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**ON DANZHOU CULTURE (HAINAN):
"NIGHTLY VISITS" AND ETHNICITY**

Method: language problem.

Field-work: 1989-1999, Institut of nationalities Guangdong province.

0.1. Danzhou people as an "invisible community"

Ethnicity and the nationalities policy.

South of the county: Li, "Miao", Hakka.

[The case of neighbouring Lingao county]

0.2. Specificity of Danzhou culture

"Danxian people" (the population of Danxian county) and "Danzhou people" (Danzhouhua speakers).

Language: Danzhouhua.

Cultural differences: the rôle of *xing* (patronym/ lineage) in popular religion (e.g. the local Taoist master is above all the ritual specialist of his own lineage).

0.3. The larger ethnographic context

Danzhou at the crossroad of two practices: marriage with postponed residence (*buluo fujia*) and nightly visits (*yeyou*).

Buluo fujia: Hui'an (Fujian), Shunde (Guangdong) (J. Stockard, *Daughters of the Canton Delta*, 1989)

My purpose here: to use the vantage point of one specific cultural practice ("nightly visits") in order to examine the way the Danzhou people construct a "contradictory identity" when interacting with two other ethnic communities in Danxian county.

1. THE "NIGHTLY VISITS"

1.1. The youth houses

Each village: male house (*housheng gelong*), female house (*niulong*)

(Not a specialised building: not visible)

Age: around 15 to 23 years old (modern variations)

1.2. Organisation of the nightly visits

- Starting a relationship between the youth of two villages

Stealing an object. Role of the market place -*jishi*;

From individual decision to collective management: the role of elders

- The first visit (*dapo*)

Time and place. "Vegetal language". Danger of the visits (lineage feuds; today's *bao'an*zu)

Diaosheng. In the youth house: matching (hierarchy)

- The ordinary visits (*xiaopo*)

Only with *peifangmei*. Sexual intercourse?

- Scale of such exchanges (vs. marriage)

1.3. Marriage and nightly visits

- Marriage and residence

Three days at the husband's place during marriage ceremony.

Then: back to the youth house; avoidance of the husband

- Husbands and lovers

Difference of feelings.

- The case of the elder child (vs. Hui'an case)

1.4. Nightly visits and Danzhou culture

General and well-organised practice

Control of behaviour by elders (e.g: number of *peifangmei*: a gift must be given)

Sexual intercourse: only between married people (cases of transgression)

2. HISTORY AND ETHNICITY

2.1. Acculturation processes (a brief account)

2.1.1. The early settlements of "Han" people in Danxian
(Resistance of the Luo Yue to Han dynasty; control of "Hainan"
through the *Li clans during Nanbeichao; exile of Su Dongpo, 1097)

2.1.2. A land route from North to South.

The old meaning of "Hainan" (Southern part of Guangxi/Guangdong and northern part of Hainan island)

2.1.3. Contrast with the rest of Hainan (Hainanhua speakers), in particular the Eastern coast.

Danxian: centuries of proximity "Han/ non Han"; a gradual process; links with "liang Guang"

East coast: more recent and massive influx of immigrants; links with Fujian culture

2.2. The triangle of ethnic relations

2.2.1. The Li people

- Differences in the pattern of nightly visits:

a- Women visit men's villages vs. the opposite

b- Individualistic vs. collective visits

c- Avoidance vs. non-avoidance of the husband's village (strict separation in Danxian between the world of marriage and the world of nightly visits)

+ d- Visible vs. invisible (youth house: see girl's *longgui* among the Li)

- Local variations

The southern part of Danxian shows practices similar to those of the Li in (a) and (b), but similar to the northern part of the district as far as (c) is concerned. There is a continuity from North to South (progressive changes).

[**N.B.** The case of unequal exchanges: Danzhou people and the Li from Baishaxian county].

2.2.2. The "commandery people" (*junren*)

- "*Junhua*" (military language") as the local form of *guanhua* (old mandarin). Junhua speakers are concentrated in the city of Zhonghe, where the yamen was located until 1920.

- A different cultural tradition: absence of the cultural traits specific of Danzhou culture. Non-participation in nightly visits -with exceptions: unequal relationship).

2.2.3. The structural dilemma of the Danzhou people

a- The dilemma:

- On the one hand, identification with the "Central Plain culture": centuries of literati tradition ("Qiong zhi yuo shi shi yu Dan")

(Cf. decision on *minzu chengfen* in the 1950s: rejection of a national minority status)

- On the other hand, attachment to "non-official" practices. Awareness of a shared history with "non-Han" people.

[**N.B.** "Han" and "non-Han" as relative concepts: the case of the Fu lineage]

b- Ambivalent attitude toward **nightly visits** among Danzhou people:

- Satisfaction, justification in cultural terms (music, etiquette)

- Criticism by local Confucianists and by modern reformers (see *Danzhou zhi*)

(Chart)

3. CONCLUSION

- The two faces of Danzhou culture (night and day)

- Ethnicity and politics, the two axis of identification