

# LAHU NYI (RED LAHU) NEW YEAR TEXTS-I

by

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## INTRODUCTION

In a recent article on Lahu Nyi blessing feasts and ancestor propitiation (Walker 1972) which appeared in this journal, I presented the original Lahu texts of a number of prayers recited on such occasions. In giving these prayer texts in their original language as well as in translation, it was my intention both to preserve the texts (hitherto unrecorded) for posterity and also to allow other students of the Lahu language to evaluate my translations. Regular readers of the *JSS* may recall, however, that I omitted the original Lahu texts in an earlier article on the new year celebrations (Walker 1970a). I intend now to make good this omission, but because many of the new year prayers are extremely long and somewhat complicated, I propose to record the first two here while hoping to present the remaining seven in two later issues of the journal.<sup>1</sup>

## THE ORTHOGRAPHY

Lahu has no traditional script, and the people among whom I did my field work were not literate in any language. These prayers were transcribed with the help of Christian Black Lahu, using the orthography developed over the past sixty years or so by members of the American Baptist Mission in Burma and China. This is the first and oldest of the three romanizations which are, so far as I know, the only scripts in which Lahu is written today. A second orthography is used among Roman Catholic converts in the Burmese Shan State. A third is in use among Lahu in China, a state-sponsored "reformed" romanization probably based on the Baptist orthography. Undoubtedly the Baptist romanization is the most widely used by Lahu outside the People's Republic of China.

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1) I wish to thank my friend and colleague in Lahu studies, Dr. James A. Matisoff of the Department of Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley, for his assistance in the analysis of these texts. To my wife, Pauline, go my particular thanks for her help in preparing this difficult manuscript.

The linguist Matisoff (1970) has noted that while not a phonemic transcription (since it indicates certain features of pronunciation which are automatic and predictable), the Baptist orthography does "accurately reflect all the sound distinctions made in the language, and is quite adequate for daily use." Matisoff's "Note on the Orthography of Lahu", which appears at the beginning of my 1970 report on Lahu Nyi village society and economy in north Thailand (Walker 1970b), is an excellent short description of the Baptist orthography.

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

- superscript straight line (*ca<sup>-</sup>*) : high-rising open tone
- superscript wedge (*ca<sup>∨</sup>*) : high-falling open tone
- superscript circumflex (*ca<sup>^</sup>*) : high tone, checked
- subscript straight line (*ca<sub>-</sub>*) : very-low open tone
- subscript wedge (*ca<sub>∨</sub>*) : low-falling open tone
- subscript circumflex (*ca<sub>^</sub>*) : low tone, checked.

## THE TEXTS

Lahu prayers are couched in a rather complex poetic language very different from that of everyday speech. Often, in fact, one word of ordinary speech is transmuted, for sound effect, into a rhyming couplet. For example, in Text One below, instead of saying "*hk'aw<sub>^</sub> suh<sup>-</sup>*" : "new year", the reciter prefers "*hk'aw<sub>^</sub> suh<sup>-</sup> ha suh<sup>-</sup>*" : "new year, new moon". In this case the second part of the couplet has some definite meaning, for the day of the new year is also the day of the new moon. On other occasions, however, the second part has no meaning at all, or if it has a meaning in everyday speech it does not mean the same in the poetic language. The Lahu say that such words are "*na sha ve*" : "good to listen to". In translating these texts I have attempted, within the limits of the English language, to preserve the flavour of the original Lahu.

The texts, both in the original and in translation, are broken up into verses. I have done this in order to facilitate rapid reference and

comparison between original text and translation. No such verse structure is recognized by Lahu themselves.

I propose to deal with each text in three stages. First is a formal transcription of the prayer in Lahu. Second is a "working translation" in which I give, as near as possible, a word by word translation of the Lahu into English. This stage enables me to indicate areas of uncertainty or of total failure to comprehend the Lahu meaning. In the working translation I depart from the standard orthography by omitting tone marks and using hyphens to join syllables into words. (One problem with the missionary orthography is that each syllable is written separately followed by its own tone mark, and even literate Lahu themselves sometimes have difficulty in distinguishing word boundaries.) Finally I give a formal translation of the prayer in English. Although a brief explanatory note accompanies each text, I make no attempt to give the full ethnographic context of the prayers. The interested reader can easily refer to my original article on the new year celebrations. In reworking these texts I have corrected some errors in my first translations.

### TEXT ONE

[Prayer by the senior village priest (*to bo pa*) when offering glutinous rice cakes to G'ui, fu (the guardian supernatural of the village) at his altar in the village temple (cf. Walker 1970a : 7).]

1. Ha! Chi hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> suh<sup>-</sup> ha suh<sup>-</sup> te<sup>v</sup> nyi, hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> tan<sub>v</sub> ha tan<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> nyi yo<sub>v</sub> law, ha, ca li<sup>-</sup> ca ma\_\_ la<sub>λ</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> hk'a<sup>^</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce<sub>v</sub> chi hta<sub>λ</sub>, mo<sub>v</sub> la<sub>v</sub> mo<sub>v</sub> sha<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve yo<sub>v</sub> law, ha, ca li<sup>-</sup> ca ma\_\_ la<sub>λ</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>λ</sub>haw yo<sub>v</sub> law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, chi hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> tan<sub>v</sub> ha tan<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> nyi ve, aw\_\_ hpfuh<sub>λ</sub> k'aw<sub>λ</sub> te\_\_ leh G'ui, fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>λ</sub> ta shehn<sup>-</sup> hpaw<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>λ</sub> ta\_\_ g'a yo<sub>v</sub> law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o.
2. G'ui, fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>λ</sub> ta daw<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, chi hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> ha meu<sup>v</sup> te<sup>v</sup> nyi, ha, na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> ya<sup>v</sup> ha ya<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve yo<sub>v</sub> law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, chi hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>λ</sub> suh<sup>-</sup> ha suh<sup>-</sup> te<sup>v</sup> nyi yo<sub>v</sub> law, hk'a<sup>^</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce la<sub>λ</sub> sha mo<sub>v</sub> la<sub>λ</sub> chi ma ve, ha, sho meu<sup>v</sup> kui<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> fui\_\_ g'a sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, sho ba<sup>v</sup> kui<sup>v</sup> ba<sup>v</sup> fui\_\_ g'a sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>,

G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta daw<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta shehn<sup>~</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, naw<sub>v</sub> hk'a<sup>^</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce<sub>v</sub>, hk'a<sup>^</sup> teh hk'a<sup>^</sup> g'aw<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> haw, ha, hk'a<sup>^</sup> teh hk'a<sup>^</sup> g'aw meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub>, k'aw<sub>^</sub> ceu<sub>v</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> caw leh naw<sub>v</sub> chi ceu<sub>v</sub> k'aw<sup>v</sup> ceu<sub>v</sub> u hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> g'aw leh pon\_\_ pi<sup>v</sup>.

3. Hk'a<sub>v</sub> g'a<sup>v</sup> chi g'a<sup>v</sup>, chi hk'aw<sub>^</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>^</sub> suh<sup>~</sup> ha suh<sup>~</sup> te<sup>v</sup> nyi, ha, G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta shehn<sup>~</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta hka<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, k'aw<sub>^</sub> hk'a<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ca leh naw<sub>v</sub> haw<sup>~</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ta\_\_ g'a meh\_\_.
4. Chaw ya<sup>v</sup> chi ve, ha, na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>^</sub> ya<sup>v</sup> ha ya<sup>v</sup> chi ve yo<sub>v</sub> law, hk'aw<sub>^</sub> sheh\_\_ ha sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ceu<sub>v</sub>, ha, hk'aw<sub>^</sub> ya<sup>v</sup> ha ya<sup>v</sup> chi ma yo<sub>v</sub> law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, chi hk'aw<sub>^</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>^</sub> suh<sup>~</sup> ha suh<sup>~</sup> ta<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> nyi yo<sub>v</sub> law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ha, hk'aw<sub>^</sub> ceh<sub>v</sub> ha ceh<sub>v</sub> fui\_\_ sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ceu<sub>v</sub>, te<sup>v</sup> ha<sup>~</sup> sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ceu<sub>v</sub> leh ka<sub>v</sub> haw.
5. Ha, hk'a<sup>^</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce<sub>v</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> hk'a<sup>^</sup> teh hk'a<sup>^</sup> g'aw<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> haw, k'aw<sub>^</sub> ceu<sub>v</sub> leh k'aw<sub>^</sub> taw<sup>v</sup> leh hk'a<sub>v</sub> g'a<sup>v</sup> chi g'a<sup>v</sup>, g'o<sub>^</sub> taw<sup>^</sup> g'o<sub>^</sub> g'a, ui\_\_ ka<sub>v</sub> i ka<sub>v</sub> chi ma ve yo law.
6. Ha, daw<sup>v</sup> hpu te<sup>v</sup> ca<sup>^</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> mui<sub>v</sub> ga<sup>v</sup> hpu te<sup>v</sup> she<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> mui<sub>v</sub> leh G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta hka<sup>v</sup> hpaw<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> sha<sup>v</sup> g'a yo<sub>v</sub> law, k'aw<sub>^</sub> sha<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> go<sup>v</sup> leh, ha, hk'a<sup>^</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce<sub>v</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub>, chi ceu<sub>v</sub> k'aw<sup>v</sup> ceu<sub>v</sub> u<sup>~</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> ka<sub>v</sub> naw<sub>v</sub> le<sub>^</sub> g'a sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta daw<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, G'ui<sub>v</sub> fu\_\_ ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta shehn<sup>~</sup> ka sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>.

## TEXT ONE — WORKING TRANSLATION

### VERSE 1.

1. *ha*, an exclamation with which prayers usually begin and which may be used after each major pause in the recital
2. *chi*: this
3. *hk'aw*: year
4. *na-pu*: eternal(?). Some informants say that *na-pu* is the name of the sacred moon tree. According to some, Lahu see the lunar shadows to form the shape of a tree. There is a myth to the effect that if humans could only touch this tree they would achieve immortality. The elder who gave me this text said that *na-pu* here is used simply for sound effect (*na sha-ve*: "good to hear").

5. *hk'aw suh* : new year (*aw-suh* : nêw)
6. *ha suh* : new moon
7. *te nyi* : one day
8. *hk'aw tan* : year begin
9. *ha tan* : month begin
10. *te nyi* : one day
11. *yo law*, no meaning, used for sound effect only (*na sha ve* : "good to listen to/hear"); *yo* by itself means "yes"
12. *ha* (see above, 1)
13. *ca-li* : blacksmith
14. *ca-ma*, no meaning by itself; rhymes with *ca-li* to form couplet
15. *la meu* : own hands (*la* : hand). 13-15 literally translated means no more than "the blacksmith's own hands". In Lahu prayer language, however, this is a poetic manner of referring to the farming implements, which are made by the village blacksmith.
16. *hk'a-ma* : village
17. *aw* : four
18. *ce* : corner. 16-18 means "in the village"; literally, "within the four corners of the village".
19. *chi hta* : in this
20. *mo-la mo-sha*, rhyming couplet meaning "community"
21. *chi ma ve* : all these
22. *yo law* (see above, 11)
23. *ha* (see above, 1)
24. *ca-li ca-ma la meu* : blacksmith's own hands (see above, 13-15)
25. *hta-haw* : under
26. *yo law k'o k'o*, no meaning, sound effect only; used alone, *yo* means "yes" and *k'o* means "if".
27. *chi hk'aw hk'aw tan ha tan te nyi ve* : this year, year begin, month begin, one day
28. *aw-hpfuh* : glutinous rice cakes
29. *k'aw* : one again
30. *te* : make
31. *leh* : and
32. *G'ui-fu* (proper name) : the supernatural intermediary between the villagers and their supreme supernatural, *G'ui-sha*; *G'ui-fu* is also the protector of the village, the people and their livestock.

33. *ta-ti*: all-true
34. *ta-shehn*: all-precious (*shehn* from Shan "jewel")
35. *hpaw meu*: side
36. *k'aw ta g'a*: once again put
37. *yo law k'o k'o* (see above, 26)

## VERSE 2

38. *G'ui-fu ta-ti*: G'ui-fu, the all-true
39. *ta-daw*: all-wise (from *daw-ve*: to think)
40. *pfuh*: to carry on the back
41. *sheh-hpa*: master, expert. 38-41 literally means "G'ui-fu, the master who carries on his back all truth and wisdom".
42. *chi hk'aw*: this year
43. *na-pu*: eternal(?) (see above, 4)
44. *hk'aw meu ha meu*: year point, month point. A couplet meaning the point at which the old year meets the new.
45. *te nyi*: one day
46. *ha* (see above, 1)
47. *na-pu*: eternal(?) (see above, 4)
48. *hk'aw ya, ha ya*: year people, month people. A couplet referring to the villagers who are celebrating the new year together.
49. *chi ma ve*: all these
50. *yo law k'o k'o* (see above, 26)
51. *chi hk'aw na-pu hk'aw suh ha suh te nyi*: this year, eternal, new year, new month, one day; i.e. "this eternal day of the new year, new month".
52. *yo law* (see above, 11)
53. *hk'a-ma aw ce*: village four corners (see above, 16-18)
54. *la-sha*: right hand
55. *mo-la*: group. 54-55 means "group of the right hand side", a poetic reference to the menfolk of the village. The women are sometimes called "the left hand group", and the full rhyming couplet (which is not given in this text) is *la-sha mo-la la-meh mo-hin* (*la-meh*: left hand, *mo-hin*: group).
56. *chi ma ve*: all these
57. *ha* (see above, 1)

58. *sho* : iron
59. *meu* : point
60. *kui meu* : copper point. 58-60 : “iron points, copper points”, a couplet which refers to the farming implements.
61. *fui g'a* : separating
62. *sheh-hpa* : master, expert. 58-62 means “you who can separate the villagers from the cuts of the farming implements,” i.e. G'ui-fu (see above, 32).
63. *sho ba kui ba* (cf. 58-60) : iron pieces(?), copper pieces(?). I am uncertain of the literal meaning of *ba*. The couplet refers, once again, to the farming implements.
64. *fui g'a sheh-hpa* : separating master (see above, 61-2)
65. *G'ui-fu ta-ti ta-daw pfuh sheh-hpa* : G'ui-fu, the all-true, all-wise (see above, 32, 38-41)
66. *G'ui-futa-ti ta-shehn pfuh sheh-hpa* : G'ui-fu, the all-true, all-precious
67. *naw* : your
68. *hk'a-ma aw ce* : village four corners (see above, 16-18)
69. *hk'a* : village
70. *teh* : to put/to place
71. *hk'a g'aw* : village, to count
72. *meu-hta-haw* : on
73. *ha* (see above, 1)
74. *hk'a teh hk'a g'aw meu-hta* (see above, 69-72, and below, 85)
75. *k'aw* : once again
76. *ceu* : look upon(?). In everyday speech *nyi-ve* means “to look upon”, but informants said *ceu-ve* in poetic language has this meaning.
77. *k'aw caw* : once again walk around
78. *leh* : and
79. *naw* : you
80. *chi ceu* : ten kinds
81. *k'aw ceu* : nine kinds
82. *u-hta* : from
83. *k'aw g'aw* : again count
84. *leh* : and
85. *pon pi* : let pass. 67-85 means “once again place [your blessings] and count [i.e. take note of the people] in your village, once again walk around [your village] and once again count [i.e. take note of] and let pass the ten kinds, nine kinds [i.e. all kinds of misfortune].”

## VERSE 3

86. *hk'a g'a chi g'a* (couplet) : every person (*g'a* : person)
87. *chi hk'aw* : this year
88. *na-pu* : eternal(?) (see above, 4)
89. *hk'aw suh ha suh* : new year, new month
90. *te nyi* : one day
91. *ha* (see above, 1)
92. *G'ui-fu ta-ti ta-shehn pfuh sheh-hpa* : G'ui-fu, the all-true, all-precious (see above, 32-34)
93. *G'ui-fu ta-ti* : G'ui-fu the all-true
94. *ta-hka* : all-precious (*hka* from Shan "gold")
95. *pfuh sheh-hpa* : carrying-on-the-back master (see above, 40-41)
96. *k'aw* : once again
97. *hk'a* : crying out [to you] beseechingly
98. *k'aw ca* : once again seeking [you]
99. *leh* : and
100. *naw* : you
101. *haw* : under
102. *k'aw ta g'a* : again putting [my prayer]
103. *meh*, indicates end of sentence

## VERSE 4

104. *chaw-ya* : people
105. *chi ve* : these
106. *ha* (see above, 1)
107. *na-pu* : eternal(?) (see above, 4)
108. *hk'aw ya ha ya* : year people, month people (see above, 48)
109. *chi ve* : these
110. *yo law* (see above, 11)
111. *hk'aw sheh ha sheh-hpa* : master of the year, master of the month (*ha* : moon, month; *-hpa* is understood in *hk'aw sheh[-hpa]*).  
Reference to the Guardian supernatural of the year.
112. *te nyi* : one day
113. *sheh yan* : three times
114. *k'aw ceu* : once again look upon(?) (see above, 76)



115. *ha* (see above, 1)  
 116. *hk'aw ya ha ya* : people of the year, people of the month  
 117. *chi ma* : these all  
 118. *yo law k'o k'o* (see above, 26)  
 119. *chi hk'aw* : this year  
 120. *na-pu* : eternal(?) (see above, 4)  
 121. *hk'aw suh ha suh ta te nyi* : new year, new month, beginning one day  
 122. *yo law k'o k'o* : (see above, 26)  
 123. *ha* (see above, 1)  
 124. *hk'aw ceh ha ceh* : year tree, moon tree. Reference to the New Year tree erected in the centre of the village (cf. Walker 1970a: 12-13) and considered a symbolic representation of the tree of immortality on the moon (see above, 4).  
 125. *fui sheh-hpa* : dividing master. 124-25 refers to the Guardian of the year, who "divides" (determines) the time when the New Year tree should be erected in the village.  
 126. *te nyi* : one day  
 127. *sheh yan* : three times  
 128. *k'aw ceu* : once again look upon(?) (see above, 76)  
 129. *te ha* : one night  
 130. *sheh yan* : three times  
 131. *k'aw ceu* : once again look upon(?)  
 132. *leh* : and  
 133. *ka haw* : here under

## VERSE 5

134. *ha* (see above, 1)  
 135. *hk'a-ma aw ce meu-hta* : within the four corners of the village  
 136. *hk'a teh hk'a g'aw meu-hta-haw* : put [blessings] on the village, count [i.e. take note of the people in] the village (see above, 85).  
 137. *k'aw ceu* : again look upon(?) (see above, 76)  
 138. *leh k'aw taw* : and again shield  
 139. *leh* : and  
 140. *hk'a g'a chi g'a* (couplet) : every person  
 141. *g'o taw g'o g'a* (couplet) : every household  
 142. *ui ka* : big

143. *i ka*: small  
 144. *chi ma ve*: these all  
 145. *yo law* (see above, 11)

## VERSE 6

146. *ha* (see above, 1)  
 147. *daw*: thoughts  
 148. *hpu*: white, pure  
 149. *te ca*: one rope. 147-49 means "bound together as with a rope by the same pure thoughts/intentions"  
 150. *k'aw mui*: once again work  
 151. *ga hpu*: white/pure thoughts (*daw hpu ga hpu* is a couplet)  
 152. *te she*: one rope (*she* is N. Thai/Shan?)  
 153. *k'aw mui leh*: again work and  
 154. *G'ui-fu ta-ti ta-hka hpaw meu*: G'ui-fu, all-true, all-precious, side  
 155. *k'aw sha g'a*: once again pray  
 156. *yo law* (see above, 11)  
 157. *k'aw sha*: once again pray  
 158. *k'aw go*: once again stretch out the hands (the common Lahu attitude of prayer, with right arm extended and hand holding beeswax candles)  
 159. *leh*: and  
 160. *ha* (see above, 1)  
 161. *hk'a-ma aw ce meu-hta*: within the four corners of the village  
 162. *chi ceu*: ten kinds [of misfortune]  
 163. *k'aw ceu*: nine kinds [of misfortune]  
 164. *u-hta*: from  
 165. *ka*: also  
 166. *naw*: you  
 167. *le*: lift up/take off  
 168. *g'a*: able  
 169. *sheh-hpa*: master/expert. 166-9: "you master who are able to take away misfortune".  
 170. *G'ui-fu ta-ti ta-daw pfuh sheh-hpa*: G'ui-fu, all-true, all-wise, carrying on the back, master (see above, 41)  
 171. *G'ui-fu ta-ti ta-shehn*: G'ui-fu, all-true, all-precious  
 172. *ka sheh-hpa*: holding in the hand, master/expert; i.e. "master who holds in his hands all truth, all preciousness".

## TEXT ONE -- FORMAL TRANSLATION

1. Ha, this year, this day of the new year, this day of the new month, this day on which the year begins, this day on which the month begins, the whole community within the four corners of the village --on this day on which the year begins, the month begins--once again make glutinous rice cakes from the rice cultivated with implements fashioned by the village blacksmith's own hands; ha, once again we make glutinous rice cakes and put them to the side of the all-true, all-precious G'ui, fu\_.
2. G'ui, fu\_ the all-true, all-wise, at this day of division between the years and the months, you who protect all the people of the year, all the people of the month,<sup>(a)</sup> on this day of the new year, day of the new month; you who protect all the people of the right hand<sup>(b)</sup> within the four corners of the village from the sharp points of iron and copper, from sharp pieces of iron and copper;<sup>(c)</sup> G'ui, fu\_ the all-true, all-wise, G'ui, fu\_ the all-true, all-precious, once again put [blessings] upon the four corners of your village, once again look on and once again walk around [your village] and once again take note of and let pass the ten kinds, the nine kinds [of misfortune].<sup>(d)</sup>
3. Every person this year, on this day of the new year, day of the new month cries out beseechingly to you, once again looks for you and once again puts his prayers under you, G'ui, fu\_ the all-true, all-precious, G'ui, fu\_ the all-true, all-precious.
4. You who are Lord of the year, Lord of the month,<sup>(e)</sup> three times in one day once again look upon these people of the year, people of the month; oh you who decide upon the time for the year tree, the moon tree,<sup>(f)</sup> on this day of the new year, day of the new month, three

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a) i.e. "all the villagers".

b) i.e. "all the menfolk".

c) i.e. "from the cuts and bruises of the farming implements".

d) i.e. "all kinds of misfortune".

e) This refers not to G'ui, fu\_ but to the *hk'aw sheh-hpa'*, the Guardian of the new year.

f) i.e. the "New Year tree", *hk'aw ceh* (see Walker 1970a: 12-23 and Pl. 1).

times in one day once again look upon these people of the year, people of the month, three times in one night once again look upon them.

5. Ha, within the four corners of the village put [blessings] on the village, take note of [the people of] the village, once again look upon them, once again shield them, every person, every household, the big and the small, all of them.
6. Ha, joined together by the same pure intention, we once again pray to the side of G'ui, fu\_\_ the all-true, all-precious; we once again stretch out our hands,<sup>(g)</sup> you who can remove from the four corners of the village the ten kinds, the nine kinds [of misfortune], G'ui, fu\_\_ the all-true, all-wise, G'ui, fu\_\_ the all-true, all-precious.

## TEXT TWO

[Prayer recited by a household head at his Rice Cake Altar (*aw\_hpfuh hti\_\_*) within his house (cf. Walker 1970a: 9-11 and Pl. 4).]

1. O<sup>-</sup> O<sup>-</sup> nga, te<sup>v</sup> yeh te k'a yo, law k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, chi hk'aw<sub>^</sub> na\_\_ pu\_\_ hk'aw<sub>^</sub> meu<sup>v</sup> chi hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub>, hk'aw<sub>^</sub> ca<sup>v</sup> ha ca<sup>v</sup> ve yo, law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, a<sup>-</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> yeh, te<sup>v</sup> k'a ve yo, law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, a<sup>-</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> yeh, te<sup>v</sup> k'a ve g'a<sup>^</sup> ka<sub>^</sub>, ce<sup>v</sup> ka, ca, ka, chi ma ve yo, law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ma<sup>v</sup> daw<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ ga<sup>v</sup> hki<sup>-</sup>.
2. Neh<sup>-</sup>hk'aw<sub>^</sub> ti\_\_ g'a ve yo, law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, na, beu, suh\_\_ chi suh\_\_ yan\_\_ u<sup>-</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> po, leh sho tcuh<sup>-</sup> kui<sup>v</sup> tcuh<sup>-</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> po, leh shaw<sup>v</sup> ba<sup>v</sup> ma ba<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> po, leh hpe<sup>v</sup> haweh\_\_ hk'aw<sub>^</sub> na, ta<sup>v</sup> hki<sup>-</sup>, hpe<sup>v</sup> la sha hpa<sub>^</sub> la, hta<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> po, leh ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ ga<sup>v</sup> hki<sup>-</sup> leh mo<sup>v</sup> law k'ao, ma\_\_ ha<sup>-</sup> sha<sup>-</sup> hti<sup>-</sup> k'ao, li<sup>v</sup> ve hta<sub>^</sub>, te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa\_\_ k'aw<sub>^</sub> go<sup>v</sup> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>.
3. A pa Sha<sup>-</sup> ca<sup>^</sup>, a e Na<sup>v</sup> bo na<sup>v</sup> ca<sup>-</sup> yo, law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ho<sup>-</sup> ti<sub>^</sub> ta ti<sub>^</sub> pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ hpa<sup>v</sup>, a<sup>-</sup>, nga, co ti<sub>^</sub> co sheh<sup>-</sup> a<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> leh nga, ho<sup>-</sup> ti<sub>^</sub> ta ti<sub>^</sub> a<sup>v</sup> pfuh<sup>v</sup> leh a e Na<sup>v</sup> bo na<sup>v</sup> ca<sup>-</sup> ho<sup>-</sup> ti<sub>^</sub> ta ti<sub>^</sub>

g) The Lahu Nyi act of prayer often involves stretching out the right arm, holding lighted beeswax candles in the right hand.

pfuh<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ ma, a pa Sha\_\_ ca^ cao<sub>v</sub> caw<sub>v</sub> hka<sup>v</sup>, a pa g'ui<sub>v</sub> ma a daw<sup>v</sup> pa\_\_, a daw<sup>v</sup> ma chi ma ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ce leh te<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ce\_\_ leh hk'o<sup>v</sup> haw\_\_ yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, ce<sup>v</sup> va\_\_ ce<sup>v</sup> sheh\_\_ u\_\_ hta<sub>^</sub> caw<sub>v</sub> g'a leh hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, chaw va\_\_ chaw sheh\_\_ u\_\_ hta<sub>^</sub> caw<sub>v</sub> g'a leh a\_\_ yu<sub>^</sub> ha\_\_ pa<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ hpa<sub>^</sub> sha\_\_ hpaw<sup>v</sup> meu<sup>v</sup> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, u\_\_ hpu u\_\_ shi kao<sub>v</sub> ca\_\_ lao ca\_\_ li<sup>v</sup> ca\_\_, she\_\_ le\_\_ sha ta<sup>v</sup> ho<sup>v</sup> ho<sup>v</sup> caw<sup>v</sup> caw<sup>v</sup> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, chi bon k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa^ leh keu la<sup>v</sup> ce<sup>v</sup>, chi bon k'aw<sub>^</sub> ji<sup>v</sup> leh keu la<sup>v</sup> ce<sup>v</sup>.

4. Te<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ ga<sup>v</sup> hki\_\_, ya<sup>v</sup> hu g'a<sup>v</sup> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ ga<sup>v</sup> hki\_\_ leh te<sup>v</sup> yeh<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> k'a daw<sup>v</sup> hpu te<sup>v</sup> ca^ mui<sub>v</sub> leh ga<sup>v</sup> hpu te<sup>v</sup> ca^ mui<sub>v</sub> leh a\_\_, te<sup>v</sup> nyi mui<sub>v</sub> g'a ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, hpu po k'aw<sup>v</sup> po g'a ve, veu<sub>^</sub> hpu k'aw<sup>v</sup> law<sub>v</sub> g'a ve, ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ ga<sup>v</sup> hki\_\_ leh a vi\_\_ cao\_\_ caw<sub>^</sub> hk'a<sup>v</sup>, mi<sub>v</sub> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce\_\_ hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub>, a\_\_, hku\_\_ chi hku\_\_ ya<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve k'a, k'aw<sub>^</sub> hpa\_\_ k'aw<sub>^</sub> go<sup>v</sup> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>.
5. Chaw ca\_\_ chaw law<sup>v</sup> a<sup>v</sup> g'a, ne<sup>v</sup> ca\_\_ ne<sup>v</sup> law<sup>v</sup> a<sup>v</sup> g'a ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, mi<sub>v</sub> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce\_\_ hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub>, mvuh<sup>v</sup> ma aw<sup>v</sup> ce\_\_ hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, ka<sup>v</sup> shaw\_\_ k'aw<sup>v</sup> pa<sup>v</sup> ve, la shaw\_\_ k'aw<sup>v</sup> pa<sup>v</sup> ve k'a<sub>v</sub>, k'aw<sup>v</sup> chi k'aw<sup>v</sup> a daw<sup>v</sup> ve k'a<sub>v</sub>, k'aw<sup>v</sup> pa k'aw<sub>^</sub> g'o<sup>v</sup> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>.
6. Te<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup>, te nyi sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup> chaw ca\_\_ chaw law<sup>v</sup> a<sup>v</sup> tcuh<sup>^</sup>, ne<sup>v</sup> ca\_\_ ne<sup>v</sup> law<sup>v</sup> a<sup>v</sup> tcuh<sup>^</sup>, k'ao\_\_ ca\_\_ lao ca\_\_ ve, ca<sup>v</sup> leh a<sup>v</sup> peu<sub>^</sub>, veu<sub>^</sub> leh a<sup>v</sup> yaw ve, chi bon ji<sup>v</sup> leh k'a la<sup>v</sup>.
7. Ya<sub>^</sub> nyi tan\_\_ o<sup>v</sup> k'ai ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, neh chi neh ya<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve k'a<sub>^</sub>, hpa<sub>^</sub> k'o<sup>v</sup> hpa<sub>^</sub> va<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve k'a<sub>v</sub>, k'aw<sub>^</sub> ce\_\_ k'aw<sub>^</sub> taw<sup>v</sup> leh ha<sub>^</sub> sha\_\_ leh lo\_\_ la<sup>v</sup>.
8. Te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup>, te<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ sheh^ yan<sup>v</sup> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, a\_\_, mi<sub>v</sub> ma hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o^ k'o, ta\_\_ nu<sub>^</sub> ta\_\_ han\_\_ chi ma ve k'a<sub>v</sub>, g'a ce\_\_ g'a taw<sup>v</sup> leh u\_\_ hpu hpa<sub>^</sub> k'o<sup>v</sup> hpa<sub>^</sub> va<sup>v</sup> chi ma ve k'a<sub>^</sub>, g'a ce\_\_ g'a taw<sup>v</sup> leh ma<sup>v</sup> ha\_\_ bon ma<sup>v</sup> g'aw<sup>v</sup> bon, chi bon hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa^ leh keu la<sup>v</sup> ce<sup>v</sup>.

9. O<sup>-</sup> O<sup>-</sup> ya<sub>^</sub> nyi tan<sub>-</sub> o<sup>v</sup> k'ai ve k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o-eh<sub>,</sub> ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha<sub>-</sub> ga<sup>v</sup>  
hki<sup>-</sup> leh chi bon k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa<sup>^</sup> leh keu la<sup>v</sup> meh<sub>-</sub>.
10. A pa Sha<sup>-</sup> ca<sup>^</sup> yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, a e Na<sup>v</sup> bo na<sup>v</sup> ca<sup>-</sup> k'a<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup>  
ha<sup>-</sup> sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> hk'o<sup>v</sup> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa<sub>-</sub> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>, a pa Sha<sup>-</sup> ca<sup>^</sup>  
k'a<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> nyi sheh<sup>^</sup> yan<sup>v</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> hpa<sub>-</sub> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>, ma<sup>v</sup> g'a daw<sup>v</sup> ha<sub>-</sub>  
ga<sup>v</sup> hki<sup>-</sup> ve, o<sup>-</sup>, o<sup>-</sup>, ya<sub>^</sub> nyi tan<sub>-</sub> o<sup>v</sup> k'ai ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o,  
chey<sup>v</sup> sha caw<sub>v</sub> sha bon ti<sup>-</sup> k'aw<sub>^</sub> pa<sub>-</sub> leh keu la<sup>v</sup>.

## TEXT TWO — WORKING TRANSLATION

[Roman numeral I refers reader back to Text One, Working Translation.]

### VERSE 1.

1. *O, o*, an exclamation beginning prayer
2. *nga*: my
3. *te yeh*: one house
4. *te k'a*, no meaning by itself; forms couplet with *te yeh* to mean "one household"
5. *yo law k'o k'o* (see I/26)
6. *chi hk'aw*: this year
7. *na-pu*: eternal(?) (see I/4)
8. *hk'aw meu*: year point (see I/44)
9. *chi*: this
10. *hk'o-hta*: on. In the poetic language of prayer, *hk'o-hta* seems to be a morpheme of quite general locative meaning; Noun + *hk'o-hta*: in/at/around/up to/on/away from the noun (personal communication, J.A. Matisoff).
11. *hk'aw*: year
12. *ca*: celebrate
13. *ha ca-ve*: month, celebrate
14. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
15. *a*, exclamation at beginning of new clause
16. *te yeh te k'a ve* (couplet): one household
17. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
18. *a* (see above, 15)
19. *te yeh te k'a ve*: one household

20. *g'a*: chicken
21. *ka*: also
22. *ce ka ca ka* (couplet): animals
23. *chi ma ve*: all these
24. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
25. *ma daw ha ga hki* (couplet): no troubled/distressing thoughts. Literally, "no difficult thoughts" (*daw-ve*: to think; *ma*, negative; *ha*: difficult); *ga hki* is the second part of the couplet and has no meaning by itself.

## VERSE 2.

26. *neh hk'aw*: next year
27. *ti*: only
28. *g'a-ve*: to reach. 26-28 means "until next year".
29. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
30. *na-beu*: sickness
31. *suh-chi suh*: seventy-seven
32. *yan*, literally "times", here means "kinds"
33. *u-hta*: from
34. *po*: let pass; i.e. "protect us from"
35. *leh*: and
36. *sho*: iron
37. *tcuh*, literally "joint", as in *va<sup>v</sup> tcuh-*: joint of a bamboo.
38. *kui tcuh*: copper joints. 36-38 is a poetic couplet meaning the knives and axes used in farming.
39. *hk'o-hta*: from
40. *po leh* (see above, 34-35)
41. *shaw ba ma ba* (couplet): pieces of wood (*shaw*, *na*: wood; cf. I/63)
42. *hk'o-hta*: from
43. *k'aw po*: once again let pass, protect
44. *leh*: and
45. *hpe*: to tie
46. *haweh* (?)
47. *hk'aw na*: year sickness
48. *ta*: all kinds of (from Shan)

49. *hki* (?). 45-49 means "tied up by all kinds of sicknesses throughout the year"
50. *hpe-la sha-hpa* (couplet): sickness(?) (cf. *hpe' lai\_ve*: to decay)
51. *la-hta* (?) (probably only sound effect)
52. *hk'o-hta*: from
53. *k'aw po*: again protect
54. *leh*: and
55. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki*: no troubled or depressing thoughts (see above, 25)
56. *leh*: and
57. *mo-law*: down there, i.e. "in the lowlands"
58. *kao*, from *aw-hkao*: the first
59. *ma-ha*: great (from Burmese <Pali <Sanskrit)
60. *sha-hti*: to be very rich; rich man (<Burmese <Pali <Sanskrit)
61. *k'ao* (?)
62. *li ve*, from *aw-li*: custom
63. *hta*, accusative particle. 57-63 means "may we enjoy great wealth like the rich people who live down there in the valley towns".
64. *te nyi sheh yan*: one day three times
65. *hk'o-hta*: in/on (see above, 10). 64-5: three times in each day.
66. *k'aw pa*: once again order
67. *k'aw go*: once again stretch out [your hands in order to put this blessing upon us]
68. *leh*: and
69. *keu la*: put on [us], bestow. 64-9 means "three times in one day, once again order, stretch out and give, and bestow this blessing upon us".

## VERSE 3.

70. *a-pa*: father
71. *Sha-ca* (proper name), an important Lahu culture hero. However, informants said that the reference here is to G'ui-sha, the supreme Lahu divinity.
72. *a-e*: mother
73. *Na-bona-ca* (couplet): Na-bo-ma, a female divinity, giver of fertility
74. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)



75. *ho-ti*: all-knowing (*ho* from Shan "to know")
76. *ta-ti*: all-true
77. *pfuh sheh-hpa*: carry-on-the-back master (see I/41)
78. *a*, exclamation
79. *nga*: my
80. *co ti co shehn* (couplet): precious life (*shehn* from Shan "jewel")
81. *a pfuh*: do not carry on the back. 80-81 means "my life, unlike yours, is not precious".
82. *leh*: and
83. *nga*: I
84. *ho-ti*: all wisdom, all-knowing
85. *ta-ti*: all-true
86. *a pfuh*: do not carry on the back. 83-6 means "I, unlike you, am not all-wise, all-true".
87. *leh*: and
88. *a-e Na-bo na-ca*: Mother Na-bo-ma
89. *ho-ti ta-ti pfuh sheh-ma*: all-wise, all-true person (female)
90. *a-pa Sha-ca*: Father Sha-ca
91. *cao*, Shan title for prince
92. *caw-hka*, Shan for "goldsmith", here a poetic reference to the divine prototype blacksmith. The usual word in Lahu for blacksmith is *ca-li*.
93. *a-pa*: father
94. *g'ui-ma*: divine, partaker in the divinity of G'ui-sha, the supreme Lahu supernatural
95. *a-daw-pa*: headman; literally "he who thinks" (*daw-ve*: to think). 94-5 means "the divine prototype headman."
96. *a-daw-ma*: headman's wife; i.e. divine headman's wife
97. *chi ma ve*: all these
98. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
99. *te nyi sheh yan*: one day three times
100. *hk'o-hta*: on/in
101. *k'aw ce*: once again help
102. *leh*: and
103. *te ha sheh yan*: one night three times
104. *hk'o-hta k'aw ce leh*: on/in, once again help and

105. *hk'o haw* : underneath; i.e. underneath the house
106. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
107. *ce va ce sheh* (couplet) : many animals (*sheh* from Shan "100,000")
108. *u-hta*, accusative particle, indicates preceding noun is object of sentence
109. *caw g'a* : may have
110. *leh* : and
111. *hk'o-hta* : in; i.e. in the house
112. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
113. *chaw va chaw sheh* (couplet) : many people (cf. 107 above)
114. *u-hta* (see above, 108)
115. *caw g'a* : may have
116. *leh* : and
117. *a-yu* : life
118. *ha* : five
119. *pa*, traditional unit of money (one *pa* = 80 rupees)
120. *ha* : five
121. *hpa-sha* (?). 117-121 means "very long life".
122. *hpaw meu ve* : side
123. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
124. *u hpu* : white heads (*u* : head)
125. *u shi* : yellow heads. 120-121 means "the white-headed elders and the yellow-headed youngsters"
126. *kao ca lao ca li ca* (meaning of individual words uncertain); a poetic way of saying "to talk about/discuss/comment upon".
127. *she-le* : dignity, style, respect (opposite of "shame")
128. *sha-ta* : money (corruption of Thai *satang*)
129. *ho-ho caw caw ve* : Oh ho, have have! 124-9 means "let the elders and young people of the village talk, of our fine style and say of us, 'Oh ho, they have plenty of money!'"
130. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
131. *chi bon* : this blessing (*aw-bon* : blessing)
132. *k'aw pa* : once again order
133. *leh* : and
134. *keu la* : put/bestow
135. *ce*, indicates speaker is making request on behalf of others

136. *chi bon k'aw ji*: with this blessing once again enwrap (*ji-ve*) us  
 137. *keu la*: bestow  
 138. *ce* (see above, 135)

## VERSE 4.

139. *te ha sheh yan, te nyi sheh yan yo law le k'o k'o*: three times in one night, three times in one day  
 140. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki*: no troubled/depressing thoughts (see above, 25)  
 141. *ya-hu*: pregnant  
 142. *g'a*: get, reach  
 143. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 144. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki*: no troubled/depressing thoughts (see above, 25)  
 145. *leh*: and  
 146. *te yeh te k'a* (couplet): one household (see above, 3-4)  
 147. *daw hpu te ca*: bound together as with a rope by the same pure intentions (see I/149)  
 148. *mui*: work in the fields  
 149. *leh*: and  
 150. *ga hpu te ca mui leh*, same meaning as 147-9; *daw-ve ga-ve* (couplet): to think  
 151. *a*, exclamation  
 152. *te nyi mui g'a ve*: one day working in the fields  
 153. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 154. *hpu*: money; literally, "silver"  
 155. *po*: box  
 156. *k'aw po*: nine boxes. 154-56: "much money"  
 157. *g'a-ve*: get/obtain  
 158. *veu*: clothes  
 159. *hpu*: white (*hpu*: white/silver/money)  
 160. *k'aw law*: nine barns. 158-60: "many white clothes"  
 161. *g'a-ve*: get/obtain  
 162. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki*: no troubled/depressing thoughts (see above, 25)  
 163. *leh*: and  
 164. *a-vi*: elder brother

165. *cao caw-hk'a* : prince goldsmith (see above, 91-92)  
 166. *mi-ma* : earth  
 167. *aw ce* : four corners  
 168. *hk'o-hta* : within  
 169. *a*, exclamation  
 170. *hku* : "sir", from Shan and Thai title *khun*  
 171. *chi* : this  
 172. *hku ya* : people of the *khun*  
 173. *chi ma ve* : all these. 170-73 : "this headman and all his people"  
 174. *k'a* : also  
 175. *k'aw* : once again  
 176. *hpa* : create  
 177. *k'aw go* : once again stretch out the hand  
 178. *leh keu la* : and bestow [this blessing]

## VERSE 5.

179. *chaw* : people  
 180. *ca* (?)  
 181. *chaw* : people  
 182. *law* (?)  
 183. *a g'a* : not reach, not able. 179-83 is a poetic manner of saying "let us/them not be killed by men".  
 184. *ne ca ne law a g'a ve* : let us not be killed by spirits (*ne* : spirit)  
 185. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 186. *mi-ma aw ce hk'o-hta* : within the four corners of the earth (see above, 166-68)  
 187. *mvuh-ma* : heaven (short form of *mvuh-naw-ma*)  
 188. *aw ce hk'o-hta* : four corners within  
 189. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 190. *ka-shaw* : a Lahu villager possessing oracular powers  
 191. *k'aw pa ve* : nine *pa* (one *pa*=80 rupees); poetic manner of saying "all *ka-shaw* everywhere"  
 192. *la-shaw* : a ritual official associated with the cult of G'ui-sha, the supreme Lahu supernatural  
 193. *k'aw pa ve* (see above, 191)

194. *k'a* : also  
 195. *k'aw-chi k'aw* : ninety-nine  
 196. *a-daw* : headman. 195-96 : "all headmen"  
 197. *ve k'a* : also  
 198. *k'aw pa* : once again order  
 199. *k'aw go* : once again stretch out the hands  
 200. *leh keu la* : and bestow

## VERSE 6.

201. *te ha sheh yan, te nyi sheh yan* : one night three times, one day three times  
 202. *chaw ca chaw law a tcuh* : may we not be killed by people (cf. above, 179-83); *tcuh-ve* : to pluck out (?), therefore *a tcuh* : not to pluck out (?)  
 203. *ne ca ne law a tcuh* : may we not be killed by spirits (*ne*)  
 204. *k'ao ca lao ca ve* : may everyone talk of our good fortune (see above, 126)  
 205. *ca* : eat  
 206. *leh* : and  
 207. *a peu* : not finish  
 208. *veu* : dress  
 209. *leh* : and  
 210. *a yaw-ve* : not be depleted  
 211. *chi bon* : this blessing  
 212. *ji* : cover, i.e. cover us with  
 213. *leh k'a la* : and give to us (?)

## VERSE 7.

214. *ya nyi tan o k'ai-ve* : today and hereafter  
 215. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 216. *neh chi* : women these  
 217. *neh ya* : women's children  
 218. *chi ma ve k'a* : all these also  
 219. *hpa k'o hpa va* (couplet) : Buddhist monk (*hpa* from Shan)

220. *chi ma ve k'a* : all these also  
 221. *k'aw ce* : once again help  
 222. *k'aw taw* : once again count, i.e. take note of  
 223. *leh* : and  
 224. *ha-sha* : take care of [us]  
 225. *leh lo la* : and look after [us] (*lo-ve* : to look after, cover)

## VERSE 8.

226. *te nyi sheh yan, te ha sheh yan* : three times in one day, three times in one night  
 227. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 228. *a*, exclamation  
 229. *mi-ma* : earth  
 230. *hk'o-hta* : on  
 231. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)  
 232. *ta-nu* : policeman (from Thai)  
 233. *ta-han* : soldier (from Thai)  
 234. *chi ma ve k'a* : these all also  
 235. *g'a ce* : help  
 236. *g'a taw* : count (see above, 222)  
 237. *leh* : and  
 238. *u hpu* : white headed [elders]  
 239. *hpa k'o hpa va* : Buddhist monks (see above, 219)  
 240. *chi ma ve k'a* : these all also  
 241. *g'a ce g'a taw leh* : help count and  
 242. *ma ha* : no hardship  
 243. *bon* : blessing (from *aw-bon*)  
 244. *ma g'aw bon*, second part of couplet *ma ha bon, ma g'aw bon*  
 245. *chi bon* : this blessing  
 246. *hk'o-hta* : on (?) (see above, 10)  
 247. *k'aw pa* : once again order  
 248. *leh keu la* : once again bestow  
 249. *ce*, indicates that request is being made on somebody else's behalf

## VERSE 9.

250. *O, O*, exclamations (end of prayer drawing near!)
251. *ya nyi tan o k'ai-ve* : today and hereafter
252. *k'o k'o-eh*, used only for sound effect, variation on *yo law le k'o k'o*
253. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki* : no troubled/distressing thoughts (see above, 25)
254. *leh* : and
255. *chi bon* : this blessing
256. *k'aw pa* : once again order
257. *leh keu la* : and bestow
258. *meh*, indicates end of sentence

## VERSE 10.

259. *a-pa Sha-ca* : Father Sha-ca (see above, 70-71)
260. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
261. *a-e Na-bo na-ca* : Mother Na-bo-ma (see above, 72-3)
262. *k'a* : also
263. *te ha sheh yan hk'o-hta* : one day three times on
264. *k'aw pa* : once again order
265. *leh keu la* : and put upon [us this blessing]
266. *a-pa Sha ca* : Father Sha-ca (see above, 70-71)
267. *k'a* : also
268. *te nyi sheh yan* : one day three times
269. *k'aw hpa* : once again create
270. *leh keu la* : and put upon [us this blessing]
271. *ma g'a daw ha ga hki ve* : no troubled/distressing thoughts (see above, 25)
272. *O, O*, exclamations (prayer is almost finished!)
273. *ya nyi tan o k'ai-ve* : today and hereafter
274. *yo law le k'o k'o* (see I/26)
275. *cheh sha caw sha* : health and prosperity
276. *bon* : blessing
277. *ti* : only
278. *k'aw pa leh keu la* : once again order and bestow

## TEXT TWO — FORMAL TRANSLATION

1. Oh, at this completion of another year my whole household, yes, my whole household celebrates the new year, celebrates the new month; may the chickens, may all the animals of the household suffer from no distressing thoughts.<sup>(a)</sup>
2. Throughout the whole year protect us all from the seventy-seven different kinds of sickness,<sup>(b)</sup> protect us from the cuts of the knives and axes, once again protect us from sharp-pointed pieces of wood, once again protect us from being tied up with all kinds of sickness throughout the year, and let us not be troubled by depressing thoughts, rather let us enjoy great wealth like the people down there,<sup>(c)</sup> three times in one day once again order, once again stretch out your hand and once again bestow this blessing upon us.
3. Oh Father Sha-ca<sup>(d)</sup> and Mother Na-bo-ma,<sup>(e)</sup> you who are all-knowing, all-true, my life is not precious, I cannot know all, I cannot speak the truth; oh Mother Na-bo-ma, the all-knowing, all-true, Father Sha-ca, Lord Blacksmith, Father Heavenly Headman, Headman's Wife,<sup>(f)</sup> all of these, three times in one day, three times in one night<sup>(g)</sup> once again help us and give us many animals underneath the house<sup>(h)</sup> and many people inside the house and let

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a) A poetic way of saying "may the animals suffer no misfortune".

b) i.e. "all sickness"; informants say the number 77 has no particular symbolic significance.

c) "The people down there" refers to the lowland-dwelling Thai, recognized by the Lahu and other hill people as being generally rather better off financially than they are themselves.

d) Here, according to the elder who recorded this prayer for me, "Father Sha-ca" refers to the supreme Lahu divinity, G'ui-sha. Sha-ca is also the name of an important Lahu culture hero.

e) Na-bo-ma is a female divinity, associated with fertility.

f) These are the divine prototypes of the earthly blacksmith, the village headman and the village headman's wife.

g) i.e. "all the time".

h) Lahu Nyi houses are erected on stilts, and the animals—cows, buffaloes, horses, pigs, chickens and dogs—shelter under the house during the night and whenever it rains.



us all enjoy long lives; may the white-headed elders and the yellow-headed youngsters<sup>(i)</sup> talk of our fine style and say of us, “Oh ho, those people have plenty of money;” this blessing my household asks that you once again order upon us, with this blessing they ask that you once again enwrap us.

4. Three times in one night, three times in one day let us not be troubled by depressing thoughts, let the pregnant women deliver safely, let the whole household united by the same pure thoughts work together in the fields,<sup>(j)</sup> and from one day's labour in the fields may we obtain nine boxes of money<sup>(k)</sup> and white clothes<sup>(l)</sup> to fill nine rice barns, may we not be troubled by depressing thoughts; may all elder brother blacksmiths<sup>(m)</sup> within the four corners of this earth, may this headman [of our village] and all his people once again create for us [this blessing], once again stretch out their hands and once again bestow [this blessing] upon us.
5. May we not be killed by men nor by malicious spirits, may every *ka-shaw*,<sup>(n)</sup> every *la-shaw*<sup>(o)</sup> also within the four corners of the earth, within the four corners of the heaven, may the ninety-nine headmen<sup>(p)</sup> also, once again order upon us, once again stretch out their hands and once again bestow upon us this blessing.
6. Three times in one night, three times in one day grant that we may not be killed by men nor by malicious spirits, let everybody talk of our good fortune, may the food never finish, may the clothing never become depleted, with this blessing enwrap us.

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i) “Yellow-headed youngsters” is simply a euphonious couplet to “white-headed elders”. Lahu youth generally have jet-black hair.

j) i.e. “may there be no disputes within the household” (which would endanger the smooth functioning of this basic economic unit).

k) i.e. “a great deal of money”.

l) The adjective “white” is used poetically and does not indicate the colour of Lahu clothing.

m) “Elder brother” here indicates respect for the blacksmith, who is the most important artisan in the village because he makes the farming implements.

n) *Ka-shaw*, a Lahu villager possessing oracular powers.

o) *La-shaw*, a ritual official associated with the cult of the supreme Lahu supernatural, G'ui-sha (cf. Walker 1970 b: 191).

p) i.e. “all headmen”.

7. From today and hereafter, may all the women, all the children of women,<sup>(q)</sup> and all Buddhist monks also,<sup>(r)</sup> once again help us, once again take note of us, take care of us and look after us.
8. Three times in one day, three times in one night on this earth, may all policemen and all soldiers help us, take note of us, may all white-haired elders, and all Buddhist monks also, once again help us, once again take note of us; the blessing of no hardship, this blessing my household ask that you once again order and once again bestow upon them.
9. Oh from today and hereafter may we be troubled by no distressing thoughts, this blessing once again order and bestow upon us.
10. Father Sha-ca and Mother Na-bo-ma also, three times in one night once again order and once again bestow upon us this blessing that we may not be troubled by distressing thoughts, oh, from today and hereafter let us enjoy health and prosperity, this blessing alone order and bestow upon us.

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q) A couplet meaning "all people".

r) While Lahu prayers retain certain traditional themes, the precise wording of a prayer is not rigidly ordained. Each recitation may be different as the individual embroiders a theme to his liking. It is quite acceptable, therefore, that this household head calls also upon the powers that be outside his own community: Buddhist monks, the spiritual leaders of the Lahu's lowland neighbours, and soldiers and policemen, agents of lowland secular authority.