

Location: More than 79,000 Cun live in the westernmost part of Hainan Island — China’s largest island (excluding Taiwan). They inhabit villages in the Sigeng, Xinjie, Hongjiang, and Baoban districts — along the south bank of the Changhua River in northern Dongfang County; and the north bank of the same river in Changjiang County. Hainan is a tropical island with warm temperatures and beautiful beaches. The Chinese authorities have tried to promote Hainan as a tourist haven in recent years. Dozens of five-star hotels have been constructed along the coasts, but to date the tourist influx has fallen far short of the government’s unrealistically high expectations.

Identity: The Cun (Village) people have been officially included as part of the Han Chinese nationality by the central government, even though their language is considered a dialect of the Ha Li language. Note that the speakers of the Lingao language in northern Hainan also refer to their language as the “village (Cun) language.” Chinese scholars have named that language *Lingao* to avoid confusion.

Language: One linguist has noted, “There are numerous Han Chinese nationality members around Changcheng on the west coast who speak *Cunhua* ‘village language’ which is one of the four *Ha* dialects of Li.”¹ There is some confusion regarding the exact linguistic affiliation of Cun. One respected source classifies it as

“Sino-Tibetan, Zhuang-Dong” and describes it as “a separate language that resembles Li.”² Others have placed Cun in the Li-Laqua branch of the Kadai language family.³ Cun — which has ten tones — also contains many Chinese loanwords. The majority of Cun are bilingual in the Hainanese dialect of Chinese.

History: The Cun were originally Han Chinese people who migrated to Hainan Island and intermingled with the Li people. After many centuries they developed their own language and ethnic identity.

Customs: The Cun are simple-hearted people. They are extremely poor and do not wear a traditional dress unique to their people. Their main concerns are for the welfare of their families and the annual success of their crops.

Religion: Most Cun are animists, but religion does not take a very important role in their daily lives.

Christianity: Although most Cun live in complete spiritual darkness and neglect, promising signs have occurred in recent years. In 1994 a Hong Kong-based mission gave Bible training to several Cun. When they



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first came to the course the middle-aged students had never heard of God, but the Holy Spirit found their hearts fertile ground for his Word. After three months the Cun were filled with Christ’s peace and love and were desperate to return immediately to their own people to tell them the way to salvation. They did this, and met with immediate success. Many of their family members and fellow villagers were overjoyed to hear the news that Christ died for their sins.⁴ By 1998 there were three or four churches among the Cun.



Population in China:
70,000 (1990)
79,100 (2000)
89,400 (2010)
Location: Hainan Island
Religion: Animism
Christians: 200

Overview of the Cun

Countries: China
Pronunciation: “Tswoon”
Other Names:
Tsuen, Ngao Fon, Cunhua
Population Source:
70,000 (1990 J.-O. Svantesson);
Out of a total Han population of
1,042,482,187 (1990 census)
Location: *W Hainan Island:*
Hongjiang and Changjiang
counties

Status: Officially included under Han Chinese
Language: Daic, Kadai, Li-Laqua
Dialects: 0
Religion: Animism, No Religion, Christianity
Christians: 200
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: None
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: CUQ00

