

THE CHINESE GOLD MURDER

CHINESE CLASSICS

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Robert Hans van Gulik
(Netherlands)



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Judge Dee was born in an ordinary bureaucratic landowner family in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and he was extremely hardworking and his efforts eventually paid off when he was selected and appointed a position in the government. At the age of 47-year-old, within a year during his tenure as an assistant officer in Dali (the position to be in charge of investigating legal cases), he handed down the judgment to over 17 thousand legal cases and all the relatives of the prosecuted expressed their willingness to comply with the verdict. He was an upright government official who was courageous enough to fight against evil and became the most credited hero that contributes to the revival of the Tang Dynasty.

Recommendations Made by Scholars Both Home and Abroad about Robert Hans Van Gulik and “A Judge Dee Mystery”

Robert is truly laud-deserving and as a foreigner, he certainly knows more about China than many Chinese people.

Nan Huaijin – An Expert in Chinese Studies

Robert has struck an apt balance of Chinese cultures and traditions and Chinese psychology. It is a purely unparalleled endeavor for a westerner to write a story in Chinese (some portions of “A Judge Dee Mystery” are written in Chinese). The complex interweaving of stories and clues eventually reveals itself piece by piece until the truth is told, inspiring great happiness in readers about the extraordinary logic and wisdom involved.

Shi Changyu –

A Researcher in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

He is truly a styled artist, collector, detective story writer that helps China to spread its essence and an unprofessional sinologist with areas of knowledge and skills that far surpass many of his professional counterparts. Robert Hans van Gulik is the contemporary westerner who has probably made the utmost contribution to spreading Chinese culture

Zhao Yiheng –

Professor of School of Oriental Studies in University of London

Robert manages to relive ancient China in a lively manner with his exceptional skills.

Alan Dean Herbin of "New York Times" Book Review

He makes creation of this masterpiece happen by strictly following the writing style of ancient Chinese classics and the writing has wonderfully satisfied modern readers.

"New York Times"

This story about Judge Dee depicts a charming, cruel and unfathomable Tang Dynasty in ancient China

"Chicago Sun-Times"

"A Judge Dee Mystery" is another precious branch pioneered by Robert in the area of detective stories around the world; it is interesting, educational and impressive.

"Times Literary Supplement"

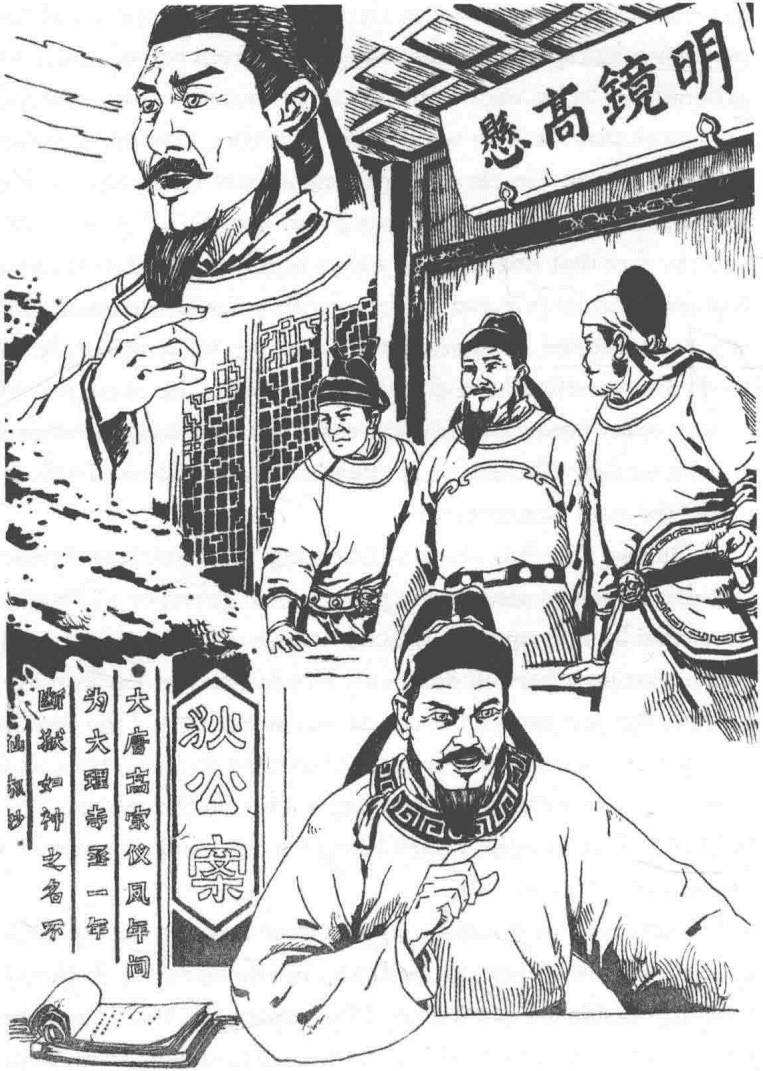
CHAPTER 1

The Magistrate Dee Renjie was a famous high-ranking government official in time of the prime of the Tang Dynasty. He was the chief decision-maker in the central administrative government in charge of political affairs and his reputation had spread far and wide and has been passed down for generations. In his early years, it can be derived from historical evidences that Mr. Dee was for the first time appointed as the governor of Dali Temple during Yifeng years of Gaozong rule. He sentenced as many as 17 thousand criminals to jail in one year and the fact that nobody was either falsely accused or framed has dramatically boosted his fame within the government. He was even dubbed as smart as God. During his tenure as local government officials in counties and towns, he managed to unravel many mysterious criminal cases that were truly horrifying and astounding. This article is intended to elaborate in detail on one of the most famous cases.

During Yonghui years of Gaozong rule, Mr. Dee Renjie was dispatched to assume the post of local governor of Penglai Township by metropolitan officials whose close confidants and patrons set up a farewell dinner for him in Beihuan Pavilion five miles to the east gate of the city. It was in March and the drizzle continued for a score of days without a sunny day. The peach and apricot flowers were falling, creating a mess on the ground. The sight of a crooked stone amidst falling flowers inevitably incites a feeling of melancholy.

Three men were silently sipping their wine on the top floor of the Pavilion of Joy and Sadness, overlooking the highway crossing outside the north gate of the imperial capital. Ever since people could remember, this old, three-storied restaurant, built on a pine-clad hillock, had been the traditional place where metropolitan officials were wont to see off their friends leaving

明鏡高懸



狄公案

大唐高宗儀鳳年間
為大理寺丞一年
斷獄如神之名不

虛傳

for posts in the interior, and where they came again to bid them welcome when, their term of office completed, they returned to the capital.

The three friends had partaken of a simple noon meal; now the time of parting was drawing near. The difficult last moments had come, when one gropes in vain for the right words. All three were about thirty years old. Two wore the brocade caps of junior secretaries; the third, whom they were seeing off, the black cap of a district magistrate.

Secretary Liang put down his wine cup with a determined gesture. He said testily to the young magistrate, "It's the fact that it's so completely unnecessary that irks me most! You had the post of junior secretary in the Metropolitan Court of Justice for the asking! Then you would have become a colleague of our friend Hou here, we could have continued our pleasant life together here in the capital, and you—"

Magistrate Dee had been tugging impatiently at his long, coal-black beard. Now he interrupted sharply.

"We have been over this many times already, and I—" He quickly caught himself up and went on with an apologetic smile, "I told you that I am sick and tired of studying criminal cases – on paper!"

"There is no need to leave the capital for that," Secretary Liang remarked. "Aren't there enough interesting cases here? What about that secretary of the Board of Finance, Wang Yuan-te his name is, I think, the fellow who murdered his clerk and absconded with thirty gold bars from the Treasury? Our friend's uncle Hou Kwang, secretary-general of the Board, asks the Court every day for news, isn't it, Hou?"

The third man, who wore the insignia of a secretary of the Metropolitan Court, looked worried. He hesitated somewhat,