

FOLKTALES OF MIZORAM

Ngaiteii Translated by Rini Toehong

Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Ngaiteii. Ngaiteii no longer had a father - her father had drowned. One day, Ngaiteii and her grandmother went to the fields to look for yam and at the bottom of their field was a deep gorge. That was the same gorge where Ngaiteii's father had drowned, and everyone believed his spirit resided there. On the day they went to their field, Ngaiteii was constantly thirsty and her grandmother would go down to the gorge and fetch water for her. When Ngaiteii was thirsty once more, her grandmother said, "Ngaiteii, I'm so very tired now, you go down and fetch the water yourself. But when you go see the gorge, don't say anything', just you keep quiet." Ngaiteii said yes to her grandmother and went down to the gorge. As soon as she saw the deep black gorge, she forgot her grandmother's warning and exclaimed "oh how did the river turn black!" As soon as she opened her mouth, she fell into the gorge. Ngaiteii's grandmother, worried that she was so long in coming back, suspected that she must have fallen into the waters and set off to look for her. On her way, she met a deer couple and asked them if they had seen her. They replied: "Saw her, yes we did, Across the waters, across the Tiau, Ngaiteii's father has taken her." Ngaiteii's grandmother then believed that she had been taken by the spirit of her father. She then met a Varung couple and asked them whether they had seen her granddaughter. They too replied the way the deer had. She then saw Ngaiteii in the waters. She said, "Ngaite, I'm jumping in" and she did. Ngaiteii was very happy to see her grandmother. She then asked Ngaiteii, "Where then is the spirit of your father?" to which Ngaiteii replied, "Right now, he's gone to his field. He'll be back soon in the shape of a serpent." Ngaiteii's father did come back in the form of a serpent late in the evening and later transformed himself to human form. The grandmother said to him, "I am going to take Ngaiteii back with me." The father agreed but said, "You will have to bring her back to me very soon, though." Ngaiteii and her grandmother then set off very happily for home. They, however, could not fulfill the father's wish because Ngaiteii refused to go back to live with her father. The father, his wish not

being fulfilled, retaliated and flooded the nearby lands till Ngaiteii's village was almost drowned in the impact. The sound of the waves reiterated, "Ngai, Ngai, Ngai". This made the villagers understand the cause of the flood and they said, "Our village will be drowned because of Ngaiteii, what we should do?" Some of them suggested "Throw her puan into the waters". They did, and the flood subsided for a while. But the waters raged again in a little while and others suggested, "Throw her comb into the waters". They did and the waters again subsided for a while. They continued throwing Ngaiteii's possessions into the waters- her bracelet, her necklace, and all she possessed- but the flood refused to stop. In the end, the villagers decided, "If we do not throw Ngaiteii into the waters, the entire village will be drowned", and they had to throw Ngaiteii into the waters with deep regret. The water then stopped raging and slowly calmed till the flood was no more. But the villagers could not get over the loss of Ngaiteii and their song of mourning was

(you can add your own tune)

" Ngaite hip,
The eastern winds did rage against you,
The heavy rains did pour down on you,
Ngaite hip."

This song continues to be sung to this day, by children in their play.