

GA GUIN: THE NEW JOSS OF PORTLAND'S CHINATOWN

BY JOHNSTON McCULLY

THE little front room of the Joss House at the corner of Second and Oak streets surrounded by gilded dragons and flowers that never wither or fade, stands Ga Guin. His six eyes, concentered from the white enamel of whose manufacture none save the high priests of Confucius in the temples of Canton are supposed to know the secret, stare blankly at the opposite, tinseled-covered wall. The lips of his three mouths are seemingly curled with the scorn he feels for his surroundings. But about his three foreheads there is an expression of pleasantness, of peace—soothing, winning, sympathetic—an expression that is good to see, for Ga Guin is the Joss of the happy household and the fortune—the mighty god of good spirits.

Time was when Ga Guin was naught but a block of uncarved wood, a few pounds of unmitigated paint, a chunk of sacred enamel and a portion of gilt and gold. He was scattered about Canton, a part of him in the temples of the inner and sacred city, a part of him in the mercantile establishments. He had the future of no Celestial in his outstretched hands then. No son of Confucius knelt before him with forehead pressed to floor. No incense burned before him to beseech his good favor.

Then there came a messenger who demanded from the high priests of Canton a new Ga Guin. The block of wood was carved. The enamel was fashioned and became eyes. Gold and gilt was applied. And out of the raw materials there issued a god—a block of painted and gilded magnificence—before which Portland's religious Chinamen will kneel and bow in time to come.

Then came the journey across the sea, a journey which Ga Guin made in a heavily-bound box marked upon the outside with quaint characters which told of Ga Guin's power and importance. Upon his arrival he spent a few days in the Custom-House—unavoidably detained. His faithful subjects ultimately came forward with his ransom, and Ga Guin was carried away and placed in his future home.

Not Yet a Powerful Deity.

And there he stands today in a glory uncomplete. For Ga Guin is not yet an all-powerful deity. There is a mass of ceremonies to be performed, a mass of incense to be consumed, a great deal of chattering by priests and their following to be gone through before Ga Guin enters into his own. More tinseled must adorn the walls of the Joss House. There must be more gilt and more gold. Everything must be new—as new as Ga Guin. And everything must come from the sacred city of Canton, after being blessed and passed upon by the few men qualified to do it.

Ga Guin does not rule alone. There is a retinue of gilded dragons of sizes innumerable. Queer little figures fashioned from gold surround his throne. Two great flags are entwined above him. Flowers are before him. Candel-sticks surround him. Emblems, whose meaning is blank save to the initiated, are on every side. From the ceiling of the room hang fantastic creations from paper. No king in royal robes is more magnificent than Ga Guin.

The idol stands with his back against the north wall of the room. He is in the niche of a great and massive frame of gilt and gold. The top of the frame is carved into shapes and figures that are never seen outside of a Joss House. In the center are three Chinese characters announcing the name of the Joss beneath. The carvings are inlaid with gold, and the characters are from the sacred enamel.

The sides of the frame are about one foot in width. The sides are inlaid with gold, there is a strip of enamel down the center of each side, and, on either side of this strip, Chinese characters tell the history and particular virtues of Ga Guin, the method of worship, and the penalties that Ga Guin is liable to impose for desultory homage. The sides slant slightly toward the center and are joined with gilded bars to the back piece, against which stands the body of the idol. The wood of which the sides and top of the frame is composed is distinctly Chinese, and has the appearance of ebony. Suffice it to say that it is not.

Stands Without Feet.

The base of the frame is solid gilt, dotted with circles and characters of the enamel, the whole massed over a wooden base a foot in thickness. On this base, in the rear, in bas-relief against a gilt background, stands Ga Guin. He doesn't exactly stand, for the figure is cut off below the knees. Feet would be unnecessary in the case of Ga Guin—the good spirits he represents must be able to rise to lofty heights, hence the missing feet, symbols of the fact that there is nothing to hold the spirits to earth.

The body of the idol is in gold, and greatly out of proportion to the heads. There are three heads. At the waist of the central figure and other figures emerge, one on either side. It is a three-man idol above the waist. Of the head of the central figure there is a front view. The eyes of enamel are small, and there is a peculiar look about them, blank, yet piercing. In the light that is thrown upon the face from a near-by window it looks ghastly. The features are of another sort of enamel, a color yellow though slightly tinted with a reddish-pink which makes the face look flushed if viewed on the side away from the light. The forehead is high and pleasant-looking when compared with the rest of the face. On the upper lip of this central figure is the typical Chinese mustache, long, black and curling. The mustache alone is symbolic of Ga Guin's superiority. No Celestial may wear a mustache unless he be of royal blood or holds a position of state slightly less in rank than that of the Emperor. But there is even a limit to the mustache of the Emperor and Ga Guin and his fellow-gods exceed this limit. The beard of a Celestial and of his gods is an insignia of rank more potent than the Victoria Cross, the Garter, the Iron Cross, or the rosette of the Legion of Honor.

The side figures of Ga Guin are also in bas-relief and show the profile. The features of these two figures are principally the same as those of the central figure. The foreheads are perhaps a trifle lower and the pleasant expression is wanting. When your Celestial wants to get in good spirits he must begin to pray to one of the side figures and advance by degrees to the supreme happiness of the central deity of Ga Guin.

Favor Won by Prayer.

On either side of the central figure at the base is a huge candelstick with a capacity of three candles. When Ga Guin is in operation these six candles are always burning. A gilded pot hung from the top of the frame by means of gold chains is filled with incense, and this also is burned. The pot swings slowly backward and forward, now obscuring, now giving to view the three faces of the idol. There are no pots for sacrifices. For Ga Guin demands no sacrifice save untiring prayer on the part of one who seeks his favor.

When a particularly important boon is craved there are candelsticks at the base and top of the frame which are supplied with lighted candles. Before this burning, smoking mass kneels the Celestial with forehead bowed to the floor, arms outstretched and palms downward. In this position he implores Ga Guin to visit upon his household a season of happiness and contentment. Now and then he looks upward at the face of the idol. If the expression of the features seems to take on a human light through the smoke and the flame the Celestial rejoices, for his prayers are answered; but should the face of the Joss retain its stolid, indif-



PORTLAND CHINATOWN'S NEW JOSS

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ferent appearance the Celestial kneels again, his forehead to the floor, his arms outstretched, and implores anew the favor of Ga Guin.

Dedication on New Year.

On the first day of the Chinaman's New Year, Ga Guin will be dedicated to worship. Elaborate ceremonies will take place, candles innumerable will be burned and incense consumed until the Joss House is thick with smoke. On that day every believing Chinaman in Portland's Chinatown will kneel in supplication before the new Ga Guin for traditions have it that a boon requested of a Joss on the day of his sanctification will be immediately granted a hundred fold, and that homage paid to Ga Guin in particular on the day of his dedication will bring peace and contentment and happiness to the household of the suppliant for a year to come.

But there is another side to the story of the great "first-day" power of a new Joss. He who kneels before the new idol and requests favor on the day of that idol's sanctification, must beware that he does not transgress the commands of that idol during the ensuing year. To pass for one moment from the road of righteousness as laid out by the Joss would mean a punishment that could only be averted by weeks and weeks of steady and earnest supplication, by days and days of fasting and by endless donations to the high priest who presides over the Joss. It is superstition that makes the Joss benevolent to the Celestial—it is also superstition that makes him terrible in anger. The eyes of the Celestial are more keen than those of a Caucasian—he sees in the human features of Ga Guin an expression either of approval or disapproval. To him the forehead of the Joss is human—eye, more than human—for as he looks upon it he can trace insidious lines converging in a frown of displeasure, or diverging in an expression of supreme contempt.

Joy in Chinatown.

On the day when Ga Guin shall be dedicated to worship there will be joy in Chinatown. Flags and lanterns will hang from every balcony on every New Year's, but this time there will be more brilliant and more numerous flags, there will be heathenish sounds issuing from every building, there will be an incessant chattering on the streets. At sunrise on that memorable day a priest will suddenly appear on the balcony before the little room where stands Ga Guin. Celestials in the street below will be awaiting his appearance. They will maintain a dignified silence while the priest looks contemptuously on them and then raises his hands and eyes above. Then, in disingenuous measure, the priest will utter a statement of how, not long ago, Ga Guin was ashamed of his children, how he ordered himself and them to be destroyed by fire, how applications were sent to Canton for a new Ga Guin and how the Ga Guin arrived and condescended to abide once more in Portland's Chinatown.

Inside, another priest will suddenly light the candles before Ga Guin. The priest outside will turn about and see the smoke and flame. Then he will turn again to those below him, stretch out his arms and cry in a happy voice that Ga Guin is taking on the breath of immortal life and awaits the homage of his people.

The Chinese in the street will then be silent no longer. Shriek cries will rend the air, there will be a pattering of padded feet, a rush of Celestials up the stairs and into the Joss House. Hats will come off, down on their hands and knees will go the multitude, palms will be outstretched in supplication for pardon and mercy and favor. The priest will then make Ga Guin a speech, telling him how obedient his children will be. After this is done the incense pot will be lighted, the priest will take his place of honor on the dais to the right of Ga Guin, beneath a mass of flowers and flags and gilded dragons, and then the individual worship will begin.

The God's First Homage.

One by one the Celestials will advance to a point directly before the Joss. There they will remain for a few moments in prayer. Then they look upward, and if the light of favor is in the eyes of Ga Guin they arise, back out of the room and go on their way rejoicing, for it has been decreed that for a space of one year their household will be a place of happiness and good spirits. The Celestials in the rear patiently await their turn, thinking the reward will be greater.

And over this scene of kneeling Celestials, of smoking incense and burning candles, of barbaric splendor, of gilded dragons and twisted flags, of paper and tinseled gilt and gold—Ga Guin will gaze with eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear—inanimate, Sphinx-like, awe-inspiring—a thing of superstition and of fear forever.

SALVATIONISTS TO WED.

Two Soldiers of the Army to Be Married at Public Ceremony.

A hallelujah wedding will take place at the Salvation Army barracks on Thursday, August 25, the contracting parties being Mr. Ray Depperman and Miss Edna Belle. The ceremony will be public and will be performed by Staff Captain Mrs. McAbee, of Seattle, who was formerly in charge of barracks No. 4 in this city, where the happy couple were soldiers. Captain McAbee will be remembered by many here. Preceding the wedding service there will be a march on the street, the special features of which will be a timbal band and ten virgins.

The bridal pair will not take part in the procession, but will appear only in the hall. The wedding will be solemnized on the platform under a marriage bell and amidst floral decoration and banners, including the flag of the army and the American starry banner. Refreshments will be served, consisting of ice cream and cake, and the bride will cut the wedding cake.

Miss Belle has been associated with the army since she was a child, and Mr. Depperman is also a veteran.

CHEAP ASTORIA RATE.

Two Dollars for Round Trip Announced by the O. R. & N.

The O. R. & N. announces the extremely low rate of \$2 for round trip, Portland to Astoria, Wednesday and Thursday of this week, account the retreat. Tickets are good returning by boat or rail. Particulars of C. W. Stitzer, city ticket agent, Third and Washington streets.

DAILY METEOROLOGICAL REPORT.

PORTLAND, Aug. 20.—Maximum temperature, 85 deg.; minimum, 52. River reading, 11 A. M., 5.2 feet; change in 24 hours, -0.2 foot. Total precipitation, 5 P. M. to 5 P. M., none; total since September 1, 1903, 47.74 inches; normal, 46.75; excess, .49 of an inch. Total sunshine August 19, 1904, 6 hours and 35 minutes; possible, 14 hours. Barometer (reduced to sea level), at 5 P. M., 30.18.

PACIFIC COAST WEATHER.

STATIONS.	Temperature.	Wind.	Clouds.
Baker City	64.0-60.0	ND	Clear
Burns	63.0-59.0	ND	Clear
Boise	72.0-60.0	SW	Clear
Helena	58.0-50.0	SW	Clear
Kamloops, B. C.	60.0-50.0	NW	Cloudy
North Bend	60.0-50.0	NW	Cloudy
Pocatello	70.0-50.0	SW	Clear
Portland	58.0-50.0	SW	Smoky
Red Bluff	58.0-50.0	SW	Clear
Roseburg	58.0-50.0	SW	Clear
Sacramento	72.0-60.0	NW	Clear
Salt Lake City	78.0-60.0	NW	Clear
San Francisco	70.0-60.0	SW	Clear
Spokane	70.0-60.0	SE	Clear
Seattle	70.0-60.0	SW	Clear
St. Louis	70.0-60.0	SW	Clear
Walla Walla	74.0-60.0	SW	Clear

*Light T trace.

WEATHER CONDITIONS.

Fair weather continues in the North Pacific States, but in Montana, good rains have occurred during the last 12 hours.

It is cooler in Oregon, Eastern Washington and Idaho, and much cooler in Montana.

The indications are for fair weather in this district Sunday. It will be warmer in Oregon.

WEATHER FORECASTS.

Forecast made at Portland at 5 P. M. for 24 hours ending at midnight, August 21:

Portland vicinity—Fair and warmer. Northerly winds.

Oregon—Fair and warmer. Northerly winds. Washington—Fair. Northwesterly winds. Idaho—Fair. EDWARD A. BEALLS, District Forecaster.

CLASSIFIED AD. RATES.

"Rooms," "Rooms and Board," "House-keeping Rooms," "Situations Wanted," 15 words or less, 15 cents; 16 to 20 words, 25 cents; 21 to 25 words, 35 cents, etc. No discount for additional insertions.

UNDER ALL OTHER HEADS, except "New Today," 30 cents for 15 words or less; 16 to 20 words, 40 cents; 21 to 25 words, 55 cents, etc.—first insertion. Each additional insertion, one-half; no further discount under one month.

"NEW TODAY" (space measure agents), 15 cents per line, first insertion; 10 cents per line for each additional insertion.

ANSWERS TO ADVERTISEMENTS, addressed care The Oregonian, and left at this office, should always be inclosed in sealed envelopes. No stamp is required on such letters.

The Oregonian will not be responsible for errors in advertisements taken through the telephone.

AMUSEMENTS.

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BASEBALL
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RECREATION PARK.
August 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.
Ladies' days, Thursday and Friday. Games called 2:30; Sunday, 2:30 P. M. Admission, 25c; children 15c.

MEETING NOTICES.
KELLER'S HALL, FIRST AND MADISON sts., for rent Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday. Inquire 260 Front st.

FIDELITY LODGE NO. 4, A. O. U. W., and Fidelity Lodge No. 14, D. of U.—Members are notified that Past Supreme Master Workman J. G. Tule will give an address at the lodge room in Lewis building, on Wednesday evening, August 24. All are cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.
W. K. BENNIE, M. W.
Attest: C. J. WHEELER, Recorder.

BORN.
CRONIN—August 16, to the wife of Ambrose M. Cronin, a son.
COLEMAN—To the wife of M. Coleman, a son weighing 13 pounds. Mother and child doing well.

FUNERAL NOTICE.
MORTENSEN—At her late residence at Montavilla, August 19, 1904, Julia S. Mortensen, wife of Jacob S. Mortensen, aged 23 years, 6 months and 27 days. Funeral will take place Monday, August 22, at 2 P. M. from the Methodist Church at Montavilla. Friends invited.

BUSHONG—At Mayer, Or., August 18, 1904, Eva Mayer Bushong, aged 24 years, 1 month, 19 days. Burial at 10:30 A. M., Wednesday, August 24, at the cemetery. Friends invited to attend. Interment Greenwood Cemetery.

EDWARD HOLMAN CO., Undertakers and embalmers, have moved to their new building Third and Salmon. Lady assistant, Telephone No. 597.

J. P. FINLEY & SON, Funeral Directors, cor. 34 and Madison. Office of County Coroner. Lady assistant. Telephone No. 9.

F. S. DUNNING, Undertaker, 414 East Alder. Lady assistant. Telephone East 52.

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