

INTELLECT AND STRENGTH

Once upon a time, in a certain place there was a very strong man. Word of how he always bullied the subjects and the weak reached Agu Demba's ears. Agu Demba thought he had to defeat that wretch, and, taking a few provisions, he traveled to the place where the strong man lived.

When Agu Demba arrived on the morning of the next day, he went to where the strong man was and made an appointment for a contest. The neighboring folks heard about it, and a mob surrounded the strong man's tent. Just before the contest, Agu Demba said, "If one of us suffers a casualty, the other will bear no consequences; whoever is defeated shall be the other's servant and must listen to whatever the other says."

The strong man agreed to the set of conditions too. Not only did they write it on paper in small letters and affix their thumb marks, but they found a mediator from the crowd. At that time, Agu Demba brought two thick long leather straps. He gave one to the strong man and he tied one sloppily around his own waist. The strong man, not knowing what this meant, asked in a frightened voice, "What's this? Have you given me a rope to kill myself?" Agu Demba acted surprised and said, "Oh! Doesn't a champion like you know how to wrestle? OK, isn't it true what they say: 'The stupid bumpkin who's never seen a really large kingdom regards himself as big.' Ha! I haven't entered all the greatest wrestling contests under the sky the best way I can, but how can you, a coward who doesn't even know how to tie a rope around his waist, compete with me? If I look at your form, I'm embarrassed."

The strong man thought, "If I look at it from any direction—first, how this man came to seek me out; second how he takes no responsibility if either of us gets mortally wounded; and how he acts haughtily and brags about tying a strap around his waist now—he really seems to be one of the strongest men under the sky."

Suddenly it appeared to him that Agu Demba's bodily strength grew greater and that the muscles of his shoulders were like a mountain's glory. He stayed there with his head bowed, neither daring to compete nor to run away.

—Rdo rje tshe ring, *Qinghai Folk Literature 2*, 1983