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Location: The Qi Li are the second largest Li group on Hainan Island. Although numbering 178,000 speakers in 1987,¹ there are many more ethnic Qi Li who now can speak only Chinese. This people group is located in the central sections of Hainan Island, especially concentrated in Baoting and Qiongzong counties.

Identity: The Qi Li are one of five distinct tribes of the official Li nationality. “The women of the Ki [Qi]... like those of all the Hainan tribes and sub-tribes, wore dress peculiar to their region. Their silver ornaments differed in design, and the headdress was a turban or sometimes a tasseled handkerchief.”²

Language: The Qi Li are perhaps the most Sinicized of the various Li groups.

Almost all Qi Li are bilingual in the Hainan dialect of Chinese. Qi consists of three dialects: Tongshi, Qiandui, and Baocheng. The Qiandui dialect group has been strongly influenced by the Chinese, both linguistically and culturally. In 1983, 78,000 members of the Li nationality were able to speak only Chinese.³ The majority of these assimilated Li are from the Qi tribe. The Qi Li language has six tones.

History: The Qi Li have a long history of being bullied by Chinese landowners. Many chose to live back in the mountains beyond the reach of their oppressors, while those who remained in the valleys were gradually assimilated to Chinese culture and language.

Customs: Until recently divorce was not prohibited

among the Li. “A [Li] widow cannot return to her parents; this is supposed to discourage prostitution, and promote marriage.”⁴

Religion: The Qi Li living in more remote villages have many superstitions. They believe demons live in nature, especially in large mountains and waterfalls. In 1937 the Qi would not allow a Western traveler to visit a nearby waterfall, claiming it was the home of the devil.⁵

Christianity: The Qi Li are an unreached people group. Few have ever been approached with the gospel. The foundation of the American Presbyterian Mission on Hainan Island was laid by Carl C.

Jeremiassen, a native of Denmark. He went to Hainan in 1881 as an independent, self-supporting missionary. “During that year he made a complete circuit of the island, treating the sick and distributing Chinese literature wherever he visited.”⁶ To the Qi Li, however, who had no prior knowledge of Christianity, this scattered seed fell on rocky soil. Decades later they told another foreigner about a man who had visited them long before and “who had stayed for only an hour. His name they did not know, but he distributed many papers showing a strange God with a beard!”⁷ Today there are possibly several hundred believers among the Qi Li; however, without a Bible in their language, the few churches are weak and nominal.⁸ There are no gospel recordings or other evangelistic tools available in the Qi Li language.



Population in China:

178,000 (1987)

245,100 (2000)

316,200 (2010)

Location: Hainan Island

Religion: Animism

Christians: 350

Overview of the Qi Li

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Chee-Lee”

Other Names:

Qi, Ki, Gei, Hei, Qiandui, Heitu

Population Source:

178,000 (1987 LAC);

Out of a total Li population of 1,110,900 (1990 census)

Location: *Hainan Island:*

Qiongzong and Baoting counties

Status: Officially included under Li

Language: Daic, Kadai, Li-Laqua

Dialects (3): Tongshi (125,000), Qiandui (29,000), Baocheng (24,000)

Religion: Animism, Polytheism, No Religion, Christianity

Christians: 350

Scripture: None

Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: LIC02

