

## THE HISTORY OF THE STOVE

Once upon a time, two hunters went to the mountains to hunt game. The whole day they ran around all the mountains and valleys, but got nothing. Hungry and thirsty, they thought about taking a rest. They came down from the mountains and made tea in a gorge where there were forest and streams. While they were going by a crooked path on the side of a mountain, they suddenly saw a fox-hole on an upland.

One hunter said, "Look! The entrance to the hole is full of new fox tracks. There's a fox in there for sure."

The other happily said, "Come here! Come here quick! If we wait by the entrance we can drive the fox out."

The two hunters came running, collected a lot of wood and lit a fire at the entrance. Actually, the fox den had two holes and one was on the upper side. When they lit a fire at one hole, smoke immediately curled out the other one, and as soon as that happened, flames spread from the upper hole. After the hunter who was making the fire saw that he got alarmed and came running.

He shouted, "The fire's spreading, the fire's spreading! How can we get across this hole?"

The other hunter got an idea and said, "Go quick and bring the pan on the horse's croup! After we pour water in it, we'll block the entrance."

Thus they made a fire at one hole, put tea leaves in the pan and after a short time they were easily able to make and drink tea.

There is a saying: From this people learned how to make fire on a stove. Later on this opened their minds, and from this came especially both farmers' and nomads' stoves, as well as the making of modern iron stoves.

—Ma'e Tshe ring, *Qinghai Folk Literature* 1, 1995