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NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Michael Black

“Speech, whether insulting or flattering, beneficial or injurious, carries life force above all; in all its uses it retains the constant quality of being language”.

(M. Griaule)²

- 1 A man, who is Han, arrives at a stall run by Hui (Chinese Muslims). The man suddenly makes some remarks which Huis consider to be insulting and bursts out laughing. The young daughter of the stallholder, who is only 17, is furious and dismayed. She knows that such remarks could set off a brawl involving several hundred people. Turning to her father, she is amazed to see him laughing as well. What's going on? She cannot understand the situation, she has never seen this man before, he is not a friend of the family. Then her father says, to reassure her: “Don't worry, it's normal, between his village and ours it's been like this for hundreds of years, they're harmless (meiyou nao) jokes (mawanr)”.
- 2 This form of alliance, usually called a “parenté à plaisanteries” or “cathartic alliance”, is not unknown to anthropologists; this type of relationship is well attested to in Western Africa³ and other areas of the world⁴, but does not appear in the literature on China. There is no reference to it either in the older or in more recent books on village life. These deal mainly with village and lineage organisation⁵ or with situations of conflict between villages⁶. Where relationships between Chinese Muslims (the Hui) and the Han are concerned, studies have concentrated on the Hui identity, on the deep

roots of Muslims in China, on the conflicts which have taken place over the centuries with the state and the Han/Hui?, as well as between the Hui themselves ⁷.

- 3 What we call here joking relationships do not concern relations between individuals connected by marriage, but rather the specific relations between members of different villages who do not necessarily know each other. This is why we use the term relationships rather than kinship, even though, as we shall see, the symbolism of relationship by marriage lies at the heart of the subject. This specific relationship is expressed through insulting, sometimes coarse words, or abnormal attitudes, without producing violent reactions. In a way, in the words of the English anthropologist, Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown, "the relationship is one of permitted disrespect" ⁸.
- 4 It was in the year 2000, in the province of Henan, that for the first time in China we were told of these *kaiwanxiao de guanxi* (joking relationships) and were able to observe manifestations of them. In 2002 and 2003, we carried out a series of studies in two directions. On the one hand we sought other examples in areas which are homogeneously Han, or contain other minorities. We chose Hunan, more specifically a mountainous area where relations between villages have not always been easy, and Guangxi, where a number of minorities live. In neither case did we find anything resembling joking relationships. On the other hand, a further series of studies was carried out in Hui villages on their relationships with their Han neighbours in various regions (Hainan, Yunnan, Xinjiang) without further conclusive results ⁹. The province of Henan and its northern section was therefore the main focus ¹⁰ of studies carried out in March and July 2003, in about ten villages.
- 5 There are virtually no writings on the history of these alliances. The local monographs we were able to consult, produced over the last twenty years, are completely silent on the subject ¹¹; a few traces are to be found on steles in ancestral temples, or in genealogies (*jiapu*). The main part is transmitted by word and gesture. On this subject we should like to point out that, because of their fascination with Chinese writing, Westerners have long neglected the role of speech in China ¹². Being undervalued, speech was unable to attain the nobility of writing and could not carry as powerful a meaning. In the last few years, linguists, anthropologists and historians have called into question this very Western vision of the contrast between the oral and the written, and have reassessed the place they assigned to speech ¹³.

I. Words, gestures and attitudes

- 6 First of all we must specify that the joking relationships observed or described by villagers (both Han and Hui) concern only men; women are completely excluded from them. They generally know of the existence of these kinds of relationships, they may be present, but they never actively participate. The terms we have found are always linked to the terminology of kinship ¹⁴. What makes these terms insulting is the fact that they are used between people from two groups who are supposedly unable to have any links of kinship by alliance, because they are of different religions; in our day people talk of the difference of "*minzu*" (nationality) ¹⁵. Besides these words connected to the terminology of kinship, there are others, probably spoken more spontaneously, which are called "dirty" (*zang*) by those who use them, and to which this researcher, being both female and foreign, could not gain access, either orally or in writing, all the more so as these expressions are generally in dialect. Sometimes the gesture is sufficiently evocative. One can imagine what these expressions are, coarseness being as popular in China as it is in the rest of the world. The only indication given is that they must not

concern the interlocutor's mother or daughter. Educated circles cannot use them nor even provide any examples of them, retired professors (both Han and Hui) emphasise the lack of culture in peasant circles (*meiyou wenhua*) to explain these differences of language. The most common term is *gufu*: uncle (husband of the father's sister). For example:

- 7 A Han says to a Hui (or the other way round): "*jiao wo gufu*!" (Call me uncle), the Hui answers: "*bu jiao, weishenme jiao ni gufu*!" (No, why should I call you uncle).
- 8 Or else "*gufu, gufu lai le!*" (Uncle's coming!), "*gufu zai...(name of the Hui or Han village)*" (Your uncle is from...). In response the Hui or the Han will answer with an insult or make a significantly insulting gesture.
- 9 The other terms are *jiujiu*: uncle (the mother's brother)¹⁶ or *lao gan die* (dry father)¹⁷.
- 10 For example:
- 11 "*Jiujiu ni qu nar?*" (Where are you going, uncle?)¹⁸, "*Xiao jiu le!*" (Little uncle!). Where the word *jiujiu* is concerned, some state that it is only used by the Hui to a Han, others only the opposite.
- 12 "*Oh! lao gan die!*" (Hey, dry father!) between two people who meet. This term is used by both Han and Hui.
- 13 As far as we know, the terms of address involved in joking relationships do not take into account the generations of individuals. That is to say that the terms *gufu*, *jiujiu* or *laogandie* are used equally by young and old, whatever the age of the interlocutor. These terms of address, which in ordinary circumstances are unremarkable, become insulting between a Han and a Hui, for they affirm the existence of an unacceptable and unimaginable kinship between the interested parties, either because one is Muslim and the other not, or because they belong to two different *minzu*. Moreover the term *gufu* marks a form of superiority, for it affirms that the speaker belongs to a generation older than that of his interlocutor. Pursuing the idea further, the use of a kinship term in this context suggests the idea of a conversion, since there can be kinship only between members of the same religion, and nobody will accept such an idea since religious belonging is transmitted within patrilineage.
- 14 We should also note that the words *gufu* and *jiujiu* designate people whose children could marry. This refers to marriage between first cousins, a match which one could consider as being preferential in China, at least until it was proscribed by the new marriage law passed in 1981. Where the relationship with the maternal uncle (*jiujiu*) is concerned, we have observed on many occasions the important role the latter plays for his nephew or niece, particularly his accompanying role in difficult situations, and his role in mediation. Among the Hui, for example, the maternal uncle is present at the moment of his niece's marriage; also, in areas where the Hui practise circumcision, the *jiujiu* will be close to his uterine nephew for the occasion. Among Hui and Han alike, the maternal uncle can intervene when a conflict arises between a father and his child. Moreover, it is not unusual in China for a joking relationship to be established between brother- and sister-in-law, which makes it possible to maintain a certain emotional distance and to divert potential conflicts within a family.
- 15 In joking relationships, the man who pronounces the insulting expressions will pass his hand across his face or the back of his neck, and then let his arm fall suddenly to his side in order to demonstrate clearly that he is not being serious. Sometimes the men jostle or thump each other, their bodies tangling in an imaginary struggle. These joking

relationships can happen on any occasion, there is no favoured place or time. However it seems that these encounters are often linked to the bustle of market days. They are a way of being recognised or of starting a conversation in a joking mode. Finally, these occasions seem to have been more frequent before the 1960s.

- 16 Among the kinds of behaviour quoted, stories are told of lack of consideration, of abnormal behaviour which would be likened to theft in normal times. For example, a Hui relates: “We would go into a Han village and take grapes off a stall, eat them and laughing, leave without paying, there wasn’t any fighting!”. Or again “One day someone from (Han) village X came into one of the eating-houses in our Hui village and ate everything that took his fancy. When he’d finished, he stood up to leave, and the owner came over to settle up. It was then that the customer made himself recognised and began to laugh, there was a playful scuffle and he left.”.
- 17 Reference to the idea of alliance prevents any violence or bloodshed, and imposes the obligation of hospitality as if it were a member of the family.

II - Legends and foundation narratives

- 18 The inhabitants of a particular area know exactly with which village they have joking relationships. Sometimes they may mention such relationships between other villages while often making mistakes ¹⁹. Some say that these relationships really became important during the first half of the twentieth century and particularly during the period of “great Han chauvinism” (*dahan zhuyi*) ²⁰. However the origins of these relationships remain largely unknown to them. “This has been going on forever, for hundreds of years”. A Hui says: “Even if we don’t know why, we can’t forget” (*wang bu liao*). A young man adds: “The old know — we don’t!”.
- 19 Some old people, retired teachers or village cadres, recount, with local variations, the following legend: “All that began under the Tang dynasty. Some Hui soldiers came from far away, from Arabia (*Tianfang*); they had come to support the Emperor of the Tang. After the victory, some remained and became mandarins (*dang guan*). But they had come without women, they were sad, they were bored!”. It is at this point that the versions diverge. In some, despite the misgivings of his entourage, one of the great mandarins of the time, a native of (Han) village X, decided to give his daughter to one of the Hui, who had become an officer. Ever since, all the Hui of China know that village ²¹, because it was the site of the first marriage between Han and Hui, and since that time there has been mutual joking. In other versions, the Emperor decided to give the most beautiful woman in the (Han) village X to one of them, who settled in the Hui village.
- 20 We should note that these legends fall within the framework of the foundation narratives of the Hui *minzu* (nationality): Arab and Persian Muslims, soldiers, scientists and merchants, came during the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1277) dynasties and founded lines by marrying Han women; this was how the Hui *minzu* arose. Han mothers symbolise belonging to the Chinese world, while Hui fathers justify the existence of a foreign religion and the creation of a different *minzu*. General works on the history of the Hui in China always refer to this outline, although many of them subsequently emphasise the coming of large numbers of Muslims from Central and Western Asia during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1277-1368) ²².
- 21 The best-known narrative on the subject relates, in substance ²³, that during the revolt of An Lushan, the Emperor Xuanzong, in a difficult position, called on Hui soldiers ²⁴, thus winning the battle. He then told them to stay in Chang’an ²⁵, and three of them did

so. But they had neither wives nor children with them, they were homesick and wanted to leave the capital. This worried the Emperor and his ministers suggested that the only way to keep them was to marry them off. But no Han father would have agreed to give his daughter to a Hui soldier. So the Emperor allowed the Hui soldiers to take their wives by force, which they did at the Lantern Festival. With the Emperor's permission, and on condition that they remained in Chang'an, they each took nine wives ²⁶.

- 22 While the local legends all refer to a founding marriage, there are no marriages between the villages involved ²⁷. In explanation of this fact, the villagers specify: "it is impossible because the *minzu* is different, the customs are different".
- 23 Joking relationships involve only two villages at a time. However friendly relations can be maintained with other villages, without taking the form of this specific relationship. We observed that, in one case, a Hui village has a joking relationship with a Han village, as well as good relations with another Han village. With the latter, exchanges at New Year replace insults or jokes. One side (the Hui) give demonstrations of martial arts (*wushu*) in the Han village and the Han perform dances *yangge* ²⁸ in the Hui village. This is no doubt an unusual situation because the two villages are practically on opposite sides of a road to each other. In this case, understanding is based on services rendered. We quote here the basic elements of the narrative engraved on a stele ²⁹ in the ancestral temple of the Han village concerned: more than 500 years ago, the Chen family had been honoured by the Ming Emperor ³⁰ and their ancestor was a high mandarin (*zuojun*). One of his descendants was named magistrate of the area. At the time, the people of the Hui village came to buy and sell cattle and sheep. They had to cross the territory and had many problems with the customs post over taxes and levies. Thanks to the intervention of the magistrate, the difficulties were resolved, and thus began the friendship between the two villages.
- 24 On the Hui side, some of the village elders relate another version of the origins of this friendship, which is not, however, engraved on a stele. They explain that at the end of the Ming dynasty and at the beginning of the Qing (1644), the villages formed two "*she*" (groups of families) who together worked the fields near a river which now flows between the two villages. Friendship was forged in the difficulties of the time and that is why one speaks of "*sheqin*" (kinship by association) to describe this relationship. In the Hui village, the younger generations (those aged under about 50) adhere to the written version. This difference of interpretation is probably attributable to events which took place during the Republican period, which we will return to below, of which the older villagers have painful memories.
- 25 We should mention another example of cordial relations, which do not concern a whole village but a branch of a Han lineage which has become Hui ³¹. It is said that it all began, long ago, with a friendship and a marriage. Two men farmed together an area situated at the edge of their respective village territories. They got along very well and had become good friends. One day the wind rose and a thunderstorm arrived. The two men took shelter in a ditch (*gou*) of red earth. They talked and agreed to marry their children to each other. One, the Han, had a son, and the other, the Hui, a daughter. Two boys were born of this union. Unfortunately at the end of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Qing (1644), disturbances came to the region, and the men were enrolled in the army ³². There was no way of resisting. So the mother took her two sons and went to stay with her two brothers in her home village, which was Hui. This is how this branch became Hui and everyone remembers the "Red Earth Ditch" agreement

which today symbolises the idea of marriage ³³. Every New Year, the Hui members meet with the Han branches of this lineage in the home village, where there are celebrations around the ancestral temple.

- 26 This narrative shows a situation which is the opposite of the traditionally accepted model of a Han woman marrying a Hui man. The woman is expected naturally to adopt her husband's religion. In Hui discourse, marriage between a Hui woman and a Han man is theoretically impossible unless he converts to Islam, which seems presumably unlikely. In fact it is a situation we have observed on many occasions in the towns of Eastern China.
- 27 Joking relationships also sometimes manifest themselves by mutual help between villages. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Hui villagers went to the edge of an allied Han village in order to wash in the river the sheepskins which were the craft supplement essential to the survival of the village ³⁴. The Han, for their part, could come and sell their produce in the Hui village. In the 1970s, the same village made a gift to its Han ally of a machine which would make it possible to increase its production of flour. At the end of the 1990s, the Hui village, having prospered, contributed financially to the repair of the main road and to the construction of a secondary school in the Han village, which has remained poor ³⁵.
- 28 During our research, we observed the economic dimension of this distinctive relationship, whether this involves a business or other activity. We have just mentioned the use of the water of a river. In other places the Hui came, and still come, to the village to buy live cattle and sheep for their meat trade; the Hui are reputed for this profession. In other cases, it can be the presence of Hui who have opened a restaurant, or are carrying on other businesses in the market of a Han village.

III - Some elements of local history

- 29 It is also necessary to look at local history, which was particularly violent during the early twentieth century. However, we must first localise the area concerned according to joking relationships. We have been able to observe relationships of this kind between villages in several cantons along a road from Luoyang to the provincial capital, Zhengzhou. Many of these villages lie north of the Yellow River, and some south of it. Distances between allied villages average 10 to 20 kilometres by road and sometimes less across the fields. These villages are in some cases separated by other Han villages, with whom the Hui do not have good relations, as we shall see. According to our observations, the Han villages do not have this kind of relationship, and further to the east of the province, it does not seem that similar situations exist between Hui and Han.
- 30 If we take the construction of mosques as an indicator of relative prosperity, the Hui in this region built a good number of them in the nineteenth century. Some are very ancient, such as that in Bo'ai or those in the village of Xiguan, situated west of the city, which date back to the end of the Yuan dynasty or the beginning of the Ming (late fourteenth and early fifteenth century) ³⁶. It seems that at that time, each village had a mosque for men and one for women. However, owing to the long period of peace under the Qing dynasty and the increase in the population during the eighteenth century, the Muslim lineages which formed and increased in number, each founded their own mosque during the nineteenth century. The major Muslim revolts in the middle of the nineteenth century which involved the Hui in Shaanxi, Gansu and Yunnan, as well as the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, do not seem to have had any direct effect on this region of the central plain. However the revolt of the Nian ³⁷ in Shandong had some repercussions, as

did the repression of the revolt of the Taiping which took place a little further south. Moreover, the frequent rises in the water levels of the Yellow River caused serious flooding and food shortages were recurrent.

- 31 The Hui's relations with their Han neighbours declined seriously during the time of the warlords, and in the 1930s, with the Japanese invasion and occupation. Some Han in the region tell of how, as children, they had acquired the habit of throwing stones at any Hui who approached the road situated between the Han and Hui villages, which obliged the Hui to stoop in order to be able to pass. It was no doubt a way of expressing their resentment at the prosperity of certain Hui villages at the time, and perhaps also a reaction to the practice the Hui had of adopting Han children born out of wedlock, and particularly girls, whom the families in the neighbouring villages did not want and would abandon ³⁸. In any case, whatever the reasons, such incidents increased during the time of the warlords. Here are two examples which left a profound impression.
- 32 The first, which took place in the district of Bo'ai, recalls the pogroms in Russia or in Central Europe. A large number of peasant self-defence militias had been constituted in the early 1920s in reaction to the bands of looters who were plundering the region, at a time when the trade in arms and drugs was a highly profitable activity. These militias, organised as secret societies, subsequently opposed the warlords and fought against the exorbitant taxes the latter sought to impose. However, as is often the case, these groups finally turned to crime. In 1927, Henan became the centre of these groups organised in networks of villages which belonged to the Red Spears Society (*hongqianghui*) ³⁹.
- 33 In Bo'ai, a local monograph ⁴⁰ reports that a group of this society was created in 1925, and had more than 500 members in 1927 ⁴¹. In the same year, the Multicoloured Spears Society (*huaqianghui*) had more than one thousand ⁴². According to the same source, in 1927, the Red Spears Society decided to oppose the Hui, and set up in a village near the Hui village of Daxinzhuang. Clashes (*xiedou*) became more and more numerous and took a tragic turn that year. It is not known how things began, but the village of Daxinzhuang was attacked by groups from all the surrounding Han villages. The Hui of the district came to the rescue and violent battles lasted several weeks. It was the arrival of *beifa* ⁴³ troops which put an end to the confrontation ⁴⁴.
- 34 The second incident is more closely linked to the prevarication and the greed of the local Han authorities of the time. The Hui village of Sanpo, through its two activities of sheepskin production and farming, was reputed to have a comfortable income for the time. Many times over the local authorities had raised various taxes. But in April 1943, probably because the villagers refused to pay any more, troops organised by the local Guomindang district leader who was seeking to extort further funds from them, surrounded the village. There was a sudden attack and a terrible massacre: in a single night there were 110 dead, 400 houses set alight, the mosques burned and several hundred families plundered ⁴⁵.
- 35 After 1949 relations between the Hui villages and neighbouring Han villages became more peaceful. Nevertheless, when collective work needed to be carried out, such as repairing the roads, the local cadres managed to assemble the Hui crews with those of their respective allied Han villages. They thus avoided any fighting breaking out. However, while some individuals remembered this alliance, it had somewhat lapsed during the previous thirty years. Some could remember as children having seen Han allies in their village, but nothing since. In the early 1990s, nobody spoke of it ⁴⁶. In fact, the steles erected date from 1999 and 2001.

- 36 Since the reforms, conflicts between Han villages ⁴⁷ and between Hui and Han have begun again, in Henan as elsewhere. These are often clashes in the markets, usually minor. But in 1992, in the small town of Yuanyang, north of Zhengzhou (the provincial capital), a confrontation took on disquieting proportions. After a fight in the market and the profanation of the mosque, violent clashes lasted several days. There were several deaths, and the intervention of the army was needed to restore order. One could quote other examples of increased tension between Han and Hui in other regions ⁴⁸, which are a general phenomenon and are not accompanied by joking relationships.
- 37 In this context, also marked by the difficulties encountered by the central government in the management of peripheral territories such as Tibet and Xinjiang, the authorities have relaunched the slogan of “unity of the nationalities” (*minzu tuanjie*) ⁴⁹. One can therefore understand the wish of local authorities, whether Han or Hui, to utilise everything which might calm things down. As in the Republican period, the Hui react quickly to anything which might appear to be insulting. In order to avoid a repetition of demonstrations similar to those against a book entitled *Sexual Morals* ⁵⁰, the Chinese authorities respond quickly and favourably when the Hui demand the banning of a publication; this fits into the political framework of the status of *minzu* and of the protection of minorities ⁵¹.
- 38 Thus while the reforms have reawoken conflicts, they have at the same time made it possible for the members of each community to revive a part of their history and to re-establish old connections. But as is often the case in China, these memories are also instrumentalised by the authorities.

IV - Some interpretations

- 39 We must now understand the internal motivations of these relationships, of which we had no knowledge until now. Before attempting any interpretation, and in the absence of any possible comparisons with other Chinese regions, we would like to take a detour via Africa, where descriptions of these sorts of relationships are ancient and numerous.
- 40 The Chinese examples observed do not present such an elaborate system (since they do not incorporate such wide-ranging services and obligations) as that which is described in the alliance between Dogon and Bozo known as *Mangou*; in particular the reversal of the ordinary rules of politeness at the moment of the end of mourning ceremonies, or the role played by conciliation. But there are a number of points in common. The first manifestation of this form of relationship takes the form, as in China, of insult. “The most appreciated insults are also those which would inevitably lead to a brawl, if one were not *Mangu*” ⁵².
- 41 M. Griaule ⁵³ relates: “No restraint is observed, even on religious subjects (...) The Bozo accuses his partner’s religious leader of having had himself licked by a great snake and of never washing ⁵⁴. The other retorts that the Bozo ⁵⁵ are “evil creatures of the water”, a veiled allusion to the fact that they are said to be water spirits who have become impure”.
- 42 The origin narratives of this specific relationship refer, as in China, to a service rendered or a blood relationship. M. Griaule presents two narratives ⁵⁶: “The most common version relates a famine which broke out in ancient times, during which the Bozo and the Dogon died in large numbers. One day, a Bozo (or Dogon) chief seeing a Dogon (or Bozo) child about to die, cut a piece of flesh from his calf and, having roasted it, gave it to the unfortunate, who recovered”. “Another narrative is more explicit and

brings out an initial relationship between Bozo and Dogon. The spirit of water (...) which was female (...) gave birth to a daughter. Rising to the surface later, she saw some children of the same family, with the same mother and father as the Dogon, to whom she gave her daughter. "Your daughter is beautiful, they answered. You are the woman of the water and you are going back to it. We will keep your daughter". They called her Sorogonn, a word which means "those who can live as easily in the water as on the surface of the earth" and which is now given to the Bozo. They took the girl to a village in Mandé; she gave birth there at the same time as a Dogon woman and died soon after, while her husband was on a journey. The Dogon woman adopted the orphan which she breastfed like her own, and during a famine, she cut off part of her thigh to feed both children. Then the husband of the woman Sorogonn returned and said to the other woman: "You have been good to my child and I do not know how to repay you. Since my child has eaten your flesh, it will not be able to marry yours nor do harm to any of your race. We have become gara (*mangou*)". Even more explicit, D. Paulme relates ⁵⁷ "The ancestor of the Peul and that of the blacksmiths came to this country together from Mecca. The blacksmith was married and had daughters. The Peul did not even have a wife. The blacksmith is said to have given him one of his daughters in marriage, assuring him that it was to be the last and only marriage between their two clans".

- 43 The partners in this relationship cannot do each other harm and owe each other assistance and hospitality ⁵⁸. "Blows are forbidden between *Mangu*. (...) blood must not flow in front of them (*Mangu*)" ⁵⁹. According to M. Griaule, "the breaking of such bans brings about an impurity which places the individual concerned in an irresolvable situation from the religious point of view, purification being almost impossible" ⁶⁰.
- 44 This specific relationship is accompanied, in Africa as in China, by the ban on intermarriage. For the Han and the Hui, the friendly relations which exist between villages connected by joking relationships forbid and make impossible any matrimonial alliance, while it can exist between Han and Hui who are not members of these villages. Finally the economic character of the relationship constitutes another point. It translates in Africa into the exchange of services and obligatory presents ⁶¹, and in China by commercial links.
- 45 Thus from the observation of Chinese phenomena and the comparison with African experience, four main elements appear: the prohibition of intermarriage, insults, friendly relations, and the creation of peaceful areas.
- 46 – **The prohibition of intermarriage.** Joking relationships are accompanied by the ban on marriage between members of the villages concerned. When a marriage occurs, writes Denise Paulme ⁶² who herself relies for her demonstration on the description of blood kinship by E.E. Evans-Pritchard ⁶³, "there is what one can call a "blood service" rendered by the parents of the wife to the parents of the husband, by the female side to the male" ⁶⁴. D. Paulme suggests a mechanism analogous to that of the blood relationship: "the originating act of the alliance thus takes on the character of an exception, or even of an offence, which makes it all the more memorable; if it had been repeated with impunity, it would have lost all efficacy" ⁶⁵. For his part, Radcliffe-Brown develops the idea of a sanction act and considers that "The prohibition against interfaçage maintains this separation by preventing the creation of relations of kinésique between members of the two groups" ⁶⁶. He adds "The "friendship" appears in the prohibition, under supernatural sanction, against the shedding of the blood of a member of the allied people".

- 47 In the light of these analyses, one may consider that the ban on reproducing the founding event which was the marriage between a Hui man and a Han woman, distinguishes the specific relationship between the Han and Hui villages concerned by joking relationships. This may be a way of sanctioning the relationship of alliance or of friendship (to which we will return) which cannot be of the same nature as that which exists in the kinship relations between Hui or even, in specific conditions, with other Han.
- 48 – **Insults.** Radcliffe-Brown, in his desire to build a general theory of what the joking relationship represents does not really address the meaning and the exact role of the insult. He situates the phenomenon more as an alternative to extreme respect ⁶⁷. M. Griaule's analysis refers to a specific situation, that of the Dogon. From Dogon mythology and cosmogony, he concludes that invective in this case is cathartic: it makes it possible both to relieve and to be relieved. It is a permanent means of purification ⁶⁸. He explains: "When the Bozo pronounced the formula (the oath), part of the force (*nyama*) which was in him passed in his words, breath and mist, entered the ear of the Dogon blacksmith, and by a complex circuit, reached his liver. This mechanism was in all ways comparable to that of the impregnation of women by the word, with the difference that, in the latter case, the end result is the womb" ⁶⁹. He continues "the *Mangou* can say anything, for each has a little of the other's *nyama* and it is to this part that each one speaks, that is to say to himself: therefore there are no repercussions. It is the part of *nyama* deposited in the other which is brought into action when there is meeting and insult" ⁷⁰.
- 49 A comparison with the Chinese situation would require a lengthy study of widely different aspects, but from this description it seems useful to retain the idea that agreed insult is the way to control violence.
- 50 – **Friendship.** Radcliffe-Brown expands particularly on the aspect of friendship, introducing a distinction between friendship and solidarity: he puts forward the idea of "a relation neither of solidarity nor of hostility but of "friendship" in which the separateness of the group is emphasised, but open conflict between the groups or the members on the two sides is avoided by establishing a relation in which they may insult each other without giving or taking offence" ⁷¹. He emphasises the distinction to be made with relations of solidarity which impose complex systems of obligation ⁷².
- 51 Where the situation between Han and Hui is concerned, the terms employed to express this relation are *biaoxiongdi* (first cousin on the mother's side) and *pengyou* (friend), *tamen shi hao pengyou* (they are good friends, real friends). The term *xiongdi* (brothers) which usually expresses relations of solidarity between individuals or between groups is not used at all in this kind of situation. Neither is it the kind of relationship which obliges blood relatives of the same generation and beyond to intervene in case of disagreement with neighbours. Acts of solidarity or mutual help in joking relationships are merely selective. Moreover they concern the group as a whole, whereas, on the contrary, insults are exchanged only between individuals. The reference to insult and to the notion of friendship brings us to our last point.
- 52 – **The creation of peaceful areas.** In Chinese history, situations of violence happen daily: if it is not the violence of arms, it is that of natural catastrophe, flood or famine. Tensions run high between the Han and the Hui. Although the Hui have participated in the same forms of popular organisation as the Han inside secret societies ⁷³, this does not make possible the resolution of conflicts in daily life. In fact the specific form of

relationship which is the joking relationship has made it possible through agreed insult to control violence and has undoubtedly facilitated the creation of pacified areas where the Hui could carry on their economic activities. Situated far enough away to allow an opening up of Hui villages, they constituted areas of mutual help and peace at the most critical moments.

NOTES

1. To insult or abuse without it being of any consequence.
2. M. Griaule, 1948, "L'Alliance cathartique", *Africa*, vol. XVIII, p. 242.
3. See for example M. Mauss, 1927-28, "Parenté à plaisanteries", *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*; H. Labouret, 1929, "La parenté à plaisanteries en Afrique occidentale", *Africa*, T. 2, pp. 244-254; Evans-Pritchard Dr. E. E., 1933, "Zande Blood Brotherhood", *Africa*, vol. VI, n° 4, pp. 369-401; D. Paulme, 1939, "Parenté à plaisanteries et alliance par le sang en Afrique occidentale", *Africa*, vol. XII, pp. 433-444; Pedler F. J., 1940, "Joking Relationships in East Africa", vol. XIII, n° 2, pp. 170-173; Radcliffe-Brown A. R., 1940, "On Joking Relationships", *Africa*, vol. XIII, n° 3, pp. 195-210 (reprinted in *Structure and Function in Primitive Societies; Essays and Addresses* by the same author, London, 1952); M. Griaule, 1948, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-258.
4. Among them J. Y. Loude et V. Lièvre, 1984, *Solstice païen*, Paris, Presses de la Renaissance. Particularly the chapter entitled "Le jour du poing brandi. Insultes entre villages", pp. 210-218.
5. For example: Fei Xiaotong, 1947 (first edn. 1939), *Peasant Life in China: a Field Study and Country Life in the Yangtze Valley*, London, Kegan Paul; Yang Maochun, 2001, (first edn. 1945 in English), *Yige Zhongguo cunzhuang. Shandong Taitou. A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shandong Province*, Nanjing, Jiangsu renmin chubanshe; Faure David, 1986, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories*, Hong Kong, H. K., Oxford, N. Y., Oxford University Press; Thireau Isabelle et Wang Hanheng, 2001, *Disputes au village chinois. Formes du juste et recompositions locales des espaces normatifs*, Paris, Maison des sciences de l'homme.
6. Bianco Lucien and Hue Chang Ming, 1995, "Xiedou et traditions: le retour des vendettas paysannes", *Perspectives chinoises*, n° 32, pp. 15-20.
7. Among works in Chinese: Bai Shouyi, 1952, *Huimin qiyi* (Hui Uprisings), Shanghai, Shenzhou guoguangshe, 4 vols; Ma Tong, 1983, *Zhongguo yisilan jiaopai yu menhuan shidu shilüe* (A history of Muslim religious movements and the *menhuan* system in China), Ningxia, Ningxia renmin chubanshe. Among recent works in Western languages: Fletcher J., 1986, "Les voies (turuq) soufies en Chine", in A. Popovic et G. Veinstein (éds.), *Les Ordres mystiques dans l'islam, cheminements et situation actuelle*, Paris, Ehes, pp. 13-26; Gladney Dru C., 1991 (re-edited, 1996, 2000), *Muslim Chinese. Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*, Cambridge and London, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University; F. Aubin, 1995, "Chine"; H. Chambert-Loir et C. Guillot, *Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman, Etudes thématiques*, n° 4, Paris, EFEO, pp. 367-388; J. Lipman, 1997, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China*, University of Washington

Press, Seattle-London; E. Allès, 2000, *Musulmans de Chine. Une anthropologie des Hui du Henan*, Paris, Ehes.

8. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

9. We asked the question as well to Muslim and non-Muslim families living in Hong Kong, originally from villages in the province of Guangdong, without receiving any positive answer either.

10. This was already the case with our study of women's mosques. E. Allès, 2000, *op. cit.*, ch. XII et XIII.

11. *Bo'ai xianzhi* (monograph of the xian of Bo'ai), 1994; *Yanshi xianzhi* (monograph of the xian of Yanshi), 1992; *Qiaozuo shijiaoqu zhi* (monograph of the environs of Qiaozuo), 1993; *Meng xianzhi* (monograph of the xian of Meng), 1991; *Henansheng Huizu difangzhi* (local monograph of the Hui of Henan), 1989; *Henansheng Huizu zhi* (monograph of the Hui of Henan), 1986; *Henansheng zhi* (monograph of Henan), 1994; *Guangcheng huizuqu zhi* (monograph of the Hui quarter of Guancheng), 1989; *Luoyangshi Chanhe huizuqu zhi* (monograph of the Hui quarter of Chanhe of the city of Luoyang), 1988. When we are able to gain access to earlier sources, we will of course have to consult the monographs of the Ming and Qing dynasties and those of the Republican period.

12. "They assumed on the one hand that Chinese writing was disconnected from speech, and on the other that the civilisations of the Far East were overwhelmingly graphic, and little interested in the oral", V. Alleton, in V. Alleton (éd.), 1997, *Paroles à dire, Paroles à écrire; Inde, Chine, Japon*, Paris, Ehes, p. 11.

13. V. Alleton (éd.), 1997, *op.cit.*; see also, J. Levi, 1995, "La voix et l'encre, la chaussure et la trace: langue, écriture et tradition romanesque en Chine", in Levi J., *La Chine romanesque. Fictions d'Orient et d'Occident*, Seuil, pp. 33-61.

14. Terms of kinship are widely used in China in order to signify a respectful proximity, without there being any real relationship for all that.

15. A neologism which arrived from Japan at the end of the nineteenth century, the word *minzu* is polysemic, meaning: nation, people, national, nationality; China today is made up of 56 *minzu*, of whom the most numerous are the Han (92%). On the history, use and ambiguities of the word, see J. Thoraval, 1990, "Le concept chinois de nation est-il "obscur"? A propos du débat sur la notion de "minzu" dans les années 1980", *Bulletin de sinologie*, n°. 65, pp. 24-41; F. Dikötter, 1992, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

16. On the place and the role of the uterine uncle, see the general literature on the subject. For example J. Goody, 1959, "The Mother's Brother and the Sister's Son in West Africa", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n° 89, pp. 61-88.

17. *Die* is a familiar term for father, the addition of *gan* (dry, dried out) means that there is no blood relationship.

18. This is a common expression in China and also a way of saying hello.

19. Which makes necessary a systematic checking in each village.

20. This was during the Republican period (1911-1949). The Hui in this case use an expression used by the Chinese Communist Party at the same time.

21. Obviously, as soon as one leaves the area concerned, the name of the village in question is unknown.

22. The Mongols dominated the north of the country after the fall of Beijing in 1215.

23. We here summarise the legend collected in 1979 in Wuzhong in Ningxia. Li Shujiang, Luckert Karl W., 1994, *Mythology and Folklore of the Hui. A Muslim Chinese People*, Albany, State University of New York Press, pp. 240-241.

24. The text speaks of Huihe soldiers. This is the generally accepted version of the origins of the word Hui as lying in a deformation of the name of a people, the Huihe, from the northwest of China, who had been Islamised.
25. The imperial capital of the time, now Xi'an.
26. The compilers of these legends note that this is undoubtedly a reference to the nine wives which the Prophet had after the death of his first spouse. Li Shujiang, Luckert Karl W., *op. cit.*, p. 241 (note 4).
27. In the course of a conversation, reference was made to the case of a marriage, but it seems the people concerned had been already living in town for some time.
28. A popular dance in Northern China. Cf. F. Graezer, 1999, "The *Yangge* in Contemporary China. Popular Daily Activity and Neighbourhood Community Life", *China Perspectives*, No. 24, pp. 31-43.
29. The stele was inscribed in 2001.
30. The Ming dynasty reigned from 1368 to 1644.
31. This narrative is partly engraved on a stele set up in the village school, and is presented as the genealogy (*jiapu*) of the lineage concerned.
32. After the overthrow of the Ming by the Qing, the region, like many others in China, became the scene of serious fighting between troops who had remained faithful to the Ming dynasty, among them a certain number of Hui, and those of the Manchurian dynasty.
33. The reference to the colour red, symbol of marriage in China, reinforces the image.
34. Most Chinese villages have always combined crafts and trade with agriculture.
35. In the Han village, near the river, a stele was erected in 1999 which relates some aspects of this story.
36. The stele of the women's mosque in Xiguan gives as the date of construction the period of Yongle of the Ming (1403-1425).
37. A peasant movement organised as a secret society which, for over ten years (1851-1863), struggled against the corruption of the Qing mandarins and the disastrous effects of the Opium Wars. The Nian were famous for their highly mobile guerilla actions. E. Perry, 1992 (first edn. 1980), *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China 1845-1945*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp. 96-151.
38. This information on adoption by the Hui was given to us by the Han women in the villages in question. Moreover, when one talks to Hui women in the mosques, even now, they ask, with a disapproving air, if abroad we still have the same habit as the Han of not burying children who have died at birth, and of throwing them anywhere without a burial.
39. On the Red Spears Society: R. Slawinski, "Les Piques Rouges et la révolution chinoise de 1925-1927", in J. Chesneaux, F. Davis, Nguyen Nguyet Ho (éds.), 1970, *Mouvements populaires et sociétés secrètes en Chine aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Paris, F. Maspero, pp. 393-406; L. Bianco, 1970, "Sociétés secrètes et autodéfense paysanne (1921-1933)", in J. Chesneaux, F. Davis, Nguyen Nguyet Ho (éds.) *op. cit.*, pp. 407-420; E. J. Perry, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-207 and note 3 pp. 284-285; Tai Hsüan-chih, 1985, *The Red Spears, 1916-1949*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.
40. *Bo'ai xianzhi*, 1994, pp. 18-19.
41. They are said to have numbered in the whole of the province of Henan at least 398,000 members. R. Slawinski, 1970, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
42. This is no doubt a generic term for the various societies which were created in the wake of the Red Spears; there were societies of yellow, green, white and black spears.

43. The nationalist troops of the Guomindang who were marching north in order to reunite the country.
44. E. Allès, 2000, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-168.
45. For a detailed history of these events and the song in memory of this massacre see E. Allès, 2000, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-81.
46. We did surveys in the region during this period and nobody at that time mentioned such relations, nor were we able to witness this type of exchange.
47. Cf. L. Bianco et Hua Chang Ming, 1995, *op. cit.*
48. Violence broke out in a village in Shandong in December 2000. A butcher who sold pork and other meat had placed or left in his window the sign *qingzhen* (pure and real) which means that the meat is *hallal*. The Hui demanded that the seller remove the sign, and the local authorities responded by arresting the Hui leaders, which set off serious confrontations resulting in five deaths among the Hui.
49. A slogan of the Cultural Revolution which is regularly re-used, especially since, in the last few years, relations between the Han and the other minorities, particularly in Tibet and in Xinjiang, have seriously deteriorated.
50. Dru Gladney, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 2; L. Cherif-Chebbi, 1991, "Contre les Rushdie chinois. Le réveil des musulmans hui", Mémoire de DEA, IEP, Paris.
51. The most recent case of this sort took place in June 2003: the July issue of the famous literary magazine *Duzhe* was withdrawn from sale because of two metaphorical texts, one considered to be insulting to the Muslims and the other to the political authorities.
52. D. Paulme, 1939, *op. cit.*, p. 435. The author spells *mangu* with a simple "u", while M. Griaule spells it with an "ou".
53. M. Griaule, 1948, p. 247.
54. Allusion to the cult of Lébé.
55. The Bozo are Muslims.
56. M. Griaule, pp. 252-253. Simplified versions of these myths are also described by D. Paulme.
57. D. Paulme, 1939, p. 442.
58. M. Griaule recounts following case: two Dogon adolescents from the south of the subdivision of Bandiagara who had run away for adventure, had fetched up in Markala, on the Niger river. They were taken in by a Bozo family on seeing their hairstyle and clothing. Housed and fed, they did no work and seemed quite happy, even though they spoke none of the languages in the region and could communicate with their hosts only in the most rudimentary fashion. Their stay had lasted several weeks when we met them (in September 1946) and it seemed that the Bozo were simply counting on public rumour to alert the parents to their presence in Markala.
59. D. Paulme, 1939, p. 436.
60. M. Griaule, 1948, p. 243.
61. H. Labouret, 1929, pp. 252-253.
62. M. Griaule says himself that he takes no position on this question and therefore does not tackle it at all.
63. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 1933, *op. cit.*
64. D. Paulme, 1939, p. 440.
65. D. Paulme, 1939, p. 443.
66. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
67. Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, p. 197.

68. M. Griaule, 1948, p. 254.

69. M. Griaule, 1948, p. 252.

70. M. Griaule, 1948, p. 253.

71. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, p. 111.

72. Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, p. 110.

73. In Henan, some Hui were members of Sun Yat-sen's organisation, the Tongmenghui. Cf Allès E., 2000. In Shanxi, there were numerous Hui groups belonging to the Society of the Elders and Ancients (*Gelaohui*) Park Sang Soo, *La révolution chinoise et les sociétés secrètes*, thèse de doctorat, Ehess.