

The Relations of Ssidi Kur – 8.

The Painter and the Wood-carver

Folk-Lore And Legends: Oriental

Arabic

Advanced
6 min read

When the Son of the Chan had, as on all the former occasions, spoken the words of threatening, placed the dead one in the sack, and journeyed forth with him, Ssidi spake this time also as follows:—"The day is long, and the distant journey will tire us: do you relate a tale unto me, or I will relate one unto you." But the Son of the Chan shook his head without saying a word, and Ssidi began as follows:—

"Many years ago there lived in the land of Gujassmunn a Chan, whose name was Gunisschang. This Chan, however, died, and his son Chamuk Sakiktschi was elected Chan in his place. Now there lived among the people of that country a painter and a wood-carver, who bore similar names, and were evilly disposed towards each other.

"Once upon a time the painter, Gunga, drew nigh unto the Chan, and said unto him, "Thy father hath been borne into the kingdom of the Tângâri, and hath said unto me, "Come unto me!" Thither I went, and found thy father in great power and splendour; and I have brought for you this letter from him.' With these words the

painter delivered unto the Chan a forged letter, the contents of which were as follows:—

“This letter is addressed to my son Chamuk Sakiktschi.

“When I departed this life, I was borne to the kingdom of the Tângâri. An abundance of all things reigns in this land; but since I am desirous of erecting a pagoda, and there are no wood-carvers to be found here, do you dispatch unto me Cunga, the wood-carver. The means by which he is to reach this place he may learn from the painter.’

“After he had perused this letter, the Chan of Gujassmunn said, ‘If my father has really been carried into the realms of the Tângâri, that would indeed be a good thing. Call hither the wood-carver.’ The wood-carver was called, and appeared before the Chan, and the Chan said unto him, ‘My father has been carried into the realms of the Tângâri. He is desirous of erecting a pagoda, and because there are no wood-carvers there he is desirous that you should be dispatched unto him.’

“With these words the Chan displayed the forged letter, and when he had read it, the wood-carver said unto himself, ‘Of a surety Gunga, the painter, has played me this trick; but I will try if I cannot overreach him.’

“Thus thinking, he inquired of the painter, ‘By what means can I reach the kingdom of the Tângâri?’

“To these words, the painter replied, ‘When thou hast prepared all thy tools and implements of trade, then place thyself upon a pile of bundled sticks, and when thou hast sung songs of rejoicing and set light to the pile of sticks, thus wilt thou be able to reach the kingdom of the Tângâri.’ Thus spake he, and the seventh night from that time was appointed for the carver’s setting forth on his journey.

“When the wood-carver returned home unto his wife, he spake unto her these words:—“The painter hath conceived wickedness in his mind against me; yet I shall try means to overreach him.’

“Accordingly he secretly contrived a subterranean passage, which reached from his own house into the middle of his field. Over the aperture in the field he placed a large stone, covered the stone with earth, and when the seventh night was come, the Chan said, ‘This night let the wood-carver draw nigh unto the Chan, my father.’ Thereupon, agreeably to the commands of the Chan, every one of the people brought out a handful of the fat of the Gunsa (a beast). A huge fire was kindled, and the wood-cutter, when he had sung the songs of rejoicing, escaped by the covered way he had made back to his own house.

“Meanwhile the painter was greatly rejoiced, and pointed upwards with his finger, and said, ‘There rideth the wood-carver up to heaven.’ All who had been present, too, betook themselves home, thinking in their hearts, ‘The wood-carver is dead, and gone up above to the Chan.’

“The wood-carver remained concealed at home a whole month, and allowed no man to set eyes upon him, but washed his head in milk every day, and kept himself always in the shade. After that he put on a garment of white silk, and wrote a letter, in which stood the following words:—

“‘This letter is addressed to my son Chamuk Sakiktschi. That thou rulest the kingdom in peace; it is very good. Since thy wood-carver has completed his work, it is needful that he should be rewarded according to his deserts. Since, moreover, for the decoration of the pagoda, many coloured paintings are necessary, send unto me the painter, as thou hast already sent this man.’

“The wood-carver then drew nigh unto the Chan with this letter. ‘What!’ cried the Chan, ‘art thou returned from the kingdom of the Tângâri?’ The wood-carver handed the letter unto him, and said, ‘I have, indeed, been in the kingdom of the Tângâri, and from it I am returned home again.’

“The Chan was greatly rejoiced when he heard this, and rewarded the wood-carver with costly presents. ‘Because the painter is now required,’ said the Chan, ‘for the painting of the pagoda, let him now be called before me.’

“The painter drew nigh accordingly, and when he saw the wood-carver, fair, and in white-shining robes, and decorated with gifts, he said unto himself, ‘Then he is not dead!’ And the Chan handed over to the painter the forged letter, with the seal thereto, and said, ‘Thou must go now.’

“And when the seventh night from that time arrived, the people came forward as before with a contribution of the fat of the Gunsâ; and in the midst of the field a pile of sticks was kindled. The painter seated himself in the midst of the fire, with his materials for painting, and a letter and gifts of honour for the Chan Gunisschang, and sang songs of rejoicing; and as the fire kept growing more and more intolerable, he lifted up his voice and uttered piercing cries; but the noise of the instruments overpowered his voice, and at length the fire consumed him.”

“He was properly rewarded!” exclaimed the Son of the Chan.

“Ruler of Destiny, thou hast spoken words! Ssarwala missdood jakzang!” Thus spake Ssidi, and burst from the sack through the air.

Thus Ssidi’s eighth relation treats of the Painter and the Wood-carver.

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