

Wu Song Fights the Tiger

(Wu Song *singing*) (*Shuang Hu Die*) ‘Drunk and not in my right mind,

I happened to wound a man;

My senior brother insisted on my leaving our hometown,

a year and more I have been on the run.

(*Mixed Rhythm*) My surname is Wu, my given name is Song, and Wu the Elder is

my senior brother.

I am from Qinghe District; both of my parents died long ago.

Since childhood I loved fighting with fist and cudgel, sword and spear.

All my life I defended people who suffered injustices, my character being staunch.

Unforeseen, one day in a drunken state, I wounded a man by accident.

Scared, my elder brother insisted that I flee to another place.

Thus I took refuge with Chai Jin, hiding for a while.

How fortunate it was that I met Song Jiang at a tavern!

He brought me the news: that man I wounded never died,

calling to mind my longing for home, so I wanted to go and see my elder brother.

Therefore, I took farewell with Song Jiang and Chai Jin,

anxious to return to my hometown.

(*畚畚 Diao*) Wearing a broad bamboo hat and a dark cotton dress,

I hold my cudgel and shoulder a bundle with silver.

All this was given to *me* by Lord Chai

and the warm-hearted Song Gongming.

I travel during the day and sleep at night, now arriving at Yanggu District.

Suddenly I feel my empty stomach and I am awfully hungry.’

Noticing that it is already noon, Wu Song looks ahead,

and from a distance he spots a wine-banner waving in the wind;

he walks over to the tavern and looks up,

there are five characters on the banner —— “Three bowls and you cannot cross the  
ridge”!

(*Mixed Rhythm*) ‘This leaves me, Wu Song, completely in the dark’;

He steps into the tavern, lays his cudgel aside,

puts his bundle down and takes out some silver—— **<page 2>**

In a loud voice he calls the waiter: “Pour some wine for *me* to taste!”

(Host *singing*) Hearing his call, the host comes to his table right away,

brings him a plate of cooked food and a pair of bamboo chopsticks.

He pours him three big bowls of the wine and places everything on the table.

(Wu *singing*) Wu Song takes the bowl in his hand and drains the wine in one gulp,

exclaiming “good wine”, and it is surely strong.

“Bring more wine and dishes, to fill up my hungry stomach——”

(Host *singing*) The host does not neglect his guest, he goes to the kitchen right away;

he cuts two catties of beef and places it on the table,

then he pours another bowl of wine——

(Wu *singing*) Again Second Brother has drained the bowl in one gulp!

He keeps praising: “Good wine, strong and tasty.”

(Host *singing*) The host pours another bowl of wine, and steps out of the dining room.

“This guest already drank three bowls, now I must serve the other guests.”

(Wu *singing*) Second Brother bangs the table——“Why don’t you come and pour the wine?”

(Host *singing*) Hearing his call, the host hurries over\_\_\_ “Good guest, please, *listen so very carefully*:

I can bring you more rice and dishes, but not even one more ounce of the wine;

the wine-banner says——“Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge!”

(Wu *singing*) “May I ask you, host, what is “Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge” supposed to mean? ”

(Host *singing*) (*Lao Bu Gang*) “Although the wine of our humble tavern is a local brew, it is much stronger than old liquors.

Everyone gets drunk after three bowls, and is not able to cross the ridge ahead;

all guests whether new or regular, after three bowls they drink no more.

So that is why it’s called-----“Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge”.”

(Wu *singing*) On hearing this Wu Song bursts into a loud laughter——

“Wine sellers always claim their own wine is better;

I already drank three bowls of your wine,

how come I've not collapsed in drunkenness here in your tavern?"

(Host *singing*) "Good guest, since you come from far away, you don't know that our wine has a name "Flavour through the Bottle"; <page 3>

it is also called "Falling at the Door",

it is tasty when you drink it, but it has a real kick afterwards!"

(Wu *singing*) "Stop talking nonsense, host. Quickly bring *me* the wine.

Just pour the wine, and you'll get enough silver in return!"

(Host *singing*) The host can see that his guest sure enough is not yet drunk, so he pours another three big bowls of the wine and places them on the table.

(Wu *singing*) Second Brother Wu asks for more beef, and once again drains three big bowls of the wine.

He keeps yelling: "Host, bring more wine!

All this silver here, is for paying the wine!"

(Host *singing*) (*Shu Zhuang Tai*) Even though the host can see his guest is capable of drinking a lot,

he wants to ignore him and just stand by;

but this good guest has an explosive temper,

so he must bring bowls of wine one by one.

(Wu *singing*) Second Brother Wu drinks eighteen bowls of the wine from the first to the last,

before he finally feels satisfied and walks out of the tavern;

he shouts: “Host, from now on you can stop saying “Three bowls and you cannot cross the ridge”!

Look, with bundle on my shoulder and cudgel in my hand, am I not very steady?”

(Host *singing*) The host steps out right away, yelling at the top of his voice——

“May I ask, good guest, where are you going?”

(Wu *singing*) Second Brother Wu, stops and turns, looking back——

“Surely I have payed my bill for the wine and beef?”

(Host *singing*) The host exclaims: “Good guest, *listen so very carefully*,

please come back and have a look at this notice——

Recently there has arrived a tiger with slanting eyes and white forehead,

often attacking people on the ridge;

twenty-thirty big fellows were eaten by him.

If you don’t believe, please look at the government proclamation of Yanggu District;

travelers and merchants shall gather in groups,

only morning, noon and afternoon are they allowed to cross the ridge. <page 4>

Since you travel alone, why don’t you stay here for the night?

Wait until there are more guests tomorrow, and cross the ridge together with them!”

(Wu *singing*) Wu Song laughs out loud when hearing this——

“My home is in Qinghe District and I used to cross this Jingyang Ridge very often,

at least thirty to fifty times,

when did I see a big beast attacking people?

Since you want *me* to stay for the night in your tavern, *I* know what's in your dirty  
mind.

In the third watch you will sneak in, steal my money and take *my* life;  
you better not try to scare me with your lies,  
even if there indeed is a tiger, what can it do to *me!*”

(Host *singing*) When the host has heard his words, he heaves a sigh——

“All my goodwill is turned into the worst of intentions!

If you, good guest, don't believe me, please, do as you please.”

Shaking his head, he steps back inside.

(Wu *singing*) (*Shu Rhythm*) Holding the cudgel, Wu Song strides off toward the ridge.

After traveling about five *li*, he sees a notice;

Second Brother lifts his head and takes a look at it, it is written *so very carefully*,  
*saying* recently a tiger frequently attacks people on the mountain.

After reading this, Wu Song is shocked, realizing that the host didn't lie to him.

‘Shall I cross the ridge or return, this I must find out——

If I go back to the tavern, they will laugh of course.

How humiliating that will be for *me!*’

After reflecting a short while, he just strides off to cross the ridge.

‘*I* will see what this big beast will do to *me!*’

While walking, the wine begins to show its effect,

he takes off his bamboo hat and strings it on his back.

(*Die Duan Qiao*) ‘Looking at the sun going slowly down towards the foot of the  
ridge,

I talk to myself: Where is the man-eating tiger?

Surely, when people are scared, they begin to create monsters.

I have no alternative. The effect of the wine makes me feel hot,

I have to loosen my clothing and bare my chest.

I hurry through the forest, staggering and stumbling;

*but just look*: a smooth black rock,

I can’t wait to put down my load and lie down on the rock’—— <page 5>

Suddenly a gust of wind can be heard blowing up in the forest.

Where the wind passes, from behind a tree, a resounding “Plop” is heard.

(*Jing Duo Zi*) *In fact* it is a big beast with slanting eyes and white forehead,

giving Wu Song such a shock that he sobers up completely;

he jumps over the rock, takes a firm grip on his cudgel,

with a fixed look he stares at the big beast.

How awe-inspiring this tiger is!

And moreover so famished that it longs to eat humans to appease its hunger.

*Just look* how it plants its forepaws into the ground, and then jumps into the air.

Like a mountain it swoops down on Wu Song.

When the hero sees the creature springing at him,

he dodges to the rear and stands waiting for the big beast.

The moment the creature realizes that it missed its aim,  
it bends its back and tries to thrust onto the hero.  
Second Master dodges again to the other side,  
he feels no panic, he is so calm.  
But now the tiger is getting truly angry,  
its mighty roaring shakes the mountain ridge;  
the tail of the big beast is hard as a steel bar,  
the tiger raises it and lashes out at Wu Song;  
Second Master again dodges like he did before,  
those three attacks were not able to wound the hero!  
Who would think that when such a big beast attacks a man,  
it only has three ways of assault: thrusting, springing, lashing;  
if these three methods fail,  
the creature's spirit is half broken.  
Again it roars and turns around,  
coming back to look for Wu Song.  
Second Master sees the tiger turning back,  
he grasps his cudgel in both hands and lifts it up.  
With all his strength, he brings the cudgel  
down straight onto that big beast!  
One only hears a loud "Crash", <page 6>



unintentionally, he cracks it against a pine tree;

branches and leaves all fall to the ground.

He misses the big beast;

his cudgel is broken in two,

and he is left with only the broken half in his hand.

The creature is enraged and roars once again.

It turns back and springs at Wu Song;

Second Master leaps back ten steps or more,

also this time the big beast failed.

As its forepaws reach the ground,

the tiger's head ends up next to the hero.

Second Master throws his cudgel away,

and with his bare hands he catches the big beast;

he grabs the tiger's striped neck firmly,

and forces it down to the ground.

As the big beast struggles to free itself,

Second Master kicks the big beast with his swift foot;

putting all his strength into every kick,

he kicks that creature in the eyes.

The paws of that stupid creature keep thrashing about,

churning out two holes in the ground.

Second Master presses down the mouth of the big beast,

deeply into into the yellow mud hole.

That creature seems to have lost its strength,

panting it lies there, unable to move.

Second Master grabs it firmly with his left hand,

with his right hand free he starts beating the big beast;

he keeps beating that big beast until red blood gushes from its mouth and nose,

its whole body and four paws stop moving.

Only then can Second Master let go,

standing by its side he looks at the big beast.

*(Mixed Rhythm)* Second Master waits a while, until he can see that the creature  
doesn't move the least,

with both his hands he starts dragging the big beast;

but now he is drained of all his strength, how can he move it? <page 7>

His arms and legs are numb and weak, and he must let go.

Sitting on the rock, he makes a plan:

'It's getting quite dark now. If there is another big beast on this mountain,

how am I able to cope? I'll just end up losing *my* life;

I'd better get down the mountain ridge

and deal with this dead big beast tomorrow!'

*(Shu Zhuang Tai)* Second Master makes up his mind,

shoulders his bundle and sets off down the ridge.

Step by step he presses forward, but before he has made half a *li*,

Gosh! another two big beasts jump out of the brush!

Staring closely, the hero discovers that these are not big beasts,

these are two hunters climbing the ridge to catch the tiger;

they are dressed up in tiger's fur.

Second Master is relieved.

He tells them at once the whole story of how he killed the tiger.

Shocked as they are, the two hunters are dumbfounded for a while;

they gather some villagers and follow Wu Song back up the mountain.

They help each other to bind up the dead tiger and carry it down the ridge.

*(Mixed Rhythm)* 'The hunters and villagers immediately inform the authorities,

the magistrate of Yanggu District gets very happy, and he rewards me the hero;

in a parade with gongs and flowers, I am riding a horse through every street and alley,

*I am appointed a captain and assigned work in the yamen.'*

*(Jing Duo Zi)* Ever since he killed the tiger with his clever fist,

Wu Song's fame spread throughout the world!

Only one thing was still on his mind——

to return to his hometown in Qinghe and visit his elder brother.

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(This text from *Yangzhou Qingqu* [Yangzhou ballads], edited by Wei Ren and Wei Minghua, Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982, pp.66-69, is very close to the oral performance found in item 10, performed May 2000. Cf. endnote to this text.)