

Internet address: www.anian.net/fh&s.html

Friendship

Homes and Schools

A non-profit 501(C)(3) organization



Ye Jiu A Niu receives guidance from her teacher.

Spring 2002
Newsletter

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See this newsletter in
color on our web site,
along with:

- Photographs of the children
- Information about the children
- Sponsorship details
- Information about traveling to visit the children

Photography

(c) Michael S. Cherney

Springtime Update on the Children & Their Environment

In this newsletter we provide some fascinating cultural facts about Liangshan Prefecture in Sichuan Province China -- the large geographic region in which the Friendship Homes and Schools children are located. Although Liangshan is an area rich in ethnic diversity and natural beauty, there exists a great deal of poverty. Understanding the hardships of Liangshan is important for appreciating the full extent of the love and joy that you bring to the FH&S orphans. In Liangshan, even children with families are not immune to daily challenges, so the fact that you lift orphans beyond daily struggles and provide them with an education is something very special indeed.

This spring the children are doing very well. At school their coursework covers subjects including Chinese, mathematics, English, physics, chemistry, instruction in their native ethnic languages, and more. They have also been participating in extra-curricular cultural activities, such as song and dance concerts, calligraphy, painting, reading and more. The orphans at the Luoji Mountain Village Primary School recently took part in the Puge County Art Festival. These same children also won third place in a local sports competition. The middle school children at the Xining and Dechang schools also took part in a sports show, and all did quite well.

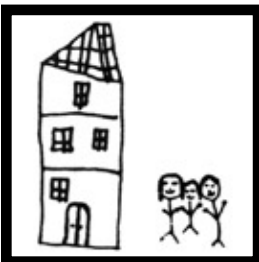
The teachers and other volunteers would like us all to know that the children are doing their best to stay fit, study hard, and continue to improve themselves as a way of expressing gratitude for your support.

New Mailing Address and E-mail for Friendship Homes and Schools

We have recently changed our office location. Please use the following new surface address for donations and other correspondence:

2345 Oakwood Drive, Prescott, Arizona 86305 USA

We have also changed our e-mail address to: fhs@mlpltd.net



Important!! Help Us Lower Our Expenses by Viewing This Newsletter Online

One of the few (and largest) costs that we have that does not go directly to the children is the mailing of our quarterly newsletter. If you are comfortable viewing our newsletter online instead of in print, please tell us so by e-mail. We will remove your name from the surface mailing list and instead send you an e-mail each time a newsletter is published. Another advantage of viewing the newsletter online is that you will get to see the photos in color!

About the Yi People

Of the different ethnicities that comprise the Friendship Home and Schools children in southwest China's Liangshan Prececture, such as Tibetan, Han and Yi, probably the least understood are the Yi people. The following information is supplied by Nick Young and Fu Tao of the **China Development Brief** as a short description of this fascinating culture:

The Yi people (previously also known as the Lolo, or Wuman) are the largest ethnic minority group in southwest China (6,578,524 people recorded in the 1990 census), and the seventh most numerous ethnic group in the country as a whole (after the Han, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, and Uighur). Although incomparably less celebrated, the Yi people are therefore more numerous than Tibetans.

Ethnographers have identified between six and twenty distinct and mutually unintelligible dialects under the broad family of Yi, a Tibeto-Burman language. This reflects the wide geographic distribution of centres of the Yi population. About two thirds of the total live in Yunnan, but the largest

single Yi community is concentrated in Sichuan's Great Liangshan mountains. Smaller groups live in northwest Guizhou and northern Guangxi.

The Yi developed their own script around 13th century AD. A reformed and standardised version, developed in recent times, has eight hundred or so characters. There exists a body of historical, medical, literary and genealogical works in the pre-reformed version of the script.

The Yi also devised their own solar calendar which divided the year into ten months, though the use of the Chinese lunar calendar came to replace it over the years.

Yi people, living for the most part in high mountain areas, traditionally practised swidden farming (shifting cultivation), with buckwheat, oats, potatoes and maize as staple crops. They were also herders and hunters and, where possible, paddy rice was farmed.

From early times, Yi society was divided by caste, with a small group (about 5% of the population) known as the 'Black Bone' holding land and power, and preserving their bloodline by marrying exclusively within their own caste. A larger caste (about 50% of the population) known as the 'White Bone' lived as serfs, able to own some property but tied to a Black Bone overlord and obliged to provide corvée labour. There was also a substantial slave caste, often captured Han Chinese or their descendants, who were the property of either Black or White Bone masters. This social order had largely died out in Yunnan and Guizhou, but survived until the 1950s in the mountain fastness of Liangshan.

Early Chinese historical sources held that the Yi people were related to the Qiang and Di nationalities. The earliest records (between the 2nd century BC and the first century AD) place the centres of the Yi around the areas of Dianchi in Yunnan and Qiongdou in Sichuan. The Yi spread into northeast and southern Yunnan,



northwest Guizhou and northwestern Guangxi after the 3rd century AD. They were the principle ethnic group in the kingdom of Nanzhao, which flourished from the eighth century until superseded by the kingdom of Dali in 937. This lasted until conquered by the Yuan Dynasty in the 13th century, when the Yi came under the vassalage of the Chinese empire, ruled through local headmen whose subjugation to central authority varied over time and with geography.

Around this time, large numbers of Han migrants began to move into areas traditionally occupied by the Yi people, leaving only the high mountain areas comparatively free of direct Han influence.

According to displays at Xichang Prefecture Museum (which is devoted to the history and culture of the Yi people), following fierce conflict with the imperial authorities during the 19th century Qing Dynasty, the Yi people elsewhere in Sichuan made a negotiated withdrawal to the Liangshan area.

After 1949, in line with the new nationalities policy, the central government established Yi autonomous Prefectures in Liangshan, Sichuan, and Chuxiong and Honghe (Hani and Yi) in Yunnan. Nine autonomous counties, either exclusively Yi or combined with other ethnic groups, were established in Yunnan, one in Guizhou and one in Guangxi.



Children of Liangshan Yi farmers

The ‘democratic reforms’ which between 1956 and 1958 saw the redistribution of 120,000 hectares of land in Liangshan alone and the freeing of 690,000 slaves. Infrastructure investment brought the first paved roads to Liangshan in 1952.

More information about the



Yi people in Liangshan

Yi people and the **China Development Brief** are available on our website at <http://www.anian.net/fhs/liangshanpeoples.html>

Liangshan Struggles

Your support not only helps to shelter, cloth and educate the Friendship Homes and Schools orphans, but also allows them to escape the tremendous poverty that surrounds them in Liangshan Prefecture. Not only orphans, but the general population as a whole must confront hardship in this developing area. Our website contains comprehensive information on the challenges facing the people of Liangshan Prefecture (<http://www.anian.net/fhs/liangshanpeoples.html>). Here are some excerpts regarding education of children:

[The] Education Bureau claims quite high primary school enrollment rates - over 80% even among Yi girls – but accepts that many children withdraw from school during peak agricultural periods. (This is exacerbated by the lack of modern agricultural technologies, making farm work highly labor intensive.) ...

Conditions in the primary schools are extremely basic, and very many of them are considered to be structurally unsound ...

Given extremely low cash incomes, it would be surprising if in nine out of ten cases parents could find the [funds] for administrative and text book fees. [Teachers] have themselves contributed, out of their own pockets to cover book fees for students ...



Yi man making roof tiles

Getting children into school is of course only the very beginning of the educational process, [&] the barriers to significant learning achievement are daunting. Perhaps pre-eminent among them is the extremely difficult issue of language. [Education] authorities say the early grades of primary school are taught in Yi language, with Mandarin being introduced as the main language of instruction at a later stage. Children who drop out of school before completing basic education may therefore have only a smattering of Mandarin, which will constrain their potential in later life for engaging with the wider world; and even those who stay through junior high school will be disadvantaged in progressing to higher educational levels within the Mandarin

national curriculum. Yet, given resource constraints & the initial, relative scarcity of well trained & fully bilingual Yi teachers, it would be extremely difficult to introduce bilingual teaching methodologies that can broaden children's educational horizons while at the same time preserving their own cultural heritage & language.

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No Spring Trip

We unfortunately did not get enough travelers to sign up for our May 2002 trip to visit the children, so the trip had to be postponed. Please watch our website and newsletter for announcements of future trips. It is important for Friendship Homes and Schools as well as the children that we see them at least once each year, so a few members of the FH&S board are planning to travel to see the children in 2002, either individually or together.

Help Our Children Via Amazon.com



Amazon.com has agreed to donate to us 5% of the cost of orders that originate from Friendship Homes and Schools. If you shop at Amazon.com, please use one of the following methods to visit the Amazon.com web site: 1) Go to the "Sponsorship" section of the Friendship Homes and Schools web site and click on the link to Amazon.com, or 2) bookmark the following link in your web browser and use it as your usual link to Amazon.com: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/friendshihome-20> There is no difference in your purchase costs.