Approximately 2.8 million Puxian Chinese densely populate a relatively small area in eastern Fujian Province, China. The Puxian take their name from the nicknames of the two counties that they primarily inhabit: *Pu*tian and neighbouring *Xian*you. Xianyou is also under the jurisdiction of Putian City. The Puxian language is spoken in an oval valley about 55 kilometres (34 mi.) wide and 100 kilometres (62 mi.) long.

Scholar Leo Moser, who calls this group by the name *Xinghua*, says that they 'form a special community speaking a rather distinct dialect. In Southeast Asia, the Xinghua people are called the Hinghua and are distinguished sharply from [other Chinese language groups] . . . The city that is now Putian . . . was founded in 567 AD, during the Regimes of North and South, by Emperor Fei of the southern dynasty called Chen. The city of Xianyou, also a county seat, was evidently established in 699 AD, during the Tang Dynasty.'[1] Puxian people are often stereotyped by other Chinese as heroic and athletic people. Many of China's best track and field stars come from Putian.[2]

A Chinese proverb states that for 'every three *li* [about one mile], the dialect is different'. One linguist said, 'People separated by a blade of grass cannot understand each other.'[3] The linguistic diversity among the Chinese of Fujian Province probably exists because the original languages spoken there were non-Chinese minority languages. When the Han Chinese flooded into the province, they formed mixed communities with the original inhabitants. The complex language situation in Fujian today is probably a result of this complicated ethnolinguistic mixing. Most Chinese do not accept the differences between various Chinese languages as being great. For reasons of national pride and unity they downplay differences and claim that languages like Puxian are merely dialects or sub-dialects of Mandarin Chinese.

Marco Polo's description, from his visit to the province over 700 years ago, presents a picture of the peoples who inhabited Fujian. Polo wrote, 'The people in this part of the country are addicted to eating human flesh, esteeming it more delicate than any other. . . . When they advance to combat they throw loose their hair about their ears, and they paint their faces a bright blue colour. . . . They are a most savage race of men, inasmuch that when they slay their enemies in battle, they are anxious to drink their blood, and afterwards they devour their flesh.'[4]

Julian Hawken

Buddhism is generally on the decline among the Puxian Chinese, and mostly it is only the elderly who still hold to a Buddhist faith. About a quarter of Puxian still profess Buddhism, however, although the number of those who ever attend a temple or participate in Buddhist ceremonies is small.

Today approximately 120,000 (4.6%) of the Puxian Chinese are Christians—including more than 30,000 in Putian City alone,[5] and 90,000 in the whole of Putian County. One source states, 'Of the Christians, about 20,000 adhere to the traditions of the True Jesus Church, while about 2,000 count themselves as members of the Little Flock. The old church building in Putian County gets used well. There are three Sunday services, each of which fills the 1,400-seat church. . . . More than 100 Christian meeting points in Putian have not yet been registered.'[6]

Population:
2,633,700 (2000)
2,976,100 (2010)
3,252,900 (2020)
Countries: China, Singapore, Malaysia
Buddhism: Mahayana
Christians: 120,000

Overview of the Puxian Chinese

Other Names: Xinghua, Putian, Hinghua, Pu-Xian, Henghua, Hsinghua

Population Sources:

2,253,000 in China (1987, *Language Atlas of China*)
6,000 in Singapore (2000, B Grimes [1985 figure])
Also in Malaysia

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Chinese

Dialects: 2 (Putian, Xianyou)

Professing Buddhists: 25%

Practising Buddhists: 10%

Christians: 4.6%

Scripture: Bible 1912; New Testament 1900; Portions 1892

***Jesus* film:** none

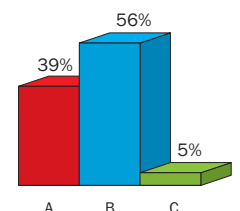**Gospel Recordings:** Hing Hwa

Christian Broadcasting: none

ROPAL code: CPX

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