

M385
Song of the spirit woman and the widower.

Sung by Tao Zi-gai.

Notes.

This song is recorded in Document F (no. 18, page 20)

Line 2. In the Miao text the expression $\text{C}^{\text{r}} \text{J}^{\text{n}} \text{C}_{\text{no}}$, “the abode of the spirits”, is written $\text{C}^{\text{r}} \text{J}^{\text{n}} \text{C}_{\text{no}}$.

Lines 3 and 4. The word Γ^{s} means “quickly and without hesitation”. It can be used of a girl who runs away with a lover, usually to avoid an unwelcome marriage. Here it describes a group of souls climbing quickly upward and with gay abandon. The parallel word in lines 17 and 18 is T_{o} . Of horses and cattle this means “frisky and high spirited”. It also describes a person running with accelerating speed. In this song it describes a group of souls climbing upward quickly and yet more quickly.

Line 7. This line, which is also repeated as lines 12, 21 and 26, is a conventional form of words common in the songs which marks the elapse of some time. It has a picturesque form, “while the sky remained constant”, but means simply “after this” or “afterwards”.

Lines 19 and 20. In both these lines the Miao text reads J^{o} , “woman”, where it should read Λ_{s} . “man”.

Lines 21 and following. The substitution of “woman” for “man” in lines 19 and 20 has resulted in a succession of further errors in the Miao text.

- 1 Having stated in line 20 that “the woman was like the sunrise”, normal poetic form then demanded that something should be said about the man. To do this line 25 was moved up to follow line 20.
- 2 Unfortunately line 25 stated that the man was like a “flower in full bloom”, and this did not match the “sunrise” in the in the previous line. Accordingly the word L^{n} , “moon” was substituted for J^{s} , “flower”. So amended the line read “full moon” instead of “flower in full bloom”, and this accorded well with the common identification of the sun as a maid and the moon as a youth.
- 3 Having thus dislocated the text, the writer put the remaining lines back together as best he could. Fortunately none was lost in the process. So the sequence of lines in the Miao text is as follows, 20, 25, 21, 23, 24, 26, 22, 27, 28.