

## Arranging marriages according to the old customs

*Written by Wang Ming-ji.*

To begin with approaches had to be made, and it was necessary to make four such approaches. The time for making the approaches was at intervals of thirteen days. So it was said, "One ba-zhu, one approach excursion". (A ba-zhu is thirteen days.) Whether the bride was obtained or not, it was necessary to make the four excursions, one approach each ba-zhu.

1. Go and enquire. After this others may not.
2. Go and enquire to get a reply.
3. Go and enquire to get a firm response.
4. Go and fetch the bride.

They would bring the bridegroom to within one li, and send his friends to fetch the bride. If the bride was willing to go, and her mother and father were willing to give her to the bridegroom, then her home people would appoint the bridesmaids to accompany her. When the young men came to fetch the bride, the girls of the village would try to prevent her from going, but her parents, her sisters-in-law and her brothers would ignore them. However, when the bride was fetched, an older person went with her. The bridegroom then would take hold of the bride. With the bridesmaids properly prepared, and the bride willing to go, all would return together for a meal, then they would all depart together.

If the bride was unwilling to go, the middleman would announce that the marriage was off.

In the bridal party there had to be seven women in all, five young women, one matron and, of course, the bride. There had to be five men, including one older man, one headman, and one nephew who was the "cattle bringer", the person who brought the cattle back from the bridegroom's family.

Explanation: When married the bride should go for about two years. The parents on both sides should be equally rich to arrange a marriage. For a marriage there were normally required, one bullock, five goats, and one pig, but provided there were seven animals it would do.

On the bride's side, it was necessary for her to make the "bridegroom's gown". Even though she was already married, the bride had to return to her parents' home to make this gown, only so would it count as the "bridegroom's gown".