

THE STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

An ancient folk legend, proclaimed like the wind, says that once there was a special place called Mayü Tongwa Günden, the clear-sounding drum of whose fame rumbled through the three domains. A family of nomads, called Lopsangtsang who made their living there, had two sons. The elder was called Lodrö and the younger Sebo. Lodrö was very happy to study culture. Sebo was the opposite; he was a base young man, deceitful and lazy. As they were reaching adulthood, their father Lopsang sent them far away to be educated.

After about three years, the two boys, their intelligence being unequal, told their father what they had learned. Lodrö had learned crafts completely; Sebo had learned to steal. The arts learned by the elder son were very beneficial to the people of the community and he became an object of praise by everyone—men, women, old and young. The knowledge the younger son had learned brought harm to people. He was a cataract in their eye and an ache in their teeth. Everyone thought there would be nothing amiss if they killed him.

One day, Lopsang thought, “If this younger son is not eliminated, there will be great harm to our reputation and the people of the community; I must find a way by any means.” In that village there was a fierce and very cruel butcher named Migmar, a man whom, if cowards simply saw him, would tremble with fear. He was a friend who got along with Lopsang, and he swore to agree. Lopsang looked for Butcher Migmar and not only told him what he was thinking, but showed the butcher his thoughts about how to kill Sebo. The butcher said in a very pliable way, “That’s easy. Tell this to the boy: ‘Go steal the butcher’s sheepskin robe’, and I’ll try to kill him.” So Lopsang told Sebo. First, Sebo prepared a bag full of bugs. When it got dark, he went to steal the butcher’s robe. After he saw the butcher was asleep wearing his robe, he carefully crept in and poured the bugs into the butcher’s sleeve. Unable to bear the itching, the butcher took off the robe and threw it against the door of the tent. Sebo took it and gave it to his father.

The next day the butcher said to Lopsang, “Tonight tell your son to go and steal me, and I’ll try to kill him.” Lopsang told Sebo, “Steal the butcher and come!” Sebo showed his father he was agreeable, prepared a sheep’s stomach full of water and made a leather container. He got to the butcher’s door at midnight and when he watched through a crack in the door, the butcher, fearing he himself would be stolen, was sitting in front of the stove. For awhile, Sebo peered down from the flap of the smoke hole on the roof of the tent. The butcher was still sitting like before. Sebo threw the whole stomach full of water on him. The butcher got frightened and thinking, “What’s this?” he drew his dagger and stabbed powerfully. At the same time, Sebo quickly put the big container made of leather over the butcher’s head. He squeezed tightly, carried it on his back and gave it to Father Lopsang.

So without finding a way to kill Sebo, they finally banished him to another land.

—Kun 'phel, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 4, 1990