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Location: Approximately 540,000 speakers of Ha Li are located in the western part of Hainan Island. The Ha Li live primarily in Ledong, Yaxian, and Dongfang counties, although they can also be found on the fringes of four other neighboring counties. Hainan was a hunter's paradise until recently, and even now a large number of wild animals can still be found in the more mountainous regions. In 1938 one visitor reported, "Hainan's wild-life includes two species of deer... porcupines, foxes, flying squirrels, monkeys, and pythons... there are also boars... leopards, black gibbons, and numerous birds such as parrots, pheasants, mynas, pigeons and doves."¹

Identity: The Ha are the largest of the groups under the official Li nationality.

Language: The Ha language is the *lingua franca* used by most of the Li on Hainan Island. It has three main dialects. A Roman orthography for the Li was created in 1957. Ha Li shares 30% lexical similarity with Northern Zhuang, 27% with Gelao, and 26% with Dong.²

History: For centuries the Li rebelled against Chinese rule of Hainan. During World War II, the Li joined the Communists to fight the Japanese who had invaded the island in 1939. Hainan was considered a part of Guangdong until 1988, when it was granted status as a separate province.

Customs: Ha Li women in the past wore 56 huge earrings during festivals.³ One visitor described their appearance: "The ears of the Ha women were weighted down with silver

and brass, and their ankles were circled with silver and gold bands. The women I saw did not cover their breasts. They were very coy and shy.... The men were tall, many six feet, and wore their black or brown hair in big knots extending out about four inches from their foreheads.... Many wore turbans of red, white, and blue through which they extended a big knot. They dressed in G-strings, and carried great knives in baskets at their backs."⁴

Religion: The Ha Li god, Pa-Thung, "is a good god, and lives in some unknown place. But his agents, devils sent to watch the [Ha Li] villages, are ever present and always live in a nearby cave, in a river, in the jungle, or on a nearby mountain.... The villages have paid priests, or witchdoctors, who complain to Pa-Thung when local devils spitefully send thunder, lightning, and rain... or when they bring famine or sickness to the people."⁵

Christianity: Of the approximately 1,000 Li believers on Hainan Island, the majority are among the Ha Li. Because they have no Bible in their language to govern them, many Li churches are filled with rampant heresies and cultic activities. One Christian visitor described a bizarre Li church service. "The leader drinks a cup of tea which has been blessed by the Holy Spirit and sprays it over the believers. Then they close their eyes and dance until they become exhausted and fall to the ground.... The Li Christians lack familiarity with the Bible."⁶



Population in China:
 390,000 (1987)
 537,000 (2000)
 692,800 (2010)
Location: Hainan Island
Religion: Animism
Christians: 600

Overview of the Ha Li

Countries: China
Pronunciation: "Ha-Lee"
Other Names: Lai, La, Loi, Le, Dli, Bli
Population Source: 450,000 (1987 LAC);⁷ Out of a total Li population of 1,110,900 (1990 census)
Location: *Hainan Island:* Li-Miao Prefecture, especially in Ledong, Yaxian, and Dongfang counties; Some also in Baisha, Changjiang, Baoting, and Lingshui counties
Status: Officially included under Li
Language: Daic, Kadai, Li-Laqua
Dialects (3): Hayan (193,000), Luohuo (166,000), Baoxian (73,000)
Religion: Animism, Polytheism, Shamanism
Christians: 600
Scripture: None
Jesus film: None
Gospel Recordings: Li: Hainan Ledong #04972
 Li: Hainan Tongjia #04973
Christian Broadcasting: None
ROPAL code: LIC01

