

Zhangzhou

Zhangzhou, formerly romanized as Changchow, is a prefecture-level city in Fujian Province, China. The prefecture around the city proper comprises the southeast corner of the province, facing the Taiwan Strait and surrounding the prefecture of Xiamen. During the 2010 census, the entire area of Zhangzhou was home to 4,809,983 inhabitants. Along with the 1.9m people of central Xiamen, its urban districts of Longwen and Xiangcheng, together with Longhai, form a single metropolitan area of about 5 million people

Geography

Zhangzhou proper lies on the banks of the Jiulong River in southern Fujian about 35 miles (56 km) from central Xiamen, whose urban core has grown to form a single urbanized area with it. The prefecture of Zhangzhou comprises the southeastern corner of the province, surrounding Xiamen. The prefecture of Quanzhou lies to its northeast, Longyan to its northwest, and Shantou in Guangdong to its southwest.

History

During the early Qing, Zhangzhou was the primary Fujianese port trading with Portuguese Macao and Spanish Manila. For a time, the Portuguese maintained a factory in the city.

During the late Qing, Zhangzhou remained a center of silk, brick, and sugar production with about a million people and extensive internal and maritime trade. Its city wall had a circumference of about 4.5 miles (7.2 km) but included a good deal of open ground and farmland. Its streets were paved with granite but badly maintained. The 800-foot (240 m) bridge across the Jiulong River consisted of wooden planks laid between 25 piles of stones at roughly equal intervals. The port of Xiamen in an island at the mouth of the Jiulong principally functioned as a trading center for the produce and wares of Zhangzhou and its hinterland; both suffered economically when Indian tea plantations cratered demand for Fujianese tea in the late 19th century.

The old city of Zhangzhou (now Xiangcheng District) was occupied in April and May 1932 by a column of Communist guerrillas under Mao Zedong. Due to the presence of Western gunboats in Xiamen Bay, arms shipments from the Soviet Union were unable to get up the Jiulong River to Mao's forces and the main Communist bases. Discovering this, Mao retreated from the city, according to some accounts with a substantial amount of loot taken from its residents.

Demographics

The main language of the Zhangzhounese is the local dialect of Min Nan, part of the Southern Min branch of Min Chinese. Government, education, and official business, however, are carried out in Mandarin. Hakka is also spoken parts of hilly and rural parts of western and southern Zhangzhou

Notable residents

Chen Yuanguang (657–711), a leader of the movement to sinicize Fujian and northern Guangdong

Khaw Soo Cheang (1786–1882), merchant and governor of a Thai province

Lin Yutang (1895–1976), international author, cultural ambassador and inventor.