

Christie Voelker

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

- Qiang, Northern and Southern (2)
- Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Northeastern Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic (2)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

- Northern Qiang: cng (2)
- Southern Qiang: qxs (2)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- Sichuan Province, China (2)
- 31-32° latitude, 103-104° longitude (3, 1)

1.4 Brief history:

- The Qiang believe themselves to be descendants of the Xia dynasty, though they first appear in recorded history in the Shang dynasty (17-11th centuries B.C.E.) They were influential in the overthrow of the Shang dynasty, then were part of several other rebellions over the years. They now have their own autonomous Beichuan county and share in surrounding autonomous counties (1, 155-56)
- They are a very ancient people, appearing in early records. “The Qiang are recognized as a “first ancestor” culture due to their ancient roots; evidence from bones and tortoise shells shows that the Qiang were living in communities in northwestern China during the Shang Dynasty, c. 16th-11th centuries B.C.”(5, 196)
- Their war with the Geji people provides the backdrop for many of the ritual traditions. “Another important war in the Qiang history was the war between the Qiangs and the aboriginal Geji tribe of Sichuan. After several years of fighting, the Qiangs emerged victorious and their victory enabled them to settle in the upper reaches of Min River in western Sichuan, where they still live”(1, 156).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- The Qiang are assimilating to Chinese culture. “The Ch’iang are being gradually absorbed by the Chinese. There is cultural absorption by social and commercial contacts, and there is intermarriage. In recent years Chinese schools have been established by the Chinese Government in the Ch’iang villages. In these schools the Chinese language and culture is taught”(3, 102).

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- “The valleys of the rivers and streams are narrow, and the mountains high and steep. Altitudes vary from less than 5,000 to over 18,000 feet above sea level. There are extensive loess deposits, and these and other kinds of soil have been terraced for convenience in farming”(3, 1).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

- Around 130,000 total for Northern and Southern (2)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- Maize/corn. “Maize is the main crop up to 8,000 feet”(3, 1). “Corn is the main product of the soil”(3, 19).
- Also wheat, highland barley, potatoes, and buckwheat (6)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Sheep and goats. “they depend very much on their flocks, especially their sheep and goats. Their flocks are the chief source of meat for food”(3, 18).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- Swords, daggers, and guns. “Hunters carry daggers or short swords in their belts and generally use muzzle-loading guns”(3, 19).

2.4 Food storage:

- Stone and wooden containers. “Water is stored in stone vats or small tanks or in wooden barrels, and is carried in wooden barrels or tubs on people’s backs”(3, 18). “Most of the winter supply is gathered in the fall after the crops have been harvested. All loads are carried on the backs of men or women”(3, 18).
- Grains and vegetables dried on roof
 - “Every house has a rooftop balcony where strings of corn and chili peppers hang from the eaves”(1, 156).
 - “At the rear of the roof is an open shed in which grain and vegetables are stored, and where women sometimes do their weaving. Here clothes are dried, and grain is dried, flailed, and winnowed”(3, 15).

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- Men plow and women sew, but other tasks are shared. “Every able-bodied member of the family is supposed to work. Men do the plowing, for there is a taboo against this being done by women, and women do the weaving. Women and girls generally do the sewing, spinning, and cooking, but in such work as farming, herding the domestic animals, and carrying loads, all the members of the family generally cooperate and do their share of the work”(3, 17).

2.6 Land tenure:

- Owned by families. “Land, houses, and tools are generally owned by families and not by individuals”(3, 17).

2.7 Ceramics:

- No data found.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- No evidence found.

2.9 Food taboos:

- Taboo against killing and eating cows, though not everywhere. “Among some of the Chi’ang there is a taboo against eating cattle and eating them, because cattle are used for plowing. This custom, however, is not universal”(3, 20).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- No evidence found.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- 159.51±0.42 inches (3, 10)

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- No information found.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- No information found.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- Information not found.

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- Information not found.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- Information not found.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- No specific age found, but people can be very young when they get married. “Sometimes people are married very young—before they have reached teen-age”(3, 36).
- Also, it is common for the wife to be older than the groom. This is because the groom’s family is interested in the wife’s ability to work. (3) “Usually, the wives were several years older than their husbands”(7).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- Divorce is very rare. “Divorce is almost nonexistent among the Ch’iang. In rare cases when a man and his wife are not harmonious he sells her to another man, who takes her as his wife”(3, 35).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- The majority of Qiang marry monogamously (7)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

- Dowry in the form of valuable presents, depending on the groom’s family’s wealth. “Always, when an engagement is made, the family of the groom must agree to give valuable presents to the family of the bride. These vary in different places, and with different families in the same locality... near Tung-men-wai and Mu-shang-chai the family of the groom must give the family of the bride a pig’s head, a couple jugs of wine, pork, shoes, stockings, and other things. At Ts’a-to he was told that the gift should include a piece of pork, three jugs of wine, two large pieces of bread, incense, candles, etc... The objects, the amount, and the value vary according to the ability of the groom’s family to give”(3, 33).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- Males inherit. In the case that a family has no sons, their daughter’s husband inherits. “A family that has daughters but no sons to continue the family often adopts a son who marries a daughter, taking the family name. Of course the children have the same family name and belong to the same family”(3, 34).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- Information not found.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- No information found.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- It has been stated that people with the same name do not marry (quote in 4.26). Therefore, it seems the family/lineage is exogamous.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

- Information not found

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

- Information not found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

- Information not found.

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

- Information not found.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

- No precise category indicated, but the groom’s family picks the bride based upon her ability to work (3)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- It seems that everyone does. “There is considerable flirting and lovemaking among the young people. Many of the “mountain songs” are songs in which lovemaking is encouraged”(3, 33).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

- If two people like each other but cannot marry, they can exchange presents, so long as there is no sexual contact. (3, 34).

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- Since the woman joins the man’s household/family, it is likely that his family raises the children. However, in situations where the groom moves into the bride’s residence, the mother’s family would raise the children. See quote in 4.9 explaining that the children belong to the family.

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

- Information not found.
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- No information found.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- Since they are monogamous, there are not “potential fathers.”
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- No evidence found.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- No evidence found.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- The family name is passed on the patriline. See quote from 4.9, explaining that males inherit the house name.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- Cannot marry in clan. “People who have the same family name are regarded as members of the same clan, and do not marry each other”(3, 38).
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- Members of the groom’s family go to the home of the bride, where they stay for a meal and small rituals. They form a procession and bring the bride to the home of the groom, where there is a formal marriage ceremony. (3, 36-37)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- In some areas, a child is given a name at his or her birth ritual. “In some districts the child is given its name at this time”(3, 39).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- “A Ch’iang who has attained to official rank under the Chinese government prefers not to marry a Ch’iang woman of lower rank, and often marries a woman of another ethnic group who is in a family of similar official rank”(3, 35)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- Arrangements are made by both families but are initiated by the groom’s family. “Among the Ch’iang, engagements are family affairs. The family of the man chooses the girl or the woman whom he is to marry, and the engagements are made through middlemen or go-betweens. When the two families have agreed, a refusal by either of the young people is not expected”(3, 33).
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
Warfare/homicide
- There is no evidence of current violence and warfare, though the oral traditions all refer to a history full of warfare and conflict.
 - “From the very beginning of their history, the Qiangs appeared to be great warriors”(1, 155).
 - “While modern cities have sprung up in the Qiang autonomous counties, many villagers still live in the centuries-old blockhouses, a legacy of their ancestors’ wars. These stone houses were built closely together and connected by tunnels so that each cluster of houses formed a defensive unit in time of war”(1, 156).
 - “Meanwhile, the history has been simplified in oral tradition as ‘the Qiang used to be a strong and warlike people but dispersed in all directions after being defeated’(8)
- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: see above note
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: see above note
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: see above note
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies(external relations):
- Overlap with neighboring societies. “A small number [of Qiang] live with Tibetan, Han and Hui ethnic groups in such localities as Wenchuan, Dali, Heishui and Songpan”(7).
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

- No evidence found.
5. Socio-Political organization and interaction
- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- “Qiang villages are generally made up of about 30 to 50 families”(4)
 - “A fortress village, *zhai*, composed of 30 to 100 households in general is the basic social unit beyond the household. An average of two to five fortress villages make up a village cluster. The inhabitants of fortress village or village cluster have close contact in social life”(8).
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- The village is sedentary, but a few hunters do leave during the winter months. “During the winter months some of the Ch’iang go to the Chengtu plain”(3, 18)
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
- “A local Ch’iang leader, or headman, is appointed by the Chinese government”(3, 33).
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- Reside with the groom’s family, eventually. “Then they go to the home of the bride, carrying gifts with them... they remain for 3 or 4 days, during which time they are feasted, and then they return to the groom’s home. Later the bride returns to the home of her family, remains there until New Year, which is generally not a long time, and then returns to the groom’s home”(3, 38).
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- The village itself is a boundary, with the clusters of houses acting as defense. The clusters of 2 to 5 villages form as another boundary. See quotes in 5.1, explaining the organization of clusters, and 5.8, explaining how they are laid out and connected.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- None apparent between the sexes. “Men and women mingle freely, talk, and sing “mountain songs” when working in the fields”(3, 33).
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- Houses are clustered closely together to form a sort of fortification.
 - “These stone houses were built closely together and connected by tunnels so that each cluster of houses formed a defensive unit in time of war”(1, 156)
 - “In the villages the houses are close together, often wall-to-wall, and the streets are narrow, generally about 3 feet wide and seldom over 10 feet in width. This gives the village the appearance of a fortification with high stone walls”(3, 16).
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):
- Watch towers. “...nearly every village has one or more watch towers which are 17 or 18 feet square at the bottom and often over 100 feet high... The Ch’iang watch towers are always near villages, their location depending on the position of the villages, the lay of the land, and the need for defense. They are square and eight stories high”(3, 16).
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- Information not found.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- Belong to families following lineages. “By telling these histories, the brotherhood among all families, lineages, and villages in an area could be strengthened”(8).
- 5.12 Trade:
- Some trade within villages and a frequent trade with Chinese markets. “There is some marketing in small villages, generally in temples, in homes, or on the streets. Bartering is still very common. The principal market places are the Chinese cities and towns”(3, 13).
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?
- A relatively recent development has created a heightened social class: a Qiang who was fortunate enough to become educated and aligned themselves with the Chinese government.

- “The Qiang literati in this chapter refer to natives who have acquired knowledge by learning Chinese language and writing and therefore became teachers, public servants of autonomous governments, or holders of other administrative or academic positions in various levels of government. Their privileged social position comes from their role as intermediaries between their own people and the state or the Han Chinese. The emergence of these people as a social class is quite new”(8)
- See quote in 4.29, explaining that a Qiang who has gained rank will not marry another Qiang with lower rank, but will marry a woman from another community who comes from equal heightened rank.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- Rituals and festivals are very important

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- Shamans. “In the Qiang language, the word ‘shibi’ means ‘shaman.’ Shamanism has a long history in China and has survived to this day in some of the minority people’s religions. In pre-modern times, shamans were tribal leaders in the Qiang society. Nowadays they no longer have their political power but are still regarded as spiritual leaders because of their learning and religious duties”(1, 160).
- The shibi presides at ceremonies, but his biggest responsibility is maintaining the oral histories of the Qiang. “Since the Qiangs have no written language, their legends, histories, and rituals form a large corpus of oral scripture, which the shamans must memorize and transmit to the general population and posterity”(1, 160).

6.2 Stimulants:

- No evidence found.

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- Birth passage ritual. “When the newborn baby is 40 days old, a ceremony of initiation is performed by the priest in front of the altar on the housetop or at the altar in the sacred grove. A goat is offered for a boy baby, and a chicken for a girl. A white string is tied around the baby’s neck, which in some places is cut off and placed on the altar, and in other localities is left on the neck of the baby until it falls off. Blood of the sacrificial goat or chicken and melted fat are daubed on the forehead of the child”(3, 39).
- Death passage ritual. “As soon as it is known that a person is dead, there is weeping. The person’s newest and best clothing is put on him, and he is placed in a coffin. For 2 or 3 days he is left in the home, after which he is carried out in the coffin and cremated or buried. Generally a priest performs a ceremony to open the way of the soul to the other world”(3, 41).

6.4 Other rituals:

- The Sacrifice to the Mountain ritual celebrates the white stone, sacred to the Qiang people. They credit the white stone with their victory in battle over the Geji people, whom they displaced from their current land. They also credit it with the discovery of fire. “This magical fire was believed to be a gift from heaven and the Qiangs began to worship the white stone. Another legend links the white stone with the battle between the Qiang and the Geji tribes”(1, 157).
 - The three-part ritual involves the sacrificial ritual of a cow, shamanistic drama and rituals in which the shamans appeal to the gods and ancestors for good harvest and good health, and the Qiang folk dances (1, 158).
- Qiang New Year. “The New Year of Qiangs, on October 1st of the lunar calendar, is the most important festival for Qiang people. The main activities for the festival are offering sacrifices to the spirit, dancing the Shalang Dance and other traditional entertainment”(6, 4)

6.5 Myths(Creation):

- Believe themselves to be the descendants of the hero of the Chinese flood myth. “The Qiang claim to be the descendants of the legendary Great Yu, the hero in the Chinese flood myth and the

founder of China's first dynasty—the Xia dynasty (c.22nd-17th centuries BCE). Although the existence of the Xia dynasty is a matter for debate, relics associated with Yu still abound in what is believed to be his birthplace in modern Beichuan County in Sichuan”(1, 155).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- Ritual dance. “The first piece was called *Heihu Jiangjun wu* (Black Tiger General Dance), which celebrates the heroic deeds of this beloved general who sacrificed his life to save his people... The young male dancers from this village performed the dances we saw. Through different formations and movements they reenacted the battle scenes while a women's chorus provided accompaniment”(1, 161-62).
- Decorated ceremonial material. “Interesting patterns are carved on the handles of Ch'iang ceremonial drums and on the sheaths of ceremonial swords. These seem to be distinctly Ch'iang designs”(3, 21).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- Information not found.

6.8 Missionary effect:

- Have begun to also worship Chinese Gods. “The Ch'iang are not monotheists, but worship many Ch'iang gods and many Chinese gods”(3, 102).

6.9 RCR revival:

- Tradition is being lost, along with the language and shaman tradition. “...among the Qiang people their indigenous language is one of the emblems of their religion, just as are their tools and dress; and just as the Qiang tools are endangered, so too is the Qiang language and culture itself as embodied in the *duangong*”(5, 203).
- According to another source, the *duangong* tradition has revived since the 1980's after being nearly stamped out during the Cultural Revolution. “During the Cultural Revolution, *duangong* and the religion they practiced almost disappeared. But, in the 1980s, as the sense of ethnic identity among China's nationalities sharply increased, the story of the Qiang-Ge war adopted from *duangong* oracles and the related white stone worship have become a symbol of the Qiang culture”(8).

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- The soul of the deceased goes on to the “other world” (see quote in 6.3 regarding death ritual) (3)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- Information not found.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

- No evidence found.

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- Pantheism. “The Qiangs are pantheists, worshipping a large number of gods such as gods of heaven, sun, fire, mountains, rivers, and trees, all of them represented by the white stone”(1, 157).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

- No information found.

7.2 Piercings:

- Women over the age of 12 have pierced ears (3, 21).

7.3 Haircut:

- Both men and women wear scarves around their head, wrapped like a turban. (6) (3)

7.4 Scarification:

- No evidence found.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

- Belts. “Both men and women wear cloth belts... The ornamented belts are believed to have power to protect their wearers from demons that poison people. Women's belts have parallel lines

on both sides, the ornamental designs being in between the lines. The belts of the men have the ornamental patterns, but not the parallel lines”(3, 21).

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- The priest, shaman, or shibi wears a monkey hat.
 - “This is made of a golden-haired monkey skin and is believed to be very efficacious, greatly adding to the dignity and potency of the priest and his ceremonies”(3, 55).
 - “...the Qiang shamans wear monkey hats, which are made of the fur of golden monkeys and have three peaks on the top representing the god of heaven, the god of earth, and the patron god of the shamans. The monkey hats are considered sacred objects and are only used during religious ceremonies”(1, 160).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- Men and women wear similar clothing, but the women’s clothing is decorated. “Most of the clothing that they wear is made of cotton, silk, sheer fur, ox fur, and flax. It is common for both women and men to wear gowns and sleeveless wool jackets. The difference between male and female’s clothing is that the women’s clothing is decorated with lace and ornaments”(4).

7.8 Missionary effect:

- No effect found.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- It seems as though that through their isolation, the Qiang living in the mountain villages never adopted “modern” dress.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- Information not found

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- Information not found

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

- Information not found

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- Drinking of wine is important in every ceremony or ritual. “Unique in style, the Zaji wine is a kind of traditional drink, with a history of over 1,000 years, which are made of buckwheat, wheat, barley or maize fermented. Zaji wine is necessary to happy event”(6, 4)
- “In the first Chinese dictionary, *Shuowen jiezi*, compiled by Xu Shen in 121 CE, the word ‘Qiang’ was defined as ‘shepherders of Xirong’ and it was written with the character ‘sheep’ as its component. Chinese characters such as beauty, goodness, and auspiciousness all share this ‘sheep’ radical, indicating the importance of this animal in ancient Chinese culture”(1, 155).

Numbered references

1. Shiao-Ling Yu, “Sacrifice to the Mountain: A Ritual Performance of the Qiang Minority People in China.” *TDR* 48.4 (2004): 155-66.
2. Ethnologue.com
3. David Crockett Graham. *The Customs and Religion of the Ch’iang*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1958. Print.
4. “Qiang Minority.” www.chinahighlights.com
5. Emma Zevik. “First Look: The Qiang People of Sichuan.” Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University.
6. “The Qiang Ethnic Group.” www.msdcchina.org
7. “The Qiang Ethnic Group.” www.china.org
8. Wang Ming-ke. “From the Qiang Barbarians to the Qiang Nationality: The Making of a New Chinese Boundary.” *Imaging China: Regional Division and National Unity*. Taipei: Institute of Ethnology. Web.