

客家山歌十二首

Twelve Hakka Folksongs

Translated by C. H. Kwock

荔枝紅皮白在心
食到嘴裏蜜咁甜
若能同妹講句話
還比荔枝味更甜



Illustrations: Tan Naichao

The lychee fruit has red skin
And white meat.
When I put it in my mouth,
It's honey-sweet.

If I could talk to you, my love—
One word repeat—
That would be sweeter far, my love,
Than lychee to eat.

高山嶺頂一棵梅
 手攀梅極望郎來
 親娘問侄望也介
 侄望梅花幾時開

High on the mountain top a plum tree stands;
 I wait your coming, holding a branch with my hands.
 My mother asks, "What are you looking at?"
 "When will the plum tree blossom? I'm looking at that."



高山有路難通天
 大河有水難蔭田
 花針無眼難穿線
 阿哥有話難開言

Many roads on a mountain,
 But none touches the sky;
 Enough water in the river,
 Yet the rice fields go dry.

With no eye in a needle,
 The thread can't get through;
 I'm bursting with words
 But can't say them to you.

久唔唱歌忘記歌
久唔網魚忘記河
久唔寫字忘記字
久唔見妹苦愁多



A long time without singing,
I forgot how the ballad goes;
A long time without fishing,
I forgot how the river flows.

A long time without writing,
I forgot how letters are made;
A long time without you,
Sorrow on sorrow laid.

新買紙扇手搖風
 新買剪刀學裁縫
 一心想尋知心妹
 井裏行船無路通

I bought a new paper fan
 And waved it to get a breeze.
 I bought a new pair of scissors—
 I'll be a tailor with these.

There's one thing I'm looking for—
 A girl who understands me,
 But by sailing my boat in a well
 I'll never get to sea.



深山樹木好遮陰
只聽歌聲不見人
有情阿妹應一句
莫使阿哥滿山尋

Deep in the hillside
The trees give good shade,
But I only hear her singing—
I can't see the maid.

My love, if you care for me
Answer if you will—
Don't make me look for you
All over the hill.



I brought no tobacco
But I'm going to have a smoke,
And I'm going to make love
Although I am broke.

The ancient sage Jiang Ziya
Went fishing with a pin;
If you want to get hooked,
Come on! You begin!

心想食烟唔帶烟
心想戀妹唔帶錢
姜公釣魚垂直釣
願者上釣正來戀

Jingling pockets—empty pockets—
 I'll never really care.
 I freely love you, lover—
 I'm a girl the wolf can't scare.

All I ask is that both of us
 May joys and sorrows share.
 The darkest night will have an end
 And a sunrise will be there.

"Wolf" here means poverty.

無相干來無相干
 咁好人情也會斷
 咁好紅花也會謝
 咁甜老酒也會酸

有錢無錢無相干
 甘願愛郎不怕窮
 總愛兩人同甘苦
 黑夜盡頭天就紅



If this is how it is
 Then let it be so,
 For even the greatest love
 At last has to go.

The petals have to fall
 From the reddest flower,
 And wine, though it's old and sweet,
 In the end turns sour.



送郎送到大樹下
勸郎早去早回家
路上野花你莫採
家中還有牡丹花

I see you off, my darling,
Under the giant tree.
I tell you, please go quickly,
And quickly come back to me.

There are wild flowers by the roadside,
But don't pick the ones you see,
For here at home, my darling,
You have your peony.



As far as the well in the courtyard
I see you off, my love,
While the blackening clouds cover
Half the sky above.

If only the rain will come,
If only the rain will pour,
And keep you here, my love,
For just a few days more.

You, my love, are a dragon in the sky.
A flowering bush upon the earth am I.
If the dragon doesn't caper, no rain will fall;
Without rain, my flowers won't be bright at all.

送哥送到天井邊
天上烏雲遮半天
只望天公落大雨
留轉情哥住幾天

哥是天上一條龍
妹是地下花一叢
龍唔翻身唔下雨
雨唔灑花花唔紅