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Location: More than 600,000 Hani live across a wide stretch of land between the Ailao and Wuliang mountain ranges in southern Yunnan.¹ The Hani population is expected to surpass 750,000 by 2010.

Identity: The official Hani nationality numbered 1.25 million people in the 1990 census. This is the result of the inclusion of more than a dozen distinct people groups into the official classification. These groups have been separated and profiled individually in *Operation China*.² There are a multitude of self-appellations among the official Hani groups. They also “have over 100 ways of dressing themselves.”³ This Profile deals only with the speakers of “Hani proper.”

Language: The Hani language consists of three tones and five dialects. More than 450,000 Hani can speak their language.⁴

Differences with each of the major dialects “are relatively small, and speakers from the different sub-dialects can generally understand each other.”⁵ A Hani Roman alphabet was introduced in 1957 but was never widely embraced by the Hani who today have a literacy rate of just 29%.⁶

History: In Hani legend a Sky god named Abo-Momi sent a buffalo to the earth to teach man that grass and trees must be planted to enable crops to grow everywhere else. If man would do this they would be able to eat every second day. Unfortunately the buffalo had a poor memory and told them the *crops* must be planted. He also told them to let the grass and trees grow everywhere else. If they would do that, the buffalo said, they would be able to eat twice every day. Man obeyed the buffalo’s message but found their lives did not improve at

all. When the buffalo returned to the sky, Abo-Momi was displeased and sent the buffalo back to the earth to help the Hani cultivate the soil. The water buffalo is still revered today among the Hani. When a Hani man dies his buffalo is slaughtered and buried with him, so that the beast can guide him to the next world.

Customs: The Hani are a needy and poverty-stricken people. The central government ranked them the lowest of China’s official minorities in a “quality of life index.” The Hani scored 38.3%, compared to the national average of 62.7%.⁷ They also ranked last for infant mortality, with 107 of every 1,000 Hani children dying during infancy. The Hani life expectancy is just 58 years.⁸

Religion: The Hani have three major religious clergymen. The *zuima* is a male from the oldest household who directs all religious activities. The *beima* perform magic rites and exorcisms. Male and female *nima* make predictions and administer medicinal herbs.⁹

Christianity: The Hani have traditionally been one of the most gospel-neglected of China’s minorities. The few efforts to evangelize them have been met with resistance. One writer notes, “They have no Scriptures, no evangelists, no radio broadcasts and no *Jesus* film. In other words, even if a Hani wants to hear about *Jesus* Christ, he can’t, no matter how hard he tries.”¹⁰



Population in China:
 500,000 (1990)
 614,500 (2000)
 755,200 (2010)
Location: Yunnan
Religion: Polytheism
Christians: 200

Overview of the Hani

Countries: China, Vietnam, Laos

Pronunciation: “Ha-nee”

Other Names: Hani, Haw

Population Source: 500,000 (1990 J.-O. Svantesson); Out of a total Hani population of 1,253,952 (1990 census); 37,000 in Vietnam (1993 P. Johnstone); 1,122 in Laos (1995 census)

Location: S Yunnan: Yuanjiang and Mekong River basins; Mainly between the Ailao and Wuliang mountains

Status:

An official minority of China

Language: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Burmese-Lolo, Lolo, Southern Lolo, Akha, Hani, Ha-Ya

Literacy: 29%

Dialects: 5

Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Shamanism

Christians: 200

Scripture: Work in progress

Jesus film: In progress

Gospel Recordings: Hani #04698

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: HNI00

