

M390
The song of Du-bw the weak one.

Collected by Wang Ming-ji.

Notes.

This song is recorded in Document C (no. 19, page 39)

A note at the beginning of the song reads, $T^u T'' C_1 T^n T'' T^u T^n C \uparrow C \downarrow$. That is “Song about rich persons despising an orphan”. This comment is scarcely borne out by the facts of the story. Moreover, the main purpose of the song was to explain the origin of the use of a horse, borrowed from the Yi landlord, for use in the course of the ancestral rites of certain branches of the Hmao-chi clan.

The following pairs of lines are written as though they are single long lines in the Miao text. 11 and 12, 13 and 14, 26 and 27, 65 and 66, 73 and 74.

Line 2. The expression $G^- \Lambda^n \uparrow^n \uparrow'$ is the name of a place, but there is nothing in the manuscript to indicate where it was located.

Line 8. The name $T^u \downarrow^p T^u J^r T_{11}$, given to the young Hmao-chi is in two parts. The second part $T^u J^r T_{11}$, means “the person not able”, or “the person not strong”, and is a term of derision. The first part $T^u \downarrow^p$, is probably also derisory. It is not quite certain, but the \downarrow^p used here may be the word meaning “spotty”. It is used in the name for measles, and also of animals having spotty coats. In the present context it is possibly a reference to the complexion of the young adolescent. Thus the full name may mean “the spotty weakling”.

Line 12. The expression $l'_{\sim} \uparrow'$, “lacquered”, is written $l'_{\sim} \uparrow'$ in the Miao text.

Line 36. The local Yi landlord is called $J^- S^{\bar{5}} \Lambda^- \uparrow^r L_{11}$, but throughout most of the song the Λ^- is omitted. $\uparrow^r L_{11}$ means “the old one”. This is a title widely used in the songs for Miao, Yi, and Chinese leaders, and virtually becomes part of the name. It is difficult to find a suitable translation for a title applied to persons as diverse as a Miao village headman, an Yi landlord, or a Chinese general, but if it is not translated and simply added to the names, these become long and cumbersome. The word “elder” has been used, but it needs to be stripped of any civic or ecclesiastical overtones it may have in English.

Lines 50, 51 and 52. These lines are written without any punctuation as though they were a single long line in the Miao manuscript.

Line 66. The expression $l'_{\gt} L_{\leftarrow}$ means literally “to take, or lead away”, but it is regularly used to mean “to take in marriage”.