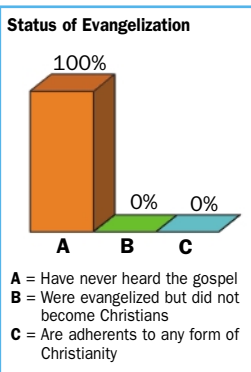




Population in China:
 2,000 (1983)
 2,780 (2000)
 3,430 (2010)
Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Shixing

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Sher-Shing"
Other Names: Shihing, Shuhin, Xumi
Population Source: 2,000 (1983 Sun Hongkai); Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)
Location: SW Sichuan: Muli County in the Liangshan Yi Prefecture
Status: Officially included under Tibetan
Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic, Shixing
Dialects: 0
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None known
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: SXG00



Paul Hattaway

Location: A 1983 report listed 2,000 speakers of the Shixing language "living along the fast-flowing Shuilo River and its downstream tributary, the Chongtian River,"¹ in the First District of Muli County in southern Sichuan Province. Mountain trails leading to the Shixing villages rise to an altitude of 4,680 meters (15,000 ft.). One visitor to the Shixing described the remarkable variation in terrain: "We found the stifling heat in the gorges of the Shou Chu next to unbearable, especially as we passed from cool forest regions to a temperature of over 100° Fahrenheit within a couple of hours."² The region is a botanist's paradise. "We found wild flowers, anemones, blue poppies, and many primroses of all colors, forming a veritable carpet of exquisite designs."³

Identity: The Shixing are one of many small groups in southern and central Sichuan who have been officially counted as part of the Tibetan nationality. The name *Shixing* means "iron people." The Chrame call their Shixing neighbors *Xumi*.

Language: Recently the Shixing language has been found to belong to the Qiangic linguistic branch, "hitherto virtually unknown to Western scholars.... Extensive

lexical and grammatical material has been collected on the Shixing."⁴ When explorer Joseph Rock visited the Shixing in 1930, he remarked that their language "seems to be a mixture of Nashi [Naxi], Tibetan and Hsifan [Chrame]; yet it is not understood by any of the three."⁵

History: The area inhabited by the Shixing has a long and rich history. Their villages are "guarded by watchtowers erected by powerful Naxi kings several hundred years ago."⁶ The Naxi's interest in the region may have been due to the abundance of gold once found in the Shou Chu River. The river was extensively mined by the

great Naxi king, Mutien Wang.⁷

Customs: The Shixing live isolated lives farming rice and maize on thin strips of land leading down to the river. The Shixing villages are "peculiar conglomerations of huts built one against the other, with flat roofs, permitting one to step from house to house over the entire village."⁸

Religion: All Shixing are Tibetan Buddhists; they were converted centuries ago. Outside many of their homes one will find *mani* piles (pyramids of white stones) which are engraved with the sacred Tibetan prayer, *Om mani padme hum* — "Hail the Jewel of the Lotus." In the past the Shixing lived under the rule of the Chrame king in Muli, along with his powerful religious rulers.

Christianity: The Muli region in southwest Sichuan Province is one of the most gospel-neglected places on earth. No missionaries are known to have worked there in the past. There has never been a known believer or Christian fellowship among the Shixing people. The nearest believers to the Shixing are the Lisu in northwest Yunnan, but they are still a considerable distance away over some of the most remote terrain in the world.