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Matters concerning Byu-no and Sao-no.

Related by Yang Sa-gai.

They tell a story that of old our ancestors arrived in a country covered by great dark forests. They spent their time clearing the forest and hunting, but, though the jungle that could be cleared for cultivation was extensive, they were very much afraid of the Yi. So it was that they said to one another, "We must be cautious lest, in clearing the forest we happen to trespass on to Yi land, and the Yi come and take us. Let everyone be most careful for fear that the Yi may come and see us here".

Later, while people continued to live there and spread further afield as their numbers increased, a day came when a certain Miao man went tree felling, and in so doing, happened to trespass on to Yi land. He returned home very frightened, and soon after, sure enough, the Yi arrived. To begin with these Yi were very good. They did not scold the Miao man, and they permitted him to cultivate that land, but they did require some help in the form of compulsory service. However, the longer they lived there, the more arduous the compulsory service became. As compulsory service this Byu-no family took our ancestors with them when they went visiting. They could be away for more than half a year before returning, and, on these visits, the compulsory service meant very long journeys. So the people made up a song which said,

"Who required hard compulsory work?
It was the 'good' Yi Lord who required hard compulsory work!
When you do compulsory work you should get your food,
When we Miao folk did compulsory work we got no food.
When you do compulsory work you should get some free time,
When we Miao folk did compulsory work for the 'good' Yi Lord, we got no free time".

Even on New Year's Day our ancestors still had to do hard compulsory service. So they said to one another, "It is not even enough that we Miao folk have to do the Lord's compulsory service on New Year's Day!" and they agreed together, "It is hard being slaves. The truth is we cannot go on living here".

One year the family of Lord Sao-no wished to take a wife from the Byu-no family. Because these Yi families were few in number, if one group wished to intermarry with another group it was necessary to travel considerable distances. The Byu-no family took our ancestors on a visit to Sao-no which lasted between six months and a year before they could return. When Sao-no visited Byu-no it was just the same.

The Sao-no family having agreed with the family of Byu-no for their daughter in marriage, it was necessary to pay the marriage settlement in cattle, according to old Yi custom in arranging marriages. The number of cattle that Sao-no had to deliver to Byu-no was considerable, as many as might graze over two or three hillsides, so that when herded together they made the whole hillside look red.

When the time for escorting the bride approached, Byu-no ordered the Miao foremen to find people to make spoons for eating, and ordered the Meng-go to weave baskets to serve the food. The people were to prepare a large number of spoons and food baskets

for fear there might not be enough for the many guests to use. Accordingly the foremen had the people fashioning spoons every day in order to be ready.

When the day for escorting the bride arrived many guests came. Those seated filled the house, while those standing filled the precinct. The Lord of the bride's family ordered the slaves to bring out the spoons for eating, but, for some unknown reason, they had all disappeared. Very many guests were arriving, but there were no spoons for them to use, so the Lord of the bride's family, in anger, took the pair of foremen and beat them, at which they were most distressed. Also, as a result, the Lord of the bridegroom's family was unhappy and grew angry, and a quarrel ensued between the Lord of the bridegroom's family and the Lord of the bride's family.

In the evening the Lord of the bridegroom's family sent for the pair of foremen and talked with them. "Are you willing to go with me back to Sao-no?" In the circumstances the pair of foremen replied, "We are willing to go". So the Lord of the bridegroom's family said, "You go back quickly, prepare plenty of rations for your journey, go on ahead and wait for me". So the pair of foremen returned and told their neighbours. All who heard wanted to accompany the Lord of the bridegroom's family. They were highly elated. Quickly they prepared rations for the journey and were ready to leave during the night. Neither house nor home nor belongings were wanted any longer, and by midnight all had departed, going on ahead of the Lord of the bridegroom's family.

Now people say that the Lord of the bridegroom's family had planned all this much earlier. He wanted to take the Miao to Sao-no, but fearing that the Lord of the bride's family would object, at the time when the foremen delivered the spoons, the Lord of the bridegroom's family deliberately took and hid them, in order that the pair of foremen might get a severe beating and therefore be willing to come away with him.

When the Miao had gone, the Lord of the bride-groom's family arose immediately, preparing to leave for Sao-no well before the accustomed time, and, because of all that had happened, the Lord of the bride's family could not dissuade him. Then the Lord of the bride's family discovered that the Miao had all gone and his quarrel with the Lord of the bridegroom's family sharpened dramatically. First the Lord of the bridegroom's family had incited the Miao to go on ahead, and then he was hastening after them. For three days had scarcely passed, and the Lord of the bridegroom's family was up and on his way.

Now these Miao had all left in a body, so many, that the very roads appeared white as they went. One group, however, having reached half way, could not continue, and simply settled where they were. Another group separated and travelled off to A-nzhi country. Those who were able, remained with the Lord of the bridegroom's family. They came on to Shui-cheng where later they built a settlement, and the longer they remained there the more people fled to the area. So it came about that the groups were separated by considerable distances. Those who had gone to live in A-nzhi country called to those who lived up here to go down to A-nzhi so that ultimately they might all live together in one place.