



Population in China:
 10,000 (1995)
 11,160 (2000)
 13,700 (2010)
Location: Sichuan
Religion: Tibetan Buddhism
Christians: None Known

Overview of the Xiangcheng

Countries: China

Pronunciation: "Shee-ung-cheng"

Other Names: Hsiangcheng, Qagcheng Tibetan, Phyangphreng

Population Source:
 10,000 (1995 AMO);
 Out of a total Tibetan population of 4,593,330 (1990 census)

Location: SW Sichuan: In and around Xiangcheng Township, Garze Prefecture

Status:
 Officially included under Tibetan

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Unclassified; Possibly Qiangic

Dialects: 0

Religion: Tibetan Buddhism

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: None



Paul Hattaway

Location: More than 11,000 people who inhabit a valley in and around the township of Xiangcheng in southwest Sichuan Province speak a distinct language and possess their own unique historical heritage.¹ The region is extremely remote. One visitor described Xiangcheng: "The town looked magnificent. The solid residential houses were all built with big blocks of stone, but their windows tended to be very small, probably for the purpose of defense, in addition to keeping warm. We were told that in the old days, horse drivers were afraid of bandits here."²

Identity: The government has not recognized the Xiangcheng as an independent minority but has included them as part of the Tibetan nationality. "The Xiangcheng people identify themselves as the descendants of Tibetan, Naxi, and Subi people... In his southern expedition, Kublai Khan of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) brought a great number of Subi people of Mongolian origin here to settle down in Xiangcheng. Ruins of ancient castles can still be found here."³

Language: It appears the Xiangcheng language is a mixture of several elements. They speak their own language within their families, but most use Khampa Tibetan when speaking to outsiders. Xiangcheng may be a Qiangic language.

History: For centuries the Xiangcheng area has remained virtually untouched — a remote outpost along the ancient caravan route that linked Yunnan with Tibet and Sichuan. One writer has noted, "Xiangcheng's geographic location provides a unique strategic location, which perhaps has also nurtured the firm character of the Xiangcheng people. Xiangcheng controls Zhongdian to the south, defends the ancient Yunnan-Tibet route in the west, and blocks the Sichuan-Tibet route from Batang to Dajianlu [now Kangding]. Since ancient times Xiangcheng has been contested by all strategists."⁴ When Joseph

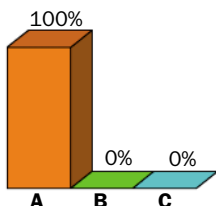
Rock visited in 1930, he found the Xiangcheng territory was ruled by Sashatimba, a bandit chief based at the Sangpiliang Monastery. "Other bandit chiefs assist Sashatimba to rule the land. Together they loot and rob and murder. They even go on journeys of many weeks to hold up caravans or loot peaceful settlements. No Chinese dares to enter the Hsiangcheng [Xiangcheng] territories."⁵

Customs: The Xiangcheng build beautiful houses, which have white rocks on the roofs like those of the Qiang people. Xiangcheng homes are square-shaped, two stories, with colorful decorations around the window frames. They are very different from the houses of their neighbors, the Khampa.

Religion: The Xiangcheng are zealous believers in Tibetan Buddhism. Their beliefs form a large part of their identity as a people. There are numerous Buddhist temples and pagodas throughout the region.

Christianity: The Xiangcheng are one of the most untouched people groups in China. Few — perhaps none — have ever heard of Jesus Christ. There are no Christian communities in the region and no gospel literature or recordings in their language. There has been no history of missionary work in the vicinity of this hidden location.

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity