



Harry Laub

**Location:** The 1,200 Enn people inhabit six villages to the north and east of the famous city of Kengtung in Myanmar's Shan State. Their main villages are Pin Tauk, Wan Pangley, Wan Naung, and Pang Mat. Although these communities are located less than 100 miles (162 km) from the Chinese border and a similar distance from Thailand and Laos, the Enn are believed to live only in these villages nestled among the hills of northern Myanmar.

**Identity:** Although visitors often mistake them for Akha people, the Enn are linguistically related to the Wa and speak a dialect of the Parauk language. In their own view, however, the Enn (sometimes written Ann or Eng) proudly consider themselves a distinct people group, and they do not readily acknowledge a connection to other groups in the region.

**Language:** The Enn language is a part of the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austro-Asiatic language family, as are the languages of their neighbors the Palaung, Tai Loi, and Wa. The *Ethnologue* lists 78 different dialects of Parauk in Myanmar, of which Enn is just one.<sup>1</sup> Incredibly, in 2006 the Chinese linguist Sun Hongkai found over 300 dialects of Parauk spoken in China alone. Most Enn people speak their own language and the regional Shan vernacular but do not speak Burmese at all.

**History:** Kengtung was previously the largest principality in Shan State, enjoying a place of prominence from 1243 until the forced abdication of the last prince in 1959. The Enn people claim to have inhabited these hills for many centuries, predating the migration of the Shan and the more recent arrivals of the Lahu and Akha. A missionary explained: "During the Wa occupation of the Kengtung valley, some of their people moved into the outlying districts and formed a village of their own. When the main body was defeated and driven out, these smaller groups remained and offered their allegiance to the conquerors and were permitted to remain."<sup>2</sup> The Enn are one of six small tribal dialect groups still living in the Kengtung District today.

**Customs:** The Enn are renowned for their blackened teeth from chewing betelnut, which they consider a mark of beauty. One visitor said: "They are locally and famously known as the 'Black Teeth Tribe' due to their near universal love of chewing betel, even from a young age. The dark red gums and rotten-teeth effect is exaggerated by the wearing of a black lipstick made from charred tree bark.... They traditionally eschew schools and medical care, which has caused, until recently, a horrific nearly 50 percent child mortality rate as well as high levels of illiteracy."<sup>3</sup>

**Religion:** Most Enn people retain the animistic rituals their ancestors have practiced for countless generations. Their villages are served by traditional shamans, who act as mediators between people and the spirit world. They also advise the Enn community and provide traditional medicinal services when someone falls ill. Although there are significant numbers of Christians among other tribes in the area, including the Lahu, Akha and Wa, the Enn have largely refused to embrace Christianity, although there are a small number of believers among them. One source says: "Religion varies depending upon the degrees of interaction with local Shan and the penetration of missionaries, so you'll encounter animist, Buddhist, and even Christian Enn, although the latter two will contain strong animist elements."<sup>4</sup>

**Christianity:** Despite having a tiny remnant of Christians in their midst, most Enn people have yet to be exposed to the claims of the Gospel in a way they can easily comprehend, and many believers struggle to cast off the animistic practices of their fellow tribesmen. Although the Enn are said to speak one of the many dialects of Parauk Wa in Myanmar, they cannot understand the Parauk Bible or Jesus film that has been translated into the main dialect of that language.



Population  
in Myanmar:  
1,200 (2024)

Location:  
Shan State

Language Family:  
Austro-Asiatic

Main Religion:  
Animism (90.0%)

Christians:  
50 (4.2%)

## OVERVIEW

Population:  
1,200 in Myanmar  
(2024 Joshua Project)

Other Countries:

Other Names:  
An, Ann, En, Eng, Wa Ann, Yinn

Location:  
Shan State: Kengtung  
Township in Kengtung District

Language:  
Wa, Parauk [prk]

Dialects: 1

Scripture:  
Bible 2006  
New Testament 1938  
Portions 1934

Jesus film:  
Wa, Parauk

Global Recordings:  
Wa, Parauk #21277

People ID: 21646

