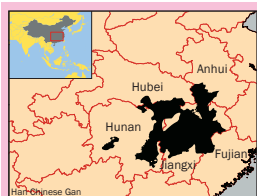


Han Chinese, Gan



Population:

36,554,000 (2000)
41,306,000 (2010)
45,147,500 (2020)

Countries: China, and many other nations around the world

Buddhism: Mahayana

Christians: 1,500,000

Overview of the Gan Chinese

Other Names: Gan, Kan

Population Sources:

31,270,000 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*)

also in many other nations around the world

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Chinese

Dialects: 9 (Changjing, Yiliu, Jicha, Fuguang, Yangyi, Datong, Leizi, Dongsui, Huaiyue)

Professing Buddhists: 25%

Practising Buddhists: 10%

Christians: 4.1%

Scripture: Chinese Bible

Jesus film: available

Gospel Recordings: none

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: KNN

More than 38 million speakers of the Gan Chinese language live in central China's Jiangxi Province and the south-eastern corner of Hubei Province, including Dachi, Xianning, Jiayi and Chongyang counties. The Gan account for approximately 3 per cent of all Chinese in China. The greatest concentrations live along the Fuhe River, the lower reaches of the Gan River and around Poyang Lake. Jiangxi has been described as 'an amphitheater of mountains and valleys, one-fifth larger than England and Wales, draining into a central lake'.¹ Small numbers of Gan speakers also live in eastern and south-western Hunan, southern Anhui and the north-western part of Fujian Province. Tens of thousands of Gan-speaking Chinese

have migrated out of China to many nations around the world, but no statistics exist of their dispersion.

Gan Chinese is a distinct language that differs from Mandarin and other Chinese languages. There are nine dialects of Gan Chinese. Almost all Gan are adequately bilingual in Mandarin, the national language that is used throughout China for education and in the media. One scholar states, 'The Gan people have considerably less sense of self-identity than many of the other subethnic groups within China. . . . The name comes from the literary term for the province, a word that is also the name of the [Jiangxi] province's primary river. . . . Only the people of the northernmost and southernmost parts of Jiangxi Province

have migrated out of China to many nations around the world, but no statistics exist of their dispersion.

speak any form of Chinese other than Gan.²

Jiangxi, where most Gan live, was incorporated into the Chinese empire at an early date but remained sparsely populated until the 8th century. The abundance of silver found in the province is one of the reasons for the influx of immigrants. Extensive mining caused the formation of a wealthy ruling class. Today, Jiangxi is one of the most densely populated provinces in China.



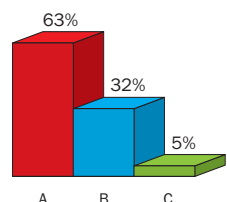
International Mission Board

Although the majority of Gan are nonreligious, there has been a revival of Buddhism and Daoism since the relaxing of restrictions on religion in the 1980s. Zhuangzi (369–286 BC) was an early leader of Daoism. His writings introduced the idea of the unity of opposites, *ying* and *yang*, widely used in Mahayana Buddhism to this day. This led to the notion of accepting life without struggle. Approximately 25 per cent of Gan Chinese profess to be Buddhists, although only about one out of ten people (primarily the elderly) participate in

Buddhist rituals and ceremonies.

In 1900 the diabolical Boxer Rebellion broke out across China. Thirty thousand Chinese Catholics and 2,000 Protestants were massacred,³ as anti-foreign and anti-Christian feelings ran rampant. The number of Christians in China more than doubled in the six years following the massacres. In 1901, one missionary in Jiangxi reported 20,000 converts.⁴ There are an estimated 1.5 million Christians among the Gan Chinese today, consisting of about 700,000 house church Protestants, 400,000 government-sanctioned church members and 400,000 Catholics. The *Jesus* film has recently been translated into the Gan language.

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Have heard the gospel but have not become Christians
C = Are adherents to some form of Christianity