



Midgie Conner

Location: The Chinese linguist Liu Guangkun lists a 1990 figure of 14,000 speakers of the Luhua Qiang language living in northwest Sichuan Province in western China.¹ The Luhua Qiang language is spoken in the Luhua, Shashiduo, Yangrong, Zegai, Ergulu, and Zhuogedu districts of Heishui (Black Water) County in the Aba Prefecture. Heishui County had a total population of 58,000 in the 1990 census, of which 49,600 (85.5%) speak Qiang languages.

Identity: Although they belong to the Qiang nationality and speak Qiang, many of the Qiang in Heishui County call themselves *Zangzu* (Tibetan) in Chinese but *R'ma* in their own language. Having been acculturated to Tibetan centuries ago, these Qiang

no longer view themselves as a distinct people.

Language: Luhua Qiang is one of four distinct varieties of Northern Qiang in China. One researcher has noted, "Although Qiang does not have a large population, their language is divided into many dialects, and they are not intelligible from one to another. Even worse, each village uses a different dialect. It is therefore very difficult to research."²

History: For a long period of time before 1949, the Qiang lived in primitive conditions. A feudal landlord economy dominated production. Many of these poor peasants eventually lost their land due to excessive and unfair taxation. They became hired laborers and wandered from place to place to make a living.

Customs: In their small fields the Luhua Qiang grow corn, red peppers, potatoes, cabbages, beans, and wheat. They also grow a fruit called *whadjou*. In their mud-brick homes they keep pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, and some cattle.

Religion: White stones are not only representative of Qiang gods but are also a symbol of good fortune. Some Qiang believe that "bringing a white stone into a house on New Year's Day will bring more property. So, when they visit a neighbor or relative... they present a white rock and shout 'Property comes!' The host receives it carefully and then welcomes their blessing wholeheartedly by carefully placing it next to the ancestral tablets or the image of a deity."³

Christianity: Foreign missionaries who worked in the Qiang region in the late 1800s recounted this fascinating story of a brief encounter with an unknown tribe: "Years ago a deputation from Ngapa came to Kwanhsien [today's Guanxian County] with a request for pith helmets, guns, and Bibles. Their interest in the Gospel, like the order, seemed mixed, but... eleven years later, the writer met a Prince from Ngapa who greedily bought up 500 [Scripture] portionettes. 'No,' [the Prince] said, 'they are not for sale. My people are interested in this Gospel.'"⁴ This interesting story reflects the interest in the gospel the Qiang people still have today. They are unreached not because they are resistant to the claims of Christ, but rather because

few have ever been presented with the gospel in a way they could comprehend it and make an intelligent decision to accept or reject the Savior.



Population in China:
 14,000 (1990)
 18,060 (2000)
 23,300 (2010)
Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Luhua Qiang

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Chee-Ung-Loo-hwa"
Other Names: Chiang; Luhua, Ch'iang, Luhua
Population Source: 14,000 (1990 Liu Guangkun – 1990 figure); 12,000 (1998 J. Matisoff); Out of a total Qiang population of 198,252 (1990 census)
Location: *W Sichuan:* Heishui County; Luhua, Shashiduo, Yangrong, Zegai, Ergulu, and Zhuogedu districts
Status: Officially included under Qiang
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Qiang, Northern Qiang
Dialects: 0
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Polytheism, Animism
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: None

