

M306
Old Miao songs about marriage. 5

Song of collecting livestock from the bridegroom's family.

Collected by Wang Ming-ji.

Notes.

This song is recorded in Document B (no. 12, page 37)

Line 13. Following this line the Miao manuscript inserts,

J ^{nc}	J ⁿ L ^ɔ	T ^u T ⁿ C ⁺ '	G _u	C _{nc} L _{ii}
weave	the	daughter	young woman	adult

In this sentence the “young woman” is the direct object of the verb “to weave”, which is a nonsense in Miao as it is in English. Moreover, whatever it may mean, the line is out of place at this point, since lines 11 to 14 form a complete, properly balanced stanza without it. Thus, either the line must be deleted as an intrusion into the text, or amended and repositioned to make it fit the context. The second alternative has been chosen for the following reason. All the elaborate arrangements described in the preceding lines were to provide the bride with an escort worthy of the occasion. The six young people, suitably dressed for the part, were to accompany her to her new home, and the lines which follow describe what an impressive sight they were as they passed along the road. However, it is nowhere actually stated in the song that these folk, in all their finery, were escorting a bride, and it may be that this indeed was the purpose of the line under discussion. So if the initial word J^{nc}, “weave”, is removed as having been copied by mistake from lines 11 to 14, and the words CT_o, “with”, and ɔ_{ii}, “go”, are added to the beginning and end of the line respectively, then it will read,

CT _o	J ⁿ L ^ɔ	T ^u T ⁿ C ⁺ '	G _u	C _{nc} L _{ii}	ɔ _{ii}
with	the	daughter	young woman	adult	go

That is, “to go with the daughter, the adult young woman”. If, now, this amended line is inserted as line 15, the meaning of the whole of the first half of the song will be clarified.