

Han Chinese, Min Nan

The Min Nan Chinese language—also called *Hokkien*—is spoken by more than 55 million people around the world. Approximately 33 million of these live along China's eastern and southern coasts. Most Min Nan speakers live in Fujian Province, where they inhabit 53 cities and counties. Others are located in Guangdong, Hong Kong, Zhejiang and Jiangxi.

The Min Nan people are renowned as a great seafaring people, and millions of them have migrated outside the People's Republic of China. Today more than 15 million live in Taiwan, 2.7 million in Malaysia, 1.6 million in Singapore, 1.2 million in Thailand, 880,000 in Indonesia, 820,000 in the Philippines and 15,000 in Brunei.

The Min Nan are the largest Chinese group in Taiwan, in Singapore and in the Philippines. Unknown numbers of Min Nan Chinese also live in Western nations around the world.

The Min Nan, or Southern Min, is the

largest of the Min Chinese group. During the 10th century, the northern part of the Kingdom of Min in Fujian split off to form the Kingdom of Yin. The line between the Min Nan and Min Bei languages today very closely follows the border between those two kingdoms. Linguists have traditionally separated the Amoy and Shantou



(previously Swatow) dialects as distinct languages. Hainanese is also related to Min Nan. Amoy and Taiwanese are easily intelligible with each other, while Shantou and Amoy 'have very difficult intelligibility'.¹

Julian Hawnken

Christianity

among the Min Nan Chinese has a long and distinguished history. A large Christian community existed in Zaitun (now Quanzhou City) in the early 1300s. A Franciscan cathedral was constructed from gifts received

from an Armenian woman living in the city.² Bishop Andrew of Zaitun wrote in 1326, 'We are able to preach freely and unmolested. . . . Of idolaters a very large number are baptized, but having been baptized they do not walk straight in the path of Christianity.'³

The Chinese have historically treated Christianity with suspicion. In 1724, Emperor Yungcheng told Jesuit missionaries, 'You wish to make the Chinese Christians, and this is what your law demands, I know it very well. But what in that case would become of us? The subjects of your kings! The Christians whom you make recognize no authority but you; in times of trouble they listen to no other voice. I know well enough that there is nothing to fear at present; but when your ships shall be coming by thousands and tens of thousands, then, indeed, we may have some disturbances.'⁴

There are approximately three million Min Nan believers worldwide today. Around 1.2 million of these are in China, with significant Christian communities among the Min Nan in all other countries where they reside. Missionaries first translated Scripture portions into Min Nan in 1875, followed by the New Testament in 1896. The full Bible was completed in 1933. Fifty thousand hymnals were printed and distributed for the Min Nan inside China in 1986, using the characteristic Amoy script.⁵



Population:

54,416,800 (2000)
60,939,500 (2010)
66,977,200 (2020)

Countries: China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, USA, United Kingdom

Buddhism: Mahayana
Christians: 3,000,000

Overview of the Min Nan

Other Names: Min Nan, Southern Min, Amoy, Hokkien, Hoklo, Teochew

Population Sources:

25,725,000 in China (2000, B Grimes [1984 figure])
15,000,000 in Taiwan (1997, A Chang)
1,946,698 in Malaysia (1980 census)
1,482,000 in Singapore (2000, B Grimes [1993 figure])
1,081,920 in Thailand (2000, B Grimes [1984 figure])
700,000 in Indonesia (1982, CCCOWE)
493,500 in the Philippines (1982, CCCOWE)
10,000 in Brunei (2000, B Grimes [1979 figure])

Also in USA, United Kingdom

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Chinese

Dialects: 8 (Fujian, Chaoshan, Hainanese, Zhejiang, Pingyang, Yuhuan, Tongtuo, Taishun)

Professing Buddhists: 30%

Practising Buddhists: 15%

Christians: 5.5%

Scripture: Bible 1933; New Testament 1896; Portions 1875

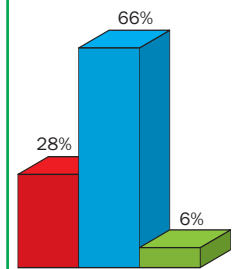
Jesus film: available

Gospel Recordings: Amoy, Chinese: Min Nan Teochew, Hokkien

Christian Broadcasting: available in Amoy and Shantou dialects

ROPAL code: CFR

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