



Marco Bottigelli

Location: Five and a half thousand members of the Rengca tribe inhabit 12 villages west of the town of Matupi in western Myanmar's Chin State,¹ approximately 50 miles (81 km) from the border with Mizoram, India. The Rengca area is long and narrow, wedged between other tribes and language groups, including the Asang Khongsa to the north, Khawngtu and Lemi to the west, Kanise to the south, and Matu to the east.

Identity: The Rengca are a new group that have never previously appeared in lists of Myanmar's peoples. In the past they were considered one of as many as 15 different Eastern Kumi dialect groups, most of which are actually distinct ethnicities with their own languages. The Eastern Khumi cluster, in turn, is considered just one of dozens of divisions of the Chin people in Myanmar. The Rengca should always have been viewed as a distinct ethno-linguistic group who possess a proud identity and culture.

Language: In 1970, an orthography

for the related Tawr language was created and intended to be used by several Chin subgroups, including the Rengca. Problems soon arose, however, with a 2011 report by SIL stating: "Around 1980, a disagreement over the orthography created a split into two sides: Khenlak versus Khawngtu and Rengca. The Tawr New Testament is currently available and is being used in some Rengca churches. These portions and songbooks have been done independently and were not published by any Bible organization."²

History: Hunting has always been necessary for the survival of the Rengca people. Their mountainous habitations are covered with sub-tropical forests that are filled with palm and bamboo. Oak and pine trees grow at elevations above 3,000 feet (900 meters), while teak and other hardwoods grow at lower elevations. The sheer terrain makes it difficult to extract timber for sale, however. The abundance of wildlife in the Mindat area includes tigers, bears, deer,

leopards, pangolin, and monkeys.

Customs: The Rengca area is mountainous, making farming difficult. Many prominent mountains dominate the skyline, the tallest of which is Mt. Awtaraw at 9,009 feet (2,746 meters) above sea level. Although many rivers and fast-flowing streams crisscross Rengca territory, most of them contain whitewater rapids, making them unnavigable to all but canoes and small boats. As a result, trade with other ethnicities is not possible, and the rugged terrain has caused Rengca communities to remain isolated from the rest of Myanmar and the outside world. In flatter areas, crops grown by the Rengca include potatoes, corn, coffee, oranges, and damson.

Religion: After being animists for centuries, the Rengca people first heard the Gospel in the 20th century and enthusiastically responded to the free gift of eternal life. Today almost all Rengca people are followers of Christ, while a relative handful of people have converted to Buddhism or have decided to remain animists to continue the traditional rituals of their forefathers.

Christianity: Although the existence of the Rengca people has yet to be acknowledged by the rest of the Christian world, they have been committed followers of Christ for generations and have had a strong desire to have the Scriptures in their language for over half a century. Denominations active in the Mindat area include Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Assemblies of God, and the Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar. After the first Rengca orthography was created in 1970, Pastor Tin Maung translated the Gospel of Luke into Rengca a few years later. A Rengca hymnal was also produced and was still being used in church services a few years ago. Although they would prefer to have their own Scriptures to access the Word of God, it appears Rengca believers have made do with using the Tawr New Testament, which was translated for that tribe in the 1970s.



Population
in Myanmar:
5,500 (2025)

Location:
Chin State

Language Family:
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:
Christianity (95.0%)

Christians:
4,950 (95.0%)

OVERVIEW

Population:
5,500 in Myanmar
(2025 Asia Harvest)

Other Countries:

Other Names:
Rengcaa, Rengca Chin, Rengsa

Location:
Chin State: Matupi
Township in Mindat District

Language:
Chin, Rengca [unclassified]

Dialects:

Scripture:
Portions 1972

Jesus film:
None

Global Recordings:
None

People ID: 22555

