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Jinping Miao-Yao-Dai Autonomous County (Yunnan Province)

General Situation of Jinping Miao-Yao-Dai Autonomous County

Jinping Miao-Yao-Dai Autonomous County is situated in the south of Honghe Hani-Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. To the west of Jinping is Lüchun County; to the north are Yuanyang County, Gejiu City and Mengzi County; to the east are Pingbian Miao Autonomous County and Hekou Yao Autonomous County; and to the south is Vietnam. Jinping covers 70 km from the north to the south and 115 km from the east to the west, a total area of 3,686 km, and encompasses 502 km of national border. Jinhe Town, the county seat, is 477 km away from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province, and 159 km from Gejiu, the seat of Honghe Hani-Yi Autonomous Prefecture, of which Jinping is part. Within Jinping, Shilicun, the closest township to Jinhe, is at a distance of 13 km; the farthest township, Ma'andi is at a distance of 146 km.

Jinping County was given the status of Miao-Yao-Dai Autonomous County from the State Council on June 11, 1985. Presently the autonomous county administers 13 townships, 1 town, 80 administrative villages, 11 administrative offices, 996 natural villages, and 1,323 village cooperatives (*cunmin xiaozu*, formerly called *hezuo she*).

Jinping is in the Yunlin Mountains, an extension of the Ailao Mountains. Its terrain being mountainous, the altitude in the county varies considerably. Mount Xilong is the highest peak, with an altitude of 3,074 m, whereas the lowest point is Bohokou, with an altitude of 105 m. Ten small plateaus are dispersed in the

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mountains: the largest is Mengleba (16.3 km²), and the smallest is Bahaba (1.19 km²). The total area covered by the plateaus is 3,700 mu, representing 0.67 percent of the total area of the county. The climate is subtropical: the rainy season extends from May to October, and the climate is dry during the rest of the year. The largest variation in altitude corresponds to a large variation in the climate and volume of rainfall. On the lower plateaus, thanks to warm weather, fertile earth, and abundant water springs, plenty of subtropical fruits are grown and two harvests of rice are reaped each year. The terrain at 1,600–3,000 m altitude is covered with primitive forest; the earth is red and lacks phosphorous. Highly fertile land covers 22 percent of the total cultivated area of the county, and moderately fertile land covers 55 percent. Land suitable for cultivation covers 977,000 mu, that is, 17.7 percent of the total area of the county (5,528,500 mu): 327,000 mu are cultivated (290,000 mu irrigated and 37,000 mu not irrigated), and 650,000 mu are not cultivated. The total forest area covers 2,170,000 mu (39 percent of the total area); the gardening area, 70,000 mu (1.3 percent). Wasteland is estimated at 1,880,000 mu (34 percent).

Jinping has abundant potentially exploitable water resources. According to one estimate, its hydroelectric energy resources stand at 1,913,900 Kw, of which 372,000 Kw could be exploited. Right now only 900 Kw are exploited. In addition, geothermic resources have not yet been exploited. The main resources of the county, however, are in mining: gold, nickel, copper, iron, and tin. Copper is exploited, as is gold, but only by individuals: the rest remains unexploited. The county is also endowed with a large variety of rare plants and animals. Since the state forbids their exploitation and hunting, they do not constitute a profitable resource. On the contrary, money and labor are required to protect them. Floods are the main natural calamity in Jinping. During the rainy season, they often cause disastrous damage to human lives and the local economy.

In 1993 the population of Jinping totaled 300,543. It was mainly agricultural (95.2 percent) and non-Han (85 percent). Jinping's 1993 GNP was 140.18 million yuan, that is, 466 yuan per capita. The respective share of the GNP was agriculture, 47.8 percent; industry, 9.9 percent; construction, 4.5 percent; and commerce, telecommunications, transport, and services (for agricultural, forest, and animal husbandry), health, education, and administration, 37.7 percent. Until 1985 Jinping was classified as one of the poorest counties at the national level (*guojiaji pinkun xian*), and it is now ranked among the poorest counties in Yunnan Province (*shengji pinkun xian*): this means that Jinping is the object of priority assistance. In 1991 it was designated a "priority assisted poor county" (*zhongdian fu pinkun xian*) by Yunnan Province and a "county assisted to overcome poverty" (*fu pin gongjian xian*) by the State Council. These epithets are accompanied by certain advantages, notably special subsidies. In 1993 the expenditures outgrew the revenues by 33.96 million yuan, and the state wiped up the deficit.

Of the four counties in Yunnan where we did fieldwork, Jinping was the only autonomous county: several ethnic groups live here, and the Han are a minority.

The Han represent 14.9 percent of the population in Jinping, and they are the third ethnic group in terms of the number of people. The other ethnic groups are the Miao, Yao, Dai, Hani, Yi, Zhuang, and Lahu, along with a group informally called "Mangren." In large part, these ethnic groups have preserved their traditions, lifestyle, and outlook on life. They react differently to the introduction of modern civilization, including modern education. Certain ethnic groups who, for a long time, have had contacts with other cultures more readily accepting of modern education, whereas in other groups, like the "Mangren," education is scarcely known as a concept and does not yet constitute a social activity differentiated from the rest of social life. For them, learning simply takes place by living alongside their parents, elders, and friends. There are no "schools" and no specialized "teachers," and the notion of "schooling" is unknown. Education in Jinping Autonomous County has developed on a heterogeneous basis. One could hardly qualify this basis as "advanced" or "backward." It would be more appropriate to say that this basis is complex, unequal, and incoherent. This creates difficulties for modern education. It is difficult to find a standardized educational model suitable for everyone.

The Present Educational Situation in Jinping

Educational Organization

Ultimate responsibility for education in Jinping is with the county Education Bureau, which is headed by a deputy director of the county (*fuxianzhang*). The bureau administers all matters concerning the schools of the county: teaching, teacher training, schooling, school enrollment, and political activities. Its real mission, however, is to carry out tasks assigned by higher-ranking administrative levels: write up reports, draw up assessments, evaluate, assist in the control exerted by the higher-echelon administration, and so on. Because precise rules apply to all aspects of daily work and because unforeseen problems must be submitted to the higher authorities of the county, the bureau is simply an executive without decision-making power.

The deputy director of the county must recommend to the director the appointment of the higher-ranking cadres of the Education Bureau and of the complete (i.e., junior-high and senior-high) secondary schools, but he can appoint lower-ranking cadres. He manages funds (about 300,000 yuan per year), such as taxes for education and state subsidies for the generalization of compulsory education. The largest expenditures are mainly for salaries.

Secondary Schools

In 1993 Jinping had two complete secondary schools and six junior high schools. Secondary School No. 1 (*Yizhong*), a complete secondary school, is in the county

seat and under the direct authority of the county. The other complete secondary school belongs to Jinping Farm. The six junior high schools are under the direction of the Education Bureau and are distributed in the townships. In 1993 student enrollment totaled 5,588, including 5,351 (96 percent) in the schools under the bureau, 1,938 girls (35 percent), and 1,331 in urban areas (24 percent). Each secondary-school class has about 50 students. The school personnel totals 497 employees, including 317 full-time (*zhuanren*) teachers, 8 replacement (*daike*) teachers, and 20 temporary (*linshi*) teachers. In 1994, at the time of our fieldwork investigation, *Yizhong* had twelve regular classes and one ethnic class, and Jinping Farm Secondary School had three classes. Together, the two complete secondary schools enrolled around 730 students and were staffed by 270 teachers.

In 1993 there were seven junior high schools in Jinping, one of which was part of a complete secondary school. Six junior high schools were in the townships. One of them is intended for Indochinese refugees. In addition, eight primary schools comprise a total of 76 annex junior high classes totaling approximately 4,850 students (statistics lack precision because of the instability of the students), and 270 teachers.

Jinping County also has a vocational secondary school (*zhiye zhongxue*), a teacher continuing school (*jiaoshi jinxiu xuexiao*), and a TV school of agronomy (*nongyi guangbo dianshi xuexiao*).

Primary Schools

Jinping has 268 primary schools and about 200 teaching points (*jiaoxue dian*): 266 primary schools and 191 teaching points are under the county (1993 data). Only one primary school is in the county seat; all others are in the townships. Of the 37,589 pupils, 96.8 percent are in the countryside, and 37.5 percent are girls. A classroom comprises around 45 pupils in the county seat and 20 pupils in the villages. In several instances a school in a township has only one teacher working in a multigrade classroom. Presently, the primary schools of Jinping employ 83 workers in the town (including 66 teachers) and 1,362 workers in the townships (including 1,260 teachers).

Distribution of Schools and Students

The schools of Jinping are distributed in the county seat and on the farms (*nongchang*) in proportion to the distribution of the population. There is a concentration of schools in Jinhe Town: Secondary School No.1 (*Yizhong*), vocational secondary school (*zhiye zhongxue*), teacher continuing school (*jiaoshi jinxiu xuexiao*), one junior high school (*chuzhong*), one annex junior high school (*fushe chuzhong*), and forty-three primary schools. In addition to Jinhe, some relatively developed localities, such as Adebo, Tongchang, and Mengla, each have a secondary school under the county, given the density of their population. Each town-

ship, except Jinshuihe Township, has an annex junior high school. Jinshuihe Township does not yet have an annex junior high school because it is in the mountains far from the center and has been created as a township only recently (1987). Each township has primary schools. The highest percentage of children of primary school age enrolled at school is in Ma'andi Township, in the east (94.6 percent), and the lowest percentage is in Zhuomi Township and Laomeng Township, in the west (77 percent and 77.2 percent). Everywhere else, the percentage varies between 80 and 90 percent. According to our own on-the-spot observations, the real percentage would be lower than the official percentage because of dropouts.

The percentage of school-age children who effectively attend school diminishes gradually as the children grow older. In 1993, in the county seat, the primary-school-age population was 1,115 (522 girls) and the number of pupils was 1,113 (522 girls), practically 100 percent. In the countryside, of a primary-school-age population of 36,063 (15,816 girls), 33,017 children (13,045 girls) were enrolled in school (91.6 percent). Primary school attendance is much less frequent for girls (82.5 percent) than for boys (98.6 percent). This gender-based tendency is even more pronounced in secondary school, especially at the senior high level. For various reasons, the number of students at school is very unstable and changes every day.

Jinping County Secondary School No. 1

Jinping County Secondary School No. 1 (*Yizhong*) was founded in 1957, as three teachers opened Jinping Junior High School (*Jinping chuji zhongxue*) in the building of the old Primary School No. 1, and enrolled 56 students. Today, *Yizhong* employs 141 workers, including 87 teachers. It has 6 promotions, distributed into 25 classes: 24 regular (*zhenggui*) classes and 1 continuation (*buxi*) class. In its total enrollment of 1,300 students, 56 percent are boys, and 47 percent are Han.

Administratively the school is in close relation with the government and the county's CPC Committee. This is why it is so dependent: the school principal is appointed by the Party Committee, in particular by the committee's secretary; and the school vice principal is appointed by the committee's assistant secretary. The Personnel Bureau appoints the school's section heads following a recommendation from the school principal, and the Education Bureau appoints the assistant section heads. The head of the Young Communist League is appointed by the county's Committee of the League. The principal has the authority to appoint the officers for research and teaching and the teachers in charge of each classroom. The hiring or reassigning of employees is constantly subject to social pressure: "A county leader would be offended if I refused a candidate he has recommended," the principal said, "Employment quotas are set at a higher level: I cannot hire the person I want, nor can I refuse a person I do not want."

The same kind of problem applies to management: "Those who have connections at a higher level do not take orders from the principal, and no one can criticize them." According to the principal, since the school has no autonomy to administer its personnel, and since the principal is constantly reminded of the role of "connections" (*guanxi*) for the selection of personnel, it is very difficult to build up the best work team, and especially so at the senior high school level.

Those who hold a contrary opinion, however, consider that it is the county government that is mainly responsible for the schools, that it must have its say in the affairs of personnel, and that the school principal must not have a monopoly over this.

In fact, the government manages all institutions in the county. Its intervention in the affairs of the schools is perhaps inevitable given the present state of education in this poor region where funds are scarce and depend on government assistance.

Financially the principal has limited power. Administrative expenses constitute the main expenditure of the school. Each year the school receives a subsidy calculated on the basis of the number of students: 45 yuan for each senior high (*gaozhong*) student and 20 yuan for each junior high (*chuzhong*) student. Subsidies for national minority students, scholarships, and awards for excellence total 70,000 yuan per year. Officially these funds are at the disposal of the principal on written request, but they are available only after the allocation of regulated expenses. By then, normally, only debts remain, so that the principal, in fact, has no funds at his disposal. Moreover, all tuition fees and all revenues for services rendered by the school must be remitted in full to the higher authorities.

To increase its revenues, the school has invested in a copper mine and opened a store and a pastry shop. However, "after paying taxes, all that is left is the salary for employees," the principal said. What is profitable for the school is the preparatory class for the university examinations: a revenue of more than 20,000 yuan per year. Joined classes (*lianban*) are also another source of revenue: these classes bring tuition fees by enrolling children from enterprises. For instance, the school has enrolled children from the Society of Non-Ferrous Metals in return for a contribution of 30,000 yuan per year. However, this practice was in contravention of a regulation and was later discontinued.

Presently the county government is promoting the reform of the educational system with the aim of implementing the responsibility of the school principal. However, the principal told us: "I am skeptical because I have no power over financial and personnel matters."

The school is now faced with problems yet to be resolved: the lack of financial resources and the mediocre quality of the teaching and administrative personnel. The proportion of conformity to state norms for educational qualifications is only 32 percent in senior high schools and 50 percent in junior high schools. According to the principal:

Given the bad working conditions, several teachers would like to leave. The problem is that the teachers are not sufficiently serious about their work. The young teachers have difficulty getting the subject matter across to students in the classroom. They do not prepare their classes well and are inexperienced. . . . A teacher with a college degree did not get along well with the students. Finally we transferred him to a laboratory. Often the teachers who are conscientious and appreciated by the students are *zhongzhuan* [specialized secondary school] and senior high graduates of the 1950s and the 1960s. Young people lack a sense of responsibility, they have fun, they drink.

The low morale and attitudinal problems among teachers are linked to a radical change of values and social structure following the reform. Jinping is a poor county, and its development in certain sectors has barely begun. Presently a minority of people are quickly getting rich, while the mass is underemployed. The teachers, often highly educated but with no connections and no opportunity to find work elsewhere, would like to catch up with the movement toward development and make use of their knowledge. However, because of a lack of opportunity and because they do not dare give up their "iron rice bowl" (*tiefanwan*), they fall back into their pessimism. Seeing others getting rich, they develop a contagious bitterness that is detrimental to their work.

Jinping Vocational Secondary School

Jinping Vocational Secondary School (*Jinping zhiye zhongxue*), founded in 1983, is situated on a mountain, outside the county seat. A project is currently in motion to move it to a highland within the county seat. For this purpose, 30 mu of land have been requisitioned, and 600,000 yuan have already been spent. But the cost of the project is estimated at 10 million yuan, and the remaining necessary funds have not yet been found. The present school buildings were built before 1966. Some were warehouses for munitions during the "Anti-American War in Vietnam." Made of brick and wood and covering an area of 5,188 m², they are considered hazardous buildings. In addition, the campus has 482 m² of newly built dormitories.

The school now employs thirty-eight workers, including sixteen teachers. Most of these teachers were assigned by the state. Four of them were recruited outside of Jinping. In the early 1980s the county went to other places in the prefecture and the province to look for senior high graduates with a "rural status" (*nongye hukou*) and gave them the status of "state employee" (*guojia ganbu*). Several teachers were hired this way, including the principal's wife. Specialized teachers all have permanent status. Among them is a teacher of veterinary science who has been practicing as a veterinarian in the county for twenty years. He was assigned here when the school opened. After classes, for a fee of five yuan, he castrates hogs for the peasants.

Presently the school offers two main programs of study: dried tobacco and

animal breeding. It will soon open a class for countryside doctors. Since its creation, the school has organized thirteen classes of two to three years' duration, and seven classes of three to six months. The shortest class was fifteen days. Ten classes, that is, approximately 500 students, have graduated from the school. Three classes (150 students) are now under way. Most of the students are Han. All candidates have equal opportunity for admission to the school, regardless of their ethnic background. All students board at the school.

Approximately 65 percent of the graduates have found work as cadres or as employees of a state enterprise. The two first promotions were students who specialized in agricultural techniques. Some graduates passed an examination to become cadres in agricultural and veterinary research stations, and others became enterprise directors. Some have found work outside their specialty.

According to the principal, vocational education is faced with serious difficulties and is far from conforming with state norms. For a county with a population of 300,000, such as Jinping, the norms require one secondary vocational school with one thousand students. In Jinping it is difficult to recruit students for the following reasons:

1. *For the local population, the purpose of schooling is to find "work in a state enterprise" other than farm work.* The vocational school is given importance only to the extent that it helps its graduates find such work. People do not see agricultural work as "work" and are not interested in studying agricultural techniques to return to their village later. This conception of vocational education has a negative impact on the student resources. In the beginning, two deputy directors of the county acted successively as principal of the school. Thanks to them, most of the graduates of the school found work. Several young people then applied for enrollment in the school. Later, the deputy directors lost some of their influence. Still, people wanted to know if work was guaranteed. "The parents of students want to have information concerning job assignments," the principal stated. In 1993 the school enrolled two classes (about one hundred students). Believing that work was guaranteed, many accepted to enroll by paying their own tuition fee (*zifei*). Later, however, several of them dropped out because job prospects did not seem too sure. Finally, only about eighty students stayed on.

2. *The vocational school's curriculum and teaching methods do not quite correspond to real needs.* It is not yet known for sure "what should be taught and how it should be taught." The courses given do not seem to be useful because their level of development is so low that there is no demand for these techniques. For example, the principal stated this:

In veterinary science, when the livestock dies, the peasants do not know that it is because of illness, and they do not consult the veterinarian. Poultry in the countryside is not always profitable for the peasants. But if they did not raise animals, the fodder would be wasted. They would not spend money to treat the animals. Cattle is important for them, but they have no cash to have them treated by the veterinarian. The implied logic is that if a cow dies, there will be another one.

Since fodder is free, the peasants prefer to feed one more head of cattle than to treat a cow that is ill. One student said: "Chemical fertilizers and fruit-tree techniques have no use here, and edible mushrooms are not sought after by the peasants. The techniques are useless because the conditions here are not favorable." The township/town (*xiangzhen*) enterprises make no progress and offer very few job opportunities, even for specialists. According to the principal: "Each trade is monopolized. Everything depends on connections, even with organized crime. No one can simply start a business."

3. *The teaching methods are a problem.* Until now, vocational education has not adopted efficient and proven methods. The teachers use methods from general education (*puzhong*) and specialized secondary education (*zhongzhuan*), methods that are not appropriate for vocational education. Lacking motivation, the teachers take no initiative to look for appropriate teaching methods nor to improve their performance. "The teachers," the principal said, "originate from general education and quickly lose their motivation. There is no pressure for the rate of success nor for standards of quality. The province prints the diplomas, the autonomous prefecture distributes them, and the school takes care of controlling them. There are no official norms."

4. *Because of their traditionalist mentality, people show little interest in learning crafts and techniques.* "The craftsmen, here, such as those in shoe repair, are all people who came from elsewhere," one teacher said. "Local people despise these crafts; it is a prejudice widespread among the population of Yunnan." One might even say that it is a generalized frame of mind in the population of poor regions. In an underdeveloped region, such as Jinping County, the combination of customs, the conception of work, the employment system, and weakness in vocational education result in an absence of demand for vocational education. In this situation, two as yet unanswered questions may be asked: First, how can vocational education develop in accordance with social development; and, second, how can one find ways to become rich through vocational education?

Political Factors of Educational Development

Poor County and "Poor County" Mentality

Jinping, as an autonomous county, has certain advantages. Officially recognized as a "poor county" at the national level (*guojiaji pinkun xian*) until 1985, and at the provincial level (*shengji pinkun xian*) since 1985, Jinping was categorized, in 1991, as a "priority assisted poor county" (*zhongdian fu pinkun xian*) by Yunnan Province and as a "county assisted to overcome poverty" (*fu pin gongjian xian*) by the State Council. The designation "poor county" (*pinkun xian*) implies being the beneficiary of state subsidies. A range of well-defined subsidies corresponds to each level of recognized poverty. Moreover, in addition to the conventional subsidies, Jinping County benefits from advantages reserved for national-minor-

ity regions, for border areas, and for underdeveloped regions. Thus Jinping exemplifies the preferential policies of the state. This special status has given rise to the following phenomena specific to Jinping:

1. *Investment in education.* Investment in education is constrained by the county's financial difficulties. Presently the budget for education comprises mainly salaries of personnel and costs of administrative services. This part is planned and allocated by the state. The education taxes and the funds for six-year- and nine-year compulsory education (300,000 yuan in all) constitute mobile funds at the disposal of the county deputy director in charge of education. Sometimes donations are received for education, but they are in small quantity: the largest sum so far has been 90,000 yuan. The tuition fees are controlled by the state and supervised by the Prices Bureau. Given the poverty of the population, it is difficult to collect tuition fees. For all these reasons, educational expenditures in the county are always confronting difficulties. Several problems need to be solved because education is still at such a low level of development, but funding is inadequate.

2. *The "poor-county" mentality ("pinkun xian" yishi).* At all levels in Jinping, there is a strong "poor county" mentality. "Poor county" has become an everyday expression that serves to justify the existence of all sorts of social phenomena. Many things are considered understandable and normal because Jinping is a "poor county." The cadres of the county "expose the poverty," and this influences the elaboration of the local policies. According to them, the county should not have been downgraded, in terms of recognized poverty, from the national level to the provincial level in 1985. In support of their claim, they argue that statistics demonstrate the inferiority of the county in terms of grain production and GNP, in comparison with the norms of the state: "Jinping County is 'sufficiently poor' to receive more financial aid." This phenomenon causes a dilemma: on the one hand, the salary and working conditions of the teachers must be sufficiently low to be subsidized by the state; on the other hand, the state policy concerning subsidies stipulates that education must be a priority in the allocation of the budget. The local authorities are always seeking an equilibrium between these two requirements. The equilibrium is obtained by sacrificing the full development of education under the present conditions.

3. *Subsidies.* The county's finances depend to a large extent on subsidies, and the main objective of the work of the local authorities is to find ways to obtain subsidies. Local decisions follow changes in the regulations and policies of higher authorities. Certain measures taken by the local authorities specifically aim at pleasing the higher authorities.

4. *The profitability of investment in education.* In the present state of public service and socioeconomic development of this poverty-stricken county, the strategy of local authorities is to adopt measures that are profitable in the short term but do not significantly improve the training of competent personnel. Within one mandate, or in the foreseeable future, investment in education does not provide immediate results in local development, since results in education must wait for

years. Consequently, since education is "a faraway source of drinking water to satisfy an immediate thirst," the authorities are inclined to concentrate on subsidies or on industrial and commercial development. The authorities sometimes resort to illegal means, such as traffic of merchandise, to gather funds. For the authorities of the county, giving food to the population is more important than developing education "with no practical value." This contradiction between long-term and short-term objectives is a problem facing Jinping. Education represents about 20 percent of the county's budget. Whereas expenditures in industry and agriculture can bring benefits, investment in education provides no direct revenues and is considered a "pure expenditure." Education is not seen as an investment but as a burden.

Local Educational Policy

As an economically underdeveloped county, Jinping does not display much need for education. Work and the mode of production being simple, education and professional training are met with few job opportunities on the market. For the people of Jinping, education is a means to leave the county. But this path is not accessible to everyone. Thus there is not much motivation to develop education at any social level in Jinping. The promotion of education depends totally on the government and on clear-sighted individuals in the county. There is no generalized wish or expressed need to develop education in the county.

1. *Ethnic education in border areas.* During the 1950s the government began to apply measures to promote education, thus creating more and more schools in border and mountainous areas. Since 1951 primary education in Jinping County has progressively been diffused: in 1951, there were 10 primary schools (650 pupils); in 1957, 50 (5,031); in 1965, 355 (11,212); in 1985, 541 (29,282). This growth was a result of the government's policy to "develop ethnic education in border areas." This policy is tinged with a "political task," and its application has been marked with exaggerated politicization. Nevertheless, on the whole it has propelled local development.

2. *Free schooling.* The local population is not motivated by the perspectives of education. The government artificially improves the rate of schooling and the rate of consolidation of school-age children: in the countryside, all primary schools are free and the government gives each border area pupil 30–70 fen monthly as a subsidy for books. In sparsely populated areas, 38 semiboarding higher primary school (*gaoxiao*) classes were created, and each boarder receives a monthly allowance of five yuan as a subsidy for food.

3. *Scholarships.* To encourage educational perseverance among national minority pupils, in 1980 Secondary School No. 1 (*Yizhong*) created a junior-high ethnic class (*minzuban*), enrolling the best pupils from various townships and giving them scholarships.

4. *Teachers.* To stabilize the contingent of teachers, especially teachers in

remote and border areas, the government's educational services have decided that the teachers in the seventy-four border-area primary schools will be given one additional increment in the salary scale and will receive an extra 15 yuan per month, while teachers in tropical areas below an altitude of 400 m will be entitled to a "refreshment fee" (*yinliao fei*) for six months per year. The Personnel Department has reunited the families of 135 teachers which, for professional reasons, had been separated. And as an measure of encouragement, *gongban* (state-employed) status was given to all *minban* (locally run) teachers deemed competent.

5. *Attracting new teachers.* Impeded by a shortage of teachers, Jinping County adopted a special policy to attract teachers and new college graduates from other regions: in addition to benefits given to border area teachers, the county helps new teachers find work for the other adult members of their family and finds schools for their offspring. The probation period is waived for college graduates, and local national-minority young people are selected to be trained as teachers and then employed in the county schools.

6. *Classes and special courses.* To spread literacy in the minority languages, the county has organized various kinds of classes and special courses at the junior-high level in work units.

Social Factors of Educational Development

Jinping being a poor county, its productive capacity and revenues are low. The government and local population do not have sufficient means to support education. These conditions shape Jinping residents' opinion and fundamental attitudes toward education. Industry is underdeveloped, jobs are scarce, and the daily lives of the unemployed is always under pressure. For most people, the main preoccupation is "how to earn a living." People's conception of education is closely related to this preoccupation. Very few entertain abstract ideals such as "personal culture" and "personal development." This collective attitude inhibits educational development.

The Ultimate Aspiration: An "Iron Rice Bowl"

Education enables a few good students to leave the countryside and find work: they complete specialized secondary school (*zhongzhuan*), a college (*dazhuan*) or university (*daxue*), and then are assigned work by the state, thus obtaining an "official occupation" (*zhengshi gongzuo*), an "iron rice bowl" (*tiefanwan*). In Jinping County, where employment is rare, being assigned to work by the state is a privilege. In this process, there is no direct link between the content of the studies and the situation resulting from the studies, that is, all receive the salary of a state employee. Young people in the lower levels of society accept any program of study that enables them to find an "iron rice bowl." With this in

mind, they choose a higher school or a special program where they are most likely to be admitted. The best graduates from junior high school (*chuzhong*) forgo senior high school (*gaozhong*) because senior high is risky, is expensive, and, most important, is not a guarantee to being admitted to a college. Most of them choose *zhongzhuan* (specialized secondary school) or *zhongshi* (secondary teachers' training school) to be assured of finding work. Thus Secondary School No. 1 (*Yizhong*) does not attract enough students: in 1993 and 1994 the school recruited only 178 and 150 students, respectively, instead of the predicted 220 students. Moreover, the state has undertaken the reform of the system of the assignment of college graduates. A number of college graduates, natives of Jinping, unable to find work elsewhere, returned to their family's home in Jinping. For them it is traumatic, and for their family it is embarrassing: honor gives way to rancor. Certain families with no student at home rejoice at other people's misfortune. Some young people who do not aspire to higher education are confirmed in their resolve. The reform of the system of the assignment of college graduates deters people from pursuing higher studies.

Usefulness or Uselessness?

In addition to a guarantee of the "iron rice bowl," people want schooling to give them "practical" knowledge. They entertain a superficial notion of "knowledge." Some want knowledge to bring them money rapidly. The government's educational services presently give this advice to people: "Nowadays, everything requires science. One needs knowledge to raise hogs and to till the land scientifically. One must go to school to do accounting." But, in reality, general education does not impart practical and technical knowledge, does not teach agricultural techniques or commerce or craftsmanship, and does not show people how to get rich. Worst of all, to succeed under present living conditions and primitive modes of production, one mostly needs "special connections," personal charm, an ability to judge and organize, and, only then, technical skills. All this comes from social experience more than from education. Good students and people with more education are not necessarily those who succeed most in business and work. Some senior high graduates learn new ideas but lack a specialized field of competence as well as social connections. Although they are dissatisfied with the backward mode of production of Jinping County, they do not have the courage to leave their native place nor the means to change things. They can do nothing better than loaf around. Social opinion differs on their situation. A few people consider that "these persons represent a contemporary conception. Dissatisfaction is a good thing, it can bring about reform," said one high school teacher. But the majority of people think that these graduates "are good for nothing" and that "their education has made them forget their origin." These people influence public opinion concerning the aims of education. Some parents would rather

have their children work conscientiously and honestly rather than have them "pursue studies to forget their roots."

Conservatism as a Choice

In Jinping County, public opinion reflects the planned, traditional, and conservative system of the past. According to this opinion, education is a means that enables one to find work, an "iron rice bowl." Obviously this concept does not correspond to the spirit of autonomy, adventure, and initiative of the market economy. In an underdeveloped region such as Jinping, however, relatively little information filters in from the outside world. The system, customs, and concepts that have long restrained individual initiative continue to dominate society. This is a logical result of China's social system and its socio-historical factors. For the local population, reality cannot be changed. One must adapt to it and use it, but not reform it.

Vocational Education or Education for Work?

Over the past few years, vocational education has made great strides in Jinping County. The reality, however, is often far from satisfactory. Agriculture is the only sector that offers work. This is why any vocational school can prepare only one or two promotions of graduates before the market becomes saturated. Graduates of vocational schools do not find work, whereas there is a dearth of candidates in the agricultural sector where the needs are great. Often students enrolled in a vocational program want to leave the countryside after having mastered a technique. Agricultural techniques do not interest young people. Meanwhile agriculture, in its present state, does not make much profit and has little potential for development. Its future does not appear promising; rather, it is seen simply as a way to make a living.

All candidates in vocational education are motivated by the practical and utilitarian goal of finding work after graduation. People consider that only general education constitutes real education, called "read books" (*dushu*), a concept related to the traditional way of studying the "Four Books and Five Classics" (*Sishuwujin*). In comparison, vocational education is the learning of a craft and consequently is viewed as being less "noble." General education is considered a luxury that is out of the reach of simple folk who are compelled to choose vocational education, a second-best choice that provides the acquisition of certain skills. As soon as a vocational program ceases to guarantee work, it gets no more candidates.

On the one hand, the work marketplace is rapidly saturated; on the other hand, vocational education is seen as "education for work." This situation forces the vocational school continually to change its programs in answer to the needs of the students and in order to survive. These changes in programs every year or

every other year entail a change of teachers and textbooks, resulting in the low quality of teaching. At the same time, since it is difficult to predict the tendencies of the work marketplace, the graduates still have difficulty finding work. There are highs and lows in the development of vocational education. The vocational school finds it hard to improve its reputation in society and remains the last choice for junior high school (*chuzhong*) graduates. The present preference of these graduates is, in decreasing order, specialized secondary school (*zhong-zhuan*), secondary normal school (*zhongshi*), general senior high school (*pugao*), and secondary vocational school (*zhigao*).

Economic Factors of Educational Development

Disjunction Between Education and the Quality of Workers

According to the norms of a modern society, the economic level of Jinping County is backward and less demanding concerning the quality of workers. This disjunction of modern education is manifested in the following ways:

1. *The industrial and tertiary sectors are largely inferior to agriculture, where plantations predominate.* The 1993 GNP of Jinping County was 140.18 million yuan, 47.8 percent of which was for agriculture, 14.5 percent for industry and construction, and 37.7 percent for the tertiary sector. The population, 300,543, was 95 percent agricultural. In the global industrial production of 18.44 million yuan, 410,000 yuan were produced by state- and province-run enterprises, and 18.03 million by county enterprises (public enterprises 15.02 million, collective enterprises 2.46 million, and village enterprises 550,000). Agricultural production was at 134.69 million yuan: plantations, 64.5 percent; forest products, 16.5 percent; animal husbandry, 17.3 percent; various products, 1.6 percent; and fishing, 0.19 percent.

2. *Agricultural production stagnates at the traditional small-scale level.* During the fifties, several ethnic groups were still using primitive methods. The government has promoted modern agricultural techniques, and the output has increased. Until now, however, manual labor and draft animals still constitute the main methods of agricultural production. Certain simple instruments and techniques are used and transmitted through practice. To master them, there is no need for education, not even literacy. During the period of the people's communes, under the political impetus, there were efforts to mechanize agricultural production. Since the establishment of the system of responsibility contracts, work is secured by the households. Most of the peasants seem content with utilizing manual labor and draft animals, thus reverting to their traditional mode of production. The mastery of these techniques requires no secondary nor primary education: growing up in a peasant's family is enough. At the same time the profits from agriculture and the increase of revenues are so insignificant that no one is thinking of improving the working methods or increasing the technical level.

3. *Industry is underdeveloped.* In 1992 Jinping had 1,479 township/town (*xiang-zhen*) enterprises and 3,414 employees. This means an average of only 2.3 persons per enterprise and only 2.4 percent of the working population in the countryside. These enterprises are in fact handicraft workshops employing traditional methods and instruments. The management and workers of these enterprises have no adequate training.

In 1990 the county had only twenty-two industrial enterprises, including seven public enterprises and three collective ones, with activities in hydroelectricity, mining, cement, pulp and paper, and tea. Hydroelectrical and pulp-and-paper enterprises require specialized personnel but hire few employees. A larger number of workers are recruited in mining enterprises and cement and brick factories. These enterprises are weak in technology and management. Most of their workers do manual labor. Further, they do not function well. The largest one, Jinping County Society for Non-Ferrous Metals, is on the verge of bankruptcy. It has a bad reputation because its administrators are suspected of illegal activities. After a period of prosperity, the cement factory is also declining. Initially, when they recruited workers, these enterprises paid little attention to professional quality and the competence of employees, being guided instead by personal relations and obedience. Positions in these enterprises were coveted by the local people. This manner of selecting personnel has had an impact on the behavior of the persons hired: they are not so keen on mastering techniques as they are on strengthening all kinds of relations to obtain a position.

There is little commerce in Jinping. Aside from a few state stores (*gongxiaoshe*), most are small shops. Opening a shop requires nothing more than social relations with tradesmen and the Tax Bureau, in addition to a few notions of arithmetic. In the present state of the economy in Jinping, it is enough to enjoy good health, to master a simple technique, or to have connections (*guanxi*) in order to obtain employment in most of the enterprises. This has nothing to do with the curriculum of modern general education. What is taught in primary and secondary schools is not really useful to people's dealings. If they fail the university entrance examination, the best students are on the same footing as the illiterates. Those who devote too much time to studies are liable to miss opportunities. In such a backward economy, there is but a weak correlation between a good education, competence, and success at work. People are not motivated to pursue their studies.

Financial Aid

The slow development of the economy in Jinping interferes with the financial aid society gives to education. In general, Jinping County, being poor and economically underdeveloped, depends on state subsidies. Educational expenditures are limited, and there are few donations to education from individuals and enterprises. This poverty is linked to policies and to people's mentality. The favorable

policy toward poor counties has created mechanisms that hinder financial aid to education. There are phenomena such as managers of enterprises who produce deficits for their personal interest and for the interest of their enterprise in order to justify their requests for subsidies. This type of enterprise never contributes to education or to social causes, even if it has the means to do so. Some nouveaux riches also refuse to make donations because it would risk exposing the illegal means employed to amass their wealth.

A number of peasant and worker families do not have the means to finance their children's education. Dropping out of school because of poverty is an urban as well as a rural phenomenon. Most often students leave school in the transition between junior high (*chuzhong*) and senior high (*gaozhong*). Good students who would otherwise have continued their education are forced to drop out because of lack of money. Some students drop out in order to help their family or to allow a brother or sister to continue his or her education. This decision can be taken by the parents or by the student. Of course, it is also related to the lack of correspondence between the curriculum and real social needs. During our fieldwork investigation in Jinping, we witnessed two sisters in the process of dropping out of school. The school principal tried to convince the parents to help their children. But the father said that "the family's difficult situation does not allow it, even if the children want to stay in school. I was a construction worker but, physically, I am no longer able to continue this kind of work. We have no more money. Last year I sold our pigs to finance our children's studies. This year we have no more pigs to sell." The two sisters failed in their request for an exemption of the tuition fee. One year's study costs 400 yuan. The parents found work for the two girls in a pastry shop. Their salary would be 80 yuan per month, plus board and lodging. It was very tempting. Then, the principal exempted one of the girls from the tuition fee. But each girl wanted to work to keep the other at school. Finally, a special exemption was obtained confidentially so that both girls could continue their studies. In the primary schools of Jinping, poverty in itself rarely causes students to drop out, probably because of the preferential policy of "tuition fee exemption" (*mian shouxue zafei*).

Geographical, Historical, and Ethnic Factors of Educational Development

Jinping: A Mountainous and Border Area

Jinping County is in a mountainous region. Jinhe, the county seat, is about 30 km from the Vietnam border, 159 km from Gejiu City, and 477 km from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province. Internal communications and exchanges with developed areas are extremely limited. The mountain terrain restricts the size of the villages. Different ethnic groups live at different altitudes. Although the emplacement of the primary schools is chosen to facilitate their access by the

children as much as possible, the dispersion of the agglomerations of dwellings and the difficulty of access are such that a child must usually walk one to two hours to get to school.

For instance, in Laomenghuoshaozhai Village the schools were built in the mountains, some 20 km from the seat of the township government office. There is no electricity, and the few newspapers and periodicals that do reach the school always arrive late. The teachers rarely leave the school; about once a week they watch TV in the township seat. After work, the teachers kill time by drinking and playing mahjong (*majiang*), cards, and checkers. This lifestyle has an impact on the teachers. Some are trying to leave; others live from day to day.

The geography of Jinping County inhibits economic development and, indirectly, educational development. During the nineteenth century, Jinping County, bordering on Vietnam, was invaded several times by the French army. During the Second World War, Jinping was a battlefield where the Chinese fought the Japanese. After 1949 the county became a supply road for the Vietnamese resistance against the French and the Americans. During the 1979 conflict, several Jinping residents participated in the logistics of the war, and some went to the battle front. "Approximately three hundred teachers actively supported the combat troops. Later, as they continued teaching, they helped track down special enemy agents. In 1985 thirty-five teachers were decorated with a medal" (*Outline of Jinping County*). For the past few decades, however, this strategic position has diverted attention and energy from the county's economic and cultural development. The state has invested very little in the county, with the exception of a few military installations. There has been much talk about "political ideology," "national defense awareness," and "sacrifice" but little mention of "scientific knowledge." In the late 1980s, as attention turned to economic development, local weaknesses became obvious: the absence of infrastructures, a shortage of skilled manpower and of managerial and technical personnel, and the lack of concepts and activities for the market economy. All that proved to be unfavorable to economic development and, consequently, to educational development.

Different Traditions

Jinping is a county where several ethnic groups live side by side: Hani (26 percent), Miao (25.5 percent), Han (14.9 percent), Yao (12.4 percent), Yi (11.9 percent), Dai (5 percent), Lahu (2 percent), Zhuang (1.7 percent), and "Mangren" (0.17 percent). Each ethnic group has its own traditions and preserves its culture and language. Apparently, in Jinping, there is no dominant culture. However, cultural patterns found in the rest of China tend to be adopted in Jinping's countryside as well urban areas. This tendency is reinforced by the administrative structure. In the villages, preschool-age children do not speak Chinese and are unaware of the lifestyle elsewhere in China. When they first go to school, they learn Chinese and discover new ideas and new things. In the national text-

books for primary schools, there are things that are totally unknown to the local children. The teachers have to use minority languages to make children understand. Most of the teachers are native to the area and can speak the local language. In the second grade, pupils begin to understand the courses taught in Chinese, and in the third grade, they can express themselves in Chinese. Teaching in the ethnic-minority language is limited to literacy; all other courses are given in Chinese with national textbooks. The ethnic minorities do not resist this sinization. On the contrary, they consider that learning Chinese helps students enter a university and find work. One never finds an ethnic minority group opposed to teaching in Chinese for the purpose of safeguarding its culture. Chinese is not their mother tongue, however, and, among themselves, people of the same minority group communicate in their own language. The spoken Chinese of non-Han children is not as good as that of Han children. If one measured specifically the mastery of the Chinese language and of the school curriculum, the general knowledge of the minority children would appear inferior. But this apparent lower level of education can also be interpreted by the cultural difference. In the absence of an appropriate measuring instrument, one cannot determine whether non-Han pupils, with a lower level of Chinese but belonging to a non-Han culture, can understand and adapt to life in modern society as well as those who master Chinese better. Since knowledge and advanced techniques are practically all transmitted by the media in Chinese, one's level of Chinese and education naturally determines one's ability to learn modern norms and techniques.

Certain ethnic traditions also affect education: for instance, the relative importance given to boys' and girls' education, which is probably related to the matrimonial system specific to each ethnic group. In the schools, boys outnumber girls; among adults, men's level of education is higher than that of women. There are also extreme cases: some ethnic minority groups living on the margin of modern society do not know the meaning of education and do not understand the importance of education for the family and the individual.