

**FOLK TALES FROM TIBET, WITH  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY A TIBETAN  
ARTIST AND SOME VERSES  
FROM TIBETAN LOVE-SONGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649149476

Folk tales from Tibet, with illustrations by a Tibetan artist and some verses from Tibetan love-songs by W. F. O'Connor

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**W. F. O'CONNOR**

**FOLK TALES FROM TIBET, WITH  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY A TIBETAN  
ARTIST AND SOME VERSES  
FROM TIBETAN LOVE-SONGS**





One of the Story-tellers, with his Family and Servants.

# FOLK TALES FROM TIBET

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A TIBETAN ARTIST  
AND SOME VERSES FROM TIBETAN  
LOVE-SONGS

COLLECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY

CAPT. W. F. O'CONNOR, C.I.E.

*Secretary and Interpreter of the Mission to Lhasa (1904)*



LONDON  
HURST AND BLACKETT, LTD.  
182, HIGH HOLBORN, W.C.

1906

*All rights reserved*

203771

38327



## PREFACE.

IN presenting these little stories to the public, it may perhaps be of interest if I describe how I came by them.

During two years spent in Tibet, at Gyantse, Lhasa, and elsewhere, I have made many friends amongst all classes of Tibetans—high and low, rich and poor—and have conversed with all sorts of persons upon all sorts of topics. In the course of my wanderings I learned that there exists amongst this fascinating and little-known people a wealth of folk-lore, hitherto inaccessible to the outside world, and I made efforts to collect as many of their stories as I could.

For certain special reasons this quest proved more difficult than I had anticipated. In the first place, I found that many of the best known stories had been imported bodily from India\* or China, and possess but little of that local colouring which is one of the chief charms of folk-lore. Secondly, some of the very best and most characteristic stories are unfit for publication in such a book as this.† And, thirdly, human nature being much the same all the world over, it was not always

\* Compare, for example, "Tibetan Tales derived from Indian Sources," translated from the Tibetan of the *Kah Gyar* into German by F. Anton von Schiefner. Done into English from the German by R. W. S. Ralston.

† But I am preserving such of these as appear to me to possess any scientific interest.



possible to find a suitable *raconteur* in a suitable mood for story-telling. A story told by a nervous or reluctant narrator loses half its charm. A good story must be natural, and necessitates sympathy on the part both of teller and of hearer. Armed diplomatic missions and an official position, apart from all questions of difference of language and nationality, do not tend to elicit the ideal sentiments necessary for the establishment of complete mutual confidence.

But patience, and the growth of kindly feelings on both sides, helped me to some extent to overcome the shyness and reluctance of the simple folk who have supplied me with my material; and, as time went on, I was able to coax a story from many unlikely sources. Village headmen, monks, servants, local government officials, peasants, traders—these and many others have contributed to my store. Shyly and haltingly at starting, with many bashful apologies and disclaimers, the story-teller will begin his tale. But a Tibetan audience is one of the best imaginable, and their open sympathy and appreciation soon melt the frosts of reserve, and the words flow freely. Presently all sense of constraint is lost, and I have known a story interrupted for ten minutes at a time by the uncontrollable merriment aroused by some comic incident.

Some of the stories, then, I have been obliged, reluctantly enough, to discard altogether for the present; others require further revision or elucidation. But the rest of my little store I give here, and with this one apology: that I have made no attempt to ornament or

improve upon them. I have written them down just as I heard them, and have translated them, as accurately as I could, from the Tibetan idiom into ours. As to their origin or scientific bearing I say nothing, and put forward no theories. I leave the Tales to speak for themselves; but would invite, and shall cordially welcome, the criticisms and surmises of all students of folk-lore who are in a position to give an expert opinion upon such points, and to shed a light upon obscure corners into which I have been unable to penetrate.

I have added to the stories a few verses taken at random from popular Tibetan love-songs, as a sample of the wealth of imagery and genuine poetic sentiment which is to be found amongst the inhabitants of this strange country. Owing to the extremely idiomatic form and severe compression of Tibetan metrical compositions, the translation of these songs into anything even distantly resembling poetry, without altogether destroying the characteristics of the original, presents peculiar difficulties; and I must crave indulgence for their crudeness and lack of artistic finish.

The pictures are the maiden effort at book illustration of a Tibetan artist, resident at Gyantse, and are, I fear, somewhat weak in details, as owing to my absence from Gyantse during the time they were in progress I was unable personally to superintend their execution. For the excellent photograph which appears as the frontispiece I am indebted to my friend and companion at Gyantse, Capt. R. Steen, of the Indian Medical Service.

In conclusion, I must express my grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Perceval Landon, to whose suggestion the collection and publication of these Tales, as well as their illustration by a native artist, is in a great measure due ; and I must thank him, moreover, for many valuable hints and much kindly sympathy and assistance.

W. F. O'CONNOR, Capt.