

## Golden 81

### Chapter 81 Jokhang Temple

The most famous Buddhist building in Tibet is probably the Potala Palace. It was built for Princess Wencheng when she entered Tibet. When the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo married Princess Bhrikuti of Nepal and Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty, the two princesses brought with them life-size statues of the Buddha at age 8 and 12 respectively, as well as a large number of Buddhist scriptures. Influenced by the two princesses, Songtsen Gampo converted to Buddhism and built the Jokhang Temple and Ramoche Temple as they are known today.

Zhuang Rui originally planned to visit the Potala Palace first, but unexpectedly, due to the vendor's interference, he ended up at the Jokhang Temple first, and even saved several tens of yuan in entrance fees.

The Tibetan people have a saying: "The Jokhang Temple came first, then Lhasa City." The Jokhang Temple holds a central position in Lhasa, not only geographically but also in terms of social life.

Many beautiful legends surround the Jokhang Temple. One story tells of how it was repeatedly flooded during its construction. Princess Wencheng explained that the entire Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was a supine demon woman, so she said the Jokhang Temple had to be built by filling in a lake to first subdue the demon's heart. Princess Wencheng then recommended twelve other small temples in remote areas to subdue the demon's limbs and joints, resulting in a total of thirteen temples.

According to the location chosen by Princess Wencheng, the first step in building the temple was to fill in the lake. At that time, the main means of transportation relied on goats carrying bags filled with sand and soil. In this way, the lake was filled in, laying the foundation for the Jokhang Temple. The name Lhasa today evolved from the Jokhang Temple.

The inner circle around the central Shakyamuni Buddha Hall of Jokhang Temple is called "Nangkhor," the outer circle around the Jokhang Temple is called "Barkhor," and the streets radiating out from the Jokhang Temple are called "Barkhor Street," the octagonal street where Zhuang Rui and others shopped. The large circle centered on Jokhang Temple, including the Potala Palace, Chakpori Hill, and Ramoche Temple, is called "Lingkor." These three concentric circles are the routes taken by Tibetans for their circumambulation rituals.

Zhuang Rui saw many devout Tibetans outside the Jokhang Temple, prostrating themselves clockwise around the temple, chanting the six-syllable mantra, their hands clasped together overhead, taking a step forward. They moved their hands, still clasped, to their foreheads, taking another step. They moved their hands, still clasped, to their chests, taking a third step. They knelt, prostrating themselves completely, palms down, hands outstretched forward, gently touching the ground with their foreheads. They rose, and the cycle repeated.

These devout Tibetans, with protective gear on their hands and knees, weathered faces, and covered in dust, prostrate themselves on the ground, their palms making a rustling sound as they scratch the earth. Relying on their strong faith, they measure the land with their bodies, taking three steps and bowing once, slowly circumambulating the Jokhang Temple. Even if it's just a clockwise walk around the Jokhang Temple, these are the Tibetan believers Zhuang Rui met on his way to Lhasa.

Tibetan believers from far and wide travel trek through mountains and rivers, enduring wind and rain, prostrating themselves all the way, and it may take them several years to reach their holy land. When they encounter a river to cross, they will prostrate themselves along the riverbank for the width of the river before trying to cross.

Next to the Jokhang Temple, a group of Tibetans were prostrating themselves in place. Although they didn't need to walk, each of them believed that they had to prostrate themselves at least 10,000 times to express their devotion.

Seeing that the Tibetan pilgrims had already flocked into the Jokhang Temple, Gegu Lama waved to Zhuang Rui and took the lead in entering the Jokhang Temple through a small door next to the main gate.

Zhuang Rui was quite frank. He hadn't done anything wrong. Although he had started the fight, Buddhism also preached punishing evil and promoting good. He figured these lamas wouldn't do anything to him. Seeing that Zhuang Rui had come with Gegu Lama, the gatekeeper lama put his hands together, smiled, and let him in.

"This is the birthplace of the 'Geshe,' which means 'doctor' among you Han Chinese."

Upon entering the Jokhang Temple, Zhuang Rui saw a courtyard with a skylight. The Gegu Lama clearly did not regard him as a villain and explained the origin of the courtyard to him. On the east side of the courtyard, there were several rows of butter lamps. Even though it was daytime, these butter lamps were still burning continuously, presumably because someone was in charge of adding butter.

Behind the butter lamps is the main gate of the Jokhang Temple. The earliest buildings of the Jokhang Temple all started from this gate; the outer courtyards were later additions and expansions. This main hall itself is over 1400 years old, and due to years of wear and tear from devotees, the stone floor at the entrance is polished to a mirror-like shine.

Zhuang Rui saw that the believers who had just passed through the pilgrimage route were constantly coming and going, returning to the famous pilgrimage route of the Jokhang Temple at varying speeds, circling around and around again. Regardless of age or gender, everyone had a look of piety and solemnity on their faces. At this moment, everything was natural and harmonious.

Upon entering the main hall, Zhuang Rui was immediately greeted by two enormous Buddha statues on either side. The one on the left was Padmasambhava, the founder of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, and the one on the right was the Future Buddha. To the right of the entrance to the main hall's passageway was a mural depicting the story of the Jokhang Temple's construction. The mural vividly portrayed the early Potala Palace in the 7th century AD, as well as the scene of filling in the lake to build the Jokhang Temple.

Gegu Lama seemed to be very prestigious. Several lamas and tourists who passed by him bowed slightly to greet him. After leading Zhuang Rui into the main hall, Gegu Lama said to Zhuang Rui, "Young man, you can look around here. Follow the direction those people are walking and don't wander off."

Gegu seemed to have something else to do. After giving Zhuang Rui some instructions, he left, as if he had forgotten the original purpose of bringing him here. He didn't even ask about the dispute that happened in the market.

Inside the main hall were many lifelike wooden carvings on the walls. When Zhuang Rui saw these carvings, his heart stirred slightly. He took a few steps and approached the wall. He focused his mind and released the already thin spiritual energy in his eyes onto the wooden carving.

"Huh? How could this be?"

Just as the spiritual energy in his eyes pierced through the wood carvings, Zhuang Rui immediately sensed that these wood carvings contained a vast amount of spiritual energy. Even when the spiritual energy in his eyes was at its peak, compared to this, it was probably just a drop in the ocean.

However, to Zhuang Rui's surprise and deep frustration, although he could sense the presence of these spiritual energies, he was unable to absorb them. This was the first time Zhuang Rui had encountered such a situation.

The spiritual energy in those murals gave Zhuang Rui a sudden illusion, as if his own spiritual energy was water, while the spiritual energy in the wood-carved murals was oil. Although water and oil can coexist in the same container, they cannot be mixed together.

"Could it be that the amount of spiritual energy in my eyes is too small to integrate with the spiritual energy in the mural?"

Zhuang Rui withdrew the spiritual energy from his eyes, looked at the mural in front of him, and began to think. Although he had used the spiritual energy in his eyes frequently in the past few days and the amount had become much less, he could still see through the wood to a depth of about one centimeter, which was no different from before.

However, the spiritual energy that had previously been invincible could no longer be absorbed from the mural. This surprised Zhuang Rui and filled him with deep disappointment. It was like entering a treasure mountain only to find that he couldn't take anything out of it; that feeling would drive anyone mad.

Zhuang Rui tried again, but to no avail. Frustrated, he almost shouted out loud. The usually calm Zhuang Rui now wished he could pounce on the murals and smash them to release the spiritual energy within.

"Waaah..."

Just as Zhuang Rui felt a pang of discomfort, like being scratched by a cat, the little white lion in his arms started whimpering and desperately clawing at Zhuang Rui's clothes, as if trying to get down to the ground. Zhuang Rui was a little puzzled; this little thing was always very docile in his arms, so why did it seem so agitated today?

Zhuang Rui was so preoccupied with the spiritual energy in the murals that he didn't care about the little guy anymore. Without thinking too much, he put the white lion on the ground.

The little white lion was already walking quite steadily. After getting off the ground, it immediately ran towards a staircase at the corner of the main hall. However, it was too small and couldn't climb up no matter what it did. It was so anxious that it kept whimpering, which made Zhuang Rui, who was already a little irritable, even more upset.

"Alas, perhaps I am simply not meant to be with the spiritual energy of this place."

Zhuang Rui sighed inwardly, but there was nothing he could do. As the saying goes, out of sight, out of mind. Unable to think of any other solution, Zhuang Rui prepared to leave.

"Um?"

Looking around, Zhuang Rui discovered that the little creature had actually climbed a staircase much taller than itself. However, this wooden staircase had more than twenty steps, and the little white lion had only climbed to the first step, unable to go up or down. Its fluffy body paced back and forth on the wide staircase, constantly barking in Zhuang Rui's direction. The little guy's behavior also attracted the attention of many tourists and believers.

Seeing the little guy's mischievous antics, Zhuang Rui's frustration lessened somewhat. This little guy was very understanding; these past few days, he had never troubled Zhuang Rui with his bodily functions, instead going to the spot Liu Chuan had prepared to relieve himself. Coupled with his adorable appearance, he had made Qin Xuanbing and the others extremely envious. However, the little white lion wouldn't allow anyone to touch it except Zhuang Rui. Even Qin Xuanbing could only hold and play with it for a while under Zhuang Rui's forced command.

Shaking his head, Zhuang Rui walked over, thinking the little thing might be hungry. He bent down and picked up the little white lion. His eyes glanced over unintentionally and he was surprised to find that the wooden staircase was actually made of sandalwood. Although it wasn't the rare small-leaf sandalwood, the amount of material used in this row of stairs was still quite precious.

"Clang... clang clang..."

Zhuang Rui reached out and tapped the surface of the stairs, which produced a metallic clanging sound, sparking his interest in the stairs.

Looking at the little white lion cub still tearing at his clothes in his arms, Zhuang Rui hesitated for a moment. Before leaving, Gegu Lama had told him not to wander around. Zhuang Rui didn't know if this was a forbidden area of the Jokhang Temple. He had been standing here for a long time and hadn't seen a single tourist go up, but none of the lamas coming and going had come to stop him or ask him anything.

Ultimately, curiosity about the unknown prevailed. Zhuang Rui picked up the little white lion, held onto the intricately carved stair railing, and slowly walked upwards.