

M217
The belongings of the Miao old folk.

Sung by Yang Zhi.

Notes

This song is recorded in Document A (no. 11, page 30), Document E (no. 11, page 28), Document K (no. 25, page 43), Document L (no. 23, page 91), Document N (no. 39, page 546).

Title. Documents K, L and N add 𠙴 𠂇 𠂊, "which were lost".

Line 3. Documents A, E and K all add the name of the second Chinese Leader **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** in this line, but since he is mentioned nowhere else in the song, the later documents are probably right in leaving him out altogether.

Line 5. In Document E the word 𠂇, "seized", is written **𠂇**. It could be argued that this is logically the correct way of writing the word, and that the letter 𠂇 is strictly superfluous. However, the script was slowly developed over more than two decades, and the letter 𠂇 had been established years before the symbol **𠂇** was introduced. Long usage has fixed 𠂇 firmly in the writing, so that the correct spelling for the word "to seize" is 𠂇 and not **𠂇**.

Line 7. Document E begins this line with **𠂇** **𠂇**, "did take".

Line 8. Instead of **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇**, "inside the record book", Document E reads **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇** **𠂇**, "in their book", while Documents K, L and N omit **𠂇** entirely.

Line 13. This line is missing in Document A.

Line 17. A note in Miao in the text of Document N explains that **𠂇** was a tobacco pouch worn at the waist.

Line 18. In Document N the last ten words of this line, from **𠂇** to the end are missing,

Line 23. In Document K, followed by Documents L and N, **𠂇**, "hemp" was misread as **𠂇**, "to stretch out".

Line 27. Documents K, L and N repeat "tiger" instead of "lion".

Lines 39 to 42. The writer of Document E misread **𠂇**, "cloth", in line 39 as **𠂇**. There is probably no such word, but he took it to mean "skirt", and in lines 40, 41 and 42 substituted it for the normal word **𠂇** which is used in Document A. In Document K, followed by Documents L and N, **𠂇** is restored, but not only where it should be in

lines 40, 41 and 42, but also in line 39 where it replaces **CT"**. The result is to present the women with "cotton skirts".

Line 42. The meaning of the final phrase of this line is not clear. It is likely that the original manuscript from which our documents are all derived read, **C_n T^δ T_ς L_n**. This is the reading in Document A. In Document E it was altered to **D_n T^δ T_ς L_n**. Document K, which is by the same writer as Document E, reverted to **C_n T^δ T_ς L_n**, which was faithfully copied by Document L. Document N reads "nis dangb drut jil", that is **C_n T^δ T^υ L_n**. The original phrase is obscure, and neither amendment much better. The difficulty lies chiefly in the meaning to be given to **T^δ**. However, three times in the previous lines this word appears as a compound **T^ε T^δ**, meaning "skirt", it therefore seems probable that the same should apply here, and the phrase should read:

C_n T^ε T^δ T_ς L_n.
connector skirt go out thus.

That is "the skirt for going out", or "the best skirt". This fits exactly with the beginning of the line, and also with the general context.

Line 46. Document E misread **Γ_ρ** as **T_ρ** which is meaningless in the context. In Document K and subsequent documents the meaning was restored by changing the word altogether, so that in place of the original **T^υ Γ_ρ** the text now reads **T^υ C_λρ**. Both phrases mean "to be despondent".

Line 68. Document A omitted this line altogether.

Line 69. The last two words of this line in all the documents are **T' CT⁻**. **T'** is a domestic fowl and **CT⁻** means "green" or "blue". The purpose of the line was to explain what kind of creature a unicorn was, and to say that it was like a "green chicken" was less than helpful. It is just possible that early in the transmission of the manuscript **CT' t₋**, "wild animal", was mistakenly written **T' CT⁻**, and since it was a description of an unknown beast, subsequent writers just copied, asking no questions.

Line 80. In Documents K and L the word **L_s** in the expression **T⁻ L[°] 'D"** **L_s**, "original family" has been lost, while in Document N the complete phrase is missing.