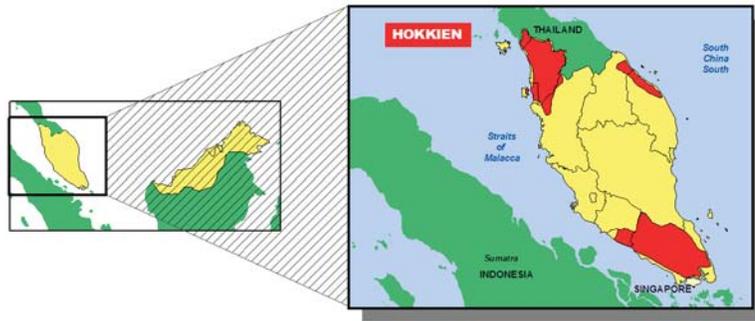


HOKKIEN



Population	Major Religion	Language
1,500,000	Chinese Folk Religion	Hokkien

Who are the Hokkien?

Hokkien is the largest Chinese dialect spoken among Chinese groups in Malaysia. Originally, the Hokkien people were the descendants of the earliest Chinese settlers on the Peninsula who originated mainly from Fujian (also called Min) Province in China. Presently, the majority of Chinese in Malaysia, no matter their ethnic background, use Hokkien as a trade language to converse with other Chinese in particular regions.

However, most Chinese in these particular regions no longer speak a pure form of the various Fujian dialects. Today they speak a Hokkien which contains a number of loanwords from Malay and other Chinese dialect groups.

The Hokkien dialect is the lingua franca for the Chinese in Johor, Malacca, Penang, Kedah, Perlis, Terengganu, Kelantan, and Sarawak. As such, the Hokkien as a trade language is the majority Chinese language in these states.

What are their lives like?

In the past the main occupations of the Hokkien were traders and merchants in the import-export industry and wholesale dealers and grocers. Presently, in the rural or semi-rural areas, Hokkien are tin-miners, rubber and oil palm estate laborers, fishermen, livestock breeders, and vegetable farmers. Within the urban centers they are factory workers, clerks and professionals, small-time shopkeepers, and businessmen.

As with the other Chinese groups, the Hokkien regard surnames (first name) within the family as important in retaining kinship and family identity. Sons take on the surname of the father to perpetuate the family line. In the family the supreme head is the father, or if the family has several generations living under one

roof, the supreme head could also be the grandfather or great grandfather. On the death of the family head the wife takes over as a supreme head and she is allrespected like her departed husband.

What do they believe?

Most of these peoples grow up in an environment of idol worship, ancestral worship, and strong teachings of filial piety. Their religion, no different from the other Chinese groups, has a multitude of stories, performances, rituals, customs, beliefs, sacred objects and places, deities, festivals, and folk practices.

The main deity in a Hokkien temple is Fazhugong or Zhanggong shengju. This deity with unkempt long hair and carrying a sword, originally came from the Yongchun district (of Fujian province, China). A notable sight in Hokkien households is the display of three or more generations of ancestral tablets at the family altar, besides other deities. For the typical Hokkien family, a distinct ritual follows when a death occurs—holes are made to the deceased's pockets to prevent him or her from taking away the family's wealth.

A small percentage of the Hokkien are Christian.

What are their needs?

The Hokkien people believe that good education is the stepping-stone on the path to success. Yet, not many have received formal education beyond secondary level. Formal education and vocational training in a wide variety of skills would be helpful. Pray that these needs to be met and also that He would awaken believers to the needs around them.