

**M256**  
**Song of the Woman Cao and the Man Cao.**

*Recorded by Wang Ming-ji.*

This was a bad time, a bad year,  
The crops did not ripen and the fruit did not set.

Only the wild bamboo put forth blossom,  
Only the wild bamboo bore seed.  
5 The wild bamboo bore seed in bunches,  
The wild bamboo bore seed in clusters.

The Woman Cao and the Man Cao left,  
Left the young woman Cao's little daughter at home  
While the Woman Cao and the Man Cao gathered seed.

10 They gathered the wild bamboo seed behind the mountain,  
Gathered the wild bamboo seed to serve for breakfast.  
They gathered the wild bamboo seed behind the ranges,  
Gathered the wild bamboo seed to serve for supper.

15 They gathered the wild bamboo seed to pay the rent,  
To pay Lord Shi-byu's rent of one "dan".

Where formerly the measure was a "shen",  
Latterly the measure was a "dou",  
But when the measure reached a "dan" they could not pay it.

20 The Woman Cao and the Man Cao's labour in lieu of rent was heavy too,  
And the Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not manage it.  
So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao sought a way to flee.

Fighting broke out between the Ruling Race and Lord Shi-byu,  
And the Ruling Race was busy training soldiers.  
When all in the lower ranks were fully trained,  
25 And all in the higher ranks were quite proficient,  
They went to fight with Lord Shi-byu.

The land was black with the thousands of the Ruling Race's soldiers,  
When the Ruling Race's soldiers arrived from the south and from the north.

30 The companies of the Ruling Race's soldiers struck down,  
Struck down Lord Shi-byu and he died.  
The young Yi woman, Lord Shi-byu's daughter, alone was left.

The Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not stay,  
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao took sandals and bound them on.

35 With the young folk following behind,  
The old folk went on ahead,

So both fled on their way.  
The men fled, so the men were gone,  
The women fled, so the women went.

40 As the women fled the women grieved,  
Grieved for the women's gardens.  
As the men fled the men grieved,  
Grieved for the men's houses.

Of old the Ruling Race,  
Their companies of retainers and soldiers had pursued,  
45 Pursued the Woman Cao and the Man Cao across,  
Across to the higher side of the river Gi-nzhe.  
Then the Woman Cao and the Man Cao sang this song of lamentation.

*From out of scattered sky material came the dome,  
For the Woman Cao to come and live.  
50 Woven from scattered earth material came the ranges,  
For the Man Cao to come and dwell.*

*The Woman Cao was beautiful,  
As the Man Cao soon came to know.  
So the Woman Cao came and together with,  
55 With the Man Cao made a couple as a family to dwell,  
To dwell on the opposite side of the river Gi-nzhe.*

*When they harvested the crops they filled the store,  
When they gathered the cotton it filled the loft.  
From their farming they gained,  
60 Gained both food and clothing year by year.*

*When the morrow came,  
They were on the road early in the morning, at break of day,  
For they were going as guests, but their memory of the road was confused,  
So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao had to select their route.  
65 Unconcerned, they selected a route to their aunt's.*

*They travelled until breakfast time,  
When they encountered nine Chinese robbers,  
Hiding by the river Gi-nzhe,  
Who robbed the Woman Cao and the Man Cao of everything.*

70 *How should the Woman Cao and the Man Cao react?  
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao could not bear the thought,  
So the Man Cao took and killed the nine Chinese robbers.*

*Afterwards the nine Chinese robbers' families accused,  
Accused the Man Cao before the magistrate,  
75 And the Man Cao had a court case with the nine Chinese robbers.  
The Chinese robbers wanted a way to bring pressure,  
To bring pressure on the Man Cao and make him afraid.*

- 80     *The Man Cao was indeed afraid of future trouble from the Chinese robbers,  
So the Man Cao and the Woman Cao sought a way to flee,  
And they fled to the presence of Lord Shi-byu.*
- Lord Shi-byu spoke,  
Requiring the Woman Cao and the Man Cao to provide young girls to become,  
To become the young Yi Lady's handmaids.*
- 85     *So the Woman Cao and the Man Cao took,  
Took Cao girls to pay the people's rent, for,  
For Lord Shi-byu to make into slaves.*
- 90     *Thus the Woman Cao and the Man Cao had become,  
Become Lord Byu-no's slaves.  
The young Yi Lady took Cao girls with her when she went as bride to Sao-no,  
And having gone, there was no word for eighteen years.*
- After the attack of the Ruling Race,  
The Woman Cao and the Man Cao came on until they met,  
Met Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, together with,  
With young Cao women along the sheep path.*
- 95     *Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, asked,  
Asked the Woman Cao and the Man Cao who they were.  
Then Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, spoke,  
Spoke with sincerity to the Woman Cao and the Man Cao.*
- 100    *Lord Shi-byu's daughter, the young Yi woman, took,  
Took the Woman Cao on behalf,  
On behalf of Lord Gha-sao, to serve as cook,  
And she arranged for the Man Cao, on behalf,  
On behalf of Lord Gha-sao, to go and pasture cattle.*
- 105    *When the morrow came,  
The Woman Cao went to get breakfast,  
While the Man Cao went to pasture cattle.*
- The sun was shining brightly,  
Shining so that the weather was good,  
Good for the Man Cao to pasture the cattle on the far side of the mountain.*
- 110    *The Man Cao heard the deer calling up there on the ridge,  
The stags calling clearly behind the mountain.  
So the Man Cao came back from pasturing cattle, he returned and reached,  
Reached Lord Sao-no's house.*
- 115    *The Man Cao ate well from the basket,  
And fed the spotted dog well from the trough.  
The Man Cao ate well from his hand,  
And fed the spotted dog well from the dish.*
- The Man Cao took the black, the curved crossbow carrying it on his back,*

And led out the black, the spotted dog to go hunting.  
 120 Where the game was the dog knew,  
 And startled, the game raced away from the dog,  
 While the dog chased after the game.

It chased a stag to the rock pinnacle at Ngga-yi-gi-zai,  
 Where the stag ran for shelter,  
 125 For shelter beside the rock pinnacle at Ngga-yi-gi-zai.

The Man Cao took his crossbow, stretched it well with his feet  
 And lifted an arrow with care to the stock of the bow.  
 Then quickly he went out under the open sky,  
 Where, under the blue sky, there was light to see that the arrow lay straight,  
 130 And light to keep the stock from tilting as he turned.

The arrow flew on its curving flight,  
 Flew on its way and hit,  
 Hit the stag right in the heart.

The stag jumped round three times,  
 135 Then fell to the ground,  
 Fell there beside the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai.

So the Man Cao had meat to prepare.  
 Then the Man Cao spoke,  
 "The land by the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai is low-lying,  
 140 And on low-lying land rice will ripen".

So the Man Cao came and built,  
 Built a home beside the rock pinnacle of Ngga-yi-gi-zai,  
 And he brought the Woman Cao to make a family and live,  
 He brought the Woman Cao to make a family and dwell.

145 Thus it is ended.