

M258

Song of the landlord's hard compulsory labour.

Recorded by Wang Jian-guo.

On reaching Sheep month or Monkey month,
Lord Sao-no went to build a house,
To build on a plain in Gi-lyu country,
And Lord Sao-no conscripted the Miao folk to haul timber,
5 To haul it to the plain in Gi-lyu country.

The rice had been planted in the curved paddy fields,
And the hemp had been cut ready for spinning,
But, returning home, I could not bother to wash my feet,
I hurried to the door and stood there looking out.

10 My heart distraught with waiting, I gazed,
Gazed disconsolately over nine rivers, nine regions,
For my betrothed had gone hauling timber for Lord Sao-no,
He had been hauling it for a month and not arrived back.

15 They say that the rapids on the river Gi-lyu pour down in an alarming manner,
Just like the rapid pouring down at Hmao-li-jyu.
Could it be that my betrothed's boat has been overturned by the flowing water?
Could it be that my betrothed has been drowned?

20 I was planting rice, planting it in the paddy field,
And thinking about the Youth in my heart,
When I slipped and fell there on the paddy field bank,
And I actually talked to the mountain ranges!

"You mountain ranges, you live on high.
Do look and see how my betrothed is faring".

25 One day when I was trimming hemp by the stream I stretched up,
And my clothing caught and tripped me,
So I cut my hand and the blood gushed out.
The flowing blood ran down and dripped,
Dripped into the clear water and drifted away.
But there came a silver fish gliding by to drink it,
30 And I actually spoke to the silver fish!

"Silver fish, oh silver fish,
Glide gracefully to Shui-cheng,
Do go and see how my betrothed is faring".

35 One day while embroidering a tribal gown,
As I was thinking of my betrothed in my heart,
The needle pricked my hand, and the blood dripped down.
A small swallow flying around came to take some,
And I addressed words to the swallow!

40 "When you fly on beating wings and reach Shui-cheng,
Do look and see how my betrothed is faring".

Days came and days went, the days kept slipping by,
The mountain ranges stood unmoved,
The silver, snake-like fish glided through the water,
And the swallow flew strongly above the hills,
45 But they knew not the maid's heart-break, as time dragged on.

Youth, oh my Youth,
What day, what night will you arrive?
Was your raft really overturned by the water?
Is it true that you fell into the rapids on the river Gi-lyu?
50 But I am sure that you excel as a builder of boats,
Your raft would have been as strong as a boat of iron,
For you were always an expert!

"Silver fish gliding in the water,
Oh, do not delay going down to the river Gi-lyu".

55 When people used to do compulsory work they would return,
But when you had to do compulsory work you could not come.
Is it true that in Shui-cheng there are many dishonest girls,
Who might deceive my handsome youth and turn his heart?
Could you have forgotten your betrothed waiting here at home?

60 Oh!..no!..My betrothed is not a person like that!
He wears the belt I braided, girt about his waist,
And looped around my arms are these, his gold and silver bracelets.
When we two stood by the water's edge face to face,
We two declared,

65 "Though the mountain ranges are gathered up,
And the river Gi-lyu runs dry,
We cousins, maid and youth, will remain like Sun-maid and Moon-youth,
but will never set!"

Oh dear! Mother, you only think about breakfast and supper, and you are for
ever calling me!

Mother, oh Mother!
70 Do you really want to make your daughter happy?
Even if you cooked dragon meat, it would have no flavour!
You offer me honey, but it is not sweet!
The peach blossom is fully open, but I cannot smell the scent!
Mother! do not pester your daughter, you are breaking your daughter's heart!
75 Just let me keep gazing toward the country beyond the river Gi-lyu, please!

One evening we may hear
How the spotted dogs keep barking,
At the bottom of the Miao village.
The dogs are barking, barking, barking,

80 Could it be that my betrothed has returned?
 Is not that a well built person coming?
 The dogs are barking, and your daughter is happy!
 Here comes my betrothed,
 And the spotted dogs will wag their tails for joy...!
 85 But it does not happen!

 Oh! But who is that person coming yonder?
 It looks like my betrothed by his build,
 But his face is so thin, just skin and bone,
 And his unsteady walk so unsightly!

 90 My betrothed's body was lithe like a fish,
 The suppleness of his body none could match!
 Now here is coming a ragged gown all creased and wet,
 Whereas my betrothed wore a handsome new gown!
 Why is this person, whoever he is, coming directly here?

 95 Yes! It is my betrothed, truly arriving!
 In great haste I leave the loft room.
 Hurrying down from the loft,
 I just run with pounding footsteps to meet him,
 And with hands outstretched I grasp my Youth.

 100 "Whatever place have you come from to arrive so late?
 Oh! It almost seemed that we had lost you!
 Now we are so happy we cannot find words to tell our Youth!"
 Taking his hand I lead him and he comes in,
 Comes in and sits down to rest in the bamboo loft room.

 105 I will get Mother to boil more rice,
 And boil white, fat pork in the pot,
 To dip up clear water and heat till it is hot,
 And add extra honey to the honeyed wine,
 But I want to stay here with my betrothed in the loft room.

 110 Why are you so sun burnt and so weak?
 Why has your new gown become so ragged?
 Even the spotted dogs did not recognize you,
 And I imagined you had been gone so long we might never see you again!

 Because of Lord Sao-no's evil intent,
 115 You had to manoeuvre the raft till it reached Shui-cheng.
 Then did you have to carry the timber from the water's edge,
 And did you have to go and build Lord Sao-no's house?

 Oh, I could die! You are so sun burnt and so weak!
 By day and by night you were carrying their timber,
 120 And they did not care that your new gown was wearing out!
 I could die! You are indeed so sun burned and so weak!
 Did you not by day and by night do their work?
 And all you got was some peach juice to drink!

Oh, what can anyone say?
125 Mother! Do not be in too much hurry to call us two,
We have not yet finished talking things through.

Lord Sao-no is like a brood of poisonous snakes!
Lord Sao-no is heartless as a wolf!
In future refuse to carry timber for Lord Sao-no's family.

130 You must hide here in my house for some time to come,
Till your body is again as lithe as a fish.
Youth, oh my Youth,
We, Hua Miao, seem destined for evil!
Never haul timber for an Yi landlord.

135 May all Lord Sao-no's fir trees rot!
May Lord Sao-no himself be slashed!
May Lord Sao-no's belly be ripped wide open!
May Lord Sao-no's guts gush out!

Mother! I shall be coming down soon for a meal.
140 We two are talking, but it is not now urgent.

The Youth, the young man there, in fact
We two, will soon be building a shelter yonder on the mountain range,
And we two, as friends and companions, will go and clear the forest.
We two will plant corn in the midst of the clearing,
145 And one day the amber grains of maize will ripen like yellow gold.

I shall use every spare moment weaving cloth,
Making embroidered gowns, clothes sufficient for you to wear,
So that both maid and young man will always be well dressed.
With our hearts at peace like honey in a pot!

150 Oh! That is Mother calling us to go down together for a meal,
And there is the tempting sweet smell of white rice.
We two have talked and talked so much,
Now as a couple, young woman and young man, let us eat.

Thus it is ended.