

THE TALE OF THE GUN AND THE BOW AND ARROW

Once upon a time, a god and a spirit competed with each other without cease to make a gun and a bow and arrow. Finally they decided that the god make the gun and the spirit the bow and arrow.

The god finished making all the parts and forms, but not knowing how to make the bolt, he fell into a state of worry. The spirit, similarly, made the bow and arrow, but did not know how to make the arrow notch.

At a loss, the two of them took turns testing each other. The god asked the spirit, “I’ve finished making the gun. If you have the strength of wisdom and the intelligence of foresight, guess what the bolt of the gun that I made should be like!” The spirit answered, “It’s easy to guess. The bolt of the gun you’ve made is foreshadowed, like the neck of a camel,” and this immediately gave the god the idea.

Then the spirit asked the god, “I’ve finished making the bow and arrow too. Well, if you have the strength of wisdom and the intelligence of foresight, what should the notch on the arrow I’ve made be like?” The god said, “That’s very easy. It’s like head of a shinbone.”

So from each of their guesses they both got the secret of whatever they did not know how to make by themselves. Like a secret that is found after returning, if one puts it into practice, one can only then complete what one does not know how to make. It is said that is how the gun and the bow and arrow were made and perfected.

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