LOOKING FOR A TEXT

Once there was a lazy man. Other than bending his head down and reading texts, he did nothing to help his family. Not only that, but his wife even had to collect and put away the texts he was looking at. After a long time had passed thus, without the man doing any work other than eating food, the living conditions of his family worsened day by day.

One day his wife said to him, "Hereafter I must do a lot of work and take care of the family. You take care of the texts you look at!" The intellectual promised to abide by her conditions, but like before he made his wife pick up and put away the texts. Besides, he made her write clearly what he was very fond of looking at, the *Gesar Story* that he had in a box.

The wife, knowing that he was so greatly lazy, sought a way to make him use his brains, and played a joke on him. She gathered up the texts and put them into three boxes. On each of the boxes she wrote: 'The *Gesar Story* is in the first box'; 'The *Gesar Story* is not in this box'; 'The *Gesar Story* is not in the first box'. After she did that, she said to the lazy man, "Among these three boxes, only one is right, but two are not." The lazy man used his brains, but did not know in which box the *Gesar Story* was.

Young friend, think about it. In which box really was the *Gesar Story*?

Here is the answer: The *Gesar Story* was in the second box. How come? On one hand, it said it was in the first box, but on the other, it said it was not. The two contradict each other. If one was all right the other is false. If it were in the first box, then what were written on the first and second boxes are all right, but the conditions do not agree. But if it were in the third box, then what were written on the second and third boxes are all right, but again the conditions do not agree. Hence if it were in the second box, the conditions do agree.

—Rgyal mtshan & Lcags mo, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 9, 1984