969: 47-8, 1970b: 190-4). The villager who turns to ritual for a cure of his ailments will go to one or more of these specialists in order to determine the cause of his illness and the ceremony most likely to cure him. Ritual offerings known as *hk'aw-tan'* (the verb *hk'aw-ve* means 'to humble oneself before a senior person or supernatural being', while the verb *tan've* means 'to make an offering as homage to a senior') are brought to the ritual specialist. Such offerings comprise a

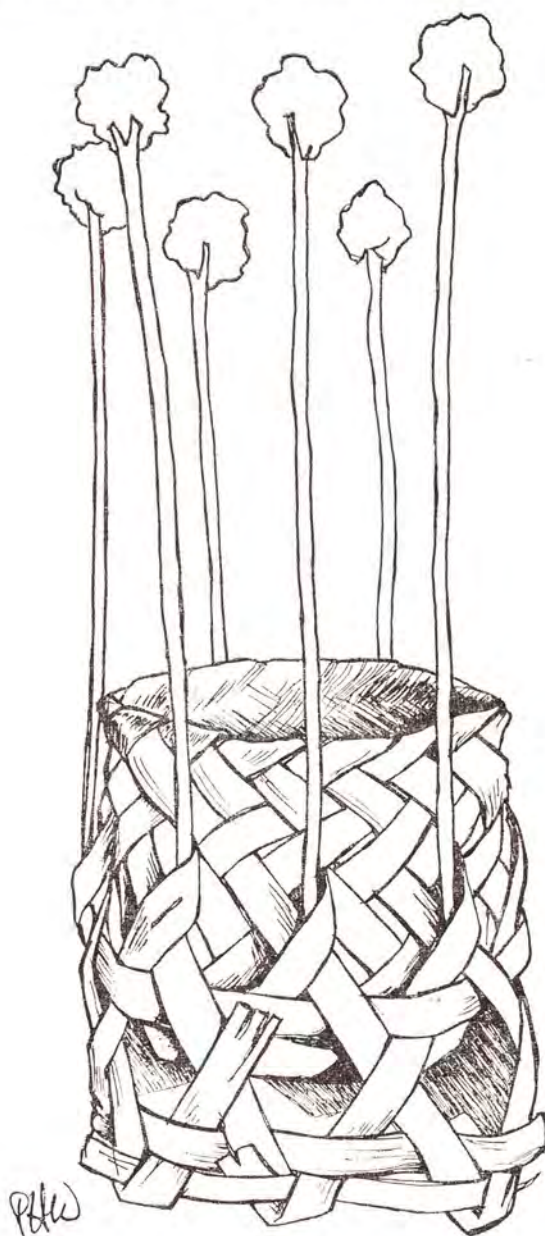


Fig. 1. *H'peu ko*, a ritual basket about 11 cm. high, made of bamboo and decorated with 'flowers' of bamboo and cotton wool.

small loosely woven bamboo basket (*hpeu_vk'o₋*)⁷ attached to which are bamboo sticks with cotton wool on the ends (*hpeu_vve*)⁸ [Fig. 1]. Informants say that this *hpeu_vk'o₋* represents a bowl of flowers similar to that which Buddhists bring to their temples. Inside the basket are placed rice grains (*ca_vhk'a*), beeswax candles (*peh^hhaw₋*), one or two coins (*hpu*), a strip of white cloth (*hpa sha⁻hka^v*) and a length of cotton string (*a⁻mo hkeh*). The rice, beeswax candles and money are offerings to the supreme Lahu supernatural, *G'ui_vsha*.⁹ The strip of white cloth symbolizes the sick man's wish that he might live as many years as there are holes between the warp and woof of the cloth. After the ritual specialist has offered the basket and its contents to *G'ui_vsha*, the string will be returned to the sick man so that members of his household may bind his wrist, symbolic of the binding of *G'ui_vsha*'s blessings into the body. The money which was brought for *G'ui_vsha* becomes the property of the ritual specialist.

When the ritual specialist offers the *hpeu_vk'o₋* and its contents to *G'ui_vsha*, he prays that the cause of the villager's sickness be revealed to him. The specialist may await revelation through his dream experiences or he may induce a trance state (called *G'ui_vsha aw_vca^hya_vve*) during which he is believed to be in direct communication with *G'ui_vsha* (*aw_vca^h*: a rope, *ya_vve*: come down or join: *i.e.*, the specialist is joined as with a rope to *G'ui_vsha*). Having obtained a supernatural diagnosis of the sickness, the specialist will order the performance of a particular therapeutic ceremony.

Some ceremonies, as indicated earlier, are prophylactic in function. These are performed, often at considerable personal expense, for three basic reasons: tradition, revelation, and personal inclination. The ritual feeding of the ancestors at New Year time, for example, is traditional;

7) I have been unable to elicit from Lahu informants a meaning for the word *hpeu_v K'o₋* means 'hollow object'.

8) *Ve^h* means 'a flower', and refers to the bamboo sticks with cotton wool stuck in a cleft in one end.

9) The etymology of the word *G'ui_vsha* is obscure.

the performance of the ceremony on this occasion is enjoined upon every Lahu Nyi household in order to guard against sickness in the coming year. Revelation is as important as tradition and it may come through the dreams or visions either of ritual specialists or of the individual concerned. For example, a man might decide to offer a ritual feast to his ancestors because a specialist so directed him, or because he himself interpreted a dream of his dead parents to mean that a feast was required. Finally, a man may simply feel that it is expedient to perform a particular ceremony at a particular time. An example is the ritual feeding of the ancestors after the harvest of the first fruits of the agricultural year—maize and pumpkins. In the village in which I was living, most households do not perform ancestor propitiation rites at this time. However, a few feel that it is expedient to perform such rites both as a sign of thanksgiving and as a surety that the ancestors will continue to bless their agricultural endeavours.

The preceding brief comments adumbrate the background to a large part of Lahu Nyi ceremonial. We may now proceed to a detailed discussion of blessing feasts and ancestor propitiation.

AW_vBO TE VE — BLESSING FEASTS

The principal idea behind the *aw_vbo te ve* ceremony is the transference of some of the good fortune of the healthy to the sick or to those who might become sick. When a Lahu Nyi villager attends an *aw_vbo te ve* feast he usually gives as his reason, '*aw_vbo ho—pi^vve*'. We have noted that *aw_vbo* means 'blessing'. The verb *pi^vve* means 'to give', while the verb *ho—ve* means 'to transfer an attribute or condition of one substance to another'.¹⁰

10) Thus, the phrase '*aw—ka^h ho—ve*' (*aw—*: cooked rice, *ka^h*: cold, *ho—ve*: to transfer [heat]) means 'to mix newly prepared hot rice with cold left-over rice in order to warm the cold rice'.

TABLE ONE : Data on Blessing Feasts Held in a Lahu Nyi Village During 1967¹¹

House No. of times ceremony performed	Reason for performance	Person suggesting performance	Animal slaughtered	Approximate value of animal slaughtered (Baht)
1. 1	Daughter of household head suffering difficult labour in childbirth	Household head	1 pig	200
2. 1	Wife of household head sick	Senior ritual official	2 pigs	270
3. 1	Son of household head sick	Household head	1 pig	200
4. 1	Member of household sick	Senior ritual official	1 pig	100
5. 1	Daughter of household head sick	Senior ritual official	1 pig	300
6. 1	Son of household head broke arm	Ritual official	2 pigs	200
7. NO CEREMONY PERFORMED				
8. 1	Wife of household head sick	Two ritual officials	1 pig	130
9. 1	Wife pregnant. Ceremony performed to ensure easy childbirth	Household head	1 pig	300
10. 1	Daughter of household head sick	Senior ritual official	1 pig	100
11. 1	General sickness in household	Ritual official	1 pig	100
12. 1	Son of household head sick	Ritual official	1 pig	150
13. 2	a) Member of household sick b) " " " "	Ritual official " "	1 fowl 1 pig	5 200
14. NO CEREMONY PERFORMED				
15. 3	a) Daughter of household head sick b) Household head sick c) Wife of household head sick	Ritual official Ritual official Ritual official	1 fowl 1 fowl 1 fowl	5 5 5

11) This survey was conducted by Khun Snit Wongprasert, Junior Research Officer for the Lahu research project of the Tribal Research Centre, Chiang Mai.

There is no prescribed time in the year when a blessing feast must take place. The performance depends on the feelings of the household head or his wife, or on the revelations or suggestions of ritual specialists. In 1967 there was an average of one ceremony per household in the village in which I was living (see Table 1). Of the fifteen households comprising this village and its outlying hamlet, twelve performed the *aw,bo te ve* ceremony once during the year, one performed it on three different occasions and two households did not hold the ceremony at all.

As the table shows, all but one of the blessing feasts performed in the village in 1967 were therapeutic in aim. The remaining ceremony was prophylactic, to ensure an easy childbirth for a pregnant woman. Twelve of the ceremonies were performed at the instigation of a ritual official while three were initiated by the particular household head. All households but one slaughtered a pig for the rite¹² and the average approximate value of such a pig was Bahts 156.

The single household which did not sacrifice a pig is that of a poverty-stricken opium addict who has neither his own pigs nor the money to buy one.

An *aw,bo te ve* ceremony comprises five distinct rites, as follows:

1. The slaughter of a pig
2. The feeding of the ancestral spirits
3. The offering of a feast to the village
4. The binding of the wrists of all members of the donor household
5. The construction of a symbolic bridge over the path leading to the village

12) Household 13 killed a fowl for one of the two ceremonies it performed in 1967. For the other ceremony a pig was slaughtered. Household 15 alone killed no pig.

1. *Va^h ti^vve*: The Slaughter of a Pig(*va^h*: pig, *ti^vve*: to kill)

For all but the poorest members of the community, the slaughter of a pig is required for the performance of a blessing feast. (Those who cannot afford a pig kill one or more fowl.)

However, the Lahu Nyi consider that killing a pig to eat is a sin for which propitiation must be made. The owner of the animal binds together a number of bamboo sticks on top of which he places cotton wool. This ritual object, known as *li^vtsuh^h* (*li^v* from *aw^vli^v*: custom, *tsuh^hve*: to bind together), is made as an offering to the soul of the pig.¹³

The owner of the pig holds the *li^vtsuh^h* in both hands near the fireplace in his house and addresses the doomed pig, which is tied to a stake outside, as follows:

*Nga^vnaw^vhta^hte^vnyi sheh^hpaw^haw^hca^hleh hu ta^hve leh nga^v,
ti^vca^vleh bo te ve, ba^hta^vcaw^vla^v.*

Three times in one day I have fed and cared for you, I kill you to eat
in order to obtain blessings, I do not sin.

The incantation finished, the owner of the pig goes out and throws the *li^vtsuh^h* into the bushes near the village.

The slaughter of the pig is a ritual act. It is in fact a sacrifice. The Lahu Nyi say that the soul of the pig is released to go to the land of the dead in place of the human souls of the household members. Before bludgeoning the pig to death with a heavy wooden stake, the slaughterer should recite this incantation: '*Chaw ta va^v ta k'ai*' ('Go in the place of the man (men)'). Often this prayer is omitted, giving the casual onlooker the impression that this is a simple slaughter rather than a ritual sacrifice.

13) Informants were unable to give the symbolic meaning of the *li^vtsuh^h*, but stated only that its manufacture for this and other rites was 'Lahu custom', *La^v hu—aw^vli^v*

When a household member is very sick indeed, so sick as to be on the threshold of death, a rite is performed which has as its object not merely the release of the pig's soul to go to the land of the dead in place of that of the sick man, but also the transference of the man's sickness to the pig. In this case, a rope is manufactured from jungle vines, one end of which is tied to the pig and the other held by the sick man. The owner of the pig or other household member recites the same prayer as recorded above, '*Chaw ta va' ta k'ai*,' but here the sickness of the man is believed to be transferred by means of the rope to the pig.

After the ritual sacrifice, the pig is butchered [Pl. 1] and a feast prepared.

2. *Chaw suh aw_ca_ve*: The Feeding of the Ancestral Spirits¹⁴
(*chaw suh*: dead people, *aw_ca_ve*: to feed)

Before the villagers are summoned to partake of the feast, a village elder conversant with the rite comes to the household and ritually offers portions of food to the ancestral spirits of the household head and of his wife. Two winnowing trays (*ha ma*) are placed side by side in the front part of the house. On each tray is placed one helping of pork soup, one bowl of rice and one bowl or cup of tea. Homemade cigarettes and tobacco are also put on each tray. The offerings on one tray are for the ancestral spirits of the household head and on the other for those of his wife. A woven bamboo basket (*hk'aw-law'k'o_*) containing the household's silver jewellery and, sometimes, new clothes is placed near the winnowing trays. The various offerings in the *hk'aw-law'k'o_* are likewise offerings to the ancestral spirits. The officiating elder lights beeswax candles which he places on the rim of each tray. (The Lahu Nyi normally light such candles when they offer formal prayers; here the candles are lighted in order to direct the ancestral spirits to the

14) This account is substantially the same as that which formed part of my article on the Lahu Nyi New Year Celebrations (Walker 1970 a: 27-30).

feast place.¹⁵) The elder now squats on his haunches in front of the two trays [Pl. 2] and summons the ancestral spirits to partake of the meal prepared for them. As he begins his prayer he pours water, either from a bamboo water container or a metal kettle, onto the bamboo slats of the floor in front of him. This is a symbolic washing of the hands of the ancestors who have come to partake of the meal. At the conclusion of the prayer, the elder once again pours water onto the floor and this time the rite has a double significance. First, it symbolizes the washing of the ancestors' hands which have been soiled in eating. Second, it symbolizes the desire of the household members that the ancestors, having eaten, leave the house and return to the land of the dead.

The text of the prayer recorded on the occasion of one such ancestor propitiation rite is as follows:

TEXT ONE¹⁶

1. O⁻, O⁻, meu^v ti[^] meu^v shehn⁻ mvuh^v mi^v,
 daw^v ti[^] ga^v ti[^], ya[^] nyi naw^v ya^v cho^v pa⁻
 hpaw^v ve, va[^] u⁻ va[^] meh⁻ taw[^] leh, naw^v chaw
 maw^v hta[^] ca⁻ la^v ve.

15) See Text Two, verse 3.

16) In order to facilitate rapid reference and comparison of the original text with my English translation, I have broken up the Lahu texts into verses. No such verse structure is recognized by the Lahu themselves.



Plate 1. Preparing the carcass of a pig for a blessing feast



Plate 2. A village elder calling on the ancestral spirits to partake of food, drink and tobacco;
at the left, rice for the blessing feast

2. Naw_v ho⁻ ti[^] ta ti[^] pfuh^v sheh₋ hpa^v, va[^] u⁻
 va[^] meh₋ taw[^] leh naw_v hta[^] ca₋ la^v ve, yeh_v
 ma chi haw⁻ ma^v daw^v ha₋ ma^v daw^v hki⁻ tu_v
 ve, chi bo k'aw[^] ji^v leh, naw_v haweh₋ naw_v
 ha[^] k'a pi^v.
3. Te^v nyi sheh[^] yan^v, te^v ha⁻ sheh[^] yan^v, hpa^v
 ka_v ma ka_v, ya^v du aw_v haweh₋ aw_v ha[^] chi ma
 ve, ma^v hpa[^] ma^v gui^v tu_v, k'a pi^v meh₋, ce^v
 ka_v ca_v ka_v, chaw ka_v va^v ka_v.
4. Mui_v ve va^v ve, te^v nyi mui_v ve k'aw^v nyi
 ca^v ma^v peu_v, te^v hk'aw[^] mui_v ve k'aw^v hk'aw[^]
 ca^v ma^v peu_v, chi bo k'aw[^] hpaw leh k'a pi^v meh₋.
5. Neh₋ co chi mi_v ma ma^v hpui^v ma^v law[^] hk'e,
 neh co ya^v co k'aw[^] ca⁻ leh k'a pi^v meh₋.

Lahu Nyi prayers are couched in complex poetic language. One word of everyday speech is often transmuted, for sound effect, into a rhyming couplet. There are several examples in the above text, *e.g.*, instead of simply saying *va*, 'a pig', the reciter of the prayer says *va*, *u*— *va*, *meh*, 'the front portion of a pig, the back portion of a pig'. In translating this and other Lahu texts I have attempted to keep as close to the original Lahu as possible within the framework of the English language. My translation is as follows:

1. Oh you elders in heaven, you who need only wish for something for that wish to be satisfied, today your children here have prepared for you to eat the front portion and the back portion of a pig.
2. You who are all-knowing, all-seeing, they have prepared for you the top portion and the bottom portion of a pig, so let there be no trouble in this house, with this blessing again enwrap your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren.
3. Three times in one day, three times in one night grant that the household head and his wife may not separate, the children, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren may not separate, all the animals and all the people may not separate.
4. Grant this blessing that the yield from one day's work in the fields may not be exhausted in nine days, that the yield from one year's work in the field may not be exhausted in nine years.
5. May the lives of the womenfolk, the lives of the menfolk, like the earth, suffer no change no decay.

The villagers do not believe that the ancestral spirits actually devour a part of the foodstuffs offered to them, but they say 'chaw suh [dead people] aw, ha [souls] aw, sha— [vapours] ceh [only] ca' ve [eat]': the spirits feast on the vapours exuded by the offerings.

After the rite and before the feast for the village, a little of each foodstuff must be fed to the household dogs. It is believed that eating of the ancestral offerings before some has been given to the dogs would cause a person to become absent-minded and forgetful. Apparently, the power (not a spirit) which produces this ill effect enters the dogs, thus permitting humans subsequently to eat with impunity.

The dead having been placated with food offerings, and the residual bad power absorbed by the dogs, the living may eat.

3. *Va,sha__ca__ve*: The Feast

(*va,sha__*: pork, *ca__ve*: to give to eat)

There is no set form to the subsequent feast, nor are there any formal invitations. News soon spreads around the village that an *aw_v bo te ve* feast is being prepared, and it is known that anyone who so desires may partake of the food. Some villagers may prefer to collect a portion of the pork soup and rice from the donor household and take it home to eat, and this is quite acceptable. The point is not that the food as such is sacred but rather that the household which desires a blessing must provide a meal for the community in order to obtain this blessing.

4. *A^-mo hkeh hpeh ve*: The Binding of the Wrists of Members of the Donor Household

(*a^-mo hkeh*: cotton string, *hpeh ve*: to bind)

After the feast, a member of the household places a small bamboo water container (*i- ka^ li^ kav^*; *i- ka^*: water, *li^ kav^*: custom cup) and a small loosely woven basket (*hpeu_v k'o__*) in front of the fireplace. Inside the basket are placed a number of beeswax candles and some cotton string. All these are offerings to *G'ui_vsha*. Just before the actual wrist-binding takes place, an elder lights a pair of beeswax candles and places them on the bamboo container. No prayer accompanies this rite. Once the candles are lighted, the wrist-binding may take place.

Each person who has partaken of the feast is socially obligated to give in return his blessings to the donor household. The giving of such blessings is symbolized by the binding with cotton string of the wrists of all members of the donor household [P1.3]. Either left or right wrist may be bound. The guests usually bring their own cotton string to the donor household. Such thread has not previously been blessed or sanctified in any way. A person who brings a length of cotton string must ensure that he uses the whole length to bind the wrists of the members of the donor household. It is said that if a person were to bring back to his

own house any remaining portion of string, sickness would shortly befall him or members of his household. Why this should be the case, informants have been unable to state.

On some occasions, notably when a wandering soul is called back to the body of a sick man, the binding of wrists symbolizes the binding of the soul back into the body. However, in the *aw_v bo te ve* ceremony, wrist-binding signifies rather the binding of blessings into the body.

The wrist-binding complete, the guests return home, leaving the household head to supervise the final rite of the ceremony, the construction of a symbolic bridge on the main pathway to the village.

5. *Co_v t_{cu}h⁻ ve*: The Construction of a Symbolic Bridge
(*co_v*: a bridge, *t_{cu}h⁻ ve*: to join)

Informants state that if there is a stream near the village which actually crosses the main pathway to the settlement, a real bridge may be constructed across this stream. However, in many villages (including the one in which I was living) there is no such stream, and a purely symbolic bridge is erected for the *co_v t_{cu}h⁻ ve* rite.

A member of the household, using a hoe, digs a shallow rectangular trench along the path. This represents the bridge. Two wooden posts are placed, one at each end of the trench, and between them is stretched a length of cotton string [Pl. 4]. This represents the handrail over the bridge. Three copper coins or, if these are unavailable, three stones, are buried in the earth, one at each end and one in the middle of the symbolic bridge. Silver or gold coins will not do for this rite although informants could offer no explanation for this proscription other than the inevitable '*chaw maw^v aw_v li^v*', 'it is the custom of the ancestors'.

The construction of the symbolic bridge ensures for the household members the blessings of all travellers who walk across it. (Twice a year, with this idea in mind, the whole village co-operates in the construction of a real bamboo shelter at some distance from the village, wherein weary travellers can rest a while.)

The stones or copper coins buried on the symbolic bridge are offerings to the earth. The household head or officiating specialist may recite the following incantation whilst burying these coins:



Plate 3. The binding with cotton string of the wrist of the head of the household which has provided the blessing feast



Plate 4. The symbolic bridge on the pathway leading to the village

*Mi_v ma hta_v ta_v ve, mi_v ma_v hpui_v ma_v pui⁻ ve hk'e, ma_v na_v
ma_v suh g'a ve, aw_v bo ca ve yo_v.*

To the earth I make this offering; as the earth does not decay, so may we have no sickness and no death, for this blessing I search.

With the completion of the symbolic bridge, the *aw_v bo te ve* rites are at an end.

CHAW SUH AW—CA—VE—ANCESTOR PROPITIATION¹⁷

Among the Lahu Nyi, the ritual feeding of the ancestors is performed frequently, both as an independent rite and as part of a larger ceremony. The basic ancestor propitiation rite has been described above as part of the *aw_v bo te ve* ceremony. Other occasions and reasons for the *chaw suh aw—ca—ve* ceremony will be discussed here. Most significant is the occasion when it forms part of a ceremony known as *chaw suh a⁻ po ngo-e te ve*.

The ritual feeding of the ancestral spirits is always performed by each household at the New Year (Walker 1970a : 27-30) and, as noted above, at the *aw_v bo te ve* ceremony. At the New Year time, its function is prophylactic; at the *aw_v bo te ve* ceremony it is either prophylactic or therapeutic depending on the purpose of the ceremony as a whole. On other occasions, when it is performed by itself, it may have either preventive or curative functions in much the same manner as the *aw_v bo te ve* ceremony.

The performance of a *chaw suh aw—ca—ve* rite independently of a blessing feast is neither so costly nor so effective as the latter. It requires the outlay of a single fowl and no feeding of the community takes place. The rite is performed frequently, usually in order to procure relief from minor ailments. Often it is a ritual specialist who advises the performance, although another common reason for it is that the household head or his wife sees his or her parents in a dream. The actions of the officiating elder, and the use of beeswax candles, food offerings on trays and other paraphernalia are the same when the rite is performed independently as when its performance is part of a blessing feast.

17) Young (1962 : 11), discussing the religion of the Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na (Black Lahu), states: 'they have no ancestor worship or reverence rituals, but honor the living distinguished elders.' For the Red Lahu, at least, this statement is quite incorrect.

Finally, we come to a ceremony known as *chaw suh a⁻ po ngo-e te ve* (*chaw suh*: dead man, *a⁻ po ngo-e*: small hut, *te ve*: to make) of which the *chaw suh aw⁻ ca⁻ ve* rite is an integral part. This ceremony is infrequently performed. The usual reason for its performance is that other rites have proved ineffective in curing an illness. If some ailment has proved particularly resistant to ritual treatment, it may be said that the ancestors of the household wish to have a new house in the land of the dead, their old one having fallen into disrepair. (The ancestors are inclined to make their wishes known on this matter by 'biting' their living kinsmen, 'ya^v hta_h [children] che_h ve [to bite]'.) If a household head learns, either through his own dreams or from a ritual specialist, that the ancestors require a new house, then a small hut must be constructed for them on the outskirts of the village. In this hut, made of wood and roofed with banana leaves [P1. 5], the ritual feeding of the ancestors is performed. The ancestor propitiation rite performed here is identical to the one described earlier with the exception that knives and other farming implements are also offered to the ancestral spirits [P1. 6] and the wrist of the sick person is tied with a special cotton string. The officiating elder takes two pieces of cotton string, one black and the other white. Joining these together, he attaches the end of the black string to one of the wooden supports of the hut. The black string symbolizes the side of the dead (*chaw suh hpaw^v*), the white the side of the living (*chaw ya^v hpaw^v*). At the conclusion of the ancestor propitiation rite, the officiating elder takes a beeswax candle and burns away the white string from the black string, symbolizing the separation of the living from the dead [P1. 7]. In the prayer that accompanies this rite, the elder requests that the ancestral spirits, having received a new house and food, return now to the land of the dead.

Recorded below are the original Lahu texts together with my English translations of the prayers which I recorded at one *chaw suh a⁻ po ngo-e te ve* rite. First the officiating elder offered food to the ancestors of the household head's wife, mentioning her father and mother by name. Next he offered food to the household head's ancestors mentioning only his mother by name (his father was still living). Finally, he requested the spirits to return to the land of the dead. The Lahu text of his first prayer is as follows:



Plate 5. Preparing food and other offerings in the hut built for the ancestral spirits



Plate 6. An elder making offerings to the ancestral spirits; in the enamel basins food; in the basket to the left clothes and silver jewellery; at the right knives and other farming implements



Plate 7. Burning apart with candle flame a black string symbolizing the side of the dead and a white string symbolizing the side of the living; facing the officiating elder the patient and her mother

TEXT TWO

1. Ā, Cā Shī leh Na mī yō a k'ō^ k'ō, yā
 nyi yō a k'ō^ k'ō, naw̄ yā chō tē hpaw̄
 ve yeh̄ ma aw̄ cē tē leh nyī chaw maw̄ chaw
 ho htā ā lā ve.
2. Ā, naw̄ yā naw̄ dū chō tē hpaw̄ ve yō
 a k'ō^ k'ō, yā nyi yō a k'ō^ k'ō, aw̄ chī
 aw̄ hpeū tā leh, g'ā ū g'ā meh̄ tā
 leh nyī chaw maw̄ htā cā lā tā lā yō
 law k'ō^ k'ō.
3. Yā nyī, ā, lā meū̄ peh̄ g'eū^ hkeh g'eū^
 hk'ā^ suh chaw leh g'uī tsuh̄ hā tsuh̄ leh
 k'aw̄ cā k'aw̄ daw̄ pī lā meh̄.
4. Naw̄ yā naw̄ dū chō tē hpaw̄ ve yō a
 k'ō^ k'ō, yā nyī naw̄ haweh̄ nāw̄ hā chō
 tē hpaw̄ ve yō a k'ō^ k'ō, dā gā leh nsw̄
 chaw maw̄ chaw ho htā cā lā tā lā yō
 law k'ō^ k'ō, chī ceū k'aw̄ yan̄ ve muī hk'eū
 vā hk'eū kā, a, veū hk'eū k'ā hk'eū kā,
 naw̄ chaw maw̄ chaw ho htā teh̄ lā yō law
 k'ō^ k'ō, hk'ā deh̄ nyī leh k'aw̄ hā pī lā
 o meh̄.

5. Naw_✓ ya_✓ naw_✓ du_✓ cho_✓ te_✓ hpaw_✓ ve yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓
 k'o, ya_^nyi chi ceu_✓ k'aw_✓ yan_✓ k'o[^]_✓ k'o, naw_✓
 chaw maw_✓ ka ti_^ ka g'a ve, hk'a deh_^ pa[^]
 leh, a⁻ keu ta⁻ pi_✓ meh₋.
6. Ya_^nyi yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓ k'o, nyi_✓ chaw maw_✓ meu_✓
 po teh ti_^ meu_✓ g'a yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓ k'o, chaw maw_✓
 meu_✓ bo teh ti_^ to shehn⁻ meu_✓ g'a yo_✓ a
 k'o[^]_✓ k'o, hk'a deh_^ nyi leh, a⁻, chi ceu_✓
 k'aw_✓ ceu_✓ u⁻ hta_^ ka_✓, naw_✓ ya_✓ naw_✓ du_✓ naw_✓
 haweh₋ naw_✓ ha[^] cho_✓ te_✓ hpaw_✓ ve hta_^ hk'a
 deh_^ fui₋ leh suh⁻ leh po_✓ ta⁻ pi_✓ meh₋, a
 na₋ chi ceu_✓ k'aw_✓ ceu_✓ ve yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓ k'o,
 a na₋ chi yan_✓ k'aw_✓ yan_✓ ve yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓ k'o.
7. Nyi_✓ chaw maw_✓ chaw ho ho⁻ ti_^ ka ti_^ ka sheh₋
 hpa_✓, nyi_✓ chaw maw_✓ chaw ho ka ti_^ ka sheh₋
 hpa_✓ yo_✓ a k'o[^]_✓ k'o, ca_✓ ta⁻ daw_✓ ta⁻ k'o[^]_✓ k'o,
 a⁻ chi₋ ceu_✓ k'aw_✓ ceu_✓ pa[^] leh po_✓ ta[✓] pi_✓
 meh₋, hk'aw_^ na_✓ ta[✓] hki chi ma ve ka_✓, hk'a
 deh_^ pa[^] leh no_✓ ta⁻ pi_✓.

8. Cheh[✓] sha caw[✓] sha, zuh[^] sha mui sha, hpa[✓] ka[✓]
 ma ka[✓] a[✓] gui[✓] a[✓] hpa[^] ve, a⁻, neh ceh ya[✓]
 ceh a[✓] gui[✓] a[✓] hpa[^] ve, kui⁻ nyi hpa[✓] ceh ma
 ceh a[✓] hpa[^] tu[✓] ve, chi bo k'aw[^] hpa⁻ leh po[✓]
 ta⁻ pi[✓] meh⁻, chi shi⁻ k'aw[^] hpa⁻ leh po[✓] ta⁻
 pi[✓] meh⁻.
9. Naw[✓] ya[✓] naw[✓] du[✓] cho[✓] te[✓] hpaw[✓] ve yo[✓] a
 k'o[^] k'o, ya[^] nyi, a⁻, nyi[✓] chaw maw[✓] chaw ho
 hta[^] ca⁻ la[✓] taw la[✓] ve yo[✓] a k'o[^] k'o, hk'a
 deh[^] k'aw[^] ca[✓] k'aw[^] daw[✓] leh, hk'a deh[^] chi
 ceu[✓] k'aw[✓] ceu[✓] u⁻ hta[^] k'aw[^] pa[^] leh yeh[✓] ma
 aw[✓] ce[✓] chi u⁻ hta[^] k'aw[^] pa[^] leh, a⁻ cho[✓] chaw
 hpaw[✓] va[✓] hpaw[✓] u⁻ hta[^] k'aw[^] pa[^] leh, ce[✓] hpaw[✓]
 ca[✓] hpaw[✓] u⁻ hta[^] k'aw[^] pa[^] leh, chi ceu[✓] k'aw[✓]
 yan⁻ ve k'aw[^] fui⁻ leh po[✓] leh, a⁻, chi ve u⁻
 hta[^] k'o[^] k'o aw[✓] bo aw[✓] shi⁻ k'aw[^] hpa⁻ leh
 k'aw[^] ta⁻ pi[✓] meh⁻.
10. Cheh[✓] sha caw[✓] sha, zuh[^] sha mui sha, a[✓] daw[✓]
 a[✓] ha⁻, a[✓] daw[✓] a[✓] hki⁻ ve, chi bo k'aw[^] hpa⁻
 leh, a⁻, naw[✓] ya[✓] naw[✓] du[✓] cho[✓] te[✓] hpaw[✓] ve
 hta[^] ta⁻ pi[✓], naw[✓] haweh⁻ naw[✓] ha[^] cho[✓] te[✓]
 hpaw[✓] ve hta[^] ta⁻ pi[✓].

11. La[^]meu^v va^vchi pui tsuh[^] pui li^vka^v k'aw[^]
 ta[^]la^v, chaw maw^v chaw ho o^vte^v hpaw^v ve,
 chi ceu k'aw^vyan[^]pa[^] leh, a[^]keh^vg'a kui^v
 ve, va^vchi suh daw^vk'o[^] k'o, suh daw^vna^v
 daw^vu[^]hta[^], hk'a deh[^]fui[^]leh ta[^]ta[^]pi^v
 meh[^], ya[^]nyi k'o[^] k'o, naw^vchaw maw^vchaw
 ho, o^vmeu^vbo ta ti[^] mui sheh[^]hpa^v.

An English version of the above text is as follows:

1. Oh Ca^v Shi^{-(a)} and Na Mi^v,^(b) today your children here on this side make and entrust to you elders a house with four corners.
 2. Oh today your children here on this side prepare for you elders rice and curry, curry prepared from the top portion and from the bottom portion of a chicken, they give this to you elders to eat and drink.
 3. Oh today follow along the light of these beeswax candles made by their own hands,^(c) wash and now come to eat and drink.
 4. Today your children here on this side, your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren here on this side wish to have good things and so they give to you elders food and drink, nine kinds of different things, ten kinds of different things ^(d) they give to you; clothing and raiment they give to you elders, so you please look carefully upon them and once again take away these offerings with you.
 5. Today you true elders who keep your promises carefully put ten kinds, nine kinds of blessing upon your children here on this side.
- (a) Ca^v Shi[^] is the deceased father of the household head's wife.
 (b) Na Mi^v is the deceased mother of the household head's wife.
 (c) A reference to the beeswax candles which the officiating elder lights on the rim of each winnowing basket containing the food offerings.
 (d) In the Lahu this is a rhyming couplet meaning 'many things', *e.g.*, food, tobacco, opium, farming implements, etc.

6. Today, yes, you elders who in heaven enjoy all blessings, yes, you elders who in heaven enjoy all blessings, carefully look upon all their possessions and separate and save your children, your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren from the ten kinds, the nine kinds of sickness.^(e)
7. You true elders, yes, you true elders, if you have finished eating and drinking, carefully order that your children be saved from the ten kinds, the nine kinds of sickness, from all sickness.
8. Again give your blessings and benedictions so that your children may enjoy good health, sleep well and sit well, that the household head and his wife may not separate, that the youths and maidens may not separate, that the husbands and wives may not separate.
9. Your children here on this side today give to you elders food and drink so once again eat and drink to your fill and bless all that belongs to your children, the four corners of their house, oh, give blessings to the people's side and to the animal's side and once again separate and save them from the nine kinds, the ten kinds of sickness, this blessing again bestow upon them.
10. Oh, once again bestow your blessings upon your children here on this side, your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren here on this side, that they may enjoy good health, sleep well and sit well, that they may suffer no misfortune.
11. Your children once again offer to you this bamboo *li^v tsuh_h*^(f) made with their own hands, so you elders on that side, purify your children from the nine kinds, the ten kinds of sickness, separate and save your children from thoughts of death and sickness, oh you elders who sit in celestial realms.

(e) In the Lahu this is a rhyming couplet meaning 'all sickness'.

(f) A *li^v tsuh_h* is a ritual object manufactured from several bamboo sticks, which are bound together and upon the tops of which is placed cotton wool. As noted earlier, informants have not been able to elaborate upon the symbolism of the *li^v tsuh_h*.

The officiating elder now offers food to the ancestors of the household head. The Lahu text of this prayer is as follows:

TEXT THREE

1. O⁻, O⁻, la[^] sha te^v sheu^v yo^v a k'o[^] k'o, Na Mi^v
naw^v yo^v law k'o[^] k'o, ya[^] nyi naw^v ya^v naw^v du^v
cho^v hpaw^v ve yeh^v ma aw^v ce^v te leh naw^v chaw
maw^v chaw ho hta[^] teh la^v leh.
2. A⁻, ca^v hpeu⁻ daw^v hpeu⁻ k'aw[^] ta^v leh, g'a[^] u⁻
g'e[^] meh⁻ k'aw[^] ta⁻ leh naw^v chaw maw^v chaw ho
hta[^] k'aw[^] ta⁻ la^v ve yo^v a k'o[^] k'o.
3. Ya[^] nyi la[^] meu^v peh^v geu[^] hkeh geu[^] hk'a^v suh
chaw leh ca^v la^o, daw la o, naw^v ya^v naw^v du^v
cho^v te^v hpaw^v ve, ya[^] nyi yeh^v ma aw^v ce^v chi
haw⁻, nyi^v chaw maw^v chaw ho hta[^] ta⁻ la^v ve yo^v
a k'o[^] k'o.
4. Yeh^v ma aw^v ce^v hta[^] te leh chaw maw^v ho hta[^]
teh la^v ve.
5. A⁻, veu[^] law^v k'a^v law^v ka[^] te leh chaw maw^v
chaw ho hta[^] ta⁻ la^v ve yo^v a k'o[^] k'o.
6. Mui^v hk'eu va^v hk'eu ka[^] ca^v hk'eu daw^v hk'eu
ka^v, naw^v chaw maw^v chaw ho hta[^] teh la^v ve yo^v
a k'o[^] k'o.
7. Hk'a deh[^] nyi leh a⁻, chi ceu^v k'aw^v ceu^v u⁻
hta[^] k'aw[^] pa[^] leh po^v leh ta⁻ pi^v meh⁻.

8. G'ui_✓ tsuh_✓ hā_✓ tsuh_✓ leh_✓ k'aw_✓ ca_✓ k'aw_✓ daw_✓
 leh_✓ naw_✓ chaw_✓ maw_✓ chaw_✓ ho o_✓ g'a_✓, meū_✓ bo_✓ teh_✓
 pi_✓ meū_✓ g'a_✓ yo_✓ a_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓.
9. Ya_✓ nyi_✓ chi_✓ ceu_✓ k'aw_✓ ceu_✓ ve_✓ hta_✓, a_✓, naw_✓
 chaw_✓ maw_✓ ka_✓ ti_✓ ka_✓ sheh_✓ hpa_✓, naw_✓ chaw_✓ maw_✓
 ka_✓ ti_✓ ka_✓ sheh_✓ hpa_✓ yo_✓ a_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓, hk'a_✓ deh_✓
 pa_✓ leh_✓ yeh_✓ ma_✓ aw_✓ ce_✓ chi_✓ haw_✓, naw_✓ ya_✓ naw_✓
 du_✓, naw_✓ haweh_✓ naw_✓ ha_✓ chi_✓ ma_✓ ve_✓, naw_✓ ya_✓
 naw_✓ du_✓ chi_✓ ma_✓ ve_✓ hta_✓, hk'a_✓ deh_✓ k'aw_✓ nyi_✓ leh_✓
 hk'a_✓ deh_✓ k'aw_✓ ngeh_✓ leh_✓ cheh_✓ sha_✓ caw_✓ sha_✓,
 zuh_✓ sha_✓ mui_✓ sha_✓, a_✓ hpui_✓ a_✓ law_✓, a_✓ hpui_✓ a_✓
 htai_✓, chi_✓ bo_✓ k'aw_✓ hpa_✓ leh_✓ k'aw_✓ ta_✓ la_✓ pi_✓.
10. Nyi_✓ chaw_✓ maw_✓ g'a_✓ suh_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓, suh_✓ ta_✓ leh_✓, a_✓,
 te_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓, te_✓ hpaw_✓ k'aw_✓ cheh_✓ ta_✓ ve_✓ yo_✓
 a_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓, cheh_✓ sha_✓ caw_✓ sha_✓ ga_✓ ce_✓, zuh_✓ sha_✓
 mui_✓ sha_✓ ga_✓ ce_✓, ma_✓ na_✓ ma_✓ gaw_✓ ga_✓, a_✓, ma_✓ hpui_✓
 ma_✓ law_✓ ga_✓ leh_✓ naw_✓ chaw_✓ maw_✓ chaw_✓ ho_✓ nta_✓ ca_✓
 la_✓ taw_✓ la_✓ yo_✓ law_✓ k'o_✓ k'o_✓, ya_✓ nyi_✓ k'aw_✓ ca_✓
 k'aw_✓ daw_✓ leh_✓ la_✓ daw_✓ shu_✓ daw_✓ leh_✓ fi_✓ daw_✓
 la_✓ o_✓ meh_✓.

An English version of the above text is as follows:

1. Oh, on the right side.^(a) Na Mi^(b) and your group, today your children here on this side make and give to you elders a house with four corners.
2. Oh, these food and drink offerings they once again prepare for you, yes, the top portion and the bottom portion of a chicken they once again prepare for you elders.

(a) Men are often in ritual referred to as the 'people of the right hand', women as the 'people of the left hand'. The officiating elder here addresses his prayer to the side of the household head rather than to that of his wife.

(b) Na Mi^(b) is the deceased mother of the household head.

3. Today your children have prepared for you in this house food and drink, so today follow the light of these beeswax candles and come to eat, come to drink.
4. They have made and give to you elders a house with four corners.
5. They have made clothes for you elders.
6. They have brought for you elders farming implements and household utensils.
7. Carefully look upon them and again save them from the ten kinds, the nine kinds of sickness.
8. You elders up there, wash and once again eat and drink and give the blessings of heaven to your children.
9. Today oh you true elders, true elders, carefully protect your children, your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren of this house from the nine kinds, the ten kinds of sickness, look carefully on all your children and bless them that they may enjoy good health, may sleep well and sit well, that they may neither decay nor change, this blessing once again give to them.
10. You elders are already dead, so you stay on the side of the dead,^(c) oh, here is the side of the living, the people here say they desire good health, they say they want to sleep well and sit well, they want no sickness, no decay and no change, so today they give you elders food and drink, so come to eat and drink, come to drink tea and smoke tobacco, come to smoke opium.

(c) This is a gentle reminder that the elders should not cause any further trouble to their living kinsmen.

Finally, the officiating elder requests the ancestral spirits to return to the land of the dead. The text of this prayer is as follows:

TEXT FOUR

1. Ō, Ō, ca[✓] ta[✓] daw[✓] ta[✓] k'o[✓] k'o[✓], g'ui[✓] tsuh[✓] ha[✓] tsuh[✓]
ta[✓] leh k'aw[✓] hpeu[✓] k'aw[✓] va-e[✓] meh[✓].
2. Chi haw[✓] to bo to hta[✓] mi[✓] ma chi-a[✓] taw[✓] te[✓]
yan[✓], chew ya[✓] chi k'aw[✓] ca[✓] da[✓] a ce[✓].
3. Ā, hkui tsuh[✓] la[✓] tsuh[✓] ta[✓] leh k'aw[✓] hpeu[✓]
k'aw[✓] va-e[✓] meh[✓].
4. Ca[✓] leh daw[✓] leh ə[✓] peu[✓] k'o[✓] k'o[✓], yu[✓] leh hkui
u[✓] hkui meh[✓] ta[✓] leh ca-e[✓] meh[✓].
5. Mui[✓] hk'eu va[✓] hk'eu ka[✓], chi ceu[✓] k'aw[✓] yan[✓]
ve ka[✓], nyi[✓] chaw maw[✓] hə[✓] a[✓] la[✓] ve yo[✓] a[✓]
k'o[✓] k'o[✓], hk'a deh[✓] yu[✓] veu leh mui ca-e[✓] meh[✓].
6. Ca[✓] leh daw[✓] leh ma[✓] peu[✓] k'o[✓], yu[✓] leh hkui u[✓] hkui
meh[✓] ta[✓] leh ca-e[✓] meh[✓].

An English translation of the above text is as follows:

1. Oh, if you have finished eating and drinking, wash your hands and once again return to your place.
2. If a new *G'ui sha* comes to earth, these people say they will once again offer food to you.^(a)

(a) *G'ui sha*, the supreme Lahu supernatural, is referred to in the text by the couplet *to bo to hta*[✓]. The whole sentence means that if a new God appears on earth the ancestral spirits should again come to eat. However, as there is little likelihood of a new God appearing, so the living people hope that the ancestral spirits will see fit not to return and cause them further trouble.

3. Oh, wash your hands and wash your feet^(b) and return again to your place.
 4. If you have not finished eating and drinking, take this food and drink to your own place, keep it near your feet^(c) and eat and drink there.
 5. These farming implements, these nine kinds, these ten kinds of offerings your children have given to you, so carefully take them away and prepare your own fields. Yes, these farming implements you once again use in your own place.
 6. If you have not finished eating and drinking, take this food and drink to your own place, keep it near your feet and eat and drink there.
-
- (b) In the Lahu this is a rhyming couplet, *'hkui* [feet] *tsuh*^v [wash] *la*_A [hands] *tsuh*^v [wash]', and refers only to hand-washing.
- (c) This means, 'take the offerings back to your own house and keep them at the place where you normally sit down to eat'.

On the completion of the *chaw suh a— po ngo-e te ve* ceremony, all the ritual offerings are removed from the hut and brought back to the house. The hut itself is left to fall to pieces in the course of time.

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