

MIANYANG 绵阳

Mianyang City, located in north-central Sichuan Province, is home to more than 1.2 million people. The city is dominated by the Han Chinese, who comprise 99.6 out of every 1,000 residents in the city. Small numbers of 1,100 Hui, 550 Qiang, 450 Manchu, 200 Tujia, 120 Tibetans and 100 Miao and 100 Zhuang also live in the city, although most of these minority people have been assimilated and can no longer be distinguished from the Han majority. The population of Mianyang is on the rise, and is expected to exceed 1.6 million by the year 2010. Mianyang City is the administrative seat of Mianyang Prefecture, which has a population of more than six million. People are coming to Mianyang from the surrounding countryside in search of work and a better standard of living. Mianyang still has something of a rural feel, with 68% of the city's inhabitants employed in the agricultural sector.

Population:
907,675 (1990)
1,219,800 (2000)
1,639,300 (2010)

Province:
Sichuan

Major Ethnic Groups:

Han 99.6%
Hui 0.1%
Qiang 0.1%
Manchu 0.1%

Christians:
8,500 (0.7%)

American Pentagon is located in the region. Mianyang is home to about 160 scientific research institutes, many of which are linked to the military.

It is a sad commentary on the lack of tourism in Mianyang that one of the few "attractions" occurs in a hilly area just outside the city, where visitors can pay "dare devil" acrobats 100¥ (US \$12) to run out onto a thick chain that is strung across a gorge. One visitor described the performance as "a combination of bad martial arts and bad tightrope maneuvers. There are three "dare devils", all in their forties. None of them look particularly athletic, and they do their performance in sweat-suits and old leather loafers.... Part of the routine involves hanging upside-down by the tops of the feet. Soon after I visited the mountain one of the "dare devils" slipped, and now there are two."

Mianyang hit the national news in June 1997 when more than 100,000 workers staged a massive demonstration in the city after their factories declared bankruptcy and officials embezzled their unemployment relief money. The government responded to the worker's complaints with an editorial in the *Mianyang Daily* accusing "hostile foreign and domestic forces" of stirring up the trouble. A citywide curfew was imposed. On July 10 the People's Liberation

Army and the police were called in to suppress the protests, which they did with brutal force. Hundreds of protesters were arrested and a huge injury toll ensued. Public security officials ordered hospital personnel not to treat the wounded demonstrators, comparing them to the state enemies who had rioted in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

This and other smaller incidents has turned Mianyang into a police-controlled city. A very tense atmosphere exists between the workers and the authorities, who are especially sensitive because of the regional military bases.

The military factor has also hindered the advance of the Gospel in this part of Sichuan Province. About ten years ago, a house church movement based in Anhui and Henan provinces sent teams of evangelists to eastern Sichuan to plant churches. They were met with severe persecution, beatings, torture and imprisonment by the local authorities, who view Christianity as a foreign subversive religion.

Anglican (Church of England) and China Inland Mission workers lived in Mianyang prior to 1949, opening hospitals and schools. Today, there are believed to be approximately 8,500 followers of Jesus in Mianyang City, including more than 600 associated with the former Anglican church. Although this city-wide figure represents less than one percent of the population, more than a decade ago there were very few evangelical believers living in the 2,100 year-old city.



An elderly man sitting on his stool in Mianyang. There is a somewhat tense atmosphere in Mianyang, due to conflict between workers and corrupt officials.

Pray for Mianyang

- 1 Pray God would come and take over the hearts and minds of people in Mianyang, that they would have the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit to guide their lives.
- 2 Ask the Holy Spirit to breathe on the Anglicans and other Christians in Mianyang, that their faith would be like a fire in their bones.
- 3 Pray the church will continue to grow and prosper in Sichuan Province despite persecution from local police and officials.



Believers arriving for worship at Mianyang Church.

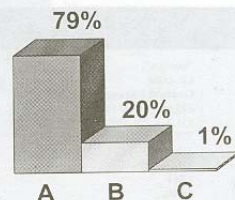
Overview of Mianyang

Pronunciation : "Meeahn-yung"
Old Spelling : Mien-yang
Location : Sichuan Province, southwest China
Population : 907,675 (1990 census)
Males : 479,538 (52.83%)
Females : 428,137 (47.17%)
Households : 258,006
Average household : 3.52 people
Divorced people : 6,200
% of population : 0.68%
Centurions (1990) : 11 people aged 100 or more
Immigrants to City : 14,810 per year
From same province : 12,491 (84.3%)
From other provinces : 2,311 (15.6%)

Employed people : 596,993 (65.8% of total population)
Main Industries : Agriculture 67.7%; Industrial 12.2%; Professional 6.9%
Educational : University: 1.3%
Attainment : High School: 38.7%
(highest level) Primary School: 43.2%
Never attended any level of school: 16.8%
Population under 15 : 19.0%
Adult Literacy : 82% (men 88%; women 75%)
Major Nationalities : Han 904,807
Hui 1,153
Qiang 556
Manchu 458
Tujia 182
Others (23 groups): 519
Christians : 8,500 (0.7%)



Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity