

SHAOGUAN 韶关

With a population for the year 2000 estimated at almost 600,000 people, Shaoguan is the largest city in the northern part of Guangdong Province in southern China. Located some 6-8 hours by train north of the provincial capital Guangzhou (also known as Canton), Shaoguan City receives few visitors or foreign investment. Most people in the area know Shaoguan only as one of the stops on the north-bound train line. Because it is less economically developed than other cities in Guangdong, many Shaoguan youth are now eager to travel to Guangzhou, Shenzhen and other big cities in search of better pay.

During World War II, Shaoguan was known as a 'Rear Area' of the province. Many government offices and schools retreated there to escape the Japanese.

Although the population of Shaoguan is dominated by Han Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka and Xiang (Hunanese) speakers), the city also serves as a potential gateway to a significant population of Yao people who live in the mountains north of the city. More than 100,000 ethnic Yao live in northern Guangdong, often in communities alongside the Hakka. Little outreach has ever been conducted to these Yao, who divide into several quite distinct ethno-linguistic groups. These include the 35,000 *Bapai Yao* ('Eight Row Yao'),

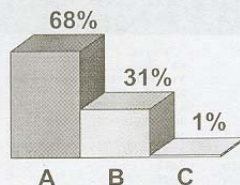
Population:	
444,714 (1990)	
597,650 (2000)	
803,100 (2010)	
Province:	
Guangdong	
Major Ethnic Groups:	
Han	99.5%
Zhuang	0.2%
Yao	0.1%
Manchu	0.1%
Christians:	
2,500 (0.4%)	

located in Liannan and Yangshan counties northwest of Shaoguan; and the 25,800 *Biao Mien* who chiefly inhabit Ruyuan County not far from Shaoguan City. These unreached people groups rarely visit the Chinese cities, however. They prefer to remain in their peaceful and isolated mountain hideouts. To reach them will take a specific effort to travel into their villages with the Gospel. Shaoguan is the ideal launching pad for such ministry. Northern Guangdong is also home to small numbers of Zhuang people. The 1990 census listed 730 Zhuang living in Shaoguan City itself, as well as 433 Yao and 279 Manchu people.

Shaoguan is the only city in this book located in Guangdong Province. Guangdong generally is one of the more evangelized provinces in China. The bulk of Christians, however, are found in the southern and coastal parts of the province. It is also in the coastal cities that the majority of missionary activity took place prior to the 1949 advent of Communism in China. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, worked in southern Guangdong and Macau from 1807 to 1834. It is also from southern Guangdong that millions of Cantonese have dispersed to all parts of the world. When Cantonese-speaking Christians from other nations return to their homeland, it is invariably to one of the towns or cities along the South China Sea.



Status of Evangelization (Awareness of Christ and the Gospel)



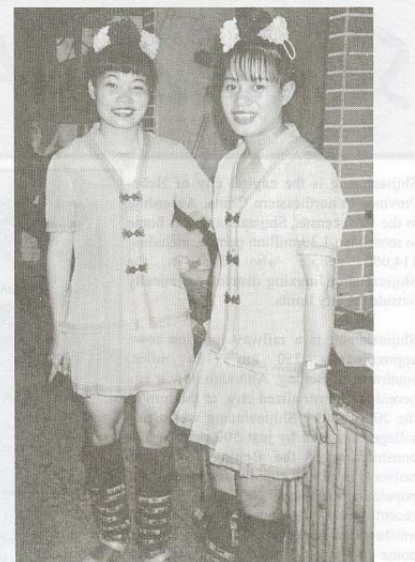
A = have never heard the Gospel or the name of Christ
B = were evangelized but have not yet become Christians
C = Adherents to any form of Christianity

When Hong Kong Christians visit their relatives in Guangdong, it is almost always to one of the coastal areas they go. As a result, Shaoguan, which is locked away in mountains in the far north of the province, has been comparatively neglected by the Gospel and has received less witness. In many ways, the spiritual environment of Shaoguan is more closely related to the barren Hunan Province to the north than the more fertile plains of Guangdong to the south.

There are a small number of Christians in Shaoguan, however, belonging to the Three Self church as well as several scattered house church meeting points. The believers at the Three Self church are warm and welcoming to visitors, who are always invited to join their fellowship meals after the service on Sunday morning. This one church is the only government-sanctioned church serving the entire city.

Before 1949 there was some missionary activity in the area, including workers affiliated with the Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists and the Mission of Gospel Boats. Since 1950, however, strict anti-religious policies and persecution have restricted the work of the church in Shaoguan. Today, the majority of TSPM believers in Shaoguan are over the age of 60. The normal attendance at a Sunday meeting is around 200, but this number swells to 1,000 at Christmas when believers and seekers come in from the surrounding counties.

Despite the presence of these steadfast believers, more than 99% of the population of Shaoguan do not profess to follow Christ. The youth in the city have been particularly neglected by Christian work. Local authorities do not seem to mind the presence of elderly believers which they feel they can control and who they feel will ultimately fade out, but they strongly oppose any evangelization in the city, especially of young people.



North and northwest of Shaoguan live several unreached Yao groups, including the *Bapai* and the *Biao Mien*. Shaoguan is ideally situated as a gateway city to reach the Yao for Christ.

Pray for Shaoguan

- 1 Pray the small yet vibrant Christian community in Shaoguan would be bold and evangelistic, despite threats and opposition from the local authorities.
- 2 Ask God to raise up workers to reach out to the needy Yao, Zhuang and Hakka ethnic groups living in nearby areas of northern Guangdong Province.
- 3 Pray the youth of Shaoguan would soon hear the Gospel and be able to make an intelligent decision to accept or reject Christ.

Overview of Shaoguan

Pronunciation	: "Shaow-hwan"	Employed people	: 240,696 (54.1% of total population)
Old Spelling	: Shou-kuan	Main Industries	: Industrial 46.9%; Professional 13%; Commerce 13%
Location	: Guangdong Province, southern China	Educational Attainment	: University: 1.3%; High School: 58.5%; Primary School: 31.4%; Never attended any level of school: 8.8%
Population	: 444,714 (1990 census)	Population under 15	: 21.8%
Males	: 228,575 (51.39%)	Adult Literacy	: 91% (men 97%; women 85%)
Females	: 206,139 (48.61%)	Major Nationalities	: Han 442,655; Yao 433; Manchu 279; Hui 143; Others (18 groups): 474
Households	: 111,473		
Average household	: 3.99 people		
Divorced people	: 2,242		
% of population	: 0.50%		
Centurions (1990)	: 7 people aged 100 or more		
Immigrants to City	: 16,029 per year		
From same province	: 12,384 (77.2%)		
From other provinces	: 3,640 (22.7%)		
Christians	: 2,500 (0.4%)		