

M202

How the ancients passed their time.

Narrated by Wang Jian-guo.

They say that during a time of adversity, our old folk did not build houses to live in, but simply lived at the foot of rocks and trees and in the hollow of trees. In those days the forests were very great, and they feared the wild animals very much. So it was that the old people passed their time cutting herbs, gathering fruit and hunting game.

If they went hunting in the forest, at the time when they were returning, they would blow instruments and blow on leaves, so that those who had stayed home would hear and know that their own people were arriving, and they would ask, "Are you human or are you spirits?" When they heard that these were really the voices of their own home folk, presently they would return to the place where the young women were.

Because at that time one group would seize the dwelling place of another group, they were afraid that other people might have come and seized their dwelling place. Since those who had gone out into the forest did not in fact know what was happening at home, they blew instruments and called out so that both those in the forest and those at home would be able to distinguish their own people clearly, and presently come home.

It was also said that at that time, when the men had gone out into the forest and the women and children were left at home, whatever the pretext, good or ill, the women would be constantly crying. However, on one occasion, the men had been out in the forest and were returning. As they neared home, they heard the women who had remained at home singing songs which were very good to listen to. Because of this they said, "Be matters good or ill, we want no crying, only singing, because crying is not good to listen to".

Since, come good or ill, these women would cry, they were called "nie" [pronounced with the tone value 45 it means "crying"]. As time went by, in common use this became "nie" [pronounced with the tone value 55 it means "mother"]. Moreover if one of these women had a man [i.e. a lover], she would take and hide him, not willing that other people should see or know. She wanted him for herself only. Because she hid ["vai" pronounced with the tone value 11] him for herself only, they call a man father ["vai" pronounced with the tone value 21].