

M498

How a swallow and a toad went to the king's country to see an elephant.

Singer not recorded.

They fixed a time of ten days,
But though they searched the land they saw nothing.
They fixed a time of ten days,
But though they searched the land they heard nothing.

5 Yet it was said that the Chinese king had built,
Had built a house, but where?

The people said,
Said that the people had not seen it.
But the swallow said,
10 The swallow had been and seen.

The swallow said,
That the swallow had eaten,
Had eaten eighty-eight measures
Of popped-corn meal and stone fragments as travelling rations,
15 While his curved, iron walking stick was three hand-breadths long.

Where was the Chinese king's house?
The people said,
Said the people had not seen it.
But the toad was able to say,
20 The toad had been and seen.

For the toad had eaten,
Had eaten eighty-eight measures
Of popped-corn meal and iron fragments as travelling rations,
While his curved, iron walking stick was three spans long.

25 It was said that the Chinese king had built,
Had built a house, but what was it like?
The interior of the Chinese king's house was like a rock face,
And the exterior was like the face of a cliff.

The people said,
30 The people had not seen it.
But the toad said,
Said the toad had been and seen.

The Chinese king's house,
The house had copper roofing inside,
35 And iron roofing outside.

Who was it kept an elephant,

An elephant with coloured markings on its tail?
The people said,
The people said they had not seen it.
40 But the swallow said,
Said that the swallow had been and seen,
Had seen the elephant.

Its attentive ears were as big as fans,
Its glowing eyes as big as small basins,
45 And its grey trunk as long as a leg band.

With its mouth it ate,
Ate ninety-nine kinds of fresh grain,
While with its mouth it drank,
Drank ninety-nine tubs of fresh water.

50 Thus it is ended.