**Tikki Tikki Tembo**

a chain tale from China  
recalled by  
[[http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/dash.gif](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/ashliman.html)  
D. L. Ashliman](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/ashliman.html)

Once upon a time in faraway China there lived two brothers, one named Sam, and one named Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako.

Now one day the two brothers were playing near the well in their garden when Sam fell into the well, and Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako ran to his mother, shouting, "Quick, Sam has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"What?" cried the mother, "Sam has fallen into the well? Run and tell father!"

Together they ran to the father and cried, "Quick, Sam has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"Sam has fallen into the well?" cried the father. "Run and tell the gardner!"

Then they all ran to the gardner and shouted, "Quick, Sam has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"Sam has fallen into the well?" cried the gardner, and then he quickly fetched a ladder and pulled the poor boy from the well, who was wet and cold and frightened, and ever so happy to still be alive.

Some time afterward the two brothers were again playing near the well, and this time Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako fell into the well, and Sam ran to his mother, shouting, "Quick, Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"What?" cried the mother, "Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well? Run and tell father!"

Together they ran to the father and cried, "Quick, Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well?" cried the father. "Run and tell the gardner!"

Then they all ran to the gardner and shouted, "Quick, Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well. What shall we do?"

"Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako has fallen into the well?" cried the gardner, and then he quickly fetched a ladder and pulled Tikki Tikki Tembo No Sarimbo Hari Kari Bushkie Perry Pem Do Hai Kai Pom Pom Nikki No Meeno Dom Barako from the well, but the poor boy had been in the water so long that he had drowned.

And from that time forth, the Chinese have given their children short names.

* Source: I heard this story in the 1940's from my mother, Elgarda Zobell Ashliman, who learned it about 1927 in Rigby, Idaho, from Ruth Harper, a schoolteacher. I do not know whether Ruth Harper learned the story from a published book or from oral tradition.
* A more recent retelling of this Chinese folktale is *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, retold by Arlene Mosel, illustrated by Blair Lent (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).
* This tale follows the pattern of the traditional chain story "The Death of the Little Hen," in which a chicken chokes on a nut, then dies while its partner is seeking help from first one source and then another (Aarne-Thompson type 2021A).
* Link to [additional chain tales](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html#chaintales).

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* [Folktales from China](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/china.html), edited by D. L. Ashliman.
* D. L. Ashliman's **[folktexts](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html)**, a library of folktales, folklore, fairy tales, and mythology.

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